War of the Burning Sky

The Complete Campaign

Deluxe Edition



A complete fantasy saga for 1st- to 20th-level characters

War of the Burning Sky: The Complete Campaign

A Complete Fantasy Saga for 1st- to 20th-Level Characters

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Note on Rules Content

All the rules content you need to use the material in this book is presented herein, but if you are interested in learning more, search for the System Reference Document online, available through various sources.

Note on Stat Blocks

Our goal in presenting certain PC and monster stat blocks is balance and playability, rather than strict adherence to standardized formulae. We apologize to all standardized formulae enthusiasts out there.



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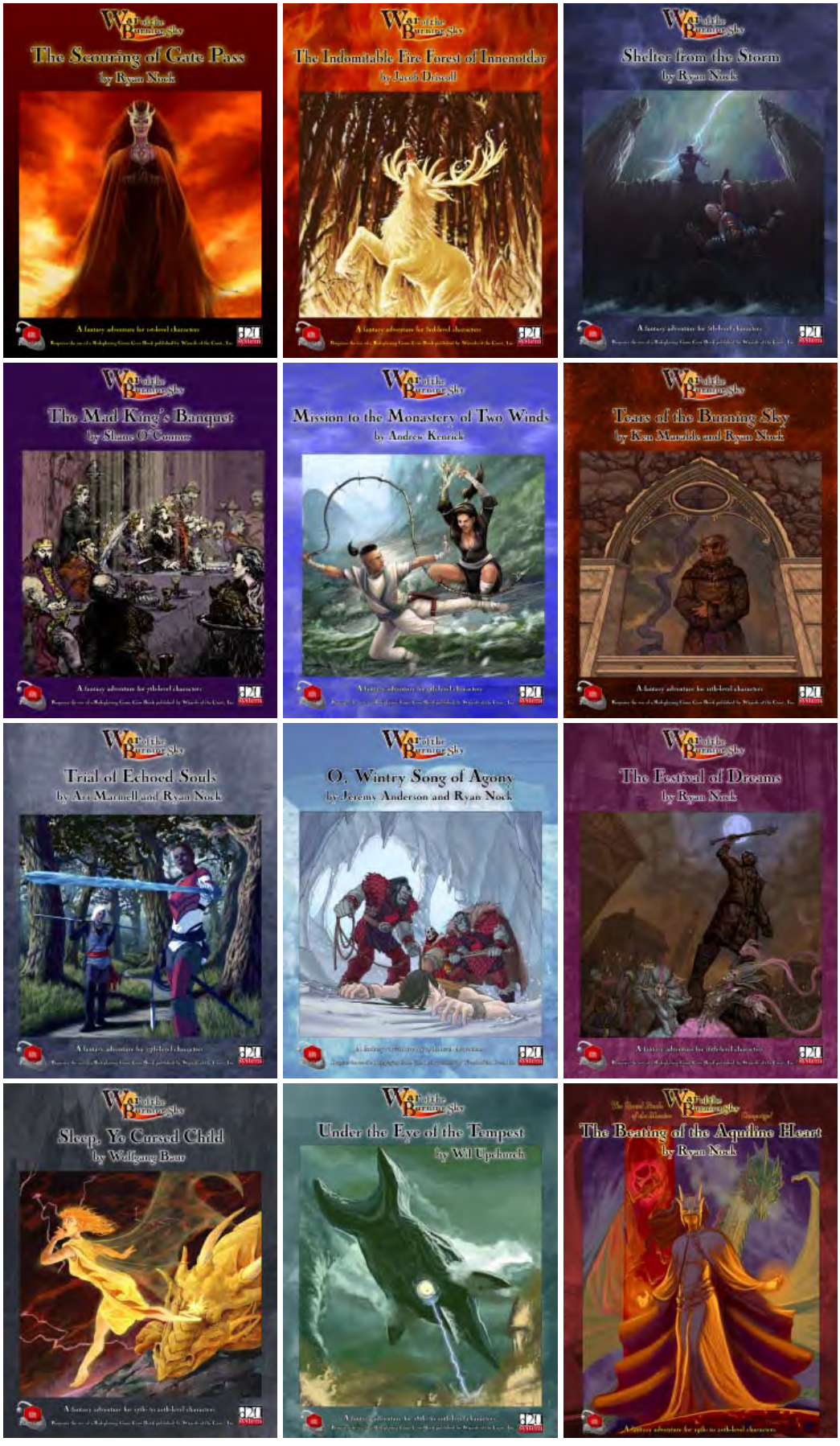
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Prologue

November

Desolation. Gray earth trod beneath boots on the march; snapped trees waiting for the flames. And soon, the victorious emperor knew, there would be that fire. There always was. Often enough, he brought it, but even when he didn't, it arose. After every battle, something burned — as if the universe followed some unwritten protocol that conflagration should be the epilogue to carnage. It was even more reliable than the crows.

Castle Korstull was taken. The mighty emperor figured he'd lost, at worst, one man in twenty. He'd known it would be so. Tonight, he would sleep on the sheets of a fallen prince, and the only cost had been a week's planning and the blood of men he did not know. If the victory had meant anything to him, he would've called it a bargain.

When had conquest lost its luster? Was it just the ease, or was it something else? The glorious emperor stared into the flames of the torch he bore in his left hand, the famed artifact he had christened the Torch of the Burning Sky. Since the day he had acquired this strange token, born a century before in miracle and catastrophe, he had never lost a battle. It was as if he'd forgotten how.

He feared his own restlessness, and was all the more frustrated to realize that it might be the only thing he feared. What would the ache for challenge drive him to? The inscrutable emperor had begun to calculate the betrayal of his oldest ally; whether it was out of strategy, ambition, or boredom, he could not tell.

That ally, of course, planned to turn on him first. There had been no intelligence of such an act, but it went without saying. His ally went by the unlikely name of Shaaladel, and if the invincible emperor had forgotten how to lose, Shaaladel had forgotten how not to betray.

The all-knowing emperor's foresight fatigued him. He'd spent the final hours of many brave men's lives hoping for some surprise — a sudden ambush, unexpected reinforcements, even a mere change in tactics — that might lend the least excitement to this clash of nations. But like the planets in their courses, his enemies plodded, unwavering, along the path he had laid out to their defeat.

Fate's arsenal had been emptied, it seemed, and no ordeals remained to try the blessed emperor. He had conquered Sindaire tonight, a nation that had already been his in all but name, for no better reason than that they had given him an excuse. Soon, he would test himself against his other neighbors — Ostalin, Dassen — but knew that they would fall just as quickly. He wondered what he'd done to anger the gods before his birth, that they should curse him by giving him only a single world to conquer. Perhaps, he mused, he should avenge himself on the heavens. He peered up through the gathering cloud-rack and contemplated this, until his view was obscured by a high-vaulted arch passing overhead. He trained his gaze forward now, as the warhorse he sat upon ambled through the yawning entryways of the castle.

Built to resemble the maw of some great beast, the front gates of Castle Korstull had impressed the magnificent emperor when he'd first seen them, but he had raised palaces of his own in the decades since. Now they looked to him like nothing more than the hastily assembled sets of some Wayfarers' comedy. He remembered what Leska had told him before he'd left, that some young bard in Ragos had penned a play about his life, probably in an attempt to earn his patronage. He'd laughed at the folly of that, yet he found himself wondering about it now, about how such a play might begin, about what soliloquies this crowing upstart had written into his mouth.

Would there be a scene of his childhood, a half-orc raised among backwoods highlanders, tribesmen who wandered the mountains of the North, having no land to hold as their own? How many acts would it take him to carve out a nation for his kin, how many trumpets and alarums as he turned it into an empire? Which of his enemies would be judged worthy of their own death scenes, which allies would rhyme couplets after his dramatic exits?

He was certain Shaaladel would be the handsome scene-stealer, declaiming regally on the nature of their fragile peace as they debated the rebellion in Gate Pass, with no hint of the craven schemer beneath the regal façade. And surely Leska would be cheated of her rightful prominence, as misunderstood by a grasping playmaker as she was by all the rest of his subjects. They all looked at her and saw a frightful mask, unaware that the creature behind that grisly visage was far more human — and more terrifying — that they could have imagined. Leska should've been the subject of a play, he thought. She had all the makings of a tragedy, while he had none. His play would be boring, the legendary emperor decided. After all, he always won.

As soon as he dismounted his horse, he was frightfully attended. Inquisitor bodyguards in their horrific masks and blood-splattered lieutenants with word from General Magdus fell in step behind him as he walked. Within a few moments, they had ascended to the throne room, where he took his dinner and dispatched orders. The throne room and the royal bedroom adjoining it were appropriately princely, festooned with tapestries, murals, and other palatial regalia. When the castle was built, these rooms had been prayed over by priests for three days. It was said no one could enter these rooms against the will of the one who sat upon the throne. The great emperor was unimpressed. He placed the Torch of the Burning Sky in a ruby-studded sconce, scraped his boot against the corner of the throne to remove a clump of gray mud, then sat down and called for the leaders of the force that had resisted him.

Hoping their deaths would provide some distraction, he ordered their executions on the spot. He watched attentively, eating stew from a brass tureen, as his bodyguards went about their work. Inquisitors all, trained in the art of torture by Leska herself, the men of his personal guard sensed the dread emperor's apathy, and stretched their imaginations to make each prisoner's end more entertaining than the previous one. But the spectacle soon descended into farce and common vulgarity; he grew listless again. He called for wine from the castle cellars and sat in silence, drinking 50-year-old vintages straight from their bottles. Before long, he grew lethargic and announced that he would retire.

All but a handful of his guards bowed deeply and left. The remaining three would stand outside his chamber as he slept. The immortal emperor extinguished the torch as he pulled it from its sconce and walked towards the bedroom, yet he stopped before the door, turned to one of his guards, and began to speak. He said, "I am more weary than I ever knew a mortal or immortal man could be. This world of half-men and vain posturing, this age of sheep who masquerade as lords, diminishes in my eyes by the day. I thought the gods would not long tolerate ambitions such as mine, but like a pack of beaten whores, they offer not defense but more accommodation. Everything that I once coveted turns stale. I grasp the fruits of conquest and each morsel tastes of ashes in my mouth. In seven months, my pennants could cast shadows over all the nations of the known lands, and yet this spent and whelping bitch they call the world cannot, for all my ravaging, yet birth a

cur whose sharpest fangs don't break against my skin. When I bid you to kill those men tonight, I found myself searching their eyes for signs that, in their fatal throes, their dying souls might glimpse another realm, a realm that better suited me. But I saw none. Did you see anything at all?"

The inquisitor, Darius, stared for a long time into those wild eyes, dumbstruck by this strange and sudden candor. In the end, shamed by his lack of a proper answer — or any answer at all — the bodyguard merely shook his head. Somehow disappointed, and knowing himself a fool for it, the doomed emperor walked away without a word and locked his bedroom door behind him. His name was Drakus Coaltongue, and his curse was to be the most powerful man in the world.

The General of the Emperor's First Army camped far from the castle that night. He did not eschew the comforts of the stronghold he had seized out of some sentimental desire to sleep in the same conditions as his soldiers. Even in the field, he had a larger tent, better food, assistants to see to his needs, and finery on which to rest. He simply felt as though here, with his troops, he could get things done, and in the castle he would be up sending messages all night. General Magdus was a practical man, and from the camp he could run his army better.

Yet for all his practicality, he was superstitious. Soldiers were like sailors that way, spending so much of their lives subject to the whims of fate that they sought signs of good and bad luck, not out of imagination, but out of fear. And the general did not like the clouds racing above his head tonight.

A storm brewing would be trial enough. Trudging through rain and muck was enough to demoralize even disciplined men. But these low black clouds moved faster than the wind, it seemed, as if intent on their destination. And they all seemed to be congregating in one place. The black thunderheads billowed highest directly above Castle Korstull. And they were not traveling, but remained stationary, whirling in place like water down a drain.

It was clearly an ill omen, he decided. Magdus was practical enough to grant fortune its place in his calculations. He gave orders to increase the frequency and size of his patrols, and told his adjutant to wake him half an hour earlier in the morning. All the confidence his victory had afforded him was melting away, and he was left with a deep unease. There weren't enough soldiers between here and the sea to give his army a moment's worry, but who could say what trouble the raging heavens might bring him?

As he put his head down to seek sleep, the general was reminded of a strange saying he'd once heard from an old sergeant. "You can conquer a land's people; you cannot conquer its gods." He didn't know if he believed that, or even what it was supposed to really mean, but he did believe this: if the heavens were angry, tonight someone would be paying the price.

Darius saw the other two bodyguards die before he even knew they were under attack. The murder in the peripheral vision to his left he barely saw. It was just a smudge of motion that made a wet sound before it was over. But turned to his right as he was, he caught his other comrade's end. He saw the last half-second of a man stepping from the shadows in the corner, as if walking out of a door, slashing the guard's throat with a curving black blade and receding as swiftly and stealthily as he'd come.

Hefting his mace, Darius drew in air to shout, but there was a sound like a thunderstrike and a sharp pain as something lashed across his adam's apple. He saw a woman in the doorway — had it opened just now or had she been there all along? She yanked the handle of a whip, and he found himself pitching forward, his throat burning and constricted. Her weapon had him by the neck, and he struggled to keep his feet as she pulled him towards her.

Helpless against the tight constriction of his windpipe, he struck out wildly with his mace, bludgeoning the air. The woman was rushing towards him — or he was hurtling towards her — and for a split second he had the incongruous realization that she was beautiful.

Yet the colors of her hair and skin were wrong. Had she dyed them? Something knocked the mace from his hand. Her face came at his. What was happening? Was she head-butting him, was she going to bite him? Had the Emperor been attacked by lunatics?

Still choking, he felt her lips on his. A kiss. Her mouth was warm. Was he awake? She tasted like blood.

When she released him, there was something in his mouth. A grainy liquid, it tasted the way violets smelled. He felt the whip slip from around his neck, and realized the woman had already moved past him, towards the Emperor's bedroom. He spun, looking for his mace, but the world kept spinning when he stopped, and he crumpled to the ground. This was no dream. He'd been poisoned.

When he recovered his breath, he finally called out. There was a clatter as the Inquisitors from the waiting chamber rushed in, but of the attackers he could hear nothing, until the din of clashing blades arose. His vision was too blurry now to see who fought or who fell.

The poison moved through Darius like a shiver. Helpless, the world dimming around him, he thought of the Emperor's question, hours before. Would he see a better world now, he wondered, in what had to be his last moments?

But there were only shadows moving in the blur. Now, as before, Darius could see nothing.

It was instinct that awoke him. There was someone in his room.

The Emperor's reflex was to spring from his bed and find a weapon, but as soon as he had opened his eyes, his torso exploded in pain. He went to move and found himself pinned to the bed. He looked down at his chest.

Someone had driven a stake through his heart.

Another man would have panicked. But Coaltongue had faced death many times before, and while he was alarmed, he could not help being curious. He looked around the room, but saw no sign of his attacker. None of his generals would've pulled this off, not with dog-loyal Magdus, the best of them all, camped so close. Shaaladel would've planned something more intricate, more unnecessarily complex, something he would've seen coming. Leska?

His hands had found the stake — everything was harder now, it seemed, with his heart not pumping blood — and tried to summon up the strength to pull it out at once.

Then, from the shadows, an aged face, dyed with ashes. A black scimitar, edged with smoky diamonds, arcing at his throat.

Him? Coaltongue thought. *Of all the enemies I have in this world? Him?*

The blade fell. Staked to the bed, the emperor could not roll out of the way, and his arms were too weak to pull it out or block the blow.

The pain of the beheading was not much, he found. Far less than that of being stabbed in the heart. He was less conscious of the blow itself than of the cold air on the insides of his neck.

Completely severed from his body, Coaltongue's head rolled over to the left side of his pillow.

His head was still alive, still conscious and bewildered. From the angle at which his head had fallen, he could see a second assailant, her hands lifting the Torch of the Burning Sky from the wall-mount where he'd left it. They were thieves as well as assassins.

The Emperor heard sounds of swordplay from the room outside. There were at least three of them, then. It was all starting to make sense. He even knew how they would make their escape. Suddenly, he became very tired. It seemed to happen all at once. He tried to rub his eyes, but obviously could not, and this simple fact provoked in him a very acute distress.

He was falling asleep. There was no preventing it. The Emperor of Ragesia had gone down without a fight, without even a sword in his hand. In other circumstances, he might have laughed.

As oblivion claimed him, he thought, *I have to hand to it to the Fates. This, I did not see coming.*

Then there was a sudden pang of regret; disappointment that he would not be there to see the cataclysmic change his death would wreak, the conflict. This, he thought, would've been a world worthy of me.

Then, blackness.



Magdus couldn't sleep. It wasn't just the turmoil in the heavens, he knew. He was a life-long soldier, hardened by decades of warring, yet he often found himself sleepless the night after a battle. The images of slaughter in his memory needed time to fade, and until then they haunted his mind's eye like fever-dreams. He had not attempted to purge himself of this frailty. He thought, perhaps, it made him better at his job.

He threw on a tunic and his boots, and grabbed his cloak on the way out of his tent. His walk through the camp was punctuated with crisp salutes and the occasional "Sir." Troubled as his mind was, he tried to return them all.

The general jogged up a pebble-strewn path up the side of the canyon to a look-out point. No bodyguards accompanied him, though the men stationed outside his tent had reported his sudden departure to their officers, who noted it but bade them only to sit out the remainder of their watches. Their general was a private man, and they'd grown accustomed to his frequent need for solitude. They did not worry for his safety. After all, Sindaire had been conquered.

At the top of the rise, Magdus met the watchmen he had posted here and gave them permission to stand down and start a fire. The wind had teeth at this high above the camp, and he wished he'd brought furs instead of just a cloak.

The sky looked just as angry as before. The clouds were no longer in motion, but perched threateningly above the towers of Korstull, the obscured moon barely silvering their edges. There was neither lightning nor rain, but the thunderheads seemed to pulse like black hearts beating in the firmament.

Perhaps he had overreacted to this suspected omen. The night, it seemed, was passing quietly. There were few lights from the castle windows.

In his life, he had heard many tales of signs before catastrophe, most unheeded until after the event. Here in Sindaire, just before the first time Ragesian armies had crossed its borders, prize royal horses had fought each other like baited dogs, with the winners eating those they killed. They said a lioness had whelped in the streets of Kistan the night the first Khagan of Ostalin had passed away. Fifty years before, the day before the First Dasseni Civil War had begun, there had been an eclipse of the sun. Certainly, a strange formation of clouds was not so dramatic as these.

Then, Magdus realized what each one of those strange portents had in common, and all at once his blood ran cold. Each one had heralded the death of a king.

As if in answer to his realization, lanterns began to flare in the distant windows of Castle Korstull. From this far he could not hear cries of alarm, but the general knew at once that his instincts were far more than paranoid superstition.

He shouted to the nearby watchmen, "Sound an alarm! Run down to the camp, now, and tell your Captain to take a detachment to the castle at once!"

The men blew their horns, then rushed down into the canyon. Magdus remained, watching the castle. In close succession, three flaming arrows were fired from the battlements, a signal. His fears had been confirmed. There were attackers in Korstull.

The lights in the stronghold's windows were being answered by torches being lit in the camp below. If it were an assassination attempt, there was little he could do from here, but he would mobilize his forces and be prepared to hunt the would-be murderers to the ends of creation.

Hoofbeats on gravel echoed across the canyon, and Magdus saw a clutch of his officers riding up to meet. Adjutants brought his horse and armor, and — he was grateful — heavier garments.

The general hurried to dress and mount his horse. The armor could wait. All of his captains, just jolted out of bed, began to ask questions at once. He quieted them quickly and began to dispense orders.

A yellow-orange light suddenly shone across the assembled faces. Magdus turned to see that the roof of the castle had erupted into a rising column of flame.

The officers stood in silence, mouths agape. The general clenched his jaw, enraged, calculating.

"Prepare for a siege," he called out, not taking his eyes from the fiery pillar atop Castle Korstull. "We have taken this castle once today. We may have to do so again. Tell your cavalrymen..."

Magdus never finished his order. The ominous heavens, already roiled with rage, opened up and gave the general a sign no man could disbelieve.

Above Castle Korstull, the sky began to rain fire.

December

Snowflakes fell fast that New Year's Eve, too fast, racing at the earth like falling stars. Watching it come down like that, it was easy to believe what they were saying in the east, that such a punishing winter had to be the retribution of an angry god.

Washing a glass, Viv Finner looked out the window of her closed-down, boarded-up pub and saw the snow still piling in the streets. It would be a long walk to her brother's house tonight, she decided, so she had better hurry.

The Poison Apple Pub was a dive, but a popular one. A shabby, low-class establishment in one of the poorer districts a mile from the West Gate, it had a coterie of devoted regulars and reputation for not watering down the drinks.

Everyone knew the man who owned the place, Trehan Finner, was a magus. They knew it as much from the twinkle in his eye and his perpetual smirk as they did from the fact that he could put a rowdy customer to sleep with a handful of dust. But no one seemed to mind. Most Gate Passers didn't trust magi as a group, but just about everybody who knew Trehan Finner liked him.

When the City Council announced they hoped to appease the approaching army by handing all of the town's users of magic over to the Ragesian inquisitors — the ruthless magus hunters known locally as the Scourge — in order to spare the town conquest by the Ragesian army, few people complained. But when the city guard came for Finner, the pub's regulars were in an uproar. All over the district, everyone who knew

the man could be heard loudly decrying the unfairness of it all.

Everyone, that is, except Trehan's wife.

Viv Finner did not cry when she found out her husband had been taken, nor did she panic. Instead, she quietly bundled up her children and took them to her sister-in-law. She told her eldest to be brave, and to take care of his brother, and told both her sons she might not see them for a little while. That done, the suddenly husbandless mother of two headed down the Emelk Way to the Chapel of the Aquiline Cross. She walked right up to the curate, announced she knew the Chapel was a Resistance safe-house, and asked how she could go about joining.

After hours of Viv's refusals to leave or take no for an answer, the curate, a Knight of the Aquiline Cross named Buron Watcher, finally said that if she really wanted to help the Resistance, they did need a private place to meet a contact. Viv already knew Torrent, who was an occasional patron of the Poison Apple, and she volunteered her pub for the meeting. But if the priest had hoped that contributing her family's place of business for the night would be enough to satisfy Viv, he was disappointed. On the way out of the temple, she stopped and said, "After the meeting, I'll be back for another mission."

Though her pub was closed, she had taken the meeting so seriously that she'd gone back and cleaned it up until it was as nice as it had been the day she and her husband bought it. Every glass was polished, every corner swept, even the rags were washed and bleached. Viv imagined brave fighters of the Resistance coming here, making plans to fight back against the monsters who had taken her husband away. Such champions, she had determined, would get the best of everything if she could help it.

Finishing the glasses, Viv stole a glance at the melting candle she had lit when she'd started and realized how late it was. Time for her to get going. She planned to be long gone before Torrent arrived. She bundled herself up against the cold, lit a lantern, blew out her candle, and let herself out the back door.

On the way out, she paused and looked around the lantern-lit interior of the pub. Had she done everything? Was it all be suitable?

Then she remembered what kind of place it was. It was local watering hole; not much to look at, but tended with love by its owners and loved equally by its regulars. People came here to laugh, to cry, to recollect, to tell ludicrous stories to old friends and hear their approbations or derision. They didn't come because the wood was polished, they came to drink with people they liked and trusted and share with them the joys and woes of being alive.

It was, she decided — as she locked the door and vanished into the snow — a perfect meeting-place for heroes.



Gate Pass's skyline seemed to sag beneath the mantle of snow. The city huddled between the mountains, looking wary as a beggar in an alley, tucking in under a white blanket and wondering where to turn for a friendly face. Its streets were thick with slush, barely foot-printed. Rumors of war, Kathor thought, must have been keeping even the drunks at home.

The usual all-night parties and intoxicated revelry weren't spilling out of doors this year, and the folks who were celebrating seemed to have all picked their tavern early in the evening and stayed there. Some cities capered and caroused on the eve of war, a final riot in the face of destruction, but tonight, in the Free City-State of Gate Pass, the celebrations seemed muted, solemn, almost funereal. The city was dark, the waning moon only a thin silver splinter, and there weren't lights in most of the windows. Even a few inns had closed their doors at sundown.

No one was doing business outdoors tonight, it appeared, except for the Resistance. And because the Resistance was on the move, so were their enemies.

The bounty hunters called themselves the Black Horses. Their leader was a man named Renard, but those inside the city walls tonight were under the command of Renard's second, a former soldier who hailed from Ragesia, the vast empire just west of Gate Pass. That was Kathor, and he didn't want to be there.

Standing high above the streets now, atop one of many vantage points in this city of towers and buttresses, Kathor could see out for miles, over the ice-topped walls and into the west. Across the valley and the bottom of the nearby pass, distant fires dotted the horizon. Scattered in groups, they twinkled through the falling snow like earthbound constellations. The glorious Second Army of the Ragesian Empire was camped on the city's doorstep, far sooner than expected, and the locals expected an attack within the week. But Kathor knew how fast that force could move, and to his mind, a week was very wishful thinking.

He couldn't help thinking that he belonged out there, with the army. With his father. For a second, impossible as it was, Kathor let himself search for the blur of a high banner in the wind, or the circle of larger fires that would surround the general's tent, before he turned away, shaking his head. Even if he knew where the old man was, what would be the point?

As much as Kathor wanted to be out there with the army, he knew the conquest of Gate Pass would not be for the glory of the Empire. It would be for the glory of one woman. Since the assassination of Drakus Coaltongue, the Emperor of Ragesia, less than two months before, the world had descended into madness. Coaltongue's chief allies and lieutenants had immediately begun positioning themselves as the next in line. Over time, two candidates had risen as the likely successors: Lord Shaaladel, ruler of the Shahalesti elves, and Leska, Coaltongue's Supreme Inquisitor.

It was Leska who had seized command of the scattered Ragesian armies. Instead of summoning them together, she had set those forces to work on pursuing new conquests of Ragesia's neighbors. This tactic provided multiple benefits: it kept the generals too busy to plot against her, and kept rival nations too busy to interfere. But the conquest of Gate Pass was different.

The Free City-State of Gate Pass had been free since the insurrection forty years before because of its location. Gate Pass was named for the narrow passage between the mountains that separated Ragesia and Shaaladel's kingdom of Shahalesti. In Coaltongue's time, keeping that central city neutral had held together the peace and sometime alliance between the Emperor and Shaaladel. But now that Lord Shaaladel had emerged as her chief rival, Leska was surely seizing the city to gain further advantage against the elven king.

Dragging his gaze from the far-away encampments, Kathor looked down on the pair of humble two-story buildings he'd come up to reconnoiter. They were connected by a bridge, leading from the top floor of the taller one to the roof of the shorter. The taller was a home, while its squat companion was a pub, named the Poison Apple in an example of the locals' flair for the perverse.

Gate Pass was a city packed with bridges and heights, a web of widening arches crisscrossing over every street, all now rimmed with ice and snow, yet in many places still welcoming, even majestic. A marvelous place, Kathor had thought, years before, when he'd admired the tall buildings. Back then, he'd seen them as a testament to

clever citizens who made the most of the narrow mountain pass confining their city.

Nowadays, Kathor didn't feel much wonder walking these streets. Perhaps, he mused bitterly, the novelty of those clever citizens' achievement had worn off when he'd started kidnapping them.

Tonight's targets were meeting at the Poison Apple. The pub was closed, since the owner, a magus, had been carried off by the city guard the night before — Kathor didn't have to read the note on the door to know that, having led the city guard there himself.

The guardsmen had already been locking up the city's magi when Kathor had arrived in town, as an attempt to appease the Ragesians and forestall further hostilities. But sometimes, when orders came from Ragesia, he was told to make sure certain ones were picked up immediately, before they could sneak out of town. Yesterday, such an order had come for the magus who owned the Poison Apple. Tonight, one had come for a member of the Resistance, a witch called Torrent.

Information said Torrent would be using the empty tavern to meet a contact. How and when his Ragesian employers got their intelligence, he didn't know, but all their messages so far had been eerily precise. The plan was to attack right after midnight, when the noise of an ambush could be mistaken for nearby New Year celebrations.

Glancing down at an alley around the corner from the Poison Apple, Kathor saw his men trying to look nonchalant as they waited for his signal to attack. Some kicked at the brownish snow shoveled into a pile at the curb, others fiddled with a tarp that hid the weapons on their wagon, but most just couldn't stop creeping to the corner to peek out at the pub. Clearly, the Black Horses weren't used to being subtle.

Kathor found it hard not to hate them.

He wished he hadn't brought so many. Kathor had only joined these bounty hunters a month before, and he was already fed up with their company. But Torrent was a witch, and their source said she had a bodyguard of some kind, so overwhelming force had seemed like the safest strategy.

Now, watching all ten men fumbling attempts to stay inconspicuous on the street, he was rethinking his tactics. *If Torrent were tipped off…*

Mid-thought, he caught his first glimpse of her, strolling down the alleyway along the city's southern wall, a few blocks away. As expected, she was walking with a massive man, two heads taller than she, wearing a bearskin as a cape over a small fortune in armor. He looked Ragesian. No doubt he was some kind of bodyguard, who would escort Torrent to her mysterious meeting. But he was unlikely to accompany her to the meeting itself; surely the Resistance would not trust any Ragesian, even a turncoat, to be privy to its secretive dealings.

Kathor figured the bodyguard was too tall not to have orc blood in his veins. Half-orcs never went down easy, and though this one would probably be long gone before Torrent reached the Poison Apple, Kathor decided bringing ten men had been right after all.

As for Torrent herself, she looked just like the description he'd received: tall for a woman, shock of short white hair, carrying herself like a soldier, and sporting an expensive breastplate he could see gleaming in the dim moonlight even from a distance. Tonight she was wearing a dark winter coat, open in the front, probably because the heavy fur concealed a weapon and she wanted ready access to it. She didn't look like a witch.

Then again, Kathor thought, *neither do I. And if I weren't, I'd be outside these walls where I belong.*

He leaned over the railing to try and catch one of his men's attention. It took longer than it should have. Kathor was six stories up, watching from the balcony of a boarded-up temple to the Red Archer, a god of summer, of sunrise, and hope, a god who seemed to be out of worshippers nowadays.

When he finally got one of the Black Horses to look his way, Kathor's signal had them back on task in a hurry, but it took him a long minute to decide Torrent and her friend hadn't seen him trying to get the bounty hunters to notice his gestures. Fortunately for him, they were stopping often, taking quick turns, clearly more concerned with making sure they weren't followed than watching for signs of ambush at their destination.

He spared a glance to check on his men — they had one of the wheels off the wagon now, as planned, and were doing a passable job of pretending to try and repair it — then made a quick estimate of how long it would take Torrent to reach the tavern.

She was closer now, and he could just make out the handle of a weapon slung across her back, not hidden, but carried openly in defiance of city law. Her companion had no obvious arms, but a man didn't wear that much armor without expecting to fight, so he probably had something. Either way, despite all the battlefield trappings, the two strolled casually beneath a picturesque array of icicle-draped archways and bridges, and their constant looking back to avoid being tailed made them look more like tourists than members of an armed insurgency.

An insurgency against an occupation that hasn't even happened yet, Kathor reflected, with grudging admiration. Say what you would about the folk of Gate Pass, there was no doubt they had courage. The Resistance, the movement that had helped drive out Gate Pass's Ragesian conquerors forty years before, had never broken up, presciently choosing to remain vigilant against future incursions. Torrent was one of their more prominent agents, which might have been why Ragesia had marked her for special attention.

Not that the why mattered, Kathor reminded himself. Being second-in-command of this gang of thugs was how he paid the bills, even if he had grown to dislike the men — or more accurately, loathe them — in the past few weeks. Their leader, Renard, had been the first to take Kathor in when he left the army, and that debt had to be respected. Sure, there was no honor in hauling these alleged "enemies" of Ragesia away from their homes and loved ones, but there was honor in fulfilling an obligation. Besides, as much as he hated the work, he'd left behind the only other world he'd ever known, and he honestly had no idea what else to do.

"This is my life now," Kathor said, out loud, shaking himself out of his reverie. He took one last look at his father's army in the distance, and then rushed down the stairs. Whether they were fighting for their freedom or not, whether they were witches or not, and whether they deserved it or not, it was time to take these two in.

If he'd planned right, they'd go down quickly. There wouldn't be any surprises inside the Poison Apple; Kathor already had a spy inside to make sure of that. Except for the owner's wife, no one else had entered the pub all night.

Beyond better intelligence and better control of the battlefield, Kathor had numbers. He had eleven Black Horses, including himself, although he didn't expect to fight — Kathor still thought of himself as an officer, after all, and there was no honor in ambushing outmatched foes. The targets would be only Torrent and whoever she was meeting, and his information said that group would be fewer than half the number of soldiers he'd brought. And if Torrent or the others had witchcraft, well, he had an answer for that too, didn't he?

Everything was set, Kathor thought, as he emerged from the temple and joined the company of the men he despised. When the time came, and the midnight bells chimed the New Year, he would be ready.

by Jeremy Forbing

Foreword

Nothing worthwhile is ever easy, goes the old saying. Right now you're reading the culmination of over two years of work by dozens of fantasy fans, whose efforts came together to create this campaign saga. We came in a little behind schedule at times, what with that whole "new edition of the game" thing being announced, and we apparently missed the memo about not biting off more than you can chew, on the assumption that if Paizo can do this every six months, it must be easy (right?), but now we have a titanic book that I'm damned proud of.

Despite a few rough patches where I'm sure we could have done better if we knew then what we do now, we accomplished everything I hoped we would when I came up with the idea of the adventure series, the foremost of which being that we gave gaming groups the tools to become part of a great, epic story.

I can't speak for what the other writers and staff had in mind when they contributed to the saga, but I know that my main drive for designing it was to put a modern, inclusionist spin on the classic concept of a fantasy war.

War of the Burning Sky drew its initial genesis from a home campaign I ran in college, but it wasn't until a few years later, at Gen Con 2006 in Indianapolis, when I found myself reading Dungeon magazine's plans for its latest adventure path, that I realized I had not seen a solid "war for the fate of the world" adventure series in D&D during my time as a gamer. Most every gamer reads Lord of the Rings at some point, and it sets the benchmark for what many expect from fantasy, but the closest I had ever seen to an epic fantasy war in D&D was Dragonlance, now twenty years old.

From the beginning, though, I decided *War of the Burning Sky* would eschew cosmic conflicts and classic good-evil dichotomies in favor of a more postmodern perspective, where enemies all have reasons for their actions. Sure, you can play the adventures such that the Ragesians are evil and can be killed without remorse because some of them consort with devils, but I tried to make sure we gave the heroes plenty of opportunities to turn the tide by allying with potential enemies, and more than a few opportunities to damn themselves by taking the easy way out of a difficult situation.

I really need to thank Jacob Driscoll, author of the second adventure, for providing a wonderful moral dilemma, which should make clear to the players and their characters that they can't just mow down everything that stands in their way and expect a happy ending. Likewise, Lydia Dene, who wrote the original script for the fourth adventure, gave us a great political conflict where just killing the bad guy can end in tragedy.

Still, this is roleplaying, not *Risk*, so simply winning is not the point of the campaign saga. The triumph of good over evil didn't interest me, because to really matter, such battles must be won internally, not on the field of battle. Instead, I sought the triumph of peace over war. The Torch, and all the power it grants to those seeking conquest, is the real enemy, though, as with other enemies, you have to ally with this one if you want to win. Victory lies in healing and freedom, in restoring a fey forest, in releasing a king from his madness, in drawing a spy back from the brink of betrayal, in rescuing tormented prisoners trapped in a frozen wasteland or from a twisted living nightmare. You end the war by killing a villain, but you only win the war by healing the wounds it caused.

Of course, you can do with the campaign saga whatever you want. Play up the politics to show the corruption on all sides of the war. Go satirical, and run the Ragesians like American settlers, the Resistance as native tribes, and the Torch as the manifest destiny of the railroad. Try pure comedy: toss a Hitler mustache on Leska and have her act like Charlie Chaplin. Be totally awesome, and use a soundtrack with lots of heavy metal.

The importance of understanding your enemies, and of healing wounds to create peace, are just the messages I wanted to weave into the plot. They're just part of the whole picture, standing alongside the thrills and surprises from my fellow authors, the sense of place evoked by our cartographers, the aesthetic wonders of our illustrators and brilliant layout artist, and the perseverance and steady hand of Russ, the man in charge. Together, they crafted compelling villains, dramatic battles, engaging mysteries, and dangers fit to challenge the greatest hero. I want to thank them one last time for all the talent they poured into this saga, and I encourage you to dive into the world we made together, to create a story that matters to you.

Ryan Nock
Campaign Director
War of the Burning Sky



The Festival of Dreams (Detail) – Art by Brandon Leach



Introduction
Campaign Guide

for Game Masters

by Ryan Nock

The War of the Burning Sky is a high fantasy campaign saga that thrusts the player characters into a war of mythic proportions.

Ever-escalating conflicts, powered by mighty magic and fervent faith, threaten the heroes' freedom and lives, and even the world itself.

Prepare to orchestrate a magic-powered war with the story and background material in this chapter.

War is coming: what happens next?

The War Begins

As the new year dawns, weather across the lands of Ragesia takes a sudden chill turn. The sky darkens with the shades of oncoming winter, and worry rises as regular channels of communication between nations suddenly cease. Slowly, throughout the lands claimed by the Ragesian Empire, rumors spread between isolated villages, traveling by foot and horse and word of mouth, rumors that Drakus Coaltongue, the immortal emperor whose armies conquered every land he set his gaze upon, has fallen in a distant land to the west. How the tyrant was defeated is unknown, but if it is true, everyone knows that a war is coming. The generals of Emperor Coaltongue will strike for control, oppressed peoples will rise up in rebellion, and dangers once held in check only by fear of the immortal emperor will bring doom to the world.

Those in power are preparing for the coming conflict, readying fervent armies and powerful weapons and subtle, deceptive plots, but two questions burn in their minds: who killed the immortal Emperor Coaltongue; and what has become of the artifact that would let a man rule the world? Who has the Torch of the Burning Sky?

Driven out of their homelands by the dogs of war, the heroes head for a distant safe haven, a mages' school named Lyceum, which has sent up a rallying cry for those who wish to resist the warmongers. Sent on missions by the leaders of Lyceum, the heroes form alliances to build an army, and they discover strange secrets that underlie the conflict. As the war reaches a climax, powerful magic superweapons threaten to scorch the world or sunder reality and leave nothing but nightmares.

War of the Burning Sky is a high fantasy campaign saga that thrusts the player characters into a war of mythic proportions. Ever-intensifying conflicts, powered by mighty magic and fervent faith, threaten the heroes' freedom and lives, and even the world itself.

Throughout the course of the saga, a party of heroes will become involved in an escalating war between mighty magical nations, and after many adventures, military battles, and mysterious intrigue, it will be up to them to decide who will rule in the aftermath.

Starting any campaign and seeing it through to the end can be challenging, so we present this chapter as an overview of the campaign saga, the characters and locations involved, and ways in which game masters can customize the saga.

Campaign Outline

While every adventure should be fun and exciting, when we designed the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga, we wanted to do something novel, and give the players a chance to influence political events in the world, to lead armies into battle, and to possibly rule the world or let it be destroyed as they see fit. The PCs will get to play with some big guns, and as the campaign nears its climax you will witness the horrifying potential of magic on the field of war. Before the campaign is over, the players will:

- Fight the living incarnation of an eternal forest fire.
- Battle a cell of magical spies while a hurricane rages around them.
- Carry out military operations ranging from infantry maneuvers and spying, to cavalry charges and tactical strike missions.
- Adventure through the memories of an enemy ruler in order to learn her secrets.
- Defend against a battalion of soldiers mounted on war mammoths and their frost giant allies in an arctic waste in order to protect a vital teleportation circle.
- Engage in street-to-street fighting in an occupied metropolis, led by a traitor toward a trap that will destroy the entire city.
- Get their hands on an artifact and actually use it to turn the tide of the war.

There are 20 levels of abilities and more in the d20 system, and one of the goals of *War of the Burning Sky* is to let the players use almost everything the system has to offer. If you'd prefer to avoid the admittedly complicated events of high-level adventures, we've included ways to end the campaign satisfactorily after the fourth or eighth adventure (see page 5, Abridged Campaigns). If you'd like to start the campaign with player characters that are already reasonably powerful, we've included ways to instead start the campaign with either of those two adventures. But of course we hope you'll take it from its portentous beginning to its epic finale.

Finally, while not everyone looks for morality tales in their gaming, we hope that players may find more in this war than simple heroism and epic conflicts. The most memorable stories in war are not about the battles, but about the people, and how they are affected. The campaign saga is designed, ultimately, to encourage peace, and winning with the aid of allies, even those who might normally be perceived as enemies. While the heroes will face true villains and scoundrels, this is not wholly a battle between good and evil. Seeking peace is the harder option, but without peace, even the final enemy's fall cannot bring true victory.

Campaign Overview

War of the Burning Sky consists of twelve adventures, which should take characters from 1st level to 20th level and possibly a few levels beyond. We've included four options for running an abridged version of the campaign as well, detailed later in this section.

The Plot in a Fiery Nutshell

The campaign begins after the assassination of Drakus Coaltongue, the emperor of the Ragesian Empire (see page 4 for timeline). Various leaders look to claim power in the resulting vacuum, and while this will eventually lead to open war, the most immediate threat comes in the form of the Scourge, a decree that all disloyal users of magic in Ragesia and surrounding lands are to be captured or killed.

The decree is from Supreme Inquisitor Leska, who commanded Ragesia's anti-magic inquisitors and who now wants to rule. Meanwhile Shaaladel, ruler of the Shahalesti nation which has an unstable peace with Ragesia, attempts to retrieve the Torch of the Burning Sky, source of the Ragesian Empire's power. In the remote Monastery of Two Winds, a wizard named Pilus creates a doomsday weapon in the form of a living airship powered by elemental forces, which he plans to use to seize power after he betrays his Ragesian allies. Finally, a race of dream monsters called the trillith ascend from deep underground; they sense a weakness in the Material Plane that will let them sunder the world into dreams.

Now, as the Ragesian armies scramble to quell the rebellions that followed in the wake of the emperor's fall, those magic-users at the edges of the Ragesian Empire see a brief window to escape. All that stops them is the question, where can they hide? For no land is beyond the cruel, searing reach of the Ragesian Empire.

Hope comes from the south, in a meager coastal town called Seaquen, where a small magical academy known as the Lyceum has called those who oppose the Empire to rally under its banner. All across the Ragesian Empire, thousands of stalwart or desperate heroes have set out, hoping to find safety at this insignificant, overlooked academy.

The Adventures

ONE *The Scouring of Gate Pass*

Levels 1–2

As the Ragesian army marches upon the neutral city of Gate Pass, the PCs must retrieve vital war intelligence from a spy and deliver it to the distant wizards' school of Lyceum, but first they have to find a way out of a besieged city before Gate Pass falls and the inquisitors, Ragesia's infamous skull-masked, mage-hunting clerics, find them.

TWO *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*

Levels 3–4

The journey between Gate Pass and Lyceum is dangerous, and along the way the heroes must survive passage through a forest that has burned for decades, where a dream monster known as a trillith holds sway. The trillith, which calls itself Indomitability, is trapped by the last survivors of the forest, a clan of pernicious fey whose magical song holds the key to defeating these strange nightmare beings.

THREE *Shelter From the Storm*

Levels 5–6

Once the heroes reach Lyceum, located in a small seaside village named Seaquen, they have to navigate various political dangers (like spies from Ragesia, power hungry refugees, and a fleet of hostile Shahalesti elves), prove themselves loyal to the fight against Ragesia, and rescue the town when a magical hurricane strikes, conjured by agents of an unknown villain. They learn that teleportation magic has gone awry, and the heads of Lyceum think it has something to do with the missing Torch of the Burning Sky.

At the end of the adventure, word comes that Ragesia has taken note of Lyceum, and that an army has been dispatched to destroy the school.

FOUR *The Mad King's Banquet*

Levels 7–8

Lyceum sends the heroes on a mission to find allies in the nearby nation of Dassen before Ragesia's army arrives. There they discover a trillith named Madness, another dream monster like the one in the fire forest, is manipulating the king. The heroes help a sympathetic noble named Duke Gallo battle the forces of the mad king. Seaquen's survival depends on their success.

FIVE *Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds*

Levels 9–10

The heroes are sent on another mission by Seaquen, to a monastery in Ostalin where monks who worship the wind are being threatened by the remnants of the army the Ragesian emperor was commanding before he was assassinated. The heads of the monastery, a pair of brothers named Longinus and Pilus, offer to aid the PCs in retrieving the lost Torch of the Burning Sky if they help them fight the army, but clues suggest that the monastery may have been responsible for the hurricane in Seaquen.

SIX *Tears of the Burning Sky*

Levels 11–12

The heroes race ahead of an enemy army, fighting its way inside the abandoned fortress in the nation of Sindaire — Castle Korstull — where Emperor Coaltongue was slain. The castle is now overrun by undead, animated by a strange fiery tear in the fabric of the planes. The castle holds the clue of what has happened to the Torch, but the heroes will have to fight to learn it.

SEVEN *The Trial of Echoed Souls*

Levels 13–14

In the haunted forest of Ycengled, the heroes locate the assassins who have the Torch, but learn that they have damaged it, removing a key piece of its magic in a nearby psionic temple, which the party must brave if they wish to use the powerful artifact. In the temple, the heroes face dangers of the past, and learn secrets that drive the next several adventures. The Torch is only partially repaired, giving the heroes mobility, but not enough power to teleport armies.

EIGHT *O Wintry Song of Agony*

Levels 15–16

A clue from the temple leads the heroes to a secret facility operated by minions of Leska in the frozen reaches of northern Ragesia. Under the facility is a strange prison where waves of agony overwhelm the inmates — all of them captured spellcasters seized by the Scourge. The agony comes from a trillith, who is being used to power experiments with some strange superweapon Leska is working on. The heroes rescue Etinifi, a prisoner who knows Leska's weaknesses.

NINE *The Festival of Dreams*

Levels 16–17

With the aid of whatever allies they have secured, the heroes return to the city of Gate Pass where the campaign began, with the goals of liberating the city and swaying the allegiance of Leska's armies. They learn that Leska is trying to use the dream monsters as fuel for a device that will let her control magic over a long distance, while the trillith have another desire — to release the bonds of the world and turn it into nothing but dreams. When a defiant religious festival is interrupted by the appearance of a nightmare swarm, the heroes must locate a disloyal trillith who can help them stop the incursion.

TEN *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child*

Levels 17–20

With news arriving that Leska is preparing her superweapon and that Pilus's airship is aimed for Seaquen, the heroes need to reactivate the Torch, so they can respond to both threats. Their mission takes them into the Underdark, to the lair of the Mother of Dreams, source of the trillith, whose power created the Torch of the Burning, and who they hope can fix it. While war rages on the surface, the heroes must find unlikely allies amid the evil races of the deep, and must battle the nightmares of a sleeping dragon in order to free her from her curse.

ELEVEN *Under the Eye of the Tempest*

Levels 17–20

Certain of his own invincibility, the stormy archmage Pilus sets his sights on destroying his old rivals, the mages of Lyceum Academy. Once again a storm rolls over the town of Seaquen, but this tempest bears an army amid its thunder. The heroes board Pilus's mile-long living airship and fight their way to its brain, but to kill the leviathan's master, they must slay the beast as well, for the lich Pilus has chosen an unusual form for his phylactery.

TWELVE *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart*

Levels 17–20

The immortal blood of Avilona, elemental spirit of air, runs in the veins of Supreme Inquisitor Leska, and she has had enough time to gather a great deal of power. Her armies defend the great rift called the Heart of History where lies the still beating Aquiline Heart, and the heroes must lead one final assault into the fiery breast of the Ragesian Empire.

The Burning Sky

During most of the campaign, teleportation is extremely hazardous. See page 442 for details.

Timeline of the War

Assuming you use the full version of the campaign and that the PCs are successful in their adventures, the war will likely progress as follows. This is a very rough timeline, so feel free to expand or compress periods of time to account for the PCs taking side quests, traveling at different speeds, or spending time training or crafting magic items. Obviously, access to swift travel, particularly teleportation, may speed up these events, but in general the war moves at the speed of normal troops, because no small group of teleporting adventures is able to destroy an entire army by itself.

At least not until they are a bit higher in level.

- **November** — Emperor Coaltongue is killed in Castle Korstull (***Prologue***) and abducted by the drow assassins. Teleportation becomes deadly. The First Ragesian Army is left stranded in Sindaire under the command of General Magdus. He orders a retreat from the flaming storm over Castle Korstull**.**
- **December** — Supreme Inquisitor Leska, who seeks to seize control of Ragesia with a strong show of force, orders General Magdus to move his forces to settle in for the winter and then join up with the Ragesian Imperial Navy when it begins a blockade of Turinn, the capital city of Sindaire, in March. Ragesia announces its intention to retaliate against the nations of Sindaire and Shahalesti for their involvement in the assassination of Emperor Coaltongue.

  In response to the announcement, Shahalesti sends out diplomatic envoys to nearby nations, seeking allies.
- **January** — The Second Ragesian Army, under command of General Danava, assaults Gate Pass (***The Scouring of Gate Pass***), while the Fourth Army marches through the mountains in the northlands, both attempting to press into Shahalesti. Gate Pass resists, and so Danava lays siege, demanding that the city open its gates to a contingent of Ragesian inqusitors, who will check whether the city is harboring enemies. Gate Pass yields, allowing the inquisitors inside, but this is a ruse to lure them away from the bulk of the army, leaving the Ragesians vulnerable to evocation magic cast by the archmage Gabal and his students. The inquisitors slay Gabal, but not before he destroys the Ragesian siege engines. Danava retreats to regroup.
- **February** — The trillith begin locating lost brethren, gathering their power while secretly working with Leska to develop her Scourge (***The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar***). The Third Ragesian Army, under the command of General Revulus, joins Danava's army, and by the end of the month the two armies assault Gate Pass again. The fight lasts more than a month.

  A fleet bearing the Shahalesti diplomatic envoy arrives in Dassen. Paranoid king Steppengard believes they are enemies, so the envoy tries to contact other people in power, including the headmaster of Lyceum, the highly regarded school of magic in Seaquen.
- **March** — Despite the fact that winter seems not to be turning to spring, a supernatural hurricane strikes Seaquen, destroying the Shahalesti fleet at an inopportune moment, ruining the chance for diplomacy (***Shelter from the Storm***). Seaquen looks for defenses against Ragesia and others, and sends envoys of its own to various Dasseni nobles. They also send a group to the Monastery of Two Winds, to investigate clues that suggest the hurricane was directed by someone there.

  In northern Shahalesti, the Fourth Ragesian Army conquers important elven cities on its way to Nacaan, capital of the northern Shahalesti state.

  In Sindaire, the blockade of Turinn begins, but before the first army under Magdus can move to their aid, the army of Ostalin invades Sindaire from the south, looking to expand its holdings. Magdus stays put, and protests with Leska, whom he does not recognize as the legitimate ruler of Ragesia.
- **April** — Gate Pass falls to Ragesia, a costly first step into Shahalesti. Danava's Second Army marches on to Shahalesti, while Revulus takes his Third Army south, into Dassen. They make their first assault toward the end of the month, and find little resistance, since Steppengard, the paranoid king, has pulled all his armies inward to defend himself, leaving the borders unsecured. However, Dasseni loyalists, with the aid of Seaquen, hold off their entrance to the country (***The Mad King's Banquet***).

  The Fourth Army captures Nacaan. Things look bleak for Shahalesti as the Fourth and Second Armies link up and make plans to march on Calanis, the capital.
- **May** — Shalosha of Shahalesti contacts General Magdus and convinces him the elves will support a bid by him to rule Ragesia.

  Looking for allies, an ambitious archmage named Pilus, from the Monastery of Two Winds, hosts the ruler of Ostalin, Khagan Onamdammin. Pilus reveals his experimental airship, *Tempest*, which is large enough to carry an army. The airship is close to completion, but while Pilus plans to use it to seize power for himself, Pilus's brother Longinus clears away the firestorm over Castle Korstull to help agents of Seaquen (***Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds***).
- **June** — Magdus and Shalosha pursue the agents of Seaquen to Castle Korstull, but are unable to retrieve clues to the location of the Torch of the Burning Sky (***Tears of the Burning Sky***). Lord Shaaladel, knowing that the Torch would help him stop the Ragesian drive into Shahalesti, devotes a massive amount of resources to tracking down those who pursue the Torch.
- **July** — Agents of Seaquen recover the Torch and use it to aid their allies (***The Trial of Echoed Souls***). Who those allies are will depend on the heroes' actions and opinions.
- **August** — The resistance launches the first strike in their counteroffensive: an attack against Leska's frozen research fortress where she was developing her Scourge superweapon (***O Wintry Song of Agony***).
- **September** — Shahalesti, having succeeded in stopping the Ragesian advance, invades the city of Gate Pass, trying to gain its own foothold in Ragesia. However, both armies are driven away by the arrival of a massive horde of trillith from under the earth (***The Festival of Dreams***).
- **October** — The conflict comes to a head in one of several possible ways. The trillith discover where the Aquiline Heart is located, and they create the dream of Annihilation to destroy the Heart and with it the material world (***Sleep, Ye Cursed Child***). Meanwhile, Pilus and his airship, loaded with the army of Ostalin, allies with whomever the party likes least and sets out to destroy Seaquen (***Under the Eye of the Tempest***). Finally, Supreme Inquisitor Leska must be defeated before she brings the Scourge to full fruition, powering it with the blood of the Aquiline Heart (***The Beating of the Aquiline Heart***).

Campaign Variants

Abridged Campaigns

In the full version of the campaign, there are two major nations at war — Ragesia and Shahalesti — plus Pilus, a third party who wants to seize power, and the trillith, who see the war as an opportunity to reshape reality to their whims. The conflict engulfs the region, and the party must deal with multiple foes and allies at once, but they ultimately have the chance to decide who will rule in the war's aftermath.

Freeing Gate Pass

This shortened version uses adventures 1 through 4 and stops when the PCs are around 8th level. The conflict begins the same, between Ragesia and Shahalesti, and the party's goal is to gain allies to come to the aid of the neutral city Gate Pass, which is a proxy battleground between the two nations. The campaign ends once the party succeeds in bringing in Dassen as a third power to force an armistice.

Defeating the Ragesian Empire

This version uses adventures 1 through 8, stopping when the PCs are around 15th level. As above, the party seeks allies to rescue Gate Pass, but Ragesia does not relent, and the party must recover the Torch, ally with Dassen and Shahalesti, and kill Leska while she is overseeing the final stages of her superweapon's construction. (Sort of like *Return of the Jedi*.) Pilus and the trillith play only a minor role.

Restoring the Rightful Ruler

In this unusual version, which uses adventures 4 through 8, Dassen becomes part of Ragesia, loyal to the fallen emperor. Leska had the emperor killed and kidnapped (hiding him so he could not be raised), and she intends to secure her rule through a reign of terror. The party must first defend Dassen from Leska's armies, then locate and rescue Coaltongue, climaxing with an assault on Leska's base of operations in the northern tundra.

The Trillith Incursion

This final alternative uses adventures 8, 9, 11, 12, and finally 10. The trillith have corrupted the empress Leska, and with their ally Pilus they seek to destroy the world. This story arc begins with the party learning about a strange research facility in the tundra, and upon investigating they learn of the trillith's plan. The trillith make Leska attack Gate Pass with her armies, allowing them to emerge and take bodies. The party must stop Pilus and his airship of nightmare creatures from laying wastes to cities, then thwart the trilliths' plans to seize the Aquiline Heart. Finally, the party must delve deep underground to finish off the dreaming mother of the trillith.

Tweaking the Setting

War of the Burning Sky is intended to fit into any setting, but we use a baseline setting as the core of the campaign saga. If you want to place this campaign saga in an existing setting, you might simply say that Ragesia and the lands around it lie far from the realms the PCs have previously experienced or in a distant part of the world. Or you might prefer to find an area that closely parallels the terrain and nations of the campaign saga.

You can easily change a great many details about the adventures in the campaign saga to fit your own setting, without ruining the plot of the adventures. There are only three major requirements for choosing a location for the campaign. First, two nations must be willing to go to war, and several nearby lands must be affected or threatened by this war. Second, the two main nations must have some sort of difficult passage separating them, which they must claim before they can press into each other's land — a mountain pass, a narrow isthmus, a magical portal, or a safe road through trackless wastes. Third, you have to be willing to create a few minor locations, such as towns, monasteries, temples, and forests.

To help reduce the amount of work necessary to make the campaign fit your setting, the following section provides suggestions on what to look for when choosing the people and places that will stand in for those written into the campaign saga.

Nations and Cities

When looking for nations in an existing setting, Ragesia's stand-in should be able to field a large enough army to potentially conquer all its neighboring lands. Shahalesti's stand-in should be slightly weaker than Ragesia, militant but not evil. The two nations should be neighbors or fairly close. The events of the adventures one and nine hinge on there being a neutral city between the two nations, which stands in the way of their conflict, though any restrictive terrain could work as well as the mountain range assumed by the adventure.

The rest of the surrounding nations can be whatever you want, though you will want a similar geographical relation between Ragesia

Key Names and Places

- **Emperor Coaltongue:** Drakus Coaltongue has ruled Ragesia for decades, slowly expanding its borders through cunning and conquest. He was rumored to be immortal, but now he is rumored to be dead, which has Ragesia up in arms.
- **The Torch of the Burning Sky:** Emperor Coaltongue's success depended heavily on the Torch, an artifact he acquired years ago. All the common person knows is that when the Emperor lights the torch, he calls a pillar of fire down from the sky that carries him and his armies to wherever he desires.
- **Gate Pass:** The Free Citystate of Gate Pass lies in the Otdar Mountains, which is the eastern border of Ragesia. The pass a major conduit between Ragesia and their elvish allies to the east, the Shahalesti. Control of it is vital.
- **The Shining Land of Shahalesti:** The elves of Shahalesti cast their lot in with the Ragesians years ago, which allowed the rather insular nation to rise to power, but now their alliance is strained. Everyone knows that the elvish ruler, Lord Shaaladel, has his sights set on inheriting after Coaltongue's death. Shaaladel's daughter Shalosha is not power-hungry like her father, and she provides an avenue for alliance with the heroes.
- **Supreme Inquisitor Leska:** Once one of Coaltongue's closest advisors, the aged witch named Leska has trained a mighty force of clerics specialized in countermagic. Concealed by bear skull masks, these "inquisitors," as they are known, do Leska's every bidding.
- **Dassen, Sindaire, Ostalin:** Three nations on the borders of Ragesia and Shahalesti, who might be allies or enemies.
- **Pilus, Master of the East Wind:** The monk-sorcerer Pilus, a master of air magic and the creature-sculpting art of biomancy, sees the war as an opportunity to claim power. He may feign allegiance with the heroes, but, in reality, he is merely a cunning liar.

and Dassen, so that the Fire Forest of Innenotdar can provide an actual shortcut. It's a small enough area that it should not be hard to add.

There could be many smaller nations involved in this conflict, but whatever you do, make sure that the conflict doesn't stretch far enough that nations far more powerful than Ragesia and Shahalesti get involved. The PCs should feel like they're the underdogs, and that they have a big fight ahead of them. Other nations should not be interested enough to simply sweep in and save the day; that's for the party to do.

What if the PCs Do Nothing?

Without the PCs present, events follow the timeline on page 4 up until adventure four, *The Mad King's Banquet*. Without the heroes' aid, Dassen falls before the army of Revulus. Then, instead of the PCs getting help from Longinus at the Monastery of Two Winds, Shalosha convinces Magdus to remove his garrison, and so Shalosha and Magdus head to Castle Korstull to find out where the Torch is.

Then, while Shahalesti elite forces rush to retrieve the Torch, Magdus takes his army to Turinn, capital of Sindaire, which is under naval blockade and under attack by Ostalin. Magdus's army, aided by the native Sindairese, breaks Ostalin's forces, then uses treachery to destroy the Ragesian fleet. Pilus, sensing success, sides with Magdus and the Shahalesti, with full intention of betraying them later. Ostalin turns its attention to Dassen, and either they or Revulus's third army destroy Seaquen.

The Shahalesti retrieve the Torch, and use it to their advantage, but because they do not have access the military intelligence that the party delivered out of Gate Pass way back in the first adventure, they don't know about Leska's superweapon. Even with the aid of the Torch and Pilus's airship, they cannot do much when Leska starts turning off magic. After a few spectacular aerial assaults, Pilus's airship falls unceremoniously from the sky.

Eventually, Shahalesti forces destroy the device powering the Scourge, and it looks like the war will devolve into a traditional, gritty ground war, with armies slowly grinding for territory. Shahalesti starts rounding up captured orcs and half-orcs and discreetly having them killed even though they are officially prisoners of war. Then, while no one is paying attention, the trillith destroy the Heart, and everyone dies.

The actions of a small group of 1st-level PCs will, in short, be pivotal.

Major NPCs

The two biggest events that spark off the war are the vacuum left after the fall of a powerful warlord and the desire to retrieve the artifact that brought him to power in the first place. The specifics of the warlord can vary easily. Emperor Coaltongue's stand-in just needs to be feared and cunning, and to have commanded armies, but his age, race, and even class could certainly change. He might have only recently begun his march to power, and he might only have had the Torch of Burning Sky for a short time.

Leska and her anti-magic inquisitors are a fairly large component of the campaign setting, but any would-be dictator and worshipful group of ominous minions works in their place. The inquisitors could be a recent development, rather than a deep institution of Ragesia. Leska's stand-in just needs to be the "hands-off manipulative genius" style of villain.

A group of non-good elves who aren't drow might not fit a lot of settings, so any group, racial or otherwise, that mixes warcraft and spellcraft can be substituted for the Shahalesti. The character used as Shaaladel's stand-in should be motivated by a sense of moral superiority, not generic "evil intentions." Shaaladel's stand-in needs to be highly charismatic — enough to have convinced people to do things they might normally think wrong, which means they might come to their senses and choose otherwise if given the option.

Pilus, the trillith, and the leaders of Seaquen had no political power before the start of the war, and so are easy to fit in anywhere.

Immortality and the Aquiline Heart

The Aquiline Heart is an artifact that is hinted at throughout the campaign saga, which provides immortality to those who taste of its blood. Destroying the artifact will end the grant of immortality, but it might have other disastrous consequences. Leska is immortal by virtue of the Aquiline Heart, which means that she does not age and that she regenerates from any wound not caused by a true dragon. The Heart gives the players a memorable way to strike a seemingly invincible foe in her weak spot. The myth of the Aquiline Heart can be a famous old legend that people only half believe, like the tales of the Holy Grail, or it could be a little-known legend, isolated to Ragesia. If you substitute an existing legend of the setting, you might lose some of the phoenix imagery in the later adventures, so try to find something that involves fire so it ties in well with the "burning sky" part of the campaign.

Trillith: The trillith are a totally new group, and since their existence is relatively unknown it should be easy to fit them in. You might need to alter the timeline of the Mother of Dreams somewhat, to make sure she keeps her ties with the creation of the Torch.

Adventure Locations: Any setting has enough uncharted terrain that it shouldn't be hard to work in a fire forest, a monastery, a psychic temple, and an underground prison. Don't worry about having to use famous locations from a setting. Just because the PCs don't personally fight the battles in a well-known city doesn't mean that the battle isn't happening. The conflict should appear massive, much bigger than the PCs. Of course, players like to feel a little bit legendary, so at least in the climax adventures, try to use notable locations.

Some of the adventures, particularly adventures four (*The Mad King's Banquet*), five (*Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds*), and eight (*O Wintry Song of Agony*), are intended to give you as game master a lot of leeway as to specific location. You just need to decide where a strategically important battle would occur, then send the PCs on the particular missions of the adventure, which are intended to be pivotal to the conflict.

Expanded Campaigns

As designed, the campaign saga should take a party from 1st to 20th level, and possibly beyond. However, you might award experience more slowly, or simply want to have more encounters to showcase the scope of the war. You might try some of these adventure hooks:

Gate Pass

The Spells of the Master. At some point in the middle of the campaign saga, the party might return to try to recover the spellbooks of Gabal, full of spells designed to thwart inquisitor tactics. Perhaps they are guarded by the ghosts of his students, by a rampant golem, or by the spells themselves, brought to life by latent energy of the trillith.

Unity Wedding. The roguish hero Rantle has fallen in love with Shalosha, the princess of Shahalesti, and despite the chaos of war, they plan to be wed in a properly regal (and time-consuming) ceremony. Rantle, who holds quite a bit of sway in Gate Pass, enlists the party and some of his guild friends to make sure the ceremony doesn't get interrupted by unwanted guests (such as the father of the bride).

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War of the Burning Sky
Rest of the World
Scourge Prison
Phorros
Irrendra
Ycengeld
Temple of Echoed Souls
Ragesian Empire
Ragos
Shining Land of Shahalesti
Heart of History
Gate Pass
Calanis
Fire Forest
Alydi Gap
Castle Korstull
Sindaire
Dassen
Monastery of Two Winds
Bresk
Turinn
Ostalin
Kistan
Seaquen
N
W
E
S
Distance in Miles
0
300
SCM

Fire Forest

War Crimes. After the war is over, the party might need to race against an effort by the Shahalesti to hide their crimes, such as the slaughter and burning of the Innenotdar Fire Forest. The party needs to find a way to protect the evidence. Of course, the dead might still be able to offer testimony.

Seaquen

More Spies in the Steam Tunnels. Under Seaquen lies a complex hive of caverns, carved by sea and magma. In addition to providing steam that keeps the city warm during the winter, these tunnels can also be the lairs of spies. The spies try to sabotage the party, steal vital magic items, or trigger a volcano by accessing a hidden seal to the Elemental Plane of Fire. See page 363.

Dreamcatcher. A trillith who calls itself Wanderer passes through Seaquen, appearing as a tall man, wrapped head to toe in sandy robes and veils, with a staff that curves at the top, ending in a knot that looks like an eye. He is collecting the dreams of the city's inhabitants — many of whom are refugees who have seen great horrors and tragedies — to be distilled and refined in order to torment Trilla and create new, unique trillith. He lurks on the Wayfarer's Theater, enjoying the psychic emanations of people watching their performances. See page 419.

Amphibious Assault. A fleet from Ostalin, accompanied by hippogriff cavalry, attempt to seize the Seaquen docks.

Dassen

Civil War. Some minor memeber of the Dassen nobility is up to the same old selfish tricks, except this time a vague, unsupportable claim to the throne threatens to override the immediate needs of stopping the world from ending. The pretender might be endorsed by one of the other powers in the war, or he might just be megalomaniacal. See page 385.

The Shrieking Wyrm. People report hearing a vicious keening in the bayou north of Seaquen. In truth, it is a large brood of infant green dragons, wailing for their mother, who was injured by a lost military convoy. If the party can nurse her back to health and protect her children, she might be willing to lend her aid to the war. Unfortunately, the father is territorial, and he wants custody of the children.

Refugee Train. In a line of thousands of desperate refugees, many are neglected or exploited, and some are not what they seem.

Ostalin

Fight or Flight. A group of Ostalin expatriates, trained under Longinus and Pilus, are trying to rally their people to resist Khagan Onamdammin while his army is distracted. The flying monks plan a strike against the breeding aeries for the nation's hippogriff cavalry, stealing mounts of their own, and killing those they can't.

Feast or Famine. A rich merchant with a fleet of ships is supplying food to the Ragesians, who are having trouble feeding their armies with the extended winter. The party might try to destroy the shipments, or stow away on board in order to sneak into Ragesia, or through the blockade in Turinn. However, one of Pilus's agents has slipped a biomanced creature on board: a fast-breeding horde of hybrid rat-cockroaches that devour everything they find.

Sindaire

Small Wars. After the assassination of Coaltongue, his army splintered. Without a clear chain of command, many smaller units took it upon themselves to crush the rebellion that originally brought Coaltongue to Sindaire. The party would gain the favor of many if they could protect the commoners in the region, but it is their misfortune that the most notorious of these rogue Ragesian warbands is actually on a noble mission, trying to track down a demon-summoner who is using the townsfolk as a human shield.

Fey Tracks. The party hears a local legend of a faerie who lived in a nearby grove for a time, his feet wilting grass with every step, his touch rotting trees, but he was still favored by the forest's druid. They hear a barkeep whistling a tune identical to the song of the fey of the fire forest while he wipes down his tables. If the party braves the natural guardians of the druid's grove, they can earn the old woman's favor, who tells them a story of meeting the fey Etinifi, and teaches them the spell *enforced flesh*.

Ragesia, Lower

Nature's Aid. The party hears of a horse-master druid who lives with a herd that would make fine mounts for whichever army can court his favor best. The druid sets up a competition between the party and a contingent of Ragesian rangers: a race through dangerous wilderness terrain, over twenty miles long.

Catch Me If You Can. A gnome caravan, trying to protect a pair of injured sorcerers fleeing the Scourge, have been chased for weeks by a small Ragesian cavalry detachment, and now they are trying to cross the mountains into Dassen. They cross paths with the party, and ask them to help with a tricky plan to stop the Ragesians from following them.

Ragesia, Upper

The Old Fashioned Way. The PCs are called upon to assassinate Rowern, head of intelligence operations for the Ragesian army, and then impersonate him in order to sow misinformation for as long as possible. In preparation for this mission, the heroes are told that Rowern likes to spend his evenings drinking with old army buddies at an upscale brewery in Ragos, the Ragesian capital. Of course, in a city so full of inquisitors, magical disguises are all but useless, so the party will have to use more traditional techniques to pull off the caper. See page 405.

Failed Experiments. A traveler who was lost in the wastes of northern Ragesia reports that he came upon a ghost town in a crater shaped like a giant feather, where the only activity he saw was a distant, hulking shape loping across the frozen lake in the crater's center. The demise of this town is a direct result of a failed test of Leska's Scourge superweapon. To make things more interesting, a small group of inquisitors are roaming the city, trying to determine what went wrong and extracting all the information they can.

Psionics

The powers of the trillith are closely modeled on psionic powers, so if you allow psionics in your campaign, your players will likely notice the connection, and those who play psionic classes will have an advantage against these creatures who are little more than disembodied minds.

We hope that presenting psionics as a type of magic rooted in dreams will provide a way to integrate them into your campaign without losing a traditional fantasy feel. However, you do not need to use the psionics rules with this campaign if you do not want to. Everything you need is presented with the adventures, and to players unfamiliar with psionics, the powers of the trillith will look like just an interesting set of new supernatural abilities.

If you are interested in using psionics, the complete psionic rules are available as Open Gaming Content through various websites. We recommend www.d20srd.org, which was used extensively as a reference when creating the campaign saga.

Shahalesti

Moral Dilemmas. A camp of tortured orcish prisoners and a captured erinyes spy, their celestial overseers, and the hateful elvish summoner in charge of the camp are the ingredients for an unorthodox rescue mission. The erinyes has stolen the soul of an elvish general and hidden it. She is a valuable agent in the war, and the party could benefit greatly from her knowledge, but she just happens to be blisteringly evil. See page 375.

Pride Before the Falls. In the capital city of Calanis, the party is close to convincing the Shahalesti to ally with them, but one of Shaaladel's generals, an egotistical wizard who believes he is the greatest spellduelist of all time, manages by persuasion, wheedling, and general diplomacy to keep the ruler from siding with the PCs. If the party can prey on the general's pride or insult his honor, he might decide to settle his dispute with a spell duel at noon on the cliffs overlooking the city's majestic waterfalls.

Power Groups

The following three groups play a role in the campaign saga. More details are provided whenever they show up in the adventures.

See the sidebar at right for information the PCs might uncover with appropriate skill checks.

Knights of the Aquiline Cross

Small chapels that teach the doctrine of the Order of the Aquiline Cross have grown up throughout the lands of Ragesia and its neighbors, preaching mercy, sacrifice, and a fierce defense of life. Knights of this order dress in white and red tabards marked with a cross surrounded by a halo of feathers.

The Wayfarers

Every port in the region has at one time or another been host to the Wayfarer Theater, a beautifully-decorated ship that is both home and base of operations for the wayfarers. The wayfarers are both master acrobats and skilled mages, prone to dress in elaborate and eclectic costumes cobbled together from dozens of lands.

The Inquisitors

Dressed in bear skins, their faces concealed by bearskull masks, inquisitors are the feared blade of Ragesia, expert in cutting out those who resist its rule. They fervently serve Ragesia's supreme inquisitor, an aged witch named Leska.

Knights of the Aquiline Cross • Knowledge (History or Religion)

DC 10: The Knights of the Aquiline Cross are clerics and paladins who see healing as the best way to fight evil. They cannot refuse using their healing powers to those who ask (though they're not required to heal enemies who have not surrendered). Followers of the order who maintain their vow of healing are said to miraculously survive injury, as if they simply do not bleed from even seemingly-fatal wounds.

DC 15: Knights of the order quest to locate the Aquiline Heart, a healing relic said to have been torn from the chest of a mighty eagle by a fierce dragon.

DC 20: The original Order of the Aquiline Cross was exterminated entirely by the wrath of a demon, but was reborn recently by an act of divine inspiration. A young human paladin named Entras found an abandoned chapel of the order in the wilds of Shahalesti, and she vowed to continue the order's quest.

DC 30: The order's true goal in seeking the Heart is not to use its healing power, but to heal the Heart itself. It is said that if one gives up his life to the Heart, it will be reunited with the Eagle, and the life of the land will be renewed.

DC 40: One sage found the Heart, and claimed he'd been granted immortality by drinking blood that still pumped from it. His wounds healed at an incredible rate, and he could even return from the dead. He told only his most trusted friends, afraid others would find the Heart and abuse its power, or, worse, destroy it. Destroying the Heart, the only relic of a mighty creature of elemental air, would upset the balance of the elements, with catastrophic effects. Eventually the sage ended his life by letting a dragon devour him whole.

Wayfarers • Knowledge (Arcana or Local)

DC 10: The Wayfarers are a famous troupe of performers who travel from port to port in a huge sailing ship that contains its own theater. Strangely, no one ever sees them enter or leave port; they simply appear and vanish in the blink of an eye, some claim. In addition to being welcome performers for the rich, Wayfarers serve as elite couriers, delivering news between major cities. They are very well paid for their services.

DC 15: Said to be larger on the inside than out, the Wayfarer Theater is just one example of the troupe's mastery of travel magic. However, the group's performances are done entirely without magical aid, as the Wayfarers stress physical mobility as well as magical.

DC 20: Rumors say that the Wayfarers regularly extort those in power — from merchants to entire nations — by threatening to withhold their services. They aggressively hunt down anyone who competes with their monopoly on teleporting goods and information. Some think that the Wayfarers have a curse that can stop a person from ever using planar magic.

DC 30: The first Wayfarer performed for Emperor Coaltongue, in an attempt to save himself from execution. Coaltongue so enjoyed the man's performance that he took him as an advisor and shared with him some of the power of the Torch of the Burning Sky. Many Wayfarers still recall Coaltongue fondly, but consistently refuse service to inquisitors.

Inquisitors • Knowledge (Arcana or Religion)

DC 10: Inquisitors hunt for dangerous magic, which pretty much means any magic used by other people. They have special skills for stopping other mages' spells. Most inquisitors are humans, orcs, or half-orcs, and they carry metal claws on their hands. Many inquisitors are skilled interrogators, and they use their claws to slit the wrists of prisoners, forcing the prisoner to answer quickly.

DC 15: Inquisitors are almost exclusively clerics, with access to divine fire, magic, and protection domains. They wear masks to shield their souls, and thus are more resistant to mind-affecting magic. No one has seen Supreme Inquisitor Leska's face for nearly forty years.

DC 20: Inquisitors cannot turn or control undead; instead they channel negative energy to dispel magic. Positive energy can inhibit their counterspelling abilities.

DC 30: Leska is rumored to be gathering information on how to steal divine power — not to become a god herself, but to make herself strong enough to never be beholden to a deity. Her followers are all heretics, and cannot be raised from the dead except as undead abominations.

DC 40: Those in the imperial palace whisper that when Leska was a young servant of the Ragesian Empire, she offered the Emperor immortality if he agreed to make her one of his advisors. Coaltongue was intrigued, but one of his guards struck down Leska with a spear for her impudence. She pulled the spear from her throat, and a moment later the wound had healed.

Players' Introduction

While once news reached the Free Citystate of Gate Pass by weekly teleporting courier, that channel has gone silent, and now news travels by the old routes of rumor — travelers from the outside world. You might be one of those travelers, or a concerned native of the city, but you have heard the rumors.

Emperor Drakus Coaltongue, ruler of the mighty Ragesian Empire which lies to the west of Gate Pass, has been slain in a distant nation, or so the rumors say. Of course, the rumors once said that Coaltongue was immortal. However, no one doubts the tales of armies mustering in Ragesia, with orders to secure the borders of the empire at this time of weakness and uncertainty. And from Shahalesti, the elvish nation east of Gate Pass, the rumors say its ruler seeks to claim the vulnerable Ragesia for his people.

Gate Pass sits alone in its mountain pass, one of the few safe routes between these two nations — Ragesia and Shahalesti. For weeks people have been saying war would come to Gate Pass, and now the rumors are true.

In War of the Burning Sky, *you will have the chance to fight in a war of mythic proportions, and determine the fate of many nations in its aftermath. Ever-escalating conflicts, powered by mighty magic and fervent faith, threaten your freedom and lives, and even the world itself.*

Driven by the dogs of war, you will head for a distant safe haven, a mages' school named Lyceum, which has sent up a rallying cry for those who wish to resist the warmongers. You will have a chance to form alliances, to build an army, and to uncover the strange secrets that underlie the conflict. As the war reaches a climax, powerful magic will threaten to scorch nations, or sunder them into nothing but nightmares. It will be up to you to bring the war to an end before only embers and ruins remain.

Player Handouts

Visit the EN Publishing Web site (www.enworld.org) for a downloadable *Player's Guide* that contains all the story information from this section and a selection of rules information from Appendix A, all intended to be suitable for review and use by the players before the campaign starts.

You can also find downloadable copies of the adventure's encounter maps, one-inch-scale battle maps, and NPC stat blocks (in Rich Text Format).

For the Players

Gate Pass

The Free Citystate of Gate Pass lies in a rocky mountain pass that runs east to west between Ragesia and Shahalesti. Sheer cliffs mark its northern and southern borders, and fortifications built up over centuries have made the city highly defensible, allowing it to avoid being annexed by either of the nations that surround it. These same fortifications, unfortunately, make it difficult for anyone to sneak out of the city without going through any of the numerous gates that give the city its name.

Gate Pass
NG Conventional Large City
Government Council of district representatives
Purchase Limit 40,000 gp; **Assets** 34,000,000 gp
Population 17,000
Demographics mixed (57% human, 13% orc, 10% elf, 6% half-orc, 5% half-elf, 5% gnome, 3% dwarf, 1% other)

Though the city's borders to north and south are tightly limited — less than a mile wide at the widest point — the mountain pass is nearly twenty miles long, giving the city a lot of room to grow eastward and westward. The older districts of the city lie in the center of the pass, with different eras of development sprawling out gradually in both directions. Additionally, various small farms and ranches dot the mountains around the city proper, though these people are generally hostile to foreigners and relatively well-armed. Gate Pass has only been conquered once, and its citizens managed to drive out the invaders and regain their freedom, so many of the farmers and ranchers view themselves as the first line of defense for their city.

Traditions and Culture

The city's architecture tends to multistory buildings with bridges between roofs, creating thousands of "gateways" along roads and alleys. Even in poorer districts, buildings are usually at least two stories tall. Many merchants, made wealthy from the traffic that passes through the city, own vast ranges of adjacent buildings, all of them connected with high bridges. An expression of the city — "a coin for every gate" — both refers to the wealth of the city, and serves as a warning to visitors to avoid poorer areas where buildings lie unconnected.

A broad, twenty foot wide thoroughfare called the Emelk Way runs the length of the city, interrupted only by the district walls every half mile or so. The city's natural landscape rises in the center to a broad hill called Summer's Bluff. In addition to being home to dozens of gated estates for the city's politicians and rich merchants, Summer's Bluff is the site of the city's grand square, where various annual holidays are celebrated. The grand square can easily hold several thousand people, and it is dotted with dozens of small groves, statues, and ornamental gate arches, with staircases people can climb to get a better view. In the center of the grand square is a high stone dais, its surface carved in a massive relief that depicts several local legends.

The rest of the city consists of various districts of skilled workers, common housing, warehouses and businesses, and slums. Each district has representation in the city government. By city ordinance, every fourth district must contain a park at least a quarter mile to a side, though entrance to these typically requires payment of a few coppers.

The city grew outward from its central districts, with a new district and new outer wall springing up every decade or so. Because of this, it is possible to see the changing styles of construction and defense over the centuries of the city's existence, like reading the rings of a tree. In older districts, built before the development of the city's underground sewer system, countless reservoirs and aqueducts rise above the rooftops, designed to catch rainwater and direct sewage to dumps outside the city. The current sewers flow into an underground river before being swept into endless, uncharted caves.

In the past few decades, clerics have blessed the gates of new districts in expensive rituals, and a tradition has developed for respected citizens to be buried in the sanctified ground near the gate of their district. Most graveyards, however, lie outside the city, either fenced in atop hills, or in gated crypts.

Districts, Walls, and Gates

The city is segmented into dozens of districts, each about a half-mile in length, separated by 30-foot-high walls (Climb DC 20) that stretch from north to south, 6 feet thick at the top. The tops of the walls sport metal grates sticking out sideways 5 feet in each direction, making it difficult (Climb DC 25) to make it over them. City ordinance forbids any rooftop within 10 feet of a wall, though the city has a few stories

pg. 629


War of the Burning Sky
Regional Map
Ragos
Ragesian Empire
Shining Land of Shahalesti
Gate Pass
Calanis
N
S
Sindaire
Dassen
Monastery of Two Winds
Turinn
Ostalin
Bresk
Kistan
Seaquen
Distance In Miles
0
300
Major City Icon
Adventure Icon
SCM

about industrious thieves using massive ladders to traverse the city for twilight heists carried out in the wealthier districts.

In a few districts are found smaller walled areas populated predominantly by a single race. Most common of these ghettos are those of the elves, who tend to shun outsiders. Elvish ghettos are renowned for having no visible entrances through their walls — all the doors are secret, which elves can intuitively notice.

Each district wall has a gate, a pair of reinforced wooden doors (hardness 8; hp 45; Break DC 35) each 20 feet high and 8 feet wide, which remain open during the day but close at sunset. A small steel access door can be opened to allow individuals to pass through at night, but vehicles and beasts of burden are almost never allowed through between sunset and dawn. A small guardhouse, large enough to comfortably hold eight soldiers, overlooks the gate with arrow slits and murder holes. More guards typically watch the ground level by day.

Passing between districts is relatively easy if one takes the main thoroughfare during the day, though guards are known to perform random inspections. The High District, in the center of the city, is much more heavily guarded: typically twice the usual number of guards is on hand, and those guards have orders to randomly inspect someone every few minutes (especially those who look like outsiders).

The northern and southern borders of the city typically have walls built from the natural cliffs, averaging 40 feet tall. Each district on the edge of the city usually has a gate either to the north or south, and a wide swath of clear land on the outer side of the wall makes the approach easy to see. These walls are only a token defense, since a devoted military press could easily overwhelm them, but normally the city relies on the fact that approaching the city through the mountains is slow and treacherous.

Only a handful of districts have gates that lead to actual roads, and most of these are used for deliveries by farmers and miners. Each day groups of Gate Pass soldiers patrol the northern and southern borders, looking for signs of illegal passage and occasionally apprehending criminals who try to hide in the craggy hills.

Most traffic passes through the easternmost and westernmost districts, which have major gates that lead out of the city to Shahalesti and Ragesia respectively. These gates are much more heavily guarded: the exits have two sets of doors with a wide kill zone between them, and city taxes pay for a variety of magical defenses on the gates.

The Festival of Dreams

Gate Pass has its share of holidays; the most prominent is the Festival of Dreams, a holy day observed by all of the city's major temples on New Year's Day. Parades march from either end of the city, stopping at the grand square on Summer's Bluff just before sunset for a ceremony in which the high priests of each of eight different temples "offer up the dreams of the people."

Each citizen is encouraged to write a prayer or hope on a slip of paper and place it in a small clay urn, which the city produces by the thousands every year. People deliver their urns to Summer's Bluff in the days leading up to the festival. During the festival, each high priest chooses one urn, breaks it open, reads the prayer held within, and pledges to fulfill that dream if possible during the next year. Selfish requests are frowned upon, and often the city takes great glee in perverting the words of selfish prayers, fulfilling the adage "be careful what you wish for."

The rest of the urns are left in the center of the square, and citizens are encouraged to pick one up and try to fulfill someone else's wish. The morning after the festival, those left unopened are carted en masse to the countless small caves that dot the cliffs around the city, where they are buried. Many folk tales involve stories of these buried dreams coming to life and bringing good fortune, though most adults of the city view these as merely superstition.

Famous Myths

"The Wavering Maiden" tells of the Tidereaver Kraken's seeking to explore the land by making a human body for itself out of seawater. In the form of a beautiful young woman with rolling black hair, the Kraken explored the world. However, because the tide is inconstant, at times this form would ebb, and the Kraken would spend an evening in a lake or river in its true form. The myth is a series of comic events based around numerous suitors who fall in love with the Kraken in its woman form, and who often seek to destroy it in its Kraken form.

"The Trilling Stone" tells of how the Worldshaper Worm sought to prove its superiority to the Storm-chaser Eagle by creating a song more powerful than the Eagle's thunder. The myth explains the various monsters who live in the depths of the world, saying that they were lured by the Worm's eerie, whistling song, only to be trapped when the arrogant Worm decided to sing even louder, causing an earthquake. This, it is said, is why the bodies of the dead are filled with worms when they are found in the ground.

"The Aquiline Heart" is a morality tale about the dangers of both pride and power. Never able to catch the Stormseeker Eagle after many years of chase, the Flamebringer Dragon preyed instead on the Eagle's pride, saying the Eagle was too weak and cowardly ever to chase the Dragon. The angered Eagle pursued the Dragon, not realizing until too late that it had been tricked into flying down a tunnel into the depths of the world, where it did not have enough room to maneuver.

The Dragon bit the Eagle's throat and began to drink its blood for its power, when the Worldshaper Worm came upon the scene. The Worm was blind, but the Dragon knew that it could feel the beating hearts of both the Dragon and the Eagle. To avoid its treachery being discovered, the Dragon tore out the Eagle's still-beating heart and hid it some place where it would never be tempted to try to get it again. This explains how dragons became the strongest creatures in the world, and teaches that those with too much power risk being turned upon by those around them.

City History and Myths

Gate Pass has the distinction of being the only city to successfully drive out occupation by the Ragesian Empire. Forty years ago, Emperor Coaltongue defeated the city's army, set up a military government, and erected a 90-foot-tall statue of himself in the grand square on Summer's Bluff before moving on to his next conquest. For two years, citizens waged an insurgency against the occupying army, until finally Coaltongue decided the city wasn't worth the loss of men.

Shahalesti and Ragesia, once allies, were approaching open war, and Coaltongue declared that he would withdraw from Gate Pass if the Lord of Shahalesti agreed to leave the city as a neutral buffer between their two nations. The elves agreed, the city celebrated its victory, and trade between the two nations began to flow.

The city still sports numerous indications of the occupation, and many citizens purchase busts or paintings of the aged emperor, as if both to mock the Ragesians for their failure and to respect Coaltongue's wisdom in deciding to leave their city alone. Even the emperor's statue remains; it is decorated and painted gaudily on various holidays.

Because of his name, Drakus Coaltongue is often associated with a myth that is native to Gate Pass and Ragesia, that of the Dragon and the Eagle. A series of myths tell of an ancient time when the lands that are now Ragesia and its neighbors were the domain of four elemental spirits — the Tidereaver Kraken, the Worldshaper Worm, the Flamebringer Dragon, and the Stormchaser Eagle, and these four beings are common motifs in the art and architecture of Gate Pass (as well as in Ragesia).

Gate Pass Power Groups

City Council

The government of Gate Pass is a council of representatives from each of the districts, with a city governor chosen every ten years. Many different groups hold sway with the government, ranging from citizen groups to wealthy merchants to religious and military groups.

One of the more colorful characters in the council is Erdan Menash, a former merchant and tailor who used to sell well-crafted but horribly unfashionable gear to adventurers, with the goal of making sure everyone knew he was the one sponsoring their heroism. His personal manor is painted vivid green, yellow, and purple.

The current governor is Merrick Hurt, a half-orc who has kept relationships with Ragesia warm in the past, though many worry he will be too agreeable to demands by the new ruler of Ragesia. Rumors say that he bitterly loathes elves and has a vast lexicon of insults for them, a vice that relatively few in the city worry about.

The Temples

The religious community of Gate Pass is diverse, owing to the interaction of cultures flowing through the city. Eight major temples represent the religious core of the community, and though each religion has its own interests, they share common ground through the annual Festival of Dreams, during which the temples all briefly work to provide for the greater good. Numerous temples of smaller religions dot the city, and though they lack the same sway as the major eight, they still put a lot of effort into New Year's festivities.

Shakur Biggs, head priest of a temple devoted to the god of revelry, is currently the master of ceremonies for this year's festival. He was apparently planning to head a large musical performance, but his plans have been dampened by the threat of a hostile Ragesia.

The Military

While the Gate Pass military answers to the city council, their opinion carries great weight given how much attention the city pays to its defense. Unlike most militaries, they are not trained for large open field combat, but rather for the defense of the city, taking advantage of enclosed terrain. Commander Harmand Fletcher, a veteran of the rebellion against Ragesia, recently retired from leader of the armed forces, replaced by Brant Sawman, who if anything is almost more gruff and brooding than his predecessor.

A small unit of twenty griffon riders serve to patrol the far reaches of Gate Pass's domain, but otherwise the city has little in the way of a cavalry tradition.

Gabal's School

Gabal, a famed evoker who helped drive the Ragesians out forty years ago, maintains a school of war. This large cluster of squat towers connected by covered bridges and surrounded by a moat and fence is jokingly known as The Castle. Gabal's students — easily identifiable by their red robes — are generally viewed as arrogant and hot-tempered, but their mentor forces them to sell their services for low prices, particularly in matters of defense and construction, and a handful of wizards serve in the city military.

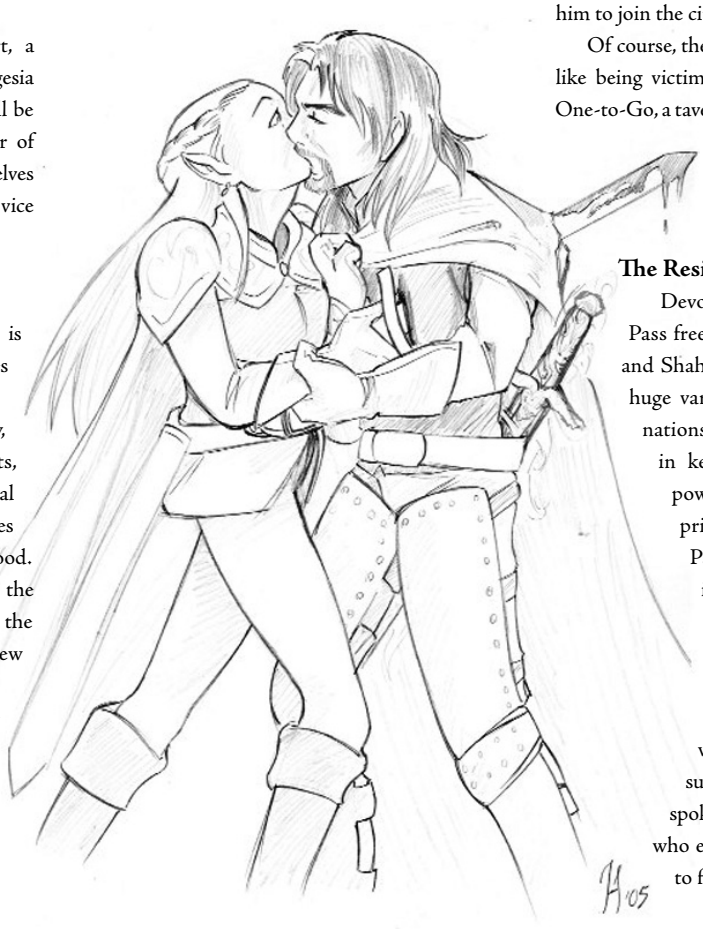
Gabal is said to scorn magic-users who do not study spellbooks for their powers, and has a particular dislike for sorcerers, commonly saying he doesn't trust people who have that much charisma. Charm is a personality flaw Gabal proudly lacks.

Thieves' Guild

Everyone knows that thieves operate in the city, often with the aid of bribed councilmen who turn blind eyes. The thieves tend to prey on wealthy merchants, especially foreigners, and so many commoners view them favorably.

One particularly well-known rogue is a dashing scoundrel named Rantle. He came to fame because of an elaborate confidence game to steal from a female merchant. One night when his scam was near fruition, he was with the merchant when she was attacked by a trio of common thugs who intended to have their way with the woman. Rantle fought them off, then stayed around to protect her while the city guard arrived, even though he knew he would be recognized and arrested. Public support for his heroism got him pardoned, and many people have begun calling for him to join the city council.

Of course, the merchants of the city still don't like being victimized. It is said the clientele of One-to-Go, a tavern in one of Gate Pass's slums, is composed entirely of former thieves who have lost a hand as punishment for stealing.



The Resistance

Devoted to keeping the city of Gate Pass free from the rule of both Ragesia and Shahalesti, the resistance includes a huge variety of people from the many nations that have a vested interest in keeping the current balance of power. Mostly they work to bolster pride among the citizens of Gate Pass, though occasionally a spy is turned over to the authorities by unknown persons, and the resistance is credited with the capture.

Many farmers and ranchers who live in the mountains surrounding the city claim to have spoken to members of the resistance, who encouraged them to be prepared to fight to defend their lands.

What Dramatic Twists Await the Heroes of Gate Pass? – Art by J. L. Jones

Ragesia and Environs

Ragesia is the largest nation in the region, and four other nations commonly interact with it. The politics and history of the region are relatively simple, though the recent power vacuum in Ragesia threatens to make things much more complicated.

Overview

The Ragesian Empire lies in the northwest of the region, spanning several hundred miles north to south and east to west. To the east is the Shining Land of Shahalesti, a tenuous ally with whom relations have frayed of late. To the south lie the Exarchate of Sindaire, the Kingdom of Dassen, and the Khaganhold of Ostalin, three nations which so far have managed to avoid being conquered by Ragesia.

Ragesia

The Ragesian Empire is based in the capital city of Ragos, located on central lowlands dominated by many lakes. While the core of the empire is populated heavily by orcs and half-orcs, the outer regions have wildly diverse cultures and populations, the result of having once been many separate nations before being conquered by sword and torch.

Every region has a large component of orcs in the population, along with heavy military presence to ensure loyalty and peace. Though the people of Ragesia have been conquered, most are content that they live today in relative safety. Given the power of the empire, rebellion just doesn't seem worth it. The majority of the population is still human however, or half-orc, and different ethnic groups remain mostly concentrated in their old homelands, which are often separated by low, long mountain ranges.

The northern reaches are home to people known as the Kelaquois, who live in frigid lands that are frozen for most of the year, where they coexist with frost giants, mastadons, and vast herds of bison. The western plains were once the nation of Latia, its renowned ship-building now benefiting Ragesia and its navy. The southern lands are craggy, with cold rocky deserts dominating what was once Chathus, a land of nomads and traders who nevertheless defended their lands with great vigor, using cavalry and mobility to wage a protracted war, allowing their home to be the last conquered by Ragesia. The central heartlands once belonged to the powerful fortified nation of Morrus, and numerous old castles, forts, and walls dot the landscape, defenses which were easily bypassed with Emperor Coaltongue's Torch.

The capital city of Ragos stretches along a vast lake, and the imperial palace lies safely offshore on a fantastically-defended island. At night its walls burn with thousands of torches, making the lake look like it is on fire.

Ragos

LE Conventional Metropolis
Government Totalitarian
Demographics mixed (53% human, 18% orc, 17% half-orc, 3% dwarf, 3% elf, 2% gnome, 2% half-elf, 2% other)

An ocean borders Ragesia to the west, with rocky mountains marking Ragesia's borders with the nations to the south — Sindaire and Dassen. The northern border is a high, frigid mountain range, separating Ragesia from most of the rest of the world. The same mountains curve down to form the eastern border, rising high enough that Ragesia never saw much value in trying to conquer beyond them.

The Inquisitors

Dressed in bear skins, their faces concealed by bear-skull masks, inquisitors are the feared blade of Ragesia, expert in cutting out those who resist its rule. They fervently serve Ragesia's supreme inquisitor, an aged witch named Leska, who until recently was a loyal servant of the emperor. Now Leska desires to rule, and her inquisitors are her greatest weapon.

Mages tell stories of inquisitors — sent to hunt down disloyal mages — completely ignoring powerful spells, or even turning spells against their casters. The few who have been captured by inquisitors and have lived to tell the tale recount being tortured, their wrists slashed by an inquisitor's clawed gauntlets, then being left to a slow, cold death unless they betrayed their allies. Some rumor that inquisitors can even devour the souls of magic-users, taking their powers for themselves before raising the slain mage as an undead follower.

Inquisitors possess alternate class abilities. If you are interested in playing an inquisitor or a character who has managed to learn their secret techniques, talk to your game master.

Emperor Drakus Coaltongue and the Torch of the Burning Sky

The Old Dragon, some called him, since he seemed immortal, and he only grew more cunning and powerful with age.

Decades ago, a warlord arose among the orc tribes of what is now Ragesia. Drakus Coaltongue, half-orc son of a human noblewoman, brought a level of patience and political cunning rarely seen among the savage orcs. He united many tribes, slew a gold dragon and took its child as a prize, and prepared his people for glory.

And then, to everyone's surprise, he did not sweep into human lands for a bloody but ultimately short-lived rampage. Instead, Coaltongue allied with various poor human nations, helping them drive back the predations of the strongest country in the region, Morrus. Coaltongue even gained the aid of the insular elves of Shahalesti, until finally he was ready to lead a coalition army against Morrus. For this great assault, Coaltongue revealed a devastatingly powerful artifact that would lead him to victory, the Torch of the Burning Sky.

The power of the Torch was to call down fire from the sky, and to carry Coaltongue's army hundreds of miles in an instant, plucking them up with one pillar of flame, and depositing them with another. Coaltongue and his allies easily defeated Morrus, and from the nation's burning remains, Coaltongue created a new kingdom for himself and his orcish followers, Ragesia.

For a time Coaltongue and his allies coexisted in relative peace. Coaltongue was content with his new homeland, and did not want to jeopardize it by reaching too far and falling before the might of many nations, as Morrus had fallen before him.

But slowly, Ragesia expanded its borders. It took years for events to play out, and always in a way that Ragesia's imperialism was justified, either in response to enemy attacks, or to aid another nation that was being threatened. With the benefit of hindsight, many suspect that somehow Coaltongue provoked these conflicts. Finally, when Coaltongue was far older than any half-orc had right to be, all the lands that had once belonged to his allies were his.

Recently, after nearly a decade of inactivity, Coaltongue offered to help the Exarchate of Sindaire put down a rebellion within its borders, and the nation nervously accepted, fearful of being swallowed up by another trick. What Coaltongue was planning may never be known, because a few weeks into his military campaign, something went wrong. Ragesia has not heard from its emperor in over two months, or if they have, they have hidden the news.

Some dread it, and some cautiously hope for it, but it seems the Old Dragon has been slain.



Emperor Drakus Coaltongue and the Torch of the Burning Sky – Art by J. L. Jones

Shahalesti

On the far side of the mountains that mark Ragesia's eastern border spreads the Shining Land of Shahalesti, ruled by Lord Shaaladel, a middle-aged elf who rose from being a military commander to the nation's ruler during the ascension of the Ragesian Empire. Shahalesti was in danger of being conquered like Ragesia's other neighbors, and Shaaladel's aggressive displays of force — including the conquest and destruction of two nearby elvish lands that were hostile to him — are credited as major reasons why Ragesia has so far not looked east for conquest.

During Ragesia's annexation of its neighbors, Lord Shaaladel lent military aid, and he and his trusted aides participated personally in several battles at Coaltongue's side. A canny, wise, and charismatic commander, Shaaladel is respected even by the Ragesian army, and many expected him to succeed as Emperor after Coaltongue's death. Rumors say that the elvish lord was quite displeased that the old half-orc was refusing to die of old age.

Shahalesti is not an entirely elvish nation. The majority of its population is human, but they live as commoners with little real power. The aristocracy is almost exclusively elvish, as well as the higher ranks among the military. Despite a grudging alliance with Ragesia, however, orcs and half-orcs are despised and persecuted, unable to hold any public positions, often horribly exploited as nearly slave labor. A few outposts of wealthy orcs with ties to Ragesia have tried to start their own communities; this is a steady source of strife.

The capital of Shahalesti, Calanis, is built over a crescent rift carved by a waterfall. The city is forbidden to non-elves except by invitation from one of the royal family which, as of now, consists only of Shaaladel and his daughter Shalosha.

Calanis

N Conventional Large City
Government Aristocracy
Demographics mixed (45% elf, 35% human, 10% half-elf, 5% halfling, 2% orc, 2% half-orc, 1% other)

The Solei Palancis

The Shahalesti military, including its navy, focuses on quality rather than quantity. Most soldiers are equipped with at least minor magic items, and arcane magic in general is key to most of the nation's tactics. Their most famed soldiers are the Solei Palancis, the shining legion, whose swords shed light as bright as the sun.

Dassen

The Kingdom of Dassen lies to the south of Ragesia, and the southwest of Shahalesti, its borders defined by craggy mountains defended by hundreds of small dwarven strongholds. Dassen's people, a swarthy assortment of humans and dwarves, cherish their land, to the point that superstitious cavalrymen even put dirt in their boots so never have to stop touching the soil of their homeland.

King Steppengard rules a patchwork of eight feudal holdings, many of them controlled by distant relatives with claims to the throne of numbing complexity. To assure that he never has to worry about untangling these claims, Steppengard has had a huge family with eighteen children, all of them legitimate on the word of his oath.

There are no mighty cities in Dassen, only thousands of farms and towns growing out from the nine castles of the king and his dukes. The largest city, Bresk, lies on a major river beside Steppengard's castle, and is a hilly community built both above and below ground.

Bresk

LN Conventional Small City
Government Monarchy
Demographics mixed (65% human, 28% dwarf, 5% orc, 1% half-orc, 1% other).

Lyceum Academy

At the end of a swampy isthmus on Dassen's southern tip, the town of Seaquen is home to a school called Lyceum, devoted to teaching magic of all kinds. Students of Lyceum are encouraged to learn a variety of magical styles, and are trained in spelldueling techniques similar to Gabal's school in Gate Pass. They were relatively unknown in the region until recently, when Simeon, headmaster of the school, sent out a call to all the people in and around Ragesia, asking for them to stand up against the threat posed by the Ragesians and their new leader Leska.

Sindaire

The national government of the Exarchate of Sindaire is officially run by a representative from Ragesia, but in practice the Exarch has limited power. The people of Sindaire — mostly humans with some caravans of nomadic gnomes — pay some taxes to Ragesia, but maintain their own armies and laws. They take mild comfort in knowing that, should Ostalin, their neighbors to the south, ever attempt to claim more land, Ragesia will come to their defense.

Recently a vocal group of city mayors in the center of the nation began to protest paying taxes to Ragesia, and refused to pay. Unlike the coastal cities, they benefited little from trade with Ragesian ships, and they called for the removal of the Exarch, a half-orc woman named Horstea. Despite protests from the government ministers, the Exarch sent a plea to Ragesia, and Coaltongue's army responded, traveling by Torch to the central prairies to put down the rebellion.

Sindaire has a long-established druidic tradition, coming from a time when a group of refugees fleeing a catastrophe in what is now Shahalesti settled in Sindaire's warm forests, converting many of the locals through their generosity and their disciplined devotion to nobler ideals. Because lions are revered in these foreigner's culture, lions now fill the role of pets to the aristocracy, and guard dogs for the common folk.

The capital city of Turinn lies on two sides of a long rock spur. The western side has ports on the sea, while the bulk of the city lies safe on the east.

Turinn

LN Conventional Large City
Government Occupational
Demographics isolated (95% human, 3% halfling, 1% orc, 1% other).

Knights of the Aquiline Cross

The Order of the Aquiline Cross originally emerged in Sindaire a decade ago. Since then, small chapels that teach the order's doctrine of mercy, sacrifice, and a fierce defense of life have sprung up throughout the lands of Ragesia and its neighbors. Knights of this order dress in white and red tabards marked with a cross surrounded by a halo of feathers.

The Monastery of Two Winds

The Monastery of Two Winds lies in the mountains that form the main border between Ostalin and Dassen, near to the large town of Eresh. The monastery teaches two different approaches to harnessing the power of air magic, the gentle West Wind style, and the fierce East Wind style. Some monks of the two winds feel compelled to travel the world, letting the wind guide their journeys.



Adventure One
The Scouring of Gate Pass

for 1st-Level Characters

by Ryan Nock

Cover Art by
Cris Griffin

War has begun.

As the Ragesian army marches upon the neutral city of Gate Pass, the heroes must retrieve vital intelligence from a spy and deliver it to the distant wizards' school of Lyceum.

But first the heroes must find a way out of a chaotic, besieged city before it falls and the inquisitors, Ragesia's infamous mage-hunting clerics, find them.

Can a small band of brave heroes escape the Scouring of Gate Pass?

Background

It is New Year's Eve, and near midnight on this frigid evening the heroes gather in a small condemned tavern in the Free Citystate of Gate Pass. Located in the mountain pass which separates two hostile nations — Ragesia and Shahalesti — Gate Pass has been neutral since the end of their last war, but now from Ragesia a scourge comes for the city.

By now, every magic-user in Gate Pass knows of the Scourge. The Emperor of Ragesia died barely a month ago, and in a move to cement herself as the next emperor of Ragesia, Leska, leader of the Ragesian inquisitors, has decreed that all disloyal users of magic — arcane or divine — are to be tracked down and killed, to prevent future threats to the empire.

To carry out Leska's command, the inquisitors, clerics specialized in countermagic, travel with military escorts to the borders of Ragesia. Their first target is Gate Pass, its neutrality long viewed as an insult to the nation's honor. Those who resist them will have to face the searing power of the Ragesian Empire.

An entire army marches for Gate Pass, and the people of the city fear that they will not be able to resist the might of the Ragesian military. The city leaders are bowing under pressure, and have barred the exit from the city, intending to welcome the inquisitors that come with the army, for they foolishly hope that the Ragesians will reward their cooperation with mercy.

A local resistance movement, devoted to keeping both the Ragesians and the Shahalesti out of the city, has gathered vital military intelligence, and they need messengers to deliver the information to allies at a distant wizard's school. With all their strongest warriors preparing to hold back the Ragesian assault, this vital mission falls to a party of inexperienced heroes — the player characters.

The Ragesian army is nearly at Gate Pass's doorstep, so time is short. The war is about to begin.

Welcome to the first adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. Throughout the course of the campaign saga, a party of heroes will become involved in an escalating war between mighty magical nations, and after many adventures, military battles, and mysterious intrigue, it will be up to them to decide who will emerge victorious and rule in the aftermath.

Introduction

Gate Pass

The Free Citystate of Gate Pass lies in a mountain pass stretching many miles west to east, though it is seldom more than a mile wide north to south. Over the years it has been controlled by both nations that border it — Ragesia and Shahalesti — until a few decades ago the natives drove out the Ragesians and negotiated their city as neutral ground. Because of this repeated history of occupation, the city is a fortress built in patchwork over many decades. High walls surround Gate Pass on all sides, and the city is divided into twenty-seven districts, each separated by a wall with a well-defended gate. A single main road stretches through the city — the Emelk Way — passing through each district and gate.

Because of cramped space, nearly every building in the city rises at least two stories, and in wealthier districts skybridges connect clusters of buildings owned by rich merchants. Walking under a gate is generally seen as good luck in the city — people view the arches created by skybridges as gateways.

In the center of the city, at its highest point, is the Grand Square, where 40 years ago the emperor of Ragesia erected a statue of himself 90 feet tall. When the city drove out the Ragesians they kept the statue as a trophy, and it is the victim of regular defacement.

Gate Pass and the Scourge

The city is torn by the current events. Many magic-users provide useful services to the community, helping defense and construction, healing the sick, and presiding over religious services. However, when given the choice between being conquered and handing over their neighbors, most of Gate Pass is more interested in protecting the greater good, which as they see it means protecting themselves.

Indeed, many in the city have grown to resent the city's magic-users for being the cause of their problems, to the point that the city council has decreed that magic-users should turn themselves over to the city guard, and no one is being allowed to leave the city unless on official business.

Most citizens of Gate Pass are Unfriendly to magic-users. Under orders from the city council, the city guard is to take any magic-user they find into custody, and deliver them to a temporary holding facility in a repurposed mansion in the city center. The city guard will generally attempt to subdue, only dealing lethal damage to those who do so first.

The major exceptions are Gabal and his wizard's school. Gabal and his red-robed students have publicly and angrily criticized the city for their cowardice, and have vowed to resist any attempt to remove them, be it by Ragesia *or* Gate Pass. Gabal was a hero in the original resistance against Ragesia forty years ago, and he insists that Ragesia intends to conquer Gate Pass for good. He has proclaimed Leska's inquisitors to be a "Scourge" against all users of magic, and such is his sway that the term has caught on among the common citizens.

Most inhabitants of the city believe (or at least claim to believe) that the Scourge is only intended to capture those responsible for killing the late Emperor Coaltongue, and that those who pose no threat to Ragesia will be left unharmed. Thus, many think Gabal is simply a troublemaker who wants a fight so he can relive the glory days of his youth. However, the city guard has so far chosen to let Gabal and his students do as they will, afraid of their power.

Weather

Since the city is in the middle of winter, if you intend to use the rules for cold weather dangers, consider giving every character a free cold weather outfit, which grants a +5 circumstance bonus on Fortitude saves against cold weather (or alternately, it reduces the effects of cold weather by one step). Otherwise, it's safe to assume that there are enough buildings with fires keeping them warm that will welcome someone out of the cold for a few minutes, so that 1st-level PCs don't simply die from exposure while traveling through the city.

Combat in the Streets

Snow melts under the constant traffic throughout the city, making the roads icy, slushy, or otherwise unpleasant in a wintry way. Movement in the streets costs double, and the DC of Balance or Tumble checks increases by +5. Attempting to run or charge down a street requires a Balance check (DC 15 with the modifiers). Failure by 4 or less means the character cannot run or charge, but can act normally. Failure by 5 or more means the character falls. Alleys and rooftops receive less traffic, so the snow is fresher, not requiring Balance checks except on uneven surfaces, but incuring a –5 penalty to Move Silently checks.

Game Master's Map pg. 630



Interdistrict Gates

A typical gate between districts is guarded by twenty soldiers (LN warrior 1), two officers (LN warrior 3), and a gatekeeper (LN expert 4, Forgery +2, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9) during the day, or sixteen soldiers and one officer after sunset. At any given time, eight of these soldiers walk the walls, making a full circuit every half hour to an hour, depending on the length of the wall, after which they swap out with one of the guards in the gate house. The rest of the guards stay in the gate house, a three-story structure built above and around the gate itself. Guards come from many races, though humans and half-orcs are most common.

Generally, people moving through the city, whether they are residents or visitors, can pass between districts without being accosted by gate guards. Most of the gate guards aren't eager to deal with spellcasters at all, and prefer to turn a blind eye to any less than blatant signs of wrongdoing. However, if the party seems too cavalier about the danger they're in, it would be fair for a suspicious gatekeeper to demand to inspect their belongings, looking for spell components. The guards might try to extort a bribe, but they won't pursue spellcasters who flee.

The Gates

The easternmost and westernmost districts are much more carefully protected. Dozens of soldiers, officers, and legitimate fighters and rogues watch these crenelated walls, armed with heavy crossbows and a variety of melee weapons. The main gates have two sets of doors that must be passed through to enter or exit the city. The kill zone between the gates is enchanted with a *hallow* spell that includes an *invisibility purge*, while a walled courtyard just inside the gates has a *hallow* that is tied to a *detect magic* effect. Sneaking out of the city through these gates is all but impossible, and these guards will apprehend any magic-users trying to leave the city.

For details on the north and south gates, see their description in Act Three.

Adventure Overview

The heroes' main goal in *The Scouring of Gate Pass* is to get a cleric named Torrent out of a city under siege before a group of mage-hunting inquisitors arrive and begin capturing and killing spellcasters. Before they can leave, though, Torrent needs the heroes to help her retrieve vital military intelligence from one of the rebellion's spies. However, spies from Shahalesti have already captured the contact, and the heroes will have to track down their base of operations in an elvish ghetto, all while the city is under attack.

Even after retrieving the information, simply walking out of the city is not an option, so the heroes will have to call upon allies in the city, most-likely going to a sympathetic city councilman, or receiving aid from a cocky wizard. While they seek a way out of the guarded walls of the city, the heroes are constantly followed by a group of mercenaries hired to capture them. Once the heroes make it out of the city, they must defeat the mercenary commander and his men, who have laid a gauntlet along the one safe road.

Finally, the heroes head for the edge of the Innenotdar Fire Forest, a dangerous passage where Torrent thinks they can evade pursuit. At the border of the Innenotdar Fire Forest, however, they come across a hermit and his daughter. The daughter asks their help to convince her father to flee, but just as they are ready to depart, a Ragesian inquisitor, sent on a special mission to retrieve the hermit, arrives and attempts to capture them all.

If they survive, the adventure ends with the heroes preparing to enter the fire forest, the passage through which is detailed in the next adventure, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*.

Character Motivations

The easiest way motivate characters to be involved in the adventure is for them to be part of the same resistance group that Torrent works with. People from any neighboring nation would have a reason to want to keep Ragesia and Shahalesti from going to war, so it is easy to justify any sort of character. Characters who are part of the rebellion would have been given orders simply to help Torrent, whose mission is a secret, though their superiors would have told them to trust her.

Characters could be natives of Gate Pass who want to protect their city. Appendix A contains a selection of bonus feats that you can grant characters if they are associated with one of these groups. All of these groups have the welfare of the city in mind and want to help Torrent and her message reach Lyceum safely. A PC associated with one of these groups might have been recruited by a resistance member, and told to meet Torrent.

Traveling PCs simply looking to get far from the war might have tracked down the resistance and been told they can earn safe passage if they join the mission. Or, for a sinister twist, a PC might be a spy for an enemy nation, sent to infiltrate Lyceum. Magic users of any sort would have a great stake in escaping the city. In general, the players and characters should understand what the "Scourge" is before the game begins.

Adapting the Adventure

If you are running this episode as a stand-alone adventure, you can have the heroes escort the courier and her message to any organization you want them to become involved with for the rest of your campaign. You may want to change some of the encounters, since several of them are designed to hint at events that take place later in the saga. The majority of the encounters can work fine as is, however, just providing local color.

The Introduction provides information to help you work the events of the saga into your own setting, offers suggestions for getting the characters involved in the adventures, and gives you an idea of what lies further down the road.

As with any 1st-level adventure, there is little in the way of a safety net for the PCs. If you want to start the campaign off with a more heroic feel, consider starting the PCs at 2nd level. By the third adventure, the slight XP boost gained by this will be imperceptible, and you won't have to worry as much about accidentally killing your party before things get underway.

Act One: The Secret Meeting

The heroes have been told to meet Torrent at the Poison Apple Pub a little before midnight on New Year's Eve, and to use the alley door. The pub has been closed down since its owner was arrested, but Torrent got permission from the owner's wife to use the building for the evening. Despite the rather dire circumstances, she doesn't want the new year to arrive without some sort of celebration, so she has drinks available for when the heroes arrive.

The people of the city know an army is on the way, so the streets are fairly deserted and normal festivities muted, letting the heroes travel unmolested. The pub is in a poorer district about a mile from the western city wall, filled with slush-covered cobblestone streets and dark, snow-filled alleyways. The evening is dark and claustrophobic, the multistory buildings of the city looming in the night, no lights in most windows.

The pub is a two-story building attached by a rooftop bridge to a neighboring house. The door and windows are boarded up, and the curtains drawn (though a faint light can be seen if someone checks closely). A notice has been posted on its door:

Trehan Finner, owner of the Poison Apple Pub, has been taken into temporary custody under the protection of the city guard, until such time that he can be questioned by representatives of the Ragesian Empire, and found innocent of hostile collusion. The Poison Apple Pub is hereby closed until further notice.

The adjacent building connected by the bridge is the Finner residence, currently unoccupied. Down the street from the pub is a stable where the heroes can leave mounts, and the heroes have been told to enter through a side alley entrance to avoid being seen. The door is locked (Open Lock DC 25), but if they knock, Torrent opens the door a crack a few moments later. After checking to make sure it's safe, she lets them in, gesturing casually to a table where she has set up a lamp, a map, several mugs, and a small keg of beer.

"Thanks for coming," she says. "Have a drink. Just because we're about to go to war doesn't mean we can't celebrate the new year."

The Mission

The darkened pub is mostly empty now, its many tables and chairs pushed to one wall and covered with sheets. A single table sits in the middle of the room, with enough chairs for all of you. A small oil lamp and a keg sit on top of it, along with several mugs. At the back corner of the common room beside the bar, a staircase leads upstairs. The windows and door facing onto the street are closed, and you know they have been boarded up from the outside. On the wall behind the bar hangs a bronze bust of the former emperor of Ragesia, Drakus Coaltongue, a regal, aged half-orc with a scar cutting diagonally across his face. You and Torrent are the only people in the room.

Torrent introduces herself to the heroes, making small talk and trying to be friendly before getting to business, all the while sipping a beer. If the heroes are curious about exploring the pub, the door to the kitchen is locked (Open Lock DC 20), and the door to the storage room is hidden behind stacks of tables and chairs. They could check the coat closet, which is empty, as are all the bedrooms upstairs. A trap door in the roof of the upstairs master bedroom leads to the roof, but it's securely locked (Open Lock DC 25), and there's nothing to see on the roof now anyway.

If the heroes search the tavern extensively, Torrent jokingly compliments their paranoia, then tells them she doesn't want to waste any more time.

Whenever the heroes are comfortable, or they bring up why they're here, ask for Listen checks. Make a note of which PCs beat DC 20, and tell them they hear a variety of distant bells throughout the city chiming to celebrate the turning of the New Year.

Torrent grimaces and straightens in her chair, saying, "Another year gone. I guess it's time to get down to business.

"The city's in trouble. The Ragesian army is marching on us, and will be here by tomorrow. Before then, we have a mission.

"I used to study at a magic academy to the south, called Lyceum. They're good people. So when word reached them about Ragesia's 'Scourge,' they sent out messages calling for

anyone fleeing Ragesia to come to them. They want to stand against the Ragesians, and the resistance wants their help. We just need to get a message to them.

"Normally we would have sent something by teleporting courier, but something strange is going on with planar magic. The last courier who teleported into Gate Pass, rumor is that he showed up burnt to a crisp. Not that *I* have that sort of magic anyway, but if we're going to talk to Lyceum, we're going to have to go overland. And that's a problem, because the city's walls are sealed.

"Ever since their emperor died, the Ragesians have been trying to show that they're not weak, and they're marching an army in our direction, since the mountain pass we're in is apparently 'strategically valuable.' Either way, a few idiots on the city council want to negotiate with the Ragesians, and rumor is they're going to invite a group of inquisitors into the city to look for 'magic-users who are hostile to the empire.' They've sealed the gates of the city so no one can get out, to make sure they look like they're cooperating, and only military personnel can get in or out.

"We're going to have to get out of the city, and I'm open to suggestions as to how. Once we're out, I can get us safely to Lyceum, but before we get ahead of ourselves, we have a mission tonight.

"The short version is that we've got to meet a contact — a gnome named Rivereye Badgerface — in about an hour at a guarded depository about a half-mile from here. He's carrying a case of vital military intelligence which he stole from the Ragesian palace, and the heads of the resistance think that it needs to reach Lyceum. We've got to get that case, get out of the city, and get far away from here before the idiot city council lets the Ragesian inquisitors in. Once that happens, the odds of us escaping are —" she finishes off her mug of beer in one long guzzle "— slim.

"I know I'd love to stay here and fight against the Ragesians, but I'm no soldier, and this mission might be more important. Worst case, you get away from the Ragesians and we can part ways a few days down the road. Best case, you can come with me to Lyceum, and we come back with an army of our own to drive off the Ragesians. But we've got to act fast either way. Are you ready for this?"

After this, the conversation turns to planning. Torrent does not take an active role, so that the heroes are the ones plotting their course, though she does provide information or suggestions if asked. The following topics may be of interest:

Gate Pass

Torrent knows almost as much about the city as a native, and answers any questions the party has about the city's defenses and laws. Alternately, allow Knowledge (local) checks (DC 10 or less) for information you think the heroes are overlooking.

Getting Out of the City

The walls of the city are patrolled, and the gates are closed and guarded, except to official city personnel and a few diplomats. Simply walking out is impossible, and sneaking out will be difficult. A Knowledge (local) check (DC 10) will reveal that one city councilman, Erdan Menash, is sympathetic to heroes and adventurers. Torrent has never met him, but she knows where he lives — his house is impossible to miss.

If the heroes ask Torrent for suggestions, she recommends they find someone with political power, or perhaps try to convince some of the mages at Gabal's school to lend their magic to aid their escape. Whatever plan the heroes come up with, Torrent has enough knowledge of the city to give them an idea to how difficult it will be (see Act Three: Escaping the City for a discussion of these options). She won't endorse any plan that requires them to kill any Gate Pass defenders or innocent bystanders.

The Road to Lyceum

Torrent has a much clearer plan for once the party is out of the city. They will take a little-traveled road south from the city to the border of the Innenotdar Fire Forest, thirty miles away. Decades ago, the Elf Road ran through the fire forest to the nation of Dassen, where Lyceum is, but during the last war some catastrophe happened. The forest was set on fire, and it has not stopped burning since.

Torrent says that all the other major roads that would lead to Dassen, and thus to Lyceum, are either impassable in winter, or they'll be crawling with Ragesian soldiers. Rather than trying to survive in the wilderness in winter, or to sneak past countless patrols of Ragesians, Torrent has prepared for a journey through the fire forest. She has a pouch full of potions that will let the party survive the intense heat, and she doubts any hostile forces will be able to muster enough similar magic to follow them: two for each PC, familiar, animal companion, and cherished mount, plus six more. Each potion lasts one day, and she is confident the trip through the fire forest should take less than two days.

The road between Gate Pass and the fire forest is the most dangerous part of the journey, but it's relatively unused. Torrent thinks that if they go quickly they should be able to make it to Innenotdar safely and avoid any Ragesian patrols.

Torrent assures them that Gate Pass is strong enough to fight off an assault, and the city can easily survive a siege of several months, long enough for the heroes to get to Lyceum and bring back reinforcements.

Rivereye's Story

The gnome sorcerer was a spy from Lyceum, acting as a servant in the imperial palace for Kreven, second-in-command of the inquisitors. Apparently Rivereye is very ugly and blithely unaware of it. His normal contact in Gate Pass — Peppin Tallman, a human wizard from Lyceum — would occasionally pass along information to the resistance, but a week ago that contact was found dead. A *speak with dead* spell revealed that Tallman was scheduled to meet Rivereye, as well as the time and place of the meeting, but the identity of Tallman's killer was unknown. Torrent is a little worried that someone else is after the case, and that Rivereye might spook when he sees Peppin isn't there.

Inquisitors

Torrent has never faced one, but she has heard stories. Allow the heroes to make Knowledge (arcana or religion) checks to recall the information listed in the sidebar on page 22.

Psionics

As explained in the Introduction, the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign doesn't require the psionics rules at all. However, if you are using psionics, note the following.

The trillith (dreamborn monsters that play a role in later adventures) possess abilities similar to psionic powers, and two of the characters in this adventure — Kathor Danava and Crystin Ja-Nafeel — have connections to the trillith. This is represented by their sorcerer levels; if you are using psionics, these characters could instead have similar psionic abilities.

Lyceum
Knowledge (Arcana or History)

DC 10: Lyceum is a school devoted to teaching magic of all sorts. It is located in the small town of Seaquen, on the rocky tip of a marshy peninsula in southern Dassen. Students often travel far to learn foreign magic.

DC 15: The head of Lyceum, a diviner named Simeon, has visited all the major cities in the region and has friends and contacts among the mages of those cities. He founded his school to encourage solidarity among magic-users, and to find ways to use magic for the benefit of everyday people. Many governments think of him as a meddler.

DC 20: Simeon, primarily an advisor for nobles and rich merchants, has recruited a cadre of talented warmages and battle clerics, and has offered Seaquen's harbor as a home port for the Wayfarers, a group of magically-inclined entertainers, to both make his school seem more legitimate and to discourage Dassen from trying to levy taxes against it.

DC 30: Many years ago, an archmage was slain at the site where Lyceum now stands. Rumors say he was entombed beneath the school in caverns filled with fire.

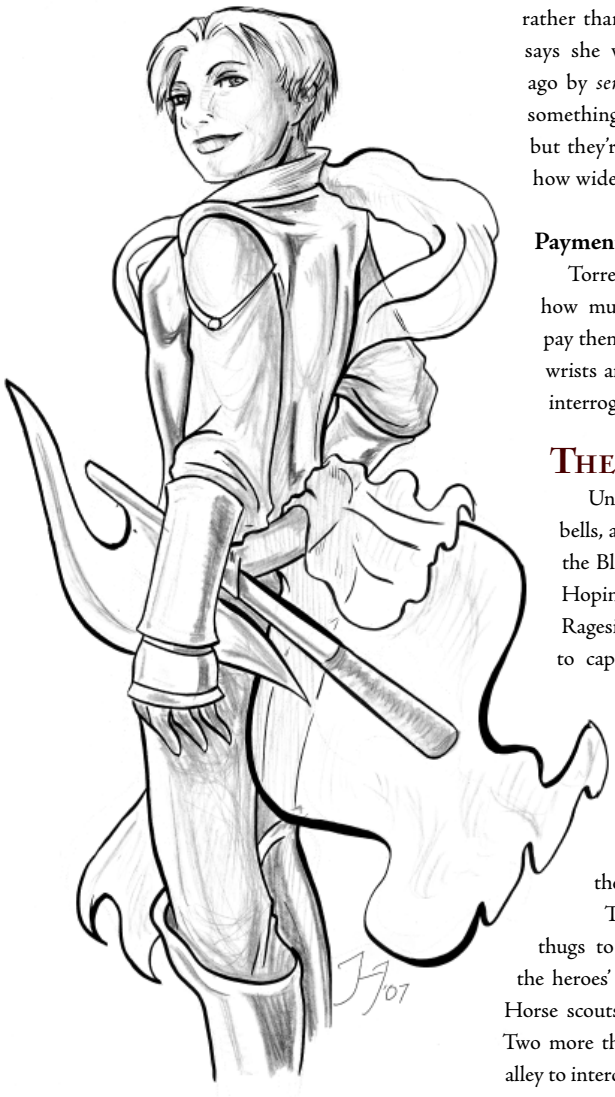
Ragesian Inquisitors
Knowledge (Arcana or Religion)

DC 10: The inquisitors hunt for dangerous magic (any magic used by other people), and they have special counterspell abilities. Most inquisitors are humans, orcs, or half-orcs, and they carry metal claws on their hands. Many are skilled interrogators; they use their claws to slit prisoners' wrists, forcing swift answers.

DC 15: Inquisitors are almost exclusively clerics, with access to divine fire, magic, and protection domains. They wear masks to shield their souls, and thus are more resistant to mind-affecting magic. No one has seen Supreme Inquisitor Leska's face for nearly forty years.

DC 20: Inquisitors cannot turn or control undead; instead, they channel negative energy to dispel magic. Positive energy can inhibit their counterspelling abilities.

DC 30: Supreme Inquisitor Leska is rumored to be gathering information on how to steal divine power — not to become a god herself, but to make herself strong enough so that she never need be beholden to a deity. She and her followers are therefore all heretics in the eyes of the deities, and they cannot be raised from the dead except as undead abominations.



Torrent – Art by J. L. Jones

The Ragesian Army

Torrent suspects scouts are scattered through the mountains and surrounding lands, but she's confident her route will avoid most if not all the Ragesians.

A Knowledge (history or nobility and royalty) check (DC 15) lets a character recall that the army headed to Gate Pass has easily over ten thousand men, and is under the command of General Danava. They don't have many spellcasters, aside from the inquisitors, but they do have some riders with wyvern mounts, and the can call on a few monstrous allies.

Lyceum

Allow the heroes to make Knowledge (arcana) checks to recall the information in the sidebar.

Torrent can provide any information requiring a DC 15 or lower check, but she prefers to focus on more immediate matters rather than ramble on about the school. She says she was contacted by Lyceum a week ago by *sending* spell. The mages there know something is amiss with teleportation magic, but they're not sure exactly what's wrong, or how widespread the problem might be.

Payment

Torrent just laughs at this idea, and asks how much they think the inquisitors will pay them for the honor of cutting open their wrists and letting them bleed out as they're interrogated.

The Ambush (EL 4)

Under the cover of the New Year's bells, a group of bounty hunters known as the Black Horses is setting up an ambush. Hoping to turn over spellcasters to the Ragesians for 100 gp a head, they plan to capture Torrent and any magic-users among the PCs. While the heroes talk with Torrent, a group of Black Horse hunters sneak into the pub through the trapdoor on the roof (using acid to melt the locks), while others gather around the ground floor.

The plan is for a pair of Black Horse thugs to smash open the door, distracting the heroes' attention, while a half-dozen Black Horse scouts rush down from the second floor. Two more thugs and a fighting dog wait in the alley to intercept them should they try to flee, and the path down the alley is blocked by a makeshift wall, forcing them to run into the street; there, the leader of the group, a former Ragesian cavalryman named Kathor, waits to finish them off. But things don't go as planned in two ways. First, the city falls under attack right as the thugs are about to spring their ambush. Second, Kathor feels the mission is dishonorable, and he decides not to lend his aid.

The following scene involves several groups working in tandem while off-screen events affect the battlefield, so make sure you understand the timing of events before running this encounter.

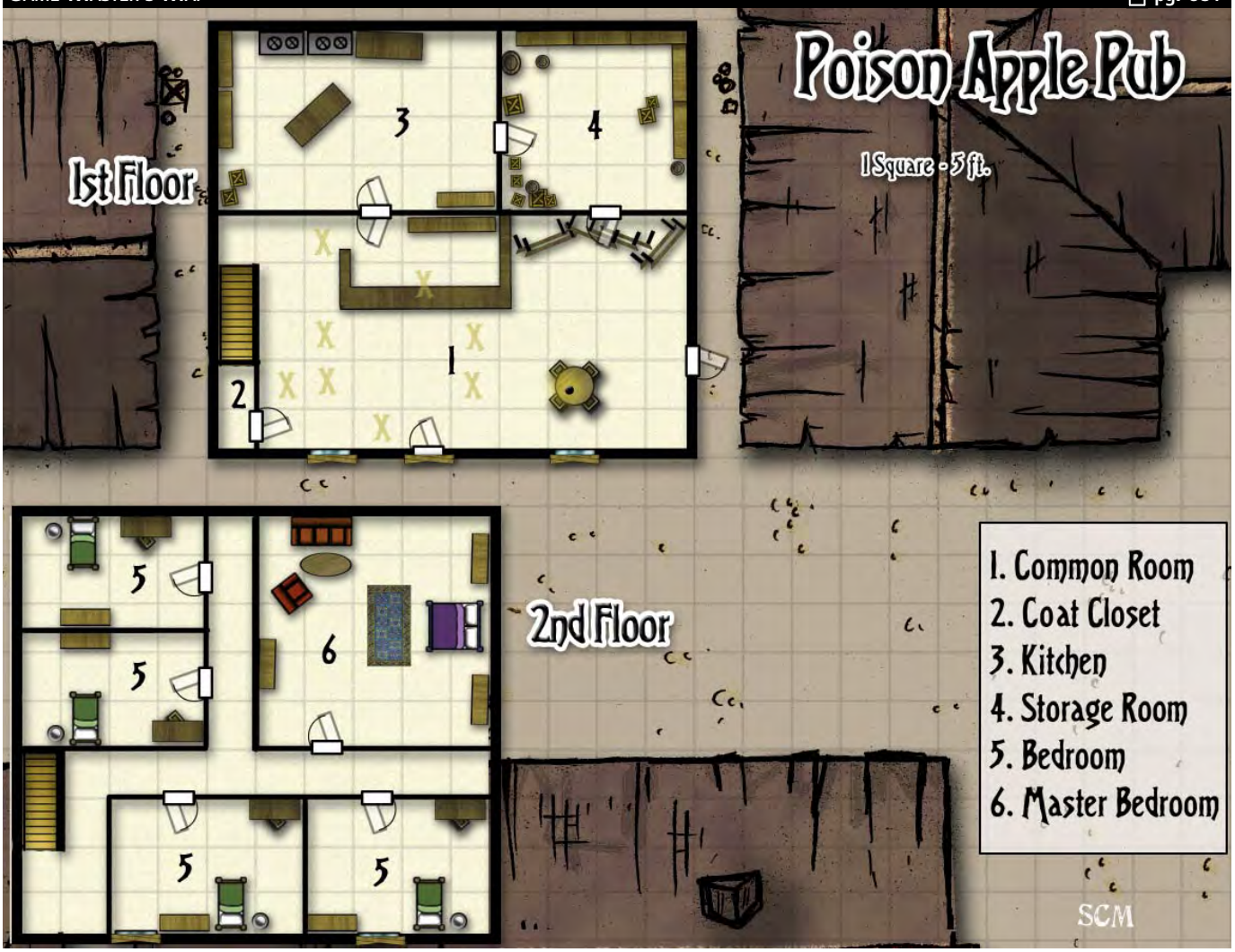
Springing the Trap

Round Zero

When you feel the conversation with Torrent is winding down and the party has a good sense of its plan of action, the bells of the city's celebration go silent in the span of a few seconds. At the sudden silence, ask the heroes for Listen

Game Master's Map

pg. 631



The Black Horse Bounty Hunters

This disreputable band consists of about twenty-five men, commanded by **Renard Woodsman** (LE male human ranger 3), who stays at his camp is in the mountains south of Gate Pass. Renard's second-in-command, **Kathor Danava** (LG male human sorcerer 1/fighter 2), is in charge of the bounty hunters' mission to capture magic-users in the city. Renard was hired by the Ragesians to slip his men into the city, and his band has been busy taking out potential troublemakers. Every few days he is contacted by *sending* from an unknown Ragesian who gives him updates and intelligence on where likely targets are.

Kathor was formerly in the Ragesian military — his father is the general leading the army coming to Gate Pass — but he left after discovering he had magical powers, afraid he would be taken in by the inquisitors. He joined up with the first group who respected his horsemanship skills, and in the few weeks since then he has slowly come to regret it. His father was once a friend of the city, so Kathor possesses a diplomatic passport which allows him (but only him) to enter or leave the city freely.

All Black Horse members wear a red armband with a black horse head and letters that read "murderers" in Ignan. (This is a joke by the tailor who made the armbands; he was told to stitch "Black Horse." None of the bounty hunters read Ignan.)

The Black Horse in the city have paid for rooms in the Mannish Inn, about a mile from where the PCs meet Torrent. From there, Kathor communicates with Renard via his raven familiar, which delivers messages once a day. Kathor's honor forces him to generally obey Renard's orders, but he won't fight alongside the other bounty hunters unless forced, and even then he'll offer quarter. If the heroes come to him privately, Kathor could be convinced to help. The heroes can locate him at the Mannish Inn with a Gather Information check (DC 15), or by interrogating a bounty hunter.

Kathor starts as Unfriendly — he doesn't trust anyone and wants to be left alone to brood, but if the heroes can make him Friendly or Helpful, he'll decide it's time to leave the bounty hunters, and won't be present at the ambush in Act Four. He warns them about Renard receiving *sending* spells, saying someone might be watching them.

If only Indifferent, Kathor merely warns the heroes that the rest of the company he works for is watching the exits of the city, and if they cross paths, his duty will force him to fight them. He suggests if that happens, they ask for quarter. He does not want to have to kill them.

If the heroes make Kathor at least Friendly, reward them with experience as if they had defeated a CR 3 challenge.

checks. Anyone who beats DC 20 hears creaking floorboards overhead from the bounty hunter scouts' movement. From this moment, the party has two rounds before the bounty hunters make their move.

Round One

At the end of the first round, distant muted thumps fill the air, like the sound of ripe fruit landing on the roof of a house. These are actually Ragesian "bombs" being dropped by wyverns overflying the city.

Round Two

At the end of the second round, a Listen check (DC 5) detects Kathor shouting, "Front door: go!" and then the front door shudders as a battering ram slams into it. Make a Strength check for the bounty hunters at the door (1d20+5 vs. Break DC 18). They retry each round until they are successful, or until the party exits some other way.

The first bounty hunter to see the group shouts, "Drop your weapons and come quietly. We don't want to break your valuable little heads."

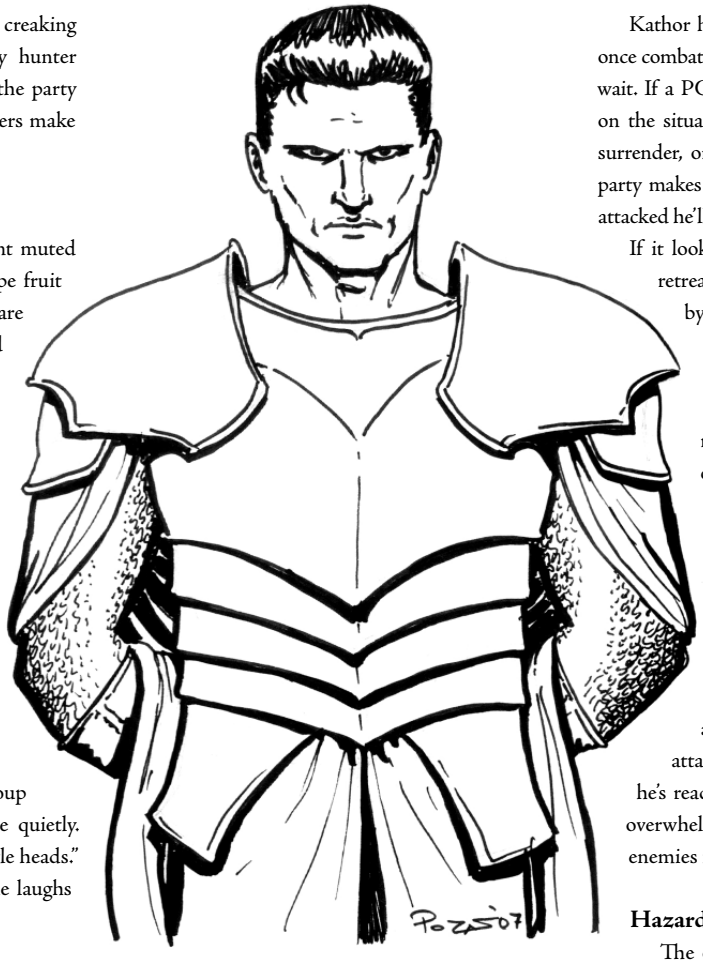
If Torrent gets a chance to reply, she laughs and says, "Just try it, buddy."

Round Three

At the end of the third round, the scouts on the second floor move down the stairs, hoping to pincer the group, but only two of them make it down: just after they do, the building shakes and a deafening boom sounds overhead. The tavern has just been struck by a Ragesian dragonbomb (see Appendix A).

Ceiling boards crack and buckle, and the flaming oil spraying around upstairs leaks down into the room like a fiery rain. Overhead, a handful of screams sound out as the remaining scouts are caught in the flaming burst and slain. A dying scout stumbles down the stairs, on fire. The bronze bust of Emperor Coaltongue falls off the wall and lands with a thud.

Have everyone in the building make Reflex saves (DC 10) to avoid taking 1 point of fire damage from spraying oil. Additionally, those squares marked on the inn map with an "X" are filled with shattered debris from the ceiling, which counts as difficult terrain. If one of these squares is occupied, choose a nearby unoccupied square, as mere falling debris can be fatal to 1st-level characters. Creatures passing through squares filled with burning debris must make a Reflex save (DC 10) to avoid taking 1d6 points of fire damage.



Torrent casts buff spells if she has time before combat. Once battle begins, she relies on her family's heirloom battleaxe. Used to fighting with wizards, she often stays back to protect allied spellcasters in case enemies get past front-line defenders.

Torrent (CR 2): hp 17, Appendix B.
Black Horse thugs (2) (CR ½): hp 6 each, Appendix B.
Black Horse scouts (6) (CR 1): hp 11 each, Appendix B.
Kathor Danava (CR 3): hp 24, Appendix B.
Sauce, dog (CR ⅓): hp 6, MM.

Tactics

The bounty hunters strike to subdue, unless they realize a particular person is too dangerous to be cautious with, in which case they switch to lethal damage. They're loyal to each other and won't abandon their allies, though if it looks like the party will kill fallen bounty hunters, they might surrender on the condition that they're allowed to tend to their friends.

Kathor himself does not get involved, though once combat begins he'll cast *shield* on himself and wait. If a PC comes out of the tavern, depending on the situation he'll either call for the party to surrender, or order his men to surrender. If the party makes a break for it, he won't stop them. If attacked he'll defend himself and strike to subdue.

If it looks like all his men are defeated, he'll retreat on his horse, and in the chaos caused by the Ragesian attack, it should be difficult for any PC to pursue him.

Should he be forced to fight, Kathor likes to set up devastating mounted attacks, maneuvering while casting *true strike* (Concentration DC 10 while riding, or DC 15 while his mount is running), then charging while using Power Attack for full. Kathor does not understand exactly how his magic works, so he may make several attempts to cast his spells if he is disrupted by armor or riding. Unless someone is attacking him, he will not engage until he's ready. He believes that a single show of overwhelming force is the best way to make enemies fear fighting him.

Hazard

The only highly flammable things in the pub are the sheets covering the unused tables, so after a few rounds they might catch fire. It will take many minutes for the pub itself to burn down.

Escaping the Pub

Aside from the alley door, the party could try to go for the roof where they could cross over to the Finner house by the skybridge, but to do this they would have to pass through thirty feet of flaming rubble (difficult terrain, 1d6 fire damage per round, Reflex DC 15 to avoid catching on fire). Alternately, they might try to break open one of the boarded up windows (hardness 5; hp 5; Break DC 10; takes 10 feet of movement and a Climb or Jump check DC 10 to get through).

If the party makes a break for it through the alley, they'll either have to go through a makeshift wall at the back of the alley (hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 18), or go out front, where Kathor waits for them.

Aftermath

If the party defeats the bounty hunters or if they escape, Torrent says they should hurry and get

Kathor Danava – Art by Claudio Pozas

to her meeting with Rivereye. She's worried that the firebombing might make him flee, and she can't risk losing him. She'll unload charges of her cure light wounds wand to get everyone healthy, and encourage the party to head to the depository.

If the party is defeated, they likely won't die, since the bounty is only for living spellcasters. The bounty hunters pull out manacles and rope, but Kathor calls them off, saying that too many people will see them, and they can't risk dragging the prisoners around in the middle of an attack. The men will balk, but Kathor is stern, and eventually they spit at any helpless PCs, take some valuable gear from them (but not magic items), then mutter something about "hundreds of gold coins" and leave. Kathor ignores the PCs as he rides off.

Navigating Gate Pass

The streets are starting to fill with panicking people, and though the bombing ends after a few minutes, a battle has begun at the west wall. Townsfolk rush about trying to put out fires or get to the shelter of temples, and soldiers hurry to their posts, slowed by the throng and chaos. All the while, bells ring urgent warnings up and down the mountain pass.

As the party heads for their rendezvous with Rivereye at the depository, emphasize the confusion and the masses of people surging about in near darkness. The sidebar below is one way to present what happens if the characters focus only on their destination. But if you want to present the heroes with ways to help, run the encounters below.

Aiding the Wounded (EL 1)

The party passes a family in the streets. The father is burnt and barely standing, having run back inside his burning house to try to rescue his wife, whose unconscious and burnt body he carries. With his three children, huddled in coats and whimpering, the man croaks out cries for help. As the party moves by, the man collapses, exhausted.

If the party helps heal the man and his wife, reward them for a CR ½ encounter. If they go out of their way to ensure that the family gets safely to a shelter, reward them for a CR 1 encounter. If the party doesn't take the initiative, Torrent will offer to help, saying they can spare a little time to do the right thing.

Burning Building (EL 2)

A cluster of four-story buildings have caught fire from the bombing, and a crowd is watching in dismay when horror strikes — a woman smashes out a window on the fourth floor and cries for help, screaming that she's trapped. From this moment, the party has four minutes to get her out before the fire reaches her room and she tries to jump.

Options include arranging to catch her with a blanket (Strength DC 19; up to seven characters may aid in this check), climbing up the side of the building to reach her and then climbing back down (Climb DC 10, perhaps difficult while carrying a 150-pound person), casting *feather fall* on her when she jumps, or going through an adjacent building that isn't on fire, reaching the roof via a skybridge, and dropping a rope to pull her up. Heading inside the burning building without protection would be almost certainly fatal.

If the party rescues the woman, reward them for a CR 2 encounter.

Narrating the Journey Instead

If you prefer, you can simply narrate the heroes hurrying through the city (see below for suggestions), rather than running this sequence of mini-encounters. If they want to stop and try to make a difference, you should let them, but the pervading sense here should be one of almost helplessness —chaos is raging around them, and there's nothing they can do to affect the battle.

Navigating Gate Pass

You exit a burning building, and monsters are flying through the skies overhead. Buildings are crumpling and exploding a few streets over. People clog the streets trying to see what's happening, and you have to get through them to accomplish your mission. You press out into the crowds, heading east, where you see a huge cluster of burning buildings, and as you get close to the gate to the next district, you are swallowed up in a huge throng of panicked townsfolk.

Soldiers from the eastern districts are trying to push through the crowd to reach the battle at the main gate, while normal people try to flee in the opposite direction. The gates, designed to hold back invaders, are too narrow to let you all through. You're being crushed, pushed back and forth, and though many are trying to yell for order, for people to let the soldiers through first, mayhem reigns.

And then something overhead roars, and all reason flees your mind. You are prey, helpless, and hundreds of shapes silhouetted against firelight swell close to you. As one, the crowd screams, and you fight to get away from the horror in the clouds, the thundering, dread-inspiring beats of its wings driving you on in swarming terror. It's all you can do to avoid being crushed in the press of bodies, and after minutes of struggling, you stagger wearily out of the crowd on the far side of the gate.

You regroup with your friends, watching panicked mothers crying out for their children, fathers carrying children burned near to death by the firebombing. Despair and confusion fills nearly every face, but you force your way onward, and you see your destination — the tower — standing high above the glow of your burning city. You rush past a building on fire, hearing the screams of a woman trapped on a top floor, the roars of pain of those few who have managed to stagger out of the inferno. You pass looters smashing down doors of shops and pulling away trinkets that will be worthless in the coming days of battle. You even see a bewildered noble, so shocked by the attack that all he cares about is finding a lost pet.

Sometimes you see people fighting against the chaos — a city guardsman carrying a young girl, trying to find her mother; thugs from the local thieves' guild gathered out in front of their hideout, shouting orders to organize a fire brigade; a cluster of young men in white cloaks shouting for the injured to follow them to a nearby church — but most just look to the skies, watching helplessly as Gate Pass griffon riders battle the wyvern knights of the Ragesians.

Overhead you spot one of these battles, and then hear a thunderous crack as the griffon rider shatters his lance in the throat of a wyvern. He tosses his broken lance down to the crowd with a cheer as the wyvern spirals out of control and crashes to the roof of a building the next street over. Then moments later a deep, challenging roar fills the air, thumping, pulsing wingbeats fan the city flames and kick cinders into the sky, and you witness a massive red dragon fly forth from the smoke and crush the stunned griffon and rider in its snapping maw with a sickening, crunching sound.

Once again, after too short a reprieve, pandemonium besets the crowd. The streets clear as people flee desperately, foolishly into the nearest building, and as the dragon swoops away into the night, headed for the colossal statue of Emperor Coaltongue in the central district, you see that your path to the depository tower is clear.

Terror in the Skies (EL ½)

When the party nears the gate between the two districts, it is packed with too many people trying to squeeze through too narrow a passage. Suddenly, fear rolls across the party like blast of cold wind. Have the PCs make a Will save (DC 21). Nondragon creatures who fail become panicked for 1 minute. Almost everyone in the crowd panics at the same time, screaming and tearing at each other to flee. Those who panic flee irrationally through the crowd, and must make a Reflex save or else take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the crush of terrified citizens. One soldier patrolling the gate wall jumps in terror and falls amid the crowd, being trampled to unconsciousness.

Characters who make a Spot check (DC 10, or DC 5 for those with low-light vision) notice a crimson, bat-winged shape the size of a house swooping through the sky about a hundred feet overhead. As it passes out of view over other buildings, a surge of panicked screams rise along its path. It is too dark to make out clearly what the creature causing the fear is. Once the panic ends, the party can regroup.

Animal Crossing (EL 2)

Just two blocks from the depository, a wealthy merchant wanders the streets, calling for his "baby." He sees the party and runs up to them, begging for their help. His house was struck by a bomb, and though the stone building did not burn, the sound of the thunderstone spooked Kiki, causing her to flee. Kiki is the merchant's pet dire weasel.

Now a scared and unfriendly dire weasel runs through the streets, while it's master runs around shouting for her to come back. The merchant might approach the party asking for them to bring his pet back, or Kiki might wander into their hiding place in the night. Though she's not immediately hostile, she will attack if threatened.

Kiki, dire weasel (CR 2): hp 13, MM.

Kiki has a collar and tag that gives her name and the address of her owner.

The merchant is thrilled if he gets his pet back, and hurries to a shelter. He scoffs at the idea of payment, offended that anyone would be trying to profit in a time of war, but a Diplomacy check (DC 15) can convince him to hand over 10 gp as compensation for injuries the party sustained (or claim they sustained) bringing the weasel back.

Torrent, for her part, thinks this is a complete waste of time.

Act Two: Retrieving the Case

In the next district to the east, a gnome spy named **Rivereye Badgerface** (CG male gnome sorcerer 4) waits at the Depository Tower, expecting to hand over a case full of valuable military intelligence to his contact, Peppin. Unbeknownst to him, Peppin is dead, slain by agents of the elvish nation of Shahalesti.

The depository is an eighty foot high tower located in the center of its district, and is surrounded by a fenced compound that is guarded day and night. Torrent has an account there, so she and the party will be able to enter, though the guards are cautious, not wanting rioters to get inside.

The grounds of the depository are 120 feet square, while the tower itself is 60 feet in diameter and 80 feet high. A 20-foot high iron fence rings the compound, with the space between the fence and tower filled with well tended gardens. Just inside the entry gate are a pair of beautiful fountains; one depicting four elemental spirits common to local legends — a dragon, a worm, a kraken, and an eagle — and the other dominated by a statue of Emperor Coaltongue, posing with his torch held high, lit by *continual flame*.

There is only one entrance to the compound, through a sturdy gate house guarded at all times by four veteran depository guards (LN warrior 4/expert 2, Sense Motive +10). Two security guards (LN warrior 1) patrol each floor of the tower, and another four patrol the grounds. The guards on the night shifts are all dwarves, orcs, or half-orcs, since their darkvision lets them better keep an eye on the valuables stored here.

The tower has only one ground entrance, large double iron doors (hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 30), which are protected by a special *arcane lock* that can be bypassed with a password that the guards all know (today it is "Avilona bar flu").

One guard will escort the party to the entrance to the tower, and offer them lanterns if they didn't bring a light source, since the interior is dark. He tells them there are guards inside, so make sure they don't 'accidentally' open anyone else's locker. He also says that one ugly gnome already came inside, so they shouldn't be startled if they see him.

Spy versus Spy (EL 4)

Rivereye has been taken captive by an elf spy from Shahalesti named **Larion Prevarieth** (N male elf rogue 2/wizard 1). An associate of Larion, **Shealis Amlauril** (N female elf evoker 5), has been watching the goings-on of the rebellion while posing as a student at the city's wizard's school. Shealis sent Larion and a pair of Shahalesti soldiers to recover the information Rivereye is carrying. Accompanied by a lantern archon that is loyal to the Shahalesti, and aided by various potions, Larion and the soldiers snuck into the depository, watched from the rooftop for Rivereye to arrive, then followed him into the tower, where they quietly knocked out the dwarf and half-orc security guards, then ambushed Rivereye. One half-orc guard was killed in the process because the archon sensed that he was evil.

The elves recovered the case containing the information, but Rivereye managed to convince Larion that the case was trapped to explode if it was opened, and that only his contact Peppin knew the password. Larion knocked Rivereye unconscious and hid him, then sent the two soldiers to take the case back to their hideout. Larion's fairly certain Shealis would be able to dispel any trap that might be on the case, but Larion is worried about ruining the mission. He and the lantern archon will wait until sunrise for the party, but if the party doesn't show they take Rivereye and retreat at sunrise.

> The first floor of the tower is one huge room, and though the far side is hidden in shadows, it looks to be about sixty feet in diameter. A broad stone ramp circles clockwise upward to the left of the door, while the interior of the room is filled with aisles of metal lockers, each slightly larger than a coffin propped upright. The ceiling is twenty feet high, supported by squat round columns.

When the party arrives, Larion is on the second floor, near the ramp, and the lantern archon hovers silently on the third floor. Larion quickly uses *disguise self* to appear as Rivereye (he has to hunch to pull off looking like a gnome), then casts *unseen servant* and orders it to open the nearest door to the balcony if he comes within 5 feet of it. He also drinks a potion of *spider climb*, in case he has to flee.

He heads downstairs and feebly nods to the group, coughing and complaining that he caught a cold on his trip here from the Ragesian capital. Disguised as Rivereye, he's a pug-faced, ugly little gnome with blue robes and a runny nose. A Spot check (DC 25) sees through his disguise, but it should be easy to figure out something is up when Rivereye calls whoever talks to him first "Peppin."

If the party doesn't make a big deal of this, Larion continues his ruse, assuming whoever he is talking to is Peppin. He takes the group to the second floor, to a random one of the countless lockers in the depository. He says that they just need to say the password, and it will open. Torrent knows nothing about needing a password, and if at this point the party has not said anything, Torrent asks for them to explain that Peppin isn't with them. Whenever Larion realizes he won't get a password from them (a password which doesn't exist in the first place), he flees.

Lantern archon (CR 2): hp 4, MM.
Larion Prevarieth (CR 3): hp 15, Appendix B.

Tactics

The lantern archon uses its *aid* spell-like ability on itself and Larion if it has the chance before the party sees it. Remember that its aura of menace applies to all hostile creatures, not just evil creatures. The lantern archon is a goodly creature, but it is loyal to the Shahalaesti and views anyone opposing its mission to be an enemy, though it will not kill foes who are no longer a threat.

Larion's goal is to escape. The archon will seek to help him.

If the party doesn't stop him, Larion simply runs to the balcony door on the second floor, which his *unseen servant* opens for him. He heads outside, tells the servant to keep the door closed, and then uses *spider climb* to reach the roof. From this point on, if the door to the balcony is open at the beginning of Larion's turn, the servant closes it.

Once on the roof, Larion drinks a potion of *jump*, then sprints down the sloped, snow-covered roof (a 20-foot running start; Balance DC 17) and jumps, hoping to clear at least twenty feet. It's 20 feet to the fence that surrounds the compound, and then another 10 feet to the nearest rooftop. Regardless of whether he gets enough distance, he casts *feather fall* and descends safely, then tries to lose pursuit in the city streets. The lantern archon slips out through an open door on the top floor and flies away.

If the party impedes Larion's escape, he'll try to tumble away and just run, but if forced to fight he'll call for help, then run through the aisles of lockers trying to find cover so he can hide. He'll try to make it to a wall or pillar so he can crawl along the ceiling and stay out of sight long enough to get to the balcony. If he calls for help, the lantern archon flies down the ramp, arriving one round later. The lantern archon tries to keep the party's attention focused on it so Larion can get away.



Larion and the archon preferentially attack orcs and half-orcs, and hesitate to attack elves or half-elves. Remember that Larion still has to make a Climb check (DC 20 for the side of the tower, though *spider climb* grants him a +8 bonus) to hold on if he takes damage while *spider climb* is active.

The Depository Tower

Each floor of the tower contains dozens of metal lockers, used by merchants and noblemen to store valuables, or to leave for others to pick up. The ceilings are twenty feet high, with a stone ramp spiraling around the interior wall. The higher floors have balconies encircled by pillars, and every twenty feet or so colorful banners flutter along the side of the tower from the highest balcony, serving as advertisements for local merchants, a somewhat tacky blight to the tower's beauty.

Each balcony has four entrances, all of them strong wooden doors (hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 20). The banners are 15 feet long (hardness 0; hp 2; Climb DC 20), and thick enough to support a person's weight.

Combat Complication

The guards in the tower are all unconscious or dead, but if somehow the guards elsewhere in the compound are alerted, one veteran depository guard and three security guards rush to the scene, assuming someone is trying to steal something. The guards don't pursue anyone outside the gate.

War Flavor

Should any PC reach the balcony, he is treated to an awesome and stunning view of the battle at the city's western gate, about a mile and a half away. Fire lights up the western sky, the result of wyvern-bombing and of trebuchets hurling flaming balls of pitch into the city. Just then, a squadron of Gate Pass griffon riders swoop past over the city rooftops, heading to join the battle, their battle horns blaring.

Aftermath

Larion and the archon head back to Gabal's school if they get away, warning Shealis that someone may come looking for her. They will then be present at the school if the party goes there.

If the party captures Larion, he refuses to cooperate unless convinced that the party is friendly to Shahalesti. If the party captures the lantern archon, it will to talk to non-orcs. It is Unfriendly, but if made Friendly it will tell the party Larion works for Shealis, and offer to take them to her.

The depository guards won't let the PCs leave until they make sure none of the lockers are damaged. This way, even if the PCs don't look, the guards will locate the unconscious Rivereye, whose information is key in recovering the case.

Treasure Lockers

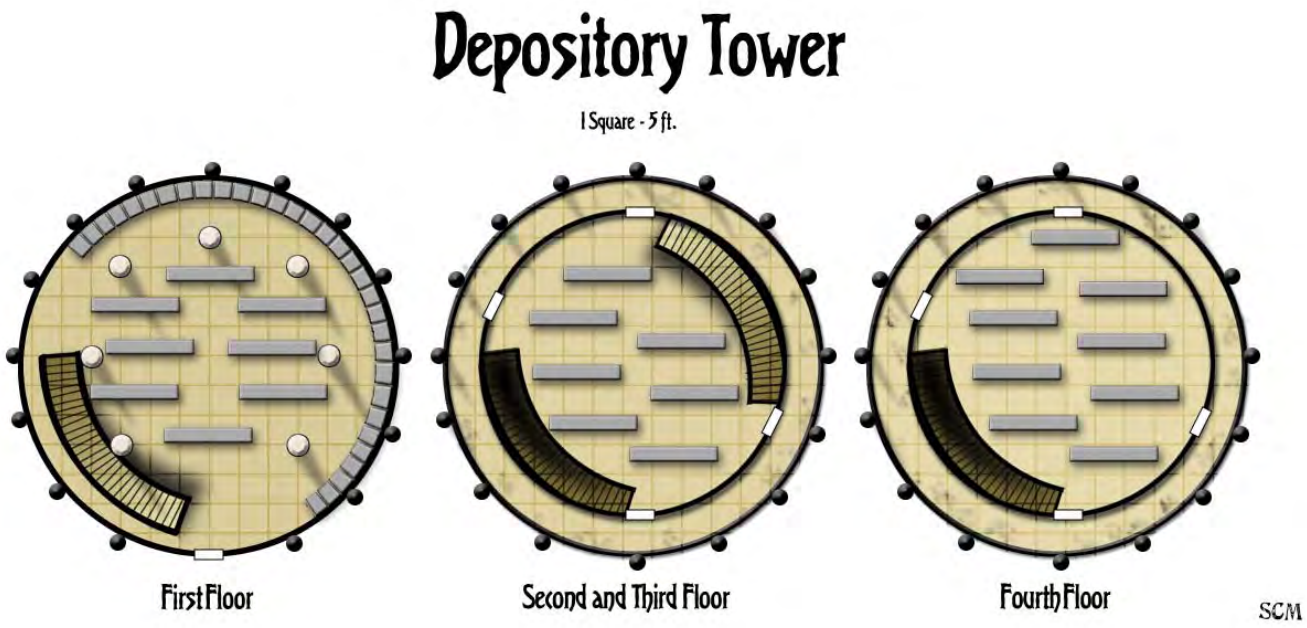
The large reinforced lockers are of varying sizes (hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 30), and are warded with a *fire trap* (1d4+3 fire damage, 5-foot radius, Ref DC 13 half, Disable Device DC 27), which the owner of the locker can bypass with a password. Should the PCs manage to open one of these lockers, it should contain treasure appropriate to a CR 4 encounter.

Enemy Good Guys?

Lantern archons are always good-aligned, and some groups may have a problem fighting celestials. One intent of this encounter is to show that the Shahalesti are not simple villains, even if their goals aren't matched to the party's. Most of the elves the party faces are neither good nor evil, but they are racist and distrustful of foreigners. They will tend to assume the PCs are evil, since they are trying to protect their nation, and view those who oppose them as threats to their families and homeland. Even if the party tries to negotiate, the Shahalesti start as Hostile. The neutral Shahalesti are more than willing to put a fallen enemy to death if no one (such as the archon) stops them.

Rivereye – Art by Claudio Pozas

Game Master's Map pg. 632



On the fourth floor, Rivereye and several guards are tied up and unconscious, with one dead half-orc moved far away, his face burned by the lantern archon's light ray. If awakened, Rivereye hails the party as his saviors, explains what happened, and tells how he outwitted Larion. He's sad that Peppin is dead, but begs the party to recover the case and make sure it gets to Lyceum. As part of his job as servant in the imperial palace, Rivereye was placed under a *geas* by the inquisitors not to talk about what he overheard, but he can say that the case contains information that can't be lost. If asked, Rivereye can describe the case — black metal, about a foot long and wide, and half a foot deep, made of (he thinks) adamantine, with a lock.

Rivereye says that he overheard the lantern archon talking with three elves, and though he didn't understand the elves, he understood the celestial — thanks to its *tongues* ability — and knows the group had a contact at Gabal's school. (Celestials are not very good at being sneaky.)

Torrent encourages the party to recover the case, and Rivereye can guide them to Gabal's school. If they're too injured or out of spells, she understands they need to rest, and recommends taking shelter in a nearby temple to a god of music and revelry, under which is one of the resistance's many safe houses.

Reaching the Safe House

The temple safe house Torrent knows is only a few blocks away, and by this point most people have cleared the streets, having already taken shelter, though the bombing has ended. In its place, a dramatic aerial battle occurs overhead. As the party nears the safe house, they have a chance to face their first Ragesian foe.

Fallen Devil (EL 2)

The battle in the skies between Ragesian wyvern riders and Gate Pass griffon riders has been long and bloody. The party sees two flying shapes — one with feathered wings, the other with bat wings — cross paths overhead, and a loud crack sounds out. The bat-winged shape spirals out of control and crashes onto the roof of a building further down the street with a death groan. A moment later, the shattered lance of a Gate Pass griffon rider falls out of the sky, its tip having snapped off in the neck of the Ragesian wyvern.

The building atop which the wyvern crashed is directly along the path to the safe house, and as the party comes alongside it, they see a rope tossed down from the roof of the building into the street. The rider of the wyvern dismounted, descended with this rope, and then fled down the nearest alley.

If the party investigates, they find the wyvern dead, a broken lance tip driven into its throat. The rider's tracks are easy to follow in the snow (Survival DC 5). The tracks lead down an alley, and less than a hundred feet from the wyvern the party finds a trio of townsfolk, murdered by someone wielding an axe.

If the party pursues the Ragesian fugitive, he is hiding in a house, having killed the family inside it, though he left one young boy alive, unconscious in the corner, gagged. When the party comes upon him he is just looking for clothes that will fit him, and if they can hide and wait long enough, he'll change out of his full plate, hoping to disguise himself as a local before burning down the house to cover his tracks. If he hears the party approach, he grabs the young boy and awkwardly tries to threaten his life with an axe to his throat, demanding they let him leave.

The warrior, Flaganus Mortus, is a veteran, but injured, wearing full plate and a heavy steel shield, and carrying a masterwork battleaxe and a silver shortsword. Though he's a 4th-level fighter, because of his weakened state he counts as a CR 2 encounter.

Flaganus Mortus (CR 2): hp 9, Appendix B.

The Safe House

If the party succeeds in recovering the case and wants to share it with other agents in the resistance, or if they just need a place to rest for the evening, Torrent guides them to a nearby temple of the Order of the Aquiline Cross, devoted to a god of healing. She says it is a gathering place for resistance members.

The temple Torrent suggests is packed with at least a hundred nervous people, all squeezed into a 40-foot circular prayer chamber and adjacent rooms. Many are nervously relating rumors of how the battle at the main gates is going. Children cry, and priests tend to numerous injuries from

fire, stampeding crowds, or violent looters. People are scared and demoralized. Priests go between the wounded, tending them as best they can, their healing spells all expended.

Just inside the front door, a dark-skinned and dark-haired young woman dressed all in black plays a depressing tune on a guitar — a typical new year's festival song, redone in a minor key. This is **Mulysa Bahri** (CE female half-elf bard 1), bringing everyone's spirits down because she enjoys sharing the suffering. She gets irritable if anyone talks to her, sarcastically saying she left the sheet music for her "happy songs" in her house, which burned down. If a character uses bardic music to inspire courage (or a similar effect), or succeeds on a Perform check (DC 15) to try to bolster the spirits of the crowd, people calm noticeably, glad someone is still optimistic. If this happens, Mulysa rolls her eyes dramatically, gives up, and tries to sleep. Soon, the temple's high priest comes out to survey the situation and the encounter develops as outlined below.

However, if Mulysa is left to play her angsty music, after a few minutes a pair of human teens begin harrassing a young half-orc woman, irrationally blaming her for the Ragesian invasion. A gnome man tries to stop the fight, but succeeds only in attracting more attention. If the party doesn't do something, after another few minutes of insults and yelling the two men drag the woman outside in the street and start beating her, trying to get her to cry out (she won't). The frightened crowd just looks on, too shocked to interfere. A Diplomacy check (DC 15) can get the two teens to leave the woman alone, as can an Intimidate check (DC 1d20+1; the bullies have 1 HD, no Wisdom bonus, and no protection against fear). Any obvious use of magic or any overt violence just makes things worse, though, angering the crowd.

If the PCs calm things down, either by quieting Mulysa or by preventing the beating, the temple's head priest comes out and thanks them personally. If instead the PCs do nothing or manage to cause more trouble, after a moment the head priest arrives and chastises the crowd angrily (this quiets but does not truly calm the crowd), then goes to help the young half-orc woman. In either case, he recognizes Torrent or one of the PCs as a member of the resistance, and he takes them to his office to talk (after making sure the half-orc woman is safe, if she was accosted by the bullies). **Buron Watcher** (NG middle-aged male human cleric 6) is tired and haggard-looking, and while he's not happy with any PCs who made things worse, he welcomes the arrival of anyone who isn't panicking. He has used all his magic for healing.

There is a small safe house under the temple where resistance meetings occasionally take place amid shelves of mountain whiskey, but tonight the PCs are the only resistance members present. Buron is relatively high-ranking in the resistance, and trying to meet with anyone above him is a futile effort; they're too busy dealing with the Ragesians. Buron is trustworthy, however, and can help the party with information and contacts if they feel lost or need suggestions.

If the party brings him the case, he cannot open it; if they have managed to open it, he can tell that the book found inside is written in Infernal, though he cannot decipher the code. He can have a scribe make a copy of a few pages so the resistance might work at breaking the code, but he suggests the more prudent course is to take the case wherever they were originally supposed to. He is not aware of their mission when they first meet him, but if he learns of it, he will wish them a blessed journey.

The party can rest at the temple (and level up if they have enough XP). Not much else occurs at the safe house. It is, after all, safe.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the party keeps the half-orc woman from being beaten, reward them for a CR ½ challenge. If they calm the crowd, reward them for a CR 1 challenge, and make sure if the PCs return to Gate Pass in the future that at least one person they run into remembers their actions and thanks them.

The Elvish Spymaster (EL 5)

The leader of a ring of Shahalesti spies, **Shealis Amlauril** (N female elf evoker 5), is at Gabal's wizard's school, where she pretends to be a student. She does not have the case the party seeks, but is the only easy way for the party to find out where it is. There is a sizeable population of elves in Gate Pass, but they tend to stay to themselves in walled districts, and it is in one of these ghettos where the spies' hideout lies. Otherwise, a Gather Information check (DC 25) can discover where the two spies with the case are.

If neither Larion nor the lantern archon escaped the depository tower, Shealis stays in her room at Gabal's school, gathering her effects and collecting years' worth of observations so she can flee the city (with *fly* and *invisibility*) to Shahalesti. If either of the two escaped, however, Shealis is much more cautious and expects company later that night.

Gabal's School

Gabal's school consists of a small campus with two 50 foot tall towers and several smaller buildings, surrounded by a moat and an iron fence. It is mockingly called The Castle by those in Gate Pass who don't like the school's pompous headmaster. Many of the students have fled, and those who haven't have *arcane locked* and trapped their rooms, making looting a difficult (and dangerous) prospect.

When the Ragesians assaulted, Gabal himself went into hiding, while some of his students went to the battle to lend their aid. Only a handful of students remain at the school — several 1st-level evokers, plus Shealis and a funny but disgruntled mage named **Diogenes** (NG male human enchanter 5).

During the Day

If the PCs arrive any time after sunrise, the front gate is surrounded by over forty angry people, all of them Unfriendly to obvious magic users. People have heard that Gabal went into hiding, and are futilely protesting outside his nearly-abandoned school. Getting in through the *arcane locked* gates is practically impossible, though if the mob recognizes anyone in the party as a magic-user, they get loud and start shouting at the party, surrounding them and pushing them.

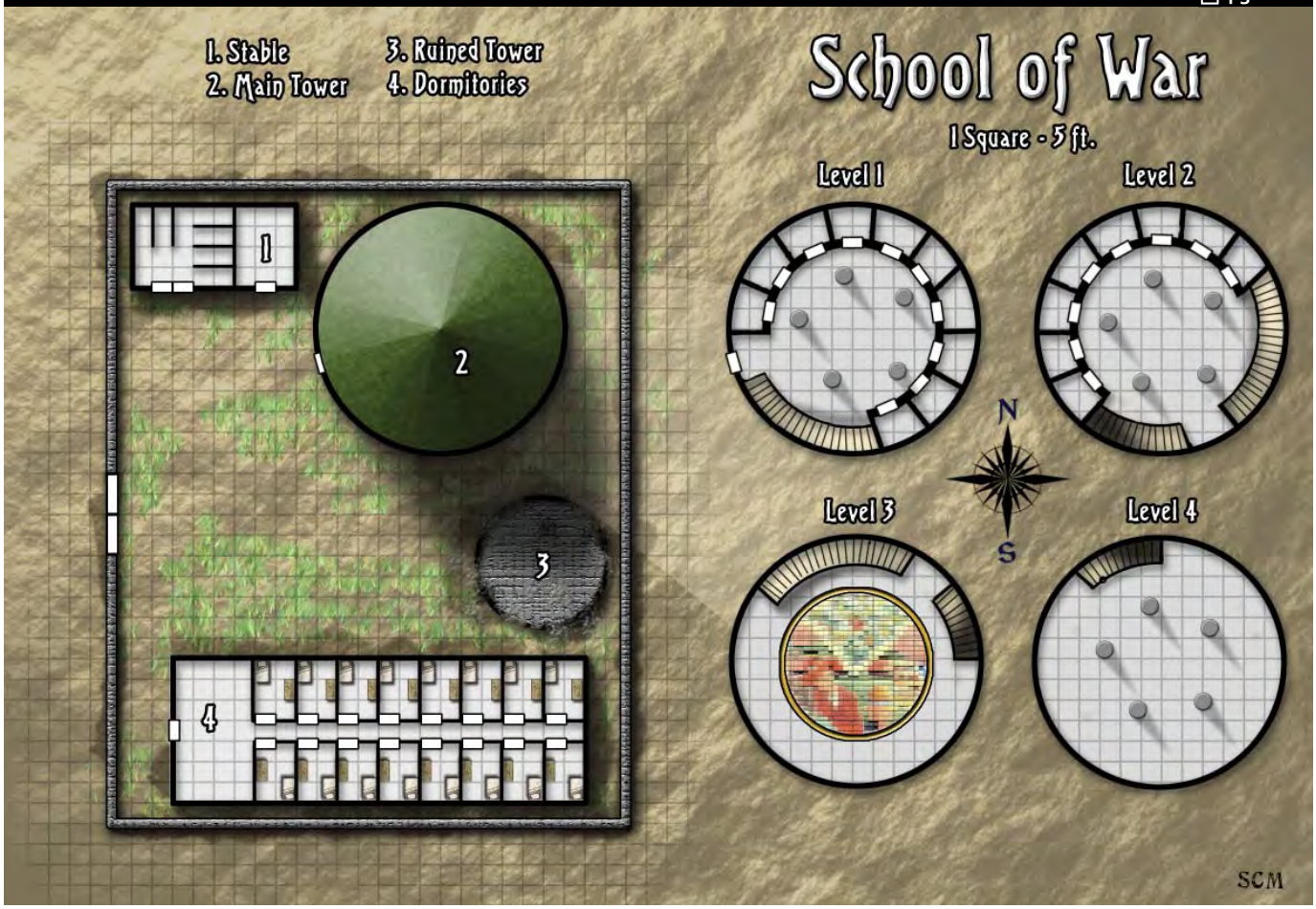
Soon after the party arrives, Diogenes strolls out to the front gates and tries to be diplomatic, making it clear that he also thinks Gabal is a coward. He's fast-talking and smooth, and claims that the reason he and the other students are staying in the compound is so that the inquisitors will have an easier time finding them. Slightly balding and laid back, he's as unhostile as anyone you could imagine, and the mob calms down slightly, long enough for Diogenes to let the party in through the gates if they give a good reason (one better than "we want to riot").

At Night

If the PCs arrive the night of the attack, entry is easier, since Diogenes is at the front gate, watching for signs of trouble, smoking cigarettes in an attempt to stay warm. There is no angry crowd and Diogenes welcomes the company.

Regardless of how the party gets in, Diogenes is the only one of the students to express much interest in the party. If the party does not bother Shealis, she is not even aware they're there. If the party asks, Diogenes can sell them scrolls of 1st-level wizard spells from Gabal's supply, though there are no enchantment or necromancy scrolls.

Game Master's Map pg. 633



War Flavor

One of the towers is cracked from a Ragesian bomb. Additionally, the corpses of a griffon and its rider float in the moat, having been slain by a wyvern's sting. They have already been looted by the students, though a greasy student might ask their help in dragging the corpses ashore for "experimentation." Diogenes shoos him away.

Getting Diogenes' Help

Diogenes has a long-standing grudge against Shealis, and will gladly help the party if they express that they're opposed to her, or if they mention the lantern archon, which Diogenes thinks is her familiar. Diogenes thinks having a familiar at all is a liability, and having one that glows like a floating target is just bad form — and Gabal's education is all about using proper form. Unfortunately, Gabal liked Shealis better than him because Diogenes refused to practice evocation spells, preferring the subtlety of illusion and charm. In any event, Diogenes is more than willing to help the party get the case back from Shealis.

He takes them to a kitchen and offers them whatever they'd like while they discuss plans. If Shealis has had any visitors this evening (such as Larion or the lantern archon), Diogenes knows, so the party should not be surprised by them.

The party should not legitimately be able to defeat Shealis in combat by themselves, so if they want to get the case from her, they will have to outwit her or ambush her. Her bedroom makes an optimal place to face her, since she is unwilling to use a *fireball* or other area attacks in such a confined area. If the group faces her in any wide area, such as the training hall (a tall room with a ring on the floor 60 feet in diameter where spell duels take place), Shealis has a clear advantage.

If the party can't come up with a plan, Diogenes says he knows Shealis is planning to leave, so he can challenge her to one final duel. He knows she has a grudge against him too and is sure she won't refuse. Diogenes says that when she comes to the dueling room, a sneaky PC should steal her spell component pouch with Sleight of Hand, leaving her with no spells but *magic missile*, *shield*, and cantrips. Then, during the fight the party can gang up on her, grappling her (and possibly the archon). Diogenes recommends most of them stay out of sight until the duel begins.

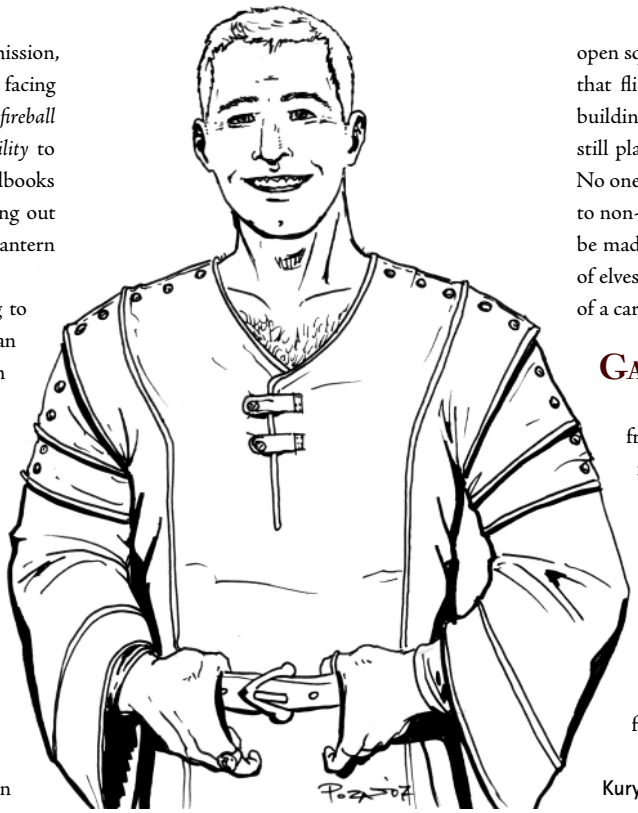
Diogenes (CR 5): hp 24, Appendix B.
Shealis Amlauril (CR 5): hp 13, Appendix B.

Diogenes is a keen judge of his opponent's skills, and enjoys the thrill of outwitting a foe. The rules of spelldueling require that both duelists start with no spells active. You can lose in any of four ways: falling down and not getting up within a round, leaving the 60-foot ring, having three of your spells countered, or not casting a spell for two rounds in a row.

Knowing Shealis will go for offense, Diogenes will ready until she starts casting, then cast *obscuring mist*, effectively ruining her spell when she becomes unable to target him. Then he'll cast *shield*, then *protection from energy (fire)*, then *summon monster II*, and will only actually start using directly offensive spells afterward, or if Shealis heads into the fog. He'll reactively counterspell anything that he thinks is too dangerous.

Shealis, so close to completing her mission, is nervous and perhaps overcautious. If facing multiple foes who aren't in convenient *fireball* formation, she'll opt to flee, using *invisibility* to hurry back to her room to get her spellbooks before drinking a potion of *fly* and escaping out her window. If the party did not defeat her lantern archon ally, it is here too, aiding her escape.

In a duel, she's still cautious, preferring to use low-level spells. Confident that she can see through Diogenes's bluffs, she'll ready an action to cast *flaming sphere* when her foe starts to cast a spell, then use *magic missile* and *Gabal's superior missile* while chasing her opponent with the sphere.



Additional Possible Allies

Larion Prevarieth and the lantern archon, if present, have not used magical healing, and will only have healed if the party waits more than 8 hours to track down Shealis. The archon makes liberal use of *aid* to keep Shealis alive, while Larion tries to stay between Shealis and any warriors.

Aftermath

If the party has Diogenes' aid, remember to split XP for this encounter with Diogenes.

If Diogenes gets a chance, he'll try to use *charm person* or *suggestion* to get either Larion or Shealis to tell the location of the hideout. However, the party can also find a map to the hideout inside the elvish spymaster's spellbook, which includes notes about the location of a hidden door that leads into an elvish ghetto, about a mile away. A map of the ghetto highlights a carpentry shop that lies next to one of the walls, and a note in Elvish reads, "Arborea before Elysium before Celestia."

If the party tries talking with Shealis, she is initially Unfriendly, but if made Friendly (such as by charming her), she will offer to let the group come with her to the hideout to examine the case together, but she will not let them take the case. However, she will give them her name and the name of a contact in Shahalesti (Clathan, LG male elf wizard 13) whom the Lyceum mages can speak to via *sending* if they want to discuss the case later. She has a mission, however, and cannot spare time to accompany the party, even to help them out of the city.

Diogenes, though he seems like he doesn't like people and is a bit of a coward, doesn't want to leave his city. If the party presses him to come with them, he says, "There aren't *that* many inquisitors. I think I'll be fine. Plus, if I wasn't here to give them a hard time, there probably wouldn't be a city left by the time you guys get back. I hope at least one of you doesn't die."

Ghetto Hideout (EL 4)

A pair of Shahalesti soldiers wait in their carpentry shop hideout, in a walled community of elves where they feel safe. The elves plan to give the case to Shealis when they see her next so she can take it to Shahalesti. Before they get a chance, however, an imp sent by the Ragesians to retrieve the case plans to attack. As the party nears the ghetto where the elves are hiding, a Spot check (DC 27) notices a raven (the imp in an alternate form) quietly shadowing them.

Getting into the ghetto is easy for elves, but not outsiders. There are no apparent doors, but an elf walking along the outside wall should eventually succeed one of his automatic Search checks (DC 20) to notice one of the several secret doors that lead inside. Alternately, a Gather Information check (DC 15) can turn up the location of one of these doors, since occasionally people see elves slipping in or out. Opening a secret door is easy enough, requiring a Search check (DC 15) to locate a triggering mechanism hidden amid various carvings of celestial creatures, gods, and myths.

The ghetto itself is quiet, filled with many trellises along the sides of buildings and plenty of open squares lit by modified *continual flame* spells that flicker and move like *dancing lights*. A few buildings have been damaged by fire, but children still play in the streets despite the recent danger. No one accosts them, but the elves are Unfriendly to non-elves. They are Friendly to elves, but must be made Helpful for them to admit that a group of elves from Shahalesti live in the upstairs rooms of a carpentry shop in the corner of the ghetto.

Gatemakers Shop (EL 2)

This two-story brick building has a fake front door, and the windows are just wooden frames painted to look like curtains have been pulled. The chimney is exhaling smoke, a sign that someone is there, but there seems to be no entrance to the building. The only creature present is a simple rat rooting around for food, which scurries away if accosted (again, this is the Ragesian imp in an alternate form).

Kurychek, imp (CR 2): hp 13, MM.

Sent by the inquisitor Guthwulf, Kurychek's mission is to retrieve the case that Rivereye brought from the Imperial Palace. He prefers to avoid combat, instead trying to manipulate enemies into helping him.

Secret Door

The real entrance is in an alley behind the building, with only a narrow space between it and the outer wall of the ghetto. A Search check (DC 20) detects this secret door made of wood, painted to look like brick, and alerts the characters that there are three switches hidden in a carving of various celestials. If the Search check beats DC 22, it also detects the trap behind a carved sunbeam.

The switches, which can be turned, are carved to resemble an winged woman with a trumpet (a trumpet archon), a noble and muscular man with a lion's head (a leonal), and an armored woman with a gleaming greatsword (a ghaele eladrin). A Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 12) can identify the alignments of the three figures (lawful good, neutral good, and chaotic good, respectively), and with the aid of the note in Shealis' spellbook, the party can figure out the clue: turn the switches associated with the ghaele (Arborea), then the leonal (Elysium), then the archon (Celestia), and push on the sunbeam carving. If you turn them in another order and try to push the door open, it springs the trap.

Diogenes – Art by Claudio Pozas

Poison Needle Trap (CR 2): mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; Atk +17 melee (1 plus poison, needle); poison (blue whinnis, DC 14 Fort save resists, 1 Con/unconsciousness); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 17

If the trap is triggered, a bell begins ringing in the building, alerting the elves upstairs.

If the party has trouble figuring out how to get inside, they hear a quiet "psst" from a nearby invisible source. The imp, invisible, addresses the party, offering an alliance. Sent to retrieve the case, the imp cannot let its bargain go unfulfilled. However, it also doesn't want to risk being killed by the elves (which would also violate its bargain), so it wants to work with the party.

The imp need only fulfill the letter of its agreement, so if it needs to make a deal, it suggests that the party may take the *contents* of the case. With its knowledge of the planes, it can easily solve the riddle if the party is stumped, but it also knows the door is trapped. If the party needs help with that too, the imp says to give it a moment and stay out of sight, and it skulks away.

About a minute later, a young elf girl, the equivalent of a 7-year-old human girl, walks into the alley, talking to her "guardian angel." If the PCs don't do anything, the imp pretends to be an angel who needs the girl's help, and convinces her to open the door, springing the trap and impaling her with the poison needle. The girl cries out and whimpers for the angel to help her, and the imp makes her keep quiet until, a minute later, the poison causes her to pass out.



If the party figures out the trap themselves, the imp still makes its offer for an alliance. It only fights the party if they attack it first, or if they completely reject its offer, which would force it to violate its pact with its summoner.

Amidst the Badgers (EL 1 or 3)

The entry room is watched over by a trio of celestial badgers, which snarl as they fight, alerting the warriors upstairs. They are not intelligent enough to be reasoned with, especially if the party has an imp with them, though if the party makes no aggressive action one of the badgers eventually makes enough noise for a curious elf soldier to come downstairs. If combat does begin, two rounds later the warriors arrive at the base of the stairs, armed and ready for battle.

This 50 foot square room is dimly lit by a roaring fire in a fireplace against the left wall, filling the building with modest warmth. Casting shadows throughout the room are nearly a dozen doors, propped up by metal frames, all of them unfinished. Tools hang around the walls, stacks of wood are piled beside the fire place, and sawdust covers the floor. It looks like the workshop of a carpenter obsessed with doors. A staircase in the back right corner leads up, and one of the doors stands at the foot of the stairs.

Celestial badgers (3) (CR ½): hp 6 each, MM.

Hazard

The various doors in the room were originally created in case the elves had to pretend to be real carpenters, but now they sit unused, propped upright. They open and close with a move action, or can act as cover otherwise. The door at the base of the stairs serves to keep enemies from approaching too quickly — the elves can stand on the stairs and shoot arrows into the room over the railing, which grants them cover. They only come off the stairs if they have no clear shot to the intruders.

Spy Quarters (EL 3)

The upstairs room is the same size as downstairs, 50 feet square, with only the sparsest furnishing — a pair of mats for the elves to rest on, a few shelves stocked with food.

Shahalesti soldiers, green (2) (CR 1): hp 11 each, Appendix B.

Treasure

A small unlocked coffer holds 100 pp. The case the party seeks, a thick steel box etched with swirling patterns and warded with *arcane lock* (Break DC 28), lies beside one of the mats.

Development

Should the party manage to get a look inside the steel case (perhaps they repeatedly throw it

Other Ways Out?

It is not vital to the adventure that the party uses the recommended method to get out of the city, though many other options are less than optimal. They might try to sneak through the sewers, but those actually exit into caverns under the city, leading down, not out. They might try to steal griffons and fly away, but the griffons are very well-guarded, and most are injured from last night's battle. They could try to hide in wagons of hay and ride out in those, but even if they can come up with a convincing reason why wagons with hay need to leave the city in the middle of a siege, the hay will still be poked with pitchforks to make sure no one is hiding in it. They could try simply climbing over the walls, but with the guards on the walls, this would be very difficult.

They also might forge papers approving their exit instead of going to Councilman Menash. The forger gains a +8 bonus if he is able to get another military order or council decree as a base sample, but two guards will check the document for authenticity at each gate, with a Forgery check modifier of +2. Aside from military units, very few people are approved to enter or leave the city, even during the day. (Kathor, who works for the bounty hunters, is one of these people, since he uses a diplomatic passport that belonged to his father, but even he cannot take other people with him.)

Shahalesti Spies – Art by Todd Schumacher

off a rooftop), they find it contains a book written in Infernal and in code (Decipher Script DC 35), though there are copious maps and architectural drawings for some sort of underground complex. The value of this book will likely remain unknown until the third adventure, *Shelter from the Storm*, when it is revealed that the book is a horrifyingly detailed treatise on ways to empower magic through mass ritual torture, and the coded text outlines a vast excavation project going on in the frozen wastes of northern Ragesia.

Negotiating'

If the party attempts to negotiate with the elves, they are willing to listen, though they start as Hostile. If the party is accompanied by the imp, they receive a –5 penalty to any Diplomacy check with the Shahalesti. Only if the elves are made Friendly will they let the party take the case, and even then only if the party makes it clear that they are working to oppose the Ragesians. The elves ask a lot of questions; they need something to report if they have to leave the city empty-handed. If Shealis is in the room, she adamantly refuses to turn the case over, and the elvish soldiers obey her.

Aftermath

Now that the party has their hands on the case, they can finally prepare to leave Gate Pass. If they have not already, Torrent recommends they go to the Temple of the Aquiline Cross to rest and heal.

What if They Fail?

If the party doesn't get the case, it barely affects the plot of the campaign saga. However, adventure eight of the saga, *O Wintry Song of Agony*, holds the pay-off of this plot thread, in which the party gets a chance to thwart the plot alluded to by the documents in the case and thus turn the tide of the war. You will want to give the party another opportunity to find this information, perhaps by adding it to the plot of another adventure, or creating a side quest to retrieve it.

Without the party's intervention, Kurychek the imp eventually manages to retrieve the case and turn it over to the Ragesians, though if the party ends up allying with the Shahalesti down the road, perhaps the elves have gained the case and the information it contained, and they might be willing to organize a joint mission that substantially follows the plot of adventure eight.

Act Three: Escaping the City

In their effort to retrieve the case, the party may have taken a few hours, or a day or more. This section assumes the party retrieves the case before the end of the first night. If the party takes longer, it is easy enough to delay the inquisitors' arrival: the city council needs several days to deliberate. However, when the party is finally ready to make their move to leave Gate Pass, word should start to spread that the council has agreed to the Ragesians' demands. The council has made it clear that, until they come to a decision, *no one* is to leave the city, on threat of death. They do not want the Ragesians to have any pretense to renew their attack.

The events of this act can occur in practically any order. The most likely course is that the party goes to Councilman Menash to get his help. Menash arranges from a city cavalry officer, Captain Herreman, to take them out of the city disguised as his soldiers, but before the party reaches Herreman they get ambushed by more Black Horse bounty hunters. During the ambush, a local hero named Rantle comes to their aid, giving them another message to take to Lyceum. Then, with Captain Herreman's aid, they ride out of the city. However, be ready to rearrange events in response to the party's actions, and do not feel you need to force the encounters described here if the party comes up with another option.

The Dawn of War

As the night wears on, the sounds of battle slowly die, and the alarm bells cease to ring. By the time the party awakens, the city is eerily silent, the air crisply cold and tainted with smoke. People cautiously step out into the streets, looking for news, and so as the party sets out to travel, it's impossible for them not to hear the rumors.

The heroes learn that Gate Pass defenders drove back the initial assault, though the attack cost many lives, and even now the men on the walls report that the Ragesian attacked with only a small portion of their entire force. The invading army has demanded that a group of inquisitors be allowed into the city, and threaten to renew their attack if they do not receive prompt agreement from the city's leaders.

Amid these mutterings, one consistent (albeit petty) complaint is that the city has cancelled the parade for the Festival of Dreams, intended to celebrate the new year. The streets are scattered with burnt or trampled decorations that had been set up for the city-wide party, now indefinitely postponed.

Exit Gates (EL 7)

The gates leading south are 10 feet wide and 20 feet high, set into a large gatehouse with room enough for eight guards to rest and keep warm. A typical southern gate is guarded by forty soldiers (LN warrior 1), four officers (LN warrior 3), and a pair of gatekeepers (LN expert 4, Forgery +2, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9) both night and day. At any given time, sixteen of these guards (eight pairs of soldiers) patrol a circuit along the roughly half-mile length of the wall, with a guard passing a given stretch of wall about once a minute.

The outer walls are 40 feet tall (Climb DC 20), crenelated, with a strange metal awning that sticks out to either side just below the top of the wall, which requires another Climb check (DC 25) to get around. Also, the far side of the wall is steep and covered in gravel and snow, incuring a –5 penalty to Move Silently checks. The gate guards won't pursue, but they will fire crossbows. There is 100 foot of clear line of sight beyond each wall, and the ground is difficult terrain.

If patrolling guards are alerted, they are joined by another two soldiers and an officer every two rounds, to a maximum of four sets of reinforcements. Trying to fight through or sneak through the gates without aid should be nearly impossible at this level.

Use Your Charm (EL 1)

The party may go back to Gabal's school looking for help getting out of the city, and if Diogenes is Helpful, they can secure his aid. If they helped him resolve his grudge against Shealis, he's automatically Helpful. Otherwise a Diplomacy check (DC 20) is necessary, as well as at least 375 gp payment to cover the expenses Diogenes intends to incur through his plan. Remember that there will likely be an angry crowd outside the Castle's fence.

If the party gets his help, he'll lead them out through a secret passage under the towers that leads to a nearby alley, and then get a wagon and a pair of horses and go with them to the southern exit gate. There he hides in the covered wagon and tells the party to talk loud and keep the guards distracted for a few minutes while he goes to work. Through a variety of small slots in the wagon he charms each and every guard at the gate (sixteen total) with his *wand of charm person*. Then, when he's confident he's gotten them all, he gets out of the wagon, and amid the warm greeting by all his new friends he simply asks them to let the party out.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the party gets Diogenes' help and doesn't ruin his plan, reward them for a CR 1 encounter.

The Councilman (EL ½)

Erdan Menash (CG male half-elf expert 7), one of the more colorful characters in the city council, is a former merchant and tailor who sold well-crafted but horribly unfashionable gear to adventurers, with the goal of making sure everyone knew he was sponsoring heroism. Torrent does not know him personally, but if the party asks for a suggestion, she recommends going to him.

He's not suspicious or fearful at all, so the party can easily get in touch with him. Unfortunately, the same bounty hunters who tried to capture the party are aware of Erdan's opinions, and so they keep watch on those who come and go at his house, and will attack the party soon after they leave.

Erdan's manor is a three-story building inside a low iron fence, located a few miles east of the depository, in the same district as a 90-foot statue of Emperor Coaltongue. The outer walls are painted vivid green, yellow, and purple, and the two guards he keeps for protection (N warrior 2) are forced to wear the same colors. The guards meet visitors at the entry gate and offer to let guests stay inside to wait. Whenever the party arrives, Erdan happens to be out — he is trying to convince the city council not to allow the inquisitors in — but his guards say that he'll be home soon.

When Erdan arrives he is noticeably frustrated, complaining in a high-pitched, wheezing voice about the morons in charge of the city. He does a double take when he sees the party, surprised to have guests. He asks their names and their business, and is especially interested in details of what happened to them during the attack the previous evening. He is easily distracted, though, and will begin giving a tour of his house's many oddities if the party doesn't keep him on track.

Erdan lives alone with a home full of his bizarre creations. Exotic weapons of all sorts adorn the walls — whips, urgroshes, double axes, double swords, monk weapons, a heavy repeating crossbow designed to look like a porcupine (but no spiked chain; too trite) — made more exotic by unorthodox choices like red and yellow frog pommels, or bunny-shaped striking heads.

The first floor consists of a greeting hall, a dining room, a kitchen and store room, a waiting room, and three galleries. The entire second floor is a workshop devoted garish decorations that Erdan had hoped to use in the Festival of Dreams: as a bear mask for the giant statue of Coaltongue, swords made of woven flowers, and dresses made of candy. He lives on the third floor, in a bedroom with a wonderful view of the grand square. Looking out of it, he sighs and shakes his head, sad that he won't get a chance to use his decorations.

Erdan can provide some interesting and exciting stories to help put the party's actions in perspective:

- The griffon riders, aided by a druid who took the form of a giant eagle, were able to drive off a massive red dragon that was setting fire to the city, and they captured two of its riders.
- An incursion through one of the northern walls was held up by armed townsfolk, who lasted long enough for actual soldiers to arrive and slay the Ragesians.
- The westernmost district caught fire and was nearly gutted, but troops have kept fighting — even some who suffered terrible burns.
- A huge earth elemental rose up from the sewers near the houses of several city council members and managed to kill them while the bulk of the city's defenders were at the walls.
- A wyvern-rider crashed into a house and killed a family, but a group of unknown heroes tracked him down and slew him.

Erdan starts as Friendly, and after hearing their story and needs, the party should make a Diplomacy check. Displaying enthusiasm about Erdan's odd creations grants a +2 bonus to this check.

If somehow the party offends Erdan and makes him Indifferent, he dolefully refuses to help them, saying he can't risk his position for their incompetent group. He asks them to leave before anyone finds out they were here.

If he remains Friendly, he will offer to give them a note for a trusted friend of his, **Captain Herreman** (NG male half-orc fighter 4), who runs a small cavalry detachment that regularly patrols the southern border. The note asks Herreman to take the party along and includes two official orders to quickly patrol roads to the south — one lists Herreman's normal patrol size, and the other is increased by the number of heroes. Herreman and the party will depart through one gate, then Herreman will let the party go their own way and return to the city through a different gate, using the other orders. Erdan will even have Herreman give the PCs each a light horse for the trip, which they should not feel obligated to bring back.

If the party makes him Helpful, he will do as above, plus offer each party member a single weapon, suit of armor, or special item from his collection, with a value of up to 400 gp, including his precious repeating crossbow.



Erdan's gear all looks atrocious, but it works. Selling any of Erdan's items should be difficult if not impossible. If Torrent is still with the party, she'll take a masterwork falchion that looks like a dolphin, later admitting she intends to give it away as a gag gift to a friend in Lyceum.

Erdan is also willing to buy gear the party has picked up from enemies, glad to have a few more swords or suits of armor for the city. He pays half the market value of the items, and if they have made him Helpful through Diplomacy checks he'll also offer them a 10% discount on any items they buy from him. Erdan is able to sell the PCs most nonmagical items of up to 400 gp value.

When the party is ready to leave, Erdan gives them the note for Captain Herreman and directions to his post (located one district to the east, less than a mile away, near a large stable and barracks), begs them to send aid as soon as they can, and bids them good luck.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award

If the party gets Erdan's aid at all, reward them for a CR ½ encounter.

Street Ambush (EL 4)

At some point during the day, probably after they leave Erdan's manor, a group of six Black Horse thugs begin to shadow the PCs, hanging back about 30 feet and following on side streets or through alleys. A Spot check (DC 12) detects the thugs' pursuit after a few minutes of travel, and though the thugs are disguised as city guardsmen, a second Spot check (DC 15) enables the heroes to see through their disguises.

The thugs approach the party when they're out of sight of any other guards or soldiers. Two thugs use alleys and side streets to get ahead of the party and approach the party from the front, while the other four come from behind to block escape. They pretend to be taking one or two characters in the party for questioning on suspicion of being mages (Bluff +0; three aid the

Ragesian Prisoner – Art by Ryan Nock

lead thug), and try to convince them to hand over their weapons. If any PCs come along they head down a side street to a dead-end alley, where they attack with saps.

If the party doesn't fall for the bluff, the thugs threaten to call other guards, but won't start a fight in the middle of the day. They'll follow from a distance for a while, looking for an opening, but once the PCs get to Captain Herreman's barracks they leave for good and report to Kathor.

Black Horse thugs (6) (CR ½): hp 6 each, Appendix B.

War Flavor

If the party talks long enough with the fake guards, a prisoner caravan approaches from the west, heading for the central district. A dozen real soldiers escort a pair of wounded and bound orc soldiers wearing the uniform of Ragesian infantry — scale mail, a red tabard with a half-crescent fireball on the chest, and a heavy winter coat of bear furs. One of the orcs glances at the party through his one good eye, the other half of his face scarred from an old burn wound.

As the convoy marches by, the thugs become subdued, afraid of drawing attention to themselves. One half-heartedly congratulates the soldiers in an attempt to look the part of a city guard, and gets spit upon by the one-eyed orc for his trouble.

Roguish Rescue (EL n/a)

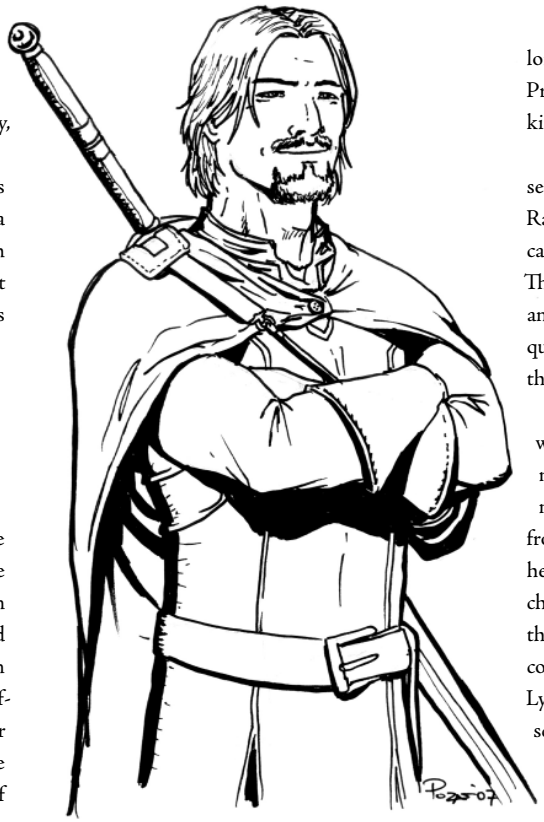
The party is also shadowed by a local hero, Rantle, a member of the city's thieves' guild who is much better at sneaking than the bounty hunters. He can be noticed with a Spot check (DC 20), and if detected, he'll just approach the party, casually admitting that he was watching out for them, and joking that he was looking for a chance to swoop in and save the day.

If at any point the party seems imperiled, Rantle dramatically charges to the rescue, cutting down an enemy with his greatsword before shouting, "Follow me! I'll get us out of this." Otherwise, Rantle will approach them just before they reach Herreman's barracks.

Rantle (CR 4): hp 25, Appendix B.

Tactics

In the city, Rantle uses his popularity to his advantage, insulting his foes and encouraging bystanders to throw things at them. However, he never gets non-combatants involved if he thinks they might get hurt. He likes to cleave multiple foes



Rantle – Art by Claudio Pozas

at once with his greatsword, his signature weapon. If he uses his leadership performances, it's usually to help his allies get out of danger. He knows when to run (preferably after making a dramatic blow or delivering a blunt, smirking insult to the enemy leader — "You guys are *really* incompetent!"), and will usually use the local townsfolk to provide a wall of bodies to let him get out of sight.

Aftermath

Once the group is out of harm's way, Rantle says that he heard about the fight at the Poison Apple Pub, and that he had wanted to come to ask a favor before the Ragesian assault distracted him. For once in his life, Rantle seeks someone else's help.

Rantle says he has a sister, Katrina, who "has a tendency to get into such trouble that I have no choice but to save her yet again!" She disappeared a little over a week ago, just before news of the approaching Ragesian army arrived. His sister is a competent sorceress, he says, though she did manage to burn a few of their homes down over the years. Rantle worries, justifiably, that she might be in trouble. The last he heard of her, she was planning to head to Lyceum to get to safety, and Rantle knows just enough about Torrent's activities to guess that's where she and the party are heading.

Rantle asks the party to deliver a scroll tube to his sister if they see her. Rantle describes his sister, "She's about five and a half feet tall, with long red hair, and too pretty for her own good. Pretty much your stereotypical fire mage. It's kind of embarrassing."

The scroll case Rantle asks them to deliver is sealed with red wax, but contains a letter from Rantle to Katrina, warning her that a some orcs came looking for her, but that he took care of them. There's a short traveler's song, written with music and lyrics, which wishes her a safe journey and quick return, and the end of the letter sarcastically thanks Katrina for the scroll she left for him.

The scroll in question is a scroll of *fireball*, which is also in the case. It contains a secret message written on it in disappearing ink. If held near an open flame, a message appears, written from Katrina to Rantle, intended to tell him that he was supposed to follow her to Lyceum for a chance to "make something of ourselves," and that she has been recruited by Ragesia to cause confusion and disarray among the mages of Lyceum. The message is hard to read unless the scroll has been used, in which case the normal ink vanishes. The disappearing ink trick was an old one between the two siblings, but Rantle missed it because he was too confused by what else was on the scroll.

Rantle doesn't have much else to offer, except a promise that he'll let the rest of the guild know not to mess with them. Unfortunately the bounty hunters are independents. If the party has completely ruined their options for escape, Rantle can arrange for some thief buddies of his to cause a distraction at one of the south gates, luring guards off the walls while the party crosses over. Rantle is much more willing to help the party if there are any women he can try to charm.

Who Is This Rantle Guy?

Rantle plays a role in adventure nine, *The Festival of Dreams*, which also takes place in Gate Pass, and he provides a connection to the sorceress Katrina who first shows up in adventure three, *Shelter from the Storm*. He also serves as an introduction to the Leadership Performance feats. Finally, Rantle gives the game master an easy way to get the party out of a tough spot, be it a fight that overwhelms them or them getting stuck by alienating all allies who might help them get out of the city.

However, once he makes an impression and tells them about his sister, Rantle should not be able to help the party again, since he has a whole city to help. Try to make the encounter with Rantle memorable, so the party will recall him many adventures later.

Captain Herreman's Barracks (EL n/a)

Herreman's barracks, less than a mile away from Councilman Menash's home, consist of several three-story buildings with attached stables and house a hundred soldiers. Each district has a similar set of barracks and number of soldiers.

Captain Herreman is a grim half-orc edging toward middle age, with a thick beard that he thinks hides his orcish tusks. He's very loyal to Councilman Menash, and fondly carries a dagger designed to look like a peeled banana, a memento of when he was an adventurer sponsored by the crazy merchant. Upon receiving the letter from Menash, he efficiently gets the party gear that will let them pass as members of his unit (studded leather, longswords, and light crossbows), acquires light or heavy warhorses for each of them (with military saddles and winter blankets, but no barding), and then gathers eight men that he can trust for this fake mission.

From there, unless the party interferes, their escape from the city is simple. Near sunset (when Herreman's regular patrol is scheduled), they ride to the gate. Along the way, a single bell at the west of the city rings out ominously and mournfully, and Herreman guesses that this means that the inquisitors have finally been let into the city.

Herreman hurries to the gate and hands over his orders to the gatekeepers, and the gatekeepers usher them through, wishing them good hunting. Obstensibly they're supposed to be looking for a Ragesian necromancer who is desecrating graveyards by raising the dead, a dramatic tale that Councilman Menash thought would give the mission enough urgency that the guards would not be suspicious.

Once outside the gates, Herreman says going any further at night is dangerous, and directs the party to a safe camping spot two miles from the city, an abandoned tower that was once a watchpost for the city, but that is now disused. Should the party become involved in combat while Herreman and his men are with them, the soldiers are loyal to Gate Pass first, the party second. They won't help the group fight gate guards under any circumstances.

If the party wants to leave earlier than sunset, they can convince Herreman to move his patrol up with a Diplomacy check (DC 20). Doing so places them ahead of the timetable the Black Horse bounty hunters are working on, so instead of the ambush in Act Four the party manages to come upon the bounty hunters when they are just standing in the road, clustered together, looking for a good place to set an ambush.

Act Four: The Gauntlet

The road from Gate Pass to the fire forest is thirty miles long, and depending on how the party got out of the city they might have light horses, or a wagon, or be on foot. As it is a mountain road, movement is at ¾ normal speed (4½ miles per hour on an unencumbered light warhorse; or about 1 mile per hour for a gnome or halfling on foot who is encumbered). It should take the party somewhere between one and four days to make the trip. If the party pushes their horses, they can hustle, traveling as fast as 9 miles an hour on a horse, though the horses quickly become fatigued. Random encounters, if any, should be minor.

When the party is 10 miles out from the city, they reach the Gauntlet. Black Horse bounty hunters have laid an ambush, their leader alerted via *sending* spell to stop the party at all costs and recover the case in their possession. A reward of 10,000 gp was offered for this task. Ragesia has many spies in the city, and they are aware of how important the stolen information in the case is.

If the party convinced Herreman to move his patrol to an earlier time, they manage to get on the road before the Black Horse can lay their ambush. Instead of being in tactical positions, the whole group is just walking or riding together, considering the terrain for possible advantages. The party might even surprise them.

This battle can be very dangerous, so try to make sure the party is 2nd level before they reach it.

The Plan

The leader of the Black Horses, **Renard Woodsman** (LE male human ranger 3), has planned for a 600-foot stretch of the road to be a gauntlet. Renard loves making complex plans, even a simpler method might be more successful. Renard's Map details how he is dividing his forces — himself, Kathor, four thugs, two scouts, and two horsemen.

At point 1, two scouts hide on a cliff overlooking the road (Spot DC 21 to notice them from 50 feet away). Once the party gets within 50 feet, the scouts move to total cover and use the sound of the party's movement to know when to spring the ambush. Their job is to wait until the party has gone just past their position, then spook the party's horses with the loud boom of thunderstones thrown behind them (ranged touch +1 against AC 5). The hope is that the group will run further ahead down the gauntlet. If the scouts succeed in throwing their thunderstones within 10 feet of a horse, its rider has to make a Ride check (DC 10) to keep the horse from bolting; a bolting horse moves at its fastest possible pace for one round.

At point 2, Renard and two of his men are mounted on light warhorses, hiding behind a large pile of rubble. As soon as the party passes them they will charge in pursuit, Renard firing arrows while his men try to ride in and strike with their saps. The scouts at point A sound their horns to alert the rest of the gauntlet, then fire their crossbows at the party's horses for as long as they have a clear shot.

At the points marked 3, 4, and 5, a thug waits in foliage by the side of the road, with orders to fire his crossbow at the party's horses as soon as they get within 200 feet, and to keep firing as long as he has a clear shot.

At point 6, Kathor waits. When the horns sound, Kathor casts *shield* on himself, then rides out, readying an action to cast *true strike* when the party gets within 100 feet, with the intention of charging on his next round. In the middle of the road, Kathor blocks attempts to ride around him unless the mount presses through the undergrowth on the side of the road, and even then Kathor can take an attack of opportunity. (If the party convinced Kathor to leave them alone, the last thug at point 5 is mounted instead, and he tries to block the party's escape.)

The road is 20 feet wide, with 5 feet of foliage on either side (difficult terrain, 20% concealment), and then relatively steep cliffs that ascend at a 60 degree angle (Climb DC 0) to a height of 20 feet. Feel free to scatter obstacles in the road, such as fallen trees, rubble, or patches of ice, to make the scene more interesting.

The Gauntlet (EL 7)

More likely than not, this encounter won't go as the bounty hunters plan. Even if the party's horses spook, most characters will turn to face a foe rather than run. If this happens, the scouts at point A sound a different note on their horns, which calls for all the bounty hunters to come to their assistance. The party might not even have any horses, in which case the bounty hunters have to come into melee; they don't want to kill the party, because the bounty is only for living spellcasters, and the bounty hunters assume anyone could be a disguised mage.

Perhaps most vexing for many groups, though, is that if the combat does turn into a running battle, no battle map is long enough to cover

the entire length of this scene. A running horse, after all, can cross most battle maps in a single round. Even one with a medium load (as most of the party's will be) can run 200 feet in a round.

However, the road, even with the brushy edges, is only 30 feet wide, so you could probably fit three or four segments of road on a typical battle map, drawn in parallel. Assume that at each end of the map, the road curves a 45-degree angle, to keep the battle developing one area at a time. By the time the battle reaches the last length drawn on the map, the first length should be unimportant to the battle, so you could cycle back to the start.

Black Horse scouts (2) (CR 1): hp 11 each, Appendix B.
Black Horse thugs (2) (CR ½): hp 6 each, Appendix B.
Black Horse cavalry (2) (CR 1): hp 11 each, Appendix B.
Renard Woodsman (CR 3): hp 20, Appendix B.
Light warhorses (3) (CR n/a): hp 22 each, MM.
Kathor Danava (CR 3): hp 24, Appendix B.
Kathor's heavy warhorse (CR n/a): hp 30, MM.

Aftermath

If Renard is defeated, Kathor calls for the rest of the bounty hunters to stand down, which they will as long as the party does not press the attack. If both Kathor and Renard fall, the surviving bounty hunters try to flee. Either by following them, or by following the group's tracks (Survival DC 6), the party can find the bounty hunters' camp, about a mile away along a rough game trail.

After defeating the bounty hunters, the rest of the trip is safe and clear. Depending on when the party left Gate Pass, they might need to camp before continuing, though Torrent will recommend they press on so they can rest at the border of the fire forest where it's warmer.

Treasure

The bounty hunters' camp lies in a grotto with several small tunnels carved into the walls, sealed off with locked iron gates. Any local of Gate Pass recognizes these tunnels as where people place unopened clay jars after the new year's Festival of Dreams. There shouldn't normally be anything of value inside the caves, but inside one tunnel lies what appears to be a person sleeping, wrapped in a ragged sheet. The gate is held shut with a new lock.



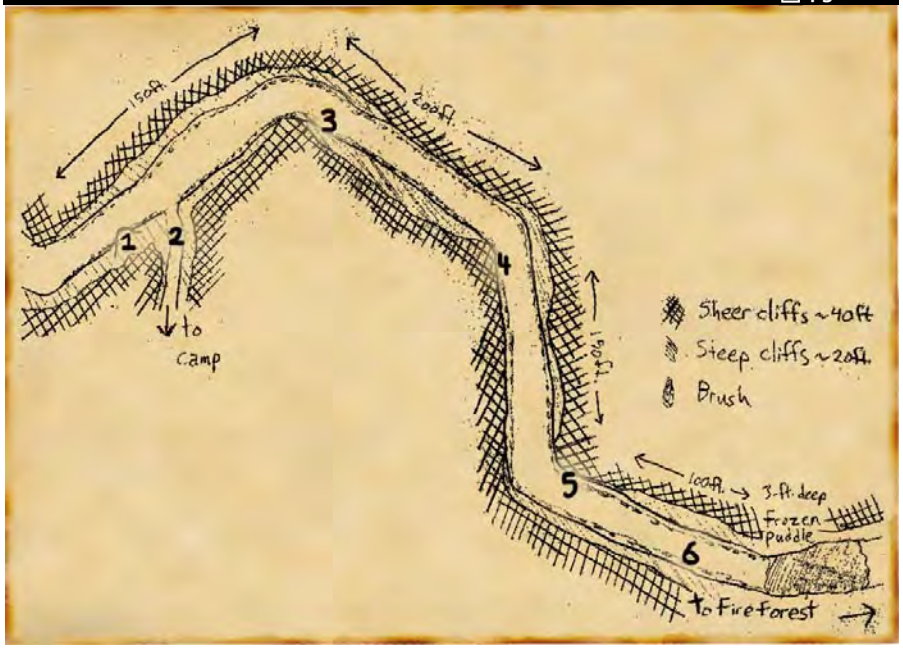
If someone opens the gate (hardness 10; hp 30; Break DC 24; Open Lock DC 25), they find a man, several days dead from exposure. A gray cat, also dead, lies curled beside him. He lies clutching a tiny clay jar, in which he placed a thin strip of paper that reads, "Please don't let my death be in vain."

The man was a sorcerer, tossed in one of these tunnels for safe-keeping. He died, as did his cat familiar, but Renard lost the key to the lock, so he decided to leave the body there, since the cold weather keeps it from stinking.

The man had tried desperately to stay warm, wrapping himself in a silk shroud, which was originally used to cover the clay jars. The shroud, which is printed with faded images of ancient myths, detects as possessing faint divination magic. If the party treats the body respectfully, such as by burying it or saying a prayer over it, the shroud glows briefly, the images on the fabric momentarily regaining their original vivid glory before fading again, becoming a *dream shroud* (see Appendix A). Anyone witnessing the transfiguration becomes aware of the powers of the shroud.

As for the camp itself, there are eight light horses, huddled under blankets, and a half-dozen tents with cold cook fires near them. The camp has a chest which contains 1000 gp in coins, a pouch with 200 gp in rubies, and four notarized sheets proclaiming they can be redeemed at any Ragesian fort for 100 gp each: rewards for the capture of spellcasters. Amid the bounty hunters' gear are several mundane daggers and shortswords, plus an *everburning torch* and two doses of *oil of timelessness*. In a spare pair of pants in Renard's tent, they can find the key to the locked tunnel.

Game Master's Map pg. 634



Renard Woodsman ~ Art by Leo Lingas

Renard's Map ~ Art by Ryan Nock

Act Five: The Inquisitor

When the party is about a mile from the edge of the fire forest, the sky ahead begins to glow faint red and orange, and the air smells of ash. The frigid winter temperatures warm noticeably, and red flowers dot the roadside amid yellowed grass. Cinders drift in the sky. Soon the cliffs alongside the road turn into craggy hills, and the forest fire itself comes into view, tall pine trees stretching down into a valley that burns to the horizon. A steaming river marks the border of the fire forest, and a vast field of ash coats the ground for the last quarter mile leading to the forest. A Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 15) is enough to inform the heroes that this area has weakly-enhanced fire magic.

Just before the ash field, about a half mile from the forest fire, the party spots a small farm, consisting of a two-story stone house and adjacent barn, and what looks like a pair of simple stone cairns. The farm is on a slight rise to the left of the road, and a young woman stands in clear view, dark-haired, eyes wide and blue, holding a slender black staff.

When the party is close enough to speak with her, it is clear that she is looking off vacantly, but she speaks to them, saying, "The Scourge comes, and the skulls of the dragon pursue you. I saw it in a dream." Then she shakes her head as if coming to her senses, then meekly apologizes.

She introduces herself as Crystin, and says that she needs their help. She and her father, Haddin, are magic-users, and they know the Ragesians are coming. Crystin says that she has visions, and she believes that wherever the party is going, they can protect her and her father. She wants to go with them. At the very least, she says, she can offer them a place to rest before they head into the forest fire.

The Situation

Crystin Ja-Nafeel (NG female human sorcerer 1) is a seer. A trillith (a type of dreamborn creature which plays a greater role later in the campaign) endowed its power upon Crystin's mother, and then passed along to Crystin when her mother died. Crystin has had visions that the Ragesians are coming for her father, and she has prepared to leave, though she did not know until she saw the party where they could go.

Haddin Ja-Laffa (old NE male human wizard 9) does not want to leave, and despite his age and feebleness, he's prepared to fight the Ragesians who come for him. Haddin is truly an asshole, and since the death of his wife and brother he has viewed Crystin not as a child, but as a tool. But Crystin still loves him, and won't leave without him. Crystin asks the party to stay the evening at the house, and to try to convince her father to come along. She can provide food and warm beds, since the house has several unused rooms. Haddin is Indifferent to the party, and will not go with them unless he is made Helpful, intimidated, or simply knocked out and carried.

Given Haddin's reputation, an inquisitor was dispatched with the specific mission to kill him. The inquisitor and several bodyguards have marched through the mountains, avoiding Gate Pass's patrols, and they manage to arrive at roughly the same time the party is leaving.

If the party simply ignores Crystin's requests, when they are preparing to enter the fire forest they hear the sounds of horses coming from the direction of the farm, as the inquisitor's group attacks; Haddin and Crystin hide in their house, and the Ragesians prepare to storm the place. If the party stays the night, or at least goes inside the farmhouse for a few minutes, the Ragesians will attack as the party leaves, coming in on foot so as not to draw attention.

Haddin's History

A Knowledge (local) or bardic knowledge check (DC 10) reveals the following information once the party hears Haddin's name.

Twenty years ago, Haddin was a skilled artist and respected citizen of Gate Pass, but his half-orc half-brother Mandragore was a notorious criminal. One day, suddenly, Mandragore turned over a new leaf and began working to redeem his name. Rumors eventually arose that Haddin was mentally dominating his brother, and an investigation revealed it was true. Within weeks, amid protests of countless people who believed — right or wrong — that Haddin had likewise dominated them, Haddin's reputation was ruined. His brother tried to defend him, but he was killed by rioters, and Haddin fled the city in disgust, taking with him only his wife and newborn daughter.

After some years, a young woman who closely resembled Haddin's wife began coming to town to get supplies, her expression distant. The stories — true for once — say that this is Haddin's daughter, dominated by the bitter old mage.



Haddin and Crystin – Art by Leo Lingas

Farmhouse

Aside from a few old cloth decorations, all the furniture here is made of stone, which looks magically shaped. A small hearth crackles with too-bright fire, and beside it an old man sits on a stone bench, perusing a spellbook and coughing incessantly. A finely-crafted warhammer hangs on the wall, surrounded by countless beautiful paintings.

Haddin, very sick, coughs constantly, his lungs ruined by decades of breathing ash, but he refuses help, and is very hard to befriend. He only really likes people who share his negative opinion of life. He complains about how people never realized his value; how they never respected him. If the heroes ask about his past, he laughs them off, and when Crystin starts to answer, Haddin glares at her, and she falls meekly silent.

Game Master's Map pg. 635



A Sense Motive check (DC 25) detects that Crystin is under the lasting effect of an enchantment spell, a custom effect that Haddin developed — the effect permanently compels Crystin to obey him. She is slowly coming to resist the effect, though, which worries Haddin somewhat. If the effect is dispelled (caster level 9), Crystin tells the party everything and begs them to take her away from her father.

The masterwork warhammer on the wall belonged to Mandragore, and Haddin won't stand to let anyone touch it. The paintings — created by Haddin years ago when there was still some decency in him — are worth 2,000 gp to an art collector, but would prove nearly impossible to carry through the fire forest unmolested. In any case, Haddin refuses to let anyone take them. Crystin takes just one, a small portrait of her mother and herself, painted when she was a child.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the party manages to get Haddin to come along without knocking him out, reward them for a CR 2 challenge. If they manage to learn about the permanent compulsion affecting Crystin and free her, reward them for another CR 2 challenge.

The Attack (EL 7)

The inquisitor, Boreus, is the youngest of the inquisitors sent to Gate Pass, but he is patient and cautious, not wanting to risk being dominated. If given a chance, he employs the following strategy.

First, he has Kralrak, sneak atop the barn for a view of the front and back of the farmhouse. Then he sends the other goblin, Emran, to the door to pick the lock. Boreus uses the scroll of *magic circle against chaos* on himself, then calls out, his voice feral and commanding, demanding Haddin come out and turn himself over, and threatening to kill the old mage if he doesn't surrender.

If anyone comes out, Kralrak will shoot that person with a *+1 human bane crossbow bolt*, and then the Ragesians will rush the door. If no one comes out, Boreus will cast *silence* on Emran, who will then open the door and lead the charge, with the six skeletons rushing in after him. Either way, Boreus, his bodyguard Smiley, and the two Ragesian soldiers slowly saunter up to the door, being careful to remain within the radius of the *magic circle against chaos* so neither of them can be dominated, moving only 20 feet per round. As they approach, Smiley pulls out his potion of *enlarge person*, then readies to drink it if anything dangerous comes out the door.

Haddin Ja-Laffa (CR 4): hp 10, Appendix B.
Crystin Ja-Nafeel (CR 1): hp 5, Appendix B.
Inquisitor Boreus (CR 4): hp 30, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldiers, green (2) (CR 1): hp 12 each, Appendix B.
Kralrak, goblin rogue (CR 1): hp 7, Appendix B.
Emran, goblin rogue (CR 1): hp 7, Appendix B.
Smarg "Smiley" Hobbler (CR 2): hp 21, Appendix B.
Human warrior skeletons (6) (CR 1/3): hp 6 each, MM. Armed with scimitars.

Tactics

Haddin's options are highly limited because the only spells he has available are those he memorized with Spell Mastery — a list of spells intended to let him escape if he was ever captured. In combat, he tries to control his enemies' minds. (Haddin's advanced age and limited spell selection, as well as his lack of magical gear, makes his challenge rating much lower than would be indicated by his level.)

Weakly Enhanced Fire Magic

Spells with the fire descriptor cast within a mile of the fire forest are automatically empowered. Note that all of adventure two takes place within this radius.

Crystin is frightened in combat, because things happen too fast for her visions to guide her. She tries to stay out of danger, but will go into harm's way if someone's in serious trouble.

Boreus's main goal is to make sure his allies stay in fighting condition, so he counters spells that would take them out of the fight. When he's not busy doing that, he'll try to *command* enemy warriors to come closer so Smiley can cut them to pieces. Aside from Haddin, Boreus is interested in taking magic-using prisoners for Leska, though he does not care about non-spellcasters.

XP Reward

Haddin and Crystin will not necessarily get involved in this battle, but if they do, it will reduce the PCs' XP reward slightly. If either dies in the battle, it is best just not to count him or her in determining XP.

Aftermath

On the inquisitor's body is a scroll tube that contains his orders to kill Haddin so the old wizard cannot reinforce the city. The message says explicitly, "He is not needed. Do not take him alive."

Should the party attempt to interrogate any prisoners, no one but Boreus knows anything of value. Boreus is scornful, saying that his masters know they are headed for Lyceum, and that though they might have avoided the army, they will not be safe, for nowhere is beyond the searing reach of the Ragesian Empire. Boreus will betray the party if given a chance, but if the party asks, he will offer up the names of his fellow inquisitors who are in the city — Kreven (second in command of the Inquisitors), Ursus, and Guthwulf.



Conclusion

If the party is willing to let Crystin and Haddin come along, they will, with Crystin trying to help, and Haddin being a constant irritant, even going so far as to try to *dominate* any PC he dislikes. If the party is not willing to bring them along, Crystin still thanks them for protecting her father, and says she will see them again. If Haddin died, or if Crystin was freed from his control, Crystin begs to come along, saying she has nothing else here. She promises to protect those who helped her.

Confident that the immediate threat is gone, Torrent recommends everyone rest again before heading on. When the party is finally ready, they should send the horses back to Gate Pass, and then cross a charred bridge over the river into the fire forest.

Boreus the Inquisitor – Art by David Hendee



Adventure Two
The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar

for 3rd-Level Characters

by Jacob Driscoll

Additional Material by
Ryan Nock

Cover Art by
John McSweeney

The journey between Gate Pass and distant Lyceum is dangerous; along the way lies a forest, that has burned for decades, where a dream monster holds sway.

Before escaping the raging flames, the heroes become caught in a three-way conflict with a fiend, the fierce spirit of the forest itself, and a clan of pernicious fey who possess a powerful weapon for the coming war.

Can the heroes traverse the treacherous Fire Forest of Innenotdar?

Background

The heroes have escaped from the city of Gate Pass with vital military intelligence as the Ragesian army's assault came down upon it, and have set off toward the town of Seaquen and the mage school of Lyceum. The heroes and, perhaps, some NPCs they are escorting (possibly including the sea-cleric Torrent, the elderly wizard Haddin Ja-Laffa, and his seer daughter Crystin) have arrived at the edge of the Fire Forest of Innenotdar.

Forty years ago, Innenotdar was home to an elvish people who wanted to remain neutral in the conflict between Ragesia and Shahalesti. One day refugees began to flee from the forest, claiming it had been put to the torch, though no one could agree on who had been responsible or why. While the refugees settled into a walled ghetto in Gate Pass, they were shocked to learn that the fires that had driven them from their homeland were not dying. For forty years, Innenotdar has burned relentlessly, with no signs that the flames will ever either abate or burn out.

The heroes have chosen to brave this dangerous pass because it is too hazardous for Ragesians to pursue them therein, and because, whereas it would take weeks to travel through the snowed in mountain passes, with the proper magic (potions of stand the heat, of which they possess many), they should be able to cross the fire forest in less than two days, taking the old Elfroad from the Otdar mountains to the northern border of Dassen, beyond the reach of the Ragesian army.

But the forest is still a home to some, and Ragesia will not give up pursuit simply because there is danger.

Welcome to the second adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. The heroes have already faced a military assault, treacherous bounty hunters, enemy spies who hide in the light, and the fierce claws of the Ragesian inquisitors enforcing the Scourge. In this next part of their adventure they will confront various inhabitants of a cursed fire forest, including the fey creatures tied to its fate and the dreamborn monster that causes it to endlessly burn.

If the heroes do not carefully consider their actions, they might survive, but they could still bring an early doom to their cause. Yet if they do well, they can gain information that will prove invaluable when a hitherto unknown enemy rises up from obscurity and the darkness of the great below.

Introduction

The Fire Forest

The events surrounding the forest's ignition are a mystery to this day. Over the course of the adventure the heroes may discover the truth, which they can use as leverage against the Shahalesti in later adventures to gain their assistance.

Forty years ago, Emperor Coaltongue of Ragesia had just conquered Gate Pass, securing a supply line into Shahalesti, and Lord Shaaladel of Shahalesti was nervous of an impending attack. The elves of Innenotdar, knowing their forest's proximity to Gate Pass made it strategically important, were unwilling to ally with Shaaladel, and their leaders had begun to express opposition to the Shahalesti. In truth, the Innenotdar elves were simply attempting to appear strong, since their position in a three-way juncture between Shahalesti, Ragesia, and Dassen made them a tempting target. However, Shaaladel refused to risk Innenotdar siding with Ragesia, so he had agents set fire to the forest and plant rumors that the Ragesians had been responsible — a believable claim given Coaltongue's fondness for fire.

The reason the fires have refused to die is because of a trillith called Indomitability. The trillith are dream-spawned creatures, born in the great below of the underdark, and until recently very few had come to the surface. Gate Pass has many legends of dreams becoming reality, and indeed there are numerous caverns under and around the city from which fledgling trillith sometimes emerge.

Indomitability had arrived in the Innenotdar forest several years before Shaaladel's torches. The seela, the fey who would sing news from one end of the forest to the other through the rustling of leaves in the wind, first noticed the trillith's presence. Indomitability, only vaguely conscious of what it was, had endowed its power upon several dying animals, who struggled to stay alive. Seeing the strange entity as a disturbance in nature, the seela called upon the elf-hero Anyariel to conquer the monster.

The seela sang the Song of Forms, an old hymn of history and events in the forest, woven in their very bodies, and the song's power trapped the trillith in the body of a stag. Anyariel pursued it to the center of Lake Seela, where she trapped it before dying. Indomitability did not die, but it cannot be released from a bodied form until the seela stop singing, and so it has lain trapped, pinned to the bottom of the lake by a sword driven through its body.

That sword, carved of living wood cut from one of Innenotdar's oldest trees, remained tied to the forest, and over the years, Indomitability's essence seeped through the blade and into the roots and trees of Innenotdar. Even some animals are suffused with its power, and now the trillith is far more powerful than most of its kind, but that power is dependent upon its prison. None who are empowered by Indomitability can idly die, and so the trees and brush have refused to fall, providing an eternal fuel source for the raging flames.

Conditions Within the Forest

The extreme heat of even the relatively fire-free Elfroad deals lethal damage. Breathing air in these temperatures deals 1d6 points of damage per minute (no save). In addition, a character must make a Fortitude save every 5 minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Those wearing heavy clothing or any sort of armor take a –4 penalty on their saves. In addition, those wearing metal armor or coming into contact with very hot metal are affected as if by a *heat metal* spell.

Down the narrower forest paths, beset by fire from all sides, creatures must make a Reflex save (DC 10) every ten minutes to avoid taking 1d6 points of fire damage.

A character who takes any nonlethal damage from the heat suffers from heatstroke and becomes fatigued until they heal that damage. While fatigued, they take a –2 penalty to Strength and Dexterity, and risk becoming exhausted if they do anything else to cause further fatigue. Creatures of the fire subtype and creatures immune to fire damage are immune to this ambient heat. Fire resistance of any sort negates the nonlethal damage the heat causes, and can help mitigate the lethal damage. The spell *stand the heat* completely protects characters from the heat of the fire forest, though not from open flames.

Because of the bright fire, the swirling ash, and the constant, cloying smoke, vision in the Fire Forest is quite limited. In general, when not directly within a smoke cloud, vision is limited to 100 feet or less. Vision in a smoke cloud is worse, granting anything within your natural reach concealment, and making anything beyond your natural reach fully concealed.

Because this is concealment and not just darkness, darkvision and low-light vision are of no use. Blindsight and blindsense still function normally, however.

Terrain Hazards

In addition to the fire and heat, the forest is filled with clouds of smoke and cinders, burning brush, and bizarre curtains of flame. There is about a 10% chance of a **smoke cloud** appearing within 100 feet each round of combat. **Cinder clouds** are much rarer, and should not be introduced idly. Individual encounters mention whether a cinder cloud appears. **Flaming brush** is common, **fire curtains** are rare, and both are depicted on maps when they show up. Winds usually blow to the southeast, carrying clouds swiftly, though strange currents can blow banks of ash in whatever direction you want.

- *Smoke Clouds:* A constant source of irritation, the smoke clouds billow through much of the Fire Forest can sweep upon travelers in moments. Smoke clouds typically fill a 20-foot spread or larger, usually moving as a whole with a speed of 120 feet per round in normal wind. A creature comes in contact with a smoke cloud must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or become nauseated for one round in a fit of choking and coughing. Wearing a cloth over one's mouth provides a +2 bonus to this check. Creatures with the (fire) subtype, creatures immune to fire damage, and creatures that do not breathe are immune to this effect. Creatures within the smoke cloud have concealment, meaning attacks against them have a 20% miss chance.
- *Cinder Clouds:* Cinder clouds are smoke clouds that carry burning debris in them. They follow the same rules as smoke clouds, except that being within a cinder cloud carries the extra risk of catching on fire. A creature who comes in contact with a cinder cloud must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or catch on fire.
- *Flaming Brush:* All normal plant life in the Fire Forest is aflame, dealing 1d6 points of fire damage upon contact, and forcing the victim to make a Reflex save (DC 15) or catch on fire. Where the flaming plant life can be moved through (for instance, if it's heavy undergrowth, or if you try to climb the tree), creatures take 1d6 points of damage for every 5 feet they move.
- *Fire Curtain:* Fire curtains are the unusual result of intense differences in pressure caused by rare terrain features and air currents. A typical fire curtain is 10 to 20 feet across and 10 feet high, visible as a bright transparent curtain that wavers with incredible heat. Passing through a fire curtain deals 1d6 points of fire damage and requires a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid catching fire.

Adventure Overview

The heroes' main goal in *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar* is to get through the dangerous Fire Forest and reach the other side, where lies the journey to the town of Seaquen. As they pass through the forest, they will first follow the Elfroad, though amid the simple dangers of strange monsters and hazardous terrain they realize that a tracker from Ragesia has followed them — a bearded devil named **Kazyk** — and that the forest itself seems to have an agenda.

Kazyk is unsure whether he can kill the heroes, and so he tries to join forces with them to find out why the forest is burning, and stop it. If they are not amenable to his offer at first, he attacks them, then flees, hoping to break their spirit. He can teleport, so he retreats to his summoner for healing.

When the heroes reach a river that cuts across the Elfroad, the trillith Indomitability sends a test for them, attacking them with fire elementals that resemble small stags. Pleased with their strength, he demands that they free him, and threatens to never let them leave if they refuse.

Regardless if they listen to either the trillith or the devil, the heroes have some time to explore ruins in the forest and discover the lost history of how the forest became as it is. Along the way they might find a clue in the journal of a long-dead priest who only wanted to heal his homeland, and a unicorn at the forest's edge who wants to carry on the priest's mission.

The information they recover directs the heroes downriver to a vast lake, where a village of fey sing a magical song that keeps Indomitability trapped, and thus keeps the forest alive. Before they reach the village, however, they witness an attack upon one of the fey, a seela woman named Tiljann, who can help the heroes navigate the complicated situation at the lake.

Here the heroes can decide who to help, and how they want to get out of the fire forest: by freeing Indomitability to slay the seela, by killing the trillith and dooming every creature in the fire forest, or by locating a relic that can save the forest and the seela. The heroes can interact with the seela, learn the unique magic of the Song of Forms, and rest before heading out to undertake the missions necessary for their goal.

In order to free Indomitability, the heroes must stop the fey song. If they pursue this goal, a seela named Vuhl offers to help them. In truth this seela is another trillith, named Deception, sent on a mission to free Indomitability. Deception can take any humanoid form he wants, and is responsible for encouraging a majority of the fey to stop singing. His plan is to shock the seela singers with a demonstration that will disrupt the song: executing the fire dryad Timbre, who is beloved by the village.

To get Timbre, however, the heroes must first retrieve an item from the hag Gwenvere, who was once Timbre's romantic rival. This item — a lock of hair from the two fey women's lover Anyariel — will let the heroes get close enough to Timbre to capture or kill her. Once the seela learn that Timbre has been killed, their shock should end the song long enough for Indomitability to escape. As the entity that was keeping their forest alive flees, the seela die, and a horrid spectre, manifested from their tragic deaths, arises to destroy the heroes.

Fire and Indomitability

Because this adventure is intended for a low-level party, we wanted to balance the awe-inspiring danger of pressing through a forest fire with a means to keep characters from simply dying. This is partially accomplished through the *potions of stand the heat* provided in the first adventure. An additional protection, however, comes from Indomitability itself.

The nature of the living fire in Innenotdar means that true death is rare. Instead, as creatures burn, they are reduced to a state of near-death, at which point they are preserved by a unique combination of elemental fire and positive energy. As soon as the fire in the forest reduces a victim to unconsciousness, it stops dealing damage. Victims are still on fire, and hair, clothing, and equipment can still burn away, but they no longer take damage from the fire, and they automatically stabilize. The fire can be put out normally, and the victim can then be healed normally after this point.

This effect only applies to creatures that would die from the forest's fires, but if you wish, you could extend the protection to any sort of damage. Characters that would die might instead become unconscious and stable at –9 hp, and can only be killed by a *coup de grace*, death magic, mutilation, or dismemberment.

Appendix B includes the indomitable fire template, which a creature can acquire if it remains alive and on fire for a day or more.

Weakly Enhanced Fire Magic

Spells with the fire descriptor cast within a mile of the fire forest are automatically empowered. All of adventure two takes place within this radius.

Adapting the Adventure

If you're not using *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar* as part of the campaign saga, you can still use it as a stand-alone adventure, simply transplanting the fire forest wherever you want.

The PCs could be fleeing through the forest to shake pursuit or simply trying to reach something on the other side. Alternately, they might seek the treasure of the Innenotdar elves, have been hired to retrieve a particular item from the blaze, or be pursuing a villain. The party will need to have access to the spell *stand the heat* (detailed in Appendix A), without which the heat of the fires make an adventure nearly, if not altogether, impossible. If the heroes don't have a way to survive the forest fire, you might have them come across a cache of *potions of stand the heat*, lost by other travelers who were cut down before they could enter the forest, or the party's employer might provide the necessary magic. Higher level parties could simply cast *stand the heat* themselves.

If you change the history of how Innenotdar caught fire, you may need to revise the Song of Forms. If you don't plan on using the trillith much beyond this adventure, you may want to make Vuhl a normal seela, rather than a deceptive trillith. Kazyk, the bearded devil who pursues the party, could have been summoned by any of the party's enemies with access to *lesser planar ally* or *lesser planar binding*, or could have even followed them from previous scuffles with other devils. In absence of this, Kazyk could simply be in the forest, looking for a way to destroy it and the fey in it when he comes across the party.

Crystin's Premonitions

"Premonition" sidebars present visions that Crystin receives because she is endowed with the essence of the trillith Foresight. Should Crystin not accompany the party, the premonitions could just as easily fall to any character with psionic or sorcerous power, to a character with the Blessed by Dreams feat (see Appendix A), or to any character who has taken the dream seeds (see page 52).

If, however, the heroes seek to save the seela, they can learn a nobler course by listening to the lyrics of the Song of Forms. If they speak to the dryad Timbre instead of killing or kidnapping her, she can tell them how to claim the Living Blade of Innenotdar, a greatsword cut from her own tree. As long as the sword is bonded to a living person, the forest will survive even the fire. The heroes must dive into the depths of the scalding lake, fight past territorial merrow, and pull the sword from the body of Indomitability.

Even if they do this, they have not won. Though taking the sword saves Innenotdar, it frees the trillith to rampage in vengeful freedom. The heroes must stop Indomitability, kill it, or drive it off. Only then will they be free to leave the forest themselves.

Replacing Characters

While this adventure protects the low-level party somewhat, PCs might still die along the way. Replacements can come from the NPCs tagging along, such as Torrent, Crystin, or the seela singer Tiljann. A new character might have immunity to fire — like a half-dragon — or might be a refugee from Gate Pass who managed to make it partly into the forest before running out of protection. Such a character might have fallen unconscious and been infused with living fire, gaining the indomitable fire template (see Appendix B). An indomitable fire character might die at the end of the adventure if his fellow heroes don't know how to help him, but he should prove an interesting and valuable, if agonized, companion for the adventure's duration.

Interparty Dynamics

This adventure contains some very weighty moral decisions for the heroes, and some intentionally difficult NPCs (especially if the party travels with Haddin from the end of the first adventure). Combined unexpected sources of stress, this can bring out a lot of personality from the characters, and can play up some relationships in the party (or between party members and NPCs), as moments of shared stress often do. All told, you should prepare to indulge some party conflict without letting it consume an entire gaming session. Even if the PCs among themselves are harmonious, you may consider allowing any NPCs that are traveling with them to grow and change, reflecting their own development as people.

Torrent

Even the cool, confident Torrent may become quite frazzled as the resources run out. She believes she has planned for most contingencies, and when supplies begin to run out, she may become defensive, perceiving the party's concerns as criticisms of her. She is a devout soul, and may begin to see the journey as a test of faith, driving her to some near-suicidal behavior as she tries to prove her strength. If other party members are of particularly questionable morality, she might even begin to doubt her faith, choosing instead a path offered by Kazyk as more practical.

Crystin

If Haddin's hold over her is broken, Crystin turns out to be the archetypal neophyte. She's quite impressionable, especially grateful to those who have saved her mind, and eager for new experiences. She doesn't get in over her head very often, but she's ready to try anything the leaders of the party propose. Conversely, if she's still under Haddin's control, she's fairly mute and obedient, letting her father take responsibility and control. She will side with him against the party, if necessary. She will be very sympathetic to Tiljann, and her contact with the power of Indomitability slowly begins to awaken something that had lain dormant inside her.

Haddin

It is unlikely that Haddin becomes any less domineering, though it's conceivable. If left to his own devices, he will simply try to use the other party members, including his daughter, as tools to keep himself alive; he will also worry that his daughter is breaking free of his control as she has visions. He will be strongly in favor of taking Kazyk's offer, seeing morality as an obstacle in the way of survival. Only if one of the heroes manages to befriend Haddin and lead by example might he begin to change his behavior. He responds best to gruff, bitter people, and responds poorly to those who criticize him. If the heroes treat him rudely, he might even attempt to magically dominate a few of them to make them do as he says. If he manages to survive this adventure, he'll likely become a thorn in the heroes' side (or at least a pain in the party's backside).

Act One: The Elfroad

The adventure begins as the party enters the forest. Read or summarize the text below for the players:

> Though magic protects your skin against burn, you can still feel the intense, withering heat carried in terrible blasts from the trees, and you smell the acrid smoke as you enter and it envelops you, arms of black and orange embracing your party. The thick banks of smoke mean that you can't often see more than an arm's length in front of you, but the fierce, dry wind often blows these banks away. Powered by backdrafts and dramatic valley winds, the gusts snatch at loose pieces of clothing. During the lulls in the wind, as the massive lungs of the forest take breath, fingers of flame reach out from the smoldering undergrowth, pawing and caressing the hems of clothing and the ropes and backpacks, always threatening to grab hold and ignite an inescapable inferno. In front of you, the only thing that distinguishes the Elfroad from the surrounding territory is its relative lack of undergrowth, exposing the blackened char-rock where once the elves of Innenotdar carried their families.
>
> Your eyes sting with tears, your nostrils burn, your hands draw back instinctively, as if touching a boiling pot. As if diving into a dragon's fiery maw, you have entered the Fire Forest of Innenotdar.

According to several old maps Torrent consulted, the path along the Elfroad through Innenotdar is seventeen miles long, followed by about fifty more miles along a mountain road before reaching the northern foothills of Dassen. The Elfroad counts as hilly highway terrain, and so travel is at the normal movement rate.

While on the Elfroad, the heroes don't need to worry about catching aflame or taking fire damage — the Elfroad is surprisingly clear, and remains that way. As long as they are protected against the ambient heat in the forest (through *stand the heat* or a fire resistance of at least 1), they suffer nothing more than the general discomfort of intense heat and breathing smoke-filled air. Haddin, if he is with the party, coughs often with wracking pain, while Torrent drinks water regularly.

The road is fairly straight and smooth, 30 feet across, with brush and trees burning close to the edge on either side. It occasionally rises on hills or cuts through low ravines, walls of rough stone rising on either side. A Knowledge (nature) check (DC 15) determines that the fires directly along the side of the road seem weaker than they ought to be. The heroes can walk all the way to the edge of the road with no danger of touching live flame, but considering how intensely the fire elsewhere burns, the sides of the road should be bathed in fire. A Spot check (DC 10) notices that the fires further down the road seem more intense, but as they travel the flames weaken, making their passage safer. Meanwhile, as they walk ahead, a few hundred feet behind them the flames intensify to what one would normally expect, making the road narrower and harder to navigate. This does not actually block the heroes' travel if they want to turn back, but it should cause them to wonder whether turning back later will be difficult.

Every mile or so, a smaller path splits off from the main road, leading into the forest fire. None of the trails look particularly interesting, though occasionally the heroes may spy what looks like houses built out of the living boughs of trees, engulfed like everything else. Their inhabitants are no doubt long dead, and little remains to loot, but if the heroes want to explore, or if you want to add further encounters to the forest, some of these side roads are clear enough to travel. Down these narrower paths, however, creatures must make a Reflex save (DC 10) every ten minutes to avoid taking 1d6 points of fire damage.

The Elfroad is covered in a few inches of ash, and the group leaves a very clear trail as they travel. If the heroes want to conceal their passage by brushing away tracks, they travel at half normal speed, but this is not sufficient to keep Kazyk the bearded devil from following them along the only safe path. Torrent advises them against traveling so slowly.

Out of the Frying Pan

The heroes come across several minor encounters along the Elfroad before they reach the river, where Indomitability will test them. If you want more combat you could add a bit of fighting with almost any fire-resistant or fire-elemental creature, such as normal or dire animals altered by the indomitable fire template (see Appendix B).

Ending Suffering (EL ½)

The heroes aren't the only ones who thought to escape the scouring of Gate Pass by taking this path. Unfortunately, without the PCs' connections and resources, many other groups quickly failed. A quarter-mile after entering the forest, the heroes come across a trio of refugees, now smoldering piles of burnt flesh and blackened bones. Their remains are scattered, as if they had been picked over by scavengers. A Search check (DC 5) uncovers 50 gp, three daggers, the clasp and metal bindings of a now-obliterated spellbook, and a spiked chain. Searching the smoldering corpses deals 1d6 points of fire damage for each round spent, though clever groups could use *mage hand* or simple tools to avoid the heat.

If a character does touch any of the bodies, however, one of the more-intact bodies begins to move, wailing in pain as it reaches out for the hero. If the heroes do not instinctively destroy what appears to be a zombie, the figure — still kept alive by Indomitability's essence — looks at them and desperately coughs a plea: "Kill me."

If the heroes do not oblige and instead heal the wounded figure and then put out the flames, the man eventually becomes coherent, though despondent. His skin is scarred and hairless, he has no possessions, and he barely speaks even if prompted. This man, **Durval** (CE male human evoker 1), was a student at Gabal's school who tried to flee with his family, but whose spells proved horribly inadequate to brave the forest fire.

If prodded to talk about himself, he asks if anyone else survived. When it becomes clear that he has lost everything he ever cared for, he withdraws from the world, only taking actions that might get him killed. He tries to get a dagger to stab himself in the heart, or he'll jump into a gorge, or simply run back into the fire.

Ad Hoc Experience

Reward the heroes as if they had overcome a CR ½ challenge if they simply loot the bodies or end Durval's suffering. If they somehow manage to keep Durval alive long enough to get him out of the fire forest, which is the earliest he will possibly consider moving on with his life, reward them for a CR 5 challenge.

An Unnatural Hunt (EL 3 or 5)

Two miles into the forest, the heroes hear some chittering and swooping in the branches overhead. Suddenly, something falls from them, careening straight at one of the party members. The character must make a Reflex save (DC 14) to avoid being struck by a falling fire mephit. The mephit is screaming in fear and terror as its aggressor descends from the branches. Its aggressor is a dire

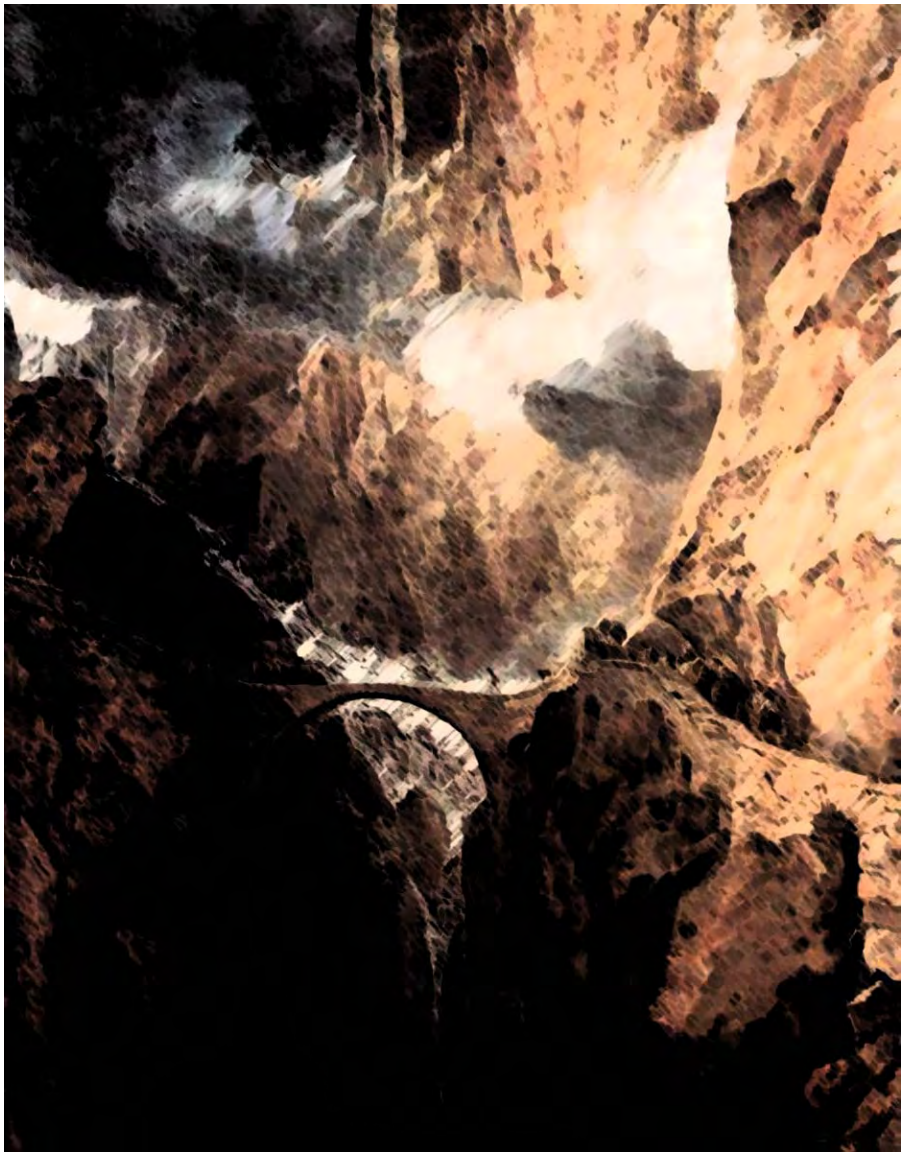
bat, entirely engulfed in flame. The mephit scrabbles, claws, and generally attempts to use the character it fell at as a shield, and the fiery bat proceeds to try and catch the creature.

Note that while this dire bat is statted out fully in Appendix B to give an example creature with the indomitable fire template, other creatures with the template do not include a full stat block, as the benefits are easy to apply and don't cause much variance from the stats in the core rulebooks.

Fire mephit (CR 3): hp 13, MM.
Indomitable fire dire bat (CR 3): hp 30, Appendix B.

The bat is one of countless creatures kept alive despite horrible burns by the power of Indomitability, and though driven mad by pain it still tries to hunt and survive like a normal creature. The mephit, applying Dodge, taking total defense actions, and using a PC as cover, has an AC of 25 against the bat. The bat attacks for several rounds, and if it misses by 4 or less it strikes the PC. The mephit uses its movement to stay with its living shield as long as the PC does not run more than 50 feet in a round.

The bat fights to the death, and then returns one more time because of its rekindle ability. The mephit retaliates if attacked by the heroes, feeling confident in its invulnerability and curious that outsiders have made it this far, though if seriously harmed it will flee. It will thank its "saviors" if the heroes kill the bat. It doesn't want to hang around long, but it will warn the PCs against angering the forest and against other burning animals.



Dangerous Crossing (EL 5)

The heroes come upon a deep gorge, crossed by what was once a sturdy stone arch bridge, 20 feet wide and 50 feet long, with 3-foot-high stone railings on either side. Now, however, the bridge is weak and dangerous. The railing on the right side has a 10-foot-wide section knocked out in the middle of the bridge, and the stone around it is cracked. A wagon crewed by fleeing gnomes attempted to cross here several years ago, and they met their end over the side of this treacherous bridge.

The bridge can safely support 500 pounds at a time. Any more weight causes the stones to shift and creak, forcing everyone on the bridge to make a Balance check (DC 15) to keep walking. A character who fails by 5 falls and must make a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid shifting 5 feet in a random direction.

Additionally, several sections of the bridge are weak: a total of eight 5-foot squares scattered along the bridge, most near the edges, but two in its very center. A Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 15) or Search check (DC 20) identifies which sections of the bridge are safe and which are dangerous and near collapse. The Knowledge check can be made from the edge of the bridge, but the Search check can be made only in squares adjacent to the searching character.

Weak bridge squares begin to crack as soon as anyone puts weight on them. A character who makes a Reflex save (DC 20) avoids falling, but must choose an adjacent square to move to, which might also be dangerous. A failed Reflex save means a 60-foot plunge into burning brush at the bottom of the gorge.

The walls of the gorge are craggy stone (Climb DC 15), bare of vegetation. Going around the edge of the gorge requires passing through 200 feet of burning brush. Worse, a large mass of bats nests under the bridge. Anyone descending will notice tiny fires flickering along the underside of the stone arch. Unless the heroes all succeed a Move Silently check (DC 11) while crossing the bridge, the noise of their passage disturbs the bats, and they take flight and attack the heroes in a flaming swarm.

Indomitable fire bat swarm (CR 3): hp 13, MM and Appendix B.

Ad-Hoc Experience

Crossing the gorge safely is worth a CR 3 challenge.

Dangerous Crossing – Art by J. M. W. Turner

Game Master's Map pg. 636



Treasure

Should the heroes explore the wreckage of the old gnomish wagon at the bottom of the gorge, they find 250 gp worth of coins and gems in a small chest, plus a cache of a dozen *potions of stand the heat*, and a *wand of cure light wounds* with 11 charges.

Devil Looking Over Your Shoulder (EL 3)

Once the party has traveled two miles into the forest, the bearded devil Kazyk comes upon them.

Kazyk was called via *lesser planar ally* by a Ragesian inquisitor named Guthwulf, and bargained into a long-term pact of assisting the Ragesian army. The High Inquisitor presiding over the scouring of Gate Pass, Kreven, has been keeping in regular contact with his subordinates, and recently he discovered that Boreus, the inquisitor sent to retrieve Haddin, was unsuccessful. If Boreus escaped, Kreven knows all about the heroes. Otherwise, he simply knows someone defeated Boreus, and so he has ordered Guthwulf to dispatch his devil ally to track down the heroes.

Kreven also has a hunch that this is tied to the theft of the case that contained vital military plans, and so Kazyk's mission is first to retrieve the case and its contents if the heroes have it, and second to keep them from escaping the fire forest. Finally, he is to gather intelligence about the fire forest, and report it to Guthwulf regularly.

Kazyk uses his *greater teleport* ability (and his immunity to fire) to arrive at Haddin's house, and then to pursue the party into the fire forest. He can easily follow their trail across the ashy Elfroad, and so each round he teleports a half-mile down the road and checks to see if the group has gotten that far. It only takes him a few minutes to pinpoint their location, at which point he stops ahead of them and conceals himself to spy on the group. He crouches amid flaming brush 10 feet off the road and waits.

Kazyk, bearded devil (CR 5): hp 45, Appendix B.

Kazyk does not want a confrontation yet — he just waits and observes the heroes, trying to decide which looks weakest. After the heroes pass by, or if he is spotted (Spot DC 22), he teleports back to Gate Pass, where he demands healing if injured and plots his next move. Whenever Kazyk teleports, he appears or vanishes in a very visible explosion: flames burst like a fiery flower blossom, alerting the heroes that something was nearby if they had not noticed him yet. A Knowledge (the planes) or Spellcraft check (DC 20) determines that some sort of planar magic was used, though the burst of flame is decidedly unusual for simple teleportation.

Fiery Howl

An hour after Kazyk first leaves the group, they are delivered a message. Kazyk found and negotiated with a hellhound living in the fire forest, and he sends it to confront the heroes.

Hellhound (CR 3): hp 22, MM.

While the heroes are crossing another arching bridge over another ravine, a hellhound hides by the side of the road (Spot DC 23). Once the group is within 30 feet, or whenever it is noticed, it paws its way onto their trail with an air of cordial ferocity. It carries what appears to be a human thigh bone in its mouth, and if given a chance it drops the bone and backs up. If asked questions in Infernal or telepathically, it responds by shaking its head or nodding, but it cannot talk. Its mission is only to deliver the message, but it is cruelly curious about the group. If they are not hostile to it, it will

gladly take some time to see if some of them might be worth stalking and eating later. If it is attacked, the hellhound fights back, confident in its strength, though it will flee if things look bad.

The femur that the hellhound carries is carved with a message in Common: "Leave the case. Cooperate, and we might find an arrangement to spare your lives. Carry this with you if you wish to bargain."

Infernal Harrier (EL 5)

About ten minutes after the encounter with the hellhound, if the party does not leave the case and carry the femur as previously instructed, Kazyk strikes. Since it is nearly impossible to hide on an open road, the bearded devil should easily be able to spot them from 90 feet away. He begins the encounter by teleporting into the center of the road in a chrysanthemum burst of flowering flame, appearing 90 feet away, cloaked, smoldering, and wielding a glaive.

If the party carries the femur but does not hand over the case, or if they left an empty case, Kazyk takes a moment to say: "Smart negotiators always obey the *letter* of any contract. Unfortunately, I have already signed one. I do so appreciate your spirit." Then he attacks.

If the party complies completely to Kazyk's request for the case and femur, the devil will not approach them after they reach the ruins of the elf village on the river (Kazyk's Offer, page 56).

Kazyk, bearded devil (CR 5): hp 45, Appendix B.
Lemures (5) (CR n/a): hp 9 each, MM. These are summoned by Kazyk.

Tactics

Kazyk begins by summoning five lemures, which rise up from the ash on the road, flickering briefly with fire. He then points his glaive toward the hero he has decided is the weakest, and orders the lemures to kill that person. Kazyk strikes each character once, letting the infernal wounds caused by his glaive deal additional damage. Once he has struck each of the heroes, or once a character falls, or when things start to go badly for him, he teleports away, saying with a smile, "Good fight."

If the characters manage to kill, incapacitate, or otherwise ground Kazyk, he offers Kazyk's Offer early (page 56), as he is on his last legs. This does not disrupt the adventure, though it may simplify things if the party kills him before he can mess with their heads.

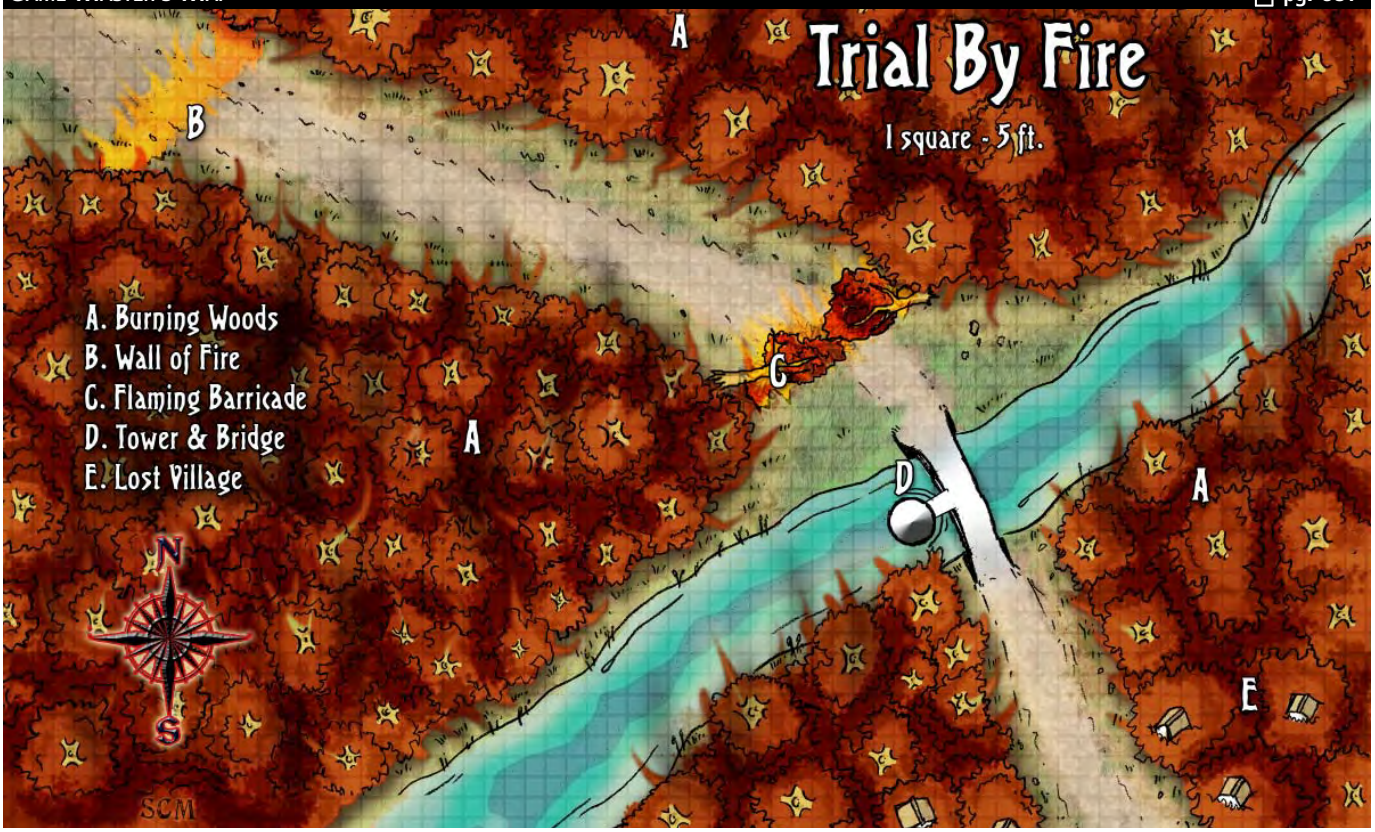
Trial by Fire (EL 6)

After traveling six miles down the Elfroad, the heroes spot what looks like a stone bridge around a bend in the road a hundred feet ahead, and some sort of structure built atop it. They also make out a loud cracking sound, and several of the trees a hundred feet down the road flare as explosions tear open their trunks at the base. A moment later,



Kazyk – Art by Claudio Pozas

Game Master's Map pg. 637



a cluster of trees on either side of the road careen inward to fall across the Elfroad, blocking the path ahead.

A round after Crystin has her premonition (see sidebar), Indomitability begins testing the heroes.

> The curtains of flame that lick meekly at the trees at the road's edge suddenly flare, cinders bursting outward across you all. Behind you, you hear a sudden roaring noise, and looking back you see the road fifty feet away cut off by a furious wall of fire. The sides of Elfroad are quickly becoming hazardous as live flames reach out at you, and overhead the ash and cinders begin to swirl, coalescing into a searing spear. Then, with a thundercrack, the spear drives into the ground amid you all and explodes. Within the smoke appears a trio of miniature stags whose bodies burn like the inferno, with racks of antlers composed entirely of dancing fire. They paw at the ground, swing their fiery antlers, and prepare to charge, while the wall of fire at your back slowly moves toward you.

In Crystin's premonition, she sees one 5-foot square as being too dangerous to stay in. If any character refuses to heed her warnings and stays in that square even as a flaming lance appears overhead, he is struck by the falling spear of fire, dealing 4d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 15 negates). Crystin is dazed for 1 round after the flaming lance strikes.

The corridor available for the party to fight in is 150 feet long, with the party about 100 feet from the far side when Crystin has her vision, and 50 feet from the wall of fire. The road is 30 feet wide, though the 5-foot squares nearest to the edges on either side are bathed in fire: creatures standing on the edge of the road must make a Reflex save (DC 15) each round to avoid taking 1d6 points of fire damage.

The wall of fire appears roughly 50 feet behind the party, and works as a *wall of fire* cast by a 7th-level sorcerer. Each round the wall of fire advances 20 feet, and then deals damage based on its new location — 2d6+7 points of fire damage to creatures it engulfs, 2d4 to creatures within 10 feet, and 1d4 to creatures within 20 feet. The wall of fire deals double damage to undead. Creatures protected by *stand the heat* take no damage from simply being close to the wall of fire, since the damage is from heat, not actual flames.

Premonition

Crystin sees a giant stag that is on fire leaping out of the treeline and goring one PC. She shouts for that person to move, and yells for everyone to get out of the way of a particular spot on the ground. She begins to come out of the vision, but is briefly dazed.

The wall moves slowly enough that characters should not get caught in it, but warn the players that if they stop within 20 feet of the wall, they will be engulfed. Over the course of eight rounds, should the combat last so long, the wall of fire moves until it strikes the trees that block the road.

The fallen trees are on fire, and form a barricade 20 feet deep. Crossing them requires a Climb check (DC 10) and 20 feet worth of movement for every 5 feet of travel, and each round a character remains in contact with the trees he takes 1d6 points of fire damage and must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or catch on fire. Disturbingly, a vaguely draconic face appears in the flames, roaring at any character trying to flee but not attacking.

The stags are actually medium fire elementals that simply have a gore attack that does piercing damage instead of a bludgeoning slam. Whenever one of these stags is killed, the advance of the wall of fire is stopped for one round.

Medium fire elementals (3) (CR 3): hp 26 each, MM. Replace the elementals' slam attack with a gore attack that does piercing damage.

Adventure Shuffle

While the default structure of the adventure assumes Indomitability contacts the party first, then Kazyk, and then Tiljann, these can occur in a different order. Shuffling them can put the focus on different elements of the adventure.

In short, Indomitability wants the heroes to set it free, and wants them to kill the seela. Kazyk suggests they kill Indomitability, not mentioning that doing so will kill the seela, (and he doesn't care, even if that is brought up as a problem). Tiljann, however, has information on a possible solution that can send the heroes on their way without killing anyone.

Indomitability's Offer • Kazyk's Offer • Trouble with Tiljann

This is the order the encounters are presented in as a default, and it provides the greatest temptation. Characters seldom like being told what to do, and after Indomitability's fierce demands, even a devil's deal may hold interest. They have time to consider both offers before they actually come upon any of the seela, and might fight Tiljann out of hand.

Indomitability's Offer • Trouble with Tiljann • Kazyk's Offer

In this scenario, Tiljann's appearance will likely be a relief, as she gives the heroes a way to resist Indomitability. Kazyk has less of a chance to influence the party if they already have an ally.

Kazyk's Offer First

If the heroes manage to defeat Kazyk early, he explains how to destroy the forest. This puts more emphasis on the Ragesians and their pursuit, since the devil's offer is coming from an enemy, whereas in the other scenarios Kazyk approaches as a supposed friend. The adventure will likely become simpler as the moral quandary is reduced to decision of whom to trust: the seela or the trillith.

Trouble with Tiljann First

The party might go out of their way to avoid Indomitability's test, and might run across Tiljann in the ruins of the elf village. While Kazyk still might tempt the party, it is very unlikely Indomitability's offer will hold any interest for the heroes.

Indomitability's Offer

Once the last of the stag-shaped elementals is defeated, the wall of fire vanishes, and Indomitability contacts the heroes directly.

You hear whispers amid the trees, snatches of words coming from all directions, growing louder and more intense all around until finally a booming voice shouts from the flaming trees:

"Come!" it roars. "Follow the river. Set me free!"

The flames on the fallen trees blockading the road flare as a draconic face emerges, shaped of fire, its head adorned with a massive crown of jagged horns. The image then fades so only a pair of eyes remain. A voice enters your minds, deep, fiery, burning with restrained anger.

"Know this: I am the flame; I am a prisoner here. Save me, free me from the prison of this enforced flesh, and you may continue to your destination. Refuse, and never shall you leave this wood. You shall be a prisoner for as long as I. You shall burn forever, and never die."

Indomitability does not speak much. Use the following replies to specific questions the heroes might ask:

What are you?

"I am Indomitability. No wound shall ever defeat me. No fire shall ever destroy me. My power can be yours if you release me."

Where are you?

"Rest your flesh now in the ruins beyond the bridge. Then you must follow the river down to the singing lake. I lie trapped beneath its surface. Set me free!"

How do we free you?

"End the song of the deep, the song of agony and eternal vigil. Silence the forty tongues who hold me here, who doom themselves with my relentless flame."

We don't want to help you.

"There is one whose blade shall cross your trail. He shall have my boon, and if you do not fall before him, my fire shall turn you to ash and embers. You shall regret your choice."

Anything else.

"I care for nothing but freedom, but if you do not release me you shall suffer my wrath."

If the heroes agree, Indomitability grants them its boon (see sidebar, page 66). They briefly feel flames burn in their veins, and then suddenly the heat of the forest no longer affects them. If they refuse, Indomitability roars at them, then vanishes, heading off to contact Kazyk and grant the devil his boon.

Once the heroes make a decision, or after Indomitability has said all it has to say, the flames quickly gutter and die. The fires at the side of the road dim again, and in less than a minute the Elfroad is safe.

As soon as the heroes get across the barricade of the downed trees (which are safe to climb across now as they are no longer burning), they see clearly a stone bridge up ahead, crossing a strong river that somehow has managed not to be burned away in the fire. The bridge has some sort of tower atop it, and beyond the bridge lies the relatively safe remains of an elvish tree village. No flames fill the village, making it a possible resting place.

Changing their Minds

If the heroes originally agree to help Indomitability, gain his boon, and later change their minds, they hear Indomitability's telepathic voice cursing them: "May your flesh always fail you." They lose the benefit of Indomitability's boon, and become some of his prime targets.

Indomitability cannot read the heroes' thoughts, however, and so he only revokes his boon if they announce that they have changed their minds while he is present (or otherwise clearly show they don't intend to help him), or they shout it to the forest.

If the heroes initially refuse and then, perhaps because of the mounting danger, change their minds, they can get Indomitability's attention by the methods above. If he is convinced they are sincere, he will grant his boon immediately, unless he is in combat, in which case he waits until he is no longer in danger.

Act Two: Rivers Flow to the Deep

This section of the adventure details a mystery-filled ruin which can serve as a resting place, the blessed river trail to Indomitability, and the dangers the heroes face along the way. Because the previous section was fairly straightforward and did not offer many character choices, you should be sure to let the players go through this section however they want, to avoid them feeling like they are being railroaded.

Two main encounters need to occur before the heroes head downstream. The first is Kazyk's offer, when the bearded devil approaches the party with a plan that will resolve both its problem and theirs. The second is Trouble with Tiljann, when a deceived seela finds herself under attack by her own kind, with the heroes her only chance of survival.

Defeated In No Battles

The heroes have just passed Indomitability's trial, and before them lies their first real fork in the road. Read or summarize the following.

> Stretching across the river in front of you is an arc of a bridge seeming composed of branches and vines of what was once pale, white stone. Several of these vines and branches plunge into the shallow water beneath the bridge, forming supports. Off the right side of the bridge, in the middle of the river sits a tall, narrow tower, only about twenty feet in diameter, reaching up to a roof thirty feet above the bridge. A narrow walkway leads from the main bridge to a thick oaken entrance door. The tower, as well as the bridge, is currently flame-free, though blackened from decades of soot. On the far side of the bridge lies a small village built in a wide clearing, its buildings faintly visible through the forest's ashy haze.

A Knowledge (architecture) check (DC 10) recognizes the bridge as using the distinctive "stonewood" style of the elves of Innenotdar. Though intended to show a harmony between artifice and the natural world, the Innenotdar elves were criticized, particularly by the elvish leaders of Shahalesti, for emulating the stoneshaping magic of the hated drow and dwarves.

Fort Entrance (EL 6)

The bridge-fort is sturdy and is a relatively safe refuge from the forest outside. Originally intended as a guard point along the Elfroad it has numerous arrow slits, and once upon a time a sturdy wooden gate could block off the entire bridge. There are several arrow slits on higher floors, but the only easy entrance is a strong wooden door (Open Lock DC 25). Additionally, a ward has been placed on the door. If a creature strikes the door to deal damage, a spiritual weapon appears in the form of a glowing blue heavy mace, which retaliates, striking the creature that attacked the door unless it moves than 150 feet away.

Spiritual Weapon Trap (CR 3): Magic device; spell trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*spiritual weapon*, 5th level cleric; 5 rounds, +7 attack; 1d8+1 damage); Search DC 27; Disable Device 27.

Once the door is open, an odd sight greets them. On the floor right in front of the door is a one-foot stone that is burning with a *continual flame* spell. Painted on the stone in black is a message in Elvish, "Say 'friend' and enter."

A *glyph of warding* has been placed on the doorway; the bypass password is the Elvish word for "friend."

Glyph of Warding Trap (CR 4): Spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding*, 5th level cleric; 2d8 cold damage, Reflex DC 16 half); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device 28.

The interior is only 130 degrees, which was not enough to kill the guards who refused to leave their posts. They perished from starvation, but not before helping many of their kindred to safety. The heroes find two dried corpses leaning against the walls, and on their bodies and around the fort can be found a total of two masterwork composite longbows (Str +1), two hundred arrows, two masterwork shortswords, two masterwork longswords, two daggers, and two masterwork chain shirts. Stairs lead up to the second floor.

On the second floor, a holy symbol of the god of sunsets has been left on a long table. On the table next to the holy symbol is a large wooden map of the village beyond the bridge, with small carved figures placed amid miniature buildings to represent possible ways to defend the town. Also on the table is a notebook written in elvish, a log book and journal written by a cleric who manned the tower, who had taken the name Bhurisrava, a celestial word that means "defeated in no battles." The book covers Bhurisrava's last few weeks in the tower, mixed with musings on the nature of faith. It appears that the priest underwent a conflict of faith as he faced death, and that he wished to convert to a healing faith before he died, but did not know how. He also recounts the tales of many refugees who spoke of fires that simply would not go out. The elves of Innenotdar tried to save their home, but not even magic could put out the flames.

Bhurisrava's body is nowhere to be found, but the heroes can use the map and the journal to plan their exploration of the village. His notes mention one location in particular in the village that might be of interest — the Shrine of Anyariel. His final passage reads:

> *I tire of spending my days rescuing the burning bodies of survivors and tending to them to no effect. The last survivor I found was a woman who still believed that the Living Wood of Innenotdar could not be abandoned. She asked my help looking for her boyfriend. We found him in a hidden basement under the Shrine of Anyariel, where he had gone to curse the Anyariel name, along with a dozen other of the townsfolk. The fire had somehow burned in from the roots of the shrine, and they had long since been claimed. Though not dead, they are despairing, and their curses haunt me. The woman saw her beloved and fled me into the woods, seeking an impossible death.*
>
> *I found myself hoping something ate her. I never learned her name.*
>
> *I can do this no longer. To whatever god hears the prayers of the doubting, please give me the strength for the task ahead of me. I am going to deliver the despairing to the mouth of the White River upstream, where at least they can have some reprieve from the fire. May someone find what I have hidden. It would help bring to justice those responsible for the destruction of my beautiful homeland, for which otherwise none shall shed tears.*

Characters can attempt a bardic knowledge check or a Knowledge (local) check to recall stories of Anyariel. Elves from Innenotdar gain a +5 bonus on these checks, and characters with 5 or more ranks of Knowledge (nature) gain a +2 bonus on this check.

Result:

- DC 15 — Anyariel was a hero of Innenotdar, a holy warrior who died only a few years before the forest caught fire. She was said to be friend of the forest's fey, was blessed by the forest itself, and had many times fought darkness from Innenotdar's borders, wielding a magic sword.
- DC 20 — Anyariel wielded a greatsword carved of wood, which she used to defeat many monsters, including a blackguard from Ragesia, and a rampaging golem of white clay.
- DC 25 — The last foe she faced was a great stag that would not die, no matter how many wounds she dealt to it, so she pinned the creature to the bottom of a lake with her sword, so its rampage would end.
- DC 30 — Anyariel was loved by a dryad named Timbre who gave her the wooden sword, and a nymph named Gwenvere who was jealous that Anyariel did not love her. It was in the nymph's lake that Anyariel defeated the stag.

The Dream Seeds (EL 4)

On the third floor of the tower, behind a locked door (Open Lock DC 25), is a closet filled with housekeeping materials, as well as a shelf holding a pouch labeled "For later study." The small paper pouch contains seven small, blackened seeds shaped like claws. A sleeping face is drawn on the pouch, and written in Goblin are instructions: "Take one for visions of the firemaker. Do not take more. These are poison."

Bhurisrava's notes call these "dream seeds," explaining they were taken from the corpses of goblins who had helped set the fires. According to a *speak with dead* spell, the seeds are supposed to create prophetic visions of a "dream realm," but Bhurisrava felt no effect when he tried one, and he risked not take another. He filed them away, figuring they were useless. The goblins had been natives to the caves under the forest, hired by an orc who claimed to be Ragesian, but Bhurisrava could find out no better information from them.

Premonition

If Crystin handles the seeds, she starts to get very sleepy, and almost falls asleep standing up. If allowed to sleep, she quickly slumps to the ground, and starts rumbling in deep roars in her sleep. Most of the words are incomprehensible, but those who speak Draconic can make out: "Return to the Mother ... Captive in Freedom ... Wake up. Wake up!"

In truth, the seeds are a sleep-inducing hallucinogen that, when taken in areas of strong psychic energy, induce incredibly vivid dreams. Bhurisrava could not experience these visions, because the elvish trance is not sleep.

In truth, the seeds have the unique effect of alerting nearby telepathic creatures. Whenever a creature falls asleep because of one of these seeds, it begins to dream and have visions, and every telepathic or psionic creature within several miles feels a mild draw toward the sleeping creature. When the Shahalesti wanted to set fire to Innenotdar, Lord Shaaladel was aware of the presence and nature of Indomitability, and so his agents recruited goblin agents to set multiple fires, telling them each to take one of the seeds. This would attract Indomitability, encouraging the trillith's essence to infuse the burning forest, to keep the flames from being put out.

The seeds are a mild ingested poison (Fortitude DC 16, initial and secondary sleep, as by the *sleep* spell; elves are immune.) A non-elf character can choose to voluntarily fail the save and fall asleep. Any character who falls asleep from a seed experiences wild dreams, seeing a highly impressionistic version of the forest fire for a moment, before his perception begins to fly to places of interest, seeing visions of family members or old friends, or sweeping and horrifying flashes of blood and swords in Gate Pass. All throughout he hears a distant song in distorted Sylvan, and feels a persistent sense of someone hiding in shadows at the edge of his vision.

While it is unclear if these are simple hallucinations, in truth they are faintly prophetic, giving you an opportunity to show events going on elsewhere in the world. If two or more characters both sleep because of these seeds, they see the same dreams, which may provide unwanted insight into each other's secrets. If a character has two or more seeds within an hour, the poison becomes far worse (Fortitude DC 16, initial and secondary 1d6 Wisdom).

If allowed to take a normal course, the sleep wears off after ten minutes, after which the eater still experiences a faint sense of foresight, gaining a +1 insight bonus to AC for one hour. However, a few moments after falling asleep, the character sees a silvery blue serpent appear in the dream realm. It flies toward the character and lashes him with a whip-like tail, dealing 1d4 points of Charisma damage (Will DC 14 half) and causing him to cry out in the waking world, though he remains asleep. The coiled, draconic serpent — the physical manifestation of a dream elemental — appears in the real world and takes on a solid form, drawn to the psychic energy of the dream seeds. It begins to attack waking characters.

Medium dream elemental (CR 4): hp 26, Appendix B.

Tactics

Drawn by the unleashed psionic energy of the dream seeds, the dream elemental targets waking characters, blasting them with its *freezing ray*. If any mind-affecting spells are cast on it, it retaliates with *ego whip*. It then engages in melee, trying to render waking characters unconscious. It uses its warp reality ability liberally.

If all sleeping characters in the room are awakened, the dream elemental becomes frantic, then vanishes one round later, banished back to the "dream realm."

The elemental is not aware of the dangers of teleporting, and so will still use *dimension door* if it needs to flee. However, it vanishes in a burst of flame, and much to its surprise takes 1d6 points of fire damage per 100 feet traveled (see Appendix A), perhaps killing it.

Exploring the Village

The village, the name of which has been forgotten, consists mostly of ruins of little interest — burned out homes and stores, a park whose trees were cut down so they would die and stop burning, and the occasional wandering animal afflicted with the indomitable fire template. The village is a quarter mile across, full of homes built into the boughs of trees or along the contours of hills. In the village's center, atop a low hill, is the Shrine of Anyariel.

Searching the Ruins (EL 3+)

Each hour the heroes spend searching the village's ruins they can each make a Search check (DC 25) to locate one of the following incidental treasures. However, each hour the heroes search, there is also a 25% chance that they are attacked by a swarm of bats with the indomitable fire template, a hellhound, a pair of fire-immune ghouls, or some similar creature.

- A necklace of ivory leaves worth 25 gp that radiates faint divination magic. While wearing the necklace, the wearer can understand and speak Sylvan but can understand and speak no other languages.
- A masterwork musical horn and lyre. Also a song book wrapped in thick blankets, containing psalms worth 5 gp.

- A similarly-wrapped book detailing tattooing methods intended to create a single tattoo across the bodies of two people, a mark of eternal love. The book is a masterpiece worth 200 gp, and the tattoo would require a Craft (body art) (DC 30) check to create.
- An iron *wand of ray of frost* (49 charges).
- A lacy red cord, two feet long, that radiates faint divination magic. This cord, if wrapped around the hands or wrists of two people at once, will change color to a darker shade if both people share a common ancestor within three generations, all the way to black if they are siblings.

The Shrine of Anyariel (EL 5)

The Shrine of Anyariel is a beautiful fountain in the shape of a grand willow tree with drooping branches, which once rained soothing water upon a wide, shimmering pool surrounded by a ring of seventeen old oak trees. A walkway of stepping stones led to a small "island" in front of the tree, where townsfolk would offer prayers and thanks to Innenotdar's last hero. Now the water has boiled away, and only the trees remain, occasionally raining fiery debris. The stone willow tree is covered with ash.

One of Innenotdar's most harrowing and revolting tragedies lurks now at the grove. Two druids — a husband and wife who had pledged themselves as caretakers for seven children — tried to hide with the youngsters in caves upstream, on a tributary of the river that has since boiled away. They hoped to wait for the fire to die out, but when it did not, the couple began to eat the children. For this act, they rose as ghasts upon their eventual death.

These two undead eventually found their way to the village, and they set an ambush that they have never sprung. Forty years have passed, and when the heroes come into the grove, the ghasts' senses awaken them for a hunt.

Ghasts (2) (CR 3): hp 29 each, MM. These ghasts have fire immunity.

The ghasts hide in the branches of the stone willow tree, 15 feet up, and require a Spot check (DC 18) to notice, and even then they appear at first glance to just be dried, cracked corpses, their limbs eerily drifting in the ashen wind like actual willow branches. If any creature comes within 10 feet of the base of the tree, the ghasts leap down and attack.

Under the Shrine (EL 13)

There is a secret door in the trunk of the stone willow tree (Search DC 25), which was warded by the priest Bhurisrava as he was dying, to keep evil doers from easily entering it. The door itself cannot be easily opened, as it has no lock (Disable Device DC 25). A cleric who channels positive energy can expend a turn undead use to open the door, and indeed the door will open if it is in the area of a turn attempt used against the ghasts. Also, a Strength check (DC 28) can force the door open, but doing so calls forth a guardian bound in the tree, a ghaele eladrin, who demands that they explain themselves. Likewise, any violence within the secret reliquary alerts the ghaele.

The ghaele was placed here by a god of healing, in answer to the prayers of an unknown priest. The heroes are the first creatures to awaken it. It knows nothing of the events of the fire forest or of the rest of the world, but it says that its duty is to protect this shrine until those responsible for the destruction of Innenotdar are brought to justice. If the heroes convince the ghaele that they will work to that end, or at least will not work against it, it lets them enter. If they destroy the evidence within or attack, the ghaele at first uses nonlethal attacks, progressing to lethal damage if necessary, depositing the surviving characters outside the grove before repairing the door with *make whole* and returning to the heart of the tree.

The ghaele begins as Indifferent. If made Friendly it can lend its at-will *cure light wounds* to the heroes. It cannot go beyond the ring of trees surrounding the shrine.

Ghaele (CR 13): hp 65, MM.

The twenty-foot stairway down into the basement is bathed in blue luminescence. When the heroes reach the base of the stairs, they find the hidden reliquary of Anyariel, once maintained by the town's priests. The dryad Timbre received Anyariel's body after her death, and gave a lock of her lover's hair to the shrine. It has since been stolen.

This twenty-foot diameter chamber radiates peace and patience; the soft blue air whispers with a hallowed, distant song. The chamber's center is dominated by a tall white statue depicting an elven woman plunging a greastsword deep into a rampant stag. The sword, though carved of stone, looks like it is made of wood and covered in vines that entwine the elf woman's hands.

At the statue's feet lie two immobile figures. The first is dressed in the uniform of a Shahalesti soldier from decades past, his body wreathed in pale flames that struggle to burn. The man's eyes are closed, as if he is in a deep slumber. Likewise along the ceiling, tree roots growing down from the surface flicker with fire, but the flames are subdued, as if the light holds them at bay.

The second figure, a young male elf with red hair, wears the robes of a priest, though he carries no holy symbol. Numerous claw wounds mark his face and body, and he does not breathe, though his body shows no signs of decay. His arms are spread as if he fell in battle, and a warhammer lies inches from one of his hands. It points to an elaborate glass display case near the wall, which has been shattered, its contents missing.

Previously, over a dozen despairing townsfolk had taken refuge here after they had fallen victim to the indomitable fire. They sought aid from Anyariel, an end to their suffering, but when the hero did not come to their aid they chose to curse her instead. Bhurisrava found them, lying burning around Anyariel's statue, and eventually he took them away to the Mouth of the White River to be tended by the unicorn Nelle.

Bhurisrava kept only one survivor here, a Shahalesti soldier. Bhurisrava stayed at the shrine to interrogate the tortured soldier, eventually getting a confession from the man that the Shahalesti were responsible for setting fire to Innenotdar. Bhurisrava believed that he could not take the man out of the forest without killing him, so he remained here, looking for a way to heal the man and keep the evidence.

Unfortunately, the nymph Gwenvere, amid all the destruction of the burning forest, sought to steal a relic of her beloved Anyariel. She used magic to slip into the reliquary, and when Bhurisrava tried to stop her, she killed him, and stole the lock of Anyariel's hair and took it back to her cave. As he lay dying Bhurisrava prayed that some god would protect what he had failed to — the evidence that would bring to justice those who destroyed his homeland.

The Shahalesti soldier, Diashan Shediell, is under the effect of *temporal stasis* (caster level 20th). Even if the *temporal stasis* is dispelled, Diashan might quickly die if Indomitability has been defeated, because he has the indomitable fire template. Rescuing and healing him is likely beyond the powers of the heroes at this point, but when later he is freed, Diashan can provide

full information of the Shahalesti plot to destroy Innenotdar. His great suffering, and his time under Bhurisrava's merciful care, compelled him to repent.

Treasure

Bhurisrava's mace, a simple iron shaft, is a *+1 heavy mace* that bypasses damage reduction as if it were good-aligned. Additionally, a creature carrying the mace gains a special benefit when using the Heal skill to treat injuries: after spending one minute tending to a creature, if the mace's bearer makes a DC 15 Heal check, the patient heals an amount of damage equal to its Hit Dice. A particular patient can only benefit from one such healing treatment per day.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes locate and enter the Shrine of Anyariel, reward them for a CR 4 encounter.

Staying at the Village

The longer they stay at this location, the more concerned about resources the heroes may become, especially if they wind up exploring. Keep in mind the quantity of *stand the heat* potions that Torrent provided, and the current size of the party. It is possible that Torrent or a PC can cast *stand the heat*. If the heroes still are running low on defenses against the heat, it may be time for Kazyk's Offer or The Trouble with Tiljann to get the heroes moving quickly.

Beyond the Village (EL 11)

Indomitability does not wish for the heroes to leave the forest without freeing it, so the path along the Elfroad on the far side of the village is blocked by fire curtains (Appendix One) every ten feet, stretching for hundreds of feet.

Should the heroes attempt to press through the flaming barrier, a many-headed serpentine monster coalesces from the forest fire, blocking the roadway. Additionally, every round another flaming stag emerges from the forest, like the ones from the Trial by Fire encounter above, until a total of nine have joined the fight. All throughout the battle, the telepathic voice of Indomitability roars into their minds, "Yield! Serve me, or you shall never escape!"

Should at any point the heroes retreat or declare they will do as Indomitability wishes, the creatures break off their attack immediately, at least against those who have agreed. If the heroes manage to push past the hydra and run down the road, the elementals follow at top speed.

Medium fire elementals (9, CR 3): hp 26, MM.

Eight-headed pyrohydra (CR 9): hp 87, MM.

Premonition

If the heroes plan to head down the path in "Beyond the Village," Crystin screams, believing herself to be on fire. Her head snaps from side to side as images of the rest of the group transformed into fiery zombies flash before her. She finally collapses into a seizure, nearly choking on her own tongue. As the seizure fades, she deliriously mutters, "This is no sacrifice. It is only death. Nothing will be saved."

Exploring the White River

When the heroes are ready to take to the river, a Survival check (DC 13) orients them. The river flows from the northeast, heading southwest. Based on their maps and the distance they've traveled so far, it is likely about ten or twelve miles to where the river first enters the fire forest. The heroes might be looking for a way to avoid having to deal with Indomitability or Kazyk, and while heading upriver will not let them easily escape, this route provides them with potentially valuable information.

It is eleven miles upstream to the Mouth of the White River, and seven miles downstream to the seela Village. The White River is about thirty feet wide, though its banks were once fifty feet across. The now dry river banks — their water burnt away by the forest fire — are ten feet wide on each side, smooth and clear of fire. This path keeps the heroes distant from even the more grasping fingers of flame, and water is close enough to put out any fire that does catch them.

Going Against the Flow (EL 5)

Perhaps because they refuse to be herded by Indomitability, or perhaps because they're investigating clues from Bhurisrava's journal, the heroes may head upstream. The wind coming down the river is fairly strong. Three times during the trip upstream, a cloud of cinders sweeps across them. The cloud covers the whole river like a tsunami of flame, and it comes and goes in less than a round. A Spot check (DC 17) detects the cloud one round before it hits, giving a character time to put up defenses or take cover.

The heroes must make Fortitude saves (DC 15) or become nauseated for one round in a fit of choking and coughing. Additionally, each character must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or catch on fire. Dropping under the surface of the river negates the need for either save.

Just before the third of these cinder clouds, another Spot check (DC 21) detects a strange floating creature with many legs and the head of a saber-toothed goblin lurking 30 feet overhead, hiding in the flames of a tree. The round that the cinder cloud strikes, the rast dives, trying to bite and grapple the weakest-looking character. Creatures face down in the shallow water near the bank are prime targets, as are those who are nauseated or away from the rest of the group.

This may be a good time to introduce the scene Kazyk's Offer, detailed below.

Rast (CR 5): hp 25, MM.

Hazard, cinder clouds (3) (CR 1): hp none, page 43.

Fiery Rapids (EL 6)

At some point along the heroes' path, they come to a section of what were once rocky rapids, but are now simply rough stones that slow the river's flow. Numerous fire elementals peek out of the holes in the stones, visible from quite a distance. They are mischevious and eager to burn creatures that are not immune to their flames. To get past this 50-foot section of the river, the heroes will either have to fight the elementals, negotiate with them, or press through the live flames of the forest.

Small fire elementals (6) (CR 1): hp 9 each, MM.

The Mouth of the White River (EL 3)

After eleven miles of travel, the heroes reach the point where the White River feeds from the mountains into the valley of Innenotdar. Here a beautiful waterfall cascades over the sheer side of a tall cliff face, its waters pouring off the roof of a small shrine that sits on a island in a lake at the base of the waterfall. The area around the pool, the cliff face, and the pool itself all have burning vegetation on them, but it is thinly spread, and strong winds from the confluence of cold mountain air and fiery drafts creates a constant haze of steam and fog. The shrine is known as the Mouth of the White River, and it is the home of one of the last untainted survivors of Innenotdar, the unicorn Nelle.

Nelle, unicorn (CR 3): hp 42, MM.

Nelle is old, his white coat turned gray by ash, his horn chipped and burnt, but he still stands vigil, maintaining a decades-old promise to the priest Bhurisrava. The unicorn starts as Friendly to any strangers, but he is judgmental: if he detects

any evil with his *detect evil* ability, his attitude will become Unfriendly, he will tell the PCs his home has enough evil already, and he asks that they leave.

As long as he detects no evil, Nelle offers healing and information while sizing up the heroes to see if they might be brave enough to try to save the forest. He is somewhat desperate, and will accept even less-than-ideal heroes. Nelle tells the heroes that it knows some strange creature has taken the forest as its body, and that occasionally it feels the creature in its dreams. Once he heard it call itself a "child of Trilla," and several times Nelle has heard the word "trillith" rumbling through the forest like the dreamy whisper of a slumbering giant.

A Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 30) recognizes Trilla as the name of a very young gold dragon who was held hostage by Drakus Coaltongue many years ago, long before he became emperor. The half-orc warlord used the child as leverage to force its mother to serve him.

Nelle asks the heroes to follow the river downstream and see if they can find a way to kill this "trillith" that calls itself Indomitability, or even to release it so it will no longer harm the forest. There is a village of creatures called seela, fey who once carried the song of the forest from one end to the other. Now they are trapped, though sometimes Nelle thinks he can hear their song. He knows their song has some sort of magical power, and wonders if perhaps it may be partially involved in the forest still enduring after all these years.

Nelle has never gone far downriver, unable to brave the heat of the forest fire, and if asked to accompany, he refuses, saying that he has a duty to attend. At this point, he shows the heroes to a small cave behind the waterfall.

Inside, the party can distinctly hear the cries and moans of many beings, and occasional curses in Elvish. These come from eighteen elves that lie about the cave, their naked bodies on fire. Nelle explains that Bhurisrava brought these victims of the flame to him for tending, with hope that one day they might find a way to cure their affliction. The elf priest had felt a weakness in himself, a desire to end his brethren's suffering, and he asked Nelle to watch them so that he would not be tempted to take their lives when they might some day be saved. Their minds are long gone from the pain, and Nelle suggests the heroes do not linger, as they are a disturbing sight.

Nelle says that Bhurisrava once took one of the despairing up the waterfall cliff, carrying him out of the fire forest in hopes that it would save him, but as soon as he was out of sight of the flames he began to die, like a candle guttering. Even healing magic did not halt the man's death. Nelle thinks that only by driving off the trillith can they be saved.

If the heroes impress Nelle or seem genuinely interested in helping, he directs their attention to a small sculpture of an eagle and dragon chasing each other in a circle, located near the back of the shrine, formed of clay, feathers, scales, and many other small beautiful items. The heroes can pull a total of three feathers from the eagle and three scales from the dragon. These function as *feather tokens*: two birds and one boat can be had from the eagle sculpture, and the dragon sculpture yields two whips and one bird (the dragon-scale "bird token" looks like a tiny serpentine dragon when used).

Finally, before they go, Nelle warns them to be careful of teleportation. A week ago he used his ability to teleport to cross the lake, and he ended up burning himself somehow. He's not sure if it is tied to the fire forest, but he has a suspicion it is not, because this was never a problem until recently.



Nelle ~ Art by Todd Schumacher

Premonition

As Nelle speaks of the dreams he has had, Crystin's eyes close, and she sways, whispering the same words as Nelle. When Nelle is done or if someone snaps her out of it, she says that she has had similar dreams, ever since she was a child living near the fire forest.

Getting the Hell Out of Here (EL 3)

The waterfall by the Mouth of the White River is the only place where the party might be able to easily exit the fire forest, by climbing up the side of the 30-foot cliff near the waterfall (Climb DC 15). Flaming undergrowth clings to the cliff face, requiring a Reflex save (DC 15) each round to avoid taking 1d6 points of fire damage. Alternately they could attempt to climb up the waterfall itself (Climb DC 25) to avoid the flames.

If the heroes do leave the fire forest, they have at least a forty mile trek east and south around its border through trackless snowy mountains in the middle of winter before they can get back to the highway at the southern edge of the fire forest.

Ad-Hoc Experience

Getting the whole party up the side of the cliff and out of the fire forest is worth a CR 3 challenge, even if the heroes do not end up leaving.

Kazyk's Offer (EL 5)

This encounter needs to occur before the heroes reach the fey village on Lake Seela. Most likely Kazyk will speak to the party while they are on the river headed north.

Kazyk the bearded devil has been called from his home plane to prevent the heroes' group from leaving the Innenotdar Fire Forest alive, and to retrieve the case. While the obvious solution is to kill the entire party, there is also another solution — to destroy the fire forest. If there is no longer a fire forest, Kazyk will technically have prevented them from leaving it, or so is his logic. Also, he figures that his superiors will not mind him opening up a new roadway which they can use to conquer Dassen to the south.

Kazyk has been contacted by Indomitability as well, and after that meeting he returned to his master and asked for information on the fire forest's history, which let him come up with a plan. He figures that the quickest way to destroy the forest is to free the entity, which means killing the fey who are binding it. If things go wrong, he knows he isn't strong enough to tackle Indomitability alone, and he suspects the fey keeping the creature trapped would not be receptive to his infernal charms, so he approaches the party, hoping to recruit them for their common goal: to leave the forest.

To do so, he meets them as peaceably as he is able, teleporting to where the party is and appearing in another floral bloom of fire. He keeps his distance, and hails them, laying his glaive at his feet. He greets them boisterously, pretending to be friends.

> "Hail, champions! It is sad that we meet in such a vile place, and under such cruel conditions. You flee Gate Pass, under the descending fist of the Ragesian Empire, toward a temporary safety. You and I both know Ragesia won't let you escape as easy as that, but we don't have to have this come to blows."
>
> He points to his neck with a gnarled, green finger, showing off an iron collar.
>
> "Indeed, I am one of their dogs, leashed and collared by one of their inquisitors. I am bound to their letter, but I bear them no respect. You, though, you have my respect. You fight well, I've seen. I have no desire to throw more lives than is necessary, particularly not my own, and I share with you the desire to escape this place as soon as possible.
>
> "I think we can work together, to find a way out of this fiery wood. As nice as it is for me, I do not think you like it so much. Well, do I have your ear? Are you interested in alliance?"

Kazyk, like any devil trying to bargain, is being mostly honest, leaving out only the "minor" detail that his plan will cause the death of every seela in the forest. If the heroes are willing to talk, Kazyk presents his plan. To fulfill the conditions of his summoning and free both him and the party, they must go to the lake and silence the song of the "wicked, twisted fey" who live here. He makes sure to paint the seela as horrible beings, driven to violent madness by the pain of the forest's burning. Kazyk pledges to help their fight, and to let them go peacefully once Indomitability is free and the forest has burned itself out. He says they should be safe in the lake bed for the day it will take for the fires to die.

Also, he adds like an afterthought, he needs to take the case they stole back to his superiors. "A small price to pay for your freedom," he says.

While accepting this "deal with a devil" would certainly violate a paladin's code, it is not itself an evil act. It will get the party out of the fire, and in most ways is the safest option. However, Kazyk will guide the group to perform acts for the sake of expediency, not goodness, and the heroes may quickly find themselves in a moral quandary. The devil has little interest in helping the party save the seela, and will break an alliance with them if they want him to help with such goodly activities.

If the party declines Kazyk's offer or attacks him, he'll pick up his glaive, shake his head regretfully, and teleport away. His intention is to shadow the heroes and wait for them to be weak or injured from some other encounter, and then to attack and finish them off. If he gets no other chances, he will face the heroes before they leave the forest, perhaps even teaming up with Indomitability or Deception to fight them. Finally, even if the heroes work with him and follow through on the plan, he still needs the case from them.

Kazyk, bearded devil (CR 5): hp 45, Appendix B.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes ally with Kazyk and fulfill the alliance, reward them for a CR 5 encounter.

What if They Escape?

If the heroes somehow manage to defeat all of the creatures Indomitability sends against them, its power to control the fire forest will have been expended for the near future, and the heroes will be able to simply travel another eleven miles to the forest's edge. While the blockade is something of a railroad for the heroes, if they are strong enough or pig-headed enough to simply fight their way through, they should not be forced to deal with the affairs of Innenotdar. Kazyk will come to them with his offer while they are wounded, and if they refuse, he will attack, admitting sadly that he respects their fighting spirit.

In the heroes' absence, Deception convinces the seela to end their song, which frees Indomitability and causes the forest to burn itself to a final death.

The Trouble with Tiljann (EL 7)

This encounter also needs to occur before the heroes reach the fey village on Lake Seela. The most likely place is in the tower on the bridge just outside the elf village, at some point while the heroes have just started or just finished resting, or when they're nearly ready to head downriver.

> Wisps of song emerge from the ever-present roar of the forest fire. Sung in a mournful minor key, but with a discordant trace of hope in the voice, the aural melody sounds like something from the swallowing depths of an endless dream. For a moment you think you see images of tragedy and history at the edge of your vision, but then your attention snaps back to the real world as you realize the song is real, and its singer close.

Tiljann is a young seela woman, in the sense that she is only about fifty years old (the equivalent of late teens in a human), so the fire forest is all she has ever known. She has long been curious about the rest of the world, and has memorized the Tale of the Longwalker, a hopeful section of the Song of Forms that the seela seldom repeat today. She has been suspicious about one of her fellow seela, Vuhl, who has begun acting differently in the past few weeks. She questioned him, and he told her that he had traveled to the ruins of a lost Elf village upriver, where he saw something he could not speak of, something beautiful, that gave him hope that some of their people might survive if the song ends. Excited, Tiljann planned a trip for herself, and it is on this trip that she comes across the heroes.

Unbeknownst to Tiljann, the man named Vuhl is another trillith, like Indomitability. This trillith, who calls itself Deception, came to the surface recently with a mission to free its brother from the fire forest. This is particularly difficult because the song of the fey keeps Deception trapped in a body, but his innate powers allow him to take whatever appearance he desires. He snuck up on Vuhl when the fey was alone, killed him, and took his form, and has been deceiving the seela ever since.

Deception has slowly been encouraging dissent among the seela, trying to get them to stop singing the song. Usually he simply speaks as Vuhl, who has become the leader of the rebels, but when necessary he has taken other forms to sow doubt and despair. He says that releasing the spirit that keeps the forest burning will end their suffering if they just die. There is no reason to keep singing. So far, Deception has convinced almost two thirds of the forty person village, and now only fifteen seela continue the song, singing in shifts of three.

Tiljann has been one of the strongest opponents to simply giving up and dying, but she likewise sees no point in singing forever. She longs for another solution, and Deception is worried she might find one, so he plans to have her killed. After giving her the fake story about something beautiful at the Elf village, Deception convinced six of the most vehement supporters of ending the song to follow Tiljann and, when she was far enough from the village, to kill her.



Tiljann – Art by Juan Navarro

The Attack

When the heroes hear the song in the distance, Tiljann is leaving the river and is climbing the river bank, looking up at the bridge and tower in curiosity. She is not trying to hide, and is absent-mindedly singing a section of the Song of Forms. Unless a PC heads out and spots her first, she comes onto the bridge and is just about to enter the door of the tower when the seela rebels attack. Tiljann flees into the tower, even if she has no idea the heroes are there. When she sees them, the first people ever to come from the outside and make it this far, she knows she has found "something beautiful," and she finally knows what hope is.

The rebels followed at a distance all the way from Lake Seela, waiting as per Vuhl's instructions until Tiljann reached the elf village. Then they drank *potions of invisibility* and snuck into position. The attack begins as soon as the heroes see Tiljann, or just before she enters the tower if they do not go out to investigate.

Tiljann, Bearer of the Song (CR 4): hp 29, Appendix B.

Seela rebels (6) (CR 2): hp 12 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

Primarily trained in driving off or killing animals, the seela rebels fight like a pack of wolves, preferring to surround enemies and cut them down from all sides. They don't have many tricks, though they are trained well enough to aid each other if they want to take down an armored foe.

The seela rebels are so used to fighting off "survivors" who are possessed by indomitable fire that they initially think the heroes are simply monsters to be killed. Once a fight begins, the seela begin chattering in Sylvan, confused, wondering who these outsiders are. They have been convinced by Vuhl, however, that the end of their suffering is near, and so while they might listen to negotiations, they are Hostile to the heroes, afraid the foreigners might interfere with Vuhl's plans.

If the rebels are reduced to only two, the remaining warriors leap off the bridge and glide to the river bank, then run as quickly as they can to Lake Seela.

Tiljann inspires courage to the newfound outsiders, singing with a voice that carries the beauty of what the forest must once have looked like, despite Tiljann's frail body. She then turns her fellow seela's tactics against them, trying to help the PCs flank, or using *hideous laughter* to take out a particularly vexing foe. However, she does not want anyone killed, crying out and even going so far as grappling a PC to try to stop him from finishing off a fallen seela.

Aftermath

After the encounter, Tiljann's reaction depends on how the heroes acted in defense of her. She starts as Friendly, unless the heroes killed one of the Seela, in which case she starts as Indifferent. After the heroes have talked with her for a minute or so, require the party spokesperson to make a Diplomacy check. The heroes take a –5 penalty if they actively finished off an already downed seela. A PC who makes a Perform (singing) check that beats DC 15 negates any penalties

and lets the heroes make another Diplomacy check if they originally made a bad impression. If the Perform check beats DC 20, the heroes gain a +5 bonus on their Diplomacy check.

If Tiljann is made Unfriendly, she answers no questions and warns the group that her people's problems are their own, and that they should not follow her. She flees as quickly as possible.

If Tiljann is Indifferent, she explains what she is and who her people are, but wants to leave the heroes, feeling somewhat afraid around them. She'll answer direct questions, but will recommend that the group head upriver. She knows there is an exit from the fire forest there.

If she remains Friendly, she'll explain that she thinks the other seela attacked her because they want the song to end (though she has no idea Vuhl was behind it), and she will invite the group to come with her to the village. She will explain the history of her people, Anyariel, and the flaming stag, and express her hope that they might be the ones to free her people.

If Friendly, Tiljann can also tell the heroes about the nature of the Song of Forms, and she will offer to teach it if someone who is able to understand Sylvan asks, though this would take a few hours, so she prefers to do it back at her village. She thinks that she will be safe there once she tells their leader, Papuvin, what happened.

If she becomes Helpful, Tiljann will ask to join the party, and to help them fight to save her village. She will trust them as long as they do not take active efforts to hurt her people, though she expresses doubt to any plan that releases the fire spirit. However, if she is not Helpful, while she will accompany the heroes if asked, she takes no part in battle.

Where to Next?

At this point, the heroes should be ready to go to the seela village. If they are not already 4th level, you might want to have them encounter a few more animals with the indomitable fire template, or encourage them to explore the ruins and upriver.

Act Three: Out of the Fire

As the party comes to the seela village, their main options for escaping the forest should be fairly clear. Indomitability is trapped, and if the heroes can free him he will let them go; he wants to take revenge, but perhaps he can be convinced otherwise once he is released. Kazyk mostly just wants the forest gone, and thinks the easiest way to do that is to kill Indomitability and the fey. Tiljann (and the unicorn Nelle for his part) want to save the forest, and if the heroes have taken time to talk with her, they can learn how.

When the heroes near Lake Seela, the fey song alerts them to the presence of a nearby community.

Ahead, the shores of the river widen, and the banks slowly rise until they are ten feet or higher. Fires still crackle with resilient fire atop the cliffs at these distant banks, but this wide area is free from flame. The everpresent ash is thinner here, and you can see the gray surface of a murky lake a mile ahead, seeming to stretch away for miles more. You realize that where you walk was once part of the lakebed, which must have been burning away slowly for many years. The heat here is weaker, but still sweltering without magical protection.

From down the river and around a distant cliff, a haunting chorus pierces the sounds of the inferno. There is magic in the air, and its song is like a dirge. The flames of the trees dim as it swells, but the voices singing it are weary, and the fire seems unquenchable.

Lake Seela is two miles across, a flat pane of ash-coated water that dimly reflects the infernal glow of the forest fire surrounding it. Day and night, clouds hang over the lake, blocking most other light. Its shoreline is typically twenty to fifty feet wide, surrounded by 10- to 20-foot-high cliffs, many spotted with caves that are sometimes occupied by indomitable fire bears or similar animals. Similar caves under the surface slowly drain the water away into the great darkness of the land below, and the forest fire has slowly boiled away much of the original lake. Around Lake Seela, the temperature dips to a modest

The seela village is located on the lake's northeast shore, not far from the White River. The burning grove of the nymph Timbre is about a mile north of the seela village, and can be reached by way of a dry, high-walled gorge that once held a stream. On the southwest shore of the lake is Gwenvere's pool. Indomitability himself is pinned to the floor of the lake, 20 feet down, just offshore from the seela village. No other major roads or pathways reach the river, though feel free to place additional encounters around the lake if you desire.

Seela Village

The seela village consists of a dozen *stoneshaped* huts, several caves in the cliff-face, and a 15-foot-tall stone watch tower on the shore. At all times, three to five seela stand atop the tower, singing the Song of Forms, their voices carrying across the lake and echoing back like a chorus of dozens. A simple wall of burning foliage lines the shore, serving as a barrier against encroachments by the merrow of the lake, while a 5-foot stone wall stops approaches from the southeast. The only entrance is from the northwest, though a narrow ravine leads out from the north of the village.

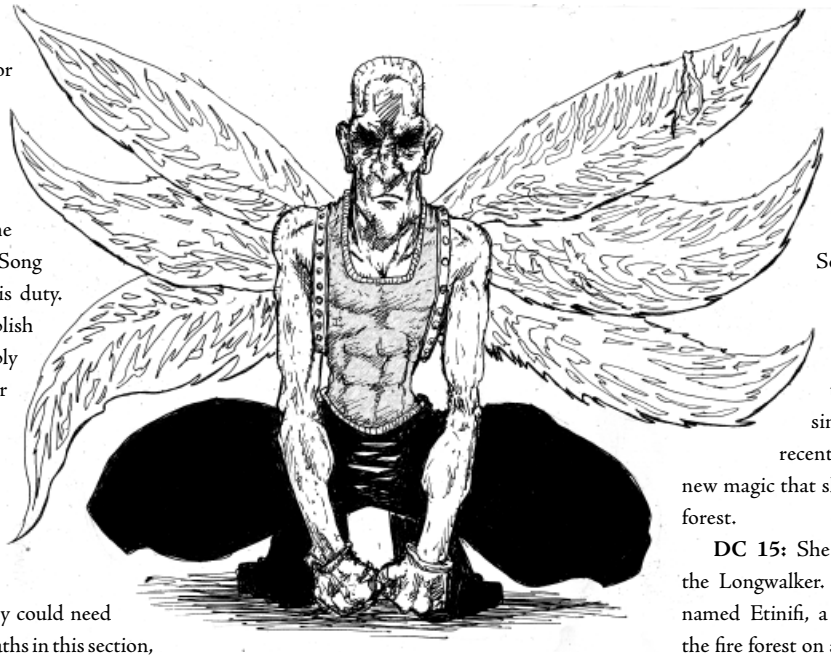
A total of thirty-nine seela live here, minus any who the heroes might have killed. Seventeen singers continue the Song of Forms in shifts, including Tiljann and Papuvin, the leader of the village. The other twenty-two are the rebels, generally listless and quiet, desiring little but a reason to end their suffering. Finally there is Vuhl, who is in truth the trillith Deception.

If they spoke with Tiljann or the surviving seela rebels, the heroes should know about Vuhl and Papuvin, though the different seela would be biased in their descriptions. Tiljann sees Vuhl as suspicious and Papuvin as a noble and selfless leader, while the rebels see Papuvin as a masochist lunatic and Vuhl as a wise savior.

When the heroes arrive, one of the singers atop the tower spots them and beats a wide drum to alert the village. It takes a few moments for most of the seela to respond, but Papuvin emerges from his cave immediately and glides down hastily to confront the party; in the distance, Vuhl glides out of the shadows of his cave, curious about this new development.

Papuvin, Songleader (CR 6): hp 44, Appendix B.

After some initial caution, Papuvin lets the heroes introduce themselves, then asks for them to come to his cave to talk. If Tiljann is present, she tells her side of the story, which may make things better or worse. Vuhl is conspicuous at the back of the crowd, catching the eyes of the heroes before slipping back to his cave.



Papuvin is not looking for help. He welcomes the heroes and offers them his cave as a place to rest and be safe from the heat of the forest fire, at least for a few days, but all he cares for is to keep singing the Song of Forms, which he sees as his duty. If the heroes want to accomplish something, they will probably need to talk to either Tiljann or Vuhl. If the heroes do not take initiative, Vuhl contacts them of his own accord.

Papuvin is willing to answer any question the heroes have, and he has almost all the information they could need to pursue the two most likely paths in this section, but he will not offer any information for which the heroes don't think to ask. The one key thing he does not know is that Gwenvere possesses a lock of Anyariel's hair, which the heroes could use to easily gain access to Timbre's grove.

Two Paths

Two main paths lie before the heroes. Each progresses through a series of encounters, detailed below. These are just the likely course of action, and indeed the heroes might find themselves reconsidering their initial decisions.

Vuhl's Path — Seela Death

This chain of encounters includes Deceptive Alliance, Shrine of Love, Difficult Choice, Silencing the Song, and Consequences.

This chain works best if the party's main goal is to escape the fire forest, and they're not concerned with the seela's lives. Kazyk may be working with them, and if so he is quite willing to follow Vuhl's advice. Note that this chain of events has some real risk of turning the characters' alignment toward evil.

When the heroes go to Vuhl's cave, begin the Deceptive Alliance encounter.

Tiljann's Path — Seela Life

This chain of encounters includes The Legend of Anyariel, Shrine of Love, Dryad Burning Bright, Lake Diving, and Rampage.

It is possible for a diligent, intelligent, or observant party to devise a way to save the seela and still escape the forest, but it requires a bit more initiative on their part. Namely, they need to research the Song of Forms in the seela village to know what to do. If they accepted Kazyk's offer, Kazyk refuses to go along with this plan, considering it a breach of their pact, and will leave to return later. This chain of events is decidedly good, as it involves extra danger and risk to save almost complete strangers.

When the heroes go to Tiljann's cave, begin the "Legend of Anyariel" encounter on page 60.

Additional Complications

During the heroes' attempts to resolve this situation, they may still need to contend with Kazyk, who watches them for moments of weakness. Additionally, the heroes might find themselves making enemies among the seela.

Gathering Information

Regardless of the path the party chooses, they may want to gather information in the village. The information below can be retrieved from the villagers with Gather Information checks at the listed DCs; make one check per topic.

Vuhl

DC 10: Vuhl, appears to have recently had a revelation that his life is meaningless. He wants the seela to embrace death, to stop fearing it, and to stop singing so that death can come to them. He says that by freeing the fiery stag, their spirits will be free to die, along with the forest.

DC 25: Vuhl has been acting strangely for the past few weeks, taking longer to respond to questions than seems normal. One seela adept using *detect magic* noticed, quite by chance, that Vuhl seemed to be affected by some familiar Transmutation effect, though the adept thinks he might just have been sleepy that day, and be misremembering. If made Friendly, the adept (who starts as Indifferent) admits that the magic was like something affected by the Song of Forms.

Tiljann

DC 10: Tiljann is eager to find a solution other than singing forever or dying. She has recently begun training, practicing new magic that she hopes will let her escape the forest.

DC 15: She particularly loves the Tale of the Longwalker. This old story tells of a seela named Etinifi, a bard who managed to escape the fire forest on a mission to find help. That was forty years ago, and he has never returned, but sometimes it is said that his song reaches the lake on the darkest, saddest nights.

The Seela Villagers

There are essentially two groups of seela.

The Singers

This group wants to continue to sing the Song of Forms for as long as possible. If they are attacked, they flee or beg for mercy. They are curious about the heroes, starting as Indifferent.

Seela singers (13) (CR ½): Male and female seela expert 1, armed with clubs.

The Rebels

This group wants to end the Song of Forms, which they hope will free them from the forest. The guards and hunters only fight to defend themselves or other seela, but they prefer to flee to safety – their morale is low, and, as a group, they are somewhat depressed anyway. They do not trust the heroes, and start as Unfriendly.

Seela caretakers (3) (CR ½): Male and female seela adept 1, armed with clubs.

Seela guards (12) (CR ½): Male and female seela warrior 1, armed with spears.

Seela hunters (4) (CR 1): Male and female seela warrior 2, armed with spears and shortbows with 5 arrows.

Seela rebels (6) (CR 2): Male and female seela rogue 1/fighter 1 (see Appendix B). Some or all may have been killed by the heroes when they tried to ambush Tiljann.

Vuhl, Deception's guise (CR 12): See Appendix B for Vuhl's statistics.

Papuvin – Art by Juan Navarro

The Song of Forms

DC 10: The seela have sung the song, or variants of it, for centuries, though never so fervently as they do now. The original purpose of the song was to give body to the native spirit of the forest for holy festivals, and to evoke in listeners nearly real images of the events told. The first words of the song are: "Life is a dream that has found its form. I sing these dreams, these tales, these legends that they might born."

The lyrics in the verses can change, and each singer usually personalizes it to his own favorite tales, but the singer must use a particular rhythm and pitch, something like a extemporaneous choral composition (imagine a faerie-blues jam session). Additionally, a series of eight refrains must be repeated as the song is continued.

Early in the Song of Forms, most of the fey of the village sing the line: "So as we were born from the First Tree, so as from our homeland's breast was cut a living blade, as this our lives are bound to thee, the forest's heart in Timbre's glade." It refers to the living blade, which was cut from the First Tree of Innenotdar, to which the dryad Timbre is bound. The living blade was wielded by Anyariel, and it currently pins Indomitability to the bottom of the lake.

The seela do not know the significance of this line, but they suspect the dryad would. However, she is tormented by the forest's flame, and will not accept visitors.

The Rest of the Lake

DC 10: The seela tell about the nymph Gwenvere, who has turned into something horrendous. Many believe she was tainted by an unfulfilled, jealous love for Anyariel. Anyariel's heart was only for the dryad Timbre, however, and even before the forest was set afire, Gwenvere and Timbre were rivals. Also, unrelated to this, the seela say there were once a group of merrow that lived in the lake.

DC 15: Gwenvere occasionally emerges for small, meaty sacrifices, hungry for the burning meat of animals.

DC 20: When Anyariel died, Timbre donated a lock of her lover's hair to a shrine, and sometimes seela who go exploring hear the dryad weeping for her lost love.

Other

If the heroes do not think to ask about the Song of Forms specifically, they might still overhear key passages during their time here if someone understands Sylvan.



Vuhl – Art by Juan Navarro

Deceptive Alliance (Vuhl's Path)

Vuhl is interested in speaking with the heroes, and if they visit him in his mostly bare cave he offers them cushions to sit on (they don't look well made, but he assures them they're very soft) and some succulent food (it looks just like burnt husks of acorns, but he guarantees they will enjoy them).

Vuhl explains his position, and says that the heroes might be able to help him and his fellow seela finally be released. He needs them to disrupt the Song of Forms with something dramatic. The disruption must cause the Song of Forms to cease for at least several seconds, so the action he proposes is, he admits, shocking — he plans to kill the dryad Timbre and display her body before the entire village. However, he feels that he and his people being alive is against the natural order, and Timbre herself has burned for forty years without relief, so in his opinion, doing this would be mercy.

Premonition

Crystin staggers upon seeing Vuhl, slumping to the ground. She does not remember what she saw, but thinks perhaps the fey song is making her weak.

He is but a weak, feeble fey (he says) whose will to fight has faded, but the heroes could accomplish this. To do so, they need to visit the pool where the nymph Gwenvere lives. Deception knows that the nymph, who has become something horrible and murderous, possesses a lock of hair that belonged to Anyariel. If the heroes could recover the lock, they could show it to Timbre to get close to her. Then they simply need to kill her and bring back her body to the village.

Almost meekly, Vuhl adds a request that they please, if possible, try not to sully her body. However they kill her, he asks that they not make it gruesome or disfiguring.

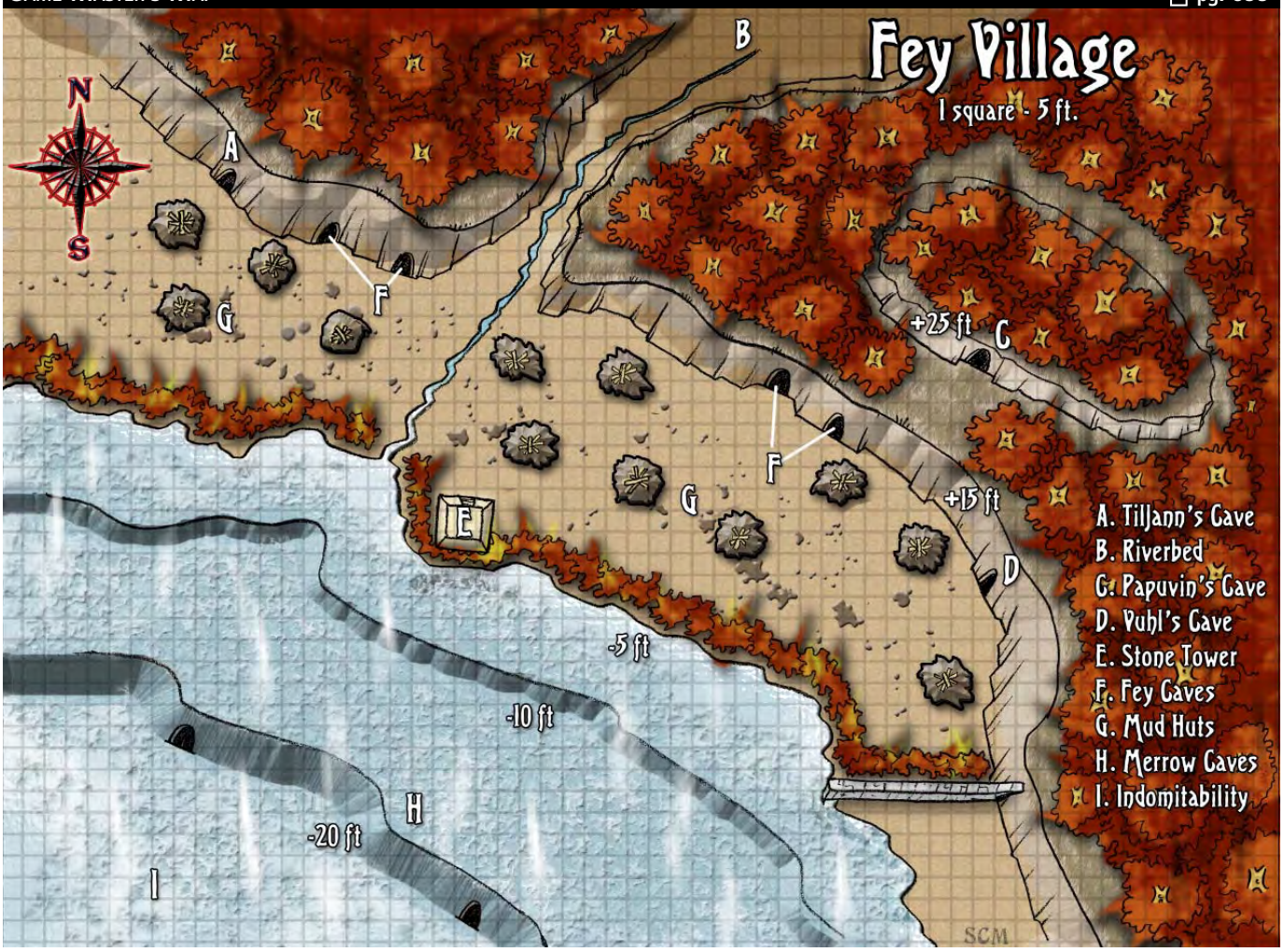
If the heroes ask, Vuhl adamantly denies being involved in the attack on Tiljann, saying that he does not want to cause anyone pain or suffering. If Tiljann is present, Vuhl asks to speak to her privately, then uses his amazing bluffing ability to convince the fey woman that he does not intend to actually kill Timbre, and that this is just a test Timbre asked him to give to the heroes. The true plan must remain secret now, he says, conspiratorially, but it involves a way by which they may all be saved. He swears her to secrecy; swayed by his magic, she agrees.

The Legend of Anyariel (Tiljann's Path)

As long as the heroes did not scare her off during the rescue, Tiljann is eager to talk to the heroes, to tell them about the history of the village and the fire spirit, hoping they might figure out a way to help. She puts on an old festival dress she inherited from a seela who died, hoping to look nice, and if given the chance will show the heroes around the village, introducing them to the seela who are still loyal to maintaining the Song of Forms. She tries to introduce them to the other seela, but most of them are not interested in talking, or they claim that it is pointless to speak with outsiders, since, they tiredly remind Tiljann, there is no hope for escape except by death.

Tiljann wants to be free from the forest. Though it has been and is still her home, she considers it a prison. The fire spirit prevents any from leaving as long as it is bound, and Papuvin is confident that the spirit's essence is all that keeps the forest from being destroyed by the fire. If the forest is destroyed, the seela, whose lives are bound to the forest, would die. So it seems that they cannot escape.

Game Master's Map pg. 638



If asked, Tiljann can teach the Song of Forms to any PC who speaks Sylvan, which takes several hours. To any heroes who do not speak Sylvan, Tiljann translates as she goes, explaining the song's nature, and tells them some of the stories she likes best from the song. It is not necessary to make the players listen to a long list of song verses. You can simply tell them that after a few hours of discussing the song, they hear an intriguing verse:

> "So as we were born from the First Tree, so as from our homeland's breast was cut a living blade, as this our lives are bound to thee, the forest's heart in Timbre's glade."

Tiljann can explain that the seela's lives are bound to the forest itself, that Timbre is a dryad who lives in the oldest tree in the forest, and that the blade the heroine Anyariel wielded was cut from the wood of that tree. Tiljann isn't certain how it would work, but there is a chance that the sword might hold a way for the seela to survive, even if the whole forest burned down. To find out how that might be accomplished, however, the heroes would need to talk to Timbre, and her grove is inaccessible: the agonized dryad wants no visitors, and fiery beasts and walls of flame block all approach to her tree, the First Tree.

If the heroes don't think of it, asking around the town should let them learn about the nymph Gwenvere at the opposite side of the lake. The nymph-turned-hag might know a way to speak with Timbre.

Shrine of Love (Both Paths) (EL 4)

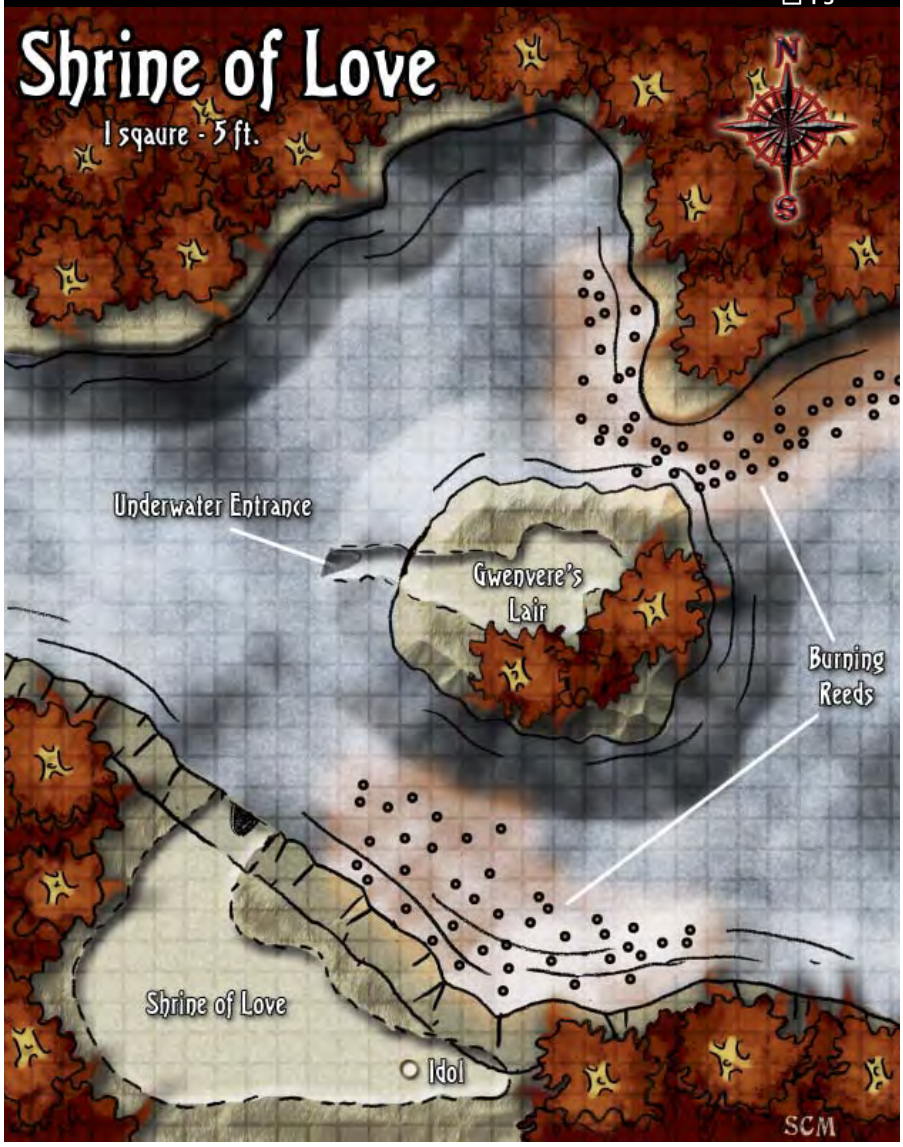
Gwenvere's pool is about four miles from the seela village. The heroes might encounter wandering creatures along the way, bursting out of the lake or from the woods.

Gwenvere's pool is the most beautiful place in the fire forest. The water here is 3 feet deep, filled with scattered patches of burning reeds. Crimson flowers crackle atop an island in the center of the pool, their embers drifting lazily in a slow breeze. Tree branches sway above the water, their heat almost hypnotic. However, the water itself is flat gray, coated in ash, and scattered along the shore are bits of animal bones.

On the south wall of the pool is an obvious cave, and the heroes will likely head to it directly. However, this is merely where Gwenvere keeps a love shrine devoted to Anyariel. Gwenvere's true home is under the island in the center of the pool, accessible by a narrow tunnel under the surface of the water. She senses the intruders in her pool automatically, and swims out into the water, hiding and observing. While in the water, she gains a +10 bonus to her Hide check because of its murkiness and her ability to stay below the surface.

Gwenvere is very protective of her shrine, though she feels slightly guilty for keeping it. She knows that there were many (like Timbre) who have more claim to Anyariel's memory than her, but Gwenvere can't allow the last remains of her one true love leave her forever.

Game Master's Map pg. 639



If the heroes simply walk into Gwenvere's pool, she views them as potential thieves, and begins as Hostile. She hides in the burning reeds north of the island she lives under, and then swims up to the rear PC, grappling him and pulling him underwater, trying to move him back to her cave, where she interrogates her prisoner. Only if wounded will she deal damage back. Likewise, if the heroes ever state that Anyariel did not love her, Gwenvere goes mad with rage and attacks.

If the heroes announce themselves or make an offering of a slain animal at the edge of her pool, she will emerge to talk, cautious but desperate for attention. She starts as Unfriendly, and spends most of her time explaining how woeful she is, how her presence is vital to keeping the lake pure, and how all she has left is the memory of her beauty, and of the love she once had. If the group mentions that they need to speak to Timbre, Gwenvere looks away in shame and fear. She suspects that the dryad would only let visitors in if they came bearing one of two things — the stolen lock of Anyariel's hair, or Gwenvere's head.

She doesn't want to part with her only remaining reminder of her lover, but if she is made Helpful she will trust the heroes. An offering of meat grants a +2 bonus to the Diplomacy check. If the heroes say that their efforts might make the lake pure, and that she might be beautiful again in the future, they gain a +10 bonus to their Diplomacy check. It's also possible to convince her to come back with the party to Vuhl if she is made Friendly. The party's other major option is simply to kill her and loot through the small "shrine" she keeps in the back of the south cave.

If the party kills Gwenvere, the lake gradually drains away over the next two days, seeping down through cracks in the earth. If they return to Vuhl with a living Gwenvere, he talks to her privately in his cave, then emerges weeping, claiming he convinced her of the futility of it all, and that she has taken her own life. She asked, he says, that they take her head to the dryad, hoping that her sacrifice might release them all from their suffering.

Gwenvere, sea hag (CR 4): hp 19. MM. Gwenvere is statistically identical to a sea hag, except that she is chaotic neutral. She used to be a nymph, but has lost all of her powers as she was twisted into a mad hag.

Treasure

Gwenvere keeps a small shrine in the back of the south cave (the one whose entrance is not underwater). Within the shrine, an old full-length mirror is held up by a frame of bones and mud, and a simple stone idol sits on a podium beside it. Around the idol is wrapped a two-foot length of blonde hair, held together by a copper clip. A pile of old, moldy blankets lie on the floor nearby.

Any time someone touches the lock of hair on the idol, he triggers a trap unless he makes sure he is not reflected in the mirror's surface at all. Likewise, breaking the mirror triggers the curse, though it keeps the trap from resetting.

Bestow Curse Trap (CR 4): Magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*bestow curse*, 5th level cleric, DC 14 Will save negates); Search DC 28; Disable Device 28 (or you can simply turn the mirror or cover it).

The curse gives the victim a –6 penalty to Charisma (to a minimum of 1), and distorts his features to make him hideous.

Dryad Burning Bright (Both Paths) (EL 4 or 8)

The dryad Timbre holds the secret to saving the seela, and her death can spell their death. Her grove is about a mile north of the seela village, along the path of a dry riverbed in a gorge.

The gorge ends with a beautiful stone staircase that leads up to a 30- by 50-foot clearing surrounded by burning roses and thick trees, beyond which is a hill, completely engulfed in fire. The hill is 40 feet in diameter, surrounded on all sides by *walls of fire*, their damaging waves

of heat pointing inward (caster level 7th). Atop the hill is an old willow tree, almost identical to the willow in the Shrine of Anyariel. Curled beneath it is a woman whose wooden flesh flares with horrible fire.

The clearing itself is still fiery, its grass flickering with fire that deals 1 damage each round that a creature stands anywhere in the clearing. At the end of the clearing stand a pair of dire boars with the indomitable fire template, acting as guardians of Timbre's grove. They bristle at any creatures that come within 20 feet, and attack any creature that comes within their reach or try to enter the grove.

Indomitable fire dire boars (2) (CR 5): hp 52 each, MM and Appendix B.

Timbre, indomitable fire dryad (CR 4): hp 14. MM and Appendix B.



If the heroes call out to Timbre, she does not easily respond. She is Indifferent to them, but will simply not listen to them unless something snaps her out of her near-catatonic state. Presenting the lock of Anyariel's hair, or having Gwenvere (or some part of her) present catches Timbre's attention. She will come to the edge of the burning grove and step out into the clearing, directing the dire boars to back away.

Capturing Timbre

Timbre is easy enough to knock out, though carrying or tying up a burning woman can be dangerous. The boars attack if Timbre is attacked. A safer course would be to convince Timbre to come to the seela village, which requires making her Friendly. However, the heroes could simply kill her and abscond with her body, fleeing down the narrow gorge to avoid pursuit by the large boars.

Talking to Timbre

Because the main goal of meeting Timbre is to gain information from her, the party should be very interested in trying to calm her down (or at least subdue her). If made Friendly, Timbre can divulge much about Anyariel and the nature of her tree, the First Tree of Innenotdar. It was blessed by a deity of life in the founding of Innenotdar forest, back in time primeval. Its first seeds were the seela, children of the forest and caretakers of it. The elves came ages later. Timbre herself came from the Song of Forms, which awakened her spirit from the subconscious of the forest. Timbre even recalls the oldest stories of the seela, of how they learned the song from the rumbling of the earth, from caves deep under the forest.

In a time of great crisis for the forest, when the Shahalesti first assaulted the Innenotdar elves, the warrior Anyariel came to rest in the glade, and Timbre cared for her, and came to love her. Timbre gave her a gift — a branch from the Tree, a part of herself — and with that blade, Anyariel lead the crusade against the Shahalesti, and drove them back.

Years later, the forest was infiltrated by something vile, a creature of indomitable life which infested the nightmares of the forest and would not let natural death take its course. Anyariel died after she imprisoned of the creature, and survivors erected a shrine to her in the hopes that her spirit might be as resilient as that of the beast she defeated. But when the Shahalesti came forty years ago, there was no hero to save them.

As for the issue of saving the seela, Timbre confirms that the seela are more directly tied to her tree than to the forest itself. Though the tree will burn if the fire stops, there is a branch that may still live, and as long as it does, the seela may not die. She warns, though, that the branch only lives when it is bonded to a living creature. The Living Sword is currently pinning Indomitability to the bottom of Lake Seela, and it is still bound to Anyariel. If the heroes intend to retrieve the sword, Timbre concentrates for a moment, then says that she has ended the bond the sword had to Anyariel. Now, if someone pulls the sword out it will bond to him or her.

However, Timbre warns, this will unleash Indomitability again. The beast is weak from its long imprisonment, but will still be formidable. The forest will burn down, but as long as the bearer of the Living Sword survives, so will the seela. Eventually the forest will take root again, and the seela will be able to bond to a new First Tree. Timbre knows she will die when the forest burns down, but she accepts this fate, and looks forward to the chance to be with her true love in the afterlife.

If Timbre is killed, this information may remain obscured, barring some potent divinations. The heroes might still happen to dive into the lake and pull out the sword, but it will not bond with anyone until the First Tree has been destroyed by fire, and with it the seela.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes speak peacefully with Timbre, reward them for a CR 4 encounter.

Silencing the Song (Vuhl's Path) (EL varies)

Assuming all goes according to plan, the heroes bring Timbre, living or dead, to Vuhl back at the village. Either way, he covers her body in a dark cloak, so as not to spoil the surprise. Then, unless one of the heroes volunteers, Vuhl takes the group to the center of the village, near the tower, and shouts to get everyone's attention. After a few moments, all the seela are watching, even the ones who are still singing. When he has everyone's attention, Vuhl pulls away the cloak and either holds up the dead body of Timbre, or slays the living Timbre with a dagger to her heart, shouting, "Your death comes now!"

If the heroes are not discreet, Papuvin realizes something is amiss and will attempt to stop them, though he has at best a round to keep Vuhl from murdering Timbre. If she is already dead, he simply attacks in vengeance. If the village sees Timbre dead or dying, the singers stop in horror, the beautiful sylvan words of the Song of Forms twisting into a scream of rage.

Gwenvere Concealed – Art by Juan Navarro

The seela are too shocked to sing for three rounds. However, as soon as Tiljann is able to react, she begins to sing, desperate to keep the fire spirit from being released. If she is not silenced within three rounds, other seela join in, and then stopping the song becomes a much more difficult and bloody affair.

Who exactly becomes involved in this scene heavily depends on the heroes actions up to this point. If necessary, Vuhl will reveal himself to help kill off any seela who keep singing, and Kazyk will gladly join the carnage. The villagers do not fight — those who want to continue the song are not warriors, and the warriors want the song to end, so they simply watch in mute guilt.

If no one sings the Song of Forms for one entire round, proceed to the encounter Consequences.



Consequences (Vuhl's Path) (EL 7)

The fey song disrupted, a victorious roar bursts from the forest in every direction, and a burst of flame rises from the surface of the lake, which begins to boil at an amazing rate, the water vanishing before their eyes, until a few moments later the group spots through the steam the corpse of a stag, pinned to the bottom of the now dry lake, a few dozen feet away. The stag is lifeless.

The seela, confused, concerned, afraid, gather around the party, staring at them. Those who sided with Vuhl use their last few moments to offer thanks to the party before all the seela drop to the ground en masse, dead. At this moment, the heroes hear the last notes of the fey song echoing across the lake, and each feels his or her soul lurch as the song truly ends. Mournful and forlorn, the song will always remain in their memories, allowing them to gain access to the Song of Forms later should any of them learn Sylvan.

A laugh gets the group's attention: it's Vuhl, who has not fallen. He nods thanks to the heroes, then vanishes, his appearance momentarily shifting into that of his natural, black-tentacled form. The party can try to pursue the invisible, incorporeal, flying Deception, but it is likely a lost cause.

Then light pierces through the smoke above the lake as a mighty wind sweeps across them. The forest fire roars, and then the flames sputter and die. A moment later, the trees begin to crack, decades of burning finally taking their toll. They crumble like rotted paper, turning to thick black ash that drifts over the party and the bodies of the seela. Then the seela too turn to ash. The entire forest is dead, eerily quiet for as far they can see, lit by dim light filtering through the thick clouds of smoke. A rain of ash begins to fall, obscuring vision beyond 60 feet.

Give the heroes a moment to take in the devastation they have caused, and then, perhaps when they are deciding what to do next, they notice the ash of the seela bodies being drawn together, coalescing into a figure in the center of the village.

Tragedy (CR 7): hp 69, Appendix B.

Tactics

The tragedy pursues the heroes until is has slain them all, turning its attention first on those who most eagerly promoted this course of action. It makes no sound at all as it fights. When the creature is destroyed, it twists finally into the shape of Tiljann and whispers "This is no sacrifice. It is only death."

The tragedy dissipates in a cold wind, and the heroes are truly alone. In the crater where the lake once was, the group can take the Living Blade, pulling it from what is now just a skeleton of a stag. They can leave the fire forest at their leisure.

Lake Diving (Tiljann's Path) (EL 5)

The party may be led here through Timbre's revelation that the seela can survive through the Living Blade, or they may be simply interested in exploring the lake themselves.

If the heroes have refused Kazyk's offer and have not defeated him, he chooses this moment to finish them off. Once the group emerges from the lake, Kazyk leaps in from the forest and attacks.

Swimming in the lake is fairly basic underwater adventuring, but note that if Gwenvere is dead, the lake may be boiling hot, requiring *stand the heat* to be able to swim in. The lake is murky, either way, filled with ash that reduces visibility to 20 feet. Creatures between 10 and 20 feet away have 20% concealment. The lake is only 20 feet deep where Indomitability lies, and won't require more than a round or two to swim to the bottom. However, there are creatures lurking in this water.

From the surface, the heroes can see a glowing red light marking where Indomitability's stag body lies. Once they go under the surface, they can see a large stag is pinned on its side, its flesh flickering with fire that sends up small bursts of steam. A greatsword carved of wood has been driven into the creature's torso and into the ground, and yet the stag still struggles despite this mortal wound.

One round after the first PC goes under the surface, a pair of merrow (aquatic ogres) emerge from caves near the pinned trillith and attack the interlopers. A Spot check (DC 4) alerts a character to the ogres' approach as they swim into combat, attacking with claws.

Merrow (2) (CR 3): hp 29 each, MM.

Saving the First Tree

The heroes might try to defeat Indomitability, then rush back to the First Tree to put out its fire before the tree is destroyed. At this level such a thing is difficult, though a *quench* spell or two *pyrotechnics* spells can put out the fire. If the heroes somehow manage to do this, reward them for a CR 5 encounter. Timbre will live, and will reluctantly accept that she will must wait to rejoin her love. In return, as long as she lives, she will help the heroes as best she can.

Timbre – Art by Juan Navarro

The Living Blade

Pulling out the Living Blade requires a Swim check (DC 10) to get stable, and then a Strength check (DC 26), each of which takes a move action. If the Strength check only beats DC 21, the blade is pulled out slightly, enough for Indomitability to no longer be pinned to the bottom of the lake, though the sword still pierces his body.

If Indomitability is no longer pinned, freeing the sword out becomes much more difficult. First a character must get adjacent to Indomitability, then grab the sword, provoking an attack of opportunity. The sword's handle is only eight feet up, so most medium creatures should be able to reach it without jumping. Once the character is holding the sword, he must make a Strength check (DC 26) to pull the blade the rest of the way out if he stays on his feet.

Alternately, he can attempt to climb onto Indomitability's side, planting his feet on the trillith's body for extra leverage. This requires a move action to begin, and the character must succeed a Climb check opposed to Indomitability's Strength check when he first climbs on, and each round thereafter. If he fails, the character loses his grip. While he is so planted, however, he need succeed only a DC 21 Strength check to pull the sword free.

Once a character pulls the blade free, he becomes bonded to it. For now it simply functions as a *+1 greatsword*, but see Appendix A for more details.

Rampage (Tiljann's Path) (EL 7)

Upon pulling the sword from the flaming stag, Indomitability surges to the surface, swimming 25 feet each round, leaving a boiling trail as it heads for shore. Once Indomitability reaches the shallow water near shore, he rears onto his hind legs, then charges into the fey village, trying to end the Song of Forms by killing as many seela as possible.

Papuvin and Tiljann will fight against the trillith, though the rest of the village flees in terror, running for the caves, which unfortunately are still large enough for Indomitability to squeeze into. From the edge of the village, an invisible Deception gives telepathic directions to his brother, focusing his might upon the most important targets.

Note that this is just Indomitability's current form; he is weaker than he was when he was first defeated by Anyariel. Years of imprisonment have left him conveniently close to a significant challenge for whatever the heroes' average level happens to be.

Indomitability (CR 7): hp 113, Appendix B.
Vuhl, Deception's guise (CR 12): hp 94, Appendix B.

Tactics

Liberated from his decades-long prison, Indomitability relishes freedom as he rampages among his former captors, trying to kill everyone singing the song he has grown to hate. He never stays put if he can avoid it, preferring to run from foe to foe, charging and flinging enemies into walls or dangerous terrain. Though not particularly intelligent, he tries to identify the leaders of the fey, and focuses his rage on them. If Indomitability previously made a deal with the heroes and they betrayed him, he considers them prime targets.

He will not surrender or retreat, though he can be negotiated with. He starts Indifferent to the heroes, but is Unfriendly if they have attacked him, or Hostile if they have betrayed him. If made Friendly he is willing to end his rampage if the heroes allow him to leave. He thanks them for his freedom, grants them his boon, and departs.

Deception's main objective is to free his brother, so he does not interfere if the heroes



The Living Blade ~ Art by Rick Hershey

Indomitability's Boon

While endowed by or when granted a boon by Indomitability, a creature gains the following abilities.

Whenever the affected creature is reduced below 0 hp, it automatically stabilizes. Also, once per day, whenever the creature would die, unless it is from a death effect (such as an assassin's death attack or a *finger of death* spell), the creature is instead reduced to –9 hp and becomes stable.

The affected creature gains the benefit of a permanent *endure elements* and *stand the heat* spell. The creature also ignores the effect of wounding injuries that deal damage round after round, such as from a bearded devil's glaive. Finally, the creature cannot be checked, knocked down, or blown away by strong winds.

Indomitability can willingly grant this boon to eight creatures at a time. For each creature it grants the boon, it receives a negative level. It can revoke the boon as a free action, negating the negative level. If Indomitability is slain while affected by the Song of Forms, the nearest eight intelligent creatures within 150 feet gain its boon, which is permanent unless dispelled.

This boon is a supernatural power. This boon can be removed if the character willingly receives a *remove curse* spell. As long as the character possesses this boon, it counts as the equivalent of 8,380 gp worth of character wealth. Note that this puts characters above the curve for wealth at their current level, so for new characters introduced to the campaign who does not have this boon, you may wish to give them additional starting wealth.

Deception's Boon

While endowed by or when granted a boon by Deception, a creature gains a +5 competence bonus to Bluff checks. The characters should have little chance of acquiring Deception's boon, but if they do it is worth 2,500 gp.

Premonition

During the celebration by the seela, Crystin walks away and sits down. She is not weak or overwhelmed by this vision, but instead seems to have come to terms with something that was bothering her. If someone goes to speak with her, she says that she saw Indomitability meeting with them again, and that she learned Vuhl's true name: Deception. They will meet him again too, when the bones of his grandmother watch them, and weep for their fate.

try to end things diplomatically. Otherwise, he mostly only participates by directing Indomitability to prime targets, all while hiding his real identity. If Indomitability is losing, he does not interfere, arrogantly believing that if Indomitability cannot fend for himself he is not worth the trouble of rescuing. If ever dealt damage, or if Indomitability is defeated, Deception flees. Only if he is pursued does he retaliate, using *greater invisibility* and multiple sneak attacks to drop enemies.

Deception's presence is intended to show that the trillith can be very powerful, not as an excuse to annihilate the heroes, who have no hope of defeating him at this time. Deception's departure does not earn the heroes XP.

Aftermath

After Indomitability is killed, or once he is out of reach of the song if the heroes negotiated a peaceful resolution, the forest fire ends, but as long as someone has bonded to the living blade, the result is not as desolate as described in the Consequences encounter.

The seela, nervous about what happens next, gather around the party, looking to them for guidance, particularly whoever holds the Living Sword. One by one, the fey begin to sing the Song of Forms, the sound swelling and echoing across the lake like light piercing the horizon at sunrise. At this moment, every one of the heroes feels the fey song uplift their souls. Though once mournful and forlorn, the new song of hope will always remain in their memories. This allows them to gain access to the Song of Forms later should any of them learn Sylvan.

Then light pierces through the smoke above the lake as a mighty wind sweeps across them. The forest fire roars, and then the flames sputter and die. For a moment the trees threaten to crack and fall, but the fey song swells, and ever so faintly, life returns to them. Though injured and weak, none fall. It is possible to believe that, given time, the forest will heal. The constant thrum of the raging inferno is gone, replaced by the dim sound of leaves rustling in the wind.

The fey song falters as laughs and gasps of amazement come up from the villagers. Like the forest itself, the seela look ever so slightly more alive, their skin no longer ashen, their eyes less sunken. The song the fey have maintained for forty years finally ends as the voices of the seela turn to cheers.

Conclusion

Once Indomitability is dealt with and the fire forest is extinguished, the major issues in the forest are resolved, for better or for worse. The party should have acquired the Song of Forms, Indomitability's boon, and the Living Blade, and they are now left with a largely clear shot toward Seaquen.

If the Seela Perished

If the heroes caused the doom of the seela, no animals or plants survive in the forest — only a handful of mephits, hellhounds, and the like. The unicorn Nelle has witnessed the death of all his charges, and so he gallops away, assuming the heroes have failed. Within a few weeks, the Ragesian army will send scouts to explore the vast valley of ash, and will realize that it gives them an easy entrance to Dassen's borders. The heroes may have escaped, but the fight will be harder for them in the future.

If the Seela Survived

If the heroes saved the seela, the forest is not whole, as any tragedy of this scope takes more time to heal than most men have to wait. Most animals with the indomitable fire template have died, and only by the blessings of unnamed gods have some survived. If the heroes visit the Mouth of the White River, they learn that only a few of the despairing survived, and their minds will still take a long time to heal.

The ghaele eladrin at the Shrine of Anyariel keeps to her duty, saying that though the forest lives, so do those who set fire to it. But the seela thank the heroes, and if they are made aware of the danger the heroes are fleeing, they promise to do their best to slow the progress of the Ragesian military through the forest. There may only be a few of them left, they say, but that means they must fight all the harder to protect their homeland, now that it, and they, have been given a second chance.

The Road Onward

The seela Tiljann asks to accompany the heroes unless they have been particularly unfriendly to her. She wants to see the world, and she dreams of finding Etinifi the Longwalker, and bringing him home.

Ahead lies safety, perhaps, but war still rages. The heroes must hurry if they want to bring aid to Gate Pass before it falls to the Ragesians.



Adventure Three
Shelter from the Storm

for 5th-Level Characters

by Ryan Nock

Cover Art by
Ian Mullen

Freed from the flames of Innenotdar, the heroes reach the small seaside village of Seaquen and the magic academy Lyceum.

But Seaquen is no safe haven: there are spies, refugees, and a fleet of hostile ships to contend with, to say nothing of an oncoming hurricane that may not be entirely natural.

Can the heroes survive long enough to learn the secrets held at Lyceum while they struggle to save their shelter from the storm?

Background

On a rocky coastal spur on the far side of a remote swamp, on the southern tip of civilized lands, an old city was swept into the sea. An earthquake collapsed its coastline, and volcanic geysers obliterated its people. All this happened centuries ago, but eventually people forgot the legends of curses, and sought to inhabit the land again. A clan of wizards, remembering only that once the peninsula had been home to a mighty fire mage in ages past, established a school, the Lyceum, on the rocky coastline, and brought slaves with them to tend to their needs.

Students, headmasters, and even slaves came and went, until only free men lived on the now-verdant rock spur. Around Lyceum grew a large town named Seaquen, home to just over a thousand fishermen, craftsmen, and former students. Spellcasters from around the world travel to Lyceum, no longer a school simply for wizards, but for all those who practice the magical arts. Lyceum and Seaquen have never known danger.

But now once-peaceful Seaquen is overrun with refugees, diplomats, spies, and heroes. A Scourge from the north burns its way outward from the Ragesian Empire, which seeks to capture or kill spellcasters disloyal to their realm; thousands have flocked to Seaquen in hopes of safety and salvation.

Lyceum, after proclaiming it will fight the Scourge, has found itself the rallying point for all the fleeing refugees. Most seek safety in numbers, some want to help, others desire an alliance; but a few wish to end Lyceum before it can affect Ragesia's plans.

Among those arriving in Seaquen are heroes bearing a message from Gate Pass, a neutral city besieged by Ragesia. At the same time they arrive, a fleet from the elvish nation of Shahalesti begins a blockade of Seaquen, trying to force Lyceum to ally with them. While Lyceum and Seaquen struggle to handle the influx of refugees and volunteers, a secret plot to destroy the city is being set into motion, supported by Ragesian spies, but orchestrated by a distant and as-yet-unknown enemy.

Welcome to the third adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. After escaping a city under siege and fighting their way through a burning forest to shake pursuit, the heroes arrive in Seaquen, where they can find allies to help fight the Ragesians or work toward other goals. But Seaquen is threatened by many foes, and the heroes are in a unique position to defend it. If they fail, Seaquen will be destroyed, and slim will be the chances for allied resistance against the might of the Ragesian Empire.

Introduction

The Weather in Seaquen

During the first three acts of this adventure, a very light drizzle falls, incurring a –2 penalty to Listen checks and ranged attack rolls, but does not automatically extinguish unprotected flames. During the fourth act of the adventure, the rain intensifies, incurring a –4 penalty to Listen checks and ranged attack rolls, and automatically extinguishing unprotected flames.

At the end of the fourth act and throughout the remainder of the adventure, a hurricane roars over Seaquen. Anyone caught in the wind and rain without magical protection finds it nearly impossible to function outdoors. Ranged attacks become impossible, and it is impossible to hear anything beyond a few feet. Medium or smaller creatures must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) each round or be blown away — knocked prone and rolling 1d4 × 10 feet, taking 1d4 damage per 10 feet rolled, while Large creatures must save or be knocked down.

The heroes, however, will be able to magically resist being blown away by winds, either by virtue of receiving Indomitability's boon in adventure two, or by exposure to a particular magic effect early in this adventure.

Railroading?

The material in this adventure describes just one possible course of events — the one we think is the most likely. In some key scenes, we propose what NPCs do if they are present, with the intention of making scenes more dynamic and interesting. Feel totally free to scrap these and do things your own way; whatever you think your players will enjoy best.

All that truly *needs* to happen to propel this adventure is that the heroes come to Seaquen and get in contact with the budding resistance to Ragesia so they have contacts who can give them the information they need to pursue their later adventures. If the heroes happen to kill a particular NPC, fail to save the city from a hurricane, or decide that the leaders of Lyceum are incompetent buffoons, the future adventures are modular enough that you should still be able to use them with just a little tweaking.

Please, for your players' sakes, don't force them down specific courses of action just because they're the ones we have written into the adventure and done the most planning for. Instead, use the material in this adventure to guide your response to what the players want to do.

Adventure Overview

At the start of *Shelter from the Storm*, the final leg of the heroes' journey to Seaquen takes them through a swamp patrolled by hostile soldiers and prowled by cannibal witches. From the latter, the heroes rescue a fire mage named Katrina, who sees them as her route to power.

Once they reach Seaquen, Katrina gets the heroes invited to a council to share news and discuss the war effort. During this council, word comes that an ominous fleet of ships from the nation of Shahalesti have arrived, and their representative — Shalosha, daughter of the Shahalesti ruler — interrupts the meeting, trying to convince the city to ally with her people. The leaders of Seaquen initially rebuff her, and in the following days the fleet blockades the peninsula while a persistent drizzle falls upon the city from thick storm clouds.

The heroes have a chance to make friends and allies, to help the thousands of refugees who currently have no shelter and dwindling food, and to prepare Seaquen and its people for the coming war, but before long conflict erupts when assassins attempt to kill various town leaders fails in a surprise attack designed to look like it was orchestrated by the Shahalesti. A group of refugees with ships fall for the ruse and hastily attempt to retaliate, an attack that will ruin any chance for diplomacy with the Shahalesti if the heroes cannot stop it, and which lures dozens of ships out of the safety of the Seaquen harbor.

The true threat is not the Shahalesti, but rather the Ragesians, who have allied with a distant master of air magic hailing from the Monastery of Two Winds. For weeks leading up to the climax of this adventure, the Ragesians have been collaborating with Lee Sidoneth, a druid well respected by the leaders of Seaquen, to prepare a magical storm. As warships sail to battle, the storm that has lingered for days (and throughout most of this adventure) intensifies to hurricane strength, forcing the people of the city to take shelter, and potentially demolishing both the Seaquen and Shahalesti fleets.

The Ragesians responsible for creating the magical storm are hiding in an ancient fire sorcerer's tomb built into the lava tunnels and steam vents under the city. The heroes must fight their way into the dungeon and destroy the item controlling the storm, or else Seaquen will be destroyed, and with it the best hope of bringing the war to an end.

Character Motivations

If the heroes have completed the first two adventures in the campaign saga, they're probably here because they're seeking aid from Seaquen in order to break the Ragesian siege of Gate Pass. Though Seaquen itself lacks the might to accomplish this, the town is a growing nexus of political dealings and a gathering place for potential warriors and resistance fighters. The heroes will probably be interested in keeping Seaquen safe, not least to win the favor of those here in power and preserve the town as a rallying point against Ragesia.

Characters might also come to Seaquen for other reasons, such as if they have individual agendas against one of the nations involved in the war, or if they want to opportunistically use the war as a means to gain power. The characters might be spies sent by Ragesia, in which case — should their sympathy not be roused by the plight of the refugees — the final act would not be the heroes' fight against the stormbringers, but rather defending against an attack by Seaquen's true defenders, giving the storm time to do its work.

Adapting the Adventure

If you are running this episode as a stand-alone adventure, the key aspect to retain is Seaquen's role as a diplomatic center. Some political event important to the heroes should be occurring, which the various factions in (and under) the city are seeking to disrupt.

The climactic act, in which the heroes brave the fury of a hurricane to defeat those threatening the city, will need to be revised so that the heroes are actually capable of traveling through the storm. In the previous adventure of the campaign saga, the heroes gained a boon which lets them ignore the fierce winds and overwhelming storm surge. If your party lacks this, the *tidereaver's tears* treasure in the first encounter can grant them a similar boon.

Psionics

As explained in the Introduction, psionics rules are not necessary in *Shelter from the Storm*. A few NPCs, refugees from Sindaire who play little role in the adventure, possess psionic-inspired powers, but these are merely flavor.

If you are using psionics, these NPCs do provide an opportunity for any psionic characters in your group to get some screen time. In addition, some of the students at Lyceum might be psions or wilders.

Act One: The Swamp

The road from the border of the Innenotdar Fire Forest to the Sour Lake swamp is 420 miles. The Sour Lake swamp is a long swampy peninsula at the southern end of Dassen, and at its end is a rocky spur where lies Seaquen. No highway leads to Seaquen, so travel is at three-quarters normal speed. A typical party on foot should take three or four weeks to make the journey, while mounted groups might make it in as short as two weeks. Ship passage to Seaquen is unavailable at any price the party can afford because of rumors that a hostile fleet prowls the waters.

There are many opportunities for adventure on the march. With the threat of Ragesian invasion looming, the people of Dassen aren't interested in helping heroes, who to them are just more refugees pouring out of Ragesia. But many travelers are heading in the same direction as the PCs, many in far worse condition, some desperate enough to be a danger. Some possible short adventures along the way include:

- **Mistaken Identity:** The heroes are arrested by soldiers of the local Dasseni noble, who claim the group is responsible for numerous crimes. It turns out another group of refugees have been looting and pillaging, and the heroes could help track them down and stop them.
- **The Forsaken:** A group of Ragesian clerical pilgrims, on their way home when they learned of the Scourge, turned on their leader, who wanted to take them back to be arrested or slaughtered. The leader arose as a wraith that has been chasing down the survivors, who have hidden in various towns along the road, hoping to hide their magical abilities.
- **No Ticket:** If Haddin is still with the party, they are lucky enough to find a daring ship's captain willing to sail them to Seaquen. However, one day out to sea the captain claims he never agreed to take them, and threatens to throw them overboard. It is revealed that Haddin dominated the captain, but became seasick and could not maintain concentration on the spell.
- **Travelers' Tales:** The heroes link up with a caravan of twenty refugees, all of whom tell tales of their flight from Ragesia. One of the heroes is accused of being a Ragesian spy, and the caravan grows paranoid and violent.
- **Bad Weather:** Several days in a row, intense rainstorms come out from the north, sweep over the heroes, and fly on southward toward Seaquen, like they're moving with a purpose.
- **Battleground:** The heroes travel through a wheat field trampled and smoking from a recent battle. By the bodies left to be gnawed by crows, it looks like a party of Ragesians were discovered by Dasseni knights, and a battle ensued, but a close examination shows that the "Ragesians" had filled their boots with dirt, a Dasseni tradition. Someone is trying to cover their tracks, and they send a stalker to silence the heroes.

Of course, feel free to make the journey to the swamp's edge uneventful if you want. In this case, the heroes travel, resting every so often, until they get to Seaquen.

Last Stop

A small shanty town lies at the edge of the Sour Lake swamp, a 50-mile stretch of bayou that separates mainland Dassen from the rocky peninsula upon which Seaquen is built.

Vidor
CN Conventional Thorp
Government Informal council of elders
Purchase Limit 800 gp; **Assets** 5,200 gp
Population 65 (plus 40 refugees)
Demographics isolated (96% human, 2% dwarf, 10% elf, 1% half-orc, 1% other).

Vidor is the last town before Seaquen, and between the two are several days of travel through rough, boggy terrain. The party would do well to stock up here, since the locals do a good job of presenting the swamp ahead as dangerous, trying to convince them to buy what they need at inflated prices (twice normal). Though most in the town are dishonest and out for their own good, they're not lying about the swamp being dangerous.

Items Available in Vidor

- Map of the swamp — 5 gp
- Rowboat (seats three Medium-sized creatures) — 100 gp
- Oar/pole — 5 gp.
- Gator tooth necklace (purported to ward off wild animals) — 25 gp
- Portage of a rowboat 15 miles to end of the road (two men per rowboat) — 5 gp

The maps (no two of which agree exactly) indicate that after Vidor is about 15 miles of safe road, then 30 miles of marsh with only scattered patches of dry land, before a final 5 miles of another

marsh road to the tip of the peninsula where Seaquen lies. Traveling along the coast is discouraged, since tides will likely get the group mired in unpassable terrain. The town has no seaworthy boats, so avoiding the swamp entirely is all but impossible, and even then there are rumors of a hostile fleet prowling the coast.

Whether they decide to go through the swamp interior or along the coast, the party should buy a rowboat and oars/poles (the water is often so shallow that you must use a pole to push the boat along the bottom) for every three people in their party. Several workshops are busily hammering away at the crafting of more rowboats, and the owner of the boat shop, **Leto Moore** (N male human expert 4/warrior 1), proudly states that he's sold a hundred boats already to folks since refugees started pouring in. To entice the party to buy from him — as opposed to the lame carpenter down the road who only knows how to make doors — Leto calls to them as they pass by, "Free keg for every three boats you buy. I'll even throw in the beer for free."

The townsfolk are getting unconscionably rich exploiting refugees, and a few small groups of poorer refugees have had to stop traveling because they can't afford the exorbitant prices. These unfortunates live in tents outside the town and might ask the heroes for money or help; the party is too large and dangerous for them to try to rob.



Vidor
Gather Information

DC 10: "Lots of refugees coming through here. Lots of mages. Too many, I think, with lots of black cats coming with them. Lots of bad luck concentrating in one place. Folks who can afford a boat through the swamp have already left. One crazy redhead, she just hired a couple of burly guys as bodyguards and walked into the swamp. Swamp's dangerous. Guess she had a death wish. Too bad. She was the prettiest thing I ever seen in this town"

DC 15: "Sometimes mages – rejects from that wizard school probably – get lost in the swamp and go crazy, start eating folks who get lost in the fog. Don't trust any lights you see at night."

DC 25: "Two weeks ago, I overheard a big orc talking to a woman that stank of blood and swamp sweat. She must've been a witch, and sure as shit I'd swear that orc was one of them inquisitors from Ragesia. A few of the folks in the tents went missing that night."

There is no tavern or inn in Vidor, but one townsperson is selling deerhide tents for 15 gp for those who want to camp out. None of the other refugees are eager to travel because of the rain, but the weak storm has been going on for a week, and shows no signs of passing.

While in the town, the party can make Gather Information checks to collect rumors, as shown in the sidebar.

This adventure assumes the heroes travel through the swamp instead of risking the coastline, but it is easy enough to still make use of the encounters detailed, simply transposing them to near the coastline instead of the interior.

When the party sets out, the road is fairly tame. The path is about 5 feet wide, shored up in places with small stone bridges when the ground dips. Going more than 20 feet off the path will usually land a person in knee-deep muck. After 15 miles, a run-down shack sits at the side of the road, once used by a hunter to sleep in, now serving as a marker of the end of the road. Nearby trees have been cleared, and a few abandoned, half-made rafts litter the area, none of them structurally stable.

Beyond this point, travel will have to be by boat, or by wading and swimming. The water is usually waist high and icky, though it poses no direct hazard. If the group takes a boat, poling or rowing is a move action that propels the boat 20 feet. A character can move the boat at double speed as a full-round action, but doing so is as tiring as running. Each boat fills a 10 × 10 foot space as if it were a Large creature, and can hold three people and gear.

The thirty mile trip through the swamp should take at least two days, and it is during the first night — with the party likely sleeping on a soggy island that has some of the only dry land in the area — that they are attacked by the witches.

Blood in the Water (EL 8)

Three witches — all of whom go by the name **H'andrea** since their cannibal ways have long since dissolved their real names in a briny sea of madness — have been recruited by Ragesian spies to make potions that will let the spies and their allies travel through the intense winds of a hurricane. As ingredients for this potion, the witches need the blood of intelligent creatures, poured fresh into their brew.

The trio — cleric, druid, and wizard — prowl the bayou in a boat drawn by the druid's crocodile animal companion, while the wizard's bat familiar flies about looking for prey. When they spot the party's resting place, the druid and her crocodile swim around to the northeast side of the group and hide a hundred feet away (Spot DC 31). Then the boat approaches from the west, poled along by the cleric while the wizard holds a covered lantern on a short staff. The cleric casts *enthrall* once they are 120 feet away, and sings a mournful, alto song in Common, encouraging listeners to purify themselves in the 'magical waters,' while the wizard accompanies in an eerie Aquan soprano. While the heroes are distracted, the druid and her crocodile approach stealthily.

The heroes should see the lantern in the distance a round after they hear the song, but notice that it is hidden within a bank of fog, an *obscuring mist* created by the cleric, who simply dead-reckons in the direction of the party, since she cannot see them. Things turn from eerie to clearly hostile once the boat becomes visible, which likely will not be until the two witches reach the shore. The boat is decorated with humanoid skulls, streamers of wizard's robes trailing along the sides. Its occupants are clearly insane.

Terrain

The islands are surrounded by a 2 foot deep shallow bog, which counts as difficult terrain, and are then surrounded by 5 foot deep bog, which requires four squares of movement for every 5 feet traveled — the deeper bog can also be swum. The boats can travel through both shallow and deep bog. Small trees dot the islands, and a few sprout from the swamp. One massive tree has fallen over, forming a bridge between two islands. Its crown counts as heavy undergrowth.

Swamp Ambush – Art by Tony Monorchio

Game Master's Map pg. 640



H'andrea the Cleric (CR 5): hp 31, Appendix B.
H'andrea the Druid (CR 5): hp 33, Appendix B.
Crikey, crocodile (CR n/a): hp 22, MM. If H'andrea the druid has cast *magic fang*, Crikey has a +1 enhancement bonus to bite attack and damage.
H'andrea the Wizard (CR 5): hp 24, Appendix B.

Tactics

The witches' goal is to kill the party, to capture one or two alive if possible, then to carry them back quickly to use in a brew. As long as the group does not take any hostile action, the cleric and wizard pole up to shore, and then the wizard, druid, and crocodile attack simultaneously.

Before launching the ambush, the druid casts *bull's strength* and *speak with animals* on herself and *magic fang* on her crocodile animal companion. She also knows whether the party has any animals that might be a danger, due to *detect animals and plants*. If there are animals that might be a threat, she disables them with *hold animal*, then rages and leaps into the midst of the group. Her crocodile stays near the edge of the island, attacking anyone who gets near the water or into a boat. Characters in a boat have cover against attacks by the crocodile if it is swimming.

Before the attack the cleric casts *shield other* to protect the wizard, then casts *disguise self* to appear hideous, and *obscuring mist* to conceal the boat. Then she casts *enthrall*. The round before combat begins, she dismisses the *obscuring mist* so she can target her spells. She stands in the back of the boat and readies to counterspell any particularly dangerous spell, then uses *hold person* or *command* on any vexing warrior.

The wizard only casts *shield* on herself before combat. She starts by *slowing* her enemies, then *webs* or *stinking clouds* those who the druid isn't fighting, with an intention of getting them later. She saves her offensive spells for foes who get too close, and she prefers to stay on the shore next to the boat so she can easily get back to the cleric for healing.

Aftermath

When only one witch remains conscious, she will likely surrender if she doesn't think she can win. The wretched creature pleads for its life, saying they had a hostage, and if the heroes promise to let her go, she'll guide them to the prisoner. The witch can guide them the half mile to their home, or the heroes can follow the trail (Survival DC 25 at night, DC 27 if they wait through eight hours of rain until sunrise), or simply scour the area for about three hours (Survival DC 16 at night, DC 10 during day).

If none of the heroes think to follow the witches back to their home, emphasize that each of the witches was carrying a key, or have an NPC with the party suggest looking into it. If all else fails, the group might spot a fire in the distance a little while later, created by Katrina, who used a tindertwig in her boot to set fire to the building around her.

If still they decide not to investigate, they can still meet up with Katrina in Seaquen, though she won't owe them any favors.

Witch Isle (EL 5)

The witches live on a broad, soggy island covered with bare-branched trees in which no birds perch. Their home is a sprawling, half-sunken cluster of five wooden shacks in the island's



center, each barely ten feet across, surrounded by a low, uneven fence. A rotted dock stretches out from the island, and a cluster of thirteen boats float nearby or are propped up on fallen logs. The skeletons of the boat's owners lie along the outside of the fence in a scattering of different piles. No lights are on in any of the shacks, but the shacks are not unguarded. A Spot check (DC 10) notices that some of the skeletons in the pile look a bit too intact.

The cleric witch has animated many of the skeletons of their victims, and ordered them to attack any interlopers. Twenty skeletons out of the dozens around the huts wait to attack as soon as any creature comes within 10 feet of the fence, or when they are attacked.

Human warrior skeletons (20) (CR 1/4): hp 6 each, MM. These skeletons lack shields and swords, so they attack with claws and have AC 13.

Three shacks are each held closed by an old padlock (Open Lock DC 15), which can be bypassed by one of the keys the witches had. The other two shacks were for storing things long since rotted away, and aren't locked.

Inside the first shack, a massive cauldron sticky with boiled fat hangs over a wide hearth, and brass vials, glassblowing implements, and more bizarre tools are scattered across numerous shelves. The witches have been capturing refugees traveling through the swamp, boiling some of them alive in the cauldron, and using that as ingredients to create more items like the *tidereaver's tears* the druid carried. They deliver one of these items every week to a half-elf contact named Nelebekus (actually a fake identity for Brutus, a Ragesian spy; see page 79) in Seaquen, who pays them in gold from Shahalaesti. Nelebekus would meet H'andrea the cleric at a fish market along the south docks, near the weathervane tower.

A second shack has the witches' sleeping quarters. A dead man covered with bite marks lies chained to one wall.

In the third shack, gagged, chained, and curled in the one dry corner, is the witches' hostage, Katrina. Her spell components have been moved to another shack, along with all her magical gear except a *ring of fire resistance*, which she wears on a toe under a lead-lined boot. She also has a tindertwig the witches didn't notice tucked into her boot.

The witches attacked Katrina and killed her escorts, and subdued her because she was sleeping at the time. When they took her back to their hut, she figured out through their muttering that they were working for Ragesians. She managed to get them to listen to her for a while, and she convinced them that she too was an agent of the Ragesians in Seaquen, and that they would be very displeased if she were killed. The witches fell for her bluff, but decided to keep her tied up until they could verify it on their next trip into the city. If any of the witches are still alive, Katrina will want the witch killed.

Katrina most likely hears the group approaching, so she is awake when they find her. Once they remove the gag she smirks and says, "Good. I've been waiting for you guys. I hope none of you died on my account."

Katrina (CR 8): hp 38, Appendix B.

Tactics

Katrina is impulsive, overconfident, and smart enough to pretend that those are weaknesses. Out of combat she pretends to be vain and invincible, but when actually endangered her tactics are intended to get her out of danger as quickly as possible. If facing more foes than she can handle, she casts *disguise self* or *invisibility* and flees. When she chooses to go on the offensive, however, she does her best to keep foes away from her, either by proactively killing them, or defensively setting up *mirror image* or *fire shield*. She's not above *fireballing* herself if she's surrounded.

Development

The heroes might know of Katrina through her brother Rantle, who may have approached them in Gate Pass to locate her and deliver a message. If they give Katrina the scroll case, she reads the message from her brother with early eagerness, which fades to disappointment when she realizes her brother has not come as she had intended. Without her brother to rely on, she decides that the group who rescued her is likely her best chance to enact her plan.

Katrina – Art by Ryan Nock

Katrina is a complicated character. Four years ago she parted ways with her brother and found herself in the employ of Ragesia, specializing in offensive magic so inquisitors could practice counterspelling. She has a passing familiarity with many high-ranking inquisitors, and has even met Emperor Coaltongue and Supreme Inquisitor Leska on several occasions. She does not mention any of this however, since she has been sent on a mission by the Ragesians to spy on Lyceum and, when the time is right, betray the school of mages.

But Katrina is not particularly interested in promoting the Ragesian agenda. She simply wants to survive this war, and preferably to come out ahead in the end. Her time among the inquisitors has made her callous and somewhat Machiavellian, but she still recalls her childhood with her brother, and his constant desire to be a hero like from bad minstrel stories. She does not realize it, but she is looking for someone to show her the way.

Left to her own devices, she will ingratiate herself at the top level of the resistance, and will eventually betray Seaquen. If the heroes can put up with her, however, and point her in a nobler direction, she may be willing to admit her involvement with the Ragesians, and provide vital information to turn the tide of battle. This can be an ongoing theme with Katrina's character, but does not come up heavily until adventure nine.

For now, Katrina wants the party to trust her, and wants them to know that she thinks they are important and have a major role to play. When they reach Seaquen, Katrina plans to act as a sort of publicity agent for the heroes, gaining *dignitas* by association with them. She knows what will impress the resistance leaders and does her best to promote the heroes as suitably "heroic."

Treasure

A pile in one of the shacks are six small coffers containing a total of 300 pp in Shahalesti coins. There are also numerous sets of damp clothes, rotted apprentice spellbooks, and weapons or armor in varying states of rust. A *make whole* spell could salvage about 500 gp worth of usable or sellable items from the pile.

Katrina's gear has been put on a shelf, and she takes it back confidently, laughing at anyone who refuses to let her have it and saying, "Adventurers are supposed to loot their *dead* foes, so if you want to take my things, something will have to change." If it comes to a fight, though, she shrugs, saying that she, at least, is not so petty as to kill someone over money, though she warns she'll be useless without her spell components.

Land Blockade (EL 7)

A day or two later, before the heroes reach Seaquen, they might spot a hawk flying several hundred feet overhead. It flies to the northeast, and a half hour later the group is accosted by a patrol of Shahalesti soldiers.

These Shahalesti have orders to question all travelers, and to attempt to detain any shipments of military supplies heading into or out of Seaquen. Since the heroes are in a relatively small group, a likewise small group of soldiers come to investigate. In a dry section of the swamp (or along a sandy coastline if the heroes are not in the interior), the elves approach at a hustle, guided by Thalan's hawk familiar. They come upon the heroes from the northeast, blowing a horn when they spot the group (likely from 200 feet away through the woods), and then demanding the group stop. The scouts continue take cover behind trees, about 100 feet away. Thalan and his bodyguards come within 60 feet, then begin to question the group.

If the heroes ask questions back, Thalan explains that they are a detachment from the *Osprey*, one of the Shahalesti ships currently sailing to Seaquen to offer an alliance. Thalan's mission is to ensure that no hostile forces enter Seaquen. It is a gesture of good will toward Seaquen, which they suspect may have been infiltrated by Ragesian agents.

This could play out as a friendly meeting, or it could turn to combat, depending heavily on how receptive the heroes are to having their belongings searched and their presence questioned. The elves will not accompany the heroes into Seaquen, and will back down if it looks like harrassing the party might have negative political ramifications. They only attack if anyone clearly shows signs of being affiliated with Ragesia, or if they are attacked first.

Thalan (CR 5): hp 13, Appendix B.
Thalan's bodyguards (2) (CR 4): hp 31 each, Appendix B.
Shahalesti scouts (4) (CR 4): hp 24 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

When supported by allies, Thalan starts by casting *haste* on his allies, followed by *flaming sphere*, which he can make use of for several rounds while casting other offensive spells. He keeps the still *magic missile* as a last-resort spell for if he is captured or grappled.

Thalan's hawk familiar departs as soon as combat begins, and will fly to deliver news of his defeat to the fleet if he falls.

Development

If the heroes and the elves part on good terms, Thalan glances briefly at the drizzling sky and says, "I hope you find shelter in the town. Things are bleak there, from what I hear. Encourage those in power to accept our offer. We have the means to make conditions much better for the thousands of refugees who are as yet without homes. May we meet again as allies."

If a fight does occur, the elves retreat if they lose more people than there are heroes. There are several dozen more elves in the swamp, but they do not pursue the heroes. Should the heroes follow the elves, the elves rely on speed to flee three miles to another group of similar size, laying down *entangle* spells as they retreat.

Through discussion or interrogation, the group can learn that Shalosha, daughter of Lord Shaaladel, will be contacting the leaders of Seaquen in a few days. Only if the group befriends Thalan will he admit that the terms of the alliance will benefit Shahalesti far more than the people and refugees in Seaquen, but he avoids going into details, saying he's not a politician.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes avoid a fight, reward them for a CR 5 encounter.

Other Encounters in the Swamp

The following encounters are not mandatory for the adventure, but the heroes might pursue them in order to help out the city, and they help lengthen the time the heroes can spend in Seaquen before the events of the last two acts.

Territorial Goblins (EL 6+)

A tribe of amphibious goblins, called the Severed Head Tribe, claim the swamp between Seaquen and Vidor as their home, and while the heroes were fortunate enough to avoid crossing them, they might have seen signs of their presence. The goblins are not particularly evil, just territorial, and they have attacked and killed a fair number of refugees streaming into the region. Already Seaquen is running low on food, while the goblins have been becoming fat on food stolen from refugees and trade caravans. They even have a *decanter of endless water* set up in the center of their village as a fountain, right beside the well-tended guillotine they use for all their holy day festivals.

At some point, the heroes might attempt to clear out the goblin tribe, or to negotiate with their leader **Ogatar the Toad** (CN goblin

rogue 1/sorcerer 7; toad familiar) in order to gain the goblins' support. Unfortunately, Ogatar is afraid that the wizards of Lyceum will come to kill him, and the paranoid goblin flees into the swamp when his scouts report the heroes' approach. The chieftain's embarrassed wife **Hessilen** (CN goblin bard 6, Diplomacy +14) can negotiate with the heroes, but lacks the support of the tribe to enforce any deals.

Hessilen will dictate a very precise stretch of terrain through which the tribe will let travelers and caravans pass, and in exchange she demands a variety of minor magical trinkets, a private cook for the chieftain to produce "exotic foreign foods," and the death of the three witches H'andrea, if this hasn't already been accomplished. Feel free to alter the demands based on how well the heroes' Diplomacy check compares to Hessilen's.

A particularly successful argument might even convince Hessilen to give Seaquen the *decanter of endless water* to help provide for the refugees, in exchange for permission for her tribe to enter the city without being accosted.

Before the treaty can be put into effect, however, the heroes have to locate Chieftain Ogatar, who has gone into hiding. Tracking and divination are two reasonable ways to locate him, but he has his familiar in contact with all the toads in the swamp, to alert him by fierce bursts of croaking whenever the heroes get near his position, making it nearly impossible to catch him by surprise. He also doesn't speak any language but Goblin, so talking to him is difficult. But should the heroes succeed in bringing him back to his wife, they will have made the lands around Seaquen much safer.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes negotiate a truce, reward them for a CR 6 encounter.

If the heroes decide to fight their way through the goblins, the tribe consists of sixty non-combatants (commoner or expert 1), twenty warriors (warrior 1), ten hunters (ranger 2/rogue 1), a high priest (cleric 6 — Plant and Trickery domains) and his apprentice (cleric 4), six battle leaders (fighter 2/rogue 3), the town champion (fighter 2/rogue 5), the Chieftain, and his wife. After any initial attack, the goblins' preferred tactic is to rally and pursue their foes, ambushing them *en masse* at night. They have very little treasure, but a great supply of food.

The Shrieking Delve (EL 8 or 12)

Naizelasa, a female adult green dragon, has recently lain a clutch of eggs, but one of her eggs was stolen by a daredevil refugee, Nathan Lowduke (CN human male ranger 8), who is currently looking for a buyer in the developing black market of Seaquen. For several days now, the southern shore of the mire has echoed with the horrible shrieks of the mother dragon. She knows that she cannot risk going to Seaquen, where she would be surely attacked by all the scores of mages, but she weeps for her lost child. One night she attacked a ship of refugees arriving from Sindaire, tore long gashes in the sails, and demanded they find her lost egg, or on her next outing she would begin destroying ships.

Naizelasa, adult green dragon (CR 12): hp 230, Appendix B.

The heroes might become interested in Naizelasa when they learn that she possesses a *lyre of building*, which Seaquen could use to quickly create shelters for the thousands of refugees streaming in. There are a few mages in the city capable of creating such an item, but that would require thirteen days of crafting during which the refugees will suffer.

Naizelasa's lair is a deep lake — the Crystal Delve — six miles southwest of Seaquen, a body of amazingly clear water surrounded by a wide ring of unused buildings in dozens of different architectural styles, many of them recently demolished. The dragon spends her day watching over her eggs or sleeping, and surfaces at night to wail and play her lyre, creating buildings which she tears down in rage before sunrise.

If the heroes are cautious, they can approach Naizelasa, learn of her plight, and bargain to return the egg in exchange for borrowing the lyre for a few weeks. In exchange, the bitter mother — lawful and evil like any good green dragon — demands that they bring her the thief. She does not want to kill him, but she will hold *him* as collateral, to ensure that she gets her lyre back within a month. She may have other demands as well, but is willing to make slightly less selfish bargains in order to ensure her egg's return.

Nathan Lowduke has a fair bit of notoriety amid the criminal element in the refugee camps, so locating him should be no trouble, but obviously he is not eager to go through with this plan. He will need to be offered a bribe of at least 5,000 gp in order to agree willingly. Other ways of convincing him are left to the players' imagination.

If the heroes act honorably with Naizelasa, eventually they may be able to convince her to aid in the defense of the city, should Ragesians ever encroach on the lands where her children will eventually be born. Alternately, she might be recruited by the Ragesians for an assault, should the heroes' failures let the Ragesians get so close.

Ad-Hoc Experience: If the heroes manage to locate Nathan and the egg, and retrieve the *lyre of building* from Naizelasa, reward them for a CR 8 encounter.

Attercops and Cypress Trees (EL 8)

The heroes learn that a ship from Ostalin has become mired after it edged too close to the shore. One of its crew, **Drimma** (N human male expert 2), made his way through the swamp, and can provide directions to the ship, ten miles away on the south coast of the peninsula. The ship, a freight courier named *Milsoven*, was delivering exotic animals to one of Lyceum's instructors, **Banahman Vett** (CN half-elf male transmuter 9), who is worried that the cargo might be ruined if it isn't retrieved quickly. He offers a stingy reward of 600 gp if all the creatures on the manifest are returned to him, reduced by 20 gp for each of the thirty creatures lost.

While the reward is paltry, Banahman is a head professor at the school, so getting on his good side may be important. Also, as detailed later, he unknowingly has had contact with some of the spies who will threaten the city. Even recovering one creature will win his favor.

Unfortunately, someone on the *Milsoven* did not follow proper procedures when feeding the creatures, and some of them escaped, overrunning the crew and turning the ship and the cypress marsh around it into their new home. These creatures are attercop pouncers, thick-bodied hunting spiders with animal cunning like that seen in wolves and hyenas. Attercop pouncers are capable of incredible jumps, and often will jump and overrun fleeing foes, giving the rest of the pack a chance to catch up. Originally bred deep underground, these creatures were to be sold to refugee druids and rangers as exotic animal companions, providing a great profit to Banahman Vett.

Attercop pouncers (12) (CR 1): hp 11 each, Appendix B.

Treasure

If the heroes dig around, on the bodies of the dead sailors they can find 200 gp worth of coins and jewelry, and a *+1 flaming stump hook* (1d3 damage, crit 20/×2, can only be used by a character who is missing a hand; market value 800 gp because of its general uselessness).

Development

Eight of the attercop pouncers prowl the watery forest around the ship, and have set up nests in cypress trees about fifty feet from the boat. The other four lurk in the ship, along with four crew members who have been cocooned and implanted with eggs.

Also aboard the ship are a digester with a glass muzzle, a girallon, a pegasus, a couple of crates with twelve stirges total, and a pair of krenshar. There were originally thirty creatures total (the seventeen still aboard plus thirteen attercop pouncers), but one of the spiders was killed by the crew.

If the heroes rescue the crew and capture or kill of all the spiders, they become famous in the city. The captain is dead, so they might even be able to salvage the ship, though uses for the ship are beyond the scope of the campaign saga. If the heroes do not deal with this, in the coming months the hunting territory of the attercop pouncers spreads slowly, until it becomes difficult to travel through the swamp anymore without being attacked.

Act Two: Seaquen

Eventually the swamp grows more shallow, and if the heroes have followed a map or had a good ranger guiding them, they reach a road leading to Seaquen. Literally hundreds of rowboats have been abandoned along the road, but most have been reclaimed now, after an enterprising Ragesian refugee named **Kor-Natheon** (LN male half-orc Adp4, with a coyote familiar) organized a business to buy up all these boats for coppers on the gold coin. Kor-Natheon's men carry the boats to his small storehouse at the edge of the rocky Seaquen peninsula. Kor-Natheon knows that eventually people will start heading back west, and he will be able to sell these boats for quite a profit.

This is the general air around Seaquen: desperate people with crazy ideas of how to prosper in this time of chaos. If a person isn't trying to sell a plan, he's probably on the receiving end of one, being exploited by more cunning or more charming refugees. Most of the refugees are from Ragesia, but about one in three is from Dassen, Ostalin, or Sindaire.

Eventually the swamp fades into rocky forest, and the road rises about 30 feet above sea level. Soon the thick stench of swamp is replaced by salt and surf. The road forks, and dozens of amateur lumberjacks are clear-cutting the nearby woods. They're gathering materials to make houses, since there are still thousands of refugees who need shelter from the elements.

The old road leads northeast through the refugee camp, then on to Seaquen itself, to Lyceum and the harbor. The newer road being cut through the forest leads southeast to the south harbor on the refugee shore.

Seaquen

NG Magical Large Town
Government Elected town council
Purchase Limit 3,000 gp; **Assets** 675,000 gp
Population 1,500 (plus 3,000 refugees)
Demographics integrated (50% human, 15% half-orc, 10% elf, 8% dwarf, 8% orc, 4% half-elf, 3% gnome, 2% other).

Game Master's Map pg. 641



Entering Seaquen

The rain has slowed the influx of refugees into Seaquen, but it is still a crowded, uncomfortable place. No fanfare greets the heroes when they enter, nor does anyone really show an interest in them. As exceptional as they are compared to typical farmers or townsfolk in the rest of the world, most of the refugees in Seaquen have fought and killed so they could reach this supposed safe haven. The heroes are, in their eyes, nothing special. However, unlike the heroes, few of the refugees are motivated to do more than just survive.

How the heroes proceed from here is up to them to decide. The heroes will likely spend at least a few weeks in Seaquen, since it will take at least that long before Seaquen can be ready to get involved in the war. Alliances must be made, strategies developed, missions planned. This chapter presents several locations of interest and potential encounters at each, ways for the heroes to contribute to the city's defenses or morale.

At some point in the first few days there the group will need to visit Lyceum academy for a council meeting (detailed in Act Three), which will set the stage for the events of Act Four.

What Now?

If Torrent is still with the party, she says they should go speak with her mentor, **Lee Sidoneth** (LN human male monk 1/druid 8), who lives on the north coast. He can get them in touch with the leaders of Lyceum to present a plea from Gate Pass, deliver the case of Ragesian intelligence, or talk about whatever else has brought them to Seaquen. Katrina simply suggests going to the school directly, at least to do a bit of people-watching so she can get a sense of who she will need to talk to later. Either route can get the party an appointment to attend a council meeting within three days.

If the group seems lost, a guide approaches them. **Judson "Stowaway" Figovich** (CG male human bard 3), a skinny Ragesian with a brown goatee that hides an eccentric grin, works for a gold piece a day, and gladly shows the heroes places they might be interested in. He will run errands for them, occasionally offering highly technical trivia related to esoteric arcane and scientific topics (such as how the local geography is the result of volcanism, or why the current weather patterns in Seaquen reflect a coldward climate shift in upper Ragesia), and is completely trustworthy and reliable.

Helping Seaquen

This adventure assumes the heroes will spend some time dealing with the various small problems plaguing Seaquen. However, there are no rules for measuring success or failure. The ultimate determiner of success is whether the heroes manage to stop the hurricane from destroying the city. The rest of the encounters simply add flavor, and provide hooks for the heroes to have allies in the future.

In general, Seaquen shouldn't be destroyed simply because someone didn't kill a swarm of rats at the right time, so you can assume that Seaquen gets along well enough even if the heroes are complacent, or if they focus on completely different issues. Plus, the city will (hopefully) be around for a while, so you can always reuse these encounters later.

Base of Operations

The heroes will need a place to stay. Inns on the north shore are entirely full, though if the group is willing to spend 10 gp per day per room they can convince an innkeeper to kick some people out to make room for them. Alternately they might find a family whom they can crowd in with for 2 gp per day per room, though their hosts will have house rules, and likely won't abide any ruckus. If the heroes are willing to live in the refugee camps or on the south shore, they could buy tents for 20 gp, or they could purchase a small house (two bedrooms, plus a common room) for 2,000 gp, though it won't be ready for three days, and they'll want to invest in guards or other defenses to keep the building from being burglarized.

Most everyday items sell for double price during the course of this adventure, especially those that have to be crafted. Weapons, armor, magic gear, and similar items are in relative abundance however, so prices for them are normal.

Though there is a lot of local strife, we suggest you not inflict any hostile encounters on the heroes during their first day in Seaquen: they should have the opportunity to feel *some* relief after finishing their very long journey.

Getting a Feel for the Town

After spending a few hours in the town, the heroes should have a fair sense of the main districts and refugee groups in and around Seaquen.

North Coast

Slightly over a thousand people live in old neighborhoods here, most of them fishermen, sailors, and their families. Numerous small docks string out into the sea, and dozens of horns and bells sound up and down the coastline. Public opinion is divided — many dislike Ragesia and appreciate the attention their town is receiving, but few like the chaos the refugees have brought with them, or the implicit threat that eventually Ragesia will come looking.

The town is presided over by **Magistrate Lorb Votberd** (LN male dwarf fighter 3/aristocrat 8), who rumor says used to be a pirate. People on the streets after sunset are questioned by the local militia, and if they do not have a place to stay they are asked to leave. Hostile persons of uncanny combat prowess are reported to the magistrate so elite town guards can handle the situation.

Harbor District

Many warehouses, inns, and businesses surround the north harbor. This bay was magically excavated over decades by students of Lyceum, and most buildings here are adorned with carved stone decorations designed by artistic mages. The harbor is currently full, and further ships are being redirected to the South Harbor. Two squat, magically illuminated lighthouses overlook the entrance to the harbor, one on either side.

In the harbor's center floats the Wayfarers' Theater, a massive galleon painted gold and red, with banners streaming dramatically from its masts. The Guildmistress of the Wayfarers, **Sheena Larkins** (N female half-elf bard 6/rogue 1/Wayfarer cirqueliste 5), has announced her troupe is preparing a performance intended to promote peace and cooperation among the refugees. They have a few more weeks of rehearsal, but then every day fifty people will be invited from each of the regions of Seaquen for a free showing of *The Spectacular Trial of Toteth Topec*. Another fifty tickets are available for 8 sp.

Lyceum Academy

The walled compound of Lyceum Academy lies amid several steep hills along the North Harbor. A few hundred students and teachers live here, plus numerous common laborers and guards. Visitors undergo a rigorous security screening before being allowed on campus grounds.

Headmaster Simeon Gohanach (LG male human diviner 7/loremaster 6) directs the school, and though many feel he does not know how to properly handle the refugee influx, he has convinced most people that he does know at least how to manage a war. The academy's new War Department, headed by **Instructor Kiernan Stekart** (LN male dwarf abjurer 11), is looking

for competent agents to build the groundwork for the coming struggle, though rumors say any actual military action is still months away.

Sunken Ruins

An old city that predated Seaquen lies on the east coast, and its ruins stretch from the shore to a half mile off the coast. The place has long since been plundered, though a few people have set up bath houses amid the ruins that have not yet fallen into the sea. Numerous rocky crags steam with natural warm water, and at low tide the coastline is blanketed with steam from caves that are normally submerged.

Refugee Camps

Several thousand refugees live in three main clusters. The northern camp is home mostly to Dasseni and Sindairese refugees, while the other two consist primarily of Ragesians, with some Ostaliners.

- The **Dasseni** refugees — approximately 400 humans and dwarves, most of them hailing from the lands of a noblewoman named Lady Timor — recognize the authority of **Xavious Foebane** (LN male dwarf commander 11), a veteran of Dassen's army who is looking to pick a fight with the Ragesians. Conditions here are the best among all the refugee camps.
- The **Sindairese** refugees — 400 humans, half-orcs, and gnomes who have long opposed Ragesia's control over their nation — are splintered into numerous groups, divided by race and religion. Numerous clerics and druids are hostile to each other. **Laurabec Adelsberg** (CG female half-elf fighter 1/paladin of freedom 11) is trying to maintain harmony among the refugees, but is not interested in taking control herself. One group, the Monks of Echoed Souls, led by **Dreams No Sorrows** (NG female human monk 2/wilder 6), are particularly persecuted; their people were already refugees to Sindaire from distant Shahalesti.
- The **Ostaliner** population along the south shore — about 200 humans and half-elves — consists of few refugees. Most are sailors or merchants looking to profit during the war. Makung Shaftobem (LE male half-elf fighter 4/commander 2) is the leader of 50 mercenaries who fled their country after the ruler, Khagan Onamdammin, grew displeased with the mercenaries' former commander and had him executed, along with the company's hippogriff steeds. They have three ships, and there are rumors they are pressuring other captains to ally with them.
- The majority of the refugees are **Ragesian** — nearly 2,000 humans and half-orcs, with a few of other races. Most of them fled frantically with very few provisions, and so they live in terrible conditions. Most of the mages and their families lack skills that are needed or wanted in Seaquen, and the majority of them live in tents. Most townsfolk and other refugees avoid the Ragesian sections of the camp, for fear that inquisitors may be hiding among the refugees. Only a handful of refugees managed to get out of Gate Pass. There are no clear leaders among these refugees.

South Harbor

Originally just a seldom-used secondary port home mostly to fishermen and a few farmers who took advantage of the strong winds to construct windmills for pumping water, today the South Harbor is overrun by ships, many of them simply sitting off shore with no place to dock. The wealthiest of the refugees usually move here, and there is a booming home-building industry. One prominent house is the mansion of the portly **Cernaban Gremman** (NE male halfling rogue 8/enchanter 2), who arrived from Sindaire with three ships and forty loyal thugs and scoundrels who now serve as his bodyguards.

There have been many reports of people — mostly young women — vanishing from the muddy, rat-infested streets near the south harbor, and with no formal law enforcement there seems little chance the mystery will be solved. Garnering more interest, however, is a spate of fires that have destroyed several recently-built homes. Alarmist Dasseni refugee **Pickens Frankart** (CG male human expert 3) has a base of followers who believe the students of Lyceum are trying to keep them homeless, so they can be more easily controlled.

Shahalesti Fleet

In Act Three, an envoy from Shahalesti arrives at Lyceum and presents an offer for alliance, which Headmaster Simeon rebuffs because of the unfair conditions. From this point on, a fleet of seventeen Shahalesti warships sit anchored a half mile off the coast of the peninsula, spaced about a half mile apart. They are fully crewed and perfectly provisioned, and each likely contains enough mages and skilled warriors to take out a quarter of the town. The occasional group of visitors is allowed, though strict security measures are taken to protect the two most noteworthy members of the fleet.

First is **Admiral Telshanth** (LN male elf commander 15), a veteran of naval conflicts around the world spanning hundreds of years. He is strictly loyal to Lord Shaaladel, ruler of Shahalesti, and carries out his orders with patriotic zeal. Those orders are to blockade Seaquen by sea and land, until the city agrees to ally with Shahalesti. Ships attempting to bypass the blockade will be crippled and magically driven to the nearest shore in the direction they came from. Any attack against the fleet will be met with an overwhelming response in force.

A few times over the course of the month the heroes are in Seaquen, the blockade stops an angry or foolish ship, but no one is crazy enough to attack the elves.

The second prominent elf in the fleet is **Shalosha** (CG female elf commander 1/wizard 6/eldritch knight 4), daughter of Lord Shaaladel and princess of the elvish nation. She has never had reason to doubt her father until recently, but though she wants to protect her homeland, she does not think the world is divided strictly into friends and enemies, so she hesitates to support the draconian measures her father requires. She wants to resolve the impasse diplomatically, but the hurricane that strikes in Act Four scatters the elvish fleet and thus convinces Shaaladel that Seaquen is an enemy. Shalosha, however, may seek the heroes later as possible allies.

General Encounters

Someone's Looking for You (EL 8)

If the heroes still have the case of military intelligence they received in Gate Pass, this encounter occurs the day the heroes arrive, and takes place before they can get a chance to visit Lyceum. Someone — perhaps a shopkeeper, or a common townsperson, or a member of the Seaquen guard — does a double-take upon seeing the heroes, comes over, and nervously strikes up a conversation.

Eventually the person speaking to the heroes reveals the true reason for approaching them.

> "Someone's looking for you. A few weeks ago this woman asked me to keep an eye out for you, and gave *exactly* your descriptions. A short blond woman with an accent I couldn't place, but she was really nice. She said her name was Jess."

If asked, the person says he doesn't know where Jess is, but she asked him to leave a note at a particular home if he saw the group. A Sense Motive check (DC 25) determines that his behavior is being influenced by an enchantment effect, and a Spellcraft check (DC 24) verifies that he is affected by a *charm monster* spell.

What's Going On?

After Kazyk the bearded devil failed to recover the case from the heroes in adventure two, the inquisitors begrudgingly dispatched an expensive infernal servant in an effort to track down the case. At the cost of thousands of gold pieces, the inquisitor **Guthwulf** (whom the heroes may have heard about several times before) has sent the erinyes **Jezska** to finish the job.

Jezska did not have a clear trail to follow and was — to her credit — cautious about getting into a fight with the heroes, so she teleported to Seaquen and has spent the past several weeks setting up a network of charmed dupes who will report to her if they see the party. She would have been more proactive in tracking down the heroes along the road, but the Ragesians in the Fire Tomb (see Act Five, page 95) have set up a teleportation anchor that makes it impossible for her to teleport out of the town, so she stays here.

What Happens Next?

If the heroes do not act on this information quickly, some charmed contact or another who has seen the party goes to the house of the wealthy Auyang family — a mother, father, and one son, all deeply enthralled with their new guest Jezska. That evening Jezska visits the heroes, and after she verifies that they still have the case she attacks them in their sleep. She blankets them with *unholy blight*, charms any survivors, and then collects the case. The next day she will head out of the swamp until she's outside the range of the teleportation anchor, and then return to Ragesia.

The heroes could ask the charmed person to give them directions to the "nice lady's" point of contact, which might be the most dangerous option, since the erinyes has charmed allies who believe she's a friend of the family (most are 1st-level commoners), plus she is already a difficult challenge for the party.

If the heroes alert Lyceum, mages from the school capture the erinyes within an hour. Others may come to the heroes' aid as well, perhaps setting an ambush in the heroes' residence. If the heroes make no effort to defend themselves against Jezska, they might not fall prey to the devil: others in town have noted oddities that suggest an infernal presence, and divinations by Headmaster Simeon lead a group of Lyceum mages to Jezska just before she reaches the heroes. The sounds of combat likely wake them up, and they can come out just in time to see the Lyceum mages securing their prisoner.

Jezska, erinyes (CR 8): hp 85, MM. Wears a *hat of disguise*, and does not have the typical *+1 flaming composite longbow*.

If Jezska is captured, the heroes are offered the chance to question the snarling, frantic prisoner, who is kept inside a reinforced amberglass cell etched with silver and affected by *dimensional anchor*. The mages who captured her, led by War Department head Kiernan Stekart, comment that it's unusual this particular captive did not try to teleport to safety, since she should be invulnerable to the flames of the Burning Sky.

Jezska can tell the heroes little that they don't already know, though if they succeed in convincing her that the Lyceum mages will cast *dismissal* rather than kill her (Bluff DC 26 or Diplomacy DC 25), she will list all the people in the city she has charmed, many of whom she encouraged to be hostile toward Lyceum. Lyceum mages set about dispelling these charms, which will dramatically reduce tension throughout the town.

If the heroes make Jezska Friendly (Diplomacy DC 35), she admits that she knows there is a cell of Ragesian spies in the town somewhere, and that they have set up a magic device that draws all teleportation in the vicinity to it. She cannot say where they are, since her orders were carefully crafted to keep her unable to reveal their location.

After the heroes and interrogators get as much information as they can, Simeon orders the devil executed publicly, to show the town that Lyceum is protecting them from danger. If the heroes manage to convince Simeon to spare the devil's life, Jezska is *dismissed*. She will thereafter feel that she owes the heroes a favor, and if she is ever called through *planar ally* or *planar binding*, she will agree to serve for up to nine days for free to repay the favor.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes alert others to deal with the erinyes, reward them for a CR 5 encounter. If the heroes participate in taking Jezska down, reward them for a normal combat encounter instead, dividing the reward appropriately, to a minimum of what a CR 5 encounter would be worth. If they get information out of the erinyes, reward them for another CR 5 encounter.

News of the War

The heroes should hear what's going on in the rest of the region as the war develops. While teleporting couriers can no longer deliver messages, *sending* spells still function, providing small details of the greater war. The heroes can learn about this whenever they show an interest. If they don't ask, they will definitely overhear the following bits of information while waiting for the council meeting at Lyceum to begin (see Act Three).

- In Gate Pass, the war wizard Gabal emerged from hiding when the city council let Ragesian inquisitors inside the walls. Gate Pass soldiers kept the inquisitors busy while Gabal and his students assaulted Ragesian camps outside the gates. Reported Ragesian losses were nearly two thousand in one day. Sadly, one of the inquisitors managed to locate Gabal and dispel his fire protection, and a mighty fire-breathing dragon incinerated the mage.
- The Shahalesti are believed to be providing supplies to Gate Pass, forcing Ragesia to turn from siege to repeated assaults.
- The first Ragesian army, led by General Magdus, has halted hostilities because of bad weather and now roams the eastern plains of Sindaire, pillaging as it goes. A fleet from Ragesia is sailing for the capital of Sindaire, and the leaders of Seaquen suspect Magdus' forces will link up with the fleet in the coming weeks.
- The second Ragesian army, led by General Danava and aided by a branch of the third army, has breached the first district gate of Gate Pass.
- The third Ragesian army, led by General Revulus, is preparing to march south to Dassen, though bad weather has halted it for now.
- Meanwhile, the fourth Ragesian army attacks Shahalesti around the northern edge of the Otdar mountains.
- Leska seems to be foolishly splitting her forces: Ragesia's armies are winning all of their battles but cannot hope to occupy territory. They seem simply to be on destructive marches.
- Shahalesti has sent out diplomatic envoys to each country in the region, looking for help against what will eventually become a two-front war when Gate Pass falls. They were rebuffed by King Steppengard of Dassen, who seems to think Ragesia is not an enemy.
- Ragesian garrisons in Sindaire have begun fighting with locals after attempting to round up mages per Leska's orders.
- Ostalin is relatively unaffected by war so far.
- There is no word of what has happened to the hundreds of mages captured by the Scourge.

North Coast Encounters

Hydromancer's Home

At some point the heroes should visit the home of **Lee Sidoneth** (LN male human monk 1/druid 8), the hydromancer who was Torrent's mentor. If Torrent is still with the heroes, she suggests this as an early destination, since Lee can get them in to see the head of Lyceum. If not, the heroes might visit Lee's island home when some other prominent NPC invites the group to take a business tour of the town with him. Perhaps a friend of the heroes wants the party to back her up when she goes to ask Lee for a favor of some sort, since Lee has a lot of pull among the captains and fishermen of Seaquen. Or perhaps Kiernan Stekart, head of Lyceum's War Department, takes the group to discuss with Lee potential solutions to the Shahalesti blockade after Act Three.

Lee Sidoneth's home is built directly into the rock of an island just off the north coast. A boardwalk crosses 100 feet of choppy sea to reach the island, at which point the path descends down soggy wooden stairs to a dock, or ascends rock-hewn steps to the cavernous entrance to Lee's home, on the top of the dome-shaped land mass. Inside are numerous rooms on different levels, though there is only living space for Lee and his two guests. A stairway descends to the bottom of the island, where the sea feeds into an underground pool. Here is where Lee usually keeps his animal companion, a squid he has named **Lula**.

Lee's two guests are **Brutus** (LN male half-orc sorcerer 4) and **Setales** (LN male half-orc fighter 4), two Ragesian brothers who have agreed to betray Seaquen to their homeland. The brothers are in contact with other spies throughout the town, and it is Brutus who poses as the half-elf Nebelekus, buying *tidereaver's tears* from the three witches H'andrea (see page 70). They report only to Lee, and do not know where the Ragesian inquisitor and his men are hiding, nor even that they exist.

When the heroes arrive, Lee welcomes them into his foyer and offers them drinks, then heads deeper into his home. He comes back with Brutus, Setales, and a strange person whose body is adorned with unnatural protrusions and alterations, ranging from teeth on his cheeks and tentacles on his arms to what appears to be a half-formed eye on the back of his hand that glows whenever it senses magic. This is **Paradim Dogwood** (NE male human transmuter 5), a loose-lipped biomancer from Ostalin who runs a new shop in South Harbor.

Brutus and Setales usher Paradim out of the house and head into the city on an errand. Previously Lee had been discussing with Paradim plans to make some creatures for an assassination plot, and worried about how talkative the biomancer is, Lee wants him out of the house. Once he's gone, Lee will gladly address whatever the heroes have come for. If Torrent is with them, he'll want to hear all about her journey, and will promise to arrange a meeting between the group and Headmaster Simeon early the next morning.

Should the heroes return to Lee's home, they'll likely witness more oddly-timed comings and goings. Lee claims that he's just busy, and that his house-guests are messengers and gofers. He gives his best effort to help out visitors however he can so as not to appear suspicious, and he has a good sense of humor about the danger they're in. When the heroes first arrive in Seaquen he'll work to quickly introduce them to Simeon, hoping to give the headmaster another distraction. After the Shahalesti fleet arrives in Act Three, he will oppose a hasty confrontation, saying a fight will help no one, when in truth he just wants to wait until the hurricane is ready to be unleashed.

Lee is not an evil person, and does not enjoy causing harm. But he is allied with the Ragesians, and sees Seaquen as an enemy that needs to be defeated. He is very disciplined, and will not risk breaking his cover to warn innocents or friends to flee before the hurricane strikes.

Arson Swarm (EL 2)

Several houses on the eastern side of the North Shore have been damaged by fire, something usually restricted to the South Harbor. No one is hurt and no buildings are fully destroyed, but rumors are spreading that one group of refugees or another is to blame, and tensions are running high. The heroes would help defuse a lot of tension if they discovered the real cause of the fires.

The Fire Tomb, detailed in Act Five, was originally overrun by swarms of rats. When the Ragesians moved in they drove a lot of the rats out, and now these fire-enhanced vermin are scuttling around Seaquen. They are mostly identical to normal rats, except that their breath and bite are slightly fiery. This is not enough to make them more damaging in combat, but occasionally, while nibbling, they start fires, which they promptly flee.

The easiest way to solve this mystery is through tracking. If the group reaches the site of a fire quickly enough, they might spot the tracks of a swarm of rats (Survival DC 17), which they can then follow through several infested homes and warehouses before finally locating a major den — a brick house with a basement filled with a rat swarm. As the rats scurry about, sparks burst from their mouths.

Rat swarm (CR 2): hp 13, MM.

The foundation of the house is cracked, and tiny tunnels lead all the way back to near the fire tomb. After disposing of the swarm, the tunnels must be sealed off. Once news gets around about what caused the fires, people check their basements and look for similar fissures elsewhere in the island, and manage to seal many of them. Additionally, tensions around the town ease as everyone has a good laugh about rats causing so much trouble. If the heroes do not solve it, however, a few people get beaten up, and the fires continue sporadically.

Solving this mystery ultimately causes the Ragesians in the Fire Tomb some discomfort (see page 95).

Feel free to throw in some red herrings, and to use the solution of this mystery as an excuse to give the heroes some information about the ruins of the old city, and the legend about the fire mage, whose lost tomb is hidden somewhere under Seaquen.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes resolve this mystery, reward them for a CR 5 encounter.

Harbor District Encounters

Tattoomancy

Dimly lit by hundreds of candles in windows and on shelves, the darkly veiled shop *Tattoomancy* attracts many customers with its mystery. Only open after sunset, the shop offers unique magical creations, courtesy of its owner **Tenga Litaranesh** (CN female elf sorcerer 12), a dark-skinned elf with short, jagged black hair and delicate, nimble hands. In her rare public appearances, Tenga disguises herself as a dark elf, and wears a cloak that sheds an aura of shadows.

Tenga and the small crew of wizards and clerics who train with her use their magic to craft tattoos that function like magic items, and they take great pride in their art.

Tenga and her workers all possess the Tattoomancy item creation feat, which is detailed in Appendix A.

Wayfarer Auditions

The Wayfarers' Cirque is looking for performers to replace a few of their members who recently died tragically as a result of the Burning Sky, a strange phenomenon that causes people teleporting to burst into flames. It first started the day Emperor Coaltongue was allegedly assassinated, and since then the Wayfarers have had a strict ban on teleportation. If the heroes care to ask, they learn that a few daring Wayfarers defended themselves with magical fire resistance, then tried teleporting. They were able to safely travel short distances (though even those were singed a bit), but the first time one of them tried to use an actual *teleport* to go more than a few hundred feet, he never returned.

If any heroes have the right temperament to join the Wayfarers — particularly if they have several ranks in Perform or qualify for the Wayfarer cirqueliste prestige class (see Appendix A) — have an NPC encourage them to visit the Wayfarers' Theater. The Wayfarers are fervently looking for a solution to the dangers of the Burning Sky, so you can assure a player who is interested that he would be able to take advantage of the class's abilities. If Tiljann (the seela singer from the Fire Forest of Innenotdar) is still with the heroes, she shows an interest; after having been trapped in one place all her life she is very interested in the Wayfarers' offers to see the world.

The theater ship — an ornate galleon adorned with whipping banners atop its masts and a swirling red and gold paint job on its hull — has been sitting in Seaquen's harbor for nearly a month, having sailed here once word spread of the Scourge. Though the entire ship can teleport, the Wayfarers knew enough not to risk it, and have disabled that function for safety's sake. The interior of the ship is far larger than its exterior would indicate, and belowdecks is a small theater that seats one hundred, where the Wayfarer Cirque is hosting auditions and practicing a new play.

Whatever type of Perform skills a PC has, the Wayfarers are conveniently enough lacking, giving the character a chance to show off. A Perform check that beats DC 15 is good enough to get them into the production of *The Spectacular Trial of Toteth Topec* (with a compensation of 1 gp for each of the twenty performances the character will be expected to participate in). A check of DC 20 or higher gets the character a major role, giving them access to the Wayfarers' Theater ship at any time (and a compensation of 5 gp per show).

The audition is overseen by **Guildmistress Sheena Larkins** (N female half-elf bard 6/rogue 1/Wayfarer cirqueliste 5), a middle-aged, somewhat overweight dark-skinned half-elf woman who looks upon her performers almost as schoolchildren to be reined in. Her tobacco-smoking bodyguard **Hawkins Dorien** (CN male human sorcerer 10) stays nearby constantly, laughing remorselessly at anyone who presents himself as a serious artist.



Before anyone is allowed to speak to Larkins, however, they must endure critique from **Giorgio** (N male human bard 6/Wayfarer cirqueliste 2), a flamboyantly dressed, staff-carrying braggart whose swagger is apparent in everything, from his walk to his talk. Giorgio will also be present at the Lyceum council (see Act Three), and unbeknownst to his fellow Wayfarers he is planning to betray them the night of a key performance (see Act Four).

Encourage players who want to join the Wayfarers to come up with what precisely their performances are, and be merciless in the critique.

Sunken Ruins Encounters

Battle Royale

The relatively wild areas on the eastern shore and just off the coast provide an easy place for would-be heroes to practice their skills against each other. While mages duel each other at Lyceum, warriors or even entire parties looking

Wayfarer Cirqueliste – Art by Todd Schumacher

to show off their talents meet here once a week, swapping stories and occasionally getting up the nerve to fight each other after having a lot of drinks. There is one tavern here, the recently-built *Royale*, which offers to cater to "persons of uncanny combat prowess."

Three stories tall, the *Royale* is slowly establishing a pecking order, with only the more dangerous or esteemed warriors being allowed to the lavish upper floors. Meanwhile in the fields and forest surrounding the tavern, numerous obstacle courses are being developed, and dozens of rumors of drama and romance circulate through the clientele. The whole compound is scattered with walled and well guarded hot springs, some intended for prudish bathing, others for more salacious activities.

Sadly, though, most of the patrons of the *Royale* are inappropriately sure of their own superiority. None have seen as much danger as the heroes, and many of them come across simply as poseurs enjoying that they can pretend to be accomplished warriors. Most importantly, none of them are motivated to actually do anything other than drink and live out their own little dramas here.

Magistrate Votberd regularly sends observers here to make sure a bit of restless sparring doesn't develop into bloodsports. If the heroes befriend either Xavious Foebane or Laurabec Adelsburg from the refugee camps, they may want to come here to recruit allies. During the course of this adventure it is unlikely that anything the heroes do can rouse the patrons of the *Royale* to action, but it could be a source of cohorts, new PCs, or magic items.

After the hurricane in Act Four reminds the patrons here that even they are in danger in this conflict, many of them finally begin to look for ways to help. And there will be quite enough missions for them to help with. Two weeks after the hurricane, the *Royale* is all but empty, though when a group of adventurers returns from a mission for Seaquen, they often stop in to toast the tavern where they met up.

Exploring the Ruins

Any great treasure that once was lost in the ruins of the old city has long since been found, though that doesn't keep people from searching. Every day a few refugees head out, hoping to find something of value. Thus, it is not particularly suspicious that a few of the villains and their henchmen might head this way, delivering messages and goods to the Ragesians. One is far more likely to run into homeless refugees sleeping under a sturdy stone arch than a nefarious spy accidentally leading snooping heroes to his masters.

We recommend that you not lead the heroes in this direction yet, since they will find the necessary clues to locate the Ragesians in due time. Dropping clues to take them here now will likely only leave them feeling frustrated, since the Ragesians are effectively a needle in a haystack of flooded ruins. Of course, if the heroes are particularly nosy and persistent, they might realize people are hiding in the sunken prison. If the heroes clear out the Ragesians early, Lee can still safely cause the hurricane in Act Four from some other aquatic location where *no one* would think the look.

Rebel Camp Encounters

The Muster

A retired commander in the Dassen military, **Xavious Foebane** (LN male dwarf commander 11) has gotten the attention of Seaquen by scouting through the refugee camps in search of able-bodied and experienced warriors who could make up a military defense for the town. The grey-bearded dwarf resides in a small stone fort atop a clear-cut hill, and when he isn't busy looking for recruits, directing training drills, or planning potential defense and offense against Ragesia, Commander Xavious secludes himself in his fortress.

There are daily musters in the field surrounding the fort, where Commander Xavious endeavors to see which warriors have the devotion to regularly report to duty. Usually less than a hundred men show up. Commander Xavious has his subordinates work a few of them through training exercises, though it is with little enthusiasm, since he knows most of his troops do not take their duty seriously, and if they were attacked, a hundred would do little to stand against the Ragesians.

If the heroes visit and impress Commander Xavious with their understanding of the wider threat posed by the Ragesians, he may invite them into his home and offer to play a game of Conquest, a board game meant to represent military engagements on different scales. (See page 228 for rules on playing Conquest within a game session.)

For the first game, Commander Xavious offers to let a PC play Ragesia, while he takes Dassen. Ragesia's size grants the PC a +10 bonus to his check, but Xavious has a +14 modifier to Knowledge (history) checks, and has enough ranks in Knowledge (nobility and royalty) and Sense Motive to gain a synergy bonus for later rounds. If he wins, he smiles and says it won't be that easy for the real fight.

Over the course of the rest of the campaign, Commander Xavious will slowly develop a very detailed board that represents the whole region, using intelligence from scouts and refugees to revise his calculations of troop strength and commander skill. If one of the heroes is interested in Conquest, before adventure eight, *O Wintry Song of Agony*, Xavious challenges the PC to another game on a grand scale.

Order of Echoed Souls

One small group of monk refugees from Sindaire has settled in a forest clearing, alone by themeselves away from the rest of the refugees. Led by Dreams No Sorrows (NG female human monk 2/wilder 6), a middle-aged bald woman with dark skin and hands callused from making crystaline wind chimes, this group contains the last survivors of the Order of Echoed Souls.

One of the monks of the order, **Three Weeping Ravens** (LN male human monk 2/psychic warrior 7), will likely accompany the heroes throughout adventure five, *Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds*, and the history of the order is closely tied to adventure seven, *The Trial of Echoed Souls*. In brief, the order was originally based in northern Shahalesti, but a tragedy drove the monks out of their homeland, and they abandoned their temple. The survivors settled in Sindaire, where they lived for several decades. Then, soon after rumors began to spread of Coaltongue's death, the First Ragesian Army attacked their lands for unknown reasons.

About forty monks or family members survive, and any erudite characters or those with psionic powers may be interested in visiting and speaking with them. They keep to themselves, and only Three Weeping Ravens speaks to outsiders so that others may be spared that frustration. Slowly, however, he comes to like the people of Seaquen, and eventually volunteers to help on one of the missions Lyceum is sending adventurers on.

If asked about the tragedy that befell the temple, the monks are uncomfortable. The closest they come to an explanation is, "Imagine all the small evils you have done, and all the evils ever committed by those you have met. Imagine that your soul contained nothing but that evil. Would you want to speak of it?"

Unity through Diversity

With refugees hailing from four different countries, and several different churches, it was inevitable that religious strife would develop. Splinter sects who used to be comfortable in different nations now squabble over the true meaning of their faith, and priests are getting downright hostile in their efforts to convert people to join new local temples.

Right now the only person working to keep the various religious groups from falling upon each other is **Laurabec Adelsburg** (CG female half-elf fighter 1/paladin of freedom 11), but she is too unwilling to take a position of authority, and the fact that she is a member of the Order of the Aquiline Cross — itself a somewhat paradoxist sect — makes it difficult for her to effect real change. The heroes have a chance to reduce the amount of strife, if not truly bring about peace.

The particulars of the religions and temples will vary based on your setting, but the refugees in Seaquen are divided into eight major groups, ranging from a handful of zealous exiles who worship a god of sorcery, to nearly two hundred frightened Ragesian followers of a god who protects the weak. None of them are evil, but that doesn't mean they easily get along. Each is trying to establish its own power base, and it should take at least a week to become familiar enough with the particulars of the conflict to have a chance to sway minds.

Laurabec, respected though she is for her heroism and defense of less fortunate refugees, and well-intentioned though she might be, has an unpopular idea, and if she learns that the heroes are taking an interest in the religious strife she approaches them to see if they have any suggestions. A tall, slender half-elf woman with short brown hair that ruffles in a constant wind and eyes with the intensity of an eagle's, Laurabec is one of the early celebrities of the town, easily noticed for the giant eagle she rides. As long as people are being reasonable she is thrilled to talk with them and is understanding of different outlooks, but she is confident she has seen enough trouble in her life to know when people are being difficult for no good reason. She does her best to educate such people that they will catch more flies with honey.

Her idea is to create a single pantheist temple, which will welcome people of different cultures and viewpoints, and which will expose people to the beliefs of all the religions in the town, letting each person choose how to worship. It has not gone over well with priests who want to gain prestige by running their own temples. An idealist, Laurabec doesn't know how to turn her idea into a real temple. She still wants each religion to have its own place of worship, but she thinks her idea would be a great fit for a town that already has the Lyceum, an academy which promotes studying diversity.

If the heroes want to help, they must convince the leaders of the eight feuding sects to go along with the plan. Laurabec will gladly accompany them, making the appropriate introductions and helping the heroes familiarize themselves with the beliefs and needs of each group, but she is not a politician, and leaves diplomacy to the party. This is a good opportunity to let the heroes learn about the regions in the campaign saga, or hear the news of the war.

1. Ragesian Philosophers • God of Knowledge

The high priest loves to hear stories, so telling a story allows a negotiator to add any levels in bard (or similar class having a lore ability) to his Diplomacy check. Giving the high priest an old book or tickets to the Wayfarers' Theater show provides a +2 bonus.

Rumors say the high priest abandoned several of his traveling companions on his way to Seaquen, but when he lost a book on the road he went back for it, braving Ragesian patrols. The book in question is an old manuscript of ancient philosophy, and the priest never parts with it. If the negotiator manages to read the book (either by stealing it or by locating a copy of it at the Lyceum's library), he gains a +10 bonus to his Diplomacy check if he uses the philosophical arguments found in the book to support his rhetorical stance.

2. Ragesian Hospitalers • Goddess of Healing

The priestess is very busy tending to sick and wounded people, since disease is a problem in the refugee camps. While the heroes can simply wait for when she's free, helping with the care grants a +5 bonus to the negotiator's Diplomacy check. If anyone among the heroes can cast remove disease or lesser restoration, doing this to help refugees is worth another +5 bonus.

The priestess likes to use parables, and so presenting the proposal in a metaphorical way that suggests healing the refugees grants another +5 bonus. However, this temple is at odds with the doctrine of the Order of the Aquiline Cross, and mentioning them or bringing Laurabec along incurs a –5 penalty.

3. Ragesian Savages • Goddess of Strength

The leader of this group is not a cleric, but a barbarian woman. She preaches that people must choose their own way, and that the strongest should lead. Very prideful, she takes offense if the negotiator comes to her as anything other than the first or last priest to convince. If the heroes come to her first or last, she automatically agrees to the proposition. Otherwise the heroes must use Diplomacy (DC 25).

4. Ragesian Druids • Goddess of Pilgrimages

A druid negotiator gains a +5 bonus. A negotiator with 5 ranks in Knowledge (geography) gains a +2 bonus.

Spending an evening eating dinner and telling stories of their travels grants a +5 bonus. The head druid likes cats, so bringing one along and treating it well in his presence provides a +2 bonus.

5. Dasseni Dwarves • God of Ancestors

A non-dwarf negotiator takes a –5 penalty. A negotiator with 5 ranks in Knowledge (history) gains a +2 bonus.

Taking the time before negotiations to detail their lineage to three generations grants the negotiator a +5 bonus (the priests won't attempt to verify what they're told, so any reasonable story will do). Bringing a goat as a sacrifice so the priest can cast augury grants a +2 bonus.

6. Ostaliner Mercenaries • God of Battle

An Ostaliner negotiator gains a +2 bonus.

The priest, Arick (N male human cleric 5), was a former hippogriff rider, and so talking to him about aerial defenses of Seaquen provides a +5 bonus. If the negotiator can beat Arick in a nonlethal fight, that is a further +5 bonus. Guaranteeing the temple would be in a central defensible position on a hill grants a +2 bonus.

7. Seaquen Locals • God of Seas

A negotiator with 5 ranks in Profession (sailor) gains a +2 bonus. Having Torrent or another water-themed magic-user present provides a +2 bonus.

Promising the temple would be built on the coast grants a +5 bonus. Guaranteeing it will be on the south shore, so the refugees don't have to come into Seaquen, grants a further +5 bonus.

8. Sindairese Exiles • God of Sorcery

An arcane spellcaster gains a +5 bonus to his Diplomacy check. Simply having one present during the negotiations grants a +2 bonus, even if he is not the one making the Diplomacy check.

Mentioning their plight in being exiled grants a +2 bonus. Bringing a bear — a symbol of good luck in Sindaire — provides a +5 bonus. (A DC 20 Gather Information check locates a druid who will loan his bear animal companion for a day for 5 gp.)

To push Laurabec's plan through (or another idea of the party's devising that would resolve the religious disputes), the heroes must convince each of the eight head priests that the plan is in their best interest. Each requires a Diplomacy check (DC 25) to convince. The negotiator gains a +2 bonus to this check if he has 5 or more ranks of Knowledge (religion), and a +5 bonus if he worships the same deity. Additionally, each temple's priest can be swayed by different deeds or particular approaches to negotiation. A Gather Information check (DC 15) made in advance of negotiations can learn these bargaining points.

While the specifics of the temples and their priests will vary by your setting, we suggest the temples listed in the sidebar below.

If six temples agree, the others follow suit automatically, wanting to be included. Thereafter the heroes can call upon a minor favor from each of the temples whose priests they convinced, about once a month. These favors can range from a spell of 4th level or lower, to borrowing a minor magic item, or something similar. If the heroes fail to succeed here, the temples still come to an awkward peace after the hurricane strikes.

After getting the priests on board, the temple still needs to be made. If the heroes have not already done the Shrieking Delve encounter, now is a good excuse for them to go.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes succeed here, reward them for a CR 6 encounter. If they convince all the temples, reward them instead for a CR 7 encounter.

South Harbor Encounters

Rabble Rouser

Pickens Frankart (CG male human expert 3) is a huge, smiling bald man with more charm than intelligence, and he does not respond well to reason or logic. He is convinced that Lyceum is just trying to take advantage of Seaquen, and works to convince others, while doing his best to help refugees make new homes and protect themselves from common thieves. Pickens never drinks but loves fancy things he can't afford; unbeknownst to him some of his "friends" are members of a thieves' guild/pirate fleet being cobbled together by Sindairese halfling crime lord **Cernaban Gremman** (NE male halfling rogue 8/enchanter 2) and Ostalin naval scoundrel **Makung Shaftobem** (LE male half-elf fighter 4/commander 2).

Pickens is not dangerous, and those using him to stir up discontent are discreet, so the heroes might simply not realize the threat. Casual conversation with Pickens is not enough to convince the naïvely self-righteous man to change his mind, and finding a way to convince either Cernaban or Makung to admit to their criminal plans is beyond the scope of this adventure. If, however, the heroes go out of their way to stop Makung's pirate fleet and the smuggling and Cernaban's people-trafficking, they can prevent Pickens from tragically convincing the Seaquen fleet to sail to battle against the Shahalesti at the end of Act Four.

Biomancy and Brothelhouses

Though Cernaban Gremman is not behind the abduction of young women around the town, some are finding their way to a secretive brothel he owns. The road here is a convoluted one. There is a shop on the south harbor named Majestic Creations, owned by **Paradim Dogwood** (NE male human transmuter 5), whom the heroes might have run into when they visited Lee Sidoneth. Paradim is something like a mad scientist, prone to rambling and exotic claims of brilliance, such as that his ancestors created the owlbear.

He offers to create custom animals for those who can pay. He effectively can create any aberration, animal, or magical beast with a Challenge Rating of 5 or less, though his creations never have an Intelligence score above 2. A few mages visit him for unique pets, and he is busy working for Makung Shaftobem to create new hippogriffs for the captain's soldiers.

His base price is 2,000 gp for a creature of CR 2 or less. The cost increases to 3,000 for CR 3 creatures, 5000 gp for CR 4 creatures, and 9000 gp for CR 5 creatures. Designing and growing a creature takes him one day per 1,000 gp of the price. He does not guarantee the creature's obedience, though he assures customers that all creatures he designs can be trained as easily as a dog or a horse.

He also offers to perform permanent physical alterations on customers, altering flesh, appearance, and even race or sex for 2,000 gp and a painful two-day submersion in biomancy fluid. The two people who were brave enough to try the procedure report being thrilled with the results, one a half-orc man who became a human, the other a human woman who wanted to grow fur, a tail, and cat-ears. All these changes can be reversed if the creature willingly submits to a *dispel magic* or *break enchantment*. Otherwise they are as permanent as a magic item.

Paradim's shop is full of cages of animals for raw materials, and large tanks filled with yellow-green fluid that his creations grow in, though the ones in his storefront are merely for display. A small crew of other Ostaliner mages assist him, and guards — provided courtesy of Cernaban Gremman's budding syndicate — ensure no one gets into the underground laboratory.

The operator of Cernaban's brothel wanted "special attractions," and so he had a few women abducted, then brought to Paradim's shop where they were altered to fit twisted sexual fantasies. Paradim's other customers include Lee Sidoneth and the Ragesian spies hiding in the Fire Tomb. For any of these reasons, Paradim deserves to be found out and brought to justice. However, it's likely that the heroes will simply see Paradim as a somewhat slimy but intriguing entrepeneur.

If the heroes do not find out the scope of Paradim's projects, eventually one of the mages of Lyceum does. A few days after the end of the adventure they piece together clues from the Ragesians, then raid his lab and capture Paradim. Feeling heat, Cernaban turns over the head of his brothel, claiming he had no idea that such horrible things were occuring in one of his places of business.

Act Three: Lyceum

Eventually the heroes should visit Lyceum. If they don't ask, someone will recognize their skill and will invite them to attend a council meeting, where the leaders of Lyceum and prominent members of the town and the refugee camps will meet to discuss news and plan how to respond to the threat posed by Ragesia. Diplomats from Dassen, Sindaire, and Ostalin will be present, and the heroes will have an opportunity to speak to the council and request aid for Gate Pass, or address whatever reason brought them to Seaquen.

The council should occur in the first few days that the heroes are in the town, though the heroes will likely be welcome in the school before and after this time.

Lyceum Academy

The Lyceum compound is surrounded by a low stone wall, and consists of a half-dozen class buildings and dormitories on a hill near Seaquen's north harbor. Most of the buildings are built of moss-coated gray stone, with wide covered walkways and broad fields filled with trees that droop with golden moss. The central tower — an eight-story, sixty-foot diameter pillar of weathered stone and thick windows called the Aurad Tower — is used for major events, such as the council the heroes will attend, and contains the offices of the professors. However, all the professors have their own homes along the north shore.

Twenty upperclassmen (spellcasters of 5th level), forty underclassmen (3rd level), and seventy apprentices (1st level) attend the school, which is presided over by **Headmaster Simeon Gohanach** (LG male human diviner 7/loremaster 6). Faculty members include:

- Kiernan Stekart (LN male dwarf abjurer 11). Head of the Department of War, in charge of academy defense.
- Fogo Henning (N male gnome illusionist 11). Instructor.
- Banahman Vett (CN male half-elf transmuter 9). Instructor.
- Cloin Vemeir (N male human necromancer 9). Instructor.
- Pristina Whitehair (CG female human conjurer 9). Instructor.
- Tika Shayam (N female human druid 7). Instructor.
- Dougan Rambausen (NG male dwarf enchanter 7). Instructor.
- Brighton Cooper (LG male human evoker 7). Instructor.
- Deacon Theal (CN male half-orc sorcerer 7). Instructor.
- Gilver Fern (N male halfling bard 7). Head of student affairs.
- Ogoth Who-Wears-No-Mask (LN male orc cleric 7). Ex-inquisitor, consultant.
- Lee Sidoneth (LN male human monk 1/druid 8). Harbormaster, friend of the faculty.



Students at the Lyceum study all manner of magic, though there is an emphasis on arcane magic. Most students who can learn the spell *duelist's etiquette* (see Appendix A) do so, as the school pays a few silver pieces for someone to cast the spell every time there is a spell duel. Likewise, most students possess the Spellduelist alternate class feature, replacing their familiar with the Spellduelist feat (see below).

Statistics for a typical upperclass student of Lyceum are provided in Appendix B, as are statistics for one of the professors, Pristina Whitehair.

Lyceum upperclassman (CR 5): hp 14, Appendix B.
Pristina Whitehair (CR 9): hp 24, Appendix B.

Tactics

Pristina's duels are well-liked by the students, since she almost always starts off by casting *mirage arcana*, turning the arena into a visually interesting location that gives her cover. Often this is something elaborate, like a forest gully filled with dozens of caves she can hide inside, tall bushes and cascading waterfalls providing concealment. She is particularly fond of playing tricks with illusions that deceive her opponents into wandering outside the ring and being disqualified, or into searching for her inside the illusion while she stands on the outside.

Pristina's general tactic is to separate herself from her foe with illusions, *solid fog*, or a *wall of ice*, and spend a few rounds summoning monsters before removing the partition and assaulting her foe. She tries not to give her foes the option of making saving throws, so for instance she would use a *wall of ice* to simply divide the battlefield in two, rather than trying to trap her foe in a hemisphere of ice.

Lyceum Tutors – Art by J. L. Jones

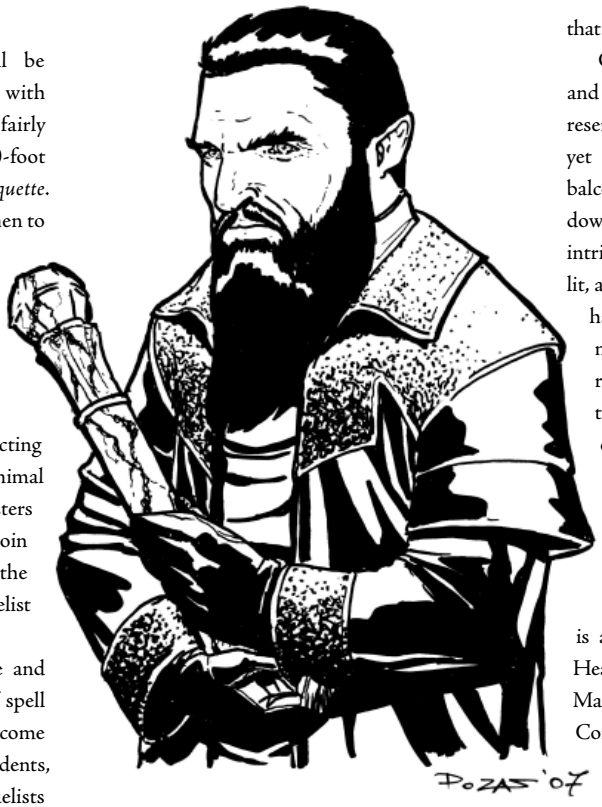
Spelldueling Heroes?

Magic-users among the heroes will be pressured by mages at the school to duel with them. The rules of spelldueling are fairly straightforward. The battle occurs in a 30-foot radius, marked off by the spell *duelist's etiquette*. A judge outside the area tells the duelists when to start, and the duel is resolved like a normal combat, albeit a usually nonlethal one. A mage loses if he falls down twice, if three of his spells are countered or disrupted, if he leaves the arena ring, or if he fails to cast a spell for three consecutive rounds.

Participants must have no spells affecting them when the duel begins. Familiars and animal companions are allowed, but non-spellcasters are usually not allowed to participate. A coin toss lets the winner decide where to hold the duel, though etiquette demands that each duelist begins with roughly equal footing.

While this is mostly just idle practice and sport, a character who consistently wins of spell duels develops a reputation and may become the target of adoration from younger students, and challenges from older students. Duelists are usually limited to one opponent a day, but a duelist may duel two challengers two levels lower than him, or four challengers four levels lower than him. Most of the students at Lyceum have no practical combat experience, and they tend to use spells that they think are interesting rather than those that will decisively end a battle.

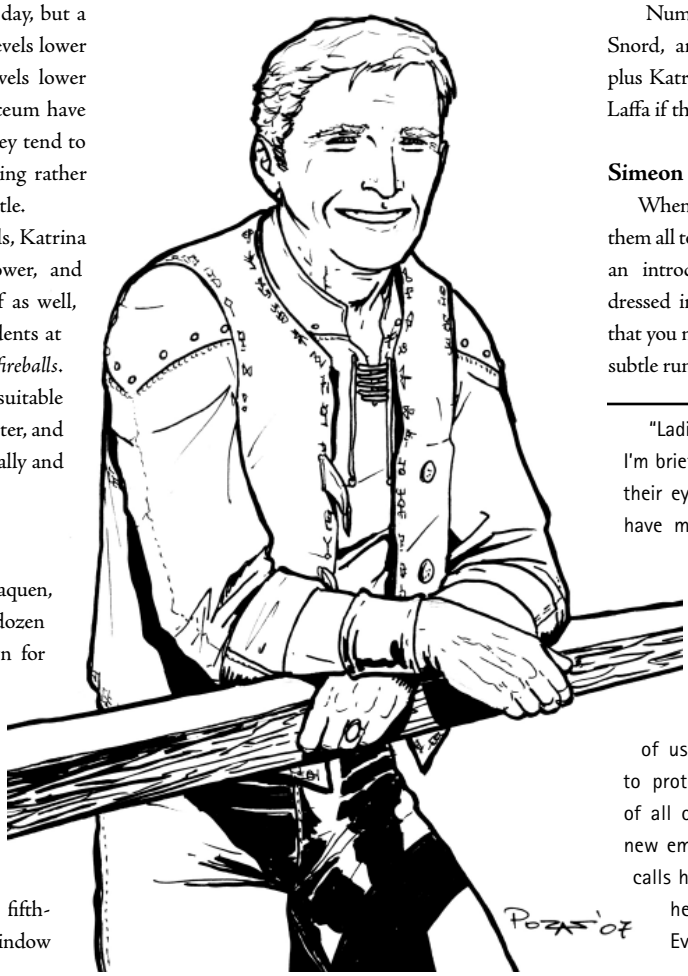
Should a hero win several spell duels, Katrina decides smugly to show off her power, and she begins to make a name for herself as well, participating in duels with several students at once, taking them down with majestic *fireballs*. Then, once she has established a suitable reputation, she challenges a PC spellcaster, and loses the duel intentionally, as dramatically and convincingly as she can manage.



Kiernan – Art by Claudio Pozas

The War Council

A few days after the heroes reach Seaquen, Headmaster Simeon calls together a dozen or so prominent people from the town for a war council. They arrive one by one through the constant drizzle, and polite students greet them at the entrance to the Aurad Tower, drying off the visitors with *prestidigitation* spells while simultaneously using *arcane sight* to provide a modicum of security. Guests are then escorted to a fifth-floor lecture hall with a vast curving window that looks out across the harbor.



Simeon – Art by Claudio Pozas

Once everyone has arrived, Simeon appears and ushers everyone to an adjacent classroom that resembles an operating theater — a comfortable yet small area for discussion, surrounded by balconies where students would normally look down and watch an instructor demonstrate the intricacies of a particular spell. The room is well lit, and the Head of the War Department, a dark-haired dwarf named **Kiernan Stekart** (LN male dwarf abjurer 11), places a short stone rod carved of veiny black stone on the table in the center of the room. He assures them no one can endanger them here, as long as they remain within 20 feet of the rod. He then steps to the side of the room, where stands a shield guardian crafted to look like a gnarled stone treant.

Aside from the heroes, the war council is attended by Headmaster Simeon Gohanach, Head of the War Department Kiernan Stekart, Magistrate Lorb Votberd, Lee Sidoneth, Commander Xavious Foebane, Laurabec Adelsburg, and Wayfarer representative Giorgio, plus Dassen ambassador Kiefer Numhaut, Sindaire ambassador Cranston Snord, and Ostalin ambassador Kazha Lonam, plus Katrina and perhaps Torrent and Haddin Ja-Laffa if they have made it this far with the heroes.

Simeon

When everyone is present, Simeon encourages them all to sit, while he remains standing to present an introduction. Simeon is casual and folksy, dressed in a common vest and work pants such that you might not realize he's a mage if not for the subtle runes sewn into his clothes.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you'll pardon me if I'm brief. Our enemies are many, and we know their eyes are constantly watching. We don't have much time for this meeting, so, even though I encourage each and every one of us to have our time to speak, I need to ask that we not get too bogged down in discussions of minutiae and other small things.

"We have a great task ahead of us – a task that we do not do simply to protect ourselves, but to save the lives of all our families, brother, and sisters. The new emperor of Ragesia, Leska, who proudly calls herself the Supreme Inquisitor, has set her armies to conquer all our nations. Everyone is in danger, from lowliest

warrior to mightiest mage. I have vowed as my duty that I will fight against this Scourge from Ragesia, but I don't know much about running a war.

"What I do know is that we all have knowledge and skills that will be valuable in this fight. I hope that you will trust me to lead this fight against tyranny, and I will trust you to give me your best wisdom and aid so that we may be victorious.

"Our goal is to stop the Scourge, to drive back the armies of the Ragesian Empire, to dethrone Leska, and to ensure our families and homelands are safe. Now, I hope you all have some idea how to do that. My ears are open."



Simeon sits, and directs each of the visitors to speak in turn. Meanwhile Kiernan Stekart, the quiet dwarf in charge of the new Department of War, remains vigilant, and acts quickly to put down any actual violence, though he expects tempers to flare and does not worry about simple yelling or even threats. From time to time, Simeon glances at him for an assessment, and Kiernan, keenly familiar with Lyceum's resources, curtly provides any information requested.

Each of the visitors takes a minute or so to present his or her concerns and insights, going in the following order unless interrupted.

Magistrate Lorb Votberd

The dwarven ex-pirate who now presides over the government of Seaquen is here to bring up a long list of grievances against the refugees, who he says are bringing chaos and crime to their town. He is in favor of recruiting able-bodied refugees to a new, broader police force to get things under control in a hurry. In particular, he wants to systematically bring in every refugee for questioning, so they can put into custody those who appear suspicious. On the matter of alliances with other nations, he is very leery of any arrangement that forces Seaquen to answer to another power.

Lee Sidoneth

The heroes should have already met the bald, relaxed hydromancer. Charged with maintaining the security of Seaquen's harbor, he weighs in on naval affairs. He explains that the north harbor is so crowded that they're sending new ships to the south harbor. Though there aren't adequate docks for all the refugee ships, Lee thinks it best that most ships not be piered, so they can move quickly in case of an attack. His general stance is to wait and build strength, rather than rush to action. As he sits down he sneers at the ambassador from Ostalin, saying, "Some war-mongers might disagree with me, but they are motivated by the flow of gold into their coffers, not the safety of refugees or our city."

Commander Xavious Foebane

A respected retired commander from Dassen, this aged dwarf wants Seaquen to forge alliances with any nation that is willing to stand against Ragesia. He has several ideas to take advantage of Seaquen's substantial magical resources, such as lending spellcasters to military units of numerous nations. This both helps those armies outwit the Ragesians, and provides some protection against betrayal. He has identified military objectives best be handled by mobile experts, saving large forces for holding back enemy advances.

The most important mission, in his mind, is locating the Torch of the Burning Sky, and he believes Leska has already begun searching for it, which is why she has spread her armies so widely. He already has in mind a group that he trusts to accomplish the mission: he served with them in Dassen, and with the support of some of Lyceum's mages they would be able to easily go anywhere and do anything to retrieve this most valuable weapon of war. All that remains is to contact Dassen's King Steppengard.

Laurabec Adelsburg

The eagle-riding holy warrior speaks for longer than anyone else, and during her speech Magistrate Votberd grows slowly more irritable.

Laurabec is less concerned with broad military matters and more worried that the thousands of people who have come to Seaquen to make a difference in the war might tear themselves apart. It's clear that Ragesia is partly to blame, she says, citing the erinyes who attacked the heroes (see "Someone's Looking for You," page 77), but just as many problems are the result of inadequate food, water, and shelter; bitter religious and cultural differences; a perception that Seaquen and Lyceum view the refugees as outsiders and pawns, rather than vital allies; and the clear fact that more than a few people are here looking for an opportunity to profit from the war.

Laurabec speaks unofficially on behalf of the refugees, and she requests that someone pay more heed to the local affairs, since it will take weeks anyway before any military actions can be coordinated. She starts to go into specifics, but Magistrate Votberd interrupts her.

Votberd thinks Laurabec is coddling potential hostiles, and is confident stricter laws will get things under control. The refugees, after all, have come to *Seaquen*, and should follow *Seaquen's* rules. Simeon is more willing to listen to Votberd, whom he trusts from experience, saying he does not want to devote Lyceum's students to helping the refugees when they could be training for war.

Giorgio

The flamboyant Wayfarer walks slowly around the table, thumping his staff on the floor with every stride, and he simmers with enthusiasm. He presents the Wayfarers' knowledge about the dangers of teleportation, and says that they are working to find a solution. In hushed tones he hints at what amazing mobility the Wayfarers could provide them if the Cirque were willing to violate its long-standing neutrality. Then, with a smile, he says that the guildmistress, Sheena

Laurebec – Art by Leo Lingas

Larkins, is willing to do just that, if Lyceum can prove it has a legitimate chance to defeat Ragesia.

Before sitting, Giorgio produces a ticket for each person present and gives the following bombastic speech:

> "These are for a performance in three weeks of *The Spectacular Trial of Toteth Topec*, which you've *no doubt* heard will be premiering at the Wayfarers' Theater in a few days. Though there will be other performances before the night of your tickets, the *ageless beauty* that *is* Guildmistress Larkins wants to be certain we have *everything perfect* before we show it to you, the city's *most respected* citizens, and those dignitaries visiting from *similarly respected* nations. Think of the *symbol* it will be, for all you to attend a show together! I dare say it may be *wholly disastrous* to morale if *even one* of you fails to attend!"



Katrina

Most likely Katrina will come with the heroes, and she presents them as the greatest resource available to the war effort. She extols their victory over a Ragesian inquisitor and reminds everyone that they are already a thorn in the Empire's side, so much so that the inquisitors sent not one but *two* children of hell to track them down. She explains that she too has faced an inquisitor and defeated him, and that her brother Rantle, whom she spoke to recently via a *sending* spell, is a vital member of the resistance in Gate Pass.

After this she lets the heroes speak, though she is not above expressing amazement at their deeds, and she occasionally prompts them for more details of what they have faced and what they suspect the Ragesians may have wanted with the case.

Kiernan advises that they not look at the contents of the case with so many people around, though Simeon assures them that he wants take a look at it after the meeting, before the group leaves.

Dassen Ambassador Keifer Numhaut

This tall, blond human says that King Steppengard is displeased that Seaquen's rallying call has brought so many refugees through his lands, making his kingdom a target for Ragesia. While Dassen is not above lending its support if there is a legitimate reason, for now the King believes it wiser to make a pact of neutrality with Leska, and leave Seaquen to its own fate.

Simeon says he will talk to the ambassador in great length, and show him copious information that he believes makes it clear that Ragesia will accept no neutrality.

Sindaire Ambassador Cranston Snord

The aged gnome from Sindaire says that his nation's people want to resist Ragesia, but the politicians cannot pledge their support to Seaquen and risk drawing Leska's ire. He suggests that if Seaquen could defeat Ragesia in a notable battle, such a victory might be enough to make a difference.

As for the Torch of the Burning Sky, Cranston says that he is confident he knows where it is; it's just impossible to reach. "The evening that the Old Dragon was slain," he says, "a storm of fire opened up in the skies above the late emperor's castle, a place called Korstull, a canyon in a broad field. Now everything there is dead, burned by months of searing rain. Sometimes the dead wander out of the storm. I don't know how anyone could have gotten into that firestorm to retrieve the Torch, nor do I know how you would expect to either."

Ostalin Ambassador Kazha Lonam

Slender, with sharpened black fingernails and voluminous robes that probably conceal weapons, the half-elf ambassador is sourly sarcastic. Her nation is only interested in lending its aid if it will profit them, but she presents their desires as generous. She says, with a self-important air:

> Khagan Onamdammin, our ruler, deeply regrets that his neighbors might be endangered by the Ragesian armies, but is willing to lend his elite, fierce armies if his neighbors are reasonable. Ragesia intends to conquer your entire nation. Would it not be reasonable to trade us one-third of your land, so that you may keep the rest from the greedy, cruel Ragesians?"

This starts a heated bout of bickering among the ambassadors, which is a good time for the Shahalesti to make their apperance.

Ad-Hoc Experience

For enduring this negotiation, reward the heroes for a CR 4 encounter. If they come up with some interesting ideas or make a good impression, reward them instead for a CR 5 encounter.

GMing a 12-Character Conversation

The purpose of this scene is not to let the heroes dictate the policies of the war; they're still outsiders in the eyes of those in charge, and they will have to earn that power by proving their loyalty and competence. Rather, this scene is meant to provide the heroes with a sense that great events are brewing, and that they have the opportunity to make a difference. It also establishes numerous key NPCs who play a role, either later in this adventure or throughout the entire campaign saga.

Try to keep this scene flowing, so that many ideas are presented. We have tried to make it easy to present: generally, only one NPC will be speaking at a time unless one of the heroes interrupts and asks a question of someone else present. Even if your players aren't the sort to be excited by lots of talking, Katrina's attempts to paint the party as great heroes should prove amusing, and Laurabec will look to the heroes as a group of fellow refugees who support her, in spite of the disdain of Magistrate Votberd.

In any case, as soon as things start to either get really slow or *really* heated, the Shahalesti should arrive, transforming the negotiations into a possibility for battle.

Giorgio – Art by Leo Lingas

Shahalesti Envoy

In the midst of people's discussions, the door to the classroom swings open. A human steps but is hurled back out of the room. The thrum of a *telekinetic thrust* shakes the room; Kiernan's hands are raised from recent spellcasting.

Simeon looks at Kiernan in shock and says, "That was Johund you just attacked."

Kiernan shrugs. "Just being safe," he replies.

When the shaken Johund is brought into the room, he says frantically that a group of elves flew over the walls and are heading up the tower right now. There are seven, he says, and they carry the flag of Shahalesti, a revelation which raises another uproar in the room. Simeon calls for calm, saying the diplomats should meet their new guests politely, but that at the same time everyone should be ready for a fight. At that, he stands and leads everyone into the adjacent lecture hall just as the Shahalesti envoy enters on the far side.



All the elves are dressed in silver armor and blue cloaks, and stand tall and bright with straight blond hair and straight swords at their hips. Their leader is a pristinely beautiful elf woman whose eyes shine like sun on the bluest sea. Two men stand close to her like bodyguards, and one in the center holds a flag ceremoniously, while the rest of the elves watch warily.

The Shahaletsi leader sees the group pouring out of the classroom and says, "I would have waited. I didn't intend to frighten you."

If none of the heroes do, Simeon takes charge and asks who she is; the woman introduces herself as Shalosha, daughter of the Shining Lord Shaaladel of Shahalesti. She has come to offer an alliance with Seaquen against Ragesia.

Shalosha (CR 11): hp 48, Appendix B.

Tactics

Neither the Shahalesti nor any of the members of the war council will initiate a battle, but if the heroes do, Shalosha and her allies start off defensive. Simeon and Kiernan quickly subdue the heroes, not wanting overeager warriors to start an international incident.

The Shahalesti Offer

As Shalosha reads her memorized speech, she hesitates occasionally, clearly uncomfortable with a few elements of the plan her father has laid out. She is not willing to defy her father, however, and stands by his commands.

"I come with an offer of safety and salvation for Seaquen and those who shelter here. As you know, Shahalesti is the shining jewel of civilization, and now we are attacked by the armies of Ragesia. For every loss we suffer, the progress of all nations suffers. We are the only power strong enough to drive back the fires of Ragesia, but even for our greatness, victory is not assured.

"My father, Lord Shaaladel, knows that some of the nations whose ambassadors stand in this very hall would prefer Shahalesti fall, but they don't realize that in so doing they prefer their own doom. All here must admit that faith in the leaders of other nations is a difficult thing when the only gesture is a few diplomats sent to the banner of Seaquen.

"Shahalesti sends a fleet. Seventeen of our ships sail now to this peninsula, surrounding it from all directions to protect it from hostilities. By this we show our devotion to the fight, and – so my father believes – we prove that it is our nation who should lead that fight.

"We invite you to join with us in the war against Ragesia. Many potential allies have found their way to your city, and so we have come here to meet them. However, we will not risk betrayal on any scale, nor would it be wise for you to risk it. So we ask that you hand over control of Seaquen to the Shahalesti fleet, so that we may begin checking the purity of your allies' spirit. Admiral Telshanth will serve as provisional governor of Seaquen—"

At this point, the Dassen ambassador begins shouting his nation's refusal to hand over territory, and within moments the other ambassadors begin to clamor as well. The Shahalesti offer, it seems, has not gone over well.

Simeon calms the group down, then says that he can recognize a threat when he hears one, and that if Shahalesti wants to form an alliance, they can learn to share just like everyone else. He is not going to hand his town or his people over to anyone. Shalosha does not look surprised, but as she breaks from the script she has prepared she shows genuine concern. She says that the admiral has his orders, that the fleet will remain, and that Shahalesti will prevent travel by sea into or out of Seaquen. She will speak to her father and seek a compromise, but she says that such a thing cannot be accomplished quickly.

The other ambassadors demand the elves leave the building. In order to salvage what negotiations he can, Simeon concedes, asking Shalosha and her retinue to go. The heroes should have a chance to talk to anyone they want to before they leave, and, though they are in no position to make an actual alliance, they could lay the groundwork for one. Or they could start working on a feud, war, or friendly rivalry against Shahalesti.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes do something dramatic with regard to the Shahalesti, be it working toward an alliance, vowing to resist Shahalesti oppression, or attempting to seduce Shalosha, reward them for a CR 5 challenge.

Audience with Simeon

Eventually, after dealing with the Shahalesti, the Dasseni, the Sindairese, and the Ostaliners, Simeon comes to the heroes, wanting to hear from them personally. He feels Katrina clearly has a good grasp of the dangers of this war, and her ringing praise of the heroes gives him confidence they can be useful allies. Simeon wants to convince

Shalosha – Art by Leo Lingas

the group to lend their aid for various missions in the future, and the heroes should come away feeling that Simeon has his heart in the right place, but he could clearly use their help.

Pleading for Gate Pass

Should the heroes entreat Simeon to aid Gate Pass, the headmaster says that he wishes he could, but Lyceum must find allies before it can make a difference. Mages — which Seaquen and Lyceum have in abundance — do not do well when marched to war without support. However, Simeon says that Commander Xavious has a hunch Gate Pass is important for more than its being a stepping stone to Shahalesti, so for now, Simeon considers learning more about Leska's goals in Gate Pass — and ultimately driving her out of the city — to be a top priority.

The Ragesian Case

If the heroes managed to deliver the case of military plans all the way from Gate Pass to Seaquen, Simeon and Kiernan take a look at it with them, taking all proper precautions before finally opening the heavy book within the case. It is written in Infernal, in an incredibly difficult cipher (Decipher Script DC 35), and though Simeon expects he'll be able to break it eventually, he wants some answers quickly. He asks the group to wait, and after ten minutes of casting various divinations, he can tell them this much.

The book was written by Kreven, second in command of the Ragesian Inquisitors, and it was read and approved of by someone who is immune to divinations, most likely Leska herself. Magic was used to scramble the words in order to encrypt it, and Kreven believed that protection was so secure that he was lax in actually making sure the book did not get stolen. The book, and what is detailed within, is somehow tied to the Scourge, Leska's military order to capture hundreds, if not thousands of "disloyal" mages. Something odd came to Simeon in the divination, as if the name "Scourge" had another meaning that he wasn't aware of. Finally, both Kreven and the unknown person who approved of the book were concerned with legends surrounding something called "Trillith." Simeon has never heard of the name.

Simeon asks to be able to keep the book so he can work on deciphering the entire text. He welcomes the group to return to Lyceum whenever they need to, and tells them to enjoy a brief rest while they can. As soon as they can get the Shahalesti off their backs, Simeon will have a mission for them.

Act Four: The Storm

The heroes have been invited to a special performance at the Wayfarers' Theater. Hopefully they're fans of theater, because assassins scheme to murder many of Seaquen's leaders, and the heroes may be the only ones with a chance to stop the assassination.

The Plan

Lee Sidoneth has brought to Seaquen a *lesser orb of storms*, an item created by Pilus of the Monastery of Two Winds. It can control the weather in a specific area, and the Ragesian spies plan to use the orb to summon a hurricane over the city. Incredible wind, rain, and storm surges will devastate most of the buildings in the city and kill a great number of refugees whose only shelters are tents. Also, by a stroke of luck for the Ragesians, a large detachment of the Shahalesti fleet has sailed into range of the storm. Lee and the Ragesians will be content simply to devastate Seaquen and demolish the Shahalesti blockade ships, but they have a plan that, if successful, would also cripple Seaquen's fleet and decaptitate the resistance's leadership.

To lure Seaquen's ships out of the safety of the harbor, Giorgio the Wayfarer will activate the dormant teleportation magic of the Wayfarers' Theater ship during a performance for Simeon and all the others who were at the war council, sending it across hundreds of miles of fiery astral space, enough to incinerate the ship and everyone inside it. By leaving evidence that points at the Shahalesti, Lee hopes the tragedy will provoke at least some of the captains of Seaquen to make for the open sea to fight.

The evidence Lee plans to leave is grim but calculated to be completely convincing. Using Paradim Dogwood's biomancy skills and a fair bit of scrying (to get the features right), Lee has had a half-dozen abducted refugees transformed into perfect images of sailors from the elvish fleet. These poor victims were burnt to death, and will be rowed in a similarly scorched boat near the spot where the Wayfarers' Theater is anchored. When the theater vanishes in a burst of flame, it will appear that the elves were killed trying to get off the ship in time.

Lee recognizes that the plan is complicated and has a fair chance of failure, but his main goal is hammering Seaquen with a hurricane. Killing Simeon, destroying two enemy fleets, and ruining the best chance for an alliance between the nations opposing Ragesia is just icing on the cake.

The Show

Guests arrive at the Wayfarers' Theater by ferry a little before noon, are greeted by **Guildmistress Sheena Larkins** (standing under a parasol held by her bodyguard **Hawkins**), and then hurry down a spiral staircase from the main deck to the theater itself, which is easily four times as large a space as should be able to fit into the ship. The theater is lit by dozens of lanterns, and lenses over the stage focus spotlights on a curtain stitched with a pattern of fire. Ushers costumed as monsters and angels guide people to their seats, offering to magically dry guests' clothes with *prestidigitation*.

The theater seats one hundred, but the heroes, being relatively unimportant in the current scheme of things (despite what they may have been told), have seats in the very back row, where they can still hear the occasional rumble of thunder overhead through the closed hatch to the main deck. Barely visible in shadows cast by lanterns are relief carvings that imply countless archetypes of fiction. There are no windows, and when the lights dim and the music of unseen performers seems to emanate from the walls, it is easy to believe that you are no longer part of the same world you were in moments before. Which, in a way, is true.

A character who uses *detect magic* or some similar ability sees that the walls are awash in various subtle magics that are as much a part of the ship as the cracks in its wood grain. The deck hatch that would normally lead into the ship's hold is the opening to a custom-designed *magnificent mansion*. This extradimensional space is where the theater lies, and it contains numerous unseen pathways that only the Wayfarers know. As vast as the visible space is, there is even more that lies unseen and inaccessible beyond the walls. The magic has a caster level of 17, so the heroes have practically no chance of dispelling it at their level.

Simeon and various dignitaries are in the front row, but Katrina is sitting in the back row with or near the heroes. She talks quietly to whoever in the party she likes or dislikes the most, even after the show starts, which earns her a few angry shushes.

The Spectacular Trial of Toteth Topec

The Wayfarers' show is a visual spectacle with songs, acrobatics, and pyrotechnics, relating an old

Ragesian myth with a modern, political twist. The tale it is drawn from is about an ancient orc druid named Toteth Topec, who supposedly learned that the world was in danger of being torn apart at its very elemental foundations. It is a sequel of sorts to the myth of the Aquiline Heart (see the Introduction), and is full of action, magic, betrayal, and great heroism.

Attending the Play

At the war council, the heroes should have received tickets to the performance this evening. If they didn't, or if they show a lack of interest in attending, Katrina might try to drag them along, saying it will be good for their image to be seen attending, since it will show their solidarity with the city. If they complain that it doesn't matter how much solidarity they show with the city, Katrina reminds them that as ambassadors from troubled, beseiged Gate Pass, the heroes are already famous and their movements are a matter of much interest in Seaquen.

Simeon might ask the heroes to come along as a favor to him, or Kiernan could ask them to serve as bodyguards, encouraging them to keep an eye out for danger. Either, or both, will point out that they would consider it a favor paid to Lyceum if the heroes attend with them.

Alternately, Crystin Ja-Nafeel, the seeress whom the heroes might have brought along since the end of adventure one, could tell them she had a vision, saying, "I saw a ship painted with flames, where a great story was being told. You were there, recognized as great heroes."

Use whichever method you think has the best chance of getting the heroes to the play without tipping them off that something particularly dangerous is going to happen. Players are naturally a little paranoid, but if they call in overwhelming reinforcements there is less opportunity for drama. Of course, if your group likes outwitting foes instead of having dramatic combats atop a galleon rocked by stormy waves, by all means let them call in the cavalry to deal with Giorgio and his crew.

If the heroes don't attend the play, at some point after the hurricane they hear that Katrina realized something was amiss and alerted Kiernan, and the two of them saved the day in an amazing and stunning display of arcane and combat prowess that far surpassed even the Wayfarers' performances in terms of sheer entertainment value and artistry. Katrina laments that the heroes didn't come along and see the *real* show.

Prelude

Starting at the back of the theater and cascading forward, lantern flames flicker and vanish, drawing your attention toward the spot-lit stage. When only a handful of lanterns remain, violins, cellos, and a tinny drumroll sound from the walls, seeming to come from nowhere. The last lanterns are snuffed, the curtain slowly crawls to the forty-foot high ceiling, and then even the spotlights die, fading like the setting sun, white to orange to blood red. The drum rises to a crescendo, and then go silent just as a man strides onto stage, a spotlight snapping him into view.

He hurries across the stage and casts a furtive glance to the audience. You recognize the actor, under layers of magic and illusion, as Giorgio the Wayfarer. He plays the role of the ancient orc geomancer, Toteth Topec, clad in a white traveling robe of ancient times. Then from the shadows of the theater's ceiling, a serpent dives likely a pearly lightning bolt, snapping its jaws just as Toteth dives out of reach. Violin strings cry out in fright from the walls. The geomancer somersaults to his feet and pulls a long black staff from under his robe. The snarling serpent rises into the air, snarling in rage, its tail whipping past Toteth like the trough of a iridescent wave.

Just when the dragon's tail is almost out of reach, Toteth leaps and graps the tail one hand, holding his long club of a staff in the other. Drums sound, horns cheer, and the audience gasps as, flying through the air, Toteth clambers up the beast's back, fights off it's thundering bites, digs his hand into the monster's eye, and cracks out one of the dragon's teeth with a ferocious swing of his staff. The wyrm bucks and vanishes into the shadowed sky, and Toteth flips and rolls twenty feet to the ground, stones cracking where his hands and feet strike.

The audience stands and applauds, and so begins *The Spectacular Trial of Toteth Topec.*

There are five acts to the play. The heroes should have a chance to talk quietly or keep an eye on anyone they think might be suspicious, and you can punctuate these periods with synopses of the events of the act. If the heroes are not very interested, you can skip to the end of Act Two, where Toteth Topec is pulled into the underworld.

Act One

Singing and cartwheeling primitives at the far end of the world celebrate Toteth Topec as a great hero, for he has saved their town from a dragon, but the geomancer does not care. He travels to find great magic, to find immortality. His journeys carry him to many foreign lands where he fights strange beasts, all the while pursued in the shadow by the opaline dragon. He befriends three mages along the way, each helping him at a different leg of his journey with their control over flames, winds, and sea, but ultimately Toteth travels alone in a great desert, under the searing sun.

Demons assault him, heat drives him mad, and he sees a vision of the Stormchaser Eagle crashing to the earth before him. Feathers burst across the theater, floating through the air, and when people grab them out of the air they see that they're not illusions. Then everyone looks up to see Toteth passed out, and the dragon hovering over him. But before it can strike, a beautiful, dark-skinned woman in green robes finds Toteth, falls across his body, and prays for help. Light beams from the heavens, and the dragon flees again to the shadows. As the stage fades to darkness, the woman carries Toteth to her home, and a deep percussive thrum shakes the theater, like the beating of a massive heart.

There is a two-minute musical intermission, during which Katrina, who is herself not the greatest fan of theater, scoffs at the heavy-handed allusions. If the party doesn't get her meaning, she explains that *clearly* the dragon is Ragesia, the air mage is Ostalin, the fire mage is Dassen, the water mage is Shahalesti, and Toteth, an earth mage, is Sindaire. The woman in green is meant to represent Seaquen, coming to aid Dassen. The elements chosen, she says, are fairly common motifs for the nations of the region; the original myth says only that there were four mages who helped Toteth. The costume choices, she concludes, are clearly intended as propaganda to show many nations — the very nations under attack — working together against Ragesia.

Still, Katrina reluctantly admits that she's quite impressed by the level of detail put into the on-stage illusions. She smirks and tucks a feather into her sleeve. However, if anyone uses *detect magic*, they see nothing on stage that is magical up to this point in the play.

Act Two

Toteth wakes in fits, light and dark represent many passing months as the woman tends to him. As he heals a romance forms between them, and the healing montage ends with a flamboyant love song and mock battle between Toteth and his love's in-laws so he can marry her. The battle is interrupted at the funniest moment by a tremor, and people in the audience actually cringe in fear as the stage seems to crack and intense winds blow out of the deep. Toteth realizes the world is still in danger, and he recalls the vision he had of the Eagle. He sets out to find a way to save the woman he loves, leaving her behind, not realizing she is pregnant.

Another montage showcases his incredible journey, as he faces riddling fairies, giant spiders, and a cursed pyre filled with evil spirits to find a gem that can seal the world. Interspersed during the odyssey are images of his love, growing slowly more pregnant, until finally she gives birth. When she does, she is visited by the other three mages who aided Toteth in Act One, and they bless the child, swearing to go join the geomancer's quest so he can come home soon.

They travel through the aftermath of the various monsters and challenges Toteth has defeated, the ease of their journey a humorous counterpoint to the geomancers. But then they find him, and see him standing atop a shining peak, fighting the dragon of bright shadows. Toteth holds the gem high, trying to capture the dragon's soul so he can take its power to heal the world, but the dragon is stronger. It bites him in half and the stage goes dark, the only thing visible is the gem, which falls and shatters.

During this intermission Katrina, recognizing that the heroes don't know this story, spoils the rest of the plot, saying that Toteth trapped his own spirit in the mountain, but the others don't realize the significance of what they saw, so they try to track down and kill the dragon. The dragon kills them at the end of Act Three, and it seems like the whole thing is a tragedy. But then the geomancer's daughter, Eshu, grows into womanhood, and she vows to destroy the dragon and complete her father's work.

Just as Act Three is about to start, have the heroes make Spot checks (DC 10) to notice that a person has emerged from one of the walls behind them, and is already starting up the spiral staircase to the main deck. He's in the shadows, but it's clearly Giorgio, after a quick costume change. He's wiping blood off his hands, having just killed a fellow Wayfarer in order to get the ring that controls the ship's teleportation ability.

If the heroes don't spot Giorgio or don't do anything about him, Katrina does: she jumps out of her seat to pursue Giorgio, hissing with fright for the heroes to follow quickly. When Giorgio realizes he's been seen, he curses and sprints up the stairs.

Assassins (EL 10)

Winds are picking up slightly as Giorgio emerges onto the deck of the Wayfarers' Theater. His character in the play is dead, and no one will be looking for him for five or six minutes. A gnomish assassin named **Nira** (NE female gnome rogue 5/assassin 1), whom Giorgio helped slip on board, has silenced the lookouts, and a burnt longboat has rowed alongside starboard and been tied off. The longboat is filled with scorched corpses of people changed with biomancy to look like elves, and its two living occupants — the brothers **Setales** and **Brutus** — have climbed aboard, ready to help.

Nira has unlocked and disarmed the traps protecting the captain's quarters, and unless opposed or pursued, Giorgio heads inside and spends a minute to activate the Wayfarers' Theater's teleportation ability, which is controlled by a desk covered in maps and lined with dozens of gems and golden buttons. At the first sign of trouble he uses the control desk, as a standard action, to seal the entrance to the extradimensional space of the theater. It will take Guildmistress Sheena at least a minute (10 rounds) to realize what is going on and reopen the portal.

When the heroes come on deck, Giorgio is inside or headed for the captain's room. Setales is standing just outside the door to the captain's quarters, Brutus beside him. Nira is hiding behind one of the staircases to the forecastle. If Giorgio has had a chance to start using the control desk, the deck is starting to crackle with thin wisps of flame, and an ominous hum fills the air. However, Giorgio doesn't order his people to attack immediately, and will try to stall for time as the ship warms up for its teleportation.

A Spellcraft check (DC 20) recognizes that Giorgio is doing something related to teleportation, and a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20) lets a character remember that the Wayfarers' Theater ship can teleport, and is controlled by a device in the captain's quarters.

Teleporting the Ship

To teleport the guildship, a character who is capable of casting *teleport* or using it as a spell-like ability must remain at the desk for 10 consecutive rounds. One round later, the ship and everyone on it teleports. However, the Burning Sky causes everyone onboard to take 40d6 points of fire damage, and anyone within 10 feet of the ship takes 4d6 points of fire damage as a wave of flame bursts outward from the space the ship just occupied.

Giorgio and his allies are planning to drink *potions of water breathing* and dive overboard

Simple Fight, or Complicated Chaos?

The simplest way to run this scene is to have all the heroes get up on deck in initiative order, as well as Katrina and any major NPC allies, and then have Giorgio seal the portal to the theater. Then the heroes face the assassins in a dramatic battle atop a ship in a storm.

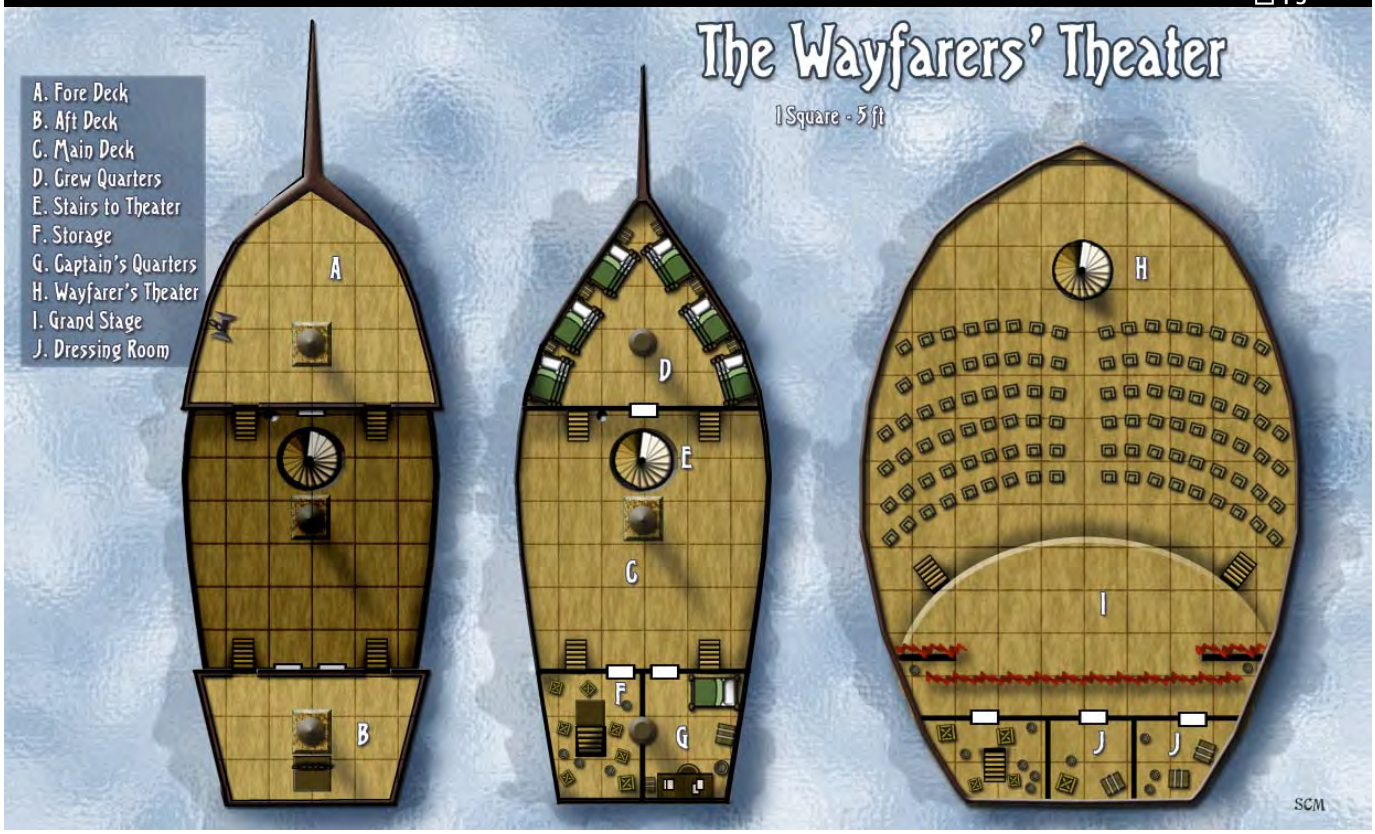
However, if the heroes split up, with some going up on deck and others warning people in the theater, things get complicated. Rather than trapping part of the group out of the fight, have Giorgio not seal the portal, and instead bear in mind the amount of time it takes to get out of theater seats and to the staircase if everyone is panicking. Even if a character only tries to get to Simeon or another prominent NPC while keeping discreet to avoid panic, it takes at least a round to explain what's going on, and another for the NPC to get up and to the staircase. People hurrying quickly to the top deck, probably while sounds of combat come through the hatch overhead, will likely cause a panic. If you don't mind running such a complicated scene, though, go for it.

If the heroes simply don't go up on deck, Katrina starts the fight with a *fireball*, and the cries of surprise from Giorgio's allies alert the audience that danger is near.

Encounter Level

This scene assumes that Katrina is with the party, providing a slight boost in power that is mitigated by Giorgio's foresight in applying *resist energy (fire)* to everyone. If she is not with the group, this is a very tough encounter for a group of 6th-level characters. However, they should be fully rested, and if things go badly for the heroes you can easily have the cavalry arrive, with Sheena, Simeon, and Kiernan forcing the portal open and striking down the assassins.

Game Master's Map pg. 642



Terrain

In addition to the features shown on the Wayfarers' Theater map, a rope ladder on the starboard railing leads down 20 feet to a boat 15 feet long and 10 feet wide, which is filled with burnt elf corpses.

Rain makes the surface of the ship slick and rocks the boat slightly, adding +2 to the DCs of Balance, Climb, and Tumble checks. These modifiers are included in the DCs below.

Rigging lines can be reached from each square along the edge of the ship, except the very fore and aft. Climbing 5 feet up into the rigging requires a Climb check (DC 12), but thereafter the rigging is angled and easy to move through (Climb DC 7 or Balance DC 12). A character fighting in the rigging is flat-footed unless he has 5 or more ranks of Balance or Climb. Each 5-foot section of rigging has hardness 0 and 20 hp.

Brutus and Setales brought on board a few casks of alchemist's fire, just in case they had to set something on fire. There is a barrel in each of the squares directly port and starboard of the main mast. Each barrel contains 20 flasks of alchemist's fire. A blow mighty enough to shatter or cut open the barrel (hardness 5, 8 hp) cracks one flask and sets off a chain reaction, spraying flaming chemicals and shards of glass. Creatures in a 5-foot radius shrapnel damage (Reflex half DC 15) and catch on fire, taking an additional 1d6 points of damage the next round. Creatures within 10 feet just take 1 point of splash fire damage. The deck is briefly coated with flaming oil, before the rocking of the ship and the cascading rain washes it over the side.

The damage from one exploding barrel *shouldn't* normally be enough to rupture the other barrel, but it might. We encourage you to improvise other classical ship combat elements.

Giorgio (CR 8): hp 39, Appendix B.
Setales (CR 4): hp 35, Appendix B.
Brutus (CR 4): hp 16, Appendix B.
Nira (CR 6): hp 36, Appendix B.

Tactics

Expecting something might go wrong, Giorgio has already cast *resist energy* on himself twice, granting electricity and fire resistance 20, and he has also given fire resistance 20 to each of his three allies; this takes 5 uses of his *Wayfarer's step* spell-like ability.

Giorgio is cocky, but hates to be hurt, so he makes for the rigging as quickly as possible, climbing up 15 feet in the first round, then moving amid the rigging each round thereafter to keep out of reach. He balances in the rigging, If an enemy gets close enough to one of the alchemist fire barrels, Giorgio *shatters* it, with explosive results. Then he'll use *grease* and *sound burst* to keep the heroes off balance, or to let his allies more easily hurl them overboard. Only if he cannot contribute to the fight directly does he use *blur* or *inspire courage*.

If forced to fight he spring attacks weaker-looking enemies, smacking them with his quarterstaff as if it were a greatclub. He is loath to enter combat alone, and if he is out of allies, he will *dimension door* to the nearest ship, a ferry which is 500 feet away. This deals 5d6 points of fire damage to him, but his fire resistance should protect him.

Brutus starts with the scroll of *haste* if he can, then buffs his brother with *bull's strength* and *enlarge person*, then does the same for himself if he doesn't get impatient and rush into combat. Because Brutus has no ranks in Concentration, he's learned that the only way to safely cast his *burning hands* is to run past opponents, drawing out their attacks of opportunity, and then to cast the spell.

Nira is just getting paid to do a job, and as soon as she drops below 20 hp she looks for a way out. Until then, she feints and sneak attacks, doing her best to kill.



Storm-Tossed Theater – Art by Leo Lingas

Aftermath

If the heroes are defeated, Giorgio may get a chance to activate the Wayfarers' ship, killing everyone on board, if you want to end the campaign. Otherwise, theater mages arrive and efficiently take out the surviving enemies, then tend to the heroes. Laurabec Adelsberg congratulates their heroism as she tends their wounds.

When the battle is done, the Wayfarers direct their ship back to shore. Winds are picking up, and the sea is starting to get choppy. The heroes should be immune to strong winds because of either *tidereaver's tears* or Indomitability's boon, but they should notice that everyone else seems to be having a much harder time with the wind.

The Wayfarers explain what Giorgio was trying to do, shocked that he would betray them. If Giorgio is captured or killed, Simeon is able to extract information out of him to find out what the plot was. The other conspirators don't know anything other than what the assassination plot required them to do (including the elf corpse trick, and that Lee Sidoneth orchestrated the whole event). They don't know about the Ragesians in the Fire Tomb at all. Simeon wants to get back to Lyceum and get busy divining as to who was behind the plot, and he asks the heroes to go with Kiernan and a few other mages to look for Lee.

Reactions in Seaquen

Over the next few hours, as the storm turns from drizzle to actual rain and strong winds, rumors spread through the town, saying that the Shahalesti tried to kill Simeon, Xavious, Laurabec, and so on. People are up in arms, agreeing that, even if they don't like each other, they can all agree the Shahalesti are enemies. Makung Shaftobem, Ostaliner mercenary and wannabe admiral, sends out word for captains to rally for an attack. Pickens Frankart, well-loved rabble-rouser, gets fully behind the idea of repelling the Shahalesti and breaking the blockade, and he quickly stirs up support.

While the rebel fleet outnumbers the elves, most of the Seaquen and allied crews are relatively untrained in battle maneuvers, especially in stormy waters. The heroes should realize that fighting during the storm is stupid at best, suicidal at worst.

If the heroes have done a good job calming people down in the town up until now, and particularly if they have befriended Pickens or Makung himself, they can easily talk down the rebels from attacking during the very dangerous and possibly lethal storm. Otherwise, several hours later (about an hour before sunset), Makung gives the order to attack.

When the naval battle starts, three dozen ships of various sizes sail out from the South Harbor and assault the blockading Shahalesti ships along the south shore. While the rebels are able to board and conquer one of the elvish ships through sheer force of numbers, the other nearby Shahalesti vessels converge, and volleys of spells set the rebel fleet in a panic. A messy naval battle ensues, while the storm intensifies to hurricane strength.

Seeking the Eye of the Storm

The heroes might scour the town looking for Lee, but his home is abandoned, and no one saw him leave (because he swam). While town guards and Lyceum mages keep the search up for several hours, eventually the storm gets too strong and everyone begins to take shelter.

Lee Sidoneth is hidden from any divination anyone in Seaquen could use, for he has gone to the Fire Tomb to set the *lesser orb of storms* to create a hurricane. Only once the hurricane is at full strength, winds powerful enough to knock a grown man flat, does he emerge. He does not want to be too close to the Ragesians, just in case someone manages to fight their way through the storm, so he swims to a small ruined island not far from the entrance to the Fire Tomb, and he waits,

reveling in the power of the storm but keeping an eye out for trouble.

It should quickly become apparent to the heroes that something strange is going on, because the storm isn't impeding their movement. They might go to Lyceum to get guidance, but the windows have all been knocked out, and most of the students and faculty are hiding. Simeon and Kiernan are in the classroom theater, which is in the center of the tower and has no windows. Together they can figure out what magic is protecting the heroes from the storm, but they don't have a way to duplicate it that won't take hours, and with the storm raging over the city they don't have time for it.

Simeon is at first dumbfounded that he cannot locate Lee through *greater scrying*, but then he gets an idea. The old stories of the Pyromancer's Tomb mention that the tomb had wards against divination, which is why no one has found it. Simeon suspects that Lee might be there, and a few lesser divinations verify that the magic controlling the storm is centered over the eastern coast of the peninsula.

While a hurricane of this size would normally be too small to have a true eye, the magic that created it creates an area of relative calm about a hundred feet across. Simeon has a scroll of a spell that is a wizard version of *find the path*, and he uses it on one of the heroes, to direct them precisely to where the spell is coming from. The storm is far too intense for anyone but the heroes to make it there in time, so they will have to go alone (barring any ingenious ideas, like carrying a flailing ally and holding onto him so the wind doesn't carry him away, or stuffing someone in a *bag of holding*).

If the heroes don't go to Lyceum for help, they notice that the greatest intensity of lightning bolts seem to be coming from the east, or they might receive a *sending* from Simeon, who knows they're the only ones who can make it.

The Wayfarers

Travelers of a thousand lands. Performers of ancient legends and living myths. Those who ignore borders. The Wayfarer Cirque has turned its humble beginning as a haven for traveling actor-mages into a near monopoly on a vital service in international travel and trade: teleportation.

From their base — a teleporting galleon known as the Wayfarers' Theater — the Wayfarers operate in every country. Their reputation as tremendously entertaining performers gains them warm welcomes in all major ports, but their elaborately costumed theatrical productions are only the public front for a fabulously expensive network of elite couriers, freight delivery, and expert guides to the most dangerous places in the world.

Qualifications

Every Wayfarer must be a talented acrobat or performer, and possess some level of magical skill. Most importantly, however, Wayfarers are not beholden to any government, choosing instead to maintain strict control over the affairs of their members. Should one Wayfarer raise the ire of an influential noble, a city, or an entire nation, the Wayfarers will punish their own rather than risk their entire business destroyed.

Wayfarers are required to pay the Cirque a fee for each teleportation spell they provide, even to friends and allies. Because of this fee, Wayfarers usually charge for their services except in extreme circumstances. In exchange, the Cirque offers its members protection and rescue in times of trouble, and can practically ensure business. Those who need to get somewhere quickly know they can trust the Wayfarers.

Anyone who is discovered to have joined the Cirque merely to learn their secrets and then use the knowledge only for themselves is tracked down and punished; the punishment is fierce indeed.

The Wayfarers' Oath

The Wayfarers want to maintain their near-monopoly on teleportation-for-hire, and so new members of the Cirque must pledge to pay the Cirque a fee for every time they teleport someone. Wayfarers are not required to charge for their services, as long as the Cirque gets its money.

A Wayfarer must speak to one of the Cirque leaders at least once a month and submit to a *discern lies* spell, then report how many times he has provided teleportation services to others. A Wayfarer who fails to hand over the mandated commission is put on probation, and is not allowed to make any profit from teleportation for a month. A Wayfarer is not required to pay for teleportation used when his or an ally's life is at stake, but when rescuing strangers the Wayfarer is still required to pay — the Cirque is not interested in a reputation as a philanthropic organization.

A Wayfarer who regularly shirks or ignores the requirements is stripped of his powers quite violently. Stories tell of a trained wight that the head of the Cirque keeps in the Wayfarers' Theater ship, which sucks the life from those who transgress against their oath until they have no more power than an apprentice wizard. The former Wayfarer is then placed in an oubliette for one year, removing from him even the freedom to travel by conventional methods.

Fees Owed

Dimension door or other local teleportation – 20 gp

Teleport – 300 gp

Greater teleport – 500 gp

If you need them, create fees for other services (for example, Wayfarer cirqueliste class abilities) in line with these costs.

What About the Rest of the Play?

Did Eshu, the daughter of Toteth Topec, succeed in her quest? Was the world saved? What thinly-veiled political commentaries cropped up in the final three acts?

If the heroes were proactive enough to attend an earlier showing than the one where the assassins strike, they could learn the ending. They could also simply ask for a script afterward, but there won't be any more shows until the Wayfarers find someone else to play Toteth.

The rest of the story? In Act Three, Eshu finds the dragon and slays it, but discovers that the dragon has become repentant in the years after it slew her father, and that indeed the dragon — who originally only sought to steal from Toteth the secret of immortality — has devoted its life to trying to finish her father's work: to save the world from tearing itself apart in storm and fire. The dragon's spirit accompanies Eshu to the underworld, and after many adventures they succeed in freeing her father's spirit from its torment.

Act Four begins with a hesitant Toteth, who feels his life was a waste, until he realizes his daughter knows only obsession and suffering, and that if the world ends it will be *her* life wasted. Thus father and daugher fight the guardians of the dead so he can return to life, and, just when all seems lost, they are aided by the ghosts of the other elemental mages.

In Act Five, Toteth and Eshu return to a world in turmoil, storms and ash tearing it apart. They hurry to the mountain where Toteth was slain, and this time he sacrifices his own life, binding his spirit to the mountain. His journeys had made the world part of him, and so as long as his soul remains safe, the world will endure. The dragon's spirit vows to defend the mountain, and Eshu is able to move on ... perhaps to live a life just like anyone else's.

Act Five: The Fire Tomb

Ages ago, a mage — now remembered only as the Pyromancer — created a tomb for himself under the peninsula Seaquen lies on, tapping the power of a natural rift to the elemental plane of fire to power the tomb's defenses. No one has seen the tomb in centuries, but treasure hunters have sought it, and proprietors of steamy bathhouses on the peninsula are thankful for its presence.

The Ragesian inquisitors with their expansive libraries of magical lore were able to locate the tomb and learn of its peculiar antidivination properties, so when they snuck into Seaquen to prepare for its destruction, they established a base in the tomb. Lee Sidoneth provided them with the magic necessary to keep the place habitable, and with the *lesser orb of storms* with they are using to destroy the town above.

The Fire Tomb happened to lie a hundred feet beneath a prison from the old city that was destroyed in an old earthquake. The prison is now flooded, and the Ragesians stone-shaped a tunnel down to the fire tomb, using magic to hold the water at bay. They purchased biomancy equipment from Paradim Dogwood, and some modest furniture, and carted it all down into the tomb, expecting to stay at least a few weeks. By the time the heroes find them, the Ragesians have conjured the hurricane, and so now they wait, expecting to see no one except for intermittent visits by Lee to renew the storm. In three days they'll emerge, survey the town and deliver a *sending* to High Inquisitor Kreven, and then meet up with a ship that will give them their new orders.

Because of the storm, only the heroes can make it out here. If the group seems to enjoy having Katrina around, she might come too, having been exposed to the witches' magic enough to be briefly immune to the storm.

The Sunken Prison

Eventually the heroes will find an area of dead calm in the storm, centered over the remains of an old prison that has partially collapsed into the sea.

Terrain

On the map, light blue represents knee-deep water, which counts as difficult terrain. The darkest water is neck deep, which must be swum through, or walked through at quadruple movement cost. While the ground outside the prison is very uneven and the water choppy (Swim DC 15), once inside the prison, the water is calm (Swim DC 10), and it steadily gets deeper the further in the characters go, though there is always space to swim up to the roof and take a breath. Only in the downstairs rooms of the prison is there no air to breathe.

Dungeon Features

In the prison, most of the doors have rotted away and cannot provide effective cover, and any furniture shown on the map is in a similarly advanced state of decay. A creature can move through a doorway, even if the door is closed, by spending an extra 5 feet of movement and making a Strength check (DC 5).

A. Rusty Gate

The path ends at a rusty gate that stands motionless, half open. An embossed metal placard beside the gate reads, "Carcer Tevensum," the ancient name for "Teven's Prison."

Beyond the gate is what looks like a narrow courtyard, a high cliff on the west, north, and southern sides, and rusty guard railings — broken and useless in places — line the eastern side. Beyond the railings the ground drops twenty feet to the surface of the sea, which is still choppy despite the clear skies. A hundred feet away to the east, the sky is dark again, and lightning crackles nearly constantly over craggy islands, ruins of the old sunken city, which stretch away from the coast until the storm swallows them. Along the eastern edge of the courtyard, nine stone pillars rise ten feet, and are capped by gargoyles that leer down at the sea.

As the group enters the courtyard and gets their bearings, they realize this is the roof of a building. A staircase leads down from the northern side of the courtyard, stopping at a cobblestone-and-sand shore where strong waves crash in from the sea. The damaged ground slopes sharply down, and by the time the group can come around to an actual door that leads into the prison, the water is waist deep.

B. Prison Entrance

This is the back entrance to the prison, where supplies were once brought in. The front entrance further up the cliffs has long since been collapsed under rubble. The doorway is dark, and gargoyles loom ominously overhead. Just inside the door, a rusted gate has been torn off its hings, and it scrapes back and forth along the ground as waves lap into the next room. There is no light inside the prison.

C. Loading Dock (EL 6)

The water in this room is waist-deep. A hallway leads west, two doorways flanking it; the doors themselves are practically rotted away. Another rotted door leads north, and a wide doorway with a damaged gate hangs open to the south. Unless the group is moving silently, the two tojanida who live in the south room swim out and attack.

Juvenile tojanida (2) (CR 3): hp 19 each, MM. Possesses the (native) subtype.

The tojanida are creations of Paradim Dogwood, designed to guard the entrance to the Ragesian lair. They work as a team: the first grapples someone, squirts ink to turn the water murky, and then drags his victim off down the hallway to the prison cells; the second squirts ink out of the water into the eyes of a warrior, then attacks, trying to keep the heroes from rescuing their comrade. Once the first drops off its victim in the undead-infested prison cells, it returns to the fight in the loading dock.

A creature being towed through the water down the hallway does not set off the trap in the hallway, since even if he does touch the ground he does not put enough weight on the pressure plate. However, a creature walking down the hallway does trigger the trap, causing spears to fire from the wall to the south and up from the floor.

Spear Trap (CR 3): Mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +10 melee (3d8, spears); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20.

D. Janitorial (EL n/a or 2)

Lumps of rotted shelves lie against the wall and float in the shallow water. If the heroes solved the mystery of the fires (page 79), as soon as someone enters the room, hordes of rats begin to pour out of cracks in the walls, their teeth sparking as they swim for food.

Rat swarm (CR 2): hp 18, MM.

E. Guard Room (EL 4)

The water here is only knee deep, but is full of the remains of fish, which look to have been half-devoured and then vomited up. On one wall, above the water line, is a shelf full of bottles of liquor, and beneath it in the water is a massive metal chest that has somehow managed to avoid rusting. A rotted table lies in the center of the room, and a handful of coins lie on the floor.

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Mimic (CR 4): hp 52, MM.

Treasure

The liquor, if it's not used to break the mimic's adhesive, is worth 5 gp per bottle, and there are ten bottles. A handful of silver and copper coins, worth a total of 232 cp if all are retrieved, lie on the floor, the remains of a card game that was interrupted centuries ago by an earthquake. The cards involved have long since disintegrated.

F. Trap Room

This room holds the mechanism that controls the spear trap in the hallway. By pulling a lever here it can be deactivated or reactivated with a move action.

G. Storage

This used to be a room for storing clothing, bedding, and similar supplies for the prison. Now everything has rotted away, and the room is only the lair of the tojanida twins. If the heroes were stealthy in their approach, the tojanida are here, nervous because of the storm outside.

In one corner lies the remains of a Lyceum mage who found the prison and came in to investigate. He wears a necklace with a *pendant of unity* that unfolds to reveal an etching of his wife, who was captured by the Ragesians.

H. Prison Cells (EL 6)

These cells have been warped by the earthquake, so anyone can squeeze into or out of them simply by spending an extra 5 feet of movement. Twelve cells lining the path between the loading dock and the lobby each contain two skeletons, for a total of twenty-four. They lie on the ground, playing the part of prisoners who died long ago, though actual bones would have long since decayed. Two of the skeletons closest to the Upper Lobby wear shiny gold necklaces.

The skeletons' command is to rise up and attack when more than one humanoid creature is in the area, or if someone enters their cell. The Ragesians pass through this area one at a time.

Once they are roused, the skeletons stand and swarm their enemies, clawing out of the water. The water is only waist deep at the entrance, but room is deeper than a man's head, with only about a foot of breathing room at the top.

Human warrior skeletons (24) (CR 1/3): hp 6 each, MM.

Treasure

The two necklaces are each worth 10 gp.

I. Upper Lobby (EL 5)

This room was once a meeting place for visitors. It consists of two stories, with a staircase leading down to the downstairs lobby. A bridge cuts across the room diagonally, serving little purpose now because the entire room is waist deep in water or deeper. A spiral stair in the southwest used to lead up to the ground level, but the earthquake destroyed that passage. Two rotted doors to the east led to prison guard living quarters.

When the heroes enter this room, they attract the attention of three skum lurking in the downstairs lobby. The skum, another of Lee's creations, swim up and grapple a victim; one holds the victim, and the others claw and bite.

Skum (3) (CR 2): hp 11 each, MM.

J. Living Quarters

These rooms are empty except for old, disintegrating furniture.

K. Downstairs Lobby

Aside from the skum who attack when the heroes enter the upper lobby, this room is fairly empty. A rotted door opens to the west, and dim red light peeks out of it.

L. Provisions

This room is dimly lit by a fiery glow coming from a hole in the ground 5 feet wide, and the water is noticeably warmer here. A large pulley has been set up in this room, aligned so it could hoist or lower things down the shaft. The shaft descends one hundred feet, but is nearly smooth, like it was excavated with magic. It leads to the fire tomb.

A Search check (DC 20) detects a pair of thin wires crossing the entrance to the shaft. If someone enters the shaft without disabling the alarm (Disable Device DC 20), they break the wires, and a thunderstone dangling by another wire much further down is released. This stone plunges to the bottom of the shaft, falls into the fire tomb, and sends out a loud boom, alerting the Ragesians.

The Pyromancer's Tomb

The air in the tomb is about 110 degrees, the air is hazy with heat and steam, and the faint rumbling of liquid stone churning through unseen tunnels fills the air with power. The ceiling is mostly 8 feet high, though the magma flow is ten feet below the main level of the floor.

When the Pyromancer created his tomb, he used power from the plane of fire to make the area very resistant to divination. Effectively the entire place registers as being on the plane of fire. In addition to protecting the area from many outside divinations, it enhances fire magic. All fire spells cast here are maximized and enlarged, while spells that use or create water are impeded, requiring a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level) to cast successfully. However, all creatures gain the benefit of *endure elements* while in the area.

A. Steam Tunnel

The bottom of the shaft from the prison opens into the ceiling of a steam tunnel. Some magic effect holds the water at bay, so it does not fall through the ceiling in more than a few drips that quickly turn to steam.

If the Ragesians have been alerted to the heroes' arrival, it takes them five rounds to alert the inquisitor, then line up on the far side of the magma flow. They begin firing their crossbows (one-handed, with a –2 penalty) as soon as the first enemy arrives. They don't reload, since they're wearing heavy shields, unless they cannot get into melee.

B. Magma Flow

A river of lava cuts the chamber in two. The source of the lava is visible down the south tunnel — a massive warding circle etched into the stone walls, its runes glowing with intense heat. It looks solid, but somehow flames are visible beyond it, and a slow flow of lava seeps out from the edge of the ring, as if it were a seal holding back the heat of the Elemental Plane of Fire.

A creature touching lava takes 2d6 points of fire damage. A creature submerged in lava takes 20d6 points of fire damage each round. Ragesians won't try to bull rush heroes into the lava, being too nervous after one of their allies slipped and fell to a horrifying death.

C. Tomb Antechamber (EL 7)

A stone door leads to the entrance to the main tomb, a triangular room with two doors flanking a stone dragon head that snarls out of the west wall. The dragon's mouth is open like it is about to breathe fire, and a permanent *darkness* spell conceals what is inside. The Ragesians have not explored it. Three bedrolls lie near one wall, a card table near the other.

Right now all the Ragesians are awake and armed, just in case someone finds them during the hurricane. The antechamber is much cooler than the steam tunnel, so they keep that door closed. They keep the door to the laboratory closed so they don't have to hear the screams of the people the inquisitor tortures.

Ragesian soldiers (8) (CR 1): hp 12 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

If caught by surprise, the Ragesians send one man to alert the inquisitor, then try to hold the door. If the men at the door fall, they withdraw down the hallways, hoping to link up with their leader.

D. Master's Chamber

Originally this room held treasure that the Pyromancer wanted to bring with himself to eternity, but the Ragesians sold most of that to pay for the *tidereaver's tears* they commissioned from the witches H'andrea. Normally Damius the inquisitor sleeps here in a bed they brought in at great difficulty.

Treasure

On the desk sits an 8-inch sphere of black glass etched with unusual curving silver patterns. The sphere is held in an oval wooden setting, carved with images of two gods blowing storms from their lips. This is the *lesser orb of storms*. The control wand is not present, however. Lee has it.

Destroying the orb doesn't stop the storm, since the spell has already been cast. The wand can still control the spell and stop the storm, even if the orb itself is destroyed.

E. Tomb (EL 5, 8, or 17)

If a creature enters the mouth of the dragon in the antechamber, he enters a small room with a door at the far end, its edge traced by glowing red runes that read, in Ignan, "The spirit of the Pyromancer Damatarion shall destroy those who disturb his body's rest."

The door is *arcane locked*, and a person who tries to open the door, or unsuccessfully tries to disarm the trap, triggers a trap. The runes flare angrily, flames briefly lighting them, and lava begins to drip from the ceiling.

Lava Trap (CR 8): Magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset. Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 35.

For three rounds after the trap is triggered, creatures in the room take 2d6 points of fire damage as lava rains from the ceiling (and the lava does half damage for a further 1d3 rounds). On the fourth round, enough lava pours down from the ceiling to entirely fill the room, and creatures who have not yet left the chamber are submerged in lava and die — no save. Only a little lava reaches the antechamber, but creatures in the tomb will likely be slain. If a character escapes before the lava fills the room, reward them only for a CR 5 encounter. The lava vanishes and magically reloads the trap 5 rounds later.

The wall of the inner tomb is surrounded by sheets of brass filled with flowing lava, making breaking in difficult. Should characters manage to break in, the Pyromancer's sarcophagus bears a powerful curse, setting aflame any creature that touches it (or uses a tool or magic to move it), dealing 5d6 fire and 5d6 divine damage each

round for ten rounds, or until the effect is dispelled (caster level 17).

A creature who still manages to heave open the sarcophagus (Strength DC 20) find a withered corpse wearing a jagging gold and ruby *ring of fire elemental command*, which has no power except to grant *stand the heat* to its wearer, until the wearer is able to cast 8th level fire spells. Once activated, in addition to its other powers, the ring lets the wearer control the seal of fire.

F. Laboratory

In the northwest corner of this room is a large tank full of green biomancy fluid, in which is growing a skum. Several other tanks are stacked against the wall, and a shelf on the east wall contains biomancy craftsman tools, plus texts detailing various monstrous anatomies and the techniques of biomancy. The shelf also holds a *bottle of air*, which the Ragesians use when they want to get up to the surface.

The west wall has two pillars of flowing magma, floor to ceiling, which somehow do not fill up the room. They are a good place to bull rush someone.

G. Torture Chamber (EL 7)

Damius the inquisitor, who is in charge of this operation, uses this room (once the burial place of the craftsmen who built the tomb) as his private torture chamber. Just as sometimes his men need to sleep with the prisoners, he sometimes needs to torture them, having no real agenda except to enjoy their suffering.

When the heroes arrive, unless he is alerted, Damius is full in the grip of joy as he tortures an elf woman. Her body is covered with small scars, the result of numerous magically healed cuts. Damius may attempt to use the woman as a hostage.

Inquisitor Damius (CR 7): hp 49, Appendix B.

Tactics

If given a chance, before combat the inquisitor uses a scroll of *mage armor*. During combat, he seeks to terrorize his foes, trapping or dividing them with *wall of fire*, then blinding spellcasters or paralyzing warriors.



Damius the Inquisitor at Work – Art by Claudio Pozas

H. Hostage Cells

In a dark corner of this sweltering chamber are four iron cells. One cell holds a white stone pillar 1 foot square and 6 feet high, which radiates strong abjuration magic. The pillar is composed of an alchemically crafted stone called opalite and is the focus for a powerful magical beacon: any teleportation that begins or ends within 10 miles of Seaquen is intercepted and the traveler(s) magically drawn here if the teleport distance was to be more than ½ mile. Massive objects (such as the Wayfarers' Theater) that cannot fit in the cell travel to their destination normally.

The same cell is filled with an *alarm* spell, a *glyph of warding* trap that casts *silence*, and a trap that sprays entangling goo (treat as a tanglefoot bag). This trap is intended for any mages foolish enough to try to teleport to Seaquen. Even those warded with enough anti-fire magic to survive the Burning Sky found themselves trapped and unable to cast spells. Most were Wayfarers, though a few powerful mages fell prey too.

The cell's bars are stained with scorched blood. Past prisoners were interrogated, then tossed into the lava. There are only two prisoners left, kept for Damius's and his guards' amusement. One is an apprentice mage named **Teymour** (CN male human sorcerer 1) who teleported in with a Wayfarer. The other is the woman being tortured by the inquisitor, **Faquaniel** (N female elf rogue 2), a Shahalesti spy who had planned to infiltrate Seaquen in advance of the fleet. She likewise teleported in with an ally, and both prisoners' allies were killed because they were too dangerous to keep alive. Their gear has been sold off in the town.

The prisoners are thankful to be rescued, having suffered days of torture. After the first few sessions, the inquisitor even stopped asking questions, and just did it for sport. Faquaniel, however, has a vital piece of information. A few hours earlier, she saw a man (who by her description the party should recognize as Lee) come in and say he was taking "the control wand, in case he had to change the weather in a hurry." This should tip off the heroes that they need to find Lee and get this "control wand" from him if they want to stop the storm.

Once the Ragesians are defeated, the heroes might speak with the prisoners to learn what might be left for them to do, if anything. In particular, they have to find Lee Sidoneth and get the control wand from him, and they may also want to track down Paradim Dogwood and deal with him. When they get back to the prison, they can still hear the hurricane overhead, thundering even louder than before.

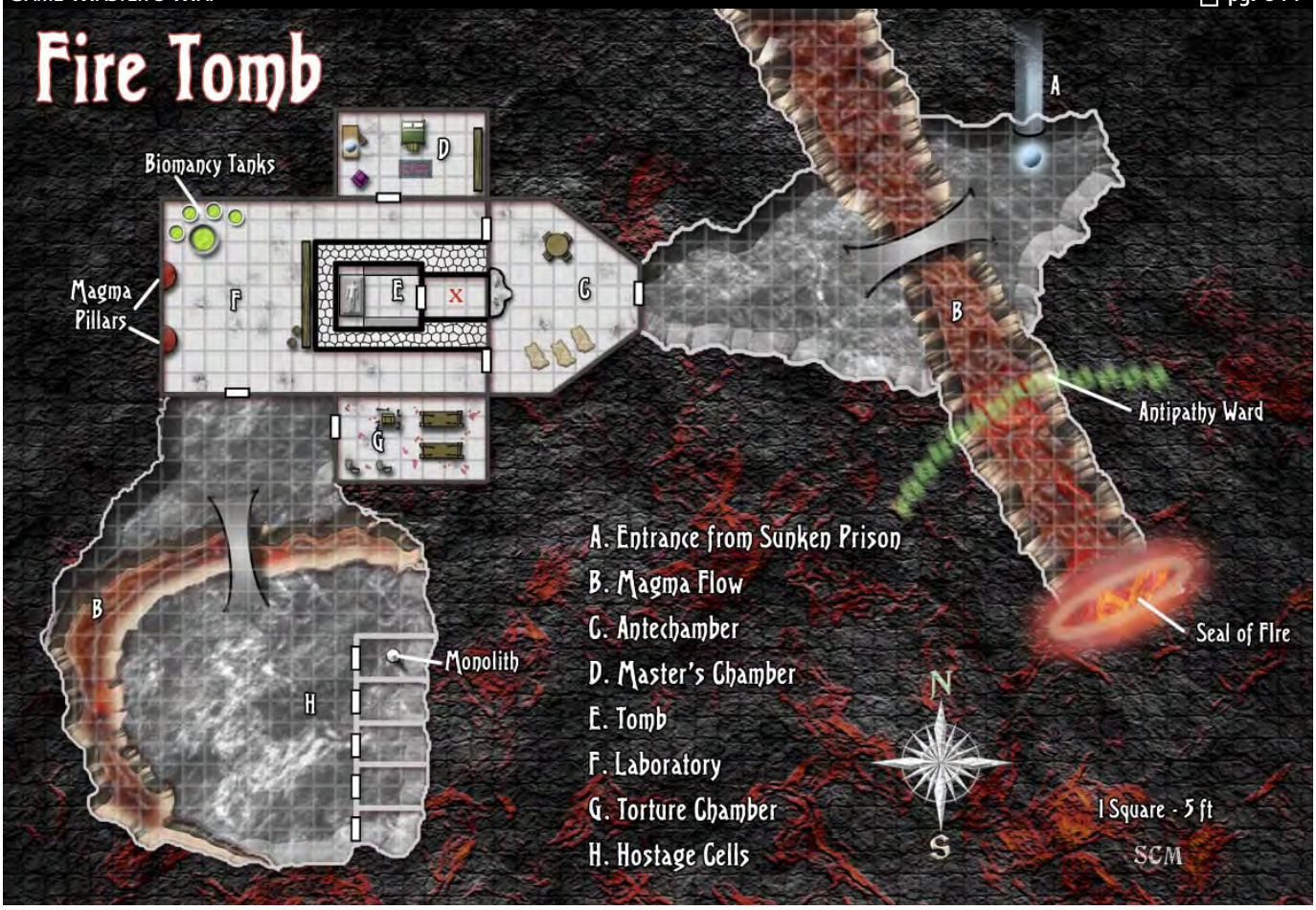
Back into the Storm

Lee Sidoneth watched the heroes enter the prison, and once he's confident they are well inside the bowels of the Fire Tomb he swims to shore and prepares an ambush. To make sure nothing can trace the hurricane back to the Monastery of Two Winds, Lee needs to make sure both the heroes and the Ragesians are silenced, and that the *lesser orb of storms* is removed from the scene after the hurricane does its work.

As the heroes near the exit to the prison, they can notice that the storm, if anything, seems to have grown more intense. The water is choppy even inside the prison, and it sounds like the stones of the building are moaning, wind cutting through every old crack. Outside the prison, the water looks rough and stormy. Any NPCs with the heroes recommend making sure everyone is healed before going any further.

Lee's squid, Lula, hides in the hallway between the loading dock and the prison cells, and it jets out of the prison to warn Lee as soon as it notices the

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heroes coming out. Lee perches over the exit, and as soon as the heroes emerge he uses the control wand to call down a lightning bolt on the person in the lead, dealing 3d10 points of lightning damage (Reflex DC 14 half). Thunder booms and the sky is awash with brilliant lightning.

Lee's silhouette appears overhead as he leans over the ledge and holds out the control wand, waving it tauntingly.

"Looking for this?" he laughs.

Then, long grasping tentacles reach out from the stormy water, and the battle is joined.

Lee Sidoneth (CR 9): hp 62, Appendix B.

Lula, squid (CR n/a): hp 31, Appendix B. This is Lee's animal companion.

Kapoacinth (2) (CR n/a): hp 37 each, MM. These are summoned by Lee.

Tactics

Lula the squid attacks whoever is closest to it. Lee, if he gets a chance, uses his two *kapoacinth gems*. Similar to *water elemental gems*, these items let the user animate nearby stone of sufficient size into a kapoacinth, an aquatic gargoyle. In this case, Lee animates the already-present gargoyles on the nearby pillars, then orders them to keep the heroes from getting out of the water, giving him time to buff himself and control the battlefield.

The stony monsters dive into the water with the heroes, focusing their attacks on anyone heading for the staircase. Lee prefers to wait on the roof, where he casts *control water* to raise the water's level so that it is just 5 feet below the level of the roof; this makes the water about 10 feet deep. With the power of the hurricane, this turns the seas dangerously choppy. (This effect is not part of the description of the spell *control water*, but it's more fun.)

Each round, characters in dangerously choppy water must spend a move action and succeed a Swim check (DC 15) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from waves and debris. Moving anywhere while swimming requires a separate check (DC 20). However, if the heroes have Indomitability's boon, or have not yet used up their one hour of protection from the *tidereaver's tears*, the strong currents won't bother them.

While waiting for his enemies to get close enough to fight, Lee first adopts the Endurance and Vigor aspects of nature. Then he casts *bear's endurance*, then *bull's strength*, then *cat's grace*, and then *resist energy* if he knows any of the heroes are fond of a particular type of energy attack. If still no one has come up to him, he takes cover and uses the control wand to blast them with lightning bolts. Only if things hasve stalemated does he rush into melee.

In melee combat, Lee likes to wade into the middle of a large group of enemies, striking wherever he sees an opening, like a wave shattering weakened stone. When he is suitably surrounded, he uses the control wand's ability to knock enemies away with a gust of wind. If he thinks a normal attack will be ineffective, he instead grapples and attempts to move both himself and his foe over the side, or simply bull rushes an enemy down to the crashing waves.

Development

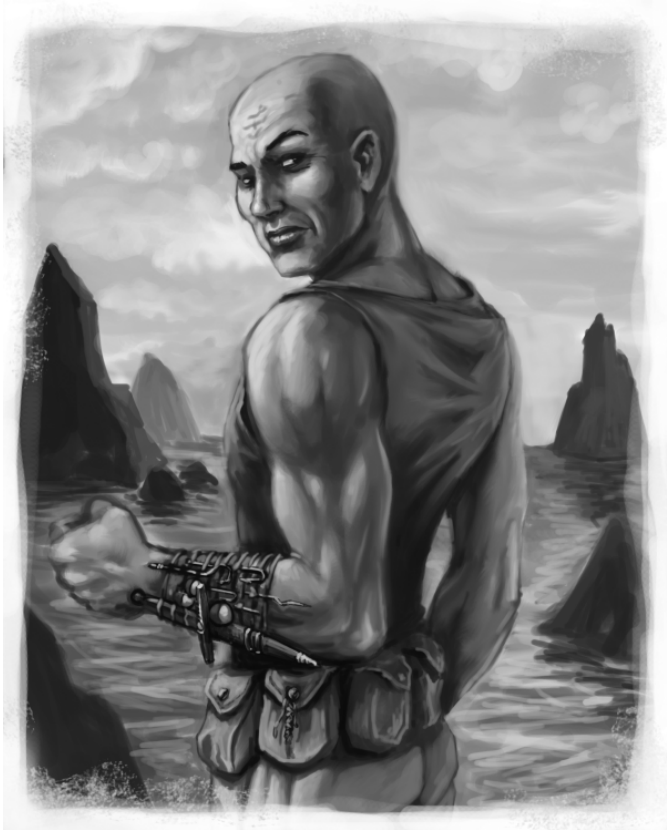
When Lee is reduced to 0 hp or below, just before falling unconscious he drops the control

wand and cries out, "Master, let your winds destroy them!"

An intense howling wind fills the air, and Lee's body is torn to pieces, disintegrating into dust. Lee screams until his voice and body are carried away into the storm, which is growing stronger by the moment. The eye vanishes overhead, and strong winds assail the heroes. Lee is fully obliterated, and his clothes and gear fall to the ground. If no one manages to grab the control wand and deactivate the storm, in two rounds the winds rise to hurricane strength in the eye, and then to tornado strength two rounds thereafter. The hurricane shrinks to a precise, annihilating cyclone centered on the heroes.

The instant someone grabs the control wand and wills the storm to stop, the winds go still. Thunder still rumbles, but the rain slowly dies, and then the lightning. Over the next ten minutes the storm clouds fade, and the cool starry night emerges.

If the heroes somehow prevent Lee from calling down Pilus's vengeance by strengthening and focusing the storm, the hydromancer is still himself annihilated, as a unique contingency prepared by the distant air mage *disintegrates* Lee's body to keep him from being interrogated. The control wand lies on the top of the hollow pile of his clothes.



Messenger of Gentle Winds

While the heroes were busy trying to stop the masters of the storm, the holy warrior Laurabec was trying to save people from it. She flew her giant eagle into the teeth of the storm, pulling people swept out to sea to safety, fighting to save as many lives as possible. Eventually, she was swept off her mount by hurricane-force winds, and her body was carried out to sea, but she managed to carry more than thirty people to the safety of a rocky island off the south shore, where they rode out the storm in a rough cave.

When the heroes are returning from defeating Lee and the Ragesian forces, above the fading winds of the storm comes the steady flap of giant wings. Takasi, Laurabec's giant eagle mount, glides past the group, then turns and lands before them. He drops Laurabec's ranseur from his beak, and bows his head in grief.

He tells them that the storm is fading all across the city, but many were lost to it, including his friend and master. A few ships not in harbor were destroyed, along with most of the elvish fleet; others were crippled, and are now crawling away.

Takasi says that their heroism would have made his master proud, as they saved thousands of lives. But, he says, with his master gone, he goes to die. Spreading his wings in a heartfelt and genuine salute to the heroes, he bids them good luck on their quest, and launches himself into the air. Takasi flies swiftly west, and soon vanishes into the horizon.

Conclusion

The city of Seaquen is devastated, but in this time of trial its people were unified to defend each other. They now know that Ragesia is still a threat, even though far away, and this motivates them to join the war effort. It will take a long time to rebuild, but the heroes have little time to rest. Word has come that the winter storms over south Ragesia have faded, clearing the way for the third Ragesian army to march into Dassen. There is also news that the King of Dassen has survived an assassination attempt. Simeon thinks the heroes should go to the paranoid king and use their fame to convince him to ally with them, and to help hold off the Ragesian army.

For the next week, the sky is clear, and the weather is beautiful. Everyone in Seaquen recognizes the heroes and thanks them for saving their lives. Homes are hospitable, drinks are free, and favors are easy to request. But there may still be spies in Seaquen, and so to keep the city safe the mages of Lyceum co-opt the teleportation beacon and *lesser orb of storms*, hoping to figure out how to control them and use them for defense.

While the heroes prepare to travel to Dassen, Simeon rallies the students to craft any magic items they can afford. If the heroes happen to be behind the curve on how much wealth they should have at their level, this is a fine time for the grateful city, through the Lyceum, to offer them gifts that will bring them up to the proper power level.

If the heroes are continuing with the campaign saga, Simeon will call on the heroes after a week elapses to meet and discuss their next move. This meeting begins the next adventure.

Keeping Takasi?

If one of the heroes would make a worthy successor to Laurabec, someone with confident morality and a love of freedom, Takasi might, if prompted, agree to serve a new master. Because he is no longer bonded to a strong vessel of divine power, his own powers are reduced to those of a normal giant eagle, though he still has exceptional *+2 mithral chain shirt barding*.

If a chaotic good hero wins his favor, he will serve as mount and occasional ally in battle, though his devotion will have to be earned. He will faithfully serve a lawful good paladin, though will humbly question his new master's obsession with order from time to time. If there happens to be a chaotic good paladin or similar character among the heroes, Takasi serves eagerly, though it takes him a long time before he stops suggesting courses of action as "what Laurabec would have done."

A paladin of 7th level or higher can have a giant eagle as a special mount, though his effective paladin level is reduced by 2 for the purposes of the mount's benefits. For a normal character or a paladin of less than 7th level, Takasi is simply a normal giant eagle.

Lee Sidoneth – Art by Leo Lingas



Adventure Four
The Mad King's Banquet

for 7th-Level Characters

by Shane O'Connor

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While Seaquen recovers from an unnatural natural disaster, the heroes undertake a quest to find allies in the nearby nation of Dassen before Ragesia's army arrives.

But the heroes discover strange tidings surrounding Dassen's King Steppengard. What afflicts the king, and is Duke Gallo truly conspiring against him? Seaquen's survival depends on unraveling the mystery.

Just what kind of feast can the heroes expect when they sit down to the mad king's banquet?

Background

Lying between Seaquen and Ragesia is the Kingdom of Dassen, currently neutral in the war. Ragesia has pledged to respect that neutrality if the nation's ruler, King Steppengard, gives one of Ragesia's armies safe passage to Seaquen in order to destroy it. The leaders of Seaquen know they cannot stand against the Ragesians yet, so they must convince Steppengard not to agree to the Ragesians' terms. Time is short, and in this perilous moment Seaquen looks to its most recent heroes to sway the conscience of the king.

A few days ago, King Steppengard of Dassen received a diplomatic emmissary from Ragesia and agreed to let the Third Ragesian Army march through his lands under escort, with the intent of destroying Seaquen, a village on the kingdom's southern border that has never claimed allegiance to Dassen. The heroes are dispatched in response to this, on a mission to get King Steppengard to reverse his decision.

However, in the time between the heroes' departure and their arrival in the capital of Bresk, tragedy strikes. A large-scale assassination attempt kills the queen and each of the king's eighteen children, through a combination of poison and mysterious magic. Steppengard alone survives, and his most trusted advisor, a gnome wizard named Nina Glibglammer, has uncovered evidence that a member of the landed nobility was behind the plot. The heroes arrive in Bresk as paranoia and a vengeful hunger grips the populace.

It is still unclear which noble was responsible, but many suspect that a civil war looms in the near future. Coupled with the recent aggression of Regesia, there is a sense the entire population is holding its breath and taking bets.

Welcome to the fourth adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. The troubled city of Seaquen is rallying other nations in the region in an effort to stand against the fiery might of the Ragesian Empire, and more urgently to stop the Scourge, a drive by the new Ragesian empress Leska to capture or kill all spellcasters hostile to her rule.

The heroes have already saved Seaquen from one destructive plot that would have annihilated the fledgling resistance with a magically conjured hurricane. Now they face a more conventional threat: as winter's end nears, the mountain passes will thaw, and Ragesia will be able to march an army to destroy Seaquen.

But not if King Steppengard will help.

Introduction

The Kingdom of Dassen

The Kingdom of Dassen lies to the south of Ragesia, and the southwest of Shahalesti, its borders defined by craggy mountains defended by hundreds of small dwarven strongholds. Dassen's people, a swarthy assortment of humans and dwarves, cherish their land, to the point that superstitious cavalrymen even put dirt in their boots so they never have to stop touching the soil of their homeland.

Originally known as the Eight Lands, when Dassen was unified fifteen years ago a ninth region was carved out, which became the holding of King Steppengard. Today Dassen is divided into nine regions, forming a loose ring around the central mountain range, the Toraest Steppes. King Steppengard rules over the eight feudal lords and ladies, as well as dozens of minor dwarven nobles who govern their own small holdings in the mountains.

There are no mighty cities in Dassen, only thousands of farms and towns growing out from the nine castles of the king and his dukes. The largest city, Bresk, is a hilly community built both above and below ground, a sprawling walled fortress on the banks of the Nasham river. Bresk is home to King Steppengard's castle. The second most prominent settlement is Gallo's Fend, a centuries-old fortress city on the northern border, which has long served to keep enemies from entering the nation.

The Council of Nine

As a country, Dassen has had trouble remaining unified. Originally an alliance of eight kings, for three centuries the nation was bound by the rule of the Book of Eight Lands, a lesser artifact that traced the lineage of each of the nobles in charge of the different lands, and kept clear who was the rightful ruler of the overall nation, by bloodlines. The book, heavily guarded by whoever was the current king, also provided magical protection to those nobles, to ensure that each ruler was free of compulsions and ensorcellment.

Five decades ago, the king was slain by the next in line, which set off a civil war that purged many bloodlines, as the nobles used the book as a sort of to-do list of who to kill to gain power. Twice Dassen stabilized, but twice more it fell again into civil war again. While it was a chaotic time, it kept the Ragesians from conquering the land, since keeping control of it would not have been worth the effort.

Fifteen years ago a new king, Steppengard, came to power. He had no siblings, and had formed alliances to keep the nation stable, but to further ensure that there would be no more wars he established the Council of Nine. All major matters of policy must be voted on by the council (often by proxy), which gathers at Steppengard's castle in Bresk. Each Lord and Lady has one vote and the King's vote counts as three. Cooperation is ensured by an agreement that the rest of the Lords will combine forces to march on a Lord who breaks faith with the Council.

The Book of Eight Lands still grants its boon to the current rulers of each of the old kingdoms, and to the king of Dassen himself, but it no longer officially dictates the line of royal ascension. Steppengard had a large family — eighteen children as of the new year — to ensure inheritance of the throne without further war.

King Steppengard

The ruler of the nation, Steppengard is an old, experienced warrior who has a reputation for preferring negotation to combat. Steppengard would likely have been willing to listen to Seaquen's offer, were it not that the death of his family has left him grieving and slightly unhinged.

Lord Gallo

Gallo was named Duke by Steppengard as a reward for his land's service in protecting Dassen from invasion. Across the Nasham River which defines the northern border of Gallo's lands is a mountain pass called the Alydi Gap, the only easy passage between Ragesia and Dassen. Most other routes through the northern mountains are protected by the dozens of dwarven strongholds, though none are as smooth a trip as Alydi Gap, so it has fallen to Gallo's family throughout the centuries to hold back invaders. Gallo does not want to let the Ragesians through his land, and so will be the most receptive ally for Seaquen.

Lady Timor

Timor is a wizard of modest power. Her lands are protected from invasion by the Glaskeel Cliffs, a strange icy landform half a mile high that separates her territory's plateau from the lowlands of Gallo's lands. Other routes into her lands are circuitous and easily defended. However, Timor is very frightened of the Ragesian Scourge, and so she is willing to ally with Seaquen if she thinks they have a chance of succeeding.

Lord Dashgoban

Dashgoban is the only dwarf among the eight lords, and he was one of the three nobles who had to sacrifice part of his family's lands to create Steppengard's holding (the other two were Lady Dene and Lord Iz). He thinks of Steppengard as a weak man, and would like to see him replaced, but he himself has no interest in ruling the whole kingdom.

Lord Megadon

Megadon is one of the richest nobles, controlling both coastline and access to the Nasham River. He does not believe Ragesia is a threat to him.

Lord Iz

The lands of Iz are rocky and inhospitable, home to strong warriors. However, Iz is loyal to the Council of Nine, and will obey his king.

Lord Rego

The poorest of the noble lords, Rego has also suffered a great number of refugees passing through his lands. He is actively hostile to Seaquen, and would like to see it destroyed.

Lady Dene

The beautiful Lady Dene expects to profit greatly from traffic passing through her lands to and from Seaquen, but she is nervous because she has only a weak army of her own.

Lady Namin

Lady Namin has ties to the Shahalesti, whose nation her lands border. She has heard rumors that agents of Lyceum attempted to kill the princess of Shahalesti and destroyed part of the Shahalesti fleet, so she is hostile to Seaquen. When the king's wife was killed, Lady Namin was already in the capital city, and she quickly began maneuvering to become the new queen.

Railroading?

The material in *The Mad King's Banquet* describes just one possible course of events — the one we think is the most likely. The adventure assumes that after leaving Bresk the heroes end up with Duke Gallo, the only noble willing to work with Seaquen. If the heroes take another route — such as going to a different noble seeking shelter — they can still end up at Gallo's Fend, perhaps having gained additional allies or enemies along the way. Unless the heroes plan to abandon their mission, anyone they go to for aid will tell them that Gallo is their best hope for success.

Of course, the heroes can go completely off the suggested track. They might decide to ally with the mad king, pledging Seaquen's powers to help destroy Gallo if Steppengard is willing to rebuke the Ragesians. They might decide to ally with Ragesia, and could play Gallo and Steppengard against each other to drive the country closer to civil war. Or they might flee south to Seaquen to recruit allies to overthrow Steppengard directly, though given the relative sizes of the forces, that plan is likely doomed to failure.

Remember also that by this adventure, you're likely several months into the campaign. The players should be getting more into their characters and have goals of their own, though some of the initial excitement from starting a new campaign might be wearing off. When looking for ways to keep the adventure dynamic, we encourage you to play up the things your players and their characters would be interested in. The adventures in this book are all meant to be fairly modular, so if your players totally annihilate Dassen in this adventure, it won't ruin adventure five, which takes place in Ostalin, though it might paint events in a new light.

Adventure Overview

The heroes' main goal in *The Mad King's Banquet* is to retrieve military help for Seaquen either from Steppengard or one or more of his high nobility, the Council of Nine. Unbeknownst to them, Steppengard's advisor has been replaced by a trillith named Madness, who has been confusing the king's mind, driving him to acts that will destroy his nation from within. In this manner the Ragesians hope to arrive to find only weak, disorganized opposition. (The dreamborn trillith made their first appearance in adventure two, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*, and more information about them can be found throughout the campaign saga.)

The heroes travel to the capital of Bresk, seeing along the way signs of political unrest and perhaps getting on the bad side of Steppengard's military. In Bresk, they find a paranoid King Steppengard embroiled in a series of kangaroo court trials to root out treachery, and as a result he is entirely unwilling to listen to the heroes' request for aid. Others are willing to listen, however; in particular, the representatives of the three nobles who are most at risk were Ragesia to invade — Duke Gallo, Lord Dashgoban, and Lady Timor. They present an avenue for winning support.

Before they can act on this opportunity, the heroes fall afoul of the king's advisor Nina Glibglammer, actually the trillith Madness, who frames them as being part of the conspiracy to destroy the royal family. She sends an assassin to kill them and soldiers to capture them, or at the least drive them to flee north to the lands of Duke Gallo. While doing so holds the best chance for the heroes to accomplish their mission, it also plays into the Ragesians' plans, since it implicates Gallo as the one behind the assassination attempt.

Adapting the Adventure

The Mad King's Banquet fills a unique role in the campaign saga. If you are running an abridged version of the campaign, it can serve as the climax of the campaign, wherein the heroes secure the safety of Seaquen in a time of war. You might shuffle the events of Acts Two and Three, so that the king's madness is dealt with first, and that the battle at Gallo's Fend is actually against the advancing Ragesian army. For the adventure's conclusion, you can have whoever ends up ruling Dassen pledge to fight for the liberation of Gate Pass, and so resolve the conflict that began the campaign saga.

If you are choosing this point of the story to *begin* the campaign, *The Mad King's Banquet* throws the heroes immediately into a struggle of politics and warfare. The heroes might still be representatives of Seaquen, though they would not be famed for any heroic deeds yet, or they could be a contingent from Gate Pass, trying to arrange an alliance with Dassen to liberate their city from the Ragesians.

Finally, you might simply use *The Mad King's Banquet* as a stand-alone adventure for a party of 7th-level characters, transporting the events to your own setting. Dassen can easily be replaced with any small country, as long as there are enemies across the border and a natural barrier like a mountain range that Duke Gallo can defend.

Psionics

As in all of the adventures in the campaign saga, the psionics rules are not necessary in this adventure. Madness the trillith is one of several dreamborn monsters that play a major role in the campaign saga, and though many trillith abilities are inspired by psionic powers, you can easily portray them as a unique form of dream magic. If you are using psionics, psychically sensitive characters should feel a strange familiarity when they see Madness, a sense fully realized when they witness Madness's true form and realize she is a trillith, just like Indomitability and Deception from the fire forest.

Duke Gallo thinks the heroes are a mixed blessing and wishes to ally with Seaquen, but King Steppengard musters his army to march on Gallo's Fend and exact punishment for a crime Gallo did not commit. Facing a two-fronted battle, Gallo seeks proof that Ragesia's intentions are not neutral, sending the heroes to investigate the mountain outposts which are the first defense against Ragesia. Only by retrieving evidence that the Ragesians are planning to invade can Gallo secure the aid of his two neighbors, Timor and Dashgoban, in defending against their own king.

Time is short, and if the heroes don't help, either by cutting through dangerous terrain to deliver the evidence to the nobles, or by slowing down the advancing army, the defenders of Gallo's Fend will face a grueling struggle against an overwhelming force.

The battle's resolution is not the end of the adventure, however. If Steppengard is victorious, he claims he was given new evidence exonerating Gallo, and says they must decide how to deal with the Ragesians. If he is defeated, he calls for a gathering to negotiate an ending that will not lead to more infighting. Either way, after the battle King Steppengard requests the Lords of the Eight Lands to return to Bresk for a peace banquet, and for a festival celebrating the aversion of civil war. Gallo cautiously agrees, asking the heroes to accompany him as bodyguards and an extra set of eyes.

In truth however, Steppengard no longer cares for his kingdom, and all he desires is to see his enemies destroyed as his family was destroyed. Poisoned by the trickery of Madness, Steppengard plans to slay all his nobles with a toxin that will drive them to kill each other in a fit of insane frenzy. If the heroes do not find the clues and stop Madness's scheme, Dassen will tear itself apart.

Character Motivation

If the heroes saved the day in *Shelter from the Storm*, Seaquen comes to them with this mission. Otherwise, the heroes can be representatives of any group with interests in the war. In addition to seeking an alliance to protect Seaquen (or whichever place they represent), the heroes might want to try to get support for an eventual push to liberate Gate Pass from Ragesia.

The heroes almost certainly need to be involved with a group that can arrange an audience with the king, though they might simply be representatives of one of Dassen's own nobles, or they might be looking for a way to win land for themselves, to fight their way into the nobility.

Act One: Message for the King

In this act the heroes are recruited on a mission for Seaquen, travel to Bresk, and have an audience with the king. They can gain the favor of other nobles, but they attract the ire of Madness, who is posing as the king's advisor. By the end of the act the heroes will likely be fleeing from Bresk, perhaps after escaping prison.

Meeting at Lyceum

A week after the hurricane (see *Shelter from the Storm*), the heroes are notified — either by letter or by an NPC that they trust — that their presence is desired at Headmaster Simeon's office at the Lyceum academy to discuss their next mission.

As they head across the campus to the main tower, call for a Spot check (DC 15). Among the groups of students strolling under the walkways with their instructors is a scrawny young man, no older than sixteen, with straw-colored hair and expensive clothes. He is watching the heroes, and is distracted from his lesson about how to defend against mind control magic.

This is **Jineer Bremman** (N male human sorcerer 2), a student at Lyceum who has heard that the heroes might be headed to Dassen. Jineer is the son of Proxy Jinis, the representative of Duke Gallo at Steppengard's court. He does not plan to approach the heroes yet, but if the heroes go talk to him, see "A Letter Home," below.

Simeon's office is on the fifth floor of the main tower of the Lyceum academy, its door guarded by four soldiers and four mages. The office fills a quarter of the tower's floor, and is furnished with several comfortable couches set up to serve as a conference area, plus a desk and numerous bookshelves for Simeon. Maps, sculptures, and weapons adorn the walls, and a broad window looks out westward over the still-devastated Seaquen harbor. **Simeon Gohanach** (LG male human diviner 7/loremaster 6) is here on one of the couches, and next to him stands **Kiernan Stekart** (LN male dwarf abjurer 11), the head of the War Department.

On another couch is **Katrina** (CN female sorcerer 9), the opportunist who helped get the heroes into the good graces of Seaquen. She has already managed to parlay their success into an advisor position for herself. So far no one suspects that she is actually a spy for the Ragesians. If **Haddin Ja-Laffa** (NE male human wizard 9) survived the flight from Gate Pass, he might be here as well, coughing and wheezing quietly, since he is nearly as manipulative as Katrina.

Also seated is a person the heroes have not spoken to before, **Balan Bastom**.

Balan Bastom (CR 7): hp 34, Appendix B.

Balan is originally from Ostalin, where he was officially a noble, though he has no actual political power. Now he is serving as an advisor to Seaquen, and has been chosen as the diplomat to represent the town's interests in Dassen.

Balan enthusiastically waves them over.

"Come on and sit down," says the half-elf stranger. "I'm Balan Bastom, distantly related to the Bastom house of Ostalin. Pleasure to meet you. Simeon and I were just trying to figure out how long it had been since we'd seen a storm anywhere near as big as the one we had last week. The best we can figure was twenty-two years ago. Good job on that, by the way."

Katrina smirks. "We owe them our lives," she says. "Guys, we've got a mission for you. I've promised them that you disappoint us."

Simeon smiles and makes introductions, gets everyone drinks of their choice from a well-stocked cabinet, and lets some small talk take place before getting to business.

The large-bodied Balan sips delicately at his ale and casts a wan smile in your direction. "I suppose you are wondering what this is all about," he says, "and I can't say I blame you. Have you heard the recent news out of Ragesia? They're dispatching an army to come take care

Enemies on the Fly

In Appendix B you will find combat stats for all the foes the heroes will encounter throughout the campaign. You can easily take these statistics (being careful with Challenge Ratings, of course) to generate encounters for the heroes should they set off on a path the adventure does not prepare for.

For instance, if the heroes attempt to abduct King Steppengard and replace him with a double, you could have a mage very similar to Kelkin protecting the king's chamber, with Madness lurking in the room, manipulating his thoughts through horrible dreams, and numerous guards outside who are identical to The Blade of the Kingsguard (though wielding only normal *+1 greatswords*).

of us. As soon as the mountain passes thaw on the border between Ragesia and Dassen, we'll have forty thousand or more soldiers headed our way. The downside of notoriety, I fear.

"Regardless, with the damage to the town, even if the entire refugee population mustered, Seaquen can't hope to defend itself against the Ragesian army. Normally it would be a simple matter of requesting help from King Steppengard, since officially Seaquen is part of Dassen. Not like we actually pay taxes, though." He grins.

"But the Ragesians have gone and made a non-aggression pact with the King." Balan frowns. "We just got word this morning. An envoy from Ragesia promised that Empress Leska will not attack Dassen if their army is allowed to march through unmolested. Depending on how the weather goes, it looks like we have a month or two before our resistance is cut short.

"That's where I, and hopefully we, come in. Simeon here has asked me to journey to Bresk and use my humble persuasive skills to convince the King to change his mind. We've already sent ahead a courier requesting an audience for us, so hopefully they'll be expecting us. Now, we're not particularly keen on officially allying with Dassen, but if we pledge our magical support to King Steppengard in this war, and play to his ego about how he is letting the Ragesians bully him, I think we have a shot."

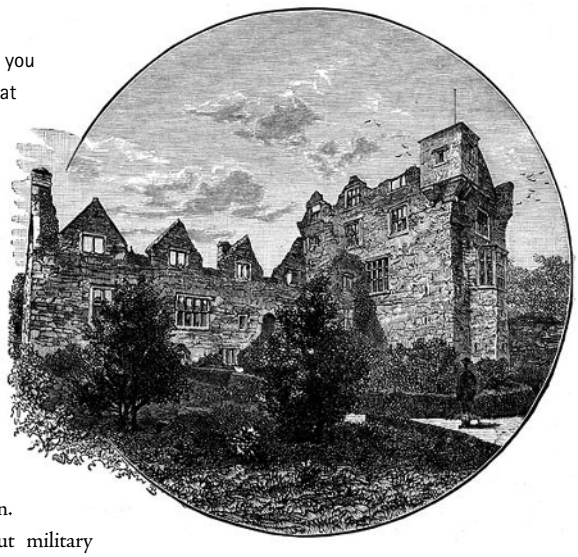
Simeon interrupts. "Try not to give away the town, Balan. Remember, we want to 'offer our assistance at the king's pleasure,' not 'pledge loyalty.' We're not joining his country, and we're sure as hell not going to pay him taxes. We —"

Balan shakes his head. "I'll try, but let's not get too full of ourselves. We're not a sovereign nation here. I'll say and do whatever is necessary to make sure that all the people here are safe from the Scourge. If Steppengard won't listen, maybe one of the other nobles will.

Without Balan

If one of the heroes is very diplomatic, feel free to excise Balan from the adventure, to let the heroes carry the spotlight. However, Balan provides an easy way for you to help the heroes avoid getting lost or confused in the admittedly complicated political situation of this adventure. Additionally, even if the heroes are not going to be the primary negotiators at first, they will have an opportunity to play a major role in the diplomacy. Balan will likely die early on anyway.

"Anyway," Balan continues, "as you can probably see, I am neither a great warrior nor an experienced traveler. Ragesia already has an envoy in Bresk, so we should expect some trouble. Simeon vouches for you fully. We need your help. I shudder to think what would happen to Lyceum if the Ragesian Scourge reaches us."



From here on the conversation turns to the practical. Simeon can provide maps and Balan can explain the political nature of Dassen. Kiernan says little unless asked about military matters, which he has been researching for the past few weeks. Surprisingly, Katrina has as much information about the Ragesian army as Kiernan does, which she explains by saying she had a few friends in the Gate Pass resistance over the years. They all encourage the heroes to ask questions and get a clear sense of how their mission will play out.

Travel

While Seaquen was being struck by a bizarre winter hurricane, weather in Dassen and further north has been terribly cold. The temperature is already taking a downward turn in Seaquen, and it looks like it will snow within a week, even though winter should be coming to an end soon.

The Nasham River that runs north through most of Dassen has frozen, whereas the King's Road, while normally an easy highway, is currently buried under snow and would be difficult passage. After a bit of overland travel to get out of the swamps near Seaquen, the heroes could buy a few sleds and dogs, reindeer, or horses to pull them. Balan would cover the cost of these, at Seaquen's expense.

The heroes might mention hiring a Wayfarer to teleport them, but how to survive the "Burning Sky," wherein teleportation causes fatal burns, still eludes the Wayfarers (and everyone else).

News of the War

Gate Pass is still a battleground: the Second Ragesian Army now controls several districts, and Shahalesti forces aid the city's defense. Shahalesti and Ragesia also battle in the northern reaches of Shahalesti, as the Fourth Ragesian Army heads for Nacaan, capital of the northern Shahalesti state. The Ragesians apparently plan to join up their two armies after conquering Gate Pass, in order to drive for Calanis, the Shahalesti capital.

The Ragesian fleet is blockading Turinn, the capital of Sindaire, while General Magdus of the First Ragesian Army marches to take the city from inland, though his forces are split up, and he is making slow progress as he tries to get them to return to the main body. There is also word that Ostalin is preparing to invade Sindaire, but news out of Ostalin is unreliable right now.

Getting Ready to Go

Simeon expects the heroes to leave in the morning. He encourages them to purchase whatever they'll need for the mission, pleased that the war economy is at least keeping people busy in the city. He promises to make sure any of their belongings they must leave behind are taken care of, and wishes them luck. Before they leave, he gives them a scroll of *sending* if anyone in the party can use it, telling them to use this to alert Kiernan if anything goes horribly awry. "Good news," he says, "can wait. Bad news will refuse to."

A Letter Home

This encounter can happen pretty much anytime while the heroes are still in Seaquen but it is most likely to happen soon after they leave their meeting with Simeon and Balan.

Jineer, son of Duke Gallo's proxy at the Dassen royal court, has heard rumors that a mission is being planned to Dassen, and he wants the heroes to get in touch with his father, about whom he is worried. If Crystin Ja-Nafeel is with the heroes, she relates a vision about Jineer's father, telling him, "Your father will be caged by Madness." (Honestly, this is probably the most literal vision she has had so far). If Crystin is not available, Jineer simply has a feeling something has gone wrong.

Eventually Jineer approaches the heroes, if they don't talk to him first.

You meet the eyes of a skinny teenaged boy cursed with a mop of unruly blond hair. He turns a brilliant red and says, "I ... I'm sorry for following you. I, uh, wanted to ask, if you're going to Bresk, you know, could you take this, this, um, letter to my father? His name is Jinis, and he's Lord Gallo's proxy to the royal court. You ... um ... you are going ... aren't you?

"Please, I think ... I'm afraid something bad is going to happen to him. I ... I can offer a few coins if you'll get this to him."

Jineer has not heard from his father for a few weeks, which is normal, since letters aren't delivered often during winter. He has, however, heard the news that Ragesia is going to march through Dassen, and he knows that Gallo will be the one the heroes will need to speak to if they want to convince the country not to acquiesce to the Ragesians' demands. He says his father can help them. In the letter he has written about what brave heroes they were, and how they saved the town from the hurricane. He is able to pay only 10 sp.

The letter is unsealed; it expresses Jineer's worry and tells his father to trust the party. Despite his issues with speaking, Jineer writes eloquently.

Other Seaquen Missions

While the heroes are busy securing the safety of Seaquen against an army, four other groups of agents are on secret missions of their own.

One group is headed for the Monastery of Two Winds, on the border of Ostalin and Sindaire, following clues that suggest the monastery might have been involved in the hurricane plot. Another group, recruited by General Xavious, has been sent to find any evidence about the fate of the Torch of the Burning Sky. They are all very elite adventurers, and are in daily contact with Simeon. The other two groups have been sent to Shahalesti and Ostalin following other leads Simeon and Kiernan are not talking about right now.

The first two groups will eventually fail in their missions, which will be the basis for the heroes' goals in the next two adventures. That is not to say that everyone on those missions dies, however, so if the heroes have made friends or enemies in the city, one or more of those NPCs might be involved with these missions, only to show up unexpectedly later on.

The Trip To Bresk

The journey from Seaquen to the edge of the marsh will take about two days, after which the heroes can reach the frozen Nasham River, purchase a sleigh, and animals to pull it, and begin traveling the 120 miles to Bresk, at a rate of (at most) 40 miles a day. The terrain is covered with snow. The weather during the day counts as cold weather for purposes of exposure damage, and at night temperatures fall to severe cold. Anyone the heroes speak to along the way expresses that the cold is unnatural this close to spring. While the river has frozen during the occasional rare cold snap in the past, it has never done so this far south.

Late Refugees (EL 7)

As the heroes are traveling along the frozen river, after they have gone ten miles upstream, have them make Listen and Spot checks. At a distance of 100 feet, plus 10 feet per point of the highest check, the heroes notice a distant commotion off the eastern bank of the river. A large crowd of people is fleeing across the rolling, snow-covered hills, screaming in panic, pursued by a towering monstrous centipede with hotly glowing red plates along its back.

This group of 40 refugees, recently forced out of Lord Rego's lands where they had been trying to settle, were headed to Seaquen on foot when the heavy beat of dozens of feet attracted the attention of a remorhaz. The remorhaz has pursued the people for miles, stopping only to kill or swallow those who stumble and lag behind. Though the monster is not any faster than the refugees, with is higher Constitution it can run much longer than they can, so every few minutes it manages to kill a few stragglers, after which it runs again to catch up with the mobile buffet. At this point it has already eaten its fill, and it is just following them for fun.

Right now the remorhaz is only 30 feet behind its prey. Once they reach the river, the creature's weight and heat will shatter the ice, stranding or drowning most of the terrified refugees. If the heroes can kill it or delay it for a few rounds, the refugees will be able to get to safety on the far side of the river. If attacked, the remorhaz will turn its attention from its food to its enemies.

Remorhaz (CR 7): hp 73, MM.

The remorhaz's gullet is already filled, so if it establishes a hold it deals automatic bite and heat damage each round, but it cannot swallow whole.

Aftermath

The refugees are mostly 1st-level adepts and their families, who just want to get to Seaquen. They have lost a dozen people already to this monster, but the one they blame is the Dasseni noble Lord Rego, who drove them out of his lands. After being rescued, the refugees will take some time to rest and overcome the shock of what has happened. Then, knowing nothing else to do, they'll head to Seaquen.

When the heroes eventually return to Seaquen, they will find that the refugees they saved have told the tale of their rescue, for which the heroes are greatly lauded.

Bodies in the Water

This encounter happens when the heroes are 60 miles from Bresk. Their sleigh comes to an abrupt stop and the animals pulling it cannot move any farther.

When the heroes get out to investigate they will find the sleigh is caught on an ornate loop of leather. Further investigation reveals that the loop is actually a belt belonging to a corpse frozen in the ice. There are, in fact, three bodies frozen in the ice, all men, their features distorted. It takes only about a minute of hacking to free the bodies, since the ice here is thinner than normal.

If the bodies are freed, the heroes can see that two were killed by crossbow bolts in the back, while the third looks to have been hanged. Each has the same device somewhere on their clothing: a leopard and a serpent dancing under a sunburst. A Knowledge (local or nobility & royalty) check (DC 15) reveals that this is the device of Lady Dene. A Search check (DC 15) reveals that the ice around where the bodies lie does not match the rest of the river surface. It appears to have been melted with fire, and is covered with notably less snow.

This is the heroes' first clue that foul things are afoot. What happened was that an envoy serving Lord Dashgoban was headed to Lady Dene's lands to deliver news of the recent assassination and to ask for Lady Dene's presence at the court. But Steppengard's newly formed Talon police force suspected them as conspirators, so they chased them down and killed them.

A Survival check (DC 12) can locate the tracks of a group of at least five men on horseback who left a few hours ago, their tracks still visible despite recent snow. There is a tree on the bank of the river nearby, where the one man who surrendered was hanged. The men on horseback headed upstream on the King's Road, and so will be traveling more slowly than the heroes.

Police Brutality (EL 7)

This encounter occurs twenty miles upstream of the previous encounter. The heroes are likely the only ones on the river, but there is a lot of traffic on the King's Road.

On the road beside the river is a colorful caravan of three covered wagons pulled by husky ponies. It appears the halfling caravan has been stopped by five humans riding light warhorses, one of them looking like a military officer. The men are rifling through the wagons throwing items about while the officer watches on, ignoring the emphatic gestures of one of the halflings.

A Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 15) reveals that the humans all wear King Steppengard's symbol — a male sphinx rearing, surrounded by eight small triangles. The halflings are merchants from Ostalin, leaving Bresk and heading home, but the soldiers are suspicious that the six halflings are spies.

As the heroes approach or pass by, they hear a woman screaming, followed by a clamor from the halflings. The soldiers have found a crawlspace under one of the wagons, and are pulling out a human woman. The halflings were helping the woman, **Hethal Bekoff** (N female human aristocrat 2), sneak out of the country (she was romantically involved with a suspected assassin). As the heroes watch, the soldiers yank the woman out of her crawlspace, and the commander draws a sword, ready to execute the woman on the spot.

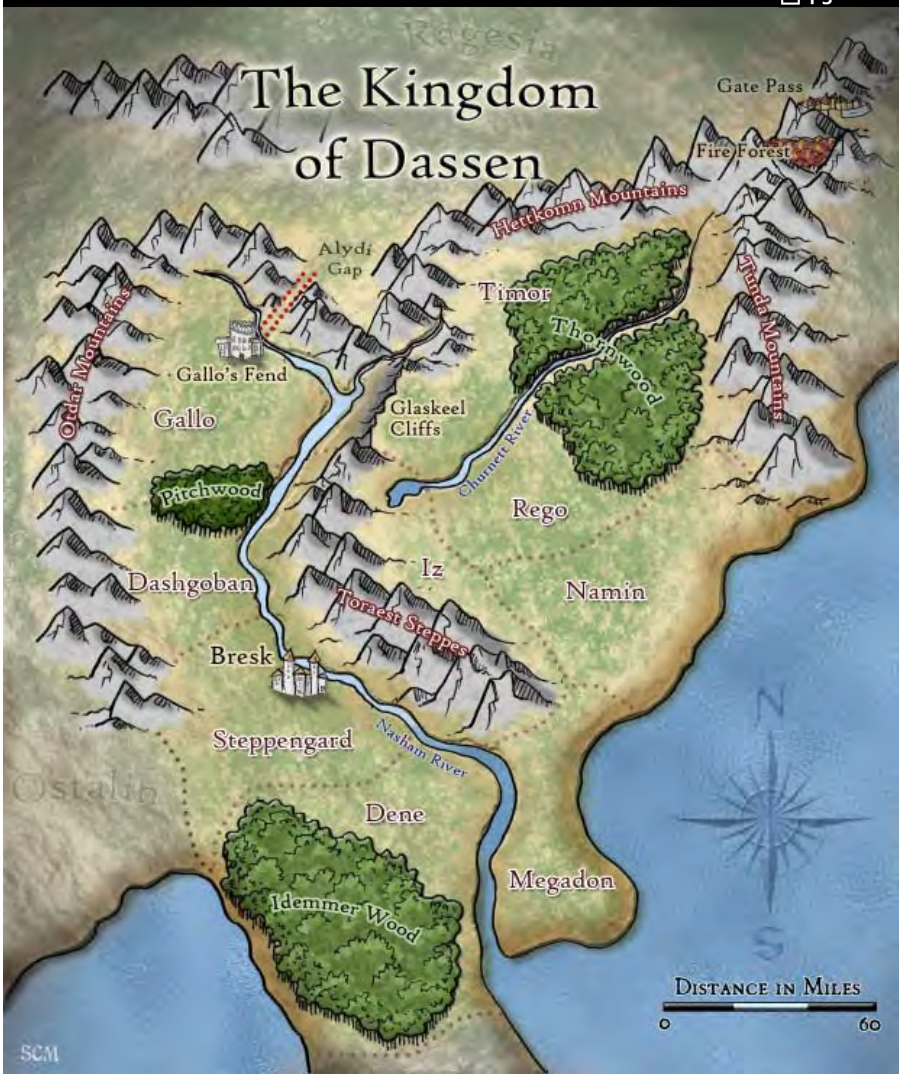
If the heroes approach, the commander's first action is to strike the woman down, then order his men to kill the halflings. If the heroes attack, the commander and his soldiers retaliate.

Steppengard soldiers (4) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

Steppengard commander (CR 5): hp 32, Appendix B.

The band of searchers are members of the new secret police, the Talon. Though officially tasked with protecting the crown, they're not above harrassing foreigners to line their own pockets. They do truly believe that assassins are trying to flee the country, so they show no mercy. If the heroes fight, the soldiers attack to kill, while the commander directs his men. The halflings will not help in the battle; they hide beneath their wagons. While the soldiers have horses, they are not trained in mounted combat, and so stay on foot.

Game Master's Map pg. 645



Balan is against getting directly involved but will not stop the heroes if they wish to. If the heroes approach but don't get involved, the soldiers will decide they need to search the heroes' belongings too. If they find Jineer's letter to his father, they confiscate it and begin asking a lot of questions.

If a fight turns badly for the soldiers, one will run for his horse and try to flee to Bresk at top speed to warn his superiors. If he reaches the city, the heroes will have a very unfriendly reception, but their diplomatic papers will keep them out of immediate trouble.

Aftermath

If the heroes talk to either the soldiers or the halfling and their refugee, they can find out that just three days earlier the king's entire family was slaughtered. His five eldest children, ranging in ages from twelve to seventeen, were at a party in which everyone was slaughtered, cut to pieces, with no sign of the assassins. Within minutes of that the King's wife and thirteen of his youngest children were killed by poison at dinner, a fate which Steppengard only managed to escape because one of his nobles came to him complaining about the Ragesian ambassador.

In every case, as the bodies were being taken away for safe-keeping, to determine if any magic could be used to safe them, the hearts were extracted and burned.

The enraged king ordered soldiers to begin searching anyone who appeared at all suspicious, and set his advisor, Nina Glibglammer, to divine who was responsible for the horrible crime. Steppengard has spent the past two days in mourning, and the funeral was earlier today. Many people are trying to flee Bresk and Dassen, and the Talon are causing people to panic that they might be wrongfully accused.

Bresk, Capital of Dassen

The walled city of Bresk rises above the hills around it, with the castle perched on a rocky protrusion called the Great Hill. It overlooks the wide river and the Toraest Steppes to the east. Much of the castle is said to be underground, as are many parts of the city, which is home to several thousand dwarves. The city itself is generally unfriendly to outsiders, and most of the *real* culture of Bresk lies underground in tunnels excavated by dwarves over the centuries. Most foreigners never delve below the surface to see the bustling markets and solemn temples, illuminated by clever skylights and mighty braziers.



Bresk
LN Conventional Small City
Government Monarchy
Purchase Limit 15,000 gp; **Assets** 7,500,000 gp
Population 10,000
Demographics mixed (65% human, 28% dwarf, 5% orc, 1% half-orc, 1% other).

Dasseni architecture tends toward the stout and broad, and is typically adorned with various great cats, gem-patterns, and sphinx statues. People dress in multiple layers of drab clothes, clearly unaccustomed to such chill weather, though the tunnels underground are much warmer.

Traditional Dasseni religion was mostly devoted to strength and warfare, but since the unification of the nation, a sect of the cave goddess **Donhofreya** (LN lesser goddess, domains: Earth, Healing, and War) has devoted itself to healing the nation. Donhofreyan prelates have earned great respect; many serve in the army, showing an eager mixture of militarism and medicine. The Order of the Aquiline Cross (detailed in the Introduction) is on good terms with the Donhofreya prelacy.

Dice or Dialogue?

Depending on how political your players are, their diplomacy could be resolved with dice, or it could turn into an evening of role-playing as the heroes locate the proxies, track down their friends, play tavern games and win drinking contests to earn the proxies' trust, pray at the same temples to hear the priests' opinions, and possibly seduce secrets from the proxies, all to help them plead Seaquen's case.

The south gate of Bresk is open to a long, snaking column of people and beasts trying to enter the city, and a smaller, more daring line of those trying to get out. Dozens of guards watch the gate and question people as they pass, searching belongings and glaring suspiciously at foreigners. Balan's diplomatic papers get the heroes into Bresk with little in the way of questioning, as long as the heroes don't act like they're going to cause trouble.

Once inside Bresk, Balan leads them to the Golden Griffon, an inn near the castle on the westward face of the great hill. Balan secures a large suite on the second floor, with a main common room and a bedroom for each of them. It takes Balan a few hours to get in touch with the right people and verify that their audience is scheduled for several days later (or the next afternoon, depending on how quickly the heroes traveled). In the meantime, Balan says, he wants to get their help planning what to say. With the recent assassination, it's imperative that they don't make any missteps when speaking to the king.

When all the heroes are inside the suite, Balan takes his *stone of alarm* and puts it on the doorknob, to help keep people from getting into the suite. "It helps me sleep a little easier at night," he says.

Group Diplomacy (EL 7)

The heroes, representing Seaquen, will be speaking to the King and the proxies of the Council of Nine, except that Lord Gallo's proxy has been arrested for treason, and Lady Namin is there in person. Rather than having five people talk at once, Balan (or a similarly persuasive player character) will present their case. Other heroes can aid the primary speaker's Diplomacy check. Only one character will be allowed to speak, so they must aid beforehand.

Encourage the heroes to spend some time discussing just how to present their case. By taking time prior to the actual event to prepare, the heroes can assist the primary speaker, each making Diplomacy checks (DC 10) to grant Balan a +2 bonus. Balan will actually make three Diplomacy checks: one to those proxies who are willing to listen to Seaquen (starting attitude Indifferent), one to those who are neutral (starting attitude Unfriendly), and one to those who are actively opposed (starting attitude Hostile).

Additionally, the heroes' decisions regarding what exactly to say can have beneficial or negative consequences. If the heroes are willing to explore the city and ask around, a Gather Information check (DC 15) reveals one of the following pieces of information, plus another piece for every 5 points they succeed by.

The Demeanor of the Court

The heroes can learn the leanings of the various nobles, as detailed in the Introduction (see page 102), namely that Gallo, Dashgoban, and Timor are not fond of the Ragesian's non-aggression pact; that Lord Iz and Lady Dene are uncertain, but are loyal to the king; and that Megadon, Rego, and Namin are hostile to Seaquen. Failing to find out this information incurs a –5 penalty to Balan's Diplomacy checks to the Hostile proxies as he directs pleas to the wrong people.

Glibglammer's Stance

The King's advisor Nina Glibglammer should be an ally of Seaquen, being a wizard, but recently she has opined that she views Seaquen as a threat. If the heroes and Balan plan to rely on Glibglammer to support their case, Balan suffers a –5 penalty to his checks with the Unfriendly and Hostile proxies, since the gnome woman has already predicted such arguments, and has warned the representatives at the court not to listen to them.

The Issue of Succession

According to the bloodline succession detailed in the Book of Eight Lands, Lord Megadon is next in line to the throne after Steppengard, but Lady Namin wants to marry Steppengard and become queen. Everyone fears another civil war, and they want Steppengard to make a clear decision as to who will succeed him, instead of turning again to the Book. It does not particularly matter what Balan says in this regard, but if he does not address the issue at all, it will demonstrate a severe lack of understanding of the situation, incurring a –10 penalty to Balan's checks with all the proxies.

Other Influences

If the heroes go out of their way to meet or speak with one or more of the proxies the evening before the audience, they might gain a +2 bonus regarding that particular noble. If the heroes mention that Lady Dene's servants were likely killed by Steppengard's new police, the Talon, they gain a +5 bonus with her, but a –5 penalty with the other Neutral and Hostile proxies, who view this as crass rumor-mongering.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes find out at least one piece of the above information to give Balan, reward them for a CR 5 challenge. If they find two pieces, reward them instead for a CR 6, and if all three, reward them for a CR 7 challenge.

Audience with the King (EL 11)

The next morning Balan and the heroes head to the castle and wait in a grand hall until noon, when they are ushered into the audience chamber just in time to see the end of a trial.

After navigating a variety of irritating functionaries and a warren of corridors leading deeper into the hillside, the heroes are ushered into a throne room — wide, high-ceilinged, its walls studded with small shaded windows and a single skylight over the throne itself, illuminating it and the space just before it in pale amber light. A crowd of dozens of people — proxies for nobles, their assistants, ambassadors, and servants all linger in the shadows, watching the spectacle.

The heroes are directed to the right side of the room, where they are positioned beside the entourage of Lady Namin, slender, platinum-haired, dressed in mourning black. She is the only noblewoman who is personally in attendance. All the other nobles are represented by their proxies.



Nina Speaks – Art by Todd Schumacher

A pair of lavish thrones sit on the dais, the left one empty and covered with a black shroud. In the other sits an aging but still vital looking King Steppengard. His brown beard is unkempt, his clothes are wrinkled, and his crown is somewhat askew; it looks like he has not slept well in days.

In front of him is a slim man in manacles, being harangued by a gnome woman with curly hair that seems to shift from black to purple as she moves. She holds a book in her hand and stalks around the man in a circle, her voice shrill.

The woman leans close to the man and says, "You realize the king is offering you a chance to recant, confess, admit your role in this tragedy, and ask for his mercy? You do realize that, don't you? It is no secret that Gallo has—"

The man interrupts, "Duke Gallo? His family has defended our nation since its birth — you should pay him the respect he has earned!"

"Gallo," the woman says. "He has the most to gain if the king were killed. This was clearly an attempt to frame Ragesia."

She gestures to the audience gathered in the darkened edges of the room, to a space opposite where you stand. You spot a man dressed in rich red Ragesian clothes, marked with symbols of a torch. He is guarded by an inquisitor in a heavy cloak, the white of his bear-skull mask darkened by etched runes.

"The Ragesians," the gnome continues, "who have offered to protect us in this time of war. But no, *Gallo* is too arrogant to accept that. *Gallo* must have his war. Is it not true?"

The man starts to reply, but stammers, looking confused.

The woman laughs. "Your lies have begun to confuse even you, poor man. Please, answer my questions. Explain to us how Duke Gallo was involved in the terrible, tragic, tyrannical attempt to break the back of our mighty kingdom."

Any spectator can tell the heroes that the gnome is Nina Glibglammer, the King's top advisor and the head of his newly commissioned police force,

The Book of Eight Lands
Bardic Knowledge, Gather Information, Knowledge (History or Nobility & Royalty)

DC	Information
10	The Book of Eight Lands magically records the lineage of all the rulers of the lands of Dassen, and its text automatically records any births, marriages, deaths, or other changes in succession.
15	The book is so named because the nation once consisted of eight kingdoms, though fifteen years ago Steppengard united the region and added a ninth region for himself. In the past the Book served almost as a checklist of whom to kill in order to move closer to the throne, so it inspired much civil conflict. It is no longer used to determine succession, however, by mutual agreement of the nobles.
20	The Book grants special magical defenses to those who rule each of the lands of Dassen, and to their immediate families, intended to let them rule without being swayed by charms or compulsions.
25	The book is is an artifact, protected in the vault of King Steppengard's castle. Any human, dwarf, or half-human may ask to view the book by addressing the guards in Dwarven, stating, "I pray that my blood is worthy of Dassen."

the Talon. They also reveal that the man in the manacles, named Relder, is the clerk to Lord Gallo's proxy, a man named Jinis, who is currently in jail for treason. Lord Gallo himself is not in Bresk.

The questioning continues for several minutes. Glibglammer closely questions Relder about where he was on the evening King Steppengard's family was killed, who Proxy Jinis saw over the previous week, and how Gallo was involved in the poisoning of Steppengard's family. The man seems confused often, like he's struggling to tell two stories. One paints him and Gallo's associates as innocent, whereas the other is a fervent, irrational babbling about poison and meetings late at night.

What has actually happened is that Nina (in reality the trillith Madness) senses that people are being swayed by the sincerity of the clerk, and is using her ability to make the man confused, then to implant a *suggestion*.

People in the audience nearby you mutter that it looks like the clerk is being mind-controlled, though they're uncertain if Nina is responsible, or if she was trying to break some previous enchantment. Just then, Nina breaks off her questioning, shakes her head, and turns to the throne, addressing the king.

"I'm convinced, Your Majesty, that this man has been charmed, and his memory altered."

Finally King Steppengard moves, straightening in his chair, looking somewhat ghoulish in the overhead light.

"Nina, thank you for your service. It worries me that someone could be using such sorcery in the seat of my nation's rule. Though I wish for nothing other than to execute this man for his part in," he draws a breath, "my family's murder, I must serve justice. Take him back to the prison. Until such time as other evidence comes to light, I cannot pass sentence on him."

Three guards come up and drag the manacled man away. The gnome woman steps to stand before the king, just beside his throne.

"I tire of trials," King Steppengard says. He waves wearily. "I will take audiences now."

The window blinds are raised, the room brightens comfortably, and the heroes can see who has gathered. Proxies for all the nobles are in attendance, except for Lady Namin's (here in person), and Lord Gallo's (arrested for treason).

The heroes' envoy from Seaquen is the first group called before the king. As the heroes come up to speak, the gathered crowd whispers excitedly. They can feel the heavy gaze of the Ragesian



inquisitor on their backs. It is now time for Balan and the heroes to plead their case.

Have the players briefly reiterate all the points they wish to make (out of character, if they're more comfortable with that), and then have Balan roll a Diplomacy check for each of the three groups — Indifferent, Unfriendly, and Hostile, using the modifiers determined beforehand.

Indifferent. This group contains the proxies of Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor. If Balan's check beats DC 15 they become Friendly, and if he beats DC 30 they will become Helpful and will ensure that their respective superiors respond favorably to the heroes later in the adventure.

Unfriendly. This group contains the proxies for Lady Dene and Lord Iz. If Balan's check beats DC 15 they become Indifferent, and if he beats DC 25 they become Friendly. Only if he beats DC 40 will they become Helpful.

Hostile. This group contains the proxies to Lord Rego and Lord Megadon, as well as Lady Namin herself. If Balan's check beats DC 20 they become Unfriendly, or Indifferent if he beats DC 25, or even Friendly if he beats DC 35. If somehow Balan beats DC 50, they become Helpful.

Aside from helping secure aid from Timor and Dashgoban in Act Two, these results have little effect in the course of the adventure, but they determine the heroes' overall success at the adventure's conclusion. Also, if the heroes manage to sway any noble to Helpful, they should learn as much, realizing that they have supporters on the Council of Nine. You might even give the heroes some leeway in the Battle of Gallo's Fend, such as by having some of the hostile soldiers serving alongside Steppengard's own forces hesitate, retreat, or even switch sides at a pivotal moment.

After Balan has presented their case, the crowd is murmuring with a bevy of responses, and Steppengard is leaning low to listen to the advice of Nina Glibglammer. After a moment Steppengard raises a hand for silence. He points to one of the heroes who has not been speaking, preferably a warrior.

"You," Steppengard says. "You don't have the silver, honeyed tongue of your companion. Tell me plainly. How many friends have you lost in this war? How many family?"

He waits for the hero's response, likely scoffing.

"I have lost *nineteen*," he says. "My wife. My children. I would have gladly lost my own life instead. Gladly! I have suffered enough for my entire country. No others shall lose their families in a fight that is not ours. If you were my subjects, I would have you executed for treason for even suggesting such a thing."

He stands and scans the crowd. "None shall offer aid to this nest of serpents, these mages of Seaquen and their allies."

He looks back to the heroes, glancing briefly to the Ragesian envoy. "To you, I give three days in my city. Perhaps in that time you can use some of your poet's tongue to persuade the Ragesians to show you mercy. I truly hope none of you will have to feel the same loss that I have, but by leaping to war you are calling such a wound down upon your house, your kin, your selves.

"Who next wishes to address their king?"

King Steppengard – Art by Claudio Pozas

The heroes' audience is clearly over at this point, as Steppengard goes on to listen to more mundane requests. Guards will not let the heroes get close enough to Steppengard or his advisor to speak to them.

The proxies of Timor and Dashgoban come over and speak to the heroes, encouraging them to stay in Bresk for a while, to see if the king might reconsider. They suggest that, if the heroes do leave, that they head north to speak to Duke Gallo. They don't believe the claims about him, and suspect he might be able to convince other nobles to support Seaquen. By the charter of the Council of Nine, if six nobles disagree with the king, their decision stands (the king has three votes). The proxies promise to contact their Lord and Lady, and offer what support they can, but no one is willing to speak out against the king.

The heroes may speak with other proxies, or with Lady Namin, though she brushes them off, either rudely or apologetically, depending on how friendly they made her. Even if she agrees with them, she wants to stay in Steppengard's good graces, and must maintain proper decorum.

Finally, the heroes might speak to the Ragesian Ambassador **Serrimus** (LE male human aristocrat 6/sorcerer 1), a cunning middle-aged diplomat with an almost militaristic presence, and his bodyguard, **Torrax** (LE male half-orc cleric 9/expert 1), a highly experienced inquisitor who flaunts his apparent savagery, wearing little but furs and leather straps amid all the nobles.

This will likely be the heroes' first opportunity to speak to a Ragesian of any standing, so be sure to present Serriums and Torrax as haughty and cruel. They are fanatics, loyal to the glorious destiny of their great homeland, and view mages such as those in Seaquen as mental inferiors who use the savage, sorcerous tools of elves and heretic gods, rather than the pure might of civilized Ragesia.

Serrimus offers anyone who looks receptive an opportunity to surrender themselves to Ragesia, gaining exile instead of death, if they are willing to betray Seaquen. He'll also make the offer if he thinks it will anger them, because he likes toying with foreigners. Torrax is generally silent and menacing, though if anyone gets belligerent he will grab the person with his clawed right hand, sneering from behind his rune-etched skull mask.

Any violence in the throne room is quickly put down, and even the Ragesians know not to start a fight. Eventually Balan will bore of standing around, and will suggest they leave, return to the inn, and come up with a new plan. As they depart, they notice Glibglammer watching them intently.

Ad-Hoc Experience

For completing this encounter, reward the heroes for a CR 8 challenge. Successfully swaying the Indifferent proxies earns no experience, but for the Unfriendly and Hostile proxies, reward the heroes for a CR 6 encounter for each group they make Indifferent, or CR 7 for Friendly, or CR 8 for Helpful. Thus this encounter could be worth as much as three CR 8 challenges.

The First Rule of Assassination

If the heroes seem interested in leaving the next day, these events happen the evening of the audience. Otherwise, they occur the next evening. If the heroes leave Bresk immediately they can avoid these events, though Madness will still seek to direct them northward to Gallo.

Madness wants first to silence Balan, who is too convincing and a threat to the control she has over the Council of Nine, and second to make the heroes look complicit in the assassination of the royal family, and third to connect the heroes with Duke Gallo, creating the illusion of a conspiracy.

To get the heroes moving in the direction she desires, she first compels one of the king's minstrels to bring the group a warning. Later that evening, she sends Pixis the assassin to kill Balan and scare the heroes, and arranges for soldiers to go arrest the heroes a few minutes after Pixis strikes. She expects the heroes to either flee on their own, or to be captured, in which case she can arrange for them to escape prison and be guided to Gallo, guaranteeing that Steppengard will strike out at one of his own nobles.

Mysterious Warning

While the heroes are getting dinner or otherwise relaxing, a tall gangly man approaches them. He looks nervously over his shoulder before leaning over and whispers, "You must leave! You are in danger!"

This is **Hrumbrand** (N male human bard 4). The heroes may recognize him from their audience with the king, though there was no music that day. If the heroes think to question his story, a Sense Motive check (DC 25) reveals that the man is under the influence of some enchantment, at which point a Spellcraft check (DC 28) reveals that he is under the influence of a *suggestion*.

The man avoids questions, saying that he can't be seen with them, but that people will try to kill them. If pressed he explains that the king is insane, and that has has sworn out an arrest warrant for the heroes, which amounts to an order of execution in these times. Their only chance of escape is to flee north to the lands of Duke Gallo, where Gallo can help them. If they leave tonight, Hrumbrand says, he'll have someone waiting at the north gate to let them out.

After delivering his message, Hrumbrand tries to bolt. Careful pursuit of him can discover that he returns to the castle, hands himself over to the guards, and is taken to the castle prison.

Silencing Balan (EL 8)

An assassin named Pixis enters the Golden Griffon, cases the joint, and sneaks into the heroes' suite in whatever way is most efficient. She uses a wand of *detect magic*, notices the *stone of alarm*, and so does not use the front door, perhaps coming in by cutting a hole in a window. Preparing for a fight, she drinks *potions of darkvision*, *mage armor*, and *magic fang* so she can still sneak attack in the darkness.

Because the suite might have more or fewer rooms based on the size of the heroes' party, design the battleground appropriately. The suite's common room is at least 20 feet by 30 feet, with a large window opposite the door that leads to the rest of the inn. The side of the room nearest the window has a table and a bookshelf. Bedrooms adjoin the common room, each 10 feet by 10 feet with a bed and wardrobe. There is also a restroom with plumbing and running water from a roof cistern. Each door has a lock (Open Lock DC 25).

Pixis sneaks in, moves silently, and opens doors one by one until she locates Balan or is detected. She takes 10 on her Move Silently checks, so the heroes must succeed a Listen check (DC 24) to hear her, with a –10 penalty if they are asleep, and a further –5 if their door is closed. They receive a new check each time she opens another door.

Once Pixis locates Balan, she tries to render him unconscious with a flurry of blows which are sneak attacks. If she is able to knock Balan out before he is able to call for help, she drags him out of the room and hands him over to the soldiers, who carry him off to prison. Then she departs, her job done, though you can feel free to bring her back for later missions. She leaves the door cracked open, so the innkeeper eventually enters and sets off the *stone of alarm*, or otherwise awakens the heroes.

If at any point she is detected, she fights viciously, attempting to stun and then sneak attack with a flurry of blows, hoping to take out the heroes before they can swarm her. When things start to look bad she flees as best she can.

Pixis the Assassin (CR 8): hp 49, Appendix B.

Under Arrest

A few minutes after the heroes defeat Pixis, or when they attempt to leave the tavern, they are confronted by members of the Talon police force, come to arrest the heroes for conspiracy.

Police Forces (EL 12 and 14)

If the heroes do not come quietly, a fight breaks out in the street. If the heroes do not try to flee, Madness has arranged for a second wave of overwhelming force to take them down, using nonlethal attacks at first, and then following up with lethal damage until the heroes fall.

First Wave of Police (EL 12)

Steppengard soldiers (12) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B:
Steppengard commanders (2) (CR 5): hp 32 each, Appendix B.
Steppengard prelate (CR 7): hp 59, Appendix B.
Criosphinxes (2) (CR 7): hp 85 each, MM.

Second Wave of Police (EL 14)

Steppengard soldiers (32) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B:
Steppengard commanders (4) (CR 5): hp 32 each, Appendix B.
Steppengard prelates (2) (CR 7): hp 59 each, Appendix B.
Criosphinxes (4) (CR 7): hp 85 each, MM.

Curing the King

The King's madness is not the result of a curse, *per se*, but rather a unique magical poison that has altered his mind. This, combined with Steppengard's fragile mental state and trust in his advisor, allowed the trillith Madness to trick the king into undoing the protections granted him by the Book of Eight Lands. Madness offered the king solace in illusions and enchantments, taking away his grief, while at the same time twisting his thoughts toward insanity. At the beginning of the adventure His Majesty is only slightly unstable, but by the climax he practically has a second personality, one that desires only the destruction of those things he once loved.

The insanity can only be removed with *break enchantment* (caster level 11th), *greater restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish*. Should the heroes manage to do this early on, the adventure turns from battling against the king to tracking down Madness and taking revenge on her, and then fighting back the armies of the Ragesian Empire at Gallo's Fend.

Southern Patrol (EL 12)

Things can go many different ways in this encounter, but Madness wants the path of least resistance to guide the heroes north to Gallo, not south to Seaquen. Should the heroes head south, they will find the gate on alert, the roads crawling with soldiers and commanders, and the sky patrolled by criosphinxes.

Steppengard soldiers (8) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Steppengard commanders (3) (CR 5): hp 32 each, Appendix B.
Criosphinxes (3) (CR 7): hp 85 each, MM.

The force should not be lethal; if the heroes insist on trying to fight their way through, let them. Then have the soldiers call for reinforcements.

Northern Pursuit (EL 10)

If they head north as Madness wants, the gate is open for them, saddled light warhorses are waiting for them, and an eager-looking sergeant is waving them through and shouting good luck to them as they ride past. The horses have special cleated shoes for taking the icy river. It is 70 miles to the border of Gallo's land, which means a two-day trip if they follow the river, and then another 50 miles to Gallo's Fend. On the morning of the day after the heroes leave Bresk, they spot riders to the south, visible from three miles away as a dark blight on the snow. This patrol is pursuing them with orders to drive them northward and not catch up until they cross into Gallo's lands.

Once they do, the horses of the patrol will likely be near death, having been pushed for several hours each day, but nevertheless the heroes face a dangerous battle with their pursuers. However, a patrol from either Gallo or Dashgoban (use the same statistics either way) will join up with the heroes before they get close enough to engage Steppengard's forces.

Northern Patrol (EL 10)

Steppengard soldiers (8) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B:
Steppengard commander (CR 5): hp 32, Appendix B:
Light warhorses (9) (CR 1): hp 22 each, MM.
Criosphinx (CR 7): hp 85, MM.

Allied Patrol (EL n/a)

Dashgoban knights (4) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B:
Heavy warhorses (4) (CR 2): hp 30 each, MM.

Aftermath

If the heroes end up anywhere other than with Duke Gallo, they will be encouraged to seek his aid. Don't push it, however, if the players want to pursue a different goal. When they do reach Duke Gallo's lands they are given an escort by a mounted patrol. News of the assassination has reached the Duke, as well as rumors that Steppengard thinks Duke Gallo was somehow responsible. A homing pigeon delivered word about the heroes to the Duke, and now he wants to speak with them, to see if they might be able to help each other.

If the heroes turn themselves over to the authorities, or if they are defeated in their escape attempt, they are taken to prison. Unless the heroes manage to pull something amazing off, it should become apparent quickly that they are not here to await a fair trial, just an excuse for execution.

Castle Steppengard Prison

If captured, the heroes are all rendered unconscious by repeated beatings with saps, then divested of their gear. They are strip-searched and branded with a small mark near their left wrist, shaped like an X. *Lesser restoration*, *cure serious wounds*, or greater magic can remove the tiny scar. Everyone is dressed in baggy gray shirts and pants.

Mages are manacled in a unique device with cuffs that keep their hands closed like a fist, and they are gagged with a device similar to a boxer's bit. It distorts speech enough to make spells with a verbal component have a 50% chance of failing, but the character can still speak clearly enough to be understood. Either device can be removed with a Disable Device or Open Lock check (DC 25), or pulled apart with brute force (Break DC 25).

They are dragged into Cell F of Area 1 on the Castle Steppengard Prison map. The floors are covered in thick straw, and parts of the floor are warmed by some sort of heating apparatus, but the prison is still around 50 degrees at all times. Balan, if he lives, is not with the group, and is instead taken to Area 5 to be tortured for information by the inquisitor Torrax. As the group slowly regains consciousness, some of them hear what sound like screams coming from the floor, mixed with a chorus of soft hisses, but those noises are gone by the time the heroes fully regain consciousness.

If the heroes aren't interested in attempting to escape on their own for some reason, have strong, prepared guards carry one of them off,

chosen randomly, for torture by Torrax. Guards drag the hero into the torture chamber, pull Balan's body off the table, do something near the grate in the northeast corner, then open it and throw Balan's body down the pit. They close the grate, drag the hero to the torture table, and strap him down.

Torrax asks some questions, and when he thinks the hero is holding out he surgically removes a ligament from the prisoner's left knee, then closes the incision with *cure light wounds*. This renders the hero permanently unable to run, and halves his speed until he receives a *lesser restoration* or similar spell. After a few more questions, Torrax has the hero dragged back to his cell, hoping the sight of their crippled comrade will convince the other heroes to be more cooperative. See if the heroes don't change their minds then.

Area 1: Prison Cells

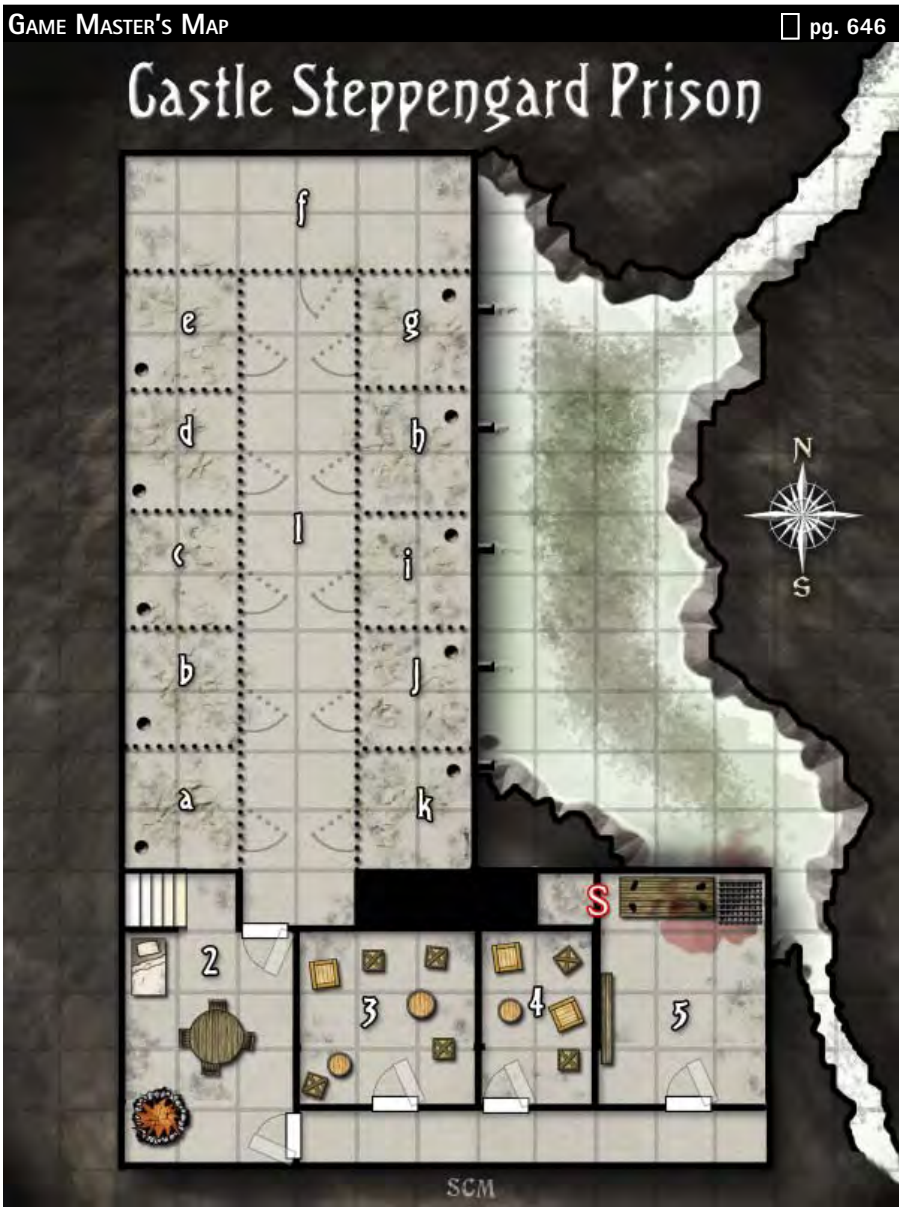
Area 1 has 11 cells. The heroes are all together in cell F. Proxy **Jinis** (LG male human aristocrat 6) is in cell E. The king's minstrel Hrumbrand is in cell G, and is gibbering madly, as though he has lost his mind. The other cells are empty, though only recently. The area is well-lit, however, by three *continual flame* spells cast along the ceiling of the central aisle.

The guards in Area 2 come by once every hour to check on the prisoners. The guards work in four-hour shifts, before being replaced by an identical group, including a prelate with fresh spells. During each check-up, the guards are protected by a prelate's *magic circle against chaos* or *protection from chaos*, warding off enchantment magic, which they expect is the most likely way prisoners will try to sneak out. Meals are brought by twice a day. Holes in the floor serve as latrines, and the intense stench suggests they do not go very deep. Things appear bleak.

Proxy Jinis engages the heroes in conversation once they awaken. He explains that he was fingered almost immediately as being involved in the assassination plot, and that from time to time he felt himself actually believing it, against his own free will, but he knows it is a lie. He suspects that Nina is responsible, or perhaps the Ragesians, or both in concert. Indeed, he has a lot of somewhat wild conspiracy theories of his own.

However, he recognizes the heroes as an avenue of escape, and he does his best to help them. He says that the only way to set things right is to get word to his lord, Duke Gallo, who can hopefully sway the other nobles to get King Steppengard away from his advisor long enough to cure him.

Game Master's Map pg. 646



Jinis knows that the heroes' gear is likely being kept on this level, beyond the guard's room, in Area 3. He knows that the latrine empties into the river, and that there is a grate to the latrine in the nearby torture chamber, though he would not be surprised if some sort of trap keeps people from sneaking in or out. Perhaps most importantly, he has a pair of knives and a fork, which he managed to keep from previous meals. These can serve as pitiful weapons, or as improvised lockpicks.

If the heroes mention his son Jineer, or manage to get him the letter (which would still be among their possessions in Area 3), Jinis thanks them deeply and excuses himself for a moment as he cries, happy to know that his son is safe. From that point on he will be a loyal companion to the heroes.

Jinis will gladly participate in any plan that seems to have a chance of success, up to and including full confession in order to get out of his cell, or sacrificing his own life. Jinis, a true patriot, is quite willing to die if he thinks there's a good chance it'll help restore his country.

Area 2: Guard Room (EL 8)

Area 2 is guarded by three Steppengard soldiers and a Steppengard prelate. Usually three play cards while the other naps. None of the guards have ranged weapons, and they only wear chain shirts with no shields (change their AC to 15).

Steppengard soldiers (3) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

Steppengard prelate (CR 7): hp 59, Appendix B.

This room is much warmer and brighter than the rest of the prison because of the large, open fire pit. The stairs lead up to barracks, but a heavy door at the top of the stairs will block the sound of combat.

The guards are a little gullible, and will fall for any of various "classic" escape tricks. If a fight does break out they do not immediately run for help, assuming they can handle the situation themselves. They would rather not let their superiors know they had failed, and won't flee until one of their number is dropped. Even at this point, the door at the top of the stairs is mysteriously locked, as Madness wants to make sure the rest of the castle guards aren't alerted.

Escaping unarmed could prove rather difficult. Encourage the heroes to improvise weapons, such as by prying out a loose brick, or snapping off a rusted bar for a makeshift club. This is a good time to reward mages who took the Eschew Materials feat, and monks and rogues in particular should have a chance to shine. Amusingly, perhaps the most powerful class ability in this scene would be a paladin's ability to summon his mount.

Areas 3 and 4: Supply and Storage

Area 3 holds gear that belongs to prisoners, an old practice held over from more peaceful times when most prisoners were nobles expecting to be quickly released. Their gear is locked up in chests, the keys to which are carried by the prelate. Any familiars and animal companions of Medium size or smaller would be kept here in cages (Open Lock DC 20). Larger creatures are kept elsewhere, and the heroes won't likely get a chance to retrieve them until Act Three.

Area 4 holds supplies, like blankets, pillows, food trays, wood for the fire, and so on.

Treasure

In addition to the heroes' gear, a scroll case in one of the chests in area 3 holds two scrolls of *mass cure light wounds*.

Area 5: Torture Chamber (EL 8)

Area 5 is a classic torture chamber, though somewhat small and poorly stocked. The shelves have numerous small hooks, implements of pain, and a 20-foot-long rope ladder, but the focus of the room is the table that serves as a stretching rack. Numerous blood stains lead from the table to the grate in the corner, from which an ominous chill radiates.

When the heroes reach this room, they find a horrifying sight. Balan's corpse is strapped to the rack and covered in tiny puncture wounds. On his open torso lies a notebook, written in Orcish, detailing the various procedures used to extract which bits of information about Seaquen's population and defenses. The front inside cover of the book is signed — a gift to Torrax from another inquisitor named Guthwulf. The inscription reads, "The road of education is painful. Enjoy it." A thorough reading of the book grants the reader a +5 bonus to Intimidate checks whenever he uses torture on a subject.

It appears that Balan gave up a great deal of information when tortured, though some of it appears to be fabricated. Torrax is nowhere to be seen now, however.

Escaping the room seems a simple matter of moving the grate in the northeast corner, but forcing it requires a Strength check (DC 28). More likely, the heroes will notice a blood-rusted latch which can be pried open with a little effort, allowing the grate to be lifted more easily (Strength DC 20). However, unless the heroes succeed a Search check (DC 28), they overlook that this latch is connected to the secret door in the northwest corner. If this connection is not overriden (either with a key the prelate carries, or with a DC 28 Disable Device check), lifting the grate opens the secret door.

Behind this door (which can be noticed itself with a DC 28 Search check) lurks the castle's oldest prisoner, a terrible mass murderer named Jutras, who had sought the crown of Dassen fifty years ago. For his crimes, he rose as a mohrg after being hung, and the malicious executioner decided to take advantage of the monstrosity rather than destroy him.

Now Jutras serves as a unique tool of torture, since many prisoners who do not fear for their lives fear for their souls when threatened with becoming one of the undead. Jutras has come to enjoy his role of causing pain, and does not try to escape. But if his private chamber is opened, Jutras expects to feed. Typically he will terrorize a prisoner and then finish him off, dumping the body into the septic tunnel where it eventually becomes a zombie.

Jutras, mohrg (CR 8): hp 91, MM.

When released, Jutras squeezes into the main room and strikes targets one by one, hoping to paralyze each so he can feed. However, if he manages to grapple a foe, he will take advantage of his position, attempting to drag the victim over to the grate and drop him into the septic tunnel.

During normal weather, the refuse-filled tunnel under the prison is filled with dozens of hungry zombies, kept in check by steel grates on either end of the chamber. The fierce winter, however, has frozen them in the muck, so that now only their arms and heads reach out. The pit drops twenty feet to the surface of the ice, and the cave ceiling is ten feet high.

Zombie Pit (CR 6)

Every 5-foot square of the cave under the prison is filled with two or three zombies, frozen in place, waiting quietly until something they might be able to eat walks by. The squares count as heavy undergrowth, requiring quadruple normal movement cost, and a creature that passes through one of these squares is attacked by bites, gropes, and slams (+2 melee, 1d6+1 damage). A creature ending its turn in this area is attacked once for each square that it occupies or that it is adjacent to.

Each square of zombies has AC 5, DR 5/slashing, and 16 hp, and counts as 4 HD of undead for the purposes of turning. "Turned" frozen zombies cannot flee, but they do stop attacking. Destroyed ones are annihilated, their bodies shattering like ice struck with a hammer.

Escape

The tunnel leading northeast out of the zombie pit is blocked by a steel grate, the lock of which has rusted away. All that is required is breaking the ice to get out. Then, after three hundred feet of tunnel, the frozen stream emerges at the edge of a graveyard, a long-abandoned place outside the walls of Bresk.

Observant heroes might notice a concealed tower hidden among trees, brush, and tall obelisk-like tombstones (Spot DC 15). The tower, 20 feet high and 20 feet in diameter, looks abandoned from the outside, but if the heroes get inside (Open Lock DC 30), the place is well-furnished with winter clothes, and looks like it has been in use recently. The windows of the tower provide good line of sight to the stream that leads out of the castle. Normally there would be a small contingent of guards here, but Madness had them dismissed from duty for the evening.

Less than half a mile away from the graveyard is the main body of the Nasham River, still frozen, and on the far bank is a small village named Macon where the heroes might acquire mounts and meager supplies for a journey. If they escaped with Proxy Jinis, he recommends they head north to Duke Gallo.

The Road to Gallo's Fend

Once the heroes reach Gallo's lands they are safe, and an escort of knights will lead them to Gallo's Fend. All along the way the towns the group stops at for the night are quiet, their citizens nervous, having heard rumors that Steppengard believes Duke Gallo a traitor. In addition to protecting the heroes, the knights, led by a dwarf named **Commander Hertiage** (N male dwarf commander 7), speak to the towns' leaders and priests, telling them to prepare their people for war, and to be ready to send troops to aid Gallo's Fend.

Commander Hertiage is a sturdy dwarf who has survived many battles after being laid low, such that he is reported by his men to be the luckiest dwarf alive. He's an outspoken supporter of Gallo and of the cause of Seaquen, and he pretends that his men have asked to hear their stories, when in truth Hertiage is the one who is most curious. He suspects the heroes are the sort of tough survivors he would get along with, and in the two or three days it takes to ride to Gallo's Fend, Hertiage will likely become fast friends with any warriors among the heroes, especially experienced, tough warriors.

For his part, Hertiage has a lot of stories to tell about fighting savages and the occasional Ragesian incursion over the past few decades. He's got a feeling that a good fight is coming, and he's glad to know the heroes are on his side.

Lore of Jutras

A Knowledge (history or nobility & royalty) check or bardic knowledge check (DC 20) recognizes Jutras by the crest on his rotted noble's outfit — a serpent coiling around a spear. A check that beats DC 25 recalls that Jutras was obsessed with the occult, and believed up until his execution that the bat-winged demon Ineluki was going to rescue him and reward him for his service to evil. Also, bizarrely, Jutras was horribly afraid of chickens, due to a prophecy he was once given by a drunken seer.

If the heroes claim to be here on behalf of Ineluki, Jutras desperately wants to believe his deliverance is here, so he immediately breaks off hostilities and asks what he needs to do. He is somewhat gullible, but will eventually realize if he is being tricked.

If the heroes create an illusion of a chicken, Jutras retreats for one round, and even after he realizes the chicken is fake he will take pains to stay away from it.

Act Two: Gallo's Fend

In this act, the heroes join forces with Duke Gallo, a Dasseni noble who agrees with Seaquen that the Ragesians must be stopped. Aware that Steppengard will send his armies to overthrow him, Gallo needs to call upon the aid of his fellow nobles. At Gallo's behest, the heroes set out to find evidence that the Ragesians are truly marching for war, and not simply to destroy Seaquen. Once they have such proof, the heroes must bypass roadblocks set up by Steppengard in order to reach Gallo's two neighboring nobles, Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor. In the climax, the heroes take part in a massive battle to defend Gallo's Fend from the army of King Steppengard.

The Shield of Dassen

Similar to Bresk, the city of Gallo's Fend is walled, built into a rocky rise of land with a river on one side. However the defenses here are much more substantial, since this is the most obvious route of approach into Dassen from the north. Gallo and his ancestors have defended against the Ragesians and others before them for hundreds of years, watching the Alydi Gap, a low pass through the Otdar mountains broad enough for an army to march in force. Other routes through the mountains are narrower, more easily defended by the numerous independent Dwarven lords who serve Dassen faithfully, but the Aldyi Gap is Dassen's most vulnerable point, so Gallo's Fend acts as a sturdy shield.

Gallo's Fend
LG Conventional Small City
Government Hereditary duchy
Purchase Limit 15,000 gp; **Assets** 5,250,000 gp
Population 7,000
Demographics mixed (55% human, 38% dwarf, 5% orc, 1% half-orc, 1% other)

The Nasham River here is roughly 500 feet wide, normally fed by many mountain streams, though in the fierce clutch of this late winter it remains frozen. An enemy army that reaches the bank of the river, however, will be bombarded by catapults and trebuchet fired from Gallo's castle, which is built on a 200-foot-high rise across the river. Rough cliffs prevent a direct assault. During normal weather, a small fleet of ships loaded with archers patrol the river, based in Stratendoch, the heavily defended waterfront of Gallo's Fend. During the winter, the docks are perhaps the weakest point in the fortress city's defenses.

Cliffs 100 feet high protect the city along the line of the river, while sturdy walls 40 feet high guard from a land assault. As impregnable as Gallo's Fend is, it would be useless if it could not actually threaten an enemy army passing through. Dwarven strongholds dot the northern cliffs along the Nasham River, as well as in the surrounding hills, many of them connected by masterfully hidden tunnels which can be collapsed if compromised by an enemy force. Likewise, just south of Gallo's Fend is Wicked Hill, which hides two dozen underground outposts beneath what appears to be simple farmland. Soldiers can pass between Gallo's Fend and these outposts using a network of tunnels, riding out to harry enemy forces, or pincering any army foolish enough to try to lay siege to the city.

Though vast underground storehouses hold enough food to support Gallo's Fend against prolonged sieges, the Otharil Vale is nevertheless the breadbasket of the area. Home to many retired soldiers turned farmers, these plains have been the site of four major battles in the past two hundred years.

The last major outpost in the Fend's defenses is Markhold, a squat fortress overlooking the river. It is large enough to serve as a fallback position for the farmers of Otharil Vale, and is manned by several hundred soldiers. An army that wants to cross the river would first have to get past Markhold, passing through the line of fire of its ranged weapons.

The armies of Gallo are as skilled with large field formations as they are in defending against sieges, and have never failed to stop an army that has managed to cross the Nasham River. Invaders cannot easily run past the defenses of Gallo's Fend, and attempting to sack the city itself is suicide.

Now, however, Gallo's Fend faces an assault from behind. Enraged at new "evidence" his advisor Nina Glibglammer has uncovered, King Steppengard intends to rally his nation's armies to destroy Duke Gallo, claiming that he is a traitor who threatens the safety of their entire nation.

Gallo knows that he could hold out against a siege, even one launched by his own king, but he knows that if he were in such a position he would be unable to deploy his forces in enough strength to keep the Ragesians from entering Dassen. His plan, then, is to meet his king on the field of battle, hoping for a swift victory. His own forces are likely not enough for this, but if he called upon his two nearest neighbors, Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor, he would have enough men to rebuke the

king, at which point he could demand surrender or peace talks. He can only pray the weather holds this unnatural chill a bit longer, or else a thaw will bring the Ragesians upon them when they are already wounded and exhausted.

Duke Gallo

As the heroes ride to Gallo's Fend they pass a small cavalry unit practices near the road in Otharil Vale, but most of the soldiers are on foot, fairly evenly split between humans and dwarves. Guards recognize Commander Hertiage and let the heroes in, at which pointed they are hurried toward the main castle. The city is bustling, everyone doing their best to prepare for coming battles.

The heroes are met at the entrance of the castle by Duke Gallo and his retinue.

Before the heavily fortified main gate of Gallo's castle waits a group of a dozen people. Soldiers and manservants flank a tall nobleman with blonde hair turning gray. He nods to you as you approach, then steps forward to shake your hands.

"I am Michael Gallo. If what the rumors say about you are true, you are welcome in my city. It's good to know there are people out there who aren't crazy enough to actually trust the Ragesians."

He waits for introductions, making sure to point out a manservant named **Rodger** (N male human expert 2), whom he will assign to answer their questions about Gallo's Fend and tend to their needs. If the heroes have arrived with Proxy Jinis, Gallo is overjoyed to see his friend and servant.

"Follow me inside, please," Duke Gallo says. "Your mounts will be tended to, and we'll get you rooms soon enough – outside the castle, sadly. We're already pretty filled up here. But I and my commanders will want to hear everything. As you can guess, it's hard to get reliable information out of Bresk right now."

The duke and his retinue turn to head into the castle, and Gallo waves for you to follow close. He pulls out a small metal case lined with cigarettes, takes one for himself, and offers the rest of you one if you'd like.

"The one thing we have heard – and maybe it's rumor, but I'm not going to risk not believing it – is that Steppengard is preparing to march his army here to take me down. He's still my king, even if he wants me dead, but he's making a major strategic mistake.



"I've read up on how this new Ragesian empress thinks, this Leska ... she's a tricky one. See, Coaltongue, you could rely on him to come in and conquer by force if he wanted your land, and if he made a treaty, well, he was an honorable man, even if he was a megalomaniac. But this 'Supreme Inquisitor?' She created a whole group of followers who wear masks. I think the only thing we can trust of her is that she lies.

"I tell you, by the dirt between my toes, the Ragesians aren't planning to just destroy a sweet little swamp town. They're here for Dassen too. I hope you kids are ready for a war."

Gallo leads the heroes to a small dining suite, where he serves drinks and fine food, and asks for the whole story until now. He says that he needs some time to think of his next move, so he asks that they let Rodger escort them to a small manor house down by the docks, where they're welcome to stay for as long as needed. He expects to send for them tomorrow morning, after he's had a chance to plan with his advisors.

He thanks them for coming, and promises that they can trust him. None of them want the Ragesians to get their way.

Around Gallo's Fend

The heroes have an evening to explore the city, though for now Rodger recommends they just get some rest, since they'll have time tomorrow to prepare for whatever lies ahead. Gallo's Fend has little in the way of entertainments this evening, though the heroes could have quite a shopping spree. Due to the immediate need for weapons and armor, such items can be sold for three-quarters of their normal value, instead of the usual half price for resales.

Gallo's Fend is clearly built to be a fortress. Even normal household windows are narrow, like arrow slits, and every child above the age of ten carries a sword or dagger. Most houses have guests these days, many of them recent refugees. Indeed, the manor house where the heroes stay is also home to five other foreigners, as well as a large staff that Gallo and Rodger both vouch for. Feel free to make some of these foreigners have a connection to the heroes' interests. Perhaps they are from Gate Pass, or are affiliated with some group the heroes are interested in.

The mood starts grim, but the food is full of strong cheese and juicy meat, and served in large portions. If the heroes make an impression this evening, perhaps by being encouraging to the frightened refugees, or by performing masterful music or acting, or simply with tales of their own adventures, word spreads, and within a few days the locals begin to recognize the heroes.

The Duke Needs a Favor

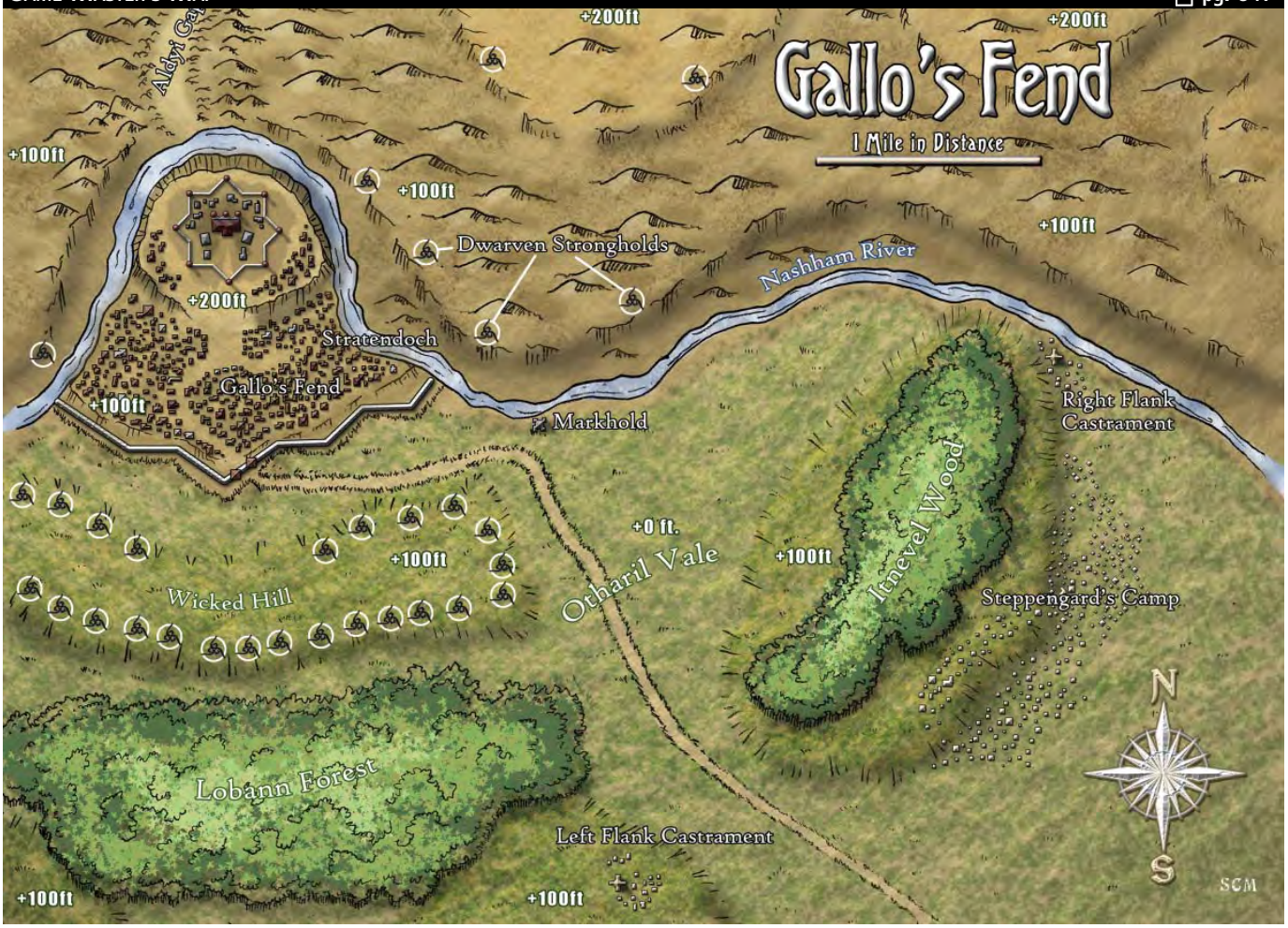
The next morning Gallo summons the party to the war room of his castle. If the heroes rescued Proxy Jinis, Gallo formally thanks the heroes before a gathering of his advisors, and gives them a promissory note worth 2,000 gp, which he suggests they use to prepare for their next mission. If the heroes delivered Jineer's letter to Proxy Jinis, the grateful father instead convinces Gallo to give the heroes a promissory note worth 4,000 gp.

Duke Gallo has a favor to ask them.

"Here's where we stand. Steppengard is marching an army of ten thousand, taking the frozen river northward so he can avoid the normal defenses along my border. Now, ten thousand men is a laughable number, really. I have nearly that many here in the city and in the various outposts in the area, and, as I'm sure you know, you need an attacking force three times as large as the defenders to hope to take an entrenched foe. Steppengard simply can't expect to actually take the city.

Duke Gallo – Art by Claudio Pozas

Game Master's Map pg. 647



"The problem is the Ragesians. The only thing holding them back is that the mountain passes haven't thawed yet. If Steppengard decides to lay siege to me, or even if he tries a frontal assault, he won't win ... but he'll weaken my defenses, making it easier for the Ragesians to get in. And by last count, the Third Ragesian Army numbers something like forty thousand soldiers.

"So we need to resolve this quickly. My commanders suggest that we face the king's forces in open battle. If we can win a decisive victory, we can force a surrender, and then I can escort him back to Bresk, summon the other nobles, and convince them that we have to unite and defend ourselves against the Ragesians.

"Steppengard will be here in a little more than a week. After that, I assume we have two weeks, three at most, before the Ragesians arrive. That should be enough time to sway the Council of Nine and get the necessary reinforcements here. Even if I lose a quarter of my men defeating Steppengard, with the aid of the rest of the kingdom we could easily hold the Gap.

"If we *lose* against the king, however, I suspect whoever's tricked him into thinking I'm responsible for the assassinations will also trick him into leaving the Gap undefended. So I can't risk losing this fight. Steppengard has the aid of units from three other nobles — Iz, Namin, and Megadon — and his army outnumbers my own by enough that, even though I like to think of my soldiers are the best in the land, I can't be certain we'll win without great losses.

"This is where you come in. I need to convince my neighbors, Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor, to join forces with me. I sent carrier pigeons requesting aid, but though I think both of them agree with me, it's likely they won't be ready to fight their own king simply because I ask them to. I need proof —proof that Ragesia has hostile intentions — and not much time to find it.

"Just across the river is the Alydi Gap. The Ragesians are going to have to come down that way, and if they really are planning to attack Dassen, as I suspect, they'll have to silence some of the watchposts I maintain along the mountain pass. I need a group who can ride up the pass quickly, check on the outposts, and look for signs of Ragesian activity. The men in the outposts would not have gotten news of what's happened here, so they might not have sent word even if they *had* spotted a few Ragesian scouts.

"You'll need to ride fast and hard, get any news there is to be had, and, if we're lucky, we'll find the Ragesians have slipped up. I'll need you to bring back two of the forward lookouts, because Timor and Dashgoban will want to talk to them personally. You aren't from around here, so you don't know how much we worry about setting off another civil war, so before they'll come to my aid, they'll need to see proof with their own eyes.

"Can I count on you?"

If the heroes agree to go to the mountain outposts, Gallo can provide them with directions, with sturdy and fast warhorses, and with a pair of *wands of cure light wounds*, which he expects them to use up completely if necessary. It is possible

to ride a horse to death, so the wand will keep the horses alive and running longer than would normally be possible.

Gallo expects them to leave immediately, as there is little time to spare, and can send servants to purchase anything they need for the trip (paid for with the heroes' coin) while his advisors brief them on the mission. Gallo recommends they bring along Commander Hertiage, whom the outpost soldiers will recognize.

If the heroes succeed a Diplomacy check (DC 20), they can convince Gallo to send four Gallo soldiers (Appendix B) on light warhorses with them. Any larger group, he says, would just get lost and slow itself down.

Hoofing It

If the heroes do not dally, they will be across the frozen Nasham River by 10 AM. There is an outpost every five miles up the Alydi Gap, the last one being thirty miles away, right at the border of Ragesia. The snowy mountain terrain slows their speed by half, so if the heroes hustle their horses they should be traveling at least 4 miles an hour, at which pace they could reach the final outpost in seven and a half hours of travel, dealing 95 points of damage to each of their horses. The heroes could expend fourteen charges of the wand of *cure light wounds*, on average, to keep a given horse alive during the run.

The weather remains cold the entire day. The heroes will need to rest their horses after eight hours, but could, if they push their horses to near death and manage to clear out the outpost in one evening, accomplish the mission in two days.

Alydi Gap Outpost

The heroes ride past five outposts, each hidden well up a cliffside, concealed behind brush, or carved out of the side of a mountain. At each outpost, the soldiers are shocked to hear the news of what is going on in their homeland, but none of them have seen any signs of Ragesians. Each fort has roughly the same garrison — a Gallo chaplain and eight Gallo soldiers. The chaplains always have *sending* prepared, so they can alert Duke Gallo with just ten minutes' notice.

They don't have much in the way of provisions, but the soldiers offer the heroes food and warm drink to keep them strong for their mission. Time after time the heroes push their horses, spot the next outpost, ascend warily, learn that there is no danger, and then must quickly turn back to the deep snow, the deathly cold, and the perilous paths of the frozen Alydi Gap.

Every hour, have one of the heroes make a Survival check (DC 15) to avoid pitfalls and false routes. (The character can take 10 on this check.) Each failed attempt requires a Reflex save (DC 15) for every horse and rider to avoid taking 2d6 points of damage from losing footing on a steep slope, being struck by falling rocks, stumbling into a small sinkhole, and so on.

As the heroes approach the sixth outpost, nothing looks out of place. At this point the heroes are barely ten miles from the border of Ragesia, and if they were to ride much further they would come upon the vast camp of the Third Ragesian Army, commanded by General Revulus, sprawled across the craglands of Chathus.

First, however, is the furthest outpost of the Kingdom of Dassen. Situated on a rocky spur one hundred feet high, the fortress is concealed from northern approach by a rolling ridge that rises even higher. On the southern side of the spur, switchbacks lead up a steep slope before reaching the plateau where the stone fort is constructed.

From the bottom of the mountain pass it is impossible to see the condition of the fort, so the heroes will likely have to ascend the steep switchbacks to the plateau.

An advance Ragesian party is already occupying the fortress. General Revulus is not certain Leska's ploy to destabilize Dassen will work, so he has dispatched small units of infiltrators to take over the garrisons along the path. They know that the garrisons are only relieved every month or two, and that relief is even more unlikely in winter, so the infiltrators just intend to stay put until the army is ready to march. Then they will advance ahead of the army, discreetly seizing outposts one by one, hopefully letting the Third Ragesian Army reach the southern edge of the Alydi Gap before the Dassen forces at Gallo's Fend are ready for them.

Ragesian Forces

In total, the forces at the outpost consist of two Ragesian infiltrators (LN male half-orc rogue 3/fighter 2), six Ragesian soldiers (LN male half-orc fighter 2), the inquisitor **Crona** (LE female orc cleric 4), and infiltration leader **Jaas** (LN male half-orc fighter 6), plus the occasional presence of **Wyvern Knight Stonum** (LN male human fighter 6) and his mount **Dractyl** (male wyvern).

If the heroes traveled at the expected pace, they likely arrive just before sunset. Stonum and Dractyl have been responsible for delivering supplies to the infiltrators, and they only fly at night, to avoid being spotted by random travelers. If the heroes wait until midnight, the knight and his wyvern depart.

The outdoor trails are covered in light snow, which does not impede movement. Off the trail the ground has thick snow, which counts as difficult terrain. A few scattered trees offer an option for a stealthy approach, though the climb is difficult because of the snow (Climb DC 15).

At Ease Positions

If the heroes manage to sneak up on the fort, there is one infiltrator, one soldier, and Dractyl the wyvern on the roof. The inquisitor Crona is in the office in room H. Five soldiers, infiltration leader Jaas, and Wyvern Knight Stonum lounge in the barracks in room I. One infiltrator walks the length of hallway F, keeping an eye on area E through the arrow slits.

On Alert

Once the alarm is sounded, one soldier goes down from the roof, alerts everyone in the fort, then returns to the roof after two rounds. It takes Wyvern Knight Stonum five rounds to reach the roof and mount up. The second infiltrator and a second soldier also heads to the roof, so there are four archers to harry the heroes' approach.

Jaas and Crona set up in hallway F behind the soldiers, directing the fight and lending aid without getting in range of enemy attacks. The following descriptions assume the fort is on alert.

Approaching the Fort

The infiltrator lookout on the roof of the fort remains hidden (Spot DC 18, modified by range), and his Spot check to notice heroes coming up the switchbacks is 16, enough to spot a group of travelers before they even begin their ascent if they do not use stealth. The lookouts all have darkvision, but if the heroes approach at night they should be able to get closer before they even have to worry about being seen.

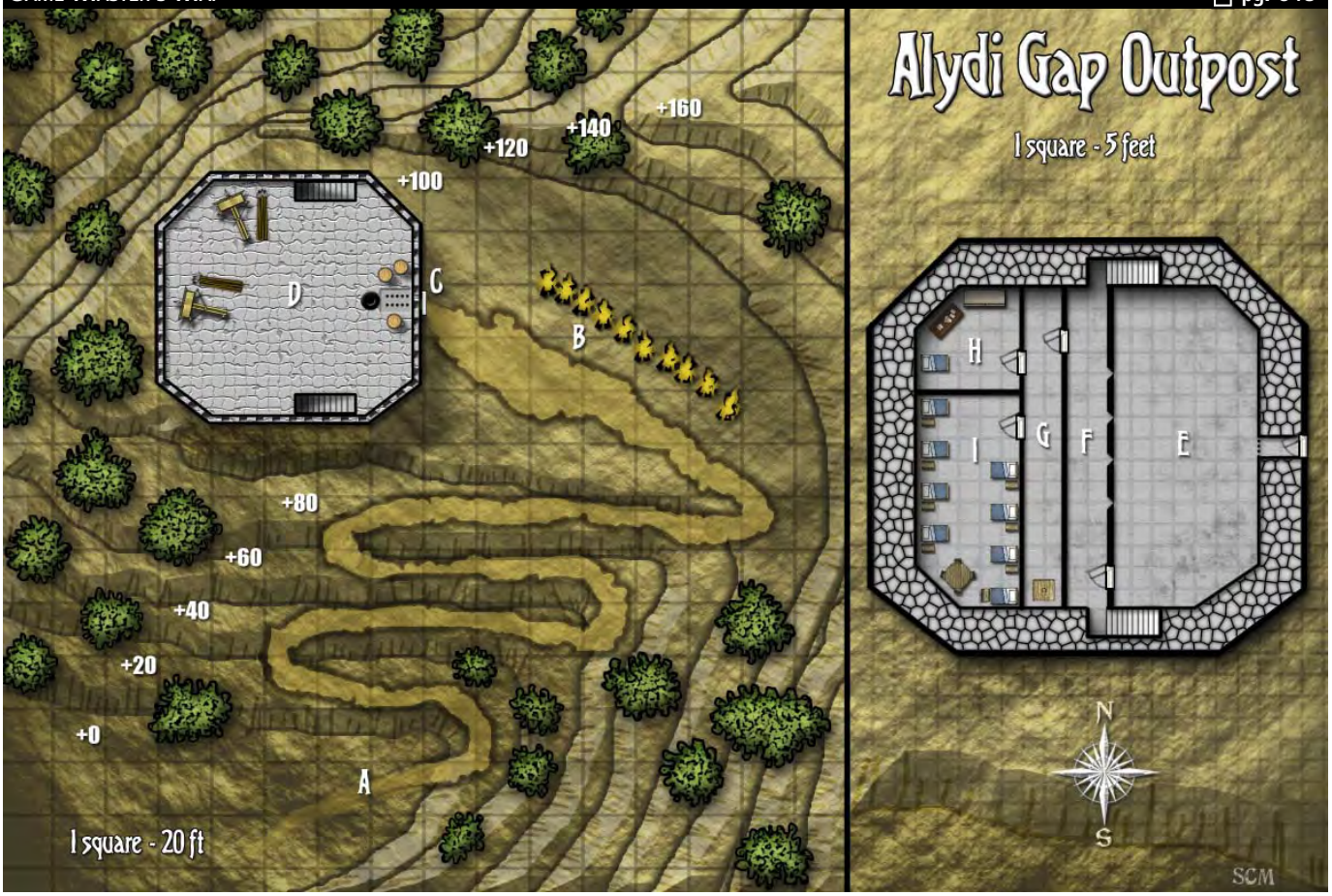
Area A: Switchback Trail

The switchback trail counts as a gentle slope, but is 560 feet long from the base of the cliff to the plateau. Because of the hill's slope, characters on the switchbacks have no cover against attacks made by enemies at the top of the plateau or atop the fortress.

Area B: Torchlit Approach (EL 8)

Alongside the trail on the plateau is a line of torches, laid out 5 or 10 feet apart. They have all burned out at this point, but every other night the Ragesian soldiers light fresh torches to let the wyvern rider who delivers their supplies

Game Master's Map pg. 648



spot the outpost from the air. There is no cover here, making sneaking up to the outpost nearly impossible during daylight.

If the heroes take more than 5 rounds to enter the fort after being spotted, Stonum and Dractyl take flight from the roof of the fort, circling over the plateau and switchbacks. Stonum spends two rounds softening his foes with crossbow fire, then has Dractyl swoop in and try to snatch a foe with the aid of his *hurling bracers*. If his foes are ever in a nice cluster, he'll drop his dragonbomb.

Stonum, Ragesian wyvern knight (CR 6): hp 50, Appendix B.

Dractyl, wyvern (CR 6): hp 59, MM.

Area C: Fort Entrance (EL 4)

The entrance to the fort is a single iron door (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 30) that opens to a 10-foot-long narrow hallway. An iron portcullis (hardness 10, hp 60, Lift DC 25; Disable Device DC 20 and 2d4 rounds) blocks entrance into area E, the shooting gallery. Murder holes in the roof make this entrance perilous.

Murder Hole Trap (CR 4)

Above the entrance hallway are murder holes: slots through which barrels of deadly iron shot can be dropped. As a full-round action, a character on the roof can load a barrel, then, as a standard action, throw a lever, opening the slots and dumping the shot on anyone in the hallway. The shower of iron deals 4d6 points of damage (Reflex half DC 15) to each character in the hallway. Disabling this device is easy (Disable Device DC 10, 1 round), but the character must be able to reach a mechanism 15 feet off the ground. *Hold portal* could be used to keep the murder holes from opening.

Area D: Roof (EL 7)

Short on staff, Infiltration leader Jaas has one infiltrator and one soldier on the roof at any given time. Additionally, dractyl the wyvern lounges here. However, when on alert the other infiltrator and a second soldier go to the roof.

Ragesian infiltrators (2) (CR 5): hp 32 each, Appendix B.

Ragesian soldiers (2) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

The infiltrators and soldiers take potshots with their bows every round, using their move actions to hide behind the crenelations, which grant cover. If the heroes are swift, Dractyl might still be here, but he does not join the fight without his rider unless he is attacked first.

The roof of the outpost has two *+1 dragonbane ballistae*, intended to shoot down dragons, wyverns, and similar aerial creatures. A single creature can operate the gears to aim the siege weapon, but its massive size incurs a –4 penalty to a Medium user's attack roll, or –6 to a Small user, and reloading takes two full-round actions for creatures smaller than Large. There are twenty ballista bolts for each of the weapons. A normal, non-magical ballista is a simple weapon that deals 3d8 damage, has a critical threat of 19–20/×2, and a range increment of 120 feet. The ballistae cannot fire below the level of the roof.

If the heroes are having trouble taking out Stonum and Dractyl, encourage them to come up here. A bardic knowledge or Knowledge (history) check (DC 25) reminds them that these outposts are particularly well-equipped for shooting dragons out of the sky.

Area E: Tower Entrance (EL 6)

The largest room of the fortress is an attacker's nightmare: a shooting gallery for bow-wielding defenders. Four arrow slits face into the room, and within four rounds of spotting the heroes, the Ragesian soldiers set up in Area F, bows trained on the entrance. An iron door (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 30) leads from the shooting gallery to the first hallway. The arrow slits provide superior cover (+8 AC, +4 Reflex, and improved evasion).

Ragesian soldiers (4) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

Area F: First Hallway (EL 7)

If the heroes make it into the first hallway, the archers drop their bows, ready their shields, and draw their axes. Inquisitor Crona lends her modest antimagic abilties to try to thwart area-attack spells, and Jaas shouts up the northern staircase for the warriors on the roof to come down the southern staircase to flank the intruders. The infiltrators, in particular, will be keen to come at the heroes from behind, even being willing to leap off the roof and come in through the front entrance.

Inquisitor Crona (CR 4): hp 30, Appendix B.
Jaas, Ragesian infiltration leader (CR 6): hp 50, Appendix B.

Area G: Second Hallway

This hallway ends with a wooden trap door that leads to the basement. The basement is too crowded for fighting, and only has mundane supplies.

Area H: Chaplain's Chamber

Once the chaplain's room, the inquisitor Crona lives here now. She has a duffle bag beside her bed with more "normal-looking" clothes than what she wears when she is trying to play the role of intimidating inquisitor. On the dresser next to the bed is a printed book, propaganda published by the Ragesian Empire denouncing the various other nations and aggrandizing the destiny of Ragesia.

Area I: Barracks

The normal soldiers sleep here. In the pack of Infiltration Commander Jass is a series of orders. These simply amount to: "Take the first outpost, then stay put, receiving supply drops every other day. When we learn of the success or failure of Madness, our weather mage associates will break the winter over the Alydi Gap. When the thaw begins, prepare to take additional outposts."

The gear of all the original occupants has been carried away by previous wyvern knights, taken to the main army.

Aftermath'

The papers with commander Jass's orders will prove more than enough to convince Timor and Dashgoban that the Ragesians are planning an invasion. The heroes should hurry back to Gallo's Fend to prepare for the next stage of their mission.

Two Missions

When the heroes return with evidence that Leska's forces are imminently going to invade they are immediately ushered into a conference chamber at the castle. Chaplains tend to their wounds, and they are assured that grooms are at work making sure their horses are ready for another trip, if necessary.

Inside the conference chamber are Duke Gallo and an assortment of commanders and advisors, looking at a table map depicting Gallo's lands as a topographical model. They are discussing ways

Other Solutions

If the heroes limit themselves to conventional methods, they must race time in order to get word to Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor. However, a little creativity or magic can quickly skip over a large portion of this act.

It should still be necessary to explore the Alydi Gap outposts. The two nobles are canny enough to see through bald lies, and will not appreciate attempts to trick them. They each have good Sense Motive skills, and with the aid of their advisors it's unlikely the heroes can deceive them at all.

Scrying may seem like an option to avoid having to ride up the Gap to get proof, but the guards at the outpost that has been seized are all dead, so the spell will fail. The characters might still try to scry the Ragesians, with a slim chance of success.

Once they verify the Ragesians are there, the heroes could split up, delivering the message to the two nobles more swiftly, but increasing the dangers on the road. They might use *sending* to contact the nobles, though this alone will not get them to commit their forces unless the heroes managed to make their proxies in Bresk helpful through Diplomacy. It is, after all, hard to be persuasive with only 25 words; attempting to this imposes a –10 penalty on any applicable Diplomacy check.

Of course, the focus of this act is the battle at Gallo's Fend, so if the heroes find a clever method to circumvent traveling and delivering messages, reward them for overcoming the challenges, and let the battle begin.

Timeline of Steppengard's Assault

The heroes arrive at Gallo's Fend on Day 0. Steppengard's army is ready to march on Day 1. The army passes Pitchwood on Day 4 and reaches the outskirts of Gallo's Fend on Day 8. The first attack occurs around noon on Day 9.

Delay the departure by 1 day for every proxy or noble among Lord Iz, Lord Megadon, and Lady Namin whom the heroes made Friendly, and by 2 days for each they made Helpful.

The heroes set out to the Alydi Gap Outpost on Day 1. If they hurry, they can return by the evening of Day 2.

It is 100 miles from Gallo's Fend to Lord Dashgoban's capital if they take the road, or 60 miles if they either go through Pitchwood or risk traveling on the river, which is patrolled. It is 80 miles from Gallo's Fend to Lady Timor's capital if they take the road, or 40 miles if they scale the Glaskeel Cliffs. It is 120 miles from Lord Dashgoban's capital to Lady Timor's capital if they take the road, or 80 miles if they go through Pitchwood and up the Glaskeel Cliffs.

It takes Lord Dashgoban's forces 5 days to muster and reach Gallo's Fend. It takes Lady Timor's forces 3 days to muster and reach Gallo's Fend.

If the heroes come up with a plan to delay the king's forces, such as by burning pitch on the river, this delays the battle at Gallo's Fend by 2 days.

Assuming that the heroes use light warhorses and travel 40 miles a day (by pushing their mounts a little, and using modest healing magic to keep them going), the heroes could easily travel 60 miles from Gallo's Fend to Dashgoban through Pitchwood, arriving around noon on Day 4, which would mean Lord Dashgoban's forces would reach Gallo's Fend just in time to join the battle. If the heroes then traveled 80 miles up the Glaskeel Cliffs to Timor, they could arrive in the afternoon of Day 6, which is not quite fast enough for Lady Timor's forces to reach Gallo's Fend before the battle joins. However, the heroes could still travel the 40 miles back to Gallo's Fend in time to be ready.

Time is short, but if the heroes are competent, and managed to sway a few of the opposing proxies at Steppengard's court, or if they have the presence of mind to slow the army's advance up the river, they should get back to Gallo's Fend, with reinforcements, with time to spare.

to slow down Steppengard's advance. A human advisor is in favor of ordering Pitchwood Burg — a small town in Dashgoban's territory on the banks of the Nasham river — to spread this year's harvest of pitch over a large section of the river and ignite it, melting the river. This would slow Steppengard's forces, but would be financially devastating for the people of Pitchwood, even if Gallo could convince them to do it. At this point Gallo turns his attention to the heroes and asks them what their news is.

Once Gallo hears the news and sees their evidence, he quickly works with the heroes to come up with a course of action on how to activate the mutual defense pacts he has with Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor. He sees the best chance of success if the heroes can escort his proxy (Jinis if the heroes escaped with him; otherwise a man named Makhesson) first to Lord Dashgoban, then to Lady Timor, stopping along the way to convince the people of Pitchwood to melt the river. However, he'll accept any plan that sounds like it will work, and his advisors can quickly calculate how long it should take the heroes to take a given path. If the heroes do take along Gallo's proxy, the man has a +19 bonus to Diplomacy checks.

Gallo is reluctant to send traditional couriers, because Steppengard likely has Talon soldiers watching the border roads to make sure Gallo cannot get any aid against the invasion. Instead, to assure swift contact with Dashgoban, the heroes could ride through Pitchwood, shaving a day off their trip, though they would have to face the dangers of the fey pitchlings. Likewise, to quickly reach Lady Timor the heroes could scale the half-mile high Glaskeel Cliffs, bypassing the long winding roads which will no doubt be blockaded.

If the heroes do not volunteer, Gallo will ask them. If they refuse, it is very likely no aid will reach Gallo's Fend.

Path through Pitchwood (EL 8)

Pitchwood is a dense forest of pitch pines that stretches between the Otdar mountains and the Nasham River, along the border between Lord Gallo and Lord Dashgoban's lands. Normal traffic goes around its edges, because of a tribe of fey called pitchlings who harrass travelers through their woods.

A bardic knowledge or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 14) lets the heroes know that the pitchlings are immune to fire damage, and that they only speak Sylvan, not common. A DC 19 check alerts the heroes to a mild defense they can use to avoid being ambushed. If the heroes hold unlit torches as they ride through the woods, as soon as a pitchling gets within 100 feet the torches will spontaneously light. Pitchlings like to ambush, so if the heroes use this torch trick, they have an opportunity to call out and speak to the fey before a fight can begin.

The straightest path through Pitchwood is a 15-mile road, where various unfriendly lurk to rob, harrass, or kill interlopers. The trees are thick, the road narrow and overgrown, and the shadows of the woods abuzz with eerie noises, like a mixture between giggles and thick, greasy dripping sounds. When the heroes are about 5 miles into the woods, a group of six pitchlings come in for an ambush. If they get within 30 feet without being seen, they attack the intruders, intending to take the pretties for themselves. If they are spotted, or if the heroes use the torches trick, the pitchlings hesitate for a minute, waiting to see if the heroes talk to them before they attack.

Pitchlings (6) (CR 3): hp 18 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

If the pitchlings manage to sneak up on the heroes, they start by unleashing *entangle* and *deep slumber* spells, likely taking out horses rather than heroes. Then they shout in broken Common, "Leave money and stuff! You go or we burn you!" They start as Hostile, but if made Unfriendly they'll back off and not fight.

The plant life in Pitchwood is highly flammable, though burning areas do not spread. Any fire damage ignites the plants in a particular square, which burns for 1d4 rounds before smoldering out.

Development

Before or after a fight, the heroes might try to talk to the pitchlings. Clever heroes can use the pitchlings as a weapon against Steppengard. While the majority of Steppengard's forces are traveling along the frozen Nasham River, the ice is not strong enough to support his siege weapons, so they will have to travel through Pitchwood. The heroes could try to get the pitchlings to attack the siege weapons.

Because the pitchlings hate outsiders anyway, they only start as Indifferent to this idea. If made Helpful, they will harrass Steppengard's forces as they deliver the siege weapons through their forest. The results of this are detailed in the section "Battle for Gallo's Fend" (see page 124).

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes get the aid of the pitchlings against Steppengard, reward them for a CR 4 encounter.

Castle Dashgoban (EL 7)

Once through the Pitchwood, only twenty miles separate the heroes from the home of Lord Dashgoban. Dashgoban's castle is built into a stone outcropping steaked with old erosion from rain so that it looks like a great monster clawed rents in the side of the rock. There is no surrounding city, just scattered farms and villages.

Dashgoban's cavalry are practicing maneuvers as the heroes arrive; if they stop to talk, they learn that the soldiers are relieved Gallo's messengers have finally arrived. The warriors of Dashgoban are eager for a fight, but their lord will not let them march until he receives a formal request.

Lord Dashgoban is a pale-haired, aging dwarf with a soft beard. He styles himself a great commander, though he admits he lacks Duke Gallo's experience. He does not like the rule of King Steppengard, but he's not a fool, and he will not send his men to war unless he can be convinced such a course of action benefits him.

If the heroes already managed to make Dashgoban's proxy at the royal court Helpful, all they have to do is show him the evidence from the Alydi Gap outpost, ask for his aid, and then share a drink with him, and the proud Lord Dashgoban will immediately order the one thousand cavalry and two thousand foot soldiers he has mustered to march to join the forces at Gallo's Fend.

Otherwise, Dashgoban's attitude matches whatever level the heroes managed to sway his proxy to. The heroes will have to attempt more diplomacy to convince him to join the fight.

Ad-Hoc Experience

Reward the heroes for a CR 7 challenge if they secure Lord Dashgoban's aid quickly enough for his forces to reach Gallo's Fend before the battle.

Delaying Steppengard (EL 4)

The town of Pitchwood Burg lies squeezed between the southern border of the forest and the Nasham River. It is one of several towns that harvest pitch from the forest, having made loose agreements with the fey not to harm each other.

Pitchwood Burg
N Conventional Hamlet
Government Town elder
Purchase Limit 100 gp; **Assets** 1,500 gp
Population 300
Demographics isolated (96% human, 2% dwarf, 1% halfling, 1% other)

If the heroes pass through the town, they might try to convince the townsfolk to spread their harvest of pitch on the river and ignite it when Steppengard's army is less than a day away. This will melt the ice and leave it weak for days, delaying Steppengard's arrival in Gallo's Fend by two days. However, to do so, the heroes will have to sway the town elder, **Father Albert** (N old male human cleric 4). He starts as Unfriendly to the plan, and must be made Helpful before he agrees, since enacting the plan will cripple the town financially, and might provoke Steppengard's wrath.

If the heroes offer compensation to the tune of 300 gp, they get a +5 bonus to their Diplomacy check, since that will feed everyone in the town for a few weeks. A payment of 1,000 gp or more grants a +10 bonus. If the heroes bring a letter from Lord Dashgoban giving the dwarf's blessing to the plan, that provides a further +10 bonus.

Alternately, if the heroes befriended the pitchlings, they might be able to convince the fey to melt the river. Doing so would likely require some test of cunning or skill, perhaps besting a pitchling in an archery competition, or in a "fire hurling" contest, where the contestants take a ball of pitch in their hands, light it, and throw it as far as possible.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes manage to melt the river and delay Steppengard's march, reward them for a CR 4 encounter.

Scaling the Glaskeel Cliffs

The heroes' journey to recruit Lady Timor to aid Lord Gallo's forces has two main options. They could take the main road, in which case they would run into a blockade of Steppengard forces, or they could attempt to scale the Glaskeel Cliffs, avoiding the road entirely and heading straight to the plateau upon which Timor's castle is built.

Steppengard Blockade (EL 9)

A force of the Talon, Steppengard's new police, watch the roads, and have specific orders to stop couriers from traveling out of Gallo's lands. If the heroes take the road, at one point they reach a bridge across one of the many gorges on the border of Lady Timor's land. The stone bridge is twenty feet wide and sixty feet long, and as the heroes reach the middle of the bridge, several soldiers ride out from a copse of trees on the far end, demanding the heroes stop and identify themselves. Meanwhile, a troll mercenary who has been lurking under the bridge climbs up and blocks off the heroes' path of retreat.

Steppengard soldiers (6) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Steppengard commander (CR 5): hp 32, Appendix B.
Rip, troll mercenary (CR 6): hp 83, Appendix B.

Rip is one of four troll mercenaries working for Steppengard. If the heroes kill him here, he won't appear at the Battle for Gallo's Fend.

Scaling the Cliffs (EL 7)

The Glaskeel Cliffs form a natural border between Lady Timor's lands and Lord Gallo's. The cliffs are almost a half mile tall, with few trustworthy ledges, and sharp, shearing winds. Caves pock the cliffs, but these do not provide a swifter route past the obstacle of the cliffs.

The cliffs are 2,500 feet high, and are constantly subject to severe winds, enough to check Medium climbing creatures, or buffet Medium flying creatures back and forth along the wall. While the heroes may still possess Indomitability's boon, and thus would not be affected by intense winds, if they are trying to bring along a proxy it will be difficult to make fast progress.

Persistent heroes could simply *fly* over the cliffs. Ascent through the wind is at half speed (30 feet, or 20 feet if encumbered), but a character could double move, traveling 600 feet per minute (400 feet if encumbered). At the heroes' current level, they could manage to make it, though on the way up they would be tossed about by winds, and would probably arrive airsick. However, this assumes the party can spare a *fly* spell for each hero.

Climbing is tough (Climb DC 20, because the surface is slippery), and though a mountaineer can cut hand-holds in the icy cliff face with a hatchet (reducing the DC to 15), such a route might simply be beyond some groups. If every hero has a climber's kit and they are all tied off to each other, an experienced climber can aid his allies, so that as long as they do not have a Strength penalty they should be able to ascend at least five hundred feet an hour. But the heroes would need to have their armor stowed, and would still have to contend with the wind slowing them down.

Once the heroes reach 400 feet, have them make Spot or Survival checks (DC 15) to notice signs that the area they are climbing is inhabited by some sort of brachiating creature. If the heroes make a great deal of noise in the area, they alert a territorial girallon, who clambers across the cliff and tries to get rid of the interlopers by grabbing them and throwing them off. Alternately, the heroes might attract a cruel hieracosphinx, whose only goal will be to knock the heroes to their deaths, just to listen to them scream as they fall.

Girallon (CR 6): hp 58, MM.
Hieracosphinx (CR 5): hp 67, MM.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes succeed in traveling over the Glaskeel Cliffs (even if they use magic), reward them for a CR 7 challenge.

Castle Timor (EL 7)

Lady Timor's castle is just a mile from the edge of the Glaskeel Cliffs, an easy walk on foot. Consisting of a cluster of over a dozen towers, surrounded by moats and connected by bridges, rooftops patrolled by mages trained for war, the castle of Lady Timor is easily the most magically gifted in Dassen. She styles herself as a young archmage, and lives in a tower of her own. She receives the heroes on a seventh-floor balcony, magically warmed, overlooking the snowy Glaskeel Cliffs.

Like Lord Dashgoban, Lady Timor's attitude matches whatever the heroes managed to sway her proxy to. Even if she does want to help, she takes her time reviewing the heroes' stories, and if they provide her with the written orders of the Ragesian infiltration commander she has them taken away by a diviner to verify they are legitimate.

Additionally, Lady Timor has heard rumors about the heroes, and wants them to answer some of her questions. Depending on how the heroes resolved adventure two, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*, Lady Timor may be somewhat irritated with the heroes. If the forest's fires ended because of the heroes' actions, she asks about their passage through the fire forest, and then laments the fact that now there is a second opening through which the Ragesians can invade Dassen. Once the Second Ragesian Army conquers Gate Pass, they will be able to simply march through the now burnt-out Innenotdar valley and emerge in the northern reaches of Timor lands. This does not incur any penalty to Diplomacy with Lady Timor, but she wants them to know that their actions may have jeopardized her land and her people.

If the heroes make her Helpful, she commits a division of fifty mages, an escort of eight hundred foot soldiers and two hundred cavalry, and a particularly precious elemental ally to the defense

of Gallo's Fend. Additionally, to ensure that the heroes can get back to Gallo swiftly, she has several of her mages escort them to the edge of the cliffs and cast *fly* on them, which lasts more than long enough for the heroes to return to the bottom of the cliffs.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes secure Lady Timor's aid, reward them for a CR 7 encounter.

War Plans

When the heroes return to Gallo's Fend, the armies of King Steppengard might already be preparing to assault the city, or might still be several days away. Regardless, most of the villagers in Otharil Vale have abandoned their homes, retreating to a tent city between Markhold and Wicked Hill. Duke Gallo welcomes any news that aid is on its way, and thanks the heroes deeply for the assistance they have lent. He promises to defend Seaquen against the Ragesians in payment for their honorable behavior.

However, there is still a battle to be won. Gallo half-jokingly says that if they leave now they'll regret not being the ones who save the day. Instead, he suggests, they should fight alongside his forces, and those of Dashgoban and Timor.

Gallo is still the ruler of his land, and while he'll consider suggestions by the heroes, he already has his overall battle plan drawn up. He will, however, offer the heroes several choices in what allies serve with them in the coming battle.

Steppengard's Forces

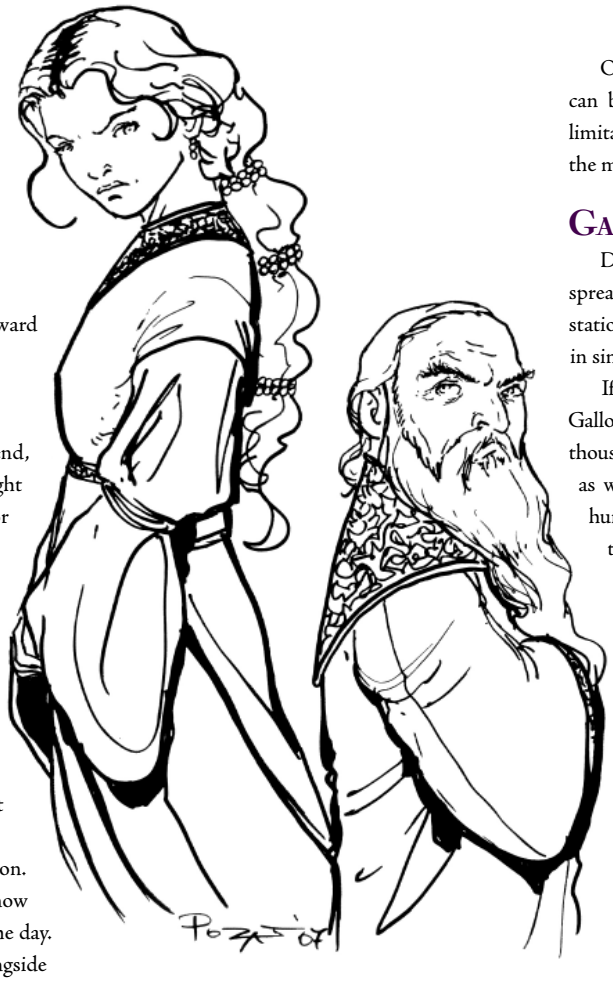
Steppengard's army is commanded by **Konigsmarshal Malkan** (LN male old human commander 12), under the supervision of Advisor Nina Glibglammer. The war wizard **Kelkin Thravanvost** (LN male middle-aged dwarf evoker 9), trained in Gabal's combat techniques, will be directing the army's magical forces. King Steppengard himself remains at his castle in Bresk.

Malkan commands roughly ten thousand soldiers, drawn from the lands of Steppengard, Iz, Megadon, and Namin. He also fields a variety of monstrous mercenaries. Stats for all the foes the heroes will face are presented in the Appendix, but feel free to add new types of foes if the heroes manage to defeat their foes easily and want to aid other companies of soldiers.

The Steppengard army is camped behind Itnevel Hill, with various lookouts watching from the woods. Malkan's command tent lies in the center of the camp, and not far away is the tent of Nina Glibglammer. A representative of each of the three assisting nobles — Iz, Megadon, and Namin — stay in their own section of the camp, near their own forces.

The war mage Kelkin likes his isolation, so his tent is at the edge of the main camp, atop Itnevel hill, near the woods. Malkan was only able to convince the mage to have a small force of guards, which worries the Konigsmarshal, because Malkan's presence is critical to maintaining the allegiance of some of their units. Malkan has under his control a beautiful *charmed* gynosphinx named Nashara, and the dozens of criosphinxes who serve with the army do so primarily to win the female sphinx's favor. If Malkan lost control of Nashara, there is a good chance the criosphinxes would abandon the fight.

The two flanks of the camp are watched by two clusters of castraments — temporary dirt forts which are excavated on site, each less than 100 feet square, with 10-foot-high walls surrounded by a 10-foot-deep ditch, set with sharpened wooden spikes. These castraments help ensure that Gallo's forces will not try to flank around the hill.



Timor and Dashgoban ~ Art by Claudio Pozas

Only about a quarter of Steppengard's forces can be effectively fielded at a time due to the limitations of the terrain, so during major combat the majority of the soldiers will stay in reserve.

Gallo's Forces

Duke Gallo commands ten thousand soldiers, spread throughout Gallo's Fend, many of them stationed in the hidden forts on Wicked Hill or in similar bunkers throughout Otharil Vale.

If the heroes earned the aid of Lord Dashgoban, Gallo is bolstered by one thousand cavalry and two thousand infantry. If Lady Timor is sending aid as well, this adds fifty **Timor war mages**, eight hundred infantry, and two hundred cavalry, plus the elder xorn **Tupof Dzequifs (see MM)**.

Gallo has a wide variety of siege weapons in place, allowing him to control the distance at which the battle begins. He plans to strand Steppengard's lines out in the fields of Otharil Vale, where they will be vulnerable to mass archery from Gallo's reserve units. The Duke intends to keep only a minimal number of troops behind in the city, choosing instead to deploy the majority of his forces along a line stretching roughly a mile, just southeast of Markhold and Wicked Hill. Since his forces will be close to safe havens, it will be easy for him to swap units in and out, keeping fresh soldiers busy putting pressure on Steppengard's lines.

The Heroes' Role

Gallo's forces are under the control of various high commanders, with individual commanders in charge of groups of between twenty and fifty soldiers. Gallo wants the heroes to be part of one of these groups, though he will only offer to let them command one if they possess the proper demeanor for command.

Commander Hertiage will serve alongside the heroes, and if the heroes do not want to be in charge of their division, he will be. The heroes' division has two main responsibilities: first, they are to ensure that none of Steppengard's forces get past the stretch of land roughly 150 feet wide that has been assigned to them (each division is assigned its own patch of land, forming a long line); second, they are to defeat all the forces that come at them.

If the heroes acquired no aid, their unit consists of themselves, Commander Hertiage (N dwarf commander 7), two Gallo chaplains (NG human cleric 7), and thirty-two Gallo soldiers (LN dwarf fighter 2).

If the heroes secured the aid of Lord Dashgoban, they can choose instead to serve with cavalry, so their unit consists of themselves, Commander Hertiage, a Gallo chaplain, and sixteen Dashgoban knights (LN human fighter 4), plus **Woody Rust-Wrangler** (LN human expert 6) and his rust monster minion, **Granule** (advanced large rust monster).

If the heroes secured the aid of Lady Timor, the general make-up of their unit doesn't change, but they can add two Timor war mages (N human wizard 5) to their forces. Additionally, they can call upon **Tupof Dzequifs**, an elder xorn who has served the Timor family for many decades. Tupof spends the battle earth-gliding wherever he is needed. The heroes are given a "thumper," a one-use magic item that emits a rhythmic thrum for several rounds when struck against a solid surface. When they throw the thumper, 1d4 rounds later (roll in secret) Tupof arrives at the spot of the thumper, rises up from the ground and simply begins fighting the nearest or most imposing enemies unless he is given more specific orders. As long as he is enjoying himself and is not getting too badly hurt, Tupof will fight for a minute, before someone else's call pulls him away. Of course, Tupof can also be used as an ace in the hole if you need to get the heroes out of a dangerous situation.

The heroes should be 8th level by this point, so with the aid of their unit they should be roughly equivalent to an EL 14 group. Therefore, while the large number of foes they face at The Line at Otharil Vale may seem overwhelming, they should be able to handle it.

Battle for Gallo's Fend

While the focus of Gallo's plans are to hold the Line at Otharil Vale, certain other missions can make a major difference in the battle. The heroes do not have to participate in all these missions, and indeed if the party has no stealth skills they would be ill-suited for some of them. However, Duke Gallo will ask them to participate in whichever missions they feel best suited for.

Siege Sabotage: The heroes destroy enemy siege weapons, which spares them some bombardment at the beginning of the battle.

Mage Assassination: The evening before the battle, the heroes attack the tent of war mage Kelkin Thravanvost, who is as dangerous as several siege weapons.

The Line at Otharil Vale: The heroes and their fellow soldiers face wave after wave of Steppengard forces.

Coup: After the first wave of the battle of the line, Steppengard's commanders will send reinforcements out, leaving their camp only weakly defended. The heroes will sneak in through dwarven tunnels and attempt to capture or kill the enemy commanders.

To aid their missions, Duke Gallo can provide them with uniforms matching the livery of Steppengard, Iz, Megadon, or Namin, and will let the heroes requisition magical gear worth up to a total of 750 gp × the number of characters in the party. Such gear is expected to be returned if it does not have limited uses.

If the heroes are defeated during any of these missions, their foes do their best not to kill them; they prefer captives that they can ransom back to the losers.

Siege Sabotage (EL 8+)

The evening before the battle, under the cover of darkness, Steppengard's siege weapons are lined up on Otharil Vale, just beyond two thousand feet from Gallo's battle lines, safely out of range of archers and opposing catapults, but close enough that a group of stealthy heroes might be able to sneak in and sabotage them. While simply running up to the siege weapons across a snow-covered open field would be suicidal, a group of dwarven sappers can excavate a tunnel that gets within 60 feet of the siege weapons. Four sappers (N dwarf expert 4) can lead the heroes to the exit, and wait behind for the heroes' return. Once the heroes get back in the tunnels, or when it becomes apparent that the heroes will not be getting away, the sappers collapse the exit so they cannot be followed.

If the pitchlings agreed to harass Steppengard's forces, there are only three heavy catapults and two ballista wagons; otherwise there are ten heavy catapults and eight ballistae. Destroying the catapults is essential, whereas destroying the ballistae helps if the heroes are planning to fly around the battlefield.

The catapults are arrayed in a line, each 40 feet from the next, surrounded by a 5-foot ditch and a 5-foot dirt wall set with a fraise of wooden spears. The ballistae are mounted on wagons pulled by heavy warhorses, so they can be wheeled close to the battle to take out flying threats if necessary.

Defenses

Each of the heavy catapults has a squad of four siege engineers (N dwarf expert 4), who are non-combatants. They are each guarded by four Steppengard soldiers (N human fighter 2), and a Steppengard commander (N human commander 4/fighter 1). Additionally, the entire area is patrolled by Nikkhuar, a wyrmling red dragon, who flies in erratic ellipses, scanning the line of siege weapons with his 60-foot blindsense every few rounds.

Steppengard commander (CR 5): hp 32, Appendix B.

Steppengard soldiers (4) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

Nikkhuar, wyrmling red dragon (CR 5): hp 59, MM.

If any of the catapults fall under attack, the soldiers sound the alarm, which call the attention of the other guards. Half of them leave their posts to respond to the more immediate threat, while the rest stay at their assigned catapults. Additionally, twenty rounds later a reserve force of eight Steppengard knights (N human fighter 4) and a Steppengard prelate (LN dwarf cleric 7) arrive. Additional reinforcements take ten minutes or more to arrive.

Destroying and Disabling

There are ten catapults, or three if the heroes got the aid of the pitchlings. The heavy catapults are Huge objects, with AC 3, hardness 5, and 100 hp. The ballistae are Medium objects, with AC 5, hardness 5, and 25 hp.

A character may attempt a Disable Device check (DC 25, 2d4 rounds) to rig a siege engine so when it is fired it breaks itself, and to do so in such a way that normal inspections will not reveal the sabotage. Though this damage can be repaired, it is sufficient to keep the weapon inoperable for the duration of the battle.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes destroy all of the catapults, reward them for a CR 7 encounter.

Mage Assassination (EL 11)

Kelkin Thravanvost, a dwarven war mage who helped the famed Gabal of Gate Pass develop some of his techniques, now serves as chief wizard of war for King Steppengard. On the day of the battle he will be a holy terror, so Gallo wants the heroes to kill him the evening before.

Uncomfortable around the gnome Nina Glibglammer (actually the trillith Madness), Kelkin stays in a tent at the edge of Steppengard's camp. The tent lies amid sparse woods on the southeastern edge of Itnevel Wood, five hundred feet from the rest of camp. The night before the

battle, Kelkin goes to bed early. His tent is broad, 20 feet square and 15 feet high, but it merely serves to conceal the *secure shelter* Thravanvost actually sleeps in. An *alarm* spell, set to sound audibly unless the password "unity" is spoken, is centered on the tent, extending 10 feet out from each wall.

Six soldiers stand in a ring 20 feet from the tent. The guards all know the password, and can reveal it if intimidated or charmed. If the guards are attacked, at least one of them moves closer to the tent to set off the *alarm*. In addition to the guards, Kelkin's charmed gynosphinx guardian Nashara paces around the tent, or sleeps lightly right beside the hut.

Captured and brought back as a curiosity to King Steppengard's court from a distant land, Nashara is under a *charm monster* spell that Kelkin (whom she believes is a good and dear friend) casts on her every week or so. He tells her it's a long-lasting defensive spell, and so convinces her to voluntarily fail her save. Nashara wants to help Kelkin consolidate the kingdom, sure that he will help her be accepted at Lyceum once that is done.

She has created only one magical symbol this week: a *symbol of stunning*, placed on a small rug which Kelkin has placed in front of his *secure shelter* as a welcome mat. Any creature moving across the welcome mat triggers the symbol unless he says the password "dissension." All the guards have already said the password, so they remain immune to the symbol as long as they do not move more than 60 feet from the front door of the *secure shelter*.

The symbol, when triggered, stuns a creature unless it succeeds a Will save (DC 22).

Kelkin Thravanvost (CR 9): hp 42, Appendix B.
Steppengard soldiers (6) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Nashara, gynosphinx (CR 8): hp 52, MM. Listen +17, Spot +17.

Tactics

Nashara is the most observant of the guards, but even she relies on the *alarm* if the heroes are invisible, in which case her first action is to cast *see invisibility*. Then she will direct the soldiers to attack, use *dispel magic*, or simply leap into combat.

The noise of the alarm awakens Kelkin, who spends two rounds preparing for battle before emerging from his shelter. First he casts *lesser globe of invulnerability* and *shield*, using his move actions to don his robes and his mithral buckler, and then strides confidently into combat.

Kelkin stays behind guards if he can, using discerning attacks like *magic missile* and *flaming spheres*. He keeps his still *charm person* in case he is grappled. If cornered and out of allies, he prefers to surrender. Because of this, he acts honorably in combat, so as not to arouse the ire of people who might eventually decide between killing him and taking him prisoner. Kelkin's raven familiar stays at the main command tent, in case the commanders need to reach him with an urgent message.

If Kelkin appears to be seriously injured, Nashara will go to him and let him climb on her before she takes to the air, to fly him to safety.

If the heroes are able to dispel the charm on Nashara, she will immediately turn on Kelkin in a furious attempt at revenge. Her wrath also extends to the guards, but she will not die for her revenge. Once the immediate enemies are dead, she will beg the heroes for succor.

Should the battle last more than ten rounds, a group of four Steppengard knights come riding to the war mage's rescue.

The Line at Otharil Vale (EL 14)

Early in the morning, drums and horns sound the approach of battle. A warm breeze blows from the south, snapping banners in a militaristic cadence, and by an hour after sunrise the armies of Gallo and Steppengard are assembled and ready for battle.

Steppengard's forces will need to march through Otharil Vale to reach Gallo's Fend. Rather than ceding that land to him, Gallo intends to confront him in a straight-up fight. Thousands of foot soldiers and cavalry, hundreds of magic-users, and scattered monstrous forces line up two thousand feet apart, awaiting the order to attack.

The heroes are assigned a line of terrain 150 feet wide that they and their allies are to hold. For ease of play, assume that no enemies who are angling to the adjacent groups of soldiers cross over to attack the heroes' division, or vice versa. The heroes will have to defeat several waves to be victorious. If they are being defeated they can retreat, and fresh forces will relieve them, but for the purpose of this encounter they will have suffered a defeat.

Commander Hertiage, who is either in charge of the unit or is assisting the heroes, suggests the heroes take the center of the line of forces. Whether they have foot-soldiers or cavalry, their unit is just large enough to fill a 150-foot-wide line with some to spare. If the unit consists of foot soldiers, Hertiage says the line should have two gaps, dividing it into three roughly equal parts, with archers set up behind a fraise (a ring of outward-pointing spears) in the gaps. The majority of the soldiers will fight in melee, but the archers will be protected and able to target particularly dangerous foes, or aerial enemies. Any mages with good ranged attacks should also be set up in these fraises.

Hertiage also suggests the chaplains remain behind the battle line, and preferably should be mounted, so they can reach the injured quickly. Duke Gallo can provide light warhorses for the chaplains (and for the heroes, if they ask).

Terrain and Advancing Forces

The battlefield is 150 feet wide and 2,000 feet long (catapult range), though this is well beyond the scope of most battle maps for miniature combat. Since the opposing forces will approach in a steady line, it may be easiest simply to set up the enemies on the opposite side of a battle map, and to just keep a running tally of how far away they are each round, until their positions can actually be represented on the map.

The land on the vale is almost completely flat, though the heroes can set up two fraises wherever they desire. A fraise is a line, curve, box, or arrowhead-shaped row of outward pointed spears, usually up to 30 feet across. The fraise makes four attacks against any creature passing through it, or eight attacks against Large creatures (+0, 1d10 damage). A Jump check that clears six vertical feet can avoid the fraise.

The heroes might also try to set up some hazards along the line they intend to defend, spending the morning or evening before digging rough ground, scattering caltrops, setting up traps, or erecting other barricades to direct the flow of enemies.

Opening Volley (EL 4)

Steppengard's army blares its horns, and the vast line of soldiers begins to advance at a hustle. If the heroes stay put to take advantage of stationary defenses, the enemy forces hustle at 40 feet per round for 35 rounds, traveling 1400 feet. Then they begin to run, traveling 60 feet per round for 10 rounds, traveling the remaining 600 feet.

If the catapults were not all destroyed, the catapults also advance a hundred feet over ten rounds, being slowly pushed into position. A bit of spying by Madness has determined where the heroes are deployed, so she has directed one catapult to focus its efforts specifically on them. Every three rounds for the next 30 rounds, that heavy catapult fires a shot aimed at the heroes.

Because of the incredible distance, the catapult only strikes its target if its operator rolls a natural 20 on his attack roll. On a miss, the shot goes so wide that it completely misses the heroes' division. Even on a natural 20, roll 1d10 to determine if the attack scatters 5 feet and in what direction (1–2 no scatter, 3 north, 4 northeast, 5 east, 6 southeast, 7 south, 8 southwest, 9 west, 10 northwest).

Creatures in the struck square take 6d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 15 half). Once the catapult gets a successful hit, the operator will not re-aim it, and so further shots will come at a rate of one every other round, until the heroes' forces move. The catapult stops firing once the Steppengard forces get within 200 feet of the heroes' line.

First Wave (EL 13)

The first volley of enemy forces consists of thirty-two Steppengard soldiers, one Steppengard commander, one Steppengard prelate, two criosphinxes, and Brakken the Blitzer, a minotaur mercenary.

Steppengard soldiers (32) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Steppengard commander (CR 5): hp 32, Appendix B.
Steppengard prelate (CR 7): hp 59, Appendix B.
Criosphinxes (2) (CR 7): hp 85 each, MM.
Brakken the Blitzer (CR 7): hp 67, Appendix B.

The commander has already used two leadership performances to give his allies a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls and saves against fear for the first 5 rounds of combat, and also to let them use the result of his Perform check (20) in place of the first save against fear they make in the battle.

Since Brakken can run faster than the rest of the group, he drinks his *potion of bull's strength* when he is 600 feet away, and arrives with two minutes left on the potion's duration. Similarly, the criosphinxes run along the ground until they are 200 feet away, at which point they leap into the air and fly behind the heroes' lines, attacking war mages, chaplains, and archers. One round before the warriors reach the heroes' line, the prelate stops 60 feet away and casts *summon monster IV* for a fiendish dire wolf.

The Steppengard commander has decent intelligence about the heroes, so (for example) if one is renowned for using area spells, once combat begins the commander always readies an action so he can use a leadership performance to have his soldiers scatter (granting an immediate move action), getting them out of *fireball* formation.

The first wave does not retreat, though if things look bad a few soldiers may throw down their arms and surrender. About the time that this wave reaches the heroes, the second wave sets out. The heroes will have little time between them to rest.

Ad-Hoc Experience

Rather than calculate exactly how to reward a few PCs from among dozens of allies, simply reward the heroes for a CR 8 encounter if they defeat the first wave.

Overwhelmed

This encounter has too many foes to be won by simply charging in and killing everyone. Make sure the heroes understand that they will either need to be creative, or they will likely have to retreat before winning a total victory. Duke Gallo is content even with a partial success.

Second Wave (EL 13)

This wave consists of the four troll mercenaries (Rip, Snort, Gut, and Beulah), plus sixteen Steppengard knights.

Rip, Snort, Gut, and Beulah (CR 6): hp 83 each, Appendix B.
Steppengard knights (16) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

The trolls and horses keep pace at 160 feet per round, and reach the heroes' line 13 rounds after the first wave strikes. This wave has received a *bless* spell, which will last for 10 rounds after they reach the heroes.

When the second wave is 500 feet away from the heroes, an invisible androsphinx flying 300 feet behind their lines unleashes a roar as he swoops past. Everyone in the heroes' division (as well as any surviving enemies from the first wave) must succeed a Will save (DC 19) or become panicked for 2d6 rounds. On a successful save, a creature is shaken for 1 round. The androsphinx flies up and away and will not engage in combat, but the roar will likely break the heroes' line, sending soldiers fleeing back toward base just as the second wave is closing in for the kill.

The knights focus on the leaders and on those enemies still able to fight, while the troll mercenaries gleefully cut down weaker foes.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes defeat the second wave, reward them for a CR 9 encounter.

Why is Kelkin a Threat?

While a 9th-level wizard is nothing to sneeze at, he lacks enough spells to be a threat to an entire army. The answer to this mystery is that Konigsmarshal Malkan has several large chests of scrolls, potions, and wands that Kelkin will use during the battle. While Malkan is willing to let Kelkin gamble with his own life by sleeping at the edge of camp, he isn't about to risk tens of thousands of Dasseni gold octets, so he keeps the chests secure at his command tent.

War-Mage Artillery (EL 10)

If the heroes have not killed Kelkin Thravanvost, once or twice during the battle, a *fireball* (5d6 damage, Ref DC 14 half) comes in from hundreds of feet away. Kelkin is riding his heavy warhorse, escorted by six Steppengard knights, a commander, and a prelate, as well as Nashara the gynosphinx. He never comes within range for melee combat, and does not linger long, preferring to strafe along the battle lines. Should the heroes make an effort to ride him down and face him, they will find Kelkin and his bodyguards relatively alone in the wasteland between the two enemy lines.

Kelkin Thravanvost (CR 9): hp 42, Appendix B.
Steppengard knights (6) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.
Steppengard commander (CR 5): hp 32, Appendix B.
Steppengard prelate (CR 7): hp 59, Appendix B.
Nashara, gynosphinx (CR 8): hp 52, MM.

After the Second Wave

Once the heroes have defeated the second wave, it looks like there will be a lull of a few minutes before the next wave comes in. What happens next depends on how well the heroes are doing. By this point the battle has lasted perhaps ten minutes, and before the heroes get far in preparing for the next stage, a courier bearing Duke Gallo's banner rides up, waving for the heroes to come to him. He says that the heroes' unit is being relieved by fresh forces, and asks that they follow him to Markhold, where they will meet with Duke Gallo.

When the heroes reach Markhold, they pass the medical tents where the injured are being carted in, though as is typical in a fantasy war, almost as many soldiers are heading out of the tents to rejoin the battle. Gallo is just inside the fortress of Markhold, examining a detailed map of the battle, which is still unfolding.

If the heroes have earned Gallo enough victory points to ensure victory or a truce, Gallo thanks them for their services and tells them that the battle will take a while to peter out, but the result has already been determined. It looks like they will win, or at least force a retreat by Steppengard's forces. Gallo wants to make sure the heroes are safe, so he asks that they let his own forces handle the rest of the battle.

If, however, Gallo does not have enough victory points to earn a truce, he explains that things look grim. He has a desperate plan that might turn the tide, but it could be suicidal. The group of warriors he was originally counting on to perform this mission were killed by an overwhelming rush, and he suspects that the enemy somehow divined what he was planning and knew how to cripple his plan.

The plan called for the now-deceased dwarf warriors to take a tunnel that passes under the Steppengard camp, nearby the command bunker. The warriors were to breach the surface and either kill or capture Konigsmarshal Malkan, a coup that would bring the battle to a sudden halt. Now, however, Gallo has a nearly complete tunnel, but no one to lead the mission.

If the heroes agree, they will cross the frozen Nasham River, enter a fort on the northern shore, and then take a 2 mile long tunnel to the breach point. If the heroes hurry, they could reach the command bunker in half an hour. The heroes will be accompanied on this mission by ten soldiers.

Coup (EL 13)

Note that this mission is very dangerous, and you should likely avoid it unless the heroes have otherwise lost the Battle for Gallo's Fend.

On the surface, a 30-foot-diameter command tent conceals Konigsmarshal Malkan's actual headquarters. Worried about aerial attack, Malkan had his soldiers excavate a small bunker, 40 feet square, 20 feet below the surface, with a 10-foot-high ceiling. The tent itself has been set up to look like a command center, but Malkan generally stays in the bunker. A trap door covered by a rug conceals the stairs that lead down to the bunker, protecting the Konigsmarshal from attempts to attack him in his tent. The defenses, however, make no consideration for a subterranean attack.

The 40-foot-square bunker has wooden staircase in the northwest corner, a bed and dresser in the southwest corner, chairs and a conference table in the southeast corner, and a cheap desk covered with maps and troop deployment records in the northeast corner. *Everburning torches* are spaced around the room at 10-foot intervals.

The tunnel the heroes use to reach the bunker is an old one, part of a decades-old defense, and is wide enough for two people to walk side by side. Scouting by a small earth elemental has allowed the sappers to find out exactly where to dig up, and the tunnels come to within 2 feet of the surface. The dwarves have set up explosive charges (magic items that unleash a *shatter* spell) in two places. One set of charges is for the breach point, and will collapse the floor in the northeast corner so the heroes can get inside. The second set of charges is positioned under the northwest corner, intended to destroy the staircase so that Malkan cannot retreat.

The tunnel runs east to west under the bunker, with two side passages that lead to the staircase and the breachpoint. The tunnel under the staircase will be completely filled with debris when the charges go off, whereas the breach tunnel will just count as difficult terrain. The stairs leading up out of the bunker will be useless, so getting out will require a Climb check (DC 20).

Two dwarves with short ladders wait just outside the breach point, and when the heroes give the signal they shout the command word to detonate the charges. A deafening crack shakes the tunnel, and blinding brown dust fills the air. The dwarves then rush in and place the ladders against the walls, holding them steady so the heroes can get in in a hurry. Moving up the ladders into the bunker takes just 10 feet of movement and no Climb check. Roll for initiative.

Konigsmarshal Malkan (CR 12): hp 58, Appendix B.
Madness (CR 11): hp 105, Appendix B.
Steppengard prelates (2) (CR 7): hp 59 each, Appendix B.
Steppengard knights (effectively unlimited) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

When the ambush is sprung, Konigsmarshal Malkan and Advisor Nina Glibglammer are in the southwest corner, talking about the king's declining health and fragile mental state, which the gnome woman denies vehemently. The detonation shocks them both, but they are far enough away not to be stunned. There are two Steppengard prelates in the bunker when the heroes attack, standing near the center of the room. They are knocked down, but are not stunned.

The entirety of the 40-foot-square bunker is filled with a dust cloud, which grants concealment to any creature 20 feet away or further. A ring directly around the 10-foot-wide breach point is filled with debris that counts as difficult terrain. The room's furniture has been knocked askew.

The prelates stand and do their best to keep the heroes from reaching Malkan. The Konigsmarshal responds quickly, taking cover behind the nearest furniture, crouching, and attacking intruders with his repeating crossbow.

Madness, a little shaken but not actually frightened (since right now she is incorporeal), simply moves to hide and take cover, watching from behind a bed or couch. If she is attacked, she giggles, shakes her head in disapproval, and begins using her *extended lesser confusion* ability to befuddle the heroes. She does not take on a corporeal form, and if the heroes think to sing the Song of Forms she flees in a panic, terrifying the guards in the tent above as her monstrous serpentine form squeezes its way out of the bunker. She is willing to let Malkan be captured, and will not put herself in harm's way for his sake.

After a few rounds of combat, Madness grows bored and simply glides into the wall incorporeally, preferring to leave rather than reveal her true form.

Should the heroes manage to force her into her true form but not defeat her, rumors spread quickly among Steppengard's soldiers, and everyone becomes very wary around the gnome woman, suspicious that she is some sort of demon. If the heroes manage to discredit "Nina," instead

Winning the Battle

Each of the following conditions is worth a number of victory points. If the heroes earn Duke Gallo 20 victory points, he wins a decisive victory over Steppengard. If they earn at least 10 victory points, a truce is called, and if they earn fewer than 10 victory points, Gallo is defeated.

Securing the aid of Lord Dashgoban	8 points
Securing the aid of Lady Timor	8 points
Killing Kelkin Thravanvost before the battle	4 points
Succeeding in holding the line at Otharil Vale	4 points
Capturing or killing Konigsmarshal Malkan	8 points
Defeating Madness	4 points
For each siege catapult not destroyed before the battle	–1 point (max –10)

The specifics of victory, truce, or defeat are detailed in Aftermath of Gallo's Fend, below.

of her it will be the Ragesian ambassador who endorses Steppengard's suicidal plan in Act Three, though Madness will still linger in the shadows.

Development

On the surface, several Steppengard knights are guarding the tent. When they hear the boom they run to the trap door; it will take three rounds from the detonation before the door in the ceiling is opened. Even then, the knights will have to drop 20 feet to get into the room. Only one enters per round. However, the camp quickly mobilizes to respond to the ambush, and thus the reinforcements do not stop coming. The heroes' only escape (short of killing several hundred soldiers one by one) is to retreat back down the tunnel. The dwarven sappers will detonate a final set of charges to seal the tunnel.

Aftermath

If the heroes are defeated, they are taken captive, but will be reunited with Duke Gallo early in Act Three, during the "peace conference," though their gear will be confiscated.

If the heroes manage to nab Malkan, they can retreat down the tunnels, their dwarven allies holding off pursuit and detonating the charges to make good their escape. If the heroes are losing, the dwarven sappers shout for the heroes to retreat. In either case, as the heroes are making their way down the tunnels, Madness appears before them, still incorporeal. She giggles, applauds lightly, and thanks them for the good show. She is quite pleased that they and Duke Gallo have done such a good job killing soldiers of Dassen, and she suggests that with their experience, they might make good recruits for the Ragesians. She floats off then, telling them to, "Sleep well," and vanishes into the wall.

Wrapping up Act Two

Unless the heroes managed to capture or kill Konigsmarshal Malkan, the battle of the Line at Otharil Vale continues for several more hours before the losers retreat (or both sides call a truce). Steppengard's forces cease hostile action, and then two days later a courier rides out from Steppengard's camp with a message for Duke Gallo.

The precise wording depends on whether Gallo won, lost, or called a truce, but the message is that King Steppengard does not wish for more fighting. He is recalling his army, and requests (or demands, if he is victorious) that Gallo attend a peace conference in Bresk. All of the nobles will be required to attend, and here Steppengard hopes to avert a civil war, and to protect his nation. Steppengard claims that new evidence has been revealed to him, and he wants to present it publicly to all his nobles, and simultaneously establish a plan to hold off the expansionist Ragesians.

To help quell hostilities, the king is throwing a two-day festival at Bresk, and Lord Gallo and his servants are all invited. The first day will be an opportunity for recent enemies to compete casually in tournaments games and reestablish friendly bonds, while the second day will be filled with parades and parties for the commoners, while the nobles discuss how to save their nation.

This is a very suspicious announcement, and Lord Gallo knows it. However, despite what the heroes may say, he has no choice but to accept. If he doesn't, the king will be able to call Gallo's patriotism into doubt, and could use it to marshal the other nobles against him. Besides, if there is any chance that the country can be united to stand against Ragesia's invasion, they must take it.

Still, Gallo is no fool. He fully expects to be betrayed. As a great show of trust, he offers a knighthood to each the heroes, and asks that they accompany him as bodyguards. If the heroes accept, they leave tomorrow.



Battle for Gallo's Fend – Art by Joe Slucher

Act Three: Served Cold

In this act, the heroes attend a peace conference, called by King Steppengard to reunite his kingdom after the recent battle, with the supposed intent of planning a defense against the Ragesians. However in truth Steppengard has completely lost his mind, and desires to destroy his kingdom, and himself with it. He plans for all the nobles to be poisoned with a toxin developed by Madness, which will drive them all into a murderous madness.

The day before the banquet, Steppengard throws a festival and tournament to distract attentions while he prepares his scheme. Informants contact the heroes and alert them to suspicious goings-on at the castle, prompting them to sneak into the castle to find evidence of what looks like an assassination attempt. Taking a hidden path into the castle's prison, the heroes discover the Ragesian inquisitor Torrax has just delivered the madness-inducing poison to agents, who will dose all the food at the banquet. The heroes rush to stop the plot, and ultimately confront King Steppengard and his trillith advisor the throne room, in a battle to defeat the king's madness.

If the heroes do not piece together the clues to stop the king's scheme, some time between the soup and the pork, the leaders of Dassen will tear each other to pieces.

The Poisoning Plot

Steppengard is mad enough to listen when Nina suggests that he could take revenge on all those who killed his family, and he is particularly happy that the poison being used will cause the nobles to murder each other. However, the toxin has a magical mind-affecting component, which means that before it can take effect, the Eight Lands Boon must be revoked.

The Eight Lands Boon, granted by the Dasseni artifact the Book of Eight Lands, protects all the nobles and their families from mind-affecting magic and divination, and removing someone's name requires the approval of the Council of Nine. Destroying the book is difficult, and removing it from the castle vault is practically impossible because of various old wards, even for the king. However, the book is not powerful enough to function from another plane of existence.

Madness's simple plan is for the Ragesian Ambassador Serrimus to enter the vault — this right is accorded to any human or dwarf — so that he may check his ancestry. Once inside, the ambassador hides the book inside a *rope trick* and leaves an illusionary replica behind. The ambassador will concentrate on the illusion for about an hour or so, making certain it lasts at least that long, by which time the poison plot will be complete. The *rope trick* will end, and the book will appear simply to have fallen off its stand.

While the book is hidden in the *rope trick*, the entirety of the Dasseni nobility will be vulnerable to the effects of the Red Madness poison. Every dish of the multi-course banquet will have several doses of the sweet poison, enough to ensure that everyone, eventually, succumbs.

Proclamation of Peace

Gallo leaves his retainers to see to the Fend in the aftermath of the battle, and brings along the heroes and forty men as an armed escort. They follow a half day behind Steppengard's retreating army, and reach Bresk in three days.

If Gallo lost the battle, instead Gallo is taken into custody, though he is allowed to have the heroes accompany him still as bodyguards, as this is a political arrest, intended mostly to keep Gallo from running. The three-day trip back to Bresk is calm and uneventful. Unless the heroes talk to someone else first, no one in Steppengard's army does anything more than give them a glance every now and then.

Parade of the Victors

When Duke Gallo and the heroes reach Bresk, they are ushered into a hastily arranged parade. Banners fly from rooftops, drums beat out a military cadence, and fresh soil has been spread along the army's path — this is to reward their return by letting them walk proudly upon the earth of their homeland.

If the heroes successfully defended Gallo's Fend, Gallo's troops enter the city first, greeted by nervous but hopeful citizens lining the streets. Word has spread that Gallo will force the king to end his witch-hunts, and that peace will be returning to Dassen.

If the heroes lost, instead they are paraded along in the middle of Steppengard's forces, shown off as prisoners of war. The crowd is still nervous, but they cheer because they expect Gallo will be executed, and that things will quiet down afterward.

If the two sides called a truce, Steppengard's forces march first, and then Gallo's. Both are greeted by cautious cheers, since people really have no idea what this means, but they know they're supposed to cheer returning armies.

Regardless of the circumstances, Duke Gallo reminds the heroes to maintain proper decorum. After an hour-long march, the parade reaches the courtyard of Castle Steppengard. Trumpeters blare victorious tunes and children throw flowers, and a line of the other seven nobles stand ready to greet Gallo's arrival. Various retainers and guards surround the courtyard, and in a shadowed corner stand the Ragesian ambassador and inquisitor Torrax. King Steppengard (possibly with Nina) stands in front of the nobles, and he steps forward as Gallo and the heroes approach.

King Steppengard looks healthier than you last saw him, more restrained perhaps, as if he is contrite over a great mistake. He offers a hand to Gallo, then turns to address the gathered crowd. The music comes to an end.

"My people," begins Steppengard, "recent times have been dark for our country. From tragedy that befell my house to recent rumors of sedition, no one can say that these have been good days. But I am here to tell you, better days are ahead! I have invited all of Dassen's Lords and Ladies here to Bresk, so that the petty squabbling may be brought to an end, and that we may forge a new, brighter future together.

"Duke Gallo, long-respected defender of the gates of Dassen, I commend you for your brave and steady heart. Though we disagreed, and though our swords crossed because of it, I know now that you acted with only love for your homeland. I have called you and your fellow Lords and Ladies here to bring an end to our struggle. There is news, both to relieve heavy shoulders and to chill marrow, but because of heroes like you, Duke Gallo, and the brave warriors who attend you, our nation will survive.

"I welcome you into my house, and offer you, as I have with all the other nobles, a chance to have your champions compete in the Tournament of Unity. Tomorrow there will be games to cheer the heart of our subjects, and in the evening we shall speak of unpleasant but necessary matters. Thieves and tricksters lurk at our borders, I now know, and it will fall to all of us, not as Eight Lands but allied as one nation, to defeat them."

The crowd applauds, and Gallo, still shaking his king's hand, leans forward and speaks so that you can barely hear him.

"You *are* talking about the Ragesians, right?"

Steppengard simply maintains his smile as if he has not heard.

Attempts to determine whether the king is lying fail because his Eight Lands Boon renders him immune to divination. It takes a DC 36 Sense Motive check to see through his bluff, because the king made sure to quaff a *potion of glibness*. Even if the characters should succeed on this check, they learn only that the king is hiding something, and they detect no immediate hostile intent.

If the heroes were captured in Act Two, they are unceremoniously handed over to Duke Gallo's custody after the king's speech. Likewise, if their familiars or animal companions were taken captive in Act One, they are returned now.

All the Lords and Ladies and their envoys are welcome to stay in any inn, tavern, or manor in the city, at no charge. If the heroes want, they could try to speak to the Castellan in order to get lodging in the castle itself (Diplomacy DC 30). Otherwise, however, Gallo finds a friendly minor dwarf aristocrat who lends him his manor for a few days — a lavishly furnished house with twenty rooms, all equipped with warm, running water.

Lady Timor and Lord Dashgoban visit the evening of Gallo's arrival, and will discuss the situation, share their misgivings, and either commiserate on their failure or celebrate their victory at Gallo's Fend.

Aren't We Done?

After saving Gallo's Fend, the heroes may think they're done, that they have secured Dassen's aid and that they're ready to head back, triumphantly, to Seaquen. If they are planning to hurry up and return to Seaquen, emphasize to them that a few things need to be finalized, to make sure the diplomatic niceties are taken care of. You might even present Act Three as merely denouement, implying that nothing dramatic will happen, but that the heroes are expected to go along to represent Seaquen and to collect their rewards.

As with all parts of the adventure, however, if the heroes decide to leave, it's their choice. They can learn a few days later that all the nobles of Dassen killed each other, and that the nation has descended into civil war. That chaos, at least, should slow the Ragesian advance for a little while, but there is nothing else to be done in Dassen. Lyceum will be looking for alternate solutions, which include sending the heroes on the trail for the Torch of the Burning Sky, which is the focus of adventures five through seven.



Tournament of Unity

The schedule for the next day has various tournament games from sunrise to sunset, and then a banquet in the evening. The nobles are expected to attend the tournament, and are welcome to bring aids to the banquet. Gallo wants the heroes to come with him to both events. The heroes have become celebrities, and if they do well in the tournament it will bolster support for him when he is negotiating with Steppengard and the other nobles. Also, he would like the heroes close in case someone tries something treacherous.

Additionally, if the heroes were not captured in Act One (and thus did not have a chance to rescue Proxy Jinis), Gallo has a special request. He knows that his proxy was arrested for suspected treason, and when he asked about the man's status, he was simply told that Jinis would be returned to him after the banquet. Gallo suspects that Jinis might know something, and so he wants the heroes to try to locate his proxy.

Gallo hopes that he might yet have allies on Steppengard's staff, and thus someone at the tournament who has news of Proxy Jinis. Gallo himself will be too closely watched, but the heroes might be easier to approach.

The heroes have a day to do as they please. Try to make sure, however, that they are at the castle by sunset, so they can attend the banquet. Some sources of information can help the heroes figure out what Steppengard is planning, but for the sake of drama don't have them speak to the heroes until it is near time for the banquet. While it is perfectly fine for the heroes to find out about the plan and avert it well in advance, the climax will be much more dramatic if they find out at the last possible moment, and have to hurry to save the day.

The Tournament Grounds

A broad field outside the walls of Bresk has been set up with warm tents, scattered stages, and broad wooden bleachers, and dozens of games and tournaments have been announced. Servants of the various nobles are competing, as are a scattering of locals, desperate refugees who were too poor to finish the trip to Seaquen, and would-be heroes who want to claim glory in the coming battles. Because of the short timespan and inhospitable weather, less than a thousand people actually attend the festival, and only two score are actually competing, but for Bresk this is quite an event.

There are several major competitions with a single prize being awarded for each, plus various minor festival games. In addition to the games, the heroes might take in a mock sword fight between a pair of masochistic dwarves, watch a short play put on by a Wayfarer with no hands named Budger and his one-thumbed goblin assistant Lucky, sample various festival food and drinks, dance on a public stage with half-elf exotic dancers from Ostalin, or listen to a musician playing an accordion. This last event takes on a sinister air if Steppengard's men killed the heroes' associate Balan, since the performer purchased Balan's old accordion.

If the heroes cause any trouble, the local guards are not equipped to stop them easily, so they simply threaten to get Steppengard's royal guards (blades of the Kingsguard and several prelates), and try to talk down the heroes, saying that fighting will reflect poorly on their liege, Lord Gallo.

Dasseni Idol

"Do you sing?" asks a dwarf with a curled blonde beard. "Perform at all? Can you make a fool of yourself? The nobles need entertainment, and the king's coffers are open to pay you to show off your talents."

A dwarf named **Bleur Himage** (N male dwarf bard 4) wanders the festival with a thick shoulder bag full of certificates providing people with permission to perform for the nobles during the

intermissions between jousts. All he asks is a brief demonstration of some talent (Perform DC 10), after which he pushes a certificate into the person's hand and tells them when and where to be.

This is an easy opportunity for characters to use the Perform skill to make some money, earning 5 times the usual amount for a given Perform check. Additionally, any performer who beats DC 25 gets called back to perform before the final joust. With a huge crowd in attendance, each of the performers has a chance to earn the favor of the crowd.

Other than the heroes, the best performance is a stirring oratory by Konigsmarshal Malkan about the first eight kings of the Eight Lands (Perform check of 31). If Malkan is not present (if, for example, he's dead), Duke Gallo is the leader, demonstrating his surprising skill at comedy. He talks to random people in the audience and various competitors in the joust, making sarcastic and satirical jabs at himself and his fellow nobles, but he makes sure to save a series of biting insults for the Ragesians (Perform check of 27).

If any of the heroes beat those checks, they win the cheers of the audience, and King Steppengard stands, as does Lady Dene, and together they rewards the winner with a deed to a 20-acre plot of land, located in the woods of Lady Dene's lands. Lady Dene personally thanks the hero for his performance, and whispers discreetly that she is glad to know that Seaquen will be safe from the Ragesians now.

Freshness Guaranteed

Walking through the crowded streets, you notice that the festival workers aren't the only ones making a profit during the celebrations. A number of food vendors line the streets, hawking exotic and tasty treats to the delight of the people, who probably get such fare only rarely.

One such food cart doesn't seem to be doing so well, however. You notice one man holding a plate with an exquisite-looking cut of steak on it, talking to the cook, a halfling standing on a step-ladder, who grows more and more upset as the conversation continues. Finally, in a rage the cook knocks the food out of the man's hands, dashing the finely prepared meal to the ground.

"Bah!" he roars, "As though you, an eater of gruel, would understand the finer aspects of the culinary arts?! Take your money and begone!"



Throwing a few coins in the man's face, the cook sends the man running, shouting curses at him until he's gone. With his victim out of sight, the unhappy chef returns to his cart and looks around grumpily.

Noticing your gaze upon him, he glares at you and demands, "What?"

The angry chef is, in fact, the head cook for King Steppengard, **Randas Slabovalles** (LN male halfling expert 10, Craft [cooking] +17). He had just begun to prepare for the banquet that the king was going to be throwing when he was rudely informed by several guards that the king would be bringing in several "specialists" for the banquet for the visiting nobles, and that the head cook and his staff were to work at the festival until then. Naturally, Randas is deeply insulted that any "specialist" cooks were brought in to cook for an important state dinner, and he has been taking his displeasure out on any customers he receives.

Randas' food cart is ridiculously over-equipped, with ingredients for gourmet meals, not simple festival fare. The cheapest meal he will cook costs 5 gp per person: a black bean tortilla soup that is probably the tastiest thing the heroes have ever eaten. If the heroes are willing to wait ten minutes while Randas cooks something for them, he will angrily mutter about how unfairly he is being treated, and how he was not meant to serve food to swine.

The heroes can try to calm him down, and though he is snappy all he really wants is some validation and respect. If the heroes are kind to him, he starts a conversation with them, mentioning that he regularly cooks for His Majesty the King, but that for some reason he has been temporarily suspended, replaced by outside help.

Soon after the heroes get the chef to open up, however, a man dressed as one of King Steppengard's royal guards approaches and tells them to move along. He has been ordered to make sure the chef doesn't talk too much, and if it comes to it he will attempt to drag the halfling away forcibly. Even if the heroes don't provoke a fight, eventually some of the other lesser cooks — who have also been assigned to the tournament — hear what happened, and they come to the heroes to complain. None of them suspect the truth, however.

Even if the heroes don't cause a scene, the next time they walk past this stall, it is being closed down by a pair of city guards, and Randas is nowhere to be seen. The guards were simply told to report here and take the cart away, and don't know what's going on.

Informant

You are passing a crowd of festival-goers when suddenly one of their number steps from his crowd into the middle of your group. A dark-haired dwarf in non-descript clothes, the stranger keeps his head down and hisses, "Try not to look at me. I've got to warn you about tonight. If any of the king's guards see me, it will ruin everything."

"I'm a guard at the castle. Strange things are going on, people being reassigned and moved, and I think it's so we don't see what the king is planning. I normally watch a weak point in the castle's backside. There's a hidden watchpost in an old graveyard on the shores of the Nasham, because the castle's sewers let out there. Normally the outflow is gated off, but we've got to make sure people don't sneak in.

"A couple of weeks ago I got reassigned to the royal vault. I checked around, and *nobody* has replaced me. So last night I snuck back to see what was up. I mean, the hind end of the castle is just plain exposed to the world now, and if anyone thought to they could just up and sneak in.

"What I saw there makes no sense. A group of priests were waiting at the entrance of the sewer, and they met up with bunch of men

Things to Do, People to See

For further tournament options, see EN Publishing's *Tournaments, Fairs, & Taverns.*

who unloaded a sleigh filled with casks, like they were delivering wine or something. The priests took the casks, paid the men, and then, damnedest thing, the priests *went into the sewers*. They weren't picking up drinks for the banquet, I'll bet you that.

"There is something foul, and not just the frozen flow in the sewer. I told you where I was reassigned — the royal vault? Well I was relieved tonight, told to take the day off and enjoy the festival. Far as I can tell, nobody's replacing me *tonight* either.

"Now maybe I'm crazy, but I know you don't stand well with the king, so I thought you might want to know this. Don't tell anyone we talked."

Another group of revelers are coming close, and the dwarf slips away, not looking back.

The informant is **Burnomn Valder** (NG male dwarf fighter 4), one of the guards for Steppengard's castle. If the heroes try to talk to him he does his best to get away before anyone sees him. He doesn't have much else to say, and most things the heroes could ask him they could find out from other people just as easily.

Burnomn witnessed a trio of Steppengard's prelates purchasing ingredients for the poison that will be used at the banquet tonight. The prelates them entered the sewers, cast *hide from undead*, and brought the casks to Inquisitor Torrax, who completed the poison recipe.

If the heroes do cause a scene, Burnomn tries to run, which may attract Steppengard's guards. If Burnomn is caught or the heroes mention what he said to Steppengard's people, the entrance to the prison is much more heavily guarded, and visibly so, to discourage investigation.

Notoriety and Taunting

One possible way to motivate the heroes to participate in festival games is to play on their pride. Several times during the day, hecklers loyal to the "lovely and patriotic Lady Namin" will pick the heroes out of the crowd and begin to taunt them, citing their support of the "treacherous cur Gallo." The hecklers suggest that the heroes are cowards if they don't compete.

While the heroes may initially think that Lady Namin is trying to harrass them or ruin their names, the truth is far less insidious. Lady Namin knows the heroes are fairly popular with the commoners, and she wants to increase her own name by having her subjects triumph over them. Every little bit helps toward her goal of convincing the king to marry her.

Jousting

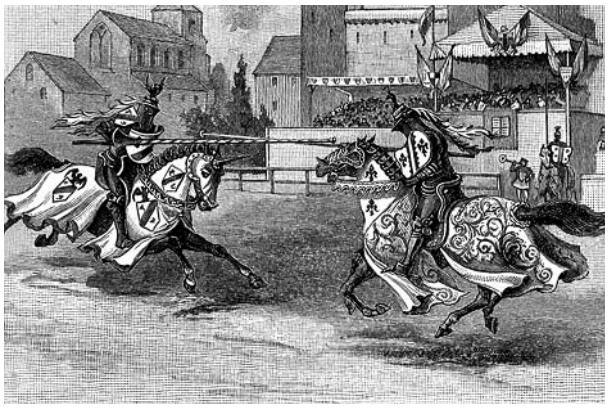
The biggest attraction of the festival is a field the length of a city block, surrounded by bleachers and wooden guard rails, near which numerous warriors in plate armor wait beside horses. Magic-users wait at ready to ensure the lances these jousters wield will only inflict nonlethal blows, and healers stand ready just in case something goes awry. Nearby, a parallel area caters to more casual jousters. Men in leather armor, with flexible wooden poles mount up on nags, and do not have the benefit of magical protection.

Both sets of jousts seem to be attracting a great deal of betting, and one entire section of the bleachers has been cordoned off so the nobles can watch comfortably. Duke Gallo spots you and nods his head toward the registration booth.

If the heroes would be interested in jousting, they should visit the joust early in the day to be placed in the tournament bracket. The commoners joust has five rounds, with none of the jousters any more skilled than a 2nd-level warrior. The entry fee is 5 gp, and the prize is 100 gp and a seat at the king's banquet this evening. If the heroes do not get involved, the winner is **Ben Roots** (NG male human warrior warrior 2).

The main joust has four rounds with sixteen contestants (including any heroes). The fan favorite is Silvia Cossala (LN female human fighter 8), a knight jousting on behalf of Lady Namin. Should one or more heroes compete, they must face the following foes. Most of these use the "typical jouster" stats in Appendix B. The entry fee is 100 gp.

Magic cast upon all the jousters causes the damage they deal to be nonlethal, and clerics are present to heal any wounds. Magic items are allowed, but no jouster may receive any spells to enhance his prowess, except those he casts himself. Each round takes one hour, so jousters have some time to heal up on their own between bouts.



Round One

Quincy Fellthuf, from the lands of Lord Rego (typical jouster). If there are two heroes competing, the second hero faces **Wodbart Erfis**, from Bresk (typical jouster).

Round Two

Grim Morgensen, a refugee from Ragesia (unique NPC, Appendix B). If there are two heroes competing, the second hero faces **Zwergenkarsh Hectonoff** (Dashgoban knight).

Round Three

Jereth Buchaven, a soldier of Steppengard (Steppengard knight). If a second hero is competing, he faces **Silvia Cossala** in this round.

Round Four

Silvia Cossala (or the hero who beat her).

When the gamekeeper calls for both opponents to charge, both will ride forward and attack on the same initiative. All jousters in this competition are skilled enough to succeed the Ride check (DC 5) to avoid being unhorsed when struck for damage, so they instead charge and attempt to bull rush their foes. A rider can make a Ride check instead of a Strength check to resist a bull rush attempt. Silvia uses her Jousting Blow feat, and with a spirited charge she has a very good chance of knocking her unconscious even if she fails to unhorse him.

If the initial pass doesn't unhorse a rider, the jousters take additional passes at each other. If both jousters are unhorsed simultaneously, they roll for initiative and fight on foot until one yields or is knocked unconscious. If both jousters fall unconscious simultaneously, they are both restored to consciousness to try again.

The winner of the joust receives as a prize an *eowhisperer charm* (a new item detailed in Appendix A), a purse of 500 gp, and any one suit of standard barding with a +1 enhancement bonus (such as *+1 full plate barding* or *+1 chain shirt barding*, but not *+1 mithral breastplate barding*).

Ring Tossing

As you pass through the crowded streets, you notice one of the impromptu games that has sprung up during the festival. Off in an alley, several people have pounded a small iron rod into the road. Two men stand over a dozen feet away from it, and take turns throwing metal horseshoes at it, trying to land them around the rod. As the last horseshoes are thrown, one person looks up at they notice you.

Characters playing the game stand 15 feet from the pole and make a ranged touch attack against AC 9 with a –4 non-proficiency penalty and a –2 penalty for range. Players get three throws each.

There is no prize for this game, but the man who owns the horseshoes offers to buy drinks for people who play with him, with the result that eventually everyone's skill goes down, but their fun goes up.

Shell Game

You can't help but notice part of the crowd that is unusually silent, huddled around a booth. Stepping closer, you notice that they are observing the man behind the booth slide three upside-down drinking cups around the booth counter in a dizzying array, before finally sliding them into a row. He looks at a young man across from him expectantly, and after a moment's notice, the youth picks the center cup. Clucking his tongue, the man raises it, revealing that it has nothing underneath. Cursing, the young man walks away as the people around him laugh good-naturedly.

"Who's next?" calls the man behind the counter. "Place a coin on the counter, and if you can find it after I'm done hiding it, you'll win double your money back! I tell you this game is so easy I once lost a week's winnings to a blind man. You, sir, you have both your eyes. Why not try your luck?"

If the heroes take up the challenge, they must make a Spot check (DC 15) to locate the coin. Failure by 4 or less means the hero loses track of the coin; failure by 5 or more means the hero is tricked into picking the wrong cup.

The worker lets the heroes win twice in a row, taking it easy on them at first, and then decides to cheat if they play a third time and agree to go for double or nothing. This time the worker palms the coin as he moves the cups, removing it from the counter entirely. A Spot check (DC 25) sees through the ruse; if caught the worker plays off his cheating with a smile, producing the coin behind the ear of a beautiful woman he keeps nearby, joking that he was just giving them a hard time.

Spell Dueling

While spellcasters don't have the same tradition of magical duels in Dassen as do the students at Lyceum, because of the heroes' presence, a group of eight mages announce a small competition to see if any of them can stand up against the "famous spell duelists of Lyceum." A crowd of interested townsfolk and awed children assemble to watch the magic at work.

Test of Strength

As you walk through the crowd, you notice several people crowded around a man with a large hammer over his shoulder. Standing by him is a large vertical board with a groove running up the center, with a bell perched at the top. At the bottom of the contraption is a small metal weight at the bottom of the groove, sitting on a small platform, laid lopsided over a level, making the other end of the platform stick upward.

Twirling the hammer, the man calls out, "Come one, come all, and test your might in this competition of strength and prowess! Who among you has the muscular fortitude necessary to swing this mighty mallet hard enough to ring the bell? Provide pure proof of your power to your friends and lady friends for only one gold piece!"

Heroes who take up this challenge make an attack roll against a tiny target with AC 7. The amount of damage the hero inflicts determines how high the weight rises. The hammer counts as a warhammer, and so nonproficient characters take a –4 penalty, while those with Weapon Focus and similar feats can apply those. The easiest way to win is to swing the warhammer in two hands with Power Attack. A blow that deals 25 points of damage rings the bell. (This damage does not actually harm the device.)

Somatic Components at Ten Paces

More information on the art of spell dueling is presented in the previous adventure, *Shelter from the Storm*. See page 85 and Appendix A.

A representative of Lady Namin is here to challenge the party. **Sting Watchall** (N male human warrior 7, Atk +5 [1d8+20 damage]) is a burly man who has served in Lady Namin's military for years, though has seldom seen combat. He enjoys heckling the heroes, but could be swayed to like them, since he is a little envious of the fact that they have seen so much actual combat.

If Sting and a hero both ring the bell, the game's director suggests they try swinging one handed instead.

The Magic is Gone

Wandering through the crowded streets of the festival, you suddenly notice several flashes of light accompanied by loud crackles. Turning, you see a collection of parents and children gasping happily over a series of small fireworks that just finished putting on a show for them. A man in a fake beard and rather gaudy wizard's robes, complete with pointy hat, takes a bow as the show apparently comes to an end.

"Thank you aww tho mut'th," he lisps. "Whithbang'th Fabulouth Fia'wo'kth will have anotha' thowing tonight. Pleathe tell you' fwiendth all abouddit!" Smiling as the crowd begins to disperse, Whizbang gathers his supplies as they depart. Once they're gone he sighs and shakes his head, then looks to you.

"Pardon me, folks," he says without a lisp, "do you know some place to get a nice drink?"

If the heroes get to talking with "Whizbang," of "Whizbang's Fabulous Fireworks," they find he's actually **Zacharr Fillip** (CN male human bard 2), who doesn't waste much time on small talk before he starts complaining that he might have to cancel the rest of his shows for the day. All five of the alchemists from whom he normally buys his supplies have closed down shop for the past three days. Apparently they are all working on something at the king's castle, and he's just used up the last of his fun incendiaries.

Zacharr needs smokesticks, thunderstones, and tindertwigs for his show later. If the heroes

A Few Too Many

Complete rules for consumption of alchoholic beverages are beyond the scope of this book. Call for a handful of Constitution checks (DC 10 or 15) and apply fatigue or exhaustion for failure. Or use the drinking rules from EN Publishing's *Tournaments, Fairs, & Taverns* or *Advanced Rules for Beginners*.

happen to have any, he has 20 gp to spend for them, but he promises to pay them back for anything they can provide. "And besides," he says, "think of the children!"

If the heroes agree, he thanks them profusely, saying they're his saviors. Just as they're about to part ways, Zacharr spins and asks if the heroes happen to have any vials of antitoxin. He always buys some before major festivals because he's found they cure hangovers.

Whether the heroes help him or not, "Whizbang" says he hopes they have a "whiz-bang" of an evening, and he tells them, quite somberly, not to drink and play with explosives at the same time. Then he waves a jaunty farewell.

Tournament's End

The final joust takes place at three in the afternoon, after which the winner is expected to ride at the front of a parade through the streets of Bresk. The parade will end after an hour, and the sun will set at six in the evening. If one of the heroes wins, Gallo comes to them in the few minutes it takes for the parade to assemble.

Gallo says that Steppengard is not acting suspiciously at all, such that he's starting to wonder if he was just being paranoid himself. He asks what if anything the heroes have learned. If they warn Gallo that the chef has been replaced and that alchemists have been called in, Gallo suspects that the king might be trying to poison him, or someone else. At this, Gallo smiles.

"It's an old tradition," Gallo says. "When I was growing up my father always had the family exchange plates after we were served but before we ate. It's sort of like when you toast and try to slosh some of your mead into your enemy's cup, so any poison gets shared. I'll ask to do that. If my King is trying to kill me, he'll hesitate.

"Just in case, I'll get one of my chaplains to ward me against poison. They won't have enough magic to completely protect you as well, but I think they can delay the onset of any poison, just in case you're targets too."

As to the possible tampering with the Book of Eight Lands, that could signal that Steppengard is planning some sort of coup, and wants to destroy the book so that no one will be able to back a claim to the throne to oppose him.

However, right now they just have innuendo, rumors, and theories. Circumstantial evidence is not enough for Gallo to act on. Rather than wait for Steppengard to make a mistake, Gallo asks the heroes to look into the situation. He wants them to sneak into the castle to find out what is going on, particularly for hints of some sort of poisoning plot, and to check on the safety of the Book of Eight Lands. Plus, if the fate of Proxy Jinis is still unknown, he wants them to try to rescue him.

Gallo can provide a rough copy of the castle map, though it will be up to the heroes on how to get inside. The castle's normal entrances will of course be watched, and decades of defenses have been developed to ruin normal magical attempts at stealth (such as *hallow* spells with *inivisibility purge*, *alarms* set to sound at random archways if the person passing through isn't visibly displaying an appropriate badge, and so on). However, the informant who approached the heroes has given them a hint on how to get inside. The graveyard watch post he mentioned is the same place that the heroes would have emerged from in Act One if they escaped from prison. The heroes can take that route into the castle's prison, and if their informant wasn't trying to trick them, they should be able to get in without being seen.

Assuming the heroes report all this to Gallo, he is protected at dinner with *neutralize poison*, and if the heroes want they could be protected by *delay poison* before they set off to check out the secret entrance to the castle.

If the heroes are oblivious to all the clues planted during the tournament, you can skip directly to The Dinner (page 136).

The Graveyard (EL 9)

Bresk has several graveyards. The one you seek is old and seldom used, lying a short distance outside the city walls on the banks of the Nasham River. Surrounded with a rusted iron fence, the place is clearly in a state of disrepair. Lichen grows unchecked over gravestones, some of which have toppled over in their neglect. Dead trees sway slowly, covered in a glaze of snow and ice. The sky is thick with clouds, and the air on the ground is thick with the cold, subtle stench of frozen excrement: yet another type of death.

The heroes may be returning here, but even if this is their first time, it should be easy for them to locate the icy ditch that flows out of the sewer tunnel. The tunnel extends 300 feet before reaching a steel grate, the lock to which has rusted away.

Beyond the grate, low groans and hisses sound (unless the heroes already destroyed the frozen zombies in this area when they escaped from the prison in Act One). Animals without the heel trick will not go into the tunnel, and even then will be nervous and skittish.

Before the heroes reach the grate, however, they hear a horrified voice wailing behind them. Gliding out of the wall is a spectral figure shrouded in ashen gray robes, its face flickering between the silent horrified screams of a half dozen different people. If any of the heroes' allies have been captured and not rescued by this point, such as Balan, they see his face here, wailing mutely.

This is a tragedy, an undead monster created by Inquisitor Torrax in a dark ritual that included the sacrifice of many people whom Steppengard had arrested on suspicion of treason. The tragedy blocks the heroes' retreat from the tunnel, and it tries to drive them into the zombie pit. A second tragedy lurks on the far side of the zombie pit. If one of the heroes can turn undead, the second tragedy waits until after that hero has done so once before it attacks.

Tragedies (2) (CR 7): hp 69 each, Appendix B.

Breaking Into Prison (EL 9+)

The locations here match those of the prison detailed in Act One, except that the heroes may already have been here once, and will be passing through in the opposite direction from that assumed in Act One.

Zombie Pit (EL 6)

Every 5-foot square of the cave under the prison counts as heavy undergrowth, requiring quadruple normal movement cost, and a creature that passes through one of these squares is attacked by bites, gropes, and slams (+2 melee, 1d6+1 damage). A creature that ends its turn in this area is attacked once for each square it occupies or is adjacent to.

Each square of zombies has AC 5, DR 5/slashing, and 16 hp, and counts as 4 Hit Dice of undead for the purposes of turning. "Turned" frozen zombies cannot flee, but they do stop attacking. Destroyed ones are annihilated, their bodies shattering like ice struck with a hammer.

Area 5: Torture Chamber

Getting into this room requires a Strength check (DC 28) to lift the grate, which unleashes the mohrg Jutras from its hidden chamber. Alternately, the heroes can disable this trigger (Disable Device DC 28), which also allows them to more easily lift the grate (Strength DC 20). If the heroes tipped off Steppengard's guards that

they might be trying to approach, an *alarm* spell fills this room, and the door to the hallway is open, so that the guards in Area 2 are ready to respond. Otherwise, the door is locked.

If the heroes were not imprisoned in Act One, they find either Balan or Proxy Jinis here, pinned up and tortured, as in Act One, but now days dead.

Area 4: Supply

This room's contents have been pushed to the wall, and alchemy tables have been set up. Torrax crafted the poison here; a notebook on a counter is open to the recipe for Red Madness. The effects, as described, are confusion, leading to eventual rage and murderous violence. Heroes making a Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check (DC 23) realize that this poison would have no effect on anyone protected by the Book of Eight Lands.

Area 3: Storage

This room is still simply a storage chamber.

Area 2: Guard Room

If the heroes have not tipped anyone off, this room is unguarded, since there are no prisoners to watch. Instead, Ambassador Serrimus and Inquisitor Torrax lounge here, enjoying a job well done and waiting for news that the nobility of Dassen has destroyed itself. They plan to retreat out the sewer if something goes amiss, or to destroy the evidence with a nice *wall of fire* if they are successful.

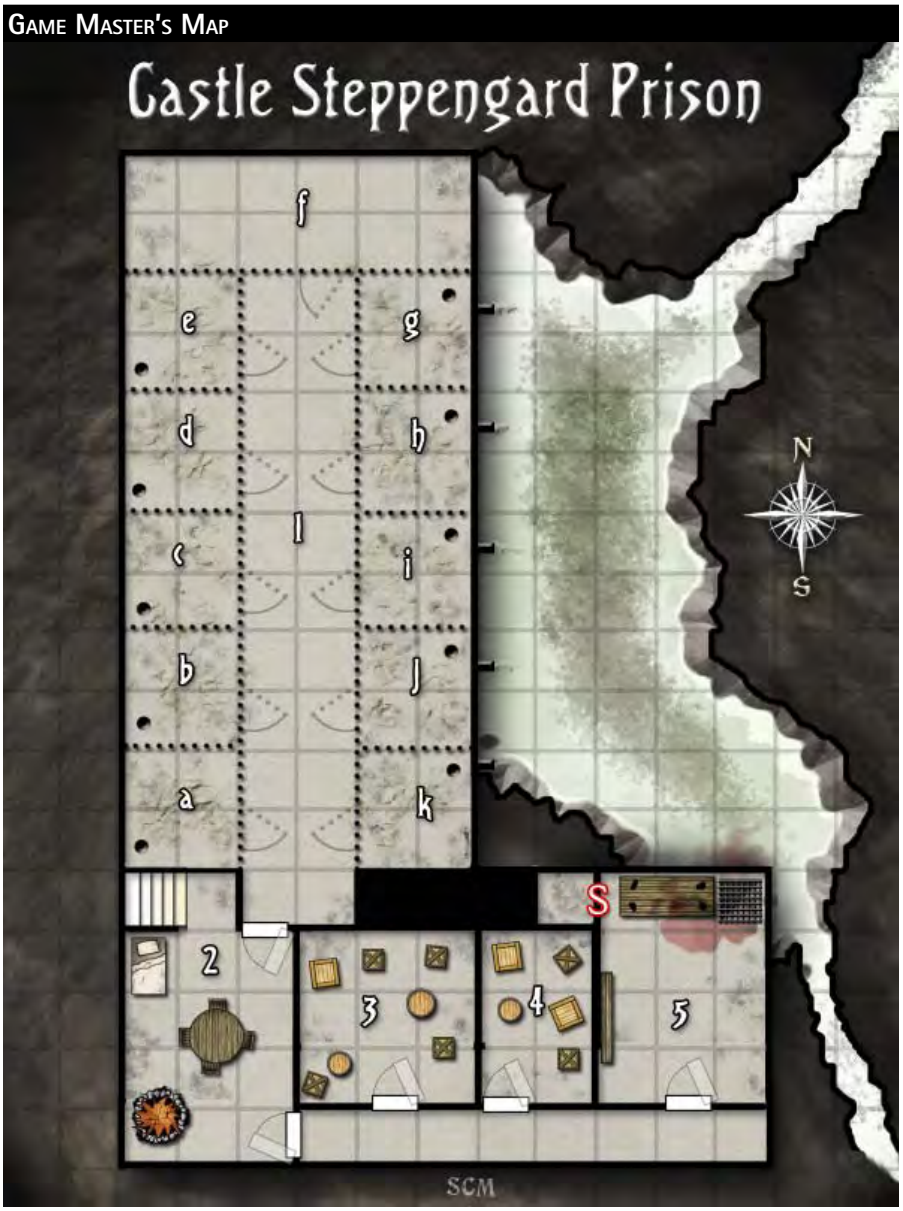
Serrimus drums his fingers idly on the side of his chair while he composes a *sending* to their contact, Inquisitor Guthwulf. He has two options:

"Guthwulf, good news in Dassen. Nobility (almost) annihilated (except x, y, z). Lyceum agents (dead/escaped). Check Innenotdar valley. Rumors of new safe passage. Reply with retrieval location."

"Guthwulf, bad news in Dassen. Plan stopped by (x). (We are suspected./No one suspects us.) Further instructions? Also, check Innenotdar valley. Rumors of new safe passage."

Meanwhile, Torrax smokes a pipe under his inquisitor mask and reads a hand-bound book of humorous prisoner confessions coerced through torture. If caught off guard he is chuckling when the door is opened to this chamber, and his pipe drops out of his mouth as he realizes he is about to be attacked.

Game Master's Map



If the heroes tipped off Steppengard's men, Torrax instead waits pensively beside the stairs, while four Steppengard knights wait to attack intruders. Serrimus is waiting outside the door at the top of the stairs, and will flee if the fight sounds bad.

Ambassador Serrimus (CR 6): hp 22, Appendix B.
Inquisitor Torrax (CR 9): hp 69, Appendix B.
Steppengard knights (4) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

The knights are loyal to Torrax, having betrayed their country for Ragesian coin. They follow the inquisitor's orders, which in this case were somewhat strange. Torrax has asked all of these knights to keep onyx gems in their mouths (two each), and to be certain not to stray more than arm's length from him. Thus the knights form a phalanx in front of the inquisitor, and they do not speak.

If three or more of the knights are dead or dying, Torrax uses *death knell* to finish off one still clinging to life, then casts *animate dead*. To give himself time to do this, Torrax may use his *wall of fire* as a blockade to prevent the heroes from coming to his side of the room.

Treasure

If the knights are not animated, two 25 gp onyx gems can be retrieved from each of their mouths. A Spellcraft check (DC 18) identifies this as the material component for *animate dead*.

Game Master's Map pg. 649



Area 1: Prison Cells

The cells are empty save one. The single prisoner is barely recognizable, having been badly beaten, but as his eyes widen in shock, the heroes realize it is Randas, the chef from the festival. Randas explains he was dragged here by the king's guards shortly after the heroes met him. Torrax interrogated and tortured him briefly, but mentioned something about turning him into an undead, but "not having enough ingredients to be worth the spell."

In classic villain fashion, the inquisitor made a point to taunt the halfling by explaining that the people he would normally be serving were going to be poisoned this evening. Having no combat ability, Randas just asks to be let free. If pressed, he is willing to go try to warn someone.

Aftermath

If the heroes interrogate any of the prisoners, the knights suspect someone is getting poisoned, but they haven't asked any questions. They also heard Torrax speaking with the king's gnomish advisor about the Book of Eight Lands, about which they likewise asked no questions. Torrax is hard to break if captured, but he carries his own undoing. The scroll of *speak with dead* he carries will get the heroes any answers they seek.

The Dinner

The banquet hall is laid out as follows:

Area 1: Main Hall

The banquet hall has three tables for the nobles and six for their entourages. The central table seats Steppengard, Lady Namin, and Duke Gallo. The two tables flanking him each seat three nobles. A Gallo chaplain and the king's chief defender, the Blade of the Kingsguard, stand behind the king. The rest of the tables are crowded with assistants and bodyguards. Advisor Nina Glibglammer lurks in the northeast corner.

The walls are covered in elaborate tapestries depicting the eight lands of Dassen, four on the east wall, four on the west. The north wall is devoted to King Steppengard and the great battles he fought to unite the kingdom.

Area 2: Stage

A group of actors perform on this stage, but they leave before dinner.

Area 3: Actors' Dressing Rooms

The desks here are full of make-up and costumes hang on racks, but the actors are already gone by the time the meal is served.

Area 4: Men's Privy

A secret door (Search DC 25) can be opened by standing on the toilet seat and pressing a button in the ceiling. The secret passage leads into the throne room.

Areas 5, 6: Women's, Servant's Privies

These areas have no special features.

Area 7: Throne Room

A *hallow* including *freedom of movement* fills a 40-foot radius centered on the throne.

Area 8: Kitchen

It's too late for the heroes to stop the poison being applied to the food, but they might be able to stop the food being served if they get here quickly enough. The cooks and servers are mostly 1st- and 2nd-level commoners and won't put up any kind of fight, especially if the heroes brandish weapons and act belligerent, but they can also be convinced that something suspicious is going on without the heroes having to resort to intimidation or threats.

Area 9: Stairs

These lead to barracks, servants quarters, and the prison.

The Poisoned Banquet

Events at dinner unfold as follows unless the heroes interrupt.

Before dinner, drinks are served, mostly wine and mead, and Duke Gallo invokes an old tradition wherein everyone exchanges dishes with a neighbor of their choice. Steppengard smiles cunningly at this, but obliges. People drink, and a ten-minute comedy play lightens moods.

After the play, the soup course is served, and again everyone shuffles dishes around, with some bemusement. Idle conversation lasts a few minutes, and then servants bring in boar's head and other pork dishes, which again get shuffled around, to no small degree of amusement. People continue to eat.

After this, King Steppengard stands, asks that the doors be closed, and then toasts. He suggests that Duke Gallo start the discussion, since he seems to know the most about what is going on with Ragesia.

Gallo says that his king had mentioned he would present new evidence, since as of right now Gallo is officially charged with assassination. He is about to go on when he notices that some of his fellow nobles are staring off into space blankly and giggling. Just then, for no apparent reason, Lady Timor grabs a steak knife and stabs Lord Dashgoban sitting next to her. At this moment, madness breaks out.

Steppengard and Madness, already insane, are unaffected by the poison, as is Duke Gallo, because he had a cleric cast *neutralize poison* on him. Neither are the Blade of the Kingsguard or Gallo's chaplain affected, because none of them eat the tainted food. But all the other 25 people dining around the room begin to fall victim to the effects of the poison. Most are simply disoriented or panicked, but some lash out violently, attacking randomly. Because persons under the effect of *confusion* always counterattack, the banquet hall quickly erupts in a massive brawl.

Steppengard begins to laugh, and he pulls out his flail from behind his chair, then attacks Duke Gallo. Once he has killed Gallo, he and his bodyguard retreat to the restroom and take the secret door to the throne room, leaving the nobles behind to kill each other. Steppengard sits on his throne, and does not move, even when his horrified castle guards find him and kill him.



Madness Revealed – Art by Todd Schumacher

Saving the Day

The timeline of this encounter depends on how swiftly the heroes have broken into the castle, but unless the players are keeping close track of time, assume that by the time they defeat Torrax they are only minutes away from the beginning of the banquet.

The door to the rest of the castle is unlocked, but getting where they need to be to stop the plot will be difficult. The majority of the castle is amazingly unguarded, but a secure ring of checkpoints surround the king wherever he goes. The banquet hall and throne room are only three flights of stairs above the prison and less than fifty feet down the hall, but guards watch the stairs, and it would be nearly impossible to even get within shouting distance of the king and other nobles.

Steppengard knights (32) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

Steppengard prelates (8) (CR 7): hp 59 each, Appendix B.

Of course, fighting isn't the only option. If the heroes explain that they are part of Duke Gallo's retinue and can convincingly explain why they were some place they weren't supposed to be, the guards may let them through. The truth, elaborate and contrived though it sounds, is worrisome enough that some of the guards will rush into the banquet to keep anyone from eating, just to be safe.

Invisibility could work, though paths are crowded. Teleportation, though painful, would bypass guard checkpoints, though the sound of fiery explosions would alert the guards, forcing the heroes to rush before they were taken down.

Reaching the royal vault to check on the safety of the Book of Eight Lands is much simpler, requiring traversing only one flight of stairs, a long hallway filled with busy castle servants, and the vault doors, which currently have only one guard, ordered to let people in after only a cursory check. If the heroes can present evidence to that guard that the Book has been tampered with (or if they simply charm him), he can grease the wheels and get the guards to let the heroes into the banquet, though under scrutiny.

Somewhat cruelly, if the heroes simply find the *rope trick* and get the Book out, its protections will again extend to the nobility, who will be safe from the poison. Their retinues will still be poisoned, however, and while some deaths will result, this will provide clear evidence of a plot.

Finally, if the heroes can get to the kitchen they can check the food for poison. Only a few of the cooks, who have fallen prey to Madness's *suggestions*, are responsible for the unknowing application of the poison. However, getting to the kitchen still requires getting past the guards.

Reactions

If the heroes don't get within earshot of the banquet hall before the insane brawl breaks out, the guards do their best to knock out nobles without killing them, but Madness uses her magic to confuse the guards. The best the heroes can do in this case is defeat Madness, then try to knock everyone out in order to mitigate the damage.

If the heroes create a ruckus before reaching the banquet hall, Duke Gallo hears something going on outside and asks to find out what has happened; he gets outside the banquet hall and demands the guards stop attacking his bodyguards. If the heroes do get into the banquet hall, the nobles want to know what's going on before they eat.

When Steppengard hears the heroes' accusations, he snaps. Unable to hold back his hatred anymore, he screams:

"I, poison? True vile is the poison clutching my heart, damning my blood. My blood is Dassen's blood! You slew my wife, my bright children. You cut my line of blood, and so I your king, and so I your homeland, shall die as well. This land I created. This land I kill!"

The King, now beyond all reason, grabs his flail from behind his chair and knocks over the table, angling to attack the heroes. His bodyguard, the Blade of the Kingsguard, loyally follows him; if Madness is present, she applauds, giggles wildly, and assumes her monstrous, serpentine form.

King Steppengard (CR 10): hp 57, Appendix B.
Blade of the Kingsguard (CR 6): hp 65, Appendix B.
Madness (CR 11): hp 105, Appendix B.
Duke Michael Gallo (CR 6): hp 33, Appendix B.
Gallo chaplain (CR 7): hp 52, Appendix B.
Lord Dashgoban (CR 5): hp 33, Appendix B.
Lady Timor (CR 6): hp 37, Appendix B.
Dasseni nobles, typical (5) (CR 5): hp 21 each, Appendix B.
Steppengard soldiers (18) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

Madness is playing for keeps here, holding nothing back as she attempts to salvage what's left of her plan. She blocks the doorway with her body, and her first action is to use *confusion*, trying to catch as many people as possible before lashing out at the heroes, hoping to engulf them as the rest of the room kills each other.

Those nobles who aren't affected by Madness flee as best they can, ordering their bodyguards to protect them. Most of the bodyguards balk, however, at the presence of Madness. People running past her get bitten and poisoned with attacks of opportunity, causing some of them to return to the battle in confusion.

King Steppengard is not flummoxed, however. He starts screaming orders to the dozen of his soldiers in the hall to kill anyone who leaves the banquet hall, an order they reluctantly obey. Their morale for this fight is weak, however, and if Gallo makes it into the hallway he orders them to attack Madness, and to try to subdue the king.

Steppengard and his bodyguard stride around the room, chasing after nobles with a lion's ferocity. He doesn't rush, and he triumphantly savors each death, no matter who caused it, but he particularly exults in the deaths of Lady Namin, who thought she could replace his wife, and Duke Gallo, whom he still believes responsible for his family's death. While the king is not an immediate threat to the heroes, if he manages to kill all the nobles, Dassen will fall into chaos.

If Steppengard falls unconscious or is killed, Madness laughs in celebration, then tries to use her engulf ability on the king to make sure he is torn apart and cannot be raised from the dead. Madness will not retreat, even if the heroes use the Song of Forms.

If Madness is defeated but isn't trapped by the Song of Forms, her body collapses and she screams from her many mouths, then vanishes, a wave of maddening images washing across all present but fading just as quickly. If Madness is truly slain, the heroes and others assisting in her defeat receive her boon.

With Madness's defeat, the king wavers, his insane determination shaken. He is stunned for a minute, during which time his guards knock him down, disarm him, and tie him up. At the end of this time he begins to weep, realizing what he has done. (If Madness was defeated previously in the adventure, the king fights until he's dropped.)

Conclusion

Passing the Crown

If Steppengard lives, after a few minutes, the king's subjects gather around and cautiously untie their liege.

Slowly climbing to his feet, Steppengard looks around at the shocked faces of wounded and frightened subjects. His face is sunken with horror and disbelief. One of his aides hands him his crown, which was knocked away in the battle. He does not put it on, but instead holds it before him like he doesn't know what he's looking at.

"What have I done?" he whispers softly. "I let that ... that *creature* control me, tie me into a knot with my own grief."

The king puts his face in his hands, and seems to give in to despair. For a long moment everyone is still, waiting to see what will happen next. Then slowly, as though bearing an enormous weight, the king manages to straighten up, and looks at you and Duke Gallo.

"I fear I wronged you most of all. I nearly destroyed our nation, but you saved it."

He looks to his crown, then raises his hand to throw it away.

If the king was killed but could be brought back with *raise dead*, this scene happens instead in the castle's Chapel of the Aquiline Cross.

In either case, if the heroes move to stop Steppengard, this convinces the king to stay in control of his nation until it is safe. Otherwise, the king renounces his throne, and in the coming hours the other nobles will decide that Lord Iz should become the next king, since he is eldest, has the most central territory, and is in general least hated.

If instead Steppengard dies irretrievably, one of the surviving nobles (Lady Namin, preferably) picks up the king's crown in the aftermath and offers it to Duke Gallo. Gallo takes it, then, like Steppengard would have, considers throwing it away unless the heroes stop him.

Either way, the surviving Dasseni nobles owe the heroes a great debt. Gallo reminds the heroes that, in this time of danger, asking for money is tacky and will hurt the war effort, but if they insist, the royal coffers can provide 10,000 gp to each of the heroes (or enough to get them up to the recommended wealth for characters of their level). The heroes are offered minor land holdings; later in the campaign saga they might work their way into a position as one of the Council of Nine.

If all of the nobles are slain, the heroes have failed, and they likely end up dead, though some of them may have escaped. Dassen is a lost cause, and in future adventures the safety of Seaquen will not be a foregone conclusion.

Aftermath

The Third Ragesian Army will be arriving within two weeks, barely enough time for the survivors to arrange a defense. No matter what state Dassen is in, it is clear to all that Ragesia was responsible for the attempt to destroy Dassen, and so officially Dassen is at war with Ragesia.

If the heroes were successful in their mission, their allies in Seaquen decide there's little more they can help with, and call for them to return to Seaquen, to prepare for a new mission. If instead they failed, their superiors decide to send other agents who might fare better than the heroes, and likewise call the heroes back for their next mission.

The weather is growing warmer, and spring is arriving quickly. The Nasham River thaws, though snow still covers the ground. If nothing else, the actual land of Dassen, the soil which is most sacred to its people, is visible again. This is an omen that life still has a chance to prosper.



Adventure Five
Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds

for 9th-Level Characters

by Andrew Kenrick

Cover Art by
Rick Hershey
and Linda Luksic

As the war spreads to new nations, the heroes set out to the Monastery of Two Winds, whose leaders — two enigmatic brothers — can guide the way to retrieving the lost Torch of the Burning Sky, which will tip the balance of power.

But two enemies threaten the order. From without, remnants of the army of Emperor Coaltongue besiege the mountain monastery. From within, one of the order's own is kidnapping innocents for cruel biomantic experiments.

Great danger and precious revelations await the heroes in their mission to the Monastery of Two Winds.

Background

Four months have passed since war erupted, and though the spring thaw should have begun, the entire region is still gripped by a fierce chill. Favorable weather seems to find only the Ragesian army, which marches steadfastly against many foes. Wise and experienced warriors recognize that Ragesia is not trying to conquer — its forces are spread too thin — but rather is scouring the region searching for the Torch of the Burning Sky, the artifact behind Ragesia's rise to power.

The nation of Dassen is delaying the Third Ragesian Army's march to Seaquen. Meanwhile, though Seaquen has had some successes, it is becoming clear that if the Ragesians claim the Torch first, it will render all their work pointless.

When Coaltongue died, a firestorm covered the land for miles in all directions. Months later, the firestorm still keeps anyone from discovering the Torch's fate. The remnants of Coaltongue's army scattered, but now a contingent of them has descended on the Monastery of Two Winds, which lies in the mountains on the border of the long-time rival nations Ostalin and Sindaire. Divinations have hinted that the heads of the monastery, masters of wind magic named Longinus and Pilus, have the power to hold the firestorm at bay.

Led by Second General Signus, the soldiers laid siege, but they did not count on the tenacity of the monks, the cunning of the monastery's leaders, or the presence of a strange soothing magic that has stymied all attempts to assault the monastery and its neighboring village of Eresh. In frustration, Signus has left a garrison and departed to seek reinforcements.

Welcome to the fifth adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. In this installment, the leaders of Seaquen dispatch the heroes to the Monastery of Two Winds, where they will have to defeat an occupying army and traitorous wind mages to earn the support of the monastery's masters. As the spooky calm that has overtaken the village near the monastery slowly fractures, the heroes learn that the war is far more dangerous than they knew.

If the heroes are brave enough to survive the tempestuous onslaught of their enemies, the heroes just might repel the Ragesian army and gain assistance in acquiring the Torch. But the heroes are not the first adventurers dispatched by Seaquen. A previous group has stopped reporting, their last message a strangely calm statement that nothing at all was going on….

Introduction

The Monastery of Two Winds

Fifty years ago, when Ragesian Emperor Drakus Coaltongue first swept through the lands of Sindaire and Ostalin, breaking resistance and ensuring that his rule would never be challenged, two brothers from Ostalin watched their homes set to the torch. The wind carried the flames to other buildings, until their entire village was obliterated. Though they joined the resistance against Ragesia, eventually both realized that the fight was hopeless, and they withdrew, meditating and contemplating on a new path in life.

One brother, Lsi Nu Gon, came to believe that while individual deaths in war are tragic, nothing can truly be destroyed, that souls reach their reward in the afterlife, and that life ultimately endures. Like the gentle west wind, he espoused a philosophy of ascetic detachment, seeking to avoid or endure threats, rather than defeat them.

The other brother, Lsi Pu, lost too many close to him, and developed a philosophy of swift surprise attacks, either as retribution or preemptively to ensure no one was ever powerful enough to threaten the innocent. Like the fierce east wind, he espoused concealing one's power, striking without warning, when one blow can be the most devastating.

Lsi Pu had always been in love with riddles and puzzles, so when he and his brother were planning to create a monastery to share their new enlightenment, he convinced his brother that they should both change their names. Lsi Nu Gon, who became Longinus, saw this as moving away from a life that was no longer his, while Lsi Pu, who became Pilus, desired only to keep his past secret, the better to hide his true intentions.

The monastery, built in a mountain valley on the border between the enemy nations of Sindaire and Ostalin, attracted many who were seeking escape from suffering, or who wished to be strong enough to defend themselves. Over the decades, the monastery grew, and a village of former monks and curious merchants was established in the bottom of the valley, where favorable weather made life possible in the otherwise inhospitable mountains.

Longinus and Pilus were born only two years apart, but Longinus is now an old man, his face hidden behind an elegant white mask and his voice rasping and wheezy, forcing him to use words sparingly. By contrast, Pilus appears a healthy man in his early forties, dark-haired and dashing. None has seen Longinus's face, so some suspect he merely plays the part of an old man, or that perhaps the two are half-brothers, and that Pilus has elven blood. The truth is more magical: Pilus has cheated death.

Pilus's Plan

While Longinus spent his time in meditation and teaching, Pilus gathered a few cunning pupils who could carry the burden of sharing his philosophy, while he spent his time dabbling in countless magical arts, seeking new ways to empower himself. His goal was to take revenge on Coaltongue, and to ensure that none would ever be so powerful or dangerous again. But as Coaltongue was immortal, Pilus knew he would need time, so his first task was to find a way to extend his life, which he did by the age of forty, binding his soul to the elemental air energy of a tempest that had rained perpetually over the nearby sacred Valley of Storms.

Then, with all the time in the world, Pilus developed a grandiose plan to topple the Ragesian Empire. Using biomantic magic he had pioneered, Pilus began to craft monsters, first simple tools and guardians, but slowly working toward his masterpiece — a mile-long living airship, a leviathan of the winds that he proudly named *Tempest*.

Now Pilus's plans are near completion. He has found allied mages of the other three elements — earth, water, and fire — and he has grown a small army of monstrous warriors. As the adventure begins, he has just used his spectacular persuasive skills to ally with the ruler of Ostalin, a petty warlord named Onamdammin, who wishes only to live up to his warrior father's legacy. Before the year's end, Pilus intends to take Onamdammin's army on board *Tempest*, and with the aid of monsters and sorcery never before seen in the world, lay waste to all the empires and nations of men, until there are no armies left to threaten the innocent.

Of course Pilus is somewhat mad to undertake this plan, but he at least realizes his plan is unorthodox and somewhat excessive. Surprisingly well-grounded for a megalomaniac, Pilus knows enough to keep the climax of his plan a secret, and until that point will gather allies so that when he does strike, none will be able to stop him. He even briefly tricked the Ragesians into allying with him for the destruction of Seaquen, which got him close

enough to the leadership of the empire that he was able to learn its weak points.

Pilus recognizes the potential for hypocrisy in his plan, but from his brother Pilus has learned, at the very least, to take the long view of things. If he must kill thousands to give security to millions, he has no qualms.

Adventure Overview

The central goal of *Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds* is to persuade the heads of the monastery, a pair of monks named Longinus and Pilus, to help the heroes acquire the Torch of the Burning Sky. With their aid, a path will be opened for the heroes to reach the location where Coaltongue was slain, which forms the basis of the next adventure, *Tears of the Burning Sky*.

With the aid of a wayfarer, the heroes teleport into Ostalin, arriving in the city of Yen-Ching, a hundred miles from the monastery itself. After a brief stint in Ostalin, they climb the perilous wintry trails up the mountains, running across a Ragesian ambush intended to keep anyone from coming to the aid of the monks of the monastery. Additionally, several companies of Ragesian forces have lain siege to the town of Eresh at the foot of the monastery, forcing the heroes to sneak past the soldiers to reach the town.

When the heroes enter Eresh they find out that something is wrong. Soldiers are living peacefully next to the townsfolk, tempers unnaturally calm, to the point that some people have simply sat down, uninterested in even eating. The few who have managed to keep some sense about themselves can explain that people are going missing, though no one is motivated enough to investigate. The disappearances are at the direction of Pilus, whose apprentice Caela is using invisible stalkers to abduct townsfolk as fuel for biomantic experiments.

As the heroes climb the mountain to the monastery they are attacked by air elementals which are tasked with holding back all foreigners. When they do reach the top, Caela refuses them entrance to the monastery until the Ragesians are gone and the village of Eresh is free from its strange curse. Even the cunning Pilus does not know what causes the calm over Eresh, and it worries him. He has a pair of invisible stalkers follow the heroes and observe their activities.

The heroes investigate the disappearances and the unnatural stillness in the town, locating both the trillith Balance and one survivor of the original expedition from Seaquen. Balance is growing weak, and soon will no longer be able to hold back the Ragesians. Meanwhile, the survivor, a ranger named Eril, explains that his group found damning evidence that whoever attacked Seaquen has a base in the nearby Valley of Storms, but soon thereafter his companions vanished, and he hid. The heroes have to decide which threat to address first.

For the Ragesian threat, Second General Signus returns to town at an untimely juncture, and his arrival with a hundred hostile soldiers proves too much, breaking Balance's calm, and killing her unless the heroes can help. Released from her power, the soldiers take out their anger on the townsfolk, and the heroes must defeat their leader if they are to save the town.

As for the mysterious disappearances, as the heroes trek to the snowy Valley of Storms, they face many obstacles along the way, from perilous climbs to ambushes by monks and strange flesh-crafted monsters. Once they pass these defenses, they can locate Pilus's hidden laboratory, where they battle a powerful guardian, before facing Caela herself, who wishes to protect her master's secrets, even if it means destroying her master's very laboratory.

If the heroes focus first on the Ragesian threat, during the battle Caela's invisible stalkers abduct one of the heroes or their allies, encouraging them to pursue. Should the heroes instead focus first on the Valley of Storms, they arrive just as Signus is arriving. Either way, they should deal with both threats before they have a chance to return to the monastery.

When they do finally gain an audience with the masters of the monastery, they must convince Longinus and Pilus to provide them with assistance in acquiring the Torch of the Burning Sky, a task influenced by their deeds throughout the adventure.

The adventure is divided into five acts — Journey through Ostalin, The Calm Over Eresh, The Ragesian Army, The Valley of Storms, and Audience with Two Winds — and while they work best in this order, you may need to shuffle them based on the heroes' actions.

Two main mysteries surround the monastery. First, a trillith named Balance had taken up residence in the village of Eresh, and has been using her power to keep the Ragesians and the monks from fighting. Balance has used her power too much, and now many on both sides are degenerating into waking comas, uninterested in anything. Balance is growing weak from holding back so much violence, and if she dies the long held-back aggression will be unleashed.

Second, one of the monastery's two leaders, Pilus, was secretly responsible for the attack on Seaquen a month ago, which he used as a test ground for new offensive magic he plans to unleash in the war. His apprentice, a half-elf woman named Caela, has been taking advantage of the strange lull in combat to abduct people, the raw materials necessary for creating the biomantic monsters Pilus is so proud of. Unknown to his brother Longinus, Pilus has allied with the ruler of Ostalin, and intends to enter the war in the coming months, as soon as his latest monster is fully grown.

Character Motivations

If you are playing through the whole of the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign, the heroes should already be embroiled in the grand scheme by now and need only a gentle push in the right direction. This adventure assumes they working with Seaquen in the resistance against Ragesia, but if they are working with another group or hunting for the Torch of the Burning Sky on their own, they could get wind of the divinations which point to the monastery, making it an obvious first step.

If you are running *Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds* as a standalone adventure, the information Longinus and Pilus possess could be whatever you desire, and provide a good jumping-off point for whatever adventure you plan to run next. For a one-shot, perhaps one of the heroes is a monk from the monastery who receives an urgent *sending* requesting he bring help, or one hero might have relatives living in Eresh and hear rumors about the Ragesian attack.

Adapting the Adventure

If you are running this episode as a one-shot or as part of your own campaign, you may want to change some of the encounters, since several of them are designed to hint at events that take place later in the saga. In particular the machinations of Pilus may seem a little out of place or lead to an unsatisfactory conclusion.

As a solution, you can either remove Pilus completely, and have Caela be performing these experiments on her own without the knowledge of her masters, or you might simply use Caela's stats to represent Pilus for a final battle, and have Caela herself use the stats of a typical East Wind monk. Either way, it is best to excise all references to the airship *Tempest*, unless you plan to work a mile-long living airship into your own campaign later.

Act One: Journey through Ostalin

Act One introduces sets the heroes on their mission and gets them to the valley where Eresh and the monastery lie. If you are not running this adventure as part of the campaign saga, you can skip or shorten the section in Yen-Ching.

An Urgent Mission

When the heroes finish their mission in Dassen at the end of *The Mad King's Banquet*, they are called back to Seaquen on urgent business. When the heroes return they are summoned to Simeon's office in Lyceum for an immediate meeting. A light drizzle falls on Seaquen, and distant thunder reminds them of the hurricane that struck a month ago.

When they arrive at Simeon's office, the headmaster is looking out his broad window at the harbor. Kiernan, the defense minister of Lyceum, clears his throat to get Simeon's attention. Unless the heroes brought anyone with them, they are the only other people in the room. Simeon offers them drinks and food, though asks them not to discuss anything important while any serving people are around. He suspects Ragesia has slipped a spy into their midst, and he's not taking any chances.

Before getting on to what their next mission is, Simeon wants to hear in detail about how things went in Dassen. As this conversation is winding down, the door opens, and in step the familiar figure of **Katrina** (N female human sorcerer 10), with a brown-skinned stranger beside her. The man is bald and dressed in simple traveling clothes, with a black tattoo on the back of his left hand and on the back of his head. He has a slight smile, and looks like that expression never leaves his face. If the heroes have visited the refugee monks from Sindaire, they recognize this man as **Three Weeping Ravens** (LG male human monk 4/psychic warrior 5), the spokesperson for his people.

Katrina is a bit displeased they started without her, but she introduces Three Weeping Ravens and the heroes. Three Weeping Ravens is as in the dark right now as the heroes regarding why he has been called here.

The Spy

Katrina, introduced in adventure three, *Shelter from the Storm*, is a double agent from Ragesia. However, she is not particularly devoted to her masters, and her interactions with the heroes may influence her to pick a side.

"Things are going well for now," Simeon says. "Well enough. We haven't died yet, at least. And while our agents are doing their best to gain us allies against the Ragesians, I'm afraid all our trouble might be for nothing. Kiernan?"

Kiernan draws a scroll case and pulls out a map of the region. He points out locations as he speaks.

"This information is all less than a week old, courtesy of *sending* spells. The Third Ragesian army is, by your information, going to be stalled by Dassen for a while. The Fourth Ragesian army is flanking around the mountains into northern Shahalesti. The Western Ragesian Navy is blockading the capital of Sindaire, and the remnants of the First Army, which was with Coaltongue when he died, are scattered throughout Sindaire as well. They are trying to find a way to Castle Korstull, where Coaltongue was slain, which is our best guess to where the Torch of the Burning Sky now lies. However, a firestorm has appeared over the castle, and it's been burning for several months now. They cannot get in.

"The Second Ragesian army has taken Gate Pass, but is having trouble holding it. The amount of resistance their facing gives us hope that we can still be some use to them, but is also worrying, since it is the one place the Ragesians are actively trying to hold territory. We're still not sure of their goals there, but we are all but certain that the Ragesians' *primary* goal is covering as much land as possible, looking for the Torch."

Katrina takes over. "After the hurricane, we sent agents to investigate one of the leads left after you saved the day, a clue which suggested the Ragesians weren't working alone. Five young men and women headed to the Monastery of Two Winds — it's this order of magic-using monks on the border of Ostalin and Dassen who are skilled with wind magic.

"We received reports, what, every other day? But they were finding nothing of interest, and were confined to the town of Eresh, in a valley near the monastery. The masters of the monastery, two brothers named Longinus and Pilus, have been refusing them entrance. Then, a week ago we received our last message. It was weirdly calm, telling us casually that a company of Ragesian soldiers had arrived at the town and were trying to attack the monastery. Since then we've heard nothing."

Kiernan points again at the map. "It's only a short distance from the monastery to Korstull, but we were curious why the Ragesians were attacking the monastery, especially if they were allies. One divination we performed returned this result: 'No single wind can destroy the Torch's fire, but a second wind could be its ruin.'"

Simeon smiles. "The way I interpret that is, since the monastery's heads are skilled with wind magic, they have the power to clear away the firestorm long enough for a group to get to the castle and retrieve the Torch, or to find out where it was taken. Whatever has happened to it, nobody's using it, but whoever gets their hands on it will have the power to end this war in a matter of days."

Katrina gestures now to Three Weeping Ravens. "Three Weeping Ravens, here, traveled with his people across the mountains and through Ostalin to reach Seaquen, and he has had dealings with the monks of two winds before. You've actually met the masters of the monastery, correct?"

Three Weeping Ravens nods gently. "They refused our plea for sanctuary. They were not hostile. They simply did not want to attract the attention of the Ragesians."

The Other Party

During *Shelter from the Storm*, Lyceum became aware of a connection between Lee Sidoneth and the Monastery of Two Winds. As the heroes were otherwise disposed, dispatched on a diplomatic mission to Dassen, another party of adventurers was selected by Seaquen's General Xavious, and sent to the monastery. They stayed in Eresh for just over a week, unable to gain entrance to the monastery, since the monastery claimed giving them aid would bring the might of the Ragesians down upon them. When the Ragesian army arrived on its own, these five agents from Seaquen were also ensnared by Balance's power. Seeing an opportunity to end their prying, Caela sent her invisible stalkers to capture them, and with inadequate information she only got four out of the five. One escaped, and is currently holed up in Eresh.

The agents were **Eril** (NG male human ranger 4), **Metran** (N female dwarf paladin 8), **Klezmer** (N male dwarf bard 8), **Shelton** (LG male human wizard 8), and **Misreth** (LN male dwarf cleric 8). Simeon wants to find out what happened to them.

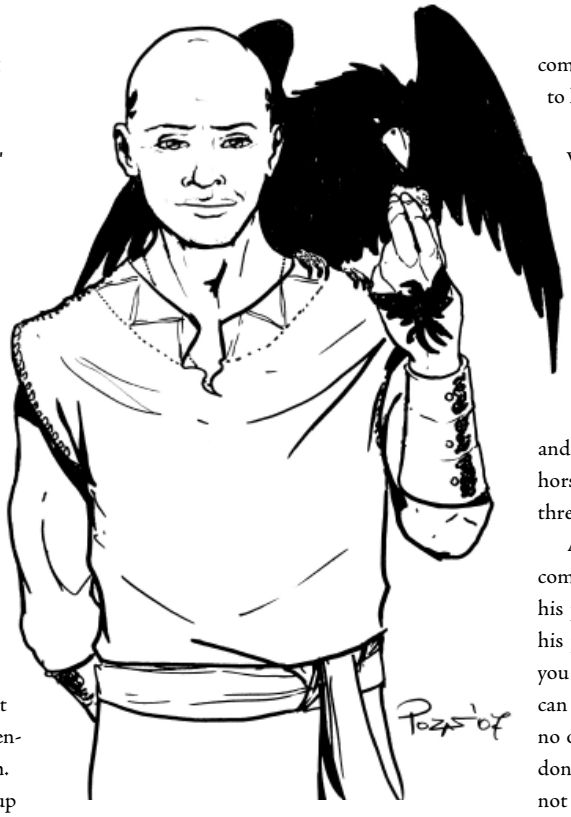
Simeon says, "Regardless, you're the closest we have to an in with them, and you know the way to the monastery.

"If the monastery falls into the Ragesians' hands, we will all be in danger, but if we save them from the Ragesians, well then maybe they'll be willing to lend us aid. It's a nice balanced arrangement. We cannot afford to pass up this opportunity, so I am asking you to go assist the monks."

Between Simeon, Kiernan, and Three Weeping Ravens, the heroes can learn about the monastery. Though the heroes can travel overland if they want, Simeon has arranged for the leader of the Wayfarers Cirque, **Sheena Larkins** (N female half-elf bard 6/rogue 1/Wayfarer cirqueliste 5), a native of Ostalin, to teleport the heroes to Yen-Ching, the nearest major city to the monastery. Sheena is not willing to risk a mishap by trying to teleport somewhere she has only seen via *scrying*, and Yen-Ching is the closest place she is very familiar with.

Sheena can take herself and a party of up to 8 people in one day, though it could be very dangerous. Because of the Burning Sky effect, teleportation will deal 40d6 points of fire damage to the heroes, and though between Sheena and Kiernan they can protect each traveler with *protection from energy* (*fire*), which will stop 120 points of damage, there is a chance the flames could still be too much. Kiernan offers to assist by turning up to six of the heroes into small red dragons with *polymorph* for the trip.

In order to leave Seaquen with teleportation, however, the heroes will have to journey ten miles out into the swamp, since otherwise they will be snagged by the teleportation beacon the Ragesians smuggled into Seaquen. Though it's an inconvenience, for now Simeon is keeping the beacon, using it as a trap in case any Ragesians find a way to circumvent the danger of the fires and actually try to ambush Seaquen.



Simeon encourages the heroes to spend the next day or so preparing for the trip, getting whatever supplies they want, especially since, if they're successful, their next stop will be in the middle of a firestorm. Three Weeping Ravens makes sure to bring along several hundred feet of rope, saying it will be useful in the mountains.

Sheena will be ready to teleport them at midnight, since that time seems to be least affected by the Burning Sky. (Teleportation will only deal 38d6 points of fire damage at midnight.)

Three Weeping Ravens

Three Weeping Ravens is all business, and thinks of the expedition as a duty, but if anyone speaks with him, particularly to ask about his order of monks or of his people, he responds favorably, since so far few in Seaquen have treated them kindly. He makes sure to explain what combat abilities he has before they leave, and asks to know the same of the heroes.

Once the heroes reach Ostalin, Three Weeping Ravens plans a route almost due north from Yen-Ching into the foothills, and then through various circuitous but safe mountain trails, covering a total of about one hundred and ten miles. They can acquire horses in Yen-Ching (teleporting mounts is problematic, such that Kiernan might have to *polymorph* a mount so its size won't ruin Sheena's teleportation), and though some of the roads are steep, taking horses should cut the trip down to just about three days.

Along the way he slowly becomes more comfortable with the heroes, sharing stories of his people and their legends, explaining that to his people, every soul has power, and the more you know the souls of others, the stronger you can become. This route to power, he says, harms no one, but benefits all. Of course, if the heroes don't want to hear him, he keeps his mouth shut, not wanting to irritate.

Three Weeping Ravens spent a week among the monks of the Monastery of Two Winds, and he knows them as an honorable group. As for his own group of monks, the Order of Echoed Souls, Three Weeping Ravens tells the heroes that many decades ago, before Ragesia came to power, his order lived in Ycengled Phurrst, a forest in what is now northern Shahalesti. However, one of the order's monks touched a group of souls too dark, and it blighted his own spirit until he sought to reshape himself into an entity of callous evil. He achieved his goal, and in so doing destroyed the Temple of Echoed Souls and scattered the surviving monks. This story lays the groundwork for the heroes' eventual journey to the temple in adventure seven, *The Trial of Echoed Souls*.

Arriving in Ostalin

Sheena Larkins intends to deposit the heroes in a private garden that belongs to an old family friend at the edge of Yen-Ching. Instead, when the fire clears, Sheena and the heroes are inside a cage with a white pillar 8 feet tall that looks strikingly similar to the one the heroes found in the steam tunnels under Seaquen. Archers atop four surrounding towers are pointing arrows at them. A woman on one tower shouts down, "Identify yourselves or die."

If the heroes look ready to start something, Sheena shouts, "Don't attack!" looking more at her allies than at the soldiers.

Psionics

Balance is a trillith, and her dreamborn abilities are inspired by psionic powers, but everything you need is provided in this adventure. Likewise, Three Weeping Ravens, who may travel with the heroes, comes from an order of monks with psionic powers (which will come into play again in the seventh adventure, *The Trial of Echoed Souls*); his stats, too, are presented so you do not need to use psionic rules.

Let's Walk

If the heroes don't want to teleport, they can travel the traditional way, which adds another three hundred miles to their trip. There's no smart reason for them to do this.

If the heroes were captured in the previous adventure, you might want to eschew the cage in "Arriving in Ostalin," and not require the heroes to hand over their gear. Most groups, you can only capture once; capture them twice and they start complaining that the game's no fun.

Three Weeping Ravens – Art by Claudio Pozas

The mages of Ostalin were developing a defense against the Torch, and these teleportation beacons are the first version. Any creature teleporting to or from a point within ten miles of such a beacon (if the distance traveled is more than a mile) is drawn to a space adjacent to the beacon. The military garrison of Yen-Ching has surrounded their beacon with a 20-foot wide cage, with bars for the ceiling. The heroes are the first to actually fall into the trap, but the soldiers are quite ready to pincushion anyone who appears a threat.

The defenders are occupy four 20-foot high, 20-foot square towers in the center of a cluster of military barracks. Portcullises blocks ground exits between the towers. Four **archers** (N male human fighter 4; ranged +9 composite longbow (1d8+4; ×3)) and one **priest commander** (LN female half-elf cleric 5) stand on each tower. The whole area is warded with a *hallow* spell tied to *dimensional anchor*, so teleporting out is not an option. The beacon delays teleportation arrival and sounds an alarm, so each of the archers has a readied action to attack if one of the priests orders it.

Finally, the floor of the cage can be dropped by any of the priests with a lever, opening to a 30-foot drop to a floor lined with spikes. A second pull of the lever releases a spray of acid, lasting for three rounds, dealing 2d6 points of damage per round (Reflex DC 15 negates).

Should the heroes provoke a fight, they are frankly doomed, as the towers are reinforced by hundreds of nearby troops. On the other hand, if the heroes explain themselves, the lead priest, a stern militant woman named **Felpan (Fau Lu Pan)** explains that in a war it pays to be cautious, and says that her lord will want to speak with them. Until that time she requests they hand over their arms and spell components. She promises that if they do not instigate a fight, their gear will be returned and they will be free to leave within a day. Then she formally welcomes them to Yen-Ching.

Yen-Ching
N Conventional Small City
Government Military dictatorship
Purchase Limit 15,000 gp; **Assets** 7,500,000 gp
Population 10,000
Demographics mixed (70% human, 10% elf, 10% orc, 5% half-elf, 4% half-orc, 1% other)

The Half-Breed Warlord (EL 8)

The heroes are asked to come along, and are escorted (forcibly if necessary) to a small villa at the edge of the barracks. The villa is exquisitely decorated, and guarded by dozens of silent, still watchmen who are almost invisible in the night, each holding a blood red falchion. Felpan quietly explains that they are very lucky to have arrived when they did, for her lord was set to leave in the morning.

Finally the heroes are brought to a soft, comfortable room with dozens of plush beds and beautiful veils pulled away to make a conference space. The air is strong with incense, and the ceiling is a massive polished bronze mirror.

Standing in the room's center is a tall, dark-haired young man, barely twenty-five years old, dressed in regal garb with red and silver gemstone patterns and a cut similar to a warrior's uniform. The man's short dark hair is slicked back, and a strange beard follows his jawline and the edge of his smile, but not his chin. Something about his face is strange, making his actual race hard to place. His eyebrows are long and slender like an elf, his ears faintly pointed, but his brow is strong and his chin thick, vaguely like a half-orc. His nose is small, almost cat-like.

Your guide bows reverently, then straightens but keeps her head down. "I present to you the ruler of Ostalin, the grand Khagan, my lord Onamdammin."

Onamdammin nods once to dismiss your escort, then frowns.

"I apologize for my appearance. The hour is late, so let us keep this brief."

Onamdammin (LN male half-elf fighter 4/wizard 5/eldritch knight 5) has been curious about the status of Seaquen, and whether they are worth allying with, so when the heroes unexpectedly arrive during his inspection visit to the garrison in Yen-Ching, Onamdammin sees it as providence.

The Khagan is not strong like his father. The half-elf son of a strong human man, raised in a world dominated by a half-orc emperor, Onamdammin always saw a weakness in his flesh, and so instead of mastering the arts of war, Onamdammin dabbled in spellcraft and biomancy, seeking to make his body pure. Never satisfied with the results of his magic, he was horrified recently when a fey prisoner gifted into his harem attempted to "heal" him with her innate powers, restoring him to his natural appearance. Onamdammin had the woman petrified as punishment and withdrew in shock, refusing to govern his nation until he was visited by Pilus, one of the masters of the Monastery of Two Winds.

Pilus, a master of biomancy, promised Onamdammin the perfection he desired, as well as a path to power — up to the standard his father had set. Onamdammin agreed, pledging his nation's army to Pilus's mission, expecting his reward to be one of beauty, power, and conquest. The Khagan is not aware of Pilus's ultimate goal, but what he does know he will keep secret, for he has been dazzled by the charm of the Master of the East Wind.

Onamdammin is considering allying with Seaquen against Ragesia, but he wants to know first whether his respected friend Pilus approves of the heroes. He tells them that, if after their mission Pilus tells him that they were honorable and worthy, then he will pledge his nation to the fight against Ragesia. If the heroes ask for help or claim that the monastery is in peril, Onamdammin scoffs, saying that Pilus is a mighty mage, and that no mere Ragesian thugs can ever be a threat to him. He fully expects that Pilus will ensure that no Ragesians ever escape the mountains to reach the lowlands of Ostalin.

This encounter has no grandiose purpose except to hint at a connection between Pilus and the ruler of Ostalin. After a few moments of talking, Onamdammin explains that he is tired and will retire, but he casually offers the heroes an evening with his harem. The heroes should come away with a sense that Onamdammin is not quite normal — not crazy, but perhaps a rich child with too many toys.

Information Gathering

If the heroes spend the evening with the harem — dozens of women and men of great diversity and talent — they learn the story behind Onamdammin's obsession with perfecting his flesh, and his recent contact with Pilus, though none in the harem know of the substance of the meeting. They also speak fearfully of Onamdammin's rage after the incident with the fey prisoner, saying that rumors suggest the Khagan decreed all fey found in his borders are to be turned to stone and brought to his palace in Kistan as trophies.

Getting Violent

If a fight breaks out, the heroes will be hard-pressed to escape without teleporting. Hundreds of soldiers will answer any alarm, and the Khagan himself is no push-over, even without his magical gear. Bodyguards are discreetly watching through various mirrors throughout the room, and if the heroes cast any offensive spells, only the Khagan's mercy will save them.

Exploring Yen-Ching

By noon the next day, the heroes are forced to leave the barracks and the Khagan's manor if they have not already. Yen-Ching itself is a dry city in a flat valley, built over tombs of kings older than the current nation of Ostalin. The city is opulent, despite having to import almost all its food. Massive aqueducts stretch between rugged multi-storied homes, watering the city with snow from the nearby mountains. Numerous schools of philosophy and warcraft vie for dominance, and hippogriff squadrons practice at noon, when the winter temperatures rise to bearable levels.

Magic is not nearly as common in Yen-Ching as in Seaquen. Curious heroes can find anything a good soldier would want, from exotic weapons to masterful martial arts techniques and tomes of cunning swordplay. Three Weeping Ravens recommends they acquire mounts and set out. Sheena rides with them to ten miles outside the city, then teleports back to Seaquen, wishing them good luck, and thanking them for giving her a chance to meet her nation's ruler.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes survive this scene, reward them for a CR 8 challenge.

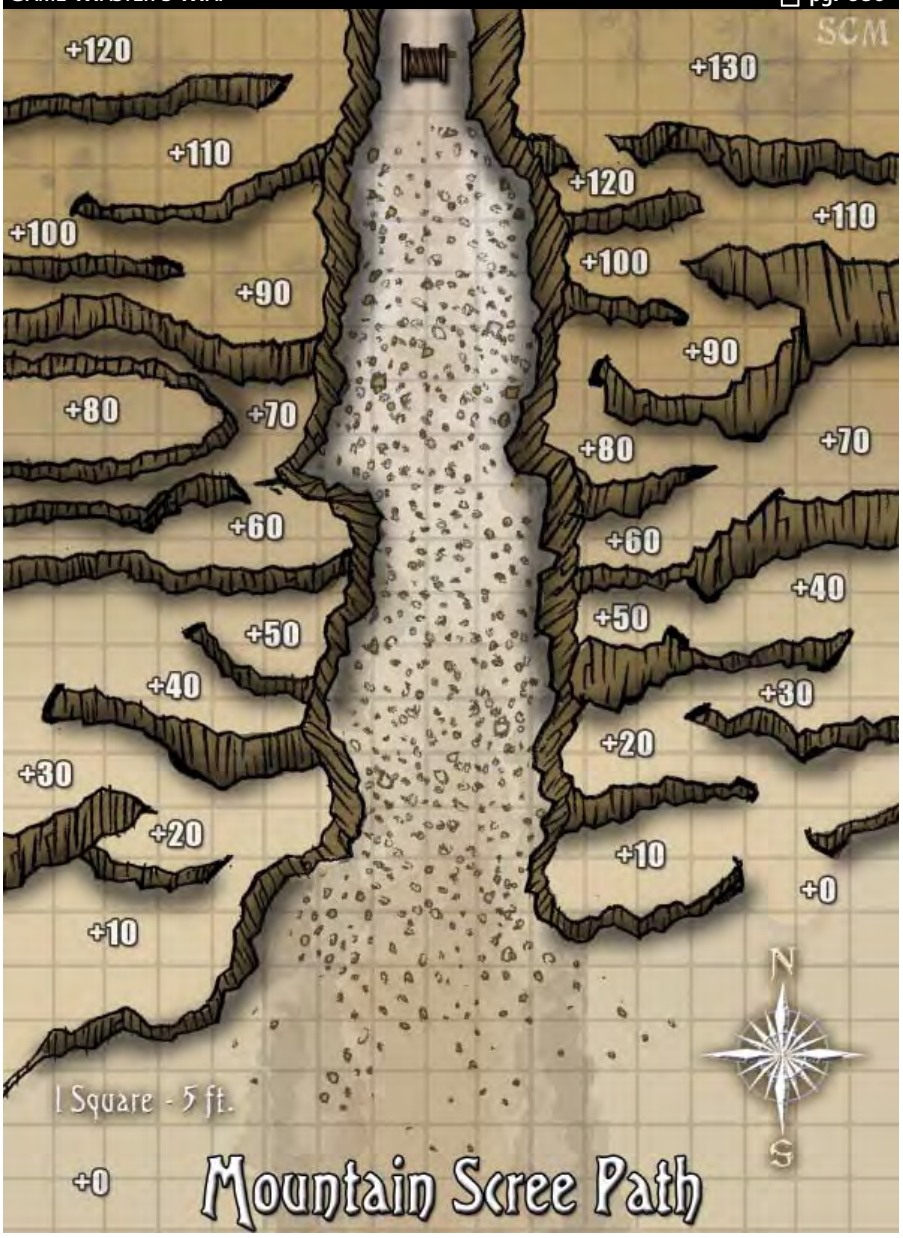
Into the Mountains

After a few days of rolling plains, the mountains begin to rise up in the distance, snow covering them and clouds hiding their heights. Progress is slow due to the unnatural winter: heavy snow and ice abound, and although the passes remain clear, the heroes are the only travelers on the roads. A few small villages lie in the lower foothills, but once the heroes get more than five miles into the mountains they are completely alone.

The roads are steep, and in places impassable except for old, hand-carved stairways rising at 45-degree angles between jagged cliffs. These slopes are easy enough for people to climb, but for mounts and beasts of burden, the natives of the mountains have installed simple winches. A person climbing the stairs can tie a rope onto the winch, then attach the other end of the rope to an animal's harness, using the winch's crank to keep the animal from slipping and falling down the icy steps. The winches lock as they turn, and cannot slip if their operator lets go; they must be manually released.

When the heroes are four miles from Eresh and the monastery, they reach the third stairway, except here, the stairs have been destroyed somehow, leaving in their place a slope of rough scree. The Ragesian army has set up a watch post to make sure no reinforcements come from Ostalin, and if the heroes aren't observant they'll fall into a trap.

Game Master's Map pg. 650



The Long Arm of Ragesia (EL 11)

Before leaving the monastery for good, Second General Signus had his new pet demolish the last set of stairs. The resulting scree path is climbable but difficult; sheer cliffs surround it, and it is nearly ten miles through trackless mountains to the next clear path. A small group of Ragesians has prepared an ambush here; they change shifts once every eight hours, though their "leader" is always present.

Not really a soldier, **Menchi the Headless** (NE male goblin battle sorcerer 8) is a very enthusiastic volunteer who's itching for a fight. His *alarm* spell a quarter-mile down the road gives him advance warning of the heroes' approach, so he has plenty of time to get the soldiers ready for the ambush.

When the heroes arrive, call for Spot checks. Anyone who beats DC 10 notices wolf tracks starting at the base of the stairs and heading up a winding and steep path to the top. Anyone who beats DC 25 notices signs of traffic at the top of the stairs. Everyone else notices that the winch at the top of the stairs looks in order. If someone can get up there, it wouldn't be too hard to pull the others up, even with the scree.

Once at least half of the heroes are within 10 feet of the base of the stairs, Menchi squeals and casts his *wall of fire*, springing the ambush.

Ragesian infiltrators, standard (2) (CR 5): hp 32 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldiers, experienced (4) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldier, veteran (CR 6): hp 50, Appendix B.
Menchi the Headless (CR 8): hp 59, Appendix B.
Menchi's worg familiar, Ekseru (CR n/a): hp 30, Appendix B.

Tactics

Hyperactive Menchi squeals as he rides through combat, thinking this is great fun. If the Ragesians are aware of the heroes' approach, Menchi prepares for their arrival by casting *mirror image*, *shield*, and *jump* on himself, which also affect his worg familiar mount Ekseru through his share spells ability. Then as the heroes come within range he casts *wall of fire* behind them to drive them up the slope. He follows up with *haste* on the Ragesians.

Menchi then spurs Ekseru down the slope, leaping from plateau to plateau, making himself an enticing target. The worg has a +48 Jump modifier (+3 Strength, +20 from *hasted* speed of 80 feet, +20 from *jump*, +5 from ring), enough to go up 10 feet with a running start, or down 10 feet without getting hurt. He can clear a scree gap with minimal effort. As they ride through combat, Menchi creates *flaming spheres*, directing them to chase heroes to keep them from stopping on the plateau. Unless he sees a particularly good opportunity (such as by *greasing* a wall that someone is climbing), he keeps making more *flaming spheres*.

Meanwhile, the Ragesian soldiers pepper the heroes with arrows, readying actions if necessary to attack heroes when they break from cover. The infiltrators head down the slope stealthily and try to flank the heroes, hoping to take out a spellcaster.

Aftermath

Captured soldiers will, with little persuasion, tell the heroes about the disposition of Ragesian forces in the area. Most of the army left with Second General Signus a little over a week ago and have yet to return, and that the remaining garrison is acting a little oddly. Some of the soldiers prefer being out in the cold; they feel more like themselves.

If any of the soldiers escape the heroes and flee into the mountains, they will eventually meet up with Signus, who will be forewarned when he returns to Eresh in a few days, perhaps dispatching a force to specifically hunt down the heroes.

The Siege (EL 17)

The heroes may be disappointed when they see the besieging Ragesian garrison at Eresh. Though the camp is filled with crimson and gold tents and wooden watchtowers cut from the nearby forests, the hundred and fifty soldiers in the camp — mostly humans and half-orcs, with a few orcs and dwarves — are not really besieging anything. They go about their duties, oiling weapons and patrolling walls, but they show no sign of being interested in fighting. The heroes can simply walk through the garrison with little more than displeased calls of, "Hey. You need to stop. You can't go into Eresh."

Lieutenant Kormus, elite Ragesian soldier (CR 8): hp 65, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldiers, standard (128) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldiers, experienced (32) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldiers, veteran (4) (CR 6): hp 50 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian infiltrators, standard (8) (CR 5): hp 32 each, Appendix B.
Hellhounds (8) (CR 3): hp 22 each, MM.

The current leader of the detachment, drunken Lieutenant Kormus, sees his unit losing its grip and lacks the willpower to care. He suspects he'll be executed when Second General Signus returns.

The soldiers here are not as bad off as the people in Eresh: relatively few of them are catatonic. If the heroes gather information here, they learn that several weeks earlier the soldiers arrived with Signus and prepared to lay siege to the town. After their inquisitor was killed during his ascent to the monastery, Signus gave the order to raze Eresh. The soldiers surged through the gate, reached the first building, and then milled around, only using their torches unenthusiastically when Signus rode in on his destrachan mount and directly ordered them. They were unable to motivate themselves to fight, and the villagers weren't interested in attacking, so they simply gave up and went back to their camp, where it was warm.

Signus tried again the next day, thinking perhaps it was a spell that might wear off, but even he was not very interested in the attack. He left in fear of being trapped, taking a score of men with him, saying he would return with reinforcements. They suspect he should be returning any day.

If the heroes pick a fight, anyone they attack can attack back freely, but the others lack the will to fight. See the Balance's Calm section in the next act for more information. Otherwise, they can simply walk through the garrison to Eresh.

Act Two: The Calm over Eresh

In Act Two the heroes investigate the mysteries of Eresh, and decide where to go to find answers. The assumed progress of this act is that the heroes arrive in Eresh, realize odd things are going on, and then ascend to the monastery where they are rebuked. Then they investigate the oddities in the village, watched by invisible agents of the monastery. They locate the survivor of the original Lyceian expedition, then discover that the trillith Balance — the source of the strange calm that pervades Eresh — is dying. After she is saved (or left to die), Ragesian reinforcements arrive, provoking the events of the next act.

This act also contains additional events that may happen after the events of the later acts, but because they occur in Eresh and might take place in a different order, we present them here.

Eresh

The town of Eresh lies at the foot of the mountain atop which stands the Monastery of Two Winds, at one end of a broad, healthy valley. With a population little more than 1000, Eresh is able to support itself on locally-grown crops, aided by the gentle weathers of Longinus and by *plant growth* spells from local priests. Scattered copper mines provide for slight income in trade with the outside world, and many buildings are decorated with copper adornments of birds or iconic depictions of lesser wind gods. Though normally the weather would be temperate even in the dark of winter, for some reason the monastery has been unable or unwilling to aid Eresh this year, and so the entire village is below freezing at all times.

Eresh
LN Conventional Small Town
Government Council of elders
Purchase Limit 800 gp; **Assets** 44,000 gp
Population 1,100
Demographics isolated (96% human, 2% half-elf, 1% half-orc, 1% other).

There is only one road into Eresh from the outside world, although two roads carry on beyond it — one up a winding cliff path to the monastery, the other to a forbidden valley to the east said to be inhabited by the gods, the Valley of Storms. An unnamed river flows down from this valley, though it is frozen and shallow now. An old stone wall blocks the entrance into Eresh, but it is unguarded, and would be under control of the Ragesians if they cared enough. The gate currently hangs open.

Eresh is made up of dour but sturdily built stone houses, clustered together on the mountainside, often leaning precariously out from long terraced slopes. Narrow roads run between buildings, and a few of the townsfolk keep their own gardens, but the buildings are tightly packed, though divided into several large groups.

Snow and rock dominate the landscape, with a few scattered copses of pine trees. The only colors in the grey landscape are the countless brightly colored pennants and flags that flutter in the breeze from the top of every building. If asked what these mean, locals will point to the mountain peaks to the east and west and explain that the flags are offerings and prayers to the gods of air and weather.

The town functions similar to a commune, with respected elders deciding on policy, but there being no law enforcement or taxes. During the course of this adventure, nearly all the citizens are too caught up in Balance's power to be of assistance, though the heroes will be contacted by one of the elders, a former West Wind monk turned baker named **Bechus (Bei Ksu)** (LG venerable male human monk 2/cleric 5).

About fifty Ragesian soldiers wander through the streets of Eresh, most of them congregating around the inn, the Peak's Shadow. Affected by Balance, they act as if they are on leave, but they never seem to enjoy themselves and remain suspicious of the townsfolk, since consciously they know they are among enemies.

A. Wall and Garrison

The people of Eresh do not go here, and never really used the wall for defense, so it is not particularly strong.

B. Fire Shrine

Four shrines revere the elements; one is at each corner of Eresh. Though the monastery is devoted to wind, its monks respect the need for balance among elements. Each shrine is a simple one-story building with a gently sloping roof and hundreds of banners of the appropriate color, bearing words in the appropriate elemental language.

This shrine, however, has been destroyed, burned down by the Ragesians in their first and only offensive action. A spellcaster who meditates in these scorched ruins for 15 minutes can prepare or cast one additional spell of his highest spell level in the next day, if the spell has the fire descriptor. This does not grant knowledge of fire spells to those who cannot already cast them.

C. Library

The library of Eresh encourages visitors to bring a book from the outside world to add to the collection, in exchange for which the monks here will scribe a copy of any of the library's current holdings. The monks also can scribe magical scrolls for the normal prices. Any of the new spells detailed in this adventure can be located here. The library's books are eclectic, and possess no particularly vital information.

D. Neighborhoods

Atop these terraced slopes are the majority of the houses of Eresh's citizens. A typical house holds a family of four to ten, and also includes some sort of shop, since most families provides crafts or services for the rest of the town.

In the southern neighborhood, one building stands out, its roof a shiny copper that has never tarnished over decades of rain and snow. This is the Eresh healing house, where West Wind monks use their magic to tend the sick and injured, and to study strange methods of non-magical healing.

E. Peak's Shadow

This inn, the only in town, services the needs of townsfolk and the rare visitors. It lies at the base of a sharp spire of rock a hundred feet high, which can be ascended through a narrow and steep circling path of steps which terminate at a small shrine. A large gong hangs in the shrine, and when struck its sound can be heard as far away as the monastery. Traditionally the gong is sounded once at sunrise and again at sunset, and multiple times on various holidays, but it has been silent for weeks, ever since Signus attacked.

The owner of the inn is a foreigner, **Thashalanos** (N male elf ranger 5), a Shahalesti expatriate and retired soldier who lacked the discipline for the monastery, but who liked the weather and people.

F. Mountain Shrine

As with the other shrines, if a spellcaster meditates at the underground chamber in the center of this sturdy shrine, he can cast one additional spell that day if it has the earth descriptor.

G. River Shrine

The monks here coated the walls with water which froze, giving the shrine a glistening shine. A spellcaster meditating in a boat on the frozen river can cast one additional spell that day if it has the water descriptor.

Game Master's Map pg. 651



H. Farms

The farmland of Eresh is barren and cold. Crops cannot grow in this weather, and nothing has sprouted in the abandoned fields in months. For their part, the townsfolk have not attempted to plant anything in the frozen soil. The monastery stores more than enough food for a year of winter.

I. Wind Shrine

A spellcaster who meditates on the roof of this monastery can cast *two* additional spells that day if both have the air descriptor.

The Peak's Shadow

Three Weeping Ravens recommends the Peak's Shadow as a good starting point, both to find lodging and to learn what is going on in the town. The inn, Eresh's only one, is built from stone carved from the rock of the nearby stony outcropping, and it always lies in the shade at sunrise, giving its drunks more than enough time to stagger home without too much bright light, though among the disciplined families of former monks, excessive drinking is typically reserved for special occasions.

The inn is crowded and quiet day and night. Townsfolk and soldiers laze about here, several of them practically unconscious. The owner, Thashalanos, has managed so far to resist slipping that far into Balance's influence, and he recognizes that something is amiss.

As a hub of sorts for the village, it won't be hard for the heroes to notice a relatively high amount of traffic in and out of the inn. When the heroes arrive, Thashalanos is actually excited for a moment to see them, and then he sighs. Heroes looking for information about goings on in the town could do worse than starting here.

Balance's Calm

Living creatures that enter Eresh or linger within a mile of it are affected by the power of the trillith Balance, which acts as a *suggestion* to be calm and take no aggressive action (Will DC 25 negates). Balance renews this effect each morning, forcing new saving throws for those who resisted, and those who failed do not get a chance to break free. If a creature affected by this spell is attacked in any way, the creature is freed from the spell until Balance renews it the next morning.

Creatures with the air descriptor are immune to this effect.

Peak's Shadow
Gather Information

DC	Result
10	"It all started when the Ragesians tried to attack. They did not get far, as if they did not care, and in truth neither did we care. Everyone appears satisfied with the situation, but my customers complain that they have had no dreams nor nightmares since that day. This is not normal, but it is probably nothing important."
15	"There was another group of strangers recently, come from some port city to the east. They came in a lot, asking questions, sometimes with Bechus, one of the town elders. They have not been in since the day after the Ragesian attack."
20	"I heard the Ragesians wanted to get to the forbidden valley, the Valley of Storms. They were trying to capture the spirits there to force the monastery to surrender." *(This rumor is false.)*
25	"Some of the monks from the healing house along Notus road have come by to collect those too calm to care for themselves." Also, "Maybe it is just my imagination, but I think some of the townsfolk have vanished in the past week."

About Town

Though many of the residents of Eresh are former monks, there are also a couple of current monks in Eresh itself, having come down to purchase supplies. They are now trapped in the soporific daze of Balance's magic, unwilling to muster up the energy to make the climb back up to the monastery. Their absence has been noticed by the other monks, and is part of the reason that no one else is allowed into or out of the monastery.

These monks, **Jamira (Jei Mi Rao)** (LN female human monk 2/cleric 3) and **Bellock (Bi Lu Kai)** (LN male human monk 2/sorcerer 3) spend their time talking about philosophy at the inn, and are iconic representations of their chosen paths. The monks are unable to tell the heroes any of the recent goings on at the monastery, but can tell them about monastery and the order. They can give the heroes an insight into the politics of the monastery, highlighting the divisions between Longinus and Pilus, and telling them about Caela, Pilus's chosen apprentice, who originally followed the West Wind path before being swayed by Pilus's charm.

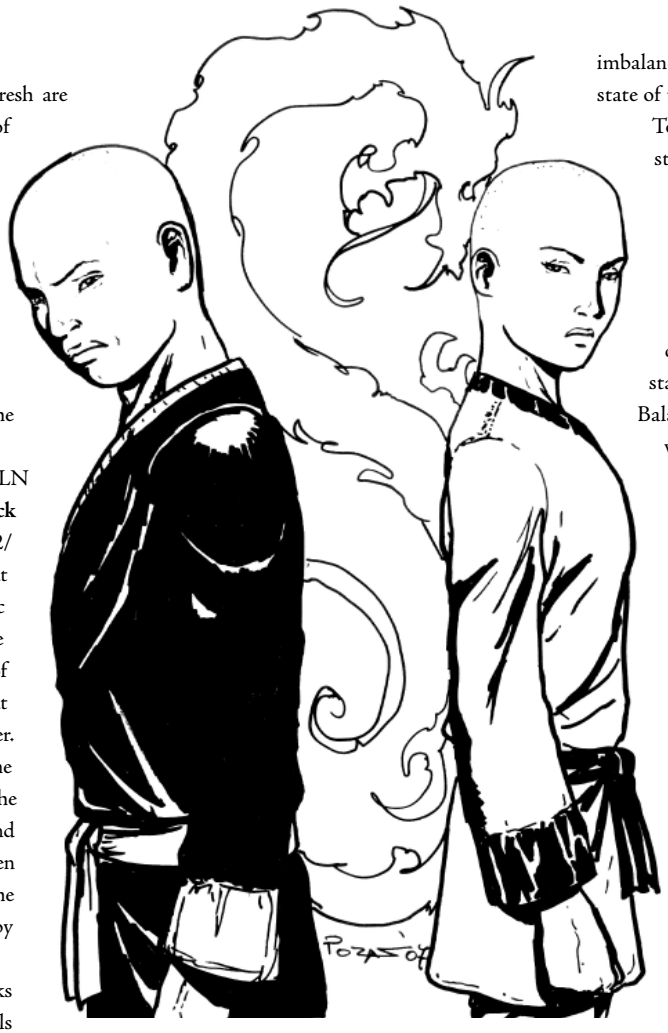
Perhaps most importantly, the monks will warn the heroes about the elementals that guard the approach to the monastery, providing them with the code word to allow safe passage — "Eshu." Caela has, of course, overridden the code, instructing the elementals to attack anyone who approaches the monastery, but this information will at least negate surprise when the elementals attack.

If asked, the monks will accompany the heroes up to the monastery, although because they are still seen as unclean and cursed, they are not allowed in. Once on the road to the monastery, however, they break free of Balance's hold, so they might at least be of aid in combat.

The Balance of Power

Some time before the heroes first head to the monastery, they have their first encounter with the trillith Balance.

Unlike the trillith that the heroes might have encountered before, Balance is not an enemy. She is something of a kindred spirit to the monks at the monastery, eager to meditate and withdraw from the world. She emerged from the caverns below Gate Pass twenty years ago and wandered the world, eventually finding her place at the monastery, and though she did not study with them, she was comfortable here, able to pursue enlightenment, and to be free from the pain and strife of her birthplace in the great below.



Balance – Art by Claudio Pozas

Balance is averse to emotions of any kind, embracing a sort of emotionless void, promoting a mellow, relaxed, and ultimately apathetic existence where sorrow and joy, bravery and fear are unheard of. She wants simply to be part of the world — no one's slave, no one's master. She recognizes that, like her trillith brethren, she experiences a desire that the world be more like her own nature (in this case, balanced), but she believes that the proper path is not to interfere, not even to teach. She rejected the machinations of her fellow trillith.

When the war came, Balance sought to keep Eresh at peace, fearing the refuge she had found would be destroyed. Her powers have been stretched to breaking since the arrival of the warmongering Ragesians, and Balance finds her control slipping as she begins to doubt herself. She wonders now whether perhaps peace is the imbalanced state and war and conflict the natural state of the world.

Townsfolk have stopped feeling and stopped *doing*, overwhelmed with a sense of apathy and futility. Instead of working, townsfolk sit around eating, drinking, and smoking in relative silence, not because they enjoy it, but because they have nothing better to do. If the effect continues for much longer, people will start to go permanently insane, and when Balance's control finally breaks, the backlash will be severe.

In day to day affairs, Balance appears as a bald woman and man, **Agneth** and **Boren**, though only one is present at any time. During conversations Balance will sometimes speak from a second body, drawing listeners' gazes to the new form as the old one dissipates. In her true form she is a wispy serpentine dragon with a head at each end, resembling a zephyr wind. (We use the feminine pronoun because it's easier.)

Spooky Meeting

Balance lives in a house of her own near the wind shrine, which the heroes will invariably pass on their way to the monastery. As they are preparing to go up to the monastery, the heroes spot her standing at her door, watching them. She recognizes that they're new, and that their presence might be the catalyst for disaster, so she waits for them to approach, beckoning them if necessary, then retreats into her home as they approach.

If the heroes follow, they find the house empty except for veils hanging ceiling to floor. It looks like no one actually lives there (though intense searching can discover footprints). Then, a female voice calls to them from behind the veils.

> "We are Balance," the woman says, "and you have met our kin."
>
> Her form is difficult to see through the veils, and as you move closer for a better look a man's voice speaks from behind you.
>
> "The scale weighs heavy, and your actions will tip it."
>
> The new speaker is also hidden by veils, and when you glance back at the woman, she is gone. Then, when you look for the man, he too has vanished.

Unless the heroes immediately begin singing the Song of Forms (originally detailed in adventure two, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*), Balance slips away. If they sing the song and she fails her save, she does not panic or flee, but instead stands to speak, her form shifting between male and female. In this case, see "Interacting with a Dream," below.

Fractured Calm (EL 6)

The heroes' arrival upsets Balance's control of her powers, as she senses great conflict coming. By the time the heroes return from the monastery the first time, there are already signs that the calm is fading. A few Ragesian soldiers hustle away from the center of the town, looking nervously at everyone around them. Townsfolk wander the streets, calling out for missing friends and family. Some comatose people sit up suddenly and begin punching the nearest inanimate object while laughing and crying in joy and rage.

When they return to town, each of the heroes must make a Will save (DC 15) to resist the power of a weakened Balance. The heroes who make this save are not the only ones who can feel emotions, however, for a group of soldiers has also shrugged off Balance's powers and are taking it out on the townsfolk. As the heroes near the Peak's Shadow, they come across a group of soldiers beating up an innocent passer-by with an alarming amount of brutality, screaming with unleashed glee.

Ragesian soldiers, standard (4) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

The battle will no doubt be short, but it is only a prelude. After killing or driving off the Ragesians, Bechus (see Hideaway, below) approaches from a crowd that had gathered to watch.

Interacting with a Dream

Balance will not speak with the heroes again until after they go to the monastery (not for any personal reason; simply because it's better for the narrative flow). Feeling weak after coming into contact with the heroes, Balance travels to the healing house, seeking aid, though the monks there have no idea how to treat a creature of her sort. Later, when the heroes return to the town (preferably after they witness signs of Balance's control slipping, and just after they locate and speak with Eril; see "Hideaway" below), a monk from the healing house comes to find them, saying that one of the patients wants to speak to them — the patient is Balance. Alternately, this scene can happen if the heroes manage to trap Balance with the Song of Forms.

Balance will answer any questions the heroes might have, responding in a dreamy, faraway tone. In particular, she has key information about the following topics.

What are you?

"We are a dream, born in the darkness below the world where our mother eternally sleeping lies. You have met our kin: we sense the wayward elder Indomitability, and others besides whose identities are not so clear. Of our kind, each is born in a dream or nightmare, and this determines the nature and powers of the newly born. We call ourselves trillith."

What do you want?

"Our kin have many desires, all of which we do not know, do not understand. We ourselves left home twenty years past, passing through the Gate to the sunlit world, where we sought a home, a quest which eventually led here. Today, we only seek to maintain the calm, but we grow weak from too much strife. Our home is in peril, and we do not wish the minions of the Torch to destroy it."

What else is going on here?

"The lesser east wind serves her master in this valley and beyond. Stalking claws, invisible and loyal, have seized those we unwittingly laid low, and carried them away to lie beneath the tempest to the east. The storm that has gathered for decades will not long idly lie, we sense. Be warned: children of the wind are strong here, too strong for our boon to calm them."

Can you please stop speaking in metaphor?

"Your eyes see a world of solids, a world we cannot grasp. Your words confuse me as well. We are at a balance."

What happens if you die?

"We cannot survive much longer, and when we pass, the scale will collapse, and discord will reign."

How can we help you?

"We are too weak to withdraw our boon from so many, and we will not forsake our beliefs, even if our fleshless spirit be eternally destroyed. Help us by going in peace, leaving, and raising neither sword nor spell in battle."

Restoring Balance (EL 10)

Once the heroes meet with the sick Balance, they may seek to save her, not wanting a potential ally to simply let herself die. In order to survive, Balance must be taken away from the soldiers. Since she has no body, either one of the heroes will have to sing the Song of Forms long enough for them to carry her away (she's too weak to resist), or they will have to convince her to endow her power upon a single creature, entering that creature's body. She starts as Unfriendly to this idea, and will have to be made Helpful, since she views it as abandoning her beliefs.

The heroes can more easily sway her if they use some metaphorical speech, like saying that they will briefly let the scale tip to violence, but that when they are done everything will balance out; or by explaining that she herself has unbalanced things too much in favor of peace.

Perhaps the most cunning solution the heroes could come up with would be to take Balance with them to the Valley of Storms as they go to confront Caela, since Balance is a powerful ally, capable of changing the emotions of those around her at a whim, inspiring fear or bravery, joy or sorrow. Of course, as soon as the heroes get Balance more than a mile from Eresh, the soldiers in the garrison quickly snap out of the calm and prepare for an attack.

If the heroes do not think to help Balance, or if they do not want to, she grows weak as their conversation progresses, and she eventually begins to mutter that she "cannot hold them back," that "too much is coming." Within an hour (or the next morning, if it is night), she begins to spasm, her form shifting from female to male and back, occasionally even flickering to her true draconic form, before finally screaming and dying as she futilely tries one last time to maintain the calm. If Balance dies in this way, no one gains her boon, because it means she effectively died of negative levels.

Variant Timeline

If the heroes manage to speak to Balance early on, she does not know to warn them about Caela, and after a few questions she begins to cough, too weak to speak any more. She manages to say that she will not harm them, and that they do not need to hold her. Unless the heroes kill her, eventually they will have to release her, at which point she vanishes.

The heroes next see her when a monk from the healing house asks them to come to see the dying trillith, as chaos is slowly breaking out.

Once Balance is no longer maintaining the calm — whether she lives or dies — at this juncture, news comes that Second General Signus has returned with reinforcements, and that his army is preparing to attack the village.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes save Balance, reward them for a CR 10 encounter.

Missing People

Townsfolk and soldiers alike have been going missing over the week, amounting to several dozen people, taken away by two invisible stalkers working for Caela, Pilus's apprentice. The invisible stalkers are delivering them away to Pilus' laboratory in the Valley of Storms. Pilus uses these people as fuel for his biomancy experiments, either burning their life force to make spells permanent (i.e., paying XP costs for crafting creatures) or as raw materials for the creatures' actual bodies.

Because of the apathy afflicting the town, little has been done about this. If the heroes choose to stay in Eresh for more than a day, they should become aware of the disappearances. If they have struck up conversation with one of the townsfolk, then he could go missing, though the heroes themselves are not targets until they visit the monastery.

Assuming the Ragesian attack occurs before the heroes go to the Valley of Storms, during the conflict these invisible stalkers attempt to carry off a wounded or unconscious hero, or perhaps Three Weeping Ravens, giving the heroes an urgent motivation to go to the valley as soon as the battle is done. If the heroes set out on their own to the Valley of Storms, they clearly don't need any encouragement, and so you can skip this scene.

Hideaway

At some point during the heroes' time in Eresh, preferably after going to the monastery, when Balance's deterioration has caused small bursts of violence to break out (see Fractured Calm, above), one of the townsfolk approaches them, an old man who looks like he's having trouble keeping focused. He introduces himself as **Bechus** (LG venerable male human monk 2/cleric 5), a baker and former monk, and implores the heroes to help him. Bechus has been sheltering the only surviving member of the previous adventuring party from Seaquen, their guide, **Eril** (NG male human ranger 4), who has been in hiding since the Ragesians attacked and the rest of his party disappeared. Bechus wants the heroes to get take Eril away, before he is found by the Ragesians.

Bechus takes the heroes to his home in the northern neighborhood, and leads them to his cellar, where the ranger from Seaquen has been hiding. Eril has seen better days and is thin, tired, and half-insane, having kept himself from falling under the sway of Balance's calm by cutting his skin and refusing to sleep. Despite this, when he sees the heroes he can barely manage a smile.

Eril tells the heroes the story of his party's downfall:

> "We had been refused entrance to the monastery for more than a week. We had spoken with Caela at the door, but she was enigmatic and more than a little unhelpful, suggesting that we would offend her masters by suggesting they'd had something to do with the hurricane. We told her that we had found evidence that something was going on in the valley to the east, the one they say is forbidden. Some divinations suggested that whatever magic keeps the storm there going forever was used to create the storm over Seaquen. Caela sneered when we told her this, and told us we were pissing her off. Well, not in so many words. She told us to leave.
>
> "But then the Ragesians attacked, and we suddenly weren't very interested in doing much of anything. But the next day a message was delivered to us by a silver raven, inviting us to the monastery. I wasn't interested in going, and then the next thing I realized, days had passed, and my companions had not returned.
>
> "It cleared my head enough for me to come here for Bechus's help, and I've been hiding ever since, hoping the Lyceum would send someone else."

This should alert the heroes that Caela is a threat, and encourage them to go to the Valley of Storms. Though healing could restore Eril's health, and magic could free him from the compulsion of Balance, he has truly lost interest in risking his life. He didn't realize how dangerous this would be, and now he just wants to survive, even if that means running away. He will be of little use to the heroes.

Ascent to the Monastery

The Monastery of Two Winds is perched atop a low peak at the edge of this valley, with yet higher mountains beyond. Visible from anywhere in Eresh, it is an impressive sight, a massive, red-roofed edifice hundreds of feet across, comprised of many wings that have an orderly sprawl atop the uneven mountain peak. The site is made all the more vivid by the pale snowy mountain peaks in the distance.

Hundreds of brightly colored banners and flags flutter from the rooftops and hang from the walls, flapping violently in the strong wind that whistles about the peak. Flocks of unusual white birds wheel about the monastery. Occasionally one of these birds will flap close to the heroes, allowing them to see the unnatural creature close up. It has three wings, and sharp claws clearly designed to grip onto something. Its beak appears upside down, curving upwards rather than downwards. Its flight is somewhat erratic, its third wing allowing it to change direction suddenly or hover in place.

These birds are one of Pilus's earliest, but more successful creations, called remora birds, designed to clean the monastery's walls, and more recently adapted to clean the mighty skin of *Tempest*. Heroes will not recognize the significance of them yet, but whenever they glimpse *Tempest* in the future they might catch a glimpse of flocks of white birds flying nearby.

The monastery wall is pierced in many places with narrow slits and holes, designed to funnel the wind through them, creating various sounds based on the direction of the wind. At dawn and dusk, the wind currents seem to sing here. Some of these holes are large enough for a Tiny creature to squeeze through.

Once inside, the true scale of the building is impressive. More palace than humble temple, the tiered building is a maze of corridors, courtyards, and chambers, connected by interior and exterior staircases. Within, the monastery is light and airy, many small windows and slits in the roof allowing shafts of light to illuminate the rooms. Most chambers lead directly to open-air courtyards and gardens, linked by corridors and colonnades. Clever use of ducts and angled vents draw air through the monastery, creating a constant wind that whistles gently through the interior of the building, to the amazement of visitors.

The monastery is home to a few hundred monks, with vast open arenas designed for training aerial and acrobatic combat, and elegant open-air gardens for meditation. Visitors are occasionally

allowed to the monastery, but in general the monks create everything need, only going to Eresh to purchase food, or to trade with the occasional foreign merchant.

Amazingly enough, the enormous monastery, with all its custom features, was built in only eight years.

The highest step of the monastery is for the private chambers and court of the masters of the monastery, Pilus and Longinus, as well as a small number of aides and servants. It is here that the heroes will be eventually granted an audience with the masters in Act Five.



The Ascent

Accessible only by a narrow path that winds its way up several hundred feet, the monastery is defended by powerful air elementals, two of which are active at any given time. The ascent is like a series of massive steps, rather than a single gentle slope, and though a trail leads all the way up, strong winds occasionally whip around the mountain, spiraling down from the peak and threatening to pitch travelers from the path to their deaths. In places the path has been eroded by the elements and travelers must step lightly or risk it collapsing under their feet. With a steady pace, the climb takes about an hour.

The path is dotted with brightly colored flags and banners that flap wildly in the constant gales. Each time the cloth flaps against the flagpole, it is said a prayer is uttered to the gods of the wind and the sky.

Guardians (EL 11)

As the heroes clamber up the path, they reach a particularly crumbly section of the trail, where the path has been obscured by snow, forcing them to risk stepping into hollow pockets and plunging into 20 foot deep rifts. At this point they are 600 feet above the level of the village, and about 300 feet from the front of the monastery. The ground has a gentle slope, but is icy, with a few scattered rifts. It is while passing through this dangerous area that the monastery's air elemental guardians attack.

Two-Wind Huge air elementals (2) (CR 9): hp 178 each, Appendix B.

The air elementals have been instructed to attack any intruders, since the monastery is sealed until the curse upon Eresh is broken. Unlike normal air elementals, these do not have the whirlwind ability, instead possessing the power to fire intense gusts of wind each round as a swift action.

Tactics

The two-wind elementals swoop in, strike, then move so they are 30 feet away from their enemies, waiting to use their gale ability to stymie enemies who try to approach. Occasionally they use tag-team tactics, one elemental descending amid the enemies while the other bull rushes a foe through the first elemental's threatened space, or the two of them flanking an entire group of enemies so that anyone who tries to flee (or who is knocked away with a burst of wind) incurs attacks of opportunity.

As long as they are not being severely hurt they enjoy themselves, looking for fun tactics, even occasionally grappling foes and carrying them into the air. If either is reduced below 30 hp, they retreat. Alternately, if the heroes are on the verge of defeat they withdraw, called back by Longinus.

Terrain

The icy rifts are 5 or 10 feet wide and up to 40 feet long, usually 20 feet deep. Hidden by a layer of snow and ice, a creature stepping on the surface above a rift realizes that the ground is treacherous. If he stops his movement on such a space, it breaks, and he must succeed a Reflex save (DC 15) to leap to an adjacent square, landing prone. Failure drops the hero 20 feet, and getting out is difficult, requiring a Climb check (DC 25).

The elementals have a bird's eye view and can easily spot these rifts, and so like to bull rush enemies into them.

Cold Welcome

The large double door to the monastery is shut tightly. Heroes who knock and wait will get a feeling they are being watched, and an Intelligence check (DC 20) detects a scrying sensor floating nearby. Heroes who knock further, or indicate to the sensor that they have seen it, will find a small vision slit opened eventually by Caela.

Caela (Cai Lei Wsu) (CR 15): hp 97, Appendix B.

Caela seems more than a little displeased to see the heroes, barking at them curtly.

"Begone with your curse!" the woman says. "The masters have said outsiders are not welcome."

If the heroes try to explain themselves, Caela frowns skeptically but will not open the door.

"There are strange things afoot in the valley below," she says, "ever since you outsiders brought your curse into the town. We know your origin and your task, and that your allies were harbingers of the unnatural stillness. It cannot be allowed to spread to the monastery, so you shall have to stay out there and we shall remain in here.

"Now, if you really want to see the masters, you'll have to make yourself useful first and sort out the mess down there. We will endure, for the wind will not be rushed. You, though, might want to hurry. Come again once the curse is lifted, and I will speak on your behalf, asking that my masters grant you an audience."

Caela closes the vision slit, but will open it again to (briefly) answer their questions. She mostly sees the heroes as a threat, but hopes perhaps to use them to ensure the Ragesians don't find out what's going on in the Valley of Storms.

Pilus and Longinus

Caela is respectful most of the time to her masters, but heroes might be able to discern that she is rather more loyal to Pilus than Longinus by the tone of her voice. She will speak of Pilus far more than she will Longinus, and give them the impression that Pilus is the more powerful of the two.

Caela's Greeting – Art by Claudio Pozas

The Torch

Caela knows the legends surrounding the torch, and has a hunch that Longinus and Pilus know far more. She knows the Ragesians desire her masters to clear the firestorm, but proudly claims they will never bow to the demands of warbringers.

The Ragesian Garrison

Caela is more than a little nervous about the garrison. She is confident that Pilus has a plan to deal with them, but is uncertain whether it includes her or not, and is therefore keen to get the heroes to deal with them. She knows more about the army than she should be able to, unless she has left the monastery recently (which she has), though she claims her masters have divined the army's nature.

Caela knows that Second General Signus will return soon, and knows he has a reputation for cunning. If the people of Eresh were free to defend themselves, they outnumber the company here, and many have some combat skills, but she suspects it will be a slaughter. She warns the heroes that they will find no refuge in the monastery if they flee here.

Caela will not admit that the current mount Signus rides, a destrachan, was crafted by Pilus a year ago.

Balance

Caela knows nothing about the trillith, and certainly doesn't intend to go and find what's causing the strange happenings in Eresh herself. Mentioning her piques the woman's interest, however, and ensures that the heroes will be watched closely by her invisible stalkers when they return to Eresh.

The Disappearances

Caela is complicit in the disappearances, but will lie to the heroes (her Bluff bonus is +20), blaming them on the army. "You know these Ragesians, infamous for their brutality. No doubt they have an internment camp somewhere in the town where the missing are going. You also know they consort with devils; such cursed creatures would naturally be immune to whatever curse *your* kind has brought here."

The Other Party

She admits that they came to the monastery, and were refused because they were disrespectful. As for their disappearance, she lies, remarking, "They spoke of going to the forbidden valley. It is forbidden for a reason. I suggest you strike from your mind any thought of going there if you do not wish to gain the ire of my lords.

Breaking and Entering

The heroes might decide to bypass or ignore Caela altogether, breaking or sneaking into the monastery by other means. They will have to be very careful if doing so, as the place is full of monks. Although the monks are not necessarily hostile, they are wary of intruders and will attack without asking too many questions.

Heroes who are sloppy will find themselves in the midst of a fully-alert monastery, and quickly confronted by a large number of monks in an environment they are perfectly suited to. This could easily turn into a running battle, made up of a series of fights with groups of monks, as the heroes battle through courtyards, gardens, armories, dormitories and kitchens. Or it could end swiftly with each hero being struck by multiple stunning fists, then being pummeled into unconsciousness.

Heroes who successfully sneak (or fight) their way past the monks can get a premature audience with Longinus (if you're feeling generous) or Pilus (if you're feeling mean). However, neither of the two masters are the least bit willing to deal with the heroes at this time — Longinus because he worries for Eresh, Pilus because he is busy finalizing the growth of *Tempest*.

Like Caela, Longinus will simply demand the heroes leave the Monastery, leave Eresh, and take their curse with them.

Pilus, on the other hand, will sense in the heroes a strong spirit he appreciates. He'll tell them that he cannot speak to them in anything like an official capacity, since his brother will never support any agreements he makes, but that he might be able to lend them some aid. Pilus will order a single two-winds huge air elemental to accompany them: it will fly quietly overhead in Eresh and be ready to come to their aid against the Ragesians (and equally ready to betray them if the heroes go into battle against monastery monks). He encourages them to solve the mystery, and promises his aid in advance.

Act Three: The Ragesian Army

This act focuses on the attack by the Ragesian garrison after General Signus returns.

Return of the General

After leaving Eresh in frustration, Signus linked up with his commander, General Magdus, in Sindaire, where he persuaded Magdus to lend him a large detachment so he could break through the defenses of the monastery and hopefully force the monks to aid them in reclaiming the Torch.

Fresh and ready for a fight, Signus rides back into town as Balance nears death, accompanied by nearly a hundred extra soldiers, as well as some of the few surviving wyvern knights in the First Army.

The general is not pleased to find the monastery still standing, and his garrison practically insensible. Of course, before he has the opportunity to bash heads together, the new tide of aggression breaks Balance's control, killing her, and utter chaos breaks loose almost immediately.

Within minutes of Balance's death, horns are sounding as the garrison gathers and prepares for an attack. Nearly three hundred soldiers prepare to assault a town of just over a thousand, and though the people of Eresh possess the strength to stop the assault, they are confused and ill-prepared. The heroes have a chance to rally them, either with words or deeds, but time is short.

The Panic (EL 10)

As soon as Balance is dead, the town erupts into chaos as a wave of emotions overwhelms the townsfolk, driving some of them briefly mad with rage, joy, and sorrow. The soldiers still in the town's limits are the most overcome by these emotions, rampaging through the streets without direction, attacking wildly. Terrified townsfolk emerge from the neighborhoods, looking out toward the open field near the Peak's Shadow, where most of the soldiers are.

Ragesian soldiers, experienced (4) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

Ragesian soldiers, standard (8) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

Most of the townsfolk are paralyzed with confusion as the Ragesians cut down several panicking inn patrons, then proceed to drag out the owner for a public execution. Though the heroes might be a half mile away, word travels fast in a town with *message* spells, and wherever they are they hear horrified reports of what's going on.

The soldiers take their time, enjoying their own brutality (and the nearly forgotten emotions that go with it) and beating Thashalanos for several minutes before killing him by dragging him up to the top of the 100 foot high peak and throwing him off.

If the heroes do nothing, the elf's death sets off a total panic in the village, and when the Ragesians sound the official attack a few minutes later, the result is a slaughter. If, however, the heroes manage to defeat the Ragesians and save Thashalanos's life — or make a commanding enough speech in the aftermath of his death (Diplomacy or Perform (oratory) DC 30), they can rally the townsfolk, preparing them for battle.

Other Options

The heroes could handle this situation several ways that don't involve combat.

They might try to help as many of the townsfolk as they can, barricading them into the sturdy cellars of the inn, library, and various shops, all while fending off angry soldiers. At this critical juncture, the fearful Eril finds his courage, and rises to help the heroes as best he can.

They might lead the townsfolk up to the monastery, and despite Caela's threats, when the elementals fly out it is only to attack the Ragesians. The heroes will be met by a different monk at the door, who tells them that Caela is gone. He is willing to let the refugees in, though the heroes will be expected to aid the defense of the monastery when Signus arrives.

More melodramatic heroes might climb to the top of the peak and ring the gong, calling for aid from the monastery, which will manifest in a sudden thunderstorm and precisely-placed lightning bolts, arriving just in time to give the heroes a break so they can regroup and press their advantage (the monastery's aid, though impressive, should not overwhelm the heroes' contribution).

The heroes might even try the diplomatic approach and attempt to parlay with Signus. This requires an exceptional argument, since Signus is purely Hostile, and he's the sort of man who will kill someone he's Indifferent to if he has been given orders, which in this case he has. Alternately, some sort of mesmerizing performance from a bard, or raw *domination* might work, though the general's guard are keen to such tricks, and will target spellcasters aggressively.

The Valiant Counter-Attack

The heroes' best chance for victory — not just in this battle but in their mission overall — is to convince the townsfolk to fight the Ragesians. With their greater numbers, intermittent martial arts experience, and magical powers, the populace of Eresh is enough of a match for the Ragesians that the army will have a fight ahead of it.

The deciding factor will be the heroes. Unless the heroes have gone out of their way to hide their presence, Signus is aware of them, and he sallies forth with his personal guard, intending to defeat the heroes himself. If the heroes win this fight, the morale of the Ragesians will break, and they will flee into the mountains.

Signus prefers to battle the heroes amid buildings or near ledges, to give his pet destrachan toys to shatter, though he goes wherever the heroes are waiting. A runner could even come to the heroes and alert them that the enemy commander is calling for them. This is a challenging encounter, but give your players a chance to use their wits by choosing their own battleground. Perhaps the best place for the heroes to hole up is in the healing house, where a half-dozen clerics (use West Wind monk stats) will stand ready to keep them alive and in the fight, aided by a large supply of *wands of cure light wounds*.

Waves

If you want some build-up to this climax (or if you have a group larger than four and want to provide them with some additional XP), you can assault the heroes with additional waves, or you can skip straight to the arrival of Signus. Between any given wave, the heroes should have a minute to regroup and heal, as the enemy army slowly sweeps through the valley, looking for signs of the rabble rousers.

Optional Wave 1 (EL 10): The Ragesian soldiers form two lines, advancing to within 80 feet. The front line uses its tower shields to provide total cover, protecting against most attacks. The second line carry no shields, and have bows ready. Once in position, the archers ready an action to shoot, and the front line lowers its shields. The archers fire, and then the front line raises their shields again. Meanwhile, the hellhounds charge in suicidally, and two infiltrators sneak around to flank the heroes and take out their mages. This scene best occurs in a street, where houses keep the heroes from simply running around the shield wall.

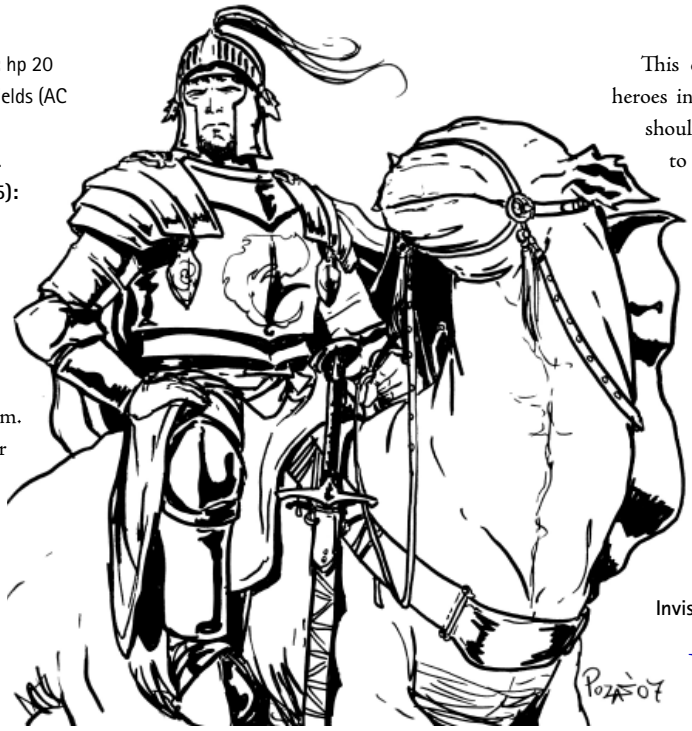
Ragesian soldiers, standard (10) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B. Half carry tower shields (AC 21, Melee +5 (1d8+3, ×3)).
Hellhounds (2) (CR 3): hp 22 each, MM.
Ragesian infiltrators, standard (2) (CR 5): hp 32 each, Appendix B.

Optional Wave 2 (EL 10): While the heroes are outdoors, particularly if they haven't chosen a location to make their stand against Signus, a pair of Ragesian wyvern knights spots them. They fly by and take potshots with their crossbows, and if one of the heroes is away from the rest of the group the wyvern may dive and attempt to snatch and drop the hero. One knight will try to drop a dragonbomb (see Appendix A) amid the heroes, while the other will conserve his, so that if the heroes try to take cover indoors he can set the building on fire and drive them out.

Ragesian wyvern knights (2) (CR 6): hp 50 each, Appendix B.
Wyverns (2) (CR 6): hp 59 each, MM.

Final Wave (EL 13): Signus loves his destrachan mount, and takes full advantage of it; though because Loper is not not properly built for being ridden, Signus's Ride checks take a –5 penalty. Signus begins the battle by shouting his battle cry, "Give 'em thunder, men!" to which his soldiers reply by roaring in unison. His first attack is to ride forward amidst his enemies, so Loper can release a burst of destructive harmonics. Then the other soldiers charge in, and Loper restricts himself to cone attacks thereafter. If Signus wants to release a burst again, he uses his Maneuver Leader feat to get his men to scatter first.

Before this battle, Signus used his leadership performance to give himself and his allies +2 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, which lasts for the first 5 rounds of combat. He chooses his Direct Orders options so as best to defend against the heroes' tactics, and likes to find opportunities to use Spirited Charge.



Signus Astride Loper – Art by Claudio Pozas

General Signus (CR 12): hp 75, Appendix B.
Loper, destrachan (CR 8): hp 60, MM.
Ragesian soldiers, standard (4) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldiers, veteran (2) (CR 6): hp 50 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldier, elite (CR 8): hp 65, Appendix B.

If Signus is reduced below 20 hp and finds himself low on allies, he throws down his sword and asks to surrender. Similarly, if one of the heroes looks badly injured he will shout, "Surrender and receive mercy." He does his best to have Loper not kill anyone who has surrendered or fallen unconscious, but the destrachan has a mean streak. If Signus is taken alive, he agrees to order a retreat.

Snatched Away (EL 9)

When the heroes are close to triumphing, Caela's two invisible stalkers fly in and carry off a wounded or weak hero, or possibly Three Weeping Ravens. Should this ploy fail to persuade the heroes to go to the Valley of Storms, a reminder by Eril or Three Weeping Ravens that the rest of the original expedition may be captives there could also do the trick.

This encounter is designed to provoke the heroes into going to the Valley of Storms, and should only occur after the heroes have gone to the monastery and met with Balance at least once. If they seem motivated enough to go on their own, this scene is unnecessary.

The invisible stalkers work together, surrounding their victim so if he flees he provokes attacks from both. They strike for nonlethal damage and carry their unconscious victim away to Pilus's laboratory in the Valley of Storms. Knowing the heroes are a threat, Pilus plans an ambush for them. This leads to the events in Act Four.

Invisible stalkers (2) (CR 7): hp 52 each, MM.

Victory

If the heroes have rallied the townsfolk and manage to defeat Signus, they can watch in pleasure as the Ragesians slowly break off and retreat. If the townsfolk panic but the heroes manage to capture Signus, he will order a Ragesian retreat, which rallies the townsfolk and averts a complete defeat. Otherwise, the heroes will be able to escape because the Ragesians are afraid of them, but the town of Eresh is doomed.

The survivors are immensely thankful to the heroes, and enough low-level spellcasters are present that the heroes will be able to depart on their expedition to the Valley of Storms fully healed, though perhaps depleted of spells and items. The loot, however, is substantial.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes manage to save Eresh decisively, preventing a massive panic that causes the townsfolk to be cut down, reward them for a CR 11 encounter. If they only manage to save the day after letting panic break out, reward them only for a CR 9 encounter.

Failure

Should the heroes fail, a few minutes after their defeat, Longinus and Pilus call down a powerful snowstorm to blanket the entire valley, freezing the Ragesians as well as the locals.

Act Four: The Valley of Storms

Act Four is the climax of the adventure, as the heroes leave the town behind and climb into the mountains to deal with the less immediate but perhaps more dangerous threat — Caela. But if the heroes will head here early on let them; in that case, the climax shifts to the showdown with the Ragesian army in Act Three.

Preferably, the heroes should be tenth level before starting this act.

The Valley

Pilus's laboratory and workshop is hidden in the remote Valley of Storms. Local legend has long held that this is a particularly holy site where the gods of the weather live. Pilus built his laboratory to take advantage of these legends and maintain secrecy, and he developed methods for tapping air elemental energy from the storm which perpetually hangs over the area, shrouding the valley in rain clouds and foreboding mists. If the heroes ask about the valley they will be urged away from it by the locals, who seem genuinely fearful of it.

If pressed, they will say reluctantly that an ancient road leads straight to the valley, though it has not been used in ages, and they hasten to add that those who go there never return.

The valley is ten miles away to the east, meaning a journey of at least a day for travelers unable to fly. As the heroes get close, they notice that the weather is oddly warmer here, despite the higher altitude. Wet mists hang over the mountains, and though the weather is still barely above freezing, the foliage here is like a thick pine rainforest.

Defenders of the Sacred Valley (EL 11+)

Finally the heroes have a chance to face the monks of the order of two winds. Pilus anticipates the heroes will head in this direction, and has sent loyal monks to guard the path. Air spirits silently watch the mountainside and alert the monks to the heroes' activities, so the heroes cannot easily avoid this ambush.

As they pass through the misty mountain forest, a mile from the valley, clear visibility is reduced to 30 feet, and everything has concealment out to 60 feet, beyond which it is impossible to see. Have the heroes make Spot checks (DC 18) to notice white-robed monks clinging to the trees 30 feet overhead. If they are spotted, they attack. Otherwise, the heroes hear soft, confusing whispers in the trees as the monks alert each other in Auran, just before they attack.

East Wind monks (4) (CR 5): hp 26 each, Appendix B.

West Wind monks (4) (CR 5): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

Two West Wind monks glide down from the trees (using a turn undead attempt to gain a fly speed), strike with bladed whips, then return to branches 20 feet up. The other two throw a flurry of shuriken that have had *light* cast on them, aiming one at each hero. Then the East Wind monks, hidden 50 feet away on the ground, each use their *scroll of lightning bolt*, targeting the glowing shuriken.

After this, the West Wind monks continue strafing with their whips for two rounds before descending, while the East Wind monks travel in a cluster through the trees, casting *magic missile* against a single target at a time, *en masse*.

Terrain

The ground here has a gentle slope, and the trees are large enough to provide partial cover, but not so large to fill entire squares. Most are at least 50 feet tall, with branches starting at 20 feet.

Development

When more than half of the monks are down, one of the survivors shouts, "Lords of the two winds, bring down your fury!" A distant roar answers, and in two rounds heavy wing beats become audible. Two rounds later, the forest is shaken by intense winds, and the mist is blown clear, revealing a massive green draconic beast swooping into battle.

Mantidrake (CR 10): hp 135, Appendix B.

The mantidrake tries to avoid catching the monks in its breath weapon, but it understands the nimble monks have a fair chance of surviving. Each breath weapon blast shakes the trees: if a section of the forest takes more than 35 points of sonic damage, the trees there shatter and topple, requiring those in the area to make a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid 2d6 points of damage. Thereafter, the ground becomes difficult terrain.

Aftermath

These monks know only that the heroes were heading to the forbidden valley. They know nothing of Pilus's laboratory.

Valley of the Damned (EL 10)

Some of Pilus's less successful creations have been turned out of the laboratory and roam the higher reaches of the valley, posing a threat to those who brave the climb. Although rejected by Pilus, these creatures still think of the laboratory as home and tirelessly guard it. Occasionally, out of pity, Pilus or one of his servants will throw them a body or two to consume.

As the heroes near the lip of the valley, four large and misshapen creatures rise up from behind nearby boulders, looming ominously in the mist, bellowing in rage and pain. The sound of eight voices meet the heroes' ears, and as the creatures shamble forward they see that each of the four giant beings has two heads, as well as three non-functional feathered wings growing from their backs at odd angles. These poor unfortunates were once monks; after learning too much of Pilus's secrets, they now mindlessly guard the valley.

Valley of Storms ettins (4) (CR 6): hp 65 each, Appendix B.

The Laboratory

When the heroes come over the edge of the valley, they can vaguely make out a 60 foot high tower in the distance, peeking out above the treetops. No other particularly dangerous creatures fill the valley, though they might pass by strange creatures of biomancy which are strong enough to live, but not escape. The tower is about a quarter mile away, just slightly up the slope of the far side of the valley.

When the heroes reach the tower, they see that it is surrounded by a clearing of icy ground and jagged rocks. The tower is 60 feet high and 20 feet in diameter, and has only two apparent entrances — a single door on the ground floor, and a balcony and broad curtained window on the top floor. There are no apparent guards. Strong winds blow down from above, making flight here impossible, but heroes might try to teleport or climb up to the balcony.

Unfortunately for overconfident heroes, the entire tower is a *permanent illusion* (Will DC 22 negates if interacted with), covering a vast chasm 60 feet deep. The real laboratory is underground. The only clue to its existence lies a little over a hundred feet away: a glass skylight that pokes up from the ground, concealed by a *permanent illusion* of featureless ground.

The Pit (EL 10)

A hero who gets within 5 feet of the illusory tower plummets into the icy chasm. A Reflex save (DC 25) lets him catch himself, but the ground is icy and windswept, and climbing out is difficult (Climb DC 22). A hero who falls lands in a field of icy spikes 20 feet wide and 60 feet down. (Someone who teleports to the non-existent balcony is in for an even longer fall.) Then, at the bottom of the pit, the hero is attacked by one last group of monsters — the mishaps.

Though these creatures appear to once have been humans and dwarves, their flesh appears fused to muscles of living ice, and their eyes are frozen. The result is vaguely reminiscent of the aquatic skum the heroes faced in the prison under Seaquen over a month ago, though possessed of more powerful magic.

Well-Camouflaged Spiked Pit Trap (CR 8): DC 25 Reflex save avoids; 60 ft. deep (6d6 fall) plus spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes for 1d4+5 each); Search DC 27; Disable Device DC n/a.

Mishaps (4) (CR 4): hp 33 each, Appendix B.

These creatures were, until very recently, the first party dispatched by Seaquen to investigate the monastery. Caela killed them after they asked too many questions, then used them to create these creatures. Though not up to the level of her master's creations, Caela still takes pleasure in adding to her master's lab's defenses, and she appreciates the irony of setting former spies to work as guards.

A strong ladder has been cut into the ice, ascending to the top of the pit.

Laboratory Entrance

One wall of the bottom of the chasm is dominated with an ornate façade depicting the ancient spirits of wind and storm being bound and trapped in mortal flesh. A single broad doorway leads inside, currently locked and warded with a magical trap. A creature opening the door without first saying "I am the wind's master" in Auran triggers the trap. It resets after one hour.

Chain Lightning Trap (CR 7): Magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*chain lightning*, 11th-level wizard, 11d6 electricity to target who triggered it, plus 5d6 electricity to each of up to eleven secondary targets, DC 19 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

Game Master's Map pg. 652



As soon as the heroes enter, a silent *alarm* alerts Caela in Pilus's study.

The interior of the laboratory is eerily silent and monolithically large. Along the walls of the foyer, vials of strangely colored liquids boil away on unattended burners, while beyond a stairway descends to a pit full of dozens of square glass tanks filled with viscous green fluid. Each tank is placed on a metal frame 5 feet high, and a dimly glowing sphere feeds numerous fleshy hoses into the tank. The tanks themselves vary in size, though most are either 5 feet square and 5 feet deep, or 10 feet square and 10 feet deep. From the entryway it is possible to see dark shapes floating in the vats, some of them twitching in their bubbling beds.

Eerie green light filters into the room through the vats, filling the vast chamber with an unearthly haze. The pit is 20 feet beneath the entrance level, while stairs lead to catwalks 10 feet higher. The ceiling is 10 feet above the catwalk, making the entire room 40 feet high. Numerous metal runners and chains crisscross the ceiling, designed to lift creatures out of the vats or move the tanks themselves.

On the right side of the great pit is one single enormous tank, over 70 feet long. Ominously, it is empty, and the slimy fluid within it is low, but with signs that it was once much more full, as though whatever was growing in it got up and left.

The laboratory is laid out in an orderly and deliberate way, with drawers and cabinets set into the walls and painstakingly marked in a strange anagrammatic cypher (Decipher Script DC 30). The same code, marked on small paper placards, identifies the contents of each tank. Each placard includes a space labeled "Purchased by," but on all these tanks that space is blank, since Pilus is only creating monsters for himself now.



At the far side of the room another stairway leads up to a pair of double doors. There is apparently no one here, though if the heroes explore the lab they will find creatures growing in vats at different stages of development. Some look to have only been placed in recently, with only the slightest change. Six of these people could be rescued and healed with a *restoration* or greater healing spell. The rest are beyond reclamation.

As the heroes creep about the laboratory, they get a sense they're not alone. A strange whistling fills the air, and they have a moment's chance to spot the lab's guardian before it attacks. A Listen or Spot check (DC 14) detects Aurus's presence just before he attacks.

When Pilus and Caela are absent, they leave the laboratory guarded by Aurus, one of Pilus's first successful experiments in marrying elemental and physical form. The windborn minotaur spends most of his time as a soft breeze, but when the laboratory is threatened he fearlessly manifests and attacks.

Aurus, windborn minotaur (CR 10): hp 139, Appendix B.

Tactics

At the start of combat, Aurus's wispy form casts a shadow through a nearby vat just as he begins to attack, whirlwind attacking to strike a hero and shatter a handful of tanks.

Thereafter, Aurus normally floats to the nearest foe and pummels him, but if ever two enemies are in a straight line with him he uses his overwhelming charge to strike them both. Be sure to make a big deal of just what provokes Aurus to use this attack. In the middle of combat he pauses for a fraction of a second, glances at those foes who have so conveniently lined up, then briefly grins and cocks his head from side to side as he aims his charge. Optimally, the heroes will recognize this pattern in Aurus's attacks, and take advantage of it, luring him into a charge that will leave him vulnerable.

Terrain

The smaller tanks are filled with different medium-sized creatures grown from humanoid stock, though none are fully formed, so they have the stats of skum. The larger tanks have various more powerful creatures growing in them. Should any of the tanks be shattered (hardness 0, hp 25, Break DC 23), the creature spills out. The skum are healthy enough to fight, though they are stunned for a round after being expelled from the tank. The larger creatures are unable to support themselves, and simply flail about while slowly dying.

Skum (number varies) (CR 2): hp 22 each, MM.

Aurus cares nothing for these creatures, and will kill any that get in his way. In turn, they will attack the nearest creature, even Aurus.

Pilus's Study (EL 15)

At the other side of the laboratory is Pilus's personal study, an ornate two-story chamber topped with a magnificent glass domed roof. Directly over the entry way is a stunning sculpture of an eagle and a dragon pursuing each other in a circle, crafted of metal and ceramic, and suspended by four chains tied to the walls.

Pilus is exceptionally organized, belying his lawful nature. Parallel pairs of couches and coffee tables sit near opposite walls, and columns support the second floor, with shelves of neatly lined books between them. At the back wall stairway curves gently up 20 feet to the second floor.

On the second floor, Pilus's desk is clear of clutter, any incriminating messages having been studiously destroyed, and all his notes and records having been meticulously stored on his own person in an extradimensional pocket, akin to a *handy haversack*. The only things on his desk are an ink well and quill, made from the tail feather of a remora bird. A row of chairs are set up in front of the desk, aligned to show off a slate chalkboard set up in a stand.

The chalk has been wiped away and the slate washed clean, but if an inquisitive hero manages to use magic to see what was on it, they see a map of the region, detailed troop counts of military units in different locations, and a force comparison listing the soldiers of Ostalin — a mock presentation for when Pilus was preparing to convince Onamdammin to ally with him.

The glass domed roof is designed to give the onlooker the impression that it is a giant goldfish bowl, an aquarium for the sky. The first person to look up catches a glimpse of what seems to be a great shark in the clouds, but the view is hidden a moment later.

Directly inside the entryway, a beautiful rug covers the floor. When activated (as it has been now), the rug triggers as soon as a creature sets foot on it. The rug grabs creatures that fail a Reflex save (DC 15), and functions like an *entangle* spell (caster level 1st).

If the heroes are coming to find an ally or friend, that person is unconscious and tied up, lying on the second floor next to the banister. Also, Pilus's apprentice is waiting for them, invisible. Floating 10 feet above the carpet, she waits for the first hero to step into the room, then begins her speech. She only says the first line, then casts her first attack spell, *like lightning*. Thereafter, she continues with another sentence each round.

"You don't understand the concept of 'Forbidden Valley,' do you? The others who came before were as tenacious as you, though not nearly as useful. You defeated scores of Ragesians, which earns you the favor of my master. But all your predecessors accomplished was to guard the entrance to this laboratory for a few days, before you killed them. When this is over, for those of you I haven't killed, I shall be creative when crafting your new form.

Aurua – Art by Leo Lingas

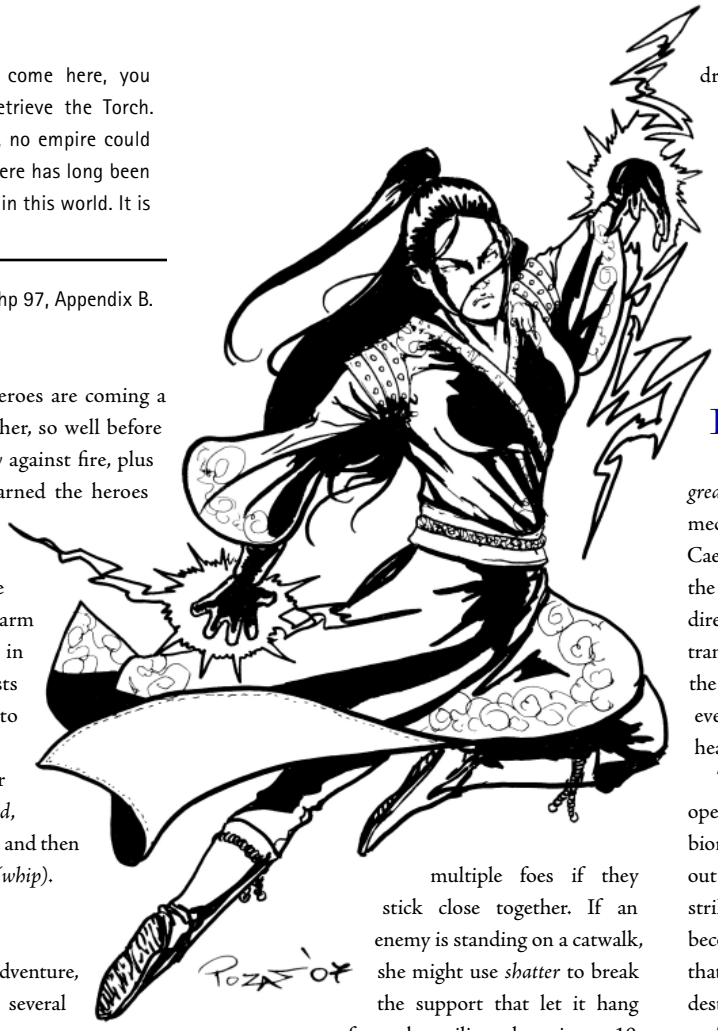
"A pity – if you hadn't come here, you might have managed to retrieve the Torch. With that in his possession, no empire could stand against my master. There has long been too much war and suffering in this world. It is time we ended it."

Caela (Cai Lei Wsu) (CR 15): hp 97, Appendix B.

Before Combat

Caela likely knows the heroes are coming a few minutes before they see her, so well before combat she casts *resist energy* against fire, plus any energy types she has learned the heroes favor. When the heroes breach the laboratory, a silent alarm alerts her since she is in Pilus's study. The alarm also notifies Pilus, far away in the monastery, and he casts *greater scrying* on Caela to watch the coming battle.

Caela prepares for their arrival by casting *storm shield*, *mage armor*, *invisibility*, and *fly*, and then finally using the *feather token (whip)*.



Tactics

As the climax of the adventure, Caela is designed to last for several rounds of combat, and to encourage the heroes to fight on the run, rather than simply standing still. This combat can be frustrating for groups that aren't geared for mobility or ranged combat, so if the heroes are having trouble hurting Caela, you might have her start to get confident and too aggressive.

When the heroes arrive, Caela is floating 10 feet off the ground over the carpet, invisible. She taunts them for a moment, then begins to cast *like lightning* for her initial strike. She strikes as many of the heroes as possible, simultaneously using Flyby Attack and her East Wind Style attack to deliver a stunning fist and *shocking grasp* (against a healer if she can). She tries to pass through the group and end up in the vat chamber, floating 20 feet off the ground, out of reach.

Thereafter, Caela remains airborne, 10 feet off the ground — high enough to stay out of reach (and to get a bonus for attacking from higher ground), but low enough to use the vats as cover against ranged attacks. Mobility is her greatest weapon: she seeks to string out her foes, flinging them one or two at a time into vats with *telekinetic thrust*, or using *like lightning* to strike multiple foes if they stick close together. If an enemy is standing on a catwalk, she might use *shatter* to break the support that let it hang from the ceiling, dropping a 10-foot section and anyone standing on it.

If she's injured and doesn't have more tempting targets, she'll strike with *vampiric touch*, tumbling in and out with Flyby Attack. Unless she's alone with a lightly-armored foe, she doesn't make full attacks.

If reduced to less than 30 hp, Caela uses her cloak's mountebank ability to *dimension door* back into Pilus's office (with *resist energy (fire)* she should be able to safely teleport 300 feet or so). Her arrival is easily visible as a burst of fire. She takes time to heal and rebuff, though does not dally unless she has taken out at least one foe, preferably a healer, since she doesn't want to give her foes an opportunity to heal.

If the heroes return to Pilus's office, she might cast *shatter* on the glass skylight, destroying it and raining massive sheets of broken glass down on the entire room. Creatures in the area must make a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid taking 2d6 points of damage from the glass. Thereafter the storm overhead rains into the room, and strong winds make ranged combat difficult. Alternately, she might *shatter* the chains holding up the dragon-and-eagle sculpture. If she destroys all four chains, the sculpture falls, dealing 10d6 damage on anyone beneath it (Reflex DC 15 negates). If she only destroys two chains, the sculpture swings, bull rushing creatures in its path (effective Strength modifier of +13).

Finally, the shattered ceiling gives her an escape route if she thinks she has lost.

Escaping the Laboratory

If Caela is defeated, Pilus (watching via *greater scrying*) likely decides to finish off the meddling heroes before they can escape, even if Caela is simply captured and not killed. He uses the *control wand* for his *lesser orb of storms*, and directs the storm over the Valley of Storms to transform to tornados and terrible winds. Over the next ten minutes the winds intensify, and eventually the eerie growl of a tornado can be heard even in the underground complex.

The tornado rattles the building, tearing open the roof and knocking over furniture and biomancy vats. Lightning crackles and lashes out with frightening proximity. Dust and debris strikes viciously and painfully, as even pebbles become deadly projectiles. It should be clear that if the heroes do not leave quickly, they'll be destroyed by the storm.

The escape should be exciting, but not actually life-threatening, and we recommend not slowing things down with too many rolls. As the heroes make their way out, simply come up with three events to impede their progress, such as collapsing lab equipment, or sprays of shattered glass picked up in the wind, or toppling sections of the roof, or small avalanches knocking them about. Once out of the lab the heroes must still contend with strong winds, making progress difficult. The safest place is low ground, and as the storm sets off minor avalanches the heroes might even use wreckage of the laboratory as makeshift sledges to race away down into the valley.

CR 15? Isn't that a Little Much?

Though Caela is a 15th-level character, we feel that she is not actually equal to a normal CR 15 encounter. Her Challenge Rating also includes the danger of Escaping the Laboratory (see below), and a bit of narrative reward for defeating the main foe of the adventure. She's been designed to deliver a dynamic, interesting fight that lasts several rounds, rather than to simply tear the heroes to pieces.

Caela – Art by Claudio Pozas

Let the heroes be creative; don't punish them as long as they are making intelligent (or at least dramatic) attempts to escape. Encourage novel plans, but explain that if they try to stay put (perhaps with a *rope trick*), they'll end up trapped under a mountain of snow as an avalanche fills in the hole where the lab is. Heroes who choose not to escape are caught in a tornado and must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 30) each round or be picked up and whirled around for 1d10 rounds, taking 6d6 points of damage per round, before being violently expelled from a dangerous height.

As the heroes get to safety, there's one more surprise in store for them. Read or paraphrase the following:

The howling winds have died to a safe flurry, and as you take a moment to rest you feel something watching you from above.

You scan the skies cautiously and there, miles up, directly above the now-annihilated laboratory, you glimpse something impossibly large, so massive that its silhouette is visible even through the clouds of the fading storm. Lightning flashes intermittently, giving you a hint of its form.

It must be colossal, the size of a small city, floating in the tempest like a shark in the dark seas. Massive horns adorn its head, and its body stretches backward at sharp angles, like the wings of a swooping raptor or the fins of an ancient sea predator. Its body tapers to a forked tail, but even that must be hundreds of feet wide.

You see what might be a flock of birds sweeping past the vast shape, white birds flying erratically, like those at the monastery, and then the clouds begin to roll back in. You know in a moment it will be hidden from you, if it truly exists now.

The last you see of the stormy vision is a glowing disk on its underbelly, and as it vanishes back into the clouds, you realize the disk, farther across than even the largest dragon from maw to tail, was an eye. And it was watching you.



Tempest – Art by Leo Lingas

Act Five: Audience with Two Winds

The denouement of the adventure comes after the heroes have defeated the two threats, and they go to negotiate finally with the masters of the monastery. Having defeated the Ragesians, the heroes have earned an audience with Longinus and Pilus, and now that Caela is defeated there is no one to stand in their way any longer.

Two Masters

Once the heroes return, a grateful and curious Longinus invites them to the monastery. An honor guard greets them outside the entrance to the monastery and escorts them to the masters' chamber. Pilus is prepared for their arrival but uncertain how much they know and how much he will have to lie. The two brothers sit on cushions near the wall of a sparse chamber seemingly intended for meditation rather than command. A cushion for each of the heroes has been placed on the floor in front of the two masters.

Longinus wears a white mask with blue highlights, and the rest of his body is hidden by gloves and a hooded white robe, etched with gold and black feathers, representing the Stormchaser Eagle. Pilus, by contrast, wears a robe with patterns of two entwined, stormy dragons, and his expression is clear and open; he has a somewhat amused posture, as though he is not devoting his full attention to the proceedings.

Longinus, wheezy and soft-spoken, through his mask, thanks the heroes, asks them to sit, and then asks they present their request for the boon so many desire.

Easy Answers

If the heroes do not cause a fuss, they can ask for the monastery's aid in reaching Castle Korstull, to which Longinus nods. Pilus then proceeds to explain why they have decided to become involved at this time, a task requiring much speaking, which Longinus is disinclined to do.

This war, Pilus says, seems to have gone beyond any prior conflict, both in scope and power. Longinus worries that the world itself might be threatened, particularly given the strange and fiery planar fluctuations that are affecting teleportation. Pilus, on the other hand, sees that this juncture holds the opportunity to bring down the Ragesian Empire, a nation which is far too powerful, a bully among kings.

Pilus and Longinus both expect the Torch will be needed to end the war, but they warn that its power is corrupting. While the heroes retrieve the Torch, the brothers will find a way to destroy it, so that once it has served its purpose it will no longer be a threat.

The monastery can provide the heroes with an orb that will keep the firestorm at bay, though it will only work for a few days, given the storm's unnatural strength. This should be more than enough time to cross the twenty mile stretch of land to Korstull, explore the ruins, and get out. The hole in the storm will be centered over the heroes, but there is a chance others might follow them, and the Ragesians are just waiting for this opportunity.

The orb can be ready in a week. Until that time, the heroes are welcome to stay, rest, and train. The two masters, however, are not interested in long conversations, and so they end their meeting by offering hot rice wine to seal their alliance. Then they nod graciously, and return to meditation.



Pilus and Longinus – Art by J. L. Jones

Hard Questions

Of course, the heroes may be less than pleased with the two monks, as evidence paints Pilus as something of a villain, behind the hurricane at Seaquen and experiments upon the townsfolk in Eresh. Pilus handles this in an unusual way, admitting almost the full extent of his plans, with a handful of lies at the right places.

His main defense is that he is acting for the greater good, having learned to appreciate a broad view of events courtesy of his brother. He admits he's allied with Khagan Onamdammin, and intends to use his biomantic creations in the coming battles. He says that he needed to learn the weaknesses of the Ragesian Empire, and at the time did not realize the importance of Seaquen, so he feigned an alliance with Ragesia temporarily; the hurricane in Seaquen was the result. He apologizes for that, and says that he sees now what a critical role Seaquen will play.

As for the experiments on the Eresh townsfolk, and the deaths of the previous expedition, Pilus uses Caela as a convenient scapegoat. He admits that he had Caela take some of the townsfolk, though only with the intention of discovering what afflicted them. She told him, he says, that there was no way to help them, and that several had died upon leaving the village. He suspects now that she was using his biomancy laboratory to grow monsters to sell as warbeasts. He admits, shamefacedly, that he is not the judge of character his brother is. Longinus responds with only a gracious bow.

Pilus's total Bluff bonus is +29. He's very good at lying, but if caught in a lie he admits to it, saying that he's uncertain whether trusting the heroes is a good thing, and that they are, after all, in a war. He trusts them, he says, but not completely, not yet.

If possible, Pilus would like the heroes as allies, but if that is not possible, he does his best to make sure they do not become his enemies. He will not oppose his brother's decision to help them, and is steadfastly immune to insults and anger.

Showdown with Pilus (EL N/A)

Of course, suspecting that Pilus was behind the disappearances, and knowing that he was responsible for the hurricane that ravaged Seaquen, the heroes might not be content to let him get away with it. Pilus is far too powerful for the heroes to have a fair chance of victory (he is, after all, the main foe in adventure eleven, *Under the Eye of the Tempest*), but the heroes might try to take a swing at him here and now anyway.

If they look set on a fight, Pilus invariably survives their first attacks. On his turn he looks to his brother for aid, and sees none. Sneering, he casts *time stop* and teleports away. Though he's powerful, he sees no reason to risk dying stupidly. His timetable pushed forward only slightly, the Master of the East Wind flies to his airship, moves Seaquen up to Number One on his list of Places to Utterly Obliterate, and then reluctantly decides he will have to kill his own brother and destroy the monastery. From time to time in the future he will contact the heroes via *sending*, presenting himself in short missives as misunderstood and not hostile, hoping that eventually the heroes will see "reason" and be on his side.

If by some strange miracle or fluke of the dice the heroes do manage to slay Pilus (who has a Challenge Rating of 20; see Appendix B), he can still return later to haunt them; use his bond with *Tempest* to bring him back to life.

Conclusion

Regardless of how things go down with Pilus, Longinus respects the heroes' actions, and wishes to help them. He can promise them protection while they're in the valley, and asks that they stay while he prepares the orb for their journey to Castle Korstull. While they stay here, he encourages them to consider the nature of balance, and that sometimes a challenge with multiple dangers must be resolved one piece at a time, to avoid completely disaster. Hopefully the heroes come away with a bit of wisdom, which will guide them to make the right choices on the road ahead.

Pages of the Burning Sky

A good layout, among other things, gets out of the way and lets the content do the talking.

It's been an interesting road since *Elements of Magic Revised*. Five years along, I still feel quite lucky that Russell hired me.

I don't have any "art credentials," really — no graphic art degree, no training courses to speak of — but I've been a gamer since the late 70s (fourth what, now?) and a professional desktop publisher since the early 90s. So when I happened to read about a job opening laying out EN Publishing products, I found the opportunity really appealed to me. I especially wanted to make products that gamers like me would enjoy and that I liked the look of better than some I've bought and disliked. I fired off an email to which I attached a few things I'd done for my home games and in my day job that proved I could find my way around a page-layout program. My first task appeared shortly thereafter.

For me, designing a book's look from the ground up is a fun and challenging task. Fun, because I get to indulge all those artistic impulses while simultaneously hewing to the rules I set myself, and all I really have to worry about is making the final pages look decent, structuring the layout files properly, hitting my file size budget (if there is one), and hitting my deadlines with some modicum of dependability. Challenging, because "blank page syndrome" can be a real roadblock for me, because deadlines have a way of approaching much more quickly when my attention is elsewhere, and because sometimes things I design in my head look substantially less cool when they're put on a page.

But the process gets easier, the tools get more powerful, and my preferences get more refined with every product I design. From *Elements of Magic Revised* through *Chainmail Bikini*, the *Metamorphosis* trilogy, and all the rest, to the original *War of the Burning Sky* adventures, I've learned so much about book design — and about what I like and dislike — that sometimes I look back at previous efforts and cringe. Hopefully I won't have that problem with this book!

It's been, as mentioned, over two years since the first release. (Monthly? What monthly?) I have a copy of the (still in print!) *Dragon Magazine* where the series was announced, with the cover I designed there in full color, alongside other products produced by people with, I like to think, ambitions similar to mine — make a good-looking product that gamers enjoy.

It's been eye-opening in many ways. In particular, it continues to impress me that a group of strangers connected only by the Internet, many of whom are hobbyists working part time or in their spare time, can produce what we've produced. I'm quite proud of what we've managed, and most of all of this hefty tome.

When it came time to compile twelve adventures plus more into a single book, I wanted to start over with the design, so everything went out the window except the fonts and artwork. And I gladly took advantage of what, in the world of desktop publishing, I find is a rare opportunity: the chance to revisit old designs with fresh ideas and the newest (at the time) version of my preferred software.

We discovered that 800 pages was the maximum page count we were permitted, so when the new template promised to include everything we'd already published in under 600 pages, several bonus features were happily added.

Ultimately, I'm very grateful to Russell, to Ryan, and to everyone involved in this saga for the chance to make a mark, however small, in an industry which has given me so much enjoyment over the last 30-plus years. We hope you're enjoying the War of the Burning Sky as it unfolds — whether it's your first, second, or fifteenth time through — and now I'll get out of the way and let the adventure authors do the talking.

— Eric Life-Putnam
Layout and Typesetting



Adventure Six
Tears of the Burning Sky

for 11th-Level Characters

by Ken Marable
and Ryan Nock

Cover Art by
Brandon Leach

In search of the Torch of the Burning Sky, the heroes set out for Sindaire and Castle Korstull, the canyon fortress where Emperor Drakus Coaltongue was slain.

Their destination lies within an endless firestorm, the result of a peculiar rupture in the fabric of the planes. While the castle surely holds clues to the fate of the emperor and his Torch, the heroes will have to contend with fiends, rival treasure hunters, and the survivors of Coaltongue's army to learn them.

Might the Torch itself lie in Castle Korstull? What happened to Emperor Coaltongue, and what strange magic brought forth the tears of the Burning Sky?

Background

For years, wealthy noble families throughout the region, especially in Sindaire, suffered under Emperor Coaltongue's rule. Last summer, Lord Pietr Gorquith organized this disapproval into an outright rebellion. The rebellious nobles were smart enough to realize, however, that Coaltongue's military might surpassed theirs, so instead of warring outright, they fought with subterfuge and politics. Shipments were delayed or rerouted from military garrisons to disgruntled peasants, threats were made to Coaltongue's supporters, and pledges were made to stand together when the time came; soon even the Exarch — the national leader installed by Coaltongue's orders — feared that he could no longer tell whom he could trust.

The Old Dragon's foes assumed his only strength was in martial warfare, but in truth he was also cunning: he decreed that every noble family would offer up a son or daughter to serve in the armies of Ragesia's heartland, far from the safety of Sindaire. The loyal noble families readily complied, whereas many among the rebellion hesitated or balked. Confident he had weeded out enough of his opponents, the emperor ordered his garrisons to arrest the rebels. Some tried to fight, and they fled in force to the highly defensible Castle Korstull in the badlands of central Sindaire, which had itself once served as a Ragesian fortress when Coaltongue first attacked Sindaire sixty years ago, before the nation pledged fealty to Ragesia.

On a morning in late fall, Emperor Coaltongue called together his loyal First Army and mustered the ten thousand men and their many beasts of war on a broad field outside the Ragesian capital. With him he had brought the son of one of the Sindairese rebels, shackled and held fast in the clawed grip of two skull-masked inquisitors. Holding aloft the Torch of the Burning Sky, the emperor roared to his men that they would put down this challenge to their authority, this insult to their invincible might. The tip of the Torch began to flicker with fire, and then, with a strike that caved in the skull of the rebel son, the flames flared to blinding brilliance. The sky roared, and an inferno descended upon the army, engulfing them and carrying them through the burning sky to the gates of Castle Korstull.

Emperor Coaltongue dined that evening in the castle's throne room.

That evening, however, as the emperor slept soundly with the satisfaction of his victory, a trio of assassins struck. Avoiding or striking down every guard, defeating every magical and mundane defense that protected Coaltongue, the assassins managed to reach the emperor's bedchambers, located behind the throne room. Poison struck down Darius, one of his inquisitor bodyguards, but not before Darius sounded an alarm. The assassins slew the emperor before he woke, and then, bearing the emperor's body and the Torch, they battled their way to within sight of the open sky and activated the Torch, teleporting away.

But the Torch's power went awry, and the assassins left behind a rift in the fabric of reality, crossing the Astral Plane, the Plane of Elemental Fire, and the Negative Energy Plane. Within moments the castle and miles around it were engulfed in flames, and all those slain by the blaze were infused with necromantic energy, soon to rise as undead. Only Darius survived, protected by the wards on Coaltongue's throne room, but the assassins' poison seared his mind as the rift incinerated his comrades, and he lay in a nightmare-wracked fever for days. Now he survives in the emperor's chambers, barely aware of who he is, or that he alone holds the secret to the Torch's fate.

Now, the firestorm created by the rift drifts for miles in every direction, raining liquid flame upon the land, turning anything it slays into undead. In the months since Coaltongue's defeat, many have tried to reach the heart of the firestorm, where a burning pillar ascends into the heavens, but none have emerged.

Meanwhile, within the castle, a strange heirarchy has emerged. Though most of the undead retain only the faintest sliver of a mind, they still obey the commands of those creatures whose spirits were strong enough to survive their deaths. Now the castle is commanded by Inquisitor Griiat, once one of Coaltongue's bodyguards. Since his death he has learned to draw divine magic from the power of the planar rift, and views it as his maker, almost his god, which he calls the Dark Pyre. Griiat is cursed, however, to remain in the castle until he is released from his duty, which he failed when he allowed the emperor to die, and so without the intervention of those from the outside, the spectral inquisitor and all his undead minions will remain in the castle for eternity.

Welcome to the sixth adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. With the wind at their backs, the heroes set out for Castle Korstull, the canyon fortress where Emperor Drakus Coaltongue was slain, and where it is believed the Torch of the Burning Sky may lie. An endless firestorm wracks the surrounding lands, animating as undead all whom it kills, including those who defended the castle that was to be the emperor's final conquest. The castle holds the clue to the fate of the emperor and the Torch, but the heroes will have to contend with fiends, rival treasure hunters, and the survivors of Coaltongue's army to learn it.

Introduction

Assassinating an Immortal Man

Rumors said for decades that Emperor Drakus Coaltongue was immortal, invulnerable to wounds and to the ravages of age, for in his nearly hundred years of life he survived hundreds of battles. As the heroes will discover in this adventure, these rumors are true. Decades ago, a young servant of the Ragesian Empire, a priest and mage named Leska Merideus, discovered the location of the Aquiline Heart, a relic of a god-like elemental entity, the blood of which grants immortality to those who drink it. Leska shared this discovery with her emperor, and the two of them became immortal.

Coaltongue, then, is not truly dead. The assassins slew him, impaling his heart and slicing off his head, but they had to bring his body with them to ensure he did not simply regenerate and track them down. In the next adventure, *The Trial of Echoed Souls*, the heroes will follow clues to track down the assassins and recover both the emperor and the Torch.

The assassins had their own motives to kill the emperor — vengeance and a desire to topple a tyrant — but they were given the necessary magic to complete the act by a third party unknown to them. Who was behind the assassination? We leave it up to you, but in general it is assumed that Leska was the mastermind.

Who Were the Assassins?

In case the heroes use divinations to learn about the identities of the assassins or ask Darius questions about them, they were, in brief:

- **Quillathe Nailo:** A dark elf woman with red-violet hair who wields a bladed whip and a rapier. She struck down Darius with a poisoned kiss.
- **Yvonnel Machuel:** A white-haired dark elf woman who wielded a two-bladed sword. She carried off Coaltongue's body.
- **Rhuarc Knightsbane:** A swarthy half-elf man who could vanish into shadows, and whose charcoal-black scimitar beheaded the emperor.

The Tears of the Burning Sky

The firestorm that erupted at Coaltongue's death, a mass of flaming clouds drizzling blood-red rain drifting eerily over the countryside, is a cylindrical area of flame and death over 30 miles in diameter and 5 miles high centered on Castle Korstull. Should the heroes for some reason head

into the storm without activating the orb from the Monastery of Two Winds (such as to try to evade the Ragesian patrol), they face slow, fiery death.

The rain, blood-red drops that sear like liquid flame, deals 1 point of fire damage and 1 point of negative energy damage each round. Large pools of the caustic rain have formed in burnt-out depressions in the land; these deal 2d6 points of damage (half fire, half negative energy) to anyone that falls in. Objects made of extremely flammable materials (like paper) catch fire when struck by the rain; wood becomes only scorched and does not ignite.

Once the orb is activated, it clears a 30 foot radius of rain within one minute, and then over the next ten minutes powerful winds drive the firestorm away. Note that the orb does not function if transformed with *wind walk* or *polymorph* or some other effect that subsumes or negates continuously functioning magical items.

One final danger of the firestorm is that teleporting through it is deadly; more so than usual. In addition to the normal fire damage caused by the Burning Sky (see Appendix A), teleporting within the firestorm deals an equal amount of negative energy damage. Any spellcaster using a teleportation effect becomes aware of strange energies just before he finishes his spell, and can choose to end the spell to avoid being harmed by the energy.

Castle Korstull

As the adventure begins, several competing groups are active at Castle Korstull, and could be used as allies, or to combat other enemies.

Clan Millorn

With the fire rain abating for a while, a group of gnomes and halflings from the Millorn Clan in southern Sindaire has traveled here in alchemicaly treated wagons to explore (read: loot) Korstull. If they manage to find some useful items to take back with them for further study, then all the better.

Full NPC statistics appear in Appendix B; general summaries appear below. Overall, unless antagonized, they look at another group as friendly competition, but expect to be allowed to keep any treasure they recover.

Jorrina Waryeye (NG female gnome diviner 7/loremaster 2) is the unofficial leader of the group, as she was the one who organized the expedition and divined when the storm would reveal a long enough opening. Initially distrustful of others, she quickly warms up to those who prove valuable.

Bombastic **Grellfin Flintflindercandle** (LG male halfling paladin 9) is eagerly looking forward to hewing through masses of undead. He often butts heads with Jorrina, since he is impatient and thinks it ignoble to waste time finding "safe" routes. His attempts to run the group more as a military unity than a band of "grave robbers" (as he often calls the rest of them) has not won him any friends. Depending on how rag-tag or formal the heroes appear, she may be more of less friendly with them.

Oller Pennyteller (NG male gnome rogue 9) is the group's trapsmith. He jokes and is friendly with everyone, but this is actually a façade to get others to lower their guard around him and reveal more than they otherwise would. Years of adventuring in the wilds has left him quietly paranoid. He actually gets along well with Grellfin, and performs the duty of buffer between him and Jorrina.

Kaletia, **Rendlas**, **Reuben**, **Verane**, and **Zooten** (N male and female gnome and halfling fighter 4) are minor players in the group, working as muscle and assistants, having little initiative in the course of this adventure.

Ernest Wentry (supposedly a N male halfling expert 4) is actually the trillith Deception. He plays only a minor role unless the heroes involve him, at least until the third act.

Deception

The lying, scheming trillith has come to Korstull, like everyone else, to locate the Torch, but not to use it as a weapon. Rather, the Torch contains a fragment of a soul of the Mother of Dreams, the creator of the trillith. By retrieving this soul, the trillith will be able to control their mother.

Deception slipped into Clan Millorn when they were in a nearby town, just before departing on the mission. In his role as Ernest, Deception plays the simpleton, obeying orders and performing menial caravan tasks. He responds to questions with a shrug or a confused look, suggesting someone else might know better than him.

Deception has brought along another trillith, less intelligent but stronger, whom he carries in a black gem. With few ways to fight undead, Deception will not betray the heroes until they are near the throne room. At that point he'll try to replace one of the heroes who is alone or disabled, releasing the other trillith to destroy the rest.

Ragesian Army Remnants

The undead soldiers from Coaltongue's army are bound in death to serve the duty they were last given, which is to defend Castle Korstull. If the heroes manage to somehow call a cease-fire (such as by speaking with Inquisitor Griiat), they might get the undead to hold off the living Ragesian army that arrives at the end of the third act.

In Act Three, the survivors of Coaltongue's army who were outside the range of the firestorm when the emperor was assassinated return. Their leader, General Magdus, has already seized this castle once, and he intends not to lose it again. The army serves primarily as motivation and a way to get the heroes out of the castle, not as a combat threat, but the heroes might decide to speak with Magdus; even if they are defeated and captured, they have a unique opportunity to bargain with the Ragesians, since by that point they should possess the most important information in the war.

Inquisitor Griiat

Though Griiat likely only briefly encounters the heroes in the third act, he becomes aware of their activities in the castle early, thanks to a scrying chamber in the upper levels, and so those defenders of the castle who are not just ignorant undead take an active role, and do not simply wait for the heroes to kick open their door and hack them apart.

Devils

A group of devils has taken over the chapel in the lower level. Summoned by inquisitor Guthwulf, of whom the heroes have heard, their mission is to secure the castle for Ragesia, and to aid the forces at the command of its leader when they arrive. For now, though, the devils just wait in the safe chapel, confident they have done enough to fulfill the letter of their bargain.

Psionics

As in all of the adventures in the campaign saga, the psionics rules are not necessary in *Tears of the Burning Sky*. Though trillith abilities are inspired by psionic powers, everything you need is provided in this adventure.

Adapting the Adventure

Tears of the Burning Sky works easily as a stand-alone adventure, where the focus can be on recovering any precious item that several groups would pursue. An ebb in the firestorm, which divinations show will only last a few days, calls other treasure hunters and even a small army to the perilous castle. The trillith Deception could simply be a unique doppelganger working as an agent for some nefarious group, and the rift can have been created by many sorts of magical catastrophe.

Lore of Korstull

Knowledge (Architecture and Engineering)

DC Knowledge

15 Aside from the main entrance—which passes through the maw of an enormous bear skull statue—if one could breach one of the many bunkers along the walls of the canyon, it would be possible to enter the castle via passages soldiers normally use.

20 The many mechanical devices within the castle—from the main gate to dozens of traps—are powered by a complex mechanism energized by an underground river deep in the mountain's interior.

25 The shaft that rises from the lower level to the upper bunker utilizes a mechanical lift. Engineers who worked on the shaft were bound by geas never to speak of the defenses they lay inside the lift tunnel.

Knowledge (History) or Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty)

DC Knowledge

15 Korstull is well known for its many rings of defenses, and though originally built as a fortress for Coaltongue when he annexed Sindaire, it was recently used as a holding for Sindairese rebels, led by the noble Pietr Gorquith.

20 The castle consists of a lower section intended for visitors and guests, and a highly defended upper section. The common barracks are located on the lower level, but supposedly many magical defenses protect the upper level.

25 It is said the lord of the castle can look into any room within it, and out onto the canyon, though mirrors placed in the war room. Also, many hidden passages allow spying into the suites on the lower level.

Rescue Mission

Although nearly all of the undead within Castle Korstull will fight to the death, they might choose to capture the heroes if they defeat them. Captives are taken to the Dark Pyre to be animated as undead minions in Griiat's personal army. While the heroes await ritual sacrifice to Griiat's "god," a fun side adventure would be to play the Clan Millorn explorers, spurred on by Grellfin to go to the rescue. These explorers are lower level than the heroes, but their size gives them unique avenues for exploring the castle without fighting.

Among the devils is Pilmat, an imp who is very displeased with being on this world. He can act as look-out or as a tiny scout if the heroes defeat the bone devil Luxkamma, who commands him and keeps him here.

Sindaire Forces

An earth elemental bound to the castle by rebel leader Pietr Gorquith roams tunnels near the battle, and might aid those who claim to be loyal to the rebels. Gorquith himself survives in a horribly twisted state, and can provide detailed information about the castle's layout and defenses.

Shahahlesti Forces

Daughter of Lord Shaaladel, ruler of Shahalesti, Shalosha and her entourage are accompanying Magdus in an effort to sway the general's loyalties. By helping him retrieve the Torch of the Burning Sky and promising that her nation will support him as new ruler of Ragesia, she hopes to turn Magdus against Leska.

When she sees the heroes again, her reaction will be greatly influenced by what happened to the Shahalesti in adventure three, but if she had a positive opinion of them from that encounter, she is likely to see them as potential allies as well, perhaps more appealing than Magdus.

Adventure Overview

The heroes investigate Korstull to see if they can either find the Torch hidden within, or information about its whereabouts. Their explorations do not win them the Torch itself, but they gain information on its whereabouts as well as the truth behind what happened the night of Emperor Coaltongue's death.

Without the Monastery

If the heroes did not complete the previous adventure, they might simply head into the firestorm when divinations say that the storm will ebb for several days, providing an opening.

Short of loading up on an inordinate number of *death ward* and *resist energy (fire)* spells, and then *wind walking* at high speed through the firestorm, it is unlikely heroes of this level will be able to reach the castle without some sort of clearing in the storm. If, however, they come up with a method, it will be difficult to justify the Ragesians following them. Perhaps only a small strike force arrives in Act Three. Clan Millorn, however, could still manage to make it through.

Act One

The heroes start at a town on the border of the lands ravaged by the planar fire. Ragesian soldiers are raiding the town, alerting the heroes that the First Army may be in the vicinity. Aided by magic from the Monastery of Two Winds, the heroes hold back the firestorm and head to the castle. There, they find countless scorched dead strewn along the canyon that leads to the castle, some of which animate and attack them. They meet a group of intrepid halfling and gnome treasure hunters who are looking to loot the castle, and who might serve as allies or friendly rivals as the heroes delve into the castle and search for the Torch. However, hidden among the small folk is the trillith Deception, who with his flawless disguises will attempt to bedevil and betray the heroes.

Act Two

In this section the heroes explore the lower levels of Korstull, amid which they must find a way to reactivate the mechanical lift that is the only entrance to the bunker-like upper level. Among the threats in this area are a small group of devils who have been sent to secure the area for the Ragesians, the twisted remains of the rebellion leader and his attendants, and of course undead of all sorts. At the end of this act, just after learning that the Ragesian army is heading for their location, the heroes ascend in the lift, which is a dramatic deathtrap.

Act Three

The upper level of the castle is trapped in a sliver of the Astral Plane, and it is here that Griiat and his minions assault the heroes as they try to reach the throne room and contact Darius. After the heroes reach Darius, the trillith Deception discreetly stabs the heroes in the back: while they try to find a way to escape the Ragesians who are storming the castle, Deception releases a nightmarish trillith from a soul gem he has carried, which chooses as its body the skeleton of a gold dragon that had been mounted as a trophy in the throne room.

The dragon-trillith attacks to slay the heroes while Deception tries to escape with the secret of the Torch's location. The heroes' best option is to flee the scene in a flying palanquin kept in the castle's imperial banquet hall. Pursued by a nightmarish dragon and attacked by all those in the Ragesian army capable of flying, the heroes race down the canyon to safety, possessing one of the most valuable secrets in the war.

Act One: The Firestorm

In this act, the heroes reach the edge of the scorched lands surrounding Korstull, fight off pillaging Ragesians, and then press into the firestorm. Once they reach the castle they encounter a second group of adventurers, and together the two groups fight against a mass of undead who rise to stop their entrance to the canyon fortress.

Aid of the Two Winds

If the heroes have completed adventure five, *Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds*, the monastery's masters Pilus and Longinus give the heroes a parting gift: a glass orb within which a storm rages. With this orb, the heroes will be able to hold back the firestorm, conjuring driving winds to push the flames away. This will ensure that the storm stays many miles from the heroes, but an unfortunate drawback is that the storm will not simply close in behind them as they travel, so there is a chance that others might take advantage of the same opening.

Longinus has divined, and knows that remnants of the First Ragesian Army, commanded by General Magdus and accompanied by a contingent of Shahalesti elves, patrol the lands near the firestorm, waiting for just such an opening. All efforts to actually determine the location of the Torch, or of the late emperor, fail outright, but Longinus says such is typical for items of such power.

Longinus tells them that once they reach the firestorm and activate the orb, it will only last for a few days, a week at most. He suggests they bring ample supplies, since they will not have time to retreat and return later. The monks of the monastery can offer magic items of up to 8,000 gp in value, selling them at 70% of market value. Most of the magic items available for purchase should be somehow wind-themed, either in function or form, but adventuring staples such as *cure* potions and wands are certainly available.

Before the heroes leave, Longinus casts a *divination* about the heroes' exploration of the castle, and receives this reply:

> "A perilous climb.
> Revelation, deception.
> Horses fly from fire."

Finally, if the heroes did not drive off Pilus, the Master of the East Wind offers them a gift as well. To whichever member of the party he suspects has the lowest Will save, he presents a platinum earring, an *earring of the whispering winds* (see Appendix A), which he says he hopes will protect the wearer from the "deception" his brother learned of through *divination*.

The Road

Guides from the monastery can escort the heroes to the lowlands on the northern side of the mountain range, and point them to the village of Ronda where they can acquire horses. The Sindairese villagers — mostly humans, halflings, and gnomes, their homes decorated with bear motifs — speak of intermittent visits by groups of Ragesian soldiers demanding supplies. They know that thousands of soldiers are based somewhere east of the firestorm, the survivors of Coaltongue's army.

If the heroes ask, the villagers can inform them of the events of the rebellion. As for the aftermath of Coaltongue's defeat, these villagers are far from the main fighting, but they know that the Ragesians are fighting to maintain their hold on Sindaire. Many travelers fleeing from the capital speak of a growing desire to defeat the Ragesians. Depending on how well the heroes protected Seaquen and Dassen in previous adventures, the villagers may also make mention of a fledgling alliance with other nations in the fight, led by some distant group of mages.

Though the heroes will not be getting involved in the larger fight in Sindaire in this adventure, the fighting here could be a hook for additional adventures, or simply a sign of how their acts have influenced the lives of even common folk in the war.

A highway leads from the village to the badlands, which has enough traffic that they shouldn't attract much attention from Ragesian patrols, not until they near the firestorm at least. The closest town to the edge of the firestorm is Gathin, sixty miles from Ronda and twenty miles from Korstull.

Approaching the Firestorm

Most of Sindaire is lush wooded prairies with villages and farms every mile or so, but when the heroes have traveled nearly sixty miles, they pass towns from which many have fled, and a mild sense of unease hovers in the air. The clouds in the distant northwestern horizon are dark red even at noon, and as the heroes near the edge of the firestorm's reach the air begins to smell of ash and sulfur.

Eventually the heroes cross the rise of a hill and come upon grounds that have been seared with fire, the result of the firestorm briefly wandering out this far several months ago. The plant life is mostly dead, but a few farm animals survive on sparse grazing. Two hundred feet ahead the heroes spot a tiny thorp, and beyond it miles of blackened hills. From the village comes shouts, and a group of mounted soldiers can be seen harassing a muscled farmer.

Gathin
LN Conventional Thorp
Government Council of elders
Purchase Limit 40 gp; **Assets** 100 gp
Population 50
Demographics mixed (80% human, 12% gnome, 8% halfling)

Gathin Garrison (EL 14)

Shahalesti diviners with the army have determined that a group will be attempting to reach the castle, and so a small company of Ragesian soldiers have been ordered to watch this road that leads into the firestorm. They will fight to stop anyone from entering, though their morale is somewhat weak, and the lesser soldiers will break if Commander Rohat is defeated.

Commander Rohat (CR 10): hp 74, Appendix B.
Bimal, Leena, Nadia, and Marton, Ragesian knights (4) (CR 8): hp 65 each, Appendix B.
Bharat, Nessian warhound (CR 9): hp 114, MM.
Ragesian soldiers, standard (8) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

When the heroes come upon the town, the small company of soldiers are arguing with one of the farmers who has been complaining about having to serve the soldiers as guests when he views them as enemies. Within a few minutes the argument will turn bloody when Rohat's right-hand-man Bimal cuts down the farmer as an example to the rest of the tiny village.

If at any point the Ragesians become aware of the heroes, they shout for them to halt, and the normal soldiers run to their mounts while Rohat and the knights ride to the heroes, suspicious of their presence. The rest of the soldiers follows a hundred feet behind, accompanied by the large hellhound Bharat. Unless the heroes manage

to get Rohat on their side, the commander eventually orders an attack.

The four knights charge and ride past the heroes in wheeling strafes, trying to keep their distance in case of area attacks, and ignoring enemies who have no mobility or ranged attack options. Meanwhile Bharat the hellhound attempts to harry any spellcasters, and the rest of the soldiers ride in slow circles around the heroes if they can, attacking whichever target Rohat orders. Rohat meanwhile activates his lance's ability to turn him invisible, and takes on whichever warrior looks strongest, preferring other mounted foes.

Terrain

The village itself only has about 20 buildings, surrounded by a 5-foot stone wall. Rohat much prefers to fight out in the open fields, where aside from a few low fences and sparse goats (sure to panic when combat breaks out) the ground is flat and open. However, the whole area is coated in ash that has blown in from the firestorm, so after a few rounds of combat (longer if foes stay still, shorter if people are running and charging a lot), a dusty haze fills the air, granting 20% concealment against all attacks launched from 30 feet or greater range.

Aftermath

Once defeated, the Ragesians can tell the heroes little, other than that several thousand survivors of the First Army are camped less than a day's ride away, and that it will be noticed when no rider reports in from this unit. The soldiers can also tell about their flight from the searing rain when the firestorm first appeared, and how many in the army feel they suffered the first defeat the Ragesian army has known in decades. They believe somehow the rebels booby-trapped the castle to assassinate the king and destroy the Torch, which created the firestorm.

The townsfolk are relieved at any aid, and if they are told that the Ragesians might be coming this way soon in force, they pack up their belongings and flee south.

Other Options

If the heroes have chosen to avoid the main highway, they come upon the group on patrol when they near the edge of the firestorm.



Ash Flight – Art by Daniel Chavez

Crossing the Battlefield

There are no foes along the path to the castle, though careful checking reveals occasional tracks in the ash of hooves and booted feet, but no bodies. The sky stays bleak, but no fiery rain falls as long as the heroes keep the orb with them.

At one point during the journey, the heroes pass through an area where the ground sizzles from heat, and noxious fumes waft into the air. The fire rain has created a few pockets of magma that burned pits into the ground. A Spot or Survival check (DC 20) notices the signs of weak ground, where a fragile shell of stone is all that hides a molten death. If no one spots it, the person in the lead of the group cracks through the stone and may be immersed in lava. The lava is slightly cooled, so damage is less than normal.

Lava Pit Hazard (CR 11): Reflex DC 16 to avoid falling in lava. On success, the character stumbles over the lava but manages to avoid falling in, taking 1d6 points of fire damage upon contact, and 1d6 each round for 1d3 additional rounds. On a failure he is completely submerged, taking 10d6 points of fire damage upon contact and each round he remains submerged, and 1d6 each round for 1d3 rounds after he escapes the lava. Climbing out requires a Climb check (DC 5), and adjacent allies can each grant a +2 bonus, though they take 1d6 fire damage from contact to the lava each round they help.

After the first such pit, the heroes can easily spot similar pits, and are in little danger of stumbling into another.

The Canyon

After fifteen miles, the heroes spot a bright red glow far in the distance, and as they grow closer they realize they are seeing a towering pillar of flame, hundreds of feet across, rising miles into the heavens. This is the center of the firestorm.

The ground grows craggier as they reach the natural stone outcropping where Korstull is located. The stone mound rises nearly two thousand feet, but low in its slopes begins the canyon that leads to the castle. Originally a natural crack in the mountain, it was expanded by the Ragesians and turned into a highly defensible entrance. Nearly a mile long, the walls of the canyon are hundreds of feet deep, with bunkers built high above the route potential attackers would take. All of these bunkers are now filled with shambling dead, but none are intelligent enough to use ranged weapons to attack intruders. However, as the heroes traverse the canyon they hear a constant echoing murmur of moaning dead and the sound of bone scraping on stone, coming from arrow slits high above them.

Similar bunkers — built directly into the mountain — defend the face of the mountain in concentric rings, and the naturally craggy terrain once made it suicidal to attempt to avoid the canyon and try to approach the castle from above.

As the heroes near the castle, they see scattered remains of fallen soldiers, stretching out ahead of them toward a bend in the canyon. There is little left to salvage beyond various mundane or masterwork armor and weapons. A Heal check (DC 25) determines that the marks and breaks on some of the skeletons indicate that they were struck after their flesh was burned away, when all that remained was the skeleton and armor. Furthermore, most of the bodies appear to have weapons in hand, as if they were struck down in the midst of combat.

A Survival check (DC 22) reveals that three wagons came through here within the past few hours. This is the trail of Clan Millorn, and beyond the curve it leads to the heroes' destination, Castle Korstull.

When the initial firestorm struck the courtyard just outside the castle, it animated both Ragesian soldiers and Sindairese prisoners, and in undeath they warred and destroyed each other again. The remaining undead withdrew into the castle, but many bodies still lie at the end of the canyon.

Finally, the canyon cuts a sharp turn, and ahead lies the canyon's end, a hundred feet away. Beyond a huge swath of skeletons, charred siege equipment, and shattered stones, a colossal stone carving of a bear skull stretches out of the canyon wall, and the road into the castle passes into its toothy gullet. A wide open killing field faces the castle's face, with countless arrow slits and siege bunkers looking down from all sides.

The wall of the canyon rises three hundred feet, the last two hundred feet licked with flames, growing ever brighter the higher they rise, until finally they coalesce into the roaring pillar that is the heart of the firestorm, which bathes the whole area in intense red light. Black bolts of lightning crackle along the pillar's surface, but the thunder is eerily muted, as though it is traveling an impossibly great distance.

Then, a hundred feet up at the very bottom of the pillar's flames, the fires part for a moment, and you spot what appears to be a window in the solid rock face that is the castle's front. Framed with ornate carvings too small to see from this distance, the window is dark, but you feel a weight pressing down, like someone is watching you. Then the flames intensify again, and the window is gone.

A black bolt of lightning descends from the heavens and strikes the floor of the canyon barely thirty feet away, beside an overturned steel cage that lies atop a vast pile of charred skeletons that must once have belonged to hundreds of men, horses, and stranger monsters, all long dead. You consider the spot the lightning struck, but then movement catches your attention just beyond it.

Amazingly, you see what appear to be a half dozen gnomes and halflings standing beside a trio of strange wagons that are parked in front of the massive stone bear skull, sixty feet away. They have turned to look back at the sound of the lightning bolt, and they seem shocked to see you.

The spot where the lightning struck shifts, and bones move with a chorus of deathly laughter; the skeletons of nearly a dozen men rise, grabbing up weapons from around them, their eyes streaming tears of flame.

Burning Warriors (EL 11)

Inquisitor Griiat has spotted the heroes, and he has commanded the Dark Pyre to raise defenders for the castle. The undead begin prone, but they quickly rise and attack.

Sergeant Smash, Dark Pyre sergeant (CR 9): hp 52, Appendix B.

Dark Pyre soldiers (10) (CR 4): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

Terrain

The canyon, previously just 40 feet wide, now opens up to a vast area over 200 feet wide and 100 feet across, the entire area strewn with bodies that

Weakly Enhanced Death and Fire Magic

Spells with the death or fire descriptor cast within a half-mile of the planar rift in Castle Korstull are automatically empowered, as are those that channel negative energy, such as *inflict wounds* spells.

make the ground difficult terrain. The undead rise 30 feet from the heroes, and the Clan Millorn caravan lies 30 feet beyond. It is a further 40 feet to the mouth of the bear carving, through which lies the entrance to the castle.

A steel cage 15 feet square, once used to transport a trained bulette, lies toppled and open between the heroes and the undead. The steel is still hot enough to deal 1d3 points of fire damage to anyone touching it. The bars are open wide enough that anyone can step through by spending 5 feet of extra movement, but doing this deals fire damage to the creature unless it succeeds an Escape Artist check (DC 20). Creatures have cover against attacks coming from the other side of the cage bars.

A Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 15) detects that this area has weakly-enhanced fire and negative energy magic.

Tactics

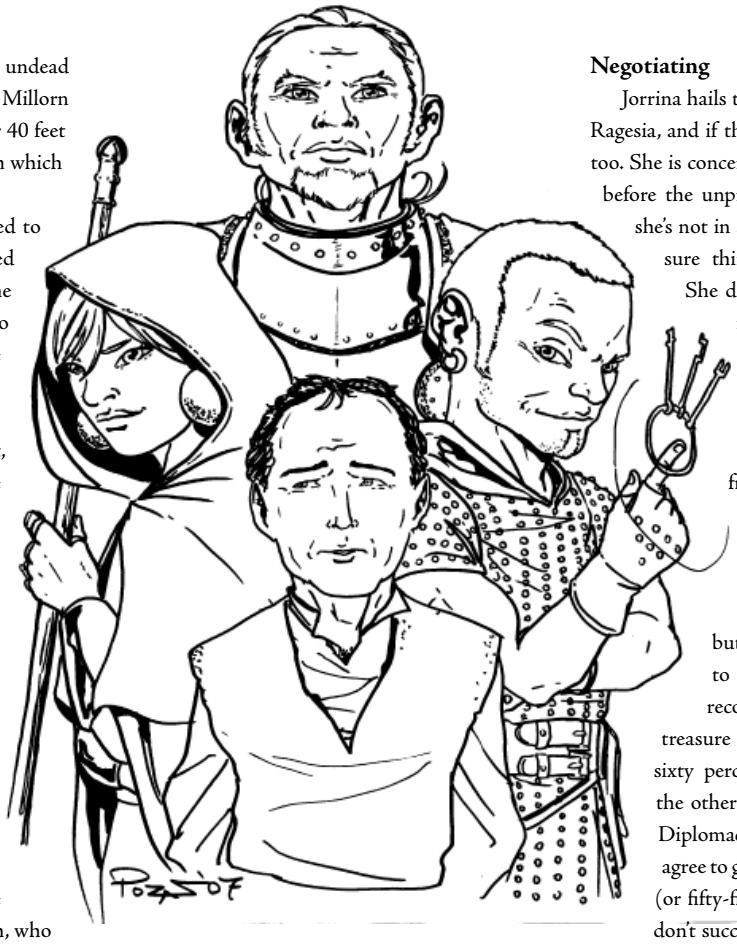
Although these soldiers prefer direct melee tactics, they were well-trained in life, and maintain some skills in undeath, especially under the direction of their leader, Sergeant Smash, who barks orders in Orcish. The other undead reply only with savage hisses. Smash begins the fight by raising a *wall of fire* behind the heroes, and if any heroes take to the air, he creates a *wall of fire* beneath them and sends his soldiers up into the air with their firewalk ability. If they go above 20 feet, he instead uses his *spined shield*, then hurls handfuls of fire from *produce flame* when he is out of spines.

These are just the first of a great many undead the heroes will face in the course of this adventure. Due to the limited timeframe, the heroes won't have much time to rest and recover magic, so even if the cleric easily turns the first few groups of undead, don't worry. There will be plenty more. Devoted undead turners should enjoy flaunting their power here.

After a round of combat, the warriors of Clan Millorn react and prepare for a fight. Grellfin, the paladin, charges into combat, tearing through the lesser soldiers one by one. The rest of the clan are not very effective against these undead, but they will aid the heroes as best they can.

Aftermath

The undead fight until they are destroyed. When the bone dust settles, the gnomes and halflings of Clan Millorn regard the heroes warily. Grellfin offers healing if needed, and Jorrina addresses them, as detailed below.



Clan Millorn – Art by Claudio Pozas

Friendly Rivals

The group of eight gnomes and halflings (and one trillith) were examining the entrance thoroughly, worried that the massive bearskull carving might be trapped. Their three wagons, covered in a thick reddish grease and including a covering for their horses, are parked nearby.

Clan Millorn's Goal

While the castle itself is certain to have many treasures, Clan Millorn's primary target is the treasure vault which lies in the upper levels. Jorrina has studied the architecture and history of Korstull, and so she knows generally what to look for. She knows the castle has many hidden passages, and her spell selection is geared to take advantage of them. She is aware that the lift to the upper levels — where the treasure vault lies — can only be operated if the water pump is functional, and she has used *locate object* to determine that the water pump lies on the western side of the castle. Therefore, the pump is her first objective.

Negotiating

Jorrina hails the heroes, asking if they're from Ragesia, and if they're here to "explore" the castle too. She is concerned about getting into Korstull before the unpredictable fire rain returns, but she's not in a great rush, and wants to make sure things are clear with the heroes. She does not want a fight, but she is not going to simply let these strangers have free reign in the castle they have come so far to plunder.

Assuming the heroes are friendly, Jorrina assumes they are treasure hunters like her own party, and proposes a mutually beneficial arrangement: the two groups will work separately but not hostilely, each having claim to whatever items they personally recover. When they discover the treasure vault, the discoverers can claim sixty percent, and the other group gets the other forty. If the heroes negotiate, a Diplomacy check (DC 30) gets Jorrina to agree to go to seventy-five and twenty-five (or fifty-fifty, if they prefer). If the heroes don't succeed the check, demand more, or attempt strong-arm tactics, Jorrina promises her clan will fight for their fair share.

Assuming negotiations go well, Jorrina says her people will be willing to lend aid if things get dangerous for the heroes, and she hopes they feel the same way. She casually suggests that once they're inside, the heroes take the left side, and her group will take the right. If the heroes suspect she knows something and ask to switch, she'll agree, and simply work quickly to reach the water wheel before the heroes can.

Torch Hunting

Smart heroes should know better than to admit they're looking for the Torch of the Burning Sky, even though Jorrina suspects that's exactly what they're up to. Clan Millorn has no interest in the power the Torch would bring them, and before going on this adventure they all agreed that if they found the Torch, they would do their best to destroy it, to keep it out of the hands of tyrants.

Over the course of their exploration of the castle, Jorrina intends to observe the heroes to determine their progress and listen for clues to their intentions and demeanor. Toward that end, the first time there is a lull in fighting, she asks Oller to go to the heroes and ask whether they're

here for the Torch, and imply that if his group finds it they intend to sell it to a noble named Jelan Ayols in the capital city of Turinn. Then once Oller leaves, Jorrina will use *clairaudience* to listen to what will hopefully be a telling conversation.

If the heroes seem truly noble and well-intentioned, Jorrina may approach them and offer a revised deal. If her group gets the Torch, they'll hand it over to the heroes, in exchange for an ninety percent cut of treausre in the vault, and even if the heroes find it first, Clan Millorn gets a seventy-five percent cut in exchange for not laying claim to the Torch, which, in all fairness, is priceless.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes come to a polite agreement with the gnomes, reward them for a CR 11 encounter.

Getting Into the Castle

There are three paths into the castle that look likely, though only the main entrance actually leads inside.

Archery Bunkers (EL 10+)

The heroes could climb, fly, or teleport up to one of the bunkers around the canyon walls, 60 feet up. At this altitude the only openings are narrow arrow slits and holes to drop alchemicals through, but at their level the heroes should find this little hindrance. The bunkers each measure 20 feet by 20 feet, and are lit only by light coming in through the arrow slits. The bunkers are connected by a network of 30-foot hallways and 20-foot ladders that pass through trap doors.

A typical bunker is occupied by four Dark Pyre swarmers, who will simply be leaning against the walls when the heroes arrive, unless the heroes have alerted Griiat, in which case the inquisitor has sent a spectral agent to put them on watch. The Dark Pyre swarmers attack if enemies come into sight, but they do not investigate sounds of combat. Their preferred tactic is to surround enemies, or to have one grapple while the others sneak attack.

Dark Pyre swarmers (4) (CR 6): hp 33 each, Appendix B.

These bunkers all show signs of older battles, and many have cracks in their walls. After exploring three such rooms, the heroes find the passage to any other bunkers blocked by debris. The firestorm's initial blast triggered many failsafes intended to keep the castle from being breached in this method, making the bunkers a dead end.

However, for keen-eyed adventurers this direction is not a total waste. The stone on the walls of these rooms has been scratched by tiny talons, writing in Infernal that basically translates to "Pilmat was here," and a series of highly clever couplets about sinning, with the main emphasis being that it's better to lure mortals into bargains they later regret than to tempt them into acts of passion. This should be a clue that there are devils about.

Bulette Tunnels (EL 11)

Emperor Coaltongue was not shy about using what magic and creatures he could in his attacks. One powerful tool he had to gain access to castles and other fortresses were his bulettes, trained to create tunnels far faster than any sapper could. Mages controlled the beasts, which were brought to the battlefield in huge steel cages, now lying broken and toppled in the canyon. However, the bulette's tunnels remain.

One bulette went wild and fled during the battle, and it was roaming in the nearby area when the firestorm struck, killed it, and animated it. It now nests in one of the guest suites (Area 9), having been brought inside by the other undead.

The second bulette managed to get into Korstull before being killed. Its tunnel leads from just to the left of the giant bear skull carving, to the barracks (Area 3), even through the iron barrier. However, the bulette was killed and its tunnel collapsed. Sixteen man-hours of work could clear the 20 feet of loose debris (small creatures count ¼ for this physical labor), but the skeletons in the barracks would hear the heroes coming and prepare an ambush.

The third bulette tunneled in from the other side of the castle face, heading for the equestrian track (Area 5), but was stopped by an earth elemental bound to the area. A tunnel 15 feet wide plunges into the castle face to the right of the giant bear skull, descending at a 45-degree angle and curving right. It stops after 40 feet, and the heroes discover the battered, all-but skeletal corpse of the creature still lying here.

The guardian elemental lurks nearby, following its last orders to protect the castle. It is dimly aware that a magical event of immense power occurred recently, though it was earthgliding at the time, and was unaffected. If emerges into the tunnel behind the heroes, its attitude is Unfriendly unless the heroes are trying to dig, in which case it is Hostile.

Elder earth elemental (CR 11): hp 228, MM.

If the heroes reduce it below 40 hp, it flees into the rock. After that, it will make hit and run attacks against the characters as long as it can. It views the heroes and Clan Millorn as the same group, and the gnomes will be horrified when one night the giant elemental clubs their horses to death, before melting back into the ground. The elemental can only enter the castle via the equestrian track, since the rest of the castle is lined with iron it cannot earthglide through. It will not risk going past the undead, and so will not go into the castle until the equestrian track has been cleared.

If the characters make the elemental Friendly, it warns them that the knights in the stables have risen as undead, though it is unfamiliar with the rest of the castle. It will not accompany the heroes inside the castle of its own free will, though it may be convinced to stand guard at the entrance. If the heroes bring the ring of Lord Gorquith, this frees the elemental from its service, and it offers to serve them in one fight for their kindness.

Main Entrance

The main entrance, the maw of the great stone bear skull, is an arch 10 feet wide and 20 feet high that once held the castle's great doors, which were demolished when Coaltongue retook the castle. What lies within is detailed in the next Act.

Act Two: The Castle

In this act, the heroes explore the undead-infested castle, battle devils for precious healing supplies, and meet with the rebel noble who used the castle to resist the Ragesians. At the end of this act, the heroes reactivate a lift that carries them to the upper level, and just before they are about to ascend, a Ragesian scout comes upon them, alerting them that an army is on its way.

Getting Upstairs

There are three main tasks the heroes must accomplish before they can take the lift to the upper level. First, they must open the dam that slows the flow of water in the underground river (Area 5). Second, they must repair the damaged water pump (Area 12), which provides the power to the lift. Third, the undead Lord Gorquith trapped in the Banquet Hall (Area 14) knows how to avoid the traps in the lift shaft, though he won't be forthcoming.

Additionally, attacks by Inquisitor Griiat's minions harrass them regularly, and the devils in the Chapel (Area 20) will be a danger when the Ragesians arrive if the heroes do not deal with them first.

Castle Traits

Unless otherwise noted, the walls are stone, though the outer shell of the castle is encased in 1-inch iron sheets, to prevent burrowing and stoneshaping. Unless otherwise stated, hallways and rooms are 9 feet high and all walls are 2 foot thick hewn stone (hardness 8, hp 260, Break DC 45). Single doors are good wooden doors (hardness 5, hp 15, Break DC 18), and double doors are iron doors (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28).

Aside from the great foyer (Area 2), there is no light, except for the flicker of flaming tears on the faces of undead. When the undead see enemies, however, they flare and shed illumination like a torch. Most walls are decorated with carvings of bears and dragons. All doors are magically-treated wood, which managed to survive the initial burst of the firestorm.

The entire castle is equipped with plumbing, pipes with warm water for heated floors, and grated air shafts for ventilation. These passageways are just large enough that a Small creature can wriggle through them with an Escape Artist check (DC 30) every 5 feet, and a Tiny creature can move through them by squeezing. These effectively allow slow but unhindered access anywhere in the castle's lower level. Such pipes do also run to the upper level, but the 100-foot ascent is warded with glyphs of dispelling, and making the ascent without magic would be very difficult.

No water runs in the castle when the heroes arrive, as the water pump (Area 12) has been disabled.

In any area, there is usually something within 5 feet that can be grabbed and used as a makeshift club, such as a small statue, a torch in its sconce, or a flower vase.

Defenders

Griiat long ago brought most of the undead inside the castle up to the upper level to be with him and bask in the glory of the Dark Pyre, but now the spectral inquisitor needs to drive out the intruders that have reached the castle. His first line of defense is to muster the guards in the barracks and send them hunting for the heroes.

Patrols (EL 10+)

Ten minutes after the heroes enter the castle, Griiat sends his dread wraith minion Reddengot to alert the warriors in the barracks. They begin to search the lower level in four groups, each consisting of four Dark Pyre soldiers and a sergeant. The wraith drifts through the castle stealthily, and if he spots the heroes or Clan Millorn he will alert the warriors, who arrive in waves every four to six rounds. Reddengot does not join in this battle unless attacked.

Single Patrol (EL 10)

Dark Pyre sergeant (CR 9): hp 52, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre soldiers (4) (CR 4): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

Total Barracks Group (EL 14)

Dark Pyre sergeants (4) (CR 9): hp 52 each, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre soldiers (16) (CR 4): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Reddengot, dread wraith (CR 11): hp 104, MM. Has the (fire) subtype.

Reddengot was in life an ogre who studied the art of torture, having learned from a consummate master, the inquisitor Guthwulf. He orders the undead soldiers to attack spellcasters with nonlethal damage, so he can capture and inflict pain on them. Otherwise, their tactics depend heavily on the terrain of wherever the heroes choose to rest. If Reddengot is losing, he'll flee to the lift and ascend incorporeally up the shaft.

Assault (EL 12+)

Assuming the heroes survive the attack by the barrack forces, Griiat is wary of turning off the traps in the lift shaft, and of depleting his defenders on the upper level. Instead he calls upon the power of the Dark Pyre, conjuring a black lightning bolt as he did when the heroes first arrived. These bolts, which Griiat can only evoke once per day, can animate the corpses strewn about the battlefield outside the castle, each raising up to 40 Hit Dice of undead, which intuitively know Griiat's command.

While the heroes rest, Griiat animates a squad of warriors and directs them to find and kill the intruders. This squad consists of four Dark Pyre swarmers and two sergeants, led by the dread wraith Reddengot, who, if he survived the previous attack, has been fully healed by returning to the Dark Pyre.

Dark Pyre sergeants (2) (CR 9): hp 52 each, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre swarmers (4) (CR 6): hp 33 each, Appendix B.
Reddengot, dread wraith (CR 11): hp 104, MM. Has the (fire) subtype.

After this attack, the heroes can follow the ashen footprints of the undead and see they came from outside. If the heroes simply lock the main gate of the castle, they can prevent further attacks. Alternately, they might go out and systematically obliterate the inert skeletons so none of them can be risen. Otherwise, Griiat sends another group every day.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes block access by future undead from the outside, or if they otherwise render themselves safe from such attacks, reward them for a CR 14 encounter, since they have saved themselves a great deal of hassle.

Assassination (EL 11)

Eventually Griiat realizes that a direct assault is pointless. He takes eight hours to rest and prepare spells, then uses *planar ally* to call a vrock named Kzyu-nior, whom he sends along with the two tragedies on the upper level and Reddengot (if the dread wraith has somehow still survived). While the heroes sleep, the

incorporeal undead sneak into position and the vrock climbs into the lift shaft, glides down so he leaves the Astral Plane, and then uses *greater teleport* to move within the castle.

Kzyu-nior prepares by using *heroism* and *mirror image* on himself, and takes up a position close enough to hear when combat starts. The undead strike first, gliding in and concentrating their attacks on the same target, and a round later the vrock teleports in and releases spores. The next round he uses his stunning screech, and then positions himself amid as many enemies as possible to take advantage of his reach and Combat Reflexes.

Kzyu-nior, vrock (CR 9): hp 115, MM.
Tragedies (2) (CR 7): hp 69 each, Appendix B.

After this, Griiat holds back the rest of his forces for a final stand when the heroes reach the upper level.

Progress of Clan Millorn

Use your best judgment on where Clan Millorn explores, based on the heroes' activities. If the heroes take the left side of the castle, the gnomes make a beeline for the pump room (Area 12), securing it but not activating it until they have cleared out the bath house (Area 8) to use as a resting area. If the heroes claim the right side of the castle, the gnomes head to the storage area (Area 10) and servants' quarters (Area 11) in an attempt to reach the cistern (Area 13), from which they will trek upstream to the pump room, though they will likely get a little lost along the way and end up wandering into the guest suites (Area 9).

It is not necessary to actually play through the encounters between the gnomes and the castle foes, since aside from the weaker sorts of undead in the castle, the gnomes will not be fighting, but rather evading. Clan Millorn's tactics are somewhat unorthodox compared to most adventurers. When they are forced to fight, they let Grellfin wade into melee and turn undead while Oller peppers foes with holy water and Jorrina traps them with *wall of stone* or turns them against each other with *control undead*. The rest of the clan helps with clean-up and keeping look-out.

If faced with something more challenging than CR 9, the gnomes use Jorrina's array of magic to escape, mostly *passwall*, *invisibility sphere*, and *mass reduce person*. In this way, the gnomes can explore the castle without eliminating foes that the heroes will have to fight. In general, assume that unless the heroes are present, any undead the gnomes defeat do not count against the numbers detailed below.

In a single day, this adventurous band can handle the equivalent of an EL 13 encounter (two EL 11 encounters, four EL 9 encounters, eight EL 7 encounters, or a similar combination), after which point they need to rest. They prefer to stay in the bath house if the water is reactivated, but otherwise stay out with their wagons.

Interactions

To spice up the heroes' explorations, you might have the gnomes suddenly appear as they flee in the heroes' direction, pursued by a group of monsters; alternately, the heroes might kick open a door to see Oller waving goodbye to them as he crawls into an air vent on the wall, leaving behind a skeleton obliterated by holy water.

It is expected that the heroes will not be able to clear out the entire lower level without resting, and a pause is almost obligatory before the heroes can ascend to the upper level, because the water pump needs a day to build up sufficient water pressure once activated (see Area 12). During this rest period, members of Clan Millorn keep casual watch while discussing all the treasure they're finding. In general, they do not seem to feel the level of peril a castle full of flaming undead should engender.

Cry for Help

If the heroes avoid going to the chapel, you may want to prompt them a bit, since it is the one major area that can be avoided while still reaching the upper level. A group of gnomes and halflings end up going to the chapel, where they are horribly overwhelmed. One manages to escape, and when Jorrina gets word she comes to the heroes asking for help to rescue her friends before the devils eat them alive.

The Lift

Assuming both groups make it to the end of this act, after encountering the Ragesian scout, Jorrina suggests they take the lift to the upper level together, since she has heard it may be trapped, and time is too short to carefully search and disable all the defenses. The clan warriors and guards will wait behind on the ground floor, which should keep the elevator from becoming too crowded.

If the gnomes *do* take the lift by themselves, they are overcome by its traps and die. Their anguished screams are audible to characters waiting at the bottom of the lift.

Keyed Castle Encounter Areas

Ground Floor

1. Front Gates (EL 13)

Inside the arch is a 40- by 90-foot chamber, 30 feet high, its walls carved with symbols of Ragesian and Sindairese glory. The inner gate, an adamantine door 5 feet wide and 10 feet tall, leads into the castle proper.

Two batteries of arrow slits, 20 feet up, flank the inner gate, but they are unmanned. However, the walls to either side of the inner gate stand 9 foot tall sandstone statues of goddesses, each wielding a pair of reinforced red marble swords. They stand upon a pile of dragon and bear skulls, also carved from stone. These are stone golems.

Additionally, many skeletons are strewn about the edges of the room. These are just normal skeletons, animated from slain soldiers by Griiat, not infused by the Dark Pyre, and are ultimately little threat at this level, though they provide nice stage dressing. Whenever someone comes within 5 feet of the inner gate (or otherwise breach the walls), the skeletons rise up, and the stone golems step free from the wall. Stone amulets around their necks with a permanent *magic mouth* begin to sing in infernal tongues as they wade into battle.

Human warrior skeletons (24) (CR 1/3): hp 6 each, MM.
Stone golems (2) (CR 11): hp 107 each, MM. They wield swords +18/+18 (2d10+9) and hurl stone skulls +8 (1d8+9).

The inner gate has been locked by the undead (Open Lock DC 30), and is difficult to open because the mechanisms that would normally

Overwhelming Odds?

Normally a small group of people should not be able to defeat all the defenders of a castle, but if the heroes have a cleric, the defenders' undead condition is a huge liability. A typical single-classed cleric at this level should be able to deal with swarms of lesser undead by himself. However, if the heroes lack someone who can turn undead, the adventure becomes much more difficult.

In such a case, we recommend reducing the frequency of Griiat's attacks. Without a cleric, the heroes will probably spend longer fighting their way into the castle anyway, so you can justify spreading out the assaults a bit.

swing it are nonfunctional due to the lack of running water. Even once unlocked, shoving the door open requires a Strength check (DC 26), which elicits the sounds of a few snapping gears inside the wall.

2. Great Foyer (EL 12)

The forty-foot high domed ceiling of this room contains a mural depicting the countryside with a great bear driving off dozens of warriors. The mural seems to be dripping blood, and old dried stains spatter the floor. Ribbons of fire randomly dance in the air near the ceiling. They flare and contort for a few moments and then vanish only to be replaced by others elsewhere.

Four sets of double doors face you, one each to the left and right, one straight ahead, and another thirty feet above it. A pair of staircases lead up to a balcony in front of the higher doorway.

On further inspection, the military standard hung by the left doorway suggests a guard station or armory. The right doors are flanked by a pair of rearing horses carved into the wall, and the doorway ahead of you lies beneath a golden arch. The balcony at the top of the stairs is marked with various holy symbols, suggesting a chapel.

If the heroes make a great deal of noise here, the soldiers in the barracks (Area 3) emerge and attack.

Treasure

The golden arch is simply stone coated with gold veneer, which could be pried loose. It is worth 3,000 gp, but weighs 60 pounds and is over 12 feet long.

3. Barracks and Prison (CR 14)

Rows of bunk beds fill this room. The far corner of the room has been partially collapsed, in order to block off one of the bulette tunnels. Rock fills much of the room, and the rest contains shattered beds and personal chests. Most of the bunks are shattered or empty, bt several bodies still lie here, skeletal and burnt, as if they were slain while sleeping, except that they are wearing armor and holding their weapons.

The heroes should expect what happens next: once three of them have come into the room, the skeletons roll out of their bunks and attack.

Dark Pyre sergeants (4) (CR 9): hp 52 each, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre soldiers (16) (CR 4): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

If the Clan Millorn explorers enter this room, they will end up fleeing while Grellfin holds the skeletons back at the door. Some might overrun him and pursue the rest of the gnomes, who run to try to find the heroes, or at least a defensible location.

A doorway on the room's north wall leads to the arrow slits overlooking the front gates, but the tunnel is partially collapsed. Also, in the southeast corner, a trap door in the ceiling leads up to the armory. The passage is guarded by a glyph of warding, which can be bypassed by the password: "Gimme."

Glyph of Warding Trap (CR 5): Spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding*, 10th level cleric; 5d8 cold, DC 16 Reflex save half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device 28.

Nearly all the gear in the small armory is mundane, though it includes nearly every variety of weapon, armor, and shield, with enough swords for forty men. A *+1 heavy mace* and a *horn of fog* hang in a glass case rigged with an audible *alarm* spell.

The prison is accessed by a staircase leading down. The prison cells are all currently unoccupied.

4. Stables

Here you find an underground stable. The air is heavy with the smell of straw and burnt fecal matter, but the stone corrals are empty. A rusted pipe runs along the ceiling and to spigot on the north wall, next to a thick wooden door. There appears to be no far wall, as if the stables extend on into emptiness.

A Survival check (DC 15) reveals that two horses have been there recently, the two nightmares that roam the equestrian track (Area 5) in endless field exercises. A Listen check (DC 10) reveals the sound of trampling hooves echoing from beyond the western end of the stables. The fallen knights note any light and keep their distance, though they attack if the heroes linger for more than a few minutes without coming further. The doorway leads to the arrow slits at the front gates.

If the Clan Millorn explorers come this way, they will leave their animals and wagons here after making sure the knights are dealt with. Otherwise, the wagons and left outside.

5. Equestrian Track (EL 11)

A natural cavern extends into the darkness, the faint sound of running water echoing within. More than 60 feet wide, 20 feet high, and at least 100 feet deep, the ground along the outer edge is beaten smooth, making what appears to be an equestrian track. Stalagmites and columns of stone still jut up from the ground closer to the center of the cavern, along with what looks like the charred remains of bleachers.

Hoofbeats sound in the darkness, and flames suddenly illuminate two charging black horses, and the blood red knights mounted upon them.

Two fallen knights ride their fearsome nightmares along this track, tilting against the stone columns. Former Knights of the Aquiline Cross (the order is popular in Sindaire), they are obviously undead. They immediately attack any living being that enters this room.

Fallen knights (2) (CR 7): hp 62 each, Appendix B.
Nightmares (2) (CR 5): hp 45 each, MM.

Terrain

The equestrian track crosses two stone bridges over a dry river. The central area of the chamber is 5 feet higher than the rest of the room, but aside from the bleachers is difficult terrain. The bleachers rise a further 10 feet at their highest point, giving warriors a chance to hit the flying nightmares with melee attacks if they can keep their footing (Balance DC 10). The riverbed is 5 feet deep, and the knights have to land if they want to attack someone hiding down there.

Tactics

The fallen knights ride their flying mounts with very unfair hit and run tactics, often riding out into the darkness of the cave before returning with a diving spirited charge.

Aftermath

The underground river has been dammed with applications of *stone shape*, so that now only the faintest trickle flows through this chamber. The stone, which blocks off the western edge of the room, must be broken open for the river to flow freely again (Break DC 30, hardness 8, hp 80).

6. Grand Entrance (EL 8)

These doors are heavy and slow to move if the water is not pumping, but they are not locked. Beyond lies the entrance to the guest section of the palace. A broad rug covers the floor, and a rounded staircase ascends to a long balcony. A pair of doors lies on either side of the room. The whole room is lined with marble statues of ancient warriors.

The carpet, though burnt, holds stains easily, and a Search or Survival check (DC 10) detects old tracks of some elephantine creature that came this way. The undead soldiers brought in an undead bulette long ago, which now nests in the hallway of the guest suites (Area 9), treating it as a burrow.

Traps

The two doors leading out of this room into the rest of the castle are each trapped (Search DC 28). If not disarmed (by flicking a hidden switch in the door frame), as soon as someone steps through the doorway, multiple sheets of blades clamp down from either side of the doorway like teeth (+20, 8d6 slashing damage). A character struck by the trap must make a Reflex save (DC 20) or be immobilized by the clamped jaws, taking 2d6 points of crushing damage each round. A Strength check (DC 24) can pry open the jaws.

7. Lift Station (EL 11)

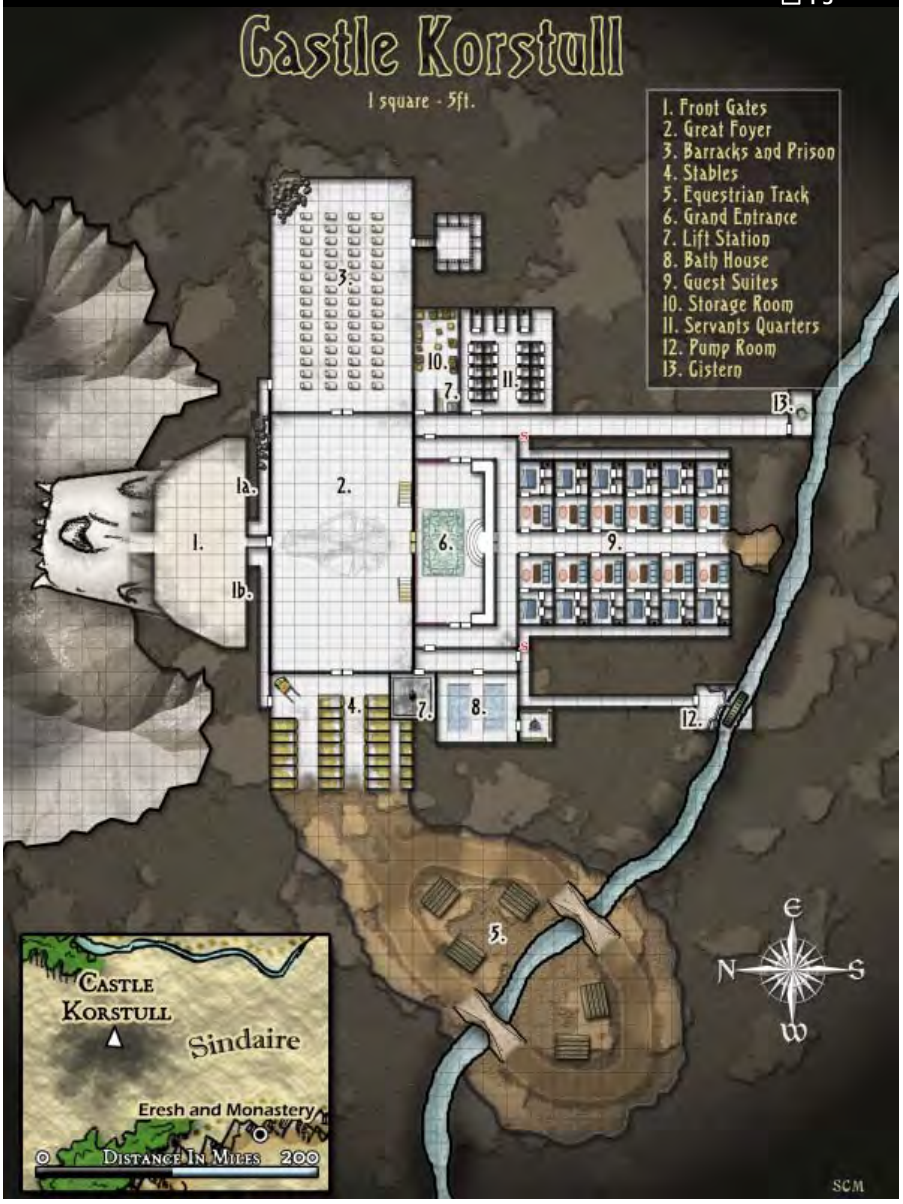
There are two mechanical lifts in the castle, neither of which works until the pump is fixed. The eastern one ascends a mere 10 feet to the banquet hall level, used to aid in catering and decorating. It is 5 feet wide, and a staircase rises beside it to the second floor.

The western lift station is much more elaborate. First, the door to this lift station is locked (Open Lock DC 35). And second, a hungry extraplanar undead known as a feaster of flesh and souls lurks here, cramped and hungry, waiting with eternal patience for someone to enter, or for it to be released by Griiat. Whenever the door opens, it lashes out to grab any creature it sees and traps his soul, then rushes out into the hallway and leaps upon other foes, gnawing them to death. When initially encountered, it does not have a trapped soul.

Feaster of flesh and souls (CR 11): hp 114, Appendix B.

Inside is a huge 20 foot square platform, with a complex mechanism in its center, and thick chains in each corner. A shaft ascends 100 feet to the upper level, and the ceiling appears to be a rippling sheet of silver (this is where the upper levels blur into the Astral Plane). This area is detailed in full in the section "In Case of Firestorm …" at the end of this Act.

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8. Bath House (EL 11)

Fine marble tiles line the floor of this bathhouse. The majority of the room is taken up by two empty pools, waist deep on a human at their shallowest, and perhaps chin-level at their deepest. Chained in the far corners are two strange creatures that resemble red hounds with no bodies, but many long legs sprouting from their neck. They begin to whimper when they see you, and suddenly a loud buzzing fills the air, like a bee's hive.

A large hellwasp swarm, which migrated into the castle through the planar rift, lairs here, crawling across the dessicated skeletons of soldiers boiled alive when the bath house was caught in the initial burst of the firestorm (treat as two swarms, each occupying one pool). The swarm brought along with it two rast slaves, which are chained on short leashes in the corners of the room. They are trained to use their paralyzing gaze on creatures that come near, giving the swarm a victim to inhabit.

Hellwasp swarm (2) (CR 8): hp 93 each, MM.
Rast (2) (CR 5): hp 25 each, MM.

If the water pump is activated (see Area 12), the pool slowly begins to fill up, and the wasps

move out of the pools and into the air ducts, to come upon the heroes at some later date while they are exploring.

The door to the south is a spa, currently empty.

Treasure

The hellwasps have created some infernally delicious honey in the pool. If collected before the pools are filled, there are about two gallons of this sweet, viscous blood-red substance. Eating a mouthful of the honey (about an ounce) heals 1 point of damage, as per *cure minor wounds*, but if one eats enough to heal 20 or more points of damage in the span of a day, the trace amounts of hellwasp poison becomes toxic, the equivalent of a dose of hellwasp poison (Fortitude DC 18, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex).

There are a total of 220 doses of the honey (each of which heals 1 point of damage). Normally these could be sold for 5 gp apiece, but to the proper conoisseur of extraplanar delicacies, each dose goes for 20 gp.

Also, hidden amid all that gunk is a platinum hairpin which functions as a *hat of disguise*, worn by a wizard who was bathing here when she died.



9. Guest Suites (EL 13)

This hallway, lined with a dozen doors, was where guests of the castle once stayed; each suite features a living room, a bedroom, a closet, and a lavatory. Being one of the deepest parts of the castle, they were relatively unscathed by fire, so some material worth taking still survives. Several of the undead defenders of the castle have taken these rooms as their own, and each of the first ten rooms now holds a pair of Dark Pyre soldiers, who are too stupid to realize they don't need a place to sleep anymore.

The undead commanders brought an undead bulette into this area, and it now sleeps at the end of the hall in a small burrowed-out chamber. The hallway is long enough that heroes likely won't spot it before it spots their torches, and if given a chance it crawls down the hallway, squeezing as it goes, in order to attack. The bulette pursues fleeing living creatures, and will ram through stone walls (+20 vs. Break DC 35) if it needs to.

While squeezed, the Dark Pyre bulette cannot use its leap attack, and it takes a –4 penalty to attack rolls and AC.

Dark Pyre soldiers (20) (CR 4): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre bulette (CR 8): hp 61, Appendix B.

A pair of hidden tunnels (their entrances marked as secret doors on the map, Search DC 30) pass behind these suites, with spyholes that peer into the bedrooms.

Treasure

The bulette wears a *belt of giant strength +4*, which resizes when taken off. Among the rooms are art objects worth a total of 8,000 gp.

10. Storage Room

This room contains the charred remains of crates full of supplies, now all useless. A small lift and staircase lead to the second floor. The lift only functions if the pump has been activated.

11. Servants' Quarters (EL 9)

The small chambers in this room each contain one Dark Pyre worker, which are practically no threat to the heroes, even *en masse*. Occasionally undead from here wander the rest of the castle, tidying up.

Dark Pyre workers (20) (CR 1): hp 7 each, Appendix B.

12. Pump Room (EL 11)

The amount of water flowing through this room depends on whether the heroes have opened the dam on the underground river (Area 5). If not, it is only a trickle. If so, a strong stream rushes through the room.

Four bestial skeletons stand between you and a huge piece of machinery that looks to have once been a pump. Three of the guards wear armor adorned with black enamel and silver skulls. The fourth, who appears to command the others, wears a hooded black robe and wields a staff made of iron, with the long skeleton of a snake embedded in it.

"So long as we stand," barks the leader, "the castle's heart shall not beat!"

Thorkrid the Dark, the robed skeletal gnoll, is a necromancer who was drawn to this area in a vision he had the night of Emperor Coaltongue's death. He aspired to lichdom, but found a slightly different fate when he and his guards were slain by the burning rain. After their death, however, they continued their journey, and upon reaching the castle, Thorkrid offered his service to Griiat, in exchange for a chance to study the power of the Dark Pyre.

The other undead gnolls are clerics of a foul death deity who follow Thorkrid's visions wherever they lead. They watch over the pump, and will fight to defend it, but do not make the first move. If the heroes do not attack, Thorkrid could be convinced to work with the heroes if they offer to let him control the castle once Griiat is disposed of.

Thorkrid the Dark (CR 10): hp 59, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre adepts (3) (CR 6): hp 33 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

The room is *desecrated*; the benefits of the spell are not included in the creatures' stat blocks. Additionally, if the gnolls hear enemies coming, Thorkrid casts *stoneskin*, and the clerics channel negative energy to bolster each other.

The three clerics stand in the doorway, with Thorkrid behind them. One cleric battles anyone trying to get into the room, while the other clerics

Dark Pyre Soldier – Art by Rick Hershey

buff and heal him. When one falls, the next takes his place at the door. Thorkrid opens up with a quickened *magic missile* against a spellcaster, and then *web*. Thereafter he uses his magic to weaken enemies and keep it so that the combat is three on one. When Thorkrid is reduced to 10 hp, if the river is flowing and he is within 5 feet of it, he snarls and leaps back into the water, letting himself be dissolved rather than allowing a living creature to destroy him.

Water Pump

The pump machinery is still in working condition but requires either a Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Disable Device check (DC 25 on either) to undo the sabotage damage done by Griiat's minions. Characters with 5 or more ranks in either of the skills gain a +2 synergy bonus to the other skill in regards to repairing the machinery. Each repair attempt takes an hour. *Make whole* fixes it instantly. Failed attempts do not damage the pump.

Once repaired, the pump can be activated, and if the river is flowing at normal capacity the pump begins to suck in water and build up the necessary pressure to run the various machinery in the castle and provide water to the sewage and drinking pipes. Within four hours, there is enough pressure to provide water from any faucet, though it takes twelve hours for the machinery to begin working, including the lift to the upper levels.

If the heroes leave the pump unguarded, any remaining undead defenders will come here and disable it again.

13. Cistern

All the sewage pipes from the castle lead here, then flow out into the river. Currently the cistern is dry and clean. A small ladder descends a shaft 10 feet to the river. If the heroes explore down the river, the half-flooded tunnel flows 200 feet before opening up into a small chamber with some dry land, which can serve as a safe haven against all the undead except the ones that can fly. Beyond that area the river dives into a deep waterfall.

Second Floor

14. Banquet Hall (EL 13)

When Emperor Coaltongue took possession of Korstull, he sat upon the throne and ordered Inquisitor Griiat to execute Lord Gorquith and his officers then and there. The noble's execution was most brutal off all — being thrown into a huge ochre jelly.

Game Master's Map pg. 654



Lord Gorquith's court minstrel, an elf named Findle, tried to ingratiate himself with the Emperor, but his attempts were annoying, so Coaltongue had him executed as well. Griiat chose to make him beg for death as he had tried to beg for life, and made a game of it, seeing how many pieces of the castle's cutlery he could insert into the man before he perished. The other rebels were forced to watch, then forced to each take a fork or knife out of the dead minstrel and eat whatever was stuck on it.

Later, when the firestorm tore through Korstull, the executed rebels and the murdered bard were animated as ghouls, and Gorquith's skeleton was animated within the ooze, the two being bound together as a unique undead jelly. As Griiat gained control over the undead soldiers that arose from Coaltongue's army, Gorquith quickly realized that they would be slaughtered again rather quickly, so they barred the entrance to the banquet hall. With Gorquith in the depths of despair over his death and return as an abomination, he ordered his minstrel and allies to celebrate what they thought would be their final hours.

Those hours stretched into days and weeks as Griiat felt it was better to let them stay contained than to waste resources trying to destroy them. So Griiat left them alone, only occasionally sending one of the undead gnoll clerics to check on them.

Also of note, since they have remained inside this room away from the firestorm, they have not gained the Dark Pyre templates.

Characters approaching this room can clearly hear the sounds of music and general merriment. The undead are currently going through the motions of a dinner party with the highest level of etiquette, eating tiny bits of their own flesh with lobster forks, toasting goblets of slime from Gorquith's new form, and the like. The room is set up perfectly neatly, aside from a few burns and scattered bits of ghouls who were torn apart by the rest of the group, and the barricades at the doors.

Entering

Entering this room is not straightforward. The main entrance has been blocked by what remains of the furniture. Opening the doors wide enough to squeeze through requires a Strength check (DC 30). A second check pushes them open enough to move through normally.

If the characters attempt to force open the doors and fail, the room falls silent for a moment. Then the music starts again with an improvised song to the effect of, "Dumb skeletons can't get in, got no meat on their bones, got no brains in their heads, they've got no meal for us!" at which the other occupants cheer.

Another option is the secret passage from the Conference Room (Area 16). A Search check (DC 25) detects the passageway.

Once the characters come inside and are spotted, read the following.

> The room suddenly falls silent. It appears to once have been a banquet hall, but now a dozen undead creatures in noble finery all turn toward you, holding lobster forks with bits of their own flesh on the ends, or holding up goblets with throbbing ochre fluid brimming at the edges. They have expressions that say, "How uncouth of these strangers to interrupt our party."
>
> Another undead abomination, wearing the tattered outfit of a minstrel, stands on a table, lute in hand, studying you with its dead eyes. Most horrifying of all, however, is the creature at the back of the room draped over a throne. A gelatinous mass of sickening yellow-gray, the ooze creature is filled with the bones of several humanoid skeletons. A small brightly colored stone floats in a circle above the abomination's head.
>
> The silence is broken by the minstrel who smiles a wicked, toothy smile, and says, "They do have a meal for us."

The ghouls are ravenous, and will attack unless the heroes manage some quick diplomacy to convince Gorquith they have a better offer than their own flesh. Gorquith begins as Hostile.

Lord Gorquith (CR 9): hp 104, Appendix B.
Findle the Minstrel (CR 9): hp 52, Appendix B.
Sindairese ghouls (12) (CR 4): hp 39 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

The oozing Gorquith remains in back, letting the warriors charge and swarm over the characters. Findle will first cast *mirror image* on himself, and then do his best to hinder the characters with spells such as *slow* and *hideous laughter*. If harmed at all he casts *invisibility* and moves about the room, using inspire courage.

Once eight of the ghouls are destroyed, or if Gorquith is dealt more than 70 points of damage, the slimy noble shudders and speaks in a gurgling voice to call off the warriors. It requests a truce with the characters. If the characters do not stop attacking, the ghouls and Gorquith will fight to the death, whereas Flindle attempts to flee or beg for his life. If that's hopelessly, he'll lash out at the nearest character and start feasting. It's best to die while enjoying a meal, he figures.

Development

If the characters are willing to do a favor for Gorquith, he is willing to aid them. What he asks is that the heroes return him from death, by means of a *scroll of resurrection* that he knows is kept in the Chapel. He tells them that the there is a cache of various healing magic in the chapel, in the Healing Hall (Area 25), which can be reached by going through the back of the main chapel, and taking the first door down the left hallway. He can tell them of how the cache is hidden under one of the cabinets, allowing them to automatically find it if they search. He says they can keep the rest of the healing items, but he wants to be freed from his horrible state. *Raise dead* cannot help him.

If the heroes fulfill their end of the bargain (hopefully they have a cleric), he can give them a fully detailed map of Korstull, the bypass sequence for the lift (DAGBHEC, see "In Case of Firestorm…"), and the full story of what happened to him and his allies. He assumes that the leader of the undead is Coaltongue, but also mentions that it was Griiat who tortured and killed them.

To aid them, he offers to send Findle along, though he wants to keep his ghoulish bodyguards. Flindle, however, is devious and self-interested. If he does join up with the characters, he will look for every opportunity to either convince them to resurrect him instead of Gorquith, or betray the characters to Griiat in hopes of mercy (or at least an opportunity to escape, preferably with the *resurrection* scroll).

Lastly, Gorquith will allow the characters to rest here if they can tolerate resting in a room with 13 ghouls staring hungrily at them all commanded by a skeleton-filled ooze.

15. Kitchen

This room has some preserved food that survived the firestorm in iron cabinets, but otherwise is empty. However, the heroes notice that some of the food cache has been opened lately, and there are washed dishes and silverware in the sink. This is the work of the imp Pilmat, who enjoys the snacks whenever he should be out scouting (see The Chapel, below).

16. Conference Room (EL 4)

Aware of the secret chamber from this room to the Banquet Hall, occasionally Dark Pyre sergeants come here to check on Gorquith's party. A Search or Survival check (DC 10) detects tracks in the ash leading to the wall, and a Search check (DC 25) locates the mechanism to open the secret passage.

Foyer Stairs
Survival (Tracking)

DC	Result
20	Dozens of creatures have wandered around in here and passed to and from the next room.
25	Not all of them appear to be typical boots. A few clawed footprints, still about humanoid in size, can be discerned.
30	The clawed feet are definitely fiendish and appear more recent than the boot prints. (Rangers with lawful or evil outsiders as a favored enemy that get this result can identify them as devil footprints.)
35	There are two different devil footprints, and one is a large creature with emaciated, bony feet. In all of the layers of prints, it is impossible to determine how many of each devil were present.
40	Careful examination of the prints that have been subsequently walked over reveal that there was a fight here between the devils and the booted prints (presumably the undead soldiers). The devils won and dragged the soldiers into the next room.

Sepia snake sigil trap (CR 4): A map on the table was left as a trap for the intruders. A creature reading the map is struck by a wispy brown serpent unless he succeeds a Reflex save (DC 14). If he fails, he is paralyzed for one day.

The Chapel (EL 13)

The chapel complex that is now overrun by devils. After the devils are killed, this can actually be a safe haven for the heroes or the Clan Millorn explorers, and it yields quite a cache of useful healing items to fight the effects of so many undead. In total, the devil group consists of:

- **2 bone devils.** Their names are Luxkamma and Alsau, and they are lovers.
- **1 erinyes.** Her name is Liselle.
- **4 bearded devils.** If the heroes did not kill Kazyk in adventure 2, he returns here.
- **1 imp.** His name is Pilmat. He was not summoned by the Ragesians, but instead was a wizard's familiar in Korstull who survived the firestorm and fell in with the devils.

Bone devils (2) (CR 9): hp 95 each, MM.
Erinyes (CR 8): hp 85, MM.
Bearded devils (4) (CR 5): hp 45 each, MM.
Imp (CR 2): hp 13, MM.

Some of the devils' tactics involve teleporting into position. While the devils are immune to fire damage, remember that in the firestorm, teleporting also deals 1d6 points of negative energy damage per 100 feet traveled.

17. Foyer Stairs

A pair of staircases lead up to the entry doors of the chapel. These beautiful iron-reinforced wooden doors are barred from within by a pair of *immovable rods*, but the doors can be removed from their hinges with about 10 minutes of work. They can also be broken down, but this attracts the attention of the devils.

A character with Track can discover tidbits of information about who passed through the area according to the sidebar on the previous page — results are cumulative.

Treasure

The two *immovable rods*.

18. Entry Hall

This room's corners are filled with the rotted remains of an old meal, and scorched bits of tables. To the right are a pair of privies, and to the left a hallway leads to the back chamber. That hall's door is locked (Open Lock DC 25). Up ahead are a pair of doors, cracked slightly open. Faint religious hymns (a permanent *ghost sound*) play from within.

If the heroes have been heard entering, the devils set up their ambush (see below), and then Liselle the erinyes sends Pilmat to flit into the room and then flee down the Hall of the Pantheon as a lure.

19. Hall of the Pantheon

The walls of this narrow hallway are lined with statues of eight deities, standing in front of carvings of scenes of battle around Korstull. The faces of the gods have been defaced in obscene, yet creative, ways. The defacement appears, in at least some places, to have been accomplished by carving with clawed fingers.

There are small holes in the floor between each statue's feet, once intended for people to drop offerings in, so they could ask favor of specific gods. Small pads for kneeling lie in front of each statue. Music plays faintly, seeming to come from every direction at once.

The hallway is filled with a strange, sweet-smelling mist. This is a mild inhaled poison seeping into the room from a water basin in the offertory chamber (Area 24b) through cracks in the wall. The poison, when inhaled, requires an initial save (Fort DC 15) to avoid a 1d4+2 point Wisdom penalty, and a secondary save one minute later (Will DC 15) to avoid a compulsion to make an offering of coins into one of the offering holes. The Wisdom penalty lasts one hour, and prolonged exposure is not cumulative.

However, anyone who makes an offering (whether or not suffering from the Wisdom penalty inflicted by the incense) receives some small boon, typically a +2 bonus to a single type of check or save appropriate to the deity the offering was made to, lasting one day.

20. Main Chapel

This large chamber was once the main chapel sanctuary, and scraps of its burned-out finery hint at its former splendor. The floor is now ankle-deep with ashes from the many pews that once stood in rows here, as well as from the elaborately carved wooden archways of which a few charred bits remain. Soot-blackened stone columns line the sides of the sanctuary, each 10 feet from the next. The remains of a pulpit lie in the far back of the room, flanked by a pair of purple curtains which somehow largely escaped burning.

Normally two bearded devils, Liselle the erinyes, and Pilmat the imp remain here on guard. Pilmat hangs on to adornments on the ceiling and scratches pictures in the soot, while the barbazu sit on the stairs in front of the pulpit playing bones. Liselle leans on the pulpit, reciting blasphemous parodies of psalms.

Pilmat the Imp

Pilmat is quite unhappy with the current state of his life. He was familiar to a powerful wizard named Silmarak, but Silmarak was slain by the Ragesians. Although he missed the extra influence and magical abilities granted by the wizard, Pilmat was rather pleased to be free to do as he wished. That would soon change, however, when the Ragesian-summoned devils arrived. They found him, and bullied him into helping, threatening to track him down and dismember him if he betrayed them.

Rather than a direct conflict with the undead, the devils retreated to the fortified chapel and promptly made it clear that they would not leave the grounds, but would tolerate no creatures entering their domain. Pilmat was ordered by Luxkamma to deliver that message to Griiat. Knowing he'd most likely forfeit his life if he tried, he wimped out and instead hid, invisible, for a while and then returned to Luxkamma, saying Griiat had accepted the terms. Luckily for Pilmat, the devils' actions were clear enough and Griiat ordered the troops to avoid the chapel area.

Now Luxkamma sends Pilmat out on spying missions to determine the numbers of the undead and their strengths and weaknesses. In all of these instances, Pilmat just hides for a few hours and then returns with varying stories, ranging from a nearly vacant fortress to hordes of mindless undead to weak humans retaking Korstull. Although he does enjoy the puzzlement on Luxkamma's face with each new report, Pilmat does this primarily to encourage the inevitable attack Luxkamma plans to make someday (though no one knows when, since immortal fiends can be very patient). Pilmat is fed up with his current situation, and if he is either cornered or witnesses the characters defeat any of the other devils, he will attempt to talk to them and offer his help.

21. Priest's Room

This simple room has doors leading out of it to the right and left. Typical furniture fills the room, including a large bed with rumpled sheets, and though it's coated with ash, none of it is burnt. Images drawn in ash on the walls depict vile and profane acts performed by devils on mortals as well as devils on each other that leave no doubt how deep the violence and depravity of a fiendish minds sinks.

The two bone devils spend most of their time here when not on alert.

22. Meditation Chamber

This room is bare except for a cracked mirror lying in ashes, the frame of which has been burnt away. If the heroes touch the mirror, for a moment they see a flickering, fiery image of Griiat's hidden scrying room (Area 34), a place with dozens of mirrors on the walls. The spectral inquisitor is floating in the room, watching another mirror which shows the main chapel from an overhead perspective. If the heroes watch for more than a few seconds, Griiat senses them and turns to face the mirror directly. The connection is visual, not auditory, so Griiat watches for as long as the heroes remain interesting, or for ten minutes, after which the mirror cracks and loses its power.

23. Library

This small room's bookshelves are scorched, and nothing of value remains. However, a Search check (DC 25) detects the entrance to area 24b. The bone devils have only used the door once. Now they simply teleport in if they want access.

24. Offertory Chambers

These two rooms flank the Hall of the Pantheon.

Room 24a is fairly bare, containing only four glass bowls (worth 20 gp each) that once received offerings.

Room 24b contains similar bowls, as well as a huge golden tub filled with incenses and holy water. The tub is worth 2,000 gp, and it contains the equivalent of 80 vials of holy water. However, this room is also filled with the same misty poison in the Hall of the Pantheon (see area 19). The fumes are much thicker here, however, and creatures in the room must save each round (Fort DC 15) to resist its effects (1d4+2 Wisdom penalty for one hour).

25. Healing Hall

Burnt cots and cabinets of worthless medical supplies fill the room. Beneath one of the cabinets (Search DC 30), the heroes can discover a hidden compartment that contains a cache of healing magic. It contains:

- A scroll of *resurrection*.
- A scroll of *heroes' feast*.
- A *wand of restoration* (10 charges).
- A *wand of cure light wounds* (50 charges).

26. Chapel Kitchen

Two bearded devils rest in here. They are trying to turn poison from the bone devils into useable poison for their weapons, but so far all they have is nasty-tasting gruel in one of the pots.

27. Chapel Storage (EL 8)

The devils managed to capture a Dark Pyre sergeant, which they keep locked up in this room (Open Lock DC 25). The skeleton is unarmed, and might fight with against the demons if freed, but will quickly turn on the heroes.

Dark Pyre sergeant (CR 9): hp 52, Appendix B.

Ambush

If the heroes have alerted the devils, they prepare an ambush. Luxkamma the bone devil and Liselle the erinyes waits in the main chapel, and the other bone devil Alsau teleports into hallway to the side of the entry hall. When the heroes open the door to the main chapel, both devils use *wall of ice* to seal them in as best they can. Thereafter two bearded devils take up positions outside each wall of ice, ready to attack anyone who comes through. Liselle takes cover behind the pulpit as she fires arrows.

During the fight, Pilmat hides in one of the offertory chambers. He insults the characters in his cackling and high-pitched, yet powerfully echoing, voice. He will mock their appearance and tell them of the brutal fate that awaits them at the hands of Luxkamma, pretending to be different gods. However, if he sees an impressive display of power from the heroes, he is momentarily dumbfounded, and then he begins offering advice.

Should the devils seem to be losing, Luxkamma calls for a retreat, and all the devils (except Pilmat) teleport to a pre-determined rendezvous in the priest's room (Area 21). One of the bearded devils then goes out scouting, and shouts to his allies which direction the heroes are headed. Optimally the devils want to teleport back in while the heroes are split up in different rooms, perhaps as they are starting to head into the hallway. When any devil is reduced below 12 hp it teleports to the foyer stairs (Area 17) and tries to flee to a safe hiding place elsewhere in the castle. It's binding prevents it from fleeing further.

To best play the devils in combat, remember that they are intelligent, well trained, and very evil. As with many soldiers, they should make good use of flanking and directing melee attacks at powerful spellcasters.

In Case of Firestorm...

Once the water pump is activated, it takes about a day for water pressure to get high enough for the heroes to use the lift to ascend to the upper level. By this point they hopefully will have dealt with most if not all of the encounters in the lower levels, and should be 12th level.

Time is Short (EL 8)

When the heroes are ready to take the lift, any survivors of Clan Millorn are waiting as well, and they recommend going up as a group. In the midst of discussions, a Listen check (DC 3) detects the approach of a Ragesian knight.

Ragesian knight (CR 8): hp 65, Appendix B.

The knight has dismounted and walked into the castle, trying to be quiet but not doing very well (Move Silently result of 8). He knows that the First Ragesian Army, led by General Magdus, is on its way, and though they are being aided by Shahalesti mages, they've been having troubles keeping the fiery weather at bay. They might be here tomorrow, or they might be here in a few hours. If the knight spots the two groups of tomb robbers, he flees, but likely won't escape. It should be clear that there is little time to dawdle.

The Ascent (EL 14)

The lift shaft ascends 100 feet in total. Up 90 feet is a silver sheet that ripples in the air. This is the entrance to a slice of the Astral Plane. The rest of the shaft is filled with seven sets of traps, set to go off every 10 feet the lift ascends, starting at 20 feet up. Once the lift starts, it cannot be stopped without all but disabling the lift. It is of course possible to climb the shaft (Climb DC 20), and flying can mitigate some of the dangers, but a permanent *wall of force* crosses the shaft 85 feet up, which can only be disabled by riding the lift up and setting the lever to the proper location at the proper time.

A Spot check (DC 38, including modifiers for distance) detects the invisible *wall of force* by its interference with the rippling edge of the silvery sheet. Have all characters who enter the lift room make a Spot check and note their results. Reduce the Spot DC by 1 per round, and as soon as a character's check result is high enough, alert him that he notices something invisible and solid at the top of the shaft.

Layout

The lift room is 20 feet square. There is a thick chain in each corner (hardness 12, hp 60; Break DC 32), and a complicated mechanism in the center of the lift, slightly recessed into the floor. It consists of a short handle fitted into a mass of gears, vaguely reminiscent of a manual transmission gearshift, with a pedal to release it and nine possible positions it can occupy. The handle and all the mechanism rise no higher than the level of the rest of the floor. The mechanism extends down through the floor of the lift and link up to traps in the walls. There is an access hatch on the floor next to the control handle.

Right now the control handle is set in the Park position. Each of the other eight positions (simply labeled A through H) deactivates a given "floor" of traps. It is a standard action to shift the handle. Details of each floor of traps are presented below. The lift starts on the ground floor, and proceeds to 1st, 2nd, and so on to 9th.

A Search check (DC 32) on the handle reveals a magical trap that will trigger *mass hold person* when the lift reaches the 2nd floor (Disable Device DC 32).

Additionally, a Search check (DC 27) locates sections of the floor which will open to pits at the 7th floor. These can be disabled easily (Disable Device DC 18).

A small lever in the doorway of the ground floor recalls the lift if it is on the upper level.

Going Up

With everyone inside the lift room, the heroes must close the door before they can start the lift. Once the door is closed, if the water pump is active, the lift can be started by pressing the pedal and shifting to any other position but Park. From this point, the lift cannot be stopped without damaging or disabling it. (The control handle cannot be moved if insufficient pressure has built up for the lift.)

The lift takes three rounds to ascend from one floor to the next; then it sits motionless for one round. At the end of that round, if the control handle is not in the proper position, the trap for the next level activates. Each trap is either immediate or lasts three rounds, and then stops for the fourth round as the lift reaches the next level.

Once the lift is more than 20 feet up, spikes snap up at the bottom of the shaft, making a fall fairly lethal.

Breaking and Disabling

If the heroes want to stop the ascent of the lift, they must break at least two of the chains pulling the lift up.

The mechanism that controls the traps is exceedingly complex, and even accessing it requires opening a locked compartment in the floor (Open Lock DC 35) and climbing under the platform of the lift (Climb DC 15 to hang in place each round). This is the only location where it is possible to reach the mechanisms in order to disable them.

A character hanging under the lift can attempt each round as a full round action to figure out which handle position will deactivate the trap for the next level (Disable Device DC 35). He can then shout it up to whoever is manning the control handle.

Alternately, a character can attempt to manually disable the next floor's trap. This requires two successful Disable Device checks (DC 30), each a full round action. The lift reaches a new floor every four rounds, so the trapsmith must work quickly.

Additionally, the gears and chains under the lift are dangerous. Each round a person on the lift's underside must make a Reflex save (DC 10) to avoid taking 1d6 points of damage.

Magical traps can be dispelled; the caster level for each magic trap is 15th.

Ground Floor

There is no actual trap on this floor. The gears begin to grind, and the water pump churns in dual blasts of pressure, sounding like a massive heart beating once every two seconds, reverberating the walls and echoing up the shaft.

1st Floor

There is no trap on this floor. The two-floor ascent gives the heroes time to get a feel of the pattern of three rounds of climbing, then one round of pause.

2nd Floor (CR 9)

Unless the control handle is in the D position, *mass hold person* (Will DC 21) goes off, targeting up to 15 creatures, but it will not target someone holding the control handle.

3rd Floor (CR 6)

Unless the control handle is in the G position, a *fireball* goes off (10d6, Ref DC 17). It only triggers in the first round of three. In the second round, however, a *summon monster VI* spell summons a large fire elemental, and then another is summoned in the third round.

Large fire elementals (2) (CR 5): hp 60 each, MM.

4th Floor (CR 7)

Unless the control handle is in the A position, a flurry of jagged balls shoot out from the walls toward every creature, dealing 4d6 damage each round (Reflex DC 17 negates). Thereafter, the floor is considered riddled with caltrops.

5th Floor (CR 5)

Unless the control handle is in the B position, *confusion* (Will DC 17) targets everyone on the lift floor. It only triggers once. At this point, an incorporeal tragedy appears at the top of the shaft, sliding out of the wall just beneath the *wall of force*. It descends and attacks for as long as it can. If it notices the hatch is open, it dives through the floor and attacks anyone hanging under the platform.

Tragedy (CR 7): hp 69, Appendix B.

6th Floor (CR 9)

Unless the control handle is in the D position, a jagged fusillade of dozens of spears stab out from every wall, then retract as the lift ascends. For each of the three rounds the trap is active, spears attack every creature in the area (three attacks per target each round, +21 melee, 1d8 damage).

7th Floor

At this level, a *mirage arcana* spell activates. Creatures that make a Will save (DC 19) can see through the glamer. If the control handle is in the H position, the lift seems to change to a pillow of clouds ascending through the heavens between columns of golden sunlight.

If the control handle is not in the H position, the floor begins to crack and a flaming light rises from below. The whole lift takes on a hellish countenance, and the control handle explodes just as a *summon monster VI* spell summons a chain devil in the center of the lift. A *magic mouth* spell shouts in Infernal, "Destroy them, but stay near the center of the floor."

The devil happily lays into its foes, preferring clerics and paladins, and it causes sections of chain in the four corners to lash out and attack. These are not part of the main chains pulling the lift, but rather were placed here specifically for this trap.

Chain devil (CR 6): hp 52, MM.

8th Floor (CR 8)

Unless the control handle is in the E position, pits open along the edges of the lift (but not in the four corner squares or in the four central squares). Unless a creature succeeds a Reflex save (DC 20), it is an 80-foot fall to the spikes below.

9th Floor (CR 9)

If the control handle is in the C position, the *wall of force* vanishes. Otherwise, characters are suddenly aware that they are being pressed down, and at the end of the third round any creature in the area is crushed for 12d6 damage.

The lift pauses at this point for one round, and then the *wall of force* vanishes and the lift ascends the last few feet to be even with the upper level. The pumping sound stops, and the floor panels that dropped out rise up. The heroes have survived the trap.

You appear to be standing in a rippling pool of liquid silver. Everything beyond your arm's reach to seem to waver in a sweltering haze — perhaps it is just the intense heat here. Something feels strange in the air, like your senses are about to be overturned. Behind you is a huge room filled with gears and chains that drew up the lift, while in front of you is an elaborately carved door of scorched red marble, set with mighty adamantine hinges. The crackle of flame can be heard from beyond.

Precise Timeline

General Magdus and the Ragesians should arrive when it is most appropriate dramatically, which will likely be in Act Three, some time between the heroes' defeat of the welcome party on the upper level and their speaking with Darius, the surviving inquisitor. While it won't ruin anything if the heroes manage to get out of Castle Korstull before the army arrives, it kills some of the drama.

Act Three: The Dark Pyre

In this act, the heroes enter the Astral Plane at the center of the planar rift, which is heavily defended by Griiat's forces. After pressing through the last undead guards, the heroes can reach the throne room where a delirious Darius lies, and upon healing him they can learn the fate of the Torch. But the Ragesian army is close behind them, and the heroes will have to find a way to escape when the one route out is watched by dozens of elite warriors.

The Planar Rift

This whole section of the castle has slid into a slice of the Astral Plane. Additionally, the rift to the planes of fire and negative energy suffuse the area with their power. The following traits are active in the upper level of the castle. Note that, because of the subjective gravity here, intelligent opponents will attack from odd directions, standing on the sides of columns, or firing down from ceilings. When low on hit points, suicidal undead will attempt to fling themselves at the heroes, choosing the heroes' direction as "down."

- **Subjective gravity.** As a free action once per round, a Wisdom check (DC 16) lets a creature choose which way is "down." If the check fails, the creature's feet are "down" and the creature gains a +6 bonus to the next check it makes. Unattended objects and creatures with no Wisdom score do not experience gravity. Thrown weapons and ammunition fired from a missile weapon do not count as unattended objects.
- **Timeless.** Age, hunger, thirst, poison, and natural healing don't function here, though they resume functioning when the traveler leaves.
- **Enhanced magic: quicken.** All spells and spell-like abilities used within this area may be employed as if they were improved by the Quicken Spell feat. Already quickened spells and spell-like abilities are unaffected, as are spells from magic items. Spells so quickened are still prepared and cast at their unmodified level. As with the Quicken Spell feat, only one quickened spell can be cast per round.
- **Enhanced magic: death and fire.** Spells with the death or fire descriptor cast here are automatically empowered, as are those that channel negative energy, such as *inflict* spells. Additionally, undead in this area gain turn resistance +4. This effect does not extend into Areas 39 and 40.
- **Inhibited magic: teleportation.** Because the upper levels are in a strange sliver dimension, it is not possible to teleport out of the upper levels. Teleportation inside still functions (though the Burning Sky is still active), and *plane shift* can allow escape.
- **Illumination.** Every room is brightly lit by a fiery glow that comes from everywhere at once.

Defenders of the Dark Pyre

Unlike the lower level, the defenses of the upper level are completely proactive, and the heroes will not likely have a chance to explore rooms individually. Instead, the battle should move from room to room as the heroes are attacked from all sides by waves of enemies. Because of this, the rooms on this level are detailed first, and then tactics and force deployment are presented for the defenders. In total, Griiat's defenses include:

- Three Dark Pyre sergeants.
- Thirty Dark Pyre soldiers.
- Eight Dark Pyre swarmers.
- A hellcat Griiat has called with *planar ally*.
- Two tragedies and the vrock Kzyu-nior, if the heroes arrived before the "Assassination" encounter in Act Two.
- The dread wraith Reddengot, if he was not defeated in Act Two.
- Griiat himself.

28. Lift Station

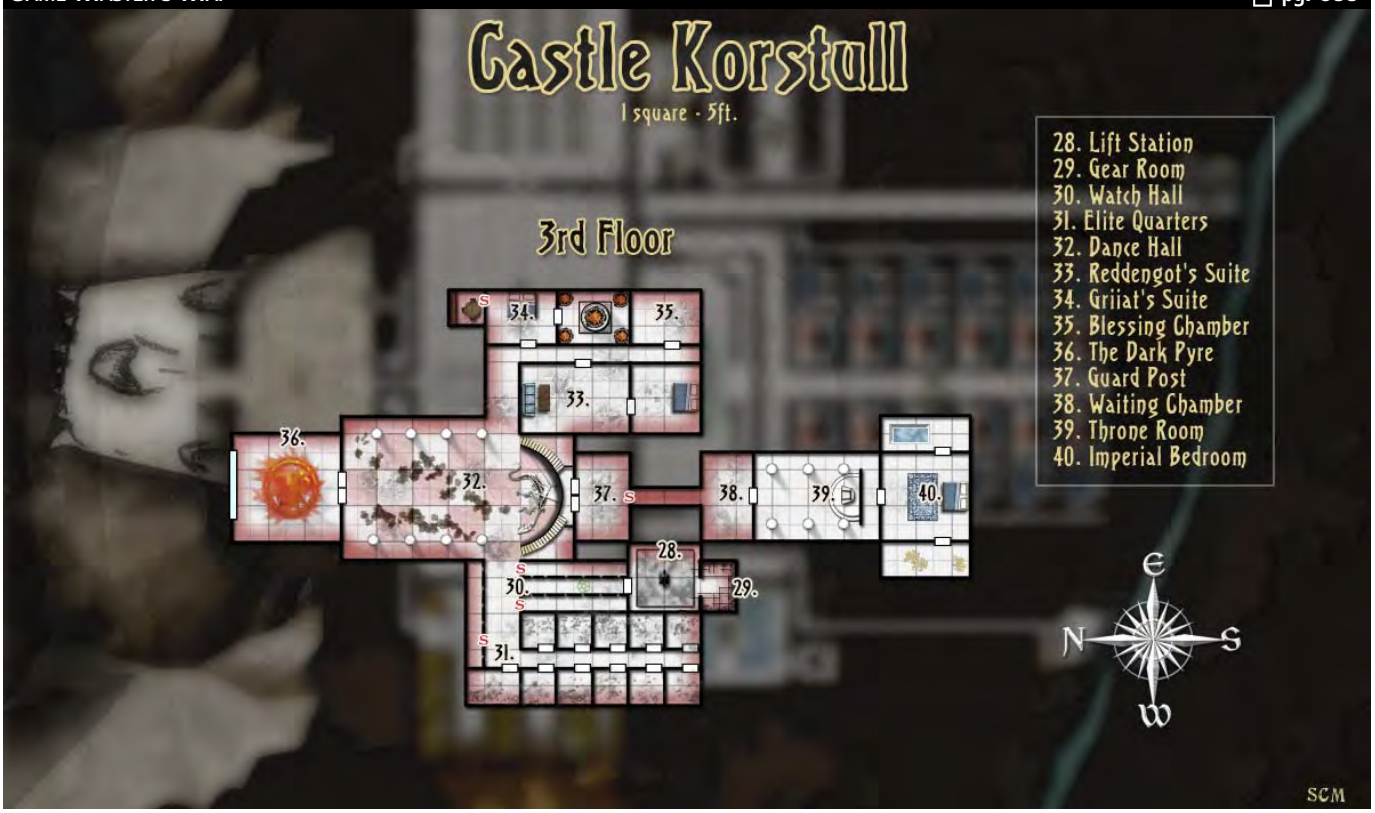
The heroes arrive here at the end of Act Two. If they want to take the lift back down, the control handle must be turned clockwise through a full cycle, and the descent will begin, taking two rounds for every 10 feet of descent. No traps trigger on the way down, though after descending one floor the *wall of force* returns.

The magical traps automatically reset for future ascents, and the projectile traps have enough ammunition to function for three more ascents.

29. Gear Room

This room is full of machinery. Every square grants partial cover (+2 AC, +1 Reflex saves), and counts as difficult terrain. Ten minutes of work can disable the lift (Disable Device DC 30) so it can only be operated from the upper levels. A more difficult process (DC 35) repairs it thereafter.

Game Master's Map pg. 655



30. Watch Hall

This room is lined with arrow slits on each side. A *glyph of warding* on the floor triggers *dispel magic* upon the first person to cross it.

31. Elite Quarters

These were once quarters for soldiers. Now they are filled with naught but ash. The wooden doorways have all been burnt away.

32. Dance Hall

This vast room is 40 feet wide, 65 feet long, and 30 feet high. Columns go from floor to ceiling, but this means little since there is no gravity here. Indeed, over the past few months bits of debris from the columns, ceiling, and wasted furniture have been left to drift here weightlessly. Because of this, any foe more than 10 feet away has concealment.

Additionally, in the darkened squares on the map, some large chunk of debris at least 5 feet across floats somewhere in the air. These are large and heavy enough for a person to stand on without significantly moving them, and should offer great options for combat tricks to mobile combatants.

On the south wall, a pair of staircases rise up to a balcony, where burnt husks of doors lead to the Guard Post (Area 37). Between the staircase, an imposing trophy watches the room — the mounted skeleton of a huge gold dragon, posed menacingly and held in place by unique magical force. Griiat once tried to animate it, but was unable to. The statue's placard — an etched gold dragon scale — reads, "Syana the Celestial, defender of Ycengled, noble foe."

This is the skeleton of the dragon Syana, who was once defender of Ycengled, the icy forest where the assassins fled. She was slain by Coaltongue, and her daughter Trilla was rescued and hidden away deep beneath the earth.

33. Reddengot's Suite

This is where the dread wraith Reddengot spends its time thinking up ways to cause pain. Implements of torture float in the air, since Reddengot cannot even touch them now.

34. Griiat's Suite

Beyond his old bedroom, Griiat has converted his guest room into a small shrine to the Dark Pyre. Fires burn in this room, and if one stares into the fires for more than a minute, he gains the ability to use *contact other plane*. This ability can only be used once per day.

A secret door (Search DC 25) leads to Griiat's scrying room, where dozens of mirrors look into rooms around the castle. The door to this room was once trapped, but the mechanism burnt out. Griiat simply glides through it now.

35. Blessing Chamber

Griiat originally brought all the lesser undead in the castle here to grant them an infusion of power from the Dark Pyre. Should the heroes retreat, any damaged undead come here, where they heal fully within an hour.

36. The Dark Pyre

This is the location of the planar rift. In the middle of a ring of crackling dark fire and lightning are the burning silhouettes of the assassins as they were standing at the very instant they fled the castle.

The north wall appears to be a huge window looking down upon the canyon, but is in fact an elaborate wall of huge stones, 10 feet thick, that were made permanently invisible. However, the firestorm cracked the wall and caused huge chunks to fall out (some of these were dragged into the dance hall). A few small holes in the wall lead out to the canyon, and the strange fluctuations of heat and pressure cause tongues of flame to lash in and out of these holes. It would be possible to smash open the wall with intense force (Break DC 28).

This room is very deadly. Creatures in here take 1d6 points of fire damage and 1d6 points of negative energy damage each round. A creature actually inside the pyre's heart takes 5d6 damage of each type each round.

In the southeast corner of this room floats a sky palanquin, a sort of aerial sled that when activated can carry a half dozen or so people through the air. It has survived the fire unharmed, and is detailed in full in Flight of the Stormchaser, below.

No undead but Griiat come in here. The sound of the crackling flames in this room can be heard from anywhere on the upper level.

37. Watch Post

This room was once where guards stood to defend Coaltongue. Now it is a burnt husk. The secret door is easy to find (Search DC 10) because the undead leave a clear trail in the ash every time they patrol down it.

38. Waiting Chamber

This room is also empty. No undead can pass beyond it into the throne room. The door to the throne room is slightly ajar, but has not been moved for months.

39. Throne Room

In this room, Darius, the surviving bodyguard of Coaltongue, lies on the floor, wracked with fevered visions. The room is richly decorated, and the six ruby-studded *everburning torch* sconces along the columns are themselves alone worth 500 gp each. Little else in the room is convenient enough to be easily looted, with nine tapestries that each weigh 50 pounds (worth 1,500 gp each), gold tracings in the floor (worth 800 gp), and the ceiling painted with a beautiful magical mural that shifts subtly by the mood of the person on the throne, granting him a +5 bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidate checks (worth 5,000 gp, but immovable).

The throne is the focus of the powerful wards in this room. No magical effect can deal direct damage here (though indirect damage, by summoned creatures or hurled objects, still is possible). All illusions and enchantment effects here are suppressed, and nonhumanoid creatures simply cannot enter without permission of whoever is sitting on the throne. Even then, attempting to take any hostile actions requires a Will save (DC 29); the bodyguards themselves were exempt of this restriction.

The throne itself has a sense of who is worthy enough to sit in it, and any creature that does not have at least a 17 Charisma or 13 ranks of Diplomacy finds it impossible to sit on the throne. There were many other wards once, but they have lapsed. All these effects were created with caster level 19.

40. Imperial Bedroom

A dried mat of blood stains the ornate bed where a golden stake was driven into the emperor's heart, and his head was slashed off. Everything in the room, from the carpet and the bedsheets to the paintings on the walls, is lavish, decadent, ostentatious, and very expensive. The bedsheets, for instance, are enchanted to be supremely comfortable, and are worth 500 gp to a discerning buyer. Beside the bed is a wall mount upon which the Torch was placed when the emperor slept.

The east room is the emperor's bathroom, which includes an extradimensional wardrobe with a half dozen outfits worth 800 gp each. The west room is the castle's treasure vault. The rest of the wealth of the castle was spent paying for Lord Gorquith's rebellion.

Treasure

Coins. One wall has a shelf stacked with bags of coins. Forty velvet bags filled with gold coins contain 500 gp each (20,000 gp in total, which is 400 pounds of gold). Additionally, ten gold- and mithral-woven bags contain 500 pp each (worth 50,000 gp, weighing 100 pounds).

Paper. A massive glass display case holds remains of an ancient spellbook. Few of the spells are extant today, but sadly none are usable. This trophy was given to Coaltongue by Leska many decades ago when she defeated an old arcane foe of the Ragesians. Market value 8,000 gp.

Arms and Armor. A suit of *+1 gold dragonhide plate* (market value 4,000 gp) holds a *+1 longsword* that can use either the *flaming* or *frost* enhancement, though not both at once. Switching between them is a free action. Additionally, the sword's wielder can spontaneously change the energy type of one spell per day that he or she casts, changing its energy type to either cold or fire. Market value 15,000 gp.

Game. An enchanted game board of magically bound ice and fire conjures illusions of game pieces for common strategy games, including Conquest (see page 228 for rules on playing Conquest during a game session). Market value 3,000 gp.

Artwork. A painting (which has no magic aura) with a name plaque that reads, "The Woman I Love the Most." It normally depicts a proper Sindairese noblewoman, but if the person viewing it says, "I can wait no longer," the image shifts to a young, sultry half-elf Ostalin woman, posing nude. This was not Coaltongue's, but rather a Sindairese nobleman's. Coaltongue kept it as blackmail, threatening to reveal the hidden underpainting to the man's wife. Market value 2,000 gp.

Mystery. Something that appears to be a block of cheese with one slice cut out of it. It detects as possessing overwhelming necromantic magic, but all attempts to identify its powers fail. Market value 200 gp as a curio.

Diversion. A *figurine of wondrous power* — an ashwood dire bear — sits in a dish of neverending white and dark chocolate, with the pieces of chocolate resembling countless types of animals. The figurine is identical to a *marble elephant*, except that it becomes a dire bear. Market value 17,000 gp for the bear, 5,000 gp for the chocolate.

Music. A small wooden stand has a permanent *programmed image* of a dancing nymph with exotic music, which responds to requests to entertain viewers. Market value 3,000 gp.

Magic. Eight stones whir through the air around the dancing nymph. One is a clear spindle *ioun stone*, and four are dusty rose prism *ioun stones*. The total market value of the *ioun stones* is 24,000 gp. The other three stones are massive diamonds which were used as foci for *trap the soul*. Each gem is worth 10,000 gp, and holds the soul of an aged, loyal Ragesian who offered his soul when he was near death, for use with the Torch. The gems glow with inner light, and even if the soul is consumed (such as to power the *sky palanquin* in the room of the Dark Pyre), the gem retains its value.

Healing. A unique *elixir of restoration* sits labeled among an emergency kit of healing, including an *elixir of break enchantment*, ten *potions of cure serious wounds*, and four *scrolls of heal*.

Welcoming Party (EL 11)

When the heroes first arrive, they are in the lift station room (Area 28), with the gear room (Area 29) behind them, and the watch hall (Area 30) in front of them. Because of the great noise produced by the ascending lift, Griiat has had plenty of time to get an ambush in place. Once the heroes open the door from the lift room to the hall, they have quite a fight ahead of them. You may want to encourage them to heal before they go any farther.

First, a *glyph of warding* lies on the ground, and as soon as a non-undead creature passes over its square, *dispel magic* targets the intruder (dispel check +10).

Second, the hallway is *desecrated*. Turn undead checks here are at a –3 penalty, and the undead here gain a +1 profane bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and saves. Additionally, remember the Dark Pyre grants undead on the upper level turn resistance +2.

Third, the walls on either side of the hallway are lined with arrow slits, as is the wall beyond the end of the hall. Three Dark Pyre soldiers hide behind each wall, armed with crossbows, and they attack as soon as they have a clear shot. Their shields lie on the ground beside them, and if they lose sight of the heroes they strap them on, drop their crossbows, and head out to fight in melee. The secret doors can be located with a Search check (DC 25).

Fourth, a pair of Dark Pyre swarmers hide at the entrance of the elite quarters (out of the path of initial turn undead attempts), waiting to rush the first foe who comes out of the hallway. One grapples while the other sneak attacks.

Fifth, a Dark Pyre sergeant waits at the entrance to the dance hall, blocking the way. When he sees the door open, he targets a *wall of fire* on the far end of the lift room, with the heat aimed so as to drive the heroes into the ambush. As the heroes advance, he places additional walls of fire behind them to keep them from retreating, with the intent of herding them into the Dance Hall.

Dark Pyre sergeant (CR 9): hp 52, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre soldiers (9) (CR 4): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre swarmers (2) (CR 6): hp 33 each, Appendix B.

Second Wave (EL 11)

Once the heroes have made it through the watch hall, the forces hiding in the elite suites emerge from their rooms, attempting to force the heroes into the dance hall. They simply rush out.

Dark Pyre soldiers (5) (CR 4): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre swarmers (6) (CR 6): hp 33 each, Appendix B.

Dance Before the Dark Pyre (EL 14)

When the heroes enter the dance hall, the defenders spring their main trap. Two *walls of fire* appear, blocking the path to the guard post (area 37) and the hallway to the east (to areas 33–35). On the balcony above the stairs, one Dark Pyre sergeant and four Dark Pyre soldiers step through their wall of fire, while another sergeant and four soldiers step through the wall of fire to the east. Six Dark Pyre soldiers standing around the ceiling or on floating pieces of debris slam their weapons upon their shields with a burning hiss. Then, with a dramatic flourish, two soldiers pull open the double doors to the room of the Dark Pyre. Griiat's spectral form casts a cold shadow, and for a moment a large feline figure is faintly visible before him, but then it vanishes. Griiat raises his clawed hand and orders for his forces to attack.

Griiat, High Priest of the Dark Pyre (CR 13): hp 75, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre sergeants (2) (CR 9): hp 52 each, Appendix B.
Dark Pyre soldiers (16) (CR 4): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Hellcat (CR 6): hp 60, MM.

Tactics

Griiat is well familiar with the quickening effects of the Astral Plane, which lets him cast a spell even if he has to counterspell something. Before combat he will have already cast *spell resistance* to give himself SR 23, and possibly *spell immunity* if Reddengot was able to report particular spells the heroes used.

In combat, he starts with *prayer* and a *quickened blade barrier*, and then in later rounds uses his ghost *telekinesis* ability to fling heroes into the blades, or to hurl chunks of stone into masses of enemies. He might *greater command* enemies to approach, while he retreats into the Dark Pyre, or use *hold person*, then command one of his undead to grapple the hero and will himself to fall into the Dark Pyre. If one of the heroes is using the Song of Forms to make him corporeal, he casts *silence* on the hellcat and sends it to stay near the singer.

During all of this, the Dark Pyre soldiers move swiftly around the room, leaping along the walls, ceiling, or floating bits of debris. Those near Griiat try to keep enemies at bay, and those on the balcony focus on ranged attacks, but the rest of the undead warriors prefer mobile melee. The hellcat, meanwhile, sprints through the room, all but invisible, with orders to kill any clerics or paladins.

Aftermath

When Griiat is defeated, he appears to burst into flames and turn to ash, and the Dark Pyre bursts with power, destroying all undead left in the battle and banishing any summoned creatures back to their home planes. The room dims noticably as the pyre's connection to this plane is crippled. Griiat will rejuvenate in 2d4 days unless the rightful ruler of Ragesia returns to the throne of this castle, but for now the pyre's power is weakened, and the heroes are, supposedly, safe.

They can explore the rest of the upper level, but if the heroes look out the window in Area 36 (the pyre is not powerful enough to deal damage now), they see an army marching down the canyon to the castle. Hundreds of Ragesian soldiers, and a dozen or more elves in rich regalia, follow behind the leader of the First Army, General Magdus. Some of the soldiers on the ground point up, and it is clear that the heroes have been spotted. Magdus shouts orders, and his forces surge into the castle.

If the heroes watch through the scrying mirrors in Griiat's hidden study, they can see that the soldiers make a bee line for the lift, but they do not move to go up it yet. Other soldiers press through the many rooms the heroes already explored, securing the area. It looks like the Ragesians are confident the heroes cannot escape, so they are going to take their time to make sure they don't fall prey to any traps. The heroes are not in immediate danger, but they should want to get what they came for quickly.

The Fall of the Emperor

The heat of the pyre fades as the heroes near the throne room of Korstull. The wards here kept out the flames and the undead, and by fortunate fate the castle's departure to the Astral Plane saved the sole survivor of Castle Korstull, so that it's story might be told.

Ten feet from the door lies **Darius** (LN male human cleric 13), curled into a fetal position, his body beaded with sweat, his face clenched in feverish pain. A mace lies beside him, but any other valuable gear he may once have had has been taken away. Two other bodies, long since rotted away, lie against the walls, also completely looted. The floor has strange patterns in it around him, and the heroes can see that Darius's nails are cracked and bloodied.

When the assassins struck, they hit Darius with violet kesh poison that reduced his Wisdom to 0. Since natural healing does not work on the Astral Plane, he has lain here for months, unable to recover. If the heroes explore the throne room and imperial bedroom, they find an *elixir of restoration* that can restore his faculties.

Darius is disoriented when he comes to, but is thankful of being snapped out of his fever visions. He has taken only minimal damage, and still has a full complement of spells if someone

happens to have an inquisitor mask he can use as his divine focus. His fingers are bloodied because in his visions he scratched at the floor, unwittingly transcribing what he saw. Careful reading of the floor reveals the following passages, written in no discernible order.

The bright shadow returns to its homeland, and the sky may burn for its last time.

Five rivers flow, one black, down to sunless seas. Between lives she sees shades chained, warring against the shining one. Golden wings, like branches in winter, shelter them against a thousand scouring eyes.

Bells toll at the gate, and winter grips like a wolf as the fire bleeds from the world. Ursine skulls lead armies against earth, wind, fire, and water.

The devil of the east wind, his mask only a smile, hides a thunder child in a prison upon a tomb.

Serpents writhe in an eight-armed stone, and soldiers shall feast upon the rubble of madness.

The earnest lie deceives, and his grandmother weeps echoes of souls primordial, but the golden ship carries the word to safe shelter.

O wintry song of agony, o longwalking betrayer, as balance shatters like waves against the shore, your vengeful wing guides the motes of the burning sky, strong by search and guile, to seek annihilation at the Heart of History.

Deep beneath the gate of summer's sound where lies sleeping the Mother of Dreams, her nightmares roam unbound. Freedom holds her chains.

The nightmares rise, the tempest stares with ire, the eternal heart falters, and death or life is borne by fire.

Darius can explain what happened. He was standing watch, along with two experienced palace guards, Dimha and Lein, when Lein suddenly fell over, his throat slashed open. For an instant Darius saw a swarthy half-elf man holding a black scimitar, but then he vanished into the shadows. The door to the room burst open, and a bladed whip lashed out, held by a beautiful dark elf woman with violet hair. The whip snared Darius by his throat, and he was pulled into the doorway, where the woman grabbed him and delivered a poisoned kiss. He cried out to sound the alarm, and guards in the main hall responded, but a third assassin — a white-haired dark elf woman with a double sword — held them off.



Darius remembers stumbling back into the room as the world bent around him. He saw the assassins carry out the body of Emperor Drakus Coaltongue, and then the world exploded with fire. He recognized the power in the air, and he knew the Torch had been activated. Since then, he is not certain if anything he has seen has been real.

Solving the Mystery

The clues of Darius's fevered vision can help the heroes eventually determine where the assassins went to. Scrying simply fails, as does even *discern location*. The only clue that might sound familiar to the heroes is the reference to "echoed souls," which if they spoke with traveling companion Three Weeping Ravens in adventure five, *Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds*, they should know is related to the monk's temple, located in northern Shahalesti.

Careful study of old lore (or a DC 40 Knowledge (history) or bardic knowledge check) shows that the visions point to a haunted elvish forest, Ycengled, which conveniently is also located in northern Shahalesti. Likewise, *legend lore* or *vision* can be used to get more information about the passages above. Even if the heroes don't solve anything now, if they record the words, they should easily be able to find answers once they return to Seaquen, at which point their course should become clear.

In particular, the "bright shadow" refers to Rhuarc's scimitar, *Shaalguenyaver*, crafted of black adamantine and white diamonds. Rhuarc himself was originally from Ycengled, so it is his homeland. The forest of Ycengled is filled with many trees that are literally bound in chains: the Shahalesti were known to torture prisoners by leaving them chained to trees, where they hung until dead. When the heroes reach Ycengled, they will find the five rivers that flow through the forest; Darius's writing reveals that they will want to follow the river whose waters are black with mourning souls.

The other passages hint at some events that have already taken place in the war, and some that are yet to come. One, the "earnest lie deceives," is about to happen very soon.

Getting Out

Give the heroes a chance to discuss their plans, and perhaps to rest. Unless the heroes lie to him, Darius will want to speak with the Ragesian forces who are coming, but he is in no condition to fight the heroes if they want to flee. An exploration of the upper levels should make it clear that the easiest avenue of escape is to activate the *sky palanquin* in Area 26, smash out the window, and fly away through the canyon.

The Sky Palanquin

This flying sled is eight feet wide by twelve feet long, big enough to easily fit four people, though there is seating space to fit eight passengers and one driver. When so filled, however, creatures in the sled are considered squeezed, making combat difficult. Those inside the sled have cover against attacks from outside.

It is also possible to hang onto the side and stand on the runners, providing room for at least two more per side. Because the palanquin grants creatures the ability to fly nearby it, creatures can automatically hang on, though they must have a spare hand.

Normally the sled simply floats slightly above the ground, but it can be activated by placing a soul gem in the mouth of a sun face on the sled's front. The soul is consumed, and blue-white flames erupt from the front of the sled, coalescing into a team of eight winged horses, hippogriffs.

Darius Tormented – Art by Claudio Pozas



The runners of the sled crackle with cool flames, and for the next hour and a half the palanquin can fly.

The team of flaming hippogriffs can be controlled by a driver, by means of Ride checks. The hippogriffs only pull the palanquin; they do not attack. The palanquin cannot fly any higher than 100 feet off the ground, and it flies at the leisurely pace of 80 feet per round, with clumsy maneuverability. This movement occurs at the end of each round, so if a creature is not inside at the end of the round, he may be left behind.

If no one controls the hippogriffs (Ride DC 5 as a free action, though someone must control the reins with at least one hand), they continue flying at full speed for one round, then begin to descend 40 feet per round.

Any creature riding in or on the palanquin gains fire resistance 30 and DR 10/magic against ranged attacks. Additionally, those in the palanquin or within 10 feet gain the ability to fly briefly. They can fly at speed 60 (good maneuverability) as long as they are within 10 feet of the palanquin. If they move beyond 10 feet, a fiery blue nimbus surrounds them, though it fades slowly, and vanishes after 3 rounds, at which point the character *feather falls* to the ground. A character who flies back to within 10 feet of the palanquin refreshes his flying ability. The protection against fire and ranged attacks also affects creatures flying from the palanquin as long as the nimbus lasts.

Because of its size and power, the palanquin has a +30 bonus to Strength checks for the purpose of bursting barriers, such as the wall of the castle window. You shouldn't even bother to roll.

As powerful as the palanquin is, it is difficult to sell it, since it requires soul gems of at least 10 HD creatures to work. The palanquin itself can be sold for 5,000 gp, plus 12,000 gp for each soul gem the heroes can offer along with it.

Under Pressure (EL 17)

The heroes should have had a chance to rest, or at least to use healing magic to be fairly recuperated, since the next scene is challenging. Then, once the heroes have come up with a plan, or when they have begun to dawdle or grow impatient, they hear a heavy beating sound as the lift begins to descend to the ground level. (If the heroes sabotaged the lift, this event might occur a few hours later, after the Shahalesti mages have had a chance to use *telekinesis* and other magic to re-rig the lift to descend despite the sabotage.)

From this point, the heroes have about ten minutes before the Ragesians and Shahalesti arrive. A fair number of soldiers are still outside the main entrance, watching the window since they suspect the heroes might try to escape that way. However, the firestorm pillar covers the outside of the window, which has kept them from trying to enter that way yet. If the heroes do not flee, however, they will likely be overwhelmed. Darius will try to call for a surrender if the heroes decide to stay and fight.

Ragesian soldiers, elite (6) (CR 8): hp 65 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian archers, master (4) (CR 11): hp 88 each, Appendix B.
Shahalesti warriors, elite (4) (CR 8): hp 57 each, Appendix B.
Shahalesti wizards, elite (2) (CR 8): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Solei Palancis dreadnought (CR 12): hp 73, Appendix B.

Deception Revealed (EL 16)

What the trillith Deception has been up to depends heavily on the heroes' actions. He likely did not go with the heroes up the lift, but since he is incorporeal it is easy enough for him to bypass the *wall of force* and arrive anyway. Unless he is impersonating someone with the heroes, the trillith has been invisibly watching from outside the throne room, listening to Darius's story, and though he might be better served by attacking earlier, for metaphorical reasons that matter deeply to a dreamborn creature like himself, he waits until the heroes are about to leave or about to be attacked by the arriving army before he makes his move.

Deception wants to kill the heroes and learn how to claim the Torch for himself; to this end, he has contrived to bring an ally along. The trillith Aggression was specifically crafted for this purpose by the nightmare spinners watching over the Mother of Dreams, which is why he does not function as a typical trillith. Effectively, Deception is using a *true resurrection*, and then binding Aggression to the resurrected Syana, compelling her to fight for him. Syana's new life will be brief and tormented: within an hour the magic will fade, and the dragon scion will die again.

When the heroes are distracted, Deception goes to the skeleton mounted in the dance hall and releases Aggression's essence from what appears to be a black gem (it is not really solid, black or a gem, of course; the trillith are all creatures of dreams). Deception calls out to the heroes to get their attention.

At the end of the dance hall a small figure stands beneath the great mounted draconic skeleton. At first you recognize him as the halfling Ernest, but then his form wavers like the rippling surface of a dark lake, and you suddenly realize you have met this creature before, when he was disguised as a dark fey in the fire forest. He speaks, and black tendrils reach upward from his body, twisting and writhing, crackling with fire, and the skeleton begins to move.

"Rebels, new longwalkers and songbearers, your blindness has pleased me, but now, with the blessing of my brothers, and with our grandmother as my witness and my destructive hand, you shall be silenced."

The deceptive figure slowly fades from sight, cackling joyously.

Sky Palanquin – Art by Rick Hershey



Deception Releases Aggression – Art by Luis Nuñez de Casttro

Already the flames have filling the hollow body of the dragon, solidifying into golden scales as the dead beast comes back to life. Finally, the only flames that remain are fiery tears streaming from her eyes. Gleaming and majestic, the huge golden dragon tears free from the magical force that once held her, and she unleashes a roar that makes even the castle stone shudder with fear. The walls around you begin to tremble and crack, rocks flying in every direction as the reborn dragon lays her sights upon you.

If the players hate being paralyzed by boxed text, and the heroes interrupt Deception's speech, Syana still returns from the dead.

Deception (CR 12): hp 97, Appendix B.
Syana, adult gold dragon (CR 16): hp 264, MM.

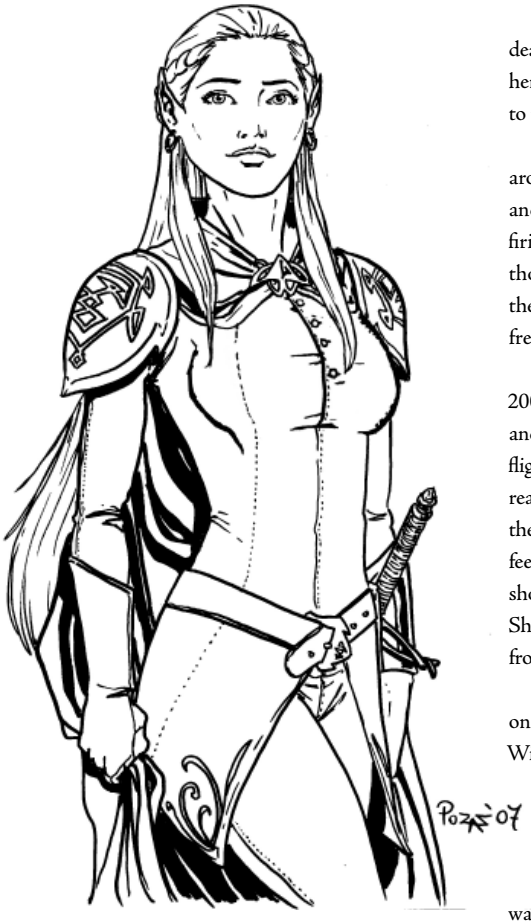
Syana uses the default stats of an adult gold dragon presented in the MM, except that because of Aggression's influence, she cannot cast spells. Additionally, instead of a weakening gas breath weapon, Syana's secondary breath weapon requires those caught in the cone to make a Will save (DC 26) or be affected as if by the *rage* spell. Each round, affected creatures can make a new save to break free.

Aggression seeks to destroy the heroes. If they decide it is time to run, assume it takes Syana a few rounds to get her bearings and clamber through the door so she can pursue, in which case she ends up bursting open the window and flying after the heroes three rounds after they leave the castle. If instead the heroes attack her rather than fleeing, she fights back right away.

The cracking of the castle stones is mostly for flavor and poses no danger should the heroes decide not to flee.

The Flight (EL 16)

Should the heroes take the *sky palanquin* and flee, the Ragesians in the canyon below begin to fire arrows ineffectually. The leader of the Shahalesti contingent, Shalosha, takes charge, ordering her most loyal bodyguards to follow her. She activates a contingent *fly* spell, casts *haste* on herself and her bodyguards, and pursues. The same round, two Ragesian wyvern knights take flight after the heroes. Shalosha's bodyguards follow a round later, having consumed *potions of fly*.



Shalosha (CR 14): hp 64, Appendix B.
Ragesian wyvern knights (2) (CR 6): hp 50 each, Appendix B.
Wyverns (2) (CR 6): hp 59 each, MM.
Elite Shahalesti warriors (4) (CR 8): hp 57 each, Appendix B.
Solei Palancis dreadnought (CR 12): hp 73, Appendix B.

Shalosha has already has cast *greater heroism*, *protection from energy (fire)*, *shield*, and *stoneskin* on herself, anticipating a fight. She flies after the palanquin, attempting to catch up and grab onto the back, casting quickened *magic missiles* along the way at anyone who attacks her. She doesn't initiate combat, and before attacking she yells to the heroes, "Land and speak with us, and you will not be harmed."

Once combat begins, she casts *greater invisibility*, then begins fighting with her sword, moving around the palanquin to avoid being located. If her invisibility ends, she uses her Shining Warrior feat to make her sword flare dazzlingly, after which it deals additional damage. If a particular foe is giving her trouble, she backs away and uses *lightning bolts* to try to remove the threat.

Meanwhile, the dreadnought flies circles around the palanquin, fighting with agile grace, and the elite Shahalesti warriors fly alongside firing arrows. The wyvern knights also use archery, though they each try once to swoop in and have their wyvern snatch someone and throw them free of the palanquin.

The canyon is 60 feet wide, and more than 200 feet high, too tall for the palanquin to fly up and out, so for now the heroes will have a straight flight to freedom. Two rounds after the Shahalesti reach the palanquin, however, Syana bursts out of the window of the castle and closes to within 100 feet. She strafes on her first round; her fire breath should be enough to make the Ragesians and Shahalesti temporarily turn their attention away from the heroes to the dragon.

Syana ignores the elves, focusing her attacks on the heroes, using her superior speed and Wingover feat to strafe back and forth, trying to stay at least 50 feet away from the palanquin. Every few rounds the canyon curves slightly, and if no hero is controlling the palanquin's reins, Syana will force the palanquin into a wall; those inside must make a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid taking 4d6 damage and being thrown from the palanquin. Those who succeed take half damage and are not thrown from the palanquin.

If the heroes fare poorly, have the other forces attack Syana and divert her attention temporarily to give the heroes a chance to regroup. This also makes it easier to ensure that once Syana is defeated, the fight is over.

When Syana is reduced to 0 hp, her body begins to dissolve spontaneously in mid-flight, until only her skeleton remains, which proceeds to crash into the ground and join the bodies of all the others who died at this castle. Shalosha, if she has survived, tries to stay to talk to the heroes, even if it means leaving the army. Any other survivors break off to report to General Magdus.

Staying and Talking

Even if the heroes want to stay and talk, when Deception calls forth his brother Aggression to assume Syana's form, they should be tempted to flee. Don't try to force them to leave, though.

Shalosha – Art by Claudio Pozas

Conclusion

If Deception is still alive after the heroes leave, he will do his best to destroy the visions Darius scribed, then go deliver the news to Leska. The campaign saga presumes Deception survives, but there's no problem if he doesn't.

Darius is still loyal to Ragesia, but not to Leska, and could possibly be an ally. General Magdus feels much the same, should the heroes speak with him, though he expects to rise to rule Ragesia in the wake of the war.

Any surviving Clan Millorn explorers thank the characters for their help, and may join the resistance if they are impressed with the heroes.

The Ragesian forces eventually manage to thoroughly explore Korstull. They soon realize their failure and believe the characters now possess the Torch. They retreat quickly, barely escaping before the firestorm returns.

The planar rift remains a blight upon Sindaire, but it may be healed before the end of the campaign.

Eventually the palanquin runs out of power and descends. Too big to carry or teleport, the heroes will likely have to just abandon it.

Shalosha wants to speak with the heroes, and even if they part ways, she will try to contact them via *sending*. She still wants an alliance between her people and Seaquen, though she knows her father will demand the Torch for himself.

Though the heroes have barely had a chance to talk to anyone before fleeing Korstull, they have encountered many with great power, and may cross paths with them again before the war is over. Now, though, their course should take them back to Seaquen to unravel the mystery of Darius's visions, and to finally retrieve the Torch of the Burning Sky.



Magdus – Art by Claudio Pozas



Adventure Seven
Trial of Echoed Souls

for 13th-Level Characters

by Ari Marmell
and Ryan Nock

Cover Art by
Jeffrey Koch

The heroes stand poised to seize control of their fates and and the ongoing war, but only if they are first to claim the Torch of the Burning Sky.

Seeking the legendary artifact of Emperor Coaltongue, the heroes explore a haunted forest and must face its dangers while contending with patrols sent by two armies, who are racing to capture it. From there, the heroes must travel to a sentient psionic temple, where they face shadows of their past in a physical and mental trial that could alter their very beings.

Can the heroes locate the Torch of the Burning Sky, and do they have what it takes to undergo the Trial of Echoed Souls?

Background

For centuries the Temple of Echoed Souls was home to meditative monks who practiced an art called soul-tapping, in which they could experience the essence of other beings. Powerful monks of the order could actually take on traits and powers of those whose souls they tapped, from acquiring bestial features to wielding the magic of their enemies.

Always there were monks who would abuse these powers, but they were caught and punished. The other monks of the order would all tap into the villain's soul simultaneously, ripping it apart and leaving a husk with no spirit of its own, and no memories. These husks were branded, a simple number replacing their old name, and then were exiled, left to live as a beast.

One of these exiles, 41 (the forty-first banished from the temple), returned after he learned what had happened to him. He fought the temple's masters and wrested control of the temple, crafting a new soul for himself from the echoes of those he had met since his exile. With his new soul, one of unadulterated darkness, 41 was content to drive out the surviving monks and simply remain at the temple's heart, meditating on the nature of evil.

He had much to interest him. Not far from the temple lay Ycengled Phuurst, a forest in which two nations of elves, the Shahalesti and the Taranesti, were forced to live by the nation of Morrus. For decades, Ycengled was the scene of constant struggle. 41 basked in it, using the power of the temple to experience the suffering of those in the conflict.

But then, sixty years ago, when the warlord Coaltongue was beginning to carve an empire of his own, a general among the Shahalesti named Lord Shaaladel forged an alliance with Coaltongue, hoping to lift his people above the constant struggles so they could have a nation of their own again. Together, the two warlords succeeded in toppling the empire of Morrus, but Shaaladel was nervous, for in the course of their conquest, Coaltongue had acquired the Torch of the Burning Sky.

The Torch's creation had been a remarkable chance, a rare confluence of powers – the fire of a devil, the grace of an archon, and, most importantly, the dreams of a young psionic gold dragon named Trilla.

Trilla was the daughter of Syana, a gold dragon who served as guardian to the Taranesti. Coaltongue had taken Trilla hostage to lure Syana away while Shaaladel assaulted the leaders of the Taranesti, and in the battle Coaltongue slew the mother dragon. Trilla's grief, mixed with powerful heavenly and infernal magic unleashed in the struggle, transformed a thigh bone of the devil into the artifact that would shape the fate of nations.

Trilla escaped, rescued by a group of Taranesti elves. They took the young Trilla into hiding, and pledged themselves to secrecy.

Shaaladel gained the nation he desired, and the Taranesti were still forced to cower in Ycengled, but over the years Shaaladel grew jealous of Coaltongue, and fearful that his nation would fall under the man's thumb. Hoping to create a "Torch" of his own, forty years ago he ordered a crusade against the Taranesti to locate Trilla, publicly claiming that the Taranesti were a threat that needed to be removed once and for all.

The crusade succeeded in murdering almost all of the Taranesti, but did not find Trilla, for she had fled deep underground, afraid of a dark power growing in her. Enraged over this failure, Shaaladel ordered all the Taranesti who had been captured to be chained to the trees at the edge of their forest, left to wither and die unless they revealed Trilla's hiding place. None could, and so the Taranesti were wiped out nearly to the last man.

But the Taranesti did not leave. 41, wretched and aged inside his temple, did not want to let the enjoyment he had taken at their suffering end, so he turned the temple's powers upon the forest, trapping the ghosts of the dead within the forest's borders. Now he can enjoy their torment forever.

Welcome to the seventh adventure of the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. The heroes stand poised to seize control of their fates and decide who will be victorious in this war, but only if they are first to claim the Torch of the Burning Sky. Stolen by the assassins who slew the emperor, and hidden in the haunted elvish forest of Ycengled, the Torch will surely grant victory to whoever finds it.

Ycengled is guarded by the restless spirits of the Taranesti, who were murdered by the neighboring nation of Shahalesti in a genocidal purge. The Taranesti survivors may help the heroes track the assassins and recover the Torch before Shahalesti or Ragesia can. But the Torch has been damaged by one of the assassins: the draconic soul that gave the Torch its power has been destroyed; without it, the Torch is just a useless club.

To repair the Torch, the heroes head to the Temple of Echoed Souls, the power of which holds the Taranesti spirits hostage, and where, by facing memories of their own past and of the dead of Ycengled, they can forge a new soul to repair the Torch. In their success they learn of a hidden threat posed by Ragesia, which lays the foundation for the next two adventures.

Introduction

Recent Events

The Ragesians have driven deep into Shahalesti lands, but they still avoid Ycengled. Despite the threat the Ragesians pose to the Shahalesti heartlands, Lord Shaaladel has sent several hundred of his men into Ycengled, his various spies having informed him that Coaltongue's assassins have hidden there, though for now his troops have no clue how to find them.

No divinations can pierce the haunted forest, a fact that has so far prevented Supreme Inquisitor Leska, current emperor of Ragesia, from realizing that the greatest threat to her reign lies there. But Leska is nothing if not cautious. Among the thousands of soldiers who camp near the forest to ensure the security of the army's supply lines, one detachment of inquisitors and elite warriors watch the forest, ready to react at a moment's notice.

There are still survivors of the Taranesti, fighting to keep their forest free of the Shahalesti, though right now they are resigned to their homeland's curse. Their greatest warrior, Fayne Rawnbeck, has been hoping that the enemies of the Shahalesti might come as well, and so she will seek the heroes out.

The assassins who killed Coaltongue are hiding in the lost city of Phorros Irrendra, which exists in a demiplane that can only be reached by braving a perilous passage in the mountains of the west of the forest. Two of the assassins are drow women — Quillathe and Yvonnel — who befriended some of the Taranesti who fled underground during the purge decades ago. They wish to punish the arrogance of the Shahalesti, and believe that by bringing the Torch to Shahalesti they can provoke the Ragesians into invading and conquering the light elves.

With them is Rhuarc, a half-Taranesti man who survived the purge and spent years on the run. He just wants to ensure no one can use the Torch's power to conquer the world. Rhuarc possesses a black scimitar, called *Shaalguenyaver*, crafted by his diabolist mother to protect his soul from a bargain made with a devil. Rhuarc managed to use the sword to extract from the Torch a sliver of Trilla's soul, which provided the artifact its power. Trapping that soul in a gem from the scimitar's edge, he brought it to the Temple of Echoed Souls and placed it in one of the temple's sonic traps, shattering both the gem and the soul within it. He also trapped the soul of immortal Emperor Coaltongue, preventing him from simply returning to life.

Rhuarc did all this without Quillathe or Yvonnel finding out, and now he simply waits in the old capital of his people, ready to kill those who come looking for the Torch.

Adventure Overview

The adventure is divided into three main sections as detailed below.

Act One

The heroes enter Ycengled, facing various Shahalesti forces and uneasy spirits of the forest as they search for clues to the location of the assassins. They are guided by haunting spirits to a sacred henge, which the Shahalesti are keeping watch on. Here the heroes get the attention of the surviving locals, led by a ranger named Fayne. She offers to help the heroes find the assassins if they defeat the Shahalesti. Somehow the heroes must discover the secret to locating the lost city of Phorros Irrendra, and decide how to deal with the Shahalesti who hope to follow them to the assassins' lair. The heroes face the demonic guardians of the path to Phorros Irrendra, which lies in a demiplane that can only be reached by following the proper path in a labyrinth of sunless tunnels.

Act Two

Once they reach the lost city, a ruined chaos of massive trees, twisting caves, and jutting peaks, the heroes must catch the assassins and defeat them in order to claim the Torch. The two drow, Quillathe and Yvonnel, can be negotiated with, but the bitter half-elf Rhuarc will lead the heroes on a deadly chase through trapped locations across the city, and will not surrender. After he is defeated, the heroes can claim the Torch, only to learn that which they have fought so hard to retrieve doesn't work.

Act Three

The heroes discover that they can restore the Torch if they defeat the dark master of the Temple of Echoed Souls. The heroes enter the temple, as do agents of both the Ragesians and the Shahalesti, and the heroes must fight their way through scenes of their past, and of those who oppose them. These deadly flashbacks provide a great wealth of information about the enemy's plans, but the heroes must still face the temple's master, 41, and capture echoes of a soul that has been destroyed.

Where Are We?

In a long campaign, it can be easy to become lost, especially near the middle when a lot of plot threads are dangling and none have been resolved. Where things stand now, the heroes are likely some of the most powerful agents of a resistance that has formed to stop the Ragesian Empire. Led by a force of refugees who rallied in Seaquen, the resistance is sending aid to areas under attack by the Ragesians, while the Ragesians use their massive armies to search for the Torch. Ragesia has not conquered so much as scoured.

If the heroes have done well, the resistance is aided by the armies of Sindaire and Dassen. Gate Pass and the Ragesian heartlands are thoroughly gripped by war, Dassen's border is in constant flux, and the Shahalesti lose ground month by month. If the heroes have done poorly, Dassen is a war zone, and Ragesia might be marching even now to sack Seaquen. Without Seaquen's aid, Sindaire's rulers are forced to yield to a Ragesian fleet while armies from Ostalin encroach from the south.

In either case, the resistance cannot last long before Ragesia simply overwhelms them. Finding the Torch will rally those afraid of Ragesia, and will spur the resistance to start fighting back.

What to Do?

After escaping Castle Korstull, the heroes should likely return to Seaquen before they set out on this mission, if for nothing else than to resupply and make sure they have as clear a sense as possible of where they're going. The mages of Lyceum can dredge up an old map of Ycengled, which is not necessarily accurate, but which can help you nudge them in the direction of locations you want encounters to take place.

In the fifth adventure, *Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds*, the heroes' NPC guide, Three Weeping Ravens, was a descendant of monks from the Temple of Echoed Souls. Before the heroes set out on this adventure, you might want to have him talk to them again, since they'll be going near his people's lost homeland.

What Good Is the Torch?

Once the resistance gets the Torch, their first goal will be to liberate Gate Pass. By teleporting their armies to strategic locations, they will divide the two occupying forces — Ragesian and Shahalesti — and conquer them. The city has been occupied for months but refuses to yield, and so it serves as a powerful symbol to the resistance.

After that the resistance hopes to teleport an army directly to Ragos, the capital of Ragesia. They suspect Leska will either flee or try to go out in a blaze of glory, but seizing Ragos will weaken the Ragesian armies to the point that they will hopefully negotiate a truce. No one expects to easily crush Ragesia, but they can work to assure that there is at least a temporary peace.

If the heroes were to lose the Torch to another power such as Ragesia or Shahalesti, it would be all but impossible to hold back their armies.

Who Deserves the Torch?

Whoever wields the Torch will be viewed as a potential conqueror and enemy by most other nations. Hopefully one of the heroes is particularly persuasive and beloved by several nations, or has at least tried to take the role of leader, in which case you should be thinking of how he'll handle his fame and notoriety once Ragesia is defeated. If none of the heroes are up to being a leader, Simeon, leader of the resistance, recommends the heroes turn the Torch over to him. He recognizes the temptation of power the Torch poses, but he trusts others to guide him so he does not become a new Coaltongue. In the aftermath of the war he hopes to destroy the Torch, or to hide it in a dungeon full of perilous traps that no one will pierce for thousands of years.

Adapting the Adventure

The Trial of Echoed Souls has two main components. The first is exploring a haunted forest while agents of a group who killed the forest's inhabitants try to beat you to what you're looking for. This can easily be adapted to different settings, with the goal of the Torch replaced by some other item of power, secret, or sacred site.

The second part of the adventure is delving into the Temple, facing echoes of events in their history and those of their enemies, and crafting a soul amid this chaos. While this idea can be compelling if used in your own campaign, most of the scenes that occur would need to be revised to fit the events in your campaign. However, we have tried to incorporate classic mythic archetypes into these visions, so even if they don't *perfectly* fit your players' characters, they are open to interpretation, and at least *seem* meaningful. If you are running your own game, hopefully you can use the structure of the third act as an example of how to use the temple in your own game, be it to restore the magic of an artifact, to bring a long-dead hero back to life, or to heal the soul of the world itself.

The temple trial is particularly useful as a way to let players rebuild their characters' abilities. Characters who complete the trial gain the ability to reshape their soul, which can grant new skills, feats, classes, or even races.

Seaquen and Lyceum

The heroes have just escaped from the firestorm over Castle Korstull, where they learned how Emperor Coaltongue was slain and got a few clues to where his body and the Torch had been taken. The single survivor of the attack, an inquisitor named Darius, had scratched snippets of feverish visions he had after being poisoned by the drow assassin Quillathe (see page 186 for the complete text of Darius's visions). Many of the scrawled passages gave hints to the broader war. These clues are pertinent to the current mission:

> The bright shadow returns to its homeland, and the sky may burn for its last time.
>
> Five rivers flow, one black, down to sunless seas. Between lives she sees shades chained, warring against the shining one. Golden wings, like branches in winter, shelter them against a thousand scouring eyes.

The clues presented by these passages can help the heroes determine where the assassins went. Scrying simply fails, as does *discern location*. Careful study of old lore, however — such as a *legend lore* or *vision* spell (which Lyceum's headmaster Simeon can cast), or a DC 30 Knowledge (history) or bardic knowledge check — shows that the visions point to a haunted elvish forest, Ycengled Phuurst. Give the heroes a chance to puzzle things out for themselves (with magical or skill-based aid), but if they don't or can't, the mages of Lyceum solve the mystery.

With this information as a guide, Simeon suggests the heroes start at either the Taryaver River (which is dark) or Shan River (which is near the Temple).

The clues in Castle Korstull were probably obliterated when the heroes escaped, so if they did their job well they shouldn't be in a rush to go to Ycengled. Alternately, if someone else (such as Deception) escaped with the same information, the pressure of time will be on the heroes.

The heroes probably should be aware of the information in the "Lore and Legends" sidebars before they set out.

The Double Agent

In adventure three, *Shelter from the Storm*, the heroes met Katrina, a sorceress who quickly ingratiated herself to the top levels of resistance planning because of her experience fighting the inquisitors. Katrina is a spy, but even when she arrived in Seaquen she was uncertain what side she wanted to be on. Depending on her interactions with the heroes she may have become more heroic, or may be resigned to the fact that Ragesia will win, and that the only way to save herself is to side with them.

Either way, Katrina shows up in Act Three at the temple, and when she does, she'll decide once and for all whether to aid the Ragesians or turn on them.

Allies

Given the importance of the mission to retrieve the Torch, the heroes might want to enlist some of their allies from previous adventures, such as Torrent, Katrina, Balan, Three Weeping Ravens, or even Darius or the gnomes of Clan Millorn. If the heroes have had friendly contact with Shalosha, daughter of Shahalesti ruler Lord Shaaladel, she might even contact the heroes to offer her help. She is sincere, and her aid would help immensely in encounters with Shahalesti forces, but the heroes might find her hard to trust.

Routes to Ycengled

The main limit upon who can go is how many people can be teleported at a time. Other types of magical travel also work, but sailing or walking is too slow and too hazardous. Even with the dangers of the Burning Sky, teleportation is likely the best option.

If the heroes have wayfarer Sheena Larkins teleport them, she can take herself plus eight people in the same day, and the closest she is able to take them is a burned-out elvish village on the mouth of the Nindan River. The Ragesians marched through here months ago, and the small garrison left would be an inconsequential challenge for the heroes.

If the heroes prefer to cast *greater teleport* themselves, they can get descriptions or use a map to take them to anywhere along the outskirts of the forest. None of the monks of the Order of Echoed Souls has seen their temple in decades, and so their description isn't clear enough for the heroes to get there.

Lore and Legends of Ycengled

Ycengled Phuurst is a frigid, haunted elvish forest that lies on the northern border between Ragesia and Shahalesti. The elves who lived there, called the Taranesti, were driven into exile by the Shahalesti, and most believe they fled underground.

There is a legend that tells of an order of paladins who tried to slay a Taranesti diabolist who they believed had ensorcelled one of their own. The paladin died to defend his wife and unborn half-elf son. It is said that the son, Rhuarc, grew up to be a powerful agent for the Taranesti, and that he was one of the few survivors of the war between the two elvish nations. The name of Rhuarc's black scimitar, *Shaalguenyaver*, translates to "bright shadow."

There are five rivers in Ycengled, including the Taryaver, which means "black" in the local tongue, so named for its dark waters. The locals avoid it, believing it carries the cursed souls of the fallen elves. Another river, the Nallanthes, occasionally flows underground. It is said this forest was once home to the drow, long ago, and that they "fled with the dawn at their backs" through the shadowed tunnels carved by the river. The lost city of Phorros Irrendra was supposedly a drow city from ages past, later inhabited by the Taranesti and never discovered by the Shahalesti.

The gold dragon Syana was guardian of Ycengled for decades, and legend has it that she maintained a lair in each river. Syana's daughter, Trilla, was once captured by Coaltongue when he was helping the Shahalesti conquer land of their own. Syana helped her daughter escape Coaltongue's grasp, but she was herself slain in the process. Her bones were mounted in Castle Korstull as a trophy.

Lore and Legends of the Temple

Monks of the Temple of Echoed Souls seek to become one with all creatures by learning to experience the lives of others. The order was driven into exile decades ago by one of its own members.

The temple itself was used by monks to reshape their souls after long years of meditation. Sometimes outsiders would come to seek to change themselves. Those who were not wise enough lost their souls and became phantoms. The true masters of the order transcended their mortal bodies, and their souls persist as echoes within the halls of the temple.

Eight was a highly significant number for the order, representing the four corporeal elements — air, earth, fire, and water — and four ethereal elements — death, life, space, and time. Their belief was that every man's soul could be seen in the interaction of any other eight people, and that no man could achieve transcendence if he did not have eight others who would aid his journey.

The heroes might also *shadow walk*, *wind walk*, or *overland fly* to the forest. How they get to the forest is not an issue, though running some of the encounters in this adventure could prove difficult if they are never actually go into the forest, such as by flying over it or by staying in a different plane. In general, don't penalize the heroes for using their high-level abilities to avoid hazards and enemies.

Starting Elsewhere

The heroes might not even start at the forest.

Ragesian Camp

Here they face a thousand soldiers of the Fourth Ragesian Army, securing the supply lines. The main army has just sacked Nacaan, capital of northern Shahalesti, many miles south of Ycengled. While there is nothing in the Ragesian camp that will help the heroes locate or repair the Torch, they could use the opportunity to trim out some of the Ragesians who would be a threat in Act Three.

Temple of Echoed Souls

If the heroes go here first, the order of the adventure changes slightly. The heroes go through Act Three first, but instead of going to re-forge the soul that should be in the Torch, they go to use the temple's supremely powerful divination powers to tell them how to get to the assassins. The other forces still head there to stop the heroes (perhaps having had the same idea), and once the heroes defeat them and 41, they see a clear path leading them to the Shahalesti who are watching the henge (see Act One).

The heroes still likely need the help of the Taranesti to get the password into Phorros Irrendra. Once they do, the heroes go through Act Two as normal. In this version, Rhuarc has managed to damage the Torch by weakening the soul within it with his sword, but it still works enough that the heroes don't need to go to the temple again. Defeating Rhuarc is the adventure's climax.

Nacaan or Calanis

If the heroes go to either of these major Shahalesti cities and either ask for or offer aid, they can forge a temporary alliance with Lord Shaaladel. If they do this, you need only change the enemy Shahalesti forces slightly: make them rogue elements secretly working for Shaaladel's trusted aide, the vampire wizard Aurana. Details of Shaaladel and Aurana are presented in the adventure nine, *The Festival of Dreams*.

Act One: Ycengled Phuurst

The heroes have arrived at one of the most dreadful, most haunted sites known to the Empire and lands beyond. Here, the forest hides an awful wound, the soil births things that should not walk, and the faces of the dead constantly watch in silence. Here stands Ycengled Phuurst, the Forest of Graves. And here the heroes must go, if they are to find the slain emperor and recover the Torch from his assassins.

In this act the heroes explore the forest, witnessing various horrors and facing deathly foes. Based on the background information about Ycengled, it should be fairly easy for the heroes to guess that the assassins are hiding in Phorros Irrendra, so their primary goal in this act is to find out how to get there.

Exploring the Wood

The dead of Ycengled Phuurst do not rest, and the horrors committed here have stained the land's very soul. Because of this and of the influence from the Temple of Echoed Souls, certain magic and abilities do not function properly within its borders. The following effects, both magical and nonmagical, may impact the heroes' journeys through the wood.

Game trails and clearings are considered normal terrain. The remainder of the forest is considered light undergrowth unless otherwise indicated. Most trees are large trees, again unless stated otherwise.

The forest is cold, and the ground and treetops are generally covered in snow, and a mild snowfall endures almost constantly.

Multiple rivers wend their way through the shadows of Ycengled Phuurst. The ground within five feet of a river is either slippery rock or mud. The forest terrain is hilly, so rapids are common, except along the river Taryaver, whose dark waters are eerily placid. None of the rivers are frozen, despite the cold.

The forest is deathly quiet. No native creatures here make vocalizations unless otherwise noted. The sound of crunching snow is muted. Listen checks suffer a –2 penalty.

Divinations are useless beyond a range of 60 feet. Any divination spell targeted on, or attempting to find, an item or creature beyond that range automatically fails.

Trees, plants, and even the land itself shift subtly as though manipulated by unseen hands, or of their own accord. Sunlight filters through trees in uneven patterns, and magnetic compasses lead their users astray. For long distance travel, generally a Survival check (DC 25) is necessary to reach one's destination without getting lost. Tracking attempts suffer a –5 penalty.

The thick canopy of leaves and branches, as well as the spiritual shadow of the forest itself, blots out much of the sunlight. Even during the day, the forest is dark (treat as shadowy illumination), and creatures that are vulnerable to daylight are unharmed.

The Forest Looms

Read the following as the heroes approach the edges of Ycengled Phuurst.

It looms before you, a cancer upon the land. The trees are gnarled, bent, twisted as if caught writhing in endless agony. The green of the leaves screams of sickness, not of growth. A shadow creeps from the bases of the trees, spreading around the forest like a skirt, though no light source from within seems to cast it. Several paths and game trails provide ingress, but each is a faint, crooked thing, threatening to vanish utterly amidst the heavy growth to either side.

Impeded Magic: Positive Energy

Within the forest, a caster must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level) to cast spells that manipulate positive energy, such as *cure* spells. Turn undead attempts fail unless the character succeeds a Spellcraft check (DC 25).

Enhanced Magic: Negative Energy

Within the forest, spells that manipulate negative energy are automatically maximized at no cost to the caster. Rebuke, bolster, and command undead attempts are resolved as if the character has 4 additional cleric levels.

Who Hired the Assassins?

There is no clear answer to who recruited the assassins to kill Drakus Coaltongue, or if they did it of their own free will. You can generally assume Leska, the new emperor of Ragesia who ascended after Coaltongue's fall, is responsible, and that the assassins simply betrayed her in the aftermath, but feel free to change this based on whomever the heroes seem to dislike the most. If they particularly loathe the Shahalesti, for instance, perhaps it was Lord Shaaladel who recruited the drow, ironic certainly given the man's calls for purity of the elvish people.

Eerie Effects

Ycengled Phuurst is a creepy, alien place, and not just due to its monsters. Every so often — don't worry about precise intervals, just whenever it feels appropriate — have one of the following effects occur to provide some spooky atmosphere. If you like, use your favorite method of amplifying tension: for example, roll some dice and consult this list with a serious glower on your face. Cheap dramatic tricks that make the players nervous are fine, as long as it's all in good fun.

- The next few words uttered by one of the heroes are echoed repeatedly, each time by a different stranger's voice.
- A bunch of leaves shifts suddenly, appearing now to be green and leafy feathers on something's wing, and flutters away into the treetops.
- The heroes come across a ring of stones or mushrooms — very clearly a faerie ring, to those with Knowledge (arcana) or (nature) — now grown rotted, overgrown, and corrupted.
- A hero's weapon oozes blood for several moments.
- Tree branches, leaves, and foliage wave and shuffle without regard for the strength or direction of the wind.
- Gleaming red eyes peer at the party from within the darkened wood. Any attempt to move or attack in their direction causes them to vanish, accompanied by the swiftly fading laughter of a child.
- The party stumbles across a naked corpse that looks exactly like one of the heroes, apparently stabbed from behind. (This can, of course, lead to all sorts of fascinating accusations.) It vanishes after a few minutes, dissolving into a swarm of snakes which themselves dissolve into a pile of dead leaves as soon as disturbed.
- A loud crack sounds in the distance. When the heroes reach its source, they find a large tree, recently dead, split down the middle. Close examination suggests that something clawed its way out from inside.

In addition to these waking moments of dread, if the heroes sleep within the forest, they dream of being chained to trees and tortured for months, of armies turning to dust at the rising sun, and of being trapped inside a mirror, screaming to get out. These dreams don't affect the amount of rest they get.



From within you do not hear the calls of animals or the chirping of birds. You do not hear the rustle of leaves and branches. You do not hear the whispers of the dead who are said to haunt these woods. The forest is deathly quiet, but one faint sound does catch your attention: the squeal of metal on metal.

At the nearest tree you see something move, and you realize it is a chain swaying in the wind, dangled from a branch. The length of chain wraps repeatedly around the branches and trunk, having bound the tree so long that the bark has grown around it, so the links have become part of it. Then you see, in both directions along the entrance to the forest, more of the trees are so wrapped, hundreds and thousands.

You have come to Ycengled Phuurst.

Encounters in the Wood

While the search may last a long time, following the clues they have learned already should eventually lead the heroes to the right path. Along the way, we suggest you have them experience the following encounters, to give them a sense of the various forces at work in the forest. Not all of them are strictly necessary, and don't be surprised if the heroes avoid some of them, though a few provide a guide to moving the heroes toward locating the assassins, so if they seem lost, you might nudge them to look into those strange things they were hiding from. After all, they're great heroes; a spooky forest shouldn't be a problem for them.

Most of these encounters can occur anywhere and in any order, though we suggest you start first with "The Root of All Evil" soon after the heroes enter the forest.

Once the heroes have gotten a feel for the situation in the forest, one of the Taranesti survivors approaches them. This encounter, "The Elves of the Wood," is the heroes' best hope for finding the hidden city of Phorros Irrendra, and may spur them to undertake encounters they avoided before.

Only two of the encounters that occur within the Forest of Graves have fixed locations. The Henge is a Taranesti holy site guarded by Shahalesti, where the heroes can either learn a key clue or gain the favor of the few Taranesti survivors. The Shahalesti Camp is somewhere the heroes should probably avoid, though if they want to make an alliance, here is where they'll have the opportunity.

The Root of All Evil (EL 13)

The evil that was done to the elves of these woods, and the blood that was shed, has long since seeped into the soil, poisoning it on a spiritual level. As a result, many of the things that grow from the earth are corrupted—and the heroes are just lucky enough to make their acquaintance.

Vile Oak – Art by Michael LoPresti

As the heroes travel the forest, they spy a wraithlike child, dressed in tattered clothes in the style of the Taranesti elves, standing beside a moss-covered black obelisk about thirty feet away. He watches them for a moment, turns and runs into the woods. If the heroes follow, they find a clearing less than a hundred feet away. The clearing is roughly sixty feet wide, the ground rough and rocky, with tall trees on all sides. A pool lies in the grove's center, the rocks surrounding it stained with old blood.

Three fiendish, carnivorous treants are hidden thirty feet outside the grove's edge, spread out so they can intercept the heroes if they try to escape. A fourth treant sits at the opposite edge of the grove, ready to lead the attack. A Spot check (DC 23) lets the heroes avoid being surprised.

There is no sign of the child, but at the far end of the clearing you notice the branches of a tree shifting. The wind seems to have picked up, for the rustling of leaves and branches is audible from all directions, but the air in the clearing is strangely still.

Then, with a deafening clamor, the air trembles with the crack of snapping branches and rending wood! Whole trunks topple to the ground as entire trees are shoved aside by something enormous, something powerful, something angry.

From all sides of the clearing, the trunks of several mighty trees step out of the surrounding forest like living creatures. Their branches clutch at the air, foul claws dripping blackened, rotted sap, and the patterns in their bark form gaping eyes and screaming maws. As they clamber toward you, you see at the base of the nearest one, chained to the rotting bark, the desiccated corpse of a small humanoid — perhaps an elven child.

Vile oaks (4) (CR 9): hp 66 each, Appendix B.

The first action of the three fiendish treants hidden in the forest is to animate trees behind the heroes, while the lead treant charges in to pincer them. The next round the three hiding treants animate a further three trees, trying to keep the heroes contained to the grove, and then they advance. A Spot check (DC 17, modified by range) notices the hiding treants.

The vile oaks do not fight to the death initially, but they feign retreat if brought to below half hit points. When they do so, they use their animated trees to cover their escape and attempt to hide in the woods, hoping to surprise the heroes once they believe combat is over. If they have already used this tactic once, or if no animated trees remain, the fiendish treants will then fight to the death.

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Development

If one of the treants or animated trees is destroyed, it remains on the field as part of the terrain. Particularly grievous attacks might lop off tree limbs, which can count as fallen logs.

A fallen log provides cover (hardness 5, hp 360, and Break DC 35 per 10-foot section). If a log is broken, the squares broken and all squares adjacent to the broken section that aren't already blocked by the log become light debris.

Aftermath

Should any of the treants escape, they stalk the heroes if possible, and may attempt to attack and devour them as they sleep. Also, these are not the only vile oaks in the forest, and the heroes may occasionally be set upon by one or two hungry trees.

The heroes can remove the child's corpse from the trunk of the lead treant. If they give it a burial, no further treants attack them.

Phantoms of the Wood (EL n/a or 14)

The native elves of Ycengled Phuurst are all but extinct, wiped out by a Shahalesti prince obsessed with the purity of elven blood. The forest remembers them still, and their spirits haunt the paths and the glades in which they once dwelt.

Moving through the woods in the distance, as though following a path only they can see, is a procession of swiftly running figures. Their features seem elven, though you cannot be certain, for each and every one is utterly transparent, and glows as though touched by the light of the moon. They clutch weapons, but also heavy sacks, and many carry children far too young to travel. They glance around warily even as they run, and more than a few spend as much time looking behind as ahead. If they see you at all, they offer no sign.

What happens next depends entirely upon the heroes' actions, both past and present. If they simply stand and watch as this sad echo of bygone days passes them by, the phantom elves eventually vanish into the wood, and things return to normal. (Or at least as normal as Ycengled ever gets.)

If they approach the elves and offer any sign of respect or sympathy, such as a prayer for their souls to find peace, or simply condolences in Common or Elven, or if they buried the body of the elf child in the treant grove, one of the elves stops and looks deeply into the eyes of the nearest hero, and then smiles sadly. The heroes feel a brief wave of peace wash over them. For the next day, they ignore the impeded magic trait of the forest regarding positive energy. In addition, when they finally meet Fayne and her companions, the elves sense the favor of the dead upon them, granting them a bonus to their Diplomacy check. (See "The Elves of the Wood.")

If the party attacks the procession in any way, if they desecrated the natives' holy grove (see "The Henge"), or if one of their number is a Shahalesti elf, the spirits of the wood attack. The phantoms' features twist in silent snarls of rage, bending and stretching obscenely, and their pale glow shifts to an emanation of darkness deeper than the shadows of the forest. The spirits transform into countless thousands of black bat-shaped things, which flutter and swoop into a massive swarm. Two slivers of pale light in the swarm's center resemble eyes, and the huge figure flies toward the heroes in rage.

Nightwing (CR 14): hp 144, MM.

The swarm-like appearance of the huge flying undead horror does not change its abilities, except as follows: its movement is not impeded by even the most massive trees, and it can pass through and occupy the same space as other creatures, though doing so provokes attacks of opportunity.

After one or two initial passes in which the nightwing strikes with its "bite" (the shadow bats briefly pluck a creature up into the air and rip it to pieces before dropping it again), it rises into the air and circles, using its spell-like abilities or summoning undead. When it is reduced to below 30 hp, it swoops down again.

The nightwing is considered an extraplanar creature. If it is banished to its home plane, the bats squeal and die, and the spirits return to their normal forms and flee into the woods.

If the heroes either defeat the nightwing or win the favor of the spirits, after the encounter they feel a strange tug toward something in the forest. If they follow the urge, it leads them eventually to the Henge, though along the way they may run into other encounters.

Dead Shahalesti (EL –)

The heroes learn that they're not the only ones battling the Shahalesti forces in the region.

A dozen corpses lay strewn in your path, scattered haphazardly across the forest floor. Though already partially consumed by various unnatural forest creatures, you can tell immediately that these were elves, and that they died violently. Most bear deep cuts, while a few were slain by clusters of arrows, making them resemble obscene porcupines. Two seem to have been mauled by a carnivore while they yet lived.



Phantoms of the Wood – Art by Leo Lingas

This Shahalesti scouting party was ambushed and slaughtered by the surviving native Taranesti elves. They have been stripped of almost all valuables, but a DC 25 Search check reveals that one of the corpses still wears a pair of high-quality boots. These are actually *boots of the winterlands*.

Should the heroes successfully *speak with dead*, they can learn that other scouting parties of Shahalesti scour the woods, while the bulk of the battalion is setting up base camp. The corpse can provide directions to that camp. They can also describe the elf who slew them; see "The Elves of the Wood."

Shahalesti Soldiers (EL 13)

The Shahalesti know full well that the assassins of Emperor Coaltongue — and, more importantly, the thieves of the Torch — are hiding deep within Ycengled Phuurst. Desperate to retrieve the artifact, Lord Shaaladel has dispatched an elite military unit to the Forest of Graves, arrogantly confident that his soldiers possess both the knowledge and the skill to hide from the Ragesians, who control the lands outside, and to safely navigate the wood and retrieve the prize.

He's quite wrong, of course. But that doesn't mean the various scouting parties aren't a threat to the heroes in their own right. These soldiers view the heroes as enemies of their nation, and they will not offer surrender, though they will accept if the heroes surrender on their own.

If the heroes have been traveling on foot, this group has found their trail, cut ahead, and laid an ambush, waiting 30 feet off the trail. A Spot check (DC 23) alerts the heroes to the ambush.

With precious little warning, arrows rain from the surrounding foliage, as though the trees themselves were shooting at you!

Alternately, the elves could ambush the heroes while they are camped, or the heroes might even notice the presence of the elves (Survival DC 25) and follow their trail, catching them unaware.

Veteran Shahalesti scouts (8) (CR 6): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

Elite Shahalesti scouts (2) (CR 8): hp 45 each, Appendix B.

In either case, the Shahalesti prefer to remain at range, sniping with their bows and using the trees for cover. They engage in melee only if the heroes close on them, or if the heroes prove too potent with their own ranged attacks and spells. The Shahalesti would prefer to take at least a few of the heroes alive for questioning, but they don't risk themselves to do so. None of these Shahalesti soldiers will retreat so long as at least half of them live; once half have been defeated, a scout attempts to flee when reduced to 10 hp.

Aftermath

Captured Shahalesti can provide the same information as the Shahalesti bodies in "Dead Shahalesti," above, though they only suspect there are Taranesti still in these woods.

Additional patrols of roughly the same composition patrol elsewhere in the forest, and their presence can be used to remind the heroes they don't have time to dally.

Howling at the Moon (EL 14)

Sweeping through the wood is a pack of spectral horrors, hunting for the heroes wherever they may be. Led by the canny vampiric worg **Malhûn**, known as the Blood Wolf, these hunters wait until nightfall to strike. These are the minions of Aurana Kiirodel, chief advisor to the Shahalesti prince—and also an undead witch of great power. The heroes will likely not know the identity of their enemy until adventure nine, *The Festival of Dreams*, but she knows of them, and she does not want them keeping the Shahalesti from retrieving the Torch.

As the first sliver of moonlight filters weakly through the canopy, a monstrous howl chills your blood, sends shivers down your spine. A second voice joins the cry, then a third. The wolfish cries approach swiftly, and you see in the woods a half-dozen ghostly forms, gleaming blue in the darkness. They look like elves clad in wolf pelts, but they lope on all fours, flying through the trees and underbrush, unslowed by any obstacle. Howling and barking, they bear down upon you.

The pack of spectres, while certainly dangerous, is only the first stage, meant to distract the party and deplete their resources for the true attack to come. The greater hunters appear after two rounds, or when the spectres are defeated. Able to fly, they approach stealthily over the trees if possible, then swoop down from above, while Malhûn appears in the center of the battle, returning to his normal form from his swarm form. (This is a bit of a cheat, since realistically Malhûn wouldn't have a chance to get into the battle, but it makes for a frightening first impression.)

Another howl rises up from the forest floor, ascending chillingly to the night sky, but this is no voice, no beast, you've heard before. In the center of the battle, a wolf of icy, deathly white, its chest stained with blood that has poured from its wounded neck, rises up from the ground, calling into the sky. The forest canopy is burst open with a blast of wind as cold as a witch's heart, and from the darkened sky above plunge more spectral shapes, dozens upon dozens, howling with exultation in a chorus worthy of Hell's own damned.

Spectres (6) (CR 7): hp 45 each, MM.

Dread spectral hounds (3) (CR 9): hp 97 each, Appendix B.

Malhûn, the Blood Wolf (CR 10): hp 119, Appendix B.

The "dread spectral hounds" are considered Large creatures, but they represent a pack of spectral wolves that each swarm over a single target. They recognize the danger posed by divine casters, and focus on them first, unless someone else reveals themselves to be a greater threat. The hounds and the spectres make every effort to attack on difficult terrain, even moving through trees to take advantage of cover, making full use of their incorporeal natures.

Malhûn is the leader of the group. Using an *overland flight* spell cast on it earlier, it tries to bite and drink the blood of a weak creature, or just aid the spectres by tripping enemies one by one.

Because all of the enemies can fly, this encounter can occur even if the heroes are flying themselves. The wolves and spectres do not hesitate to follow the heroes into the sky.

Development

Upon inspection, the barding Malhûn is wearing bears marks of the Shahalesti military, as well as a strange symbol of crescent moon made of red gems. A Knowledge (local) or (nobility and royalty) check (DC 20) identifies this "gem moon" as the mark of Aurana Kiirodel's house, and recalls that she is Lord Shaaladel's chief advisor.

If the heroes have allied with the Shahalesti, this encounter should occur after the heroes learn how to get into Phorros Irrendra. Aurana knows she can extract the information from their dead bodies, so she sends her beloved wolf to kill the heroes, now that their lives are no longer useful.

The Elves of the Wood (EL n/a)

The ranger **Fayne Rawnbeck** (CN female elf ranger 15/barbarian 1) is one of the few surviving Taranesti. She has been picking off Shahalesti intruders one by one, trying to keep her forest free of the villains who destroyed her people, but her true hope is to find allies against the Shahalesti. At some point she becomes aware of the heroes and will cautiously approach them. Just when is up to you, but we suggest it happens after they have a chance to interact with both the spirits of the forest and the Shahalesti patrols.

Whenever Fayne is ready to approach them, she sends her dire fox companion first.

> A fox the size of a wolf darts out of the underbrush and stops two dozen feet away, head tilted to one side. It might not seem so odd, if this weren't the first normal creature you'd see in this blasted forest—and if the fox weren't so clearly looking directly at you, examining you.

This is Tinncev, Fayne's animal companion, As long as the heroes don't take hostile action, a few moments later Fayne herself steps out of the brush (Listen and Spot DC 30).

> A woman steps out of the forest, appearing out of nowhere. Branches do not sway as she moves, and her footsteps make no sound upon the rough ground. Clad in leathers the color of tree bark, this elf woman's eyes are a piercing gold, her hair the same red-brown of the fox's fur, cut short except for one long braid that falls along the left side of her face, almost down to her waist. She warily holds a battered sickle in one hand, and has other sickles, a bow, and various other weapons about her body.



> "Clearly you are no friend of the Shahalesti," she says in Elven, her voice slightly rough. "But I must know if you are a friend to us. I am called Fayne. Who are you?"

If none of the heroes speak Elven, do not tell them immediately what Fayne says. If they appear confused, she repeats the question in heavily accented Common. Fayne's entire demeanor is cautious; she has survived this long by being very careful, and she values her people's secrets above her own life. Until she is confident the heroes are not allied with the Shahalesti, she responds to most questions with a shrug and a question of her own, not giving any important information. If the heroes have made an alliance with the Shahalesti, Fayne is not immediately hostile, but she attempts to convince them they have made the wrong choice. She is not a particularly eloquent speaker, however, so her attempts at persuasion consist mostly of curses and insults about how the betrayers cannot be trusted.

Eventually, Fayne admits that she can help the heroes, but she is not certain if it is worth the risk to her homeland to reveal secrets to outsiders. Let the heroes negotiate with her, and then make a Diplomacy check.

If the heroes are foolish enough to attack, Fayne will flee, using *tree stride* if necessary. If pursued, she leads them on a chase across the forest, heading for the Taryaver River, where she will call upon the aid of her people's haunted spirits. If Fayne is killed, the remaining Taranesti will refuse to help in any way (even if the heroes do find them), and the spirits of the forest will be Hostile thereafter.

Assuming the heroes are wise enough to talk, Fayne starts as Indifferent, and a Diplomacy check (DC 30) is required to get her complete help. The check is modified as noted in the sidebar below.

Elves of the Wood Diplomacy Modifiers

Circumstance	Modifier
Heroes were blessed by the phantoms	+5
If any hero is an elf, but not a Shahalesti	+2
The heroes negotiate in Elven without the aid of magic	+2
The heroes defeated the Shahalesti at the henge	+5
The heroes rescue Liat from the Shahalesti camp	+5
The heroes make it clear that removal of the Torch should cause the Shahalesti to depart	+2
Heroes were attacked by phantoms	–5
Heroes showed disrespect to the henge	–5
Any hero (or NPC ally) is a Shahalesti elf	–10

Who is Aurana?

Aurana won't show up until the ninth adventure, but if the heroes go looking for her, they can find her among Shaaladel's armies that are helping hold the Ragesians from marching through Gate Pass. However, she only ever is seen at night, usually in the light of the moon. She is pale, dark-haired, and carries herself with a posture of faint, aged resignation.

Aurana was a wizard in the Shahalesti army decades ago when Shaaladel first came to power. She served loyally and was eventually chosen as his vizier. A few years ago the elves became worried that Supreme Inquisitor Leska was advising the Ragesian emperor Coaltongue to attack Shahalesti, and Aurana tried to assassinate Leska. This attempt failed, and the inquisitor retaliated by feeding her own immortal blood to Aurana, turning the elf woman into a unique type of vampire. Unable to ever again experience the sun that is so precious to her people, Aurana despaired, but her duty to her lord kept her from destroying herself.

Now she seeks to ensure Leska's downfall.

Fayne – Art by Leo Lingas

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If the heroes succeed in at least making Fayne friendly (DC 15), she cautiously offers them a chance to prove their trustworthiness. If the heroes have not already done so, she asks them to help her defeat the Shahalesti who are desecrating the sacred henge, and then to rescue Liat, one of her people who was captured by the Shahalesti. After they do one or both, allow them another Diplomacy check.

If the heroes make Fayne helpful, she offers the following guidance.

"To reach Phorros Irrendra, you must leave light behind. Follow the Nallanthes River west to the mountains. The river flows in and out of many caves, but do not enter any of these, not until you come to a cavern with a beach of black sand. Here you must create a bright light to the east — a bonfire, a powerful spell, or, if you can't even muster that, wait for sunrise. Follow your shadows into the cavern, walking alongside the edge of the river. Whenever the passage branches, create another light behind you, but never carry light in front of you. Remember, let your shadows guide you.

"There are other dangers in the passage, and I think my people's spirits, may they some day find peace, will not idly let you pass. Destroy them if you must. At least that will end their torment.

"When you reach the hidden city, two of the three you seek can be found in a tree manor that is near a prominent peak. You'll recognize the peak by its emerald trees. Their leaves are translucent. The third, Rhuarc, could be anywhere.

"When you leave, return to the passage and hold light before you. You'll find your way out quickly. If you are successful, I'll find you. If I am lucky, once you take this Torch away, the traitorous Shahalesti will leave my people."

Ad-Hoc Experience

For learning the route to Phorros Irrendra (however the heroes do it), reward them for a CR 15 encounter.

The Henge

A sacred, forbidden site for the Taranesti elves of Ycengled Phuurst, this henge of black monoliths still stands as a monument to the culture that was obliterated by the Shahalesti genocide. A small group of Shahalesti guards this location, thinking the assassins might come here. Their presence offends the spirits of the Taranesti.

In the distance through the trees you see a flickering light, alternately bright as day and dark as midnight, and within it some structure. After a moment the flickering fades, until eventually the distant grove has the same ambient gloom as the rest of the forest.

Rising from the center of the clearing is a circle of great stones, each one foot thick, four feet across, and nine feet high, their black surface smooth as a polished mirror but reflecting nothing. Each is wrapped in clinging ivy, which seem to have curled in the shapes of ancient symbols and elven pictographs. A few are cracked and toppled, or bear the signs of abuse, but no mark from the weathers of time.

Taranesti Survivors

Three dozen survivors are all that remain of the Taranesti people. They live in a huge wood-shaded sinkhole carved by a waterfall along the Nallanthes River, with numerous spies and a complex network of animal calls and signals to warn if enemies are approaching. Fayne will only bring the heroes here after a long while, and even then only if they have shown themselves to be loyal allies. All of the Taranesti survivors are, by now, experienced warriors: mostly barbarians, druids, and rangers of 10th level or higher.

Without the Taranesti

So what happens if the heroes fail to get Fayne's aid, or if they choose to ally with the Shahalesti instead? The Shahalesti actually could be more valuable allies in the long run, but thankfully the heroes don't have to help Fayne murder her enemies in order to complete their mission. The Taranesti have done a good job keeping their secrets, but the heroes have a few options.

First, the heroes might simply figure out the clue themselves from the lore of Ycengled, particularly the part that says, "fleeing with the dawn at their backs." Alternately, by performing the ritual detailed on the henge stones, they can learn the path themselves. Also, divination spells cast within the henge can reveal answers that would be concealed elsewhere — the higher level the better.

Second, you can offer the heroes a second chance. Perhaps they come across another patrol of Shahalesti, about to slay several of Fayne's companions, or to further desecrate the henge. If they oppose the Shahalesti in such an instance, Fayne might grudgingly reconsider her opinion of the heroes.

Third, the heroes might get lucky wandering around and spontaneously discover the tunnel to Phorros Irrendra. Without guidance, however, this should take the heroes days, and potentially weeks, of labored searching. If the party takes this long, a few additional Shahalesti patrols likely also have found the spot, which admittedly is somewhat suspicious for its black sand, though they will not have figured out the trick to navigating the maze.

Whether or not they received Fayne's help or the favor of the Taranesti spirits, just what awaits the heroes in the passage to Phorros Irrendra is detailed at the end of this act, in "The Darkness Your Guide."

In the center of this ringed henge you see movement. On closer inspection, you can make out the figures of a half-dozen Shahalesti elves, as well as a graceful humanoid with wings instead of arms, and a stoic man-beast with the head of a lion.

Shahalesti Guards (EL 15)

The heroes come upon the henge just as the Shahalesti wizard Lkendreis is renewing a *daylight* spell to hold back the perpetual darkness that shrouds it. Normally the henge is completely shrouded in absolute blackness that not even darkvision can see through, but the *daylight* spell returns it to the ambient lighting conditions, and drives away the spirits of the wood.

Elite Shahalesti soldiers (4) (CR 8): hp 57 each, Appendix B.
Lkendreis, Shahalesti wizard (CR 8): hp 20, Appendix B.
Toruviist, Solei Palancis dreadnought (CR 12): hp 73, Appendix B.
Chaeluk, avoral (CR 9): hp 66, MM.
Manrik, leonal (CR 12): hp 114, MM.

The wary Manrik's Spot check is 27, though the heroes can likely approach through the cover afforded by the terrain and large trees, completely avoiding line of sight to the henge if they're careful. When he spots the heroes, he assumes they are enemies and uses his roar. If none of the party is affected by the *holy word*, he shouts for the rest of the guards to wait, then apologizes and asks to parlay.

The elves look for an excuse to fight the heroes. Alignment notwithstanding, they consider all foreigners enemies. After at most a minute of conversation, unless the heroes have clearly stated their allegiance to the Shahalesti, Lkendreis suggests it will be best to take the heroes into custody for questioning back at the main camp. If the heroes decline, she insists, violently. The celestials are officially under the command of the elves, and will defer to the wizard.

If the heroes came at Fayne's urging, encountering the celestials might give them pause. If Fayne is with the heroes, the Shahalesti desire to capture her, take her back to their camp, and magically coerce knowledge of the forest out of her. Fayne, on the other hand, will want to kill all the Shahalesti. It takes a Diplomacy check (DC 30) to convince her not to attack at the first opportunity.

Be forewarned, this can be a morally muddy encounter. The safest option to avoid a fight would be for the heroes to keep Fayne away, then to approach the Shahalesti and convince them to depart. Neither of these is an easy task.

Tactics

The wizard Lkendreis is the leader of the team, and it is she who gives the orders. When combat begins, she prefers to start with *haste* on her allies, followed by *greater invisibility* on Toruviist, then *flaming sphere*, which she can make use of for several rounds. Her *still magic missile* is a last-resort spell for if she is captured or grappled. Her sonic attacks are intended for devils. The soldiers form a defense for Lkendreis, while invisible Toruviist tries to take out opposing spellcasters.

Manrik uses *hold monster* to try to subdue non-evil enemies, and though he prefers not to kill, he will do so to save his elvish allies. Chaeluk focuses on flying enemies and those with magical defenses, and repeated use of *dispel magic* or *magic missile* is a favored tactic of his.

Aftermath

Should the heroes pay their respects to the standing stones or offer prayers appropriate to the site, they benefit as if they had received the favor of the spirits. Even if the heroes do not, they still enjoy those benefits for as long as they stay at the henge.

If the heroes show disrespect to the stones, such as climbing upon them, mocking them, or further desecrating them, they gain no benefits from camping here and suffer a Diplomacy penalty with the surviving Taranesti. In addition, the next time they come upon one of the ghostly processions, the phantoms automatically turn hostile and attack.

A successful bardic knowledge, Decipher Script, or Knowledge (religion) check (DC 20) is sufficient to inform the heroes to the nature of this holy site. The henge was home to the most sacred rites of the Taranesti, performed to ensure that light and dark remained balanced. Every month a trio of priests from the hidden city would come to renew the henge's power.

If the heroes wish, they can perform this ritual themselves. It requires an arcane spellcaster and a divine spellcaster to circle clockwise on opposite sides of the henge, and a person to dance in the henge's center while wielding two swords, all of which must be done in absolute darkness.

After the one-hour ritual, the henge's power is renewed, and those who participated in the ritual, or simply stood reverently in its presence,

no longer suffer any of the negative effects associated with the forest, and unerringly know the route to Phorros Irrendra. However, they lose the ability to cast or use any magic with the [light] descriptor for one month, except when cast for the express purpose of finding the path to the lost city.

Shahalesti Base Camp

At the southern end of Ycengled Phuurst camps the bulk of the Shahalesti forces in Ycengled. Over a hundred warriors and war-wizards of the elven empire wait to hear back from their scouts, and are ready to march in force upon the hiding place of the assassins.

The Shahalesti have built their camp in one of the largest clearings of the entire wood, setting up an abatis (a defensive structure of recently felled, sharpened trees) to create a rough but effective defensive barricade around a small community of tents magically-conjured huts. No trees stand within leaping or climbing distance of the wall; those that one did have been cut down to build the defenses.

If the heroes come here unaccompanied, the elves are generally hostile, but their leader, Kiznith, is willing to negotiate. If the heroes pick a fight, they will likely be overwhelmed in short order.

Camp Patrol (EL 13)

Six groups take shifts patrolling the outskirts of the camp, but magical wards alert the elves when the heroes are still a quarter mile away, unless the heroes can hide from *prying eyes*.

Veteran Shahalesti scouts (4) (CR 6): hp 35 each, Appendix B.
Elite Shahalesti scouts (2) (CR 8): hp 45 each, Appendix B.
Elite Shahalesti soldier (CR 8): hp 57, Appendix B.
Shahalesti wizard (CR 8): hp 20, Appendix B.

After combat begins, an additional patrol is ready to join the fight in four rounds, plus however long it takes them to reach the battle. If things are going poorly, the patrol will attempt to fall back and call upon the aid of the greater numbers in the camp.

Camp Interior (EL 21)

The abatis is roughly a hundred feet square, and has archery platforms built into its interior corners, letting soldiers stand partly behind the wall and thus gain cover while they fire at enemies. It is 3 feet thick, and each 5-foot section has hardness 5, 300 hp, and Break DC 30. It can also be climbed (Climb DC 10). The whole camp is warded with a *hallow* spell keyed to *protection from energy* (*fire*), and a *forbiddance* spell that hedges out non-lawful good creatures, with the password, "This forest is our shame." The password was chosen by the trumpet archon.

Veteran Shahalesti scouts (32) (CR 6): hp 35 each, Appendix B.
Elite Shahalesti scouts (8) (CR 8): hp 45 each, Appendix B.
Veteran Shahalesti soldiers (32) (CR 6): hp 44 each, Appendix B.
Elite Shahalesti soldiers (8) (CR 8): hp 57 each, Appendix B.
Shahalesti wizards (8) (CR 8): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Solei Palancis dreadnoughts (4) (CR 12): hp 73 each, Appendix B.
Kiznith, unit commander (CR 16): hp 90, Appendix B.
Jafreinjar, trumpet archon (CR 14): hp 126, MM.

At all times, three veteran scouts and one elite scout are on guard duty at each archery platform, watching in every direction. The remaining Shahalesti are within the tents, discussing battle plans and waiting for the scouting parties to return and report.

Terrain

Due to the constant activity here, the underbrush in the clearing has been tramped or cut down. The ground here thus qualifies as normal, easy terrain.

The outside of the abatis (a wall made of felled trees) has sharpened wooden spikes protruding outward. Anyone attempting to climb the abatis takes 1d4 points of damage each round. Anyone standing on the archery platforms inside gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls against foes on the ground, and cover from foes outside the wall. The abatis is only 10 feet tall, one hundred feet long per side. It has two gates, also made of wood, providing egress on the northwest and southwest sides. Each of these has the following attributes: 2 in. thick; AC varies; hardness 5; hp 20; open DC 25 (locked).

Development

The Shahalesti have managed to capture one Taranesti elf, Liat (CN female elf ranger 10), who so far has resisted mental compulsion to reveal her people's secrets. She is kept manacled and gagged in a cage in the center of camp, watched constantly. Fayne may ask the heroes to help rescue her.

Kiznith won't seek out the heroes, but if they come to him, he is more than willing to negotiate. He suggests, subtly and persuasively, that they could track down the Taranesti, feign a desire to defeat the Shahalesti, and then betray the Taranesti. Doing so, he says, would save a lot of bloodshed, and would win Lord Shaaladel's favor toward the resistance. Of course the Shahalesti, consummate betrayers themselves, will eventually turn on the heroes unless they have managed to secure a more lasting allegiance (such as by befriending Shalosha in the previous adventure).

If the heroes are captured, they are brought here and given the same offer.

The Darkness Your Guide

After the heroes have learned the secret to enter Phorros Irrendra, it is not hard for them to find the tunnel that is the mouth of the road between Ycengled and the demiplane of the lost city. A stretch of black sand leads to the mouth of a tunnel from which flows the Nallanthes River. Further travel to the west overland simply will not find Phorros Irrendra, since it does not lie on this same plane.

The river here is rough, the rocky ground dropping unevenly away from the mouth of the cave. Because of the land's slope, there is a clear view of the forest stretching out to the eastern horizon. The tunnel from which the river flows is huge, a hundred feet wide and twenty feet high, with a fifteen foot wide walkway of black sand on the right side. However, if the heroes simply enter the cave without proper preparation, they find that it only goes in for about a quarter mile before the passage opens up again, emerging at a point further downstream than where they entered.

The tunnel does not detect as magical at all.

Navigating the Dark Labyrinth

To properly find the path, the heroes must create a bright light within sight of the mouth of the cave, bright enough to cast their shadows down the tunnel in front of them. The tunnel is very straight, so they can easily go in two hundred feet before it becomes too dark to make out their shadows anymore. At that point, the heroes notice a change in air pressure and how

the roar of the river echoes off the walls, caused by a pair of small tunnels, each 10 feet wide, that branch off from the main path. This is the first of six branches in the dark labyrinth, and the heroes must follow a proper ritual to determine whether to take one of the side paths, or to continue to follow the river.

At each intersection, the heroes must place a light, at least as bright as a torch, downstream of themselves, so that their shadows are cast upstream. As they look at the shadows they cast, they will notice shallow grooves and lines in the stones of the wall, reminiscent of Celtic knotwork. Darker than the surrounding shadows, these lines only lead down one of the three pathways, and that is the one the heroes must take. Due to the magic of the passage, there is no preset route — the tunnels shift with a will of their own, so that the only way to take the right path is to let your shadows stretch out before you.

The heroes can look backwards if they want, but they must never hold or create a light source so that their shadows are cast *down*stream. If they do so, or if they take the wrong pathway or choose a pathway without the ritual use of shadow, they are discreetly transported to another section of the Nallanthes River downstream, and soon the tunnel emerges back in the normal forest. They must start all over again. Even so much as casting *fireball* in front of yourself is enough to disrupt your journey.

After taking each proper path, the tunnel continues for roughly a quarter mile, either continuing alongside the river, or taking a passage which eventually returns to the river, even though it seems as if the route is taking them away from it. Soon thereafter the heroes come to another intersection, until the heroes have chosen the proper path six times.

Rhuarc, however, has arranged for dangers along the way, calling upon magic and demonic favors originally owed to his diabolist mother.

Magical Traits

This passage to Phoros Irrendra is suffused with energy from the plane of shadow, so shadow-based spells function differently.

Enhanced magic: shadow. Spells with the shadow descriptor function as if cast with the Maximize Spell feat. *Shadow conjuration* and *shadow evocation* are 30% as powerful as the spells they emulate, *greater shadow conjuration* and *greater shadow evocation* are 70% as powerful as the spells they emulate, and *shades* is 90% as powerful as the original.

The next three encounters are ultimately a mild hindrance to characters of the heroes' power, but they might serve to lead the heroes astray.

Lust in the Shadows (EL 10)

After the third intersection, a trio of succubi waits for the heroes, disguised as seductively-dressed drow women. Two of them wait to speak with the heroes, pretending to be the assassins and to guide the heroes off the path, with misdirection such as, "Rhuarc took the Torch and gave it to the Shahalesti. He never told us how to leave the lost city, so we have been wandering here for weeks. Congratulations, now you're trapped too."

Meanwhile, the third succubus uses *ethereal jaunt* to hide as the heroes approach, then turns corporeal once the heroes pass by, soothingly reaching out to embrace the last character in the group. She presses herself upon the hero, putting a hushing finger to his lips as she moans into his ear. Only one of the succubi in the front of the group actually speaks; the other two use telepathy to cast *charm monster* and *suggestion* upon the rear-most hero, trying to convince him to leave the path so that he may dally with them and enjoy wondrous sensual pleasures.

Catelyn, Katheryn, and Katcha, succubi (3) (CR 7): hp 33 each, MM.

The succubi don't expect their ruse to succeed, but if the heroes do fall for it, the succubi continue to lie, saying that every hour or so they see a spirit peek out of the walls, watching them. Their suggestion is that the heroes split up and spread out so that someone will be close enough to spot the spirit, and when the spirit appears, attack it, keeping it distracted long enough that the two women can use their "drow magic" to "order it to help them." This is, of course, just an excuse to try to pick off the heroes one at a time.

More likely, they'll be found out, and as soon as they are attacked they'll turn ethereal and flee. However, now they know what the heroes look like, so the next time the heroes are distracted, they'll try to sneak in disguised as members of the group.

Leashed Power (EL 13)

After the fifth intersection, the heroes hear chuckling in the darkness ahead. Daukran, a glabrezu, stamps his way toward the heroes, shouting, "Finally, men not afraid to wield the power of the Burning Sky!"

Rhuarc placed Daukran here to ward the path, knowing the demon would chafe at his leash and try to betray him. Glabrezu are notorious for tempting mortals with power, and the Torch is one of the greatest powers in this world. Despite a lifetime of bitterness, Rhuarc suspects he will die soon, and wants to give the world one last chance not to disappoint him.

Daukran is bound magically, but he offers to tell the heroes where Rhuarc hides if they can prove to him they will wield the might of the Torch with proper violence, and can then manage to defeat him in combat. If the heroes agree to talk, Daukran explains Rhuarc's history, sneering that the child of such a marvelous dark sorceress would reject the power the Torch offers him. The glabrezu soon grows bored of talking, though, and attacks, demanding that the heroes prove they are mighty enough to earn the Torch.

Daukran, glabrezu (CR 13): hp 174, MM.

If the heroes defeat him, as his body is swallowed back to the Abyss Daukran cries out, "He hides in the Grove of Fallen Hallows."

In fact, Rhuarc almost never goes to the Grove of Fallen Hallows; he tricked the demon and created a way by which he gauges the demeanor of those seeking to kill him. If the heroes look for Rhuarc in the Grove of Fallen Hallows, the shadowdancer will know that they managed to impress Daukran with their thirst for power, and he will remain confident that the world is too full of greed to merit helping.

However, if the heroes do not go to the Grove of Fallen Hallows, or at least do not go there early in their search for him, Rhuarc will be left with a hint of doubt. Normally Rhuarc uses his scimitar to trap the souls of those he kills so that they cannot be resurrected; if the heroes have caused him to question his belief about greed, he will not steal the souls of those he kills. He'll still fight to the death, but when he goes he'll allow himself a tiny sliver of hope that perhaps his actions weren't completely in vain.

Screams of Revenge (EL 12)

After the sixth intersection, the heroes return to the river, and ahead they see a pinpoint of light in the distance: the end of the tunnel, and the exit to Phorros Irrendra. However, as the heroes approach the exit, the light flickers as if something had flown in front of it. It flickers again, and the constant rushing echoes of the river change into a rising chorus of angered

screams and cries for vengeance, a cacophony of hundreds of voices of the murdered.

The light at the end of the tunnel vanishes, and the air becomes thick with the flutter of wings or tattered clothes sweeping past the heroes. The heroes see nothing, not even those with darkvision, and in this absolute blackness they must face one final demon.

Nihilheim, abyssal greater basilisk (CR 12):
hp 189, MM.

This massive reptilian demon's roar joins the chorus of screaming spirits as it leaps from the river just upstream and charges the heroes. The tunnel is cloaked in a unique supernatural darkness that blocks normal vision, low-light vision, and darkvision, but which can be dispelled with even the faintest light. So much as lighting a candle ends the supernatural darkness (though the tunnel is naturally nearly pitch black). This, however, is the worst thing the heroes can do; though creating light here holds no risk of forcing the heroes to exit the labyrinth, it reveals the face of their foe.

If the heroes create light, the glow illuminates the demonic black-eyed visage of the basilisk Nihilheim, and the heroes can see that the air is suddenly thick with swooping, screaming ghosts.

The ghosts cannot harm the heroes, but their screams make it difficult to concentrate, forcing Concentration checks (DC 15 + spell level) to cast spells, and their presence acts like severe wind, making ranged attacks difficult and threatening to carry off heroes into random directions. Any turning or rebuking attempt scatters the ghosts, negating the winds and reducing the loudest of the screaming, though the tunnel is still filled with more ghosts down both directions.

Nihilheim's gaze attack does not turn creatures to stone, but rather to obsidian. If Nihilheim manages to shatter one of these statues, a swarm of incorporeal bat-shaped shadows burst into the air and are carried away by the swarm of ghosts. *Stone to flesh* restores a creature turned to obsidian as usual; in addition, a turn undead attempt that affects a creature of the hero's Hit Dice can restore the hero once the basilisk is dead.

Upon the demon's defeat, the spirits flee, and the cavern seems deathly quiet in their absence. Up ahead the heroes can see the faint green light of Phorros Irrendra, the lost city of the Taranesti.

Act Two: Phorros Irrendra

Deep within the mountains west of Ycengled Phuurst, hidden within a demiplane whose location has been a secret for centuries, there stands a deserted city. Phorros Irrendra, once a thriving community of the Taranesti elves, has lain abandoned for four decades. During the Shahalesti crusade, many of its people went to aid their brethren, and those few who were smart enough to remain hidden were slain in turn by the bitter spirits of those same kin. Some fled to the shadows in the depths of the earth, leaving their city trapped and abandoned. Only the handful of Taranesti who were brave enough to go and face the Shahalesti, but smart enough not to be caught, survive today, eking out an existence in the haunted wood.

Yet Phorros Irrendra is not *completely* empty, for it is here that the assassins of Emperor Drakus Coaltongue, the thieves of the Torch of the Burning Sky, have gone to ground.

In this act the heroes track down the assassins. The two drow — Quillathe and Yvonnel –may be willing to negotiate, but the half-Taranesti Rhuarc is willing to die to keep the Torch from ever being used again. First we present a general overview of the city, then details of the two main parts of this act — finding the drow assassins, and running down Rhuarc. Finally we provide descriptions of the key locations in the city.

Preferably the heroes should be 14th level by the start of this act.

The Lost City

Phorros Irrendra is an odd city indeed. Built in a steep valley and on the slope of several forested hills, it consists of traditional elven tree-houses and similar structures—but also of deep caves and sinkholes within the slanted earth. Some of the unnaturally massive oaks that tower high overhead emerge from those holes, and some buildings are built directly on, or under, the forest floor.

No formal "levels" exist within the city. Rather, each building simply stands at the height (or depth) that its builders preferred. Thus, the bridges that crisscross the city like some great spiderweb often slant upward or downward. Most of the buildings are in poor shape, slowly crumbling beneath the weight of years, but a significant minority remains structurally sound. Alas, even these are not safe, for the hiding assassins have reset many of the traps built by the elves long ago, and intended for the advancing Shahalesti.

In total, the lost city covers roughly ten square miles. Travel beyond the city boundaries eventually leads into the mountains west of Ycengled, from which one cannot simply back-track to return to the city, for losing sight of the city means leaving the demiplane; if they leave the demiplane, the heroes must follow the path of shadow to return.

Entering Phorros Irrendra

Read the following as the heroes emerge from the dark labyrinth.

The depths of the cavern open up ahead, and faint light filters in from overhead, revealing that you stand in the bottom of a wide, deep grotto. Vast carvings span the walls, stretching up hundreds of feet to a forest-shrouded sky, while the floor of the grotto is mostly flooded, smooth black flagstones cracked from exposure and the growth of wild brush. Above the floor there are two main tiers, at forty and eighty feet. Amid the carvings are small tunnels on these tiers, accessible by ladders, most of which look ready to crack if weight were put upon them.

A toppled ring of black obelisks marks the base of a switchback stairway that climbs one wall of the grotto, and they too are overgrown. If this is truly the entrance to the lost city, it looks to have been abandoned for decades.

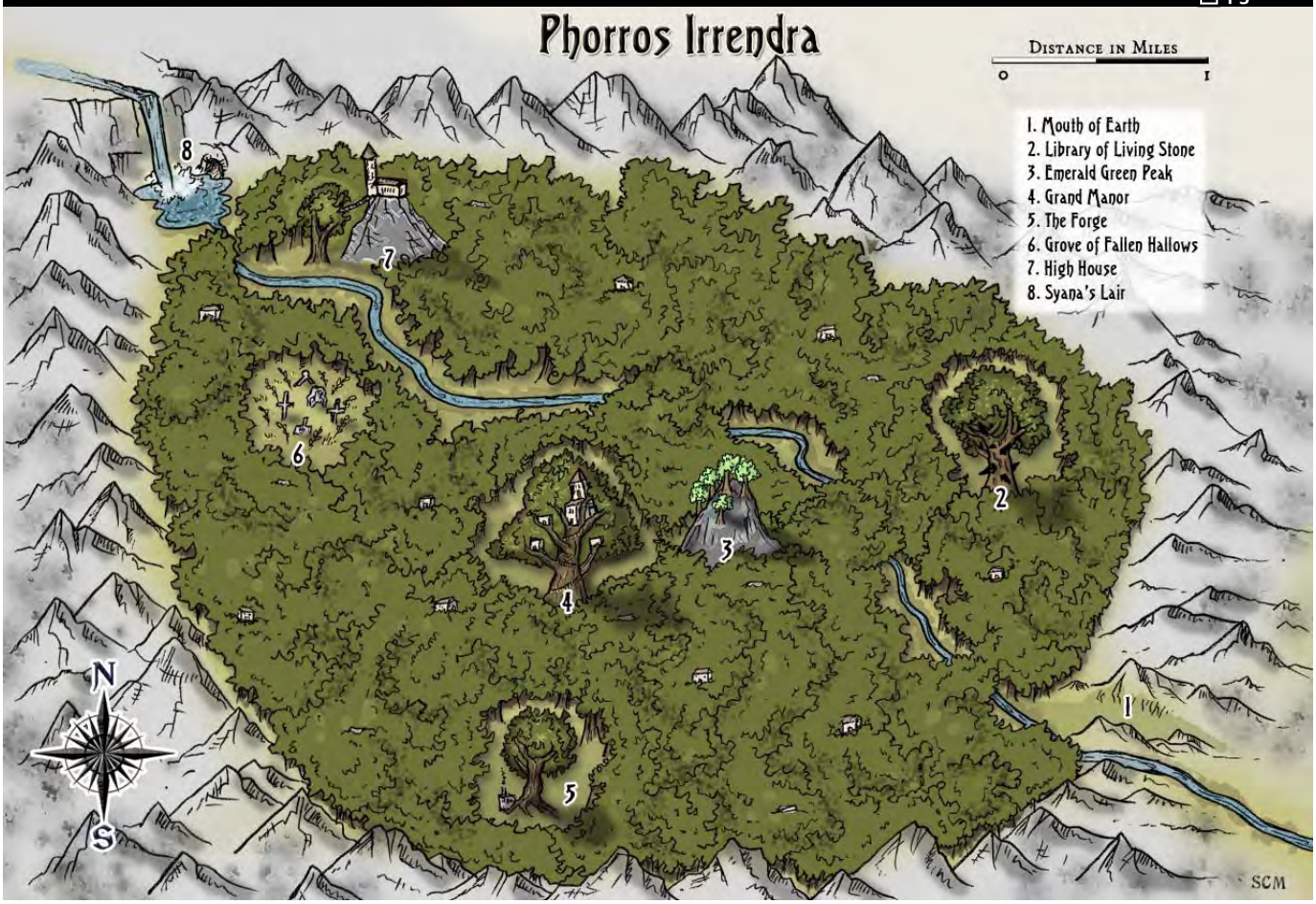
The river continues upstream, its ultimate source hidden in caves too narrow to navigate, so it seems your only route is up.

More details of this area are provided at "Mouth of the Earth," below. When the heroes reach the top of the grotto, read the following.

The stairway ends at a broad, open cliff, revealing a remarkable vista. The city lies nestled in a valley surrounded by high, snow-topped peaks. Behind you, the slope of a mountain rises up thousands of feet like a wall, though its full size is hidden by colossal trees. Chill, misty air, stuff that you would call clouds if you were on lower ground, seems to float within the city itself.

Phorros Irrendra is built on many levels, amid massive trees and jagged hills and dark sinkholes. Wooden structures, most of which seem on the verge of falling apart, stand high on distant branches, or sit at the mouths of

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City Traits

Most of Phoros Irrendra is rather empty. Only a few significant locations are presented in the adventure — if the heroes choose to go elsewhere, or engage in combat outside a defined area, use the existing areas as inspiration, making use of the following traits.

Because Phorros Irrendra lacks the accumulated spirits common to the rest of the wood, positive and negative energy work normally here, as do divination spells.

There is no snow here. The temperature never drops below freezing. Ground level is generally heavy undergrowth outside of structures, and light undergrowth along old roads.

Cave floors, once smoothly tiled with river stones, are now broken and uneven. The entrances of most caves have light rubble from fallen rocks.

Building floors above ground level are easy terrain, though most are slightly slanted from age and growth of trees. Most tree branches are wide enough to walk along, though they count as light underbrush. Bridges are easy terrain, but movement along them requires a Balance check (DC 12). Failure indicates the hero cannot run or charge along the bridge, but can otherwise act normally. Failure by 5 or more indicates the hero falls. A Reflex save (DC 15) allows her to catch herself and dangle; otherwise, she plummets.

Foliage, leaves, and branches are thick. Anyone who falls from through the trees is entitled to a Reflex save (DC 20) every 20 feet. Success indicates that the character manages to arrest her fall, taking damage only for the distance fallen so far.

Phorros Irrendra once had platforms that carried people and cargo up and down to various heights, secured to heavy ropes and vines and lifted by great pulleys, but these have all fallen apart. While it is possible for heroes to navigate between levels of the city, usually this involves crossing great horizontal distances just to find a staircase down a hundred feet. Unless the heroes use magic, their only quick way of traveling up and down the trees, or down into the tunnels and sinkholes, is to climb.

Common Climb DCs: cave walls DC 15, ropes and vines DC 8, trees DC 12.

caverns in the hills. The trees, hundreds of feet tall and across, rise from the slanted earth, their roots merging with the stone to create a confusing mess of tunnels and passageways. Another disorienting network of wooden bridges, many of them aged and fragile, span from building to building amid the trees.

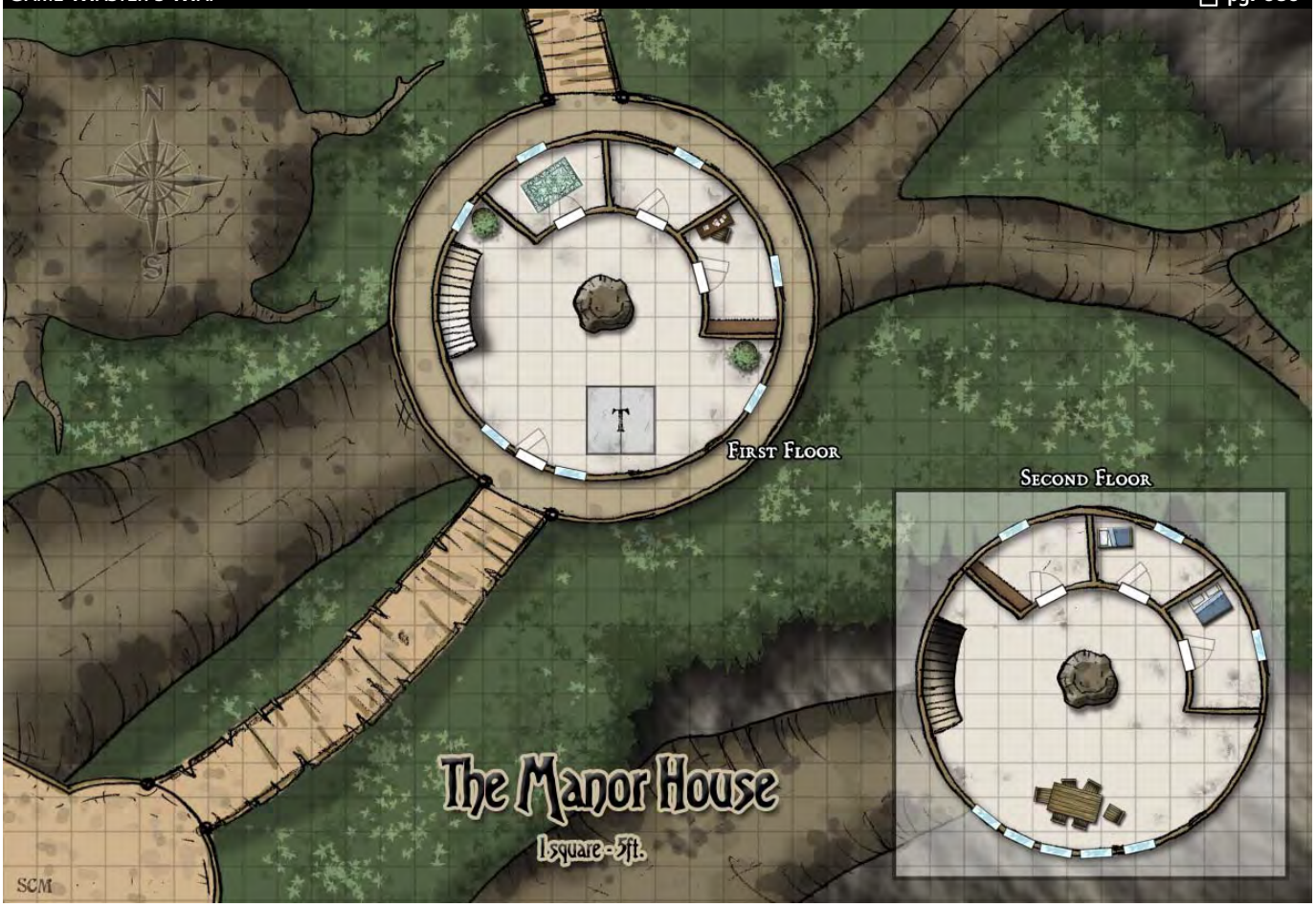
It is a city built just as fully, and just as haphazardly, on the vertical as well as the horizontal. Just looking at it is dizzying. And somewhere in that chaos hides your prey.

Finding the Assassins

With Fayne's guidance, the heroes should know to look for two drow women at the Grand Manor, near the Emeraldgreen Peak. If the heroes aren't particularly quiet, the drow become aware of their presence, and will be ready whenever the heroes do find them.

Rhuarc, for his part, simply won't be surprised. Closely tied to the demons he left in the dark labyrinth, he already knows the heroes are coming. He sends his shadow out to hide about

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four hundred feet from the Grand Manor, where it can have a better view of the heroes' interactions with the drow. Because of the distance, spotting it should be nigh impossible (DC 54).

Black Widows (EL 18)

Elevation: 100 feet.

Yvonnel and Quillathe are in over their heads, and they know it. Hired to murder Emperor Coaltongue, they thought to drive the Ragesians and the Shahalesti to war by absconding with the Torch itself. Though they have stayed hidden in the forest for months now, the various demons Rhuarc has called upon have kept them informed to the events in the wider world. They know the Shahalesti suspect they are here, and worry that soon Leska will turn her attentions to finding the path through the dark labyrinth.

They recently abandoned their partner Rhuarc, having realized the man is happy with the way things are, and have taken up residence in a small home near the edge of the Grand Manor. Though the care they have given their new home makes it stand out, here they have access to many potential escape routes. Here also is where the assassins have hidden the body of Emperor Coaltongue, concealed under the floor in a lead-lined coffin.

> The Grand Manor spans the entire vast boughs of what must be the largest tree you have ever seen. Buildings lie scattered all across its branches, connected by bridges of wood and curling stone, most cracked or warped from age.
>
> While most of the structures here are dilapidated and deserted, you spy one, a family dwelling, that clearly looks like it has been cared for recently. Round, with a walkway around its edge, it boasts a sloped roof to shed the rain and falling leaves. A single branch protrudes from the center of the roof, alone the size of a normal tree. A single door provides ingress, though several of the windows would be large enough to climb through if they weren't tightly shuttered.

Quillathe (CR 16): hp 85, Appendix B.
Yvonnel (CR 16): hp 128, Appendix B.

The two women are curious that the heroes do not seem clearly affiliated with either the Shahalesti or the Ragesians. However, they won't start talking until they establish their superiority, so when they notice the heroes approaching they hide and prepare an ambush. Their attitude is only Unfriendly, but they're drow, so attacking strangers is not unusual for them. They intend to keep at least one hero alive to question; if the heroes call for negotiations, they're willing to listen. If the heroes don't manage to make them at least Indifferent, they eventually renew their attacks, preferring to demand answers from prisoners rather than negotiate.

If they are made Friendly, the pair reveal that they're willing to depart for greener pastures, and they direct the heroes to the Forge, where they believe Rhuarc typically lairs (Rhuarc cleverly led them to this belief, since in truth the Forge is a deadly trap). They secretly expect that any ire directed toward them will be redirected to the heroes once the heroes get the Torch.

If they are made Helpful, the women actually become talkative, explaining why they have done as they did. They might be willing to aid the party in

getting the Torch from Rhuarc, and if the heroes seem particularly opposed to the Shahalesti, they might be willing to aid them in the future, perhaps helping guide them underground in adventure ten, *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child*.

Tactics

If possible, Quillathe prefers to poison her weapons before combat, and both assassins drink a *potion of heroism*. If it seems like the heroes will be approaching by rope bridge, Quillathe hides underneath the one they're taking, and, once she has had three rounds to observe her target, she strikes with a death attack from below, entangling a victim's throat with her bladed whip to either snap his neck or simply slice his head off. Meanwhile, Yvonnel hides by flying underneath the house, ready to swoop to Quillathe's aid.

If the heroes don't use the rope bridges, the two women don't wait in the building for it to be fireballed or otherwise assaulted; they hide in the branches and keep their distance. The two women have a ridiculous number of attacks with wounding weapons, but they are somewhat fragile and avoid melee with strong foes, preferring to focus on enemy spellcasters, or to have Yvonnel use her thrown sword against barbarians and the like. However, if they can manage to flank, few creatures can survive the flurry of Quillathe's sneak attacks. Yvonnel sometimes will grapple a foe, holding them so that Quillathe can strike their vulnerable points.

The drow try to lure enemies to narrow terrain that forces Balance checks, so those with fewer than 5 ranks in Balance lose their Dexterity bonus to AC while on the tree, making them easy for her to sneak attack. Yvonnel can fly, and Quillathe has good enough balance to avoid this threat. Note that even creatures with uncanny dodge lose their Dexterity bonus to AC in this situation.

The drow arranged the pit trap in the center of the main room, and if they are caught inside they attempt to maneuver heroes over it. Likewise, as they move away from the main building, they will look for more opportunities to send heroes who cannot fly plummeting off bridges.

Wide-Mouth Pit Trap (CR 9): mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 25 Reflex save avoids; 100 ft. deep (10d6, fall); multiple targets (all within 10-ft. by 10-ft. area); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25. Falling heroes have a chance to arrest their plummet.

Terrain

The floor here is slightly sloped and uneven, and most of the rooms have scattered bits of old, rickety furniture, which count as difficult terrain, and provide partial cover (+2 AC, +1 Reflex saves) to those in the same square.



Yvonnel and Quillathe – Art by Tim Divar

Aftermath

Quillathe and Yvonnel are fiercely loyal to each other — their relationship is about the only thing either of them really cares about anymore — and if one of them falls, the other goes berserk with despair, fighting in a rage, not relenting unless she is convinced that ending combat is the only way she'll be allowed to take her friend's body and go in peace.

If It Bleeds, We Can Kill It (EL 18)

While the confrontation with the drow has a pre-determined location, the heroes' fight with the half-elf Rhuarc is a running battle, one that occurs over the span of multiple locations. Rhuarc is a cunning, scheming creature, and he knows full well how to maximize his advantages. He keeps the Torch of the Burning Sky with him at all times, carefully secured in a backpack.

Rhuarc has specially prepared half a dozen locations throughout the length and breadth of Phorros Irrendra. The traps in these areas are set and ready to trigger; Rhuarc knows them well and never risks activating them himself. Throughout the course of his struggle with the heroes, he attempts to lead them through each of these areas, using his amazing stealth to stay one step ahead.

Introducing Rhuarc

The heroes' first encounter with Rhuarc should occur not long after they finish their fight with Quillathe and Yvonnel. Rhuarc hides about a hundred feet away and waits for someone who looks like a healer to go up next to a heavily wounded character. As soon as the healer begins to cast a spell, Rhuarc fires a single shatterspell arrow, then flees. No one should be expecting to get attacked in the post-combat healing rounds, so this should start things off well.

Rhuarc (CR 18): hp 131, Appendix B.
Rhuarc's shadow (CR n/a): hp 45, Appendix B.
Tragedies (variable) (CR 7): hp 69 each, Appendix B.

After this, Rhuarc flees to any of the locations below, preferring first to go to the Forge. Thereafter, feel free to use whatever order you think best.

The Forge

Overall the deadliest trap, Rhuarc is willing to linger here a bit longer than might be safe so that he gets a chance to catch all the heroes at once. After he springs this trap, he suspects the heroes won't fall for any more obvious tricks.

Library of Living Stone

Rhuarc flees here if his foes are capable of flying, since this trap covers a vast enough area that fliers won't be able to escape it.

Mouth of the Earth

This area has many tunnels that Rhuarc hopes to use to split up his enemies so he can take them on one at a time.

Grove of Fallen Hallows

The poisonous pollen of the black lotuses and keshweed plants growing here, combined with the bevy of options for cover and a small horde of ghouls, should make this an interesting place for a battle.

Syana's Lair

This is where Rhuarc keeps a cache of supplies, which he will flee to if he begins to feel overwhelmed.

High House

His mother's old home, here Rhuarc has his shadow ambush the heroes, and then he crushes the bridge they are approaching along. He peppers the heroes with arrows until they get too close, and then waits inside the building for the heroes to pursue him.

Tactics

Rhuarc attempts to remain at range, sniping at the heroes and trusting in his numerous defenses to avoid the worst of hostile spells. He quickly learns which enemies are most dangerous at what distances, and does his best to disrupt their tactics.

He usually starts with shatterspell arrows to remove enemy defenses, then conjures tragedies from the spirits trapped in his scimitar, sending them into combat while he continues to snipe with poisoned arrows. His bow is non-magical, so his arrows have no chance of striking his incorporeal minions. Depending on the nature of the battle, he might simply shoot once then hide again (taking a –20 penalty to his Hide check), or stay mobile, using Shot on the Run while hiding in plain sight (taking a –25 penalty to his Hide check if he moves at normal speed).

Because of the nature of his traps, Rhuarc has a vested interest in getting rid of flying mounts. Likewise, creatures who have blindsense or blindsight are a threat to his stealth, so he'll either stay outside the range of their senses, or try to kill them first.

Once he suffers more than 25 hp damage, he typically seeks to move on to his next location. He prefers to do so through hiding and stealth, but makes use of his *shadow jump* ability if necessary. The powerful combination of teleporting a short distance where he can then hide in plain sight — perhaps just to the far side of a tree — should make it easy for him to flee when the danger gets too hot. He then sprints to his next ambush point, not bothering to cover his trail because, in truth, he wants the heroes to follow him. Indeed, before his first encounter with the heroes, he sets up a trail of blood to make it easier for the heroes to "track him down" to the Forge.

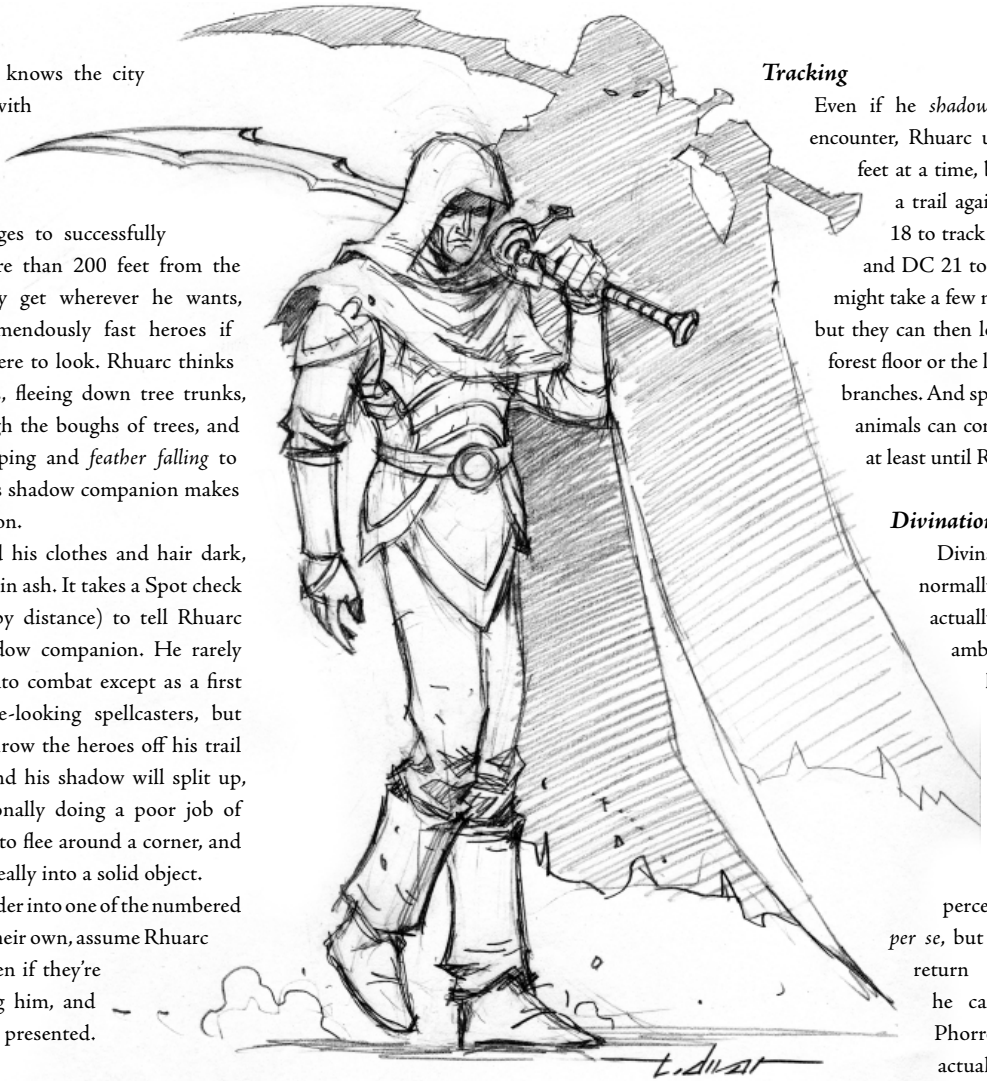
Alas, Poor Coaltongue

What of the corpse of Emperor Drakus Coaltongue (LN male venerable immortal half-orc fighter 4/commander 20)? It lies in a lead-lined coffin under the drow women's home. A special divider is in place separating the Emperor's head from his shoulders, intended to keep the blood of the Aquiline Heart that flows through his veins from restoring him to life. This is unnecessary, because Rhuarc stole his soul with his black scimitar, *Shaalguenyaver*, but the women do not know this.

If you prefer to keep things simple, you can say that after Rhuarc trapped the soul of the emperor with his scimitar, he threw away the gem in which the soul was held, so that now the emperor's body is simply a lifeless husk. The gem lies somewhere lost in Ycengled, all but impossible to ever find.

Alternately, the heroes can recover Coaltongue's soul from the black scimitar and return it to the late emperor's body. Coaltongue's immortality (see adventure six, *Tears of the Burning Sky*) restores him within a matter of seconds. The old half-orc is calm and curious, aware of his relatively tenuous position. He wants to know what has happened since his death, and does his best not to show his fear at having his soul trapped again.

How he interacts in the wider scope of the campaign saga is up to you. Leska will use all her power to ensure that she does not have to turn Ragesia back over to him, but if the heroes are willing to ally with him, he could easily rally all the nations in this war to strike against Leska. His defeat has actually humbled him, and he realizes that Leska had long led him astray, but old habits die hard. In truth, the people of the region are looking for change, not a return to the rule of the Old Dragon.



Because Rhuarc knows the city well and is familiar with all its shortcuts, it is generally safe to assume that once he manages to successfully hide and move more than 200 feet from the heroes, he can easy get wherever he wants, outpacing even tremendously fast heroes if they don't know where to look. Rhuarc thinks in three dimensions, fleeing down tree trunks, blazing trails through the boughs of trees, and sometimes even leaping and *feather falling* to ground level, and his shadow companion makes for a useful distraction.

Rhuarc has dyed his clothes and hair dark, and covered his skin in ash. It takes a Spot check (DC 23, modified by distance) to tell Rhuarc apart from his shadow companion. He rarely sends his shadow into combat except as a first strike against feeble-looking spellcasters, but when he needs to throw the heroes off his trail for a moment, he and his shadow will split up, the shadow intentionally doing a poor job of hiding itself. It tries to flee around a corner, and then melds incorporeally into a solid object.

If the heroes wander into one of the numbered encounter areas on their own, assume Rhuarc beats them there even if they're not actively tracking him, and run the encounter as presented.

Waiting Out Rhuarc

Should the heroes choose not to pursue him, Rhuarc can still be a threat. If the heroes simply find a defensible place to wait and rest, Rhuarc should be able to sneak up and kill someone in his sleep. It takes truly amazing cunning to trick the old shadowdancer into a trap, and if he suspects an ambush he'll try to spring the trap, then attack elsewhere while the heroes go after the red herring.

If somehow the heroes manage to keep the hunt going for more than a day, Rhuarc does eventually need to sleep, though he spares no expense to ensure his trail is cold — he uses what *shadow jump* he has left, *feather falls* into the river, and heads upstream to Syana's lair.

For all his wariness, Rhuarc does still have an Achilles' heel: he loathes paladins, knights, and their ilk, for it was knights who murdered his father and set his life down this bleak path. He's a little less cautious when he thinks he has a chance to kill a knightly character, especially a paladin.

Rhuarc is not a conversationalist, but he does get bored hiding all the time, so he might strike up a conversation as he snipes at the heroes. He never stops to negotiate, but he'll begrudgingly complain about the state the world is in, or critique the heroes' choices of tactics (especially if they summon outsiders), or try to disturb the heroes by telling them about the time his mother was possessed by a demon and he had to kill her. He doesn't complain — he's far too old and jaded for that — but rather his tone is one of perpetual disappointment.

Pursuing a Shadow

So how are the heroes supposed to follow the half-elf through the city? Actually, though it sounds like a daunting task, it's not all that hard.

Listen and Spot

An average result of Rhuarc's Hide and Move Silently checks is 42, but he tends to run quite recklessly when fleeing the heroes, reducing this to 22: a respectable total, but not unbeatable.

Tracking

Even if he *shadow jumps* to escape an encounter, Rhuarc usually only moves 40 feet at a time, before he starts leaving a trail again. Assume a base DC 18 to track Rhuarc during the day, and DC 21 to follow him at night. It might take a few minutes to get the scent, but they can then locate his tracks on the forest floor or the leaf-and-needle covered branches. And speaking of scent, trained animals can come quite in handy here, at least until Rhuarc kills them.

Divination

Divination magic works normally here and might actually foil a few of Rhuarc's ambushes, which should help keep the heroes from getting too frustrated.

Finally, the heroes might fail to find him. In this case, he doesn't perceive them as a threat *per se*, but he knows they might return with assistance, so he cannot let them leave Phorros Irrendra. He will actually try first to make himself easier to pursue, since he prefers to lay ambushes, but if that fails, he'll run down these incompetent intruders so they can't waste any more of his time. Hopefully, though, the heroes will be clever enough to catch Rhuarc.

The pursuit of Rhuarc is meant to be a complex challenge that the heroes and their players should remember for a long time to come. Expect the players to get a little frustrated, and don't hesitate to have Rhuarc grow a little overconfident, or linger just a little too long, when you feel it is time for the hunt to come to an end.

City Locations

The heroes enter Phorros Irrendra at its eastern end, about a hundred feet above the valley floor. Though the city is huge, there aren't that many locations with enough structural stability to serve as a home for the assassins. Prominent locations in the city include the following. Each location is detailed below, with emphasis given to how the location can be used as part of the greater chase for Rhuarc.

Rhuarc – Art by Tim Divar

Emeraldgreen Peak

This jagged hill is capped with small trees that have translucent leaves that glint like emeralds.

The Forge

Built between roots of a huge tree, this stone structure descends deep into a cavern below it.

The Grand Manor

In the center of the city, the largest tree in the valley is covered with numerous buildings, attached by curling stone arches crafted by *stone shape*, now warped by the growth of the tree and the passage of years. Long ago this tree was a manor for one of the noble families of the city. Now it is where the two drow live, in one of the smaller outlying houses.

The Grove of Fallen Hallows

Located on the ground level, this garden is ringed with sculptures of all manner of holy icons, and wild lotuses bloom within.

The High House

A fancy, tower-like home built on a jutting peak, this building is the highest in the city, and has a clear view of the Grove of Fallen Hallows. This is where Rhuarc spends most of his time. Conveniently, it is across the river from the Grand Manor; the running water blocks *locate creature* spells.

Library of Living Stone

A small, shadowed building lies in the boughs of a once well-groomed tree. Black stones grow from the tree's bark, and upon these stones are scribed the history of the city. The tree's upper branches spread wide, casting a huge shadow.

Mouth of the Earth

This is the sinkhole where the heroes enter.

Syana's Lair

A large waterfall on the northwest end of the valley feeds into a dark lake. Beneath its surface, a tunnel leads back up behind the waterfall to the lair of the gold dragon who once defended Ycengled.

Emeraldgreen Peak

Elevation: Ground level, though the ground is 250 feet above the valley floor.

This tall hill holds no threats, but is capped with vividly green trees, and it has a clear vantage point to the Grand Manor, about four hundred feet away. A creature on the hill, such as Rhuarc's shadow, will have an easy view of the house where Quillathe and Yvonnel live, and of any fight that goes on there.

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The Forge

Elevation: Ground level.

Rhuarc has set a trap in an old forge, which he has set up to look like his lair.

A somewhat clear pathway of low brush cuts through the thick forest to the base of a huge tree. A black obelisk jutting up from the foliage marks the destination, announcing in elvish that this is a forge.

The roots of this huge tree stretch over a shallow pit filled with fallen leaves, and the large stone forge building stretches between two of the closest roots. Its upper floor is level with the main forest floor, but it has a lower floor down beneath the roots. A wooden walkway crosses the pit to the building's porch, and a broken staircase looks to once have led downstairs. The roof has broken shingles and a narrow chimney.

Strange winds blow through the gaps under the roots, fluttering the curtains that hang behind the building's shattered windows. The air here smells faintly of smelted iron.

Inside the forge are many tools for crafting adamantine and mithral, and mostly empty racks that once held precious weapons and armor. The forge in the center of the room is powered by a huge bellows built into the underside of the building, which is pumped by the constant flow of wind through a massive tunnel under the tree.

The "ground" of the pit appears to be only about 10 feet deep, but this is just a net Rhuarc placed to hide the pit's true depth, which is forty feet. A Spot check (DC 25) realizes that the pit actually is much deeper beneath the net. The forge's bottom level's floor actually fell out over the years, though from afar it looks perfectly normal.

Rhuarc's Trap (CR 14)

Rhuarc hides in plain sight atop the root nearest the black pillar outside the forge, waiting for the heroes to approach. Through the cracks in the roof, he uses his *shadow illusion* ability to create an image of himself inside the forge, hoping to lure the heroes inside. When the heroes spot the illusion, he has it grab the one sword that still hangs on a rack, and then duck behind the anvil, where it vanishes. He hopes to draw the heroes inside, and then drop the whole building into the pit.

He simply has to cut a cable that runs up the length of the root and tree (easily done with his adamantine scimitar), which releases the mooring that keeps the forge from plummeting into the pit, while simultaneously releasing a huge deadfall of logs and branches that hangs a hundred feet up, in the low branches of the tree.

Creatures in the building when the trap is triggered take 4d6 points of damage from falling, plus 4d6 points of damage from the crush of the building (Reflex DC 15 halves the crushing damage). Then the deadfall strikes, and then everyone in the path of it takes 12d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 15 halves). They are subsequently buried.

Buried characters take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute. If a buried character falls unconscious, he or she must make a DC 15 Constitution check or take 1d6 points of lethal damage each minute thereafter until freed or dead. Digging free requires three Strength checks (DC 24).

Upon impact, several flasks of alchemist's fire Rhuarc hid in the building's rafters shatter. While not immediately dangerous, the flames slowly set fire to the building, and within five minutes the whole place is burning.

The Grand Manor

Elevation: 100 feet.

This location is detailed in the Black Widows encounter, above.

Grove of Fallen Hallows (EL 14)

Elevation: Ground level.

This garden is ringed with huge statues and religious icons from a dozen faiths, and within its borders are rows of smaller hallowed items. Among these stone art objects sways a huge field of black and violet flowers — lotuses and keshweed, both very toxic. The air is sickly sweet, and poisonous pollen floats in a shadowy haze over the whole garden. More dangerous, though, are the ghasts that sleep in the field, sleeping in this self-made graveyard until they are disturbed.

Ghasts (32) (CR 3): hp 29 each, MM.

Creatures can move at a rate of 5 feet per round without kicking up the pollen on the flowers. Any faster, though, and the air quickly fills with poison. Each round spent in the field counts as one dose of poison, though heroes can simply hold their breath.

Black lotus pollen: inhaled (DC 14); initial and secondary 1 Con.

Keshweed pollen: inhaled (DC 14); initial and secondary 1 Wis.

One stone building in the center of the garden looks like it might be a place where Rhuarc could be hiding, and inside it Rhuarc has placed a wrapped piece of leather that looks like it holds something about the size and shape of a torch. However, this is just another trap, a *greater glyph of warding* that triggers *greater dispel magic* (caster level 11th).

The High House (EL 12+)

Elevation: The house is at ground level, but is 220 feet above the valley floor.

Once one of the finest dwellings in Phorros Irrendra, this house belonged to Rhuarc's own mother, Stacia. Built atop the highest hill in the valley, its impressive stonework, black etched with silver in patterns akin to binding circles, still survives, and it is Rhuarc's favorite bolt-hole in the city. Inside, much of the old furniture remains, and in long, dark hallways the shattered windows are hidden by tattered curtains that flutter eerily in the wind. Various bits of furniture can provide cover, and several ropes dangle from the nearby branches, tied off to balconies and rooftops, giving Rhuarc a quick way to swing away to safety.

The few infernal beings Rhuarc's mother had left in stasis have already been released, sent by Rhuarc to guard the dark labyrinth, but the place has a wealth of lore about demons and devils, as well as on Rhuarc himself.

Rhuarc hides atop the balcony of the second floor, with a clear view of the only rope bridge that comes to this hilltop, and to the distant Grove of Fallen Hallows. When he thinks the heroes are approaching, he sends his shadow companion out to float under the bridge. When the heroes get within 200 feet, it "climbs" up onto the bridge and then runs for the entrance of the house.

The Bridge of Terror (CR 12): mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 22 Reflex save avoids; swinging log (12d6 crush); multiple targets (all targets in the center 15 feet of the bridge); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 18.

This trap is made up of two enormous logs, attached to trees by thick ropes and vines. When the heroes reach a spot on the bridge 20 feet from the high house, they trip a wire that releases the logs, which swing down from either side, striking a 15-foot-long area centered on the trapped area.

In addition to crushing approaching creatures, this impact also mangles the bridges. One round later the bridge snaps in the middle and collapses, and until that time creatures on the bridge must make a Balance check (DC 15) to move along the bridge. All during this time, Rhuarc peppers them with arrows, since most should be denied their Dexterity while balancing.

This will likely be the last location Rhuarc runs to. Once the heroes get inside, he leaves his balcony perch and goes to hunt them down.

Areas within the house have yet further traps, their locations marked on the map.

Bladed Portcullis Trap (CR 2): Mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +10 melee (4d6); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 25. Portcullis blocks hallway or doorway.

Falling Spiked Block Trap (CR 6): Mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; Atk +20 melee (7d6); multiple targets (can strike all characters in four adjacent specified squares); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 20.

Forcecage and Summon Monster VII Trap (CR 10): Magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; multiple traps (one *forcecage* trap and one *summon monster VII* trap that summons a babau demon); spell effect (*forcecage*, 13th-level wizard), spell effect (*summon monster VII*, 13th-level wizard, babau

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demon); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. Cost: 241,000 gp, 7,280 XP. **Note:** This trap is really one CR 8 trap that creates a *forcecage* and a second CR 8 trap that summons a babau demon in the same area. If both succeed, the demon appears inside the *forcecage*. These effects are independent of each other.

Forcecage and Summon Monster IX Trap (CR 12): Magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; multiple traps (one *forcecage* trap and one *summon monster IX* trap that summons a barbed devil); spell effect (*forcecage*, 13th-level wizard), spell effect (*summon monster VII*, 13th-level wizard, barbed devil); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. Cost: 241,000 gp, 7,280 XP. **Note:** This trap is really one CR 8 trap that creates a *forcecage* and a second CR 11 trap that summons a barbed devil in the same area. If both succeed, the devil appears inside the *forcecage*. These effects are independent of each other.

Treasure

Eerily, one room contains a fair amount of torture equipment, as well as a scroll rack with clear labels. Most are missing, but two *scrolls of speak with dead* remain.

Library of Living Stone (EL 10)

Elevation: 90 feet above ground level.

This is a particularly nasty setup, in that it has a good chance of catching the entire party in the trap.

> Nestled in the bough of this tree is a plaza dominated at one end by a large, broken building. All along the tree's bark are stone plaques, the size of a shield, covered in writing.

This used to be a center for learning in Phorros Irrendra, a library of history and naturalism. Now, though, Rhuarc has set it up to be a massive deadfall trap, somewhat less deadly than the forge, but covering a larger area. Over the past several months he has cut into the branches of this tree, rigging one whole side to collapse with a bit of judicious leverage. A Knowledge (nature) or Spot check (DC 20) notices that about half of this tree has leaves that are withered, for the tree is half-dead.

Rhuarc hides in the part of the tree that is not dead, and has set up a dummy on top of the building, which should fool some people (Spot DC 27, modified by distance, to tell the dummy is not a living creature). He snipes from behind the dummy, hoping to entice the heroes into approaching before he triggers the trap. When he does, a huge weight of logs higher in the tree swings toward the perfect spot on the weakened side of the tree. One round later, the huge weight strikes, and with a deafening crack the tree is practically cleft in twain. Branches snap and crash into the heroes, and as the tree collapses around them like a ship capsizing, the heroes are tossed into the air.

The tree doesn't crumple, so there is no threat of being buried, as at the Forge.

Collapsing Bough Trap (CR 10): mechanical; location trigger; no reset; DC 25 Reflex save partial (half damage from debris); 90 ft. deep (9d6, fall, plus 4d6 debris); multiple targets (everyone within 150 ft., including those in the air); one-round onset; Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

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Mouth of the Earth

Elevation: The entrance to the sinkhole is 80 feet above the valley floor. The bottom is 20 feet below ground level.

This area is where the heroes first emerge from the dark labyrinth. A tiny complex of tunnels weaves through the different levels of the sinkhole, which was once a religious meditative aid. The elves of Phorros Irrendra would walk the path here slowly, multiple times, focusing on the religious iconography carved into the walls. Now it's nothing but another kill zone for Rhuarc's amusement.

This area is described in Entering Phorros Irrendra, above. There is no trap here, just a convoluted mess of tunnels where Rhuarc hopes to split up the heroes.

Once the heroes enter the tunnels, Rhuarc maintains a pattern of shooting once and then retreating, trying to always keep at least one bend of the tunnel between him and the heroes except when he's attacking.

Syana's Lair (EL 10)

Elevation: Entrance 15 feet below river level.

The former lair of the gold dragon who once protected this wood (and whose bones the heroes might have seen on display in Castle Korstull), this cave is Rhuarc's back-up supply cache. Not only does it provide him a number of vantage points from which to snipe, and a nasty trap, but he has stockpiled food and supplies here, in case he has to pretend he's dead.

To reach the lair, the heroes must dive into the lake in front of the waterfall at the west end of the valley, swim down a 40-foot tunnel, and ascend a 40-foot vertical chute that is 30 feet wide. This was easy for a gold dragon, and Rhuarc handles it fairly well, but the heroes might have a hard time.

> Above the lip of the chute you find a broad cave, marked with tall, scattered toadstools. Beautiful swirling patterns line the wall, looking to have been carved into the stone by large clawed hands, and amid this artwork are many small caves and ledges. Stone pillars jut upward around the edges of the cavern, though the center is clear.

The fungus near the entrance is a cluster of shriekers, which helps warn Rhuarc of ambushes if he needs to find some brief rest here. Of course, that's assuming the heroes don't trigger the trap, which has outlasted its crafter, Syana.

Anyone who steps on the 10-foot area nearest the vertical chute triggers the trap; the safe route into the cavern is to fly or *spider climb* along the wall, avoiding the trapped area.

Tinder and Flame Trap (CR 10): magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; multiple traps (one *transmute metal to wood* trap and one *fire storm*); spell effect (*transmute metal to wood*, 13th-level druid, all within 40 of the trigger), spell effect (fire storm, 13th-level druid, 13d6 damage throughout the entry passage, DC 20 Reflex half); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. Note: This trap is really one CR 8 trap that creates a *fire storm* and a second CR 8 trap that casts *transmute metal to wood*. These effects are independent of each other.

The various tunnels and ledges don't lead much of anywhere, just going back into the central cavern, with just one that leads into the face of the waterfall. Rhuarc uses the ledges as vantage points, and cover, for sniping at the heroes, and attempts to lurk around corners and sneak attack them if they follow him in. He sometimes has his companion appear out of one tunnel just as he enters another, again hoping to confuse the heroes as to where he actually is.

Concluding Act Two

Finally, after a long hunt, the heroes have managed to run Rhuarc down and defeat him. They have retrieved the Torch of the Burning Sky (not to mention the body of Emperor Drakus Coaltongue). They have practically assured the victory of their side in the war.

Or have they? Even a cursory examination of the Torch reveals that while it still radiates an overwhelming magical aura, there's something very, very wrong. *It doesn't work!* Rhuarc, the annoying bastard, has managed to spite them even in death.

The heroes can try to speak with Rhuarc's corpse, use divination magic (the proximity of the Torch and black scimitar makes it easy to divine their recent past), or contact Seaquen in order to find out what happened. If any of the heroes accepts the offer Rhuarc's sword makes, that hero can speak with Rhuarc and compel him to answer a few questions before his spirit mingles with the countless others the shadowdancer has killed, erasing his individuality.

Even if they do none of these things, a key clue is that Rhuarc's scimitar is missing one of the diamonds in its blade, which indicates a soul has been taken away. You might want to suggest that the heroes not leave the forest just yet, because as soon as they're outside the divination protection provided by its spirits, they'll no doubt have everyone descending upon them. This encourages them to figure out what happened and resolve the damage, which keeps the momentum of the adventure, instead of heading home for a rest.

Eventually, somehow, the heroes find out that Rhuarc took a sliver of the soul that powered the Torch, brought it to the Temple of Echoed Souls, and destroyed it. The master of the temple then consumed the spirit. However, if the heroes were able to defeat the master of the temple and survive its trial, they might be able to recreate the lost soul from its lingering echoes.

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Now all they have to do is get there without the many, many people who want the Torch realizing they have it.

Act Three: The Trial

In this act, in order to restore the power of the Torch of the Burning Sky, the heroes explore the Temple of Echoed Souls, whose evil master will turn the psionic temple's powers against them. Some of the dangers they face are intentionally set upon them by the temple's master, but others they bring with them.

This act has a great deal of information important to the plot of later adventures in the campaign saga. We have attempted to present this information as part of the narrative, rather than as exposition. Because of this, some sections of this act possess a great amount of detail. Feel free to excise this if you find it clashing with your gaming style. Likewise, if you are running this adventure as a stand-alone, you can adapt these details to fit revelations in your own campaign, or simply remove them, putting the focus on getting to the temple's master and defeating him.

Most Wanted

A lot of people are looking for the heroes and the Torch, and once the heroes leave the forest, as they're nearing the temple, have them each make several Intelligence checks (DC 20) to recognize the numerous scrying sensors watching them. They should realize that it won't be long before their enemies come in force to try to take the Torch.

The heroes might react to this in many ways, though the two most likely reactions are to hurry and try to get the Torch fixed as quickly as possible (because if they don't, the next time they try to come, there will likely be a whole army camped outside the temple waiting for them), or to return to Seaquen, where they'll be well-defended enough against the few enemies who would be able to teleport in at a given time.

If the heroes don't go to the temple yet, nothing keeps them from going later, though you'll have to change some of the events in the next adventure to adjust for the resistance lacking the power of the Torch. They might not try to fix the Torch until they find Trilla herself to get a legitimate piece of her soul in adventure ten, though between now and then agents of the Ragesians and Shahalesti will be trying to steal the Torch away.

The Temple's Trials

When the temple was in use, there were two main reasons someone would undergo a trial in the temple. One was to reshape your soul, removing elements you didn't like and adopting traits you did. Many students would go into this trial, and would carefully choose who came with them, since it was easiest to adopt traits that your companions possessed. This trial could also be used to create a soul, such as to bring sentience to a construct, or to restore a friend who had been slain by dark magic. It is this trial the heroes will be undergoing.

The other trial was to achieve enlightenment, to learn that one's soul is constantly in flux, a balance between forces in the world around one. Those who pass the second trial surrender their corporeal bodies, and thereafter exist within the temple only to provide wisdom and guidance. The temple's current master, 41, never undertook this second trial.

Psionics in the Adventure

As in all of the adventures in the campaign saga, the psionics rules are not necessary in *Trial of Echoed Souls*. Where psionic abilities appear, we have provided nonpsionic equivalents in the text or in sidebars.

The Temple of Echoed Souls

The temple lies along the Shan River, eight miles from Ycengled Phuurst. The terrain here consists of cold hills, covered in hard-packed snow and ice. The temple itself is built into the side of a cliff, and aside from the entry room, the meditation rooms, and the final chamber of the master, the temple interior does not really exist.

Beyond the mirror in the front hall, the next three sections of the temple are created as needed, each fulfilling one of the three stages of the temple's trial. A creature who passes through the mirror willingly accepts the temple's power into his mind, allowing those rooms to be as good as real for them. However, if someone tries to move forward before completing the appropriate part of the trial (such as by traveling ethereally, using *greater teleport*, or other magic), the rest of the temple is effectively solid rock. If a hero manages to get into the final chamber, 41 will be quite irritated.

Similarly, fleeing the temple during the trial is difficult. While it is possible to simply bash through the stone between areas 2 and 11, teleportation magic and similar powers used to escape the temple require beating Spell Resistance 31.

The temple reacts when the heroes arrive, and so the following descriptions include scripted elements that occur as the heroes travel inside. Some may change based on the heroes' actions.

Running the Trial

When the heroes undergo this trial, they will face challenges in the physical world while intermittently seeing flashes of visions from their pasts, either events they participated in, or events that involved them that they were unaware of. Then later, once 41 starts meddling, some of the visions become dangerously real, and these echoes of the past start to react with a life of their own.

Some of these visions will be drawn from the heroes' lives, while others are reflections of the enemies the heroes are facing. For your player's characters, we suggest general themes to focus on, though you will need to draw on the characters' individual backgrounds to personalize them for your group. The NPC visions are provided in greater detail, though of course if you aren't using this adventure as part of the campaign saga, you'll need to change some things.

When a vision occurs, at least at first, all of the heroes find themselves standing in a perfectly realistic illusion of the event. The vision occurs around them, the figures within the illusion simply re-enacting events that occurred, and so nothing and no one reacts to the heroes' presence. The visions are insubstantial and cannot harm the heroes, and when they end, the images fade around the heroes, and they are left where they were when the vision began.

The visions serve to highlight the action in the real world, and should be relatively brief, because they somewhat remove control of events from the players, since the visions are intangible and cannot be interacted with. Your goal, then, with these visions is to ensure that every vision provides some motivation to act.

Early visions can reveal elements of character backgrounds that might prompt the rest of the heroes to be helpful or suspicious, especially if the vision reveals a secret. Some of these secrets might even be things the character himself is not aware of, though be careful not to change a character's background in a way the player won't like. For later visions, 41 will cause things to start going crazy, which turns the visions into potential role-playing and combat encounters.

Normally you should only have one vision per character, but if you have a particularly small group, you might want to double up on a few, to give the heroes as much screen time as the villains.

Note that except for the Shahalesti and Ragesian forces the heroes encounter in Area 14, and 41's actual physical body in Area 15, all of the

things the heroes encounter during the trial are only semi-real. Creatures who attempt to disbelieve what they see and succeed their Will save (DC 25) treat these creations as only 80% real: they deal less damage, and nondamaging effects only have an 80% chance of working, though the walls of the various rooms are all solid. A successful disbelief works for the current encounter, but the hero must try again once the next encounter starts. (These encounters, in general, are "Trial of the Bell," "Trial of the Offering," "Trial of the Self," and "Final Trial.")

Area 1 — Front Balcony

Two stone staircases ascend 40 feet up to a large balcony here. Four bells hang alongside each staircase, just out of arm's reach. Proper ritual requires that no more than four people ascend each staircase, and that groups of eight who enter are considered blessed. A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 25) recalls this fact.

The bells begin to ring on their own as the heroes ascend past them, though the number of bells which ring is never greater than the number of people who climb the stairs. (If three went up one side and two another, only three would ring on the one side, and two on the other.) The bells toll until the heroes pull open the front doors, at which point they stop, and the ringing seems to hover over the heroes for a moment.

If four people have ascended the stairs when the doors are opened, those characters gain a +2 bonus on Will saves within the temple. For each additional person, this bonus improves by +1, to a maximum of +6 for a group of eight people. If more than eight have climbed the stairs when the doors are opened, none of them gain the bonus. This bonus lasts for one day or until the characters leave the temple.

For the purpose of this boon, creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or greater count as "people" as long as they have a soul. Familiars and similar intelligent bound companions can be considered part of the same person, or a separate, at your discretion. If the heroes have more than eight people with them, they can still gain the bonus if they make sure to open the doors with just eight (perhaps having others fly up to the balcony instead of walking).

Area 2 — Front Hall

Directly in front of the entrance is a large mirror, which reflects everything in it as if seen through *true seeing*.

As soon as the heroes enter, eight faintly glowing rings appear on the ground, and an aged, brown-skinned man in light burgundy robes appears in the mirror, standing among their reflections. This is the spirit of one of the temple's old masters, **Haathon**.

> The figure in the mirror speaks slowly, his voice echoing strangely. "I cannot hold his power back for long, but you stand at the edge of peril. The one called 41 controls the temple now, and will destroy you if you enter."

If the heroes insist on entering, Haathon asks what they have come for, and if they present their goals so they sound worthy, he nods in acceptance.

> "41 is cruel, and will turn his vileness upon you, but the ritual of the trial is older than him, so I and my fellow old masters will ensure you have a chance. You must face the temple's trials. If you pass them, reach 41, and defeat him, you will be able to craft a soul to your desires.
>
> "First is the trial of the bell. Not all dangers can be defeated with physical might.
>
> "Second is the trial of the offering. The sinister and righteous paths await you, and how you best the challenge will determine what awaits you beyond.
>
> "Third and final is the trial of the self. Your past will return to you, and you must find within yourselves that which you seek. Be warned that 41 will attempt to corrupt your past. Your wills must be strong if you are to defeat him.
>
> "No person can exist alone in this world. Within the temple, your companions' strength is your own. The temple gives you the power to tap their souls briefly. I suggest you try now and practice, but be warned that using this gift can leave souls entangled, and abusing it can make it impossible to disentangle.
>
> "When you are ready, stand in the circles and face your reflections, then will yourself through the glass, and the trial shall begin. I cannot tell you how to face these trials, but be true to yourselves. Remember, what you bring with you is all that will be present in the trial."

Haathon can briefly instruct the heroes on how to tap each other's souls (see the sidebar), and briefly explain the nature of the temple and what the meditation rooms represent, though he stresses that he doubts they can hold back 41's power for more than a few minutes.

If the heroes linger for too long, 41 overwhelms the old master and comes to taunt the heroes.

Soul Tapping for Dummies

While advanced soul tapping is represented by various psionic powers (which, for ease of play, we present as spell-like abilities in 41's stat block), the temple allows people to easily draw upon the powers of their companions. To attempt any of these options, you must first be mentally focused. Attaining focus requires a Concentration check (DC 20) as a full-round action. Then choose an ally within line of sight who possesses the power you want to tap, and spend a standard action to make a Will save. Each attempt expends your focus, and you must regain focus before you can try again.

If successful, you gain access to that power, as described below, for one minute. Unless otherwise noted, any ability you gain functions exactly as it would if your ally were using it, so if a feeble mage uses mimic attack to echo the raging two-handed axe-chopping barbarian, his attacks and damage are the same as that person, as he briefly gains the strength, skill, and even weapon of that person.

If you fail, you take 1 point of Wisdom damage. If you fail by 5 or more, you instead take 1d6 points of Wisdom damage.

You can only tap one ability at a time. If you tap another ability, you lose the previous ability.

Communicate (DC 0). You can communicate telepathically with your ally for one minute.

Tap Skill (DC 10). You can use a single skill your ally possesses with that ally's skill modifier.

Tap Save (DC 10). One of your save modifiers becomes equal to that of your ally. If you mimic a Will save, you still suffer penalties to soul-tapping attempts due to previous failed attempts. You also gain evasion or similar abilities related to the chosen saving throw.

Tap Attack (DC 15). Choose one attack form your ally is skilled with, such as melee with two weapons, or grappling, or firing a bow. With that combat style you fight as well as your ally.

Tap Spell (DC 15 + spell level). You can cast a spell or use a spell-like ability an ally possesses. This expends the ally's ability to use that magic, just as if your ally had used it.

Grant Power (varies). You can also give an ability you possess to an ally. The DC is the same as it would be to take that power yourself.

Miscellaneous (varies). Other options for powers to soul tap are of course available, though these should generally be limited to powers characters possess, and not those of items they have. Use your best judgment to determine an appropriate DC.

The old monk's image in the mirror flickers and fades. The doors to the temple slam shut with a boom, and in the meager light coming through the cracks under the doors, you see a new figure reflected in the mirror. He is strong and muscular, his expression that of someone violently annoyed with a pestering child; someone who will commit the basest crime merely to end the noise.

"I don't make speeches," he says in a grim voice. "You probably expect something dramatic, but I'm just going to kill you. Then your souls — you know those? — I'm going to destroy them, because they're not even interesting enough for me to keep around and torment. Hurry up and come to your deaths."

The man's image in the mirror vanishes, his confident voice echoing long after he is gone.

Areas 3 to 10 — Meditation Chambers

These eight rooms each represent one of the elements of the temple's philosophy. Each contains a simple cot for sleeping, a dish for water, and a desk upon which sits some token that represents that element.

Area 3 — Space. A folded game mat with a grid on it — akin to the game Go — lies on the desk.

Area 4 — Death. An empty clay flower vase sits on the desk.

Area 5 — Life. A pomegranate, looking freshly picked, waits on the desk.

Area 6 — Time. On the desk sits the bottom half of an hourglass, with no sand in it.

Area 7 — Earth. A gold nugget lies on the desk.

Area 8 — Fire. A candle sits on the desk, beside flint and steel.

Area 9 — Water. Nothing sits on the desk. The token from this room is the dish of water.

Area 10 — Air. On the desk sits a recorder (a kind of wooden flute).

Beginning the Trial

When the characters are all ready, they must stand in the glowing circles, and once everyone is ready, the trial begins. Normally no more than eight people can go into the trial at once, though if you have a particularly large group, or if there are animal companions and such, they can probably squeeze into the glowing rings as long as they're no larger than Large.

Haathon makes it clear that anyone who does not go with the group will be stuck outside and not be able to follow.

You face your reflections in the mirror, and then among your companions you sense a unity of purpose. As one, you will the trial to begin. You feel the sensation of traveling without moving, and then the world around you vanishes, replaced with somewhere new, a place and time that you somehow know is long gone. You are standing in a vision of the past.

If the heroes took the time to explore the meditation chambers, and were wise enough to consider the metaphorical import of the temple's elements, they gain useful boons. Each of the meditation chambers had one token that represents the appropriate element, and if a character brought that item with him, he gains the appropriate boon for the duration of the trial. The hero becomes aware of that boon as soon as the trial starts.

These boons only last as long as the heroes are in the trial, and cannot be exchanged (though their powers can be mimicked by soul tapping). They are considered supernatural abilities.

Space. The hero can teleport 30 feet as a swift action once per round, but must have line of sight to his destination.

Death. As a standard action, the hero can create a 10 foot radius field, centered on himself, that blocks psionic effects. This is particularly useful in defending against 41's mental attacks.

Life. The hero gains fast healing 5.

Time. The hero's initiative is determined as if he had rolled a 30. He can choose to take a standard action any time he could take an immediate action, but if he does so he cannot take any actions on his next turn, as if he were dazed.

Earth. The hero gains DR 10/adamantine and sonic resistance 5.

Fire. The hero gains fire immunity.

Water. The hero gains a +5 bonus on attack rolls, a +5 dodge bonus to AC, and a swim speed equal to his base land speed.

Air. The hero gains a fly speed of 60 with perfect maneuverability.

List of Visions

Of this list, "The Fellowship" needs to occur. The others can be used or discarded as you choose. If you plan to use any particular vision more than once, it is easiest to reuse "The Shadow" and "The Child."

The Fear. Vision of a hero's past in which he is frightened, fleeing from danger. The vision reveals something about the nature of what caused the fear, such as the creature flying over the streets of Gate Pass (a huge red dragon, its face scarred with a flame design).

The Child. A vision of one of the heroes in his childhood, revealing some element of his family or youth he had forgotten, such as an encounter with something magical that explains a mysterious power he possesses.

The Fellowship. A vision of the heroes as a group, working together, or of them failing to work together. This vision occurs just as the enemy group is entering the temple, and the vision cuts to reveal them approaching, to show contrast (hopefully) between the heroes' unity and the disunity of the enemies.

The Shadow. Vision of a hero's past where he acts against his perceived nature, or where he confronts someone who is his dark opposite. An example would be a hero seeing a hint that Katrina is a traitor. The vision should preferably reveal something that the hero was hiding from the rest of his companions.

The Self. A vision of the hero coming into his own, perhaps coming of age or being recognized as a hero. An example might be a mage being recognized as a master spellduelist at Lyceum. The vision also reveals consequences of whatever led to the hero's victory — the foe's ally plotting revenge, or a rival growing jealous — to show that by becoming an individual, the hero has accepted a life more complicated than before.

Alternately, the vision might occur later, when the visions can be interacted with, giving the hero a chance to face someone he never resolved his issues with. For example, a mage who studied with Gabal in Gate Pass might be able to witness the archmage's power, and show off some of his own, earning Gabal's approval.

The Battle. A vision of one of the heroes in a battle. This scene reveals little if anything, but serves as a backdrop for the battle between the heroes and the group of Ragesians and Shahalesti in Area 14, The Trial of the Self. The heroes face their current foes; earlier versions fight other enemies from the past.

The Mother. A vision of a wounded hero, physically or emotionally, being tended by a nurturing figure. Preferably the "mother" should say something pithy and wise that means one thing in context, but also comes across as valuable advice to some problem the hero currently has.

The following visions occur once the enemies enter the temple. A suggested order is included in the description of the temple. If you are not using this adventure as part of the campaign saga, you'll need to change these to fit your own setting.

Katrina the Spy. The heroes see proof that Katrina was closely associated with Leska.

The Indomitable One. The heroes witness the capture of Indomitability, a trillith from the Fire Forest (see adventure two, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*). The fey Song of Forms becomes a liability for the heroes.

The Fall of the Taranesti. In this vision, Taranesti armies battle the Shahalesti.

Warriors of the Fourth Army. This vision shows Ursus, the druid inquisitor, leading a battle into a Shahalesti city.

The Scourge. The heroes see the inquisitor Etienna discussing the Scourge Prison, which provides the hook for the next adventure, *O Wintry Song of Agony*.

Shaaladel's Purge. Here the heroes see Shaaladel and one of his lieutenants discussing the genocide against the Taranesti.

Shalosha, daughter of Shaaladel. The heroes witness the Lord of the Shahalesti being a gentle father and a noble leader.

The Torch. Another battle, with warriors standing at the side of Coaltongue as they defeat Syana the gold dragon and provoke the creation of the Torch of the Burning Sky.

The Aquiline Heart. The heroes witness a young Leska returning to her emperor, announcing that she has found the Aquiline Heart, secret of immortality.

Area 11 — Trial of the Bell (EL 12)

The heroes first witness a vision of The Fear (detailed above), and near the end, the sound of a bell overlaps the sounds of the vision. The vision ends suddenly, and the heroes are in a long hallway with a vaulted ceiling, and mirrors on three walls. They are all clustered in the three squares adjacent to the west wall, and above them hangs a bell, 15 feet up. The east end of the hall looks like it has been bricked up, with a keyhole in its center. (This wall hides the doors shown on the map.)

The vaulted ceiling acts as an echo chamber, but is amplifying the sound much more than it should. Any creature that whispers takes 1 point of sonic damage each round it speaks as its words rebound on it. Speaking with a normal voice deals 1d6 damage to the speaker and 1 point of damage to everyone adjacent, and shouting deals 4d6 damage to the speaker and 1d6 to anyone adjacent. Even moving is dangerous; creatures must make a Move Silently check for each move or standard action they take. If the check beats DC 20 the creature takes no damage. If it beats DC 10 the creature takes damage as if it whispered. If the check fails DC 10, the creature takes damage as if it spoke.

If the heroes look, a Search check (DC 30) finds a small shattered gem on the floor, similar to one in Rhuarc's black scimitar.

The Two Paths: Opening the lock on the east wall requires an Open Lock check (DC 30), which causes the wall to silently split apart and slide into the wall. Alternately, the wall can be broken (hardness 8, 60 hp). Beyond the wall are two oval mirrors. The left is tinted blue, and the right is tinted red, and a message is carved in the wall between them.

Game Master's Map pg. 664



> SPEAK YOUR NAME AND BE DIVIDED
> TO PATHS SINISTER AND RIGHTEOUS.
> A SACRIFICE OF BLOOD
> IS THE KEY TO YOUR SALVATION.

Speaking your name transforms one of the mirrors into a glowing portal. Only one portal can be open at a time, and only the person who opened it can pass through. Once he does, it closes. If a hero has one of the boons gained from bringing an elemental token, the portal opens on a specific side. Otherwise, the portals alternate so

that an equal number of people end up in each of the two following rooms.

The first portal that opens is the left one, the "sinister path," which is keyed to the elements of air, life, time, and water. The right portal leads to the "righteous path," keyed to the elements of death, earth, fire, and space.

Bell Trap (CR 12). Unfortunately, the floor directly in front of the brick wall is a pressure plate, which triggers the bell at the other end of the hall to ring. A Search check (DC 20) locates this, and a Disable Device check (DC 25) disables it.

If the bell rings, it tolls once per round, its sound echoing and shaking the hall. At the start of the first round it does 1d6 points of sonic damage. This damage doubles each round (2d6, 4d6, 8d6, and finally 16d6). Casting a spell requires a Concentration check (DC 10 + half damage dealt that round + spell level). Once the bell's damage reaches 2d6, the mirrored walls begin to crack, and once it reaches 8d6, the stone wall with the keyhole shatters, revealing the mirrors beyond. These mirrors are immune to shattering.

The Mother Vision

This series of encounters can be very dangerous, and the heroes have little chance to rest once they begin the trial. If you want to avoid a potential Total Party Kill, the nature of the temple gives you a viable out that doesn't smack too much of *deus ex machina*.

Whenever the heroes seem close to defeat, the action is interrupted and the world suddenly goes black. This vision involves only the heroes, and is hidden from the Ragesians and Shahalesti, as well as from 41. The heroes can see each other, and they also see a moment from the past when one of them is being tended to by a gentle, motherly figure, after the young hero was injured or when he was facing a difficult challenge. The scene is quiet and subdued, passing in a moment, just long enough for the heroes to catch their breaths.

The vision fades out, and all of the heroes are restored to full health and have limited-use abilities (such as spells) restored to their condition when the heroes entered the temple. The action then continues where it left off.

Only use this option if you think the players will accept it. If your group would balk, it's better to have the heroes be defeated and survive through their own wits instead. If you do use it, however, it should be a dramatic turning point. Hopefully the heroes won't end up losing afterward....

If the heroes are not careful, they will trigger the bell, and then have to race to open the lock or shatter the wall so they can pass through the portals. And once they do, the temple forces the group to split up.

Areas 12 & 13 — Trial of the Offering

When the heroes enter these areas, they witness a vision of The Child (detailed above). When the vision fades, the heroes are standing near each other, but the two groups see two dramatically different scenes.

Those forced down the sinister path find themselves in the eye of a storm, a circular wall of rain surrounding them, forming the boundary of the room that is as solid as stone. The ground is flooded ankle-deep with water, and floating 20 feet overhead is a blue orb that contains a willow tree, a single glob of amber gleaming on its trunk. Standing beneath the willow is a ghaele, the same celestial being whom the heroes encountered in the Fire Forest. She is confused to be here. On the east end of the room, undisturbed by the wind and surf, is another mirror, with a space in its frame just the same size as the piece of amber.

In the righteous path, the heroes find themselves standing on a rocky platform above a cracked ground that seethes with fire, surrounded by walls of stone. Huge pillars of stone spiral upward around the room, starting at 2 feet high, increasing by another 2 feet with each consecutive pillar, so that the final pillar is 18 feet above the ground. In the center of the floor is the top hemisphere of a red orb, within which lies a silver sword. On the east wall is a mirror, with a piece missing that is the exact shape of the sword. Twenty feet overhead floats a misshapen creature, resembling a mass of arms, legs, and faces, which is moaning in a hideously beautiful chorus.

These two areas are linked. Each room has a mirror which becomes a portal when the proper item is placed in the mirror — the piece of amber for the sinister path, the sword for the righteous path. However, acquiring either of these items requires a sacrifice, since only the death of an intelligent creature can open the barrier that holds the necessary item.

The names of the paths refer to what is expected in each. The sinister path confronts the heroes with a noble being as their prospective sacrifice, while the righteous path confronts them with a monster that few heroes would have qualms killing. However, each room's trial can be defeated either by killing the creature, or by a hero willingly sacrificing himself to save the creature from death.

Though the events in the two rooms are separate, a portion of each room overlaps the other. In the overlapping portion, heroes can see their allies in the other room, and if two heroes touch each other, they switch rooms. A given creature can only switch rooms once per round. Area effects in one room do not cross over to the other room, and neither the ghaele nor the monstrous chorus can see creatures in the other room.

To run this encounter, we suggest you draw the two areas next to each other, so that it is easy to tell where a space in one room correlates with the other.

Area 12 — Sinister Path (EL 13)

This room quickly floods, the water deepening by 2 feet per round, though it is fairly calm and easy to swim in (Swim DC 10). The ghaele is not willing to let itself be sacrificed for the heroes' ambitions, and will fight to defend itself if the heroes try. It takes to the air, swooping around the globe encasing the willow to keep cover as it uses its spell-like abilities.

Ghaele (CR 13): hp 65, MM.

If the heroes kill the ghaele, the globe around the willow shatters, and the heroes can recover the piece of amber (assuming they can get to it). Alternately, one of the heroes can choose to willingly kill himself, which likewise shatters the orb. When the amber is placed in the appropriate spot on the mirror's frame, the mirror transforms into a portal to Area 14.

Once both the portal here and in Area 13 are opened, any creature who willingly sacrificed himself is returned to life by *true resurrection*.

Area 13 — Righteous Path (EL 13)

This room's floor is on fire, and in the center is a hemispherical globe, beneath which is the silver sword the heroes need to open the portal on the far wall. Moving through the flaming ground deals 2d6 points of fire damage each round.

The heroes will likely need to climb up the spiraling pillars to reach their foe. This horrible creature was once a group of adventurers who delved into the temple and failed the trial. Their souls and bodies were fused together and bound within the temple. Now they simply serve as a guardian, barely able to understand their wretched condition. It attacks aggressively.

The Chorus (CR 13): hp 133, Appendix B.

As with the sinister path, the globe dissolves once the chorus is killed, or once a hero willingly sacrifices himself, and a creature who sacrifices himself is restored by *true resurrection* when both portals are opened.

Choices and Consequences: If the portal is opened after slaying the creature in that room, each creature who passes through that portal gains the ability to use *slay living* as a spell-like ability (caster level 11th, Fort DC 17) one time before the end of the trial. If the portal is opened after a hero sacrifices himself, those who pass through that portal can use *heal* as a spell-like ability (caster level 11th) one time before the end of the trial, and the creature guarding that room becomes loyal, following and aiding through the rest of the temple.

These creatures are merely echoes of the real beings, so if the heroes slay the ghaele, the one in the Fire Forest survives, though it might feel distrust of the heroes.

Area 14 — Trial of the Self (EL 18)

When the heroes first step into this room, it is simply a huge, spare chamber, 40 feet high, 40 feet long, and 65 feet wide. The portcullis on the map does not exist yet. This room is where the heroes' pasts will be brought to confront them, starting slowly, but quickly growing more and more chaotic when the Ragesians and Shahalesti enter.

The heroes will face enemies here, but the environment will change every few rounds. Despite the backdrop for the battle, the dimensions of the fight are always limited to the same area, filling the size of this room. These borders are as solid as stone, and the images that lie beyond them are just illusions.

After a moment of standing in the open room, the heroes witness a vision of The Fellowship. After witnessing a moment of teamwork (or failed teamwork) from their own past, the vision flickers to the front of the temple as the enemy group reaches the doors.

The Other Fellowship

The group includes Shalosha and Katrina, whom you recognize, and several people you don't — a pale elf mage, another elf with a greatsword, a hunched inquisitor holding a scimitar and spear with a huge polar bear behind him, and a half-orc knight in crimson armor. The leader of the group seems to be a female inquisitor, wearing a beautiful alabaster mask, and pale white armor. She speaks to you:

"We are here to stop the Seaquen quislings, not to battle each other. They are too resourceful for us to fight amongst ourselves." She turns to Shalosha. "We Ragesians, at least, are not known for betrayal." Then to Katrina, "Though there are precedents."

She turns to the doors and says, "I shall guide us, for my eyes can pierce the illusions of this temple."

The pale elf mage sneers. "Don't overestimate yourself."

The female inquisitor says nothing in reply. She nods to the red knight, and the man steps forward to open the doors.

Inquisitor Etienna (CR 13): hp 88, Appendix B.
Inquisitor Ursus (CR 12): hp 119, Appendix B.
Karedan, the Red Knight of Ragesia (CR 12): hp 95, Appendix B.
Katrina (CR 13): hp 74, Appendix B.
Nahrem, Shahalesti necromancer (CR 12): hp 42, Appendix B.
Nahrem's skeletal minion (CR n/a): hp 78, Appendix B.
Rihalles, Solei Palancis dreadnought (CR 12): hp 73, Appendix B.
Shalosha (CR 14): hp 64+13, Appendix B.

These enemies have a +5 bonus to their Will saves while in the temple, because they came in a group of seven, and most of them have used some manner of buffing spell or magic items, detailed in their stat blocks. If the heroes have previously killed off any of these NPCs, try to replace them with someone thematically similar, though with a lower power level.

This combat can be difficult to run because it involves seven unique NPCs, and because the combat environment can change rapidly and dramatically, so we have tried to provide simple and straightforward round-by-round tactics for each of them. However, the scene should be quite memorable.

Eventually these enemies will reach the heroes, but not quite yet. First, the temple has some challenges of its own for them.

Facing the Past

While the Ragesians and Shahalesti make their way through the temple, the heroes are caught up in more visions of their past, some of them overlapping with visions from their enemies.

First, they witness a vision of The Shadow (detailed above). When this vision ends, the world shifts to become a grand ballroom, with a giant gilded window facing outward to a moonlit lake. The heroes are now witnessing Emperor Coaltongue's midsummer ball from three years ago, taking place in the Ragesian Imperial Palace.

Katrina the Spy

The hall is filled with hundreds of the most powerful and wealthy people in the world, dressed to celebrate the midsummer festival. Elvish warlords trade stories with an international cavalcade of noblemen, while Wayfarers tumble and blink their way through the room, sending up smatterings of applause.

One end of the room is dominated by a huge gilded window that looks out upon a moonlit lake. Standing before this vista is a huge crowd, and in its center stands Emperor Coaltongue, smiling as he regales his audience with an amusing battle anecdote from his early years as a soldier, of how he got the scar across his face. The group laughs at the story's conclusion, and amid the crowd you recognize Shalosha, the princess of the Shahalesti. She stands beside an older elf with a severe face, who by the respect given him must be Lord Shaaladel.

A woman in a conservative red ballroom dress comes up to the emperor's side, and it takes you a moment to recognize this as Katrina, looking far more humble than you've ever seen her. She moves beside the emperor, and when Coaltongue sees her his smile falters.

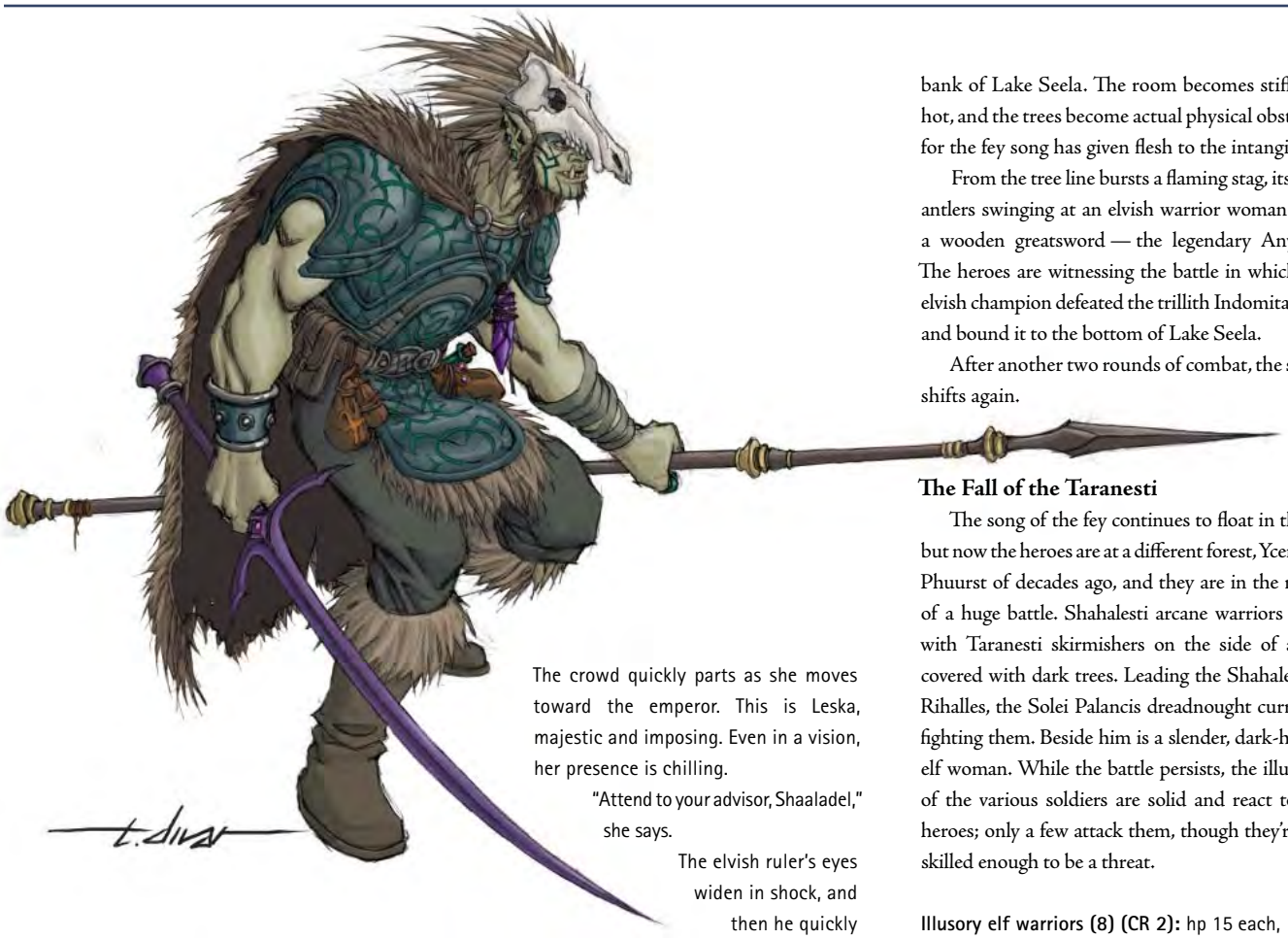
"Your mistress sent you to ruin my party?" he asks. "Have Leska tell Guthwulf he can take longer if he'd like. I know he enjoys it so much.

Katrina shakes her head. "The Supreme Inquisitor sent me to ask for Lord Shaaladel. He ... pardon me, the Lord of the Shining Land ... apparently missed an appointment."

Shaaladel seems to pale, and Coaltongue looks to him in curiosity.

"Are you two squabbling again?" asks the emperor. His sigh is like the growl of a dragon. "I was hoping she wouldn't bother us tonight. Go talk to her before she decides to come to the party. We're trying to have fun, and I would hate to see Leska so completely out of her element."

The room grows suddenly quiet, and the Emperor turns to glare in your direction. For a moment you think he's seen you, but then a woman glides through you, part of the illusion. She wears a dark red robe and a bleak skull mask, capped with an elaborate headdress of feathers and primitive tribal charms.



The crowd quickly parts as she moves toward the emperor. This is Leska, majestic and imposing. Even in a vision, her presence is chilling.

"Attend to your advisor, Shaaladel," she says.

The elvish ruler's eyes widen in shock, and then he quickly excuses himself, striding to the doors out of the hall. Leska's eyes are cold, but a dark smile curves her lips.

"The music, please, my emperor," she says. "Do not for me deny yourself your 'fun.' The summer is so precious, these long years."

Leska turns to leave, and Coaltongue quickly snaps to the musicians to start playing again. Dance music fills the room as Leska nears the exit. Just then the doors open with a boom as seven people and a white bear burst into the room. Your enemies have arrived.

The battle with the Ragesians and Shahalesti begins right as the ballroom's occupants pair up to dance. The dancers are incorporeal and do not react to the heroes or their enemies — not yet, at least. After two rounds of combat, the world shifts.

The Indomitable One

The strings of the ballroom music change to the aural symphony of the fey song of the Fire Forest, and in the middle of the battle, the dancers look around, reacting to the presence of the heroes and their enemies. Only a moment later, though, they dissolve, and the grand hall is replaced with the towering trees of the Fire Forest, surrounding the bank of Lake Seela. The room becomes stiflingly hot, and the trees become actual physical obstacles, for the fey song has given flesh to the intangible.

From the tree line bursts a flaming stag, its fiery antlers swinging at an elvish warrior woman with a wooden greatsword — the legendary Anyariel. The heroes are witnessing the battle in which the elvish champion defeated the trillith Indomitability and bound it to the bottom of Lake Seela.

After another two rounds of combat, the scene shifts again.

The Fall of the Taranesti

The song of the fey continues to float in the air, but now the heroes are at a different forest, Ycengled Phuurst of decades ago, and they are in the midst of a huge battle. Shahalesti arcane warriors clash with Taranesti skirmishers on the side of a hill covered with dark trees. Leading the Shahalesti is Rihalles, the Solei Palancis dreadnought currently fighting them. Beside him is a slender, dark-haired elf woman. While the battle persists, the illusions of the various soldiers are solid and react to the heroes; only a few attack them, though they're not skilled enough to be a threat.

Illusory elf warriors (8) (CR 2): hp 15 each, Appendix B.

At the end of the first round of the vision, the dark-haired woman raises her hands, and a wave of dust bursts outward from her, disintegrating the forest and many Taranesti. The dust deals 5d6 points of damage to everyone else (Fort DC 20 negates) as it partially disintegrates them.

When the dust clears, the vision has changed again, partially. The battle in Ycengled persists in one half of the room, while the other is witness to another scene. From this point on, each half of the room changes every other round, staggered so one is changing at the end of each round.

Warriors of the Fourth Army

Half the room shifts to a huge assault upon a Shahalesti city, buildings springing up throughout the room, and dozens of troops filling nearly every empty space. If the fight is still going on, use this to divide the two sides if possible — perhaps putting the heroes inside a building while their enemies are trapped in the streets — giving each side a chance to regroup. In the vision, Ursus calls down a *flame strike* upon an archery nest of Shahalesti soldiers, while his polar bear companion tears through soldiers in the streets.

Over Too Soon?

What if the heroes easily wipe the floor with the Ragesian and Shahalesti agents? It's certainly a possibility, and is almost a certainty if they can get Katrina on their side. In this case, simply watching the visions or fighting the few mooks in the visions, who would normally be little threat, is not satisfying. Instead of having the heroes sit around and wait for the visions to finish, you can just have 41 appear, and have the visions continue as 41 provides the climactic battle.

What if They Lose?

If the heroes are defeated in battle, they might still have a chance for victory. The surviving enemies have to face 41, and the old masters of the temple might aid the heroes briefly, healing them and guiding them toward 41's vulnerable physical body.

Alternately, the heroes could be captured, and the Torch seized (but not repaired). The next adventure just happens to be centered on a deadly prison, so you could start that adventures with the heroes imprisoned, having to engineer a prison break.

Ursus ~ Art by Tim Divar

Illusory orc warriors (8) (CR 2): hp 16 each, Appendix B.

The heroes might miss it if they are busy, but once Ursus has defeated his immediate foes, a woman in black monk robes glides down from the night sky and nods to the inquisitor. This woman is an East Wind monk and agent of the archmage Pilus. She is alerting Ursus that a group from Seaquen is headed to Ycengled, and that he should make sure he is part of the group that goes to stop them. Ursus nods at this, and then the vision ends.

The Battle

The other part of the room shifts to be a battle from one of the heroes' pasts. The enemies here might join into the battle, and weaker versions of the heroes might briefly aid their current selves.

The Scourge

A part of the chaotic battle calms suddenly, revealing a dark room where Etienna the inquisitor is braiding the hair of what must be Leska. The supreme inquisitor's face lies in shadow, but her mask and head-dress sit on a nearby table.

"The progress of this foot war wearies me," Leska says. "Pray, raise my spirits, Etienna."

"Mistress," Etienna says, "Kreven sends word that he now has his six hundred souls to torture, so the Scourge will be ready within a month. Soon, we will no longer need to seek the Torch."

"Yet she who trusts the sun can still be burned," Leska says. "And I feel heat upon my neck this night."

The vision fades.

Shaaladel's Purge

Half of the room cuts to the outskirts of Ycengled in the aftermath of the Shahalesti crusade. Shaaladel stands beside the necromancer Nahrem, directing the chaining of a Taranesti prisoner to the side of a tree. A Shahalesti scout notices the heroes' battle, and weak Shahalesti soldiers move to defend the elvish lord, who activates an amulet to teleport himself away. The older version of Nahrem might have some spells to harass the heroes briefly.

Illusory elf warriors (8) (CR 2): hp 15 each, Appendix B.

The Self

Now an eye of calm appears around one of the heroes as he is presented with some part of his past that either represents his coming of age, or gives him a chance to face a rival. This small area, just 20 feet in diameter, persists as long as you deem it interesting, then fades away.

Shalosha, Daughter of Shaaladel

Meanwhile, part of the room shifts to an illusion that is as intangible as the early ones. Here, Shalosha tells her father Shaaladel about her concerns that the war will tear their people apart. Her father responds that they may have to do terrible things to ensure the safety of their nation, and that he would die to protect his beloved daughter. She promises to act with honor on her mission to Seaquen. Then the vision ends.

The Torch

In this vision, a much younger Coaltongue and a small horde of orcs battle the gold dragon Syana at the edge of a waterfall. A young gold dragon, Trilla, is chained and guarded, and one of the guards is Karedan, wearing a red tunic the same color as his current armor. A group of allies fighting with Syana are aided by a trumpet archon, while a bone devil fights at Coaltongue's side.

Illusory orc warriors (17) (CR 2): hp 16 each, Appendix B.

While orcs swarm toward the strange threat posed by the heroes and their rivals, the Coaltongue of the vision has his axe sundered by someone who can be recognized as a much younger Rhuarc, wielding his signature black scimitar.

The trumpet archon cuts down the bone devil, and a desperate Coaltongue boots Rhuarc into the river so that he eventually tumbles over the waterfall. Then the half-orc warlord rips out the femur of the bone devil just in time to parry a killing blow from the trumpet archon. He grabs the archon by its neck and drives it to the ground, then caves in its skull with the bone club.

The club begins to glimmer with fire as Coaltongue stands and orders his men to all fire at Syana, who is wheeling in the air for a strafing pass. Hundreds of arrows rise into the sky, blotting out the sun, but Syana breathes a gout of fire that ignites them, filling the sky with a rain of cinders. Unfazed, Coaltongue stalks over to the panicking young Trilla, plants his heel on her neck, and holds the newborn Torch high, threatening to kill the child if her mother does not relent.

But Syana draws in a breath, and fire engulfs the warlord as he brings down the Torch in spite. The blow connects with Trilla's jaw, and then flame consumes all. The vision ends abruptly, the song of the fey fades, and the room is left dark.

The Final Trial (EL 18)

Light reenters the room, dimly illuminating even its farthest corners, and revealing a bronze portcullis in the east wall.

Right where Trilla lay, a small gem gleams on the ground, a sliver of diamond holding a fragment of the dragon's soul, created anew. If any enemies survive, they all try to get the gem, sensing its import. Most likely the battle will have ended well before this, and the heroes will be able to claim the reward for surviving this trial.

When the heroes pick up the gem, they feel a presence within it, and get the mental image of a child sleeping. Then before the heroes can start wondering if they have won, the portcullis rises, and 41 enters the room.

"So you have what you came for," he says. "Intriguing, but you don't know what to do with it." He cocks his head with a smile. "Too bad." His forearms transform into bear claws, and he attacks.

41's projection (CR 18): hp 127, Appendix B.

Fixing the Torch

The heroes now have the soul they sought to create, but getting it into the Torch where it needs to be requires applying the teachings of the temple. A hero must attempt to tap the soul in the gem (Will DC 15), and then grant that same power to the Torch (Will DC 15). Each attempt is a standard action, and requires the hero to attain focus each time (Concentration DC 20 as a full-round action). If a hero is successful, the gem's light dims, but the Torch's flame flickers to life.

See Appendix A for details of the powers available to the Torch in this slightly weakened state. The hero who fixes the Torch is fully aware of the powers of the Torch, and may choose to gain control of it if he wishes.

Tactics

Fighting 41 is more of a puzzle than a test of arms. What the heroes face is not the monk's real body. If the heroes try to disbelieve what they see, they realize that his body is but a projection, semi-real like everything else here. Killing this projection is impossible. The heroes have to either kill 41's real body, or consume 41's spirit with the power of the Torch.

Until the heroes figure out what to do, 41 toys with them, clawing at them and making

them recall past agonies. If after two rounds the heroes don't figure out that their attacks aren't effective, you can have an image of Haathon appear near the portcullis and beckon the heroes to go down the hallway.

When the heroes get wise to where 41 really is, or when they start swinging the Torch at him, he changes tactics dramatically, and does his best to kill whoever has the Torch and protect his body. Each round he uses one of his four favored attacks (*psychic crush*, *recall agony*, *telekinetic maneuver*, and *ultrablast*) until he is out of powers.

Area 15 — Master's Lair

This room is dominated by a gold shrine 20 feet tall, and the ceiling, 30 feet high, is one massive mirror. The shrine is a simple pointed roof supported by four wooden pillars (hardness 4, hp 20), and beneath the roof of the shrine are racks of aged scrolls on the nature of evil. The walls are slowly shifting murals of various devastations, cruelties, and massacres going on across the world. One of these walls, however, is strangely empty, depicting just a cracked expanse of white stone stretching out to the horizon, with a sinkhole in the foreground. Its scale is impossible to judge.

41 watches these images from his vantage point on the top of the shrine's roof.

41's body (CR n/a): hp 1.

The temple's master is old beyond his years, his body withered and helpless, but with the temple his mind can still influence the physical world. 41's physical body can easily be coup de graced, and any attack that deals 11 points of damage to him kills him. While getting up to him might be difficult, if two of the legs of the shrine are destroyed, the roof collapses, and the fall itself will nearly kill the feeble monk.

Alternately, if 41's projected body is reduced below 0 hp when the Torch is repaired, the Torch consumes the monk's soul. The body of 41 spasms and cries out one brief retort, then goes limp and rolls off the roof of the shrine, cracking unceremoniously on the temple ground. Regardless of how 41 is defeated, the Torch's flames flicker with renewed power, and if the heroes want, they can *greater teleport* wherever they want, though they might want to wait to loot or resolve loose ends.

Perhaps a strong-willed hero might briefly bend the temple to his will to divine the answer to some mystery; or a hero who seeks a change within himself can now accomplish it.

If the heroes want to walk out, the next doorway they pass through takes them through the mirror back into the front hall.



Treasure

The scrolls under the pagoda, though unwieldy to carry, function as the lesser artifact, *book of vile darkness*.

Aftermath

Whenever the heroes leave the temple, be it by teleportation or traditional means, one final vision appears in their minds. They see the rift in the white stone from the wall in 41's chamber, and then the image fades to Emperor Coaltongue upon his throne, looking down at what must be a younger Leska. Her face is still hidden under a mask, but she is prostrated before the Ragesian ruler.

"My emperor," she says, "my quest is now complete. This last lost secret finally is ours. Immortality, my lord. The Aquiline Heart."

Conclusion

The heroes have the Torch of the Burning Sky, and they have learned clues to mysteries that will drive the campaign's conclusion. There are many ways they could resolve the rest of the campaign saga, but numerous threats still remain. Leska has prepared some powerful magic, the Scourge, and the final visions claims that she has found the secret of immorality.

The heroes may have made new allies, however. By defeating 41, they have freed Ycengled from its curse. As a result, the heroes have earned the gratitude of the surviving Taranesti — a powerful cadre of high-level barbarians, druids, and rangers — or, if you're interested in a nod to *The Lord of the Rings*, they could gain the ability to call on a grand army of fallen Taranesti spirit warriors. The former is better if the heroes are already winning, while the latter can help turn the tide if the resistance has not been doing well to this point.

If the heroes fail here, the Torch falls into the hands of their enemies, though who among the Ragesians and Shahalesti claims it can make a huge difference. The range of potential outcomes goes far beyond the scope of this adventure.

Even if the heroes do win, though, the battle is not over yet. Powerful though the Torch is, it is not now strong enough to win the war itself. That task is up to the heroes.

41 Attacks – Art by Darren Calvert



Adventure Eight
O, Wintry Song of Agony

for 15th-Level Characters

by Jeremy Anderson
and Ryan Nock

Cover Art by
Tim Divar

As war rages on multiple fronts, the heroes call together their allies for a strike against a secret, frozen fortress that defends the Scourge.

Deep in the icy heart of northern Ragesia, the Scourge is Supreme Inquisitor Leska's greatest weapon: a device powered by the suffering of thousands of prisoners which, if completed, could annihilate a city from across the world.

The heroes must assault this fortress deep in enemy territory, but can they destroy the doomsday weapon before they fall victim to a wintry song of agony?

Background

The heroes have just learned that the second in command of the Ragesian inquisitors, an infamous man named Kreven, has nearly completed a doomsday device, a magical focus known as the Scourge. Spies and captured military plans reveal that the Scourge facility is located in a valley in the frozen northern reaches of Ragesia, and that a massive divination shield wards the entire area. Even though the wayfarer guildmistress could potentially power through even anti-teleportation wards, teleportation beacons — which divert planar travel — lie scattered around the edge of the valley, so the heroes cannot teleport too close, lest they risk being trapped. The valley's walls are too steep for a conventional army to traverse except via one route, through a pass called Frost Needle's Eye.

The valley has long been a strategic fallback point for the Ragesians, but only in the past year has it been converted to its present purpose. Incredible amounts of resources were funneled here, though always done discreetly. It is suspected that not even Emperor Coaltongue himself knew about it, and those in charge of the Resistance now suspect Leska arranged his assassination so she could complete her doomsday weapon.

The Resistance had been using scrying to track to this location hundreds of mages who were captured in the early stages of Leska's bid for power, though their fate now is hidden by the shield. What the Resistance does not know is that the "Scourge" weapon is powered by the collected pain and suffering of these imprisoned mages. Beneath the Scourge fortress is a prison designed to be impregnable to magic-users, with two vitally important prisoners.

The first prisoner is Agony, one of the trillith — nightmare spirits from deep underground who have allied with Leska for their own ends. Agony was not loyal to his brothers, and so was given to Leska for use as her power source. Magically compelled to wield his powers against his fellow prisoners, Agony daily wracks the captured mages with waves of pain. The Koren Obelisk captures this suffering and harnesses it as a power source, and if the heroes can kill or free Agony they will render the Scourge powerless.

The second prisoner is one with a unique relationship with Leska herself. Four decades ago, the forest of Innenotdar, located near the city of Gate Pass, was set alight, killing most of its inhabitants except for a clan of fey known as the Seela, who survived only because of the magical Song of Forms. Trapped in an endlessly burning forest of flame, the Seela sent their strongest, Etinifi, on a quest to find release for them. Etinifi managed to escape the flames, and roamed the world, looking for a way to heal his homeland.

He learned of the legend of the Aquiline Heart, said to be able to mend any wound and grant immortality, and in his search for it he met Leska, at the time just a young woman assigned the impossible task of finding the supposedly mythical Heart. Together, however, the two discovered the lost trail to the location of the Heart, and slowly grew to love each other. But when they reached their goal, the defenders proved too strong, and to save himself Etinifi betrayed Leska, draining her life force so he could achieve immortality for himself.

Though left as little more than a husk, Leska survived and claimed immortality as well. The betrayal had cut her to the core, and afterward she never cared for anyone again. After using the secret of immortality to gain the favor of then-emperor Coaltongue, Leska tracked down Etinfi, captured him, and devised a prison that would eternally punish the man who had betrayed her. Leska knew how to kill Etinifi despite his immortality, but she chose instead to place him at the bottom of a oubliette that would eventually become the Scourge prison.

Today, Etinifi and Agony are bound in the same chamber at the bottom of the Scourge prison. Etinifi has little left of himself other than the Song of Forms from his homeland, which can hold at bay the power of Agony. Inevitably, however, his song always falters, unleashing waves of pain throughout the prison.

Welcome to the eighth adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. The stakes continue to rise. The heroes have so far assisted the liberation of nations, overcome the challenges of multiple terrifying dream monsters, and continually done battle with the forces of the tyrannical empire of Ragesia. With help and information from the wind-wielding brothers Longinus and Pilus, the heroes have fought their way through a fortress where the artifact known as the Torch of the Burning Sky first fell from the dead fingers of the former Ragesian emperor. There they found clues which led them to the present location of the Torch, a den of assassins in the haunted forest of Ycengled. After confronting the killers, they reclaimed the Torch and endured an ancient trial in order to restore the artifact's faded power.

Though victorious, they emerged with the Torch only partially restored; more importantly, however, the trial revealed visions of the past … and secrets of the present.

Introduction

The Scourge

The heroes have learned a most pressing secret: the existence of a new weapon being created by Leska, the current leader of Ragesia. Known to the heroes only as "The Scourge," the nature of this threat is unclear, but it seems it will be ready within the month.

The Scourge is the Ragesian code name for the Koren Obelisk, a magical focus of immense power, that, when complete, would dwarf the power of the Torch itself. While the Torch of the Burning Sky permitted the previous Ragesian emperor to transport his armies anywhere he wished, the Obelisk would give Leska the power to wield her magic directly across any distance. Coupled with her formidable personal spellcasting arsenal, the Obelisk might plunge the entire world into eternal despotic rule under Leska's thumb.

If the heroes can manage to destroy the Koren Obelisk and free Etinifi, they can learn the secret to defeating Leska (which will lead to the campaign's climax in adventure twelve, *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart*). However, the man's prolonged torment has left him mad, longing for nothing more than an end to his existence, and unfortunately, the only way he knows to do that will kill everyone else in the process. This sets the stage for the next adventure, *The Festival of Dreams*.

Developments

If you have played the whole campaign saga to this point, the heroes likely have many allies and enemies from the previous seven adventures. The following NPCs might be of use to them, or could prove dangerous enemies.

Grateful Rescuee: Tiljann

Tiljann, the seela woman from the Innenotdar fire forest may have accompanied the heroes to Seaquen after the second adventure. If she did, she has made herself useful in the war, becoming a Wayfarer (CG female seela bard 3/seela paragon 2/sorcerer 1/Wayfarer cirqueliste 9), and so can replace Wayfarer Guildmistress **Sheena Larkins** (N female half-elf bard 6/rogue 1/Wayfarer cirqueliste 9). Tiljann can remind the heroes of the Song of Forms, and of the seela legend of the Longwalker, a hero named Etinifi who left his people to find a way to defeat a great fire beast, but never returned.

Double Agent: Katrina

A Ragesian spy, **Katrina** (N sorcerer 14) may

have betrayed the heroes in the previous adventure, or could have turned on her masters, depending on how the heroes interacted with her. If she is still alive, she can offer knowledge about Kreven.

Lyceum: Simeon and Kiernan

Headmaster Simeon of the Lyceum (LG male middle-aged human diviner 7/loremaster 7) is in charge of the Resistance, but as a diviner he is not suited for direct conflict. His place is in Seaquen, with his trusted guard **Kiernan** (LN male dwarf abjurer 13) beside him. However, these men can provide aid in the form of defensive and divination magic while the heroes are in Seaquen.

Dassen: King Steppengard, Duke Gallo, or Lord Iz

Depending on how well the heroes did in the fourth adventure, one of these worthies is in charge of the nation of Dassen, which could be one of the Resistance's greatest allies. If Dassen is an ally, its ruler devotes one of his armies to this mission, hoping to use the power of the Scourge to strike down the Ragesian armies who are attacking his lands.

Monastery of Two Winds: Longinus and Pilus

The two brothers in charge of the Monastery of Two Winds play a small role in this adventure unless the heroes are actively hostile to them. Longinus will offer a few of his monks for the battle, as well as *air walk* or *wind walk* spells to help the heroes bypass the first line of defense at the Frost Needle's Eye.

Pilus also plays a role in this adventure, and his involvement foreshadows what the heroes will have to face in adventure eleven, *Under the Eye of the Tempest*. Pilus has created a massive living airship named *Tempest*, and he has allied with Khagan Onamdammin, ruler of the nation of Ostalin. Pilus is not ready to start destroying everything in his path yet, but he has spies too, and he realizes the danger posed by the Scourge. He will offer his airship's powerful weapons to clear the way for the heroes.

Shahalesti: Shalosha and the Elves

The daughter of the ruler of the elves, Shalosha (CG female elf commander 1/wizard 6/eldritch knight 7) can get soldiers to aid the main assault, and might accompany the heroes if she has a particularly close bond with any of them. If you are ending the campaign saga with this adventure, for closure's sake it is best to also include Lord Shaaladel (N middle-aged male elf fighter 4/commander 16), who will lead his forces himself.

Back from the Dead: Drakus Coaltongue

If the heroes retrieved Emperor Coaltongue (LN male venerable immortal half-orc fighter 4/commander 20) and restored him to life, the former ruler of Ragesia wants to be involved in toppling Leska, but most of the heroes' allies were not particularly fond of Coaltongue before he was assassinated. Not wanting to be imprisoned or killed again, Coaltongue is willing to play a minor role for now, offering to contact various military leaders from Ragesia to convince them to turn against Leska. His plan is to declare a formal successor, who will rule Ragesia, but not the outlying lands that used to be independent countries.

Either way, Coaltongue will have little to do with this adventure unless the heroes want to trust him in battle. After all, he is a high-level warrior, and immortal to boot. The forces at the Scourge fortress are all loyal to Leska, but the sight of their old emperor might break their morale.

Seaquen: Other Allies

Even if the heroes have failed at just about everything, Seaquen still has an alliance with the nation of Sindaire, whose legions are the backbone of the conventional forces for this mission.

As for other allies, we suggest you come up with other elements of the Scourge's defense that require their attention, rather than have them accompany the heroes. While their allies open a path for them and keep the army occupied, the heroes' focus is the Koren Obelisk. For example, if the heroes have the aid of the drow assassins from the previous adventure, those two might sneak into the Frost Needle's Eye and take out some initial defenders.

Also, remember that despite having a *teleportation circle* to get them to the edge of the

Adapting the Adventure

O, Wintry Song of Agony works easily as a stand-alone high-level adventure. The fortress works excellently for a villain's stronghold that only the bravest heroes would dare attack. The Ragesian army can be any enemy force, and the Obelisk itself can be any stationary doomsday device. What matters most is this:

- The heroes learn that the villains have built a device of terrifying power and dominance, and that it is near completion. They know where the device is, and have obtained plans for it. Their first course of action is to prepare for an assault, though the enemy is proactive in hindering them, making use of the doomsday weapon.
- The heroes can only travel extra-dimensionally to the edge of the enemy zone, and from there they must travel in a more linear manner. The fortress could be in a demiplane, a magically-resilient tunnel network in deep recesses underground, or – as in the adventure – just be a heavily warded area with nigh-impassable natural boundaries. Once they arrive, the heroes must fight or sneak past the enemy forces.
- The heroes must then descend into the heart of the vile prison-machine providing the doomsday weapon with its power, and slay or free its living power source.

Coincidentally, each of these three important issues is a summary of one of the three acts of this adventure.

Starting the Campaign Here

O, Wintry Song of Agony makes a perfect starting point for a short, high-level campaign. The focus of this mini-campaign is Leska's use of the trillith, a strange dream-spawned menace, which she wields in an attempt to conquer the world or, if stymied, to destroy it.

In this version, great heroes are called upon by the nations opposed to Ragesia to undertake a strike mission into the Scourge facility. The Koren Obelisk is itself powered by the Torch of the Burning Sky, allowing the heroes to possess it for the rest of the campaign, though its power has been drained to create the obelisk. (In the normal version of the campaign, the Torch is at reduced power until the heroes encounter the Mother of Dreams in adventure ten, *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child*.)

Ending the Campaign Here

You can also retool the campaign and make this adventure the final mission. In this case, Leska herself is at the Scourge fortress to personally oversee the completion of the Koren Obelisk. Lower-powered versions of Leska and Shahalesti ruler Shaaladel appear in Appendix B.

The simultaneous battles in the movie *Return of the Jedi* can inspire this final conflict. Perhaps the Shahalesti wish to defeat Leska and claim the Torch from the heroes, leading to a three-way battle in the Obelisk room, while the two armies outside defeat the Ragesians and then turn on each other.

Scourge's valley, the heroes's allies still need to get to the same place so they can teleport together. There is a certain paucity of spellcasters who can even cast *teleportation circle*.

Adventure Overview

While the heroes meet with their allies to discuss how to attack and destroy this "Scourge," the Koren Obelisk is activated, devastating a swath of Seaquen and making it clear this threat must be dealt with immediately. Not only is its power great enough to ruin any other military offensive they might make, divinations suggest that power stems from the despair of hundreds of tortured people, making its very existence an abomination.

The heroes must disable the power source, and then break the Obelisk itself. Leska is no fool, however. She has set an entire army to the task of guarding the compound, and between the Burning Sky making teleportation deadly and the vast power of the Obelisk itself, any traditional assault seems impossible.

Thanks to the heroes, however, all is not lost. The Torch of the Burning Sky, while not fully functional, will let the heroes teleport their allies close enough to the Obelisk to attack the Frost Needle's Eye watchpost, where they will draw out the forces guarding the main fortress. Allied general Xavious Foebane recommends that while the armies battle for ground, the heroes take advantage of the distraction to attack the fortress itself.

In a bunker fortress beneath a vast, icy valley, Kreven and his staff work tirelessly on improving the Obelisk. His wife Koren works beneath them in the Chamber, taking already-tormented victims from the Halls of Pain and weaponizing them for the Ragesian army. And beneath this lovely couple, the Halls themselves await, full of crazed wizards who fight for what little relief they can find, and the cell of Agony and Etinifi.

For now, the Obelisk itself is protected from attack. The heroes must infiltrate the facility and reach the antimagic "clean room" that leads to the prison. Inside the prison they locate the source of the Obelisk's power and remove it, either by killing or freeing Agony. Without the misery caused by Agony, the Obelisk's defenses are weakened. Not only will the wards around the valley be dropped — opening a path for the Resistance army — the mighty Koren Obelisk itself will be rendered nothing more than a block of bloody ice.

The Consequences of Failure

If the heroes failed at the end of the last adventure, their enemies claimed the Torch for themselves, and may have taken the heroes as prisoners. Bound by powerful charms and wards to prevent them from using magic, captured heroes were taken to the Scourge prison, interrogated by Kreven, and tossed into the gulag like wood fuel into a furnace. But therein yet lies a glimmer of hope: the very prison the heroes are taken to is the home of the Koren Obelisk.

In this course of events, the heroes must find their way out of the prison, re-equip themselves, and fight their way out of the prison, destroying the Koren Obelisk on the way out. You may have various allies come to their aid, since even without the Torch, the Resistance could find a way to open a *teleportation circle* and attack. You can also make the Torch a component of the Obelisk, so that the heroes can retrieve it when they defeat Kreven.

Kreven Lore

Bardic Knowledge, Gather Information, or Knowledge (Arcana)

DC	Information
25	Kreven is the second in command of the inquisitors, a brilliant human spellcaster who is zealously devoted to Leska.
30	Kreven is married to a woman named Koren, a former Wayfarer who served at the pleasure of the Ragesian emperor.
35	In truth, Kreven is not a cleric like most inquisitors, but a sorcerer. He has developed a personal spell which can easily slice off limbs or cut a man in half.

Psionics

While Agony wields psionic abilities, the psionics rules are not necessary to this adventure. Agony is one of many trillith, dreamborn monsters that play an important role in the campaign saga of *War of the Burning Sky*. While many of their abilities are inspired by psionic powers, they can just as easily be portrayed as unique dream magic. If you are using psionics, psychically sensitive characters will recognize Agony as a psychic being at a moment's glance and will probably recognize the power filling the Halls of Pain as a psionic effect. However, we present his powers as spell-like and supernatural abilities for ease of play.

Using the Obelisk

Controlling the Obelisk requires knowledge of dozens of secret tricks and arcane insights which the heroes lack, though that's not to say they can't try. You might let them use it one time at the end of this adventure, but after that their meddling should cause it to overload and destroy itself.

Conquest

Conquest is a popular board game, played by many commanders, aspiring commanders, and casual aficionados throughout the region. Any number of players can participate in a game of Conquest. The rules of the actual game are complicated and detailed, but you can simulate a game played by the heroes using the following rules.

Each round, players make opposed Knowledge (history) checks, representing their familiarity with historical military tactics. The player with the smallest force has no bonus; a force twice as large gains a +2 bonus, and a force four times as large gains a +4 bonus, with an extra +2 for each doubling thereafter.

If the game goes beyond two rounds, each round thereafter you have the ability to bolster your forces with economy, politics, and propaganda. This grants you a +2 synergy bonus for each of the following skills you have 5 or more ranks in: Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nobility and royalty), and Sense Motive. A particularly clever gambit can grant a +2 bonus, at the game master's option.

If your check is highest, you may have one opponent suffer a "Loss," or you can remove one of your own Losses. For every 5 points you win by, you can inflict one additional Loss, either to the same foe or to another one, or you can remove one of your own Losses. For each Loss a player has, he takes a –2 penalty on his Knowledge (history) checks. Once a player's total modifier is 20 points or more below the next lowest player, that player loses. The last player remaining is the victor, though players can choose to end the game in a draw.

A player can choose to use the Aid Another action, representing an alliance, though, as in reality, an alliance provides no guarantee that your "ally" will not simply use his position to harm you, inflicting a Loss on you. A player can also choose to attack recklessly, gaining a +4 bonus on his check, but automatically taking a Loss at the end of the round.

Act One: A Hanging Sword

In this act, Seaquen is attacked by the Koren Obelisk, and the heroes help the Resistance plan its assault on the Scourge fortress.

The Second War Council

The heroes have recovered the Torch of the Burning Sky, and while the Resistance wants to begin to liberate lands overrun by the Ragesians, a more pressing matter hangs over the leadership. Months have passed since the heroes brought a case of coded plans to Seaquen, and the code has finally been cracked, just as the heroes return from the Temple of Echoed Souls with clues of a looming threat.

The heroes are called back to Seaquen to report, and though Simeon wants to speak to the heroes in relative privacy at first, it does not take long before their return is noticed. Throughout the city rumors are buzzing with their return that the tide is about to turn, and that they are about to bring the fight to Ragesia.

During the war council, Simeon explains that he has finally managed to decipher the coded documents the heroes brought many months ago — he briefly looks wistful at the memory — and says that the news is not good. The Ragesians have been working on a superweapon for more than a year now, code-named the Scourge, and combined with the clues the heroes bring from the temple, it seems that it won't be long before this weapon is turned against them.

While Simeon would like to maintain secrecy and strike with a surprise attack, to destroy the Scourge superweapon he knows they'll need a large force. He'll set his most trusted guards to protecting the heroes, and within a few days they should have the necessary precautions in place to have an honest to god war council. The idea seems to excite Simeon.

Mission Planning (EL 15)

Soon enough, it is time for the heroes to go to the council of war. When the heroes arrive in Simeon's conference room at the Lyceum academy, they find dozens of major players in the war gathered. Their many allies or representatives thereof are present, along with overwhelming amounts of security, intended to keep anyone from trying to steal the Torch away.

By a large table at one end of the room are Headmaster Simeon, Kiernan, and the elderly dwarf commander Xavious Foebane. At nearby tables sit representatives of Dassen (most likely Duke Gallo), Sindaire (most likely Ambassador Numhaut), and the wayfarers (probably Guildmistress Larkins), with seats reserved for the heroes. All others who are in attendance sit on step seating at the edge of the room, with guards — swordsmen and sorcerers — watching every entrance. Exactly who is present depends heavily on the heroes progress so far.

The heroes should notice that two of the representatives from Ostalin are dressed like monks from the Monastery of Two Winds.

Everyone tries to call out to the heroes and to see the Torch, but Simeon has warned them that his nerves are raw right now, and that anyone accosting the heroes will be treated as an enemy and ejected from the meeting without question. Give the heroes a chance to meet with whoever most interests them, but the meeting is starting soon, so they should take their seats.

Most everyone else is being quiet, so you might want to encourage the heroes to keep their voices low until it comes time to speak up. However, players seldom like to be spectators, so don't worry if they interrupt. It just means they want to be involved.

Simeon calls the meeting to order, and Kiernan places his black stone scepter on the table, which you know will keep the nearby area safe from attack. Simeon nods thanks to Kiernan, then speaks.

"Alright, friends," Simeon says, "let's get to business. You all should have been briefed about the situation. We have the Torch in our possession, though it appears that it's not quite as strong as it was when it belonged to Coaltongue. I know you all want us to start attacking the Rags in your neck of the woods, but we have a more urgent matter."

He looks at you.

"The papers you brought us make several references to Kreven, the biggest dog on Leska's leash. He is the head of the inquisitors now that she has become emperor. It seems the reason we have not seen much of him recently is that Leska placed him in charge of a new project. The chief inquisitor's mastery of magic is now providing a sort of focus to a magical device the Ragesians have worked up. They refered to it by the code name of 'The Scourge.' Kiernan can give you more details."

The dwarf steps up, and when he speaks his tone is one of measured concern.

"The papers make numerous references to a subterranean prison in an icy wasteland near a landmark called the Frost Needle's Eye. The eye is the entrance to a steep-walled valley in northern Ragesia. We believe this prison is where all of the mages captured by the Ragesians have been taken for the past several months, and the Scourge is built over that prison, somehow drawing their power into an eldritch device.

"This sword Ragesia has hanging over our heads is more formally called the Koren Obelisk. It is a pillar of ice, designed to focus and empower magic. A spellcaster who knows the secrets of its use could send a spell through its icy heart to emerge practically anywhere, and to affect many more targets than normal. If Leska could simply snuff the life from the heads of state in every city she dislikes ... well, the war ends, doesn't it? We lose.

"Being as our streets do not yet run red with blood, clearly the Scourge has not been finished yet. Evidence points to it being nearly done, and we expect they have entered the fine-tuning phase of their work. Traditional divinations are useless, because the entire facility where it is housed is warded against such magic, but through unorthodox channels we have learned that Kreven has been summoning devils and sending them on far-ranging missions to test the Obelisk's ability to target and strike from afar. We suspect we have a month at the absolute most."

Kiernan steps back, and Simeon nods thanks, then gestures for the other dwarf, Xavious Foebane, to speak. The man stands, and gestures to the center of the room. An aide standing nearby chants a spell, conjuring an illusion of a vast valley and surrounding terrain.

"This is the Scourge fortress's valley," Xavious says, "at least as it looked a few years ago. We've modified it with information from the stolen plans and knowledge gleaned from soldiers abducted outside the scourge valley. The place is not huge, just four miles across, but has cliff walls too steep to bring an army through, and only one avenue of approach, through the Frost Needle's Eye, which has been fortified. An ice sheet beneath that fortress is used to scry on the entire valley, detecting those who breach its borders. It seems that the divination shield does not hinder the Ragesians' own magic, and that there are many other wards.

"The Scourge fortress has its own self-sufficient army of elite soldiers. Many are inquisitors. Apparently the inner lands are interwoven with magic fields that strike down those who are not loyal to Ragesia. Likewise, direct teleportation into the valley simply fails.

"These defenses are mighty, but not impregnable. As works of magic, they can be dispelled, suppressed, and claimed as our own.

"In the center of the valley is a bunker, with the prison dug deep into stone beneath it. The Obelisk is inside this bunker, no doubt heavily guarded. Even if we could get an army into the valley, overwhelming forces win us nothing against such a small target. So we have a different approach.

"The Torch will not let us teleport an entire army in one swoop, though if we use it in conjunction with the power of the wayfarers, we will be able to create a temporary teleportation circle, and those passing through it will be protected from the heat of the Burning Sky. With proper preparation, we can easily get a force of several thousand into position outside the valley, though we have no illusions about avoiding detection by the Ragesians. Indeed, that is part of the plan.

"The army will march against the Frost Needle's Eye and claim the scrying sheet, which will blind the Ragesians. We hope to draw out the bulk of those forces guarding the inner bunker, while a strike force sneaks into the valley and attacks the bunker directly."

Xavious looks to you.

"If our ruse works, you should be able to enter the prison practically unchallenged and destroy their machine. Who will you be bringing with you?"

At this point, Xavious turns to the heroes and addresses their leader by name. He asks who they want to bring along with them, stressing that the heroes will need to make an appearance at the initial attack on the Eye. The Ragesians know about them now, and will be suspicious if they are not present. Once the scrying sheet is disabled, they'll be able to slip away and make for the main fortress.

Before more discussion can start, however, the two monks from the Monastery of Two Winds stand and interrupt, their voices magically amplified so that everyone turns to pay attention.

"Please pardon our interruption," says a white robed monk. "We have information that you are lacking that should influence your plans. If you'll permit us to deliver a message from our master?"

Some in the council look nervous, but none protest. After a moment, the black-robed monk pulls out an expressionless black mask and holds it in the air. He releases it, and the mask hovers, slowly taking on a vaguely human countenance, resembling the Master of the East Wind, Pilus.

"You have done a very good job. I'd applaud if my hands were there. However, you have not seen the current defenses of the fortress. I don't know if the rumors have spread, but I have been engaged in the crafting of a flying ship. Where your divinations have failed, my more 'traditional' eye has been watching this fortress from high overhead. Strange how rarely Ragesians tend to look up.

"The Ragesians have already threatened the monastery my brother and I have strived to make a place of enlightenment, so we wish to offer our aid, if you'll have us. A score of our students have volunteered for your fight, and I personally offer to remain overhead during the battle. Alas, my airship has no weapons that would be of use in this mission, but I am confident that my timely reconnaissance, which can help you prepare for the Ragesian forces, will be a valuable aid.

"I offer this with no terms, merely that you bear me good will in this war's aftermath."

This should set off another round of discussion. Pilus is actively connected to the mask, and so he can contribute to the conversation. If the heroes view him as a threat, he responds to any unfriendliness without taking offense, acknowledging that he understands their hesitancy, but that cooperation now is the best way to avoid distrust later.

If pressed about his airship, he at first avoids the question, saying his alliance with Khagan Onamdammin requires a certain amount of discretion, but if the heroes insist, he will admit that his ship, *Tempest*, is quite large, and it carries a crew of Ostalin soldiers, but that Onamdammin is not willing to commit them to this battle, since his pride requires he direct any war engagement that his armies are involved in. Additionally, Pilus knows that the valley is warded with a *forbiddance* spell, the power of which would slay any men he sent down. And if the heroes mention it, Pilus admits that indeed, his ship is a living creature, which simply renders it too vulnerable to the *forbiddance*.

If the heroes accept Pilus's offer (and the rest of the council is at least grudgingly in favor of it), he asks them to keep the mask with them, and to pull it out whenever they wish to speak with him, though he politely requests they not bother him with frivolous concerns.

Give the heroes a chance to discuss their plans for a while, perhaps butting heads with other members of the Resistance who don't want to commit troops to a mission that might end with everyone stranded hundreds of miles inside enemy lines if the heroes take the Torch with them. At a dramatic juncture, or when things start to lull, a sudden ice storm strikes.

A thunderous noise fills the air. Screams fill the streets and the sound of breaking glass reigns above them, as a hail of ice strikes the entire city at once, for a period of seconds that seems to last a lifetime. Simultaneously, everyone in the room aside from the heroes and whoever is sitting with them (and anyone with more than 150 hp) is stunned. A strange, mournful song fills the air for a moment, then fades, its tune reminiscent of the Song of Forms.

Frost forms its latticework over the windows and floor with unnatural suddenness, and then the windows and doors burst open. Then the two blizzard elementals attack.

The Attack

Kreven has been using the Koren Obelisk to watch the heroes and wait for an opportunity to attack and claim the Torch. Having lost sight of the meeting when Kiernan activated his *rod of security*, Kreven drew upon the power of the Obelisk to send an *ice storm* upon Seaquen, strike the conference chamber and the entire rest of the tower with an advanced *power word stun*, and summon a group of powerful blizzard elementals.

The heroes' seats were protected by a variant of *magic circle against evil* cast by Kiernan, who had the foresight that someone might try to charm them. Kiernan, Simeon, and Xavious are also protected, and can aid in the coming fight. The floating mask of Pilus watches the fight, commenting on the weaknesses of the elementals in an attempt to help the fight from afar.

Blizzard elementals (2) (CR 13): hp 204 each, Appendix B.

There are many others in the council chamber, all of them endangered by the elementals. The elementals have been ordered to attack the heroes, but they don't mind targeting their attacks to

take out a few bystanders as well. If the heroes respond quickly, they can avoid disastrous losses among their allies.

Terrain

Step seating lies along the eastern edge of the room, with windows rising 20 feet behind the seats. The rooms to the west are a waiting room and a private meeting chamber, which could serve as fall-back locations, since the elementals cannot easily enter them. Outside the chamber, the two hallways lead to classrooms and foyers, where no help is to be had. All of the people who could help are stunned for at least 4 rounds.

Aftermath

When the elementals are defeated, the heroes can check on survivors. Outside the windows they can see a swath of the city, nearly a quarter mile across, is covered in ice, and many buildings are damaged from hail. Most who were out in the streets have been killed.

General Xavious walks to the window and looks out on the devastation.

> "We will not suffer this wound quietly," he growls, vehement. "The Scourge has just lived up to its name, and proven that we cannot afford to let this Obelisk reach its full power.
>
> "We can be ready within days. Should the Ragesians drive us off, we'll bring in another thousand troops the next day, and another thousand, until the dogs of Leska face every man, woman and child of our alliance. We shall break this hanging sword."

After this pronouncement, Xavious heads out to survey the streets for wounded, but asks the heroes to meet him back at the Lyceum academy that evening. Within a few days the armies of the Resistance will be in position for a major strike, and Xavious wants the heroes to be clear on what their role in all this is.

Without Pilus

If the heroes refuse Pilus's help, the aeromancer will nevertheless keep an eye on the assault, since he knows that his plan will be jeopardized if the Obelisk is not destroyed. Really the heroes' acceptance has no effect on his plans (see Act Two), except that he will not be actively speaking with them.

Game Master's Map pg. 665



It's Okay, Really

Things are not as bad as the heroes may believe at this point. This little stunt pushed the limits of the Koren Obelisk, and took Kreven days to prepare. He does not understand the workings of this device as Leska does; he is merely the builder, not the architect, and does not fully comprehend its arcane design. Of course, if the heroes dally, Kreven can continue to attack every few days.

Kreven can still use the Obelisk with limited prep time, but he needs a focus. To this end, he has summoned an ice devil named Velkiss to be the target of his magic. When the heroes assault the fortress, it will be through Velkiss that they first face the power of the high inquisitor.

A Friendly Game

If any of the heroes have taken an interest in the game Conquest (see page 228), Xavious asks to play one great game with them before the mission. This game will represent the entire war as Xavious currently understands it. He will represent Ragesia, and the heroes will represent the Resistance.

Xavious has a +19 bonus to his Knowledge (history) check, and has enough ranks in other skills to gain a +8 synergy bonus for later rounds. The sheer size of Ragesia's armies grants him an additional bonus of +12 to his check, but he also gains a bonus or penalty depending on what victories the heroes have achieved. For each of the following missions the heroes have accomplished, the Ragesian side begins with one Loss.

- Saved Dassen from the Ragesian invasion in adventure four, *The Mad King's Banquet*.
- Gained the friendship of Khagan Onamdammin of Ostalin in adventure five, *Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds*.
- Arranged an alliance with the monsastery master Pilus.
- Forged an alliance with General Magdus and the survivors of the First Ragesian Army in adventure six, *Tears of the Burning Sky*.
- Retrieved the Torch in adventure seven, *The Trial of Echoed Souls*.
- Repaired the Torch with the power of the Temple.
- Arranged an alliance with the Shahalesti elves. Counts as two victories.

You can simply run the game as a battle of numbers, but each gambit represents a tangible part of the Resistance's strategy, and so you can tie the results of each round of the game with one or more of the following missions.

- Destroy the Koren Obelisk.
- Drive the Second Ragesian Army out of Gate Pass.
- Drive the Third Army from Dassen's border.
- Drive the Fourth Army out of Shahalesti.
- Destroy one of the three surviving Ragesian armies. Requires two victories.
- Sack key Ragesian cities such as Muldera, Palesi, Vemerre, and Yroma.
- Foment rebellion in the local populaces of the old nations of Chathus, Kequalak, or Latia.
- Sack Ragos, the capital of Ragesia. Requires two victories.
- Achieve any of the missions from the first list the heroes have not yet accomplished.

Each Loss Ragesia inflicts represents undoing one of the heroes' accomplishments, and then later sacking the capitals of Dassen, Ostalin, and Shahalesti, turning those nations' armies to their own side, and then finally obliterating Seaquen.

Of course, there are factors influencing the war that are not represented in this simplified simulation (Conquest is much more complex than, say, *Risk*), but this game can serve as a good way to keep clear in the players' minds the scope of the war.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes defeat General Xavious in this game, reward them for a CR 16 encounter. Even if they lose, reward them for a CR 14 encounter for playing.

Act Two: The Needle's Eye

In this act, the heroes disable the watchpost at the Frost Needle's Eye and cross the icy wasteland to the Scourge fortress.

This location bears its name because of two separate landforms. First is the Needle, a mile-long arrow-straight pass that lead through the mountains to the Scourge valley. Second is the Eye, a large subterranean ice sheet that old shamans used for scrying, located at the end of the mountain pass.

The Great Mission

With great wariness and little fanfare, the forces of the Resistance gather for this mission. Hopefully one of the heroes will shout an inspiring speech to the soldiers, while mages and priests lend their power to protect the soldiers. Simeon and Kiernan can provide any spells the heroes have asked for, within reason, though they make sure to cast *fly* on each hero, and someone will have provided *heroes' feast*.

The heroes can requisition magic items of up to 20,000 gp each; Simeon recommends substantial amounts of magical healing, since once they go in, they might not have a chance to withdraw. The heroes will have to accomplish their mission in one day, so scrolls will be very useful to spellcasters, and everyone should stock up even on basic supplies like spare arrows. The Ragesians are of course renowned for their antimagic capabilities, so Simeon suggests not overloading on too many "buffing" spells before the first strike.

The mission is set to begin at midnight. When the heroes are ready, someone, likely Wayfarer Guildmistress Larkins, casts *teleportation circle*, targeting a small sheltered valley a half mile from the entrance of the Frost Needle's Eye mountain pass. The hero with the Torch must pass through first, after which anyone else traveling through the portal will be protected from the flames of the Burning Sky.

The heroes arrive in a desolate, frigid tundra, with no one in sight. Just over a low hill to the north is the supply road that leads to the Frost Needle's Eye. Once the heroes give the all clear signal, soldiers begin streaming through, four per round, forming ranks and giving space for the continual flow of troops. Scouts quickly get their bearings and determine they have arrived on location, a half-mile from the mountain pass entrance to the Scourge valley.

Depending on who their allies are, the heroes will have anywhere from three thousand to ten thousand troops, most of them between 4th and 8th level. Most are veteran or elite foot soldiers, with a few Dasseni warmages and a handful of Sindairese druids. The mages who have come along are stocked with dozens of scrolls for different contingencies, and various called outsiders bolster the ranks. In a war with armies numbering in the hundreds of thousands, it is ultimately a small force, but these are the best soldiers the Resistance can offer, and since a teleportation circle lasts less than three hours anyway, getting any more here is impractical.

Mission Stages

Unless the heroes have come up with an alternate plan, Xavious leads the Resistance forces with the following goals.

Stage One

The heroes fly over the mountain wall to attack the Eye while more conventional forces assault the Needle to keep the forces there from pincering the heroes. This, they hope, will draw out the Ragesian garrison at the main fortress in the valley's center.

Up to three heroes can be linked with Xavious and Simeon via a *telepathic bond* spell, though because the Obelisk blocks incoming divination (but not outgoing), Simeon will not be able to hear the heroes' thoughts. Xavious stays at the edge of the divination shield, and so by moving back and forth he can relay messages. The spell will last two hours and twenty minutes.

Stage Two

Once the heroes defeat the defenders at the Eye, they will be able to evade the oncoming Ragesian forces and cross the valley to the fortress when it is relatively undefended. Pilus and his airship will provide guidance to make sure the heroes keep safely out of sight from the Ragesians. Xavious hopes to capture some parts of the defenses in the Needle, so the Resistance forces can hole up and keep the Ragesians occupied for a long while.

During this leg of the mission, the heroes will be able to communicate with Pilus via the black mask that was brought to the council meeting. If the heroes refused his help, Pilus keeps an eye open anyway, and can help out in a pinch, sending an elder air elemental to their aid.

Stage Three

The heroes enter the fortress, find the Koren Obelisk, and destroy it, as well as anyone who looks like they would know how to repair it. If possible, Xavious hopes the heroes will be able to use the Obelisk at least once to destroy the Ragesians here, but he imagines the eldritch machine won't be easy to use.

Resistance forces will hold the pass, and when the heroes are done they're to fly to the rear of the Resistance forces, and create a new *teleportation circle* back home. The allied forces will then withdraw. It's not important to kill all the Ragesians, but if Xavious loses touch with the heroes for more than ten minutes, he'll order a full assault in an attempt to force his way into the valley.

Also, the prison should be located directly below the fortress, so if they have the time, the heroes could do worse than to rescue a few prisoners, though it will likely be logistically infeasible to get out all of them. If the heroes can think of an effective way, they should be rewarded for their ingenuity.

Xavious wants the heroes to keep the Torch. He thinks his soldiers will fight better if they know they're not going home without a victory. The old dwarf commander is certain that a failure in this mission will spell doom for the Resistance, so retreat is not an option.

The Scourge Valley

The Scourge valley is four miles across, with the Obelisk located in a fortress in its center. The Koren Obelisk wards the entire valley against incoming divinations, but inside the valley divination magic works normally.

Unless otherwise noted, all parts of the valley are blanketed in a *forbiddance* effect, set to harm non-Lawful Evil creatures (6d6 damage to LG, LN, NE, or CE creatures; 12d6 to NG, CG, N, and CN creatures; Will DC 20 half; caster level 11th), and blocking all dimensional travel. This ward extends a hundred feet into the air. Individual 60-foot cubes can be dispelled, but they are only suppressed for ten minutes before coming back into effect.

The Needle is sixty feet wide, defended by a force of three hundred soldiers and inquisitors (all Lawful Evil), generally divided into groups of eight in dozens of different bunkers and pillboxes. Wards allow the inquisitors to activate *walls of fire* at various intervals along the pass, and various *symbol* spells face toward incoming forces. Four cunningly crafted greater stone golems hide near the mouth of the pass, appearing at first to be nothing but massive boulders poking out of the ice. They are the first line of defense against an overland assault. Behind them numerous other lines of defense. The Resistance forces have quite a fight waiting for them.

A road crosses the two mile distance from the Needle to the fortress, wide enough for a dozen men to march abreast.

Frost Needle's Eye

The heroes will be detected when they cross over the mountains into the Scourge valley, so all enemies will be ready for a fight. If you wish to run the full battle for control of the Needle, we suggest you use the *Grim Tales* mass combat system, published by Bad Axe Games. This scene, however, focuses on the heroes' actions in taking the Eye.

Surface Defenses (EL 16)

The Eye has ground forces patrolling its exterior, and several *unhallow* spells (caster level 13th) cover a circular area 160 feet in diameter centered on the entrance to the subterranean tunnel. These *unhallows* are tied to *invisibility purge*. The entrance to the tunnel is sealed with a *sonic wall of fire* (caster level 18th), and 30 feet past the roaring wall is a permanent *symbol of stunning* (caster level 13th). Trying to rush past the garrison will have very bad consequences for the heroes.

A small stone barracks west of the tunnel entrance normally lets troops warm themselves and sleep in cramped quarters, but all of the warriors are on guard now. The main road to the Scourge Fortress runs past the snowy hills here, crossing over an ancient frozen lake.

The defense of the exterior is led by Garivus, a warlike inquisitor who commands from the top of a fiendish war mammoth. He controls the mammoth, while archers mounted in a howdah on its back provide ranged fire support. He has used a scroll of *fly* on the mammoth, and has cast many enhancements on himself by the time the heroes arrive.

Meanwhile, dozens of warriors form a defensive ring 80 feet in diameter, while closer to the mouth of the tunnel a group of elite archers watch the skies, with three inquisitors spread out for support. The Ragesians anticipate an aerial attack, so two wyvern knights patrol the air in lazy circles. The wyvern knights and their mounts have received *see invisibility*. They take their spotting responsibilities seriously.

Mammoth Unit

Fiendish war mammoth (CR 12): hp 230, Appendix B. *Fly* (fly 60 good).

Master Ragesian archers (3) (CR 11): hp 85 each, Appendix B.

Garivus, master Ragesian inquisitor (CR 13): hp 88, Appendix B.

Defensive Ring

Standard Ragesian soldiers (40) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

Aerial Defense

Elite Ragesian archers (4) (CR 8): hp 65 each, Appendix B.

Standard Ragesian inquisitors (3) (CR 7): hp 49 each, Appendix B.

Wyvern Patrol

Ragesian wyvern knights (2) (CR 6): hp 50 each, Appendix B. *See invisibility.*

Wyverns (2) (CR 6): hp 59 each, MM. *See invisibility.*

Tactics

The defensive ring and wyvern knights are basically fodder, but any that survive the heroes' initial attack will swarm any enemies they can reach. Garivus prefers to keep his mammoth on the ground so it can trample, but if he is unable to dispel the heroes' *fly* spells, he'll take to the air himself. The other inquisitors generally stay on the defensive, but will try to dispel particularly frustrating magic, while archers concentrate fire on isolated heroes. The wyverns would love to grab a flying foe and hurl him down into the tunnel to the Eye, to be hit by the *sonic wall of fire*.

Terrain

The land is snowy or rocky. Snowy grounds counts as difficult terrain. The Ragesians

Glossing Over the Minutiae

The heroes will probably be leading a coalition force from many different regions, so the heroes would need to teleport to their allies and use the Torch, with the aid of a Wayfarer, to create an initial *teleportation circle* just to get everyone to the same place, which then can be the final staging ground. However, if you prefer the first activation of the Torch to be more dramatic, you can simply gloss over this, or stretch credulity a bit and have the heroes' allies already have marched into position. Do whatever you feel your players would most appreciate.

poured water into the mouth of the tunnel to the Eye, which turned to ice, making the slope slippery (Balance DC 15). Those who slip while descending slide 30 feet per round straight through the *sonic wall of fire* and will be blasted by the *symbol of stunning*. A narrow walking path with handholds cut into the ice goes along each side of the tunnel, which counts as difficult terrain unless one succeeds a Climb or Balance check (DC 15).

Development and Aftermath

The defenders within the Eye do not emerge, nor do those in the Needle come to help. Within moments of the heroes' attack, however, Kreven will be notified of their presence, and the bulk of the forces at the fortress will begin to march within ten minutes. Thirty minutes later they will reach the Eye, so the heroes have at most forty minutes to regroup, head into the Eye, and get out before they are overwhelmed by thousands of Ragesians.

Blinding the Eye (EL 19)

The Eye is a huge sheet of ice, beneath which lives an ancient aboleth that has been trapped here since before the last ice age. The aboleth considers the Eye his domain, but proudly serves the tyranny of Leska. He defends his lair with two dominated *frost worms*, and the Ragesians have left two Nessian warhounds as bodyguards, equipped with collars that allow them to communicate telepathically as if they were true devils. (These collars do not work for non-infernal creatures.)

When the heroes cross the mountains, Kreven sends his wife Koren to shore up the defense of the Eye. Though the area is warded with *forbiddance*, her wayfarer training lets her bypass the ward after one or two tries. With her she brings her personal bodyguard Magnus Fightmaster, two twisted humanoid creatures called nullifiers, and the ice devil Velkiss, who is Kreven's personal servant in this battle.

Frost worm (2) (CR 12): hp 147 each, MM.
Lurker in the Eye, aboleth savant (CR 13): hp 276, Appendix B.
Nessian warhounds (2) (CR 9): hp 114 each, MM.
Nullifiers (2) (CR 10): hp 133 each, Appendix B.
Koren (CR 16): hp 91, Appendix B.
Magnus Fightmaster, claw of Leska (CR 14): hp 105, Appendix B.
Velkiss, ice devil (CR 16): hp 147, MM. See below for details.

Terrain

The cave is fairly nondescript except for the massive ice sheet in its center (Balance DC 12). This ice sheet is not frozen water, but rather the frozen slime of the aboleth savant, put down layer after layer over the centuries. Due to this unique attachment to the ice, the savant can swim through the ice as easily as he could normal water, and can attack out of the ice freely. The ice sheet is only two feet thick, beneath which is normal, albeit frigid, water. If the savant has attacked with its tentacles in the past round, the tentacles can be attacked by creatures above the surface, similar to sundering the heads of a hydra. A sunder attempt that does 19 points of damage severs a tentacle (as well as doing normal damage to the aboleth).

The ice sheet provides total cover from most attacks, but strangely does not block line of effect for the purpose of targeting spells (spells with physical effects, such as fireball, must first bypass the ice as would a normal physical attack). The ice has hardness 0 and 3 hp per inch for any given 5-foot square; it takes double damage from fire. A square that has taken 72 points of damage is considered too damaged to provide total cover, but the debris of the ice still provides normal cover.

Any creature passing over the ice sheet sees images of events around the valley — particularly the battle raging for control of the Needle — shining up from the depths, which is enough to cause vertigo in most people (Will DC 15 each round or the creature is sickened for 1 round).

Preparation

Before the heroes arrive, the aboleth savant uses *mirage arcana* to make the room look more nondescript, and a *programmed image* to lure the heroes to a perilous spot. The first illusion hides the sides of the room where Koren and the rest of the Ragesian forces wait, as well the two frost worm tunnels near the entrance, plus the ice sheet itself, replacing everything beyond the red dashed line with relatively mundane snow and ice walls and floor, and hiding the main ice sheet under illusory snow. The second illusion creates the appearance of a small ice sheet in the area of the map marked with black dashed lines, and causes it to glow. Finally, the savant uses *veil* to conceal the frost worms as giant flaming serpents.

When the heroes enter the chamber, Velkiss, who is hidden behind the illusory wall of the *mirage arcana*, has Kreven cast his *project image* spell.

The figure of a frail old man appears in the glow above the ice sheet at the far end of this cave, and you briefly hear echoes of a fey song. A rich winter cloak drapes across the man's shoulders, but beneath it his body is so withered that the bear skull he wears as a mask could easily be his true face. He holds up a hand to forestall immediate attack.

"You've done very well," he says, his voice refined and dismissive, "but your Resistance is foolish if it believes it can triumph over the might of the Ragesian Empire. I could easily collapse this cavern upon you, yet I would rather not destroy such a valuable scrying Eye. I shall not offer you an alliance, nor attempt to turn you to our side. I simply ask you abandon your hope that you might succeed.

"This world is vast place. Go where you wish, and when Empress Leska has crushed those who have stood against her, I will tell her of your wisdom. She respects the intelligent – those who do not let emotion sway their decisions. If you flee now, she will know you are no threat, and you may keep your lives.

"Stay, and I will have no choice but to ensure your perpetual agony."

If the heroes do not look ready to leave, Kreven chuckles and says, "Excellent. I much prefer to torment you, anyway. Velkiss, destroy them."

At this point, Velkiss and the frost worms emerge from their hiding spots, seeming to erupt from the ice wall. One frost worm trills for one round as the other attacks. Velkiss attacks as well, but there is a roleplaying component nested nested inside this combat encounter, and so this somewhat complicated set-up receives its own section below.

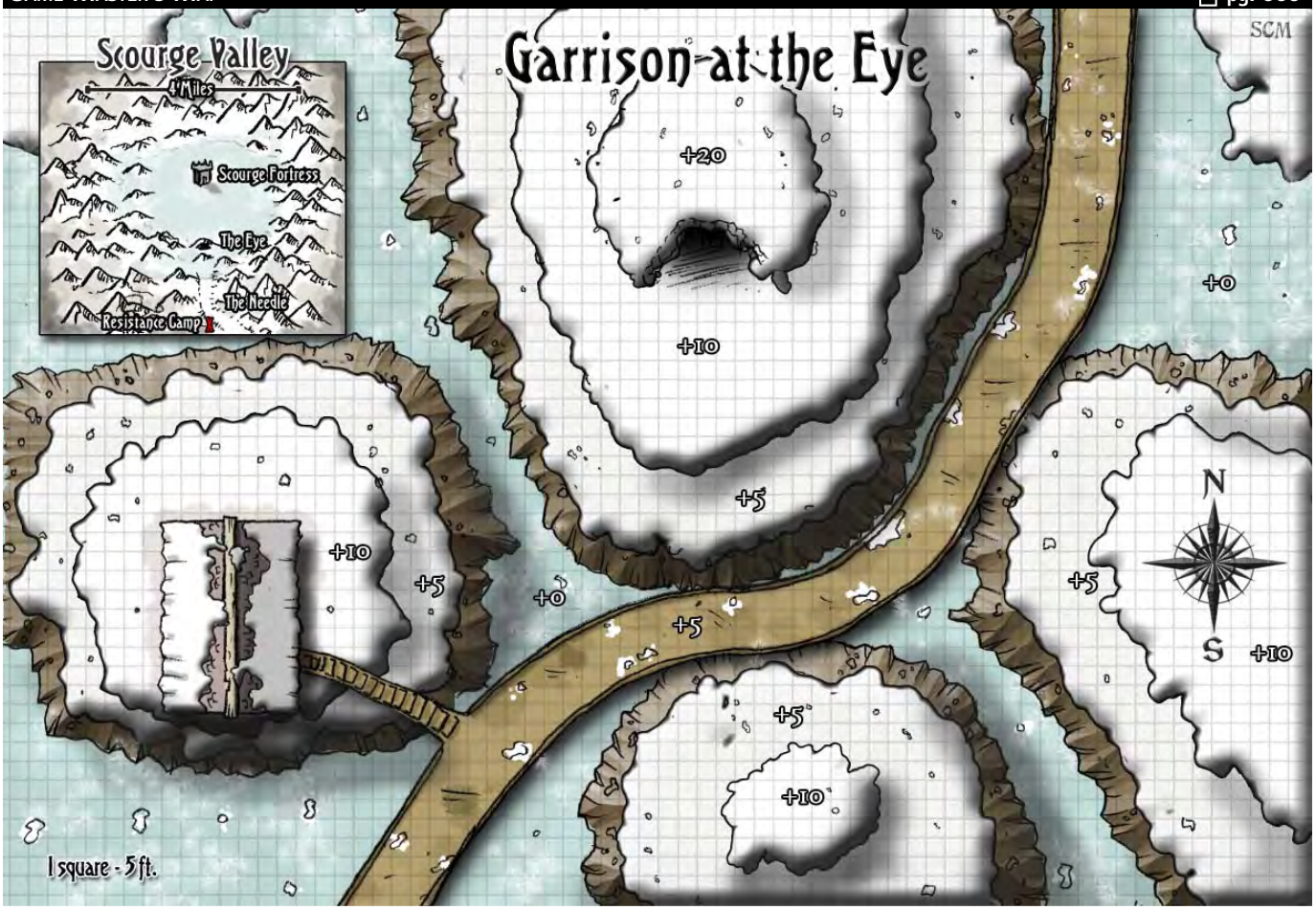
Tactics

The aboleth savant's first action is to dismiss *mirage arcana* for a dramatic reveal of the ice sheet, after which it uses *enslave* round after round until it succeeds. Once it has a minion, it begins attacking through the ice.

Koren has cast *silence* on an ice pillar to protect herself and the rest of the Ragesians against the trill, but she'll send the nullifiers charging in behind Velkiss. If none of the heroes are stunned by the trill, Koren orders the rest of the group to attack, seeing no reason to hold back their full power.

The savant directs the frost worms to use their breath weapons early, before the Ragesians are close enough to be hit in the crossfire. The nullifiers, warhounds, and Magnus attack the heroes fairly directly. Koren, however, stays mobile, usually hiding behind ice pillars and casting spells in the middle of her movement. She casts *haste*

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on her allies, then tries to disable or disrupt the heroes with emotion-affecting magic.

Kreven's projected image will lay a *mind fog* amid the heroes, then use *mass suggestion* (perhaps to get the heroes to cluster near one of the frost worms when it is near death so the explosion will catch them all) and sonic empowered *chain lightning*. Each round he also casts *severing slash* as a swift action, and intermittently gives directions to someone located in the Obelisk chamber, saying things like, "Channel negative energy into chime two," or "Recurse the flow of daons, and quickly!"

When either Koren or Magnus are heavily injured, Koren will move to her bodyguard, grab him, and then teleport back to the Scourge Fortress (which requires her to roll 1d20+20 against DC 22 to overcome the *forbiddance*). Before she teleports, she looks to the *projected image* of Kreven and shouts, "My love, get the healers."

Aftermath

All of the foes here fight to the death except Koren, who if she cannot escape will beg for her life, offering to betray her husband, all while discreetly trying to teleport away. If she is charmed or otherwise forced to talk, she knows everything about the Koren Obelisk except for the exact identity of the creatures who power it.

The heroes might wish to use the Eye, but if they damaged the ice to get to the savant, the visions through the scrying sheet are distorted. At best the heroes can simply see things in the valley, and can see that the army is marching. They can also make out its components — roughly two thousand soldiers, scattered inquisitors and other specialists, and a handful of monsters — information in which General Xavious is very much interested.

Velkiss (EL 16)

This encounter likely occurs during Blinding the Eye, above, but Velkiss has a bit more freedom to range about, and his encounter is complicated, so we detail it separately here.

When Velkiss sees the heroes, he charges, but also begins communicating telepathically.

Velkiss, ice devil (CR 16): hp 147, MM. See below for details.

Special

Because Velkiss serves as Kreven's focus for the Koren Obelisk, the ice devil is currently affected by *magic circle against good*, *shield*, *spell turning*, *stoneskin*, and *true seeing*. He has also used *fly* and *unholy aura* on himself. Kreven can cast spells with range Touch or Personal on Velkiss, but to cast any spells with longer ranges, Kreven must first cast *project image*. This allows him to participate in the combat and gives the heroes an opportunity to see the main villain of the adventure prior to the climax. However, if Velkiss loses line of sight to the projected Kreven, the spell ends. Likewise, if Velkiss dies or is returned to his home plane, Kreven no longer has a focus to target through.

Kreven's presence raises Velkiss's CR by 3, since he effectively has an untouchable 18th-level sorcerer hiding in his body. Kreven's vulnerability to simply having his image dispelled, however, mitigates the effective challenge.

Negotiations

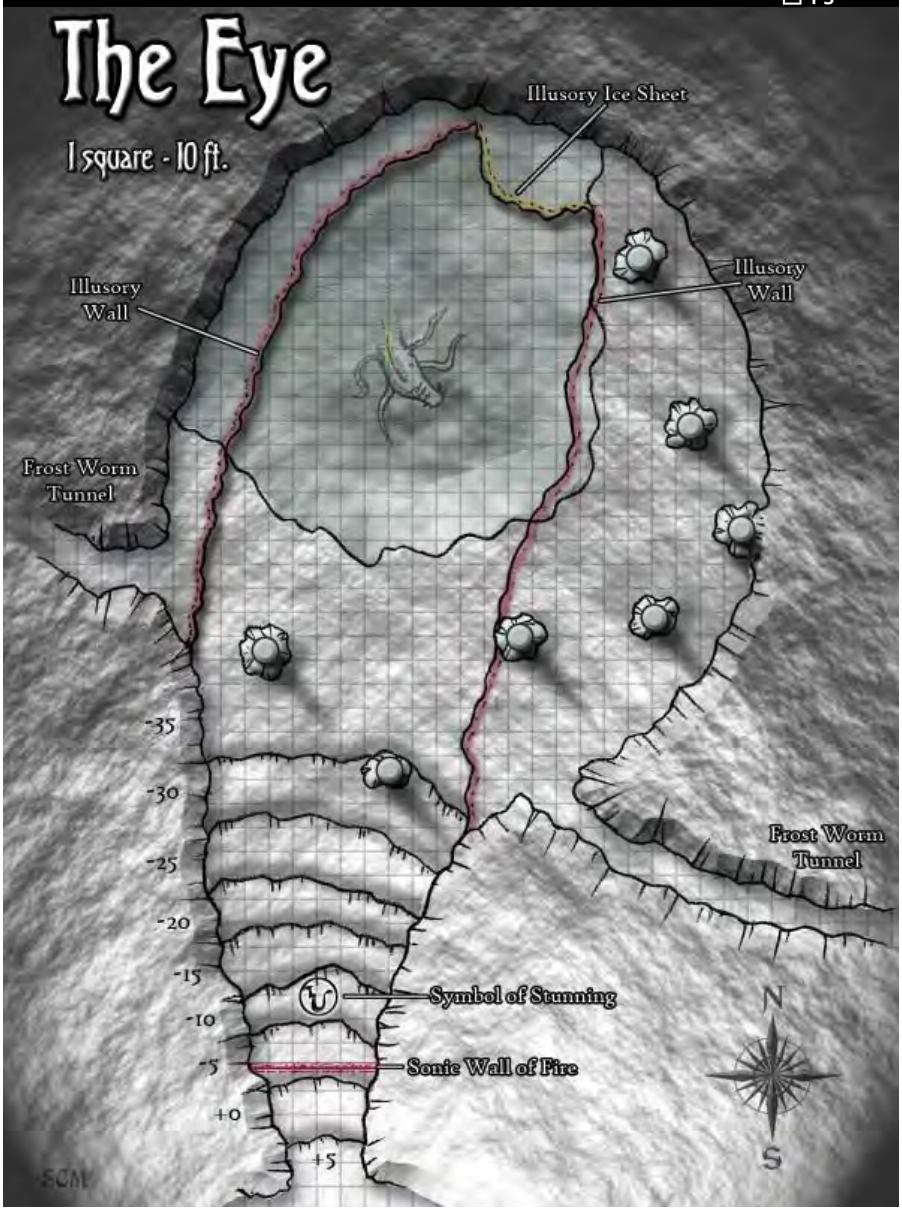
It is not particularly wise, in general, to make a deal with a devil. In this case, however,

Velkiss's Prices

GP	Information
3,000	**Getting In.** A series of seven hand gestures is required to bypass the *forbiddance* spell that surrounds the Scourge Fortress. Velkiss will imprint this knowledge in the heroes' minds if they pay up.
4,000	**Map.** Velkiss knows the layout of areas 1 through 16, but not of the prison. If the heroes pay, he'll give them a clear mental map, without mentioning defenders or what each room's purpose is.
6,000	**Surrender.** If the heroes pay this much, Velkiss agrees to not resist any attempts to magically dismiss or banish him.
6,000	**How It Works.** The Obelisk has three components. First, the pain of the prisoners, which is regularly renewed by an effect Kreven simply referred to as "Agony." Whenever the Obelisk is used, the pained spirits of the imprisoned sing like an unholy choir. Second, the Obelisk is linked to eight clusters of runes — one for each school of magic — which store and amplify the power of spells, offering great power and scope at the expense of precision. This is why Kreven cannot simply destroy the Resistance army, because doing so would wipe out most of his own too. If these rune clusters are destroyed, spells of the associated school can no longer benefit from the Obelisk's power. Third, the Obelisk's controller can target a spell anywhere he can see, and the Obelisk lets one see almost anywhere. Kreven's attack on Seaquen overextended the Obelisk's power, however, so now he can only cast magic on whatever creature he happens to be directly scrying, or on areas near the fortress. His *project image* spell lets him cast spells at other targets too, but not with the massive power the Obelisk normally wields.
8,000	**Strengths and Tactics.** Velkiss knows by now the majority of the spells on Kreven's spell list, as well as who he keeps around him as bodyguards.
8,000	**Reaching the Obelisk.** Velkiss can tell the heroes about the final lines of defense for the Obelisk. These include an antimagic room covered by archers hiding behind arrow slits, a chamber that can be flooded, and walls of force that are created by the Obelisk.

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the party might benefit from trying it. Velkiss's contract originally required he permit his body to be used as a focus for the Obelisk's power for a period of eighteen days, but when the heroes attacked, Kreven offered to revise the deal. Now Velkiss is allowed to return home when he believes everyone in the heroes' party to be dead, but until that time he must fight them to the best of his ability, and let Kreven use the Obelisk's power against them. Additionally, Velkiss still has standing orders not to knowingly injure any member of the Ragesian army.

As a devil, lawful by nature, Velkiss will follow those orders to the letter. However as a devil, evil by nature, he hates Kreven, and so he attempt to subvert the spirit of the bargain. Velkiss will telepathically contact the heroes at the start of combat, telling them the letter of his contract, and opening up a virtual marketplace of sabotage options.

Because of the contract, he continues to fight while he deals, and refuses to lighten his offense for the heroes' sake. However, if the heroes should happen to discreetly drop gems, coins, or magical items during the battle, he will part with information.

The extraplanar insectile mind of the ice devil allows for extremely efficient telepathic communication. Effectively, each round a given creature can talk with him for about 30 seconds of real time as a free action. Longer conversations can occur in the span of a single

round if a character spends his full turn. Velkiss can imprint any information the heroes pay for into their minds as a free action. All of this communication occurs without Kreven or other onlookers noticing.

If the heroes do not agree to bargain with him, Velkiss is more than willing to flee, since he views that tactic as part of how to "fight to the best of his ability." He cannot teleport because of the *forbiddance*, but may try to escape with Koren if she is present.

The Frozen Wasteland

The air is dry and far enough beyond freezing that the snow is more like dust than anything. On this side of the mountains, the land is flat as far as the eye can see: several hundred feet, due to the blowing snow.

Assuming the heroes are cautious, they can cross the wasteland without running into the Ragesians, though you may wish to have a few close calls with ranging patrols seeking them and Pilus's guidance helping them avoid detection. However, someone is looking for them.

The Grim Stalwart (EL 13)

Recently the Ragesians decided to take a few nullifiers out to deal with a perpetual thorn in their side named Ander Folthwaite, a gnome with a stubbornness that nothing could crush.

This encounter begins as the party travels, and can happen multiple ways depending on their mode of transportation, but most likely Ander simply walks up toward them.

> A slender gnome wearing ordinary peasant garb appears at the top of the hill in front of you. He looks completely unconcerned with the intense cold, nor worried that an army might be just beyond the next rise. As you get closer, you realize the gnome is slightly transparent.
>
> "Here now," he says, squinting at you with suspicion, "you aren't with Ragesia, are you?"

Ander Folthwaite is a ghost (CG male gnome ghost sorcerer 4), but he doesn't know it, and his stubborness is such that he looks almost the same as he did in life. However, he is trapped in the memory of his death over a year ago, when the prison was just becoming a wizards-only area. He is talkative, brusque, and carefree. If given a chance, he leaps into talking about himself. If interrupted with any questions, he'll reply, "I'm getting to it." He does not respond too well to new stimuli.

> "See, I've always been a bit stubborn. My mam told me to care for strangers and that I always have, but I've never cared much for what they do outside my home, if you see. Well, when I got caught harboring a mage, the Ragesians brought me in for questioning and they tortured me, which got me right pissed off. I only gave a tired man at my door a place to stay for the night!
>
> "So they told me to tell them what I knew, and I was so mad I told them I knew all about that man's mission but wouldn't ever give it up. That," he admits, a little shamefaced, "were probably a bit childish. But I didn't!" He looks proud of himself. "They brought in some amateur, with mind magic and such, and I blotted him out with a set of bar tunes day after day, until he had to admit he couldn't do it! Suck on *that* lemon, Ragesia!
>
> "Then, they bring this real pro, don't use magic or nothing. Just sticks me with needles and cuts my thigh open with scissors and haves his pet ghoul gnaw on my fingernails. By this point, it was a matter of pride. I told them I'd let myself die before I'd squeal."
>
> He looks over his shoulder at the distant fortress. "So they brought me here. I think they said they were going to use me for parts in some kind of machine, but I didn't let them get me that far. I clawed, I bit, whatever it took, and finally, I won! I forced them to stab me out here. I wasn't about to sit around in their stinking dungeon and rot, not me. Ha!"
>
> "And then I thought, well, what's one more? So after I beat their mind wizards and their soldiers I took on Death. I think I'm doing pretty well, so far, except for those creepy monsters they send after me from time to time. They make it hard to breathe and smile they do. But I persevere. It's sad, seeing folk driven to lose their minds like that. I wish that bitch who makes them would get her 'uppance.
>
> "You want to know the worst thing? I keep hearing this song coming from in the earth, under their fort. Whenever I hear that song, I forget I'm fighting, because all the screaming down there stops.... There it is!"

The heroes can hear nothing, but Ander's form grows eerily solid, and blood rushes from countless cuts across his body, dripping to the snow at his feet. He curls over and cries out, until in two rounds he "dies" from blood loss and vanishes. If the heroes wait around, a few hours later he'll return, fully reformed, with no memory of seeing the heroes.

Roaming Nullifiers

Shortly after Ander seemingly perishes, through lightly falling snow the heroes spy some dark shapes moving their way from a hundred feet off. These trio of free-range nullifiers wear torn leashes around their necks. They could sense Ander's ebullient spirit from far away, but when they sense the heroes, they hesitate for a moment, then flee toward the road, having been ordered to report any intruders.

Nullifiers (3) (CR 10): hp 133 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

The nullifiers all run at first, taking three slightly different directions through bland, rolling terrain. If the heroes pursue, one turns around to try to slow them down while the others escape. They all fight if they can no longer run, or if the heroes can outrun them, though the visibility makes it hard to pursue them.

Aftermath

If the nullifiers get away, the heroes will have to hurry, or else find a way to get past a small legion of forces that falls back to defend the fortress.

If the heroes have defeated Koren, or return here after defeating her, Anders thanks them before vanishing. Each hero gains a special favor: one time, the hero can benefit from *good hope* (caster level 7th), which also dispels any deleterious emotion-based effects active on the hero. The hero can activate this favor as an immediate action at any time.

Nullifiers

The Ragesians went to great effort to ensure that their prisoners would live long enough to power the Scourge, even to the point of *hallowing* the entire prison complex so that none who died in the oppressive despair would rise as undead. But despair had a few tricks up its sleeve.

A rare few of the mages interred in the dungeon responded to the pain of Agony's power by turning necromantic magic upon themselves, shutting off their own emotions and nerves. As the Halls of Pain augmented this magic, their bodies twisted and mutated, until they succeeded in blotting out the pain of their sentience. These twisted creatures, which the Ragesians call nullifiers, have been removed from the Halls (they blocked up the flow of the agony) and released into the wild around the fortress, though Koren kept a few as pets. These three are currently dominated by Koren.

The Scourge Entrance

The heroes can spot the Scourge Fortress from over a mile away across the flat tundra. The main valley road ends near the fortress, and the surrounding countryside is covered with dozens of squat stone barracks, enough to house and supply an army of thousands. The air smells active and hungry, filled with the dust and snow kicked up by the armies as they marched out to the Needle. And in the center of the rings of barracks is a daunting shining beacon.

Kreven has activated the Scourge Fortress's greatest defense, a huge *prismatic sphere* with a 100-foot radius, which is likely an impassable challenge for the heroes. Worse, though most of the army has departed, a few hundred soldiers remain as a rear guard, ringed around the sphere to ensure the heroes would not have a chance to idly dispel the layers of the mighty abjuration.

Before the heroes get too close to the fortress, Pilus contacts them (either through his mask or via *whispering wind*), saying, "Hold back a moment. When you're ready I will destroy the barrier. You will need to hurry in; it might not stay down long."

When the heroes reply that they're ready (Pilus is more than capable of hearing them from his airship), Pilus takes action. If the heroes refuse to act, Pilus forces the issue.

Play this scene for all it's worth. The heroes may have seen *Tempest* once before, but then it merely glanced in their direction from far away, then flew out of sight. Now, Pilus has something a bit more dramatic planned.

Why Doesn't Pilus Do This Himself?

Pilus is a powerful wizard with weird biomantic creatures and a doomsday airship at his command. What could he possibly need the Resistance for?

First of all, *Tempest*, though powerful, is not invincible. It can only use its primary eye attack every hour or so, and since this cannot destroy the Koren Obelisk in a single blow, the ship would be vulnerable to counter-attack: the Obelisk would likely drop the airship out of the sky, and once on the ground it would be hacked apart by an army of thousands.

Second, Pilus isn't really on the Resistance's side. He wants them to waste a few thousand of their men on this mission. It will make it all the easier for him to triumph later. This move by Pilus will be detailed in adventure eleven, *Under the Eye of the Tempest*.

Though the shining sphere dominates the terrain, as the air begins to rumble with a deep, pervasive thunder, you notice something bright in the clouds overhead. Looking up, it takes you a moment to adjust your eyes to the scale of what you are seeing. The clouds are being *pushed* down as something truly colossal descends through them. Lightning crackles around it, but its form is hidden, impossible to see at once so massive it is. The only thing your vision can easily focus on is a bright sliver of light on its underside, a thousand feet or more above the forces defending the Scourge Fortress.

The sliver widens from a slit to a thick crescent, to the shape of a gibbous moon, to a full circle, which must be a hundred feet across or more, shining with an inner line. The light has a dark center, like the pupil of a god's eye.

The air seems to come alive — breathing, momentous, full of energy — and you realize that a wild wind is blowing across you, first a breeze, but quickly rising to the power of a titan's roar, swirling upward toward the eye in the tempest. Torrents of snow fill the sky, and just before your vision is blotted out, a green-white brilliance swells in the eye. Then there is a flash, blindingly bright, and the sky turns solid white.

The ground trembles beneath your feet, and, a breath later, the shockwave hits.

Everyone within sight of the blast must make a Fortitude save (DC 30) or be blown back. Creatures on the ground are knocked prone and rolled 1d4×10 feet, taking 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per 10 feet. Flying creatures are blown back 2d6×10 feet and take 2d6 points of nonlethal damage from being battered and buffeted.

The sky is suddenly very dark, and by the time the heroes' eyes adjust, the massive being in the sky has vanished and the clouds are rolling in to fill the gap left by its departure. When they look down at the entrance to the Scourge Fortress, most of the barracks buildings have been shattered, with those closest to the center simply annihilated. However, in the center beyond the field of destruction is the small stone tower that marks the entrance to the fortress, practically untouched by the devastating blast. A large pair of adamantine double doors are all that lie between the heroes and their objective.

The *prismatic sphere* is gone.

So is the garrison.

So are all the Ragesians.

Act Three: The Halls of Pain

At last, the party reaches the interior of the Scourge Fortress, which reaches downward, iceberg-like, into the frozen earth, turning into a gulag and terminating in the oubliette that imprisons the entity that powers the Koren Obelisk.

In this act they must fight to Kreven's research facility and discern that the Obelisk is invulnerable unless they can cut off its power source, which means they must descend into the prison itself. There they meet Guthwulf, a former inquisitor who was imprisoned for repeated failure to kill the heroes. From him they learn of the "whisper-hole" that leads to the oubliette. The heroes must break through to the oubliette, and defeat or release Agony and Etinifi, which leaves the Obelisk vulnerable to a final attack.

The Scourge Fortress

The fortress has been slightly damaged, not by the blast directly, but by the tremors that passed through the stone from those areas outside the *prismatic sphere*. After the attack, the staff of the facility retreated to the defensible lower levels and released nullifiers and various undead into the upper level, hoping that these would delay the attackers until the army could return.

Area Descriptions

The walls are all stone, the floors thinly carpeted. Aside from areas 1 and 2, the fortress is underground, under at least 20 feet of stone. Unless otherwise noted, assume the following traits for the interior of the fortress.

- **No Lighting.** The inquisitors mostly all have darkvision or carry lanterns, and so leave the fortress unlit.
- **Unhallow.** Areas 3 through 12 are affected by *unhallow*.
- **Forbiddance.** Areas 3 through 16 are affected by *forbiddance*, which wards against non-Lawful Evil creatures. A creature who makes seven special hand gestures before entering the *forbiddance* field takes no damage. If the Obelisk's power source is removed, the *forbiddance* effect ends.
- **Debris.** Certain areas are covered in debris from cracked ceilings. This counts as light rubble. A few dead guards lie crushed beneath this rubble.
- **Magic in the Air.** Divination spells are fairly useless beyond the clean room (Area 13). In Areas 14 to 16, the power of Agony is so great

that even spells that do not normally detect magic or evil reveal overwhelming auras of both. A caster level check (DC 20) is required for any divination spell to function properly in this area. Additionally, the heroes occasionally catch glimpses of momentary reflections in the air, as if tiny shards of glass were winking in and out of existence every few seconds.

- **Walls.** The walls are all stone with a thin sheet of lead inside them. Exterior walls of the facility are framed with steel trusses to prevent *passwall* and resist earthquakes.

1. Entrance (EL 15)

A squat stone tower guards the entrance to the facility. A ramp 60 feet long descends 30 feet to a pair of adamantine doors (hardness 20, hp 40; Break DC 35). White stone pillars line the ground above on the sides the ramp. The doors have no lock, and normally are opened magically. This requires channeling positive or negative energy into the doorway, sufficient to affect a 13 HD creature (or counter a spell with caster level 13).

Though the main garrison was obliterated by the aerial strike, a few defenders within the shield survived. An archery squad fires down from the tower, commanded by Rovus, an elite inquisitor. On the ground, a cloud giant waits with plenty of rocks to throw at the heroes as they approach. The battlements of the tower provide cover to the archers against targets below.

Elite Ragesian archers (8) (CR 8): hp 65 each, Appendix B.

Rovus, elite Ragesian inquisitor (CR 11): hp 75, Appendix B.

Cloud giant (CR 11): hp 178, MM.

2. Watch Tower

This stone tower is 30 feet tall and is accessed by a wide, stable stone staircase that spirals around the outside the tower. At the tower's center is a ballista on rotating tracks, intended to hold off aerial attacks. Anyone can fire it, but it takes two full-round actions to reload, and Medium creatures take a –4 penalty to attack with it.

There are forty normal ballista bolts, plus ten special ones. These huge *+1 heavy crossbow bolts* are loaded with a special arrowhead filled with superior alchemist fire. A successful hit deals normal bolt damage (3d8+1), plus 10d6 points of fire damage. Adjacent creatures take 10 points of fire damage from splashing chemicals. This fire damage repeats for two further rounds, unless the creature struck successfully neutralizes the fire.

3. Inner Gate

This room is used to receive and inspect prisoners. A wide iron portcullis, slightly burnt as if by acid (Strength DC 24 to lift or break), blocks the path to the rest of the facility. It hangs half-open when the heroes enter, with 3 feet of clearance. Of course, monsters wait just beyond it to grab the first person to walk through (see Area 5).

The most interesting thing the heroes find here are scorch marks in the floor, as if some acid had seared away the carpet. Drops of black ooze remain on the floor and burst into smaller bits if poked.

Development

As the heroes enter this room, a faint chill runs over them, and they sense someone watching them. A voice speaks to them from all around; this is a modified *sending*, empowered by the Obelisk, which Kreven uses to taunt the heroes and gauge their status.

> "I'm certain you savages will enjoy looting this facility," Kreven says, "but you are as good as trapped, while I and my staff are safely protected by the Obelisk. You are quite doomed. Within minutes that leviathan in the heavens will be destroyed, and without your biomancer friend's aid, I doubt you'll be able to resist long once the army returns. I admit your assault was a bit of a surprise, but not one we are unable to counteract. You have less than an hour to live, so I suggest you run and hide."

Kreven can hear the heroes, but will not converse for long. He is wholly convinced the heroes are unable to harm him, with good reason, so after trading a few verbal barbs with them, he gets back to work defending the fortress.

4. Holding

The prison cell in this room is enchanted with a permanent *antimagic field*. Four humans, wearing just thin gray robes of prisoners, lie dead, torn to pieces by monsters in the past few minutes. If the heroes get here early enough, the nullifier in Area 7 is here instead.

5. Guard Post (EL 13)

The square marked "X" on the map is the lever that activates the portcullis. Eight slavering zombies lurk around the corner, waiting to grab anyone who comes through.

Horde zombies (8) (CR 7): hp 39 each, Appendix B.

6. Armory

The stone door to this room is locked (Open Lock DC 35). Countless weapons, armor, and gear fill this room. Below is a sample listing of what the heroes might find, but we suggest you personalize the contents of this room to help them resupply. Because they'll have practically no opportunity to rest and regain spells, the items in this chamber should give spellcasters endurance they might otherwise lack. Additionally, some of the equipment should be sufficiently unusual as to give the heroes some new toys to play with. If the heroes are doing fine on supplies, feel free to cut down on what they find here.

- Dozens of simple and martial weapons and several suits of various types of armor, all masterwork.
- Copious amounts of ordinary ammunition.
- Ten flasks of superior alchemist's fire (see Appendix A).
- A *horn of blasting*.
- Two *beads of force*.
- Twelve *javelins of lightning*.
- Two *rods of absorption* (each already holds 50 spell levels).
- A *staff of healing* (25 charges).
- A *staff of life* (10 charges).
- A *wand of cure critical wounds* (20 charges) and ten *wands of cure light wounds* (50 charges).
- A scroll case labeled "In case of accident," which contains four scrolls of *regenerate*.

Additionally, there is a surprisingly large amount of gear for Small (or child-sized) humanoids, though the Ragesians use almost no Small forces.

7. Meeting Hall (EL 10)

This room of long tables has many maps along its walls, as well as a chalkboard upon which a quick defensive plan for the valley was sketched out in the early minutes of the Resistance's assault. The room was abandoned when the facility was struck by Pilus's airship. A nullifier sits quietly at one of the tables, examining left-behind food for traces of the emotions felt by those who had been eating it. He screeches when he notices the heroes, which also attracts undead from areas 8 and 9.

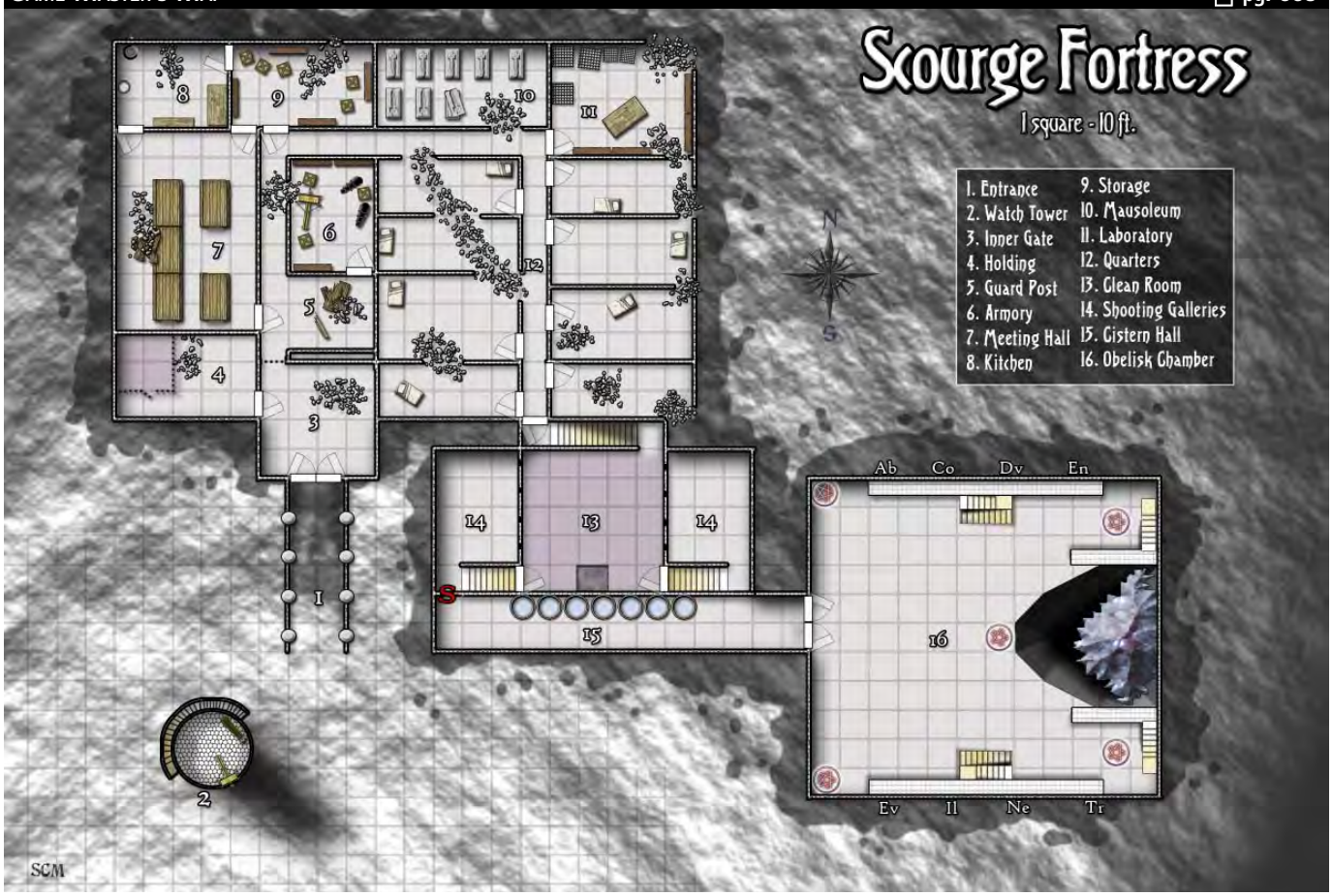
Nullifier (CR 10): hp 133, Appendix B.

8. Kitchen (EL 12)

A group of zombies lurks here.

Horde zombies (6) (CR 7): hp 39 each, Appendix B.

Game Master's Map pg. 668



9. Stores (EL 12)

Another group of zombies lurks here.

Horde zombies (6) (CR 7): hp 39 each, Appendix B.

10. Mausoleum

This is where the inquisitors stored their undead. The soldier sent to let them out lies dead, torn to pieces amid the rubble leading into the room. A few unanimated corpses lie stacked like cordwood around the room. This room's *unhallow* is attached to a *gentle repose* spell.

11. Laboratory (EL 15)

Kreven's wife Koren has all but mastered teleportation magic, but her latest interest lies in controlling the emotions of creatures in order to enslave them. She hopes to allow Leska to not simply annihilate her enemies, but take control of their minds. After the attack by Pilus's airship, Koren quickly set up a surprise for the heroes while the rest of the staff were fleeing into the lower level.

Since Kreven and Koren never had a child, the woman has a sick fascination with the young, and she has made a point of keeping as prisoners all of the children captured in the Scourge. With the aid of the Obelisk she has *dominated* them all, and now she has armed and armored them. They have orders to attack the heroes when they arrive, and the horrified emotions this could provoke will hopefully make the heroes easy pickings for her pet nullifiers.

Koren herself is not here.

Nullifiers (4) (CR 10): hp 133 each, Appendix B.
Dominated children (20) (CR ½): hp 4 each. Use the stats for halfling warriors, MM.

Tactics

The children have been ordered by Koren to grapple and attack the intruders, and to try to force them into the cages on the north side of the room. The nullifiers just push their way through the crowd and attack the heroes, though they too try to throw the heroes into the cages.

These cages each have been enchanted in an effort to forcibly create more nullifiers. Any creature pushed into the cage must make a Will save (DC 17) each round or suffer a cumulative penalty of 1d4 points of Charisma. When the creature's Charisma is reduced to 0, it will rise an hour later as a nullifier unless the cage is destroyed (hardness 10, 30 hp). Destroying the cage negates all Charisma penalties it has created. Each cage locks automatically once the door is closed (Open Lock DC 25).

Terrain

Being relatively small and weak, the children's squares can be moved through as if they were difficult terrain, even by Medium-size heroes. A hero who occupies the same square as a child counts as being squeezed.

Treasure

In the drawers beneath the lab tables are dozens of spellbooks, taken from prisoners. If the heroes want any spells, they can justifiably be found here. There are also detailed notes into the nature of the nullifiers.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes manage to keep most of the children alive and free them of their compulsion,

then get them to safety at the end of this adventure, reward them for a CR 16 encounter.

12. Quarters (EL 12)

These bedrooms are abandoned, and all the furniture lies in melted heaps. The doors all hang open, for the inquisitors fled in a hurry. Now an elder black ooze slithers through the damaged rooms. Originally used as a garbage disposal system for the facility, it escaped after the aerial strike shattered its holding cell. It avoids the undead, and so stays in this area. However, once the heroes enter the area, it becomes active and oozes toward them. As attacks split the ooze into multiple smaller oozes, the different pieces chase after different creatures.

The stone door at the end of the hallway is locked (Open Lock DC 35).

Elder black ooze (CR 12): hp 290, MM.

Beyond the door, stairs lead down twenty feet to the clean room.

13. Clean Room (EL 16)

There is an intense corruptive influence to the power of Agony, as the heroes may have guessed from dealing with the nullifiers. To protect the army they keep above-ground, the Ragesians have a room that completely negates the flow of magical energy. This prevents the assistants from carrying any magical diseases above-ground, and limits the amount of psychic disturbance that might otherwise drive the workers here insane. When guards who do not rely on magic are posted there, it also makes for an exceptional guardpost.

This entire room is enveloped in a permanent *antimagic field* (filling the area marked in pink). A wall separates the room from the stairway, so the stairs are shielded from the *antimagic field*. The ceiling is 30 feet high, and arrow slits look into the room, but are located 20 feet above the floor level. Four archers wait behind each wall.

The main defenders of the room, however, are a group of Ragesian infiltrators equipped for combat in antimagic areas. Led by a former clerk named Clark, these infiltrators wait behind doors, on the two staircases that lead up from the clean room to the shooting galleries. They are ready to surge in once the heroes are in the *antimagic field*.

Rush Team

Clark the Clerk, antimagic assassin (CR 16): hp 89, Appendix B.

Elite Ragesian infiltrators (5) (CR 8): hp 53 each, Appendix B.

Shooting Team

Standard Ragesian archers (8) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

Terrain

The area shaded pink on the map is the extent of the *antimagic field*.

On the south end of the room is the primary access to the Scourge Prison below, a covered pit. A winch with various chains and attachment clips hangs on the wall beside the pit, and with a round of work a chain can be dropped down the 100 foot deep pit (also in an *antimagic field*). The pit's edges are fairly smooth, almost impossible to climb out from (Climb DC 25, since a creature can use the corners to its advantage).

The pit is fairly easy to see, so the heroes shouldn't be able to accidentally fall in, but they could be pushed. A creature forced into one of the pit's squares must make a Reflex save (DC 25) to avoid falling. If there's an open square adjacent to him, he moves to that square. Otherwise he ends up dangling over the pit.

The bottom 20 feet of the pit are not in an antimagic field, and a permanent *feather fall* effect functions there, so a creature falling in will land gently. He'll just be stuck thereafter.

Tactics

No one attacks, not even the archers, until the bulk of the heroes are in the room, or until the heroes start attacking. The defenders hope to lure more of their foes into the antimagic area.

When combat begins, the rush team rushes in, trying to surround heroes. Clark tumbles through the battle, or has his minions grapple the heroes so that he can take advantage of his devastating multiple sneak attacks. Each of his sneak attacks is also a crippling strike, dealing 2 points of Strength damage as he rips out tendons and muscles from his foes. His daggers are poisoned as well, and whenever he drops a foe he'll quickdraw and throw daggers with the rest of his attacks.

The defenders here do not retreat, since they know Kreven will not open up the Obelisk chamber until the heroes are defeated.

Development

Clark is fundamentally a coward and more interested in escape than duty. He rather hates working here, and his infiltrators long thought of the Obelisk as a cursed thing. A few weeks ago one of Clark's men tried to break the Obelisk with the *horn of blasting* from the armory, and though it did crack the huge ice pillar, moments later an invisible wall came up to block further attacks, and eventually the Obelisk seemed to heal on its own.

The soldier in question was tossed into the pit without the aid of a winch.

Clark is willing to betray Kreven, but only if he does not have to leave the clean room. He can share information, even help the heroes descend into the prison, but he's afraid of being scried on, and so won't leave the clean room if he can avoid it.

14. Shooting Galleries

These two rooms are twenty feet above the level of the clean room, with four arrow slits facing into it. A creature behind the arrow slits has improved cover (+8 AC, +4 to Reflex saves, effects which allow a Reflex save for half damage deal no damage on a successful save and half damage on a failed save).

In each room, a rack in the corner holds ten *potions of cure moderate wounds*. The archers don't keep the potions on themselves because they're superstitious and think antimagic will ruin them.

15. Cistern Hallway

A secret door (Search DC 20) leads from the shooting gallery to this hallway, but opening it triggers an *alarm* (Search DC 21, Disable Device DC 21). Along the north wall are seven huge steel cisterns that rise up into the ceiling. These hold enough water to partially flood the prison below. While it's not enough to drown anyone (and the water would quickly drain to the lower levels and then flow out into deep underground caverns), the water is kept just barely above freezing, and can be released in the case of a prisoner revolt. Or, in this case, a hostile incursion.

Trap

When the heroes reach this hallway they feel the same chill as the last time Kreven spoke to them, and the air begins to hum with the sound of overlapping abjurations as multiple *walls of force* spring into existence, sealing off the end of the hallway, so that the only open path leads back to the clean room and the pit. Kreven's voice again comes from all around.

"Persistent fools," he says. "You will not reach the Obelisk. After our forces have slain you, I will raise you as walking dead and let you lead the assault on your pathetic rebellion."

Then a loud churning sounds in the cisterns, and their faces slide open. A powerful spray of water pours out from them, threatening to sweep the heroes into the pit to the prison.

- **Round One.** The water floods to waist height, and creatures in the hallway must make a Swim check (DC 10) to maneuver. The current pushes creatures 20 feet in the direction of the pit in Area 13, but creatures could potentially move against the flow of the water to try to reach the entrance to Area 17.
- **Round Two.** The water is now at chest height. A Swim check (DC 15) is required to maneuver, and the current pushes creatures 30 feet in the direction of the pit.
- **Round Three.** The water now fills the room. A Swim check (DC 20) is required to maneuver, and the current pushes at a speed of 40 feet.
- **Round Four.** The water is already draining, now at chest height. The effects are as per round two.
- **Round Five.** The water is back down to waist height, and effects are as per round one.
- **Round Six.** Only a small amount of water flows now. Any heroes who have not been swept away can act freely from here on.

16. Obelisk Chamber (EL 21)

Though the heroes might reach this chamber now, it is intended to be the climax of the adventure, so it is detailed in the Battle at the Obelisk section after the Halls of Pain.

Too Clever For Their Own Good?

It's actually in the heroes' best interest to go into the prison, because without defeating Agony, they'll be unable to get past the defenses that ward the Obelisk chamber. However, heroes are tricky, and might not fall for Kreven's trap (such as if they have a *rod of cancellation* to destroy the *wall of force*, or a *wall of force* of their own to stop the water, or use *hold portal* to keep the pit closed).

In that case, when they do get to the Obelisk chamber, they can face the device's defenders, but even if they triumph, any damage they deal to the Obelisk will quickly heal. They have to go to the prison if they want to destroy it for good.

The intended flow of the end of this adventure is that the heroes delve into the prison, defeat the trillith, then emerge and destroy the Obelisk. However, if your players seem intent on doing otherwise, the action instead becomes destroy the Obelisk, delve into the prison, and put the trillith out of its misery. We feel Kreven makes for a better final encounter, but don't stymie the players' efforts just for the sake of drama.

The Halls of Pain

Finally the heroes reach the title of the act, only to find it entirely without combat encounters!

At the bottom of the pit, 100 feet down, the heroes find the smoothly-hewn tunnels of the Scourge Prison. The following conditions obtain throughout:

- **Meager Lighting.** The prison came with no light sources, but a few prisoners managed to cast intermittent *continual flame* spells.
- **Dimensional Lock.** A *dimensional lock* spell (caster level 17th) affects the entire prison. There is no *forbiddance* spell here, however.
- **Hallow.** The entire complex is hallowed, so as to prevent despairing prisoners from dying and rising as undead who would then quickly depopulate the prison. The *hallow* spell is attached to an *endure elements*, so the prisoners can survive despite the below-freezing temperatures.
- **Layout.** The prison's general shape is a giant ring, with the pit for new arrivals along the northwest arc. The tunnel of the main ring is 20 feet wide by 10 feet high. Along the edge of the ring, every forty feet a hallway 10 feet wide extends outward 80 feet, with 5 foot deep alcoves cut into the walls for prisoners to sleep. However, there are no beds or furnishings. Three long access tunnels cross the interior of the ring. One hallway leads inward from the ring, toward the whisper hole and the oubliette, detailed below.
- **Agony.** Whenever Etinifi's song fails, the trillith Agony's spirit roams the prison. Each round, every creature in the prison must make a Will save (DC 23) or be stunned as the most horrible pain imaginable afflicts it. Those who resist are still wracked with pain, taking a –4 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks. This generally lasts for ten minutes before subsiding. Persistent exposure to this agony drives people insane.

The facility is enormous — both sprawling and fairly repetitive — the heroes should not spend much time exploring, since their allies are counting on them to take out the Scourge's power source, and the thousand imprisoned spellcasters will not let their potential saviors dally. For these reasons, we haven't mapped it completely.

Defenses

The hallways are patrolled by eight stone golems carved to resemble skeletal bears, but these serve only as clean-up. Practically immune to any attacks the prisoners could muster, the golems only attack prisoners if they see them trying to dig their way out or otherwise compromise the prison's integrity. If a prisoner dies, or turns into a nullifier, they carry it to the base of the pit and wait for the forces overhead. Likewise, they also perform the wretched duty of refuse collector. Every day the defenders open the pit and cautiously send down a harness to bring up anything that needs to be removed.

The walls, floor, and ceiling are a thick stone façade over a truss of steel and cold iron beams, plus a thin sheet of lead, designed to stop burrowing and magical phase attempts.

Prisoners and Their Care

Most prisoners are energy drained before being tossed into the pit, so the majority are 1st-level clerics, druids, sorcerers, and wizards. Few are above 4th level. Even for those, the regular bouts of incredible agony are enough to keep anyone from having a clear enough head to prepare or regain spells.

Each of the radial hallways has a stick that extends from the wall at the end. This casts *create food and water* once per ten minutes, enough to keep the population fed. The golems can also cast *remove disease* three times per day.

Numerous gangs and pacts have developed among the roughly one thousand inmates. Each typically occupies a discrete section of the prison and posts guards or crude signs to ward off others.

Despairing: These arcane spellcasters seek to use necromantic magic to turn themselves into nullifiers. They are not particularly unified, and have to discuss their plans in secret because the rest of the inmates know that a new nullifier will likely kill many of them before the golems carry it away. Anyone who is revealed to be planning to become one is killed as a precaution.

Sons of the Resistance: Perhaps the least mad group, these 40 or so individuals have one radial hall to themselves. Consisting of mostly bards and clerics, they do their best to keep each other's hopes up, and occasionally seek ways to break out. They are led by **Theren Willen** (LG male half-elf paladin 4), who does his best to prevent fighting among the different groups in the prison.

The Wee Halls: The three narrow access tunnels are home to most of the halflings and gnomes here. These tunnels were originally hidden, but one **Avantina Drumfingers** (CG female gnome wizard) found them, and realized they were too small for the golems to enter. These prisoners try to hide from the golems, and with just their most

primitive tools have managed to dig a 20-foot tunnel through solid stone, though they still have a long way to go.

The Mad Party: Some of the inmates have simply gone mad, and have deluded themselves into a mass hallucination where they are all in a grand party. Hundreds of prisoners have become this wretched, and are slightly dangerous, since they often believe newcomers to the party are dangerous, and will try to bite and claw them.

Redjacks: This gang of the most physically imposing prisoners try to make their lives as comfortable as possible despite their conditions, resorting to classic bullying, beatings, and theft. Led by **Ugar Thrank** (CE male orc ranger 4), this gang of fifty or so regularly terrorizes others in the prison.

Alchemists: Another group of arcane spellcasters, who have a few small hallways as their enclave, believe that by sacrificing part of their life force they can regain enough magic to escape. Toward this end they have multilated themselves and often trade small magical favors to the Redjacks in exchange for new victims to maim for power.

The Choir: A few dozen prisoners believe that if they can decipher the muted, distorted song they hear through the stone, they could keep the pain at bay forever. A few have made slight strides, but none have the power to hold Agony in its flesh-bound form.

Slaves: Sadly, for some prisoners imprisonment here is exacerbated by having become slaves for other prisoners.

The Demented: And then there are those who are simply gone, barely able to feed themselves, roaming and screaming endlessly, scratching at their skin until it goes raw.

Guthwulf, Minister of Pain: Right outside the deepest oubliette of the prison lairs **Guthwulf** (LE male human cleric 11/thaumaturgist 5), a former inquisitor who was destined for the prison after his summoned devils repeatedly failed to defeat the heroes. He was set upon by his former allies in his sleep, but managed to fight them off. Realizing he would be unable to get out of the valley with an army chasing him, he willingly jumped into the pit, along with his ghoul henchman Augustus. He is the only spellcaster here capable of protecting himself from Agony's power, and so can be a valuable ally.

Mad Greetings

When the heroes reach the bottom of the pit, they see a long tunnel heading to either side, lit by intermittent puffs of arcane flame. A stone golem walks past them, its bear skull turning briefly to consider them before it moves on. Then, a moment later, a thickly-bearded man follows the golem, capering and quite clearly addled in his head. He stops when he sees the heroes.

Hyperactive and convinced that the golems can't see directly behind them, this is **Crazy Harry** (CN male human druid 1). When he spots the heroes he runs to them and looks up the pit, screaming for freedom and trying to scramble up the walls. He whimpers that he wants to get out before the pain returns. Only moments later a wave of agony strikes, as detailed above. Screams sound from throughout the prison, and the air is filled with a strange undertow, as if pieces of their souls were being tugged away from them.

They'll most likely be debilitated, but if the heroes explore they find the prisoners throughout the facility paralyzed with pain, or perhaps feebly crawling, trying to escape. When the wave finally ends ten minutes later, it takes a while for the screams to fade, but then there is a moment of silence in which the heroes hear, muted by thick rocks, a familiar fey song. (If the heroes have not encountered it before, the Song of Forms is detailed in Appendix A.)

Crazy Harry can guide the heroes, explaining in a chittering, terrified, sing-song way how things work in the prison, though he often uses strange turns of phrase since his mind is unhinged. Feel free to rant madly at the players, to depict Harry as an iconic prisoner here. He does not know about the Obelisk, or why he's here, just that Ragesia took him because he was a spellcaster and did not pledge loyalty to their new, tyrannical empress.

Take Us to Your Leader

Unless the heroes ask for something in particular, Harry is not particularly helpful at first. He takes the heroes to the Mad Party, wanting to welcome them with a celebration. Along the way the heroes will likely run into an enforcer of the Redjacks, busy stealing meager trinkets from those prisoners who have not recovered quickly enough from the Agony. Everyone who sees the heroes briefly snaps out of whatever they're doing to ponder these heavily-armed newcomers. Some begin to follow them — in hopes of rescue, or simply to mug them if they look vulnerable, depending on who it is. Eventually, however, the heroes should talk to Theren of the Sons of the Resistance.

Theren is a strong, dark-skinned holy warrior whose faith is unshakeable even in these dark circumstances. He and his small band are working on crafting macabre crossbows from the remains of a few of their fellow prisoners who were killed by the mob, and eventually they hope to fight their way to the surface. Theren himself has been busy trying to negotiate an alliance with Guthwulf, though he's not sure he can trust the man.

The former inquisitor arrived a couple weeks ago, and then made a beeline for the whisper hole, managing to bypass the defenses. Many saw him, as well as what appeared to be his handservant, but no one knows why he's here or has had a chance to talk to him. Rumor is that the former inquisitor has been somehow offering advice to the despairing on how to turn themselves into nullifiers, or that he's come to kill the singing one in the center of the prison.

While the heroes could spend a lot of time here, Theren encourages them to go to Guthwulf quickly, before the perpetual pain begins to weaken them. He says that he has prayed for deliverance, and he thinks the heroes are his answer.

Guthwulf (EL 16)

Guthwulf is evil to the core, but in a bemused, friendly way, with a dark, mocking sense of humor that endears him to many. He seldom wishes ill to anyone he gets to know personally, and he doesn't like to harm people while others watch, but he greatly enjoys the suffering of strangers (and of prisoners).

Considering his situation, he lives fairly comfortably. Guthwulf does loves torturing people, and his skill in that regard was legendary in the Imperial palace, allowing him to rise to great power in the inquisitor hierarchy with relatively little notoriety in the outside world.

Augustus, or "Gus" to Guthwulf, was an infiltrator in life, skilled at grabbing enemies unaware and stabbing them to death. He died on a amission Guthwulf was leading, and the inquisitor took cruel pity on him, returning him to unlife as a devil-infused ghoul. Gus has a dark sense of humor regarding this — he knows he's going to some hell after he dies again, so he plans to enjoy himself as much as he can until then. He also knows Guthwulf can destroy him practically with a thought, so he's very loyal, and despite himself, he likes the guy.

Getting to Guthwulf requires going down the hallway to the Whisper Hole. This hallway leads inward to the center of the ring, but it's warded by a *repulsion* field and a *greater glyph of warding*. A creature attempting to enter the field must make a Will save (DC 21) or be forced back, and any creature crossing the glyph is caught in an explosion for 10d8 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 20 half). The glyph recharges every hour.

Beyond the glyph is a small rift in an antimagic field, which is the bottom of the pit that leads up to the Koren Obelisk, a hundred feet above. Ice coats every surface here, including the 5 foot wide stone bridge that crosses the gap. Seventy feet beneath the bridge, an adamantine spiked grate stops the fall of anyone who falls into the pit. Beneath the pit is an underground river. So far a few have tried to escape into the river. They died.

Beyond the bridge is the room where Guthwulf now lives, the walls of which are carved with tales of Leska's glory and other vanities, which Guthwulf has defaced. With *stone shape* he has created crude furniture, tools, and weapons for himself and Gus.

The south wall is a floor-to-ceiling carving of a bearded man's face, with its lips puckered in the shape of an "O." The "O" is a hole about finger width, and unlike similar holes elsewhere, this one will not chop off or electrocute anything an adventurer puts into it. Whenever the song is active, wind blows through the hole and a *wall of force* blocks access to the face. When the song falters, the mouth closes and the *wall of force* falls, but Agony's power is unleashed. Normally this prevents anyone from breaking through.

The wall of the face is one foot of magically-reinforced stone (hardness 15, hp 480).



Encounter

Guthwulf is ready to kill anyone who comes after him, but he is very much looking for a chance to escape, and so he does not pick a fight. He defends his territory with a casual humor entirely out of place in a prison full of anguished prisoners, but as former high interrogator (or, as he preferred, "minister of pain"), he enjoys everyone else's suffering. Also, he's protected from the agony, courtesy of *mind blank*.

He of course recognizes the heroes as his old targets, and greets them as old friends. He is forthright about his past, but laughs at the heroes as if they're joking if they appear not to trust him.

> "I'm not with the Ragesians anymore," he says. "You put in a good seventeen years torturing, intimidating, and raising minions from the dead, and you get rewarded with premature burial because the budget is short? I honestly would have sent a lot more devils after you if Kreven had approved the payment for them, but that is, shall we say, water under the bridge. *Now* I would much rather betray him as payback for his foolishly short-sighted attempt to betray me.
>
> "I imagine you would all like to get out, wouldn't you? How about we *don't* kill each other, and in exchange I'll tell you how to get out of here. It is unfortunately not a job one man and his trusty ghoul sidekick could accomplish on their own, but from what I know of you, you should manage not to screw it up too much."

Guthwulf wants to get out, and he wants the heroes' help to kill Kreven, but he doesn't care about the other prisoners. His primary plan of escape is good enough to get the heroes out, but not everyone. However, if the heroes press and succeed a Diplomacy check (DC 30), he'll admit that he does have a trick that could help them get out. If they fail the check, Guthwulf says he doesn't know how to get the prisoners out short of defeating all the guards.

Guthwulf (CR 16): hp 82, Appendix B.
Augustus (CR 12): hp 76, Appendix B.

Tactics

If a fight does happen, Guthwulf starts with *antilife shell*, then *blade barrier*. He cannot use summoning magic because of the dimensional lock on the prison. He'll cast *earthquake* if he's about to die. In combat, Gus will stand between Guthwulf and those who threaten him, or if he can, sneak attack after blinding a foe by throwing salt in their eyes. During the fight, however, Guthwulf continues to explain to the heroes that they'd be better off if they worked with him.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes get Guthwulf's aid in freeing the prisoners, reward them for a CR 16 encounter.

The Great Escape

Let the heroes propose escape plans first, using their own resources. However, if they don't have any outs, Guthwulf happens to have a pretty good plan of his own.

First of all, Guthwulf will explain that escaping is pointless if the Obelisk is active. He's been here a long time, so he knows the power source is some creature trapped in the Oubliette beyond the whisper hole, but he doesn't know what it is. However, he has heard it referred to as if "Agony" were its actual name. He believes that killing it will end the waves of agony, leaving the Obelisk with only whatever power it currently has stored.

To get into the Oubliette, the heroes will have to wait until the song ends and the *wall of force* drops. If the heroes have no way through, Guthwulf can open the path easily with *stone shape*. Thereafter, however, he expects the heroes to pull their weight. If the heroes don't mind receiving evil spells, he can offer *magic circle against good* to give them a slight bonus against Agony's power.

After Agony is slain (Guthwulf assumes they will have to kill it, whatever it is), the next stage of the plan may actually be harder. When the Obelisk no longer has a steady power source, it will be unable to maintain the *forbiddance* spell over the valley. However, the prison is still in a *dimensional lock*. Guthwulf can rebuke that to suppress it in a given area for 1d4+1 rounds, during which time he has a few ideas how to get out.

One of the heroes can just teleport them all to the surface, or perhaps summon an avoral to *dimension door* them to somewhere outside the *antimagic field*. If one of the heroes has good timing, Guthwulf can begin casting *greater planar ally* to summon a fiendish burrowing creature; the hero will have to make sure the *dimensional lock* is

Guthwulf – Art by Claudio Pozas

dispelled the round Guthwulf completes his spell, and they'll have to offer some of their gear to pay the creature. Finally, Gus is a surprisingly adept climber for an undead creature, and if necessary, he can just climb up the shaft out and drop the harness down to pull the group up one by one.

As for getting the prisoners out *en masse*, Guthwulf could cast *earthquake* at the base of the pit. The resulting landslide would certainly dislodge parts of the pit wall, leaving some patches that are outside the antimagic field, or that are at least more climbable. He doesn't suggest this, because he'd rather not risk collapsing the whole prison on himself.

The Song of Agony (EL 17)

Through the whisper hole the heroes can clearly hear the Song of Forms, the lyrics of which often change, but which keeps a constant mournful rhythm and rhyme scheme. The heroes can wait several hours for Etinifi to grow tired and stop singing, or they can try to provoke him to stop. The most effective way to do this is to sing the song back to him. A character who learned the song back in adventure two can do this automatically. Otherwise, an untrained singer must speak Sylvan, and must succeed a Perform (singing) check (DC 20).

Whenever Etinifi stops singing, the heroes (or Guthwulf) can get through the whisper hole. Beyond is a short hallway, and then a huge circular room with a 20 foot high ceiling, the walls covered in gold plating that hides a deadly trap. In the center of the room is a large pit that leads to the oubliette, its edge surrounded by a ring of burning runes, and beyond it, chained to the floor, is the singer, Etinifi. Strangely, dozens of tiny scorpions crawl along the floor, oblivious to the magical pain.

A limited antimagic effect in the room suppresses all magical light effects and dims glowing swords and the like to the faintness of candlelight, but does not affect light from actual fire. The circle of runes prevents any creature or object from entering or escaping the oubliette; even light does not pass through, but sound and psychic emanations can, allowing communication. This magic circle can be dispelled (caster level 11th), or it can be disrupted by simply smashing the stone or snuffing the flames.

Agony (CR 17): hp 225 (of 230), Appendix B.
Etinifi (CR 8): hp 77, Appendix B.

The Prisoners

Etinifi is chained to the floor, in a position where he can almost manage to kneel. When he sees the heroes he briefly overcomes the pain to point at the pit and cry out, "Oh nightmares, free me! Destroy this agony." Oddly, each character hears him speaking in their native tongue.

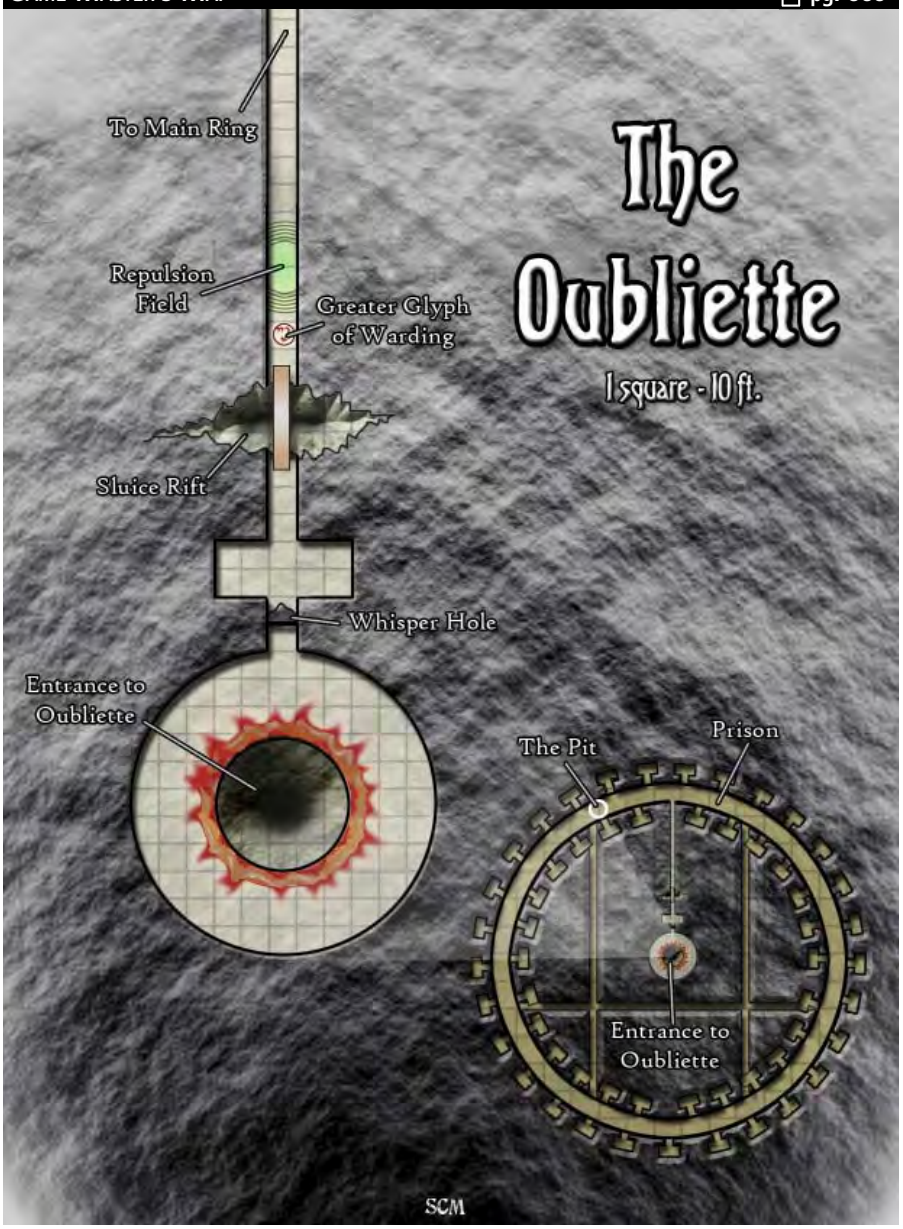
From the darkness of the oubliette comes the sound of thousands of carapaced limbs scraping against each other; of claws scraping on stone; of mute, shuddering pain. If the heroes call down to it, Agony identifies itself as "one of Mother's first." It has been trapped for so long that it assumes any corporeal creature is its foe and is automatically Hostile. Agony just wants to be released, and wants to leave to help its Mother, so the heroes can negotiate with it, and if the heroes manage to win the trillith's favor, they can escape without a fight.

Grant the heroes a bonus to their Diplomacy check (from +5 to +10) if they correctly identify Agony as a trillith, and mention peaceful dealings with other trillith in the past. If they heal Agony to full hit points, its attitude improves two steps. If it becomes Friendly it will share what it knows about the trillith incursion into Gate Pass (see below). If it becomes Helpful, if asked it will help the heroes briefly in their fight against the Ragesians, long enough to get out of the fortress.

Encounter

The heroes will have to decide how best to deal with this situation. While Agony's power is in effect, Etinifi will be unable to give them

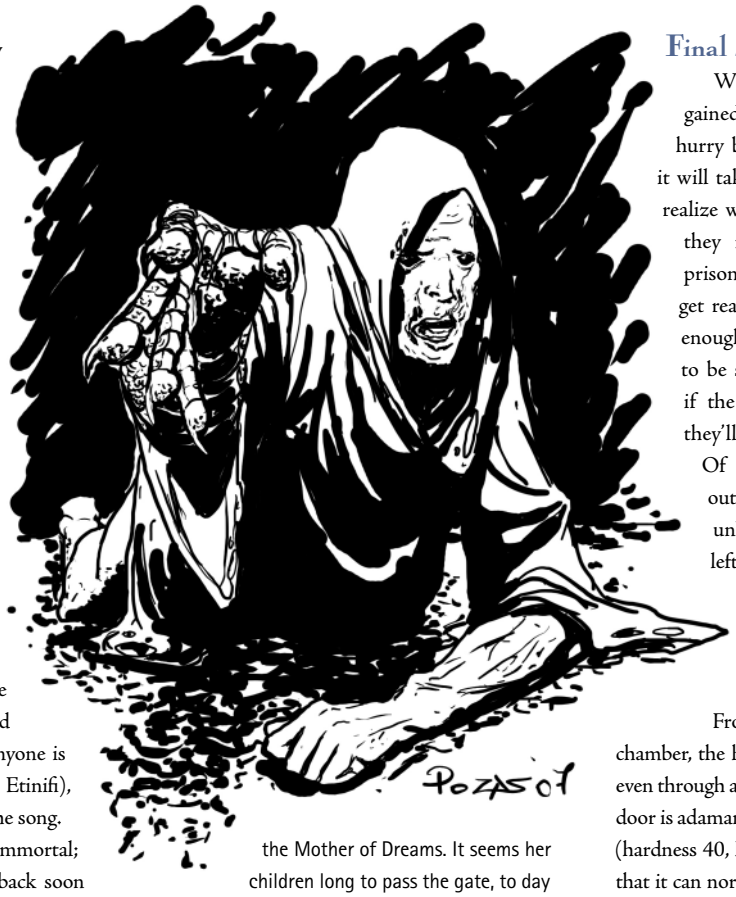
Game Master's Map pg. 669



much useful information, and they themselves will likely be debilitated. However, Etinifi cannot answer questions while singing, lest he release Agony again. It should be clear that to reach the power source of the Koren Obelisk, the heroes will have to open the pit and release or kill whatever is trapped in there.

To kill Agony, their best bet is to have Etinifi sing, to keep it trapped in a solid form. When the oubliette is opened, the trillith crawls up over the lip of the ledge, his limbs twisting in directions painful to human joints, but natural to the segmented limbs of a scorpion. If it is incorporeal, it uses its spell-like abilities to fight; if corporeal, it uses poison claws and quickened *harm* spells. If Agony needs to create a body for himself, he pulls in the scorpions in the room and uses them for his embody ability. If anyone is singing the Song of Forms (including Etinifi), Agony focuses its attacks on silencing the song.

Note that Etinifi is technically immortal; though he can be "killed," he'll come back soon thereafter.



Aftermath

If the heroes gain Agony's trust, the creature is willing to restrain its power and leave, flowing down through the river to the darkest reaches of the deep underground. It may also briefly help the heroes fight the Ragesians. Etinifi begs to be freed as well, and once he realizes the heroes are opposed to the Ragesians, he desperately claims that he knows how to defeat Leska.

Freeing these prisoners will provide the heroes with a piece of valuable information. Agony knew this because he is connected on a subconscious level to his fellow trillith, and there were brief times over the years that the two prisoners were able to simply talk to each other, so Etinifi knows it as well. However, the fey has an ulterior motive. In addition to bartering the information so he will be freed, Etinifi actually seeks to ally with the trillith. He offers the heroes this information.

"Innenotdar, my love, my homeland, lies south of the city of the Gate, a city founded by man, but who lets dreams craft its fate. O agonized one, not I, this inmate but the other, shared his tale of betrayal by his brother, against the Mother of Dreams. It seems her children long to pass the gate, to day above from great below, but a brother is their foe. Vigilance stands watch, keeps weak his kin, but in days too few to wait will come his fall, when the free men dance their Festival of Dreams. At the midnight hour a nightmare masquerade will arise at Leska's right hand, and all this land will be scoured.

"My own traitorous love left me here, to live and die and live in fear. We two share our blood and breath, and each can bring the other's death. Lest man and dream become but one, and all this world's life be done, you and I must share this task, to kill the evil that hides behind the mask."

Of course, spontaneously crafting dialogue for a character whose entire life is wrapped in poetry and song can be difficult, so Etinifi can speak normally if you need him to. He can explain his history, and how he was betrayed by Leska, and says that to kill her they must destroy the Aquiline Heart, which will also release him from his immortal torment. He offers to guide them to the location of the heart, but warns that it is much more urgent to deal with the trillith, who will be arriving during Gate Pass's Festival of Dreams. This is the focus of adventure nine.

Final Stage

When the heroes have defeated or gained the aid of Agony, they'll want to hurry back to the fortress above, because it will take less than an hour for Kreven to realize what has happened, at which point they might simply destroy the entire prison out of spite. While the heroes get ready for battle, any prisoners cogent enough to realize what's going on cry out to be saved, to be taken with them, and if the heroes cannot offer some solace, they'll be facing a riot.

Of course, fleeing into the freezing outdoors might not be the best idea, but unbeknownst to the heroes, anyone left in the prison when the Obelisk is destroyed is effectively doomed.

Battle at the Obelisk

From outside the door to the Obelisk chamber, the heroes can hear faint music, audible even through adamantine and lead-lined walls. The door is adamantine, 10 feet wide and 2 inches thick (hardness 40, hp 80), and enspelled in such a way that it can normally be opened only by channeling positive or negative energy sufficient to affect a 13 HD undead (or counter a spell with caster level 13). Kreven can to use the Obelisk to see the other side of the door, so he and his forces will not be surprised unless the heroes are really tricky.

The adamantine doors open, and the muted music you heard before rises to stunning volume, a choir of hundreds of tormented voices, conducted in an eerie, ominous song in infernal tongues.

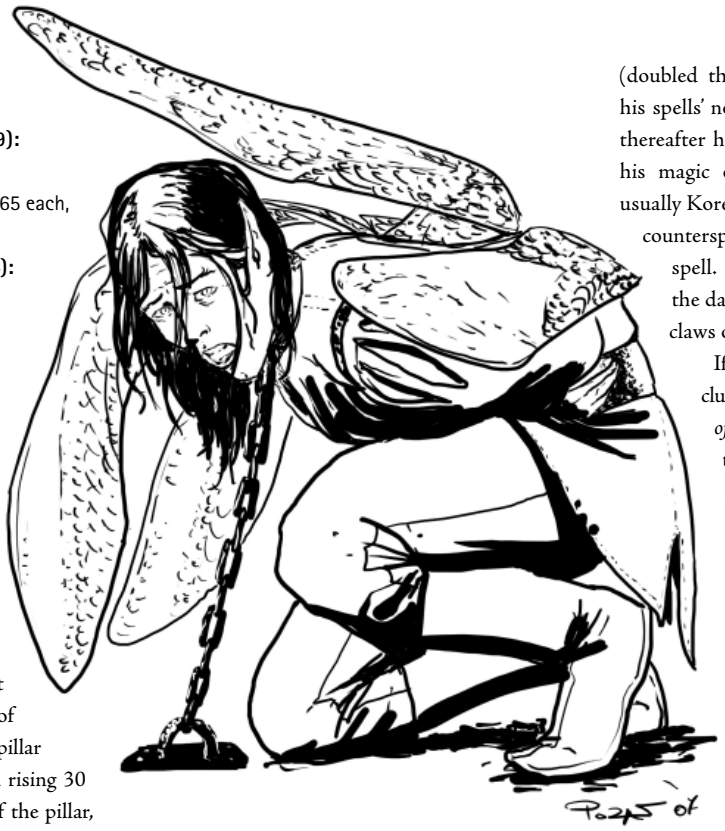
Pillars of fire illuminate this huge room, the walls of which are covered with runes that glow red beneath a sheen of ice, but both the runes and the flame seem faded, flickering like a candle at the end of its wick. Dozens of defenders look down at you from high steel scaffolding scattered around the room.

Across the chamber, Kreven stands on a platform beside a bed of jagged shards of frozen blood, from which rises a pillar of ice – the Koren Obelisk. Tangible fields of pain shimmer around it, and as Kreven raises one clenched fist, the song swells, and the battle is joined.

Kreven (CR 18): hp 47, Appendix B.
Koren (CR 16): hp 91, Appendix B.

Agony – Art by Claudio Pozas

Claws of Leska (2) (CR 14): hp 105 each, Appendix B.
Veteran Ragesian inquisitors (4) (CR 9): hp 62 each, Appendix B.
Elite Ragesian soldiers (8) (CR 8): hp 65 each, Appendix B.
Standard Ragesian archers (16) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.
Stone golems (2) (CR 11): hp 107 each, MM.



Terrain

The east end of the room has a massive pit that descends to the prison. A mass of jagged, bloody ice shards extrudes from the far wall, descending all the way to the rift outside the whisper hole below. The top of this ice — a bed of frozen spikes — is level with the rest of the chamber. Then, in the center of the spikes is the slender, gleaming pillar of the Obelisk itself, 5 feet wide and rising 30 feet to the ceiling. At the very base of the pillar, icy sculptures of four elemental spirits rear menacingly, but they are just for decoration.

Each 5-foot square of the ice shards deals damage to a creature that moves through equal to 25 minus its AC, not counting Dexterity and dodge bonuses (so a creature in +2 *full plate*, which grants AC 20, would take 5 damage).

The Obelisk: The Obelisk has hardness 10 and 200 hp, and takes double damage from fire. Also, whenever Kreven uses the Obelisk, he damages it. However, it "heals" 30 points of damage per round, even if it is completely destroyed, unless its power source has been removed.

Rune Clusters: Scaffolding surrounds this room, with platforms 15 feet high beside the Obelisk itself, and scaffolding 40 feet high on the north and south walls. This scaffolding provides access to eight great clusters of runes that line those walls. The Obelisk is the primary focus of power, but these runes channel that energy, and without them the Obelisk cannot turn potential power to actual spell effects. The north wall has four large sections of runes (abjuration, conjuration, divination, and enchantment) and the south another four (evocation, illusion, necromancy, and transmutation). Each cluster is a 10-foot square, with AC 3. Anyone who can read Infernal can make a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 17) to discern this division of runes, which provides a clue to how to defeat the Obelisk's power. A spell of 7th level or higher cast at one of these clusters of runes suppresses the power of that rune for one minute if it has the appropriate magical school. While the rune cluster is suppressed, Kreven cannot use the power of the Obelisk to cast or maintain spells of that school. Alternately, if the wall is sufficiently damaged (hardness 8, hp 20), the rune cluster is ruined.

Fire Pillars: In the corners of the room and beside the pit are five pillars of fire, 10 feet across. A creature entering one of these pillars takes 5d6 points of fire damage and 5d6 points of unholy divine damage, as if from a *flamestrike*. They provide enough light to fully illuminate the room. If the evocation rune cluster is suppressed or destroyed, these pillars fade out.

Tactics

Assuming he is not caught by surprise, before combat Kreven casts *spell turning* on himself, then lays a *mind fog* at the entrance to the room. Kreven is fragile, but can easily turn his enemies against each other. He typically starts with *mass suggestion*: "Take no hostile action against me until you've defeated all my guards." (This elicits a sarcastic, "Thank you, my love," from Koren if she is present.)

Kreven then uses the power of the Obelisk to seal off himself and the Obelisk with *wall of force* (doubled thanks to the Obelisk). This blocks his spells' normal line of effect for targeting, so thereafter he'll use the Obelisk's power to have his magic originate from some of his allies, usually Koren. He usually doesn't waste his time counterspelling unless he's the target of the spell. His *ring of friend shield* means half the damage against him goes to one of the claws of Leska.

If the heroes manage to destroy the rune cluster of evocation, however, the *walls of force* are destroyed, forcing Kreven to change his tactics. In order of preference, he'll generally use *dominate monster*, then a sonic empowered *chain lightning*, and then empowered *vampiric touch* (usually doubling each of them with the Obelisk's power, or extending the *vampiric touch*'s range). Each round he also attacks with *severing slash* if he's not quickening something else, since he can cast it as a swift action.

Koren has already used *inspire courage* on the defenders unless they are caught by surprise. She teleports around the room, carrying allies into opportune tactical positions (she can bring along extra creatures when she uses *wayfarer's step* by expending multiple uses), seldom casting offensive spells, figuring there will be too much counterspelling going on for her enchantments to last long. She saves those as a back-up near the end of the fight, since her survivability is fairly high.

The inquisitors stay in the scaffolding, intent on using countermagic to thwart the heroes, such that for any given spell the heroes cast, there will usually be at least two or three inquisitors trying to rebuke or *overmaster* it. They cast offensive spells when they can, but are mostly here to protect Kreven and the Obelisk.

The claws of Leska and elite Ragesian soldiers rush into melee, while the two stone golems stay back to defend the approach to the obelisk. The archers stay on the scaffolding and provide relatively useless cover fire, and are mostly here to let the heroes enjoy their area-effect attacks.

If the heroes have Guthwulf or Agony on their side, they can greatly turn the tide of this battle. Agony just leaps and clambers up the walls, tearing through inquisitors. Guthwulf starts by saying, "I said I'd kill you, bastard," which triggers a contingent summoning: a bearded devil appears to fight with Guthwulf.

Using the Koren Obelisk

While the full extent of the Obelisk's power falls in the realm of game master fiat, for the purposes of this battle, Kreven can use the Obelisk in several ways (he likes to gesture grandiosely, as if he is directing an orchestra).

He can modify any spell he casts (when within 30 feet of the Obelisk), but doing so deals damage to the Obelisk if its power source has been removed. He can apply multiples of these effects to the same spell, to a maximum of 20 hp worth of bonuses.

- Double the spell's duration or range. 4 hp. (Tripling 8 hp, quadrupling 12 hp, etc.).
- Originate the spell from another creature he can see (e.g., cast "personal" spells on other creatures), or use touch-range spells with a range of 70 ft. 8 hp.
- Double the spell's area. 12 hp.
- Cast the spell as a swift action. 16 hp.
- Cast the spell twice at the same time, with different targets or areas. 20 hp.

If the Obelisk takes damage while he is using its power, Kreven must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level + amount of hp worth of bonuses being wielded) or the spell fails. If a spell is countered or disrupted, all duplicates of that spell are as well.

If a rune cluster is nullified or destroyed, Kreven can no longer use the Obelisk to empower spells of that type, and any spells of that school he has already affected with the power of the Obelisk end as if dispelled.

Heroes and the Obelisk

Once Agony is gone, a hero who stands within 30 feet of the Obelisk can concentrate and try to bend its eldritch energy to his will.

For a hero, controlling the Obelisk requires a Use Magic Device check or caster level check (DC 25). To use the Obelisk's full power requires a DC 35 check: the controller can cast any spell anywhere within the valley with an area of up to twenty times the spell's normal area. Other characters can aid the primary controller.

Each failed attempt deals 40 hp damage to the Obelisk. Using the Obelisk's full power, without the proper guidance from assisting inquisitors and precise knowledge of how the device works, destroys the Obelisk, but should let the heroes get off one good shot first.

Aftermath

The Ragesians fight to the death.

When the Obelisk is destroyed, if its power source has been removed, the accrued pain and suffering of the prison is released. Black, shrieking waves of pain surge outward from the Obelisk, shaking the entire facility. The ice shards shatter and tumble into the rift, and from the core of the Obelisk bursts a tangible cryoclastic flow of negative energy, which begins to fill the room, tons more pouring out than could possibly have been contained in the ice. Some flows down into the prison, but this deadly cryoclasm mostly fills the Obelisk chamber, then flows through the rest of the fortress, eventually welling up out of it and covering any trace of it on the surface.

Anyone who comes in contact with the black sludge takes 20d6 points of cold damage and must make a Will save (DC 25) or be nauseated with pain for one minute, able to take only a single move action per round.

The flow fills the fortress, expanding outward at a rate of roughly 20 feet per round in a mass 5 feet deep. Of course the flow does not fill up the chamber all at once, so any Ragesians not yet dead might still fight the heroes while trying to stay on the scaffolding. If Kreven can, he'll create *walls of force* to try to trap the heroes, trusting to his high ground, and to his wife's ability to teleport him out.

The heroes must race from the fortress; now that the Obelisk is destroyed, all the magical defenses of the fortress and valley are gone, including the *antimagic field* in the clean room and pit.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes manage to rescue the Sons of the Resistance from the prison, reward them for a CR 16 encounter.

Conclusion

As the heroes escape from the frozen fortress, the situation on the ground could be in many different states, from embattled to a rout. Either way, the heroes should be able to use teleportation or flight to link up with their allies, and then use another *teleportation circle* to return to Dassen.

If the heroes were victorious, the destruction of the Obelisk will tip the scales in favor of the Resistance, and any prisoners the heroes rescued become celebrities and symbols of the strength of spirit of those fighting against Ragesia (after they receive *heal* spells to cure their insanity).

On the other hand, if the heroes failed to destroy the Obelisk, the Resistance is doomed. Within days it becomes fully operational, and no force can stand against Leska as with impunity she annihilates all who oppose her. While it might still be possible for the heroes to survive and tackle future missions by staying hidden, the world will eventually bow to the might of Leska and her Obelisk.

In victory, however, the heroes bolster the clout of the Resistance, and soon many who were simply hiding in hopes of waiting out the war join up to fight against Ragesia. The Resistance will need them, too, because their next mission, liberating Gate Pass, puts them up against tens of thousands of warriors.

Worse, Etinifi's warning of the coming trillith incursion means that the heroes will have to figure out how to stop these dreamborn monsters, for their incorporeal forms are all but invincible to normal attacks. It seems Leska has a few more plays to make before she is defeated, and the next stage of battle is where the campaign saga began: Gate Pass.

The Grand Finale?

If this is the final adventure, you may as well let the heroes use the Torch at its full power, though warn them that when they repaired it in the last adventure, they left it fragile, so using it too much could destroy it. This way the heroes can call down a massive pillar of fire from the heavens, and teleport everyone within a mile to the very outskirts of the valley. They can come with a much larger force, though the Ragesians should have a comparably large number of defenders.

Additionally, Pilus offers his airship for an end run. After the heroes attack the Eye and draw out a large bulk of the army at the fortress, the Tempest will strike the fortress to take down its shield, and then disembark a few hundred Ostalin hippogriff riders to clear up the surviving defenders at the fortress, clearing the way for the heroes to get in.

You will also need to make some subtle changes to some of the maps. Bear in mind, this encounter's probably too hard for 15th level PCs whose resources are expended from earlier in the adventure. But it's a climax, and they'll have allies helping, so don't be afraid to destroy them.

Loose Ends

This is an abbreviated climax, so the heroes will never get a chance to deal with Pilus themselves, nor will they find out the secret of the Mother of Dreams, and will miss out on the satisfaction of liberating Gate Pass from the conquering Ragesians. However, when the Obelisk is destroyed, even if the heroes can't manage to figure out how to kill Leska, she can still be caught in the cryoclastic flow, immortally trapped until some adventures accidentally let her out in a few thousand years.

Meanwhile, the heroes will have led the Resistance to victory, and their leadership should place them in a position to direct the fates of many nations: to be free and independent, to unite under a noble ruler, or to be burnt in fires of a new conquering warlord.

Supreme Inquisitor Leska (CR 21)

The new empress is either already at the fortress when the Resistance attack, or arrives after the initial strike (she can get in by teleporting to the area above the forbiddance and flying down). When the heroes breach the fortress, upon reaching the clean room, an ambush does not occur. Instead, the clean room has a balcony overlooking it, and as soon as the heroes enter, Kreven uses the power of the Obelisk to create *walls of force* behind them in the stairwell and just outside the borders of the antimagic field, effectively trapping them, with the only way out being the pit to the prison.

Leska then appears at the balcony, protected behind a *wall of force* and flanked by two claws of Leska. She speaks with the heroes, assuring them none can challenge her; that they have accomplished nothing except to kill a few thousand soldiers whom she will raise and send back into battle. She thanks them, however, saying that for the first time in a long while, they have given her something she can enjoy: knowing they will die in agony.

She then opens a "scrying screen" on her side of the *wall of force*, so the heroes can see the events occuring overhead. She gives a command to Kreven, telling him to activate the disjunction, and then the entire fortress shakes as the Obelisk unleashes its incredible power upon Pilus's airship. Magical lights illuminating the airship flicker and die, and the storm surrounding the leviathan suddenly dissipates. Then slowly the ship lists sideways and falls to the earth. It lands far from the fortress, but the impact still shakes the entire room.

Pleased with her show of power, Leska has Kreven activate the flood from the cisterns (which in this version, comes from behind them above the stairwell), and the heroes are swept into the prison.

If the heroes manage to overcome Leska's villainous trap, they can get to fighting her right away (after all, few places are worse for her than an antimagic room). Otherwise, after the heroes escape from the prison, they can face her in the Obelisk chamber.

Lord Shaaladel of the Shahalesti (CR 20)

There is a good chance the Shahalesti will have lent military support in the assault on the Scourge, though how trustworthy they are depends heavily on how well the heroes got along with the princess Shalosha. Shaaladel himself leads his forces. With his leadership and the magical aid of his army, the Resistance will manage to break through the defenses at the Needle, and then march upon the reinforcements from the fortress.

General Xavious Foebane keeps the heroes informed of what's going on, and by the time the heroes are able to get out of the prison, the Resistance army will be almost to the fortress, being in the grip of battle now with an army of undead created from the warriors slain by Pilus's airship.

When the heroes negate the power source of the Obelisk and then reach Leska, in the opening rounds of combat Shaaladel, his daughter, and several allies teleport into the Obelisk chamber to join in the final fight. Initially, they will be on the heroes' side, but when Leska appears near her final defeat, Shaaladel will waste no time, turning on the heroes in an attempt to take the Torch from them.

Lord Shaaladel **CR 20**

Ruler of the Shining Land of Shahalesti, Lord Shaaladel stands tall and stern, his blonde hair short-cropped to highlight his sharp ears and high cheeks, the marks of his elvish heritage. His dress lives up to his shining title, with stark blues and bright silver adorning his mithral breastplate, crisp cloak, and hauberk. He wears at his hip a seemingly mundane longsword, and on his left. arm a unique bladed shield that covers his forearm, then bends over his hand like the claw of an eagle. Pride gleams in his grey eyes.

Middle-aged male elf commander 8/fighter 12

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision, celestial sight; Listen +4, Spot +31

Aura shadow purge 60 ft.

Languages Common, Celestial, Elven, Orc

AC 46 (+5 Dex, +10 armor, +5 natural, +5 deflection, +6 shield, +5 *defending* weapon), touch 20, flat-footed 36

hp 162 (20 HD)

Immune sleep, movement impairment (*freedom of movement*)

Fort +18, **Ref** +10, **Will** +14 (+2 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee Gray Blade +29/+24/+19/+14 (1d8+15 plus 2d6 vs. humans or orcs plus negative level on crit, 17-20) and Talon +22/+17 (1d4+4 plus 1d6 cold) or

Gray Blade +31/+26/+21/+16 (1d8+15 plus 2d6 vs. humans or orcs plus negative level on crit, 17-20)

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +22

Atk Options Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack

Special Actions leadership performances (4/day), battle cry ("Burn them with our holy light!"), direct orders +8

Combat Gear *glove of storing*, six *potions of cure serious wounds*, six *potions of heroism*, *potion of neutralize poison*, *potion of remove blindness/deafness*, *potion bracer*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 19, Wis 14, Cha 26

SQ initiative bonus +2, widen command (40 ft.)

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Elite Training (longsword), Fearless Leader, Greater Weapon Focus (longsword), Greater Weapon Specialization (longsword), Improved Shield Bash, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Legendary Leader, Maneuver Leader, Mobility, Spring Attack, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword), Whirlwind Attack

Skills Bluff +13, Diplomacy +30, Intimidate +19, Jump +12, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Perform (oratory) +31, Ride +10, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (celestial), Spot +31, Swim +7, Tumble +11.

Possessions combat gear plus *+5 human-bane orc-bane keen longsword of life stealing*, *+5 mithral defending frost ghost-touch bladed shield*, *amulet of natural armor +5*, *belt of physical perfection*, *boots of the winterlands*, Crown of Shining Glory, *eyes of the eagle*, *+5 mithral breastplate*, *+5 mithral light shield*, *ring of freedom of movement*, *ring of protection +5*, *wings of flying*

Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour, if Shaaladel shouts a battle cry while in combat (typically "Burn them with our holy light!") he gains a bonus leadership performance that must be used during that combat.

Celestial Sight (Su) Shaaladel is of a royal elvish bloodline with a distant celestial heritage. He has a unique form of vision in which all living things shine with an inner light, and all inanimate objects and non-living creatures appear as gleaming crystal. In this vision, he can see regardless of light conditions, since the inner light of any living creature effectively illuminates a 60-ft. radius. This does not allow him to see invisible creatures, but he can detect the presence of creatures behind cover or concealment by noticing their glow.

Celestial sight functions just as well in well-lit areas as it does in dark areas. However, magical darkness blocks his line of sight for this ability, and a shadowdancer using its hide in plain sight ability does not appear to emit light.

Shaaladel cannot be blinded or dazzled by bright light.

Direct Orders (Ex) Each round as a swift. or immediate action, Shaaladel may choose one of the following types of rolls. He grants every ally within 40 ft. a +8 bonus to rolls of that type for one turn:

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) All of Shaaladel's allies within 40 ft. gain a +2 bonus to initiative checks.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Four times per day, Shaaladel can inspire or direct his allies in one the following ways. Unless otherwise noted, these performances require a standard action, and do not affect Shaaladel himself. They only affect allies who can understand Shaaladel's language.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant allies who hear it +4 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting as long as Shaaladel remains within 40 ft., and then for 5 rounds thereafter.
- Inspire greatness, granting allies within 40 ft. 17 temporary hit points and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as he is within 40 ft. and for 5 rounds thereafter.
- Grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action or a single attack with whatever weapon he has available.
- Make a Perform (oratory) check. Every ally within 40 ft. that is afflicted with a hostile mind-affecting effect breaks free if Shaaladel's Perform check beats that effect's save DC.

Tactics Shaaladel is strongest with many allies at his side, but he is arrogant and likes to handle major foes personally, directing his allies with encouragement that their deeds will bring glory to the elvish people, even if he is sending them to their deaths like the pawns they are.

Shaaladel enjoys flying over a line of enemies, landing behind their defenses, and cutting them down from within their ranks. Against land-bound foes he will use Spring Attack while flying, staying out of reach as much as possible. If he finds himself overwhelmed, he has many items at his disposable for getting out of trouble. He simply tucks his gray longsword into his *glove of storing*, retrieves what he needs, uses it, then rearms himself.

If he expects a fight, Shaaladel will start off by drinking a *potion of heroism*, then has one of his assistants cast *daylight* on his sword for dramatic effect. Because of his reliance on magic items, Shaaladel is loath to go into battle against inquisitors, and usually sends his subordinates in first to dispatch them.

Lord Shaaladel's Unique Items As the ruler of a sovereign nation, Shaaladel has access to several magic items of impressive power.

The Gray Blade is a *+5 human-bane orc-bane keen longsword of life stealing*. Unlike the rest of his people, Shaaladel wields a sword that does not shed light. It is the result of a failed attempt to create a new Torch, and while the sword can drink life energy, it lacks the teleportation powers of the Torch. Whenever the Gray Blade deals a critical hit, it bestows a negative level and the wielder gains 1d6 temporary hit points, lasting 24 hours. One day after being struck, subjects must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or the level loss is permanent.

Talon is a custom-made *+5 mithral light shield* that fits on Shaaladel's forearm and hand like a large, flared gauntlet. A trio of long blades extend over Shaaladel's hand like an eagle's talon, functioning as *+5 mithral defending frost ghost-touch light shield spikes*, except that they deal slashing damage.

Shaaladel's *belt of physical perfection* is a blue velvet sash with silver stitching that grants a +6 enhancement bonus to the wearer's Str, Dex, and Con.

The Crown of Shining Glory is the signature item of the ruler of Shahalesti. It grants its wearer a +6 enhancement bonus to Int, Wis, and Cha. Additionally, it creates *shadow purge*, a 60-ft. emanation that eliminates all darkness and shadows, and wreathes Shaaladel and his allies in sparkling light. This effect can be deactivated at will, but Shaaladel keeps it up to defend against a particular shadowdancer. Finally, as a mark of Shaaladel's vanity, the crown conceals itself with *invisibility* so that the Lord of the Shining Land's aquiline features are not obscured.

Supreme Inquisitor Leska Merideus CR 21

The world seems to fade around Leska, sounds muted, colors faded, time drawing out so that nothing appears real except for her dark majesty. Despite her imperial grandeur, she is adorned with dozens of primitive shamanistic charms and amulets. Her face lies hidden behind a skeletal mask, long dark gloves conceal her hands, and regal crimson robes float around her body as if even gravity yields to her power. Only the flesh of her neck, jaw, and mouth is exposed, and her blood-red lips hint at a face filled with cold, scornful detachment.

Female human cleric 3/wizard 5/mystic theurge 10/archmage 3

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0 (+18, *moment of prescience*); **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elf, Infernal, Orc

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 148 (21 HD); regeneration 30

Immune disease, divination, energy drain, mind-affecting effects, movement-impairment, and poison

Fort +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +21

Buff Suite *mind blank*, *moment of prescience*, *true seeing*

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee melee touch +6 (varies)

Ranged ranged touch +7 (varies)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +6

Combat Options Multispell, rebuke magic (6/day, d20+13 vs. 11+caster level)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 13th, save DC 14 + spell level)

7th – *spell turning*[D], *spelleater**

6th – *antilife shell*, *fire seeds*[D]**, *heal*

5th – *flame strike*[**], *greater command*, *spell resistance*[D], *true seeing*

4th – *cure critical wounds*, *dimensional anchor*, *dismissal*, *sending* ×3, *wall of fire*[D]**

3rd – *dispel magic*[D], *invisibility purge*, *remove blindness/deafness*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*, *stone shape*, *wind wall*

2nd – *align weapon*, *identify*[D], *lesser restoration*, *resist energy* ×2, *silence* ×2, *sound burst*[**]

1st – *burning hands*[D]**, *command* ×5, *deathwatch*, *endure elements*

D Domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 18th, save DC 19 + spell level)

9th – *crushing hand*[Q] (+45 grapple), *summon monster IX*, *time stop*[Q]

8th – *horrid wilting*[**], ~~*mind blank*~~, ~~*moment of prescience*~~

7th – *delayed blast fireball*[**], *greater arcane sight*, *mage's sword*[Q] (+30, 4d6+3, 19–20/×2)

6th – *greater dispel magic* ×4

5th – quickened *magic missile* ×2, *telekinesis*[Q] ×2[**], *teleport* ×2

4th – *charm monster*, *dimension door* ×2, *fire shield*[Q], *wall of fire* ×2[**]

3rd – *fireball*[Q]** ×3, *fly*, *haste*, *slow*

2nd – *arcane lock*, *detect thoughts* ×4, *protection from arrows*

1st – *magic missile* ×3, *shield*, wayfarer's step* ×3

* Presented in Appendix A.

** Evocation or Necromancy spell. Save DC +2.

Q Quickened courtesy of metamagic rod.

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast.

Leska has already used one 6th, two 7th, and one 8th level spell slot for her archmage powers.

Epic Spells (2/day) – *desertion of the blade*, *mythos scourge*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 28, Wis 18, Cha 16

SQ Blessing of the Aquiline Heart, mastery of counterspelling, mastery of elements, mastery of shaping, contingent heal

Feats Epic Spellcasting, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Improved Counterspell, Multispell, Quicken Spell, Reactive Counterspell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Focus (necromancy)

Skills Concentration +25, Decipher Script +13, Knowledge (arcana) +33, Knowledge (history) +33, Knowledge (religion) +33, Knowledge (the planes) +33, Sense Motive +28, Spellcraft +45

Possessions Mask of Leska, Leska's Cloak of Fire, Amulet of Three Beasts, greater quicken metamagic rod, standard quicken metamagic rod, lesser quicken metamagic rod

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Blessing of the Aquiline Heart (Ex) Leska is immortal. She does not suffer ability score penalties from aging, nor can she die of old age, but she does gain the normal ability score bonuses. She has regeneration 30, and heals ability damage at a rate of 1 point per ability score per round. She is immune to disease, energy drain, and poison.

Almost no form of attack deals lethal damage to Leska. She regenerates even if she fails a saving throw against a *disintegrate*

spell or a death effect. If she fails her save against a spell or effect that would kill her instantly (such as those mentioned above), the spell or effect instead deals nonlethal damage equal to her full normal hit points +10 (or 158 hp). Leska is immune to effects that produce incurable or bleeding wounds, such as mummy rot, a sword with the wounding special ability, or a clay golem's cursed wound ability.

If Leska loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1d6 minutes (the detached piece dies and decays normally). She can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to her stump.

Only the bite or breath weapon of a true dragon deals lethal damage to Leska. She cannot regenerate Constitution damage from having her blood drunk. If Leska is completely exsanguinated (reduced to 0 Constitution by the blood drain of a vampire, for example), she loses this ability and is slain. If Leska has nonlethal damage equal to her hit points +10, she is unconscious and helpless. While she is helpless, a character may perform a coup de grace to impale her in the heart. As long as her heart is so pierced, Leska cannot regenerate.

Contingent Heal (Sp) Leska's *contingency* is that if she falls unconscious, a *heal* spell will be cast upon her (caster level 13th). After this effect triggers, the *contingency* is expended.

Mastery of Counterspelling (Ex) When Leska counterspells a spell, it is turned back upon the caster as if it were fully affected by a spell turning spell. If the spell cannot be affected by spell turning, then it is merely counterspelled.

Mastery of Elements (Ex) Leska can alter an arcane spell when cast so that it utilizes a different element from the one it normally uses. This ability can only alter a spell with the acid, cold, fire, electricity, or sonic descriptor. The spell's casting time is unaffected. She decides whether to alter the spell's energy type and chooses the new energy type when she begins casting.

Mastery of Shaping (Ex) Leska can alter area and effect spells that use one of the following shapes: burst, cone, cylinder, emanation, or spread. The alteration consists of creating spaces within the spell's area or effect that are not subject to the spell. The minimum dimension for these spaces is a 5-ft. cube. Furthermore, any shapeable spells have a minimum dimension of 5 ft. instead of 10 ft.

Multispell (Ex) Leska can cast two quickened spells per round.

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Leska can counterspell even when she has not readied an action, as long as she is aware of a spell being cast. If she does so, she gives up her standard action on her next turn, having effectively already used it.

Tactics Leska has used three *metamagic rods of quicken* to prepare an array of magic, taking advantage of her Multispell feat to cast up to three spells per round. She has cast *mind blank* and *moment of prescience* already, and at the start of combat uses her prescient +18 insight bonus to her initiative check, which gives her a good chance of going first. She then casts a quickened *time stop*.

During the *time stop* she casts mostly defensive spells (*spell turning*, quickened *fire shield*, quickened *mage's sword* in round one; quickened *crushing hand* and *summon monster IX* for 1d3 hellcats (MM) in round two; then less critical ones, such as *greater arcane sight*, *shield*, and *fly*), and when the spell ends she unleashes her magical fury upon the heroes.

Leska has designed two epic spells, which she supplements with quickened *fireballs*, *magic missiles*, and *telekinesis* spells, taking advantage of her mastery of energy and shaping abilities to have the *fireballs* deal whatever damage the heroes are most vulnerable to, without hitting any of her allies.

She casts her first epic spell, *desertion of the blade*, in the first round of combat (since when her *time stop* ends, it's still her turn), turning the heroes' magic items against them. If Leska believes she may actually be defeated (such as when most of her allies are defeated or after she has expended her contingent *heal* spell), she casts Mythos Scourge, and then fights to the death. After investing so much into her conquest, she is too proud to surrender or flee.

Note that these tactics assume that, for non-spontaneous spellcasters, *metamagic rods* must be used at the time of a spell's preparation, rather than when spells are cast. If you instead allow preparation-based magic-users to apply metamagic feats from rods on the fly, Leska keeps her three metamagic rods at her hip, and begins combat by drawing the *greater rod*, holding it until she has expended its power. Then she drops the rod, draws the next most powerful, and continues fighting. This is a good opportunity to show Leska's disdain for the heroes and her willingness to cast aside things once they have served their purpose. She is so confident she will defeat them that she doesn't hesitate to drop a supremely expensive magic item on the ground. All the while, she quietly assures them that she will destroy them and all who stood with them.

Leska's Unique Items As the ruler of a sovereign nation and an accomplished arcane and divine spellcaster in her own right, Leska has access to several magic items of impressive power.

The skull-like Mask of Leska, carved from one single bone and etched with gold, deadens the effects of magic upon the wearer and focuses its wearer's mind. The wearer gains a +6 enhancement bonus to Intelligence and a +5 resistance bonus to saving throws.

Dark red like seared blood, Leska's Cloak of Fire grants its wearer constant *freedom of movement*.

Representing the planes of earth, life, and time, the Amulet of Three Beasts grants the wearer a +6 enhancement bonus to Constitution and a +10 competence bonus to Spellcraft checks.



Adventure Nine
The Festival of Dreams

for 16th-Level Characters

by Ryan Nock

Cover Art by
Brandon Leach

War began with the new year, as the Ragesian army assaulted the city of Gate Pass. Now, as the heroes return to where their quest began, the local rebellion rallies to their cause, battling in the streets as they defiantly celebrate a long-delayed holiday.

But Ragesia has far stranger minions than mere soldiers and beasts. Sleeping horrors strain to pass through to the world of flesh, and though victory in Gate Pass is near, the heroes will find their desires turned to nightmares in the Festival of Dreams.

Background

Dreams have always been a part of the history of Gate Pass; its annual Festival of Dreams celebrates the spirit of a city that manages to live in peace despite its divided nature. Different races, nations, and religions come together in the festival to celebrate the new year and give good wishes toward each other, and this cosmopolitan spirit helps Gate Pass prosper.

One hundred years ago, during Coaltongue's rise to power, fleeing elves took the young gold dragon Trilla deep underground through tunnels beneath Gate Pass. Trilla, cursed with a power that caused her dreams to come to life, would eventually give rise to the trillith, strange creatures that have vexed the heroes throughout the campaign. Since Gate Pass was the last Trilla saw of the surface, in her nightmares the city became a barrier that could not be passed. For the trillith, metaphors and symbolism are as powerful as reality, so they too were trapped, unable to escape into the land they call the Great Above.

At first, trillith were able to cross the barrier during the Festival of Dreams, when the power of the holiday's metaphor made it easy for the dreams to bond with human hosts. Eventually, though, Leska discovered the trillith and traced them back to the city. She made an alliance with some of the trillith, pulling them through to the surface and using them as agents in her war, and then she bound their leaders with powerful compulsions and unbreakable oaths. Foolishly, Leska assumed she had controlled them.

The leaders of the trillith have one secret goal: to turn the corporeal world into dream-stuff. They believe that when their mother Trilla dies — as eventually she must — they will cease to exist unless the whole world is incorporeal, like them. While they have pledged their lesser kin to serve Leska, once they are free the elders will seek a way to sunder the world. This will be one element of the final adventure of the campaign saga, The Beating of the Aquiline Heart, but for now what matters most is that the trillith are reinforcements for the Ragesians.

However, one of the trillith, Vigilance, defends Gate Pass. Loyal to Trilla, his power is strong enough that any foray could only occur during the Festival, and would last only as long as the holiday. The Ragesians have managed to capture Vigilance, and hold him captive until the trillith can come to slay him, which will open the gates for them to enter the surface world. Leska believes that with their power at her command, she will be able to quell any opposition to her.

Vigilance will be familiar with the heroes, for he was once Indomitability, the trillith who kept the fire forest of Innenotdar from dying (see adventure two,). He, and all other trillith the heroes encounter in this adventure, are corporeal, given solid flesh by the ambient power of the coming festival.

Meanwhile, a more traditional war is still going on. The Second Ragesian Army, under the command of General Ashok Danava, succeeded in officially defeating the defenders of Gate Pass around the time the heroes completed the third adventure, Shelter from the Storm (which should be about four to seven months ago), but since then the townsfolk have not given in. Members of a local rebellion have assassinated Ragesian commanders, destroyed the invaders' supplies, and continued to keep the Ragesians from sleeping peacefully, all while evading capture themselves. General Danava is an honorable warrior, and so he has refused to punish civilians for the actions of the resistance. Angered at what she perceives as his weakness, Leska has sent a toadying noble, Legate Kolvus, to ensure Danava does what is necessary to get things under control.

The inscrutable elves of Shahalesti have occasionally lent their aid to the resistance, because they fear that the Ragesians seek to march on through to Shahalesti lands. The elves' leader, Shaaladel, is coming himself to reinforce his warriors in the city. Shaaladel wants to come out of this war a victor, and he is ready to ally with or betray the heroes, as needed. Shaaladel suspects Leska has some plan for the city, but does not know what.

Finally there is the Gate Pass rebellion, who despite the bravery of its members, is close to defeat. The people of Gate Pass are about ready to give up, and they need a sign that their fight is not in vain.

Welcome to the ninth adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. At the war's start, the heroes fled before the approach of the Ragesian army, taking with them refugees and a plea for aid. Behind them, Gate Pass has been besieged, assaulted, and magically bombarded, but it has not been taken; even today it remains a battleground as the local rebellion continues the fight against the would-be conquerors.

Now, with allies gained from many adventures, the heroes can finally liberate Gate Pass. They must rally the local populace, defeat key elements of the Ragesian military, and make sure that the opportunistic Shahalesti elves do not betray them when they are weak, all while protecting a dream-born entity that holds the key to the metaphorical gate for which the city is named.

Nightmares lurk below Gate Pass, and only the heroes and their allies stand between the victory of nightmare and the Festival of Dreams.

Introduction

Return to Gate Pass

The heroes interact with three main factions in this adventure — the rebels, the Shahalesti, and the Ragesians.

The Rebellion

The current leadership of the rebellion is a triumvirate consisting of dashing hero **Rantle** (CG male human fighter 4/rogue 3/ranger 2/paladin of freedom 3/commander 4), acerbic enchanter **Diogenes** (N male human enchanter 13/archmage 3), and quirky aristocrat **Erdan Menash** (NG male half-elf expert 7/abjurer 5), all of whom the heroes may have met in the first adventure.

These men will be busy leading their forces during the coming battle, and though they will ask the heroes for help against certain challenges too overwhelming for them, they expect to be the ones calling the shots. They know their city, and the heroes would be smart to trust their advice.

Shahalesti

The heroes know the Lord of the Shahalesti, **Shaaladel** (N middle-aged male elf commander 8/fighter 12), only indirectly, by rumor or by interacting with his daughter **Shalosha** (NG female elf commander 1/wizard 6/eldritch knight 8), who, depending on the heroes' actions, may be an ally, an enemy, or a corpse. Shaaladel is arrogant, power-hungry, and an elf-supremacist, believing that he and his people deserve to rule as they once did long ago. He will work with non-elves and is cunning enough to play the part of a loyal ally in the fight against Ragesia, but he truly views foreigners as less than people.

Shaaladel has a thick enough skin to work around such savages as humans and orcs, but if his pride is repeatedly challenged, or his daughter threatened, he is liable to lash out, though afterward, he will try to diplomatically undo any damage he may have caused to his long-term plans. Shaaladel spent decades feigning friendship and loyalty to Emperor Coaltongue in hopes of claiming his throne when he passed, so he is quite adept at being too valuable an ally to throw away, even if one knows he should not be trusted.

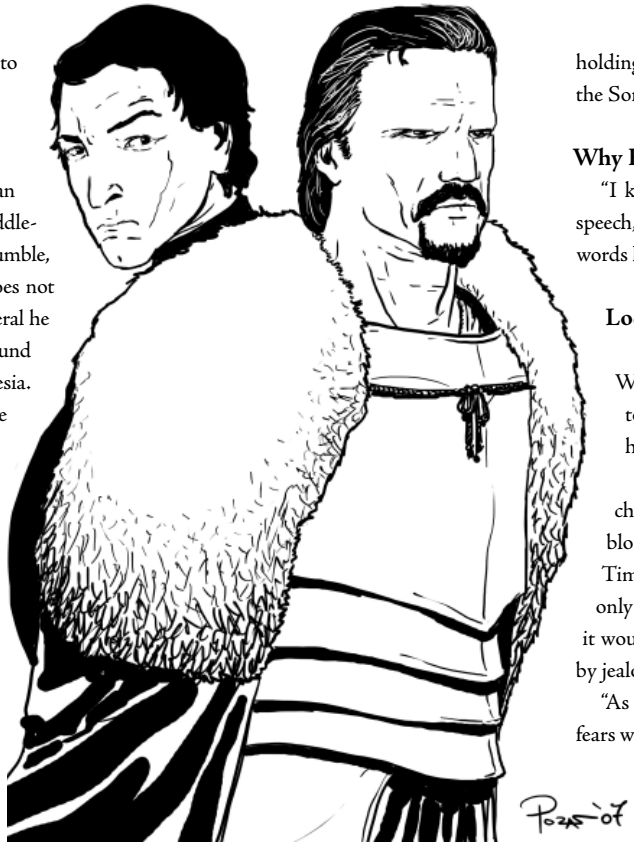
Shaaladel wants two things from this battle: first, to defeat the Ragesians and drive them away from his nation's borders; and second, to claim the Torch of the Burning Sky from the heroes. For the latter, however, he's willing to wait until the war with Leska is complete, and his vizier, **Aurana Kiirodel** (CE female elf sorcerer 14/archmage 4)

will be watching the heroes for clues of how to defeat them when that time comes.

Ragesian Army

The commander of the Second Ragesian Army, **General Ashok Danava** (LN middle-aged male human commander 16) is a humble, honorable man forced to direct a war he does not believe in. When he took the mantle of general he accepted a powerful, unending *geas* that bound him to never act against the ruler of Ragesia. He is forced to be Leska's lackey, and he believes it is better for him to stay in charge of the army and try to keep the amount of suffering down, rather than let someone more bloodthirsty take his place.

This is a balancing act, made more difficult with the recent arrival of Leska's loyal **Legate Kolvus** (LE male advanced erinyes). Known for his toadying ways, Kolvus is secretly a devil disguised as a man. He has long discreetly acted to promote Leska's rise to tyranny. He plays the role of a somewhat out-of-touch politician, but has slowly been using charm magic to ensure that Danava's army will not turn on the Empress.



Legate Kolvus and General Ashok Danava – Art by Claudio Pozas

Doom and Peril

In adventure eight, the heroes may have freed the immortal fey singer Etinifi. Etinifi's purpose in the campaign is to provide exposition and connect different adventures. It was he who warned the heroes of the coming trillith incursion, and he can also give the heroes a sense of who Leska is and clues of how to defeat her, so that they have more invested when they finally face her. If Etinifi is not with the heroes, or if you are running this adventure as a stand-alone, you can remove him and provide his information through someone else, perhaps Foresight (see Act One).

If Etinifi is around, he wants to accompany the heroes, claiming that his people's song will help protect them from the trillith, and that after the trillith are thwarted he will be able to guide the heroes to the Aquiline Heart. Once there, he claims, they will be able to defeat Leska.

In truth, Etinifi is fairly mad, and has suffered so long that all he really wants is to die. He knows that destroying the Heart will unbalance the elemental energies within hundreds of miles, turning all solid matter to ether, and he hopes that by destroying it he can end his pain. He knows that the trillith seek to do the same thing, and that they are poised to break through to the surface.

Etinifi's goal in this adventure is to stay close to the heroes until the trillith arrive, at which point he tries to join them, telling them he knows how to find the Aquiline Heart, and doing whatever he can to destroy the heroes. The fey is not really a threat to the heroes, but he knows things that their enemies would want to learn, and his immortality makes him a hassle to keep under control.

Meanwhile, he will want to rant at them about the course they are about to take, and they may want to ask him questions. Here we provide some examples of his warnings, and his responses to typical questions the heroes might ask.

The Trillith in Gate Pass

"The city of the gate bars the path of the warring children of the Mother of Dreams. From caverns on a sunless sea, they rise now, drooling, howling, to break the seal, to see the Great Above. It seems that Agony — o Agony, my brother in chains — knew of their desire. Their nightmares ally with Leska's chill fire, and soon their brother Vigilance will sleep eternal, and the gate shall open to hordes infernal. My song, taught in ages dark by the trilling worm, can keep you from somnolent harm."

It is important for the heroes to understand that the trillith are coming from caverns below the city, and that some entity named Vigilance is holding them back. Etinifi can teach the heroes the Song of Forms if they do not already know it.

Why He Speaks in Rhyme and Riddle

"I know I'm mad. If you listen to nightmare's speech, you too would reach this madness, and words like yours would be the strangeness."

Location of the Aquiline Heart

"A map would call its home the Opaline Wastes, but you need not haste, for the time to go has not yet come. Your doom as yet has not begun. Let me explain.

"When ancient Flamebringer hid Storm-chaser's heart, he placed the beating bag of blood in depths to which he could not return. Time itself forbade him, for the rift lies whence only life can come, but if Flamebringer returned it would mean his death, his final breath snuffed by jealous Tidereaver and Worldshaper.

"As the heartless one Leska and I quested, our fears were never rested (not until her betrayal), for both would die if one did fail. This you see was the key, that none can find Heart Aquiline except to save his life. When nothing else will halt your fall, when you curse the world's all, only then will seekers find the prize to which the rest are blind."

Basically, when the only way to keep from dying is to find the Aquiline Heart, the heroes will be able to go to the Opaline Wastes (badlands of milky white stone in southwest Ragesia) and find where the Heart lies. That time will come only when the trillith go to the Heart to destroy it and turn the world to dreams. They believe that only then will they be able to survive after their mother dies. Leska, of course, will defend it to prevent her death. Things are not dire enough yet for any of these groups to find the Heart, however.

Originally Etinifi and Leska found the Heart because each had a death sentence. If the heroes ask what defended the Heart, Etinifi cackles, then shakes his head, saying he only remembers horror, not the truth.

How to Defeat Leska

"While the Heart beats, those who share its blood are undying. Kill it, and all our hearts stop, a price gladly I would pay to slay she who betrayed me, and to end my endless pain."

Effectively, destroying the Heart renders mortal anyone who has gained immortality because of it. Of course, aside from some special conditions (which will be revealed in adventure twelve), destroying the Heart kills everyone anyway.

Adventure Overview

Warnings reach the heroes regarding a Ragesian plot in Gate Pass at the same time that the local rebellion is preparing a daring mission. With the aid of the rebels, the heroes are able to enter Gate Pass, avoiding the Ragesian defenses warding the city. They head to a bell tower in the central district, where after defeating its draconic guardian Vorax-Hûl they sound the bells to call the waiting freedom fighters across the city to action. By dawn the next day, nearly the entire city is coming out to fight the Ragesians, the citizens dressing in costumes originally intended for the Festival of Dreams, which was interrupted by the invasion's start many months ago. Before the day's end the Seaquen-based Resistance forces will join the battle, and the Shahalesti will be on the way, trapping the Ragesians in a pincer.

While the battle rages, the heroes lend their might to win control of the city for the rebellion. They break the initial advance of the Ragesian army, holding back hundreds of soldiers, mercenaries, and wyvern-mounted knights, and then after that grueling battle they have a chance to negotiate with the ruler of the Shahalesti elves, securing an alliance for the liberation of the city.

Meanwhile, the trillith Metamorphosis contacts the heroes, asking their help in freeing her master, Vigilance, soon to be executed by the Ragesians. The search for Vigilance leads to the ruined School of War, once run by the famed warmage Gabal. Here the heroes run into a Ragesian trap, but if they survive they can rescue allies for the rebellion and defend Vigilance from the imminent arrival of hostile trillith.

At day's end, the Ragesian leader seeks out the heroes in order to surrender, but Leska's representative tries to stop him and assassinate Vigilance. With his defeat, the Ragesians are free to obey their general, and will stand down.

The next day, a massive crowd gathers in the grand square of Summer's Bluff to listen to the formal surrender of the Second Ragesian Army, and to fulfill the Festival of Dreams holiday, long delayed. But the ceremony is interrupted by the arrival of a trillith herald, Desire, who summons a mighty force of the nightmare monsters. The trillith take on corporeal forms drawn from the nightmares and twisted desires of the people of Gate Pass, and attack.

While the trillith rampage, the trillith leader, Victory, calls a mass of his weaker brethren to unite and animate a giant statue into a deadly colossus, which will devastate the city and destroy the allied forces if the heroes cannot stop it.

Act One: Call to Arms

In this act, the heroes prepare for their mission, then enter Gate Pass and defeat one of Ragesia's mightiest warriors, the dragon Vorax-Hûl. Defeating him rallies the defenders of Gate Pass to rise up for a unified push against the occupying army.

Battle Plans

In their latest mission, the heroes learned that trillith will soon attack Gate Pass, joining the forces of Empress Leska. (If you did not play adventure eight, you need to provide the heroes with this information somehow.) In the days since then, a flurry of *sending* spells and similar magic has led to the creation of a daring plan to reclaim the city before the trillith can overcome whatever magic holds them underground.

Allow the heroes to be involved with devising the specifics, working with the leaders of the Resistance in Seaquen to plan the mission. We present here the suggestions the rebellion in Gate Pass and the resistance in Seaquen have come up with.

Communication

Sending magic requires brevity, so highly detailed plans are best left for after the heroes reach Gate Pass. However, the following messages, sent from Gate Pass by the mage Diogenes, give them key information for their mission.

- "From Diogenes. Rebellion plans counter-attack against Ragesians within week. Request aid. We're aware you have Torch, but multiple teleportation wards shield city. More *sendings* coming."
- "Suggest you teleport army west of city. Wards prevent mass teleportation into city, but [hero's name] and group needed for critical first strike. Suggest coordinated attack."
- "We can suppress teleportation wards simultaneously at midnight, creating teleportation window. Maybe five minutes. Conventional approaches heavily watched by wyverns, divinations. Early stealth is vital."
- "Active warriors limited. Many sympathetic here, but fear Ragesian dragon Vorax-Hûl. Attack is pointless if dragon incinerates everyone. Must kill dragon before Ragesians alerted."
- "If you kill dragon, townsfolk fight; distract Ragesians until your army arrives. Meanwhile, various objectives here for [hero's name]'s group. Too complicated to explain now."
- "General Danava not sadistic. Dislikes Leska, might negotiate, but on short leash. Shahalesti maybe allies, but have sticks up asses. You prefer assassination or talk?"

Further *sendings* will depend on how the heroes respond, and what plans they make. Divinations can prove very helpful in preparing for the coming battle.

Foresight

Amid the various *sending* spells received by the Resistance, one strange message comes, sent directly to one of the heroes in a dream. Crystin, the young sorceress the heroes may have helped rescue back in adventure one, *The Scouring of Gate Pass*, appears to one sleeping hero. Even if Crystin is dead, the messenger has her appearance. This is Foresight, a trillith who wants to help protect Gate Pass.

The young woman considers you with her wide eyes for a long moment, as if waiting for you to speak. Then, just before your dream self is about to ask her who she is and why she's here, she delivers a message.

"A single vigilant gatekeeper denies the dark masquerade. He is imprisoned in war, and like his fellow captives, he is a vital ally. His kin and mine seek to end his stewardship. Death begets death begets death, and in war, death lurks behind many closed doors.

"My kin are not all cruel, and some may aid you. One will seek you who is made to change. Another seeks justice from a father who cast him out with nothing but horse and sword. Others — many others — have allied with the masked empress, but the elders are not loyal to her. They must be stopped.

"As the throngs share their dreams, they open themselves to nightmares. The Torch shall fall from the hand of its wielder, and the song of the deep shall be no ally. Walk the line between foes carefully, and beware your unfulfilled desires."

The vision ends, and you wake.

These cryptic messages just serve to give the heroes a sense that something momentous is about to happen. Particularly wary heroes might figure out that the one they will need to seek, Vigilance, is held at Gabal's school of war, where an ambush hides behind the doors. Other lines refer to Metamorphosis, a trillith who can help

them, and suggest bringing Kathor Danava, who is bound to the trillith Justice, to talk to his father General Danava, which will make negotiating with the general easier.

The prophecy of the Torch can serve double duty, either showing the defeat of the heroes and the Torch being taken from them, or the destruction of the Coaltongue colossus.

Crystin Ja-Nafeel (LG female human sorcerer 6/monk 1) was bonded to the trillith Foresight, and if Crystin still lives — either in Seaquen or back on the edge of the fire forest south of Gate Pass — the heroes may go talk to her. Crystin has long had intermittent visions, and she has realized of late that she is bonded to some other entity that provides her power. She cannot control her visions, and she did not consciously contact the heroes. She cannot really help them, and the best she can offer is to warn them that it's their dreams they have to worry about, so they had best not sleep too soundly.

The Mission

Ultimately, the Gate Pass rebellion thinks the only way to have a chance is to take out the dragon Vorax-Hûl first. Then in the ensuing chaos they hope they can take out critical targets, and perhaps win over General Danava by diplomacy, instead of having to fight to the last man.

Deploying Forces

A key limitation is that, while the rebellion can temporarily disable the teleportation wards, and even destroy some of them, some of them are heavily guarded in the Ragesian garrisons, and will return to power soon enough. For the initial arrival the heroes only have a narrow window to teleport in forces. Even if they create a *teleportation circle*, once the wards go back up, no one will be able to teleport in, or worse, they might be diverted to one of the trapped teleportation beacons scattered throughout the city.

The Seaquen Resistance suggests using a *teleportation circle* to transport an army to the lowlands west of Gate Pass, using the power of the Torch to protect the soldiers from fire damage. They could create the circle a few minutes before midnight, and would march forces through it while the heroes teleport on to Gate Pass itself. Then by the next morning the Resistance forces would be ready to march on the city.

Meanwhile, every able-bodied citizen in Gate Pass is preparing to fight. The rebellion has been crafting and stockpiling weapons for weeks — blades, alchemicals, and even some magic items that adepts can use. At the same time the heroes are fighting the dragon Vorax-Hûl, members of the rebellion will assassinate a few key Ragesian commanders and set fire to as many barracks as they can.

When the heroes arrive, they will need to attack Vorax-Hûl before the dragon can be alerted, which makes sneaking into the city over the walls or flying in a risky proposition (though not impossible). After slaying Vorax-Hûl, a representative of the rebellion will bring the heroes to their base, where they will prepare for the next day's battles.

Time to Slay the Dragon

Assuming the heroes go with the Gate Pass rebellion's plan, just before midnight on the appointed day, groups from the rebellion attack the sites of the teleportation wards around the city, taking out the defenders and using specially-prepared dispel effects to nullify the wards for a short duration. At midnight, the heroes are to teleport in to some pre-chosen location, perhaps the courtyard of the Depository Tower or some other landmark with which the heroes would be more familiar.

Best Laid Plans

Unfortunately, things do not go off exactly as planned on the Gate Pass end, and when the heroes teleport there is still one layer of defense left: a teleportation beacon which the rebellion was not previously aware of. It diverts their arrival point to a trapped location, but thankfully a member of the rebellion was able to react quickly enough to spare the heroes a grizzly fate.

When the heroes teleport in, they arrive at a trap in the ruins of Erdan Menash's manor (area D on the Gate Pass city map). As the haze of travel fades, they see they are in the bottom of a pit 25 feet wide with a pillar of white stone 5 feet thick in its center. Above them is a wickedly spiked grate, swinging ominously, which was set to drop on them when they arrived. However, a group of rebellion fighters managed to get there moments before the heroes, take out the defenders, and halt the trap. Leaning over the edge of the pit, looking down at them with a smirk, is Rantle, the most famous warrior of Gate Pass's rebellion. A bent and mangled greatsword is jammed into the gears of the spiked grate.

"Things *almost* went according to plan," he says. "You might want to get out of that pit. This thing is heavy."

Rantle has four rebel warriors with him (CN male human fighter 2/rogue 1/ranger 1), who can help the heroes out of the pit. Rantle explains the situation, and says that he can guide them to Summer's Bluff in the central district, where Vorax-Hûl's clocktower lair waits. A whole city is waiting to see if they can live up to their reputations.

Teleportation Beacon

The pillar of the beacon can be easily smashed, ruining its magic. If the heroes leave it intact, teleportation within the city over a distance of more than a mile automatically diverts here. Worryingly, this beacon must have been recently installed, which raises the possibility that the Ragesians knew the heroes were coming. (They did, actually, though it is due simply to divination magic, not betrayal.)

Scale of the Battle

The Second Ragesian Army, after some losses and reinforcements, numbers a modest 10,000 men. Gate Pass's original population of 17,000 has been slashed to 12,000, though some were victims of fires and disease, not direct battle. Of the survivors, about 5,000 people are prepared to fight.

The Resistance will be able to teleport in about 3,000 soldiers using a *teleportation circle*, deploying them about ten miles to the west of the city. Roughly 500 Shahalesti soldiers work discreetly within the city, and 10,000 more Shahalesti, already prepared to repel a possible Ragesian invasion, are only a day's march away.

It is not necessary for the Gate Pass rebellion to defeat all of the Ragesians. Simply taking out their strongest forces and keeping them busy so they cannot set up proper defenses will leave them vulnerable enough to the Resistance and Shahalesti armies that they won't be able to hold the city.

Adapting the Adventure

If you plan to run *The Festival of Dreams* as a standalone adventure, Gate Pass can be any embattled city caught between two opposing forces. You can simplify things with the trillith, making them into nightmare monsters summoned by the Ragesians, with no ulterior motive.

If you run the adventure in your own campaign, we encourage you to replace NPCs in the Resistance with ones your players will be familiar with.

Rantle as Guide

The heroes are relatively powerful by now, but if you want, Rantle can fight by their side, or at least accompany them from a distance, offering guidance about the city.

Rantle as Ally

Rantle originally appeared in the first adventure, *The Scouring of Gate Pass*, where he asked the heroes to track down his sister Katrina. When he meets the heroes again, he asks if they kept her safe. If they have, Rantle is fiercely loyal to them, with a Helpful attitude.

Rantle as Rival

If Katrina is dead, Rantle trusts them less, and is just Friendly. If they themselves killed her (such as after she turned traitor in adventure seven, *The Trial of Echoed Souls*), unless they explain themselves very well he stays with them only out of a sense of duty to the rebellion, with an Unfriendly attitude.

Alternately, if one of the heroes is romantically interested in Shalosha, Rantle can be a rival for her affections, having put the serious woo on every time he's run into her these past several months.

The Tower of the Dragon (EL 20)

The grand square of Gate Pass is deserted in the middle of night, dominated by the towering, ninety foot tall statue of the late Emperor Coaltongue, holding a massive bronze-cast version of the Torch of the Burning Sky over its head. Erected decades ago, it faces east in challenge to the nation of Shahalesti, but the people of Gate Pass kept as a sort of trophy after they drove out the Ragesians forty years ago.

The heroes' destination is at the west end of the square: the Spire Clocktower. Though taller than the Coaltongue statue, it lies on lower ground and so only comes to the colossus's shoulder.

Instrumental in the defeat of Gate Pass's defenders was the red dragon Vorax-Hûl, a near-legendary beast whom Leska convinced to fight by promising him power, followers, and grand treasure. He already possessed strange powers unknown to most dragons, but now he also boasts a powerful ward from Leska, and a massive bone mask that resembles the skull masks inquisitors wear, though crafted of entire humanoid skeletons. This mask contains the spirits of four inquisitors, who now serve only to protect Vorax-Hûl.

The mighty dragon lairs in the Spire Clocktower, content to occasionally swoop through the city and terrorize the citizens while he waits for the Ragesians to gather his tribute. With him at their command, the Ragesians can easily quell any uprising, so the rebellion hopes the heroes can manage to slay the fell beast.

Ground Level

An iron fence 20 feet high surrounds the clocktower. The gates are unlocked, since Vorax-Hûl assumes none would dare attack him. Rantle can tell the heroes that emissaries from the Ragesians often enter the clocktower with the latest treasure for the dragon's hoard. He knows some sort of magic watches the skies near the clocktower, which alerts Vorax-Hûl if anyone tries to fly to his roost, so Rantle suggests trying to attack the dragon in its lair, sneaking up the interior of the tower to hopefully catch the wyrm off guard.

Double doors lead into the clocktower interior, and then narrow stairs spiral around the square inside, rising a hundred and fifty feet to level one.

Level One

Here lairs Vorax-Hûl, curled upon an awe-inspiring hoard of coins in the northwest corner. He has torn a massive hole in the west wall through which he comes and goes. On the eastern side of the room is the huge mechanism of the clock itself, a pendulum slowly cutting across the area marked in gray while smaller mechanisms whir quietly. The mechanism area is dangerous, costing quadruple the normal movement rate, and requiring a Reflex save (DC 15) every 5 feet to avoid taking 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage from the gears.

If jammed or heavily damaged, the gears of the clock break. The face of the clock is a huge glass setting with multiple pieces that shatters with ease.

Level Two

Stairs lead up from the level below to catwalks on this level, which provide a somewhat safe route of approach to the dragon's sleeping place. Stairs from here lead 20 feet up to the bell tower.

Bell Tower

The bell tower level has no walls, and just four columns support the roof of the tower. From the ceiling hang four huge bells, connected by complex gears inside the columns to the clock mechanism below. It is possible to walk from the balcony to the roof, though this is perilous, for a clan of mercenary gargoyle strikers live here, elite bodyguards and watchdogs for the dragon. The roof slopes at a 45-degree angle, and the edge of the roof is 170 feet off the ground.

Encounter

Before combat, Vorax-Hûl should easily hear the heroes coming unless they are very stealthy. The lich inquisitors of his mask begin to place defensive magic upon him, but Vorax-Hûl holds his ground. Intrigued by the heroes' audacity, he confronts them with questions when they arrive, trying to evaluate their powers and determine who is in charge.

He wonders why they oppose Ragesia, why they haven't sought to make a deal like he has, and how they hope to possibly defeat him. He is offended by attempts to win his favor, unless the heroes have a particularly cruel past and he can trust that by allying with them he'll have a chance to lay waste to more cities. Otherwise, Vorax-Hûl will eventually boast of his invincibility and attack.

Vorax-Hûl (CR 20): hp 434, Appendix B.
Mask of Vorax-Hûl liches (4) (CR 12): hp 71 each, Appendix B.
Gargoyle strikers (12) (CR 9): hp 74 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

This scene is designed with three stages, though Stage One won't occur if the heroes attack by air instead of ascending the stairs.

Stage One occurs in the dragon's lair. Vorax-Hûl uses his lashing tongue of fire breath weapon as a first attack, then relies on his seeking breath weapon and melee attacks for one or two rounds. If the heroes keep their distance, the layout of the clocktower limits Vorax-Hûl from using his claws, so all he can do is bite, hoping to snatch a foe in his teeth. During this stage, the inquisitors of the mask focus on counterspelling to defend their master. When Vorax-Hûl is reduced below 250 hp or when he manages to grab a foe, he'll withdraw through the hole on the west wall. He refrains from using his gout of flame unless it is the only way to clear out his enemies, because he is not willing yet to melt his lair.

Stage Two is the meat of the battle, and occurs in the air outside the clocktower. The gargantuan dragon keeps his distance, using his different breath weapons when he is close, and then withdrawing to a few hundred feet away to pick up debris so he can hurl it at the clocktower or wherever the heroes happen to be. During this stage the inquisitors try to take out flying abilities of the heroes, desiring to leave them

stranded on the clocktower while Vorax-Hûl controls the pace of the battle.

His typical pattern is to come within 100 feet in the first round to use his lashing tongue of fire. On the second round, he flies over 300 feet away (using a "run" action to get beyond the reach of Medium-range spells), diving to ground level. On round three he picks up something huge to throw, then ascends 50 feet with a move action. He stops ascending at the end of round five (at 250 feet altitude), and then flies back on the sixth round (another "run" action), dropping the debris on the heroes from 50 feet up as a free action and sweeping past them. He repeats this pattern, roaring and boasting, laughing every time he manages to injure a hero with a house or church steeple.

The gargoyles on the roof will join the battle; they prefer to wait and ambush the heroes if they hear people climbing the stairs to the belltower level. In combat they'll swarm one or two foes, and if heavily injured will try to grapple a foe and drag him to his death, perhaps even plummeting with him. (They're mostly here to give the heroes something to deal with while the dragon is away.)

When Vorax-Hûl is reduced below 100 hp, or when the mask is destroyed, or if his tactics are ineffective, he stops hanging back, and closes for the final battle.

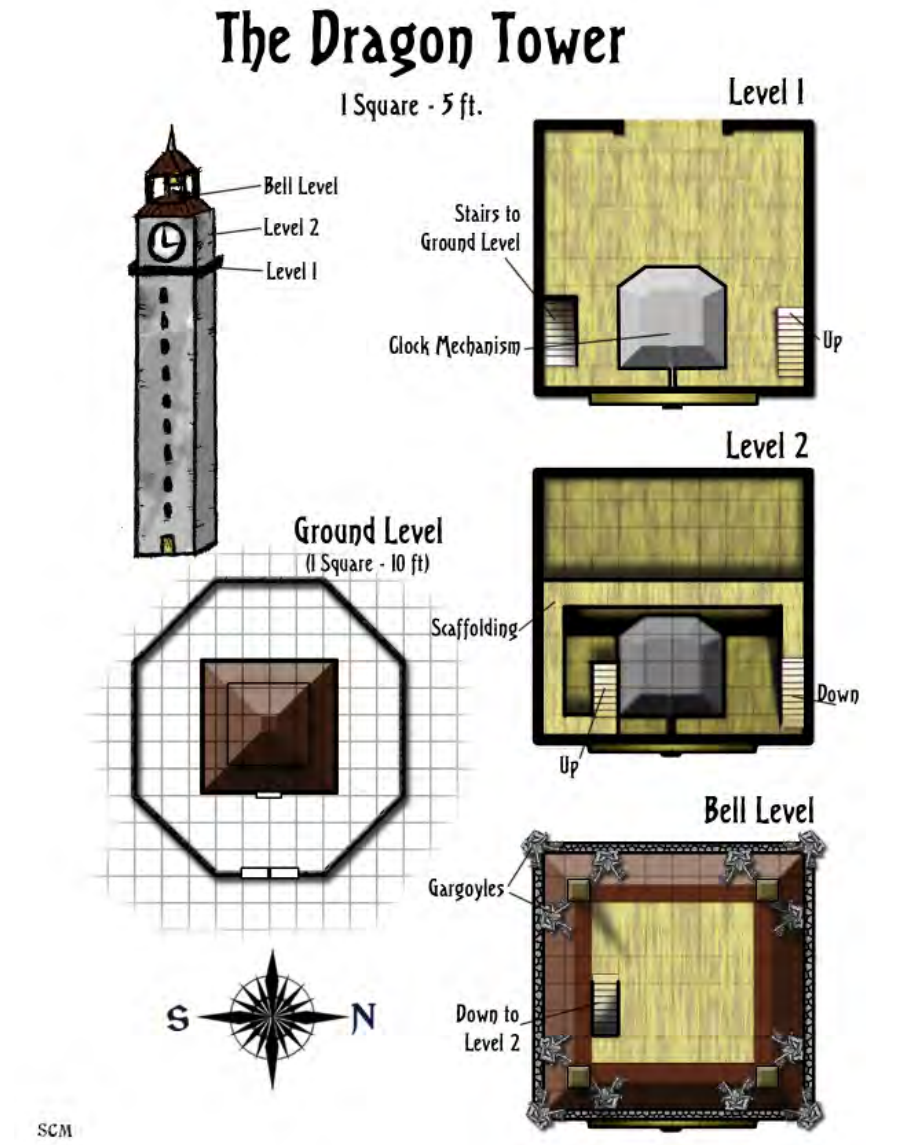
Stage Three works best if the inquisitors have been doing their job properly, keeping the heroes stuck on the clocktower. Preferably, Vorax-Hûl will be able to catch the heroes in a devastating gout of flame that will knock them off the rooftop while simultaneously setting the tower on fire. If anyone remains, he'll either use flyby attacks with Awesome Blow to knock them down, or just charge into melee with as many foes as he can reach at once, his vanity letting him be satisfied with either a glorious victory, or a glorious death.

Aftermath

When Vorax-Hûl falls, he roars in fury and combusts from within, flames bursting out of his scales as he flails and screams, until finally only charred bones and the husk of the dragon's scales crash to the earth. At this point, the heroes are to ring the bells to sound the defeat of Vorax-Hûl (Rantle has a scroll of *fabricate* from Diogenes, just in case the bells got melted). The bells toll, and then a few moments later, the faintest of cheers can be heard going up around the city as word spreads that the rebellion has begun.

Rantle encourages the heroes to flee quickly, before the Ragesians arrive in force. (It takes about fifteen minutes for the Styx squadron of wyvern knights, detailed in Act Two, to arrive.) He will take them back to the rebellion headquarters, where they can rest and heal. As for the treasure of Vorax-Hûl, Rantle says with amusement that the money was taken from the people of Gate Pass, but he's fairly certain they'll be so happy to get it back they won't notice if *a little* goes missing.

Game Master's Map pg. 670



Treasure

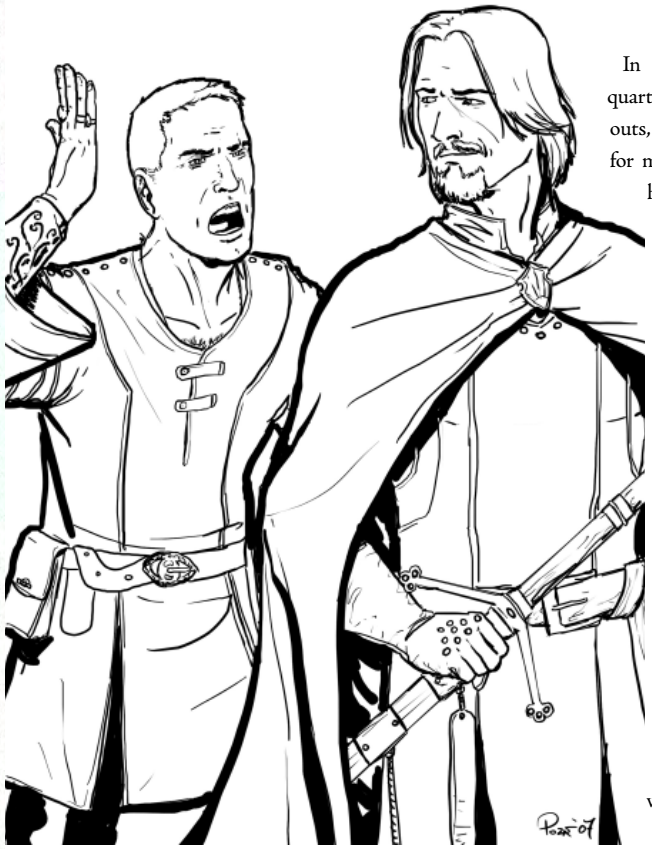
240,000 gp worth of coins and precious items. Most of Vorax-Hûl's hoard consists of roughly four million coins, mostly copper, covering the north side of level one under several feet of loose, shifting metal, some of which spills out of the opening in the west wall. The corners of the room are filled with discarded bones; the Ragesians typically execute spies by giving them to the dragon.

Very little of the hoard should be magical treasure, since because of Leska's blessing Vorax-Hûl finds magical trinkets much less interesting than raw currency.

Rebel Headquarters

The rebellion moves around fairly regularly, but for now they work out of the basement of a church the heroes may have sheltered in months ago. The surface is mostly burned out, but the basement is the size of a large house, with a sub-basement extending into the city sewers providing an escape route. The location is cramped; thick incense covers the smells of too many people living in one place.

The three leaders of the rebellion will be the heroes' main source of aid and knowledge about Gate Pass.



- **Diogenes.** Once a bit of a joker, Diogenes has grown bitter and fatalistic, particularly after his leg was amputated during a brief imprisonment (the only clerics in the city strong enough to cast *regenerate* are inquisitors). Diogenes is the only strong magic-user the rebellion has, and the heroes might call upon him for magical support, but if things get too dangerous he's likely to hide and flee.
- **Erdan.** Not originally a leader, but after all the other more outspoken leaders of the rebellion were tracked down and killed, Erdan realized he was the only one with the knowledge to coordinate the fight. He plays the role of a go-between for the Ragesians, supposedly keeping the populace from open rebellion, but in truth he plays a dangerous game of spying. He knows the most about the Ragesians.
- **Rantle.** Beloved as a daring hero who laughs in the face of danger and regularly defies the Ragesians' attempts to catch him, Rantle is vital to the rebellion's morale. He will fight alongside the heroes in the field, and provides necessary rousing speeches if the heroes aren't the inspiring sort.

In this triumvirate, Rantle is the face of the rebellion, Erdan the brains, and Diogenes the hidden knife.

In addition to these three, headquarters boasts fourteen guards, lookouts, and scouts who are responsible for making sure the hideout remains hidden. Members from various cells around the city visit to provide status reports. When the heroes arrive, the place is packed with nearly three dozen people, waiting for word that the dragon is defeated.

Arrival

As Ragesian horns sound alarms in the cold distance, Rantle guides the heroes to the ruined church, down a flight of stairs to the basement, lit by *continual flame* spells and incense candles. The crowd presses in to hear what happened. A shout calls the heroes over to a table beside which stand Diogenes (on a crutch) and Erdan. A large map of the city covers the table. Erdan wants to hear the full story, but Diogenes urges him to send out word soon, so after confirming Vorax-Hûl's defeat, he dispatches most of those present to tell their cells to put the plan into action.

A Small Gift

Once the runners have been sent, Erdan gives a long litany of thanks to the heroes. He says he has prepared gifts for them, taken from a long-kept private collection. With barely restrained pride (and with Rantle and Diogenes rolling their eyes), Erdan opens a closet and lets the heroes choose from among the items inside, saying that the rebellion was unable to make use of any of this, but he hopes they will.

- A *figurine of wondrous power (marble elephant)*, which transforms into an albino elephant.
- A *rod of splendor* decorated with a keyhole motif, which if activated creates a pavilion full of clocks that have all long since stopped. It can create clothing that was fashionable over a thousand years ago, but the clothing thus created is of the finest quality.
- A child's storybook, written in Goblin, that functions as a *rod of wonder*. When opened, the book flips to a random page with a story that matches the effect rolled. Erdan warns that a hide-out burned down thanks to that book, so he advises them not to flip through it idly.
- A *ring of evasion* that keeps moving from finger to finger when the wearer isn't looking. Whenever the wearer succeeds a Reflex save and takes no damage, the ring swaps his appearance and that of some random person nearby, similar to *disguise self*. Erdan never figured out what the ring was supposed to do.
- A neutral good, intelligent *phylactery of undead turning* (Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12, telepathy), which has *deathwatch* constantly active. The phylactery gives the wearer a mild hallucination: that of always being accompanied by a beautiful member of the opposite sex only the wearer can see and hear. The phylactery communicates with the wearer through this hallucinatory person.
- A suit of +2 *moderate fortification full plate*, which is purple, with green *+1 ooze-bane armor spikes*.

The Situation

After the items are handed out, Diogenes asks to get down to business. He shows the heroes a map of the city and explains the situation. The three men take turns with different topics: Diogenes on the overview and unconventional allies on the Ragesian side, Rantle on the traditional military, and Erdan on the political end of things.

The Ragesians have a firm grip on the six western districts of Gate Pass, where the bulk of their force — eight thousand men — are in firm control. They also have two thousand soldiers spread over garrisons in the other eight districts. Though the dragon is dead, the Ragesians still have wyverns, some devils, various monstrous mercenaries, and a few traitorous mages who turned sides so as not to be carted away in chains.

Erdan says General Danava is a noble man, who is controlled in some way by Ragesia, since he has never once expressed respect for Leska. On the other hand, the newly arrived Legate Kolvus is a terrible man, and has been sending groups of soldiers on random assaults against families, on the off chance they might be harboring rebels. Just three days ago he strung up a few dozen prisoners on the sides of buildings throughout the city and rode a wyvern past them one by one, using them as archery targets. Frighteningly, the Ragesians seem to be very enthusiastic for this sadistic politician, and their loyalty to Danava seems to be fading.

The Plan

The presence of a few thousand soldiers was once enough to keep most townsfolk in line, but they are ready now to take action. At sunrise, the

Diogenes and Rantle – Art by Claudio Pozas

mustered citizenry will assault the garrisons in the eastern districts, since the rebellion doesn't want to fight a battle on two fronts. Meanwhile, those with actual combat training will take up defensive positions at the gates along the Emelk Way, the major road that runs down the length of the city, intending to hold back Ragesian reinforcements.

The three rebel leaders want the heroes to help with the defense of the gateway between the seventh and eighth districts, which will be the first major battle against the mass of the Ragesian army. They don't need to defeat the Ragesians, just keep them from gaining ground too quickly, so that the Resistance army that teleported in can have the time it needs to assault from the other direction.

Second, they hope the heroes will be able to get in touch with agents from the Shahalesti army, to get the elves to bring in their forces. If they can get the Shahalesti on board, it will easily turn the tide, but everyone knows how prideful their Lord Shaaladel is, so the heroes will need to tread carefully. Rantle claims to have met Shaaladel's daughter Shalosha several months ago, and he thinks she might be able to get her father to be more sympathetic.

Third, if there's a chance to reach the leader of the army, General Danava, the heroes should take it. He will be very well-defended, but Erdan thinks negotiation might be an option. However, he has agents from Ragesia watching his every move, and they are poised to replace him if he turns away from Leska.

Finally, Erdan wants the heroes to locate a secret jail where rumor says many of their best warriors are being held. When this topic comes up, it is clear the three men have been arguing about it for some time: Rantle and Diogenes are sure the Ragesians wouldn't keep prisoners around unless it was a trap of some sort, but Erdan hopes that in the chaos of fighting, any such trap won't spring properly. The captives here are all experienced combatants, and will constitute a significant force increase for the rebellion. Unfortunately, all they have is rumors that such a prison exists, and they have no idea where it could be. Divinations to locate captured friends have failed, but likewise they know those allies are not dead.

If the heroes mention the trillith, none of the men know what to make of it. They know rumors and tall tales of living dreams, but have heard nothing substantial.

The heroes may suggest different tactics, in which case you'll need to revise some encounters in the next act. They might choose to go after their objectives in a different order, but either way we try to give you a feel for the situation in Gate Pass.

Act Two: The Battle of Gate Pass

In this act, the heroes take on the Ragesian army in Gate Pass while facing threats from trillith and the elves of Shahalesti. After a day of fighting, it will be clear who has claimed victory.

Timeline of the Battle

This timeline assumes the heroes are involved in aiding the resistance; without them, things turn for the worse very quickly. Likewise if they take a different route than we suggest, these events can change drastically.

Gate March and School of War

At sunrise, the townsfolk will attack sites around the city, while the heroes and the best-trained defenders move to protect the Emelk Way. By mid-morning, the Ragesian ground forces mobilize and march against these defenders. During this protracted battle, Metamorphosis approaches the heroes and tries to get them to free Vigilance. The sooner they find him, the easier the battle against the Ragesians will be.

Shining Lord and Ragesian General

At noon, the Shahalesti join the battle, a few Solei Palancis mageknights surgically striking major threats and aiding rebellion forces. The heroes are called to negotiate with their leader Shaaladel, and if they win his aid the Shahalesti army arrives the next morning. Before then, the Resistance army arrives at the western wall of Gate Pass, though the fight to break through the western wall is not resolved by nightfall. That evening, Ashok Danava offers to discuss terms of a surrender with the heroes.

Trillith Masquerade

Throughout the night revelers fill the streets, while fighting continues in some districts. By dawn, a reborn Festival has been formally declared, and a hastily-prepared parade marches through the city toward the central district. Seeking a sign to let the city know their victory is complete, the resistance suggests accepting the surrender of the Ragesians at Summer's Bluff, where the parade will end. At noon, when the parade comes to a conclusion, the trillith arrive.

The Gate March

Early in the morning, rebellion forces take up positions at the gate on the Emelk Way between the seventh and eighth districts. The heroes are needed to help, and when they arrive, the Ragesian army is already on its way to their position: a thousand men marching in a massive column from their barracks in the third district.

Most of the rebel warriors who have turned out are wearing some sort of costume in addition to their combat gear — masks fitted on the back of their heads, colorful cloaks, exotic jewelry, face paint, and more. Many carry on their person tiny clay urns the size of an apple, a tradition of the Festival of Dreams. Normally, each citizen writes a wish he has on a strip of paper, places it in his urn, and then leaves it at the foot of the statue of Emperor Coaltongue in the center of town before the parade reaches Summer's Bluff. Details of this tradition are presented in Act Three.

Though the rebels have defensible positions, they are drastically outnumbered — 200 rebels against 1,000 Ragesian soldiers. Most of the Ragesians remain at their base, confident that the huge fielded contingent will be able to deal with the rabble. A few other companies of Ragesian soldiers are trying to breach the walls to the north and south of the main gateway, but those fights are less critical. If the heroes don't come to the rebels' aid here, they'll be overrun.

Terrain

This encounter covers a distance of at least 500 feet, and more if the heroes move out to engage the enemy directly. Nearby buildings are stone (and so won't catch fire easily), and average three stories tall, with intermittent towers six stories or

Massive Combat

The encounters in this adventure detail the foes that are of importance to the heroes. Some are deadly enemies of nearly equivalent strength, others just masses of lesser soldiers that *could* be handled by normal rebels, but who have foolishly come into nice clusters for high-level heroes to cut to pieces.

There could be other prominent foes in the battles – company commanders, feared mercenaries, maverick warriors of modest repute – but because of the vast scope of the conflict you can abstract them away by assuming allies on the heroes' side – retired city watchmen, reluctant refugee warmages, heroic priests finding great strength within themselves – deal with the problem. We have tried, however, to make sure that anyone the heroes already know about will be available to have their butts kicked.

Game Master's Map pg. 671



more in height. Roofs are flat with interconnecting skybridges. (*Note: This level of detail is not depicted on the map.*) Most have trapdoors that lead down to the main building.

Alleys are 5 feet wide, roads are 10 feet wide with 5-foot sidewalks on either side, and the central Emelk Way is 30 feet wide with 5-foot sidewalks edging it.

The district wall is 40 feet high and 20 feet wide at the base, with a walkway 10 feet wide at the top, crenelations lining each side. The top of the wall sports a metal grate sticking out sideways 5 feet in each direction, making it difficult to get over them (Climb DC 25). The main gateway fortification is 20 feet wide, 40 feet long, and 40 feet tall, and again crenelations provide cover on each side of the roof.

At ground level a tunnel cuts through this fortified gatepost, and in the center of the tunnel is the doorway — a pair of reinforced wooden doors 20 feet high and 8 feet wide (hardness 8, hp 45, Break DC 35). On one side of the gatepost a stairway leads 25 feet up to the guardhouse built over the doorway. The base of the stairs are blocked by an iron gate (hardness 10; hp 20; Break DC 26) and the door into the guardhouse is reinforced wood (hardness 8, hp 30, Break DC 28).

The guardhouse is 20 feet by 40 feet, with eight arrow slits looking out in either direction down the road. The floor has murder holes: four on either side of the doors below. Racks along the walls contain various rolling objects to be dropped, like iron balls, and rglass globes with acid or alchemist fire. A trapdoor and staircase leads up to the roof.

Gateway Defenders

The defenders are divided into two groups. One hundred are at the gate itself, or nearby on either side. The other hundred are west of the gate, hiding on rooftops or in buildings.

The guardpost roof has twenty rebel defenders, led by Rantle. Twenty more man the inside of the guardpost. Twenty more guard the wall to the north and another twenty to the south. Twenty have set up cover and barricades on the roofs near the gatehouse, creating a makeshift extension to the defenses. They have set up two bridges 20 feet long to span the gap from the roofs to the district wall in case they have to retreat; the bridges can be collapsed and shattered easily to stop pursuit.

Further from the wall, sixty rebels hold the high ground from windows, stretched out as far as 500 feet from the gate. Twenty more range around the rooftops, able to snipe the army column and then flee by skybridges to evade counterattack. Twenty warriors hide along side streets to make sure the Ragesians don't try to flank them. Riding from point to point directing these front-line defenders is **Kathor Danava** (LN male trillith-bound human fighter 12; if the heroes killed Kathor in the first adventure, instead this is the trillith Justice itself, who still appears as Kathor did).

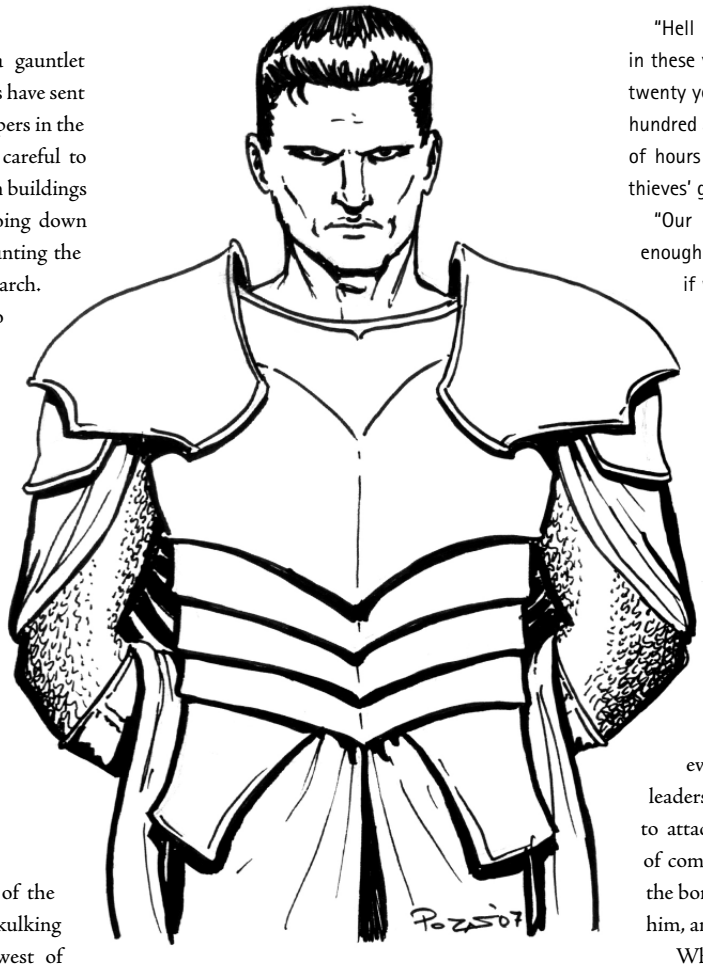
A final handful act as look-outs on the top floor of the circular tower just southwest of the gatehouse. They are too far away to effectively attack, but have horns to signal the defenders of possible foes.

Rantle (CR 16): hp 108, Appendix B.
Kathor Danava (CR 16): hp 216, Appendix B.
Kathor's horse (CR n/a): hp 76, Appendix B.
Rebel mages (15) (CR 4): hp 16 each, Appendix B.
Rebel priests (15) (CR 4): hp 25 each, Appendix B.
Rebel warriors (170) (CR 4): hp 30 each, Appendix B.

Skulking Wraiths (EL 7+)

The Ragesians know they face a gauntlet along the Emelk Way, so the inquisitors have sent a single wraith to clear out possible snipers in the buildings before they advance. Being careful to avoid the sun, the wraith glides through buildings (crossing streets and alleys by first going down through the sewers, then back up), hunting the rebels while the army prepared for its march. By itself it is unlikely to be a threat to the heroes, but if not stopped it will ruin the defenses, for each defender it kills becomes another wraith.

If the heroes aren't specifically on the lookout for such tricks, they only get alerted to the wraith's presence when a horrified rebel cleric comes running across the rooftops, screaming that the undead are coming. He managed to turn the wraith, but not before it slew his friend, tearing the man's soul out of his body.



Wraiths (2+) (CR 5): hp 32 each, MM.

Finding the Undead

By the time the heroes are aware of the threat, there are already two wraiths, skulking through buildings 500 feet to the west of the gate. Every minute that passes without the heroes doing something, another rebel is slain and transformed. Because the wraith and all its spawn are under the command of its creator (an inquisitor who knows better than to let a wraith transform an entire city into undead), there will not be more than eight undead at one time.

The wraiths aren't able to tell the heroes from anyone else, so perhaps the easiest thing for the heroes to do is to make themselves tempting targets, going out alone or in pairs in the distant buildings while evacuating the rest of the snipers for now. Hunting through the buildings room by room is like searching for a needle in a haystack, though in this case the needle is eager to poke them. The wraiths will not flee.

Once the heroes get out to where the wraith was spotted, they can begin searching. Every round of searching, each group has a 1% chance to find a wraith. A character with 5 or more ranks of Knowledge (religion) gains a +2% increase. *Detect undead*, *etherealness*, *prying eyes*, and similar spells that let you search faster or more effectively grant a +10% increase, and great speed or unusual senses might grant an additional small bonus. Multiply this modified percent chance by the number of wraiths.

Finding a wraith can entail simply coming upon one, or spotting it through a window across the road, or hearing the screams of a rebel a few rooms over as he is attacked.

Ad-Hoc Experience

Though wraiths are puny against 16th-level heroes, reward the heroes for a CR 13 encounter if they stop the wraiths in less than ten minutes.

Leadership

After dealing with the wraiths, the heroes should return to the main gateway. Soon they can hear the approaching tromp of a thousand booted feet as the Ragesian army marches down the Emelk Way toward them.

If none of the heroes want to give a speech, Rantle has one prepared. He stands and calls out down the street:

> "I can hear that thunder. The stomp of a thousand boots, ten thousand, with demons, ghosts, monsters of all sorts. But am I afraid?
>
> "Hell no! I was born in this city. Fighting in these very streets, I survived on my own for twenty years, alone, and now? Now I have two hundred allies, and an army coming in a matter of hours to back me up. All my years in the thieves' guild I was never so lucky.
>
> "Our mission is to hold this gate, to kill enough of the Rags so they turn tail and run, if we can; if we can't, then when I give the signal we fall back to the next of our city's many glorious gates. Along the way I might show you a few other scenic landmarks.
>
> "If that time comes, we move together. Until then, we fight together. And together, we will drive those ugly boot-wearing bastards out of our city, so we can nag *our* children with our stories for the next forty years!"

A cheer mixed with laughter goes up from the defenders, and everyone benefits from Rantle's leadership performance, gaining a +3 bonus to attack and damage for the first 5 rounds of combat. Those who stay near Rantle keep the bonus as long as they are within 40 feet of him, and then for 5 rounds thereafter.

When the cheers of the speech die down, Rantle grins to those nearby and says, "I spent *months* writing that, so none of you go dying and ruin it, alright?" This is his way of inspiring greatness. All allies within 40 feet gain 17 temporary hp and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as Rantle is within 40 feet, and for 5 rounds thereafter.

Ragesian Column (EL 16+)

Over a thousand Ragesians march down the Emelk Way, generally arranged in platoons of twenty-four. Each platoon fills a space roughly 30 feet wide by 20 feet deep, consisting of three rows of six soldiers, and one row with four soldiers, a commander, and an inquisitor. A 20-foot gap divides each platoon. There are a total of fifty platoons, stretching out more than a quarter mile along the road.

The march is audible when the head of the column is over 1,500 feet away, and it must advance before any attack between the two forces is practical. The soldiers hustle 40 feet per round. The bend of the road only allows about 500 feet of clear sight down the road, though the march can be heard well in advance of the column's arrival.

Typical Platoon (50)

Ragesian inquisitor, standard (CR 7): hp 49, Appendix B.

Ragesian soldiers, experienced (20) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.

Ragesian soldiers, veteran (2) (CR 6): hp 50 each, Appendix B.

Ragesian commander, veteran (CR 6): hp 37, Appendix B.

Archery Volleys

Masses of archers can fill the air with so many arrows that even the well armored are vulnerable. To fire as part of a volley, an archer readies an action to fire when a volley leader whom he can hear or see gives the order to fire. The volley leader chooses a 10 foot by 10 foot area, and can give the order to fire as a free action. When the volley fires, each archer's initiative changes to the same count. If the targeted area is not within range of a given archer, he cannot aid the attack.

This tactic requires twenty arrows. Normally each archer contributes one arrow, but an archer who did not take any other actions on his turn except to ready can contribute as many arrows as he could normally fire with a full attack. The group as a whole makes one attack (1d20+10) against each creature in the area. If archers in the group deal different amounts of damage, use the most common damage amount. Apply range increment penalties based on the most common range increment from the group. Volley attacks cannot critically hit.

For every twenty arrows after the first, increase the attack bonus by +5 and increase the damage by one arrow's worth. A volley firing one hundred arrows, for instance, would make an attack (1d20+30), dealing five times the damage of a normal arrow. If the volley leader gives the order to fire before enough archers have joined, the volley takes a –1 penalty to its attack roll for every arrow less than twenty.

Full cover (such as from a tower shield) can fully protect a character in the targeted area from a volley, and any effect that would block normal missiles, such as a *wind wall*, blocks a volley.

The individual skill of the archers does not affect the attack roll for a volley; the attack roll represents the threat of being struck, akin to the attack roll made by a spiked pit trap. Also, note that we use "archer" and "arrow" for ease of reference, but these rules can apply just as easily to any thrown or projectile weapon.

Grand Cavalry Units (10)

Ragesian archers, elite (3) (CR 8): hp 65 each, Appendix B.

Ragesian inquisitor, standard (CR 7): hp 49, Appendix B.

Elephant (CR 7): hp 104, MM.

Ragesian Tactics

As soon as each platoon comes into sight of the gate, its inquisitor attempts to use his *scroll of fireball* to keep the defenders pinned down, which requires a caster level check to use (1d20+3 vs. DC 6). The rest of the platoon advances at a run, 60 feet per round for six rounds (a speed which the unarmored inquisitor can easily catch up with), until they are only 140 feet away (close enough for the inquisitor to be able to dispel things like *wind wall*). Other platoons stretch out behind them, so that a total of ten platoons will be in sight (and ten *fireballs* will have been launched) before the Ragesians actually begin to attack.

Round One

The inquisitor in the first platoon casts *wall of fire*, most likely creating it across the front of the roof of the guardhouse, since defenders are likely to be relying on the crenelations for cover against arrow fire. Then each platoon's commander orders his soldiers to fire a volley. In preparation of this tactic, the soldiers in the first ten platoons are already armed with their bows, and don't have their axes or shields out.

Each platoon can fire one volley, but they can combine fire. Assuming the *wall of fire* has the roof in flames, the platoons might concentrate on firing through the arrow slits of the guard house, choosing just two 10-foot squares at first (1d20+22 for one, 1d20+16 for the other, 5d6+20 damage). Even with the +8 cover bonus to AC, anyone standing behind the arrow slit is likely to get pin-cushioned.

If instead there are other targets out in the open, the platoons fire in groups of forty archers, targeting five different 10-foot squares (1d20+11, 1d20+9, 1d20+7, 1d20+5, and 1d20+1; 2d6+8 damage each).

Round Two

Each commander uses his Maneuver Leader ability to grant two platoons (since it affects a 40-foot radius) a bonus move action; combined with their own normal move, each platoon advances 60 feet, then fires another volley. The defenders will see a frightening charge of roaring Ragesian soldiers, arrows arcing upward in wave after wave.

Because they have closed the distance, the volley attacks improve, either against two targets (1d20+24 and 1d20+18, 5d6+20 damage) or against five targets (1d20+13, 1d20+11, 1d20+9, 1d20+5, and 1d20+3, 2d6+8 damage each).

Then, the inquisitor in the second platoon casts his *wall of fire*, placing in front of the arrow slits of the guard post, while the first inquisitor readies an action to counterspell (in addition to being able to reactively counterspell).

Round Three and Beyond

By this point the heroes are likely disrupting the Ragesian's plans, but if they can the Ragesians advance another 60 feet in round three and four, and then slow to 20 feet per round thereafter. The archers continue to fire volleys until they get up to the gateway, at which point they take up defensive positions in nearby buildings. They continue to fire at the defenders until the gateway is opened, at which point they try to push through and finally make use of their axes. Some might try to smash down the gate and door to the guardhouse in order to get to the top of the wall.

During this time, whenever a new inquisitor gets into range, he uses *wall of fire*, either keeping defenders at bay or directly trying to burn down the gate doors (half damage from 2d6+7 against hardness 8 and 45 hp will take a while, however). Then they are prepared to counterspell, or use their other spells to target foes arrows are ineffective against.

Rebellion Tactics

The Ragesian advance can generate an overwhelming threat, but even with the inquisitors they are vulnerable to high-level magic. A few area attacks, summoned monsters, or even wall spells can ruin their tactics.

As for the rest of the defenders, the rebel mages start with *glitterdust* to stymie at least some of the inquisitors and archers. They try to take out inquisitors with their *scrolls of ice storm*, and will use *web* to catch a platoon in a charge, though the street is wide enough that the webs will just cut a narrow line, since they have no other anchor points.

The rebel priests stand ready with *scrolls of dispel magic*, and occasionally team up with archers, casting *silence* on an arrow, which can then be fired at an inquisitor.

You'll notice that the rebellion forces are divided into convenient groups of twenty for volley archery (see sidebar). Alternately, you can

simplify things even further. The Ragesians are better trained, but the rebels have cover and are inspired, so you can assume as a baseline that for every defender felled by archery, an equal number of attackers fall. Then multiply that number by the ratio of surviving Ragesians to surviving defenders. So if from the original 200 Ragesians there are 120 left, and 150 defenders left (4:5), then if the Ragesians kill 20 defenders, they would lose 25 of their own men.

During the third round of the battle, Kathor charges in from a side street, managing the sort of slaughter normally reserved for player characters. He cuts down a dozen or more of soldiers by himself before he wheels his horse and flees. Kathor is distinctive among the rebels for not wearing any costume, and the heroes should hopefully get interested in talking to him after the battle.

But the deciding factor in the battle will likely be how well each side leverages its magical power.

Development

While the first ranks attack, the rest of the platoons of the Ragesian army hang back for a minute, wary of some sort of trick. What the Ragesians do next depends on how effective the defenders are in the first ten rounds of combat.

If the heroes and their allies manage to drop at least 100 of the attackers (roughly 50%), the Ragesians keep their distance, deciding to try a different approach. The defenders still need to finish off the current attackers, though once they've dropped 150 (about 75%), the rest flee.

If the heroes manage to drop between 50 and 100 attackers, the Ragesians send in the grand cavalry (see above), which they believe will be strong enough to smash open the doors, and tough enough not to die on their way. Horns blare as four war elephants advance, each with a howdah bearing three elite archers and an inquisitor driver. The elephants travel two abreast, but no other forces follow.

If the heroes fail to drop at least 50 of the attackers in the first minute, or if the gate doors are breached, the Ragesians sound a full advance. The grand cavalry charges in, with dozens more platoons following close behind. They advance until the defenders manage to drop a total of 150 of their forces (an elephant still only counts as one), at which point they pull back.

The encounter ends either with the Ragesians pouring through the gate (and the defenders all dead or retreating), or with the Ragesians halting their advance to wait for reinforcements.

Reinforcements (EL 15)

If the first advance is halted, there is about ten minutes of lull, during which Rantle gives another inspiring speech about how he looks forward to celebrating the Festival of Dreams with everyone here, and how he hopes some day kids will dress up as them, since they will be famous heroes. As before, this again gives the defenders a +3 bonus to attack and damage for the next 5 rounds of combat.

Then, while clerics tend to healing, a group of scouts from the rooftops return to the rebel side. It isn't until they've gotten across the skybridge to the wall that the defenders realize the scouts are dead, reanimated as skeletons. This is just a quick horror, though, sent by a bored inquisitor.

Human warrior skeletons (7) (CR 1/3): hp 6 each, MM.

Less than a minute later, a Spot check (DC 30) notices multiple puffs of flame atop a high tower about 500 feet away. This is a group of bearded devils, surveying the terrain so they can *greater teleport* into a good position. One round later, a single bearded devil appears in the center of the road, 40 feet from the front gate, hand raised to signal his intent to parlay.

The devil explains that a great many inquisitors cast *lesser planar ally* and spent thousands of gold pieces to win the service of him and his fellow devils. They are being paid to fight the defenders of the gateway, and are not allowed to leave until they have slain at least three of the rebels. The devil says that the inquisitors were bad negotiators ("Not like Guthwulf," he adds wistfully), so while they no doubt intended that *each* of the devils would have to kill three defenders, the letter of their contract only demands that the devils — as a group — kill three of the rebels at this gateway.

The devil proposes an arrangement. If the heroes pay each of the sixteen devils a thousand gold pieces ("And I know you can afford it," he says, looking at their gear), they will twist the spirit of the Ragesian pact. Of course the devils must still kill three defenders, but that is all they will do. The infernal negotiator suggests the defenders draw lots to see who gets to nobly sacrifice himself ("Your kind seem to enjoy doing that, apparently," he laughs), though if pressed he'll haggle down to them just tossing down a few of their injured for him to finish off. Clever heroes can likely come up with less morally ambiguous solutions.

The devils want to go home without a fight, and richer, but if the heroes refuse to negotiate, they don't appreciate "holier-than-thou" mortals (though almost any mortal *is* holier than them). They will spitefully teleport around the battlefield, picking off as many of the defenders as they can before things start to hurt, and then, if they have killed at least three, they return to Hell.

Bearded devils (16) (CR 5): hp 45 each, MM.

Then, about five minutes after the devils, the heroes easily spot dark specks in the sky — wyverns approaching from the Ragesian camp several miles away. They won't arrive for a few more minutes, but first the heroes have to deal with one final attack. A unique pair of mercenaries has snuck over the walls and managed to flank the defenders. Their mandate is to kill the heroes.

Lyndztei, troll hunter (CR 11): hp 130, MM.
Nanyg, harpy archer (CR 11): hp 103, MM.

These two monsters work as a team. They both have a large stock of *potions of invisibility*, and have been staying invisible as they sneak up on the heroes. If the heroes are at the gatepost, Nanyg uses her captivating song to try to lure them out, or just get defenders off the wall. Lyndtzei has earplugs, and she hides on a rooftop, hoping to jump down on a hero to start her attack.

Metamorphosis

After defeating the mercenary monsters, as the heroes prepare to face the coming aerial bombing by wyvern knights, a telepathic message comes to them. The trillith Metamorphosis is present and she wants to speak with them, but she suspects they are wary for enemies, so she wants to announce her presence to avoid being attacked.

Metamorphosis (CR 10): hp 97, Appendix B.

Metamorphosis is a somewhat young but still very powerful trillith, created from a dream Trilla had about being reborn as a phoenix. Metamorphosis appears as a young, dark-haired half-elf, though her exact facial features and clothing shift constantly, except for a red and gold feathered shawl that she always wears, and a bandage around her knee. Originally loyal to the contingent of trillith trapping the Mother of Dreams, she eventually sensed the power of the elder trillith Vigilance, whose very essence had changed before he came to this city. She was drawn to him, and became fiercely loyal, realizing that the trillith must change as well, by releasing their mother so they are no longer tied to her.

Vigilance was using his power to keep the trillith who wanted to wreak havoc on the surface trapped underground, but he warned Metamorphosis that events were in motion that would create the proper metaphorical environment for the trillith to get free. As long as Vigilance was safe, he knew that their incursion would be brief, but he needed her to find out what their intentions were.

So Metamorphosis set out on a sort of fact-finding mission. But a few weeks ago, Vigilance was captured by the Ragesians. Unable to kill him, they trapped him somehow, and they waited for other trillith to come and finish him off. Metamorphosis knows where they took Vigilance — a magically-warded prison in the ruins of Gabal's school of war, which also holds many rebel prisoners — but she has a hunch that she alone would not have a chance to get in and free her master.

Metamorphosis asks the heroes' help, and she offers them hers. She knows that Vigilance's powers would be a great help to the rebels in their battle today, but she believes it is critically important to make sure her master is free before the rest of the trillith arrive, and there are many coming, the children of decades of nightmare-wracked dreams.

Unlike many of her kin that the heroes have met, this trillith is wholly sincere, and she can be a valuable ally, answering any questions they have about trilith with remarkable forthrightness. She is currently corporeal, and explains that some power is growing here that keeps her from leaving this solid form.

Metamorphosis — Changing the Battle

Metamorphosis's power is very flexible, but she has no direct offensive ability. She can use the following spell-like abilities at will, at the rate of one per round (caster level 15th): *fly, gaseous form, make whole, mass enlarge person, mass reduce person, polymorph, stone shape, wood shape*.

You might let the heroes play Metamorphosis, or at least control how she uses her power. Encourage the heroes to be creative, and if they don't think of anything, let her show her value by *polymorphing* a few rebel fighters into giants.

Soon enough, at the climax of the Festival of Dreams, Metamorphosis will change again, gaining amazing power just when the heroes will most need her aid.

Kathor, Bound to Justice

Should the heroes follow up on the vague prophecy from Crystin/Foresight, they may seek out Kathor Danava. The knight now fights against the injustice of the Ragesian war, and is not aware of the affairs of the trillith, even though he himself is bound to one.

He is not eager to accompany the heroes in their own battles, since he doesn't want to leave his allies in the streets, but if the heroes convince Kathor to come with them when they talk to General Ashok Danava later, they will have a much easier time with negotiations.

Styx Squadron (EL 16)

This is the last drive of the Ragesians to open the gateway: Styx squadron, so named because they keep the famed boatman Charon in business. When they arrive, they'll drop their dragonbombs on the gate, killing or stunning most of the defenders, which clears the way for the army to press through.

Styx squadron is foolish enough to think they can defeat the heroes. If the heroes have not thought to prepare flight magic, Metamorphosis can use her power to cast *fly* on each hero.

Ragesian wyvern knight, elite (8) (CR 10): hp 75 each, Appendix B.

Ragesian wyvern, elite (8) (CR 8): hp 82 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

The squadron's primary formation is to fly in two rows of four, no two wyverns closer than 40 feet apart, in order to avoid *fireballs*. If they are circling, they travel in two different directions at slightly different altitudes, making it difficult for their enemies to concentrate fire.

If the heroes take to the air, the wyvern knights try to draw them away from the gate, backing away as they fight, hoping to lure the heroes to higher towers where they can take advantage of cover while swooping between buildings.

A favorite tactic is for the lead wyvern from a given row of four to snatch a foe with its *hurling bracers*, dive, and then release the creature so it slams into a rooftop. Then the next two wyverns swoop by, the knights bombarding the creature with bolts while the wyverns sting it. The final wyvern dives and lands on the creature, picking it up briefly and then throwing it again after a brief lift-off.

Battle's End

If the heroes defeat or drive off the wyverns, the Ragesian army hangs back for an hour, devising tactics to avoid the gateway and just shatter the city walls in order to flank the defenders. Rantle thanks the heroes for helping out, but says he and his people can handle it from here. The Ragesians will be more wary now, and a lot of their strongest forces are out of the fight, so the rebellion will be able to fall back to the next gate and harry the Ragesians with a street-by-street fight. It's more important, Rantle says, for the heroes to free their allies from that prison, and if anyone can do it, it's them.

If the heroes don't go to help Metamorphosis, or simply want to fight some more Ragesians before they leave, most of the encounters in the streets are skirmishes, seldom with more than twenty foes in line of sight at a given time. The Battle for Gate Pass lasts through the day and into the night, and while the heroes will certainly need time to rest occasionally, it's safe to assume that they engage in many more small skirmishes than are presented here. Most of these battles would not be worth even rolling initiative for, and we suggest you not waste time playing them out, instead glossing over them the same way you would if the heroes were traveling through peaceful wilderness.

Ad-Hoc Experience

Since the individual foes in this battle are worth little or no experience for a 16th-level party, reward them for a CR 16 challenge if they manage to defeat at least 100 attackers, a CR 17 challenge for 300 attackers, and a CR 18 challenge for 750 attackers.

Shaaladel's Proposal

Though the heroes might be preparing to stage a rescue mission against a prison in enemy-held territory, just before noon they receive a message that gives them another concern they might deem more important. The Lord of Shahalesti wishes to discuss an alliance, and the heroes will have to decide whether to put the rescue mission off until later, or to make a testy warlord wait on them. Each approach has benefits and drawbacks.

Shahalesti Emissary (EL 13)

Roughly a half hour after the battle with the Ragesian column, the heroes are approached by an agent of the Shahalesti elves, a ghaele eladrin named Eritae. If the heroes are headed for Gabal's School of War, she arrives just shortly before they get into full swing with the rescue mission.

Eritae, ghaele (CR 13): hp 65, MM. Instead of Knowledge skills, Eritae has skill ranks in Bluff (+16) and Sleight of Hand (+14).

Eritae has two missions. Shaaladel does not know how trustworthy the heroes are, and wants to have some leverage against them. Eritae's first mission is to retrieve personal items from each hero. She casts *air walk*, *greater invisibility*, and *see invisibility*, then approaches, moving stealthily but being careful to not look suspicious in case anyone can see her. If she can hide while invisible, it takes a Spot check (DC 44) to notice her presence.

Once she is confident she can approach safely, she sneaks up and attempts to cut a lock of hair from each hero, using tiny shears (alternately, she may try to wipe some of the heroes' blood if he is injured), using Sleight of Hand to tuck the item into a pocket before anyone notices. Once she has something from each hero she departs, then approaches more openly for the second half of her mission. Likewise if she is spotted, she moves immediately to the second half of her mission, to allay suspicion.

For her second mission, Eritae turns visible.

"Thank the heavens I finally found you. My lady Aurana Kiirodel sends me to deliver an invitation. Lord Shaaladel wishes to discuss tactics for a unified fight against the Ragesians. He bids you meet him at the aqueduct entrance to the fourteenth district when the sun glows in the noon sky. I can guide you if you wish."

If the heroes are injured, she can use her unlimited *cure light wounds* spells to slowly help them. On the other hand, if the heroes find out she is stealing from them, she has orders to pretend that she has no connection to the Shahalesti, and she will flee. The message for the meeting is then delivered via *sending* from Aurana.

If they go to Shaaladel (detailed in The Shining Lord, below), Metamorphosis will accompany them, but urges that they must not forget Vigilance. If the heroes decide instead to continue with the rescue mission (detailed in School of War, slightly further below), Eritae says she must tell her Lord, and warns he will not like the news.

Shaaladel will deal with other negotiators, but without the heroes to provide some clout, the Resistance will get the worst possible alliance, ceding practically all authority to the elvish lord.

The Shining Lord

The aqueduct where Shaaladel waits for the heroes feeds water from the mountains into the city's water supply, and is one of the few large structures the Ragesians have gone out of their way not to bomb. Shaaladel has chosen this location to contrast with the run-down desperation of the rest of Gate Pass, implying that he and his people are a shining beacon of hope.

Slender columns of polished white stone rise a hundred feet into the air, tall arches supporting the ten-foot wide river in the sky. The aqueduct flows from the southern edge of the fourteenth district, between two two mighty guard towers (whose Ragesian defenders have been slain neatly), then above a quarter mile of buildings, ending at a complicated facility of water towers.

Shaaladel and his entourage wait in a sunlit courtyard at the base of the two guard towers, but aside from a hundred-foot square patch of ground, most of the nearby terrain is dark, lying in the long shadows cast by the aqueduct and numerous looming towers.

Shaaladel waits with a massive entourage, including a dozen members of the elite Solei Palancis (N elf sorcerer 1/rogue 2/fighter 8), twenty warmages (N elf wizard 7), forty loyal archers, several flitting lantern archons, and even two astral deva, as well as Eritae the ghaele. Also, unless something unusual has happened to her, Shaaladel's daughter Shalosha is here as well, though the sorceress Aurana is nowhere to be seen. Shaaladel and his royal guard arrived ahead of the bulk of the army, so thousands more of the elvish lord's forces are en route. Hopefully the heroes won't be foolish enough to pick a fight.

Negotiating with the Elves (EL 16)

Shaaladel greets the heroes with charm and feigned respect, though just how he presents his offer depends on how well the heroes are doing, how respectful they are to him, and what tactics he thinks will best appeal to them. He says that his main goal is to cut off the hand Ragesia is currently using to violate Gate Pass, to make sure Leska does not try anything so foul upon his own lands. His army can work with the Resistance's army to give the Ragesians no route for retreat, and if the human general is smart he'll recognize he is defeated and surrender before all his men are slaughtered.

Shaaladel is confident of Ragesia's defeat, and he says that precise tactics can be figured out soon enough. First, though, he has heard rumors of strange dream monsters in this city, and he wants to know what the heroes know. After that, he plans to discuss the terms of their alliance.

Shaaladel has five main desires in these negotiations. There are of course countless other dry details necessary for a massive international military alliance, but those can be quibbled out. For these five important points, however, if the heroes disagree or have another suggestion, they must convince Shaaladel. Each of the five topics below has an associated DC, which is what the heroes must achieve on a Diplomacy check to get Shaaladel to see it their way. In most cases, if there is an impasse Shaaladel will pretend to go along with the heroes, but will secretly plan to betray them at the opportune moment.

The heroes' negotiator may get bonuses or penalties depending on his identity and status, bearing in mind Shaaladel's underlying racism. In particular, if the heroes show up much after noon, they suffer a –5 penalty for making Shaaladel wait.

Defeat Ragesia (DC 50). Shaaladel wants the Resistance army to work with his army, pressing back into Ragesian territory with the intent to depose Leska and shatter the tyranny of the Ragesian Empire. He assumes no one will object to this, though the heroes might want Shaaladel to stay in his own country and let them handle it. However, he explains that he *will* defeat Ragesia, and he would prefer that the Resistance be his allies, not more enemies.

General Shaaladel (DC 40). Second, he wants to be in charge of all the armies for this military campaign. If anyone has a problem with this, he explains that he has the most strategic experience of practically anyone alive, and knows the structure of Ragesia's military fairly intimately, having been a close ally of Coaltongue. He personally knows all of their generals. If the heroes agree to this, Shaaladel will want to be the one who accepts the Ragesian surrender tomorrow.

If the heroes do not want the Shahalesti army involved at all, Shaaladel still thinks he is the best person to lead the Resistance army.

If the heroes and Shaaladel reach an impasse on this issue, they can still work together, but Shaaladel will constantly try to go his own way, and will seek to turn others in the alliance against the heroes.

Secure Shahalesti Borders (DC 40). Third, Shaaladel wants the first mission, after freeing Gate Pass, to be driving back the Fourth Ragesian Army, which is keeping his armies occupied in the north of his country. In Shaaladel's mind, it is foolish to be defensive on one front and offensive on another. He may cite the heroes' own experiences in helping defend Dassen from invasion many months earlier.

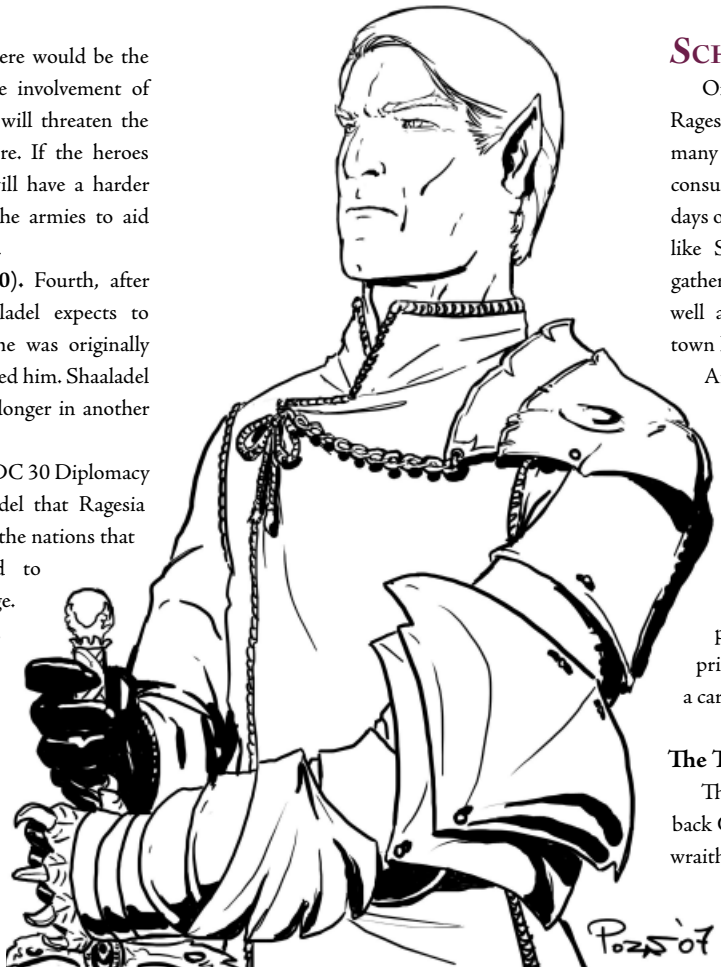
Shaaladel's preference here would be the best strategy if not for the involvement of the trillith and Pilus, who will threaten the resistance in the near future. If the heroes agree to this point, they will have a harder time taking advantage of the armies to aid them against those two foes.

Emperor Shaaladel (DC 40). Fourth, after Ragesia is defeated, Shaaladel expects to become its new ruler, as he was originally Coaltongue's choice to succeed him. Shaaladel does not want to wait any longer in another ruler's shadow.

If there is an impasse, a DC 30 Diplomacy check can convince Shaaladel that Ragesia should be broken back into the nations that were originally conquered to form it, so no one is in charge.

The Torch (DC 30). Fifth, Shaaladel wants the Torch of the Burning Sky. He suspects he won't get it, so if the heroes disagree, he wants a pledge that after they are done using its power to aid the defeat of Leska, they will destroy it. Shaaladel says that his allies have discovered clues of how to destroy the Torch, but he doesn't want to share that information just yet.

Convincing Shaaladel to let someone else have the Torch after the war is over is practically impossible, and if the heroes demand that, Shaaladel has already planned a contingency to take them out when the time is right (see page 273).



Without the Shahalesti

It is hard to offend Shaaladel so completely that he is unable to ally with the Resistance, since it's in his best interest to get the Ragesians out of Gate Pass, but if the heroes botch things, Shaaladel might hold his forces back, or actively attack the Resistance.

Shaaladel is much more cunning a strategist than the heroes likely are, so he knows just how to maneuver and leave the Resistance in a bind so that he can sweep in afterward and clean up the remains. In this situation, the negotiations with the Ragesians can instead be an attempt to ally against the Shahalesti. If the Resistance tries to take on Shaaladel alone, they'll lose.

If the heroes ever try to go after Shaaladel personally, he'll enact his contingency plan (see Shaaladel's Contingency on page 273), and then the heroes will be in serious trouble.

If at the end of negotiations Shaaladel is satisfied, he invites the heroes to toast their alliance, and then he sends a lantern archon to deliver a message to Aurana to call in the full army. He will also send Eritae to aid the resistance, sweeping through the city in her glowing colors form, stopping to help any injured resistance members or occasionally to bend her spell power against hostile forces. Before she goes, though, she waits for the heroes to leave, then hands over the hair clippings or personal belongings she stole, part of the Shahalesti insurance plan.

Within two hours, thousands of elvish warriors arrive in the city and begin to clash with Ragesians. Shaaladel remains in this district as a base camp is set up so he can direct the battle, though the threat of the Shahalesti will likely be enough to get Danava to surrender. Eritae flies across the city, delivering communications between Shaaladel and the leaders of the local rebels and the resistance army.

School of War

One of the greatest opponents of the Ragesians was the archmage Gabal, who killed many inquisitors and soldiers before being consumed by the flames of Vorax-Hûl in the early days of the war. The Ragesians sacked his fortress-like School of War, but recently they began gathering all their high-profile prisoners here, as well as keeping family members of important town leaders hostage, to ensure their cooperation.

Among the prisoners is Vigilance, whom the Ragesians are holding until agents of the trillith can come and slay him (they're quire certain this will happen).

The school's existing wards make it an excellent jail, and it is located in the Ragesian-controlled sixth district, but the inquisitors in charge of the facility are prepared in case the rebellion tries to free the prisoners, because now the former academy is a carefully-crafted trap.

The Trap

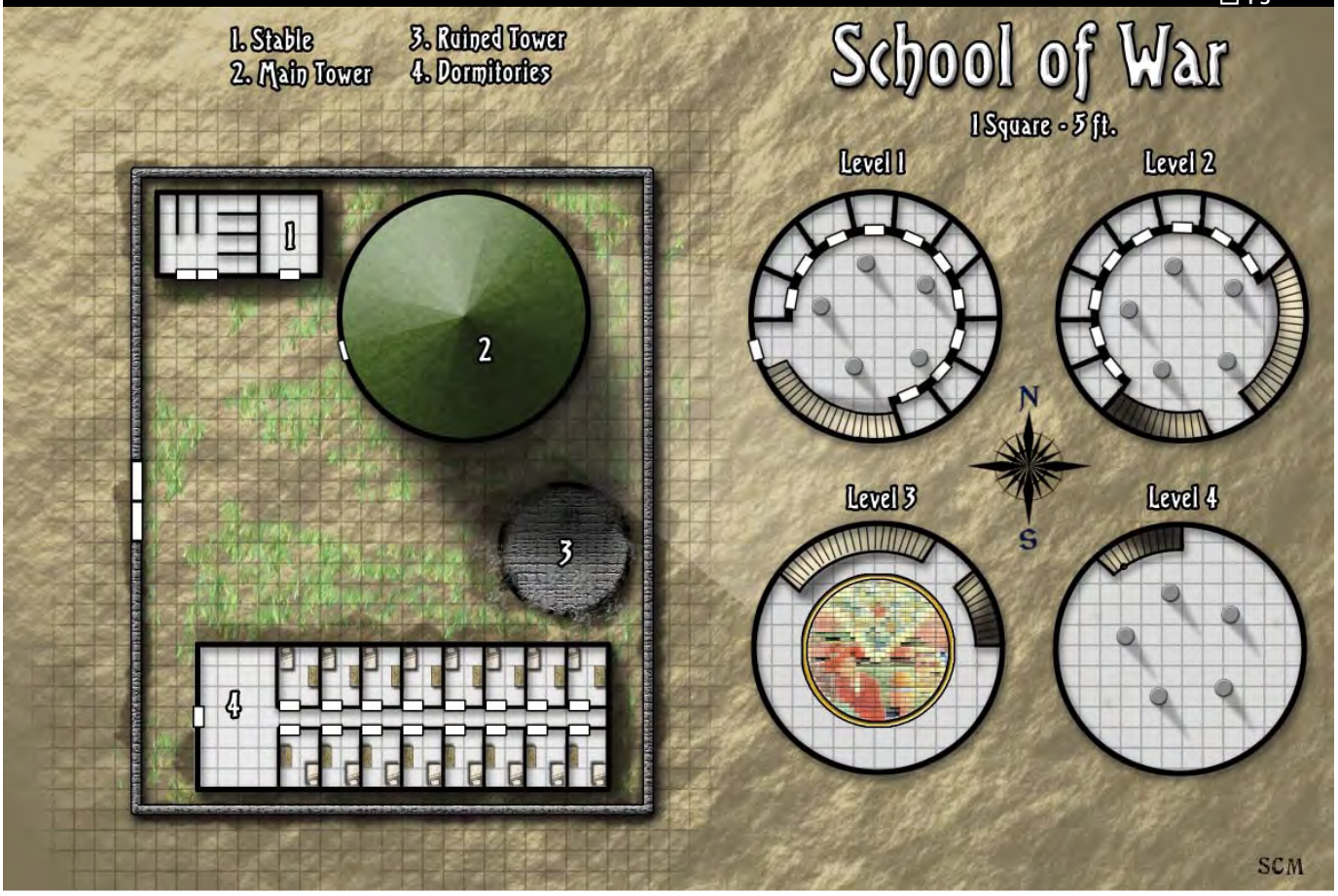
Through a powerful ritual, inquisitors called back Gabal's soul and transformed it into a dread wraith which still possesses the abilities the archmage had in life, but is firmly under the control of the Ragesians. The newly undead Gabal has created dozens of wraiths as spawn, and one waits in each prisoner's cell, hidden partially in the floor, waiting to notice intruders. When that happens, the wraiths will attack the prisoners, turning them into yet more wraiths, so that within minutes the entire gathering of prisoners will be turned into twisted undead horrors.

To ensure that would-be rescuers cannot escape, a quartet of bone devils serve as guards of the prison, flying and hiding invisibly 150 feet above the school. When they notice the heroes enter the main tower, they begin to seal the building with multiple *wall of ice* spells. Each round, the four bone devils can create enough ice to seal off one floor of the building in a foot of ice. Note that officially, *wall of ice* must be flat or a hemisphere, so letting them create gently curving panes to seal the round tower is breaking the normal rules slightly.

After sealing the building entirely in ice (which should take four rounds), the bone devils then *greater teleport* back into the building, still invisible and flying, though a burst of flame when they teleport in should alert the heroes. On their next round the bone devils try to strike each hero with *dimensional anchor* and then teleport away, since they contract says nothing about fighting attackers.

Shaaladel – Art by Claudio Pozas

Game Master's Map pg. 672



Prisoners

Two dozen renowned resistance fighters are held in the labs-turned-cells of the School of War, including one 8th-level and four 6th-level NPCs having each of the following classes — fighter, ranger, rogue, wizard (evoker). Also among the prisoners are eight famed prisoners, a group of veterans from the last Ragesian invasion: **Aeolus** (male gnome cleric 12), **Celone** (female elf ranger 12), **D'Crog** (male orc barbarian 12), **Joanelle** (female human bard 12), **Quill-Kainen** (male human evoker 12), **Shindig** (male human paladin 12), **Sudajj** (male human rogue 12), and **Targashal** (female half-elf druid 12). These heroes are held in a *mirror of life trapping* on the fourth floor of the main tower. Also trapped in the mirror is the trillith Vigilance.

If the heroes have any friends or family in Gate Pass, this prison would be a great place for them to be held, though unless you want to be cruel and have them rise as wraiths, they should also be in the *mirror of life trapping*. Rescuing these prisoners will prove a great aid for the Gate Pass rebellion.

Eternal Vigilance

The elder trillith was once Indomitability, trapped in the fire forest of Innenotdar, thirty miles south of Gate Pass. By the heroes' actions, he was either released or slain, but unsurprisingly, death could not keep a creature named Indomitability down for long. Finally freed from his prison, the primal creature came to realize that the fey of the forest had also been prisoners, and he became contrite over raging against them. Sensing the plight of the citizens of nearby Gate Pass, Indomitability had a spiritual transformation, devoting himself to defending those who cannot defend themselves.

Now calling himself Vigilance, the trillith is much more low key, appearing as a tall, old orc, gnarled like an ancient tree and dressed in forester's clothing that is colored a strangely washed-out white and blue, giving him a ghostly appearance. His true form is still a mighty stag, but he now burns with a intense silver fire, and his posture is serene, not fierce.

Vigilance is aware that his brethren seek to slay him, since he has the power to hold the masses of trillith beneath the city. He opposes them because they keep his mother a prisoner, and he suspects that whatever brings them to the surface will cause great harm to the people of Gate Pass, whom Vigilance has pledged to defend. Realizing that his brethren's window for breaking free is narrow, Vigilance hopes the heroes will keep him safe, in repayment for how his boon — granted long ago in the fire forest — has protected them. If he can but survive a few days, his cruel brothers and sisters will not be able to terrorize the surface world.

Vigilance has stretched his power wide over the city, weakening himself such that he is not useful as a combatant.

School Grounds

All windows in the school have dark curtains that keep out the sunlight which is anathema to wraiths. *Guards and wards* (caster level 15th) protects the main tower, so the building is filled with fog, all doors are *arcane locked* (Open Lock DC 25, Break DC 28, hardness 5, 15 hp), and stairways are all covered with a *web* spell. There are no locations with *confusion* effects or lost doors.

A stone wall and iron fence, 20 feet tall, surrounds the facility. The front gate is *arcane locked* (hardness 10, hp 60, Open Lock DC 30, Break DC 38) and guarded by shadows (Spot DC 28 to notice them).

Greater shadows (2) (CR 8): hp 58 each, MM.

Additionally, Gabal has activated the school's arcane defenses. Any interloper that attempts to climb or fly over the wall from the outside is targeted by a *telekinesis* effect (Will DC 19, range 150 feet, caster level 15th), which yanks the creature downward 150 feet, impaling it on the arcane-charged spikes of the fence. A creature pulled down this way is attacked by the fence (+20, 1d8 piercing plus 5d6 force). The fence defense can activate only once per round.

Area 1

This stable has nothing of interest.

Area 2

The main tower rises eighty feet, topped by a golden dome surrounded by four jagged iron spires, part of a magical defense. Gabal controls this defense, and can fire up to four rays of energy each round, one each of cold, electricity, fire, and sonic damage (+12 ranged touch, range 100 feet, 4d6 damage of the appropriate energy type). However, these rays can only target creatures that are more than 20 feet off the ground.

Area 3

This ruined tower has two surviving floors, both rubble-filled. It was struck by a Ragesian dragonbomb in the first attack of the war, and has been thoroughly looted.

Area 4

The dormitory has three floors that are all practically identical, but the rooms here are all empty and looted.

Main Tower — Level One (EL 15)

The front door is unlocked, and opens to a circular foyer 20 feet in diameter, five thick stone pillars holding up the ceiling. A staircase spirals upward to the right, and a ring of rooms surround the inside of the building, each of which is a cell for one prisoner, as well as containing one wraith. The rooms do not rise all the way to the ceiling, so it is possible to walk across the roofs of these rooms. Curtained windows circle the first floor above these pseudo-roofs.

When any humanoid creature enters this room, as soon as every creature who is within 30 feet of the door comes inside, the door magically slams shut and a *magic mouth*, cast on a statue of Gabal worked into the pillar nearest the stairs, speaks.

> You dare intrude into my school? Your mission shall fail, I assure you, but should you survive, come meet me upstairs.

Two hellhounds lurk in the foyer, hiding in the fog, but the greater threat is the wraiths.

Nessian warhound (2) (CR 9): hp 114 each, MM.
Wraiths (11) (CR 5): hp 32 each, MM.
Bone devils (4) (CR 9): hp 95 each, MM.

Tactics

The hellhounds simply wait until the heroes come into the foyer, and then they jump out of the fog and attack. At the sounds of combat, the prisoners begin crying out to be rescued. At this point, the wraiths rise up beside their victims and strike, and muffled screams of horror sound through the closed doors as the prisoners feel their souls being ripped out. Thereafter, each wraith keeps striking until its prisoner is dead, and then glides through the door to attack the heroes. Then a few rounds later the various dead prisoners will rise as wraiths for a second wave.

A typical prisoner has Constitution 10 and a +4 Fort save, meaning it will take about 6 rounds for a wraith to finish off a given prisoner. If the heroes are fast they might be able to save a few, but the doors should be difficult to get through in time.

Once the bone devils outside have sealed the tower, they teleport in to this floor and try to tag the heroes with *dimensional anchor*, then teleport away. If the heroes are already on another floor, the devils check the next level up until they find them.

Level Two (EL 13)

This floor is very similar to the first floor, minus the hellhounds. As soon as the wraiths hear the sounds of combat from below, they begin to attack the prisoners.

Wraiths (11) (CR 5): hp 32 each, MM.

When any humanoid creature arrives on this floor, a *magic mouth*, cast on a painting of Gabal hanging near the stairs, speaks.

> That's good; almost there. I hope you enjoyed the screams; you'll hear more soon. Yours.

Level Three (EL 18)

Magically, no pillars support the ceiling of this chamber, and huge stained glass windows circle the room. If the curtains are moved away, they reveal eight legendary mages from ancient history. This level, originally a dueling arena, has some unusual traits while Gabal is present.

In the center of the room is a golden ring 60 feet in diameter, within which is a mosaic of four elemental spirits, part of this region's own creation myth — the Tidereaver Kraken, the Worldshaper Worm, the Flamebringer Dragon, and the Stormchaser Eagle. One quarter of the interior of the ring is devoted to each.

A spellcaster touching part of the mosaic can cast spells of the appropriate element without expending a spell slot or needing the material component. He cannot cast a spell of a level he could not normally cast, but he can use the power of the mosaic to cast a spell that is not normally on his spell list. A given spell can be cast once per hour; all spell effects created this way end if they pass beyond the boundaries of this level. Gabal can activate any of these abilities, though he cannot benefit from *stoneskin* or *iron body*.

Air
2nd – *wind wall*
5th – *telekinesis*
6th – *summon monster VI* (Large air elemental)
8th – *greater shout*

Earth
4th – *stoneskin*
5th – *wall of stone*
6th – *summon monster VI* (Large earth elemental)
8th – *iron body*

Fire
2nd – *scorching ray*
3rd – *fireball*
4th – *wall of fire*
5th – *fire shield*
6th – *summon monster VI* (Large fire elemental)

Water
2nd – *acid arrow*
3rd – *water breathing*
5th – *flood* (water fills chamber, 10 feet deep)
6th – *summon monster VI* (Large water elemental)
8th – *horrid wilting*

An arcane or divine spellcaster standing in the appropriate area can make a Spellcraft check (DC 23) to intuitively sense how the dueling circle works, and what spells it grants access to.

Normally the magic of the circle would make all damage within it nonlethal. Gabal has disabled that. Now he waits here, having cast *mislead* as the heroes approached. He floats in the center of the ring, just above the surface, and once all the heroes are in the chamber he casts *greater shout*, screaming, "Welcome!" (For dramatic effect, this disperses the mist in this room, so that the combat does not have concealment).

Gabal, dread wraith archmage (CR 19): hp 208, Appendix B.
Large air elemental (CR 5): hp 60, MM.
Large earth elemental (CR 5): hp 68, MM.
Large fire elemental (CR 5): hp 60, MM.
Large water elemental (CR 5): hp 68, MM.

Tactics

Gabal is an overwhelmingly straightforward foe. While he possesses a great amount of cunning when it comes to dealing with inquisitors, against normal foes he simply tears through them with the most powerful evocations he can manage.

Gabal starts the battle having already cast *empowered flaming sphere*, *mislead*, and *protection from energy* (cold, electricity, and fire). Until located, he stays in the center of the ring, taking 5-foot steps whenever he needs a different elemental spell. His action in the surprise round is to use *greater shout* (DC 26). Thereafter he directs the flaming sphere as a move action and casts one of his various quickened spells (as a swift action) and either a powerful evocation spell (using mastery of elements to get around enemy resistances) or a spell from the elemental ring as his standard action. He only makes melee attacks if an enemy provokes an attack of opportunity.

Meanwhile, Gabal has four elementals which he has called to aid him. The air elemental becomes a whirlwind, the earth elemental tries to push foes into the fire elemental, and the water elemental stays in the center of the dueling ring, readying to intercept any foe who tries to approach Gabal.

When he is reduced below 50 hp, Gabal fires one final swift action spell in spite, and then flies up through the ceiling into the fourth floor. There he *shatters* the *mirror of life trapping*, and proceeds to strike at the prisoners while they are too stunned to react. He hopes to create new wraith minions, and to spite the heroes, before fleeing back down through the floors of the tower, and into the sewers beneath the city. If he can manage this without dying, Gabal may return to hound the heroes at some later point, when he does not have to worry about sunlight.

Should the heroes destroy the dread wraith, upon defeat, Gabal's wispy robes disperse, and for a moment his old soul floats in the air, looking as the man did in life. He nods in thanks to the heroes, then fades away in a spiral of four elements.

Level Four

This room, mist-filled like the rest of the tower, has a high domed ceiling. A permanent magical effect prevents teleportation into this room.

The room's contents have been cleared out, except for a single full-length mirror, a *mirror of life trapping*, which is covered with a large flag of the Ragesian Empire. Any living creature seeing his reflection in the mirror is trapped within unless he succeeds a Will save (DC 23). The mirror can hold up to fifteen creatures, and currently nine (possibly more) tiny diamonds around its edge gleam with light; six others sit without shining.

All the heroes need do is shatter the mirror, and everyone within will be freed. Alternately, the heroes could pry out the gems, which hold souls that can be consumed to power the Torch of the Burning Sky. Metamorphosis, if present, will tell them she senses her master in the mirror.

Aftermath

When the heroes see Vigilance, he is unshaken by the experience, and needs only a few moments to get up to speed. He asks to stay with the heroes, that they might keep him safe from his brethren, some of whom he senses are already in the city.

From any prisoners they rescued, the heroes likely have new allies to aid their side in the fight. The surviving prisoners can get back to the resistance headquarters on their own, where they will get gear and any needed healing. News will spread, and many more citizens will be inspired to join the fight. Even if most of the prisoners were killed by the wraiths, the Ragesians no longer have hostages, so many who were afraid to move against the invaders now have nothing to lose.

Ingenious heroes may realize that the *mirror of life trapping* can capture the souls of trillith, and if they use *identify* or similar magic they can figure out how to release the prisoners without shattering it. It is an ungainly weapon, and dangerous to carry into battle, plus you have to lure your foe within 30 feet, but using it could be fun.

(This particular mirror traps people with their gear; rescuees don't emerge naked.)

The Ragesian General

Small battles fill the rest of the day. The occasional *sending* keeps the heroes informed of the state of the battle as the Resistance army attacks the western wall. Their precise tactics vary widely based on what allies the heroes have, but the fighting is taking quite a while. Rumor is that an actual balor joined the field of battle, *gated* in by Leska and sent here to try to salvage the situation, but thankfully a Resistance mage managed to banish him.

Let the heroes pursue their own goals, or just simply rest for a while, since even they cannot always be fighting. In mid-afternoon, news comes that a trap laid by the rebels dropped an entire tower on a few hundred Ragesian soldiers, crushing them. The rebels have had to withdraw from the seventh and eighth districts, but they firmly control the eastern half of the city, and most of the fighting is going on in the ninth district. The Resistance army has kept the Ragesians from sending all their might against the rebels.

If the heroes have not already sought out the Ragesian general, at sunset a *sending* spell comes to whichever of the heroes is most sympathetic to the Ragesians. It says, "General Danava seeks to discuss his surrender. He will withdraw forces from the ninth district this evening, to meet on the main road at midnight."

Terms of Surrender (EL 16)

General Danava did not want this war, and he is eager for an honorable end to it. He is *geased* not to betray the ruler of Ragesia, but he has enough leeway to be able to surrender when the situation warrants it. He just hopes the heroes understand that his men will never surrender if he is assassinated under a flag of truce.

The heroes may bring along whomever they want. Lord Shaaladel somehow finds out about the meeting and suggests the heroes meet him in advance so they can go together. Shaaladel is proud that the mere approach of his armies has prompted Danava's surrender, though he admits the humans of the city have done fairly well.

Shaaladel comes with a small entourage: Aurana, his daughter Shalosha, and two astral devas. Danava comes with just six soldiers, carrying torches to make their location clear. Aurana, for her part, is beautiful and wary, and on the way to the meeting she says little other than to wish they could just kill "the old man." Shaaladel laughs, shaking his head and saying it would be a waste to kill the one honest man in the whole of Ragesia. A *disguise self* hides Aurana's faint traces of vampirism, and *nondetection* hides her alignment.

Lord Shaaladel (CR 20): hp 162, Appendix B.
Aurana Kiirodel (CR 20): hp 117, Appendix B.
Shalosha (CR 15): hp 79, Appendix B.
Astral devas (2) (CR 14): hp 102 each, MM.
General Danava (CR 16): hp 98, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldiers, veteran (6) (CR 6): hp 50 each, Appendix B.

The General greets the heroes gravely, his posture restrained and respectful. He admires the people of Gate Pass, and feels no shame in his defeat. Indeed, he was more ashamed of having to obey Leska's cruel orders. As for the Shahalesti, he respects the nation if not its ruler, but he knows better than to let Shaaladel know it. He explains his *geas*, and his suspicion that Legate Kolvus is in the city in preparation of something more significant than a simple assault.

Interrupted Negotiations

The heroes do not have long to discuss terms. Danava begins by saying his primary concern is the safety of his men, and that the inquisitors, with their sorcery, are *not* his men. He wants to withdraw from the city, though he warns that he cannot do this while there is a legitimate Ragesian authority giving him commands. As long as Legate Kolvus is here, Danava cannot simply surrender.

As if prompted, Kolvus appears with his two bodyguards, emerging from a nearby building. His bodyguards are nightmare trillith who have scouted the area incorporeally and reported back telepathically. Kolvus teleported inside a nearby building to meet them, and when he walks out upon the treasonous meeting, his bodyguards right behind him, he looks surprised, as if he wasn't expecting to see them.

Kolvus and his bodyguards are disguised by the *veil* spell. Kolvus appears in his usual disguise; the trillith appear as plainly dressed humans: Cosmos a stocky young man in a dashing hat, Danger a tall blond woman whose head is always cocked to the side. Their natural forms are of a flailing void of stars and floating mass of dozens of golden punching daggers which flicker as they teleport about. If the heroes have either Metamorphosis or Vigilance with them, they recognize the two as trillith. Both are forced by the power of the Festival of Dreams to become corporeal once battle starts.

Finally, Kolvus's chief bodyguard is the marilith Deha'sell, who chafes at being bound to serve a devil. She waits in a building a few hundred feet away, connected to Kolvus via *telepathic bond*, and will teleport in on the first round of combat.



Aurana Kiirodel – Art by Claudio Pozas

Legate Kolvus (CR 12): hp 170, Appendix B.
Magic circle against good.
Cosmos and Danger, nightmare trillith (2) (CR 12): hp 91 each, Appendix B.
Deha'sell, marilith (CR 17): hp 216, MM.
Unholy aura.

Kolvus may not get a chance to talk, but he has a lot to say if he gets the opportunity. Irrationally cocky, he says he knew Danava would betray their empire, so he has been ensuring that not all the soldiers will follow Danava if he surrenders. By now, he says, he has *hundreds* of key personnel charmed and loyal to him, and they will fight to the death. This final bit is an exaggeration, but he has done enough to make a clean victory very difficult.

Kolvus has come far by being loyal to Leska, and is convinced still that Ragesia will win the war. If the heroes try to negotiate, he'll listen, but he interjects comments that show he has a completely evil worldview ("They were all eventually going to die of old age anyway. Weren't we just being prompt?" "Leska is doing what is necessary. Haven't you ever heard of a 'necessary evil'?" or "Oh, like you wouldn't commit genocide if you could.")

If the heroes have brought Kathor along, General Danava is bolstered by the presence of his son, and he enthusiastically supports the heroes, granting them a +10 bonus to their Diplomacy check. If the heroes have the Torch of the Burning Sky present, the temptation it presents to the devil incurs a –10 penalty to their Diplomacy check.

A DC 35 check convinces Legate Kolvus to not attack the heroes, though he will still attack Vigilance if he can. A DC 45 check gets him to admit that Leska has committed enough horrors already, so someone else should have a chance. He'll depart with a smile, though the trillith remain. A DC 60 check is enough for the devil to turn on Leska, since he's eager to try to corrupt some new leader. He'll teleport away immediately to tell the troops to listen to Danava's orders, though again the two trillith remain, and want to attack.

Tactics

In a fight, Kolvus takes to the air, though *veil* still conceals his infernal nature. He uses *quickened unholy blight*s while peppering the heroes with arrows. Meanwhile Danger starts by whirlwind

The Ragesian Camp

The heroes might attempt a tactical strike against the leadership of the Ragesian army, or to assassinate Legate Kolvus, or just to talk to General Danava. There are many possibilities.

The central Ragesian command is in the first district, spread across a few dozen buildings, with others around the district used as barracks and supply houses. There are always at least a thousand soldiers patrolling the streets and rooftops near the main command, and the area within their perimeter is warded against teleportation. The highest rooftops serve as makeshift aeries for wyverns, and a few scattered giant and ogre mercenaries stand by to face any monstrous threats.

Inquisitor bodyguards have set up various magical defenses around Danava's and Kolvus's quarters. Danava lodges in a converted magistrate's building, built like a small fort, while the infernal Legate sleeps in a theater, guarded by inquisitors and his two special trillith defenders. Danava will not harm the heroes if they come to him to talk, but many of the guards are loyal to Kolvus. If the heroes are discovered, thousands of soldiers will descend upon them.

attacking, and Cosmos slams some of the heroes into different parts of the street.

The marilith Deha'sell *greater teleports* in, and begins reciting her lineage and the history of conquests as she attacks Shaaladel and his group ("I am Deha'sell, lieutenant of Bathesh, twice-dead Warlord of the Horde of Thirty Million, / for a thousand centuries known as the Deep Damnation of the Nightmare Wastes, defiler of eighteen kingdoms, / feared by an entire plane as She-Who-Beheaded-All-Children-Of-The-Last-Decade, the last to tread the sulfur-consumed soil of Lazreb. / My conquests are innumerable. My blades are undefeatable. I will slay you and eat your children! / I shall find all who know your name and parade your skin as a trophy, until this world eternally dreads me as Bearer-of-the-Pelt-of-the-Shining Lord" and so on; each slash is about a round's worth of ranting).

She should manage to keep them busy for a round or two.

Afterward, Shaaladel and his allies come to the heroes' aid. The nightmare trillith focus their attention on only one hero at a time (or on Vigilance if he is present). Legate Kolvus fights until he is clearly outmatched, or is reduced to below 50 hp, at which point he shrugs and says, "There'll be other empires to toady to. Maybe I'll work for *you* some day." Then he flees by teleporting.

A *geas* prevents Danava from acting against any representative of the Empire, so at the start of combat Danava withdraws and tells his soldiers to scatter so they won't be hit by area attacks. Should Shaaladel be imperiled, Aurana teleports her lord to safety, though the angels fight the demon and devil to the end. Most likely, though, the heroes will win the fight handily. In part, this is an excuse to show Shaaladel's prowess, to prove he is not just an undeserved prideful ass.

Aftermath

When Kolvus is no longer a threat, Danava returns to the heroes, apologizing again for his *geas*. He asks to finish negotiations, and hopes to be able to formally surrender tomorrow afternoon. Somehow, try to encourage the heroes, either by influence from the rebellion, or by suggestion of Danava himself, that the surrender should take place at Summer's Bluff, since the townsfolk are already celebrating the Festival of Dreams, and many thousands will be gathered to witness the event when the parades reach the old statue of Coaltongue.

If Kolvus is killed, in a few days his countless *charm monster* spells wear off, so that the Ragesian army can obey Danava's surrender order. If he escaped, the surrender will be an uneasy affair, with days of sporadic fighting as Kolvus continues to teleport around the army and charm more to his side. Either way, the festival will still go on tomorrow, even if there are more battles.

Nightmare Trillith

There are many lesser trillith, referred to collectively as nightmares (or as "children," in contrast to "elders" like Vigilance). They all have similar stats; each has a few unique abilities.

Cosmos can control gravity, moving up to four creatures as a standard action, as with *telekinesis* (caster level 14th, range 960 feet, Will DC 19 resists each round), though he can affect creatures of any weight up to Medium size. A Large creature counts as two Medium creatures, and a Huge counts as all four. He usually hovers foes in the air so they cannot reach him, or hurls them up to 140 feet, perhaps sending them skyward and letting them fall. If foes prove to have strong wills, he instead makes large inanimate objects 'fall' onto them.

Danger is able to instantly teleport her weapons anywhere within 100 feet, effectively giving her 100-foot reach. She normally just attacks (two slashes, +17, 2d8+6, 19–20/×2), though once every three rounds she can perform a whirlwind attack against every enemy within 100 feet. Her attacks can affect incorporeal foes, as if they were *ghost touch* weapons.

Shaaladel's Contingency

If the heroes attack Shaaladel or betray him, his most powerful servant, **Aurana Kiirodel** (CE female vampiric elf sorcerer 18), will destroy the heroes.

Shadowdrinker (EL 19)

Needing only eleven minutes to prepare, Aurana buffs herself, then casts *waking nightmare* (see Appendix A), using a personal item taken by Eritae to make the spell harder to resist. She has second-hand knowledge of them, but if she has a piece of their bodies, the save DC is 36. If she only has a personal item the DC is 32. If she only has pictures provided by various witnesses, the DC is 30.

The nightmare begins with the hero helpless, unable to move while an emptiness with the shape of a woman force-feeds him blood. He begins to gag on it, but soon blood flows all around the hero, sweeps over him, and turns darker, until it is a matte black. Then the blood drains away, leaving the hero standing, with his companions, in a forest composed entirely of solid shadows, on the shore of a crescent-shaped coastline. Waves crash against the shore, but there is no light; the world is complete darkness.

Aurana has already cast a suite of buffing spells. These are factored into her stat block.

She begins combat flying 20 feet off the ground, amid low branches. She then casts *quickened black tentacles*. She prefers to catch strong-willed and weak-limbed foes with the tentacles (grapple +30, 1d6+4 damage); her next spell is *mass suggestion*: "Stay far away from your allies!"

If this works, she casts *accursed tendrils*. She strikes her target once, then follows up with *quickened vampiric touch*. If she can manage to grapple and pin the creature, she will drain his blood as long as she is not being harried by other enemies.

Thereafter, she uses her many attacks of opportunity with the tendrils to keep foes at bay, casting *quickened vampiric touch* or *quickened touch of stupidity* whenever she can. *Greater shadow evocation* gives her flexibility, and *ventriloquism* can provide extra edge against foes who try to target her in the dark by the sound of her voice. *Greater arcane sight* lets her watch the heroes from up to 120 feet away while she hides high in the black sky.

Her greatest concern is being swarmed, so she might use *greater shadow evocation* to cast *forecage* if the heroes regroup, or *dominate person* to turn them against each other. Her second greatest concern is that someone who disbelieves the nightmare will get the rest out of the dreamscape. Should any heroes manage to disbelieve the spell, keen-eyed Aurana notices and turns her ire upon that character, throwing shadow *delayed blast fireballs* or *walls of fire* to punish anyone who neglects the dreamscape.

If the heroes stay near allies, they can come to the aid of the heroes' physical bodies, or perhaps to enter the dreamscape with them. If the heroes are having too easy of a time with this encounter, you might have a group of charmed monsters attack at the same time in the waking world.

When Aurana is reduced to 0 hp, *waking nightmare* ends, but she is not destroyed; rather, she transforms into her swarm form to seek shadowed ground to heal in. If the heroes try to track her down, they have to get past her *nondetection* spell (caster level check DC 37). Once she is healed, she will try to fly or teleport to the Shahalesti capital.

Should Aurana defeat the heroes, she tries to retrieve the Torch, but if this is infeasible she is content to have ended the greatest threat the Resistance could muster.

Act Three: The Time of Dreams

In this act, the festival concludes with the arrival of hundreds of trillith, and after a colossal battle the heroes will learn that the war is moving swiftly to a dangerous climax.

Traditional Festival

In a normal Festival of Dreams, eight high priests choose one urn from among a vast collection at the foot of the statue of Drakus Coaltongue. Each urn contains a piece of paper, on which a wish is written. Some subtle magic of the holiday compels people who write wishes to either place their own name on the paper, or to leave it anonymous, and never to put more than one wishing urn in the collection.

Normally the priests break these urns open, reading them aloud one by one. Then each priest pledges his temple to helping the wisher in the coming year, though not necessarily in the way the wisher may have intended. Anonymous wishes may be read aloud if the priest wants, but they are never chosen to be fulfilled. Selfless wishes are usually pursued most actively, while selfish or cruel wishes may prompt a temple to address whatever grievance provoked them. There is no stigma in being a little selfish, though people are encouraged to wish for things that will help both themselves and others.

Since the Festival usually takes place at the New Year, it is considered bad luck if no one wishes for Spring to come.

Different Outcomes

If the heroes did poorly, the surrender might go differently, with the Shahalesti or possibly even the Ragesians accepting the surrender of the other two groups. If there has not yet been any victory, there is no surrender ceremony, but the townsfolk have still gathered for the festival, praying their dreams will be answered, and that the Ragesians will be defeated.

The heroes should suspect that the trillith will be coming, and during the ceremony is a perfect time, so they might try to cancel the ceremony, or do it elsewhere. However, unless the heroes forcibly stop the townsfolk, the citizens of Gate Pass are too caught up in festivities to stay indoors, and will have their parades.

If somehow the heroes stop the townsfolk from gathering, the trillith still arrive. When Desire arrives, her psychic compulsion prompts everyone in the city to turn toward the central district, no matter how far away they are. Desire's speech sounds telepathically in their heads, and the trillith will emerge all around the city, instead of being clustered in one location. A large mass will still gather to animate the colossus, which will seek out Vigilance and the heroes.

The Surrender

If the heroes have done well, the Resistance and the rebels, with the aid of the Shahalesti, have defeated the Ragesians, and will be accepting a formal surrender at the foot of the statue of Drakus Coaltongue atop Summer's Bluff. Representatives of the Resistance congregate in the black area on the map, the Shahalesti in the blue, and the Ragesians in the red, waiting as parades of thousands of costumed citizens arrive in the grand square.

The colossus of the late Ragesian emperor stands atop a stone base 20 feet high which is surrounded by at least a thousand clay urns the size of an apple, some of which were placed in the past two days, but most of which have been waiting since the turn of the new year. Coaltongue stands in a ferocious, victorious pose, his right arm holding high a recreation of the Torch of the Burning Sky. His half-orc face is regal, cut diagonally down the middle by a scar that stretches from left jawline to right hairline. This scar is formed of smaller, wrinkled sheets of copper, while the rest of the statue is reinforced bronze. He faces east, so as the sun slowly passes west after noon, his vast shadow stretches out toward the gathered crowds.

Slightly after noon, the Resistance will accept General Danava's surrender. Shaaladel will want to make a speech beforehand, giving inspiration to the heroes of Gate Pass, and pledging that he will ensure that Ragesia can never threaten them again. The heroes might also make a speech, but the surrender itself will be brief. Let the heroes spend as much time as they want, since this will be their chance to shine in the spotlight.

Trillith Masquerade

After the surrender ceremony, eight religious leaders from among the people of Gate Pass come up from the crowd to the foot of the colossus. If the heroes have not yet contributed wishing urns of their own, the priests ask them to do so. You might have the players actually write down wishes that their characters have on strips of paper and give them to you. You will soon have a chance to make them regret whatever they wished for.

Reading of Dreams

Everyone grows quiet and watches as the first of the eight priests chooses an urn at random and takes it to a small altar set up near the foot of the statue. He lifts the urn and brings it down hard on the altar, cracking the clay. Then he pulls out the paper and reads aloud.

The writer is a young man who wishes for he and his fellow workers to be paid by their employer for all the work they have done on a long building project, even though the building was destroyed in the attack. The priest says the wish is one he will pledge to fulfill, and then calls out the name written on the strip.

There's a pause, and then someone from the crowd shouts out, "He died last night."

There's a bit of discomfort, but the priest says he will do his best to fulfill the wish anyway.

Other priests come up, opening urns one by one. Most wishes are for the safety of the town, or that the Ragesians would kill each other, but a few are funny, like a young girl who writes, "I wish my mommy could talk to the rooster too," or an old man who wishes for "two women at once."

Then there is only one urn left from the eight, and people are anxious, because no one has wished for Spring yet. The last priest comes up to the altar, but just as he lifts it so he can crack it open, a figure emerges from among the gathered priests, someone who was definitely not there a moment before.

Herald of Dreams (EL 16+)

The figure sways seductively over to the final priest, holding a bundle of urns in the crook of her left arm. As she moves, a voice enters everyone's mind, a lush, compelling voice that makes even holy men imagine lurid, carnal fantasies.

"These things all things desire,
More than joy or flesh's fire,
Dreams of sin, and hate, and steel,
All these now do we make real."

This creature is Desire, the herald of the trillith. The urns she holds are those the heroes filled, and at the end of her brief poem she raises them high, then hurls them to the ground. They

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shatter, and faintly visible serpentine forms rise incorporeally into the air, each a nightmare trillith that will take its from a different one of the heroes' wishes, only twisted somehow.

Meanwhile, all throughout the grand square, other unformed nightmares rise from the ground. They fly upward through townsfolk, Ragesians, Resistance, and Shahalesti forces alike, hundreds appearing at once. Each draws a nightmare from the mind of the creature it passes through and takes its form from that horror. Screams rise from the crowd as people look up and see their fears brought to life.

Desire (CR 16): hp 190, Appendix B.
Nightmare trillith (one per hero) (CR 12): hp 91 each, Appendix B.

Enough chaos erupts simultaneously that most NPCs are too busy with their own fights to help the heroes. The heroes' own nightmares focus on them as a group; they each resemble one of the heroes, making it clear which nightmare is born from which hero's wish.

Nightmare Trillith Abilities

As with Cosmos and Danger before, each nightmare trillith has its own special abilities, in this case based on a perversion of a given hero's wish. As a baseline, choose one or two low-level spells it can use at will and a higher-level spell it can use 3/day, or create some unique power. The save DC is 12 + spell level, and the caster level is 10th.

For example, if a hero wishes for strength to defeat the Ragesians, the associated trillith might appear as a mighty warrior, able to use *mage's sword* and *mass bull's strength* each three times a day. A wish for rulership might manifest as a towering version of the hero, capable of using *dominate person* thrice a day, and *suggestion* at will. Wishing for arcane power could create an eldritch storm that shoots the character's favorite spells.

More noble wishes may require twisting intent. A wish to heal the injured might manifest as a walking blight that can use *mass inflict serious wounds* in order to create more injured people, while a wish for peace might create a very serene-looking trillith that uses *circle of death* so that people won't be able to fight anymore. Wishing for the answer to a mystery might make the trillith resemble the subject of the mystery, with powers similar to theirs, giving hints and clues that are lies.

For heroes who did not make a wish, you can create a nightmare that is appropriate to their personalities, or have them fight an invisible trillith that can use *enervation* at will.

However, if any of the heroes wished for Spring to come, that trillith appears as a warm, soothing presence with no shape. It is loyal to the heroes and can use *cure serious wounds* at will and *heal* three times per day.

If the heroes go after nightmares harrassing other people, you can use practically any CR 9 to CR 12 creature to represent the trillith. Who's to say a person did not have a nightmare about colossal centipedes or elder earth elementals?

Tactics

The nightmare trillith work together to attack Vigilance if he is present, or the heroes if he is not. Vigilance changes to his stag form to fight them, while Metamorphosis keeps her distance, using her powers to aid the heroes as possible. She

seems confused, however, often staggering slightly as if she feels weak. Her appearance shifts more rapidly than ever before, but she stays within 10 feet of Vigilance at all times.

Desire tries to distract the heroes away from Vigilance with her covetous spirit power, using *quickened suggestion* on anyone who doesn't follow. She uses her dazzling beauty if it won't harm her allies, and then will pervert the heroes' desires with her naked wish ability. Throughout the fight she taunts the heroes, tempts them with power, and screams at them about any of her brethren they killed previously.

In the past, a useful tactic against the trillith has been to sing the Song of Forms, forcing them to become corporeal, but now the trillith are already corporeal, and they want it this way so they can destroy as many surface-dwellers as possible. If someone sings the Song of Forms, the trillith are more inclined to target him, but are not affected in any other way.

What's Everyone Else Doing

The Ragesians are not being attacked, and indeed some of them are coming to the aid of the people of Gate Pass, but a fair number are just trying to avoid danger, and a few are actively aiding the trillith's massacre.

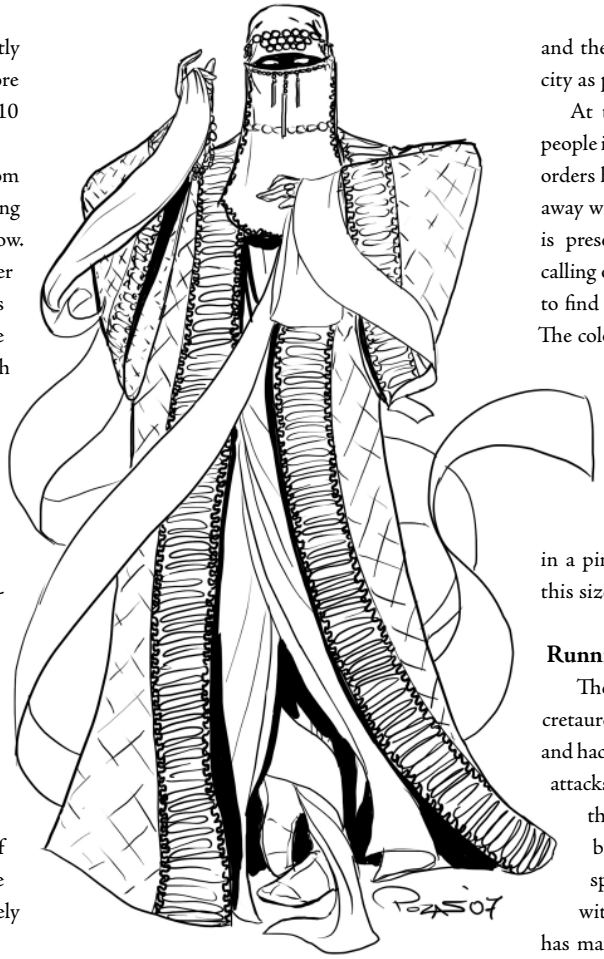
The Shahalesti have one of the largest concentrations of trillith attacking them; apparently they have strong nightmares. The rebels and the Resistance trust that the heroes can handle themselves, and so after they deal with the trillith attacking them, many of them go to help the townsfolk. If the heroes need aid, however, they can call for it.

There are hundreds of nightmare trillith, and each of them is more than a match for a dozen of townsfolk. However, most of the revelers now carry weapons with them as a matter of course (even in costume), and so easily half of the two thousand people in the square are engaged in battles, while children and elderly flee to safety.

Should the heroes have Etinifi with them, the insane seela flies up over the crowd and does his best not to contribute at all, though he keeps eyeing the colossus expectantly.

Development

When she is reduced below 90 hp, or if Vigilance is slain, Desire telepathically cries out, "Behold your destruction. Behold our victory!" She theatrically points to the colossus of Drakus Coaltongue, where a slender figure in plate armor



floats before the statue's face. Then hundreds of wispy, incorporeal trillith stream from the ground, swirling higher and higher around the statue's body. Finally they surge into it at three points — its chest, its head, and the end of the torch it wields.

With the piercing sound of twisting metal, the colossus lurches, the bronze head of its torch catches fire, and it tears itself free of the ground.

Clash of Titans (EL 20)

The heroes now have a chance to face Emperor Coaltongue, at least by proxy. Hundreds of trillith have animated a 90 foot tall colossus, which will devastate the city if the heroes don't stop it.

Coaltongue colossus (CR 20): hp 2007, see below.
Victory (CR 16): hp 190, Appendix B.

The colossus is controlled by Victory, one of the most powerful trillith, born from Trilla's combined nightmares of many warlords trying to use her as a weapon. At the start of battle Victory flies into the head of the colossus, where he lends his essence to the titan. At his direction, the colossus will first attempt to slay Vigilance, and then will destroy as many defenders of the city as possible.

At the sight of the titanic foe, most of the people in the square panic and flee. Lord Shaaladel orders his forces to retreat, and then is teleported away with his daughter and elite guards. If Etinifi is present, he hoots in glee and flies upward, calling out to the trillith, claiming it knows where to find the Heart and how to destroy everything. The colossus lets him land on its shoulder, where he shouts advice to Victory, warning it of the heroes' powers and tactics.

Potential allies of the heroes might stay engaged in their fights at the edge of the grand square, in case you want them available to help out the heroes in a pinch. It won't be easy to take down a foe this size.

Running the Colossus

The colossus does not work like a normal cretaure. It's too big for simply standing next to it and hacking at its feet to be effective. Conventional attacks don't have even the slightest effect, and the most mighty attacks of high-level heroes barely scratch it, but it has a few vulnerable spots. This encounter is a battle combined with a multi-stage puzzle, and each stage has many solutions, some of which may require a protracted effort to accomplish. Here is an overview of the colossus's various target points.

- **Legs.** If the heroes want to climb up onto the colossus, they'll have to start here. Crippling a leg causes the colossus to stumble.
- **Torch.** The torch apes the powers of the Torch of the Burning Sky, providing the colossus with ranged attacks and various tricks that keep combat interesting. Crippling the torch removes the firestorm shield that protects the colossus from normal ranged attacks and fends off flying foes.
- **Hand.** Injuring a hand can make the colossus drop what it's holding, be that the torch or one of the heroes.
- **Head and Shoulders.** The head is where the trillith Victory controls the colossus from, and to draw him out the heroes must tear out the colossus's eyes or reopen the scar on its face. Once Victory emerges to do battle, the titan will be vulnerable to a killing blow.
- **Chest.** The vest of the colossus is open, exposing the chest, which pulses with blood-red energy where the heart would be on a living creature. The killing blow must be delivered here, though it has mighty defenses.

Desire – Art by Claudio Pozas

The following rather long and unconventional stat block explains what you'll need to know about the colossus while running it.

The Coaltongue Colossus CR 20

Ninety feet tall, wielding a massive torch that flames with the souls of dozens of nightmares, this bronze colossus surveys the carnage across the city. Its face is that of the late Emperor Drakus Coaltongue — imperious, legendary, a seemingly mortal scar crossing his face from right temple to left jaw — but its eyes burn like the fires of heaven. Its search stops when it sees you, and it raises high its torch. The sky ignites, the crown of the torch transforms into a blazing axe-head, and the colossus roars as it brings the weapon down upon you.

N Colossal Construct

Init +0; **Senses** Low-light vision, darkvision 1,000 ft.

Languages None

Aura The torch creates a powerful *fire shield* that surrounds the colossus from a distance of 10 ft. out to 20 ft. Any creature or object passing through this shield takes 2d6+30 points of fire damage, more than enough to incinerate most arrows, though *flaming* or *flaming burst* arrows can pass through the shield without taking damage. This shield also blocks line of effect to the colossus for targeting magic. The shield can be dispelled (caster level 25th), but the colossus can recreate it as a free action on its turn. The *fire shield* does not protect the torch.

AC 10, touch 2, flat-footed 10 (–8 size, +8 natural)

hp 2007 (**HD** n/a); **DR** special

Immune The colossus is animated by many creatures, so mind-affecting magic has no effect on it unless it can affect most of the hundreds of trillith on the inside of its bronze shell. These trillith have a Will save of +9. As a construct, the colossus is also immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromancy effects, critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability score damage, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, and any effect requiring a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects, or is harmless.

Resist Due to its size, most attacks are insignificant to the colossus. Damage from any source is reduced by 40 points, even spells and other magical attacks. At a few vulnerable points on its body, the colossus merely has DR 8/—, and magic affects it normally.

While its *fire shield* is active, cold attacks deal half damage to the colossus.

Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0. As long as Victory is inside it, the colossus automatically makes every save as if it had rolled a natural 20.

Weakness The colossus has five important targets, where dealing the listed amount of damage triggers a change in the battle. The damage can be done over the course of multiple attacks, and the damage dealt applies to the colossus's hp total.

Leg (40 hp). The colossus stumbles. At the start of its next turn it lands on its hands and knees, though it doesn't let go of its torch. It must spend a move action to stand. The *fire shield* still protects its head and chest, but not the arms and legs, nor the torch. The back of the colossus's knee is particularly vulnerable (though AC 18 instead of AC 10). An attack there only has to bypass DR 8/—, not the normal 40-point damage ablation.

Torch (100 hp). The torch's power falters, its flames dimming. The *fire shield* vanishes, and the colossus cannot use any of its magical powers. Two rounds later the torch's flame returns to its original power.

The second time 100 damage is dealt to the torch, the torch cracks and explodes. Until the torch cracks, damage to it does not count against the colossus, but when the torch explodes the colossus loses 200 hp, so the effect is the same.

The torch takes no damage from fire. However, the torch's magic can be suppressed by opposing fire magic, as well as *dispel magic* and similar effects. Any such spell targeted at the torch deals 2d6 damage per spell level + the spell's caster level, ignoring the colossus's normal 40-point damage ablation.

Hand (40 hp). If the heroes deal enough damage to the hand (AC 14), the colossus drops the torch. The *fire shield* only falters if the colossus goes a whole round without the torch, so unless the heroes can move a 10-ton object out of its reach before it acts, this tactic won't help much. Similarly, if a creature is being crushed in the colossus's left hand, dealing 40 damage to it will cause it to release the creature.

Head (100 hp). If a character targets the scar or eyes of the head (AC 18), he can ignore the 40-point damage ablation, and need only contend with DR 8/-. Once the head takes 100 damage, Victory emerges, gliding out of the face (though he is otherwise corporeal). It attacks creatures who are harming the colossus, focusing on the greatest threat first, particularly one attacking the chest. If Victory emerges, the colossus no longer automatically rolls natural 20 on its saves.

If another 200 damage is dealt to the head, it wrenches free and falls off. Trillith pour out in a facsimile of a giant face, but the colossus is stunned, dropping its torch and flailing helplessly for three rounds. After this, the trillith manage to get enough control of themselves to direct the colossus, which quickly rearms itself and returns to battle.

Torso (n/a). Normal attacks against the chest only count against the colossus's total hp, but if a creature strikes at the glowing heart (AC 18) and gets through the 40-point damage ablation, the colossus roars with pain. It must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage dealt) or be slain. As long as Victory is inside the colossus's head, it always rolls natural 20 on its saves, and so cannot fail, regardless of the damage dealt. If Victory is away and the colossus fails its save, it is stunned for one round, drops the torch, and falls to its knee. The second time it fails its save, the titan falls. See "Defeating the Colossus," below.

If the heroes don't have anyone capable of dealing 41 points of damage in one hit, spells can do the job, or you can simply have the colossus's damage reduction fall to DR 8/— once Victory is defeated.

Standard Actions: The colossus can take one of these actions each round. The colossus's attacks are treated as epic for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. None of these actions provoke attacks of opportunity.

Attack. The colossus attacks with its axe-headed torch, +32 (4d6+60 plus 10d6 fire), 40 ft. reach. Then, on either a miss or a hit, flames explode from the axe head, and every creature within 10 ft. of the target takes 5d6 fire damage (Reflex DC 28 half). If the torch's power is suppressed, it acts as a massive morningstar, dealing weapon damage (no fire damage and no fiery burst).

Axe Rush. The colossus can combine a bull rush and an attack, though it normally only uses this attack against similarly massive foes. It makes a bull rush check with a +44 modifier, and one attack with the axe against the same foe. If it succeeds its bull rush check, it moves its foe back a minimum of 40 ft.

Firestorm. The colossus sweeps its torch, and casts *firestorm* (caster level 25th). The colossus can only use this ability once every

third round. It cannot use this ability if the torch's power is suppressed.

Grapple. The colossus has 40 ft. reach and a grapple check modifier of +64. Its unarmed strike damage is 2d6+44. If the colossus takes a –20 penalty to its grapple check, it can just hold a foe in its off hand, and make one grapple check each round as a free action to continue to squeeze the creature.

Hurl. If the colossus has grabbed a foe, it can throw it up to 400 ft. A creature with a fly speed can make a Reflex save (DC 28) every 50 ft. to try to stop its motion. It gains a +4 bonus for every maneuverability class above Poor it has. If the colossus hurls a massive object, resolve this as with Vorax-Hûl's hurl debris ability.

Teleport. The colossus can point at a foe within 1400 ft., and that creature is teleported into the colossus's free hand (Will DC 28 negates), where it will be crushed each round thereafter. It cannot use these abilities if the torch's power is suppressed.

Torch. The colossus can raise its torch high, and call down a pillar of fire from the heavens. The fire does not burn, but any creature entering it feels like he is in two places at once. At the start of the colossus's next turn it teleports to a point up to 1400 ft. away. Any creature within 40 ft. is brought along. A Spellcraft check (DC 22) recognizes what the pillar of fire will do, giving the heroes a chance to get into position so they won't be left behind. The colossus can only use this ability once every three rounds.

Move Actions: The colossus's sheer size lets it perform any of the following as move actions.

Grab. The colossus can lift an object roughly the size of a Huge creature with one hand.

Move. The colossus's base speed is 120 ft. It treats buildings less than 20 ft. tall as difficult terrain, and must spend 10 ft. of movement to climb onto a roof higher than that. Note that most buildings will be crushed under the colossus's weight, but the colossus is at no risk of losing its balance unless pushed by a similarly massive foe.

The colossus can move through the spaces of Huge and smaller creatures as if they were unoccupied. Any hostile creatures whose space it moves through takes 2d8+20 damage (Reflex DC 28 negates).

Stomp. The colossus can stamp down repeatedly, affecting all squares below him and within 10 ft. Each Large or smaller creature in the area takes 4d8+40 damage (Reflex DC 28 half).

Swift Actions: The colossus can take one of these actions each round.

Attack of Opportunity. The titan's size makes it hard for it to notice most foes, so an attack of opportunity is an immediate action for the colossus. It seldom takes attacks of opportunity except against flying foes. It has a 40 ft. reach.

Bladeskin. The colossus can cause its skin to shift and sharpen into jagged ridges for one round. Every creature touching the colossus takes 2d8 damage (Reflex DC 28 half).

Buck. The colossus can try to shake off climbers as a swift action. This requires every creature on its body to make a new Balance or Climb check, with a +10 increase to the DC. However, the colossus does not notice most climbers unless they attack it.

Flame Strike. The colossus can cast a quickened *flame strike* (caster level 25th, DC 28).

Swallow. If the colossus has snatched a Medium or smaller foe, it can toss it into its mouth as a swift action. If the creature succeeds a Reflex save (DC 28) it manages to move clear at the last moment, and ends up on the head or shoulders (its choice).

If the creature fails, it falls into the interior of the colossus, where it is is assaulted by semi-corporeal trillith. It takes 4d8+40 damage per round, and is drawn down into the body, descending 10 ft. per round. To escape it must fly or climb its way to an interior surface (Climb DC 20, the distance depends on how far down the creature is), then smash its way out. The colossus' interior has AC –3 and hardness 8, and it takes 40 points of damage to cut one's way free. The hole remains thereafter.

Climbing the Colossus: The colossus's legs are 45 ft. tall (Climb DC 20). The knee is 25 ft. up. Above the waist there are more handholds and places to stand (Climb DC 10). It is 30 ft. from the waist to the shoulders.

At 45 ft., the belt is wide enough to stand on (Balance DC 20). At 65 ft., a sash across the chest adorned with medals provides a larger foothold (Balance DC 10) at the right spot for an attack on the colossus's thrumming heart.

Standing on the colossus's shoulders only requires a Balance check (DC 10) if the titan bucks. A failed check trips the creature, but doesn't cause it to fall off.

Terrain

Summer's Bluff is fairly open, a plateau 100 feet high that makes the battle visible from across city. Buildings surround the square on all sides, most of them richly-crafted five-story manors. The clocktower where the heroes faced Vorax-Hûl is just west of the bluff, and it is a half mile to the nearest gate. A half mile south is the Emelk Way, and a mile northward is the nearest city wall. Beyond the 40 foot high wall are hills that eventually lead up to mountains.

Metamorphosis and Vigilance

The arrival of so many of her brethren has an effect on Metamorphosis, causing her to spontaneously develop much greater power. At first weak, when the colossus animates, she senses a new power inside herself. When the colossus raises its axe for first attack against Vigilance, Metamorphosis screams for her master to get to safety. She stays with the heroes, trying to use her power to help them. The festival has strengthened her, but she is not sure of the extent of her powers.

She communicates with the heroes, linking them as if by *telepathic bond* and allowing them to direct her as to how to use her powers. She can use one of these abilities each round, acting on her own initiative. She targets her abilities as if she were in any location any hero is.

First, she can transform terrain in a 40-foot radius, with a range of 400 feet, raising or lowering it up to 100 feet from where it would normally be, with a great degree of precision. She can create spikes to knock the colossus over onto, or towers with balconies for the heroes to fight from, or cages to trap the colossus, or a pit to drop it into. Everything is made from the same material that is nearby (so stone, in this city), and anything she creates the colossus can easily smash to bits with a single standard action, but she gives the heroes incredible terrain control. Once she stops concentrating on a given area the terrain reverts to normal over the course of a round.

Additionally, she can use any of the following spell-like abilities at will (caster level 15th): *fly*, *gaseous form*, *make whole*, *mass enlarge person*, *mass reduce person*, *polymorph*, *stone shape*, *wood shape*.

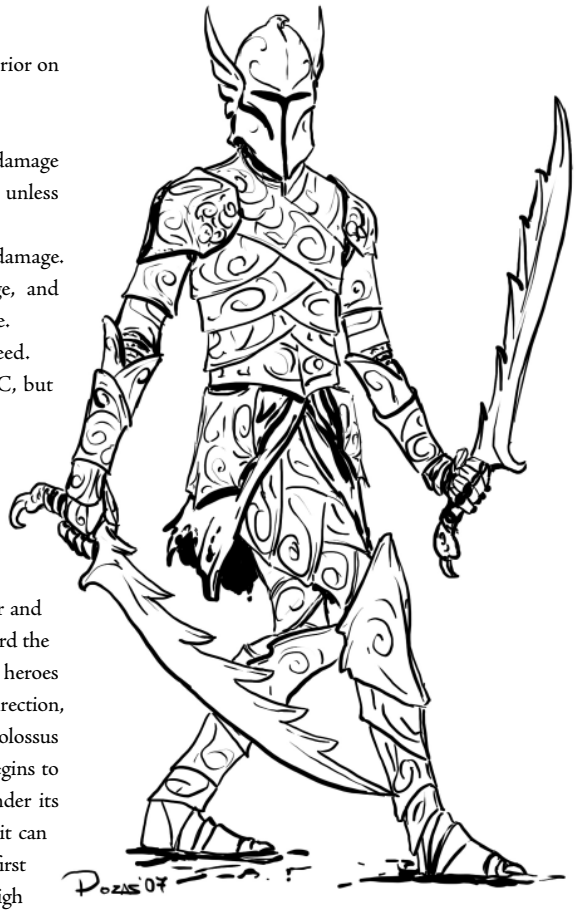
Finally, Metamorphosis has one last power she can use, but only if she dies: she can grant her dying boon to a hero, letting him transform to a size comparable to that of the colossus.

Rather than fully calculating the changes that would occur with a character enlarging, apply the following simple modifications, which capture the

spirit of being a titan, and which put a warrior on roughly even footing with the colossus.

- The hero ignores the first 40 points of damage from any attack, even magical ones, unless they target his mind.
- The hero's melee attacks deal +40 damage. Off-hand weapons deal +20 damage, and two-handed weapons deal +60 damage.
- The hero gains a +90 foot bonus to speed.
- The hero gets a –8 size penalty to AC, but gains a +8 bonus his natural armor.

This effect lasts for up to three hours, but ends soon after the colossus is defeated.



Victory – Art by Claudio Pozas

Tactics

Vigilance flees west, past the clocktower and down streets lined with tall buildings, toward the gate to the next district. (Alternately, the heroes might tell Vigilance to flee in another direction, such as north to the nearest wall, to get the colossus away from the townsfolk.) The colossus begins to pursue, crushing homes and businesses under its massive feet, wanting to grab Vigilance so it can crush him to death, but Metamorphosis's first action is to create a massive wall fifty feet high to block it, and a concealing roof for nearby buildings to hide where Vigilance has fled.

Stymied, the colossus turns its ire upon the heroes, assuming they are to blame.

The colossus prefers to start by using *firestorm*, then grabbing a flying foe out of the air or teleporting an annoying enemy into its grasp. It crushes the creature, then throws it to the ground and stomps on it. Thereafter, if foes cluster close together, the colossus will use a melee attack to strike one and hit its allies with a burst of fire. If its foes are keeping their distance, it tries to grab a hero, then teleport 1400 feet away.

If a foe manages to strike any of its vulnerable points, the colossus will focus its full attention upon that creature. It does not attempt to swallow any creatures until its torch has been damaged at least once, not wanting to let creatures get too close to its head.

When the head is sufficiently damaged, Victory comes out to defend it. His tactics are fairly simple, as he relies on his dancing blades attack every round. He does not speak.

If Desire and any of the other nightmare trillith are still alive at the start of this combat, they follow the same tactics detailed above. If Etinifi is here, he can contribute little to the fight, and flees when the colossus falls.

This battle should be titanic in scope. This city has been at war for months, so if the heroes need a giant ballista, a siege tower, or a huge cache of dragonbombs to explode and tear off the colossus's foot, they should be able to find it, though they'll be chased as they go.

Defeating the Colossus

Whether by wearing it down over long minutes of combat or by delivering a precise killing blow to its heart, the colossus finally is destroyed. The trillith within its body scream and begin to wither, and then a burst of psychic energy flashes outward, stunning all the trillith across the city. The titan's bronze body slumps to the ground and turns inert, just a statue again (albeit a permanent reminder of the epic battle that took place here).

If Victory lives, the psychic burst knocks him out of the air, and he lands near the heroes, helpless, his swords far from his reach. He recovers just in time to look up at the heroes when they come to him. He pulls off his helmet, revealing that he looks just like whoever dealt the killing blow the colossus. Then, if a hero does not execute him, he slumps dead, never having said a word.

With Victory and the colossus defeated, what the remaining trillith do depends on whether Vigilance lives. If he was slain, the surviving trillith flee into the nearby mountains, and eventually will regroup, heading west to aid Leska's army.

If Vigilance still lives, the stag returns to the heroes, concentrates, and telepathically compels all the nightmares in the city to return underground, unable to aid the Ragesian army. The city turns soothingly quiet as the fighting comes to a sudden end.

Using Metamorphosis

It is important not to have Metamorphosis overshadow the heroes' own power, but instead to use her abilities so that every character has a chance to participate against the colossus. She can get heroes into position for attacks, or create uneven terrain in order to knock the colossus over and let the heroes strike at the torch or climb on board. You might also have her intercede to save or protect a dying hero, creating a defensive dome to protect him from a killing blow.

Most importantly, though, you should not bring up that she can make a hero colossal unless it is necessary, or if one of the characters is feeling ineffective (such as a heavily-armored warrior who cannot easily climb or fly into battle). When it is necessary, though, don't hesitate to have the colossus smash Metamorphosis to bits. It is the sort of dramatic development that should lead to a climactic end of a battle, or provide the dramatic turn for the better when all seems lost. Playing this trump too early, however, can lessen the fight's awesomeness.

If Metamorphosis died previously in the adventure, she returns here in spirit, temporarily granting the heroes her great boon.

Conclusion

The heroes have saved Gate Pass. Even if the Ragesians here were not defeated before, after the terrifying display this afternoon they withdraw from the city. If Etinifi got away he will collect the few trillith who were strong enough to remain behind despite Vigilance, the heroes will see him again. However, for now the city is safe. If any of the heroes thinks to open the last wishing urn that was left unopened, he finds it a wish for Spring, and for Victory.

Three adventures remain in the campaign saga, one for each of the major villains of the war. The Resistance has information to share with the heroes, and what information you give them should direct the heroes to resolve these adventures in an order that will leave their favorite foe for last. The three adventures are:

Sleep, Ye Cursed Child

A few of the most powerful trillith intend to destroy the Aquiline Heart and with it the entire region, and even if the heroes stop them now, they will remain a threat unless the source of the nightmare beings — the sleeping dragon Trilla — is destroyed. The heroes delve into the underdark, to the dreamscape where Trilla eternally slumbers, and they must navigate a world of metaphors and end the dragon's torment, or defeat Trilla's jailers to free her from her curse.

Under the Eye of the Tempest

The aeromancer Pilus, with the aid of an Ostalin army and his biomantically crafted mile-long living airship *The Tempest*, aims to destroy any who could threaten him. The airship flies for Seaquen, seat of the Resistance, where it will destroy the city with lightning, earthquakes, and tidal waves. The heroes must open a portal to the plane of fire in order to cripple the leviathan with a column of flame, and then teleport an army on board, fight their way through the living fortress, and slay its master.

The Beating of the Aquiline Heart

The sorcery of Empress Leska feeds upon death, and she knows that the heroes are coming to slay her. She makes her final stand in a barren plain where the source of immortality, the Aquiline Heart, lies in a deep rift, protected by impossible challenges and invincible guardians. Her death is nigh, but her power is now at its greatest, and as their armies clash on the lifeless surface above, the heroes and Leska will decide the victor of this war.

Choosing an Ending

Of these three foes, Leska is most likely to be the main villain, and the order above is how the final adventures will be played to make her the climax. Other climaxes require a slight re-ordering, and each demands the heroes learn certain information. While of course the heroes should be free to follow whichever path they desire, this information should steer them in a given direction.

The Trillith

In this ending, defeating the colossus of Coaltongue is sufficient to fully reactivate the powers of the Torch of the Burning Sky, which will be detailed in adventure ten. These powers will prove necessary for the fight ahead.

The Resistance informs the heroes that Pilus is already almost to Seaquen, and the Grand Imperial Ragesian army is marching into a wasteland, apparently to protect some vital holding of Leska's; they suspect that both Leska and Pilus are being manipulated by the trillith.

Vigilance or Foresight informs the heroes that the way to the land of the trillith is guarded by far too many monsters, and the only way to reach it would be to call upon the primeval elemental spirits, the Worldshaper Worm and the Tidereaver Kraken, who could open a path through the underdark, bypassing the normal defenders of the trillith homeland. These spirits are so powerful that they would only notice mere mortals if one of their kin were imperiled.

To stop all three threats in time, the heroes will need to use the Torch to teleport an army to attack Pilus's airship. Hopefully they can free Pilus from the trillith's control, so he can lend his airship for the attack on Leska's army. The wasteland where the Heart lies cannot be teleported into, so the heroes will then need to teleport their armies to outside the wastes and march in. Once they defeat Leska they can use the Aquiline Heart as a focus to contact the other elemental spirits, and then go and defeat the trillith for good.

Note that in this ending, there is a small chance the heroes might just skip going after Pilus altogether.

Pilus

In this ending, the Resistance tells the heroes that Pilus has just sacked Ragos, capital of the Ragesian Empire, and that he's announced his intention to destroy Seaquen. It will take the power of the Torch to defeat the airship and its armies, but repairing the Torch is only possible by taking a piece of Trilla's soul, so the heroes will need to delve into caves deep underground. As above, however, the way to Trilla's lair is too dangerous, so the heroes will have to defeat Leska and get to the Heart in order to get the aid of the other elemental spirits. Only then will they be able to reach Trilla, repair the Torch, and strike the Tempest from the sky.

Shaaladel

Perhaps the heroes are really fed up with the pompous elf. Pick any of the other routes, and then have Shaaladel betray the heroes at the end. Strains of this ending are worked into the conclusion of adventure twelve.

Leska

The Resistance has just learned that Pilus has allied with Leska (again, he's sort of an opportunist). She has sent him to destroy Seaquen, as well as other key strongholds the Resistance is relying on, though the airship will be ready to fly to Leska's aid should an army march on her position in the Opaline Wastes. It is smartest to take out the two foes when they're separated, but it would take an army to defeat the airship. The heroes must delve into the underdark (which is much less-defended in this version of the narrative), repair the Torch, and defeat Pilus. Then, with all their allies unified together, the heroes will assault Leska and end the war.



Adventure Ten
Sleep, Ye Cursed Child

for 17th- to 20th-Level Characters

by Wolfgang Baur

Additional Material by
Ryan Nock

Cover Art by
Storn Cook

Armies march, the clouds roar with fire, and deep in the shadows of the earth, nightmares craft the world's annihilation.

The trillith, born from the dreams of the imprisoned dragon Trilla, have manipulated events in the war since its beginning, crafting the opportunity to fulfill their great desire: to unmake the bonds of the world, freeing themselves from the shackles of corporeal flesh.

Though nations still wage battle on the surface, if the trillith, hidden far beyond the reach of the mightiest army, are not stopped, all will die to their plan. But in Trilla lies hope, for if the heroes can free her from her cursed sleep, she holds the key to restore the Torch of the Burning Sky, whose power will decide the destiny of the war.

Background

Born of the nightmares of the gold dragon Trilla, the trillith are trapped between the worlds of the intangible and the corporeal. Should their "mother" ever die, these living dreams fear they will perish, so they keep Trilla trapped in an eternal slumber, crafting ever more powerful horrors for her sleeping mind in an attempt to create new trillith strong enough to save them.

Their current leader, however, is no nightmare, but one of Trilla's earliest and most hopeful dreams. The trillith Freedom once represented what Trilla most desired in the early days after she became cursed, but the century since then has seen selfishness and self-delusion gripping this most powerful of the trillith, and now Freedom has become her mother's jailer.

A century ago, Trilla was just a young gold dragon with latent psionic powers, the daughter of Syana, a powerful defender of the elvish people. Occasionally her dreams would manifest as incorporeal creatures, but they would always fade at the dawn.

During the wars of conquest that led to the rise of the Ragesian Empire, the half-orc warlord Drakus Coaltongue captured Trilla and used her as bait to draw out and slay Syana. During her captivity she was tortured by the bone devil Hagenar, and this trauma, combined with witnessing her mother's death, was enough for Trilla's power to go wild and take on a life of its own.

Trilla was rescued, but thereafter whenever she dreamed the creatures born in her sleep endured past the dawn and took on a life of their own. Most of these entities were little more than poltergeists, but the most traumatic or moving of her dreams gave birth to creatures possessing intelligence and will. Fearful of Trilla's sanity and her safety, a group of elves helped her hide in the underdark, beyond the reach of Coaltongue or any other who could try to exploit her power.

Her dreams, however, soon grew so great in number that they formed a society, naming themselves the Trillith, for they viewed Trilla as both their mother and their god. Despairing from being trapped in the sunless depths of the world, and uncomfortable with the often horrific nature of the trillith, Trilla eventually grew to see her children as abominations. Unable to kill her own offspring, she tried to kill herself, but the trillith stopped her. Fearful of what would happen to them if Trilla died, the trillith called upon Freedom, the most powerful of their kind and Trilla's most beloved daughter.

To ensure that her kindred would be free from the fear of death, Freedom agreed to be bound to physical form, and by so doing make freedom unattainable by their mother. Trilla's physical body was trapped in an endless sleep, though her dreams continue to manifest in the real world, and over the years an entire dreamlike world has grown around her, the domain of the trillith. In this world, even the walls and air are fragments of Trilla's dreams and nightmares, brought to life.

Now Freedom directs the affairs of the trillith from within this vast, semi-real dreamworld. Under her command, nightmare architects manipulate Trilla's dreams to provoke particular dreams and craft new trillith with specific powers. No longer is Trilla allowed to have dreams of hope or kindness, for the trillith born from such dreams might oppose Freedom. Now the majority of trillith in the dreamworld are unsubtle terrors fervently loyal to Freedom.

In this way the trillith created the horrific army that recently attacked the city of Gate Pass while it celebrated a belated Festival of Dreams. Conquering the mortal world is only a step toward their ultimate goal, however: to impregnate Trilla's dreams with the nightmare Annihilation, a beast capable of no less an act than destroying the immortal Aquiline Heart.

If they succeed, the balance of elements in the world will be undone, and the world (or at least the nearby region, if you prefer a less global cataclysm) will turn to dreams. They believe that in such a world they would be able to survive even if Trilla died, and for most of the trillith, concern for their mother has long since paled against their own desire to live.

Welcome to the tenth adventure and one of three possible conclusions to the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga.

The dreamborn beings known as the trillith have vexed the heroes throughout the war, many of them serving as allies for Leska, though a few have pledged themselves to saving their creator Trilla, known as the Mother of Dreams, who is kept prisoner by her own children. The trillith seek to sunder the world, turning all reality to dreamstuff, and now to stop them the heroes must enter the vast dreamworld where Trilla is kept captive, face cruelly wrought nightmares, and end the tormented dragon's suffering before the trillith succeed in crafting the world's annihilation.

Introduction

The war is hurtling toward its climax, and the scales may just be ready to tip in the heroes' favor. Having united several nations against the overwhelming power of the Ragesian Empire, the heroes recently won the first great victory for the Resistance, liberating Gate Pass from an occupying army. However, in the wake of their victory they learned of three great threats, any of which has the potential to spell defeat for them and their allies.

A former ally, the wind mage Pilus, has betrayed the heroes and now carries an army aboard his airship to sack the base of the Resistance. Meanwhile, the force behind the whole war, Empress Leska, has bound the world to a fate of war, and if she is not slain the conflict will never end.

This adventure, however, focuses on the threat of the monsters known as the trillith.

Adventure Overview

The heroes must stop the trillith from destroying the Heart, but doing so directly is an unlikely proposition: how, after all, to find and destroy thousands of incorporeal creatures? The best way to stop the trillith is to destroy their mother, the source of their life and energy. Hence, the party must head into the deep caverns of the earth to fight the trillith and the Mother of Dreams.

Getting there won't be easy, as Trilla is kept captive in a living cavern formed of countless minor trillith. Though most of the defenders of this dreamlike realm left in order to attack the surface, there are no doubt thousands of trillith strung out along the tunnels between there and the surface,

Adapting the Adventure

Though intended as a climax for the campaign, *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child* can easily be adapted to an existing campaign, because Trilla's power can justify all manner of unique magic, and because she is a source of monsters.

Perhaps a foe of the heroes has allied with the trillith, and freeing or killing Trilla is the only way to remove these powerful foes. Maybe a villain seeks to use Trilla's dreams to recreate a lost empire or awaken a long dead god. Trilla's ability to create creatures could drive the heroes to seek her in order to conjure an entity capable of harming some otherwise impervious foe, or perhaps the trillith have been attacking a kingdom, and the heroes are called upon to end the threat, unaware of the nature of the "Mother of Dreams."

and teleporting there is impossible because of the shifting, living nature of the dreamworld. In order to reach it the heroes will need to contact ancient elemental spirits of sea and stone to help them bypass most of the defenses.

The heroes must then get past a pair of glass dragon guardians in order to enter the dreamworld, a vast realm of wind, clouds, storms, and sunlight, filled with truly bizarre creatures. The bizarre semi-real world is created by the trillith, and to them it makes perfect sense, but the heroes must learn to navigate it properly if they are to find Trilla.

A tiefling wizard who has crafted a home in the clouds can guide the heroes to the right path, which takes them through a burning sky defended by the trillith Flight, past miles of sky islands, to the night-swept labyrinth that protects Trilla's prison. Along the way they are harried by the undead spirit of the trumpet archon who failed to save Trilla from Coaltongue, and who now seeks to fulfill his task by destroying the abomination she has become.

Ultimately, the heroes must confront Freedom, the most powerful of the trillith, facing her in a twisting, illogical palace with impossible dimensions, whose very walls can fight against the heroes. If the party defeats Freedom and can keep Trilla alive, they gain an incredibly powerful ally. Otherwise, they triumph tragically by ending Trilla's century of restless torment, killing the dragon in her sleep and putting an end to a poor child's nightmares. Either action weakens the hordes of trillith, destroying the dreamworld and ending the threat, though one final trillith will be born, its nature dependent on the heroes' actions in this adventure.

The Torch

Trilla's connection to the events of the war runs deep: her power created the Torch of the Burning Sky. When the warlord Coaltongue used the thigh bone of a slain devil as a makeshift club, caving in the skull of a trumpet archon sent to help free Trilla, celestial, infernal, and psionic energies were absorbed into the thigh bone, which became the Torch of the Burning Sky.

The Torch combined teleportation powers of the devil and the archon with the ability of Trilla to create souls from her dreams; the Torch thus gained a limitless supply of power.

If you are running this as the second- or third-to-last adventure in the saga, the heroes will likely want to use Trilla's essence to repair the Torch, so they can teleport armies in the final conflicts against Pilus and Leska. If this is the final adventure, the heroes will have the chance to destroy the Torch when they reach Trilla.

Act One: The Maw

In this act, the heroes contact powerful elemental spirits to help them reach the entrance of a hidden dreamworld.

Sea and Stone

The heroes begin the adventure at the city of Gate Pass, having destroyed the bronze colossus of Emperor Coaltongue and halted the incursion of an army of trillith. The trillith are scattered, but the strongest ones still roam the surface, and countless weaker ones have returned to their caverns deep below the city. The only solution to breaking their power and preventing them from destroying the Heart is to go after them. (If this will be the final adventure of the series, the heroes instead begin at the resting place of the Aquiline Heart, detailed in adventure twelve, *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart*.)

The heroes have an option of simply fighting their way down through miles of tunnels to the entrance to the dreamworld, though their allies advise against that. Let the heroes use their own plan if they come up with one, but Vigilance (or some other ally connected to the trillith) suggests they contact the elder elemental spirits of the Tidereaver Kraken and the Worldshaper Worm. Somewhat alien to human thought, these elder spirits are difficult to contact, but if reached they will offer a service to the heroes: clearing a path for them down to the Maw that leads to the dreamworld.

Alternate Beginning: Subterranean Approach

If the heroes decide to try a straight approach through the tunnels, Vigilance can give them directions, though *find the path* is more useful. The tunnels beneath the city turn quickly from sewers filled with a few wererats into ancient diggings filled with undead, which the heroes can quickly dispatch. Beyond this are wild tunnels, home to aboleth, duergar, drow, and other cruel lords of the underworld, though a vast swath has been abandoned due to the trilliths' upsurge.

Along the way, the heroes run into dozens of clusters of trillith, though many may simply flee the heroes if given the chance. The heroes might face other dark-dwelling monsters as well. If you're willing to handwave a few encounters, these can represent trillith that are still infused with the power of the Festival of Dreams.

Preparation

Regardless of how the heroes find their way, to reach Trilla in the dreamworld they will need to be able to fly. Even cursory divinations should reveal this, as will speaking with any trillith. The heroes might simply stock up on *scrolls of overland flight*, or go retrieve the sky chariot that was in Castle Korstull (see adventure six, *Tears of the Burning Sky*), or acquire biomantic flying mounts from the Ostalin mercenaries in Seaquen.

The Elder Spirits

These two spirits are masters of the elements of water and earth in this region of the world, and each considers the trillith an itch they cannot scratch. The trillith have been harrassing the spirits for decades, stealing bits of their power to form their bodies, as well as secretly trying to determine how to use them to turn the world to dreams.

If the heroes have just finished adventure twelve, *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart*, they must wound the Aquiline Heart in order to draw the attention of these spirits. Otherwise, the heroes have several options. *Contact other plane* works with no chance of failure or mental decrease, and *sending* can reach them if the heroes learn their true names, information that might be acquired via *legend lore* or *vision*.

Finally, if the heroes go to a location of intense earth and water elemental energy, such as a towering seaside cliff face, they can call the spirits by performing an 8-hour ritual, which requires a Knowledge (arcana or religion) check (DC 35) to properly perform. Up to eight characters can aid the ritual, each granting a +2 bonus if they succeed a DC 10 check.

When the spirits are called, the earth trembles and nearby liquids seem to writhe with tentacles just below the surface. The world becomes suffused with ancient, primal power, and though the spirits are never visible, their presence can be felt deeply within each person. They are powerful like gods (and as easy to offend), and if displeased they will summon floods and earthquakes, but if the heroes can succeed a Diplomacy check (DC 40), the spirits agree to help. This check gets a +20 bonus if the heroes mention that their goal is to destroy the trillith, and a +10 bonus if they sing the Song of Forms, which was originally sung by the Worm.

If the heroes get their help, the spirits give the heroes no more than a day to prepare, and will then deliver them to the entrance of the dreamworld. When the time comes, the world

GAME MASTER'S MAP pg. 674



opens up beneath the heroes into a chasm a hundred feet across, seeming to descend endlessly to a darkness that crashes with the echo of waves. The heroes must fall or fly down until the sky above is just a faint pinprick of light, and then the light vanishes. Suddenly, the heroes find themselves at the entrance to the crystal dragons' lair just before the dreamworld. The tunnel above them closes, and the cavern ceiling looks as if it was never disturbed.

Their trip across scores of miles has taken only an instant, though it seemed an eternity.

Ad-Hoc Experience

If the heroes get the assistance of the elemental spirits, reward them for a CR 15 encounter.

Glass Wyrms' Lair (EL 16)

Two glass wyrms defend the entrance to the dreamworld.

The large cavern ahead of you is filled with ghostly shapes and adorned with large gemstone outcroppings. Pointed crystal shapes and long needlelike stones jut from every wall, lit by a pillar of what looks like sunlight, descending from the chamber's ceiling. Some stones are as green as jade, others are milky white quartz, but they reflect enough light to reveal the vast size of the cave, five hundred feet across.

The cave floor descends past numerous crystal spurs to a broad, still pool that flashes with sunlight. Beyond, in the two far corners of the cavern stand two dragons, both made of crystal or glass. Their scales are semi-transparent, and blade-like horns sweep across the crown of their skulls. The dragons turn their heads toward you with the sound of grating glass. Their eyes glitter in the bluish cavern light.

The glass wyrms are loyal to the trillith, and keep anyone but trillith out of the dreamworld. They are happy to talk for hours with visitors, but they magically bound to their task, and cannot be convinced to let anyone pass by them. They hint very broadly that they are hungry for gemstones, and they happily eat any such gems they are offered. This does not change their attitude toward letting anyone through their cavern, however.

Should the heroes dally more than an hour, eventually trillith will come to investigate, some from the tunnels behind the heroes, and some watching from behind the *wall of force* to the dream plane. They will gather reinforcements and attack as a horde.

The ceiling of the cavern is 20 feet above the ground at the entrance, rising 50 feet high over the pool in the center. If the heroes get close enough and look up, they see an endless blue sky above.

Ythricstal and Nordricstal, glass wyrms (2) (CR 14): hp 177 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

If — or rather when — the heroes decide to fight, the glass wyrms rely on their breath weapon and natural attacks in combat, switching between them as the battle warrants. Powerful foes are always targeted first and subjected to the monster's breath weapon, while obvious melee threats are kept at a distance using their *walls of force*. If they get near the beam of sunlight over the pool or the two daylight spells in the corners, they can use their reflective hide to blind trespassers.

If one of the glass wyrms is slain, the other goes into a towering rage and seeks to avenge the death. In this state, the surviving glass wyrm gains a +2 morale bonus to attack and damage rolls, and can command both mobile *walls of force* at the same time with a single swift action. The glass wyrm seeks to crush party members between the walls.

Walls of Force

Three *walls of force* are present in the room, one cutting the cavern in half to block the heroes' approach, the second blocking off the side passage that is their lair, and the third locked in place on the ceiling to bar the entry to the demi-plane of dreams.

The glass wyrms control these walls through mental commands; each glass wyrm can control one wall at a time. As a swift action a glass wyrm can change the dimensions of the wall, ranging from one to sixteen 10 foot square fields, change its angle and axis, and cause it to move up to 20 feet in any direction. The wall must remain a flat plane, but it adjusts to the contours of the cavern terrain as it moves.

The walls cannot be moved by anything other than the dragons, and if a dragon directs its wall through a hero's space, treat this as a bull rush (+16 modifier). If the bull rush fails, the wall does not move the hero that round, and it stops in place. If the dragons trap a hero between the wall and a solid object, it can crush that hero, dealing 12d12 bludgeoning damage (Fortitude DC 25 half). A crushed hero must make an Escape Artist check (DC 25) is necessary to be able to get free.

Shard Terrain

The caverns are littered with bright shining crystals, false gemstones, and other gleaming dangers. These sections are difficult to pass through safely, and any creature attempting to move through the crystals must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or take 1d12 slashing damage per 5-foot space. A creature forced into the crystal terrain, such as by a moving *wall of force*, takes 2d12 damage.

Glass wyrms are immune to the effects of shard terrain.

Acid Pool

The pool is 5 feet deep and filled with corrosive acid. A creature that touches the acid takes 1d6 damage, and a creature that falls in takes 10d6 damage each round.

Treasure

The dragons have gathered quite a bit of wealth from minions, from the trillith, and from foolish visitors over the years. This includes 22,800 gp worth of gemstones, a strange assortment of ivory, teak, and jade statuettes worth 1,500 gp in total, and a suit of *+4 red dragonscale leather armor*.

Into the Dreamworld

If the dragons are both slain, dominated, or subdued, the force gate to the dreamworld opens. The *walls of force* vanish, and a cold wind enters the cavern.



Trilla – Art by Claudio Pozas

The cloudscape visible through the ceiling suddenly seems less like an illusion and more like a real place: cold wind is blowing from the opening, and wisps of cloudstuff stream into the cavern like tiny ghosts.

Ascending through the gate, you emerge onto the small round plateau, barely fifty feet across. The sky extends as far as you can see in all directions. Huge thunderheads gather in the distance, and flocks of birds fly far below. Islands float in the air in the distance, and atop one sits a baroque castle whose banners fly in a storm. In another direction the colors of sunset create a vivid image, like a titanic painting upon the clouds, depicting fire and war a thousand feet high.

Open sky seems to exist in all directions away from you. Looking down from the edge, you see that the plateau is a narrow, craggy spire, stretching up from an infinitely distant ground, hidden beyond layers and layers of cloud.

The Nature of the Trillith

If you are running the main campaign, it is paramount that the heroes know the nature of Trilla and the trillith. Any information the heroes lack – particularly how the trillith react to the Song of Forms and how they can be killed – can be presented by Vigilance or a captured trillith prisoner. It is not necessary for them to already be aware of how Trilla is trapped, or of the full extent of trillith culture, but if the heroes haven't figured out the rules of the trillith, you should tell them now.

If you are running this as a one-shot or as part of your own campaign, the heroes should start with some clue to what the trillith are, and you can provide more details once they reach the tiefling Sagramar in the dreamworld. You might want to start the adventure off with a bang by moving the Stalking Nightmares encounter from Act Two to the beginning. If you are running the main campaign, however, the heroes just had an epic battle, so you should keep things low key for a bit.

Elder Elemental Spirits

The elder spirits' names are Silesh-el-Mavisha for the Tidereaver, and Thuuga-el-Shembul for the Worldshaper. Jhial-el-Avilona the Stormchaser is dead except for her heart, and Khor-el-Jiese the Flamebringer will not respond to the heroes' entreaties.

Act Two: The Dreamworld

In this act the heroes explore the homeland of the trillith, and seek out the prison of the Mother of Dreams.

Dreamworld Rules

The moment when the party leaves the caverns and enters Trilla's dreamworld should be obvious. Beyond the portal, normal rules of reality are replaced with dream logic. Geography matters less than mindset, and like a normal dream, while the heroes are here they can't be sure whether what they see is real, if they are on an entirely separate plane, or if everything is just an illusion.

This dreamworld is part of the Material Plane, but suffused with essence of the plane of dreams, as well as being formed from the psychic manifestations of countless incorporeal beings. Thus it is extremely variable and difficult to navigate, as it is subject to Trilla's unconscious whims, and to some degree the conscious control of the nightmare sculptors who serve Freedom.

As the game master, you can get away with sudden shifts of scenery, strange encounters, and generally trippy weirdness, but your players will want landmarks and goals of some kind. Pretty much anything you point out as unusual will likely spur the party to investigate.

Dreamworld Magic

Conjuration (creation) magic has its effects greatly increased in duration and detail. For most such magic, durations are doubled, and the creations are much more visually grandiose and intricate. Such spells do not require material components to cast unless their value is greater than 500 gp.

Lore of the Dreamworld
Knowledge (The Planes)

DC	Result
25	Planes of raw chaos don't behave quite like this; you are probably on the demi-plane of dreams. Creatures unlike those in the waking world are common here. Navigating a dream requires as much the proper mindset as it does a map.
30	This realm is not a normal dream plane, but rather a part of the Material Plane heavily infused with dream power. Theoretically, such a place would be closely connected to the dreams of one creature. If that creature were awakened, this world would likely dissolve.

The Trillith

Normally trillith are incorporeal, and must enter and animate a physical object in order to affect corporeal creatures. The nature of the dreamworld allows them to turn corporeal at will, and so all of the trillith the heroes face will be corporeal, in order to more easily battle the heroes. This simplifies combat (always a plus at the complicated high levels of this game), but the trillith do still have an option to return to their incorporeal form, such as if they want to flee. Switching is a full round action.

Navigating the Dreamworld

From where the heroes enter the dreamworld, the sky is fairly empty for miles in all directions, but they can see a castle on a sky island to the "east," and a vast mural in burning clouds to the "west." These directions are fairly arbitrary, and merely relate to where the dreamworld's "sun" rises and sets. Day and night have no preset duration, changing to fit the mood of a region. Sleep is unnecessary here, but the various nightmare trillith that roam the world tend to be more active at night.

Aside from these two landmarks, distant colossal clouds hide the rest of the dreamworld. No matter how far the heroes dive, they never find ground, and no amount of ascending will ever break the tops of the clouds. Traveling in the wrong direction or with the wrong mindset will just leave the heroes lost in vast cloud maze for miles and miles, but if they decide to turn back they find themselves quickly reaching the last landmark they left.

Many mysteries hide through the dreamworld, but normal maps do not lead to them. To find Trilla the heroes must undertake a journey that evokes the proper symbols.

Magic can aid the heroes somewhat. *Teleport* does not work over distance of more than a mile because of the subconscious will of the world, but *find the path* can guide the heroes in the right direction. Since much of the journey requires a certain amount of time to pass, at times a *find the path* spell may simply tell the heroes to wait until the right thing comes to them.

Exploring the Dreamworld

There is no ground here except for the infinite spire and the floating cloud islands. The heroes will likely start by exploring the nearby Thundercloud Keep and Cloud Mural, both of which can help the heroes get on the right track. If they set right out to find Trilla, proceed to The Path of Sorrows, below.

Thundercloud Keep (EL 15)

Ahead in the shifting landscape you see a black castle rising up from dark clouds, a place surrounded by almost constant lightning. A cloud of hundreds of winged skulls flies around the castle, and massive banners marked with infernal runes whip in the wind.

This thundercloud castle is the home of Sagramar Montezor, a tiefling wizard and elementalist who came here long before the war started, and who is studying how to control and shape the matter of the dream plane. He has befriended Flight, one of the greatest trillith, and his entire castle is crafted from the firmament of the dreamworld, though in truth it consists of just a handful of rooms, the rest being just grandiose decoration. If the heroes are smart, they may be able to get valuable information from him in return for magical items, favors, or smooth talk. The wizard is especially fond of human and elven women.

Montezor is wary of the trillith, an intruder in their territory. Though the trillith tolerate him, he suspects curiosity about the source of the dreamworld will invite attack, so he has set up mighty defenses for his keep. If the party approaches the castle within 1000 feet, the vargouille swarm all shriek with a single voice, a sound that echoes for miles and that may paralyze the heroes. If the heroes do not quickly withdraw, the swarm attacks.

Vargouille swarm (CR 15): hp 200, Appendix B.

Terrain

The keep is 300 feet across and has four tiers with many minarets and balconies, though only one door and no windows. The sky for a mile in every direction is filled with a thunderstorm. Every creature in the area other than the swarm has a 1% chance per round on its turn to be struck by thin arcs of lightning, which deals 5d8 electricity damage (Reflex DC 15 half).

Sagramar, Lord of the Castle (EL 17)

Once the heroes get past the swarm (by fighting or hailing the castle's master), they can enter on a balcony near a large domed structure at the top of the castle. Sagramar meets the heroes in the greeting room, just inside the door.

You enter a round chamber filled with orange, green, and blue cloudstuff in drifting pillars. Standing among those pillars is a man with small horns and a large purple robe covered with eyes. At his side are two mechanical men, each shaped like a horned devil and holding a large spiked pole arm.

Sagramar is evil but in a low-key way. He's curious as to why the party are in the dream realm at all, and wonders if he can profit by bartering information, though he tries to learn as much as he can before offering anything about himself or the dreamworld. His "robe of eyes" is a fake, meant to intimidate visitors.

Layout

The castle's interior is rather humble compared to the exterior, consisting of just four rooms on different levels — a greeting room, a laboratory, a dining room, and a bedroom, each 20 feet in radius, connected by a single staircase. Dozens of odd little air elementals wander around the place, varying from mist-formed to lightning-like, but they are harmless unless attacked.

Sagramar Montezor (CR 11): hp 124, Appendix B.

Targus and Tower, shield guardians (2) (CR 8): hp 112 each, MM.

Tactics

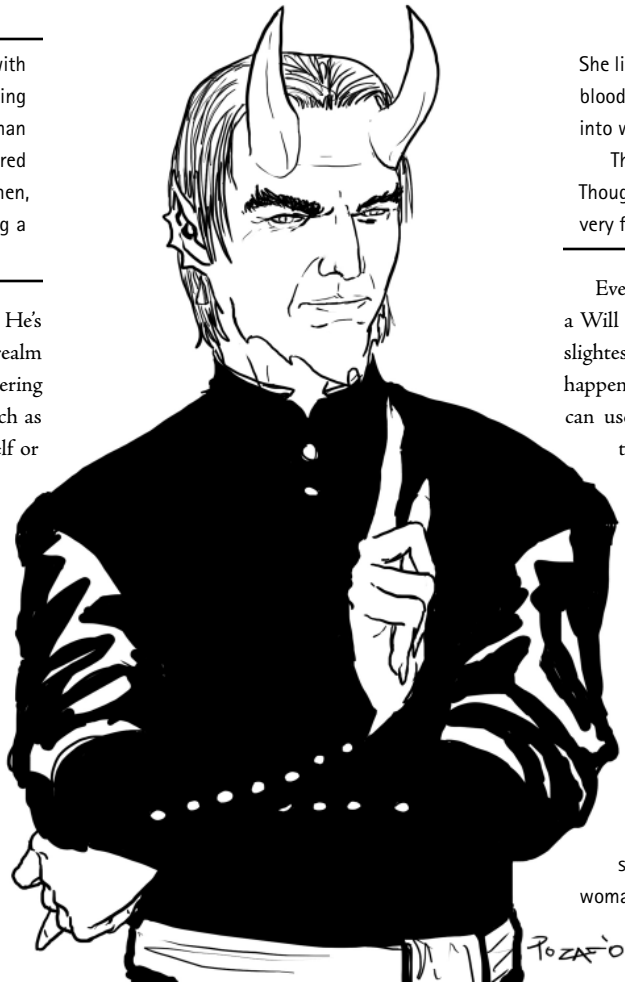
Sagramar has cast a small buff suite, already reflected in his stats. He does not pick a fight; if he must, he starts with a *greater command* to "stop," followed up by various conjuration (creation) spells, such as *black tentacles* and wall spells.

Sagramar's two shield guardians protect him at all times. They have two different stored spells, both used when their master is threatened: Targus carries *confusion* (Will DC 19 negates), and Tower carries *enervation* (ranged touch +12). Both spells have a caster level of 10th.

If both of his shield guardians are slain or if he is reduced below 60 hp, Sagramar flees immediately using *word of recall*, which takes him to his old tower in Ragesia.

Information Brokering

Sagramar doesn't want to fight; he wants to barter knowledge and power. Material wealth is meaningless to him here, where he has learned to craft nearly any object he desires, but if the heroes can provide him with powerful magic items, unique spells, or secret knowledge, he is willing to help them with their mission in return.



Sagramar begins as Indifferent, or Hostile if he is attacked. If after their initial meeting Sagramar has no reason to fear the heroes, he freely offers them insight into the condition of Trilla, to prove to them that he has information worth paying for. He offers them luxurious, delicious food, then brings out a large crystal ball for them to view.

Sagramar concentrates, the crystal ball fills with mist, and then images appear within it. First is of a vast sky, then a castle on the edge of an ocean, then a darkness where barely visible gold scales shift and strain against chains. Then the image becomes more impressionist, like a living painting. Sagramar explains that this is Trilla's current dream. The trillith influence what nightmares she faces, and he suspects they're trying to create something specific.

In the following vision, it is not possible to speak with the woman, who is Trilla's dream self.

The dream image begins with a look up at the moon in a starry sky. Then the view shifts to look down upon a blonde female elf, wearing a golden dress reminiscent of gold dragon wings. She lies on a rocky shore, sleeping and weeping blood that drains onto the ground, then down into water.

Then the water trembles as a terrifying roar. Though it is just a dream, the sound shakes the very foundations of your flesh.

Everyone viewing the crystal ball must make a Will save (DC 36) or take 5d6 damage as the slightest bits of them simply vanish. If someone happens to be singing the Song of Forms, they can use the singer's Perform check in place of their save.

Sagramar asks if they want to see more. If they do, the dream continues.

The view of the dream pulls out quickly as the sleeping woman snaps awake, horror in her eyes. She stands, and you see that she is trapped on the edge of a rocky peninsula. As she looks back to the craggy, mountainous shore, it's clear that something colossal is coming, shaking the pillars of the earth. The sea begins to churn and stars begin to fall out of the skies, and the woman stands paralyzed, trapped.

Again the unseen monster in the distance roars. In the sky, the moon shatters and falls toward the sea. Then the crystal ball cracks, and the vision ends.

As before, the heroes take 5d6 damage from the roar (Will DC 36 negates). Sagramar is unconcerned with the damage to the crystal ball; he can make another one.

On to Business

Sagramar won't get involved directly, because he rightly fears the power of the trillith. Even though thousands of them streamed out through the exit not long ago, he knows danger enough lurks on the path ahead of the heroes.

Sagramar can tell the heroes how to reach the castle where Trilla is imprisoned. He assures them that simply wandering will never get them where they want. He himself had to spend several months gleaning this information from trillith, and playing games with the "thing with scrabbling wings" in order to get it to bring him information.

If the heroes have made him Helpful, such as just by being good company or catering to his lonely desires, he offers the following information freely. If Friendly, he will want some token of

Sagramar ~ Art by Claudio Pozas

value worth roughly 20,000 gp — magic items preferable, though the value of knowledge is negotiable. If only Indifferent, he is worried about angering the trillith, and will not help for less than 100,000 gp.

Directions

To start their journey, Sagramar says they must pass through the Cloud Mural. However, the cloud bank is huge and dangerous, so he suggests a guide, the aforementioned "thing of scrabbling wings." It likes games, he says, and is more powerful than it thinks it is, but if they can beat it at a game, they should be able to get it to take them through the mural.

Beyond they must focus on the sorrow in their hearts. Not one for strong emotions himself, he finds this amusing, but he suggests if they don't have sorrow, they start remembering sad stories they heard and telling them to each other. They will follow the path of sorrows for a day of traveling, and at sunset they will find the Abyssal Pillars, a fog-shrouded maze of towering stones where the nightmare trillith live. They will need to pass this area quickly, for the nightmares come out in the darkness, but if the heroes stay quiet, they can avoid danger.

Once the heroes bypass this dangerous region, they will reach the fog-shrouded ocean of stars from which the pillars rise, seemingly the "bottom" of the dreamworld. A slick of blood stains the water like a trail, and if the heroes follow it they come to the gates of the castle where Trilla is held prisoner.

First, though, they will need to call the creature of scrabbling wings (which is the trillith Flight). Sagramar used to use *sending* once he learned the trillith was too childish to be afraid of him. If the heroes contact Flight, she responds that she wants to see if they can catch her, so they should come to the cloud mural, and she'll take them to her "playground."

Cloud Mural

The sky ahead of the party looks painted and flat, as if it were a page in a book. Miles across, this cloud shifts red with fire, the colors depicting dreamlike images in grand scale, moving slowly. If the party comes within a mile of it, they are close enough to spot smaller images flickering in flashes of lightning, visible only for an instant: avalanches of gold, herds of refugees fleeing in panic, geysers of red and orange fire, battalions of tiny orcs scattered by a huge wind, and so on. These are some of Trilla's dreams related to the Torch of the Burning Sky.

A character who succeeds a DC 25 Spot check catches a glimpse of the Torch being smeared with blood by a familiar hand, and then being blasted with fire. The image, which reveals how the Torch can be destroyed, vanishes a moment later.

The images shift to events of the current war as heroes grow closer and closer to the cloud wall. Some of these events are things the heroes have witnessed, but soon it becomes clear that the images are of things happening now or in the near future. Allies of the heroes face perilous battle while armies clash. You can use this as an opportunity to foreshadow some of the events in the coming adventures if there are any left, or to show how much is riding on the heroes' success here.

Then the entire cloud mural rolls with flame, and from the fire appears a titanic image of whichever foe (and whichever adventure) the heroes will face at the campaign's end — Freedom (this adventure), Pilus (adventure eleven), or Leska (adventure twelve). The figure seems to be aware that it is being watched, and it looks down at the heroes for a moment before the mural returns to normal.

Passing through the Mural

The cloud mural the edge of a bank of burning clouds and intense storms a mile thick. While perhaps the heroes can survive the severe winds (Fort DC 15 each round for Medium or smaller flying creatures, or else be blown back 1d6 × 5 feet), they must also contend with flaming tornados and lightning storms.

The storms shift suddenly, making avoiding them difficult. Every 500 feet, the heroes must make a Reflex save (DC 25, with a +5 bonus for good or perfect maneuverability) to avoid being caught in one of these two hazards.

Flaming Tornado (CR 14)

Those who fail their save are caught by the actual funnel cloud, picked up, and whirled around for 1d10 rounds, taking 6d6 points of damage and 4d6 points of fire damage per round, before being violently expelled. While a tornado's rotational speed can be as great as 300 mph, the funnel itself moves roughly 250 feet per round. If a hero has Indomitability's boon, he takes only half damage as he can resist some of the might of the winds, but even he is endangered by a tornado.

Lightning Storm (CR 14)

Those who fail their save are caught in a long lance of lightning, taking 20d6 points of electricity damage.

Burning Clouds (CR 7)

The clouds are fairly slow moving, so a character flying under his own power can easily avoid them. Should a character enter a burning cloud bank, he takes 4d6 points of fire damage per round (Reflex DC 20 half).

Keep Away (EL 20)

Flight is Trilla's happiest memory, and one of her oldest dreams-given-flesh. Her personality is that of a child who has never grown up, but who is loyal to Trilla. She can meet the heroes on the safe side of the cloud mural and guide them through an opening in the clouds to an area of relative calm, with three stable tornados filling the center. This is her "playground," a sphere roughly 1,000 feet in diameter, the edges of which are bounded by burning clouds. The tornados are each 100 feet in diameter, about 300 feet from the nearest edge of the playground, and each is like one vertex of a triangle. Within 100 feet of the tornados, the wind is Windstorm strength, and in the triangle between them it is Hurricane strength. A flyer who fails a Fortitude save (DC 25) to go into this area gets pulled into one of the tornados

Flight explains the rules, flitting about as she talks like a hyperactive child. First, she'll start on one side of the playground, the heroes on the other. She's going to carry a red ribbon, and if the heroes can get it away from her and get it to the center of the tornados, they win.

Second, anyone who goes beyond the bounds and doesn't get back by the end of the next round is cheating, and can't play anymore.

Third, playing rough is fine. Honestly, Flight doesn't quite grasp how fragile most humanoids are, so her idea of good fun could be lethal.

If the heroes agree, Flight agrees to protect them from the dangers of the storm here and get them to the far side safely. If they refuse, she attacks spitefully for a few rounds, then flies off in a huff.

Flight (CR 20): hp 499, Appendix B.
Living winds (4) (CR 11): hp 156 each, Appendix B.

Going Around?

In a normal world, flying heroes would simply be able to go under, over, or around a stationary firestorm. In a dreamworld, however, going around takes you on the wrong metaphorical path; you end up in a different region of the dreamworld. Short of powerful magic like *wish* and *miracle*, the only way to get to the far side of the mural is to go through.

Tactics

Before she says start, Flight summons her living winds, four invisible creatures who intercept foes, grappling or just smashing to keep them from reaching Flight. The trillith herself starts off cautious, staying near the edge of the playground and just using *quickened telekinesis* to try to throw the heroes into danger.

If after three rounds the heroes aren't making headway, Flight begins strutting and showing off, either flyby attacking heroes, or flying close to the tornados to try to trick them into the funnels. She might turn invisible and taunt them, calling out to them as she flies past and attacks, or grapple a hero and intentionally fly into one of the tornados.

Flight carries the ribbon tightly, holding it with her myriad spare wings. Getting it from her normally requires a disarm check, as if taking a weapon away. No doubt high-level heroes have other tricks to get the ribbon from her.

If Flight loses her ribbon, she aggressively tries to get it back. If she has to, she'll try to kill whoever has it. If she uses her shriek, stunned flyers may fall dangerous distances through the firestorm.

When defeated, she is a good sport, and even if the heroes tricked her somehow, she appreciates their cleverness and will abide her promise. She doesn't want her play buddies to leave, so if she kills or knocks a hero out, she sends one of her living winds to grab him and keep him safe.

If the heroes kill Flight, they will have to navigate the firestorm themselves.

Aftermath

When the heroes are ready to go on, Flight grants them each her boon, giving them the ability to fly on their own as long as they remain on the dreamworld. Then she gathers them around her and streaks through the clouds, pulling the heroes along in a funnel of wind. Diving and weaving through crackling thunderbolts and pillars of flame, it takes her less than a minute to pass through to the far side. Somehow, in the time they spent in the firestorm, night has fallen.

Flight releases the heroes from her whirlwind, and glides down gently to the snowy peak of an impossibly tall mountain, the only landmark visible in a sea of dark clouds. The heroes are welcome to stay in caves on her mountain top, and she suggests they not roam until the sun rises, because of the monsters. Flight thanks them for their fun and says they can call her whenever they want to go back through the firestorm. She then heads off to go play some more.

The Path of Sorrows

The way to the Trilla's prison is hidden beyond miles of clouds. Without physical landmarks, the heroes can either rely on magic (such as *find the path*), or on having the proper emotional mindset.

If the characters can keep a bit of sorrow in their hearts, perhaps by recalling personal loss or relating tragic stories to each other, then whatever direction they travel becomes the right one, as the world itself guides them to Trilla. (There is no game mechanic requirement for this, just flavor.)

A character with the Vow of Healing feat (see Appendix A) can clearly sense the right direction, and any magical healing he performs is maximized until the heroes leave the dreamworld.

To follow the path, starting the morning after they make it through the Cloud Mural they must travel for a day. They can travel constantly, or stop and rest without worry, but at sunset that day, the clouds will part below them, revealing the tops of the Abyssal Pillars. They must descend quickly through the pillars before the nightmare trillith who lurk there become aware of them and attack. At the bottom of the pillars they reach a starry ocean, whose surface is marred by a trail of blood, floating like an oil slick. To find Trilla, the heroes must follow this blood slick to rocky shores, where lies the Prison Palace.

O Dread Trumpets

The trumpet archon Jesepha failed to protect Trilla decades ago, and was slain by Drakus Coaltongue. She was corrupted in death, and now as Trilla's fate becomes tied to the fate of the world, the celestial has returned as a dread wraith sovereign trumpet archon. This heinous undead being is composed in equal parts of sacrilege, cruelty, and hate. She wants nothing more than to see good temples defiled and good servants brought low. Nevertheless, she recognizes her own darkness and believes she can atone by dealing with what Trilla has become.

Jesepha manifests directly into the dreamworld from some hellish plane, bringing with her a host of forsaken souls. Realizing the importance of the heroes, she stalks them the first night after they pass through the Cloud Mural, though she will not confront them directly until they enter the fog-shrouded Abyssal Pillars.

Stalking Nightmares (EL 19)

The first evening the heroes spend after passing through the mural, an ambush party of trillith attack, led by a vampiric fire giant named Vargenga, who came into the dreamworld from the underdark years ago. One round before they strike, however, the cloudy night is pierced by a warbling, eerie sounding of trumpets that call out from miles away.

The ambush has been sent by Freedom, but Jesepha wants to learn the heroes' capabilities. She watches through the eyes of wraith minions she sends to observe, though the wraiths never come closer than 200 feet.

This encounter assumes the heroes are resting in or near the caves at the peak of Flight's mountain, but it can easily occur if the heroes have decided to keep flying through the night, with nightmare trillith bursting out of clouds and rushing the heroes.

Vargenga (CR 17): hp 176, Appendix B.
Advanced nightmare trillith (6) (CR 14): hp 157 each, Appendix B.
Dread wraiths (2) (CR 11): hp 104 each, MM.

Tactics

Vargenga is approaching in gaseous form, pretending to be part of the cloudstuff, when the ambush is foiled. She tries to *dominate* a strong warrior and draw him away from the party for feeding. If that doesn't work, she uses her dire bat form and blood drain against a flying mount or scout. If she has solid ground, she relies on full attacks using Power Attack.

Six trillith accompany her. The first four — Hallucination, Hungry Tree, Kitten Beetle Horde, and Tattooed Demon (named for their appearance) — attack right away, each homing in on a single hero. If things are going too easy for the heroes, two more trillith — Slicer and Stalker — emerge from clouds and join the fray. If the heroes are having a hard time, instead these two trillith come to "rescue" them, slaying their brothers in order to gain the heroes' trust.

The wraiths keep their distance and watch. At the end of the battle, the trumpet wails again in the distance, and the wraiths withdraw, though they attack if followed, rather than lead the heroes back to Jesepha. If destroyed, they fade slowly, lasting long enough to tell the tale of the "golden betrayer" Trilla, who stole their master's power to create her "savage children," and how she was responsible for their master's fall.

Development

Slicer and Stalker are chatty but treacherous allies. They say they want the party to help them against Freedom, so they can release their mother, but their real goal is to lure the heroes into a deadly

ambush in the Abyssal Pillars. They take as few risks as they can until then, and they assume that creatures already understand the dreamworld as well they do themselves. They are remarkably unhelpful, boastful, and prone to dramatics. The party will likely find them troublesome even if they are treated well.

Treasure

The trillith Hallucination carried a single treasure; a jewel of psionic power. This is a *mind seed pearl*, which the trillith hope to use to turn one of the heroes into a double agent.

A *mind seed pearl* **is a** tiny pearly sphere that instantly takes on the skin tone and texture of whatever creature handles it. When hurled by its owner, it speeds toward any visible target within 150 feet to which there is line of effect. If the target fails a DC 22 Will save, the pearl seems to impact and then enter the flesh of the target. Over the period of a week, the subject's personality changes until finally he becomes a version of the pearl's owner, but with eight negative levels. This is the same as the *mind seed* psionic power, and can be halted or undone by magic as if it were possession.

Eight Strange Things I Saw on the Plane of Dreams

The trillith who normally live in this dreamworld have mostly left, gone to the surface, and so the majority of the realm is vast and empty, though there are some manifestations of Trilla's dreams that have taken on a life of their own, most lack the sentience to be considered true trillith. The heroes should come across these encounter while traveling the Path of Sorrows, or you can also use them if the party is unsure how to proceed and simply ambles around the dream plane hoping to find their way.

A Whirling Treasure Hoard (EL 15)

You see a wave of shining gold coins washing down the side of a nearby cloud. It seems to be clinking and chirping like a living thing, and slowly it turns toward you.

Whirling treasure hoard (CR 15): hp 225, Appendix B.

This is a massive combination of countless treasure-dreams Trilla has had. It is used to being petted and fussed over, and will approach the heroes with a vaguely cat-like demeanor to see if they will give it attention. If they try to steal from it or attack it, the hoard grows angry and attacks back, though will flee if it takes 150 damage. Though it seemingly contains the wealth of an entire nation, any treasure taken from it is nonmagical, and vanishes when the heroes leave the dreamworld.

If the heroes treat it well, it may follow them for a while, but will leave at the first sign of trouble.

A Peeled Knight

A humanoid figure wearing heavy armor rides through the clouds. It approaches the heroes and attempts to speak, but its throat has been ripped out. Its full plate armor is punctured in a dozen places, and the creature dies on its feet unless the party heals it swiftly of at least 20 hp damage. If healed, it can speak, and it raves about dangerous dragons.

This is one of Trilla's hunting dreams, and the knight is its view of human prey from old tales her mother told her. The knight is not actually sentient, and eventually leaves and rides off.

An Eldritch Spring

You see ahead of you a clear spring on the side of a floating island, and creatures boil up out of it: frogs, snakes, pseudodragons.

Trilla's connection to magic is very powerful, and she pictures her arcane power as a wellspring of water, or perhaps blood, that boils up from within her. This dream is a vision of that magic, which transmutes everything it touches into a reptilian or amphibian form.

Anyone entering the spring benefits as if from a *heroes' feast*, and gains immunity to fire for 24 hours, but also becomes a scaled creature in that time, temporarily gaining the Reptilian and Fire subtypes. The spring is a safe place to rest, a lush oasis in the sky. Dream creatures occasionally come to drink, but hostile creatures avoid this place.

A Human Swarm

This is a mass of human bodies presented as little more than lemmings, each figure only a foot tall. They move around on a sky island, digging, sowing, reaping, and building a tiny civilization, but ignore the party completely unless touched. If the humans are physically touched, they band together, put on armor and carry spears, and act like several rat swarms. Like most everything else here, they are only dream constructs, not really sentient.

A Dream of Fire

The air around the party begins to burn, turning both hot blue and warmer orange, white, and yellow. The fire causes no damage, but its movement is powerfully soothing. The heroes must make a Will save (DC 24) or feel an intense compulsion to go to sleep at the first safe opportunity. If allowed to sleep at least an hour, when the heroes awaken they are surrounded by incorporeal wisps that resemble images from their dreams.

Chains and Wails (EL 10)

A mass of heavy iron chains, some of the links as much as a two feet long, snakes through the sky crying and wailing and clanking. Any attempt to interfere with it is met with a powerful whip-like lash. The chains are, of course, Trilla's dream of prison and failure. Their wailing sounds oddly metallic and childlike.

Heavy chains, Colossal animated object (CR 10): hp 256, MM.

The chains have a fly speed 200 (clumsy), and cause chains to rise up from solid ground, effectively

Allying with the Trillith

Most nightmare trillith must struggle to survive against their kin, and the lingering vestiges of those who fail to be fittest eventually become part of the material of the dreamworld. Slicer and Stalker are two rather stupid nightmare trillith who have survived this long by pledging themselves to Freedom, acting as spies and enforcers, rooting out those trillith who are sympathetic to releasing their Mother.

Slicer looks like a mass of knives and blades, a perpetual dream of swords and violence. Stalker is a little more subtle, but only just; he's a dream of paranoia, madness, and being watched, his body that of a huge, hunched, transparent dwarf, wielding a pair of bloodied clubs.

Neither is particularly loyal to Freedom, however, and if the heroes treat them very well they might own up to their mission and switch sides for real. Currently, though, Stalker is trying to convince Stalker that they should let both sides kill each other, then become the new ones in charge.

a spell-like ability to use *quickened entangle* at will (caster level 20th).

An Enormous Ox

Another food dream of Trilla's, this is a living ox about the size of a mountain, and half-eaten but still alive. Its blood forms rivers and its eyes always follow the party while they remain within sight of it. If the heroes questions it with a *speak with animals* spell, it can tell them the trillith occasionally assume physical form to experience the joy of feeding on the ox-mountain's flesh.

The ox is slow and ponderous, most of its body hidden in clouds, and it can offer little help to the heroes. If the heroes rest here, they will likely fall under attack from lesser trillith.

Sky Worms (EL 15)

One region seems filled with huge golden worms, which fly from the clouds, circling the heroes as if excited but hesitant to approach. Finally one does, charging at the heroes and trying to grapple the character with the highest Charisma.

Golden worm (CR 15): hp 351, Appendix B.

The worm is nearly mindless, and only wants to roll around with and crush its chosen target.



Abyssal Pillars

If the heroes have traveled at least a day along the Path of Sorrows, at sunset the clouds below them part to reveal the top of a vast labyrinth of stone pillars, appearing to stretch up from infinity. The heroes can hear faintly the sound of ocean waves far below. If they do not descend and let the sun set, the clouds eventually roll in and conceal the pillars until next sunset.

Terrain

The pillars are each between 20 and 100 feet across, solid shafts of bleak stone riddled with caves where thousands of trillith hide, ranging from meek cat-sized oddities and nearly-human lesser trillith to the most fearsome of the nightmare trillith. During daylight, the nightmare trillith prefer to stay out in their caves, though if they become aware of trespassers, they will emerge and attack. Their caves are typically 15 feet deep, bare of decorations. The other, weaker trillith have huge variety in their homes, and some are actually sympathetic to Trilla, but they dare not act out of line.

Gaps between pillars average 40 feet, and the thin fog here limits visibility to 50 feet. The pillars are exceedingly tall, and should take the slowest flyer among the heroes long enough to descend through that the sun will be finally setting when they reach the ocean at the bottom. The whole region is miles across, but it obeys dream logic, so any attempts to go around eventually just loop back to the other side; only once the ocean is within sight does the labyrinth acquire defined edges.

Waking the Horde (EL 20)

If the heroes remain quiet, they can pass without attracting attention. The nightmare trillith are unwary, so the heroes simply must be able to succeed DC 0 Move Silently checks, though their enemies might spoil their stealth.

However, once the heroes are within a few minutes of the bottom, Jesepha appears 100 feet below them and blasts her trumpet, striking as many heroes as possible and shattering a narrow pillar so that it topples and crashes into another pillar, cracking and raining down upon the heroes. That pillar then cracks and tilts into another, creating a slow cascade like titanic dominos being knocked over. Meanwhile, the trillith swarm out of their holes to attack.

If the heroes are traveling with Slicer and Stalker, instead they begin making a lot of noise, then flee to let the horde attack the heroes. A few rounds after the battle begins, Jesepha arrives to complicate things.

Jesepha, dread wraith sovereign trumpet archon (CR 17): hp 199, Appendix B.
Dread wraiths (4) (CR 11): hp 104 each, MM.
Wraiths (16) (CR 5): hp 32 each, MM.
Advanced nightmare trillith (12) (CR 14): hp 157 each, Appendix B.

Note that while there are thousands of trillith in the Abyssal Pillars, most of the truly dangerous ones left for the surface, and only enough stayed behind to help Freedom keep in line any dissenters. If the heroes manage to defeat more than twelve of these mightiest creatures, the rest keep their distance and let the heroes pass.

Different Motivations

Jesepha's goal should be the opposite of the heroes'. If they seek to free Trilla, Jesepha wants to kill her and sees no value in releasing the cursed dragon. If instead the heroes want to kill Trilla, change Jesepha's motivation so that she wants to free Trilla. This way the archon will be opposed to the heroes in either case.

Additionally, on the topic of the Torch, if the heroes are coming to destroy the Torch, Jesepha wants to claim it for herself, believing that once she has atoned, she will use its power to purify the world. If the heroes are coming to restore the full power of the Torch, instead Jesepha wants to destroy that which she helped create.

It might still be possible to form a temporary alliance with the fallen archon, since she and the heroes both need to reach the prison of Trilla and defeat her guardians.

Jesepha – Art by Claudio Pozas

Hazard

Once a pillar is cracked, rocky debris begins to fill the air from the devastating impacts, growing slowly more hazardous as more pillar smash together. Each round every creature in the combat takes 1 point of damage (Reflex negates, DC 10 + 1 per round after the first, max DC 20).

Tactics

The advanced nightmare trillith approach from different directions, four a round, trying to pincer the heroes. Each of these is accompanied by a small mob of lesser trillith, whirling around them in a circle 40 feet wide. These are not treated as separate creatures, but instead grant an additional ability to the nightmare trillith, as detailed in Appendix B.

Meanwhile Jesepha sends in her dread wraiths, then alternates casting *mass inflict* spells (preferring to catch both wraith allies and mortal enemies) and blasting the heroes with her trumpet. She keeps the lesser wraiths around her as a sort of shield against turning and charging enemies. Also, if a nightmare trillith looks close to death, she sends a wraith to try to kill it and turn it into a new wraith, which joins the battle within a few rounds.

The nightmare trillith tend to approach from above, trying to drive the heroes downward, while Jesepha stays below the heroes, trying to keep them trapped, but if the heroes head for her, she descends to stay out range.

Jesepha only uses her paralyzing awe trumpet blast if she is left alone or if she has few allies remaining; if she is reduced below 60 hp, she glides into a solid object and casts *harm* on herself. If a hero takes cover in a cave, she uses *wall of stone* to trap him.

Aftermath

Killing Jesepha is a major achievement for Good and Law. As she dies, her features return to those of an angel, though they are wrinkled, worn, and wasted. Jesepha's wings, though, shine like the sun for a moment, scaring away any remaining wraiths and nightmare trillith. The heroes have a few minutes to regroup before their enemies risk another attack.

Only a few minutes later, the heroes reach the ocean, where soft waves lap against the base of the pillars. They easily spot a trail of blood in the water, and can follow it out of the labyrinth. Night has fallen by now, and the rippling waters reflect stars and the moon above, lighting their way to a distant fog-shrouded shore..

Act Three: Architects of Annihilation

In this act the heroes confront Freedom at the prison palace where Trilla is held.

The Prison Palace

At the end of the slick of blood through the ocean is a rocky island about twenty feet across. As they near it, thick fog rolls in, but the sky remains clear, leaving the heroes isolated, as if this island is the only solid thing left in the world.

The air begins to rustle as if filled with leaves, light as if from a window appears in the fog, and a massive creaking of wood and grinding of metal links comes from the same direction.

All around you doors, windows, and other portals appear and snap apart, shattering and vanishing in the fog. Then the grinding of metal grows louder, and you see a massive wall of wood and iron leaning slowly outward, and suddenly you are in the shadow of an enormous drawbridge that is falling toward you, the size of a cliff.

The drawbridge threatens to crush any heroes who chose to land on the island, but if they do not move out of its way, its fall stops just short of them, and will not crush them. If no one is in the way, the bridge crashes to the island. The bridge stretches out to the entrance of a palace, its exterior barely visible in the fog, its shape surreal and baroque. Scattered windows light it up from within, but nothing can be seen through them. And all around it in the fog, shapes move, countless trillith flying around the castle as defense. None of them attack, however, and the path to the drawbridge and into the castle is unobstructed.

Before the heroes try to fight their way in, Freedom sends a telepathic message:

"I now invite you into my palace to parlay. Though you are not the Mother's children, you have come for her, and we should not rush to battle without knowing each others' intentions. Please, come in."

Palace Exterior

The prison palace rises along a jagged slope of rocky cliffs, its walls adorned by thousands of sculptures of creatures with different shapes. Each tier of the palace is about 100 feet high, though like so much in this place, the appearance has only the slightest correlation with the contents.

The air around the palace is swarmed by thousands of incorporeal trillith, normally tasked with defending the source of all their life. Now, however, Freedom has ordered them to allow the heroes to enter. This is a risky move, because once the heroes are inside, the defenders cannot follow.

The nature of the palace, like the Path of Sorrows, only allows creatures who have undergone the proper journey to enter. The heroes have no trouble, but summoned or called creatures find it impossible to approach closer than the rocky island. Likewise, Jesepha could enter, though her wraith minions could not. Neither can the nightmare trillith; they are restricted to protecting the exterior. Creatures can be summoned and called into the palace, but they cannot cross the threshold if they're already on this plane.

Palace Interior

Freedom has come to need variety in her home, and the nine different areas of the interior each carry private significance to her, reflecting her various musings on being imprisoned in physical form. This ties directly into reaching Trilla, because it is not possible to enter the central chamber of the palace without first visiting the other eight.

In areas 2, 4, 7, and 9 there are curtains on the walls that face the central chamber, area 10, the prison. These deep red curtains (100 feet long, 20 feet high) are composed of many overlapping sections, so they can be walked through. They appear to be lit from within by something brilliant and sun-like, but a creature who opens the curtain sees the room on the opposite side of the building, and a creature walking through emerges in that room. In this way, area 2 connects to area 9, and area 4 connects to area 7.

Each 10-foot section of the curtain has a faintly visible black ring sewn into it, with eight triangular black notches set into it, and one small circle of gold in the center. When the heroes first enter the palace, they notice that on every section of the curtain, one of the eight notches turns from black to gold. This reflects the one room the heroes have been in so far. Whenever they enter another room, another notch turns gold, appearing on every single one of these curtains.

Once all eight of the rooms have been visited and all eight notches are gold, a creature passing through one of the curtains arrives in the central chamber. Until then, nothing short of a *wish* or *miracle* can get a creature into the prison, and efforts such as *passwall* create a portal that simply

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leads to the room on the other side of the palace.

Because the heroes came as a group, it isn't necessary to track which rooms they've been to individually. Each character contributes to the whole task, though unintelligent creatures such as animal companions, and creatures summoned or called after the heroes entered do not count.

Mundane Features

All doors throughout the palace are locked (Open Lock DC 30) unless otherwise noted. The doors are strong wood. Ceilings are 60 feet high unless otherwise noted.

Defenses

In most rooms the nightmare architects have prepared some sort of defender they can create or animate. These monsters are not automatically there; the nightmare architects must spend a standard action to animate a given room. The natural attacks of all of these defending creatures are treated as magical weapons for the purpose of striking incorporeal creatures and bypassing DR. See area 10, below, for more details.

1. Drawbridge

This wood and iron bridge leads to a massive portcullis that rises as the heroes approach.

2. Greeting Chamber (EL 15)

Two fountains shaped like twelve-headed hydras are surrounded by stone benches that face a raised stage along the north wall. Stairways lead up either side of the stage to a balcony 30 feet high. A thick red curtain lines the back wall, illuminated from the far side. Three doorways lead into the rest of the palace.

The nightmare architects can animate the two fountains.

Twelve-headed cryohydra (CR 13): hp 129, MM.

3. Dining Hall (EL 15)

Three tables and their chairs surround a firepit. Three windows look out at the foggy ocean. Stairs lead up 30 feet to a balcony. Tapestries on the wall show beautiful, reveling people of every race.

The nightmare architects can cause the figures in the tapestries to step out and attack. The tapestry

Scaling the Climax

Depending on when this adventure takes place in the order of the campaign's final three, the heroes could be from 17th to 20th level, or even higher. Balancing encounters at this high level is difficult in any case, especially with the wide variety of character options and party builds, so we have made the finale contain modular components that can be removed if the climax is proving too challenging.

In particular, you can reduce the number or power of the defenders the nightmare architects conjure throughout the palace, or perhaps simply reduce their hit points to reflect that they aren't real.

Additionally, if the group is only 17th level, if they delve into Trilla's dreams they can free her before they have to face Annihilation, escaping the dream just before the beast would attack. But if they are 20th level, the final encounter should be with Annihilation. Even if the heroes simply kill Trilla, her death gives birth to the trillith Annihilation, which could destroy the world if not defeated.

figures have the same stats as fire giants, though they look like towering humans, elves, dwarves, gnomes, and orcs.

Fire giants (5) (CR 10): hp 142 each, MM.

4. Kitchen (EL 10)

This chamber is divided into two levels. Tables for preparation are on the lower floor, as well as a window looking out at the cliffs. Stairs ascend 30 feet to another balcony lined with a curtain. A small store room on the upper floor is filled with food and mundane supplies.

The nightmare architects can call forth a cooking staff in elaborate costumes, who appear out of thin air and try to steal items from the heroes, then vanish and carry them up to the supply room. Though not a threat, the frenetic crowd of thieves can distract the heroes.

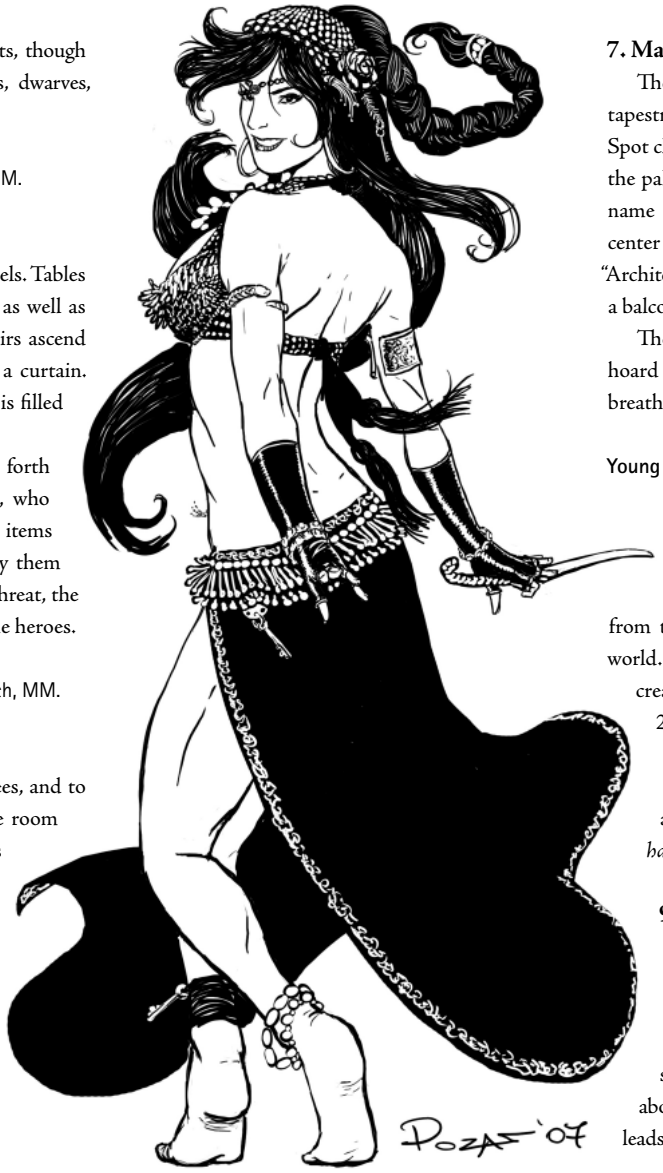
Ethereal filchers (10) (CR 3): hp 22 each, MM.

5. Garden (EL 11)

A dirt walkway leads past a few trees, and to the door. An iron fence surrounds the room instead of a normal wall, but there is still a ceiling, though it is only 30 feet high. The view is beautiful and desolate, and the sky is filled with watching trillith.

The nightmare architects can create a *wall of thorns* here, sealing off the doors. Then they animate three trees.

Treants (3) (CR 8): hp 66 each, MM.



6. Freedom's Hall (EL 15)

Freedom tests herself in this hall, using it as a gymnasium and place to seek thrills. The walls, floor, and ceiling are lined with patches of jagged spikes, and the light from the firepit fills the room with shadows. Windows look out to the ocean, and a staircase leads up to area 7. The northwest wall is staggered, like a staircase on its side. Areas with spikes count as difficult terrain.

This room has variable gravity, controlled by the nightmare architects. As a standard action, a nightmare architect can cause "down" to be in the direction of any wall (or floor or ceiling) it chooses, though this isn't likely to matter for flying heroes. When the heroes enter, they have already set gravity to face west, so that a creature entering the room will fall onto spikes.

100 ft. Spiked Gravity Trap (CR 10): DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 100 ft. deep (10d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +20 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 2d8+10 each); Search DC 25.

It is possible to climb the spikes (Climb DC 10) in order to reach a desired door.

Additionally, the nightmare architects can animate the walls, floor, and ceiling, which reach out with their spikes to impale the heroes. These creatures are actually the size of an entire wall (60 × 100 feet), or the floor or ceiling (100 × 100 feet), so they can target a wider area, but they are immobile.

Colossal animated objects (6) (CR 10): hp 256 each, MM.

7. Map Room (EL 13)

The walls here are covered with hanging tapestries depicting dozens of treasure maps. A Spot check (DC 25) notices that one map depicts the palace, showing the location and labeling the name of every creature in it, including, in the center chamber, Trilla and four beings named "Architect of Nightmares." Stairs lead up 30 feet to a balcony with a curtain.

The nightmare architects summon a treasure hoard that animates into the form of a dragon. Its breath weapon is molten gold.

Young adult red dragon (CR 13): hp 218, MM.

8. Library

The shelves here are lined with crystal orbs holding dreams captured from thousands of different people around the world. Touching an orb and concentrating lets a creature experience the dream. Stairs lead up 20 feet to a second floor, then 10 feet more to the third floor.

If a crystal is shattered, the room's appearance is changed wildly as if by *hallucinatory terrain* (Will DC 20 disbelieve).

9. The Emptiness

All that is in this room is another curtain. Those paying close attention can realize that this room defies traditional geometry, since the room to the east is 60 feet above sea level, and the room to the west is 90 feet above sea level, while the curtain to the south leads to a balcony 30 feet above sea level.

10. Prison (EL 17)

This chamber is 100 feet high and brilliantly lit by a giant *prismatic sphere*, 30 feet in radius, floating in the air, within which sleeps a gold dragon, Trilla. There are no traditional entrances to this chamber, but from inside creatures can see curtains along the walls (30 feet up on the north and south walls, 60 feet up on the east and west walls, each curtain 20 feet tall). Moving through a curtain leads to the room on the far side.

Carved into the floor beneath the *prismatic sphere* is a ring 30 feet in radius, with three keyholes set equally around it (Open Locks DC 40). Each keyhole is surrounded by ornate bloodstone relief carvings, making them stand out at even a casual glance. Affecting the locks with magic requires a caster level check (DC 32).

In the center of the ring is a crystal 10 feet wide, set into the floor, with another keyhole beside

Freedom – Art by Claudio Pozas

it. This keyhole has no mechanical pieces and so cannot be opened except by retrieving the white key from within Trilla's dream. A creature looking into the crystal in the center of the circle sees faint images of Trilla's nightmares, and realizes this is a portal to her dreams, sealed shut by the crystal.

The crystal cannot be broken, but if the three outer locks are opened, a creature touching the images is pulled into Trilla's nightmares. Incorporeal creatures, including those slain by Freedom's Turn to Dust ability, can pass through the seal even if the locks are unopened.

See "The Mother of Dreams," below, if the heroes enter her nightmare.

The Nightmare Architects

In the four bottom corners of the room, four looming statues of hooded draconic humanoids emerge from the stone wall, eerily life-like with black mineral veins. These are the nightmare architects, powerfully psionic trillith who prey upon Trilla's mind and control her dreams. Long ago her power turned them to stone, and now they help Freedom find a way to annihilate the world so they will be freed from their bodies.

The architects are not combatants in the traditional sense, and if their statues are destroyed they die, but they have powers to defend themselves and aid Freedom. The abbreviated stat block in the sidebar summarizes the nightmare architects' important attributes. They are wholly aware of the presence and actions of every creature inside the palace, and can communicate telepathically with Freedom, and with each other.

Should the *prismatic sphere* protecting Trilla be destroyed, all four architects working together can recreate it as a full-round action.

Freedom

Though the heroes could try to fight their way through the horde of trillith outside, or teleport into the palace interior, the nightmare architects in the prison (area 10) are aware of the palace grounds and alert Freedom of the heroes' movements. Freedom prefers to talk first, but if enemies invade her home and try to reach Trilla, she will attack.

Inside the palace, they see no one at first, just two elaborate hydra-shaped fountains spraying water from their twelve heads. Then Freedom steps out through a curtain on the balcony on the north wall. She resembles no nightmare, but rather a dancer. A Spot check (DC 20) notices that she has three red keys on her person — tied in her hair, hanging from her belt, and dangling from her ankle.

She gestures for the heroes to have a seat by one of the fountains, and she gracefully descends the staircase to meet them, though she remains standing, always ready to move.

Negotiating

Freedom expects a fight, and suspects she'll win, but she has lost many of her people to the heroes, and so she wants to bring the heroes to her, instead of forcing them to fight through her defenders. Also, this way, if a fight does occur and she is winning, the heroes will find it harder to escape, since her people will cut off their escape. First, though, she wants to offer them a way to save themselves.

"I am Freedom, and I am the protector and leader of my kin.

"You are in our realm, this enforced home of my brothers and sisters. You've come to stop us, because you believe that what we are doing is going to kill you and your kin. In fact, you're very brave to have come this far. But my people are imperiled too. We aren't acting out of maliciousness. We want to save ourselves, and save your people too.

"Whenever our Mother was awake, we were weak. It stretched us between our true nature and this, this flesh your kind thinks so important. You don't understand that flesh is just a prison for the soul.

"Even though my kind only have flesh when they need it, we still have to live in this corporeal world. We can see the prison for what it is, and we want to break free. And as you come to us to stop us, we are on the verge of success. In a matter of days, we will have the power to destroy this world and turn it into something unrestricted by the bonds of matter.

"All you are now is a cocoon of dust holding a soul. In fact, your religions all believe in an afterlife, where the soul is free from flesh, though even then your souls are under the control of gods, archdevils, and other powers of the universe. We want to free all of us, to live without limits in a living heaven where we alone are the crafters of our existence.

"My people are afraid. Our connection to our mother means that when we die, there's no afterlife for us. Our soul is our flesh. We know that one day our Mother will die, as all living things have to. When she does, we will be destroyed. The only way I can ensure my people's survival is to let our Mother live as a being of soul alone. That way she will never die, and finally we, and she, will be freed.

"Now, I admit, it was short-sighted of me not to come to the leaders of your people earlier. I should have seen if some would listen, and gotten your help, but we find it hard to trust beings of flesh. But you're here now, and surely you are worthy to join us. So I offer you this: come to our side. We will ensure that you safely transition to your new existence, where you will never want for anything. You will have all your minds' desire."

Nightmare Architect **CR 13**

Init –5

AC 4 (–5 Dex, –1 size)

hp 60; **hardness** 8

Fort —, **Ref** —, **Will** +15

Abilities Str —, Dex —, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 21

Spell-Like Abilities (CL17th; save DC 15 + spell level)

At will—*major image**, *stone shape**

1/day—*greater dispel magic**, *hallucinatory terrain*, *insanity*, *maze*, *wall of stone**, *weird*

* The nightmare architects can use *greater dispel magic*, *major image*, *stone shape*, and *wall of stone* anywhere in the palace, regardless of range and line of sight or effect.

Teleportation Ward (Su): Any creature coming within 10 ft. of one of the statues is teleported into a palace chamber of the architect's choice (Will DC 24 negates).

Wield Nightmares (Sp): As a standard action, a nightmare architect can animate one room's worth of defenders, as detailed in the room descriptions above. By concentrating, it can control the actions of all that room's defenders. If it ceases concentration, the defenders vanish or return to their inert forms. A given room's defenders can only be animated once per hour.

These defenders can be dispelled (caster level 17th), causing them to become inert or vanish.

What Freedom does not express is that she knows some of her people could survive even if Trilla died. Trillith could join with the souls of other intelligent creatures, as Foresight and Justice did (see adventures one and nine), or they could create bodies for themselves. Freedom herself will be safe if Trilla dies, but she loathes the corporeal world, and more than

anything — even more than protecting her people — she longs to be rid of her body and return to the truly free being she was before.

Also, she certainly does not volunteer that a large majority of the corporeal races will simply die horrible deaths when the trillith destroy the world, and only those with the strongest souls will survive. If asked, though, she admits to, but says it's certainly worth the sacrifice, since they all would die in the long run anyway.

Damning the World

If the heroes agree to Freedom's offer, she is sincere. She will take them one at a time into the central chamber, where the nightmare architects can slowly transform each of them into something much like a trillith, incorporeal, but capable of assuming physical form if desired. Sadly, this process turns the character into an NPC and, if all the heroes undergo the transformation, this choice ends the campaign in abject failure.

Other Options

The heroes might propose other solutions to avoid a conflict, but Freedom is not keen on bargaining. She will never agree to release Trilla or let them kill her, nor does she want to simply move to another plane in order to destroy that world instead. She sees such suggestions as proof that the heroes don't understand the prison they live in, and thus they must be destroyed.

The heroes might be able to negotiate a reprieve, convincing Freedom to delay her people's plans for a year (Diplomacy DC 35), to give them time to settle unfinished business and bring back some friends so they can also be turned into spirit beings. Freedom is not keen on this, but if the heroes are exceedingly charming and convincing she accepts that corporeal beings have needs that she can put up with. If the heroes are amazingly convincing (Diplomacy DC 50), perhaps by saying that a fight now could destroy the trillith, they could convince her to wait until the heroes are all dead, to let the trillith withdraw from the world for a while until they are believed only a myth. Then there will be no one to stop them when they strike again.

Should the heroes and Freedom agree to a reprieve, she orders the nightmare architects to end their current activities, and give their Mother peaceful dreams for a while, then lets the heroes leave.

Freedom will not call off her plans for good, however, and if the heroes cannot accept this, she attacks.

The Battle (EL 22)

Should negotiations fail, Freedom is ever prepared for attack. Her foremost goal in this battle is keeping the heroes away from the central chamber, though she is well aware of the threat they pose, so she tries to minimize the risk to herself.

Freedom (CR 20): hp 345, Appendix B.

Tactics

Freedom can take an extra standard action every turn, so her first action is to activate her Turn to Dust and Aura of Freedom abilities, then Spring Attack past the heroes to release their armor and shields. She strikes one of the heroes, then heads for the nearest door, trying to get to the next room. She cannot fail to Tumble at full speed, even through enemies' spaces.

Three nightmare architects then target the heroes with *greater dispel magic*, preferring flying heroes, and the fourth animates the fountain statues as cryohydras. Thereafter the nightmare architects try to cut the heroes off from each other by readying *stone shape* to shut doors, or to animate monsters at just the right time.

Freedom always stays mobile, trying to keep her enemies from staying together and supporting each other, but she never goes farther than one room beyond the heroes, and if the heroes do not pursue she throws her dagger from a distance, staying out of melee until a minute has passed and she can use her Turn to Dust ability again. If the heroes do pursue, she keeps falling back to more rooms, hoping to string them out as much as possible.

If she is reduced below 150 hp, Freedom flees through a curtain to the central chamber to heal, relying on the nightmare architects to create illusions of her to keep the heroes distracted. She can enter the central chamber freely, even if the heroes have not yet been to the necessary eight chambers to let the curtain lead to the prison.

If she thinks the heroes have figured out how to reach the central chamber, she orders the nightmare architects to try to seal rooms with *stone shape*. If they breach the central chamber, she turns incorporeal and rushes to face them, and will stay and fight to the end.

Development

After the battle begins, the trillith outside the palace fly in front of the entrance and begin to swarm around the building, visible through the windows. These are effectively a hundred advanced nightmare trillith, with the abilities of those from the abyssal pillars. Fleeing will prove difficult.

Aftermath

If Freedom is slain, her body falls limp, but her spirit lingers briefly, visible like a ghost. She relishes in being freed from her flesh for a moment, but then gasps in horror as her spirit burns away. A round later, all that is left of her is an empty corpse.

When all the nightmare architects are destroyed, the *prismatic sphere* fades away, one layer per round until it is gone, leaving Trilla suspended in the air, her eyes shut and her body twitching in a nightmare. Trilla is a Huge adult gold dragon (see MM).

When all their immediate enemies are defeated, the heroes are free to deal with Trilla as they choose, though the palace begins to rumble slightly, growing more violent over the course of an hour. After an hour, Trilla's dream of Annihilation manifests in the physical world. To complete their mission, the heroes will need to either free Trilla or kill her, preferably before they are annihilated, as detailed below in "The Mother of Dreams."

Alternately, the heroes might try to deal with Trilla while the fight is still waging. Heroes with the appropriate spells could take out the *prismatic sphere* and kill Trilla in her sleep, or rogues might steal the keys away from Freedom (Sleight of Hand DC 20 for each key). These keys each unlock one of the three bindings that seal Trilla's dreams, detailed in area 10, above. The final key needed to awaken Trilla is hidden in her nightmare, but if a hero could get into her dream and retrieve the key, he could release Trilla, and she could aid in the defeat of her child Freedom.

The Mother of Dreams

If a creature enters Trilla's nightmare through the prison portal, it is pulled bodily into a ravaged, dark wasteland. Empowered by the magic of the nightmare architects, this dreamscape has become wholly real like a demi-plane, and if a creature dies here, it will not simply wake up; it dies. Only Trilla is somewhat safe. Her dream self has died thousands of times now, but she always awakens in another nightmare.

You see a creature soaring through the night, shining brighter than gold, though the sky is black all around. The glowing dragon is singing or muttering as it flies, and fragments of it peel away from its body, like feathers or falling ashes, glowing.

You realize that you are standing in the bottom of a ravine, sharply curving walls of weathered, jagged stones rising up on either side of you like teeth. From around a bend you

hear the sound of running footsteps, desperate breath, and then she runs into view, a woman in a tattered golden dress, her cheeks streaked with red tears. She is staring up at the flying dragon, clearly desperate to keep up with it, but then she sees you and stops, screaming in horror.

From far in the distance behind her comes a primordial roar that shakes the world. The woman stumbles and falls, cowering and crying even after the tremor ends.

Hearing the roar of Annihilation is devastating, dealing 10d6 damage (Will DC 36 half), and causing tremors, requiring a Balance check (DC 10) to avoid falling over.

Terrain

The apocalyptic landscape is jagged with ravines and narrow canyons leading east to what was once a crater, perhaps a quarter mile away. The crater extends 1,000 feet and ends in a precipice over the abyss. Throughout the crater are huge chunks of white rock, glowing like the full moon, and at the edge of the precipice, something pulses with even brighter light, seemingly alive. These rocks are the fallen pieces of the shattered moon the heroes saw earlier through Sagramar's crystal ball (Trilla has no idea how large the moon is, so in her dream it only created a large crater), and the shining light is the white key that can free Trilla.

Annihilation is approaching from the west, currently hidden beyond jagged peaks, but its movement shakes the earth. A hero might fly up for a better vantage, but he cannot see the monster in the darkness, for there it is as black as the void. There is only barely enough light to see that the world has been ground away, so that now only a half mile of jagged rock remains, hanging suspended in space. To the east he sees a field of white stones, and something shining at the edge of the world.

If a creature flies more than 200 feet up, he find everything silent, and that he can no longer breathe. Annihilation has destroyed even the air, so that now air only exists within 200 feet of the remaining pieces of the world. Beyond is vacuum, where it is impossible for winged creatures to fly, and many effects reliant on air, such as air spells and fire and sonic attacks, are simply useless.

Leaving the Dreamscape

If you are running this adventure below 20th level and won't have the heroes fight Annihilation, any creature other than Trilla can spend a standard action to will himself out of the nightmare. This lets the heroes enter the dreamscape, find the white key, and escape to free Trilla before Annihilation kills them.

If you intend for the adventure to climax with the battle against Annihilation, characters cannot simply exit the nightmare dreamscape until Stage Five of the battle, detailed below.

Trilla's Final Nightmare

The heroes have stepped into the trilliths' latest effort to craft a new horror capable of destroying the Aquiline Heart. For six days Trilla has been guided to this point, her every experience closely manipulated to ensure the proper outcome. After decades of nightmares, Trilla had grown inured to the pain and madness afflicted upon her, her torment so long ongoing that the only way the trillith could provoke the necessary despair was to lift up her hopes, then utterly destroy them.

Trilla believes that six days earlier she was in hell. After her latest nightmare, a glorious vision appeared, the spirit of her mother Syana, shining like the sun. Her mother lifted her ravaged body and told Trilla that she had been punished for a century for killing herself. Though Trilla had just wanted to be free of her nightmares, she had committed a sin, and so her torture had persisted into the afterlife.

But now, her mother told her, she needed to redeem herself. The world was dying, ruined by the nightmares Trilla had birthed. Had she stayed and guided them, they could have helped the world, but without their own mother they turned to chaos and destruction. Now the world is on the brink, and if Trilla could not heal it, all life would end.

Her mother told her how to escape: that she needed to find a way to bring the moon to earth. She set Trilla on a desperate journey, up from the depths of hell, through many dangers and past the guardians of the underworld. Finding a reservoir of hope in herself she had not known was left, Trilla struggled, outfought, and outwitted the challenges, and managed to reach the threshold of the world of the living, where she was reborn.

She awoke in the body of an elf woman, physically weak but empowered to save the world. But the world was already desolate, and she roamed the wasteland, seeing no life, only the ruins of civilizations lost. Always the moon hung in the sky to the east, night never changing to day, and she headed for it, traveling for three days, facing dangers of thirst and crumbling earth. Slowly she saw the moon grow closer in the sky, but then she reached the end of the earth, a rocky peninsula that was the furthest east she could possibly go. The moon was still beyond her reach, and she sank into despair.

It was at this point the heroes saw into her dream, when she awoke to the roar of Annihilation, and the moon shattered.

Then the world shook, and the sea drained away, and in the sky Trilla saw what she thought was the spirit of her mother, guiding her to where the moon fell to the earth. For the past day she has run, as the roaring, unseen beast growing inexorably closer. She has found fallen stars smashed to bits on the dry ocean floor, and the withered corpse of a giant kraken, but always she followed the glowing spirit in the sky.

Now, when the heroes arrive, the spirit is flying faster, and she knows the monster chasing her is nearly upon her, but she believes she has nearly reached where the moon fell to earth.

Nightmare's Conclusion

If the heroes do not go into Trilla's dream, they can watch through the portal on the floor of the prison, letting the nightmare run its course.

Trilla finds the shattered moon strewn before her and sees the shining light at the far edge, just as Annihilation reaches her. The world begins to crumble into dust, and the pieces of the moon fall into an endless drop into nothing. Trilla sees Annihilation flying to devour her, but the shining draconic spirit catches her out of the sky and carries her to the center of the white stones of the moon. The spirit drops her onto an island in the void, then turns back to fight Annihilation, and while the two battle in the empty blackness, Trilla desperately leaps between different islands to reach the shining gleam.

The light is a white key, held in the hand of the trillith Life, slain long ago by the other trillith for trying to help Trilla escape. Trilla runs to him, but just as she is about to reach him, she hears a death scream overhead. The shining spirit falls out of the sky, slain by Annihilation, and it falls upon Life, crushing his body. Then Trilla realizes the spirit is her own original soul, now dead too.

The floating rock she stands on cracks from the impact, her body and her last hope fall away, and Trilla is left alone, floating, as the rest of the world vanishes into darkness. Annihilation slowly glides to her and hovers, looming above her, and then roars her into oblivion.

Heroic Intervention

When Trilla sees the heroes arrive in the dreamscape, she is shocked, and her immediate suspicion is that this ordeal has been another nightmare all along. She collapses for a moment,

overwhelmed and not knowing what to believe. If the heroes try to pull her out her confusion and explain what is going on, she doubts, believing them another trick. Trilla has been burned by false hope hundreds of times before. She's understandably very cynical, and just wants to sit still and let this nightmare end with her death.

A Diplomacy check (DC 40) can snap her out of it, as can showing the Torch of the Burning Sky and presenting it as evidence of Coaltongue's death, but the surest way is to sing the Song of Forms. Trilla gasps, remembering learning the song from the earth as a charm to protect her from her children. Singing it clears her thoughts and earns her trust immediately.

Whether she believes the heroes or not, Trilla keeps moving toward the crater to the east, trying to stay away from the monster, which she is still afraid of. She demands to know why the heroes are here, and what they intend to do to her. Now that she knows all this was just a dream, she believes without a doubt that she will never get free, that the power holding her is too strong, and she that will never wake up. She begs the heroes to kill her, and quickly, before this nightmare ends and another of her horrible children is born. She will keep running to give them the time they need, but they have to leave and finish her now. If the heroes allow Trilla to die in the dream, or if they kill her physical body, Annihilation is born into the real world.

There is a way to save Trilla, however. By locating the white key, exiting the dreamscape, and opening the final lock, the heroes can release Trilla from the magic binding her. She will awaken, and Annihilation will never be born. The white key lies at the edge of the shattered pieces of the moon, less than a mile away. Just how hard getting that key is, though, depends on whether you want the heroes to face Annihilation.

Fighting in the Real World

If the heroes kill Trilla and face Annihilation in the real world, the battle takes place much more immediately, in the Prison Palace, which Annihilation tears apart easily. If the heroes let Trilla die in her dream or killed her physical body without ever speaking to her in the dreamscape, Annihilation is at full power.

If, however, they spoke to Trilla and she gave them permission to end her life, Annihilation is weakened, possessing only half its full hit points. If the heroes began fighting it in the dreamscape but Trilla was slain in the dream, they all emerge into the real world to continue the fight in whatever condition they were.

The encounter with Annihilation has five stages if the heroes are going to fight it.

Stage One. Speak with Trilla, head for the fallen moon.

Stage Two. Cross over a bottomless fall to reach the fallen moon.

Stage Three. Run through the moon debris to reach the white key.

Stage Four. The world shatters. Battle Annihilation amid floated islands.

Stage Five. A heavily wounded Annihilation expends all its power to destroy Trilla, and the remains of the world.

If the heroes are not high enough level to take on Annihilation, the trillith only appears once they reach the white key at the end of Stage Three. It starts 1,500 feet away, and the heroes should be able to free Trilla and end Annihilation's rampage just before the titanic beast attacks.

If the heroes are going to face Annihilation, it makes its appearance at the start of Stage Two, and the heroes must defeat it before they can leave the dreamscape and awaken Trilla.

Facing Annihilation (EL 26)

Annihilation is a force of nature, a being of seemingly unstoppable might that exists only to undo existence. As the heroes battle it, they will have to deal with the world crumbling around them.

Annihilation (CR 26): hp 927, Appendix B.
Trilla, adult gold dragon aspect (CR 16): hp 264, Appendix B.
Trilla, elf maiden aspect (CR n/a): hp 264.

This battle has five stages, guidelines to help you stage a dramatic battle at the end of the world. As the heroes get closer to the white key, the stages progress, which may even result in some skipping if the heroes decide to teleport. Annihilation is powerful and resilient, but with enough effort the heroes can crack its defenses and leave it vulnerable for a few short rounds before it recovers. Each time they do, it changes its tactics slightly.

The White Key

When the heroes reach the far edge of the moon crater, they find the corpse of a trillith that resembles a dryad, holding a key made of the same white stone as the moon fragments. Once the heroes get out of the dreamscape, this key unlocks the metaphorical bonds that keep Trilla trapped in an endless sleep.

Additionally, in the dreamscape, the holder of the white key can as a standard action create a line of pale white light 400 feet long, akin to the *sunbeam* spell. This beam heals 24d6 points of damage to allies and deals 24d6 points of damage to enemies (Reflex DC 28 half). It counts as a 9th-level spell for the purpose of Annihilation's Absorb Magic ability.

Outside Trilla's dreamworld, the white key functions as a *luck stone*.

Stage One

Trilla, in elf maiden form, runs through canyons, following the glowing draconic figure in the sky toward the fragments of the fallen moon. The journey of a quarter mile takes Trilla about two minutes of hustling and intermittent running. She talks to the heroes if they follow, and if they convince her they are not a trick from the trillith, she says that she will keep running, but begs them to leave and kill her body so no more of her horrific children are born. If a hero tries to leave and you want them to fight Annihilation, he discovers that it's not possible for him to leave.

During the run, Annihilation roars once, but remains out of sight. At the end of the run, the heroes come out to a cliff 20 feet high that overlooks the crater where the moon shards fell. Scattered chunks of massive white stones dot the landscape out to a thousand feet, where the world simply ends. And at that far edge, right at the edge of existence, something glows like a dim sun.

The nearest moon fragment is 100 feet away. Most of the fragments of the fallen moon are 50 feet wide, embedded into the ground so that their tops only stick out 5 or 10 feet from the surrounding stone. The distance between fragments ranges from 5 feet to 30 feet.

Stage Two

Annihilation — a colossal dragon of black smoke and void — appears atop a high hill 500 feet to the west. It roars again, and the ground between the heroes and the field of white stones cracks and falls into the void, leaving a gap 100 feet wide that the heroes must cross if they wish to continue on.

This splits the dreamworld into two halves, and the east half, with the fallen moon stones, remains stable, while the west half continues to rumble.

Annihilation takes to air, and its hill perch crumbles as it leaps away. The huge draconic trillith stays in the thin sky, strafing with its claws, but the heroes can easily take cover in the ravine. At some point they are going to have to emerge from cover, either to keep heading for the white light or to attack Annihilation, and when they do, Annihilation



attacks one of them with its tail, trying to grapple, bite, and then throw down into the rift.

If the heroes have earned Trilla's trust by this point, the golden spirit in the sky lands near the heroes as soon as the world splits in two. This is Trilla, just as the elf woman with them is Trilla, two different aspects of her. While they must protect the woman, the dragon aspect can aid them in battle, acting as a mount, protecting a hero from Annihilation, or catching a dying hero so he doesn't fall into the void. If the dragon aspect is slain, the elf aspect is shocked, but rather than despair she gains a new determination to see this done.

If the heroes have not convinced Trilla they are not just trying to trick her, the dragon aspect only defends Trilla, but does not volunteer to the help the heroes. When the first of the heroes reaches the moon fragments beyond the chasm, the battle moves on to the next stage.

Stage Three

During this stage, the heroes are amid the moon shards but have not yet gotten to the white key. When the last of the heroes have left the western half of the world, that half crumbles away.

Annihilation continues to roar and strafe with its tail, targeting whoever is closest to the key, though if someone is foolish enough to close and attack it, it deals with them first. The stones of the fallen moon form smooth canyons in some places, giving heroes cover if they stick to those aisles that are 5 feet wide.

When the heroes target Annihilation with enough spells to trigger its Nether Breath Weapon ability, it lands to recover, and then two rounds later it takes off. When it does, the mundane stones the moon fragments are embedded in fracture and fall away, leaving the moon fragments floating in the void. They begin to drift slightly, the battlefield slowly shifting as combat progresses to Stage Four.

Stage Four

A thousand feet of scattered, drifting white islands, averaging 50 feet across, hang above an infinite void. The islands the heroes are on tend to stay less than 10 feet from each other, and a clear path remains to reach the white key if they haven't already, but the rest drift away from the center at a rate of 20 feet per round or so, leaving a cluster of islands that grows smaller and smaller.

Annihilation circles the cluster of islands, preferring to use its claws now that the heroes likely have a harder time coming to each other's aid. It now can also use its hurl island ability to separate heroes from their allies by knocking an island out of the cluster, or to smash a hero between two islands.

Stage Five

When Annihilation is reduced to below 400 hp, or when it has used its Nether Breath Weapon three times, the "flesh" around its head peels away, exposing the red entity beneath. Annihilation remains vulnerable and enters a destructive frenzy, trying to reach and kill Trilla.

When Annihilation is defeated it goes limp, crashes into a floating island, and falls away into the void, vanishing in the blackness. Then a breath later the void flashes with light. The world of the dreamscape begins to reform, stars flying up to the heavens, the moon fragments reuniting and rising into heaven so the heroes can look down and see the world's life being renewed. At this point the heroes know they can return safely to the physical world, where they can end Trilla's sleep.

Flight's Boon and Annihilation's Attacks

Annihilation's abilities can strip magical defenses and buffs from the heroes, but even if the heroes have their flight magic dispelled, they should retain Flight's boon (as well as other trillith boons). In this way, Annihilation can take a hero out of a fight for a while by throwing him away, but it cannot simply drop the heroes into the endless void.

Annihilation's True Form – Art by effervescence.co.uk

Conclusion

After defeating Freedom (and Annihilation, if they faced it), the heroes should have one final task left in the dreamworld, involving the Torch of the Burning Sky.

Repairing or Destroying the Torch

Repairing the Torch

At the start of adventure nine, the Torch was not at full power. If you intended to run *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child* as the final adventure, then at the end of adventure nine the Torch regained its full power, and the heroes will have a chance to destroy it at the end of this adventure.

Otherwise, the heroes have to repair the Torch during this adventure. They have two ways to do this. Either way, the Torch must taste Trilla's blood, and then be seared with fire.

The first option is if the heroes kill Trilla. If the heroes smear the Torch with Trilla's blood, they can activate it as if they had slain an intelligent creature.

Phoenix Symbology

In all three possible final adventures, there is a chance to destroy the Torch of the Burning Sky. The Torch's destruction signals a new era free from tyranny, a time for healing and growth. But destroying the Torch requires a sacrifice. Much as in the phoenix myth, the wielder must be consumed by the Torch's final activation in order to renew the world. The wielder's soul, cleansed and pure, becomes part of the new world.

If the heroes don't destroy the Torch, they have not failed, but they have left the possibility for its abuse in the future. Perhaps now is not the time for rebirth, but that time will come some day, when new legends rise to change the world.

The Torch draws in Trilla's soul, and with it all of the weak and dying trillith in the dreamworld, restoring the Torch to full power. Then with an explosion of fire, the sky of the dreamworld is burned away, leaving the heroes and their allies alone in a vast, empty cavern.

The second option is if the heroes free Trilla. They must smear some of her blood across the Torch, and then she blasts it with dragonfire, sealing her power into it. The Torch begins to draw in the souls of the the trillith of the dreamworld, destroying them. Then Trilla spasms as a twisted, tainted sliver of her soul is torn from her and pulled into the Torch. Trilla cries out in relief for she has been purified of her curse. As above, the Torch burns away the dreamworld.

Destroying the Torch

Like any artifact, the Torch is not easy to destroy. It is thematically connected to the myth of the Aquiline Heart, representing the dragon which devours souls in order to gain power.

If you are running *Under the Eye of the Tempest* as the final adventure, the Torch can be destroyed by using it to break the seal to the Plane of Fire beneath Seaquen. This unleashses a devastating blast of fire that the heroes can use as a weapon, and which also incinerates the Torch.

If you are running *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart* as the final adventure, the heroes can destroy the Torch by using it to slay the Heart. This also destroys the world unless the heroes know what they're doing and make the proper sacrifice.

However, if you are running *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child* as the final adventure, the Torch can be destroyed two ways. First is by slaying Annihilation with it, which works either in the Trilla's nightmarish dreamscape or in the real world. The second requires getting Trilla's help in the dreamscape. If she smears her blood on the Torch, its wielder can activate it.

Either option obliterates the artifact and unleashes a purging explosion that consumes Annihilation and the dreamworld, as well as the Torch's wielder. Fire washes harmlessly across the rest of the heroes and their allies, purifying Trilla (if she still lives) of the curse that has given birth to the trillith. At the same time it teleports the heroes and their allies to the surface, lighting up the sky across the world.

The Final Dream

Whether Trilla was slain with mercy, died within her nightmares, or was freed from her curse, the heroes have defeated the trillith threat. Some more powerful trillith may have survived by bonding with a corporeal creature, but the rest of the race is gone.

This may be the conclusion of the campaign, or simply the first step toward defeating the true threat to the world, but the heroes' actions have one tangible consequence. Within a day of their victory, they come across a child. Perhaps they find her in the rubble of the palace, or one of their allies in the Resistance finds her and brings her to them. This is Trilla's final dreamborn child, who has bonded to a mortal elvish child, and its nature depends on what the heroes have done.

If the heroes slew Trilla without ever speaking with her in the dreamscape, the child is the trillith Loneliness. She is fated to grow up alone and wander the world, bringing ill fortune with her until the end of her long, solitary life.

If the heroes mercifully killed Trilla with her consent, the child is Rebirth. Wherever she goes life flourishes and the grieving find strength to live on. Despite the many deaths of this war, the world will regain the life it had before.

If the heroes freed Trilla from her curse, this final child is Hope, destined to lift up those who suffer across the world. In the war's wake, the world will enter an age that, like her mother, is golden.



Adventure Eleven
Under the Eye of the Tempest

for 17th- to 20th-Level Characters

by Wil Upchurch

Cover Art by
Claudio Pozas

As Leska's plans near fruition in the depths of Ragesia, an old acquaintance shows his true colors, and the coastal town of Seaquen, home of the Lyceum Academy and a rallying point for thousands of refugees, finds itself the target of a new, more dangerous attack!

Certain of his own invincibility, the wind-powered archmage Pilus seeks to destroy his old rivals, the mages of Lyceum Academy. Another storm rolls over Seaquen, but this tempest bears an army amid its thunder. As the town quakes under the dire gaze of the Tempest, Pilus's mile-long living airship, the heroes and their allies must band together in a desperate defense.

Can the heroes save Seaquen from this new threat and survive the Eye of the Tempest?

Background

It seems that threats in this war are like the many heads of a hydra: destroy one and three more grow in its place. So it is for our heroes, who journeyed back to Gate Pass in order to save it, only to learn that while they were distracted their enemies were on the move. The first order of business was to stop the nightmarish trillith in their quest to destroy the Aquiline Heart, and in so doing reignite the Torch of the Burning Sky. That task complete, the heroes can now focus on their ultimate objective: the destruction of Empress Leska and her allies. One such ally is an old "friend" of the heroes, the sorcerer-monk Pilus.

Their expedition into the mountains of Ostalin introduced the heroes to Pilus and his laboratory full of physical aberrations. While trust was a rare commodity in the Monastery of Two Winds, Pilus did not stand in the way of the heroes and their quest to retrieve the Torch. Since that time, however, Pilus has been working tirelessly to fulfill his ambitions — desires at odds with the heroes' quest.

After the disruption and chaos left by the heroes journey, Pilus abandoned the pretenses under which his brother Longinus overlooked his work. They argued over the role of the monastery in the war, and chose to separate rather than deepen the rift between them. Pilus disappeared into the Valley of Storms to continue his strange experiments, while Longinus meditated on the war's long-term consequences and the potential for wisdom in his brother's plans.

The heroes' deeds convinced Pilus the Resistance was just as dangerous to peace as Ragesia. He secretly contacted Empress Leska and once more proposed an alliance, this time dangling the power of his mighty airship Tempest *as a lure. Leska, though suspicious about Pilus's ulterior motives, agreed to let Pilus test his airship's capabilities on the weakened town of Seaquen, a familiar target, and then use it to force rebellious nations to submit to Leska's will. Meanwhile, Ragesia would withdraw from Ostalin to win an alliance with Khagan Onamdammin, the lord of Ostalin, and would focus its efforts in the east, where the Resistance gathers for a final push against the Ragesian invasion.*

Pilus, for his part, was content to play along with Leska long enough to further his ultimate goal: to steal the power of the Aquiline Heart. After learning of the relic's existence, he became convinced that he was the reincarnation of the ancient eagle spirit known as the Stormchaser, and that gaining the heart was the final step in the process of his rebirth, a process he unknowingly began when he linked himself to the Valley of Storms. This new obsession began to erode his original goals, and he no longer cares how many lives he must destroy in order to fulfill his destiny.

Tempest *was ready several weeks before the climactic battle with the colossus at Gate Pass, but when Pilus first flew the ship away from the Valley of Storms toward Ostalin, both he and it began to die. His link to the Valley had somehow passed to his creation, and it weakened both of them once they left its environs. He flew back to the Valley and brought his biomantic workshop aboard in order to solve the problem.*

Pilus worked day and night for weeks, and impatiently seized upon the first viable solution that presented itself. His previous experiments had been performed on captured villagers and roaming monsters, but this time it was his own flesh he twisted, his own blood and bile he mixed with alien fluids, and, in the final step, his own heart he squeezed until chunks of red and purple flesh exploded from his open chest. It was a small price to pay — he'd soon replace the sacrificed organ with the Aquiline Heart.

The result of this was a melding of man and beast until one could not survive without the other. Pilus and Tempest *became one being, connected by sinewy tissues, bulging veins, and a shared bioelectric pulse. The storms that raged through their valley were locked into their vitality as well, and storm clouds and lightning gathered to cocoon* Tempest *as it made its way through the skies.*

There was no time to experiment with his new form, as tales of the battle for Gate Pass reached Pilus's ears. Now linked inextricably to Tempest, *Pilus flew the mighty airship across the mountains, gathered Khagan Onamdammin's army on board, and set off for Seaquen to finish the job his magical hurricane could not.*

Pilus communicated with his brother Longinus by way of magic, so Longinus would have no idea what had become of him. Longinus knows only to make his way to Seaquen and secure the portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire that persists in the Pyromancer's Tomb. Hopeful that reconciliation with his brother is near, he doesn't question why — and he thinks it a good idea in any event. Longinus and a hand-picked group of monks have taken up position in the Pyromancer's Tomb by the time the PCs reach Seaquen; his brother, Tempest, *and Khagan Onamdammin's formidable Ostalin army are only a few days behind.*

Welcome to the eleventh adventure and the second of three possible conclusions to the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. In this adventure, the heroes must once confront a determined archmage, an army, and a mile-long living airship to save the weather-beaten Resistance town of Seaquen from utter annihilation.

Introduction

The end of the War of the Burning Sky draws near, and the fate of Ragesia and the surrounding lands rests in the hands of heroes forged in the war's intrigues and battles. After recovering a lost artifact, uniting armies in defense of cities and nations, and uncovering an alien conspiracy that threatens the survival of all those who make war, the heroes still have work yet to do. The liberation of Gate Pass was a great victory for the Resistance, but it revealed a trio of threats greater than even the Ragesian armies that still ravage the land.

The first of these threats is represented by the dream creatures known as the trillith. They seek to extinguish a powerful artifact, the Aquiline Heart, without the protection of which all reality will bend into a living nightmare. The finale of the trillith story arc is the subject of adventure ten.

The second important threat is Empress Leska, the heir apparent to the throne of Ragesia, whose hubris threatens to keep the lands in turmoil indefinitely. Empress Leska's plans, and the heroes' march to war to stop her, are the subject of adventure twelve.

The heroes may have already confronted one or both of these threats (as detailed in adventure nine) before turning to the third threat: Pilus, the sorcerer-monk whose biomantic laboratory has created a weapon so fearsome that no nation could hope to stand against it without the Torch of the Burning Sky. It is this threat to which the heroes devote their attention in this adventure.

The heroes have already glimpsed Pilus's weapon, the living airship known as *Tempest*, but its true power is only now being brought to bear. Unknown to any but Pilus and his allies, *Tempest* brings with it the same destructive power that nearly laid Seaquen low months ago: it is a mobile platform of destructive storm magic. The mile-long monstrosity also carries an invading army that could spell doom for the Resistance if it is allowed to occupy the city.

Under the Eye of the Tempest assumes that the characters have decided to confront Empress Leska, the greatest threat to peace, last, and that this is the second adventure in the trilogy of endings. In this case, the characters will have already activated the Torch of the Burning Sky by invading the dreamlands and destroying or freeing Trilla, and will be attacking Pilus and his ship as the first step toward stopping his ally, Leska. If this is not the case, see the "Adapting the Adventure" sidebar for suggested changes to fit it into the flow of your campaign.

Adapting the Adventure

Under the Eye of the Tempest can be adapted for use as a stand-alone adventure, but it's going to take some planning and adjustments on the part of the DM. First, the PCs will need access to a loyal army. Second, you have to make sure they have a way to control the planar portal, as well as to teleport an entire army across a continent and then onto and off of the living airship. It would be good if they had at least heard of the airship before, but if they haven't then you'll need to find a way to get them some lore on the ship so they'll be able to plan their assault.

End of the Campaign

If this is being used as a stand-alone ending to the campaign, then you may want to find a way to rid the PCs of the Torch of the Burning Sky. The easiest way is to have it fall dormant once the heroes teleport their armies to safety at the conclusion of the adventure. The artifact has done its job and it can now rest.

Leska is still out there, however, and several nations still have momentum for war. Shaaladel takes his army of elves to where Leska has holed up and lays siege to the valley. The elves warn off all others that this is their fight and help is not appreciated. With the war contained in Ragesia, and the two armies at a stalemate, the rest of the continent can begin rebuilding and planning their defenses for the next war.

First Adventure in the Ending Trilogy

You don't need to change much, other than the assumption that the PCs have already been to the dreamworld and back. In this case, defeating the Colossus was such a heroic feat that the Torch of the Burning Sky repaired itself in the wake of the action. Leska remains a target for the heroes, and they must still take the Torch to the dreamworld in order to stop the trillith once and for all.

A more detailed summary of this plot thread can be found in adventure nine, *Festival of Dreams*.

Final Adventure in the Ending Trilogy

Same as above, except that the heroes have already dealt with both the Aquiline Heart and Trilla. The only thing left to ensure peace is to stop Pilus and his doomsday weapon.

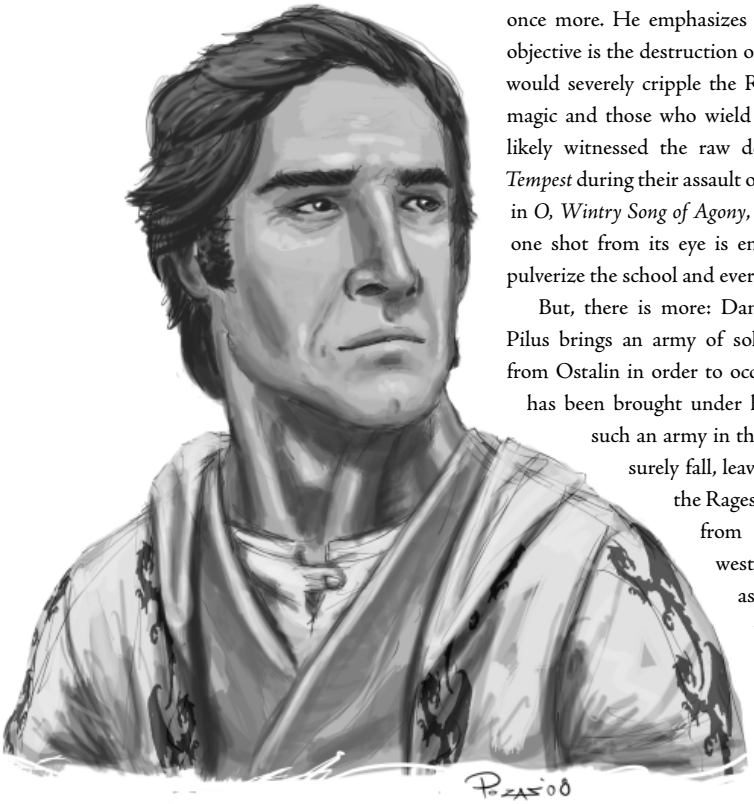
A more detailed summary of this plot thread can be found in adventure nine, *Festival of Dreams*.

Adventure Overview

The heroes return to the embattled city of Seaquen, home of the Lyceum, an arcane guild, and shelter for refugees from all across the land. Aware that the archmage Pilus is bringing an army to destroy Seaquen upon his living airship, the heroes must counter with an army of their own. They have many allies and are owed many favors based on their actions in the war thus far, but to whom they go for help in defending Seaquen depends on where they believe they can find the most ready aid.

After securing an army and transporting them to Seaquen using the power of the Torch, the heroes must descend beneath a familiar sunken prison and wrest control of a portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire from Longinus, whose wavering faith in his brother may provide the heroes with an opportunity to avoid bloodshed.

Finally, the airship arrives over Seaquen, bringing it with it storms and earthquakes to rival those of a few months before. The heroes can disable the ship by using the portal to blast it with a column of lava, and then they must transport themselves and their army on board for the climactic battle. While fighting rages on the ship's deck, the heroes must penetrate its core and confront Pilus and his monstrous allies in order to silence *Tempest* forever.



Pilus Contemplates – Art by Claudio Pozas

Act One: My Brother's Keeper

In this act, the heroes first hear of the newest threat to the seaside city of Seaquen: the wind mage Pilus is flying his living airship, *Tempest*, toward the town with an Ostalin army on board. They must get to Seaquen ahead of Pilus and confront his brother, Longinus, who holds a planar portal that may be the key to destroying *Tempest*.

All encounter stats for this and the following Acts are presented in Appendix One, unless they are found in the core rules.

Looking to the Sky

At the end of the previous adventure, the heroes repaired the Torch of the Burning Sky and were transported back to the surface at Gate Pass. They can immediately tell the difference, as the temperature has risen and spring has fallen across the land almost as if it was painted on top of the wintry canvas to which they had become accustomed. The aftermath of their battle with the Colossus is still fresh, as their time in the dreamworld lasted merely a day in the city. Yet, in that day much has happened.

The Ragesian Army has retreated, but General Danava has provided intelligence that suggests the archmage Pilus has struck a deal with Leska and may already be on his way to assault Seaquen once more. He emphasizes that Pilus's primary objective is the destruction of the Lyceum, which would severely cripple the Resistance's access to magic and those who wield it. The heroes have likely witnessed the raw destructive power of *Tempest* during their assault on the Koren Obelisk in *O, Wintry Song of Agony*, and should fear that one shot from its eye is enough to completely pulverize the school and everything in it.

But, there is more: Danava tells them that Pilus brings an army of soldiers and monsters from Ostalin in order to occupy the city once it has been brought under his command. With such an army in the south, Dassen will surely fall, leaving little to threaten the Ragesian armies marching from the north and the west. Seaquen, Danava assures the heroes, is the key to the war.

Read the following aloud to fill the PCs in on what General Danava knows:

"Gentlemen and ladies,

"You know that I cannot act against an officer of the Ragesian Empire, but I can help you defend against yet another threat. Information has come to me that Empress Leska has made a new alliance with the archmage Pilus, and he now flies his monstrous airship at her command. I have heard reports of the destruction it can cause, and I believe its existence is a harbinger of evil. I tell you this so that you can destroy it; I would see it fall before it brings its power to my home. Leska must be insane to allow it access to the skies over her armies. She is blinded by her hatred of the Lyceum, which I believe to be the airship's target. It can do the job of a hundred Inquisitors in a handful of seconds.

"I fear that is not all, however. Khagan Onamdammin flies with Pilus and brings an army with which he hopes to capture Seaquen and extend the holdings of his father to the eastern sea. Reports of this army's strength are dire news for the Resistance.

"My final piece of advice to you is this: it is time to surrender this pointless resistance. The Ragesian Empire cannot be stopped, in the end; all you're doing by fighting is causing more bloodshed. If Leska can command the power of archmages and airships even as she wages a war of extermination against the very same, hers is a destiny that neither man nor elf can deny."

At this point a commotion at the edge of the room draws attention away from the dire news General Danava has just reported. A rain-soaked man in traveler's clothes has pushed his way through the crowd, and over the cries of some disgruntled guards he launches into a memorized, rehearsed speech:

"My esteemed lords, forgive the interruption, but I bring grave news from Seaquen. My masters at the Lyceum have seen a great flying ship coming from the west, and they believe the city will soon be under attack. At its current speed, the ship will reach Seaquen in three days, but there is already a plot in progress underneath the city."

He stops to catch his breath for the first time since starting his report and then continues.

"A dozen monks, led by a masked priest dressed in white, have taken up residence beneath the sunken prison. Headmaster Gohanach dispatched fliers immediately to find you, my lords, certain you would have an idea if this was related to the attack. He begs your immediate attention, and whatever aid you can bring once again to defend Seaquen and the Lyceum."

After finishing this report, relieved that he's remembered everything he was supposed to say, the messenger begs a chair and some food, and while he'll entertain questions from the heroes and assembled leaders, he knows nothing beyond what he's just related, and he seems ready to collapse from exhaustion at any second.

The assembled commanders, having just had confirmation of General Danava's intelligence, begin talking, and in some cases, arguing amongst themselves. It should be clear that the power of the Torch is the only thing that can stand up to the living airship, and if the heroes don't chime in after a few minutes, then one of the Resistance commanders points at them and says as much. At that point, the ball is in their court.

You and What Army?

Finding an army to counter that which rides *Tempest* may prove an adventure in itself, depending on how the heroes have comported themselves over the course of the campaign. Still, they are likely to have allies somewhere in the region, and it's best to let the PCs shine in this regard as a reward for making it this far. Don't give them too much trouble unless they decide to ask someone with whom they don't have a good relationship. Still, nothing's free in war, and some of the people they ask might just want something in return.

Gate Pass

After the recent events in Gate Pass, the heroes may be able to call upon the Resistance there to provide men. Depending on how things went, they might even call on General Danava and the remains of the Second Ragesian Army, especially if they can convince him that Pilus is going to betray Leska. In any event, the Gate Pass Resistance will not leave the city as long as the Second Army is camped nearby.

Danava does want the airship destroyed, but he's not willing to help unless he realizes the true extent of Pilus's plan. The heroes must reveal Pilus's plan for the Aquiline Heart (if they know it) to have a chance of convincing him. Even then, it requires a DC 30 Diplomacy check to convince Danava to lend his aid to the defense of Seaquen, and therefore countermand his *geas*. If the heroes did not destroy Legate Kolvus during the Festival of Dreams, the DC is 40 because Danava is uncertain about the loyalties of key leaders in his army.

Shahalesti

Shaaladel's elven forces were key in the defense of Gate Pass, and the heroes may be comfortable asking him to aid them in Seaquen. They have

Don't the Heroes Know All This?

If you're running this adventure in order, as the second in the ending trilogy, it's quite possible that you've already filled the heroes in on Pilus's impending assault, either through a messenger, an informant, a prisoner, or Danava's willingness to "help without helping." After all, the heroes repaired the Torch because they knew they'd need it against Pilus and Leska.

Even so, there may be details contained in this synopsis that the players overlooked when you ran *Festival of Dreams*, so you'll need to make sure that your players have all the information contained in Danava's speech. If you're not sure, or feel like your players could use a refresher, have them invited to a meeting after they emerge from the dreamworld, in which Danava recounts everything he knows in front of Shaaladel and other leaders. This way, your players have all the information they need and can ask last-minute questions before embarking on their journey.

Bringing together all the commanders in this way is also a convenient way to have them all around when the heroes begin to recruit an army to help them face the Ostalin force.

What Is Longinus Up To?

Longinus is something of a victim of his loyalty to his brother and their monastery. He believes that Pilus will help the Resistance secure Seaquen against assault, either from the sea by Shahalesti or by land from Ragesia. He therefore agreed to take a contingent of monks to Seaquen to secure the portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire so that it could not be used against Pilus's airship once he arrived. Of course, these threats are all lies.

Longinus is unaware of his brother's alliance with Leska, or his plan to destroy the Lyceum. If he learns of either, and can be convinced it is the truth, then he will abandon his brother and help the heroes to stop him, though not directly.

already engaged him diplomatically, and so have some idea of what he is after. Of course, they don't know his ultimate goal: to acquire the Aquiline Heart (see adventure twelve).

If the PCs don't know of his ambitions, he alludes to them, without being overt, in his negotiations with them. He's already wrested promises from the heroes about the Torch, so now he raises the subject of the Heart. He insists that he be allowed in on the final assault against Leska once Pilus is taken care of, and that the Aquiline Heart be preserved until he has plenty of time to examine it. The heroes, he says, may keep the Torch while he examines the Heart, but they must not use it. If they refuse to agree to this condition, Shaaladel marches off imperiously and will have nothing more to do with them.

If the heroes are desperate, then Shaaladel's daughter, Shalosta, approaches them and pledges some troops loyal to her, including a grove of treants that may be useful against the airship's natural defenses. In this case, the heroes will probably want to seek supplemental aid from another source, since Shalosta brings mostly archers who will easily be cut down without infantry to shield them.

Dassen

The heroes have provided several brave services for Dassen, so a request for aid in defending Seaquen once more shouldn't be too difficult to fulfill, no matter who is in charge. The airship must be confronted, one way or another, and the heroes offer the best chance of destroying it now in Seaquen. If it's allowed to roam the skies, it could show up anywhere and bring death and destruction with it.

Sindaire

Sindaire's alliance with Seaquen remains firm even after all the help they have already given, and the heroes' reputation likely guarantees that an army will be entrusted to their command should they, or the Lyceum, request it.

Get On Your Horse and Ride! (Optional Encounter)

If the PCs dawdle in Gate Pass, thinking they've got several days to get to Seaquen and handle things, then you may want to prod them along a bit by having an old adversary return to haunt them (literally).

Caela, Pilus's right-hand woman and master of his biomantic laboratories, has risen as a ghost and still serves her master faithfully. He dispatched her to Gate Pass after hearing of the heroes' great triumph there, thinking that she could retrieve the Torch of the Burning Sky, or at least disrupt any plans they might have for interfering with his own.

Caela's ghost (CR 17): hp 52, Appendix B.

Caela starts by targeting the barracks and campsites of the heroes' army, awakening groups of soldiers and using her horrific visage ability. She does this while demanding that the heroes be turned over to her. She'll use her sorcerer spells if necessary to strike more fear into the armies, or to defend herself if it turns out she can be harmed in her ethereal form.

Out of old habit, and because she enjoys how the crackling nimbus of electricity looks in her incorporeal form, she still casts *storm shield* (see Appendix A) on herself before manifesting, so anyone that strikes her suffers its effects.

Once the heroes make themselves known (probably responding to the commotion outside), Caela does whatever she can to steal the Torch from them, or find it if they do not have it on them. Once she spots it, she attempts to use telekinesis to draw it to her. If she does, she teleports with it to Pilus's airship, presenting some serious complications for the heroes. If this happens and necessitates a conventional attack upon *Tempest*, utilize the information on pages 317–321 to run the assault.

Seaquen: Home Away From Home

Once the characters finally make it to Seaquen, they're going to be traversing some familiar haunts. They may want to catch up (quickly!) with old friends and contacts, and will probably head to the Lyceum for an update on the airship as well as the monks beneath the city. Unfortunately, there's been no news since the monks were spotted several days ago, although there has been confirmation that the airship is almost to the city (it will be one or two days away, depending on how long the party took to get here).

Once the party has satisfied their information and shopping needs, it's a small matter to retrace their steps to the sunken prison and down the magically carved shaft that leads to the Pyromancer's Tomb. A handful of (wet and miserable) guards are posted in the prison, and Longinus left a *symbol of weakness* halfway down the shaft (not at the top of the shaft, where the heroes may have found a previous trap), as he fears that their entry into the city did not go undetected.

The heroes will be familiar with the sunken prison and the shaft leading to the tomb from the third adventure in the saga, *Shelter from the Storm*. See pages 95–100 for details. Having been here before, the heroes will have already bypassed the numerous traps, and the monsters and enemies from the previous adventure, naturally, are no longer present. It is suggested that you "hand-wave" the trip as far as the actual tomb, although you can refer to adventure three for more detail if you wish. See also maps on pages 643 and 644.

Other than the confrontation with Longinus, below, two encounters can take place during this section of the adventure. The first takes place at some point within the sunken prison; the second takes place only if the heroes travel through the tomb with the encounter with Longinus to enter the laboratory area.



Tempest *Approaches ~ Art by Leo Lingas*

Sunken Prison

Two elite West Wind spies are stationed in the prison environs as lookouts, supported by a group of four West Wind monks. The spies are located in Areas D and G (Janitorial and Storage), and the four monks are billeted in area E (Guard Room).

West Wind spies, elite (2) (CR 14) : hp 124 each, Appendix B.
West Wind monks (4) (CR 5) : hp 32 each, Appendix B.

The shaft leading to the Pyromancer's Tomb (in Area L) is warded with a *symbol of weakness* trap halfway down.

Symbol of Weakness Trap: CR 7, all creatures within 60 feet suffer 3d6 Str damage, persistent effect (lasts for 170 minutes after triggered).

The Pyromancer's Tomb

Lingering Ragesian magic continues to keep the tomb filled with air. The temperature in the tomb is unchanged — about 110 degrees — and the air is still hazy with heat and steam. (The haze is insufficiently thick to affect combat.) The familiar, faint rumbling of magma churning through unseen tunnels fills the air with power. The ceiling is mostly 8 feet high, except the exposed magma flow in Areas A and H is 10 feet below floor level.

The entire tomb remains very resistant to divination: when the Pyromancer created his tomb, he caused it to seem as though it's on the Elemental Plane of Fire. This protects the area from many outside divinations, and it enhances fire magic. All spells with the [fire] descriptor, or that use or create fire, cast here are maximized and enlarged, while spells with the [water] descriptor, or that use or create water, are impeded, requiring a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level) to cast successfully. However, all creatures gain the benefit of *endure elements* while in the area, which negates penalties from the very hot environmental condition.

The shaft from the prison (Area A on the tomb map) opens into the ceiling of a natural steam tunnel (Area B on the tomb map) that's split in two by a deep fissure filled with running magma. The source of the lava is visible down the south tunnel — a massive warding circle etched into the stone walls, its runes glowing with intense heat. It looks solid, but somehow flames are visible beyond it, and a slow flow of lava seeps out from the edge of the ring, as if it were a seal holding back the heat of the Elemental Plane of Fire.

A creature touching lava takes 2d6 points of fire damage. A creature submerged in lava takes 20d6 points of fire damage each round. The monks won't try to bull rush heroes into the lava, though, because they've heard about a Ragesian soldier who slipped and fell to a horrifying death.

If the heroes trip the *symbol of weakness* trap, Longinus and the twelve monks in the tomb with him make preparations for their arrival. If they somehow bypass the *symbol*, all of the West Wind Monks and two of the Elite West Wind Spies are surprised by their appearance; the other two Elite West Wind Spies and Longinus are not surprised.

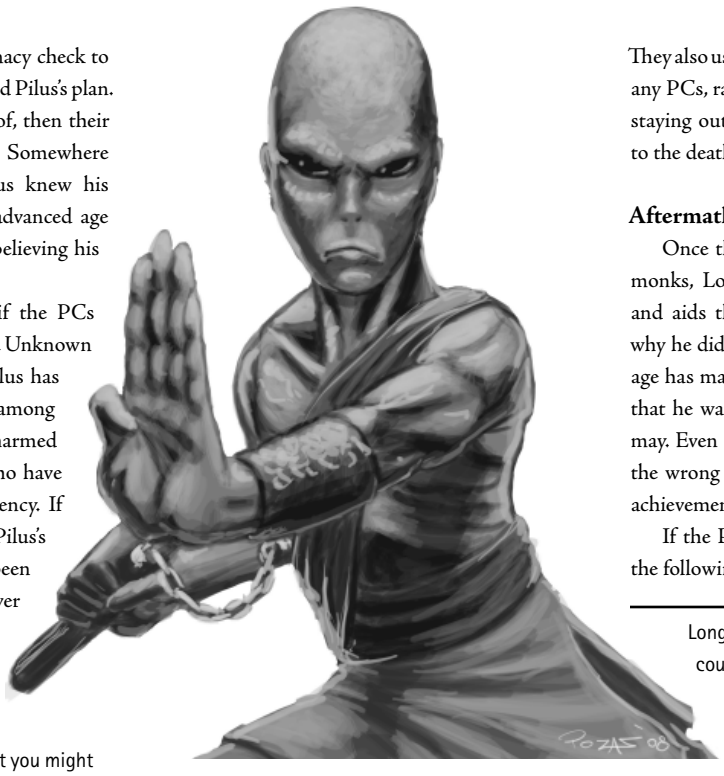
Either way, Longinus has given orders not to immediately attack intruders, because he's convinced himself that Pilus's intentions aren't aggressive. He won't order an attack against the heroes until he hears what they have to say. His respect for them has grown because of their conduct during the war, and he's willing to hear them out, especially since he doesn't fully trust his brother anymore. However, if the heroes come in guns blazing, then Longinus and the rest defend themselves to the best of their ability, although Longinus tries to convince the heroes to parley for the first two rounds of combat, hoping to discuss things with them before one side is forced to destroy the other.



Pyromancer's Seal – Art by Claudio Pozas

It requires only a DC 20 Diplomacy check to convince Longinus of the truth behind Pilus's plan. If the heroes have some sort of proof, then their attempt is automatically successful. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Longinus knew his brother was lying to him, but his advanced age caused him to delude himself into believing his brother's lies.

But the danger does not end if the PCs convince Longinus of Pilus's betrayal. Unknown to the Master of the East Wind, Pilus has planted four doppelganger spies among the monks in his retinue, and has charmed or bought the loyalty of the rest, who have instructions in case of this contingency. If Longinus becomes convinced of Pilus's treachery, one of the spies (who has been using *detect thoughts* on the PCs ever since their arrival) transforms into his true form. Read the following to the players:



"My master, your brother, thought you might betray him in the end. So close to reaching the goal the two of you have worked so hard for all these years, Master Pilus is not willing to let your weakness topple his efforts. Help us destroy these meddlers, Longinus, or stand aside and let us protect your brother!"

With that, the four spies drink their *potions of invisibility* and the rest of the West Wind monks take offensive stances and prepare to attack.

Longinus (CR 17): hp 119, Appendix B.
Elite West Wind spies (4) (CR 14) : hp 124 each, Appendix B.
West Wind monks (8) (CR 5) : hp 32 each, Appendix B.

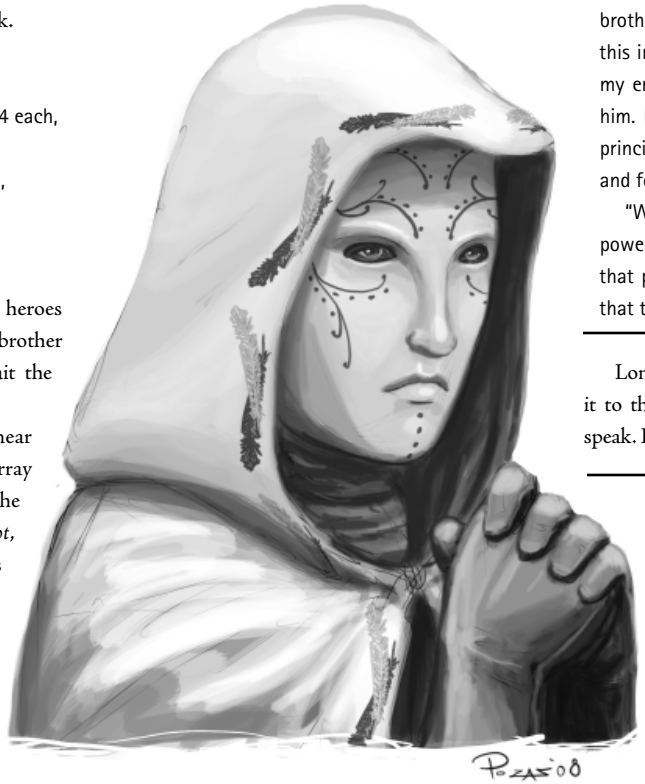
Tactics

If Longinus was convinced to help the heroes against his brother, he balks at fighting his brother monks, and casts *meld into stone* to await the outcome of the battle.

If he is fighting the heroes, he stays near the back and continues to cast his buff array unless he's directly attacked. After that, he casts *divine power*, then *righteous might*, and then wades into battle. If it appears the heroes are going to kill him, he attempts to surrender; he does not wish to die here.

The doppelgangers spend a round to drink their *potions of blur* and take up flanking positions around two accessible PCs before attacking with a flurry of blows. One in each pair attempts to disarm while the other focuses on damage.

The West Wind monks use their flying ability to get just out of range of grounded PCs, and then use their whips to trip, damage, and generally harass while the elite monks do the real damage.



They also use their superior movement to surround any PCs, ranged attackers, or spellcasters that are staying out of the melee. All of the monks fight to the death.

Aftermath

Once the PCs have defeated the treacherous monks, Longinus emerges from the stone floor and aids them with healing if he can. If asked why he did not fight, he admits that his advanced age has made him shy about direct conflicts, and that he was content to let things fall where they may. Even though he thinks his brother is doing the wrong thing, he thinks it could result in the achievement of their long-sought goal.

If the PCs ask what he was doing here, read the following:

Longinus speaks in a raspy whisper, coughing and wheezing after each sentence.

"Pilus sent me here to protect the portal from Ragesian spies, who he said were going to try to use it against the city. I think, however, that I have divined his true purpose, given what we've just witnessed. If he is indeed coming here to attack the city, then the Lyceum will be his first target. I love the academy as much as any, and do not wish to see it destroyed. It is for this reason alone that I will aid you now.

"Be warned: I will not help you fight my brother in any way. Once I have given you this information, I will leave, and you shall be my enemies for as long as you try to destroy him. I cannot allow my brother to betray our principles, but I also cannot betray him in turn, and for that reason I must remain a bystander.

"We have all witnessed the destructive power of my brother's airship, and I do not wish that power brought to bear on the Lyceum. If that truly is his target, then I offer you this."

Longinus pulls a scroll from a pocket and hands it to the nearest spellcaster before continuing to speak. It contains a *clairvoyance/clairaudience* spell.

"This magma flow and the portal face the hill on which the Lyceum sits, and the skies above it where my brother's airship must fly. Use this scroll when he comes to the city, and it will show you when the ship is opposite the portal. Use the power of the Torch of the Burning Sky to open the portal. I shall lower the

Elite West Wind Spy – Art by Claudio Pozas

Longinus Speaks – Art by Claudio Pozas

antipathy ward before I leave. By focusing the artifact on the portal, you can cause the planar essence to burst forth with incredible force. If you time it correctly, you may be able to disable the eye, and thus the death ray it can generate. If you miss, the retribution on this city will be horrible to witness.

"That is all I have to say to you; I cannot wish you luck."

With that, Longinus casts a *banishment* spell and lowers the ward blocking the portal. Read the following to the players when he does this:

Immediately, the chamber gets unbearably hotter and the magma flow swells and churns. You can see swirling fire and faceless creatures on the other side of the portal, but it remains intact and nothing is coming through. Turning to Longinus once more, you find him gone.

If the PCs attacked the entire group together, then Longinus surrenders before he can be killed. The other monks fight to the death. Once the battle is over, Longinus relates the information in the text box above to them, albeit in a different tone, especially if he's doing so under threat of injury or death.

If the PCs should happen to kill Longinus, then they'll find the spell scroll and a letter that explains everything above. It turns out that Longinus was in on the plot all along. Pilus outlines his instructions for defending the portal, lowering the antipathy barrier with a *banishment* spell, and his conjecture about using the Torch of the Burning Sky to unleash the portal's elemental energies as a weapon.

Finally, in the few months since the heroes were last here, the laboratory (Area F on the tomb map) has become home to Glurthog, an advanced huhhoad. Glurthog is hiding here from the agents of a powerful balor, Hedrenatherax, from whom she's stolen an intelligent bastard sword (*Pyrronax*, which she will use in combat; see Appendix B). She is aware of the presence of Longinus and his monks, but is plenty intelligent enough to know she is outclassed. She inhabits the laboratory and swims the magma in the prison cell area (Area H), using her considerable Hide skill, and she'll gladly kill any lone monk that ventures through.

Glurthog, wielding *Pyrronax*, will take on the PCs for a bit of sport, but she'll retreat into the magma if she realizes defeat is imminent. Her breath weapon and supernatural abilities are not affected by the enhanced fire magic in the tomb, but any fiery spell-like abilities she uses are. She does not use her summon ability: she tried it once before, but it failed because of the weird planar mix in the tomb.

Glurthog, advanced huhhoad (CR 18): hp 282, Appendix B.



Glurthog and Pyrronax *– Art by Claudio Pozas*

Who is Hedrenatherax?

The mighty fiend Hedrenatherax is a gargoylesque mountain of living evil and flame. Its massive head features a wide, fanged maw, deep-set reptilian eyes, and two great black horns projecting from either side of its skull. The demon's body is armored with burnished red scales and corded with massive slabs of sinewy muscle. A pair of gargantuan wings, alight with green flame, jut from its broad back, spanning thirty feet from tip to tip. The demon wears only a simply kilt of beaten bronze from which hangs a massive, jagged-edged sword.

Hedrenatherax is a powerful balor in the service of the demon lord Pyrak, acting as an enforcer of his master's will, especially when direct, violent action is necessary. Although powerful, Hedrenatherax is quite dull for a balor, and lacks much of the guile, charisma, and intuition common to the most powerful of demons. He makes up for this lack with sheer brutality, and is considered one of the most ruthless, petty, and overtly cruel demons in the Abyss.

You can find out more about Hedrentherax in EN Publishing's novel trilogy *Metamorphosis: From Dretch to Demon Lord*. Needless to say, Hedrenetherax is far too powerful a foe for heroes of the party's current level to handle (his CR is 28; see Appendix B), but he might provide an opportunity for the GM to continue a campaign after the War of the Burning Sky is over.

If you want to introduce Hedrenetherax to the heroes, his game statistics can be approximated by making him a balor barbarian 10 armed with a *+2 vorpal flaming falchion*.

Act Two: He that Dies Pays All Debts

In this act, the heroes take their army onto the flying airship and assault its master in the belly of the beast.

The Battle of Battles

Wars come and go, but great battles go down in history. Though the lands have seen many great battles in this war already, none compares to the one the heroes will now join. As word that the great airship approaches, the warlords and commanders are giving speeches to their men about how this will be a day to remember, and that their actions this day will live for all days to come.

If any of the heroes would like to make a speech or add to the preparations in any way, feel free to let them. There will be plenty of time for them to take up positions at the planar portal and unleash the fury of the fire incarnate upon the attacking vessel, since the ship moves slowly and scouts will report its imminent arrival at least two hours before it actually appears in the city skies. They may wish to reconnect with old allies or discuss strategy with new ones. This is also the time to pick up any last minute equipment, either from the Lyceum or the merchants traveling with the armies in town.

Using the Torch of the Burning Sky to create a geyser of flame from the planar portal is as easy as Longinus described. Artifacts of such power will not be denied their legends: the Torch guides the hand of its wielder, and makes his aim true. If the Torch is used in this way, the geyser of pure elemental flame explodes upon impact with *Tempest*, and moments later a shockwave can be felt and heard all the way to the plaza where the heroes' army waits. Great cheers are heard throughout the city as the eye is melted and rendered useless. *Tempest* will fire no death rays this time (which, if the PCs witnessed it attack the Koren Obelisk, should be of great relief to them).

Once preparations are complete, and the eye has been disabled, then the heroes can rush to the surface and activate the Torch of the Burning Sky to teleport themselves and their army on board the airship.

See page 317 for details about attacking *Tempest*, as well as a full description of the airship and its defensive capabilities. Familiarizing yourself with that section beforehand will help you quickly adjudicate any battle plan your players come up with. The section below assumes that the heroes are prepared and head straight to the interior of the ship as quickly as possible.

On Board, Chaos!

Once the heroes and their army appear on the deck of *Tempest*, chaos breaks loose very quickly. Onamdammin's army should be a match for that the PCs have gathered — the grand melee that breaks out should plausibly last for as long as the PCs need to clean out the ship's guts. The deck of *Tempest* is large enough, after all, to accommodate both armies in camps, if need be. If the PCs have not raised an army, even from among the ragtag defenders who have taken refuge in Seaquen, Ondamdammin's army should be large enough to dissuade them from fighting on deck. Several large monsters, phalanxes of battle mages, and even the odd devil or two, should be enough to prod the heroes into going inside.

Read the following aloud once your players wave the Torch:

As the veil lifts and reality surrounds you, the sheer size of *Tempest* leaves you momentarily in awe. Viewed from afar, it appeared as large as a dragon ... now you see that several dragons could easily make their home on this enormous ship. Your army surrounds you, but you can see the enemy arrayed from one end of the ship to the other — giants, humans, orcs, and unspeakable things mingle together in an unholy alliance.

The other army is as surprised as you are, but they are battle ready nonetheless, and their hesitation will not last. You think you see Pilus momentarily, but his features look strange, as if he was made of clay. As you try to focus on him, however, he disappears in a scrambling crowd of Ostalin soldiers.

With a quick scan, you identify two conical structures with dark orifices leading to the bowels of the ship. These must be the entrances to the internal systems. If you move quickly, you might be able to make it to one of them.

BOOM!

An explosion nearby sends both armies into a war-howling fury, and the clash of steel and spell begins.

The PCs probably brought an army along to deal with this part of the mission, but you can give them a minor challenge to deal with if they feel like scrapping it out on their way to the entrance they choose. Perhaps a frost giant jarl from the mountain peaks of northern Ostalin has been tasked to guard the entrance, while the guardians of the other entrance have been swept up in the melee, leaving it open. That way, your players can choose whether or not to take a potshot at the army before hunting down Pilus.

Attacking Tempest Alone

Stubborn heroes might reject outright any notion of teleporting an army aboard the flying ship. It's also possible the heroes handle negotiations so poorly that all of their requests for aid are denied.

Cautious heroes may decide instead that teleporting an army aboard is too risky after striking the ship with a blast from the planar portal (it might fall from the sky, dooming everyone on board).

Other groups may want complete freedom to handle the ship how they choose. In this case, the heroes will have to figure out a way into the airship without the benefit of an army's worth of distraction. If they managed to convert Longinus to their side, he will have told them exactly how to gain entrance to the bowels of the beast. If not, they'll need to learn in a hurry once they teleport or fly up to the ship, as the ship's defenses are mighty even without the horde of men and creatures assembled upon its deck.

If this happens, then Pilus will fire the death ray and destroy Lyceum, if he can, and land the ship as soon as he realizes the heroes are on board and coming for him (landing the ship takes about 5 minutes). If there is an army in Seaquen ready to defend it, then the heroes will find themselves in the midst of yet another city-wide battle when they emerge from the leviathan. This time, however, defending forces will have the upper hand, and the heroes should only need to assist in clean-up duties before peace is restored. Without the might of *Tempest* to back them, Onamdammin's army is severely outmatched.

If Seaquen is taken unawares, Onamdammin will capture the Lyceum and the city and attempt to use them as bargaining chips in negotiating with the heroes to leave Seaquen to the invaders. Onamdammin's "loyalty" was to Pilus, however, and he will offer to help defend Seaquen against Ragesia in return for the cession of the southern peninsula of Dassen to his rule.



In the Belly of the Beast

Adventuring inside a living airship should be one of the most unique experiences the heroes have ever had. Make sure you play up the strange environment in your descriptions, and let them know how things change as they move from section to section. Each section of the beast is broadly analogous to an organ system, and each has a different feel to it as well as different default dangers and natural hazards. The players should be fully aware when they have passed from one section to the next by your descriptions.

Their first challenge is getting into the beast: this they can accomplish by climbing 50 feet down one of the entrances on the deck. Once they reach level "ground" in the first section of the living dungeon, it's just a matter of making their way through the various parts until they reach Pilus and the heart.

Tempest is a biomantic miracle, and one of Pilus's greatest innovations was the use of magical beings to power the ship's greatest weapons. This is done by draining the magic from acidic goo in the digestive system, but it also takes small amounts of energy from ambient magic. As a result, all arcane spells cast while inside the ship suffer a caster level penalty if the caster fails a Spellcraft check while casting (this caster level penalty doesn't affect spell slots or available spells, just the effectiveness of spells which are cast). The DC of the check and the caster level penalty for failure depend on which section the PCs are in, as shown in the chart below:

Section	DC	Caster Level Penalty
Digestive	15	–1
Respiratory	20	–2
Heart	25	–4

The first time an arcane spell is cast inside the ship, read the following:

> As you weave the arcane energies of your spell, you feel a slight tug, as though there's an interruption in the power link between you and the magic.

Have the caster make his Spellcraft check. If he succeeds, the spell goes off normally. The first time he fails, read the following:

> Your spell goes off, but you notice that it's not as powerful as you were expecting. At the same time, one of the veins in a nearby wall swells and a pulse of blue-white light shoots away from you along the wall and out of sight.

Where's the Challenge?

Most of the monsters inside the ship are significantly weaker than the party, and normally wouldn't pose much of a challenge. The environmental factors offset that somewhat, but it was by design that the encounters were less than the PCs would normally face (until the final room). The PCs have to make this in a straight shot: they can't teleport to safety, and they can't take time to rest. Therefore, the encounters are designed to be tough and memorable, but not life-threatening. There's enough going on in every room that the players shouldn't be bored by an easy fight here and there, and it will allow them to plausibly make a "suicide run" without having to rest because they're no longer in optimal fighting shape.

Digestive System

The system that the heroes enter first is the digestive system, beginning with the first tunnel they climb down.

The air in this system is putrid and acidic, and as soon as the heroes step foot inside each one each must make a DC 22 Fortitude save or be sickened until they leave the section. The floor, walls, and ceiling of these round tunnels is made of soft, pink flesh that makes a sickening "squish" sound

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as it is walked upon. Veins in varying shades of blue can be seen weaving in and out of the walls, beginning with the first room. Every few seconds, the veins seem to pulse momentarily with brilliant energy, which appears to travel deeper into the beast. (These surges are magical power heading toward the beast's heart, there to be channeled into magical effects.)

1. Harvest Room

After traveling for several minutes, the heroes come upon their first room.

> The floor of this room is covered in a thick mucous that drips from the ceiling and slowly rolls down the walls. A soft raised path leads through the room. The truly disturbing thing, however, is the dozen or so living beings that seem stuck in the walls, moaning softly and writhing lamely. Most of the creatures are humans and elves, but a satyr and a sphinx can also be identified.

Each PC must succeed on a DC 10 Balance check to avoid slipping off the path into the goo. A PC that falls into the goo suffers 2d6 points of acid damage, and is targeted by a *dispel magic* effect on his highest level persistent magical effect each round he remains in it. The dispel check is made at +20.

The creatures in the walls are being slowly drained of their magical capacity to feed the needs of the airship. They are already as good as dead, their brains turned to jelly by the insidious biomantic processes at work, and no amount of healing can revive them or free them from the walls. The PCs are getting a glimpse of their fate should they be captured by Pilus or his allies.

The exit to this room is a sphincter that is squeezed shut. It requires a successful DC 20 Strength or Escape Artist check for a Medium creature to squeeze his way through. The exit closes behind each creature, necessitating a check from each creature that wants to escape. Small creatures gain a +4 bonus on the roll, while Large creatures suffer a –4 penalty. Causing 100 points of damage to the sphincter causes it to reflexively open for one round before squeezing shut again.

2. Small Stomachs (EL 6)

After finding a fork in the tunnels, the PCs come upon two small stomachs. These stomachs are holding tanks rather than serving a digestive function, so the acid is not as strong here as it will be in the primary stomach. It is here, though, that they get their first glimpse of what Pilus has become.

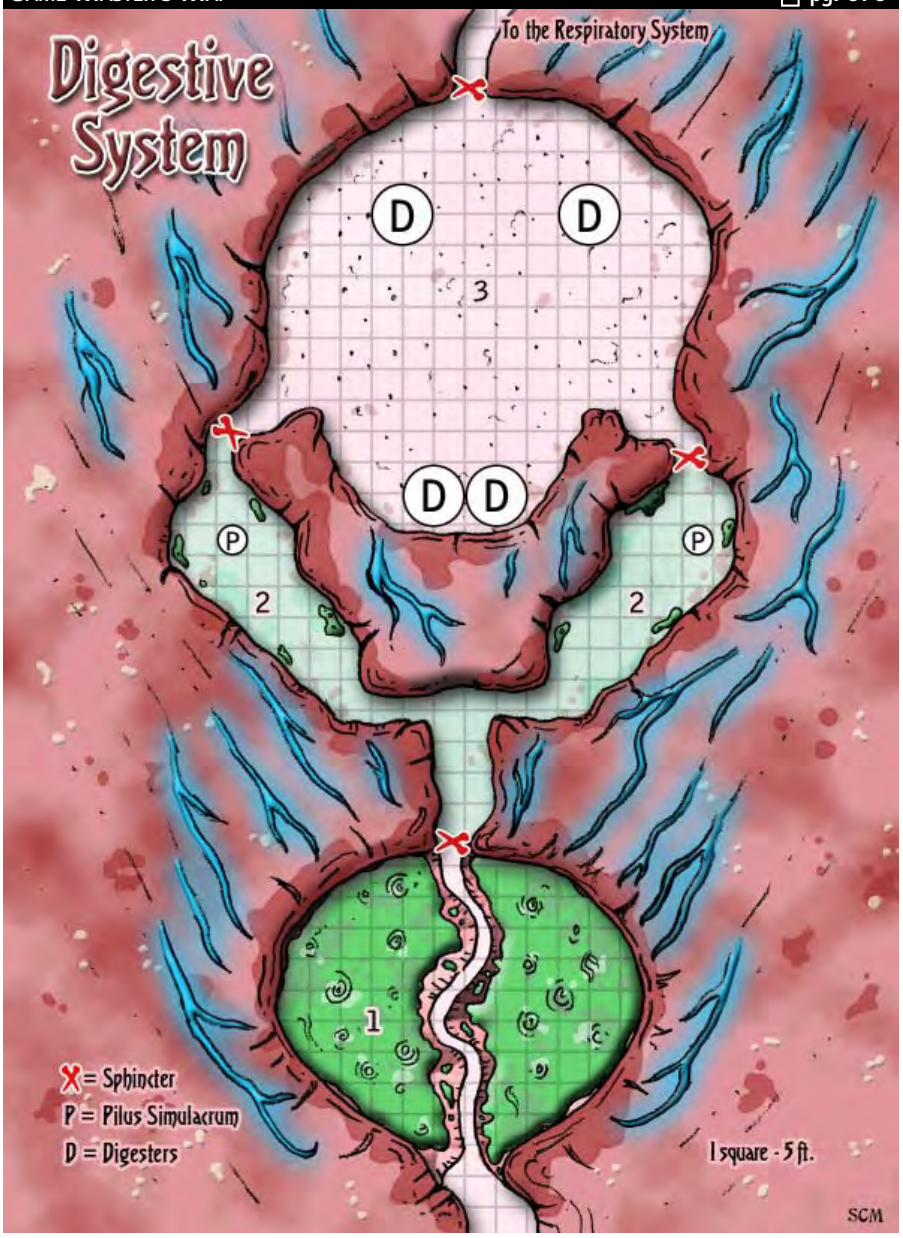
Because of his connection with the ship, Pilus can manifest a simulacrum from the ship's tissues, and use its harvested magic to channel a limited number of spells through the copy.

When the PCs first enter one of these rooms, read the following text:

> As you enter this oval-shaped chamber, you see a blister-like swelling growing on the floor. It stretches larger and larger until it grows to the size of a man, at which point a dark shape appears inside. A face presses up against the blister from the inside, and then hands, and then it explodes with a wet squelch. Standing before you, dripping with mucous, is a pink, fleshy creature whose form resembles that of the wind mage, Pilus. Even its clothes are made from veiny, raw flesh, and it speaks to you in Pilus's voice.
>
> "It's funny, almost, that you've come in the backside but you're destined to be chewed up and spit out by my lovely creation!"

At which point, a battle begins. The simulacrum has 70 hp and AC 18. It is immune to all spells other than those that cause damage. It has no physical attacks, but can cast any spell

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Pilus knows of 3rd level or lower without exhausting his own stores. It generally just throws *lightning bolts* unless the party seems resilient to electricity, in which case it switches to *magic missiles* until it is "killed."

Pilus simulacrum (CR 6): hp 70.

If destroyed, the simulacrum unleashes a death effect, and then cannot be reformed for five minutes. Unless the heroes are particularly fast or slow, you can just assume that Pilus will form a simulacrum once in the digestive system and once in the respiratory system. The death effect released depends on where the simulacrum was defeated. If in the digestive tract, it explodes and showers all creatures in 30 feet with acid for 5d6 acid damage. If in the respiratory system, whoever lands the killing blow is targeted by a focused wind blast (+15 to hit) that deals 3d6 points of damage and knocks the target prone and 20 feet away from the simulacrum. This could be especially dangerous in the lung, as you will see later.



3. Primary Stomach (EL 14)

The room before you looks a bit different from the last few. The walls are the same pink flesh, but the floor is spongy and has a lot of give. A hissing noise emanates from within, followed by several sucking sounds in quick succession.

This is one of *Tempest*'s primary stomachs, and as such it presents a real hazard for the PCs. Whenever foreign objects enter this stomach, it starts to process them as food. Three rounds after a PC enters the stomach, holes open up all over the floor and ceiling and the room floods with acid for 1d4 rounds, causing 10d6 acid damage per round to any creature inside the room (Reflex save DC 23 for half damage each round). During these acid sprays, all three exits from the room squeeze shut, requiring the same efforts to get through as that in Area 1.

This wouldn't be so bad if Pilus hadn't also populated the room with biomantically altered digesters. In addition to being larger than normal digesters, each has been implanted with an ettercap's web thrower.

Advanced biomantic digesters (4) (CR 10): hp 126 each, Appendix B.

The digesters alternate between webbing and spraying acid, hoping to keep out of danger long enough for the acid spray trap to kick in.

Acid Spray Trap: CR 10; magic device; location trigger; reset time 1 hour; 10d6 acid damage for 1d4 rounds (Reflex DC 23 half); Search DC 10; Disable Device n/a.

The exits to the room remain closed for 10 minutes after the acid spray, so the party will either have to wait them out or push their way through in order to move on to the respiratory system.

Ad Hoc Experience Award

Grant the PCs a total of 2,000 XP for making it through the digestive system, even though the individual creatures are too weak to normally merit a reward.

Respiratory System

Once the heroes get past the stomachs, they move through several hundred yards of winding, intertwining tunnels until things begin to change. The fleshy pink walls of the tubes begin to stiffen, and instead of acidic miasma, the walls are covered by spear-thick, foot-long cilia that seem to dance in a gentle breeze. The cilia completely cover the walls, so the PCs can no longer see the veins of energy running toward the heart, but anyone that takes a close look can see the cilia occasionally making waves in a similar pattern as the energy passes beneath them. In this way, the PCs can get a sense that they are moving toward something important.

There is a bit of relief for the PCs as the air clears up; anyone that was sickened in the previous section can breathe normally again. In fact, they get the idea that they're not the only things breathing, as the corridors here rhythmically shudder and vibrate.

Footing is difficult because of the constant motion, so any time a PC does anything strenuous, he must make a DC 10 Balance check or fall prone. Actions that trigger a check include, but are not limited to: making a double move, running or charging, making a full attack. In addition, Climb, Jump, and Tumble checks all suffer a –4 penalty in this section.

To make matters worse, Pilus's simulacrum shows up in one or both of these rooms to harass the party and make arrogant comments. If you think the PCs are going to have an easy time of it against the giant in Area 5, save the Pilus simulacrum for that room, and have it emerge in the midst of the party so that when it dies it has a good chance of knocking someone off the walkway.

Spells cast here are more liable to be drained by the veins pumping magic to the heart, so unless an arcane spellcaster succeeds on a DC 20 Spellcraft check for each spell he casts, the spell will be at –2 caster level.

4. Diaphragm (EL 13)

A cavernous room spreads out before you. The ubiquitous cilia cover the floor, walls, and ceiling, and you can see that the floor isn't flat, but is uniformly bumpy like a giant tongue. Tremors regularly flow across the room,

Gar-Alanak – Art by Claudio Pozas

causing the cilia to dance madly. The ceiling slopes down to the floor at the far side of the room, where you can see a dark tunnel behind flapping pink flesh. Each time it flaps open a strong wind beats against your face.

The floor and ceiling here constantly rise and fall as wind comes through the opening on the far side of the room. The room acts as if under a permanent gust of wind spell.

It's also quite difficult to walk in this room, and a DC 10 Balance check is required every round, regardless of what the character is doing. The easy solution would be to fly across the room, with its 50-foot ceilings, if it weren't also the home of two elder air elementals who attack any creatures entering the room as soon as they get about halfway across.

Elder air elementals (2) (CR 11) : hp 204 each, MM.

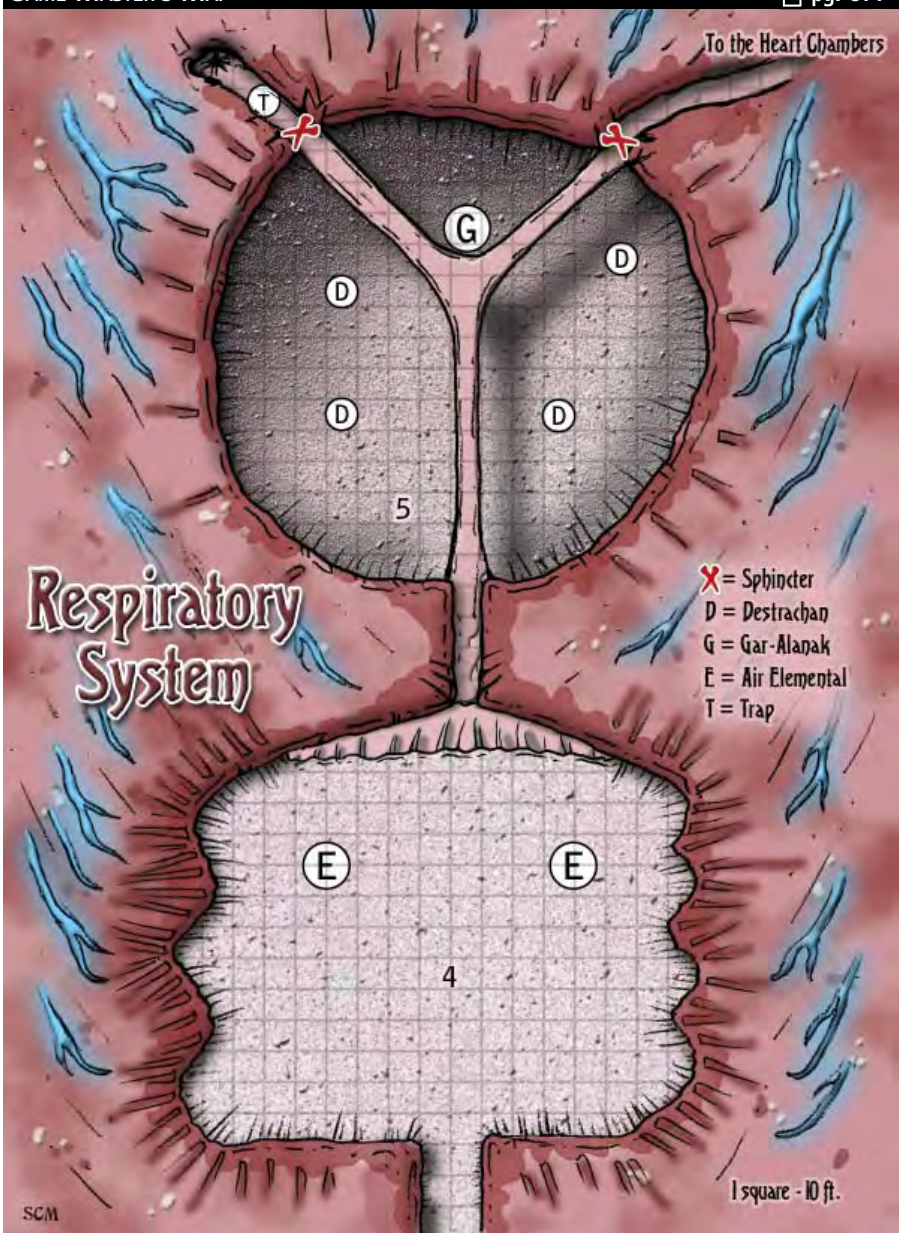
Escaping the diaphragm requires a well timed leap into the dark tunnel on the other side of the room. The skin of the floor and ceiling flaps up for only a few seconds before crashing heavily back down. A character has to time a leap through the opening at precisely the right time or be pummeled for 6d6 damage on his way through. A successful DC 18 Reflex save or Tumble check gets the character through safely. Characters gain a +2 bonus on the check for every 10 feet by which their base speed exceeds 30 feet per round.

5. Lung (EL 14)

This globe-shaped room is smaller than the last one, but the winds are stronger here and buffets chaotically around. The pink cilia waggle around like worms striving to dig through clay. Your path extends out onto a 10-foot-wide walkway of soft flesh, while the floor drops off to a garden of cilia far below. You can see several monstrous creatures milling about at the bottom of the room, but they don't seem to have noticed you. The walkway branches left and right about three-quarters of the way to the other side, leading to two closed sphincters.

The visible creatures are four destrachans that live in this room as guardians. The room's other guardian is a windborne cloud giant created by Pilus, who enhanced the giant's natural abilities greatly in return for five years of service. He is floating hidden down beneath the walkway, and will rise up and make himself known once all the PCs enter the room, or he is spotted by a scout.

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It is 60 feet down to the bottom of the room, although the cilia somewhat break a characters fall, so that 2d6 of the falling damage is nonlethal. The ceiling of the room is 30 feet off the platform at its highest point. The winds and shuddering combine to make the precipice quite treacherous for the PCs. In addition to the DC 10 Balance check required for certain actions, any PC that fails the check must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall off the walkway to the pit below.

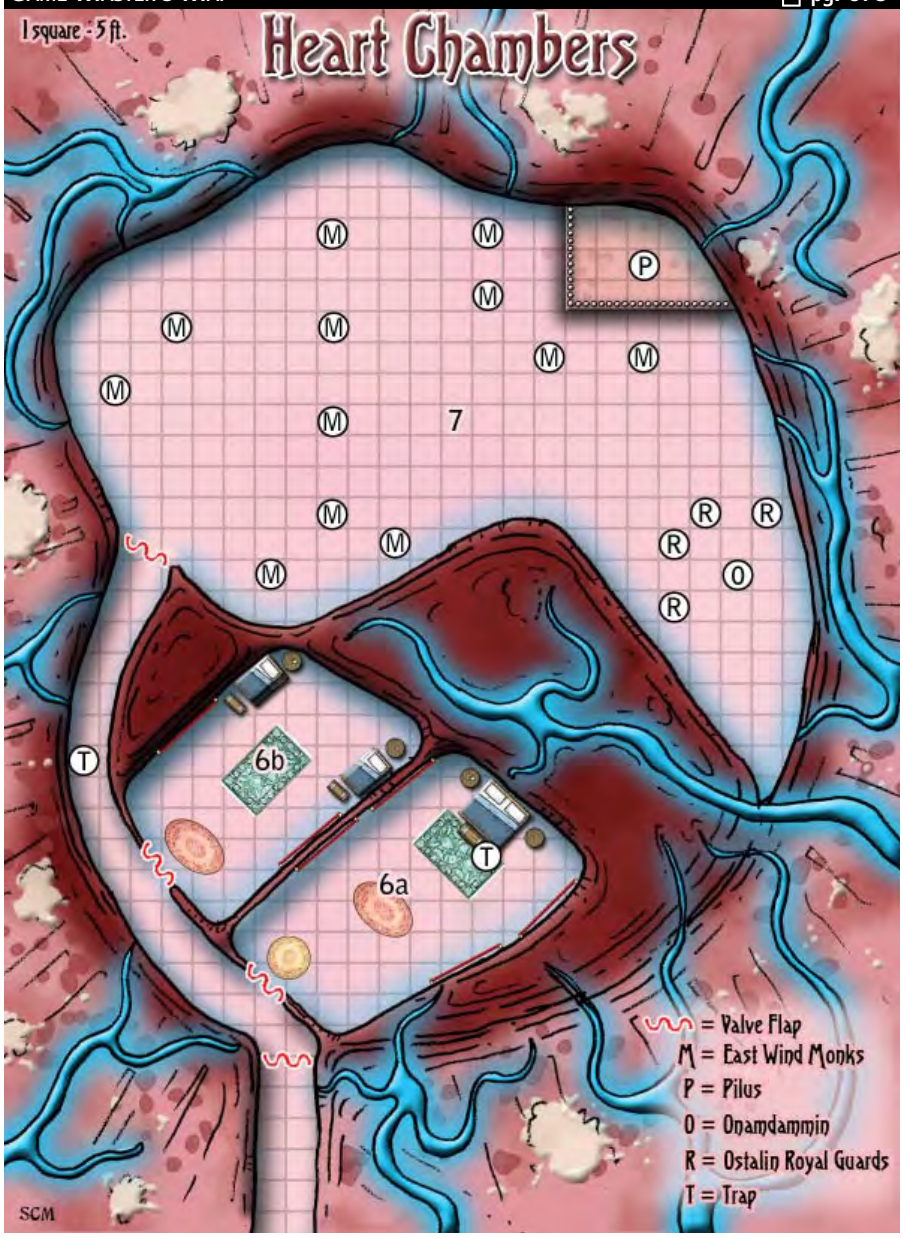
Gar-Alanak, windborne cloud giant (CR 13): hp 227. Appendix B.

Destrachans (4) (CR 8) : hp 60 each, MM.

Tactics

Gar-Alanak doesn't waste time. In the first round, he floats up and throws his *iron bands* at a flying creature. Next, he flies into combat, using Improved Overrun to charge through the PCs as he attempts to bull rush one of them off the platform (bull rush modifier +26 when charging). Arrogant, he taunts and blusters at the heroes during combat. If one or more PCs tries to stand toe-to-toe with the giant, he gladly tries to crush them with his morningstar. If it's apparent he's outmatched, though, he'll keep trying to bull rush opponents down into the pit to even things out. Gar-Alanak fights to the death, never quite believing that the heroes have the upper hand until it's too late.

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The destrachans stay in their pit, waiting for Gar-Alanak to dump them some fresh meat, at which point they all focus their nerve harmonics on the victims until they are knocked unconscious. Then, if there are no threats, they devour the unconscious creature(s).

Leaving the Room

There's one final obstacle to leaving the room, and that's the fact that the exit to the left is actually a waste-disposal mechanism. Any PC that squeezes his way through the left exit immediately finds himself grappled in a tight space, and can feel himself being shunted away from the lung room via a swallowing action.

The space's grapple check is +35; it deals 4d6 crushing damage on a success, and its grapple check is rolled at the end of the PC's turn. A PC trying to crawl back to the lung room must win two opposed grapple checks in a row. If the trap wins two in a row first, the PC is shunted out of the leviathan and finds himself in the middle of the storm some 600 feet above ground.

The exit to the right leads to the final few chambers: *Tempest*'s heart.

Ad Hoc Experience Award

Grant the PCs 2,000 XP for making it through the respiratory system in addition to the XP for the individual creatures.

Heart Chambers

After traveling through more winding tunnels, the heroes have worked their way into the heart of the beast, where the mage Pilus awaits them with his allies and one final surprise. The cilia quickly shorten and then disappear as the PCs move away from the lung, and the pink flesh gives way to red, gristly muscle. The corridors themselves pump flashes of arcane energy in the direction the PCs are traveling, and they can feel the raw power coursing by them as an electric buzz. All doorways in this area are valve flaps, loose sheets of flesh that can be pushed aside to move through them.

Spells cast here are even more prone to being drained by the nearby heart, so unless an arcane spellcaster succeeds on a DC 25 Spellcraft check for each spell he casts, the spell will be at –4 caster level.

6. Guest Chambers (EL 11)

Both of these rooms are as finely appointed as any royal chambers in a castle on the ground. This may be a clue to the heroes that they don't belong to Pilus.

6a. Onamdammin's Chamber

Pilus made sure that Onamdammin was going to feel right at home by providing him with the finest of everything: silk bedsheets (500 gp), tapestries (four worth 250 gp each), carpets (three worth 300 gp each), and a golden serving pitcher and water bowl (1,000 gp for the set). Onamdammin brought some of his personal treasure here as well, in a locked (Open Lock DC 31) and trapped chest at the foot of the bed.

Wail of the Banshee Trap: CR 10; magic device; location trigger; no reset; spell effect (*wail of the banshee*, 17th-level wizard, DC 23 Fortitude save negates); multiple targets (up to 17 creatures); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34.

All told, the room's treasure objects consist of six emeralds (400 gp each), *potion of neutralize poison*, five *potions of cure serious wounds*, *clear spindle ioun stone*, ten gold ingots (200 gp each), and 500 pp.

6b. Monks' Chamber

This room is not quite as finely appointed as the other, with only about half the value in woven goods and a silver serving set rather than gold. There are also two sets of bunk beds here instead of one grand bed. There are two small chests at



the feet of the bunk beds. They are locked (Open Locks DC 25) but not trapped, and contain only personal items, none of which have any value.

The hallway just past Area 6b is trapped with a *symbol of insanity*, which triggers as soon as someone passes over it.

Symbol of Insanity Trap: CR 8; magic device; location trigger; no reset; spell effect (*symbol of insanity*, 17th-level wizard, DC 22 Will save negates); multiple targets (all creatures in a 60-foot burst); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33.

7. Main Heart Chamber (EL 21)

When you open the valve flap to this chamber, you feel a rush of electricity buzzing all around you. You quickly get used to the buzz, but the hair on your arms and necks is standing on end. The room is well lit naturally by the blue-white energy that flows and swirls across nearly every inch of the walls. This is where it's all been coming. Suspended from the ceiling in a web of pulsing tendrils, you see a unicorn whose fur has fallen out and whose skin looks saggy and loose. Its eyes still show some spark of life, unlike the unfortunate souls trapped in the green goo, but it seems to be slowly fading into nothingness right before your very eyes.

You see several women dressed in garb you recognize from the Monastery of Two Winds, and they immediately take defensive stances and look at you menacingly.

Across the room you see a man that you barely recognize as the archmage Pilus. He stands in what looks like a cage of bone on a platform that rises nearly five feet off the floor. Tongues and tubes of flesh connect his back, chest, and head to the ceiling of the chamber, and energy seems to be flowing back and forth between him and the walls of the ship. He looks at you and sneers.

"So, you've made it to the heart of the beast, and have found that it's me! Don't look so surprised...after all, it was you who taught me so many months ago that my creations couldn't survive without me!"

Pilus is crazed, and more than a little worried that the heroes have made it this far. If the heroes disabled the eye with the Torch and the planar portal, Pilus tells them he won't be so easy to overcome as his weak brother.

Waiting in the alcove are Onamdammin and his private guards. They plan to gauge the capabilities of the PCs before making themselves known and joining the battle. (After all, what's the point of lackeys if they're not the first to die?)

Pilus (CR 20): hp 108, Appendix B.
East Wind monks (12) (CR 5) : hp 26 each, Appendix B.
Onamdammin (CR 14): hp 123, Appendix B.
Ostalin royal guards (4) (CR 10) : hp 105 each, Appendix B.

Preparation

If the PCs set off either the *wail of the banshee* or *symbol of insanity* traps in the previous areas, then those inside the room start making preparations. The monks of the East Wind cast shield on themselves and take up positions. Pilus and Onamdammin start their buff suites in the order listed; the royal guards drink their *potions of bull's strength*.

Tactics

The monks are the first to attack, diving in headlong, flying around the battlefield, and using *shocking grasp* and stunning fists as often as possible in an attempt to drop their foes early.

Onamdammin and his guards hang back until the Khagan finishes activating buffs, or the East

Pilus Connected ~ Art by Claudio Pozas

Wind monks are all taken care of. (In the latter case, Pilus gives him away by looking his way and asking, "what are you waiting for, you fool?!") The Ostalins emerge in formation: the guards form a semi-circle in front of Onamdammin with two squares separating each guard. Onamdammin carries his sword, but prefers to hang back and fire his *wand of scorching ray* and ranged spells until he's forced to fight. Even then, he releases his sword to dance at the first opportunity so that it can strike and leave him free to cast spells or use wands.

On the first round of combat, Pilus casts *time stop* and continues his buff suite if need be. On the last round of stopped time, even if he's still got buffs to cast, he makes sure to place a *wall of force* across his cage of bones. If he has extra rounds of stopped time, he traps one or two characters in separate *resilient spheres* before casting *wall of force*.

Pilus can't move outside the boundaries of his platform niche because he's attached to the heart, but he has free rein to move anywhere within it. After his *wall of force* is up and his buffs are active, he'll ready an action for the wall's eventual fall. When it goes down, he'll have readied a spell to go off immediately, depending on the circumstances. *Horrid wilting* is his first option, though he's loath to catch his allies in it, so he won't use it if they're still active and vital. If they are, he'll use targeted spells such as *prismatic spray*, *baleful polymorph*, *dominate person*, and *chain lightning*.

Pilus's cage of bone is more than it appears: it animates and attacks anyone that tries to get through it, dealing 13d6 damage (Reflex half DC 21). It also provides Pilus with cover (+4 AC, +2 Reflex saves) against attacks from outside it.

He'd prefer no one ever get to him, of course, but he can handle himself in melee for a while. He'll cast fire shield (warm) as soon as someone breaks through his defenses, and then start pummeling them with electricity-bolstered unarmed strikes. Once all his guards are dead he'll fight for his life and that of his creation. Like any good captain, he's prepared to go down with his ship rather than abandon her.

Development

When Pilus is killed, a shockwave of blue-white energy pulses across the ship, knocking every creature on it prone. It lists slightly to one side, causing the armies up top to scramble madly to avoid being spilled off to the ground below. The ship will try to right itself as it slowly dies, but at any moment it's going to flip over and crash to the ground.

If the characters wish to loot bodies, they'd better be quick about it. Also, it takes two full-round actions to cut down the dying unicorn if they choose to do so. Since the ship is no longer draining its power, it is able to speak and it begs the PCs to save it immediately after Pilus is destroyed. It turns out to be a celestial charger, and the value of its alliance is up to you.

Any remaining living humans that lack the ability to leave the ship themselves also beg to be saved. Onamdammin, if alive, teleports to safety, leaving his royal guard behind.

When they decide to leave, the PCs should teleport to the ship's deck to rescue their army. If they're good-aligned, they'll likely realize that leaving an entire army, even an opposing one, to die on the ship is against their principles. If they decide to save the Ostalin army, they've gained recruits for the duration of the war, especially since there's a power vacuum with Onamdammin either killed or in hiding. The Resistance welcomes the influx of seasoned recruits, although some of the monsters are killed and some of the soldiers march back to Ostalin, unwilling to follow anyone but the Khagan.

After the PCs have teleported off the ship, they can watch it loll in the sky for a few more minutes before plunging to its death in the ocean off the coast of Seaquen.

Ad Hoc Experience Award

Grant the PCs 2,000 additional experience for making it through the heart. If they rescued the unicorn, give them an additional 1,000 XP; if they saved the Ostalin army from certain death, 1,500 XP.

Conclusion

If the heroes brought the Shahalesti army along for the ride, they're going to have some promises to keep to Shaaladel, who will immediately come to collect anything they promised. He shows no gratitude for them saving his forces, and is eager to begin his new quest to get the Aquiline Heart for himself. How the heroes handle this fragile alliance will have consequences going forward. Meanwhile, they're going to have a hard time keeping the other armies from dispersing back to their homes.

Lyceum is grateful for the heroes' help once again, and offers them a magical reward that you think is appropriate — it could be magic items, magical training, spellbook swapping or scroll scribing services, or some other form of bartering based on what a guild of mages would have to offer.

Spring has come fully to Seaquen by the time the characters emerge from the airship. The air has warmed, birds are singing, and green is popping up all over the city. The heroes can feel cataclysmic changes of their actions … they haven't just been defeating enemies, they've been restoring the world to its rightful place. Let them bask in it.

The destruction of *Tempest* is a major victory for the Resistance, and ties up several loose ends of the campaign for the heroes. Unfortunately for them, the hardest may be yet to come. Empress Leska is entrenched in a valley with an army protecting the source of her immortality. She's daring the heroes to come and get her, and to bring the Torch right to her doorstep, so she can guarantee her immortality. Finding themselves unable to teleport into the valley, they will have to lead an army once more, this time to still *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart*.

Tempest

This section details Pilus's biomantic airship, *Tempest*. You will find detailed descriptions of the ship, its natural defenses, its death ray and other potent offensive capabilities, and an explanation of the dangers await those who would attack it. Full tactics for the ship's defenders are presented, as well as rules for adjudicating different attack plans the heroes may devise.

The Flying Ship

Of all the wind mage Pilus's biomantic creations, this one is by far the most fearsome. It is a mile-long flying ship reminiscent of both a shark and a dragon, but with a flat deck that could house the inhabitants of a small city…or an army. Inside the gargantuan beast, fleshy tunnels and chambers double as vital organs and living chambers for Pilus and his allies.

Tempest flies atop a persistent bank of angry storm clouds that spit lightning, hail, and rain in its wake. These clouds part only to reveal the convex disc of silver that is the creature-ship's lone eye, whose attention brings death and destruction on a massive scale. Few have seen its emerald death ray, and fewer still have lived to tell of its destructive power.

External Description

The massive airship is a mile long and almost half as wide, and can house an incredible army on its main deck. Its hide is as thick as a castle wall and is covered by a layer of armored plates that can turn away almost any conventional weapon. Cave-like dimples some 30 feet in diameter pockmark its body, each designed to perfectly fit a conventional siege device. Catapults, ballistae, and fire hurlers can be installed and then locked into place by driving a metallic spear into a nearby nerve, causing the ship's muscles to contract around the engine's hitches. Tunnels through the creature's flesh connect these "battlements" to the main deck. In addition, several cage-like platforms protrude from the deck and give near-perfect cover to archers and mages who can best utilize a more encompassing vision of the three-dimensional aerial battlefield.

The deck itself is a flat layer of thinner, interlocking plates covering a fleshy body. The surface has enough give to provide a comfortable rest for those traveling upon it for days and weeks on end, but it is consequently a bit less protective than the thick shell that surrounds the rest of the ship.

Sharp, angled, tree-sized blades of bone surround the sides of the deck when it is in flight, making it very difficult to board the ship with another force. These blades can retract for offloading or to make direct contact with another flying ship or creature. The effect is to give viewers from the side or above the impression that the ship is a gargantuan flying maw waiting to chew up anything that comes near it. Interspersed among these bones are pairs of flailing antennae that gather static electricity as the ship moves and then discharge it as bolts of lightning. Under attack, these bolts can be directed at targets, but otherwise they simply disperse into the air around the ship. Viewed from afar, the ship appears to buzz and flash with electrical energy as it moves ponderously through the sky.

The creature's head is a flat snout flanked by two massive horns and lined with razor-sharp bones, almost like a barracuda with its teeth on the outside. It has no visible eyes, ears, mouth, or breathing apparatus. Its tail arches up to form an upper deck that maps closely to the aft deck of a large ship. This serves as a convenient lodge for troop commanders and nobility in the event of an army being carried upon the ship. Instead of stairs, four tunnels large enough for four riders side by side are bored directly through the flesh of the leviathan, serving as passage from this deck to the main deck below.

Two (relatively) small, fin-like wings project from the sides of the ship, but these are mostly vestigial pieces of the base creature used to grow the leviathan. They do not help the creature fly, but they help it balance as it moves through the air. Controlling the leviathan becomes much more difficult if these wings are damaged or destroyed (see below). A third fin protrudes from the underside of the creature, but this fin truly serves no purpose.

The only other feature noticeable from the ground — when it's not shrouded by a storm — is the airship's lone eye. The eye normally remains partially closed, open only enough to allow Pilus to view the lands beneath the ship. During an assault, the eye is shrouded by the maelstrom that follows the ship and conceals it from the ground. Pilus, however, can see through the maelstrom because the eye acts as a divination device rather than processing light. The eye's other function is to focus magical energy into the destructive "death ray" the ship can fire intermittently. When it does this, it opens as wide as it can, becoming a silver disc with a black pupil, around which coalesces a nimbus of green-white energy. This is often the last thing an observer will ever witness.

Internal Description

Inside, *Tempest* is a curious combination of subterranean tunnels and wet, pulsing flesh. The chambers and tunnels inside it are a part of the creature's physiology — even some of its internal organs appear as nothing more than enormous caverns from the inside — though its massive size makes it easy to forget this fact.

Traversing the insides of the creature is a disgusting undertaking. The rank atmosphere can be overwhelming to terrestrial creatures, and the acidic miasma that marks its vestigial digestive region is a danger to all who aren't prepared for it. Tunnels are soft and make a squelching sound whenever trod upon, and walls and ceiling are lined with multicolored "veins" through which glowing energy pulses toward the creature's heart.

Passing through the sphincters that link the organs and passages requires one to either know the nerve triggers that cause them to flex open, or to damage the opening enough to cause a reflexive retraction. Some passages open to the outside, while others conceal deadly bile or sucking, high-pressure deathtraps, so hacking at every hole without knowing what's on the other side is a deadly pastime.

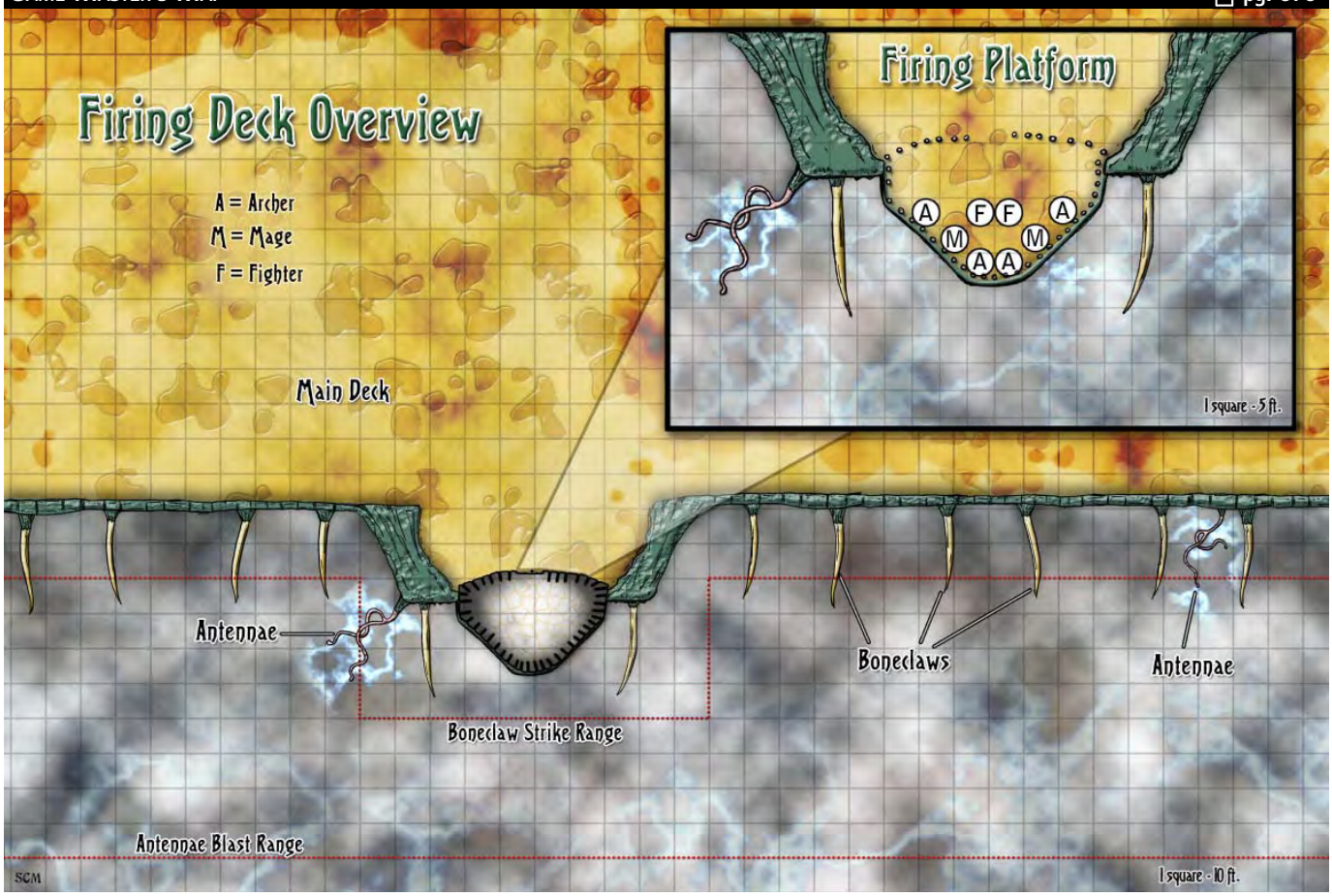
The creature-ship's insides were not designed to carry passengers, so any army must reside topside. It can, however, house any number of creatures that are immune to the hazardous environment, and a few small interior chambers (most notably the heart) were shaped and designed to carry human passengers. Invaders will find danger at every turn, as Pilus has summoned powerful allies and crafted biomantic defense systems in order to protect his vital creation.

Some heroes will decide the creature may be vulnerable to conventional attack from the inside, but the rush of blood, violent spasms, and magical backlash that accompany any such attacks should quickly divest them of such a notion.

Pilus and Tempest

Pilus is the only person who can fly *Tempest* now that he has completed the ritual of bonding. The two beings are now inextricably linked, and the death of one means the death of the other.

Game Master's Map pg. 679



Tempest can stay in the air on its own natural power, but it requires Pilus's concentration to fly it with any speed or maneuverability. In fact, if it ever landed without Pilus at the helm, it would not be able to get off the ground.

Tempest has a fly speed of 60 feet, cannot run or hustle, and has average maneuverability (it can hover and has no minimum forward speed).

Pilus built into *Tempest* the power to channel his own magic into destructive winds and storms, but in the past few months he made a breakthrough that allows him to channel the innate magic of any magic using creature in this way, although doing so slowly kills such creatures. He can bind a creature to *Tempest* in one of two ways: either by embedding the creature in a grasping, slimy orifice that *Tempest* can create at will, or by "plugging them in" in a similar manner in which he is permanently attached to the airship. He uses both methods, and has gathered many sacrificial victims in preparation for the coming war.

As a result of these experiments, the storm beneath *Tempest* acts as a permanent *call lightning* spell, with bolts of destructive force shooting at targets on the ground at all times unless Pilus consciously turns them off. In addition, the ship can call a tornado down anywhere along its length. This tornado stretches all the way to the ground, and can be consciously maneuvered at a speed of 60 feet per round to anywhere beneath the ship.

Attacking Tempest

Although *Tempest* is a living creature, it more closely resembles an object, and it is not subject to any spells or attacks that target creatures. In short, if a spell or ability would affect a non-living ship, it affects *Tempest*, otherwise it doesn't. Conventional damage applies to the ship, but its massive size makes it almost pointless to launch a traditional assault upon it. Still, it has some weak points that can be disabled or destroyed by attacks, which are detailed below. The stats, abilities, and defenses for each attack point are detailed separately, as well as the consequences for their destruction.

Any creature coming within 20 feet of the deck's edge is subject to attack from 1d2 boneclaws per round.

Boneclaw (CR n/a): Atk +23 melee (2d10+12, 19–20); hardness 10, hp 50.

Approaching on the Ethereal Plane

If the PCs are attacking the airship alone, it's quite possible they'll try to float into the ship ethereally. That's easier said than done, however, because Pilus (with Leska's aid) has taken precautions against just such an assault. He made deals with several powerful devils to patrol the "ethereal skies" around his airship over the course of his assault on Seaquen. Any attempt to access the ship ethereally meets with the following force.

Horned devils (2) (CR 16) : hp 172 each, MM.
Bone devils (4) (CR 9) : hp 95 each, MM.
Bearded devils (8) (CR 5) : hp 45 each, MM.

Attacking From Above

When there's no army on board, this is clearly the way to attack the airship. Its hide is more vulnerable on its deck, its interior can be penetrated, and any installed and manned siege engines can't target the attackers. In addition, a direct assault from above manages to bypass the



Ostalin Hippogriff Rider – Art by Claudio Pozas

deadly boneclaws and antennae that ring the deck's edge (although attacking the edges of the ship from above still provokes attacks from them).

With an army on board, however, it becomes much more dangerous. Attackers must suffer ranged and magical artillery fire from the defending army, and may have to fight their way into the ship's interior. In addition, a flight of eight hippogriff-mounted archers patrols the skies above the ship from sunrise to darkfall (there are 24 total on board, and they rotate patrols throughout the day).

Hippogriffs (8) (CR 2): AC 20 (chainmail barding), hp 35 each, MM.

Ostalin hippogriff riders (8) (CR 8): hp 65 each, Appendix B.

There are four major encounter areas/attack points to cover when the ship is being attacked from above: the deck, the firing platforms, the antennae, and the wings.

The Deck

The deck has a hardness of 15 and a 10-foot section has 150 hp. Given that the deck's surface is comprised of approximately 80,000 of these sections, the futility of hacking away at them should be apparent to anyone. However, the only entrances to the creature's insides are found on the deck, so it's going to have to be approached at some point. One way would be to distract the army on board with another army.

There is a visible interior entrance at each end of the ship, appearing as two dark holes in the surface of the deck about 500 feet from its center on either side. These holes have the appearance of miniature dormant volcanoes, with sides approximately 15 feet tall and a diameter of 30 feet. Each is a vertical shaft that eventually, some 30 or so feet down, leads to a tunnel that levels out into a 15-foot-wide corridor where creatures can walk normally.

The upper deck at the rear of the ship can be accessed directly, or via one of four tunnels that leads to it from the main deck.

Firing Platforms

These roughly semi-circular platforms extend off the edge of the deck and allow battle mages and archers a wider range of vision when fending off airborne attackers. Each includes a dome-like cage of armor plating that acts as an arrow slit (+8 AC, +4 to Reflex saves, grants improved evasion) for any defender on the platform against attacks from off the ship. The domes have hardness 10 and 60 hp per 10-foot section.

Any attacker coming within 10 feet of a firing platform is subject to attack by one boneclaw each round.

Boneclaw (CR n/a): Atk +23 melee (2d10+11, 19–20); hardness 10, hp 100.

Antennae

These 20-foot long fleshy tendrils can be found growing from the deck's edge at regular intervals. There are 10 on each side of the ship, as well as two at the head and two at the tail. Each can fire off rays of static electricity whose potency depends on the energy the ship has gathered by moving through the air. Although they have great range, the antennae don't "notice" attackers unless they fly within 100 feet of the ship (including targets above the ship).

The ship has a ranged touch attack bonus of +12; the range of an antenna attack is 400 feet. The first time a particular antenna fires its bolt, it deals 12d6 electricity damage, the second time 8d6, and then 4d6 every time after that. Antenna damage recharges at the rate of one "level" per minute it rests.

Creatures coming within 20 feet of an antenna also suffer 1d2 boneclaw attacks per round.

Antenna (CR n/a): Atk +12 ranged touch (12d6/8d6/4d6 electricity); AC 24, hp 80.

Boneclaw (CR n/a): Atk +23 melee (2d10+11, 19–20); hardness 10, hp 100.

Wings

The wings are free from boneclaws, making them relatively safe places to attack (or to launch attacks from), although each wing is within range of two antennae. Directly attacking a wing from above exposes the attacker to defenders on the ship's deck as well, while attacking from below provides cover from the deck but opens the attacker up to four siege engine attacks (DM's choice).

In addition, after two rounds of direct damage, Pilus notices the assault and sends two elder air elementals to fend off the attackers.

Elder air elementals (2) (CR 11): hp 204 each, MM.

Disabling a wing imposes a –2 penalty on all boneclaw and antennae attack rolls, and drops the ship's maneuverability class by one step. All penalties are cumulative if both wings are disabled.

Wing (CR n/a) (2): hardness 15, hp 500 each.

Attacking From Below

Attacking the airship from underneath is a somewhat safer solution, although it won't get the attackers very far and the weather is as

much a factor as its weapons. Antennae ring the ship around the bottom at the same intervals as those on the deck, but these will fire at anything within their range that seems to be a threat. The siege weapons entrenched in niches all along the outer rim of the ship will have full view of anyone flying on one side of the ship. In addition, anyone caught in the blast of the eye's death ray will be sorry.

Attackers thinking of cutting their way into the ship's interior will find it a daunting and ultimately futile task, as the interior is protected by armor plating and a thick layer of fat that would take days to get through even with powerful magic. Much more likely is a direct assault on the eye, which is the source of much of the ship's fearsome destructive capability.

A maelstrom follows the ship wherever it flies, concealing it from view and protecting it from aerial assault. It completely covers the eye and 10 feet above it, as well as 50 feet below it. The storm has the following properties:

- Windstorm level winds assail anyone within the storm.
- Anyone wearing or holding metal has a 25% chance to be struck by lightning each round for 10d6 damage (Reflex half DC 25).
- Visibility is restricted to 20 feet while in the storm.

There are four major encounter areas/attack points to cover when the ship is being attacked from below: the artillery niches, the antennae, the wings, and the eye.

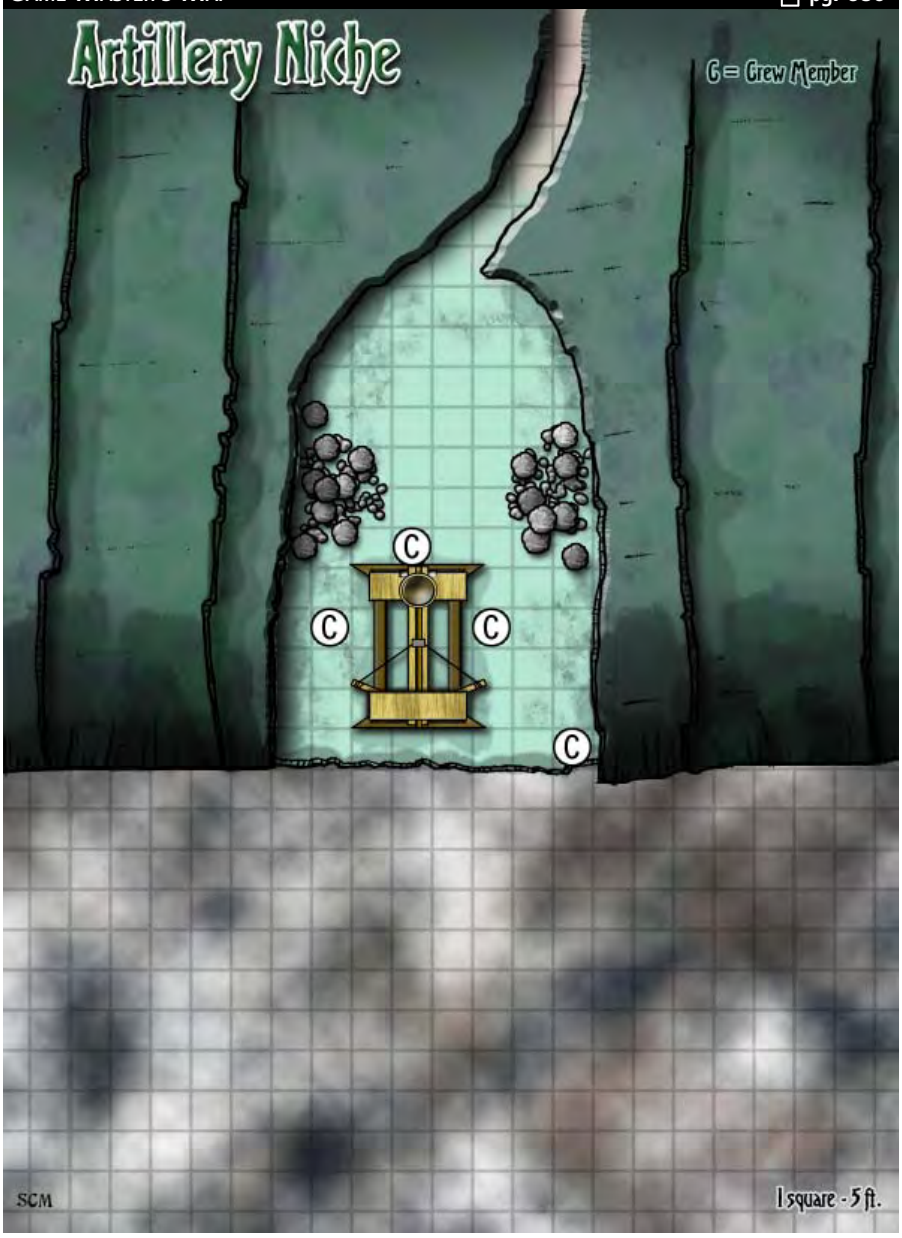
Antennae and Wings

See above, except the antennae fire at anyone within range.

Artillery Niches

Each of these niches is 40-feet high, 40-feet wide, and 60-feet deep. A niche holds either a heavy catapult, three ballistae, or a fire hurler (a heavy catapult that hurls flaming pitch as a ranged touch attack, dealing 5d6 fire damage and automatically setting its target aflame). A full crew attends each weapon, and Pilus makes sure to bring along backups so the crews can rotate as a result of fatigue or death. Roll on the tables at right to determine a random crew if the heroes decide to assault an artillery niche.

Game Master's Map pg. 680



Ballista

1d8	Crew
1–2	1 human fighter 10 with a ring of enlarge person
3–4	1 human monk 10 with a ring of enlarge person
5	1 human wizard 10 and 1 shield guardian
6	3 troll hunters
7	3 elite vampires
8	3 barbed devils

Catapult or Fire Hurler

1d4	Crew
1–2	4 half-orc fighters 8
3	1 night hag and 3 minotaurs
4	4 xills

Artillery niches offer one possible way to sneak onto the deck while avoiding most of the antennae and the boneclaws, as each has a flesh tunnel that winds up until it reaches open sky. These tunnels do not grant access to any other part of the ship, however.

The Eye's Defenses

This is the heart of the terror that *Tempest* can bring to bear against its enemies, and anyone that has seen its awesome power must be incredibly brave or incredibly foolhardy to attempt a direct assault upon it. First, any attack on the eye draws a swift reprisal from Pilus, who can see everything that goes on in its field of vision. He sends two elder air elementals as well as the windborne cloud giant Gar-Alanak to help defend the eye. They arrive at the end of the second round after an assault begins. Second, the eye is surrounded by four antennae that fire round after round at any creatures that attack it. Third, the eye seals itself shut at the first sign of danger. And finally, the eye can bring its own power to bear against creatures that break through all of its defenses.

Elder air elementals (2) (CR 11) : hp 204 each, MM.

Gar-Alanak (CR 13): hp 227, Appendix B.

Antennae (4) (CR n/a) : Atk +12 ranged touch (12d6/8d6/4d6 electricity); AC 24, hp 80 each.

The Eye

This silver disc with the black center strikes fear into all who see it. Wherever the airship goes, the eye peers out from the storm, and where it sees enemies it lays out an emerald beam of destruction. All who have seen it and survived fear it, and those who have no knowledge of its power have little chance to speak of what they see when it is unleashed. The eye is perhaps the most tempting target on the airship, but it is also the most deadly, and those who attack it are in for more than they bargained for.

The eye's armored lid has hardness 15 and 300 hp. The eye itself has no hardness and can be disabled by dealing it 100 points of damage, or by a single blow that deals 50 or more points of damage.

If the lid is opened by force, the eye immediately begins to power up its death ray, which fires even if the eye is disabled while it is powering up. The death ray has the following effects:

Round 1: The eye begins to glow a brighter and brighter white-green. The maelstrom beneath the ship begins to part and the storm is drawn into the eye. Anyone within 300 feet of the eye is subjected to 70 mph winds (equivalent to a windstorm) and the effects of an *ice storm* as cast by a 20th level caster.

Round 2: The death ray fires. Normally, Pilus can orient the death ray up to 10 degrees from vertical — any more and it throws the ship out of control — but if it's fired in an emergency situation it doesn't aim at all and fires straight down.

The Eye's Effects

Any creature directly beneath the eye (which has a 100-foot diameter) suffers the effects of a *disintegrate* spell as cast by a 20th-level sorcerer with no save or spell resistance. Creatures that survive disintegration are automatically blinded for 10 minutes, as the spell, and then bull rushed toward the ground with a +30 on the opposed roll; failure indicates up to 20d6 crushing damage as the creature is forced to the ground. Non-corporeal creatures are simply blinded.

Creatures within 30 feet of the eye, but not beneath it, at the time it fires suffer the same *disintegrate* and blinding effects, but do get a saving throw and/or spell resistance to overcome the effects. They are also knocked back 3d4×10 feet and suffer 1d6 lethal and 1d6 nonlethal damage per 10 feet they are thrown.

On the ground, everything directly beneath the eye (a 100-foot radius cylinder) is automatically disintegrated, and the shockwave devastates the surrounding area. Within 30 feet of the eye beam cylinder, the effects are as described above. More than 30 feet and up to 100 feet from the cylinder, creatures and structures suffer the effects of an *earthquake* spell, although the fissures do not automatically close (creatures that fall in suffer an 80-foot drop instead). Creatures and structures more than 100 feet and up to 200 feet away suffer a half-strength *earthquake* (all effects and damage are halved, though saving throws remain the same).

The death ray can only be fired once per hour, so if the eye's armored lid has been destroyed it can easily be disabled by any attackers that survived the blast. Once the eye is disabled, it cannot fire its death ray again until it has been healed.

Defeating Tempest

Defeating *Tempest* requires that at least 25% of its body is destroyed, which is a tall order, or that it is disconnected from Pilus, most obviously by penetrating its interior and killing him in the heart chamber. Disabling its eye, wings, antennae, or any other part merely affects its ability to maneuver or deal damage. Pilus can and will fix any damage caused if he and *Tempest* survive the assault on Seaquen.

If Pilus is destroyed, the airship begins to falter. It does not immediately fall from the sky; instead, it takes however long is necessary for the heroes to make a daring and frantic escape, and to teleport whomever they wish off the ship before it crashes to the ground, killing all those left on board. Make sure, however, to impress upon the heroes that they risk being killed in the crash if they don't hurry.



Under the Eye of the Tempest ~ Art by Claudio Pozas



Adventure Twelve
The Beating of the Aquiline Heart

for 17th- to 20th-Level Characters

by Darrin Drader
Ryan Nock
and Russell Morrissey

Cover Art by
Claudio Pozas

In the stunning finale to the War of the Burning Sky campaign saga, the heroes lead their armies on a final assault against the might of the Ragesian Empire, and cut out the heart out of their foe, the tyrannical Leska.

Companies of fiends, legions of deadly warriors, furious beasts, and titanic arcane creations defend the desolate Opaline Wastes, for in the caverns below, Empress Leska crafts dark sorcery which will bind the world to eternal war.

From the throne room of the imperial palace, to the ash-stained fields of war, to the ancient and accursed Heart of History, epic dangers loom against the heroes, and tens of thousands will fight and bleed and die at their side to save their many homelands, for both the end of the war and the fate of the world are tied to the beating of the Aquiline Heart.

Background

In primordial times, an ancient spirit of elemental fire known as the Flamebringer Dragon battled the spirit of air, the Stormchaser Eagle. The dragon tore out the eagle's heart and drank her blood, gaining immense power and ensuring the strength of his draconic progeny. But the spirits of sea and stone sensed the dragon's growing might, and the dragon knew that if he consumed the heart and slew the eagle fully, the other two spirits would unite to destroy him. So the dragon hid the still-beating heart in a place to which he could never return, preferring to live rather than risk death by seeking more power.

Buried beyond the sight of any creature, the heart's blood pulsed into the roots of the world, nourishing it and fostering life above and below the surface. Ages marked the world, and as civilization rose, rumors of this font of life spread throughout the lands that would become Ragesia and its neighbors. Spellcasters could sense its power, and the power-hungry and the desperate sought it out, but only the scantest clues hinted at its location, or at the dangers that awaited those who found it. The Aquiline Heart passed into legend, becoming a symbol of the unattainable.

Then two people found it. Where many had tried before, a young sorceror named Leska and her lover, the fey Etinifi, discovered the path to the heart in a desert of white stones called the Opaline Wastes. A lifeless land, where time flows like an erratic wind, the wastes long attracted seekers, but ancient shamans and warriors had devoted themselves to hiding the heart. The shamans erected colossal arcane totems to conceal the heart's resting place, and to ensure that only those who truly needed the heart to avoid death could find it, while their warriors slew unworthy trespassers.

Leska and Etinifi, however, had been sentenced to death by the aging Ragesian emperor Drakus Coaltongue, who had offered them reprieve if they found him the secret of immortality. Of course others had found the trail to the heart too, but only Leska had the strength to defeat the dangers on the path and claim the prize. She drank the heart's blood, achieved immortality, and in a fit of patriotism she would later regret, brought back a vial of the heart's blood for Coaltongue. But she could never again find the tunnels that led to the heart, because she no longer had the need.

What she had, however, was ambition.

After years of loyal service to mighty Coaltongue, Leska, Supreme Inquisitor of Ragesia, slew her emperor, claimed his rule, and set the empire's armies on a war march to ensure her unchallenged dominion. Great legions scourged the lands around Ragesia, and power-hungry warlords battled Leska and each other, while heroes rose to challenge these tyrants. But deeper threats than tyranny and slaughter endanger the world.

Leska will not be satisfied until there are none left with the strength to oppose her. She knows that the heroes have learned the location of the Aquiline Heart, a legendary relic whose blood protects Leska and grants her immortality. The Heart also nourishes the lands of Ragesia and its neighbors, balancing the elemental energies of creation; if the Heart were to die, the corporeal world would disintegrate into ethereal dreamstuff. It is this fate that the dreamborn trillith desire. Nightmare creatures lacking bodies, they feel imprisoned by the corporeal world and seek its destruction.

Meanwhile, to protect the the precious Heart, source of her eternal life, Leska has gathered her armies deep within the desolate badlands known as the Opaline Wastes. These legions guard the Heart of History, a practically bottomless rift that leads to the Aquiline Heart. Powerful rituals, performed by her loyal inquisitors in the imperial capital of Ragos, shield these forces from divination and ward the area against teleportation. All this gives Leska time to complete a mighty dweomer of her own.

Welcome to the twelfth adventure and the third of three possible conclusions of the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga.

The heroes met faithless Etinifi in adventure eight, and from him they learned that they can only truly kill Leska if they destroy the Aquiline Heart. Etinifi, himself immortal and long tormented by Leska for some undisclosed betrayal, simply wants to die, and if the heroes have not dealt with him, he has allied with the trillith in order to destroy the heart. He knows it will doom the world, but he doesn't care.

The heroes may already have defeated the leader of the trillith (in adventure ten), but nevertheless some trillith survive, having bonded with corporeal creatures. Leska long used the trillith to manipulate and weaken her enemies, but now a deceptive trillith plans to use the heroes' attack on the supreme inquisitor as cover for its attempt to destroy the heart.

The heroes should still have many allies they can trust, however, and they will need them to triumph. Much depends on how successful the heroes have been in their missions so far.

Introduction

The whole world knows change hangs in the air. Rumors on the interplanar grapevine, whispers in the dreams of priests, and murmurs in the pulse of the earth all give the same warning: Leska seeks to command the power of the Heart, and through it the very fate of the land. She will bind this land to war, and will not release it until she has her victory. If she completes her spell, allies will turn against each other, soldiers will fight for no purpose but undefined "victory," and all dreams will be crushed under the heels of calamitous armies.

The heroes face three challenges. They must defeat Leska's armies and slay her, and they must also protect the world from destruction by the actions of the trillith. Most importantly, they must break the curse Leska places on the world, condemning it to endless conflict. The end of the war and fate of the world are both tied to the beating of the Aquiline Heart.

Adventure Overview

The heroes learn that while Leska has moved the bulk of her forces to the white wasteland around the Heart of History, a contingent of inquisitors in the Ragesian capital of Ragos maintain a ritual spell that wards the wastes against teleportation and divination. In order to use their greatest advantage in this battle, the Torch of the Burning Sky, the heroes must disrupt this ritual. After a quick assault on the Ragesian Imperial Palace, they will be able to freely teleport their armies to the final battle against Leska.

Spread throughout the white wasteland, three divisions of Ragesian forces defend the path to the Aquiline Heart, where Leska is performing mighty magic. The heroes and their allies teleport in and engage the enemy, but great sorcery bolsters her forces. Overwhelmed and caught by surprise, the heroes must target key powers among the Ragesian armies in order to give the Resistance a chance in the battle. Over two or three days of fighting, the Resistance army forces its way to the Heart of History, where during a battle with a titanic dragon, the heroes have a chance to aid a mutiny and force the Ragesian army to surrender.

The heroes descend a seemingly bottomless rift into the Heart of History, where they overcome impossible challenges of fire, water, stone, and time, finally reaching the cavern of the fabled Aquiline Heart. Leska, all her ambition and might having failed her, turns the sum of her fury upon those who have opposed her. But enemies have discreetly followed the heroes — the subtle

trillith and the traitorous Shahalesti — and the heroes find themselves caught in a four-way battle to determine the fate of the world.

The Clash of Armies

In Act Two we provide an overview of the various allies and numerous enemies who can aid or oppose the heroes in their mission. While you can certainly go into more detail when running the grand battles, the following system simplifies the job of determining how victorious the heroes and Resistance are.

The heroes start with Victory Points (VP) based on their allies and on their actions to date in the war, and throughout the course of the adventure the heroes will acquire VP based on their actions, such as defeating key enemy units, disrupting their supplies and chain of command, dangerous reconnaissance, sabotage, capturing a command post, and even making stirring speeches.

In order to defeat the Ragesian army, the heroes must acquire 200 VP by the end of the adventure. Simply rushing to Leska is not enough to win the day, for the Resistance armies could still be broken, leaving various surviving Ragesian commanders to try to claim power in the wake of their empress's death. While the heroes might ultimately triumph over such a difficult, fractious power struggle, it hardly makes for a tidy, inspiring ending.

Worse, however, would be for the heroes to assume that simply by defeating the Ragesian armies they will end the war. Even if they acquire enough VP to force Leska's armies to surrender, when Leska completes her spell, the armies that make up the Resistance will begin to turn on each other, driven by sorcery to continue the war.

Victory Points represent not just direct success in battle, but also strategic advantage. For instance, the players don't have to specifically

Adapting the Adventure

If you plan to run *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart* as a stand-alone adventure, you could use the caverns of the Heart of History as a near epic level dungeon, with the heroes competing against Leska for the prize of immortality, or perhaps seeking to defeat her so they can ascend to epic levels.

Alternately, you could use the Battle of Opaline Wastes as the basis for a siege of any key location in a fantasy war, or Storming the Palace for a royal assassination plot.

If you run the adventure in your own campaign, we encourage you to replace NPCs in the rebellion with ones your players will be familiar with. The hidden trillith can simply become traitorous allies, and you can tweak the symbolism of the Heart of History to fit your setting's origin myths.



Origin of the Heart – Art by Claudio Pozas

Success in Previous Adventures	VP
Sindaire's armies loyal. (This is assumed unless the heroes went out of their way to mess it up.)	+20
Fire Forest fey loyal. Seela scouts and spellsingers bolster allies throughout the allied armies.	+1
Established unity temple in Seaquen. The temple helped rival groups learn to work together.	+2
Saved the nobility of Dassen. The armies of the Eight Lands fight for the Resistance.	+20
Steppengard or Gallo is King of Dassen. Morale and patriotism run high.	+2
Longinus loyal. West Wind monprotect against aerial threats.	+2
Loyal forces control *Tempest*. (Difficult.) The airship, though weakened, obliterates stationary forces.	+15
General Magdus loyal. The rogue Ragesian general lends the survivors of the First Army to the battle.	+5
Shahalesti loyal. These elite warriors blend magic and strong infantry tactics.	+30
Shalosha loyal. The Shahalesti, normally suspicious of foreigners, trust Shalosha, and they follow orders better.	+5
Shaaladel in charge of Resistance armies. The Shahalesti lord makes sure his people suffer the fewest casualties, leading to resentment.	–20
Shahalesti opposed. Shaaladel's pride leads his people to cause trouble for the rest of the Resistance.	–30
Katrina loyal. The fire-happy sorceress kills hundreds of Ragesians.	+2
Katrina opposed. She instead kills hundreds of the heroes' allies.	–2
The heroes possess the Torch. This symbol of military supremacy incites fervor in their allies.	+5
The Torch is fully functional. The heroes can take advantage of amazing strategic options, teleporting huge forces into the perfect position.	+20
Drakus Coaltongue loyal. (Difficult.) The immortal warlord strikes fear in the soldiers who betrayed him for Leska, and inspires the Resistance.	+1
Koren Obelisk still functional. The Ragesians can slay entire armies in a matter of minutes with its power.	–100
Gate Pass loyal. The city's beleaguered freedom fighters join the battle.	+5
General Ashok Danava loyal. (Difficult.) The Second Ragesian Army joins the Resistance, pitting brother against brother.	+10
Vigilance died during the Festival of Dreams. Leska's armies include many lesser trillith who can possess allied forces and mislead them, or cause nightmares and confusion.	–20
The Mother of Dreams slain or freed. The trillith present are restricted to corporeal forms.	+5
Trilla loyal. (Difficult.) The gold dragon seeks redemption, and relishes fighting against tyrants. All but a few of the trillith present join with the heroes.	+5
Annihilation unleashed. The colossal trillith horror destroys the world.	n/a
Seaquen destroyed. Devastating blow to morale.	–10
Ostalin's armies loyal. (Difficult.) The aerial cavalry help defend against Ragesia's wyverns, while biomantic creations aid the ground war.	+20

decide how they will use the Torch of the Burning Sky in battle, but simply being able to use it helps them outmaneuver their foes. If the heroes take a direct role in leading the Resistance, you should encourage your players to flesh out the details of their orders, but generally we assume the heroes go on special missions, while General Xavious and others direct the movements of armies.

Tracking Victory Points

The chart below lists all the factors that influence Victory Points, including some description of how they benefit or hinder the Resistance. Some factors can change in the course of the adventure. For instance, if Katrina survived her last encounter with the heroes and is an enemy, she poses a great danger to the Resistance, incurring a VP penalty. But if the heroes defeat her, they remove the penalty, and if they win her back to their side (perhaps by bringing her brother Rantle to talk to her) they could even earn extra Victory Points.

For those factors that involve NPCs, the person has to be alive to be "loyal." Someone who died a friend won't contribute much to this battle. Some factors are difficult or nigh impossible to actually accomplish, but we include them for those who manage to pull them off.

Throughout the text, scenes and sections that have a potential to influence VP are marked with a torch's flame: .

Generally this adventure assumes the heroes start with the aid of Sindaire, Dassen, and Shahalesti, that the Gate Pass freedom fighters are on their side, and that they have a fully functional Torch, for a baseline of 100 VP.

Reasonably successful heroes who kept their allies alive and worked hard to forge a few unorthodox alliances might start with 120 VP. Truly amazing negotiators and strategists could possibly start with as much as 175 VP, while heroes who failed on numerous missions and let Pilus destroy Seaquen might start with 0 VP or worse, making victory on the field of battle a practical impossibility.

Narrating the Grand Battle

When the heroes reach certain VP thresholds (see the table on the next page), they trigger significant victories for the Resistance. These provide a framework for narrating the conflict.



When the heroes reach a VP milestone, this represents decisive progress by the Resistance in the battle. It takes at least a few hours of battle for the Resistance soldiers to actually accomplish what is listed below after the heroes acquire enough VP for the milestone.

After resolving the events in the Through the Two Dragons entry (200 VP), Resistance forces clear a path to the rift, and after defeating the commander of the Seventh Army and the green dragon Phaaughsmat, the heroes force the surrender of the Ragesian forces, and declare victory in the Battle of the Opaline Wastes. All that remains is to descend into the Heart of History and defeat Leska.

Gallery of Allies

Throughout the campaign saga, the heroes have met and fought beside a wide array of allies, and we have endeavored to give each of them a role in the campaign's climax. Whenever you see a scene marked with a , the encounter involves one or more NPCs from earlier in the campaign who may not necessarily be alive or allied with the heroes. If a given NPC died or isn't loyal to the heroes, many of these scenes can either be cut out or the character can be replaced with a random Resistance member. But with luck, the heroes will be reminded of their successes throughout the campaign saga, and be more motivated to fight for victory, not just for themselves, but for all those fighting at their side.

Most of these NPCs are low- or mid-level, so they will be facing challenges better suited to their skills, but for those likely to play a prominent combat role we include stat blocks in Appendix One: Allies. If the heroes end up dragging lower level allies into combat, you can use their original stats from their previous appearance.

Actions in Battle	VP
Ragesian activities	
Take out the teleportation/divination ward ritual. Leska can no longer move her armies in secret. If the heroes do not accomplish this, they gain no benefit from the Torch being active.	+15
Notice that some of Leska's forces remain hidden. The Resistance is not caught by surprise by the early attack by the Ragesians.	+5
Devise tactic to use the Torch to teleport enemies away.	+5
Rousing speech before the mission.	Up to +5
Recover important captives for interrogation.	Up to +5
Quickly resolving treant tactics dispute.	+2
Quickly negating Atroius's weather magic.	+2
Badlands battle. Discover invisibility trick.	+1
Defeat wave one.	+5
Defeat wave two.	+6
Cavalry general. Defeat General Titus.	+10
Recover the Grand Standard of the Fifth Army.	+5
Monstrous assault. Defeat the Army of Darkness.	+4
Win Golem Battle.	+6
Kill or capture General Euserius de Fiaba.	+10
Recover the Grand Standard of the Sixth Army.	+5
Recruit humanoid mercenaries to Resistance side.	+5
Defeat Atroius and end the weather menace.	+10
Various missions on the second day — each.	+5
Motivate the armies to face the daunting tunnel.	+10
The Edge of History. Defeat General Cavala.	+10
Force the Ragesians to order a surrender.	+25
Slay Leska.	+50
Failures and mistakes	
Fail to avert assassination of Resistance commanders.	–20
Fail to avert abduction of Shalosha.	–5
Lose the Torch to the Ragesians.	–40

VP Total	Event
—	**Engagement:** Less than an hour after the Resistance's arrival, and before they can launch their first attack, the hidden Fifth Ragesian Army strikes from multiple directions, while elements of the Sixth Ragesian Army sally forth, catching the Resistance in a pincer. Ragesian druids unleash unnatural weather upon the center of the Resistance formations, pinning them down while the Ragesians maneuver to favorable positioning.
100	**Repulse:** Resistance armies manage to cut the Fifth Ragesian Army's infantry in two. The army withdraws to regroup. Meanwhile, the Resistance defends against attacks by the golems, undead, and monsters of the Sixth Ragesian Army, but it wins the day.
125	**One Down, Two to Go:** The Resistance crushes the Fifth Ragesian Army; the remnants withdraw to a defensive position in the badlands. Allied forces hunt down and kill any who don't surrender. Attention turns to the Sixth Army. (This happens no earlier than the morning of the second day.)
150	**Trench War:** Faced with heavily dug-in Sixth Ragesian Army defenders, the Resistance skirmishes and ambushes until it finally controls the Opaline Wastes. They move to Two Dragons Canyon. (This happens no earlier than the afternoon of the second day.)
200	**Through the Two Dragons:** The Resistance encounters a cavern full of fortified side tunnels from which the Seventh Ragesian Army snipes and assaults the Resistance. Sappers open paths into these tunnels, and room-to-room fighting begins. (This happens no earlier than the morning of the third day.)

Act One: The March to War

In this act, the heroes gather their armies and clear the way for their assault upon Leska's last bastion of power.

The stats of all encounters in this act and others are presented in Appendixes One and Two, unless they are in the core rules.

The Heart of the Matter

If the heroes do not already know, their allies inform them that Leska has gathered a large force to protect a seemingly unimportant stretch of white, rocky desert. You should use divine visions, contact from extraplanar entities, or the results of the heroes' divinations to warn them of Leska's plans to use the power of the Aquiline Heart to bind the fate of the world to war.

To defeat Leska, the heroes must fight through Leska's armies at the Opaline Wastes, pass through a canyon gateway called Two Dragons Arch, and reach the subterranean entrance to the rift known as the Heart of History, then descend to face Leska herself. But they have a few other things to deal with first.

Objectives

Either let the heroes research what Leska's defenses are for themselves, or have mages from the Lyceum academy report how a ritual being performed by inquisitors in the Imperial Palace in Ragos is shielding Leska's forces in the Opaline Wastes from divination and blocks teleportation in a vast swath nearly twenty miles across. While the heroes could simply use the Torch to teleport outside the radius and then march in on foot, the area is hazardous, renowned for deadly eldritch weather, and they would be sacrificing a great tool for tactical teleportation. The Resistance leaders think it is imperative to interrupt the ritual in Ragos before engaging Leska's armies.

As a small blessing, however, by moving her forces to protect the Heart of History, Leska has left the capital and the palace relatively unguarded. It should be possible for a small group of erstwhile, seasoned heroes to sneak in or storm the place, take out the inquisitors performing the ritual, and then withdraw before the city garrison arrives.

Before they do this, though, the heroes might also want to make last minute efforts to recruit new allies, look for weaknesses of Leska they can exploit, and research the nature of the Aquiline Heart. Most importantly, though, the heroes need to plan, or at least hand off responsibility for, the battle at Opaline Wastes. That means getting all the leaders of the Resistance on the same page, foremost among them the stubborn and prideful Shaaladel.

Pecking Order

The heroes have a major say in who runs the Resistance armies in the coming battle. Most of the generals and nobles who have joined the Resistance agree that someone from Lyceum — either the heroes or General Xavious (introduced in Shelter from the Storm) — should lead. But Shaaladel brings the largest single contingent of forces, and he believes he is best suited to command.

The heroes could simply accede to Shaaladel's demands and endorse him to command the combined armies, but that will weaken morale, since many don't trust the elf, which incurs a 20 VP penalty. To convince Shaaladel to go along with someone else as high commander requires a Diplomacy check (DC 40). Fellow elves have an easier time swaying him (+5), and assuring him he'll be second in command helps (+5).

If the heroes and Shaaladel reach an impasse, they suffer an even greater setback, a 30 VP penalty, offsetting the entire benefit of the Shahalesti army. Shaaladel will make a big show of gallantly agreeing to work under whomever the heroes pick, but will play along only long enough to make sure the heroes use the Torch to bring his armies to the field of battle. From that point on he'll be a royal pain in the rear echelons.

Allies

This adventure assumes the heroes have the allegiance of Sindaire, Dassen, Shahalesti, and Gate Pass — enough allies to eventually defeat Leska's armies, but not enough to make it an easy task. While the heroes could try to win new allies, you should emphasize that they don't have much time to waste.

Researching Leska

Pride, hatred of others, and disdain for her own weakness motivate Leska's actions. When she was younger she put her faith in Etinifi, and when they were both near death during the final trial before reaching the Aquiline Heart, he betrayed her and stole her life essence to give himself the strength to reach immortality. Leska survived through force of will and slowly came to loathe having to trust anyone. She had tasted the power of the Heart, and the hunger of the primordial dragon coiled deep within her, encouraging her to constantly overcome challenges until nothing could ever threaten her again. She expects to succeed, and looks forward to playing with her toy of a world afterward.

Despite possessing a megalomaniacal ego, she also is exceedingly aware of her own weaknesses, and so she keeps a tight rein on her emotions. She will not give in to bouts of boasting, nor will she underestimate her foes. She has thoroughly studied the talents of the heroes by this point, and will be prepared for their tricks. She even suspects that the trillith will betray her, and is ready to deal with them if they reach her sanctum in the Heart of History.

She speaks little, and when she does, it's usually in iambic meter.

The Opaline Wastes

A small desert of white stone shards in southwest Ragesia, the Opaline Wastes is lifeless. Eldritch storms of black rain, glass wind, and other aberrant weather strike suddenly. Right now a Ragesian druid is using magic to control the weather, but once the Resistance arrives, the power of unnatural nature will be turned against the heroes.

Black Rain

Filled with the souls of the damned, black rain falls from an infernal storm cloud. In addition to the effects of heavy rain, creatures caught in black rain slowly go mad as the sins of condemned souls seep through their skin into their hearts. Every hour of exposure to black rain, a creature must make a Will save (DC 20) or take 2 points of Wisdom damage.

Glass Wind

Volcanic heat like the breath of a dragon kicks up crystalline shards on the surface of the Opaline Wastes. These storms, which usually last ten minutes to an hour, create intense winds equivalent to a windstorm, spraying flecks of molten glass that sting and can cover an unconscious man in a matter of minutes, trapping him in a slowly hardening shell of crystal.

Creatures caught in glass wind take 1 damage every minute, though they can avoid this by covering themselves thoroughly with a cloak, tent, or similar. However, any creature or object that stays stationary for at least five minutes gets coated in an ever-thicker sheen of crystal. In order to break free a creature must succeed a Strength check (DC 15 + 2 per five minutes of being stationary).

The Burning Sky

The heavens above the battlefield slowly grow a deep red, and by the end of the first day of fighting intermittent flashes of fiery lightning lash through the coiling clouds. The storm persists as long as the Torch is within 20 miles of the Heart of History. Though it poses no threat to most creatures, the flaming clouds prevent anyone from flying more than 1,000 feet off the ground, and spells that draw on weather like *call lightning* or *whirlwind* deal 1½ times their normal damage. This extra damage is fire damage.

Two Dragons Canyon and the Heart of History

At the bottom of this three-pronged canyon, a huge stone arch marks the entrance to a tunnel that slopes deep into the earth, before ending at a great chasm known as the Heart of History.

Only scant reports exist of the nature of this seemingly bottomless pit. They say that the earth is alive there, but that nothing else lives, and that time there is a tangible dimension, as measurable as length and depth.

Only two people — Etinifi, who is too mad to explain, and Leska herself — know the truth: an entity called Time, a spectral dragon strangely similar to a trillith, guards the Heart, and as you get closer to it, you age, until by the time you see the chamber of the Heart you barely have strength left to crawl. The effect reverses if you leave, and it is possible to negate the effect, but doing so reduces the Heart to merely a source of fabulous healing, rather than one of immortality. When Leska came, she captured a sliver of Time's essence with a *soul bind* spell, which allowed her to grant Emperor Coaltongue immortality.

Information about the Heart is presented in the Final Council scene on page 336.

Elder Elemental Spirits

The elder spirits from the primordial myths are named:

- Silesh-el-Mavisha the Tidereaver kraken
- Thuuga-el-Shembul the Worldshaper worm
- Jhial-el-Avilona the Stormchaser eagle (dead except for her heart)
- Khor-el-Jiese the Flamebringer dragon.

Adventure ten has details on contacting the kraken and worm (see page 283). Though risky and difficult to reach, these entities could provide perhaps the only first-hand information available about the Heart of History.

Storming the Palace

To take out the warding ritual, the heroes have to attack the Ragesian Imperial Palace, perhaps the most heavily defended building in the world. But the heroes have faced demons, devils, dragons, and more, and so even the loyal defenders of the palace pose little threat.

With all the aid at the heroes' disposal, before they embark on this mission they should have a clear idea of the best way to the ritual chamber and details on the magical defenses. However, if they put in a little research work will they discover that Leska has left the defense of her palace in charge of the pit fiend Roav.

Palace Overview

The Ragesian capital of Ragos lies along the coast of the huge Lake Aldrem, and just off shore, on a rocky island, the imperial palace lights up the night. All visitors to the palace travel by lavish barge to the guard post at Monument Island, and then from there they take a thousand-foot gilded skywalk to the palace proper. Hundreds of nonmagical torches, lit laboriously by the palace's servants, illuminate the glass-walled bridge, and thousands more flicker within the looming windows of the palace walls. Gold and ebony statues of dragons leer down from the jagged awnings like gargoyles, and given the nature of the current emperor, some may well serve as more than ornamentation.

In addition to the Empress and her court, the palace and its satellite buildings are the working home for dozens of nobles and their staffs of servants and bodyguards. Any extravagant excess of the rich has a home somewhere in the palace.

Exterior Defenses

Powerful wards put in place over decades shield the palace against dimensional travel, peel away invisibility, and rain unholy fire down upon those who approach the walls and roof. Additionally, those who fly in will fall under deadly barrages of *magic missiles*, ballistae aimed with *true strike*, and blankets of *dispel magic* cast from the dozens of ships patrolling the harbor, which also protect nicely against waterborne attacks.

A fleet of eighty ships patrols the waters. Each has two heavy ballistae manned by two Flames of the Emperor and one palace inquisitor, plus a crew of two dozen palace guards.

A 1,000 foot radius area centered on the palace is warded with a broad *dimensional lock* and *invisibility purge* (caster level 20th). This ward does not extend inside the palace, though other wards protect the building itself.

Eight greater stone golems in the form of dragons perch on the roof. Each has wings, granting it a fly speed of 60 feet (average).

Unorthodox methods of entry are certainly possible, but the most straightforward approach is to teleport to Monument Island, which lies outside the wards, and then go through the comparably under-defended interior of the palace. They might even try to disguise themselves as nobles in order to get closer to the imperial court before the fighting starts.

Interior Defenses

In addition to the hundreds of richly-equipped palace guards, several magical effects ward the palace. The caster level for each effect is 20th, and spells like *dispel magic* can suppress the wards in a small area.

A teleportation beacon redirects all teleportation travel attempting to enter or leave the palace, depositing the traveler on Monument Island. Teleportation within the palace is not blocked outright. However, every room benefits from *dimensional lock* if all its doors and windows are closed.

Invisibility purge fills every hallway and the imperial court, but not other rooms.

Death ward affects every creature in the palace.

An effect similar to *arcane lock* raises the Open Lock DC of every door to 35.

Anyone official assigned as a palace defender (including all enemies the heroes face here) can open or close any door within line of sight (as the *open/close* spell) once per round as a free action.

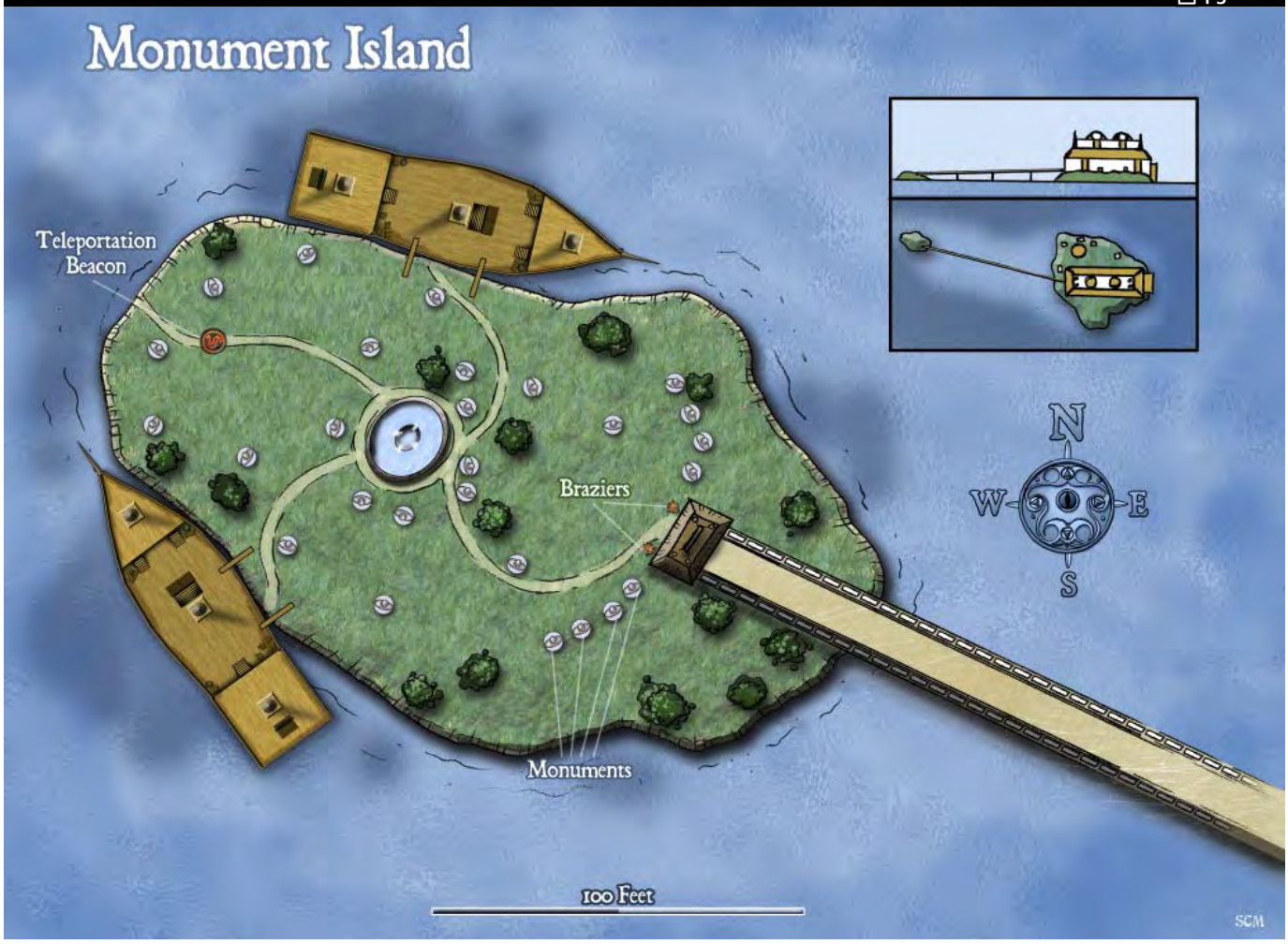
The confluence of so many abjurations creates a noticeable hum, though typically musicians fill the halls with music to hide it.

Monument Island (EL 18)

Dozens of towering statues of nobles and warlords fill this sparse park island, and two huge braziers full of glowing coals flank the doors to the skywalk. The monuments themselves, thirty-foot high stone statues of famous Ragesians, lean ominously, granting the central garden an imposing aesthetic.

A pair of fire giants, their clan long ago absorbed by the Empire, make sure none enter the palace without proper papers. A Forgery check (DC 30) can create suitable fake documents, but the heroes must use decadently rich gold filigree papers stitched with threads of elemental fire and enspelled with *arcane mark*, or the forgery won't do. The double agent Katrina can provide her own documents as samples for the heroes.

Game Master's Map pg. 681



In addition to the fire giants, Leska's elite erinyes guards stand watch with their *true sight*, some mingling around the edge of the monuments, the others perched atop them. Finally, two massive ships of war dock here, always ready to escort barges of nobles to the mainland. At this time of danger, however, Leska has closed the island to visitors, and set the guards on alert. A unit of twenty palace guards waits on the deck of each ship, with sixty more below.

Fire giants (2) (CR 10): hp 142 each, MM.
Erinyes (8) (CR 8): hp 85 each, MM.
Ragesian infantry squads (8) (CR 13): hp 159 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

Once alerted to danger, the fire giants keep their post at the doors, hacking at anyone within reach or hurling boulders (rather ineffectually) at distant foes. The erinyes atop the monuments attack from range with bows and *unholy blights*, while those on the ground try to close for melee.

The soldiers on the ships' decks rush to battle with aggressive war cries, and another unit of twenty guards make it up to each ship's deck every other round, while the two ships sound their bells, alerting the rest of the navy. The crew of the ships may fire ballistae at the heroes if they have a chance.

As soon as the first erinyes is slain, one of them gasps, recognizing the heroes. "It's them!" she cries, and then takes to the air to flee at top speed (since the teleportation beacon keeps them from teleporting away). Thereafter every erinyes flees, rising into the air like frightened birds.

Development

Two minutes after battle begins, other vessels come within range and begin bombarding with ballistae and magic, but the heroes should easily get inside by that time. As they move through the glass skywalk, extreme-range ballista shots shatter windows all around them, and they can see torches lighting up in all the palace windows as the Ragesians try to prepare for their arrival.

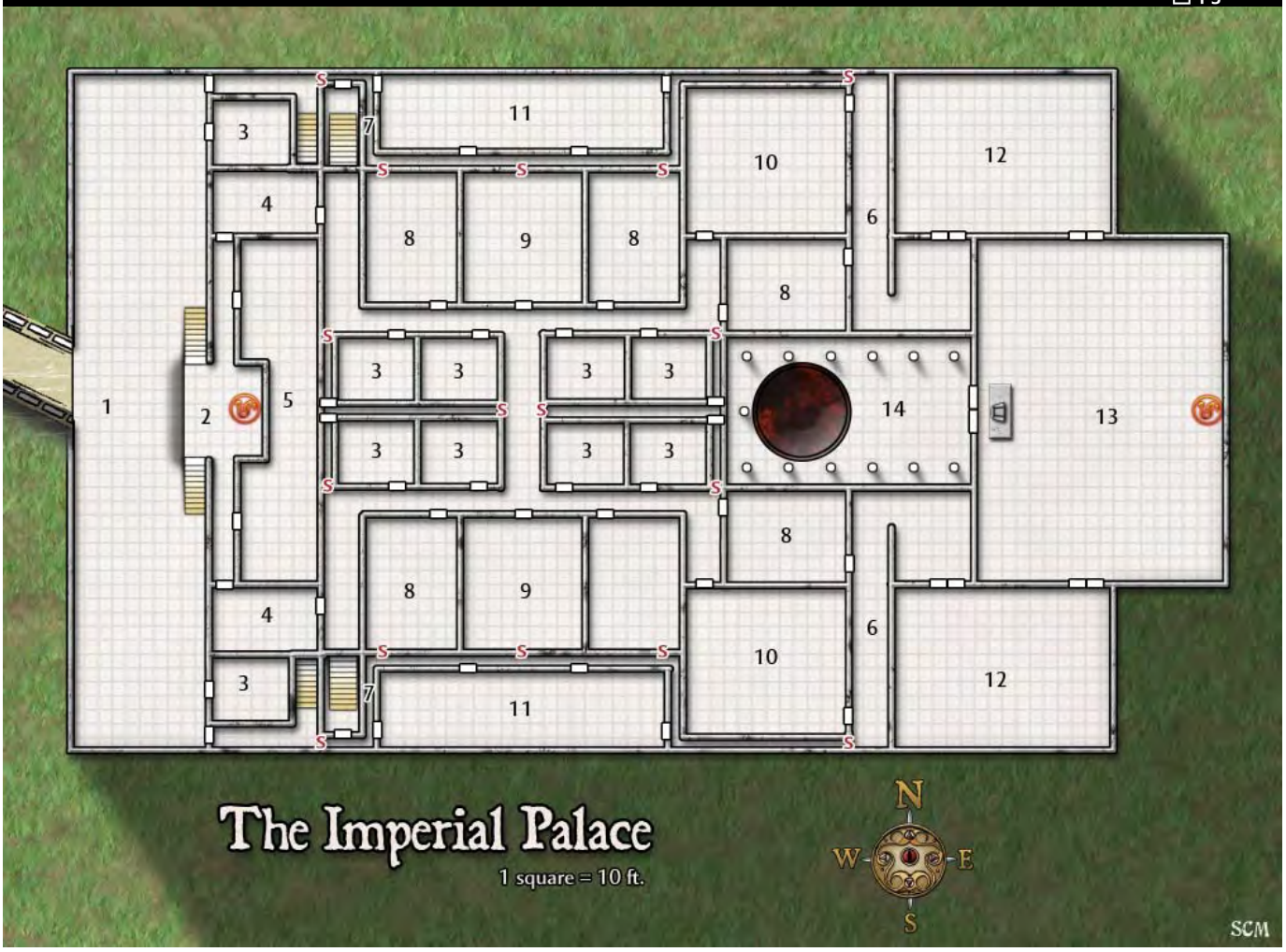
Palace Halls

The palace has eight floors and hundreds of rooms, but the heroes would be fools to take their time exploring, since as soon as any alarm is raised, they have perhaps ten minutes before thousands of Ragesian soldiers come after them. While most of the guards cannot stand up against the heroes, a few have a sharp enough bite that even high-level heroes should realize they cannot take on an army all by themselves.

The skywalk leads the heroes to the western side of the palace on the fifth floor, and the imperial court is one floor up, facing east, so the heroes can just dead reckon and fight their way there, or they could use magic to bypass traditional defenses. We present the map as the most direct route the heroes could take, but of course the palace holds much more if the heroes detour or try to avoid direct conflict.

Game Master's Map

pg. 682



In addition to the warriors who defend the palace, hundreds of courtiers and servants fill the halls in a panic. If the heroes care to take time to loot, you can assume they claim riches worth 200,000 gp, most of it in art objects and incidental magic items.

Unless otherwise noted, ceilings are 20 feet high, and all walls are at least three feet thick, stone reinforced with iron. Secret doors require a Search check (DC 30) to locate. Encounters are detailed after the area descriptions.

Area 1 — Grand Hall

The heroes might recognize this huge dance hall from a vision in the Temple of Echoed Souls (see adventure seven, *The Trial of Echoed Souls*). Open stairs lead up to the celestial balcony. The ceiling here rises 40 feet.

Recently, Leska placed a *forbiddance* in this hall, keyed only to allow Lawful Evil creatures or those in the uniforms of the Ragesian army. This ward is probably enough to keep the heroes from bringing in their own army of troops, since the damage would kill most common warriors.

Area 2 — Celestial Balcony

Raised 20 feet above the grand hall, here fake sunlight shines down from a domed ceiling. A *teleportation circle* in the back allows people to travel from the Imperial Court to here, but not vice versa.

Area 3 — Conference Rooms

Many nobles cower in these rooms, once used for political meetings.

Area 4 — Guard Station

The defenders of these rooms are detailed in the Guard Station encounter.

Area 5 — War Gallery

Hundreds of trophies of war and murals of battle fill this room.

Area 6 — Noble Hallways

In these long hallways, the heroes face waves of palace guards who struggle to stop their advance, detailed in the Minions in the Halls encounter.

Area 7 — Secret Hallways

These narrower halls, intended for palace staff, grant the guards avenues to flank the heroes.

Area 8 — Decadent Room

These chambers contain some manner of opulent extravagance — a sauna-harem with a hall of mirrors, an obstacle-strewn dueling chamber enchanted with objective-directional gravity, a skylight-illuminated garden with animated (but harmless) topiaries adorned with flowers, a room full of illusory gold coins that one can swim in like water, a world map sized so that you can stride across it like a god, and a room enchanted to snow. A large number of panicked nobles and courtiers hide in the sauna-harem.

Roav

While the devil manipulator Roav plays what is ultimately a minor role in this adventure, his presence helps explain Ragesia's multitude of infernal allies throughout the campaign. Not so much a warlord as a power broker, Roav has helped the Ragesian Empire in exchange for slowly putting devils in place as nobles and magistrates of the empire's many provinces. You could potentially spin this element of Ragesia's inner turmoil into a plot of its own as the heroes track down and take out those otherworldly elements Roav put in place. The heroes could win the favor of the common people of Ragesia, adding more allies to their final battle against Leska.

Units

Rather than have the heroes individually battle hundreds of soldiers, we present the new creature subtype of "unit." Units function similarly to swarms, and provide a way for heroes to take on huge numbers of enemies at once without slowing the game down with lots of rolling. We recommend that when warriors attack a unit, you play up the carnage they elicit, with single attacks taking out several soldiers at once; area attack magic already tears through units with ease, but if spellcasters use individually targeted spells, feel free to exaggerate, letting single spells strike several of these minions at once.

A squad of eight palace guards waits in each of these rooms. See the Ambush Squad encounter for more details.

Area 9 — Dining Hall

These halls are equipped with opulent couches for dining, and a vomitorium in the corner. A squad of eight palace guards waits in each of these rooms. See the Ambush Squad encounter for more details.

Area 10 — Library/Study

These two rooms contain books and equipment for historical and magical research. A squad of eight palace guards waits in each of these rooms. See the Ambush Squad encounter for more details.

Area 11 — Servants Quarters

Most of the servants have evacuated to lower floors.

Area 12 — Foyer

These beautiful waiting rooms have beautiful views of the harbor.

Area 13 — Imperial Court

The raised dais of the emperor's throne provides a panoramic view of the harbor, and from the seat the emperor always has a view of the sunrise no matter the time of year. The eastern wall of this 40 foot high room is entirely made of windows.

Area 14 — Ritual Chamber

Leska built her ritual chamber in a broad hall adjacent to the imperial court room. Originally used as a council chamber for the nobles of Ragesia to present proposals to the emperor and govern the sprawling empire, the room was claimed by Leska and her inquisitors when she took power, and the nobles relocated to a less grand location in a satellite building on the same island.

To harness the power she needs to shield her forces, Leska shifted the ritual chamber partially into a hellish dimension, easing the flow of infernal energy. Sigils along the walls and floor shape the energy into the ward, and trusted inquisitors direct the spell to cover the distant Opaline Wastes. Due to its existence across two planes, it is not possible to teleport into or out of the room as long as the ritual is active.



Ambush Squad – Art by Claudio Pozas

Encounters in the Palace

Friends in the Grand Hall

If the gnomes of Clan Millorn survived the events of adventure six, *Tears of the Burning Sky*, and are on good terms with the Resistance, the heroes encounter them here. The four gnomes — loremistress Jorrina Waryeye, bombastic paladin Grellfin Flintflindercandle, chatty trapsmith Oller Pennyteller, and Rivereye Badgerface, the spy they met in the first adventure — have infiltrated the imperial palace, posing as servants for the past few weeks, and when they learned of the imminent attack they girded themselves for battle and cleared out the first wave of defenders that were waiting in the dance hall.

The gnomes say they can work to keep some of the heat off the heroes, and will maneuver through the palace trying to slow the defenders, giving the heroes a better chance to get to the throne room. Jorrina hands the heroes a detailed map that shows the fastest way to the throne room, and wishes them luck.

If Clan Millorn died out or isn't loyal, instead the heroes encounter a group of general, nondescript human spies.

Guard Post (EL 10)

In the two guard posts, four elite guards called Flames of the Emperor wait near the stairs, each having drunk a *potion of invisibility*. When the heroes enter, the Flames of the Emperor quick-draw a *scroll of true strike*, cast it, move into position, and then use their knife eye attacks to hurl a dagger or stab an enemy in melee.

Minions in the Halls (EL 13 per squad)

If the alarm has been raised, every three rounds a group of palace guards come upon the heroes, bursting out from a room, slipping up behind them from a secret doorway, or charging from a side hallway.

Ragesian infantry squad (CR 13): hp 159, Appendix B.

Of course these groups pose no real threat to the heroes. The guards continue to come until the heroes leave or they have defeated ten squads. Additional squads lurk in certain rooms (labeled Area 8, 9, or 10; see Ambush Squad below).

Column Lurkers (EL 15)

Outside of the doors to each Dining Hall (Area 9), where a third hallway connects the two noble hallways in an H-shape, a Spot check (DC 34, modified by distance) notices that two golden bear statues on either side of the door to the dining hall are actually lurking golems, poised to grapple when the heroes pass by.

Iron golems (2) (CR 13): hp 129 each, MM.

The golems try to grapple, but resort to simple claw attacks if their foes avoid their grabs. Each of the two dining rooms has a pair of iron golems, but they do not attack unless an enemy comes within 60 feet. Each golem has an internal structure of an iron bear skeleton, and a covering skin of gold. As it takes damage, the bear façade breaks off, revealing the iron bones beneath.

Ambush Squad (EL 13)

The elite palace guards — called Flames of the Emperor — have taken up positions in the secret hallways near potential bottlenecks, hoping to catch the heroes in an ambush. A pair of Flames of the Emperor waits outside each room labeled Area 8, 9, or 10 (all of these only have two doors). A squad of eight normal palace guards lie inside each room as bait.

Each Flame of the Emperor drinks a *potion of invisibility* and uses a *wand of hold portal* to prime the doors to their rooms. The first time the heroes enter any of these rooms, once at least a few of the heroes are inside, the Flames of the Emperor close the entry and exit doors (which they can do as a free action as long as the doors are in line of sight).

At most this will trap the heroes for a minute or so, but because they won't be able to teleport out, the inconvenient delay gives the Ragesians a chance to assemble a stronger, more numerous force to pincer the heroes.

If this trap succeeds, the guards call for reinforcements, and more Flames of the Emperor and palace guards rush to either side of the room, waiting for the hold portal effect to end or the heroes to burst free. Even if the heroes avoid being trapped, the other Flames of the Emperor react to the heroes and try to overwhelm them, though they send in a contingent of palace guards first to draw out area attacks.

Flames of the Emperor (8) (CR 6): hp 31 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian infantry squads (3) (CR 13): hp 159 each, Appendix B.

Imperial Court (EL 19)

After the ambush attempt fails spectacularly, the Ragesians give a wide berth to the heroes. Finally the heroes reach the foyers outside the imperial court. When they arrive, one squad of palace guards is running for the court room, trying to reach allies before the heroes cut them down.

Inside the imperial court, a last defense waits to hold back the heroes. A squad of emaciated undead warriors, unintelligent but programmed to fight with elite tactics, try to hold the heroes back from the door to the ritual chamber. Meanwhile members of the white court — those nobles who chose spectral undeath rather than let death pull them from their positions of power, cower near the eastern window, and through them the heroes can see the Ragesian fleet circling the palace.

The undead warriors, called white court rajput, draw their power from the red spears they wield. Little more than skin, bones, veins, and magical runes, the rajputs coordinate attacks against one or two foes at a time. Every successful attack they make heals them, and if one is fully healed when it strikes a foe, it can reanimate a fallen ally. Their vulnerability is their spears, and if the heroes disarm or sunder them, the rajputs pose little threat.

White court rajputs (8) (CR 13): hp 65 each, Appendix B.

Terrain

One round before the heroes enter, an inquisitor in the ritual chamber casts a *wall of force* in front of the door to the ritual chamber, then closes the door. Another inquisitor casts *hold portal* on it. The inquisitors desperately hope the heroes won't manage to get through the door, though the wall lasts only 8 more rounds.

Kicking Ass

If you are running this adventure when the heroes are just 17th level, this encounter might challenge them a little, but for 20th-level heroes this is mostly an opportunity for them to tear through hordes of minions, showcasing how awesome they are.

Alternately, you might let your players play NPC allies who get sent on a critical mission to clear the way for the army. If you want to do this, you could have it so that disrupting the ritual only takes out the teleportation ward for a short period of time, meaning the heroes have to be present with their armies in that narrow window in order to teleport them.

One possible team would be Rantle, Tiljann, Katrina, Torrent, and Guthwulf. If the heroes want to play lower-level characters, they'll have to use stealth rather than raw power.

Running a Rampage

Don't let the game bog down in calculations and number crunching. Most of the foes in this scene will die if hit by heroes of 20th level, so your job is to keep things interesting and fun. This scene has four "stages":

Monument Island. The heroes must enter through the front doors; killing insignificant foes is secondary.

Palace Halls. As the heroes make for the throne room, guards come out from every side passage and doorway, trying to slow them or catch them from behind. These small mini-ambushes bridge the space between two rooms with a mix of role-playing and combat.

Imperial Court. The heroes attack the final guard post before the emperor's court, fending off an endless horde of seemingly suicidal warriors while trying to figure out a way into the ritual chamber.

Ritual Chamber. The heroes battle the pit fiend Roav in an attempt to cut off Leska's access to infernal energies for her great ward.

Magic in the Heart of History

No divination or teleportation magic short of divine power can pierce beyond the Two Dragons Arch. Such spells work within the area, but cannot see across the threshold.

A *teleportation circle* on the eastern edge of the room, activated by tapping any metal weapon three times on the floor, leads to Area 2, Celestial Balcony. The circle is one-way.



Development

Every two rounds, a Ragesian infantry squad comes up from elsewhere in the palace, attacking the heroes from behind. While not a serious threat, they can be a nuisance, especially as the undead rajputs keep coming back from the dead.

Ragesian infantry squads (one at a time) (CR 13): hp 159 each, Appendix B.

Ritual Chamber (EL 21)

In this darkened chamber, six inquisitors assist the pit fiend Roav in drawing energy through a bound portal to an infernal plane. Roav's lieutenants on the other side of the portal feed thousands of bound souls into a churning pyre, consuming their essence and channeling it through this portal. The inquisitors then shape the power and direct it to create the wards over the Opaline Wastes.

Killing one inquisitor disrupts the ritual, but if Roav lives he can just find other inquisitors, or even his own devils, to continue the ritual. The heroes' target here is the tricky, diabolically clever pit fiend.

Palace inquisitors (6) (CR 11): hp 50 each, Appendix B.

Roav, Consultant of the Damned (CR 20): hp 225, Appendix B.

Terrain

The portal lets only energy transfer through; Leska wasn't planning to let a pit fiend march legions into her home. It's still supernaturally intimidating, though; any non-evil creature must make a Will save (DC 28) to approach within 10 feet of the portal.

With *damned dominion*, Roav can take advantage of the pillars and daises to put the heroes in disadvantageous positions. The ceiling here is 40 feet high.

Tactics

Prior to combat, Roav used *greater prying eyes* to keep tabs on the Imperial Palace, and so he has a sense of the heroes' powers. Tiny holes in the structure of the palace lets the eyes navigate without opening doors.

In preparation for their arrival, he casts *invisibility* on himself and uses *permanent image* on the entrance to the chamber, creating the appearance of three panicked inquisitors standing around a small magical portal, as well as a wall that conceals the part of the chamber where Roav and the real inquisitors are. Roav wants the heroes to dispatch the fake inquisitors easily, at which point he'll direct the portal to burst dramatically before vanishing entirely. If he's lucky, he might actually trick the heroes into leaving, thinking they've finished their job.

Of course, he expects better of them, and is ready in that instance too. A Spellcraft check (DC 31) reveals that the illusory ritual has discrepancies, and it shouldn't be hard for heroes to disbelieve the scene (Will DC 24). As soon as they wise up to the trick, Roav enters combat.

Round 1

Roav flies above the heroes and uses *damned dominion* to control them, then casts *rack and ruin* on a foe who resisted.

Round 2

If any creature was affected by *damned dominion*, Roav moves the weakest one within full attack range, and moves others into disadvantageous positions. He full attacks the foe, then casts quickened *dimension door* to get back to the defense of his allies, possibly bringing along a grabbed foe.

Round 3

Roav uses his one *wish* for this year, saying, "I wish that all the healing these enemies use will instead heal me." The mechanical effect of this is that as long as the heroes are within 1 mile of Roav, on the same plane as him, and he is alive, any spell with the healing descriptor they use will affect Roav instead of its intended target. (This includes *neutralize poison*, however, which negates Roav's poison claws if he fails his save.) Roav then moves and casts quickened *rack and ruin*. The effect of the *wish* lasts one hour.

Round 4 and beyond

Roav continues to abuse *rack and ruin*, casting it both as a standard action and swift action, unless an enemy is within range for a full attack. He tries to keep the heroes apart so they can't aid each other.

Meanwhile, the inquisitors stay on the far side of the portal, and focus on countering the heroes' spells, often with all six of them reactively using rebuke magic against the same spell (this grants a +10 bonus to the primary counterspeller's roll). If necessary they defend themselves with *flame strike*, *harm*, and maximized empowered *burning hands*.

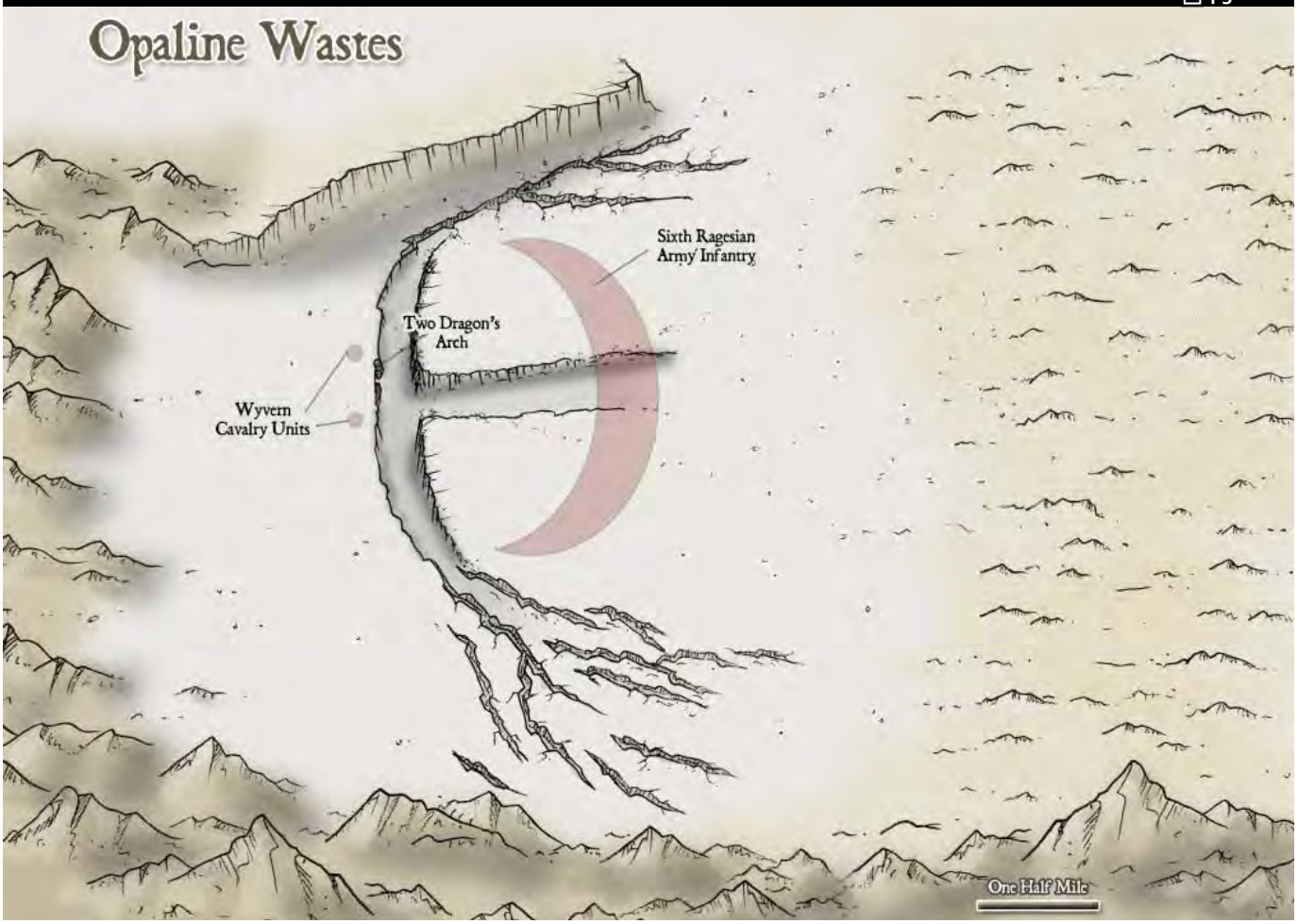
Development

When Roav is reduced below 100 hp, he becomes much more defensive, and he starts talking. He knows most people would balk at allying with a devil, but most people don't have to win a war against an immortal empress. He tries to convince the heroes that he is willing to change sides, since he is displeased that Leska has control over him and his subordinates.

How successful Roav is at this bald-faced lie depends on how busy the inquisitors are. If any live, one of them realizes their strongest ally is

Roav – Art by Claudio Pozas

Players' Map pg. 683



trying to desert them, and the inquisitor shouts that Roav answers to only himself, and that he willingly allied with the Supreme Inquisitor. Roav then tries to kill that inquisitor to shut him up.

If no one speaks up against Roav, however, the tricky pit fiend bargains for his life (while regenerating), and pledges to gather his devils to aid the Resistance fight Leska. He is only stalling for time, however. At best, he'll just teleport away as soon as he's beyond the reach of the teleportation beacon. At worst he'll integrate devils into the heroes' army, who will attack when the Battle of Opaline Wastes begins.

If the heroes should fall for this trick, unlikely though it is, it costs them 20 VP as the treacherous devils begin to sow discord before turning on those near them. The devil legion will be defeated, but not after causing havoc, a large number of casualties, and a massive impediment to morale as soldiers wonder who they can trust. The GM should feel free to introduce this event at any dramatic moment. Industrious GMs may wish to turn this event into an actual encounter during which the PCs battle the devils (use two bearded devil legions and three lemure hordes from Appendix B and add one horned devil leader from the MM); if this happens, and the PCs are successful, halve the VP penalty to only 10 VP.

Once at least one inquisitor dies, the portal begins to fade out, its edges guttering like a choking candle. When the last inquisitor dies, the portal collapses, and a wave of magical energy blows through the room. The constant hum of abjurations vanishes as the palace's wards fade out. The heroes can now simply teleport away. They would be well advised not to wait for the army's arrival, but they should make sure Roav is dispatched first.

When Roav is reduced to 0 hp, he begins to burn away into ash, but has time enough to chuckle and say, "Don't worry. If not Leska, then one of you. She too had good intentions once, you know? You won't make the same mistakes, though. That's what they all think."

Ending the ritual earns the heroes 15 VP.

Final Preparations

When the heroes return from their mission, the bulk of the armies of the Sindaire, Dassen, and Shahalesti nations — as well as any other allies the heroes have acquired — have gathered in Dassen near Bresk. Tens of thousands of warriors train and pray, while the crafters of Dassen feverishly forge fine weapons and construct siege artillery. All that remains is for the leaders of the Resistance to give the order, and the unified armies will go to war.

Forces and Commanders

Some of these details may vary based on the heroes' actions and who they petitioned to be in charge of the Resistance assault.

General Xavious Foebane most likely acts as supreme commander of the allied forces. He also commands the Seaquen components of the Resistance. Though they field only 2,000 infantry, Seaquen provides hundreds of battle-trained mages and once-mercenary units from many parts of the region. These forces generally serve as

defenders of the base camp, while more seasoned soldiers go out into the field.

King Steppengard or, if he has died, **Gallo** (who could be duke or king), commands the Dassen army of 20,000 warriors through a complicated hierarchical structure. The seventeen thousand heavily armored infantry prefers to fight with axes, maces, and flails, while the three thousand cavalry knights fight with lance or heavy flail. Several units of elite dwarven sappers, squadrons of sphinxes, and a tough cadre of battle clerics gives the Dassen army great resilience, though they lack any overwhelming offensive power due to their relative lack of wizards. Every Dassen warrior carries a sack with soil from his homeland, and puts a handful in his boots before every battle.

General Gasparde commands the army of Sindaire, 20,000 warriors strong. In addition to its sword-and-shield infantry, Sindaire fields companies of gnome and halfling druids, rangers, and their animal companions; light and swift horse cavalry; and great gatherings of barbarian clans who have long chafed against the oppression of the Ragesians.

Shining **Lord Shaaladel** (N male elf commander 8/fighter 12) commands the 30,000 warriors of the Shahalesti armies. Its infantry traditionally fight with longsword and buckler, and double as archers, while a high number of wizards provides aid. Its elite Solei Palancis consists of a thousand higher-level warriors, many of them eldritch knights, and all of them equipped with fine magic arms and armor, plus potions for flight and other defenses. The Shahalesti have relatively few clerics, and limited cavalry, though it has alliances with many called celestials and limited elements of giant eagle cavalry. Finally, a small forest of dozens of treants have joined with the Shahalesti due to their love for the princess **Shalosha** (CG female elf commander 1/wizard 7/eldritch knight 10).

Additionally, the Resistance might have the aid of former Ragesian generals **Magdus** and **Ashok Danava**, commanders of the remnants of the First and Third Ragesian Armies, respectively. The first army has about 5,000 warriors left, mostly infantry, with a few hundred traditional cavalry knights. Danava's third army fields 10,000 warriors, including a few dozen wyvern knights. Both armies have expelled any inquisitors, though the generals suspect they may have imperial loyalists among their ranks.

Gate Pass rebellion commander **Rantle** (CG male human fighter 6/rogue 3/ranger 2/paladin of freedom 3/commander 4) brings 5,000 irregular warriors, a barely organized but highly motivated hodge-podge of thieves, mages, and brave parents driven to ensure Ragesia never threatens their city again.

If somehow the Resistance has the loyalty of Ostalin, it is possible that **Khagan Onamdammin** leads his armies, but most likely he has been deposed and replaced by **Warlord Adeo Hammith**, who has convinced Ostalin to lend its forces to the battle with Ragesia in order to stave off later retaliation by the other nations. The condition of the Ostalin army varies heavily based on the events of adventure eleven, *Under the Eye of the Tempest*, but most likely they suffered heavy casualties and can contribute only 10,000 warriors, though many of those are hippogriff cavalry. Ostalin also possesses the greatest monstrous component of any possible allies, with behir, chimeras, gray renders, and yrthaks more than making up for the fewer numbers of conventional soldiers.

Final Council

The Resistance commanders gather at Lyceum to go over their plans for the Battle of Opaline Wastes, and they invite the heroes. As usual, Shaaladel is overconfident and proud, the Dassen leaders stalwart and organized, General Xavious humble but hopeful. Before Lyceum headmaster **Simeon Gohanach** and his aide **Kiernan Stekart** present the results of their divinations, the heroes have a chance for final politicking or just shooting the breeze.

If Rantle is present, he scoffs at all this preparation. As he puts it, "Leska is a lot smarter than us. Every hour we spend planning, she spends an hour planning better. So the best thing we can do is to go in right now without a plan."

Though the heroes haven't met the Sindairese General Gasparde, **Ambassador Cranston Snord** introduces them. With thickly-accented statements of congratulation and respect, General Gasparde says he looks forward to fighting by their side. Then he gives each of the heroes the gift of a wooden mug carved with the symbol of the Order of the Aquiline Cross: a red cross surrounded by a halo of white feathers. On the bottom of each mug is carved part of a map to a famed "lost brewery chapel" in western Sindaire.

"I didn't want you to get bored after the war, ah?" he says. "You found the Torch. A little lost beer should be nothing. You should enjoy something so simple. Give you something to look forward to."

Divinations and Intelligence

When the Lyceum leaders arrive, illusionists recreate detailed images of the battlefield, showcasing all the Ragesian forces they have spotted. Show the players the Opaline Wastes players' map on page 335.

Kiernan points out that while elements of cavalry from the Fifth Ragesian Army patrol the outskirts of the area, and wyvern cavalry prowl the skies, the bulk of the defenders are the Sixth Ragesian Army, dug into emplacements around a three-pronged canyon, which they have named Two Dragons Canyon. At the bottom of the canyon, a huge arch has been carved into the canyon wall, depicting a pair of dragons 600 feet tall. The only route to the subterranean chasm of the Heart of History is through that arch, and the only easy approach to the arch is through the Ragesian defenders, down the gentler slope of the canyon's central prong.

Scrying beyond the Two Dragons Arch is difficult, but the Lyceum mages know that the Ragesians have set up defensive bunkers in the walls of the tunnel between the canyon and the Heart of History.

Ragesian Forces

The Resistance does not realize that Leska has used a second level of subterfuge to hide the true extent of her forces. However, the heroes might notice a discrepancy between what they'd expect Ragesia could field and what they see in the divinations. A Knowledge (history) check (DC 40) lets a hero recognize that too many units are unaccounted for. It's not enough to know for sure what's going on, but it provides a hunch that Leska is keeping some of her forces hidden.

Warning the Resistance armies of the discrepancy lets them prepare for a surprise, and earns 5 VP.

Plans of Arrival

General Xavious recommends using the Torch to teleport the Resistance forces to the eastern edge of the flatlands east of the canyon. The light hills in the east will provide a good staging ground, and are far enough away to keep the Sixth Army from launching an attack, and rugged enough to disrupt attacks by the Fifth Army's cavalry. He wants to set up a base of operations first, rather than rushing directly into battle, especially since they have such a large force that it will require three activations of the Torch to get them all to the Opaline Wastes.

Kiernan grimly explains that they have a pool of traitors and prisoners sentenced to death who can be used to fuel the Torch's power. No one is particularly comfortable with having to



The Torch Alight ~ Art by Claudio Pozas

sacrifice a sentient creature to use the Torch, but the commanders are all willing to compromise their morality a little to defeat the greater evil represented by Leska.

Xavious's plan is to have the heroes (or himself, if they'd prefer) use the Torch's *empyreal fire* power to bring the Sindaire army to the Opaline Wastes, then use the Torch to *greater teleport* back to the Dassen muster point, and repeat to bring the Shahalesti army, and finally the Dassen army. Other allied units can squeeze in with these three primary armies.

Battle Plans

Once the Resistance has set up its base, Xavious plans to launch their attacks the next morning. He wants to use the Torch to deliver units to precise locations to assault the Ragesian defenses, though he is wary of teleporting their warriors behind enemy lines where they would be reliant on using the Torch again to get away if things went badly.

He goes into a detailed description of how he thinks the Resistance units should be deployed against the Ragesian defenders, matters which the heroes won't have to worry about. Xavious intends for the heroes to act as a strike force. He will have to see the conditions on the ground before he knows what particular missions he'll need them for, but he wants them to be mobile. He would also prefer if they not risk losing the Torch when they go on missions. The worst thing that could happen would be for the Ragesians to get their hands on the Torch.

His suggestion is that, when they're fighting in large army-against-army battles, they should carry the Torch, but on smaller missions he wants them to leave the Torch with him at the command base, where it will be heavily guarded. Toward that end, he has acquired an attaché from the Wayfarers.

Xavious calls in **Tiljann** (CG seela bard 4/seela paragon 2/Wayfarer cirqueliste 7), the seela singer whom the heroes first met in adventure two, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*. Tiljann will go with the heroes on their strike missions; while she cannot contribute meaningfully to combat, she will be ready to teleport the heroes to safety or maneuver them around the battlefield. If Tiljann did not travel with the heroes or has died, instead a different Wayfarer fills this role. (The abbreviated stat block in Appendix One should suffice to run either Tiljann or her replacement.)

If the heroes object to leaving the Torch, Xavious acquiesces, but emphasizes how dangerous he thinks that is. Either way, however, he wants to make sure that everyone there still agrees to destroy the Torch after Leska has been defeated, because the temptation of its power is too great, and will just lead to a new generation of tyranny.

Destroying the Torch, Killing Leska

Simeon presents all the knowledge they have gleaned about how to destroy the Torch and how to kill someone who is immortal.

Like any artifact, the Torch is not easy to destroy. It is thematically connected to the myth of the Aquiline Heart. The Torch represents the flamebringer dragon which devours souls in order to gain power, and the Heart is the one soul the dragon was unable to consume. As far as Simeon and his fellow mages can tell, if the Torch strikes the Aquiline Heart, it will destroy the heart, and in so doing fulfill its purpose, rendering the Torch inert. This would successfully render Leska mortal, but it would also have the unfortunate side effect of destroying the world.

Since this option seems off the table, killing Leska will be difficult. Current theories are that completely exsanguinating her might work, and they know from Coaltongue that if you deal a killing blow and keep the weapon in the wound to stop regeneration, she won't be able to return to life. But that would only be a temporary solution.

Kiernan jokingly suggests constructing a complicated, trap-laden dungeon to hold the immortal witch for all eternity, and everyone gets a good laugh at how ridiculous that idea is.

Simeon says that because the blood of the Aquiline Heart flows through Leska's veins, he suspects that if the Torch delivers the killing blow to her, it might consume her soul and satisfy the Torch's purpose.

Without the Torch

If the heroes don't have the Torch, or if they got rid of it or destroyed it, the Resistance can still march on the Opaline Wastes, approaching by ground. This is just much less dramatic.

The Torch and Defeating Leska

If you are running either *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child* or *Under the Eye of the Tempest* as the end of the campaign, Simeon's idea works partially. If the heroes perform a *coup de grace* on Leska with the Torch, it consumes her soul and kills her, but does not render the Torch inert.

If this is instead the final adventure, Simeon is mistaken. Striking Leska with the Torch has no particular effect, and the heroes will have to go to greater lengths to win the day.

The Torch and Other Climaxes

If you are running *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child* as the final adventure, the Torch can be destroyed two ways. First is by slaying Annihilation with it, which works either in Trilla's nightmarish dreamscape or in the real world. The second requires getting Trilla's help in the dreamscape. If she smears her blood on the Torch, its wielder can activate it. Either option obliterates the artifact and consumes nearly all the trillith.

If *Under the Eye of the Tempest* is the final adventure, the Torch can be destroyed by using it to break the seal to the Plane of Fire beneath Seaquen. This unleashes a devastating blast of fire that the heroes can use as a weapon, and which also incinerates the Torch.

Both options are detailed in their respective adventures.

Coaltongue at their Side

If the heroes returned the late Emperor Coaltongue to life and are willing to trust him, the world-weary half-orc serves a limited role in advising and occasionally going into battle as a common – albeit immortal – foot soldier. Additionally, the After the War scene could feature Coaltongue instead of General Xavious.

The Nature of the Heart

If the heroes are curious about the Aquiline Heart and how it is connected to the world's life, Simeon can explain the current understanding of its nature. First of all, no one knows quite what the Aquiline Heart is, whether it is an actual beating heart, or a crystal, or something less tangible. What is known is that the heart is bonded to the life force of a vast region of the world, so destroying it will result in the slow annihilation of several nations and millions of people as the elemental energies of the world are thrown into chaos.

Many signs point to Leska creating a ritual that will direct her magic into the blood of the Heart, and thus into the essence of the rest of the world. If she completes her ritual, she will bind the world to a fate of constant war. Hopefully the Resistance would be able to find a way to dispel the magic, but if they can't, the only way to stop its power would be to destroy the Heart.

During this discussion of the Heart, the heroes notice General Gasparde looking worried. If pressed, he explains that his mother was a member of the Order of the Aquiline Cross, and that to believers, the tale of the Aquiline Heart is one of how willing sacrifice leads to healing.

"The life of the world requires a sacrifice to nourish it," he says. "We want to destroy the Torch, to destroy the Ragesian Empire, to kill Leska. We want a lot of death, the end to many things, ah? No one talks of healing. Even Leska, she poisons our heart. This world needs a new heart, new life."

Shaaladel dismisses the general as superstitious, and asks that they turn their attention back to planning a war, and not running a hospital. But if the heroes speak with General Gasparde later, he says that if the Heart does die, someone must be willing to take its place, to nourish the world, or life will end.

The effects of tasting the blood of the Heart, and of someone taking its place, are detailed in Act Three.

Unorthodox Tactics

One use of the Torch we deliberately avoid having any NPCs suggest is to teleport enemies away. Should the heroes think of this, they can use it to devastating effectiveness. The *empyreal fire* power of the Torch requires line of sight to all those who will be affected, so the heroes can't simply run up and teleport all the Ragesian armies away, but they could catch large swaths of their enemies and take them to, say, the arctic wastes, or the ocean.

Should the heroes come up with this tactic, you should require them to go into harm's way the first time they try to pull it off, and if they succeed, they gain 5 VP. Subsequent uses can be glossed over. They cannot use this tactic the first day after arriving at the Opaline Wastes, because bringing three armies there exhausts the daily uses of *empyreal fire*.

This tactic is useless underground; for example, beyond Two Dragons Gate.

After the War

If the heroes aren't considering what will happen if they do defeat Leska, General Xavious comes to them during a quiet moment between planning sessions. He grumbles and takes a drink from a flask.

"Reminds me of King Zeltrax of Narcum," Xavious says. "Never heard of him? Great warrior. Terrible king. Carved out his own little land a few centuries ago, personally defeated everyone who might oppose him, but couldn't handle politics."

He offers the heroes a drink as he continues.

"Turns out most conquering warriors don't do well when they find they have to start resolving disputes without killing. After this is over, people will look to you for guidance on what happens next. Just think on that."

Act Two: The Battle of Opaline Wastes

In this act the Resistance launches its assault to reach Leska, and the heroes take on the toughest missions of that conflict.

Lighting the Torch

The armies have gathered, the plans are set, and the time has come for the heroes to activate the Torch, sending 70,000 men, women, and magical beings to the final battle of the War of the Burning Sky.

Bringing all the Resistance armies will require three activations of the Torch, but they should be able to accomplish the troop movement in a matter of minutes. If the heroes have any inclination to give a compelling, noble speech, now would be the best time. The armies will not immediately go to battle when they arrive at the Opaline Wastes, so a good speech here would be one that encourages cooperation, or courage, or vigilance, rather than raw heroism.

If one of the heroes gives an inspiring speech, have them make a Perform (oratory) check, with a bonus of +2 for each Leader feat he has (see the Player's Guide). A check that fails to beat DC 20 provides no VP. A check that beats DC 20 earns 2 VP, DC 25 earns 3 VP, DC 30 or higher earns 5 VP.

If none of the heroes speak, General Xavious addresses the gathered armies, his voice magnified by magic. (This earns no VP.)

"History. The Empire of Ragesia is the mightiest in the history of the world. It conquered scared tribes of savages, brought order to weak nations, and destroyed those who desired chaos. History is written by the victors, and this is the history Leska will write if she triumphs.

"But it is not the story we know. We know of the tyranny of the torch. We know the blood our parents shed fighting to defend our homelands, and we know the scars many of us bear today from this, our great fight to determine the course of history.

"We have fought many brave battles, seen much suffering, sacrificed too many friends to let it all be burned away by the lies of another tyrant. We stand at the brink of a new age, and in that new age, history will laud us, because we will have written it.

"Stand steadfast, hold your weapon bravely, and you will be remembered as heroes."

After the speech, they discreetly trot out a condemned prisoner to be executed in order to activate the Torch, and then the first army is carried by flaming heavenly pillar to the Heart of History. The bearer of the Torch then needs to teleport back and repeat the process with the rest of the armies, until all the Resistance forces are in place.

The commanders send out scouts to check the lay of the land, and for the next half-hour the thousands of soldiers begin to set up a base camp. But the battle begins sooner than anticipated, and the Ragesians make the first strike.

The Ragesian Armies

Three distinct armies defend the approach to Two Dragons Canyon and the Heart of History beneath it.

The Fifth Ragesian Army, commanded by infamous horse-archer General Titus, consists of twelve thousand infantry, three thousand cavalry, and a few hundred wild beasts, monsters, and devils. While four divisions of cavalry patrol the outer perimeter of the Ragesian holdings, the infantry waits in two long lines in the badlands east of Two Dragons Canyon, poised to ambush the Resistance. The attached inquisitor Atroius, a druid who flayed the skin off his face, spends most of his time in bear wildshape.

The Sixth Ragesian Army fields nine thousand infantry and hundreds of wyvern knights who defend static positions. Their initial offensive instead features a few thousand powerful units of various magical natures, such as golems, oozes, and devils. Additionally, its commander, the snobbish necromancer Euserius de Fiaba, directs a regiment of undead.

The Seventh Ragesian Army defends the tunnel between Two Dragons Canyon and the Heart of History. These 5,000 soldiers previously defended the Ragesian capital, and have trained extensively in close-quarters fighting, while their commander, General Mazina, earned a reputation for loyalty to the empire. Her attached inquisitor, Artillochus, is renowned for his fascination with cruel traps, and keeps close tabs both on the General and on the green dragon Phaaughsmat, who guards the Heart of History.

The Battle Flags

As daunting as thousands of enemy soldiers are, things are much worse than they appear. Leska has prepared a ritual that draws power from the war-like intent of both sides and channels that power into three battle standards, one for each army. Roughly half of the Ragesians are shielded with *nondetection* through the standards. Until battle begins, divinations that would reveal these units must beat a caster level check (DC 28) to see them.

When the heroes encounter the Ragesian army, *detect magic*, arcane sight, and similar magic reveals that every soldier is under the influence of the same spell (usually *heroism*). A major goal of this act is tracking down the standards and destroying or capturing them. See Appendix A for details regarding the Ragesian Grand Standards.

Stages of Battle

Barring unusual actions by the heroes, the Battle of Opaline Wastes will develop as follows.

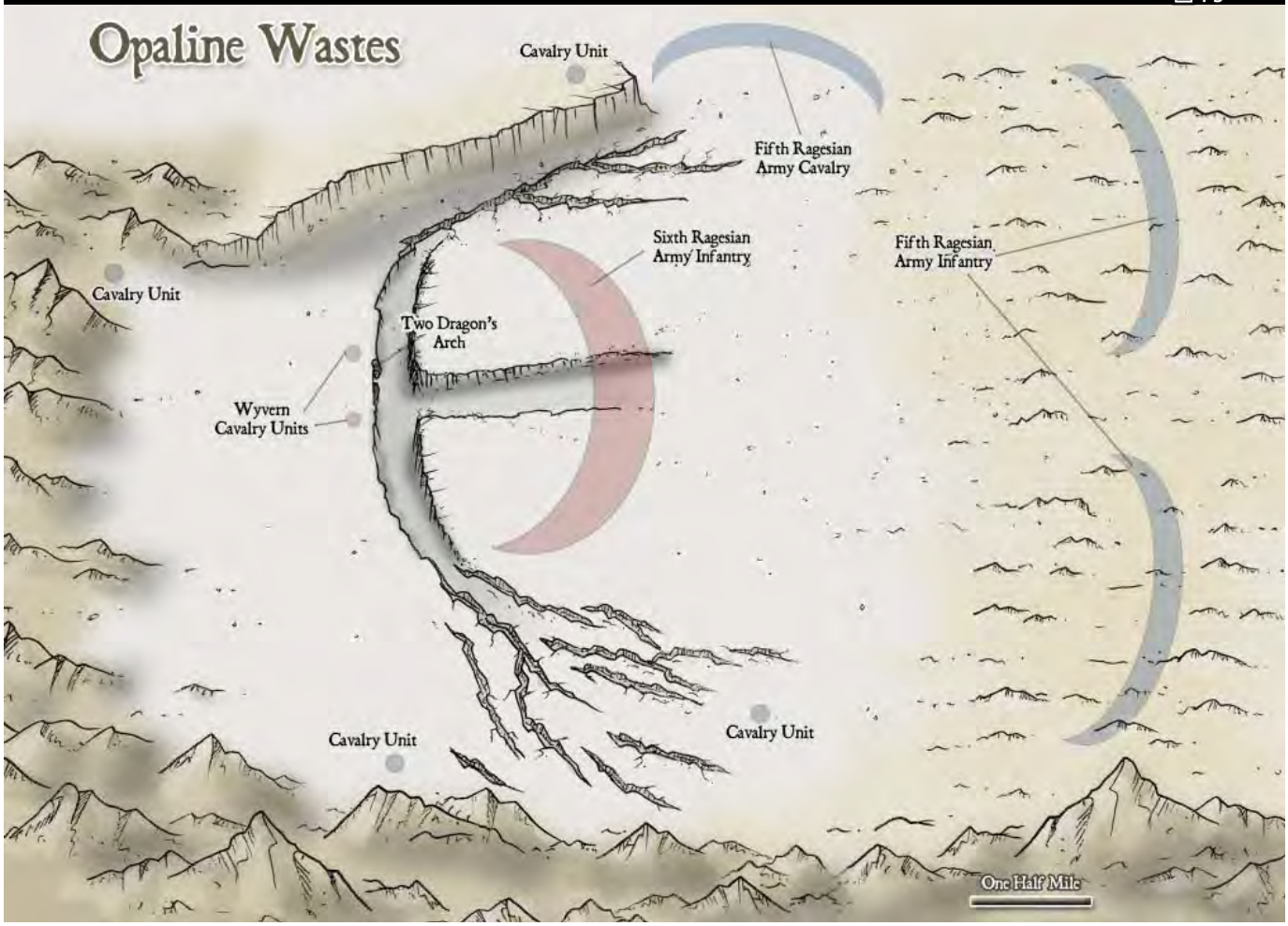
The Resistance armies arrive and begin setting up camp. The flame bursts of the Torch's *empyreal fire* power alert Ragesian scouts, who report to their commanders. The Ragesians hustle to prepare an ambush, while the druid inquisitor Atroius and his assistants use weather magic to call down a storm of glass wind, pinning and confusing the Resistance forces. Elements of the Fifth and Sixth Armies form a pincer around the Resistance, and General Xavious calls upon the heroes to fight off the attackers.

Wayfarer courier Tiljann can ferry the heroes between three simultaneous fronts — the Fifth Army's infantry from the east, the Fifth Army's grand cavalry from the north, and a horde of monsters, undead, and golems from the Sixth Army to the west. The heroes have a chance to aid in all three battles, and they notice that the Ragesians are bolstered by Leska's magic, granting them unnatural strength. After the heroes defeat General Titus, Resistance spellcasters notice that his battle standard serves as a focus for Leska's magic, and once they suppress it the Fifth Army's strength drops greatly.

In the night after the first day of fighting, the Ragesians attempt to assassinate the leaders of the Resistance, steal the Torch, and kidnap Princess Shalosha. If the first succeeds, the Resistance suffers a great blow as its command structure has to reorient itself; if the second succeeds, the Resistance armies suffer as the artifact is used against them; and if the third succeeds, the Shahalesti morale suffers, and Shaaladel's callousness is exposed when he quickly resigns himself to his daughter's death.

Though the heroes have dealt with most of the major threats, fighting against isolated forces

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weather continues to hinder the Resistance's efforts. Lyceum mages eventually track down Atroius, the druid responsible, and the heroes assault his hiding place atop a natural stone tower, while wyverns from the Sixth Army harrass them.

After many small battles, the Resistance crushes the Fifth Army's infantry when the heroes reach 125 VP. Afterward they begin clearing out isolated defenders from the Sixth Army, which collapses once the heroes reach 150 VP. Neither task poses a significant threat to the heroes, but if they haven't earned enough VP yet, they can go on additional objective missions to make up the difference.

The Resistance prepares to pass through Two Dragons Gate to the Heart of History, but morale may be flagging, and many soldiers balk at the slaughter they expect to suffer in the final push. Beyond the Two Dragons Arch, a mile of enemy crossfire and traps awaits them, and fights between soldiers and their commanders break out, since no one wants to have to go in first. The heroes will have to overcome this threat to the alliance's solidarity.

command, Anastasius, offers to guide the heroes through the layers of defenses to ambush General Cavala, commander of the Seventh Ragesian Army. Anastasius wants to defect to the Resistance, but first needs Cavala, her inquisitor aide Sinaelus, and the mighty green dragon Phaaughsmat taken care of. While the Resistance keeps the Seventh Army occupied, the heroes sneak in to cut off its head.

If the heroes fail to reach the Heart of History by the end of the third day, they are in for a surprise. The morning of the fourth day, Leska completes her ritual, and the heroes lose the aid of their allies as the Resistance armies begin to fight each other.

Encounters

A battle of this scope has many more scenes than the heroes could participate in or that your players would want to play through. In an effort to reflect the scope of the battle, we have designed a series of encounters appropriate for the heroes to deal with. Many other challenges face the Resistance armies, but the generals in command recognize that the heroes need to focus their

Note that the heroes do not have to win all these encounters, and in some cases they may need to retreat from battle when they are outmatched or have expended too many resources. Encounters are presented in the format shown below.

Encounter Name

Encounter overview.

Time: Some encounters occur at set times, or in response to the actions of the heroes or the Resistance. Other encounters occur if or when the heroes pursue them.

Location: The assumed site of the encounter, which can change based on the heroes' actions.

Allies/Enemies: Describes who the heroes have on their side and who they're opposed to. Stats for allies and enemies are presented in Appendixes One and Two.

VP: How many Victory Points the heroes can earn or lose in the encounter. Specifics are listed in the encounter description.

Description: The details of the encounter.

Setting Up Camp

After the heroes and the Resistance armies arrive, let the players get familiar with the surrounding area and the layout of their allies.

Time: Day one, arrival.
Location: Base camp.
Allies/Enemies: Various.
VP: 0

Scouts from every army set out to get the lay of the land, while everyone begins setting up tents, stone-shaped buildings, and a few magical edifices to serve as base camp. The sky overhead crackles with fire instead of lightning, but the thunder resounds hollowly. Give the heroes a chance to speak with any allies they're interested in, and to see the huge scope of the forces they have come with. Perhaps they help set up camp, or cast spells to secure the area.

In particular, the central command tent — a majestic blue and gold set-up — is warded with *dimensional lock*, *hallow* tied to *invisibility purge*, *mage's private sanctum* (which also conceals other nearby tents), and *screen*. Additionally, the actual command center lies within a *mage's magnificent mansion* which can only be accessed through a portal in the center of the command tent. Only select people — generals, their couriers, the heroes, and a few others — can enter, and the portal itself is heavily guarded. A curtain of gold chains tied with tiny bells covers the portal, providing a mundane back up amidst all this magic.

If the heroes agreed to hand over the Torch when they go into battle, the Resistance leaders keep it in the *mage's magnificent mansion*, in a locked chest (Open Lock DC 40) guarded with numerous glyphs and symbols. The heroes may wish to add their own defensive factors.

Other Foes

Deception will show up in Act Three, as will Etinifi if the heroes have not dealt with him already. Neither plays a role in the Battle of the Opaline Wastes, though Etinifi is lurking in a cave in Two Dragons Canyon. Locating Deception requires a caster level check (DC 37) due to the *nondetection* spell Shaaladel's high mage Aurana has cast on herself. The trillith Deception discreetly eased its way into her undead soul, where it lies dormant, aside from occasionally urging Shaaladel to take actions that will ensure Deception and his vessel reach the Aquiline Heart.

If the heroes are proactive enough to deal with these threats, they can remove the fey and the trillith from the equation in Act Three.

Forewarned

The heroes get a warning hint from the prophetic Crystin.

Time: Day one, arrival.
Location: Base camp.
Allies/Enemies: Crystin.
VP: 0

Crystin comes to one of the heroes with a concerned expression. (If not Crystin, a Sindairese cleric who used *divination* speaks with them.)

She says, "I saw a vision of an enemy twice dead hiding in light. As usual, I wish I knew what that meant, but my guess is that Shaaladel isn't being earnest. Oh, and be prepared for an ambush tonight, when enemies who hide their faces without masks dress in blue and gold and ring bells to announce their coming, and leave a pyre with their departure. That part I saw clearly."

This can clue the heroes into the fact that the trillith Deception (previously encountered in adventure two, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*, posing as a seela, and adventure six, *Tears of the Burning Sky*, posing as the halfling Ernest) will be making an appearance, and he will be impersonating one of the Shahalesti (who have a thematic fondness for light), but it won't be Shaaladel. Also, it gives the heroes a heads up that a group of necromancers will be infiltrating the command tent later that evening (see the Night Ambush scene, below).

After telling the heroes this, Crystin goes to warn the commanders of the army too. As with any prophecy, if the heroes are proactive enough, they can manage to avert it.

Narrating the Battle

The Battle of Opaline Wastes will prove a challenge for even experienced GMs to run: it requires off-the-cuff narration, accommodation of unexpected contingencies, and constant description of what's going on around the heroes, whether they be in camp or in the midst of a thousands-strong battle.

You will need to be very familiar with all of the encounters herein — the battle will prove almost impossible to run otherwise. Unlike a traditional location- (or site-) based adventure, the ebb and flow of events and the constant portrayal of NPCs is very important. Please make sure you read this act very carefully before running it!

In many cases, the GM will be required to provide his own narration or description, as well as decide on the physical layout of each encounter. The encounters are presented without blocks of text to read to the players, and the GM's task is to link them all together into a cohesive whole while providing the PCs with description and atmosphere during each. It may even be worth doing some preparatory work in addition to simply reading the adventure.

Although a complex challenge, we hope the Battle of Opaline Wastes provides a unique and very rewarding experience for you and your players alike.

Styles of Interrogation

Allies request the heroes take some enemies prisoner for interrogation.

Time: Day one, arrival.
Location: Base camp.
Allies/Enemies: Diogenes, Haddin, and Guthwulf.
VP: 5.

Diogenes, Haddin, and Guthwulf (or suitable replacements if these three are not alive or allied) approach the heroes and explain that they will be staying back at base camp, conserving their spells for extracting information from any prisoners.

Diogenes requests the heroes try to bring back alive some high-ranking enemies, preferably ones they have knocked unconscious. He plans to use illusions and charm magic to make the prisoner think he was rescued and nursed back to health, and thus glean information and eventually get the man to lower his defenses for a charm spell.

Haddin scoffs at this idea, saying it's much simpler just to use *suggestion* and *dominate person* to make a prisoner tell everything he knows. Diogenes counters that if Leska isn't an idiot, the people most likely to know valuable information will be resistant to such magic, which is why a gentler approach is needed.

Guthwulf leans close to the heroes and quietly says, "If you kill anybody important, bring 'im back anyway, alright?" Guthwulf, at least, has no qualms turning fallen enemies into ghouls who will serve him faithfully and share all their knowledge.

If the heroes bring prisoners to these three during the course of the battle or after any of the missions they undertake, they gain VP based on the importance of the person they bring back. Normal soldiers earn nothing. The commander of an enemy unit earns 1 VP. A typical inquisitor earns 2 VP. The general of any army earns 5 VP. If the heroes bring back multiple prisoners, they only earn VP for the most prominent one.

A Glass Wind Blows

The Ragesian attack begins with unnatural weather.

Time: Day one, arrival.

Location: Base camp.

Allies/Enemies: n/a.

VP: 4.

Barely twenty minutes after the heroes arrive, perhaps toward the tail end of the heroes' interaction with the interrogators, a strong wind begins to blow in from the east, and something that looks like a pale dust storm quickly approaches the camp. This is glass wind (see page 328), conjured by the druid inquisitor Atroius, and sent to immobilize the Resistance.

People take cover in tents as the storm blows in, and while those caught in the storm do not suffer any immediate detriment, the flecks of glass in the air scrape their skin like sandpaper, and fill their lungs with choking dust. Though people adapt quickly with cloth to cover their noses and mouths, the army is effectively immobilized.

An urgent courier finds the heroes and says their presence is needed at the command tent. When the heroes arrive, the leaders of the armies have assembled. Xavious informs them that Wayfarer scouts spotted Ragesian forces far closer than previous divinations indicated. While the storm is pinning the Resistance down, the Ragesians are approaching in a pincer from three directions.

From the east, huge columns of infantry march out of the badlands. From the west, a wide assortment of monsters and magical creations advance across the open fields. And from the north, General Titus of the Fifth Ragseian Army leads perhaps a thousand cavalry knights.

The storm overhead is magical, and they're working on divinations to locate whoever is creating it, as well as countermagic so the soldiers can get up and fight, but that might take a while, and it won't change the problem that they have several thousand enemies coming at them at once, and less than half an hour to get things into order. Xavious wants the Sindaire infantry to face off against the infantry to the east, the Dassen cavalry against the cavalry to the north, and the Shahalesti, their warrior-mages, and their treants against the magical monsters coming from the west.

Complication (EL 20)

Shaaladel objects. He has heard reports that some of the creatures coming from the west burn with fire, and he doesn't want to endanger his valuable treant allies. Xavious says it's critical to have the hardest hitters face off against any monsters, and he says the Lyceum mages can provide fire resistance for the treants.

Shaaladel wants to see the mages casting the spells before he sends out his treants. The heroes could just let the Resistance wrangle dozens of mages who are scattered and hiding from the glass storm, and while that would work, it takes at least fifteen minutes they could better spend doing other things. A faster solution is to try to cow or nudge Shaaladel to take a risk (Intimidate check DC 32 or Diplomacy check DC 40). If the heroes spend a minute to track down Shalosha and bring her in, she provides a +10 bonus to either check.

Resolving the problem quickly earns 2 VP.

Other Options

If the heroes use *control weather* or the like, they can counter the power of the Ragesian storm, earning 2 VP. Even if they don't, the Resistance manages to kill the storm before the Ragesians attack, but the heroes' action expedites things.

Joining the Battle

Xavious wants the heroes to link up with Tiljann, who will be ready to teleport them between the three battles. While Xavious is confident their forces will be able to repulse the attack, he doesn't want more men to die than necessary, so the heroes need to take out as many of the enemy as possible, and to target any specific enemies who overpower the normal forces.

The three battles are detailed in the encounters Badlands Battle, Cavalry General, and Monstrous Assault, below.

Badlands Battle

The Resistance army meets the Fifth Ragesian Infantry for battle in craggy badlands.

Time: Day one, afternoon.

Location: Eastern badlands. The terrain is open wastes that lead to rough hills. The druid inquisitor Atroius has used his weather magic to create loud thunder to mask the approach of the Ragesian army, though no rain falls.

Allies/Enemies: 14,000 Sindairese infantry, 4,000 Dasseni infantry, 1,000 allied barbarians, and limited Sindairese cavalry support versus 12,000 Ragesian infantry and 100 bearded devils, with giant and inquisitor support. Prominent allies — Torrent, possibly Katrina. Prominent enemies — Kulashkar the horned devil, possibly Katrina.

VP: 12

The Sindairese lines stretch out over two miles, curving toward the Ragesians at either end. Their commander keeps them a safe fifteen hundred feet back from the crags, and so while the approach of the Ragesians is concealed by the craggy terrain, when they finally make an appearance the Resistance should have a chance to prepare.

Soon enough, the heroes hear what must be thousands of Ragesian soldiers marching out of the badlands, but it seems like they're staying out of sight for now. In truth, the entire Fifth Ragesian Army is invisible, due to the power of the army's Grand Standard. They approach with as much stealth as an army can manage, closing to within 200 feet unless they are discovered. When General Titus — linked by telepathic bond to several other commanders throughout his army — gives the order, horns blare and the Ragesians fire thousands of arrows at the unprepared Resistance.

If the heroes see through the ruse and warn their allies, they earn 1 VP.

After one volley, the archers draw weapons and charge, and within moments the two armies crash into each other. Just before they make their first attack, General Titus uses the Grand Standard to

empower all his troops with heroism.

During the first rounds of battle, the second wave of Ragesian forces emerge from the badlands, waiting 1,500 feet away. Amid the traditional foot soldiers, giants stride with mighty metal weapons, and gnarled green figures — companies of bearded devils — stand guard with what must be the commander, a ten-foot tall horned devil who whirls his spiked chain to signal troop movements. Ragesian standards snap in the wind like dark fire, and with a roar, the devil sounds the second charge.

The Battle

The heroes should each be targeted by one archery volley by a Ragesian infantry squad during the surprise round. Afterward, an initial wave of a hundred Ragesian soldiers and twenty bearded devils led by two fire giant commanders approach the heroes' position. While the rest of the Resistance forces deal with more mundane threats, the task of defeating this powerful company falls to the heroes.

All of these forces are under the influence of heroism from the Grand Standard of the Fifth Ragesian Army, granting them a +2 morale bonus to attack rolls, saves, and skill checks, until the standard is taken care of.

Wave One (EL 19)

Ragesian infantry squads (5) (CR 13): hp 159 each, Appendix B.
Bearded devil legion (CR 14): hp 270, Appendix B.
Fire giants (2) (CR 10): hp 142 each, MM.

The soldiers charge in, trying to surround the heroes if on the ground, or firing arrows if they take to the air. The bearded devils teleport around any obstructions the heroes put up, and try to target spellcasters. The fire giants like to grapple their enemies and hold them down as an infantry squad hacks them to pieces. The heroes have about a minute — ten rounds — before the second wave reaches them.

Development

In the break between the two waves, a courier contacts the heroes, telling them that the cavalry battle to the north is going badly, and that their help is needed. The words are no sooner out of his mouth when a fireball strikes the heroes, probably killing the courier.

Wave Two (EL 19)

Bearded devil legions (4) (CR 14): hp 270 each, Appendix B.
Kulashkar, horned devil (CR 16): hp 172, MM.

After the first wave's most-likely swift defeat, the horned devil commander leads the rest of his devils to assault the heroes. Kulashkar targets flyers, trying to stun them and drop them for the legion to finish off. The bearded devils summon hordes of lemures who try to grapple the heroes and keep them occupied. If Katrina is a villain, she appears here too, laying down a devastating assortment of fire magic. She fights until things look bad for her, then teleports away, to fight another day.

If the heroes depart the battle — easy with Tiljann present — Kulashkar orders the the bearded devils to fan out via teleport and locate the heroes, then report back. Four rounds later, wherever the heroes are, the devilish legion arrives to continue the battle.

Allied Assistance

If the heroes call for help, they can get the aid of a Sindaire infantry company or Dassen cavalry company. The first company that comes to their rescue is led by water-mage Torrent, whose summoned water elementals provide a counter-point to the hordes of devils.

Victory

If the heroes defeat Wave One, they earn 5 VP. Defeating Wave Two earns another 6 VP. Further slaughter by the heroes contributes nothing significant to the battle, which the Resistance has under control. The heroes are, however, needed at the cavalry battle.

Cavalry General

The heroes battle the general of the Fifth Ragesian Army and his thousands of mounted knights.

Time: Day one, afternoon.

Location: Northern highlands. The terrain is rough, ascending slowly but steadily as you head northward. Here a thin, cold rain falls. It provides no penalties to any checks, just discomfort.

Allies/Enemies: Three thousand Dasseni heavy cavalry, scattered sphinx squadrons, one thousand Sindairese light cavalry, five hundred knights under former-Ragesian General Magdus, and limited infantry back-up, versus three thousand Ragesian heavy cavalry and various trained beasts and monsters.

VP: 15

If the heroes begin the battle here instead of with the infantry, the scene plays out similarly with an approach of invisible cavalry. After an initial volley of arrows, the cavalry charges.

While the heroes can take their time tearing through scores of enemy knights, blaring horns reveal General Titus's location.

Battle Against the General (EL 22)

General Titus (CR 18): hp 153, Appendix B.
General Titus's horse Vorenus (CR 18): hp 189, Appendix B.
Ragesian cavalry squads (8) (CR 14): hp 207 each, Appendix B.

General Titus carries the Grand Standard of the Fifth Army, set into a holster on the side of his intelligent warhorse, Vorenus. He rides within one of his cavalry squads, providing deadly archer support while his knights trample and lance the heroes.

Presently Titus and his allies should be under the effect of heroism. Should the heroes be flying, he pulls out a *potion of fly* and quaffs it — spreading the effect with the rest of his army — then orders his soldiers to take to the air. Alternately, he might drink a *potion of resist energy (fire)* if the heroes are obliterating his knights with fireballs.

Titus petitioned hard for Leska to let him ride into battle, and he believes he can kill the heroes who have so stymied the Ragesian war effort. When he sees the heroes he calls out to them, thanking them for the glory he will receive when he presents their heads to his empress. He focuses on one enemy at a time, and will not retreat or surrender unless he has decisively defeated or killed at least half the party.

Allies in Battle

While we focus on the heroes' fight with the most prominent enemies of the Ragesians, the heroes may want to call in military assistance. You should inform your players they have this option before the battles begin.

Calling in assistance is a full round action. Alternately, a character can expend a use of bardic music or a leadership performance to call in assistance as a swift action. The aid depends on what allies they have available.

If an allied unit is within line of sight or range of hearing (and usually one will be unless the heroes make a point of going off alone), the hero can get the unit to join their fight, typically by charging or firing an arrow fusillade at an enemy designated by the hero. The unit aids the heroes for three rounds before the threat of other enemies draws them to another battle. The unit acts on the hero's initiative, starting the round he spends his action to call in help.

Generally, let the player whose hero called in the unit play the unit, as his character is giving it orders. We recommend printing out or photocopying the pages with unit stats and cutting up the sheets. No more than one unit can aid the heroes at a time.

Allied Assistance

If the heroes call for help, a Dasseni cavalry squad comes to their aid. The first time they request help, the squad that arrives is led by Kathor Danava, whose trillith-granted powers let him tear through several men with a single strike.

Victory

If the heroes defeat General Titus, they earn 10 VP. If they bring back the Grand Standard to the leaders of the Resistance, they earn 5 VP, for the Lyceum mages soon figure out how to use the standard to their advantage.

In the aftermath of the battle, an injured lantern archon finds the heroes and tells them that Lady Shalosha requests their help on the western front.

Monstrous Assault

The Shahalesti battle magical and monstrous enemies from the Sixth Ragesian Army.

Time: Day one, afternoon.

Location: Western plains. The terrain is rolling hills with scattered caves. An intense storm, conjured by the necromancer inquisitor Euserius de Fiaba, affects the whole battle with black rain (see page 328), which incurs a –4 penalty to ranged attack rolls and Listen checks.

Allies/Enemies: 15,000 Shahalesti infantry, 5,000 Gate Pass irregulars, 1,000 Solei Palancis elite, 100 treants, limited giant eagle cavalry, and scattered celestials versus 6,000 Ragesian infantry, 10,000 monstrous humanoids who believe they still fight for Emperor Coaltongue, and hundreds of strange magical foes, including golems, undead, oozes, and aberrations, under inquisitor control. Prominent allies — Shalosha, Rantle. Prominent enemies — General Euserius de Fiaba.

VP: 30

Shahalesti mages pin down clusters of enemies with battlefield control spells, causing the already somewhat unstable hordes of monsters to attack with little order or tactics. This suits the mobile Shahalesti and the Gate Pass irregulars just fine, as they concentrate their attacks against isolated groups at once, but the monsters are still very dangerous.

Shalosha directs the battle from the front lines, and she needs the heroes' help against a trio of dangerous golems. She offers the aid of Arisha, a planetar she called, to fight beside them.

Special Note: In all of these battles, the enemies benefit from the *heroism* spell cast through the Grand Standard of the Sixth Army. This provides them +2 to attack rolls, skill checks, and saves.

Army of Darkness (EL 18)

Skeleton phalanxes (4) (CR 13): hp 156 each, Appendix B.

Skulks of shadows (4) (CR 12): hp 117 each, Appendix B.

As Arisha guides the heroes to the trail of the golems, they come upon a swath of land riddled with bodies of elves who died in agonizing horror. Their skin has been bleached white, and the ground beneath their bodies has turned black. The heroes spot a few scattered undead shadows checking the bodies, trying to kill any survivors and turn them into more shadows. No major enemies are immediately apparent, but if the heroes follow the swath of dead, they eventually come upon several phalanxes of skeletons and many shadows battling Shahalesti forces.

If they ignore this encounter and press on, or after they defeat it, the heroes soon come upon the towering fire golems.

Golem Battle (EL 21)

Bound fire golems (3) (CR 17): hp 439 each, Appendix B.

Savage hordes (5) (CR 13): hp 183 each, Appendix B.

The golems are chasing down units of Shahalesti soldiers and incinerating them horrifically, while dozens of wildly hooting humanoid sellswords follow their progress, looting and putting the knife to anyone clinging to life. Aside from the charred husks of a few treants, no allied units can be seen, though a unit of Gate Pass irregulars hide in a low valley a few hundred feet from the burning golems, praying they won't be spotted.

When the heroes arrive, two golems keep their distance while the other tries to engage in melee. The savage hordes do not join the battle unless the heroes are on the ground, or if the heroes attack them. Instead, the horde follows its gnoll trackers, who are following the scent of the Gate Pass irregulars.

Chase the Necromancer (EL 20)

General Euserius de Fiaba (CR 17): hp 78, Appendix B.

Skeleton phalanx (CR 13): hp 156, Appendix B.

Nightwalkers (2) (CR 16): hp 178 each, MM.

Nightwings (4) (CR 14): hp 144 each, MM.

While a huge battle rages in the black rainstorm, the general of the Sixth Army, an effete necromancer named Euserius de Fiaba, strolls with daunting guards near the back edge of the battlefield, his undead servitors keeping him comfortable and carrying his army's grand standard as he casually directs troop movements via telepathic bond. The heroes need to take him out, but he is cowardly, and quick to flee.

The heroes have a few minutes to recuperate after their last fight, but then an elf riding a giant eagle lands nearby, saying that the general of the Sixth Army has been located. Lady Shalosha wants to join forces with the heroes on a pincer attack. The courier guides them to an impromptu gathering of Shahalesti warriors and mages in a small vale. Two treants stand watch, their branches shielding Shalosha and her advisors from some of the intense rain.

Shalosha plans to go with the heroes on an aerial strike from above while ground forces keep the enemy pinned down. Shalosha and the heroes will target the general and his personal defenses, while the Shahalesti warriors deal with various other monsters and unnatural foes.

Other Options

If the heroes recovered the Grand Standard of the Fifth Army, the Resistance has figured out how it works. If Shalosha (or the heroes, if they enter the chain of command) use the Grand Standard, it gives the Shahalesti a huge leg up in the coming battle. This is already represented by the Victory Points earned in the Cavalry General scene, but it changes the flavor of this fight.

Joining the Battle

The heroes find the necromancer general walking among a phalanx of skeletons who are busily tending to him. One holds an umbrella over his head, another carries a tea tray, and a third holds his robes so they don't get wet on the ground. A few inconsequential lieutenants from the army stand nearby awaiting orders, and surrounding this macabre command center, a half dozen giant undead beings — nightwalkers and nightwings — quietly circle.

When the heroes attack, the general curses and orders the nightshades to attack. The nightwings pair up against heroes in the air or strafe those on the ground, while the nightwalkers interpose themselves between the heroes and the general. The skeletal phalanx stays with de Fiaba, to the point that they still keep the umbrella over his head, his tea handy, and so on.

Euserius doesn't expect to fight. He panics a little, using quickened *true strike* and *energy drain*, then *horrid wilting*, and finally firing off *disintegrates*. If surrounded, he casts *wall of stone* to create a dome over himself (figuring no one will bother trying to counterspell him casting a mere *wall of stone*), then casts a quickened *invisibility*, hoping to fool enemies into thinking he has teleported away. If reduced below 40 hp, Euserius grabs the skeleton bearing the Grand Standard and teleports to the entrance of his command bunker in Two Dragons Canyon and flees inside. His *etherealness* spell and contingent *magic jar* give him other opportunities to escape, and his *mind blank* makes it hard to find him once he runs.

Allied Assistance

They already have a planetar by their side, but if they need more help, the heroes can call upon the aid of a Shahalesti infantry squad (same stats as a Sindairese infantry squad) in the Army of Darkness encounter.

Against the golems if they call for help, the Gate Pass irregulars emerge from their hiding place, led by Rantle. If the heroes haven't figured out the golems' weakness yet, he shouts that he saw a fire elemental burst out of one golem whose breastplate was destroyed, and he thinks that might be its weak spot. If the heroes manage to release any fire elementals from their binding, the elementals turn on the savage horde.

When battling General Euserius de Fiaba, if they call for help, a treant grove comes to their aid.

Victory: If the heroes defeat the Army of Darkness encounter, they earn 4 VP. They earn 6 VP for winning the Golem Battle encounter. If they kill or capture General Euserius, they earn 10 VP, and if they bring back the Grand Standard of the Sixth Ragesian Army they earn an extra 5 VP. Even if they don't defeat de Fiaba and get the standard now, they'll have another chance later.

If the heroes offer at least 50 gp for each member of the savage hordes still alive, and succeed a Diplomacy check (DC 20), they can convince them to leave the battle. If instead they succeed a DC 30 check, they can get the mercenary humanoids on their side. Word quickly spreads among the savage races that the Resistance is paying better than Leska, and with their new allies, the heroes earn 5 VP.

If after this encounter the heroes have not earned a total of at least 100 VP, the Resistance lines are too weak to hold back the mass of Ragesian warriors. The heroes have at most half an hour before the armies sack the command tent and scatter the insignificant little rebellion. The heroes might continue the fight, but they do so from hiding, without much support.

Aftermath

The initial assault repulsed, the heroes see the aftermath of the day of battle.

Time: Day one, evening.

Location: Central flatlands, base camp, and surrounding areas. Inclement weather occurs in some areas, despite Resistance efforts to counter the weather magic.

Allies/Enemies: Various allied units. Prominent NPCs — Three Weeping Ravens, Balam, Rantle, Katrina.

VP: 0

As the heroes survey the battlefield, they run into the soul-tapping monk Three Weeping Ravens bringing back wounded and dead. He solemnly informs them of what toll the day's battle has taken.

How many troops the Resistance lost depends on how much VP the heroes have earned so far. They should have just accomplished the Repulse milestone (see page 327). If they have between 100 and 124 VP, the fight was very tough, and the Resistance lost nearly 15,000 troops in a costly battle. If between 125 and 149 VP, the fight cost about 7,000 troops. If above 150 VP, the Resistance managed to repulse over 20,000 enemies (killing about 6,000 of them) while only losing about 3,000 troops. (These losses do not affect the heroes' VP total. Rather, the VP total abstractly represents the number of losses.)

Three Weeping Ravens also says he has heard stories of Ragesian vandals on horseback stealing corpses of both sides. He grimaces at the prospect of fighting undead crafted from fallen friends.

Meanwhile, back at camp, the heroes discover a small celebration going on under a large mess hall tent. Within, half-elf diplomat Balam (if he survived *The Mad King's Banquet*) plays his accordion while Rantle leads the crowd in singing a boisterous rebel song from Gate Pass.

If Katrina is an ally, she relaxes for once, becoming much more sociable in the presence of her brother, rather than exhibiting her normal prickly demeanor. If she has not done so yet, she waits for the song to finish and quietly thanks the heroes for helping make sure she is a part of this, rather than hating herself and still working for Leska.

Storm Pillar

The heroes target the storm-summoning druid Atroius.

Time: Some time after the first battle. If the heroes are raring for another fight, they can go after Atroius before midnight of the first day. Otherwise, they probably need to rest and recover, and can pursue this mission some time the next day.

Location: Eastern badlands. Scattered among the crags are cyclopean pillars, eighty feet across, three hundred feet tall, their ancient carvings eroded from centuries of unnatural weather. Atroius's base is atop one of these pillars, while several squadrons of wyverns perch on other pillars within a few hundred feet.

Allies/Enemies: Limited allies, versus Atroius and scores of wyvern knights. If the heroes have not yet reached 150 VP, thousands of Ragesian infantry surround the pillar on the ground, since this is where the Fifth Army regrouped after its initial attack was repulsed. Due to the angle they would have to fire at, as long as the heroes stay above 200 feet off the ground, these squads play no role in the battle.

VP: 10

Lyceum mages manage to locate the inquisitor responsible for the unnatural storms that have threatened the Resistance this past day. The air mage Longinus (or a Lyceum mage group, if he's not available) has managed to keep away the worst of the weather, or else the Resistance army would be going slowly mad, or having their skin sanded away. However, that magical prowess could be better used elsewhere.

The heroes need to kill the inquisitor, and they won't be able to bring many allies along. They can choose to approach the pillar by flight, or try to climb it, but a widened dimensional lock wards the top of the pillar itself. Shaaladel offers to send his elite Solei Palancis dreadnoughts to go with the heroes, and the heroes might be able to convince one or two other allies to fly in with them.

The Flayed Druid (EL 21)

Atroius (CR 17): hp 114, Appendix B.

Ragesian wyvern squadrons (3) (CR 17): hp 270 each, Appendix B.

Ragesian infantry squads (varies) (CR 13): hp 159 each, Appendix B. Only participate in the battle if the heroes fly below 200 feet.

Aside from a widened *dimensional lock* (caster level 21st), the top of the pillar is rather nondescript, just a platform of stone 80 feet wide. Leska etched a sigil atop the pillar, which has allowed the druid to send his *control weather* spell beyond its normal range.

Atrious spends most of his time in dire bear form, using his Natural Spell feat to cast his spells. If the inquisitor has advance warning of the heroes' attack (by scrying, spies' reports, or simply seeing them coming from his high vantage point), he spends thirteen rounds casting his buff suite, the most critical being *freedom of movement*, *stoneskin*, *antilife shell*, *death ward*, and then *air walk*.

When the heroes are within long range, he casts whirlwind, trying to grab them one by one, and then bring them closer. The Burning Sky weather effect (see page 329) causes whirlwind and other weather spells to deal extra fire damage.

When the heroes get within medium range, he casts his empowered *firestorm*, then targets two *flame strikes* (one quickened) at injured enemies. He uses *control winds* to disperse the party by hitting those who aren't battling the wyverns with a hurricane force downdraft. If the heroes get closer, he advances via *air walk* into melee, only shifting to dire bat form only if enemies turn invisible. Before his first attack, he casts a quickened *poison*.

He generally only counterspells potentially fatal attacks or dispels overwhelming defenses for the heroes. He does not mind if the heroes fly, because he believes he has aerial superiority. The wyvern squadrons either pepper the heroes with arrows, or grapple vulnerable ones and drag them into whirlwinds.

Victory: When Atroius dies, his *control weather* spell begins to collapse. Flaming lightning begins arcing down from the sky, snapping along the sides of the pillar, breaking away huge pieces with thunderous booms. After a minute, the pillar begins to sway, and two rounds later it collapses. The dramatic destruction stuns and demoralizes any Ragesian soldiers present, and ensures the Resistance will be free from nasty weather, earning 10 VP.

Night Ambush

Ragesian infiltrators seek to assassinate the leaders of the Resistance.

Time: Some time after midnight, after the first day of battle.

Location: Resistance base camp.

Allies/Enemies: Guards of the command tent versus eight imperial assassins and a nightshade nightcrawler. Prominent NPCs — Simeon, Kiernan, General Xavious, General Gasparde, and the leader of the Dasseni military.

VP: Special.

Earlier, Crystin warned the heroes and the leaders of the Resistance that an ambush would come tonight. The commanders have taken the precaution of each sleeping with guards in the mage's magnificent mansion, except for Shaaladel, who trusts his own guards more, and is staying in his part of camp. The heroes might persuade the commanders to do something else, but unless physically restrained, Shaaladel refuses to be in the same place where an attack is likely.

Kiernan Stekart stays awake in the command tent, expending scrolls with a team of diviners to gather intelligence for tomorrow and watch for attacks tonight. Guards ring the tent just inside the area concealed by *mage's private sanctum*, and an avoral guardian stands watch inside, its *true seeing* ready to pierce illusions and trickery. The heroes might act as guards, might sleep inside the *mage's magnificent mansion* too, or might try many other things. The Ragesian plan, however, is as follows.

Assassins in the Command Tent (EL 21)

Imperial assassins (8) (CR 14): hp 28 each due to occupying weaker bodies, Appendix B.

Nightcrawler (CR 18): hp 212, MM.

Simeon: hp 42, Ref +6.

General Gasparde: hp 64, Ref +6.

General Xavious: hp 88, Ref +4.

Duke Gallo or King Steppengard: hp 70, Ref +4.

The Ragesians have taken a fair number of prisoners to the command bunker of the Sixth Army, where eight elite assassins used scrolls of *magic jar* on them. They "return" to the Resistance base healed of wounds and carrying the soldiers' original gear, plus a lead-lined pouch which holds a few doses of poison, a *null spellbomb* (see Appendix A), and a *necklace of fireballs* (type I). The lead conceals the magic from divination, and neither *true seeing* nor any of the other defenses of the command tent can detect possession.

The assassins infiltrate the base camp, take out the guards who are supposed to relieve those at the command tent during shift change, and then settle in, waiting until the other guards let their guard down. They take 10 on their Disguise checks, and seeing through their ruse requires a Sense Motive check (DC 34) or Spot check (DC 44, since they are actually in the bodies of those they're pretending to be).

Meanwhile, a nightcrawler burrows under the Resistance base camp and stops roughly 30 feet below the command tent. The soul gems the assassins used to cast *magic jar* have been planted inside an incision in the skin of the nightcrawler, so that if the assassins die in their current bodies, their souls will be safely returned to the gems.

At a prearranged signal ("breakfast tomorrow"), the assassins each quick-draw a *null spellbomb* and shatter it near the entrance to the *magnificent mansion*. The *greater dispel magic* (caster level 20th) will hopefully dispel the *mansion*, depositing the surprised leaders of the Resistance armies in the tent, most of them while sleeping. Then the assassins draw out their *necklaces of fireballs*, and when everyone has their *necklace* out, they shatter them as one, intentionally failing their saves so that the fireball beads explode as a chain reaction, dealing 88d6 points of fire damage in a 20-foot radius (Reflex DC 14 half). This kills the bodies the assassins are occupying, but their souls return to the gems carried by the nightcrawler underground.

The nightcrawler's tremorsense alerts it to the explosion. If it hears people still moving overhead, it burrows up and attacks whoever is closest. After 5 rounds, or if reduced below 106 hp, the nightcrawler burrows away and heads for the Ragesian command bunker. The assassin's souls do little, but if the nightcrawler dies, they attempt to possess weak souls nearby, in order to have at least a chance of retrieving the gems from the undead worm's corpse and getting back to Ragesian territory before the spell ends and kills them.

If the nightcrawler sees the Torch of the Burning Sky, it tries to swallow it (plus its bearer, if necessary) and escape with it.

Aftermath

If the heroes save the commanders, or at least most of them, they do not lose any VP, but if Simeon, Xavious, Gasparde, and Steppengard (or Gallo) die, the blow to command structure and morale incurs a 20 VP penalty.

Abduction

A devil abducts the Shahalesti princess, Shalosha. If Shalosha is not with the Resistance, the devil instead abducts an ally who is precious to the heroes. If no such ally exists, the devil abducts a renowned commander of the Shahalesti army, Liorala.

Time: Immediately after the assassination attempt.

Location: Resistance base camp.

Allies/Enemies: Shalosha versus a pit fiend and cauchemar.

VP: Special.

As soon as word begins to spread about the assassination attempt, a Ragesian agent tries to abduct Lady Shalosha. A called pit fiend — Baan-Fell, Lord of the Domain of the Upside-Down Sinners — rides on a cauchemar, and the nightmare's *etherealness* power has let the two float above the Resistance camp, observing unseen and practically undetectable.

When Baan-Fell spots Lady Shalosha heading out to see what happened in the assassination attempt, the cauchemar swoops down and ends its *etherealness*. The pit fiend then *power word stuns* the elvish princess and grabs her stunned form. The next round, the cauchemar turns itself, its rider, and their hostage ethereal again, then flies away. The pit fiend's fear aura panics most those nearby, and the devil escapes easily.

If the heroes have made a point of staying with Shalosha, they have a chance to stop this abduction.

The Devil and the Nightmare (EL 20)

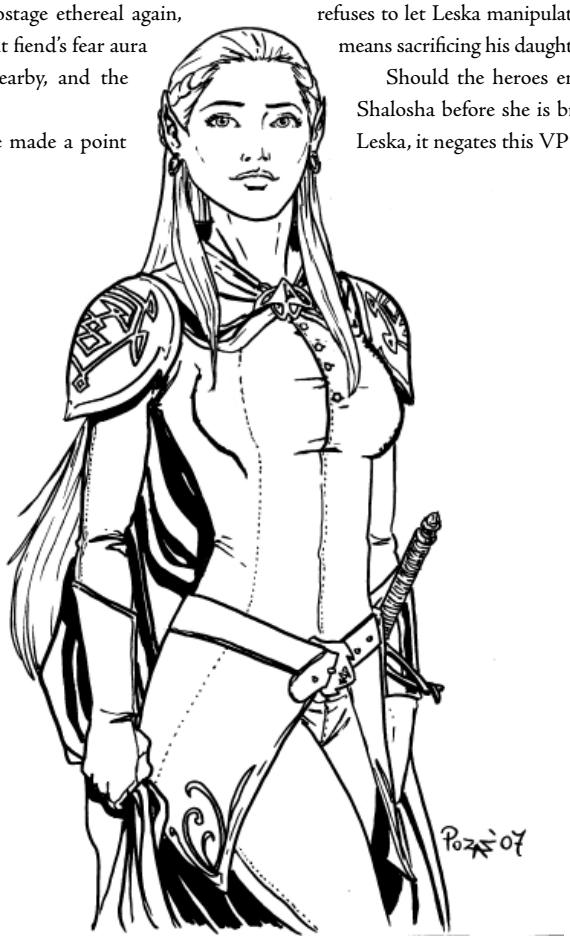
Baan-Fell, pit fiend (CR 20): hp 225, MM.

Cauchemar (CR 11): hp 172, MM.

If the initial attempt fails, Baan-Fell tries again until he is reduced below 150 hp, then teleports away. The nightmare flees on its own. Both the pit fiend and the nightmare were just bound to perform this one service, and do not appear otherwise in this adventure.

Aftermath: In the unlikely event the heroes save Shalosha, they earn no VP, just avoid a penalty. If Shalosha is abducted, Baan-Fell takes her to General Cavala beyond Two Dragons Gate, who then traps her in an *iron flask* and gives her to a ghoulish red dragon servant of Leska to take down into the Heart of History to Leska. The blow to Shahalesti morale incurs a 5 VP penalty. It outrages Shaaladel, who believes that his daughter is as good as dead, because he will not give in to any demands by Leska. He knows the abduction was designed to make him change his strategy, but he refuses to let Leska manipulate him, even if it means sacrificing his daughter.

Should the heroes enact a rescue of Shalosha before she is brought down to Leska, it negates this VP penalty.



Shalosha – Art by Claudio Pozas

The Slog

The Resistance begins the difficult slog to control the lands around Two Dragons Canyon.

Time: The second day of battle, possibly beyond.

Location: Entire Opaline Wastes.

Allies/Enemies: The Resistance armies versus the remains of the Fifth and Sixth Ragesian Armies.

VP: Varies.

This "encounter" represents the second major stage of the Resistance's offensive, and goes from when the heroes earn 100 VP until they earn 200 VP.

The Ragesians tried for a quick win on the first day, and so deployed nearly all their strongest resources. What remains are scattered battalions of infantry and companies of cavalry from the Fifth Army who hide in the hills and make ill-coordinated forays to disrupt the Resistance; plus hunkered-down companies of soldiers from the Sixth Army who hide in bunkers and secret tunnels all around the approach to Two Dragons Canyon. Any foes the heroes were to have faced in the first day of battle that they did not defeat can show up here.

During this scene, few great challenges confront the heroes. Those few enemies who can threaten the heroes do not attack the heroes, and instead wait either in the Sixth Army's command bunker, or in the tunnels beyond Two Dragons Canyon. The heroes can contribute in many ways, too many to detail in this adventure. Using the following examples as a baseline, let the heroes decide on how they wish to aid the battle, and come up with the encounter, usually EL 15 to 18 (higher if the heroes have allies present).

Assassination. The heroes locate a critical part of the enemy's command structure and take him out. Alternately, the heroes can identify the location of a target, then send in the drow assassins Quillathe and Yvonnel, if they are allies.

Assault. With several units under their command, the heroes attack a bunker of Ragesian soldiers and clear out the nearby secret tunnels.

Conversion. With cunning words (Diplomacy DC 40) or powerful magic, the heroes convince Ragesian prisoners to turn against the tyranny of Leska and join the Resistance.

Counter-Intelligence. Through coercion, magic, or deception, the heroes trick a messenger to give false intelligence to a Ragesian commander. A company of Ragesians who are in hiding to attack into an ambush.

Defend. A few hundred Ragesians attack a satellite base of Resistance soldiers.

Duel of Champions. The heroes call out a prominent and powerful warrior of the opposing side, and as warriors from both sides watch, the heroes try to defeat the enemy and cow the Ragesians into surrender.

Reconaissance. The heroes use their superior stealth to cross enemy lines, discover key targets of attack, and then report back to the Resistance armies. They must avoid roaming patrols, and make sure they don't tip off the Ragesians.

Spying. One or more of the heroes sneaks into a commander's bunker and recovers information on orders and troop movements. These could be used to forge fake documents later, or just to better target more assaults.

Unfinished Business. If the heroes failed to accomplish objectives in the first day of battle, they can track down those same enemies and finish what they started, earning appropriate VP.

Each encounter, except Unfinished Business, earns the heroes 5 VP, and takes about an hour, including travel and down time. Remember that the heroes have until the morning of the fourth day before Leska activates her ritual that will force the Resistance armies to battle each other.

When the heroes have earned 125 VP, the Fifth Ragesian Army surrenders. When they reach 150 VP, they root out the bulk of the Sixth Army, clearing the way for the army to gather in front of Two Dragons Gate, and prepare for the final push.

Daunting Dragons

Camped near Two Dragons Arch, the Resistance armies suffer low morale as some balk at an expected slaughter.

Time: A few hours after achieving 150 VP.

Location: Resistance forward camp at the bottom of Two Dragons Canyon.

Allies/Enemies: The Resistance armies.

VP: 10.

As the allied armies move into position outside the colossal Two Dragons Arch, word begins to spread of the intense tunnel defenses. Captured Ragesians have general details of the tunnel; they warn of glyphs and wards along the ground and archery bunkers and murder holes stretching over a mile to the great rift. Common soldiers throughout the army expect to be slaughtered in the fight to the Great Rift, and no one seems willing to be the first in. The heroes need to find a way to bolster morale.

The most straightforward solution is to address the armies, remind them of how much is at stake, and inspire them to not fear death because they are heroes, and their sacrifices will win prosperity for their families and nations. It's a tall order to convince men to go into near certain death, though, requiring a Perform (oratory) check (DC 30). The speaker gets a +2 bonus for each Leader feat he has.

Alternately, the heroes might devise tactics that shield the lead force, such as using *control winds* to knock away arrows from enemy archers long enough for sappers to dig through the walls of the bunkers. The Ragesians have rigged the side tunnels that connect the bunkers so they can collapse if intruders pierce the defenses, so such a tactic would be slow, clearing out a hundred feet of the tunnel every few minutes at best. See the Murder Tunnel encounter for details on the Ragesian defenses.

Finally, if General Danava is loyal to the Resistance, he comes to the heroes asking to be allowed to send his troops in first. He and his officers feel the stain of having followed Leska's orders, and this wish to make amends, even if it means giving their lives. The noble and conciliatory gesture by the former Ragesian general is a boon for morale and cooperation.

If the heroes resolve the dilemma by one of these ways or by any other, they earn 10 VP.

The Defector

A Ragesian offers to lead the heroes to the command center of the Seventh Army.

Time: After Daunting Dragons, before the attack begins.

Location: Resistance forward camp at the bottom of Two Dragons Canyon.

Allies/Enemies: Dougal Haius, Ragesian defector.

VP: 0.

While the heroes are preparing for the coming battle, a resolute dwarf approaches them, introduces himself, and surrenders. **Dougal Haius** (NE dwarf druid 13) explains that he oversaw the design and magical creation of the side tunnels between Two Dragons Gate and the Heart of History. He knows the Ragesian defenses and some of their weaknesses. He had been stationed in a bunker, but during the battle he disguised himself in the armor of a fallen Resistance soldier, then made his way to the heroes. In so doing, he violated his druidic oath, and thus cannot cast spells for another 24 hours.

Dougal believes that the Resistance is going to win this fight, and he says that the second in command of the Seventh Army, Commander Anastasius, agrees with him. They both want to be on the winning side, and they figure that by betraying General Cavala, they'll save thousands of lives in the coming battle, which ought to keep them from being executed for aiding Leska.

He can give them a detailed layout of the tunnel defenses, which would prove invaluable for the larger offensive, but Dougal thinks the best way to end the battle decisively is for the heroes to sneak all the way to the end of the tunnel, then face General Cavala and her allies, the inquisitor Sinaelus and the green dragon Phaaughsmat. If they defeat them, Commander Anastasius will be able to order his army's surrender.

It's up to the heroes whether to trust the dwarf. He is evil and is looking out for himself first, but he is being honest. He'll willingly agree to any reasonable loyalty test, mind reading, or even domination to make sure he wins the trust of the people he thinks will be deciding his fate.

The Walkthrough

Dougal is useless in a fight, and unless the heroes are prepared to wait a day he won't be helping them in their battle (which is part of his plan). Instead, he gives them detailed descriptions of where the various defenses are, to let them pass through the great tunnel under the Ragesians' noses. He tells them that Anastasius — a half-orc archer who they'll recognize by his white eyepatch — will be with General Cavala, and they need to keep him alive if they want to end the fight quickly and cleanly.

Murder Tunnel

Against a seemingly endless array of defenses, the Resistance armies battle to reach the Heart of History.

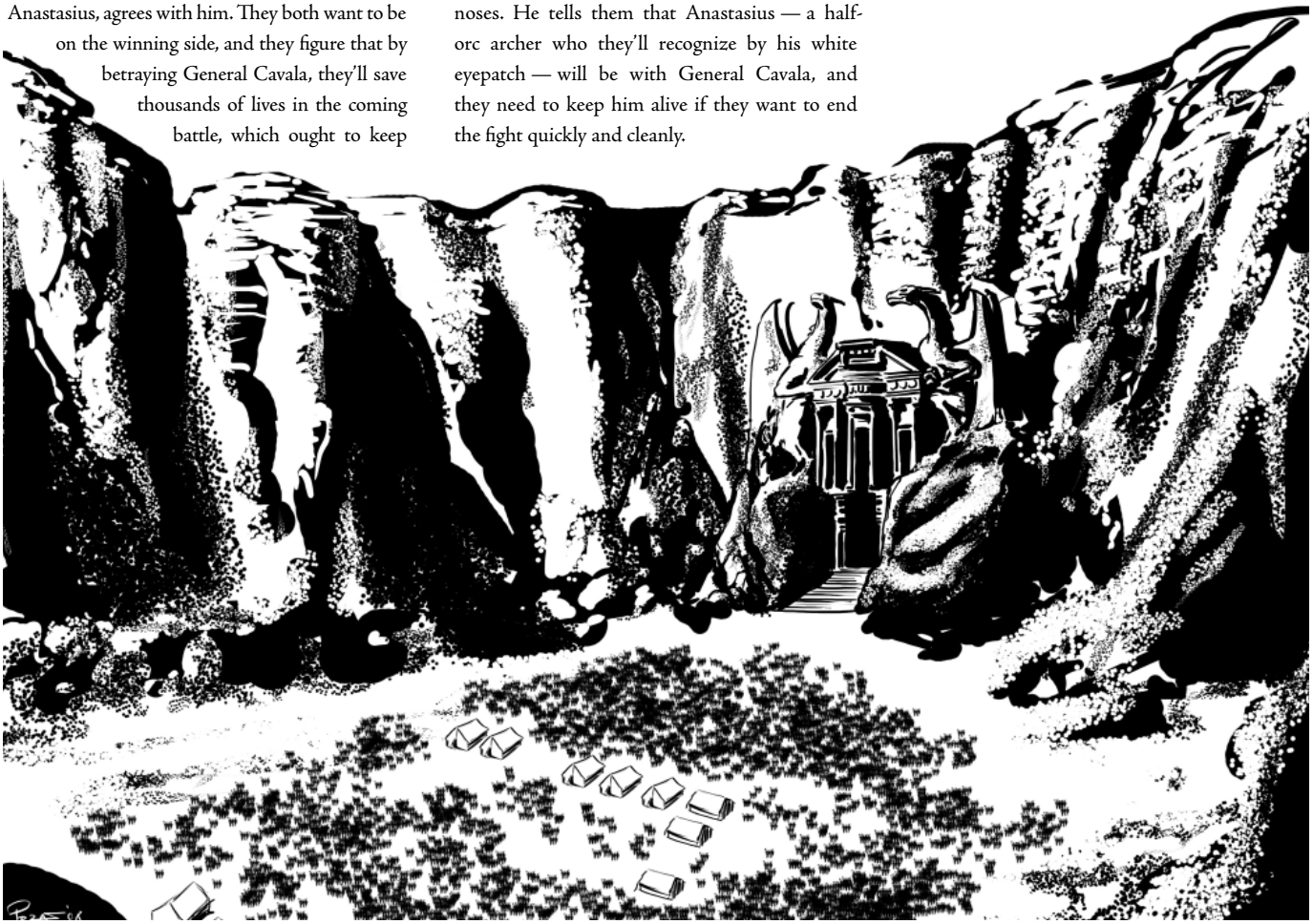
Time: When the heroes and Resistance leaders decide to launch the final attack.

Location: The tunnel between Two Dragons Canyon and the Heart of History. Though six hundred feet across at its entrance, it narrows to roughly two hundred feet across, its floor unevenly sloping downward, stretching a mile to the great rift of the Heart of History.

Allies/Enemies: All the Resistance armies versus the five thousand soldiers of the Seventh Ragesian Army.

VP: 0.

Optimally, the heroes won't have to fight directly in this battle, because it would involve tedious fighting for every inch of ground. If the heroes agree to go along with the defector Dougal's plan, however, the Resistance leaders think it key to launch an attack on the tunnel in order to keep Ragesian attention focused on them, and not looking for the heroes.



Two Dragons Arch – Art by Claudio Pozas

Layers of defenses run down the length of the main tunnel, and hundreds of continual flame spells illuminate it like a road to hell.

Archers look out from at least two dozen arrow slits every twenty feet, scattered along the walls and ceiling. Beyond those arrow slits lie hundreds of magically-shaped rooms, each housing a squad of infantry who snipe at enemies pressing through the tunnel. Hallways and cramped stairs connect these sniper rooms, and most rooms are rigged so that with the pull of a lever, a rock deadfall collapses in the entrance, blocking the passageway. The Ragesians expect the Resistance to pierce some of these bunkers, and this countermeasure should keep the Resistance from simply bypassing the defenses in the main tunnel.

No bunkers are apparent for the first three hundred feet, though they are there, cleverly concealed (Spot DC 30). The Ragesians wait until enemies get at least 300 feet in, which is where the first layer of magical defenses begin. A complex interweaving of three *forbiddance* spells (caster level 21st, making them nearly immune to dispelling), set to only allow Lawful Evil creatures to pass, covers the entire cross-section of the tunnel. The damage from this field should prevent all but the strongest creatures from entering.

The Ragesians suspect the Resistance will try to circumvent the forbiddance somehow, so the archers have orders to open fire upon anyone who gets close to the field, in order to keep mages from performing important magic. Additionally, the inquisitors have set up dozens of blasting *glyph of warding* spells on either side of the *forbiddance* fields, along with the occasional *symbol of sleep*, *unhallow* spell tied to *invisibility purge*, or simple *alarm* spells.

This pattern repeats every 500 feet, roughly, creating ten "gates" of *forbiddance* that must be bypassed in order to spare Resistance soldiers 6d6 or more damage each time. The spells do not have passwords, meaning the only "safe" route through requires taking the heavily defended side tunnels.

The only open entrances to the side tunnels from which the Ragesians snipe lie beyond the tenth gate; all others were sealed up with stone shape and the like. The Ragesians have enough supplies to withstand a month-long siege, and the Resistance doesn't have the time to waste.

The far end of the tunnel opens up into a wide cavern over a yawning chasm, a seemingly bottomless pit. Along the edge of this chasm lies the fortified command center of the Seventh Ragesian Army, and on the building's roof nests the green dragon Phaaughsmat.

Finally, to inhibit efforts to bypass all these defenses, the Ragesians have hung a magical teleportation beacon out over the chasm. Any teleporting creature who used teleporting magic to traverse more than 400 feet is drawn to the beacon if he used that magic within a mile of the beacon. Short-range teleportation is safe, but longer range magic is perilous. The beacon actually hangs out 40 feet from the edge of the chasm, and a *greater glyph of warding* stores a *greater dispel magic* (caster level 20th), set to go off whenever a creature teleports near the beacon. The intention is to cancel flight magic and similar defenses, sending invaders plummeting down the chasm.

Remember, no teleportation or divination magic can function across the Two Dragons Arch, but such magic does work within the tunnel. If the heroes cut loose the beacon and drop it in the chasm, they could then set up a *teleportation circle* leading to the entrance of the great tunnel, which could let hundreds of soldiers come to their aid during the fight with the leaders of the Seventh Army.

Dougal's Plan

The defector dwarven druid provides the heroes with the exact parameters of each *forbiddance* field, the location of *glyphs* and *symbols* relative to each, and where *invisibility purge* and *alarm* spells lie. He warns them not to teleport more than two hundred feet at a time.

If the heroes turn invisible or ethereal or use *wind walk*, they can heed his warnings and avoid alerting the Ragesians. They should be able to simply weather the damage from the *forbiddances* (Will DC 22 half), then heal up before they have to fight.

Of course, the heroes could just rush through, alerting tons of guards, but then when they reach The Edge of History encounter below (see below), General Cavala will already be reinforced with all her soldiers, instead of having them arrive slowly.

The Direct Approach

If the heroes ignore Dougal's plan and opt for a traditional slow engagement, they have to either bypass the many gates of *forbiddance* while keeping themselves and their allies from dying under a hail of arrows, or they have to break into the side tunnels the Ragesians occupy and fight their way room by room. None of those fights could conceivably challenge high-level heroes, but they would take a lot of time and resources, especially as the Ragesians have set up traps throughout the tunnels.

The Edge of History

The heroes reach the chasm at the end of the great tunnel, and attack the commander of the Seventh Ragesian army.

Time: Heroes' prerogative.

Location: 300 feet beyond the tunnel's final *forbiddance* field, at the edge of the rift known as the Heart of History. The main command bunker lies on the northeast edge of the chasm, and great stone bridges connect a ring of bunkers lined with arrow slits, arrayed around the pit.

Allies/Enemies: The heroes and any allies they bring versus General Cavala, fell claw inquisitor Sinaelus, the green dragon Phaaughsmat, and a near-endless onslaught of warriors who will come to the defense of their general.

VP: 35.

Much of this encounter depends on how the heroes approach. The green dragon Phaaughsmat sits atop the command bunker, connected by *telepathic bond* to General Cavala and commanders throughout the tunnel. His 60-foot blindsense provides a first line of detection.

Inside the command bunker, General Cavala uses Phaaughsmat as a liaison with the rest of her army, while Sinaelus preps a briefing on resources and force assignment. Neither of them expect an attack, though the eye-patched Commander Anastasius is just biding his time to betray the general.

Three Ragesian infantry squads guard the command bunker — one at the main entrance, one in the hall facing the rift, and one in the central chamber with the general. An additional infantry squad waits in each of the eight bunkers around the rift, the soldiers uneasy but not particularly on the look-out for intruders.

Cavala has strapped the Grand Standard of the Seventh Ragesian Army to her *animated shield*, and it floats within easy reach. Currently a *flame arrow* spell affects the entire army, but when combat begins, Cavala will drink a *potion of protection from energy* (acid, caster level 10th), to provide her and her nearby allies a 120-point shield against acid damage.

The Coup (EL 22)

General Cavala (CR 20): hp 110, Appendix B.

Phaaughsmat, very old green dragon (CR 19): hp 362, Appendix B.

Sinaelus, fell claw of Leska (CR 17): hp 148, Appendix B.

Ragesian infantry squads (11+) (CR 13): hp 159 each, Appendix B.

Whenever the heroes reveal their presence, the alarm goes up quickly, and within at most two rounds General Cavala orders Phaaughsmat to call for several hundred Ragesian soldiers in the great tunnel to fall back and reinforce their general. She uses a leadership performance to inspire the squads in the command bunker, which try to hold off the heroes' attack, while Phaaughsmat takes to the air, strafing the heroes and laying down clinging clouds of acidic gas. Sinaelus stays near the general, ready to throw himself in the way of dangerous attacks.

As soon as the heroes get into the central command room, Commander Anastasius slings his crossbow off his shoulder and orders the general to surrender. General Cavala curses at her commander, and a stand-off lasts until one of the heroes arrives. At that point, Anastasius tries to attack, and Cavala reacts by activating her *cape of the mountebank* to teleport to the next bunker, taking the Grand Standard with her. From there she proceeds to flee bunker to bunker as necessary, keeping in touch telepathically with Sinaelus and Phaaughsmat, hoping to evade capture until reinforcements arrive. She tries never to move without having a squad of soldiers with her as cover.

Ragesian Reinforcements

Starting five rounds after the alarm is sounded, two Ragesian infantry squads arrive in the area, one emerging from the smaller tunnels on each side of the great tunnel. Another pair arrives every five rounds thereafter, to a maximum of twelve total over three minutes.

Development

Phaaughsmat roars the orders Cavala sends him telepathically, directing volleys of archery — at the heroes usually, but at Anastasius if he is in the open. The dragon uses his breath weapon to stymie the heroes' pursuit of the general, and snarls at the "traitor" Anastasius, trying to grab him and toss him into the pit.

If the heroes are with Anastasius, they can make a Diplomacy check (DC 30, with a –10 penalty to do so as a standard action) to convince any Ragesian squads they encounter to stay out of the fight, and to wait until the mutiny is resolved.

Phaaughsmat fights until reduced to 100 hp or less, at which point he panics and dives down into the rift of the Heart of History. Though this is brazen defiance of Leska's orders, it's the only way he thinks he can escape being slaughtered. If

he escapes, the heroes will soon see him again (at the beginning of Act Three).

When the heroes capture or kill General Cavala, the Ragesian soldiers hesitate. If they have protected Anastasius, the commander orders a surrender, news of which spreads quickly. If Anastasius died but the heroes have the Grand Standard, they can make an Intimidate check (DC 33) to cow the witnessing soldiers into surrendering. A lieutenant steps up to take charge of the army and agrees to surrender.

Victory

The heroes earn 10 VP simply for defeating General Cavala. If any effort to get a Ragesian leader to order surrender succeeds, the heroes earn an additional 25 VP.

If the heroes have earned at least 200 VP, the Ragesian armies go along with the surrender order, securing victory for the Resistance. The heroes can safely rest and wait for their allies to link up with them before they descend into the Heart of History. If they have not yet reached 200 VP, the soldiers in the tunnels hold out and keep fighting for days more, and the heroes cannot spare the time to wait for their allies. The Ragesians at the chasm do not pick a fight with the heroes, but will fight back if targeted. The heroes might need to head down into the Heart of History immediately, or find a way to get whatever allies they want to bring along through the Ragesian lines.

Phaaughsmat

The heroes should find out about the existence of the mighty green dragon from interrogations of Ragesian prisoners, before they enter the tunnel. A little research — bardic knowledge (DC 30) or Knowledge (arcana or religion) (DC 30) — identifies Phaaughsmat as a 765-year old green dragon who long studied the myth of the Aquiline Heart, and who disappeared several decades ago, roughly the same time Leska apparently discovered the Heart herself.

If the heroes had interactions with Naizelasa, the green dragon in the mire north of Seaquen, a successful check also reveals a connection between her and this dragon; Phaaughsmat is her father. Eager to prove her superiority to her elder, Naizelasa could be convinced into allying with the Resistance if they tell her she'll have a chance to face him. Getting her in may prove difficult, and her only focus in the fight will be her father, but she won't plan to betray the heroes.

Leska's Ritual

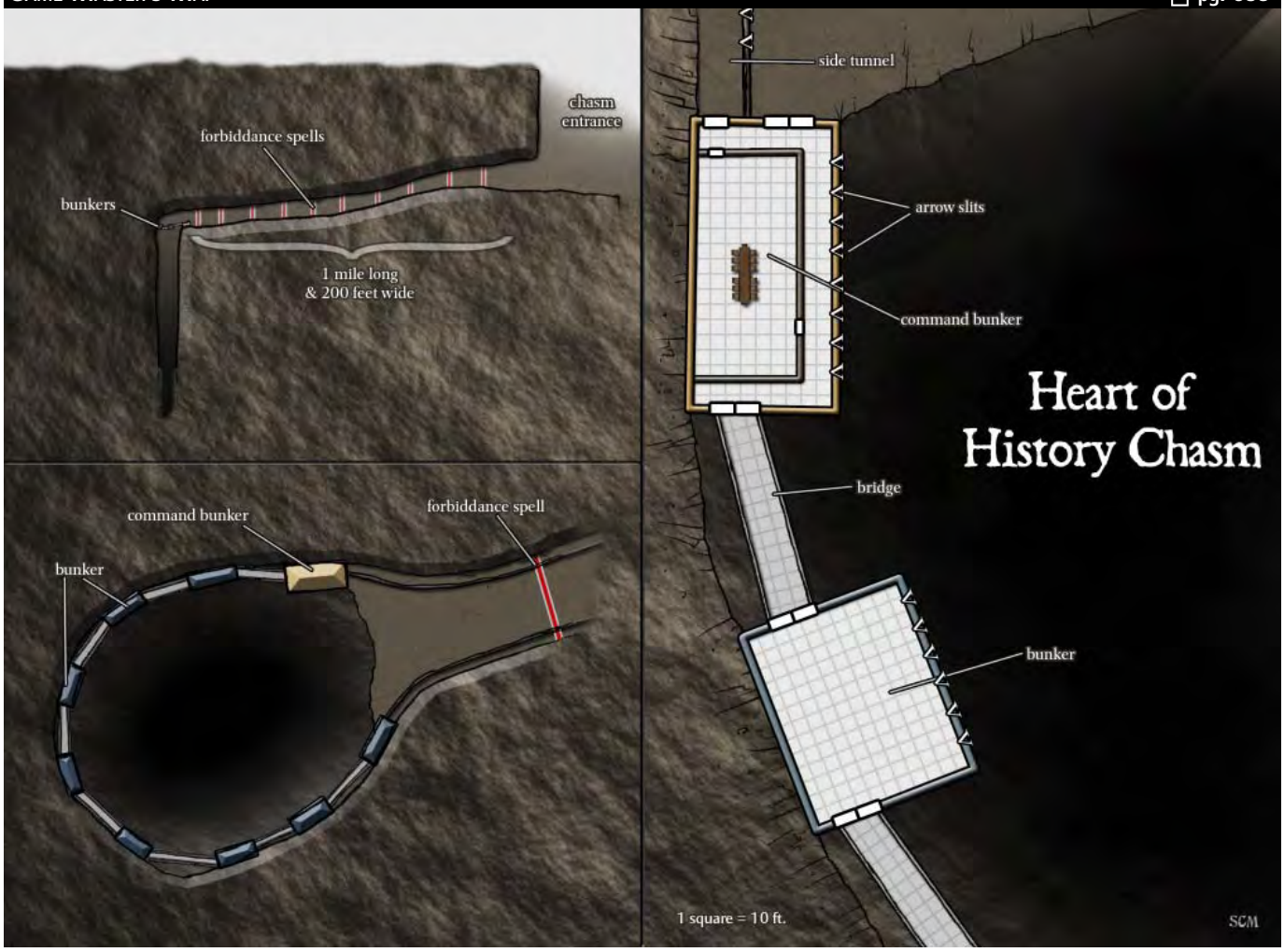
If the heroes have not reached the Heart of History by the morning of the fourth day, they suffer a devastating setback when Leska completes her ritual. Subtle magic slithers into the essence of the world, in Ragesia and the lands around, twisting fate to nudge events toward war. Not a mental compulsion but rather a gentle nudge to the course of events, first, long-standing tensions between nations boil to war, political rivals see opportunities for taking out their enemies, and religions see signs that lead them to turn upon nonbelievers.

As time progresses, the weight of years of slights and wrong-doings will drive wedges between even the strongest allies, and the world will fracture into thousands of tiny enclaves constantly at war for resources, for religion, and for revenge.

The immediate effect is a 50 VP penalty as the heroes' allies turn against each other. Some just fail to provide back-up to units from other armies, while others actively attack those they view as rivals. Of course, even Leska's own armies are not immune, and the tunnels leading to the Heart of History run with blood as power-hungry Ragesian lieutenants and commanders vie for control of the army.

The heroes remain, for now, unaffected, and the last, best hope for peace.

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Into the Heart of History

The top of the chasm is just the entrance to the Heart of History, a place of unnatural time and mighty physical challenges. The nature of the powerful magic that suffuses the area allows only a select few to enter. Generally, creatures with fewer than 17 Hit Dice who see the great chasm quaver at the thought of facing whatever lies at its bottom, and simply cannot bring themselves to go along. Creatures with 17 Hit Dice or more (as well as any heroes who for whatever reason don't have that many Hit Dice yet) sense greatness in the air, and can bring along one creature as a cohort or ally, though generally you have fiat to limit who can go with the heroes.

Unless one of the heroes has a particularly strong tie to a given NPC, you probably shouldn't let anyone go with the heroes. Through a year or more of travel, battle, and heroism, they have earned the right to face Leska, and it just complicates things if the heroes drag along people simply to have spare swords.

Shaaladel plans to send his high mage Aurana (see adventure nine, *The Festival of Dreams*) to follow the heroes, but not directly, since he hopes they'll deal with whatever challenges lie ahead, clearing the way. Aurana's divinations have warned of the "aging" effect in the path to the Heart, something Shaaladel will not risk, but something against which the vampiric Aurana is immune. Shaaladel's plan is that when the heroes defeat Leska, Aurana will attack them at their weakest, claim the Torch, and take the prize of immortality. Shaaladel wishes to rule, and Aurana wants to be restored to life. If necessary, Aurana can aid the heroes should Leska prove too challenging.

For now, though, Shaaladel plays the part of a daunted commander, and he agrees with the rest of the Resistance leaders that the heroes alone have a chance of defeating Leska. When the heroes are ready (or when they're forced to flee before a Ragesian onslaught), all they need to do is figure out how to descend a bottomless pit.

Act Three: The Heart of History

In this act, the heroes overcome great physical challenges and face Leska to decide the fate of the war and of the world.

This Thing All Things Devours

The greatest guardian of the Aquiline Heart is Time itself, literally. A draconic spirit somewhat akin to a trillith lurks in the tunnels that lead down to the Aquiline Heart, and its presence has caused time to flow oddly. As creatures go closer to the Heart, they age, until by the time they have reached the threshold of the final chamber even the youngest will be too frail and weak to press on.

This entity, Time, consists of the spiritual leavings of the great dragon spirit who slew the eagle and placed its heart here. Over the aeons, the spirit gained the slightest spark of sentience, and now it waits for those who will correct the wrong it perpetuated in the ancient past. It will stop any who it believes may steal the Heart's power or destroy it to destroy the world, but will reward those who it believes will protect the Heart or take its place to restore balance to the world.

Time, the Heart, and Immortality

The heroes will understandably want not to be gripped by old age when they face Leska, and they have several ways of freeing themselves from Time's power. However, if they're hoping to then taste the blood of the Aquiline Heart and become immortal, they're in for disappointment.

The Heart's blood provides healing, but on its own it does not grant immortality. Only with the interaction of Time's influence does it provide eternal life. If a creature who is not aged by Time's power drinks the blood of the Heart – either directly off its surface or from the streams that flow from it – he is affected as by the *heal* spell. This power fades quickly as the blood leaves the Heart chamber, and blood removed from the caverns holds no particular power.

If a creature who is under the influence of Time's aging power drinks the Heart's blood, he becomes immortal, gaining the benefits of the Blessing of the Aquiline Heart.

Aging Penalties

Characters lose 1 point each of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution if they advance to Middle Aged; 2 more points (total 3) at Old age; and 3 more points (total 6) at Venerable age.

As the heroes descend, Time appears to the heroes on several occasions. It never initiates attacks, but it observes their actions, reads their thoughts, and detects their alignments. Each time it shows up, it observes for a minute, then flies away at great speed, slipping into solid surfaces if necessary. If addressed, it reacts as if it understands, but only barely, and it does not communicate in response. If attacked, it uses *time stop* then flees. Each time it leaves, time tightens its grip on the heroes, and they spontaneously age.

When Time leaves, the heroes and those with them advance one age category. They suffer the physical penalties of aging, but gain no bonuses. Characters with Timeless Body suffer no penalties, though their appearances still change. Non-living creatures are unaffected. Most characters will age from Adult to Middle Age after encountering Time at the bottom of the chasm, to Old at the waterfall, and then to Venerable at the edge of the lava chamber.

Older characters will reach the edge of death sooner, but this effect cannot actually kill a creature, nor reduce stats below 1. *Wish* and *miracle* can negate this effect, restoring creatures to their natural age. Likewise, if Time is destroyed the effect is nullified, at least until the spirit rejuvenates. Finally, if Time deems the heroes trustworthy and the heroes trust it, it will voluntarily free them from this effect.

Leska, being immortal, is unaffected by Time's power. If Shalosha was taken hostage, she was transported to Leska in an *iron flask*, within which she was not subject to the aging effect. Once released in the Heart chamber, Shalosha was beyond Time's reach, and so she is unaffected.

The Trials of the Heart of History

Four stages of trials lie between the heroes and Leska. Unless noted, all these areas have no natural light.

The Great Rift

This seemingly-bottomless pit starts at the end of the Ragesian-defended tunnel, and descends two miles, so wide and deep that unless the heroes hug the walls, it feels as if they are descending endlessly through a black void. Somehow the heroes must find a way to descend, probably by flight magic, but perhaps by climbing (Climb DC 20).

After what feels like an interminable journey, the sound of rushing water reaches the heroes. A swift river flows through the bottom of the chasm, 100 feet wide, its source unknown. It disappears down a tunnel barely higher than the water's depth, and by searching along the wall of that tunnel, the heroes can spot several generations of climbing hand-holds cut into the stone wall by many millennia of seekers who came before.

If Phaaughsmat died over the rift, his body lies shattered and impaled upon jagged rocks in the river. If the dragon escaped, the heroes find him here, lying weakly upon the rocks, his scales pale and falling out as if with extreme age, an unnatural appearance for a dragon. He gasps to the heroes, "I am dying. Here, Time claims even my kind. What madness have I—"

He wheezes out his last breath, and just then the heroes become aware of a presence watching them from the tunnel that flows downstream. (Alternately, if Phaaughsmat never reached here, they sense this after they look around for a bit, before they press on.) The spectral dragon Time observes them for a minute, then flees downstream, and the heroes feel years wrack their bodies, as detailed above.

The Sunless River

There is room enough for the heroes to fly or climb (Climb DC 15 due to existing paths) through the tunnel without having to get into the river, but Leska has set wards here. One hundred feet in, a *greater glyph of warding* set to cast *greater dispel magic* (caster level 21st) marks the ceiling, and the first flying, non-undead creature who passes through the tunnel will be targeted by it.

Thirty feet beyond, another *greater glyph of warding* is set to cast *spell immunity* (for *fly*, *levitate*, *darkvision*, *spider climb*, and *feather fall*; Will DC 22 negates) against the first non-undead creature to pass by, including creatures in the water. The intent is to first dispel anything letting a hero fly, then render him immune to basic efforts to rescue him.

Finally, 30 feet beyond that, a *symbol of stunning* (Will DC 30 negates) on the ceiling catches the unfortunate point-man, as well as anyone who tries to go to his rescue, stunning everyone within 60 feet for 1d6 rounds as soon as a non-undead creature passes within 60 feet of it.

If these glyphs land a hero in the water, or if one of the heroes decides to try to swim it intentionally, the river poses a mighty challenge.

The river crashes through the lightless tunnel for over a mile, passing through two areas of

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jagged rocks and rapids before finally ending at a titanic waterfall. Creatures caught in the river flow downstream at a rate of 60 feet per round. While it is possible to slow one's movement by swimming against the current (Swim DC 20), getting out of the river requires a Climb check (DC 30).

In each of the two areas of rapids, a creature caught in the river must make three Swim checks (DC 25). Each failed check results in 5d6 damage from being tossed and sliced against jagged rocks.

After a mile, the heroes hear the deafening roar of a massive waterfall echoing through the tunnel. Should a creature caught in the river go over the waterfall, he drops a mile, tumbling across numerous outcroppings on the way down, taking several distinct batches of 20d6 points of falling damage, before splashing into the giant whirlpool at the waterfall's bottom. Any hero (or corpse) who falls into the water swirls around a minute before disappearing into the unseen depths of the world.

If the heroes aren't flying, the climbing paths cut into the wall continue alongside the waterfall, and around the low rocky beach.

When the heroes pass the waterfall, they spot the faintly glowing dragon spirit Time hovering 60 feet away, watching them. As before, it observes for a minute or until attacked, then flies away toward a tunnel in the far wall, the location of which is marked by a tiny *continual flame*. In so doing, it forces the heroes on to another age category.

Blessing of the Aquiline Heart

A creature receiving the blessing of the Aquiline Heart is immortal. He does not suffer ability score penalties from aging, nor can he die of old age, but he does gain the normal ability score bonuses. He has regeneration 30, and heals ability damage at a rate of 1 point per ability score per round. He is immune to disease, energy drain, and poison.

Almost no form of attack deals lethal damage to him. He regenerates even if he fails a saving throw against a *disintegrate* spell or a death effect. If he fails his save against a spell or effect that would kill him instantly (such as those mentioned above), the spell or effect reduces him to –10 hp; unconscious, but still alive and able to regenerate. He is immune to effects that produce incurable or bleeding wounds, such as mummy rot, a sword with the wounding special ability, or a clay golem's cursed wound ability.

If he loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1d6 minutes (the detached piece dies and decays normally). He can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to his stump.

Only the bite or breath weapon of a true dragon deals lethal damage to a creature made immortal in this way. He also cannot regenerate Constitution damage from having blood drunk. If he is completely exsanguinated (reduced to 0 Constitution by the blood drain of a vampire, for example), he loses this ability and is slain. If he has nonlethal damage equal to his hp +10, he is unconscious and helpless. While he is helpless, a character may perform a coup de grace to impale him in the heart. As long as his heart is so pierced, he cannot regenerate.

Epoch Cliffs

All around the huge whirlpool, rock walls rise a mile and a half to a stalactite-riddled ceiling. Thousands of millennia of history can be seen in sedimentary layers around the cavern, and here and there fossils peek out. One side of the chamber possesses a strange gravity, however, and the heroes feel a slight tug in that direction, growing stronger the closer they get.

On the wall opposite the waterfall, cracks run up the stone layers, rising all the way to the roof. Roughly half way up, one of these fissures widens into a tunnel which leads on. A solitary continual flame, which has burned for ages, marks it from afar. Reaching the tunnel seems to be the fairly easy matter of flying up, but of course Leska has taken precautions against that. She has placed a *greater glyph of warding* just inside the tunnel, set to cast *greater dispel magic* on the first flying, non-undead creature to come within 30 feet.

Instead of flying, the heroes might attempt to climb (Climb DC 15).

Through the fissure in the cliff walls, the heroes find a rough, claustrophobic tunnel, barely 5 feet wide, which twists and turns, heading slowly downhill for miles and miles. The heroes notice the air growing ever warmer, and eventually a sinister red glow appears at the end of the tunnel, and a deep, rhythmic beating pulses through the stone.



Leska – Art by Claudio Pozas

Dragon's Teeth

The craggy passage opens into a sprawling cave that resembles the maw of a dragon. The thin shore of blackened stone on the near side of the cavern is littered with ancient husks of armor and bone from millennia of seekers who made it this far, but never reached the Heart. Beyond the shore, the entire cave's floor is covered with lava, and along the sides of the room strange hollow spires arc up like teeth, spilling streams of orange molten stone into the pool. A hundred feet away, at the far end of chamber, a thin sheet of lava pours down from the ceiling, parting occasionally to reveal brief glimpses of the entrance to the final chamber, the resting place of the Aquiline Heart.

Immediately after the heroes reach this chamber, the ghostly dragon Time rises up from the lava and moves just to the edge of the shore, but pulls up short to consider them one final time. How it reacts next depends on the heroes' alignments and how they act.

If the heroes are all good-aligned and they have not attacked it, Time telepathically says to them, "You are worthy," and it frees them from its aging power.

If the heroes are all evil, whether they attacked it or not, it tells them, "Turn back. You are unworthy." It will attack them if they try to move on to the final chamber.

If the heroes consist of mixed alignments, or are all good and have attacked it, it telepathically says, "Prove your worth."

To prove their worth, the heroes can extol their virtues and willingness to defeat Leska (Diplomacy DC 30, +5 if they mention the myth of the Heart in detail). Alternately, they can offer themselves to Time's judgment, and then not flinch when it attempts to bite them. It stops just before it would harm them each time. Singing the Song of Forms renders the spirit corporeal, and its tune soothes the beast. Any other efforts can work as well.

Upon proving their worth or destroying the spirit — it does not flee if attacked here — the heroes are freed from the unnatural aging. If the heroes do not prove their worth and simply press on, Time snarls in disappointment and vanishes, leaving the heroes aged and enfeebled. All that remains is finding a way through the sheet of lava.

The lava, thin though it is, completely coats any creature any creature that passes under it, dealing 20d6 points of damage, plus an additional 10d6 damage for 1d3 rounds thereafter. Wall of force and other tricks can divert the lava's flow. Should the heroes somehow fall in the lava, they die. No save.

Time's Boon

When the heroes pass into the Heart chamber, the dragon spirit speaks to them one final time, saying, "You have my aid to defeat the tyrant" (or, if they destroyed Time, instead, "Even you may be better than this tyrant"). The heroes suddenly find their health and powers replenished to whatever state they were before the first encounter of the day. If the heroes have any spells active on them when they enter the Heart chamber, those spells remain active, and the spell slots or resources used to cast them remain expended, but otherwise their powers return in full. They cannot change their prepared spells, and expended items, charges, or XP do not return, but the heroes go to fight Leska at effectively full power, as if she were the only challenge they faced today.

The Aquiline Heart

Beyond the *burning veil*, the heroes find a sprawling chamber, its ceiling rising as high as thirty feet, with clusters of stalagmite pillars dividing it into smaller sections. A deep, slow heartbeat reverberates from the western end of the cave, and streams of primordial blood flow outward to the chamber's edges. Thin flames cling and crawl along the cavern's walls, providing illumination.

Leska had placed two *alarm* spells, one at the entrance to the lava chamber, and another at the entrance of the Heart chamber, so if the heroes fail to notice and dispel those warnings, she is ready for their arrival. She has cast all her defensive suites (see below) except Suite One, since it has the shortest duration. She has also cast her epic spell *burning veils* to create four flaming walls in the tunnel that leads from the lava chamber to the Heart. If the heroes do manage to sneak in, her first action is to cast a quickened *time stop*, during which she raises her defensive suites and creates the *burning veils*.

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Leska stays within sight of the Heart and within 300 feet of the heroes. If the heroes are blocked by the flaming walls of her spell, she addresses them (also concentrating on her spell). While the heroes can try to bypass the walls somehow, this setup provides incentive for the heroes to wait and talk with Leska before fighting.

> "When I was yet but young," she says, "Lord Coaltongue conquered all he set his eye upon. I joined his war, I found my lord eternal life, and all I gained: betrayal and distrust by he whom I had served. I saw the battling age of blade against brother would never close, for mercy, hope, and peace are but sweet lies. In war does mankind shows its nature true. In war you will fight, and sacrifice much, but whether I live or I die, in war you'll see the world and man's malignity."

As her speech draws to a close (or when the heroes tire of talking with her), the walls flicker out and die one per round, and when the last drops, the battle begins.

The Supreme Inquisitor (EL 28)

Leska mixes raw offensive evocations with more disruptive spells, and has girded herself with a majestic suite of sorcerous defenses.

Leska (CR 28): hp 246, Appendix B.
Ghoulish juvenile red dragons (4) (CR 10): hp 123 each, Appendix B.
Shalosha (CR 18): hp 94, Appendix B.
Aurana (CR 20): hp 117, Appendix B.

Due to her Multispell and Automatic Quicken Spell feats, Leska can cast up to three quickened spells per round (instead of just one), and all her spells of 3rd level or lower are automatically quickened. She has already cast *mind blank* and *moment of prescience*, and their effects are included in her stat block.

Magical Suites

Leska has three "suites" of offensive spells, and three suites of defensive and enhancing spells.

If alerted to the heroes' coming, she casts all her defensive suites, and waits to cast her offensive suites for when she can target the heroes after her brief address to them.

If caught off guard, her first action is to cast a quickened *time stop* during which she casts Offensive Suite One first, then Defensive Suite One, and if possible Defensive Suite Two, Offensive Suite Two, and then finally Defensive Suite Three. Offensive Suite Three represents her usual actions once combat begins.

Offensive Suite One takes her standard action and all her quickened spells for the round to cast, and creates challenges for her enemies, lasting the entire duration of the battle. She casts quickened *mage's sword*, quickened *crushing hand*, quickened *flaming sphere*, and *acid fog*. Finally, she whispers a curse, which triggers her thaumaturge contingent conjuration for *summon monster IX* for a pair of fiendish tyrannosaurs. Stats for these foes are provided below. She only casts this suite once the heroes are within range.

Mage's Sword (CR n/a): +34 (4d6+3, 19–20/×2). It makes one attack each round a chosen creature within 70 feet. Leska can change its target as a standard action.

Crushing Hand (CR n/a): hp 246, AC 20. Fort +23, Ref +16, Will +40. Atk +40. Grp +45 (2d6+12 damage). Bull rush +18. The hand resembles an articulated brass claw. It targets one creature of Leska's choice, with a range of 280 feet. She can change who it targets as a move action.

Flaming Sphere: 2d6 fire damage to creatures in the 5-ft. square (Reflex DC 27 negates). She can move it 30 feet as a move action, with a maximum range of 280 ft.

Fiendish tyrannosaur (2) (CR n/a): hp 216 each. Huge magical beast (evil, extraplanar). AC 14. Spd 40. Atk +22 (3d6+16), improved grab, swallow whole. Grp +32. Fort +18, Ref +12, Will +8. DR 10/magic. Fire and cold resistance 10. SR 23. Darkvision. Smite good 1/day (+18 damage against good creature).

Offensive Suite Two is battlefield control, with quickened *glitterdust*, quickened *silence*, and a quickened *wayfarer's step* to get her into a better position, teleporting up to 45 feet. She finishes with her epic spell *desertion of the blade*.

Offensive Suite Three is Leska's typical use of her actions once combat begins. She casts three quickened spells — usually *fireball*, *magic missile*, or *touch of idiocy* — then one powerful spell, such as *meteor swarm*, *horrid wilting*, *acid fog*, *chain lightning*, *disintegrate*, *greater shout*, or *harm*. If she has to give up her standard action to counterspell, she still casts her multiple quickened spells. If necessary, she uses a move action to direct her *crushing hand* or *flaming sphere*.

Defensive Suite One takes all of Leska's swift and standard actions in one round to cast. It protects her for the duration of the battle with quickened *protection from energy (fire)*, quickened *fire shield*, quickened *freedom of movement*, and *greater spell immunity*. This suite grants her a 120-point shield against fire damage, reduces damage from cold by half, grants immunity to grappling and effects that slow her movement, and provides unbeatable Spell Resistance against five spells of 8th level or lower, which she chooses based on her research of the heroes. Additionally, any creature hitting her in melee with a non-reach weapon takes 1d6+15 points of fire damage.

Defensive Suite Two wards her against a lot of enemy tricks, with quickened *true seeing*, quickened *invisibility purge*, quickened *magic circle against chaos*, and *antilife shell*. This permits her to see through illusions and recognize polymorphed creatures, eliminates invisibility in a 210-foot radius (particularly useful for her allies), keeps non-lawful summoned creatures from coming within 10 feet (spell resistance applies; the other benefits of *magic circle against chaos* are redundant with her existing defenses), and keeps most other creatures — animals, aberrations, dragons, fey, giants, humanoids, magical beasts, monstrous humanoids, oozes, plants, and vermin — from approaching within 10 feet of her.

Defensive Suite Three is least necessary, and provides some ancillary protection, with three quickened *resist energy* and *spell turning*. This provides acid, electricity, and sonic resistance 30, and lets her turn back the first 1d6+4 spell levels that target her.

Terrain

In each of the smaller sections, a white crystal spike rises up from the ground, veins of blood flowing through them. These spikes provide layers of redundancy for the crystalline shield that seals off the Aquiline Heart.

Normally the Heart, itself nearly ten feet across, lies in a 30 foot wide pool of its own blood atop a 10 foot high mound. Streams flow down from the sides of the pool. Leska, however, has sealed off the Heart with a pillar of red crystal, which is as impenetrable as a *wall of force*, though it allows blood to flow through it. The five white spikes throughout the chamber divide the spell that empowers the wall, so that a single *rod of cancellation* or *disintegrate* spell won't take out the shield. They also perpetuate the spell long beyond its normal duration, and protect it even from *antimagic field* and *mage's disjunction*.

Each of these spikes has AC 5, hardness 5 and 40 hp, so they can be destroyed with a powerful blow or a spell such as *shatter*. As the spikes are destroyed, the red crystal around the Heart slowly drains of color, until, with the destruction of the final spike, the crystalline wall shatters, leaving the Heart exposed.

The stalagmites around the chamber grow in long clusters. These spaces are generally impassable, but a creature can make an Escape Artist check (DC 20) as part of its movement to pass through them as if they were difficult terrain. They provide improved cover (+8 AC, +4 to Reflex saves) to creatures in the area or on the far side.

The streams of blood flowing from the Heart are just ankle deep, but a creature who drinks a mouthful of the blood is healed, as per the spell (caster level 11th). Drinking usually requires a free hand, a move action to get the blood, and a standard action to drink it. No creature can benefit from this healing more than once per day.

If the heroes waited too long and did not arrive until after Leska completed her epic ritual *fate of war*, a creature that drinks the blood also finds himself compelled to attack the nearest creature, whether friend or foe (Will DC 28 negates). This effect lasts three rounds.

Tactics

Leska tries to destroy the heroes with direct offensive fire as quickly as possible. She hurls multiple quickened spells, often spending her move action to use her *burning veil* epic spell to create walls of fire to keep her enemies moving. Her mastery of elements power lets her change the energy type of any spell she casts, and her mastery of shaping lets her protect her allies.

Though Leska is a skilled counterspeller, she does not waste her efforts countering anything that won't take her out of the fight. Her mastery of counterspelling makes her particularly dangerous if the heroes try for a cheap win with something like *flesh to stone* or *trap the soul*. Unfortunately, she cannot use *spell turning* against *mage's disjunction*. That spell, as well as *antimagic field*, are her two greatest threats.

She has *mage's disjunction* prepared, but she will not use it offensively, only as a counterspell. Should an enemy manage to cast *antimagic field*, Leska reacts by casting a quickened *wall of stone* to surround the person in a dome just wider than the field's radius.

Enemies and Allies

In addition to the fiendish tyrannosaurs she summons, Leska controls four ghoulish red dragons. They likely will not last long, but she sends them to hold off warriors.

If Shalosha was successfully kidnapped, Leska has used her as an experiment subject for her great ritual. The elven princess waits in the eastern chamber of the room, and will attack the heroes when they enter. *Break enchantment* or *remove curse* can free her, as can destroying the Heart.

When the heroes have destroyed three of the five crystal shards, Aurana arrives via *shadow walk*. She says Shaaladel sent her to help, and proceeds to assist their fight against Leska, mostly with her *accursed tendrils* and *greater shadow evocation*. When the shield around the Heart goes down, however, the trillith Deception who has been hiding inside Aurana takes over. At that moment,

Leska's Mask

If the heroes manage to sunder or remove Leska's mask, she feels vulnerable without it, and loses the protection of her *mind blank* spell. If subjected to any emotion-based effect, be it fear, rage, bravery, or hope, she is stunned for one round.

At the end of the battle, if they remove her mask, they see she was beautiful.

Etinifi (if he is still alive) arrives, having traveled via *shadow walk* with Aurana.

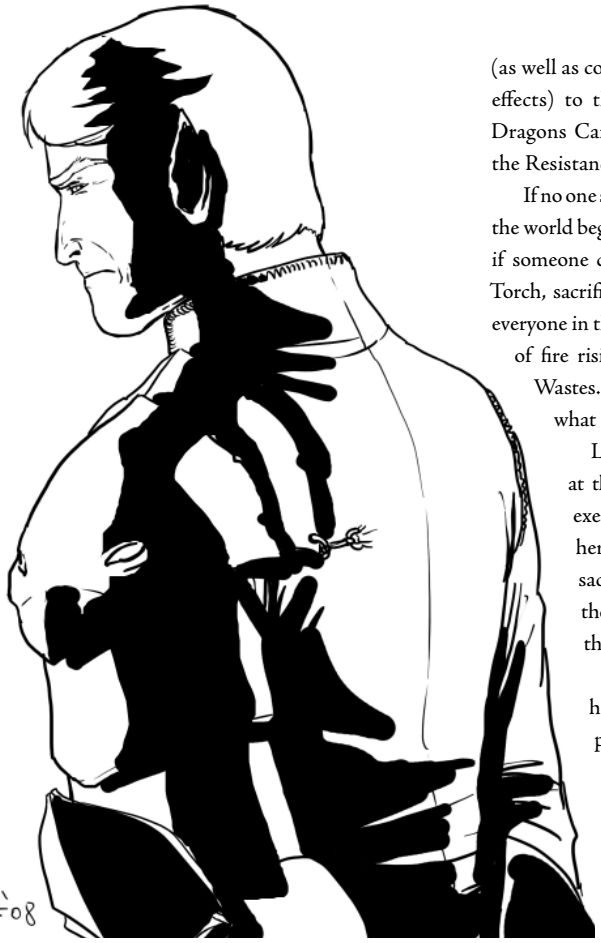
Then, on Deception's turn, it makes Aurana cast *telekinesis* to try to disarm whoever carries the Torch, and if successful, a second, quickened *telekinesis* to hurl the Torch into the Heart. What this causes is detailed below in Destroying the Heart.

Development

How the battle ends depends partially on if this is the end of the campaign saga. If you intend to end the campaign with a different adventure, Leska poses a great enough challenge as is, and she fights until the heroes drop her. At that point, the heroes can keep her from regenerating by piercing her heart, or kill her for good by performing a coup de grace with the Torch. The heroes can then slightly injure the Heart (as detailed in adventure ten, *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child*) to contact the elemental spirits and get access to the trillith's homeland. The two spirits can also destroy the ritual Leska was powering with the Heart.

If this, however, is the climax of the campaign, things get a bit more complicated. In this climax, the heroes should not be able to decisively defeat Leska except by destroying the Heart.

In this version, the proximity of the Heart grants Leska even more amazing healing properties. Instead of regeneration 30, she has regeneration 200, allowing her to effectively recuperate from any damage the heroes deal her. This should encourage the heroes to destroy the Heart.



Destroying the Heart

If the Torch of the Burning Sky strikes the Heart (AC –3), it bursts with flame, and the giant heart seizes and suddenly turns black. The flaming head of the Torch begins to burn wildly out of control, and one round later it obliterates the Heart. During that round, anyone who touches the Torch feels his own heart beating with godlike strength, as flames begin to consume his body. If he lets go of the Torch, he suffers no ill effect, but if anyone is holding the Torch at the end of that round, the Torch tears his soul from his flesh and burns it into the world. Then the Torch shatters in an explosive conflagration. Fire bursts through the entire heart chamber, and the Torch's final act is to teleport everyone present (as well as conjured creatures and animated spell effects) to the surface, in the bottom of Two Dragons Canyon, surrounded by the armies of the Resistance.

If no one sacrificed himself to replace the Heart, the world begins to shake and tear itself apart. But if someone did let himself be consumed by the Torch, sacrificing himself to keep the world safe, everyone in the canyon witnesses a heavenly being of fire rising phoenix-like above the Opaline Wastes. It hangs in the air, as if waiting to see what will happen.

Leska visibly quavers for a moment at the sight in the sky, then sneers and exerts the last of her power to destroy her enemies and prove that the heroic sacrifice was meaningless. But with their armies and allies backing them up, the heroes hold the upper hand.

If a player character sacrificed himself to replace the Heart, let the player choose and play four units out of the Resistance as allied soldiers who come to the heroes' aid. Shaaladel, however, joins the battle to betray the heroes. Feel free to throw in a few extra attacks here and there from allies on the sidelines as beloved NPCs chip in to take down Leska, and stop Shaaladel's betrayal (as well as deal with the trillith Deception and Etinifi, if necessary). You should probably leave the killing blows to the heroes, though.

When Leska falls and Shaaladel is defeated, a cheer goes up from the gathered thousands. Then, in the sky, the fiery image of the phoenix condenses into a single shining mote before exploding in a wave of flames that spreads across the sky. A cleansing breath blows outward, and everything it touches heals (the amount of healing is up to the game master). The deathly white stones of the wastes darkens to lush soil, grass springs up from the ground, trees sprout and flower, and the wounded find themselves healed. The fires in the heaven fade, leaving the sky clear and wondrous.

Shaaladel, Betrayer – Art by Claudio Pozas

Aftermath and Denouement

If the heroes haven't already won the Battle of Opaline Wastes, defeating Leska earns 50 VP. If that's still not enough to bring them to 200 VP, the heroes haven't earned a tidy, happy ending. They can rest for now, but the remnants of Ragesia's power will still pose a threat in the future.

Most likely, though, the heroes will have defeated the greatest villain of present times, saved millions from her tyrannical rule, and shaped the fate of the world for years and years to come. The "Burning Sky" effect that caused fire damage from teleportation ends; with it gone, Lyceum mages and Wayfarers are able to create *teleportation circles* to let the various armies return to their homelands, where news and celebration spreads like the wind.

In the former fire forest of Innenotdar, the green of life returns, and the ghaele eladrin who pledged to watch over it pays the heroes a visit before returning to the celestial planes. The few survivors of the Innenotdar elves find the strength within themselves to create a new village, aided by the unicorn Nelle. There the heroes will always be welcome, and the trees will whisper and sing of their tale.

In Dassen, Ostalin, Sindaire, and Shahalesti, warriors return to their homes. Families that lost fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters mourn, but for those who were on the right side of the conflict, they can count on the respect and support of their neighbors in repayment of the heroism of the fallen.

The soldiers of Dassen bring handfuls of dirt from what had been the Opaline Wastes back to their homes, and the next year's harvest is bountiful.

At the Monastery of Two Winds, survivors of the war devote themselves to traveling the world to promote peace and fight wrongdoing before it gains the strength to be tyranny.

The burning rift in the skies over Sindaire closes, and that lost chapel brewery waits for the heroes, whenever they are ready for another adventure.

Some of the monks of the Temple of Echoed Souls return to Shahalesti and seek disciples in the cities of the elves, who spread the word of the genocide in Ycengled. No apology can undo the atrocity of the wrongs against the Taranesti, but the Shahalesti will forever bear the burden of what they have done.

In scattered corners of the world, children awaken from dreams of Loneliness, or Rebirth, or Hope.

Riots and celebration erupt throughout Ragos, the capital of Ragesia, and a revolution spreads across the lands once conquered by the empire. Infernals are slain and banished, and complicit nobles are hung.

The people of Gate Pass throw a lavish party, name a few streets after the heroes, and send out offers for them to become members of the city council, commanders of the garrison, or heads of a new school of war. The new ruler of the Shahalesti pledges never to send her armies into the city except as friends, while the leaders of the various regions that made up Ragesia convene in Gate Pass to forge an independent peace among themselves, unless one of the heroes makes a play to be the new emperor.

Somewhere in the heavens, the spirit of the hero who sacrificed himself to become the new heart of the world can look down and know that a hundred thousand veterans remember his name whenever they think of the battle they won. He might become an agent of a god of healing, a demi-god of his own, or simply let his consciousness drift across the world without goal, but whatever he chooses, his nature, his heart, and his dreams influence the fate of those he gave his life to save.

From the docks of Seaquen, ships set out as refugees return to their homelands, but many stay behind. The celebrations are a showcase of illustrious magic found nowhere else in the world. Aboard their ship, the Wayfarers put on one final great show, but soon, they will set out on a world tour to recount the saga of the War of the Burning Sky.



The Beating of the Aquiline Heart – Art by Claudio Pozas



Side Quests
Bonus Adventures

for Various Level Characters

by War of the Burning Sky Fans

Cover Art by
Claudio Pozas

About the Bonus Adventures

This section contains five bonus adventures which are set during the War of the Burning Sky but which aren't part of the main campaign saga's story line. These adventures deal with events on the periphery of the main campaign events, and cover a variety of locations and levels.

More Spies in the Steam Tunnels

Seaquen • Level 5

Deep beneath the streets of Seaquen, the elemental planes of fire and water meet to create the rising steam which serves to warm the city in the depths of winter. Now, as an unnatural cold snap hits the town, the steam suddenly stops, and the people of Seaquen huddle in their homes, unable to fight the bitter cold.

Can the heroes solve the mystery and save the town?

Moral Dilemmas

Shahalesti • Level 6

As a blizzard hits them in the depths of winter, near the mountain borders of Shahalesti, the heroes are forced to hole up in a small cave-camp occupied by a band of elven guerilla warriors and their captive, an erinyes devil with valuable information. The heroes will be forced to make a difficult decision between the crazed, cruel Shahalesti commander and the unspeakably evil erinyes, Asura.

A Harvest of Hope Forlorn

Dassen • Level 7

A civil war is brewing in Dassen. In the meantime, Leska has dispatched an army to annex the kingdom. The heroes, in the town of Liederhafen, investigate rumors of a mysterious cache of magical weaponry, and soon discover that they are the victims of a murderous conspiracy.

The Old Fashioned Way

Ragesia • Level 8

The heroes are sent to Ragos, the capital city of Ragesia, to locate a man called Rowern, the head of Ragesia's army intelligence. The trail leads to the Wiseman Brewery, where Rowern likes to spend his evenings drinking with his old army buddies.

Dreamcatcher

Seaquen • Level 15

A trillith who calls itself Wanderer passes through Seaquen, appearing as a tall man, wrapped head to toe in sandy robes and veils, with a staff that curves at the top, ending in a knot that looks like an eye. He is collecting the dreams of the city's inhabitants — many of whom are refugees who have seen great horrors and tragedies — to be distilled and refined in order to torment Trilla and create new, unique trillith. He haunts the Wayfarer's Theater, enjoying the psychic emanations of people watching performances.

How to Use the Bonus Adventures

We suggest you have your players generate a new party of heroes for these adventures. This is, of course, not compulsory, but it has a couple of advantages.

First, creating new characters allows you, as game master, to portray the overall war as something that is going on everywhere at the same time, and not merely wherever the original heroes happen to be. While the original heroes are moving along the main storyline and accomplishing vitally important deeds, thousands of other folk have their own stories of the war entirely unconnected to the heroes' actions.

Second, creating new characters makes the task of inserting the adventures into the main campaign a little easier, because you'll be able to play these adventures whenever you feel like it and in whatever order you wish. The timing of the adventures is not forced by the original heroes' location or level.

However, if you wish to add these adventures to the main heroes' storyline, we have also provided notes within each adventure on how best to do that.

There are plenty of ideas for additional side quests in the Introduction (see pages 6–9).

These adventures were created by *War of the Burning Sky* fans as part of a competition held in early 2008. The five adventures presented here were judged the best of the entries.



Tears of the Burning Sky (Detail) – Art by Brandon Leach



Bonus Adventure One
More Spies in the Steam Tunnels

for 5th-Level Characters

by Ronnie Snyder

Cover Art by
Todd Schumacher

Deep beneath the streets of Seaquen, the elemental planes of fire and water meet to create the rising steam which serves to warm the city in the depths of winter. Now, as an unnatural cold snap hits the town, the steam suddenly stops, and the people of Seaquen huddle in their homes, unable to fight the bitter cold.

Can the heroes solve the mystery and save the town?

Background

Centuries before Seaquen was founded, hundreds upon hundreds of fire and water elementals were drawn to the tunnels underground. These tunnels were full of magma and water from the sea, which are the source of the steam. These elementals would fight each other to the death because of their hatred for each other. Eventually, two great elder elementals brought their wrath upon this place, and named it Vule.

The Flame of Fire and the Wave of Water, as were their titles, settled down, and made this place their domain. Here, they ruled uncontested for many generations. They were ancient and venerable even before they came to Vule. Knowing that their lives were coming to an end, they sacrificed the lesser elementals, and then themselves, and made Vule into a demiplane, forever to reside underground. Their essences endured within Vule, their essences forming the boundary of the demiplane. Since the creation of the demiplane, elementals often find their way here, and live in paradise. When they die, their essences also become a part of Vule. Perhaps most impressively, both a phoenix and a leviathan have found homes here.

Here Vule has rested for unknown years, untouched by the outside world. When travelers reached Seaquen, they used the power of the steam, even while not knowing its origin, as the basis of a town. Great engineers built a massive machine to harness this power, and attached pipes, to distribute the steam throughout the town. Some of the engineers discovered were the steam came from, and in doing so, discovered Vule. Though brave men, they were not foolish, and did not venture far into Vule.

When the project was completed, they hired powerful wizards to place safety measures on the machine, to keep it from falling into ruin. These wizards also placed powerful wards in the same room, so that they would kill any evil being that entered the room.

"More Spies in the Steam Tunnels" is an adventure designed around four 5th-level characters. When this adventure is completed, the characters will have reached 7th level.

Introduction

The events of this adventure assume only one thing, which is that winter will be ending very soon. This adventure should be run in February, either during or after the events of adventure three, *Shelter from the Storm*. The magical hurricane that strikes Seaquen could be substituted for a cold snap, which is the trigger for this adventure. The natural disasters could both happen near the same time, perhaps making the adventurers even more heroic, since, seemingly, they can even battle nature herself.

Though some GMs may find two such disasters too much, this adventure could even be run during March or later, making the cold snap seem more like a bad omen, but still as deadly.

Adventure Overview

Steam rises into the town of Seaquen from below the ground. Tunnels are everywhere under the town, with miles upon miles of pipes carrying steam to the surface. These tunnels and pipes are a mystery, no one knows who built them. All that the townsfolk care about is that everything is working properly so they don't freeze during the winter months.

Winter is coming to an end, and the days are getting warmer. Shortly after the PCs arrive in town, one of the PCs goes missing, and Seaquen is struck by a deadly cold snap. Temperatures drop at an incredible rate, going well below freezing. Weather like this is unusual for the town, but the citizens are not scared by the change. What makes the citizens scared is that steam is no longer coming out of the ground. Without this source of warmth, they know they will surely freeze to death.

The PCs are tasked by Lyceum Academy to go into the tunnels and find out what has gone wrong before people start freezing to death. In the tunnels is a group of spies who are working for Ragesia. Their leader is an ugly hobgoblin assassin by the name of Rexis. He has partnered with a wizard from the academy, an intelligent grey elf named Ivellios. Together they have shut down the machine that provides the town's steam by using magical suggestions on one of the good-natured PCs since they cannot enter the room that houses the steam machine because it is protected by ten *power word kill* wards. They plan on sabotaging the PCs, making it seem as though they were the ones who shut down the steam.

The imprisoned PC meets an ally who is in the jail cell next to him. This mysterious person with no name can tell the story of how these tunnels were used, and even talks of a demiplane located deeper within the tunnels. This demiplane has strong ties to the elemental planes of fire and water. This place is where the steam originates. He goes on to tell the PCs of an evil druid who has become the demiplane's new master, a wild elf named Toma. Toma has lost many of his powers that made him a druid, but has been blessed by elder elementals, given new powers that better suit his talents and interests.

After defeating Ivellios and Rexis, the PCs rescue their imprisoned friend as well as the other captive. They discover that the other prisoner is a fire elemental named Jibrand. Taking this fire elemental with them, they all travel further into the tunnels, and pass into the demiplane Vule.

Here, they must fight against both fire and water elementals, and make their way to Toma. In the final encounter, they fight this druid who can change his shape into two different elementals. Because of Toma's presence here, the elder elemental's power have increased dramatically. Thus the cold snap was brought about by the powerful Wave of Water.

The PCs must defeat this insane druid, or the power of the Flame of Fire will become so great that it will burn Seaquen to ashes.

Toma's Story

One hundred fifty three years ago next month, Toma was born somewhere in the wilderness. His parents shoved him off to a secret druid circle for a reason Toma will never know. There, wise druids raised him to respect and love nature, to revel in all its glory. At first, this is exactly what Toma did. While he loved nature, there was always a feeling of not being at home, as if this wasn't his true calling.

Years he spent wandering the forests of his ancestors, all the while growing less content with his surroundings. Eventually he earned the companionship of a young, ferocious brown bear that he named Crag. Even this was not enough to quell his emotions. Yet he continued, walking,

Adapting the Adventure

In order to adapt this adventure, ideally all the GM needs is a coastal town where magma and sea water can collide underground. The adventure can work even in the middle of a continent, where magma can meet underground water reserves.

This adventure has ties to the elemental planes of fire and water, where all the elementals the PCs fight have come from. If your campaign has no such planes, then have the elementals be born of the magma or sea.

traveling from one place to another. Whenever he returned to his circle, anxiety would well up inside him. He didn't want to be here, he never wanted to be here. He wanted to leave this world, and one day, he finally did.

The more he lived as a druid, the more he disliked the world around him. He often thought of suicide, in order to go to a better place. Finally, it dawned on him, the afterlife is located on a different plane of existence. He has heard many stories of great wizards being able to create portals with their magic to access such places. That was when he decided for good to leave this place, to leave this world. His calling was on a different world altogether.

It took a few years, but he eventually came into contact with a hermit wizard that went by the name Tonk. Toma found that Tonk was a very powerful wizard, able to create this portals he had heard so much about. Tonk was pleased with his new friend's interest in the planes, for that was were his interest lies as well. Toma spent a few years being taught by Tonk, learning of what the planes had in store for him. The day came that Tonk agreed to make a portal to the Astral Plane. From here Toma could reach any of the other planes with ease. He set Crag free, and departed. This was the last time that Toma was seen in this world.

He arrived on the Astral Plane, and using his knowledge, managed to roam around, albeit difficultly. A few more years passed. He had seen much there was to see of the Astral Plane, and was much happier here. Still yet, those same feelings of homelessness were still present in him. That is, until he was called to the Elemental Plane of Fire.

A booming, crackling voice spoke of a world set ablaze. Where volcanoes erupted constantly, rivers contained flowing brimstone, and the smell of sulfur filled the air. Toma went there immediately. He found it strange that the intense heat of the plane did nothing to him. In his studies he read of people catching fire instantly upon setting one foot onto the plane. So he began to roam once more.

Here, he felt at home, finally. This place was of magnificent beauty and splendor to him. Long he roamed, forgetting of his druidic duties. He never found the being the voice belonged to, but always searched. This place was his paradise.

One day, a voice that sounded of rushing water beckoned him to the Elemental Plane of Water. So he went. Again, paradise was found here as well. The gorgeous, endless blue oceans, waterfalls that started above the clouds, and rain were his new friends.

Although he found his calling, it was a dual destiny. He felt at home on both planes, and could not decide which one he liked more. So for the first time in his life he felt confused, split between loves. Then he was summoned, by both voices, to a place called Vule. They told him that it existed back on the world he was from, but it was where he needed to be. He trusted the voices before, so he traveled back, went to the town called Seaquen. Deep underground he found Vule, a demiplane that has both fire and water qualities.

Here he discovered that the voices were of the plane itself, the ancient elder elementals that ruled here before, and pledged loyalty to them. In return, they granted him powers beyond what other druids are capable of. They gave him mastery over the plane.

Part One: A Cold Snap Hits Seaquen

The PCs should arrive in Seaquen during the month of February. Give them just enough time to get acquainted with the town, perhaps stopping by the tavern to gather information (see sidebar), make contacts, and to re-supply. The cold snap should hit town no later than 1d3 days after they arrive in town, perhaps leading some of the more superstitious townsfolk to believe that they brought the storm with them. Explain the dire situation the town is facing to the PCs. After a couple hours, the PCs should receive a summons from the wizards of the Lyceum Academy.

Once they arrive at the academy, an elven wizard wearing a fiery red and yellow robe approaches them, and speaks:

> "Hello there! My name is Ivellios, it's a pleasure to meet such fine, brave adventurers. I've heard of your deeds, and I am quite impressed! I wish for you to stay here with us. Our academy is quite warm, don't you think? Stay here a few days until the cold has stopped, will you?

Ivellios insists that the PCs stay in the academy until the storm is over. He offers free warm beds, food and drink. What the PCs do not know is that Ivellios is the enemy - he obediently serves Toma. Ivellios is using this time with the PCs to get to know them, where they are from, and what their abilities are. He wants to know everything about them, to better prepare against them. He plans on using one of the good-natured PCs to shut down the steam machine in the tunnels, and then blackmail them to ruin their morale and reputation as heroes. This tactic, he hopes, will end with the PCs in jail, so that when his master Toma leads the elemental army into town, there will be no one to stop the carnage. Have Ivellios ask questions along those lines, while simultaneously trying to be as friendly as possible.

After giving the PCs a tour of the academy, Ivellios leads them to their rooms. The PCs should feel at home here, letting their guard down. During the night, he puts on his *headband of detect alignment*, and goes into the PCs' rooms. There, he detects their alignments, and decides which one he wants to use. He picks the leader of the party or the most intelligent PC, hoping that will disrupt the group and lead to an easy blackmailing.

After finding his target, he casts *suggestion* on them. Even though the PC is asleep, they still get the Will save (DC 20), and might wake up. There is a 20% chance that the spell will arouse the PC from her slumber. Even if they wake up, they will not know that the spell was cast on them, though why Ivellios is in the room in the middle of the night could raise some suspicions.

Ivellios can prepare *suggestion* three times a day, and does so while he is in the academy. If the PC passes the Will save, Ivellios just keeps casting the spell until it works. Alternatively,

Steam Tunnels Information
Gather Information

DC	Results
20	The steam was here before the town was built, and has been rising up for hundreds of years. No one can provide information about the tunnels or the pipes underground.
25	Some say that great dwarven engineers built an impressive network of tunnels and pipes to distribute the steam evenly throughout town.
30	All the pipes are connected to one great magical machine, that is protected by great magical spells and wards.

as the GM you can rule that the spell is an automatic success since they are asleep (and more susceptible to the spell), since this part of the adventure hinges on the PC to fail his save.

Once Ivellios has the PC under his command, he gives an order: to go into the tunnels and turn off the steam machine. He leads the PC to a secret tunnel entrance that is located in his room. He then takes them to the room that houses the machine, and lets them enter. Although the room is guarded by ten *power word kill* wards that trigger when someone enters the room, they will not affect anyone of good alignment. After this task is complete, Ivellios takes all of the possessions of the PC and locks her in the hidden jail cell in area A8. Morning is near, and Ivellios stashes those possessions in area A9 for the time being, and goes back to the academy to prepare his daily spells.

Part Two: The Steam Tunnels Investigation

Early the next morning, the PCs find that one of them is missing. They have no time to look, though, as the wizards ask the party to venture into the tunnels and try to figure out what is wrong. If the PCs insist on trying to find their lost friend, the wizards try their best to remind them of the important role the steam has for the town. If the PCs do not go now, they risk needless deaths. The disappearance of their friend can wait until later.

Any one of the wizards can lead the PCs to an old entrance to the tunnels that is in town, about thirty paces from the general store to the west. The entrance is just a locked manhole. The wizard unlocks the entrance. He doesn't know the layout of the tunnels, because no one ever goes down there. In all the years Seaquen has been here, there has been no need for repair men or anything of the sort to go into the tunnels. An access ladder stretches down into the darkness. The climb down is approximately 50 feet. Normally there would not be any lighting down here, but since the hobgoblins have moved in, there are torches spread out every 20 feet or so. These torches are always kept lit.

The tunnels have been carved out ages ago by the sea water, and in some places the magma has hardened over the original rock. In both cases, the floor is slightly uneven, and there are no penalties for walking. The floor, walls, and ceiling for rooms A1, A2, A3, A6, and A7 are covered by the magma, making them smooth and a sheer black. The rest of the rooms are dull green in color and smooth to the touch. The ceiling is as low as 10 feet, and as high as 25 feet in the larger chambers. Most of the smaller tunnels just lead outwards with no real destination. The PCs could follow these tunnels and wind up in a different part of town or even outside the town's limits. The only tunnel the PCs need to be concerned with is the one leading southeast from area A9.

Pipes are everywhere here. They run all along the ceiling, going in all directions. They are of varying sizes, and securely bolted to the ceiling. There is always a layer of steam at the ceiling throughout the tunnels. In some places vents are opened, letting out jets of steam. In addition to the pipes are wooden structures built for support for both the tunnels and pipes themselves. These structures are incredibly strong, and show no sign of breaking.

A character who takes the time to invest the pipes closely can uncover dwarven runes. These runes translate as "We built here, we Mazak". A Knowledge (history) check of DC 25 is enough to remind a character of the Mazak clan of dwarves. They were a small group of about one hundred engineers, famed for their incredible steam-powered machinery. They were masters of their art, perhaps the best engineers yet to date. Sadly they did not last long. as they were all eaten by a very old red dragon whose sleep they disturbed. The time of their disappearance was around the time that Seaquen was founded.

Remember that one PC is locked up in area A8. While the party is battling hobgoblin spies in the rest of the tunnels, this PC will be gathering important information from the fire elemental named Jibrand that is locked up in the cell beside her. Jibrand never discloses what she actually is, but isn't necessarily leading the PC to believe she is something humanoid. While this PC isn't participating in the fights, she shall still gain experience accordingly.

The GM has two options here: divide up the experience from the fights like usual, or leave the captured PC out and give her experience based on roleplaying and how much information she has gotten out Jibrand. Try to make the experience rewards similar.

Take turns between the split up PCs here. Perhaps go back and forth after each battle. Once the PCs clear out a room, change angles to the captured PC, do some roleplaying, then go back to the other PCs and fight in the next room. The PC will get rescued soon enough, and can join in on the battles once inside Vule.

A1: Entrance Room

The ladder you climbed down on ends here. The air is very warm here but fresh. The rock here is a deep black. The floor is a bit uneven. A torch is lit on each side of the room here, and more are lit down the single tunnel to the south. Someone is here somewhere.

This first room is empty; the entire complex is lit with torches. A hissing noise is coming from the tunnel to the south. If the PCs manage to be quiet here, they will not alert the hobgoblin spies in the next room.

The tunnel leading south is about 5 feet wide. Halfway down is the first of many open steam vents. In order to proceed, the PCs must close the valve, or risk getting major burns by the steam jet. This vent is located on the eastern wall.

Steam Vent Trap (CR 3): Type mechanical; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20; Trigger location; Reset manual. Effect gas; multiple targets (all targets in a 15 ft. cone); never miss; onset delay (1 round); 4d4 fire; DC 15 Reflex save half damage; targets receive a -4 penalty to AC and a -2 penalty on attack rolls for 3 rounds.

A2: Guard's Chamber (EL 6)

The tunnel opens up widely into a large chamber. This place is damp, and smells of wet fur and sulfer. The air here is think and warm. Another tunnel leads to the northeast, while the last tunnel goes eastward. There are creatures here, four of them, and they are caught surprised by your entrance.

There are four hobgoblin rogues stationed here, playing a game of three-dragon ante. They are caught completely off guard. There is a single table in the middle of the room, full of playing cards and beer. There is a closed steam vent located halfway down the western wall.

Game Master's Map pg. 688



Hobgoblin rogues (4) (CR 2): hp 8, Appendix B.

The hobgoblins always have paralysis poison applied to their shortswords. They always attack different targets, trying to paralyze them with the poisoned blades. If successful, they their task is to take all of the items the PCs have with them, leaving them to be killed by Ivellios and Rexis. The hobgoblins obey Rexis and will follow Rexis' instructions to the death.

A3: Open Chamber (EL 4)

This chamber's only outstanding features are the two hobgoblins that are asleep on the floor. They are snoring loudly. The tunnels continue to the east and south.

Unless the PCs have taken measures to be very loud in the tunnels, these hobgoblins are in a deep slumber when they are found in this chamber. They are very heavy sleepers, and as long as the PCs don't actively try to awaken them, they will continue to sleep for a few more hours. These hobgoblins have the same stats as the ones in area A2.

In the eastern tunnel is another open steam vent on the northern wall, blocking access into area A4. The south tunnel leads to area A6.

Hobgoblin rogues (2) (CR 2): hp 8, Appendix B.

A4: Open Chamber (EL 4)

This chamber is huge, and unlike the rooms before it, the rock is green in color. You can hear the ocean faintly from here through the tunnels to the northeast and east. It is a bit cooler on this side of the tunnels.

The tunnels here just lead back to town, and eventually to bigger chambers, more tunnels, and the ocean. PCs could possibly get lost here.

Two more hobgoblins are stationed here. They are currently unarmed, as they have gotten into an argument over which was the best way to kill a halfling, and have been wrestling for a few minutes. As such, their weapons are only a few feet from them, and each has 8 nonlethal damage.

Additionally, there is another close steam vent on the southern wall.

Hobgoblin rogues (2) (CR 2): hp 8, Appendix B. These hobgoblins begin combat unarmed and with 8 points nonlethal damage.

A5: Repair Room

This room is piled up with rusty pipes and tools. These pipes have been stacked up against the southern tunnel, blocking passage. The ocean beckons you to come eastward to greet her, but you can see light coming through the western tunnel.

The pipes are extra from the construction here, and are of no value. They can be moved from their place, but doing so is very noisy and will take a half day's work. Most of the tools here are also rusted and worthless, except for one hammer, discarded beneath the other tools (Search DC 20) . The hammer is very old: it was used by the Mazak dwarves for the construction here. It has escaped rust, and if used to hammer nails, its power is discovered. No matter how hard one strikes at a nail, it is always driven perfectly, without error. This hammer could fetch a good price from the right buyer; perhaps as much as 800 gp.

There are no hobgoblins in this room.

Steam Vents

Within the tunnels are dozens of steam vents. Characters navigating the tunnels must close some of these vents in order to proceed further in. During fights, however, the PCs may try to open a vent in order to deal damage to an enemy. In both cases, there is a high risk of getting burned, and PCs might walk away from this adventure with burn scars.

Presented here are the rules for dealing with the opening or closing of the steam vents, and are applied to whomever may be attempting this action. The Disable Device DC is for both opening and closing actions. There are thousands of miles of pipes running through these tunnels. While one vent might be open, with a constant torrent of steam flowing outwards, another vent may be closed and ready to burst open.

All of these vents have pressure gauges and valves. A PC may simply look at a gauge to tell if the vent is close to bursting. The steam comes out of the vents in a 15 ft. cone. The initial blast deals 4d4 damage; the damage drops by 1d4 each round thereafter, to a minimum of 1d4 damage per round. Only creatures caught in the initial blast suffer from burns and the penalties to AC and attack rolls. Also, anything within the steam is granted concealment for as long as the steam persists.

When using a vent, a player must stand adjacent to it. Depending on the degree of success or failure, someone might get seriously injured. This is a full-round action. The opening and closing can be done by a Strength check, Disable Device, or even by using a skill related to engineering.

A DC 20 is required when closing the vents. Failure by 5 or more means that the vent is partially closed, and the PC takes 2d4 damage (DC 15 Reflex save for half damage).

A DC 20 is required when opening the vents as well. Failure by 5 or more means that the vent is partially opened, and the PC takes 2d4 damage (DC 15 Reflex save for half damage). Success by 5 or more means that the vent is opened suddenly. Anyone caught within this blast takes 4d4 damage (Reflex DC 15 half). The steam comes out of the vents constantly.

Burn Scars

Scars are often overlooked in the game, but they can be a powerful role-playing tool for a PC. One character might take pride in surviving a sword cut across his chest, finding the strength and courage to keep fighting when he remembers the villain that gave him such a scar. Another character might be disgusted by a scar, perhaps even embarrassed by it, wearing clothes to cover it up.

Scars could even lead a PC to find a way to have it removed. Magic may be used to heal an injury, but does it also remove the scar? In general, the players should decide if their characters have scars or not. A PC might be driven to discover a way to remove a scar, either through a quest or researching a spell to combat such a thing.

In this adventure, there is a flat 10% chance that a PC will get a burn scar if caught in the initial blast of a steam vent. The player or GM can decide where the burn is and what its severity is. For instance, a PC might sustain burns on the hand and fingers when failing to open a vent. Consult the tables below for random results.

Burn Location

d%	Location	d%	Location
01-30	Hands	81-90	Legs
31-60	Arms	91-95	Feet
61-70	Upper torso	96-100	Face
71-80	Lower torso		

Burn Severity

d%	Location	d%	Location
0-50	Superficial	75-90	2nd degree
51-75	1st degree	91-100	3rd degree

A6: Barracks (EL 6)

Before you is a huge room, almost 80 feet wide, and 120 feet long, as the most. The ceiling here raises high above your heads, stretching upwards 25 feet or so. Sixteen beds and extra racks of weapons holding swords and polearms are in this room. The four hobgoblins in this room have been expecting you, awaiting your arrival with swords and daggers drawn. One of them says loudly, "Kill them and let's have dinner!".

The four hobgoblins attack immediately, giving the PCs no time to react. There is an open steam vent here, covering up the secret door to area A8. A tunnel connects to area A2 to the west, and the southern tunnel is the only entrance to area A9.

The racks contain a dozen or so longswords and shortswords, and a handful of spears.

The secret door can be found with a DC 20 Search check.

Hobgoblin rogues (4) (CR 2): hp 8, Appendix B.

A7: Open Chamber (EL 4)

The smell of sea water is strong here, and the entire floor is covered with about two inches of water. This room is empty, except for the two hobgoblins that are splashing around, playing in the water. As you come through, they stop, and let out an awful shriek, charging in to attack.

The room here is empty except for the water on the floor. This was is not pure, as all these hobgoblins have made it their personal bathing area at Rexis' command.

Hobgoblin rogues (2) (CR 2): hp 8, Appendix B.

A8: Jail

The magma of this room has been carved out making to makeshift jail cells. The doors on the cells have to windows or bars, and the air here is hotter than elsewhere in the tunnels.

The captured PC as well as Jibrand are located here. The doors are locked tight, but may be picked (DC 20). Much to the surprise of the PCs, the imprisoned person isn't human, dwarven, or elven, but instead a walking, humanoid shaped flame. She finally tells the PCs that she is a fire elemental, descendant of the forces that created her.

While he will show the PCs the entrance to Vule, and will even follow them there, he is not capable of fighting. If the PCs manage to escort him all the way to area B12 so that he can return home, award them experience as per a CR 7 encounter.

There is another open steam vent located in the tunnel to area A9, on the north wall.

A9: Planning Room (EL 9)

This room is filled with tables chairs, and maps. The room is dotted with small puddles of water every few feet. Before you stand a familiar wizard - Ivellios. He is staring at you with death in his eyes. "Your arrival here is not because you are strong, but because your opponents so far have thus been weak. Do not think that you false confidence will save you here, you will burn by my spells of fire, and your ashes will stay on the floor so that i may walk on them at my leisure. You are nothing but dirt at my feet."

Ivellios was upstairs in the academy when the PCs entered, and he knew as much. He waited a little while, and then proceeded down the secret entrance in his room that is located under his bed. There is a ladder in this chamber that leads straight up to his room.

Ivellios begins to attack the PCs immediately after he stops talking, hoping to distract them long enough for Rexis to sneak up behind and take a few out.

The notes speak of a druid named Toma. The maps on the table show different places all over the continent that Toma wishes to destroy. The notes detail how long Toma has been here, and when contracts were made between him, Ivellios, and Rexis. If Jibrand hasn't already told the PCs about Toma, he will most certainly do so at this point.

All of the items of the imprisoned PC are thrown in a corner to the east. Haphazardly laying on the floor.

There is another open steam vent in the southeast tunnel blocking passage to area B1.

Ivellios (CR 7): hp 29, Appendix B.
Carl, toad familiar (CR n/a): hp 14, Appendix B.
Rexis (CR 7): hp 29, Appendix B.

When Ivellios knows that the PCs are near, he casts *resistance*, *mage armor*, *shield*, and *fox's cunning* on himself, then drinks his *potion of barkskin*. He has the spell effects affect Carl as well. These are included in Ivellios' stat block.

After defeating both Ivellios and Rexis, the PCs may rest here safely for a liitle while. Although they might want to hurry and turn the steam machine back on as quickly as possible. Jibrand asks the PCs to help her return home, by taking her into Vule. She cannot do it alone, she tells the PCs, because of all the hostile elementals that are in Vule right now. She can also show which tunnel the PCs should go through to get into Vule.

A10: Steam Machine Room

This room is unlike the other rooms, as its walls and ceiling are reinforced, and the entire floor is a grate. Below, a hundred feet or more, you can see where magma and sea water collide, creating a spectacular sight as the two forces mix together, creating the intense steam that rises up. A huge vacuum attached to the bottom of a menacing, dark iron machine that sucks the steam up quickly, then forces it through a dozen pipes to reach the town above.

The grate is very sturdy to walk on, and is very unlikely to break. The grate openings are not wide enough for even a gnome to fall through. In various places in the room are orc skulls, ten in all. They are all facing the entrance to the room. The *power word kill* spell has been placed on them, as a defense mechanism. They are designed to kill anything that is evil that steps into the room, and leave everything else alone. As long as the PCs are of good alignment, they may step into the room with no risk of death.

At this point, the PCs may feel free to return to the academy and show the wizards there that Ivellios was betraying them, and that he was the one who planned all of this. The PCs' job here isn't finished, as they muct defeat Toma next. Give the PCs time to level up and even resupply if need be.

Part Three: Vule's New Master

After walking about 40 feet or so down the tunnel, the PCs pass unknowingly into the demiplane of Vule. This tunnel acts as a gateway, and is the only entrance to Vule, and the only exit to the Material Plane. There are two more portals, located in area B12, that are connected to the elemental planes of fire and water.

The PCs must make their way through Vule, in order to kill Toma and remove his threat from the world. They face tough battles ahead, and even a couple that they would do best to avoid enirely. Under normal circumstances, the elementals here are not hostile, although if provoked they will fight to the death. While Toma is here the elementals are commanded to destroy anything that isn't Toma, Ivellios, or Rexis that set foot into Vule.

Jibrand accompanies the PCs here, providing knowledge about the demiplane and each room, and he can even show where hidden passages are located. Some rooms are fire-dominant and the PCs are a low level, so it's nearly impossible for them to adventure far without dying. If a wizard is in the party, she would have to cast spells like *resist energy* on all of the party members. Still, this might not be enough. Luckily for the PCs, Jibrand has some control over Vule, and can thusly raise or lower the temperature of a room so that the PCs will not suffer from the intense heat. All of the rooms that have the fire-dominant trait are at 140 degrees. The Jibrand can lower the temperature below 90 degrees. They so not receive the normal damage for being in a fire-dominant place, but they may take damage from other sources, as noted in the room descriptions.

Toma is the master of Vule, and because of that, he is the only one who can change the traits and characteristics. He has already changed some of the demiplane's dynamics: reversing gravity, changing magic behavior, or rebalancing the dominant elemental and energy traits. The stat block below for Vule is the default traits for the plane, the changes Toma has made are noted in each room description in bold.

The doors in Vule are made from lava and water. When a character touches a door that is connected to a fire-dominant room, it immolates, then once everyone has passed through the door, lava pours down over the space that the door occupied, forming a new door. If the door is connected to a water-dominant room, when it is touched it falls to the ground in a splash. When everyone has passed through the door, a waterfall comes down over the space the door occupied, forming a new door. Rooms that have no fire or water dominant trait alternate between the two descriptions above. All of the doors have this feature, even the secret doors.

Vule
Finite demiplane (alterable morphic)
Gravity Normal
Time Normal
Shared Dominancy Vule has strong ties to elemental fire and water. Rooms in Vule are either fire-dominant or water-dominant. Each room description has more information.
Impeded Magic Rooms that are fire-dominant impede water magic, while rooms that are water-dominant impede fire magic.
Separate Vule is completely separate from all other planes other than the Material Plane, the Elemental Plane of Fire, and the Elemental Plane of Water.
Coterminous The Material Plane, the Elemental Plane of Fire, and the Elemental Plane of Water are the only planes that Vule connects to.

B1: Entrance

You reach a solid iron door. When you place your hand upon the door, it immolates, allowing passage to the small room beyond. The walls of this room are carved from very old magma. After you enter the room, lava comes down in the space the door occupied. This lava hardens instantly, forming a new door.

The large pipe that is connected to the steam machine winds its way in here, going into the room in front of you.

This room is rather featureless. The walls are masonry, crafted from old magma. They are very warm, much to anyone's surprise. There is a door directly ahead, that leads into area B2. There is a secret door here as well, that can be found with a DC 20 Search check, but is not needed since Jibrand can show the PCs where the door is located. This is path the PCs should take, since they cannot handle the elder elemental that is in area B2.

B2: Pool (EL 11)

Water-dominant: impeded fire magic.

This room is freezing. There is not a floor here, instead, a very deep, cold pool of water is to be found. In the center of the room is a huge water elemental. The elemental looks at you, then dives underwater. A few seconds later a whirlpool 20 feet across forms. There is no way to get around the room to the other door except for swimming across.

The large pipe from before is installed in this room and makes its way to the next room.

This whirlpool is an elder water elemental using its vortex ability. It begins to do this when the PCs open the door to the room. If the PCs decide to enter the pool without Jibrand's warnings to go around, they will soon find out the whirlpool is to much for them to handle, as they will soon begin to drown.

Elder water elemental (CR 11): hp 228, MM.

B3: Storage Room (EL 5)

Various forge tools are stored here. They are guarded by a pair of small humanoids that seem made of lava. They stand up from their croutched position, and begin attacking.

These creatures are magmins, having wound up in Vule by accident through area B12. Toma allowed them to stay, but they had to work the forge with the elder elemental in area B6. They spend some time in this room melting down scrap metal with their touch to create terrible looking sculptures. This hobby keeps them busy for hours at a time. When the PCs enter the room, the magmins believe that they have come to steal their sculptures, and will fight to the death to protect them.

Magmin (CR 3): hp 11, MM.

Treasure

The magmins have stashed their treasure in an iron box hidden in a corner of the room. This box is not locked. It contains 1,100 gp, a fire opal (worth 1,000 gp), and a masterwork dagger.

B4: Reverse Gravity Room (EL 5)

A *reverse gravity* effect covers this entire room.

There is nothing on the floor here. Everything in this room has fallen upwards, and now rests on the ceiling. Every inch of the ceiling is covered in red-hot coals. The door out of this room is located straight ahead, and is as high up as the ceiling.

Toma has reversed the gravity in this room. The ceiling is 30 feet high here, and the PCs must fall if they wish to access the other door, since it can only be reached from the ceiling. Gravity is normal in the next hallway, and it slopes down to area B6.

At first, there seems to be no monsters to fight in this room. After all of the PCs are on the ceiling, a large fire elemental bursts up from where it was basking under the hot coals, and attacks. The elemental is eager to return to the Elemental Plane of Fire, and so is willing to fight to the death.

Any hero that does not move at least 5 feet per turn takes 1d3 fire damage from the coals burning on the ceiling.

Large fire elemental (CR 5): hp 60, MM.

B5: Hallway

This hallway leads to area B6, which contains an elder fire elemental. Like before in area B2, this room the PCs best skip or face certain doom. The fire elemental can show them a secret door that is 10 feet from the entrance to area B6. This secret door is attached to another hallway (DC 20 Search), which leads to area B7.

B6: Forge (EL 11)

Fire-dominant: impede water magic.

This room is extremely hot, and the air is tick with soot and smoke. Two large forges are on both sides of the room, tended by a huge fire elemental who is walking on a floor of fire. The elemental takes up most of the space in this room; getting past it to get to the door across the room would be next to impossible.

This room is guarded by a huge elder fire elemental, who is whiling away the time tending the forges. This encounter should be beyond the PCs' abilities; if they should decide to attack anyway, the fire elemental tries to pick up the PCs and throw them into the forges in order to burn them alive. The elemental does not try to fight the PCs if they do not come into the room, and will not pursue them out of this room. Let the presence of the fire elemental guide them to the secret door that is in the previous hallway.

Elder fire elemental (CR 11): hp 204, MM.

B7: Junction (EL 5)

This room is made from pure brass, every bit of it. There are a total of four doors in this room, and other than that, the room is featureless. Well, except for the three dwarf-like creatures that occupy this room. They look angrily at you, beards of flame flickering as if with rage.

The PCs most likely do not have the proper kind of tools to extract the brass, and even if they do, it turns into worthless rock once outside Vule.

Game Master's Map pg. 689



There are three azers in this room acting as guards. They found their way into Vule from area B12, and when they reached this room, they moved in. Nothing that Toma could do would make them leave, even after he killed one of them. So Toma decided to let them stay in this room, as long as they don't let anyone pass. The azers happily agreed.

Azers (3) (CR 2): hp 11, MM.

The azers stand in a triangle formation in this room, playing hot brass potato. Once the PCs come into the room, whichever azer has the hot brass potato throws it at a random PC. This is a +3 ranged attack, dealing 1d3 damage, plus 1 point of fire damage. The azers see this room as their home, and are honor-bound to defend it. They fight to the death.

Treasure

In addition to the weapons the azers are carrying, the first azer has 230 sp, the second azer has 300 sp, and the third azer has 320 gp.

B8: Ocean (EL 5)

Infinite. Water-dominant: impeded fire magic.

Entering this room, you feel a cool breeze blow across your face. You are standing on sand, with a deep blue ocean in front of you that seems to go on forever. The waves crash at your feet, its almost as they are telling you to go swimming.

Each PC must succeed on a Will save (DC 13) least they feel compelled to jump into the waters to swim off into the horizon. The PCs do not need to make additional saves while they are still in the room, but if they leave and later come back, they must make this save again. Also, they must make the save as long as they look at the ocean. A PC who fails her save dives into the water regardless of personal risk. They continue to swim until they grow tired, and drown. A PC who has succeeded on his save can thusly hold back another PC until the urge to swim wears off.

A beach runs along the outer perimeter of this room, making access to the other doors easy. Toma has turned this room into an infinite ocean, to reflect his wandering on the Elemental Plane of Water.

After the PCs all manage to overcome the mind-influencing effect of the ocean, a large water elemental raises up from the ocean and attacks.

Large water elemental (CR 5): hp 68, MM.

B9: Waterfall (EL 5)

Across the room is a small waterfall, about 15 feet across, that is coming down from the clouds far above. The room has collected about 2 inches of water, and seems to be rising rapidly.

This room is built as a water-filled room trap that triggers when the PCs are all in the room, flooding the entire room. As the entire room begins to flood, a Medium water elemental drops from the waterfall in cannonball fashion into the water. The elemental attacks, fighting to the death.

Medium water elemental (CR 3): hp 30, MM.

B10: Rain Clouds (EL 5)

When you step into this room, rain begins falling. At first it is a light drizzle, then begins to build into a torrent of rain. The water beats on the masonry stone floor as a thousand fists.

The water here does not accumulate and flood the room. The rain is caused by the clouds that are up in the sky here, where the water elementals have made their home. The elementals come down in the room as the rain, and attack. They fight to the death.

Medium water elementals (2) (CR 3): hp 30, MM.

Treasure

There is a secret door here, as the Jibrand can show the PCs, otherwise it is a DC 20 Search check. This leads to a small room, that has a treasure chest sitting quietly on the stone floor. The chest is locked, and can be opened with a DC 30 Open Lock check. Inside the chest is a *staff of fire*.

B11: Trophy Room

This room is completely empty except for the brown bear rug that is stretched across the floor. The pelt was obviously not removed carefully, and suffers many rips, tears, and burns. The expression on the bear's face is of great sadness and betrayal.

This pelt was once the fur of Toma's old animal companion, Crag. When Toma came back to the Material Plane, he found Crag, who had been wandering the forests for years in search of him. Crag was excited that his master had finally returned, but he met his end at Toma's hands. Toma clumsily claimed Crag's pelt and wrapped it around himself to keep very hot in the summer months of his return.

The pelt is ruined and worthless.

B12: Portals for Fire and Water

You walk into a gigantic room that is 60 feet wide. There is a catwalk that circles the room, providing safe access tot the double doors across the way.

Flames nick at your head from above, drawing your attention. Several hundred feet above, you can see what most surely has to be the Elemental Plane of Fire. Seas of fire and lava, fields that are set ablaze. You can spot great elder fire elementals roaming around, as well as other various fire-based creatures. A giant flame stretches down into this room.

The sound of crashing waves comes from below, the Elemental Plane of Water is down there. You look, and see endless oceans, waters that are swaying back and forth. Elder water elementals are walking on the water, and great vortexes spin on continuously. A great waterfall falls upwards into this room.

The flame from the Elemental Plane of Fire and the waterfall from the Elemental Plane of Water collide in a great display of force, and huge amounts of steam rise from the battle. The steam is quickly sucked into large pipes attached to the walls in this room. These large pipes connect to the bigger pipe that is connected to the steam machine. This is where Seaquen's steam comes from.

This room is the reason Seaquen has steam. The PCs can see into each plane from here, and if they had the right abilities, they could even travel to these planes, since this room is connected via portals. The task is possible, but any PC setting foot onto either plane at this level would surely die.

There is no danger in this room. The catwalk if incredibly sturdy, and will not break. There are no hand rails here, and as long as the PCs don't do anything foolish, there is no risk of falling into either plane. If a PC does manage to fall off of the catwalk somehow, there is a 50% chance of being pulled by gravitational forces into one of the planes.

After the PCs get about halfway through this room, they witness an incredible, once-in-a-lifetime sight. A beautiful phoenix flies into the room from the Elemental Plane of Fire, and looks the PCs in the eyes, almost as if approving of their mission to kill Toma. A moment later, a great leviathan jumps out of the ocean of the Elemental Plane of Water and bites at the phoenix. The leviathan manages to inflict some damage, but the phoenix claws a few times and escapes back home.

The Jibrand at this point thanks the PCs for returning her here safely, and blesses them with fire resistance 5 (only lasts for one hour). She then jumps into the air, and begins falling into the Elemental Plane of Fire.

B13: Lava Room (EL 5)

Fire-dominant: impeded water magic.

A river of lava flows all around the perimeter of this room. A pair of fire elementals are walking around in the lava, kicking it onto the rocks in the middle of the room.

The elementals stay in the lava to fight. They

spend their turn kicking and shoveling lava onto the floor: they can target any square in the room with a glob of lava as a splash weapon. A lava glob deals 2d6 points of damage to anyone in the targeted square, and 1d6 points of damage for 1d3 rounds thereafter. The PCs would therefore be wise to take this fight into the hallway.

Medium fire elementals (2) (CR 3): hp 26, MM.

B14: Toma's Chamber (EL 10)

"Finally, the 'heroes' have made it.", speaks Toma from across the room. He is standing between a pool of water and a bonfire. "You wish to save Seaquen by killing me, yes? That is not going to happen. I know how these stories go: villain threatens town, heroes kill villain and save the town. You know what? I am not the villain. I am merely here to do my job by my gods-given right, and you want to stop me? Ha! I don't think so! Come, I will let you decide if you want to burn or drown!"

Toma is insane. If the PCs do not stop him here, Seaquen is doomed to burn. This fight will be very tough, but the PCs should still have plenty of time left from the Jibrand's blessing of fire resistance 5, and they will have a few rounds in between Toma's wild shapes to heal up.

Toma (CR 8): hp 63, Appendix B.

When Toma is defeated, he screams the word "Burn!" over and over again as his voice gets progressively higher in pitch. His body twists and buckles; his bones crack and break. Finally, he spontaneously combusts. The fire that consumes him turns into water and washes away his ashes.

B15: Treasure Room

Books are piled up on shelves, and stacked high on desks. There is are two incredibly strong auras in here, each one a malicious spirit. Your body temperature raises, and you begin to sweat. At the same time, your body temperature lowers, and your teeth chatter.

The dual auras are from the two elder elementals that ruled here long ago, the same ones that created Vule, the Flame of Fire and Wave of Water. This room is where they died, and where Vule extended from. Their spirits are forever trapped in this room, and nothing may set them free. The auras are not so strong as to harm anyone. As long as the PCs can bear them, they can enter the room.

Treasure

There are about a dozen books in this room that detail the Elemental Plane of Fire and the Elemental Plane of Water. A character who studies these books will gain a +5 insight bonus on knowledge checks involving those two planes only. The other books are folk stories, novels, literary masterpieces, geographical studies, history, and so on. There is one book worth finding here: a book that Toma wrote. Toma's book details his story and journey, everything up to this point. It also tells the history of Vule, of how it was created.

Sitting on the desk is Toma's *traveler's coin*. The PCs can read about it in his book, and learn all about its abilities, although such a magic item will not greatly benefit characters of this level.

Also sitting on the desk is a large bag. It contains 2,546 gp, and two fire opals (worth 1,000 gp each).

Conclusion

If the PCs manage to kill Toma, they will save Seaquen from certain doom. If the PCs have not done so yet, they can present evidence to the wizards of the Lyceum Academy that Ivellios was conspiring to destroy the town using steam.

Nothing really needs to be said about the druid, however, since no one has ever heard of him. The demiplane of Vule returns to normal, and all of its inhabitants are no longer hostile. The rooms go back to their original traits, and the entire place can be safely entered by anyone.

The PCs may wish not to tell anyone about Vule, keeping it secret, since such a place could be used by evil in the future. Alternatively, the PCs can use the portals in area B12 as a means of travel into the other planes, if their adventures require that they go to such places.

If the story is told, however, the heroes have earned great respect, and are treated as great heroes from now on. The wizards also grant the PCs a place to stay within the academy always, and wish to grant them a magic item of their choice. The wizards make the items themselves, and it cannot be valued at over 4,500 gp.

If Toma is not defeated, he is granted a new power: command over an elemental army. He manages to summon about a dozen elder elementals, 15-20 greater elementals, 40-50 Huge elementals, and almost 100 Small, Medium, and Large elementals from both planes. They set Seaquen on fire, and not even Lyceum can do anything about this surprise attack. Everyone in town is slain, and Toma begins to destroy the nearby forests.

Eventually, if he isn't stopped, he could open up more portals throughout the world, summoning even more elementals. The world could certainly succumb to his power.

New Magic Items

Ghor's Branding Iron

Ghor's Branding Iron was invented recently by a despot by the name of Ghor Rhaam. The device was used mainly as a way of branding his slaves, enemies, and torture victims. The *branding iron* is just over three feet long, and made entirely of cold iron. This item is activated by touching the brand to flesh, where it heats up quickly, leaving a permanent scar.

Faint transmutation, CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *heat metal*. Price 32,000 gp; Weight 6 lbs.

Headband of Detect Alignment

While wearing a *headband of detect alignment*, the bearer is able to feel alignment traits. The bearer must mentally decide what alignment she wishes to detect, and may only detect one alignment component at a time. The choices are: chaos, evil, good, or law.

Slight divination; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *detect chaos*, *detect evil*, *detect good*, *detect law*. Price 3,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Traveler's Coin

A *traveler's coin* appears as a standard gold coin, showing a road leading into the horizon on the front and a walking traveler on the back. Twice per day, if a character says "I want a coin" while holding the *traveler's coin* in hand, the magic creates a nonmagical, completely real copy of the coin.

This item cannot be made, only found. Some speculate that this item appears only to those in need of it, perhaps as a blessing from the gods. Others say that since coins travel just as far as the people who carry them, the coin gathers remnants of magic like a magnet, and is born thusly.

Slight conjuration; CL 1st. Price none; weight 1/50 lb.



Faces of the Burning Sky – Art by Claudio Pozas



Bonus Adventure Two
Moral Dilemmas

for 5th- to 7th-Level Characters

by Chris Longhurst

Cover Art by
Claudio Pozas

As a blizzard hits them in the depths of winter, near the mountain borders of Shahalesti, the heroes are forced to hole up in a small cave-camp occupied by a band of elven guerilla warriors and their captive, an erinyes devil with valuable information.

The heroes will be forced to make a difficult decision between the crazed, cruel Shahalesti commander and the unspeakably evil erinyes, Asura.

Background

This adventure takes place in early April, shortly after the fall of Gate Pass and the initial advances of Danava's second army into Shahalesti. Although a formal defense has not yet been properly organized, bands of guerrilla warriors led by elven soldiers and nobility harry the Ragesian forces and do what they can to slow the advance. One of these bands, led by an unhinged and callous wizard called Seryanna, has not only captured and enslaved many orc soldiers but has also managed to bind an erinyes spy as she tried to rejoin the main Ragesian force. They are holed up in a shallow cave network on the forested slopes of a foothill in the mountains northeast of Gate Pass.

Asura, the erinyes, has captured the soul of an elven general but has hidden it. Seryanna would normally exercise her cruel nature and inventive mind on Asura, but she cannot get into the magic circle to torture the erinyes without breaking the circle and freeing her. The two are at an impasse: Asura is imprisoned but willing to wait with immortal patience for someone to come along and let her out; Seryanna wants to know where the general's soul is hidden but needs time to work out how to extract that information from the erinyes.

Enter the heroes. Trapped with Seryanna and her band by a sudden snowstorm, they will be faced with several hard decisions. Indiscriminate violence is the least useful solution here and the characters will find themselves better rewarded by careful use of skill and diplomacy.

Welcome to the second bonus adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. This adventure is intended for a group of four characters of level 5–7. With this level range and timing it can be slotted into the campaign between adventure three, *Shelter From the Storm*, and adventure four, *The Mad King's Banquet*, although there is the obstacle that player characters working their way through the *War of the Burning Sky* saga are probably in Seaquen — a very long way from the borders of Shahalesti — at this point. If the GM is unable or unwilling to engineer the party's transition to Shahalesti, this adventure could also be run as a one-shot for a specially created, different group, as a way to illustrate facets of the war that the main campaign does not touch upon.

Introduction

Moral Dilemmas is an event-based adventure that presents a number of possible encounters. Each event is presented with a set of conditions necessary to trigger that encounter — not all of the events need to occur, and some will never occur depending on the player characters' actions. The GM will need to be familiar with the entire adventure and the likely course of events before running it, but each encounter also indicates what is likely to follow from it.

Adventure Overview

The player characters are in the foothills of the mountains northeast of Gate Pass. They might be fleeing from the Ragesians or spying on them, or possibly they have other business in the area and are just avoiding orc patrols. Perhaps they have a message for someone in the Shahalesti resistance or are being paid to free them from a Ragesian prison camp. Perhaps they are pursuing Asura in order to find and rescue the soul of the elven general.

However they arrive in the vicinity of Seryanna's hideout the player characters find themselves in the midst of a sudden snowstorm just as the sun sets. While searching for shelter they are spotted by Seryanna's guards, who first establish that the characters are not Ragesian soldiers and then invite them in out of the cold.

Once inside, the characters have a chance to meet their unstable host when she offers them food and shelter for the night. That night, they are also contacted through more subtle means by Asura and may choose to investigate. The next morning they discover that snow has drifted across the entrance to the caverns, trapping them within.

After this, how things unfold depends mostly on the player characters. The most likely course of events is that they investigate the caverns and uncover exactly what sort of person Seryanna is and what secret Asura holds that is so valuable. What they *do* with this knowledge is up to them. There are several conflicts that they can promote or squash as they see fit:

Seryanna, the General

Yes, she's evil, crazed and prone to pointless acts of cruelty. If she walks away from this scenario she will bring ruin to countless not-necessarily-evil orcs and will almost certainly move on to humans and other races in time. However, there *is* a war on, the Ragesians are not exactly saints either, and Seryanna is a potent and canny aggressor. Her presence so close to the pass could be instrumental in disrupting Ragesian supplies and communications should they push further into Shahalesti. Is that enough to justify the unspeakable pain she will inflict over the course of her long elven lifespan?

Asura, the Devil

Asura's evil is perfectly assured. Even more so than Seryanna, she is sure to spread unutterable suffering wherever she goes and her lifespan is longer. She is also quite openly working for the armies of Ragesia. However, the trapped general's soul is a precious treasure — not just because of the general's value to the war, but also because it is a good soul unjustly torn from the body and en route to a terrible fate, either in Ragesia at the hands of the inquisitors or on Asura's home plane in the hands of the devils. In addition, if the characters get in over their heads Asura is nearby and willing to help — for a price…

Hazred, the Angel

Hazred is a celestial bodyguard and general servant summoned by Seryanna using a *lesser planar binding* spell. He is walking a very fine line between retaining his celestial status and falling. He wants to stay on the material plane fighting the good fight, but he also doesn't want to fall. This dilemma is largely a matter for the GM to help balance encounters — all it takes is a crisis of conscience and Hazred just vanishes into thin air.

Gorm, the Prisoner

Gorm is a warlike orc held captive in the slave pens. Gorm and, to a lesser extent, the other orc slaves are useful allies for the player characters. However, they are Ragesians — the enemy. Are the characters willing to collaborate and help the orcs escape (and possibly set themselves up for blackmail later on) in order to get out themselves?

Lyon, the Guard

Lyon Petris is one of Seryanna's guards, rescued from a losing battle. He is a good man who has fallen into a bad situation. He needs help — are the player characters the ones to help him?

The Adventure

The Caverns

This small cavern complex is a result of both natural erosion and soil movement, and the home-making habits of large burrowing creatures.

Common Features

Lighting: Unless otherwise specified, the caverns are lit with purple *continual flame* objects — anything handy was enchanted and scattered about on the floor. The odd choice of color and the bad placement means the caves only gain shadowy illumination throughout, without any areas of bright illumination.

Walls: The walls are solid earth, filled with large stones and bound together by the roots of the plants above. Hacking at them achieves nothing, although a determined assault might cause a cave in (6d6 damage, Reflex save for half).

Ceilings: The height in the tunnel passages is approximately eight feet, with roots dangling down that lower the effective clearance to 6–7 feet. This makes them comfortable for humans to walk through, unless they're wearing hats. In the chambers, the ceiling is higher, ranging from 10 to 20 feet. Again, roots occupy the top foot or two of each room, but it is less of a problem in this case.

Doors: The few "doors" in the caverns are curtains made by stringing rope between two pitons set into either side of the doorway and draping a blanket over it. They provide total concealment, but can be swept aside as a free action.

Nightmares: Every night Asura sits in her binding circle and telepathically 'shouts' messages of oppression and frustration. This affects everyone within 100 feet of her (basically the entire complex except for the slave pens). Sleepers must make a DC 19 Will save or awaken in a sweat from terrible nightmares — this counts as no rest for the purpose of regaining spells, but is otherwise not harmful. People who are awake, or elves, who don't sleep in the same way as other races, suffer a -1 penalty to all skill checks as the visions make it difficult to concentrate.

1. Entrance

Almost completely hidden behind scrubby undergrowth, a tall tunnel, lined with roots, stretches before you into the hill.

The entrance tunnel is unlit, the better to keep enemies from spotting the hideout. The entrance itself is mostly concealed behind a bush. Spot or Survival DC 25 to see it in passing, and it can be found automatically by anyone making a Search check or anyone using the Track feat in the area.

This area is normally guarded by two of the Shahalesti — when the characters arrive this will be Lyon and Gertis.

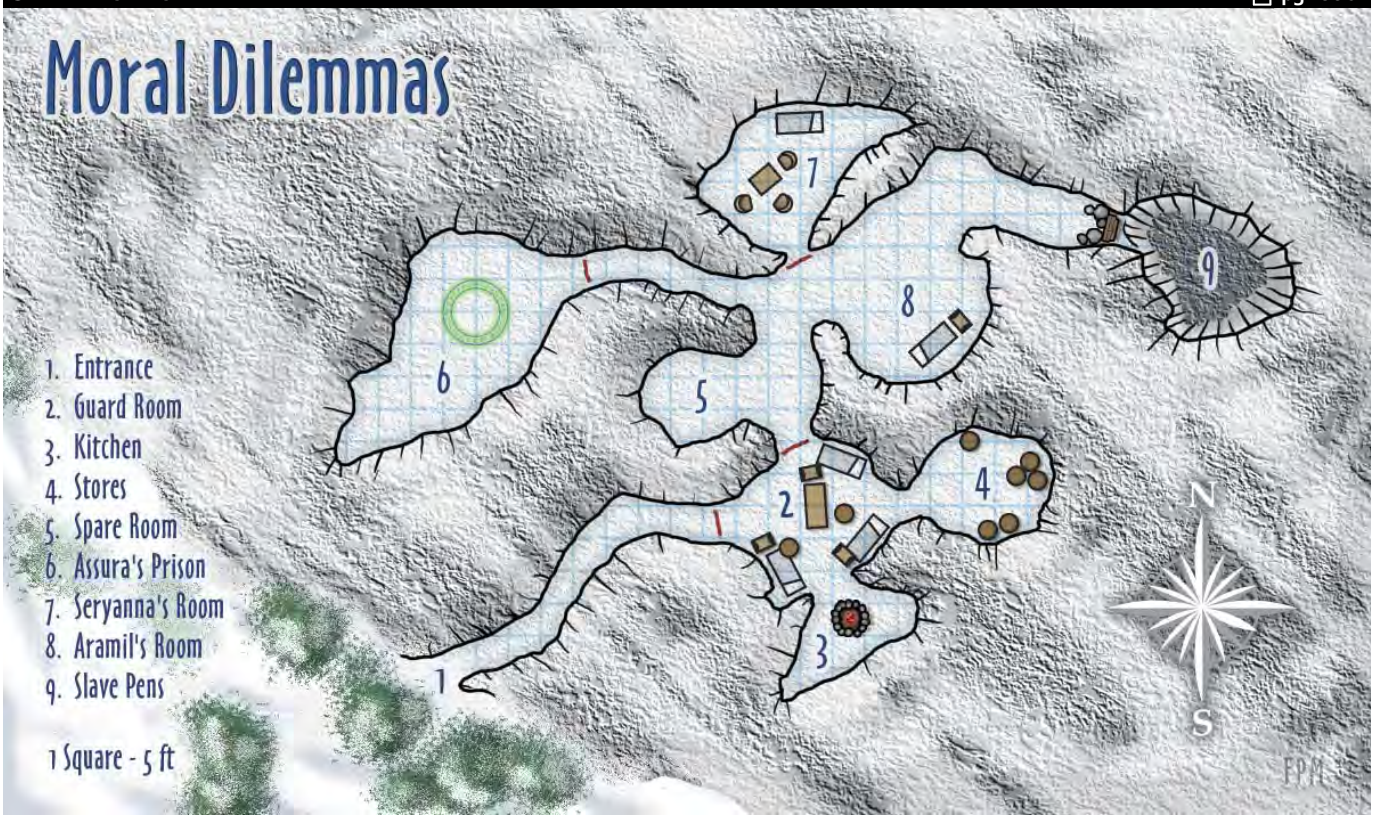
2. Main Guard Room

This natural opening in the cavern complex has been furnished with several bedrolls, personal chests, and scrounged and makeshift pieces of furniture. The centre of the room holds a round table, covered with carved graffiti, spilled wax from candles, and old food stains.

This chamber holds ten Shahalesti warriors, four elves and six humans. Typically, two are on guard at the entrance, two are on guard by the slave pens, and the remaining six lounge around here, killing time by telling stories and gambling. They will challenge anyone who enters who they do not recognize.

A thorough search of this room (Search DC 25) turns up 4d6 gp in silver and copper, a *+1 dagger*

Game Master's Map pg. 690



that has been glued into its sheath with *sovereign glue*, and various personal effects of the warriors.

3. Spare Room

The tunnel bulges outwards here, making a space where a few people might lay down their bedding.

This is where the player characters will be put when they stay.

4. Slave Pens

This room is pitch dark — you get a sense of a void yawning before you, from which issues groans, grunts, grumbles and an overwhelming stench of sweat and filth.

If the characters bring light or can see in the dark:

This room is a large pit. At the bottom lie maybe two dozen orc prisoners in the ragged remnants of Ragesian army uniforms. An overwhelming stench of unwashed orc rises from the pit, mingling with the smell of effluent that has nowhere else to go.

The slave pens are ten feet below the level of the rest of the complex and unlit. Prisoners are literally thrown in here and left to fend for themselves. The space is cramped and there is no food — the orcs drink snowmelt that runs through a crack in the ceiling and down a rock in the wall opposite the entrance.

The pens are closed off by a barricade made from stout branches lashed together into a grid shape and wedged in place in a narrow section of the corridor. It cannot be pushed any further towards the orcs and several heavy boulders hold it in place from the Shahalesti side. Two guards keep an eye on the orcs at all times, although if there is a major disturbance elsewhere in the complex they will run to help.

The lattice itself has enough space for sword blades to be thrust through the gaps at anyone trying to move it. It has hardness 5, 40 hp, and Break DC 25. When it has taken 20 hp damage, a space opens in the lattice big enough for a Medium creature to crawl through with a DC 20 Escape Artist check. Small creatures need only spend a full-round action to climb through that gap. Pushing the lattice out of the way from the orc side requires five successful DC 15 Strength checks. If someone is on the other side pushing back then the Strength check becomes opposed and the orc side has to win five checks in a row to knock the lattice to the floor and open the corridor.

In the slave pits are twenty-three orc slaves plus Gorm. Of the orc slaves, only twelve are in any condition to fight. The rest are either on 0 hp, unconscious and dying from starvation, or too ill. Gorm is always ready to fight.

5. Seryanna's Room

This room seems better appointed than the others – although the bed is the usual bedroll, there is a rickety table and several chairs in the middle of the room and several books in a pile next to the bedroll.

This is Seryanna's room and she permits no uninvited visitors. When she is within, Hazred keeps guard outside the door. His bulky frame fills the doorway, so even invisible characters won't be able to get past without alerting him.

Searching this chamber will reveal only Seryanna's spellbooks and, if they have been captured, the characters' unidentified magical equipment. Seryanna carries the remainder of her gear on her person.

6. Aramil's Room

The bedroll here is neatly made and turned down. A personal chest sits at the food of the bedroll and a weapon-cleaning kit is neatly laid out next to it. This area speaks of an experienced soldier camping in the field.

Aramil is usually here, where he can keep an eye on as many different parts of the complex as possible. His chest is locked (Open Locks DC 30 or use the key, which Aramil carries) and contains four emeralds (each worth 100 gp — Aramil's stash of funds against future misfortune) and two finely crafted suits of clothing in an elven fashion approximately 150 years out of date. These count as noble outfits for any male elf characters and look ridiculous on anyone else. Anyone who makes a DC 25 Appraise check realizes they can be sold to a collector in a large city for 500 gp each.

7. Asura's Prison

This cave is pitch dark. Somewhere ahead you can see two glowing yellow eyes. A woman's voice laughs softly.

If the characters bring light or can see in the dark:

This cave is large, roughly circular, and bare except for the circle and runes scratched on the floor in chalk. Sitting within the circle, balancing a powerful-looking bow across her knees, is a blue-skinned, green-haired woman of surpassing beauty. Her eyes glow a lambent yellow.

"Hi," she says with a casual wave. "Do a girl a favor and let me out?"

There is nothing here apart from the binding circle and Asura. Asura cannot directly or indirectly affect the circle, but anyone on the outside can scuff it with ease. Once scuffed, the circle is broken and Asura is free. Everything will probably go sharply downhill very shortly afterwards.

8. Kitchen

This room has had the roots hacked from the walls and ceiling and a semi-permanent firepit constructed in the centre. Sacks of dried foodstuffs are scattered around the perimeter of the chamber.

This room is where the soldiers make their food. They are heartily sick of the easily-preserved stuff they subsist on and will welcome any fresh meat or alternative flavours the characters can bring (even the bland fare summoned by *create food and water*).

A DC 15 Search check in this room turns up two kitchen knives suitable for use as daggers in combat.

9. Stores

The floor of this room is scattered with small barrels, sacks, and loose items. It seems to be a storeroom.

A Search check in this room turns up the following:

DC 10: 50 feet of hemp rope…
DC 12: …and a hammer and 10 pitons…
DC 15: …and a light pick and another 50 feet of hemp rope…
DC 17: …and another light pick and a grappling hook…
DC 20: …and a crowbar and 10 feet of chain…
DC 22: …and a heavy pick.

Event 1: A Dark, Stormy Night

Conditions: This event starts the adventure.

The characters are making their way through wooded foothills as night falls. While they search for a place to camp a sudden snowstorm descends and threatens to overwhelm them. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Although it has been bitterly cold all day, the skies have remained clear. That changed abruptly just before night fell and you find yourselves struggling through the forest in the teeth of a driving snowstorm. No shelter is robust enough to withstand the wind and no fire can be lit in the whirling snow.

Let the players spend a few moments discussing a course of action then have them make Listen checks. Whoever scores highest hears a voice calling them. The voice belongs to Lyons, who has seen the characters struggling in the snowstorm. Despite Seryanna's instructions to keep a low profile, Lyon's good nature has overridden his orders.

If the characters follow the voice, read or paraphrase the following:

> As you push forward through the dark and the snow you catch sight of a light springing up ahead. Another few steps and the light can be seen to be a lantern in the hand of a young human warrior. In his other hand he carries a spear.
>
> "This way," he says, beckoning you forwards. "We've got a cave where you can shelter."
>
> The young man is as good as his word – following him reveals a low cave entrance well-hidden behind brush and foliage. As you duck inside you see another human warrior within, looking less than pleased to see you.

The cave is lit by several random objects — here a large stone, there someone's boot — that have had *continual flame* cast on them and been left lying around. The violet colour of the flames and the underlighting effect give the whole place a surreal atmosphere and constitute shadowy illumination throughout.

Lyon will escort the characters into the main guard room while Gertis (the displeased guard) remains on watch. Once the characters are in the guard room Lyon will block the exit and challenge them to prove their allegiance. The GM should be lenient in allowing them to prove themselves enemies of Ragesia since the objective is not to provoke a slaughter straight away. Any Shahalesti in the party can vouch for the others, or perhaps one of the guards has heard of the characters' exploits and knows them to be no friends of Ragesia. Once their identity has been established the guards will relax, Lyon will apologize and explain:

> "We're the Shahalesti resistance," Lyon explains. "Well, part of it. We hit the Ragesians whenever we can, slow them down, make their lives difficult—"
>
> "Or short," puts in one of the other guards with a bark of laughter.
>
> "Yes, or short. Anyway, I couldn't leave you outside but I needed to know you weren't the enemy. No hard feelings?"

In the event the player characters somehow cannot prove their good intentions, or start a fight, or actually *are* Ragesian soldiers (or are dressed as them), the Shahalesti guards will fight to subdue them using disarms, trips and nonlethal damage. They want Ragesians alive for interrogation and torture. The characters will wake up in the slave pens, which changes the nature of the adventure considerably. Go to Event 9: Captured!

Assuming the characters establish themselves as allies to the Shahalesti, this event leads on to Event 2: Dinner Is Served.

Event 2: Dinner Is Served

Conditions: This event happens automatically unless the characters do something unexpected in the previous event.

After the characters have had a chance to chat with the guards a little or otherwise get a feel for the place Seryanna makes her entrance, escorted by Hazred the bralani. She has heard the player characters' arrival and wants to know what's going on. When she enters the room, have all the characters make Sense Motive checks (DC 25) to pick up on the sudden increase in tension. Even Seryanna's most enthusiastic followers fear that she might turn on them if the whim takes her.

As far as the player characters are concerned, though, she is the soul of civility; a noblewoman ejected from her home by the Ragesian invaders and staging a counterattack with all the resources at her disposal.

After the characters have had a chance to react to Seryanna and her companion she invites them to eat with her. Although she doesn't show it, characters who refuse who dine with her set their first foot on the slippery slope of her paranoia. One more 'transgression' by them will convince her that they are enemies and need to be captured and interrogated.

Dinner with Seryanna takes place in her room and is a very strange affair. Hazred lays the rickety table as if he was a butler while Seryanna asks the characters about their adventures. The dinner itself is plain food, cooked by one of the other guerrillas, but Seryanna treats the whole affair as if it was a noble dinner party. Together with the purple lighting, Seryanna's somewhat cracked dignity should come across as rather creepy.

Adapting the Adventure

This adventure is very easy to adapt to campaigns and settings outside the War of the Burning Sky. Essentially, all that it is required are elves and orcs at war (or at least in conflict), an erinyes with something the elves want, and a suitable natural event to keep them and the heroes contained long enough for the cracks to show. Asura does not even have to be allied with the orcs – she could have just been caught by chance while passing through the area.

The setting will also have to allow evil elves who are not drow. Changing the elves to drow or any other "obviously evil" race, such as tieflings, removes a lot of the depth of the scenario since the players will be expecting deception and unpleasantness from the word go. A better option, if necessary, is to replace the elves with humans or dwarves. For a more twisted and blackly humorous adventure, replace the elves with gnomes or halflings.

"I Cast *Tiny Hut*."

Spellcasters with access to the 3rd-level wizard spell *tiny hut* or a similar easy way of surviving outrageous weather can still be brought into the adventure. Although the snow won't drive them to find shelter they can still find Seryanna's hideout in one of two ways:

- They could simply stumble onto it while en route to their true destination, being challenged by the guards instead of rescued by them.
- The dwelling created by the player characters' magic is spotted by Seryanna or her guards. They will approach with stealth and caution in case the characters are Ragesian spies and either apprehend them or invite them in.

However, otherwise the dinner is perfectly normal and civil. Seryanna is interested in the characters' past adventures and tries unsubtly to recruit them to her cause. Hazred fills the role of butler.

Once dinner is over, Hazred will show the characters to an empty cave where they may lay out bedrolls and the like. If the characters stay put for the night, proceed to Event 4: Dream Girl. If they wish to have a poke around consult Event 3: Looking for Trouble.

Event 3: Looking for Trouble

Conditions: A Player Character pokes around the caverns.

Player characters being player characters, the chances are good that at least one wants to have a look around while the Shahalesti sleep. Refer to the map and room key on pages 377–378 should they choose to do so. During the night there are no patrols but the elves among the guerrillas only enter reverie rather than sleep, so they may make Spot and Listen checks (+5 modifiers) to detect prowlers as normal. Hazred and Asura do not sleep. Hazred stands in the doorway to Seryanna's chamber, ever-watchful; Asura sends the guards bad dreams using her telepathy and sings to herself. Hazred will challenge anyone he sees wandering the caves. Asura will say hello and try everything she can think of to get the character to break her binding circle — see Event 5: Interview With the Devil for details.

This event may run concurrently with Event 4: Dream Girl. The next morning, run Event 6: Snowed In.

Event 4: Dream Girl

Conditions: Happens on the first night.

On the first night characters will be subject to Asura's telepathic broadcast — the equivalent of a normal person spending the night shouting and banging on the walls of their cell. Sleeping characters will dream of a beautiful woman trapped by a cackling witch, all the while feeling a terrible sense of confinement and suffocating pressure. Characters failing a DC 19 Will save wake up in a sweat and do not count as having had any rest for the purposes of regaining spells. Wakeful characters and elves, who do not sleep as the other races do, receive the dream as a waking vision. Its intensity is lessened but the distraction imposes a -1 penalty on all skill checks.

Towards the end of the night, Asura will contact one of the player characters directly — preferably one who failed the Will save against her telepathic 'shouting', since that means they are more likely to be affected by her other magic. Details of the conversation are covered in Event 5: Interview With the Devil.

The next morning, run Event 6: Snowed In.

Event 5: Interview With the Devil

Conditions: The player characters talk to Asura.

At some point the characters are likely to converse with Asura. If they are unable to reply telepathically, Asura will tell them where she is so they can talk to her in person. Asura is not guarded — she can't go anywhere, and she is a skilled enough manipulator to turn guards against each other without much effort. However, every morning Seryanna enters the room to recast *dimensional anchor* on the magic circle, ensuring that Asura cannot just teleport away.

Asura greets any visitors politely and invites them to make themselves at home, gesturing around the bare cave. She is open about what she is but not about what she is doing on the material plane. She makes no effort to seduce the characters or strike deals with them, knowing that they expect that from her. Instead, she just makes conversation and answers their questions. Her intention is to lure one of the characters into *proposing* a deal, in which case she is more than happy to set a price.

Asura has three primary aims in her chat with the characters:

- To make Seryanna and her followers look like a terrible, psychotic menace. The fact that Seryanna *is* a terrible, psychotic menace makes this easier.
- To make herself look sympathetic and well-balanced by comparison.
- To find out what the characters want. The more she knows about them, the more leverage she has when negotiating for her freedom or their corruption.

Possible lines she might use are:

"Have you seen the slave pens yet? Even I treat my slaves better than that, and I'm evil incarnate."

"Of course you can trust me! When I swear to do something, I do it. No more, no less. I mean, what use is a fiend who doesn't keep her word? I'd never get a deal again."

"Your father's been captured by the Ragesians? Oh, that's terrible. If only you knew someone who knew people in Ragesian command. And who can teleport. And fly. And is currently trapped in a magic circle and who isn't a million miles away."

"Gold? No, I have a much easier price. I want you to kick a puppy. Yes, a puppy. The next time you're walking through town and you see a child playing with a puppy, I want you to kick that dog as far as you can. That's all. You do that, come back to me, and then I'll do as promised."

When making deals, Asura is not interested in payments of gold or jewels (although magic items might suffice for small favors). She prefers to set prices that cause harm, or suffering, or tarnish the character's soul (that is, shift his alignment closer to evil). Ideally, all three. She would also like to be free, but is aware that many people would balk at the idea of setting her loose.

Asura knows that the ace in her hand is the general's soul. She doesn't mention it unless it becomes necessary, and will trade it for as high a price as she can. This price will almost certainly include her freedom, unless she thinks she can get that from another source.

If Seryanna catches characters talking to Asura she will become angry and order them from the chamber. She trusts no one else to deal with the cunning fiend and will station Hazred outside the chamber to ensure that no one enters except her. Of course, this may well accelerate Hazred's fall. (See Hazred's description on page 382.)

Event 6: Snowed In

Conditions: This event occurs the morning after the player characters' arrival. So long as they spent the night in the caverns it happens automatically.

The next morning it becomes apparent that the snowstorm of the previous night has buried the entrance to the cave complex. The snow is packed into ice by the pressure and experimental digging reveals only more snow and ice beyond. Seryanna could easily clear the blockage with her magic but chooses not to in order to continue considering the situation regarding Asura.

Seryanna orders the slaves to clear the blockage with their bare hands — the Shahalesti have some picks that would be useful but it doesn't occur to her to give the orcs any tools. If someone suggests that they could use some equipment she considers it for a moment, nods once and says 'yes', then forbids them from using the picks.

Seryanna also forbids the characters from leaving if they try. Hazred, Aramil and the other

warriors keep a careful eye on the exit and the slaves working there. If necessary they fight to subdue the characters and throw them in the slave pens.

Ultimately, the snow is exactly as deep as it takes to keep the player characters in the caverns long enough for everything to kick off. Once everything is chaos, the snow can be dug out in a few hours.

Likely directions from here lead to Event 8: Confronting Seryanna or Event 9: Captured!

Event 7: The Slave Pens

Conditions: The characters visit the slave pens. This can happen voluntarily or involuntarily.

The slave pens are a truly horrible place. The orcs are not fed and have to get their water from a tiny crack at the rear of the cave where snowmelt runs through. The Shahalesti do not worry about cleaning them out, either, so the cavern smells like a sewer.

To the guerrillas the slave pens are mostly a one-way trip. They don't expect to see any of their prisoners alive again unless Seryanna gets it into her head to torture one, whereupon they open the barricade and grab the nearest orc. The Shahalesti are not overly concerned with rebellion from the slaves as the orcs are too weakened by their terrible conditions to be effective.

Hazred avoids the slave pens because he understands in some way that if he goes back there he will be faced with a difficult decision that he is not ready to take.

All of the orcs in the slave pens have taken extensive nonlethal damage from starvation and many have taken hit point damage from it as well (which makes them fatigued as well). Several are on 0 hp or are unconscious and slowly dying. They have no equipment — no weapons, no armour, no money. They would love to break free but can't see how.

The one resident of the slave pens who has not yet given up hope is Gorm, an experienced orc soldier and thoroughgoing misogynist. The fact that he has been trapped by a woman makes him so furious that he seems to exist on little more than rage alone. If male player characters seem even remotely sympathetic to the plight of the slaves he will try and recruit them. He just snarls at women, not believing that any offers of help they make are genuine.

Event 8: Confronting Seryanna

Conditions: Seryanna has pushed the characters too far.

This event may happen as early as the first night, but will certainly come to pass at some juncture. Seryanna's strange behaviour and casual disregard for other people's lives are bound to draw a reaction eventually.

If confronted violently, Seryanna responds with *greater invisibility* and spells as appropriate while Hazred wades into combat and calls for help from the other warriors. From there, things are likely to proceed to Event 9: Captured! or Event 10: Everything Goes to Pot.

If confronted diplomatically, Seryanna will first try to explain her position. *"There is a war on,"* she will say *"and those Ragesian orcs are our enemies."* She sees little difference between letting them starve to death in a cave and killing them on a battlefield. Mentions of 'excessive cruelty' or anything similar draw blank looks.

Seryanna is also quite open about why she keeps an erinyes bound in one of the caves. Asura has something she wants, and she needs to keep her in place until she works out how to make the fiend give it up. However, if characters ask about Asura then Seryanna keeps an eye on them to make sure they aren't making deals with the fiend behind her back.

Event 9: Captured!

Conditions: The characters manage to rub Seryanna or the other guerrillas the wrong way and fail to fight their way free.

For details of what the slave pens are like and their inhabitants, see Event 7: The Slave Pens.

Between Seryanna's behaviour and the superior numbers that she has at her disposal it is likely that the player characters will earn her ire and end up subdued and thrown in with the slaves. Keep track of any casualties or other injuries they inflict on the way, since those will be telling in their inevitable escape attempt.

When the characters are thrown into the slave pen, their equipment will be taken and used by the Shahalesti. Anything that the guerrillas cannot easily identify will be left in Seryanna's room for her to cast *identify* on as soon as she finds some 100 gp pearls.

It is likely that the characters will try to recruit the slaves to help them escape. The orcs' initial attitude to the characters is Indifferent, with Gorm Unfriendly towards any female characters. If the characters can change the orcs' attitude to Friendly then the slaves will follow them into battle with the Shahalesti as an act of desperation. If they can change it to Helpful then the orcs will lead the charge. However, if Gorm is alive then the orcs will do nothing without his say so — any negotiations will have to be with him.

Event 10: Everything Goes to Pot

Conditions: A fight breaks out.

This section covers, in broad strokes, the tactics used by everyone in the caverns should a fight occur.

Seryanna opens with *greater invisibility* and uses spells as appropriate. If pressed, she uses *dimension door* to travel the maximum range straight up, then *feather fall* to avoid falling to her death. From there, she escapes overland.

Hazred wades into combat — his primary duty is to keep Seryanna safe so he distracts enemies with melee and uses his spell-like abilities if the opportunity arises. GMs should be aware that Hazred is facing a choice between good and evil. If he chooses good, then his binding breaks and he is returned to the outer planes — this is a useful tool if it looks like the characters are going to be overwhelmed.

Asura sits in her circle and sighs at all the carnage she is missing. She telepathically broadcasts her willingness to aid anyone who frees her — Seryanna may well take her up on this offer if things get desperate. As for the player characters… well, that's their decision. Asura is certain to point out how useful she could be against other outsiders if Hazred is butchering them.

Aramil and the other **warriors** fight to subdue the characters the first time a fight breaks out. The second time they strike to kill.

Gorm and the **orc slaves** will take advantage of the guards leaving the barricade to join in a fight elsewhere by struggling to open it. Roll a DC 25 Strength check for Gorm with a +4 bonus from assisting orcs every round to see if they manage to break through. The orcs are almost certainly ineffective in combat with the better-trained Shahalesti but they may help player characters by setting up flanking opportunities, using up Shahalesti attacks of opportunity, and so on.

Conclusion

There is a huge array of potential outcomes for this adventure, depending on the decisions the characters made. The ideal outcome is that Seryanna is dead or gone, Hazred has retained his celestial nature and returned to the outer planes, Asura is still bound but has given up the location of the general's soul, and that Gorm and the orcs remain prisoners but are treated properly by the Shahalesti guerrillas. This is astronomically unlikely to come about. Other outcomes are discussed below:

If the heroes have won, **Seryanna** is almost certainly either dead or escaped. If she escaped, she may well fixate on the heroes as people who defied her will in the most terrible way imaginable. She will return to plague them whenever they are trying to get something done in Shahalesti, possibly even going after their friends and family with all the vicious inventiveness she possesses.

Hazred may have fallen, in which case he is now a Chaotic Neutral ex-celestial wandering the Material Plane, free to do as he will. If the effect of his fall is not something you want to worry about, rule that he is simply too contradictory to exist and vanishes in a puff of paradox. If Hazred remains a celestial, then he returns to the outer planes. If the characters took time to speak to him and bolster his fading morality, they have a new friend only a *lesser planar ally* spell away.

Asura may well be free. She causes as much havoc as she can in the caves, then escapes using *greater teleport*. As well as making one or more appearances in the adventure to recover the general's soul (see below) Asura is likely to show up whenever things look grim for the characters, always ready to help them with their problems — for a reasonable price, of course.

If **Gorm** is free then despite his chaotic nature he recognises any debt he owes the characters. The next time the characters are in trouble with the Ragesian military, consider having them discovered by Gorm. He will let them go, once, in honour of what they did for him.

Lyon could be a hero if he manages to survive long enough. He also makes quite a good choice for a good character's cohort or follower.

The most probable follow-up adventure to Moral Dilemmas is one revolving around the retrieval of the general's soul. However, is Asura is free and has given up the location of the sapphire she will be waiting there for the characters, having relocated the soul to another hidden location and forcing them to negotiate with her again. She will do this as often as she can get away with it.

Dramatis Personae

The NPCs in this adventure have complex motivations, backgrounds, and personalities. We strongly recommend you take time to read about them so you can properly present the events in this adventure. The characters' statistics can all be found in Appendix B, unless otherwise noted.

Seryanna, Unhinged Noble Mage

"Welcome to my… temporary home. Please, make yourselves comfortable."

Seryanna is a noble of the nation of Shahalesti. The foothills and mountains of her lands have shaped her personality somewhat, giving her a soul of flint underneath the veneer of civility. She was displaced when the Ragesians marched an army through her lands, effortlessly sacking her castle which had been designed more for aesthetics than defence. She doesn't particularly hate the Ragesians — they just made themselves obvious targets for her sadistic nature.

Seryanna is a true sociopath. Although her uprbringing and several hundred years of experience have taught her to conceal it expertly, she cannot see people as people. To her, everyone and everything are just objects for her to play with. As a consequence, people who resist her manipulations make her inordinately angry. She tends to let these feelings simmer behind a polite façade until she is ready to wreak a terrible and bloody vengeance. Seryanna is also slightly delusional and tends to 'gloss over' things that do not fit her world view.

Seryanna's current main concern is what to do about the erinyes she has trapped. Seryanna cannot cross the magic circle to torture Asura without freeing her and is doubtful that her techniques will work on a fiend anyway. She doesn't really care about the elven general's soul but wants to beat Asura purely because the fiend is daring to resist her. She just needs time to work out how…

As with all elves, Seryanna's appearance does not reflect her true age. She wears fine gowns in purple, violet or lavender — her favourite colors — and tasteful silver jewellery. Her hair is long and black, but without a maid to help her put it up she has to settle for a style of "elegant simplicity" rather than her preferred complex braids.

Hazred, Celestial on the Edge

(With infinite sarcasm) "Is there something I can do, o great and wise master?"

Hazred looks, as do all of his race, like a powerfully built desert nomad. He wraps himself in white robes and carries a scimitar and bow. His skin, where it can be seen behind the robes, is a pale blue. He shaves his head and facial hair, which is white.

The conditions of Hazred's remaining on the Material Plane are that he does everything that Seryanna asks of him for an indefinite period. He can choose to disobey her at any time, but will return to his home plane as soon as he does so. He chooses to put up with Seryanna in exchange for the opportunity to oppose the evils of Ragesia.

Hazred gets little spare time, but what he does get he tends to spend talking with Asura. What he does not realise is that she is steadily winding him around her little finger as a sort of 'side project' while she is trapped. He just finds her good company and appreciates the perspective of a fellow immortal outsider.

Although Hazred is a celestial, he is walking very close to the edge. If he continues to turn a blind eye to Seryanna's torturing of her prisoners or spends much more time associating with Asura his alignment will shift to Chaotic Neutral (or even Chaotic Evil) and he will fall. The effects of this are up to the GM.

Hazred is a bralani — his statistics can be found in the System Reference Document.

Aramil, Loyal Guard Captain

"Life without honor is no life at all."

Aramil has been captain of the guard on Seryanna's ancestral lands for hundreds of years. His unswerving loyalty to her family is a habit long-ingrained into him and it is doubtful if he could consider betraying her. Even though he thinks his current mistress is… eccentric, and hopes she will have children soon and he can defend someone less unsettling, he will defend her unto her death.

Should Seryanna be slain Aramil will surrender and order the other warriors to do so as well. Should she merely be driven off he will continue fighting in the belief that she will return.

Lyon Petris, In With a Bad Crowd

"I don't want to hurt you, but I will if I must."

Lyon's home was destroyed by the Ragesian army as they poured through Gate Pass. Fleeing with his family, he joined the Shahalesti military at the first town they encountered — only days later the town was overrun and Lyon was rescued from wandering in the wilderness by Seryanna and Aramil.

Lyon feels an obligation to Aramil for helping him and respects the elf as a soldier. He believes Seryanna to be dangerously insane but is not sure what to do about it — he is just one man against all the other guards and the celestial Hazred. If it looks like the player characters are going to stand up to Seryanna and somehow avoid a bloodbath in the process Lyon may well speak up for their cause.

If Asura ever becomes loose in the caverns, she will seduce, corrupt, or kill Lyon as a matter of priority. His naiveté combined with his goodness draws her to him like a shark to blood in the water.

Asura, Not a Typical Damsel

"I'm going to kill you and everyone you love. But that doesn't mean we can't have some fun first…"

Asura is pure, unmitigated evil in the form of a stunning humanoid woman. Her skin is blue and her hair a dark green. Her eyes are solid yellow and can glow softly when she wills it.

In addition to her appearance, Asura is supernaturally charming. She makes pleasant company in all manner of circumstances, has a wonderful sense of humour, and is generally every man's dream girl. Even though she is quite open about her nature and prefers to maim and torture her enemies rather than kill them, her cruelty just doesn't seem as important as it should in the face of her genuine smile and easy-going personality.

Asura is currently working as a spy for the Ragesians. She is not bound, but performing the service willingly. As an immortal she gets bored easily, and likes to meddle in the affairs of men to keep herself entertained. She's working on Hazred as a 'side project' while she waits for someone to free her from the binding circle or for Seryanna to get bored of casting dimensional anchor every day to keep her trapped in the makeshift prison.

Asura hid the elven general's soul, bound into a sapphire, in a secure location within Shahalesti. Whenever the subject comes up in conversation she will only think of the sapphire to defeat *detect thoughts* and similar spells, all the while spinning fantastical and obviously false tales of where it might be hidden.

One thing worth noting is that as a creature of law incarnate, Asura will not break her sworn word. If a party can extract an oath from her to do or not do something she will do as she has promised. She will twist the words of the promise to bring about as much suffering as possible, but the letter of the oath will be fulfilled.

Asura is an erinyes — her statistics can be found in the System Reference Document.

Gorm, Unbroken Slave

"No surrender! Crack their bones and drink their blood!"

Gorm is approaching middle-age, for an orc, and has been a warrior for his entire life. He joined the Ragesian army when it marched because he wanted an opportunity for violence and action. He was captured when he chased fleeing soldiers in a rage and found himself hopelessly lost, wounded and exhausted. In that state Seryanna managed to overpower him with little effort.

Gorm is a misogynist of the worst kind. He considers women to be weak and useful only for breeding, so his inability to defeat Seryanna or break free now she has caged him is a constant nagging frustration that only fuels his rage. His magic ring ensures that he is unaffected by the starvation that overcomes the other slaves — he claims it is simply his natural strength — but he has discovered already that he alone is not strong enough to prevail against the guards, especially Hazred, whom he cannot harm at all.

Despite his unpleasant attitude and love of violence, Gorm is not actually evil and might be persuaded to change his ways — or at least redirect his anger — by a suitably charismatic character.

Shahalesti Guerrillas, Devoted Warriors

"Whatever gets the Ragesian scum off our land."

These men are the remnants of Seryanna's household guard and a few soldiers rescued from the aftermath of Ragesian victories. The elves tend to adopt a supercilious attitude and order the humans around even though they are technically of the same rank. The humans accept this because that's the way it has always been in Shahalesti. All of the guards are quite irritable because Asura's nightly broadcasts prevent them from getting restful sleep.

Some of the warriors are loyal to Seryanna no matter what. Some will betray her at the drop of a hat. The precise balance should be adjusted by the GM to ensure that the player characters will always be facing a challenge.

Try to give each of the guerrillas the heroes interact with a distinct personality and name. If the heroes see them as people rather than nameless sword-fodder it makes the inevitable confrontation more than just an exercise in small unit tactics.

Slaves, Orcs in Distress

"We cannot fight any more. We are defeated."

The Ragesian orcs that the guerrillas have accumulated are thoroughly cowed. Between starvation, the terrible deaths and mutilations of some of their number at Seryanna's hands, and the seeming invincibility of Hazred (whose damage reduction makes him invulnerable to anything the orcs can do) they no longer have any hope.

Most of these orcs have the evil alignment of their race, but does that condone Seryanna's treatment of them?

The Ragesian slaves are 1st-level orc warriors — their statistics can be found in the System Reference Document. Between starvation and mistreatment, all are fatigued and all have taken 4 hp of nonlethal damage. In other words, they will drop after a single hit in combat, though they may merely be unconscious from nonlethal damage.



The Mad King's Banquet (Detail) – Art by Shannon White



Bonus Adventure Three
A Harvest of Hope Forlorn

for 7th-Level Characters

by Tan Shao Han

A civil war is brewing in Dassen. In the meantime, Leska has dispatched an army to annex the kingdom. The heroes, in the town of Liederhafen, investigate rumors of a mysterious cache of magical weaponry, and soon discover that they are the victims of a murderous conspiracy.

Background

Leska's Superweapon

After the death of Emperor Drakus Coaltongue, Supreme Inquisitor Leska has assumed a position of political power over the Ragesian Empire. She has dispatched the Ragesian armies to annex the bordering nation of Dassen, to the south, so as to seize control over the Lyceum in Seaquen. Leska fears the rebellious mages of the Lyceum will interfere in the development of her secret anti-magic superweapon.

She has thus ordered a pre-emptive invasion of Dassen, to destroy the Mage's Academy and nip this threat in the bud. At the same time, King Steppengard, the mad monarch of Dassen, has recalled all his troops from his various duchies to the capital of Bresk, leaving the common folk defenseless against the Ragesian invaders. If Leska succeeds in destroying the Lyceum, her sinister plans to control magic would meet significantly less opposition, and it is likely that the entire world will suffer under the yoke of her thaumtaturgical tyranny.

The Will of Avilonia

Destiny has other plans, though. Leska is immortal, because she had drunk the blood of the Aquiline Heart — a relic with incredible power over life and healing. The Aquiline Heart is all that remains of Avilona, Elemental Spirit of Air, and some remnant of Avilona's consciousness remains within it. Rumor has it this last shred of Avilona seeks to heal itself and restore the confluence of elemental energies back to a healthy, life-sustaining equilibrium. The Aquiline Heart is sympathetically linked to Leska, and senses that her plans will wreak even greater imbalance in the land; it thus seeks to thwart her megalomaniacal ambitions, by protecting Dassen — and thus, by extension, the Lyceum.

The Aquiline Heart has thus tried to manipulate one of its most powerful agents, the elderly Duke Arndt of Dassen, to serve this goal. Duke Arndt is a virtuous man of noble conduct, who is renowned for his compassion as well as his skill in battle; he is a famous healer dedicated to the teachings of the Aquiline Cross, and is one of the most experienced paladins in Dassen. Within the political realm, Duke Arndt is also extremely influential and well regarded; not only is he a direct blood relative to King Steppengard, but he is also the Chief Military Instructor of the Royal Military Academy, and is also a celebrated war hero.

All throughout his life, Duke Arndt has received many visions, from both celestials and the Aquiline Heart, which both inspires his doubt and tests his convictions, leading him to greater wisdom and a deeper understanding of his faith. He remained steadfast throughout these trials, earning his right to become invested with the holy powers of a paladin, to protect the lives and nurture the souls of the innocent.

Duke Arndt has decided he cannot, with a clear conscience, obey King Steppengard's orders and forsake the lives of the common people to the tender mercies of the Ragesian invaders. He knows that by raising an army and riding out to protect the borders of Dassen, he will polarize different factions within the nation, and possibly start a civil war.

After the Duke disobeys the King's orders to send all his troops to Bresk, many soldiers and knights who see him as a paragon of virtue are encouraged to emulate his example. They also start to disobey their royal orders, abandoning their positions in Bresk, and join Duke Arndt's defense efforts. As these warriors begin flocking to him, the other aristocrats are spurred to build their own armies and hedge tenuous alliances too. It is only a matter of time before Dassen is plunged into full-fledged civil war. Despite these problems, Duke Arndt has decided he has no choice but to become a warlord to defend the common people, in these times when nobody else will do anything.

The Twin Visions of the Aquiline Heart

Duke Arndt's decision may be entirely his own; the Aquiline Heart has subtly influenced the Knight of the Aquiline Cross. Recently, the Aquiline Heart has sent two particularly vivid and stirring visions to the Duke, as a gambit to spur him into action.

Even before the Ragesian invasion of Dassen, Duke Arndt had been greatly troubled by King Steppengard's unstable behavior, and he grew worried about the state of the nation and the common folk. He had been praying for celestial guidance about what he should do in these uncertain times; finally, three months ago, the Duke received two visions from the Aquiline Heart, of two possible futures.

In the first vision, Duke Arndt saw the entire continent, from the northern mountains of Ragesia to the southern tips of Seaquen, transformed into a grim wasteland; a place oppressive to all life and light, where chaos and evil reigned, with fiends, undead, and other even more nightmarish creatures running roughshod over decent and honest folk.

In the second vision, Dassen was ravaged by war, but had not been utterly destroyed, and the majority of its people were still alive, not monsters. Only a small town in the north, Liederhafen, was destroyed, and the fates of its inhabitants were uncertain.

As the visions drew to a close, Duke Arndt heard a single command reverberate throughout his consciousness: ***DECIDE.***

A Paladin's Fall from Grace

The good knight struggled to interpret these visions, and grappled with the repercussions of the divine command. Doubt gripped his heart as he wondered why, and how, the gods could permit such injustice, to (apparently) force him to decide between two such horrible actualizations of reality. In one terrible moment, the conflicted Duke chose the second vision over the first, and immediately regretted it.

But it was too late. Duke Arndt could no longer feel the strength of divine fervor in his old bones, and could no longer hear the song of the heavens. The old paladin had doubted and lost his faith in divine justice, and in doing so, fallen from grace. Duke Arndt had lost his paladin abilities, but he had not lost heart in his quest.

Stoically, he chose to continue his plans, to spearhead a campaign to the north. He will defend Liederhafen with all his might, to defy the future he had seen glimpses of. He keeps the secret of his fall from everybody, though — it would do no good for the morale of the already outnumbered troops. He maintains the pretence of being a great healer with mundane poultices, magical potions, and the healing abilities of his followers. Every day though, doubt continues to gnaw at him, and the charade becomes harder and harder to maintain.

The Duke's Military Campaign to Defend the North

Thus, Duke Arndt — guided by both his own moral compass, as well as the promptings of the Aquiline Heart — has ridden out from his duchy with an ever-growing army. This army has built a garrison at the river town of Liederhafen near Dassen's northern borders, to repel the invading legions. At the same time, Duke Arndt's forces protect and guide refugees away from the front line of conflict, to safer zones deeper south of Dassen.

Duke Arndt does not fight alone. His cohort and old friend, Advisor Gereon, a cunning tactician and war hero in his own right, has lent his strategic acumen and negotiation skills to Duke Arndt's quixotic quest. In Bresk, Duke Gallo is sympathetic to Duke Arndt's ideals, but has not yet committed his forces to aiding the defense of the northern borders — he has his hands full.

Meanwhile, warriors across Dassen have heard of Duke Arndt's righteous mission to protect the defenseless, and dissatisfaction is spreading across the land with King Steppengard's apparently craven orders. Those men-at-arms suffering from the deadly mental maladies of "ethics", "patriotism" and "duty"

have begun flocking to the banners of the two veteran warriors, to add their strength to their noble cause.

The Ragesian Response

General Revulus does not want to lose too many of his soldiers in the Dassen campaign. The Third Ragesian Army is currently less well equipped and smaller than the other Armies, as they had earlier planned their foreign policies and strategies in light of King Steppengard's earlier folly — they had not predicted Duke Arndt would actually be able to field a fighting force within so short a time. Duke Arndt's small (but growing) garrison thus presents a great danger to the Ragesian Third Army, until reinforcements arrive for General Revulus.

General Revulus's two most capable lieutenants, Inquisitor-Major Alecto (NE human cleric 12) and Captain Gracchus (LN orc sorcerer 6/dragon disciple 3), have suggested different ways to conquer Dassen, with minimum loss of Ragesian life or property.

The Schemes of the Witch's Daughter

Inquisitor-Major Alecto is a trusted personal aide and an adopted daughter of Supreme Inquisitor Leska. She is utterly loyal to the old witch Leska, and has been sent to ensure the utter destruction of the Lyceum and to retrieve its magical secrets. Inquisitor-Major Alecto has used her old contacts to retrieve a few select Dassenian spellcasters from the slave pens and incarceration pits of the Inquisition.

Through the liberal use of geas *and* mark of justice *spells, Inquisitor-Major Alecto has forced four of these imprisoned spellcasters to become assassins and saboteurs against their nation. These prisoners will return to Dassen, using their old identities and local knowledge to infiltrate Liederhafen. They will then use their magic to slay the commanders — Duke Arndt and his Advisor Gereon — as well as the capable adventurers in their service, and open the fortress gates for the Ragesian Third Army to march through.*

Inquisitor-Major Alecto keeps three of these spellcasters under her leash by detaining their loved ones (children, parents, lovers, etc.) — and has informed them that any disobedience on their parts would lead to their loved ones' slow and painful deaths. These three assassins are Simon, a human cutpurse with a strong talent for magical subterfuge, Sophia, a tiefling wizard and Markus, a human cleric. Simon's grandmother — who shares his innate magical powers — is old and frail, and is being held hostage by the Ragesian Inquisition. Sophia and Markus are lovers, and their baby son is also being held hostage. To motivate the assassins further, Inquisitor-Major Alecto has also dangled the carrot of freedom before them — she assures them that they will be released when she is satisfied with the results of their work.

The Ambitions of the Dragon's Son

Captain Gracchus is the charismatic leader of a small but increasingly vocal group of Ragesian warrior-sorcerers calling themselves "The Sons of the Old Dragon". They attribute their physical prowess and inherent magical powers to the blessing of Emperor Coaltongue, and more than a few secretly believe the Emperor is not truly dead. The Sons of the Old Dragon are friendly with the anti-Inquisitor General Magdus, as they share similar distrustful attitudes toward the Inquisitors and their witch-queen, Leska.

Gracchus suggests challenging the Duke or one of his representatives in single, honorable combat, and volunteers himself as the Ragesian champion. Though motivated by the glory and honor he will gain defeating a renowned warrior, he is also acting rationally: he argues that the Duke is not an unreasonable, foolish, or unprincipled man — a one-on-one duel would even the odds for the Duke, as his small garrison will be disadvantaged once they confront the superior forces of the Ragesian Third Army in the battlefield. Captain Gracchus is confident of his abilities to defeat the Duke's champions. As an honorable warrior, Captain Gracchus does not intend to cheat; he plans to fight Duke Arndt — or one of his representatives — fair and square. The loser of the duel will surrender and withdraw his side's forces.

General Revulus, after mulling over both options, has decided to authorize both lieutenants' suggestions as preliminary stratagems before engaging in more conventional warfare. Alecto's reprogrammed magic-using assassins have been released and sent to infiltrate Duke Arndt's garrison (without Captain Gracchus's knowledge), and at the same time, Gracchus has been given the green light to prepare his forces, as well as himself, for a military strike, just in case the Dassenian turncoats fail at their task.

Welcome to the third bonus adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. *A Harvest of Hope Forlorn* is an adventure for four good-aligned 7th-level PCs. The events within this adventure can be inserted into the campaign saga before or after the events of adventure four, *A Mad King's Banquet*. The adventure will present the PCs with opportunities to gain fame and fortune, to make powerful allies and vengeful enemies, and to determine their own fates, and those of others, in the bigger picture of the campaign world.

Introduction

Why is there a civil war in Dassen? Who is fighting this civil war, and what is at stake here? Is this civil war fought over ideals and values, or more pragmatic matters like power and wealth? Who wants to see political change in Dassen, and what would they stand to gain from this? How does the strife in Dassen relate to the strife in the world? Would this civil war be a just war?

This adventure is not about a civil war that is already in progress, but rather, about the events leading up to a civil war. How do wars begin, and who are the men that fight them? *A Harvest of Hope Forlorn* is about the first signs of unrest, hinting at the political chaos that will soon follow; it is about the actions of mortal men and women, and how they influence, and are influenced by, history and destiny. Despite one's best efforts and intentions, politics is a dirty business. Sometimes it seems, the only harvests one can reap from righteous actions within the domain of statecraft are the bitter seeds of forlorn hopes and disappointed dreams.

GMs can play this adventure as the introduction to a self-contained campaign about Dassen's Civil War, or they can build on its themes as an arc to explore the more fundamental problem of cosmic disharmony that pervades the campaign world of the *War of the Burning Sky*.

The following paragraphs will describe the events and processes in Dassen and Ragesia leading to *A Harvest of Hope Forlorn* and illustrate how this adventure can tie into the larger meta-plot of the *War of the Burning Sky*.

Adventure Overview

A Harvest of Hope Forlorn takes place in four sections — a Prologue, a Main Act, and an open-ended Epilogue. A brief summary of the main events and plot in each section follows:

Prologue

In the Prologue, the PCs prove their prowess in the northern border town of Liederhafen. The PCs manage to foil a magical assassination attempt on Duke Arndt's life, and also protect helpless refugees from a ferocious aerial assault.

This sudden explosion of violence introduces the PCs to the dangers and intrigues lurking behind every corner, and the course of the battle also provides hints about Duke Arndt's loss of his divine abilities. This foreshadowing also provides the PCs with hints about the nature of the challenges they will face later.

Having thus earned the trust of Duke Arndt, the PCs become respected members of his entourage. Assassins eye the PCs from the shadows, gauging their ability and might, while beyond Liederhafen's palisades, black storm clouds gather ominously, and the invading Ragesian forces loom ever closer.

Main Act

The main act begins as Liederhafen receives news of a shipment of Ragesian magical munitions found abandoned in a nearby mountain range. Advisor Gereon sends the PCs to investigate and to prevent Ragesian forces from retrieving this lost shipment. As the PCs travel through harsh, mountainous wilderness in search of the lost convoy, mysterious "accidents" and suspicious "coincidences" threaten both their lives and their mission.

If the PCs survive, they discover they are the victims of a murderous conspiracy. The Ragesian forces, working together with Dassenian traitors, have engineered this situation to draw out the more capable and powerful members of Duke Arndt's garrison, so that they can complete their assignment more easily. The PCs, naturally, fall into this category of "capable" and "powerful".

If the PCs manage to capture and interrogate their clandestine assailants, they can find out why these individuals have betrayed Dassen. They are also rewarded with a shocking revelation — their prisoners inform them this was merely a distraction all along, and the real assassins are still back in Liederhafen, with the Duke!

Lastly, they may also encounter Haaketh, a half-orc swordsman who has spent centuries in the mountains. If the PCs prove themselves to be honorable, sincere, and spirited heroes, Haaketh may be swayed to help their cause.

Adapting the Adventure

This adventure can be played in two ways: it is designed as a linear adventure with a rough timeline and flow of events in mind. However, you can also run it as a "sandbox." The encounters, NPCs, and events can be used as interactive touchstones that generate story hooks and side treks, to fill out your own campaign.

If you are not running the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign, you can adapt this to any campaign where a larger, more politically unified, and militarily powerful nation invades another country that is smaller, more fractious, and militarily weaker. With some changes in the terrain, geopolitics, and back-story, you should be able to adapt *A Harvest of Hope Forlorn* for your needs.

Epilogue

The PCs rush back to Liederhafen — are they in time to save the Duke? That is up to you, as the GM. There are many different ways to develop your campaign from this point; it depends on what kind of feel you want for your game.

If you want the PCs to become the most important figures in both the war against the invading Ragesians, as well as the Dassen Civil War, the remaining assassin can slay Duke Arndt (and maybe Advisor Gereon, as well), thus letting the PCs decide if they will fill the power vacuum. They can then try to carry on their commanders' legacy, and rally the forces against the invaders. If they fail to defend the town, your PCs may end up being in charge of a large army of warriors and refugees, and can lead to the "Refugee Train" Expanded Campaign Option on page 8.

If your game still has mileage from the Duke's back-story involving the Aquiline Heart and Supreme Inquisitor Leska, don't kill him off. The last assassin has not yet made his move, and thus Duke Arndt is still alive. You can play up the story of the Duke's lost faith and inner conflict as a microcosm of the chaos afflicting the nation, the entire world, and the cosmos at large; until the Aquiline Heart is recovered, countless tragedies will befall the land, and keep it in disharmony. If Liederhafen falls, so does Dassen — and if Dassen falls, it is likely that Seaquen will fall too, and the Lyceum will be destroyed, and Leska will have removed one more threat to her superweapon.

Meanwhile, General Revulus begins to mobilize the Ragesian Third Army, after he realizes Inquisitor-Major Alecto's ploy has failed. The PCs may thus make a recurring enemy in the spiteful, vengeful Inquisitor-Major, who feels personally slighted by their interventions. General Revulus will dispatch Captain Gracchus's warband to Liederhafen, while asking for more reinforcements from Ragos. Captain Gracchus is itching for a fight; he's eager to regain honor for his troops that have been shamefully defeated in the Griffon Leaping Peak fiasco. These threats to Liederhafen can provide PCs with many more hours of gaming, as they engage in military operations, skirmishes, duels and other martial activities.

But while the threat of the Ragesian army looms menacingly over Dassen, more subtle dangers await the country. Some courtiers in Bresk have openly expressed disdain for Duke Arndt's actions in Liederhafen, calling him an unstable, power-hungry old fool who dreams of the glory days of his youth. Some members of the Royal Court have gone so far as to blame him for the intensification of the Ragesian invasion — because the Duke has shown unlawful resistance (unsanctioned by the King) to the Ragesian Third Army, it will incite the violent Ragesians to send even more soldiers, and cause even more chaos to be inflicted upon the nation. Loyal knights have been sent by King Steppengard to capture Duke Ardnt, while rival warlords marshal their forces, preparing for a coup to replace the inept king. Traitorous aristocrats have also begun to make deals with the invading Ragesians to secure positions of power and wealth in what they see to be the new world order.

The PCs are situated at the starting point of all this intrigue, as they serve Duke Arndt, the unwilling harbinger of the civil war. What will your PCs do? What can they do? What loyalties do they serve, and who can they trust?

Liederhafen: The Songs' Haven

History and Culture

The town's name harkens back to an ancient tale of how a wandering bard saved the town from a large clan of powerful and rapacious ogre magi river pirates. According to legend, the fierce ogres were on their way to destroy the town, and encountered a mysterious musician en route. The minstrel was captured and enslaved by the ogres, who forced him to perform for them on their war galley. During his performances, as the pirates began drinking copious amounts of alcohol, the bard innocently asked the pirates who was the strongest warrior among them.

The ogre magi began to brag of their combat prowess, and the troubadour used his bardic music to create a *suggestion* effect, provoking them to fight each other — after all they had nothing to fear, as they could regenerate from the most grievous wounds! The minstrel then used his *inspire heroism* ability to cause the ogres to fight each other even more ferociously. The ogre magi fought till they were exhausted, and they were still unable to determine who the strongest were, as they could not inflict lasting injuries on each other. The bard continued to sing and ply them generously with wine, until the tired pirates were lulled to slumber. A mysterious fire then consumed the ship, and slew many of the ogre magi, and the bard disappeared into the mountains, never to be heard of again.

The town was thus named Liederhafen — Songs' Haven — in honor of this mysterious trickster's heroic deeds. While few people believe this story today, bards and performers of all sorts

can still find warm welcome within Liederhafen. Every year, during the autumn harvest festival, many troubadours and minstrels from all around, visit the town to celebrate and perform to appreciative audiences.

Liederhafen
NG Conventional Small Town
Government Hereditary duchy
Purchase Limit 800 gp; **Assets** 43,000 gp
Population formerly 1073, but swollen to 3018 with refugees and military personnel
Demographics mixed (93% human, 7% dwarf)
Authority Figures Duke Arndt (LG male human commander 12, military commander of the Liederhafen garrison), Advisor Gereon (NG male human bard 12, tactician and seneschal for Duke Arndt)
Important NPCs Town Steward Andrew (LG male human commoner 13, the oldest man in the town whose advice is sought on practical matters), Midwife Martha (NG female human adept 10, village witch), Father Dominic (NG male human cleric 7 — Domains: Healing, Sun), Gunnar Olafson (LG male dwarf fighter 6, captain of the militia), Gerald Sawyer (N male human expert 8, master of the Carpenter's Guild)

Law and Order

Typical Guard Patrol: During these times of war, Duke Arndt has supplemented the town militia with his own soldiers, to prevent any infiltrators or saboteurs from gaining easy access into the town. The local patrols and military forces have undergone some training together, and have become somewhat accustomed to working with each other. A typical patrol thus consists of a royal army sergeant who has undergone wilderness survival training (ranger 2/ fighter 2) and 2 royal corporals (fighter 2) and 6 town militiamen (warrior 2). These guards typically wear banded mail (for the royal forces) and chain shirts (for the militia), and carry longswords and heavy shields, as well as longbows. The sergeants are armed with masterwork mighty (+2 Strength bonus) longbows instead of normal longbows, and also carry 2 thunderstones and 2 potions of *cure light wounds* each.

Patrol Tactics: In the event of a battle, the sergeants will toss a thunderstone at the enemy to disorient them and alert other guard patrols of the conflict. The sergeant then snipes at key targets with the longbow — this also indicates to his subordinates which foe is the highest-priority target to engage first.

Healing, Shopping, and Other Services

The PCs, after defeating the invisible stalker and arrowhawks, will find the locals to be very friendly folk. They can enjoy 20% discounts to purchase magical items from Midwife Martha (who sells potions and wands) and Kiran (who sells potions and scrolls), and can receive some degree of magical healing for free.

There are no priests in Liederhafen who can raise the dead, though Duke Arndt does have access to two scrolls of *Raise Dead*, which both Father Dominic and Midwife Martha can use. Duke Arndt may raise those PCs who have fallen heroically in the defense of Liederhafen, if their souls are willing to return.

On the other hand, if any PC is an orc, a half-orc, or betrays otherwise "orcish" features or heritage, he receives a very cold reception from most of the townsfolk. At the very least, he may be charged exorbitant prices (adding 50% to the base cost of all goods and services is a good start). The locals aren't particularly happy with orcs at the moment, in the light of the Ragesian invasion — it's only due to the PCs' earlier heroism and the Duke's presence that the orc-blooded PC has not yet been lynched by a panicking mob. Even though many of the Ragesian soldiers are human, the human townsfolk of Liederhafen are blind to that fact, and associate "Ragesia" with "orc". This is the sad reality of ethnic and racial bias — people can always find ways to divide and blind themselves, even in the middle of a larger war.

Geography and Socioeconomics

Liederhafen is situated below the mid-point of the three rivers in North Dassen flowing toward the sea. As such, it is situated on the extremely fertile soil of the rivers' alluvial plain, and has been blessed with bountiful harvests.

The inhabitants of Liederhafen have used its central location, at the crux of the three rivers, to develop their settlement as a collection and processing point for boats from other agricultural settlements in north Dassen, before these boats continue downriver to Bresk and other important areas. However, during times of intense, torrential rainfall, flooding is not uncommon, and the locals are skilled in constructing trenches and dams to mitigate the seasonal flash floods.

Due to this strategic position, Liederhafen has become a sizable, prosperous town, dwarfing the other smaller agricultural villages in the region. During these times of war, however, Liederhafen's strategic location also means that it has become a high-priority target for the invading Ragesian army, as they continue their southern advance to the peninsula. Once the Ragesian forces seize Liederhafen, they will be able to sail downriver throughout the whole of Dassen. It would then be very easy for them to seize Bresk, and ultimately Seaquen will easily fall to their advance.

Current Affairs

In the light of the recent war and magical fires dotting the sky, times have become very harsh. The ice on the nearby mountain peaks has begun to melt, leading to a significant drop in the ambient temperature as the snow melts and flows in rivers of slush downhill. Wild animal attacks are more and more common, as the beasts think that an early winter has come, and they have not yet hoarded enough food to survive hibernating in the cold season. Many of the crops are dying as the temperature dips, and the townsfolk are finding it hard to harvest all of the grain in time before they spoil in the cold snap.

Two months ago, Duke Arndt's contingent came into town, declaring their intent to protect the common people from the invaders. The warriors come from all walks of life — ranging from dutiful knights following Duke Arndt's example in protecting the common folk, zealous patriots from rural communities fighting for their land and people, to cynical sell-swords, trading wounds for gold and scars for coin.

Refugees from communities razed by the Ragesian invaders in the vicinity have also begun to flock in great droves to the town. They have heard of Duke Arndt's garrison and his plans to guide them to safer territories. This influx has led to population pressure and ethnic tension, as too many people from different ethnic and cultural groups are forced to live together within times of crisis.

Thus, there is a general air of distrust in the air — some of the mercenaries have generally dour, sleazy and untrustworthy demeanors that the townsfolk are apprehensive of, while the refugees provoke resentment from some locals, who feel that their town is being taken over by "filthy foreigners". Inquisitor-Major Alecto's small squad of Dassenian assassins has exploited these mass migrations to enter the town without raising too much suspicion. A week ago, they managed to infiltrate the town, assuming the role of refugees and warriors, and for now they lie in wait.

Adventure Preparation

A large part of the adventure takes place within harsh, mountainous wilderness and subterranean caves, so game masters should familiarize themselves with the rules dealing with mountain terrain and dungeons, with particular emphasis on altitude sickness, avalanches, cave-ins, exhaustion/ fatigue, and falling.

The author is unapologetically influenced by a steady cultural diet of Asian martial arts movies and video games, and thus many opportunities for the PCs to engage in acrobatic stunts and feats of extreme athleticism also abound in this adventure. Game masters will thus find it useful to review the specifics of the Balance, Climb, Jumping and Tumble skills.

Lastly, the special attacks of the basilisk also play a significant role in this part of the adventure.

This adventure also involves much intrigue and dissembling, so GMs should become familiar with the nuances of the NPCs' motivations and personalities, in order to understand them and their actions better. The NPCs are dynamic characters that will try to achieve their own goals, but their plans, of course, are not immune to the vagaries of your PCs' actions.

Prologue

Whispers of a Gathering Storm (EL 7)

This prologue serves to ease PCs from different backgrounds into *A Harvest of Hope Forlorn*. It is most suitable for PCs who are local heroes, retainers of Duke Arndt or Advisor Gereon, or resistance fighters from Gate Pass sent to assist the defense of Dassen.

However, if your PCs are new characters, this prologue also provides a rationale to explain why Gereon would entrust the PCs with the recovery mission in Act One.

Inquisitor-Major Alecto has used her *Lesser Planar Ally* spell to call forth extraplanar creatures of elemental air to strike at the Duke's forces. She uses these creatures to test the strength of the Duke's defenses — this allows her magically compelled assassins to take note of well the Duke is guarded.

This scene begins in Liederhafen's town hall, where Duke Arndt is holding an audience.

Read or paraphrase the following text:

It's the usual business, here in Liederhafen. Another busy morning, on a busy day, in this small sleepy town that has suddenly turned, overnight, into a busy military base. The busiest man of all, in this hustle and bustle, is of course the garrison's commander, Duke Arndt.

Amidst the mean surroundings of Liederhafen's town hall, the nobleman still cuts a regal figure in fine robes emblazoned with the red cross of the Knights of the Aquiline Cross and ceremonial chain-mail of exceedingly fine dwarven craftmanship.

Duke Arndt is patiently holding audience upon a makeshift dais, and despite his best efforts to appear stoic, the troubled times are taking their toll on the aged knight. Countless crow's feet meander across the Duke's brow, and tiny fissures of fatigue crease his aquiline features, threatening to plunge Arndt into a chasm of exhaustion. The Royal Strategist, Advisor Gereon, sits near him, his concern for his old friend evident in his posture and expression.

A filthy, maimed figure, probably one of the countless refugees streaming into the town, limps forward. Behind him, three children huddle pathetically — none of them look as if they have seen more than five summers of such harsh existence. More sardonic souls would thank the Heavens for this small mercy, at least, as flies dance lazy ballets over their miserable frames, stopping only to graze delicately from their weeping scars. Valiantly, the broken man attempts to bring his one useless arm forward, in a beseeching gesture, but manages only to raise the trembling, twisted limb an inch or so, before collapsing into a tumultuous coughing fit.

He is not that old a man, you realize. In fact, he is quite young — as he coughs for a good minute or two, you can see that he is at most 30 years of age. Once, he was muscular and stout, but has been reduced to this wasted frame, by a diet of too little food and too much grief. Perhaps, in a happier past, not too distant from the cruel present, he was a laborer, farmer, or even a warrior.

Wiping flecks of bloodied spittle from his cheek, the refugee speaks his plea. His voice — thickly accented in the dialect of the hills-tribes dwelling further north — is a lacerated, forlorn thing, with neither pitch nor power. His words crawl piteously before the ashen-eyed Duke, and the rest of the waiting assembly.

"My lord... please... I know I have no right to crave a boon from you... but please, hear me out. I will work for you... I will do anything, any kind of hard work, for your army, for your town... but nobody will hire me. They cannot find work for me — not with this broken arm! I was a warrior from my village, and I am used to a harsh life... but my children, who will feed them? They... have already lost their mother... my wife... when those Ragesian bastards came through our fields... The stories say your touch can heal the sick and wounded... Please, my lord... can you mend this broken arm of mine? My children... their lives depend on your mercy, my lord!"

At this point, Duke Arndt stands up, and walks towards the refugee. PCs who make a successful Sense Motive check (DC 15) will notice that the Duke hesitates, very briefly, before touching the refugee's shoulders. He then guides the wounded man back, slowly and gently, to his children, and touches the red cross of the Aquiline Rose emblazoned on his robes, muttering a prayer softly under his breath.

The Duke then takes out a bottle, containing a pale, clear blue liquid from his belt pouch. Pulling out the stopper from the bottle, Duke Arndt then hands it over to the man, instructing him to drink. After the man quaffs down the potion, he gasps as

his broken arm's twisted bones begins to uncurl and straighten, and his body's bleeding wounds begin to fade away. A hollow, metallic clunking noise echoes throughout the hall, as a cruelly barbed, black-tipped arrowhead falls out from the man's shoulder, onto the floor.

The Duke then walks over to the awestruck children, and gives them similar bottles. Speaking to them in gentle, encouraging tones, he opens the bottles and bids them to drink from them. As the children drink the potions, their wounds and bruises also begin to fade.

Alert PCs may notice, with a Wisdom check (DC 5), that the Duke isn't using his Lay On Hands, paladin spells, or Vow of Healing feat from his training as a Knight of the Aquiline Cross. If the PCs succeed in this Wisdom check, and have been serving Duke Arndt for a while, a further Intelligence check (DC 10) reminds them that they hadn't seen him use any supernatural healing abilities during the last three months.

As the children's joyful laughter and the man's relieved sobs fill the air, the Duke looks up to the rest of the assembly. The PCs who succeed at a Sense Motive (DC 15) check notice a glimpse of sorrow flash in his eyes, when the Duke notices this family is merely the first of so many more wounded people he has to tend to. At this point, ask the PCs to make a Listen check (DC 15). If they succeed, they hear distant shouts for help, from outside the town hall.

Enemy Air Strike, Detected! (EL 7)

The inquisitor's assault has begun! The first wave of Alecto's conjured allies, four juvenile arrowhawks, sweep over the refugee train swarming into Liederhafen, blasting away with their lightning rays, at the helpless refugees. PCs who have made successful Listen checks earlier may run to nearby windows or move outside, to get a better view of what's happening. They will see lightning bolts streak down from the clear morning sky, without the retort of any thunder.

If the PCs wish to trace the trajectory of these lightning bolts, a Spot check (DC 10) reveals the source: four legless avians with twin pairs of wings, flying about 50 feet above the ground. These creatures are near the town gates, which are approximately 150 feet away from the town hall. The strange birds are flying in a V formation, with two on each flank, strafing the refugee train with rays of deadly electrical energy from their tails, causing most of the helpless refugees to flee in panicked terror.

A successful Knowledge: Planes or Knowledge: Nature roll (DC 15) reveals they are arrowhawks, outsiders from the Elemental Plane of Air, and informs the PCs of their energy resistances. A roll of DC 20 on either Knowledge check informs the PCs of their alignment, their energy immunities, as well as their incredible aerial maneuverability and speed.\

Juvenile arrowhawks (4) (CR 3): hp 16 each, MM.

The arrowhawks have been instructed by Alecto to hamper and harry the movements of the people moving in and out of Liederhafen. The arrowhawks, as predators, are thus attacking the weakest members — the refugees — of these "cattle", to slow and divide the "herd". Initially, they maintain a height of 50 feet, simply following a straight flight path, blasting away at random refugees, likely killing one person each, every round.

When the PCs reach them, the four town guards on duty at that sector will be using ranged weapons to attack the arrowhawks — but their high AC and the guards' low attack bonuses means that it is unlikely that any of tem would actually be hit. The PCs are likely to be more successful in their attacks. If the PCs do not have any ranged weapons with them, assume that some of the town guards have just been killed by the arrowhawks, and they have dropped their longbows in an area conveniently close to the PCs.

If the arrowhawks are injured in combat, they will use their Dodge feat against the character that caused them the most damage in the last turn, and focus their lightning ray attacks on him. When one, or more of the arrowhawks has been defeated, the other three will begin to become more cautious and tactical. They will then focus fire on the most dangerous-looking PC — usually one who has shown the ability to cast long-range attack spells, or who has exhibited skills in ranged combat.

They will also begin to improve their tactical movement. They will unleash their lightning blasts at a height of 50 feet, then swoop up 60 feet, to gain a height of 110 feet, and they will use the ground cover to their advantage, to reduce incoming fire. The next round, they will dive 60 feet, and fire lightning rays, before returning up to 110 feet on the subsequent round.

The arrowhawks will repeat these tactics, until they or the PCs are slain. PCs who have earlier identified the arrowhawks accurately with relevant Knowledge checks remember that arrowhawks are intelligent predators, not bloodthirsty monsters, and that this tenacity in combat is highly unusual.

Remember to apply range penalties for the PCs' ranged attacks. If the PCs wish to gain some height to get closer to the arrowhawks, they can either scale the nearby buildings (10 feet tall) or the town walls (30 feet tall) to adjust for range. Of course, magical flight or levitation abilities make this a much easier and simpler process.

Getting on Top of Buildings

There are many barrels, crates, and pushcarts lying around near the buildings. The PCs can hop up on them with a successful Jump check (DC 10), and another successful Jump check (DC 20) with a subsequent Climb check (DC 15) allow the PCs to leap up and pull themselves over the roofs of the buildings. These skill checks count toward the PCs' movement, and PCs can take a –5 penalty to their Climb check to make an accelerated climb, and move half their speed, instead of one-quarter of their land speed.

Getting to the top of the buildings allow the PCs to reduce the range penalties to their attacks, and also reduce the arrowhawks' cover bonus to AC by –2, as they can get a better shot. The higher ground also allows them to notice the invisible stalker later more easily (see "The Unseen Blade of the Wind,"below).

Getting on Top of Town Walls

The PCs can race up the stairs to the top of the town walls, but where's the fun in that? More importantly, the streets are filled with throngs of panicking people. This makes moving through the mob both dangerous (every round they move through the congested streets, the PCs will take 1d6 subdual damage from the mob's lashing out at anything around them. A successful Reflex Save at DC 10 prevents this damage), as well as time-consuming (treat the streets as difficult terrain, requiring twice the amount of movement to cross).

If the PCs have already jumped on top of the buildings, they can make a Balance check (DC 10) and make a 20-foot running start, and clear a long jump (DC 20) to reach the heavy tapestries dangling from the battlements on the walls. These tapestries are made of heavy-duty, strong cloth, emblazoned with Duke Arndt's personal heraldic crest, and can support one or two medium-sized PCs without any problems. (GMs, it's your call, as to how long the tapestries can support the PCs' weight, and how much heavy armor/ loads will strain the tapestries.) PCs can use the tapestries to climb up to the battlements — treat this as a DC 5 Climb check to move up the wall, using the cloth as an improvised knotted rope.

Once the PCs have reached the battlements, they will be able to get clear shots and ignore any cover the arrowhawks may try to gain. The height advantage also negates the range penalties for firing at the arrowhawks once they begin their evasive maneuvers. This also allows them to notice the trail of the invisible stalker (see below) more easily.

The Unseen Blade of the Wind (EL 7)

After the PCs have defeated the arrowhawks in combat, ask them to make a Spot Check (DC 20). The DC of this Spot check is 15 for the PCs on the roofs of the low-lying buildings, and 10 for those on the battlements. If they succeed, they can see the faint outline of an amorphous, cloudlike mass moving very quickly past the town gates. From a higher vantage point, it appears to be some sort of localized, sentient gale, which leaves urban devastation in its wake. Three unlucky guardsmen are caught in the direct path of the focused, incredibly strong wind, and they are torn into bloody gobbets of flesh and metal.

The windows of Liederhafen's various buildings explode in hailstorms of tiny glass shards, as the fierce onslaught of wind wreaks havoc throughout the town. This sudden wind seems to be heading towards the town hall, and it slams through the open door, ripping tapestries and curtains into shreds. Townsfolk and refugees start pouring out of the building, in panicked, screaming droves. Furious knives of wind slash those guardsmen who attempt to stop the unseen storm — some are shredded and unceremoniously tossed like so much useless chaff out of the windows.

This sanguinary, violent wind — an invisible stalker — is the second wave of Alecto's assault on the Duke. If the PCs decide to investigate or stop this new menace, they have to race the 150 distance feet back to the town hall, from the town gates. They will have to navigate past the large crowds of panicked commoners, who are suffering from the bystander effect, and milling about in shock. (Treat the mob as difficult terrain; each square costs twice the amount of movement.)

PCs can take shortcuts by scaling the walls, and jumping from rooftop to rooftop across the town's various buildings, like *parkour* athletes or *wuxia* heroes. They should make Climb checks (DC 10) to scale the walls, Jump checks (DC 20) with a 20-feet running start to leap from building to building, and Balance checks (DC 10) to keep their balance throughout the entire process. Each time a PC manages to successfully make one set of these skill checks, he gets closer to the town hall; when the PC completes 3 sequences of these skill checks, he will reach the town hall.

Invisible stalker (CR 7): hp 50, MM.

The invisible stalker has been instructed to slay the Duke, and it will try to complete this task as in as straightforward a manner as possible. It will thus race straight for the Duke, ignoring any guards who may throw to impede its task. With its natural invisibility, quick speed, and maneuverability, it easily bypasses most resistance. Its large size, superior reach, and Combat Reflexes feat allows it to easily defeat approaching low-level guards.

The melee between the guards and the invisible stalker rapidly escalates into a bloody storm of mangled limbs and twisted metal, and the faint outline of the invisible stalker can be seen in the blood-mist rising from the still-warm corpses of the soldiers. If any characters (i.e. PCs) offer more substantial resistance, the invisible stalker will turn its attention to them, and attack relentlessly, hoping to drive them off, so it can continue on its task.

When the PCs reach the town hall, Advisor Gereon will be gravely injured from trying to defend the Duke. The invisible stalker has eviscerated the old tactician, who lies on the floor, bleeding to death. The Duke tries to defend himself and his old friend as best as he can, but he too, is old, ill and feeble.

PCs who succeed at a DC 15 Sense Motive check notice that he is visibly shaken by the air elemental's attacks. (The Duke fears this recent attack is another grim omen of Heaven's anger towards him, as both winds and birds feature strongly in the Order of the Aquiline Heart's symbolism.) The PCs also notice the invisible stalker flaying the Duke with an attack of opportunity, when the Duke tries to use the Heal skill, to stabilize the dying Gereon. Perceptive PCs may thus wonder why, during this emergency, the Duke still does not use his supernatural healing powers or healing spells.

It thus falls to the PCs to defeat this tempestuous menace. PCs can make Spot checks (DC 20) to notice telltale signs of the invisible stalker's passage — it leaves vapor trails through the red clouds of gore, it disturbs the tapestries, cloaks and other fabrics in the town hall, etc. A Listen check (DC 20) allows the PCs to pinpoint the location of the invisible stalker, and they can attack it, with a 50% miss chance. Of course, PCs with the Blind-Fight feat, *See invisibility* or *glitterdust* spells have an advantage in this battle.

When the PCs kill the invisible stalker, there is a thunderous surge of howling, raging winds, and suddenly everything turns silent. At this point, read or paraphrase the following text:

> The wounded Duke stands up, his hands stained in scarlet from stanching the reservoirs of blood upon the bodies littered around him. Advisor Gereon is prone behind him — many cuts ravage his gaunt frame, but he's breathing gently — he'll survive.
>
> As the Duke turns to look at you all, he is silent, and you can see doubt, fear, gratitude, grief and wonder mingling in his eyes. After a brief moment, he speaks.
>
> "Brave heroes... I thank you. You have prolonged this old man's life, for him to live another day. I thank you greatly, and I owe you both my life and my eternal gratitude."

The PCs have managed to foil the attempts on the Duke's life, and will be hailed as heroes by the entire town. Let them take a break for a while, some PCs may want to bask in this public adoration, while others may want to follow up on investigations about the magical assailants or Duke Arndt's unusual behavior.

Meanwhile, the other three assassins who have infiltrated Liederhafen are observing this chain of events, and realize this is a ploy by Inquisitor-Major Alecto to reveal the openings and workings of the Duke's defences. After a brief meeting to coordinate their actions and strategies, these 3 assassins have marked the PCs out as the most likely obstacles to their task. In any case, these assassins make their move, and the next phase of the assassination plot will occur over the course of the next week.

Simon disguises himself as a carpenter, and helps to repair the damaged buildings in town, while trying to get closer to the Duke to kill him. Meanwhile, under cover of darkness, Sophia and Markus leave town surreptitiously, and rendezvous with the Dassenian militamen they have contacted earlier. Together, they hijack the Ragesian column in the Unrepentant Peaks, initiating the ruse to distract the Duke's forces (i.e. the PCs).

Main Act

Meeting with Advisor Gereon

The adventure proper begins a week after the attempt on Duke Arndt's life. In the early hours of the night, military messengers inform the PCs that Advisor Gereon has summoned them for a meeting on the morrow. The PCs are to assemble at Gereon's tent at dawn, to attend a briefing for an emergency mission of utmost importance.

As dawn breaks, and the PCs enter Gereon's tent, read or paraphrase the following text:

Despite the earliness of the hour, the old tactician's tent is a busy scene of organized clutter and orderly confusion. Classical tomes detailing the languages and customs of the Ragesian Empire and its many satellite satrapies lie open next to avant-garde texts of magical theory discussing the finer points of reflexivity and tunnel vision within meta-divination practices. Parchment and papyrus of all persuasions litter the ground haphazardly, as apprentices and adepts run helter-skelter, making constant adjustments on the huge battle-map sprawling across the massive conference table in the middle of the tent.

As you step in, Gereon looks up from a dog-eared book titled *Crowns of Flame and Light: A Comparative Analysis of Geopolitics after the Ragesia-Shahalesti Alliance*, and sets it down onto the table. He nods briskly towards you, with surprising energy for a man of such advanced age – especially considering just how badly injured he was, a few days ago – and settles quickly into the main meat of his briefing.

"Thank you all for heeding my summons with such short notice. Let me speak frankly and simply – as always, the first victims of brutal times are the luxuries of diplomacy, so do forgive my brusque tone.

"We have received intelligence from our allies that a Ragesian caravan containing magical weapons of great potency has been intercepted en route to the rest of the invading legions heading our way. Our allies – partisans and militia loyal to the cause of defending and maintaining Dassen's independence – have managed to ambush this caravan in the mountain pass to the north, but before they could capture all the crates containing the magical weapons, a small squad of Ragesian scouts were able to sneak away, and hide the shipment in a ravine.

"Our allies have captured some of these weapons, and our research teams are busy analyzing their capacities at the moment. We have no idea what the other weapons contained in the other crates may be capable of, though. Our other spellcasters have recently used their familiars to conduct aerial reconnaissance, and they have managed to pick up 3 strong auras of magic from the schools of abjuration, divination, evocation and transmutation moving around the northern mountains of the Griffon Leaping Peaks.

"These auras were last observed moving into a series of caves along the gullies – our aerial scouting lost trace of them after they entered the caves. Lastly, our magical scouting has also noted the presence of Ragesian patrols moving towards and around the gully – perhaps they are retriever units, sent to retrieve and protect their lost cargo.

"Our mission for you is simple – you are to escort one of our mystic's familiars, with as great speed as you can muster, through those mountains, and recover these 3 boxes from the Ragesian scouts before they make contact with the other Ragesians forces.

"The crate was last observed in a network of caves near the steep slopes dubbed 'The Unrepentant Cliffs' in the middle of the Griffon Leaping Peaks. The cliffs enjoy this charming name on account of how many lives they have claimed, so do be careful there now. At the same time, you will probably encounter resistance from Ragesian forces. You should make haste to locate the Ragesian scout unit holding on to these crates, before their reinforcements arrive.

"You have to defend the position while our spellcaster Kiran back here will channel his sympathetic link to his familiar, to identify the contents of these boxes. After we have determined the true nature of this convoy, orders will be magically communicated to you, to return the Ragesian cargo to base, destroy them, or leave them alone.

"Avoid the Ragesian patrols as much as you can – do not waste time engaging in minor skirmishes – these could be those powerful weapons that the Old Dragon was supposed to have cached away for use by his soldiers in his military campaigns to pacify his borders.

"If we allow this crate to return to Ragesian hands, it may undermine our efforts to defend our homelands – if we get our hands on these weapons, we may be able to understand our enemies' tactical capabilities better, as well as possibly use these munitions against them.

"Do you understand? Any questions? If there are none, you set forth in an hour. That should be enough time for the spellcasters among you to gather your energies and refresh your devotions."

Gereon will try to gauge the reactions of the PCs. If they seem worried about the threats of the harsh terrain and any enemies within the area, Gereon will inform them of the following:

"I know this is not an easy task. This is exceedingly dangerous territory that I ask you to traverse – hostile tribes, exotic beasts and harsh terrain are but a paltry few of the threats that abound in the Unrepentant Cliffs. But these times that we live in are just as dangerous – if not more so – and fearless heroes of prowess are needed to guide those less doughty and stalwart than themselves into safer, gentler times.

"It is my hope and wish that you will be those heroes, that you will help us all in our quest to protect the suffering commoners from the horrors of war. Our allies and scouts have managed to create accurate maps that can guide your way across the mountains. Also, the familiar you will be escorting is far more intelligent than a normal beast, and it is – forgive the wordplay – familiar with the terrain, having just traveled there firsthand."

Gereon is canny enough to use a variety of approaches to convince the PCs to join this mission. If the PCs are members of the Dassenian military or Dassenian loyalists, motivating them to join this mission should not pose much of a problem. Duke Arndt and Advisor Gereon are both old war heroes, highly respected and renowned throughout the lands for their compassion, prowess, righteousness, valor, and wealth. If the PCs are enemies of the Ragesian Empire, Gereon should be able to convince them to help in a coordinated war effort against a common enemy. If the PCs are mercenaries, he is willing to reward them with fortune and renown if they so wish. As the GM, you are in the best position to scale and balance the rewards that suits your own campaign.

Ragesian Magical Shipments?

Cunning old Gereon's hunches and deductions are right. There are currently no top-secret, prototype, incredibly powerful weapons of magical devastation in the northern mountains and deserts, at least not in the conventional sense. Supreme Inquisitor Leska does not wish to expend her newfound political power on such pursuits — her superweapon project is consuming a lot of the Empire's resources, and thus she can hardly afford to blithely send out large quantities of enchanted munitions in the campaign to take Dassen.

Furthermore, since the Ragesian Empire already possesses magical superiority on the battlefield through their Inquisitor corps, who can negate the spells of their foes, the Ragesian armies, as a whole, do not focus on large-scale magical blasting effects to destroy their foes. The Ragesians also tend to outnumber their opposition, which makes it harder for them to use offensive blasting spells in the battlefield. Their larger armies also means it makes more economic sense for the Ragesian Inquisitors to be equipped with small, easily carried personal items such as scrolls, wands, and *pearls of power* to recast team buffs with large areas of effect (such as *bless* and *prayer*) on the numerous soldiers. There are some outliers who concentrate on offensive blasting magic, such as Captain Gracchus and other war-mages who subscribe to the beliefs of the Sons of the Old Dragon, but they are few and far between.

So what do these mysterious crates contain then? One of the crates — those captured by the partisans — really contain some minor magical weapons, such as *necklaces of fireballs, +1 weapons*, etc. The other three, however, are merely junk piles of scrap metal and wood, packed in crates embossed with Ragesian army heraldry. Inquisitor-Major Alecto's magically coerced assassins had used *magic aura* spells to disguise the boxes' contents as powerful magical items.

Flexing her political muscle, as a high-ranking Inquisitor, on General Revulus, the cunning Inquisitor-Major Alecto had arranged a false escort mission to be arranged. These boxes were escorted by a large group of forces, containing both forces that are loyal (and expendable) to Inquisitor-Major Alecto, as well as the more insubordinate soldiers who are sympathetic to the ideals espoused by Captain Gracchus and the Sons of the Old Dragon.

Inquisitor-Major Alecto's magically bound team of spellcasters-turned-assassins have used *change self*, *charm person*, *detect thoughts*, *suggestion* and *tongues* spells to disguise themselves as Dassen minutemen. They infiltrated and contacted other cells of partisans in the mountains and hills, and manipulated these partisans into attacking the Ragesian forces.

A sizable force of Dassenian resistance fighters thus managed to rout the Ragesian convoy in the Griffon Leaping Peaks, killing off many of Captain Gracchus's loyalists, and capturing one of the crates. After the successful raids, the assassins used more *suggestions* to motivate some partisans to send word of their victory back to Duke Arndt's base. Misinformation and deception follows, as the inexperienced partisans, drunk on success, boast of their victories, and rumors spread like wildfire throughout the land.

Inquisitor-Major Alecto has planned this as part of an elaborate con to distract and disperse Duke Arndt's forces. Her agents have observed the presence of powerful champions and warriors (like the PCs) assembling in town to serve Duke Arndt's cause, and these capable servants may make it hard for them to complete their task of assassination.

As the PCs head out on a wild goose chase to search for the three boxes of magical weapons that don't exist, two of the unwilling assassins — a pair of lovers, Markus (N Human Ranger 2/ Cleric 5) and Sophia (N Tiefling Wizard 6) have remained behind to assail and harass the PCs with sabotage and traps that can be explained away as "wilderness accidents". These assassins are especially motivated to complete the mission, because Inquisitor-Major Alecto is holding their baby son hostage — and both have first-hand experiences of the horrors of the Ragesian torture pits.

If the PCs survive these treacherous ambushes, and can find their ways into the caves, more dangers await. After the PCs find the tracks leading to the caves containing the Ragesian grain and weapon shipments, the assassins have also rigged the shipments with deadly traps, to cause a cave-in and remove the threats of the PCs once and for all.

The Lovers' Tale — of Assassins and Basilisks, Children and Devils

At least, those were the assassins' plans. But you know how they say that plans never survive contact with reality? Two mated basilisks lair in the caves where the assassins have planted the fake Ragesian magical weapons, and as the assassins were preparing the magical traps, the surly, territorial basilisks stumbled across them. Nobody expected the basilisks to be there — these dangerous lizards aren't found in mountains caves usually, but then, neither are assassin mages. In the ensuing fracas, Markus, the male assassin, was turned to stone by the basilisks, but Sophia, his devil-blooded lover, managed to avoid petrification.

In a cold rage, Sophia relentlessly killed one of the basilisks with her spells and crossbow, to avenge her lover. Recovering her wits soon thereafter, she realized she had to leave before her luck ran out. Now she's in a bad situation — she's left evidence behind, in the form of poisoned bolts in the dead basilisk, that she can't risk retrieving, because of the surviving, furious basilisk. (Ironically, the surviving basilisk is angry because his mate has also been killed.) Then there's also the petrified Markus to worry about. He's far too heavy and bulky to carry away, and he's another big clue for the PCs, that can help them uncover more information about the conspiracy around them.

Sophia's thus channeling all her frustration and rage into making sure the PCs do not survive this trip into the mountains, so that Markus's petrification would not have been in vain. If the mission succeeds, she hopes she can convince the Inquisitor-Major to cast a *Break Enchantment* or *Stone to Flesh* spell on her lover. But she's also become overly cautious now — her earlier loss of self-control had led her to compromise the mission, as she shot the basilisks with her poisoned bolts, and she's careful not to make a similar mistake.

Her emotional instability thus provides the PCs with a higher chance of survival, as she may err on the side of caution, and PCs who also try to (or at least appear to be able to) restore Markus to flesh may be able to win her sympathies.

Sophia loves Markus deeply — he's been the only man in her life, who has looked beyond her race as a tiefling, and he truly cares for her. They've made a promise to each other that they won't die as slaves in the hellish detention centers of the Ragesian Inquisition, and that they will both return to see their child grow up.

Hence, Sophia may be convinced to negotiate, and rethink her position and loyalties. She may yield some useful information about her employer and her mission, and may even join the PCs if they can — or promise to find a way to — remove the *mark of justice* and *Geas* placed on Markus and her.

Of course, as an accomplished negotiator and military strategist, Gereon has his own concerns about the situation, which he does not share openly with the PCs. He does not think the Ragesians have been shipping magical weapons through the mountains — but he suspects they are certainly up to something in those mountains.

It is important to reiterate that he is not lying — the wily old man just has certain suspicions, which he does not share with the PCs, to prevent an overall loss of morale. He suspects a ruse of some sort, but the possibility of gaining either intelligence about the Ragesians, or their magical supplies, is too great to risk ignoring this development. As an experienced tactician and wily politician, Gereon is thus sending out the PCs to investigate, instead of using his own forces or the allied partisans, because as adventurers, they are not part of the usual military command structure.

The PCs, to put it bluntly, are expendable, and if they fail and perish, their deaths will not harm the morale of the regular troops. In fact, if they succeed, their conflicts and victories against the Ragesians may influence them to become more loyal to the defense of Dassen, and improve the morale of the regular forces. Even if there is no hidden cache of Ragesian weapons, embarking on this mission will provide the beleaguered, outnumbered, hastily assembled troops with much-needed encouragement about the capabilities of their partisan allies. Gereon is in a bad situation, and he's just making the best he can of it — that's his job, as the tactician for the army.

This mission is also potentially hazardous — and as the PCs are all adventurers of some caliber and repute, they are more reliable than average soldiers, and also more equipped with the skills and abilities to accomplish this task. (Gereon, as a high level Bard, has access to sources of information such as bardic knowledge, networks of spies and informants — it is likely he would have heard of the PCs' exploits in your campaign.) This makes sending the PCs for the mission more economically sound, rather than sending in conventional military forces, which will reduce the defenses of the fortress. Finally, Gereon also hopes that the PCs' embarking upon this mission will spur the clandestine forces in the camp into action, and allow him to gather more information about Duke Arndt's foes.

Gereon keeps these concerns to himself through a combination of his social skills, bardic magic, and magic equipment. If any PC is able to ferret out his suspicions — through any means such as magic, psionics, or just plain good old-fashioned deductive skills, and confronts him about them, Gereon will smile at them knowingly and begin to say something. He thinks better of it, though, and shakes his head, muttering something under his breath like "we can't afford to risk it…" and then dismisses the party. Kiran will then bring the PCs to another tent for further briefing and outfitting.

Preparations Before Setting Forth

After Gereon's briefing, a stout, dark youngish man with a raven perching on his shoulder politely introduces himself to the PCs. This is Kiran, a local magical prodigy and hedge wizard. With his understanding of both arcane and divine magic, Kiran has been tasked to coordinate the various spellcasters to provide Gereon with analysis, advice and magical support. Kiran is now in charge of assisting the PCs with his divinations and his familiar, Edgar the Raven, is supposed to follow the PCs into the mountains.

Edgar has just returned from his long recon flight in the mountains, and is resting for a while. He will be napping for a while, to rest from his fatigue. As a raven familiar, Edgar can speak Common as a supernatural ability, and can thus guide the PCs along their journeys. He is a font of historical knowledge, and enjoys switching between many different accents to amuse (or more often than not, irritate) his audience, as well as flirting with female PCs.

Kiran informs the PCs that from Liederhafen, they have to travel approximately 20 miles to the northwest, past the alluvial plains, and they will reach the mountain range where the Ragesian shipments have been last sighted. Kiran will use his magic to summon *Mounts* for the PCs — they should last for 8 hours, during which they can travel 24 miles, more than enough for the journey. They then have to brave the steep mountain ranges, and head to the Unrepentant Cliffs, hiking through rough dirt trails that Edgar had already scouted.

Kiran hands them a rough map and notes provided by the partisans and other scouts, warning of deadfalls and other dangers from the mountain's flora and fauna. Due to the effects of the Torch of the Burning Sky, the ice of the highest alpine peaks in the Unrepentant Cliffs have begun to melt, and may render the map somewhat inaccurate. The map, along with Kiran's briefing and warnings, grant the PCs a +2 bonus to Survival checks within these northern mountains.

At this point, Kiran provides them with silk rope, masterwork climbing gear, hammers and pitons, hardy mountaineer's clothing, and an emergency cache of potions and miscellaneous magical supplies for their foray into the Unrepentant Cliffs.

The cache is a *bag of holding I* that contains a bundle of 15 *goodberries* and 15 bottles carefully packed in cloth to soften bumps and impacts — 4 vials of antitoxin, 4 *potions of endure elements*, 4 *potions of cure light wounds*, 1 *potion of spider climb*, 1 *potion of lesser restoration*, and 1 *potion of darkvision*. There are also 4 sunrods, 4 smokesticks, 4 tindertwigs, 4 flasks of holy water, 4 vials of acid, and 4 vials of alchemist's fire.

Kiran does not expect the PCs to replace the potions and consumable items they use, but he would be impressed if they do so. He also expects them to use these resources prudently, and not flippantly. He instructs them to return whatever they do not use, and needless to say, he also wants his *bag of holding I* back after they finish the mission.

Kiran concludes his briefing by announcing that he will be waiting at a meeting point marked 'K' at the foot of the mountains, to expedite their return. The empathic link between Kiran and Edgar should be able to coordinate the PCs to any new meeting points, should the need arise for a change in plans.

During this hour before their departure, the PCs can pray, prepare their spells, maintain their weapons, and set other miscellaneous affairs in order. PCs who wish to source for more information about the northern mountains, Unrepentant Cliffs, partisans, or Ragesian army can roll Gather Information skill checks to dredge up some relevant rumors. This roll only takes 1 hour, not 1d4+1 hours as usual because the population of Liederhafen is currently so densely packed together — it's easy to find the people you want to talk to. However, the skill check DC is high (DC 20), as it's still very early in the morning, and it's not easy to find people who are in the know at this time of the day.

If a PC succeeds in the Gather Information check, read out one of the rumors from the sidebar on the next page. Roll 1d6 to consult the rumor chart. You may wish instead to choose a more suitable rumor for your campaign, instead of leaving it up to chance.

The Journey to the Mountain Range

The PCs follow the directions of the map and Edgar's advice to the mountains. The journey on Kiran's magically summoned horses from Liederhafen to the mountains takes around 7 hours. The journey goes smoothly and safely, without interruption.

Edgar spends the time chatting with the PCs, switching from the most mundane and irrelevant of topics to critical information pertaining to the PCs' mission. He informs the PCs, that during his earlier reconnaissance mission last night, he had observed the magical auras of the Ragesian shipment moving quickly up the Unrepentant Cliffs, and through the ridge dubbed "The Perch of the Thousand Eggs". The magical auras blinked out of Edgar's range of vision when they entered a cave in the gully after the Perch of the Thousand Eggs.

As they are riding, PCs who succeed at a Spot check (DC 20) can notice a black dot in the sky — after some squinting, they realize it is a black-winged hawk, flying around 200 feet above the ground. The hawk seems to be observing them intently, and flies away after a minute or two. The hawk returns every hour, and follows a similar pattern of behavior — it flies over, circles, watches them for a couple of minutes, and then flies off.

Liederhafen Rumors • Gather Information DC 20

D6	Rumor
1	This early winter and raging war is the result of a plot of an obscure cult of insane priests who venerate a forgotten, imprisoned god of primordial madness and dark elemental powers. This malevolent deity is called the "Old Omnipotent Orb" or "Ancient Annihilating Axe", or something to that effect, and it seeks to plunge the entire world into an age of darkness and devastation, to punish all of creation for imprisoning it. (False. Wrong game, wrong vowel.)
2	I heard from some my friends in the militia that the daring commandoes who had just fought against the Ragesians in the Unrepentant Cliffs and forced them to abandon their caravans en route, are men shrouded in mystery. Nobody had heard of these boys before this battle, but they certainly proved their valor in these tough times! This just goes to show that these times of upheaval and invasion bring out the best in us goodly folk of Dassen! (True. Some of these daring commandoes are just from distant rural settlements that do not communicate much with other communities, while others are the magically disguised assassins, that have just appeared on the scene.)
3	My nephew — he works as a scribe for a merchant in Bresk — he tells me the armies have all been summoned back to the capital for something. Some kinda fancy military maneuver that the nobles wanna try — I dunno what kinda crazy ideas they are trying out, when our enemies are HERE on the front and our boys are THERE back home! This is a direct order from the King though, or so my nephew says — sigh — times aren't what they used to be. Here! A toast to the continued health of the King and Land! (True.)
4	Advisor Gereon's been a really busy man recently. He's never stopped talking to those adventurer-types — and that would include you, of course. There's so many people going in and out of that tent of his, and all of them come over here, buy a couple of drinks for the road, get their nice shiny swords and axes out, and march out into the night. Let me guess — you're also on a top-secret mission, concerning national security? Don't tell me about it, save us both the trouble. Here's one on the house for you — may the gods keep your swords in your enemies' guts and theirs out of yours! (True. Gereon is the crisis control centre who's been coordinating and briefing various groups of adventurers, heroes, and subordinates to investigate and follow up on the various disturbances the assassins have cooked up.)
5	I think Duke Arndt may be suffering from countless bad dreams and strange illnesses — he's been ordering huge quantities of medicinal plants! The teas and herbs being delivered to his tent are all for helping those maladies. Funny thing is, he's a paladin — I thought they never fall sick. (True. Duke Arndt isn't using them for himself, though — he's instructing his followers to make medicinal poultices to help the common folk, as he's lost his faith healing abilities.)
6	This war is actually an elaborate plot by the Werewolf Sword-Emperor Who Reigns Alone in the Unrepentant Cliffs to weaken both Ragesia and Dassen, then he will sweep us all together in one fell swoop! I hear he's working for the Shalahesti elves. You know what they say about werewolves and elves, right...? What? You've not heard? You know how elves tend to be nature-worshippers, and druids are nature-worshippers who can shape-shift... and this is a werewolf... so you know... same thing! Elves are good with swords, and this is a werewolf sword-emperor, for crying out loud! It's all a foul conspiracy, I say! (False. There is no Werewolf Sword Emperor Who Reigns Alone in the Unrepentant Cliffs.)

Traversing the Griffon Leaping Peaks

After the PCs dismount, at the base of the mountains, the PCs have to navigate a rough dirt trail in order to get closer to the location of the Ragesian shipment. The terrain is difficult, and progress is slow — they will have to hike for around 5 hours, on increasingly steeper slopes, until they reach the Unrepentant Cliffs.

Scaling the Unrepentant Cliffs (EL 7)

When the PCs reach the foot of the Unrepentant Cliffs, read or paraphrase the following text.

> These tall, nearly vertical sandstone precipices jut out imposingly into the sky. The red stone makes the Unrepentant Cliffs look like a massive rusty and bloodstained butcher's cleaver, slicing into the face of the sky.

PCs who enjoy access to magical means of traveling through the air — such as druids with wild shape, mages with *fly*, or clerics with *air walk* — have a great advantage in this scenario. Magic, as always, makes life a lot easier. Even *spider climb* or similar spells can easily help them cross the Unrepentant Cliffs. Those capable of summoning flying creatures with enough strength and size to carry them across through the use of such spells as *summon monster*, or *summon nature's ally* should also find this challenge an easy one to circumvent. If someone falls when climbing, *feather fall* can save the PC from a messy death, or at the very least, horrendous injury.

Other PCs must succeed at Climb checks (DC 25) in order to make any progress up the nearly vertical slope. Remember, every time they want to move, they have to make the Climb check — and each skill check moves them only half their land

speed up the cliff! Fortunately, there are a few ways to make this difficult climb easier.

Firstly, and most obviously, PCs who use Kiran's masterwork climber's tools gain a +2 circumstance bonus to their Climb checks.

Secondly, one of the PCs can use Kiran's *potion of spider climb* to climb up effortlessly, and then drop a rope down for the other climbers. This reduces the DC of the Climb check to 5. Suggest this option to PCs with lots of ranks in Climb, or if the PCs' background would suggest a familiarity with climbing in the highlands.

Thirdly, the PCs can use pitons to make handholds into the cliffs. This would reduce the Climb check's DC to 15, but this would require very slow, very steady work — each piton allows the PCs to cover 3 feet of distance, and requires one minute of work to drive it in. (There are 50 pitons in Kiran's *bag of holding I*, so the PCs won't run out of pitons so easily.) The advantage of this method is that the handholds can be re-used when they make their descent.

In total, that's about half an hour of exhausting work to scale the 90-foot cliff, with the aid of pitons. Treat this arduous climb as hustling for 1 hour — the PCs will take 1 point of nonlethal damage and become fatigued (–2 to Strength and Dexterity, cannot charge, cannot run). There are other dangers associated with driving the pitons in to make handholds. The Burning Sky's effects have melted the ice of the peaks, and this water has permeated the mountains.

The mountainous soil is thus soaked in far more groundwater than it can hold, and is softer and more unstable than usual. As such, the PCs may inadvertently cause a dangerous deadfall or landslide to occur. In order to minimize the possibility of such an occurrence, PCs who succeed at Knowledge: Nature, or Survival skill checks (DC 20) can select areas of greater structural strength to secure their pitons. If the PC possesses Knowledge (nature), as well as Survival, the DC is 15 instead. If the PC also possesses 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (architecture and engineering), the PC gains a further +2 synergy bonus.

If the PCs wish to combine these three methods, they provide somewhat stacking bonuses. The masterwork climber's tools grant a +2 bonus to the PCs' climb checks, while having a *spider climbing* PC providing an knotted rope anchor reduces the DC of the Climb checks to make handholds with pitons to 10. If your PCs can think of other ways to scale the cliffs, let them do so. Creative, plausible solutions and ideas should be rewarded.

Eye in the Sky (EL 7)

As they begin to scale the Unrepentant Cliffs, PCs who succeed in a Spot check (DC 20) notice two hawks — one with black wings, the other brown — flying in wide circles, about 200 feet up in the sky, above them. PCs who have managed to spot the black-winged hawk earlier recognize the black bird is the same black-winged hawk. The two hawks fly off after a while, into the mountain.

Every hour or so, ask the PCs to make a Spot check (DC 20) again. If they succeed, they see more hawks flying above them again — and these birds are not alone. There are many other birds of prey, from hawks to mountain eagles to vultures, and they all seem to be observing the PCs. They fly in large, mixed flocks, and scatter when the PCs make hostile gestures at them, but reform into their droves within a short while. PCs who have successfully spotted the birds, and subsequently succeed on a Survival check (DC 15) or Sense Motive check (DC 20) feel that the birds seems to be observing them intently.

Edgar the Raven gets increasingly nervous around these raptors — he claims it's not because they tend to tear smaller birds, like ravens, into bloody gobbets, but because he's got a "bad feeling about this". Edgar is uncomfortable because he senses one of the birds is not a normal animal.

That would be Eye-of-Thunder, the black-winged hawk, who is the leader of the flock. He is actually the assassin Sophia's familiar, and is currently serving as Sophia's spotter, so she can plan her sabotage operations against the PCs. Sophia has cast *fly* and is hiding in a *rope trick* half a mile up in the sky, where she enjoys a high vantage point to observe the PCs with a spyglass, and is still within range to utilize her empathic link with Eye-of-Thunder.

Eye-of-Thunder has spoken to the other birds of prey and convinced them to serve him as scouts and support; for their trouble, they have been promised lots of meat and shiny things — in other words, the PCs and their gear.

Let the PCs make Intelligence checks (DC 5) or Knowledge (nature) checks (DC 10) to realize that, within this mountainous terrain, whatever they do and say can be easily seen and heard by observers with a height advantage. They can also make Wisdom checks (DC 5) or Survival checks (DC 10) to realize that these birds' behavior is highly unusual. The birds seem to be waiting for something to happen, as the PCs continue to go higher into the mountains. An Intelligence or Wisdom check (DC 10) lets the PCs realize that these birds are not just following them — they appear to be preceding them. In fact, the birds are waiting for the PCs to travel the route on the maps provided by Advisor Gereon's men.

This should be sending out alarm signals in the PCs' heads, that something isn't quite right. It is possible the PCs may be spooked by these passive, silent watchers in the sky, and they may thus attempt to hurt, scare, or kill the birds with magic or ranged attacks. This is also part of Sophia's plan so she can find out more about the PCs' modus operandi and attitudes, as well as to drain their resources and to unsettle them.

For example, if the PCs cast long-range spells like *fireball* at the birds, many of them will die, and the survivors scatter, while Sophia estimates the approximate level of power of the spellcaster from her vantage point in the *rope trick*. (She has also instructed Eye-of-Thunder to stay out of direct confrontation. Thus, he is apart from the main flock after his initial foray and keeping a low profile, so that the PCs are less likely to target him. A particularly sharp-eyed PC can notice this with a DC 20 Spot check.)

If the PCs still decide these birds are not worth their time and worry, and press on to climb the Unrepentant Cliffs, Sophia will attempt to sabotage their climb and kill them off (refer to "Sophia's Tactics," below).

Sophia (CR 7): hp 26, Appendix B.
Eye-of-Thunder, hawk familiar (CR n/a): hp 13, Appendix B.

Sophia's Tactics

Sophia chooses her actions carefully, reacting to how the PCs choose to act. Sophia is a meticulous genius, and fights as such. She is also desperate to save the lives of her family, and is thus entirely willing to cheat and fight dirty, in order to achieve her victory. In general, Sophia believes in gathering information about her enemies, which helps her to start fights on her own terms. She seeks to maximize her advantages while minimizing those of her opponents, and her tactics thus depend on how much magic the PCs are using.

Against PCs who use a lot of magic

If the PCs appear to be using magic to fly, climb, or otherwise ascend, Sophia will buff herself with her defensive spells inside the *rope trick*. She will then use her *wand of invisibility* to make herself invisible, and cast *detect magic*. She will then fly near the PCs to make educated guesses, with Spellcraft checks, about what magical effects they are using, with *detect magic*.

She will then fly about 30 feet above the apex of the Unrepentant Cliffs, and ready an action to cast a targeted *dispel magic* to deprive one or more of the PCs of their magical transport effects, once they have moved to about 20 feet away from the peak of the Unrepentant Cliffs. If her *dispel magic* works, PC spellcasters may attempt to use *feather fall* to save the party.

She will then use her standard action for the round to cast *shatter* at the weak points of the cliff face (which she has already identified earlier, with her knowledge skills), and cause the cliff to collapse on the PCs. As the PCs would already have used their full allotment of actions to climb up the slope, and have already cast *feather fall* as a quickened action to save themselves from the fall, it is not likely they would be able to use *feather fall* again to slow the deadfalls. As they are directly in the way of the landslide, they will be in the bury zone (taking 8d6 points of damage, Reflex DC 15 for half) and risk being trapped and suffocated when they hit the ground.

Warning for the GM

This is a very dangerous fight, which can result in several PC deaths if the party is not careful. It can be especially frustrating for players more used to foes they can fight face-to-face and vanquish toe-to-toe, and if the PCs are unlucky or careless, Sophia may be able to defeat the entire party with a combination of her cunning and the natural hazards of the treacherous terrain.

When the birds first begin to flock in great numbers and observe the PCs, play up how ominous this seems, as a warning for the PCs that unnatural forces seem to be watching them. Remind them that the cliffs are very steep and dangerous. If the PCs do not stay sharp, they will be nearly defenseless against Sophia's sabotage and schemes; conversely, if they remain alert and aware, Sophia's ploys will be far less successful against them.

There are a few ways for the PCs to save themselves from Sophia's trap. If they make a successful Spot check (DC 20), they can sense a faint shimmer in the air where the invisible Sophia is, hinting at something not quite right in their surroundings. If Sophia is summoning fiendish hawks, this Spot check also lets the PCs pick out the birds in the sky, that are circling and rearing to strike.

A Listen check (DC 15) allows the PCs to hear a female voice murmuring from the sky, and a subsequent successful Spellcraft check (DC 17) identifies it as *summon monster II*. If the PC is able to understand Infernal, or gets a Spellcraft check of 22 or higher, he can also tell that the spell is specifically being used to summon fiendish hawks.

PCs with combat abilities such as the Combat Reflexes or Great Cleave feats should be able to defeat the hawks before they succeed in destroying the ropes or pitons. At the same time, *see invisibility*, *invisibility purge*, and *arcane sight* are also very useful in this situation, in revealing Sophia's position.

Of course, Sophia may also just roll badly on her *dispel magic* – then this discussion would be a moot point. If things go badly for her, Sophia will hastily turn invisible and retreat into her *rope trick*, and wait until another opportune time for her to act arises.

Against PCs who use less magic

If the PCs are not using that much magic, but are instead relying on mundane skills and equipment, she will instead fly invisibly 200 feet above the Unrepentant Cliffs, and wait for the PCs to reach the top of the cliff. When they are about halfway from the peak, she casts *summon monster II* twice to summon 2d3 fiendish hawks. She will command the hawks — in Infernal — to dive, directing them to use their claw charge attacks against the PCs' ropes and climbing gear. This is considered a sunder attempt, so the PCs can make attacks of opportunity against the hawks.

Sophia also commands Eye-of-Thunder to order the other (mundane) birds to attack the PCs at this point of time — if the PCs haven't driven off, killed, befriended, etc the normal birds, assume that 2d4 normal hawks will also attack the PCs — they won't target the ropes, as they're not that intelligent and can't be commanded to accomplish tasks of such detail.

The PCs' ropes may snap from this assault, and they may thus fall from a height of approximately 60 feet. As the fiendish hawks attack, Sophia will descend, to get in range to cast *dispel magic* as a counter-spell in response to any *feather fall* spells that PCs may cast. The party members are thus likely to take 6d6 falling damage from the drop.

The next round, she casts *shatter* on the Unrepentant Cliffs to trigger a landslide, and crush the PCs for another 8d6 damage (Reflex DC 15 for half). The PCs may then be buried and suffocated underneath the rubble. Once the PCs have been buried under the rubble, Sophia will throw down a flask of alchemist's fire onto the rocks. As the flame burns, she will cast *Pyrotechnics*, creating a smoke cloud to further weaken the suffocating PCs, and also to deprive the choking PCs of oxygen with the fire.

This scene of suffering will finally cause the emotionally unstable, grieving tiefling to snap — Sophia will shout things like "Markus, I am sorry I had to kill again, I promised you I would not follow the path of my ancestors anymore… but I have to do this for you… and our baby!"

Fiendish hawks (2d3) (CR 1/3): hp 4 each, MM.
Hawks (2d4) (CR 1/3): hp 4 each, MM.

Ad-Hoc XP Modification

Award 25% more XP to the PCs for defeating Sophia, as she has rigged the fight to greatly favor her.

The Perch of the Thousand Eggs

When the PCs have driven off or defeated Sophia, and managed to clamber on top of the Unrepentant Cliffs, they find themselves on a smooth, somewhat gently rounded sandstone surface, that stretches on for about five to six miles or so.

This is the Perch of the Thousand Eggs, a tor or ridge of some sort. The view is truly amazing here; the PCs can see the Unrepentant Cliffs behind them, separating the rolling hills and smaller mountains they have just traversed, from the truly impressive peaks which lie ahead.

Edgar the Raven will inform the PCs, in his know-it-all manner, that they are standing on the Perch of the Thousand Eggs; the local legends and oral histories refer to this place as such, because it is rumored that entire flocks — dozens, or even hundreds, of griffons from all around the region proceed here during mating season, to mate and lay eggs. Edgar volunteers some of his own hypotheses on the matter, to explain the apparent attraction this place holds for griffons; GMs are encouraged to have fun making up random, somewhat lewd explanations for the griffons' behavior, that sound like they just might be true.

The PCs are also beginning to experience some breathing difficulties. They have just reached the high pass threshold of the Griffon Leaping Peaks, and are at a height of approximately 6,000 feet above sea level. Non-acclimated PCs — who have not spent much time living on mountains — find it very hard to breathe, at this altitude, as the air is extremely thin. PCs must make a successful Fortitude save each hour (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or be fatigued. This fatigue ends when the character descends to an altitude with more air.

This is especially dangerous if the PCs are already fatigued from climbing or some other strenuous activity; in that case, they become exhausted instead (–6 to Strength and Dexterity, cannot charge, cannot run, move at half speed). Acclimated characters do not have to attempt these Fortitude saves. Edgar's a bird; he's used to great heights, so he doesn't have to make the save.

There are no more concealed enemies at the Perch of the Thousand Eggs waiting for the PCs, except for the high altitude and their own fatigue. The ground is not hard to travel — the sandstone has been weathered through constant erosion into a smooth, evenly rounded surface. There are some polished, weathered boulders lying around the tor — these reddish, round rocks look like the griffon eggs mentioned in Edgar's tales. In fact, from a higher vantage point, the Perch of the Thousand Eggs looks a bit like an immense reddish-orange egg itself.

After two hours' walk, or an hour of hustling, the PCs will be able to reach the end of the Perch. (Remember to make checks for the PCs' fatigue, exhaustion, and altitude sickness.) As they are reaching the end of the tor, they find a steep, scree-laden slope is 120 feet deep. This sandstone slope is also vermilion in color, and the PC's movement through the slope causes small red puffs of dust clouds to waft up. If the PCs try to run down, they may fall down and land prone on the bottom of the slope — they won't actually get hurt for this, except maybe for their pride.

This slope leads down to a gully. Edgar the Raven will inform the PCs that this gully is where he last observed the shipments.

The Ravine of the Red Remorhaz (EL n/a or 7)

At this point, the PCs also notice a gigantic caterpillar-like creature that is rearing up outside the gully. The beast is ready to strike with its cruelly hooked mandibles and claws, its bristling spines flaring along its massive back. Edgar panics, and squawks that the beast wasn't there the last time he flew over!

However, after a few moments of observation, the PCs notice this creature isn't moving, and it's actually a statue of some sort. It's extremely lifelike, and the sculptor was able to capture every fine detail of the angry beast, right down to immortalizing trails of its frenzied drool in finely detailed strands of stone. This was a red remorhaz — a distant, less famous cousin of the more common blue remorhaz that is found in cold climes.

This particular red remorhaz is petrified, as it had run afoul of the basilisks lairing inside the caves. This encounter provides a warning about the basilisks the PCs may face. The stone remorhaz is of no danger to the PCs — unless, of course, for some reason they wish to de-petrify it.

Remorhaz (CR 7): hp 73, MM. Turned to stone. If brought to life, replace fire damage with cold damage; weapons must make the indicated save or break due to cold.

Entering the Cave in the Gully

A river flows through the cave in the gully. It is probably flowing from a higher mountain spring to a subterranean river of some sort. A successful Search or Survival check (DC 15) allows the PCs to notice drag marks on the soft soil in the cave — if they follow these tracks for around 100 feet, they enter a clearing with very unusual internal decor.

Markus's Mausoleum

When the PCs follow the tracks, they notice a gray stone statue of a man at the far end of the clearing. The statue, like that of the red remorhaz earlier, is extremely lifelike. The stone man's mouth is open in an expression of fear and concern, and he appears to be in the process of turning his back, moving his arms to ward off something, or someone. The statue is portrayed as wearing very drab, practical, and utilitarian mountaineering clothes and boots.

This is the petrified Markus, Sophia's lover, who had become stone after covering Sophia's escape from the basilisks.

Development

If the PCs are able to find a way — either on their own, or through NPCs' help (such as Gereon or Haaketh) — to restore Markus to living flesh, he will be very grateful to them. He will hence be more open to negotiations and discussions with the PCs (treat him as having an initial attitude of neutral, rather than hostile). If the PCs seek to interrogate him, he will negotiate with them — he wants them to help him reunite with his lover, Sophia, before he will give them the information they are seeking.

If the PCs try to find out more, they can do so with a successful Diplomacy check (DC 20). Markus will then be convinced to tell them, very evasively and vaguely, that Sophia will be likely to continue attacking them, to save their child, who is in the hands of the Ragesians, unless he can convince her not to do so. (This vagueness is intentional — Markus is trying to tell the PCs as much as he can, without triggering the curse from the *mark of justice* placed upon him.)

If Sophia sees the PCs have saved Markus, she will also become less hostile. Of course, if the PCs had killed Sophia earlier in battle and Markus finds out, he will become grief-stricken, and becomes far less helpful. While he won't attack the PCs — they have just saved his life, after all, and he is in a bad position to take revenge — he will be far less forthcoming with any information, and may become a future enemy, once the passage of time has sown bitterness into his broken heart.

If the PCs convince Markus to tell them what he knows about the Ragesian scheme to assassinate the Duke, Inquisitor-Major Alecto's *mark of justice* will strike him down with a curse if he reveals any secrets of the Ragesian military. As Markus starts to speak, he will have a huge choking and gagging fit, and spits out a small black scorpion of some sort — the scorpion seems to have stung his tongue. Markus tries to speak, but he cannot; the Inquisitor's curse has rendered him deaf and mute. The scorpion dissipates into nothingness after a few seconds. He can still read and write, however, and, depending on how circumstances play out, he may communicate with the PCs that way.

Markus (CR 7): hp 48, Appendix B. Turned to stone.

Ad-Hoc XP Award

If the PCs restore Markus to flesh, and are able to influence him into becoming an ally (and revealing the plots of the Ragesians), they get XP for overcoming a CR 7 challenge.

The Mushroom Grotto (EL 7)

The PCs can follow the dragging tracks past the statue, and a successful Search or Survival skill check (DC 15) reveals other tracks. There are two recent — about 2 days old — sets of large, lizard-like tracks in the soil. These lizard tracks are stretching out from deeper inside the cave. They can also find another more recent set — 1 day old — of dragging tracks. It seems one of the large lizards was dragging something big, with 4 legs and a tail, deeper into the cavern.

After walking another 30 feet or so, the PCs find a large grotto filled with immense (most are 10 feet tall, but some grow up to 30 feet) gray mushrooms. Pale blue fluorescent light illuminates this cavern, from the strangely glowing moss and lichen inside this grotto, so visibility is better than

usual. (This light is functionally and mechanically the same as torchlight, except for the unusual azure shade.) In the light, the PCs can see bite marks on some of the mushrooms. Judging from the size and shape of the teeth marks, the creature that has been chewing on these mushrooms appears to be some kind of large lizard.

A successful Listen check (DC 10) alerts the PC to loud, thrashing sounds, followed by crashing, booming thuds from deep inside the mushroom jungle. This sounds similar to the noise of trees being felled in the forest.

This fungi forest is the home of the mated pair of basilisks encountered by Sophia and Markus earlier. The bull basilisk had just dragged back the dead body of its mate into the middle of the grotto. The male lizard is very aggressive and irritable, as Sophia had just killed his mate, and he is taking his anger and frustration out by smashing the nearby mushrooms. If he senses the PCs' approach, he will rush out and attack them, fighting to the death.

Basilisk (CR 5): hp 38, MM.

After the PCs defeat the basilisk, they also find the body of a female basilisk behind a series of particularly large mushrooms. This is the bull's mate. Her corpse is ridden with crossbow bolts, and some of her flesh is burnt and scorched (from Sophia's *scorching ray* spell). A successful Heal check (DC 15) reveals the crossbow bolts were tipped with Giant Wasp poison.

The crate's dragging tracks continue into the grotto, and ends abruptly at a small bushel of mushrooms.

Behind these mushrooms are three crates, lying in a pile and draped in brown cloth. Edgar crows triumphantly as he recognizes them; these are the Ragesian shipments they have been sent to find.

Opening the Crates (EL 5)

The crates have been sealed and trapped with magical traps. Markus had earlier placed *glyphs of warding* (DC 28 Search and Disable Device; casts *shatter* on ground; only rogues can make this check) on each of the crates. The glyphs can be bypassed if the PCs speak the correct password, which is Edward (the name of Markus and Sophia's son).

If any living creature touches the crates (even a slight brush is sufficient) without speaking the proper password, they will trigger the glyphs. The glyphs all contain *Shatter* spells targeting the ground in the crates' squares. The triggering of even a single glyph causes the soft soil to crumble, resulting in a cave-in, as the ground begins to collapse.

Sophia, using her Craft Wondrous Item feat, had also rigged the crates with magical traps of her own. Each of the crates has been trapped with a *burning hands* effect (Search and Disable Device DC 26, 5d4 fire damage, Reflex half DC 12; only rogues can make this check). PCs who try to open the crates without first disabling these traps will be targeted by gouts of flame.

Luckily for the PCs, Sophia's *magic aura* spells have just faded away — it's been too long. Any PCs using *detect magic* spells or similar abilities to scan the crates notice they do not give off the same strong auras Advisor Gereon had mentioned during his briefing. Instead, there are auras of faint Conjuration (*burning hands* traps), Abjuration (*glyphs of warding*) and Evocation (the stored *shatter* spells) on the crates. This can provide them with a vital clue, and warn them to be more cautious.

If the PCs do not manage to find and disarm these magical traps, Edgar will fly over to one of the crates and land on it, discharging Kiran's *identify* spell with a touch. The *glyph of warding* then triggers, collapsing the soft soil floor of the mushroom grotto. Edgar will squawk in a terrified manner and fly up, beating his wings plaintively, cawing, "It wasn't me, it was you idiots! Trap must be pressure-operated — you heavy humans must have stepped on something!"

Awakening the Sleeping God of War

If the PCs fall through the collapsed grotto, they are not hurt too badly, as the spongy mushrooms also fall along with them and cushion the impact. The PCs will take only 3d6 subdual damage, instead of 9d6 damage, from the 90 feet drop to this hidden level. Edgar will fly down to find them, after the loud crashing noises end, and the collapse is complete.

When they land, they find themselves outside an abandoned temple of some sort, carved into the rock walls. The basilisks' dead bodies and the statue have fallen along with them — the statue has crushed the corpses of the basilisks, ironically.

The crates have been broken during the fall, and consequently exploded in mid-drop, as the *burning hands* traps are activated. The explosions don't actually hurt the PCs, but they do look very impressive. PCs who try to look for the contents of the crates find them strewn all around the stone floors — they find chunks of scrap metal (still hot from the *burning hands*), pieces of discarded clothing, planks of wood, and other junk. They do not radiate any magic at all, and after a moment's observation, the PCs can tell this junk is utterly worthless.

If the PCs decide to explore the ancient stone shrine, read or paraphrase the following text:

This stone temple is silent — not the quiet peaceful lull of a lazy summer's day at the seaside, nor the chill, grave soundlessness of the tomb. It is the silence an old blade emits when it has seen too much bloodshed and grown rusty from disuse; it is the silence that permeates a war-mage's mind when his arcane energies have been totally spent after a grueling battle; it is the silence that rings numbly in your skulls after a thundering storm breaks into bouts of deafening fury around you. In this silence, it is so bereft of sound that you can hear the air move, as currents whirl around each other, spiraling into the infinity between spaces.

An ancient statue of some obscure local mountain god, wreathed in the dust of ages, is the only object of note inside this temple. The god depicted appears to be a feral, snarling half-orc, with sharp tusks and long, flowing hair that reaches to his shoulders. Though apparently a warrior, the figure is not girded in any form of armor. He wears a pair of rough leather bracers along his wrists and loose cloth trousers. A long sash-scarf wraps around his broad shoulders and entwines his massive arms, while a wine gourd hangs by a simple rope belt. The warrior bears a massive weapon — a club or sword — of some sort, in his left hand, while his right hand is bunched into a threatening fist.

The base of the statue is carved to resemble a small bulette — the warrior is standing on the land-shark, seemingly trampling him underfoot. Under the dust and cobwebs, script of some sort has been carved into the base of the pedestal. Some old cups and plates litter the ground in front of the statue — they are stained with the remains and dregs of meals from long ago.

Interacting with the Statue

It is likely the PCs may suspect the statue to be a monument to some kind of sort to a forgotten nature spirit, and so they may try to spend some time searching for clues, deciphering the script, and experimenting with the cups and plates (which steadfastly remain merely junk).

Temple Statue

Knowledge: Religion

DC 15: Some demigods and lesser divinities, especially in rural and remote areas, have very close and familiar relationships with their congregations and communities. A DC 20 Knowledge: Religion check yields the same information, and also reveals that some of these lesser divinities are not actually full gods in their own right, but are creatures like aasimars and half-celestials, who possess both godly blood and their ancestors' celestial power. In time, as legends of their deeds spread, they become canonized as saints and small gods.

Knowledge: Nature

DC 20: The PC recalls a kind of primordial spirit known as a "yasha". These beings are demonic spirits who are bound to natural places, and they are associated with both the strength of the earth and the fertility of plant life. They look like large, muscular men with fearsome physical features, like tusks, claws, and fangs. They are related to the extraplanar creatures known as 'rakshasas', but are not usually malevolent, unlike their brethren. Ancient legends speak of their roles as guardians of buried treasures and agricultural communities.

Knowledge: History

DC 25: The PC recalls legends of a half-orc warrior predating the Ragesian empire, who grew tired of the violent lifestyle of his people, and deserted the army. He took to traveling the world, and amused himself by assuming the role of a wandering guardian, testing himself against the challenges of the world. He is rumored to have massive strength, and to have defeated a land-shark in a wrestling contest.

Bardic Knowledge

Increase the DC by 5 for bardic knowledge checks, but otherwise reveal the same information as above, and create a number of embellishments and rumors to throw into the mix. Edgar the Raven can also provide some hints and scraps of this information.

PCs who examine the carvings closely can read it if they can read Orcish or Terran. (The same message is written, in the two languages.) If not, translating the text requires 10 minutes of work and a DC 20 Decipher Script check for the Orcish version, and a DC 30 Decipher Script check for the Terran version.

The carvings reveal a message that is quite at odds with the solemn surroundings:

> "Hey, if you guys need me, remember – don't bring any breakable stuff, and try to stay a safe distance away, when you wake us up. You know how excitable Crag can be. And please, please, please use a new cup for the blood offerings – it's disgusting to use the same cup over and over again, can we please try to maintain some basic hygiene here? Some food would be good too. Okay; bed-time."

If the PCs decide to experiment and fill one of the cups with some blood (taking 1d3 points of Constitution damage in the process), a loud clacking noise like that made by the scraping of rock against rock booms throughout the small shrine.

Then a short, beautiful woman, with brown skin seemingly carved from the earth of this cave, begins to materialize from the stone floor. She continues to grow in size, until she stands as tall as a full-grown man, and granite-gray wings flare magnificently from her shoulders. Walking imperiously over to the PC with the cup, she will snatch the goblet from the PC's hand, and gulps down the blood greedily, and then, with a lusty hiss and belch, the woman stares irritably at the PCs, and looks expectantly, as though awaiting something from them.

> "Well... Yes? Come on, I don't have all day. Whaddya want?"

Roleplaying Hints for Nuura

This is Nuura, an earth mephit cleric of the Worldshaper Worm. She is far wiser and sharper than the average mephit. Despite her disturbing blood-drinking behavior, she is not evil, insane or aberrant in any way — as a creature from the Elemental Plane of Earth, Nuura just enjoys the taste of iron in mammalian blood. She doesn't even drink humanoid blood exclusively — the blood of any mammalian creature is good enough for her.

Drinking blood incites a very pleasant and soothing reaction in Nuura, similar to how alcohol warms the body and soul of a hopeless alcoholic. It takes the edge off her cynical, hard-bitten attitude. She's — for lack of a better term — Haaketh's manager (and also his cohort, but she'll assert that she's the one in charge, and emphasize how important she is to him — oh, how he'll mess up without her, how long-suffering she is in having to clean up after him all the time, etc.).

If the PCs do not reply promptly, Nuura sighs dramatically, and rolls her eyes in an incredibly exaggerated, aggravated manner. She'll make a snide comment about the ignorance of "these so-called moderns". She then explains her situation — paraphrase the information in the following three paragraphs for your players. Nuura will leave out the less flattering bits, and exaggerate her own importance — she will act like some surly, busy, big-shot public relations executive who's in charge of summoning and managing a living legend, and the PCs must convince her of their sincerity before she even considers waking Haaketh up. (Some more drinks of blood, of course, would help improve her disposition greatly.)

Nuura reveals that in ancient times, give or take a millennia or two, Haaketh was a half-orc warrior. He was a dreamy, idealistic sort, whom grew tired of the violent ways of the orc tribes, and deserted that lifestyle, becoming a wandering swordsman and storyteller.

He had many adventures, and saved both Nuura and Crag from being the slaves of a cruel Night Hag witch, earning their loyalty. As an imaginative sort of guy, who loved stories, Haaketh wanted to experience what the world would be like in the future, and he also realized his short life-span as a half-orc would work against his speculative ideals.

He thus hit on a crazy and somewhat dangerous plan — he would sleep throughout the ages, and wake up occasionally to see how things had changed. He then started a cult of personality, capitalizing on his heroic deeds as a wandering adventurer to spread word of his many exploits throughout the lands.

He then scribed scrolls of *break enchantment* and left them with Nuura — who, as an outsider spirit of earth, is ageless and immortal. Haaketh captured a mated pair of basilisks (so they can reproduce — otherwise his plan would not be sustainable in the long term) from the nearby deserts. After taming and penning them in the adjacent caves, he subjected himself to their gaze, thus going to "sleep" in his petrified state every now and then.

During interesting times, people who had heard of his legendary deeds and this small temple would visit him, and leave blood offerings. This would attract the alcoholic mephit's attention — she would then gauge how important (i.e. exciting) and desperate (i.e. fun) the pilgrims'

requests were. If Nuura feels the times warrant the awakening of Haaketh, she will use one of the *break enchantment* scrolls to relieve him of his petrified state, and they'll all run off and have some fun, and fight the good fight, and buckle some swash, and all that.

If the PCs decide (and manage) to convince Nuura to wake Haaketh up, she will make a big, theatrical show of casting *break enchantment* from a scroll that she retrieves from an ivory scroll-case hanging from her belt. With the awesome sound of stone shattering, the earthen skins of Haaketh and the bulette break, and the two of them awake from their eons-long slumber. Then, Haaketh promptly falls down, as the bulette runs off excitedly, barking and bounding happily around the room.

Haaketh stands up, and tries to look as dignified as possible. If it doesn't look like the PCs are impressed, he gives up, shrugs, and grins at them in a good-natured fashion. If the PCs help him to get up, he'll grin at them even more widely, and give them a very forceful pat on the back, as he thanks them profusely for the help. He'll try speaking to them in Orcish first, then in Terran if the PCs do not seem to understand Orcish. If the PCs are not proficient in either of these languages, Haaketh will then cast *tongues* to facilitate communications.

Roleplaying Hints for Haaketh

Haaketh is bright for a half-orc, but tends to be impulsive and kind of gullible. He's a real softie when it comes to sob stories; he sympathizes with people very easily, and he often ends up being manipulated by con-men. When this happens, it is likely to provoke a screaming fit of scolding complaints and frenzied lecturing from Nuura. Like all men faced with this situation, Haaketh will attempt to defend himself, except he's got a powerful defense in the form of his bardic counter-song — "Come on now, dear, you see, this all makes so much sense…" Just play him as a big, lovable lug with a heart of gold, and you can't go too wrong.

(Haaketh also happens to be the same quixotic minstrel that saved Liederhafen, a long time ago, from the ogre magi pirates. It is up to the GM to decide if — and how — he wishes to play up this fact in your campaign.)

Haaketh commands the respect of Nuura and Crag, because of his heroism and kindness — despite his massive strength, he doesn't believe in settling disputes and disagreements through physical force. Force of personality, however, is quite another issue. He is extremely confident and competitive, and lives for the good fight. He enjoys participating in lost battles (on the side of the hopelessly outnumbered), duels and contests where there is a fair and equal meeting of opponents.

Now, the old warrior's beginning to feel a bit tired, and is wondering how he can begin to act more responsibly for a man of his age. When he hears the PCs speak of the state of current affairs, of the King's erratic behavior, of the fires in the sky, and of how Ragesia is invading Dassen, he feels tempted to just do what he would do in the past, to pack up and run off to fight gallantly to protect the people of Liederhafen, without any promise of any reward whatsoever.

However, Haaketh is deeply troubled by what he has heard, and he thinks that his past heroic deeds in the world may not actually be achieving much, as the same problems of evil exist today, as they did in the past, and in fact, they may be getting worse.

Instead of just taking action directly and personally, he thus decides to aid the PCs, by training them. By providing the younger generation of heroes with support and guidance, as well as continuing to fight as an individual, Haaketh hopes to change the tide of the age-old battle against evil.

In order to decide if the PCs are worth teaching and aiding, he challenges them to a duel — all of them, against him.

Roar, O Blades of the Demon King! (EL 11)

If the PCs accept Haaketh's challenge, he'll make sure they are at their full fighting ability. He will use *break enchantment* to restore any petrified PCs, and Nuura will heal them of all ability and hp damage. They then travel through a cave that leads to a dead end, where Nuura uses her clerical spells to open a door in the wall.

When the PCs walk through the door, they will emerge through one of the boulders on the Perch of the Thousand Eggs, near the Unrepentant Cliffs. Hefting his massive wooden club, Haaketh will then inform the PCs to prepare for the battle ahead.

Treat this battle as a set piece — it's been designed as a chance for the PCs to indulge in the sort of martial arts magic and acrobatic maneuvers usually found in arcade games, *wuxia* epics, samurai movies, and action-packed *anime*. This battle also takes part in 3 different phases — Haaketh will slowly reveal more and more of his prowess as the PCs fight better.

Haaketh — a CR 11 creature — is too hard for the PCs to fight normally, in an outright duel. However, Haaketh doesn't want to beat their faces into the dirt. He's not a bully. He wants to fight them in order to train them and test them. If the PCs are going to fight against the Ragesian Army, they're going to need as many allies and resources as they can get — but that's useless without any training or experience.

Thus, Haaken wants to teach them some fighting techniques and give them opportunities to pick up both combat experience, as well as experience with fighting in a team, against a more powerful opponent. Lastly, Haaketh wants to gauge how good the PCs are, and how brave they are — if these are the heroes of the contemporary age, how valiant are they, and how much do they deserve his patronage or assistance?

This is an EL 11 encounter — challenging for 7th-level PCs, but still possible. For starters, Haaketh will refrain from exercising his full power in this battle. This encounter is also made easier by the fact that the half-orc is not ruthlessly efficient in this fight; he tends to make very grandiose, showy, and tactically unsound moves in combat, to entertain and encourage the PCs. Lastly, Haaketh will also buff them with his spells and bardic abilities to even the odds and spur their fighting spirits.

Haaketh (CR 11): hp 77, Appendix B.
Nuura (CR 8): hp 49, Appendix B.
Crag, bulette (CR 7): hp 94, MM.

Haaketh's Tactics

Before the combat begins, Haaketh will give them 5 rounds to buff themselves, while he prepares the following buffs on himself (caster level 10th): *alter self* (to assume the form of a "yasha" — this form gives him +3 natural armor), *cat's grace*, *expeditious retreat*, *resistance*, and *animate rope* (on his long sash).

Nuura will also buff him with the following effects (her caster level is 5th): *aid*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *magic vestment* (on his robes), *shield of faith*.

During the first phase, Haaketh is still somewhat overconfident. If he wins initiative in the first round, his first action in combat is to tear a gash across his palm with his tusks, doing 1 hp of damage to himself — the proud warrior will spend his first action drawing first blood on himself, because he doesn't want to give up that privilege to anyone else.

He then proceeds to battle the PCs, using *Jihi-Yasha-O* (The Merciful Earth Demon King), his *+1 merciful darkwood bokken* (use greatclub stats for the bokken, or wooden practice sword). He will Power Attack recklessly, trading out all 8 points of his Base Attack Bonus for 16 extra points of damage, as he is wielding his weapon in both hands. He is likely to miss on most of his attacks, as he is sacrificing so much accuracy for his Power Attacks.

On the other hand, Haaketh's bokken deals 1d10+1d6+26 points of subdual damage if it connects, so it won't take too many hits from him before someone goes down. He also will use his long sash (that's been animated with the *animate rope* spell) in many different ways: to entangle the PCs, to catch nearby boulders to toss at the PCs, or to swing around dramatically on the battlefield.

If Haaketh manages to knock out one or more of the PCs, he will cast *major image* defensively on the following round, creating an impressive illusion of cherry flower blossoms, weeping willow leaves, and hollow reeds, all flying in a strong wind against a reddening sky. This illusion will last for 3 rounds, as Haaketh will not continue to concentrate on it past the first round.

Haaketh will roar ferociously at the PCs during this battle, to test their skills, resolve, and convictions. GMs should play up just how powerful his fighting prowess is. When he misses an opponent, describe how the ancient stone of the mountains shattering from the massive impact of his assault. Haaketh is fond of speaking in idioms drawn from real-world Chinese/Japanese examples, such as "Blades unsheathed and crossbows drawn!" (剑拔弩张 in Chinese, pronounced "jian ba nu zhang") when battle begins, or "Brave, yet without strategy!" (勇而无谋 in Chinese, pronounced "yong er wu mou"), when the PCs leave a hole in their defenses.

The battle proceeds to Phase 2 when the PCs reduce Haaketh to 38 hp. He will laugh joyously, and shout, "You kids are good — let's speed things up, and take this battle to another level!" He will then leap back, and cast *mirror image* defensively, to reflect his increased resolve and speed — he's now so blindingly fast, he can't be touched!

Nuura will also cast *enlarge person* on him at this point, increasing his reach, his Strength and his weapon damage. Haaketh will continue dedicating all 8 points of his attack bonus to Power Attack for 16 extra points of damage with his attacks, and will cast *haste*, not only on himself, but also on the PCs. He's genuinely enjoying this fight, and part of his warrior ethos is not merely to defeat his opponents, but also for all the combatants to enjoy, and ultimately transcend, themselves.

The battle reaches its final arc in Phase 3, when the PCs reduce Haaketh to 19 hp. The half-orc roars in laughter, and declares, "I hadn't had so much fun, not in a long while. Let's take things to the max — you kids have earned the right to face the power of my true blade!"

Haaketh will then leap away from the PCs, onto the center of the Perch of the Thousand Eggs, and Power Attack the ground, shattering his greatclub, and revealing *Kongo-Yasha-Tei* (The Thunderbolt Diamond Demon Emperor), his +2 *adamantine bastard sword*.

As the stone begins to rumble — all the earlier missed attacks are beginning to take their toll — Haaketh will cast *shout* at the ground, and the PCs. As the Perch shatters and starts to collapse, Haaketh will cast *feather fall* as a free action on himself, the PCs, and the falling boulders around them. The PCs will thus be able to safely continue the duel in free-fall, becoming part of an exciting aerial battle.

Haaketh will cast *blink* — he's now moving so quickly that it looks like he's moving between the stone raindrops. As the battle rages on, he begins to sing, using his inspire courage bardic music to improve not just his own fighting prowess, but also those of the PCs — everyone gains a +2 morale bonus to attacks, damage, and saving throws against fear and charm effects. The round after he sings, he will use his bardic music to inspire greatness in the strongest warrior (the PC who's been consistently damaging him the most), and will go into his barbarian rage. Because he's no longer using a *merciful* weapon, Haaketh will take a further –4 to his attack rolls to do non-lethal damage with his melee attacks.

When Haaketh reaches 5 hp or less, he concedes defeat with a rueful smile, saying that he's getting old and that the PCs did really well. If the PCs have been dealing real damage (i.e. not pulling back their blows to do non-lethal damage), and Haaketh is in danger of dying, Nuura will drop her mask of feigned non-concern, and use a readied action to fly over and cast *cure serious wounds* on him.

Development

If the PCs manage to defeat Haaketh, he will give them his sword, *Kongo-Yasha-Tei*, saying they have proven the right to use it — they are the first warriors in a thousand years to have forced him to not only to draw *Kongo-Yasha-Tei* in battle, but have also fought him to a standstill.

He will also give the PCs two scrolls of *break enchantment* (in case any of them get petrified by his pet basilisks), as well as his *immortal's wine gourd*. This is a unique magical item, similar to a *handy haversack*. The *immortal's wine gourd* is essentially a variant of the *handy haversack* that stores up to 10 small bottles' worth of liquid — changing the draught is a move action that does not attract attacks of opportunity. The activation action to change draughts involves tapping the back of the gourd impatiently, and looking up at the bottle hole in an expectant manner. The *immortal's wine gourd* currently contains 10 potions in total — 2 potions each of *cure serious wounds*, *lesser restoration*, *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, and *bear's endurance*.

If Haaketh defeats the PCs, they don't get the sword or the wine gourd, but they get healed by Nuura, and also receive the two scrolls of *break enchantment*. As the PCs were sporting enough to battle him, despite their difference in fighting ability, he's still impressed enough to help them, but they don't make enough of an impression that he'll entrust them with any of his prized possessions.

As Nuura heads over to heal his wounds, he orders her to heal the PCs first. After some arguing, she does so. He will then stride off, laughing and stoically shrugging off the pain from his injuries, with Nuura scolding him incessantly and Crag yapping loudly at his ankles. As he nears the horizon, he will shout out to the PCs that it was a really great battle, and that the future of the world depends on the actions of young heroes like them.

The last question he'll ask them is "So, young heroes… what's the name of that place again, where you're from? The place you're trying to defend from my tribesmen?"

When the PCs reply, he'll say, "Liederhafen? Hmmm… well, we'll probably meet again…" before striding off into the sunset, in the best tradition of mysterious old martial artists living on mountaintops.

Ad-Hoc XP Modifications

Award the PCs only 75 percent of the XP they would get from this encounter, as Haaketh is not fighting at the peak of his ability against the PCs. Also, Haaketh is giving them his own buffs, to encourage them, thus improving the PCs' combat prowess.

Returning to Liedenhafen

After the battle, the PCs can return to Liedenhafen. Since Haaketh has just sundered the Perch of the Thousand Eggs and the Unrepentant Cliffs, it's all easy terrain (relatively speaking — no more deadfalls, no more steep slopes, etc) from here, back to the plains. Edgar will guide the PCs to the meeting point with Kiran, at the foot of the mountains, where he magically summons more mounts to transport the PCs back to town.

If Sophia or Markus are with the PCs, Kiran will summon mounts for them, and will keep a very watchful eye on them. If they have not already been bound with ropes, he will insist bindings be placed on them to prevent their escape during the ride home. Kiran is highly conflicted towards them — as a loyal Dassenian citizen, he is filled with revulsion and distrust towards these traitors, yet as a spellcaster, he realizes how bad a spellcaster's life can get, once the Ragesian Inquisitors have gotten their hands on you.

Campaign Seeds: Haaketh and Family

Haaketh, Crag, and Nuura are intended to bring a feel of hope and humor into the game, as a counter-balance against Inquisitor-Major Alecto's sinister plans, and the Smiling Bastard's crazed schemes. In a game filled with a fallen paladin, political assassinations, civil war, mad noblemen, social tension, refugees and the war-weary, it is very easy to lose a sense of hope and levity.

This encounter is also actually a kind of reward for the PCs. The PCs were initially manipulated by the cynical deceptions of their enemies to go on a wild-goose chase to search for secret orcish magical weapons that didn't exist. Ironically, they encounter Haaketh who is a sort of secret (if you want to be technical about it, he's more actually forgotten and obscure than secret) orcish (half an orc is better than nothing) magical (he's got access to lots of magic) weapon (he's a high level warrior with many ways to fight).

With Haaketh's ability to scribe scrolls and craft magical weapons, as well as Nuura's ability to brew potions, these PCs now have access to secret orcish weapons, of sorts. The trio is thus a new source of shopping/trading for magic items for PCs who have money to spend (and no place to spend it) during the war. This suggests a sense of dramatic twist of fate — perhaps truth is stranger than fiction, or the PCs lucked out — or maybe the heavens have not abandoned Duke Arndt, after all?

Lastly, Haaketh's ability to cast *break enchantment* allows the PCs to restore any of their petrified allies — even the petrified Markus — to flesh, and this can influence Sophia's reactions to the party as well. Haaketh feels sheepish and somewhat responsible — it was his pet basilisks that petrified them, and thus he will use his magic to save them from that rocky fate.

This happy-go-lucky trio thus exists as mentors, allies, and friends. They're also a family, of sorts, in their dysfunctional way — Crag is Haaketh's pet, and even though they would both hotly deny it, Haaketh and Nuura have been in love with each other, for a long time. As they are all quasi-immortals, who enjoy living viscerally and passionately, they also remind the PCs of the importance of life — they've lived to see the world change through many incarnations, and they remind the PCs, from their own experience, that no fate is too bleak to overcome, and that the world, as a place rich in history and memory, and color and culture, is worth fighting for.

They also exist to reinforce the illusion of a living, breathing campaign world existing independently of, and also interacting with, the PCs. Haaketh, as a half-orc, also allows the GM to explore issues of racism and ethnic tension in the game. How would the harried, embattled Dassen refugees and military react to a half-orc warrior who shows up from nowhere, saying he is there to help them?

As always, don't let these NPCs, or any others, overshadow your PCs. These NPCs are just in the adventure to add another level of color and layer to the campaign world, not to rob your PCs of their place in the center-stage of destiny.

Epilogue

Once the PCs return to Liederhafen, you can weave their actions and plot developments any way you like. Is the Duke dead, or alive? How many more traitors are there — even if the PCs have discovered Alecto's pawns and plots, the town is so full of refugees and soldiers that it is logically impossible to verify everyone's identity. As the Ragesian Third Army begins to send its forces down to conquer Liederhafen, the various factions in Dassen also begin to send their armies to Duke Arndt — either to destroy him, join him, manipulate him, or all of the above.

In any case, the events in *A Harvest of Hope Forlorn* will herald the beginning of Dassen's civil war. The PCs' actions are pivots on the crux of history, and they are in the position to make their marks upon the destiny of your campaign world.

Basilisks and Bulettes

Between a Rock...

The mated basilisks have reproduced over the years, and spread out slowly into the nearby lands, becoming part of the mountains' ecosystem. The basilisks encountered by Sophia and Markus earlier are the descendants of Haaketh's first mated pair. There are 10 other basilisks, in addition to the mated pair encountered by the assassins, serenely grazing through the deepest recesses of the mountain caves at any one given time.

They aren't really a factor in the adventure for now, unless your PCs really wish to take time off from the war to stalk the entire mountain range for the poor critters.

...and a Hard Place

Crag the bulette isn't fully grown yet, and hasn't grown for 300 years. The magical stresses of repeated petrification have adversely warped his body and mind — for better or worse, Crag seems to be locked in a state of pre-adolescence. He has the personality of a Jack Russell terrier puppy and the strength and mass of a young bulette — in short, he is terrifying to be around.

The petrified Haaketh was standing on the bulette, not because he was trying to be an iconographic representation of the mortal overcoming the chthonic forces of the earth and all that, but rather because he was exasperated with Crag's restlessness and was about to smack the bulette's rear end with his great-club, and was shouting at him to stand still, so the basilisk can do its job and go back to its nap.



Bonus Adventure Four
The Old-Fashioned Way

for 8th-Level Characters

by Jeff Vincent

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The heroes are sent to Ragos, the capital city of Ragesia, to locate a man called Rowern, the head of Ragesia's army intelligence. The trail leads to the Wiseman Brewery, where Rowern likes to spend his evenings drinking with his old army buddies.

Background

The Ragesian Third Army has been held on the borders of Dassen, but the Second Army has taken Gate Pass and is looking to advance into Shahalesti and link up with the Fourth Army, which is already there. Meanwhile, the First Army remains in Sindaire.

Ragesian Intelligence spies have been uncovered and defeated in Seaquen, but the heroes' old friend Simeon Gohanach, head of Lyceum, is certain there are more operatives. Simeon wants to find out who they are, and if possible prevent the Ragesians from sending any more.

To that end, Simeon has devised a daring and risky mission…

Welcome to the fourth bonus adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. *The Old-Fashioned Way* is a short adventure for 8th-level PCs. It takes place shortly afterwards the events of *The Mad King's Banquet* (April, per the timeline given on page 4, but you might need to adjust it slightly to fit your campaign).

Adapting the Adventure

You can run this adventure as a side quest for the main characters playing through the saga (for example, if you'd like to give them some more experience points before running adventure five, *Expedition to the Monastery of the Two Winds*). Alternatively, it could be a one-off adventure for new characters on the same timeline.

If you are using other characters, you might wish to start the adventure at Gate Pass rather than Dassen. The characters could even be attached to the original expedition to the Monastery of the Two Winds, who have now been sent new instructions to continue onto Ragos. The adventure can be adapted to other campaign settings.

Replace the Ragesians with any warlike nation from your campaign world. It is not necessary for there to actually be a war taking place, but tensions should be running high enough that one of its smaller neighbours feels the need to send spies into its capital on an intelligence gathering / misinformation mission.

The inquisitors can be left as they are, or replaced with another organisation (not necessarily a sinister one) capable of detecting and foiling magical disguises.

Introduction

The heroes, pressed into service once again as agents of Seaquen, are tasked with traveling to the Ragesian capital Ragos.

They will have to enter the capital in disguise, avoid the attentions of the dreaded inquisitors, and track down the head of intelligence, Rowern. The trial leads to the Wiseman Brewery, where Rowern likes to spend his evenings drinking with his old army buddies.

The characters have to spread as much misinformation as possible to fool the Ragesian high command. This may involve assassinating Rowern, and PCs with the appropriate skills may consider impersonating him for as long as possible in order to find out what they can about Ragesian operations. They will then need to fake "Rowern's" death and escape the city without their plot being found out.

The Mission

The characters receive message from Simeon, head of the Lyceum in Seaquen. If they are actually in Seaquen, they receive a request to visit him, and he delivers it in person. This has the advantage of allowing them to ask him questions.

If not, they are visited at midnight by the wayfarer **Hawkins Dorien** (CN male human sorcerer 10 — see adventure three, page 80 for another appearance by Hawkins), who has teleported from Seaquen to give them their next mission. The Wayfarers have come up with a partial solution to the problem of the Burning Sky, and now teleport at midnight with maximum protection from fire.

Hawkins is not pleased at being used as a messenger boy, and whilst he carries out his instructions his starting attitude is unfriendly. He hands over Simeon's note.

"Greetings, my friends.

"As you know, the military and political situation continues to be in a state of flux. We have achieved some significant successes, not least due to your own noble efforts, but much more remains to be done.

"Ragesian Intelligence, headed by General Rowern, continues to send spies throughout the land. To date we have defeated his agents in Seaquen, but we are certain there are more operatives which we have not been able to uncover. We need to find out who they are, and if possible prevent the Ragesians from sending any more.

"We have learnt that Rowern was behind the recent attack on our town. He was once a student at the Lyceum, but was expelled for killing another student in a duel. I believe that he bears a grudge against the town, and will not rest until it is destroyed.

"To this end, we have devised a daring and risky mission that we would like you to undertake. It will involve travelling to Ragos, heart of the Ragesian Empire, and infiltrating General Rowern's organisation. The plan is for you to then obtain as much information as you can about Ragesian operations, whilst spreading misinformation which gives the Ragesians the impression that Seaquen has descended into anarchy and is no longer any threat to them.

"In addition, General Rowern needs to be removed, so he can no longer advocate destroying our town.

"First you'll need to talk to Barabas the druid. He's an orc, but he's on our side; the Ragesians have left him alone thus far, but he has good reason to despise them; more importantly, he can tell you things about General Rowern that you'll need to know to get to him.

"I know we're asking a lot here, but you've come through for us before, and we know you won't let us down."

Simeon would prefer to appeal to their patriotism, but if necessary he (or Hawkins) will offer up to 2,000 gp each, plus arranging for Seaquen's wizards to craft a magic item of for each of them with a purchase price of up to 2,000 gp.

Depending on the circumstances, Simeon may be able to pay some or all of the gold up front. The magic items are to be collected when the party return to Seaquen.

He also hands them some forged reports, purporting to be from Rowern, dismissing the threat of Seaquen.

If the PCs ask, Simeon tells them that Rowern fought the duel with another student, Lars, over a woman named Genevieve. (Her name is actually the password to Rowern's vault, although obviously no one in Seaquen knows this.)

In the Land of the Enemy

Entering Ragesia

How this scene plays out depends in part on where the characters are based. However, if they are based in Gate Pass or Dassen, it will involve a daring break through enemy lines. The Ragesian army is spread out, having a lot of ground to guard, but the soldiers are alert and motivated.

Ragesian wyvern riders patrol the skies during the day, and are almost certain to spot the characters and summon the nearest patrol. At night, or if the characters have arranged a diversion (presumably carried out by Lord Gallo's forces in Dassen, or by the resistance in Gate Pass) the wyvern riders are elsewhere and the patrol will have to rely on spot checks.

Of course, at night the characters might need to carry lights to see the way, but the orcs and half-orcs who carry out night duty have no such limitations.

Ragesian Patrols (EL 8 or 11)

A standard patrol consists of a squad of six soldiers plus an NCO. These will be mounted on light warhorses. There may also be one or two wyvern riders in attendance.

Ragesian soldier, typical (6) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian solder, standard (CR 4): hp 40, Appendix B.
Ragesian wyvern knight (2) (CR 6): hp 50 each, Appendix B.
Wyvern (2) (CR 6): hp 59 each, MM.

Travelling to Ragos

The Contact

The heroes have been asked to make contact with a Seaquen agent just inside the Ragesian border, a disgruntled orc druid named Barabas. He suspects Leska murdered Emperor Coaltongue, although he can't prove it, and he joined the resistance as a result.

The inquisitors are suspicious about Barabas, and are planning to add him to the Scourge at some point. However, he lives in heart of the Vergland crags, a dangerous area of badlands from which most of the army's wyvern eggs are obtained (Ragesian wyverns do not breed well in captivity), and so far not even the most ambitious inquisitor has been willing to lead an expedition to take on the old druid on his own turf.

The Stone Brothers (EL 10)

This unlikely pair are not actually brothers, of course. Hans is a stone giant. Willum is an advanced gargoyle who, thanks to Ragesian experiments, is psychic. They are allies of Barabas. He has asked them to drive off any Ragesians who make it to the interior. Willum, in particular, has no love for Ragesians following his escape from their laboratories, whereas Hans loves any opportunity to throw rocks.

Willum scouts the end of the valley, and warns Hans of intruders. Hans then emerges from the cave they both share and throws rocks at intruders in a playful fashion until their victims get the message and retreat.

Hans (CR 9): hp 130, Appendix B.
Willum (CR 6): hp 54, Appendix B.

Development

There are three piles of rocks, graded by size. Hans starts off with the smaller rocks, as he doesn't intend to kill. However, he is blissfully unaware that even a pebble hurled by a stone giant can easily kill a humanoid. At the same time he calls out in heavily accented common, "Hello little Ragesians. Welcome to our bowling alley. You can leave at any time!"

If faced with invisible targets, Hans chortles with glee. "Excellent, this makes it so much more fun!" Willum uses his *see invisibility* power and directs Hans's rock throwing against the invisible targets with calls of "Up a bit, left a bit" etc.

Should the characters up the ante, for example by using powerful magic against them, then Hans shrugs and switches to using the "normal" sized rocks.

If Hans gets extremely annoyed (for example if Willum is seriously injured or killed) he flies into a barbarian rage and starts throwing the large rocks with murderous intent. Willum generally stays out of the fight, but will attack any unguarded horses or take a bite out of an unconscious character if he thinks it can get away with it.

Treasure

The pair keep treasure in their cave — 2,500 gp and a sandstone sculpture of a roc, worth 150 gp. The sculpture was a gift from Barabas.

If this encounter ends peacefully, and you sense the players are getting restless for something to kill, it might be a good time for a roll on the wandering monster table (see sidebar).

Druid's Lair

The approach is protected by a *snare* (Search DC 23).

The druid is out hunting when they arrive. Hiss, his animal companion (a huge viper) is there, and lives up to his name by hissing at them in a hostile manner. Barabas will not be pleased if he returns home to find the creature is dead.

Heroes as Assassins?

One of the themes of *The Mad King's Banquet* is that King Steppengard sees the characters and their allies as assassins, when in fact it is the Ragesians who are responsible for the deaths of his family. Whether because of this, or due to their own moral code, some characters may balk at performing an assassination.

If so, make the mission a simple intelligence gathering operation, with a fair fight against Rowern at the end.

Wandering Monsters

If you want to throw in a wandering monster or two, roll 1d6 on the following table (or choose):

1 *EL 6* Wyvern (CR 6): hp 59, MM. Normally it knows better than to attack a group of mounted men, but in this case the PCs disturb it as it is feasting on a mountain goat and it defends its kill.
2 *EL 8* **Orc savages (8) (CR 4):** hp 39 each, Appendix B. There are eight of them, all fourth level; they enjoy fighting to defend their turf.
3 *EL 8* **Ragesian patrol** (fringes only). This is a restricted area, and they will seek to take the PCs in for questioning.
4 *EL 8* **Young wyverns (4) (CR 4):** hp 30 each, MM. Four young wyverns who have yet to learn the dangers of attacking mounted men; they have half normal hit points but are otherwise normal wyverns.
5 *EL 9* **Roc (CR 9):** hp 207, MM. The gargantuan bird considers anything and everything in the badlands to be its prey.
6 *EL 12* **Roper (CR 12):** hp 85, MM. This creature attacks anyone who comes within reach; this is a tough opponent, but the PCs don't have to defeat it, merely escape with their lives.

Barabas's lair is decorated with numerous sandstone sculptures of local wildlife, in the same style as the one in the giants' cave. The druid is a keen sculptor and the entire collection is probably worth 10,000 gp if sold as a set to a collector.

When Barabas returns, he offers the characters valuable information on Rowern.

He lives in the citadel in Ragos, which is probably too well guarded for the characters to be able to make their way in. However, apparently the general has a weakness for Wiseman's ale, in particular their famous Old Fashioned brew, and frequents the taverns in Ragos which serve that particular beverage. The easiest way to track him down is to find out which Wiseman tavern is his current favorite and stake it out.

(Barabas is unaware that, in fact, taverns are no longer able to obtain Wiseman's ale. General Rowern has taken over the brewery and holds drinking sessions there.)

The characters will need a disguise to get into Ragos. They may have their own ideas, but if not Barabas tells them that there is an expedition from the Imperial University of Ragos in the area, studying the mating habits of the wyverns in the hope of figuring out why they don't breed very well in captivity. They have also been gathering wyvern eggs to supply the army. Barabas suggests they ambush the Ragesians and take on their identities.

Barabas (CR 10): hp 55. Appendix B.
Hiss, animal companion (CR n/a): hp 33, Appendix B.

Ragesian Expedition (EL 12)

The expedition comprises Professor Talon, four assistants, a dozen soldiers, and a wagon full of wyvern eggs. While it is unlikely there are seventeen characters, losses are not unexpected on an expedition to the Vergland crags, so the characters can plausibly claim to be the only survivors of a determined wyvern attack.

Barabas is unaware of the threat posed by the professor, and may give the heroes the impression that taking out the Ragesians will be easy. Confident PCs may decide to take on the Ragesians without resting, particularly if they have annoyed Barabas and he is not willing to put them up for the night. At first, such rashness appears to be justified. The soldiers and assistants are no match for the party.

Professor Talon is another matter. He is a spirit binder who specializes in devils, a bitter rival of the devil-summoning Inquisitor Guthwulf. At the moment, Guthwulf has Empress Leska's favor, and Talon has found himself reduced to undertaking trivial missions such as the one he is currently on. This has done nothing to improve Talon's already vicious temper, and his underlings tread very carefully around him.

Talon has not given up. He continues to intrigue against Guthwulf, and is more than happy to take out his frustrations on the PCs.

Professor Talon (CR 10): hp 68, Appendix B.
Ragesian assistants (4) (CR 3): hp 22 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldiers, typical (12) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.

Tactics

Talon is convinced that he himself is by far the most dangerous creature in these parts, and is completely unprepared for trouble. Once the fight starts, he assumes that Guthwulf has sent assassins after him. His plan is to sacrifice the soldiers and assistants in order to give himself as much time as possible to prepare.

However, he is conscious of the fact that his most potent abilities can only be used a few times a day, so he needs to be sure the attack isn't a feint before using his Rakshasa's Rage ability. Also, he is loath to use his Reserve Spirit ability — it can be used only once a day and leaves him fatigued two minutes later, and his particular reserve spirit, Merickel, is chaotic good and thus opposed to everything Talon, who is lawful evil, personally believes in.

The soldiers and assistants have no wish to die to save Talon, but are also painfully aware that fleeing into the wilderness is a good way to end up in a wyvern's stomach.

Development

Once Professor Talon hears the sound of a disturbance, he goes through the following routine unless interrupted.

Rounds 1 to 5 — don mithral chainmail
Rounds 6 to 10 — improve fit of armor
Round 11 — drink potion of *shield of faith* (+2 deflection bonus to AC) and poke head out of tent to investigate
Round 12 — use *shatter* on nearest armored enemy or if no suitable target use *acid gout* on an unarmored enemy or group of enemies.
Later rounds — repeat if possible (acid gout is available only every 5 rounds)

At some point, it will be clear the fight is going against the professor. He will then use some or all of the following options, depending on how dire the situation seems:

Wildshape into dire lion form — Professor Talon can still fly in this shape; there is no limit to the number of times he can do this but he will lose his armor and shield bonus (if any).
Activate rage — Talon can only do this twice a day, but he hasn't used it yet today, so that's not an issue; however, the ability's limited duration and consequent fatigue mean he prefers to use it to finish off weakened foes or as a last resort.
Retreat and heal — Professor Talon runs into his tent and drinks a *potion of cure critical wounds*, regaining 3d8+5 hp.
Use reserve spirit — Talon runs into his tent, cuts himself self with his greatsword (1 hp of damage) and uses reserve spirit. Talon does this only if he feels he is close to meeting his match. However, once he has done so he throws caution to the winds and goes all out to kill or drive off his opponents.
Go completely berserk — Professor Talon wild-shapes into dire lion form, engages his reserve spirit, enters rage, and wades into the melee. He only uses this option *in extremis*.

Aftermath

Professor Talon's tent has a number of devil-related items, and notes on spirit binding. It includes details of the Dark Blood, Talon's current spirit of choice. The Dark Blood represents the collective spirit of six young hobgoblins, who epitomise deceit, rage and feline prowess.

Talon has seven vials of what, on closer inspection, turns out to be blood. In fact, it is the blood of celestials, needed in summoning the Dark Blood.

There is also a half written letter to an unknown person referred to as "Rhodri". (If the PCs decide to find out who Rhodri is, they may discover that he is one of Talon's old students, a quartermaster in the Ragesian army, with the rank of Major.)

"Dear Rhodri,

"I continue to cool my heels in this wilderness while that fraud Guthwulf lords it in Ragos. Yet I have not given up hope that sooner or later her Imperious Highness will recognize his many weaknesses.

"I have heard rumors that his overconfidence was responsible for a case containing sensitive military information being stolen from the Citadel. It eventually found its way into the hands of the Gate Pass Resistance.

"What is undeniably true is that his efforts to retrieve the case ended in complete failure. He sent various devils against the gang of freebooters who were charged with delivering it to Seaquen, but they were unable to retrieve the case. The mages of Seaquen are no doubt examining it and will use that information to the detriment of the Empire."

This letter has no bearing on the current adventure, but refers to events in adventures one, two, and three. It also foreshadows Guthwulf's fall from grace in *O Wintry Song of Agony*.

The masterwork greatsword is fixed at a dangerous angle, and there is a bowl on the floor containing a *potion of cure serious wounds*.

If the eggs were damaged in the fight, then the characters would be wise to try and get some more before returning to Ragos. This will require visiting the nests of various mating pairs of wyverns. Barabas can provide helpful information, but will be hard pressed to contain his amusement at this turn of events.

Road Trip

The Ragesian Empire is famous for the quality of its roads, which were built by Emperor Coaltongue to allow his armies to travel quickly from place to place.

Ragos is approximately 350 miles from either the Alydi Gap in northern Dassen or Gate Pass.

Along the way, the characters will be able to take in the mood of the Empire. The land itself is largely untouched by the war, other than the fact that those who have sons and daughters in the army worry about the safety of their loved ones serving abroad.

However, the population are sombre because of the Scourge. Whilst few families have personally suffered loss at the hands of the Inquisitors, they all know of someone who has been taken away, never to be seen again.

Some people console themselves with the belief that the authorities know what they are doing, and that taking magic users into protective custody is in the best interests of everybody in these troubled times. Most, however, find it extremely disturbing, and concentrate on minding their own business and keeping a low profile.

There are regular Ragesian patrols and checkpoints, but assuming the PCs have a reasonable cover story they should have little difficulty reaching Ragos.

Ragos, Capital of Ragesia

Before Drakus Coaltongue's rise to power, Ragos served as the capital of Morrus, then the mightiest nation within a thousand miles. When Coaltongue conquered the city, he made it his seat of power and named his new empire after it, but left the heart of old Ragos intact. In this way he won the loyalty and trust of many powerful families who expected to be slaughtered, though certainly some dynastic grudges survive. Now, a century after it bowed to Coaltongue, modern Ragos combines a history of military might, an extravagant beauty grown through centuries of wealth, and endless forms decadence from the aristocracy old and new.

With Coaltongue's fall and Leska's rise as the new emperor, fractures have begun to show from the city's longstanding tensions between its traditional power centers and the newer influences of the imperial army, the inquisitors, and rumored infernal players. Most citizens support their empress because they either do not mind or choose to ignore her more draconian rule, but some cells resistance operate in Ragos, hiding from the ever-present scrutiny of Leska's minions. Should the heroes dare to enter the center of Ragesia's power, they won't discover any monolithic evil, but few will risk aiding them when a single suspicion could lead to torture and eldritch torment.

Ragos

LE Conventional Metropolis
Government Totalitarian
Purchase Limit 100,000 gp; **Assets** unlimited
Population 900,000
Demographics mixed (53% human, 18% orc, 17% half-orc, 3% dwarf, 3% elf, 2% gnome, 2% half-elf, 2% other)

City Layout

Ragos looms imposingly on the shores of Lake Bashar. Regal buildings, decorated in expensive black marble, rise high along the city's broad streets, down which patrol the proud warriors of the elite Seventh Ragesian army. Pleasure barges float among the small, rocky islands of the lake, where the most prominent of the city's noble families, many of which descend from before Coaltongue's armies conquered the city, make their homes.

Garrisons of thousands defend the walls around these high quarters, and wyverns prowl the skies near the palace, but aside from a sprawling district known as The Hundreds to the south of the city center, no other city quarters are allowed to extend closer than a half mile from the walls of the high districts. In the fields surrounding the high quarters, the army performs daily training exercises, more to display the empire's power to the populace than to actually hone their skills. Beyond these training fields, to the north and west of the central city, dozens of smaller towns, scores of slums, and hundreds of farms and small holdings lie interspersed with small defensive forts and watchtowers.

Climate

Though the rest of Ragesian experiences harsh blizzards, Lake Bashar normally keeps the winters mild, and wind off its surface keeps away mosquitos during the summer. During the period of the war, however, particularly frigid and fierce weather persists over Ragos.

Organizations and Power Groups

The Imperial Palace primarily devotes itself to managing the empire, not the city itself. The city's governor serves at the empress's pleasure, and though he consults the noble families and the mayors of the outer city districts, his is the final word, and his primary duty is ensuring the safety of the city from any manner of attack. Thus, experienced soldiers with some magical knowledge typically serve as mayors.

Though individual districts and towns keep their own small constabularies, the army officially serves as the city's police force. Nearly everyone in the military police takes bribes, though an elite squad of inquisitors called the Daggers serves to ensure the police never betray each other for money.

Many churches and temples in the city have begun to resent the new empress's disdain for any religion other than the cult-like following she has among her inquisitors. Temples to gods who favor battle have managed to sway the pious among the military in order to forestall mistreatment, both for themselves and for other temples. A few enlightened leaders among the temple hierarchies realize that they must stand by their brothers, for once the empire begins to close down any temples, the trend won't stop.

Outer City

The outer city, gripped with a somber wartime wariness, resembles any typical city of the region, just magnified and sprawling. The rough hills surrounding Lake Bashar lead to clear

delineations of status, with the middle class living on the gentler flatlands, while the poor cram into slums on the steep sides of the hills. Numerous walls divide city sections and defend against outward attacks, but at its current size, Ragos is almost too large to effectively attack or besiege.

Each district provides its own militia to serve in the Seventh Army, and people have gotten used to seeing soldiers nearly everywhere. Few inquisitors, however, make it out of the high districts, though those who live in the slums tell frightening tales of inquisitors carrying off the poor and the helpless as sacrifices to infernal powers.

The wealthiest of the outer city live on the banks of the Highvein River, to the west of the high districts. Most of these families own river and lake barges, or otherwise control aspects of the city's trade.

High Districts

The inner city consists of five districts, all sharing the same looming architecture of beautiful, many-storied buildings trimmed in black marble. Not all who live in these districts are rich, and common names for streets survive from the time when the walls of the high districts would have enclosed the entirety of the city, but most who live there today consider themselves privileged above the citizens who live in the outer city.

The five districts include:

- Five Points: The central district, where the old emperor of Morrus once ruled from the Landward Palace.
- Free Quarter: The southern district, added as the first outer lands fell under the old empire's control.
- Heraldsbanner: The long-time center of religion and learning in the city, in the northwestern district.
- Northride: Originally the commercial district, now home to the imperial stables.
- Whitewing: Home to many wharfs and warehouses, and the center of the city's commerce today.

Gates and Walls

There are three main entry gates into the high districts of Ragos: Gallowsgate, Gorgon's Gate, and Victory Gate.

Gallowsgate opens out to the The Hundreds, and has the harshest security measures, since undesirables find it easy to slip into that crowded district. Merchants and residents of that area who often go into the high districts usually pay to get imperial identification papers, arcane marked to combat forgery. At any time, a half dozen swing just inside the Gallowgate in an area large enough to accommodate a bloodthirsty crowd. The city times executions to occur when the most traders are entering or leaving the city.

Gorgon's Gate, the grandest of the three gates, faces the Field of War, within sight of any encamped military units. Most diplomatic visitors to the city use this gate, where the army would station its most dramatic monstrous units, the iconic being a pair of masked gorgons. The city's primary wyvern aeries rise up from the walls here.

Victory Gate, to the northwest, provides entry to farmers and craftsmen who produce the fine goods the aristocracy desires. When the empire's armies return triumphant, they march into the city through this gate, instead of the more common Gorgon's Gate.

During this time of war, the gate guards are thorough, and entrance to the city can take hours. Everyday military shift changes, however, take priority over everybody else, and many units enter and leave through the Gorgon's Gate each hour. A token force of inquisitors aid the gate guards to discourage people from using magic to sneak in to the city.

Warning signs everywhere state that, due to the war and the assassination of the late emperor, attempting to enter the city under false pretences carries the death penalty.

Gate Defenses

A typical defense force for an inner gate consists of:

Ragesian soldiers, typical (12) (CR 2): hp 20 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldiers, standard (4) (CR 4): hp 35 each, Appendix B.
Ragesian soldier, veteran (CR 6): hp 50, Appendix B.
Ragesian inquisitors, standard (4) (CR 4): hp 30 each, Appendix B.

If trouble breaks out which the guards cannot handle, they sound bells, and a flight of six wyvern riders appears in 2d6 rounds. More conventional ground forces arrive 2d10 rounds later.

Ragesian wyvern knights (6) (CR 6): hp 50 each, Appendix B.
Wyverns (6) (CR 6): hp 59 each, MM.

The defenses for the three outer gates to the high districts have double the normal forces.

Free Quarter

1. The Orphan's Hope

Thieves love this low-rent housing area, where many of the city's orphans live and learn guild skills. The crumbling buildings here contain many hideouts for thieves, who use it for quick access to the sewers.

2. Feuding Brothers

Centuries ago, the city governor sentenced two murderous brothers, Otho and Lorgo Cullen, to quarry work for the rest of their lives after a spate of robberies and muggings. They died after a few brutal years and then were raised as undead once the city's need for stone became urgent during one of the innumerable wars of conquest in the distant past. The brothers remained fierce rivals even in death, and could never stop fighting. Every full moon they would battle with each other, wrestling and grappling until the moon would set.

The quarry was later filled in, burying the brothers, and buildings erected over the top. One enterprising ale seller heard the old story and excavated down to the brothers, then built a tavern above the sheer-sided twenty-foot deep pit, leaving an opening in the roof so the brothers could see the full moon. Now all manner of scum flock to the Feuding Brothers tavern to wager on which brother will win their eternal fight at each moon.

On off nights, the hosts cock-fights and bear-baiting, and it's not hard to find people brawling in the taproom either.

3. The Asylum

A dark and intimidating place, avoided as much as possible by the locals, the Asylum houses the insane, as well more than a few political prisoners. An inquisitor office on the ground floor has a friendly relationship with the managers of the asylum, and inquisitors frequently use inmates for bizarre experiments and tests. Rumors say most of the wards of the asylum weren't crazy until the inquisitors got their claws in them, and that monstrous, mutated, or magically afflicted victims roam tunnels under the asylum.

4. Wiseman Brewery

The Wiseman Brewery and its eventual fate are the subject of this adventure.

5. Maze of Pain

In the center of the district, this amphitheatre surrounds a huge maze filled with different types

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of terrain and laced with puzzles and traps. The maze puts on a show every week, free to the masses, who flock to the arena to see teams of warriors enter the maze and battle terrible monsters, deadly traps and confusing puzzles.

Betting runs from guessing how far a particular team will get and who will be the last to survive, to which monster will eat a particular fighter or if any of the audience will die as collateral damage. The monsters come from all over the empire, and are held in underground chambers below the maze.

Several crowd favourites are the minotaur Hephastion, a hydra nicknamed Hissy, and a pair of rust monsters that have been arena stalwarts for over a decade. The maze usually press gangs criminals, enemies of the empire, or slaves into fighting for the delight of the crowds. Though wildly expensive to produce, the shows receive funding from the empire, which finds they distract the populace from the wars on the nation's borders.

6. Stinksquare

Most of the city's sewers lead to this large factory. The factory's secretive owner sells distilled products (manure, various curing chemicals, and even recycled paper) to various craftsmen and travelling merchants.

7. The Grates

Long ago this section of the district suffered numerous sinkholes, rendering a proper sewer system impossible. Instead, a broad grate-covered canal leads out to the lake. The police sometimes chain criminals who have earned the public's ire directly beneath one of these grates, and one truly vindictive noblewoman has been known to "save up" her manor's waste for these occasions.

One or two guards always watch such criminals, but bribes can easily convince them to "take a walk" while aggrieved citizens pour other dangerous liquids, such as acid, upon stockaded criminals.

Unbeknownst to most, the inland end of the grates hides the entrance to narrow, wretched tunnels that weave through the city, above and below the sewers. Truly desperate thieves, as well as the occasional spy, use these passages to evade the police.

8. Red Rocks and the Tower of Warning

This old beacon tower once housed a platform for signal fires to direct water traffic, and during times of danger, the signal fires would be set to release a massive column of black smoke to warn the rest of the empire of war.

The tower is now famous for the sharp red rocks at its base, for the tower also served as an execution point for one old king, who would hurl criminals and traitors from the tower, to be dashed to death on the rocks below. Later, a suicidal poet set a tradition for those who took their lives to do it at the tower. Legends say the rock's color comes from the stains of so much blood. They also say that if the empire is ever in danger, a ghostly beacon fire will light atop the tower even before anyone in the city knows of the threat. People saw such lights the night Coaltongue fell.

Ghosts haunt here, said to be visible only by torchlight. The citizens of the Free Quarter often hear a wailing, keening voice, thick with anguish, singing a lament on dark windy nights.

White Wing

9. Great Circle

This oval racetrack hosts horse and chariot races, two very popular spectator sports in Ragos. Champion charioteers enjoy great status in the city, wined and dined by Ragos' rich and elite.

10. Imperial Barracks

A dozen barracks, a parade ground, training areas, and various armories and stables for savage beasts fill this block near Gorgon's Gate. Over five thousand soldiers live here, from all corners of the empire.

The central military police base functions out of this block, though numerous other outposts lie throughout the city.

11. Bertram's Toys

A two-storied house in the market district, this unassuming building sells the creations of a family of toymakers. The father, Bertram, is a carpenter who specializes in making affordable wooden toys, while his seamstress wife Annia makes some of the finest dolls in the land. Their daughter Kessi went to the Lyceum, though she grew bored with academia and returned to the toy store to add a little magic to her parents' creations.

Most of the common toys sell for a single silver piece or less, but the toymakers also cater to wealthier patrons, making ceramic-faced dolls and complicated wooden rocking horses. Kessi has enchanted dolls with magic mouth to speak limited phrases, and uses other spells to enhance toys for their noble clients. The family has even produced a few larger golem dolls, able to intelligently interact with its child charge, and even protect a child in danger. Unfortunately, the early versions of these dolls are too protective, and react too swiftly to a child's emotional responses, treating a tantrum as an excuse to maim a family member who made a young girl cry.

12. Grand Aviary

The lower levels of this tower contain habitats for hundreds of species of birds from around the world, including a few exotics that live in enchanted cages that recreate different environments. For a small fee, visitors can see the live birds, or explore museum exhibits that include the most detailed understanding of flight outside of the Monastery of Two Winds.

Long red flags drape from the top two floors, which house a carrier pigeon aviary. Many large shops or civic buildings in the city fly a red flag near their entrance, marking them as part of the carrier pigeon network. For two coppers, anyone can send a message between one of these stations and the grand aviary; for five coppers a message can fly from a station, to the aviary, to another station; and for a silver a message can fly to the nearest station, then delivered on foot to a specified address that isn't part of the network. All senders must present imperial papers, and the aviary keeps records of who sends each message and when, though the contents remain secret.

The aviary uses a type of large green-winged crow found in the northern mountains for its carrier birds. Highly intelligent, the birds can understand simple human speech, though they can only squawk in reply.

13. Lihorn's Transport Office

A billboard on the side of the Bondgate Within road reads, "By hook or by crook we will get you there! Coaches run on the even hours and ferries every four hours. See the sights around the city! Tours available! Tales told! See your guide for specifics. Ghosts tours on the Blood Moon must be booked in advance."

Kresk Lihorn, the enterprising half-orc grandson of one of Coaltongue's original warlord allies, operates this diverse transportation business, and has a knack for hiring chatty orc and half-orc coach drivers, ferrymen, and tour guides. Their pervasive presence once went a long way toward getting the native humans comfortable with the idea of the city as home to orc-kind as well. Today, the Lihorn family's old loyalty to Coaltongue has led to a lot of grumbling about the new empress, which has consequently led to less business, as few want to risk being associated with potential rabble rousers.

14 The Floating Corpse

The most infamous tavern in town, this converted lake barge contains drinking halls, gambling dens, and private rooms in what were once its cargo holds. Most nights it remains moored to the docks, but every week or so the Corpse schedules a night voyage, where it drops anchor several miles offshore, outside of city jurisdiction. Rumor is that it doesn't go back to port until it leaves someone floating as a corpse in the lake.

15. Syfoam's Shell

Lake Bashar is large enough to have tides, and during low tide, the waters reveal this natural cavern carved out of the rock between White Wing and Northride. The acoustics within inspire eerie, beautiful musical performances – albeit short ones – during each month's lowest tide.

Heraldsbanner

16. Mercian's Walk

Eighty-five years ago, General Mercian, known as Mercian the Cruel, nearly ruined Ragesia-Shahalesti relations by pillaging and looting Elisvara, a city on the border between the two nations. He brought back as trophies two columns of hand-crafted trees, their branches of grey stone, and they leaves pure, clear crystal. The city governor named a long, narrow reflecting pool and the street that runs along it in honor of him, then had the trees placed along the pool.

When Mercian and his entire extended family died within a month, people attributed it to a curse from the Shahalesti. This is so firmly entrenched in the popular imagination that not even the most hardened thief in the city would dare to steal so much as a leaf from these trees.

On dark nights, the leaves of these trees glimmer with a faint silver starlight, and in light breezes they clink musically, making this area a favorite trysting spot for lovers to meet after dark.

17. Street of the Gods

The pious and the curious come to this street to see dozens of temples, shrines, cathedrals, and a vast central plaza where hucksters, mad men, inspired holy men, and everything in-between stand on soap boxes and preach some sort of gospel or other.

18. Imperial University

The world-famous Imperial University of Ragos has roots older than the current empire. Although its research into the arcane cannot match that of the Lyceum in Seaquen, the University offers a much broader curriculum, including archaeology, architecture, biology, languages, politics, and religion. The university generally rejects new and niche topics, such as psionics and biomancy.

Every professor who still teaches there had to sign an oath of loyalty to the empire after one art instructor was discovered teaching students how to conceal secret messages in book illuminations.

19. The Great Library and the Magister's Tower

The Great Library fills the huge Magister's Tower, named after its famous former occupant, the Master of Rolls to the late Emperor Coaltongue. The Magister used the narrow ten-story tower to store the chancery rolls, but over the decades since its construction, ever more diverse material has found its way into the library's stacks.

Two spiral stairways wind up opposite sides of the inside of the tower, helixing around a central pillar, twenty-feet wide and crammed with hundreds of thousands of shelves. Since the library is free, many citizens, both scholars and layfolk, come to the tower with a cushion under their arm, find a section that interests them, and sit on one of the stairs atop their cushion, cluttering the staircase with stacks of books.

The library forbids anyone officially part of the Magister's order from carrying any books or paper out of the library, to prevent theft. However, it is commonly known that people use the library to pass messages anonymously, taking advantage of the fantastic catalog index code. Each book has a number and a letter followed by a number, which correspond to the adjacent stair, to the shelf, and to the position of the book. Sometimes people will receive a simple code, telling them the book and the page number.

In one famous case, an assassin coated the pages of a book with poison and tricked his victim into killing himself. Similarly, black market trade occasionally relies on the library for its traffic.

More recently, the unknown author of a witty screed known as "The Empire of Lies" used the library to deliver to his publisher this monthly collection of tales of illicit doings of the city's high and mighty in the city. None could figure out how the publisher smuggled out the writings, but the publisher's claim that he could not reveal the identity of his author became moot when he was executed for conspiracy for sedition. Since then, readers have scoured the library for potential hiding places of new editions.

Five Points

20. Bureau of Justice

Once a respected home to courtrooms overseen by wise judges, and a publicly displayed and publicly debated wall of city laws, the green copper roofs of the Bureau of Justice, rising above the walls of Five Points district, used to inspire pride across the city. Over the past decade, however, the lauded ideals of the bureau have fallen by the wayside as then Supreme Inquisitor Leska played politics to get her cronies into power. Today it serves more as a warehouse of blackmail and secrets, and armed guards prevent citizens from getting close enough to the carven city laws to read them.

Between the two branches of the bureau, a bleak, black-walled prison compound houses criminals awaiting trial. It has now seen nearly a year of growing crowds, with few ever seeing a day in court.

21. Landward Palace

The Landward Palace served as the seat of power for Morrus, and briefly for the Ragesian Empire before the construction of the island palace. Visitors can explore the palace now as a museum.

22. Hands of Judgment

This ancient, crumbling courthouse today serves as a converted gymnasium and celebratory venue for aristocrats throwing lavish parties. During the day, many power players come to broker deals and discuss agendas in the light of the building's hurt braziers, while watching athletes exercise naked.

23. Statue's Corner

Over three hundred years ago this huge stone slab held a statue of an ancient general, now long-since toppled down. The base for the statue remains, and it has become a sort of soapbox for local dissidents to voice their opinions. A peculiarity of local law states that individuals cannot be harmed for expressing their views while standing upon the statue's base, provided they do so in a non-violent manner, and three centuries of free thinking and orating has instilled a true magical compulsion to the tradition. Despite the current regime's desire to silence anarchists, so far not a single soldier or inquisitor has been able to take any action against a speaker standing on the platform.

The protection, sadly, does not persist once the speaker steps down.

24. The Donjon

While some political prisoners end up executed, slipped into the asylum, or simply vanish, a few truly high profile inmates survive in surprising luxury in what appears from the outside a stark, black ring with no windows. Within, however, a few dozen prisoners live solitary lives, visited only by a handful of guards and caretakers, but allowed to relax in wide suites with amenities the noble and wealthy expect.

Northride

25. The City in Miniature

Close to Victory Gate, near the Imperial Stables, this inn contains on its grounds a garden where masons tend to a marvellous scale model of the entire city, carved out of stone, at a scale of one building story to six inches. Those new to the city can walk among the tiny buildings to gain an idea of its layout and to sit among its splendour, supping and taking their ease whilst planning their visit.

First time visitors to the capital often stay the inn, though more than a few have lost their purse whilst meditating amidst the tiny buildings, since thieves take advantage of tourists' distraction. Popular rumor says that the owner, Septimus Fisk, can find any person in the City using his marvellous figurine. He has only to say the name of the person sought to the figurine and it will run into the City in Miniature and stop at the location of the person so named. Fisk's services are often sought by those trying to find criminals or friends and there is often a line of people winding around his Inn every morning, looking for his services.

26. The Imperial Stables

Only the best horses will do for the Imperial army. The Imperial Stables house the mighty steeds used by the late emperor, his generals, and his elite knights.

27. The Confectory

Once a simple sweets dealer, the Confectory has expanded to provide elite catering and celebration services to the city's wealthier inhabitants. Many of its employees are paid handsomely for the gossip they snatch from unknowing customers as they sample the delicious foodstuffs provided to them at parties.

28. The Imperial Ampitheatre

A massive arena capable of seating tens of thousands of spectators, this building is a testament to Ragos' power and excess. As well as the expected gladiatorial games, the amphitheatre produces yearly battles on an epic scale with lavish sets: teams of gladiators dressed as pirates fighting sea monsters from ships in a flooded arena floor, giants grappling hydras as they crash through trees of a transplanted rainforest, and chained demons, devils, and celestials fighting in a landscape of heavenly clouds and hellish lava, for example.

The ampitheatre is also a stage for the world's most famous bards who put on spectacular musical extravaganzas augmented with magical lighting and special effects. Most such shows cater to the fabulously wealthy, but four yearly shows are free to the public.

29. The Forest of Swords

Along this steeply sloping shore of the lake, swords, gripped by stone hands, rise up from rows of high, grassy mounds, each mound the burial place for one of an old, defunct order of warriors called the Carnelian Guard. Once they protected the rulers of Morrus, but now many of their tombs lie defaced and neglected.

Bothies inside each mound once served as homes for the spouses of dead guardsmen. The Mournwives traditionally would pray five years for the gods to reward the souls of their husbands, and some claimed they would receive visions of the future during their stay. Today the tradition continues intermittently, as descendants of the guardsmen come here discreetly to pray.

It is said that the order, though all its warriors died in defense of Morrus, survives in spirit, and should a warrior pure enough of spirit spend a night facing the spirits of the dead Carnelian Guard, at dawn's first light he can test his worth by drawing a sword from one of the stone hands. So far, every sword remains with its fallen last owner.

30. The Lighthouse of Seven Faces

A great seven-sided tower of basalt rises out of the water at the northern end of the High District docks. Seven stern faces, carved with the countenance of the founders of Ragesa, Morrus, and older kingdoms, nations, and empires encircle the top of the tower. The watch-fire set atop the tower shines out of their eyes at night, and horns in their mouths can boom out during fog or in times of celebration.

Since Coaltongue's fall, Leska has ordered no fires lit in this tower, and at her command, a massive curtain now drapes across all of the tower's faces.

Lake Bashar

31. Monument Island and the Imperial Palace

The Ragesian Imperial Palace is perhaps the most heavily defended building in the world. It lies just off shore, on a rocky island. At night, the Imperial Palace lights up the sky.

All visitors to the palace travel by lavish barge to the guard post at Monument Island, and then from there they take a thousand-foot gilded skywalk to the palace proper. Hundreds of non-magical torches, lit laboriously by the palace's servants, illuminate the glass-walled bridge, and thousands more flicker within the looming windows of the palace walls.

Gold and ebony statues of dragons leer down from the jagged awnings like gargoyles, and given the nature of the current emperor, some may well serve as more than ornamentation.

In addition to the Empress and her court, the palace and its satellite buildings are the working home for dozens of nobles and their staffs of servants and bodyguards. Any extravagant excess of the rich has a home somewhere in the palace.

Monument Island and the Imperial Palace feature heavily in *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart*. See that adventure for more details.

Other Areas

The Runnel

The black ditch of The Grates exits the city here into this great trough of filth. The waste of much of the Free Quarter runs through here, and while the stench keeps away even the military police, many vile creatures lurk, live, and feed on this run-off. Some say that on a new moon, you can hear skeletal servants of some unknown necromancer skulking through the waste, searching for lost coins, new dead bodies for animation, or blackmail material.

Fields of War

At any time, thousands of soldiers camp, train, and march on the Fields of War. Outside their central town of tents and pavilions, the army practices erecting earthen structures and battling for control of them. At any given time, dozens of small units patrol the field, making crossing from the Outer City to the Inner City without being seen difficult and exceedingly dangerous.

The city occasionally clears the Fields of War for great jousting tournaments, which attract visitors from all over the world.

The River of Ice

An underground river empties into the lake just outside the walls of Northride. Many researchers and explorers have tried to determine the source of the river, and their best guess is that it somehow flows from the northern mountains, for it contains huge quantities of ice, even in summer.

The river may have been what originally attracted settlement to the area, and today the capitol's fishing fleets use the river's ice to pack their catches and keep them fresh, and other businesses and homes throughout the city benefit from a ready source of ice.

A branch of the Capitol's watch, known as the Blue-watch, has the unenviable duty to patrol the river tunnel and clear them of trouble makers. During the winter the water slows to a trickle, allowing deeper exploration, but the worst they usually find are poor people from the Outer City trying to steal ice without paying proper taxes for it. Even thieves or spies will rarely put up with the tunnel's wretched cold.

The Hundreds

A sprawling mass of tree-shaded narrow streets, the houses, shops and taverns of the Hundreds lie to the south of the High District's formidable walls. Though dangerous because the military police have a limited presence, the narrow, crowded lanes of the Hundreds offer a wide variety of common delights from stalls and street vendors, and lower-end inns and taverns bustle with activity all through the night, lit with hanging lanterns.

The lower-class servants of those in the High Districts live here, many caught uncomfortably between a desire to keep their comparably comfortable lifestyle and their dislike for the growing trend of mistreatment and cruelty enacted by the new, more oppressive regime. The seeds of rebellion beginning to take root across the city all come originally from the Hundreds.

Finding Rowern

The heroes' only clue to Rowern's location is his weakness for Wiseman's Ale. However, they will find out that no taverns sell that ale any more. The brewery was bought by a mysterious purchaser and closed down.

They might be able to find Andras Wiseman, the previous owner and grandson of the founder of the brewery. He was forced to sell to a mysterious man by political pressure. He is not happy about it ("this would never have happened under Emperor Coaltongue") but he is loyal to the Empire and anyway is reluctant to engage in talk which might be interpreted as sedition.

However, if approached in the right way he explains what has happened. His initial attitude is unfriendly, as it is a sore subject to him. If he is made helpful, he draws the PCs a rough plan of the brewery.

The purchaser is Rowern. He, like all Ragesians, is feeling nervous in these dangerous times, and he has bought the brewery ostensibly so he can have parties with his army drinking buddies without risking going out in public. In fact, he is also slowly moving Intelligence records out of the citadel. He does not trust the new regime, and want to have some leverage should he find himself out of favour. He hopes that by holding private parties in the brewery his true purpose will pass unnoticed.

However, Inquisitor Guthwulf has managed to infiltrate an agent into Rowern's retinue, an erinyes called Salla. Her *true seeing* ability makes it hard for the PCs to sneak into the brewery, but she will hesitate before denouncing them — it would please Guthwulf if Rowern was taken out of the picture.

The Brewery

This is in the Free Quarter. It is surrounded by a high wall, but appears run down and disused, guarded only by a few surly dwarven watchmen. In fact these are all members of Ragesian Intelligence. They are happy to give the appearance of co-operating with generous or intimidating PCs, but will betray them at the first opportunity.

One of the dwarves is actually an erinyes with a *hat of disguise*. Her name is Salla, and she has been tasked by Inquisitor Guthwulf with keeping an eye on Rowern. This means that she would be happy to see Rowern killed (as it will end her task), and may seek to negotiate with the PCs.

(If you have previously run *Shelter from the Storm* and the erinyes Jezska survived, she is here instead of Salla. Her attitude towards the PCs will depend the outcome of their prior encounters.)

Rowern himself is in the brewery's main brewing chamber. He and his army friends are skilled fighters, but are likely to get more and more drunk as the evening progresses.

Nobody is expecting an attack by a party of adventurers. However, they are worried that the inquisitors are planning to take Ragesia's intelligence service "in house", and a reasonable first stage in that operation would be an assault on the brewery. They may therefore assume the PCs are working for the inquisitors.

Drunkenness

If you want to make the brewery fights easier for the PCs, or if they make a specific point of waiting for their foes to get as drunk as possible, you can use the following rules from EN Publishing's *Tournaments, Fairs and Taverns* (republished in *Advanced Rules for Beginners*). Judge for yourself what stage the NPCs in the brewery have reached. (Note that states beyond drunk exist, but the NPCs do not drink enough for this to be an issue.)

Tipsy: -1 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks and Reflex saves; must make a Concentration check (DC 5 + spell level) to cast spells.

Merry: -2 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks and Reflex saves; gain +1 temporary hit point per level; must make a Concentration check (DC 5 + spell level) to cast spells.

Drunk: -4 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks and Reflex saves; gain +2 temporary hit point per level; if takes more than one standard action per round must make a DC 10 Balance check or fall down; must make a Concentration check (DC 5 + spell level) to cast spells.

1. The Wall

The wall is 12 feet high (climb DC 20) and its top is covered by shards of broken glass which have been smeared with contact poison — treat as a trap (Search DC 5, Disable Device 25, DC 25 Reflex save to avoid taking 1d4 points of damage plus scorpion venom Fortitude DC 18, initial damage 1d6 Str, secondary damage 1d6 Str).

2. The Gatehouse (EL 10)

Smoke rises from the chimney of this building.

There are five Watchmen, plus the disguised erinyes, in the gatehouse, warming themselves on the fire. Every hour three of them set off on a tour of the grounds.

Watchmen (5) (CR 4): hp 40 each, Appendix B.
Salla, erinyes (CR 8): hp 85, MM.

3. The Yard

There are six unimpressive dogs roaming the yard (hp 6 each). They set up a furious barking if they spot or scent any intruders, but are reluctant to engage in combat with armed opponents.

The well in the yard has recently been boarded up. It currently contains the corpse of a petty

thief who attempted to sneak in to the "deserted" brewery, only to be caught by Rowern.

He was stabbed repeatedly, then tossed in the well. He has been dead for 7 days.

In the corner of the yard is a large trapdoor leading into the cellar. A pulley device is set up next to it. This was originally the way barrels were taken out of the cellar. The trapdoor has been nailed shut. If a PC listens carefully at the trapdoor, he might hear the sound of revelry coming from the other side (Listen DC 21).

4. Stables

The stable was previously used to house the brewery's cart horses. Today there are four heavy war horses (each bearing the brand of the Ragesian army) and one, extremely high quality, light warhorse that is unbranded.

5. Storeroom (EL 4)

This room holds brewing supplies, old and rotting. The watchman stationed here is supposed to be hiding, but hasn't made much of an effort (Spot DC 15). However, if he is alerted to intruders he will attempt to take cover behind some crates, where he can't be seen (but still might be detected by other means).

Rowern and his friends are in the cellar relaxing. The watchman is supposed to warn them if there is a disturbance, but having felt the rough edge of Rowern's tongue for interrupting their card games without good cause he will hesitate before disturbing them.

Watchman (CR 4): hp 40, Appendix B.

6. Brewing Area

There are large vats and other mysterious items of equipment here. Some of it might look quite interesting, but in fact it is merely mundane brewing apparatus. A trapdoor leads into the cellar. Anyone listening at the trapdoor (Listen DC 18) might hear the sound of revelry from below.

7. Offices

These areas have apparently been cleaned out of anything useful. In fact, there is a locked safe hidden in one of the walls (Search DC 25, Open Lock DC 25) containing the recipes for Wiseman's various beverages. (This list includes spirits, which might be a clue to the existence of the spirit cellar.) To the right buyer, this might be worth as much as 1,000 gp.

8. The Beer Cellar (EL 11)

Rowern and his four friends drink and gamble down here amongst the casks of Wiseman's ale. They have broached one of the casks, and are alternating between playing cards and singing patriotic songs. (At the GM's option, this could be treated as an inspire courage bardic music effect — if so, reduce Rowern's remaining uses of bardic music by one.)

The Ragesians have set up a table here and are playing cards. There is a total of 1,137 gp on the table being used as gambling stakes.

A desk in the corner contains Rowern's "public" papers, which aren't of any value; they foster the image of a hard-working, loyal, and unambitious public servant. There is also an "invitation" to visit the inquisition in the Bureau of Justice the following morning to discuss the political landscape.

A nearby cupboard contains a masterwork disguise kit. This may encourage the PCs to attend the meeting in Rowern's stead — see "Meeting" on the next page if they do. A locked secret door leads into the spirit cellar.

There is also a newly constructed escape tunnel concealed behind a rack of beer bottles. It comes out in an abandoned house next to the brewery.

General Rowern (CR 10): hp 58, Appendix B.
Klaus, standard Ragesian soldier (CR 4): hp 36, Appendix B.
Olaf, standard Ragesian soldier (CR 4): hp 36, Appendix B.
Gregor, standard Ragesian soldier (CR 4): hp 36, Appendix B.
Svenn, standard Ragesian soldier (CR 4): hp 36, Appendix B.

9. The Spirit Cellar

A locked secret door (Search DC 15, Open Lock DC 30) leads into this room. Rowern has the key. There is also a magical lock (CL 15 for dispel attempts) which needs the password "Genevieve". Otherwise, given enough time the PCs can hack their way through the door. Doing this triggers the cellar's self destruct mechanism: four vials of alchemist's fire fall onto the floor. This quickly burns up most of the papers, unless the heroes act quickly to save them.

If the heroes get in without breaking down the door, the four vials of alchemist's fire are in a net on the ceiling (Disable Device DC 15 to retrieve safely). The contents of the vault are in code. They are not the main records of Ragesian intelligence — those remain at the Bureau of Justice. Instead they are Rowern's "private" papers — primarily dossiers on his rivals for power in Ragesia.

If the heroes retrieve some of the papers, they (or the mages of Lyceum) will be able to decode some of it. If there are parts of the plot so far of the War of the Burning Sky which have been particularly bothering the PCs, they might find a few clues here to help them.

Also, there might be references to the Monastery of Two Winds, further encouraging Simeon to send the PCs to investigate.

Game Master's Map pg. 692



Meeting

This is an optional scene, depending on how confident the PCs are that they can impersonate Rowern. He has a meeting arranged tomorrow in one of the Citadel's outer offices with a pair of Ragesian inquisitors. The PCs could attend in his stead, and spread as much misinformation as they can in response to the inquisitors' questions. The questions themselves might give valuable information to the PCs.

Questions the inquisitors might ask include :

What is the current situation in Seaquen?

Has any progress been made in locating the Torch of the Burning Sky?

How loyal are the officers of the First Army to Empress Leska?

Are there any leads to more mages for the Scourge (the more powerful the better)?

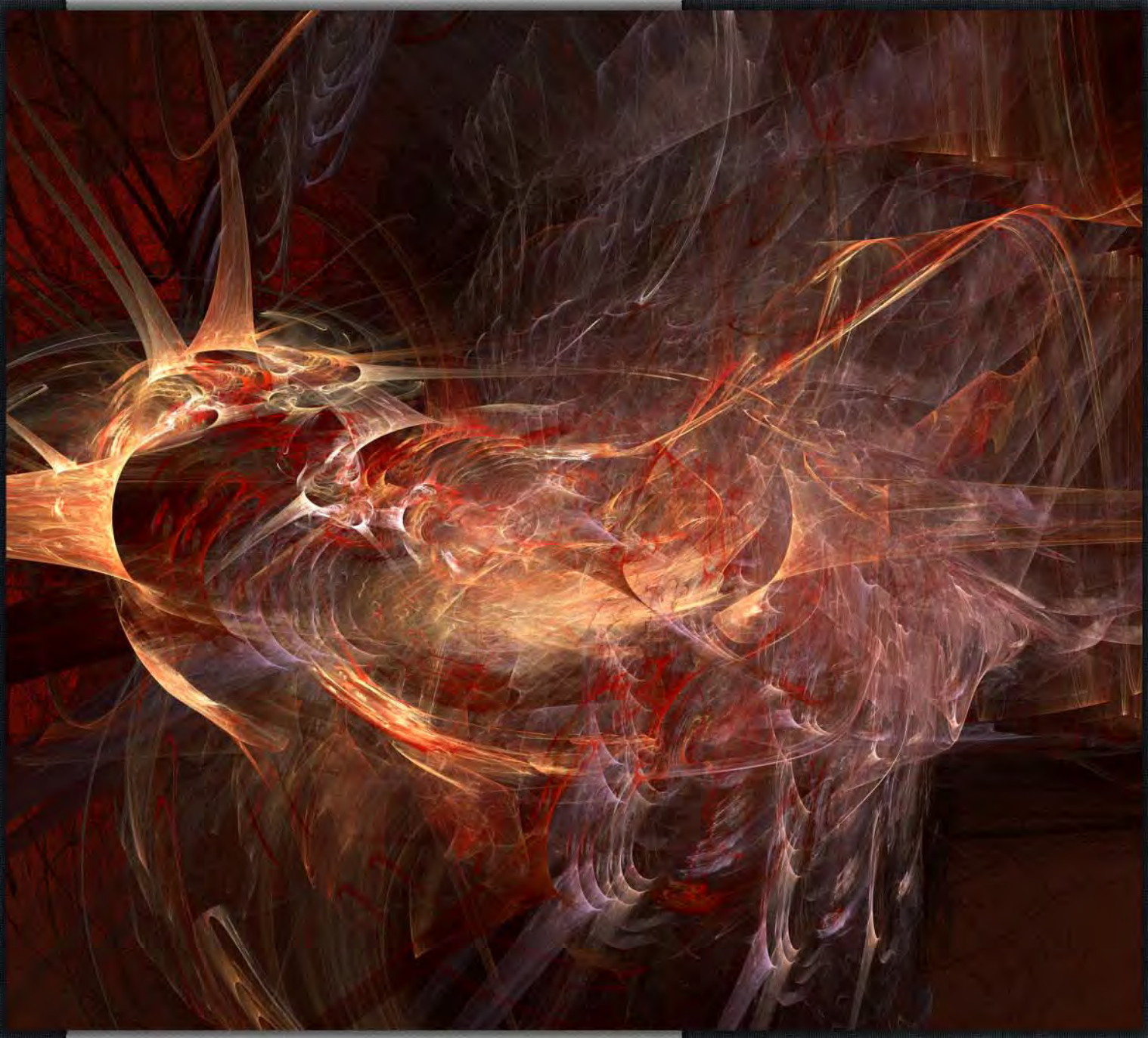
What went wrong in Dassen? Was it the fault of Madness?

Concluding the Adventure

The characters need to make their way out of Ragos and get home safely. This can be as easy or as difficult as you want it to be.



Shelter from the Storm (Detail) – Art by Ian Mullen



Bonus Adventure Five
Dreamcatcher

for 15th-Level Characters

by Thurston Hillman

Cover Art by
effervescence.co.uk

A trillith who calls itself Wanderer passes through Seaquen, appearing as a tall man, wrapped head to toe in sandy robes and veils, with a staff that curves at the top, ending in a knot that looks like an eye. He is collecting the dreams of the city's inhabitants — many of whom are refugees who have seen great horrors and tragedies — to be distilled and refined in order to torment Trilla and create new, unique trillith. He haunts the Wayfarer's Theater, enjoying the psychic emanations of people watching performances.

Background

Under directions from the trillith Freedom (see adventure ten, Sleep Ye Cursed Child*) various trillith on the mortal plane continue searching for ways to keep their mother, the gold dragon Trilla from awakening. Since the beginning of this quest, the trillith Wanderer has walked through many cities in search of the perfect mix of nightmares and dreams to craft a new trillith by implanting them into his sleeping mother. Having the unique ability to create a portal to the dream realm where Trilla resides, Wanderer is capable of quickly implanting his acquired dreams into the mind of his mother. Many trillith owe their own existence to the journeys of Wanderer making him one of the oldest trillith to walk the realms of man.*

At some point after the commencement of the Ragesian Scourge, Wanderer found his way to Seaquen where he discovered the dreams of the displaced and dispossessed refugees who had fled there. Feeding slowly on the dreams of the citizens Wanderer has been slow to act, not wanting to gain unwanted attention to himself. Only taking dreams he views as "succulent," the trillith has already stolen dreams from a dozens of townsfolk.

Once the heroes return to Seaquen (likely with the Torch in tow) there is much fanfare to be had for them. The Wayfarers Cirque begins to hold regular theatrical plays, some based (loosely) on the exploits of the players up to this point in the campaign. Upon attending one of these productions as a curiosity, Wanderer realized the sheer potential the combined dreams of the crowd would have. One person's dreams in particular gained the attention of the trillith; the dreams of the archmage Ovnor Kaivar.

Ovnor was content to live in seclusion in his tower just outside of the borders of Seaquen while both his daughters, of whom he was quite proud, were being trained in the arcane arts in Ragesia.

The Scourge has changed everything for Ovnor. In recent months the archmage has received word that both of his daughters were accidentally slain by Shahalesti forces while trying to escape Ragesia. The tragedy that befell this poor man made his nightmares particularly interesting to Wanderer who could not resist stealing them.

Wanderer did not anticipate the determination of an archmage. Ovnor, suffering from sleep deprivation, pooled all his substantial resources into finding the reason for his ailment, and when he discovered the nature of the trillith his anger peaked. Taking it upon himself, Ovnor began to hunt Wanderer through the streets of Seaquen, but the movement abilities of the creature prevented him from ever getting close enough to effectively combat him. Realizing his own limitations in fighting the dream-made creature, Ovnor returned to his tower and locked the doors. Channeling his talents into one major spell, the archmage began creating a planar gate to contract an outsider to assist in his hunt.

The citizens of Seaquen whose dreams had been captured saw the old archmage just before discovering their dreamless state. Not realizing that Ovnor was hunting after the true culprit, many citizens have already begun spreading rumors about the powerful archmage. These rumors have only been intensified following Ovnor's retreat to his out-of-town tower.

During the preparation of Ovnor's spell, Wanderer has set in motion a plan that will capture the dreams of terrified stage watchers at the Wayfarer's Theater. Using these dreams, Wanderer plans to create a new brother or sister and unleash it upon the unsuspecting populace of Seaquen.

Welcome to the fifth bonus adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. In this short adventure for 15th-level characters, a trillith who calls itself Wanderer is causing chaos as it passes through Seaquen. It appears as a tall man wrapped head to toe in sandy robes and veils, with a staff that curves at the top, ending in a knot that looks like an eye.

Wanderer is collecting the dreams of the city's inhabitants — many of whom are refugees who have seen great horrors and tragedies — to be distilled and refined in order to torment Trilla and create new, unique trillith. With help from a sleep-deprived old archmage, the heroes must track Wanderer to the Wayfarer's Theater, where he preys upon the psychic emanations of people watching their performances.

Introduction

During the course of the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga, players have no doubt become acquainted with the coastal city of Seaquen, a bastion of hope for resistance forces against the rampant Ragesian Empire. While the heroes have been off in search of the Torch of the Burning Sky a new refugee has come to the city unnoticed by the ever increasing military force that gathers; he is the Trillith Wanderer.

Wanderer has journeyed through the streets and alleys of Seaquen finding the most horrific and terrifying dreams from the refugees that inhabit the city. During the hero's absence, Wanderer has captured the dreams of dozens of citizens, leaving them shells of their former selves. Recently, the Trillith has been attending theatrical productions of the Wayfarers Cirque hoping to gather dreams on an even greater scale than his previous exploits.

Called upon by an old friend, the heroes have little rest upon returning, as they are asked to investigate the strange rash of dream theft. Early investigation will point to the reclusive Archmage Ovnor Kaivar who lives in a strange tower just outside the city. To reach Ovnor, though, the heroes will need to endure his tower's traps and guardians before finally meeting the archmage and discovering he is not the true culprit. Before they leave the extra-planar tower, the heroes will need to engage with a powerful planar entity that Ovnor has summoned to seek vengeance on Wanderer.

The adventure reaches its apex when the party tracks down Wanderer on the stage of the Wayfarer Theater as he prepares to unleash a terrible new trillith upon the populace.

Adapting the Adventure

Dreamcatcher works well as a standalone short adventure for higher level characters (14-16) in a one shot or campaign setting. Instead of returning with the Torch, the heroes are hailed for other exploits they have achieved and are invited to Seaquen because of their status.

The trillith can be made into psionic creatures who steal dreams to continue living, maintaining the reasoning for the marut's appearance in Act Two. Lacking Indomitability's boon, other reasons the players may need to fight the marut are listed in the encounter.

Adventure Overview

The adventure starts with the players returning to Seaquen after completing a perilous quest (most likely recovering the Torch of the Burning Sky). After being debriefed by Headmaster Simeon, they will be approached by the young sorcerer Jineer who requests they visit his fellow colleague Mira, who has been affected by the dreamless state.

After meeting Mira and other affected townsfolk, the heroes will come to find that those whose dreams have been taken are unable to sleep due to a terrible void that has replaced their otherwise normal dreams and nightmares. Many of the patients will point to the reclusive archmage Ovnor Kaivar, leading the characters to the second act. Before they can go to the archmage's tower, Wanderer animates the nightmares of one of the patients, hoping to slay the party before they can interfere with his plans.

Following the information gathered from the affected townsfolk, the heroes will come to the extra-planar tower of Ovnor Kaivar. The tower is filled with powerful guardians and sneaky traps that guard the way up to the inner sanctum of the archmage. Upon reaching the final chamber, the heroes will confront Ovnor as he finishes conjuring a planar gate. Not seeing the heroes as a threat, Ovnor explains that he has had nothing to do with the dream thefts, and tells them of his plans to exact vengeance upon the trillith who has stolen his dreams as well.

Before the party can leave to confront the trillith, a creature steps through Ovnor's gate; the marut Obsequies III. The inevitable immediately recognizes the players as having Indomitability's boon and in response attacks them. After fighting the powerful outsider, the heroes discover that the trillith Wanderer is at the Wayfarer's Theater and must rush there to stop him.

The final act of the adventure sees Wanderer coming on the Wayfarer's stage and putting the crowd into a powerful dreamlike haze. While in this state, the trillith begins to siphon their dreams into a portal to Trilla's realm that he has created on stage. As Wanderer sends the dreams through the portal to create a new trillith, the party will fight him on stage.

If the party is able to defeat Wanderer before the new trillith is born, then the dreams of the crowd will change to be more hopeful and a new trillith named Deliverance will emerge and restore the stolen dreams. Should the heroes fail, a new darker trillith named Misery will emerge to haunt them in the future.

Act One: Investigation

In this act, the party returns to Seaquen after a long journey. They are given just enough time to safely rest and recuperate before their skills are requested by the townsfolk of the city. It seems that several people have been struck by an ailment that does not allow them to safely sleep, word of this has not spread to the general public and the Lyceum would like it stamped out before it does.

Returning Heroes

After returning from the forests of Ycengled with the sought after Torch of the Burning Sky, the heroes have become legends in the eyes of the citizens of Seaquen. Holding such a literal beacon of hope and power has uplifted the spirits of resistance forces in the city, and everyone seems far more upbeat then the previous times the players have been here.

Where once it was impossible to find a proper inn to rest in, innkeepers now squabble over who will host the great heroes who found the Torch, and even storekeepers give them slight discounts on various items to help in their quest. What this means for the players is that they will not have to worry about paying for lodgings or food during their stay in Seaquen, and will receive a 25% reduction in prices on all non-magical items as well as a 10% reduction on the prices of magical items.

The heroes will also be told that briefly after their return the Wayfarers began running plays at their theater. These plays are based on the exploits of the party. While the heroes have been offered many invitations to the show, they are likely unable to attend due to continual meetings at the Lyceum.

A Simple Request

The adventure begins after the heroes are finished with one of their many debriefings at the Lyceum. In this meeting the heroes have been listening to various diviners including headmaster Simeon explain the responsibilities of bearing the Torch, as well as the political ramifications that all of their actions will likely have now. In short, the heroes have spent their time enduring long and drawn out meetings that will likely bore all but the most politically minded of them. It should be emphasized that it has been some time since the heroes have been adventuring or even done more then rest and attend meetings.

As the players exit one of the Lyceum's meeting rooms they will be given a moment of reprieve before their next meeting, entitled "Proper Conduct when Faced with Shahalesti Military Command Staff." This meeting is scheduled to take about four hours of the heroes' time.

During the time off before their next meeting the party should make Spot checks (DC 15) to spot someone is watching them from the hallway. Anyone who goes to investigate recognizes the young Jineer (see adventure four, *The Mad King's Banquet*), a young student of the Lyceum who might have requested the heroes deliver a letter for him earlier in the campaign. The boy is as obvious as ever when tracking the players and at their current levels most of the players should notice the young lad.

If the heroes approach Jineer or acknowledge him, the youth will seem ecstatic almost to the point of tears. Whether or not the players say anything to the young sorcerer, he will soon speak.

"Oh it's so great to see you again!" The youth you recognize as Jineer chimes.

"The halls of the Lyceum are abuzz with your tales, even the city streets are filled with rumors about you. The Wayfarers are showing plays about your exploits..." The blond haired boy pauses and begins to count his fingers briefly. "I've seen their plays three times now!"

Give the players a few moments to chat with young Jineer about their recent adventures. If his father survived the events of adventure four, then Jineer will smile and tell the players that his father is now acting as advisor to the king (whoever the king of Dassen now is).

Once the reunion is over and the conversation begins to die down Jineer will seem to think pensively for a moment.

Jineer looks meekly at the floor, his youthful vitality almost drained. Clenching his right hand in a fist, the boy speaks lightly his tone increasing with each word. "I know you must be really busy now... but... I have a favor to ask."

"My friend Mira hasn't been feeling well the past few weeks. She can't sleep properly for some reason; she's had to drop out of classes here because of it."

Jineer takes a moment to compose himself then looks up, his young face full of color once again. "I was wondering if you could look into what has happened to her. I did some looking around town and found that she isn't the only one suffering from this."

Pulling a small scroll case out of his robes he looks over all of you for a moment, smiling the entire time. "If you have some time can you go speak to Mira? She'd really appreciate it. She's at the Lyceum Infirmary; I've marked it on this map."

An older voice booms from the end of the hallway, each of you recognize it as the voice of one of the several school teachers who have been lecturing at your debriefings. "Jineer! Class begins in two minutes, if you're late again you will help the kitchen staff for the next week."

If one of the heroes takes the scroll and agrees to speak with Mira, Jineer will take their arm and thank them before running off to his next class. If the players say they cannot help then Jineer will seem saddened and walk away slowly not caring about his class at all.

Either way, the players will now have to decide if they will attend their next meeting. If they opt to stay then they will find the meeting room is closed with a sign on the door that says "Instructor away sick". A group of two men outside the door indicate that the instructor had not slept in almost four days because of some strange ailment. The instructor is also present at the Lyceum Infirmary.

Lyceum Infirmary (EL 14)

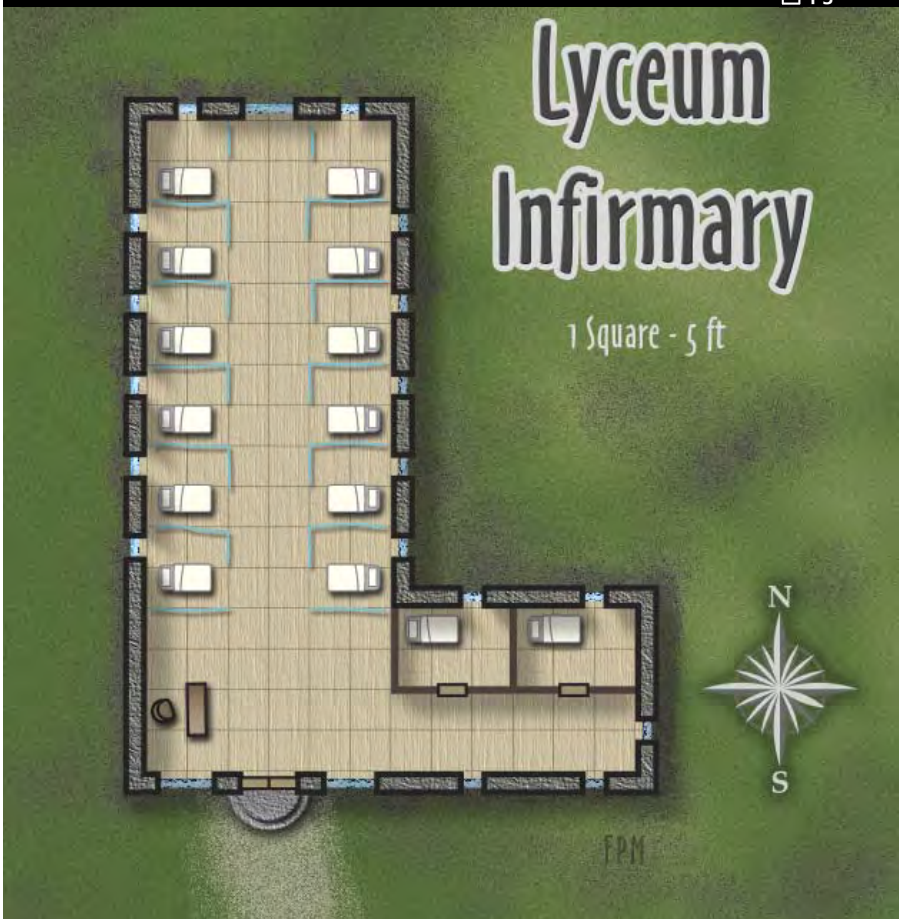
On the grounds of the Lyceum academy is the small student infirmary, a single story L-shaped building with a simple non-magical look to it. It is easily recognizable as one of the few standard building of the academy.

Aside from two examination rooms, the majority of the Infirmary is a wide open area with blue silk curtains blocking off specific areas where patients reside. Currently the Infirmary is overpopulated with various different patients, the majority of which have had their dreams stolen by the Trillith Wanderer.

Entering the Infirmary your ears are accosted by the sounds of low moaning, the near euphoric smell of various medical concoctions assaults your nose. The female attendant at reception takes a moment to gaze up briefly giving you little heed before tucking her head down back at her papers.

Looking around you see various stalls curtained with light silk fabrics, each stall bearing the shadow of a single bed and chair. While there are a few scattered coughs about, the majority of the noise coming from this place is terrible grunts of perceived pain and anguish.

Game Master's Map pg. 693



If they ask the receptionist, the heroes will be directed to the stall that contains young Mira. She is a short woman in her teens with long brown hair that comes to her shoulders. Currently she is draped in a green medical vest and lies on her bed staring blankly at the ceiling. If approached she will take no notice of the heroes and continue to stare up at the ceiling.

If a hero speaks to Mira, she will take a few seconds to respond.

"Are you real or are you a dream? I can't tell anymore, everything is so real now. The walls of dream and reality are broken for me, I am continually awake but continually asleep... how is this possible?"

When questioned about her condition, Mira will explain to the heroes that she is in a state where if she falls asleep her mind remains awake and she cannot move or react, to her this is a terrifying prison that she wishes to avoid. Though she cannot remain awake forever, she tries with all her might to remain awake for as long as possible to avoid the "sleepless sleep."

After the players have received a vivid description of Mira's state, the following scene occurs.

Mira's eyes remain affixed to the ceiling as she speaks once more in a hushed tone. "I remember the night this started... I was walking home with Jineer after class we stopped in front of his dorm. Then the fool tried to kiss me, and of course I let him."

Closing her eyes tightly and clenching the sides of her bed Mira continues. "Then we parted ways and I headed back to my dorm. That's when I spotted him... the old man in the violet robes. I felt winded for a second then fell down..."

As she continues you begin to notice the light seep out of the room, the torches at the ceiling of the infirmary spring to life with fire immediately.

Mira continues as the darkness grows throughout the room. "When I awoke I saw him over me, the archmage Ovnor Kaivar. He looked down at me almost sorrowfully before I slipped off into my first dreamless sleep."

With the conclusion of the story a cry comes from the other side of the room. Looking across you see the shadow of one patient rise up from his bed screaming. "No! Father please don't... NO!"

Almost in tune with the man's screams a shake rumbles across the building, followed by another. Looking down the aisle of the infirmary you see a massive ten-foot tall black figure stepping slowly forward. The creature bears a blackened chain of metal in both of its spiked arms. Taking another brief step forward the beast hisses in a dark tongue. "Fooools... I will devour your souls!"

Infirmary Clues
Gather Information

DC	Result
10	"I don't remember anything. I was walking home from the Lyceum one night and I couldn't sleep."
15	"My guess is it's the wizards. I've seen too many suspicious people of their lot about lately. I eyed that violet wizard Ovnor Kaivar on the streets just a few weeks ago."
20	"I haven't been here too long; I stopped sleeping well about a week ago when I saw the latest Wayfarer performance. Just felt sort of empty after that play."
30	"It happened to me about three days ago. I saw a robed figure off in the distance holding some strange staff. Next thing I know another similarly garbed fellow in a violet cape was close, holding me after I fell down."

The Archmage Ovnor Kaivar
Gather Information

DC	Result
10	There's an archmage who lives in a tower outside of Seaquen.
15	Ovnor Kaivar, the Violet Archmage, lives in a well guarded tower that oversees the marshes west of Seaquen.
20	Considered a contemporary of other famous wizards, such as Gabal of Gate Pass, Ovnor used to be a member of a well known adventuring group until several years ago when his wife died on a quest.
30	In recent times, Ovnor's two daughters were killed while escaping Ragesia. Shahalesti forces who were staging a raid on a Ragesian town accidentally caught the two in a brutal magical crossfire. Since that moment Ovnor has become withdrawn, only leaving his tower to see the occasional Wayfarer show.

The creature that has appeared is a horned devil, created from the nightmares of one of the patients. Desiring the dreams of those who have endured torment and agony, the trillith Wanderer stands outside the halls of the infirmary, peering in through the windows at the patients.

Realizing the threat that the heroes pose (especially if they bear the Torch), Wanderer has created a physical manifestation of one of the patient's nightmares. In this case it is a horned devil that was summoned by Ragesian inquisitors to capture his family while they fled to avoid the Scourge.

Horned devil (CR 16): 172 hp, MM. See below.

Tactics

This devil is unique and does not have access to all of its normal abilities, in particular its summoning, teleportation, or *persistent image* spells. Also due to the nature of the fight the nightmare does not use its *fireball* ability, and instead relies on *lightning bolts*.

The devil will only be able to move in a straight line down the aisle of the infirmary due to its size, but it will be sure to make use of its reach to attack the heroes. If they end up in a convenient line then the horned devil will make use of its *lightning bolt* attacks; otherwise, it will use conventional attacks to bring them down.

Aftermath

Upon defeating the devil, the creature will burst apart into blue and green energy that retreats into the body of the screaming man. Immediately the man falls asleep peacefully; his dreams now restored to him.

Players can immediately make a Spot check (DC 20) to notice a purple robed figure moving out of sight through the other side of a nearby window. This is the trillith Wanderer using its *alter self* ability to play on the heroes' recently acquired knowledge of the archmage Ovnor.

Once the encounter is over the players will likely pursue the old archmage. Any of the Lyceum staff knows enough about Ovnor to direct them to his tower that overlooks the marshes to the west of Seaquen.

Act Two: A Wizard Did It

Following their actions at the Lyceum Infirmary, the party will be directed to the tower of the archmage Ovnor Kaivar. The tower is a slender and tall building with one strange descriptive item; it's bigger on the inside. Ovnor's tower actually is linked to a small demi-plane that the archmage discovered in his younger years.

The heroes will need to endure the guardians and defenses of the tower to reach the archmage within. Then once they find the wizened wizard, they will learn the truth of dream theft, but not in time to prevent the summoning of a dangerously powerful planar entity.

The Archmage

A local asset in Seaquen's resistance to Ragesia has been the archmage Ovnor Kaivar. Growing up in Ragesia as a court wizard, Ovnor eventually departed those lands in search of adventure and fame. Founding an adventuring group of his own, Ovnor became well known across the lands for his powerful magics and aura of bravura. Rumors even persist that Ovnor was a contemporary to the Archmage of Gate Pass, Gabal.

Marrying at a young age, Ovnor sired two daughters to his elven wife Illyana. After the birth of their daughters, Ovnor and Illyana went on a quest to the mysterious island south of Ostalin. It was during this quest that Illyana was slain and Ovnor's world shattered. After that day he became a recluse in his tower outside Seaquen, sending his two daughters for schooling in Ragesia.

In recent times the commencement of the Ragesian Scourge worried Ovnor, who demanded his children come to Seaquen for their own safety. Only months ago did news reach the archmage that his daughters were both slain by a Shahalesti raiding force in Ragesian territory. This event, coupled with the recent incursion into Seaquen's borders by the Shahalesti navy, has made Ovnor suspicious of any loyal to their armies.

Since the death of his daughters Ovnor has retreated further into his tower and has only given the barest of aid to the resistance, while he prepares himself for what he believes will be an apocalyptic final battle between the Ragesians and Shahalesti (whom he intends to slay both sides of). The only major excursions that Ovnor has made in the past few months were to attend plays put on by the Wayfarers, a pastime he and his wife once enjoyed.

During a Wayfarer theatrical production, the daydreams of Ovnor attracted the attention of the trillith Wanderer, who could not resist stealing them. Bereft of dreams and mourning his daughters, Ovnor became more irritable then ever. Realizing he was under some kind of effect, the archmage used his considerable skill to divine the nature of what happened to him. Upon learning part of the nature of the trillith and the theft of his dreams, the archmage now had a funnel for his rage.

Tracking Wanderer for several weeks, Ovnor put himself at the scene of various dream thefts, something that has led the heroes to his tower. In truth Ovnor is not an evil wizard but one of good, albeit direct, intentions. Realizing he could not keep up with the quick moving trillith, Ovnor has continued his research; when the heroes arrive at his tower, he is preparing a highly particularized *gate* spell to summon planar assistance.

The Archmage's Tower

Long ago during Ovnor's adventuring days, the wizard and his fellow party members stumbled across a stone gateway to a small demi-plane. The plane itself was barren and devoid of life, and most of the party paid it little heed once they explored it. Eventually one of Ovnor's old rogue companions made a wise crack about 'taking it with them', which took root in the aspiring wizard's mind.

After his adventuring party disbanded Ovnor took the extra-planar gate and began testing it just outside the borders of Seaquen. Not being one to waste precious items Ovnor put it to use. Originally crafted as a bet between him and Gabal, Ovnor believed it would be 'interesting' to have the majority of his private study on a different plane, so he used the portal to craft such a stronghold. In the end Gabal crafted a school and Ovnor had a planar fortress, they agreed that they tied.

On the outside the tower looks like a traditional stonework spiral tower with a large domed roof. In truth the entirety of the tower is filled with stone; the planar portal at the entrance of the tower allows access to the demi-plane which is Ovnor's true lair.

Note: The demi-plane has the minor positive trait, meaning that all living beings within the tower benefit from fast healing 2 as an extra-ordinary ability.

Entrance (EL 8)

Ovnor's tower resides only a short distance outside of Seaquen, and the city can still be seen in the distance from the base of the tower. The tower itself is a large gray stonework building with a bulbous top covered in a large crystalline dome. As the heroes approach read the following.

You've seen this tower before; often times it loomed in the distance as you walked in Seaquen. It is roughly eighty feet high and surrounded by grasslands, built entirely of solid gray stonework with the occasional metal embellishment along the sides.

The top of the tower flares out; a large circular top floor seems to be covered in a dome of violet crystal glass.

At the base of the archmage's home is a simple stonework door. The door has in its center a single bronze handle, and it is inscribed with various runes and markings, the trademarks of a potent spellcaster.

The heroes should be suspecting a trap on the door and they would be right. Ovnor has crafted a fairly basic trap for the entrance to his tower, and the writings on the door (Spellcraft DC 28 or Decipher Script DC 30) indicate that intruders will be punished.

The door itself is conditioned to accept only Ovnor's hand, or the proper entry code. The way to enter the tower is to knock the handle a total of four times, twice in rapid succession and the other two spread out over a second. If at any point someone does not input the correct sequence the door activates the trap.

Prismatic Spray Trap (CR 8): Magic device; contingent trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (prismatic spray, 13th-level wizard, DC 20 Reflex, Fortitude, or Will save, depending on effect); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

If the heroes are able to detect and disable the trap, then they will be able to open the door itself with little problem. Should the trap be activated it will give the players ten minutes to investigate once again and if needed break down the door itself. The door is treated as having a magical hardness of 20 and a total of 60 hp.

Portal

After the door has been open the party will see the planar portal behind it.

As the door opens you are presented with a strange pool of color on the other end. A mixed haze of greens, reds, and blues greets seems to move like water along the vertical surface behind the door.

Beyond the veil of shifting colors you can see what appears to be a room, the interior of which is too obscure to make out from this side of the strange portal.

Anyone can immediately make a Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 20) to recognize that this is a planar gate, and by the nature of the colors it would seem to be one that is hospitable to living beings.

The heroes may take some time to test the portal, and unless they are quite resourceful there will be no way to truly test it until one of them steps through to the other side.

1. Study (EL 14)

As you exit the portal your senses assault you. First the smell of dust and aged paper tickles your nose, the shimmering sounds of the portal behind you sound more magnificent then before. Finally you look up and see the room around you.

It's circular, much like the base of the tower you were just in front of; save that it is twice the size. Bookshelves arrange themselves along the walls with space left between them to allow the viewing of windows. The floor is dull brown wood embellishes with the occasional rug and carpet or chair, couch and table. The room seems to be a meeting place or study of some sort.

At the opposite end of the area is another simple stone door similar to the one at the entrance of the tower. Along the walls to the sides of the door are four man sized hardened clay statues standing atop stone blocks, two on each side of the door. In front of the door on the floor is a visible circle of vibrantly glowing blue runes.

Each statue is visible from where you stand. To the left, one statue is a tall thin elven figure clad in full plate with a sword and shield and to her right is a robed figure holding a staff tight to his side. The first statue on the right of the door is a large full bodied half-orc wearing a breastplate and clenching a mace. To the half-orc's right is a hunched over small gnome brandishing two small daggers at his side.

The four statues are representations of Ovnor's adventuring companions. Below each statue is a small metal plaque inscribed with a name and epithet; Smilin' Jack's has been modified with a strikeout and etched writing.

Ovnor Kaivar: Master of unknown magic
Illyana Ovnor: Champion of the blade
Burtog: Devout follower of the righteousness
Smilin' Jack': Renowned ~~thief~~ *duelist*

Any player searching the outside windows will see that they are indeed floating in the Astral Plane; looking outside will show a great silvery sky, with a devoid brown dirt ground that the tower is situated on. Specially made *Walls of Force* prevent access to the outside plane, and any who tried would simply find a small rock world devoid of life.

Ovnor's study is a relatively relaxed room, as long as the heroes remain in the lower side of it. The second they move past the halfway point a *Programmed Image* set by the Archmage activates.

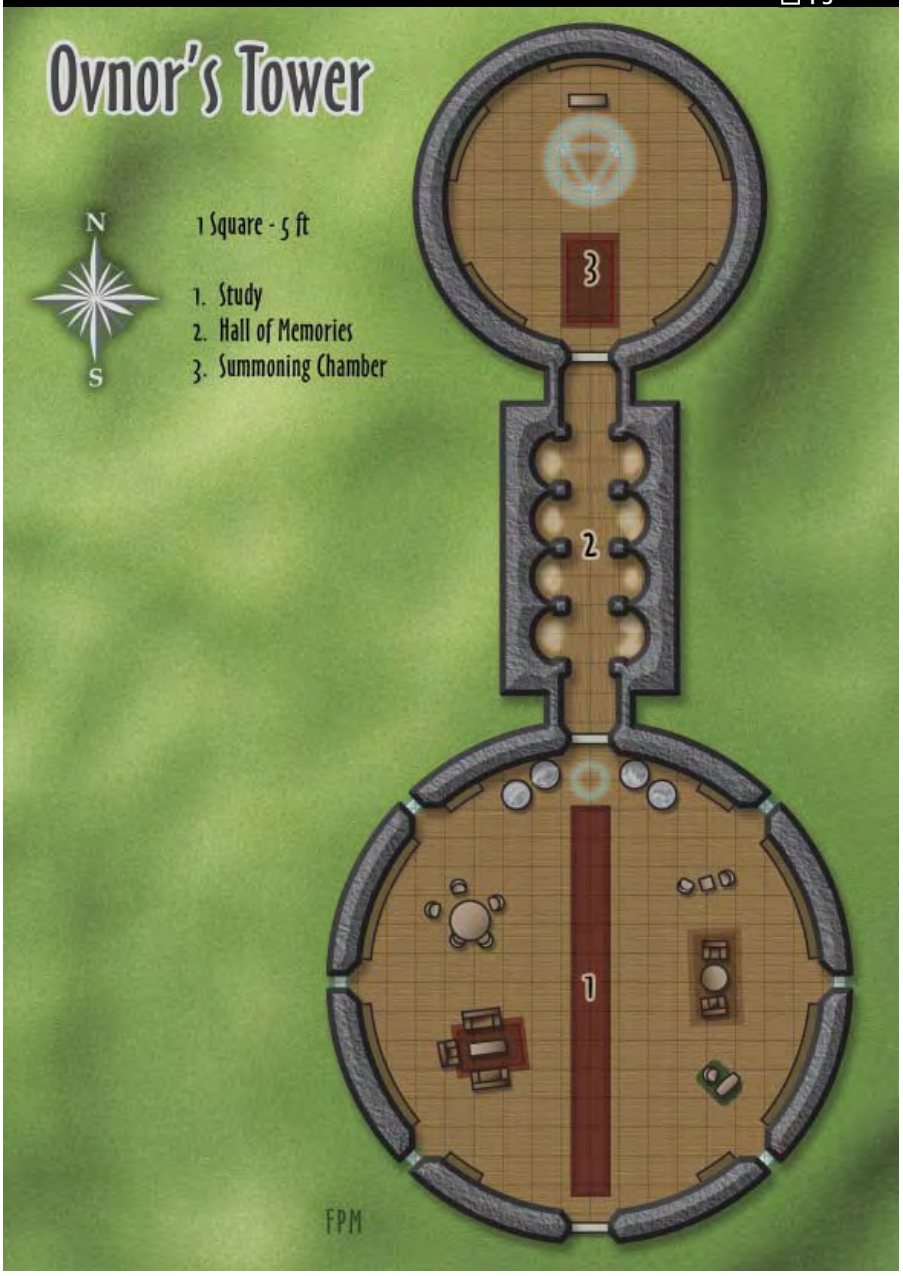
As you take another step forward a figure suddenly appears in your field of view. Positioned on the circle of blue runes now stands a violet robed human, his handsome face looks directly forward as though piercing you.

"Hello intruders. It seems that you have broken into my personal sanctum, most likely to steal my possessions and fill your pockets with my treasure. Adventuring hasn't changed much since my days."

The robed figure's face turns to a condescending smile that only a master of the arcane arts could muster. "But in my day, adventurers would never be so foolish as to simply walk into the lair of one who controls the laws of physics. Perhaps I should show you how we handled things in my day... yes, that sounds proper."

As the sentence finishes the figure vanishes from sight, and no sooner then he does so, the statues along the walls begin to move.

Game Master's Map pg. 694



The image is that of a much younger Ovnor Kaivar, set up when he originally constructed the tower. The door will not unlock until the party has successfully dispatched the statues.

Normally Ovnor would be alerted by various *contingency* and *alarm* spells placed throughout his tower, but he is currently too busy to notice their activation.

Clay golems (4) (CR 10): hp 90 each, MM. No chance of berserking, except see below.

Tactics

Each of the golems represents a character class (wizard, fighter, cleric, rogue), though this has no bearing on their combat statistcs. Instead, each golem has orders to target intruders who match their class first, then spread out to engage others.

Once engaged with their preferred foe, the golems will attempt to full attack whenever possible, or will simply move to engage and make one attack. They will only use their *haste* ability if they are reduced to below half their original hit points.

Due to the special construction method used, these golems are immune to the normal chance of going berserk that clay golems possess. Instead, if the heroes destroy the golem of Illyana (the one targeting fighters) before they destroy Ovnor's golem (the one targeting wizards), Ovnor's golem will go berserk against the heroes and benefit from a permanent *haste* and +2 to Strength for the remainder of combat.

2. Hall of Memories

This small hall leads directly to the private sanctum of Ovnor. Along the walls of the hall are several alcoves, each containing a permanent image of various people Ovnor knew throughout his life. The archmage often comes here to carry on one-way conversations with the images, though as of late he has simply ignored the inhabitants of the hall, especially the images of his two daughters.

Along the hall are images of the following people:

- Illyana, his wife
- His two half elf daughters (pictured; sharing an alcove)
- Burtog, the half-orc cleric
- Smilin' Jack', the gnome rogue
- Gabal, arms folded and stern looking
- A solar, an old summoned friend of Ovnor's
- A sour-looking barkeep
- A smiling young boy in loose-fitting wizard's robes

Give the players a basic description of the room, describing only the first two stalls. As they advance through the hall describe the other image stalls as they approach them. During their walk down the hall they will begin to hear Ovnor's voice.

Continuing down the hall you hear a low rumble that grows in intensity. Slowly picking up on the words you can hear it's some kind of chant. The words seem to come from the walls themselves.

"Hear me. I have been stolen from, a terrible theft that I alone cannot right. Come to my aid, hear my callings."

The voice is direct but there seems to be much strain in the one who speaks, as though each word were being barely forced out.

The heroes may think that Ovnor is attempting to summon something to combat them, especially if they have taken any items from his study. Try to play this up as much as possible, even though Ovnor is not a direct threat to them, they still should be in the dark as to his true intentions.

As they near the end of the hall there is one more speech that comes from the walls.

"Any who know my quarry, I beseech you to come and assist me. I will offer whatever price in gold or valuables I can. Just aid me in this task, before I fail."

The door at the end of the hall is not locked, and can be opened normally.

3. Summoning Room (EL 15)

Unlike the other rooms that you have seen in this tower, there is very little light in this darkened room. Only a small lamp floating at the roof this circular area gives illumination. The smell of various potions filter into your nose as you can almost taste the acidic content therein.



At the center of this area is another circle similar to the one you saw in the study, though this one is much larger with a fifteen foot diameter. Across from the circle is a small wooden desk that comes about three feet off the ground and is littered with various items that could only be described as spell components.

Behind the desk is an older man garbed in violet robes, his features similar to that of the image from earlier in the tower though much more aged. Deep bags lie underneath his obviously bloodshot eyes, and he seems to lean on his metallic staff and the desk for support.

It takes a moment for the old man to even acknowledge you, at which point his finger comes up shaking.

"Who... Who are you and what are you doing here in my tower?"

There are many likely reactions from the heroes at this point. If they decide to immediately attack the old wizard, he will cast a *wall of force* to block himself off for the party and wish to parlay with them. Should the party wish to speak with Ovnor before immediately attacking they will learn quite a bit from the old wizard.

Ovnor can explain to them who is the real culprit in the case of the dream thefts. He can also impart some of his discovered knowledge on the trillith race; what specific information he possesses is left to the GM. This way if the party has not pieced together some of the facts about this alien race, Ovnor might be able to fill them in.



Either way, the players should be able to gather enough information from the old Archmage to realize that a Trillith is in Seaquen and causing all of the problems. Ovnor can also inform the heroes that the Trillith has been at the Wayfarer's Theater and his own research into the matter has found out that the creature will be there tonight with the intent on stealing as many dreams as it can for some unknown purpose.

Once the players have a clear enough view of Wanderer's agenda, the following scene occurs if they have the boon of Indomitability.

A low hum fills the room, followed by a brief shaking as books fall out of bookcases and items fall of the nearby desk. Soon after a dull thud sound follows, followed by another, and then another. It sounds as if something nearby was ascending stairs.

The sound grows louder as a form begins to emerge from the glowing circle in the center of the room. Walking up an invisible hidden staircase it takes a few seconds for the being to come into full view.

Standing roughly fourteen feet tall is a brutish humanoid clad in dull golden armor. Where skin should be is instead onyx stone, and at various junctures of its body are moving gears and other mechanical parts.

Gazing its helmeted head over to Ovnor the creature booms in a monotone voice. "I am Obsequies III. Your primary target has been accepted."

Turning his head away from the mage, the extraplanar being scans all of you. Once again the emotionally void voice speaks. "Newly discovered secondary targets identified. Engaging."

Due to their ability to "cheat death" with Indomitability's boon, the party has now attracted the ire of the marut Obsequies III. Since the heroes have most likely used the boon to avoid their own death on a few occasions, the Inevitable will show them no leniency.

Some heroes might try to stay the creature and explain that they did not wish the boon put upon them. If the heroes can convince Obsequies III that they wish the boon removed, and are enemies of the trillith, and succeed on a Diplomacy check (DC 35 due to the stressful situation) the marut will agree to allow the heroes to fight the trillith and depart. If this is the case, the marut will keep track of the heroes and should they break their word, it will return to seek justice on them.

Most likely the heroes will not be able to parlay with the mechanical creature and will be forced to fight it. Because of the enclosed space it might be difficult for the heroes to handle such a powerful foe; this should however be balanced by the benefit of fast healing due to the plane as well as the assistance of Ovnor (see below). The planar healing does not stack with existing fast healing of the Marut.

If the players do not have Indomitability's boon, then this scene will still occur, but the Marut will not engage the party immediately. It might be prudent to remind the party that while Seaquen is a city of wizards, a Marut walking down the streets would likely cause panic and unrest. If they do not stop the Marut here, then the Trillith will likely realize it has been detected and escape while panic grips the city. This would of course leave countless citizens and Ovnor in a still dreamless state.

Obsequies III, marut (CR 15): hp 112, MM.

Tactics

Obsequies III will begin combat with an area effect *greater dispel magic* hoping to rid the heroes of any potent spells that might still be up. On the second round the marut will attempt to *greater command* the hero who did the most damage to it in the first round and order them to "halt."

Should Obsequies be engaged in melee, he will switch to using his fists of thunder and lightning. Throughout combat the Inevitable

will use whatever spell like abilities he deems appropriate, but will not use his 1/day abilities as he is saving them for his primary target (in this case the trillith Wanderer).

If reduced to below 30 hp, Obsequies will use his *plane shift* ability to return to his home plane. As it will take a week for this ability to recharge, his return is outside the scope of this adventure, but it is likely the players now have a new planar force interested in their progress.

Ovnor, though an archmage, will be all but useless to the party throughout this fight, but for flavor purposes he will begin to scrounging through his bookcases for spells to use. If the party seemed generally honest and well-intentioned he will assist them, as he did not intend for his summoned creature to attack anyone else.

At the beginning of every round after the first roll 1d6. On a 5 or 6, Ovnor has found a beneficial scroll to use on the party; roll again and consult the table below. Ovnor can only cast each spell once and should he find the same scroll again, it is a dud and nothing happens.

1 Dud (*darkvision*, or other useless spell)
2 *Owl's wisdom, mass*
3 *Bull's strength, mass*
4 *Bear's endurance, mass*
5 *Cat's grace, mass*
6 *Haste*

If the party somehow offended or fought Ovnor, the archmage will not assist in combat at all, watching to see who gains the upper hand.

Aftermath

The heroes now know that a trillith is responsible for the theft of dreams, and that it plans to attend tonight's presentation of the Wayfarer's Theater. They will need to move fast to return back to Seaquen and stop the trillith before it completes its twisted scheme.

Act Three: The Show Must Go On

The heroes now realize who the true threat in Seaquen is and must rush to stop it. As the heroes reach the Wayfarer's Theater they engage in combat with the Trillith Wanderer who has put the audience into a dreamy haze making them unable to tell reality from dream. On the stage of the theater the heroes must fight Wanderer in hopes of returning the dreams of those whom the Trillith has stolen from.

Enthralled

All the time the heroes have spent at the tower of Ovnor Kaivar, the trillith Wanderer has been preparing for the Wayfarer performance. It is his plan to put the crowd of the play in a half-dream state where their waking dreams can be sent to Trilla. With his own innate ability to create a portal to the dream realm of his mother, Wanderer plans to use the dreams of the audience to create a new trillith brother or sister.

The crowd is filled with various different townsfolk, and the GM is free to put in a few familiar faces. The effects of Wanderer's portal will make the audience ineffective for the majority of the act, but having some characters who the players know in the audience can add to the tension of the battle.

Having snuck onboard with the other attendees of the play, Wanderer used his *passwall* ability to sneak into the backstage and pose as one of the stage crew. The trillith intends to wait for the most dramatic and dark portion of the production before revealing himself on stage.

Wanderer's ability to create a Nightmare Portal (see Appendix for more information), will cause the crowd to enter a state where they can't discern reality from dream. Thus for the duration of the portal being open, the crowd will just assume everything on stage is part of the play.

The Wayfarer Theater

Unlike previous times the party has attended the theater, this time they likely have quite a few different methods of reaching the boat based location. Since the show is already underway, the players might have to resort to other tactics such as bribing a boatmaster to take them to the Wayfarer vessel (a bribe of at least 50gp), or use a magical solution such as flying.

Once the heroes get onboard the vessel they will find that the main stairway leading down to the theater (see Wayfarer's Theater map from Adventure Three, *Shelter from the Storm*) is magically locked. They can attempt to dispel the lock, though a more obvious route exists from the open storage room on the main deck.

By the time the players get onboard the vessel, Wanderer has not yet made an appearance. This gives the players some time to look around and try to find the Trillith before he sets his plan in motion. Due to his various movement related abilities, the Trillith can remain concealed long enough without arousing suspicions.

Only a handful of stage hands are in the back of the theater; the majority of them being low level experts who will stay out of any combat that occurs. None of the crew has noticed anything particularly strange about tonight's show, or the audience.

Final Act (EL 16)

While the players are searching for the Trillith the current act of the play will end, the Wanderer will use his *dimension door* ability to appear from under the stage.

Once the Trillith has taken to the stage the audience begins murmuring excitedly, an indication for the players to check the stage if they are not in sight of it.

Upon seeing the stage, the following scene occurs.

On the stage now stands a tall man, wrapped head to toe in sandy robes and veils, with a staff that curves at the top, ending in a knot

What Play Is Playing?

The adventure does not make any assumptions as to what kind of production the Wayfarers are enacting when Wanderer begins his plan. As game master, feel free to choose a theatrical production that would appeal to the characters; something established in the storyline would work best.

For simplicity's sake, it can be assumed that the Wayfarers are once again trying the *Spectacular Trial of Toteth Topec* (see adventure three, *Shelter from the Storm*). If this is the case, Wanderer will appear at the end of the second act after Toteth is killed on stage.

Another possibility would be to re-enact one of the many adventures the heroes have undergone throughout the campaign – events such as traversing the Fire Forest, exploring Castle Korstull, or even recapturing the Torch of the Burning Sky.

that looks like an eye. He is positioned in the center of the stage looking at the audience.

"Greetings ladies and gentlemen." A low almost hissing voice reverberates throughout the ship. Each word seems to come from a different direction, as though an invisible crowd surrounds you and speaks.

"You have witnessed great and terrible deeds, the likes of which only few could endure. Today we change this humble establishment's regular performance into something more…"

As the words finish a terrible roar like that of a dragon fills the theater. Behind the robed figure appears a great circular gate, no less then ten feet in diameter. Staring into the gate you see an endless jagged chasm of spiked rock with a young woman in a golden dress running through it. The vision flashes and the image turns to a strange fractal image of twisted reds, oranges, purples and whites; a gateway to some other world.

The gateway hangs ominously in the air over the crowd who remain transfixed on it. From the crowd a small blue orb lifts up off the face of one member and floats slowly towards the portal. Before even realizing it, there are dozens of these orbs now floating to be consumed by the portal.

Wanderer has now opened the portal and the heroes will be forced to fight him in one final showdown if they wish to stop him. Because of the portal and the dream stealing nature of the Trillith, he must remain on the stage for the entirety of the ritual. This ritual stops any kind of attack from reaching Wanderer unless the attacker is within the confines of the stage, forcing the heroes to engage with the Trillith instead of sitting back where he cannot reach.

When the heroes rush on stage to confront the trillith, he will finally reveal himself to them. If they possess the Torch of the Burning Sky, he will seem taken aback by its presence and address the wielder specifically for the duration of the encounter.

The robed man turns and points an accusing finger at your group as you rush on stage to meet him. "So… you are this world's champions. What dreams and nightmares shall we make together this day?"

Driving his staff into the ground the robed man steps back, vanishing as he does so. The wood that makes up the body of the quarterstaff begins to fade slowly until only the top knot; in the symbol of an eye remains. The knot of the staff shimmers blue before turning into a real eye, roughly the size of a human head. The creature that now stands before you is a huge insect like being made up of black carapace and tight gray flesh. Six strong pincer legs and two additional claws support its bulbous weight. In the center of this creature where a head should reside is instead the single immense eye atop a vicious toothy maw.

Letting loose a violent sonic scream, the trillith's true form begins to step forward…

The reasoning behind the stage-bound fight is because of the effects it has on the crowds watching the events unfold. Likely unknown to the players, the dreams that float by are affected by how well the heroes fight against the trillith goes. There is no real time limit on the fight with Wanderer, though a good assumption would be twenty rounds to prevent parties from simply walking away from the fight to heal up or do other long actions.

During the battle players may wish to interact with the floating dream bubbles, or the GM may wish to add some flavor to the combat itself. If a hero attempts to touch a dream bubble, or some action causes him to come in contact with one (GM's discretion), the hero will have a brief glimpse of the dream. It is also advisable to alter the mood of the dream scene dependant on how well the party is doing against the Wanderer in combat. Events may include the following.

- Sailing on a ship filled with pirates in good spirits sharing drinks and singing sea songs.
- Being in the middle of a gladiatorial arena faced against a massive orc wielding a double axe while only having a dagger.
- Standing on a cliff while powerful wizards duel in the skies above.
- A young girl is chained and taken away by Ragesian soldiers and an Inquisitor.
- Being on the streets unprotected as a hurricane ravages Seaquen.

Wanderer (CR 16): hp 160, Appendix B.

Tactics

Wanderer is not foolish, but is desperate to see this plot through and will not leave the stage under any circumstances save his death or dismissal. He will dominate the stage with his complete freedom of movement, *dimension door*, and ability to ignore attacks of opportunity. Using his fast movement, Wanderer will try to move as far as possible in a round to take advantage of his special damage reduction.

Depending on GM description, the players may learn about the unique damage reduction Wanderer has quickly, or painfully slowly. Since the players will be moving around quite a bit, they might think it has an extremely high DR, which in fact it does. Spell casters and ranged combatants should have an easier time damaging the Trillith then other classes. The key with this battle is placement, and making the players move in ways that will direct the Wanderer.

To start off combat, Wanderer will begin with a *slow* spell on the party, which it will only bother casting once as most players should be able to shrug it off. Once that is done the Trillith will begin using his *Shunt Essence* ability to damage heroes it needs to. If any heroes are affected by a *dimensional anchor* spell, Wanderer will instead revert to physical attacks on them, likely casting *haste* beforehand for the extra attack.

If defeated while not trapped by the Song of Forms, Wanderer's form breaks apart into thousands of miniature spiders that skitter off into the portal while letting loose a terrible chorus of screams. If the Trillith is trapped when defeated, the heroes receive his boon.

Once the trillith is defeated the portal begins to shift and change rapidly, remaining open even though the haze over the audience is lifted.

Standing Ovation

With Wanderer defeated or driven off, the heroes should be given a moment to take in what has happened and what to do next. The crowd still seems transfixed on the stage, and the foreboding portal remains in the background of the stage.

If the players were able to defeat Wanderer in time; meaning they did not run away during the battle, then their victory is not in vain.

The looming portal in the background shimmers once more. Sucking in the last of the floating dream bubbles, the portal changes dramatically into a new scene. This image is that of an endless plain of grass and flowers filled with rolling clouds along a blue sky.

Walking along the fields is a humanoid form, composed entirely of light. The form grows closer as it seems to approach the portal, then as if seeing a portrait come to life; the figure emerges onto the stage.

A melodic voice rings aloud. "I am Deliverance. I am my mother's dream, one of few joyful ones she has had. I see that you may

bring my gift to her one day, but that will not be for some time. Instead on this day I give my gift to your kind, in the hopes that you will one day return the payment."

Suddenly the form takes another step forward, breaking apart as it does so. Each fragment of the dream creature seems to fly on its own powers, some through the walls and other into the faces of the audience.

As the light show finishes an uneasy silence fills the Wayfarer theater. The crowd begins to look over at one another, some shaking their heads while others rub their eyes. Finally a sound can be heard, then another, and another. Clapping soon fills the halls of the theater as the crowd begins cheering up at the stage, a stage occupied by you and your companions.

The sacrifice of Deliverance restores those affected by Wanderer's dream theft. Since this was a newborn trillith there is no boon it can grant (the heroes should be content with Wanderer's).

Concluding the Adventure

With the defeat of Wanderer and the sacrifice of Deliverance, the heroes have restored the citizens of Seaquen and dealt with another threat to the Resistance forces. Their legend will continue to spread as the Wayfarer's now see themselves as indebted to the party.

The heroes have likely defeated yet another trillith and gained the further ire of their race, which may impact the reactions of the various dream creatures encountered in the future since Wanderer was considered an old and powerful trillith. Many trillith may now take special note of the party, and if the players have made any enemies amongst their race, they may see this as a signal to continue plots against them.

Also of note is the fact that the heroes have met with the archmage Ovnor. Depending on the relationship that was made, this powerful old wizard may be able to lend several high-level spells to the defense of Seaquen and the use of the party (for a price of course). The old wizard may also be willing to part with some of his prized spells from his spellbook. Since Ovnor was a friend of Gabal, this allows for the players to gain access to any of the spells in Appendix A they may have missed up to this point.

Depending on their interactions with the marut Obsequies III in the second act, the heroes may have made an enemy of the mysterious inevitables. Due to their very nature, the inevitables will continue sending forces against the players and trillith, likely starting in a month with the creation of the marut Obsequies IV. Only until Trilla's dream is ended, or the heroes die, and the boon is gone, will the inevitables see their goal as being complete.



Appendix A
New Rules Material

for All Levels

by the War of the Burning Sky Crew

Cover Art by
Leo Lingas

All the custom rules material that powers the War of the Burning Sky campaign saga is compiled in this appendix.

What is the Burning Sky?
How does an inquisitor rebuke magic?
Who can learn the Song of Forms?
Where did Victory Points come from?
Why is it a good idea for a military leader to have ranks in Perform?

The material in this appendix can be used in any fantasy campaign.

Character Race

Seela

Seela are a fey race native to the Fire Forest of Innenotdar who have a great affinity with song and wind. Before their forest was set to flame, they served as messengers of the woods, singing news on the wind. Their original vibrant beauty has changed to match the dying conditions of their homeland. As large as humans, they have wings reminiscent of a dragonfly's, or of leaves that got too close to an open flame. Their flesh is naturally pale and sunken, and they look perpetually starving and rather eerie.

Seela Traits

Type: Fey type. Seela are fey, not humanoids.
Abilities: +2 Charisma, –2 Constitution.
Size: Medium size.
Speed: A seela's base land speed is 30 feet.
Senses: Low-light vision.
Proficiencies: Proficient with all simple weapons.
Skills: +2 racial bonus on Listen and Perform checks.
Automatic Languages: Common, Elven, Sylvan.
Bonus Languages: Auran, Giant, Gnome, Goblin, Ignan.
Favored Class: Bard.

Seela Special Qualities

The seela have suffered years of torment, and thus are physically fragile but spiritually strong. All seela have the following special qualities:

Bardic Music (Ex): A seela gains one additional bardic music usage a day. If the seela has no levels in bard, she can only use this ability to sing the Song of Forms, detailed on page 450.

Fallow Touch (Su): A seela saps life with the touch of her bare flesh. A seela's unarmed strikes deal an additional 1 point of damage. Prolonged exposure deals 1d6 points of damage per round. A seela cannot harm another seela in this way.

Glide (Ex): A seela's wings allow her to descend safely. She can ignore the first 20 feet of falling damage as long as she is conscious.

Stand the Heat (Ex): Seela can resist the fires of their home forest as if they were affected by *stand the heat*. This power is only available in the Fire Forest of Innenotdar and only as long as the trillith Indomitability is alive and within the forest.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): Seela can use *ghost sound* and *message* each once an hour. The caster level for these abilities is equal to the seela's character level.

Core Class

Commander

Commanders are at home on the battlefield, with a group of allies or minions by their side. While bards simply inspire the courage of their companions, commanders know what tactics have the best chance of leading to victory, and know how to motivate people to fight well. Most commanders are members of the military, but many tribal chieftains, rebel leaders, and ship's captains have the skills and talents of commanders.

Making a Commander

In an adventuring party, the commander is not necessarily the leader, though he is the person to listen to when large or complicated combat looms. Players of commander characters are encouraged to research some classic military tactics, because no amount of stat bonuses can balance out genuinely poor planning. Knowledge of these tactics can help both in small skirmishes and in battles between armies. Some key tactics to bear in mind include:

- *Encircle.* A foe is best attacked from multiple sides. Likewise, you should maintain an awareness of the battlefield so as not to be surrounded.
- *Overwhelm.* Strike where your foe is weakest. Overwhelming a single target and destroying it prevents your enemy from regrouping and recovering. Defend against your own weaknesses, and plan in case you are attacked there.
- *Hit and Run.* If you cannot field overwhelming force, use your enemy's size against him. Strike where not expected and retreat, then strike elsewhere while your enemy is distracted. Know when a small mobile force is more useful than a large army.
- *Maneuver.* Consider where to fight, bearing in mind how to array your forces so they cannot be surrounded, without spreading them so thin that they can be overwhelmed. Know the range at which your enemies are a threat, and take advantage of mobility offered by mounts, vehicles, and magic.
- *Surprise.* It is critical to take the initiative, to strike before your opponents can, and to strike accurately. Understand that your plans can unravel in an instant, and have contingencies in place to handle losing the initiative.

Abilities: Different commanders have different styles, but Intelligence aids a commander in developing and deploying tactics, while Charisma determines how well the commander can motivate his allies. Some commanders like to be in the thick of combat, and so high Strength and Constitution are important.

Races: Any race that excels in warfare can produce a commander, but dwarves, elves, and humans are the most common commanders.

Alignment: Commanders can be of any alignment, but are commonly lawful.

Starting Gold: 6d4×10 gp (150 gp).

Starting Age: As fighter.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the commander class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A commander is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields (but not tower shields).

Commander Feat: At 1st and 2nd level and every 3rd level thereafter, the commander gains either a Leader feat or a fighter feat.

Direct Orders (Ex): A commander is skilled at directing his allies. Once per round as a swift action, the commander may choose one of the following types of rolls. All allies within 30 feet gain a bonus to those rolls equal to the commander's Charisma modifier, to a maximum of the commander's class level. This benefit lasts until the beginning of the commander's next turn, and only affects allies with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher who are able to understand the commander's language.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits.
- Attack rolls while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

At 7th level, the commander can give an order as an immediate action. If the commander had given a different order on his turn, the new order supersedes the old one, and lasts until the beginning of the commander's turn after next.

Initiative Bonus (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, the commander and all his allies within 30 feet when combat begins gain a +1 morale bonus to

initiative checks. This bonus improves to +2 at 6th level, +3 at 10th level, +4 at 14th level, and +5 at 18th level.

Widen Command (Ex): At 3rd level, the range at which a commander can affect allies with his direct orders, initiative bonus, and leadership performances increases from 30 feet to 40 feet. It increases to 50 feet at 9th level, and 60 feet at 15th level.

Battle Cry (Ex): At 4th level, the commander should choose one or two catchphrases, slogans, or battle cries that encompass his style of command. Once per hour he can speak or shout a battle cry as a free action during combat in order to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Chain of Command (Ex): At 12th level, a commander can grant uses of his leadership performances to others, usually his subordinates. When he does this, he must choose a specific leadership performance effect. Those subordinates must make use of that effect in an hour, or the benefit is lost. The effect of the performance is the same as if the commander himself had made it.

For example, a 14th level commander with 17 ranks in Perform and the Leadership Performance feat might grant each of his three warlords the ability to make a speech and give their allies a +3 bonus to attacks, damage, and saves against fear. To do so he uses up three of his own leadership performances.

Implicit Command (Ex): At 13th level, the commander no longer needs to share a language with his allies to grant them the benefits of his leadership performances.

Inspire Sacrifice (Ex): At 16th level, whenever an attack or spell with a visible component would reduce the commander to 0 hit points or below, an ally within 5 feet may choose to take the damage instead. The ally must be aware of the attack and not flat-footed. The commander can benefit from this ability no more than once an hour (since, after the first sacrifice, not as many people are willing to risk their lives). The choice of whether to take the damage is wholly up to the ally.

Seize Command (Ex): At 19th level, a commander may use one of his leadership performances to exert his force of will upon a single creature with an Intelligence of 3 or higher within 30 feet. If that creature fails a Will save (DC 10 + ½ commander's level + commander's Charisma modifier), it obeys the orders of the commander to the best of its ability for one hour. During this time, the creature acts as if it was completely loyal to the commander and his allies, even at the expense of its own normal allies. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Tactical Genius (Ex): At 20th level, once per day as a standard action a commander can direct his allies within range of his inspiration to perform swift and complicated maneuvers. All allies within range of his inspiration immediately take one full round worth of actions, keeping their normal initiative order. At the end of this bonus round, normal initiative resumes. The commander does not benefit from his own ability.

The Commander

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Commander feat, direct orders
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Commander feat, initiative bonus +1
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Widen command +10
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Battle cry
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Commander feat
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	Initiative bonus +2
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	Direct orders (immediate)
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	Commander feat
9	+6	+6	+3	+6	Widen command +20
10	+7	+7	+3	+7	Initiative bonus +3
11	+8	+7	+3	+7	Commander feat
12	+9	+8	+4	+8	Chain of command
13	+9	+8	+4	+8	Implicit command
14	+10	+9	+4	+9	Commander feat, initiative bonus +4
15	+11	+9	+5	+9	Widen command +30
16	+12	+10	+5	+10	Inspire sacrifice
17	+12	+10	+5	+10	Commander feat
18	+13	+11	+6	+11	Initiative bonus +5
19	+14	+11	+6	+11	Seize command
20	+15	+12	+6	+12	Commander feat

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills: The commander's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at First Level: (6 + Int modifier) × 3

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Playing a Commander

The traditional fantasy military leader is a soldier who has risen to the highest ranks of the army, but fighters and paladins lack the necessary skill points to be truly effective leaders compared to classes that focus less on combat, particularly bards or rogues. The commander class maintains the martial flavor of the fighter, but trades some combat prowess for abilities that improve teamwork. While some characters may find appeal in being a single-class commander, the commander class is primarily designed to be useful for other characters, especially fighters, to dip into.

Of course, in a fantasy setting, theoretically anyone can command an army. Leader feats have enough variety that characters of any class could choose to be a leader and still keep the flavor of their original class. You might consider letting the commander class not count toward favored class experience penalties, in order to encourage different styles of commander.

Prestige Class

Wayfarer Cirqueliste

While anyone able to teleport and having a penchant for performance can join the Wayfarers, the most respected members are the highly-trained cirquelistes. These agile, typically flamboyant performers are masters of teleportation magic.

Becoming a Wayfarer Cirqueliste

An aspiring Wayfarer must complete an audition as detailed on page 80. See also page 94 for information about the Wayfarers, including the oath a character accepted into the Wayfarers must swear. An aspiring cirqueliste must also learn *Wayfarer's step* and have some ability to entertain a crowd.

Entry Requirements

Skills: 9 ranks in one, and 2 ranks in any other two, of the following skills: Balance, Climb, Disguise, Jump, Knowledge (geography), Perform (any), Tumble.

Spells: Ability to cast *Wayfarer's step* as an arcane spell.

Special: Complete the audition detailed on page 80 and swear the oath explained on page 94.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Wayfarer cirqueliste class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Wayfarer cirqueliste gains no new weapon or armor proficiencies.

Spellcasting: Levels of Wayfarer cirqueliste stack with your arcane caster level for the purposes of caster level and familiar advancement. Additionally, at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste gains additional spells per day and spells known as if he had gained a level in his previous arcane spellcasting class.

Wayfarer's Step (Sp): A Wayfarer cirqueliste can use *Wayfarer's step* a number of times per day equal to his caster level plus three. His effective caster level for this and all other class spell-like abilities is the same as his arcane caster level.

Dimension Door (Sp): A Wayfarer cirqueliste can use *dimension door* once per day at 1st level, twice at 4th level, and three times at 7th level. After using this ability, the Wayfarer cirqueliste's turn does not end immediately, unlike normal *dimension door*.

Traveler (Su): A Wayfarer cirqueliste can ignore effects that would restrict her movement. This acts as the *freedom of movement* spell, and can be used a number of rounds per day equal to twice the Wayfarer cirqueliste's class level. This effect occurs automatically as soon as it applies, lasts until it runs out or is no longer needed, and can operate multiple times per day (up to the daily limit of rounds).

Expanded Spells (Sp): At 2nd level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste may select one spell of 2nd level or lower from either the bard or sorcerer/wizard spell list. This spell must be related to travel or movement, such as *jump*, *levitate*, or *spider climb*; during the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga, *resist energy* would also be a valid choice for this ability, because it protects warded characters against the fires of teleportation (see page 442). The Wayfarer cirqueliste may expend one of his daily uses of *Wayfarer's step* to use the chosen spell instead as a spell-like ability.

At 4th level, the Wayfarer cirqueliste gains another spell, which must be of 3rd level or lower. At 6th level he gains a spell of 4th level or lower, and at 8th level he gains a spell of 5th level or lower. Whenever he gains a new expanded spell, the Wayfarer cirqueliste can choose to also replace one of his other expanded spells with a new spell.

Sense Teleportation (Su): At 2nd level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste can sense recent teleportation. If a Wayfarer cirqueliste comes within 60 feet of a location where teleportation either arrived or departed within the last ten minutes, he is immediately aware of it. By concentrating for one round he can locate the exact location the spell occurred, and by concentrating a second round he knows whether the subjects were arriving or departing. Finally, by concentrating for a third round he can sense the area the subjects departed from or arrived at, getting enough information about the area to teleport there as if the area were "viewed once." If the Wayfarer cirqueliste does not follow the teleportation within ten minutes, he loses this sense of that area, and treats that area as "never seen" (unless he has, in fact, seen it before).

Teleport (Sp): At 2nd level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste can use *teleport* once per day, twice at 5th level, and three times at 8th level. Using this ability requires one full minute. At 8th level, the Wayfarer cirqueliste can use *teleport* as a standard action.

The Wayfarer Cirqueliste

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Wayfarer's step, dimension door, traveler	—
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Expanded spells (2nd), sense teleportation, teleport	—
3	+1	+1	+3	+1	Extra passengers, splendorous passage	+1 spells per day/known
4	+2	+1	+4	+1	Expanded spells (3rd), swift step	—
5	+2	+1	+4	+1	Abduct, celeritous strafe	+1 spells per day/known
6	+3	+2	+5	+2	Expanded spells (4th), greater teleport	—
7	+3	+2	+5	+2	Spellrunner, unanchored	+1 spells per day/known
8	+4	+2	+6	+2	Expanded spells (5th), planar spell, prescient dodge	—
9	+4	+3	+6	+3	Teleportation circle	+1 spells per day/known

Hit Die: d6.

Class Skills: The Wayfarer cirqueliste's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (the planes) (Int), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Speak Language (none), Spellcraft (Int), Tumble (Dex), Use Magic Device (Cha), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Extra Passengers (Ex): At 3rd level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste can take additional creatures with him whenever he uses *dimension door*, *teleport*, or *greater teleport*. For each use of *Wayfarer's step* he expends, he can bring along one additional Medium creature.

Splendorous Passage (Ex): At 3rd level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste adds his Charisma bonus (if any) to Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Jump, Ride, Swim, and Tumble checks.

Swift Step (Ex): At 4th level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste can use his *Wayfarer's step* spell-like ability as a swift action. Only his *Wayfarer's step* spell-like ability is quickened. Spells he has access through Expanded Spells are not usable as swift actions using this ability.

Abduct (Su): Starting at 5th level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste's teleportation spells and spell-like abilities can affect unwilling creatures as if they were willing. Such creatures may make a Will save (DC 10 + spell level + Wayfarer's Charisma modifier) to avoid being forced to teleport.

Celeritous Strafe (Ex): At 5th level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste who uses a move action to move can take his standard action for the turn at any point during his movement.

Greater Teleport (Sp): At 6th level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste can use *greater teleport* once per day. Using this ability requires one full minute. At 8th level, the Wayfarer cirqueliste can use *greater teleport* as a standard action.

Spellrunner (Su): At 7th level, whenever a Wayfarer cirqueliste casts a spell with an instantaneous duration, he may expend a daily use of *Wayfarer's step* to teleport to any space within that spell's area or adjacent to one of its targets, as long as that space is within 800 feet of the Wayfarer cirqueliste and is unoccupied.

Unanchored (Su): At 7th level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste can attempt to use dimensional travel even when an effect — like *dimensional anchor* — prohibits such movement. Whenever he casts a spell or uses a spell-like ability with the teleportation descriptor he may make a caster level check against DC 11 + caster level of the prohibiting magic. If he succeeds, his teleportation spell or spell-like ability functions normally. If he fails, the spell or ability is wasted.

Planar Spell (Su): At 8th level, any spell a Wayfarer cirqueliste casts can affect an incorporeal or ethereal creature just as it would a corporeal creature, at the Wayfarer cirqueliste's choice.

Prescient Dodge (Ex): At 8th level, once per day a Wayfarer cirqueliste can take a move action as an immediate action. If he does this in reponse to an attack and moves to a space the attacker cannot target, the attack misses him. If he moves but is still within reach or range, the attacker automatically readjusts his aim, and the attack is resolved normally. Using this ability must be declared after an attack is announced but before the attack roll is made.

Teleportation Circle (Sp): At 9th level, a Wayfarer cirqueliste can use *teleportation circle* once per day. Using this ability requires ten minutes.



Wayfarer Cirqueliste – Art by Todd Schumacher

Wayfarers Beyond the Burning Sky

This class is slightly overpowered in settings where you don't catch on fire for teleporting (see page 442). In these settings, reduce the number of uses of *Wayfarer's step* to one per level per day.

Racial Paragon Class

Seela Paragon

Seela who are strong of spirit can take one level in the seela paragon class. Seela who leave their ashen forest and travel to more promising lands can take the second level in this class. Levels in the seela paragon class never result in XP penalties for multiclass seela characters.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the seela paragon class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A seela paragon gains no new weapon or armor proficiencies.

Personality (Su): A seela paragon adds her Charisma modifier to her hit points at each level, instead of her Constitution modifier (this applies to all class levels, not just seela paragon levels). She also applies her Charisma modifier to Fortitude saves and Concentration checks instead of Constitution.

Levels of the seela paragon class count as levels of bard for the purpose of determining access to bardic music ability, as long as the seela has at least one level of bard. Her bard levels still determine how many uses of bardic music she gets each day.

Fallow Healing (Su): Whenever the seela deals damage with its fallow touch, it heals an equal amount of damage. A seela can heal no more damage than twice her Charisma modifier in a day in this way. At 2nd level, she can heal up to triple her Charisma modifier in a day in this way.

Limited Flight (Ex): A 2nd-level seela paragon gains the ability to fly for brief stints. She gains a fly speed equal to her land speed, with average maneuverability. However, she can only fly for a number of rounds every ten minutes equal to her Charisma modifier. After that, she must descend. Additionally, her glide ability improves. When falling, she can choose to descend as slowly as 60 feet per round and to take no damage.

Longwalker (Su): A 2nd-level seela paragon is considered to always be bonded to whatever natural terrain she is in. This allows her to avoid taking Constitution damage when singing the Song of Forms, and may have other benefits, at the game master's option.

Charisma Bonus (Ex): A seela paragon gains +2 Charisma at 2nd level.

Seela Paragon

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special Abilities
1	+0	+0	+2	+2	Personality, fallow healing
2	+1	+0	+3	+3	Limited flight, longwalker, +2 Charisma

Hit Die: d6.

Class Skills: The seela paragon racial class's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Spot (Wis), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.



Alternate Class Features

East Wind Training

Level: Sorcerer 1.

Replaces: You do not gain a familiar.

Benefit: You gain East Wind Style as a bonus feat, if you fulfill the prerequisite.

Rebuke Magic

Level: Cleric 1 or blackguard 3. Must channel negative energy.

Replaces: You do not gain the ability to turn or rebuke undead, and you do not have Diplomacy or Heal as class skills.

Benefit: You can rebuke magic a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier. Rebuking magic can dispel ongoing magical effects as the spell *dispel magic*, and can counter spells if you ready an action to use this ability. This ability can affect spell-like abilities and magic items (as well as psionic powers, psi-like abilities, and psionic items, assuming psionics-magic transparency), but not supernatural abilities. Rebuking magic is a standard action.

When rebuking magic, you must choose a single spell to dispel or counter, or a single magic item to suppress. You can also target a creature and attempt to dispel one effect active on that creature.

You make a dispel check, rolling 1d20 + cleric level against a DC equal to 11 + the spell's caster level. (Paladins are treated as clerics of their level –3, and blackguards as clerics of their level –2.) If you succeed, the effect is dispelled, countered, or suppressed, as if you had succeed in using dispel magic on it.

If used to target a single creature, make a dispel check against each effect active on that creature, starting with the one with the highest caster level, until one effect is dispelled. This use of rebuke magic does not affect magic items. A given rebuke can dispel no more than one single effect.

You gain Intimidate and Sense Motive as class skills.

Special: A character who channels positive energy (such as paladins and good-aligned clerics) can try to counteract your rebuke ability by using a turning attempt to gird another character's magic with positive energy. The character makes a girding roll: 1d20 + cleric level (+2 bonus for having 5 or more ranks of Knowledge [arcana]). The dispel check to rebuke the next spell or spell-like ability the affected character uses must beat the result of the girding roll if the girding roll is higher than the normal DC.

Dangerous Crossing (Detail) – Art by J. M. W. Turner

In the area of a *hallow* spell, you take a –4 penalty on dispel checks when using your rebuke magic ability. This penalty applies if either you or your target are in the hallowed area.

For example, Torrent (cleric 2) and Diogenes (wizard 5) are facing an inquisitor. Torrent expends a turning check to gird Diogenes' magic, and rolls a 19 for her girding check. Diogenes casts a spell, and the inquisitor tries to rebuke its magic. Normally the DC of the inquisitor's dispel check would be 16, but because of Torrent's girding it is 19.

Spellduelist

Level: Sorcerer 1 or wizard 1.

Replaces: You do not gain a familiar.

Benefit: You gain Spellduelist as a bonus feat.

Mageknight

Level: Wizard 1.

Replaces: You do not gain Scribe Scroll as a bonus feat. Choose one school of magic other than Divination. You lose access to that school. (This is in addition to any schools lost due to wizard specialization).

Benefit: You can ignore the arcane spell failure chance from light armor when casting wizard spells. You may select Celestial as a bonus language.

Two Winds Weapon Training

Level: Monk 1.

Replaces: You do not gain proficiency in normal monk weapons. You have a poor Fortitude saving throw progression (+0 at 1st level; +1 per three levels) instead of a good one (+2 at 1st level; +1 every even level).

Benefit: The weapons you are proficient with are bladed whip, club, dagger, javelin, kama, longbow (normal or composite), nunchaku, quarterstaff, shortbow (normal or composite), shuriken, and whip. You treat these weapons (and no others) as special monk weapons.

At 1st level, for your monk bonus feats you can only choose Stunning Fist. At 2nd level you can select Combat Expertise or Weapon Finesse. At 6th level you can select Improved Disarm or Improved Trip.

West Wind Training

Level: Cleric 1.

Replaces: You do not gain armor or shield proficiency.

Benefit: You gain West Wind Style as a bonus feat, if you fulfill the prerequisite.

New Feats

Gate Pass Feats

Adventure one, *The Scouring of Gate Pass*, introduces the player characters to a variety of organizations and affiliations in the city of Gate Pass. Gate Pass feats are a special game option by which the game master can reward players who create characters that are invested in the campaign's conflict from the beginning.

There are six main affiliations player characters could be a part of. At the game master's option, if a player creates a character with one of these affiliations, the character gains the associated feat as a bonus feat at 1st level. The character may also select one of these feats normally, though the benefit granted is not on par with a standard feat. Remember that access to these feats is wholly at the game master's permission.

- **City Council.** While most of the politicians in Gate Pass wish to surrender to Ragesia, some want to take a stand. A character involved in the government and politics of Gate Pass gains Civic Minded as a bonus feat.
- **The Temples.** The religious community of Gate Pass fears the heretical zealotry of the Ragesian inquisitors. An associate of one of the temples gains Blessed by Dreams as a bonus feat.
- **The Military.** Elements of the Ragesian military are displeased with their orders and their new ruler Leska, while commanders of Gate Pass's military desire reinforcements. A member of either military gains Cavalry Errant as a bonus feat.
- **Gabal's School.** Gabal, a famed evoker, maintains a school of war, and he intends to make a stand against Ragesia. An apprentice of Gabal gains Student of War as a bonus feat.
- **Thieves' Guild.** The guild in Gate Pass is nervous about the prospect of Ragesian martial law. One of their members or agents gains Thieves' Guild Sympathizer as a bonus feat.
- **The Resistance.** A small group of Gate Pass natives are taking up arms to defend their home against both Ragesia and Shahalesti. A member of their group gains Blade of the Resistance as a bonus feat.

Leader Feats

Leader feats are part of a group that allows any character to bolster his allies in combat similar to the way a bard can. Fighters can select Leader feats as fighter bonus feats.

Feats Alphabetically

Blade of the Resistance [Gate Pass]

Fed up with the oppression of the Ragesians and Shahalesti, you wage a discreet war against them.

Benefit: You gain Sense Motive as a bonus class skill. Additionally, once per encounter you can select an intelligent creature who has dealt damage to you or your allies as your preferred foe. That creature need not have dealt damage to your or your allies during the current encounter; a previous encounter will suffice. Until the end of the current encounter, you gain a +2 bonus to weapon or ray damage rolls against your preferred foe.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass resistance.

Blessed by Dreams [Gate Pass]

You have helped the Gate Pass temples to manage the annual Festival of Dreams holiday parade, and last year you were promised good fortune.

Benefit: You gain Knowledge (religion) as a bonus class skill. Additionally, once per day you may reroll a single saving throw made by you or any ally within 30 feet of you, using the better of the two results.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass temples.

Cavalry Errant [Gate Pass]

You are (or were) a member of Ragesia's or Gate Pass's military, and are trained as a cavalryman.

Benefit: You gain Ride as a bonus class skill. Additionally, you gain the ability to help your mounted allies. Once per round, you can make a Ride check and use your check in place of an ally's if yours is higher. The ally must be within 30 feet of you.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass military.

Civic Minded [Gate Pass]

You are involved in the politics of Gate Pass, and know your way around the city's laws and government.

Benefit: You gain Diplomacy as a bonus class skill. Additionally, whenever an ally within 30 feet of you uses the aid another ability, the bonus he provides increases by +1. Normally this will improve the bonus from +2 to +3. Multiple characters with this feat do not improve the bonus further, though other special abilities can.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass City Council.

East Wind Style [General]

You have learned the techniques of the Monastery of Two Winds. Your vicious, tempestuous fighting style makes you a storm upon your foes.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast *shocking grasp* spontaneously.

Benefit: You can multiclass freely between sorcerer and monk. If you have monk levels, you can apply your Charisma modifier instead of your Wisdom modifier to your monk's AC bonus and to the DC of your stunning fist attacks. You cannot cast sorcerer spells with the earth descriptor.

If you have the Stunning Fist feat, whenever you make a stunning fist attack, your unarmed strike deals +1d6 points of electricity damage. If you possess the ki strike ability, you can expend a use of stunning fist to cast *shocking grasp* as a swift action (the *shocking grasp* occurs instead of the normal stunning effect). This does not count against the normal limit of using stunning fist only once a round, so you could choose to expend two stunning fist uses to cast shocking grasp and deliver a powerful stunning strike infused with electricity.

You may select Auran as a bonus language.

Elemental Control [General]

You possess great control over one of the classical four elements — air, earth, fire, or water.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (arcana) 15 ranks, ability to cast six spells of the chosen element, at least one of which must be 6th level.

Spells with the air, cold, electricity, or sonic descriptor, or which grant a fly speed count as "air" spells. Those with the acid or water descriptor count as "water" spells. Other spells may count even if they lack the precise elemental descriptor, at the game master's discretion.

Benefit: Your caster level for spells with the descriptor of your chosen element increases by +1.

You can use one of the following sets of powers, as appropriate to your chosen element. For spell-like abilities, your caster level is equal to your normal caster level.

- **Air.** You can use *gust of wind* at will as a spell-like ability. You gain cold, electricity, and sonic resistance 5.
- **Earth.** You gain the spell-like ability to use *stone shape* at will as a spell-like ability. You are immune to petrification and your natural armor bonus increases by +1.
- **Fire.** You can use *produce flame* at will as a spell-like ability. You gain fire resistance 10, and are immune to the fire damage from you own spells.
- **Water.** You can use *create water* at will as a spell-like ability. You can breathe underwater. You gain acid resistance 10, and are immune to the acid damage from you own spells.

Elite Training [General, Fighter]

Choose a weapon you have weapon specialization in. You are highly trained with weapons of that type.

Prerequisite: Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization, fighter level 8th (or fighter level 4th and base attack bonus +10).

Benefit: With the chosen weapon and all weapons with the same damage type, you gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage. If the weapon has multiple damage types, choose one of its damage types.

Equine Stalwart [General, Fighter]

Your skill with horses is masterful, and your preferred mount stands above other horses because of how you have trained it.

Prerequisite: Handle Animal 4 ranks, Ride 9 ranks, Mounted Combat

Benefit: If you spend at least one day training with a warpony or light or heavy warhorse, that steed becomes more stalwart and attains an exceptional connection to you, like a druid's animal companion. You can only have one stalwart mount at a time.

You can handle your stalwart mount as a free action, and push it as a move action. You gain a +4 bonus to all Handle Animal checks with it.

Additionally, based on the number of ranks you have in Ride, your stalwart mount gains additional Hit Dice, similar to advancing an animal, so that the mount's total Hit Dice is equal to the number listed in the table below. Your ranks in Ride also grant your mount bonus tricks, and it gains evasion (or improved evasion) as long as you are within 5 feet of it.

Stalwart Mounts

Ride Ranks	Total HD	Bonus Tricks	Special Ability
9–10	5	1	Evasion
12–14	7	2	
15–17	9	3	
18–20	11	4	
21+	13	5	Improved evasion

For example, a rider with 9 ranks in Ride could give a stalwart light warhorse 2 extra Hit Dice, or a stalwart heavy warhorse 1 extra Hit Die, for a total of 6 either way. These extra Hit Dice grant new feats, skill points, and ability score increases, as normal for adding Hit Dice. Your horse does not increase in size.

Fearless Leader [Leader]

You help your allies avoid the effects of fear.

Prerequisites: Leadership Performance, Perform (any) 3 ranks, plus either Iron Will or resistance or immunity to fear effects.

Benefit: You can spend one minute giving a performance and use one of your leadership performances to try to remove fear. Make a Perform check. Each ally who hears your performance can use the result of your Perform check in place of his saving throw against the first fear effect that affects him within the next hour.

If you have three Leader feats and 9 ranks in Perform, you can use a leadership performance to help allies break free of a fear effect, though only if you have successfully saved against the fear. Make a Perform check. If your Perform check beats the DC to resist the fear effect, each ally within 30 feet of you acts as if he had succeeded his save. If you have four Leader feats and 17 ranks in Perform, you can use this ability to help allies break free of any sort of mind-affecting effect, as long as you successfully saved against it.

Greater Awesome Blow [General, Fighter]

You bat your foes great distances.

Prerequisites: Str 25, Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Awesome Blow, Huge or larger size

Benefit: Whenever you use your Awesome Blow feat, you can knock your foe a distance equal to your space, rather than just 10 feet.

Improved Awesome Blow [General, Fighter]

You can knock your foes about with ease.

Prerequisite: Str 25, Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Awesome Blow, Large or larger size

Benefit: You can take a –4 penalty to any melee attack to gain the benefit of your Awesome Blow feat with that attack.

Normal: You have to spend a standard action to use your Awesome Blow feat.

Improved Mounted Strafe [Fighter]

You can cut down foe after foe as you ride past them.

Prerequisites: Ride 8 ranks, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe

Benefit: When mounted, you may make a full attack while moving. Your attacks can each come at any point during your mount's movement, though if your mount moves more than 5 feet you must move at least 5 feet between each attack.

Normal: You can only make melee attacks while mounted at the beginning or end of your mount's movement. You can only make ranged attacks while mounted at the beginning, end, or precise middle of your mount's movement. You cannot make more than one melee attack in a round if your mount moves more than 5 feet.

Jousting Blow [General, Fighter]

Your charges knock your foes flying.

Prerequisite: Str 13, Ride 8 ranks, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack (or Mounted Strafe), Spirited Charge.

Benefit: When you use a charge action to attack while mounted, you may take a –4 penalty to your attack roll and deliver a jousting blow. If you hit a corporeal opponent that is smaller than your mount, that creature must succeed a Reflex save (DC = damage dealt) or be knocked flying 10 feet in the direction of your charge, falling prone. If an obstacle prevents the completion of the opponent's move, both the obstacle and the creature take 1d6 points of damage, and the opponent stops in the square adjacent to the obstacle.

A mounted opponent may substitute a Ride check in place of his Reflex save to resist being dismounted, and he gains a +2 bonus if he is using a military saddle.

Lashing Whip [General, Fighter]

You threaten the area your whip can reach.

Prerequisite: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: When armed with a whip or other whip-like weapon, you threaten any square your whip can reach, except for squares within your natural reach.

Normal: A whip has 15-foot reach, but does not threaten that area.

Leadership Performance [Leader]

You can inspire the courage of your allies.

Prerequisite: Perform (any) 3 ranks.

Benefit: Perform is a class skill for you, and you gain an ability similar to bardic music. You can use your leadership performance abilities a number of times each day equal to the number of Leader feats you possess. The feat Leadership counts as a Leader feat for this purpose. Unless otherwise noted, abilities granted by Leader feats are extraordinary abilities, and only affect creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or higher who can understand your language; they are not magical.

If you spend a minute giving an inspiring speech or other performance to your allies, their courage is bolstered. If they enter combat within the next hour, they gain a +1 morale bonus on saves against charm and fear effects, and a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls. These benefits last for the first 5 rounds of combat. For the purposes of this ability, combat begins when a character attacks or must make a saving throw.

If you have two Leader feats and 11 ranks in Perform, the bonus increases to +2. If you have three Leader feats and 17 ranks in Perform, the bonus increases to +3. If four feats and 23 ranks, the bonus is +4.

Special: Most leaders focus in Perform (oratory) rather than musical performances.

Legendary Leader [Leader]

Your leadership shall become the stuff of legend.

Prerequisite: Cha 17, Leadership Performance, Perform (any) 17 ranks.

Benefit: Whenever you give an inspiring speech to an ally using the Leadership Performance feat, the benefits of that performance persists for as long as you remain within 30 feet of that ally plus 5 rounds of combat, instead of lasting only 5 rounds of combat.

Additionally, you can use one of your leadership performances to inspire allies to greatness. All allies within 30 feet gain 17 temporary hit points and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as you are within 30 feet, and for 5 rounds thereafter. A given creature can only be inspired this way once per day.

Maneuver Leader [Leader]

You can direct the maneuvers of your allies.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Perform (any) 6 ranks.

Benefit: You can use one of your leadership performances to grant all allies within 30 feet of you (but not yourself) the ability to take a bonus move action immediately, acting in their normal initiative order. This movement does not count against their normal actions on their own turns, nor does it disrupt readied actions.

If you have three Leader feats and 14 ranks in Perform, you can use a leadership performance to let a single ally make a bonus single attack at his highest attack bonus, using whatever weapon he has available. The character may choose not to attack. If you have four Leader feats and 20 ranks in Perform, you can grant a single bonus attack to each ally within 30 feet (but not to yourself).

Melee Lash [General, Fighter]

You can defend yourself in melee with a whip.

Prerequisite: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: When armed with a whip or other whip-like weapon, you threaten an area around you equal to your normal unarmed reach. You can make attacks of opportunity with the whip within that area. Additionally, you don't incur attacks of opportunity by using a whip in combat, or by any other use of a whip, such as with the Third Hand feat.

Normal: A whip has 15-foot reach, but does not threaten that area. Using a whip provokes an attack of opportunity, just as if you had used a ranged weapon.

Special: You can qualify for this feat if you are proficient in any whip-like weapon.

Mounted Strafe [General, Fighter]

You can attack as you ride past your foe.

Prerequisites: Ride 5 ranks, Mounted Combat

Benefit: When mounted, you may take a standard action at any point during your mount's movement. If you attack a creature in melee when mounted, neither you nor your mount provoke attacks of opportunity from that creature for having moved.

If you perform a charge action while mounted, you can attack any creature adjacent to or along the line of your movement. Your mount must still move in a straight line, but you can choose to attack a creature as you pass it by.

Normal: You can only make melee attacks while mounted at the beginning or end of your mount's movement. You can only make ranged attacks while mounted at the beginning, end, or precise middle of your mount's movement.

Special: You may use this feat to qualify for feats and prestige classes as if it were Ride-By Attack.

Necrotic Leader [Leader]

Your leadership performances can affect mindless undead.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Knowledge (religion) 12 ranks, Perform (any) 3 ranks, ability to cast *animate dead*.

Benefit: Your leadership performances can affect mindless undead creatures if they are under your control, or are under the control of one of your allies. This is a supernatural ability.

Operation Leader [Leader]

You can direct your allies in situations that require special skills.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Perform (any) 6 ranks.

Benefit: If you have 5 ranks in Hide and Move Silently, you can make use of your leadership performances without making noise by using communicative gestures, though you can only affect those allies within 30 feet who can see you. This only functions for the Leader feats that don't require you to make a speech.

Likewise, if you have 5 ranks in Bluff and Sense Motive, you can use non-speech leadership performances while being observed. Make a Bluff check, and onlookers unfamiliar with your communication techniques must succeed a Sense Motive check (DC equal to your Bluff check result) or else not realize that you are doing anything unusual.

Either of these abilities only work with allies who you have taken time to establish a set of communication cues, usually taking ten minutes of discussion and practice.

You can use one of your leadership performances to make it easier for your allies to help each other with certain skills. Beginning this is a standard action, and continuing it require concentration. While directing your allies thus, if at least one ally within 30 feet of you has 5 ranks in a given skill, all other allies with at least 1 rank gain a +2 bonus to checks with that skill.

The skills that can benefit from this ability are Balance, Bluff, Climb, Disguise, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Ride, Search, Sense Motive, Survival, and Swim. This ability is especially useful, for example, to help a party navigate difficult terrain, maintain a façade while undercover, or perform an ambush. Note, however, that if you lack the skill ranks to communicate stealthily or discreetly while observed (see above), there are obvious situations in which you cannot benefit from this ability without drawing attention.

Primal Leader [Leader]

Your leadership performances can affect creatures of animal intelligence.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Handle Animal 12 ranks, Perform (any) 3 ranks, ability to cast *speak with animals*.

Benefit: Your leadership performances can affect creatures of animal intelligence that are friendly or helpful to you, or are friendly or helpful to their masters, if their masters are allies of yours. This is a supernatural ability.

Reactive Counterspell [General]

Having trained in the techniques of the Ragesian Inquisitors, you are always poised to counter spells.

Benefit: Whenever a creature you are aware of casts a spell, you may attempt to counterspell that spell reactively. You can only do this if you are not flat-footed, and if you are able to take a standard action in your next round. If you attempt to counter a spell in this way, you give up your standard action in your next round, effectively having used it up already. You can only perform actual counterspells, such as by using *dispel magic*, *slow* to counter *haste*, or using a spell of a similar school with the Improved Counterspell feat. You cannot use this feat to reactively cast damaging spells to disrupt an opponent's concentration, or other similar tactics.

If you have the rebuke magic alternate cleric class feature, you can use a rebuke magic attempt to attempt to counterspell with this feat.

Secret Keeper [General]

You have sworn yourself to keeping secrets, and your oath gives you power.

Prerequisite: Base Will save +3.

Benefit: You cannot be compelled by magic or torture to reveal any secrets, neither by telling the secret nor by guiding your foes to a secret location. Coercion and threats to those you care for can change your mind, but pain and magic cannot crack your will in this regard.

Shining Strike [General, Fighter]

Your weapon flashes with searing light.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +6, Shining Warrior, ability to cast *daylight* as an arcane spell.

Benefit: You can activate your Shining Warrior feat as a swift action instead of a standard action. While using the ability of the Shining Warrior feat to have your weapon glow as bright as *daylight*, that weapon deals an extra 1d6 points of light damage with each hit, or an extra 2d6 damage against creatures particularly vulnerable to light.

Shining Warrior [General, Fighter]

You possess the luminous power of the Solei Palancis, the elite fighting force of the Shahalesti army.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +3, ability to cast *light* as an arcane spell.

Benefit: If you wield a magical weapon that sheds light (or one glowing because of a spell with the [light] descriptor), you can choose to intensify that light, increasing it to the strength of a daylight spell (60 foot radius, with shadowy light another 60 feet) as a standard action once a day, lasting 10 minutes.

Whenever you strike a critical hit with a weapon that is emitting daylight, the creature struck must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be blinded for 1 round. On a successful save, the creature is merely dazzled for 1 round.

While in an area that is brightly illuminated, you gain a +2 bonus to saves against fear and negative energy effects. You cannot be dazzled or blinded by bright light.

Soul Echo [Psionic]

You can tap the souls of other creatures to experience their lives.

Prerequisite: Wis 13, Caster level 3rd.

Benefit: You can manifest the psionic powers *animal affinity* and *sense link* once each per day, with a manifester level equal to your caster level. They are augmented as if you had spent power points equal to your caster level.

If you are not using the psionics rules, instead once per day you can gain a +4 enhancement bonus to any ability score, lasting 1 minute per caster level. Additionally once per day you can forge a connection with one willing creature within 150 feet. For as long as you concentrate, up to 1 minute per character level, you sense what it senses for any one of sight, hearing, touch, or olfactory senses.

Spellduelist [General]

You have studied the art of spell dueling, perhaps under the famed evoker Gabal in the small school he maintains in Gate Pass, or at the Lyceum academy in Seaquen.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast spells.

Benefit: You gain Bluff and Sense Motive as bonus class skills. In addition, you know how to convince an onlooker that you're casting a spell when you actually are not. Whenever you cast a spell, you may make a Bluff check, and any opponent who would respond to you casting a spell — such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action — makes a Sense Motive check with a DC

equal to your Bluff check. If you win the opposed check, you trick your opponent into acting before you actually begin casting. Counterspells are wasted, because they were completed before you began casting; attacks of opportunity that hit you do not force you to make a Concentration check, because the damage was dealt before you began casting; other readied actions are completed before you actually begin casting. If you fail the opposed check, your opponent's action overlaps your spellcasting as normal.

Spellwise Leader [Leader]

You can bolster the magical abilities of your allies.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Perform (any) 6 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefit: You can use one of your leadership performances to coordinate the magic of your allies. Starting to coordinate in this way is a standard action, and maintaining it requires concentration. As long as you coordinate in this way, if an ally within 30 feet of you casts a spell targeting a creature that another allied spellcaster targeted within the last round, that creature takes a –2 penalty to its saving throw for this spell. Additionally, all allies within 30 feet who have at least 1 rank in Spellcraft immediately can identify any spell or effect that you successfully identify with Spellcraft.

If you have three Leader feats and 14 ranks in Perform, while you coordinate your allies' magic, the caster level of allies within 30 feet of you is increased by +1. If you have four Leader feats and 22 ranks in Perform, the caster level bonus increases to +2.

These abilities are supernatural, not extraordinary.

Student of War [Gate Pass]

You have studied the art of war at Gabal's wizard's school, and have practiced battling many foes at once.

Benefit: You gain Knowledge (history) as a bonus class skill. Additionally, you can strengthen your spells for use in large-scale battles. You can spontaneously modify a spell, which extends its casting time: if the spell's normal casting time is 1 action, casting the modified version is a full-round action; for a spell with a longer casting time, it takes an extra full-round action to cast the modified version. When you do so, if the modified spell affects three or more creatures, increase the spell's save DC by +1.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with Gabal's School in Gate Pass.

Tattoomancy [Item Creation]

You can endow tattoos with magical effects.

Prerequisite: Any item creation feat, Craft (tattoo) 6 ranks.

Benefit: When you craft a magic item you possess the proper item creation feat for, instead of making a physical item you can place the magic in a tattoo. The cost to create the item is the same, but inking the tattoo only takes ten minutes for every 1,000 gp of the item's market value.

The tattoo needs positive energy to hold onto the magic and infuse it into the tattooed creature. In order to do this, the recipient must be at full hit points, and then receive a *cure light wounds* spell, or some similar magic that can heal at least 5 points of damage, or some form of channeled positive energy, such as a turning attempt. The character must do this for a number of days equal to the market value of the tattoo divided by 1,000. Only once he has does the tattoo finally take effect. If the character misses a day there is no negative effect other than that the tattoo will not provide a benefit yet.

Tattoos can only emulate wondrous items and rings. Tattoos count against the same body slot that a similar item would, though they can be placed anywhere on the body. Tattoos cannot emulate items that do not fill a body slot. The tattoo permanently fills that body slot, preventing other magic items worn in that slot from functioning.

A magic tattoo can be temporarily suppressed with antimagic or *dispel magic*, but it can only be permanently dispelled by effects that would likewise permanently dispel a magic item. Alternately, if the bearer of the tattoo is willing, a *dispel magic* targeting a specific tattoo can automatically remove it. Finally, if the actual tattooed flesh is removed, the effect of the tattoo is lost.

For example, a character gets a tattoo on his shoulder of a tiger roaring, granting a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength, the equivalent of a *belt of giant strength +4*, which has a market value of 16,000 gp. The tattoo costs 8,000 gp to craft in materials, but only requires 160 minutes, a little less than 3 hours. However, the character must be fully healed and receive positive energy over the course of 16 days before the tattoo grants him any benefits. As long as he has the tattoo, magic belts he wears have no effect, since he counts as already having one.

Please note that, while tattoos cannot be lost, broken, or stolen, they cannot be sold or upgraded either (though they can be removed and replaced). Characters may come to regret spending money on them if later on they want to replace them.

Thieves' Guild Sympathizer [Gate Pass]

You have had dealings with the Gate Pass thieves' guild, and you suspect they might owe you a favor, though you know it might not be safe to push your luck.

Benefit: You gain Bluff as bonus class skill. Additionally, your experience with being a lookout grants you an ability to alert your allies just before danger strikes. If you are not surprised at the start of an encounter, your allies receive a second Listen or Spot check to avoid being surprised.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass thieves' guild.

Third Hand [Fighter]

You can use your whip as if it were a spare hand.

Prerequisite: Dex 13, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Weapon Finesse.

Benefit: When armed with a whip, you are treated as having a free hand that can reach as far as your whip's reach, which you can use to manipulate objects, throw weapons, or even grapple.

Grappling with a whip works as it would with an unarmed strike, except that if successful you deal your whip's damage instead of your unarmed damage. You must still enter your opponent's square if you want to maintain the grapple, or you can simply use your additional whip attacks (if you have any) to make grapple checks, then release your opponent at the end of your turn. With a successful grapple check, you can perform any of the following actions.

- Deal your whip's damage to your opponent.
- Move at half speed and bring your opponent with you (though he keeps the same relative distance to you).
- Pull your opponent closer (up to an adjacent square).

Totem Shape [General]

You can assume the form of a totem animal.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (nature) 4 ranks.

Benefit: Choose a Medium or smaller animal with a Challenge Rating no greater than one-third your character level. Once per day, you can transform into that animal, as with a druid's wild shape ability, and remain in your animal form for one hour per level. You may not change your totem animal once you have chosen it.

This is a supernatural ability. This feat does not stack with wild shape or any similar ability and is not affected by any ability that affects wildshaping; it is a different ability.

Volley Shot [General, Fighter]

You can turn your arrow shots into an area attack.

Prerequisite: Rapid Shot, base attack +6.

Benefit: As a full-round action you can choose a single creature within range of your bow and fire three arrows. That creature must make a Reflex save (DC 10 + your attack bonus with your bow –2 per range increment beyond the first) or take damage as if you had struck that creature with an arrow. You cannot add precision-based bonuses such as sneak attack to this damage.

Vow of Healing [General]

You have pledged yourself to heal all those in need, friend or foe. For this sacrifice, you are blessed with greater healing power.

Prerequisite: Heal 4 ranks, ability to cast *cure spells* or otherwise magically heal.

Benefit: Once per level per day, as a free action you can release a 10-foot radius emanation of positive energy. Every living creature in the area heals 1 point of damage; undead creatures take 1 point of damage. Additionally, you gain one bonus spell slot of your highest spell level, which can only be used for a spell of the healing subschool.

You cannot refuse to heal any injured living creature who asks you for healing, though you are not obligated to provide more than 1 point of healing, and you are not required to heal enemies unless they surrender and you are reasonably sure they cannot betray you. You cannot perform a coup de grace on a living creature, nor can you target damage against a dying living foe (you may deal damage to them with area attacks, though you must make a best effort to avoid doing so). If you violate this oath, you lose the benefit of this feat for 24 hours. Repeated or flagrant transgressions can result in permanent loss of this benefit until you receive an *atonement* spell.

Warmage Strike [General, Wizard]

You can unleash repeated magical attacks of weak power without expending your spells.

Prerequisite: Arcane caster level 5, and see below.

Benefit: When you select this feat, choose one descriptor (acid, air, cold, death, earth, electricity, fire, force, light, sonic, or water) and one attack form (blast, burst, cone line, shield, or touch). You must be able to cast at least one spell with the descriptor you choose.

Whenever you regain spells each day, you can choose to sacrifice a spell slot that you could normally use to cast or prepare a spell with the chosen descriptor. During the day, you may use a warmage strike as a standard action. The damage it deals is based on the energy type you chose and the spell level sacrificed that day.

If you chose acid, cold, electricity, or fire, the strike deals 1d6 damage per level of the sacrificed spell; otherwise, it deals one less die of damage.

Your chosen attack form determines how your strike works. If the blast allows a save, the DC is 10 + sacrificed spell level + primary spellcasting stat. Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus (evocation) improve the save DC for your warmage strike.

- Blast. Ranged touch with range 60 feet.
- Burst. 5-foot radius burst, with a range of 30 feet (Reflex half).
- Cone. 15-foot cone, and use d4s instead of d6s (Reflex half).
- Line. 20-foot line (Reflex half).
- Shield. Affects every creature within 5 feet of you (Reflex negates); does not harm you.
- Touch. Melee touch attack.

The warmage strike is a spell-like ability with the same spell level as the sacrificed spell slot. Creatures are immune to warmage strike damage from an energy type that matches their subtype, and undead are immune to death damage.

Special: A wizard can select Warmage Strike as a bonus feat. You can select this feat multiple times. Each time you do, choose a new energy type and attack form combination.

West Wind Style [General]

You have learned the techniques of the Monastery of Two Winds. Your graceful, windy fighting style makes you a breeze among your foes.

Prerequisite: Access to the Air domain.

Benefit: You can multiclass freely between cleric and monk. Add *fly* (3rd level) and *overland flight* (5th-level) to your cleric spell list. You cannot cast cleric spells with the earth descriptor.

If you have the Stunning Fist feat, you can expend a use of stunning fist or turn undead as a free action to gain a fly speed equal to your land speed (good maneuverability) lasting for one round. If you continue to expend stunning fist or turn undead uses round after round, you do not fall between your turns. If you possess the slow fall ability, you can expend a stunning fist or turn undead use when you fall to take no damage from the fall, and you land safely on your feet.

As you gain levels, you can grant additional creatures the ability to fly. When you use this ability to let yourself fly, you can grant a fly speed to one additional willing creature within 30 feet for every 5 character levels you possess. Each creature's fly speed is determined by its own land speed. For instance, a monk 2/cleric 8 could use one stunning fist attempt to give a fly speed to himself and two allies.

You may select Auran as a bonus language.

The Burning Sky

The Torch of the Burning Sky is tied to the Astral Plane as well as the Elemental Plane of Fire. When Emperor Coaltongue was killed, one of the assassins intentionally damaged the Torch, which suffused the nearby Astral Plane with energy from the Plane of Fire. This has two important effects on the campaign world.

First, things are getting colder. There is no spring in sight for Ragesia and the lands bordering it; druids sense something amiss, and the sky is filled with flocks of confused birds trying to flee this unnatural winter. By the later adventures in the campaign saga, temperatures across the region are perpetually below freezing, with some regions even more dangerously cold. By the campaign's finale, the PCs will have a chance to end the winter, and for a few months spring renews the land, until the natural turn of seasons again takes it course.

Second, teleportation and other forms of astral travel are hot and dangerous. This effect, which during the campaign will quickly become known as the Burning Sky, has a limited effect on travel between planes. Whenever a creature undergoes planar travel to or from the lands involved in this campaign, that creature takes 1d6 points of fire damage. Creatures arrive in a small burst of flame, enough to easily alert onlookers. This affects all summoning, calling, and teleportation spells, except for those that use the Ethereal Plane or Plane of Shadow.

The Burning Sky has a greater effect on travel across the plane. For every 100 feet (or fraction thereof) you teleport at a time, you take 1d6 points of fire damage, to a maximum of 40d6 (average 140, slightly more than *protection from energy* can prevent).

To bypass this danger, a character can either transform into a creature immune to fire or use magic to gain fire resistance. Desperate characters might climb into a *bag of holding* and let the wizard use *protection from energy*.

The reach of the Burning Sky is up to you, but it covers the entire region of Ragesia and the nations surrounding it. Characters who wish to teleport outside the area during the campaign will have to sail or hike outside the reach of the Burning Sky.

Weapons

Bladed Whip

This weapon is constructed much like a whip, except the plaited strands of the whip also include several specially designed metal strips with slashing edges and the fall consists of either a blade or sharpened chain segments. Alternately, a bladed whip might be covered in spikes, thorns, or other jagged edges.

Unlike a normal whip, a bladed whip deals lethal damage, and can harm creatures even if they have an armor bonus of +1 or higher, or a natural armor bonus of +3 or higher. A bladed whip has hardness 3. In all other ways, a bladed whip is just like a normal whip.

Exotic melee weapon, one-handed; damage (M) 1d6 slashing, critical 19–20/×2. Price 25 gp; weight 3 lb.

Bohemian Ear-Spoon

This fancifully named weapon resembles something between a ranseur and a longspear; a "spear with a hilt." A Bohemian ear-spoon has reach: you can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but you can't use it against an adjacent foe. If you use a ready action to set a Bohemian ear-spoon against a charge, you deal double damage on a successful hit against a charging target.

Martial melee weapon, two-handed with reach; damage (M) 2d4 piercing, critical ×3. Price 10 gp; weight 9 lb.

Greathammer

This massive bludgeoning weapon is a two-handed warhammer.

Martial melee weapon, two-handed; damage (M) 1d12 bludgeoning, critical ×3. Price 35 gp; weight 30 lb.

Hand Claw

Effectively, this weapon is a spiked gauntlet that does slashing damage. Worn on the back of the hand, the hand claw leaves the wielder's hand free to grasp items and perform the somatic components of spells. A hand claw cannot be used as a weapon if the wielder is holding something with the hand bearing the claw.

At the game master's option, the wielder may take a –2 penalty to skill checks involving the dextrous use of both hands, such as Disable Device or Open Lock, while a hand claw is worn.

Simple melee weapon, one-handed; damage (M) 1d4 slashing, critical ×2. Price 5 gp; weight 1 lb.

Alchemical Items

Greater Alchemist's Fire

These wooden flasks of alchemist's fire are only created by pitchlings, though an alchemist with access to freshly harvested pitch from the skin of a pitchling could create such items. They function identically to normal alchemist's fire, except that they do twice as much damage (2d6 on a direct hit, or 2 splash).

A flask of greater alchemist's fire costs 100 gp and weighs 1 lb. The Craft (alchemy) check to create one flask is DC 30.

Ragesian Dragonbomb

This weapon is dropped by wyvern riders, functioning as a grenade-like weapon. Because the weapon simply drops, the rider makes a ranged touch attack, with a –2 penalty per 20 feet of altitude. If the attack misses, the bomb strikes in a random direction, and the distance from its intended target is equal to half the speed the attacker flew that round (minimum 10 feet).

A dragonbomb consists of little more than a compilation of existing alchemicals. It has 10 flasks of oil, 5 alchemist fire flasks, and a thunderstone in a clay shell that shatters on impact. In addition to whatever damage the bomb inflicts by striking its target, it also creates a deafening boom as a normal thunderstone. Alchemist fire coats everything within 5 feet of the target, dealing 1d6 fire damage for two rounds. Additionally, burning oil spreads a further 5 feet, dealing 1d3 fire damage for two rounds. The alchemicals typically last long enough to set fire to flammable objects.

One Ragesian dragonbomb costs 150 gp and weighs 20 lb. The Craft (alchemy) check to create one from scratch is DC 30; to create one if the components listed above are available, the check is DC 20.

Red Madness

This is an ingested poison (Will DC 17). The initial damage from this poison is *confusion* for one hour; the secondary damage is *rage* for one hour.

One dose of Red Madness costs 500 gp and weighs ½ lb. The Craft (alchemy) check to create one dose is DC 25. With the recipe found in Inquisitor Torrax's book (see page 135), the DC is 20.

Shatterspell

Shatterspell is a black compound infused with antimagic that is poured into special vials when extremely chilled and then sealed airtight. As the



compound warms it turns gaseous, so that when the vial is opened or shattered (such as when thrown as a grenade-like weapon) it fills a 5-foot square with wispy black gas. The character who threw the shatterspell then makes a dispel check (1d20+0 against DC 11 + caster level) for each magical effect in that square, as if a targeted *dispel magic* had been cast, except shatterspell has no effect on permanent magic effects or magic items.

If a vial of shatterspell takes any cold damage (such as from a *ray of frost*), the contents turn fluid again, lasting for one minute. During this time the compound can be ingested like a potion, granting the drinker SR 10 for one minute.

A vial of shatterspell costs 50 gp and weighs about a tenth of a pound. The Craft (alchemy) check to create one vial is DC 25.

Superior Alchemist's Fire

Imported from the elemental planes, these fist-sized amberglass spheres explode when shattered, dealing 10d6 points of fire damage to a target struck, plus 10 points of fire damage to adjacent targets. This fire damage repeats for two rounds or until the fire is neutralized, as with normal alchemist's fire. As a thrown, splash weapon, a flask of superior alchemist's fire has a range increment of 10 feet.

A flask of superior alchemist's fire costs 4,000 gp and weighs 2 lb. If a character could somehow get the ingredients, the Craft (alchemy) check to create one flask is DC 40.

Magical Items

Black Scimitar

Created by Rhuarc's diabolist mother to shelter their souls against an infernal pact, this *+1 adamantine scimitar*, named Shaalguenyaver ("bright shadow"), is almost completely black. The S-shaped crossguard is fire-blackened ivory, the hilt is wrapped in black velvet, and the pommel is capped with a large black pearl. The blade is lined with flawed, smoky diamonds, with one missing near the blade's base. It radiates no magical aura.

When a wielder picks up the sword for the first time, he hears a dark, feminine voice whisper, "Be with me, my child." The wielder inherently knows he is being offered a pact — give over his soul, and his life will be protected. If the wielder agrees, he gains access to the following benefits.

- The scimitar becomes a *+1 adamantine ghost touch scimitar*.
- When the wielder holds the *black scimitar*, it generates a ward against disembodied souls, such as ghosts and other incorporeal undead. Such creatures must make a Will save (DC 27) to approach within 20 feet of the wielder or to attack him. (Rhuarc's shadow, as an extension of himself, is not affected by this power.)
- The wielder is immune to energy drain.
- Upon his death, the wielder forfeits his soul into the blade. He cannot be returned from the dead, and his soul never passes into any afterlife. For Rhuarc, this is a better fate than the hell his mother bargained him into.
- Anyone making this pact owes payment on the bargain Rhuarc dodged. Evil outsiders are subconsciously drawn to the wielder, and will attack him first, hoping to subdue him and seize his soul for the archdevil to whom it is pledged.

Additionally, when Rhuarc wields the weapon in adventure seven, it has several abilities only he personally may .

- When Rhuarc kills a creature with the sword, he can choose to trap its soul. The dying creature makes a Will save (DC 27), and if it fails its soul is pulled into one of the gems along the scimitar's blade. Sometimes, for his own reasons, Rhuarc will pry out that gem and toss it into a cave or into the sea where it will be lost forever, so that the spirit will never reach its resting place. Usually he does not trap souls, however, since the blade can now only hold seventeen.
- Once per minute as a free action, Rhuarc call forth some of the souls trapped in the sword, summoning 1d4+1 tragedies, which serve him loyally for one minute before vanishing.

No aura, CL 17th; Craft Magical Arms and Armor, *antipathy*, *death ward*, *magic aura*, *nondetection*, *trap the soul*. Price 31,315 gp; weight 4 lb.

Blade of the Kingsguard

The *blade of the Kingsguard* is a minor intelligent item. In addition to being a *+1 greatsword*, it has enough willpower to activate its single special power. Only the highest ranking of the king's royal guards actually carries this blade. The others wield normal *+1 greatswords*.

Alignment Lawful Neutral
Senses normal vision 30 ft., hearing
Communication empathy
Abilities Int 4 Wis 14, Cha 4; Ego 4
Lesser Powers (CL 7th)

- 1/day — *cure critical wounds* (4d8+7 hp, on wielder)

Faint conjuration and evocation, CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *limited wish*, *cure critical wounds*. Price 3,100 gp; weight 8 lb.

Eowhisperer Charm

This magic item, an ornate shawl that fits over a horse's mane and ears, allows a creature with an Intelligence of 1 or 2 to understand Common as if it were affected by a *speak with animals* spell. This item fills the animal's head body slot. An animal wearing this can be handled as a free action or pushed as a move action, and it eventually begins to exhibit signs of an uncanny intelligence.

Faint divination, CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *speak with animals*. Price 1,700 gp; weight 1 lb.

Fimbulwinter Charm

A silvery cord threaded with several rings of sapphire-studded silver rings, when wrapped around the handle of a weapon, this charm can causes the weapon to deal +1d6 cold damage with each strike. However, attacks that deal cold damage deal 1 additional point of damage to the weapon's wielder.

Faint evocation, CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *ice storm*, Price 3,000 gp; weight ⅒ lb.

Flute of Thunder

This stone flute has three small wind chimes dangling from its end. This spell completion item lets a character cast *sound burst* (caster level 4, Fort DC 13). The flute has three charges.

Faint evocation, CL 4th; Craft Wondrous Item, *sound burst*. Price 600 gp, weight 1 lb.

Hurling Bracers

These items can be activated as a swift action once per day. For one round, the wearer is treated as one size category larger for purposes of lifting capacity, grappling, and what sort of weapons the creature can wield. If being treated as larger would be a detriment for any given effect, it may use its normal size instead. (For instance, a human would not suddenly be unable to use a Medium dagger just because he counts as being Large). Typically wyverns use these bracers to pick up enemies during a flyby attack (taking a –20 penalty to their grapple check so they can keep moving), and then drop them before the bonus wears off.

Moderate transmutation, CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *polymorph*. Price 2,000 gp; weight 1 lb.

Inquisitor Mask

Inquisitors believe that their masks protect their souls from hostile magic. Male inquisitors favor masks carved to resemble (or actually made from) bear skulls, while female inquisitors prefer ones that look more like heavily-decorated masquerade masks. An *inquisitor mask* takes up the eyewear item slot.

A creature wearing an *inquisitor mask* can choose as a free action to have the mask alter his voice to be more menacing and feral, granting a +2 enhancement bonus to Intimidate checks. Additionally, for 3 rounds per day the mask makes its wearer immune to possession, and to attempts to exercise mental control, as with *protection from good*. This effect functions immediately when needed, and ends when it is no longer needed (or the 3 rounds expire). The rounds can be spread across the day.

Faint abjuration, CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *cause fear*, *protection from good*. Price 2,600 gp, weight 2 lb.

Inquisitor Mask, Lesser

These masks are given to novice inquisitors, typically once they learn to cast *cancel*, a 2nd-level spell. All these masks do is make the wearer's

voice sound more menacing and feral. This has no game effect.

Faint abjuration, CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *cause fear*. Price: 50 gp, weight 2 lb.

Inviso-Lance

This *+1 lance* grants its wielder the ability to use *greater invisibility* once per day while he is mounted, affecting both him and his mount. The invisibility lasts 7 rounds, and ends if the wielder dismounts. The entire lance is made of magically treated glass that is as strong as steel.

Moderate illusion and transmutation, CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *greater invisibility*. Price 7,350 gp; weight 10 lb.

Kiano

Kiano is a *+1 Large greathammer*. It deals triple damage against inanimate objects.

Strong evocation, CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *shatter*. Price 9,305 gp; weight 60 lb.

Mask of Inner Death

This bear-skull inquisitor mask grants its wearer a +6 enhancement bonus to Charisma, a +5 resistance bonus to Will saves, and the ability to expend an 8th level spell slot to cast *mind blank* once per day.

Strong abjuration and transmutation, CL 17th; Craft Wondrous Item, Iron Will, *eagle's splendor*, *mind blank*. Price 60,000 gp; weight 1 lb.

Null Spellbomb

When thrown as a grenade-like weapon, this small glass sphere shatters and casts *greater dispel magic*.

Strong abjuration; CL 20th; Craft Wondrous Item, *greater dispel magic*. Price: 10,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Potion Bracer

A *potion bracer* functions like a highly specialized *handy haversack*, allowing you to store up to 10 potions or similarly-sized items in an extradimensional space. No matter how many items are stored in the bracer, you can retrieve the one you want as a free action.

You can only wear one *potion bracer* at a time; wearing a second causes both to cease functioning. Most *potion bracers* are worn on the user's weapon arm so the user doesn't have to drop a weapon to get out a potion. If both your hands are full, you can drink directly from the *potion bracer* as a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity.

Faint conjuration, CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *prestidigitation*. Price 500 gp; weight 1 lb.

Pyrronax

Pyrronax is a *+2 flaming burst anarchic Large bastard sword* which once belonged to the powerful balor Hedrenatherax. The huhhoad Glurthog stole Pyrronax from Hedrenatherax two months ago, and fled here to the Prime Material Plane. The Pyromancer's Tomb, secreted below ground with its wardings and magma flow, turned out to be the perfect place to hole up. Hedrenatherax is, naturally, searching for his lost sword, and will eventually catch up with whoever has it in their possession. Pyrronax has the following characteristics:

Alignment Chaotic Neutral

Senses darkvision 120 ft., hearing

Communication empathy (unlike most weapons of its intelligence, Pyrronax cannot communicate directly with its wielder)

Abilities Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 17; Ego 16

Lesser Powers (CL 3rd)

- At will — *detect magic*
- *3/day — faerie fire, cure moderate wounds (2d8+3 hp, on wielder)*

Greater Powers (CL 9th)

- 1/day — *wall of fire (ring, with wielder at its center)*

Dedicated Power (slay devils, CL 15th)

- 3/day — *greater shout* (15d6, DC 19)

Strong evocation and conjuration, CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *cure moderate wounds*, *detect magic*, *faerie fire*, *greater shout*, *limited wish*, *wall of fire*. Price 232,570 gp; weight 6 lb.

Tidereaver's Tears

This glass sphere appears to be filled with blood, and leaks it constantly, though the drips soon evaporate. The bearer of the sphere likewise drips blood, which is eerie but harmless. The bearer can, for about an hour a day, travel through strong winds or water currents as though traveling through calm air or water. The sphere of bloody tears must be held in hand to provide this benefit.

Faint abjuration, CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *endure elements*. Price 1,400 gp; weight 1 lb.

Torchstaff

Resembling a shepherd's crook with a flaming bronze lantern swinging from the end, this quarterstaff can be used to deal 1d6 points of fire damage as a melee touch attack.

Faint evocation, CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *burning hands*. Price 1,000 gp; weight 2 lb.

Artifacts

The Book of Eight Lands

An aged book lies in the vaults of Steppengard's Castle in Bresk; it magically tracks the complete genealogy of the king of Dassen and the lords of the eight lands of Dassen. This book, the Book of Eight Lands, displays the name of the king and each of the lords of the eight lands, and provides a boon to each of those people, as well as their spouses and their children with those spouses. As long as they are touching soil from Dassen, each such affected noble is protected as if by *mind blank*, rendering them immune to all attempts to detect, influence, or read their emotions or thoughts. The beneficiaries of the book's boon can choose to lower it willingly.

According to the book, there is no line of succession after King Steppengard (all of his heirs are slain in one fell swoop before the events of adventure four). New names may be recorded in the book manually, but this requires the approval of all of the current lords of the eight lands.

The Book of Eight Lands has no market value — apart from its being an artifact, it is priceless in Dassen and worthless elsewhere (except perhaps as a hostage, in which case it's worth whatever is paid — if anything — to get it back). The boon it bestows is equivalent in value to a magic item worth 120,000 gp as long as the beneficiary is touching Dasseni soil; most commonly, this requirement is met by wearing a small bag of soil underneath one's clothing.

Strong abjuration, CL 15th.

The Living Blade of Innenotdar

Cut from the First Tree of Innenotdar, the Living Blade was once bonded to the heroine Anyariel. When the heroes retrieve it, it bonds to whoever pulls the blade from Indomitability's body. The power of the weapon grows with its wielder, and some of the abilities below may be exchanged for ones of equal power that better reflect the nature or experiences of the sword's wielder.

Whenever the wielder gains a level, he has the option of transforming the weapon's shape. When the heroes first encounter it in adventure two, it is in the form of a greatsword, but it can be turned into almost any type of weapon. The Living Blade cannot be transformed into a weapons with complex moving parts like a repeating crossbow, or a weapon with multiple segments, like a flail, net, or spiked chain. It can, however, be transformed into many other weapons, such as a dagger, a crossbow, a whip, a Bohemian ear-spoon, or a composite

longbow. If it is turned into a composite bow, the wielder can choose any Strength bonus.

Once the Living Blade's form is chosen, it remains in that form until the wielder gains another level, when he can transform it again. In any form, it appears as though it is roughly carved from wood.

Regardless of the form or enhancement bonus of the Living Blade, it has hardness 15 and 60 hp, and it takes no damage from fire. If the weapon is destroyed, the wielder it is bonded to gains a negative level that persists for one year. This negative level never causes actual level loss.

If the wielder chooses the form of a double weapon, determine its powers as if the wielder were 4 levels below his actual level.

- **Level 3 or less:** The weapon is masterwork.
- **Level 4–5:** The weapon gains a +1 enhancement bonus.
- **Level 6–7:** If the weapon would be dealt fire damage, it gains the *flaming* enhancement for one minute (10 rounds), dealing an extra 1d6 points of fire damage with each hit.
- **Level 8–9:** The weapon's enhancement bonus changes to +2.
- **Level 10–11:** As a standard action, the wielder can call for the weapon. It teleports into his grasp, though often with a dramatic flourish, such as by appearing in a burst of flame overhead and plunging its blade into the ground at his feet. The weapon can teleport from any distance, but not across planes.
- **Level 12–13:** The weapon's enhancement bonus changes to +3, and it gains the *ghost touch* weapon enhancement.
- **Level 14–15:** Whenever the weapon scores a critical hit, the creature struck takes damage equal to how much it dealt to the wielder in the past round as it feels a surge of agony reflected upon it. A Will save (DC 17 + wielder's Charisma modifier) negates this damage.
- **Level 16–17:** The weapon's enhancement bonus changes to +4, and it gains the *flaming burst* enhancement. This replaces the level 6–7 ability.
- **Level 18–19:** The wielder can cast *limited wish* once per month. The wielder may also cast *wish* once. When he does, he dies one minute later.
- **Level 20 or higher:** The weapon's enhancement bonus changes to +5.

Because the Living Blade is an artifact, it has no specific market value, but as treasure it is roughly equivalent in effective character wealth to a magic weapon with a total enhancement bonus equal to half the wielder's level. So when wielded by a 17th-level character, the Living Blade has worth equivalent to a *+8 weapon*, or 128,000 gp.

Strong evocation and transmutation, CL equal to wielder's level or wielder's level –4 (see above).

The Torch of the Burning Sky

The Torch was created approximately sixty years ago by chance. It is a bone devil's thigh bone that was used as a club to slay a trumpet archon in the presence of a very young Trilla, the psionic gold dragon now known as the Mother of Dreams. The Torch combined the teleportation powers of the devil and the archon, and the ability of Trilla to create souls from her dreams, and thus the Torch could devour those souls for a limitless supply of power.

Normally the Torch just looks like a somewhat jagged and fire-cracked femur, 40 inches long, wrapped in eerily smooth white skin around one end, marking the handle. The item appears primitive, and Coaltongue often adorned it with tiny ceramic beads on leather cords. The Torch detects as possessing overwhelming conjuration, evocation, and necromantic magic.

Any creature who tries to pick up the Torch must roll 1d20, adding his base attack bonus, his Charisma modifier, and the number of Leader feats he possesses (see page 437 *et seq.*). If he beats DC 30, the Torch accepts him as a wielder. Otherwise it inflicts a negative level on him. One day later, the creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 34) to avoid permanent level loss.

Additionally, if another creature succeeds in getting the Torch to accept it, the Torch attempts to consume the soul of its former wielder. The former wielder feels flames bathing him, wracking him with pain. Each round he gains a negative level, and must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 20) to take any actions because of the overwhelming agony. Once the Torch has inflicted ten negative levels it stops, but one day later the creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 34) for each negative level to avoid permanent level loss.

If the Torch is used to destroy the Aquiline Heart, it is itself destroyed. See page 358.

The Torch's wielder can take advantage of the following abilities.

- Constant — The Torch functions as a *+6 ghost touch vicious morningstar.*
- Constant — The wielder and anyone who travels with him takes no fire damage from teleportation.
- At will — As a free action, the wielder can cause flame to emerge from the head of the Torch, which lasts until dismissed. This flame can be as dim as a normal torch, or bright enough to illuminate a mile in every direction (this brightest flame can be seen out to the horizon).
- At will — The wielder can instead have the Torch conjure a single-headed axe of flame as a free action, which glows as brightly as a normal torch. While so activated, the Torch functions as a *+6 flaming burst ghost touch keen vicious battleaxe.*
- At will — As a swift action, the wielder may teleport up to 150 feet.
- 3/day — Cast widened enlarged empowered *flame strike* (Reflex DC 27 for half damage).
- 3/day — Cast *greater teleport* as a full-round action. This effect can only be used within sight of the sky (Will DC 29 negates).
- 3/day — Empyreal Fire. The greatest magic of the Torch is the ability to teleport an entire army at once. To activate this ability the wielder first must use the Torch to slay a living, intelligent creature with at least 5 Hit Dice. If this is done, the Torch draws in the creature's soul. If Empyreal Fire is not then activated within one minute, the Torch releases the soul it has captured, and it cannot use Empyreal Fire until the wielder slays someone else with the Torch. This ability can only be used outdoors during daylight.

  The sky crackles with flame, and a vast pillar of fire descends, picking up the wielder and any number of creatures the wielder can see (wielder's choice) within 1 mile. Unwilling creatures can make a Will save (DC 40) to resist being teleported by the Torch. All affected creatures instantaneously teleport to an outdoor location of the wielder's choice on the same plane, if it is daytime at the destination. If it is not, the power fails and is wasted.

Overwhelming conjuration, evocation, and necromancy; CL 25th.

Warfare for Beginners

Warfare for Beginners is a short EN Publishing supplement by Russell Morrissey, around which the battle aspects of *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart* were hinged. The system was modified to meet the requirements of the adventure, but it is presented here in its original form. Game masters can use the supplement as is or modify it to suit their own adventures.

This supplement presents an easy-to-use mass-battle system which involves your player characters on an individual level. The key to the system is focusing on tactical and strategic missions which affect the overall outcome of a large battle.

The system assumes that the player characters are integral to the battle — in other words, without their actions, the battle will be lost. That's why we play fantasy role-playing games, right?

You'll find that the system is remarkably simple to use, and allows your players to feel they truly are affecting the course of the battle in a vital way, without forcing you to adopt large-scale and clunky mass-battle rules involving army units and the like.

The Basics

The system works on a basic Victory Points scale. Successful missions performed by the PCs earn their "side" Victory Points, while the passage of time deducts Victory Points. The scale runs from 0–20; if the PCs' Victory Points total reaches 20, the battle is won; if it reaches 0, the battle is lost.

Generally speaking, the heroes' side will start with 10 Victory Points, adding Victory Points when the PCs succeed in a mission, and deducting Victory Points as time passes. This creates a sense of urgency, because if the PCs sit around doing nothing for too long, the battle will, left to its own devices, be lost.

Missions include such things as: assassinations, captures, reconnaissance, spying, sabotage and so on. A successful mission will earn 1–3 Victory Points: the more difficult the missions, the more Victory Points.

Passage of time reduces the PCs' Victory Points tally at a rate of 3 Victory Points per day.

Optional Rule

Make the PCs' task easier or harder by increasing or decreasing the starting score. Apply a 2-point bonus or penalty for major conditions that affect one side or the other, such as being greatly outnumbered, having significant fortifications, having flying troops, being thoroughly prepared or being completely surprised, and/or for having either extensive or next to no experience. Try not to add or subtract more than 6 Victory Points, or the PCs' job may become either trivial or next to impossible.

The Missions

Each day, roll 1d20 three times and offer the players the three resultant missions. They are free to attempt any or all of the missions available. Any missions not succeeding or not undertaken on a particular day may be undertaken on a later day unless failure incurs a penalty, in which case the damage has already been done to the heroes' side.

A successful mission gains the party's side the number of Victory Points indicated in the "Success" column, above. A failed mission means that the party's side loses the number of Victory Points in the "Fail" column, above.

If the failure penalty is 0 Victory Points, the mission can be attempted again at any point.

Roll (d20)	Mission	Victory Points Success	Fail
1–2	Minor Assassination	1	0
3–4	Major Assassination	3	0
5–7	Minor Sabotage	1	0
7	Artifact	4	0
8	Major Sabotage*	2	–1
9–10	Reconnaissance	1	0
11	Spying	3	0
12–13	Minor Abduction	2	0
14	Major Abduction	4	0
15–16	Defense	2	–2
17	Bodyguard	1	–2
18	Counterspy	2	–2
19	Morale	2	0
20	Allies	4	0

*Major sabotage may constitute a larger, or better defended installation than Minor sabotage, or it may comprise three act of Minor Sabotage.

Important Note

Missions with a penalty for failure count as failed if they are not undertaken. They are time-critical: the PCs don't get to wait until tomorrow to defend that breach in the wall.

Daily Events

Each day, roll 1d12 for a Daily Event. The event can apply to either side in the battle — which side that is should also be determined randomly. The heroes' side gains or loses the number of Victory Points indicated, depending on whether the event benefits them.

Roll (d12)	Event	Victory Points
1–2	**Weather Change:** A change in weather favors one side or the other.	1
3	**Reinforcements:** Reinforcements arrive for one side or the other.	3
4	**Illness:** Plague or other widespread illness affects one side or the other.	3
5–6	**Spy:** One side's secrets are leaked to the others' by a spy.	2
7–8	**Hero:** One side is badly damaged by a successful mission by a hero of the other side.	2
9	**Omen:** An omen reduces morale of one side.	1
10	**Desertion:** Desertion problems weaken one side.	2
11	**Traitor:** An important individual or unit defects to the other side.	3
12	**Major Death:** An important individual or unit dies, either slain on the battlefield or at the hands of an assassin.	3

Putting All This Into Practice

The preceding sections outlined the basic mechanic for outlining the course of a battle. However, this needs to be put into practice. You can't just tell your players: "Your daily event is Illness. Missions available are Major Assassination, Minor Sabotage and Defence, plus the Reconnaissance saved from yesterday." You need to translate these results into interesting and varied game encounters!

You should keep your players apprised of the score they have achieved, and the Victory Points available for each mission. This allows them to weigh their strategic and tactical options and creates tension when the score approaches one end of the scale or the other.

Each available mission should be described as an encounter. For example:

"General Arvistas calls you to his tent. He



informs you that three artillery pieces mounted on the hills to the east are creating havoc amongst the defenses, and that it is imperative that these weapons be destroyed. As far as he knows, each is manned by three ogres." [Major Sabotage]

"Spies have identified the tent of one of the opposing generals, Lord Borstas, and General Arvistas has decided to attempt to abduct him. A small group will need to sneak through the enemy camp at night, infiltrate his tent while he sleeps, and transport him back to the fort." [Major Abduction]

"Morale is low, and supplies are running short. In the nearby village of Bitterne, a cellar full of beer can be found. Obtaining this beer and bringing it back for the troops will result in a great morale boost." [Morale]

The mission possibilities are almost endless.

Designing the Encounters

The most important piece of information you need when designing the mission encounters is the same piece of information needed when designing any encounter: you need to know how powerful your PC party is and create a challenging mission.

Some missions will be easier than others. The difficulty of the mission matches the number of Victory Points gained for succeeding: between 1 and 4 Victory Points. A 1-point mission should be fairly easy, while a 4-point mission should stretch the party to its limits.

In terms of Challenge Rating, a 2-point mission should have an average CR equal to the average level of a four-person party. A 1-point mission should have a CR 1 less; a 3-point mission 1 more; and a 4-point mission 2 more. For each additional party member, add 1 to the CR.

So a party of five 8th-level characters undertaking a 2-point mission will find that the average CR of the encounters that make up the mission will be 9. If they undertake a very difficult 4-point mission, the average CR of the encounters will be 11.

The Mission Itself

You should divide your mission into three parts:

1. **The Approach:** Do the PCs need to scale a cliff, sneak though the enemy camp, fight their way across a guarded bridge, or explore a secret tunnel or cave?
2. **The Mission:** This is the bit where the PCs actually accomplish the task they have been set.
3. **The Escape:** In most cases, the PCs will need to go back the way they came — but this doesn't necessarily always have to be the case.

Passage of Time

As mentioned earlier, the default assumption is that, without the PCs' help, the battle will be lost. Therefore, every day, the heroes' side automatically loses 3 Victory Points. In other words, if the PCs do nothing, eventually their Victory Points will reach zero and the bad guys will win.

Scaling

It's easy to scale these rules. The default assumption is a battle of 2–7 days, roughly, with short missions that can be accomplished in a day.

You may want to use these rules to handle more epic battles lasting weeks, months, or even years. All you need to do is replace "days" with whatever unit of time you prefer, and make the missions themselves larger in scope.

For example, you could have an engagement which you plan to take months. The PCs have a month to accomplish a given mission. These lengthy missions may involve long-distance travel or major exploration of expansive locations.

Battle for Gallo's Fend – Art by Joe Slucher

Mission Ideas

This sidebar presents ideas for missions the heroes can undertake on behalf of their side.

Assassination/Abduction
Leaders (generals, clerics, wizards)
Monsters (giants, dragons)
Hero (captain, gladiator, champion)

Sabotage
Artillery (catapults, cannons, onagers)
Structure (bridge, viewing tower, gateway)
Magic (portal, scrying pool, altar)

Artifact
Obtain the MacGuffin of Winning (a lance that is quite good at killing dragons; a torch that can teleport armies)

Reconnaissance
Scout out a nearby hilltop
Investigate a cave complex
Search for a way across a river or gorge

Spying
Obtain maps, plans or other documents
Eavesdrop on a meeting or council
Recruit an agent

Defense
Rush to a breach in a wall
Guard a bridge or other strategic location

Counterspy
Identify and apprehend a spy or traitor

Morale
Organize a bardic performance
Activate a symbol (a beacon, a flag)
Obtain resources (ale, an entertainer, food)

Allies
Incite an uprising of the populace
Convince the nearby dwarves to help out

In this way you can even build an entire campaign around this system. Each mission can be an entire adventure in itself.

Sample Battle

Castle Northam is under siege! Manned by a few regiments of green troops, it is surrounded by a massive army of veteran killers. To make matters worse, the enemy has brought monstrous allies: a group of hill giants who are bombarding the fortifications with massive boulders, and are busy digging a massive tunnel under the walls. The enemy is led by an evil wizard, Count Jarvis, and his three lieutenants. It is rumored that the enemy has a small dragon, but this has not been seen as yet.



Start

Default — The defenders of Castle Northam start with 10 Victory Points.

Bonuses — Castle Northam counts as a significant fortification (+2 Victory Points).

Penalties — The defenders are outnumbered (–2) and are rookies to boot (–2).

Result — With 8 Victory Points, the castle will fall in three days if nothing is done. Enter the Heroes of Northam!

Day 1

Daily Event: Hero — A mighty minotaur, hero of the enemy army, slays an entire unit of soldiers singlehandedly (–2).

Mission: Minor Sabotage — The enemy is using a strange mechanical digging machine to construct its tunnel. The heroes infiltrate the tunnel and destroy the machine (+1).

Mission: Minor Abduction — The castle commanders have decided to abduct a staff member on the enemy side. The heroes sneak through the camp at night and attempt to abduct a cook. Unfortunately, they are spotted and barely escape with their lives (+0).

Mission: Bodyguard — Spies report that agents within the castle intend to make an attempt on the general's life. The heroes mount a secretive watch, and intercept a small band of kenku as they close on the general's private quarters (+1).

Result — At the end of the first day, the heroes still have 8 Victory Points. They will need to do better than this if they are to save the castle.

Day 2

Passage of Time — The heroes' side loses 3 Victory Points automatically.

Daily Event: Desertion — Reports indicate that the enemy's hill giant unit has grown tired of the battle and left (+2).

Mission: Minor Sabotage — The enemy has constructed another digging machine. It is not in the tunnel yet, and the heroes sneak behind enemy lines and manage to destroy it (+1).

Mission: Major Sabotage — The enemy is almost certain to build further digging machines. The only long-term option is to flood the tunnel. The heroes make their way to a nearby dam and manage to destroy it, causing the enemy's tunnel to fill with water (+2).

Mission: Defense — The castle has a small lookout tower one mile to the east, which has been used to spy on the enemy camp. Unfortunately, the enemy has decided to deal with this nuisance and has dispatched a unit of ogres to tear it down. The heroes mount a stalwart defense, barely scraping a victory. For now, the tower stands (+2).

Result — Today was a much better day for the good guys, who close the day with 12 Victory Points. The tide of battle seems to be swinging in their favor.

Day 3 and Beyond

If the heroes can keep racking up victories, and especially if they can find and defeat that dragon, the defenders of Castle Northam may yet snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

The Song of Forms

In the second adventure of the campaign saga, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar,* the party encounters a group of fey, the seela, who sing a magical song, the Song of Forms. The seela originally used this song in prayers to the spirit of their forest, believing that they could give the forest a body so they could see its physically-embodied majesty. When the ruler of Shahalesti put their forest to the torch, the seela called out to the forest spirit for help, but their song conjured something they did not expect.

Learning the Song of Forms

To properly learn the Song of Forms, you must possess the bardic music ability (or a similar ability), must be able to speak Sylvan, and must have learned the song from the seela of the Fire Forest. It does not require any special feat or ability.

Using the Song of Forms

Singing the Song of Forms counts as a bardic music usage. Beginning the song is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity, and maintaining the song requires concentration.

The magic of the song draws on your life to create bodies for those that have none, so singing the song deals 2 points of Constitution damage to you, plus another 2 points every ten minutes you continue to sing. The Song of Forms only has a magical effect when sung by a living creature. Fey bonded to a location, such as the seela of the Fire Forest, do not take Constitution damage from singing the Song of Forms as long as they are in that location.

Effects of the Song of Forms

You make a Perform (singing) check, and each incorporeal creature within 200 feet must make a Fortitude save (DC equal to the result of your Perform check) or lose its incorporeality for as long as you remain singing and it remains in range. Note that the Song of Forms does not affect ghosts that have not manifested, since they are on the Ethereal Plane and not the Material (on the Ethereal Plane ghosts are not incorporeal). A creature with turn resistance adds its turn resistance bonus to its Fortitude save against this effect. The Song of Forms is a supernatural, sonic ability.

Creatures that are only temporarily incorporeal simply return to their normal corporeal form. Creatures that are normally incorporeal but that are currently occupying a physical body, such as a ghost using its malevolence ability or a trillith using its embody ability, are unable to willingly leave their current bodies. Creatures without any normal corporeal form — such as allips, shadows, and wraiths, as well as ghosts that are not in a body — assume a semi-corporeal form. Trillith that are not currently occupying a body are affected as detailed by the trillith subtype.

A creature forced into a semi-corporeal body is affected as follows:

Hit Dice, Base Attack, Special Attacks, Special Qualities, Saves, Skills, Feats

These do not change, except that the creature loses incorporeality and any attendant special abilities. The new form is not incorporeal, and thus the creature can be affected by weapons as any other physical creature, though it retains any special resistances or immunities it had that weren't tied to its incorporeality.

Size and Type

Its size and type do not actually change, though its body does. The form the creature assumes resembles its incorporeal form, with appropriate modifications that would allow for actual locomotion. A wraith would gain feeble legs, while an unbodied (an incorporeal psionic brain able to creature illusory bodies) would probably gain the body of its current illusion, or if it had no illusion it would gain tentacles attached to its brain with which it could shamble about.

Speed

The creature loses any ability to fly unless its form has wings (such as a ghost manticore). If it had no other form of locomotion, it gains a land speed of 30 feet.

Armor Class

The creature loses the deflection bonus from its Charisma, and instead gains a natural armor bonus appropriate to its size, as shown in the table below.

Attacks, Damage, and Abilities

The creature gains a Strength score appropriate to its size if it did not already have one (see table).

If the creature had normal attack forms, it retains them, though they are no longer incorporeal. If it dealt special damage with its incorporeal touch attacks, that damage is applied as bonus damage to any melee attacks it makes, though the attacks must beat the creature's normal AC, not just touch AC. The creature may gain attack forms appropriate to its new form. As a default, you can assume the creature gains a slam attack if it has no other clear attack form, with damage appropriate to its size.

For example, a ghost with the corrupting touch ability who carried a sword would be able to attack with that sword, dealing sword damage, plus 1d6 from the corrupting touch ability. An allip (a medium incorporeal undead) would gain a slam attack that did 1d6 damage, plus 1d4 points of Wisdom drain.

Other effects may be appropriate, at the game master's prerogative.

Strength and Slam Damage

Size	Natural Armor	Strength	Damage
Fine	+0	1	1
Diminutive	+0	2	1d2
Tiny	+0	4	1d3
Small	+1	8	1d4
Medium	+2	10	1d6
Large	+3	18	1d8
Huge	+4	26	2d6
Gargantuan	+7	34	2d8
Colossal	+11	42	4d6

Slain by the Song of Forms

Most undead are destroyed when reduced to 0 hp, and this occurs normally even if the creature is currently in a semi-corporeal form. Non-undead incorporeal creatures die at –10 hp as normal.

For example, when the host body of a ghost using malevolence is killed, the ghost survives, but it is forced into a semi-corporeal form by the Song of Forms. Even if the ghost is destroyed while semi-corporeal, however, it can still rejuvenate as normal.

When a trillith is slain, its essence disperses, but it can reform several days later. However, if a trillith is slain while affected by the Song of Forms, it is dead permanently.

Spells

Accursed Tendrils
Illusion/Necromancy [Shadow]
Level: Sor/Wiz 8
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude partial; see text
Spell Resistance: No

A mass of shadowy tendrils surrounds you, concealing you while attacking your foes and paralyzing them.

You gain a 20% miss chance due to concealment, as with the *blur* spell. *True seeing* can negate this chance.

You also can use the tendrils as a natural weapon with reach. You can make one attack immediately when you cast the spell, but thereafter you must use your own actions to attack with the tendrils. If you get multiple attacks because of a high attack bonus, you can make multiple attacks with them, and you can use them to make attacks of opportunity.

Attack rolls and grapple checks with the tendrils gain a bonus equal to one-half your caster level, and you modify them with your Intelligence score (if wizard) or Charisma score (if sorcerer). A successful hit deals 2d8 points of damage + 1 point per level (maximum 2d8+20), and the creature struck must make a Fortitude save or be paralyzed for one round.

On your turn you can extend your tendrils' reach to Close range (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels), but if you do they do not threaten adjacent squares until your next turn.

The tendrils cannot be harmed. Attacks pass through them, and even magical light has no effect on them, unless it would dispel the spell.

Cancel
Abjuration
Level: Brd 2, Clr 2, Drd 3, Pal 2, Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Target: One spellcaster
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell functions like *dispel magic*, except that it can only counter spells as they are being cast. Make a dispel check, 1d20 + caster level (maximum of +10) against DC 11 + caster level of the caster whose spell you're trying to counter. If you succeed, the spell is countered.

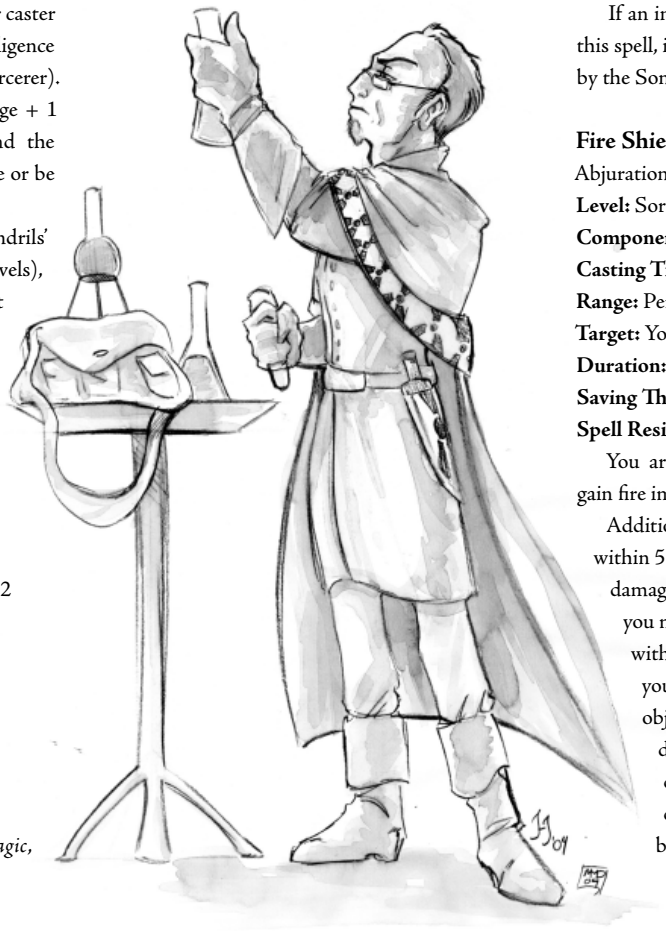
Since this spell takes a standard action to cast, you must either ready an action to cast it in response to a spell, or must be able to counter spells reactively.

Duelist's Etiquette
Abjuration
Level: Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 3 rounds
Range: Touch
Area: 30-ft. radius
Duration: One hour
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

When cast, the radius of the spell's area is traced with a faintly glowing line of energy. The spell creates a subtle defensive barrier against magical attacks, causing all damage from spells and summoned creatures in the area of effect to become nonlethal. Whenever a creature enters the warded area, it must consciously choose to accept this restriction, or else the spell ends. If at any time a creature inside the area wishes to no longer abide by the restrictions of *duelist's etiquette*, he can spend a full round action to concentrate and end the spell. When the spell ends, all creatures in the area of effect immediately are aware.

This spell is primarily used to ensure that spell duels are not fatal, without forcing mages to hold back their strongest powers.

Focus: A pair of padded sticks.



Lyceum Arcanist ~ Art by J. L. Jones

Enforced Flesh
Transmutation
Level: Brd 3, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Target: One incorporeal creature
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

If an incorporeal creature fails its save against this spell, it gains a body as if it had been affected by the Song of Forms (see page 450).

Fire Shield, Greater
Abjuration/Evocation [Fire]
Level: Sor/Wiz 7
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Reflex negates (see text)
Spell Resistance: Yes (see text)

You are wreathed in a roaring inferno. You gain fire immunity.

Additionally, any creature or object that comes within 5 feet of you takes 2d6+15 points of fire damage (spell resistance applies). Creatures you move adjacent to can negate the damage with a Reflex save, but those who approach you themselves receive no save. Unattended objects in the area automatically take damage (halved, because it is energy damage). This is typically enough to destroy non-magical arrows (8 hp) before they can harm you.

Gabal's Superior Missile
Divination/Evocation [Force]
Level: Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: See text
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: Up to five creatures, no two of which can be more than 15 ft. apart
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

The archmage Gabal proudly states that this spell is superior to the old standby *magic missile* in urban settings. Though its range is shorter, it can be cast even without line of sight to its targets.

The spell creates two energy darts, plus an additional missile for every two caster levels beyond 3rd, to a maximum of five at 9th level. Each missile strikes its target unerringly, and does 1d4+1 damage. This spell has two modes. The first mode has a casting time of a standard action and is identical to *magic missile* except for its shorter range.

The second mode has a casting time of a full round action. You become aware of every visible creature within range of the spell, and can divide the targets among them, though all targets must be within 15 feet of each other. You can target creatures that have total cover or total concealment with respect to you, as long the target is not totally concealed and there is a clear route between you and the target. A clear route is one where line of effect can be traced from one square to the next along the route, but the beginning and end of the route do not need line of effect to each other. The total length of this route cannot exceed the spell's range. For example, you could target a creature inside a room even if there was a wall between you, as long as a door or window was open. Likewise, you could target a creature hiding behind a fog cloud, as long as there was a clear route around the fog. However, you could not target a creature totally concealed within the fog cloud.

Gabal's Viral Flame
Abjuration/Evocation [Fire]
Level: Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
Area: 20-ft. radius spread
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: Yes

Hungry flames sear creatures in the area you target. Their fire deals 1d6 points of fire damage per level (maximum 15d6), but the flames feed on antimagic and energy wards, and actually become stronger in their presence.

In addition to its damage, *Gabal's viral flame* functions similar to the area dispel option of *greater dispel magic*, except that it can only dispel effects that provide resistance or immunity to energy damage. For each effect that is dispelled, *Gabal's viral flame* deals an additional 2d6 points of fire damage per level of the defensive spell to the creature or object that the ward was on.

If someone attempts to counterspell *Gabal's viral flame*, your spell attempts to transform the counterspell into additional evocation magic. Make an opposed caster level check with the caster of the counterspell. If you succeed, the counterspell is itself countered, and *Gabal's viral flame* deals an additional 2d6 points of fire damage per level of the counterspell to that spell's caster. (For inquisitors, their rebuke magic ability counts as a spell of the highest level they can cast.)

For both these effects, your caster level check caps at 1d20+15.

Icebind
Conjuration [Cold]
Level: Drd 3, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M/DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft.+10 ft./level)
Effect: Icy bonds in a 20-ft. radius spread
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Reflex partial; see text
Spell Resistance: No

Creatures caught in the area are trapped by bonds of ice, becoming entangled, and the affected area counts as difficult, slippery terrain. While entangled, they take 1d6 points of cold damage per round. Additionally, each creature in the area when the spell is cast must make a Reflex save or be stuck in place. It is not helpless, but cannot move from its location. If this spell is cast on a creature that is not adjacent to a surface, the creature is still entangled with ice, but cannot be held in place.

A creature stuck in place can make a Strength or Escape Artist check (DC 20) as a move action. Success frees the creature from being stuck, but leaves the creature entangled. If the creature beats DC 25, it frees itself from the bonds entirely. The bonds can also be broken by dealing 20 points of damage; the bonds have hardness 5, but fire ignores hardness and does double damage.

Material Component: A drop of water and a blue thread.

Like Lightning
Evocation/Transmutation [Electricity]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: See text
Spell Resistance: See text

You transform your body into lightning and fly a distance up to twice your land speed (perfect maneuverability). You do not provoke attacks of opportunity for this movement, and can travel through spaces occupied by creatures. Whenever you pass through a creature's space, that creature must succeed a Reflex saving throw or take 1d6 points of electricity damage per two caster levels (maximum 10d6). Passing through a creature's space more than once does not deal extra damage. Creatures with spell resistance have a chance to resist being affected by your lightning entirely. Once you have moved up to twice your base speed, you return to normal, and your turn ends.

If you have the Flyby Attack or Spring Attack feat, at one point during your movement you may briefly turn solid again so you can make a single melee attack. If you do this, your movement is limited to your land speed instead of twice your land speed.

If you have already moved in your turn before casting this spell, that movement counts against your limit for the spell.

Overmaster
Abjuration
Level: Clr 5, Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Target: One spellcaster
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell functions like *dispel magic*, except that it can only counter spells as they are being cast. Make a dispel check, 1d20 + caster level (maximum of +20) against DC 11 + caster level of the spell you're trying to counter. If you succeed, the spell is countered, and you can choose to cast the spell yourself as a free action. The spell functions as if cast by its original caster, except that it originates from you, you control it, and you make all choices regarding its effects and targeting.

This spell takes a standard action to cast; you

must either ready an action to cast it in response to a spell, or must be able to counter spells reactively.

For example, Katrina (sorcerer 9) casts a *fireball*, but the inquisitor Kreven (cleric 17) uses *overmaster* to counter it. He may then immediately cast *fireball*, though its caster level will only be 9.

Rack and Ruin

Evocation [Fire, Force]
Level: Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Target: One creature
Duration: 3 rounds; see text
Saving Throw: Fortitude partial
Spell Resistance: Yes

You throw out your hand at your foe. Telekinetic force slams the target, dealing 5d6 force damage and tripping him. The creature may make a Fortitude save to avoid being tripped.

Then if the creature is adjacent to any surface as large as his space (such as if he was tripped and fell), the force holds him there. Fires crackle along the surface in the shape of Infernal sigils, and at the start of the creature's turn, the flames sear the creature for 5d6 fire damage. The creature is immobilized for three rounds or until it spends a move action to make a Strength or Escape Artist check (DC 20), or otherwise escapes (such as by teleportation). If the creature moves out of the space it was pinned to, the spell ends.

Red Hot Liquid Magma

Evocation/Transmutation [Fire]
Level: Sor/Wiz 8
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
Area: One 10-ft. square per level (S)
Duration: Instantaneous (see text)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The area you target grows intensely hot, slowly turning into lava.

1st round — The ground becomes searing hot. Creatures in the area take 1d6 points of fire damage at the start of their turn.

2nd round — The ground blackens and cracks; glowing red stone shines from the cracks. Creatures in the area take 5d6 points of fire damage.

3rd round — The ground in the area becomes lava. Those who fall in it die. No save (unless they're immune to fire, in which case they don't die). The ground remains molten for several hours.

Severing Slash

Evocation [Force]
Level: Sor/Wiz 8
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: Medium (100 ft.+10 ft./level)
Effect: One blade of force
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Fortitude partial
Spell Resistance: Yes

A crescent-shaped blade of force flies from you to your target, causing a grievous cutting wound. Make a ranged attack, with an attack bonus of your caster level plus your Intelligence or Charisma modifier. As a force effect, it can strike ethereal and incorporeal creatures. A creature or object struck takes 4d12 points of force damage. Living creatures then take 1d6 points of damage each round thereafter from blood loss. This blood loss can be stopped by a Heal check (DC 15) or any amount of magical healing.

When you cast this spell, you can choose a specific limb, body part, or other exposed piece of your target to try to sever. If you do, you take a –4 penalty to your attack roll, but the target must make a Fortitude save or have that piece cut off.

A lost limb causes no additional damage, except for the bleeding mentioned above, but incurs appropriate penalties to the creature's actions. A lost arm halves the creature's lifting ability (but doesn't affect how much it can carry on its person), as well as obviously making it impossible to use that arm for anything (except maybe a club). A lost leg reduces a creature's speed to 5 feet, and incurs a –10 penalty to Balance and Tumble checks, as well as a –4 penalty to melee attack rolls and Reflex saves. Other effects may occur, subject to the game master's adjudication (for example, a quadraped losing a leg might only be reduced to half speed, and wyvern that loses its tail loses its stinger attack).

If you attempt to sever something that would kill or destroy the target, the target gets a +20 bonus to its save (but automatically fails if the damage dealt to it kills it anyway).

Spelleater

Abjuration/Necromancy
Level: Clr 7, Drd 7, Sor/Wiz 7

This spell functions as *greater dispel magic*, except that whenever it successfully counters a spell or dispels a spell in effect, you heal 1 point of damage for each spell level of the countered or dispelled spell. If you use this spell to affect magic items, the magic items do not contribute healing.

Stand the Heat

Abjuration
Level: Clr 1, Drd 1, Pal 1, Rgr 1, Sor/Wiz 1
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 24 hours
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The touched creature and all equipment it carries suffer no harm from being in even extreme heat. It can exist comfortably in temperatures as high as 500 degrees Fahrenheit. This protection is sufficient to endure the oven-like heat of a forest fire, though neither the creature nor its equipment is protected against fire damage.

If the affected creature catches fire, it can put itself out automatically by spending a move action.

Material Component: Ten gold coins which have sat in a fire for at least one hour.

Storm Shield

Abjuration/Evocation [Air, Electricity, Force]
Level: Drd 5, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 min./level (D)
Saving Throw: See text
Spell Resistance: See text

You are protected by the fury of a thunderstorm. This spell functions like *shield*, granting a +4 shield bonus to AC and protecting against *magic missiles*. Additionally, whenever you are struck in melee combat, thunder, lightning, and wind blasts your attacker. If that creature fails a Reflex save, it takes 1d6 points of electricity damage and is knocked back 5 feet. Spell resistance applies to this effect.

Telekinetic Thrust

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Target: One or more objects or creatures with a total weight of 50 lbs./level or less
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates (object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (object)

You can affect one or more objects or creatures by concentrating your mind upon them, sending

them in a deadly hail at your foes — or simply by hurling your foe! You can hurl one object or creature per level (maximum fifteen separate targets), as long as all are within range and each is no more than 10 feet away from any other one. Each object or creature can be hurled a maximum distance of 10 feet per level.

You must succeed on ranged attack rolls (one per creature or object thrown) to hit a target of the hurled items with the items, applying your Intelligence modifier (or Charisma modifier if a sorcerer) to the attack roll instead of your Dexterity modifier. Hurled weapons deal their standard damage (your Strength bonus does not apply; arrows or bolts deal damage as daggers of their size when used in this manner). Other objects deal damage ranging from 1 point per 25 pounds of weight (for less dangerous objects such as an empty barrel) to 1d6 points per 25 pounds of weight (for hard, dense objects such as a boulder).

Creatures are allowed Will saves (and spell resistance) to negate the effect, as are those whose held possessions are targeted by this power. If you use this power to hurl a creature against a solid surface, it takes damage as if it had fallen 10 feet (1d6 points). If you hurl one creature into another, both take the damage.

Vex the Inquisitor

Abjuration
Level: Sorcerer 7
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 hour/level (D)

Whenever a spell you cast is countered or dispelled by an enemy, you gain an open spell slot one level lower than that of the spell countered or dispelled.

Waking Nightmare

Enchantment/Illusion (Shadow) [Mind-Affecting, Evil]
Level: Sor/Wiz 9
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Unlimited
Targets: Self, plus 1 creature/level
Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will disbelief; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes; see text

You create a dreamscape of shadowstuff, calling the minds of many creatures to participate in the same waking nightmare, where they must face you to escape. The targets only have to be on the same plane, and do not have to be asleep, or even be capable of sleep. However, the spell requires malice, and so you cannot bring any allies into the dreamscape, only enemies.

This spell creates in the dreamscape a version of each target, formed of shadowstuff and magically linked to the real creature, so that what it experiences in the nightmare seems real. Since this is a dream-like representation of the creature, he appears with whatever equipment he normally has (though this does not create items the creature does not actually own). He has the same hit points his physical body had. This shadowy version is connected to the physical version, so any damage the creature takes in the nightmare manifests on his physical body, and any magical effects on one form affect the other. Likewise, magic and items that are expended in the dreamscape are expended in the real world.

The general appearance of the dreamscape is up to you: you choose a theme (such as "tombstone city full of screams," "jagged peaks where impossibly huge monsters float overhead in a stormy sky," or "spike-filled dungeon with slowly shifting halls and stairways"), though you cannot specify a particular layout or precise details. The terrain is solid, but cannot be intrinsically hazardous, so lava, intense cold, or grinding maws that chew your foes cannot be created.

A *mirage arcana* ***or*** *hallucinatory terrain* cast in the dreamscape has a very tangible effect, letting the caster reshape the dreamscape in more detail.

The difficulty of the save to resist this spell depends on how well you know the subject and what sort of physical connection (if any) you have to that creature. The modifiers for this are the same as for the *nightmare* spell.

Knowledge	Will Save Modifier
None	+10
Secondhand (you have heard of the subject)	+5
Firsthand (you have met the subject)	+0
Familiar (you know the subject well)	–5
Connection	**Will Save Modifier**
Likeness or picture	–2
Possession or garment	–4
Body part, lock of hair, bit of nail, etc.	–10

When you finish casting the spell, each target sees a flash of a nightmarish vision of your devising. Though the flash only takes a moment, the vision can seem to be up to a minute long. Even creatures who disbelieve the illusion or whose spell resistance resists it witness the vision.

When the vision ends, every target finds itself in the dreamscape, except for creatures who avoided the spell due to spell resistance; all targets are within 60 feet of each other and of you. The dreamscape covers a total area roughly 1000 feet in diameter, beyond which is an impenetrable, unseen barrier. It is not possible to teleport out of the dreamscape, because nothing exists beyond it.

Creatures who failed their save have their minds fully trapped in the nightmare. Their physical bodies fall into a coma, and they can only act in the dreamscape. Creatures who successfully disbelieve are not comatose, and perceive both the real world and the dreamscape, but in a given round they can only control either their physical body or their dream form, and whichever body they are not controlling is treated as helpless.

Creatures who disbelieve take only 50% damage from effects in the dreamscape, and non-damaging effects are only 50% as powerful, or have only a 50% chance of affecting them.

You also are part of the dreamscape, but you automatically disbelieve. If you are slain or lose consciousness, the spell ends and all those trapped within it are freed.

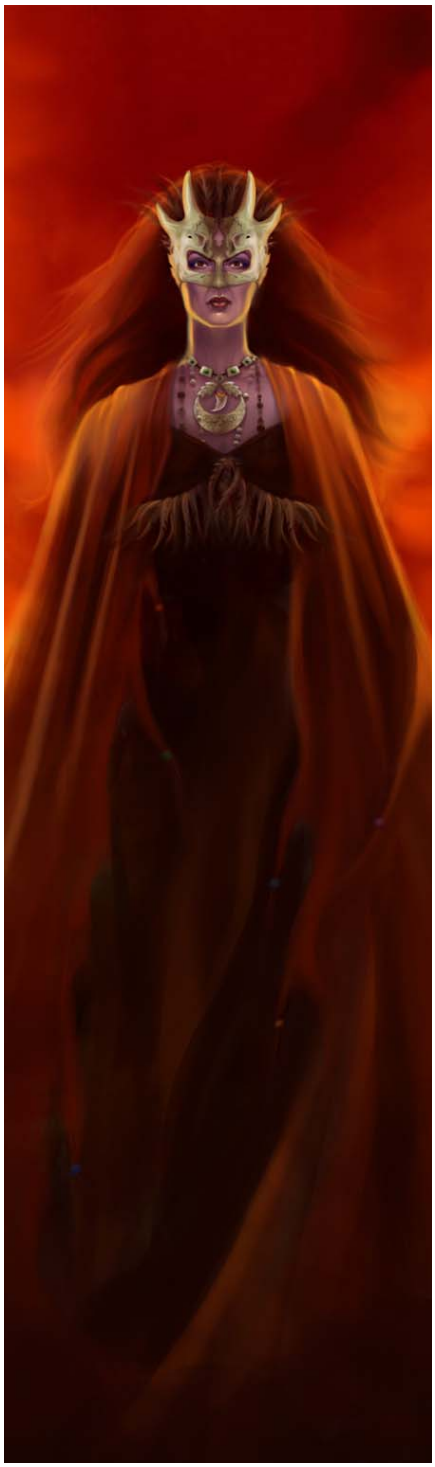
A creature outside the dreamscape who touches a creature affected by the spell sees the nightmare vision, and must make a Will save or be pulled into the waking nightmare. Thus creatures can come to the aid of comrades who would otherwise have to face you alone. However, the spell can never affect more creatures than your caster level.

A creature whose physical body is damaged by something outside the nightmare gets a new save to wake up and exit the dream. *Dispel evil*, *dispel magic*, or *break enchantment* cast on a target disrupts the spell's connection to that target, as if he had resisted by the spell due to spell resistance, but leaves other creatures trapped.

Wayfarer's Step

Conjuration (Teleportation)
Level: Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 full-round action
Range: 10 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels
Target: Personal
Duration: Instantaneous

You can teleport 10 feet, plus 5 feet per two levels. You do not need line of sight to your destination, but you cannot teleport to any location if there is a physical barrier between you and it, so you could not teleport through a window, through prison bars, or past a door, but you could teleport across a chasm, through fog, around a corner, or up a cliff. If your intended destination is occupied, you do not teleport.



The Scouring of Gate Pass (Detail) – Art by Cris Griffin

Epic Spells

Burning Veils
Evocation
Spellcraft DC: n/a
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft.+10 ft./level)
Effect: Multiple walls each of whose area is one 10-ft. square/three levels
Duration: Concentration + 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes (see text)

During the spell's duration, with a wave of your hand you can spend a move action to create an opaque, impenetrable flaming wall, whose area is up to one 10-foot square per three levels, anywhere within range. Each wall lasts five rounds before flickering out and vanishing. The wall is as impenetrable as a *wall of force*, and a creature who tries to move through the wall discovers it is solid, and takes creatures that touch the wall or end their turn adjacent to it take 2d6+20 points of fire damage. The wall deals double damage to undead.

The walls block line of effect. If the edges of the wall would interact with a solid surface, the wall simply becomes flush with the surroundings, allowing it to create a temporarily impassable barrier. Unlike *walls of force*, these walls can be dispelled, and if 20 points of cold damage is dealt to one, it is destroyed.

Desertion of the Blade
Transmutation
Spellcraft DC: n/a
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft.+10 ft./level)
Targets: 1 creature/level, all of which must be within 60 ft. of each other
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will partial
Spell Resistance: Yes

You turn the possessions of your enemies against them, awakening a spark of malevolent sentience in even the most mundane magic items. Each round, each affected creature must make a Will save. Those who fail are beset by their own gear, taking 1d6 points of damage per magic item worn (maximum 12d6). This only includes items that take up body slots, not potions, scrolls, ioun stones, and the like.

Worn magical armor tugs at the wearer, making a bull rush attempt with a bonus equal to its armor bonus (so +5 *full plate* gets a +13 bonus). Magic weapons attack their holder with an attack bonus of your caster level + your prime ability score modifier + 3 (Leska's total is +30 if she appears in adventure eight; otherwise, it is +37). Held items which cast spells, such as wands and staves, cast their spells so as best to harm their wielder. Other effects may occur, at your discretion.

Affected creatures must make a new save each round, even if they previously succeeded.

Intelligent magic items and artifacts (such as the Living Blade of Innenotdar and the Torch of the Burning Sky) are unaffected.

Divide the Heart
Universal
Spellcraft DC: n/a
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One hour

This spell lets you divide the core of another spell you cast so that it is less vulnerable to dispel or destruction. You create five immobile focus items within 1,000 feet of the original spell. As long as the five focus items are intact, the original spell cannot be dispelled, destroyed, or otherwise negated, even by *antimagic field* or *mage's disjunction*. The spell's duration is extended to one day per level. The focus items chosen by Leska have AC 5, hardness 5 and 40 hp.

Eye of the Obelisk
This was the spell that Leska used to activate the Koren Obelisk.

Fate of War
This is the spell Leska is using to force the whole world to war.

Mythos Scourge
Conjuration (Teleportation)
Spellcraft DC: n/a
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: See below
Targets: All creatures within 200 ft.
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You rip open the veils of reality, transporting nearby creatures into a demiplane where myth rules, then call forth an elder spirit of that myth to your enemies. All creatures within range are transported with you, and when the spell ends they all snap back to their previous reality.

If Leska uses this spell in adventure eight, the fortress vanishes from sight as the entire battle is transported to a cracked, dead field of white stones that stretches to the horizon in every direction. The heavens burn with fire, casting everything in a red haze, and stretching for a hundred feet behind Leska is the withered, dessicated corpse of a massive eagle, its rib cage exposed where its heart should be. High overhead, thunder roars as a serpent circles the battle, and with a gesture from Leska, the eagle cries as life suffuses it, and the dragon dives from the heavens.

Use the stats for a fiendish roc and a young adult red dragon for these mythic representations; they attack the heroes. The Koren Obelisk is still present on the battlefield, and if it is destroyed or if Leska is rendered unconscious, the spell ends.

Reweave Magic
Transmutation
Spellcraft DC: n/a
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal

When you cast this spell, you can immediately end any spell effects active on you, and immediately restore any spell effects that had been active on you that were dispelled within the last round.



Lyceum Tutors – Art by J. L. Jones



Appendix B
Game Statistics

for All Levels

by the War of the Burning Sky Crew

Cover Art by
Ryan Nock

Nearly 300 allies, enemies, and other interested parties are collected herein, sorted alphabetically for easy reference.

Who is Oller Pennyteller?
Why might a 9th-level wizard have CR 4?
What level is Leska?
How do you tame a rust monster?
Where does Lee Sidoneth keep his animal companion?

The material in this appendix can be used in any fantasy campaign.

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41, Master of the Temple **CR 18**

As this brown-skinned man stalks toward you, his forearms transform into bear-like claws. You can feel his soul grappling with yours as his body leads the attack. Despite his confident fury, his eyes are always thinking, pondering ways to blight the world.

Male human monk 3/monastic psion (seer) 15
NE Medium humanoid (evil)

Init +3; **Senses** *true seeing*; Listen +8, Spot +8
Languages Common

AC 36, touch 25, flat-footed 33 (+3 Dex, +8 Wis, +11 inertial armor, +4 insight); deflect arrows
hp 127 (18 HD)
Immune divination, mind control
Fort +12, **Ref** +11 (evasion), **Will** +22 (+24 vs. enchantment)

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee two claws of the beast each +16 (4d6+3, 19–20)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +12
Atk Options Stunning Fist (7/day, DC 25)
Psionic Powers Known (ML 15th; 240 PP; 94 spent so far)
8th – *hypercognition*
7th – *divert teleport*, *personal mind blank*, *ultrablast*
6th – *fuse flesh*, *greater precognition*, *psionic contingency*
5th – *psionic major creation*, *psionic true seeing*, *psychic crush*, *shatter mind blank*
4th – *correspond*, *psionic divination*, *remote viewing*, *telekinetic maneuver*
3rd – *fate link*, *forced share pain*, *mental barrier*, *psionic blast*
2nd – *clairvoyant sense*, *claws of the beast*, *object reading*, *recall agony*, *sensitivity to psychic impressions*
1st – *defensive precognition*, *empathy*, *inertial armor*, *offensive precognition*, *sense link*

Str 17, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 26, Cha 11
SQ renewal
Feats Cleave, Deflect Arrows, Expanded Knowledge (animal affinity), Expanded Knowledge (claws of the beast), Great Cleave, Greater Psionic Fist, Improved Critical (claws), Iron Will, Power Attack, Psionic Fist, Psionic Meditation, Stunning Fist, Unavoidable Strike, Weapon Focus (claws) 2
Skills Concentration +25, Jump +15, Knowledge (religion) +22, Sense Motive +14 Spellcraft +16, Tumble +11
Possessions none

Monastic Psion (Ex) 41's primary ability score for his psionic powers is Wis, not Int.
Psionic Focus (Ex) As a move action, 41 can make a Concentration check (DC 20) to attain focus. He can expend his focus to resolve an attack as a touch attack, or to have an attack deal +4d6 damage. When he makes a touch attack, he usually Power Attacks.
Renewal (Ex) If 41's projected body is destroyed, it returns at full power one round later. He can only truly be destroyed by capturing his soul or killing his physical body.



Soul Magic, not Psionics

If you are not using the psionics rules, this simplified version covers all you need to handle 41's powers.

Psionics (Sp) When 41 uses one of these powers, there is no special sound or visual display, but those around him are simply aware that he has tapped a power, as clearly as they would notice someone casting a spell. The caster level for all these abilities is 15th.

Ten times per day he can use one of the following – *psychic crush*, *recall agony*, *telekinetic maneuver*, *ultrablast*.

Four times per day he can use one of the following – *lion's charge* or *painful strike*.

Once per day he can use any one of *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *eagle's splendor*, *fox's cunning*, or *owl's wisdom*. While so affected, he takes on minor physical traits of the appropriate creature.

Once per day he can use *forced share pain*.

Forced share pain – If a creature in close range fails a save (Fort DC 25), 41 takes half the damage dealt to him for the next 15 rounds, and the target of this ability takes the other half. If the save succeeds, there is no effect.

Lion's charge – 41 can charge and make a full attack in the same round. Activating this ability is a swift action, and it only affects him on the round he activates it.

Painful strike – 41's natural attacks deal an additional 1d6 nonlethal damage. This bonus lasts 15 rounds.

Psychic crush – If a creature in close range fails a save (Will DC 23), he is reduced to –1 hp. If he succeeds, he takes 6d6 damage instead.

Recall agony – One target in medium range takes 14d6 damage (Will DC 25 half) as pains from his past return to him.

Telekinetic maneuver – 41 can bull rush, disarm, grapple, or trip as if his base attack bonus were +15 and his Str modifier +8. He can do this once per round, as long as he maintains concentration.

Ultrablast – 41 infuses horrible elements of anguished and tortured souls into the souls of those within 15 ft, dealing 15d6 damage (Will DC 25 half).

Agony **CR 17**

A twisted man crawls on broken limbs, clad only in loose rags that do not hide the black sores that cover his body. As he moves through the shadows, his flesh seems to glint like a dark carapace, and where his fingernails scratch on stone, he leaves a trail of black venom. Hidden in the hunch of his body are a cluster of arms, which wrap around his torso like a freezing man struggling for warmth, but each of these arms ends not in hands, but in five writhing, segmented scorpion tails. With a moan the figure looks to you, his hollow eyes wide with desperate agony.

CG Medium aberration (trillith, incorporeal)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 30, touch 16, flat-footed 24 (+6 Dex, +14 natural); miss chance 50% (incorporeal)

hp 230 (20 HD – currently at 225 hp); **DR** 15/ health

SR 22

Fort +13, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee two claws each +18 (2d6+7 plus poison, 19–20)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +23

Special Actions rake (four attacks each +18, 1d6+3 plus poison), unleash agony

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)

At will – *hold monster* (DC 18), *mass inflict critical wounds* (DC 21)

3/day – *power word stun*, quickened *harm* (DC 19).

Str 25, Dex 23, Con 25, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 16

SQ agonized spirit, embody, endow, grant boon, healing vulnerability, poison, project image, rejuvenation

Feats Ability Focus (agonized spirit), Ability Focus (poison), Improved Critical (claw), Improved Grapple, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Quicken Spell-Like Ability (harm), Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Climb +15, Concentration +30

Agonized Spirit (Su) Whenever Agony takes damage, the creature responsible for dealing that damage takes an equal amount of damage. A Will save (DC 25) negates this. A separate save must be made each round (not for each individual attack).

Damage Reduction (Ex) Agony's damage reduction can be bypassed by creatures who are at full health, with no damage or debilitating physical conditions.

Embody (Su) Agony is naturally incorporeal and so normally could not do much to harm his foes other than to use spell-like abilities. However, as a full round action, Agony can create a corporeal form for himself by entering an object (or group of objects) of roughly Medium size that resembles either an injured person or a scorpion. Agony has his normal shape, but his composition will be that of the matter used to create his body.

While embodied, Agony loses the incorporeal subtype, and loses his fly speed. Agony can leave this body as a standard action Any damage dealt to the embodied form affects Agony normally, and stays with him even once he returns to incorporeality.

When the heroes face Agony, however, he will be affected by Etinifi's song of forms, and he spontaneously embodies, not requiring any object to enter. If he is already embodied he cannot leave his body.

Endow (Su) As a full round action while incorporeal, Agony can grant its power to any living creature within 30 ft. When he does so, he vanishes, effectively absorbed by the creature. At will, or when the creature dies, Agony reappears within 30 ft. of the creature, unharmed by the ordeal. The endowed creature gains Agony's boon.

A trillith that is endowing a creature can be targeted and affected by mind-affecting effects, and can be driven out with *remove curse*, *break enchantment*, or a similar effect. However, the trillith itself cannot be harmed while endowing a creature, except by mind-affecting effects.

Grant Boon (Su) Agony can lend his power to several creatures at once without actually entering their bodies. To do so he must touch each creature. Agony gains a negative level, and the creature gains a +15 enhancement bonus to Concentration checks made to maintain concentration after taking damage or being otherwise disturbed. This boon is the equivalent of a magic item with market value 10,000 gp.



If Agony is slain while affected by the Song of Forms, the nearest ten intelligent creatures within 150 ft. gain his boon, which is permanent unless dispelled. Agony can grant this boon to up to nineteen creatures.

Healing Vulnerability (Ex) If an effect heals Agony's damage, the trillith must make a Will save (DC 10 + damage healed) or be overwhelmed with relief, effectively being stunned for one round. Agony cannot attack while its hp are full. However, every minute that its hp are at full, it takes 5 points of damage as its inherent nature causes it pain again.

Poison (Su) Injury. Will DC 29 (initial) and Fortitude DC 29 (secondary). Initial damage – wracking pain for ten minutes; Secondary Damage – 1 Con. A creature afflicted with wracking pain takes a –4 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks, and any character attempting to use magic to heal the creature must succeed a caster level check (DC 27), or else the creature receives no healing. This is a magical effect that can be dispelled (caster level 20).

Project Image (Su) At will when he is incorporeal, Agony can assume the appearance of a wretched, rag-clad man whose joints are twisted painfully, as if they had been repeatedly broken. Agony's true form is only visible to creatures using *true seeing*.

Rake (Ex) To use this ability, Agony must hit with

a claw attack. He can then rake with multiple small hands that stretch out from his chest, each finger tipped with a scorpion-tail stinger: four attacks at +18 (1d6+3 plus poison).

Rejuvenation (Ex) As Agony is a creatures of dream and not of flesh, he is hard to kill. While incorporeal or while embodied, if Agony is destroyed he does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later.

Agony can only be truly slain two ways. If his body dies while he is trapped by the Song of Forms or similar magic, he dies, and his corpse remains even after the magic ends. Alternately, if Agony is destroyed and all the damage is caused by mind-affecting or negative energy effects, the trillith's spirit is obliterated. In this case, no creature gains the benefits of Agony's boon.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp) Agony can only use *hold monster* against creatures that are at less than half their maximum hp. The trillith is immune to his own magic, and so cannot kill himself.

True Seeing (Su) Agony has *true seeing* active constantly.

Unleash Agony (Su) As a full-round action while incorporeal, Agony can release an intense blast of psychic pain. Each round, every other creature within a mile must make a Will save (DC 23) or be stunned as the most horrible pain imaginable afflicts them. Those who resist are still wracked with pain, taking a –4 penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks. It is only during this time that Agony is relieved of its pain, but it can only maintain this power for about ten minutes before it grows weak, rendering it unable to use the power for a minute. During that time, Etinifi is usually able to start singing the Song of Forms, which binds Agony and holds the pain at bay for a while.

This is a mind-affecting effect. The defenses of the Scourge prison prevent this power from affecting those outside the prison, though even they feel a slight discomfort while Agony uses his power.

Annihilation **CR 26**

Deeper than the void, a black being rises into view. It roils like smoke with no fire. Jagged claws grind the earth to dust, an infinite bladed tail stretches into the nothing and strangles the light, and a neck armored with the curved bones of the world holds aloft a draconic head whose fangs slice like the scythes of Death, and whose eyes are the emptiness of an eclipse. Wings that stretch across the fiery heavens bear the beast toward you, and it roars, threatening to tear your soul from your flesh. It is Annihilation, and you face it at the end of the world.

When the heroes reveal the true form of the trillith beneath its flesh, they see this: *There is fire without heat. The dragon's flesh crumbling about its face, revealing a writhing, jagged nimbus of crackling red energy.*

CE Colossal aberration (trillith)

Init +1; **Senses** blindsight 500 ft., arcane sense 500 ft.; Listen +36, Spot +35

AC 38, touch 3, flat-footed 37 (+1 Dex, +35 natural, –8 size)

hp 927 (64 HD); **DR** 20/epic

Immune ability damage, ability drain, disease, disintegrate, energy drain, mind-affecting effects, petrification, poison, polymorph

Fort +30, **Ref** +22, **Will** +36

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), fly 200 ft. (clumsy)

Melee bite +57 (4d8+17, 20/×4) and claw +48 melee (1d12+8 plus negative level plus Awesome Blow) and tail slash (3d8+25 plus *greater dispel magic*)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (40 ft. with tail)

Base Atk +48; **Grp** +81

Atk Options cloning claw, dispelling tail, improved grab; Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Greater Awesome Blow, Improved Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Snatch

Special Actions hurl island, nether breath weapon, roar of annihilation; Fly-By Attack, Wingover

Str 45, Dex 12, Con 28, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 14

SQ arcane sense, augmented critical, overcome damage reduction (epic), spirit of annihilation

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Fly-By Attack, Greater Awesome Blow*, Improved Awesome Blow*, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Snatch, Toughness ×21, Wingover

* New feats; see sidebar

Skills Listen +36, Spot +35

Absorb Magic (Su) Normally, any spell or spell-like ability that targets Annihilation or includes it in its area is absorbed, even if the trillith would be immune to it. Once it has absorbed 40 spell levels, it uses its Nether Breath Weapon ability in its next round. If somehow it cannot use that ability, at the end of its next round it is weakened, as detailed in Nether Breath Weapon.

Arcane Sense (Sp) Annihilation is aware of all magical effects active within 500 ft., as with *arcane sight*. This helps it target its Nether Breath Weapon

Augmented Critical (Ex) Annihilation's bite deals quadruple damage on a critical hit.

Awesome Blow (Ex) All of Annihilation's claw attacks use Awesome Blow. A creature struck by Annihilation's claw attack must make a Reflex save (DC = damage dealt) or be hurled 30 ft. and fall prone.

Cloning Claw (Su) When Annihilation hits a Large or smaller foe with its claw attack, it tears a part of that creature's soul away and creates an antithetical clone of it which exists only to destroy the creature that spawned it. The creature struck by the claws gains a negative level. The clone appears adjacent to the original creature. The clone is identical to the affected creature at the time it is cloned, and it has access to the same powers and tactics as that creature, except that it cannot use any divine powers. When the clone is reduced to 0 hp it vanishes, and the negative level is removed. If the original creature is slain, the clone vanishes.

Annihilation can only create a single clone at a time; if its claw attack hits while a clone exists, a clone is not created and the creature struck does not gain a negative level.

Dispelling Tail (Su) A creature struck by Annihilation's slashing tail is affected as if by a targeted *greater dispel magic* (caster level 25th). Additionally, Annihilation has improved grab with its tail.

Hurl Island (Ex) As a standard action, Annihilation can hurl an object up to 50-ft. across, up to a distance of 50 ft. Alternately he can grab it as a move action then throw it later as a standard action.

Creatures in a 50-ft. square take 20d6 damage (Reflex DC 69 half). Normally the creatures would be buried, but Annihilation destroys whatever it touches, so after hitting, the object turns to dust.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, Annihilation must hit with its slashing tail. It then begins a grapple as a free action. If it succeeds, on its next turn it lifts the creature to its mouth and bites it, then hurls it away 30 ft. at some point during its flight.

Nether Breath Weapon (Su) Annihilation can only use this ability once it has absorbed 40 spell levels with its Absorb Magic ability, and then it must use it. As a standard action, Annihilation releases a 200 ft. line of crackling red energy. Any creature struck is affected as if by *mage's disjunction* (caster level 25th). This cannot destroy the Torch.

After using this ability, Annihilation is weakened: on its next round it can only take a single move action, which must be to land, or else at the end of its turn it falls. On the next round the trillith is dazed; on the third round it regains its full power and can return to battle.

While weakened, the flesh around Annihilation's head breaks free, revealing a pulsing being of red energy within it. While its head is exposed, the trillith loses its Absorb Magic ability and its damage reduction, and its natural armor is reduced by 20, to AC 18. At the start of its third round after using Nether Breath Weapon, the debris that makes up its head returns, and its defenses return to normal. After using Nether Breath Weapon three times in one encounter, Annihilation's head remains exposed even after its weakness ends. It can continue to act as normal, but its defenses stay lowered. Then, instead of a bite, Annihilation gains a slam attack with its head (+57, 4d8+17 plus *mage's disjunction*).

Overcome Damage Reduction (Ex) Annihilation's attacks are treated as epic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Roar of Annihilation (Su) The devastating roar of Annihilation deals 10d6 damage (Will DC 36 half) and causes tremors in the earth, requiring a Balance check (DC 10) to avoid falling over. If someone sings the Song of Forms, listeners can use the singer's Perform check in place of their save if it is higher. Annihilation can roar as a standard action once per minute.

Spirit of Annihilation (Su) Any unattended object Annihilation touches is disrupted. It remains solid as long as Annihilation touches it, but the round after the trillith stops contact with it, the object is obliterated. Magic items receive a Will save (DC 44) to resist. Because of its size, Annihilation destroys entire 50-ft. chunks of matter at a time whenever it lands on a solid surface.

Aramil **CR 5**

Male elf fighter 5

LN Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Elven

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15

hp 32 (5 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2 (+4 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee two mwk shortswords each +9 (1d6+3 and 1d6+2, 19-20) or
mwk shortsword +11 (1d6+3, 19-20)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6

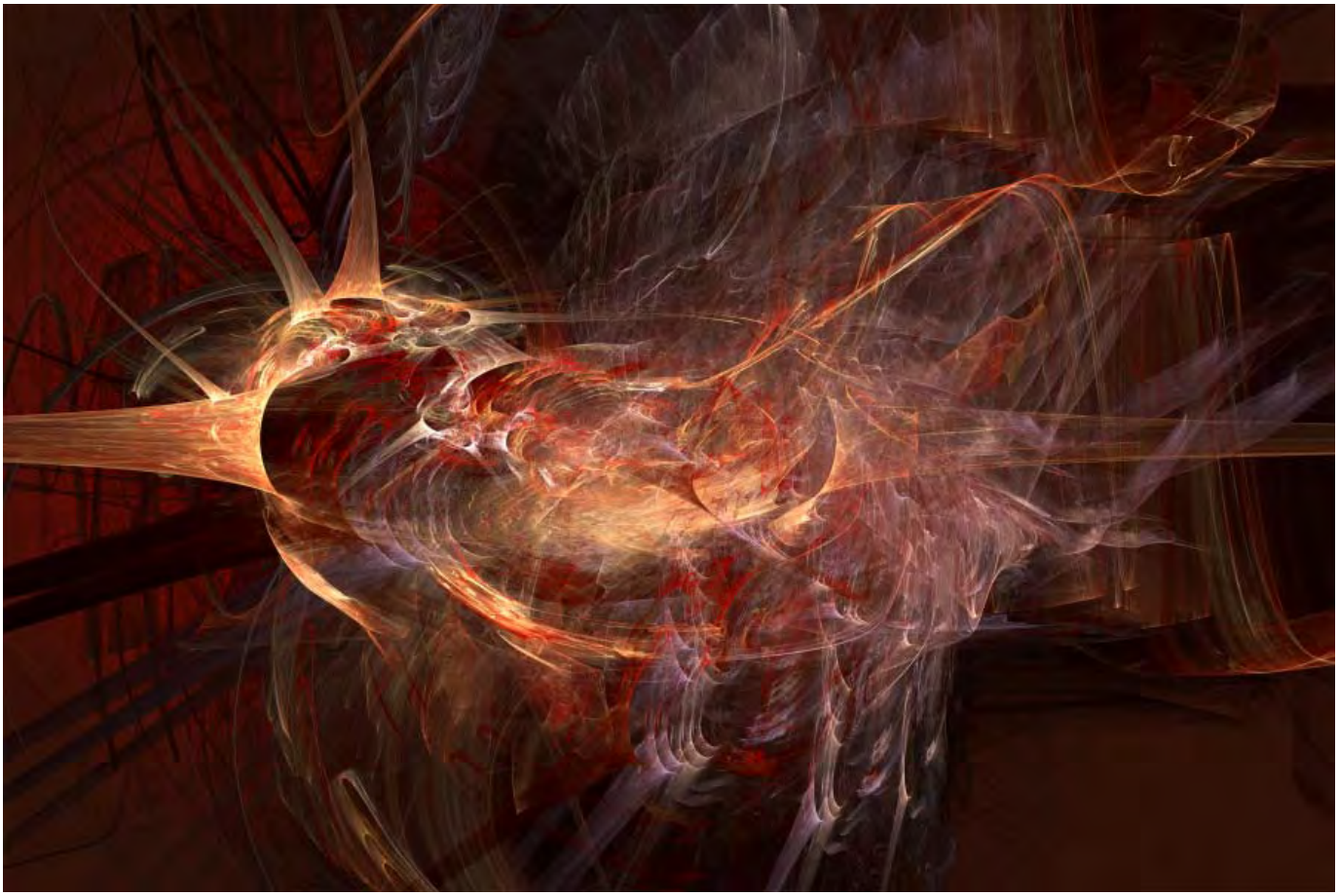
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Str 13, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Feats Combat Reflexes, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (shortsword), Weapon Specialisation (shortsword)

Skills Profession (soldier) +9, Ride +12

Possessions combat gear plus *chain shirt +1*, mwk cold iron shortsword, mwk alchemical silver shortsword, key to his personal chest



Atroius **CR 17**

As a man. *This thin old man gazes at you with huge eyes from a face of flayed flesh that exposes his skull horrifically, reminiscent of an inquisitor's mask. Though wearing a suit of heavy armor and shield – all of red dragon scales – he looks too frail to fight.*

As a bear. *A fierce bear growls at you, its eyes two impossibly wide yellow orbs in a face of flayed flesh, its skull exposed horrifically, like the mask of an inquisitor.*

Venerable male human druid 17

NE Medium humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +26, Spot +26

Languages Common, Draconic, Druidic, Infernal, Orc

AC 30, touch 10, flat-footed 30 (+13 armor, +7 shield)

hp 114 (17 HD)

Immune poison

Fort +12, **Ref** +5, **Will** +16; +4 vs. fey

Buff Suite (duration 17 minutes or longer) *air walk*, *antilife shell*, *barkskin*, *control winds*, *death ward*, *freedom of movement*, *protection from energy* (all types), *spider climb*, *stoneskin*

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Dire Bat Melee bite +25/+20/+15/+10 (1d4+7); *greater magic weapon*

Dire Bear Melee two claws each +23 (2d4+11) and bite +18 (2d8+6); *greater magic weapon*

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +13; **Dire Bear Grp** +26

Special Actions reactive counterspell, spontaneous casting, wild shape (5/day)

Spells Prepared (CL 17th, DC 16 + spell level)

9th – empowered *firestorm*

8th – quickened *flame strike*, *whirlwind*

7th – *greater scrying*, *heal*, quickened *poison*

6th – *antilife shell*, *greater dispel magic* ×2, quickened *heat metal* ×2

5th – *control winds* ×2, *death ward*, quickened *faerie fire*, *stone skin*

4th – *air walk*, *flame strike* ×2, *freedom of movement*, *scrying* ×2

3rd – *greater magic weapon*, *protection from energy* ×5

2nd – *animal messenger* ×5, *barkskin*, *spider climb*

1st – *cure light wounds* ×6, *longstrider*

0 – *cure minor wounds* ×4, *detect magic* ×2

Str 12, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 22, Cha 11

Feats Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Heavy Armor Proficiency, Improved Initiative, Natural Spell, Quicken Spell, Reactive Counterspell

SQ a thousand faces, timeless body, trackless step, woodland stride

Skills Concentration +23, Listen +26, Spellcraft +23, Spot +26

Possessions *+5 wild dragon hide full plate*, *+5 wild heavy dragon hide shield*

Wild Shape (Su) Five times per day, Atroius can transform into a Huge or smaller animal, lasting up to seventeen hours. He prefers the form of a dire bear, though occasionally he will become a dire bat to find invisible foes, or a tyrannosaur just to terrorize the weak. In any form, he maintains his flayed face. In dire bear form, Atroius's statistics change as follows:

Size Large

AC 37, touch 10, flat-footed 36 (+13 armor, +7 shield, +7 natural, +1 Dex, –1 size)

Fort +14, **Ref** +6, **Will** +16; +4 vs. fey

Str 31, Dex 13, Con 19

Attercop Pouncer **CR 1**

N Medium vermin

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11

hp 11 (2 HD)

Fort +4 (+8 vs. poison), **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d6 plus poison)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1

Special Attacks knockdown

Str 11, Dex 15, Con 12, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 6

Feats Skill Focus (Jump)[B], Weapon Finesse

SQ animal cunning, webs

Skills Climb +11*, Hide +3, Listen +23*, Move Silently +3

Animal Cunning (Ex) An attercop pouncer can be trained, handled, and affected by mind-affecting magic as if it were an animal with an Int score of 2. It is affected by magic as if it were either an animal or a vermin. A druid or ranger may choose an attercop pouncer as an animal companion as if it were a wolf.

Knockdown (Ex) Attercop pouncers often attempt to overrun fleeing creatures, jumping as part of a charge, and attempting to knock its target down. As long as the attercop pouncers has enough space to jump at least 4 ft. vertically, it gains a +4 bonus to its overrun check, it does not incur an attack of opportunity for entering its target's space, and its target cannot choose to avoid it.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 12, initial damage none, secondary damage unconsciousness for 1 minute. An attercop pouncer only generates enough poison to deliver once per eight hours. It can choose not to inject its poison on a successful bite.

Skills (Ex) An attercop pouncer has a +10 racial bonus on Jump checks. It uses its Dex modifier for Climb checks. It has a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks, and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Webs (Ex) An attercop pouncer cannot use its web in combat, and if it plans to eat its foe it simply chews on it without wrapping it up. However, if the spider plans to plant its eggs, after knocking a foe unconscious it will slowly encase the creature in a web, then drag it away to some place safe. The eggs incubate for a week before slowly eating the victim from within. A Heal check (DC 25) can remove them safely, as does a *remove disease* spell.

Escaping from the webs after being wrapped up requires a Str check (DC 22), or they can be cut open with 5 points of damage. Attercop pouncers do not live in vast webs, instead making nests in high places, packing dirt into a hanging tunnel, reinforced by webbing. When prey comes by, they leap out from above.

Augustus, Apprentice of Pain CR 12

Male fiend-touched ghoulish half-orc rogue 7/fighter 4

NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, extraplanar, orc)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common, Orc

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10 (+3 Dex)

hp 72 (11 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune undead immunities

Resist cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 16

Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee stone shortsword +11/+6 (1d6+3, 19–20)
or
unarmed strike +12/+7 (1d3+3) or
two stone shortswords +9/+9/+4/+4 (1d6+3/1d6+1, 19–20)

Ranged rock +12 (1d4+3)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +16

Atk Options sneak attack +4d6, smite good (1/day, +11 damage)

Special Actions salt in the eyes (+12 melee touch)

Spells Imbued (CL 16th)
2nd – *shield other*
1st – *deathwatch*, *shield of faith*

Str 16, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ undead traits

Feats Ability Focus (salt in the eyes), Improved Grapple, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Unarmed Strike, Quickdraw, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (shortsword), Weapon Specialization (shortsword)

Skills Climb +17, Escape Artist +12, Hide +16, Listen +14, Move Silently +16, Open Locks +9, Spot +13, Tumble +17

Possessions two stone shortswords, rocks, pouch full of salt

Salt in the Eyes (Ex) As a free action, Gus can pull out a handful of salt and toss it into an enemy's eyes as a melee touch attack. The creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 21) or be blinded for ten minutes, or until it can wash out its eyes. Even if it succeeds the save, it takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls. A given creature is only vulnerable to this trick once per day.

Aurana Kiirodel CR 20

This slender woman carries herself with a posture of faint, aged resignation. Where her skin shows – her angular face, long fingers, and plunging neckline – she is the creamy white of a full moon. Everywhere else – her hair, nails, and lace dress – is the flat black of an unlit room. The only color in her is the freezing blue of her eyes, and the sanguine red of her lips.

Female heartsblood vampire elf sorcerer 14/archmage 4

CE Medium Undead (augmented humanoid, elf)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +13, Spot +13

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Undercommon

AC 37, touch 19, flat-footed 30 (+7 Dex, +8 natural, +2 deflection, +6 shield, +4 armor); Dodge

hp 117 (18 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 10/silver and magic

Immune undead immunities

Resist turn resistance +4, cold 10, electricity 10, acid 30, fire 30, sonic 30

Fort +10, **Ref** +17, **Will** +18

Weakness vampire weaknesses

Buff Suite *disguise self*, *greater arcane sight*, *mage armor*, *nondetection*, *overland flight*, *resist energy* (acid, fire, sonic), *true seeing*, *ventriloquism*

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee melee touch +12 (varies) or
accursed tendrils +32/+27 (2d8+20 plus paralysis [Fort DC 30])

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +16 (+36 with *accursed tendrils*)

Atk Options Combat Reflexes

Special Actions blood drinking

Spells Known (CL 22nd, +16 ranged touch)
9th (4) – *dominate monster* (DC 31)
8th (5) – *accursed tendrils** (DC 30), *greater shadow evocation* (DC 30)
7th (7) – *greater arcane sight*, *greater teleport*
6th (8) – *planar binding*, *shadow walk*, *true seeing*
5th (4) – *dominate person* (DC 27), *overland flight*, *sending*, *telekinesis* (DC 25, +32 attack bonus)
4th (8) – *arcane eye*, *black tentacles*, *charm monster* (DC 26), *scrying*
3rd (8) – *daylight*, *displacement*, *nondetection*, *vampiric touch*
2nd (9) – *detect thoughts*, *invisibility*, *minor image*, *resist energy*, *touch of idiocy*
1st (9) – *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *magic*



missile, shocking grasp, ventriloquism

0 (6) – *detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, read magic*

Buff suite expends one 9th-, one 7th-, two 5th-, one 3rd-, three 2nd-, and three 1st-level slots

Str 16, Dex 24, Con -, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 30

SQ metamagic affinity, spell power +4, undead traits, vampire weaknesses

Feats Alertness[B], Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge[B], Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Greater Spell Focus (illusion), Improved Grapple[B], Improved Intiative[B], Lightning Reflexes[B], Quicken Spell, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (illusion)

Skills Bluff +34, Concentration +20, Hide +15, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Listen +13, Move Silently +15, Search +11, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +29, Spot +13

Possessions *robe of charisma +6 and resistance +5, +5 glamered mithral buckler*

Tattoos *amulet of natural armor +2, gloves of dexterity +4, ring of protection +2*

Alternate Form (Su) Aurana can assume the form of a swarm of vipers (as a centipede swarm, except her poison does Con damage) or a large viper as a standard action.

If Aurana is reduced to 0 hp, she is not destroyed. Instead she collapses into a swarm of vipers and attempts to escape by burrowing into the ground. While in this form, she cannot attack and further damage against her has no effect, though if a bird manages to catch one of the serpents and devour it, Aurana is destroyed. As long as she can reach shadowed soil within 2 hours, however, her fast healing will begin to restore her.

Blood Drinking (Ex) Aurana can suck blood from a living victim with her fangs by making a successful grapple check. If she pins the foe, she drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Con damage each round the pin is maintained. On each such successful attack, Aurana gains 5 temporary hp.

Metamagic Affinity (Ex) Instead of having access to a familiar, Aurana can use the Quicken Spell metamagic feat without increasing the casting time of her spells.

Tattoos (Su) Aurana has inscribed on her person a number of magical tattoos that duplicate the effects of magical items (see above). A magical tattoo cannot be disarmed, sundered, or stolen.

Vampire Weaknesses (Ex) Aurana has the same vulnerabilities to holy symbols, sunlight, and running water that normal vampires do. She avoids birds as a normal vampire avoids garlic, and cannot come within 20 ft. of an intentionally built fire, such as a campfire or hearth. She can be perpetually incapacitated by staking her with a bone from a large bird, and can be slain by immersion in water, decapitation, or if the final damage is dealt by a bird.

Aurus, Windborn Minotaur CR 10

Through the distorting green fluid of the nearest vat you spot something moving, its form indistinct, so silent you wonder whether it's just a trick of the light. Larger than a man, horns stretching out from its head, you realize suddenly that it is charging straight for you. The vat shatters, and toxic slime sprays you as a bull-headed humanoid bursts through, roaring and swinging a massive hammer. Its skin is icy white, verging on blue, its body nothing more than wisps of vapor beneath the waist.

LE Large monstrous humanoid (air)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +17, Spot +7

Languages Auran

AC 18, touch 9 (never flat-footed)

hp 150 (12 HD); **DR** 10/–

Immune windborn immunities, natural cunning immunities

Fort +14, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect); Fly-By Attack

Melee *Kiano* +19/+14 (3d6+13, ×3) and gore +13 (1d8+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +22

Atk Options Whirlwind Attack

Special Actions overwhelming charge

Str 28, Dex 10, Con 22, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ air mastery

Feats Fly-By Attack, Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (greathammer), Whirlwind Attack[B]

Skills Intimidate +3, Listen +17, Search +2, Spot +7

Possessions *Kiano*

Air Mastery (Ex) Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty on attack and damage rolls against Aurus.

Natural Cunning (Ex) Aurus is immune to *maze* spells, cannot get lost, and is never flat-footed.

Overwhelming Charge (Ex) As a full round action, Aurus can make a special charge attack, driven by pummeling gusts of wind, striking everything in his path. He can travel up to twice his base speed in a straight line. Every time he enters the square of a creature or object, he may attack with his greathammer *Kiano* (+19 attack bonus; 3d6+13, ×3). Creatures struck in this way must make a Str check (DC 21) or be knocked prone. Objects struck this way take triple normal damage from *Kiano* (enough to destroy nearly anything in the lab). Aurus provokes attacks of opportunity for this movement as normal, including attacks of opportunity for entering opponents' squares.



If a creature in Aurus's path resists being knocked down, or an object in his path is not destroyed, Aurus's movement ends. If he shatters one of the vats and attempts to pass through it, each square costs quadruple normal movement rates as the draining fluid slows him down. At the end of his charge, Aurus is dazed and he loses the benefit of his windborn defenses for one round as his body turns mostly solid.

Windborn (Ex) Because of Aurus's dual nature, part solid creature and part air elemental, he has DR 10/– and ignores any poison, sleep, paralysis, or stunning effect, as well as extra damage from critical hits and sneak attacks. He can still be flanked. For one round after he uses his overwhelming charge ability, he loses these defenses.

Tactics Normally Aurus simply floats to the nearest foe and pummels him, but if ever two enemies are in a straight line with him, he uses his overwhelming charge to strike them both. Be sure to make a big deal of just what provokes Aurus to use this attack. In the middle of combat he pauses for a fraction of a second, glances at those foes who have so conveniently lined up, then briefly grins and cocks his head from side to side as he aims his charge. Optimally, the heroes will recognize this pattern in Aurus's attacks, and take advantage of it, luring him into a charge that will leave him vulnerable.

Balan Bastom **CR 7**

An Ostalin man nearing middle age with a thick sandy brown muttonchop beard, Balan dresses in nobleman's finery, and always situates himself to be as comfortable as possible without looking improper. He keeps an exotic leather-bound case beside him, stitched with his family's coat of arms.

Male half-elf bard 7

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Orc, Terran

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 34 (7 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +4 (+6 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 shortsword* +5 (1d6, 19–20) or accordion case +0 (1d6–1 nonlethal)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4

Spells Known (CL 7th)

3rd (1/day) – *deep slumber* (DC 16), *glibness*

2nd (3/day) – *cure moderate wounds*, *detect thoughts* (DC 15), *misdirection*, *tongues*

1st (4/day) – *charm person* (DC 14), *comprehend languages*, *disguise self*, *silent image*

0 (3/day) – *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16

SQ bardic knowledge +8, bardic music 7/day (countersong, fascinate, inspire courage, inspire competence, suggestion)

Feats Negotiatior, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Skills Bluff +15, Diplomacy +26, Intimidate +17, Gather Information +17, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Perform (keyboard) +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +12.

Possessions *+1 shortsword* (jeweled and etched, worth 2,500 gp), *stone of alarm*, masterwork accordion in a fine accordion case, noble's outfit, 150 pp and 300 gp for bribes

Bardic Music (Su) Seven times per day, Balan can use a bardic music performance to oppose hostile sonic or language-dependent effects, to fascinate onlookers when not in combat, to grant his allies a +1 bonus to attack, damage, and saves against fear, to grant an ally a +2 bonus to a skill check, or to implant a suggestion (Will DC 16) into the mind of a creature he has already fascinated. After all, nothing is more fascinating than a bard passionately playing an accordion.

Balance **CR 8**

This is a beautiful, fey-like humanoid with a bald head and flowing robes that seem to drift in an invisible breeze surrounding him. Wait – wasn't he a "she" just now?

Via true seeing*: This creature is a ghostly blue-white draconic serpent, whose body is made up of strands of intertwined energy, silk and gossamer threads.*

N Medium aberration (Trillith)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Dodge, retort (Fort DC 21)

hp 110 (20 HD); **DR** 10/emotion

Fort +9, **Ref** +12, **Will** +17

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 60 ft.

Melee two slams each +20 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +16

Atk Options Combat Expertise

Special Actions change shape, retort

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)

At will – *calm emotions*, *detect thoughts*

Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 20

SQ contingent incorporeality, rejuvenation, soothing voice, trillith traits

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +28, Diplomacy +28, Disguise +28, Sense Motive +26

Calm Emotions (Su) At will, Balance may affect all creatures within 30 ft. with a *calm emotions* spell (caster level 20th; Will DC 25 negates).

By using a bit of her own life essence, Balance may extend the *calm emotions* effect to the closest 100 creatures. Doing so incurs 1 negative level upon Balance per 100 creatures affected. She currently has 11 negative levels.

Change Shape (Su) Balance can assume the shape of any Small or Medium humanoid. In humanoid form, Balance loses her natural attacks. She can remain in his humanoid form until he chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, and the Song of Forms does not keep Balance from changing its form (though it does keep him from being incorporeal). *True seeing* reveals Balance's natural form.

Damage Reduction (Ex) Balance has a damage reduction of 10/emotion. Bypassing this damage reduction requires the attacker to be under the influence of a particularly strong emotion of some kind – the grim determination



and subdued demeanor exhibited by typical PCs in most circumstances won't do. Any magical effect which induces emotion will qualify, and if the players engage in at least a little roleplaying, that will suffice as well.

Detect Thoughts (Su) Balance can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 20th; Will DC 21 negates). This ability is always active.

Contingent Incorporeality (Su) Balance is naturally incorporeal, though as long as the Song of Forms is sung, she must remain in either her natural body or in a humanoid guise of some sort. If the Song of Forms ends, Balance becomes incorporeal, though she still projects the same image. She gains a Fly speed 30 (perfect).

Grant Boon (Su) While endowed by or when granted a boon by Balance, a creature gains a +5 competence bonus to Diplomacy checks and once per day may cast the *calm emotions* spell on one target within 30 ft, including itself. If Balance dies, the closest 8 creatures permanently gain Balance's Boon. It is worth 2,500 gp.

Rejuvenation (Su) As Balance is a creature of dream and not of flesh, she is hard to kill. While incorporeal or while embodied, if Balance is destroyed she does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later.

Balance can only be truly slain two ways. If her body dies while she is trapped by the Song of Forms or similar magic, she dies, and her corpse remains even after the magic ends.

Alternately, if Balance is destroyed and all the damage is caused by mind-affecting or negative energy effects, the trillith's spirit is obliterated. In this case, no creature gains the benefits of Balance's boon.

Retort (Su) Attacking Balance is not without consequence. An attacker who successfully injures Balance must make a Fortitude save (DC 21) or suffer an equal amount of damage.

Soothing Voice (Su) Balance gains a +30 bonus to Diplomacy checks made to convince others of her intentions, truthful or otherwise.

Notes Although Balance speaks telepathically with sentient creatures, they perceive her as speaking to them in their own language with a charming, distant voice. Only one of Balance's forms is ever present at once, but she subtly shifts between the two from time to time, one form vanishing while onlookers are distracted, the other form appearing from the corner of their eyes.

Barabas **CR 8**

Male orc druid 8
N Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +8
Languages Common, Druidic, Orc

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +1 Dex)
hp 55 (8 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+2 quarterstaff* +12 (1d6+8)
Ranged sling +7 (1d4+4)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +10
Special Actions spontaneous casting (augmented *summon nature's ally*), wildshape 3/day (Large)
Combat Gear 20 bullets
Spells Prepared (CL 8th, +10 melee touch, +7 ranged touch, Natural Spell)
4th – *flame strike* (DC 16), *giant vermin*
3rd – *call lightning* (DC 15), *cure moderate wounds*, *poison* (DC 15)
2nd – *barkskin* (+3 AC), *bear's endurance*, *heat metal* (DC 14), *resist energy*
1st – *faerie fire*, *longstrider*, *magic fang*, *magic stone*, *speak with animals*
0 – *create water*, *cure minor wounds*, *flare*, *guidance*, *resistance*, *virtue*

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 6
Feats Augment Summoning, Natural Spell, Spell Focus (Conjuration)
Skills Knowledge (Nature) +12, Listen +7, Spot +8, Survival +15
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 (wyvern) hide armor*, *+2 quarterstaff*, sling

Hiss, Snake Animal Companion **CR —**

N Huge augmented animal (snake, huge viper)
Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision, Listen +7, Spot +7

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+5 natural, +2 Dex, –2 size)
hp 33 (6 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

Speed 20 ft, climb 20 ft, swim 20 ft.; Run
Melee bite +6 (1d6+4+poison)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +15

Str 16, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
SQ share spells
Feats Improved Initiative, Run, Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Balance +10, Climb +11, Hide +3, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +11

Poison (Ex) Injury DC 14 (1d6 Con / 1d6 Con)

Bearded Devil Legion **CR 14**

Twenty bearded devils

LE Huge outsider (unit of Medium outsiders; evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +39, Spot +39

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17

hp 270 (36 HD); DR 5/silver or good

Immune fire and poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 17

Fort +23, **Ref** +22, **Will** +20

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee glaive wall +59 (1d10+23 plus infernal wound)

Ranged javelin volley +59 (1d6+22)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +36; **Grp** +58

Special Actions *greater teleport*

Str 15, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 10

SQ unit traits

Battle Frenzy (Ex) Twice per day, the legion can work itself into a battle frenzy similar to the barbarian's rage (+4 Str, +4 Con, +2 morale bonus on Will saves, –2 AC penalty). The frenzy lasts for 6 rounds, and the legion suffers no ill effects afterward.

Greater Teleport (Su) The legion can use *greater teleport* at will, teleporting each bearded devil with up to 50 pounds of equipment, as a standard action.

Infernal Wound (Su) Glaive damage the legion deals causes persistent wounds. An injured creature loses 2 additional hp each round. The wound does not heal naturally and resists healing spells. The continuing hp loss can be stopped by a DC 16 Heal check, a cure spell, or a heal spell. However, a character attempting to cast a cure spell or a heal spell on a creature damaged by a bearded devil's glaive must succeed on a DC 16 caster level check, or the spell has no effect on the injured character.

A successful Heal check automatically stops the continuing hp loss as well as restoring hp.

Summon Devil (Su) Once per day the legion can spend a standard action to summon five lemure hordes (*q.v.*).

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a *fireball* (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics Bearded devil legions teleport behind enemy lines, targeting weak foes. When endangered, they teleport away to regroup.

Beulah, Troll Mercenary **CR 6**

Troll barbarian 1

CN Large giant

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +6

Languages Common, Giant

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20

hp 83 (7 HD); regeneration 5

Fort +14, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee two claws each +11 (1d6+7) and bite +6 (1d6+3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +14

Atk Options rend (2d6+10)

Special Actions rage 1/day (12 rounds)

Combat Gear two *potions of resist energy (fire)*, two *potions of resist energy (acid)*

Str 25, Dex 16, Con 25, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Track

Skills Listen +5, Spot +6

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 Large breastplate*

Rage (Ex) While raging, the troll mercenary's stats change as follows:

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 18

hp 97

Fort +16, **Will** +5

Melee two claws each +13 (1d6+9) and bite +7 (1d6+4)

Str 29, Con 29

When the rage ends, the troll mercenary is fatigued until the end of the encounter.

Rend (Ex) If a troll hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+9 points of damage.

Regeneration (Ex) Fire and acid deal normal damage to a troll. If a troll loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Bimal, Ragesian Knight **CR 8**

Male human fighter 8

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex)

hp 65 (8 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee *+1 lance* +15/+10 (1d8+8, ×3) or mwk heavy pick +14/+9 (1d6+5, ×4)

Ranged heavy crossbow +11 (1d10+2, 19-20)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11

Atk Options Improved Mounted Strafe, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample

Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds, oil of magic weapon*

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Elite Training (lance), Equine Stalwart, Improved Mounted Strafe, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)

Skills Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Ride +14

Possessions combat gear plus full plate, cold iron heavy shield, mwk heavy pick, *+1 lance*, silver short sword, four daggers, two javelins, net, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 10 *+1 bane bolts* (4 *human-bane*, plus 2 each *elf-bane*, *orc-bane*, and *dwarf-bane*), 2 days of rations, Ragesian knight's stalwart warhorse (*q.v.*), military saddle, banded mail barding, 10 gp

Ragesian Knight's Stalwart Warhorse CR —

N Large animal (horse)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +5

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19

hp 37 (5 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2; evasion when within 5 ft. of rider

Speed 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee two hooves each +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Feats Endurance, Run

Skills Listen +5, Spot +5

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

Tricks (Ex) combat riding, attack unnatural creatures

Biomantic Digester, Advanced **CR 10**

These bloated green creatures are the size of baby elephant. They have flat, splayed feet and a translucent sac for a belly that's filled with a noxious black liquid They have long, tube-like snouts that drip with the liquid and pale, white eyes with no pupils.

N Large magical beast

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +6

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 18

hp 126 (12 HD)

Immune acid

Fort +13, **Ref** +11, **Will** +4

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares)

Melee claw +14 (2d6+7)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11

Special Actions acid spray, web

Str 21, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

Feats Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Hide +6, Listen +7, Jump +23, Spot +7

Acid Spray (Ex) As a standard action, a digester can spray acid in a 20-foot cone, dealing 4d8 points of damage to everything in the area. Once a digester uses this ability, it can't use it again until 1d4 rounds later.

The creature can also produce a concentrated stream of acid that deals 8d8 points of damage to a single target within 10 ft. In either case, a DC 21 Reflex save halves the damage. The save DC is Con-based.

Web (Ex) Four times per day, advanced biomantic digesters can throw a web as a standard action; the web has a range increment of 10 ft. and a maximum range of 50 ft. The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement. An entangled creature can escape with a DC 21 Escape Artist check or burst the web with a DC 21 Str check. The web has 6 hp, hardness 0, and takes double damage from fire.

Black Horse Cavalry **CR 1**

Male human fighter 1
NE Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Orc

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
hp 11 (1 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), ride 60 ft. (12 squares)
Melee sap +3 (1d6+2 nonlethal) or
longsword +4 (1d8+3)
Ranged composite longbow [+2 Str] +3 (1d8+2, ×3) or
tanglefoot bag +3 ranged touch (immobilize)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, two tanglefoot bags

Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (longsword)
Skills Climb +1, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +3, Ride +6.
Possessions combat gear plus chainmail, composite longbow [+2 Str] with 20 arrows, lance, longsword, sap, gilt horns worth 13 gp, light warhorse, armband, leather barding

Black Horse Scout **CR 1**

Male half-orc rogue 1
N Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5
Languages Common, Orc

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 11 (1 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee sap +2 (1d6+2 nonlethal) or
morningstar +2 (1d8+2)
Ranged light crossbow +1 (1d8, 19–20)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** +2
Atk Options sneak attack +1d6
Combat Gear 2 thunderstones

Str 15, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6
Feats Toughness
Skills Climb +5, Hide +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Open Lock +3, Ride +6, Spot +5
Possessions combat gear plus studded leather armor, morningstar, light crossbow with 10 bolts, armband, 5 gp

Black Horse Thug **CR ½**

Male human warrior 1
N Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15
hp 6 (1 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** –1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee sap +3 (1d6+2 nonlethal) or
short sword +3 (1d6+2, 19–20)
Ranged light crossbow +1 (1d8, 19–20)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 10
Feats Animal Affinity
Skills Handle Animal +6, Ride +6
Possessions scale mail, light wooden shield, sap, short sword, light crossbow with 10 bolts, armband, 5 gp; one portable battering ram per four Black Horse thugs

Blade of the Kingsguard **CR 6**

Human fighter 6
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +5; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14
hp 65 (6 HD); *friend shielding* (King Steppengard)
Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *blade of the Kingsguard* +10 (2d6+6, 19–20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes
Special Actions Holding the Line, Prevent Retreat

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Holding the Line*, Improved Initiative, Prevent Retreat*, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)
Skills Intimidate +8
Possessions *ring of friend shielding* (other ring is worn by King Steppengard), chain shirt, *blade of the Kingsguard*

Holding the Line (Ex) You may make an attack of opportunity against a charging opponent who enters an area you threaten. Your attack of opportunity happens immediately before the charge attack is resolved.
Prevent Retreat (Ex) When a foe's movement out of a square you threaten grants you an attack of opportunity, you can attempt to stop your foe in his tracks. If your attack of opportunity hits your foe, he must succeed on a Reflex save against a DC of 10 + your damage roll (the opponent does not actually take damage), or immediately halt as if he had used up his move actions for the round.

Blizzard Elemental **CR 13**

NE Huge elemental (air, cold)

Init +15; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +27, Spot +27

Languages Auran

AC 31, touch 19, flat-footed 20 (+11 Dex, –2 size, +8 natural, +4 shield)

hp 204 (24 HD); **DR** 10/—

Immune cold, critical hits, *magic missiles*, paralysis, poison, stunning; cannot be flanked

Resist *spell turning* (1d6+4 spell levels turned)

Fort +12, **Ref** +25, **Will** +10

Weakness fire vulnerability

Speed fly 100 ft. (perfect)

Melee two slams each +27 (2d8+6)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +32

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Spring Attack

Special Actions freezing gale

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 24th)

At will – *icebind*

3/day – quickened *icebind*

1/day – *polar ray* (ranged touch +27)

Str 22, Dex 33, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11

SQ air mastery, eldritch ice, elemental traits

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative[B], Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (icebind), Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse[B]

Skills Listen +27, Spot +27

Air Mastery (Ex) Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty on attack and damage rolls against a blizzard elemental.

Eldritch Ice (Su) Any spell with the acid, electricity, fire, or sonic descriptor cast within 60 ft. of the elemental, or whose area of effect comes within 60 ft. of the elemental, has its energy type changed to cold unless its caster succeeds a caster level check (DC 23).

Additionally, surfaces within 60 ft. of a blizzard elemental become coated with ice, which counts as difficult terrain and increases the DC of Balance and Tumble checks by +5. This ice thaws normally.

An effect capable of turning or rebuking a cold creature of 12 HD suppresses this ability for two rounds.

Freezing Gale (Su) As an immediate action, blizzard elementals can release a 70 mph blast of freezing wind, 5-ft. wide and 60-ft. long. This can be used to deflect incoming missile attacks, negating conventional missile weapons and incurring a –4 penalty to the attack roll for siege weapons, or to blow away a Small creature, knock down a Medium creature, or check a Large or Huge creature that fails a Fortitude save (DC 28). Any creature in the path of the gale takes 5d6 points of cold damage (Reflex half DC 28).

Obelisk Boon (Su) The Koren Obelisk allows Kreven to cast *shield* and *spell turning* on the blizzard elementals the heroes encounter (caster level 18th). The effects are included in the stat block.

Bound Fire Golem **CR 17**

A titan of carved stone strides swiftly across the white plain, flames bursting out from its joints with each step. Its fists glow like slabs of molten rock, and within its chest an inner heat turns its stone breastplate white hot.

N Huge construct (augmented elemental, fire)

Init +13; **Senses** Listen +28, Spot +29

Languages Ignan

AC 38, touch 17, flat-footed 29 (–2 size, +9 Dex, +21 natural)

hp 439 (42 HD); **DR** 15/adamantine and 10/—

Immune fire, magic, poison, paralysis, sleep, stunning

Fort +18, **Ref** +21, **Will** +14

Weakness cold vulnerability

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee two slams each +42 (4d8+13 plus 2d8 fire plus burn)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +31; **Grp** +52

Special Actions hurl flame

Str 37, Dex 29, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 11

SQ binding, magic immunity

Binding (Su) Inquisitors create bound fire golems quickly and cheaply by calling elder fire elementals and binding them into the hollow body of a huge stone golem. While normally the elemental is trapped, forced to serve, and unable to be affected by magic, if the golem's breastplate is removed or destroyed, the elemental can be directly targeted.

The breastplate can be targeted separately (AC 38), and counts as an attended item for spells. It has 50 hp. Damage to the breastplate counts against the golem's own hp total. Alternately, with a Disable Device check (DC 35) as a standard action, a character can remove the bindings of the breastplate, causing it to fall free.

Without its breastplate, the golem's loses its DR 15/adamantine (but still has DR 10/–), and it loses its immunity to magic, but the spells listed below still affect it as described.

Burn (Ex) Those hit by the golem's slam attack must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 26) or catch on fire for 2 rounds or until he puts himself out. A burning creature can take a move action to put out the flame.

Creatures hitting the golem with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take 2d8 points of fire damage, and catch on fire unless they succeed a Reflex save (DC 26).

Hurl Flame (Su) A bound fire golem can hurl explosive balls of flame as a standard action. The golem makes a ranged touch attack with a +30 modifier, and a range of 1,200 ft. A creature struck this way takes 4d8 points of fire damage, and those adjacent to the struck creature take half damage.

Magic Immunity (Ex) A bound fire golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance, except as follows.

A *transmute rock to mud* spell slows the golem (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw, while *transmute mud to rock* heals half of the damage it has taken. *Stone to flesh* does not actually change the golem's structure but negates its damage reduction and immunity to magic for 1 full round.

Additionally, if the breastplate has been removed, *protection from evil* or *break enchantment* cast on the fire elemental frees it from the binding magic, as does a dispel check (DC 26). Either of these releases the elder fire elemental from its shell, for which it will likely be quite grateful. The elemental will have hp damage equal to half the damage dealt to the golem.

Also, if the breastplate has been removed, the fire elemental can be banished, because it is an extraplanar creature.

Brakken the Blitzer **CR 7**

Male minotaur barbarian 2/ranger 1
CN Large Monstrous Humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +7, Spot +5
Languages Common, Giant

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20, uncanny dodge
hp 67 (9 HD)
Immune natural cunning immunities
Fort +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee mwk Large greatsword +15 (2d8+7, 19–20), +2 damage vs. dwarves or
two claws each +11 (1d6+7) and bite +6 (1d6+3), +2 damage vs. dwarves
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +18
Atk Options Power Attack; powerful charge (4d6+7), reckless offense, rage (7 rounds)
Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength*

Str 20, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ favored enemy (dwarves +2), natural cunning
Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Reckless Offense, Track, Weapon Focus (greatsword)
Skills Intimidate +2, Jump +17, Listen +7, Search +2, Spot +5
Possessions combat gear plus mwk Large greatsword

Natural Cunning (Ex) Brakken is immune to *maze* spells, cannot get lost, and is never flat-footed.
Powerful Charge (Ex) When charging, Brakken can make a single gore attack with a +14 attack bonus that deals 4d6+7 points of damage.
Rage (Ex) While raging, Brakken's stats change as follows:
AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 18
hp 83
Fort +13, **Will** +7
Melee mwk Large greatsword +17 (2d8+9, 19–20), +2 damage vs. dwarves or
two claws each +13 (1d6+7) and bite +7 (1d6+4), +2 damage vs. dwarves
Reckless Offense (Ex) Brakken can take a –4 penalty to AC to gain a +2 bonus to his attack rolls for one round. He typically uses this as an excuse to Power Attack for more.

Brutus **CR 4**

Somewhat unbelievably, this hulking half-orc, hands callused and great axe dented from much use, wears a wizard's robe, but he looks far too stupid to be a mage.
Male half-orc sorcerer 4
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Orc

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10
hp 16 (4 HD)
Resist fire 20
Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk greataxe +7 (1d12+6, ×3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +6
Combat Gear scroll of *haste*, two *potions of cure serious wounds*
Atk Options Power Attack
Spells Known (CL 4th, +5 ranged touch)
2nd (3) – *bull's strength*
1st (7) – *burning hands* (DC 12), *disguise self*, *enlarge person*
0 (6) – *detect magic*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 12
SQ snake familiar
Feats Power Attack, Weapon Proficiency (great axe)
Skills Bluff +11
Possessions combat gear plus mwk greataxe, two *potions of water breathing*

Tactics Brutus starts with the scroll of *haste* if he can, then buffs his brother with *bull's strength* and *enlarge person*, then does the same for himself if he doesn't get impatient and rush into combat. Since he has no ranks in Concentration, he's learned that the only way to safely cast his *burning hands* is to run past opponents, drawing out their attacks of opportunity, and then to cast the spell.

Caela (Cai Lei Wsu) **CR 15**

This black-haired half elf woman flashes a sneering grin as she leaps at you, her hands humming with blue arcs of electricity. Her black cloak, lined with gray stormcloud designs, snaps in an intense wind as she soars through combat, and she moves with the speed of a lightning strike.

Female half-elf monk 4/cleric 1/sorcerer 10
LE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Auran, Elven

AC 22, touch 21, flat-footed 22 (+8 w/*mage armor* and *storm shield*)

hp 97 (15 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +11, **Ref** +14, **Will** +17 (+21 vs. enchantment); evasion

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Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +15/+10 (1d8–1) or unarmed flurry +13/+13/+8 (1d8–1)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +7

Combat Gear *potion bracer*, *potion of cure serious wounds* ×4, *potion of cure light wounds* ×6, *feather token (whip)* ×2

Atk Options Stunning Fist (6/day, Fort DC 19 negates), rebuke undead (5/day, 1d20+2, 2d6+3 HD), turn earth or rebuke air creatures (5/day, 1d20+2, 2d6+3 HD), deflect arrows

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 1st)

1st – *cause light wounds*, *entropic shield*[D]
0th – *cause minor wounds* ×3
D domain spell **Domains** Air, Luck

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 10th)

5th (3/day) – *like lightning* (DC 17)
4th (5/day) – *storm shield* (DC 16), *telekinetic thrust* (DC 16)
3rd (6/day) – *dispel magic*, *fly*, *vampiric touch* (DC 15)
2nd (7/day) – *gust of wind*, *invisibility*, *resist energy*, *shatter* (DC 14)
1st (7/day) – *charm person* (DC 13), *mage armor*, *shocking grasp*, *silent image*, *unseen servant*
0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 22, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15

SQ half-elf traits, slow fall 20 ft., east wind style, luck domain, two winds weapon training, west wind style

Feats Craft Wondrous Item, Deflect Arrows, East Wind Style, Fly-By Attack, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Concentration), Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed), West Wind Style

Skills Balance +10, Bluff +20, Concentration +24, Diplomacy +9, Escape Artist +18, Jump +9, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +6, Tumble +15

Possessions *cloak of charisma +2 and resistance +2 of the mountebank* (market value 18,800 gp), *ring of protection +2 and counterspelling* (market value 12,000 gp; contains some spell the heroes are fond of that could take her out of combat with a failed save; otherwise contains *hold monster*), *gloves of dexterity +4*, *potion bracer*, *zephyr shirt* (+1 natural armor, +2 Con, +5 Escape Artist; market value 8,500 gp)

East Wind Style (Su) Whenever Caela makes a Stunning Fist attack, her unarmed strike deals +1d6 points of electricity damage. Additionally, she can expend a use of Stunning Fist to cast *shocking grasp* as a swift action (the *shocking grasp* occurs instead of the normal stunning effect), or expend two Stunning Fist uses to both cast *shocking grasp* and stun, dealing 1d8–1 plus 6d6 electricity plus stunning (Fort DC 19 negates)

Luck Domain (Ex) Once per day, Caela can reroll any one roll.

West Wind Style (Su) Caela can expend a use of Stunning Fist or turn undead as a free action to gain a fly speed of 40 (good), lasting for one round. If she continues to expend Stunning Fist or turn undead uses round after round, she does not fall between her turns. When she uses this ability, she can also grant three willing creatures within 30 ft. a fly speed equal to their land speeds.

Caela's Ghost **CR 17**

A dark-haired woman with elven features glides effortlessly across the ground before you. Her black cloak swirls around her as if disturbed by a wind no one else can feel, and she sneers at you with the hatred of the dead who know no peace.

Female half-elf monk 4/sorcerer 10/cleric 1
LE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Auran, Elven

AC 18, touch 17, flat-footed 18; miss chance 50% (incorporeal)

hp 52 (15 HD); **DR** 10/adamantine (stops 150 damage)

Immune undead immunities

Resist turn resistance +4

Fort +11, **Ref** +14, **Will** +17 (+21 vs. enchantment); evasion

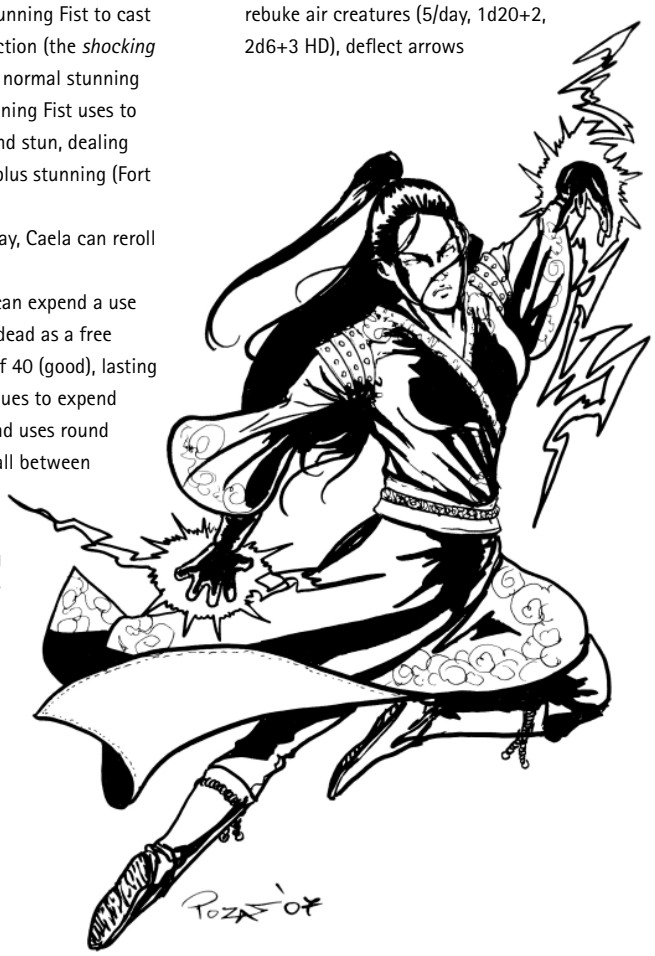
Buff Suite *storm shield*

Speed Fly 30 ft. (perfect) (6 squares)

Melee incorporeal touch +11 (1d4 ability drain)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** —

Special Actions telekinesis (CL 15); rebuke undead (5/day, 1d20+2, 2d6+3 HD), turn earth or rebuke air creatures (5/day, 1d20+2, 2d6+3 HD), deflect arrows



Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 1st)
1st – *cause light wounds*, *entropic shield*[D]
0th – *cause minor wounds* ×3
D domain spell **Domains** Air, Luck

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 10th)
5th (3/day) – *like lightning* (DC 19)
4th (5/day) – *storm shield* (DC 18), *telekinetic thrust* (DC 16)
3rd (6/day) – *dispel magic*, *fly*, *vampiric touch*
2nd (7/day) – *gust of wind*, *invisibility*, *resist energy*, *shatter* (DC 16)
1st (7/day) – *charm person* (DC 15), *mage armor*, *shocking grasp*, *silent image*, *unseen servant*
0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 22, Con —, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 19

SQ incorporeal, undead qualities

Feats Craft Wondrous Item, Deflect Arrows, East Wind Style, Fly-By Attack, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Concentration), Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed), West Wind Style

Skills Balance +10, Bluff +22, Concentration +25, Diplomacy +11, Escape Artist +18, Jump +9, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +6, Tumble +15

Draining Touch (Su) When Caela hits a living target with her incorporeal touch attack she drains 1d4 points from any one ability score she selects. On each such successful attack, she heals 5 points of damage to herself. Against ethereal opponents, she adds her Str modifier to attack rolls only. Against non-ethereal opponents, she adds her Dex modifier to attack rolls only.

Horrific Appearance (Su) Any living creature within 60 ft. that views Caela must succeed on a DC 21 Fortitude save or immediately take 1d4 points of Str damage, 1d4 points of Dex damage, and 1d4 points of Con damage. A creature that successfully saves against this effect cannot be affected by Caela's horrific appearance for 24 hours.

Luck Domain (Ex) Once per day, Caela can reroll any one roll.

Manifestation (Su) As a ghost, Caela dwells on the Ethereal Plane and cannot affect or be affected by anything in the material world. If she manifests, she partly enters the Material Plane and becomes visible but is incorporeal on the Material Plane. A manifested ghost can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, magic weapons, or spells, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. A manifested ghost can pass through solid objects at will, and its own attacks ignore armor. A manifested ghost always moves silently. A manifested ghost can strike with its touch attack or with a *ghost touch* weapon. A manifested ghost can be attacked by opponents on either the Material Plane or the Ethereal Plane. The ghost's incorporeality helps protect it from foes on the Material Plane, but not from foes on the Ethereal Plane.

When a spellcasting ghost is not manifested and is on the Ethereal Plane, its spells cannot affect targets on the Material Plane, but they work normally against ethereal targets. When a spellcasting ghost manifests, its spells continue to affect ethereal targets and can affect targets on the Material Plane normally unless the spells rely on touch. A manifested ghost's touch spells don't work on non-ethereal targets.

A ghost has two home planes, the Material Plane and the Ethereal Plane. It is not considered extraplanar when on either of these planes.

Telekinesis (Su) Caela can use *telekinesis* as a standard action (CL 15th). When she uses this power, she must wait 1d4 rounds before using it again.

The Chorus **CR 13**

Half-fiend eight-headed pyrohydra wilder 4
CE Huge magical beast

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +7, Spot +8

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 18 (–2 size, +3 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 133 (12 HD); fast healing 18; **DR** 10/magic

Immune poison, sonic

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 22

Fort +13, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8

Weakness sundering vulnerability

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 20 ft. (good)

Melee eight slams each +15 (1d10+6)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +28

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Atk Options independent attacks, smite good (1/day, +12 damage), wailing; Combat Reflexes

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; each a swift action)
At will – *charm person*, *daze monster*
3/day – *darkness*, *poison*
1/day – *blasphemy*, *contagion*, *desecrate*, *unholy blight*

Str 23, Dex 16, Con 22, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 12

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Grapple, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Listen +7, Perform (sing) +5, Spot +8

Independent Attacks (Ex) All eight bodies can attack even if the chorus moved that round.

Sundering Vulnerability (Ex) Because the chorus is a conglomerate of eight separate creatures, sunder attacks can be used to hack loose parts of it. This functions similarly to the rules for sundering the heads of a hydra.

The chorus can be killed either by sundering all its component bodies or by slaying it as one. An attacker can ready an action to sunder a body when the creature slams him. Each component body has 16 hp; losing a body deals 8 hp damage to the chorus as a whole and reduces its maximum hp by the same amount. The chorus can no longer attack with a sundered body but takes no other penalties.

Unlike a hydra, new bodies do not spring up in the place of the old one.

The chorus can be slain just like any other creature, but its fast healing makes it difficult to defeat in this fashion. Any attack that is not (or cannot be) an attempt to sunder a body affects the chorus as a whole.

Wailing (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, each of the chorus's eight bodies can release a hideous wail, dealing 3d6 points of sonic damage (Reflex DC 20 half) in a 20 ft. line.

Clan Millorn Guard **CR 4**

These halfling guards each have a half dozen bolas on their belts.

Male and female halfling fighter 4
N Small humanoid (halfling)
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Gnome

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+4 Dex, +1 size, +4 armor)
hp 26 (4 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2 (+4 vs. fear)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk Small heavy flail +7 (1d6+1)
Ranged Small bola +10 (1d3+1, range inc. 10 ft.)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +2
Atk Options Improved Trip

Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Combat Expertise, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bola), Improved Trip, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Skills Climb +10, Jump +4
Possessions mwk Small chain shirt, mwk Small heavy flail, six Small bolas, 100 gp

Clan Millorn Warrior **CR 4**

These gnome warriors proudly carry the ridiculous dire flail as their primary weapon.

Male and female gnome fighter 4
N Small humanoid (gnome)
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +1
Languages Common, Gnome

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+2 Dex, +1 size, +5 armor)
hp 30 (4 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2 (+4 vs. illusions)

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares)
Melee mwk Small dire flail +9 (1d6+4) or +7/+7 (1d6+4/1d6+3)
Ranged mwk Small heavy crossbow +8 (1d8, 19-20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +2
Atk Options Combat Reflexes

Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dire flail), Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (dire flail), Weapon Specialization (dire flail)
Skills Handle Animal +6, Ride +9
Possessions mwk Small chainmail, mwk Small dire flail, mwk Small heavy crossbow with 40 bolts, 100 gp

Clark the Clerk, Antimagic Assassin CR 16

Male half-orc rogue 11/fighter 4/assassin 1
NE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +14, Spot +14
Languages Common, Orc

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+5 Dex, +4 armor, +1 shield)
hp 89 (16 HD); **DR** 1/—
Fort +9, **Ref** +15, **Will** +3; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee two daggers each +19/+14/+9 (1d4, 19–20)
Ranged two daggers each +19/+14/+9 (1d4, 19–20) or
thrown items +21/+16/+11 (damage varies)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +12
Atk Options crippling strike, sneak attack +7d6
Special Actions death attack (DC 11)

Str 10, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10
SQ evasion, improved uncanny dodge, poison sense, trap sense +3
Feats Elite Training (dagger)*, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Quickdraw, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger), Weapon Specialization (dagger)
Skills Bluff +15, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +19, Hide +20, Jump +10, Listen +14, Move Silently +15, Sense Motive +19, Spot +14, Tumble +26
Possessions adamantine chain shirt, twenty mwk daggers, two adamantine daggers, two cold iron daggers, two silver daggers, ten mwk daggers with blue whinnis poison applied (Fort DC 14, initial 1 Con, secondary unconsciousness), two mwk daggers carved from wyvern stingers with wyvern poison (Fort DC 17, initial and secondary 2d6 Con), ten flasks of superior alchemist's fire (2d6 per round)

Claw of Leska **CR 14**

This hulking orc warrior seethes with unholy energy, and his eyes are wide with fanatic glory. The gauntlets of his crimson spiked armor end in wicked claws.

LE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +0; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Aura detects as overwhelming evil; *unholy aura*
Languages Common, Orc

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 23 (+9 armor, +4 deflection)
hp 105 (14 HD)
Immune possession and mental influence
SR 25 (against good spells and spells from good casters)
Fort +17, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+2 spell-storing greathammer* +24/+19/+14 (1d12+14, 19–20/×3) or
two claws +22 (1d6+4, 19–20)
Ranged darkfire burst +14 ranged touch (7d6 fire and unholy)
Base Atk +14; **Grp** +22
Special Actions Awesome Blow; darkfire smite, scour magic, smite good (3/day, +2 attack, +14 damage), spell-storing weapon, spiked armor
Combat Gear *+2 spell-storing greathammer* (*dispel magic*, CL 10)

Str 26, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 14
SQ dark blessing, scour magic, unholy aura
Feats Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greathammer or greataxe), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Spellcraft)
Skills Spellcraft +9
Possessions *+1 spiked full plate*, *cloak of charisma +2*, *belt of strength +4*, *hurling bracers*

Awesome Blow (Ex) A claw of Leska can only use this ability if he has activated his *hurling bracers*, which allows him to count as Large for one round. As a standard action he may make a melee attack, taking a –4 penalty to his attack roll. If he hits, the struck creature must make a Reflex save (DC = damage dealt) or be knocked 10 ft. in the direction of the claw's choice.

Darkfire Smite (Su) As a standard action, a claw of Leska can fire a ray of unholy flame, to a maximum range of 30 ft. Any creature struck takes 7d6 points of damage. Half of this damage is fire, and half is unholy energy. For one round after using this ability, the claw of Leska loses the benefit of its unholy aura (detailed below).

Scour Magic (Su) Five times a day as an immediate action, a claw of Leska can attempt to counter a spell. He rolls 1d20+13 against a DC of 11 + the spell's caster level. If he succeeds in countering the spell, he gains 5 temporary hp per level of the spell countered. These temporary hitpoints vanish after a minute.

Smite Good (Su) Three times a day a claw of Leska can make any melee attack be a smite, gaining a +2 bonus to attack and dealing +14 damage if the target is good.

Spell-Storing Weapon (Sp) The claw of Leska's weapon stores a *dispel magic* (caster level 10), which it can release on any successful melee attack. This dispel can only affect the target struck.

Unholy Aura (Sp) The claw of Leska has a +4 deflection bonus to AC, a +4 resistance bonus to saves, SR 25 against good spells and spells from good casters, and is immune to possession and mental influence. If a good creature strikes the claw, that creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or take 1d6 points of Str damage.

Commander Anastasius CR 11

This aristocratic half-orc wears a complicated black crossbow behind his shoulder, and a white eye-patch over his left eye. His graying muttonchop beard gives him an air of authority.

Male half-orc ranger 1/fighter 10

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +6 armor, +2 shield)

hp 85 (11 HD)

Fort +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee cold iron battleaxe +12 (1d8+3, ×3) or +12 silver shortsword (1d6+2, 19–20)

Ranged *+2 repeating crossbow* +20/+15 (1d10+4, 17–20), Rapid Reload

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +16

Combat Gear ten *potions of cure light wounds*, two clips (5 each) of *+1 human-bane bolts*

Str 12, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15

SQ favored enemy (humans +2)

Feats Elite Training (repeating crossbow), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (repeating crossbow), Improved Critical (repeating crossbow), Improved Initiative, Improved Precise Shot, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Track, Weapon Focus (repeating crossbow), Weapon Specialization (repeating crossbow)

Skills Climb +3, Handle Animal +6, Jump –3, Ride +19, Survival +3

Possessions *+1 breastplate*, *+1 buckler*, *+2 repeating crossbow* with ten clips, *gloves of dexterity +2*, cold iron battleaxe, silver shortsword

Commander Hertiage CR 7

Tall for a dwarf, this commander wears dull plate armor and a helmet with a red phoenix flaring its wings outward on the back. He has trimmed his russet beard short enough that you can see an old white scar on his throat – an arrow wound that probably should have killed him.

Male dwarf commander 7

N Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; +4 dodge bonus vs. giants

hp 49 (7 HD); Diehard

Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee mwk warhammer +8 (1d8+2, ×3)

Ranged alchemist fire +5 ranged touch (1d6 for two rounds)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +7

Special Actions battle cry, leadership performance, direct orders

Combat Gear six *potions of cure serious wounds*, *potion of resist energy (fire)*, five flasks of alchemist fire

Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14

SQ initiative bonus

Feats Diehard, Endurance, Fearless Leader, Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader

Skills Craft (weapons) +10, Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +12, Intimidate +12, Perform (oratory) +12, Ride +11

Possessions *+1 full plate*, *+1 heavy shield*, mwk warhammer

Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, Hertiage can shout an iconic battle cry (such as "Stick to The Plan!") to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round Hertiage can choose to grant all allies within 40 ft. a +2 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He can also spend an immediate action to replace his current orders with a different type of bonus.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) Allies within 40 ft. of Hertiage gain a +2 bonus to initiative checks.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Three times per day, Hertiage can inspire or direct his allies (within 40 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +1 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect the commander himself.

Commander Rohat **CR 10**

Male human commander 1/cleric 1/fighter 8
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Halfling, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex)
hp 74 (10 HD)
Fort +12, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)
Melee *+1 lance* +15/+10 (1d8+8, ×3) or mwk heavy pick +14/+9 (1d6+5, ×4)
Ranged heavy crossbow +11 (1d10+2, 19-20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11
Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (10 charges), *wand of cure light wounds* (50 charges)
Atk Options, Mounted Strafe, Power Attack
Special Actions Spirited Charge; leadership performance
Spells Prepared (CL 1st)
1st – *bless*, *magic weapon*[D]
0 – *detect magic*, *light*, *mending*
Deity Lord of Horses; **D** domain spell; **Domains** Animal, War
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)
1/day – *speak with animals*

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 8
Feats Elite Training (lance), Equine Stalwart, Jousting Blow, Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe, Primal Leader, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)
Skills Handle Animal +12, Heal +4, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (history) +4, Listen +4, Perform (oratory) +12, Ride +16, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, cold iron heavy shield, mwk heavy pick, *inviso-lance*, silver short sword, four daggers, two javelins, net, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 2 days of rations, Atreya (stalwart heavy warhorse), 50 gp

Leadership Performances (Ex) Three times per day, Rohat can inspire or direct his allies (within 30 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +2 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 30 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Rohat himself.

These benefits apply to creatures that understand his language, as well as animals.

Atreya, Stalwart Warhorse
CR —

N Large animal
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +6

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural, +6 armor)
hp 52 (7 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3; evasion when within 5 ft. of rider

Speed 35 ft. (7 squares)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +13
Melee two hooves each +8 (1d6+4) and bite +3 (1d4+2)

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6
Feats Endurance, Run
Skills Listen +6, Spot +6
Possessions banded mail barding, military saddle

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.
Tricks (Ex) attack any creature, combat riding, come, defend, guard, heel, perform, stay, work

Crystin Ja-Nafeel **CR 1**

Slender and docile, wavy dark hair frames this young woman's haunted face, dominated by wide blue eyes that seem to see beyond the material world. She cradles a thin black staff close to her, like it is precious to her.

Female human sorcerer 1
CG Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Elven

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 12
hp 5 (1 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee quarterstaff –1 (1d6–1)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** –1
Spells Known (CL 1st)
1st (4/day) – *magic missile*, *sleep* (DC 13)
0 (5/day) – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mending*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14
SQ trillith spirit
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will
Skills Concentration +5, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +5.
Possessions quarterstaff (used to be a *staff of charming*, now out of charges), basic clothes, cold weather outfit

Trillith Spirit (Su) If Crystin dies, for a moment everyone experiences *déjà vu*, and then something barely visible drifts out of Crystin's body and vanishes, flying away into the sky. This is the trillith spirit that has occupied Crystin, granting her sorcerer abilities, but its identity remains a mystery for now.

Tactics Crystin is frightened in combat, because things happen too fast for her visions to guide her. She tries to stay out of danger, but she will go into harm's way if someone else appears to be in greater danger.

Crystin Ja-Nafeel **CR 2**

Female human sorcerer 2
CG Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Elven

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 9 (2 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee quarterstaff +0 (1d6–1)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0
Spells Known (CL 2nd)
1st (5/day) – *magic missile*, *sleep* (DC 13)
0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mending*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14
SQ trillith spirit
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will
Skills Concentration +6, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Sense Motive +4.5, Spellcraft +8.
Possessions quarterstaff (used to be a *staff of charming*, now out of charges), basic clothes, cold weather outfit

Trillith Spirit (Su) If Crystin dies, for a moment everyone experiences *déjà vu*, and then something barely visible drifts out of Crystin's body and vanishes, flying away into the sky. This is the trillith spirit that has occupied Crystin, granting her sorcerer abilities, but its identity remains a mystery for now.

Crystin Ja-Nafeel **CR 3**

Female human sorcerer 3
CG Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Elven

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 12 (3 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee quarterstaff +0 (1d6-1)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0
Spells Known (CL 3rd)
1st (6/day) – *magic missile*, *sleep* (DC 13), *true strike*
0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mending*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14
SQ trillith spirit
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Concentration)
Skills Concentration +10, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +9.
Possessions quarterstaff (used to be a *staff of charming*, now out of charges), basic clothes, cold weather outfit

Trillith Spirit (Su) If Crystin dies, for a moment everyone experiences *déjà vu*, and then something barely visible drifts out of Crystin's body and vanishes, flying away into the sky. This is the trillith spirit that has occupied Crystin, granting her sorcerer abilities, but its identity remains a mystery for now.



Crystin Ja-Nafeel **CR 4**

Slender yet strong-spirited, wavy dark hair frames this young woman's restrained face, dominated by wide blue eyes that seem to see beyond the material world. She cradles a thin black staff close to her, like it is precious to her.

Female human sorcerer 4
NG Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 16 (4 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee quarterstaff +1 (1d6–1)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1
Spells Known (CL 4th)
2nd (4/day) – *detect thoughts* (DC 14)
1st (7/day) – *magic missile*, *sleep* (DC 13), *true strike*
0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mending*, *message*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14
SQ trillith spirit
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Concentration)
Skills Concentration +11, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +10.
Possessions quarterstaff (used to be a *staff of charming*, now out of charges), basic clothes, cold weather outfit

Trillith Spirit (Su) If Crystin dies, for a moment everyone experiences *déjà vu*, and then something barely visible drifts out of Crystin's body and vanishes, flying away into the sky. This is the trillith spirit that has occupied Crystin, granting her sorcerer abilities, but its identity remains a mystery for now.

Crystin Ja-Nafeel **CR 5**

Slender yet strong-spirited, wavy dark hair frames this young woman's restrained face, dominated by wide blue eyes that seem to see beyond the material world. She holds a thin black staff comfortably, like she has had it all her life.

Female human sorcerer 4/monk 1
LG Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven

AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 15
hp 22 (5 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee quarterstaff +5 (1d6–1) or
unarmed strike +5 (1d6–1) or
unarmed flurry +4/+4 (1d6–1)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1
Special Actions Stunning Fist (2/day, Fort DC 15)
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds* ×4, *potion of magic weapon* ×2, *potion of protection from evil* ×2, scroll of *arcane sight*, *wand of burning hands* (1st level, 30 charges)
Spells Known (CL 4th)
2nd (4/day) – *detect thoughts* (DC 14)
1st (7/day) – *magic missile*, *sleep* (DC 13), *true strike*
0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mending*, *message*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14
SQ trillith spirit
Feats Blind Fight, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Stunning Fist
Skills Concentration +9, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +10.
Possessions combat gear plus quarterstaff (used to be a *staff of charming*, now out of charges), basic clothes, cold weather outfit, *bracers of armor +1*, *ring of protection +1*, two sunrods

Trillith Spirit (Su) If Crystin dies, for a moment everyone experiences *déjà vu*, and then something barely visible drifts out of Crystin's body and vanishes, flying away into the sky. This is the trillith spirit that has occupied Crystin, granting her sorcerer abilities, but its identity remains a mystery for now.

Crystin Ja-Nafeel **CR 6**

Female human sorcerer 4/monk 2
LG Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +7
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven

AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Deflect Arrows
hp 27 (6 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +13; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee quarterstaff +6 (1d6–1) or
unarmed strike +6 (1d6–1)
unarmed flurry +5/+5 (1d6–1)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2
Special Actions Stunning Fist (3/day, Fort DC 16)
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds* ×4, *potion of magic weapon* ×2, *potion of protection from evil* ×2, scroll of *arcane sight*, *wand of burning hands* (1st level, 30 charges)
Spells Known (CL 4th)
2nd (4/day) – *detect thoughts* (DC 14)
1st (7/day) – *magic missile*, *sleep* (DC 13), *true strike*
0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mending*, *message*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14
SQ trillith spirit
Feats Blind Fight, Deflect Arrows, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Stunning Fist, Weapon Intuition
Skills Concentration +10, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +10, Spot +7
Possessions combat gear plus quarterstaff (used to be a *staff of charming*, now out of charges), basic clothes, cold weather outfit, *bracers of armor +1*, *ring of protection +1*, *cloak of resistance +1*, *elixir of vision*, two sunrods, 50 gp

Trillith Spirit (Su) If Crystin dies, for a moment everyone experiences *déjà vu*, and then something barely visible drifts out of Crystin's body and vanishes, flying away into the sky. This is the trillith spirit that has occupied Crystin, granting her sorcerer abilities, but its identity remains a mystery for now.

Dark Pyre Adept **CR 6**

Male Dark Pyre gnoll cleric 5

NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, gnoll, fire)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Aura unnatural aura 30 ft. (Will DC 11)

Languages Common, Gnoll, Orc

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+2 Dex, +3 natural, +5 armor)

hp 33 (5 HD); Dark Pyre healing; **DR** 5/ bludgeoning and magic

Immune fire

Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 falchion* +9 (2d4+7, 18-20), or death touch +7 touch (if foe's hp are 5d6 or less, he dies)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +7

Combat Gear scroll of *restoration*, *wand of inflict light wounds* (50 charges)

Special Actions Dark Pyre corona, firewalk, spells, bolster undead (2/day, 1d20+1), improved trip, death touch (5d6)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th)

3rd (3/day) – *magic vestment*, *prayer*, *protection from energy*

2nd (4/day) – *death knell*, *desecrate*, *hold person*, *silence*

1st (5/day) – *cause fear*, *command*, *hide from undead*, *obscuring mist*, *shield of faith*

0 (5/day) – *detect magic* ×5

D domain spell **Domains** Death, War

Str 18, Dex 14, Con —, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 8

SQ Dark Pyre healing, Dark Pyre strike, unnatural aura, water vulnerability

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Martial Weapon Proficiency (falchion), Weapon Focus (falchion)

Skills Concentration +7, Knowledge (religion) +9, Spellcraft +9

Possessions *+1 falchion*, chainmail

Dark Pyre Corona (Su) Once every 5 rounds, as a standard action, a Dark Pyre adept can release blast of black fire, dealing 3d6 points of fire and 2d6 points of negative energy damage to each creature within 5 ft. (Reflex DC 11 negates). This heals 2d6 points of damage to any undead in the area, including itself.

Dark Pyre Healing (Su) Dark Pyre adepts heal 1 point of damage for every 10 points of fire damage they would take from a given attack. Attacks that do less than 10 damage do not heal them.

Dark Pyre Strike (Su) Each of a Dark Pyre adept's melee attacks deal +1d6 points of fire damage and +1d6 points of negative energy damage. The Dark Pyre skeleton's natural weapons and any weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned for overcoming damage reduction.

Firewalk (Su) A Dark Pyre adept can climb an object on fire as though it had a climb speed equal to its highest speed. Furthermore, it can fly at its highest speed with perfect maneuverability so long as it remains in contact with fire, and it can walk on flames at its highest speed, as though walking on air via the *air walk* spell.

Unnatural Aura (Su) Any animal within 30 ft. of a Dark Pyre adept must make a Will save (DC 11) or become frightened. It only needs to flee beyond 30 ft. from the adept, at which point it is only shaken.

Water Vulnerability (Ex) A Dark Pyre adept takes damage from any sort of water as if it were acid. Holy water deals an additional 1d6 damage.

Note These gnolls are a variant without racial Hit Dice. While typical creatures with such low Int cannot have class levels or feats, Dark Pyre adepts retain combat knowledge they possessed in life.

Dark Pyre Bulette **CR 8**

NE Huge undead (augmented magical beast, fire)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent, tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Aura unnatural aura 30 ft. (Will DC 11)

AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+3 Dex, +15 natural, –2 size)

hp 61 (9 HD); Dark Pyre healing; **DR** 10/ bludgeoning and magic

Immune fire

Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), burrow 10 ft.

Melee bite +17 (2d8+12 plus 1d6 fire and 1d6 negative energy) and two claws +11 (2d6+6 plus 1d6 fire and 1d6 negative energy)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +24

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Actions Dark Pyre corona, firewalk, leap

Str 35, Dex 17, Con —, Int 1, Wis 6, Cha 6

SQ Dark Pyre healing, Dark Pyre strike, unnatural aura, water vulnerability

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative[B], Iron Will, Track, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Jump +22

Possessions mwk longsword, breastplate, heavy steel shield

Dark Pyre Corona (Su) Once every 5 rounds, as a standard action, a Dark Pyre bulette can release blast of black fire, dealing 5d6 points of fire and 4d6 points of negative energy damage to each creature within 5 ft. (Reflex DC 12 negates). This heals 4d6 points of damage to any undead in the area, including itself.

Dark Pyre Healing (Su) Dark Pyre bulettes heal 1 point of damage for every 10 points of fire damage they would take from a given attack. Attacks that do less than 10 damage do not heal them.

Dark Pyre Strike (Su) Each of a Dark Pyre bulette's melee attacks deal +1d6 points of fire damage and +1d6 points of negative energy damage. The Dark Pyre bulette's natural weapons and any weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned for overcoming damage reduction.

Firewalk (Su) A Dark Pyre bulette can climb an object on fire as though it had a climb speed equal to its highest speed. Furthermore, it can fly at its highest speed with perfect maneuverability so long as it remains in contact with fire, and it can walk on flames at its highest speed, as though walking on air via the *air walk* spell.

Leap (Ex) A Dark Pyre bulette can jump into the air during combat. This allows it to make four



claw attacks instead of two, each with a +16 attack bonus, but it cannot bite.

Unnatural Aura (Su) Any animal within 30 ft. of a Dark Pyre bulette must make a Will save (DC 12) or become frightened. It only needs to flee beyond 30 ft. from the bulette, at which point it is only shaken.

Water Vulnerability (Ex) A Dark Pyre bulette takes damage from any sort of water as if it were acid. Holy water deals an additional 1d6 damage.

Dark Pyre Sergeant **CR 9**

Clad in spiked plate armor and a spiny shield, this skeletal warrior stands tall, his massive frame and tusked skull marking him as once having been an orc. Liquid flame pours from his empty eye sockets like tears, but as he raises his weapon his body flares with fire, until his entire form is engulfed in a blazing nimbus. He points at you with a long axe and orders an attack, then advances with unnatural speed, his bones clattering within his blackened armor.

Male Dark Pyre orc fighter 8

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, orc, fire)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Aura unnatural aura 30 ft. (Will DC 11)

Languages Common, Orc

AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 25 (+9 armor, +3 shield, +1 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 52 (8 HD); Dark Pyre healing; **DR** 10/ bludgeoning and magic

Immune fire

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee *+1 dwarven waraxe* +18/+13 (1d10+11 plus 1d6 fire and 1d6 negative energy, ×3)

Ranged shield spine +13 (1d10+1, 19-20, range inc. 120 ft., 3/day)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Special Actions Dark Pyre corona, firewalk

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)

At will – *produce flame*

3/day – *wall of fire* (DC 14)

Str 22, Dex 18, Con —, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10

SQ Dark Pyre healing, Dark Pyre strike, power critical, unnatural aura, water vulnerability

Feats Elite Training (dwarven waraxe)*, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative[B], Quick Draw[B], Power Attack, Power Critical (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Specialization (dwarven waraxe)

Skills Intimidate +11

Possessions *+1 spiked full plate, spined shield, +1 dwarven waraxe*

Dark Pyre Corona (Su) Once every 5 rounds, as a standard action, a Dark Pyre sergeant can release blast of black fire, dealing 4d6 points of fire and 4d6 points of negative energy damage to each creature within 5 ft. (Reflex DC 14 negates). This heals 4d6 points of damage to any undead in the area, including himself.

Dark Pyre Healing (Su) Dark Pyre sergeants heal 1 point of damage for every 10 points of fire damage they would take from a given attack. Attacks that do less than 10 damage do not heal them.

Dark Pyre Strike (Su) Each of a Dark Pyre sergeant's melee attacks deal +1d6 points of fire damage and +1d6 points of negative energy damage. The Dark Pyre sergeant's natural weapons and any weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned for overcoming damage reduction.

Firewalk (Su) A Dark Pyre sergeant can climb an object on fire as though it had a climb speed equal to its highest speed. Furthermore, it can fly at its highest speed with perfect maneuverability so long as it remains in contact with fire, and it can walk on flames at its highest speed, as though walking on air via the *air walk* spell.

Power Critical (Ex) When using its dwarven waraxe, the Dark Pyre sergeant gains a +4 bonus on the roll to confirm a threat.

Unnatural Aura (Su) Any animal within 30 ft. of a Dark Pyre sergeant must make a Will save (DC 14) or become frightened. It only needs to flee beyond 30 ft. from the sergeant, at which point it is only shaken.

Water Vulnerability (Ex) A Dark Pyre sergeant takes damage from any sort of water as if it were acid. Holy water deals an additional 1d6 damage.

Note While typical creatures with such low Int cannot have class levels or feats, Dark Pyre sergeants retain combat knowledge they possessed in life.

Dark Pyre Soldier **CR 4**

The armor and charred remnants of military uniforms show these creatures to have once been among Emperor Coaltongue's army. Now, however, nothing remains of them but their skeletons which burn with an unholy fire.

Male Dark Pyre half-orc fighter 3

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, orc, fire)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –3, Spot –3

Aura unnatural aura 30 ft. (Will DC 11)

Languages Common, Orc

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+5 armor, +2 shield, +3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 20 (3 HD); Dark Pyre healing; **DR** 5/ bludgeoning and magic

Immune fire

Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** –2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee mwk longsword +9 (1d8+4 plus 1d6 fire and 1d6 negative energy, 19-20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +7 (1d8, 19-20)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Special Actions Dark Pyre corona, firewalk

Str 18, Dex 16, Con —, Int 1, Wis 4, Cha 10

SQ Dark Pyre healing, Dark Pyre strike, unnatural aura, water vulnerability

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative[B], Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Jump +8

Possessions mwk longsword, mwk light crossbow w/20 metal bolts, breastplate, heavy steel shield

Dark Pyre Corona (Su) Once every 5 rounds, as a standard action, a Dark Pyre soldier can release blast of black fire, dealing 2d6 points of fire and 1d6 points of negative energy damage to each creature within 5 ft. (Reflex DC 11 negates). This heals 1d6 points of damage to any undead in the area, including itself.

Dark Pyre Healing (Su) Dark Pyre soldiers heal 1 point of damage for every 10 points of fire damage they would take from a given attack. Attacks that do less than 10 damage do not heal them.

Dark Pyre Strike (Su) Each of a Dark Pyre soldier's melee attacks deal +1d6 points of fire damage and +1d6 points of negative energy damage. The Dark Pyre soldier's natural weapons and any weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned for overcoming damage reduction.

Firewalk (Su) A Dark Pyre soldier can climb an object on fire as though it had a climb speed equal to its highest speed. Furthermore, it can fly at its highest speed with perfect maneuverability so long as it remains in contact with fire, and it can walk on flames at its highest speed, as though walking on air via the *air walk* spell.

Unnatural Aura (Su) Any animal within 30 ft. of a Dark Pyre soldier must make a Will save (DC 11) or become frightened. It only needs to flee beyond 30 ft. from the soldier, at which point it is only shaken.

Water Vulnerability (Ex) A Dark Pyre skeleton takes damage from any sort of water as if it were acid. Holy water deals an additional 1d6 damage.

Note While typical creatures with such low Int cannot have class levels or feats, Dark Pyre soldiers retain combat knowledge they possessed in life.

Dark Pyre Swarmer **CR 6**

This flaming skeleton scuttles toward you, wielding a pair of black blades.

Male Dark Pyre half-orc fighter 4/rogue 1

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, orc, fire)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –3, Spot –3

Aura unnatural aura 30 ft. (Will DC 11)

Languages Common, Orc

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+5 armor, +2 shield, +3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 33 (5 HD); Dark Pyre healing; **DR** 5/ bludgeoning and magic

Immune fire

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** –2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee mwk shortsword +10 (1d6+6 plus 1d6 fire and 1d6 negative, 19-20) or two mwk shortswords +8/+8 (1d6+6 plus 1d6 fire and 1d6 negative, 19-20)

Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +8 (1d10, 19-20)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +12

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Special Actions Dark Pyre corona, firewalk, sneak attack +1d6

Str 19, Dex 16, Con —, Int 1, Wis 4, Cha 10

SQ Dark Pyre healing, Dark Pyre strike, unnatural aura, water vulnerability

Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Initiative[B], Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (shortsword), Weapon Specialization (shortsword)

Skills Tumble +3

Possessions two mwk shortswords, breastplate, mwk heavy crossbow w/20 metal bolts

Dark Pyre Corona (Su) Once every 5 rounds, as a standard action, a Dark Pyre swarmer can release blast of black fire, dealing 3d6 points of fire and 2d6 points of negative energy damage to each creature within 5 ft. (Reflex DC 11 negates). This heals 2d6 points of damage to any undead in the area, including itself.

Dark Pyre Healing (Su) Dark Pyre swarmers heal 1 point of damage for every 10 points of fire damage they would take from a given attack. Attacks that do less than 10 damage do not heal them.

Dark Pyre Strike (Su) Each of a Dark Pyre swarmer's melee attacks deal +1d6 points of fire damage and +1d6 points of negative energy damage. The Dark Pyre swarmer's natural weapons and any weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned for overcoming damage reduction.

Firewalk (Su) A Dark Pyre swarmer can climb an object on fire as though it had a climb speed equal to its highest speed. Furthermore, it can fly at its highest speed with perfect maneuverability so long as it remains in contact with fire, and it can walk on flames at its highest speed, as though walking on air via the *air walk* spell.

Unnatural Aura (Su) Any animal within 30 ft. of a Dark Pyre swarmer must make a Will save (DC 12) or become frightened. It only needs to flee beyond 30 ft. from the swarmer, at which point it is only shaken.

Note While typical creatures with such low Int cannot have class levels or feats, Dark Pyre swarmers retain combat knowledge they possessed in life.

Dark Pyre Worker CR 1

These burning skeletons bear no weapons or armor.

Male Dark Pyre human commoner 1

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, fire)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –3, Spot –3

Aura unnatural aura (30 ft., animals frightened)

Languages Understand common

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 7 (1 HD); Dark Pyre healing; **DR** 5/bludgeoning

Immune fire

Fort +0, **Ref** +2, **Will** –3

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee claw +2 (1d4+2 plus 1d6 fire and 1d6 negative energy)

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +2

Special Actions Dark Pyre corona, firewalk

Str 14, Dex 14, Con —, Int 1, Wis 4, Cha 6

SQ Dark Pyre healing, Dark Pyre strike, unnatural aura, water vulnerability

Feats Improved Initiative[B], Skill Focus (Profession (worker))

Skills Profession (worker) +4

Dark Pyre Corona (Su) Once every 5 rounds, as a standard action, a Dark Pyre worker can release blast of black fire, dealing 1d6 points of fire damage to each creature within 5 ft. (Reflex DC 8 negates).

Dark Pyre Healing (Su) Dark Pyre workers heal 1 point of damage for every 10 points of fire damage they would take from a given attack. Attacks that do less than 10 damage do not heal them.

Dark Pyre Strike (Su) Each of a Dark Pyre worker's melee attacks deal +1d6 points of fire damage and +1d6 points of negative energy damage. The Dark Pyre worker's natural weapons and any weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned for overcoming damage reduction.

Firewalk (Su) A Dark Pyre worker can climb an object on fire as though it had a climb speed equal to its highest speed. Furthermore, it can fly at its highest speed with perfect maneuverability so long as it remains in contact with fire, and it can walk on flames at its highest speed, as though walking on air via the *air walk* spell.

Unnatural Aura (Su) Any animal within 30 ft. of a Dark Pyre worker must make a Will save (DC 8) or become frightened. It only needs to flee beyond 30 ft. from the worker, at which point it is only shaken.

Dashgoban Knight CR 4

Male human fighter 4

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 35 (4 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); ride 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee mwk lance +9 (1d8+5, ×3) or mwk battleaxe +8 (1d8+3, ×3)

Ranged heavy crossbow +5 (1d10, 19–20)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

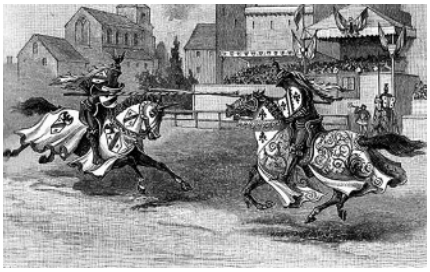
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *oil of magic weapon*

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +4, Ride +10

Possessions full plate, heavy steel shield, mwk battleaxe, mwk lance, four daggers, two javelins, net, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 2 days of rations, heavy warhorse, military saddle, scale mail barding, 10 gp



Dasseni Cavalry Squad **CR 14**

Twenty knights, mostly human fighter 4, with warhorses

LN Gargantuan animal/humanoid (unit of Medium humanoids and Large animals)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +27, Spot +27

Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 207 (24 HD)

Fort +18, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee lance press +38 (1d8+26) or hoof stamp +37 (1d6+24)

Ranged crossbow volley +34 (1d8+20, 19–20)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (5 ft. with hoof stamp)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +36

Special Actions mounted mage, mounted strafe, Spirited Charge, trample

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ unit traits

Mounted Mage (Sp) Every Dasseni cavalry squad includes a well-defended war wizard from Lady Timor's lands who rides with them. As a standard action, this wizard can cast the following spells five times each (caster level 8th, DC 13 + spell level) – *fireball*, *glitterdust*, *magic missile*.

This mage can be specifically targeted by spells and ranged attacks. She uses the squad's statistics, though attack rolls against her take a –4 penalty. If 20 damage is dealt to her, she dies, and if she dies or is otherwise taken out of commission, the squad loses this ability.

Mounted Strafe (Ex) A Dasseni cavalry squad can take its standard action (such as a melee attack) at any point during its movement.

Spirited Charge (Ex) A Dasseni cavalry squad deals triple damage on a successful charge.

Trample (Ex) The unit can spend a standard action to be able to overrun (with a total +28 bonus) any number of creatures as a free action during its turn. This allows the unit to move through hostile creatures' spaces as long as those creatures are Huge or smaller. The unit makes a hoof stamp attack against every creature it knocks prone this way.

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a *fireball* (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics Cavalry units usually charge to close the distance, then either trample or withdraw for a second charge.

Dasseni Jouster, Typical **CR 4**

Male human fighter 4

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 35 (4 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee mwk lance +9 (1d8+5, ×3) or mwk flail +8 (1d8+3, ×2)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +4, Ride +10

Possessions full plate, heavy steel shield, mwk flail, mwk lance, heavy warhorse, military saddle, scale mail barding

Dasseni Noble, Typical **CR 5**

Human arisocrat 6

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc, Terran

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 21 (6 HD)

Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Immune divination, mind-affecting

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee dagger +3 (1d4–1, 19–20) or shortsword +3 (1d6–1, 19–20)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13

Feats Negotiatior, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Knowledge [nobility and royalty]), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +19, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Perform (varies) +10, Sense Motive +13.

Possessions Eight Lands boon, noble's outfit

Eight Lands Boon (Su) As long as they are touching soil from Dassen, typical Dasseni nobles are protected by *mind blank*. The beneficiaries of this boon can choose to lower it willingly. This effect's caster level is 15th.

Deception **CR 12**

Dozens of squirming tentacles struggle to hide beneath the surface of this creature's oily black body, giving its skin the appearance of a writhing underground sea. Though vaguely humanoid, with its four longest tentacles having the impression of arms and legs, this creature's head is expressionless, its intentions impossible to perceive.

NE Medium aberration (incorporeal, trillith)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14; miss chance 50% (displacement); Dodge, Mobility

hp 94 (17 HD); DR 10/stealth

Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect); Spring Attack

Melee four tentacles each +18 (1d6+1, 10 ft. reach)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Feint; improved grab

Special Actions change shape, dark double, embody, endow, grant boon, lead astray, sneak attack +3d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th)

At will – *invisibility* (self only)

1/hour – *greater invisibility* (self only)

Str 12, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 16

SQ deceptive spirit, displacement, guarded thoughts, incorporeal, trillith traits

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Feint, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +23 (+53 for lying)*, Disguise +20 (+22 to act in character)*, Hide +23, Move Silently +23.

Change Shape (Su) Deception can assume the shape of any Small or Medium humanoid. In humanoid form, Deception loses his natural attacks. He can remain in his humanoid form until he chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, and the Song of Forms does not keep Deception from changing its form (though it does keep him from being incorporeal). *True seeing* reveals Deception's natural form.

Damage Reduction (Ex) Deception has DR 10/stealth. This damage reduction can only be bypassed by weapons that are invisible, or that strike Deception when he is denied his Dex bonus to his AC, or attacks of similar poetic significance. Deception, as clever as his lies are, has little defense against others' trickery.

Dark Double (Su) If Deception is grappling with a foe, it can assume that foe's appearance as a free action as long as the creature is roughly humanoid of either Small or Medium size. Onlookers must succeed a Spot check opposed by Deception's Hide check to keep track of which one of the grapplers is real and which is the trillith.

Deceptive Spirit (Su) Deception gains a +30 bonus to Bluff checks made to convince another of the truth of his words. Effects that would detect his lies or force him to speak the truth require a caster level check (DC 27) to work against him.

Detect Thoughts (Su) Deception can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 17th; Will DC 19 negates). This ability is always active.

Displacement (Su) Deception's image is not where he actually is. Melee and ranged attacks against Deception have a 50% miss chance unless the attacker can locate him by some means other than sight. *True seeing* negates this miss chance, but *see invisibility* has no effect. Deception can activate or suppress this ability as a free action.

Embody (Su) Deception is naturally incorporeal and so cannot do much to harm his foes. However, as a full round action, Deception can animate nearby objects in order to create a corporeal form for himself which closely resembles his monstrous appearance.

While embodied, Deception loses the incorporeal subtype, and loses his fly speed. Deception can leave this body as a standard action Any damage dealt to the embodied form affects him normally, and stays with him even once he returns to incorporeality.

If Deception is affected by the Song of Forms, he spontaneously embodies. If he is already embodied, he cannot leave his body while affected by the Song of Forms.

Endow (Su) As a full round action, when Deception is incorporeal it can grant its power to any living creature within 30 ft. When it does so, the trillith vanishes, effectively absorbed by the creature. At will, or when the creature dies, the trillith reappears within 30 ft. of the creature, unharmed by the ordeal. The endowed creature gains the benefit of Deception's Deceptive Spirit ability.

A trillith that is endowing a creature can be targeted and affected by mind-affecting effects, and can be driven out with remove curse, break enchantment, or a similar effect. However, the trillith itself cannot be harmed while endowing a creature, except by mind-affecting effects.

Grant Boon (Su) While endowed by or when granted a boon by Deception, a creature gains a +5 competence bonus to Bluff checks. He can grant his boon to only one creature at a time, and it is equivalent to 2,500 gp of character wealth.

Guarded Thoughts (Ex) Deception is immune to any form of mind reading.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, Deception must hit with a tentacle. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he establishes a hold and can use its dark double ability as a free action.

Lead Astray (Su) Deception can cause a foe's actions to go astray. As an immediate action, Deception forces a phantasm into the mind of a foe within 150 ft. If that creature fails a Will save (DC 19), Deception chooses two creatures other than the target itself. During its turn, the affected creature perceives the world around it as if those two creatures had switched places. The creature does not realize its perceptions have changed, and if it intended to take an action against one of the creatures, it instead acts upon the other, perhaps attacking an ally, healing a foe, or yelling orders at confused bystanders. The creature realizes its error as soon as its turn is over.

This is a mind-affecting illusion (phantasm) effect.

Rejuvenation (Ex) As Deception is a creature of dream and not of flesh, he is hard to kill. While incorporeal or while embodied, if Deception is destroyed he does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later.

Deception can only be truly slain two ways. If his body dies while he is trapped by the Song of Forms or similar magic, he dies, and his corpse remains even after the magic ends.

Alternately, if Deception is destroyed and all the damage is caused by mind-affecting or negative energy effects, the trillith's spirit is obliterated. In this case, no creature gains the benefits of Deception's boon.

Skills (Ex) When using his change shape ability, Deception gets a +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks. If he can read an opponent's mind, he gets a further +4 circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks.

Desire **CR 16**

Blue veils and golden jewelry reveal only hints of a sensual form.

N Medium aberration (trillith)

Init +13; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Telepathy 100 ft.

AC 32, touch 32, flat-footed 23 (+9 Dex, +13 deflection)

hp 190 (16 HD); **DR** 10/gold

Fort +19, **Ref** +27, **Will** +29

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares) or fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee dagger +21/+16/+11 (1d4–1, 19–20)

Ranged dagger +21/+16/+11 (1d4–1, 19–20)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +11

Special Actions dazzling beauty, naked wish, twist desire

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th)

3/day – quickened *suggestion* (DC 26), *mass charm monster* (DC 31)

Str 8, Dex 28, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 22, Cha 36

SQ covetous spirit, prickly guard, trillith traits

Feats Ability Focus (naked wish), Improved Initiative, Quickdraw, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (suggestion), Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +32, Diplomacy +36, Sense Motive +25, Sleight of Hand +28

Covetous Spirit (Su) Any creature that comes within 60 ft. of Desire must make a Will save (DC 31) or be compelled to stay as close to her as possible. A creature so-compelled that comes within 5 ft. of her must make another save each round or be stunned for one round, able to take no action but to bask in her beauty. Creatures can make a new save every round.

This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect. Trillith are immune to this effect.

Dazzling Beauty (Su) Desire can reveal just the slightest bit of her form beneath her veils, the beauty of which is enough to blind a man. Living creatures within 30 ft. are blinded for two rounds and dazed for one round unless they succeed a Fortitude save (DC 31). This beauty transcends species, affecting any living creature. A creature that succeeds its save cannot be affected by Desire's dazzling beauty for 24 hours. Desire can cover or reveal her beauty as a free action.

Grant Boon (Su) If Desire is defeated, the creature with the lowest Cha within 150 ft. gains a +2 inherent bonus to Cha.

Naked Wish (Su) Three times a day as a full-round action, Desire can telepathically compel any creature she within 10 ft. to make a wish. If the creature fails a Will save (DC 33) it must wish for something it selfishly wants. Desire then takes that wish and exploits it, giving it an unforseen outcome in keeping with a twisted sense of poetic justice.



This effect is limited only by the power and scope of a *wish* spell, such as making dead loved ones come back as undead horrors, crushing a greedy character under treasure, teleporting a glory-hungry warrior to the feet of the colossus in adventure nine, or having a long-desired lover grow violently jealous so that all she cares about is her paramour. Any non-immediate effects of the *wish* end if Desire is defeated. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Prickly Guard (Ex) Despite her alluring beauty, Desire does not like being touched. Whenever a creature comes within 10 ft. of her, dozens of golden blades erupt from beneath her swaying robes, whirling out and slashing that creature. The creature takes 10d6 points of slashing damage (Reflex DC 27 half).

Twist Desire (Su) As an immediate action, Desire can pervert the desire of a creature within line of sight, causing its actions to affect someone other than who it intended. The creature must make a Will save (DC 31), and if it fails, Desire chooses how to target its action. She can only use this ability after a creature has declared that it is performing an action but before resolving it, and she must be aware of the action to do this. She can cause spellcasters to hit their friends with hostile spells, to waste beneficial magic on the wrong target, or to dispel their own magic, and she can make archers fire at innocents or warriors impale their allies. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Unearthly Grace (Su) Desire adds her Cha modifier as a bonus to all her saves and as a deflection bonus to AC.

Diogenes **CR 5**

With a paunch, a prematurely receding hairline, and a sarcastic tone that is lost on most people, this blue-robed wizard possesses an everyman's charm.

Male human wizard (enchanter) 5

NG Medium humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Elven, Ignan, Orc (plus the phrase "don't eat me" in Draconic)

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 24 (5 HD)

Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee dagger +1 (1d4–1, 19–20)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1

Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, scroll of *dispel magic*, scroll of *hold person*, scroll of *suggestion*, scroll of *resist energy*, scroll of *see invisibility*, *wand of charm person* (50 charges)

Special Actions Reactive Counterspell, Spellduelist

Spells Prepared (CL 5th, +2 ranged touch)

3rd – *dispel magic*, *protection from energy*, *suggestion* (DC 18)

2nd – *acid arrow*, *hideous laughter* (DC 17), *invisibility*, *summon monster II*

1st – *charm person* (DC 16), *obscuring mist*, *shield*, *sleep* (DC 16)

0 – *daze* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

Prohibited Schools Evocation, Necromancy

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 13

Feats Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Reactive Counterspell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Concentration), Spell Focus (enchantment), Spellduelist

Skills Bluff +9, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +13

Possessions combat gear plus spell components, 100 gp

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and a selection of other useful spells

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Diogenes casts a spell he may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to him casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing his Bluff check. If Diogenes wins the opposed check, he fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before he begins casting his spell. If he fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Tactics Diogenes is a keen judge of his opponent's skills, and enjoys the thrill of outwitting a foe. The rules of spellduelling require that both duelists start with no spells active. You can lose any of four ways – falling down and not getting up within a round; leaving the 60-ft. ring; having three of your spells countered; or not casting a spell for two rounds in a row.

In adventure one, for example, Diogenes readies an action until Shealis starts casting, then uses his readied action to cast *obscuring mist*, effectively ruining Shealis's spell when she becomes unable to target him. Then he'll cast *shield*, *protection from energy (fire)*, and *summon monster II*; he will only use directly offensive spells afterward, or if Shealis heads into the fog. He'll reactively counterspell anything he thinks is too dangerous.



Diogenes **CR 16**

With a paunch, a prematurely receding hairline, and a sarcastic tone that is lost on most people, this blue-robed wizard regards his surroundings with a great weariness and frustration. He leans on a crutch, though his robes hide whatever injury requires he use it.

Male human wizard (enchanter) 13/archmage 3

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** arcane sight 120 ft., darkvision 60 ft., see invisibility; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages all languages (*tongues*)

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 74 (16 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +1, **Will** +12

Speed** 15 ft. (3 squares)

Melee crutch +2 (1d8–1)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +6

Combat Gear ten *potions of cure serious wounds*, *wand of charm person* (50 charges), scroll of *dimension door*

Special Actions Reactive Counterspell, Spellduelist

Spells Prepared (CL 18th, +7 ranged touch)

8th – *demand* (DC 24), *mind blank*, *screen* (DC 23)

7th – *banishment*, *mass hold person*, *mass invisibility*

6th – *disintegrate* (DC 20), *greater dispel magic*, *mass suggestion* (DC 22), *true seeing*

5th – *cloudkill* (DC 19), *dominate person* (DC 21), *feeblemind* (DC 21)

4th – *arcane eye*, *charm monster* ×2 (DC 20), *scrying* ×2, *stoneskin*

3rd – *dispel magic* ×3, *protection from energy*, *suggestion* ×2 (DC 19)

2nd – *acid arrow* ×2, *hideous laughter* (DC 18), *invisibility* ×2, *summon monster II*

1st – *charm person* ×2 (DC 17), *disguise self* ×2, *shield*, *sleep* (DC 17)

0 – *detect magic* ×2, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

Prohibited Schools Evocation, Necromancy

Str 8, Dex 10**, Con 14, Int 19, Wis 12, Cha 13

SQ contingent *stoneskin*, lame**, mastery of counterspelling, permanent spells, spell power +2

Feats Craft Wand, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Greater Spell Penetration, Reactive Counterspell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (illusion), Spell Penetration, Spellduelist

Skills Bluff +20, Concentration +23, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +28

Possessions combat gear plus spell components, crutch

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and a selection of other useful spells

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Contingent Stoneskin (Sp) A *contingency* spell will cast *stoneskin* on Diogenes if he is attacked by someone he is not aware of. This only responds to physical attacks, not spells.

** **Lame (Ex)** Diogenes lost one of his legs at the knee, and there have been no clerics capable of regenerating the limb, so he moves on a crutch. He suffers a –5 penalty to Dex-based checks that require agility, his speed is halved, and he has a –4 penalty to melee attacks and Reflex saves. If he loses his crutch, these skill penalties increase to –10, and his speed is reduced to 5 ft.

Mastery of Counterspelling (Ex) Whenever Diogenes counters a spell, it is turned back against its caster as if by spell turning.

Permanent Spells (Sp) Diogenes has used *permanency* to acquire permanent *arcane sight* (range 120 ft.), *darkvision* (range 60 ft.), *see invisibility*; and *tongues*.

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Diogenes can counterspell as an immediate action, but if he does he skips his standard action in his next turn.

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Diogenes casts a spell he may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to him casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing his Bluff check. If Diogenes wins the opposed check, he fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before he begins casting his spell. If he fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Dread Spectral Hound **CR 9**

Note Each of these creatures resembles a swarming pack of a half dozen ghostly wolves, as opposed to one large wolf.

Dread spectre advanced dire wolf

NE Large undead (augmented animal, incorporeal)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +12, Spot +12

Aura frightful presence (60 ft.), unnatural aura (30 ft.)

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 11 (–1 size, +6 Dex, +2 deflection); miss chance 50% (incorporeal)

hp 97 (15 HD)

Immune undead immunities

Resist turn resistance +4

Fort +9, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12

Weakness daylight vulnerability

Speed fly 100 ft. (perfect) (20 squares)

Melee incorporeal touch (bite) +18 (2d6 plus energy drain)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +11; **Grp** —

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Fly-By Attack; create spawn, energy drain, frightful presence

Special Actions command spectres

Str —, Dex 22, Con —, Int 6, Wis 16, Cha 14

SQ incorporeal traits, retributive drain, undead traits

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Fly-By Attack, Improved Initiative, Run, Track, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Hide +11, Listen +12, Move Silently +8, Spot +12, Survival +4 (+8 when tracking by scent)

Command Spectres (Su) A dread spectral hound can automatically command all normal spectres within 30 ft. as a free action. Normal spectres never attack a spectral hound unless compelled.

Create Spawn (Su) Any creature with a Cha score of 16 or higher that is killed by a spectral hound rises as a dread spectre in 1d4 rounds. Any other creature slain by a spectral hound instead rises as a normal spectre in 1d4 rounds. A spectre or dread spectre created in this manner is under the command of its creator and remains so until either it or the creator is destroyed. (If you lack access to the dread spectre template, you can make do by advancing a normal spectre to the appropriate HD.)

Daylight Vulnerability (Ex) A dread spectral hound takes a –4 penalty on all attack rolls, checks, and saves when in natural sunlight (but not a *daylight* spell).

Energy Drain (Su) An creature struck by a dread spectral hound's incorporeal touch attack gains two negative levels. These negative levels fade after one hour.

Frightful Presence (Su) Any creature within 60 ft. that witnesses a dread spectral hound's attack must succeed on a DC 19 Will save or become frightened for 5d6 rounds. This ability only effects creatures with fewer HD than the dread spectral hound. A creature that successfully saves is immune to that dread spectral hound's frightful presence for 24 hours.

Retributive Drain (Su) Any time someone attempts to turn a dread spectral hound, or cast a positive energy spell upon it, he must make a DC 19 Fortitude save. Failure indicates that he suffers a negative level, which disappears after one hour. A successful save renders that individual immune to that particular dread spectral hounds retributive drain ability for 24 hours.

Unnatural Aura (Su) Any animal within 30 ft. of a dread spectral hound is automatically panicked, and remains so as long as they remain within that range.

Dream Elemental, Medium **CR 4**

A silvery dragon, antlered like a stag, appears in the center of the room, whirling and spinning like a demented wind.

N Medium elemental (extraplanar)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14

hp 26 (4 HD)

Resist warp reality

Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1; **SR** 14 (against mind-affecting effects only)

Speed Fly 60 ft. (perfect) (12 squares)

Melee slam +5 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th, ranged touch +5)

At will – daze (DC 12), detect magic, dimension door, sleep (DC 13)

3/day – *freezing ray* (as *scorching ray*, deals 4d6 cold damage)

Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 14

SQ elemental traits, ego whip

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes

Skills Concentration +8, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +2, Spot +2

Ego Whip (Sp) As a standard action, the dream elemental can inflict 1d4 points of Cha damage upon a creature within 30 ft. A Will save (DC 14) reduces the damage to half. This is a mind-affecting ability, and the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Warp Reality (Su) Once per round, the dream elemental can redirect damage it would have taken to the attacker. Spells can also be reflected, but only spells that specifically target the psionic elemental; area effect spells cannot be reflected.

Tactics Drawn by the unleashed psionic energy of the dream seeds in adventure two, the dream elemental targets waking characters, blasting them with its *freezing ray*. If any mind-affecting spells are cast on it, it retaliates with *ego whip*. It then engages in melee, trying to render waking characters unconscious. It uses its Warp Reality ability liberally.

If all sleeping characters in the room are awakened, the dream elemental becomes frantic, then vanishes one round later, banished back to the dream realm.

The elemental is not aware of the dangers of the Burning Sky, and so will still use *dimension door* if it needs to flee. If it does this, it vanishes in a burst of flame, and much to its surprise takes 1d6 points of fire damage per 100 ft. it travels, perhaps killing it.

Duke Michael Gallo **CR 6**

Male human middle-aged elite arisocrat 6

NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc, Terran

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 33 (6 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Immune divination, mind-affecting

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee dagger +3 (1d4–1, 19–20) or shortsword +3 (1d6–1, 19–20)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16

Feats Negotiation, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Knowledge – History), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Skills Bluff +12, Diplomacy +23, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Perform (comedy) +12, Sense Motive +13.

Possessions Eight Lands boon, *ring of friend shielding* (other ring is worn by bodyguard), noble's outfit

Eight Lands Boon (Su) As long as he is touching soil from Dassen, Duke Michael Gallo is protected by *mind blank*. The beneficiaries of this boon can choose to lower it willingly. This effect's caster level is 15th.

Note When playing the board game Conquest, Gallo has a +14 bonus in the first two rounds, and +24 thereafter.



East Wind Monk **CR 5**

Slender in black and brown peasant's robes, this woman's hair sways in a constant slight breeze.

Female human monk 2/sorcerer 3

LN Medium humanoid

Init +7; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Auran, Common

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+1 armor, +3 Dex, +2 Cha)

hp 26 (5 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +6 (1d6–1) or unarmed fluury +4/+4 (1d6–1)

Ranged shuriken +5 (1d2–1) or shuriken flurry +3/+3 (1d2–1)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1

Combat Gear *potion of fly*, scroll of *lightning bolt* ×2

Special Actions Stunning Fist (2/day; Fort DC 14 negates)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 3rd)

1st (6/day) – *magic missile*, *shield*, *shocking grasp*

0 (6/day) – *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14

SQ East Wind Style

Feats Craft Wand, East Wind Style, Improved Initiative, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed)

Skills Balance +8, Bluff +5, Concentration +9, Craft (various) +6, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Profession (various) +5, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +4

Possessions 20 shuriken, *bracers of armor +1*, mundane clothes, tools

East Wind Style (Su) Whenever the monk makes a Stunning Fist attack, her unarmed strike deals +1d6 points of electricity damage.

Tactics East Wind monks rely more on their magical abilities than melee, and do not like proctracted battles. Groups of monks learn to remain scattered while focusing their ranged attacks (typically *magic missiles*) on a single target. If an enemy does close to melee, the scattered monks charge in and deliver multiple Stunning Fist attacks.

Emran **CR 1**

Male goblin rogue 1
NE Small humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12
hp 7 (1 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee Small shortsword +2 (1d6, 19–20)
Ranged mwk Small heavy crossbow +5 (1d8, 19–20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +0; **Grp** –4
Special Actions sneak attack +1d6
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, one *+1 human-bane bolt* (Krarlrak) or one *potion of invisibility* (Emran)

Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 6
Feats Rapid Reload
Skills Climb +4, Disable Device +4, Hide +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +7, Spot +6, Tumble +7
Possessions combat gear plus Small leather armor, Small shortsword, mwk Small heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, thieves' tools, 28 gp

Etinifi, the Longwalker **CR 8**

A withered, gray-skinned man smiles with maddened pain. Fey wings curl around his back, and he sways as if to an unheard song.
Male seela spontaneous cleric 5/seela paragon 3
CE Medium fey
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Auran, Common, Elven, Sylvan

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10
hp 77 (8 HD); regeneration 30
Immune disease, energy drain, and poison
Fort +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 (good)
Melee unarmed strike +5 (1d3+1d6)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5
Special Actions smite (1/day, +5 damage), song of forms 4/day
Spells Known (CL 5th)
3rd (3/day) – *contagion*, *nondetection*[D]
2nd (4/day) – *eagle's splendor*, *invisibility*[D], *shatter*, *silence*
1st (6/day) – *bane*, *command*, *comprehend languages*, *deathwatch*, *disguise self*[D], *inflict light wounds*
0 (5/day) – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *read magic*
D domain spell **Domains** Destruction, Trickery

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 20
SQ blessing of the Aquiline Heart, fallow touch, feysinger
Feats Extra Performances, Improved Unarmed Strike, Skill Focus (Perform (singing))
Skills Bluff +16, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Perform +21, Spellcraft +7, Survival +11

Blessing of the Aquiline Heart (Ex) Etinifi is immortal. He does not suffer ability score penalties from aging, nor can he die of old age, but he does gain the normal ability score bonuses. He has regeneration 30, and heals ability damage at a rate of 1 point per ability score per round. He is immune to disease, energy drain, and poison.

Almost no form of attack deals lethal damage to Etinifi. He regenerates even if he fails a saving throw against a *disintegrate* spell or a death effect. If he fails his save against a spell or effect that would kill him instantly (such as those mentioned above), the spell or effect instead deals nonlethal damage equal to his full normal hp +10 (or 87 hp). Etinifi is immune to effects that produce incurable or bleeding wounds, such as mummy rot, a sword with the wounding special ability, or a clay golem's cursed wound ability.

If Etinifi loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1d6 minutes (the detached piece dies and decays normally). He can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to his stump.

Only the bite or breath weapon of a true dragon deals lethal damage to Etinifi. He cannot regenerate Con damage from having his blood drunk. If Etinifi is completely exsanguinated (reduced to 0 Con by the blood drain of a vampire, for example), he loses this ability and is slain. If Etinifi has nonlethal damage equal to his hp, he is unconscious and helpless. While he is helpless, a character may perform a coup de grace to impale him in the heart. As long as his heart is so pierced, Etinifi cannot regenerate.

Fallow Touch (Su) Etinifi deals 1d6 damage with his touch, or 2d6 per round of prolonged exposure. He heals an equal amount, to a maximum of 15 points per day.
Feysinger (Ex) Etinifi can take 10 on Perform checks, even if threatened or stressed.



Fallen Knight **CR 7**

This red knight bears the symbol of the Order of the Aquiline Cross on his plate armor, but his entire form is smeared with blood, and his eyes are merely scabs.

Male blood knight paladin of slaughter 5
CE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, human)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1
Aura debilitating aura 10 ft.
Languages Common

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18
hp 62 (5 HD); **DR** 10/bludgeoning
Immune disease (magical and mundane)
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 greatsword* +11 (2d6+8 plus 2 bleed/19-20) or
slam +10 (1d6+5)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +10
Atk Options Mounted Combat, Spirited Charge; smite good (2/day, +2 attack, +5 damage)
Special Actions blood drain, blood slick (Reflex DC 14), deadly touch (+10 melee touch, Will DC 14, 10 points damage), detect good, fountain of blood (Reflex DC 14), improved grab, rebuke undead (5/day)
Spells Prepared (CL 2)
1st (1/day) – *doom* (DC 13)

Str 21, Dex 12, Con —, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 15
SQ blood body, bonded armor, poison blood, special mount
Feats Mounted Combat[B], Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge
Skills Escape Artist +11, Handle Animal +10, Ride +11
Possessions *+1 greatsword, cloak of resistance +1*, military saddle, full plate armor.

Bleeding Wounds (Ex) Each time a blood knight damages a living foe with a piercing or slashing atack, whether with a natural or manufactured weapon, the resulting wound continues to bleed. The bleeding deals 2 points of damage each round until the victim either heals at least 1 point of damage or receives a successful DC 20 Heal check. Multiple blows result in cumulative damage from blood loss.

Blood Body (Ex) Because its body is entirely composed of blood, a blood knight can store items within its form. It can retrieve any item stored in its body as a move action or as a free action that is part of a move. An item to be stored must be of a size and shape that fits within whatever portion of the blood knight's armor it is placed.

Blood Drain (Ex) Any living creature damaged by a blood knight's natural attack take 1 point of Con damage in addition to the normal damage. This Con damage is subject to the multiplier for a critical hit, just as normal damage would be. In a grapple, a blood knight deals 1d4 points of Con damage to a living foe each round that the grapple is maintained. On each such sucessful attack, the blood knight gains 5 temporary hp.

Blood Slick (Ex) A blood knight constantly drips slippery blood in a 10-foot radius spread around itself. Any creature that is in this area at the start of its turn must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 14) or fall prone. Furthermore, a creature moving through the area at more than half its normal speed falls prone. To move at half normal speed, the creature must succeed on a DC 10 Balance check. A creature that fails this check by 5 or more falls prone; one that fails by less than 5 makes no progress that round. Blood knights and their mounts (in this case, the nightmares) are immune to the slipperiness of any blood knight's blood slick.

Bonded Armor (Ex) A blood knight always wears the suit of full plate armor in which it died. It cannot remove this armor or exchange it for another suit. If the amor is destroyed, the blood knight is destroyed as well. The blood knight has a +5 bonus on saving throws made on behalf of its armor.

Debilitating Aura (Su) A blood knight radiates a malign aura that causes enemies within 10 ft. to take a –1 penalty to Armor Class. This ability functions while the blood knight is conscious, but not if it is unconscious or dead.

Fountain of Blood (Ex) As a full-round action, a blod knight can spray blood from its armor in a great cascade. Each creature within a 15-foot radius is covered in blood and must succeed on a Fortitude save as though it had ingested the blood knight's poisonous blood. The blood fills the area until the blood knight's next turn. Creatures entering the spray while it persists are subject to its effects, but a creature can be affected only once per round.

The area covered by the blood spray becomes coated as though by a blood slick and remains slippery for 2 rounds or until the blood is washed away with at least 5 gallons of water or other liquid, or burned away with normal or magical fire as a full-round action. Creatures and objects within the area that do not have total cover are coated with the blood, and a creature wishing to use, pick up, or cling to an item coated in the blood must succeed a Reflex save (DC 14) to do so. Falure means the item is immediately dropped. A creature coated in blood gains a +10 on Escape Artist checks.

Once the blood knight has used its fountain of blood attack, it must wait 1d4 rounds before it can do so again. Blood knights are immune to the slipperiness of any blood knight's fountain of blood.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a blood knight must hit a creature of any size with a natural attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Poison Blood (Ex) Ingested, Fortitude DC 14, initial damage 1d6 Con, secondary damage nausea for 1 minute. Any opponent that strikes a blood knight with a bite atack is subject to this attack, as is any creature in the area of the fountain of blood attack.

Fayne Rawnbeck **CR 16**

A red-haired elf woman, her posture cautious and her hands tight on the hilts of a pair of battered sickles, steps out of the forest brush, looking curious despite wariness.

Female elf ranger 15/barbarian 1

CN Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +19, Spot +19

Languages Common, Elven

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+2 Dex, +6 armor)

hp 110 (16 HD), **DR** 3/bludgeoning (Bladeproof Skin)

Immune sleep

Fort +14, **Ref** +12 (evasion), **Will** +8 (+10 vs. enchantment)

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee *+1 sickle* +23/+18/+13 (1d6+7, 19–20) or *+1 sickle* +21/+16/+11 (1d6+7, 19–20) and *+1 sickle* +21/+16/+11 (1d6+4, 19–20)

Ranged mwk longbow [+6 Str] +19/+14/+9 (1d8+6, ×3, range incr. 110 ft.)

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +26

Atk Options favored enemy (elf +8, orc +2, human +2, good outsider +2)

Special Actions rage 1/day (7 rounds)

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 5th, 50 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 7th)

4th – *tree stride*

3rd – *neutralize poison*

2nd – *barkskin* (+3)

1st – *alarm*, *pass without trace*, *speak with animals*

Str 22, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8

SQ camouflage, elf traits, swift tracker, wild empathy (+11), woodland stride

Feats Bladeproof Skin, Endurance[B], Greater Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Improved Critical (sickle), Improved Grapple, Improved Two Weapon Fighting[B], Improved Unarmed Strike, Secret Keeper*, Track[B], Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Weapon Focus (sickle)

Skills Climb +19, Handle Animal +14, Hide +20, Listen +19, Move Silently +20, Spot +19, Survival +20

Possessions combat gear plus *+3 studded leather*, two *+1 sickles*, two mwk sickles, whip, net, bolas, mwk longbow [+6 Str], *belt of strength +4*, *amulet of health +2*, *cloak of resistance +1*.

Rage (Ex) While raging, Fayne's stats change as follows:

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 14

hp 136

Fort +16, **Will** +10 (+12 vs. enchantment)

Melee *+1 sickle* +23/+18/+13 (1d6+9, 19–20) and *+1 sickle* +23/+18/+13 (1d6+6, 19–20)

Str 26, Con 18

When the rage ends, Fayne is fatigued until the end of the encounter.

Tactics Fayne has a lot of pent-up anger, so she prefers to run into combat and start cutting, particularly against enemies with blades. Her sickles are light weapons, so she can use them in a grapple.

Tinncev, Fox Animal Companion CR —

N Medium animal

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages —; understands Fayne Rawnbeck

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+4 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 45 (6 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1; evasion

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee bite +9 (1d8+3)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6

Special Actions sneak attack +2d6

Str 14, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Feats Improved Natural Attack (bite), Stealthy, Weapon Finesse[B], Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Hide +10, Listen +2, Move Silently +9, Spot +2

Feaster of Flesh and Souls **CR 11**

This cadaverous creature's limbs are lined with rows of gnashing teeth. It reaches out hungrily, its ribcage cracking open like a devouring maw.

NE Medium undead (Extraplanar)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common

AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 24 (+14 natural)

hp 114 (12 HD)

SR 21

Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee two claws each +16 (1d6+9)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +19

Special Actions trap soul, spell-like abilities, gnaw

Str 28, Dex 10, Con —, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 17

SQ spell deflection, unholy toughness

Feats Ability Focus (trap soul), Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Climb +24, Concentration +18, Jump +24, Listen +18, Move Silently +15, Spot +18

Gnaw (Ex) While grappling, the feaster automatically deals 4d6 points of damage each round to one other creature in the grapple, as the teeth along its body gnaw into its flesh.

Spell Deflection (Su) The trapped soul provides a measure of magical protection to the feaster. Any spell that targets the feaster and requires a Fortitude or Will save affects the trapped soul instead if it beats the feaster's spell resistance. In many cases, this deflection effectively neutralizes the spell. Some of these effects might eliminate the trapped soul, depriving the feaster of its spell-like abilities until it can consume another victim.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp) At the start of any encounter, the trapped soul within a feaster of flesh and souls is assumed to have 3d4+3 levels (enough fuel for thirty to seventy-five uses of a spell-like ability). Once per round, a feaster can use one of the following abilities: *ghoul touch* (DC 15), *inflict critical wounds* (DC 17), *mass inflict light wounds* (DC 18), *ray of enfeeblement*, *see invisibility*, *spectral hand*, *suggestion* (DC 16). Caster level 12th.

Trap Soul (Su) As a standard action, the feaster of flesh and souls may attempt to snatch the soul out of a living creature. It makes a claw attack, but if it hits it deals no damage. Instead, the creature must make a Will save (DC 21) or have its soul removed from its body. The creature's body collapses to the floor, but remains alive as long as the trapped soul survives. If either the soul or the body is slain, the other dies as well. *Death ward* protects against this attack.

A trapped soul appears within the feaster's ribs as a tiny figure with the victim's features. A feaster can hold only one soul at a time. The trapped soul can take no actions other than to scream horribly as it is consumed.

The trapped soul provides the feaster with enough power to use five spell-like abilities for each Hit Die or level of the trapped creature. As this energy is expended, the soul fades away until it evaporates completely. The trapped essence gains one negative level for every five times the feaster uses one of its spell-like abilities. When the soul's number of negative levels equals the creature's total Hit Dice or level, the soul is extinguished.

When the feaster is slain, the trapped soul returns to its original body if it was not completely consumed. Any negative levels it gained fade after one hour, and do not cause permanent level loss. If *death ward*, *dispel evil*, or *protection from evil* are cast on the trapped soul and they beat the feaster's spell resistance, the soul is expelled and returns to its body.

Unholy Toughness (Ex) The feaster gains a bonus to its hp equal to its Cha modifier × its Hit Dice.

Fiendish War Mammoth **CR 12**

NE Huge magical beast

Init +0 **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +23, Spot +10

Languages Understands Common

AC 21, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (–2 size, +7 natural, +6 armor)

hp 230 (22 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Resist fire 10, cold 10; **SR** 25

Fort +19, **Ref** +13, **Will** +8

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); 30 ft. when encumbered

Melee slam +25 melee (2d6+11) and two stamps +20 melee (2d6+5) or
gore +26 melee (2d8+16)

Base Atk +16; **Grp**+35

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Atk Options smite good (1/day, +20 damage vs. good), rhino-hide armor charge; Great Cleave, Power Attack

Str 32, Dex 10, Con 22, Int 3, Wis 13, Cha 7

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Endurance, Great Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Listen), Weapon Focus (gore)

SQ scent

Skills no ranks other than Spot and Listen

Possessions Huge *rhino hide chainmail barding +1*

Rhino-Hide Armor Charge (Su) The mammoth deals +2d6 damage on a successful charge.

Trample (Ex) Reflex DC 26, 2d8+16

Findle the Minstrel **CR 9**

Ghoulishly smiling and garishly dressed, this undead man holds a lute in one hand and a silver rapier in the other.

Male dread ghoul bard 8

CE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, elf)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +14, Spot +14

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Orc

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +2 natural, +4 Dex)

hp 52 (8 HD)

Fort +2, **Ref** +10, **Will** +9

Turn Resistance +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 30 ft.

Melee *+1 silver rapier* +11/+6 (1d6+1, 18-20) or bite +10 (1d6+1 plus paralysis) and two claws +5 (1d3 plus paralysis)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +6

Special Actions command ghouls, create spawn, paralysis

Bard Spells Known (CL 8th)

3rd (2/day) – *charm monster*, *displacement*, *slow* (DC 17)

2nd (4/day) – *alter self*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *silence* (DC 16)

1st (4/day) – *alarm*, *charm person*, *grease*, *hideous laughter* (DC 15)

0 (3/day) – *detect magic*, *lullaby*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *summon instrument* (DC 14)

Str 10, Dex 18, Con —, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 19

Feats Persuasive, Skill Focus (Perform (lute)), Track[B], Weapon Finesse

Skills Appraise +14, Bluff +17, Climb +7, Diplomacy +19, Intimidate +8, Listen +14, Perform (lute) +18, Sense Motive +14, Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +14, Survival +11, Use Magic Device +15

Possessions *+1 silver rapier*, *ring of feather fall*, leather armor, mwk lute

Command Ghouls (Su) A dread ghoul can automatically command all normal ghouls within 30 ft. as a free action. Normal ghouls never attack a dread ghoul unless compelled.

Create Spawn (Su) Any creature killed by a dread ghoul that lies undisturbed until the next midnight rises as a dread ghoul at that time. The new dread ghoul is not under control of its creator. A *protection from evil* or *gentle repose* spell cast on the corpse prevents this.

Paralysis (Ex) A creature damaged by a dread ghoul's natural attack must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 18) or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds.

Flaganus Mortus **CR 2**

Male human fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Draconic, Orc

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 17
hp 32 (currently 9) (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +9 (1d8+5, ×3)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +7 (1d8+2, 19–20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +5
Combat Gear *oil of magic weapon*

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Mounted Combat, Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)
Skills Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +5, Ride +11
Possessions combat gear plus mwk banded mail, heavy wooden shield, mwk battleaxe, mwk light crossbow with 60 bolts (40 normal, 10 cold iron, 10 silver)

Notes Flaganus's CR is low for his level because the heroes encounter him in adventure one with nearly all his hp gone (he plummeted to the ground when his wyvern mount was killed under him). Fully healed, Flaganus's CR is 4.

Flame of the Emperor **CR 6**

Bedecked in rich crimson uniforms, their eyes shining with deep light, these imposing half-orcs glare daggers at you.
Half-orc fighter 4/cleric 2
LE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Orc

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 armor)
hp 31 (6 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +11 (1d4+6, 19–20)
Ranged dagger +9 (1d4+6, 19–20); Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +9
Combat Gear ten mwk daggers, *wand of hold portal* (10 charges), scroll of *true strike* ×2, *potion of invisibility* ×2
Special Actions knife eye attack
Spells Prepared (CL 2nd, DC 11 + spell level)
1st – *burning hands*[D], *inflict light wounds* ×3
0 – *detect magic* ×4
D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 18, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 6
Feats Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (dagger), Weapon Specialization (dagger)

Knife Eye Attack (Su) A Flame of the Emperor has had liquid essence of the Astral plane injected into his eyes. Once per day he can make an attack with a dagger (either melee or ranged) as a swift action.

Flight **CR 20**

A man-sized creature of scrabbling wings bursts through the clouds, pirouettes upward in a swift, beautiful spiral, and then dives and sweeps past you
CN Medium aberration (air, trillith)
Init +22; **Senses** blindsight 500 ft, *true seeing*
Languages telepathy 1000 ft.

AC 39, touch 32, flat-footed 17 (+22 Dex, +7 natural); superior dodge; Dodge, Mobility
hp 499 (34 HD); fast healing 10; **DR** 10/ground
Immune ability damage, ability drain, death from massive damage, electricity, energy drain, mind-affecting effects, petrification, polymorphing
Resist cold 20, sonic 20; **SR** 33
Fort +17, **Ref** +33, **Will** +17; improved evasion

Speed 5 ft. (1 square), fly 200 ft. (40 squares) (perfect); Spring Attack
Base Atk +17; **Grp** +39
Melee two wing blades each +39 (2d6+12) and six wing buffets each +37 (1d6+6)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; save DC 20 + spell level)
At will—quickened *lightning bolt*, quickened *telekinesis*, *ventriloquism*
1/hour—*chain lightning*, *greater invisibility*
Atk Options shriek, summon winds; Spring Attack
SQ grant boon, soaring spirit, telepathy, true seeing

Str 34, Dex 55, Con 24, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 30
Skills Hide +32, Move Silently +49
Feats Alertness, Dodge, Fly-By Attack, Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Toughness ×4, Weapon Finesse

Damage Reduction (Ex) Flight's damage reduction can be bypassed if either it or the creature attacking it is on solid ground. If a character has filled his boots with dirt, this counts.
Grant Boon (Su) Flight can grant its boon to up to eight creatures, giving them a fly speed of 20 with clumsy maneuverability, or improving their speed by 10 ft. if they already have a fly speed. If Flight is slain, the nearest eight intelligent creature within 150 ft. gain her boon. This boon is the equivalent of a magic item with market value 10,000 gp.
In the dreamworld, creatures with Flight's boon instead gain a fly speed of 40 (average), or improve their existing flight by 20 ft. and one maneuverability class.
Improved Evasion (Ex) If free to move and subjected to an attack that allows a Reflex save for half damage, Flight takes no damage

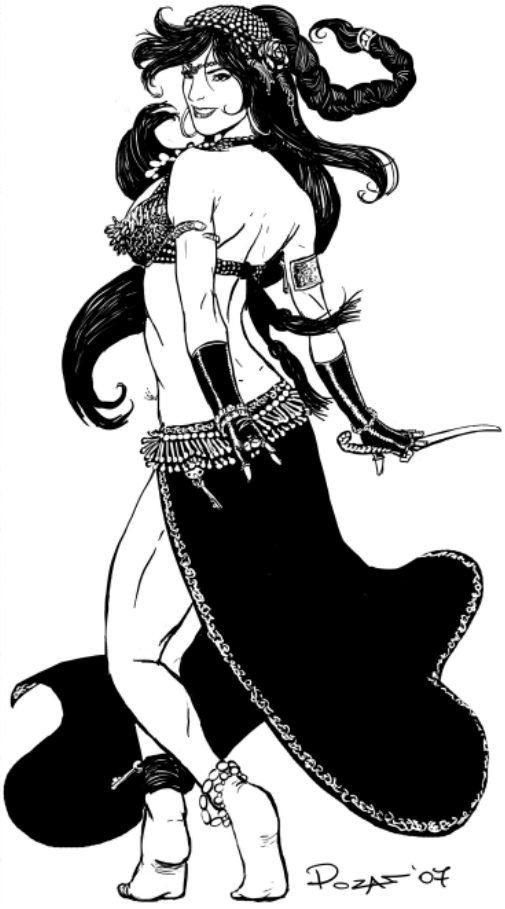
on a successful save and half damage on an unsuccessful save.

Shriek (Su) Once per hour, Flight can release a stunning avian shriek. Every other creature within 40 ft. takes 12d12 sonic damage and is stunned. A Fortitude save (DC 33) halves the damage and negates the stunning. Each round thereafter the creature can make a new save with a cumulative +2 bonus each round to shake off the stunning. This is a sonic effect.

Soaring Spirit (Su) Flight can fly perfectly regardless of wind conditions. Additionally, Flight may hinder the flight of others, so that she is supreme in the sky. Any creature with a fly speed that comes within 1000 ft. of her has its maneuverability reduced by two steps unless it succeeds a Will save (DC 37). Allies of Flight are not hindered in this way.

Summon Winds (Sp) Once per hour, Flight can summon four living winds (*q.v.*), lasting for ten minutes.

Superior Dodge (Ex) Once per round, when Flight would be hit by an attack from the creature she has declared as her Dodge target, she instead is not hit. This does not let her avoid disarm attempts.



Freedom **CR 20**

She walks with casual freedom, the movement of her body inspiring, liberating. But in her golden eyes regret and resolution struggle for mastery.

CN Medium aberration (trillith)

Init +24; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Anarchic, Auran, Common, Draconic, Undercommon; telepathy 1000 ft.

AC 37, touch 27, flat-footed 37 (+12 Dex, +10 natural, +5 deflection); uncanny dodge; Dodge

hp 345 (30 HD); fast healing 20; **DR** 10/swiftness

Immune compulsion, movement restriction, polymorph

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10, sonic 10

Fort +14, **Ref** +22, **Will** +22; evasion, slippery mind

Speed 85 ft. (17 squares); Spring Attack

Melee mind blade +33/+28/+23 (1d4+6, 17–20)

Ranged mind blade +33/+28/+23 (1d4+6, 17–20); Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +16

Atk Options striker

Special Actions aura of freedom, shed body, turn to dust

Str 13, Dex 34, Con 25, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 20

SQ mind blade (critical hit grants temporary hp), quickness, spirit of freedom, trapped

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (dagger), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Spring Attack, Superior Initiative[E], Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger)

E Epic feat

Skills Balance +45, Jump +58, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Open Lock +45, Perform (dance) +21, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +20, Tumble +47

Aura of Freedom (Su) Freedom can radiate a 5-ft. radius aura as a free action. When she does so, all locks, chains, and bindings are released, including those fasteners that hold armor and shields affixed to their owners. Affected creatures must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 30) or have their shield become unreadied, and lose half of their armor bonus (rounded down). Chain shirts are not affected, nor are buckler shields. Re-readying a shield takes as long as normal. Re-readying armor takes as long as it would take to don hastily.

A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by Freedom's aura until it sleeps.

This ability also allows Freedom to open, walk through, and close locked doors simply by expending a swift action, which she can do in the middle of her movement. Once through, the door remains locked behind her.

Damage Reduction (Ex) Freedom has DR 10/swiftness. This damage reduction can only be bypassed by creatures with an initiative bonus of +4 or better. For all others, Freedom slips away from underneath any blow, escaping the worst of it. If Freedom is denied her Dex bonus to AC (which, because of her uncanny dodge and motion mastery, will probably only happen if she is unconscious), she loses her damage reduction.

Mind Blade (Su) As a free action, Freedom can create a psionically charged dagger, which functions as a *+5 ghost touch dagger*. Whenever Freedom inflicts a critical hit with the dagger, she gains temporary hp equal to the amount of damage dealt. If she throws the dagger, it vanishes after the attack, but immediately reforms in her hand. It likewise reforms if destroyed (it has hardness 14 and 30 hp).

If Freedom dies, the weapon becomes tangible and remains behind as a *+5 ghost touch dagger* that once per day can cast *disintegrate* (caster level 17th) upon a target successfully hit, as a spell-storing weapon.

Quickness (Su) Freedom can take one extra standard action each round.

Shed Body (Su) Three times per day, Freedom can turn incorporeal for up to one minute. She can begin and end this ability as a free action. While incorporeal, Freedom gains a fly speed equal to her base speed, with perfect maneuverability.

Spirit of Freedom (Su) Freedom is protected from any effect that the spell *freedom* protects from, including but not limited to *binding*, *entangle*, grappling, *imprisonment*, *maze*, paralysis, petrification, pinning, *sleep*, *slow*, stunning, *temporal stasis*, and *web*. She is also immune to compulsion effects, such as *suggestion* or *dominate monster*.

Striker (Ex) If Freedom moves at least 10 ft. in a round before she attacks, her attacks deal +6d6 damage and she gets a +6 dodge bonus to AC until her next turn. If instead she moves at least 20 ft. before attacking, her attacks deal +8d6 damage, and her dodge bonus is +8. She only gains this bonus damage if she is within 30 ft. of her target.

Trapped (Su) Because of the ritual to bind Trilla, Freedom is trapped in her physical form. She is immune to polymorph effects.

Turn to Dust (Su) Once per minute as a standard action, Freedom can charge her dagger with power, causing the blade to glow and reality around it to appear unstable. If she strikes a creature before the end of her next turn, the attack deals an extra 20d6 points of damage (Fort DC 30 half). If the creature is in earshot of someone singing the Song of Forms, he may substitute the singer's Perform check for his saving throw. This damage results in the victim's wound turning to dust, which is all that Freedom believes the corporeal world to be: meaningless, unvariegated matter, purposeless without a soul.

A creature slain by this attack is disintegrated. However, his soul lingers as an incorporeal spirit, briefly able to experience the freedom from flesh the trillith desire. The spirit has a fly speed of 60 (perfect), and can communicate, but can only affect other incorporeal creatures. Lacking a body, he cannot use any gear or magic items, though he retains any trillith boons he may have acquired, and if his soul was bonded to any item, such as the Living Blade (see adventure two), his spirit possesses that item as well, while the corporeal item is disintegrated.

Without his body, he begins to slowly fade away, and after a number of rounds equal to his character level, his soul joins his body in death, and he cannot be restored short of a *true resurrection*, *wish*, or similar magic.

Gabal, Dread Wraith Archmage CR 19

This wraith's features are no more distinct than any other of these undead horrors, but it is larger, and it holds itself with an unusual, but familiar posture – the stance of a Gabalese warmage.

Dread wraith wizard (evoker) 13/archmage 3
LE Large undead (incorporeal)

Init +13; **Senses** arcane sight 120 ft., darkvision 60 ft., lifesense 60 ft., see invisibility; Listen +25, Spot +25

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Ignan, Orc

AC 25, touch 25, flat-footed 16 (+9 Dex, +7 deflection, –1 size, +4 mage armor, +4 shield)

hp 208 (32 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +19, **Will** +24

Weakness daylight powerlessness

Speed fly 60 ft. (good) (12 squares)

Melee incorp. touch +24 (2d6 plus 1d8 Con drain)

Base Atk +16; **Grp** —

Atk Options constitution drain, create spawn; Spellduelist

Special Actions Reactive Counterspell

Spells Prepared (CL 16th, +24 ranged touch)

8th – empowered *Gabal's viral flame** (DC 24), quickened empowered *scorching ray*

7th – *prismatic spray* (DC 25), quickened *fireball* (DC 21), quickened *lightning bolt* (DC 21)

6th – *Gabal's viral flame** (DC 24), *mislead* (DC 23), quickened *scorching ray*

5th – empowered *fireball* (DC 21), quickened *magic missile* ×3, quickened *true strike*

4th – empowered *flaming sphere* (DC 20), *resilient sphere* (DC 22) ×2, *wall of fire* ×2, ~~*greater invisibility*~~

3rd – *dispel magic* ×3, *protection from energy* ×3

2nd – *darkness*, *rope trick*, *scorching ray* ×2, *shatter* ×2

1st – *burning hands* ×2 (DC 17), *magic missile*, *scare*, ~~*mage armor*~~, ~~*shield*~~

0 – *detect magic* ×2, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

Prohibited Schools Enchantment, Necromancy

Str —, Dex 28, Con —, Int 22, Wis 18, Cha 24

SQ mastery of counterspelling, mastery of elements, mastery of shaping

Feats Alertness[B], Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Empower Spell, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative[B], Improved Natural Attack (incorporeal touch), Mobility, Quicken Spell, Reactive Counterspell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spellduelist, Spell Focus (evocation, illusion), Spring Attack

Skills Bluff +26, Craft (alchemy) +22, Decipher Script +22, Hide +24, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +22, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +22, Knowledge (geography) +22, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +22, Knowledge (religion) +22, Knowledge (the planes) +22, Listen +25, Spellcraft +27, Sense Motive +23, Spot +25

Daylight Powerlessness (Ex) Gabal is utterly powerless in natural sunlight, and flees from it.

Lifesense (Su) Gabal notices and locates living creatures within 60 ft., just as if he possessed the blindsight ability. He also senses the strength of their life force automatically, as if he had cast *deathwatch*.

Con Drain (Su) Living creatures hit by Gabal's incorporeal touch attack must succeed on a DC 25 Fortitude save or take 1d8 points of Con drain. On each such successful attack, Gabal gains 5 temporary hp.

Create Spawn (Su) Any humanoid slain by Gabal becomes a wraith in 1d4 rounds. Its body remains intact and inanimate, but its spirit is torn free from its corpse and transformed. Spawn are under Gabal's command and remain enslaved until his death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Mastery of Counterspelling (Ex) Whenever Gabal counters a spell, it is turned back against its caster as if by *spell turning*.

Mastery of Elements (Ex) Whenever Gabal casts a spell with the acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic descriptor, he can replace its energy type with another.

Mastery of Shaping (Ex) Gabal can choose to have an area spell he casts not affect any number of squares in its area.

Permanent Spells (Sp) Gabal has used *permanency* to acquire permanent *arcane sight*, with a range of 120 ft.; *darkvision*, with a range 60 ft., and *see invisibility*.

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Gabal can counterspell as an immediate action, but if he does he skips his standard action in his next turn.

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Gabal casts a spell he may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to him casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing his Bluff check. If Gabal wins the opposed check, he fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before he begins casting his spell. If he fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Gallo Chaplain **CR 7**

Female human cleric 7
NG Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Dodge, Mobility
hp 52 (7 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), 30 ft. with longstrider
Melee mwk gauntlet +4 (1d3)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5
Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (40 charges), *wand of bless* (10 charges), *wand of cause fear* (10 charges), scroll of *prayer* ×2, scroll of *dispel magic* ×2
Special Actions spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead (3/day, 1d20+2), healing emanation (7/day, 10-ft. radius, heals 1 damage)
Spells Prepared (CL 7th, DC 13 + spell level; CL 8th with healing spells)
4th – *dimension door*[D], *restoration* ×2
3rd – *cure serious wounds*[D], *magic circle against evil* ×2, *prayer*
2nd – *cure moderate wounds*[D], *remove paralysis*, *resist energy* ×2, *shield other*
1st – *bless*, *longstrider*[D], *sanctuary* ×3, *shield of faith*
0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison* ×3, *virtue*
D domain spell **Domains** Healing, Travel

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10
SQ Travel domain freedom (7 rounds/day)
Feats Dodge, Mobility, Tower Shield Proficiency, Vow of Healing
Skills Concentration +12, Heal +13, Knowledge (religion) +10
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, tower shield, mwk gauntlet

Tactics Just in case she has to use *dimension door* to rescue an injured warrior, the chaplain casts *resist energy (fire)* before battle, gaining fire resistance 20, which should be enough to safely teleport 400 ft. She also uses *longstrider* so she can more easily reach the wounded. When combat begins, her first action is usually to cast *sanctuary*.

Gallo Soldier **CR 2**

Male dwarf fighter 2
LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19; +4 dodge bonus vs. giants
hp 22 (2 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1; +2 vs. poison, spells, spell-like abilities

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk waraxe +6 (1d10+2, ×3) or mwk shortsword +6 (1d6+2, 19–20) or glaive +5 (1d10+3, ×3)
Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +4 (1d10, 19–20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*
Atk Options Power Attack

Str 15, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6
Feats Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (warhammer)
Skills Climb –2, Craft (weapons) +5
Possessions combat gear plus half-plate, heavy shield, mwk shortsword, mwk waraxe, mwk heavy crossbow with 20 bolts

Tactics Gallo's soldiers are well-regimented, trained to focus their efforts against a few foes at a time, rather than each soldier picking his own opponent. Gallo calls this "The Plan," and a soldier who gets too hungry for glory will often get shouted at with, "Stick to The Plan!" The other common shout is "Duck!" typically used when enemy mages attack with an area of effect spell.

If readying his glaive against a cavalry charge, the Gallo soldier must first unready his shield; he will ready his shield before returning to combat.

Gar-Alanak, Windborne Cloud Giant CR 13

This massive giant floats up from beneath the walkway, brandishing one of the largest morningstars you have ever seen. A glowing white stone circles its head in flight. You realize with a shock that its legs and lower torso melt into a wispy cloud that swirls violently as it floats before you.

NE Huge giant (air)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +15, Spot +15
Languages Common, Auran, Giant

AC 25, touch 9, flat-footed 24
Immune poison, sleep, paralysis, stun, critical hits
hp 227 (17 HD); DR 10/ –
Fort +16, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

Speed fly 50 ft. (good) (10 squares)
Melee *+2 Gargantuan crushing* morning star* +24/+19/+14 (4d6+18) or two slams +22/+22 (1d6+12)
Ranged +11 ranged touch *iron bands of binding* (immobilize)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +32
Atk Options Fly-By Attack, Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)
3/day – *levitate* (self plus 2,000 pounds), *obscuring mist*
1/day – *fog cloud*

Str 35, Dex 13, Con 23, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 13
Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Fly-By Attack[B], Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Iron Will, Power Attack
Skills Climb +19, Craft (any one) +11, Diplomacy +3, Intimidate +11, Listen +15, Perform (stringed instruments) +2, Sense Motive +9, Spot +15
Possessions chain shirt, *+2 Gargantuan crushing* morning star*, *pearly white spindle ioun stone*, *iron bands of binding*, 200 pp, 14 diamonds (500 gp each).

* Treat this property as the blunt weapon equivalent of *vorpal*: on a roll of natural 20 and then a confirmed critical, the target's head is crushed, instantly killing it.

Gargoyle Striker **CR 9**

The stony, crouched figure springs to life, its joints grinding as it draws back a dark, gleaming glaive.

NE Medium monstrous humanoid (earth)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Common, Terran

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+2 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 74 (9 HD); **DR** 10/adamantine

Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), fly 70 ft. (average)

Melee two claws each +15 (1d4+6) or adamantine glaive +17 (1d10+9, ×3)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +19

Atk Options sneak attack +3d6; Combat Reflexes, Fly-By Attack, Reckless Offense

Special Actions freeze

Str 22, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 7

Feats Combat Reflexes, Fly-By Attack, Improved Grapple[B], Reckless Offense, Weapon Focus (glaive)

Skills Hide +12, Listen +4, Spot +4

Freeze (Ex) A gargoyle can hold itself so still it appears to be a statue. An observer must succeed on a DC 20 Spot check to notice the gargoyle is really alive.

Reckless Offense (Ex) Gargoyle strikers can take a –4 penalty to AC for one round to gain a +2 bonus to their attack rolls. They usually do this while charging.

Sneak Attack (Ex) Gargoyle strikers have sneak attack +3d6.



Gate Pass Irregulars **CR 12**

Twenty freedom fighters, mostly human warrior 4 or adept 4

CG Huge humanoid (unit of Medium humanoids)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +28, Spot +28

Languages Common, Elven, Orc

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

hp 108 (24 HD)

Fort +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee irregular offensive +33 (1d8+21, plus the unit tumbles 15 ft.)

Ranged irregular fusillade +33 (1d6+24, plus slowed one round; range inc. 40 ft.)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +33

Atk Options unit tactics, unit traits

Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ unit traits

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a *fireball* (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics The irregulars use hit and run tactics, pinning foes with combined tanglefoot bags and entangling spells, or simply striking with assorted weapons and then running away.

Gate Pass Rebel Mage **CR 4**

Male human wizard (evoker) 4
CN Medium humanoid
Init +5; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Orc

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex)
hp 16 (4 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +2 (1d4, 19–20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2
Combat Gear scroll of *ice storm* (caster level check 1d20+4 vs. DC 8)
Special Actions Spellduelist
Spells Prepared (CL 4th)
2nd – *flaming sphere* (DC 17) ×2, *glitterdust* (DC 15), *web* (DC 15)
1st – *grease*, *magic missile* ×3, *obscuring mist*
0th – *detect magic*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *resistance*
Prohibited Schools Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 8
Feats Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation)
Skills Bluff +6, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (any two) +10, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +12

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever a Gate Pass rebel mage casts a spell he may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to him casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing his Bluff check. If the Gate Pass rebel mage wins the opposed check, he fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before he begins casting his spell. If he fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Gate Pass Rebel Priest **CR 4**

Male human cleric 4
N Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common

AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13 (+4 armor, –1 Dex)
hp 25 (4 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee heavy mace +5 (1d8+2, 19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5
Combat Gear scroll of *dispel magic* (caster level check 1d20+4 vs. DC 8)
Atk Options turn undead (4/day, 1d20+1, 2d6+5)
Spells Prepared (CL 4th)
2nd – *shield other*[D], *silence* ×2 (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15)
1st – *bless* ×4, *sanctuary*[D]
0 – *cure minor wounds* ×5
Domains Protection, one other

Str 14, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 13
Feats Brew Potion, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)
Skills Diplomacy +11, Heal +10, Knowledge (religion) +7
Possessions combat gear plus chain shirt, heavy mace, spell component pouch, holy symbol

Gate Pass Rebel Warrior **CR 4**

Male human fighter 2/rogue 1/ranger 1
CN Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +1 Dex)
hp 30 (4 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee halberd +7 (1d10+4, ×3)
Ranged shortbow +5 (1d6, ×3); Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6
Atk Options favored enemy (Ragesians +2), sneak attack +1d6

Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (halberd), Weapon Focus (shortbow)
Skills Climb +5, Hide +6, Jump +5, Move Silently +6, Profession (various) +5, Use Magic Device +0
Possessions chain shirt, halberd, shortbow, 20 arrows

General Ashok Danava **CR 16**

The commanding presence of this stern, troubled man demands your respect, and the wise experience in his cool gray eyes makes it easy to understand why he holds the loyalty of so many warriors.
Middle-aged male human commander 16
LN Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Aura initiative bonus (60 ft., allies +4 to initiative)
Languages Common, Elven, Goblin, Orc

AC 17, touch 8, flat-footed 17 (–2 Dex, +9 armor)
hp 98 (16 HD); **DR** 3/—
Fort +10, **Ref** +3, **Will** +13

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 bastard sword* +14/+9 (1d10+2, ×3)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +13
Atk Options Improved Disarm, Combat Expertise
Special Actions direct orders +4, battle cry, chain of command, inspire sacrifice; Leadership Performance (5/day)

Str 12, Dex 6, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 18
Feats Combat Expertise, Equine Stalwart, Fearless Leader, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Legendary Leader, Maneuver Leader, Mounted Combat, Operation Leader, Skill Focus (Perform (oratory))
Skills Bluff +23, Diplomacy +29, Handle Animal +14, Hide +6, Knowledge (history) +21, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +21, Move Silently +6, Perform (oratory) +26, Ride +19, Sense Motive +22
Possessions *+1 bastard sword, +1 adamantine full plate, cloak of charisma +2*

Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, Danava can shout an iconic battle cry (such as "Be brave. Be just," to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.
Chain of Command (Ex) Danava can expend one of his leadership performances to let a subordinate be able to use it instead, for one hour. This loaned performance functions as if Danava himself had used it.
Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round Danava can choose to grant all allies within 60 ft. a +4 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He can also spend an immediate action to replace his current orders with a different type of bonus.
- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).

- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) Allies within 60 ft. of Danava gain a +4 bonus to initiative checks.

Inspire Sacrifice (Ex) Whenever an attack or spell with a visible component would reduce Danava to 0 hp or below, an ally within 5 ft. may choose to take the damage instead. The ally must be aware of the attack and not flat-footed. The commander can benefit from this ability no more than once an hour (since, after the first sacrifice, not as many people are willing to risk their lives). The choice of whether to take the damage is wholly up to the ally.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Five times per day, General Danava can inspire or direct his allies (within 60 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +3 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for as long as Danava remains within 60 ft., plus the next 5 rounds of combat, to a maximum of one hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 60 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Danava himself.
- As a standard action, grant a single ally within 60 ft. an immediate extra attack at its full base attack bonus.
- As a standard action, make a Perform check. Every ally within 60 ft. currently under the influence of a fear or mind-affecting effect makes a new save against that effect, using his Perform check in place of their Will save. Danava can only do this if he himself did not fail his save against the same effect.
- As a standard action, Danava can inspire allies to greatness. All allies within 60 ft. gain 17 temporary hp and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as Danava is within 60 ft., and for 5 rounds thereafter. A given creature can only be inspired this way once per day.

General Cavala **CR 20**

Stress has sunken the eyes and cheeks of this woman. She wears the armor and adornments of a Ragesian general, and a shield with the burning torch standard hovers beside her. Light gray is overtaking the black of her hair, and she chews the tip of a wand nervously as she works through countless tactical concerns.

Female human commander 20

LE Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Elven, Orc

AC 32, touch 15, flat-footed 32 (+10 armor, +7 shield, +5 dodge)

hp 110 (20 HD)

Fort +13, **Ref** +6, **Will** +13

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+5 defending bastard sword* +24/+19/+14 (1d10+9, 19–20)

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +14

Special Actions battle cry, direct orders, inspire sacrifice, leadership performances, seize command (DC 27), tactical genius

Combat Gear *wand of cure serious wounds* (50 charges), *wand of maximized magic missile* (9th level, 20 charges), *wand of lightning bolt* (10th level, 20 charges), two *potions of protection from energy* (acid, caster level 10th)

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 20

Feats Ability Focus (seize command), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Fearless Leader, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (bastard sword), Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Legendary Leader, Lightning Reflexes, Maneuver Leader, Operation Leader, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device), Spellwise Leader, Weapon Focus (bastard sword) (15)

Skills Bluff +28, Diplomacy +34, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (history) +25, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +25, Perform (oratory) +28, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +27, Use Magic Device +19

Possessions combat gear plus *+5 defending bastard sword*, *+5 animated large shield*, *+5 mithril breastplate*, *cape of the mountebank*, Grand Standard of the Seventh Army

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Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, Cavala can shout, "Show me blood, troops!" to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round Cavala can choose to grant all allies within 60 ft. a +5 bonus to one of the following types of checks until her next turn. She can also spend an immediate action to replace her current orders with a different type of bonus.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) Allies within 60 ft. of Cavala gain a +5 bonus to initiative checks.

Inspire Sacrifice (Ex) Whenever an attack or spell with a visible component would reduce Cavala to 0 hp or below, an ally within 5 ft. may choose to take the damage instead. The ally must be aware of the attack and not flat-footed. Cavala can benefit from this ability no more than once an hour.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Six times per day, Cavala can inspire or direct her allies (within 60 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant herself and allies who hear it +3 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for as long as Cavala remains within 60 ft., plus the next 5 rounds of combat, to a maximum of one hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. She and all her allies can use the result of her Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 60 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Cavala herself.
- As a standard action, grant a single ally within 60 ft. an immediate extra attack at its full base attack bonus.
- As a standard action, make a Perform check. Every ally within 60 ft. currently under the influence of a fear or mind-affecting effect makes a new save against that effect, using her Perform check in place of their Will save. Cavala can only do this if she herself did not fail her save against the same effect.
- As a standard action, inspire allies to greatness. All allies within 60 ft. gain 17 temporary hp and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as Cavala is within 60 ft., and for 5 rounds thereafter. A given

creature can only be inspired this way once per day.

- As a standard action, inspire spellcasting allies. As long as Cavala maintains concentration, whenever an ally within 60 ft. casts a spell at an enemy that another ally has targeted in the past round, the target takes a –2 penalty to its saving throw.

Seize Command (Ex) Cavala may use one of her leadership performances to exert her force of will upon a single creature with an Int of 3 or higher within 30 ft. If that creature fails a Will save (DC 27), it obeys the orders of the commander to the best of its ability for one hour. During this time, the creature acts as if it was completely loyal to the commander and his allies, even at the expense of its own normal allies. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Tactical Genius (Ex) Once per day as a standard action, Cavala can direct her allies within 60 ft., granting them each one full round worth of actions, keeping their normal initiative order. At the end of this bonus round, normal initiative resumes. Cavala does not benefit from her own ability.

General Euserius de Fiaba **CR 17**

Short, slightly balding with sandy brown hair, this mage seems uncomfortable in the accoutrements of a necromancer. Beneath his shadowy black robe to his skull mask, his posture reflects frustration and disinterest.

Male human necromancer 17
LE Medium humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Orc

AC 28, touch 16, flat-footed 27; deflect arrows
hp 78 (17 HD); *shield other*
Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10
Buff Suite (duration 170 minutes or longer) *control weather*, *detect scrying*, *mind blank*, *protection from arrows*, *protection from energy* (cold, fire, lightning), *shield*

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +7
Spells Prepared (CL 17th, DC 16 + spell level +2 if necromancy, ranged touch +9)
9th – *energy drain*, *etherealness*
8th – *greater prying eyes*, *horrid wilting*, *mind blank*
7th – *control weather*, *finger of death*, *greater teleport*, *spell turning*
6th – *circle of death*, *disintegrate* ×4, quickened *invisibility*
5th – *magic jar*, quickened *true strike*, *telepathic bond* ×2, *teleport*, *wall of stone*
4th – *detect scrying*, *fear*, *scrying* ×4
3rd – *protection from energy* ×3, *vampiric touch* ×3
2nd – *invisibility* ×3, *mirror image*, *protection from arrows*, *spectral hand*
1st – *ray of enfeeblement* ×4, *shield*, *true strike*
0 – *mage hand* ×3, *touch of fatigue*
Prohibited Schools Enchantment, Evocation

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 24, Wis 10, Cha 14
SQ contingent spell, *ring of friend shield*
Feats Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Deflect Arrows, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Unarmed Strike, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Penetration
Skills Concentration +23, Spellcraft +23, various Knowledges
Possessions *skull mask of intellect +6*, *bracers of armor +8*, *ring of protection +5*, *ring of friend shield*, Grand Standard of the Sixth Ragesian Army

Contingent Spell (Su) When Euserius drops to the ground, intentionally or not, a contingent magic jar affects him. He usually does this to feign death, and then attempts to hop into an enemy's body, recover his own body, and wait for an opportune time to mortally wound himself before shifting back.

Ring of Friend Shield (Su) One of the nightwalkers that travels with Euserius wears the mate to the general's *ring of friend shield*. The nightwalker keeps *shield other* up at all times, protecting the general.



General Signus **CR 12**

This middle-aged knight sits saddled atop a bipedal, eyeless reptilian mount. The knight wears a commander's cloak and holds himself with a confident, fearless bearing. His voice is gruff, his face scarred and pitted from countless battles.

Male middle-aged human commander 12

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Orc

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 25 (+9 armor, +4 shield, +1 deflection, +1 natural)

hp 75 (12 HD)

Resist 25% chance to ignore extra damage from critical hits and sneak attacks

Fort +9, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 bastard sword* +14/+9 (1d10+4, 17–20)

Ranged mwk two-tined trident +10/+5 (1d8+3, 20/×3; range inc. 10 ft.)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +12

Atk Options Power Attack, Spirited Charge

Special Actions leadership performance, direct orders

Combat Gear three *potions of cure serious wounds*

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 16

SQ battle cry, initiative bonus, chain of command

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Fearless Leader, Improved Critical (bastard sword), Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Power Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +20, Handle Animal +18, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +16, Perform (oratory) +18, Ride +15 (+10 on Loper), Sense Motive +15

Possessions combat gear plus *cloak of charisma +2*, *gloves of strength +2*, *+1 full plate of light fortification*, *+2 heavy shield*, *ring of deflection +1*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *+1 bastard sword*, mwk two-tined trident

Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, Signus can shout an iconic battle cry (such as "Give 'em thunder, men!" to which his soldiers reply by roaring in unison) to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Chain of Command (Ex) Signus can expend one of his leadership performances to let a subordinate be able to use it instead, for one hour. This loaned performance functions as if Signus himself had used it.

Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round Signus can choose to grant all allies within 50 ft. a +3 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He can also spend an immediate action to replace his current orders with a different type of bonus.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) Allies within 50 ft. of Signus gain a +3 bonus to initiative checks.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Three times per day, Signus can inspire or direct his allies (within 50 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +2 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 50 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Signus himself.
- As a standard action, grant a single ally within 50 ft. an immediate extra attack at its full base attack bonus.
- As a standard action, make a Perform check. Every ally within 50 ft. currently under the influence of a fear effect makes a new save against that effect, using your Perform check in place of their Will save. Signus can only do this if he himself did not fail his save against the same effect.

Tactics Signus loves his new mount Loper (an ordinary destrachan), and takes full advantage of it. However, since Loper is not a horse and is not properly built for being ridden, the general's Ride checks take a –5 penalty. Signus will usually direct his men to keep between 35 and 50 ft. away (so they can benefit from his command, without being caught in Loper's attacks) as he rides into masses of enemies and has the destrachan release blast after blast of destructive harmonics.

General Titus **CR 18**

A huge helmeted half-orc in jagged red armor sits astride a frightfully muscled red stallion in spiked steel barding. The warrior holds in his meaty fist an unearthly longbow around which hellish souls flicker and wail. Firmly set into the warrior's saddle, an eight-foot pole holds aloft a streaming banner whose edges burn and smoke.

Male half-orc barbarian 14/fighter 4

NE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +23, Spot +23

Aura *magic circle against good*, 10 ft.

Languages Common, Orc

AC 32, touch 15, flat-footed 29 (+3 Dex, +12 armor, +5 shield, +2 natural, +2 deflection); improved uncanny dodge

hp 153 (18 HD); **DR** 3/—

Immune mind control, possession

Fort +19, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 cold iron spiked gauntlet* +25/+20/+15/+10 (1d4+7)

Ranged Aphrax +31/+26/+21/+16 (1d8+15 plus 2d6 against good, 19–20/×3, range inc. 330 ft.)

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +24

Atk Options Rapid Shot

Special Actions rage

Combat Gear *handy haversack* full of *potions of cure serious wounds*, *fly*, *heroism*, *invisibility*, and *resist energy* (ten each)

Str 22, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14

Feats Elite Training (composite longbow), Far Shot, Improved Critical (composite longbow), Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (composite longbow), Weapon Specialization (composite longbow)

Skills Listen +23, Ride +26, Spot +23

Possessions combat gear plus Aphrax (*+5 distance thundering unholy mighty composite longbow* [+9 Str]), *+4 mithral full plate*, *+4 buckler*, *amulet of natural armor +2*, *belt of strength +4*, *gloves of dexterity +4*, *+1 cold iron spiked gauntlet*, *cloak of resistance +4*, Grand Standard of the Fifth Army

Rage (Ex) Four times per day, Titus can enter a rage that lasts 8 rounds. While raging his stats change as follows:
AC 30, touch 13, flat-footed 27; improved uncanny dodge
hp 207 (18 HD)
Fort +22, **Ref** +14, **Will** +18
Melee *+1 cold iron spiked gauntlet* +28/+23/+18/+13 (1d4+10)
Ranged Aphrax +31/+26/+21/+16 (1d8+18 plus 2d6 against good, 19–20/×3 plus 2d8 sonic, range inc. 330 ft.)
Grp +27
Str 28, Con 20

General Titus's Unique Item General Titus wields the infernal bow Aphrax, a vaguely intelligent *+5 distance thundering unholy mighty composite longbow* [+9 Str]. The bow creates a permanent *magic circle against good* on its wielder (caster level 5th).

The arch of the bow is covered with callused, mummified skin, and when held, a hot breath blows across the wielder's hand, and a pulse can be felt through the unholy skin. When the legionnaire devil Aphrax tried to betray the pit fiend Roav (*q.v.*), Roav imprisoned him in a bow and gave him as a gift to Ragesia's fiercest cavalry archer.

Vorenus, Awakened Warhorse **CR 17**

The archer's mount bares sharpened teeth and roars an enraged war cry of "We will gnaw your flesh, devour your soul, and spit out your bones!"

Male awakened heavy warhorse barbarian 14
NE Large magical beast (augmented animal)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +22, Spot +22
Languages Common

AC 28, touch 12, flat-footed 27 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +12 barding, +4 natural, +2 deflection); improved uncanny dodge, Dodge, Mobility
hp 189 (18 HD)
DR 3/–; **Immune** mind control, possession
Fort +17, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)
Melee hooves +31/+26/+21/+16 (1d6+12, 19–20) and bite +30 (1d4+8) or armor spikes +30/+25/+20/+15 (1d6+8)
Base Atk +18; **Grp** +27
Atk Options rage

Str 26, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 7
Feats Dodge, Endurance, Improved Critical (hoof), Mobility, Power Attack, Run, Weapon Focus (hoof)
Skills Listen +22, Spot +22
Possessions *+4 spiked mithral full plate barding, bridle of strength +6, amulet of mighty fists +4*

Rage (Ex) Four times per day, Vorenus can enter a rage that lasts 10 rounds. While raging his stats change as follows:
AC 26, touch 10, flat-footed 25; improved uncanny dodge, Dodge, Mobility
hp 243 (18 HD)
Fort +20, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11
Melee hooves +34/+29/+24/+19 (1d6+15, 19–20) and bite +33 (1d4+11) or armor spikes +33/+28/+23/+18 (1d6+11)
Grp +30
Str 32, Con 24

Ghoulish Juvenile Red Dragon **CR 10**

CE Large undead (augmented dragon, fire)
Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +24, Spot +24
Languages Common, Draconic

AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24 (–1 size, +15 natural)
hp 123 (19 HD)
Immune fire, undead traits
Resist turn resistance +2
Fort +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +12
Weakness cold vulnerability

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 150 ft. (poor)
Melee bite +27 (2d6+11 plus paralysis, 19–20)
Base Atk +19; **Grp** +34
Space 20 ft.; Reach 15 ft. (20 ft. w/bite)
Atk Options Fly-By Attack
Special Actions Wingover; breath weapon (30-ft. cone, 8d10 fire, Ref DC 23 half)

Str 33, Dex 10, Con –, Int 6, Wis 15, Cha 18
SQ dragon traits, undead traits
Feats Fly-By Attack, Improved Critical (bite), Weapon Focus (bite), Wingover

Paralyzing Bite (Su) A non-elf creature bitten by the dragon's bite is paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Fort DC 23 negates.

Giorgio **CR 8**

Flamboyantly bedecked in an eclectic and colorful vest, pants, and feathered hat, this man wears a wide smile on his large lips. He carries a quarterstaff adorned with ribbons and kerchiefs, which he carries as if it were a badge of honor, or a symbol of his virility.

Male human bard 6/Wayfarer cirqueliste 2
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14, dodge, mobility
hp 39 (8 HD)
Resist electricity 20, fire 20
Fort +3, **Ref** +10, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Spring Attack
Melee *+1 quarterstaff* +8 (1d6+4) or mwk shortsword +8 (1d6+2)
Ranged grenade-like weapons +7 ranged touch
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +7
Combat Gear *feather token (whip)*, four vials of alchemist fire, four flasks of acid
Special Actions bardic music 6/day (inspire courage +1, countersong, fascinate, inspire competence, suggestion)
Spells Known (CL 8th)
2nd (3/day) – *blur*, *shatter* (DC 16), *sound burst* (DC 16)
1st (4/day) – *disguise self*, *feather fall*, *grease* (DC 15), *Wayfarer's step*
0 (3/day) – *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)
11/day – *Wayfarer's step*
1/day – *dimension door*, *teleport* (casting time 1 minute)

Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 18
SQ bardic knowledge +6, sense teleportation, traveler
Feats Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff)
Skills Balance +12, Bluff +15, Climb +12, Perform (sing) +15, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +15
Possessions *+1 quarterstaff*, mwk shortsword, *handy haversack*, *cloak of charisma +2*, mwk chain shirt, two *potions of water breathing*

Traveler (Su) Giorgio can ignore effects that would restrict his movement. This acts as the *freedom of movement* spell, and can be used 4 rounds per day. This effect occurs automatically as soon as it applies, lasts until it runs out or is no longer needed, and can operate multiple times per day (up to the daily limit of rounds).

Wayfarer's Step (Sp) Giorgio can use this ability to teleport 30 ft. as a full round action, but not through a solid barrier; he can expend one of these uses to cast *resist energy* instead.

Tactics If he expects something is about to go wrong, Giorgio casts *resist energy* on himself twice, granting electricity and fire resistance 20, and gives fire resistance 20 to three allies; this takes five uses of his *Wayfarer's step* spell-like ability.

Giorgio is cocky, but hates to be hurt. In adventure three, when combat breaks out, he makes for the rigging as quickly as possible, climbing up 15 ft. in the first round, then moving amid the rigging each round thereafter to keep out of reach. He balances in the rigging, and is not treated as flat-footed. If an enemy gets close enough to an alchemist fire barrel, Giorgio *shatters* it, with explosive results, then uses *grease* and *sound burst* to keep the heroes off balance, or to let his allies more easily hurl them overboard. Only if he cannot contribute to a fight directly does Giorgio use *blur* or *inspire courage*.

If forced to melee, he uses Spring Attack against weaker-looking enemies, smacking them with his quarterstaff as if it were a greatclub. He is loath to enter combat alone, and if he has no allies, he will *dimension door* to the nearest ship (in adventure three, this is a ferry 500 ft. away; Giorgo takes 5d6 points of fire damage, but his fire resistance should protect him).



Glass Wyrm **CR 14**

NE Large dragon
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +22, Spot +22
Aura frightful presence 180 ft. (DC 26)
Languages Draconic, Undercommon

AC 26 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +15 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 24
hp 177 (16 HD); **DR** 10/magic and bludgeoning
Fort +14, **Ref** +12, **Will** +11
Weakness sonic vulnerability

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee bite +21 melee (2d6+6, 19–20) and 2 claws +19 melee (1d8+3) and tail slap +19 melee (1d8+9)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)
Base Atk +16; **Grp** +26
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack
Special Actions breath weapon 12d6, move force walls

Str 23, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 26
SQ dragon traits, reflective hide, spell reflection
Feats Alertness, Cleave, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack
Skills Diplomacy +22, Escape Artist +12, Listen +22, Move Silently +11, Search +19, Sense Motive +20, Spot +22

Breath Weapon (Su) A glass wyrm can unleash a blast of razor-sharp shards of glass once every 1d4 rounds in a 40-foot cone. Affected creatures take 12d6 points of piercing damage (DC 22 Reflex save for half). The save DC is Con-based.

Frightful Presence Aura (Ex) Like all dragons, glass wyrms have a fear aura that takes effect when it attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Any creature with 4 HD or less within 180 ft. that fails a DC 26 Will save is affected by fear for 4d6 rounds; creatures with 5 HD or more that fail the save become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Success means the creature is immune to that dragon's aura for 24 hours. This is a Cha-based effect.

Move Force Walls (Su) As a swift action, the glass wyrms who guard Trilla's dreamworld can change the dimensions of one of the three *walls of force* in their lair (anywhere from one to sixteen 10 ft. squares), change its angle and axis, and cause it to move up to 20 ft. in any direction. The wall must remain a flat plane, but it adjusts to the contours of the terrain as it moves.

If a glass wyrm directs its wall through another creature's space, treat this as a bull rush (+16 modifier). If the bull rush fails, the

wall does not move the creature that round, and it stops in place. If the glass wyrm traps a creature between the wall and a solid object, it can crush that creature, dealing 12d12 bludgeoning damage (Fortitude DC 25 half). A crushed creature must make an Escape Artist check (DC 25) to get free.

Reflective Hide (Ex) Any mundane or magical light source brought within 30 ft. of a glass wyrm causes the light to be reflected as a burst that blinds all creatures within 30 ft. for 1d6+4 rounds. A creature can attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save to negate the blinding effect. The save DC is Con-based.

Sonic Vulnerability (Ex) A glass wyrm takes half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from sonic attacks and effects, regardless of whether it succeeds its saving throw.

Spell Reflection (Ex) Any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance and targets a glass wyrm (or includes it in its area of effect) is reflected back on the caster if the glass wyrm successfully resists the spell or effect. The original caster becomes the spell's target (or its point of origin in the case of area spells). A reflected spell can be resisted normally by the caster (and any other creatures affected). A glass wyrm cannot reflect a sonic effect, even if it allows resistance.



Glurthog **CR 18**

Female advanced huhhoad

CN Huge outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, water)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +24, Spot +24

Languages Ogdoadt

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 22

hp 282 (20 HD); fast healing 5; DR 10/lawful

Immune acid, fire, suffocation, drowning, gas attacks

Resist cold 5, sonic 5; **SR** 23

Fort +19, **Ref** +15, **Will** +16 (+20 vs. charm, compulsion, fear)

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), swim 40 ft.

Melee *Pyrronax* +31/+26/+21/+16 (2d8+18 plus 1d6 fire plus 2d6 vs. lawful, 19–20 plus 1d10 fire)

Melee 2 slams +29 (2d6+11 plus 1d6 fire)

Ranged —

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +20; **Grp** +39

Atk Options Awesome Blow, Power Attack

Special Actions breath weapon (20-foot cone, 10d10 fire damage, Fort DC 26 half), searing aura, summon ogdoad

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)

At will – *astral projection* (self plus 50 pounds), *burning hands* (free action, DC 16), *detect law*

3/day – *scorching ray* (3 rays), *protection from law*, *shatter* (DC 17)

1/day – *chaos hammer* (DC 19), *disintegrate* (DC 21)

Str 33, Dex 16, Con 31, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 21

SQ alien mindset, breathless

Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Alertness, Awesome Blow, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*burning hands*)

Skills Bluff +19, Climb +24, Concentration +17, Diplomacy +21, Disguise +19 (+21 acting), Hide +19, Intimidate +24, Jump +19, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +24, Move Silently +23, Search +12, Spot +24, Survival +13 (+15 on the planes), Swim +29*, Use Magic Device +22

* Glurthog has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check made to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. She can always choose to take 10 on Swim checks, even if distracted or endangered. She can use the run action while swimming, provided she swims in a straight line.

Possessions *Pyrronax* (intelligent *+2 flaming burst anarchic Large bastard sword*; see sidebar)

Alien Mindset (Ex) Glurthog has a +4 racial bonus to resist all charm, compulsion, and fear effects. Further, anyone attempting to read her mind (via *detect thoughts* or some similar effect) must succeed at a Will save (DC 27). The save DC is Con-based. If successful, the character is stunned for 1 round and the mind-reading fails. If the save fails, the mind-reading fails and the character is stunned for 1 round and then affected by a lesser confusion effect for the following 1d4 rounds.

Breath Weapon (Ex) As a standard action once every 1d4 rounds, Glurthog can breathe a 20-foot cone of scalding slime. All in the area take 10d10 points of fire damage (Fortitude DC 26 half). The save DC is Con-based.

Breathless (Ex) Glurthog doesn't need to breathe and is immune to suffocation, drowning, and gas attacks. She can survive comfortably in a vacuum.

Searing Aura (Su) At will, as a free action, Glurthog can surround herself with an aura of blistering heat in a 10-foot radius. Any creature in the area is affected as if by a *heat metal* spell (no save), except that the damage applies to all creatures, even those not wearing metal armor. Creatures actually wearing metal armor take double damage. Once the effect reaches the level of "searing" (per the *heat metal* spell), it does not lessen until the creature leaves the searing aura or Glurthog dismisses the aura, at which time the effect lessens to "hot" and then "warm" over 2 rounds, as the spell.

Summon Ogdoad (Sp) Once per day Glurthog can attempt to summon 2d4 nunnoad or another huhhoad with a 65% chance of success. This is the equivalent of a 5th-level spell. Ogdoad summoned in this way remain for 1 hour, and summoned ogdoad can't use their own summon ogdoad ability for 1 hour. In adventure eleven, Glurthog is unable to use this ability.

Golden Worm **CR 15**

N Gargantuan magical beast (fire)

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 200 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +32

Languages None

AC 21, touch 6, flat-footed 21 (–4 size, +15 natural)

hp 351 (27 HD)

Immune fire

Fort +22, **Ref** +15, **Will** +11

Weakness cold vulnerability

Speed fly 90 ft. (18 squares; poor)

Melee bite +35 (3d6+18)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +27; **Grp** +51

Atk Options, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack; improved grab

Special Actions Awesome Blow; breath weapon, constrict (2d8+8)

Str 34, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 1, Wis 14, Cha 12

Feats Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Power Attack, Toughness ×5, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Spot +32

Breath Weapon (Su) 150 ft. line of clinging fire, every 10 rounds, 27d6 fire (Ref DC 30 half). A creature that fails its save catches on fire and takes 1d6 damage each round thereafter until it puts itself out.

Cold Vulnerability (Ex) A golden worm takes half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from cold attacks and effects, regardless of whether it succeeds its saving throw.

Constrict (Ex) The worm does 3d6+18 damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, the worm must hit a creature of any size with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it it establishes a hold and can attempt to constrict the opponent in the following round.

Gorm **CR 5**

Male orc barbarian 3 / fighter 2

CN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Orc

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; uncanny dodge, trap sense +1

hp 40 (5 HD) (currently at 29 hp after his last escape attempt)

Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Weakness light sensitivity

Speed 40 ft. (6 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +9 (1d3+5 nonlethal)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +9

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, rage 1/day

Str 20, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6

Feats Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Skills Intimidate +4, Jump +13, Survival +5, Swim +13

Possessions *ring of sustenance*

Notes Because of his injured and unequipped state, Gorm is only worth one quarter of the normal XP if attacked by a fully armed party. Gorm's ring is so caked in grime that a DC 25 Search check is required to find it on his person.

Gregor **CR 4**

Male half-orc fighter 4

LN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 35 (4 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee mwk battleaxe +10 (1d8+6, ×3) or shortsword +8 (1d6+4, 19–20)

Ranged mwk composite shortbow +6 (1d6+4, ×3)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8

Atk Options Power Attack

Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)

Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +3

Possessions combat gear plus full plate, heavy shield, mwk battleaxe, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, shortsword, 5 days of rations

Grellfin Flintflindercandle **CR 9**

Toweringly tall for a gnome, this warrior's silvery plate armor and shield shine with holy power, and his expression beams stern confidence. He wears his hair in a pale red pony-tail, and is armed with a golden warhammer etched with turquoise.

Male gnome paladin 9

LG Small humanoid (gnome)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot –1

Aura courage (allies within 10 ft. gain +4 to saves vs. fear)

Languages Common, Gnome

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 23 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +9 armor, +3 shield)

hp 68 (9 HD)

Fort +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5 (+7 vs. illusions)

Immune disease, fear

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares)

Melee *+1 undead-bane Small adamantine warhammer* +15/+10 (1d6+4, ×3) (vs. undead +17/+12 (3d6+6, ×3)) or mwk Small longsword +14/+9 (1d6+3, 19-20)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +8

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack

Special Actions lay hands (27 hp), smite evil 2/day (+3 attack, +9 damage), turn undead (10/day, 1d20+3, 2d6+10 HD)

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 16

SQ aura of good (strong), detect evil, divine health, remove disease 2/week, summon companion 1/day

Feats Cleave, Extra Turning, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (warhammer)

Skills Heal +11, Knowledge (religion) +12

Possessions *gauntlets of ogre power, +1 small full plate, +1 undead-bane small adamantine warhammer, +1 small heavy shield*, mwk small longsword

Summon Companion (Sp) Once per day as a full-round action, Grellfin can call from the celestial realms Sheshma, a celestial wyrmling white dragon. Sheshma serves for up to eighteen hours at a time.

Sheshma, Wyrmling White Dragon Celestial Companion **CR —**

LG Tiny dragon (cold, extraplanar)

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, darkvision 120 ft., blindsense 60 ft., scent; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common, Draconic, empathic link (Grellfin)

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 18

hp 37 (5 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune cold, sleep, paralysis

Resist acid 5, electricity 5

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +4; improved evasion

Weakness fire vulnerability

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares), burrow 30 ft., fly 150 ft. (good), swim 60 ft.; icewalking

Melee bite +9 (1d4+1) and two claws +3 (1d3+1)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** –2

Special Actions smite evil 1/day (+5 damage), breath weapon

Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 6

Feats Fly-By Attack, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Intimidate +4, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Listen +6, Spot +6

Breath Weapon (Ex) 15 ft. cone, recharges every 1d4+1 rounds, 1d6 cold damage (Ref DC 12 half)

Griiat, High Priest of the Dark Pyre CR 13

Dark and foreboding in a priest's robes, this figure watches you from behind a carved bear skull that is etched with runes. A three-clawed black gauntlet stretches along his right arm, serving as both a weapon and a light shield. Though his form is intangible, fire seems to burn in his skull-sunken eyes.

Male ghost cleric 11

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +11

Languages Common, Infernal, Orc

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10, manifested 14 (+4 deflection)

hp 75 (11 HD)

Resist turn resistance +4

Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +7

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (7/day, 1d20+11), turn water creatures or bolster/command fire creatures (7/day, 1d20+4, 2d6+15 HD), telekinesis

Spells Prepared (CL 11th, melee touch (incorporeal) +8, DC 14 + spell level)

6th – *antimagic field*[D], *blade barrier*

5th – *greater command*, *overmaster*, *spell resistance*[D]

4th – *dismissal* ×2, *divination*, *spell immunity*, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *bestow curse*, *blindness/deafness*, *dispel magic*[D], *glyph of warding*, *prayer*, *protection from energy*

2nd – *hold person* ×2, *produce flame*[D], *resist energy*, *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *bless*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*, *sanctuary*

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 8, Dex 10, Con –, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 18

SQ corrupting gaze, Dark Pyre healing, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), water vulnerability

Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +19, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Spellcraft +17

Possessions none that are corporeal

Corrupting Gaze (Su) Creatures within 30 ft. that meet Griiat's gaze must make a Fort save (DC 19) or take 2d10 points of damage and 1d4 Cha damage.

Dark Pyre Healing (Su) Griiat heals 1 point of damage for every 10 points of fire damage he would take from a given attack. Attacks that do less than 10 damage do not heal him.

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Griiat can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Seven times a day, Griiat can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+11 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect. See Campaign Saga Overview for more details.

Telekinesis (Sp) Griiat can use *telekinesis* as a standard action, though once he uses it he must wait 1d4 rounds before using again.

Water Vulnerability (Ex) Griiat takes damage from any sort of water as if it were acid. Holy water deals an additional 1d6 damage. Though he is incorporeal, water thrown at him affects him normally (as long as it is not in a container).

Grim Morgensen **CR 8**

Behind a day's worth of stubble watch the wary eyes of this dark-haired Ragesian. Dressed like one of the famed Chatham mounted archers, he looks completely at ease on his horse. His left leg is bent awkwardly, as if from an old wound that healed poorly.

Male ranger 2/fighter 6
NG Medium humanoid (human)
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Common, Goblin

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 20
hp 62 (8 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares – injured leg); ride 50 ft. (10 squares)
Melee mwk lance +10/+5 (1d8+1, ×3) or mwk spiked gauntlet +10/+5 (1d4+1)
Ranged *+1 composite longbow [+1 Str]* +14/+9 (1d8+4, 19–20/×3); Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +9
Combat Gear two tanglefoot bags, four flasks of acid, four flasks of alchemist's fire

Str 13, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8
SQ favored enemy (goblinoid +2), wild empathy +1
Feats Equine Stalwart, Improved Critical (composite longbow), Mounted Combat, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Ride), Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow), Weapon Specialization (composite longbow)
Skills Handle Animal +10, Heal +6, Listen +6, Ride +18, Spot +6, Survival +6
Possessions *+1 composite longbow* [+1 Str], *+1 chain shirt*, *ring of protection +1*, *handy haversack*, mwk spiked gauntlet, mwk lance, mwk leather barding

Equine Stalwart (Ex) Grim can handle his mount Reaper as a free action and push it as a move action. He gains a +4 bonus to all Handle Animal checks with it.

Reaper, Stalwart Warhorse **CR —**

N Large animal
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +4

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural); evasion (if Grim is within 5 ft.)
hp 50 (11 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)
Melee two hooves each +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6
Feats Endurance, Run
Skills Listen +5, Spot +4

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.
Tricks (Ex) Attack any creature, come, defend, down, guard, heel, seek, stay, work

Gut, Troll Mercenary **CR 6**

Troll barbarian 1
CN Large giant
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +6
Languages Common, Giant

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20
hp 83 (7 HD); regeneration 5
Fort +14, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee two claws each +11 (1d6+7) and bite +6 (1d6+3)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +14
Atk Options rend (2d6+10)
Special Actions rage 1/day (12 rounds)
Combat Gear two *potions of resist energy (fire)*, two *potions of resist energy (acid)*

Str 25, Dex 16, Con 25, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Track
Skills Listen +5, Spot +6
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 Large breastplate*

Rage (Ex) While raging, the troll mercenary's stats change as follows:
AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 18
hp 97
Fort +16, **Will** +5
Melee two claws each +13 (1d6+9) and bite +7 (1d6+4)
Str 29, Con 29
When the rage ends, the troll mercenary is fatigued until the end of the encounter.
Rend (Ex) If a troll hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+9 points of damage.
Regeneration (Ex) Fire and acid deal normal damage to a troll. If a troll loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Guthwulf, Minister of Pain **CR 16**

This mage is the first you've seen in the entire prison who does not appear crazed, half-starved, and violent. Bald, cleanly dressed in black robes, with a staff made of stone and a skull hanging from his belt, the man considers you with a stern gaze for a long moment, but then his expression cracks into a smile. Simultaneously he, and a gray-skinned half-orc hunched behind him, burst into laughter.

Male human cleric 11/thaumaturgist 5
NE Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 82 (16 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +4, **Will** +15

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee stone quarterstaff +7 (1d6–3)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +9
Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (5/day, 1d20+11)
Spells Prepared (CL 16th, DC 14 + spell level)
8th – *earthquake*, *greater spell immunity*, *mind blank*[D]
7th – *disintegrate*[D], *repulsion* ×2, *summon monster VII*
6th – *antilife shell*, *blade barrier*, *harm*[D], *heal*
5th – *flame strike* ×2, *overmaster** ×2, *spell resistance*[D]
4th – *cure critical wounds* ×2, *freedom of movement*, ~~*imbue with spell ability*~~, *spell immunity*[D], *tongues*
3rd – *contagion*[D], *create food and water*, *magic circle against good*, *meld into stone*, *stone shape* ×3
2nd – *resist energy* ×2, *shatter*[D], *silence*, *sound burst* ×2, *spiritual weapon*
1st – *cause fear*, *comprehend languages*, *deathwatch*, *endure elements*, *protection from good*, *sanctuary*[D], *shield of faith* ×2
0 – *inflict minor wounds* ×6
~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast
D domain spell **Domains** Destruction, Protection

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 14
SQ rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), extended summoning
Feats Augment Summoning[B], Eschew Materials, Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Minister of Pain, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Spell Focus (conjuration)
Skills Concentration +20, Diplomacy +21, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (the planes) +21, Spellcraft +21
Possessions stone quarterstaff, makeshift divine focus (etched human skull)

Contingent Conjuration (Su) When Guthwulf says, "I said I'd kill you, bastard," a contingency casts *summon monster V* to summon a bearded devil.
Extended Summoning (Ex) Guthwulf's summoning spells are automatically extended.
Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Guthwulf can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.
Rebuke Magic (Su) Five times a day, Guthwulf can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+11 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.



H'andrea the Cleric **CR 5**

Strands of bone-white hair hang across the face of this emaciated woman, her skin seeping black ichor from countless sores. A trembling gray cloak hugs her hideous form, and green water oozes from her mouth.

Female tiefling cleric 5
NE Medium outsider (native)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Infernal, Orc, Sylvan

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20
hp 31 (5 HD); takes damage avoided by H'andrea the Wizard
Resist cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5
Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee pole +2 (1d6–1)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2
Combat Gear scroll of *cure serious wounds*
Special Actions *darkness* 1/day
Spells Prepared (CL 5th)
3rd – *cure serious wounds* ×2, *dispel magic*[D]
2nd – *enthrall* (DC 17), *hold person* (DC 17), *invisibility*[D], ~~*shield other*~~
1st – *cause fear* (DC 14), *command* ×2 (DC 16), *disguise self*[D], ~~*obscuring mist*~~
0 – *cure minor wounds* ×3, *mending*, *purify food and water*
~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast
D domain spell **Domains** Magic, Trickery

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14
SQ spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), rebuke undead (5/day, 1d20+2, 2d6+7)
Feats Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (enchantment)
Skills Bluff +10, Disguise +8, Spellcraft +9
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, heavy wooden shield, dagger, pole, four *elixirs of love*, silver necklace with red glass beads worth 100 gp (heavily encumbered), brass key.

H'andrea the Druid **CR 5**

Black-haired and wide-eyed, this slender witch drips blood as she emerges from the swamp, threatening with a long dagger in her left hand. She wears a thick green reptilian skin like armor, and carries a bloody glass sphere in her right hand.

Female tiefling druid 4/barbarian 1
NE Medium outsider (native)
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Aquan, Common, Druidic, Infernal, Sylvan

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15
hp 33 (5 HD)
Resist cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +9 (1d4+4, 19–20); Combat Reflexes
Ranged dagger +9 (1d4+4, 19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8
Special Actions *darkness* 1/day, rage 1/day (6 rounds)
Spells Prepared (CL 4th)
2nd – ~~*bull's strength*~~, *hold animal* (DC 13)
1st – *cure light wounds*, ~~*detect animals and plants*~~, ~~*magic fang*~~, ~~*speak with animals*~~
0 – *cure minor wounds* ×3, *detect magic*, *know direction*
~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

Str 14 (18 w/*bull's strength*), Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 6
SQ spontaneous casting (*summon nature's ally*), nature sense, wild empathy, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, fast movement
Feats Combat Reflexes, Weapon Finesse
Skills Handle Animal +2, Hide +11, Move Silently +9, Swim +9
Possessions four mwk daggers, dragonhide breastplate, *tidereaver's tears*, brass key

Rage (Ex) While raging, H'andrea the Druid's stats change as follows:
AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 43
Fort +9, **Will** +7
Melee dagger +11 (1d4+6, 19–20); Combat Reflexes
Ranged dagger +9 (1d4+6, 19–20)
Str 18 (22 w/*bull's strength*), Con 16
After her rage ends, H'andrea the Druid is fatigued for the rest of the encounter.

H'andrea the Wizard **CR 5**

Chubby-faced with short brown hair, this witch leans her youthfully feeble body on a twisted staff. A flaming lantern swings from a crook at the top of the staff.

Female tiefling wizard (prescient diviner) 5
NE Medium outsider (native)
Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Abyssal, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Gnoll, Goblin, Halfling, Ignan, Infernal, Orc, Sylvan, Terran, Undercommon

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15
hp 24 (5 HD); avoids half damage from all sources
Resist cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5; *magic missiles*
Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6
Buff Suite *shield, shield other* (cast by H'andrea the Cleric)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *torchstaff* +2 melee touch (1d6 fire)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2
Special Actions *darkness* 1/day
Spells Prepared (CL 5th)
3rd – *slow* (DC 16), *stinking cloud* (DC 16)
2nd – *hideous laughter* (DC 15), *scare* (DC 15), *web* (DC 15)
1st – *burning hands* (DC 14), *magic missile*, ~~*shield*~~, *sleep* (DC 14)
0 – *detect magic* ×2, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*
~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast
Prohibited School Illusion

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 6
SQ bat familiar, prescience
Feats Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Concentration)
Skills Concentration +13, Knowledge (arcana) +7
Possessions *torchstaff* and a once-beautiful green dress that would be worth 1000 gp if it received *make whole* and *prestidigitation* to fix and clean it, brass key
Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *comprehend languages*, *identify*, *detect thoughts*, *locate object*, *arcane sight*, and *clairvoyance/clairaudience*

Prescience (Ex) Instead of gaining bonus divination spells, twice per day H'andrea can add a +3 insight bonus to any attack roll, saving throw, skill check, or level check she makes. She must choose to use this ability before the die roll is made.

Haaketh **CR 11**

Male half-orc barbarian 1/ bard 10
CG Medium humanoid (human, orc)
Init +2 **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 14; touch 12; flat-footed 12
hp 77 (11 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6
Buff Suite *alter self* (assumes the form of a "yasha" – this form gives him +3 natural armor), *cat's grace*, *expeditious retreat*, *resistance*, and *animate rope* (on his long sash)

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee *Jihi-Yasha-O* +13/+8 (1d10+1d6+7 nonlethal) or
Kongo-Yasha-Tei +14/+9 (1d10+8)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12
Atk Options Power Attack
Combat Gear *immortal's wine gourd*
Bard Spells Known (CL 10th; save DC 18 + spell level)
4th (1/day) – *break enchantment*, *cure critical wounds*, *shout*
3rd (3/day) – *blink*, *dispel magic*, *major image*, *haste*
2nd (4/day) – *alter self*, *cat's grace*, *mirror image*, *tongues*
1st (4/day) – *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *remove fear*, *undetectable alignment*
0 (3/day) – *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *know direction*, *message*, *resistance*
Buff suite expends one 0-level, one 1st-level, and two 2nd-level spell slots

Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 18
SQ half-orc traits, rage 1/day, fast movement, bardic music, bardic knowledge
Feats Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Leadership, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll
Skills Balance +16, Climb +8, Concentration +14, Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Intimidate +7, Jump +18, Perform (singing) +18, Survival +3, Tumble +16
Possessions combat gear plus *Jihi-Yasha-O* (*+1 merciful greatclub*), *Kongo-Yasha-Tei* (*+2 adamantine bastard sword*), comfortable training robes (treat as padded armor)

Notes Haaketh typically sings songs players (not their characters) might recognize as power metal ballads.
A "yasha" resembles an ogre mage.

Haddin Ja-Laffa **CR 4**

Once strong and handsome, this man is now old and feeble, his brown hair stringy, his voice ragged from constant coughing. He dresses like a common merchant, but he clutches an aged book to his chest.

Old male human wizard 9
NE Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon

AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9
hp 10 (9 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +4 (1d4, 19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4
Spells Prepared (CL 9th)
5th – *dominate person* ×2 (DC 22)
4th – *stone shape* ×3
3rd – still silent *charm person* ×2 (DC 18), silent *detect thoughts* ×2 (DC 19)
2nd – *detect thoughts* ×2, *knock* ×2, silent *charm person* (DC 18)
1st – *charm person* ×6 (DC 18)
0 – *read magic* ×4

Str 10, Dex 9, Con 7, Int 20, Wis 17, Cha 11
Feats Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Mastery (*charm person, detect thoughts, dominate person, knock, stone shape*), Still Spell
Skills Craft (painting) +17, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (local) +17, Spellcraft +19.
Possessions aged book (not his spellbook, which he destroyed in anger, but rather a sketchbook from when he was still a good man, in love with his wife and daughter), basic clothes, cold weather outfit, dagger, 30 gp.

Tactics Haddin's options are highly limited because the only spells he has available are those he memorized with Spell Mastery – a list of spells intended to let him escape if he was ever captured. Haddin takes every opportunity to charm or dominate people he doesn't like (which is nearly everyone) to get his way.

Note Haddin's advanced age, limited spell selection, and lack of magical gear make his Challenge Rating much lower than would be indicated by his level.

Hans **CR 9**

Male stone giant barbarian 1
N Large giant
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +12
Languages Common, Giant

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+3 armor, +1 Dex, –1 size, +12 natural); rock catching
hp 130 (15 HD)
Fort +15, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee greatclub +18/+13 (2d8+12)
Ranged rock +13 (1d4+8 or 2d8+8)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +23
Atk Options Power Attack, Point-Blank Shot
Special Actions rage 1/day (lasts 9 rounds)
Combat Gear greatclub, hide armor, 3 piles of rocks

Str 27, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 11
Feats Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (rock)
Skills Climb +11, Hide +14, Jump +15, Listen +5, Spot +12



Hedrenatherax **CR 28**

Hedrenatherax is a powerful balor in the service of the demon lord Pyrak, acting as an enforcer of his master's will, especially when direct, violent action is necessary.

Male balor barbarian 10
CE Large outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)
Init +13; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Listen +11, Spot +11
Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 43, touch 18, flat-footed 43; improved uncanny dodge, uncanny dodge (–1 size, +9 Dex, +19 natural, +6 kilt)
hp 542 (30 HD); **DR** 15/cold iron and good and 2/--
Immune electricity, fire, poison; **SR** 28
Resist acid 10, cold 10
Fort +31, **Ref** +24, **Will** +16

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), fly 90 ft. (average)
Melee *+2 vorpal flaming falchion* +47/+42/+37/+32 (2d6+24 plus 1d6 fire, 15-20) and bite +42 (2d6+7) or two slams +44 (1d10+15)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +30; **Grapple** +49
Atk Options Cleave, Fly-By Attack, Great Cleave, Hover, Improved Sunder, Power Attack
Special Actions rage 3/day (17 rounds), *summon demon*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)
At will – *blasphemy* (DC 21), *dominate monster* (DC 23), *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *insanity* (DC 21), *power word stun*, *telekinesis* (DC 19), *unholy aura* (DC 22)
1/day – *fire storm* (DC 22), *implosion* (DC 23)

Str 40, Dex 28, Con 34, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 18
SQ death throes, fast movement, flaming body, trap sense +3
Feats Cleave, Fly-By Attack, Great Cleave, Hover, Improved Critical (falchion), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*telekinesis*), Track, Weapon Focus (falchion)
Skills Climb +25, Diplomacy +3, Hide +28, Intimidate +37, Jump +33, Knowledge (the planes) +24, Listen +42, Move Silently +32, Search +24, Sense Motive +24, Spot +32, Survival +34 (+36 following tracks, +36 on other planes)
Possessions *+2 vorpal flaming falchion, +4 bronze kilt*

Death Throes (Ex) If brought below 0 hp, Hedrenatherax explodes in a blinding flash

of light that deals 100 points of damage to anything within 100 ft. (Reflex DC 37 half). This explosion automatically destroys any weapons Hedrenatherax is holding.

Flaming Body (Su) Hedrenatherax's body is wreathed in flame. Anyone grappling him takes 6d6 points of fire damage each round. Hedrenatherax can suppress his body flames at will, as a free action.

Rage (Ex) Three times per day, Hedrenatherax can enter a state of fierce rage that lasts for 17 rounds. The following changes are in effect as long as he rages:

AC 41

hp 602

Melee *+2 vorpal flaming falchion* +49/+44/+39/+34 (2d6+27 plus 1d6 fire/15-20) and bite +44 (2d6+8)

Fort +33, **Will** +18

Str 44, Con 38

At the end of his rage, Hedrenatherax is fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Summon Demon (Sp) Once per day Hedrenatherax can automatically summon 4d10 dretches, 1d4 hezrous, or one nalfeshnee, glabrezu, marilith, or balor. This ability is the equivalent of a 9th-level spell.

True Seeing (Su) Hedrenatherax has a continuous *true seeing* ability, as the spell (caster level 20th).

Tactics An unsubtle combatant, Hedrenatherax prefers to simply rush into melee, rage, and lay about with his massive falchion. He relies on his damage reduction and natural resistances to keep him from harm, although he occasionally casts *unholy aura* before confronting particularly powerful foes, especially those of good alignment.

Hedrenatherax prefers to ambush his targets from the air if possible, and he is an adroit flyer. Upon the Abyssal layer of Vrack, the endless sky is filled with slow-moving clouds, perfect for obfuscating flying creatures, even ones as large as Hedrenatherax. When attacking from the air, Hedrenatherax dives at an opponent, slashing wildly with his sword and allowing his body flames to singe his opponent as he passes. He makes good use of the Fly-By Attack and Hover feats against land bound opponents, although he lacks patience for protracted aerial encounters and will eventually land and come to grips with his foes in melee.

Hedrenatherax rarely uses his spell-like abilities, because frankly, he lacks the intellect to use them effectively, and prefers the visceral thrill of melee to spellcasting.

Notes Although powerful, Hedrenatherax is quite dull for a balor, and lacks much of the guile, charisma, and intuition common to the most powerful of demons. He makes up for this lack with sheer brutality, and is considered one of the most ruthless, petty, and overtly cruel demons in the Abyss.

Nevertheless, Hedrenatherax is no less ambitious than any other demon. Relentlessly selfish, he sees the eventual rule of his own Abyssal layer as his sovereign right, and his service to Pyrak as simply a means to an end. Pyrak's own considerable power keeps Hedrenatherax from overtly opposing him, but the balor constantly seeks an advantage over his master. Fortunately for Pyrak, Hedrenatherax is both dull and uncreative, and the few schemes he has dreamed up to usurp his master have been either childishly simple or uselessly complex.

Recently, Pyrak has given Hedrenatherax the task of collecting damned petitioners from the gateway layer of Abrigor. These damned petitioners are then sold off to the night hags for useful magical items or information about Pyrak's hated foes, the devils of the Nine Hells. For more information about Hedrenatherax, Pyrak, and more, see the EN Publishing novel trilogy *Metamorphosis: From Dretch to Demon Lord*.

Hobgoblin Rogue **CR 2**

Male hobgoblin rogue 1

CE medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3; Spot +4

Languages Common, Goblin, Orc

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 8 (1 HD)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee shortsword +3 (1d6+3/19-20 plus poison) or dagger +3 (1d4+3/19-20)

Ranged dagger +3 (1d4+3/19-20)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +3

Atk Options sneak attack +1d6

Combat Gear two daggers, one dose paralysis poison

Str 16, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 15

SQ trapfinding

Feats Stealthy

Skills Appraise +2, Bluff +4, Decipher Script +2, Disable Device +4, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +5, Hide +7, Knowledge (local) +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +5, Search +2, Sense Motive +3, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +4, Swim +4, Use Mage Device +3

Possessions combat gear plus chain shirt, shortsword, 5 sp, 56 cp

Poison (Ex) Paralysis poison (injury, Fort DC 13; initial damage paralysis 1d6 rounds; secondary damage paralysis 1d4 minutes). The poison affects only one target; after the hobgoblin rogue successfully deals damage, the poison has been used.

Tactics These hobgoblins always have paralysis poison applied to their shortswords. They always attack different targets, trying to paralyze them with the poisoned blades. If successful, they their task is to take all of the items the PCs have with them, leaving them to be killed by Ivellios and Rexis (q*q.v.*). The hobgoblins obey Rexis and will follow Rexis' instructions to the death.

Horde Zombie **CR 7**

NE Medium Undead

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages None

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+5 natural)

hp 39 (6 HD); **DR** 5/slashing

Immune undead immunities

Resist cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee slam +16 (1d6+17)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +20

Atk Options Improved Grapple; gnaw, mob tactics

Str 28, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

SQ dweomer eater, magic enhancements, undead traits

Feats Improved Grapple[B]

Dweomer Eater (Su) A horde zombie can chew through unattended magic items as easily as if they were roast pork. This is why the heroes don't find much to loot.

Gnaw (Ex) If a horde zombie succeeds in pinning a creature, it bites, dealing 1d6+17 damage.

Magic Enhancements (Sp) A horde zombie is magically imbued with *bull's strength* and *greater magic fang* (caster level 16th). If these effects are dispelled, its Str falls to 24, reducing its attack bonus to +10 (1d6+10 damage), and its grapple check to +14.

Mob Tactics (Ex) For each other horde zombie that threatens a given creature, the horde zombie gets +2 to its attack rolls. For each other horde zombie grappling the same creature, the horde zombie gets +2 to its grapple checks.

Illusory Elf Warriors **CR 2**

Male elf fighter 2

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Elven

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +1 shield, +3 Dex)

hp 15 (2 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1 (+3 vs. enchantment)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee mwk longsword +5 (1d8+1, 19–20)

Ranged mwk longbow +6 (1d8+1, ×3); Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +3

Str 13, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Feats Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Climb +2, Ride +8

Illusory Orc Warriors **CR 2**

Male half-orc fighter 2

LN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Orc

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +2 shield)

hp 16 (2 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +1, **Will** –1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee mwk battleaxe+7 (1d8+3, ×3)

Ranged mwk shortbow +4 (1d6, ×3)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5

Atk Options Power Attack

Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10

Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe)

Skills Intimidate +2, Ride +3

Indomitability **CR 7**

A mighty stag, larger than a bear, its antlers as broad as a man is tall, rears and snorts cinders. Flames crackle across its body and along its horns, and though the creature's flesh burns, and though its flank gapes with a decades-old wound, an indomitable will flashes in this creature's eyes, and it refuses to fall.

Neutral Large aberration (Trillith)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16

hp 113 (9 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 5/dead

Fort +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +9

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee gore +12 (2d6+10 plus 1d6 fire) or two hooves +12 (1d6+3 plus 1d6 fire)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +17

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack; improved grab, hurl

Str 25, Dex 10, Con 26, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 15

SQ contingent incorporeality, indomitable spirit, trillith traits

Feats Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Attack (gore), Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Intimidate +14

Contingent Incorporeality (Su) Indomitability is naturally incorporeal, though as long as the fey song is sung, he must remain in the body of a stag. If the song ends, the stag body collapses, dead, and Indomitability turns incorporeal, gaining a Fly speed 30 (perfect).

Damage Reduction (Ex) Indomitability has DR 5/dead. This damage reduction can only be bypassed by weapons made from once-living things, such as wood or bone, by the natural weapons of undead creatures, or attacks of similar poetic significance. Since the sources of these attacks have died, they are the antithesis of Indomitability's nature, and thus can harm him.

Hurl (Ex) If Indomitability has grappled an enemy, as a free action he can fling his foe with his antlers. This is resolved as a bull rush, except that Indomitability does not have to follow his opponent if he manages to throw a creature more than 5 ft. Using this ability ends the grapple. If an obstacle prevents the completion of the opponent's move, the opponent and the obstacle each take 1d6 points of damage, and the opponent stops in the space adjacent to the obstacle. If Indomitability loses the opposed Str check, its opponent lands without harm in an adjacent square of its choice.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, Indomitability must hit with its gore attack against a creature at least one size category smaller than it. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he scoops his opponent up into his rack of antlers and can hurl. If Indomitability does not hurl a foe scooped up this way, the foe can escape the antlers with a grapple check. Indomitability takes a –20 penalty on its grapple check to keep foes in its antlers, and though it does not count as grappled while doing so, it cannot use its gore attack.

At the beginning of Indomitability's turn, a creature grappled with it takes 1d6 points of fire damage.

Indomitable Spirit (Su) Whenever Indomitability is reduced below 0 hp, he automatically stabilizes. Additionally, once per day, whenever he would die, unless it is from a death effect (such as an assassin's death attack or a *finger of death* spell), Indomitability is instead reduced to –9 hp and becomes stable.

Indomitability has the benefit of a permanent *endure elements* and *stand the heat* spell. He also ignores the effect of wounding injuries that deal damage round after round, such as from a bearded devil's glaive. Finally, he cannot be checked, knocked down, or blown away by strong winds.

Rejuvenation (Ex) As Indomitability is a creatures of dream and not of flesh, he is hard to kill. While incorporeal or while embodied, if Indomitability is destroyed he does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later.

Indomitability can only be truly slain two ways. If his body dies while he is trapped by the Song of Forms or similar magic, he dies, and his corpse remains even after the magic ends.

Alternately, if Indomitability is destroyed and all the damage is caused by mind-affecting or negative energy effects, the trillith's spirit is obliterated. In this case, no creature gains the benefits of Indomitability's boon.

Indomitable Fire Bat Swarm **CR 3**

N Diminutive animal (fire, swarm)

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense 20 ft., low-light vision; Listen +11, Spot +11

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+4 size, +2 Dex)

hp 13 (3 HD)

Immune fire, weapon damage

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

Weakness cold vulnerability

Speed 5 ft. (1 square), fly 40 ft. (good)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Melee swarm (1d6 plus 1d6 fire)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** –

Atk Options wounding

Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4

SQ swarm traits

Feats Alertness, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Listen +11, Spot +11

Blindsense (Ex) Opponents have total concealment against the indomitable fire bat swarm, but swarm attacks ignore concealment.

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Con-based.

Indomitable Fire Soul (Su) The fire wreathing the indomitable fire bat swarm is tied directly to its life force. If the flame is extinguished, the creature is destroyed, and the animating force is lost. The flame is fairly tenacious, and requires the creature to be completely submerged for one full round before it goes out. The *quench* spell affects the creature as if it were a fire elemental, and *pyrotechnics* deals 1 point of damage per caster level if the creature is used as the spell's fire source.

The indomitable fire bat swarm can be turned, bolstered, or rebuked as if it were a fire elemental. The flame is very similar to positive energy, and so responds to a turn or rebuke undead attempt as well. Those who turn undead can rebuke or bolster indomitable fire creatures, and those who rebuke or bolster undead can turn or destroy indomitable fire creatures.

Rekindle (Su) Two rounds after an indomitable fire creature falls to –1 or fewer hp, it heals 1 hp per Hit Die, or enough to raise it to 1 hp, whichever is more. This ability only works once per day.

Skills (Ex) A bat swarm has a +4 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks. These bonuses are lost if its blindsense is negated.

Wounding (Ex) Any living creature damaged by an indomitable fire bat swarm continues to bleed, losing 1 hp per round thereafter. Multiple wounds do not result in cumulative bleeding loss. The bleeding can be stopped by a DC 10 Heal check or the application of a *cure* spell or some other healing magic.



Indomitable Fire Dire Bat **CR 3**

N Large animal (fire)

Init +6; **Senses** blindsense 40 ft.; .Listen +12, Spot +8

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 14

hp 30 (4 HD)

Immune fire

Fort +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

Weakness cold vulnerability

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 40 ft. (8 squares) (good)

Melee bite +5 (1d8+4 plus 1d6 fire)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +10

Str 17, Dex 22, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6

SQ indomitable fire soul, rekindle

Feats Alertness, Stealthy

Skills Hide +4, Listen +12, Move Silently +11, Spot +8

Indomitable Fire Soul (Su) The fire wreathing the indomitable fire dire bat is tied directly to its life force. If the flame is extinguished, the creature is destroyed, and the animating force is lost. The flame is fairly tenacious, and requires the creature to be completely submerged for one full round before it goes out. The *quench* spell affects the creature as if it were a fire elemental, and *pyrotechnics* deals 1 point of damage per caster level if the creature is used as the spell's fire source.

The indomitable fire dire bat can be turned, bolstered, or rebuked as if it were a fire elemental. The flame is very similar to positive energy, and so responds to a turn or rebuke undead attempt as well. Those who turn undead can rebuke or bolster indomitable fire creatures, and those who rebuke or bolster undead can turn or destroy indomitable fire creatures.

Rekindle (Su) Two rounds after an indomitable fire creature falls to –1 or fewer hp, it heals 1 hp per Hit Die, or enough to raise it to 1 hp, whichever is more. This ability only works once per day.

Indomitable Fire Dire Boar **CR 5**

N Large animal (fire)

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +8, Spot +8

AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15 (–1 size, +6 natural)

hp 52 (7 HD)

Immune fire

Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Weakness cold vulnerability

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee gore +12 (1d8+12 plus 1d6 fire)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +17

Special Actions ferocity

Str 27, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8

Feats Alertness, Endurance, Iron Will

Skills Listen +8, Spot +8

Ferocity (Ex) An indomitable fire dire boar is such a tenacious combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying.

Indomitable Fire Soul (Su) The fire wreathing the indomitable fire dire boar is tied directly to its life force. If the flame is extinguished, the creature is destroyed, and the animating force is lost. The flame is fairly tenacious, and requires the creature to be completely submerged for one full round before it goes out. The *quench* spell affects the creature as if it were a fire elemental, and *pyrotechnics* deals 1 point of damage per caster level if the creature is used as the spell's fire source.

The indomitable fire dire boar can be turned, bolstered, or rebuked as if it were a fire elemental. The flame is very similar to positive energy, and so responds to a turn or rebuke undead attempt as well. Those who turn undead can rebuke or bolster indomitable fire creatures, and those who rebuke or bolster undead can turn or destroy indomitable fire creatures.

Rekindle (Su) Two rounds after an indomitable fire creature falls to –1 or fewer hp, it heals 1 hp per Hit Die, or enough to raise it to 1 hp, whichever is more. This ability only works once per day.

Indomitable Fire Creature **Template**

Indomitable fire creatures are kept alive despite horrible burns by the power of Indomitability, and though driven mad by pain they still try to hunt and survive like normal creatures.

Creating an Indomitable Fire Creature

"Indomitable fire" is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal creature that is not already immune to fire damge, hereafter referred to as the "base creature."

Size and Type The creature gains the fire subtype, which grants it immunity to fire and vulnerability to cold. It retains any other subtypes it had. It does not gain the augmented subtype. It uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Attacks An indomitable fire creature retains all the base creature's natural weapons, any of the base creature's manufactured weapons that would survive a forest fire, and all the base creature's weapon proficiencies.

Damage An indomitable fire creature deals an additional 1d6 fire damage with all its melee attacks.

Special Qualities An indomitable fire creature retains all special qualities of the base creature that are consistent with its being constantly on fire. It loses any special qualities it has that would be negated by its being constantly on fire. In addition, an indomitable fire creature gains the following special qualities.

Indomitable Fire Soul (Su) The fire wreathing the indomitable fire creature is tied directly

to its life force. If the flame is extinguished, the creature is destroyed, and the animating force is lost. The flame is fairly tenacious, and requires the creature to be completely submerged for one full round before it goes out. The *quench* spell affects the creature as if it were a fire elemental, and *pyrotechnics* deals 1 point of damage per caster level if the creature is used as the spell's fire source.

The indomitable fire creature can be turned, bolstered, or rebuked as if it were a fire elemental. The flame is very similar to positive energy, and so responds to a turn or rebuke undead attempt as well. Those who turn undead can rebuke or bolster indomitable fire creatures, and those who rebuke or bolster undead can turn or destroy indomitable fire creatures.

Rekindle (Su) Two rounds after an indomitable fire creature falls to –1 or fewer hp, it heals 1 hp per Hit Die, or enough to raise it to 1 hp, whichever is more. This ability only works once per day.

Environment An indomitable fire creature is born from the fires of the Innenotdar Fire Forest and cannot leave.

Challenge Rating If the base creature's CR was less than 8, the indomitable fire creature gains +1 CR. Otherwise, leave the indomitable fire creature's CR the same as the base creature's.

Treasure All the base creature's possessions have been subjected to a forest fire. Anything that is not destroyed is either treasure or ruined, at the game master's option.

Level Adjustment +1.

Inquisitor Boreus **CR 4**

Clad only in leather cords, bearskins, and a carved bear skull, this orc looks savage. A three-pronged metal claw is strapped to his right hand, and fire seems to burn in his eyes.

Male orc cleric 4

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Orc

AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13 (having used scroll of *mage armor* earlier)

hp 30 (4 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee hand claw +5 (1d4+2)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *cure light wounds* ×4, scroll of *mage armor*, scroll of *magic circle against chaos*, *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (3/day, 1d20+4), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Spells Prepared (CL 4th)

2nd – *cure moderate wounds*, *produce flame*[D], *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, ~~*endure elements*~~

0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *guidance*

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 14, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11

SQ light sensitivity, rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Feats Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +12, Spellcraft +7

Possessions hand claw, *inquisitor's mask*, 73 gp

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Inquisitor Boreus can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Three times a day, Inquisitor Boreus can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+4 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of rebuke magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Tactics Boreus's main goal is to make sure his allies stay in fighting condition, so he counters spells that would take them out of the fight. When he's not busy doing that, he'll try to *command* enemy warriors to come closer so Smarg "Smiley" Hobbler (*q.v.*) can cut them to pieces. When he appears in adventure one, Boreus is interested in taking magic-using prisoners for Leska (except that he wants Haddin dead); he does not care about non-spellcasters.



Inquisitor Crona **CR 4**

A hulking, hairy orc woman, covered with rough hide armor and numerous magical charms strapped to cords, and wearing a jaggedly curved claw on her right hand, this inquisitor has an eerily beautiful face – a mask, half obsidian, half ivory, with slots only for the eyes and the bottom of her mouth.

Female orc cleric 4

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Orc

AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 12

hp 30 (4 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee hand claw +5 (1d4+2)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *cure light wounds* ×4, *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (3/day, 1d20+4), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Spells Prepared (CL 4th, DC 12 + spell level)

2nd – *cure moderate wounds*, *produce flame*[D], *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×3, *guidance*

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 14, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11

SQ light sensitivity, rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Feats Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +12, Spellcraft +7

Possessions hand claw, *lesser inquisitor's mask*, hide armor

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Inquisitor Crona can counterspell even when she has not readied an action, as long as she is aware of a spell being cast. If she does so, she gives up her standard action on her next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Three times a day, Inquisitor Crona can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. She rolls 1d20+4 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of rebuke magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Inquisitor Damius **CR 7**

Male human cleric 7

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Orc

AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9 (–1 Dex)

hp 49 (7 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +1, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee hand claw +6 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (4/day, 1d20+7), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (4/day, 1d20+1)

Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *break enchantment*, scroll of *mage armor*, scroll of *hold person* ×4, scroll of *invisibility*, scroll of *magic circle against chaos*, *wand of cure light wounds* (50 charges), *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 7th, DC 13 + spell level)

4th – *sending*, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *blindness/deafness*, *create food and water*, *dispel magic*[D], *invisibility purge*

2nd – *hold person*, *produce flame*[D], *resist energy*, *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *bless*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 13

Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +13, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Speak Language (Orc), Spellcraft +12

Possessions combat gear plus hand claw, *inquisitor's mask*

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Inquisitor Damius can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Four times a day, Inquisitor Damius can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+7 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of rebuke magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Inquisitor Darius **CR 9**

Male human cleric 9/expert 1

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Orc

AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9

hp 77 (currently 70) (10 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk light mace +7 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (3/day, 1d20+9), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Spells Prepared (CL 9th, DC 13 + spell level)

5th – *flame strike*, *spell resistance*[D]

4th – *divine power*, *sending*, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *animate dead*, *create food and water*, *dispel magic*[D], *invisibility purge*, *searing light*

2nd – *hold person*, *produce flame*[D], *resist energy*, *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *bless*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*

0 – *cure minor wounds* ×4, *detect magic* ×2

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 14, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10

SQ rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +18, Craft (alchemy) +7, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Spellcraft +14

Possessions mwk light mace

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Darius can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Three times a day, Darius can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+9 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Tactics When the heroes first encounter Darius, he has a Wisdom of 0 and is unable to fight. If they manage to restore him, he will be grateful and will want to help the heroes, not fight them. He lacks a divine focus with which to cast spells, but any inquisitor's mask will do as a replacement.

Inquisitor Etienna **CR 13**

Thick black bearskins cover rune-etched white plate armor, combining with this woman's alabaster mask to create a pale image of death.

Female human cleric 13

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages Common, Infernal, Orc

Aura *invisibility purge* (65 ft. radius)

AC 30, touch 15, flat-footed 30 (+11 armor, +4 shield, +1 insight, +4 deflection)

hp 88 (13 HD)

Immune death effects, effects that restrict movement, negative energy

Resist acid 30, cold 30, electricity 30, fire 30, sonic 30; **SR** 25

Fort +13, **Ref** +7, **Will** +16

Buff Suite *death ward*, *endure elements*, *fire seeds*, *freedom of movement*, *greater magic weapon*, *invisibility purge*, *magic vestment* (armor & shield), *resist energy* (all five), *shield of faith*, *spell resistance*, *status*, *true seeing*. All these last 13 minutes or more, and Etienna casts them before entering the temple. Their effects are included in her stat block.

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee *+3 vicious hand claw* +14/+9 (1d4+2d6+4, 1d6 to Etienna)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10

Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *break enchantment*, scroll of *heal*, scroll of *invisibility* ×2, scroll of *speak with dead*, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (30 charges), *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)

Atk Options Power Attack

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (7/day, 1d20+13), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Spells Prepared (CL 13th; ranged touch +9)

7th – *fire storm*[D] (DC 22), *mass cure serious wounds*

6th – ~~*fire seeds*~~[D] (DC 21), *greater dispel magic*, *heal*

5th – *overmaster**, *righteous might*, ~~*true seeing*~~, ~~*spell resistance*~~[D]

4th – *cure critical wounds*, ~~*death ward*~~, *divine power*, ~~*freedom of movement*~~, ~~*greater magic weapon*~~, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *dispel magic*[D], *dispel magic* ×2, *invisibility purge*, *magic vestment* ×2

2nd – *produce flame*[D], ~~*resist energy* ×5~~, ~~*status*~~

1st – *bane*, *burning hands*[D] (DC 16), *cure light wounds* ×3, ~~*endure elements*~~, ~~*shield of faith*~~

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 10

SQ rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Feats Extra Turning, Improved Counterspell, Power Attack, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Weapon Focus (hand claw)

Skills Concentration +21, Ride +12, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +17

Possessions combat gear plus mwk full plate, mwk light shield, *inquisitor's mask of resistance +3 and wisdom +2*, *+1 vicious hand claw*, *ring of counterspell* (currently holding *greater dispel magic*), *gloves of dexterity +2*, *dusty rose ioun stone* (+1 insight to AC)

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Etienna can counterspell even when she has not readied an action, as long as she is aware of a spell being cast. If she does so, she gives up her standard action on her next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Seven times a day, Etienna can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. She rolls 1d20+13 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of rebuke magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Tactics Etienna has plenty of time to prepare herself before combat, and so is loaded up with more buff spells than is really fair. Having invested so much effort into fortifying herself, she is wary of having her defenses dispelled, but her *ring of counterspells* (keyed to *greater dispel magic*) should help, and if she is targeted by antimagic she can use *overmaster* or her rebuke magic ability to protect herself. She will also use her reactive counterspelling ability against threats that would likely drop any of her allies, though she's less concerned with them than with herself.

If she is not busy counterspelling, she hurls her *fire seeds*, then uses *greater dispel magic* to stop something annoying the heroes are doing. Thereafter she will likely go on healing duty, using *mass cure serious wounds* or *heal* on her allies, though she reserves a scroll of *heal* for herself.

If combat is still not over, she uses *divine power* and, if she thinks she has time, *righteous might*, and spends the rest of the battle in melee.

With Divine Power hp 101; melee +21/+16/+11 (1d4+2d6+7, 1d6 to Etienna); grapple +16

With Righteous Might AC 29 (touch 13, flat-footed 29); hp 101; Fort +14; melee +15/+10/+5 (3d6+6, 1d6 to Etienna); grapple +16; DR 6/good; Large size

With Divine Power and Righteous Might AC 29 (touch 13, flat-footed 29); hp 114; Fort +14; melee +22/+17/+12 (3d6+9, 1d6 to Etienna); grapple +22; DR 6/good; Large size

Inquisitor Garivus **CR 13**

Thick black bearskins cover rune-etched white plate armor, combining with this inquisitor's bearskull mask to create a pale image of death in the winter's night.

Male human cleric 13

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages Common, Infernal, Orc

AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 26 (+11 armor, +4 shield, +1 insight)

hp 88 (13 HD)

Immune temperatures between –50° and 140° F, impediments to movement

Resist acid 30, cold 30, electricity 30, fire 30, sonic 30

Fort +13, **Ref** +7, **Will** +16

Buff Suite *endure elements*, *fire seeds*, *freedom of movement*, *greater magic weapon*, *magic vestment* (armor & shield), *resist energy* (all five, energy resistance 30), *status*. All these last one hour or more, and are included in the stat block. Given time, Inquisitor Garivus may add his short buff suite and/or immediate buff suite (see below).

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee *+3 flaming hand claw* +14/+9 (1d4+4 plus 1d6 fire)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10 (automatic success resist or escape grapple or escape pin)

Atk Options Power Attack

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (7/day, 1d20+13), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Combat Gear four acorn grenades (*fire seeds*), *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *break enchantment*, scroll of *mage armor ×2*, scroll of *hold person* ×2, scroll of *invisibility ×2*, scroll of *invisibility purge*, scroll of *magic circle against chaos*, scroll of *speak with dead*, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (30 charges), *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 13th; ranged touch +9)

7th – *fire storm*[D] (DC 22), *mass cure serious wounds*

6th – ~~*fire seeds*~~[D] (DC 21), *greater dispel magic*, *heal*

5th – *overmaster**, *righteous might*, *true seeing*, *spell resistance*[D]

4th – *cure critical wounds*, *death ward*, *divine power*, ~~*freedom of movement*~~, ~~*greater magic weapon*~~, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *dispel magic*[D] ×3, *invisibility purge*, ~~*magic vestment*~~ ×2

2nd – *produce flame*[D], ~~*resist energy*~~ ×5, ~~*status*~~

1st – *bless*, *burning hands*[D] (DC 16), *cure light wounds* ×3, ~~*endure elements*~~, *shield of faith*

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 10

Feats Extra Turning, Improved Counterspell, Power Attack, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Weapon Focus (hand claw)

Skills Concentration +21, Ride +12, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +17; automatic success Escape Artist checks made to escape grapple or pin

Possessions combat gear plus mwk full plate, mwk light shield, *inquisitor's mask of +3 resistance and +2 Wis*, *+1 flaming hand claw*, *ring of counterspell* (currently holding *greater dispel magic*), *gloves of dexterity +2 and ride +4*, *dusty rose ioun stone* (+1 insight to AC)

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Inquisitor Garivus can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Seven times a day, the inquisitor can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+13 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Tactics If Inquisitor Garivus has a few rounds to prepare himself before combat, he will add to his buff suite by casting *bless*, *death ward*, *invisibility purge* (65 ft. radius), *shield of faith* (+4 deflection), *spell resistance* (SR 25), and *true seeing*. All these last 13 minutes or more; they are not included in the stat block.

If pressed, Garivus will also cast *divine power* and *righteous might*. These last 13 rounds; they are also not included in the stat block.

With Divine Power hp 101; melee +21/+16/+11 (1d4+7 plus 1d6 fire); grapple +16

With Righteous Might AC 25 (touch 9, flat-footed 25); hp 101; Fort +14; melee +15/+10/+5 (1d6+6 plus 1d6 fire); grapple +16; DR 6/good; Large size

With Divine Power and Righteous Might AC 25 (touch 9, flat-footed 25); hp 114; Fort +14; melee +22/+17/+12 (1d6+9 plus 1d6 fire); grapple +18; DR 6/good; Large size

Inquisitor Rovus **CR 11**

Male human cleric 11

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Orc

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20 (+9 armor, +2 shield, –1 Dex)

hp 75 (11 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +2, **Will** +10

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 hand claw* +9 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +8

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (5/day, 1d20+11), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), turn water creatures or bolster/command fire creatures (5/day, 1d20+2, 2d6+13 HD)

Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *break enchantment*, scroll of *mage armor ×2*, scroll of *hold person* ×2, scroll of *invisibility ×2*, scroll of *invisibility purge*, scroll of *magic circle against chaos*, scroll of *speak with dead*, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (30 charges), *wand of hold portal* (10 charges), *wand of lightning bolt* (10 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 11th, melee touch +8, DC 13 + spell level)

6th – *antimagic field*[D], *harm*

5th – *flame strike*, *overmaster**, *spell resistance*[D]

4th – *dismissal*, *divination*, *summon monster IV*, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *bestow curse*, *blindness/deafness*, *dispel magic*[D], *glyph of warding*, *prayer*, *speak with dead*

2nd – *hold person* ×2, *produce flame*[D], *resist energy*, *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *bless*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*, *sanctuary*

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 10, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14

SQ rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +19, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Spellcraft +17

Possessions *+1 glamered full plate*, *+1 hand claw*, *+1 buckler*, *inquisitor's mask*, 400 gp in black gems

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Inquisitor Rovus can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Five times a day, Inquisitor Rovus can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+11 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of rebuke magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Inquisitor Torrax **CR 9**

Proudly savage, this half-orc wears nothing but furs, leather cords, and a menacing bearskull mask, etched with runes. His only weapon is clawed bronze gauntlet, but the air around him feels heavy with danger.

Male half-orc cleric 9/expert 1

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Orc

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14

hp 77 (10 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +11

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee *+1 hand claw* +9 (1d4+3)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (3/day, 1d20+9), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Spells Prepared (CL 9th, melee touch +8, DC 13 + spell level)

5th – *flame strike*, *spell resistance*[D]

4th – *divine power*, *sending*, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *animate dead*, *create food and water*, *dispel magic*[D], *invisibility purge*, *searing light*

2nd – *hold person*, *produce flame*[D], *resist energy*, *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *bless*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*

0 – *cure minor wounds* ×4, *detect magic* ×2

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 14, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10

SQ rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +11, Craft (alchemy) +5, Intimidate +6, Spellcraft +12

Possessions *+1 hand claw*, *amulet of health +2 and natural armor +1*, *+1 hide armor*, *inquisitor's mask*, tobacco supplies and pipe, scroll of *speak with dead*

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Torrax can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Three times a day, Torrax can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+9 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect. See the Campaign Guide for more details.

Tactics Torrax enjoys the smell of burning flesh, and so likes to trap his foes behind *walls of fire*. He is fairly straightforward in combat, using his offensive spells rapidly with a frightening smile, before resorting to using his claw. If he gets a chance, before combat he casts *resist energy (fire)* on himself.

Inquisitor Ursus **CR 11**

This hunched half-orc wears the mask of an inquisitor, but is armed with an unmatched scimitar and spear, looking more ready for melee than magic.

Male half-orc aspect of nature druid 11

NE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Druidic, Orc

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19 (+5 armor, +4 natural, +4 Dex)

hp 119 (11 HD), **DR** 10/adamantine (stops 110 damage)

Fort +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +10

Immune effects that restrict movement, poison

Buff Suite *barkskin*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *freedom of movement*, *greater magic fang* (on Fell the polar bear), *protection from energy* (fire), *speak with animals*, *spider climb*, *stoneskin*. All these last 11 minutes or more, and are included in the stat block.

Energy Buffer 120 points of fire damage

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 scimitar* +13/+8 (1d6+9, 18–20) and *+1 shortspear* +13 (1d6+5) or *+1 scimitar* +17/+12 (1d6+9, 18–20)

Ranged *+1 shortspear* +13 (1d6+9, range inc. 20 ft.)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12

Atk Options Power Attack

Special Actions aspect of nature 4/day, spontaneous casting (*summon nature's ally*)

Spells Prepared (CL 11th; ranged touch +11)

6th – *greater dispel magic*

5th – *cure critical wounds*, ~~*stoneskin*~~

4th – *dispel magic*, *flame strike*, ~~*freedom of movement*~~

3rd – *cure moderate wounds*, *dominate animal*, *greater magic fang*, *neutralize poison*, *protection from energy*

2nd – *barkskin*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *lesser restoration*, *spider climb*

1st – *cure light wounds* ×5, ~~*speak with animals*~~

0 – *detect magic* ×6

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

Str 26, Dex 18, Con 22, Int 6, Wis 16, Cha 6

SQ nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, venom immunity, wild empathy +9, woodland stride

Feats Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Reactive Counterspell, Two-Weapon Fighting

Skills Concentration +20, Ride +18

Possessions *inquisitor's mask of wisdom +2*, *+1 shortspear*, *+1 scimitar*, *+2 hide armor*

Aspect of Nature (Su) Four times per day as a standard action, Inquisitor Ursus can choose two of the following physical alterations. The effect lasts eleven minutes, or until he chooses to end it or adopt a different pair of alterations. This replaces a druid's normal wild shape ability. He begins combat with the agility, endurance, and vigor aspects active.

- Agility. +8 Dex, –4 Str
- Endurance. +4 Con
- Flight. Ursus grows batlike wings that let him fly at speed 30 with average maneuverability
- Vigor. +8 Str, –4 Dex

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Inquisitor Ursus can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Tactics The dim-witted Ursus lacks spellcraft, but if Inquisitor Etienna (*q.v.*) shouts for him to counter something, he will. Otherwise, he rides his polar bear animal companion, Fell, into melee, swinging with his mismatched pair of weapons, but confident in his nature-empowered fury. If he uses *summon nature's ally* for anything, it is to summon more bears.



Ivellios **CR 7**

Male elf wizard (evoker) 7

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +5; Spot +5

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Gnoll, Gnome, Goblin, Orc, Sylvan; empathic link (Carl)

AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +3 natural, +4 shield)

hp 29 (7 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7 (+9 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +1

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin +3*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, two *feather tokens (whip)*, *wand of burning hands* (CL 1st, 21 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 7th; +1 melee touch, +7 ranged touch)

4th – *fire shield*, *ice storm*

3rd – *fireball* ×3 (DC 22)

2nd – *flaming sphere* (DC 21), *fox's cunning*, *scorching ray*, *web*

1st – *burning hands* (DC 20), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *shocking grasp*

0 – *acid splash*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *resistance*

Prohibited Schools Illusion, Necromancy

Str 6, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 25, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ summon familiar, notice secret doors

Feats Alertness (if familiar is within 5 ft), Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Widen Spell

Skills Concentration +12, Decipher Script +13, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +15, Knowledge (geography) +16, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Spellcraft +19

Possessions combat gear plus spell component pouch, alexandrite 500 gp, two emeralds 2,000 gp, 100 pp, 70 gp, 180 sp

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *alarm*, *burning hands*, *charm person*, *hypnotism*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *shocking grasp*, *true strike*; *flaming sphere*, *fox's cunning*, *scorching ray*; *dispel magic*, *explosive runes*, *fireball*, *fly*, *suggestion*; *fire shield*, *ice storm*, *shout*

Tactics When Ivellios knows that the PCs are near, he casts *resistance, mage armor, shield, fox's cunning* on himself, then drinks his *potion of barkskin*; he has the spells affect Carl as well. These are included in Ivellios' stat block.

On the first round of combat, Ivellios casts *web* on the PCs, hoping to entangle the majority of them. Next, he uses his two *feather tokens* to grapple any foes not caught in the *web*. At this point, he uses his non fire related spells on the PCs first. Then he casts the fire spells, hoping to catch them all in the blasts, and even getting extra damage from the burning webs. He only uses Carl to deliver touch spells if it is necessary.

Ivellios is very smart, but also very proud. While he knows that his life might end upon meeting the heroes, he will still fight to the death to protect Toma.

Carl, Toad Familiar
CR —

Male amphibian
N Diminutive magical beast (augmented animal)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +4; Spot +4
Languages empathic link (Ivellios), speak with master, speak with amphibians

AC 26, touch +15, flat-footed +25 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +3 natural, +4 size, +4 shield)
hp 14 (7 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7

Speed 5 ft. (1 square)
Space 1 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +4; **Grp** –14
Atk Options deliver touch spell

Str 1, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 4
SQ amphibious
Feats Alertness
Skills Hide +21, Listen +4, Spot +4

Tactics Carl stays in Ivellios' pocket unless delivering touch spells. Carl's stat block includes *resistance*, *mage armor*, *shield*, *fox's cunning*, and *barkskin*, all shared by Ivellios before combat.

Jaas, Ragesian Infiltration Leader CR 6

Male half-orc fighter 6
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 50 (6 HD)
Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 battleaxe* +12 (1d8+7, ×3) or silver shortsword +10 (1d6+3, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +8 (1d6+4, ×3)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +10
Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*
Atk Options Power Attack

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +5
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, cold iron heavy shield, *+1 battleaxe*, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, silver shortsword, 5 days of rations



Jesepha, Dread Wraith Sovereign Trumpet Archon CR 17

A six-foot tall figure composed of shadows, with great wings of darkness and a tall crown of flickering, guttering light, this black angel carries a long trumpet of cracked, tarnished silver, holding it like a blade.
LE Medium undead (archon, augmented outsider, extraplanar, incorporeal, good, lawful)
Init +17; **Senses** lifesense, darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +24, Spot +24
Aura menace, unnatural aura, unnatural chill
Languages *tongues* ability

AC 33, touch 33, flat-footed 20 (+13 Dex, +10 deflection)
hp 199 (12 HD), **DR** 10/evil; **SR** 29
Immune cold, electricity, petrification, undead immunities
Resist turn resistance +6
Fort +8, **Ref** +21, **Will** +15
Weakness daylight vulnerability

Speed fly 180 ft. (36 squares) (perfect)
Melee incorporeal touch attack +25 (1d8 plus 1d8 Con drain [Fort DC 26]) or
+4 ghost touch unholy greatsword +29/+24/+19 (2d6+3 plus 2d6 against good plus 1d8 Con drain (Fort DC 26), 19–20)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +12
Atk Options Combat Reflexes
Special Actions trumpet (paralyzing awe or destructive blast)
Divine Spells Prepared (CL 14th, save DC 20 + spell level)
7th – *disintegrate*[D], *mass inflict serious wounds* ×3
6th – *antilife shell*, *greater dispel magic* ×2, *harm* ×2, *hold monster*[D]
5th – *flame strike*, *mass inflict light wounds*[D], *scrying*, *unhallow*, *wall of stone*
4th – *dimensional anchor*, *dismissal*, *inflict critical wounds* ×2, *order's wrath*[D], *spell immunity*
3rd – *deeper darkness*, *dispel magic* ×2, *locate object*, *searing light* ×2, *magic circle against chaos*[D]
2nd – *aid*, *calm emotions*, *desecrate* ×2, *eagle's splendor*, *owl's wisdom*, *shatter*[D], *silence* ×2
1st – *bane* ×3, *command* ×2, *detect good*, *hide from undead*, *inflict light wounds*[D]
0 – *detect magic* ×4, *light* ×2
D domain spell **Domains** Destruction and Law
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)
At will – *detect evil*, *continual flame*, *message*

Str —, Dex 37, Con —, Int 22, Wis 24, Cha 30
SQ aura of menace, daylight vulnerability, incorporeal traits, lifesense, magic circle against evil, outsider traits, teleport, tongues, undead traits, unholy toughness
Feats Alertness[B], Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack
Skills Concentration +25, Diplomacy +27, Escape Artist +28, Handle Animal +25, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Listen +24, Move Silently +28, Perform (wind instruments) +25, Ride +30, Sense Motive +22, Spot +24, Use Rope +13 (+15 with bindings)
Possessions *+4 ghost touch unholy silver greatsword*

Aura of Menace (Su) Any hostile creature within 20 ft. of Jesepha must succeed on a DC 28 Will save or take a –2 penalty on attack rolls, AC, and saves for 24 hours or until it successfully hits her. A creature that has resisted or broken the effect cannot be affected again by it for 24 hours.

Con Drain (Su) Jesepha's attacks deal 1d8 points of Con drain unless the creature struck succeeds on a DC 26 Fortitude save.

Daylight Vulnerability (Ex) Jesepha is not powerless in natural daylight and does not flee from it like a normal wraith does, but she does take a –4 penalty on all attack rolls, checks, and saves when in natural sunlight (but not within the radius of a daylight spell).

Lifesense (Su) Jesepha can locate living creatures within 60 ft., just as if she possessed the blindsight ability. She also senses the strength of their life forces automatically, as if she had cast *deathwatch* (caster level 14th).

Trumpet (Su) Jesepha's trumpet produces music both haunting and devastating. As a standard action, the dread wraith sovereign trumpet archon can blast its trumpet to create one of two effects.

The first is paralyzing awe. All creatures except archons within 100 ft. of the blast must succeed on a DC 26 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.

The second is a destructive blast. This creates a 800 ft. line of piercing sound. Unattended objects of up to large size are shattered, and larger ones have 10-ft. sections blasted out of them. Creatures in the path take 10d6 sonic damage (Fort DC 26 half).

She can also command its trumpet to become a +4 greatsword as a free action.

Teleport (Su) At will, Jesepha can use *greater teleport,* as the spell (caster level 14th), except that she can transport only herself and up to 50 pounds of objects.

Unnatural Aura (Su) Any creature of the animal type within 100 ft. of Jesepha automatically becomes panicked and remains so until the distance between it and her is at least 100 ft.

Unnatural Chill (Su) Each creature within 30 ft. of Jesepha takes 2d6 points of cold damage per round and must succeed a Fortitude save DC 26 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for one round. Incorporeal creatures are immune to this effect.



Jorrina Waryeye **CR 9**

This gnome woman's wide, canny eyes watch you from beneath the hood of her pale robes. She carries a short staff, and she smells of strange spell components.

Female gnome variant diviner 7/loremaster 2
CG Small humanoid (gnome)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +4
Languages Common, Gnome, Orc, Terran

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex, +1 size)
hp 32 (9 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +10 (+14 vs. illusions)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee quarterstaff +3 (1d4–2)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** –2
Combat Gear two scrolls of *break enchantment*, *wand of magic missile* (CL 5th, 20 charges), six *potions of cure moderate wounds*, two *potions of resist energy (fire)*, two pellets *dust of dryness* (100 gallons of water each)
Spells Prepared (CL 9)
5th – *passwall*, *telepathic bond*, *wall of stone*
4th – *arcane eye*, *mass reduce person*, *remove curse*, *stone shape*
3rd – *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *halt undead*, *haste*, *invisibility sphere*, *secure shelter*
2nd – *command undead* ×2, *knock*, *levitate*, *locate object*, *spider climb*
1st – *alarm*, *detect undead*, *detect secret doors*, *floating disk*, *identify* ×2, *magic missile*
0 – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*, *message*, *open/close*, *read magic*
Prohibited School Enchantment
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)
1/day – *see invisibility*

Str 6, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 14, Cha 10
SQ enhanced awareness, instant mastery (Appraise), lore (+5), Waryeye family traits
Feats Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge [architecture and engineering]), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)
Skills Appraise +10, Concentration +8, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +19, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +16
Possessions combat gear plus *hooded cloak of intellect +2*, quarterstaff, twelve 100 gp pearls

Enhanced Awareness (Ex) Jorrina needs only 10 minutes to prepare an item for *identify*. An *arcane eye* she casts travels 20 ft. per round (instead of 10) when examining its surroundings. The save DC of her divination spells increases by +1.

Waryeye Family Traits (Ex) Jorrina has variant gnome racial traits. These grant her +4 on saves against illusions, a +2 bonus to Spot checks, and the ability to use *see invisibility* as a spell-like ability 1/day. She does not have the normal gnome bonus to Listen checks and save DCs of illusions she casts, nor the ability to speak with burrowing animals.

Karedan, Red Knight of Ragesia CR 12

This half-orc knight wears crimson spiked armor.
Male half-orc fighter 12
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 31, touch 12, flat-footed 30 (+11 armor, +7 shield, +1 Dex, +1 natural, +1 deflection)
hp 107 (12 HD); fast healing 10
Fort +13, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+2 dwarven waraxe* +22/+17/+12 (1d10+17, 19–20/×3) or silver shortsword +18/+13/+8 (1d6+7, 19–20)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +18
Atk Options Power Attack
Combat Gear three *potions of cure serious wounds*, *potion of fly*

Str 22, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8
SQ Aquiline blessing
Feats Elite Training (dwarven waraxe), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Greater Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Greater Weapon Specialization (dwarven waraxe), Improved Critical (dwarven waraxe), Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Specialization (dwarven waraxe)
Skills Intimidate +7, Ride +7
Possessions combat gear plus *+3 full plate*, *+3 tower shield*, *ring of protection +1*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *+2 dwarven waraxe*, silver shortsword

Aquiline Blessing (Ex) Though Karedan does not have the full immortality provided by the Aquiline Heart, he has tasted its blood, and so no longer ages. He has fast healing 10.

Tactics Karedan simply fights, though he tries to stay near Inquisitor Etienna (*q.v.*) and keep enemies from charging her.

Kathor Danava CR 3

Hidden under grey plate armor is a tightly muscled man, his armor worn from many battles, and humbly marked with symbols of sacred honor. His eyes have a darkness like a judge laying sentence. A broken helmet, cloven in the face, hangs from his belt.
Male human fighter 2/sorcerer 1
LN Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17
hp 24 (3 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), ride 35 ft. (7 squares), Ride-By Attack
Melee mwk greatsword +6 (2d6+3, 19–20)
Ranged composite longbow +3 (1d8, ×3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5
Atk Options Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Spirited Charge
Combat Gear two tanglefoot bags (+3 ranged touch), net (–1 ranged touch), two *potions of cure light wounds*
Spells Known (CL 1st, arcane spell failure 40%)
1st (5/day) – *shield*, *true strike*
0 (4/day) – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*, *mending*

Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12
SQ trillith spirit
Feats Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (greatsword)
Skills Concentration +4, Handle Animal +6, Ride +8
Possessions combat gear plus mwk greatsword, composite longbow, 40 arrows, half-plate, shortsword, heavy warhorse, banded mail barding, 350 gp

Trillith Spirit (Su) If Kathor dies, for a moment the air grows heavy, and then something barely visible drifts out of Kathor's body and vanishes, flying away into the sky. This is the trillith spirit that has occupied Kathor, granting him his sorcerer abilities, but its identity remains a mystery for now.

Kathor Danava CR 16

This tightly muscled man wears battered gray plate armor, humbly marked with symbols of sacred honor. His eyes have a darkness like a judge laying sentence. A broken helmet, cloven in the face, hangs from his belt.
Male trillith-bound human fighter 12
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Aura just aura (60 ft.; Will DC 20)
Languages Common

AC 32, touch 15, flat-footed 31 (+9 armor, +1 Dex, +8 natural, +4 deflection)
hp 216 (12 HD); **DR** 10/lawful
Fort +20, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), ride 35 ft. (7 squares); Mounted Strafe
Melee *+1 greatsword* +20/+15/+10 (2d6+11, 17–20)
Ranged *+1 composite longbow* +14/+9/+4 (1d8+5, ×3)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +16
Atk Options Cleave, Great Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Spirited Charge
Special Actions second wind; walk the line
Combat Gear four *potions of cure serious wounds*, four *potions of fly*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)
3/day – quickened *true strike*



Str 18, Dex 13, Con 34, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 18
SQ just aura, trillith spirit
Feats Cleave, Elite Training (greatsword)*, Equine Stalwart*, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Mounted Strafe*, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Power Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)
Skills Handle Animal +14, Ride +16
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 greatsword*, *+1 composite longbow* [Str +4], 40 arrows, *+1 full plate*, silver shortsword, heavy warhorse (stalwart heavy warhorse [9 HD])

Just Aura (Su) Against evil creatures, Kathor and creatures within 60 ft. of him gain a +4 bonus to attack rolls, a +12 bonus to damage rolls, and a +4 bonus to caster level checks to bypass spell resistance. They gain a +4 bonus to saving throws against attacks by evil creatures and evil effects. Creatures within 60 ft. of Kathor must succeed a Will save (DC 20) or be unable to attack him. If Kathor attacks them, they can make a new save (but no more than once each round).

Second Wind (Ex) Twice per day by spending one full round, Kathor can heal 54 points of damage.

Trillith Spirit (Su) Kathor is bonded with the spirit of the trillith Justice. This grants him the ability to use quickened *true strike* as a spell-like ability three times a day, and grants him a +20 enhancement bonus to Con, as well as his just aura, second wind, and walk the line powers.

Walk the Line (Su) As a standard action, Kathor can prepare himself to deal a punishing blow to a villainous foe. On Kathor's next turn, he can deal up to 10 points of Con damage to himself. For each point of Con damage he deals to himself, his first attack that round deals +2d6 damage.

Kathor's Horse, Stalwart Warhorse **CR —**
N Large animal
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +7, Spot +7
AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 23 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural, +10 armor)
hp 76 (9 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4; evasion (if Kathor is within 5 ft.)
Speed 35 ft. (7 squares)
Melee two hooves each +10 (1d8+4) and bite +4 (1d4+2)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +14
Str 18, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6
Feats Endurance, Improved Natural Attack (hoof), Run, Weapon Focus (hoof)
Skills Listen +5, Spot +4
Possessions *+2 full plate barding*, military saddle

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

Tricks (Ex) Attack any creature, come, defend, down, guard, heel, stay, work

Kathor Danava **CR 20**
This tightly muscled man wears battered gray plate armor, humbly marked with symbols of sacred honor. His eyes have a darkness like a judge laying sentence. A broken helmet, cloven in the face, hangs from his belt.
Male trillith-bound human fighter 16
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common
AC 32, touch 15, flat-footed 31 (+9 armor, +1 Dex, +8 natural, +4 deflection)
hp 286 (16 HD); DR 10/lawful
Fort +20, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4
Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), ride 35 ft. (7 squares); Mounted Strafe
Melee *+1 greatsword* +24/+19/+14 (2d6+11, 17–20)
Ranged *+1 composite longbow* +18/+13/+8 (1d8+5, ×3)
Base Atk +16; **Grp** +20
Atk Options Cleave, Great Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Spirited Charge
Special Actions second wind, walk the line
Combat Gear four *potions of cure serious wounds*, four *potions of fly*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th)
3/day – quickened *true strike*
Str 18, Dex 13, Con 34, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 18
SQ just aura, trillith spirit
Feats Cleave, Elite Training (greatsword)*, Equine Stalwart*, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Mounted Strafe*, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Power Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)
Skills Handle Animal +23, Ride +22
Possessions *+1 greatsword*, *+1 composite longbow* [Str +4], 40 arrows, *+1 full plate*, silver shortsword, heavy warhorse (stalwart heavy warhorse [11 HD])

Just Aura (Su) Against evil creatures, Kathor and creatures within 60 ft. of him gain a +4 bonus to attack rolls, a +14 bonus to damage rolls, and a +4 bonus to caster level checks to bypass spell resistance. They gain a +4 bonus to saving throws against attacks by evil creatures and evil effects. Creatures within 60 ft. of Kathor must succeed a Will save (DC 20) or be unable to attack him. If Kathor attacks them, they can make a new save (but no more than once each round).

Second Wind (Ex) Twice per day by spending one full round, Kathor can heal 71 points of damage.

Trillith Spirit (Su) Kathor is bonded with the spirit of the trillith Justice. This grants him the ability to use true strike as a spell-like ability three times a day, and grants him a +20 enhancement bonus to Con, as well as his just aura, second wind, and walk the line powers.

Walk the Line (Su) As a standard action, Kathor can prepare himself to deal a punishing blow to a villainous foe. On Kathor's next turn, he can deal up to 10 points of Con damage to himself. For each point of Con damage he deals to himself, his first attack that round deals +2d6 damage.

Kathor's Horse, Stalwart Warhorse CR —

N Large animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +7, Spot +7

AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 23 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural, +10 armor)

hp 93 (11 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4; evasion (if Kathor is within 5 ft.)

Speed 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee two hooves each +11 (1d8+4) and bite +5 (1d4+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +15

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Feats Endurance, Improved Natural Attack (hoof), Run, Weapon Focus (hoof)

Skills Listen +5, Spot +4

Possessions *+2 full plate barding*, military saddle

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

Tricks (Ex) aerial combat, attack any creature, combat riding, come, defend, down, guard, heel, stay, work

Katrina CR 8

This woman of fiery red hair and slender curves holds herself with a sultry air of practiced overconfidence. She dresses as if she is the iconic pyromancer, wearing a red robe with extravagantly flowing sleeves, a tight belt with spell components, and long leather boots. A bulky velvet glove covers her left hand, and with the heavy sleeve it nearly hides the silvery gauntlet and metal guard that protects her forearm.

Female human sorcerer 8

N Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Orc

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13

hp 38 (8 HD)

Resist fire 10

Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee dagger +3 (1d4–1, 19–20)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Special Actions spellduelist

Spells Known (CL 8th, +5 ranged touch)

4th (4/day) – *fire shield*

3rd (6/day) – *fireball* (DC 20), *protection from energy*

2nd (7/day) – *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

1st (8/day) – *burning hands* (DC 18), *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *protection from evil*, *unseen servant*

0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 20

Feats Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Concentration), Spell Focus (evocation)

Skills Bluff +16, Concentration +16, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Spellcraft +12, Tumble +6

Possessions *ring of minor fire resistance*, *ring of sustenance*, *+2 mithral buckler* that covers her forearm, *gloves of dexterity +2*, tindertwig, beautiful red robe enchanted to clean and mend itself

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Katrina casts a spell she may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to her casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing her Bluff check. If Katrina wins the opposed check, she fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before she begins casting her spell. If she fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Tactics Katrina is impulsive, overconfident, and smart enough to pretend that those are weaknesses. Out of combat she pretends to be vain and invincible, but when actually endangered her tactics are intended to get her out of danger as quickly as possible. If facing more foes than she can handle, she casts *disguise self* or *invisibility* and flees. When she chooses to go on the offensive, however, she does her best to keep foes away from her, either by proactively killing them, or defensively setting up *mirror image* or *fire shield*. She's not above *fireballing* herself if she's surrounded.



Katrina **CR 13**

This woman of fiery red hair and slender curves holds herself with a sultry air of practiced overconfidence. She dresses as if she is the iconic pyromancer, wearing a red robe with extravagantly flowing sleeves, a tight belt with spell components, and long leather boots. A bulky velvet glove covers her left hand, and with the heavy sleeve it nearly hides the silvery gauntlet and metal guard that protects her forearm.

Female human sorcerer 13

N Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Orc

Aura cannot be touched by a summoned creature unless it has spell resistance

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AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +3 shield); +2 deflection against evil

hp 74 (13 HD); **DR** 10/magic for missile weapons (stops 100 damage)

Immune fire from her own spells, mind control, possession

Resist fire 10

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Energy Buffer 120 points of cold damage

Buff Suite *fly*, *mage armor*, *protection from arrows*, *protection from energy* (cold), *protection from evil*. All these effects last at least 13 minutes, and so Katrina casts them before entering the temple. Their effects are included in her stat block.

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee dagger +5 (1d4–1, 19–20)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +5

Special Actions Silent Spell, spellduelist

Combat Gear four *potions of cure moderate wounds*

Spells Known (CL 13th or 14th for fire spells, +7 ranged touch)

6th (3/day) – *Gabal's viral flame** (DC 25), *mislead*

5th (6/day) – *dismissal*, *sending*, *teleport*

4th (7/day) – *charm monster*, *fire shield*, *lesser globe of invulnerability*, *wall of fire* (DC 23)

3rd (5/day) – *fireball* (DC 22), *fly*, *magic circle against evil*, *protection from energy*

2nd (7/day) – *hideous laughter*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *protection from arrows*, *scorching ray*

1st (6/day) – *burning hands* (DC 20), *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *protection from evil*, *unseen servant*

0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th)

At will – *produce flame*

Str 8, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 25

SQ spellduelist

Feats Elemental Control (fire), Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Spell Focus (evocation)

Skills Bluff +23, Concentration +16, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Spellcraft +14, Tumble +6

Possessions *+2 mithral buckler* that covers her forearm, *gloves of dexterity +2*, three tindertwigs, beautiful red *robe of charisma +4,* twenty *potions of cure light wounds.*

Tattoo *amulet of health +2*

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Katrina casts a spell she may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to her casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing her Bluff check. If Katrina wins the opposed check, she fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before she begins casting her spell. If she fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Tattoo (Su) Katrina has inscribed on her person a magical tattoo that duplicates the effects of an *amulet of health +2*. A magical tattoo cannot be disarmed, sundered, or stolen.

Tactics In combat, Katrina takes to the air and opens up with *Gabal's viral flame* to ensure that her enemies cannot resist her fiery onslaught. Then, as long as nothing else is threatening her, she keeps the pressure up by hurling *fireball* after *fireball*, though she can switch tactics if threatened by summoned creatures (*dismissal*), warriors attacking her (*mislead* and *hideous laughter*), or low-level spellcasters (*lesser globe of invulnerability*). Her spellduelist ability helps her dodge counterspells.

Gabal's viral flame is also a perfect foil for inquisitor tactics: because the fire resistance from her Elemental Control feat cannot be dispelled, if Katrina does decide to side with the heroes, she'll try to get as close to as many Ragesians as possible, and drop the spell at her own ft.

Katrina **CR 18**

This woman of fiery red hair and slender curves holds herself with a sultry air of practiced overconfidence. She dresses as if she is the iconic pyromancer, wearing a red robe with extravagantly flowing sleeves, a tight belt with spell components, and long leather boots. A bulky velvet glove covers her left hand, and with the heavy sleeve it nearly hides the silvery gauntlet and metal guard that protects her forearm.

Female human sorcerer 18

N Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Orc

Aura cannot be touched by summoned creatures without spell resistance

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AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +3 shield); +2 deflection against evil

hp 101 (18 HD); **DR** 10/magic for missile weapons (stops 100 damage)

Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +10

Resist fire 10; **Immune** fire (from own spells), mind control, possession

Energy Buffer 120 points of cold damage

Buff Suite *mage armor*, *overland flight*, *protection from arrows*, *protection from energy (cold)*, *protection from evil*, vex *the inquisitor**. All these effects last at least 13 minutes, and so Katrina casts them before entering the temple. Their effects are included in her stat block.

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +8

Combat Gear four *potions of cure serious wounds*

Special Actions Silent Spell, spellduelist

Spells Known (CL 18th or 19th for fire spells, +10 ranged touch)

9th (4/day) – *meteor swarm* (DC 30)

8th (6/day) – quickened *wall of fire*, *red hot liquid magma**

7th (7/day) – *greater fire shield** (DC 28), *greater teleport*, *vex the inquisitor**

6th (7/day) – *Gabal's viral flame** (DC 27), *globe of invulnerability*, *mislead*

5th (8/day) – *break enchantment*, *dismissal*, *overland flight*, *sending*

4th (8/day) – *charm monster*, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*, *wall of fire* (DC 25)

3rd (8/day) – *fireball* (DC 24), *fly*, *magic circle against evil*, *protection from energy*

2nd (8/day) – *hideous laughter*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *protection from arrows*, *scorching ray*

1st (9/day) – *burning hands* (DC 22), *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *protection from evil*, *unseen servant*

0 (6/day) – *detect magic*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Buff suite expends one 7th-, one 5th-, one 2nd-, and two 1st-level slots.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th)

At will – *produce flame*

Str 8, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 28

Feats Elemental Control (fire), Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Spell Focus (evocation), Widen Spell

Skills Bluff +29, Concentration +21, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Spellcraft +19, Tumble +6

Possessions combat gear plus *+2 mithril buckler* that covers her forearm, *gloves of dexterity +2*, three tindertwigs, beautiful red *robe of charisma +6*, twenty *potions of cure light wounds*.

Tattoo *amulet of health +2*

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Katrina casts a spell she may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to her casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing her Bluff check. If Katrina wins the opposed check, she fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before she begins casting her spell. If she fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Tattoo (Su) Katrina has inscribed on her person a magical tattoo that duplicates the effects of an *amulet of health +2*. A magical tattoo cannot be disarmed, sundered, or stolen.

Tactics Against an army, Katrina casts *invisibility* and her buff suite, then flies high overhead. Once in place she casts *greater invisibility*, *greater fire shield*, *globe of invulnerability*, and *stoneskin* as a defense, then begins destroying legions with *meteor swarms*, widened *fireballs*, and other attacks.

Kazyk, Bearded Devil **CR 5**

A tattered brown cloak whips about this man-sized creature's scaled body. It has the face of a commanding, honest man, but its flesh is green, its eyes glow with infernal fire, and its thick beard writhes and bites like a nest of vipers. Barely visible under its beard is a thick metal collar attached to a length of limply dangling chain. The powerful being stands tall, and wields a blood-stained saw-bladed glaive. It only has four fingers on its left hand, and a scaled, dessicated pinky finger hangs on a cord around its neck.

Male bearded devil

LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Common, Infernal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17

hp 45 (6 HD); **DR** 5/silver or good

Immune fire and poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 17

Fort +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee *+1 glaive* +10/+5 (1d10+4 plus infernal wound) or

two claws +8 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Atk Options Power Attack

Combat Gear 4 vials of shatterspell

Special Actions battle frenzy, beard, summon devil

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

At will – *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. of objects only)

Str 14, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10

SQ attacks count as evil-aligned and lawful-aligned for overcoming DR

Feats Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (glaive)

Skills Diplomacy +2, Hide +11, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +9, Speak Language (Common), Spot +9, Survival +7

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 glaive*, *hand of the mage* (Kazyk's severed pinky, worn on a necklace)

Battle Frenzy (Ex) Twice per day, Kazyk can work himself into a battle frenzy similar to the barbarian's rage (+4 Str, +4 Con, +2 morale bonus on Will saves, –2 AC penalty). The frenzy lasts for 6 rounds, and Kazyk suffers no ill effects afterward.

Beard (Ex) If Kazyk hits a single opponent with both claw attacks, he automatically hits with his beard. The affected creature takes 1d8+2 points of damage and must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or be infected with a vile disease known as devil chills (incubation period 1d4 days, damage 1d4 Str). Damage is dealt each day until the afflicted creature succeeds on three consecutive Fortitude saves, the disease is cured magically, or the creature dies.

Infernal Wound (Su) The damage Kazyk deals with his glaive causes a persistent wound. An injured creature loses 2 additional hp each round. The wound does not heal naturally and resists healing spells. The continuing hp loss can be stopped by a DC 16 Heal check, a cure spell, or a heal spell. However, a character attempting to cast a cure spell or a heal spell on a creature damaged by Kazyk's glaive must succeed on a DC 16 caster level check, or the spell has no effect on the injured character.

A successful Heal check automatically stops the continuing hp loss as well as restoring hp. The infernal wound is a supernatural ability of Kazyk, not of his weapon.

Summon Devil (Sp) Once per day, Kazyk can summon five lemures. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell. Note that this ability is slightly different from a core bearded devil, but Kazyk has received a few small boons from the inquisitors, and this is one.

Tactics When the heroes meet him in adventure two, Kazyk begins by using his summon devil ability to summon five lemures, which rise up from the ash on the road, flickering briefly with fire. He then points his glaive toward the member of the heroes he has decided is the weakest, and orders the lemures to kill that person. Kazyk only strikes each character once, letting the infernal wounds caused by his glaive deal more damage. Once he has struck each of the heroes, or once a character falls, or when things start to go badly for him, he teleports away, saying with a smile, "Good fight."

If the characters manage to kill, incapacitate, or otherwise ground Kazyk, he offers them a deal, as he is on his last legs. This does not disrupt the adventure, though it may simplify things if the party kills him before he can mess with their heads.

Kelkin Thravanvost **CR 9**

A magnificent silver mantle hangs over this middle-aged dwarf's shoulders, and a gleaming silver skullcap rests on his head. His black beard is woven with coins bearing the faces of seven generations of kings. His silver-trimmmed black cloak looks stiff, like it is made of stone.

Middle-aged male dwarf wizard (evoker) 9
LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Giant, Orc, Sphinx; empathic link 1 mile (Vellin), speak with familiar

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; +4 dodge bonus vs. giants

hp 42 (9 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Combat Gear *wand of hold portal* (9 charges), *potion of cure light wounds* ×9, *potion of invisibility*

Special Actions warmage strike (5-ft. radius burst, 30-ft. range, 4d6 earth damage, Ref DC 22 half)

Spells Prepared (CL 9th)

5th – *cloudkill* (DC 20), *cone of cold* (DC 22)
4th – *charm monster* (DC 19), *lesser globe of invulnerability*, *secure shelter*, *wall of fire*
3rd – *dispel magic*, *fireball* ×3 (DC 20), *wind wall*
2nd – *flaming sphere* ×3 (DC 19), *glitterdust*, *shatter* (DC 19), still *charm person* (DC 16)
1st – *alarm*, *magic missile* ×5, *shield*
0 – *daze* ×3 (DC 15), *detect magic*

Prohibited Schools Illusion, Necromancy

Str 9, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 20, Wis 14, Cha 7

SQ dwarf traits

Feats Alertness (if Vellin is within 5 ft.), Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Concentration), Still Spell, Spell Focus (evocation), Student of War[B], Warmage Strike

Skills Concentration +17, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Listen +2 (+4 if Vellin is within 5 ft.), Spellcraft +19, Spot +2 (+4 if Vellin is within 5 ft.)

Possessions *+1 mithral buckler*, *ring of sustenance and protection +1* (market value 4,500 gp), *skullcap of intellect +2*, permanently glamered cloak that looks tough and impenetrable

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *blink*, *continual flame*, *detect secret doors*, *erase*, *explosive runes*, *grease*, *identify*, *hold person*, *hold portal*, *locate object*, *protection from arrows*, *protection from energy*, *reduce person*, *rope trick*, *sepia snake sigil*, *shout*, *stoneskin*, *transmute rock to mud*, *wall of stone*, and *whispering wind*; the spellbook also contains three pages of *mnemonic enhancer*, which Kelkin transcribed before he realized how utterly useless it is.

Share Spells (Ex) At Kelkin's option, he may have a spell he casts on himself also affect Vellin. Vellin must be within 5 ft. at the time of casting to receive the spell's benefit.

Student of War (Ex) Kelkin can spontaneously modify any spell he casts, extending its casting time as if he were a sorcerer applying a metamagic feat to the spell. When he does so, if the spell affects three or more creatures, the spell's save DC is increased by +1.

Vellin, Raven Familiar
CR —

LN Tiny animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +5

Languages empathic link 1 mile (Kelkin), speak with master, speak with birds

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 21 (9 HD)

Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2; improved evasion

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee claws +8 (1d2–5)

Space 2½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Base Atk +4; **Grp** –9

Special Actions deliver touch spell

Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 6

Feats Weapon Finesse

Skills Listen +3, Spot +5

Deliver Touch Spells (Su) If Kelkin and Vellin are in contact at the time Kelkin casts a touch spell, Kelkin can designate Vellin as the "toucher." Vellin can then deliver the touch spell just as Kelkin could. If Kelkin casts another spell before the touch is delivered, the touch spell dissipates.

Share Spells (Ex) At Kelkin's option, he may have a spell he casts on himself also affect Vellin. Vellin must be within 5 ft. at the time of casting to receive the spell's benefit.

Khagan Onamdammin **CR 14**

Khagan Onamdammin is a tall, dark-haired young man, barely twenty-five years old, dressed in regal garb with red and silver gemstone patterns and a cut similar to a warrior's uniform. His short, dark hair is slicked back, and a strange beard follows his jaw line and the edge of his smile, but not his chin. Something about his face is strange, making his actual race hard to place. His eyebrows are long and slender like an elf, his ears faintly pointed, but his brow is strong and his chin thick, vaguely like a half-orc. His nose is small, almost cat-like.

Male half-elf fighter 4/wizard 5/eldritch knight 5
CN Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Orc

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22; miss chance 50% (displacement)

hp 123 (14 HD); **DR** 10/— (90 hp protected)

Immune movement restriction

Fort +15, **Ref** +5, **Will** +12

Buff Suite *stoneskin*, *shield*, *resist energy*, *heroism*, *mage armor**

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee Khagan's Sword +15/+10 (2d4+3, 15–2 0)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +12

Combat Gear *lavender and green ellipsoid ioun stone* (38 spell levels available), *ring of force shield*, *wand of scorching ray*

Spells Prepared (CL 9th, DC 13 + spell level)

5th – *teleport*
4th – *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*
3rd – *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *heroism*, *ray of exhaustion*
2nd – *blindness/deafness*, *detect thoughts*, *heroism*, *resist energy*, *scorching ray*
1st – *burning hands*, ~~*mage armor*~~, *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*
0 – *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

Str 13, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 15

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Craft Arms and Armor, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Still Spell, Summon Familiar, Weapon Focus (falchion), Weapon Specialization (falchion)

Skills Climb +7, Concentration +16, Craft (biomancy) +10, Intimidate +9, Jump +7, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +10, Ride +10, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +14, Swim +9.

Possessions combat gear plus *boots of speed*, *twilight chain shirt +2*, Crown of Ostalin, Khagan's Sword, *major cloak of displacement*, *periapt of health +2*, *ring of freedom of movement*

Khagan Onamdammin's Unique Items The legendary Crown of Ostalin passed from Onamdammin's father to him, and will be worn by the next Khagan of Ostalin as well. It grants the wearer the following abilities:

- +2 Int, +2 Cha
- +4 bonus on saving throws versus enchantment and mind-affecting spells and effects
- Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision.

The falchion Khagan's Sword inspires servants of Ostalin to great heights of heroism in defense of their ruler and their lands. It is normally a *+2 falchion*, but in the hands of the Khagan of Ostalin it has the following abilities:

- Anyone fighting in defense of Ostalin or the Khagan within 60 ft. of the Khagan while he wields the sword gains +2 on attack rolls and saving throws.
- The sword gains the dancing property.

Kiernan Stekart CR 13

A dusky-skinned dwarf with a flowing black beard and precisely-trimmed hair, he carries a stone scepter traced with strange veins of black mineral. His clothes are thick, crisp, and a deep, almost black red.

Male dwarf wizard (abjurer) 13

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Infernal, Orc

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; +4 dodge bonus vs. giants

hp 99 (13 HD)

Fort +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +12; +2 to saves vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee *rod-mace* +8/+3 (1d8+1)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7

Combat Gear *lesser silent metamagic rod-mace* (casts heightened *sanctuary* [CL 7th] 1/day)

Special Actions Improved Counterspell, Reactive Counterspell, Spellduelist

Spells Known (CL 13th)

7th – *limited wish*, *spell turning*

6th – *eyebite*, *greater dispel magic* ×2

5th – *baleful polymorph*, *break enchantment*, *dismissal*, *magic jar*

4th – *black tentacles*, *dimensional anchor*, *resilient sphere* ×2, *stoneskin*, *wall of ice*

3rd – *dispel magic* ×2, *magic circle against evil*, *protection from energy*, *stinking cloud*, *vampiric touch*

2nd – *alter self*, *detect thoughts*, *resist energy*, *rope trick*, *see invisibility*, *shatter*

1st – *hold portal*, *mage armor*, *magic missile* ×3, *shield*

0 – *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *resistance*

Prohibited Schools Enchantment, Illusion

Str 12, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 6

SQ dwarf traits

Feats Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms & Armor, Craft Rod, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Scribe Scroll, Spellduelist

Skills Craft (stonecutting) +20, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (engineering) +14, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +22

Possessions combat gear plus *amulet of health +4*, *cloak of resistance +3*

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Kiernan casts a spell he may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to him casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing his Bluff check. If Kiernan wins the opposed check, he fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before he begins casting his spell. If he fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Tactics Kiernan focuses on the role of bodyguard, ready to reactively counterspell a spell that might be debilatating. When he's not counterspelling, he'll start with *eyebite* so he can continue to make attacks as a free action, then uses *black tentacles* against clusters of enemies, and *wall of ice* to hold off warriors. Kiernan's rod-mace is his prized possession.



King Steppengard of Dassen **CR 10**

Though no longer the young warrior who united eight kingdoms into a single country, King Steppengard still has a lion's strength. Tall, brown-haired, with a short-cropped beard, the ruler of Dassen stands tense with restrained scorn. Weakness, however, seems to grip the king's mind, and his eyes look uncertain, his gaze unfocused.

Middle-aged male human commander 2/fighter 8
NE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Orc, Sphinx, Terran

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 20
hp 57 (10 HD), friend-shielded by bodyguard
Immune divination, mind-affecting
Fort +9, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 heavy flail* +17 (1d10+11, 17–20)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +13
Atk Options Cleave, Combat Expertise, Great Cleave, Improved Feint, Improved Trip, Power Attack

Str 18, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12
SQ initiative bonus +1, direct orders +1
Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Elite Training (heavy flail), Great Cleave, Improved Critical (heavy flail), Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Focus (heavy flail), Weapon Specialization (heavy flail)
Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +23, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Sense Motive +6, Survival +6
Possessions *glamered +2 full plate, +1 heavy flail, gauntlets of ogre power, ring of protection +1, amulet of natural armor +1,* Eight Lands boon, *ring of friend shielding* (other ring is worn by bodyguard), noble's outfit

Eight Lands Boon (Su) As long as he is touching soil from Dassen, King Steppengard is protected by *mind blank*. The beneficiaries of this boon can choose to lower it willingly. This effect's caster level is 15th.

Kiznith, Shalahesti Commander **CR 16**

Tall and charming, with dramatic blond hair, when this elf moves, his soldiers watch raptly.

Male elf bard 16
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Celestial, Common, Elven

AC 28, touch 17, flat-footed 24 (+4 Dex, +7 armor, +4 shield, +2 deflection, +1 insight)
hp 90 (16 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +7, **Ref** +14, **Will** +10 (+12 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+2 shocking rapier* +19/+14/+9 (1d6+1 plus 1d6 electricity, 15–20)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +11
Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (50 charges)
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm
Special Actions bardic music (16/day – countersong, fascinate, inspire competence, inspire courage +3, inspire greatness, inspire heroics, song of freedom, suggestion)
Spells Known (CL 16th)
6th (1/day) – *animate objects, heroes' feast*
5th (3/day) – *greater dispel magic, mass cure light wounds, mass suggestion, song of discord*
4th (4/day) – *break enchantment, dimension door, dominate person, locate creature*
3rd (4/day) – *charm monster, cure serious wounds, daylight, see invisibility*
2nd (6/day) – *alter self, detect thoughts, enthrall, silence*
1st (6/day) – *alarm, animate rope, cause fear, charm person, comprehend languages*
0 (4/day) – *dancing lights, daze, mending, message, prestidigitation, summon instrument*

Str 8, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 22
SQ elf traits
Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Disarm, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)
Skills Bluff +25, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +27, Knowledge (the planes) +20, Perform (oratory) +25, Sense Motive +19, Use Magic Device +28
Possessions combat gear plus *cloak of charisma +4, +2 shocking rapier, +3 mithral shirt, +3 mithral buckler, ring of protection +2, gloves of dexterity +2, ioun stone of +1 insight to AC, amulet of health +2*

Tactics Kiznith inspires his troops, using a different bardic music ability every few rounds. He has enough to spare that he can let a previous use lapse, so he doesn't worry about maintaining one song forever.



Klaus **CR 4**

Male half-orc fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 35 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +10 (1d8+6, ×3) or shortsword +8 (1d6+4, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +6 (1d6+4, ×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8
Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*
Atk Options Power Attack

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +3
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, heavy shield, mwk battleaxe, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, shortsword, 5 days of rations

Konigsmarshal Malkan **CR 12**

Saddled astride a beautiful young warhorse in chain barding, this weathered old man looks out upon the battlefield with a relaxed, knowing nod. Dressed in a heavy winter uniform, the horseman's only apparent armor is a oversize mithral archery bracer serving as a buckler. He holds an ornate but mechanically complicated crossbow, and wears his badge of office – a golden flail – at his hip.

Old male human commander 12
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 19
hp 58 (12 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee golden flail +5 (1d8–4, 19–20)
Ranged *+1 heavy repeating crossbow* +12/+7 (1d10+1 plus 1d6 cold, 17–20), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +6
Atk Options leadership performance, direct orders
Combat Gear four *potions of cure light wounds*

Str 5, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 22
SQ battle cry, initiative bonus, chain of command, equine stalwart
Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (heavy repeating crossbow), Fearless Leader, Equine Stalwart, Improved Critical (heavy repeating crossbow), Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader, Mounted Combat, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (heavy repeating crossbow)
Skills Bluff +21, Diplomacy +25, Handle Animal +21, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +17, Perform (oratory) +21, Ride +16, Sense Motive +16
Possessions *cloak of charisma +2*, *gloves of dexterity +2*, *+1 mithral chain shirt*, *+1 mithral buckler*, *ring of deflection +1*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, golden flail, *+1 heavy repeating crossbow* w/4 clips (20 bolts), 10 additional clips (50 bolts) on horse's saddle, *+2 chain shirt horse barding*, *fimbulwinter charm*

Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, Malkan can shout an iconic battle cry (such as "What king do you serve?," to which his men reply in unison, "Steppengard!") to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Chain of Command (Ex) Malkan can expend one of his leadership performances to let a subordinate be able to use it instead, for one hour. This loaned performance functions as if Malkan himself had used it.

Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round Malkin can choose to grant all allies within 50 ft. a +6 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He can also spend an immediate action to replace his current orders with a different type of bonus.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one)
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Equine Stalwart (Ex) Malkan can handle his mount Ahram as a free action and push it as a move action. He gains a +4 bonus to all Handle Animal checks with it.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) Allies within 50 ft. of Malkan gain a +3 bonus to initiative checks.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Three times per day, Malkan can inspire or direct his allies (within 50 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +2 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 50 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Malkan himself.
- As a standard action, grant a single ally within 50 ft. an immediate extra attack at its full base attack bonus.
- As a standard action, make a Perform check. Every ally within 50 ft. currently under the influence of a fear effect makes a new save against that effect, using your Perform check in place of their Will save. Malkan can only do this if he himself did not fail his save against the same effect.

Ahram, Stalwart Warhorse

N Large animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +4

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural); evasion (if Malkan is within 5 ft.)

hp 41 (9 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee 2 hooves +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Feats Endurance, Run

Skills Listen +5, Spot +4

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301-600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601-900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

Tricks (Ex) Attack any creature, come, defend, down, guard, heel, stay, work

Koren **CR 16**

Ribbons and necklaces of finger bones flutter and clatter as this lithe blonde woman leaps and tumbles through combat, carrying an elaborately adorned quarterstaff that marks her as a Wayfarer. She dresses in short black robes trimmed with sapphires.

Female human bard 8/Wayfarer cirqueliste 8

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Orc

AC 31, touch 19, flat-footed 20 (+6 Dex, +7 armor, +3 shield, +2 deflection, +2 natural, +1 insight)

hp 91 (16 HD)

Resist cold 30, fire 30

Fort +6, **Ref** +18, **Will** +7

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee *+1 quarterstaff* +17/+12 (1d6+1)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +10

Special Actions bardic music 8/day (inspire courage +2, countersong, fascinate, inspire competence, suggestion)

Spells Known (CL 16th, +4 for Spell Penetration)

4th (2/day) – *break enchantment*, *dominate person* (DC 20), *hold monster* (DC 20)

3rd (4/day) – *charm monster* (DC 19), *dispel magic*, *fear* (DC 17), *see invisibility*

2nd (4/day) – *crushing despair*, *heroism*, *silence* (DC 16), *suggestion* (DC 18)

1st (4/day) – *disguise self*, *feather fall*, *hideous laughter* (DC 17), *Wayfarer's step*

0 (3/day) – *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th)

19/day – *Wayfarer's step*

3/day – *dimension door*

2/day – *teleport*

1/day – *greater teleport*

Str 10, Dex 22, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 18

SQ abduct, bardic knowledge +9, celeritous strafe, planar spell, prescient dodge, sense teleportation, spell-like abilities, spellrunner, traveler, unanchored

Feats Craft Wondrous Item, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Penetration, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +29, Bluff +23, Concentration +21, Jump +20, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (the planes) +20, Perform (sing) +23, Spellcraft +23, Tumble +31

Possessions *+1 quarterstaff*, *handy haversack*, *tiara of charisma +4*, *+3 mithral shirt*, *ring of protection +2*, *amulet of natural armor +2*, *boots of striding and springing of dexterity +4*, *ioun stone of insight +1*, *+2 mithral buckler*, *wand of cure light wounds* (20 charges)

Abduct (Su) Koren's teleportation spells and spell-like abilities can affect unwilling creatures as if they were willing, unless they succeed a Will save (DC 14 + spell level).

Celeritous Strafe (Ex) Koren can take her standard action for the turn at any point during her movement.

Planar Spell (Su) Koren's spells can affect an incorporeal or ethereal creature just as they would a corporeal creature if she chooses.

Prescient Dodge (Ex) Once per day Koren can take a move action as an immediate action. If she does this in reponse to an attack and moves to a space the attacker cannot target, the attack misses her. If she moves but is still within reach or range, the attacker automatically readjusts his aim, and the attack is resolved normally. Using this ability must be declared after an attack is announced but before the attack roll is made.

Spellrunner (Su) Whenever Koren casts a spell with an instantaneous duration, she may expend a daily use of *Wayfarer's step* to teleport to any unoccupied space within that spell's area or adjacent to one of its targets, as long as that space is within 800 ft. of her.

Traveler (Su) Koren can ignore effects that would restrict her movement. This acts as the *freedom of movement* spell, and can be used 16 rounds per day. This effect occurs automatically as soon as it applies, lasts until it runs out or is no longer needed, and can operate multiple times per day (up to the daily limit of rounds).

Unanchored (Su) Koren can attempt to use dimensional travel even when an effect – like *dimensional anchor* – prohibits such movement. She rolls 1d20+20 against DC 11 + spell's caster level. If she succeeds, her teleportation spell or spell-like ability functions normally. If she fails, the spell or ability is wasted.

Wayfarer's Step (Sp) This ability lets Koren teleport 50 ft. as a swift action, though her path cannot pass through a solid barrier. Koren can also expend one of these uses to use *feather fall*, *fly*, *haste*, or *resist energy*. She can also expend one to bring along an extra creature when she teleports.

Kralrak, Goblin Rogue **CR 1**

Male goblin rogue 1
NE Small humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12
hp 7 (1 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee Small shortsword +2 (1d6, 19–20)
Ranged mwk Small heavy crossbow +5 (1d8, 19–20); Rapid Reload
Base Atk +0; **Grp** –4
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, one *+1 human-bane bolt* (Krarlrak) or one *potion of invisibility* (Emran)
Special Actions sneak attack +1d6

Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 6
Feats Rapid Reload
Skills Climb +4, Disable Device +4, Hide +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +7, Spot +6, Tumble +7
Possessions combat gear plus leather armor, mwk Small heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, Small shortsword, thieves' tools, 28 gp

Kreven **CR 18**

A rich winter cloak drapes across this frail old man, so withered that the bear skull he wears as a mask could easily be his true face.
Venerable male human sorcerer 18
LE Medium humanoid
Init –2; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Infernal, Orc

AC 8, touch 8, flat-footed 8 (–2 Dex)
hp 47 (18 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +18

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk handclaw +7 (1d4–3)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +6
Special Actions Reactive Counterspell
Spells Known (CL 18th, DC 18 + spell level)
9th (3/day) – *dominate monster**
8th (6/day) – *greater planar binding, power word stun, severing slash*
7th (7/day) – *project image, spell turning, spelleater*
6th (7/day) – *chain lightning, mass suggestion*, true seeing*
5th (7/day) – *dominate person*, mind fog*, overmaster, wall of force*
4th (8/day) – *charm monster*, ice storm, stoneskin, wall of fire*
3rd (8/day) – *magic circle against good, protection from energy, suggestion*, vampiric touch*
2nd (8/day) – *cancel, hideous laughter*, invisibility, shatter*
1st (8/day) – *burning hands, charm person*, shield, sleep*, unseen servant*
0 (6/day) – *detect magic, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, read magic*
* Enchantment spell; +2 DC
Kreven has definitely already cast one 8th-, one 4th-, two 3rd-, and one 1st-level spell today, plus any he used against the heroes in previous encounters – if the heroes fought Velkiss (*q.v.*) today, he's also used one 7th-, one 6th-, one 4th-, one 3rd-, and one 1st-level spell. These are not yet removed from his stat block.

Str 4, Dex 6, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 26
Feats Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Energy Substitution (sonic), Extra Spell Knowledge (severing slash), Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Improved Counterspell, Reactive Counterspell, Spell Focus (enchantment)
Skills Concentration +21, Craft (stonework) +23, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Perform (orchestra) +19, Spellcraft +25
Possessions *mask of inner death*, *ring of friend shield*, *crystal ball* with telepathy

Tactics If Kreven has time to prepare before combat, he casts *mind blank*, *magic circle against good*, *protection from energy*, *shield*, and *stoneskin*, in that order. These spells are not included in Kreven's stat block.

Lady Timor **CR 6**

Female human wizard 5/aristocrat 2
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Dwarven, Terran

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10
hp 37 (7 HD)
Immune divination, mind-affecting
Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +2 (1d4–1, 19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2
Combat Gear 4 scrolls of cold-substituted *fireball*,4 scrolls of cold-substituted *burning hands* (CL 5th)
Special Actions warmage strike (3d6 cold damage, range 30 ft., 5-ft. radius burst, Ref DC 17 half)
Spells Prepared (CL 5th)
3rd – *fireball* (cold, DC 17)
2nd – *flaming sphere* (cold, DC 16) ×2, still *charm person* (DC 14)
1st – *burning hands* (cold, DC 15) ×3, *endure elements*
0 – *light* ×2, *message* ×2

Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 13
Feats Energy Substitution (cold), Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Still Spell, Warmage Strike
Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +17, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +11, Spellcraft +13, Sense Motive +9
Possessions combat gear plus Eight Lands boon, dagger
Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and plus *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *dispel magic*, *see invisibility*, *arcane lock*, *continual flame*, *eagle's splendor*, *resist energy*, *enlarge person*, *magic missile*, *reduce person*, *shield*, *sleep*, *identify*

Eight Lands Boon (Su) As long as she is touching soil from Dassen, Lady Timor is protected by *mind blank*. The beneficiaries of this boon can choose to lower it willingly. This effect's caster level is 15th.



Larion Prevarieth **CR 3**

Without his disguise, this elf is short and wiry, his blond hair and pale skin mostly hidden by black clothing. A small pouch slung over his shoulder has slots for scroll cases and potion vials, and a rapier sits sheathed at his hip.
Male elf rogue 2/wizard (illusionist) 1
CN Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Celestial, Elven

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13
hp 15 (3 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +1, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1 (+3 vs. enchantment); evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk rapier +2 (1d6, 18–20) or sap +1 (1d6 nonlethal)
Ranged +4 dagger (1d4, 19–20)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1
Combat Gear two *potions of jump*, two *potions of spider climb*, two scrolls of *comprehend languages*, scroll of *erase*, scroll of *expeditious retreat*, scroll of *knock*, scroll of *true strike*, *oil of magic weapon*
Special Actions Quick Draw, sneak attack +1d6
Spells Prepared (CL 1st)
1st – *disguise self*, *feather fall*, *unseen servant*
0 – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*
Prohibited Schools Abjuration, Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 13
SQ trapfinding, mageknight
Feats Improved Initiative, Quick Draw
Skills Balance +10, Bluff +7, Climb +4, Concentration +4, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +9, Gather Information +5, Jump +7, Open Lock +5, Tumble +10
Possessions combat gear plus mwk studded leather, mwk rapier, sap, eight daggers, thieves' tools, two sunrods, 50 ft. silk rope, 10 pp in Shahalesti coinage
Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *magic aura*

Laurabec Adelsburg **CR 12**

This half-elf woman's short brown hair is ruffled by a constant wind, and her eyes have the intensity of an eagle's. Silvery chainmail crafted to resemble feathers protects her, and both her gear and her armor are tightly-secured.
Female half-elf fighter 1/paladin of freedom 11
CG Medium humanoid (elf)
Init –1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2
Aura good (overwhelming), resolve (10 ft.)
Languages Common, Auran, Elven

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17, *gloves of arrow snaring*
hp 83 (12 HD)
Immune compulsion, sleep
Fort +14, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8 (+10 vs. enchantment)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), Ride 90 ft. (average)
Melee mwk ranseur +15/+10/+5 (2d4+3, ×3)
Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +12 (1d10, 19–20)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +14
Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (50 charges)
Atk Options Power Attack; smite evil (3/day, +4 atk, +11 damage)
Special Actions detect evil, lay on hands (44 hp), remove disease 2/week, turn undead (as 8th level cleric, 7/day, 1d20+4, 2d6+12)
Spells Prepared (CL 5th)
3rd – *heal mount*
2nd – *shield other*
1st – *bless weapon*, *lesser restoration*

Str 14, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 18
SQ divine health
Feats Jousting Blow, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe, Power Attack, Spirited Charge, Vow of Healing
Skills Heal +5, Knowledge (religion) +4, Ride +14, Sense Motive +8
Possessions combat gear plus mwk ranseur with a slot that holds a *wand of cure light wounds*, *+2 elven chain*, *ring of protection +1*, *ring of feather falling*, *gloves of arrow snaring*, silver raven *figurine of wondrous power*, mwk heavy crossbow, 20 bolts, 500 gp

Aura of Resolve (Su) Laurabec is immune to compulsions, and allies within 10 ft. of her gain a +4 bonus to their saves to resist compulsions.
Vow of Healing (Su) Twelve times per day, as a free action Laurabec can release a 10-ft. radius emanation of positive energy. Every living creature in the area immediately heals 1 point of damage, while undead creatures take 1 point of damage.

Tactics Despite having aerial superiority when mounted upon her giant eagle Takasi, Laurabec typically eschews ranged combat, preferring to swoop in using Spirited Charge, knocking her foes away using Jousting Blow. With her reach she is also fond of strafing a line of enemies, slashing at them as Takasi performs a majestic barrel roll to put Laurabec within range.

Takasi, Celestial Companion **CR —**

Male giant eagle
CG Large magical beast
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +6, Spot +17
Languages Common, Auran

AC 27, touch 12, flat-footed 24
hp 52 (8 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4, improved evasion

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 90 ft. (average)
Melee two claws each +13 (1d6+5) and bite +7 (1d8+2)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +17

Str 20, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10
SQ evasion
Feats Alertness, Flyby Attack, Weapon Focus (claw)
Skills Knowledge (nature) +2, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +6, Sense Motive +4, Spot +17, Survival +3
Possessions *+2 mithral chain shirt barding*



Lee Sidoneth **CR 9**

Bald, tanned, muscular, and dressed like a fisherman, this man stands with the calm of a sea seen in the distance, but up close you can tell he possesses great power, and is ready to unleash it, like a dam ready to burst.

Male human monk 1/ aspect of nature druid 8
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Druidic

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 14
hp 62 (9 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10, *freedom of movement*

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee unarmed strike +12/+7 (1d6+5) or unarmed strike +10/+10/+5 (1d6+5) with flurry of blows
Ranged shuriken +7/+2 (1d2+3)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +13
Combat Gear *kapoacinth gem* ×2 (see Tactics)
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack; reckless offense (–4 AC, +2 to attack rolls for entire round)
Special Actions aspect of nature, control wand
Spells Prepared (CL 8th)
4th – *control water*, ~~*freedom of movement*~~
3rd – *call lightning* (DC 15), ~~*greater magic fang*~~, *sleet storm* (DC 15)
2nd – *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *resist energy*
1st – *cure light wounds* ×4, ~~*longstrider*~~
0 – *create water* ×6
~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8
SQ animal companion, nature sense, resist nature's lure, spontaneous casting (*summon nature's ally*), trackless step, wild empathy, woodland stride
Feats Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Grapple, Power Attack, Reckless Offense (XPH), Weapon Focus (unarmed)
Skills Balance +5, Bluff +5, Climb +7, Concentration +14, Handle Animal +7, Spellcraft +8, Swim +20
Possessions *tidereaver's tears* (see page 445), *bracers of armor +2*, *ring of swimming*, 20 shuriken, *control wand*

Aspect of Nature (Su) Three times a day as a standard action, Lee can choose two of the following physical alterations. The effect lasts eight minutes, or until he chooses to end it or adopt a different pair of alterations. This replaces a druid's normal wild shape ability.
Agility. +8 Dex, –4 Str.
Aquatic. Lee can breathe air as well as water, and gains a swim speed of 40.
Endurance. +4 Con.
Vigor. +8 Str, –4 Dex.

Control Wand (Su) As long as Lee has the control wand for the *lesser orb of storms*, once per round as a standard action he can direct a bolt of lightning to strike any 5-ft. square within 150 ft., dealing 3d10 damage (Reflex DC 14 half). Once per round as a standard action he can generate a hurricane-force gust of wind in a 20-ft. radius centered on him. Medium or small creatures in the area must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 20) or be knocked prone and blown away, moving 1d4×10 ft. and taking 1d4 points of nonlethal damage for each 10 ft. they are blown.

Tactics Lula the squid attacks whoever is closest to it. Lee, if he gets a chance, uses his two *kapoacinth gems*. Similar to *water elemental gems*, these items let the user animate nearby stone of sufficient size into a kapoacinth, an aquatic gargoyle. In this case, Lee animates the already-present gargoyles on the nearby pillars, then orders them to keep the heroes from getting out of the water, giving him time to buff himself and control the battlefield.

The stony monsters dive into the water among the heroes, focusing their attacks on creatures that are heading for the staircase. Lee prefers to wait on the roof, where he casts *control water* to raise the water's level so that it is just 5 ft. below the level of the roof; this makes the water about 10 ft. deep. With the power of the hurricane, this turns the seas dangerously choppy. We understand this is not officially allowed by the spell, but it's more fun this way.

Each round characters in the choppy water must spend a move action and succeed a Swim check (DC 15) or else take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from being smashed by waves and debris. Actually moving anywhere while swimming requires a separate check (DC 20). However, if the heroes have Indomitability's boon, or have not yet used up their one hour of protection from the

tidereaver's tears, the strong currents won't bother them.

While waiting for his enemies to get close enough to fight, he casts first adopts the Endurance and Vigor aspects of nature. Then he casts *bear's endurance*, then *bull's strength*, then *cat's grace*, and then *resist energy* if he knows any of the heroes as being fond of a particular type of energy attack. If still no one has come up to him yet he takes cover and uses the control wand to blast them with lighting bolts. Only if things has stalemated does he rush his foes.

In melee combat, Lee likes to wade into the middle of a large group of enemies, striking wherever he sees an opening, like a wave shattering weakened stone. When he is suitably surrounded he uses the control wand's ability to knock enemies away with a gust of wind. If he thinks a normal attack will be ineffective, he instead grapples and attempts to move both himself and his foe over the side, or simply bull rushes an enemy down to the crashing waves.

Lula, Squid Animal Companion **CR —**

N Medium animal (aquatic)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision ; Listen +7, Spot +7

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 17

hp 31 (7 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2 (+6 vs. enchantment), evasion

Speed swim 60 ft. (12 squares)

Melee arms +8 (0) and bite +3 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +16

Special Attacks improved grab

Str 16, Dex 19, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

Feats Alertness, Endurance, Improved Grapple

SQ ink cloud, jet

Skills Profession (squid) +3, Swim +10

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, Lula must hit an opponent of any size with its arms attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and automatically deals bite damage.

Ink Cloud (Ex) Lula can emit a cloud of jet-black ink 10 ft. high by 10 ft. wide by 10 ft. long once per minute as a free action. The cloud provides total concealment, which Lula normally uses to escape a losing fight. All vision within the cloud is obscured.

Jet (Ex) Lula can jet backward once per round as a full-round action, at a speed of 240 ft. It must move in a straight line, but does not provoke attacks of opportunity while jetting.



Leena, Ragesian Knight **CR 8**

Female human fighter 8

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex)

hp 65 (8 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), ride 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee *+1 lance* +15/+10 (1d8+8, ×3) or mwk heavy pick +14/+9 (1d6+5, ×4)

Ranged heavy crossbow +11 (1d10+2, 19-20)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11

Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds, oil of magic weapon*

Atk Options Improved Mounted Strafe, Power Attack, Spirited Charge

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Elite Training (lance), Equine Stalwart*, Improved Mounted Strafe*, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)

Skills Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Ride +14

Possessions combat gear plus full plate, cold iron heavy shield, mwk heavy pick, *+1 lance*, silver short sword, four daggers, two javelins, net, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 10 *+1 bane bolts* (4 *human-bane*, plus 2 each *elf-bane*, *orc-bane*, and *dwarf-bane*), 2 days of rations, Ragesian knight's stalwart warhorse (*q.v.*), military saddle, banded mail barding, 10 gp

Ragesian Knight's Stalwart Warhorse CR —

N Large animal (horse)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +5

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19

hp 37 (5 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2; evasion when within 5 ft. of rider

Speed 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee two hooves each +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Feats Endurance, Run

Skills Listen +5, Spot +5

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

Tricks (Ex) combat riding, attack unnatural creatures

Legate Kolvus **CR 12**

This tall, strangely charming man regards you with a cocked eyebrow. He is dressed like a rich politician, but carries a bow of red wood beneath his cloak.

Male advanced erinyes

LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness, *true seeing*; Listen +25, Spot +25

Languages Infernal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 31, touch 16, flat-footed 25 (+6 Dex, +8 natural, +7 armor); +2 deflection against good attacks; Dodge, Mobility

hp 170 (18 HD); **DR** 5/good

Immune fire, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 24

Fort +19, **Ref** +20, **Will** +18; +2 vs. good effects

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee mwk longsword +25/+20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+9/19–20)

Ranged *+2 flaming composite longbow* +26/+21/+16/+11 (1d8+7/×3 plus 1d6 fire) or erinyes rope +24 ranged touch (entangle)

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +23

Atk Options Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Special Actions Shot on the Run

Combat Gear 20 cold iron arrows, 20 silver arrows, 20 adamantine arrows

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th)

At will—*greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *charm monster* (DC 19), *minor image* (DC 17), *magic circle against good* (self only), *unholy blight* (DC 19)

3/day – *telepathic bond, veil*

Str 22, Dex 22, Con 21, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 20

Feats Dodge[B], Improved Initiative, Improved Precise Shot, Mobility[B], Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*unholy blight*), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run

Skills Bluff +26, Concentration +17, Diplomacy +32, Escape Artist +17, Hide +26, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Move Silently +26, Search +14, Sense Motive +25

Possessions combat gear plus *efficient quiver*, *+3 mithral shirt*, *+2 flaming composite longbow* [Str +6], *cloak of resistance +3*

Entangle (Ex) Kolvus carries a stout rope some 50 ft. long that entangles opponents of any size as an *animate rope* spell (caster level 16th). He can hurl this rope 30 ft. with no range penalty.

See in Darkness (Su) Kolvus can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, even that created by a *deeper darkness* spell.

True Seeing (Su) Kolvus continuously uses *true seeing*, as the spell (caster level 14th).



Lemure Horde **CR 11**

Twenty lemures

LE Huge outsider (unit of Medium outsiders, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +15, Spot +15

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14

hp 54 (12 HD); DR 5/silver or good

Immune fire, poison, mind-affecting

Resist acid 10, cold 10

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee bounding claws +32 (1d4+20)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +32

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 5

SQ unit traits

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a *fireball* (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics Lemure hordes just charge and overrun their enemies mindlessly, though they follow orders from other devils.

Lieutenant Kormus **CR 8**

Male half-orc fighter 8

LN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 65 (8 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee *+1 battleaxe* +16 (1d8+9, ×3) or silver shortsword +14 (1d6+5, 19–20)

Ranged mwk composite shortbow +10 (1d6+4, ×3)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12

Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, three *potions of cure serious wounds, potion of fly*

Atk Options Power Attack

Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10

Feats Elite Training (battleaxe)*, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)

Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +7

Possessions combat gear plus full plate, cold iron heavy shield, *+1 battleaxe*, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, 10 *+1 human bane arrows*, silver shortsword, 5 days of rations.

Living Wind **CR 11**

The air comes alive before you and buffets you, threatening to stop your flight.

N Large elemental (air, extraplanar)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +29, Spot +29

AC 23, touch 19, flat-footed 13 (–1 size, +10 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 156 (24 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +24, **Will** +10

Speed fly 100 ft. (20 squares) (perfect)

Melee two slams each +28 (2d6+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +30

Atk Options Combat Reflexes

Special Actions intercept

Str 18, Dex 30, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 11

SQ natural invisibility

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Listen +29, Move Silently +31, Search +29, Spot +29

Intercept (Ex) Living winds serve Flight (*q.v.*), and wish to protect her. They usually move with her, then ready actions to fly in front of the path of any creature trying to get within 30 ft. of Flight, so that the creature flies through the living wind's threatened space and provokes an attack of opportunity.

Natural Invisibility (Su) This ability is constant, allowing a living wind to remain invisible even when attacking. This ability is inherent and not subject to the *invisibility purge* spell.

Lkendreis **CR 8**

Female elf wizard (evoker) 8

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision ; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Elven

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14

hp 20 (8 HD)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7 (+9 vs. enchantment)

Immune sleep

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee longsword +3 (1d8–1, 19–20)

Ranged longbow +7 (1d8–1, ×3)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Combat Gear *elemental gem* (air), two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of fly*, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of cure light wounds*, *wand of magic missile* (CL 1st, 25 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 8th, +7 ranged touch)

4th – *greater invisibility*, *ice storm* (DC 17), *wall of ice*

3rd – *daylight*, *haste*, *lightning bolt* (DC 16), *protection from energy*, sonic *lightning bolt*

2nd – *flaming sphere*, *minor image*, *invisibility*, sonic *scorching ray*, still *magic missile*

1st – *alarm*, *magic missile* ×3, *protection from evil*, *shield*

0 – *detect magic*, *light* ×2, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost* ×2

Prohibited Schools Conjuration, Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 10

SQ mageknight, familiar

Feats Armor Proficiency (light), Energy Substitution (sonic), Spell Penetration, Still Spell

Skills Concentration +10, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +9, Spellcraft +16

Possessions spell components, *+1 chain shirt*, *+1 mithral buckler*, mithral gloves worth 200 gp, 10 pp, two doses of silversheen, *hand of the mage*

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *daylight*, *dimensional anchor*, *fly*, *jump*, *scorching ray*, *shocking grasp*, and *spider climb*

Longinus **CR 17**

Longinus wears a white mask with blue highlights, and the rest of his body is hidden by gloves and a hooded white robe, etched with gold and black feathers, representing the Stormchaser Eagle.

Male human cleric 13/monk 4

LN Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages Common, Elven

AC 28, touch 26, flat-footed 25; Dodge; evasion

hp 119 (17 HD)

Fort +13, **Ref** +11, **Will** +17

Buff Suite *shield of faith* (+4 AC), *spell resistance* (SR 29), *invisibility purge* (65 ft. radius), *true seeing*, *bless*.

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); Mobility

Melee *+3 thundering/merciful quarterstaff* +16/+11 (1d6+4 plus 1d6 sonic or nonlethal) or *+3 thundering/merciful quarterstaff* flurry +14/+14/+9 (1d6+4 plus 1d6 sonic or nonlethal)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Stunning Fist (7/day; Fort DC 23 negates)

Special Actions West Wind Style; spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead 6/day

Combat Gear *wand of cure serious wounds* (18 charges), *wand of hold person* (23 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 13th, DC 15 + spell level)

7th – *spell turning*[D], *mass cure serious wounds*

6th – *antimagic field*[D], *greater dispel magic*, *heal*

5th – *break enchantment*, *righteous might*, *spell resistance*[D], *true seeing*, *wall of stone*



4th – *dimension door*[D], *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *neutralize poison*, *restoration*, *sending*
3rd – *dispel magic* ×3, *fly*[D], *invisibility purge*, *meld into stone*
2nd – *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *delay poison*, *find traps*, *hold person*, *locate object*[D], *zone of truth*
1st – *bless*, *comprehend languages*, *longstrider*[D], *obscuring mist*, *remove fear*, *sanctuary*, *shield of faith*
0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*
D domain spell **Domains** Magic, Travel

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 16
Feats Combat Casting, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Extra Turning, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Concentration), Stunning Fist, West Wind Style
Skills Concentration +24, Diplomacy +19, Jump +10, Knowledge (religion) +17, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12, Spellcraft +17, Tumble +12
Possessions *+3 thundering/+3 merciful quarterstaff*, *amulet of natural armor +2*, *periapt of wisdom +4*, *ring of protection +4*, scroll of *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, 180 pp.

West Wind Style (Su) Longinus can expend a use of Stunning Fist as a free action to gain a fly speed of 30 ft. (good), lasting for one round. If he continues to expend Stunning Fist uses round after round, he does not fall between his turns. When he uses this ability, he can also grant a willing creature within 30 ft. a fly speed equal to its land speed.

Tactics When the heroes are about to confront Longinus in adventure eleven, Longinus casts the spells in his buff suite as soon as he detects them. If pressed, Longinus will also cast *divine power* and *righteous might*.

With Divine Power hp 136; melee +24/+19/+14 or +22/+22/+17/+12 (1d6+7 plus either 1d6 sonic or nonlethal); grapple +21

With Righteous Might AC 29 (touch 26, flat-footed 26); Fort +14; hp 136; melee +17/+11 or +15/+15/+10 (1d8+4 plus either 1d6 sonic or nonlethal); grapple +19; DR 6/evil; Large size

With Divine Power and Righteous Might AC 29 (touch 26, flat-footed 26); hp 153; Fort +14; melee +26/+21/+16 or +24/+24/+19/+14 (1d8+9 plus either 1d6 sonic or nonlethal); grapple +23; DR 6/evil; Large size

Lord Dashgoban CR 5

Middle-aged male dwarf aristocrat 6
LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init –2; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Dwarven, Giant, Orc

AC 12, touch 8, flat-footed 12; +4 dodge bonus vs. giants
hp 33 (6 HD)
Immune divination, mind-affecting
Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** +5; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk mace +5 (1d8–1) or shortsword +3 (1d6–1, 19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Str 8, Dex 7, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 12
SQ dwarf traits
Feats Negotiatior, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Weapon Focus (mace)
Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +21, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Sense Motive +12.
Possessions Eight Lands boon, mwk chain shirt, mwk mace, noble's outfit

Eight Lands Boon (Su) As long as he is touching soil from Dassen, Lord Dashgoban is protected by *mind blank*. The beneficiaries of this boon can choose to lower it willingly. This effect's caster level is 15th.



Lord Gorquith CR 9

Wretched skeletal limbs stretch out from within this viscid mass of brown ooze, and sizzling pseudopods lash out toward you.
Male undead aristocrat 6
LE Huge undead (augmented ooze)
Init –5; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2 (blind)
Aura cold aura 10 ft.
Languages Common, Gnome, Orc

AC 3, touch 3, flat-footed 3 (-2 size, –5 Dex)
hp 104 (16 HD)
Immune cold, ooze immunities, undead immunities
Fort +5, **Ref** +0, **Will** +14

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares), climb 10 ft.
Melee slam +13 (2d4+6 plus 1d4 acid plus 1d6 cold)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +23
Special Actions constrict, improved grab

Str 23, Dex 1, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 18
SQ ooze traits, undead traits
Feats Negotiator[B], Persuasive, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)
Skills Bluff +15, Climb +22, Diplomacy +19, Forgery +11 Gather Information +6, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (Local) +11, Sense Motive +16, Sleight of Hand –3
Possessions *pink & green sphere ioun stone* (+2 Cha)

Cold Aura (Ex) Gorquith constantly emits an aura of cold in a 10 ft. radius around himself. His melee attacks deal additional cold damage, in addition to his oozy acid damage.
Constrict (Ex) Gorquith deals automatic slam, acid, and cold damage with a successful grapple check.
Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, Gorquith must hit with his slam attack. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he establishes a hold and can constrict.

Ooze Traits (Ex) Because of his oozy form, Gorquith is immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, polymorph, and stunning. Because he has no clear front or back, it is not subject to flanking or critical hits. Further, because he is blind, he is immune to gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions, and other attack forms that rely on sight.

Undead Traits (Ex) Because he is undead, Gorquith has immunity to all mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, and death effects. Gorquith is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability drain, or energy drain and is immune to damage to his physical ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution), as well as to fatigue and exhaustion effects. Negative energy (such as an *inflict* spell) can heal Gorquith. Furthermore, Gorquith is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless) and is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when he is reduced to 0 hit points or less, he is immediately destroyed. He is not affected by *raise dead* and *reincarnate* spells or abilities; *resurrection* and *true resurrection* turns him into a living, intelligent ooze with 6 levels of aristocrat. Gorquith does not breathe, eat, or sleep.

Lord Shaaladel **CR 20**

Ruler of the Shining Land of Shahalesti, Lord Shaaladel stands tall and stern, his blonde hair short-cropped to highlight his sharp ears and high cheeks, the marks of his elvish heritage. His dress lives up to his shining title, with stark blues and bright silver adorning his mithral breastplate, crisp cloak, and hauberk. He wears at his hip a seemingly mundane longsword, and on his left arm a unique bladed shield that covers his forearm, then bends over his hand like the claw of an eagle. Pride gleams in his grey eyes.

Middle-aged male elf commander 8/fighter 12

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision, celestial sight; Listen +4, Spot +31

Aura shadow purge 60 ft.

Languages Common, Celestial, Elven, Orc

AC 46 (+5 Dex, +10 armor, +5 natural, +5 deflection, +6 shield, +5 *defending* weapon), touch 20, flat-footed 36

hp 162 (20 HD)

Immune sleep, movement impairment (*freedom of movement*)

Fort +18, **Ref** +10, **Will** +14 (+16 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee Gray Blade +29/+24/+19/+14 (1d8+15 plus 2d6 vs. humans or orcs plus negative level on crit, 17-20) and Talon +22/+17 (1d4+4 plus 1d6 cold) or

Gray Blade +31/+26/+21/+16 (1d8+15 plus 2d6 vs. humans or orcs plus negative level on crit, 17-20)

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +22

Atk Options Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack

Special Actions leadership performances (4/day), battle cry ("Burn them with our holy light!"), direct orders +8

Combat Gear *glove of storing*, six *potions of cure serious wounds*, six *potions of heroism*, *potion of neutralize poison*, *potion of remove blindness/deafness*, *potion bracer*

Str 18, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 19, Wis 14, Cha 26

SQ initiative bonus +2, widen command (40 ft.)

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Elite Training (longsword), Fearless Leader, Greater Weapon Focus (longsword), Greater Weapon Specialization (longsword), Improved Shield Bash, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Legendary Leader, Maneuver Leader, Mobility, Spring Attack, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword), Whirlwind Attack

Skills Bluff +13, Diplomacy +30, Intimidate +19, Jump +12, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Perform (oratory) +31, Ride +10, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (celestial), Spot +31, Swim +7, Tumble +11.

Possessions combat gear plus *+5 human-bane orc-bane keen longsword of life stealing*, *+5 mithral defending frost ghost-touch bladed shield*, *amulet of natural armor +5*, *belt of physical perfection*, *boots of the winterlands*, Crown of Shining Glory, *eyes of the eagle*, *+5 mithral breastplate*, *+5 mithral light shield*, *ring of freedom of movement*, *ring of protection +5*, *wings of flying*

Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour, if Shaaladel shouts a battle cry while in combat (typically "Burn them with our holy light!") he gains a bonus leadership performance that must be used during that combat.

Celestial Sight (Su) Shaaladel is of a royal elvish bloodline with a distant celestial heritage. He has a unique form of vision in which all living things shine with an inner light, and all inanimate objects and non-living creatures appear as gleaming crystal. In this vision, he can see regardless of light conditions, since the inner light of any living creature effectively illuminates a 60-ft. radius. This does not allow him to see invisible creatures, but he can detect the presence of creatures behind cover or concealment by noticing their glow.

Celestial sight functions just as well in well-lit areas as it does in dark areas. However, magical darkness blocks his line of sight for this ability, and a shadowdancer using its hide in plain sight ability does not appear to emit light.

Shaaladel cannot be blinded or dazzled by bright light.

Direct Orders (Ex) Each round as a swift or immediate action, Shaaladel may choose one of the following types of rolls. He grants every ally within 40 ft. a +8 bonus to rolls of that type for one round:

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) All of Shaaladel's allies within 40 ft. gain a +2 bonus to initiative checks.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Four times per day, Shaaladel can inspire or direct his allies in one the following ways. Unless otherwise noted, these performances require a standard action, and do not affect Shaaladel himself. They only affect allies who can understand Shaaladel's language.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant allies who hear it +4 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting as long as Shaaladel remains within 40 ft., and then for 5 rounds thereafter.
- Inspire greatness, granting allies within 40 ft. 17 temporary hit points and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as he is within 40 ft. and for 5 rounds thereafter.
- Grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action or a single attack with whatever weapon he has available.
- Make a Perform (oratory) check. Every ally within 40 ft. that is afflicted with a hostile mind-affecting effect breaks free if Shaaladel's Perform check beats that effect's save DC.

Tactics Shaaladel is strongest with many allies at his side, but he is arrogant and likes to handle major foes personally, directing his allies with encouragement that their deeds will bring glory to the elvish people, even if he is sending them to their deaths like the pawns they are.

Shaaladel enjoys flying over a line of enemies, landing behind their defenses, and cutting them down from within their ranks. Against land-bound foes he will use Spring Attack while flying, staying out of reach as much as possible. If he finds himself overwhelmed, he has many items at his disposable for getting out of trouble. He simply tucks his gray longsword into his *glove of storing*, retrieves what he needs, uses it, then rearms himself.

If he expects a fight, Shaaladel will start off by drinking a *potion of heroism*, then has one of his assistants cast *daylight* on his sword for dramatic effect. Because of his reliance on magic items, Shaaladel is loath to go into battle against inquisitors, and usually sends his subordinates in first to dispatch them.

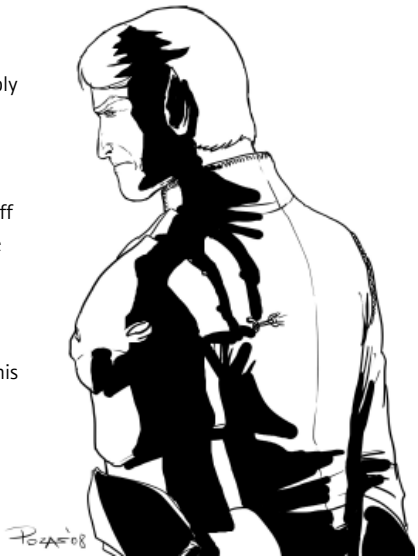
Lord Shaaladel's Unique Items As the ruler of a sovereign nation, Shaaladel has access to several magic items of impressive power.

The Gray Blade is a *+5 human-bane orc-bane keen longsword of life stealing*. Unlike the rest of his people, Shaaladel wields a sword that does not shed light. It is the result of a failed attempt to create a new Torch, and while the sword can drink life energy, it lacks the teleportation powers of the Torch. Whenever the Gray Blade deals a critical hit, it bestows a negative level and the wielder gains 1d6 temporary hit points, lasting 24 hours. One day after being struck, subjects must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or the level loss is permanent.

Talon is a custom-made *+5 mithral light shield* that fits on Shaaladel's forearm and hand like a large, flared gauntlet. A trio of long blades extend over Shaaladel's hand like an eagle's talon, functioning as *+5 mithral defending frost ghost-touch light shield spikes*, except that they deal slashing damage.

Shaaladel's *belt of physical perfection* is a blue velvet sash with silver stitching that grants a +6 enhancement bonus to the wearer's Str, Dex, and Con.

The Crown of Shining Glory is the signature item of the ruler of Shahalesti. It grants its wearer a +6 enhancement bonus to Int, Wis, and Cha. Additionally, it creates *shadow purge*, a 60-ft. emanation that eliminates all darkness and shadows, and wreathes Shaaladel and his allies in sparkling light. This effect can be deactivated at will, but Shaaladel keeps it up to defend against a particular shadowdancer. Finally, as a mark of Shaaladel's vanity, the crown conceals itself with *invisibility* so that the Lord of the Shining Land's aquiline features are not obscured.



Lurker in the Eye **CR 13**

In the depths of the eye lurks something dark and massive, its tentacles trapped just below the surface, its three eyes the color of a blood moon.

Advanced aboleth

LE Gargantuan aberration (aquatic)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +32, Spot +32

Languages Aboleth, Aquan, Common, Undercommon

AC 17, touch 7, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +11 natural, –4 size)

hp 276 (24 HD)

Fort +15, **Ref** +9, **Will** +19

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares), swim 60 ft.

Melee four tentacles each +21 (1d12+12 plus slime)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +36

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack

Special Actions enslave

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th)

At will – *hypnotic pattern*, *illusory wall*, *mirage arcana*, *persistent image*, *programmed image*, *project image*, *veil*

Str 34, Dex 12, Con 24, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 17

Feats Ability Focus (enslave), Alertness, Cleave, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Improved Natural Attack, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Concentration +34, Knowledge (history) +27, Listen +32, Spot +32

Enslave (Su) Three times a day, the lurker in the eye can use *dominate monster* (Will DC 25 negates) with a range of 30 ft. Remove curse breaks this effect.

Slime (Ex) A blow from an aboleth's tentacle can cause a terrible affliction. A creature hit by a tentacle must succeed on a DC 29 Fortitude save or begin to transform over the next 1d4+1 minutes, the skin gradually becoming a clear, slimy membrane. An afflicted creature must remain moistened with cool, fresh water or take 1d12 points of damage every 10 minutes. The slime reduces the creature's natural armor bonus by 1 (but never to less than 0). *Remove disease* stops the transformation, but only *heal* can reverse it.

Mucous Cloud (Ex) The frozen climate where the heroes meet the Lurker in the Eye in adventure eight prevents the aboleth savant from using its mucous cloud.

Lyceum Upperclassman **CR 5**

Male human wizard 5
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10
hp 14 (5 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +1 (1d4–1, 19–20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1
Spells Prepared (CL 5th, ranged touch +3)
3rd – *dispel magic*, *summon monster III*
2nd – *invisibility*, *acid arrow*, *touch of idiocy*
1st – *magic missile*, *minor image*, *shield*, *summon monster I*
0 – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 13
SQ spellduelist
Feats Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana)), Spellduelist
Skills Bluff +9, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (one other) +11, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +13
Possessions various keepsakes, incidentals, writing implements and parchment
Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips

Lyon Petris **CR 4**

Male human warrior 5
LG Medium humanoid (human)
Init +3; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15
hp 32 (5 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee longspear +8 (1d8+4, ×3)
Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with longspear)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +8
Atk Options Power Attack
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*

Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 13
Feats Cleave, Endurance, Power Attack
Skills Profession (farmer) +9
Possessions combat gear plus longspear, breastplate



Madness **CR 11**

The body of the grinning gnome woman slowly fades away as a massive coiling form materializes where she once stood. Her smile is the last part of her to vanish, just as the monstrous form snaps its multiple viper jaws. Before you slithers a roiling swarm of serpents, each bigger around than a man's torso. Venom glistens on their fangs, and light reflects squamously across their scales, like the interior of the swarm is impossibly deep. You look upon it, and you know its name is Madness.

NE Huge aberration (trillith, incorporeal)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –2, Spot –2
Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Dodge, Mobility; miss chance 50% (incorporeal) or 20% (maddening spirit)
hp 105 (11 HD); fast healing 5
SR 16 (see maddening spirit)
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (perfect)
Melee eight bites each +11 (1d10+4 plus poison)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +20
Atk Options Combat Reflexes
Special Actions embody, endow, engulf, grant boon, project image
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11)
At will – extended *lesser confusion* (DC 15), *suggestion* (DC 17)
3/day – *confusion* (DC 17), *dream*, *mislead*, *nightmare*

Str 19, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 15, Wis 6, Cha 15
SQ amorphous form, maddening spirit, poisoned bite
Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Bluff +16, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +18, Spellcraft +16

Amorphous Form (Ex) Because Madness moves in nonlinear dimensions, she fills the space of a Huge creature, even though her body is simply one large viper. She appears multiple times within that space, resembling a coiling mass of serpents with multiple heads. Madness can occupy any adjoining area of nine squares, or as few as four adjoining squares. Madness cannot be flanked.

Embody (Su) Madness is naturally incorporeal and so cannot do much to harm her foes other

than to use *confusion* and *suggestion*. However, as a full round action, Madness can create a corporeal form for herself by entering an object (or group of objects) of roughly Huge size that resembles a giant serpent or a mass of snakes. Madness still keeps the same general shape, though her composition would be that of the matter used to create her body.

When the heroes face Madness, she will likely use either debris and remains from a shattered wooden staircase to create her body, or she will embody a massive tapestry in Steppengard's throne room, ripping it down from its hangings and turning into a coiled serpentine shape twisting upon itself.

While embodied, Madness loses the incorporeal subtype, and loses her fly speed. Madness can leave this body as a standard action. Any damage dealt to the embodied form affects Madness normally, and stays with her even once she returns to incorporeality.

If Madness is affected by the fey Song of Forms, she spontaneously embodies, not requiring any object to enter. If she is already embodied she cannot leave her body.

Endow (Su) As a full round action while incorporeal, Madness can grant its power to any living creature within 30 ft. When she does so, she vanishes, effectively absorbed by the creature. At will, or when the creature dies, Madness reappears within 30 ft. of the creature, unharmed by the ordeal. The endowed creature gains Madness's boon.

A trillith that is endowing a creature can be targeted and affected by mind-affecting effects, and can be driven out with remove curse, break enchantment, or a similar effect. However, the trillith itself cannot be harmed while endowing a creature, except by mind-affecting effects.

Engulf (Ex) Because most of her space is empty, Madness can move up to her base speed and enter areas occupied by other creatures as a full-round action.

Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against Madness as she attempts to engulf them, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 20) or be engulfed. On a successful save they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as Madness moves forward.

Engulfed creatures are considered grappled, and can escape with a successful grapple check. Madness can divide her attacks however she chooses among creatures she threatens and creatures she has engulfed. If Madness moves, she does not carry engulfed creatures with her.

Grant Boon (Su) Madness can lend her power to several creatures at once without actually entering their bodies. To do so she must touch each creature. She gains a negative level, and the creature gains the ability to once per day try to shake free of a mind-affecting effect. If the creature fails a save against a mind-affecting effect, she can attempt the save again 1 round later at the same DC. This boon is the equivalent of a magic item with a price of 1,500 gp.

If Madness is slain while affected by the Song of Forms, the nearest ten intelligent creatures within 150 ft. gain her boon, which is permanent unless dispelled. Madness can grant this boon to up to ten creatures.

Maddening Spirit (Su) Whenever Madness is targeted by mind-affecting or divination (including *detect* spells and *true seeing*) effect, the creature that cast or created that effect must make a Will save (DC 19) or be *confused*. Each round thereafter the creature may make a save as a free action to attempt to break free of the confusion.

If Madness fails a save against a mind-affecting effect, on its next turn it can attempt one additional save against the same DC to break free.

Because Madness exists partially in multiple places at once, all spells and attacks against her have a 20% chance not to affect her. This is not a miss chance because of concealment, however, so sneak attacks can still affect Madness. Creatures currently under the influence of effects that cause confusion, or who are otherwise insane, are not affected by this miss chance. With their grip on reality loosened, such creatures are able to see the underlying impossible form of Madness, and strike the iteration of her serpentine non-Euclidian form that is most manifested in our world.

Likewise, a creature that is confused or insane automatically beats Madness's spell resistance.

Poisoned Bite (Su) Injury, Will DC 17. Initial damage *confusion* for two rounds; secondary damage permanent mental disorder, such as an intense phobia, vicious paranoia, hallucinations, or a splinter personality. *Neutralize poison* or *dispel magic* can end the confusion and stop the poison from dealing its secondary damage, but cannot cure the insanity. The insanity can only be removed with *break enchantment* (caster level 11th), as well as by *greater restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, and *wish*.

Project Image (Su) At will when she is incorporeal, Madness can assume the appearance of a creepy dark-haired gnome woman. Madness's true form is only visible to creatures using *true seeing*.

Rejuvenation (Ex) As Madness is a creature of dream and not of flesh, she is hard to kill. While incorporeal or while embodied, if Madness is destroyed she does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later.

Madness can only be truly slain two ways. If her body dies while she is trapped by the Song of Forms or similar magic, she dies, and her corpse remains even after the magic ends. Alternately, if Madness is destroyed and all the damage is caused by mind-affecting or negative energy effects, the trillith's spirit is obliterated. In this case, no creature gains the benefits of Madness's boon.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp) Madness can only use *suggestion* against creatures that are confused. Creatures who fail their save are no longer confused, and instead follow the instructions of the suggestion. When she uses *mislead*, she smiles a wide grin, and then her body dissolves into tiny illusory serpents that writhe on the ground and flee, though her smile remains in place for a round.

Magnus Fightmaster **CR 14**

This hulking orc warrior seethes with unholy energy, and his eyes are wide with fanatic glory. The gauntlets of his crimson spiked armor end in wicked claws.

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Orc

Aura detects as overwhelming evil; unholy aura

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 23 (+9 armor, +4 deflection)

hp 105 (14 HD); **SR** 25 (against good spells and spells from good casters)

Fort +17, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10

Immune possession and mental influence

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee *+2 flaming greataxe* +24/+19/+14 (1d12+14 plus 1d6 fire, 19–20/×3) or two clawed gauntlets +22 (1d6+4, 19–20)

Ranged darkfire burst +14 ranged touch (7d6 fire and unholy)

Base Atk +14; **Grp** +22

Special Actions Awesome Blow; darkfire smite, scour magic, smite good (3/day, +2 attack, +14 damage), spell-storing weapon, spiked armor

Str 26, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 14

SQ dark blessing, scour magic, unholy aura

Feats Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greathammer or greataxe), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Spellcraft)

Skills Spellcraft +9

Possessions *+1 spiked full plate, cloak of charisma +2, belt of strength +4, hurling bracers*

Awesome Blow (Ex) A claw of Leska can only use this ability if he has activated his *hurling bracers*, which allows him to count as Large for one round. As a standard action he may make a melee attack, taking a –4 penalty to his attack roll. If he hits, the struck creature must make a Reflex save (DC = damage dealt) or be knocked 10 ft. in the direction of the Claw's choice.

Darkfire Smite (Su) As a standard action, a claw of Leska can fire a ray of unholy flame, to a maximum range of 30 ft. Any creature struck takes 7d6 points of damage. Half of this damage is fire, and half is unholy energy. For one round after using this ability, the claw of Leska loses the benefit of its unholy aura (detailed below).

Scour Magic (Su) Five times a day as an immediate action, a claw of Leska can attempt to counter a spell. He rolls 1d20+13 against a DC of 11 + the spell's caster level. If he succeeds in countering the spell, he gains 5 temporary hp per level of the spell countered. These temporary hp vanish after a minute.

Smite Good (Su) Three times a day a claw of Leska can make any melee attack be a smite, gaining a +2 bonus to attack and dealing +14 damage if the target is good.

Unholy Aura (Sp) The claw of Leska has a +4 deflection bonus to AC, a +4 resistance bonus to saves, SR 25 against good spells and spells from good casters, and is immune to possession and mental influence. If a good creature strikes the claw, that creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or take 1d6 points of Str damage.

Malhûn, the Blood Wolf **CR 10**

Advanced heartsblood vampire worg paladin of slaughter 8

CE Medium undead (augmented magical beast)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +6

Aura debilitating aura (10 ft. radius)

Languages Elven

AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 23 (+5 Dex, +8 natural, +5 armor); Dodge

hp 119 (14 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 10/silver and magic

Immune undead immunities

Resist turn resistance +4, cold 10, electricity 10

Fort +10, **Ref** +13, **Will** +12

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +17/+12/+7 (1d6+10)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +22

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Power Attack; blood drinking, cause disease (1/week), reckless offense, smite good (2/day, +2 attack, +8 damage), trip

Special Actions alternate form

Spells Prepared (CL 4th)

2nd – *eagle's splendor*

1st – *corrupt weapon, magic weapon*

Str 24, Dex 20, Con —, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 14

SQ undead traits, unholy toughness, vampire weaknesses

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Grapple, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Reckless Offense, Track, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Hide +14, Intimidate +10, Listen +14, Move Silently +16, Spot +14, Survival +3.

*Malhûn has a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

Possessions *+1 mithral shirt barding*

Alternate Form (Su) Malhûn can assume the form of a swarm of vipers (as a centipede swarm, except poison does Con damage) or a large viper as a standard action. Once per year on the winter solstice it can assume the form of a feral male elf, but reverts to normal at sunrise.

If Malhûn is reduced to 0 hp, he is not destroyed. Instead he collapses into a swarm of vipers and attempts to escape by burrowing into the ground. While in this form, it cannot attack and further damage has no effect, though if a bird manages to catch one of the serpents and devour it, Malhûn is destroyed. As long as it can reach shadowed soil within 2 hours, however, it will begin to heal.

Blood Drinking (Ex) Malhûn can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Con damage each round the pin is maintained. On each such successful attack, Malhûn gains 5 temporary hit points.

Cause Disease (Sp) Malhûn can use *contagion* once per week.

Death Touch (Su) Malhûn can inflict wounds with its touch, dealing 12 damage, divided as he chooses throughout the day.

Debilitating Aura (Su) All enemies within 10 ft. take a –1 penalty to their AC.

Reckless Offense (Ex) Malhûn can take a –4 penalty to AC to gain a +2 bonus to his attacks for one round.

Trip (Ex) When Malhûn hits with a bite attack, it can attempt to trip the opponent (+7 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip Malhûn.

Unholy Toughness (Ex) Malhûn adds its Cha modifier × HD to its hit points. He gains this ability instead of the standard paladin mount.

Vampire Weaknesses (Ex) Malhûn has the same vulnerabilities to holy symbols, sunlight, and running water that normal vampires do. It avoids birds as a normal vampire avoids garlic, and cannot come within 20 ft. of an intentionally built fire, such as a campfire or hearth. It can be perpetually incapacitated by staking it with a bone from a large bird, and can be slain by immersion in water, decapitation, or if the final damage is dealt by a bird.

Mantidrake **CR 10**

A roar more powerful than anything you've ever heard announces the presence of this creature as it swoops over the hill toward you. Green-scaled with wings and claws like a dragon, its tail is a cluster of a shimmering black spikes.

Neutral Huge Dragon (Air)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +15, Spot +19

Languages Draconic

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 19

hp 135 (10 HD)

Immune sleep, paralysis, sonic

Fort +14 **Ref** +8 **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (clumsy)

Melee two claws each +20 (1d8+12) and bite +18 (2d6+6)

Ranged up to six spikes each +11 (1d8+6, 19–20)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +27

Atk Options Cleave, Flyby Attack, Power Attack

Special Actions breath weapon (30-ft. cone, 6d6 sonic; Ref DC 22 half, every 1d4 rounds)

Str 34, Dex 13, Con 25, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 11

Feats Cleave, Flyby Attack, Multi-Attack, Power Attack, TrackB

Skills Intimidate +13, Listen +15, Spot +19, Survival +15

Breath Weapon (Su) The mantidrake can unleash a devastating roar once every 1d4 rounds, a 30-ft. cone of sonic energy dealing 6d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 22 half).

Spikes (Ex) A mantidrake can release a volley of spikes as a standard action, attacking up to 6 targets within 30 ft. of each other. The attack has a range of 180 ft. with no range increment. The mantidrake can release up to twenty-four spikes in a given day.

Markus **CR 7**

Male human ranger 2/cleric 5

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18

hp 48 (7HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee mwk longsword+8 (1d8+2)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +8/+8 (1d8+2) with Rapid Shot or mwk composite longbow +10 (1d8+2)

Base Atk +5, **Grp** +7

Combat Gear 2 *javelins of lightning*

Special Actions turn undead (5/day, check 1d20+3, HD turned 2d6+8), wild empathy (check 1d20+5)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th; save DC 12 + spell level)

Markus has no spells left to cast when he encounters the PCs.

Domains Luck, Travel

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 16

SQ favored enemy (magical beasts), Luck domain power, Travel domain power

Feats Quick Draw, Rapid Shot[B], Run, Scribe Scroll, Stealthy, Track[B]

Skills Balance +2, Climb +2, Concentration +7, Hide +8, Jump +2, Knowledge (religion) +5, Move Silently +8, Survival +11, Swim +2,

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 chain shirt*, *+1 heavy steel shield*, mwk longsword, mwk composite longbow (with 20 arrows), holy symbol, silver dagger, mwk climbing/outdoor gear, rope, *ring of protection +1*, ring presentation box

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Notes Markus's gold *ring of protection +1* is hidden in a small red presentation box. Before the Ragesians captured them, Markus was about to propose, with this ring, to Sophia.

Markus cast all his spells prior to being petrified to set traps, fight basilisks, and travel the mountains. He can ordinarily prepare five 0-level, four 1st-level, three 2nd-level, and one 3rd-level spell, plus one domain spell of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level.

Marton, Ragesian Knight **CR 8**

Male human fighter 8
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex)
hp 65 (8 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)
Melee *+1 lance* +15/+10 (1d8+8, ×3) or mwk heavy pick +14/+9 (1d6+5, ×4)
Ranged heavy crossbow +11 (1d10+2, 19-20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds, oil of magic weapon*
Atk Options Improved Mounted Strafe, Power Attack, Spirited Charge

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Elite Training (lance), Equine Stalwart, Improved Mounted Strafe, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)
Skills Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Ride +14
Possessions full plate, cold iron heavy shield, mwk heavy pick, *+1 lance*, silver short sword, four daggers, two javelins, net, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 10 *+1 bane bolts* (4 *human-bane*, plus 2 each *elf-bane*, *orc-bane*, and *dwarf-bane*), 2 days of rations, Ragesian knight's stalwart warhorse (*q.v.*), military saddle, banded mail barding, 10 gp

Ragesian Knight's Stalwart Warhorse CR —

N Large animal (horse)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +5

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19
hp 37 (5 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2; evasion when within 5 ft. of rider

Speed 35 ft. (7 squares)
Melee two hooves each +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6
Feats Endurance, Run
Skills Listen +5, Spot +5

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.
Tricks (Ex) combat riding, attack unnatural creatures

Menchi the Headless **CR 8**

Grinning moronically atop a black worg, this goblin's arms and waist are adorned with heavy bangles and pouches, and though he wears a vest of chain armor, his chest is bare, revealing a massive – and seemingly once-fatal – scar across his neck and torso.

Male goblin battle sorcerer 8
NE Small humanoid (goblin)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Goblin

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15
hp 59 (8 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee Small trident +6/+1 (1d6–1)
Ranged Small trident +10/+5 (1d6–1; range inc. 10 ft.)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +1
Combat Gear *gloves of arrow snaring*
Atk Options mounted combat
Spells Known (CL 8th)
4th (2/day) – *wall of fire*
3rd (4/day) – *haste*
2nd (6/day) – *flaming sphere* (DC 14), *mirror image*
1st (6/day) – *alarm*, *grease*, *jump*, *shield*
0 (5/day) – *daze*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14
SQ goblin traits
Feats Improved Familiar (worg), Mounted Combat, Obedient Fire
Skills Concentration +13, Intimidate +3, Ride +12
Possessions combat gear plus four small tridents, small chain shirt

Obedient Fire (Su) Menchi can direct any number of *flaming sphere* spells he has cast as a single move action.

Ekseru, Worg Familiar **CR —**

NE Medium magical beast

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Worg, speak with master

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16

hp 30 (8 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee bite +7 (1d6+4 plus trip)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Atk Options trip

Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 14, Cha 10

SQ familiar traits

Feats Alertness, Track

Skills Hide +4, Jump +16, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +6, Survival +2 (+6 when tracking by scent)

Possessions *ring of jumping +5*

Trip (Ex) If Ekseru hits with her bite, she can attempt to trip as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, her opponent cannot react to trip her.

Metamorphosis **CR 10**

A young, dark-haired half-elf, this woman's exact facial features and clothing shift constantly, except for a red and gold feathered shawl that she always wears.

CN Medium aberration (trillith, shapechanger)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages Telepathy 100 ft.

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+2 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 97 (15 HD); **DR** 10/transmuted

Immune critical hits, flanking, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning

Fort +9, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11; metamorphic spirit

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +12 (1d3+1)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +12

Atk Options Combat Expertise

Special Actions alternate form, grant boon

Spell-Like Abilities (CL15th)

At will – *fly*, *gaseous form*, *make whole*, *mass enlarge person*, *mass reduce person*, *polymorph*, *stone shape*, *wood shape*

Str 12, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 14

SQ amorphous

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Climb +7, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +20, Knowledge (nature) +16, Listen +12, Spot +12, Tumble +8

Alternate Form (Su) Metamorphosis can assume any form of Small to Large size as a swift action. This ability functions as *quickened polymorph* (caster level 15th).

Amorphous (Ex) Metamorphosis's physical form is constantly in flux. As such, she is immune to critical hits and flanking.

Damage Reduction (Ex) Metamorphosis's damage reduction can be bypassed by creatures who are under the effect of transmutation magic.

Grant Boon (Su) If Metamorphosis is slain, the nearest intelligent creature within 150 ft. gains the ability to use *alter self* once per day as a spell-like ability (caster level 3rd). This boon is the equivalent of a magic item with market value 6,000 gp.

Metamorphic Spirit (Su) Due to her everchanging nature, each round Metamorphosis gets a new save against any magical effect that is affecting her.

Mishap **CR 4**

Though these creatures appear to once have been humans and dwarves, their flesh appears fuzed to muscles of living ice, and their eyes are frozen.

CE Medium Aberration (air, cold)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Auran, Common

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 36 (6 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Immune cold

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), Fly 40 ft. (Average)

Melee two claws each +9 (1d4+5 plus 1d6 cold plus mishap)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +8

Atk Options cold blast

Str 20, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6

Feats Ability Focus (cold blast), Toughness, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Hide +5, Move Silently +6

Cold Blast (Su) Once per round as a standard action, a mishap can fire a 30-ft. line of chilling wind, dealing 4d6 points of cold damage (Reflex DC 16 half).

Mishap (Su) A mishap's body is suffused with disruptive magical energy. If a mishap touches another creature at all, the next time that creature casts a spell or uses a spell-like ability it must make a Will save (DC 11) or the spell or ability fails, and the creature takes damage equal to the spell's level. Multiple touches do not stack, affecting only the single next spell or spell-like ability used.

A creature which has been touched by a mishap can spend one minute and make a Spellcraft check (DC 15) to clear the disruption.

Nadia, Ragesian Knight **CR 8**

Female human fighter 8
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex)
hp 65 (8 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)
Melee *+1 lance* +15/+10 (1d8+8, ×3) or mwk heavy pick +14/+9 (1d6+5, ×4)
Ranged heavy crossbow +11 (1d10+2, 19-20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds, oil of magic weapon*
Atk Options Improved Mounted Strafe, Power Attack, Spirited Charge

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Elite Training (lance), Equine Stalwart*, Improved Mounted Strafe*, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)
Skills Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Ride +14
Possessions full plate, cold iron heavy shield, mwk heavy pick, *+1 lance*, silver short sword, four daggers, two javelins, net, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 10 *+1 bane bolts* (4 *human-bane*, plus 2 each *elf-bane*, *orc-bane*, and *dwarf-bane*), 2 days of rations, Ragesian knight's stalwart warhorse (*q.v.*), military saddle, banded mail barding, 10 gp

Ragesian Knight's Stalwart Warhorse CR —

N Large animal (horse)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +5

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19
hp 37 (5 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2; evasion when within 5 ft. of rider

Speed 35 ft. (7 squares)
Melee two hooves each +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6
Feats Endurance, Run
Skills Listen +5, Spot +5

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.
Tricks (Ex) combat riding, attack unnatural creatures

Nahrem, Shahalesti Necromancer **CR 12**

Death hangs in the air around this pale elf mage.
Male elf wizard (necromancer) 12
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision ; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Elven, Infernal

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10 (+3 Dex)
hp 42 (12 HD) plus 16 temporary hp
Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11 (+13 vs. enchantment)
Immune sleep
Buff Suite *false life*, *true seeing*; these spells last more than 12 minutes, so Nahrem casts them before entering combat

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk shortsword +10/+5 (1d6–1, 19–20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +5
Combat Gear two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, eight *potion of cure light wounds*
Spells Prepared (CL 12th, +9 ranged touch, +11 w/spectral hand)
6th – cold-substituted *chain lightning*, *disintegrate*, quickened *spectral hand*, ~~*true seeing*~~
5th – *break enchantment*, empowered *vampiric touch* ×2, quickened *true strike*, *sending*
4th – *bestow curse* (DC 22), cold-substituted *wall of fire*, cold-substituted *shout*, *contagion* (DC 22), empowered *touch of idiocy*
3rd – cold-substituted *lightning bolt*, cold-substituted empowered *shocking grasp*, empowered ma*gic missile*, empowered *ray of enfeeblement*, *vampiric touch*
2nd – *blindness/deafness* (DC 20) cold-substituted *flaming sphere*, ~~*false life*~~, *locate object*, *see invisibility*, *spectral hand*, *touch of idiocy*
1st – *magic missile* ×3, *ray of enfeeblement* ×2, *shocking grasp*, *true strike*
0 – *disrupt undead*, *light* ×2, *ray of frost* ×2
~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast
Prohibited Schools Conjuration, Illusion

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 22, Wis 13, Cha 10
SQ skeletal minion
Feats Empower Spell, Energy Substitution (cold), Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (necromancy), Weapon Finesse
Skills Concentration +15, Diplomacy +7, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Spellcraft +23
Possessions spell components, *cloak of resistance +2*, *headband of intellect +4*, *amulet of health +2*
Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and a variety of other useful spells

Tactics Nahrem keeps his skeletal minion by his side, so that its spiked chain can deter enemies from approaching (though against the heroes, the skeleton's attacks are laughably weak). On the spellcasting front, Nahrem is extremely dangerous, though he is fragile.

Nahrem begins by choosing someone he doesn't like the look of – almost certainly a non-elf – and then casts a quickened spectral *hand* to strike with an empowered *vampiric touch*. Thereafter he focuses all his effort on killing that one enemy, casting cold-substituted *chain lightning* (with the chosen enemy as the primary target), cold-substituted empowered *shocking grasp*, and empowered *magic missile*. Once that creature is dead, he uses a quickened *true strike* to cast *disintegrate*, then uses his various other touch spells however seems best at the time. Whenever his hit point total (including temporary hit points) drops below 40, he uses another *vampiric touch* to "heal" himself.

Skeletal Minion
CR —

NE Medium undead
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7

AC 26, touch 13, flat-footed 23 (+3 Dex, +8 natural, +5 chainmail)
hp 78 (12 HD); **DR** 5/bludgeoning
Immune cold, undead immunities
Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk spiked chain +10 (2d4+4)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +9

Str 17, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
SQ undead traits
Feats Improved Initiative

Naizelasa CR 13

Female adult green dragon
LE Huge dragon (air)
Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; Listen +24, Spot +24
Aura frightful presence 180 ft. (HD 19 or less, Will DC 21)
Languages Common, Draconic

AC 27, touch 8, flat-footed 27
hp 230 (20 HD); **DR** 5/magic
Immune acid, sleep, paralysis
SR 21
Fort +17, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), swim 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor); Fly-By Attack
Melee bite +26 (3d8+8), 2 claws +21 (2d6+4), 2 wings +21 (1d8+4), tail slap +21 (2d6+12)
Base Atk +20; **Grp** +36
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (bite 15 ft.)
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack
Special Actions Hover, Wingover; breath weapon, crush
Spells Known (CL 5)
2nd (5/day) – *blur*, *detect thoughts* (DC 15)
1st (7/day) – *expeditious retreat*, *shield*, *true strike*, *undetectable aura*
0 (6/day) – *arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *read magic*, *resistance*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6)
3/day – *suggestion* (DC 16)

Str 27, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 16.
SQ water breathing
Feats Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Power Attack, Wingover
Skills Bluff +20, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +13, Hide +0, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (nature) +18, Move Silently +20, Search +14, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +15, Swim +16
Possessions CR 13 dragon hoard including *lyre of building*

Blindsense (Ex) Dragons can pinpoint creatures within a distance of 60 ft. Opponents the dragon can't actually see still have total concealment against the dragon.
Breath Weapon (Su) 50-ft. cone, damage 12d6 acid, Reflex DC 25 half.
Crush (Ex) Area 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Small or smaller opponents take 2d8+12 points of bludgeoning damage, and must succeed on a DC 25 Reflex save or be pinned; grapple bonus +36.
Water Breathing (Ex) Naizelasa can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use her breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Nightmare Trillith **CR 12**

Born from a child's nightmare, this creature's monstrous form is horrifyingly primal.

(Nightmare trilliths can look like whatever you want – a shambling horde of screaming beetle kittens, a roaring tree with teeth that bleed, or a cackling white-skinned demon who wears stitched flesh covered in tattoos with curses written in elvish – or masses of shadows, or simple dinosaur-looking monsters, or whatever.)

CN Huge aberration (trillith)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

Aura fear (Will DC 19), 5 ft.

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 19 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +11 natural)

hp 91 (14 HD); **DR** 10/courage

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +9

SR 23

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee two bites, slams, etc. each +17 (2d6+8, 19–20)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +27

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack

Str 27, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 15

SQ special abilities, nightmare spirit

Feats Cleave, Improved Critical, Improved Natural Weapon, Power Attack, Weapon Focus

Skills Intimidate +19

Damage Reduction (Ex) This nightmare trillith has DR 10/courage. This damage reduction can only be bypassed by creatures that are immune to fear or who are affected by an ability that grants a morale bonus of some sort, and who are not currently affected by a fear effect. Although this trillith is terrifying, it remains vulnerable to those who are not swayed by fear.

Fear Aura (Su) This nightmare trillith can radiate a 5-ft. radius fear aura as a free action. Affected creatures must succeed on a Will save (DC 19) or become frightened. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same nightmare trillith's aura until it sleeps. Other trillith are immune to this aura. This is a mind-affecting fear ability.

Nightmare Spirit (Su) Each nightmare trillith has its own particular forms of instilling terror, as each was born from a unique nightmare of the Mother of Dreams. Any creature that causes the fatal blow to a nightmare trillith must make a Will save (DC 19) or be cursed with perpetual nightmares that prevent the creature from sleeping or resting. This is a mind-affecting fear ability.

Creatures who are immune to fear or who are affected by an ability that grants a morale bonus of some sort, and who are not currently affected by a fear effect gain a +4 bonus on caster level checks to overcome a nightmare trillith's spell resistance.

Special (Sp) Caster level 10th. Each nightmare trillith has its own set of abilities based on the particular nature of its terror. Usually these are spell-like abilities, but there are many varieties.

As a baseline, choose two spells of 3rd level or lower it can use at will, and two spells of 5th level or lower it can use 3/day. The save DC is 12 + spell level.

For example, a roaring tree with bleeding teeth might have "At will – *slow*, *vampiric touch*; 3/day – *tree stride*, *wall of thorns*." A shambling horde of screaming beetle kittens might have "At will – *hold person*, *shatter*; 3/day – *insect plague*, *shout*." A cackling tattooed demon might have "At will – *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *hideous laughter*, *ventriloquism*; 3/day – *shadow evocation*, *symbol of pain*."

You might change some of the powers of a few trillith to deal with the particular tactics of the heroes. The trillith have access to a lot of different nightmares, so if there is shadowdancer among the heroes, one trillith might be a blindingly bright entity that casts a light spell that eliminates all shadows.

Nightmare Trillith, Advanced **CR 13**

Born from a child's nightmare, this creature's monstrous form is horrifyingly primal.

(Advanced nightmare trilliths can look like whatever you want – a shambling horde of screaming beetle kittens, a roaring tree with teeth that bleed, or a cackling white-skinned demon who wears stitched flesh covered in tattoos with curses written in elvish – or masses of shadows, or simple dinosaur-looking monsters, or whatever.)

CN Huge aberration (trillith)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

Aura fear 5 ft. (Will DC 23)

AC 28, touch 9, flat-footed 27 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +19 natural)

hp 157 (21 HD); **DR** 10/courage

SR 23

Fort +11, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee 2 natural attacks +26 (2d6+12, 19–20)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +31

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack

Str 35, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 16

SQ enhanced natural attacks, nightmare spirit

Feats Cleave, Improved Critical, Improved Natural Weapon, Power Attack, Weapon Focus

Skills Intimidate +27

Bane (Su) As a free action once per encounter, a nightmare trillith can declare a chosen target. The trillith's attacks against that creature are treated as a bane weapon, gaining a +2 enhancement bonus to attack and damage as well as dealing +2d6 damage.

Damage Reduction (Ex) This nightmare trillith has DR 10/courage. This damage reduction can only be bypassed by creatures that are immune to fear or who are affected by an ability that grants a morale bonus of some sort, and who are not currently affected by a fear effect. Although this trillith is terrifying, it remains vulnerable to those who are not swayed by fear.

Enhanced Natural Attacks (Su) An advanced nightmare trillith's attacks count as magical for the purpose of bypassing damage reduction.

Fear Aura (Su) This nightmare trillith can radiate a 5-ft. radius fear aura as a free action. Affected creatures must succeed on a Will save (DC 23) or become frightened. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same nightmare trillith's aura until it sleeps. Other trillith are immune to this aura. This is a mind-affecting fear ability.

Nightmare Spirit (Su) Each nightmare trillith has its own particular forms of instilling terror, as each was born from a unique nightmare of the Mother of Dreams. Any creature that causes the fatal blow to a nightmare trillith must make a Will save (DC 23) or be cursed with perpetual nightmares that prevent the creature from sleeping or resting. This is a mind-affecting fear ability.

Creatures who are immune to fear or who are affected by an ability that grants a morale bonus of some sort, and who are not currently affected by a fear effect gain a +4 bonus on caster level checks to overcome a nightmare trillith's spell resistance.

Special (Sp) Caster level 10th. Each nightmare trillith has its own set of abilities based on the particular nature of its terror. Usually these are spell-like abilities, with a save DC of 12 + spell level, but there are many varieties.

The trillith present in adventure ten (and their powers) are:

Hallucination. At will – *major image*, 3/day – *mirage arcana, programmed image.*

Hungry Tree. At will – *slow, vampiric touch*; 3/day – *wall of thorns.* It can move through its own *wall of thorns* without hindrance.

Kitten Beetle Horde. At will – *hold person, shatter*; 3/day – *insect plague, shout.*

Tattooed Demon. At will – *hideous laughter*; 3/day – *greater shadow evocation.*

Slicer. 3/day – *blade barrier.*

Stalker. 3/day – *mislead*, quickened *true strike.* A creature struck by Stalker's claws is blinded (Fort DC 23 negates).

Abyssal Pillar nightmare trillith. These trillith have a variety of abilities, and attack with an accompanying mob of lesser trillith. To reflect this, each creature within 20 ft. of a nightmare trillith in the abyssal pillars takes 4d6 damage per round (Reflex DC 23 half).

Nira **CR 6**

Female halfling rogue 5/assassin 1
NE Small humanoid (halfling)
Init +5; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Halfling, Orc

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 20
hp 36 (6 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +11, **Will** +2 (+4 vs. fear), evasion
Resist fire 20

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 shortsword* +9 (1d4+1, 19–20; first attack is poisoned, Fort DC 18, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex)
Ranged dagger +8 (1d3, 19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** –1
Combat Gear *elixir of swimming*, two potions of *cure light wounds*
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Feint; sneak attack +4d6, death attack (DC 12)
Spells Known (caster level 1st)
1st (1/day) – *detect poison*, *true strike*

Str 10, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 10
SQ uncanny dodge, poison use
Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +12, Bluff +9, Disable Device +10, Disguise +8, Hide +16, Move Silently +14, Search +10, Tumble +13
Possessions *+1 mithral chain shirt*, *+1 shortsword* dosed with giant wasp poison, four daggers, mwk thieves' tools, two potions of *water breathing*

Tactics When the heroes encounter her in adventure three, Nira is just getting paid to do a job; as soon as she drops below 20 hp she looks for a way out. Until then, she feints and sneak attacks.

Nullifier **CR 10**

These creatures look like they were once members of civilized humanoid races, but have since had their bodies mutated and twisted beyond recognition. Strips of flesh have been stretched and pulled over their eyes, ears, and noses, and their bodies have been twisted and reattached in strange and disturbing ways. The skin itself is a mottling of black, gray, and white spots. Their mouths show no emotion, but as takes a deep breath of the icy air, you note that it has no tongue.

NE Medium aberration (augmented humanoid)
Init +4; **Senses** emotion sense 120 ft.; Listen +0, Spot –10
Languages Common, Draconic, Orc

AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+4 Dex, +8 natural)
hp 133 (14 HD); **SR** 30
Immune mind-affecting effects
Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9
Weakness human mind

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee unarmed strike +14/+9 (1d6+4)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +15
Atk Options Improved Grapple, emotion drain
Special Actions thief of desire

Str 18, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 10
Feats Ability Focus (thief of desire), Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)
Skills Concentration +22, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +19, Spellcraft +19

Emotion Drain (Su) Nullifiers' prefered tactic is to grapple the most emotional foe they can sense. A nullifier automatically inflicts a penalty of 1d4 to the Cha of its foe with a successful grapple check, in addition to dealing unarmed strike damage. A Will save (DC 17) negates this penalty. This penalty is cumulative, and a creature reduced to 0 Cha falls unconscious and turns into a nullifier within an hour if it is not healed (or eaten by other nullifiers). This is a mind-affecting effect.

When a nullifier dies, the Cha penalty it inflicted ends as the creature's senses return.

Emotion Sense (Su) Nullifiers have poor vision, but can psionically sense emotions of creatures within 120 ft. Mindless creatures and those under the effect of *mind blank* or *calm emotions* are effectively invisible to nullifiers. A creature that is psionically focused effectively has 20% concealment against a nullifier. Even non-psionic creatures can attempt to calm their emotions enough to hide from a nullifier; as a full-round action a creature can make a Concentration check (DC 20) to clear its mind of emotions for one minute.

Creatures currently influenced by emotion-affecting magic cannot hide from nullifiers, even if they have calmed their emotions or are psionically focused. In fact, creatures experiencing strong emotions, such as through emotion-influencing magic, barbarian rage, or more traditional fits of passion, are easier for nullifiers to attack. Against such a creature, a nullifier gains a +4 bonus to its attack rolls and grapple checks.

Emotion sense extends through materials, but is limited the same way as detection spells: it is stopped by 3 ft. of wood or dirt, 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, or a thin sheet of lead.

Human Mind (Ex) Nullifiers were once humanoids, and so count as both humanoids and aberrations for all purposes.

Thief of Desire (Su) As a standard action, a nullifier can turn its empty gaze upon any creature within 150 ft. A creature that fails a Will save (DC 20) is stunned for one round as the nullifier steals all desire from its heart and replaces them with bottomless feelings of despair. This immediately ends any emotion-influencing effect currently affecting the creature, and for one minute thereafter, the creature is affected as if by *crushing despair*, taking a –2 penalty to attack rolls, saves, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls (and making the creature easy prey for the nullifier). This is a mind-affecting effect.

Nuura **CR 8**

Female earth mephit cleric 5

N Small outsider (earth, extraplanar)

Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common, Terran

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16 (+1 size, –1 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 49 (8 HD); **DR** 5/magic; fast healing 2

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee two claws each +9/+4 (1d3+3)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +5

Atk Options Power Attack

Special Actions breath weapon, change size 1/hour, feat of strength 1/day, summon mephit 1/day, turn undead 5/day (check 1d20+2, HD turned 2d6+7), turn air creatures or rebuke earth creatures 5/day (check 1d20+2, HD turned or rebuked 2d6+7)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th)

3rd – *magic vestment*, *stone shape*[D]

2nd – *aid*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*[D]

1st – *bless*, *entropic shield*, *magic stone*[D], *shield of faith*

0 – *cure minor wounds* ×3, *resistance*, *virtue*

D domain spell **Domains** Earth, Strength

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)

1/day—*soften earth and stone*

Str 17, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 15

SQ spontaneous casting (*cure wounds* spells)

Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Power Attack, Toughness

Skills Bluff +6, Escape Artist +5, Hide +9, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Heal +8 (+10 with kit), Intimidate +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Spot +6, Use Rope –1 (+1 with bindings)

Possessions healer's kit (10 uses)

Breath Weapon (Su) 15-ft. cone of rock shards and pebbles, damage 1d8, Reflex DC 15 half.

Change Size (Sp) Once per hour, Nuura can magically change her size. This works just like an *enlarge person* spell, except that the power works only on Nuura. This is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Fast Healing (Ex) Nuura's fast healing works only if she is underground or buried up to her waist in earth.

Feat of Strength (Su) Nuura gains +5 enhancement bonus to Str. Activating this power is a free action, it lasts 1 round, and it is usable once per day.

Summon Mephit (Sp) Once per day, Nuura can attempt to summon another mephit of the same variety, much as though casting a *summon monster* spell, but with only a 25% chance of success. Roll d%: On a failure, no creature answers the summons that day. A mephit that has just been summoned cannot use its own summon ability for 1 hour. This ability is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Tactics After casting a suite of buff spells on Haaketh (*q.v.*), Nuura will stay out of the way as Haaketh spars with the heroes. She will not attempt to summon another mephit. After the fight, she will try to heal Haaketh (he will refuse the aid) and then will heal the heroes.

Olaf **CR 4**

Male half-orc fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 35 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +10 (1d8+6, ×3) or shortsword +8 (1d6+4, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +6 (1d6+4, ×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8
Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*
Atk Options Power Attack

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +3
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, heavy shield, mwk battleaxe, shortsword, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4], 20 arrows, 5 days of rations

Oller Pennyteller **CR 9**

Small and skinny, even for a gnome, this bug-eyed picklock is burdened with many tools, and wears a bulging satchel that hangs near his hip.
Male gnome rogue 9
NG Small humanoid (gnome)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +0
Languages Common, Gnome

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +4 armor, +2 shield); improved uncanny dodge
hp 50 (9 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3 (+5 vs. illusions); evasion

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 Small heavy mace* +9/+4 (1d6+2)
Ranged splash weapon +11/+6 ranged touch (varies)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear ten acid flasks, five alchemist fire flasks, 20 holy water flasks, five tanglefoot bags, five thunderstones, *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 3rd, 50 charges)
Atk Options sneak attack +5d6

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12
SQ trap sense +3, improved uncanny dodge
Feats Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (grenade-like weapon)
Skills Disable Device +11, Escape Artist +15, Hide +15, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +15, Search +11, Use Magic Device +13
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 Small buckler*, *+1 Small studded leather*, *+1 Small heavy mace*, mwk thieves' tools, *handy haversack* filled with combat gear, from which he can quick-draw weapons

Orc Savage **CR 4**

Male elite orc barbarian 4
CN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot –1
Languages Orc

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +1 Dex); uncanny dodge
hp 39 (4 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0
Weakness light sensitivity

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee spear +9 (1d8+7/×3)
Ranged spear +5 (1d8+5/×3)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +9
Atk Options rage 2/day (6 rounds); Power Attack, Cleave
Combat Gear five spears

Str 20, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6
SQ illiteracy, trap sense +1
Feats Power Attack, Cleave
Skills Climb +12, Intimidate +5, Listen +6, Survival +6
Possessions combat gear plus studded leather, dagger

Rage (Ex) When raging, the orc savage's stats change as follows:
AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 11; uncanny dodge
hp 47 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2
Melee spear +11 (1d8+10/×3)
Ranged spear +5 (1d8+7/×3)
Str 24, Con 18
When the rage ends, the orc savage is fatigued until the end of the encounter.

Ostalin Hippogriff Rider **CR 8**

Male human fighter 8
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 65 (8 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); mounted 40 ft. (8 squares) or fly 90 ft. (18 squares)
Melee *+1 lance* +15/+10 (1d8+8, ×3) or mwk longsword +14/+9 (1d8+3, 19–2 0)
Ranged *+1 longbow* +12 (1d8+3, ×3)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11
Atk Options Improved Mounted Strafe, Power Attack, Spirited Charge
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of levitate*

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Improved Mounted Strafe, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow)
Skills Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Ride +14
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, mwk longsword, +1 lance, 2 days of rations, military saddle, chain mail barding, 10 gp



Ostalin Royal Guard **CR 10**

These guards wear immaculate livery and are well equipped with the best of everything. They appear confident, capable, and utterly devoted to Khagan and country.

Male human fighter 10
LN Medium humanoid
Init +5; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Elven, Orc

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19
hp 105 (10 HD)
Fort +14*, **Ref** +8*, **Will** +9*

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+2 falchion* +18/+13* (2d4+10, 15–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +13* (1d8+4, ×3)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +13
Atk Options Power Attack
Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength*, two *potions of cure serious wounds*, *potion of fly*, *potion of darkvision*

Str 17, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11
Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Elite Training (falchion), Great Fortitude, Improved Critical, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (falchion), Weapon Specialization (falchion)
Skills Climb +9, Intimidate +8, Jump +9, Listen +4, Ride +7, Spot +4
Possessions *+2 full plate*, *+2 adamantine falchion*, *cloak of resistance +2*, mwk composite shortbow [Str +3] with 20 +1 arrows, two days of rations

* **Khagan's Sword Bonus (Su)** Ostalin royal guards get +2 on attack rolls and saving throws when within 60 ft. of Khagan Onamdammin (*q.v.*).

Papuvin, Songleader **CR 6**

This fey man, though wiry and emaciated, wears a commanding expression in his angular face. Studded leather arm covers his chest and legs, but not his arms, which are muscular like a warrior's. Wings like splayed, withered leaves fan behind him, one of them scarred and damaged from an old battle.

Male seela bard 1/fighter 4/seela paragon 1
CN Medium fey
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13
hp 44 (6 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee unarmed strike +7 (1d3+6 nonlethal plus 1 lethal)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +11
Atk Options Cleave, Improved Grapple, Power Attack
Spells Known (CL 1st)
0 (2/day) – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mending*, *virtue*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)
1/hour – *ghost sound*, *message*

Str 16, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 16
SQ bardic knowledge +1, bardic music (2/day – countersong, fascinate, inspire courage), fallow touch, glide
Feats Cleave, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike)
Skills Climb +11, Diplomacy +10, Jump +14, Perform (sing) +9, Swim +7, Tumble +9
Possessions *+1 studded leather armor* glamered to reveal heroic amounts of skin, *amulet of mighty fists +1*

Fallow Touch (Su) Papuvin's unarmed strikes deal an additional 1 point of damage, and he heals 1 point of damage with each strike. Prolonged exposure deals 1d6 points of damage per round, and heals an equal amount. Papuvin can heal no more damage than 4 hit points in a day in this way. He cannot harm another seela in this way.



Phaaughsmat **CR 19**

Lithe and deeply green like a jungle serpent, this dragon trails a cloud of cyan vapors as he moves.

Male very old green dragon

LE Huge dragon (air)

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; Listen +33, Spot +22

Aura frightful presence 270 ft. (HD 28 or less, Will DC 28)

Languages Auran, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Orc

AC 36, touch 8, flat-footed 36 (–2 size, +28 natural)

hp 362 (29 HD); **DR** 15/magic

Immune acid, paralysis, sleep

Resist *ioun stone* absorbs 50 spell levels (8th level or lower); **SR** 29

Fort +27, **Ref** +21, **Will** +25; evasion

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 40 ft.

Melee bite +38 (2d8+11, 19–20) and two claws +36 (2d6+5) and two wings +36 (1d8+5) and tail slap +36 (2d6+16);

Base Atk +29; **Grp** +48

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (bite 15 ft.)

Atk Options Cleave, Flyby Attack, Great Cleave, Power Attack

Special Actions breath weapon

Combat Gear *anklets of speed* (as *boots of speed*)

Spells Known (CL 11th)

5th (4/day) – *dominate person* (DC 19), *telepathic bond*

4th (7/day) – *dimension door*, *greater invisibility*, *polymorph*

3rd (7/day) – *dispel magic*, *magic circle against chaos*, *major image*, *protection from energy*

2nd (7/day) – *glitterdust*, *locate object*, *magic mouth*, *shatter*, *whispering wind*

1st (7/day) – *alarm*, *charm person*, *disguise self*, *magic missile*, *shield*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)

3/day – *suggestion* (DC 17)

Str 33, Dex 10, Con 23, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 18

SQ dragon traits, water breathing

Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Cleave, Eschew Materials, Flyby Attack, Great Cleave, Hover, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite), Wingover

Skills Bluff +29, Concentration +25, Diplomacy +30, Hide –8, Intimidate +37, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (history) +22, Knowledge (religion) +22, Listen +33, Move Silently +29, Search +33, Sense Motive +33, Spellcraft +19, Spot +22

Posessions combat gear plus *amulet of resistance +5* (as *cloak of resistance*), *ring of evasion*, *lavender and green ioun stone* (absorbs 50 levels of spells, 8th level or lower), dragonskin *handy haversack* full of 4,000 platinum pieces and 59,000 gp worth of precious emeralds

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Breath Weapon (Su) 50-ft. cone of corrosive gas, 18d6 acid damage (Reflex DC 32 half). Lingers one minute, or until dispersed by strong winds. Creatures in the lingering cloud at the end of their turn take 9d6 acid damage (Reflex DC 32 half). Creatures in the cloud who are adjacent have concealment, and those beyond 5 ft. have total concealment.

After breathing, Phaaughsmat must wait 1d4 rounds before his breath recharges.

Crush (Ex) Area 20 ft. by 20 ft.; Medium or smaller opponents take 2d8+12 points of bludgeoning damage, and must succeed on a DC 25 Reflex save or be pinned; grapple bonus +36.

Frightful Presence (Su) 180-ft. radius, Will DC 28 or be shaken for 4d6 rounds. Creatures with 4 or few Hit Dice instead become panicked for that period.

Water Breathing (Ex) Phaaugsmat can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use his breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Pilus **CR 20**

This cloaked figure has the vitality of youth but an old man's body, his bald head wrinkled well beyond its years. A pulsing cord of flesh connects his upper back with a tongue of flesh extending down from the ceiling of the chamber. You can see his body pulse with blue-white energy in time with the undulations of the tongue.

Male human sorcerer 18/monk 2

LE Medium humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** *true seeing*; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant

AC 24, touch 17, flat-footed 21

hp 108 (20 HD); **DR** 10/ – (stops 150 points of damage)

Immune fire (until 120 points of fire damage taken)

Fort +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +19; evasion

Buff Suite *stoneskin*, *protection from energy* (fire, 120 points), *spell turning*, *true seeing*, *mage armor*

Speed — (attached to *Tempest*, can't move)

Melee unarmed flurry +18/+18 (1d6+6 plus 1d6 electricity, 20 plus 1d10 electricity)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +11

Atk Options Stunning Fist 6/day (DC 23), East Wind Style

Combat Gear *gauntlets of shocking burst*, two *potions of cure serious wounds*

Spells Known (CL 18th, DC 18 + spell level)

9th (3) – *time stop*

8th (5) – *horrid wilting*, *power word stun*

7th (6) – *greater teleport*, *prismatic spray*, *spell turning*

6th (6) – *chain lightning*, *globe of invulnerability*, *true seeing*

5th (6) – *baleful polymorph*, *dominate person*, *mind fog*, *wall of force*

4th (7) – *fear*, *fire shield*, *resilient sphere*, *stoneskin*

3rd (7) – *dispel magic*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*, *protection from energy*

2nd (8) – *darkvision*, *invisibility*, *shatter*, *spider climb*, *touch of idiocy*

1st (8) – *charm person*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *shocking grasp*

0 (6) – *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Buff suite expends one 4th, one 3rd, one 7th, one 6th, and one 1st-level spell, respectively

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 17, Cha 26

Feats Combat Casting, Deflect Arrows, East Wind Style[B], Great Fortitude, Improved Unarmed Strike[B], Iron Will, Persuasive, Spell Focus (evocation), Still Spell, Stunning Fist[B], Summon Familiar, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed)

Skills Bluff +29, Concentration +25, Craft (biomancy) +22, Jump +8, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Spellcraft +22, Tumble +10

Possessions *cloak of charisma +6*, *amulet of mighty fists +5*, *ring of protection +3*

East Wind Style (Su) Whenever Pilus makes a Stunning Fist attack, his unarmed strike deals +1d6 points of electricity damage. Additionally, he can expend a use of Stunning Fist to cast *shocking grasp* as a swift action (the *shocking grasp* occurs instead of the normal stunning effect), or expend two Stunning Fist uses to both cast *shocking grasp* and stun, dealing 1d6+6 plus 6d6 electricity plus stunning (Fort DC 23 negates).

Gauntlets of Shocking Burst (Su) These gauntlets add 1d6 electrical damage to the wearer's natural attacks, and an additional 1d10 points of electrical damage if the wearer makes a critical hit with a natural attack.



Pitchlings CR 3

These slender fey step nimbly through the forest, naked except for a coating of black pitch smeared across their bodies. They carry jagged longbows, but no arrows, though rows of long, sharp spines stick out from their backs. As one trains its bow on you, it snaps a spine off from its shoulder and nocks it like an arrow.

CN Medium Fey (fire)

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Sylvan

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 13

hp 18 (4 HD); **DR** 5/cold iron

Fort +2, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

Immune fire; **Weak** cold

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee bow spikes +2 (1d4, 19–20)

Ranged mwk spiked longbow +8 (1d8, ×3), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2

Combat Gear 4 flasks of greater alchemist fire

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6)

At will – entangle (DC 13), ghost sound, speak with plants

3/day – deep slumber (DC 15), flame arrow

Str 10, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14

Feats Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Skills Craft (alchemy) +7, Hide +12, Listen +9, Move Silently +12, Spot +9, Survival +9

Possessions combat gear plus mwk spiked longbow (functions as a longbow, but can also be used as a two-handed melee weapon that deals dagger damage)

Pixis the Assassin CR 8

Female human rogue 6/monk 2

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +11

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 15 (19 with *mage armor*), touch 15, flat-footed 15

hp 49 (8 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8; evasion

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +9 (1d6) or unarmed strike +7/+7 (1d6) with flurry of blows

Ranged mwk shuriken +9 (1d2) or mwk shuriken +7/+7 (1d2) with flurry of blows

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Stunning Fist (3/day, DC 16); sneak attack +3d6

Combat Gear *potion of darkvision*, four *potions of mage armor*, four *potions of magic fang*, *wand of detect magic* (35 charges)

Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Stunning Fist, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed)

Skills Climb +9, Escape Artist +14, Hide +14, Jump +9, Listen +11, Move Silently +14, Open Locks +14, Search +12, Spot +11, Tumble +14, Use Magic Device +8

Possessions combat gear plus 20 mwk shuriken, *boots of striding and springing*, *cloak of resistance +1*

Tactics By the time the heroes meet Pixis in adventure four, she has consumed a *potion of darkvision* (she has a spare).

Pristina Whitehair **CR 9**

Female human wizard (conjurer) 9
CG Medium humanoid (human)
Init +5; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Auran, Common, Celestial

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10
hp 24 (9 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +3 (1d4–1, 19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3
Spells Prepared (CL 9th, ranged touch +5)
5th – *mirage arcana* (DC 20), *summon monster V*
4th – *lesser globe of invulnerability*, *solid fog*, *wall of ice* (DC 19)
3rd – *dispel magic* ×2, *fireball* (DC 17), *major image* (DC 18), *summon monster III*
2nd – *invisibility* ×2, *glitterdust* (DC 17), *gust of wind*, *see invisibility*, *summon monster II*
1st – *disguise self*, *magic missile*, *minor image* (DC 16), *obscuring mist*, *shield*, *summon monster I*
0 – *acid splash*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*
Prohibited Schools Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 19, Wis 14, Cha 13
SQ Spellduelist
Feats Augment Summoning, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Focus (illusion), Spellduelist
Skills Bluff +13, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +17
Possessions *lesser metamagic silent rod*, *cloak of resistance +2*, witch's pointy *hat of intelligence +2*, various incidentals
Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and a selection of other useful spells

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Pristina casts a spell she may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to her casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing her Bluff check. If Pristina wins the opposed check, she fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before she begins casting her spell. If she fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Tactics Pristina's duels are well-liked by the students, since she almost always starts off by casting *mirage arcana*, turning the arena into a visually interesting location that gives her cover. Often this is something elaborate, like a forest gully filled with dozens of caves she can hide inside, tall bushes and cascading waterfalls providing concealment. She is particularly fond of making the area of the illusion not match the actual area of the arena, which has tricked many mages into accidentally wandering outside the ring and being disqualified, or searching for her inside the illusion while she stands on the outside.

Her general tactic is to separate herself from her foe with illusions, *solid fog*, or a *wall of ice*, and spend a few rounds summoning monsters before removing the partition and assaulting her foe. She tries not to give her foes the option of making saving throws, so for instance she would use a wall of ice to simply divide the battlefield in two, rather than trying to trap her foe in a hemisphere of ice.

Professor Talon **CR 10**

Male human spirit binder 7 / devil binder 3
LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 50 ft.; Blind-Fight; *true seeing*, *detect thoughts* (CL 9); Listen +3, Spot +3
Aura regal bearing 60 ft. (opponents cannot ready or delay actions)
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+5 natural)
hp 68 (10 HD)
Immune fire
Resist acid 10, cold 10; add electricity 10, sonic 10 with Reserve Spirit
Fort +12, **Ref** +5, **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 50 ft. (good); *freedom of movement* with Reserve Spirit
Melee dagger +6 (1d4-1/19-20)
Ranged light crossbow +7 (1d8/19-20)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +6
Special Actions Reserve Spirit 1/day
Combat Gear *potion of cure serous wounds* (in bowl), *potion of shield of faith*
Pact Magic (CL 9th; 10th for fiendish spirits)
At will – entangle, wildshape
1/3 rounds – shatter
1/5 rounds – acid gout, entangling vine, brief invisibility
2/day – rakshasa's rage
1/day – undying aid

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 15
SQ wild empathy +12 (felines only)
Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Fiend Pact[B], Focal Constellation (Fiend)[B], Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes
Skills Bluff +10, Decipher Script +8, Diplomacy +4, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +10, Listen +3, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Perform (oratory) +16, Spot +3, Swim +7
Possessions Masterwork greatsword (not proficient unless activates Reserve Spirit, below), mithral chainmail (not currently worn – 10 rounds to don, 5 rounds to don hastily),

Pact Magic (Su) The Professor currently has a good pact with Dark Blood, and has bonus spirits of devil (erinyes), Aza'zati, and Fourash; these benefits are included elsewhere in the stat block and give him additional abiltiesas set out below. Each ability is a standard action except where noted.

Acid Gout Talon emits a 15-foot cone of acid that deals 5d4 acid damage to all in the area of effect (Reflex half).

Brief Invisibility Talon becomes invisible for 1 round and gains a +4 bonus to Move Silently.

Entangle Professor Talon gains a magical 50 ft. erinyes rope that he can use to entangle as with the spell *animate rope*; Talon can also can throw the rope up to 30 ft. as the erinyes ability.

Entangling Vine One Medium or smaller target within 70 ft. must make a Reflex save or be entangled; on its turn, the victim can attempt a DC 20 Str check or Escape Artist check to escape.

Rakshasa's Rage Professor Talon turns into a bloodthirsty tiger hybrid for 7 rounds (fatigued when it ends) and gain +4 Dex, +4 Con, +10 ft. movement, 60 ft. darkvision (effectively +10 ft. for Talon), Multiattack feat, a primary bite attack that does 1d6 damage, 2 secondary claw attacks that do 1d4 damage, DR 5 (piercing and good), +3 natural armor. (If Professor Talon uses this ability while in wild shape form, adjust his ability scores, speed, and AC, but for other benefits use either the rage benefit or the benefit of the wild shape form, whichever is better.)

Shatter As the spell, except this ability can also be used against creatures in armor or with natural armor, in which case it does 9d6 sonic damage (Fort half).

Undying Aid As a swift action, Professor Talon heals 1d4+8 hit points.

Wild Shape Talon changes into a Small, Medium, or Large animal or magical beast as the druid ability, but may only choose feline forms (he prefers dire lion form).

Reserve Spirit (Merickel) (Su) Once per day as a standard action, Professor Talon can gain the following benefits for two minutes; the standard action consists of him inflicting 1 hp of damage to himself using a greatsword.

- Resist electricity and sonic 10
- *Freedom of movement*
- +2 bonus to attack rolls, saves and skill checks when holding greatsword
- +1 to all d20 rolls when within 30 ft. of an arcane spellcaster or engaged in combat with a demon
- Greatsword proficiency

Quillathe **CR 16**

This ebony skinned elf woman moves with lithe agility despite her dark red armor, wielding a lashing bladed whip in one hand, a dimly glowing rapier in the other. Her dark red-violet hair is plaited in a spiderweb pattern, and her lips curl with haughty scorn. Her crimson-eyed gaze seems to pierce through you.

Female drow duelist-path assassin 15

CE Medium humanoid (drow)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Orc, Sylvan, Undercommon

AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 20 (+4 Dex, +8 armor, +1 natural, +1 deflection); improved uncanny dodge

hp 85 (15 HD)

Immune sleep

SR 26

Fort +7 (+12 against poison), Ref +17 (improved evasion), Will +6 (+8 against enchantments, spells, and spell-like abilities)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee *+1 wounding bladed whip* +20/+15/+10 (1d6+1/19–20 plus 1 Con) or

+1 wounding rapier +20/+15/+10 (1d6+1/18–20 plus 1 Con) or

+1 wounding bladed whip +16/+11/+6 (1d6+1/19–20 plus 1 Con) and *+1 wounding rapier* +16/+11 (1d6+1/18–20 plus 1 Con)

Reach 5 ft. (15 ft. with bladed whip)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +11

Atk Options Combat Reflexes; death attack (DC 19), kesh poison, sneak attack +8d6, spell-like abilities, swift feint

Combat Gear four *potions of cure serious wounds*, *potion of heroism*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)

1/day – *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Str 10, Dex 26, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12

SQ drow traits, lay low, poison use

Feats Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bladed whip), Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Lashing Whip, Third Hand, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +12, Bluff +19, Climb +11, Escape Artist +10, Hide +23, Intimidate +3, Jump +17, Listen +9, Move Silently +23, Search +10, Sleight of Hand +15, Spot +9, Tumble +18

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 wounding rapier*, *+1 wounding bladed whip*, *+3 mithral breastplate*

Tattoos *amulet of natural armor +1*, *boots of striding and springing of spider climbing*, *gloves of dexterity +6*, *ring of protection +1*

Death Attack (Ex) After three rounds of observation, Quillathe's sneak attack can kill target or paralyze it for 1d6+15 rounds (Fort DC 19 negates).

Kesh Poison (Ex) Quillathe has learned to manipulate her body to create two varieties of poison. She is immune to her own poison.

The first type of poison, black kesh, is created when her saliva mixes with a victim's blood. As a standard action she can spit on a weapon to apply the poison, though the poison only remains potent for one minute thereafter. This is a paralyzing poison. A creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) when first affected and each round thereafter, for ten rounds. Each failed save deals 1d6 points of Dex damage.

The second type of poison, violet kesh, must be tasted or ingested to function, and it results from the mixture of Quillathe's saliva and her own blood. She must spend a move action to bite herself and mix the poison, and can then deliver the poison with a kiss as a free action if she successfully pins a creature. A creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) when first affected by the poison, and then each round thereafter, for ten rounds. Each failed save deals 1d6 points of Wis damage. A creature reduced to 0 Wis by this poison sees visions of events around the world.

Lashing Whip (Ex) With a whip, Quillathe threatens any square the whip can reach, except for squares within her natural reach.

Lay Low (Ex) The difficulty for anyone to locate Quillathe through tracking, or through social skill checks such as Gather Information or Knowledge (local), is increased by 7.

Poison Use (Ex) Quillathe is trained in the use of poison and never risks accidentally poisoning herself when applying poison to a blade.

Swift Feint (Ex) Quillathe can attempt to feint in combat as a swift action, rather than a standard action.

Tattoos (Su) Quillathe has inscribed on her person a number of magical tattoos that duplicate the effects of magical items (see above). A magical tattoo cannot be disarmed, sundered, or stolen.

Third Hand (Ex) When armed with a whip, Quillathe is treated as having a free hand that can reach as far as her whip's reach, which she can use to manipulate objects, throw weapons, or even grapple.

Grappling with a whip works as it would with an unarmed strike, except that if successful Quillathe deals her whip's damage instead of her unarmed damage. She must still enter her opponent's square if she wants to maintain the grapple, or she can simply use her additional attacks to make grapple checks, then release her opponent at the end of her turn. With a successful grapple check, Quillathe can perform any of the following actions:

- Deal her whip's damage to her opponent.
- Move at half speed and bring her opponent with her (though he keeps the same relative distance to her).
- Pull her opponent closer, up to being adjacent.

Quillathe uses this ability to attack and grab with her bladed whip, pull her foe in, then release him and attack with her rapier at close range.



Ragesian Ambassador Serrimus **CR 6**

Human aristocrat 6/sorcerer 1
LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +0; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc, Terran

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 22 (7 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +3 (1d4–1, 19–20) or shortsword +3 (1d6–1, 19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear *ring of counterspells* (holds *charm person*)
Spells Known (CL 1)
1st (4) – *charm person*, *silent image*
0 (5) - *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue*

Str 8, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13
Feats Iron Will, Negotiatior, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)
Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +19, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Perform (percussion) +10, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +3.
Possessions combat gear plus noble's outfit, scroll of *rope trick*

Ragesian Archer, Elite **CR 8**

Male half-orc fighter 8
LE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +6 armor, +2 shield)
hp 65 (8 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee cold iron battleaxe +10 (1d8+2, ×3)
Melee silver shortsword +10 (1d6+1, 19–20)
Ranged *+1 composite longbow* +15/+10 (1d8+5, ×3)
Ranged *+1 composite longbow* +13/+13/+8 (1d8+5, ×3)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +10
Atk Options Volley Shot
Combat Gear two *potions of cure moderate wounds*

Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Elite Training (longbow)*, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Volley Shot*, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +9
Possessions *+1 breastplate*, *+1 buckler*, *+1 composite longbow [Str +2]* with 40 arrows, 10 *+1 bane arrows* (various types, typically human or elf), cold iron battleaxe, silver shortsword

Ragesian Archer, Master **CR 11**

Male half-orc ranger 1/fighter 10
LE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +6 armor, +2 shield)
hp 85 (11 HD)
Fort +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee cold iron battleaxe +14/+9 (1d8+3, ×3)
Melee silver shortsword +14/+9 (1d6+2, 19–20)
Ranged *+2 composite longbow* +20/+15 (1d8+7, 19–20/×3)
Ranged *+2 composite longbow* +18/+18/+13 (1d8+7, 19–20/×3) with Rapid Shot
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +16
Atk Options Volley Shot
Combat Gear ten *potions of cure light wounds*, twelve *+1 human-bane arrows*

Str 16, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8
SQ favored enemy (humans +2)
Feats Elite Training (longbow), Improved Critical (longbow), Improved Initiative, Improved Precise Shot, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Track, Volley Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow)
Skills Climb +3, Handle Animal +3, Jump –3, Ride +19, Survival +3
Possessions *+1 breastplate*, *+1 buckler*, *+2 composite longbow [Str +3]* with 40 arrows, *gloves of dexterity +2*, cold iron battleaxe, silver shortsword

Ragesian Archer, Standard **CR 4**

Male half-orc fighter 4
LE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +5 armor, +1 shield)
hp 35 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee cold iron battleaxe +7 (1d8+2, ×3)
Melee mwk silver shortsword +7 (1d6+1, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +9 (1d8+4, ×3)
or
mwk composite longbow +7/+7 (1d8+4, ×3) with Rapid Shot
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +5
Possessions mwk breastplate, mwk buckler, mwk composite longbow [Str +2] with 40 arrows, mwk cold iron battleaxe, mwk silver shortsword

Ragesian Assistant **CR 3**

Male or female human expert 4
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Draconic, Orc

AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9 (-1 Dex)
hp 22 (4 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee club +3 (1d6)
Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear 20 bolts

Str 11, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Dodge, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana))
Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +10, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +1, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (history) +9, Profession (graduate assistant) +7, Ride +1, Sense Motive +7
Possessions combat gear plus club, light crossbow notebook, collection of textbooks (worth 50 gp), 10 gp

Ragesian Cavalry Squad **CR 14**

Twenty knights, mostly human fighter 4, with warhorses
LN Gargantuan animal/humanoid (unit of Medium humanoids and Large animals)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +27, Spot +27
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 207 (24 HD)
Fort +18, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)
Melee lance press +38 (1d8+26)
Melee hoof stamp +37 (1d6+24)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (5 ft. with hoof stamp)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +36
Atk Options mounted strafe, rebuke magic, Spirited Charge, trample, unit tactics

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ unit traits

Mounted Strafe (Ex) A Ragesian cavalry squad can take its standard action (such as a melee attack) at any point during its movement.
Rebuke Magic (Sp) Every cavalry squad includes a well-defended inquisitor who rides with them. Five times per day as an immediate action, this inquisitor can rebuke magic, making a dispel check against a single effect with a +8 modifier.

The inquisitor can also cast the following spells twice per day: *dismissal*, *invisibility purge*, *obscuring mist*.

This inquisitor can be specifically targeted by spells and ranged attacks. He uses the squad's statistics, though attack rolls against him take a –4 penalty. If 35 damage is dealt to him, he dies, and if he dies or is otherwise taken out of commission, the squad loses this ability.

Spirited Charge (Ex) A Ragesian cavalry squad deals triple damage on a successful charge.
Trample (Ex) The unit can spend a standard action to be able to overrun (with a total +28 bonus) any number of creatures as a free action during its turn. This allows the unit to move through hostile creatures' spaces as long as those creatures are Huge or smaller. The unit makes a hoof stamp attack against every creature it knocks prone this way.
Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage

in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a *fireball* (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics Cavalry units usually charge to close the distance, then either trample or withdraw for a second charge.

Ragesian Commander, Veteran **CR 6**

Male human commander 6
LN Medium humanoid
Init +7; **Senses** Listen +14, Spot +14
Aura initiative bonus (40 ft., allies +2 to initiative)
Languages Common, Orc

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22 (+9 armor, +3 shield, +1 Dex)
hp 37 (6 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +8 (1d8+2, ×3)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +6 (1d6+2, ×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Special Actions direct orders +3, battle cry; Leadership Performance (2/day)
Combat Gear three *potions of cure serious wounds*

Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 16
Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader, Skill Focus (Listen), Skill Focus (Spot), Weapon Focus (battleaxe) (see *Player's Guide* for Leader feats)
Skills Diplomacy +12, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (history) +8, Listen +14, Perform (oratory) +11, Spot +14
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 full plate, +1 heavy shield,* mwk battleaxe, mwk composite shortbow, 40 arrows

Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, the commander can shout a battle cry – "Make the general proud, men!" – to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round the commander can choose to grant all allies within 40 ft. a +3 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He usually chooses Reflex saves.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) Allies within 40 ft. of the commander gain a +2 bonus to initiative checks.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Twice per day, the commander can inspire or direct his allies (within 40 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +1 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect the commander himself.



Ragesian Infantry Squad **CR 13**

Twenty warriors, mostly half-orc fighter 4
LN Huge humanoid (unit of Medium humanoids, orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +26, Spot +26
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 159 (24 HD)
Fort +16, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares)
Melee pike hedge +38 (1d8+26)
Ranged concentrated archery +34 (1d6+24, range inc. 70 ft.)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +36
Atk Options rebuke magic, unit tactics

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
SQ unit traits

Rebuke Magic (Sp) Every infantry squad includes a well-defended inquisitor. Five times per day as an immediate action, this inquisitor can rebuke magic, making a dispel check against a single effect with a +7 modifier.

The inquisitor can also cast the following spells twice per day: *dismissal*, *invisibility purge*, *obscuring mist*.

This inquisitor can be specifically targeted by spells and ranged attacks. He uses the squad's statistics, though attack rolls against him take a –4 penalty. If 30 damage is dealt to him, he dies, and if he dies or is otherwise taken out of commission, the squad loses this ability.

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a fireball (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics Infantry units usually fight with pikes and shields in close quarters. When at range, they spend a full round action to divest themselves of pike and shield and switch to shortbows. Switching back requires another full round action.

Ragesian Infiltrator, Elite **CR 8**

Male half-orc rogue 4/fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Common, Orc

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; deflect arrows
hp 53 (8 HD); **DR** 1/—
Fort +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee adamantine shortsword +12 (1d6+5, 19–20)
Melee unarmed strike +10 (1d3+3)
Melee two adamantine shortswords each +10 (1d6+5/1d6+3, 19–20)
Ranged mwk shortbow +7 (1d6+3, ×3)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +14

Str 17, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Deflect Arrows, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (shortsword), Weapon Specialization (shortsword)
Skills Climb +11, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Open Locks +8, Spot +6, Tumble +10
Possessions adamantine chain shirt, two adamantine shortswords, mwk shortbow [Str +3] with 20 arrows

Ragesian Infiltrator, Standard **CR 5**

Male half-orc rogue 3/fighter 2
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Common, Orc

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14
hp 32 (5 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee two mwk shortswords each +7 (1d6+3/1d6+1, 19–20) or mwk shortsword +9 (1d6+3, 19–20) or unarmed strike +7 (1d3+3)
Ranged mwk shortbow +7 (1d6, ×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +11

Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (shortsword)
Skills Climb +11, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Open Locks +8, Spot +6
Possessions mwk studded leather, mwk buckler, two mwk shortswords, mwk shortbow with 20 arrows

Ragesian Inquisitor, Elite **CR 11**

Male human cleric 11

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Orc

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20 (+9 armor, +2 shield, –1 Dex)

hp 75 (11 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +2, **Will** +10

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 hand claw* +9 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +8

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (5/day, 1d20+11), turn water creatures or bolster/command fire creatures (5/day, 1d20+2, 2d6+13 HD)

Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *break enchantment*, scroll of *mage armor* ×2, scroll of *hold person* ×2, scroll of *invisibility* ×2, scroll of *invisibility purge*, scroll of *magic circle against chaos*, scroll of *speak with dead*, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (30 charges), *wand of hold portal* (10 charges), *wand of lightning bolt* (10 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 11th, DC 13 + spell level; melee touch +8)

6th – *antimagic field*[D], *harm*

5th – *flame strike*, *overmaster**, *spell resistance*[D]

4th – *dismissal*, *divination*, *summon monster IV*, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *bestow curse*, *blindness/deafness*, *dispel magic*[D], *glyph of warding*, *prayer*, *speak with dead*

2nd – *hold person* ×2, *produce flame*[D], *resist energy*, *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *bless*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*, *sanctuary*

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 10, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14

SQ rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +19, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Spellcraft +17

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 glamered full plate*, *+1 hand claw*, *+1 buckler*, *inquisitor's mask*, 400 gp in black gems

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) The inquisitor can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Five times a day, the inquisitor can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+11 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.



Ragesian Inquisitor, Green **CR 4**

Male orc cleric 4

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Orc

AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 12

hp 30 (4 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee hand claw +5 (1d4+2)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *cure light wounds* ×4, *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (3/day, 1d20+4), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Spells Prepared (CL 4th, DC 12 + spell level)

2nd – *cure moderate wounds*, *produce flame*[D], *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×3, *guidance*

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 14, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11

SQ light sensitivity, rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Feats Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +12, Spellcraft +7

Possessions hand claw, *lesser inquisitor's mask*, hide armor

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) The inquisitor can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Three times a day, the inquisitor can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+4 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of rebuke magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Ragesian Inquisitor, Master **CR 13**

Thick black bearskins cover rune-etched white plate armor, combining with this inquisitor's bearskull mask to create a pale image of death in the winter's night.

Male human cleric 13

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages Common, Infernal, Orc

AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 26 (+11 armor, +4 shield, +1 insight)

hp 88 (13 HD)

Immune temperatures between –50 and 140° F, impediments to movement

Resist acid 30, cold 30, electricity 30, fire 30, sonic 30

Fort +13, **Ref** +7, **Will** +16

Buff Suite *endure elements*, *fire seeds*, *freedom of movement*, *greater magic weapon*, *magic vestment* (armor & shield), *resist energy* (all five, energy resistance 30), *status*. All these last one hour or more, and are included in the stat block. Given time, a master Ragesian inquisitor may add his short buff suite and/or immediate buff suite (see below).

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee *+3 flaming hand claw* +14/+9 (1d4+4 plus 1d6 fire)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10 (automatically succeeds grapple checks made to resist or escape grapple or to escape pin)

Atk Options Power Attack

Special Actions spontaneous casting (inflict spells), reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (7/day, 1d20+13), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Combat Gear four acorn grenades (*fire seeds*), *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *break enchantment*, scroll of *mage armor* ×2, scroll of *hold person* ×2, scroll of *invisibility* ×2, scroll of *invisibility purge*, scroll of *magic circle against chaos*, scroll of *speak with dead*, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (30 charges), *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 13th; ranged touch +9)

7th – *fire storm*[D] (DC 22), *mass cure serious wounds*

6th – ~~*fire seeds*~~[D] (DC 21), *greater dispel magic*, *heal*

5th – *overmaster**, *righteous might*, *true seeing*, *spell resistance*[D]

4th – *cure critical wounds*, *death ward*, *divine power*, ~~*freedom of movement*~~, ~~*greater magic weapon*~~, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *dispel magic*[D] ×3, *invisibility purge*, ~~*magic vestment*~~ ×2

2nd – *produce flame*[D], ~~*resist energy*~~ ×5, ~~*status*~~

1st – *bless*, *burning hands*[D] (DC 16), *cure light wounds* ×3, ~~*endure elements*~~, *shield of faith*

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 10

Feats Extra Turning, Improved Counterspell, Power Attack, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Weapon Focus (hand claw)

Skills Concentration +21, Ride +12, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +17; automatically succeeds Escape Artist checks made to escape grapple or pin

Possessions combat gear plus mwk full plate, mwk light shield, *inquisitor's mask of +3 resistance and +2 Wis*, *+1 flaming hand claw*, *ring of counterspell* (currently holding *greater dispel magic*), *gloves of dexterity +2 and ride +4*, *dusty rose ioun stone* (+1 insight to AC)

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) The inquisitor can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Seven times a day, the inquisitor can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+13 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Immediate Buff Suite *divine power*, *righteous might*. These last 13 rounds; they are not included in the stat block, but are spells the inquisitor casts if he feels pressed.

With Divine Power hp 101; melee +21/+16/+11 (1d4+7 plus 1d6 fire); grapple +16

With Righteous Might AC 25 (touch 9, flat-footed 25); hp 101; Fort +14; melee +15/+10/+5 (1d6+6 plus 1d6 fire); grapple +16; DR 6/good; Large size

With Divine Power and Righteous Might AC 25 (touch 9, flat-footed 25); hp 114; Fort +14; melee +22/+17/+12 (1d6+9 plus 1d6 fire); grapple +18; DR 6/good; Large size

Short Buff Suite *bless*, *death ward*, *invisibility purge* (65 ft. radius), *shield of faith* (+4 deflection), *spell resistance* (SR 25), *true seeing*. All these last 13 minutes or more; they are not included in the stat block, but are the first spells the inquisitor casts if he has time to prepare before an anticipated conflict.

Ragesian Inquisitor, Palace **CR 11**

Dark and foreboding in a priest's robes, this figure watches you from behind a carved bear skull that is etched with runes. A three-clawed black gauntlet stretches along his right arm, serving as both a weapon and a light shield. Fire seems to burn in his skull-sunken eyes.

Male human cleric 11

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Orc

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20 (+9 armor, +2 shield, –1 Dex)

hp 50 (11 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +10

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 hand claw* +9 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +8

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (7/day, 1d20+11), turn water creatures or bolster/command fire creatures (7/day, 1d20+4, 2d6+15 HD)

Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *break enchantment*, scroll of *wall of force*, *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 11th, melee touch +8, DC 13 + spell level)

6th – maximized empowered *burning hands*[D], *harm*

5th – *break enchantment*, *fire shield*[D], *flame strike*

4th – *dismissal* ×3, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *dispel magic*[D], *dispel magic* ×2, *invisibility purge*, *speak with dead*

Lower level spells have been consumed in performing the ritual

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 10, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 18

SQ rebuke magic, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Feats Empower Spell, Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Reactive Counterspell

Skills Concentration +16, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Spellcraft +17

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 glamered full plate*, *+1 hand claw*, *+1 buckler*, *inquisitor's mask*, 400 gp in black gems

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) The inquisitor can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Seven times a day, the inquisitor can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+11 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Individually any palace inquisitor has almost no chance to counter the heroes' spells, but if more than one of them react to the same spell, one of them is the primary rebuker, and the others aid him, providing a +2 bonus to the dispel roll per additional inquisitor.

Ragesian Inquisitor, Standard **CR 7**

Male human cleric 7

LE Medium humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Orc

AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9 (–1 Dex)

hp 49 (7 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +1, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee hand claw +6 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6

Special Actions spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (4/day, 1d20+7), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (4/day, 1d20+1)

Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *break enchantment*, scroll of *mage armor*, scroll of *hold person* ×4, scroll of *invisibility*, scroll of *magic circle against chaos*, *wand of cure light wounds* (50 charges), *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 7th, DC 13 + spell level)

4th – *sending*, *wall of fire*[D]

3rd – *blindness/deafness*, *create food and water*, *dispel magic*[D], *invisibility purge*

2nd – *hold person*, *produce flame*[D], *resist energy*, *silence*, *sound burst*

1st – *bane*, *bless*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*

0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*

D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 13

Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +13, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Speak Language (Orc), Spellcraft +12

Possessions Hand claw, inquisitor's mask

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) The inquisitor can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Four times a day, the inquisitor can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+7 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Ragesian Inquisitor, Veteran **CR 9**

Male half-orc cleric 9
LE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Orc

AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11 (+2 shield, –1 Dex)
hp 62 (9 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk hand claw +8 (1d4+1)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7
Special Actions spontaneous casting (inflict spells), reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (4/day, 1d20+9), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (4/day, 1d20+1)
Combat Gear *brooch of shielding* (101 charges), scroll of *break enchantment*, scroll of *mage armor* ×2, scroll of *hold person* ×2, scroll of *invisibility* ×2, scroll of *invisibility purge*, scroll of *magic circle against chaos*, scroll of *speak with dead*, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (30 charges), *wand of hold portal* (10 charges)
Spells Prepared (CL 9th, DC 13 + spell level)
5th – *overmaster**, *spell resistance*[D]
4th – *sending*, *summon monster IV*, *wall of fire*[D]
3rd – *animate dead*, *blindness/deafness*, *create food and water*, *dispel magic*[D], *speak with dead*
2nd – *hold person* ×2, *produce flame*[D], *resist energy*, *silence*, *sound burst*
1st – *bane*, *bless*, *burning hands*[D], *cause fear*, *command*, *endure elements*
0 – *create water*, *detect magic* ×4, *guidance*
D domain spell **Domains** Fire, Magic

Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12
Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)
Skills Concentration +13, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Spellcraft +13
Possessions Masterwork hand claw, *+1 buckler*, inquisitor's mask, 400 gp in black gems

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) The inquisitor can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.
Rebuke Magic (Su) Four times a day, the inquisitor can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+9 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect.

Ragesian Knight **CR 8**

Male or female human fighter 8
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex)
hp 65 (8 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)
Melee *+1 lance* +15/+10 (1d8+8, ×3) or mwk heavy pick +14/+9 (1d6+5, ×4)
Ranged heavy crossbow +11 (1d10+2, 19-20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *oil of magic weapon*
Atk Options Improved Mounted Strafe, Power Attack, Spirited Charge

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Elite Training (lance), Equine Stalwart*, Improved Mounted Strafe*, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)
Skills Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Ride +14
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, cold iron heavy shield, mwk heavy pick, *+1 lance*, silver short sword, four daggers, two javelins, net, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 10 *+1 bane bolts* (4 *human-bane*, plus 2 each *elf-bane*, *orc-bane*, and *dwarf-bane*), 2 days of rations, Ragesian knight's stalwart warhorse (*q.v.*), military saddle, banded mail barding, 10 gp

Ragesian Knight's Stalwart Warhorse CR —

N Large animal (horse)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +5

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19
hp 37 (5 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2; evasion when within 5 ft. of rider

Speed 35 ft. (7 squares)
Melee two hooves each +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6
Feats Endurance, Run
Skills Listen +5, Spot +5

Carrying Capacity A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.
Tricks (Ex) combat riding, attack unnatural creatures

Ragesian Magic Jar Assassins **CR 14**

Several guards approach the tent for the change in shift, cracking jokes among each other and talking about their exploits in the day's battle.

Male human rogue 10/assassin 4
LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +18, Spot +18
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Orc

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+1 Dex, +5 armor, +1 shield); improved uncanny dodge
hp 28 (14 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +12, **Will** +5; evasion; +2 vs. poison

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk shortsword +14/+9 (1d6+2)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +12
Atk Options sneak attack +7d6, death attack (DC 17), poison use
Combat Gear poison, null spellbomb, necklace of fireballs (type 1)
Spells Known
2nd (2) – invisibility, pass without trace, undetectable alignment
1st (4) – disguise self, ghost sound, sleep, true strike

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 14
SQ skill mastery (can Take 10 on all Bluff, Disguise, Hide, Move Silently, Sense Motive, Tumble, and Use Magic Device checks)
Feats Quick Draw, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Bluff, Disguise, Use Magic Device), Weapon Focus (shortsword)
Skills Bluff +22, Disguise +24, Hide +18, Listen +18, Move Silently +18, Sense Motive +18, Spot +18, Tumble +18, Use Magic Device +22
Possessions combat gear plus mwk short sword, chain mail, buckler, lead-lined pouch holding combat gear

Poison Use (Ex) The Ragesian assassins have laced their shortswords with black lotus extract (contact, Fort DC 20, initial 3d6 Con, secondary 3d6 Con). Each also carries three further doses of the poison.

Notes The assassins are possessing the bodies of Resistance soldiers.

Ragesian Palace Guard **CR 1**

Male half-orc warrior 2
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18 (+7 armor, +1 shield)
hp 13 (2 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +1, Will –1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +7 (1d8+3, ×3)
Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +4 (1d10, ×3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5

Str 17, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 12
Feats Weapon Focus (battleaxe)
Possessions half-plate, buckler, mwk battleaxe, mwk heavy crossbow with 20 bolts

Ragesian Soldier, Elite **CR 8**

Male half-orc fighter 8
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 65 (8 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 battleaxe* +16 (1d8+9, ×3) or silver shortsword +14 (1d6+5, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +10 (1d6+4, ×3)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12
Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, three *potion of cure serious wounds, potion of fly*
Atk Options Power Attack

Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Elite Training (battleaxe)*, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +7
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, cold iron heavy shield, *+1 battleaxe*, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, 10 *+1 human bane arrows*, silver shortsword, 5 days of rations.

Ragesian Soldier, Experienced **CR 4**

Male half-orc fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 35 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +10 (1d8+6, ×3) or shortsword +8 (1d6+4, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +6 (1d6+4, ×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8
Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*
Atk Options Power Attack

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +3
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, heavy shield, mwk battleaxe, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, shortsword, 5 days of rations

Ragesian Soldier, Green **CR 1**

Male half-orc fighter 1
LE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18
hp 12 (1 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** –1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +5 (1d8+2, ×3)
Ranged shortbow +2 (1d6, ×3)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +4
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 9
Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack
Skills Intimidate +1, Ride +3
Possessions combat gear plus banded mail, heavy shield, mwk battleaxe, shortbow with 20 arrows, 5 days of rations, light warhorse, 10 gp

Ragesian Soldier, Standard **CR 2**

Male half-orc fighter 2
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19
hp 20 (2 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +1, **Will** –1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +7 (1d8+3, ×3)
Ranged mwk shortbow +4 (1d6, ×3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe)
Skills Intimidate +2, Ride +3
Possessions combat gear plus half-plate, heavy shield, mwk battleaxe, mwk shortbow with 20 arrows, 5 days of rations

Ragesian Soldier, Veteran **CR 6**

Male half-orc fighter 6
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 50 (6 HD)
Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 battleaxe* +12 (1d8+7, ×3) or silver shortsword +10 (1d6+3, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +8 (1d6+4, ×3)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +10
Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*
Atk Options Power Attack

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +5
Possessions full plate, cold iron heavy shield, *+1 battleaxe*, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, silver shortsword, 5 days of rations, heavy warhorse, chain shirt barding

Ragesian Wyvern, Elite **CR 8**

Advanced wyvern rogue 2
N Large dragon
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +11, Spot +14
Languages Draconic

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 17
hp 93 (12 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6; evasion
Immune sleep, paralysis

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); fly 60 ft. (poor)
Melee tail sting +16 (1d6+5 plus poison) and bite +13 (2d8+5) and two wings +13 (1d8+2) or talons +15 (2d6+5) during Fly-By Attack only
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +24
Atk Options improved grab (during Fly-By Attack only), poison (tail sting), sneak attack +1d6
Special Actions hurl; Fly-By Attack
Combat Gear *hurling bracers**

Str 20, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 9
Feats Ability Focus (poison), Fly-By Attack, Improved Grapple, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (sting)
Skills Hide +10, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Spot +14, Tumble +16

Hurl (Ex) By activating its *hurling bracers*, the wyvern is treated as one size category larger for purposes of lifting capacity and grappling for one round. Typically wyverns grapple foes during this round, taking a –20 penalty to their grapple check so they can keep moving, and then drop them before the bonus wears off.
Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability the wyvern must hit with its talons. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and stings.
Poison (Ex) Injury, Fort DC 19, initial and secondary 2d6 Con.

Ragesian Wyvern Knight **CR 6**

Male human fighter 6
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Draconic, Orc

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15
hp 50 (6 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Ride 60 ft. (flight, poor, 12 squares)
Melee mwk shortsword +8/+3 (1d6+1, 19–20)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +11/+6 (1d8+2, 19–20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *oil of magic weapon*, Ragesian dragonbomb

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (light crossbow), Weapon Specialization (light crossbow)
Skills Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +5, Ride +14
Possessions combat gear plus mithral chain shirt, buckler, mwk shortsword, mwk light crossbow with 60 bolts (40 normal, 10 cold iron, 10 silver), wyvern mount, exotic military saddle

Ragesian Wyvern Knight, Elite **CR 10**

Male human fighter 8/rogue 2
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +3; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +12
Languages Common, Draconic, Orc

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+8 armor, +1 shield, +1 Dex)
hp 75 (10 HD)
Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +2; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Ride 60 ft. (flight, poor, 12 squares)
Melee mwk shortsword +12/+7 (1d6+1, 19–20)
Ranged *+1 seeking light crossbow* +17/+12 (1d8+5, 17–20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +11
Combat Gear two *potions of cure serious wounds*, *oil of magic weapon*, two Ragesian dragonbombs

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Elite Training (light crossbow), Improved Critical (light crossbow), Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (light crossbow), Weapon Specialization (light crossbow)
Skills Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (history) +5, Listen +12, Ride +16, Spot +12
Possessions mwk full plate, mwk buckler, mwk shortsword, *+1 seeking light crossbow* with 200 bolts (140 normal, 20 cold iron, 20 silver, 20 adamantine), wyvern mount, exotic military saddle

Ragesian Wyvern Squadron **CR 17**

Twenty knights, mostly human fighter 6, with wyverns
LN Gargantuan dragon/humanoid (unit of Medium humanoids and Large dragons)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +39, Spot +39
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 270 (36 HD)
Fort +22, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12

Speed fly 60 ft. (12 squares, poor)
Melee wyvern strikes +41 (2d8+24 plus poison)
Ranged crossbow volley +41 (1d8+20)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +18; **Grp** +42
Atk Options Mounted Strafe; poison, rebuke magic, snatch, trample, unit tactics

Str 19, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ unit traits

Mounted Strafe (Ex) A Ragesian wyvern squadron can take its standard action (such as an attack) at any point during its movement.
Poison (Ex) Injury DC 32, initial and secondary 1d6 Con.
Rebuke Magic (Sp) Every wyvern squadron includes a well-defended inquisitor who flies with them. Five times per day as an immediate action, this inquisitor can rebuke magic, making a dispel check against a single effect with a +11 modifier.

The inquisitor can also cast the following spells twice per day: *dismissal*, *invisibility purge*, *obscuring mist*, *true seeing*.

This inquisitor can be specifically targeted by spells and ranged attacks. He uses the squad's statistics, though attack rolls against him take a –4 penalty. If 45 damage is dealt to him, he dies, and if he dies or is otherwise taken out of commission, the squad loses this ability.

Snatch (Ex) By sheer force of numbers, the squadron can swarm a single foe and pick him up in the wyverns' claws. If the squadron hits with its wyvern strikes attack, it can initiate a grapple as a free action without incurring an attack of opportunity. The squadron takes a –20 penalty on its grapple check, and if successful it can pick up its foe and carry him without otherwise hindering its movement or attacks. Typically the squadron does this to pull a foe away from his allies, or to drop him from a great height.
Trample (Ex) The unit can spend a standard action to be able to overrun (with a total +28 bonus) any number of creatures as a free action during its turn. This allows the unit to move through hostile creatures' spaces as long as those creatures are Huge or smaller. The unit makes a wyvern strikes attack against every creature it knocks prone this way.
Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a *fireball* (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics Ragesian wyvern squadrons can make one melee and one ranged attack each round as a standard action.

Rantle **CR 4**

Tall, dark-haired, and roguishly handsome, by his goatee and massive greatsword you recognize this man as the local folk hero Rantle, a scoundrel and defender of the common man. Despite his light chain armor, his smirk says clearly that he thinks he's invincible.

Male human rogue 2/fighter 2
CG Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14
hp 25 (4 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** –1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk greatsword +7 (2d6+4, 19–20)
Ranged dagger +5 (1d4+3, 19–20); Point-Blank Shot
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, leadership performances, sneak attack +1d6
Combat Gear two smokesticks, two *potions of cure light wounds*, scroll of *burning hands* (Use Magic Device +5 vs. DC 21)

Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 13
SQ evasion, trapfinding
Feats Cleave, Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack
Skills Bluff +8, Diplomacy +7, Hide +6, Intimidate +5, Move Silently +5, Open Lock +6, Perform (oratory) +8, Perform (sing) +4, Ride +4, Sleight of Hand +5, Tumble +5, Use Magic Device +5.
Possessions Masterwork greatsword, mwk chain shirt, shortsword, two daggers

Leadership Performances (Ex) Twice per day, Rantle can inspire or direct his allies in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +1 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 30 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Rantle himself.

Tactics In the city, Rantle uses his popularity to his advantage, insulting his foes and encouraging bystanders to throw things at them. However, he never gets non-combatants involved if he thinks they might get hurt. He likes to cut through multiple foes at once with his greatsword, which is his signature weapon. If he uses his leadership performances, it's usually to help his allies get out of danger. He knows when to run (preferably after making a dramatic blow or delivering a blunt, smirking insult to the enemy leader – "You guys are *really* incompetent."), and will usually use the local townsfolk to provide a wall of bodies to let him get out of sight.



Rantle **CR 16**

Tall, dark-haired, and roguishly handsome, by his goatee and massive greatsword you recognize this man as Rantle, once a folk hero, now a legendary warrior in the Gate Pass resistance. Despite his battered chain armor and piecemeal gear torn from many fights, his smirk says clearly that he thinks he's invincible.

Male human fighter 4/rogue 3/ranger 2/paladin of freedom 3/commander 4

CG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Aura resolve (10 ft.; allies +4 to save vs. compulsions), initiative bonus (40 ft.; allies +1 to initiative)

Languages Common, Elven

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +3 shield, +2 Dex, +1 deflection)

hp 108 (16 HD)

Immune compulsion

Fort +19, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 orc-bane bastard sword* +20/+15/+10 (1d10+5, 19–20)

Ranged dagger +16/+11/+6 (1d4+4, 19–20); Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot

Base Atk +14; **Grp** +18

Atk Options favored enemy (Ragesians) +2, smite evil (1/day, +3 attack, +3 damage), sneak attack +2d6; Cleave, Power Attack

Special Actions lay on hands (9 hp), detect evil, direct orders +3, battle cry; Leadership Performance (6/day)

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (50 charges)

Str 18, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 16

SQ trapfinding

Feats Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Fearless Leader, Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Legendary Leader, Maneuver Leader, Operation Leader, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Rapid Shot, Spellwise Leader, Track, Weapon Focus (bastard sword) (see *Player's Guide* for Leader feats)

Skills Bluff +9, Diplomacy +16, Hide +16, Intimidate +6, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +6, Perform (oratory) +22, Perform (sing) +5, Ride +4, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +5, Spellcraft +5, Tumble +5, Use Magic Device +16.

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 orc-bane bastard sword*, *+1 mithral chain*, *+2 light shield*, *ring of protection +1*, *cloak of charisma +2*, shortsword, two daggers

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Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, Rantle can shout a mocking insult at the leader of his enemies as his iconic battle cry to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round Rantle can choose to grant all allies within 40 ft. a +3 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He can also spend an immediate action to replace his current orders with a different type of bonus.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) Allies within 40 ft. of Rantle gain a +1 bonus to initiative checks.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Six times per day, Rantle can inspire or direct his allies (within 40 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +3 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for as long as Rantle remains within 40 ft., plus the next 5 rounds of combat, to a maximum of one hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Rantle himself.
- As a standard action, grant a single ally within 40 ft. an immediate extra attack at its full base attack bonus.
- As a standard action, make a Perform check. Every ally within 40 ft. currently under the influence of a fear or mind-affecting effect makes a new save against that effect, using your Perform check in place of their Will save. Rantle can only do this if he himself did not fail his save against the same effect.
- As a standard action, inspire allies to greatness. All allies within 40 ft. gain 17 temporary hit points and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as Rantle is within 40 ft., and for 5 rounds thereafter. A given creature can only be inspired this way once per day.
- As a standard action, inspire spellcasting allies. As long as Rantle maintains concentration, whenever an ally within 40 ft. casts a spell that another ally has targeted in the past round, the target takes a –2 penalty to its saving throw.

Rantle **CR 18**

Tall, dark-haired, and roguishly handsome, by his goatee and massive greatsword you recognize this man as Rantle, once a folk hero, now a legendary warrior in the Gate Pass resistance. Despite his battered chain armor and piecemeal gear torn from many fights, his smirk says clearly that he thinks he's invincible.

Male human fighter 6/rogue 3/ranger 2/paladin of freedom 3/commander 4

CG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Elven

Aura resolve (allies within 10 ft. get +4 to saves against compulsions)

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +3 shield, +2 Dex, +1 deflection)

hp 121 (18 HD)

Fort +20, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11

Immune compulsion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 orc-bane bastard sword* +24/+19/+14 (1d10+9, 19–20)

Ranged dagger +18/+13/+8 (1d4+4, 19–20); Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +20

Atk Options aura of resolve, detect evil, favored enemy (Ragesians) +2, lay hands (9 hp), leadership performances, smite evil (1/day, +3 attack, +3 damage), sneak attack +2d6

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 5th, 50 charges)

Str 18, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 16

SQ evasion, trapfinding

Feats Cleave, Elite Training (bastard sword), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Fearless Leader, Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Legendary Leader, Maneuver Leader, Operation Leader, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Rapid Shot, Spellwise Leader, Track, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)

Skills Bluff +12, Diplomacy +16, Hide +16, Intimidate +6, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +6, Perform (oratory) +22, Perform (sing) +5, Ride +4, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +5, Spellcraft +5, Tumble +5, Use Magic Device +16.

Possessions *+1 orc-bane bastard sword, +1 mithral chain mail, +2 light shield, ring of protection +1, cloak of charisma +2*, shortsword, two daggers

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Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, Rantle can shout a mocking insult at the leader of his enemies as his iconic battle cry, to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round Rantle can choose to grant all allies within 40 ft. a +3 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He can also spend an immediate action to replace his current orders with a different type of bonus.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) Allies within 40 ft. of Rantle gain a +1 bonus to initiative checks.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Six times per day, Rantle can inspire or direct his allies (within 40 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +3 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for as long as Rantle remains within 40 ft., plus the next 5 rounds of combat, to a maximum of one hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Rantle himself.
- As a standard action, grant a single ally within 40 ft. an immediate extra attack at its full base attack bonus.
- As a standard action, make a Perform check. Every ally within 40 ft. currently under the influence of a fear or mind-affecting effect makes a new save against that effect, using your Perform check in place of their Will save. Rantle can only do this if he himself did not fail his save against the same effect.
- As a standard action, inspire allies to greatness. All allies within 40 ft. gain 17 temporary hp and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as Rantle is within 40 ft., and for 5 rounds thereafter. A given creature can only be inspired this way once per day.
- As a standard action, inspire spellcasting allies. As long as Rantle maintains concentration, whenever an ally within 40 ft. casts a spell at an enemy that another ally has targeted in the past round, the target takes a –2 penalty to its saving throw.

Renard Woodsman **CR 3**

The rider wears black studded leather, and a black helmet decorated with a silver horse's head. A cap billows behind him as he rides, and all you can see of his skin is his toothy smile.

Male human ranger 3
LE Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, elven, Orc

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14
hp 20 (3 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1

Speed 30 ft. (4 squares), ride 60 ft. (12 squares)
Melee mwk spiked gauntlet +4 (1d4)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +6 (1d8, ×3), Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*
Atk Options Mounted Combat

Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 13
SQ favored enemy (elf) +2, wild empathy +6
Feats Endurance, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Track
Skills Handle Animal +7, Heal +5, Hide +7, Knowledge (nature) +10, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Ride +10, Spot +5, Survival +7.
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 chain shirt*, *+1 cloak of resistance*, light warhorse, leather barding, mwk composite longbow with 40 arrows, mwk spiked gauntlet, *black horse helmet* (+1 competence bonus on Ride checks, faint transmutation, market value 100 gp), armband, 40 gp.



Rexis **CR 7**

Male hobgoblin rogue 5/assassin 1
NE medium humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +3 (+3 Dex); **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3; Spot +4
Languages Common, Goblin, Orc

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +2 natural)
hp 29 (6 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk shortsword +8 (1d6+4/19-20) or
two mwk shortswords each +6 (1d6+4/19-20)
or
dagger +7 (1d4+4)
Ranged dagger +6 (1d4+4) (+3 BAB, +3 Dex)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +3 (+3 Class); **Grp** +7
Atk Options death attack (DC 12), sneak attack +4d6
Combat Gear two doses paralysis poison, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, two *potions of invisibility*
Spells Prepared (CL 1st)
1st – *sleep* (DC 12)

Str 18, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 6
SQ evasion, poison use, spells, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge
Feats Stealthy, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus
Skills Balance +11, Climb +6, Decipher Script +2, Disable Device +5, Disguise –1, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information –1, Hide +12, Knowledge (local) +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +21, Open Lock +11, Search +8, Sleight of Hand +12, Spot +4, Tumble +17
Possessions combat gear plus 2 mwk shortswords, 4 daggers, chain shirt, mwk thieves' tools, *boots of elvenkind*

Poison (Ex) Paralysis poison (injury, Fort DC 13; initial damage paralysis 1d6 rounds; secondary damage paralysis 1d4 minutes). The poison affects only one target; after the hobgoblin rogue successfully deals damage, the poison has been used.

Tactics Long before the PCs arrive, Rexis applies paralysis poison to one of his shortswords. Before the PCs enter the room, he drinks one *potion of invisibility* and hides.

While Ivellios (*q.v.*) has the PCs distracted, Rexis chooses a PC that seems like the strongest to use his death attack on. For the first three rounds of combat, Rexis studies his opponent, while being careful to not be seen. At the end of those three rounds, he sneaks behind his target to complete the death attack with the shortsword that is without the poison. If the death attack fails, he tries to subdue the target with the poisoned shortsword or by casting *sleep*.

Rexis is prepared to fight to the death.

Rhuarc **CR 18**

There, amid the shadows, you glimpse the faintest hint of dark eyes, of an aged face with a hint of elvish blood, of a scimitar edged with smoky diamonds. And then he is gone.

Middle-aged male half-elf wilderness rogue 7/ranger 1/shadowdancer 10

CN Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +21, Spot +21

Languages Common, Elven, Infernal

AC 28, touch 17, flat-footed 22 (+6 Dex, +6 armor, +4 shield, +1 natural, +1 deflection); Dodge, Mobility, improved uncanny dodge

hp 131 (18 HD)

Fort +15, **Ref** +25 (improved evasion), **Will** +10 (+12 against enchantments, slippery mind)

Immune energy drain, movement restriction, poison, sleep

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee *black scimitar* +20/+15/+10 (1d6+3/18–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow [Str +2] +20/+15/+10 (1d8+2/×3, range inc. 110 ft.)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +15

Atk Options archery (poisoned arrows or shatterspell arrows), combat reflexes, favored enemy (evil outsiders +2), Shot on the Run, sneak attack +4d6, Spring Attack

Special Actions hide in plain sight, shadow illusion, shadow jump 160 ft.

Combat Gear two *wands of cure light wounds* (50 charges each), *potion of cure serious wounds* ×2, alchemist fire ×4

Str 14, Dex 22, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ half-elf traits, defensive roll, hide in plain sight, slippery mind, summon shadow, trap sense +2

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Point-Blank Shot, Shot on the Run, Spring Attack, TrackB, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +16, Bluff +9, Climb +4, Craft (cooking) +11, Disguise +9, Handle Animal +4, Hide +32, Jump +17, Listen +21, Move Silently +32, Open Lock +11, Perform (dance) +4, Spot +21, Survival +10, Swim +4, Tumble +16

Possessions combat gear plus *efficient quiver* (40 arrows, 10 cold iron arrows, 10 silver arrows), *+2 mithral shirt, +2 glamered mithral heavy shield* with *+1 silver shield spikes* (the shield is invisible when worn; when Rhuarc uses the shield spikes they appear to emerge from the back of his hand like claws), mwk composite longbow [Str +2], *black scimitar, Torch of the Burning Sky*

Tattoos *amulet of health +2 and natural armor +1 and proof against poison*, boots *of striding and springing and spider-climbing and elvenkind*, *cloak of resistance +5 of elvenkind*, *gloves of dexterity +4*, *ring of freedom of movement*, *ring of featherfalling and protection +1*

Archery – Poisoned Arrows (Ex) Rhuarc has poisoned twenty arrows in his quiver with a poison mixed from kesh and black lotus extract, which slowly paralyzes his heart and lungs. Injury DC 24. Initial and secondary 1d6 Con.

Archery – Shatterspell Arrows (Ex) Rhuarc has coated another twenty of his arrows with a potent antimagic alchemical. A creature struck by one of these arrows is affected as if by a targeted *dispel magic* (caster level 10th). He prefers to use this against flying foes, and those who seem immune to his poisoned arrows.

Defensive Roll (Ex) Once per day, when Rhuarc would be reduced to 0 hp or less by damage in combat (from a weapon or other blow, not a spell or special ability), he can attempt to roll with the damage. He makes a Reflex saving throw (DC = damage dealt) and, if successful, takes only half damage from the blow. He must be aware of the attack and able to react to it in order to execute his defensive roll. If in a situation that would deny his Dex bonus to AC, he can't attempt a defensive roll.

Hide in Plain Sight (Ex) Rhuarc can use the Hide skill even while being observed. As long as he is within 10 ft. of some sort of shadow, he can hide himself from view in the open without having anything to actually hide behind. He cannot, however, hide in his own shadow.

Shadow Illusion (Sp) This ability's effect is identical to that of the arcane spell *silent image* and may be employed once per day.

Shadow Jump (Su) Rhuarc can travel between shadows as if by means of a *dimension door* spell. The magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. Rhuarc can jump up to a total of 160 ft. each day in this way. This amount can be split among many jumps, but each one, no matter how small, counts as a 10-foot increment.

Slippery Mind (Ex) If Rhuarc fails his save against an enchantment effect, 1 round later he can attempt his saving throw again.

Tattoos (Su) Rhuarc has inscribed on his person a number of magical tattoos that duplicate the effects of magical items (see above). A magical tattoo cannot be disarmed, sundered, or stolen.

Rhuarc's Shadow **CR –**

CN Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7

Languages communicate with master

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11 (+2 Dex, +1 deflection); miss chance 50% (incorporeal)

hp 45 (7 HD)

Immune turning, undead immunities

Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6

Speed fly 40 ft. (good) (8 squares)

Melee incorporeal touch +6 (1d6 Str)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** –

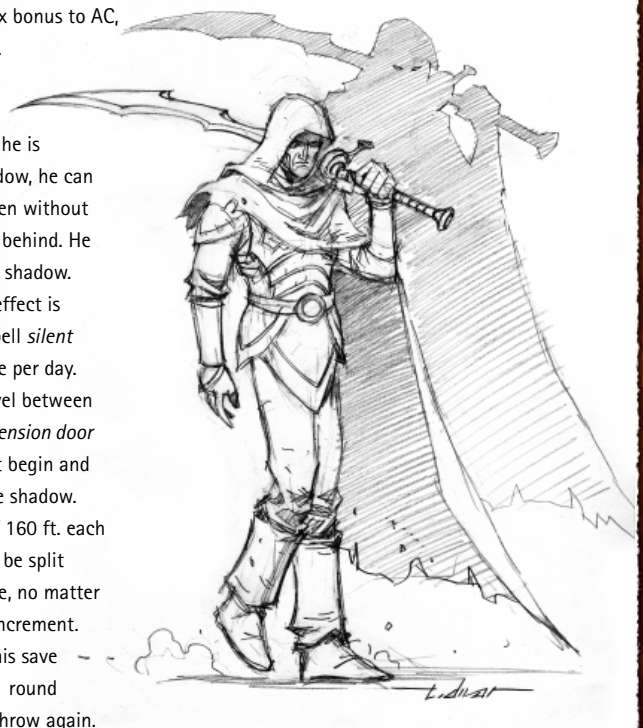
Str –, Dex 15, Con –, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 13

SQ incorporeal traits, undead traits

Feats Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (touch)

Skills Hide +10*, Listen +7, Search +6, Spot +7

* A shadow gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks in areas of shadowy illumination. In brightly lit areas, it takes a –4 penalty on Hide checks.



Rihalles, Solei Palancis Dreadnought **CR 12**

Male elf fighter 8/wizard (transmuter) 2/rogue 2
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision, Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Celestial, Elven

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +3 Dex); dodge, mobility
hp 73 (12 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6 (+8 vs. enchantment); evasion
Immune sleep

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+2 greatsword* +20/+15 (2d6+13, 17–20)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +15
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack; sneak attack +1d6
Combat Gear *potion of fly* ×2, *potion of invisibility* ×2, *potion of heroism* ×2
Spells Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st – *enlarge person*, *shield*, *true strike*
0 – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*
Prohibited Schools Conjuration, Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 20, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ mageknight, familiar
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Elite Training (great sword), Improved Critical (great sword), Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (great sword), Weapon Specialization (great sword)
Skills Climb +16, Intimidate +13, Jump +18, Spellcraft +7, Tumble +20
Possessions spell components, *+1 mithral breastplate*, *+2 great sword*, *cloak of resistance +1*, *gloves of dexterity and strength +2*
Spellbook spells prepared

Tactics Solei Palancis dreadnoughts prefer to sneak up invisibly, cast *enlarge person*, then attack.

Rip, Troll Mercenary **CR 6**

Troll barbarian 1
CN Large giant
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +6
Languages Common, Giant

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20
hp 83 (7 HD); regeneration 5
Fort +14, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee two claws each +11 (1d6+7) and bite +6 (1d6+3)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +14
Atk Options rend (2d6+10)
Special Actions rage 1/day (12 rounds)
Combat Gear two *potions of resist energy (fire)*, two *potions of resist energy (acid)*

Str 25, Dex 16, Con 25, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Track
Skills Listen +5, Spot +6
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 Large breastplate*

Rage (Ex) While raging, the troll mercenary's stats change as follows:
AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 18
hp 97
Fort +16, **Will** +5
Melee two claws each +13 (1d6+9) and bite +7 (1d6+4)
Str 29, Con 29
When the rage ends, the troll mercenary is fatigued until the end of the encounter.
Rend (Ex) If a troll hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+9 points of damage.
Regeneration (Ex) Fire and acid deal normal damage to a troll. If a troll loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Roav, Consultant to the Damned **CR 20**

The crimson skinned fiend steeples his oily fingers, smiling black teeth at you. Then his burning wings flex, and the weight of a thousand centuries of infernal dominion falls upon your souls, demanding you serve him in battle.

LE Large Outsider (Evil, Extraplanar, Lawful)
Init +12; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; Listen +29, Spot +29
Languages telepathy 100 ft.
Aura damned aura 20 ft.

AC 44, touch 21, flat-footed 36 (–1 size, +8 Dex, +23 natural, +4 deflection)
hp 225 (18 HD); DR 15/good and silver
Immune fire, mental influence, poison
Resist acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 32
Fort +23, **Ref** +23, **Will** +25

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 60 ft. (average)
Melee two claws each +30 (2d8+13 plus poison) and two wings each +28 (2d6+6 fire) and tail slap +28 (2d8+6 plus improved grab)
Base Atk +18; **Grp** +35
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Atk Options damned dominion, improved grab and constrict, spell-like abilities
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th)
At will — create undead, dimension door (self plus up to six Medium allies), greater dispel magic, greater prying eyes, greater teleport (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), invisibility, rack and ruin (DC 24)
1/day — meteor swarm (DC 27), permanent image (DC 24)
1/year – *wish* (caster level 20th)

Str 37, Dex 27, Con 27, Int 26, Wis 26, Cha 26
SQ damned aura
Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*dimension door*), Quick Spell-Like Ability (*rack and ruin*)
Skills Bluff + 29, Concentration +29, Diplomacy +31, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (arcana, nature, religion, the planes) +29, Listen +29, Spellcraft +31, Spot +29

Aligned Attack (Su) Roav's attacks are treated as evil and lawful for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.
Constrict (Ex) Roav deals 2d8+26 points of damage with a successful grapple check.
Damned Aura (Su) At the beginning of his turn as a free action, Roav can infuse himself and every creature within 20 ft. with energy drawn from the tortured souls in his infernal prisons. Affected evil creatures heal 10 points of damage. Affected good creatures gain

a negative level (Will DC 27 negates). This negative level only lasts for five minutes, not long enough to cause permanent level loss.

Damned Dominion (Su) Once every five minutes as a swift action, Roav can unleash the power of its infernal command. Every enemy creature within 20 ft. must succeed on a DC 27 Will save or it falls partially under the fiend's dominion. An affected creature loses a move action on its turn, and on Roav's turn (starting the turn it uses this ability), the fiend controls the creatures' move action. He can force the creature to flee, move into dangerous positions, drop to the floor and curl into a ball. Roav can only force creatures to use move actions for actual movement, not, for instance, drawing weapons, stowing items, or manipulating objects.

The creature still can use its standard and swift actions on its own turn. And each turn an affected creature can make a new save to break free. If Roav tries to force a creature into certain death (such as into lava, or a portal to hell), the creature automatically breaks free.

This is not a mind-affecting or compulsion effect, but remove curse frees a creature from its effects.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, Roav must hit with his tail slap attack. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he establishes a hold and can constrict.

Poison (Ex) A creature struck by one of Roav's claws takes 10 damage per round until the poison is neutralized with magic or a Heal check (DC 27). Multiple strikes do not deal cumulative poison damage.

See in Darkness (Su) Roav can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, even that created by a *deeper darkness* spell.



Rowern **CR 10**

Male human bard 10

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3 (+3 Dex); **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +0

Languages Common, Orc

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 58 (10 HD)

Resist fire 10

Fort +10, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk rapier +11/+6 (1d6-1/18-20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +11 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +6

Special Actions bardic music 10/day (Inspire Greatness, Inspire Courage +2, Suggestion, Fascinate, Countersong)

Spells Known (CL 10th, +8 melee touch, +8 ranged touch)

4th (1/day) – freedom of movement, greater invisibility

3rd (3/day) – charm monster (DC 18), dispel magic, glibness, haste

2nd (4/day) – cure moderate wounds, glitterdust (DC 16), heroism, mirror image

1st (4/day) – disguise self, expeditious retreat, hideous laughter (DC 16), unseen servant

0 (3 / day) – light, lullaby (DC 15), mage hand, mending, message, prestidigitation

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Str 8, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 18

SQ bardic knowledge +11

Feats Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +17, Decipher Script +14, Diplomacy +21, Disguise +17 (+19 to act in character), Escape Artist +16, Gather Information +17, Intimidate +6, Listen +8, Perform (Singing) +17, Sense Motive +5, Use Rope +3 (+5 using bindings)

Possessions *gloves of dexterity +2*, *vest of charisma +2*, *cloak of resistance +3*, *ring of fire resistance (minor)*, *ring of evasion*, *mithral chain shirt +2*, mwk buckler

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Bardic Music (Su) Inspire Greatness grants +1 to Fort saves, +2 HD, +11 hit points, +2 to hit.

Sagramar Montezor, Master of Thundercloud Keep **CR 11**

Male tiefling wizard 4/cleric 4/mystic theurge 7

LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +10

Languages Common, Draconic, Goblin, Gnome, Infernal, Orc

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +1 armor, +4 shield)

hp 124 (15 HD)

Immune *magic missile*, 132 points of electricity

Resist cold 5, electricity 5 and fire 5

Fort +12 **Ref** +11 **Will** +18

Buff Suite *bear's endurance*, *protection from energy* (electricity), *shield*

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee *+3 morningstar* +12/+7 (1d8+4)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +9

Atk Options rebuke undead (3/day, 1d20+2, 2d6+4)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 11th, +9 melee touch, +11 ranged touch; Spell Penetration)

6th – *wall of iron*

5th – *major creation*, *wall of stone*

4th – *black tentacles*, *secure shelter*

3rd – *lightning bolt* ×3 (DC 17)

2nd – *blindness/deafness* (DC 16), *glitterdust* (DC 16), *minor* image (DC 16), *scare* (DC 16), *touch of idiocy*

1st – *feather fall* (DC 15), *magic missile*, *protection from good*, *reduce person* (DC 15), *shield*

0 – *detect poison*, *mage hand* ×2, *ray of frost*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 11th, +9 melee touch, +11 ranged touch; Spell Penetration)

6th – *word of recall*

5th – *dispel good*, *greater command*

4th – *discern lies* (DC 17), *inflict critical wounds* (DC 17), *restoration*

3rd – *create food & water*, *dispel magic*, *protection from energy*

2nd – *bear's endurance*, *desecrate*, *shatter* (DC 15), *silence*

1st – *comprehend languages*, *deathwatch*, *endure elements*, *sanctuary*

0 – *cure minor wounds* (DC 13), *detect poison*, *inflict minor wounds* (DC 13), *light*, *purify food and drink* (DC 13), *resistance* (DC 13)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)

1/day – *darkness*

Str 12, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 10

Feats Eschew Materials, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration

Skills Bluff +10, Concentration +20, Gather Information +4, Hide +11, Knowledge (Arcana) +15, Knowledge (Religion) +17, Listen +11, Search +12, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +24, Spot +10.

Possessions *+1 robes, +3 morningstar, cloak of protection +1, potion of greater invisibility,* silver holy symbol

Spellbook wizard spells prepared plus a wide selection of other useful spells

Note Due to Sagramar's poor character build and lack of appropriate equipment, his CR is lower than his level would suggest. He has developed skills to help in escaping and investigation, not fighting.



Savage Horde **CR 13**

Twenty warriors, mostly goblin rogue 4, gnoll ranger 3, and grimlock barbarian 2

CE Huge humanoid/monstrous humanoid (unit of Small and Medium Humanoids)

Init +5; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +26, Spot +26

Languages Various

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16

hp 135 (24 HD)

Fort +17, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee blood-stained armory +38 (1d8+26)

Ranged hunting party barrage +34 (1d8+24, range inc. 100 ft.)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +36

Atk Options frenetic offensive, sneak attack +2d6

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 7, Wis 8, Cha 8

SQ unit traits

Frenetic Offensive (Ex) Every round as a standard action, the savage horde can make two melee attacks and either a ranged attack of another melee attack.

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a *fireball* (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics The hordes of humanoids and monstrous humanoids go after weak, solitary targets, and only engage dangerous enemies if they dramatically outnumber them.

Seela Rebel **CR 2**

Male or female seela rogue 1/fighter 1
CE Medium fey
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14
hp 12 (2 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** –1; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk shortspear +5 (1d6+2) or unarmed strike +3 (1d3 nonlethal +1 lethal)
Ranged mwk shortspear +5 (1d6+2) or dagger +3 (1d4+2)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear *potion of invisibility*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 2nd)
1/hour – *ghost sound, message*

Str 14, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 13
SQ sneak attack +1d6, evasion
Feats Dodge, Weapon Focus (shortspear)
Skills Bluff +5, Climb +7, Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +7, Move Silently +6, Swim +6, Tumble +8
Possessions combat gear plus mwk studded leather armor, mwk light wooden shield, mwk shortspear, dagger

Fallow Touch (Su) The seela's unarmed strikes deal an additional 1 point of damage. Prolonged exposure deals 1d6 points of damage per round. They cannot harm another seela in this way.

Tactics Primarily trained in driving off or killing animals, the seela rebels fight like a pack of wolves, preferring to surround enemies and cut them down from all sides. They don't have many tricks, though they are trained well enough to aid each other if they want to take down an armored foe.

Sergeant Smash **CR 9**

Male Dark Pyre orc fighter 8
LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, orc, fire)
Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Aura unnatural aura (30 ft., animals frightened)
Languages Common, orcish

AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 25 (+9 armor, +3 shield, +1 Dex, +3 natural)
hp 52 (8 HD); Dark Pyre healing; **DR** 10/ bludgeoning and magic
Immune fire
Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee *+1 dwarven waraxe* +18/+13 (1d10+11 plus 1d6 fire and 1d6 negative energy, ×3)
Ranged shield spine +13 (1d10+1, 19-20, range inc. 120 ft., 3/day)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12
Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack
Special Actions Dark Pyre corona, firewalk
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)
At will – *produce flame*
3/day – *wall of fire* (DC 14)

Str 22, Dex 18, Con —, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10
SQ Dark Pyre healing, Dark Pyre strike, power critical, unnatural aura, water vulnerability
Feats Elite Training (dwarven waraxe)*, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative[B], Quick Draw[B], Power Attack, Power Critical (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Specialization (dwarven waraxe)
Skills Intimidate +11
Possessions *+1 spiked full plate, spined shield, +1 dwarven waraxe*

Dark Pyre Corona (Su) Once every 5 rounds, as a standard action, a Dark Pyre sergeant can release blast of black fire, dealing 4d6 points of fire and 4d6 points of negative energy damage to each creature within 5 ft. (Reflex DC 14 negates). This heals 4d6 points of damage to any undead in the area, including himself.
Dark Pyre Healing (Su) Dark Pyre sergeants heal 1 point of damage for every 10 points of fire damage they would take from a given attack. Attacks that do less than 10 damage do not heal them.
Dark Pyre Strike (Su) Each of a Dark Pyre sergeant's melee attacks deal +1d6 points of fire damage and +1d6 points of negative energy damage. The Dark Pyre sergeant's natural weapons and any weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned for overcoming damage reduction.
Firewalk (Su) A Dark Pyre sergeant can climb an object on fire as though it had a climb speed equal to its highest speed. Furthermore, it can fly at its highest speed with perfect maneuverability so long as it remains in contact with fire, and it can walk on flames at its highest speed, as though walking on air via the *air walk* spell.
Power Critical (Ex) When using its dwarven waraxe, the Dark Pyre sergeant gains a +4 bonus on the roll to confirm a threat.
Unnatural Aura (Su) Any animal within 30 ft. of a Dark Pyre sergeant must make a Will save (DC 14) or become frightened. It only needs to flee beyond 30 ft. from the sergeant, at which point it is only shaken.
Water Vulnerability (Ex) A Dark Pyre sergeant takes damage from any sort of water as if it were acid. Holy water deals an additional 1d6 damage.

Note While typical creatures with such low Int cannot have class levels or feats, Sergeant Smash retains combat knowledge he possessed in life.

Seryanna **CR 9**

Female elf wizard (conjurer) 9
CE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Celestial, Elven, Infernal, Orc

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10
hp 22 (9 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5 (+7 vs. enchantment)
Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk longsword +5 (1d8, 19-20 critical)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4
Combat Gear one vial of *silversheen*, two *potions of cure light wounds*, scroll of *haste* (caster level 5th)
Spells Prepared (CL 9th, +4 melee touch, +7 ranged touch):
5th – *mage's faithful hound*, *summon monster V*
4th – *dimension door*, *dimensional anchor*, *greater invisibility*
3rd – *dispel magic* (1d20+9), *lightning bolt*, *major image*, *slow*, *summon monster III* (DC 16)
2nd – *acid arrow*, *fog cloud*, *protection from arrows*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*, *summon swarm* (DC 15)
1st – *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *grease*, *mage armor*, *magic missile* ×2 (DC 14)
0 – *acid splash*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation* (DC 13)
Prohibited Schools Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 8, Cha 14
Feats Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Penetration, Persuasive
Skills Bluff +7, Concentration +12, Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +7, Listen +2, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Search +6, Spellcraft +11, Spot +2
Possessions combat gear plus mwk longsword, spell component pouch
Spellbook spells prepared plus *lesser planar binding*, *secret chest*; *secure shelter*; *sepia snake sigil*, *sleet storm*, *magic circle against good*, *phantom steed*, *continual flame*; *cat's grace*, *locate object*; *animate rope*, *identify*, *mount*; all 0-level spells

Notes Anyone reading her spellbooks triggers Seryanna's *sepia snake sigils* which she has cast liberally throughout each. This is more likely to be annoying than dangerous, as it is unlikely that the characters read her spellbooks while in combat.

Setales **CR 4**

This half-orc is dressed for heavy battle, and a lot of his gear looks like it came from the Ragesian army.
Male half-orc fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 35 (4 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0
Resist fire 20

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +10 (1d8+6, ×3) or shortsword +8 (1d6+4, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +6 (1d6+4, ×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8
Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*
Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 9
Feats Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +3
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, heavy shield, mwk battleaxe, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, shortsword, two *potions of water breathing*

Shahalesti Guerilla, Elf **CR 3**

Male elf warrior 4
Various alignment Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +5, Spot +5
Languages Common, Elven

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; AC increases to 18 with a shield readied
hp 19 (3 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2 (+4 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee longsword +6 (1d8+2, 19-20)
Ranged composite longbow +6 (1d8+2, ×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Atk Options Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, 20 arrows

Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10
Feats Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack
Skills Listen +5, Spot +5, and one of Intimidate +3, Ride +5, or Swim +2
Possessions combat gear plus longsword, large steel shield, chain shirt, composite longbow (+2)

Shahalesti Guerilla, Human **CR 3**

Male human warrior 4
Various alignment Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Elven

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; AC increases to 18 with a shield readied
hp 19 (3 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee longsword +6 (1d8+2, 19-20 critical)
Ranged composite longbow +6 (1d8+2, ×3 critical)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Atk Options Improved Sunder, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, 20 arrows

Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10
Feats Improved Sunder, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack
Skills Listen +3, Spot +3, and two of Intimidate +3, Ride +5, or Swim +2
Possessions combat gear plus longsword, large steel shield, chain shirt, composite longbow (+2)

Shahalesti Scout, Standard **CR 4**

Male or female elf ranger 2/fighter 1/wilderness rogue 1

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Common, Elven, Orc

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15

hp 24 (4 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +2 (+4 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee longsword +4 (1d8+1, 19–20) or spiked gauntlet +4 (1d4+1)

Ranged longbow +9 (1d8+1, ×3), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4

Combat Gear 2 tanglefoot bags, 2 thunderstones, *wand of cure light wounds* (5 charges), and *wand of entangle* (5 charges)

Str 13, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Feats Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Track

SQ favored enemy (orcs) +2, wild empathy, sneak attack +1d6

Skills Climb +6, Hide +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Spot +10, Survival +7

Possessions combat gear plus mwk chain shirt, mwk buckler, longsword, spiked gauntlet, mwk composite longbow [+1 Str] with 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance +1*

Shahalesti Scout, Elite **CR 8**

Male or female elf ranger 3/fighter 2/wilderness rogue 3

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +14, Spot +14

Languages Common, Elven, Orc, Goblin

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15

hp 45 (8 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +4 (+6 vs. enchantment); evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee longsword +8 (1d8+1, 19–20), or spiked gauntlet +8 (1d4+1)

Ranged +13 *+1 longbow* (1d8+2, ×3), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +8

Combat Gear 2 tanglefoot bags, 2 thunderstones, *wand of cure light wounds* (20 charges)

Str 13, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Feats Endurance, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Track

SQ favored enemy (orcs) +2, wild empathy, sneak attack +2d6

Skills Climb +9, Hide +13, Listen +14, Move Silently +13, Spot +14, Survival +10

Possessions combat gear plus mwk chain shirt, mwk buckler, longsword, spiked gauntlet, *+1 composite longbow* [+1 Str] with 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance +1, boots of the winterlands*

Shahalesti Scout, Veteran **CR 6**

Male or female elf ranger 2/fighter 2/wilderness rogue 2

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages Common, Elven, Orc, Goblin

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15

hp 35 (6 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +2 (+4 vs. enchantment), evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee longsword +6 (1d8+1, 19–20), or spiked gauntlet +6 (1d4+1)

Ranged *+1 longbow* +11 (1d8+2, ×3), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6

Combat Gear 2 tanglefoot bags, 2 thunderstones, *wand of cure light wounds* (20 charges)

Str 13, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Feats Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Track

SQ favored enemy (orcs) +2, wild empathy, sneak attack +1d6

Skills Climb +7, Hide +10, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Spot +12, Survival +8

Possessions combat gear plus mwk chain shirt, mwk buckler, longsword, spiked gauntlet, *+1 composite longbow* [+1 Str] with 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance +1*

Shahalesti Soldier, Elite **CR 8**
Male or female elf fighter 8
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Elven

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 21
hp 57 (8 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3 (+5 vs. enchantment)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk longsword +12/+7 (1d8+2, 19–20), or short sword +12/+7 (1d6+4, 19–20)
Ranged *+1 longbow* +16/+11 (1d8+7, ×3), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +10
Combat Gear two thunderstones, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, two *oils of magic weapon*, *potion of resist energy (fire)*, *potion of heroism* or *potion of fly*

Str 14, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Combat Reflexes, Elite Training (longbow), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longbow)
Skills Climb +11, Ride +15
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 full plate*, *+1 buckler*, mwk longsword, short sword, *+1 composite longbow* [+2 Str] with 40 cold iron arrows and 20 silver arrows

Shahalesti Soldier, Green **CR 1**
Male or female elf fighter 1
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Elven

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16
hp 11 (1 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1 (+3 vs. enchantment)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee longsword +3 (1d8+1, 19–20) or shortsword +2 (1d6+1, 19–20)
Ranged shortbow +3 (1d6+1, ×3)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2
Combat Gear 2 thunderstones

Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Point-Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (longsword)
Skills Climb +0, Ride +6
Possessions chainmail, buckler, longsword, shortsword, composite shortbow [+1 Str] with 20 arrows

Shahalesti Soldier, Veteran **CR 6**
Male or female elf fighter 6
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Elven

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18
hp 44 (6 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3 (+5 vs. enchantment)
Immune sleep

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk longsword +10/+5 (1d8+2, 19–20), or shortsword +8/+3 (1d6+2, 19–20)
Ranged +11/+6 mwk longbow (1d8+4, ×3), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8
Combat Gear two thunderstones, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, two *oils of magic weapon*

Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Combat Reflexes, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longbow)
Skills Climb +9, Ride +12
Possessions *+1 breastplate*, *+1 buckler*, mwk longsword, shortsword, mwk composite longbow [+2 Str] with 40 arrows

Shahalesti Wizard, Elite **CR 8**
Female elf wizard (evoker) 8
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Elven

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14
hp 20 (8 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7 (+9 vs. enchantment)
Immune sleep

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee longsword +3 (1d8–1, 19–20)
Ranged longbow +7 (1d8–1, ×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear *elemental gem* (air), two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of fly*, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of cure light wounds*, *wand of magic missile* (1st level, 25 charges)
Spells Prepared (CL 8th, +7 ranged touch)
4th – *greater invisibility*, *ice storm* (DC 17), *wall of ice*
3rd – *daylight*, *haste*, *lightning bolt* (DC 16), *protection from energy*, sonic *lightning bolt*
2nd – *flaming sphere*, *minor image*, *invisibility*, sonic *scorching ray*, still *magic missile*
1st – *alarm*, *magic missile* ×3, *protection from evil*, *shield*
0 – *detect magic*, *light* ×2, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost* ×2
Prohibited Schools Conjuration, Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 10
SQ mageknight, familiar
Feats Armor Proficiency (light), Energy Alteration (sonic), Spell Penetration, Still Spell
Skills Concentration +10, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +9, Spellcraft +16
Possessions, spell components, *+1 chain shirt*, *+1 mithral buckler*, mithral gloves worth 200 gp, 10 pp, two doses of silversheen, *hand of the mage*
Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *daylight*, *dimensional anchor*, *fly*, *jump*, *scorching ray*, *shocking grasp*, and *spider climb*

Shalosha **CR 11**

Regal and beautiful, by the sword at her hip and her silvery chainmail this blond elfwoman looks prepared for combat, but her demeanor is genuinely peaceful. Her elegant and rich attire – a cloak, long gloves and high boots, all brilliant silver and blue – mark her as nobility, but the gleam in her sapphire eyes hints at something otherworldly in her blood.

Female elf commander 1/wizard 6/eldritch knight 4

CG Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, celestial sight; Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Orc

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 17

hp 48 (11 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7 (+9 vs. enchantment)

Immune sleep, blinding or dazzling from bright light

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Spring Attack

Melee *+1 merciful longsword* +11/+6 (1d8+1d6+4 nonlethal, 19–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow [Str +2] +9/+4 (1d8+2, ×3)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +9

Combat Gear eight *potions of cure light wounds*, two *oils of bless weapon*, *potion bracer*

Atk Options Combat Expertise

Special Actions Shining Warrior; direct orders +1

Spells Prepared (CL 9th, ranged touch +8)

5th – quickened *magic missile*

4th – *dimension door*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*

3rd – *fly*, *heroism*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *protection from energy*

2nd – *bull's strength*, *hideous laughter* (DC 16), *invisibility* ×2, *resist energy*

1st – *magic missile* ×2, *protection from evil*, *shield*, *true strike*

0 – *detect magic*, *detect poison* ×2, *prestidigitation*

Prohibited School Necromancy

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 12

SQ mageknight, celestial sight

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, Quicken Spell, Shining Warrior, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Concentration +15, Diplomacy +13, Listen +5, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +9, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Ride +4, Sense Motive +4, Spot +5, Spellcraft +20, Swim –1 [+3 without armor].

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 merciful longsword*, *+1 elven chain*, *ring of protection +1*, *earrings of intellect +2* (as headband), mwk composite longbow [Str +2] w/40 arrows, royal outfit, spell components

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *charm person*, *daylight*, *disguise self*, *identify*, *scrying*, *sending*, *sleep*, *summon monster I*, *teleport*

Celestial Sight (Su) Shalosha is of a royal elvish bloodline with a distant celestial heritage. She has a unique form of vision in which all living things shine with an inner light, and all inanimate objects and non-living creatures appear as gleaming crystal. In this vision, she can see regardless of light conditions, since the inner light of any living creature effectively illuminates a 60-ft. radius. This does not allow her to see invisible creatures, but she can detect the presence of creatures behind cover or concealment by noticing their glow.

Celestial sight functions just as well in well-lit areas as it does in dark areas. However, magical darkness blocks her line of sight for this ability, and a shadowdancer using its hide in plain sight ability does not appear to emit light.

Shalosha cannot be blinded or dazzled by bright light.

Direct Orders (Ex) Each round as a swift action, Shalosha may choose one of the following types of rolls. She grants every ally within 30 ft. a +1 bonus to rolls of that type for one round.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging
- Caster level checks
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one)
- Grapple checks
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist

Shining Warrior (Su) Shalosha can choose to intensify the light shed by her longsword, increasing from the strength of a *light* spell to that of a *daylight* spell (60 ft. radius, with shadowy light another 60 ft.) as a standard action once a day, lasting 10 minutes. While so illuminated, whenever she inflicts a critical hit on a creature with the longsword, that creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be blinded for 1 round. On a successful save, the creature is merely dazzled for 1 round.

While in an area that is brightly illuminated, Shalosha gains a +2 bonus to saves against fear and negative energy effects.

Tactics When the heroes first meet Shalosha in adventure three, neither the Shahalesti nor any of the members of the war council will initiate a battle. If the heroes do, Shalosha and her allies start off defensive. Simeon and Kiernan (*qq.v.*) quickly attempt to calm the heroes, not wanting overeager warriors to start an international incident.



Shalosha **CR 14**

Regal and beautiful, by the sword at her hip and her silvery chainmail this blond elfwoman looks prepared for combat, but her demeanor is genuinely peaceful. Her elegant and rich attire – a cloak, long gloves and high boots, all brilliant silver and blue – mark her as nobility, but the gleam in her sapphire eyes hints at something otherworldly in her blood.

Female elf commander 1/wizard 6/eldritch knight 7

CG Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, celestial sight; Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Orc

AC 25, touch 12, flat-footed 24 (+8 armor, +4 shield, +1 Dex, +1 deflection, +1 natural); Dodge, Mobility

hp 61 (14 HD)

Immune sleep, blinding or dazzling from bright light

Fort +10, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8 (+10 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Spring Attack

Melee *+1 merciful longsword* +15/+10 (1d8+1d6+4 nonlethal, 19-20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow [Str +2] +12/+7 (1d8+2, ×3)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +13

Combat Gear eight *potions of cure light wounds*, two *oils of bless weapon*, *potion bracer*

Atk Options Combat Expertise

Special Actions Shining Strike, Shining Warrior; direct orders +1

Spells Prepared (CL 12, ranged touch +11)

6th – *freezing sphere* (DC 20), *greater heroism*

5th – quickened *magic missile* ×2, *wall of force*

4th – *dimension door*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*

3rd – *fly*, *haste*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17) ×2, *protection from energy*

2nd – *glitterdust*, *hideous laughter* (DC 16), *invisibility* ×2, *resist energy*

1st – *magic missile* ×2, *protection from evil*, *shield*, *true strike*

0 – *detect magic*, *detect poison* ×2, *prestidigitation*

Prohibited School Necromancy

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 12

SQ mageknight

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, Quicken Spell, Shining Strike, Shining Warrior, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Concentration +17, Diplomacy +16, Listen +5, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +10, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Ride +4, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Spellcraft +22, Swim +3 [+7 without armor].

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 merciful longsword*, *+3 elven chain*, *+3 mithral buckler*, *ring of protection +1 and counterspells* (currently holds *dispel magic*), *amulet of natural armor +1*, *earrings of intellect +2* (as headband), *gauntlets of ogre power*, mwk composite longbow [Str +2] w/40 arrows, royal outfit, spell components

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *break enchantment*, *bull's strength*, *charm person*, *contingency*, *daylight*, *disguise self*, *disintegrate*, *dispel magic*, *identify*, *scrying*, *sending*, *sleep*, *summon monster I*, *teleport*, *wall of force*

Celestial Sight (Su) Shalosha is of a royal elvish bloodline with a distant celestial heritage. She has a unique form of vision in which all living things shine with an inner light, and all inanimate objects and non-living creatures appear as gleaming crystal. In this vision, she can see regardless of light conditions, since the inner light of any living creature effectively illuminates a 60-ft. radius. This does not allow her to see invisible creatures, but she can detect the presence of creatures behind cover or concealment by noticing their glow.

Celestial sight functions just as well in well-lit areas as it does in dark areas. However, magical darkness blocks her line of sight for this ability, and a shadowdancer using its hide in plain sight ability does not appear to emit light.

Shalosha cannot be blinded or dazzled by bright light.

Direct Orders (Ex) Each round as a swift action, Shalosha may choose one of the following types of rolls. She grants every ally within 30 ft. a +1 bonus to rolls of that type for one round.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging
- Caster level checks
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one)
- Grapple checks
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist

Shining Warrior (Su) Shalosha can choose to intensify the light shed by her longsword, increasing from the strength of a *light* spell to that of a *daylight* spell (60 ft. radius, with shadowy light another 60 ft.) as a swift action once a day, lasting 10 minutes. While so illuminated, her sword deals an extra 1d6 points of light damage with each hit, or an extra 2d6 damage against creatures particularly vulnerable to light. Whenever she inflicts a critical hit on a creature with the longsword, that creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be blinded for 1 round. On a successful save, the creature is merely dazzled for 1 round.

While in an area that is brightly illuminated, Shalosha gains a +2 bonus to saves against fear and negative energy effects.



Shalosha **CR 15**

Regal and beautiful, by the sword at her hip and her silvery chainmail this blond elf woman looks prepared for combat, but her demeanor is genuinely peaceful. Her elegant and rich attire – a cloak, long gloves and high boots, all brilliant silver and blue – mark her as nobility, but the gleam in her sapphire eyes hints at something otherworldly in her blood.

Female elf commander 1/wizard 6/eldritch knight 8
CG Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, celestial sight; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Orc

AC 27, touch 13, flat-footed 26 (+8 armor, +4 shield, +1 Dex, +2 deflection, +2 natural); Dodge, Mobility

hp 79 (15 HD) plus 14 temporary hp,; **DR** 10/ adamantine (140 points of damage)

Immune sleep, fear, blinding or dazzling from bright light

Fort +16, **Ref** +9, **Will** +13 (+15 vs. enchantment)

Buff Suite *fly*, *greater heroism*, *protection from energy* (fire), *stoneskin* (all last 14 minutes or more)

Energy Buffer 120 points fire damage

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good); Spring Attack

Melee *+1 merciful longsword* +20/+15 (1d8+1d6+4 nonlethal, 19–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow [Str +2] +17/+12 (1d8+2, ×3)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +14

Combat Gear eight *potions of cure moderate wounds*, two *oils of bless weapon*, *potion bracer*

Atk Options Combat Expertise

Special Actions Shining Strike, Shining Warrior; channeled strike, direct orders +1

Spells Prepared (CL 13th, ranged touch +12)

7th – quickened *lightning bolt* (DC 17)

6th – *freezing sphere* (DC 20), ~~*greater heroism*~~

5th – quickened *magic missile* ×2, *wall of force*

4th – *dimension door*, *dimensional anchor*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, ~~*stoneskin*~~

3rd – ~~*fly*~~, *haste*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17) ×2, ~~*protection from energy*~~

2nd – *glitterdust*, *hideous laughter* (DC 16), *invisibility* ×2, *resist energy*

1st – *magic missile* ×2, *protection from evil*, *shield*, *true strike*

0 – *detect magic*, *detect poison* ×2, *prestidigitation*

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

Prohibited School Necromancy

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 12

SQ mageknight

Feats Channeled Strike, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, Quicken Spell, Shining Strike, Shining Warrior, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Concentration +21, Diplomacy +20, Listen +9, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +14, Ride +8, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9, Spellcraft +26, Swim +7 [+11 without armor].

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 merciful longsword*, *+3 elven chain*, *+3 mithral buckler*, *ring of protection +2 and counterspells* (currently holds *dispel magic*), *amulet of natural armor +2 and health +2*, *earrings of intellect +2* (as headband), *gauntlets of ogre power*, mwk composite longbow [Str +2] w/40 arrows, royal outfit, spell components

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *break enchantment*, *bull's strength*, *charm person*, *contingency*, *daylight*, *disguise self*, *disintegrate*, *dispel magic*, *identify*, *scrying*, *sending*, *sleep*, *summon monster I*, *teleport*, *wall of force*

Celestial Sight (Su) Shalosha is of a royal elvish bloodline with a distant celestial heritage. She has a unique form of vision in which all living things shine with an inner light, and all inanimate objects and non-living creatures appear as gleaming crystal. In this vision, she can see regardless of light conditions, since the inner light of any living creature effectively illuminates a 60-ft. radius. This does not allow her to see invisible creatures, but she can detect the presence of creatures behind cover or concealment by noticing their glow.

Celestial sight functions just as well in well-lit areas as it does in dark areas. However, magical darkness blocks her line of sight for this ability, and a shadowdancer using its hide in plain sight ability does not appear to emit light.

Shalosha cannot be blinded or dazzled by bright light.

Channeled Strike (Su) When Shalosha attacks, she can expend a spell slot as a free action to get +1 to her attack roll and deal +1d6 damage for each level of the spell slot for that attack and any other attacks she makes until the beginning of her next turn.

Direct Orders (Ex) Each round as a swift action, Shalosha may choose one of the following types of rolls. She grants every ally within 30 ft. a +1 bonus to rolls of that type for one round:

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Shining Warrior (Su) Shalosha can choose to intensify the light shed by her longsword, increasing from the strength of a *light* spell to that of a *daylight* spell (60 ft. radius, with shadowy light another 60 ft.) as a swift action once a day, lasting 10 minutes. While so illuminated, her sword deals an extra 1d6 points of light damage with each hit, or an extra 2d6 damage against creatures particularly vulnerable to light. Whenever she inflicts a critical hit on a creature with the longsword, that creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be blinded for 1 round. On a successful save, the creature is merely dazzled for 1 round.

While in an area that is brightly illuminated, Shalosha gains a +2 bonus to saves against fear and negative energy effects.

Tactics Shalosha directs her allies, most likely giving them a bonus to Reflex saves to protect against enemy spells. For the first two rounds she flies, casting *freezing sphere*, *lightning bolt*, and *quickened magic missiles*, focusing her attacks on spellcasters. Thereafter she activates her Shining Warrior ability and begins using Spring Attack.

Shalosha **CR 18**

Regal and beautiful, by the sword at her hip and her silvery chainmail this blond elfwoman looks prepared for combat, but her demeanor is genuinely peaceful. Her elegant and rich attire – a cloak, long gloves and high boots, all brilliant silver and blue – mark her as nobility, but the gleam in her sapphire eyes hints at something otherworldly in her blood.

Female elf commander 1/wizard 7/eldritch knight 10

CG Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, celestial sight; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Orc

AC 27, touch 13, flat-footed 26 (+8 armor, +4 shield, +1 Dex, +2 deflection, +2 natural)

hp 94 (17 HD) plus 14 temporary hp; **DR** 10/ adamantine (150 points of damage)

Immune sleep, fear, blinding or dazzling from bright light

Fort +19, **Ref** +10, **Will** +14 (+16 vs. enchantment)

Buff Suite *fly*, *greater heroism*, *protection from energy (fire)*, *stoneskin* (all last 15 minutes or more)

Energy Buffer 120 points of fire damage

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good) ; Spring Attack

Melee *+4 merciful longsword* +26/+21/+16 (1d8+1d6+8 nonlethal, 19–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow [Str +2] +19/+14/+9 (1d8+2, ×3)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +17

Combat Gear eight *potions of cure serious wounds*, two *oils of bless weapon*, *potion bracer*

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Whirlwind Attack

Special Actions Shining Strike, Shining Warrior; channeled strike, direct orders +1

Spells Prepared (CL 16th, ranged touch +14)

8th – *greater planar binding*, *sunburst* (DC 22)

7th – quickened *lightning bolt* (DC 17) ×2

6th – *chain lightning* (DC 20), *freezing sphere* (DC 20), ~~*greater heroism*~~

5th – quickened *magic missile* ×3, *telekinesis* (DC 19, +20 attack bonus)

4th – *dimension door*, *dimensional anchor*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, ~~*stoneskin*~~

3rd – ~~*fly*~~, *haste*, *magic circle against evil* ×2, ~~*protection from energy*~~

2nd – *glitterdust*, *hideous laughter* (DC 16), *invisibility* ×2, *resist energy*

1st – *magic missile* ×2, *protection from evil*, *shield*, *true strike*

0 – *detect magic*, *detect poison* ×2, *prestidigitation*

~~Strikethrough~~ spells are already cast

Prohibited School Necromancy

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 12

SQ mageknight, celestial sight

Feats Channeled Strike, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, Quicken Spell, Shining Strike, Shining Warrior, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Whirlwind Attack

Skills Concentration +24, Diplomacy +23, Listen +9, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Ride +8, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9, Spellcraft +29, Swim +7 [+11 without armor].

Possessions combat gear plus *+4 merciful longsword*, *+3 elven chain mail*, *+3 mithral buckler*, *ring of protection +2 and counterspells* (currently holds *dispel magic*), *amulet of natural armor +2 and health +2*, *earrings of intellect +2* (as headband), *gauntlets of ogre power*, mwk composite longbow [Str +2] w/40 arrows, royal outfit, spell components

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *break enchantment*, *bull's strength*, *charm person, contingency, daylight, disguise self, disintegrate, dispel magic*, *identify, scrying, sending, sleep, summon monster I*, *teleport*, *wall of force*

Celestial Sight (Su) Shalosha is of a royal elvish bloodline with a distant celestial heritage. She has a unique form of vision in which all living things shine with an inner light, and all inanimate objects and non-living creatures appear as gleaming crystal. In this vision, she can see regardless of light conditions, since the inner light of any living creature effectively illuminates a 60-ft. radius. This does not allow her to see invisible creatures, but she can detect the presence of creatures behind cover or concealment by noticing their glow.

Celestial sight functions just as well in well-lit areas as it does in dark areas. However, magical darkness blocks her line of sight for this ability, and a shadowdancer using its hide in plain sight ability does not appear to emit light.

Shalosha cannot be blinded or dazzled by bright light.

Channeled Strike (Su) When Shalosha attacks, she can expend a spell slot as a free action to get +1 to her attack roll and deal +1d6 damage for each level of the spell slot for that attack and any other attacks she makes until the beginning of her next turn.

Direct Orders (Ex) Each round as a swift action, Shalosha may choose one of the following types of rolls. She grants every ally within 30 ft. a +1 bonus to rolls of that type for one round:

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Shining Warrior (Su) Shalosha can choose to intensify the light shed by her longsword, increasing from the strength of a light spell to that of a daylight spell (60 ft. radius, with shadowy light another 60 ft.) as a swift action once a day, lasting 10 minutes. While so illuminated, her sword deals an extra 1d6 points of light damage with each hit, or an extra 2d6 damage against creatures particularly vulnerable to light. Whenever she inflicts a critical hit on a creature with the longsword, that creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be blinded for 1 round. On a successful save, the creature is merely dazzled for 1 round.

While in an area that is brightly illuminated, Shalosha gains a +2 bonus to saves against fear and negative energy effects.

Tactics Shalosha directs her allies, most likely giving them a bonus to Reflex saves to protect against enemy spells. For the first two rounds she flies, casting sunburst, freezing sphere, and quickened magic missiles, focusing her attacks on spellcasters. Thereafter she activates her Shining Warrior ability and begins using Spring Attack or dives amid a horde of enemies and uses Whirlwind Attack.

Shealis Amlauril **CR 5**

This blond elf woman's blue eyes flicker like shining sapphires, and her pale skin glows like snow. She wears concealing red robes, but the metallic gleam of chainmail peeks out from her collar. Her gloves shine like silver.

Female elf wizard (evoker) 5

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Elven

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14

hp 13 (5 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +0, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5 (+7 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee longsword +1 (1d8–1, 19–20)

Ranged longbow +5 (1d8–1, ×3)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1

Combat Gear eight *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of fly*, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of jump*, *wand of magic missile* (1st level, 25 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 5th, +5 ranged touch)

3rd – *clairvoyance*, *fireball* ×2 (DC 16)

2nd – *detect thoughts*, *Gabal's superior missile*, *invisibility*, still *magic missile*

1st – *comprehend languages*, *magic missile* ×2, *protection from evil*, *shield*

0 – *detect magic*, *light* ×2, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost* ×2

Prohibited Schools Conjuration, Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 10

SQ mageknight

Feats Armor Proficiency (light), Brew Potion, Still Spell

Skills Bluff +4, Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Spellcraft +13

Possessions chain shirt, two doses of silversheen, *hand of the mage*, spell components, mithral gloves worth 200 gp, 10 pp

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *daylight*, *fly*, *jump*, *scorching ray*, *shocking grasp*, and *spider climb*

Tactics When the characters meet Shealis in adventure one, she is close to completing an important mission, making her nervous and perhaps overcautious. If she faces multiple foes who aren't in convenient *fireball* formation, she'll opt to flee, using *invisibility* to hurry back to her room to get her spellbooks before drinking a *potion of fly* and flying out her window. If the party did not defeat her lantern archon ally, it is here too, aiding her escape.

In a duel with Diogenes (*q.v.*), she's still cautious, prefering to use low-level spells. Confident that she can see through Diogenes's bluffs, she'll ready an action to cast *flaming sphere* when her foe starts to cast a spell, then use *magic missile* and *Gabal's superior missile* while chasing her opponent with the sphere.

Silvia Cossala **CR 8**

A statuesque blonde female knight sneers a taunt in your direction, holding her gauntlet in a posture that you suspect would be a vulgar hand gesture if it had more articulation. Her hair is short, and behind her shoulders she wears a mantle of bull horns.

Female human fighter 8

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21

hp 65 (8 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee mwk lance +16/+11 (1d8+8, ×3) or mwk battleaxe +13/+8 (1d8+4, ×3)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12

Atk Options Mounted Combat, Power Attack

Str 19, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Elite Training (lance), Improved Mounted Strafe, Jousting Blow, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe, Power Attack. Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)

Skills Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Ride +14

Possessions *+1 full plate*, heavy shield, *+1 lance*, mwk battleaxe, *mantle of bull's strength +2*, military saddle, banded mail barding

Simeon Gohanach **CR 14**

Dressed in a leather vest and rough shirt, you would almost forget this middle-aged man was a mage if not for the subtle runes stitched into his clothes. He looks more like a rancher or farmhand, and his face is that of a man who enjoys life too much to be saddled with his current burden of authority.

Middle-aged male human wizard (diviner) 7/loremaster 7

LG Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Orc

AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13 (–2 Dex, +3 armor, +1 deflection, +1 natural)

hp 37 (16 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +14

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk dagger +5/+0 (1d4–1, 19–20)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +5

Spells Prepared (CL 14th)

7th – *greater arcane sight*, *greater scrying*, *vision*

6th – *disintegrate*, *greater dispel magic*, quickened *scorching ray*, *true seeing*

5th – *break enchantment*, *contact other plane*, quickened *true strike*, *telepathic bond*

4th – *detect scrying*, *dimensional anchor*, *greater invisibility*, *scrying*, *shout*, *stoneskin*

3rd – *arcane sight*, *fireball* ×2, *protection from energy* ×2, still silent *charm person*

2nd – *detect thoughts* ×4, *invisibility*, *scorching ray*

1st – *magic missile* ×4, *protection from evil*, *true strike*

0 – *detect magic* ×5

Prohibited School Necromancy

Str 9, Dex 7, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 16

SQ Spellduelist; dodge trick, greater lore, instant mastery (Bluff, Sense Motive), lore, secrets of inner strength

Feats Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Decipher Script), Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Knowledge (nobility and royalty)), Spellduelist, Still Spell

Skills Bluff +8, Decipher Script +24, Diplomacy +21, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +24, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +23, Use Magic Device +13

Possessions *amulet of natural armor +1*, *bracers of armor +3*, *vest of resistance +5*, *ring of protection +1*, spell components

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and a selection of other useful spells

Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Simeon casts a spell he may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to him casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing his Bluff check. If Simeon wins the opposed check, he fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before he begins casting his spell. If he fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Tactics Simeon isn't kidding when he tells the resistance leaders he's not much of a tactician in adventure three. If endangered, he turns invisible, then casts *true strike* and tries to *disintegrate* the largest threat. After that, he improvises.



Sinaelus, Fell Claw of Leska **CR 17**

This hulking orc warrior seethes with unholy energy, and his eyes are wide with fanatic glory. The gauntlets of his crimson spiked armor end in wicked claws.

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Orc

Aura detects as overwhelming evil; unholy aura

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 23 (+11 armor, +4 deflection, +4 natural)

hp 148 (17 HD); SR 25 (against good spells and spells from good casters)

Fort +20, **Ref** +11, **Will** +11

Immune possession and mental influence

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee *+2 spell-storing dire morningstar* +29/+24/+19 (3d6+17, 19–20) or two claws +27 (1d6+4, 19–20)

Ranged darkfire smite +14 ranged touch (8d6 fire and unholy)

Base Atk +17; **Grp** +27

Special Actions darkfire blast, scour magic, smite good (3/day, +4 attack, +17 damage), spell-storing weapon, spiked armor; Awesome Blow

Str 30, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 18

Feats Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (dire morningstar), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Spellcraft)

Skills Intimidate +23, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Spellcraft +26

Possessions *+3 spiked full plate*, *cloak of charisma +4*, *amulet of natural armor +4*, *belt of strength +6*, *hurling bracers*, *+2 spell-storing dire morningstar*

Awesome Blow (Ex) Sinaelus can only use this ability if he has activated his *hurling bracers*, which allows him to count as Large for one round. As a standard action he may make a melee attack, taking a –4 penalty to his attack roll. If he hits, the struck creature must make a Reflex save (DC = damage dealt) or be knocked 10 ft. in the direction of the Claw's choice.

Darkfire Smite (Su) As a standard action, Sinaelus can fire a ray of unholy flame, to a maximum range of 30 ft. Any creature struck takes 8d6 points of damage. Half of this damage is fire, and half is unholy energy. For one round after using this ability, the Claw of Leska loses the benefit of its unholy aura (detailed below).

Hurling Bracers (Su) As a free action once per day, Sinaelus can use his bracers to count as Large for one round, without changing size.

Scour Magic (Su) Five times a day as an immediate action, Sinaelus can attempt to counter a spell. He rolls 1d20+17 against a DC of 11 + the spell's caster level. If he succeeds in countering the spell, he gains 5 temporary hp per level of the spell countered. These temporary hp vanish after a minute.

Smite Good (Su) Three times a day, Sinaelus can make any melee attack be a smite, gaining a +4 bonus to attack and dealing +17 damage if the target is good.

Spell-Storing Weapon (Sp) Sinaelus's weapon stores a *dispel magic* (caster level 10th), which he can release on any successful melee attack. This dispel can only affect the target struck.

Unholy Aura (Sp) Sinaelus has a +4 deflection bonus to AC, a +4 resistance bonus to saves, SR 25 against good spells and spells from good casters, and is immune to possession and mental influence. If a good creature strikes him, that creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or take 1d6 points of Str damage.

Sindairese Ghoul **CR 4**

Male ghoul fighter 4

NE Medium Undead (augmented humanoid, human)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Gnome

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Dodge, Mobility

hp 39 (6 HD)

Turn Resist +2

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +10

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee bite +9 (1d6+4 plus paralysis) and 2 claws +4 (1d3+2 plus paralysis)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +9

Atk Options Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack

Special Actions Ghoul fever, paralysis

Str 18, Dex 17, Con —, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14

Skills Balance +6, Climb +8, Hide +6, Intimidate +9, Jump +8, Move Silently +6, Spot +7, Tumble +2

SQ undead traits

Feats Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness

Possessions chain shirt

Ghoul Fever (Su) Disease - bite, Fortitude DC 15, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex.

Paralysis (Ex) Those hit by a ghoul's bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Elves have immunity to this paralysis.

Sindairese Infantry Squad **CR 13**

Twenty warriors, mostly human fighter 4

LN Huge humanoid (unit of Medium humanoids)

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +26, Spot +26

Languages Common

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 159 (24 HD)

Fort +16, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares)

Melee pike hedge +37 (1d8+25)

Ranged concentrated archery +34 (1d6+24, range inc. 70 ft.)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +35

Atk Options blessed guidance

Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

SQ unit traits

Blessed Guidance (Sp) Every infantry squad includes a well-defended cleric. The infantry squad's attacks count as magical weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. Five times per day as a standard action, the cleric can using magic to heal the squad 20 points of damage.

The cleric can also cast the following spells twice per day: *bless*, *dismissal*, *invisibility purge*, *obscuring mist*, *prayer*.

This cleric can be specifically targeted by spells and ranged attacks. He uses the squad's statistics, though attack rolls against him take a –4 penalty. If 30 damage is dealt to him, he dies, and if he dies or is otherwise taken out of commission, the squad loses this ability.

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a fireball (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics Infantry units usually fight with pikes and shields in close quarters. When at range, they spend a full round action to divest themselves of pike and shield and switch to shortbows. Switching back requires another full round action.

Skeleton Phalanx **CR 13**

Twenty dread skeletons

NE Huge Undead (unit of Medium Undead)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16

hp 156 (24 HD); **DR** 5/bludgeoning

Immune cold, undead traits

Fort +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee phalanx of spears +33 (1d8+21)

Ranged skeletal archery +33 (1d8+20, range inc. 100 ft.)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +13

Str 13, Dex 13, Con -, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 6

SQ undead traits, unit traits

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

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Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Skulk of Shadows **CR 12**

Twenty shadows

CE Huge undead (unit of Medium undead, incorporeal)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11

hp 117 (18 HD), incorporeal

Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

Resist turn resistance +2

Immune undead traits

Speed fly 40 ft. (good, 8 squares)

Melee grip of shadows +31 touch (1d6 Str plus 20 negative energy damage)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** -

Str -, Dex 14, Con -, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 13

SQ undead traits, unit traits

Create Spawn (Su) Any humanoid reduced to Str 0 by a shadow becomes a shadow under the control of its killer within 1d4 rounds.

Str Damage (Su) The touch of a skulk of shadows deals 1d6 points of Str damage to a living foe, plus 20 points of negative energy damage (affecting hp). A creature reduced to Str 0 by a shadow dies. This is a negative energy effect.

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a fireball (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

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A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Smarg "Smiley" Hobbler **CR 2**

Male orc barbarian 1/fighter 1

NE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –2, Spot –2

Languages Common, Orc

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12

hp 21 (2 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** –2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee mwk silver greataxe +7 (1d12+5, ×3)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +6

Combat Gear *potion of enlarge person*

Special Actions rage (7 rounds)

Str 19, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 6, Cha 11

SQ uncanny dodge

Feats Cleave, Power Attack

Skills Climb +8, Intimidate +5, Jump +13, Swim +8

Possessions combat gear plus mwk silver greataxe, leather armor, platinum chain worth 140 gp

Tactics When a fight breaks out, Smiley drinks his potion and goes for the throat.

Raging: AC 11, hp 25, Fort +7, Will +0, +9 melee (1d12+8, ×3), grapple +8.

Enlarged: AC 11, space 10 ft., Ref +1, reach 10 ft., +7 melee (3d6+6, ×3), grapple +11.

Raging and Enlarged: AC 9, hp 25, Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +0, space 10 ft., reach 10 ft., +9 melee (3d6+9, ×3), grapple +13.

Snort, Troll Mercenary **CR 6**

Troll barbarian 1
CN Large giant
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +6
Languages Common, Giant

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20
hp 83 (7 HD); regeneration 5
Fort +14, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee two claws each +11 (1d6+7) and bite +6 (1d6+3)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +14
Atk Options rend (2d6+10)
Special Actions rage 1/day (12 rounds)
Combat Gear two *potions of resist energy (fire)*, two *potions of resist energy (acid)*

Str 25, Dex 16, Con 25, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Track
Skills Listen +5, Spot +6
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 Large breastplate*

Rage (Ex) While raging, the troll mercenary's stats change as follows:
AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 18
hp 97
Fort +16, **Will** +5
Melee two claws each +13 (1d6+9) and bite +7 (1d6+4)
Str 29, Con 29
When the rage ends, the troll mercenary is fatigued until the end of the encounter.

Rend (Ex) If a troll hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+9 points of damage.

Regeneration (Ex) Fire and acid deal normal damage to a troll. If a troll loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Solei Palancis Dreadnought **CR 12**

Male elf fighter 8/wizard (transmuter) 2/rogue 2
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Celestial, Elven

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +3 Dex); Dodge, Mobility
hp 73 (12 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6 (+8 vs. enchantment); evasion
Immune sleep

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+2 greatsword* +20/+15 (2d6+13, 17–20)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +15
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack; sneak attack +1d6
Combat Gear *potion of fly* ×2, *potion of invisibility* ×2, *potion of heroism* ×2
Spells Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st – *enlarge person*, *shield*, *true strike*
0 – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*
Prohibited Schools Conjuration, Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 20, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ mageknight, familiar
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Elite Training (great sword), Improved Critical (great sword), Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (great sword), Weapon Specialization (great sword)
Skills Climb +16, Intimidate +13, Jump +18, Spellcraft +7, Tumble +20
Possessions combat gear plus spell components, *+1 mithral breastplate*, *+2 great sword*, *cloak of resistance +1*, *gloves of dexterity and strength +2*
Spellbook spells prepared

Tactics Solei Palancis dreadnoughts prefer to sneak up invisibly, cast *enlarge person*, then attack.

Solei Palancis Elite Guard **CR 20**

Twenty dreadnoughts, mostly elf fighter 8/wizard (transmuter) 2/rogue 2
N Gargantuan humanoid (unit of Medium humanoids)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +39, Spot +39
Languages Celestial, Common, Elven

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20; dodge, mobility
hp 468 (72 HD)
Fort +25, **Ref** +27, **Will** +24; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Spring Attack
Melee shining greatswords +66/+61 (4d6+36 plus 4d6 light; 17–20)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +36; **Grp** +61
Atk Options magic, shining strike, sneak attack +4d6

Str 20, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Power Attack
SQ unit traits

Magic (Su) Every dreadnought has two *potions of fly* and two *potions of invisibility*, with they use as a unit. Once per day, the elite guard can spend a standard action to have each member cast *true strike*, granting the unit a +20 bonus on its first attack on the next turn. They usually combine this with Power Attack.

Every dreadnought also has a *wand of magic missile* (caster level 1st, 50 charges) built into the hilt of his shining *+2 greatsword*. As a standard action, the unit can fire twenty missiles, dealing 20d4+20 damage unerringly to any target within 110 ft.

Shining Strike (Su) Once per day as a standard action, the elite guard can cause their swords to shine as bright as a *daylight* spell, blinding all creatures within 400 ft. (Fort DC 14 negates) for as long they are in the area, and for one minute thereafter. Creatures who succeed the initial save must make a new save each round they are within range. Other Solei Palancis dreadnoughts and some members of Shahalesti royalty are immune to this blinding.

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a fireball (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Tactics The elite guard of dreadnoughts have little finesse. Empowered with flight magic and invisibility, they descend upon their target, cast *true strike*, and obliterate their enemy.

Sophia **CR 7**

Female tiefling wizard 7
N Medium outsider (native)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +6 (+9 in bright light)
Languages Fiendish, Common, speak with familiar

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14
hp 26 (7 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk quarterstaff +4 (1d6/20) or
Ranged mwk light crossbow +7 (1d8/19-20 and giant wasp poison)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear *wand of Invisibility*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of bear's endurance*, 1 dose of giant wasp poison, scroll of *see invisibility*, 2 flasks of alchemist's fire
Special Actions bestow touch spell (familiar)
Spells Prepared (CL 7th; save DC 14 + spell level)
4th – *stoneskin*
3rd – *dispel magic* ×2, *fly*
2nd – *pyrotechnics*, *rope trick*, *summon monster II* ×2
1st – *burning hands* ×2, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*
0 – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *read magic*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)
1/day – *darkness*

Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ tiefling traits, empathic link (familiar), share spells (familiar)
Feats Alertness (if familiar is within 5 ft.), Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Stealthy
Skills Bluff +5, Concentration +11, Hide +10, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (nature) +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +10, Spellcraft +12, Spot +6 (+9 in bright light)
Possessions combat gear plus *cloak of resistance +1*, *brooch of shielding*, mwk quarterstaff, mwk light crossbow (20 bolts), 2 smokesticks, cold iron dagger, spell components
Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips; *expeditious retreat*, *magic aura*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *silent image; invisibility*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility; fireball*, *nondetection*; *bestow curse*, *minor creation*

Eye-of-Thunder, Hawk Familiar **CR —**

N Tiny animal
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +6, Spot +14
Languages speak with master, speak with birds

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural)
hp 13 (7 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares), fly 60 ft. (average)
Melee talons +7 (1d4-2)
Space 2½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** –7
Special Actions deliver touch spell

Str 6, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 14, Cha 6
SQ empathic link (master)
Feats Weapon Finesse
Skills Bluff +5, Concentration +10, Hide +7, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (nature) +0, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Spellcraft +7, Spot +14

Steppengard Commander **CR 5**

Male human commander 4/fighter 1
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Dodge
hp 32 (5 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk flail +9 (1d8+3, 19–20)
Ranged acid flask +3 (1d6 splash)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7
Special Actions Leadership Performance; battle cry, direct orders +2
Combat Gear two *potions of cure serious wounds*, five flasks of acid

Str 16, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14
SQ battle cry, initiative bonus
Feats Dodge, Fearless Leader, Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader, Weapon Focus (flail)
Skills Craft (weapons) +7, Diplomacy +9, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +10, Perform (oratory) +10, Ride +8
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 full plate, +1 heavy shield,* mwk flail

Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, the commander can shout an iconic battle cry (such as "You weren't *trained* how to die, soldiers!") to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round the commander can choose to grant all allies within 40 ft. a +2 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Ex) Allies within 40 ft. of the commander gain a +1 bonus to initiative checks.

Leadership Performances (Ex) Three times per day, the commander can inspire or direct his allies (within 40 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +1 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect the commander himself.

Steppengard Knight **CR 4**

Male human fighter 4
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18
hp 35 (4 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)
Melee mwk heavy flail +9 (1d10+6, 19–20) or mwk lance +8 (1d8+3)
Ranged heavy crossbow +6 (1d10, 19–20) or acid flask +5 ranged touch (1d6)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure moderate wounds, oil of magic weapon*, four acid flasks
Atk Options Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Trample

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Power Attack, Trample, Weapon Focus (heavy flail), Weapon Specialization (heavy flail)
Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +4, Ride +10
Possessions full plate, mwk heavy flail, dagger, four flasks of acid, mwk lance, mwk heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 2 days of rations, heavy warhorse, military saddle, scale mail barding, 10 gp

Steppengard Prelate **CR 7**

Female dwarf cleric 7
LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; +4 dodge bonus vs. giants
hp 59 (7 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8; +2 vs. poison, spells, spell-like abilities

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk flail +9 (1d8+2)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +7
Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (50 charges)
Special Actions turn undead (1/day, 1d20–2), turn air creatures or command earth creatures (1/day, 1d20–2)
Spells Prepared (CL 7th, DC 13 + spell level; CL 8th with healing spells)
4th – *cure critical wounds*[D], *summon monster IV*
3rd – *cure serious wounds*[D], *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against chaos* ×2
2nd – *calm emotions*, *cure moderate wounds*[D], *remove paralysis*, *resist energy*, *silence*
1st – *bless*, *command*, *cure light wounds*[D], *detect chaos*, *protection from chaos* ×2
0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison* ×3, *virtue*
D domain spell **Domains** Earth, Healing

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 6
SQ spontaneous casting (cure spells), dwarf traits
Feats Martial Weapon Proficiency (flail), Toughness, Weapon Focus (flail)
Skills Concentration +13, Heal +13
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, light shield, mwk flail, spell components

Steppengard Soldier **CR 2**

Male human fighter 2
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18
hp 20 (2 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk flail +6 (1d8+2, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow [+2 Str] +4 (1d8+2, ×3) or
acid flask +3 (1d6 splash)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4
Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, five flasks of acid

Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (flail)
Skills Handle Animal +4, Ride +6
Possessions combat gear plus banded mail, heavy shield, mwk flail, mwk composite longbow [+2 Str] with 20 arrows

Stonum, Ragesian Wyvern Knight **CR 6**

Male human fighter 6
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Draconic, Orc

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15
hp 50 (6 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Ride 60 ft. (flight, poor, 12 squares)
Melee mwk shortsword +8/+3 (1d6+1, 19–20)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +11/+6 (1d8+2, 19–20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7
Combat Gear two *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *oil of magic weapon*, Ragesian dragonbomb

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (light crossbow), Weapon Specialization (light crossbow)
Skills Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +5, Ride +14
Possessions combat gear plus mithral chain shirt, buckler, mwk shortsword, mwk light crossbow with 60 bolts (40 normal, 10 cold iron, 10 silver), wyvern mount, exotic military saddle

Supreme Inquisitor Leska Merideus **CR 28**

The world seems less alive around Leska, sounds muted, colors faded, time drawing out so that nothing appears real except for her dark majesty. Despite her imperial grandeur, she is adorned with dozens of primitive shamanistic charms and amulets. Her face lies hidden behind a skeletal mask, long dark gloves conceal her hands, and regal crimson robes float around her body as if even gravity yields to her power. Only the flesh of her neck, jaw, and mouth is exposed, and her blood-red lips hint at a face filled with cold, scornful detachment.

Female human cleric 3/wizard 3/mystic theurge 10/hierophant 1/archmage 5/loremaster 2/thaumaturge 4
NE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +21 (*moment of prescience*); **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8
Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Infernal, Orc

AC 37, touch 18, flat-footed 34 (+8 armor, +5 deflection, +6 shield, +5 natural)
hp 246 (28 HD)
Regeneration 30
Immune disease, divination, energy drain, mind-affecting effects, movement-impairment, and poison
Fort +22, **Ref** +15, **Will** +39
Buff Suite *mind blank*, *moment of prescience*

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee melee touch +12 (varies)
Ranged ranged touch +16 (varies)
Base Atk +13; **Grp** +12
Combat Gear various scrolls
Special Actions Improved Counterspell; contingent conjuration, multispell (3 quickened spells per round), reactive counterspell
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 21st, save DC 18 + spell level)
9th – *mage's disjunction*, *mass heal*, quickened *wall of stone*
8th – *greater spell immunity*, quickened *cure critical wounds* ×2
7th – *spelleater* ×4
6th – *greater dispel magic* ×3, *harm* ×2
5th – *spell resistance*, *true seeing*[O], *wall of stone* ×4
4th – *dimensional anchor*, *freedom of movement*[O], *freedom of movement*
3rd – *bestow curse*, *cure serious wounds* ×3, *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against chaos*, *protection from energy* ×2, *remove curse*
2nd – *aid*, *resist energy* ×4, *silence*
1st – *cure light wounds* ×7

Q Spell quickened by *metamagic rods*

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 18th, save DC 23 + spell level)

9th – *crushing hand*Q, *meteor swarm**, *time stop*Q

8th – *greater shout**, *horrid wilting*, quickened *dimension door*

7th – *mage's sword*Q, *spell turning*

6th – *acid fog*, *chain lightning** ×2, *disintegrate* ×2

5th – *major creation*, *sending*, *telekinesis* ×2, *wall of force** ×2

4th – *fire shield*Q, *wall of fire** ×3

3rd – *fireball** ×13, *fly*

2nd – *flaming sphere**, *glitterdust*, *touch of idiocy* ×3

1st – *magic missile* ×10, *Wayfarer's step* ×4

* Evocation, +2 DC

Q Spell quickened by *metamagic rods*

Epic Spells (3 arcane/day, 3 divine/day)

Arcane – Burning Veils, Divide the Heart, Eye of the Obelisk

Divine – Desertion of the Blade (DC 28), Fate of War, Reweave Magic

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Str 8, Dex 16, Con 23, Int 36, Wis 27, Cha 28

SQ Blessing of the Aquiline Heart, arcane reach, contingent conjuration, contingent heal, mastery of counterspelling, mastery of elements, mastery of shaping, spell power (hierophant)

Feats Augment Summoning, Automatic Quicken Spell, Epic Spellcasting, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Counterspell, Multispell ×2, Quicken Spell, Reactive Counterspell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Focus (evocation)

Skills Concentration +37, Knowledge (arcana) +44, Knowledge (history) +44, Knowledge (religion) +44, Knowledge (the planes) +44, Sense Motive +23, Spellcraft +56, others.

Possessions combat gear plus *mask of Leska*, *Leska's cloak of fire*, *amulet of three beasts*, *greater quicken metamagic rod*, *standard quicken metamagic rod*, *ring of protection +5 and wizardry I*, *ring of wizardry III*, *bracers of armor +8*, *+5 mithril gauntlet buckler*, *gloves of dexterity +6 and storing*, spell components

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Arcane Reach (Su) Leska can deliver touch spells at a range of 30 ft. with a ranged touch attack.

Automatic Quicken (Ex) All 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level spells she casts are automatically quickened without increasing the spell level.

Blessing of the Aquiline Heart (Ex) Leska is immortal. She does not suffer ability score penalties from aging, nor can she die of old age, but she does gain the normal ability score bonuses. She has regeneration 30, and heals ability damage at a rate of 1 point per ability score per round. She is immune to disease, energy drain, and poison.

Almost no form of attack deals lethal damage to Leska. She regenerates even if she fails a saving throw against a disintegrate spell or a death effect. If she fails her save against a spell or effect that would kill her instantly (such as those mentioned above), the spell or effect instead deals nonlethal damage equal to her full normal hp +10 (or 158 hp). Leska is immune to effects that produce incurable or bleeding wounds, such as mummy rot, a sword with the wounding special ability, or a clay golem's cursed wound ability.

If Leska loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1d6 minutes (the detached piece dies and decays normally). She can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to her stump.

Only the bite or breath weapon of a true dragon deals lethal damage to Leska. She cannot regenerate Con damage from having her blood drunk. If Leska is completely exsanguinated (reduced to 0 Con by the blood drain of a vampire, for example), she loses this ability and is slain. If Leska has nonlethal damage equal to her hp, she is unconscious and helpless. While she is helpless, a character may perform a coup de grace to impale her in the heart. As long as her heart is so pierced, Leska cannot regenerate.

Contingent Conjuration (Su) Leska's thaumaturge class has let her set a contingent conjuration. With a whispered curse, she can trigger a pre-cast *summon monster IX* to summon a pair of fiendish tyrannosaurs.

Contingent Heal (Su) Leska has used contingency so that if she falls unconscious, a *heal* spell will be cast upon her (caster level 21st). After this effect triggers, the contingency is expended.

Mastery of Counterspelling (Ex) When Leska counterspells a spell, it is turned back upon the caster as if it were fully affected by a spell turning spell. If the spell cannot be affected by spell turning, then it is merely counterspelled.

Mastery of Elements (Ex) Leska can alter an arcane spell when cast so that it utilizes a different element from the one it normally uses. This ability can only alter a spell with the acid, cold, fire, electricity, or sonic descriptor. The spell's casting time is unaffected. She decides whether to alter the spell's energy type and chooses the new energy type when she begins casting.

Mastery of Shaping (Ex) Leska can alter area and effect spells that use one of the following shapes: burst, cone, cylinder, emanation, or spread. The alteration consists of creating spaces within the spell's area or effect that are not subject to the spell. The minimum dimension for these spaces is a 5-foot cube. Furthermore, any shapeable spells have a minimum dimension of 5 ft. instead of 10 ft.

Multispell (Ex) Leska can cast three quickened spells per round.

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) Leska can counterspell even when she has not readied an action, as long as she is aware of a spell being cast. If she does so, she gives up her standard action on her next turn, having effectively already used it.

Leska's Unique Items As the ruler of a sovereign nation and an accomplished arcane and divine spellcaster in her own right, Leska has access to several magic items of impressive power.

The skull-like Mask of Leska, carved from one single bone and etched with gold, deadens the effects of magic upon the wearer and focuses its wearer's mind. The wearer gains a +6 enhancement bonus to Int and a +5 resistance bonus to saving throws.

Dark red like seared blood, Leska's Cloak of Fire grants its wearer constant *freedom of movement*.

Representing the planes of earth, life, and time, the Amulet of Three Beasts grants the wearer a +6 enhancement bonus to Con and a +10 competence bonus to Spellcraft checks.

Svenn **CR 4**

Male half-orc fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 35 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +10 (1d8+6, ×3) or shortsword +8 (1d6+4, 19–20)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +6 (1d6+4, ×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8
Combat Gear three *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*
Atk Options Power Attack

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)
Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +3
Possessions combat gear plus full plate, heavy shield, mwk battleaxe, mwk composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, shortsword, 5 days of rations

Thalan **CR 5**

A few strands of blonde hair peek out from this elf's blue cloak. He carries a sword at his hip and a bow on his back, but his armor, if any, is hidden under loose robes, and he carries himself like a scholar, not a warrior.
Male elf wizard (evoker) 5
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Elven

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14
hp 13 (5 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +0, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5 (+7 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee longsword +1 (1d8–1, 19–20)
Ranged longbow +5 (1d8–1, ×3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1
Combat Gear two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of fly*, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of cure light wounds*, *wand of magic missile* (1st level, 25 charges)
Spells Prepared (CL 5th, +5 ranged touch)
3rd – *haste*, *lightning bolt* ×2 (DC 16)
2nd – *flaming sphere*, *minor image*, *invisibility*, still *magic missile*
1st – *magic missile* ×3, *protection from evil*, *shield*
0 – *detect magic*, *light* ×2, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost* ×2
Prohibited Schools Conjuration, Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 10
SQ mageknight (*Player's Guide*, pg 14), hawk familiar
Feats Armor Proficiency (light), Spell Penetration, Still Spell
Skills Concentration +7, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Spellcraft +13
Possessions combat gear plus chain shirt, *hand of the mage*, spell components,10 pp\
Spellbook spells prepared plus cantrips and *daylight*, *fly*, *jump*, *scorching ray*, *shocking grasp*, and *spider climb*

Tactics When supported by allies, Thalan starts by casting *haste* on his allies, followed by *flaming sphere*, which he can make use of for several rounds while casting other offensive spells. The *still magic missile* is a last-resort spell for if he is captured or grappled.

Thalan's hawk familiar departs as soon as combat begins, and will fly to deliver news of his defeat to the Shahalesti fleet blockading Seaquen if he falls.

Thalan's Bodyguard **CR 4**

Male elf fighter 4
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Elven

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15
hp 31 (4 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2 (+4 vs. enchantment)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk longsword +8 (1d8+2, 19–20) or shortsword +6 (1d6+2, 19–20)
Ranged mwklongbow +9 (1d8+4, ×3), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Combat Gear two thunderstones, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*

Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longbow)
Skills Climb +6, Ride +10
Possessions combat gear plus mwk chain shirt, buckler, mwk longsword, shortsword, mwk composite longbow [+2 Str] with 40 arrows

Thorkrid the Dark **CR 10**

This dark-robed mage's face is the skull of a jackal, traced with streaks of ash and lit from within by unholy fire. A red stone orbits his head like a halo of blood.

Male dark-pyre skeleton gnoll* wizard (necromancer) 9

NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, gnoll, fire)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Aura unnatural aura (30 ft., animals frightened)

Languages Common, Gnoll, Orc

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +3 natural, +1 insight)

hp 59 (9 HD); Dark Pyre healing; **DR** 10/ bludgeoning and magic

Immune fire

Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee spectral hand touch +9 (varies) or melee touch +7 (varies)

Ranged ray +7 (varies), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Combat Gear *wand of subdual lightning bolt* (CL 9th, 17 charges)

Special Actions Dark Pyre corona, firewalk, spells

Spells Prepared (CL 9th)

5th – quickened magic missile, quickened ray of enfeeblement

4th – *bestow curse* (curse of the stilled heart), empowered subdual *scorching ray*, *stoneskin*

3rd – subdual lightning bolt, empowered ray of enfeeblement, empowered subdual shocking grasp, vampiric touch

2nd – flaming sphere, scare, subdual scorching ray ×2, spectral hand, web

1st – chill touch, magic missile ×3, ray of enfeeblement ×2

0 – open/close ×5

Prohibited Schools Enchantment, Illusion

Str 16, Dex 16, Con —, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 8

SQ Dark Pyre healing, Dark Pyre strike, unnatural aura, water vulnerability

Feats Empower Spell, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Subdual Substitution**

Skills Concentration +11, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Spellcraft +16

Possessions *dusty red ioun stone*

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips

Curse of the Stilled Heart (Ex) Thorkrid has devised a unique curse that prevents the victim from healing naturally. He no longer heals lethal or nonlethal damage, nor ability damage, except by magic. This curse can be broken if the victim is targeted with a turn undead attempt sufficient to turn undead with 9 or more Hit Dice.

Dark Pyre Corona (Su) Once every 5 rounds, as a standard action, Thorkrid can release blast of black fire, dealing 5d6 points of fire and 4d6 points of negative energy damage to each creature within 5 ft. (Reflex DC 13 negates). This heals 4d6 points of damage to any undead in the area, including itself.

Dark Pyre Healing (Su) Dark Pyre sergeants heal 1 point of damage for every 10 points of fire damage they would take from a given attack. Attacks that do less than 10 damage do not heal them.

Dark Pyre Strike (Su) Each of a Dark Pyre sergeant's melee attacks deal +1d6 points of fire damage and +1d6 points of negative energy damage. The Dark Pyre sergeant's natural weapons and any weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned for overcoming damage reduction.

Firewalk (Su) A Dark Pyre sergeant can climb an object on fire as though it had a climb speed equal to its highest speed. Furthermore, it can fly at its highest speed with perfect maneuverability so long as it remains in contact with fire, and it can walk on flames at its highest speed, as though walking on air via the *air walk* spell.

** **Subdual Substitution (Ex)** Several of Thorkrid's spells are listed as "subdual." These spells deal nonlethal damage instead of lethal. Nonlethal damage does not harm undead.

Unnatural Aura (Su) Any animal within 30 ft. of a Dark Pyre sergeant must make a Will save (DC 14) or become frightened. It only needs to flee beyond 30 ft. from the sergeant, at which point it is only shaken.

Water Vulnerability (Ex) A Dark Pyre sergeant takes damage from any sort of water as if it were acid. Holy water deals an additional 1d6 damage.

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* **Note** Thorkrid is a variant gnoll without racial Hit Dice.

Three Weeping Ravens **CR 9**

Short, wiry and young, with dark brown skin and shaved black hair, Three Weeping Ravens has a relaxed and disarming air, wearing a constant slight smile with never shows teeth. Two ravens are tattooed on his left hand and the back of his head, but the third raven must be hidden somewhere beneath his loose-fitting brown and grey monk robes.

Male human monk 4/psychic warrior 5

LG Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +4 Wis, +1 monk)

hp 53 (9 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9 (+11 vs. enchantment); evasion

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Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); Spring Attack

Melee unarmed strike +10/+5 (1d8+3) or unarmed strike +8/+8/+3 (1d8+3) with flurry of blows

Ranged shuriken +8/+3 (1d2+3; range inc. 10 ft.)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +9

Combat Gear ten *potions of cure light wounds*

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Stunning Fist (5/ day, DC 18)

Psionics (CL 5th; 17 pp)

2nd – *lion's charge*, *painful strike*

1st – *detect psionics*, *force screen*, *inertial armor*

Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8

SQ Soul Echo, Totem Shape; ki strike (magic), psionic focus, slow fall 20 ft.

Feats Aligned Strike, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Soul Echo, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist, Totem Shape (raven), Up the Walls, Weapon Focus (unarmed)

Skills Balance +15, Concentration +11, Jump +20, Listen +8, Spot +8, Tumble +15

Possessions combat gear plus 20 shuriken, monk's outfit

Tattoos *gauntlets of ogre strength +2*, *periapt of wisdom +2*, *gloves of dexterity +2*

Psionic Focus (Ex) As a full-round action, Three Weeping Ravens can make a Concentration check (DC 20) to attain focus. While focused, he can use his Up the Walls feat to travel up vertical surfaces as easily as on the ground, though at the end of his turn if he is not on a horizontal surface he falls.

Alternately, Three Weeping Ravens can expend his focus as a free action to use his aligned attack feat to deal an extra 1d6 damage with an attack, and to have that attack count as a lawful weapon.

Soul Echo (Sp) Once each per day, Three Weeping Ravens can use *animal affinity* and *sense link*, augmented with power points equal to his manifester level.

Tattoos (Su) Three Weeping Ravens has inscribed on his person three magical tattoos that duplicate the effects of magical items (see above). A magical tattoo cannot be disarmed, sundered, or stolen. Three Weeping Raven's tattoos are on his hand, head, and foot, and depict ravens.

Totem Shape (Sp) Once per day, Three Weeping Ravens can transform into a raven, as with a druid's wild shape ability, lasting nine hours.

Tactics Three Weeping Ravens never remains still for long in combat, using Tumble and Up the Walls to move about freely, lending support to allies who need it most. If things get tough, or if he needs to move about the battle swiftly, he will use his Totem Shape feat to turn into a raven and fly about, repositioning himself or withdrawing to use one of his potions.



Soul Magic, not Psionics

If you are not using the psionics rules, this simplified version covers all you need to handle Three Weeping Ravens' powers.

Psionics (Sp) When Three Weeping Ravens uses one of these powers, there is no special sound or visual display, but those around him are simply aware that he has tapped a power, as clearly as they would notice someone casting a spell. The caster level for all these abilities is 5th.

Five times per day he can use one of the following – *detect magic*, *mage armor*, or *shield*.

Four times per day he can use one of the following – *lion's charge* or *painful strike* (see below).

Once per day he can use any one of *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *eagle's splendor*, *fox's cunning*, or *owl's wisdom*. While so affected, he takes on minor physical traits of the appropriate creature.

Once per day he can use *sense link* (see below).

Lion's charge – You gain the powerful charging ability of a lion. You can use this ability as a swift action, and may make a full attack at the end of a charge. This is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Painful strike – For the next 5 rounds each successful attack you make with a natural weapon deals an extra 1d6 points of nonlethal damage to the target as he feels the pain of other wounded creatures. This is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Sense link – You forge a connection with one willing creature within 150 ft. For as long as he concentrates, up to 1 minute per level, he perceives what it perceives for any two senses. Alternately, he can have the creature perceive one of his senses for the duration. This is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell.

Tiljann, Bearer of the Song **CR 4**

This young woman has deep, vivid eyes full of fey mystery and cautious curiosity. She is emaciated, as if she has never had a full meal in her life, and light leather armor clings to her waifish body. Dark gray hair floats around her shoulders, and faintly glistening wings twitch behind her back, withered like a dragonfly that got too close to a flame.

Female seela bard 3/seela paragon 1
CG Medium fey

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot +1

Languages Common, Elven, Ignan, Sylvan

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 29 (4 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Dodge, Mobility
Melee mwk spear +3 (1d8) or unarmed strike +2 (1d3 nonlethal +1 lethal)
Ranged mwk shortbow +5 (1d6)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2
Combat Gear *flute of thunder*
Atk Options fallow touch
Special Actions bardic music (4/day – countersong, fascinate, inspire courage, inspire competence)
Spells Known (CL 3rd)
1st (2/day) – *hideous laughter* (DC 14), *silent image*, *ventriloquism*
0 (3/day) – *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)
1/hour – *ghost sound*, *message*

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16
SQ bardic knowledge +6, glide
Feats Dodge, Mobility
Skills Bluff +10, Craft (clothing) +8, Diplomacy +12, Knowledge (history) +8, Listen +10, Perform (sing) +12, Tumble +8
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 leather armor* enchanted with a mild glamer to make it look more revealing when worn by a woman, mwk spear, mwk shortbow, 7 arrows

Fallow Touch (Su) Tiljann's unarmed strikes deal an additional 1 point of damage, and she heals 1 point of damage with each strike. Prolonged exposure deals 1d6 points of damage per round, and heals an equal amount. Tiljann can heal no more damage than 8 hit points in a day in this way. She cannot harm another seela in this way.

Glide (Ex) Tiljann's wings allow her to descend safely. She can ignore the first 20 ft. of falling damage as long as she is conscious.

Tiljann **CR 5**

This young woman has deep, vivid eyes full of fey mystery and cautious curiosity. She is emaciated, as if she has never had a full meal in her life, and light leather armor clings to her waifish body. Dark gray hair floats around her shoulders, and faintly glistening wings twitch behind her back, withered like a dragonfly that got too close to a flame.

Female seela bard 3/seela paragon 2

CG Medium fey

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +11, Spot +1

Languages Common, Elven, Ignan, Orc, Sylvan

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13

hp 41 (5 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (average; limited flight)

Melee mwk spear +4 (1d8) or unarmed strike +3 (1d3 nonlethal +1 lethal)

Ranged *+1 shortbow* +6 (1d6+1)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1st, 50 charges)

Atk Options fallow touch

Special Actions bardic music (4/day – countersong, fascinate, inspire courage, inspire competence)

Spells Known (CL 3rd)

1st (2/day) – *hideous laughter* (DC 15), *silent image*, *ventriloquism*

0 (3/day) – *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

1/hour – *ghost sound*, *message*

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 18

SQ bardic knowledge +6, glide, limited flight, longwalker

Feats Dodge, Mobility

Skills Bluff +12, Craft (clothing) +9, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (history) +8, Listen +11, Perform (sing) +14, Tumble +8.

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 leather armor* enchanted with a mild glamer to make it look more revealing when worn by a woman, mwk spear, *+1 shortbow*, 20 arrows, 20 gp

Fallow Touch (Su) Tiljann's unarmed strikes deal an additional 1 point of damage, and she heals 1 point of damage with each strike. Prolonged exposure deals 1d6 points of damage per round, and heals an equal amount. Tiljann can heal no more damage than 12 hit points in a day in this way. She cannot harm another seela in this way.

Glide (Ex) Tiljann's wings allow her to descend safely. She can ignore the first 20 ft. of falling damage as long as she is conscious.

Limited Flight (Ex) Tiljann can only fly for 4 rounds every ten minutes. After that, she must descend. Additionally, when falling, she can choose to descend as slowly as 60 ft. per round and to take no damage.

Longwalker (Su) Tiljann is considered to always be bonded to whatever natural terrain she is in. This allows her to avoid taking Con damage when singing the Song of Forms, and may have other benefits, at the game master's option.



Tiljann **CR 6**

This young woman has deep, vivid eyes full of fey mystery and cautious curiosity. She is emaciated, as if she has never had a full meal in her life, and light leather armor clings to her waifish body. Dark gray hair floats around her shoulders, and faintly glistening wings twitch behind her back, withered like a dragonfly that got too close to a flame.

Female seela bard 3/seela paragon 2/sorcerer 1

CG Medium fey

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +11, Spot +1

Languages Common, Elven, Ignan, Orc, Sylvan

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13

hp 48 (6 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (average; limited flight)

Melee mwk spear +4 (1d8) or unarmed strike +3 (1d3 nonlethal +1 lethal)

Ranged *+1 shortbow* +6 (1d6+1)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 2nd, 50 charges)

Atk Options fallow touch

Special Actions bardic music (4/day – countersong, fascinate, inspire courage, inspire competence)

Bard Spells Known (CL 3rd)

1st (2/day) – *hideous laughter* (DC 15), *silent image*, *ventriloquism*

0 (3/day) – *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 1st)
1st (4/day) – *comprehend languages*, *Wayfarer's step*
0 (5/day) – *disrupt undead*, *flare*, *message*, *ray of frost*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)
1/hour – *ghost sound*, *message*

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 18
SQ bardic knowledge +6, glide, limited flight, longwalker, spellduelist
Feats Dodge, Mobility, Open Minded, Spellduelist
Skills Bluff +13, Craft (clothing) +9, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +6, Knowledge (history) +8, Listen +11, Perform (sing) +15, Tumble +8.
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 leather armor* enchanted with a mild glamer to make it look more revealing when worn by a woman, mwk spear, *+1 shortbow*, 20 arrows, 20 gp

Fallow Touch (Su) Tiljann's unarmed strikes deal an additional 1 point of damage, and she heals 1 point of damage with each strike. Prolonged exposure deals 1d6 points of damage per round, and heals an equal amount. Tiljann can heal no more damage than 12 hit points in a day in this way. She cannot harm another seela in this way.
Glide (Ex) Tiljann's wings allow her to descend safely. She can ignore the first 20 ft. of falling damage as long as she is conscious.
Limited Flight (Ex) Tiljann can only fly for 4 rounds every ten minutes. After that, she must descend. Additionally, when falling, she can choose to descend as slowly as 60 ft. per round and to take no damage.
Longwalker (Su) Tiljann is considered to always be bonded to whatever natural terrain she is in. This allows her to avoid taking Con damage when singing the Song of Forms, and may have other benefits, at the game master's option.
Spellduelist (Ex) Whenever Tiljann casts a spell she may make a Bluff check, and any onlooker who would respond to her casting a spell – such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action – makes a Sense Motive checks opposing her Bluff check. If Katrina wins the opposed check, she fakes out the onlooker, causing their action to go off just before she begins casting her spell. If she fails the opposed check, the onlooker's action goes off normally.

Tiljann **CR 13**

This young woman has deep, vivid eyes full of fey mystery and cautious curiosity. Light leather armor clings to her waifish body, dark gray hair floats around her shoulders, and faintly glistening wings twitch behind her back, withered like a dragonfly that got too close to a flame. She carries a staff adorned with mementos of a year of extensive travel.

Female seela bard 4/seela paragon 2/Wayfarer cirqueliste 7
CG Medium fey
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +11, Spot +1
Languages Common, Elven, Ignan, Orc, Sylvan

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 113 (13 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +13, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (Average; limited flight)
SQ bardic music (5/day – countersong, fascinate, inspire courage, inspire competence; Perform +21), limited flight, wayfaring

Limited Flight (Ex) Tiljann can only fly for 4 rounds every ten minutes. After that, she must descend. Additionally, when falling, she can choose to descend as slowly as 60 ft. per round and to take no damage.
Wayfaring (Sp) Tiljann can use *Wayfarer's step* 14 times per day as a swift action. She can expend a use of *Wayfarer's step* to teleport to any unoccupied square within 800 ft. she affects with an instantaneous spell or any space adjacent to one of its targets as part of the effect of the spell.

She can use *dimension door* three times per day, and her turn does not end after teleporting in this way. She can use *teleport* twice per day, and *greater teleport* once per day. Whenever she teleports, she can expend a use of *Wayfarer's step* to bring along one more person than normal. She can also attempt to bring along unwilling creatures with her (Will DC 15 + spell level negates). For all these abilities, her caster level is 11.

She gains the benefit of *freedom of movement* up to 14 rounds per day, used whenever she needs it automatically. If she tries to teleport when affected by an effect that would prevent teleportation, she can make a caster level check (DC 11 + warding spell's level) to teleport anyway.

Finally, Tiljann can attempt to use dimensional travel even when an effect prohibits such movement (fore example, *dimensional anchor*). Whenever she casts a spell or uses a spell-like ability with the teleportation descriptor she may make a caster level check against DC 11 + caster level of the prohibiting magic. If she succeeds, her teleportation spell or spell-like ability functions normally. If she fails, the spell or ability is wasted.

Note This abbreviated stat block should suffice to run Tiljann in her role as the heroes' chauffeur during adventure twelve.

Timbre **CR 4**

Female indomitable fire dryad
CG Medium fey (fire)
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +9, Spot +9
Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan; wild empathy

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13(+4 Dex, +3 natural)
hp 14 (4 HD); **DR** 5/cold iron
Immune fire
Fort +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6
Weakness cold vulnerability

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +6 (1d4 plus 1d6 fire, 19-20)
Ranged mwk longbow +7 (1d8, ×3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2
Special Actions wild empathy
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)
At will – *entangle* (DC 13), *speak with plants*, *tree shape*
3/day – *charm person* (DC 13), *deep slumber* (DC 15), *tree stride*
1/day – *suggestion* (DC 15)

Str 10, Dex 19, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18
SQ tree dependent, indomitable fire soul
Feats Great Fortitude, Weapon Finesse
Skills Escape Artist +11, Handle Animal +11, Hide +11, Knowledge (nature) +11, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Ride +6, Spot +9, Survival +9, Use Rope +4 (+6 with bindings)

Indomitable Fire Soul (Su) The fire wreathing Timbre is tied directly to her life force. If the flame is extinguished, she is destroyed, and the animating force is lost. The flame is fairly tenacious, and requires Timbre to be completely submerged for one full round before it goes out. The *quench* spell affects Timbre as if she were a fire elemental, and *pyrotechnics* deals 1 point of damage per caster level if Timbre is used as the spell's fire source.

Timbre can be turned, bolstered, or rebuked as if she were a fire elemental. The flame is very similar to positive energy, and so responds to a turn or rebuke undead attempt as well. Those who turn undead can rebuke or bolster indomitable fire creatures, and those who rebuke or bolster undead can turn or destroy indomitable fire creatures.

Rekindle (Su) Two rounds after an indomitable fire creature falls to –1 or fewer hp, it heals 1 hp per Hit Die, or enough to raise it to 1 hp, whichever is more. This ability only works once per day.

Tree Dependent (Su) Each dryad is mystically bound to a single, enormous oak tree and must never stray more than 300 yards from it. Any who do become ill and die within 4d6 hours. A dryad's oak does not radiate magic.

Wild Empathy (Ex) This power works like the druid's wild empathy class feature, except that the dryad has a +6 racial bonus on the check.



Time **CR 20**

The spectral figure of a great, wingless dragon glides slowly through the cavern, all the colors of the world's history trailing behind it, blurring past and present, moments mingling together like this has happened before, and it will always happen until eternity's end.

N Huge undead (augmented dragon, incorporeal)
Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +27, Spot +27
Aura frightful presence 240 ft. (Will DC 36), null time field 30 ft. (Will DC 26)
Languages telepathy

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (–2 size, +7 deflection)
hp 130 (20 HD); **DR** 15/hasted
Fort +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +16
SR 25; **Resist** incorporeal traits
Immune undead traits

Speed fly 200 ft. (perfect)
Melee bite +18 incorporeal touch (2d8); and tail slap +13 incorporeal touch (2d6)
Base Atk +20; **Grp** +28
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.
Special Actions recall death
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)
At will – detect good, detect evil, detect chaos, detect law, detect thoughts
3/day – time stop

Str -, Dex 10, Con —, Int 3, Wis 19, Cha 22
SQ dragon traits, rejuvenation
Feats Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (bite)

Damage Reduction (Su) Time's DR can be bypassed by weapons of speed, and those wielded by creatures under the effect of *haste* and similar speed-enhancing magic.

Frightful Presence (Su) 240-ft. radius, Will DC 36 or be shaken for 4d6 rounds. Creatures with 14 or fewer Hit Dice instead become panicked for that period. The save DC includes a +10 sacred bonus.

Null Time Field (Su) The dragon spirit continually generate a 30-foot-radius spread null time field. All other creatures and objects in the field must make a Will save (DC 26) each round to take any actions. On a failed save, subjects are stuck in a static time stream until their next round of actions, at which time they must make another save. A creature so stuck is conscious of its surroundings and can think, but is unable to do anything that affects itself or the rest of the world.

Ranged attacks that enter the null time field from outside pause mid-flight unless the attacker succeeds a Will save (DC 26). Such attacks resume their path when Time moves away, and generally miss without effect.

While a subject is stuck in this static time stream, Time can use its recall death power on the subject, though in all other ways the subject is invulnerable to attacks and damage as if in temporal stasis.

Recall Death (Su) As a standard action, Time can cause a creature within 300 ft. to witness its entire life, past and future, from birth to death, in an instant. The shock and strain deals nonlethal damage equal to that creature's normal full hp (Will DC 26 negates).

Rejuvenation (Su) If Time is destroyed, it restores itself in a matter of days, like a ghost, unless the Aquiline Heart has been destroyed.

Timor War Mage **CR 5**

Female human wizard 5
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10
hp 24 (5 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +1 (1d4–1, 19–20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1
Combat Gear *wand of fireball* (5th level, 10 charges), scroll of *dispel magic* ×2, scroll of *slow* ×2, scroll of *haste* ×2
Special Actions warmage strike +3 (ranged touch attack, 3d6 cold damage, range 60 ft.)
Spells Prepared (CL 5th)
3rd – *fireball* (DC 16)
2nd – flaming sphere ×2 (DC 15), see invisibility
1st – magic missile ×3, shield
0 – *light* ×2, *message* ×2

Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 13
Feats Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Warmage Strike*
Skills Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +11, Listen +4, Spellcraft +13, Spot +4
Possessions combat gear plus dagger, adventurer's outfit
Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips and *sleet storm, dispel magic, invisibility, web, continual flame, resist energy, grease, color spray, sleep, identify*

Toma **CR 8**

Male elf druid 8
NE medium humanoid (elf)
Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +11; Spot +11
Aura hot and cold (30 ft.)
Languages Aquan, Common, Druidic, Elven, Ignan

AC 22, touch +16, flat-footed +16 (+3 armor, +6 Dex, +3 shield)
hp 63 (8 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10
Weakness vulnerable to air and earth

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee *+1 flaming rapier* +13/+8 (1d6+3 plus 1d6 fire, 18-20)
Ranged mwk longbow +13/+8 (1d8, ×3)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +6/+1; **Grp** +8
Combat Gear *necklace of fireballs type I*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*
Spells (CL 8th; +8 touch, +12 ranged touch)
4th – *cure serious wounds*, *summon nature's ally IV* ×2
3rd – *contagion* ×2 (DC 17), *cure moderate wounds* ×2
2nd – *bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, *heat metal* (DC 16), *summon nature's ally II*
1st – *cure light wounds* ×3, *longstrider*, *produce flame*
0 – *detect magic* ×2, *flare*, *light*, *read magic* ×2

Str 14, Dex 22, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 11
SQ demiplane attunement, master of Vule, nature atrophy, notice secret doors, suspended animation
Feats Augment Summoning, Spell Focus (conjuration), Weapon Finesse
Skills Handle Animal +3, Heal +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Listen +11, Spot +11, Survival +10
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 flaming rapier, mwk longbow, 20 arrows, +1 leather, +1 heavy wooden shield,* silver pearl 100 gp, 10 pp, 27 gp

Blessing of Fire and Water (Su) When reduced to 0 hit points or lower, Toma is immediately surrounded by elemental forces that protect him from all harm for 4 rounds. He cannot take any actions until the fourth round, and the only action Toma can take is to use his wild shape ability.

Demiplane Attunement (Su) Toma is attuned to the demiplane Vule. This ability makes Toma completely aware of all things happening on the demiplane at all times. He knows the location of all living beings, knows their

alignment, and knows their intentions (whether they are helpful or harmful).

Hot and Cold (Su) Creatures near Toma feel both hot and cold sensations at the same time. While this aura is certainly discomforting, it has not developed enough to cause harm.

Master of Vule (Su) Toma is Vule's new master. He can manipulate the plane, and does so often.

Nature Atrophy (Su) Its been so long since Toma has been in nature, that some of his abilities have vanished. He has lost the use of all the druid class features except for spells, spontaneous casting, and wild shape.

Spontaneous Casting (Ex) This works just like the druid class feature, except that it can only be used to summon fire or water elementals.

Vulnerable to Air and Earth (Ex) Toma takes an extra 50% normal damage and gets –5 to all saves from sources involving air or earth.

Wild Shape (Su) Toma has been blessed by the elder elementals of fire and water, and can use wild shape to turn into an elemental (and nothing else) earlier than other druids. He only has two shapes to choose from, either a Huge fire elemental or Huge water elemental.

Tactics Toma knows that the PCs are coming for him, and he knows where they are because of his attunement to the demiplane. When he knows the PCs are right outside of his door, he casts *bear's endurnace*, *cat's grace*, and *longstrider* on himself (these spells are already included in Toma's stats).

If Toma wins initiative, he detaches the 5d6 orb from his *necklace of fireballs*, and hurls it at the door. His first couple of rounds should be spent staying far back from the PCs, casting two augmented *summon nature's ally IV* spells for a medium fire elemental and medium water elemental. He uses these elementals to hold back the stronger members of the party, while aiming his longbow at casters. If the opportunity presents itself, he'll enter melee to flank an enemy. Once reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, his suspended animation ability activates, then he uses wild shape to turn into a huge water elemental. When he is again reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, suspended animation activates one last time, allowing him to wild shape into a huge fire elemental.

Toma feels intense animosity towards things that are not from the elemental planes of fire or water. Thus, only death will stop him from killing all those who have brought harm to his domain.

Torrent **CR 2**

As tall and strong as the typical warrior, Torrent is a distinctive looking woman with tanned skin and short white hair. Under a dark winter coat she wears a breastplate decorated with blue wave-like etchings, and a holy symbol to a sea god is tied to her wrist with a leather cord. Her demeanor is smooth but forceful, like an ocean wave.

Female human fighter 1/cleric 1
CG Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15
hp 17 (2 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** –1, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +4 (1d8+2, ×3)
Ranged light crossbow +0 (1d8, 19–20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear *potion of remove paralysis*, scroll of *hide from undead*, two flasks of holy water, *wand of cure light wounds* (50 charges)
Special Actions feat of strength (+1 Str as free action, lasts 1 round, 1/day), spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+2, 1st), turn fire and command, rebuke or bolster water creatures 4/day (+1, 2d6+2, 1st)
Spells Prepared (CL 1st)
1st – *bless*, *enlarge person*[D], *magic weapon*
0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *guidance*
D domain spell **Domains** Strength, Water

Str 15, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 13
Feats Negotiator, Rapid Reload, Skill Focus (Swim)
Skills Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (local) +2, Sense Motive +6, Swim –1 (+9 without armor or shield)
Possessions combat gear plus mwk battleaxe, light crossbow, breastplate, light steel shield, dagger, 40 crossbow bolts, copious variety of beverages in backpack, 300 gp, large padded hip pouch containing numerous *potions of stand the heat* (two per PC, plus at least six more).

Tactics Torrent only uses her buff spells if she has time before combat. Once battle begins, she relies on her family's heirloom battleaxe. Used to fighting with wizards, she often stays back to protect allied spellcasters in case enemies get past front-line defenders.

Torrent **CR 3**

As tall and strong as the typical warrior, Torrent is a distinctive looking woman with tanned skin and short white hair. Under a dark winter coat she wears a breastplate decorated with blue wave-like etchings, and a holy symbol to a sea god is tied to her wrist with a leather cord. Her demeanor is smooth but forceful, like an ocean wave.

Female human fighter 1/cleric 2
CG Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15
hp 22 (3 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** –1, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +6 (1d8+2, ×3)
Ranged light crossbow +1 (1d8, 19-20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4
Combat Gear *potion of remove paralysis*, scroll of *hide from undead*, two flasks of holy water, *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1st, 50 charges)
Special Actions feat of strength (+2 Str as free action, lasts 1 round, 1/day), spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+3, 2nd), turn fire and command, rebuke or bolster water creatures 4/day (+1, 2d6+3, 2nd)
Spells Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st – *bless*, *divine favor*, *enlarge person*[D], *protection from evil*
0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *purify food and drink*
D domain spell **Domains** Strength, Water

Str 15, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 13
Feats Negotiator, Rapid Reload, Skill Focus (Swim), Weapon Focus (battleaxe)
Skills Concentration +2, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (geography) +1, Knowledge (local) +2, Sense Motive +6, Swim –1 (+9 without armor or shield)
Possessions combat gear plus mwk battleaxe, light crossbow, breastplate, light steel shield, dagger, 40 crossbow bolts, copious variety of beverages in backpack, 300 gp

Tactics Torrent only uses her buff spells if she has time before combat. Once battle begins, she relies on her family's heirloom battleaxe. Used to fighting with wizards, she often stays back to protect allied spellcasters in case enemies get past front-line defenders.

Torrent **CR 4**

Female human fighter 1/cleric 3
CG Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15
hp 28 (4 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +0, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +8 (1d8+3, ×3)
Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8, 19-20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6
Combat Gear *potion of remove paralysis*, scroll of *hide from undead*, two flasks of holy water, *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1st, 50 charges)
Special Actions feat of strength (+3 Str as free action, lasts 1 round, 1/day), spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+4), turn fire and command, rebuke, or bolster water creatures 4/day (+1, 2d6+4)
Spells Prepared (CL 3rd)
2nd – *aid*, *bull's strength*[D], *sound burst* (DC 14)
1st – *bless*, *divine favor*, *enlarge person*[D], *protection from evil*
0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *purify food and drink*
D domain spell **Domains** Strength, Water

Str 16, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 13
Feats Negotiator, Rapid Reload, Skill Focus (Swim), Weapon Focus (battleaxe)
Skills Concentration +5, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (geography) +1, Knowledge (local) +2, Sense Motive +6, Swim +0 (+10 without armor or shield)
Possessions combat gear plus mwk battleaxe, light crossbow, breastplate, light steel shield, dagger, 40 crossbow bolts, copious variety of beverages in backpack, 300 gp

Torrent **CR 5**

As tall and strong as the typical warrior, Torrent is a distinctive looking woman with tanned skin and short white hair. Under a dark winter coat she wears a breastplate decorated with blue wave-like etchings, and a holy symbol to a sea god is tied to her wrist with a leather cord. Her demeanor is smooth but forceful, like an ocean wave.
Female human fighter 1/cleric 4
CG Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common

AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17
hp 33 (5 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +9 (1d8+3, ×3)
Ranged light crossbow +3 (1d8, 19–20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7
Combat Gear *potion of remove paralysis*, scroll of *water breathing*, two flasks of holy water, *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1st, 35 charges)
Special Actions feat of strength (+4 Str as free action, lasts 1 round, 1/day), spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+5, 4th), turn fire and command, rebuke or bolster water creatures 4/day (+1, 2d6+5, 4th)
Spells Prepared (CL 4th)
2nd – *aid*, *bull's strength*[D], *shield other*, *sound burst* (DC 14)
1st – *bless* ×2, divine favor, *enlarge person*[D], *protection from evil*
0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *purify food and drink*
D domain spell **Domains** Strength, Water

Str 16, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 13
Feats Negotiator, Rapid Reload, Skill Focus (Swim), Weapon Focus (battleaxe)
Skills Concentration +8, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (geography) +1, Knowledge (local) +2, Knowledge (religion) +4, Sense Motive +6, Swim +4 (+10 without armor or shield)
Possessions Masterwork battleaxe, light crossbow, *+1 breastplate*, *+1 light steel shield*, dagger, 40 crossbow bolts, copious variety of beverages in backpack, 60 gp

Tactics Torrent only uses her buff spells if she has time before combat. Once battle begins, she relies on her family's heirloom battleaxe. Used to fighting with wizards, she often stays back to protect allied spellcasters in case enemies get past front-line defenders.

Torrent **CR 6**

As tall and strong as the typical warrior, Torrent is a distinctive looking woman with tanned skin and short white hair. Under a dark winter coat she wears a breastplate decorated with blue wave-like etchings, and a holy symbol to a sea god is tied to her wrist with a leather cord. Her demeanor is smooth but forceful, like an ocean wave.
Female human fighter 1/cleric 5
CG Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Aquan, Common

AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17
hp 39 (6 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk battleaxe +9 (1d8+3, ×3)
Ranged light crossbow +3 (1d8, 19–20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7
Combat Gear *potion of remove paralysis*, scroll of *water breathing*, two flasks of holy water, *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1st, 35 charges)
Special Actions feat of strength (+5 Str as free action, lasts 1 round, 1/day), spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+6, 5th), turn fire and command, rebuke or bolster water creatures 4/day (+1, 2d6+6, 5th)
Spells Prepared (CL 5th)
3rd – *prayer*, *water breathing*[D]
2nd – *aid*, *bull's strength*[D], *shield other*, *sound burst* (DC 14)
1st – *bless*, *divine favor*, *enlarge person*[D], *magic weapon*, *protection from evil*
0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *purify food and drink*
D domain spell **Domains** Strength, Water

Str 16, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 13
Feats Craft Magic Arms & Armor, Negotiator, Rapid Reload, Skill Focus (Swim), Weapon Focus (battleaxe)
Skills Concentration +9, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (geography) +1, Knowledge (local) +2, Knowledge (religion) +4, Sense Motive +6, Swim +4 (+10 without armor or shield)
Possessions combat gear plus mwk battleaxe, mwk light crossbow, *+1 breastplate*, *+1 light steel shield*, dagger, 40 crossbow bolts, copious variety of beverages in backpack, 1060 gp

Tactics Torrent only uses her buff spells if she has time before combat. Once battle begins, she relies on her family's heirloom battleaxe. Used to fighting with wizards, she often stays back to protect allied spellcasters in case enemies get past front-line defenders.

Torrent **CR 16**

As tall and strong as the typical warrior, the deeply-tanned, white-haired Torrent wears a breastplate decorated with blue, wave-like etchings. Holding a holy symbol to a sea god, she awaits battle with a confident demeanor, smooth but forceful, like an ocean wave.

Female human fighter 1/cleric 15
CG Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Aquan, Common

AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +2 shield, –1 Dex)
hp 109 (16 HD)
Immune acid from own spells
Resist acid 10
Fort +12, **Ref** +4, **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+3 fire-bane battleaxe* +18/+13 (1d8+8, ×3)
Ranged *+1 light crossbow* +9 (1d8+1, 19–20), Rapid Reload
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +14
Combat Gear *wand of cure serious wounds* (50 charges)
Special Actions feat of strength (+15 Str as free action, lasts 1 round, 1/day), spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+16, 15th), turn fire and command, rebuke or bolster water creatures 4/day (+1, 2d6+16, 15th)
Spells Prepared (CL 15th)
8th – horrid wilting[D] (DC 22), summon monster VIII
7th – acid fog, summon monster VII ×2
6th – blade barrier (DC 20) ×2, cone of cold[D] (DC 20), summon monster VI
5th – break enchantment, righteous might[D] ×4
4th – death ward, dismissal ×3, freedom of movement, spell immunity[D]
3rd – prayer ×4, water breathing[D], wind wall ×2
2nd – consecrate, fog cloud[D], hold person, shield other, silence ×3
1st – bless ×5, enlarge person[D], protection from evil
0 – detect magic ×5, purify food and drink
D domain spell **Domains** Strength, Water

Str 21, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 13
SQ aqueous summoner, breathe water
Feats Aqueous Summoning, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Elemental Control (water), Negotiator, Rapid Reload, Skill Focus (Swim), Spell Focus (conjuration), Weapon Focus (battleaxe)
Skills Concentration +19, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (geography) +1, Knowledge (local) +2, Knowledge (religion) +9, Sense Motive +6, Swim +4 (+10 without armor or shield)
Possessions combat gear plus *+3 fire-bane battleaxe*, *+1 light crossbow*, *+2 mithril breastplate*, *+2 light steel shield*, dagger, 80 crossbow bolts, *belt of strength +4*, *periapt of wisdom +4*

Aqueous Summoner (Ex) Torrent can cast summon spells with the water descriptor as a standard action. Water creatures she summons have 10 temporary hp and gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls.
Elemental Control (Su) Torrent can *create water* at will, can breathe water, has acid resistance 10, and is immune to acid damage from her own spells. Her caster level with water spells is 16th.
Righteous Might: When Torrent is affected by *righteous might*, her stats change as follows:
AC 18, touch 8, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +2 shield, –1 Dex, +2 natural, –1 size)
hp 125 (16 HD); DR 9/evil
Fort +12, **Ref** +4, **Will** +11
Melee *+3 fire-bane battleaxe* +19/+14 (1d8+10, ×3)
Grp +20
Str 25, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 13



Toruviist, Solei Palancis Dreadnought **CR 12**

Male elf fighter 8/wizard (transmuter) 2/rogue 2
N Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Celestial, Elven

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +3 Dex); Dodge, Mobility
hp 73 (12 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6 (+8 vs. enchantment); evasion
Immune sleep

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+2 greatsword* +20/+15 (2d6+13, 17–20)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +15
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack; sneak attack +1d6
Combat Gear *potion of fly* ×2, *potion of invisibility* ×2, *potion of heroism* ×2
Spells Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st – enlarge person, shield, true strike
0 – detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand
Prohibited Schools Conjuration, Enchantment, Necromancy

Str 20, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ mageknight, familiar
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Elite Training (great sword), Improved Critical (great sword), Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (great sword), Weapon Specialization (great sword)
Skills Climb +16, Intimidate +13, Jump +18, Spellcraft +7, Tumble +20
Possessions spell components, *+1 mithral breastplate*, *+2 great sword*, *cloak of resistance +1*, *gloves of dexterity and strength +2*
Spellbook spells prepared

Tactics Solei Palancis dreadnoughts prefer to sneak up invisibly, cast *enlarge person*, then attack.

Tragedy **CR 7**

Shadowy, incorporeal creatures swoop toward you, rotted skeletal hands reaching out from ashen shrouds. Twisting, roiling faces push up from within its form, faces of elvish men and women mutely screaming at their tragic end.

CE Medium undead (Incorporeal)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Listen +14, Spot +14

Languages Common, Gnome, Orc

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 13; miss chance 50% (incorporeal)

hp 69 (7 HD)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 80 ft. (perfect)

Melee incorporeal touch +6 (1d8 plus negative level)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** —

Str —, Dex 16, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15

SQ energy drain, incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, undead traits, unholy toughness

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track

Skills Hide +13, Intimidate +12, Listen +14, Search +12, Spot +14, Survival +12 (+14 following tracks)

Energy Drain (Su) A creature struck by the tragedy's touch gains a negative level, and the tragedy gains 5 temporary hit points. These negative levels go away after one hour, and never cause permanent level loss.

Unholy Toughness (Ex) The tragedy gains a bonus to its hit points equal to its Cha modifier x its Hit Dice.

Treant Grove **CR 17**

Twenty treants

N Colossal plant (unit of Huge plants)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +45, Spot +45

Languages Common, Sylvan, Treant

AC 20, touch 7, flat-footed 20

hp 396 (42 HD); **DR** 10/slashing

Immune plant traits

Fort +28, **Ref** +13, **Will** +17

Weakness fire vulnerability

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee two slams each +38 (2d6+29)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +31; **Grp** +68

Atk Options double damage against objects, trample 8d6+33, unit traits

Str 29, Dex 8, Con 21, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12

SQ unit traits

Double Damage Against Objects (Ex) If the treant grove makes a full attack against an object, it deals double damage.

Trample (Ex) Reflex DC 40 half.

Unit Traits (Ex) A military unit consists of a large number of cooperating warriors. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. They cannot be bull rushed, tripped, or disarmed, and they can automatically escape a grapple as a free action, though this incurs an attack of opportunity from the grappler. For the purpose of initiating a grapple and dealing damage in a grapple, the unit's "unarmed damage" is whatever its normal melee attack is. Units do not fail saves on a natural 1.

Units tend to fill square spaces, but if they cannot, they can move through passages that their component creatures fit through, spreading their total squares up in the tightest pattern they can. When doing so, they count as squeezed. Allied creatures can share a spare with a unit without counting as squeezed. Despite their similarities to swarms, units can make attacks of opportunity.

Attacks that normally affect multiple foes affect a unit differently. Area attacks deal half damage in general, but they deal that amount of damage once for every 5-ft. space of the unit that is caught in the area. Apply energy resistance to the initial damage before multiplying. For instance, if a fireball (10d6 damage normally) was centered on the unit, it would take half damage, multiplied by 9 for having all its squares caught in the blast.

Some abilities let you make multiple attacks against adjacent foes. As a guideline, these abilities let you make an additional attack for each square of the unit you can target, within the normal limits of the ability. For instance, a warrior with Cleave could make a second attack against the unit if his first hit, as long as at least two squares of the unit were within reach. A warrior with Great Cleave could continue making attacks as long as he hit, to a maximum of once per square of the unit he was adjacent to. An arcane archer's hail of arrows ability would let him make one attack per unit square within range.

A unit is immune to any mind-affecting spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, unless it targets at least 10 creatures. The game master may have to adjudicate other effects.

Units get an inherent +20 bonus to Str checks, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls, but they do not deal extra damage on a critical hit. Their size modifiers to attack and AC are based on the component creatures, not the unit itself.

When a unit is reduced to 0 hp, it loses its cohesion. Generally half the unit survives, albeit wounded, while the rest are dying, but the unit no longer poses a significant threat.

Trilla, Adult Gold Dragon Aspect CR 16

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +33, Spot +33
Aura frightful presence (DC 26)
Languages Common, Draconic

AC 30, touch 8, flat-footed 30 (–2 size, +22 natural)
hp 264 (23 HD); DR 5/magic
Immune fire, sleep, paralysis
SR 23
Fort +18, Ref +13, Will +18
Weakness vulnerability to cold

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares), fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.
Melee bite +33 (2d8+11) and 2 claws +31 (2d6+5) and 2 wings +30 (1d8+5) and tail slap +30 (2d6+16)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (bite 15 ft.)
Base Atk +23; **Grp** +42
Special Actions breath weapon (50 ft. cone of weakening gas or 50 ft. cone of fire 12d10, DC 26), crush 2d8+16 (DC 26), alternate form, luck bonus
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th)
3rd (5/day) – *searing light*, *suggestion*
2nd (7/day) – *cure moderate wounds*, *fog cloud*, *resist elements*
1st (8/day) – *charm person*, *magic missile*, *protection from evil*, *shield of faith*, *true strike*
0 (6/day) – *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)
3/day – *bless*

Str 33, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 20, Wis 21, Cha 20
SQ water breathing
Feats Alertness, Empower Spell, Flyby Attack, Multiattack, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (claw)
Skills Concentration +24, Diplomacy +23, Disguise +23, Escape Artist +18, Heal +23, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (any 2) +31, Listen +33, Search +31, Sense Motive +23, Spot +33, Swim +29, Use Magic Device +23

Alternate Form (Su) A gold dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form of Medium size or smaller as a standard action three times per day. The dragon can remain in its animal or humanoid form until it chooses to assume a new one or return to its natural form.
Blindsense (Ex) Dragons can pinpoint creatures within a distance of 60 ft. Opponents the dragon can't actually see still have total concealment against the dragon.
Breath Weapon (Su) A gold dragon has two types of breath weapon, a cone of fire and a cone of weakening gas. Creatures within a cone of weakening gas must succeed on a Fortitude save or take 1 point of Str damage per age category of the dragon.
Crush (Ex) This special attack allows a flying or jumping dragon of at least Huge size to land on opponents as a standard action, using its whole body to crush them. Crush attacks are effective only against opponents three or more size categories smaller than the dragon (though it can attempt normal overrun or grapple attacks against larger opponents).

A crush attack affects as many creatures as can fit under the dragon's body. Creatures in the affected area must succeed on a Reflex save (DC equal to that of the dragon's breath weapon) or be pinned, automatically taking bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off them. If the dragon chooses to maintain the pin, treat it as a normal grapple attack. Pinned opponents take damage from the crush each round if they don't escape.
Frightful Presence (Ex) A young adult or older dragon can unsettle foes with its mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever the dragon attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures within a radius of 30 ft. × the dragon's age category are subject to the effect if they have fewer HD than the dragon. A potentially affected creature that succeeds on a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 dragon's HD + dragon's Cha modifier) remains immune to that dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or less HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with 5 or more HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Dragons ignore the frightful presence of other dragons.
Keen Senses (Ex) A dragon sees four times as well as a human in shadowy illumination and twice as well in normal light. It also has darkvision out to 120 ft.
Luck Bonus (Sp) Once per day an adult or older gold dragon can touch a gem, usually one embedded in the dragon's hide, and enspell it to bring good luck. As long as the dragon carries the gem, it and every good creature in a 10-foot radius per age category of the dragon receives a +1 luck bonus on all saving throws and similar rolls, as for a stone of good luck . If the dragon gives an enspelled gem to another creature, only that bearer gets the bonus. The effect lasts 1d3 hours plus 3 hours per age category of the dragon but ends if the gem is destroyed. This ability is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.
Water Breathing (Ex) A gold dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged (the cone of fire becomes a cone of superheated steam underwater).



Trillith Subtype

Trillith are a race of dream-spawned monsters who lack bodies of their own. Every trillith has a visual appearance that is unique to it, based on its nature. The trillith's stats and abilities match this form, but normally a trillith is incorporeal, so it cannot easily affect the material world. However, a trillith can create a body for itself if it has appropriate material, and some magic can turn a trillith corporeal.

When viewed through *true seeing*, a trillith is revealed to be something like a wispy, sinuous dragon with no wings. However, a trillith normally appears as some sort of monstrous creature, though it can disguise itself in a humanoid form. Each trillith only has a single monstrous and a single humanoid form. In all its forms, a trillith's appearance is still determined by its nature, so a trillith that normally takes the form of a flaming stag would look fiery in its draconic true form, and its humanoid form might be a mighty orc with antlers, dressed in red furs.

Traits

Trillith are aberrations that possess the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry).

Telepathy (Ex) Trillith can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 ft. that has a language. While corporeal the creature seems to actually speak the words that it sends.

Incorporeal (Ex) Trillith are naturally incorporeal. A trillith can use its Embody ability to create a corporeal form for itself. Likewise, certain magic can cause a trillith to lose its incorporeality.

Project Image (Su) At will a trillith that is incorporeal can assume the appearance of a medium or small humanoid. Each trillith has only a single such form. Most trillith prefer to keep their natural form unless they need to conceal their identities or want to avoid disturbing people.

Embody (Su) As a full round action, an incorporeal trillith can create a corporeal form for itself by entering an object (or group of objects) of roughly the same size and shape of its natural form. The trillith still looks like itself, though its composition remains that of the matter used to create its body.

For instance, Deception's natural form is that of a dark, oily humanoid with tentacles for arms and legs. If it was incorporeal it could attempt to embody itself by entering a large pile of oily rags, a mass of dead eels, or a vast pool of soiled blood. It would take the outward shape of a humanoid with tentacles for arms and legs, but this shape would be composed of oily rags, dead eels, or blood, depending on what Deception chose to use.

While embodied, the trillith loses the incorporeal subtype, and loses its fly speed unless the new body can fly with its limbs. It uses its normal listed AC, not its incorporeal AC. A trillith can leave this body as a standard action. Any damage dealt to the embodied form affects the trillith normally, and stays with it even once it returns to incorporeality.

If a trillith is affected by the Song of Forms, it spontaneously embodies, not requiring any object to enter. The effect of being forced into a body is the same as using its embody ability, except that it cannot willingly exit its body.

Endow (Su) As a full round action, a trillith that is incorporeal can grant its power to any living creature within 30 ft. When it does so, the trillith vanishes, effectively absorbed by the creature. At will, or when the creature dies, the trillith reappears within 30 ft. of the creature, unharmed by the ordeal. Each trillith has a description of what powers it grants to creatures that it endows.

A trillith that is endowing a creature can be targeted and affected by mind-affecting effects, and can be driven out with *remove curse*, *break enchantment*, or a similar effect. However, the trillith itself cannot be harmed while endowing a creature, except by mind-affecting effects.

Grant Boon (Su) A trillith with a Cha score of 13 or higher can lend its power to several creatures at once without actually entering their bodies. To do so it must touch each creature. The trillith gains a negative level, and the creature gains the same powers as if the trillith had endowed it. The trillith can revoke this boon at any time, removing the negative level. A trillith cannot grant a boon to another trillith. The number of creatures a trillith can grant a boon to is detailed in its entry.

Rejuvenation (Ex) As trillith are creatures of dream and not of flesh, it is hard to kill them. While incorporeal or while embodied, if a trillith is destroyed it does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later.

A trillith can only be truly slain two ways. If its body dies while it is trapped by the Song of Forms, the trillith dies, and its corpse remains even after the Song of Forms ends. When a trillith is slain this way, if it had a Cha score of 15 or higher its essence is absorbed by nearby creatures. These creatures gain the effects as if the trillith had endowed them. Only intelligent creatures within 150 ft. are affected, and the closest are affected first, to a maximum equal to the number of creatures the trillith could grant its boon to.

Alternately, if a trillith is destroyed and all the damage is caused by mind-affecting or negative energy effects, the trillith's spirit is obliterated. In this case, no creature gains the benefits of the trillith's boon.

Trillith do not sleep, and unless they are trapped in a physical form they do not need to eat or breathe.

Immunities (Ex) Trillith are immune to sleep effects.

Special The nature of a given trillith can change over time, and if a trillith's personality alters significantly, it may change its powers and appearance, as well as its name. Such a change is very rare, and seldom happens more than once in a given trillith's life.

Two-Winds Air Elemental. Huge **CR 9**

N Huge elemental (air, extraplanar)

Init +14; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages Auran

AC 26, touch 18, flat-footed 16

hp 178 (21 HD); **DR** 10/-

Immune critical hits, paralysis, poison, stunning; cannot be flanked

Fort +11, **Ref** +22, **Will** +9

Speed Fly 100 ft. (perfect); Spring Attack

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Melee two slams each +23 (2d8+5)

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +28

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack; gale

Str 20, Dex 31, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 11

SQ air mastery, elemental traits

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative[B], Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse[B]

Skills Listen +12, Spot +12

Air Mastery (Ex) Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty on attack and damage rolls against a Two-Winds air elemental.

Gale (Su) As an immediate action, a Two-Winds air elemental can release a blast of severe wind, 5-ft. wide and 60-ft. long. This can be used to deflect incoming ranged attacks, incurring a –4 penalty to the attack roll, or to knock down a Small creature or check a Medium creature that fails a Fortitude save (DC 25).

Valley of Storms Ettin **CR 6**

CE Large giant

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Auran, Common

AC 18, touch 9, flat-footed 18 (–1 size, +7 natural, +2 Wis)

hp 65 (10 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), Fly 10 ft. (clumsy)

Melee unarmed strike +12/+7 (1d8+6 plus 1d6 electricity) and bladed whip +12/+7 (1d8+6)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +17

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (25 ft. with whip, but does not threaten)

Atk Options Power Attack

Str 23, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 8

SQ superior two-weapon fighting

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bladed whip), Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack

Skills Listen +10, Search +1, Spot +10

Possessions large bladed whip

Superior Two-Weapon Fighting (Ex) Because each of its two heads controls an arm, the Valley of Storms ettin does not take a penalty on attack or damage rolls for attacking with two weapons.

Vargenga **CR 17**

Pale, stocky, and red-haired, this giant woman has an eerie, commanding presence.

Female fire giant vampire fighter 5

CE Large undead (augmented giant, fire)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +15, Spot +31

Languages Giant, Goblin, Elven, Orc

AC 39, touch 12, flat-footed 36 (+11 armor, –1 size, +3 Dex, +16 natural)

hp 176 (20 HD), fast healing 5; **DR** 10/magic and silver and 10/bludgeoning and magic

Immune fire

Resist cold 10, electricity 10, sonic 10, turn resistance +4

Fort +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

Weakness cold vulnerability

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 20 ft. (4 squares, perfect)

Melee *+3 warhammer* +35/+30/+25 (2d6+29, 19–20/×3) or two slams +31 (1d4+17 plus energy drain)

Ranged rock +17 (2d6+17)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +40

Atk Options blood drain, create spawn, dominate, energy drain, rock throwing; Cleave, Power Attack

Str 45, Dex 16, Con -, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 15

SQ alternate form, gaseous form, rock catching, spider climb, undead traits, vampire weaknesses

Feats Alertness[B], Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge[B], Improved Critical (warhammer), Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes[B], Power Attack, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (warhammer), Weapon Specialization (warhammer), Toughness

Skills Climb +29, Hide +19, Intimidate +20, Jump +25, Listen +16, Sense Motive +18, Spot +31

Possessions *+2 mithral plate, +3 adamantine warhammer, cloak of elvenkind, ring of minor sonic resistance, vest of escape, elixir of harm* (which heals her), 4 flawless diamonds (5,000 gp each)

Alternate Form (Su) Vargenga can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a standard action. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell (caster level 12th), except that Vargenga does not regain hit points for changing form and must choose from among the forms mentioned here. While in an alternate form, Vargenga loses her natural slam attack and dominate ability, but she gains the natural weapons and extraordinary special attacks of her new form. She can remain in that form until she assumes another or until the next sunrise.

Blood Drain (Ex) Vargenga can suck blood from a living victim with her fangs by making a successful grapple check. If she pins the foe, she drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Con drain each round the pin is maintained. On each successful attack, she gains 5 temporary hit points.

Cold Vulnerability (Ex) Vargenga takes half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from cold attacks and effects, regardless of whether she succeeds her saving throw.

Create Spawn (Su) Any humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by Vargenga's energy drain attack rises as a vampire spawn 1d4 days after burial.

Dominate (Su) Vargenga can crush an opponent's will just by looking into its eyes. This ability is similar to a gaze attack, except that Vargenga must take a standard action, and those merely looking at her are not affected. Anyone the vampire targets must succeed on a Will save (DC 22) or fall instantly under her influence as though by a *dominate person* spell (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 ft.

Energy Drain (Su) Any living creature hit by Vargenga's slam attack gains 2 negative levels. For each level bestowed, she gains 5 temporary hit points. Vargenga can use her energy drain ability once per round. One day later, the creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 22) or the level loss is permanent.

Fast Healing (Ex) Vargenga heals 5 points of damage each round so long as she has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points, Vargenga automatically assumes gaseous form and attempts to escape. She must reach her coffin home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (She can travel up to 9 miles in 2 hours.) Once at rest in her coffin, she is helpless. She rises to 1 hit point after 1 hour, then is no longer helpless and resumes healing at the rate of 5 hit points per round.

Gaseous Form (Su) As a standard action, Vargenga can assume gaseous form at will, as the spell (caster level 5th), except that she can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 ft. with perfect maneuverability.

Rock Catching (Ex) Vargenga can catch a rock or other projectile of similar shape of Small, Medium, or Large size. Once per round she can make such an attempt.

Rock Throwing (Ex) The range increment for a fire giant's thrown rocks is 120 ft. She uses both hands when throwing a rock.

Spider Climb (Ex) Vargenga can climb sheer surfaces as though with a *spider climb* spell.

Vargouille Swarm **CR 15**

NE Small outsider (evil, extraplanar, swarm)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +8

Languages Infernal

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+1 size, +2 Dex)

hp 200 (30 HD)

Fort +19, **Ref** +18, **Will** +20

Speed fly 30 ft. (6 squares) (good)

Melee swarm (3d4 plus poison)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Actions shriek, kiss

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8

Feats Ability Focus (poison)

Skills Hide +10, Intimidate +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +8

Kiss (Su) If the swarm occupies the space of a paralyzed creature, dozens of skeletal heads kiss the paralyzed creature, beginning a terrible transformation that turns the creature into a vargouille (Fort DC 19 negates) within 24 hours (and often much sooner; roll 1d6 separately for each phase of the transformation). First, over a period of 1d6 hours, all the victim's hair falls out. Within another 1d6 hours thereafter, the ears grow into leathery wings, tentacles sprout on the chin and scalp, and the teeth become long, pointed fangs. During the next 1d6 hours, the victim takes Int drain and Cha drain equal to 1 point per hour (to a minimum of 3). The transformation is complete 1d6 hours later, when the head breaks free of the body (which promptly dies) and becomes a vargouille.

This transformation is interrupted by sunlight, and even a daylight spell can delay death, but to reverse the transformation requires remove disease. The save DC is Con-based and includes a +4 racial bonus.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude (DC 17) or be unable to heal the vargouille's bite damage naturally or magically. A *neutralize poison* or *heal* spell removes the effect, while *delay poison* allows magical healing.

Shriek (Su) Instead of biting, a vargouille swarm can open their mouths as one and let out a terrible shriek. Those within 1000 ft. (except other vargouilles) who hear the shriek and can clearly see the creature must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 20) or be paralyzed with fear for 2d4 rounds or until the swarm attacks them, goes out of range, or leaves their sight. A paralyzed creature is susceptible to the vargouille swarm's kiss. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same vargouille swarm's shriek for 24 hours. The shriek is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Victory **CR 16**

Whorls of hypnotic light reflect off this flying swordsman's gleaming plate armor. He wields two scimitars, the backside of their blades shaped like the feathers of a bird's wing.

Neutral Medium Aberration (trillith)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 36, touch 23, flat-footed 27 (+13 natural, +9 Dex, +4 deflection); Dodge

hp 190 (20 HD); **DR** 10/success

Fort +11, **Ref** +15, **Will** +17

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares) or fly 90 ft. (perfect)

Melee two scimitars each +28/+23/+18 (1d6+8 plus 1d6 electricity, 15–20)

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +20

Atk Options dancing blades

Special Actions redirect, whirlwind swords

Str 20, Dex 28, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 18

SQ victorious spirit, trillith traits

Feats Dodge, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Skill Focus (Tumble), Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills Knowledge (history) +23, Tumble +32

Damage Reduction (Ex) Victory has DR 10/success. If a creature hits Victory with multiple attacks in the same round, each attack after the first ignores his damage reduction. If Victory is not wielding two blades, he only has DR 5/success instead, and if he has no blades he loses his damage reduction.

Dancing Blades (Ex) Victory can use Weapon Finesse with scimitars, and he applies his full Str bonus to off-hand attacks. Any scimitars he wields are treated as *+5 keen shocking burst* weapons.

As a full-round action, Victory can fly up to 90 ft. and make a full attack, though he must move at least 5 ft. between attacks, and cannot move back to a space he just exited. Victory usually tumbles when using this ability, to avoid attacks of opportunity.

Grant Boon (Su) If Victory is defeated, whoever strikes the killing blow gains his boon. One time they can choose to reroll any saving throw, opposed attack roll, or grapple check, treating their roll as a natural 20.

Redirect (Ex) If the creature Victory has declared as his Dodge target attacks Victory and misses, Victory can choose as an immediate action to redirect the attack to any other creature adjacent to Victory. The original attacker makes another attack roll and applies it to the chosen creature. Victory can use this ability even on rays and ranged attacks.

Victorious Spirit (Su) Victory acts as if he rolls 20 on all saves, opposed attack rolls, and grapple checks.

Whirlwind Swords (Su) If Victory hits a foe with two attacks in the same round, his blades create a severe blast of wind that knocks his foe 20 ft. back (Fort DC 24 negates). Creatures get a +4 bonus to this Fortitude save for each size category above Medium it is, or a –4 for each size category below. Every additional two times Victory hits the same foe in that round, he creates another blast of wind.

If Victory hits a foe with four attacks in the same round, the wind intensifies, actually cutting the foe with its force. The creature takes 8d6 points of slashing damage (Reflex DC 24 half).

If Victory hits with six attacks, a thunderous boom bursts from his blades, stunning his foe for 1 round (Fort DC 24 negates).

Resolve each of these effects as they occur: Victory might fly up to a foe with his dancing blades attack, slash once, move, slash again, blast his foe away with wind, fly after him, slash a third time, move, slash a fourth time, blasting his foe away and dealing slashing damage, fly after him again, slash a fifth time, then move and slash a sixth time, knocking his foe back once again, and this time stunning him.



Vigilance **CR 12**

A mighty stag, larger than a bear, its antlers as broad as a man is tall, regards you with a calm gaze. Intense white and blue flames crackle across its body and along its horns, and though the creature's flesh burns, and though its flank gapes with a decades-old wound, an indomitable will flashes in this creature's eyes, for it will not fall until its duty is done.

Neutral Large aberration (trillith)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16 (+7 natural, –1 size)

hp 226 (18 HD), fast healing 10; **DR** 10/dead

Fort +14, **Ref** +6, **Will** +17

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares) or fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee gore +20 (2d6+12 plus 1d6 fire) or two hooves +20 (1d6+4 plus 1d6 fire)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +25

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack; improved grab

Special Actions hurl

Str 26, Dex 10, Con 26, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 15

SQ vigilant spirit, grant boon

Feats Ability Focus (vigilant spirit), Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Attack (gore), Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (gore), Weapon Focus (hoof)

Skills Intimidate +14, Sense Motive +10

Damage Reduction (Ex) Vigilance has DR 10/dead. This damage reduction can only be bypassed by weapons made from once-living things, such as wood or bone, by the natural weapons of undead creatures, or attacks of similar poetic significance. Since the sources of these attacks surrendered to death, they are the antithesis of Vigilance's nature, and thus can harm him.

Grant Boon (Su) Vigilance has already granted a boon, and has extended his power across Gate Pass, so has no more power he can share.

Hurl (Ex) If Vigilance has grappled an enemy, as a free action he can fling his foe with his antlers. This is resolved as a bull rush, except that Vigilance does not have to follow his opponent if he manages to throw a creature more than 5 ft. Using this ability ends the grapple. If an obstacle prevents the completion of the opponent's move, the opponent and the obstacle each take 1d6 points of damage, and the opponent stops in the space adjacent to the obstacle. If Vigilance loses the opposed Str check, its opponent lands without harm in an adjacent square of its choice.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, Vigilance must hit with its gore attack against a creature at least one size category smaller than it. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he scoops his opponent up into his rack of antlers and can hurl. If Vigilance does not hurl a foe scooped up this way, the foe can escape the antlers with a grapple check. Vigilance takes a –20 penalty on its grapple check to keep foes in its antlers, and though it does not count as grappled while doing so, it cannot use its gore attack.

At the beginning of Vigilance's turn, a creature grappled with it takes 1d6 points of fire damage.

Vigilant Spirit (Su) Whenever Vigilance is reduced below 0 hit points, he automatically stabilizes. Additionally, once per day, whenever he would die, unless it is from a death effect (such as an assassin's death attack or a *finger of death* spell), Vigilance is instead reduced to –9 hit points and becomes stable.

Vigilance has the benefit of a permanent *endure elements* and *stand the heat* spell. He also ignores the effect of wounding injuries that deal damage round after round, such as from a bearded devil's glaive. Finally, he cannot be checked, knocked down, or blown away by strong winds.

Finally, the trillith has a power that is ambiguous and has no tactical effects, but simply is responsible for keeping the trillith from entering Gate Pass. There are no precise rules for it, to give you leeway in enforcing it.



Vile Oak **CR 9**

Fiendish treant
CE Huge plant (extraplanar)
Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +8, Spot +8
Languages Common, Sylvan, Treant

AC 20, touch 7, flat-footed 20 (–2 size, –1 Dex, +13 natural)
hp 66 (7 HD); **DR** 10/slashing and 5/magic
Immune plant immunities
Resist cold 5, fire 5; SR 12
Fort +10, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7
Weakness vulnerability to fire, banishment vulnerability

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee 2 slams +12 (2d6+9)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +22
Atk Options Improved Sunder, Power Attack; double damage against objects, smite good 1/day (+7 damage), trample 2d6+13
Special Actions animate trees

Str 29, Dex 8, Con 21, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12
SQ plant traits
Feats Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack
Skills Diplomacy +3, Hide –9*, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8, Survival +8 (+10 aboveground)

Animate Trees (Sp) A fiendish treant can animate trees within 180 ft. at will, controlling up to two trees at a time. It takes 1 full round for a normal tree to uproot itself. Thereafter it moves at a speed of 10 ft. and fights as a treant in all respects. Animated trees lose their ability to move if the fiendish treant that animated them is incapacitated or moves out of range. The ability is otherwise similar to *liveoak* (caster level 12th). Animated trees have the same vulnerability to fire that a treant has.

Banishment Vulnerability (Ex) If a vile oak is affected by magic that would banish an extraplanar creature, the evil spirit within it is sent back to the lower planes. The tree is rendered inert and immediately roots itself, and though its twisted shape remains, the vile taint in its sap is gone.

Double Damage Against Objects (Ex) A treant or animated tree that makes a full attack against an object or structure deals double damage.

Skills (Ex) * Fiendish treants have a +16 racial bonus on Hide checks made in forested areas.

Trample (Ex) Reflex DC 22 half. The save DC is Str-based.

Vorax-Hûl **CR 20**

The beast's scales are the color of smoke and fire, and they scrape like the clash of sword against sword as the creature moves. This massive red dragon wears a mask of humanoid bones upon its face, and its teeth crackle with dark energy.

Male old red dragon
NE Gargantuan dragon (fire)
Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +31, Spot +31
Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Orc
Aura frightful presence (240-ft. radius, Will DC 29 or be shaken for 4d6 rounds)

AC 33, touch 6, flat-footed 33 (-4 size, +27 natural)
hp 434 (28 HD); **DR** 10/magic
Immune fire, paralysis, sleep
SR 24
Fort +23, **Ref** +16, **Will** +16

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 100 ft. (clumsy)
Melee bite +37 (4d8+12, 19-20) and two claws +32 (2d8+6) and two wings +32 (2d6+6) and tail slap +32 (4d6+18)
Base Atk +28; **Grp** +52
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. w/bite)
Atk Options Awesome Blow, Snatch
Special Actions breath weapon, hurl debris, trample 4d6+18
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)
3/day – *locate object*, quickened *suggestion* (DC 18)

Str 35, Dex 10, Con 29, Int 20, Wis 10, Cha 20
SQ dragon traits, frightful presence, group mind, Leska's ward
Feats Awesome Blow, Flyby Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Natural Attack (bite), Power Attack, Quicken Spell-like Ability (*suggestion*), Snatch, Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Appraise +36, Bluff +36, Concentration +38, Intimidate +36, Knowledge (arcana) +36, Knowledge (history) +36, Listen +31, Search +36, Sense Motive +31, Spellcraft +22, Spot +31

Awesome Blow (Ex) As a standard action, Vorax-Hûl can make a claw attack with a –4 penalty. If he hits, the creature struck must make a Reflex save (DC = damage dealt) or be sent flying 10 ft.

Breath Weapon (Su) Vorax-Hûl can unleash his breath weapon in three different forms. He can only use one of these breath weapon forms in any given round, and after he uses his gout of unholy flame he cannot use it again for the next three rounds.

First is a gout of unholy flame. As a standard action, Vorax-Hûl can release a 60-ft. cone of fire that deals 16d10 points of damage (Reflex DC 31 for half). Half of this damage is fire and half is divine power, like a *flame strike*. Creatures caught in the area are knocked back 20 ft. away from Vorax-Hûl (Fortitude DC 31 negates). Creatures that strike a solid object take an additional 1d6 points of damage.

Second is a lashing tongue of fire. As a standard action, Vorax-Hûl can create a shapeable path of flame that fills twenty-four continguous 5-ft. squares, which must start adjacent to him. Creatures in the area take 8d10 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 31 half).

Third is a seeking ball of fire. As a swift action, Vorax-Hûl can spit a blast of fire, targeting any creature it can see. The blast of fire travels 120 ft. per round toward that creature, flying with average manueverability for three rounds or until it hits a solid object. When it hits, the ball explodes, dealing 4d10 points of damage (Reflex DC 31 half).

Frightful Presence (Su) 240-ft. radius, Will DC 29 or be shaken for 4d6 rounds.

Group Mind (Ex) Vorax-Hûl and the four inquisitor liches it has bound to its service (see sidebar and Mask of Vorax-Hûl lich entry) can communicate instantaneously and privately among themselves.

Hurl Debris (Ex) One of Vorax-Hûl's favorite tactics is to throw massive objects down at his foes. As a move action, Vorax-Hûl can pick up an object roughly the size of a Huge creature from the ground (or tear it free from wherever it is anchored). This could be a massive slab of stone from the ground, a small house, or the actual corpse of a huge creature. He can then drop the debris from any height as a swift action, having it strike it any point directly below himself.

Creatures in a 15-ft. square take 20d6 damage and are buried. A Reflex save (DC 36) halves the damage and leaves the creature only partially buried. Creatures get a +5 bonus to their save to avoid the attack for every 50 ft. the debris falls from.

Buried characters take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute. If a buried character falls unconscious, he or she must make a DC 15 Con check or take 1d6 points of lethal damage each minute thereafter until freed or dead. Digging one's way free requires three Str checks (DC 15), each a standard action. A partially buried creature requires only one Str check to get free. A creature can help an ally climb free by spending a standard action to make a Str check (DC 15), which counts toward one of the necessary checks to get free.

Leska's Ward (Su) As a standard action, Vorax-Hûl can make a touch attack against an object or magical effect. If he hits, that object is affected as if by a *rod of cancellation*. A Will save (DC 23) negates.

Snatch (Ex) Vorax-Hûl can start a grapple as a free action if he hits with a bite or claw attack, as if he had Improved Grab. He usually takes a –20 penalty so that he does not count as being grappled himself. The creature takes automatic bite or claw damage each round it remains held. He can release the creature as a free action, or fling him 1d6×10 ft. as a standard action, dealing 1d6 damage per 10 ft. thrown (or falling damage, if it would be greater).

Trample (Ex) Vorax-Hûl uses this ability to smash through surrounding foes if his breath weapon doesn't knock them clear. As a full round action he can move up to twice his speed and deal 4d6+18 damage to any Huge or smaller creature in his path. Creatures can make a Reflex save (DC 36) for half damage, or can accept the full damage and take an attack of opportunity with a –4 penalty.

Mask of Vorax-Hûl

This mask is formed of the skeletons four inquisitors lashed together with the bones of other beasts, the inquisitors' souls bound and forced to serve their draconic master. These four inquisitors – effectively a quartet of liches – are devoted solely to negating hostile magic directed toward Vorax-Hûl.

Each of the four liches has identical stats (see Mask of Vorax-Hûl Lich entry below). They share Vorax-Hûl's initiative and each can act either before or after Vorax-Hûl each round. The liches are treated as sharing the same space as Vorax-Hûl. Usually they focus on healing their master and countering hostile spells, but if they get the chance they give their master defensive buffs. They start with *shield of faith*, *freedom of movement*, and *resist energy* (cold and electricity), then cast *magic circle against good* and more *resist energy* or *protection from energy* spells if they have the time (or the heroes make use of a lot of such attacks).

After this initial suite of buff spells, one of the inquisitors usually heals, one readies an action to counterspell, one uses *dimension door* or *teleport* to move himself, Vorax-Hûl, and his fellow liches to an opportune location (perhaps just close enough for the dragon to full attack a hero), and the last lich uses another *dimension door* or *teleport* to take them all out of reach of a counterattack. The next round the inquisitors switch jobs. Note that the anti-teleportation shield just stops travel in and out of the city, and the teleportation beacons only divert travel of more than a mile, so a 200 ft. jaunt won't be inhibited (and the inquisitors will just suck up the mild fire damage).

Against highly dangerous spells, each inquisitor can drop what he's doing to reactively counterspell. *Break enchantment* and *restoration* take rounds to cast, but Vorax-Hûl tends to keep his distance as he fights, so the liches might have a chance to use them if the heroes don't get close enough to attack back. The liches only use *flame strike* if they have nothing better to do.

Mask of Vorax-Hûl Lich **CR 12**

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, orc)

Init —*; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Orc

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 deflection)

hp 78 (12 HD); **DR** 15/magic and bludgeoning

Immune cold, electricity, mind-affecting effects, polymorph

Resist turn resistance +4; 12 rounds of Travel domain free movement

Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +13; improved evasion

Speed 0 ft. (0 squares)

Melee lich touch +8 (1d8+5 [Will DC 19 half] and paralysis [Fort DC 18 negates])

Space —**; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +8

Special Actions rebuke magic (6/day, 1d20+12 vs. DC 11 + caster level, range 220 ft.)

Spells Prepared (CL 12th, DC 14 + spell level)

6th – *banishment*, *find the path*[D], *heal*

5th – *break enchantment*, *flame strike*, *overmaster*, *teleport*[D]

4th – *dimension door*[D], *dismissal*, *freedom of movement*, *restoration*, *spell immunity*

3rd – *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*[D], *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against good*, *protection from energy* ×2

2nd – *cure moderate wounds* ×2, *identify*[D], *make whole*, *resist energy* ×2

1st – *cure light wounds* ×5, *magic aura*[D], *shield of faith*

0 – *detect magic* ×6

D domain spell **Domains** Magic, Travel

Str 10, Dex 10, Con —, Int 14, Wis 19, Cha 16

SQ group mind

Feats Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Counterspell, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Unorthodox Cultist

Skills Concentration +17, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Sense Motive +19, Spellcraft +18

* **Dependent Initiative (Ex)** Each of the four liches acts on Vorax-Hûl's initiative, in any order, making sure to include Vorax-Hûl himself. See the sidebar above.

Group Mind (Ex) The four liches and Vorax-Hûl can communicate instantaneously and privately among themselves.

Reactive Counterspell (Ex) The lich can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su) Six times a day, the lich can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+12 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect. See *Campaign Guide* for more details.

** **Shared Space (Ex)** Each lich can be targeted as if it exists in any square of Vorax-Hûl's space.

Unorthodox Cultist (Ex) These liches are devoted to serving their master, and so have the Travel domain instead of the Fire domain.

Vuhl, Deception's Guise **CR 12**

Dark-haired, clad in dark clothes, this black-winged fey man watches you with intense consideration.

If Deception chooses to reveal his monstrous form, he appears thus: *Dozens of squirming tentacles struggle to hide beneath the surface of this creature's oily black body, giving its skin the appearance of a squamous underground sea. Though vaguely humanoid, with its four longest tentacles having the impression of arms and legs, this creature's head is expressionless, its intentions impossible to perceive.*

NE Medium aberration (trillith)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14; miss chance 50% (displacement)

hp 94 (17 HD); **DR** 10/stealth

Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee four tentacles each +18 (1d6+1, 10 ft. reach) or
dagger +18 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +13

Atk Options improved grab, sneak attack +3d6

Special Actions lead astray

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th)

At will – *invisibility* (self only)

1/hour – *greater invisibility* (self only)

Str 12, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 16

SQ guarded thoughts, dark double, displacement, change shape, contingent incorporeality, deceptive spirit, trillith traits

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Feint, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +53 (+23 for feinting)*, Disguise +20 (+22 to act in character)*, Hide +23, Move Silently +23.

Change Shape (Su) Deception can assume the shape of any Small or Medium humanoid. In humanoid form, Deception loses his natural attacks. He can remain in his humanoid form until he chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, and the Song of Forms does not keep Deception from changing its form (though it does keep him from being incorporeal). *True seeing* reveals Deception's natural form.

Contingent Incorporeality (Su) Deception is naturally incorporeal, though as long as the fey song is sung, he must remain in either his natural body, or in a humanoid guise of some sort. If the song ends, Deception becomes incorporeal, though he still projects the same image. He gains a fly speed 30 (perfect).

Damage Reduction (Ex) Deception has DR 10/ stealth. This damage reduction can only be bypassed by weapons that are invisible, or that strike Deception when he is denied his Dex bonus to his AC, or attacks of similar poetic significance. Deception, as clever as his lies are, has little defense against others' trickery.

Dark Double (Su) If Deception is grappling with a foe, it can assume that foe's appearance as a free action as long as the creature is roughly humanoid of either Small or Medium size. Onlookers must succeed a Spot check opposed by Deception's Hide check to keep track of which one of the grapplers is real and which is the trillith.

Deceptive Spirit (Su) Deception gains a +30 bonus to Bluff checks made to convince another of the truth of his words. Effects that would detect his lies or force him to speak the truth require a caster level check (DC 27) to work against him.

Detect Thoughts (Su) Deception can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 17th; Will DC 19 negates). This ability is always active.

Displacement (Su) Deception's image is not where he actually is. Melee and ranged attacks against Deception have a 50% miss chance unless the attacker can locate him by some means other than sight. *True seeing* negates this miss chance, but *see invisibility* has no effect. Deception can activate or suppress this ability as a free action.

Guarded Thoughts (Ex) Deception is immune to any form of mind reading.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, Deception must hit with a tentacle. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he establishes a hold and can use its dark double ability as a free action.

Lead Astray (Su) Deception can cause a foe's actions to go astray. As an immediate action, Deception forces a phantasm into the mind of a foe within 150 ft. If that creature fails a Will save (DC 19), Deception chooses two creatures other than the target itself. During its turn, the affected creature perceives the world around it as if those two creatures had switched places. The creature does not realize its perceptions have changed, and if it intended to take an action against one of the creatures, it instead acts upon the other, perhaps attacking an ally, healing a foe, or yelling orders at confused bystanders. The creature realizes its error as soon as its turn is over.

This is a mind-affecting illusion (phantasm) effect.

Rejuvenation (Ex) As Deception is a creature of dream and not of flesh, he is hard to kill. While incorporeal or while embodied, if Indomitability is destroyed he does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later.

Deception can only be truly slain two ways. If his body dies while he is trapped by the Song of Forms or similar magic, he dies, and his corpse remains even after the magic ends.

Alternately, if Deception is destroyed and all the damage is caused by mind-affecting or negative energy effects, the trillith's spirit is obliterated. In this case, no creature gains the benefits of Indomitability's boon.

Skills (Ex) When using his change shape ability, Deception gets a +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks. If he can read an opponent's mind, he gets a further +4 circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks.



Wanderer **CR 16**

Driving his staff into the ground the robed man steps back, vanishing as he does so. The wood that makes up the body of the staff begins to fade slowly until only the top knot; in the symbol of an eye remains. The knot of the staff shimmers before turning into a real eye, roughly the size of a human head. The creature that now stands before you is a huge spider-like being made up of black carapace and tight gray flesh. Six strong pincer legs and two additional claws support its bulbous weight. In the center of this creature where a head should reside is instead the single immense eye stop a vicious toothy maw.

NE Large aberration (trillith, incorporeal)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +3; Spot +3

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 15; miss chance 50% (incorporeal)

hp 160 (16 HD); **DR** X/movement*

Immune movement restriction

SR 26

Fort +9, **Ref** +12, **Will** +9

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), Climb 40 ft, fly 40 ft. (perfect); unhindered step

Melee two pincers each +16 (2d8+5) and bite +11 (1d8+5)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5

Special Actions change shape, create nightmare portal 1/day, embody, endow, grant boon, project image, shunt essence

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)

At will – *dimension door*, *haste*, *slow* (DC 18), *wind wall*

3/day – *passwall*, *shout* (DC 20)

Str 20, Dex 22, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 20

SQ trillith traits, unhindered step

Feats Improved Initiative, Ability Focus (Shunt Essence), Improved Natural Attack, Improved Natural Armor, Multiattack, Power Attack

Skills Gather Information +20, Climb +22, Concentration +16, Intimidate +16

Change Shape (Su) Wanderer can assume the shape of any Medium or Large humanoid. In humanoid form, Wanderer loses his natural attacks. He can remain in his humanoid form until he chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, and the Song of Forms does not keep Wanderer from changing its form (though it does keep him from being incorporeal). True seeing reveals Wanderer's natural form.

Create Nightmare Portal (Ex) Once per day

Wanderer can create a portal to the Nightmare realm of his mother Trilla. The portal takes the form of a large circular gateway 10 ft. in diameter showing scenes from the extra-planar dream realm. Only trillith can successfully travel through the portal and any other creatures attempting to traverse it must make a will save (DC 27) or suffer the effects of an *insanity* spell.

This portal remains open for up to four hours, though Wanderer can dismiss it at will.

Damage Reduction (Ex) Wanderer's damage reduction is based on the number of feet an opponent has moved in the round it damaged Wanderer. If an attacker moved 10 ft. (2 squares) then Wanderer ignores 10 damage. An attacker who remains stationary negates Wanderer's damage reduction.

This defense is based entirely on the attacker's movement and does not increase in effectiveness against ranged attacks.

Embody (Su) Wanderer is naturally incorporeal and so normally could not do much to harm his foes other than to use spell-like abilities. However, as a full round action, Wanderer can create a corporeal form for himself by entering an object (or group of objects) of roughly Huge size that resembles either a robed figure or a spider. Wanderer has his normal shape, but his composition will be that of the matter used to create his body.

While embodied, Wanderer loses the incorporeal subtype, and loses his fly speed. Wanderer can leave this body as a standard action Any damage dealt to the embodied form affects Wanderer normally, and stays with him even once he returns to incorporeality.

Endow (Su) As a full round action while incorporeal, Wanderer can grant its power to any living creature within 30 ft. When he does so, he vanishes, effectively absorbed by the creature. At will, or when the creature dies, Wanderer reappears within 30 ft. of the creature, unharmed by the ordeal. The endowed creature gains Wanderer's boon.

A trillith that is endowing a creature can be targeted and affected by mind-affecting effects, and can be driven out with *remove curse*, *break enchantment*, or a similar effect. However, the trillith itself cannot be harmed while endowing a creature, except by mindaffecting effects.

Grant Boon (Su) Wanderer can lend his power to several creatures at once without actually entering their bodies. To do so he must touch each creature. Wanderer gains a negative level, and the creature gains the ability to cast *find the path* (caster level 12) once per day as a supernatural ability. This boon is the equivalent of a magic item with market value 20,000 gp.

If Wanderer is slain while affected by the Song of Forms, the nearest ten intelligent creatures within 150 ft. gain his boon, which is permanent unless dispelled. Wanderer can grant this boon to up to sixteen creatures.

Project Image (Su) At will when he is incorporeal, Wanderer can assume the appearance of a tall man, wrapped head to toe in sandy robes and veils, with a staff that curves at the top, ending in a knot that looks like an eye. Wanderer's true form is only visible to creatures using true seeing.

Wanderer prefers to use this form, but will use his change shape ability to fit into non-human communities during his travels.

Rejuvenation (Ex) As Wanderer is a creature of dream and not of flesh, he is hard to kill. While incorporeal or while embodied, if Wanderer is destroyed he does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later. Wanderer can only be truly slain two ways. If his body dies while he is trapped by the Song of Forms or similar magic, he dies, and his corpse remains even after the magic ends. Alternately, if Wanderer is destroyed and all the damage is caused by mind-affecting or negative energy effects, the trillith's spirit is obliterated. In this case, no creature gains the benefits of Wanderer's boon.

Shunt Essence (Su) When Wanderer has an active portal to Trilla's nightmare realm open he can force parts of his enemies through the portal. As a standard action, Wanderer chooses a target within 100 ft. and psionically compels part of their essence to depart through the portal. Affected creatures must make a Fortitude save (DC 24) or suffer 11d6 points of damage. Creatures under the effect of a *dimensional anchor* spell are immune to the effects of this ability. Any creature killed by this ability is sucked fully into the nightmare realm and consumed.

Unhindered Step (Su) Wanderer is limited by no man-made boundaries or obstacles. The trillith is considered to be continually under the effects of a *freedom of movement* spell.

When moving, Wanderer cannot be targeted by attacks of opportunity.

Watchman **CR 4**

Male or female dwarf rogue 4
N Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +0 Dex); +4 dodge bonus vs giants; uncanny dodge
hp 40 (4 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3; +2 vs poison, spells, and spell-like effects; evasion

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee quarterstaff +4 (1d6+1); +1 to hit vs orcs and goblinoids
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4
Atk Options sneak attack +2d6

Str 12, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 11
SQ +4 vs bull rush and trip attempts, trapfinding, trap sense +1
Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes
Skills Bluff +7, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +7 (+9 to act in character), Listen +9, Open Lock +7, Search +6, Sleight of Hand +9, Spot +9
Possessions mwk studded leather armor, quarterstaff, bottle of weak beer, ragged but warm cloak, 20 cp

West Wind Monk **CR 5**

Clad in a simple white and blue peasant's clothes, this man's martial skill is betrayed by a jagged-bladed whip worn coiled at his hip. He moves with an airy grace, as if his feet barely touch the ground.

Male human monk 2/cleric 3
LN Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Auran, Common

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Wis)
hp 32 (5 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee unarmed strike +6 (1d6+3) or
unarmed flurry +4/+4 (1d6+3) or
mwk bladed whip +7 (1d6+3, 19–20) or
mwk bladed whip flurry +5/+5 (1d6+3, 19–20)
Ranged shuriken +3 (1d2+3; range inc. 10 ft.) or
shuriken flurry +1/+1 (1d2+3)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6
Combat Gear *potion of fly*, scroll of *dispel magic*, *wand of cure light wounds*
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Stunning Fist (2/day, Fort DC 14 negates), Flyby Attack
Special Actions turn undead (2/day, 1d20–1, 2d6 HD), turn earth or rebuke air creatures (2/day, 1d20–1, 2d6 HD)
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 3rd)
2nd – *aid*, *bull's strength*, *hold person* (DC 14)
1st – *bless*, *command* (DC 13), *obscuring mist*, *sanctuary* (DC 13)
0th – *detect magic*, *guidance*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*
Domains Air, Luck

Str 16, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 8
SQ luck domain, West Wind style
Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Flyby Attack, Melee Lash*, Stunning Fist, West Wind Style
Skills Balance +5, Concentration +9, Craft (various) +6, Knowledge (religion) +9, Profession (various) +7, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +4
Possessions 20 shuriken, mwk bladed whip, mundane clothes, tools

Luck Domain (Ex) Once per day, the monk can reroll any one roll.
West Wind Style (Su) The monk can expend a use of Stunning Fist or turn undead as a free action to gain the ability to fly 30 (Good), lasting for one round. If he continues to expend Stunning Fist or turn undead uses round after round, he does not fall between his turns. We he uses this ability, he can also grant a willing creature within 30 ft. a fly speed equal to its land speed.

Tactics West Wind monks use their momentary flight powers to gain the higher ground, using their bladed whips to trip or disarm foes. When teamed with East Wind monks, the West Wind students keep warriors occupied while the East Wind students attempt to bring down mages and more nimble enemies with their magic.



West Wind Spy, Elite **CR 14**

The monk in front of you slowly changes shape until it appears as a featureless, gray-skinned creature dressed in monk's clothing. It looks at you and breaks into a wide grin, displaying rows of razor-like teeth.

Doppelganger monk 11
LN Medium monstrous humanoid (shapechanger)
Init +7; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8
Languages Common, Auran

AC 24, touch 20, flat-footed 21
hp 124 (15 HD)
Immune poison, disease, sleep, and charm
Fort +14, **Ref** +17, **Will** +17; improved evasion

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares); Spring Attack
Melee *+2 nunchaku* +17/+12 (1d6+5) or
+2 nunchaku flurry +17/+17/+17/+12 (1d6+5)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +15
Atk Options Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Stunning Fist (11/day, Fort DC 18 negates); greater flurry
Special Actions West Wind Style; change shape, detect thoughts, wholeness of body (22 hp per day)
Combat Gear *potion of blur*, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of cure serious wounds*

Str 17, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 12
Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist, West Wind Style
Skills Balance +5, Bluff +13, Disguise +9, Intimidate +6, Jump +10, Listen +8, Profession (various) +5, Sense Motive +10, Spot +8, Tumble +14
Possessions +2 nunchaku, ring of protection +2, cloak of resistance +3, mundane clothes

West Wind Style (Su) The monk can expend a use of Stunning Fist as a free action to gain a fly speed of 30 ft. (good), lasting for one round. If he continues to expend Stunning Fist uses round after round, he does not fall between his turns. When he uses this ability, he can also grant a willing creature within 30 ft. a fly speed equal to its land speed.

Whirling Treasure Hoard **CR 15**

CN Tiny vermin (swarm)

Init +16; **Senses** blindsense 200 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

AC 30, touch 28, flat-footed 14 (+2 size, +16 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 225 (50 HD); fast healing 15

Immune mind-affecting, critical hits, flanking

Fort +27, **Ref** +34, **Will** +22

Speed fly 90 ft. (18 squares) (perfect)

Melee swarm (5d6)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Base Atk +37; **Grp** —

Special Actions blinding, distraction

Str 3, Dex 42, Con 10, Int —, Wis 23, Cha 32

SQ swarm traits, vermin traits

Blinding (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with the hoard in its space must make a Fortitude save (DC 51) or be blinded for one round.

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature vulnerable to the swarm's damage that begins its turn with the hoard in its square is nauseated for 1 round; a DC 35 Fortitude save negates the effect. Even with a successful save, spellcasting or concentrating on spells within the area of a swarm requires a Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level). Using skills requiring patience and concentration requires a Concentration check (DC 20).



White Court Rajput **CR 13**

Regalia of what was once a noble warrior now protects this undead thrall. Etched with glowing runes, it crouches with lean aggression, its red spear aimed for your heart.

LE Medium undead

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common

AC 27, touch 15, flat-footed 22 (+5 Dex, +12 armor)

hp 65 (10 HD); DR 15/-

Immune fire, undead immunities

Fort +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee longspear +23 (1d8+20, ×3)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +20

Str 30, Dex 20, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1

SQ magic enhancements, undead traits, vampiric spear

Magic Enhancements (Sp) Runes etched into the white court rajput's flesh imbues it with various magical offensive enhancements. If this effect is dispelled (caster level 21st), the rajput's Str falls to 16, its AC falls to 22, it loses its DR, its attack bonus is reduced to +9 (1d8+4 damage), and its grapple check to +8.

Vampiric Spear (Su) Each rajput carries a masterwork spear enchanted to feed on the blood of its foes. When a rajput strikes a creature with its spear, the spear pulses as if it had living veins, and the rajput heals an amount of damage equal to the amount it dealt. If the rajput is at full hp, it can choose one rajput within 60 ft. that has been destroyed, and it restores that rajput to a functional state, with 10 hp. If a rajput's spear has been destroyed, however, it cannot be restored in this way. The spear has hardness 5 and 10 hp.

Willum **CR 6**

Male advanced psychic gargoyle

N Medium monstrous humanoid (augmented)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Common, Terran

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 54 (6 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee 2 claws +8 (1d4+2) and bite +6 (1d6+1) and gore +6 (1d6+1)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)

3/day – *detect magic*

1/day – *detect secret doors*, *see invisibility*

Str 15, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 11

SQ freeze, clairvoyant (already included in stat block)

Feats Iron Will[B], Multiattack, Stealthy, Toughness

Skills Hide +17, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Spot +14

Possessions none

Woody, Rust-Wrangler **CR 5**

Old male human expert 6
LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common

AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 12; +4 dodge bonus vs. giants
hp 35 (6 HD), Diehard
Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee long prod +2 (1d4–2 nonlethal)
Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with long prod)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +2

Str 6, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 16
Feats Animal Affinity, Diehard, Endurance, Skill Focus (Handle Animal)
Skills Craft (armor) +9, Handle Animal +20, Heal +11, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Ride +10
Possessions Granule the Mighty, hide armor, *circlet of persuasion* (made of wood, not silver)

Granule the Mighty **CR 6**

Advanced rust monster
N Large aberration
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +12, Spot +12

AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21
hp 96 (15 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +12

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Melee antennae +14 touch (rust) and bite +10 (1d6+4)
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +19
Atk Options rust

Str 18, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8
Feats Alertness, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Track, Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Listen +12, Spot +12
Possessions *+1 hide armor barding*

Rust (Ex) Granule's successful touch attack with his antennae causes the target metal to corrode, falling to pieces and becoming useless. Magic items made of metal must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 25) or be dissolved. Granule has been trained to target armor first.
Tricks (Ex) Granule has been trained for hunting, and has the tricks attack, down, fetch, heel, seek, and track.

Xavious Foebane **CR 14**

This gray-bearded dwarf has the scars of over a century of military experience.
Venerable male dwarf commander 14
LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin, Terran

AC 12, touch 6, flat-footed 12 (–4 Dex, +6 armor); +4 dodge bonus vs. giants
hp 66 (16 HD); **DR** 1/–
Fort +9, **Ref** +0, **Will** +12; +2 vs. poison, spells, spell-like abilities

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 dwarven waraxe* +8/+3 (1d10–1, 20/×3)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +7
Combat Gear *wand of magic missile* (CL 9th, 50 charges)
Atk Options Improved Disarm, Combat Expertise
Special Actions battlecry, leadership performance 5/day

Str 6, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 18
SQ battle cry, chain of command, dwarf traits, implicit command, initiative bonus +4
Feats Combat Expertise, Fearless Leader, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Legendary Leader, Maneuver Leader, Skill Focus (Perform (oratory)), Skill Focus (Use Magic Device), Spellwise Leader
Skills Bluff +21, Diplomacy +27, Knowledge (history) +19, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +19, Perform (oratory) +24, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +10, Use Magic Device +15
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 dwarven waraxe*, *+1 adamantine chainmail*, *cloak of charisma +2*

Battle Cry (Ex) Once per hour as a free action, Xavious can shout an iconic battle cry (such as "Even beyond death, they shall fear you!" or "What are you so scared of? I was killing these things before you were even born!") to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.
Chain of Command (Su) Xavious can expend one of his leadership performances to let a subordinate use it instead, for one hour. This loaned performance functions as if Xavious himself had used it.
Direct Orders (Ex) As a swift action each round Xavious can choose to grant all allies within 50 ft. a +4 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He can also spend an immediate action to replace his current orders with a different type of bonus.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits or while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Initiative Bonus (Su) Allies within 50 ft. of Xavious gain a +4 bonus to initiative checks.
Leadership Performances (Ex) Five times per day, Xavious can inspire or direct allies (within 50 ft.) in one of the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +3 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for as long as Xavious remains within 50 ft., plus the next 5 rounds of combat, to a maximum of one hour.

- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 50 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Xavious himself.
- As a standard action, grant a single ally within 50 ft. an immediate extra attack at its full base attack bonus.
- As a standard action, make a Perform check. Every ally within 50 ft. currently under the influence of a fear or mind-affecting effect makes a new save against that effect, using your Perform check in place of their Will save. Xavious can only do this if he himself did not fail his save against the same effect.
- As a standard action, inspire allies to greatness. All allies within 50 ft. gain 17 temporary hit points and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as Xavious is within 50 ft., and for 5 rounds thereafter. A given creature can only be inspired this way once per day.
- As a standard action, inspire spellcasting allies. As long as you maintain concentration, whenever an ally within 50 ft. casts a spell that another ally has targeted in the past round, the target takes a –2 penalty to its saving throw.

Tactics At his age, Xavious prefers to delegate responsibilities, but if he has to fight, he directs his allies to minimize the number of enemies who can attack, while maximizing the number of his allies who are fighting back, such as by bottlenecking enemies after one manages to get close. He cannot lend much aid in physical combat, but he's smart enough not to fight alone.

Yvonnel **CR 16**

This muscular drow woman carries her two-bladed sword with a hint of resigned boredom. She appears to not even be wearing any armor, but intangible wings of shadowy feathers are briefly visible at her back when the light strikes her.

Female drow ex-monk 3/fighter 12

CE Medium humanoid (drow)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Orc, Undercommon

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 23 (+1 Dex, +11 armor, +1 shield, +1 deflection); Two-Weapon Defense

hp 128 (15 HD)

Immune sleep, SR 26

Fort +14, **Ref** +10 (evasion), **Will** +9 (+11 against spells and spell-like abilities, +13 against enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee *+1 wounding two-bladed sword* +27/+22/+17 (1d8+19/17–20 plus 1 Con) or *+1 wounding two-bladed sword* +25/+20/+15 (1d8+15/17–20 plus 1 Con) and *+1 throwing returning two-bladed sword* +25/+20 (1d8+11/17–20) or unarmed strike +23/+18/+13 (1d6+8)

Ranged *+1 throwing returning two-bladed sword* +22 (1d8+15/17–20; range inc. 10 ft.)

Combo melee *+1 wounding two-bladed sword* +25/+20/+15 (1d8+15/17–20 plus 1 Con) and *+1 throwing returning two-bladed sword* +25 (1d8+11/17–20) and ranged *+1 throwing returning two-bladed sword* +15 (1d8+8/17–20)

Base Atk +14; Grp +26

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (37 charges), *wand of entangle* (7 charges), *potion of heroism*

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack

Spell-Like Abilities (caster level 15th)

1/day – *dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*

Str 26, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ drow traits, still mind

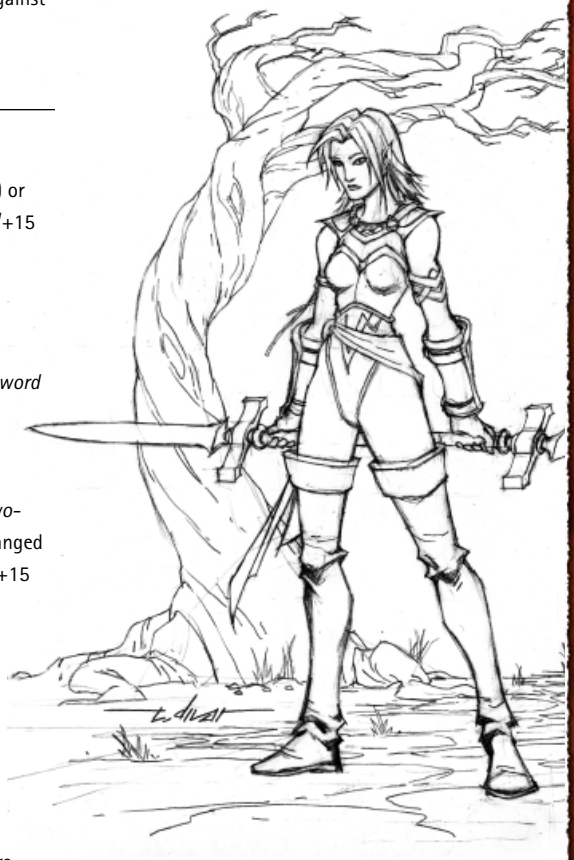
Feats Combat Reflexes[B], Elite Training (two-bladed sword), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (two-bladed sword), Flyby Attack, Greater Weapon Focus (two-bladed sword), Greater Weapon Specialization (two-bladed sword), Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Critical (two-bladed sword), Improved Grapple[B], Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Improved Unarmed Strike[B], Iron Will, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (two-bladed sword), Weapon Specialization (two-bladed sword)

Skills Climb +7, Hide +9, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Spot +6

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 wounding/+1 throwing returning two-bladed sword, +3 glamered full plate, hurling bracers*

Tattoos *amulet of health +2, belt of strength +6, glove of storing and dexterity +2, ring of protection +1, wings of flying*

Tattoos (Su) Yvonnel has inscribed on her person a number of magical tattoos that duplicate the effects of magical items (see above). A magical tattoo cannot be disarmed, sundered, or stolen.





O, Wintry Song of Agony – Art by Tim Divar



Appendix C Maps

for All Levels

by Sean Macdonald and Frank Michienzi

All the maps appearing in the War of the Burning Sky campaign saga are compiled in this appendix.

What is the best route from Gate Pass to Seaquen?
How does a dragon live in a clock tower?
Who has a buried laboratory?
Where's the best place to curl up with a good book in Eresh?
Why is Ragos hard to get into?

The maps in this appendix can be used in any fantasy campaign.


Game Master's Map
pg. 7
War of the Burning Sky
Rest of the World
Scourge Prison
Ragesian Empire
Ragos
Heart of History
Alydi Gap
Fire Forest
Gate Pass
Shining Land of Shahalesti
Galanis
Phorros
Irrendra
Temple of Echoed Souls
Castle Korstull
Sindaire
Monastery of Two Winds
Bresk
Dassen
Turinn
Ostalin
Kistan
Seaquen
N
S
E
W
Distance in Miles
0
300
SCM

Players' Map

pg. 11




Game Master's Map
pg. 19
Gate Pass
To Ragesia
To Shahalesti
Coaltongue Statue
Emelk Way
To Outlying Farms
To Innenotdar Forest
N
S
Distance In Miles
0
3
SCM
A. Poison Apple Pub
B. Depository Tower
C. Gabal's School of War
D. Elvish Ghetto
E. Erdan's Manor
F. Herreman's Barracks
Watchpost

Game Master's Map

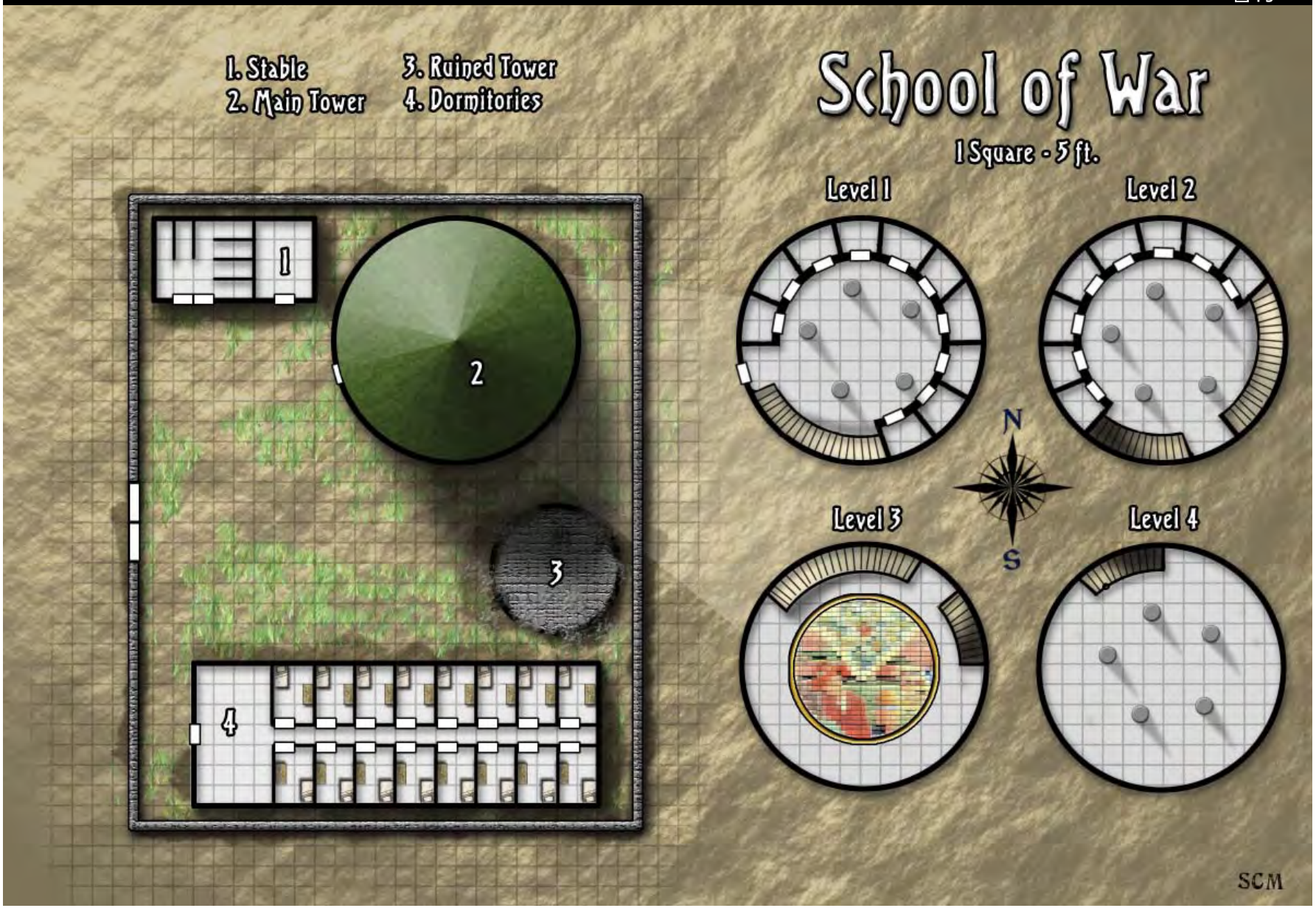
pg. 23

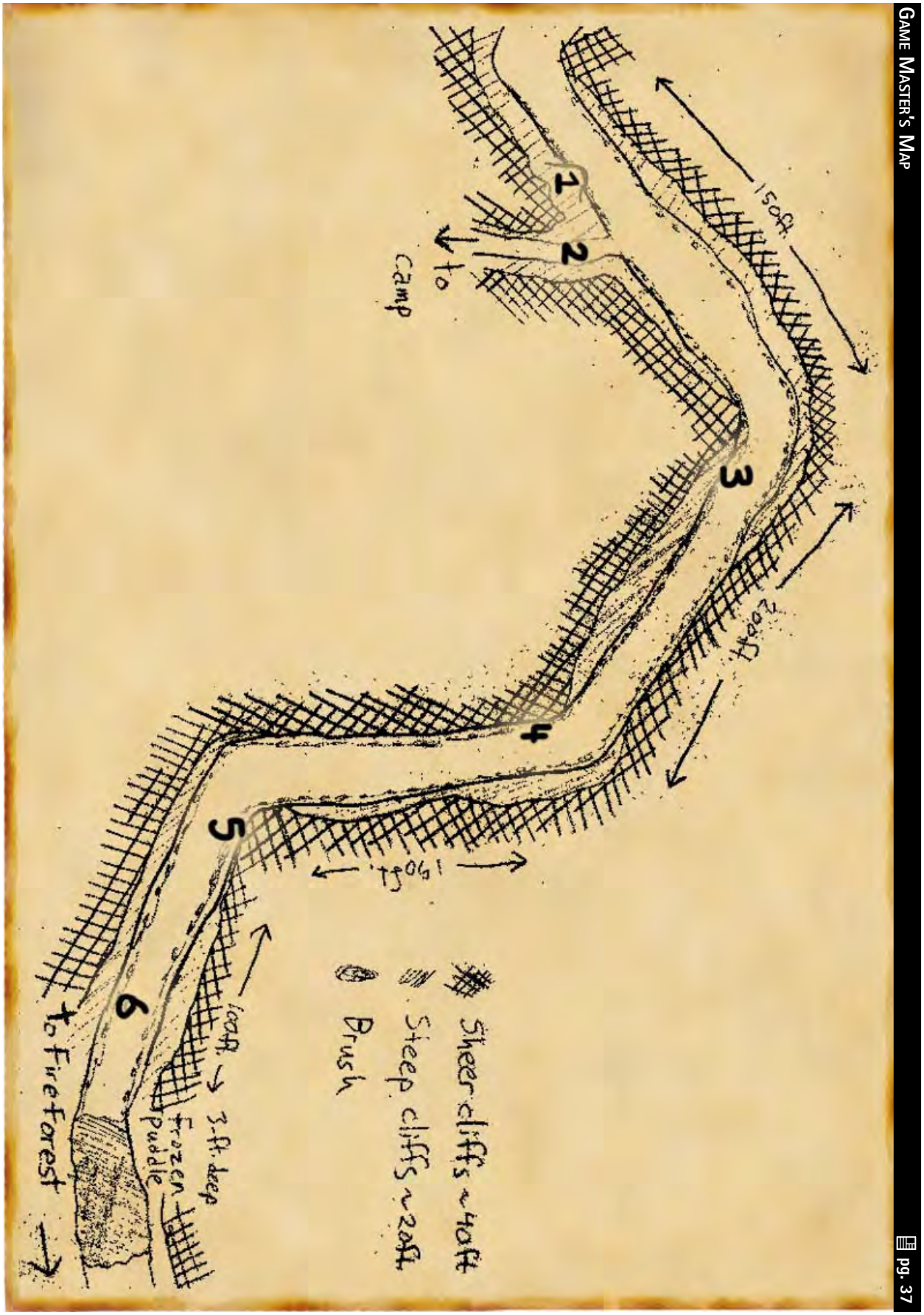


Game Master's Map
pg. 28
Depository Tower
1 Square = 5 ft.
First Floor
Second and Third Floor
Fourth Floor
SCM

Game Master's Map

pg. 30

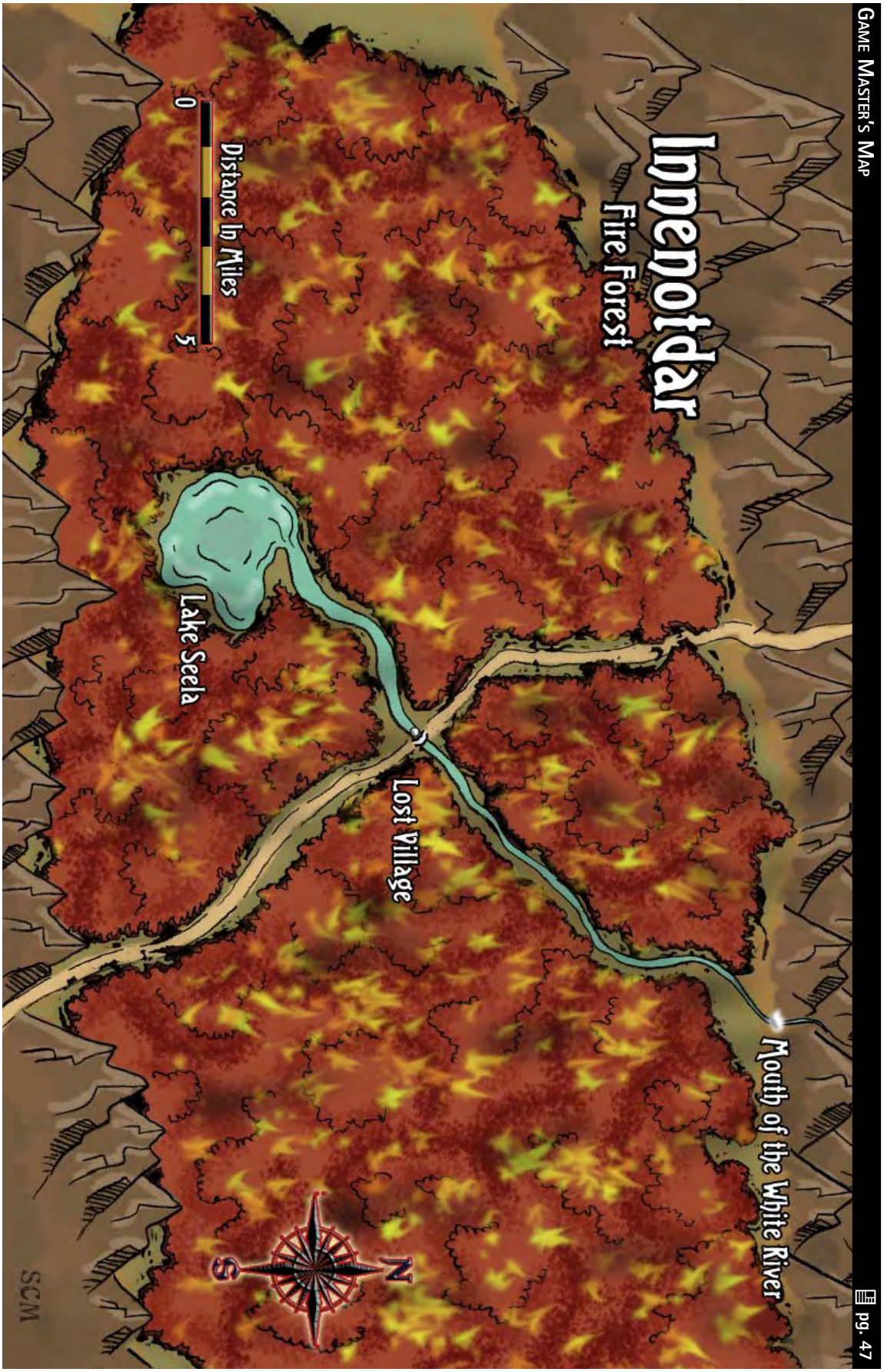




Art by Ryan Nock

Adventure One Map

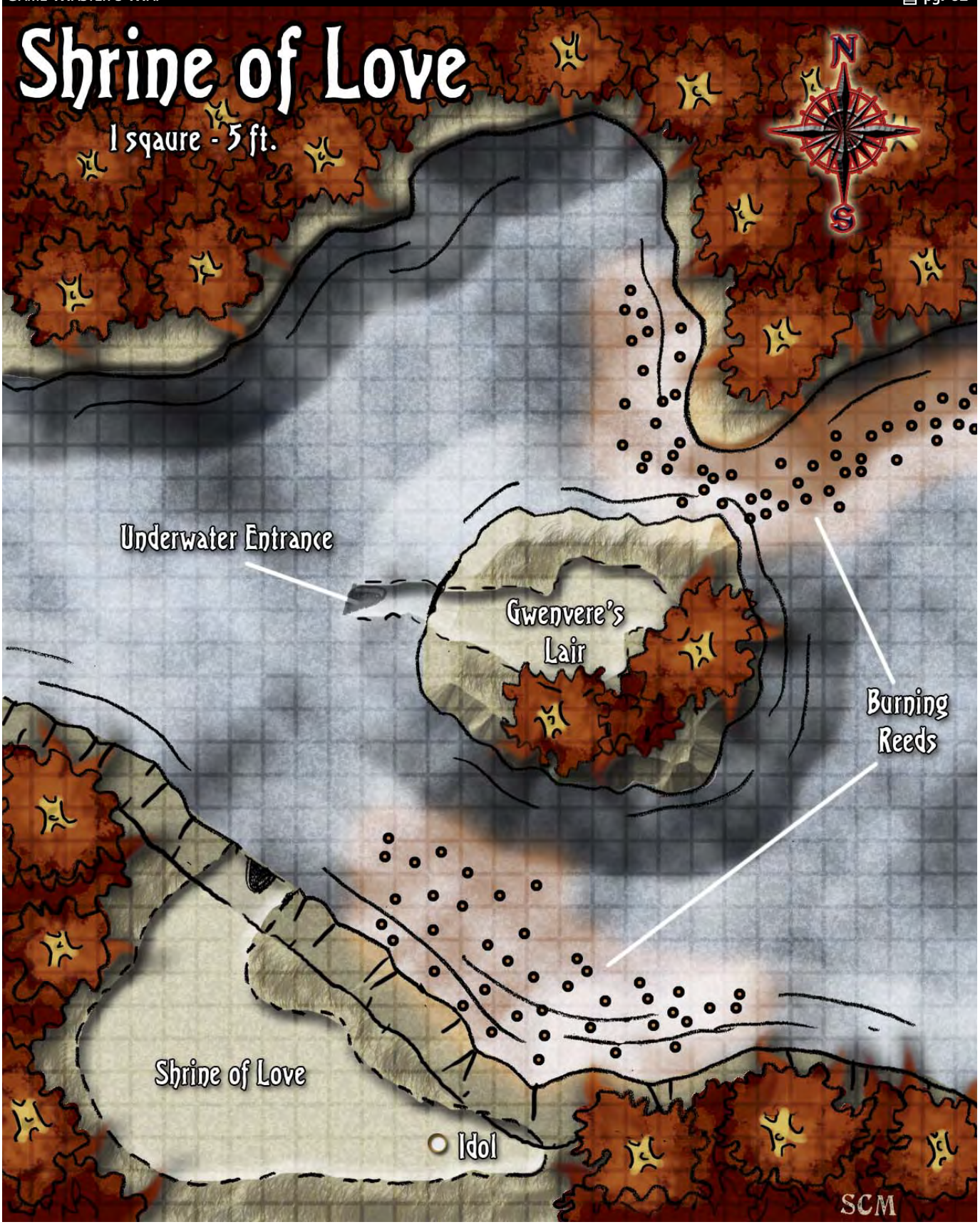

pg. 39
Game Master's Map
Farmhouse
1 Square = 5ft.
N
S
W
E
Stable
Cairns
Hills
Road
Cliff
SCM
11'
7'
4'
5'
6'
3'
10'


Game Master's Map
Inpenotdar
Fire Forest
Distance In Miles
0
5
Lake Seela
Lost Village
Mouth of the White River
N
S
SCM
pg. 47

Game Master's Map
pg. 49
A Trial By Fire
1 square = 5 ft.
A. Burning Woods
B. Wall of Fire
C. Flaming Barricade
D. Tower & Bridge
E. Lost Village
N
S
SCM


Game Master's Map
pg. 61
Fey Village
1 square = 5 ft.
N
S
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
+25 ft
+15 ft
-5 ft
-10 ft
-20 ft
SCM
A. Tiljann's Cave
B. Riverbed
C. Papuvin's Cave
D. Vuhl's Cave
E. Stone Tower
F. Fey Caves
G. Mud Huts
H. Merrow Caves
I. Indomitability

Game Master's Map pg. 62




Game Master's Map
Marsh Attack
pg. 71

Game Master's Map

pg. 75



Game Master's Map
pg. 92
The Wayfarers' Theater
1 Square = 5 ft
A. Fore Deck
B. Aft Deck
C. Main Deck
D. Crew Quarters
E. Stairs to Theater
F. Storage
G. Captain's Quarters
H. Wayfarer's Theater
I. Grand Stage
J. Dressing Room
SCM

Game Master's Map

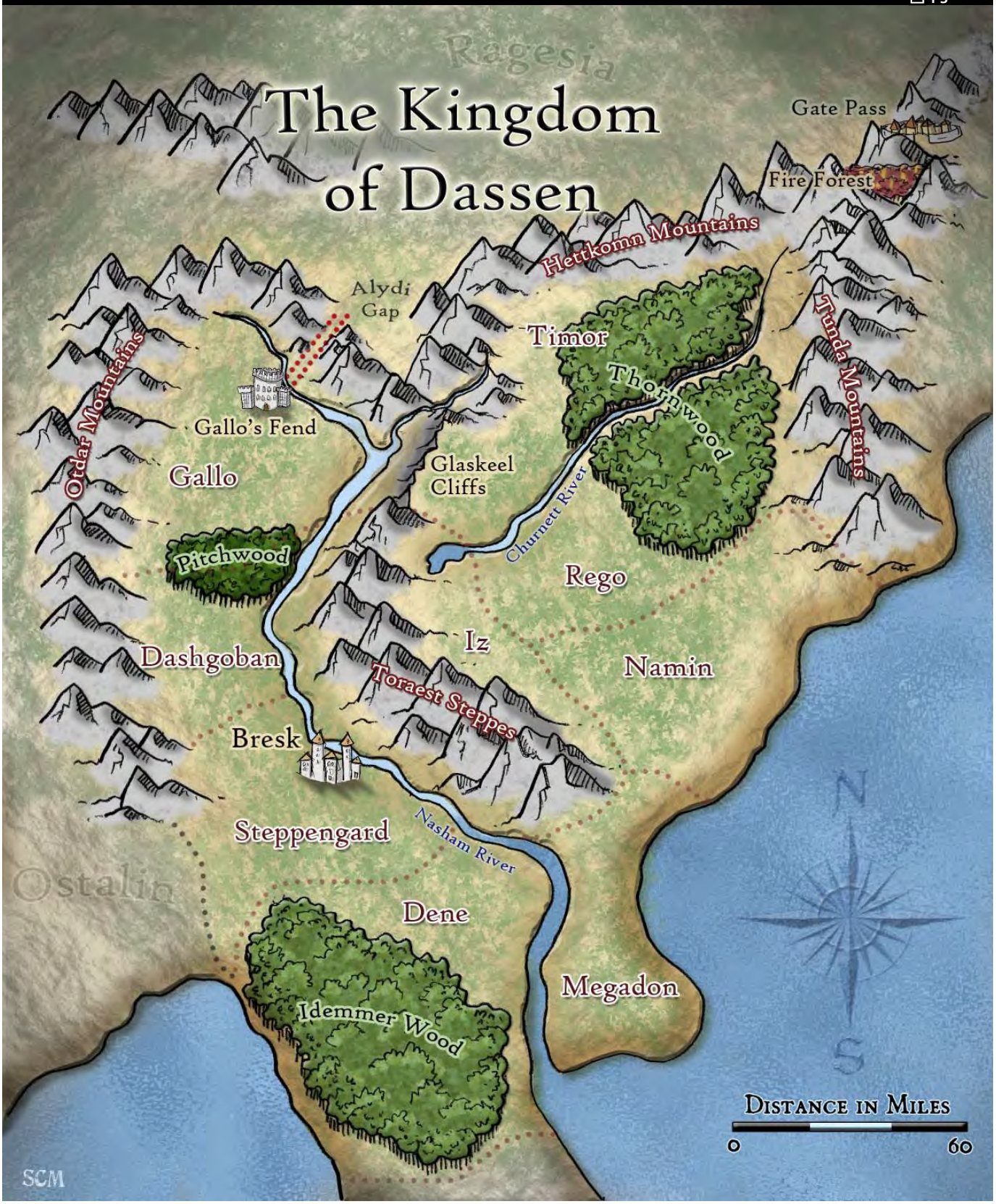
pg. 96



Game Master's Map
Fire Tomb
Biomancy Tanks
Magma Pillars
Monolith
Antipathy Ward
Seal of Fire
A. Entrance from Sunken Prison
B. Magma Flow
C. Antechamber
D. Master's Chamber
E. Tomb
F. Laboratory
G. Torture Chamber
H. Hostage Cells
N
S
1 Square = 5 ft
SCM
pg. 99

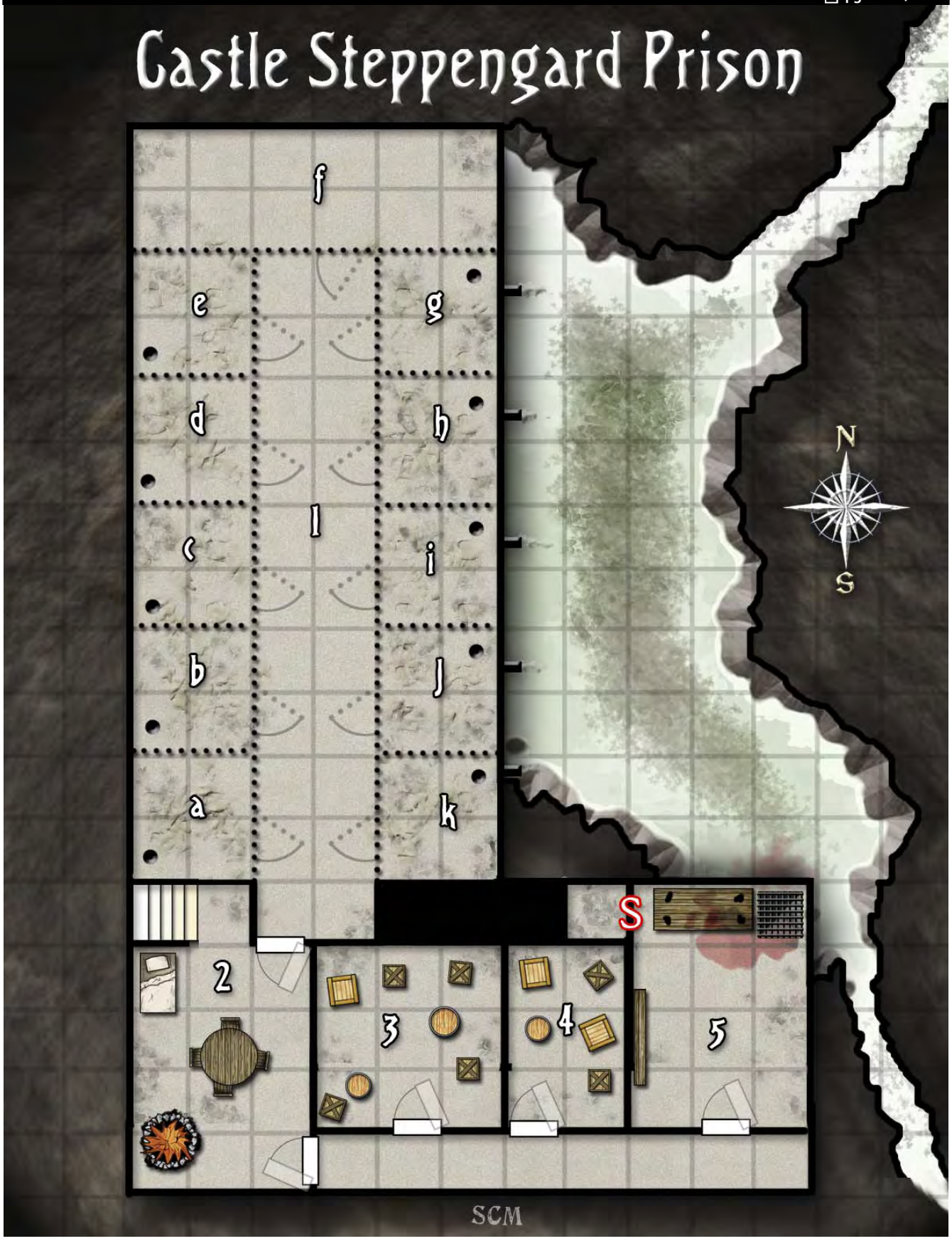
Game Master's Map

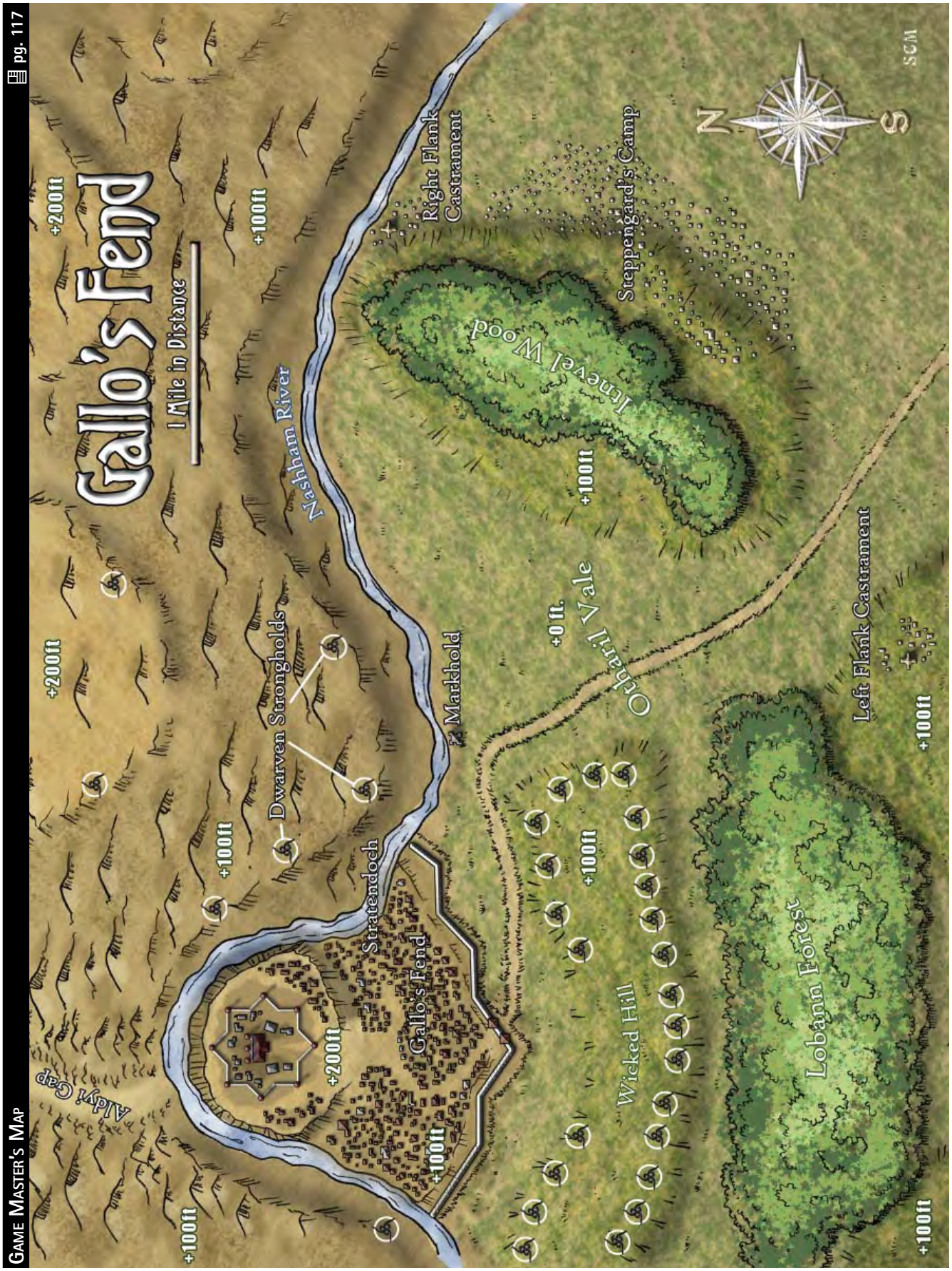
pg. 107



GAME MASTER'S MAP

pgs. 113, 135

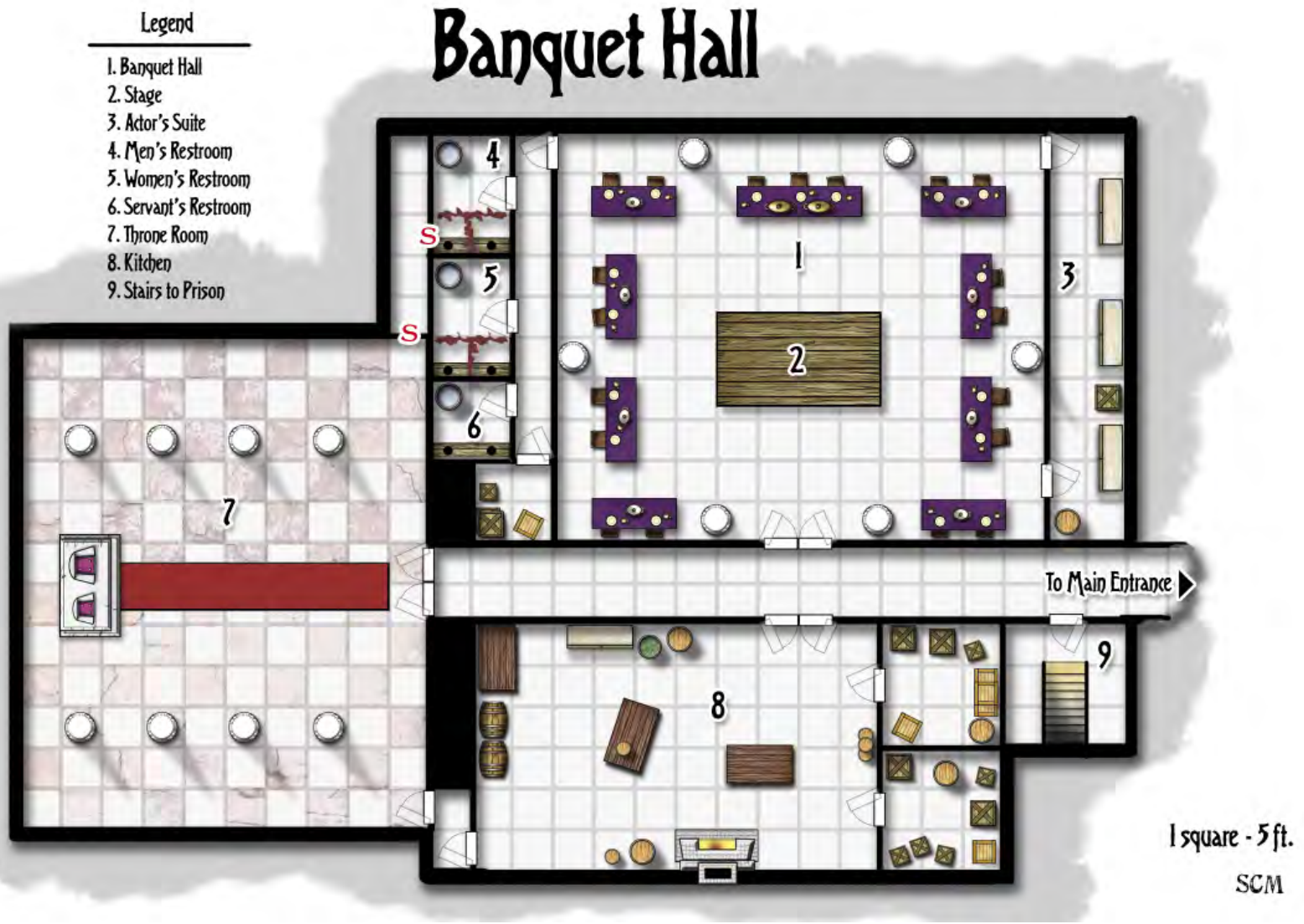


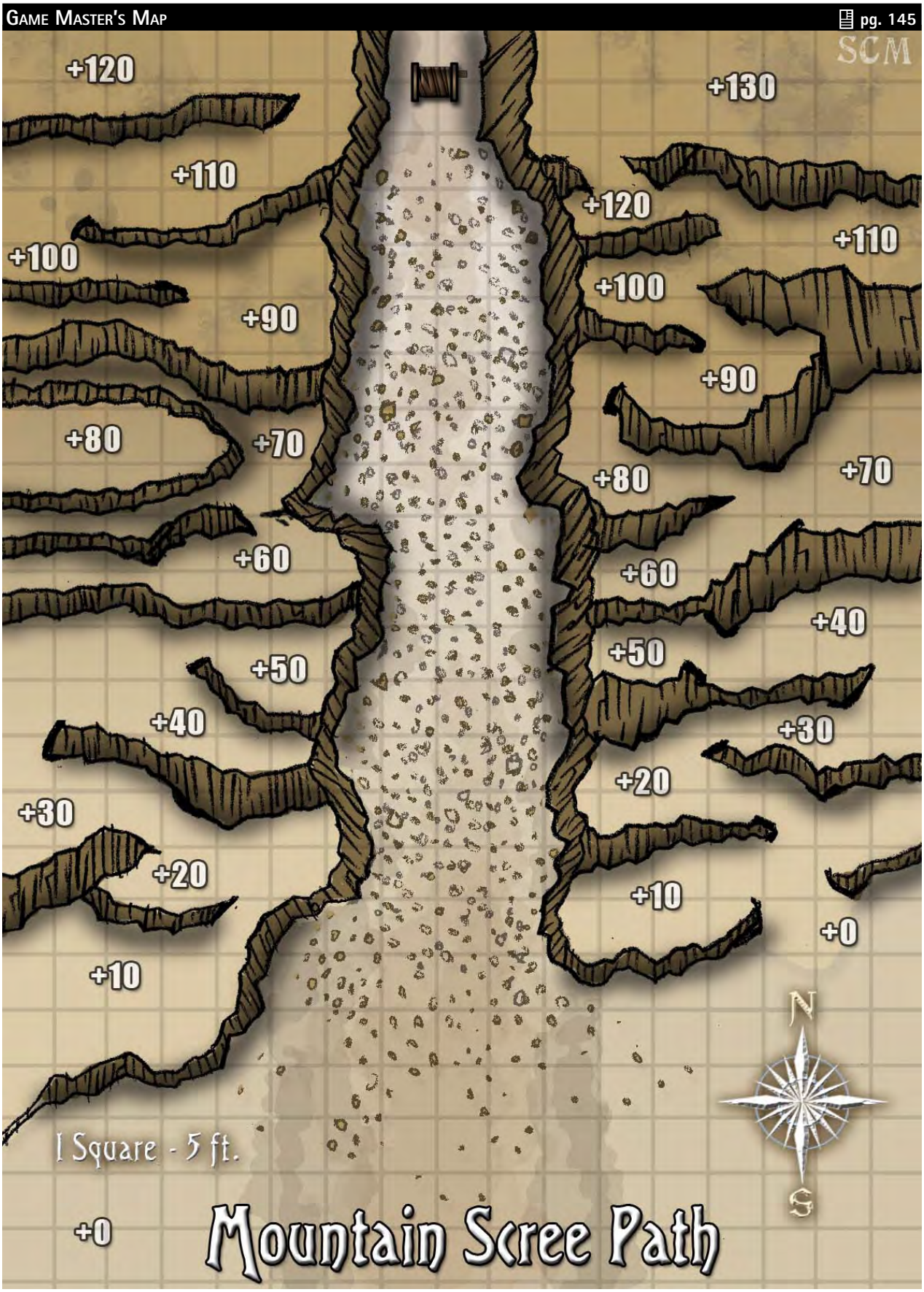

Game Master's Map
pg. 117
Gallo's Fend
1 Mile in Distance
+200ft
+100ft
+0 ft.
Aldyn Gap
Stratendoch
Gallo's Fend
Dwarven Strongholds
Nashham River
Markhold
Orthril Vale
Wicked Hill
Lobann Forest
Ironvel Wood
Steppengard's Camp
Right Flank Castrament
Left Flank Castrament
N
S
SCM

Game Master's Map
pg. 119
Alydi Gap Outpost
1 square - 5 feet
1 square - 20 ft
+0
+20
+40
+60
+80
+100
+120
+140
+160
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
N
S
SCM

Game Master's Map

pg. 136

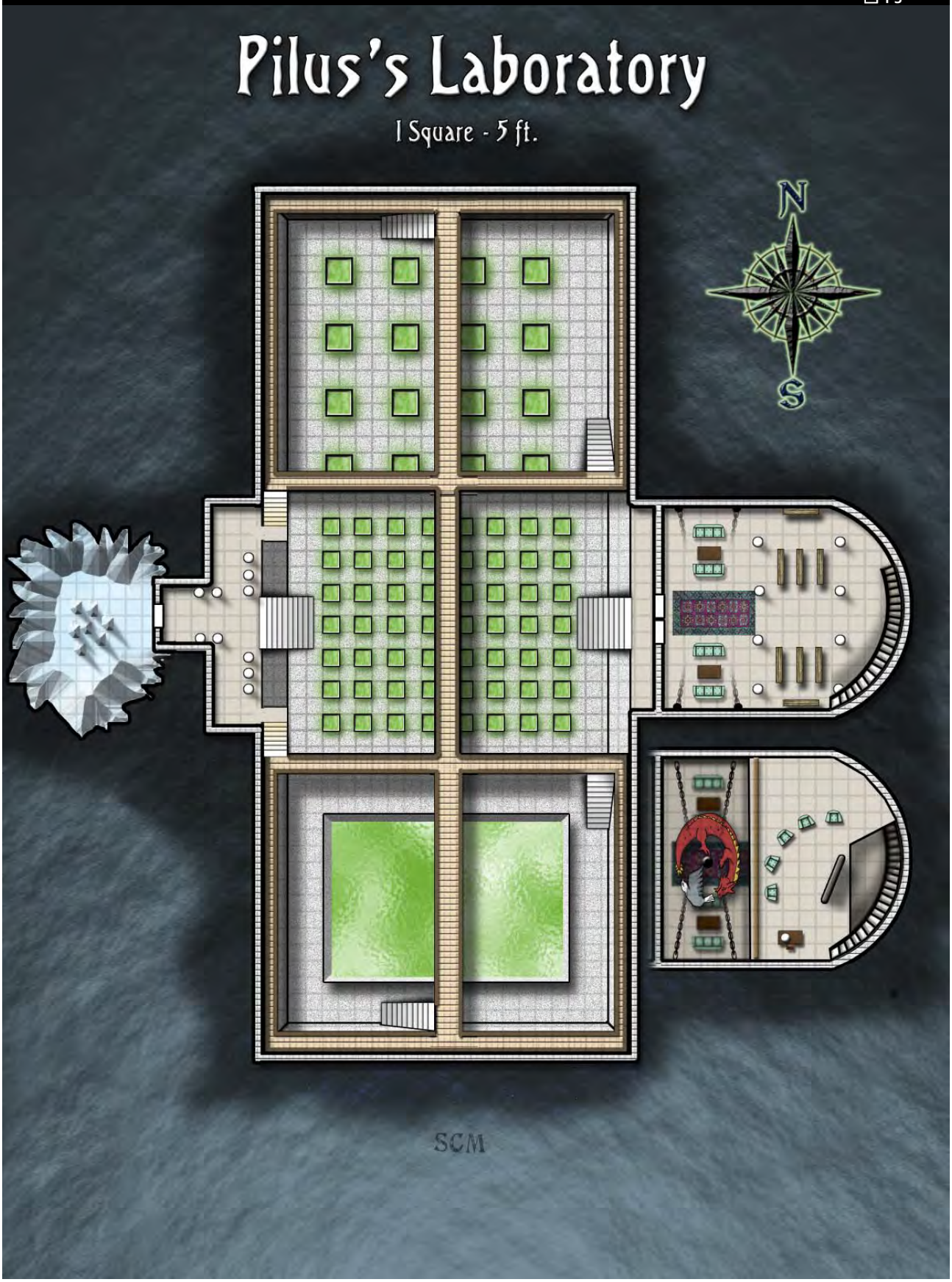



Game Master's Map
pg. 145
SCM
+120
+130
+110
+120
+110
+100
+100
+90
+90
+80
+70
+80
+70
+60
+60
+40
+50
+50
+40
+30
+20
+30
+20
+10
+0
+10
N
S
1 Square - 5 ft.
+0
Mountain Scree Path

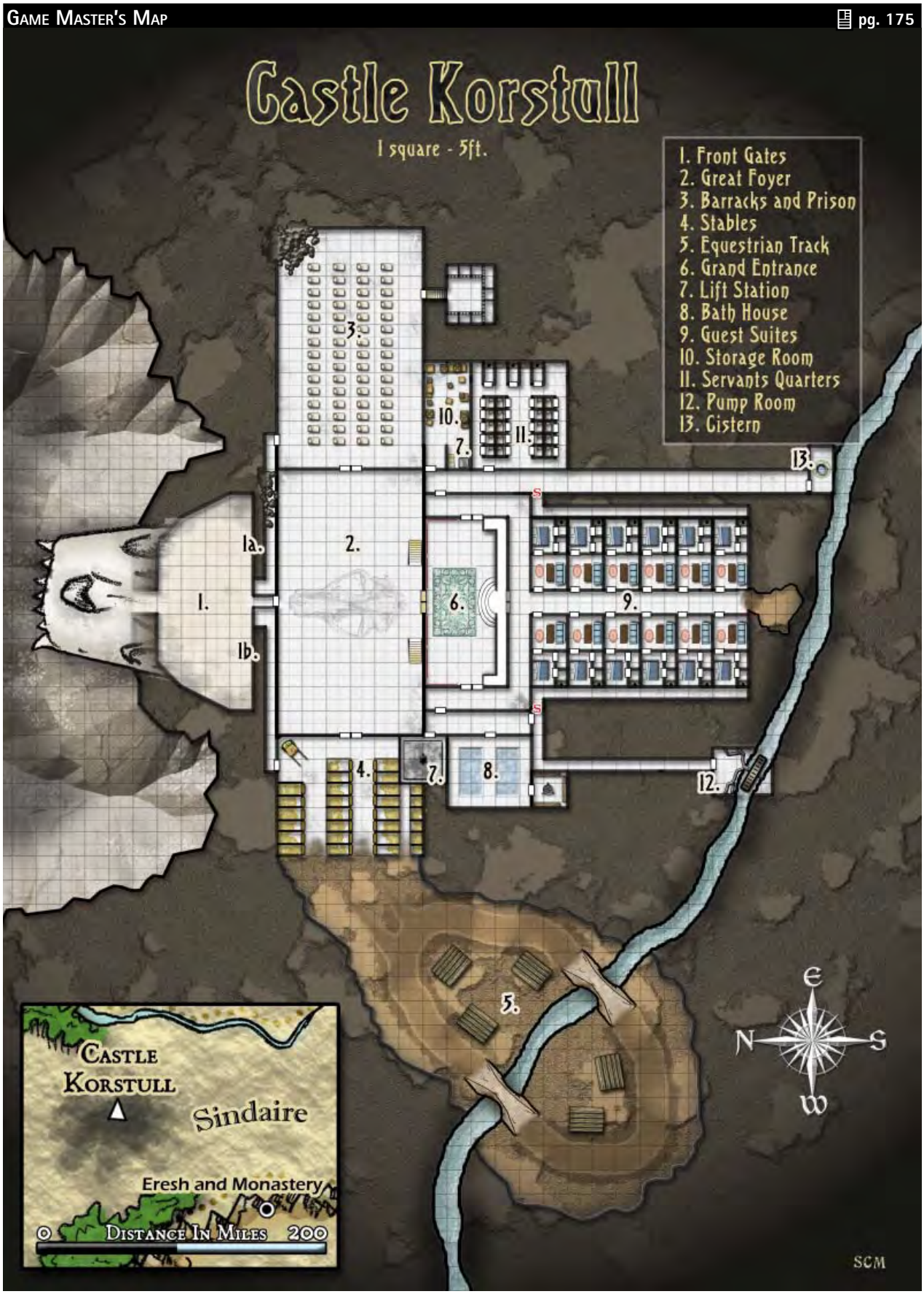
Game Master's Map pg. 148



GAME MASTER'S MAP pg. 157



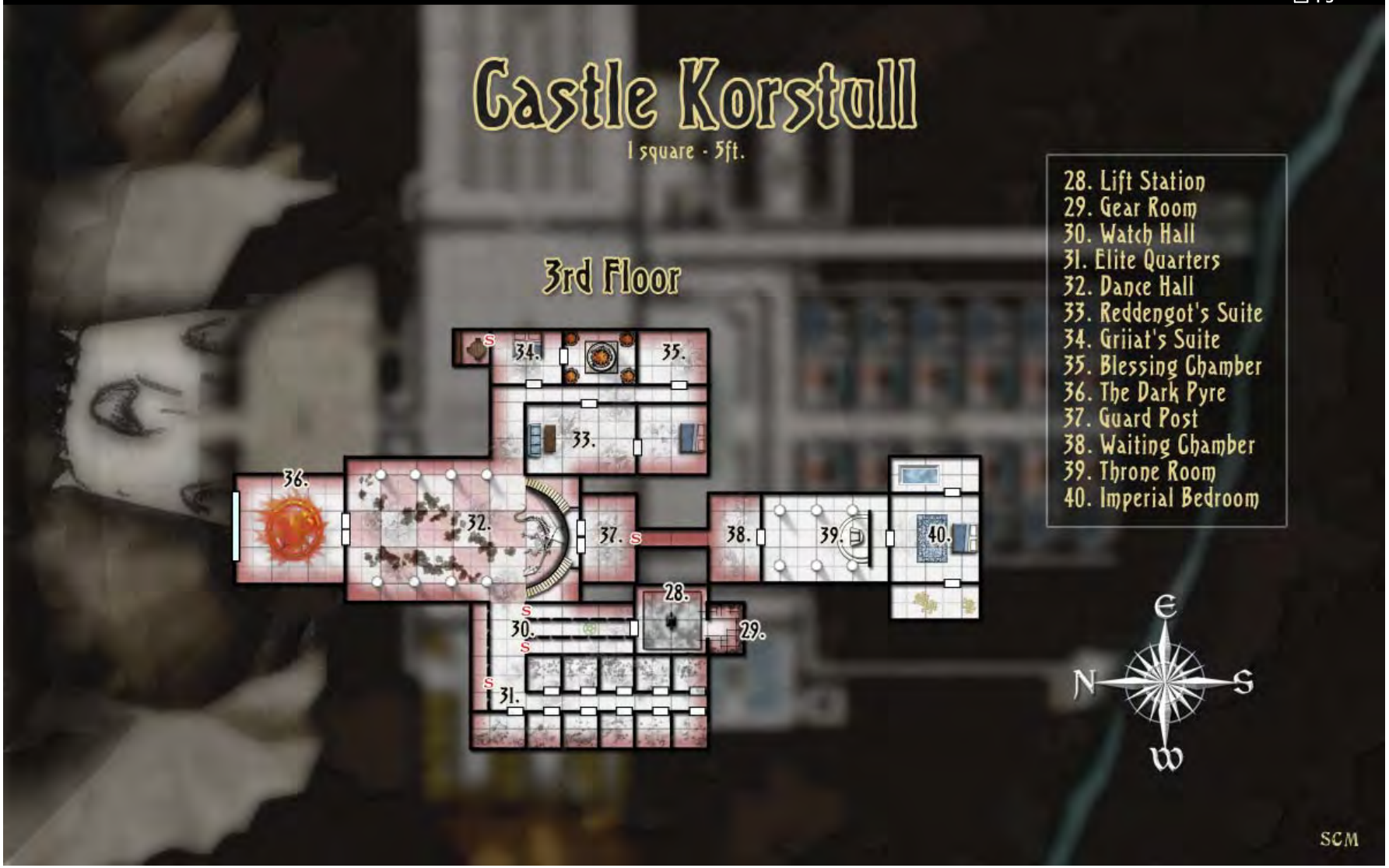
Game Master's Map pg. 175




Game Master's Map
pg. 177
Castle Korstull
1 square - 5ft.
2nd Floor
7. Lift Station
10. Storage
14. Banquet Hall
15. Kitchen
16. Conference Room
17. Foyer Stairs
18. Entry Hall
19. Hall of the Pantheon
20. Main Chapel
21. Priest's Room
22 Mediation Chamber
23. Library
24. Offertory Chamber
25. Healing Hall
26. Chapel Kitchen
27. Chapel Storage
Chapel
10.
15.
16.
7.
S
S
14.
6.
2.
26.
27.
25.
S
24a.
20.
17.
18.
19.
24b.
S
23.
21.
22.
E
N
S
W
7.
SCM

Game Master's Map

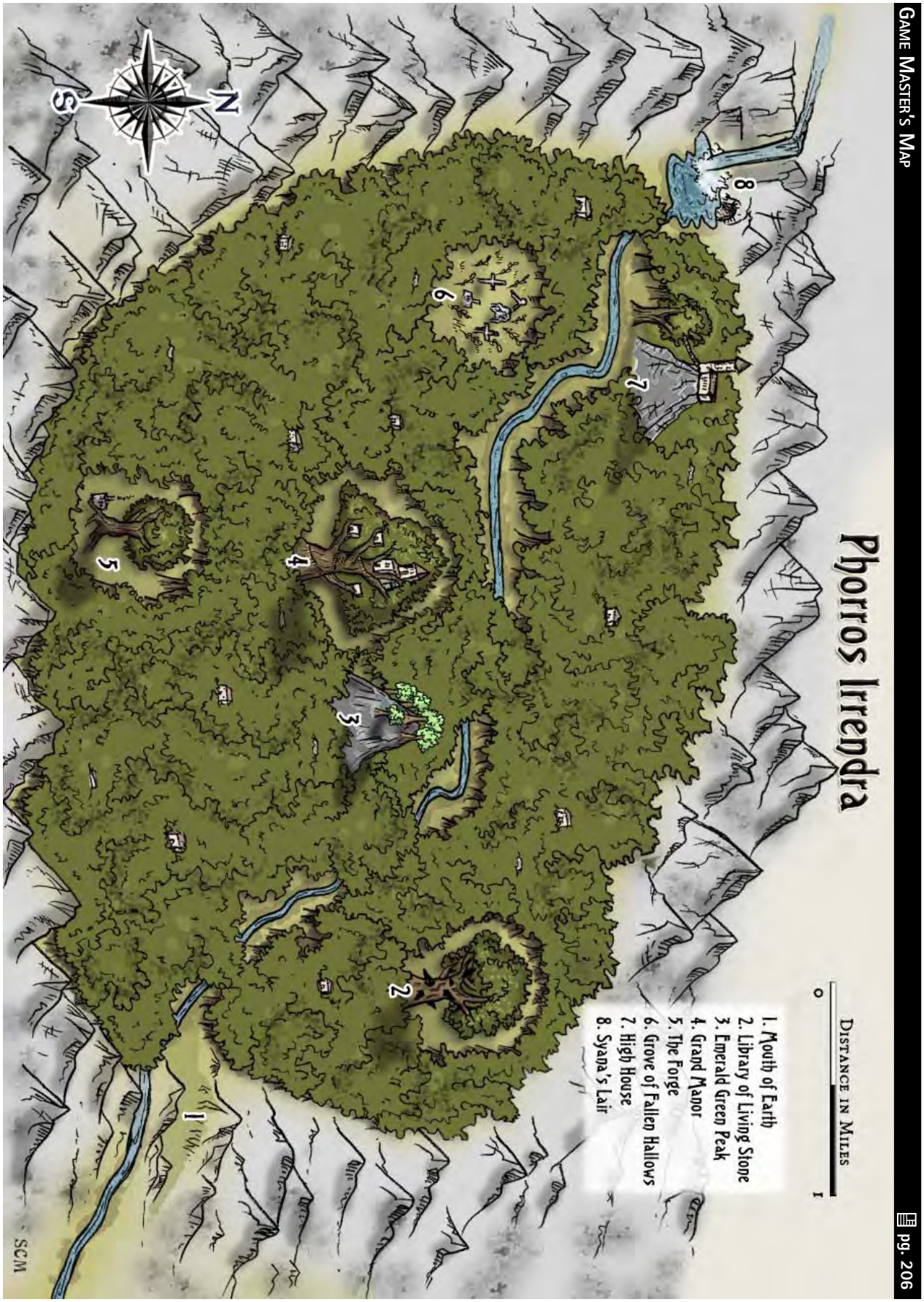
pg. 183

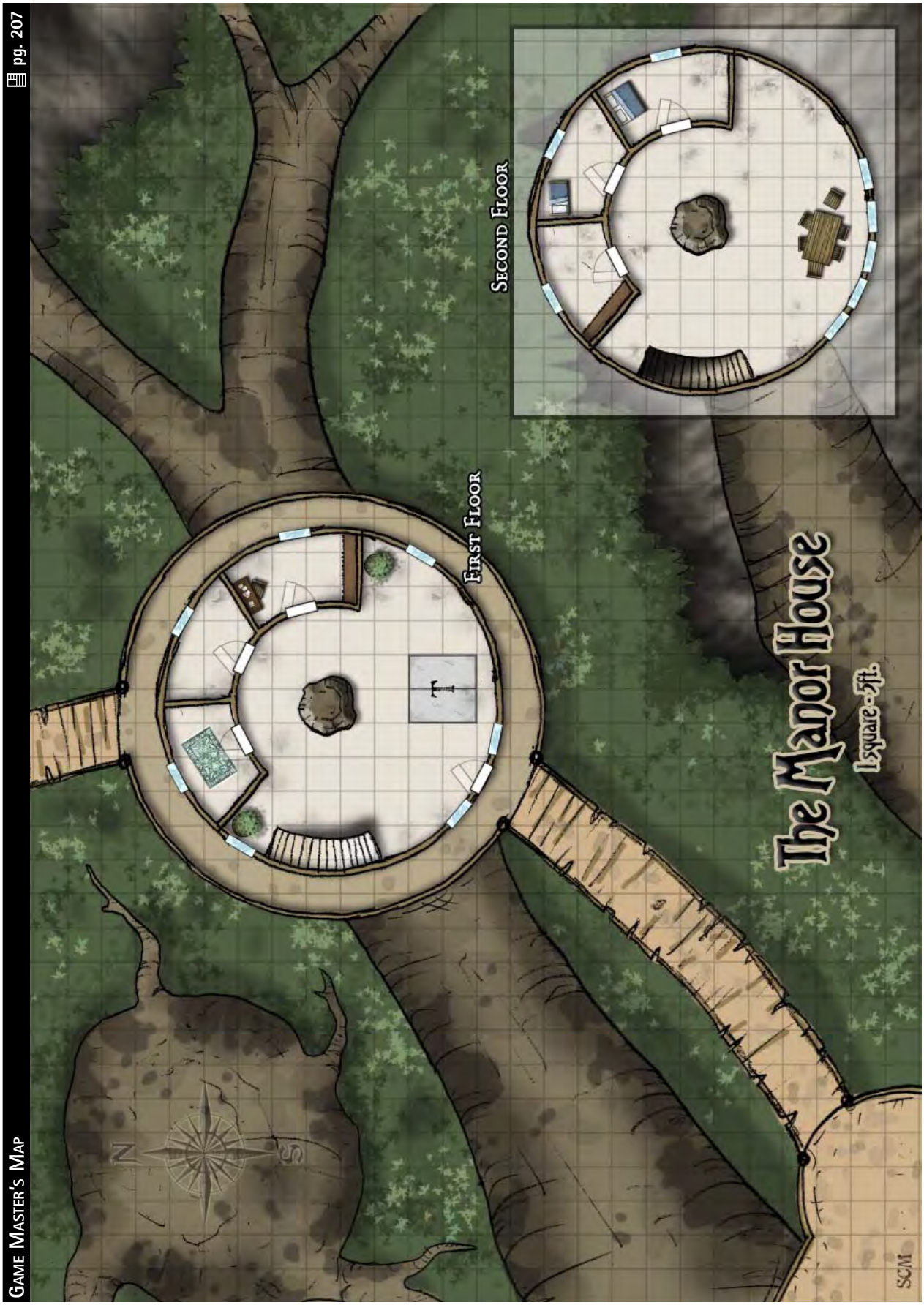


Game Master's Map pg. 197




pg. 201
Game Master's Map
Henge
1 square = 5ft.
Darkness
Darkness
+10
+5
+5
+5
+5
+5
+5
+5
+5
N
S
SCM


Game Master's Map
pg. 206
Phorros Irrendra
Distance in Miles
0
1
1. Mouth of Earth
2. Library of Living Stone
3. Emerald Green Peak
4. Grand Manor
5. The Forge
6. Grove of Fallen Hallows
7. High House
8. Syana's Lair
N
S
SCM


pg. 207
Game Master's Map
First Floor
Second Floor
The Manor House
1square=5ft.
N
S
SCM


Game Master's Map
pg. 211
N
S
The Forge
1 square = 5ft.
+20
-40
+20
Pylon
SCM

Game Master's Map

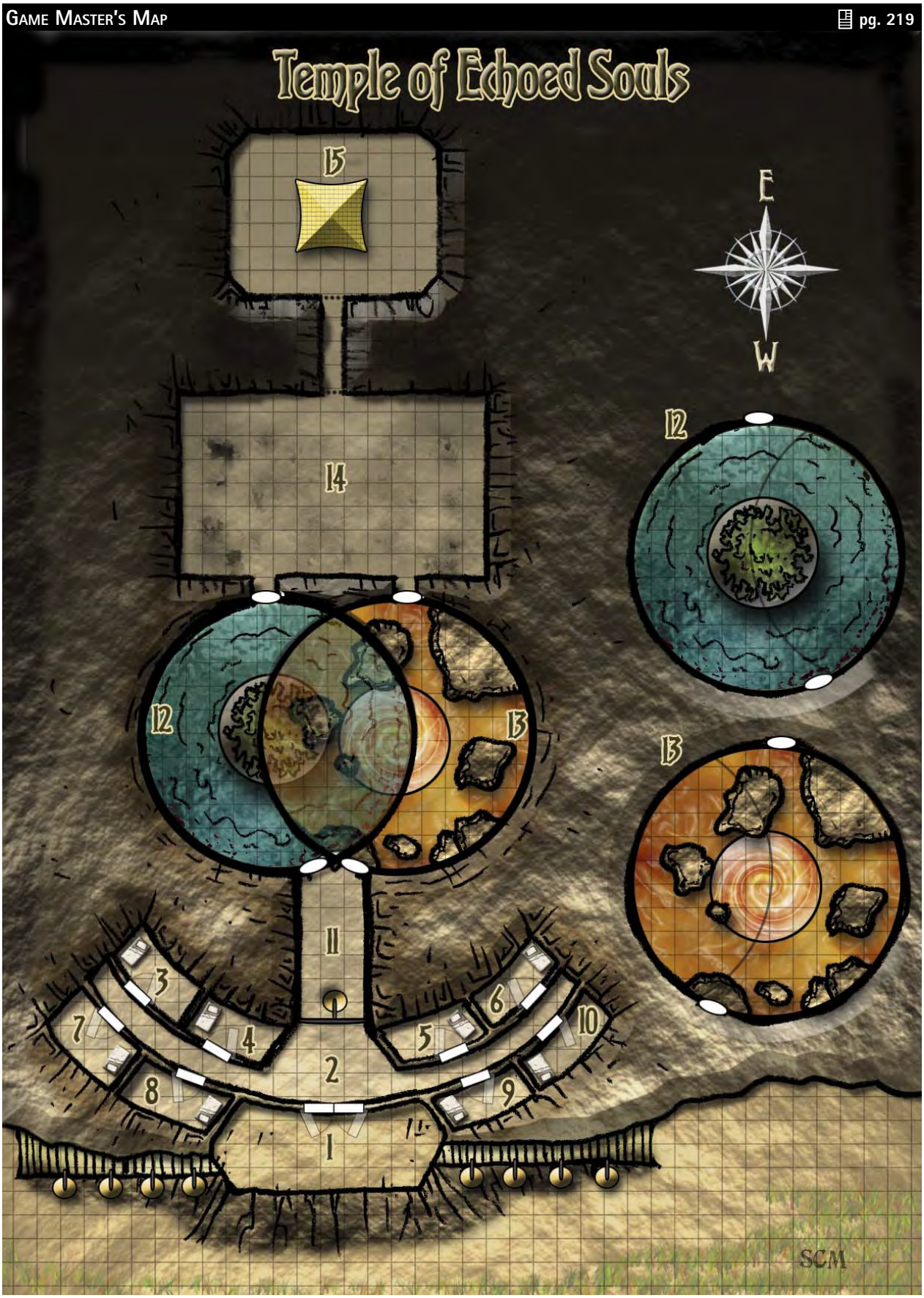
pg. 213



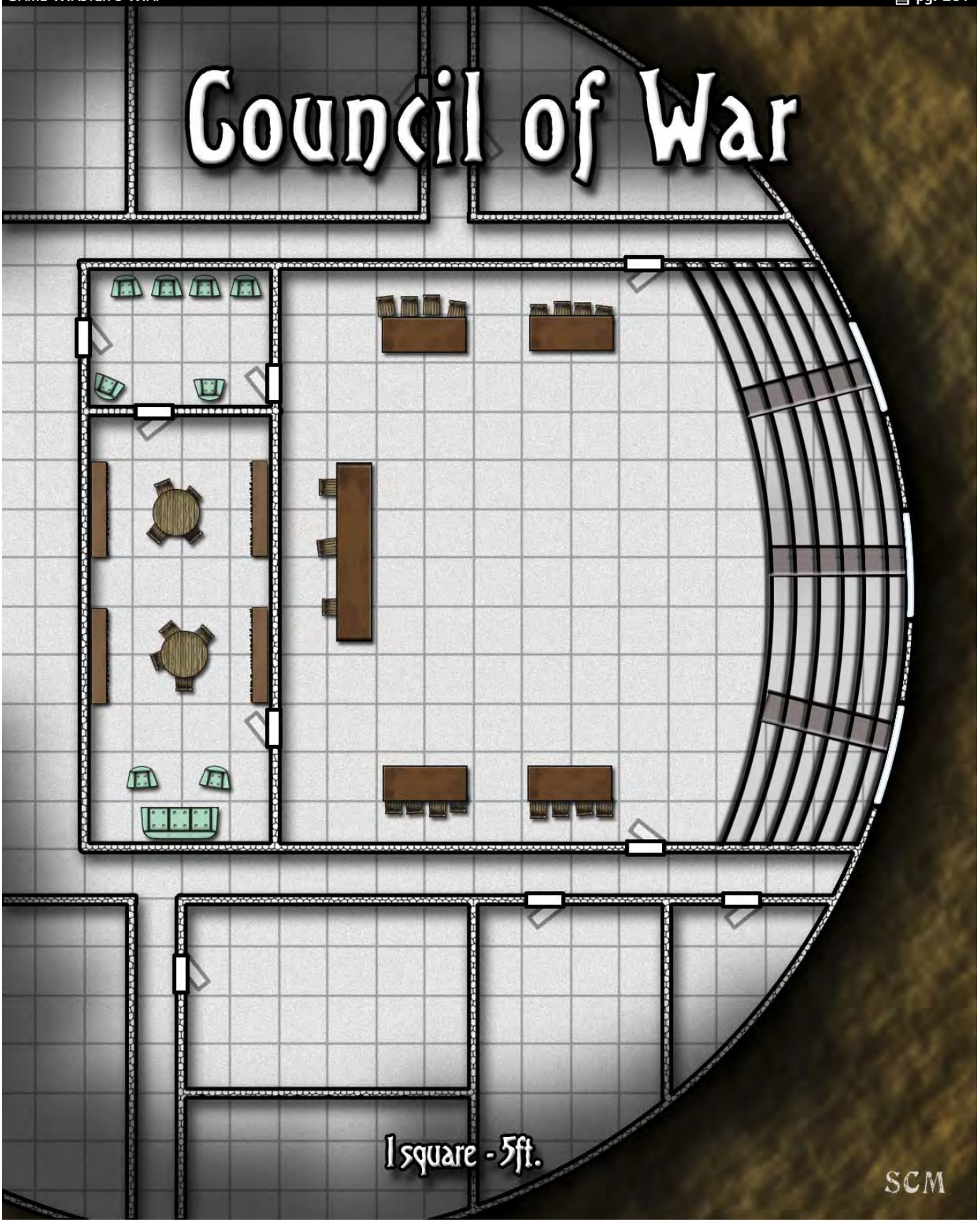

Game Master's Map
Library of Living Stone
1 square = 5 ft.
A
D
N
S
SCM
pg. 214

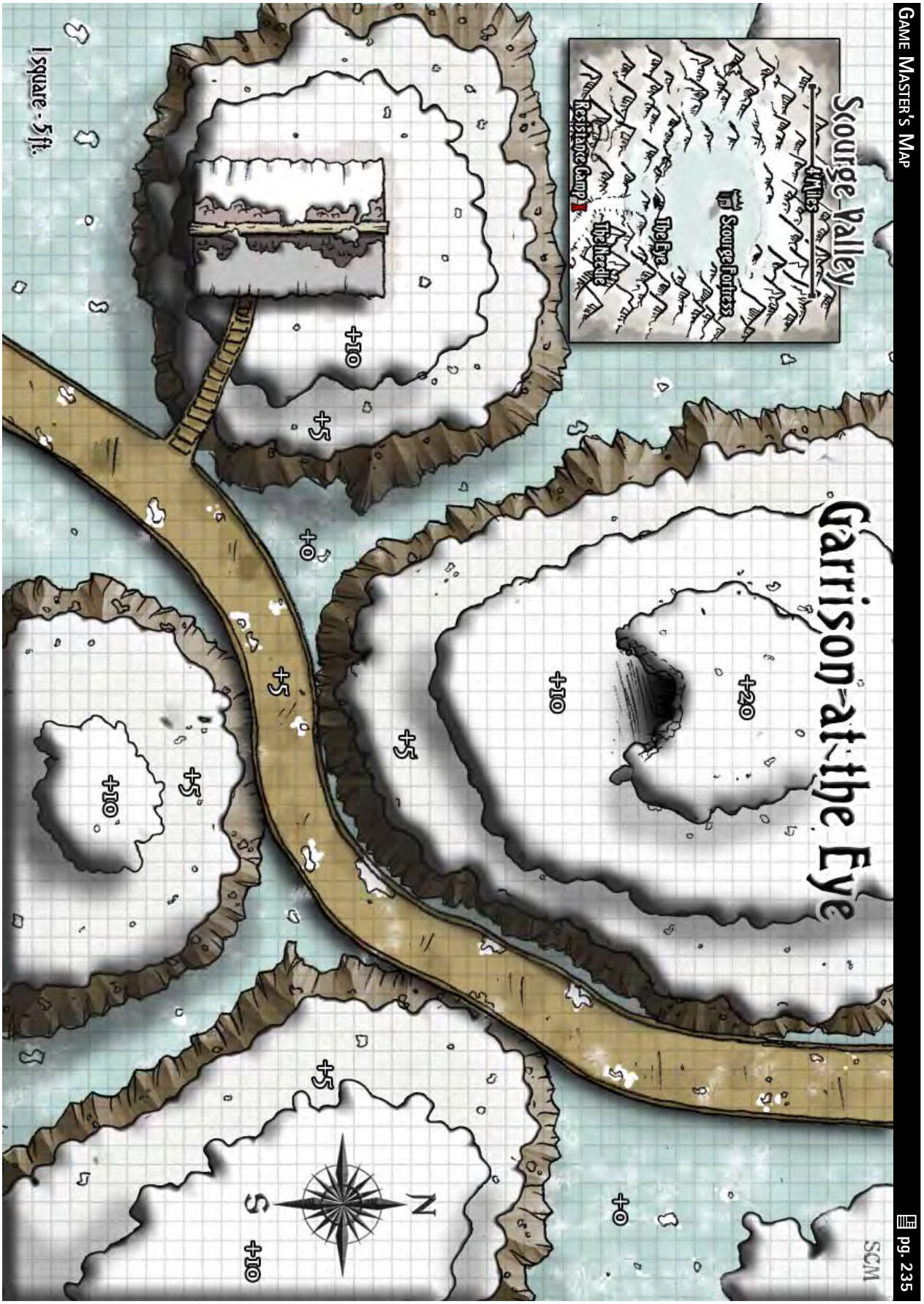

Game Master's Map
pg. 215
Syana's Lair
1 square - 5ft.
N
S
+5
-40
To Waterfall
SCM

GAME MASTER'S MAP pg. 219

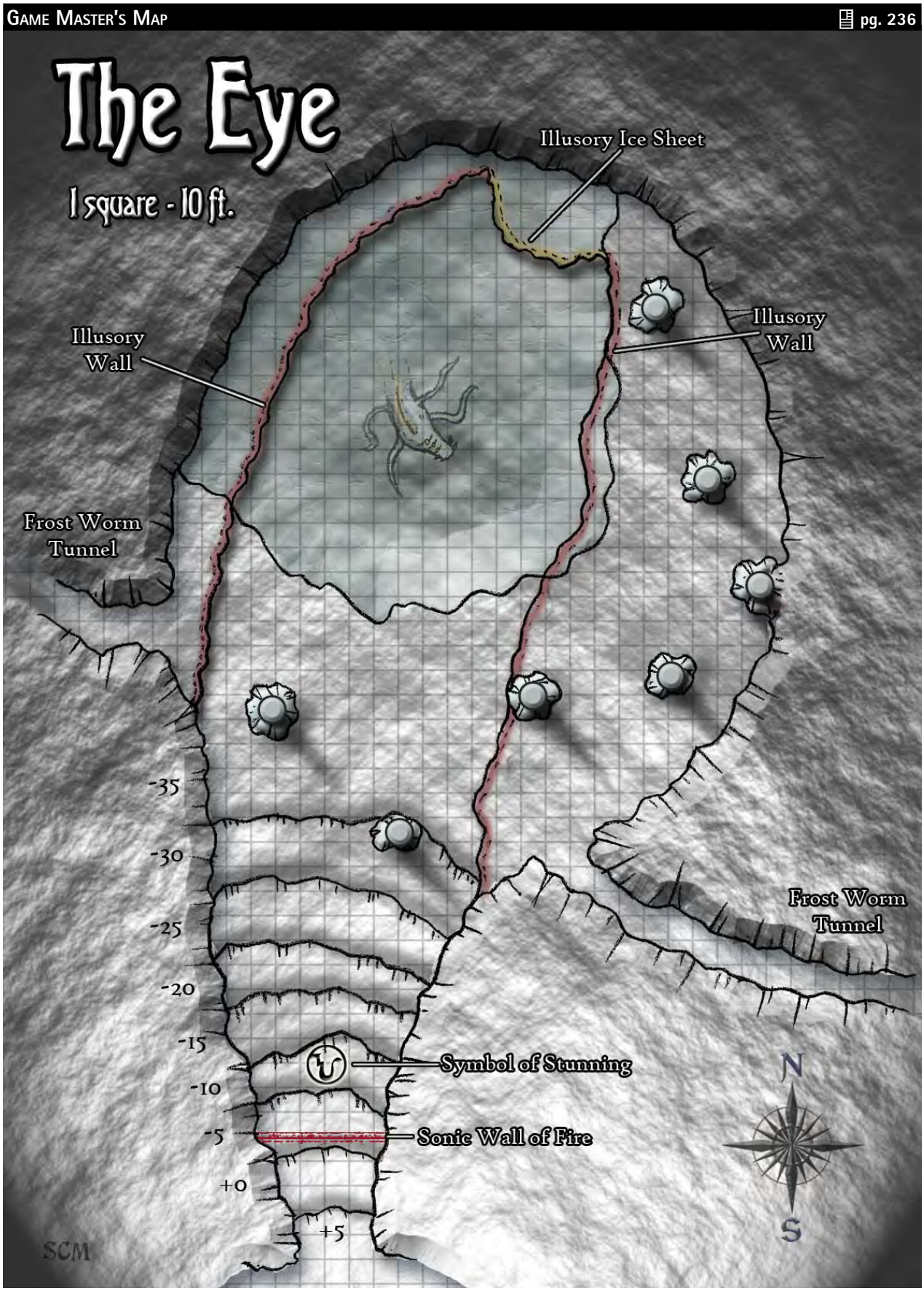


Game Master's Map pg. 231

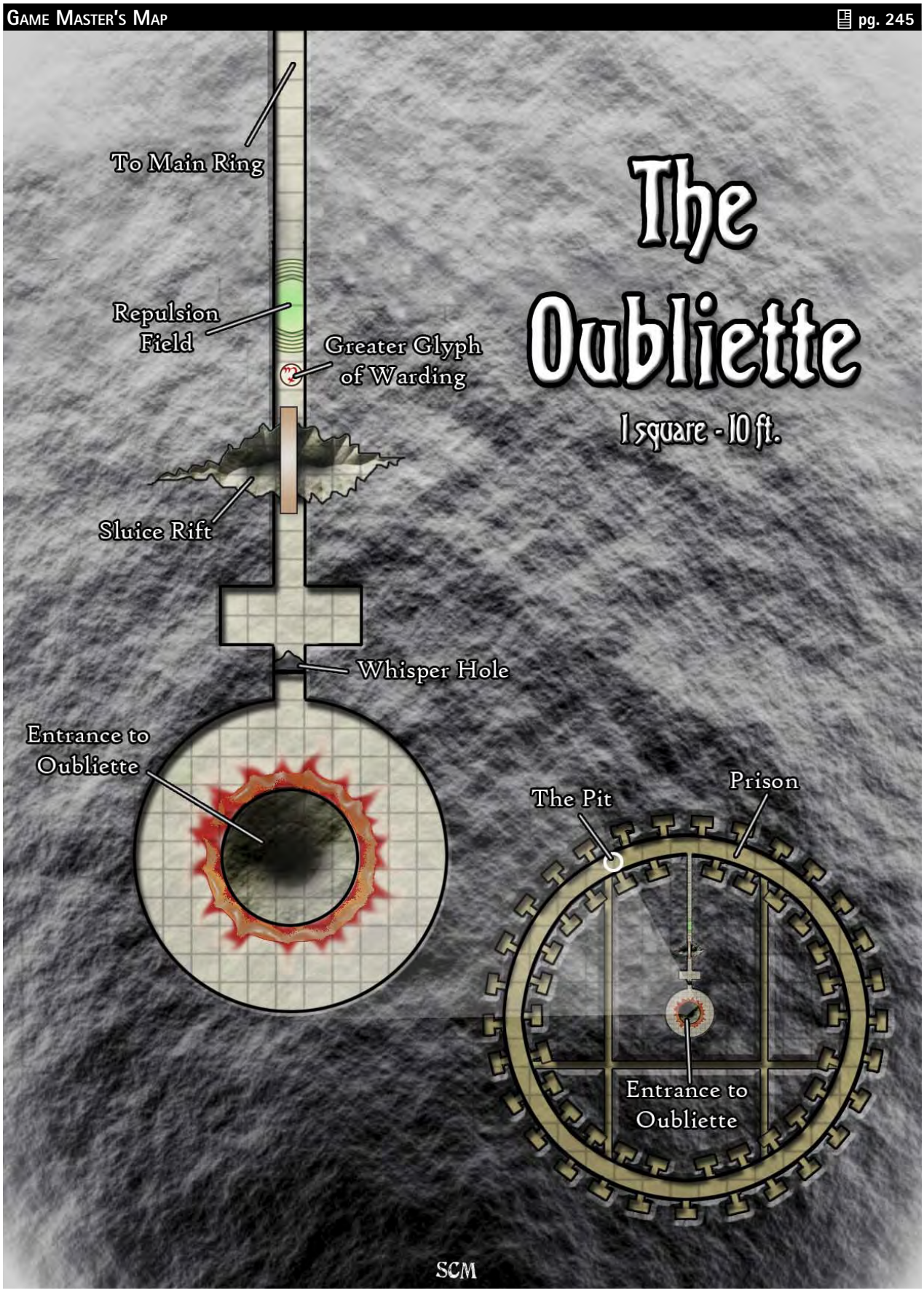



Game Master's Map
Garrison at the Eye
Scourge Valley
4 Miles
Scourge Fortress
The Eye
The Needle
Resistance Camp
1 square = 5 ft.
+20
+10
+5
+0
N
S
SCM
pg. 235

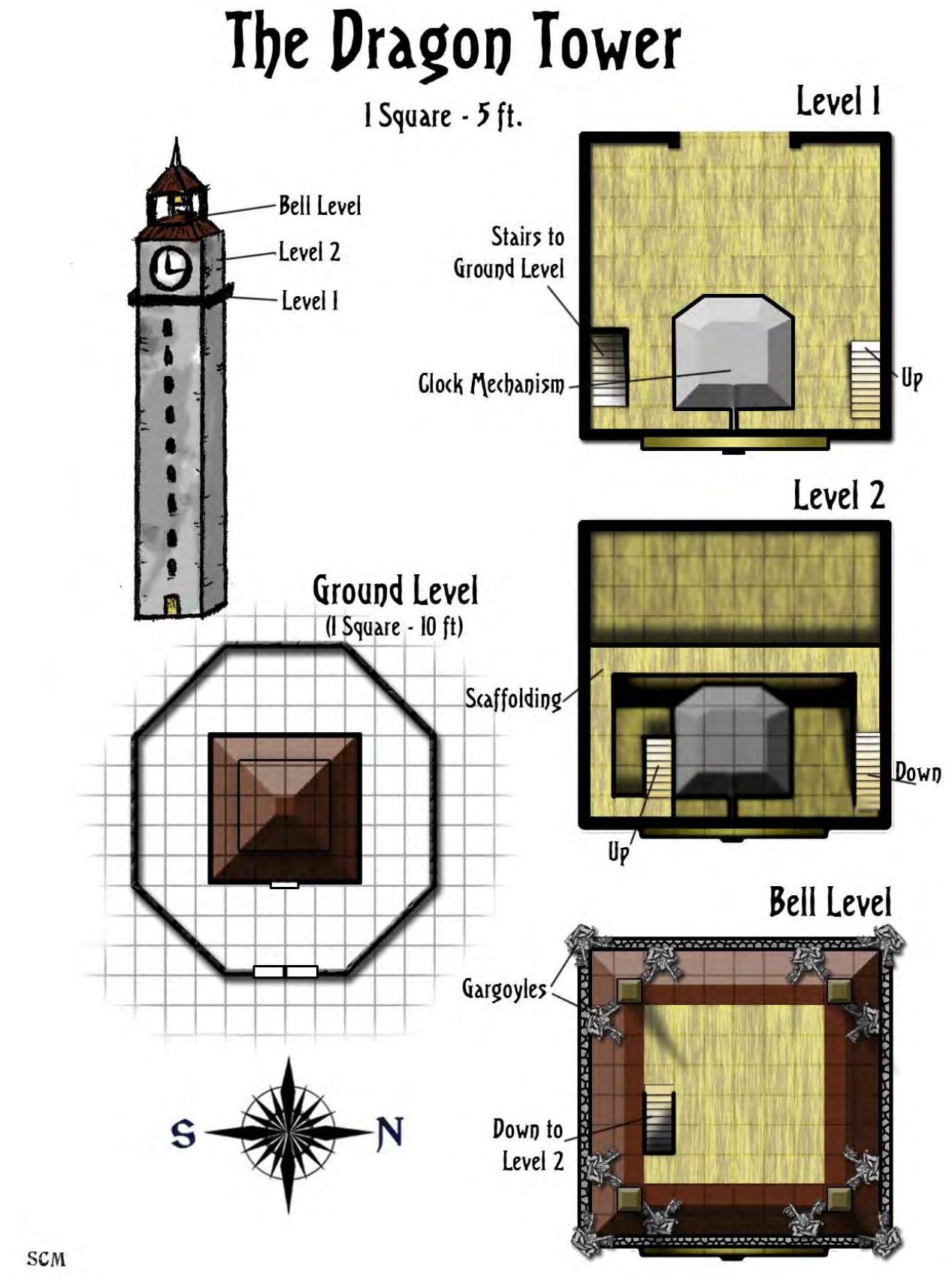
Game Master's Map pg. 236




Game Master's Map
pg. 240
Scourge Fortress
1 square = 10 ft.
1. Entrance
2. Watch Tower
3. Inner Gate
4. Holding
5. Guard Post
6. Armory
7. Meeting Hall
8. Kitchen
9. Storage
10. Mausoleum
11. Laboratory
12. Quarters
13. Clean Room
14. Shooting Galleries
15. Cistern Hall
16. Obelisk Chamber
N
S
WOS
Ab
Co
Dv
En
Ev
Il
Ne
Tr


Game Master's Map
pg. 245
To Main Ring
Repulsion Field
Greater Glyph of Warding
Sluice Rift
Whisper Hole
Entrance to Oubliette
The Pit
Prison
Entrance to Oubliette
The Oubliette
1 square = 10 ft.
SCM

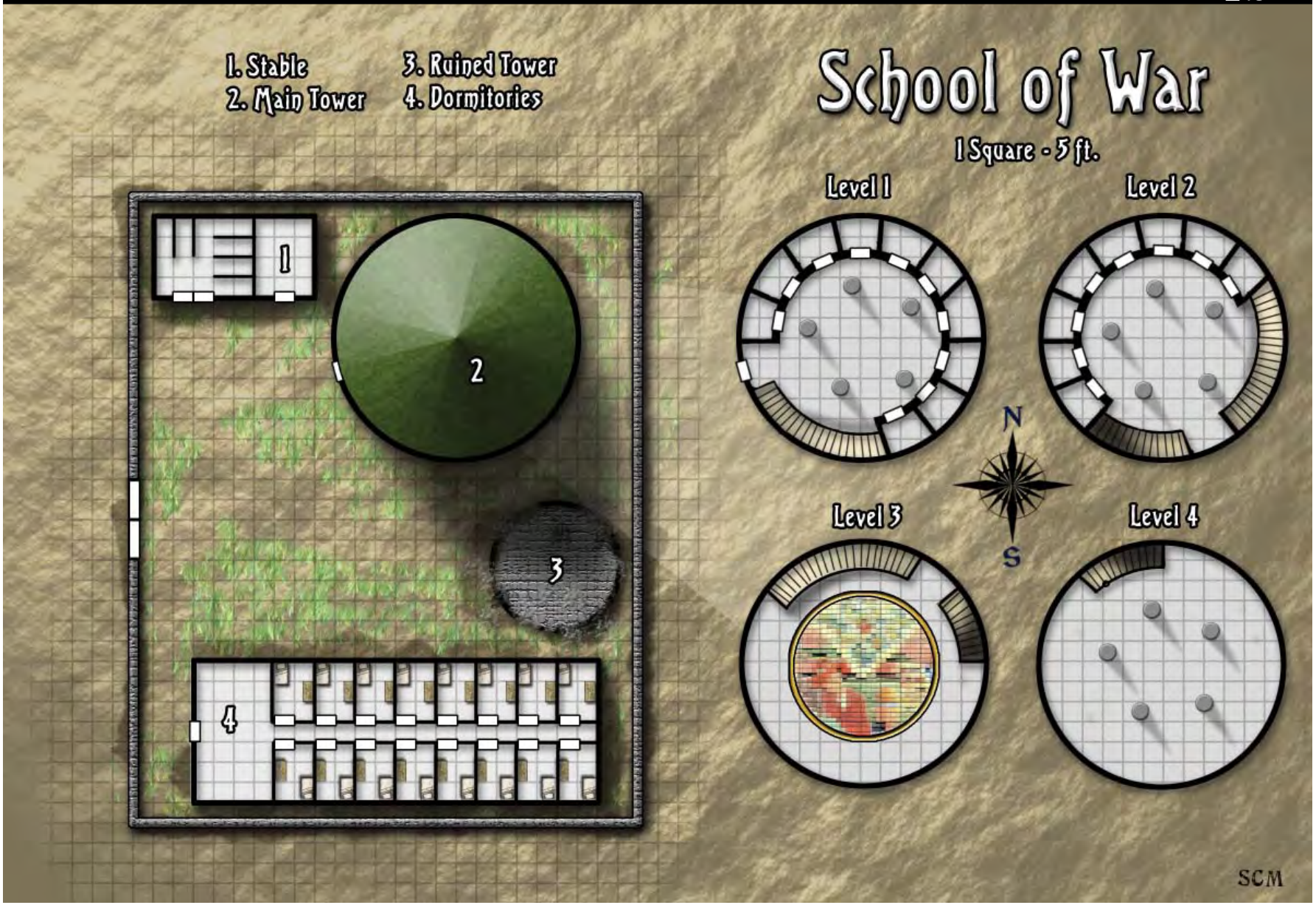
GAME MASTER'S MAP pg. 259




pg. 262
Game Master's Map
Districts Map
Distance in Feet
0 ft
80 ft
SCM
N
S

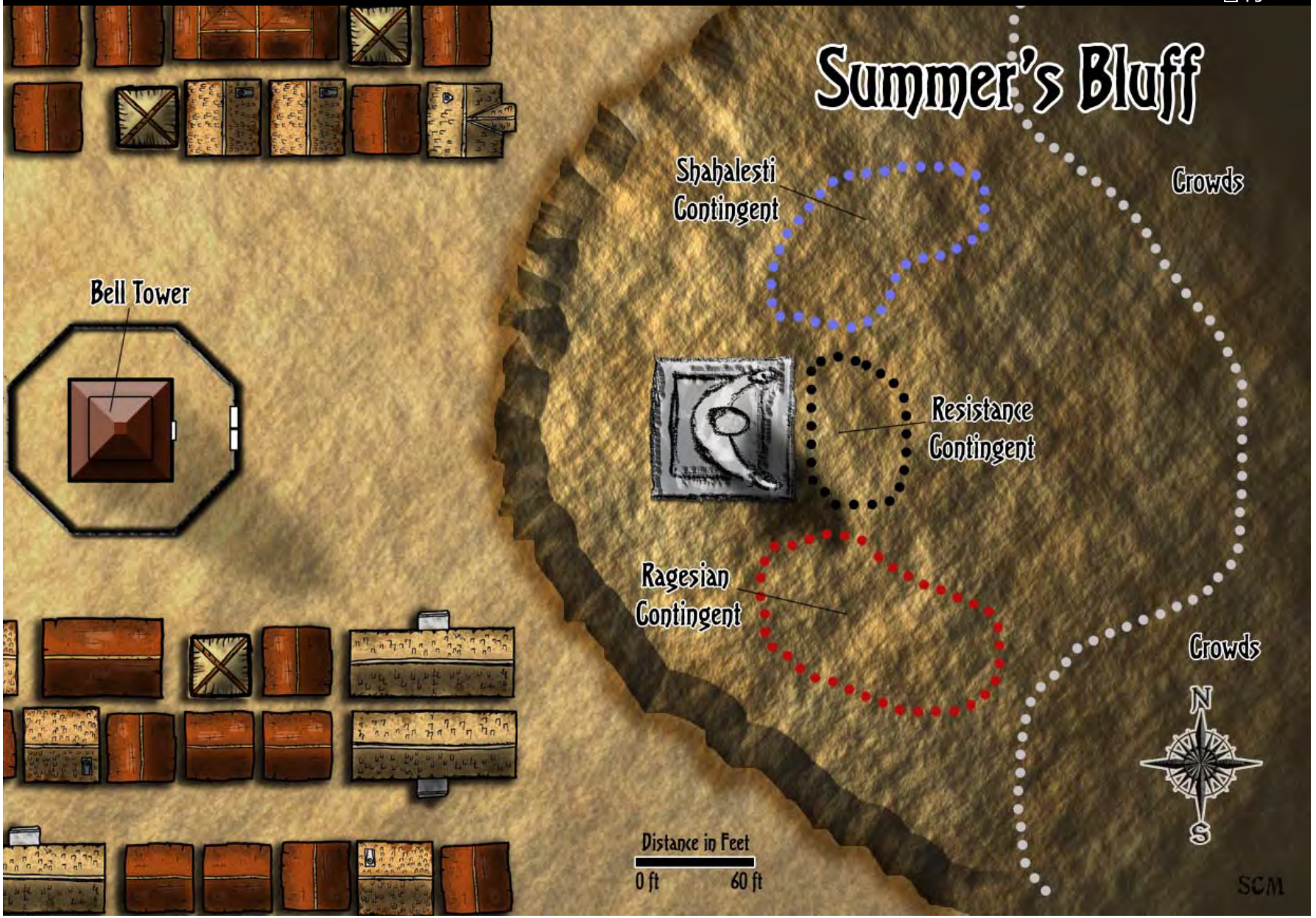
Game Master's Map

pg. 269

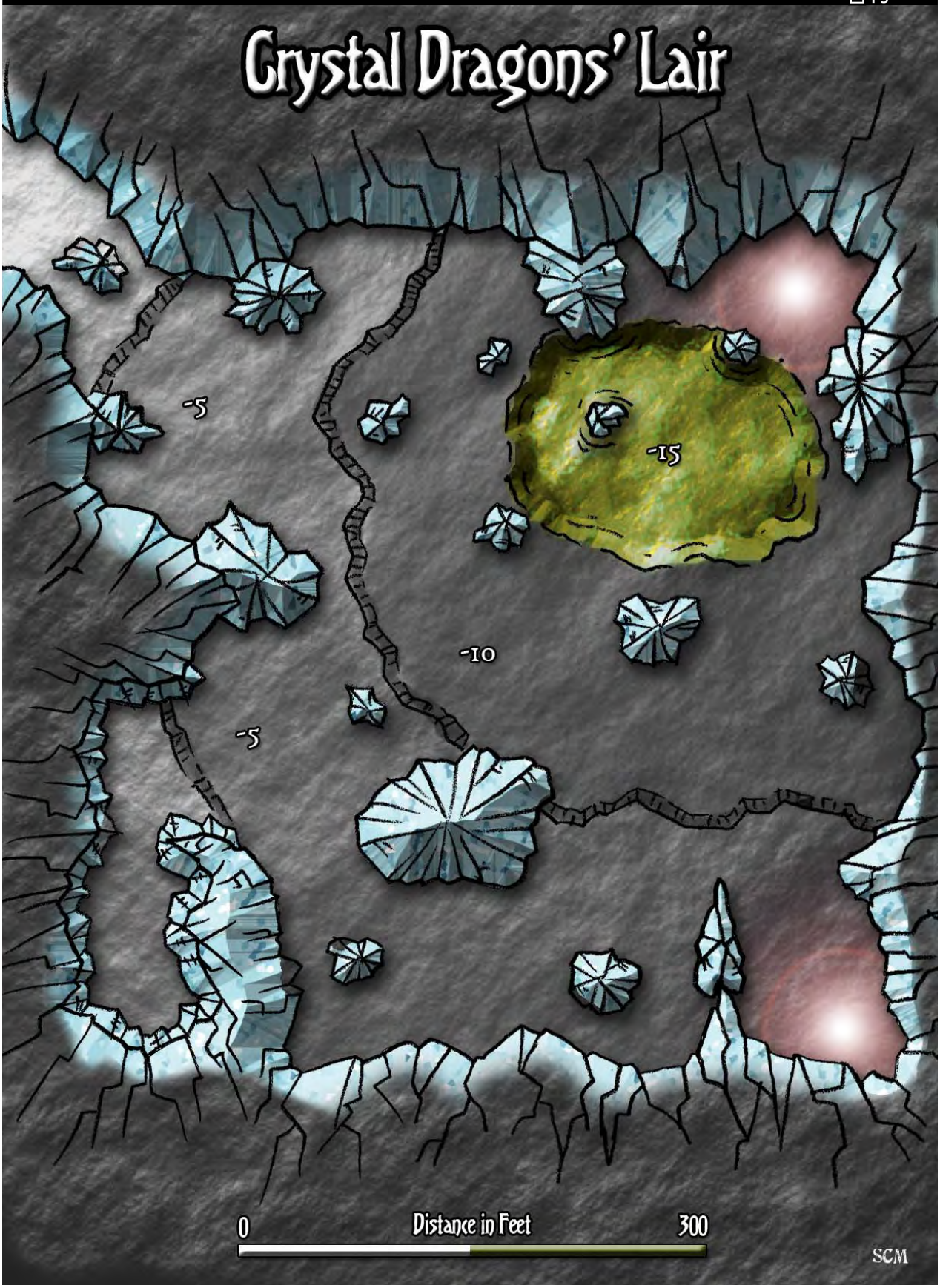


Game Master's Map

pg. 275



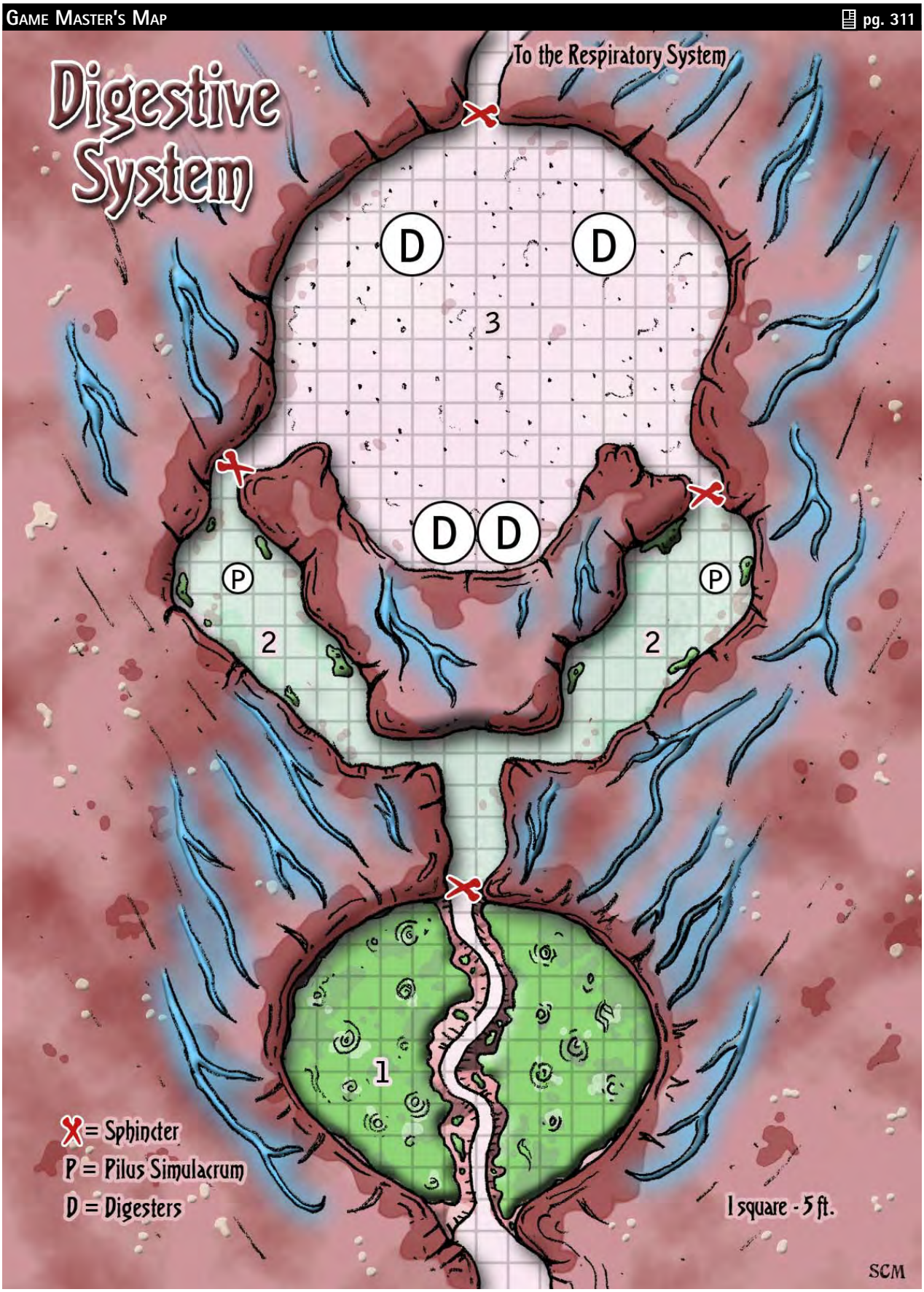
GAME MASTER'S MAP pg. 284



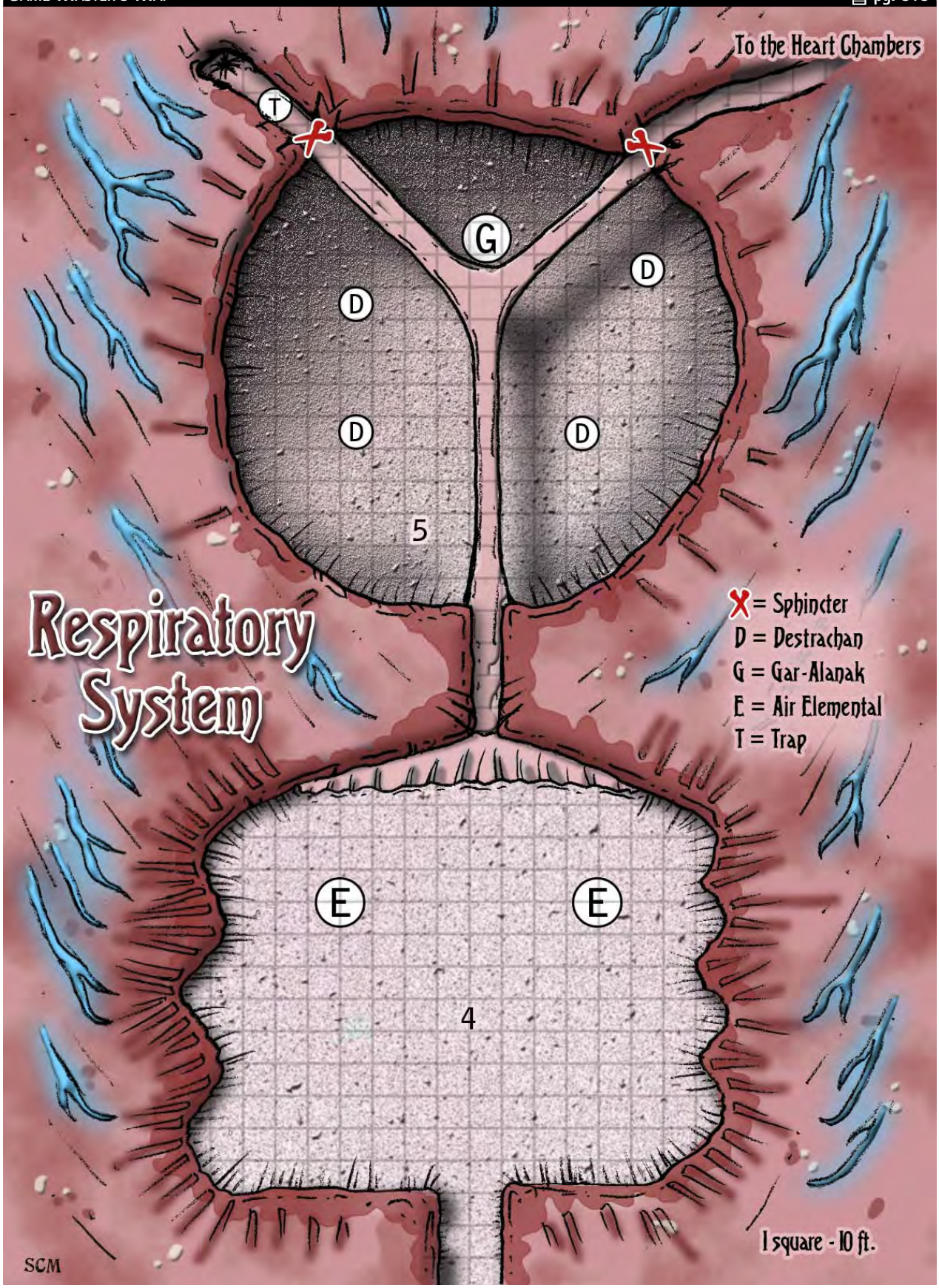
Game Master's Map

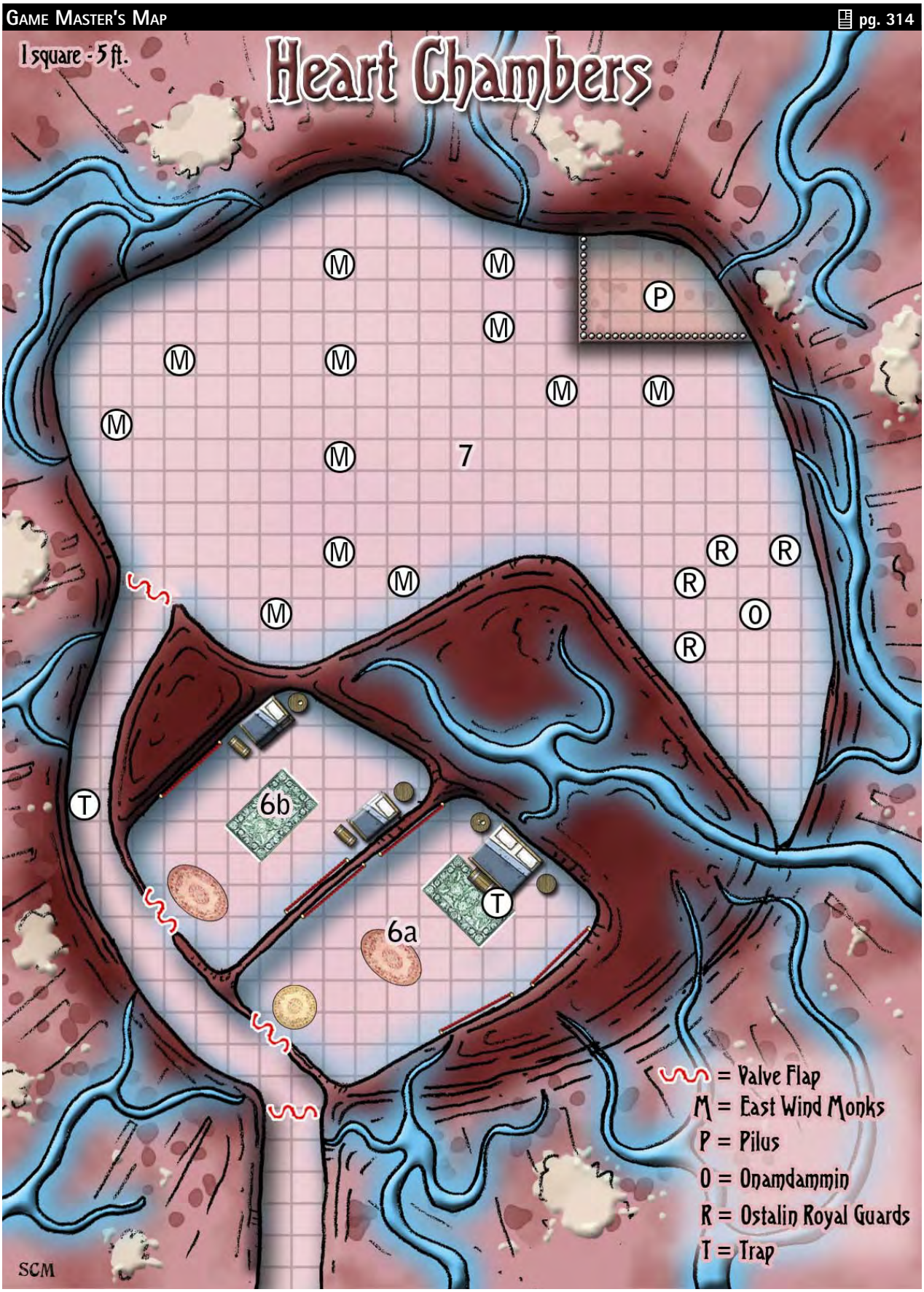
pg. 293




Game Master's Map
pg. 311
Digestive System
To the Respiratory System
D
D
3
D
D
P
P
2
2
1
X = Sphincter
P = Pilus Simulacrum
D = Digesters
1 square - 5 ft.
SCM

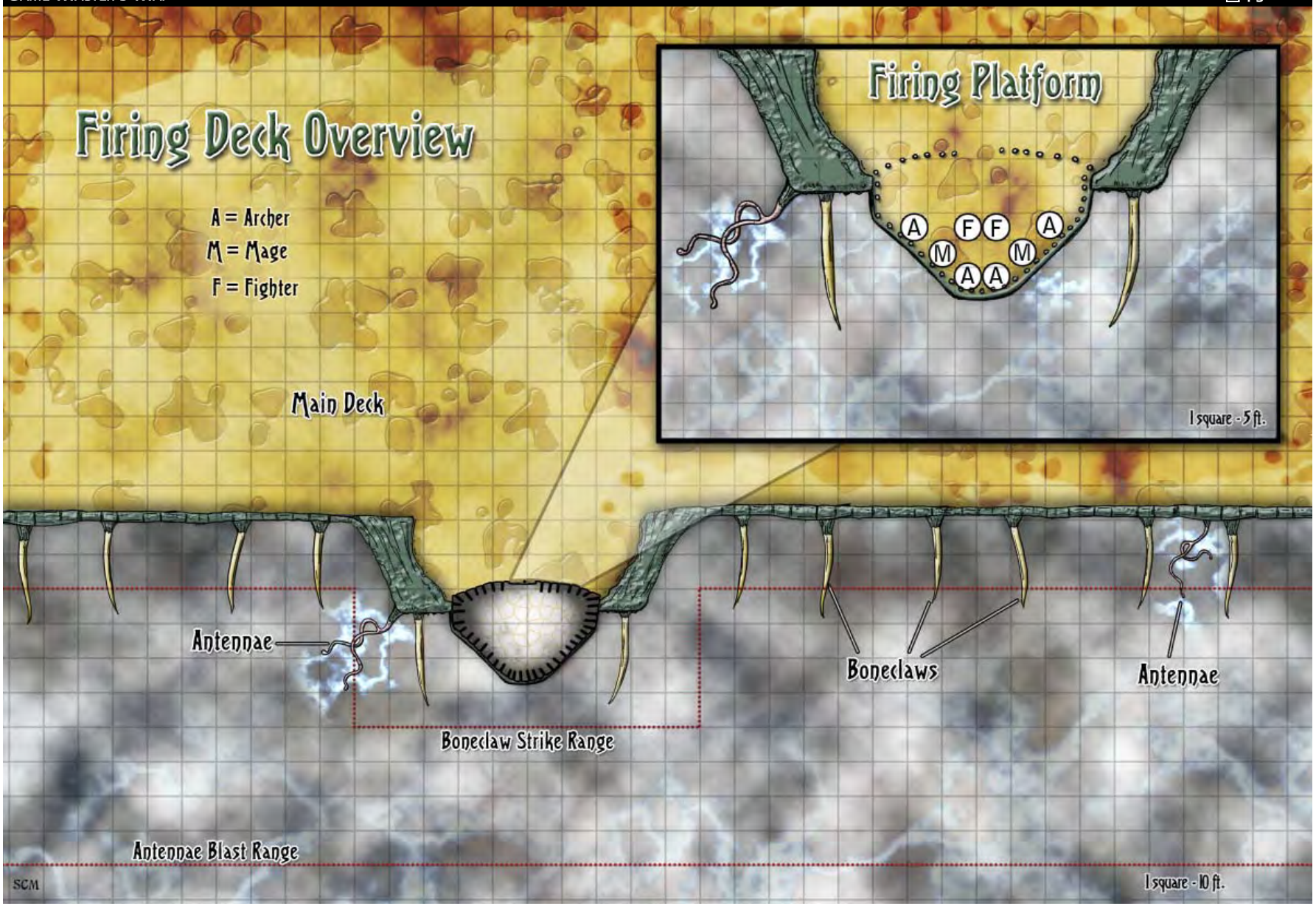
Game Master's Map pg. 313

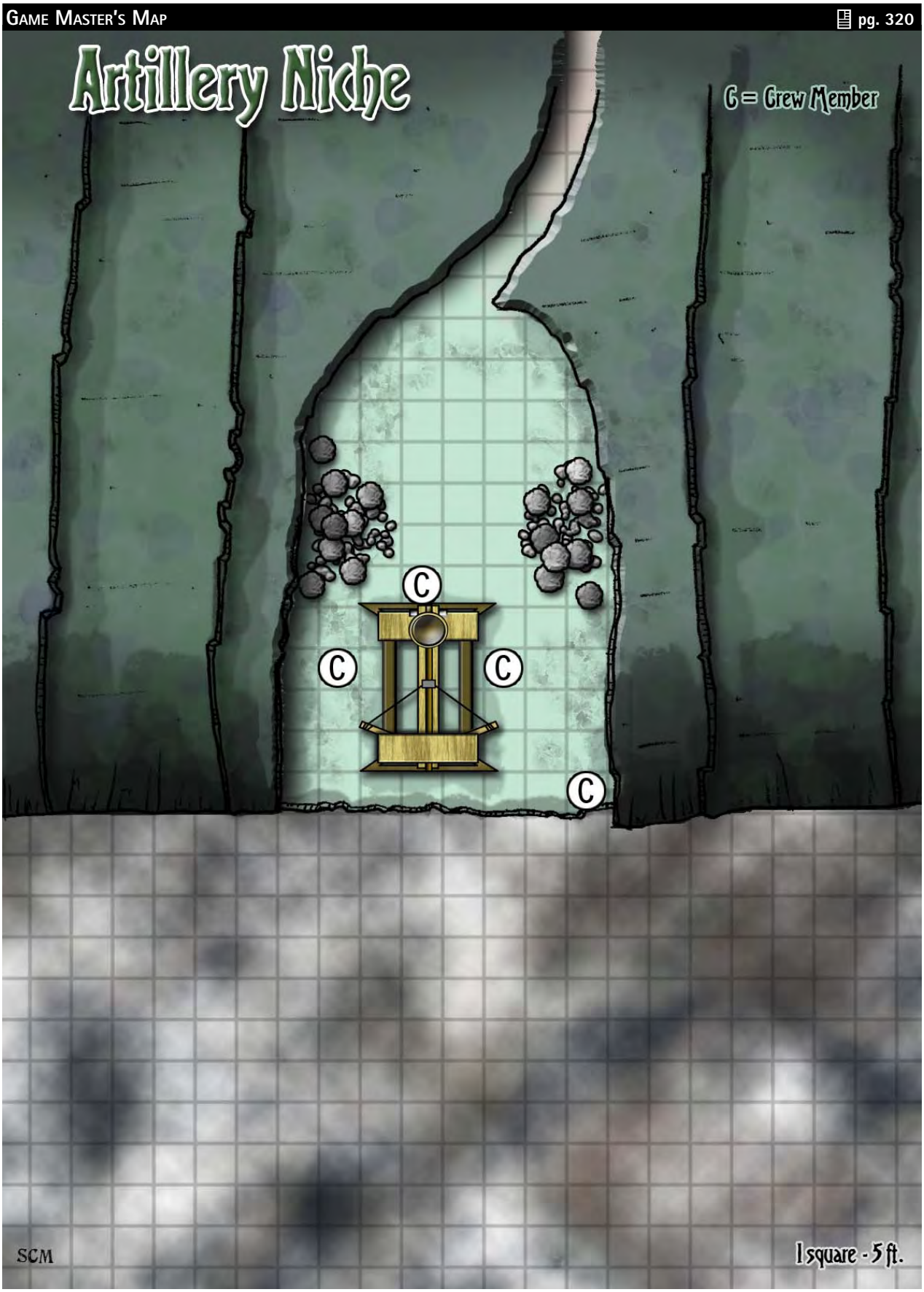



Game Master's Map
pg. 314
1 square = 5 ft.
Heart Chambers
7
6b
6a
= Valve Flap
M = East Wind Monks
P = Pilus
O = Onamdammin
R = Ostalin Royal Guards
T = Trap
SCM

Game Master's Map

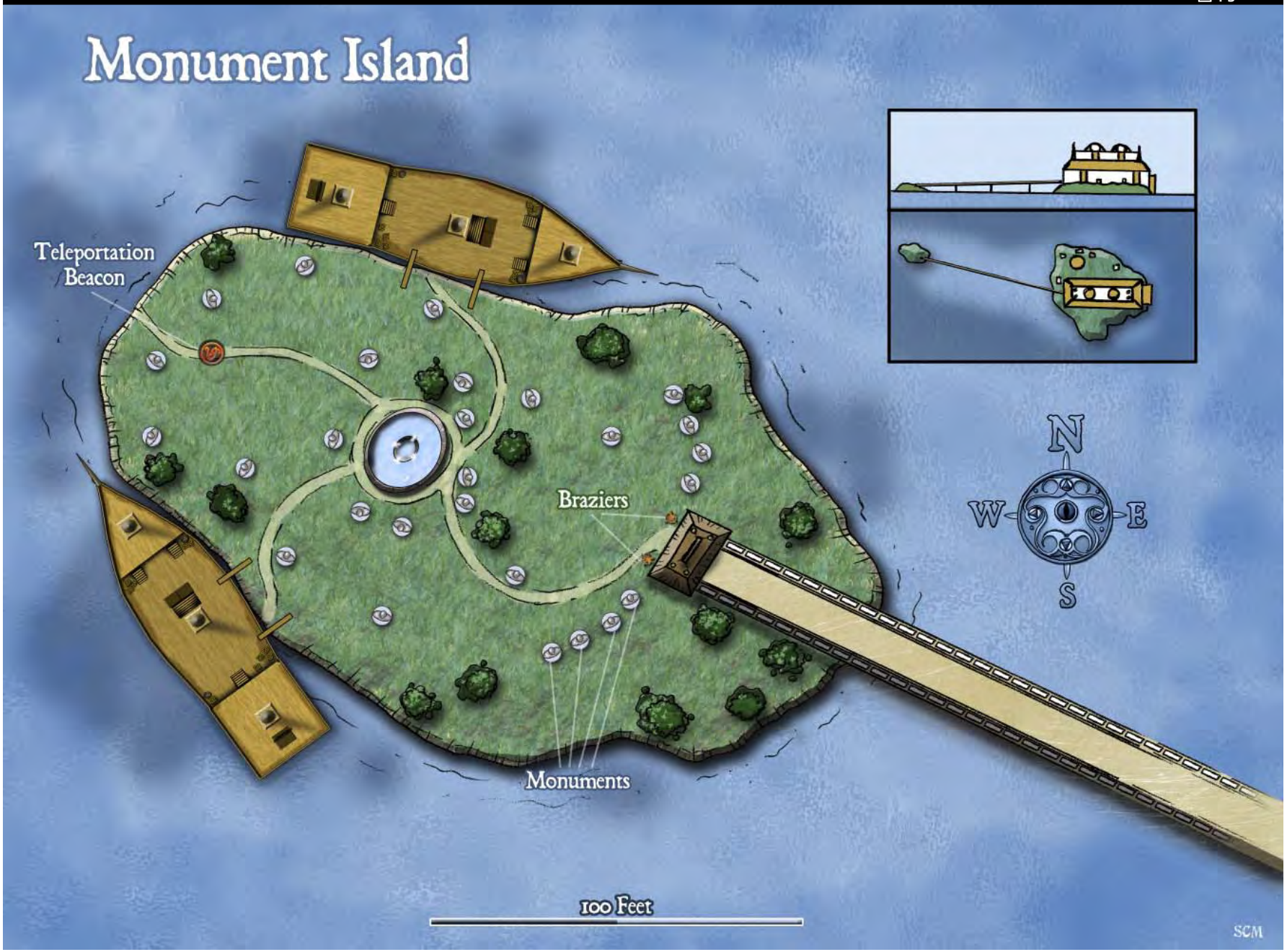
pg. 318

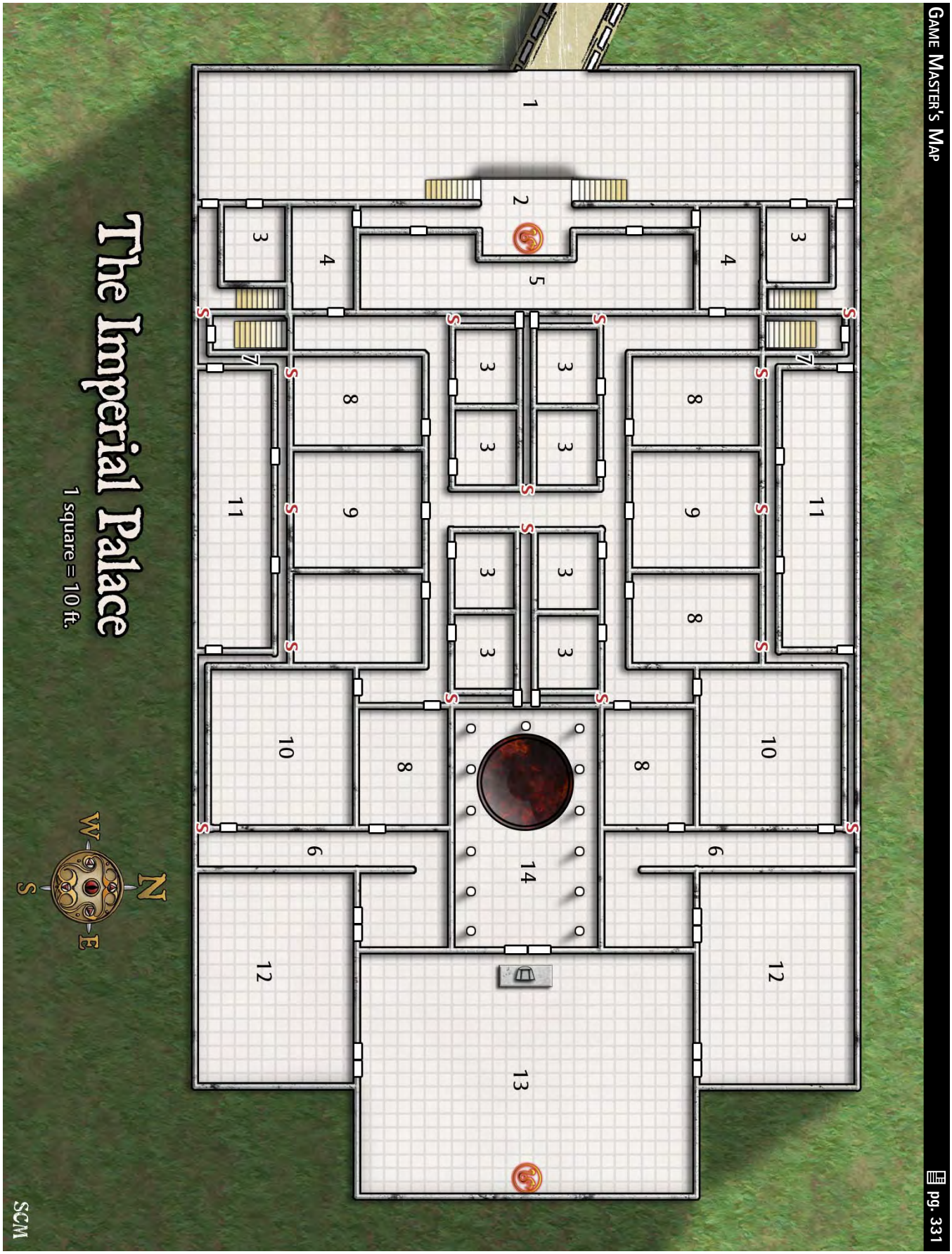



Game Master's Map
pg. 320
Artillery Niche
C = Crew Member
C
C
C
C
SCM
1 square = 5 ft.

Game Master's Map

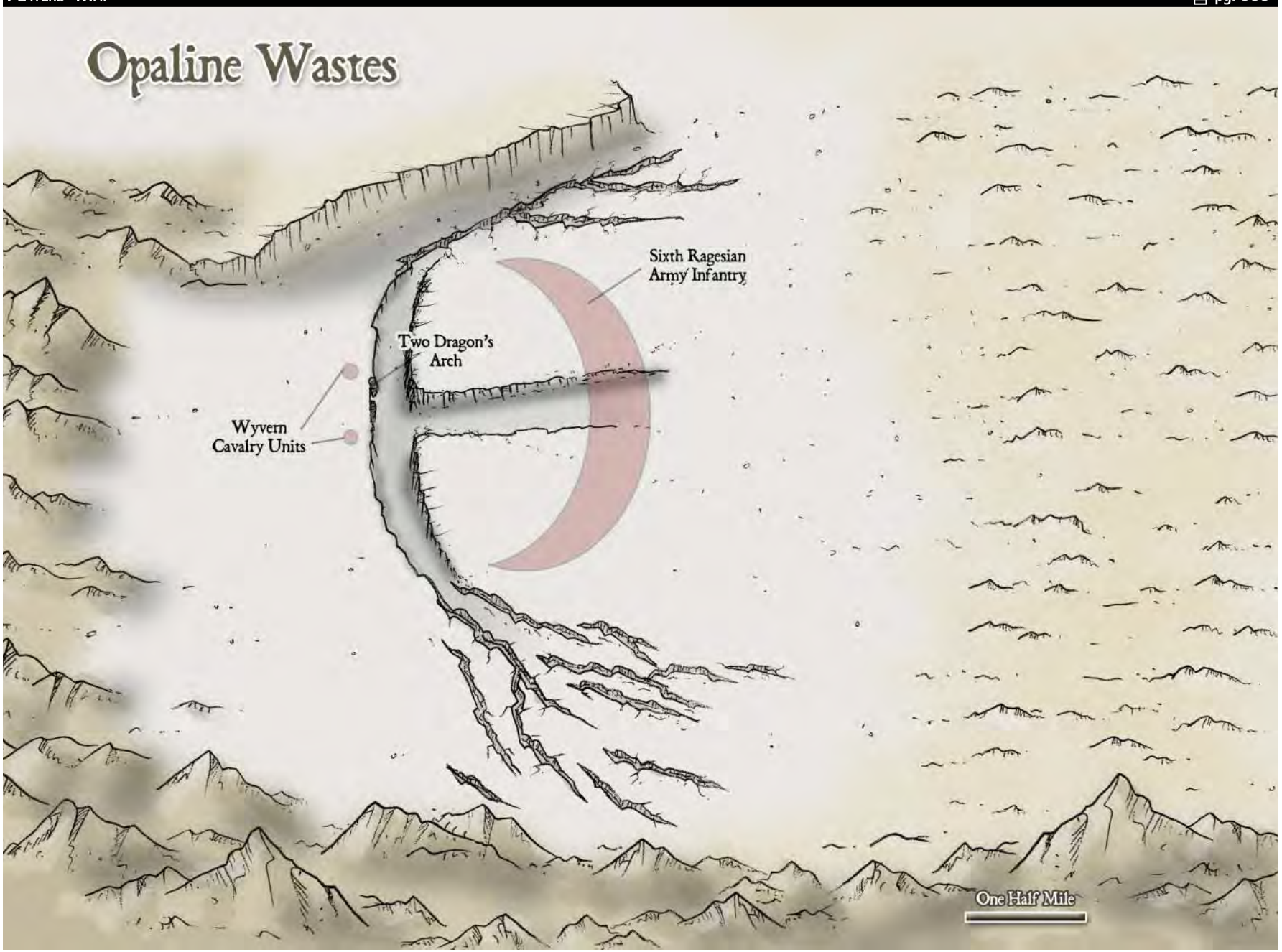
pg. 330

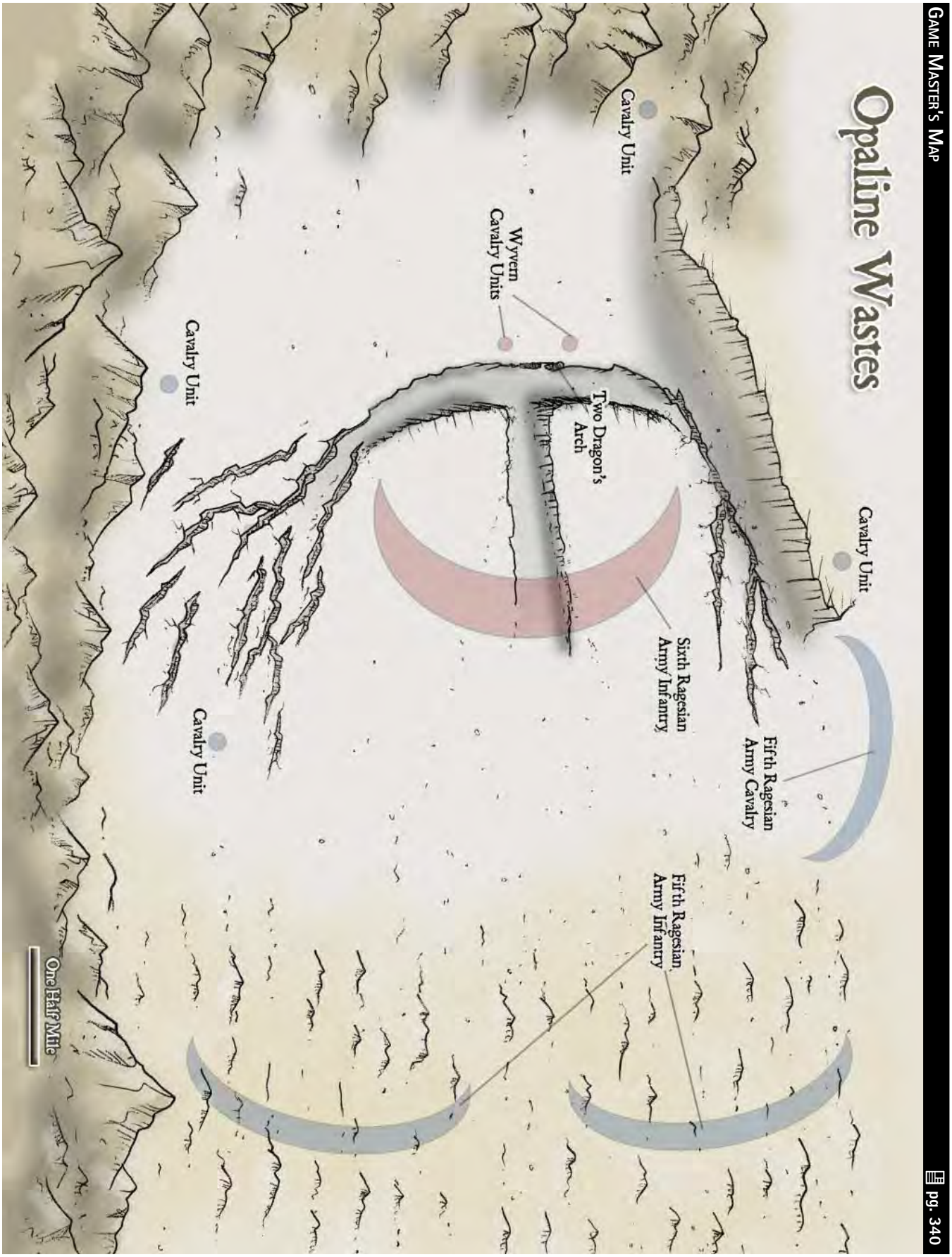



Game Master's Map
pg. 331
The Imperial Palace
1 square = 10 ft.
N
E
S
W
SCM

Players' Map

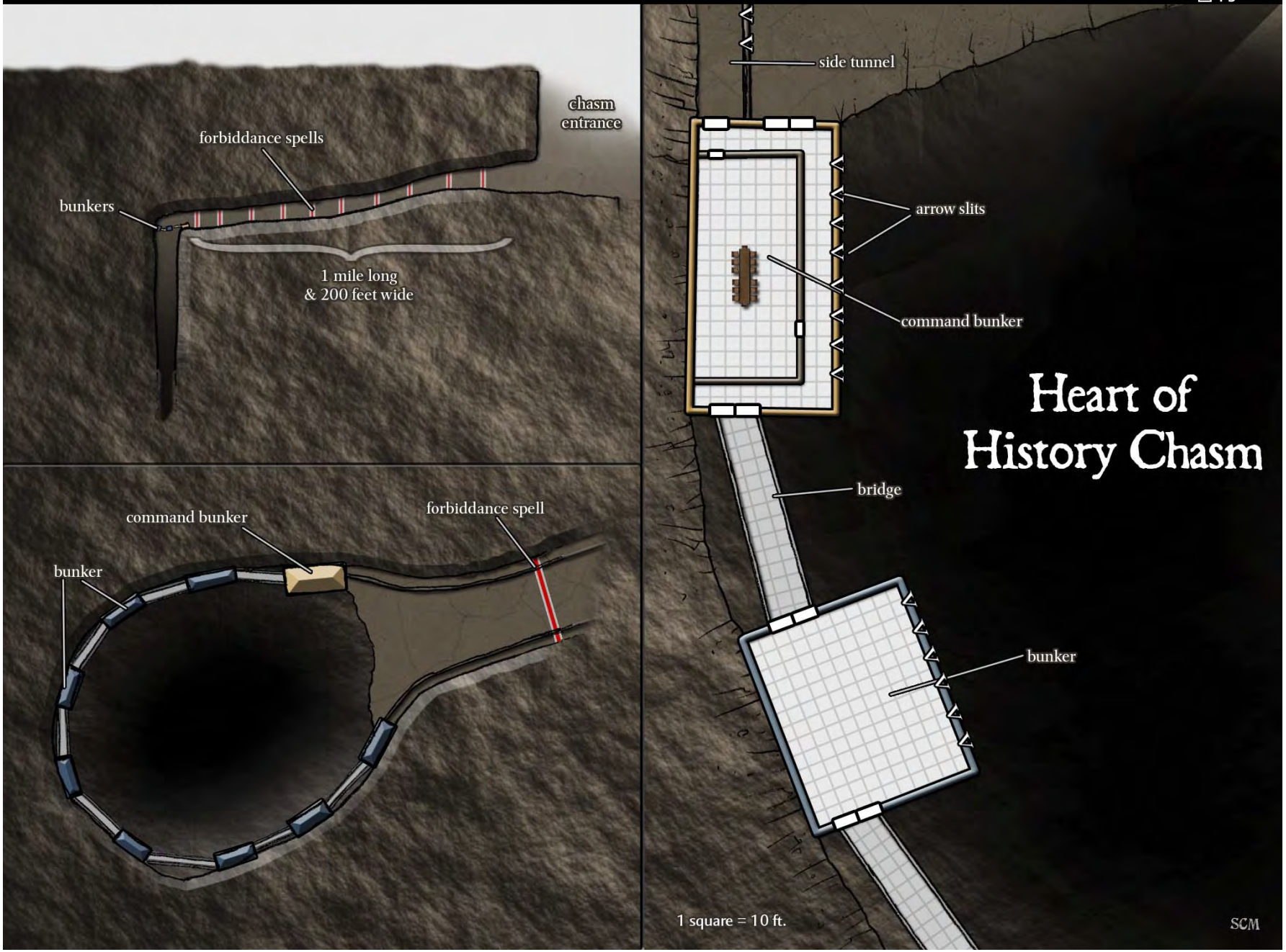
pg. 335




Game Master's Map
pg. 340
Opaline Wastes
Cavalry Unit
Fifth Ragesian Army Cavalry
Sixth Ragesian Army Infantry
Fifth Ragesian Army Infantry
Cavalry Unit
Wyvern Cavalry Units
Two Dragon's Arch
Cavalry Unit
Cavalry Unit
One Half Mile

Game Master's Map

pg. 352




Game Master's Map
Trials of the
Heart of History
SCM
pg. 354

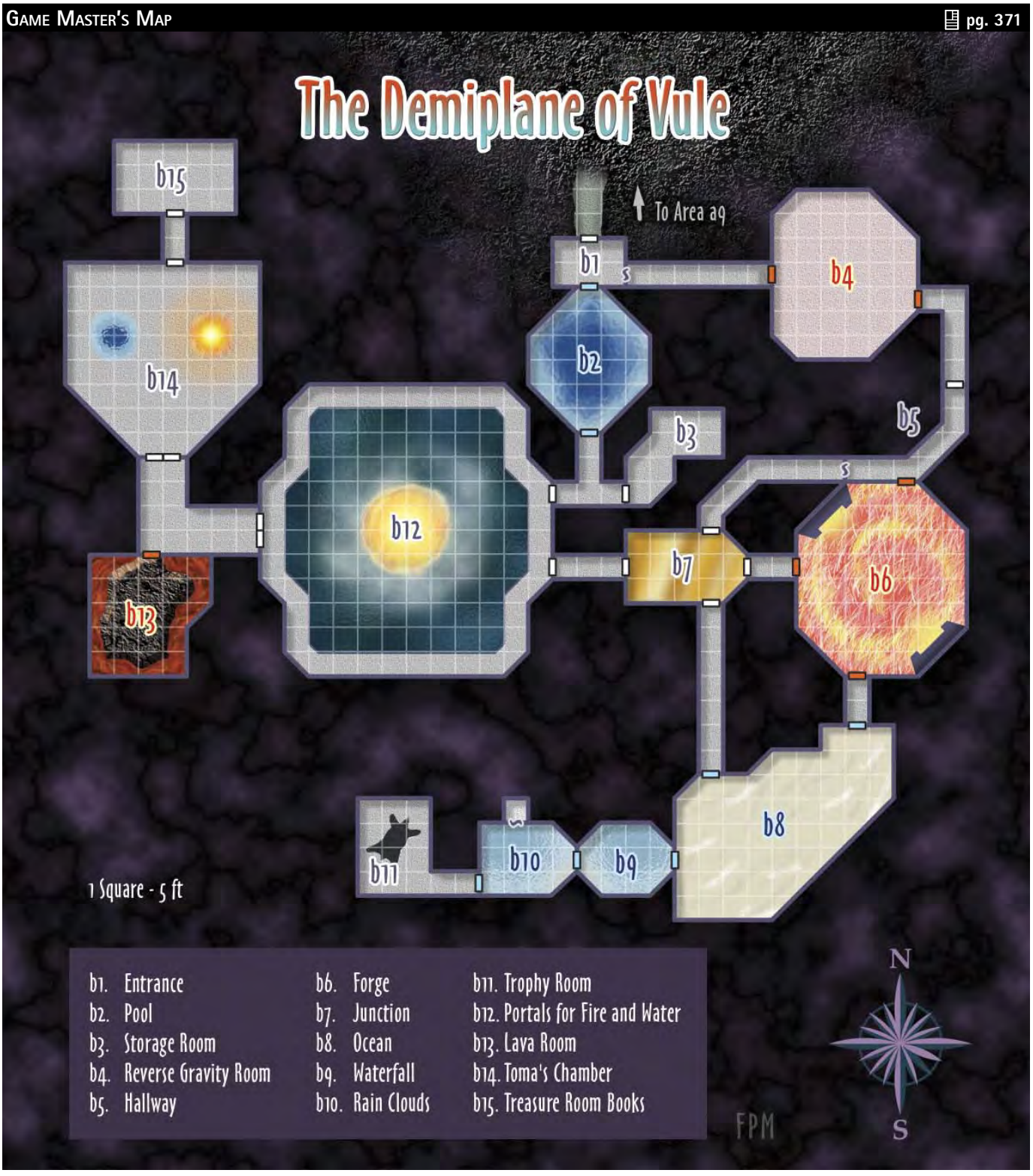
Game Master's Map

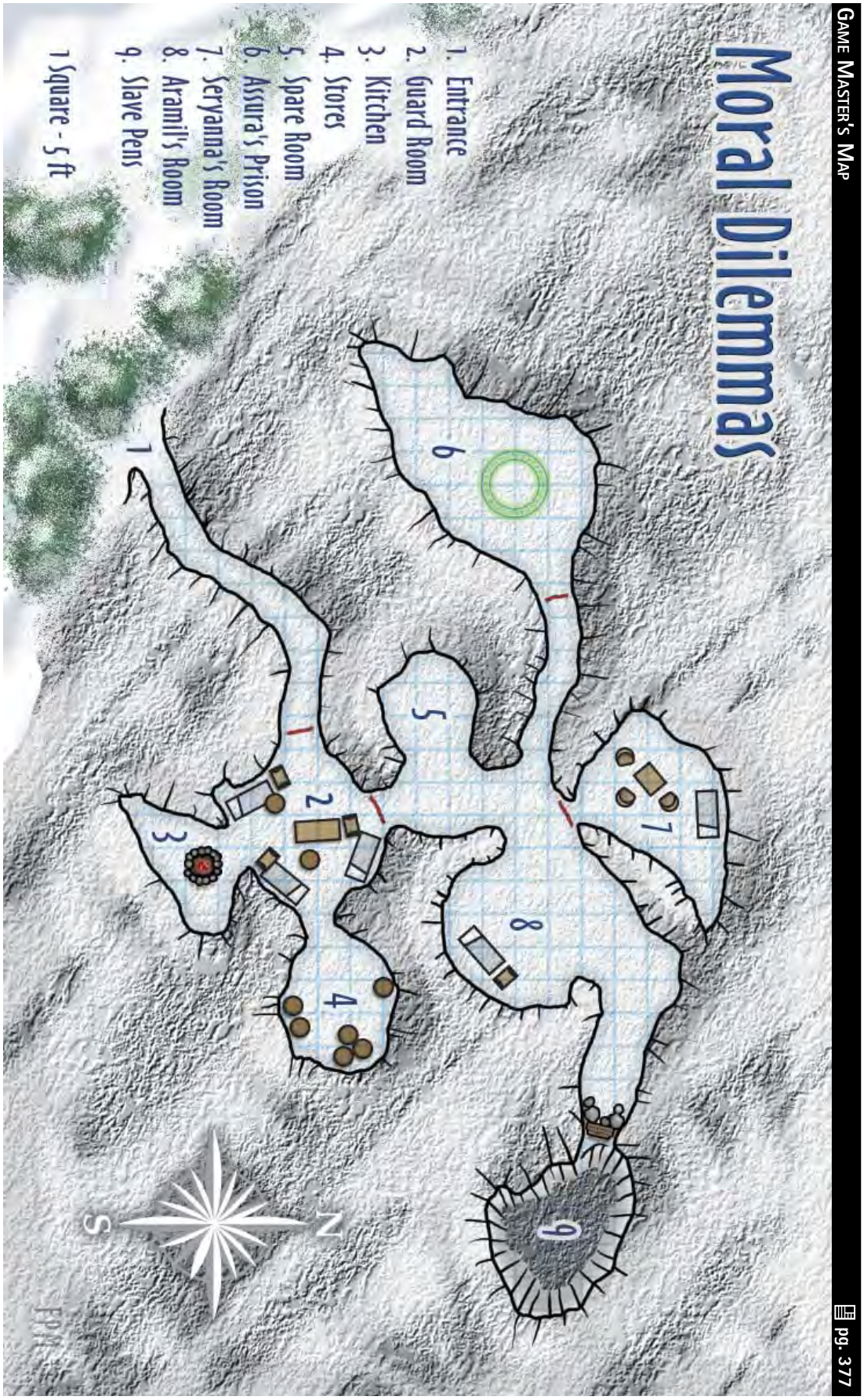
pg. 356



Game Master's Map
pg. 367
Steam Tunnels
a1. Entrance Room
a2. Guard's Chamber
a3. Open Chamber
a4. Open Chamber
a5. Repair Room
a6. Barracks
a7. Open Chamber
a8. Jail
a9. Planning Room
a10. Steam Machine Room
1 Square - 10 ft
EPM
N
S
To Area B1

Game Master's Map pg. 371




Game Master's Map
Moral Dilemmas
1. Entrance
2. Guard Room
3. Kitchen
4. Stores
5. Spare Room
6. Assura's Prison
7. Seryanna's Room
8. Aramil's Room
9. Slave Pens
1 Square = 5 ft
N
S
pg. 377

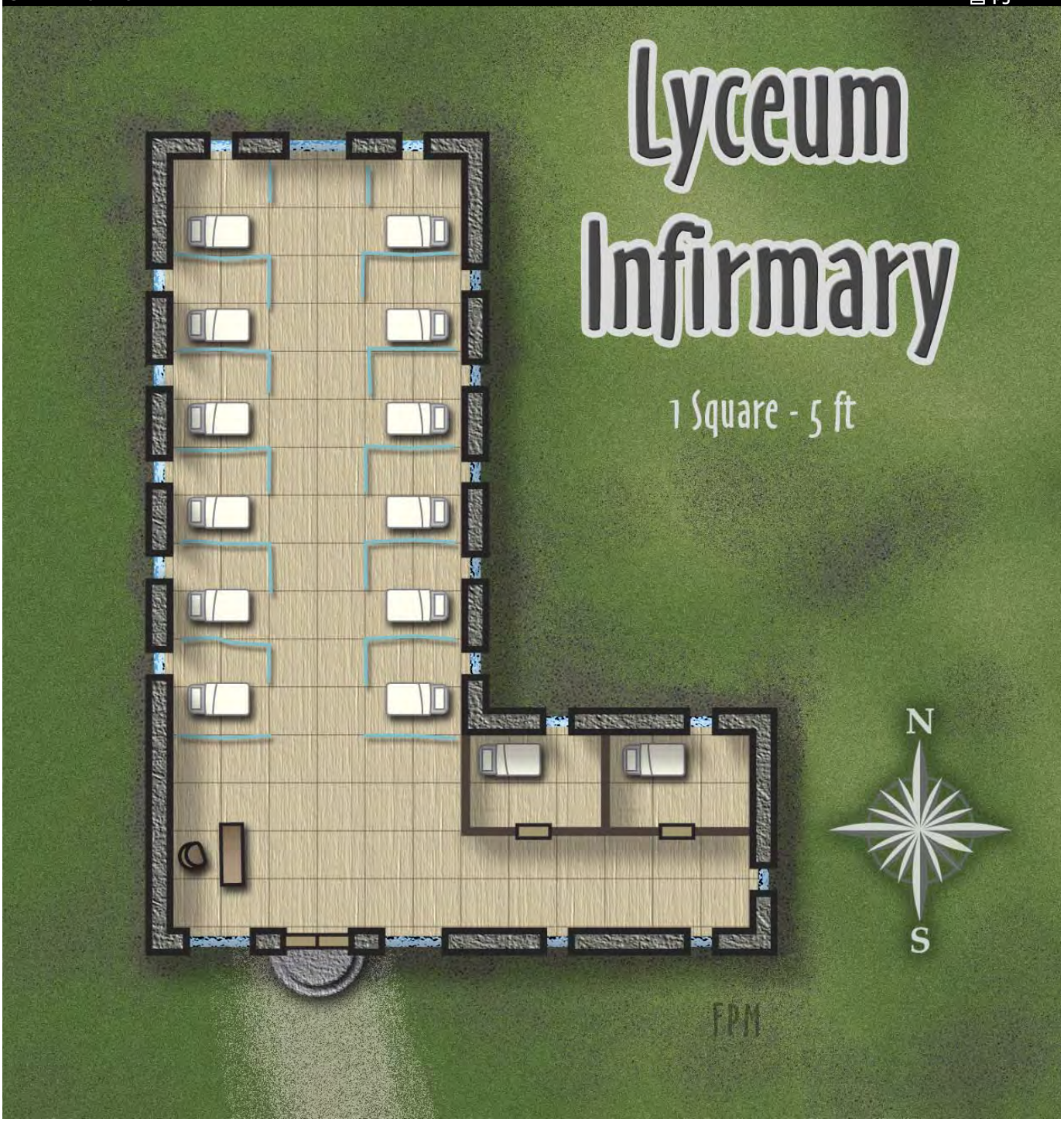
Game Master's Map

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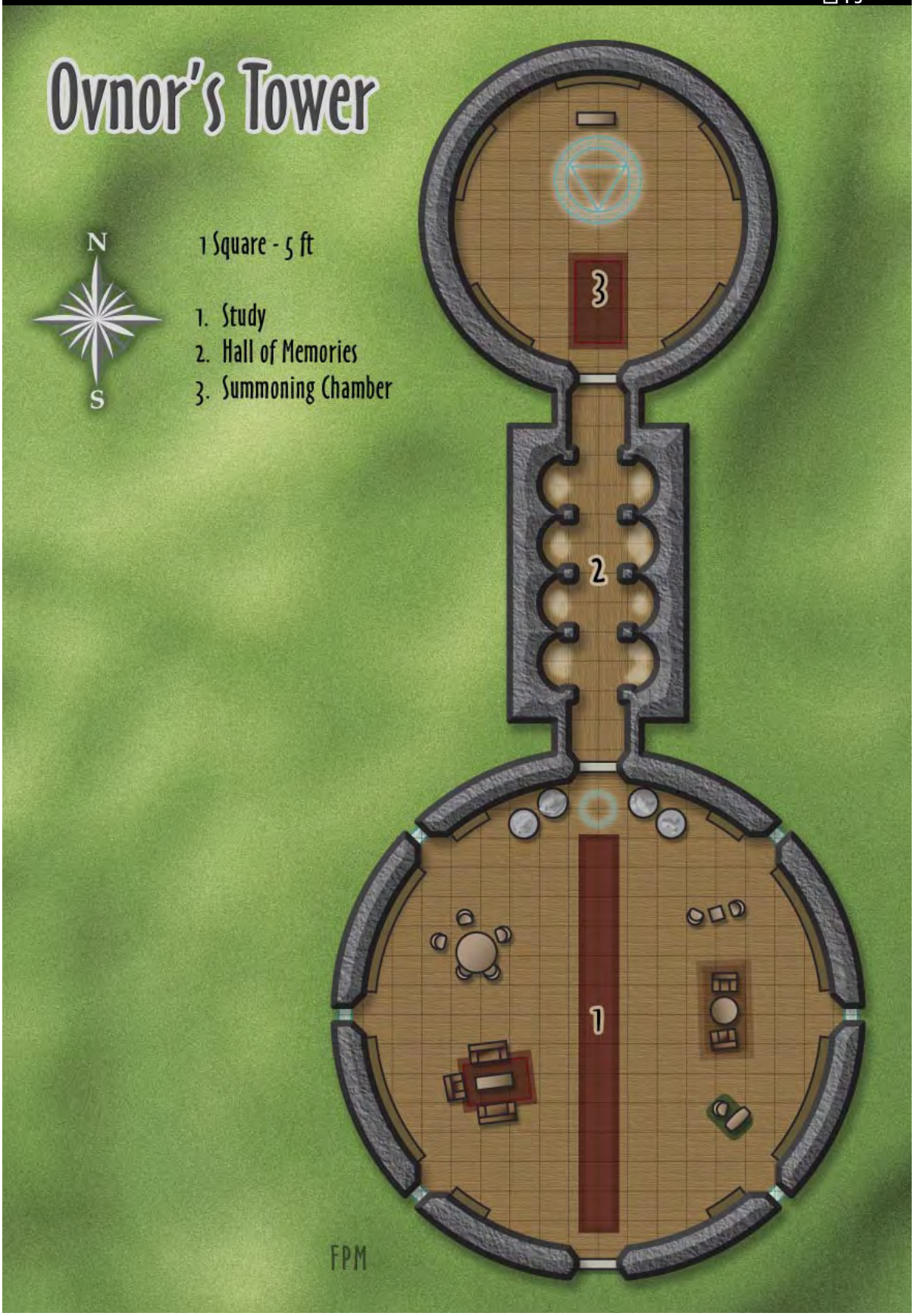



Game Master's Map
Wiseman Brewery
1 Square - 5 ft
1. Wall
2. Gatehouse
3. Yard
4. Stables
5. Storeroom
6. Brewing Area
7. Offices
8. Beer Cellar
9. Spirit Cellar
N
S
(down to 8)
(down to 8)
(up to 6)
(up to 3)
FPM
pg. 417

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GAME MASTER'S MAP pg. 425





Afterword

When Ryan Nock initially approached me and floated the idea of our publishing a series of linked adventures, I said no. I didn't believe that we could do it well, and I didn't believe that we could sell the product. EN Publishing is a small company, and this proposal would be the most expensive thing we'd ever attempted by an order of magnitude.

But when I saw his outline for the adventure series, I was floored. From the adventure titles (I'll take *Sleep, Ye Cursed Child* and *O, Wintry Song of Agony* over *The Lava Caves of Xyrthennrgggh* any day) to the huge cast of fully fleshed-out NPCs; from the sheer variety of tasks (rescuing prisoners from a secret underground ice prison where they are tortured and their pain used to fuel a magical weapon, assaulting a mile-long living biomantic airship, traversing the Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar), to the epic climax which evokes the Battle of Minas Tirith as civilizations clash in a mighty battle, I saw reasons not to say no everywhere I looked. And so, finally, I said yes. And, if you look again at that long sentence you just read, you will also see why the bulk of the writing work would not fall upon my shoulders.

We plunged into this herculean task without the faintest idea of what we'd let ourselves in for. We had no idea, at the time, of just how difficult producing a fully-fledged adventure every month on time would be; over a year of waiting on tenterhooks for art to arrive in time, for writers to deliver manuscripts, juggling all these tasks, somehow paying for them (and the costs were mounting up and up — I could have a pretty nice, brand new car for what I spent on this campaign saga), and then trying to find the time to persuade people to actually buy the darn thing — only to have Fourth Edition D&D announced partway through and our sales to drop to almost nothing.

Man, producing this thing was hard. Most of the time we were behind schedule, and falling further and further behind: what was supposed to take one year (twelve adventures, one per month) took nearly two years; thankfully, it seems it took most folks more than a month to play through each one and so we never found ourselves in the unfortunate position of having our customers caught up and waiting for the next one with nothing to do.

We did get lucky in places. Notably, we managed to persuade veteran D&D writers such as Ari Marmell (*Heroes of Horror*, *Tome of Magic*), Wolfgang Baur (Editor, *Dungeon Magazine*, 1992–1995), Wil Upchurch (*Midnight*, *Champions of Ruin*) and Darrin Drader (*Book of Exalted Deeds*, *Serpent Kingdoms*) to write for us for knock-down prices.

We finally released *The Beating of the Aquiline Heart* in late 2008 with a massive sense of accomplishment. We'd done it! We'd finished! Yes, we took much longer than we said we'd take; yes, it cost far more than we thought it would; yes, we fell out on numerous occasions and nearly gave up — but we did it, by jove! We had our fully-fledged campaign saga and, damn, it was good.

In your hands, you now hold the compiled hardback edition of the saga — a monster of a book, as I'm sure you can see. Not only have we put all twelve adventures together, along with the player's guide and campaign guide, we've also added five bonus adventures, a section on the city of Ragos, and other bits and pieces. We're very proud of this enormous book, and we fervently hope that those who had the faith in us to pay the equally monstrous price tag get as much pleasure from it as we have.

Thanks does need to be given to an incredibly large list of people — the writers, artists, playtesters, and editors. Especially Ryan Nock, who not only saw this thing through to the very end, but did far, far more than he was actually paid for simply because he wanted to see this thing done right. Equally, other contributors stuck with us the whole way through — Claudio Pozas who did so much of the art, Sean McDonald who created the majority of the maps, and Eric Life-Putnam who still hasn't been paid, but is hard at work laying out this epic tome as I write this despite recently becoming a father to twin girls. This project really was a labour of love.

Russell Morrissey
Owner, EN Publishing

Coupon

As special thanks for purchasing the print edition of this book, we invite you to download the PDF for free!

http://enworld.rpgnow.com/index.php?discount=27627

Colophon

The War of the Burning Sky: The Complete Campaign was produced using Adobe InDesign CS3, Photoshop CS3, and Acrobat 8 in Microsoft Windows XP and Microsoft Windows Vista. Content was submitted in Microsoft Word, plain text, EPS, JPEG, TIFF, and Adobe PDF format. The fonts used are Adobe Jenson, Du Bellay, Dwarven Stonecraft, Nicolas Cochin, Rotis Sans Serif, and Wingdings.

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