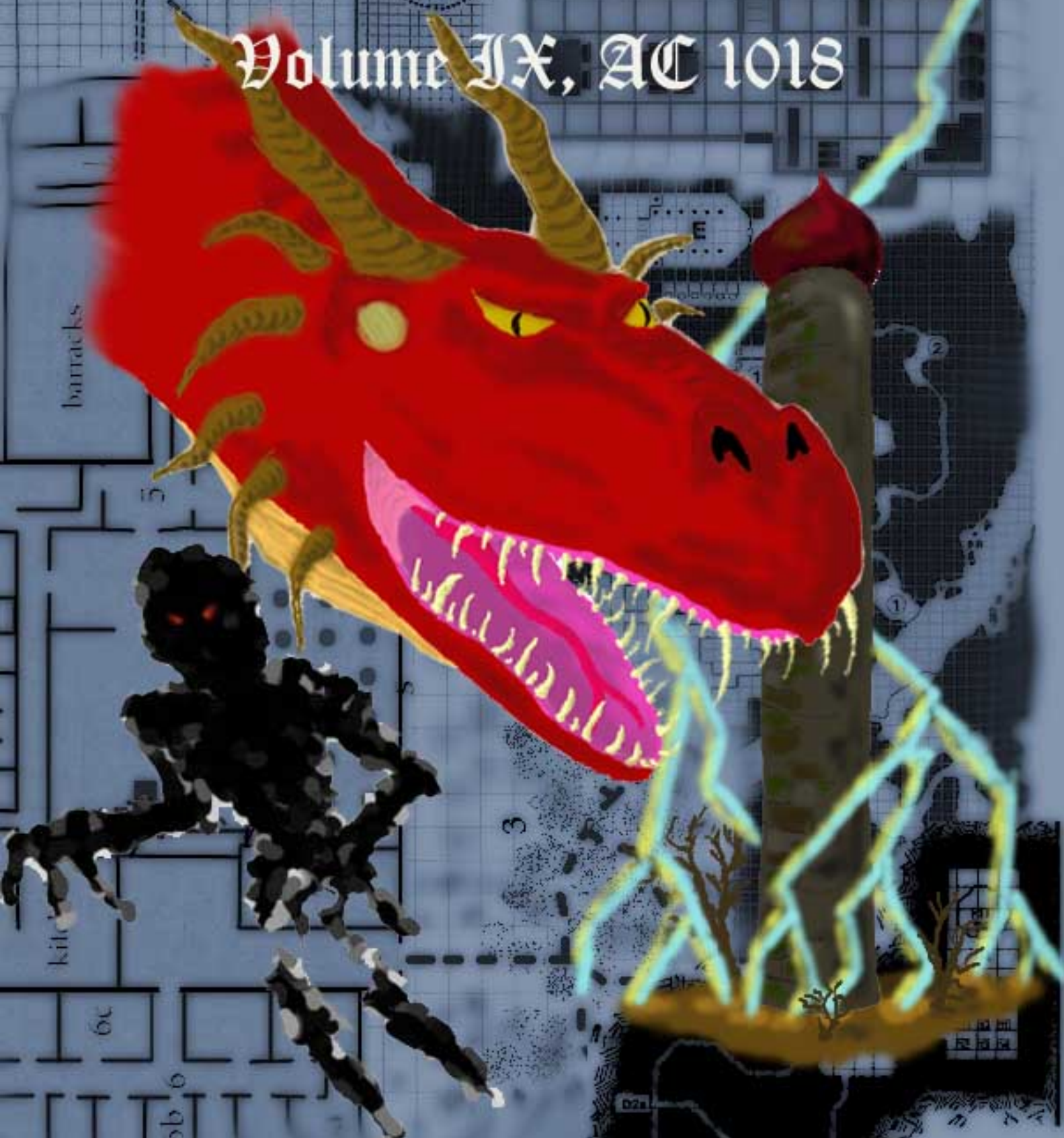


Mystaran Almanac

Book III: Adventures

Volume IX, AC 1018



One Full Year of Mystara

Mystaran Almanac & Book of Facts

Book Three: Adventures

Volume IX, AC 1018

Compiled as a Handy Handbook

First Printing

Published by **Joshuan Gallidox**
Hin Adventurer and Entrepreneur
within the City of Mirros
in the Kingdom of Karamaikos
in the Year After Crowning 1019

A Word or Two About this Material

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The intent behind the *Mystaran Almanac* is to continue to keep alive the wonderful world of Mystara. It is therefore the compilation of ideas and suggestions from all members of the *Mystara Mailing List*, and not those of the staff and/or management of TSR.

This manual has very little in terms of game stats, as it does not want to infringe on TSR's copyright (meaning: you want the stats of NPCs and such, buy the appropriate book/references by TSR). We hope that TSR sees this merely as the work put in by those who love Mystara and wish to see it grow rather than any attempt at stealing their setting and infringing on their copyrights.

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1. Change the title: we would like to keep the title *Mystaran Almanac* so people can find the rest of the series and know which material is the continuation of this particular group of authors' project. In other words, we are simply asking for the rights to the name *Mystaran Almanac*.
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Of course, we won't police you or harass anyone who doesn't comply with this. We just ask that you do, please.

Now comes the debate on "canon" or "net-canon" material. We do not in any way claim that the *Mystaran Almanac* is the "online official future of Mystara!" We, the authors, write this product because we enjoy writing it. It is not our attempt to make our own personal home campaign the official version! It doesn't even always match OUR own campaigns as we are several authors who each put in their own ideas (often conflicting until a consensus is agreed upon). We also steal/accept ideas left and right from posts made by the members of the *Mystara Mailing List* or other sites. So the names on the author list is by no means the only people who have shaped this "future" Mystara; many people on the *Mystara Mailing List* have participated, whether they know it or not (unfortunately, we often forget who the source of a given idea was, so the Special Thanks list is far from complete. If we missed you, sorry!).

This product is nothing more than a possible future for Mystara which we call the "*Mystaran Almanac* future" (hence the above expressed desire to keep the title should you change a part of this product). Use its contents or disregard them as you see fit. You are each the DM of YOUR own campaign, so decide what YOU like, keep what interests YOU, or throw out what YOU don't like—and that's the end of it. Do not take these events in your own campaign simply because we say so! There is no such thing as an "official" or "canon" Mystara. Use them because YOU want to.

And, more importantly, should TSR ever return to making Mystara products, odds are everything we've done here (as well as whatever has been happening in your own campaign) will probably disagree with what they say and become obsolete (as far as "canon" is concerned, that is). All this to say: **DON'T WORRY ABOUT CANON OR NON-CANON; JUST HAVE FUN!**

Next is the big decision between D&D and AD&D. This subject is always a strong debate on the mailing list. The *Mystaran Almanac* supports both games as it is very stats free. It deals mostly with the world of Mystara, NOT gaming systems.

The few times that stats are present, describing NPCs, the AD&D 2nd Edition game stats were used, except in the Famous Folk section where we used both 2nd and 3rd Edition rules (with clear marks to identify one from the other and avoid confusion). The main reason for this is the fact that potential new players will be used to the AD&D system, and the more of them that join Mystara, the better! Also, Mystara was completely converted to AD&D with their final projects, including *Joshuan's Almanac* as well as the Karameikos, Glantri, and Savage Coast box sets (all copyright property of TSR). Should TSR revive Mystara, it will probably be in 3rd Edition format.

Lastly, by now, all old D&D players should know how to convert back and forth between systems blindfolded. This is something the new AD&D players don't know how to do.

All in all, this book is about Mystara, not the game system, so please don't discard it because of that, but instead read it because it's about Mystara!

Finally, the list of authors and contributors to this project:

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Special Thanks to	John Calvin & Andrew Theisen & Matthew Wang (stats) also all contributors to the previous almanacs and anyone whose ideas we shamelessly pillaged but forgot to thank

So, if you have any ideas or comments concerning this almanac or events for AC 1019, please, feel free to contact us. For AC 1019, expect more regions to be covered in the almanac, as well as whole new sections.

Read on, and enjoy your year-long visit to the grand world of Mystara.

The Mystaran Almanac Team

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Introduction

Preface



Dear Reader

The wonderful book you now hold in your hands is the ninth in a series of rich volumes intent on describing the amazing world of Mystara.

Allow me to introduce myself to those who did not read previous almanacs. I am Belzamith Fingertackles, an illusionist of Highforge in the wonderful Kingdom of Karameikos. Oh yes, before I forget: I'm also a gnome. I have several fascinating hobbies including poetry, tinkering, solving mysteries, and political sciences. I am one of the few souls who truly enjoys discovering things that were previously hidden and searching for the truth behind what is always presented to us. I for one believe that there is much going on in this world that we should know about, but the powers behind the scenes keep hidden.

We wanted to make this issue of the almanac as thorough as possible. Those who own previous almanacs will notice that this year's edition is not significantly bigger—we have tried to stabilize the weight of the almanac you are holding in your hands. We have, however, tried to make it easier and more agreeable to read, by using a new font and spacing, and by adding even more awesome illustrations, portraits, and maps. The *Mystaran Almanac* has been divided into three volumes for easier reading: Book I is the Atlas, Book II is the Events, and Book III is the Adventures.

The volume you are now holding is Book III: the Adventures.

Now, of course you must all be wondering what changes have been made to this year's *Mystaran Almanac*, that we brag about it. Well, we still have our famous on-site correspondents and letters to describe places and events. I firmly believe that such presentations make the descriptions all the more lively and interesting, giving the reader a better perspective on things, as well as insight on the people who present them to you. I continuously encourage our writers to dig more behind the scenes; unfortunately, sometimes digging behind the scenes can be very dangerous—some of our correspondents have actually disappeared, and I don't buy the theory that they had unfortunate accidents—and we cannot safely get all the information as to what is really going on. Despite this, the *Mystaran Almanac* is definitely the most precise and accurate account of last year's history that will ever be written.

As for changes, there is one I'm sure you'll notice. This year, the almanac does not introduce new and previously unknown portions of our world; although several new nations of the far fringes of the world, that were introduced in previous almanacs, are described in greater detail in this edition. In some cases, various portions of the better known parts of the world are described in greater detail, too. I hope you'll enjoy reading about them as much as we enjoyed chasing for the best information to provide you, the reader.

Finally, we received mountains of letters and comments from you the reader, and have done our very best to fix all the mistakes you have pointed out, or add details that were left out, and so on. Again, thanks everyone for your comments, and yet more thanks to those who, after getting their hands on an almanac, decided to volunteer as reporters and correspondents to bring us more news from every known corner of Mystara! We are always eager to reproduce fresh takes on well-known countries, or to hear about new ones!

Therefore, it is with great pleasure that I present to you the new and improved *Mystaran Almanac*, AC 1018 edition. It would also be my pleasure to hear from you, gentle readers, on your opinions of our presentation and content.

Belzamith Fingertackles, Co-Editor of the Mystaran Almanac

Mirros, Karameikos

Nuwmont, AC 1018

To the reader

I'm Dorrik Stonecleaver, one of the two editors of the *Mystaran Almanac*. I'm a dwarf from Highforge, and used to be a caravan guard for several decades. I retired over a decade ago and wandered the world for a while.

I've always believed that one should get to the point, and therefore try to keep the gnome's babbling to a minimum. I don't like big texts and wasting breath, so I give the information that you really need. Numbers, dates, places. They give you what you want or need to know, quickly. I've therefore made sure to include exact dates, locations, populations, taxes, currency, and all the other small details meticulous people expect to find. That information is as concise as possible, and I hope accurate, for quick reference.

Once again, I would have loved to include descriptions of the military forces and their tactics as well, but most governments took a dim view at seeing such information published and though we gathered a lot of data we knew some of it was inaccurate. I still hope such information, and others I'd like to include as well, will one day find its place in the almanac—it almost did this year, but we haven't finished sorting the truth from misleading information that was fed to us. I wish I could blame the gnome for the almanac's bulk, but I fear I must share responsibility on this, though at least I was able to keep things to a reasonable length this year.

Anyway, I've said the important stuff, so it's time to start reading the *Mystaran Almanac*. If you have anything important to tell us, let us know. Make sure it's important, because with all our correspondents, we don't have time for useless letters. Also, speaking from the previous years' experience, most of you should learn to write in proper Thyatian before sending us any letters!

Dorrik Stonecleaver, Co-Editor of the Mystaran Almanac

Mirros, Karameikos

Nuwmont, AC 1018

The Adventures Within

Book III is the treasure trove of the bold adventurers who bravely leave their cozy homes to face the dangers of the big wild world of Mystara. These foolhardy characters, whom I like to call Plucky Challengers (my good friend Dorrik calls them Poor Chumps instead), strap on arms and armor, sharpen their daggers, pray to their Immortal patrons, or compile traveling spellbooks, and ride and sail and fly and burrow to the strangest places, righting wrongs and slaying foul beasts, to gain fame, riches, and power. They are the shakers and movers of Mystara, who shape events in the service of the greatest kings, or in the name of powerful Immortals, or at the behest of rich guilds, or simply for their own puny selves. As they constantly put their lives in jeopardy, many die terrible deaths, but the bravest become men and women to be feared or respected: rulers of nations, heroes of legend, epitomes of mastery, or universal scholars, who rival the Immortals Themselves.

The world of Mystara is full of opportunities for such adventurous fellows, and their handiwork can often be seen in the Events. This book contains samples of the adventures that were related to us by some of those hardy souls.

A group of adventurers investigated a series of gruesome murders in a remote Darokinian village, but little did they know what horror their inquiry would lead them to—something truly from outside this world, for *It Came from Outer Space*.

In Ambyrmont, the good city of Threshold suffered at the hand of a wicked tribe of bugbears and their infamous bronze golem, as they rampaged through the town and plundered at their leisure. Baroness Aleena Yurevich sent for adventurers to put an end to the menace, and unravel the secret of the *Legend of the Bronze Warrior*.

A terrible civil war has ravaged the eastern Peninsula of Esterhold, pitting Alphasians and some Jennites that believe in peaceful coexistence against rebel Jennites and their wild brethren from the Steppes of Jen. Battles were fought, and cities torched, with the Alphasians withdrawing to their best-defended cities while the Jennites pressed on. Both sides called upon adventurers to help them achieve victory during such troubled time *Where Brothers War*.

Belzamith Fingertackles

Artists for the Adventures

Here is our list of artists whose creations you can see in the almanac:

Jalinoor Cerrulian

Jalinoor Cerrulian is an Alphasian artist who dabbles in chronomancy... or perhaps he's a chronomancer who dabbles in paint and canvas. Either way it boggles the mind. Cerrulian's powers are at the disposal of *Gallidox Publishing*, and he is quite capable (and most enthusiastic) of being able to illustrate any event that is worth illustrating. "Any place, any time."—his motto.

Anonymous

Various artists, like some correspondents, prefer to remain anonymous. Rumors have it at *Joshuan Gallidox* that one artist would be an imp that has a special skill of painting little pictures really fast, but this might be a joke that we dare not pass onto you, revered readers.

IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE

By Jacob Skytte.

Thanks to John Calvin and Matthew Wang for assistance with 3E stats.

Thanks to Geoff Gander for the map of Hendry.

An adventure for a suggested party of characters of level 3-5 (about 18 levels total). You can easily adapt the adventure for lower level characters, as there is little serious combat and several sources of additional allies.

Prelude

Scene: The depths of space.

A strange vessel travels ever onwards. Its sole occupant: a bloated, yellowish, amorphous, tentacled **THING**. As the vessel starts to shake, lights begin blinking, and the **THING** opens its four eyes. Tentacles manipulate strange instruments as the vessel plummets towards the surface of a blue and green world.

Scene: A farm outside the village of Hendry in the Republic of Darokin.

Paolo looks up at the night sky, holding his father's hand. "Look father, a shooting star!" he exclaims, and points to the sky with youthful enthusiasm. They both watch the fiery trail streak across the sky. Suddenly it seems to blaze into huge flames before their eyes, then disappears into the trees not far from the farm. A loud rumble is heard as a warm breeze washes over them. As the sound dies out, Paolo, his mouth wide open, is nudged by his father.

"Go get my ax. We'll see what it was. And if it's worth anything, it belongs to us."

Scene: The crash site, not far from the village of Hendry in the Republic of Darokin.

Trees are ablaze and smoke rises from the crater where the vessel has plowed into the earth. The flames illuminate the area with an eerie light. A strange sound like a shrill cry echoes in the glade. Out of the smoking crater, on crab-like legs, crawls the terrible **THING**. Its mouth opens slowly in a hiss, revealing long razor-sharp fangs. The horror is about to begin.

Background

A **NEH-THALGGU**, or **BRAIN COLLECTOR**, a horrible creature from the **NIGHTMARE DIMENSION**, has found itself stranded on Mystara, after traveling through space for its own inscrutable purposes. Once among human cattle, its vessel destroyed, it strives to obtain the twelve brains it will need to power its artifacts and send it on its way.

The vessel has crashed in the Republic of Darokin, near the village of Hendry. Villagers soon investigate the crash site, but the first ones there are overcome by the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** and their brains are harvested. Once other villagers reach the crash site they realize that something is loose among them and quickly gather in the village for added protection in numbers.

Meanwhile the government of Darokin sends out its own team to investigate the crash site, a party of soldiers led by two spellcasters. Once they find out that a monster is loose, they will want to find it and destroy it before it claims any more lives.

How to Play the Adventure

The tone of the adventure depends much on the DM and how you choose to introduce the characters to the adventure (see Adventure Hooks). The adventure lends itself well to simple detective work, with the PCs gradually discovering what they're up against as they find the remnants of the **BRAIN COLLECTOR'S** deeds and victims. But it could just as well be played as a simple encounter, such as an attempt to invade the creature's lair. The adventure has been written vaguely on purpose, as a series of scenes and events, which the DM can then use as he or she sees fit.

If, as we suggest, playing the adventure as a detective horror story, the DM should strive to foreshadow the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**. Emphasize the strange state of its victims, the tops of their heads removed, and let them wonder about what could make the bite marks they also discover. Have them examine the ruined vessel and worry about what it might have contained. Let them catch a glimpse of the monster as it flees the scene of an attack. Allow them to find its lair while the creature is about so they can examine its strange artifacts. When they finally confront the monster, emphasize its alien nature and let it fight an awesome battle!

Adventure Hooks

There are several ways that the PCs can become involved in the adventure. This also depends on how much of the adventure you plan to play through.

As independent operatives, the PCs can witness the shooting star and observe the crash, then go to investigate by themselves. In this case you will probably want them to arrive in the morning after or while the villagers of Hendry investigate the crash site.

Another option could be to have the PCs be the ones sent by the Darokinian government to initially investigate the crash. If you choose this option the PCs should replace the Darokinian expedition NPCs or you could play the adventure using the members of that expedition as pre-rolled characters. In this case you will have to come up with additional victims for the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**, to make up for the five brains it will presumably not get from the members of the expedition.

The PCs can also be drawn into the adventure by responding to the call for adventurers posted by the government on Day 5 (see the Timeline). In this scenario they will mostly be investigating what has already happened, and this is probably the most suspenseful option.

A final suggestion sees the PCs as caravan guards for Gospodin Nikolaievich (see The Merchant under Scenes). In this case the adventure will probably become a short encounter rather than a proper adventure, but the PCs can still examine the crash site and search the area.

Timeline of Events

This timeline assumes that the PCs do not interfere with any events. It is what would have happened if the PCs didn't participate in the adventure. Naturally the DM will want the PCs to participate in some of these events and to confront the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** before it completes its plans.

Keep in mind that this is only a suggested timeline. If you wish encounters to happen in a different order or at different times, you shouldn't hesitate. Tailor the events to occur at the pace of your PCs.

Day 1

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** arrives at night, crash-landing its vessel into the forest outside of Hendry. A local farmer, Mercurio Vespian, and his son Paolo are the first to investigate and they are killed by the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**, who harvests their brains afterwards. It salvages what it can from the remnants of its vessel, then sets out to look for a proper place to build a lair.

In the morning several armed villagers arrive at the crash site. They find the bodies of the farmer and his son, which they bring back to Hendry. They send out people to warn other farmers of the danger. Several farm families take shelter in the village.

In Darokin City an expedition to examine the crash is quickly organized. It sets out for the village of Hendry that same day.

Day 2

The expeditionary force from Darokin City reaches Hendry, where the leaders interview the villagers and examine the bodies. Next they set out for the crash site to learn what they can.

Meanwhile the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** has found a suitable place to build its lair and spends the day busily setting it up.

The Darokinian expedition examines the crash site, but finds little to help them figure out what has happened. They return to Hendry to stay the night over.

Day 3

The Darokinian expedition travels into the forest looking for clues leading to the monster.

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** spends the day scouting its surroundings, learning of the nearby merchant's trail to Hendry and looking for isolated settlements.

Day 4

The Darokinian expedition comes upon the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** close to its lair. It ambushes them and manages to overcome all but one soldier, who flees back towards Darokin City. The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** returns to its lair with the five brains it has managed to extract (one was damaged and thus useless to it) and feasts.

Day 5

The lone survivor of the Darokinian expedition returns to Darokin City. She relates her tales of the horrible **BRAIN COLLECTOR** to her superiors and is excused from further duty.

The government of Darokin realizes that it needs what help it can get and posts notices calling for experienced adventurers to volunteer for a monster hunt.

Day 6

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** runs across a lone shadowelf scout, spying in the area. It overcomes her and harvests her brain.

Day 7

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** attacks the isolated Pendleton farm and harvests another 3 brains, bringing it to 11. It needs one more brain to complete its plans.

Day 9

The last two days should be placed to suit the adventure, so the PCs can interfere with these events. They could be postponed if the PCs have been taking their time or rushed if they have been efficient in tracking down the antagonist.

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** attacks a wagon on its way to Hendry and captures the merchant driving it. It brings him back to its lair to complete its ritual there.

Day 10

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** consumes the merchant's brain and activates its devices, leaving Mystara.

Scenes

This is an overview of the various places where the adventure takes place, what people and items are found there, and what clues can be obtained from them.

The Village of Hendry

This village of 550 people lies at the edge of the Canolbarth Forest, about 40 miles southeast of Darokin City. It is mostly a village of loggers and contains a large sawmill by the banks of the Helleck River. The sawmill provides work for most of the inhabitants, cutting logs into lumber and collecting sawdust used to produce paper. Those villagers not employed by the sawmill run shops or small farms scattered about the countryside.

The businesses in Hendry include:

Tailor/Barber

Julius Centares is the busy village barber. His shop doubles as a tailor, which is overseen by his wife, Hypatia. This is the definite place to go for all the local gossip. Hypatia always has a pot of tea steaming and a few ladies over. Julius also adds his share to the conversation while tending to customers.

Baker/Herbalist

Theodore Scrapples runs the local bakery. He is a large round man, who enjoys the finer things in life. His 27-year-old daughter, Cecilia, lives with him and is a well-versed herbalist, who has a large garden with all manner of strange herbs. Theodore's famous spice cakes are only baked on very special occasions. The general consensus is that Cecilia should have married years ago, but Theodore won't give up "daddy's little girl."

Hunter/Tanner

Reynard "Fox-step" is the local tanner, as well as a hunter, and a bit of a local celebrity after chasing a rogue monster that came out of Aengmor, away from the village. Reynard himself is quick to point out that it was pure luck; he is not a skilled warrior. There are other hunters, but none as good as Reynard, and he makes a comfortable living from selling animal skins. He is considered an attractive bachelor.

Map of the Village of Hendry



It Came From Outer Space!

Map of the Village of Hendry

Scale: One inch equals approximately 60 feet.

Map Legend

1. Baker
2. Curio Shop
3. Hunter/Tanner
4. Butcher
5. Sawmill
6. Tailor/Barber
7. Tavern
8. Sawmill Foreman
9. Clergy Residence

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The Sawdust Tavern

Madame Phoebe runs the local drinking establishment, where the rugged lumberjacks spend their pay. It can be a rough place, but they all respect Phoebe, who once threw a 200-pound lumberjack through a window when he refused to leave. Upstairs there are two large rooms with 10 beds each; a bed costs 1 *half-daro* a night and patrons will have to put up with the noise from the common room below, which often continues till late in the night.

Curiosity Shop

Francesca di Malapietra (no relation to the Glantrian di Malapietras... really!) is a mysterious lady, who favors Belcadizan veils and ornate black dresses. Her shop is a two-story building with all available space (including the basement) filled with all manner of exotic goods and equipment. What Francesca doesn't have, she can probably obtain within a month through her contacts. Francesca is rumored to be a wizardess, who flunked at the Great School of Magic. There are many men who find her greatly attractive, while their wives find her elegant and sophisticated.

Butcher

Bill Morgan, a farmer who lives close to the village, is also the local butcher. He is a giant of a man, who is generally in a foul mood. Some people believe that he enjoys his work a little too much, though none would dare say that to his face. Bill is often found drinking at the Sawdust, where people tend to avoid him or suck up to him. Nobody wants to be on bad terms with Bill Morgan.

The Hendry Sawmill

The foreman of the sawmill, Silvester Hoff, is also what comes closest to mayor of the village. His brother Jon is the local priest of Koryis, and his words also carry great weight in Hendry. Both are level-headed men, who believe in keeping Hendry the peaceful place it is and fulfilling their roles in society.

Village Defense

There is no military presence in Hendry, but many of the villagers know how to handle a weapon and they are quick to band together against trouble. Since the village lies in an extremely peaceful part of Darokin, trouble is a rare occurrence. In the face of this unknown horrible threat (nobody has ever seen anything like this before!), the villagers realize that they are unequipped to deal with it, so, for now, they have chosen to stick close together and let the government handle it.

Investigations in Hendry

PCs making inquiries in Hendry will be met by Silvester and Jon, who tell them about the crash and the bodies recovered from the crash site. They will be happy to lead them to Jon's residence, where the bodies are kept. The bodies of the widower Mercurio Vespan and his 11-year-old son Paolo are laid out on tables in Jon's cool basement. Their faces are twisted in horror and half of Mercurio's right arm is missing. The most dreadful thing, though, is that the tops of their heads are missing, their brains seemingly removed from their skulls.

Examination of Mercurio's arm reveals that it has been severed by sharp blades (or teeth). The head wounds are clean, clinical cuts. Attempts to *speak with the dead* will reveal few details, they were overcome too quickly to be sure what attacked them. They believe it to have been a monstrous creature. They cannot be brought back to life with their brains missing.

The village hunter, Reynard "Fox-step," will be happy to lead the PCs to the crash site, but will be reluctant to accompany them further, fearing the unnatural creature, and believing that he is needed to help protect the village should it be attacked. If they are in sore need of a tracker, Reynard may be persuaded to help them, but, as he will be quick to point out, he is a hunter of animals, not a skilled warrior.

Depending on when the PCs arrive in Hendry, Silvester and Jon can also tell them that an official expedition of soldiers from Darokin City investigated the crash site, then left to search for the murderous creature. They haven't been heard from since (consult the Timeline to see how long they've been missing).

If they are in Hendry on Day 8 or later (see the Timeline) Jon will also ask them to check on the Pendleton family since their daughter Violet was supposed to collect supplies on Day 7, but hasn't shown up. This could simply be because the Pendletons are afraid to leave the farm, but it could also mean something more sinister.

Before leaving Hendry, the PCs may also be approached by a distraught farmer, Myles Stockton, who has lost his bull and will offer to pay up to 5 *daros* for its safe return (see An Escaped Bull in the Random Encounter section).

The Crash Site

This small glade lies some 2½ miles from Hendry. Nearing the glade the PCs will see trees toppled and burned. Clearing the trees they find a deep groove plowed through the ground, reaching about 50 feet before ending in a pile of pushed-up earth and toppled trees. Beneath the pile lies a strange spherical rock 20 feet in diameter.

The glade is filled with footprints from the villagers (and the Darokinian expedition if they have already been here), so it's impossible to find any prints from whatever may have crawled out of the sphere.

Examining the sphere, the PCs find that it looks like a hollow rock that's cracked open. Inside the rock they see weird buttons, indentations and levers (that do nothing if operated though a few lights might blink on and off) spread across one half of the sphere. Opposite these controls, what seems to be a bowl-shaped pedestal with six grooves spread evenly around it (the seat) takes up part of one wall.

The vessel itself will never be able to fly again and the means of its propulsion will remain a complete mystery to the inhabitants of Mystara. Still, the vessel is a curious artifact and the Darokinian government will want to seize it for its own research. Crafty PCs might lay claim to it and obtain up to 500 *daros* from government officials, but this will not endear them to the government. If they are greedy and press for more money than that, the officials will become frustrated and order the army to simply confiscate the vessel, though this is not a tactic that they would usually employ since it runs the risk of making them look like oppressive tyrants.

Closely examining the glade the PCs may find blood-spattered ground, where Mercurio Vespan got his arm bitten off. There is no sign of the arm (or the ax it held), the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** ate both. The location of their scalps also remains a mystery.

The Vespan Farm

This is the farm of Mercurio Vespan and his son Paolo, the first two victims of the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**. The farm is abandoned, villagers having brought their animals into Hendry. Unscrupulous PCs may find Mercurio's savings: 14 *daros*, 18 *half-daros*, 73 *tentrids*, and his late wife's turquoise necklace (worth 20 *daros*) and onyx earrings (worth 70 *daros* as a pair) hidden in a locked box under a floorboard in his bedroom. In Paolo's toy box are also scattered some 15 *passemis* along with a lot of junk that only an 11-year-old boy could love. There is little else of use or value at the farm.

There is nothing sinister at the farm, though the PCs may think so, if they haven't inquired about it at the village, when they see the barn door standing open and no animals about. If the DM wishes, he or she can stage an encounter from the Random Encounters here.

The Shadowelf Corpse

This scene can only be run on or after Day 6, when the shadow elf is killed. The PCs come across the body of a female shadow elf (perhaps after following the trail of the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**). She has been sent to scout out the area and spy on the Darokinians. The shadow elves have other such spies around Darokin.

If the PCs come upon her within a few hours of her death, they will see the *light* spell that the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** used to blind her, still in effect. If not, then all they see is the grievous bite wound in her left side that took out her heart and, of course, that she is missing the top of her head. She managed to draw her weapon, a sword of exceptional quality (does +1 damage, worth 100 *daros*, perfect for enchantments), which lies beside her. She wears ruined chain mail (the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** took a good bite out of it) and a light crossbow is strapped to her back. Her remaining possessions include 25 quarrels, a mirror, 25' of silk rope, chalk, and an engraved brooch (worth 10 *daros*).

Using *speak with the dead* on the shadow elf (whose name was Acastra) will do little good unless one of them is a shadowelf shaman. She will not give straight answers to foreigners. She cannot be *raised* since she has no brain.

Note that Acastra is not alone in the area. Her superior, Marcafarel, is also around (see A Lone Shadow Elf in the Random Encounter section).

The Pendleton Farm

This scene should only be run on or after Day 7, when the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** attacks the farm. The Pendletons are a family of three, Arthur Pendleton, his wife Gwynneth, and their 16-year-old daughter Violet. They run a quiet farm with two grain fields, a draft horse, three cows, some chickens and a pigsty.

The Pendletons received warning from Hendry that there was a monster in the area, but Arthur did not believe that there was much danger (the area is so peaceful, he couldn't really imagine anything attacking him), and besides he couldn't just abandon the farm. He was saving up for a nice gift for his wife on their 15th anniversary in a few months and needed to put in more work.

On Day 7 the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** will be lurking about the house looking for a good opportunity to ambush the family. That opportunity comes when Violet is sent on her regular trip into town to collect some supplies. She rides the family's small cart (pulled by the draft horse) along the trail leading to Hendry, when the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** falls upon her. It first attacks the horse, biting it to death. Violet screams and tries to flee, but the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** incapacitates her with a spell. It then proceeds to harvest her brain, an operation that will be complete in 10 rounds (it is quite skilled at this).

Arthur will come running, his woodsman's ax in his hands, but will be torn by grief upon seeing his daughter's mutilated body and is no match for the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**. It bites him to death, then harvests his brain. Finally it scuttles to the farm, where the terrified Gwynneth attempts to barricade the door. It crashes through a window, chases her around the house and traps her in the bedroom, where it kills her (biting off a leg, then harvesting her brain after she falls unconscious from the shock).

After finishing the slaughter, the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** crashes through another window and returns to its lair, eager to make some adjustments to its equipment there, before seeking the final brain it needs.

The PCs can interrupt this sequence of events if you wish, saving one or more family members before driving the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** off. It shouldn't fight to the death here, not being prepared for or anticipating capable opponents. As soon as it takes notable (10 or more) damage, it retreats to seek easier prey. It should use a spell or two to harm or incapacitate some PCs, so they won't be too eager to pursue it. And they should also remember to care for any injured members of the Pendleton family.

One of the Pendletons could be used as the final victim the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** needs in which case that person should be kidnapped and taken to the **BRAIN COLLECTOR'S** lair to be used in its ritual instead of the merchant assumed to be its victim. Any Pendletons who survive may also take the role of the merchant in The Invasion of the **BRAIN COLLECTORS** entry in Further Adventures.

Should the PCs arrive after the carnage, they can explore the area and look for clues/loot. This would be a good place for an encounter with A Pack of Scavengers (see Random Encounters). Inside the house greedy PCs can find Arthur's savings: 38 *daros*, 7 *half-daros* and 42 *tentrids*. They are hidden away in a box on top of a support beam.

Using *Speak with the Dead* on any of the Pendletons will yield a fair description of the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**. They cannot be *raised* since their brains are missing.

Remains of the Darokinian Expedition

For details of the expedition members see the NPCs section.

Once the PCs manage to find the remains of the Darokinian expedition, they are close to the **BRAIN COLLECTOR'S** lair. Finding their remains is a good precursor to finding the creature's lair.

The soldiers of the Darokinian expedition were ambushed by the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**. It surprised Captain Faysal while he was taking care of some "delicate business." It overcame him easily then proceeded to creep up on the soldiers. Quinton discovered it, and the soldiers scrambled to get their guard up.

When the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** saw Maggie starting to cast a spell it concentrated its attacks on her, incapacitating her quickly. It then proceeded to use spells and bite attacks on Sergeant Barton and the two foot soldiers. As the archers saw their comrades fall they withdrew, and Quinton convinced Elyse that she should return for help, while he stalked the monster.

Elyse fled the area for Darokin City and Quinton attempted to fight the monster on his own terms, using cover and trees to strike and hide. The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** managed to injure him while he stood on a tree branch and he fell to his death, crushing his head.

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** then proceeded to harvest the brains from the five expedition members whose brains were intact, with its usual surgical precision.

PCs searching the bodies find few valuables besides the soldiers' weapons and armors. They carry a total of 14 *daros*, 24 *half-daros* and 43 *tentrids* (expenses are billed to the army). They also carry various personal effects of no significant value.

Clues to the **BRAIN COLLECTOR'S** spell repertoire may be found by inspecting the area and the bodies. For example, if you have decided that the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** has a *flaming sphere* spell, the PCs may find burn marks on the bodies and a trail of burned vegetation, where the sphere passed. But keep in mind the number of spells that the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** had access to at this time. If you are following the timeline it should only have two spells at the time of this event.

The Merchant

Gospodin Nikolaievich is a small-time merchant, who believes that he will soon make it big. He is on his way to Hendry with a cargo of supplies and oddities, mostly for the curiosity shop. These wares are worth about 500 *daros* if a buyer can be found. In Hendry he will pick up lumber and take further orders from Francesca before continuing his travels.

Gospodin rides a small roofed wagon, pulled by two draft horses. His valuable possessions are hidden in a secret compartment beneath the wagon. These include 115 *daros* for emergencies and opportunity deals, a magical *dagger +1* with cheap jewels imbedded in the hilt (worth 75 *daros* if not detected as magical), a bundle of love letters from his fiancée Rosalinda, and a locket with a small painting of Rosalinda.

As Gospodin merrily rides along the trail to Hendry, dreaming of resting his head on Rosalinda's ample bosom, the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** suddenly attacks while under an *invisibility* spell, severing the cart from the horses that pull it. The horses panic and ride off; they will wander into Hendry later that day, and thus may let the PCs know that something has happened.

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** quickly seizes the flustered merchant, but does not kill him outright. His is the last brain that the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** needs and it wishes to return him to its lair, where it will consume his brain during a ritual that will allow it to leave Mystara.

If the PCs are present for this encounter, they can fight the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**. It is intent on seizing a person for its ritual and Gospodin likely appears the weakest, so it will want to grab him. If met by a group it will use its spells intelligently to create an opportunity to grab Gospodin. Should the PCs manage to seriously harm it (more than 25 damage) before it can get to Gospodin, it will flee. In this case you should select a proper replacement for the merchant to be used in the ritual. Good choices are one of the Pendletons if you haven't run their scene or an NPC from Hendry that the PCs have grown attached to, who, for whatever reason, was in the area.

Unscrupulous PCs who show up in Hendry with Gospodin's wares and try to hawk them to Francesca of the curiosity shop (the only person who will be likely to buy them), will be well marked by her as thieves. She was expecting this exact shipment from Gospodin and will know that the PCs must have stolen it from him. She will buy part of the shipment to appease them, leave them with the rest to be caught red-handed, then close shop for the day and contact the authorities in Darokin with their descriptions (and names if she can get them). They will soon find government officials looking for them, suspecting them of theft and possibly murder as well.

If you wish to run encounters with government officials you can use the stats provided for the Darokinian expedition in the NPCs section.

Of course, if they show up with the wares just to put them in a safe place, explaining how they found them, nobody will suspect them of being thieves, since the monster is obviously responsible. Trying to sell goods belonging to another is theft though, regardless of how they found them.

Lair of the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** has set up its lair inside a house built on an upper branch of an oak tree. This tree is the largest oak tree in the area, a small remnant of the giant trees of the Canolbarth Forest, and was chosen by a small group of refugees from the former nation of Alfheim as their home after the trees of Alfheim were twisted during the shadowelf invasion. The elves tried, but never managed to emulate their former life style and soon moved on to follow their brethren to more distant destinations.

The humans of Darokin never discovered that there were elves living briefly in the area, and nobody knows of this tree-house. A person standing by the tree and looking up can easily see the building sitting on a large branch, but nobody had discovered it before the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** did.

Reaching the tree-house means having to climb the tree, which is not impossible, but there's a good 100' to the tree-house, so a check of some sort is justified. The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** uses its *levitation crystal* to enter its lair.

The tree-house itself is a wooden building sitting precariously on a large tree branch. It is about 15' wide and 30' long with several windows in the walls and a door at each end of the building. It consists of a common room, placed closest to the tree trunk, and a cramped corridor with four small rooms off to the sides. There is also an attic beneath the sloped roof that is accessible from the common room.

Most of the rooms are empty, the elves having taken their belongings with them when they left. The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** uses the common room as its main lair. Since the room is cramped, it uses one of the smaller rooms to store a few of its artifacts.

In the main lair the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** has placed several strange objects, various crystals and orbs as well as some metal rods and disks. These all radiate magic, but their effect and use is mostly impossible to discern for creatures not native to the **NIGHTMARE DIMENSION**. They may be of great value to **DIABOLI** if the PCs know of them. The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** will use them to assist it in returning home, and also wishes to bring its equipment with it.

The items that could possibly be identified and used include: A *crystal ball*, a single *eye of the eagle*, a *gem of brightness*, and an *iridescent ioun stone*. These items are indiscernible from the many other similar items that have no apparent purpose, since they all radiate magic. Using these items might also render the user sensitive to the **NIGHTMARE DIMENSION** (see *Nightmares Persist in Further Adventures*).

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** will only occasionally be found in the lair, as it is mostly searching for the brains it needs to move on. Sometimes it will be here adjusting the equipment to make sure that all is as it should be. The PCs could enter the lair when the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** is about and steal or smash its equipment. This will not prevent it from completing its plans, but will mean that it needs a little longer to complete its ritual and will upset it (which can be good or bad).

The Ritual

Unless the PCs have clearly compromised its lair, the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** will return to the lair with its final victim. Otherwise it will look for a quiet place in the area. The PCs should ideally be present or nearby to interrupt the ritual. You could have them track the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** down, already be waiting for it near the lair, or just have them hear the screams of the victim.

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** will slowly make the incision to remove the top of the skull from its still living victim, while activating its various devices. If the PCs do not act, it will devour the victim's brain, activate the final devices and disappear from Mystara along with all of its equipment, presumably returning to the **NIGHTMARE DIMENSION**. What consequences this has will not become apparent right away, but the Invasion of the **BRAIN COLLECTORS** (see Further Adventures) might not be far off.

If the PCs attempt to stop the ritual, that is easily accomplished. All they have to do is engage the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** in combat and kill it. The **BRAIN COLLECTOR**, so close to completing its plans, will fight to the death, eager to move on. This is the final showdown!

Random Encounters

These encounters could be used whenever the PCs travel between the different scenes. At certain scenes some encounters have also been suggested. The area is very peaceful, so they are generally not terribly dangerous encounters. Most of them need not even be hostile in nature.

Roll 1d10 if you wish or choose an encounter to your liking.

- 1-5 An Encounter with Nature
- 6 A Lone Shadow Elf
- 7 A Pack of Scavengers
- 8 A Hungry Bear
- 9 An Escaped Bull
- 10 An Enterprising Mage

An Encounter with Nature

This represents any number of simple natural encounters. The PCs may come across regular forest animals, such as deer, rabbits, skunks, or birds (some might be valuable as food, others if caught and sold).

They may also come across interesting settings such as an uprooted tree, a small and pleasant lake (time for a bath or some good fishing!) or a dark grove with mushrooms growing in patterns that almost seem artificial (some may be edible, others poisonous).

Finally this encounter can mean a sudden change in the weather such as a thunderstorm, a brief shower, the sun/moon suddenly bursting through cloud cover, or a strong wind rising or waning.

A Lone Shadow Elf

This shadow elf, who goes by the name of Marcafarel, is a former Snake of the Eyes of the Serpent, a secret organization of spies that used to work for Xatapechtli, the spymaster of the shadow elves. Following the civil war in Aengmor the Eyes of the Serpent were dissolved. Marcafarel is now part of a slightly less elite group of scouts/spies in Darokin. He is training Acastra (see the Shadowelf Corpse), with whom he is secretly falling in love.

Marcafarel has some remnants of the equipment he was given as a Snake, most notably his *ring of disguise*, which allows him to appear as most humanoids, even changing sex. He is well trained in disguise and acting, being able to alter his manner completely. His spells are mostly used for disguise and escape, though he has a few combat spells memorized for emergencies. For escape purposes he carries a scroll with *teleport* inscribed.

When prepared for battle Marcafarel wears chain mail, carries a *short sword* +1 and a light crossbow with 20 quarrels and 10 poisoned quarrels, which *slow* for 2-5 rounds.

Encounters with Marcafarel are only likely to result in confrontation under certain circumstances. Unless the PCs have extraordinary means of detection they are probably not able to detect this master of stealth. For his part Marcafarel will want to avoid trifling with a party of adventurers.

However, should the PCs have looted Acastra's corpse and Marcafarel discover that they are carrying some of her belongings, he will assume that they have killed her and mark them for death. He will stalk them and attempt to ambush sole PCs if given the opportunity. He will particularly want to kill any PC who carries Acastra's things and retrieve them.

If Marcafarel is seriously injured he will attempt to use his magic to escape and report back to his commander. Marcafarel and Acastra are part of a larger group that operates in southern Darokin, a group that it is not wise to make enemies of (see Vengeance of the Shadow Elves in Further Adventures).

On the other hand you could use Marcafarel as a wild card to help the PCs out if they are having trouble with the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**. If they have not made an enemy of him, he might discover what has truly happened to Acastra and take out his revenge on the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**.

Marcafarel, elf Ftr3/Wiz4 (Illusionist)

CR 7; Medium Humanoid; HD 3d10 + 4d4; hp 34; Init +6 (Dex +2); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 armor, +2 Dex); Atks +6 melee (short sword 1d6+2), +7 ranged (light crossbow 1d8); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +8, Concentrate +10, Handle Animal +4, Ride (skinwing) +6, Scry +2.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Leadership, Mobility, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus: Illusion.

Possessions: Chain mail armor, *short sword* +1, light crossbow (20 quarrels, 10 quarrels which cause *slow*).

3 Languages: Elvish (Shadowelf dialect), Thyatian (Darokinian and Thyatian dialects).

Spells in spellbook (Evocation = prohibited):

1st: *Cause fear*, *change self*, *charm person*, *expeditions retreat*, *hypnotism*, *obscuring mist*.

2nd: *Blur*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *misdirection*.

A Pack of Scavengers

A pack of scavenging animals, such as jackals, wolves or giant rats, is found dining on an animal carcass (or better yet, a victim of the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**). They will be reluctant to leave their meal and may even be hostile (if hungry enough), but shouldn't pose too big of a challenge for the PCs (i.e. easily driven off if met with firm resistance).

Wolf Pack (3)

CR 1/2; Medium-Size Animal; HD 2d8+4; hp 12, 10, 8; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atks +3 melee (bite 1d6+1); SA Trip; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +1.

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).

A Hungry Bear

This adventuresome bear (which is likely a brown bear, but can be of another type if you prefer) has come down from the Cruth Mountains and wandered into the area. It is hungry, but is not particularly likely to attack the PCs unless provoked. It can be easily fended off by throwing it food, and, if you're so inclined, might make an animal companion for a PC who cares for it.

Brown Bear

CR 4; Large Animal; HD 6d8+24; hp 51; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atks 2 claws +11 melee, bite +6 melee (claws 1d8+8, bite 2d8+4); SA Improved Grab; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 27, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +7, Swim +14.

An Escaped Bull

This large bull belongs to one of the farmers in the area, Myles Stockton. When Myles heard of the monster that was loose, he quickly gathered his family and his belongings and left for the village of Hendry. On the way, the bull got loose and escaped. Myles didn't dare go look for it. The bull has just been wandering around the area, grazing. It is not hostile unless provoked (do any of the PCs wear red?), but scrupulous PCs will want to bring it back to Hendry since it does represent a farmer's livelihood.

Escaped Bull (Bison)

CR 2; Large Animal; HD 5d8+15; hp 37; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, +4 natural); Atks +6 melee (butt 1d8+6); SA Stampede; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 4.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +5.

An Enterprising Mage

Zargon the Mighty (who is really a guy named Seymour) is a haughty mage who has entered the area searching for "the meteoric wonder that fell from the heavens." When first meeting the PCs he will be wary, but if they greet him in peace, he will quickly turn into his usual arrogant self. He will attempt to learn the location of the crash site from them if possible and may offer them to guard him while he examines it. For this he will pay them the "truly magnificent sum" of 5 *daros* per day (for the entire party that is).

If he finds the crash site, he will stake out the area, using spikes and rope that he has brought with him on his riding horse, and claim it the property of "Zargon the Mighty, Warmage of Quanfax." Quanfax was a town on the sunken Alpathian continent that Zargon once saw on a map. He liked the name and has since gone about claiming that he is from that town. If asked about it, he will make up some tale of a great and wonderful city with "an entire academy of mages that rival and even surpass the knowledge of the Glantrian Great School of Magic!"

If the PCs have also laid claim to the crash site, Zargon will be infuriated and challenge any of their wizards to "a duel of mighty magicks and supreme sorceries" over "the ownership of the mysterious meteorite and the lands around it." Zargon may be an eccentric coot, but he is also an able wizard and may prove to be a serious challenge in a duel. Should the PCs kill him, they may well end up charged with murder if they do not hide their tracks well. For his part Zargon will try to avoid doing serious injury in a duel, instead trying to incapacitate his opponent. But if his life is in serious danger, he will not hold anything back.

If Zargon gains possession of the crash site, he will quickly become frustrated with the whole enterprise and when the Darokinian government shows up to claim the vessel, he will sell it to them for "an appropriate compensation for my help in keeping it safe from greedy adventurers."

Zargon the Mighty travels light. He holds a "staff of otherworldly wizardry" (an ordinary staff), wears "robes of runic recuperation" (ordinary robes) and a "ring of eternal incandescence" (an ordinary ring worth 20 *daros*, enchanted with a *continual flame* spell). His robes contain pouches with various spell components, many of which actually have no use. His spellbook and other valuables are in a saddle bag on his riding horse, Vergorathrax (or Virgil). These include 44 *daros*, 9 *half-daros*, a deck of cards, a quill, a bottle of ink, and a treasure map. Unfortunately his ink bottle wasn't properly secured when last he threw it in his bags, so there's ink all over his possessions, making the treasure map very hard to read and staining his cards and spellbook. Any thief rummaging through his belongings will also end up with very black hands.

Zargon, human Wiz5

CR 5; Medium Humanoid; HD 5d4+5; hp 21; Init +2 (Dex+2); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atks +1 melee (staff 1d4+1), +4 ranged; AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Alchemy +8, Concentration +8, Craft (Calligraphy) +4, Forgery +4.0, Knowledge (Arcane) +8, Profession (Scribe) +4, Scry +8, Spellcraft +8.

Feats: Ambidexterity, Craft Wondrous Item, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Still Spell.

Possessions: Staff, robes, ring (enchanted with *continual flame*).

5 Languages: Thyatian (Darokinian, Thyatian and Glantrian dialects), Elvish (Alfheim dialect), Alasiyan.

Spells in Spellbook:

1st: *Alarm, animate rope, comprehend languages, expeditious retreat, grease, mount, reduce, spider climb, summon monster I.*

2nd: *Blindness/deafness, continual flame, rope trick, tasha's hideous laughter.*

3rd: *Explosive runes, hold person.*

NPCs

This section details the various important personages found in the adventure.

The Darokinian Expedition

This small group of soldiers is chosen from the legions based in Darokin City. Captain Faysal was chosen to lead the investigation and he has let his trusted sergeant choose the men for the detail. The investigation is expected to be fairly routine, which is why so small a group has been sent.

Foot soldiers and the sergeant are armed with 12' pikes and rapiers. Archers carry a short bow and also a rapier. All soldiers wear padded leather armor with a metal breastplate. Foot soldiers also have a light buckler strapped to one arm.

Captain Faysal ibn-Majdi

Faysal is a young (25) military mage originally of Ylari ancestry. His intelligence and good grasp of tactics have earned him promotion to captain, and his superiors predict that he will have a long and prosperous career. Being a mage, Faysal does not carry regular army equipment. Instead he wields a *dagger* +1 in combat and wears a leather uniform. He is also trained in combat spell use.

Faysal, human Wiz4 (Evoker)

CR 4; Medium Humanoid; HD 4d4+8; hp 21; Init +6 (Dex+2); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 armor, +2 Dex); Atks +2 melee (dagger 1d4+1), +4 ranged; AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills: Concentration +7, Knowledge (Arcana) +7, Knowledge (Engineering) +7, Spellcraft +7, Spot +3.5, Tumble +3.5.

Feats: Armor Proficiency: Light, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll.

Possessions: Leather armor, *dagger* +1.

4 Languages: Thyatian (Darokinian, Thyatian and Glantrian dialects), Alasiyan.

Spells in Spellbook (Enchantment, Illusion = prohibited):

1st: *Endure elements, magic missile, mage armor, magic weapon, message, ray of enfeeblement, shield, true strike.*

2nd: *Cat's grace, endurance, fog cloud, whispering wind.*

Sergeant Jack Barton

Jack is a grizzled old (47) veteran, who has spent most of his adult years in the army. He is a large, stocky man, who is good at two things: following orders from his superiors and shouting orders at grunts. He also packs a mean punch.

Barton, human Ftr3

CR 3; Medium Humanoid; HD 3d10+6; hp 31; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 armor, +1 shield); Atks +6 melee (halberd 1d10+4, rapier 1d6+3), +3 ranged; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Jump +6, Swim +6.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Endurance, Focus: Unarmed, Improved Unarmed Strike, Toughness.

Possessions: Padded armor with a breastplate, buckler, rapier, halberd.

Foot Soldier Martino Vinti

Martino is a young (19) freckled lad, who grew up on a farm and is seeing the world for the first time, serving his country. He will feel at home in Hendry, but is otherwise wide-eyed and cowed.

Martino, human Ftr2

CR 2; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d10; hp 16; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 armor, +1 shield); Atks +3 melee (halberd 1d10+1, rapier 1d6+1), +2 ranged; AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Handle Animal +5, Profession (Farmer) +2.5.

Feats: Blind Fight, Focus: Rapier, Lightning Reflexes, Run.

Possessions: Padded armor with a breastplate, buckler, rapier, halberd.

Foot Soldier Gracchi Septimus

Gracchi is a middle-aged (34) grim soldier. He lost his family during the war with the Master of the Desert Nomads and has fought in the army ever since. His anger often puts him at odds with his superiors. He dislikes Faysal immensely due to his ancestry.

Gracchi, human Ftr3

CR 3; Medium Humanoid; HD 3d10+9; hp 31; Init +1 (Dex +1); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 armor, +1 shield, +1 Dex); Atks +5 melee (halberd 1d10+3, rapier 1d6+2), +4 ranged; AL CG; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills: Craft (Carpentry) +6, Jump +6, Ride +6.

Feats: Cleave, Focus: Halberd, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Sunder.

Possessions: Padded armor with a breastplate, buckler, rapier, halberd.

Archer Elyse Kingsley

The Darokinian army is an equal opportunity employer. Elyse is a young (22) woman, who is the daughter of a *legionate* (commander of the IV Legion of Darokin). She wishes to make a career in the military and is impeccable in every way.

Elyse, human Ftr2

CR 2; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d10-2; hp 14; Init +6 (Dex +2); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 armor, +2 Dex); Atks +3 melee (rapier 1d6+1), +4 ranged (short bow 1d6); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +5, Craft (Bowmaking) +5, Diplomacy +2.5, Swim +5.

Feats: Focus: Short Bow, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot.

Possessions: Padded armor with a breastplate, rapier, short bow.

2 Languages: Thyatian (Darokinian and Thyatian dialects).

Archer Quinton Winter

Quinton is a promising young (21) soldier, whose aim is unflinching. He is being trained as a sniper, well-versed in camouflage and guerrilla warfare. He is also an excellent tracker. His superiors feel that he needs some practical experience, so he has been sent on this mission.

Quinton, human Rgr2

CR 2; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d10+2; hp 18; Init +3 (Dex +3); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 armor, +3 Dex); Atks +2 melee (rapier 1d6), +5 ranged (short bow 1d6); SA favored enemy (goblinoids), two weapon fighting; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 5.

Skills: Hide +5, Intuit Direction +5, Move Silently +5, Search +5, Spot +5.

Feats: Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Track.

Possessions: Padded armor with a breastplate, rapier, short bow.

Maggie Lucciano

A priestess of Freyja, patroness of intelligent warfare, Maggie is a 28-year-old adventurer. She is one of several specialists that the army of Darokin employs on certain occasions. Being an independent operative, she is allowed to use her own gear, a chain mail, a *shield* +1 and a long sword (priests of Freyja are allowed to use swords and daggers in combat), but she wears a coat with the army insignia over her armor. She is considered just below Captain Faysal in rank.

Maggie, human Clr3

CR 3; Medium Humanoid; HD 3d10+6; hp 24; Init -1 (Dex -1); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+5 armor, +2 shield, -1 Dex); Atks +5 melee (long sword 1d8+2), +1 ranged; SA turn undead; AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 17, Cha 12.

Skills: Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (Religion) +6, Scry +6.

Feats: Cleave, Martial: Long Sword, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus: Long Sword.

Possessions: Chain mail, long sword, *shield* +1.

Domains: War (Free Martial Weapon Proficiency—Deity Favored Weapon, Weapon Focus—Deity Favored Weapon) and Law (+1 caster level when casting Law spells).

Commonly Prayed For:

0-Level: *Guidance, light, resistance, virtue.*

1st: *Magic weapon, shield of faith, bless, entropic shield.*

2nd: *Calm emotion, bull's strength, endurance.*

Other NPCs

Reynard “Fox-step”

Generally considered the best hunter in the village of Hendry, Reynard was the only child of an aging farm couple. Reynard spent much time in the forest, taking care of most of the work at their small farm. He began feeling at home in the forest. When his parents died, he moved into the village, where he took up the vocation of tanner. Barely finding enough work, he also became a hunter himself and turned out to excel at this.

Reynard is skilled with a bow and is a competent trapper and tracker. He is famous locally for chasing off a foul monster from Aengmor, but he is not a skilled warrior.

Reynard, Human Rgr1

CR 1; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d10+4; hp 14; Init: +2 (Dex +2); Spd 30 ft; AC 14 (+2 armor, +2 Dex); Atks +3 melee (long sword 1D8+2), +3 ranged (longbow 1D8); SA favored enemy (animals) +1; AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Move Silently +6, Profession: Tanner +5, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +5

Feats: Point Black Shot, Toughness, Track.

Possessions: Leather armor, long sword, composite longbow, quiver, 20 arrows.

Francesca di Malapietra

The villagers of Hendry spend a fair amount of time discussing Francesca's origins. She showed up in Hendry 7 years ago and set up her strange curiosity shop. She is charming if a bit eccentric and has been generally accepted in the village. She sometimes has strangers coming in to collect an object or two from the shop, adventurer types.

Francesca, human Wiz5

CR 5; Medium Humanoid; HD 5d4+5; hp 22; Init +2 (Dex +2); Spd 30 ft; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 Amulet); Atks +2 melee (dagger 1D4); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Alchemy +8, Appraisal +5, Concentration +7, Knowledge (Arcana) +8, Profession (Herbalist) +7, Spellcraft +8.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Items, Scribe Scroll.

Possessions: *Amulet of natural armor* (+1), *cloak of resistance* (+1), *wand of shocking grasp* (50 charges), *wand of hold person* (50 charges).

4 Languages: Thyatian (Glantrian and Darokinian dialects), Elvish (Belcadizan dialect), Lalor.

Commonly Memorized Spells:

0-Level: *Arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*.

1st: *Charm person*, *mage armor*, *shield*, *summon monster I*.

2nd: *Flaming sphere*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*.

3rd: *Dispel magic*, *hold person*.

Silvester Hoff

As foreman of Hendry Sawmill, Silvester is generally regarded as the most important man in the village. This has not exactly gotten to his head, but he does expect people to listen when he talks. He is a responsible man, who believes in keeping Hendry a peaceful place.

While he is untrained in combat, Silvester can swing an ax along with the best of them. He used to be a competent lumberjack after all.

Silvester, human Exp5

CR 5; Medium Humanoid; HD 5d6+10; hp 25; Init +1 (Dex +1); Spd 30 ft; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks +3 melee (hand ax 1D6+2), +1 ranged; AL: LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Diplomacy +8, Handle Animal +5, Hide +6, Intuit Direction +8, Miller +8, Profession: Lumberjack +8, Ride +8, Search +8, Spot +8, Wilderness Lore +8.

Feats: Martial Weapon Proficiency (Hand Ax), Skill Focus (Profession: Lumberjack), Weapon Focus (Hand Ax).

Possessions: Hand ax.

Jon Hoff

Silvester's brother, Jon felt the calling to serve Koryis at a young age. He preaches peace and understanding and his calm and wisdom means that the villagers often turn to him to mediate disputes. Being a modest, concerned individual, Jon would never strike another living being.

Jon, human Clr3

CR 3; Medium Humanoid; HD 3d8; hp 11; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks None; AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +5, Diplomacy +5, Healing +6, Knowledge (Religion) +5, Spellcraft +2.

Feats: Brew Potion, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Healing).

Domains: Healing (+1 Casting Level with any healing spell), Protection (Protective Ward / Once per day).

Commonly Prayed For:

0 Level: *Create water*, *guidance*, *light*, *purify food and water*.

1st: *Command*, *divine favor*, *sanctuary*, *shield of faith*.

2nd: *Augury*, *calm emotions*, *shield other*.

Possessions: Holy symbol and 2 vials of holy water.

Gospodin Nikolaievich

A small-time merchant believing he will soon make it big, Gospodin has landed a profitable deal, transporting goods for Francesca di Malapietra of the curiosity shop in the village of Hendry. He is intent on making enough money to settle down with his fiancée Rosalinda and provide for the family. He does not possess any combat skills, but carries a weapon and wears armor out of necessity.

Gospodin, human Exp3

CR 3; Medium Humanoid; HD 3d6; hp 12; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 13 (+2 armor, +1 Dex); Atks +3 melee (light mace 1D6), +1 ranged; AL NG; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +6, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +6, Innuendo +6, Profession: Appraisal +8, Ride +6, Search +6, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +2.

Feats: Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Appraisal, Diplomacy).

Possessions: Leather armor, light mace.

3 Languages: Thyatian (Darokinian dialect), Traladaran, Alasiyan.

The BRAIN COLLECTOR

More of a monster than an NPC, the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** is a powerful creature from the **NIGHTMARE DIMENSION**, which is not native to Mystara at all. Its intentions are completely unknown, but while on Mystara it merely wants to collect enough brains to move on.

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** does not have a proper name, but it thinks of itself as **NEH-THALGGU**, which is actually the name of its race. It does not consider the inhabitants of Mystara intelligent and though it will quickly learn to speak with them (it can speak the language of any victim whose brain it has consumed), it will have no desire to converse with mere cattle.

Entirely alien to inhabitants of Mystara, the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** is bloated, oily and amorphous. It has four eyes set above its huge mouth, which is lined with long sharp fangs. It has short tentacles set about its body that never stop writhing about. These can be used to manipulate objects. It scuttles about on six legs that seem crab-like. The top of its head contains twelve “housings” for brains. Once filled such a housing becomes an obvious lump, but otherwise it is not discernible.

In battle the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** has a powerful bite attack that can easily sever a limb, and this is the attack that will be often used on relatively defenseless opponents. But the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** also obtains spell use by collecting the brains of thinking creatures. Each brain it has obtained allows it to cast an arcane spell of level 1-3. The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** casts spells as a sorcerer, not needing to memorize spells, and there is no limit to the number of times it may cast each spell.

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** is an intelligent opponent able to use complex tactics and will make great use of its spells. Specific spells are left for the individual DM to choose, tailoring them to your PCs, but if in doubt some suggestions are (note that some of these spells are assumed possessed by the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** in the different Scenes of the adventure):

Burning hands, dispel magic, enlarge, flaming sphere, hold person, invisibility, light, protection from arrows, stinking cloud, suggestion, vampiric touch.

The **BRAIN COLLECTOR** carries one of the artifacts from its vessel, a *levitation crystal* that allows it to *levitate* as the spell. It uses this to enter and leave its lair. Use of the *levitation crystal* makes the user sensitive to the **NIGHTMARE DIMENSION** (see Nightmares Persist under Further Adventures).

BRAIN COLLECTOR

CR 7; Large Outsider; HD 10d8+30; hp 75; Init +4; Spd 50 ft; AC 18 (-1 size, +9 natural); Atks 2 bites +10 melee (1d8+5); AL CN; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +10; Str 20, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Concentration +13, Knowledge (Arcana, Dimensions, Planes) +11, Intimidate +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Spot +10.

Feats: Combat Casting, Enlarge Spell, Improved Initiative.

Additional Complications

If you do not feel that there is enough going on in the adventure, here are a few suggestions that could spice up the adventure a bit.

One of the citizens of Hendry is actually quite psychotic. Inspired by the **BRAIN COLLECTOR**, this person decides to weed out the weak of Hendry. The PCs are faced with the added complication of seeking out a human murderer as well as the monster. Who is the murderer? You decide. The obvious suspect is Bill Morgan, the butcher, but perhaps he is a little too obvious...

Like the Enterprising Mage (see Random Encounters) the entire village of Hendry figures that the crashed vessel must be worth something. The villagers are at each other's throats to decide who has the rights to it. Violence and sabotage are obvious possibilities as old tensions erupt and the PCs are forced to protect the greedy villagers from each other.

Further Adventures

So you had a good time playing the adventure? Well, it doesn't have to end here. There are plenty of details in the adventure that may lead the PCs to more adventures, but here are some specific ideas that may be used as the basis of further adventures.

Invasion of the **BRAIN COLLECTORS**?

While the PCs may have defeated the dreaded **BRAIN COLLECTOR** and saved the poor merchant, Gospodin Nikolaievich, from death, they likely did not act in time to prevent grievous head injuries inflicted on the merchant. Gospodin is not entirely coherent, but he doggedly claims that the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** spoke to him, explaining that it was just a scout and that more would soon be coming—an entire colony. Gospodin is regarded as mad and is incarcerated in an insane asylum. But one night the people of Darokin see a shooting star. Then another. And another...

Nightmares Persist

The artifacts of the **BRAIN COLLECTOR** are not safe to use by creatures not of the **NIGHTMARE DIMENSION**. Any Mystaran creature using, carrying or spending a lot of time around these objects will slowly become sensitive to the **NIGHTMARE DIMENSION**. This will initially manifest itself in terrible dreams, but in time these dreams will occasionally occur while the victim is awake, and eventually the victim will be pulled into the **NIGHTMARE DIMENSION** itself. Freeing such a victim will be a grand adventure.

Vengeance of the Shadow Elves

As noted in the adventure the shadow elves in the area are part of a larger organization of spies operating in southern Darokin. If the PCs run afoul of the shadow elf Marcafarel, either killing him or chasing him off, that organization will seek revenge for the deaths of its operatives. They will doggedly pursue the PCs, though they may also take their time, looking for good opportunities to discredit or otherwise hurt the PCs. Shadow elves live a long time after all.

The PCs on the other hand might have an interest in flushing out and exposing this organization. This will be hard work; the shadow elves are equipped with powerful magic and are crafty spellcasters. This could become the basis of an entire campaign.

Other Ideas

Some other details and objects may lead to more adventures:

Francesca di Malapietra, proprietor of the curiosity shop, has lost her regular supplier of various goods. Perhaps the PCs can be persuaded to pick up some objects for her? Maybe they will even become regular suppliers or customers? But what about Francesca's obscure past?

Gospodin Nikolaievich, the merchant, has a fiancée, Rosalinda. Who is she and what will she ask of the PCs if they bring her news of Gospodin's death or insanity?

Zargon, the Enterprising Mage, has a treasure map among his possessions. While it is stained by ink, it might still lead the PCs to interesting treasure and more dangers.

And of course Hendry itself can serve as a base of operations and a setting for further adventures.

Legend of the Bronze Warrior

Original idea and text by Jacob Skytte.

Cartography, additional ideas and text by Geoff Gander.

Creature statistics and additional text by Andrew Theisen.

Legend of the Bronze Warrior is an adventure for four 6th-level player characters (PCs) set on the world of Mystara. The adventure can easily be modified for use by higher- or lower-level PCs, by replacing encounters with stronger or weaker monsters.

The adventure can easily be modified for use by higher- or lower-level player characters, by replacing encounters with stronger or weaker monsters. For instance, the bugbears can be replaced with goblins or hobgoblins, if an easier challenge is wanted, or with ogres or even giants, if the PCs are of high level. Likewise, the random encounters and final battle can be adjusted in difficulty by using monsters of varying levels of power. Always remember that the adventure can be modified any way you like, to present your players with the best gaming experience you can offer.

Background

2,000 years ago, the land now known as Karamaikos was a prosperous human nation, though under the control of the dog-headed Hutaakans. Their reign ended when the beastly gnolls swarmed into the lush country to conquer it from both the Hutaakans and the native Traldar humans. The Hutaakans retreated into a hidden valley and left the Traldar to fend for themselves. The Traldar took up arms against the invaders, and eventually drove them from the land, winning it for themselves, since the Hutaakans never returned.

Not all humans took up arms against the beastly invaders; there were those who revered them as rightful invaders, who were enamored of the pure rage of the beast. These Traldar began worshipping the Beast; either as an aspect they strove to attain or as a real Immortal—this is not known. In their righteous worship, they adopted the ways of the Beast and sought to aid the invaders through any means possible. Whether through research, luck, or divine inspiration, the followers of the Beast discovered a way to create a servant worthy of their master—an animated bronze representation of the Beast, filled with liquid fire—that was to pave the way for the gnollish invasion and prove their devotion to their master.

The dark ways of the followers of the Beast did not go unnoticed by the local Traldar population. In a daring raid, the local heroes stormed the dark temple, seeking to eradicate the treacherous curs who would betray their own race. It was a desperate battle, but the heroes managed to overcome the cultists in time to prevent them from completing the ritual giving life to the bronze statue. After their victory, the heroes barred the only entrance to the temple with a rockslide, declared the area forbidden, and went back to their struggle against the gnolls.

Though the area was remembered as forbidden for centuries, eventually the Traldar forgot why, and in time even the warnings of terrible danger were forgotten. There were many other, far more real, horrors to relate to, so this was one legend that passed into oblivion.

So things remained for more than a millennium. The temple lay buried beneath the rubble, now part of the vast wilderness, after the decline of Traldar rule. The lands of the temple eventually fell under non-human influence, as a tribe of bugbears made it theirs. More centuries passed and eventually K'Rrargg, witch doctor of the bugbear tribe, fell into a hole...

Finding himself in an underground cave of sorts, the resourceful K'Rrargg explored the area and found an ancient temple, apparently dedicated to his own Immortal master, Bartziluth. Whether K'Rrargg was truly resourceful or was guided by his patron Immortal (or manipulated by another Immortal), the witch doctor found and completed the ritual needed to activate the ancient bronze statue. When the golem came to life, K'Rrargg first thought that he had offended his patron, but he discovered soon enough that it was his to command.

K'Rrargg ordered the golem to dig its way out of the temple, and returned to his tribe with his new servant. Awed by their witch doctor's amazing power, the tribe soon fell at his feet, naming him their chief and asking him for direction. When K'Rrargg was a toddler, he had always loved the stories of the great raids on the human settlements, where magnificent booty was to be found and warriors could prove themselves. He had since discovered firsthand that the humans were not pushovers, but with this new ally at hand... K'Rrargg smiled to himself as he ordered the tribe to prepare for war. The humans in the nearby town of Threshold were in for a big surprise...

In the weeks following these events, the bugbears were busy gathering the numbers needed for a daring raid on Threshold. The local bugbear tribes united under K'Rrargg and his bronze warrior, and their activity also stirred up other humanoids in the area, who sensed that something big was about to happen. Meanwhile, the unsuspecting population of Threshold had their own problems, and, though the increased humanoid activity did not go completely unnoticed, they were largely unprepared for the raid that was about to take place.

It is this volatile situation the player characters are thrust into, while in the area for their own reasons. They will soon come face to face with beasts both ancient and modern, to fight for their lives and the lives of the innocent inhabitants of Threshold.

Setting the Stage

Although this adventure is set in the general vicinity of Threshold, in Karamaikos, the DM is free to place it in any frontier region of his or her campaign setting. If Mystara is being used, and another location is preferred, alternates include the northern foothills of the Cruth Mountains (in southern Darokin, perhaps near Armstead or Reedle), the southern or western hinterlands of Vestland or Soderfjord, or the hilly country east of the Mengul Mountains, in northern Heldann. Needless to say, the adventure background will have to be altered to maintain the consistency of the storyline.

If the given adventure location is to be used, the following information about Threshold will be useful. Though Threshold has a relatively small population, it covers a vast area. By baronial decree, no house may be built within 50 feet of another. The town lies at the bank of the Windrush River, south of Lake Windrush. With the river on one side, and town walls on the others, Threshold appears impregnable.

Threshold (Small City)

Conventional; AL LN; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 4,743,000 gp; Population 6,324; Mixed (human 84%, hin 6%, gnome 4%, dwarf 3%, elf 2%, other 1%).

Authority Figures: Baroness Aleena Yurevich, ruler of Threshold, female human Clr14; Baron Dmitri Yurevich, ruler of Threshold, male human Ftr12; Sergeant Arthol, commander of the city guard, male human Ftr6; Petrov Varescu, judge of Threshold, male human Rog10; Anton Tvarovic, Guildmaster of the Loggers' Guild, male human Exp8.

Other Notable Figures: Gabriella Kendonion, female human Com1/Exp4; Gabron Kendonion, male human Rog3; Sergei Borisov, male human Com3; Adriana Borisov, female human Com1.

Threshold is a thriving frontier settlement in the north of Karamaikos, at the foot of the Black Peak Mountain range. Though technically a small city, the inhabitants of Threshold still consider themselves to be just a town, and often refer to the city as such. Threshold is divided into three major sections: the so-called "old town," "new town," and Fogor Isle. The entirety of the city is built primarily out of wood—a resource the city has in plenty—gathered from the lush nearby forests.

The Old Town is the central-most portion of Threshold. The town hall is located there, making it the hub of law and order in the city. It is surrounded by a stone curtain wall, with several gates leading outwards to the New Town and to Fogor Isle.

As the town of Threshold grew, the New Town sprang up outside of its walls. Attempting to keep the burgeoning population safe from hostile wilderness creatures, greater defensive measures were required. Thus, eventually, the New Town came to boast a stone curtain wall around its boundaries similar to that of the Old Town. The New Town wall has only two gates, one in the south, and one in the north. Both gates are manned at all times by eight guardsmen (War1) and one sergeant (War3).

Town Walls (Masonry)

1 ft. thick masonry; Hardness 8; hp 90; Break DC 35; Climb DC 15.

Town Gate (Reinforced Wooden Gate)

2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 30; Break DC 25; Open Locks DC 20.

Laws are harshly enforced in Threshold. No arcane magic may be cast, and the town guard will not tolerate any "public miracles" either. Weapons in general are forbidden within town limits, with the exception of daggers, swords and staves. Other weapons are confiscated and kept in the town hall. Armor is tolerated, but frowned upon. Going about in armor at all hours of the day will convince the town guard that you're up to no good, and result in being harassed and hauled in for questioning.

Fogor Isle, in the middle of the Windrush River, is a small town in itself, and most of it was built before the decree that houses be built apart from each other was announced. As a result, the isle is packed with buildings and narrow streets. Much of the business going on here is of the illegitimate kind. This isn't helped in any way by the fact that the town guard doesn't patrol the area at night. Fogor Isle has no walls around it, depending entirely upon the surrounding river for defense. Guard patrol boats stop and inspect all vessels approaching Threshold by way of the river. They are manned by eight guardsmen (War1) and one sergeant (War3), in addition to their regular crew.

North of town, on the shores of Lake Windrush, lies Tarnskeep, the fortress of Baroness Aleena Yurevich. While the baroness spends time at the town hall several days a week, she prefers to stay at her own small castle, outside of town. Tarnskeep is easily defensible with a small number of men from anywhere but a proper army equipped with siege weapons.

Across the river lies the loggers' camp, home to about 1,000 loggers. The camp doesn't have the same protection the town itself does. Likewise, a small town of 1,000 fishermen lies north of Threshold proper, unprotected at the shores of Lake Windrush.

Windrush Towne (Small Town)

Conventional; AL LN; 800 gp limit; Assets 48,520 gp; Population 1,213; Isolated (human 95%, hin 3%, gnome 1%, other 1%).

Authority Figures: Yusuf Krylenko, head fisherman, male human Exp4; Roscoe Goodbarrel, head scrimshander, male hin Exp3.

Loggers' Camp (Small Town)

Nonstandard; AL N; 800 gp limit; Assets 37,480 gp; Population 937; Isolated (human 96%, hin 2%, other 2%).

Authority Figures: Master Anton Tvarovic, Guildmaster of the Loggers' Guild, male human Exp6.

Starting the Adventure

There are a number of ways to involve the PCs in this adventure. Some ideas are given below, but the DM is encouraged to use whatever rationale is best for his or her campaign. The purpose of these hooks is to interest the PCs in what is going on in the area. This may lead to encounters with NPCs, or side adventures that are beyond the scope of this module.

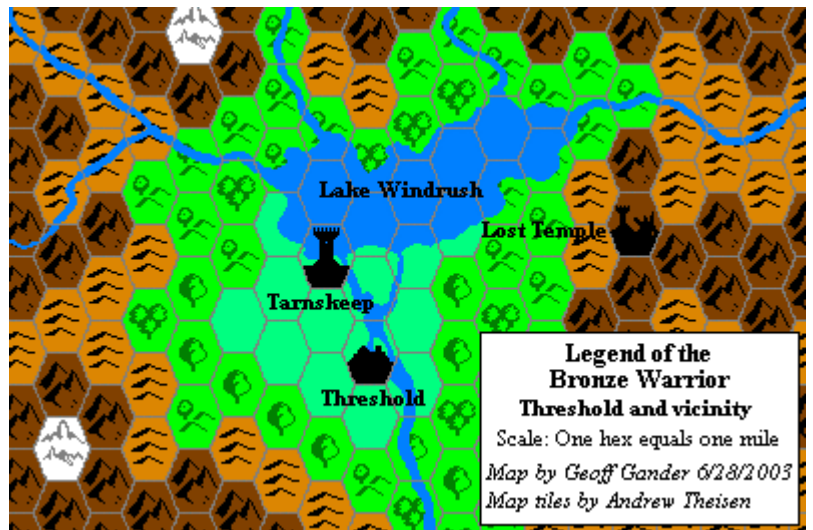
1. The logging guild has informed Baroness Aleena Yurevich that some of their camps have been sabotaged. No one has been killed yet, but some men have been injured by falling logs and fires. The baroness appreciates the gravity of the situation—Threshold's economy depends on the continued health of the logging industry. The PCs can be solicited by Master Anton Tvarovic (Guildmaster of the Loggers' Guild), or one of his representatives, to find out who is behind the acts of sabotage. He says he suspects Gabriella Kendonion, but in truth he has ordered some of his own henchmen to vandalize the work sites, in order to make Gabriella look bad in the eyes of the townsfolk, and, he hopes, leave Threshold entirely.

2. Baroness Aleena Yurevich issues a call to adventurers to help her clear the foothills of the Cruth Mountains of goblins, who have become more active in recent months. Although the town has not been threatened yet, she wishes to strike out at the humanoids before they can do so. She would normally have dispatched some of her own forces to deal with the problem, but they are tied up right now. If asked, she will offer a reward of up to one *royal* for every goblin scalp brought to her keep, as well as half of any goblin loot recovered.

3. A small merchant caravan is encountered on the road to Threshold, who offer the PCs decent wages in exchange for their services as guards. If asked about their destination, the merchants say that Threshold is merely a stopover; they are on their way to the so-called "Lost Valley," where they hope to trade for some of the exotic goods that are said to be produced there. They are convinced that such items would fetch high prices on the open market, due to their rarity. At the DM's discretion, this encounter can also serve as a way of introducing the Lost Valley to their campaigns, and lay the foundations for playing D&D module B10 *Night's Dark Terror*.

4. A rash of thefts has caused a stir in Threshold. The town's constabulary has been investigating for weeks, but has so far been unable to determine the identity of the perpetrator(s). In unofficial circles, the Thieves' Guild has stated that a freelance thief is behind the break-ins. In truth, the thief is none other than Gabron Kendonion, son of Gabriella, the owner of a prosperous logging venture. Gabron is a disturbed youth, who is acting out his hatred of Traladarans by stealing from them when he can—unbeknownst to his mother and everyone else.

Map of Threshold and Vicinity



Investigations in Threshold

In relation to these adventure hooks, there are a number of investigations that the PCs can pursue, and a number of people that they might meet and interact with. The purpose of this section is not to present a proper adventure, but to give the DM guidelines and ideas for keeping the PCs busy and involved in Threshold affairs, until the humanoids attack the town. The more you can convince your PCs that this adventure is about anything but fighting humanoids, the more surprised they will be by the sudden desperate turn of events.

Since Threshold is likely to have been the starting point for many campaigns, this section is, of course, unable to take into account already established personalities or further unfinished adventures from the characters' pasts. If you're able to bring things such as family, old flames or feuds, or other unfinished business into the game, so much the better.

Baroness Aleena Yurevich of Threshold

The ruler of Threshold, the baroness was appointed last year. She is above most everyday concerns, and is a hard woman to get to speak to. Though Aleena holds meetings at the town hall several days a week (about 30% chance of her being in on a particular day—on other days, she's at her castle), she is busy when she is there. Getting an official appointment with the baroness takes a legitimate reason, and if the PCs turn out to be bothering her with matters that her officials could be taking care of, she will not tolerate having her time wasted.

Though she is soft-spoken and romantic, the baroness is an experienced adventurer. She can handle herself very well in a fight, being a cleric of the Order of the Griffon. Aleena is beautiful but married, and highly unlikely to mingle socially beneath her station. She typically dresses in her adventuring gear, and appears ready for trouble at all times.

Age: 40.

Aleena Yurevich, female human Clr14

CR 14; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 14d8+14; hp 86; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 21 (+10 *half-plate* +3, +1 small steel shield), touch 11, flat-footed 21; Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+3, *lawful heavy mace* +2); SA spells, spontaneous healing; SQ none; AL LG; SV Fort +13, Ref +5, Will +17; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 18.

* Statistics are age-adjusted and include a +2 level bonus to Wisdom and a +1 to Constitution.

Skills: Concentration +11, Diplomacy +9, Heal +10, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (Karamaikan local) +6, Knowledge (Thyatian religion) +19, Profession (teacher) +10, Ride (horse) +5, Spellcraft +7.

Feats: Combat Casting, Expertise, Extra Turning, Improved Disarm, Leadership, Weapon Focus (heavy mace).

Spells Prepared (6/6/6/5/5/4/4/3; base DC = 15 + spell level):

0: *cure minor wounds* (x2), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *virtue*.

1st: *bless* (x2), *cure light wounds* (x2), *remove fear*, *sanctuary*.*.

2nd: *calm emotions**, *cure moderate wounds* (x2), *hold person* (x2), *remove paralysis*.

3rd: *cure serious wounds*, *magic circle against chaos**, *remove blindness/deafness*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*.

4th: *cure critical wounds* (x2), *neutralize poison*, *order's wrath**, *restoration*.

5th: *commune*, *healing circle*, *raise dead*, *spell resistance**.

6th: *heal* (x2), *hold monster**, *word of recall*.

7th: *greater restoration*, *dictum**, *resurrection*.

* Domain spells. Domains: Law (cast Law spells at +1 caster level), Protection (one per day, generate protective ward granting +14 resistance bonus to saving throws to one person touched, duration one hour).

Possessions: *Half-plate* +3, *lawful heavy mace* +2.

Baron Dmitri Yurevich

Aleena's husband, Dmitri, is an adventurer of some renown. Though technically a baron, due to his marriage to Aleena, Dmitri has very little to do with the running of Threshold and its vicinity. He has a high regard for adventurers of all sorts, particularly those of Karamaikan ancestry. As such, he is a more likely contact for PCs to get in touch with Aleena than attempts to reach her directly.

Dmitri is of mixed Traladaran and Thyatian ancestry—he considers himself a Karamaikan, and often involves himself as arbiter in conflicts between the two ethnic groups in Threshold. In the city, he is viewed as an impartial judge, and is consulted when necessary in such situations (or any other dispute between parties of different races or ethnic backgrounds).

Dmitri Yurevich, male human Ftr12

CR 12; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 12d10+24; hp 102; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (+7 *breastplate of invulnerability* +2, +1 small steel shield), touch 10, flat-footed 18; Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (1d8+5 +1d6 fire/19-20/x3 +3d10, *flaming burst warhammer* +2); SQ DR 5/+1 (*breastplate of invulnerability* +2); AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 12.

* Statistics are age-adjusted and include a +2 level bonus to Strength, and a +1 to Constitution.

Skills: Climb +3, Craft (blacksmithing) +13, Diplomacy +4, Handle Animal +9, Jump +2, Knowledge (Karamaikan local) +6, Ride (horse) +10, Swim +1.

Feats: Cleave, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Critical (warhammer), Leadership, Power Attack, Run, Skill Focus (Craft: blacksmithing), Sunder, Weapon Focus (warhammer), Weapon Focus (light hammer), Weapon Specialization (warhammer).

Possessions: *Breastplate of invulnerability* +2, *flaming burst warhammer* +2.

Sergeant Arthol, Jr.

Arthol Jr. is the commander of the town guard. If the PCs make trouble, or if they have immediate concerns, they will most likely deal with Arthol. The sergeant is a no-nonsense man, well grounded in reality. If the PCs are troublemakers, or they appear to be (by constantly wearing armor in public, for example), Arthol will have his men harass them and take them in for questioning repeatedly.

If the PCs go to the authorities with proof of foul play, chances are that they will deal with Arthol. If they have made fools of themselves earlier, the sergeant will have a short attention span, but otherwise he will listen and act on convincing proof.

Arthol Sr., the old commander of the town guard, now holds a desk job at the town hall, and he expects the younger Arthol to be perfect in every way. Arthol Jr. does his best to live up to his old man's wishes.

Arthol, male human Ftr6

CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 6d10+12; hp 79; Init +3 (-1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (-1 Dexterity, +7 *chain mail* +2, +1 small steel shield), touch 9, flat-footed 17; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+7/19-20, *longsword* +2); SV Fort +9, Ref +1, Will +3; AL LN; Str 16, Dex 9, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11.

* Statistics are age-adjusted and include a +1 level bonus to Strength.

Skills: Climb +0, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (Karameikan local) +6, Listen +3, Ride (horse) +5, Spot +3, Swim -5.

Feats: Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Knowledge: Karameikan local), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Possessions: *Chain mail* +2, *longsword* +2, *potion of cure light wounds* (x3).

Master Anton Tvarovic

For many years, Anton has been Guildmaster of the Loggers' Guild. He has come to take his position for granted, and greatly enjoys the authority it gives him. For this reason, he is greatly troubled by his sudden rival, Gabriella Kendonion, who has started her own logging venture. Since Anton is unable to compete with Gabriella on her terms (she has more money and can offer better deals than he can), he has taken to working with unscrupulous people. Thinking himself quite shrewd, Anton has arranged for his own logging sites to be vandalized and sabotaged, in the hopes that Gabriella will take the blame.

Anton used to be an honest and hardworking man, but seeing his position threatened has undermined his integrity greatly. He is head of a family, and fears greatly for his future, if he is put out of business by Gabriella. Accordingly, he uses every means at his disposal to drive Gabriella from the area. Among other tactics, he fuels the flames of Thyatian-Traladaran hatred among the mostly Traladaran loggers, which has led to some over-eager individuals also vandalizing Gabriella's work sites, aggravating the rivalry further.

As guild head, Anton has a rather large house, which houses his extended family. Family members will be there at all hours of the day, and gaining access to Anton's private office is not an easy thing. However, Anton actually has contracts with members of the Kingdom of Thieves locked away in a strongbox inside his office, convinced that nobody would ever suspect him.

Age: 42.

Anton Tvarovic, male human Exp8

CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 8d6; hp 26; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9; Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6+1, hand ax); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +7; AL LN; Str 12, Dex 9, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 14.

* Statistics are age-adjusted and include a +2 level bonus to Charisma.

Skills: Balance +7, Climb +13, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (Karameikan local) +12, Profession (lumberjack) +14, Sense Motive +9, Spot +10, Swim +9, Use Rope +8, Wilderness Lore +10.

Feats: Endurance, Skill Focus (Profession: lumberjack), Skill Focus (Climb).

Gabriella Kendonion

The widow of a Thyatian merchant, Gabriella has left her home in Kerendas, with her son, for the rugged wilderness of Karamaikos. Running a business is what Gabriella knows, and she has wasted no time setting up a new one. Seeing the monopoly of the Loggers' Guild, Gabriella has elbowed her way into that business, luring several loggers away from the official guild with better wages and working conditions.

Gabriella is a prim and proper lady, who believes in separating business and pleasure. When it comes to official business, she is ruthless and driven, but at social affairs she can be quite charming. Having lived a somewhat turbulent and active life, Gabriella is a shrewd judge of character and keeps her own cards close to her. She is not exactly amused by her rivalry with the Guildmaster of the Loggers' Guild, but she believes it is a fight that she will eventually win. Gabriella is not above using foul means against her rival and has had some of her loyal men actually sabotage some of the Loggers' Guild work sites.

The Kendonion manor is a large house with five private guards—Thyatians—who will do their best to keep inquisitive PCs at bay. The guards are loyal to Gabriella and will not betray either her or Gabron to sweet-talking, bribing PCs. In fact, they are very likely to inform Gabriella of any such incidents, and she is likely to take legal action against such PCs. The guards are aware of Gabron's comings and goings, but do not suspect him to be anything but a spoiled brat, sneaking out to have his fun with the local girls at night.

Age: 40.

Gabriella Kendonion, female human Com1/Exp4

CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d4-1 plus 4d6-4; hp 12; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +1 melee (1d3-1, hairpin); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +7; AL LN; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 17.

* Statistics are age-adjusted and include a +1 level bonus to Charisma.

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +8, Craft (cooper) +5, Diplomacy +7, Knowledge (Karamaikan local) +4, Knowledge (Thyatian local) +7, Listen +8, Profession (accountant) +12, Ride (horse) +4, Sense Motive +8.

Feats: Skill Focus (Profession: accountant), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Iron Will.

Gabron Kendonion

Gabriella's son is a cunning but disturbed thief, who, unbeknownst to all—including his mother—secretly hates all Traladarans, feeling superior to them. He steals from Traladarans just to prove his superiority, and is definitely not above committing murder one of these days. Gabron appears quite the charming youth, but is in fact sociopathic in the extreme. Never one to forget an insult, he is likely to target any person who has offended him, for theft and humiliation. He fantasizes about control over other people, and is playing around with the idea of kidnapping and murdering somebody.

Nobody has yet realized that so far it's exclusively Traladarans who are being targeted, as Gabron is acting out his indignation against being taken to this backwater country. In truth he deeply resents his mother for this, and is likely to eventually act on this resentment by assaulting somebody who reminds him of her. It will be quite some time before he might gather enough courage to stand up to her, though.

Age: 19.

Gabron Kendonion, male human Rog3

CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d6; hp 14; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Atk +2 melee (1d4-1, dagger) or +6 ranged (1d8+1/19-20, *light crossbow* +1); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +1; AL CN; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 14.

Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +6, Climb +6, Disable Device +6, Gather Information +6, Hide +7, Jump +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +8, Search +6, Spot +6, Use Rope +7.

Feats: Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Far Shot.

Possessions: *Light crossbow* +1, *dust of tracelessness*.

Petrob Varescu

In his everyday life, Petrov is a judge at the Threshold town hall. In reality, he is head of the local Kingdom of Thieves. Petrov is a shrewd character, carefully planning and orchestrating the thefts in the town and making sure that the right people are let off the hook. Since Petrov has planned everything so carefully, there is one thing that he cannot tolerate: freelance thieves. The recent rash of thefts (by Gabron Kendonion) is bringing much unwanted attention on his own Kingdom of Thieves. Accordingly, Master Varescu has put all the works in motion to find the thief responsible for these thefts. Gabron, however, does not use any of the known channels for fencing goods, and does not associate with any other thieves of the kingdom. Petrov has been forced to publicly hire adventurers.

Incidentally, Petrov knows all about Master Anton Tvarovic of the Loggers' Guild, and his foul play. Exceptionally clever PCs might make a deal with Petrov to obtain proof against Anton in return for flushing out Gabron, but even in such a scenario, they are unlikely to deal directly with Petrov. He is sure to use a strawman, in case the PCs will want to bring everybody to justice.

At Petrov's town house there are absolutely no clues to his secret identity as head of the Kingdom of Thieves. Petrov keeps his two identities carefully separate, and only a handful of people know of both his identities. These are people that he would trust with his life, and they feel the same way about him. Anybody caught inside his house will be persecuted to the full extent of the law, likely to be sentenced to at least 5 years of imprisonment.

Age: 33.

Petrov Varescu, male human Rog10

CR 10; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 10d6; hp 29; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Atk +7/+2 melee (1d4, *dagger of venom*); SA sneak attack +5d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge, slippery mind; SV Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +6; AL LE; Str 9, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 15/17.

* Statistics are age-adjusted and include a +1 level bonus to Wisdom and a +1 to Charisma.

Skills: Bluff +12/14, Decipher Script +11, Diplomacy +10/12, Forgery +11, Gather Information +16/18, Hide +6, Innuendo +7, Knowledge (Karamaikan local) +9, Knowledge (Karamaikan politics) +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +6, Perform (oration) +14/16, Pick Pocket +5, Profession (advocate) +13, Read Lips +10, Search +9, Sense Motive +11, Spot +10.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Gather Information).

Slippery Mind (Ex): If he is targeted by a mind-affecting enchantment or effect and fails his saving throw, one round later Petrov may make a second saving throw to resist the effect.

Possessions: *Amulet of natural armor* +2, *cloak of charisma* +2, *dagger of venom*, *potion of glibness* (x2), *ring of mind shielding*.

Sergei and Adriana Borisov

Sort of a center for events, and a great base for PCs based in town, Windrush Inn is situated near the river. Its owner, Sergei Borisov, and his daughter Adriana run the inn. The inn is slightly high class, and the various personalities in town will be likely to arrange business meetings at the inn.

Sergei is a widower and a protective father, but Adriana is old enough to make her own decisions. Adriana's mother was a Thyatian, while Sergei is Traladaran, and she is blessed with the best looks both worlds can offer. Accordingly, she has many suitors, and might act favorably towards handsome male PCs. Should Gabron Kendonion come to know her (such as seeing her, when accompanying his mother to a meeting), he might well develop an obsession with her and make her the target of his fantasies.

Sergei Borisov, male human Com3

CR 2; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d4-3; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +1 melee (1d6, meat cleaver); AL LN; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Handle Animal +5, Listen +8, Profession (innkeeper) +9, Spot +8, Swim +4, Use Rope +3.

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Profession: innkeeper).

Adriana Borisov, female human Com1

CR ½; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 1d4-1; hp 3; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk -1 melee (1d4-1, beer stein); AL LN; SV Fort -1, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 9, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 16.

Skills: Craft (pottery) +7, Handle Animal +7, Listen +3, Profession (innkeeper) +3, Spot +3, Swim +3.

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft: pottery).

The Battle of Threshold

Once you, as DM, are satisfied that the PCs are properly caught up in adventures in Threshold, it is time to spring the humanoid attack. K'Rrargg, the bugbear witch doctor, leads his small army of bugbears against the town, looking for plunder and prestige.

The attack starts with two simultaneous strikes: one at the fishermen's town and one at the loggers' camp. Both of these attacks are very successful, though the assault on the fishermen's town takes longer, since the bronze golem at the loggers' camp decides that battle quickly. While people flee the attacks, the bugbears use the logs stashed at the loggers' camp to cross the Windrush River, landing at Fogor Isle. Ahead of them, the bronze golem wades into the town, smashing buildings and people in its way. Since the town guard stays out of Fogor Isle at night, the bugbears are practically unopposed by any sort of organized resistance, quickly dispatching the small groups of archers gathered to oppose them.

As dawn breaks, the bugbears cross the bridges into town, led by the bronze golem and their fearsome witch doctor. The bugbears are intent on killing and looting, not conquering. As a result they seek to increase confusion and fear, not hold their conquered terrain.

As DM you can run the battle any way you like, but below are a number of suggested encounters during the battle. The intent is to keep the PCs busy and personally involved in the battle. If you have PCs with families or paramours in the town, exploit that. Otherwise, the following encounters can serve as inspiration or to spark your own ideas for the battle.

Encounters with the rampaging bugbears come in three types: ordinary bugbears, elite bugbears and the witch doctor. Stats for the three types are given below. You may mix ordinary bugbears with elite chiefs and tailor the opposition to suit your PCs.

Side Events during the Battle of Threshold

These events can be run at any time, though they are presented here in their suggested order. DMs should feel free to modify them or add events of their own as they see fit. The sense of dramatic tension should be played up very strongly during and between events. DMs should describe the chaos that is taking place throughout the town, with people fleeing the carnage, bugbears rampaging, and even the ominous thumping and fires caused by the bronze golem running amok through the town.

Sergei Borisov's Inn (EL 4)

Bugbears will find an inn a very tempting target (alcohol is high on their list of good loot). Due to its location near the river bank, the inn will become one of the first targets once the bugbears have entered the city proper. Sergei and his daughter Adriana will try to defend the inn, but they can't hold off a force of bloodthirsty bugbears. If the PCs are staying here, this might be their first encounter, or perhaps they have gear left at the inn in danger of being stolen by the bugbears. Any stolen gear might also give them a personal reason for later tracking down the bugbears.

Bugbears (2)

hp 18, 15; *Monster Manual* 27. The largest of the two bugbears (18 hp) is wielding a battle ax (x3 damage on a critical hit).

Tactics: These bugbears are not expecting any heavy resistance. If one of the bugbears is killed, or they are reduced below half of their hit points, they will attempt to flee into the streets of Threshold.

Reclaiming Your Weapons

Since several weapons might have been confiscated and kept in the town hall, the first priority of some PCs may well be to visit the town hall and reclaim their gear. As soon as it becomes apparent that the town is under attack, the officials will attempt to seal the town hall, and they will expect the PCs to help protect this, the most important building in town (from their point of view). Heroic PCs should soon be drawn out into the streets, seeing the bugbears more intent on slaughter and looting than invading town halls. Town officials might not see it that way, though, and could later make trouble for PCs abandoning them during the battle.

A Barricade (CL 5)

Citizens of Threshold have barricaded a road to protect their homes, and the bugbears naturally assume that something worth looting is to be found there. PCs will want to save the citizens from the rampaging humanoids, and take the citizens to a safer place.

Bugbears (3)

hp 17, 16, 12; *Monster Manual* 27.

Reconciled Enemies (CL 5)

Gabriella Kendonion's manor is in danger of being overrun by the lieutenant of the bugbears, a tough barbarian named Thrakh. Anton Tvarovic, a decent person at heart, helps defend it. Gabriella's son Gabron might very well slip and show his hatred, spitting on Anton's help, giving a clue to observant PCs. PCs may also be distracted during the fight by being forced to save Anton or the others from Thrakh's terrible ferocity.

Thrakh, male bugbear Bbn3

CR5; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d8+6 plus 3d12+6; hp 56; Init +5 (+1 Dexterity, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +5 *chain shirt* +1), touch 11, flat-footed 19; Atk +5; SQ darkvision, rage, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +5, Hide +2, Intimidate +2, Jump +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +2.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Special Qualities: **Rage:** The following changes are in effect as long as Thrakh rages: AC 17; hp 68; Atk ; SV Fort +8, Will +4; Str 22, Con 19; Skills. His rage can be used once per day, it lasts for 7 rounds (or until ended), and he is winded afterwards; **Uncanny Dodge:** Thrakh doesn't lose his Dexterity bonus to AC when flat-footed.

Possessions: *Chain shirt* +1, *battleaxe* +1, 36 *royals*, 40 *cronas*, an emerald (worth 35 gp), 2 silver-chased goblets (worth 12 gp each), and a handful of silver jewelry (collectively worth 60 gp).

Tactics: Thrakh will go into a rage at the sight of the PCs, focusing his attacks on the most heavily-armored or strongest-looking PC first. If reduced to 20 hp or less, he will retreat from the field of battle. If he gets away, he may show up later at the temple during the second part of the adventure, in room 1 (Entry Hall).

Reinforcements from Tarnskeep (CL 6)

Baroness Aleena Yurevich, warned by refugees from the fishermen's town, arrives to repel the invaders, but the bugbears have secured the northern town gates, and the PCs need to reconquer them to let the reinforcements in. This should be a turning point in the battle, as Aleena's forces will even out the odds considerably, in fact turning the battle against the bugbears. When the PCs arrive on the scene, read them the following:

The northern gate is barred and has a considerable pile of debris stacked up against it, confounding any efforts to break through from the other side. Even worse, two bugbears stand atop the wall, peppering the would-be rescuers with arrows. Three other bugbears stand around the base of the gate, menacingly blocking any direct access to the gate.

It will take 6 rounds for the baroness's forces to break through the gates and come to the aid of the town and the PCs. If the PCs are in trouble, the DM may wish to speed this up by a few rounds. Even if PCs need assistance in defeating the bugbears, they should gain full experience for the encounter if they last long enough to allow the baroness and her troops through to the town.

Bugbears (5)

hp 17, 16, 16, 14, 12; *Monster Manual* 27. Two of the bugbears are armed with short bows and arrows.

Tactics: The three bugbears on the ground will shout an alarm to the two atop the wall before closing to skirmish with the party. Every round, one of the two archers will fire at the party below (the other one is still firing at the forces on the other side of the gate). When one of the bugbears on the ground falls in combat, one of the archers will run down to melee combat (it will take him one round to reach the PCs).

The Bronze Warrior (CL 12)

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

As you rush through the harrowed streets of Threshold, the ground begins to shake beneath you. It throbs with a steady thumping. You hear screams from just around the corner.

If they choose to investigate, as they round the corner, they see the following:

Turning the corner, you spy a tremendous golden-skinned, jackal-headed statue tromping through the streets. It is creating a swath of devastation around it, as it bashes down buildings with its mighty fists. Fires rage all around, and the very air near the creature shimmers hazily from the heat it gives off. A brave warrior rushes forward to attack it, smiting it with its sword. The monstrosity doesn't even register the man's presence, never slowing in its stride, even as it crushes him beneath one shining foot.

Of course, the unstoppable bronze golem wades through buildings and squashes all who confront it. PCs might want to attempt to trap it with impromptu pit traps or otherwise deal with it, but confronting it directly should prove impossible. The DM is encouraged not to kill PCs outright, but make it very obvious that they're out of their league (a well-known warrior being squashed without a chance, or the bronze golem toppling a building should prove sufficient warning). If their plans have a good chance of succeeding, the witch doctor should show up to shout orders at it to save the golem, giving them a clue who's really behind this.

Bronze Golem

hp 110; see statistics in the Appendix section.

Fire Hazard

While Threshold is built to minimize fire hazard, the old town on Fogor Isle is not. Since the bugbears are interested in spreading chaos, they can, deliberately or not, start a fire on Fogor Isle that could prove disastrous if it isn't contained. Trying to put out fires while fighting desperately for their lives should be a challenge for any PC. This encounter is a good way to end the battle, as it will give the PCs something to worry about, besides pursuing the bugbears.

The Witch Doctor (CL 7)

Encountering the witch doctor and his elite bodyguards should be the climax for the PCs. They should manage to, at the very least, wound him sufficiently for him to decide to withdraw, calling the bronze warrior to accompany him, giving the PCs and the baroness a chance to topple it. Should the witch doctor die, that isn't a disaster. Though the PCs are meant to seek out the bugbear temple, they will still have motivations to do so, and the witch doctor has able apprentices to take his place in the later stages of the adventure.

K'Rrargg, male bugbear Adp3

CR4; Medium-size Humanoid (7 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 3d8+3 plus 3d6+3; hp 37; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Atk +4 melee (1d8+1, morningstar); SA spells; SQ darkvision; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +7*, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10.

* K'Rrargg gains a +2 bonus to Reflex saves while Squ'rk is within one mile.

Skills: Climb +4, Concentration +4, Hide +4, Knowledge (bugbear religion) +4, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Spellcraft +4, Spot +8.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Great Fortitude.

Spells Prepared (3/3):

0: *cure minor wounds* (x2), *guidance*.

1st: *bless*, *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*.

Possessions: *Wand of burning hands* (22 charges), *leather armor* +1, *potion of bull's strength*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, key to treasure chest in room 6 of the temple (see below).

Squ'rk, weasel familiar

CR -; Tiny Magical Beast; HD 1/2d8; hp 18; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 14; Atk +5 melee (1d3-4, bite); SA touch; SQ improved evasion, share spells, empathic link; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 5.

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +11, Hide +13, Move Silently +9, Spot +4.

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).

K'Rrargg's Bodyguards, male bugbear War1 (2)

CR 3; Medium-size Humanoids (7 ft. tall); HD 3d8+6 plus 1d8+2; hp 30; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Atk +7 melee (1d8+3/x3, battleax); SQ darkvision; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +2, Hide +2, Intimidate +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (battleax).

Possessions: Battleax.

Tactics: On the first round of combat, K'Rrargg's bodyguards will close to skirmish with the PCs, while K'Rrargg casts *bless*. K'Rrargg will then use his *wand of burning hands* to fry PCs from a distance while his bodyguards deal with them up close. If forced into melee combat, K'Rrargg will down his *potion of bull's strength* before attacking hand to hand. If his bodyguards are killed, or he is reduced to 10 hp or less, K'Rrargg will cast *obscuring mist* and attempt to escape from combat. If K'Rrargg manages to escape from combat, he will turn up during the latter half of the adventure in room 6 of the temple (see below).

Aftermath

In the aftermath of the battle, there will be a million things for the PCs to do. Putting out fires, rescuing people from collapsed buildings and hunting down the remaining bugbears in town, should keep the PCs from pursuing the bugbears just yet. If they have proven themselves able heroes, they will be given proper praise, and invited to official dinner at either the town hall or Tarnskeep, to be given official recognition. On the other hand, if they acted in a cowardly manner, or abandoned town officials, they might be charged with treason. In spite of their new status, they will also want to finish up their investigations. They might also suspect that the bugbear attack is tied into one of their active investigations, and make plans accordingly. As DM, try to keep them in town for a few days, with official obligations or charging them with treason.

Regardless of how the PCs behaved, the end result of the raid for the town is the same—much of Fogor Isle lies in ruin, and many buildings in Threshold proper have sustained heavy damage. It will take many months, of not a few years, for the town to be fully restored. Witnessing the barbarity of the raid, and the devastation it wrought, could serve as another reason for the PCs to pursue the bugbears once they are able to do so.

Analysis of the Golem

A few days after the battle of Threshold, a very famous mage, Igor Grygorovich, shows up in town. He goes straight to the baroness, not tolerating any nonsense. Igor is a well-known Traladaran historian, and he is here to study the remains of the bronze golem. The mage suspects that the golem is a remnant of the ancient Traldar culture, and that it may have come from a stash of invaluable treasure. Consequently, he will want to track down the bugbears and find out where they obtained the golem.

The PCs should be offered to accompany Igor on his trek, either because they have proven themselves heroes, or as a way of redeeming themselves by service to the baroness. In the latter case, Igor may well *geas* them to perform their duties, if they accept to undertake the mission rather than face other legal repercussions (long prison sentence, outrageous fines or death, depending on the severity of their actions). Igor will, of course, explain what he knows of the golem, and the culture it came from (you may want to paraphrase appropriate parts of the Adventure Background, or the Player's Background of GAZ1 *The Grand Duchy of Karameikos*).

If any PC mages have studied at the School of Magecraft, you may give them additional background and an established relationship with Igor.

Igor Grygorovich

Not a battlemage by any means, Igor is a scholar and historian, though over the years (he was born AC 949) he has learned to handle himself, particularly since he spent his youth trekking the country. He has been teaching at the School of Magecraft for the past six years and has finally begun to come in touch with current events. Still, he much prefers to pore over tomes and restore ancient pottery. He longs for chances to go on field trips and relive his youth, but the school keeps him pretty busy. This bronze golem business is exactly the break he has been waiting for, and now he insists on searching out the site where it was found, and he obviously needs an escort.

Igor isn't an annoying old coot, but an intelligent and mostly friendly aging gentleman, who prefers to discuss events of several hundred years ago, rather than what is currently going on around him. He isn't exactly shy, just not very good at making conversation that doesn't involve his field of knowledge. On the other hand, he's quickly absorbed by discovering ancient artifacts and is supremely knowledgeable about ancient Traladara. He can become a steadfast contact and ally for the PCs.

While Igor is of a high level, he will not be of much aid to PCs during battles, since he carries few offensive spells and isn't in peak physical condition. While he can take a beating, he won't fight the battles on behalf of the PCs, though he might save them in a bind, through the use of some unexpected spell.

Should Igor learn firsthand of the Lost Valley (from the Caravan random encounter), he will insist on making a trip to that place as well, after finishing this trek (see Further Adventures).

Age: 69.

Igor Grygorovich, male human Div10/Lor12

CR 22; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in.); HD 10d4-10 plus 12d4-14; hp 32; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (-1 Dexterity, +5 *ring of protection* +5, +2 *staff of power*); touch 15, flat-footed 15; Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6, *staff of power*); SA spells; SQ SR 21, lore, greater lore, true lore, secrets, *detect magic*; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +19; AL NG; Str 8, Dex 9, Con 9, Int 24, Wis 13, Cha 11.

* Statistics are age-adjusted and include a +5 level bonus to Intelligence.

Skills: Alchemy +18, Appraise +17, Decipher Script +17, Gather Information +5, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (Karameikan geography) +24, Knowledge (Karameikan history) +34, Knowledge (Karameikan local) +34, Knowledge (Karameikan nobility) +25, Knowledge (Traladaran religion) +23, Profession (teacher) +9, Scry +28, Spellcraft +32, Use Magic Device +7.

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Staff, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Greater Spell Focus (Divination), Greater Spell Penetration, Permanent Emanation (*detect magic*), Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge: arcana), Skill Focus (Knowledge: Karameikan history), Skill Focus (Knowledge: Karameikan local), Spell Focus (Divination), Spell Penetration.

Lore (Ex): Igor adds 19 to Knowledge checks using the Lore ability.

Greater Lore (Ex): Igor can identify (as the spell) any item he examines. He may use this ability once per item examined.

True Lore (Ex): Once per day Igor can duplicate the effects of either a *legend lore* or *analyze dweomer* spell.

Secrets: Igor has gained the secret knowledges of: Instant Mastery (appraise), Secrets of Inner Strength (+1 Will saves), Newfound Arcana (bonus 1st level spell), More Newfound Arcana (bonus 2nd level spell), and Applicable Knowledge (Greater Spell Focus).

Bonus Language: Igor's studies have afforded him knowledge of the languages of Hutaakan and Nithian.

Detect Magic (Sp): Igor can *detect magic* as a free action. Any effect that would normally *dispel* it merely suppress the ability for 2d4 rounds.

Wizard Spells Prepared (5/8/8/7/6/6/6/6/5/5; base save DC = 17 + spell level; Divination base save DC = 21 + spell level):

0: *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *read magic*.

1st: *comprehend languages*, *detect secret doors*, *detect undead*, *hold portal*, *identify**, *message*, *Tenser's floating disk*, *true strike*, *unseen servant*.

2nd: *daylight*, *detect thoughts*, *magic mouth*, *misdirection*, *knock*, *locate object**, *obscure object*, *see invisibility*, *whispering wind*.

3rd: *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *dispel magic*, *illusory script*, *Leomund's tiny hut*, *nondetection*, *suggestion*, *tongues** x2.

4th: *arcane eye*, *detect scrying*, *locate creature**, *minor creation*, *Rary's mnemonic enhancer*, *remove curse*, *scrying*.

5th: *contact other plane**, *feeblemind*, *major creation*, *prying eyes*, *Rary's telepathic bond*, *sending*, *teleport*.

6th: *analyze dweomer**, *contingency*, *geas*, *legend lore*, *Mordenkainen's lucubration*, *true seeing* x2.

7th: *Drawmij's instant summons*, *greater scrying**, *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*, *sequester*, *spell turning*, *teleport without error*, *vision*.

8th: *discern location** x2, *etherealness*, *mind blank*, *protection from spells*, *symbol*.

9th: *astral projection*, *foresight**, *freedom*, *Mordenkainen's disjunction* x2.

* These spells belong to the school of Divination, which is Igor's specialty. Prohibited school: Necromancy.

Possessions: *Mantle of spell resistance*, *mirror of mental prowess*, *ring of protection* +5, *staff of power*, *wand of dispel magic* (25 charges).

Trek to the Temple

Following the PCs' conversation with Igor Grygorovich, it is presumed that they will accept his offer of employment as bodyguards for the journey to the temple. The path of destruction left by the bugbears is easy to follow at first, but once Threshold fades into the distance, PCs will have to rely on tracking skills to determine the location of the temple. If none of the PCs have the appropriate skills, the DM can have one of the locals, perhaps a woodsman or hunter, accompany the party as a guide. If this option is chosen, the DM should develop stats and a brief background for the NPC, and give him or her basic combat skills. This NPC would fight in self-defense only.

Over the course of their journey, the party may have a number of encounters. The DM may use any of the encounters, in any sequence, presented below, or none of them—whatever best suits his or her campaign style. Should the DM wish to randomize the process, a roll of a d6 may be used to determine which encounter takes place, rolling again if a given encounter has already happened. The DM may opt not to re-roll results of “1” or “6” if they have already been encountered, to allow for the possibility of larger numbers of humanoids roaming the countryside.

Bugbear War Party (CL 5)

Our regular hostile humanoid encounter; these bugbears are drunk on the success of their raid. In addition to their regular weapons and equipment, the bugbears may be in possession of treasures looted from Threshold (the DM should determine the chance of this occurring). If so, the raiders will be carrying 2d10x10 gold pieces' worth of treasure. Award the PCs an experience point bonus if they try to return the loot to its rightful owners after the adventure.

Bugbears (3)

hp 20, 14, 13; *Monster Manual* 27.

Tactics: These bugbears are not expecting any heavy resistance. If one of the bugbears is killed, or they are reduced below half of their hit points, they will attempt to flee.

Treasure: The bugbears carry 4d8x10 *royals*, one moonstone (50 gp), and a silver locket studded with rubies (175 gp). The locket has an illustration of a young woman inside, and engravings on the back are to “Lysette.”

Caravan for the Lost Valley

In entrepreneur Finnwiddey Nimbletoes obtained exclusive trade rights for the Lost Valley last year. He (or his hired people) heads a caravan bound for the valley. This encounter serves both as area flavor and as an opportunity to get PCs interested in the Lost Valley. Finnwiddey could also serve as a potentially useful contact for the PCs, due to his connections in the Karameikan hin business community, as well as family ties to the Five Shires.

Logging Saboteurs (EL 3)

This is a band of men hired by Anton Tvarovic or Gabriella Kendonion to sabotage the other's logging operations. Although considered tough, the saboteurs are reluctant to fight stronger opponents, and will try to run away at the first sign of trouble. Should the PCs fight them, they might be identified by the saboteurs to the constabulary as being the brigands who ambushed them in the woods!

Saboteurs, human male War1 (6)

CR ½; Medium-size Humanoids (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, light hammer) or +2 melee (1d6+1, handax); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +3, Intimidate +4, Swim +3.

Feats: Power Attack.

Possessions: Handax, light hammer.

Royal Patrol

The party encounters a company (60 soldiers and a lieutenant) from the 4th division of the King's Army from Duke's Road Keep, looking for hostile humanoids. They won't accompany adventurers on a quest; their job is to hunt down humanoids, not escort adventurers to hidden temples. They can, however, provide the PCs with useful information about the humanoid tribes in the region—namely, where they are located, and what they have been doing lately.

Prospectors (EL 3)

Frontiersmen looking for precious metals and gems, ancient ruins—you name it. They will be reticent about telling anyone where they are going (for all they know, the PCs might be tempted to muscle in on their territory). A larger group of prospectors might be tempted to rob the PCs, if they look injured.

Prospectors, human male Com1 (5)

CR ½; Medium-size Humanoids (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d6; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4, light pick); AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +2, Profession (miner) +3, Spot +1, Use Rope +2.

Possessions: light pick, prospecting gear.

Goblin Wolfrider Scouts (EL 4)

Not far from Threshold, nestled in the forested foothills of the Cruth Mountains, is a remote goblin stronghold. Although they have lived for a long time in the shadow of the bugbears, the tribe has a new chief, who has started sending out scouts to gauge the strength of his tribe's rivals—including nearby human settlements. Should the party appear to be weak or injured, the goblins might attack; otherwise, they might loose a few arrows if the PCs are spotted, and ride away.

The DM should roll Spot checks normally.

Wolfriders, male goblins (2)

CR 1/4; HD 1d8; hp 6; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., 50 ft. (mounted on worgs); AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Atk +1 melee (1d6-1, short sword) or +3 ranged (1d6, short bow); SQ darkvision; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Ride +5, Spot +3.

Feats: Mounted Combat.

Possessions: Short sword, short bow, 30 arrows, studded leather armor.

Worg Mounts (2)

CR 2; hp 32, 30; *Monster Manual* 185-6.

Tactics: On the first round of combat, the goblins will fire their bows at the PCs. On subsequent rounds, they will draw their short swords and charge the PCs. If one or more of the goblins are killed, the surviving enemies will attempt to retreat into the woods.

Once the DM has put the party through as many wilderness encounters as he or she sees fit, it is time to proceed with the next phase of the adventure—the storming of the temple.

The Lost Temple

Map of the Lost Temple (Upper Level)

The Bugbear Temple (Upper Level)

The temple itself lies underground, built into a mountainside. This is the main area, where the bugbears worship the Beast (actually they worship Bartziluth, not the original Beast worshipped by the temple's original users). The rooms here are used by the shaman and his acolytes, and some elite guards tend to them.

Interior Walls (Hewn Basalt)

3 ft. thick hewn stone; Hardness 8; hp 540; Break DC 50; Climb DC 22.

Old Wooden Doors

2 in. thick; Hardness 4; hp 15; Stuck DC 18; Open Locks DC 22.

1. Entry Hall (EL5)

The fallen splendor of a bygone age is much in evidence here. Clearly this was an entry hall of some sort: fluted pillars have been carved out of the rock face here, giving the appearance of supporting a pediment, which in turn frames a rectangular entrance leading deeper into the mountainside. On the walls to either side of you, broken only by rusting wall sconces, can be seen faded carvings. Your immediate attention is drawn to the three burly creatures occupying much of this chamber.

The three creatures are large bugbears (even by the standards of their own race), armed with great clubs.

Bugbears (3)

CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (7 ft. tall); HD 3d8+6; hp 30, 28, 26; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +2 leather); touch 11, flat-footed 15; Atk +5 melee (1d10+3, great club); SQ darkvision; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Tactics: Regardless of whether or not they were alerted by the sounds of combat outside, they will not be surprised by the PCs' arrival, and will attack them with ferocity. If the battle turns against them, one of the bugbears will try to run into the temple to alert the acolytes (in area 3).

Treasure: Also present in this room are three crude sets of sleeping furs, and a pile of refuse in the far corner. Should the PCs search the room, they could find a tarnished silver ring (nonmagical—worth 20 gold pieces) hidden amongst the furs.

If he managed to escape during the Battle of Threshold, Thrakh is here with two of the bugbears (there is no third bugbear in this case). The EL of the encounter should be raised to 6 in this instance.

Thrakh, male bugbear Bbn3

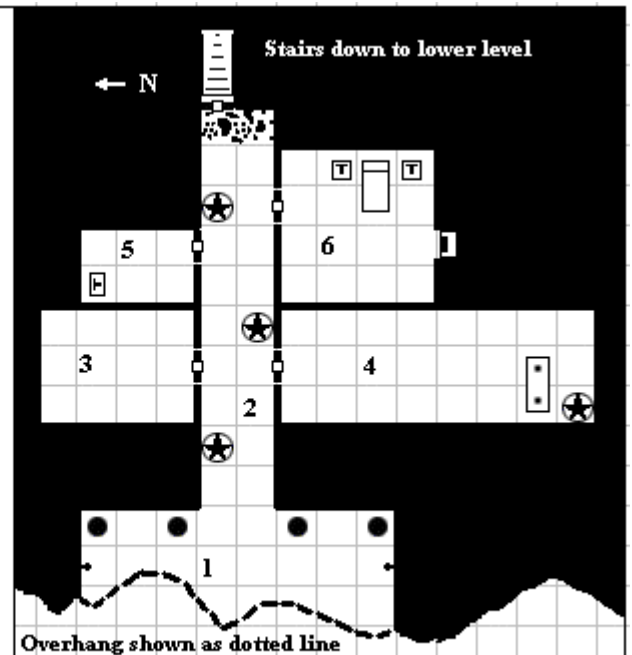
Use the statistics for Thrakh given in the Battle of Threshold, encounter 4, above.

Legend of the Bronze Warrior The Lost Temple (upper level)

Scale: One square equals 5 feet.

Map Legend

- Pillar
- ★ Statue
- ⬮ Door
- ⬮ Wall Sconce
- ⬮ Altar
- ⬮ Tables



Map copyright 2003 by Geoff Gander, permission granted to photocopy for personal use.
Map courtesy of Dungeoncrafter (TM)

2. Hall

A long hallway stretches before you, passing into shadow as it heads into the mountain. From where you are standing, you can see at least two doors ahead—one on each side of the hall. Spaced at regular intervals along the hall are what appear to be statues of wolf-men.

The statues were carved to resemble gnolls, but time has weathered their features somewhat, so that they retain their canine appearance, but little else. As the PCs venture deeper, they will see the second set of doors, as well as a pile of fresh rubble at the end of the hall. If the PCs try to clear the rubble, it will take one person six turns (one hour) to complete the task—reduce this by one turn for each additional party member who helps out. DMs may wish to roll for encounters as per the standard rules, due to the noise, with an encounter meaning that any bugbears outside the temple have heard the PCs digging away at the debris.

Once the rubble has been cleared, the PCs will discover an ancient, battered wooden door, which opens outwards. Behind the door is a staircase, leading downwards (into the dungeon). PCs will a good sense of smell, or who are alert, will notice a musty smell wafting up from below.

3. Acolyte Living Quarters (EL 6)

A heavy odor of unwashed bodies assails your senses in this dingy chamber. Scattered about this otherwise bare room are three piles of furs, and in the far corner is a pile of bones and other detritus. Also present are three large, hairy creatures dressed in filthy loincloths.

The creatures inhabiting this room are bugbear acolytes sworn to serve the evil shaman. If no alarm has been sounded, the acolytes will be resting here on their sleeping furs; otherwise, they will be in the chapel. If the bugbears are present, they will attack the PCs. Their combat statistics are as follows:

Acolytes, male bugbears Adp1 (3)

CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (7 ft. tall); HD 3d8+3 plus 1d6+1; hp 24, 22, 20; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Atk +4 melee (1d8+1, morningstar); SA spells; SQ darkvision; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +2, Concentration +1, Hide +3, Knowledge (bugbear religion) +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting.

Spells Prepared (3/1):

0: *cure minor wounds* (x2), *guidance*.

1st: *burning hands*.

Tactics: On the first round of combat, the two bugbears with the lowest hp will move to flank the PCs, and cast *burning hands*, trying to catch as many PCs in the crossfire as possible. The one with 24 hp will cast *guidance* on himself. On the second round, the 24-hp bugbear will close to combat with the PCs, while the other two cast *guidance* on themselves. After that, the bugbears will alternately using *cure minor wounds* on each other and skirmish with the PCs. The 24-hp bugbear will save his *burning hands* spell to use on a PC who looks severely wounded.

Treasure: Aside from the sleeping furs, the only other item of interest in this room is the pile of garbage, which contains remnants of the bugbears' previous meals, a silver arrowhead (worth 1 gp), and the disintegrating remains of the barrels and sacks that once filled this room—the only evidence that this was once the temple storeroom.

4. Chapel

The openness of this long chamber, in addition to the presence of an imposing altar at the far end, proclaims this room to be a chapel. The walls are hung with simple tapestries depicting numerous battles, and various weapons lie on the ground in front of the altar. Against the far wall is a statue of what appears to be a great warrior, but the features are unrecognizable from this distance.

If the alarm has been raised, the acolytes from area 3 will be here, praying to Bartziluth. If they notice the PCs entering the chapel, they will invoke the name of their Immortal, and seek to drive the intruders away.

If the PCs examine the weapons, they will notice that some of them bear the insignia of Baroness Aleena Yurevich—these were taken from recently killed baronial guards. None of them are magical. Closer inspection of the statue will reveal that it was carved in the likeness of a wolf-man (actually a gnoll), but the face was chipped away to resemble a bugbear. Contrary to all conventional expectations concerning altar rooms in evil temples, there is nothing of value in this room.

5. Workshop

Mosaics depicting hunting scenes can still be seen under the crude glyphs, painted in blood, that dot the walls of this small chamber. Suspended by strings overhead, dozens of dried hands and animal paws hang down into the room, swaying slightly with the air currents.

Against the far wall stands a small wooden table, its surface laden with all sorts of stoppered vials, sealed jugs, and covered bowls.

This room was once the private chapel of the temple priest, but all of its contents were looted long ago. Now, the bugbear shaman uses this room as his personal workshop, where he mixes his potions and powders, and communes with his Immortal. If the PCs search the table, they will find the equivalent of a basic alchemical laboratory (worth approximately 80 gp to an alchemist or a wizard), as well as two weak healing potions (each one will restore 1d4 hit points).

6. Priest's Bedchamber (EL 4)

Clearly, this room was, and still is, a bedroom. Against the wall to your left is a battered, sagging wooden bed, flanked by two night tables. A large heap of furs obscures most of the bed. In the far wall is a fireplace, carved into the rock itself, which is filled with charred wood and ashes.

This room was once the personal chamber of the temple priest, which the bugbear shaman has taken for his own living quarters. The fireplace is functional, with its two-foot wide chimney leading roughly 20 feet upwards, through solid rock, to vent from a ravine unseen from the ground outside.

Although the bed contains nothing of value, there is an ancient locked chest beneath it (2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; break DC 18). The lock can be picked (DC 20) or broken (DC 20); alternatively, the party could use the key acquired from the shaman (encounter 8 in part one). If K'Rrargg managed to escape during the battle of Threshold, he and his familiar will be encountered in this room:

K'Rrargg, male bugbear Adp3

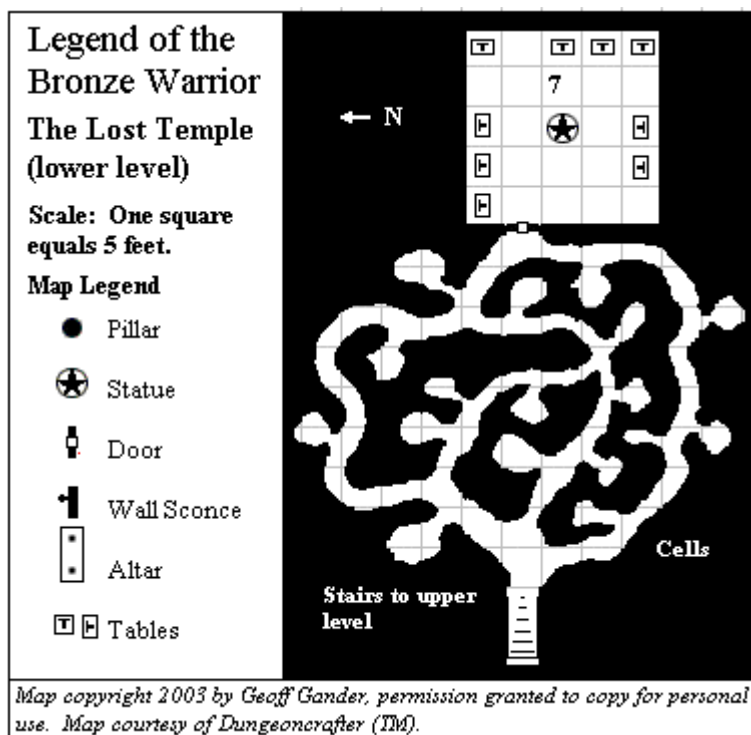
use the statistics presented in the Battle of Threshold section.

Squ'rk, weasel familiar

use the statistics presented in the Battle of Threshold section, above.

Treasure: Contained within the chest, beneath piles of rotting cloth, is a small collection of coins and a ring. There are 22 *royals*, 48 *cronas*, and a plain electrum ring. An Appraise check (DC 12) estimates its value at a base value of 30 gp (use the rules on p. 63 of the *PHB* for determining actual appraisal value). A *detect magic* or similar spell reveals the rings actual value, as a *ring of protection* +1.

Map of the Lost Temple (Lower Level)



The Dungeon (Lower Level)

When the temple above was inhabited by its original occupants, the dungeon was used to hold sacrificial victims. When the temple was attacked by the party of Traladaran heroes many years ago, the bodies of the priest and his acolytes were thrown into the dungeons. The malevolence of this place lived on, and the evil clerics' patron Immortal had their bodies animated, to serve as the guardians of this unholy place. When the bugbears arrived, they discovered the undead, and, being unable to destroy them all, they blocked the door at the end of the hall upstairs. The undead priest and his followers have been wandering the lower levels since that time.

There are only two real "rooms" on this level—the cells and the treasury (the DM is free to expand the lower level as he or she sees fit). The cells were carved into the rock, and made secure with wooden doors. Most of the doors have since rotted away, leaving rows of empty niches. It is here that the zombies and ghouls that were once the evil clerics roam—their combat statistics are as follows:

Ghoul patrol (EL 4):

Zombie, medium-sized (4)

CR 1/2; *Monster Manual* 191-192.

Ghoul

CR 1; *Monster Manual* 97.

Tactics: There are three of these groups roaming the cells. The zombies will shuffle forward to attack immediately, while the ghoul will approach cautiously and attempt to paralyze a PC. Both the zombies and the ghoul will focus their attentions on only the moving and living PCs, completely ignoring any that have been paralyzed. The ghouls will retreat if obviously overpowered (perhaps to join up with another of the patrols later), though the mindless zombies will continue to attack regardless.

Zombie patrol (EL 2):

Zombie, Medium-sized (4)

CR 1/2; *Monster Manual* 191-192.

Tactics: There are two of these groups of zombies roaming around. They will simply attempt to slay any living thing in their realm.

DMs should roll for encounters each turn the PCs spend wandering the cells, doubling the chance of an encounter due to the confined nature of this part of the temple. The PCs will continue to encounter undead until all of the creatures have been destroyed. The DM should keep track of the number of undead slain, and should feel free to shuffle around the group makeups above to challenge a stronger party, or to help a weaker party. There is nothing of value in this part of the lower level.

7. Treasury (EL 6)

The door to this room is locked. The lock can be picked, but it is rusted shut, and thus is difficult to open.

Treasury Door

2 in. thick iron door; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Locks DC 20.

Trap: The lock to the door is equipped with an acid spray trap that will trigger if not disarmed. If the trap is activated, the acid will spray anyone within three feet of the door.

Acid Trap

CR 5; 1d6 points of corrosive damage; Reflex save avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20). See *DMG* p. 88 for more information about acid dangers.

When the door has been opened, read:

You have entered a large, square chamber, whose walls are lined with sagging tables, each of which, in turn, is laden with haphazard piles of unidentifiable objects. You recognize the glint of metal in some places, possibly coins, but all of it bears the appearance of having been here for a long time.

The center of this room is occupied by two stone statues of what appears to be men with the head of a dog or wolf of some sort. Before you can take in any more sights, however, you hear grinding noises coming from the statues. They are moving, and, with ponderous steps, are heading in your direction.

The PCs must fight the guardians of this chamber, two rock living statues carved in the likeness of gnolls, before they can profit from their discovery. Being simple constructs, the living statues will fight to the death, and will attack the nearest opponent first, changing targets only if the first opponent is dead or otherwise incapacitated, or if they sustain 10 or more points of damage from a single attack made by another PC—in which case that PC will be attacked the following round.

Rock Living Statues, advanced (2)

CR 4; Large Constructs (Fire); HD 8d10; hp 44; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (can't run); AC 16 (-1 Dexterity, -1 size, +8 natural); Atk +15 melee (1d8+9, 2 fists); SA lava spurt; SQ construct, fire subtype, darkvision 60 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 28, Dex 8, Con -, Int 5, Wis 11, Cha 1. Height: 10 ft.

Lava Spurt (Ex): If an advanced rock living statue is injured by slashing or piercing weapons, its fiery blood spurts forth, dealing 2d6 points of fire damage to the opponent who wounded it. Characters may make a Reflex save for half damage.

Fire subtype (Ex): A rock living statue is immune to fire damage, and takes a -10 penalty on saves against cold attacks. If a cold attack does not allow a saving throw, the statue takes double damage instead.

Construct traits (Ex): A living statue is immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. It is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. It is immune to anything requiring a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). It is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, it is immediately destroyed. As it is not alive, a living statue cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*.

Treasure: This room is where the evil clerics kept much of their wealth, and many treasures of Traladara's past can be found here, some of them of no historical value, which the PCs can keep as payment. The precise nature and amount of the treasure has been left for the DM to determine. Many of the items in this room would be of no interest to ordinary PCs, but of great value to a historian like Igor.

Conclusion

Following the looting of the lost temple, the PCs will need to accompany Igor on the return trip to Threshold, laden with ancient treasures. On the return trip, you may want to run other encounters. Depending on the state the PCs are in, you may even want to have the goblins of the area attempt to steal the treasure from the PCs, further complicating matters.

Assuming that the PCs make it back to town safely, they will be met by the town guard and invited (ordered) to Tarnskeep, where Baroness Aleena will evaluate their performance. Igor should, under all circumstances, be with the PCs—should he have somehow perished, the PCs should have brought his body back. Aleena will heal and *raise* any injured and dead. If the PCs are already established heroes of the town, they will be offered their part of the treasure, subject to taxation of course—Aleena needs money to rebuild Threshold, after all. As DM, you must decide on the proper amount. If they were forced to accompany Igor due to charges of treason, they will be let off the hook, if they have performed well, and may receive a token payment for their services.

If the PCs have returned as heroes, they will be guests of honor at a banquet at the town hall, where all the dignitaries of the town will be present. This in turn will give them prestige and more opportunities for adventure. If they've just escaped charges of treason, they will be encouraged to leave town.

Any loose ends from the initial adventure hooks should be tied up now.

Further Adventures

Should you wish to run further adventures in the area, there are a number of opportunities that can be pursued.

The Goblin Keep

In the vacuum left by K'Rrargg's fall, a local goblin warlord moves his tribe into the lost temple and fortifies it, to take over humanoid activity in the area. Though the goblins pose less of a threat to Threshold, the populace will be very focused on eliminating any humanoids in the area, so something like this doesn't happen again.

The Lost Valley

Whether acting on their own or in Igor's employ, the PCs may well be tempted to visit the Lost Valley of the Hutaakans, leading to adventure in the vein of *B10 Night's Dark Terror*.

Treasures of the Past

Meeting Igor could lead the PCs to all manners of adventures; in fact, working for the old historian, who is no longer able to make the treks he used to do in his youth, could be an adventure in itself! Students of his, at the School of Magecraft, could be assigned to dig up ancient artifacts, and others could simply be hired to do that work. Since much of Karameikos is hostile wilderness, this can lead to any number of adventures.

Reconstruction

Although there will likely be little for the PCs to do in the actual reconstruction of the devastated parts of Threshold, Aleena could very well have need of a ready band of adventurers. One possibility is that, with the virtual razing of Fogor Isle, workers might discover the foundations of a much older structure—one that perhaps dates back to Traldar times, over 1,000 years ago. Contained within these formerly buried ruins might be clues to lost treasures in the region (which would certainly attract Igor's attention), or perhaps they conceal an ancient dungeon, which the PCs must explore. The options here are almost limitless.

Marriage and Settling Down?

PCs so inclined could embark on the greatest adventure of their life: Marriage! Adriana Borisov, or any number of other NPCs, could serve as spouses for PCs. Playing out a hero settling down and making a living in a frontier town, such as Threshold, leads to a whole different kind of adventures. For their services, the PCs could become landed knights, get caught up with the Kingdom of Thieves, or become merchant guards under the employ of Gabriella Kendonion. The opportunities for social adventure are endless...

Appendix

Bronze Golem

Large Construct (Fire)

Hit Dice: 20d10 (110 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 40 ft. (can't run)

AC: 20 (-1 size, +11 natural)

Attacks: Fist +23 melee

Damage: Fist 2d10+9 and 1d10 fire

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Heat, fire blood

Special Qualities: Construct, fire subtype, magic immunities, DR 10/magic, darkvision 60 feet

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6

Abilities: Str 28, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 1

Skills: None

Feats: None

Climate/Terrain: Any land

Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4)

Challenge Rating: 12

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 21-30 HD (Large), 31-60 HD (Huge)

A bronze golem stands 16 feet tall and weighs around 3,000 pounds. Its hollow interior is filled with liquid fire. The incredible heat generated by its fiery blood causes it to appear slightly blurry. The golem is often carved in the image of fire giants.

Despite its size, the golem moves surprisingly swiftly, due to its hollow nature and the magical fire running through its "veins."

Combat:

Bronze golems are formidable opponents, using their crushing strength in conjunction with their burning form to deal searing pain to the enemy.

Heat (Ex): The merest touch of a bronze golem is searingly hot, automatically dealing 1d10 points of fire damage on contact.

Fire blood (Ex): If the bronze golem is injured by slashing or piercing weapons, its fiery blood spurts forth, dealing 2d6 points of fire damage to the opponent who wounded it. Characters may make a Reflex save for half damage.

Fire subtype (Ex): A bronze golem is immune to fire damage, and takes a -10 penalty on saves against cold attacks. If a cold attack does not allow a saving throw, the golem takes double damage instead.

Construct traits (Ex): A bronze golem is immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. It is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. It is immune to anything requiring a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). It is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, it is immediately destroyed. As it is not alive, a bronze golem cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*.

Magic immunity (Ex): Bronze golems are immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects except as follows. Cold-based effects slow them (as the *slow* spell) for 1d6 rounds, with no saving throw. Fire effects break any slow effects on the golem, and cures 1 point of damage for every 3 points of damage it would otherwise deal. Bronze golems roll no saving throws versus fire effects.

Construction:

A bronze golem's body is sculpted from 4,000 pounds of pure bronze.

The golem costs 90,000 gp to create, which includes 1,200 gp for the body. Assembling the body requires a successful Craft (metalworking or armorsmithing) check (DC 18). Additionally, a successful Craft (alchemy) check (DC 18) is needed in order to create the "liquid fire" that fills the golem's interior.

The creator must be 16th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 1,800 XP from the creator and requires *fire shield*, *gas/quest*, *limited wish*, and *polymorph any object*.

Living Statue, Rock

Large Construct (Fire)

Hit Dice: 4d10 (22 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft. (can't run)

AC: 15 (-1 size, +6 natural)

Attacks: 2 fists +7 melee

Damage: Fist 1d6+5

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks : Lava spurt

Special Qualities: Construct, fire subtype, darkvision 60 feet

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 10, Con -, Int 5, Wis 11, Cha 1

Skills: None

Feats: None

Climate/Terrain: Any land

Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 5-8 HD (Large), 9-12 HD (Huge)

A rock living statue stands 16 feet tall and weighs around 3,000 pounds. Its hollow interior is filled with liquid fire. The incredible heat generated by its fiery blood causes it to appear slightly blurry. The statue is often carved in the image of fire giants.

Combat:

Rock living statues are formidable opponents, using their crushing strength in conjunction with their burning form to deal searing pain to the enemy.

Lava Spurt (Ex): If the rock living statue is injured by slashing or piercing weapons, its fiery blood spurts forth, dealing 2d6 points of fire damage to the opponent who wounded it. Characters may make a Reflex save for half damage.

Fire subtype (Ex): A rock living statue is immune to fire damage, and takes a -10 penalty on saves against cold attacks. If a cold attack does not allow a saving throw, the statue takes double damage instead.

Construct traits (Ex): A rock living statue is immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. It is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. It is immune to anything requiring a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). It is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, it is immediately destroyed. As it is not alive, a living statue cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*.

Construction:

A rock living statue's body is sculpted from 4,000 pounds of high-quality rock.

The statue costs 15,000 gp to create, which includes 200 gp for the body. Assembling the body requires a successful Craft (metalworking or armorsmithing) check (DC 18). Additionally, a successful Craft (alchemy) check (DC 18) is needed in order to create the "liquid fire" that fills the statue's interior.

The creator must be 16th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 1,800 XP from the creator and requires *fire shield*, *geas/quest*, *limited wish*, and *polymorph any object*.

Where Brothers War

By Jens Schnabel, with the help of his merry elves Geoff Gander and Hervé Musseau.

Cartography by Geoff Gander.

Adventure Background

Last year, AC 1017, the Jennites overran Verdan in Esterhold and pushed the Alphas back, then renamed the city of Faraway to Draeh. They then clashed with the Alphas in the heartlands of the Esterhold Peninsula, which resulted in the Jennites burning the town of Anchorage to the ground while the Alphas were pushed back to the coastal cities and towns, particularly Skyfyr in Blackrock. The two Jennite brothers Talin and Kalin are on opposite sides of the conflict, each a significant leader for his own side. Kalin is the leader in the Alphas-controlled city of Skyfyr, and Talin is among the leaders of the Jennites besieging Skyfyr. The struggle for Skyfyr would appear destined to be a deciding battle in this war. As the adventure begins, Favian Vern, the Alphas President of Esterhold, has hired adventurers to send against the Jennites as his people are reduced to refugees fleeing from the Jennite advance.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventurers will start off being involved on one side of the conflict in the lands in dispute between the Jennites and the Alphas, in most cases on the Alphas side because Favian Vern is hiring adventurers. As they go about their assignment to stop the enemy, events will occur which will come to involve the PCs and will eventually determine the course of the conflict in Esterhold. On either side of the conflict there are secret enemies. On the Jennite side, some wild Jennites known as the True Way, and their chieftain Maltaen, are so hateful of the Alphas that they will go to any length to see them destroyed, and that hatred may eventually destroy the Jennites if not stopped. On the Alphas side, Favian Vern has political enemies that might wish to see the situation deteriorate and so destroy Vern's position in Alphas politics, while the wizard Nicodemus, former oppressive King of Verdan, wants him out of his way so that he can reclaim Esterhold for Nayce and turn the Jennites into slaves again without bothering with Vern's ideals of democracy. As the adventure progresses, the various factions on either side of the conflict will also clash with each other, and the PCs will be among those who must find a way out of the madness of war. The plots unfold, on each side, as described here:

The Alphas Campaign (AC)

Part I: Skyfyr under Siege

The adventurers are hired by Favian Vern or his agents to go to Esterhold and help the Alphas refugees fleeing the Jennite advance. First they help Kalin withstand the siege of Skyfyr, which will go on for some time and give them a chance to get a little combat training, perhaps even command troops in battle (rules for mass combat may be used by the DM for this purpose). The adventurers meet Lyriander, an Alphas soldier who is bitter over the death of his mentor and fellow soldier Krael, a Jennite killed during the siege of Anchorage last year.

Part II: Vengeful Maneuver

Eventually, when Talin is not in the enemy camp, the invaders kill a messenger sent by Kalin to discuss peace. In retaliation, Lyriander leads the PCs on an espionage and sabotage mission inside their camp, although one of their group uses the opportunity to poison the Jennites' water supply as an act of vengeance.

Part III: Negotiation of Hostility

After this Kalin and Talin meet to discuss the situation. Both Lyriander and the PCs act as escorts for Kalin, but the meeting does not go well and they have to fight their way out and back to Skyfyr.

Part IV: Embers

The siege of Skyfyr resumes, and the PCs see more severe fighting, but it does not last as long. The Jennites slow their assaults to the point of almost stopping them, at which point the siege of Skyfyr is essentially over, at least as far as the PCs are concerned.

Part V: Evidence of Evil

Kalin hears rumors of some harsh Alphas adventurers called the Crimson Avengers. Sneaking past the Jennite camp, he takes Lyriander and the PCs to find out more. They travel the land of Esterhold and find evidence of the brutality of the Crimson Avengers, though they don't meet them. Along the way they meet and fight several random Jennite opposition. They also face the harsh group called the Champions of the True Way, who are extreme followers of Chieftain Maltaen. Once they have their evidence, Kalin sends Lyriander back to Skyfyr while he contacts Favian Vern. He and the PCs then present their evidence to Favian.

Part VI: Avengers and Rectifiers

Favian sends Kalin back to Skyfyr, then he and the PCs go to Esterhold to find and confront the Crimson Avengers. This requires some traveling and tracking, but eventually they find them. They do not respond well to Favian's disappointment with them and the PCs have to help Favian defeat them, which is a tough battle.

Part VII: Brothers Triumphant

Kalin sends Favian word that there is dissent among the rebels. Kalin has recently rescued his rebel brother Talin from extremist Jennites, but he is affected by some powerful magic that impairs his memory. Favian and the PCs meet Kalin, Talin, and their various Jennite followers, and Favian removes the spell that impedes Talin's memory. Talin then reveals that Nicodemus, an Alphantian wizard and former king, is manipulating the Jennites to fight among themselves and clear the way for his own return to the harsh rule of traditional arrogant Alphantian ways, by posing as a Jennite wizard.

The PCs then go with Talin, Kalin, and Favian to Drach (formerly Faraway) to expose Nicodemus. They must travel through secret tunnels underneath the city, which are probably guarded or inhabited, to enter the city, then expose Nicodemus.

Talin then confronts the Jennites about their extremist ways, but their leaders are not convinced. One leader, Lotam, declares, that by ancient Jennite tradition, they will settle the truth through a trial by combat. The PCs must fight alongside Talin and Kalin and defeat the group representing the extremist Jennites. Once they are victorious, the Jennites will be convinced and the adventure is over.

The Jennite Campaign (JC)

Part I: Siege of Skyfyr

The adventurers are asked by Talin to stand with him in his struggle against the Alphantian overlords. First they must help Talin in the Jennite siege of Skyfyr. This is a chance for fighting some battles, and the PCs could lead troops in combat (potentially with mass combat rules) against the Alphantians and the Jennites on their side. The adventurers encounter Grath, a Jennite wizard trained by Alphantians who believes in Talin's cause and who has suffered as a slave under the Alphantians.

Part II: Travels and Discoveries

Talin is going to a meeting with other Jennite leaders, and Grath and the PCs go with him as elite guards. They travel Esterhold a little and come under attack from one of the groups of adventurers sent by Favian Vern to stop the Jennites, and perhaps have other random encounters. Once they return to Skyfyr, they learn that Alphantian saboteurs have poisoned the Jennite water supply, leaving several Jennites dead. Talin then calls for a meeting with Skyfyr's leader, his brother Kalin, to discuss what is going on.

Part III: Hostility of Negotiation

Talin and Kalin meet to discuss the situation on neutral ground. Both Grath and the PCs act as escorts for Talin, but the meeting does not go well and they have to fight their way out and back to the Jennite camp.

Part IV: Dying Fire

The siege of Skyfyr resumes. Since the Jennites press their attack harder now, the PCs see more severe fighting, but it does not last as long because Skyfyr's defenses hold. The Jennites then slow their assaults to the point of almost stopping them, at which point the siege of Skyfyr is essentially over, at least where the PCs are concerned.

Part V: Evils Within and Without

It is clear that Skyfyr is too difficult to take by force, so the defenders must be starved out, which could take a long time. Talin leaves a token force around Skyfyr to maintain the siege, then he takes Grath and the PCs into the wild lands to stop the bands of Alphantian adventurers harassing the Jennites. The PCs hear of a brutal group called the Crimson Avengers and see the results of what they do, but they don't actually meet them, though they track down and meet the group called Minboral's Circle thinking they are the Crimson Avengers. However, they also see savagery committed by Jennite warriors and discover that this is done by an extreme tribe of the free Jennites following the traditional True Way philosophies, led by Chieftain Maltaen. Having seen much of this, Talin decides to confront Maltaen on the matter, but Maltaen has him arrested as the PCs and Grath flee. On the run from their allies and with nobody to turn to, Grath decides they should seek out Talin's brother, Kalin, even though he is on the side of the Alphantians.

Part VI: Alliance of Enemies

Grath convinces Kalin of Talin's capture. Kalin joins Grath and the PCs to rescue his brother. Kalin uses his contacts to discover where Talin is being held. He, the PCs, and Grath must then sneak into the camp of the Jennite chieftains and free Talin, then make good their escape. Once they are successful, however, it is clear that Talin suffers from some sort of amnesia and Grath discovers that it is due to some powerful magic he cannot *dispel*. Kalin contacts Favian Vern, who may be the leader of the Alphatians but also a very skilled spellcaster, to have the spell removed.

Part VII: Triumphant Brothers

Favian Vern arrives and removes the powerful spell from Talin. Once it is gone, Talin reveals that Nicodemus, an old Alphatian wizard and former king, is manipulating Maltaen and his True Way tribe to fight the other Jennites and so clear the way for his own return to the harsh rule of traditional arrogant Alphatian ways, by posing as a Jennite wizard. Talin discovered this when he attempted to escape during his capture, but Nicodemus discovered him and put a spell on him so he would forget.

The PCs then go with Talin, Kalin, and Favian to Draeh (formerly Faraway) to expose Nicodemus. They must travel through secret tunnels underneath the city, which are probably guarded or inhabited, to enter the city, then expose Nicodemus.

Talin then confronts the Jennites about their extremist ways, but their leaders are not convinced, and Maltaen claims their accusations are merely lies meant to weaken his cause. The great Jennite leader Lotam declares that, by ancient Jennite tradition, they will settle the truth through a trial by combat. The PCs must fight alongside Talin and Kalin and defeat Maltaen and his group representing the extremist True Way Jennites. Once they are victorious, the Jennites will be convinced and the adventure is over.

Adventure Flow Chart

Naturally, this is a large plot that may look complex and confusing, so here is a handy adventure flow chart, an overview of the events of the adventure in either campaign that might be helpful to the DM.

<i>Alphatian Campaign (AC)</i>	<i>Jennite Campaign (JC)</i>
PCs recruited by Favian Vern to fight the rebel and free Jennites killing his people. Sent to Skyfyr to help Kalin withstand the Jennite siege.	PCs recruited by Talin to oppose Favian's adventurers who harass the Jennites and to be elite guards for Jennite leaders like Talin.
Defenders during the siege of Skyfyr, help Kalin.	Invaders during the siege of Skyfyr, help Talin.
Sabotage Jennite camp with Lyriander.	Escort Talin to meet other leaders (interlude).

Failed negotiations—the brothers' war.

Defend Skyfyr against Jennite retaliation.	Attack Skyfyr over failed negotiations.
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(Skyfyr siege essentially ends here.)

Kalin explores rumors of Crimson Avengers.	Talin explores rumors of Maltaen's True Way.
Kalin confronts Favian. Adventurers then join Favian.	Talin confronts Maltaen. Adventurers escape to Kalin.
Help Favian defeat the Crimson Avengers.	Help Kalin rescue Talin.
Assist the uneasy alliance between Favian, Kalin, and Talin, end the war, expose Nicodemus, and stop Maltaen.	

Character Hooks

It is undoubtedly easier to involve players in the Alpathian side of the adventure, since Favian Vern is actively recruiting adventurers to stop the Jennite advance in his republic. The PCs merely need to be somewhere around or inside Nayce to hear of the Esterhold war and that Favian is recruiting adventurers in exchange for land, titles, treasure, or whatever else the DM will allow.

Even if they PCs aren't in Nayce, they are still quite likely to hear that there is a war in the Esterhold area. If they then go to Nayce to find out more about it, they will certainly hear of Favian's attempts at recruiting people for his cause.

If the PCs have already been involved in heroic actions known in Nayce or Esterhold, they might be contacted and asked if they will participate, or an old friend could point them in Favian's direction or even recommend Favian to hire them out.

The Jennite campaign is more restricted. Mostly Jennites will be part of that, but PC Jennites will be perfect for it. Non-Jennites are a little problematic because of the distrust Jennites have for outsiders, but some PCs could be outsiders, most likely if they are from nations that harbor enmity towards Nayce or have a generally strained relationship with Alpathia, such as Minaea or Thyatis. Even so, a group of all non-Jennites should not participate in the Jennite campaign, as the Jennites would be too suspicious of them. At least half the group should be Jennite.

Rumors

Over the course of the adventure, the PCs will have opportunities to pick up information about the goings-on in Esterhold, either through conversations with NPCs or by overhearing other people's conversations. These rumors have been arranged into two lists: one for Alpathian or Alpathian-aligned PCs, and one for Jennite PCs (depending on which side they are on, the PCs would have access to different information). The DM should roll randomly whenever he or she deems it appropriate, or a particular rumor may be chosen. The DM is also free to add new rumors as he or she wishes. False rumors are marked with an (F).

Alpathian Rumors (roll on 1d8):

1. They say that Favian Vern has had it with Esterhold. He's given up all hope of a peaceful solution to this mess, and he'll be calling on the council soon to send in more troops to clean this place out. (F)
2. The council has all but given up on Esterhold and Favian Vern; Nayce is going to pull out, and those of us who choose to remain in Esterhold will be left to their own devices. (F)
3. Not all of the Jennites are unwilling to negotiate—a significant number of them would be willing to come to some sort of agreement.
4. Although Skyfyr is holding out, it won't do so for long. Some of the Jennites living within its walls are enemy spies, looking for the opportunity to destabilize the regime and sabotage our efforts to hold the enemy at bay. (F)
5. While the Jennites fight with a terrible ferocity, our side is by no means any better. There are those who fight under Alpathian banners who are little more than monsters.
6. Favian Vern has many enemies in the corridors of power—he is looking for allies.
7. The current Jennite invasion is but the first wave; I hear there are thousands more further to the east, preparing to sweep us all into the sea. (F)
8. There are some conservative elements in the council who would have the Republic of Esterhold fail, and they would turn Esterhold back into a colony.

Jennite Rumors (roll on 1d8):

1. Our leadership speaks with one voice; the Jennite nation shall fight as one great warrior to crush the Alpathians. (F)
2. Skyfyr will not resist us for much longer. The Alpathians are demoralized, and it is said that some of our warriors have managed to infiltrate the city. (F)
3. The so-called President of Esterhold, Favian Vern, is little more than a puppet of the Alpathian government. He can make no assurances to us that our rights will be respected—do not trust him! (F)
4. Some warriors have said that, although the Alpathians were brutal in their day, we are no better than they, for all the blood that has been shed. Our chieftains deny this, saying that it is just repayment, but I am not so sure.
5. Some of our emissaries have made contact with other peoples to the east of our domains, who might be enlisted in our war against the Alpathians. (F)
6. Those who espouse the principles of the True Way insult the honorable traditions of our ancestors. Their deeds show them to be worse than animals, and their interests do not lie with those of the Jennite people.
7. Not all Alpathians are evil. There are some who recognize that the old ways are no longer sustainable, and that we must all work together now—however difficult that may be.
8. The Jennite people are already showing signs of disunity. Those who have forsaken their heritage to live in cities are more like our former masters than they choose to admit.

Scaling the Adventure

Altering the adventure to fit the party should be easy in the early parts of the adventure, since most of the opponents are simple first-level fighters or barbarians. The DM can simply reduce the numbers for a low-level party and add more if the PCs are more experienced. Use the rules in the *DMG* on challenge ratings to determine the opposition your PCs should face. As the adventure unfolds, however, this will be more problematic—by parts VI and VII (in either campaign) the PCs should be at least level 7 or above, or they will find it very difficult to survive the battles they face, in which case the DM may have to make their opponents less experienced.

A Note About Statistics

As with most other products associated with the *Mystaran Almanac*, this adventure module was designed with 3rd Edition (3E) *Dungeons and Dragons*® in mind. We recognize, however, that not all DMs use this system in their own campaigns. Due to time constraints related to the production of a product of this magnitude, and due in part to this consideration, we have kept statistics to a minimum throughout. We leave it to the DM to decide which set of game statistics to use for monsters, NPCs, and the like. Nevertheless, where possible, 3E statistics have been presented.

Part I: The Siege of Skyfyr

Opening Notes (AC & JC)

Though the adventure is divided into two campaigns, there are some notes that are relevant to both since they are opposite sides of the same coin. So for either purpose, here are a few notes that may be essential during Part I for either side of the fight.

The city walls of Skyfyr: The wall surrounds the city completely except for two gates, the main one to the wilderness outside and a smaller one at the harbor. The smaller one may be used to close off the harbor if an enemy succeeds in bringing ships there, but it is very unlikely the rebels will be able to do so. For one thing, they have no ships, and even if they did, it is unlikely they could convince the free Jennites to assist them in such an effort. The free Jennites are extremely suspicious of what they see as advanced technology. The main gate is ten feet tall and made from strong wood reinforced with iron. It is old, but quite durable. The city wall itself is a fifteen-foot tall stone wall. It has ensured for many years, but has proven able to hold off aggressors for centuries and has no vulnerabilities (unless the DM wishes to change that, of course).

Combat statistics: As stated in the previous section, this adventure has been kept relatively stats-free. That said, the authors have included some sample 3E statistics for commonly encountered NPCs.

Typical free Jennite, human Bbn1: CR 1; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d12+4; hp 16; Init +5 (Dex, feat); Spd 40 ft. (+10 Fast Movement); AC 15 (hide, shield, Dex); Attacks +3 (battleaxe) melee (1d8+2 /crit 20/x3) or +2 (short bow) ranged (1d6 /crit 20/x3); SA barbarian rage; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 11. Skills: Craft (stone age weaponry) +2, Handle Animal +3, Listen +3 (-1), Ride (horses) +4 (+1), Wilderness Lore +4 (-1). Feats: Improved Initiative, Toughness. Possessions: Hide armor, small wooden shield, battleaxe, short bow.

Typical Jennite or Alpathian soldier, human Ftr1: CR 1; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d10 +4; hp 14; Init +5 (Dex, feat); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (chain mail, large shield, Dex); Attacks +4 (longsword, weapon focus) melee (1d8+2/crit 19-20/x2) or +2 (light crossbow) ranged (1d8 / crit 19-20/x2); SA none; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 11. Skills: Craft (repairs to equipment) +2, Handle Animal +2, Ride (horses) +4 (+1). Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus, Toughness. Possessions: Chain mail armor, longsword, large shield, light crossbow. Note: This is a general description of all “common” soldiers be they Jennites among the rebels or on the Alpathian side or Alpathian soldiers. They all fall into the same category since they were all trained to Alpathian military standards. The rebels have good equipment because they either took it in earlier conquests or from trade with Thyatians. Naturally not all soldiers are exactly the same and the DM is encouraged to alter the stats so the PCs won’t always know what enemy they face. This is merely a template to start with, as is the Jennite barbarian above.

The Siege of Skyfyr (AC)

In the Alpathian campaign the adventure begins when the PCs meet with Favian Vern. Most likely they will already have gone to Skyfyr, probably by ship, or else they will have to since Favian will immediately send them to aid Kalin in his defense of Skyfyr. Because the DM must get the PCs from wherever they start to meet with Favian, the journey is not detailed, but going to Skyfyr is certainly a trip filled with lots of potential encounters, though confrontations with the Jennites will not occur at sea since the Jennites have no ships. Random encounters with sea monsters or Minaean pirates are still quite possible, however.

In truth, Favian Vern could meet the PCs pretty much anywhere in Nayce or the Alpathian parts of Esterhold if the DM prefers, be it in the great halls of Ionace, the throne room (of former King Xanthus) in Skyfyr, or a modest room somewhere else. Favian is a wizard as well as a priest and has several wizard friends, so *teleporting* about is no major problem for him, but he isn't likely to *teleport* adventurers about unless the situation is critical (he may want people to help Skyfyr's defense, but if they meet him early in the year, they will still have time to get there because the Jennites cannot attack until spring). If the PCs meet Favian in Skyfyr, read the description of the city below to the players before they meet Favian or Kalin.

Once the players meet Favian, read or paraphrase this:

As you enter you see a bald, elderly man. His clothes look casual and he appears tranquil, yet it is somehow betrayed by a hard glow in his eyes. Clearly this is Favian Vern. Behind him in the corner stands a man wearing a black robe made of silk and leaning on a staff. He makes a greeting motion as the group enters, though he doesn't move or speak and instead simply looks toward Favian. Favian looks toward you to greet you:

"Well met, adventurers. I am Favian Vern, President of the Republic of Esterhold. As you may have heard, I am seeking brave people to stop the chaos that the Jennite uprising is causing in my republic. These rebels have claimed to fight for independence in the past, in itself a noble goal, but last year they destroyed the eastern forts that guarded the border to the Lands of Jen. They then invaded Verdan and took the city of Faraway, which they renamed 'Drach' after a treacherous governor from among their ranks who was killed the year before, and finally they attacked the town of Anchorage and burned it to the ground. As if that wasn't savage enough, they have recently brutally murdered the peace negotiators I sent to discuss this matter. In doing so, they have revealed themselves to be little more than savages, unable to let go of old hatreds and bitterness. For years I have tried to build a fair and peaceful nation on the ruins of lands and people ravaged by harsh Alpathian kings such as Xanthus or Nicodemus, but it seems a good number of Jennites have seen my attempts at reconciliation only as signs of weakness and as an opportunity for them to claim revenge. Make no mistake, though. I have no quarrel with the Jennites in general. In fact, many of the people I want you to protect are themselves Jennites who are trying to make peaceful lives for themselves, such as Kalin, the Governor of Blackrock. Alas, Kalin's own brother, Talin, is one of the most aggressive rebel leaders. To let a conflict like this tear them so far apart is one of the great tragedies of this conflict, but remember that it was Talin who forced the issue and proclaimed his brother a traitor. Kalin had the choice between blindly following his brother or fighting for what he believed in. He chose the latter, hard as it was for him, though I think it still wears heavily on his mind. For that reason, I would ask you not to discuss the matter needlessly when you meet Kalin.

"As you may have heard, I have hired adventurers to stop the Jennite offensive in the wilderness of Esterhold. However, we also need strong people to aid Kalin in his defense of the city of Skyfyr. This I would ask you to do. Go and see Kalin and help him as much as you can. Make suggestions if you have them, but remember that he is the elected Governor of Blackrock. I say this because some Alpathians have trouble accepting a Jennite as their superior, so I have made of habit of supporting Kalin's position from the start. I may be in Skyfyr at times, but the defense of the city is under Kalin's command even when I am. If the siege of Skyfyr is broken, Kalin or I might have other assignments for you.

"You're doubtlessly wondering what I offer in return for your services. Well, I can offer gold and other riches from the mines of Southrock, but only to a certain extent. Still, Esterhold is large and much of the wilderness is uninhabited. If you prove yourself to be worthy folk, I might reward you with land in some of the unsettled areas. If you accept, I will begin by giving each of you 1,000 *crowns* right away. Or do you have more questions?"

Let the PCs ask Favian questions and discuss the matter for a while. Favian is a busy man, though, and will not waste all his time on them. If they continue to discuss for a long time, let them see that he is losing his patience with what he considers to be relatively straightforward matter. To him they are mercenaries, and they will have to prove they are more to earn his respect.

If the PCs wonder about the robed man and ask Favian about him, Favian will merely say that he is a friend and advisor. It should be clear that is a trusted acquaintance of Favian. Favian will not speak much about him, and the stranger will not interfere in the conversation. In truth, this person is little more than a wizard friend of Favian, but the PCs could be suspicious of him, which would be understandable given that the mystery of who this mysterious and secretive person could be is rather straightforward. If this is the case, the DM should let the PCs have their suspicions. The wizard is merely a red herring to make the PCs wonder if there might be foul play involved when Favian briefly imprisons Kalin toward the end of Part V.

Favian will repeat his support of Kalin if the PCs bring it up. He will hear nothing of suggestions that Kalin might side with his brother Talin at some point, and it should be very clear to the PCs that Favian implicitly trusts Kalin. It should also be clear that Favian is bitter about the rebellion, and that the rebels' actions have hurt him very deeply. He will be angry about it, though not openly vengeful. If the PCs have more questions, the DM should use the NPC description of Favian and the Events section of the almanac to answer questions. Favian will not be able to hide his bitterness if asked about the negotiators he sent to discuss peace with the Jennites.

Once the PCs are done talking to Favian, he will pay them the money he promised and give them a signed document to confirm their status. He will note down their names and tell them that he will inform Kalin they are coming, then send them to meet with Kalin. If they aren't already in Skyfyr, they will have to find a way to get there. Since it is most likely the PCs will arrive by ship, the following description of Skyfyr will assume that.

Having sailed across the Sea of Esterhold, you finally saw the land of the Esterhold Peninsula itself. After that came the last and most dangerous part of the journey, though. Skyfyr lies a little up the Esterhold River, and Jennite attacks were possible then.

Now, however, you can see the city of Skyfyr for the first time. It is a walled community, which has obviously stood here for long times. The wall around the city is made of stone, it seems, and was likely built long ago to stop attacks from monsters or Jennite raiders during the days of the harsh Alpathian kings, such as Xanthus. One of the sailors tells you that the city is called Skyfyr because of its origin. When the Alpathians invaded the land over a thousand years ago, they burned the original city down and built a new one, which was then called "Sky-Fire", and the name was then corrupted into "Skyfyr" over the years.

The city is only somewhat typical of Alpathian buildings. Some structures are large and mountainous in that they seem to be carved from a single, huge piece of some fine form of rock or other hard material, and these structures are in many different colors. Still, the houses and towers aren't as impressive as those that might be seen in other areas of Nayce, and some are far more common. Clearly, Skyfyr is a mixture of common buildings as seen in most nations and the more grand buildings of the Alpathians. Doubtlessly many wizards have lived here in the past.

At last you come into the harbor. You're reminded of the fact that the city is under siege by several volleys of arrows being shot at your ship and the harbor, but the effort doesn't seem to be very serious, and the ship docks without much trouble. A number of city guards come aboard to talk with the captain. Eventually they come to see you as well and ask what you're doing in Skyfyr.

The PCs will probably go to see Kalin. If they haven't met Favian already, read or paraphrase the section above, then return here to let them meet with Kalin. If the PCs want to fire their bows or other ranged weaponry at the Jennites, then there is no reason why the DM shouldn't let them. If the PCs are particularly powerful, the DM can even make this situation more dangerous. Generally this is intended only as background that sets the mood that the PCs are entering a besieged city, yet the DM can make the trip and arrival in Skyfyr more challenging by setting up serious Jennite attacks before the PCs' ship can enter the harbor of Skyfyr. See the Opening Notes for typical examples of the free and rebel Jennites.

The city guard bring you to a large building at the center of the city. It looks like it was once a grand palace, but somehow it doesn't look quite so grandiose as you imagine it once did. Rather it looks like someone has been willfully trying to make it appear less imposing or extravagant than it must once have seemed. This continues as you go inside and find yourselves in a large hall that must once have been filled with all sorts of banners and sculptures, yet is now empty. Eventually you are taken into a large room that must once have been a grand throne room, yet seems now more like a great waste of room, as barely any people or furniture occupy it. The most prominent people are seated around a large table where the throne must once have been, and they all look up as you enter. One of them, a tall man wearing a worn leather armor underneath a primitive-looking tunic, rises and looks toward you. He has black hair and brown eyes, and from his coppery skin you can see that he is clearly of Jennite origin.

In not quite fluent Alphatian, he says, "Greetings. I am Kalin, Governor of Blackrock. Who might you be, and what can I do for you?"

Kalin will let the PCs introduce themselves and explain what they are doing here. If they say they were sent by Favian, he will ask for the signed document Favian gave them, which he will then read through very briefly, as he has already read several such documents from other adventurers recently. If the PCs speak neither Alphatian nor Jennite, several people in the room will be able to translate. Once he has looked their document over and is satisfied of its authenticity, he will continue:

"So, Favian has sent you here to help us, eh? Well, we can certainly use the help, so your arrival is much appreciated. You see, now that we have passed beyond winter, the rebels are again gathering their forces. Last year they were forced to stop their invasion due to the winter, but they remain determined to capture Skyfyr, since this is one of the primary settlements where Alphatians still live in Esterhold. Because of that determination, breaking their siege will be very difficult, yet I am equally determined, if not more so, not to allow them to succeed. They take this city over my dead body!"

As he talks, Kalin becomes a little more agitated, but he doesn't reveal anger or bitterness as Favian seemed to. He seems a bit gruff in his manners, but even so he has an honesty about him that you find very reassuring. Kalin may have sided with the Alphatians in this conflict, but he is far from having the inherent superior attitude common among Alphatians, nor is he anywhere near being a submissive lackey to powerful masters. At length, Kalin gets around to mentioning his rebel brother, Talin, and his voice grows a little colder, although he also appears a bit saddened and reluctant as if the matter is difficult to talk about.

"No doubt you've heard that Talin, one of the leaders among the rebels, is my brother. That is indeed the case. In fact, he was instrumental in creating the alliance between the rebels and the wild tribes from what I hear. However, I do not call him brother. Although he would undoubtedly call me a traitor, it is him who has killed our people, Jennite or Alphatian, in his blind hatred of the Alphatians. We were estranged for many years as we were separated during our years as slaves, I here in Skyfyr, he in Faraway, which they now call 'Draeh.' About eight years ago, I killed my harsh Alphatian master and joined the growing resistance movement against the harsh rule that began after the Great War with Thyatis. I was suspicious of all Alphatians until I learned that one of them had joined our cause and was even

teaching some of us magic. That was none other than Favian Vern, and he was eventually arrested by cruel King Xanthus for helping us resist. Through him I learned that not all Alphatians were evil slavers, and with the help of some of them who were like-minded, such as Prince Haldemar of Haaken, our rebellion against Xanthus eventually succeeded. Then we went about ending the cruel rule of King Nicodemus of Verdan, who was just as harsh an Alphatian ruler. By that time Emperor Zandor had been replaced by the council of what would eventually be called Nayce and we had the support of Commander Broderick to move against Nicodemus. In order to form a resistance movement in Verdan, I suggested my brother Talin might help us create one there, and as you know we eventually succeeded. But in victory we became divided. Most of our people wanted to live in peace with those Alphatians who shared our ideas, so when Favian transformed Esterhold into a republic and organized elections, it seemed like a dream had come true, at least to me. However, before elections could be held, Favian had to appoint temporary governors, and in Verdan he chose Talin simply because he was my brother. Alas, Talin has not learned to see the Alphatians as I do. To him they are all still harsh slavers, and he cannot see past that. He helped sabotage the elections and distort the results. Eventually a Jennite named Draeh was elected Governor of Verdan two years ago, but his first official acts were to declare independence from the republic and have several political enemies, Alphatians all, executed. Since his actions were illegal, he joined Talin's rebels, but was later killed, so when the rebels and their wild allies seized the city of Faraway, they renamed it 'Draeh' after him. It pains me to admit it, but there are still those among my people who insist on living in the past and repaying the Alphatians, any Alphatian, for the suffering we have long suffered at their hands. But not all Alphatians are oppressive despots like Nicodemus or Xanthus, and most who are still here do not deserve the scorn they are met with. People like Seward Alska, the Governor of Anchorage, didn't deserve the fate given to them. Though Seward Alska had been here as long as Xanthus or Nicodemus, he never mistreated Jennites in Anchorage as Nicodemus or Xanthus did, and most of the old, oppressive Alphatians have long since departed these lands, so the Jennite vengeance is now being waged against those who stayed to help us rebuild. There are those among my people who cannot let go of the past and move on. In a way I understand them, since they never knew Favian or Haldemar as I did, but to think they would kill our own people and burn our cities... And now my very own brother is out there, driven by some misguided hatred of Alphatians to break down the walls of this city and kill us all..."

With that a saddened expression falls over Kalin's face and he changes the subject to discuss how to organize the defenses. Eventually he comes around to introducing the other people in the room. Most are advisors or mercenaries like you. One is a dark-robed man, clearly an Alphatian wizard, whom Kalin refers to merely as the mage Stormlock. Another one is an Alphatian wearing banded mail. He seems fairly young, yet has a harsh look on his face as if he were in a constantly bitter mood.

"And finally we have Lyriander here", says Kalin. "Now, since I want you to help in the defense of Skyfyr, you will be working closely with Lyriander and myself. Lyriander is one of very few people to have survived both the battles at Vigil Keep, Faraway, and Anchorage before the rebels took those places, so he knows about how their organization, which should be most useful to us." Lyriander merely nods at this while uttering, "Yes, sir," though it is barely audible. You get the distinct impression that something is weighing heavily on his mind.

After these introductions, Kalin will let people get to talk amongst themselves. The PCs won't have much opportunity to talk to the wizard Stormlock as he will exit fairly quickly, not that he has much to tell them. If they ask other people about him, though, they will learn that he has some reputation and respect here and is said to have been somewhat involved in the fights to overthrow Xanthus and later Nicodemus. Stormlock seems to be considered the most experienced wizard in these parts. However, he is rarely present, and if the PCs ask around, they will find nobody who remembers having seen him in Blackrock for at least two years before this rebellion began and only returned here a few months ago.

The PCs will doubtlessly talk to Lyriander at some point, and will likely ask him if something is wrong, considering his mood. Lyriander is a somber character, who has been marked by what he has seen in the war so far. He was originally among the soldiers Broderick stationed in the forts on the eastern border of Verdan several years ago. While he was there, he became friends with an older Jennite warrior named Krael who became his mentor over a few years of service. When the forts were overrun by the wild Jennites last year, Krael and Lyriander fled to Faraway and then to Anchorage when Verdan was also invaded. Anchorage was besieged, but Lyriander was wounded and Krael stayed to make sure that the younger soldier could escape. The last thing Lyriander saw of him was wild Jennites running him through with their spears and then cutting off his head and putting it on a spear as they named him a traitor to their people. Then they burned Anchorage to the ground. The experience was very traumatic for Lyriander and he doesn't like speaking or even thinking about it, so he won't tell the PCs about it, though others will soon enough if they ask around. Nobody will know the entire story as Lyriander doesn't talk about it, but if the PCs ask around, they should be able to piece the whole story. The DM should paraphrase parts of this tale as he or she sees fit.

The PCs might also want know more about the relationship between Kalin and his rebel brother Talin, though they shouldn't ask Kalin himself if they respect the wishes Favian expressed on the matter. Others, Lyriander for example, will tell them all they want to know, though not in Kalin's presence. Kalin has declared his brother an enemy, but it is clear to others around them that Kalin is sad and hurt deeply over the matter, though he is not really bitter at Talin. He just thinks his brother is misguided, yet is determined to fight for what he believes in.

Eventually Kalin will tell Lyriander to assign the PCs to guard duties. Lyriander will then explain to the PCs that now that spring has come, the rebels will be resuming their attacks on Skyfyr and so the need to guard the city walls is greater than ever. That will be the primary confrontation in this part of the adventure. However, the DM should feel free to design it as he or she sees fit. The adventure provides general statistics for those involved in the battles, but since every campaign is different, there is no way to say what sort of scenario will suit it best. If the DM has rules for mass combat such as the War Machine or Chain Mail, then this is a good chance to use them, especially if some of the PCs have the experience and desire to command troops in battle themselves. On the other hand, if the PCs are rather inexperienced, it could quickly be the death of them. Instead the DM might prefer to divide the battles into groups, then play out only the one the PCs are involved with. Use the statistics given above under the notes for Part I for this purpose.

The DM should keep these battles running for a while to give the PCs a sense of a prolonged siege. How long this should continue depends a little on PCs' experience. If they are level 4 or above, don't hesitate to give them a lot of boring combat duty. This will grow tiresome after a while, so the besieging Jennites will try something else—they try to set Skyfyr ablaze by shooting fire arrows into the city.

Ready for another day of siege and tiresome battle, you find yourself surprised today when the Jennites don't attack the city walls. At first you wonder if they have given up the siege, but nothing suggests they are moving away. Instead you watch in horror as hundreds of Jennites begin shooting blazing arrows into the city, obviously intending to start a fire. With the constant volleys of arrows and bolts, you have your doubts about shooting back, since you could easily become targets for enemy fire. Over the yells and screams you hear Lyriander curse the Jennites even as a bell begins ringing to signal the fire. A moment later you hear Lyriander call for anyone with experience with firefighting to join the city's Fire Slayers, wizards who can cast fire-suppressing spells, such as *ice storm* or *cone of cold*.

Unlike before the PCs' side now faces a two-front battle, one against the attacking Jennites and another against the fire in the city. A low-level party should probably stick together and fight one side only, most likely the Jennites since they will be able to do little that other people couldn't do against the fire, but if they are more experienced, the wizards and clerics in the party might be sent to fight off the fire with their spells. That, of course, is exactly what the attacking Jennites are trying to accomplish—to distract the spellcasters (of which they have few themselves) so they can face better odds against the defenders when they attack. If the PCs are on the city walls, the DM should have them roll a Spot check against DC 15 to note that a lot of the fire attacks are also focused on the city gate. If a PC has already stated that he is specifically trying to note the targets of the Jennites, give him a +4 bonus to his check (i.e., an effective DC of 11). The city gate should withstand most attacks and resist the flames enough to not burn down, but then neither the attacking Jennites nor the PCs may be aware of that.

If any of the PCs go to put out a fire, the DM can roll fire damage normally for a blazing arrow or bolt that strikes home, though this will be a lengthy and tedious affair. Since the PCs will probably try to put out the larger fires, it is reasonable to just rule that the fires they face are more dangerous. How to handle such fires is tricky, but the easiest way is to give them hit points, particularly since the PCs or the Fire Slayers of Skyfyr may use cold spells to fight them. Therefore it is suggested that the PCs face fires with 50, 100, or even 200 "hit points." The DM should read the section on p. 86 of the *DMG* about Heat Dangers and Catching on Fire. Going close to a large fire will force a Reflex save against DC 15 as described there, and may cause a lot more than a mere 1d6 points of damage depending on the actions of the PC and how badly he or she rolls. At worst he or she could suffer the full amount of 'hit points' the fire has, though this should be considered only if a natural 1 is rolled on the save.

The PCs may also want to fight a fire by more mundane means, such as throwing water at it or striking it with a wet piece of cloth or similar. Obviously these are perfectly reasonable actions. Throwing water will require a missile attack to hit AC 14 (actually AC 10, but with a –4 penalty because throwing water is not easy. Thus it is easier to simply treat it as AC 14). Each hit will reduce the fire by 1d8 points. If the attempt misses with a margin of five or less (AC 9 to 13), the throw was long, while a miss of a margin greater than five (AC 8 or below), then the throw was short. In either case the DM should roll for Grenadelike Weapon Attacks as described on p. 138 of the *PHB*, since water splashes and so may hit the fire in spite of the failed attempt. If the direction of the splash is opposite (short for a long throw, or long for a short throw), then the attempt reduces the fire by 1d4 points. If the fire is very large, the throw obviously can't miss, but the AC 14 still applies because the fire is so intense that the attempt has no effect unless it hits "just right." A PC trying to hit with a wet piece of cloth rolls an attack roll against AC 14 (as before) and rolls 1d6 for reduction of the fire. Note, however, that this is a melee attack, which means the person attempting it must be close to the fire and so risks Catching on Fire as mentioned earlier depending on the size of the fire (DM's discretion—a single arrow shouldn't force a Reflex save, but one that has set a carpet on fire might). The PCs might also try to convince the general population to help them. If they can organize them, it might be a lot more effective than a lot of spells, but people are generally scared and convincing them to help will require a good deal of persuasion, so PCs with leadership skills or high Charisma might be useful here. Note also that as the PCs fight the fire, the Jennites continue to shoot fire bolts and arrows into the city, so the PCs have to face the risk of being hit by stray missiles as they fight the fire. Obviously the PCs are under excellent cover in the city, but the DM may wish to roll an attack of this fashion against each of them each round unless they take steps to protect themselves. The DM can increase the number of such random missile attacks to reflect the danger and increase the danger to the PCs.

While some PCs might choose to fight the fire, others might choose to face the Jennites. After the besiegers have bombarded Skyfyr with fire missiles for a while, they will again attempt to rush the city walls. When this happens depends a little on how fast they can cause trouble inside the city. The DM should wait a little and let the PCs decide what they want to do before letting the Jennites attack. If all the PCs are fighting fires, let them hear screams of "The Jennites are attacking!" or something similar. It should make the PCs wary and a little uncertain about how to react. But unless they go back to face the Jennites, their attack won't affect them at all. PCs defending the walls will have their hands full keeping the aggressors out, though. The DM should let them face at least a few attempts to scale the walls, perhaps even fight attacking Jennites with a battering ram intended to knock down the city gate. The attackers shouldn't succeed, but let the PCs think they might, and so may others on their side. So if the PCs stop them, they may be the heroes of the day.

The Siege of Skyfyr (JC)

The Jennite campaign begins when the PCs join Talin's quest to overthrow the Alphatians. The campaign is more exclusive than the Alphatian campaign because only Jennites are likely to participate. After all, PCs who like to be mercenaries are more likely to be hired by Favian Vern and the rebel Jennites have very little money to pay any soldier-for-hire. Besides, the free Jennites will meet most outsiders with scorn... That's not to say outsiders are impossible. Thyatian PCs who abhor the Alphatians might have enough of a personal grudge to join the fight against the Alphatians, and since a Thyatian expedition traveled through the area last year, there may be rumors about the conflict. The problem is that there can't be too many outsiders in a group before credibility in the plot begins to suffer. As the plot evolves, the Jennite distrust of outsiders will only grow and make the participation of any non-Jennites more and more difficult. In any event, less than half the group should be outsiders and any arcane spellcasters will be exceedingly unlikely because of the fear of magic among most of the rebel or free Jennites caused by abuse at the hands of the wizardly Alphatian aristocracy. After all, the Jennites scorn even arcane spellcasters among their own ranks, so they will treat such outsiders even worse!

The PCs are more likely to be Jennites who have joined Talin's struggle against the Alphatians. They can either be former soldiers trained by the Alphatians and now hoping to cast out the oppressors, or adventurers who have returned home to help their people in their fight for freedom. They can also be new characters who have fought with Talin since last year and survived the early struggles and gained experience for it, in which case they will already be with Talin in Skyfyr and will be his guards when he meets any other PCs, at which point the PCs will meet each other. In this case, however, these Jennite PCs should be no more than level 2 or 3.

If they are known adventurers among the Jennites, Talin might even approach them and ask for their help, though he won't actually hire them—he is expecting them to be heroes and so do the right thing for their people. Besides, he has no money to pay them with. How and where exactly the PCs meet Talin is left for the DM to decide. Talin is unlikely to travel away from his siege of Skyfyr to meet them, but then during the early winter months the siege cannot continue anyway, meaning that he might make a trip to gather allies. But he will not travel beyond the areas conquered by the Jennites, let alone Esterhold itself. If the PCs travel to Skyfyr to meet Talin, use the description of the city above from the Alphatian section to describe the setting, then describe how the PCs are met by Jennite guards and taken to the large camp of tents set up by the besieging Jennites.

When the PCs meet or are approached by Talin, read or paraphrase the following:

Before you stands a man wearing a typical Jennite tunic with plain leather armor underneath. He has black hair and brown eyes, and his coppery skin tells you that he is a Jennite. He seems to be a little over thirty years old, though his eyes have a piercing quality just as his face seems worn and yet firm and stubborn at the same time. This makes him look both older and younger than he probably is. As he looks at you, you find it very difficult to meet his gaze. He appears friendly enough otherwise, but his scowl never fails to haunt you... Behind, you see another Jennite wearing equally plain clothes except for the large cloaks he also wears. He is probably in his late twenties and has brown hair with green eyes and carries a staff around though he also has a knife in his belt. It occurs to you that he looks a bit like a shepherd, but he remains quiet as the first man with the piercing gaze talks to you...

"Hello. I am Talin, leader of the Jennite freedom fighters combating the Alpathian oppressors. You have probably heard of me. I am the former Governor of Faraway, which is now the free Jennite city of Draeh. You look like sturdy folk with your hearts in the right place. If that is so, I would ask you to join our struggle to cast off the centuries of oppression at the hands of the Alpathians and free our people once and for all. You might question my association with the Alpathians... Well, I don't blame you. You see, when the Alpathian Emperor belatedly decided to get rid of King Xanthus in Skyfyr, and later King Nicodemus in Verdan, Alpathian soldiers and their leader, Commander Broderick, decided to use the local Jennites to their advantage in the attempt to overthrow those tyrants. Given how hated those two were among the Jennites, it took but little to turn the population against the oppressors, though true to Alpathian treachery, rather than risk their own soldiers, they let our people die for their cause rather than fight it out among themselves. After this tactic had worked in Skyfyr against Xanthus, they decided to try it again in Faraway. They 'helped' organize a Jennite resistance movement against Nicodemus to get rid of him, and I was the chosen Jennite leader. It worked too, because we did get rid of Nicodemus, but then something happened they hadn't planned—me! I, and others like me, decided to demand independence from all Alpathians. I am not Alpathian, but the lesson of their treachery is one they finally taught us once too often! The Alpathian 'King' Favian Vern tried to appease our people with promises of democracy, but when the vote went against the Alpathians, of course they refused to accept the result. People like Draeh and myself then began our just rebellion against liars like Favian Vern, though sadly Draeh was killed a little over a year ago. However, since then my fellow rebels and I allied with our ancestral brethren of the free Jennite tribes and attacked the Alpathian positions. We conquered Faraway and renamed it 'Draeh' in honor of our fallen leader. We took back all the lands of former Verdan and burned the hated watchtowers to the ground, and the free tribes drove the Alpathians further from the town of Anchorage. We hunted them all the way to Skyfyr, which we now besiege, but the hated Alpathians, and those of our people who have betrayed us by siding with them, have fortified their positions well, and we must fight hard to drive them from our lands completely before their imperial forces send reinforcements to stop us. It is a race against time, and as if that wasn't bad enough, the Alpathian leader, Favian Vern, has used Alpathian coin to hire foul mercenaries, greedy soldiers without conscience, and then sent them against us, so I'm trying to enlist as many people as I can in our struggle for freedom. Will you join us and help free our people?"

The PCs might want to discuss this amongst themselves. Unless the PCs have already considered it, Talin will give them time to ponder his proposal. They might want to ask him questions, but there will be limits to how much he will tell them until he knows where they stand. The cloaked man is actually the rarest thing: a Jennite wizard. His name is Grath, but he won't say much and Talin won't say much about him either until the PCs seem inclined to join their cause. The DM should let the PCs roll a skill check against a DC of 10 if they have Knowledge in the areas of history or local knowledge. If not, an Intelligence check will do just as well, since the matter at hand is common knowledge (though only for Jennites—outsiders get a chance to roll only if they have the Knowledge skill in a relevant area of Esterhold's politics or history). Anyone who succeeds will have heard of Talin, but will also have heard that the leader of those Jennites who have sided with the Alpathians is named Kalin and apparently Talin's brother. This is, of course, quite true, but it is not something Talin is likely to admit unless asked directly, which might make the PCs suspicious of him. If they do ask him about it he will get an evil look in his eyes and clench his teeth, then merely say that yes, Kalin is his brother... Then he will be silent and not speak of his brother again. If necessary, the DM should hint that mentioning Kalin is likely to upset Talin, or Grath will wave dismissively to the PCs to signal that they should avoid the subject. The PCs might wonder why Talin is wearing such plain clothes. After all, it makes him vulnerable to attack from the Alpathians. To this he merely responds that plain clothes just make him harder to distinguish from other Jennites and that is the best protection he can get. They may also ask Talin to pay them, but given his disgust at Favian's use of mercenaries, they should be warned that he doesn't like kindly on mercenaries. If they ask he will be rather disappointed, then make an off-hand comment about how he was counting on them to do what is right for their people, not try to enrich themselves in the struggle for freedom. They might put it more diplomatically to him, for example by asking how they will pay for food and weapons. In that case paraphrase the part below on the subject. Hopefully the PCs should decide to join Talin:

“So, you will join us. Excellent! I am pleased to accept your aid in our long struggle. Now, I cannot pay you any money for your services, but then we aren’t Alpathian mercenaries... Still, you will obviously be welcome to share our food and shelter like everyone else, and you will be given weapons that can be spared if need be. Hopefully we will capture weapons and other goods from the Alpathians as we did last year. If you do, what you find is basically yours, though. While I expect you to share what weapons and goods you confiscate, it is for you to volunteer such goods. I have no way to check if anyone keeps things they should share, but if I did, I wouldn’t because it inspires mistrust. We are not distrustful Alpathians and I have to be able to trust the people around me. If I cannot trust them to share what they seize as repayment for the centuries of slavery we suffered through, how can I trust them with my life when I need to? And to gain trust you have to give it, so that’s what I do, and I hope you will do the same. So if you need arrows for your bows, you have but to ask as long as there are arrows to spare. Just remember that you will receive as well as you give... If people find you never give anything back, they will be less likely to share with you in the future.

“Now, since you are skilled in diverse talents, I will probably want to keep you with me most of the time as my personal guards as well as my advisors. In that sense you will be much like my friend Grath here. Don’t let his plain appearance fool you. He is, in fact, a wizard! Now, before you get too upset about that, let me explain. You see, while the Alpathians oppressed us, they did teach some of our people the ways of magic... Or rather, they forced us to learn so they wouldn’t be bothered about every little spell that needed casting. However, their teachings came with restrictions, so there are limits to what was taught. Grath, you better explain this.”

The younger cloaked man you thought were a shepherd steps forward and speaks for the first time. “Actually, the Alpathians taught the lessons of magic to many of our people who had the potential for it. Unfortunately many of them seem to have been lured by the knowledge of magic to either avoid this conflict or else to side with the Alpathian masters... Sad it is, it seems some of them have served so long under their old masters that they fear to embrace anything else. Besides, many of those mages were killed in the previous battles, either because the Alpathians put them on the front lines or because they killed them rather than let them go free to become a threat to their own failing power. There has long been fear among our people and especially among the free tribes of arcane magic, but I have decided to turn the power I have learned into something positive for our people. Talin is one of the few who has overcome any lingering fear and I hope you will as well. Welcome to our ranks.”

Talin then speaks again: “Now, as you probably know, our first task is to complete our siege of Skyfyr and chase the Alpathian oppressors out. However, a good many of the survivors from both Verdun and Anchorage have fled here and the city has prepared its defenses well, so it has proven more difficult than we thought. We were unable to complete our siege before the coming of winter last year. For a time we feared that Alpathian reinforcements might arrive from other corners of their empire, but none have come. Whatever the reason for the delay, we must take Skyfyr before those forces arrive, and now that spring is close by, we can resume our siege. I want you to join our attempts take the city along with Grath and myself. If you have any suggestions on how to reach our goal, don’t hesitate to bring it to my attention.”

If the PCs aren’t already in the Jennite camp outside Skyfyr, getting there is the first thing they need to do. It isn’t a problem, however, since Talin is with them and will provide mounts if needed. If they travel, the DM should describe the lands they cross; this is left to the DM since the starting point is flexible. The DM can run random encounters with monsters relevant to the area or mercenaries hired by the Alpathians as he or she sees fit, but it might be best to simply assume that Talin, Grath, and the PCs arrive in the Jennite camp without much incident. If the PCs want to discuss something among themselves or either Talin or Grath, that is perfectly fine. They might want to ask Grath about Talin’s brother, Kalin, for example. If they do, Grath will tell them that Kalin commands the garrison of Skyfyr, the city they are currently besieging, and so the two brothers are strongly committed to opposite sides of the war. Talin considers his older brother a traitor to the Jennite people and is ashamed of him. That Kalin sided with the hated Alpathians and the liar, Favian Vern, is something that haunts Talin, so Grath asks the PCs to avoid the subject, though he assures them that Talin can be trusted—he has no doubt that Talin is prepared to kill his brother if it becomes necessary!

Once in the camp, let the PCs plan the siege with Talin and Grath. Grath knows little about warfare, so he will let Talin and the PCs make the decisions here, assisting with his magic as he can and is instructed to. He will be open about his abilities and known spells since, after all, he is fighting to free his people from the Alpathian oppressors. Talin’s plan is a rather simple siege: starve the city into surrender while keeping reinforcements out. Keeping out reinforcements is not so easy, however. A few ships have already made it in and out of the city and the Jennites have no ships of their own. The PCs might have plans to set up ambushes for ships or to take the city. The DM is encouraged to let them think of whatever they want based on the descriptions given of the city in the notes and the Alpathian section above, though the PCs raiding into the city is probably a bad idea: while they might be able to sneak in, there are some truly powerful wizards in there that could finish the average PCs in short order! Besides, Talin won’t see much use for that, rather preferring to have them probe the Alpathian defenses for weaknesses they can exploit.

Once the battles begin, the PCs can participate as they like, but be warned that attempts to scale the walls of Skyfyr will be quite dangerous, as there are a lot of soldiers waiting on the battlements! The PCs might be safe among the Jennites, but they shouldn’t think this means the defenders are incompetent—the defenders are content to stay in the city and wait out the siege for now, so let the PCs be warned if need be.

The PCs might also note how their allies organize themselves, or rather how they don’t. If any of the PCs have experience as soldiers, the efforts of the free Jennites will seem disorganized and primitive. If they mention this to Talin he will admit that the free Jennites aren’t very orderly soldiers. They are courageous and fight hard, but ultimately their lack of planning makes them less efficient than they might be. Still, they are their allies and fight according to ancient traditions, and those traditions aren’t so easily dismissed, more is the pity... Let the PCs see a few more examples of these differences. For example, some of the free Jennites refuse to use the arrows or armors that bear the markings of a tribe other than their own, and so time is wasted trading things around, or some can be used only by the rebels who don’t care about these things. If any of the PCs are free Jennites, they should also remain aware of their cultural heritage and role-play their characters accordingly.

The DM is encouraged to run some battles using the statistics given above. If rules for mass combat such as War Machine or Chain Mail are available, this is one chance to use them, especially if the PCs are mostly warrior-types with an intent to lead troops in battle. If not, the PCs can participate in regular fights. All the DM needs to do is set up a little part of the battle for the PCs as described above in the Alphetian section. Given the amount of soldiers inside Skyfyr, the PCs probably won't survive a frontal assault in the long run, though, so be sure they have a chance to escape (i.e. fall back when relieved by fresh troops) when the time comes. The PCs can always jump from the city wall, but a fifteen-foot drop to hard ground might not be so much fun if they're already hurt... If the PCs are good archers, however, they are encouraged to help take out the Alphetians in ranged combat. After all, the free Jennites are more numerous and tend to be barbarians and are thus more efficient in melee, so Talin does have reason to let the free Jennites storm the city walls while the more organized and less numerous rebel soldiers try to give them cover-fire.

The PCs might plan something to take down the city walls. As described above the walls are quite durable, as are the gates themselves. Though the odds are that the Jennites will fail in taking Skyfyr, the PCs can be succeed in bringing down the walls or gates, only to witness some Alphetian mage seal the hole with *wall of stone* or similar spell. Rather than let the PCs try in vain to bring down the defenses (which is not fun role-playing), this sort of tactic is good in demonstrating why the Jennites' desire to bring down Skyfyr will eventually begin to fade over time. More so than in the Alphetian side of Part I, PCs on the Jennite side have the opportunity to take the initiative, since the Alphetians are merely waiting and defending themselves. However, because PC actions can change things around a lot, the adventure does not take all the possibilities into consideration, so the DM will have to determine what is feasible and what is not. Since the plans are almost doomed to fail, it's probably safe to let the PCs try the tactics they come up with.

If the PCs don't think of it themselves, Talin will eventually order the use of flaming arrows to start a fire in Skyfyr. Since the PCs are likely to be more skilled at archery than the majority of Jennites, chances are they will be picked up as archers. If this sounds boring, Talin will explain that they need their best people to shoot the arrows. After all, if the arrows don't hit, no fire will start, and without that the plan to distract the Alphetians will fail, so he asks the PCs to overlook their desire to fight the Alphetians and instead use their skills where they are most needed. Firing arrows will be tricky, though. Every time the PCs pick up a new arrow, let them roll a Dexterity check against a DC of 5. Obviously this will succeed most of the time, but if a PC fails the check, he or she has accidentally started a fire in the camp. Have the PC roll a Reflex save as described on p. 86 of the *DMG* under the heading "Catching on Fire." Whether that succeeds or not, roll 1d6 to determine how severe the fire is (though if the PC took damage, this cannot be below the amount of damage he or she sustained). If a natural 6 is rolled, roll again and add the results together. If anyone tries to stop someone catching on fire by extinguishing the fire with a blanket or something similar, let him or her roll an attack against AC 14 to reduce the fire by 1d6 'points'. This is similar to the notes above in the Alphetian section of Part I. The PCs are unlikely to start a genuine fire in the Jennite camp, but if the DM so desires the descriptions above can be used for that purpose.

Actually hitting with the flaming arrows is obviously not so easy since the PCs have no idea what they are aiming for. Whether the Jennites have any idea of where it would be best to fire arrows is up to the DM unless the PCs somehow acquired such information, either by sneaking into town or getting a good look from battles at the city walls. If the PCs have no idea where to shoot, they will simply be told to shoot as far into the city as they can. Have the PCs roll attack rolls. Rolls that hit AC 10 or below don't even hit the walls. Rolls of 10 to 18 hit the city walls, whereas rolls of 19 and above may hit people fighting at the walls—check against their AC, but remember that the Alphetian defenders get their bonus for cover. To clear the walls and hit inside the city, a PC must hit AC 21 or above. If they do, have them roll fire damage as above—1d6, roll again and add for a natural 6. If the result is 3 or below, it can be safely assumed that the fire is so minor that it is either put out immediately or else doesn't have the strength to grow enough in intensity. A natural 20 automatically starts a fire. The DM could keep track of all the fires, but it's much easier to simply count how many the PCs start. The more fires the PCs start, the more Alphetians will be busy putting them out, especially the more dangerous wizards. The Alphetians won't just sit and wait for the Jennites to burn them, though. And if the PCs can shoot inside the city, then they are certainly within range of the defending soldiers' bows and crossbows, so they will obviously try to stop them. Every round there will be 1d6 Alphetian soldiers trying to shoot specifically at the PCs. However, for every fire the PCs started in the last round, subtract one from that number. If the PCs shot and killed soldiers on the walls, subtract their numbers too. For example, if the PCs started one fire and killed two enemy soldiers on the walls in the last round, the DM should subtract 3 from the 1d6 roll to find out how many shoot back at them this round. Obviously the PCs can choose to shoot at the Alphetian defenders, but with cover and decent armor, hitting them won't be so easy. Once enough Alphetians are distracted (DM's decision), Talin will order the archers to concentrate on the city gates in the hope of burning it down. The PCs can join in, or not, as they prefer. Refer to the notes above for the durability of the gate. Still, even if the Jennites succeed in harming the gate, the Alphetians will simply use magic to keep them out. If the PCs are doing particularly well, they might also incur the wrath of one of the aristocratic mages in the city who may then decide to single them out with his or her ranged spells. This is unlikely given that the PCs are probably not so experienced, so this is merely an idea the DM can consider as possible additional action. Once this has continued for long enough, Talin will call off the attack for the day. The DM can then move on to Part II.

Part II: Vengeful Maneuvers & Travels and Discoveries

Synopsis (AC & JC)

After weeks of unsuccessful siege, Kalin tries diplomatic overtures while Talin is meeting with his allies. The high level of tension leads to a worsening of the situation.

Sabotage (AC)

After the siege has lasted for a while, Kalin will attempt diplomacy again since he doesn't like the idea of killing his fellow Jennites (according to the events of the *Mystaran Almanac*, the siege began on Thaumont 3 and this event takes place on Flaurmont 26, close to two months later. The PCs have probably not been part of the siege that long, though, since it took them time to hear of it and travel to Skyfyr first). He tried this last year already, but learned bitterly that the enemy will not listen to reason. However, since their siege has been unsuccessful for a while, they might have grown tired and be ready to listen to him, so he sends a messenger out to parlay with the besiegers. Unfortunately some of the attackers see this attempt to parlay as an indication that the defenders think their siege has failed, and in their rage they kill the messenger despite the fact that he came under a flag of truce. The defenders in Skyfyr are appalled at this. Talin, the leader of the rebel Jennites, was not in the enemy camp at the time, but the defenders did not know that, so they think this is his answer to them.

As an act of vengeance, some of the defenders decide to cause some mischief among the enemy. They intend to sneak into the enemy camp and spy a little. If they are discovered, they are content to kill as many enemies as they can. Lyriander will approach the PCs to participate in this, particularly since they are resourceful people and probably possess very useful skills for such an operation. The mission is not all it appears to be, however. First of all, Kalin knows nothing about this, no doubt because Lyriander knows he would never condone it. Second, some among the spies plan to poison the well in the enemy camp as revenge over the dead messenger. The PCs may unwittingly help them succeed or, if the PCs are devious enough, they may plan to do it themselves.

While the siege continues, Skyfyr is in an uproar over the recent murder of a messenger sent to parlay with the enemy under a flag of truce. Kalin has not reacted much to this latest infamy beyond expressing disgust, but you've heard several soldiers, particularly among the Alphas, who have implied that Kalin is looking the other way because his brother was involved in this shameful act. Nobody is about to challenge Kalin, or speak out against him, but tension is rising and many are unhappy about it, seeing the aggressors as barbaric savages, little better than animals. One day Lyriander comes to you and asks if you are interested in helping return the favor a little.

"We're not going to be like them and brutally murder people in spite of the rules of war, but we intend to take some mild vengeance by sneaking into their camp and spying a little, and so upset their siege a bit. That's all. You have useful skills that might allow us to succeed, so I was wondering if you would join us?"

Let the PCs discuss the matter with Lyriander and amongst themselves for a while. If they want to, they can help plan the operation themselves. Basically, it's a simple spying mission. Lyriander intends to sneak into the Jennite camp at night, conduct some espionage (and possibly a little sabotage), and then sneak back into Skyfyr. He has made arrangements to have the gates opened and closed to let the group out of and back into Skyfyr without anyone knowing, so that part shouldn't be too much trouble. The real challenge will be sneaking past the Jennite guards outside. If the PCs plan to kill some of them, then he has no problem with that, as long as they manage to sneak into the enemy camp. Aside from that, the PCs are pretty much free to devise their own objectives for the mission (for example, destroying a piece of artillery or magical item, assassinating a Jennite leader, stealing plans, setting a portion of the camp afire, etc.), and, depending on the complexity of what they wish to achieve, and their level of preparation, the DM may have to alter the difficulty level appropriately.

In truth, this won't be quite as difficult as it may seem. The besieging Jennites are very confident, and since Talin is not in camp (though the PCs don't know that), they suffer a lack of efficient leadership at the moment. Since they are the aggressors in the siege, they simply don't expect a counterattack, so they haven't prepared for one, or rather, they are ignoring the preparations Talin ordered to prevent one.

Jennite Leaders Meeting (JC)

After another hard day of siege, in which you have had the chance to prove your bravery, but to no avail so far, you are summoned to Talin's tent.

The wizard Grath is already present when you arrive, though you can't fathom whether he just came in an instant prior to you, or if he has been present for quite some time. Responding to Talin's gesture, you move next to Grath and wait for Talin's instructions. Talin says: "There is an important meeting of the various leaders of the free Jennite alliance to discuss our successes and setbacks throughout Esterhold, and fine-tune our future strategy accordingly. This meeting will take place in a secret location, and I have chosen you to accompany me. Get ready, we leave in an hour, right after sunset, so we are far for the prying eyes of the Alphas by dawn."

The PCs should prepare for the trek. If they decide to warn their unit that they are leaving and arrange for replacements (especially if they were in command), then the DM may give them a few experience points; if they don't, their unit won't be at a loss anyway since the meeting was scheduled and Talin's seconds-in-command will take care of such things, and of keeping the siege going, while he is away.

One hour later, the group assembles and leaves the camp discreetly (as discreetly as armored men on horseback can manage, anyway). The PCs do not have hostile encounters that night, as the approach of the camp is patrolled by the Jennites, but after that the DM should roll for random encounters (see the Encounters in Esterhold section). The DM can decide how long it takes to reach the meeting place, though it shouldn't be less than one day, and probably no more than a week.

When they arrive at the meeting, Grath and the PCs must wait it out because they are not invited to the proceedings. On the way back, Talin will not discuss it with them, unless the PCs are part of his close staff of advisors. The return trip takes just as long, and brings the same type of random encounters.

Poison (JC)

The PCs and Grath, coming back with Talin from the meeting of the Jennite leaders, arrive at the Jennite camp that has been besieging the city of Skyfyr. They escort their leader back to his tent. Talin's aides, who have been left in charge of the siege in his absence, are gathered there to welcome him and report. Their report is grim, though, as the water supplies have been poisoned by the murderous Alphas from the city, and many brave Jennites have died as a result. Talin is furious, though not really surprised that the Alphas would act so treacherously. He is, however, surprised that his brother Kalin would condone such actions, and he fears that he has been irredeemably corrupted by the Alphas' nefarious ways. Talin decides to use the opportunity to meet with the Alphas, to confront them with their acts, and to see for himself how much in their thrall his brother really is.

Talin does not let the PCs go, and, since they (hopefully) did a good job of protecting him when he met with the other Jennite leaders, orders them to remain in that capacity and accompany him on his meeting with Kalin a few days hence.

Part III: Negotiation of Hostility

Synopsis (AC & JC)

With no end in sight to the siege of Skyfyr, both the Alphas and Jennite sides have agreed to a temporary truce. The brothers Kalin and Talin have decided to meet in order to arrive at a solution that will be acceptable to everyone, so that further casualties—already quite high on both sides—can be avoided.

Unfortunately, there are already flies in the proverbial ointment. In Talin's absence, and unbeknownst to him, the besieging Jennite armies butchered an Alpha envoy, who had been sent by Governor Kalin to present an overture of peace. Angered by this act, a party of Alphas, led by Lyriander, sneaked into the Jennite camp to commit acts of sabotage. One of the vigilantes took advantage of the secrecy of this mission, and poisoned the Jennites' water supply, resulting in many deaths. Talin, upon his return from a meeting of the Jennite leaders, is infuriated over news of the Alpha raid, and blames his brother for condoning such an act (even though he was unaware of it until after the fact).

This sets the stage for a tense meeting between the two brothers, each of whom is bringing a small retinue—the PCs can be among these, depending on which side they are on. Kalin wants to defuse tensions—the vile tactics practiced by both sides will only fuel hatreds even more—and Talin wants to let the Alphas and their allies know just how much contempt he feels for them.

Encounter Setup

The two brothers and their retinues meet in a field just outside Skyfyr's main gate. Talin is accompanied by Grath and other companions, while Kalin brings along Lyriander and a handful of other followers. Alphetian or Jennite PCs can be present in either group, and most likely they will serve as armed escorts. This part of the adventure presents a dialogue between the two brothers; DMs are encouraged to embellish it as they see fit.

Curt greetings are barely exchanged before Talin, seething with rage, launches into a tirade.

"You would greet me, brother, but I would share no warmth in my heart with you! You and your lot have sided with those who are worse than animals! War is harsh, aye, but we cannot do honest battle with a foe who would stoop to poison our water while we sleep, and then watch with glee behind their walls of stone while honest men die in agony! We cannot in truth say that we fight real men, if those 'men' hire the likes of the Crimson Avengers, who loot, murder, and burn their way across our lands like the worst plague!"

"I hear you, brother," replies Kalin, "and I regret that some of what you say is true. An evil deed was committed that night, when men sworn to defend Skyfyr poisoned your army's wells. You must know that I would never have allowed such a thing to happen, if I had heard rumor of it beforehand."

Before Kalin can continue, his brother retorts in renewed fury: "Save your apologies for the Alphetian lords you love so much! You, and other Jennites who have turned their backs on their people, who have chosen to ignore blood ties, will stop at nothing to appease the foreign oppressors. Have you learned nothing from the harshness of your own childhood? Are you deaf to the pleas of our people for freedom? The Alphetians will have you dance to their tunes long enough, until you are no longer useful to them, and then they will cast you aside!"

Talin is then interrupted by Lyriander, who is unable to contain himself any longer: "Do not claim to speak of honor, or of accusing anyone of lacking it, when you and your followers are only too happy to butcher peaceful envoys, or slaughter innocents—Alphetian or Jennite! I saw what was done in Faraway! I saw the destruction of Anchorage! You call us butchers, you call us deceivers, yet you and your kind are far, far worse!"

Talin stands speechless for a moment, and, with a sudden snarl of fury, he draws his weapon. Lyriander, spitting a few curses, draws his weapon too.

Both the Alphetian and Jennite parties are now embroiled in a nasty skirmish. Both sides should be evenly balanced, to make the encounter challenging; therefore, depending on which side the PCs are on, the opposing side should contain an equal number of NPCs, of roughly equivalent level. The actual staging of the battle is up to the DM, but Kalin and Lyriander should be allowed to fight their way back to Skyfyr, and Talin and Grath should likewise come away from the battle alive. One or more of the PCs could very well be seriously injured, or even die, in this encounter.

Aftermath

This encounter marks the first time Kalin and Talin have met in battle—neither takes it as a good sign. Kalin noted the mentioning of the Crimson Avengers and their deeds, and he will seek to learn more about them if he can. He will begin to wonder about the true intentions of the various Alphetian parties roaming the interior of Esterhold.

The battle is also a turning point for Talin. Beforehand, he had thought that his brother was a pawn of the Alphetians, but now that Kalin has actually taken up arms to defend the cause of what Talin sees as enslaving oppressors, he must believe strongly in Favian Vern's principles.

With the negotiations having ended in hostility, the Jennites renew their siege of Skyfyr with added vigor. The stage is now set for Part IV of the adventure.

Part IV: Embers & Dying Fire

Synopsis (AC & JC)

After the failure of the negotiations, the truce comes to an end and the siege of Skyfyr resumes in earnest.

Defense (AC)

The defenders of Skyfyr continue to defend their city against the redoubled assaults of the Jennites.

The action is similar to that of earlier battles (see Part I), unless the PCs come up with new defense schemes. The fighting is even more fierce at this stage, but otherwise alike.

Assaults (JC)

The Jennites press their attacks on Skyfyr's walls even harder now.

Such attacks are similar to those fought earlier (see Part I), unless the PCs come up with new tactics. The fighting is even more fierce at this stage, but otherwise alike.

End of Siege (AC & JC)

Soon enough, with the defenses holding, the Jennites will slow their assaults to the point of almost stopping them. Until then, the battles should be similar to those in Part I, to the point where the PCs see no point in continuing to participate in the siege, so that the PCs will be more than willing to investigate the rumors that are spreading within Skyfyr and in the camps of the Jennites (see Part V).

This part of the adventure may be abbreviated or lengthened by the DM as needed by the timeline, and by the desire of the players to leave the Skyfyr siege vs. their assigned duty to take or protect the city.

Part V: Evidence of Evil and Evils Within & Without

Evidence of Evil (AC)

Synopsis

Kalin has heard rumors of the activities of an Alpathian party known as the Crimson Avengers, who are said to be waging a campaign of terror in the interior of Esterhold, slaughtering any Jennites they can find. Those rumors were given added strength by the angry testimony of his estranged brother, Talin. While he wishes to make Esterhold safe for law-abiding people once again, Kalin does not wish to accomplish this through wanton brutality. Eager to find out more for himself, Kalin confers with Lyriander, and asks the PCs to join them in their search for evidence of this rogue band.

Leaving Skyfyr

Once the PCs join Lyriander and Kalin, the first order of business is to sneak out of the city, and avoid detection by the besieging Jennite army. If one or more of the PCs are spellcasters, they might have a spell or two in their repertoires that could be of use here—especially if they involve concealment, reduction or elimination of noise, or anything that might befuddle the minds of those who might see the party. Otherwise, the party will have to perform successful Move Silently or Hide in Shadows checks, or any other sort of skill check deemed appropriate by the DM. Given the sheer number of Jennites besieging the city, the DM should assign hefty penalties to any rolls required, and should require each PC to make several rolls.

The DM may wish to throw in a few chance encounters during the passage through the Jennite camp. Possible examples include running into sentries returning from their posts during a shift change, stumbling into the midst of a duel between members of opposing tribes, or even running into a party of Jennites on a mission to infiltrate Skyfyr. The purpose of such encounters would be to keep the PCs on their toes, but the details are left to the DM to flesh out as desired.

In Search of the Crimson Avengers

Assuming that Kalin, Lyriander, and the PCs manage to bypass the Jennite camp undetected, they will be able to explore the interior of Esterhold in search of their quarry.

This phase of the adventure consists of random encounters, and lasts a couple of weeks. DMs should use the Encounters in Esterhold section for this part of the adventure, and, should an encounter with the Crimson Avengers be rolled, the party will find the handiwork of the Crimson Avengers—burned villages and homesteads, mutilated Jennite corpses, and the occasional shell-shocked survivor—but they will not encounter their quarry personally. They are more likely to encounter various Jennite parties, many of whom will belong to tribes that have had little contact with more civilized nations. The main purpose of this excursion is to show the PCs how inhuman the Crimson Avengers really are, as well as expose them to the dangers of the interior of Esterhold. A side benefit is that, by the time the PCs return to Skyfyr, they should each have survived enough encounters to advance at least one experience level.

The Champions of the True Way

Sometime during this part of the adventure, Kalin, Lyriander, and the PCs should meet the Champions of the True Way, a band of fanatical warriors who follow the Jennite chieftain known as Maltaen. In many ways, they are just as bad as the Crimson Avengers, as their leader has commanded his forces to destroy any pockets of Alphatian resistance to Jennite rule, by any means necessary. DMs are encouraged to substitute any Jennite party encountered for the Champions of the True Way. When the encounter happens, the Champions of the True Way will attack without provocation, especially once they recognize Kalin, and loudly denounce him as a traitor to his people for working with the hated Alphatians.

On the PCs' side, Lyriander will attack with equal ferocity, once he recognizes some of the Jennite warriors belong to the same tribe that burned down Anchorage the previous year, and killed his friend, Krael. The battle itself should be tough—the champions are all skilled warriors, plus one or two shamans or druids, who will fight to the death—but Kalin and the rest of the party (including the PCs) should be victorious. Eventually, word of the victory will reach Skyfyr and the other remaining Alphatian strongholds in Esterhold, and could boost their morale.

Back on the Trail

After the encounter with the Champions of the True Way, Kalin leads Lyriander and the PCs back onto the trail of the Crimson Avengers, determined to confront the errant Alphatian party, and to find out for himself whether there is any truth to the horrible rumors surrounding them. DMs should continue to use the Encounters in Esterhold section, substituting encounters with the Crimson Avengers (when rolled) with more evidence of their handiwork. On a couple of occasions, Kalin and the rest of the party will find lone survivors of an attack by the Alphatian rogues, who will tell tales of witnessing whole villages being put to the sword, or of suffering horrendous torture, and then being let go to “spread the message of the glorious return of the Alphatians as the rightful masters of Esterhold.” All of this will affect Kalin more deeply as the days go by, but after he and the party hear a rumor from another survivor (it is up to the DM to develop the specifics of this encounter) that Kalin had an encounter with the Crimson Avengers, he decides that he has heard enough. He will then lead Lyriander and the PCs back to Skyfyr to confront Favian Vern on the matter, as the President of Esterhold was the one who issued a call for Alphatian adventurers to help maintain order—a call which the Crimson Avengers answered all too eagerly.

Returning to Skyfyr

The journey back to Skyfyr should be just as dangerous as the trip to the interior—only the stress level should be higher, as Kalin will want to make haste, so that he can confront Favian about the Crimson Avengers, and whether or not he condones what is being done in Alphatia's name. To increase the adventure's tempo, DMs might wish to increase the numbers of encounters with Jennite parties—many of whom are also searching for the Crimson Avengers, but who will not hesitate to attack Kalin, Lyriander, and the PCs. Such encounters should not detract overly from the main thrust of this part of the adventure, and therefore should not be too dangerous. Likewise, getting through the besieging Jennite army back to the city itself should be difficult, but not impossible.

Once the party has made it back to Skyfyr in (hopefully) one piece, Kalin will waste no time in tracking down Favian, and confronting him with what he has learned. Depending on how well they have served him to this point, the PCs could be brought along, and in fact for the purposes of plot development and staging, it is highly recommended that the PCs accompany Kalin. DMs can read the following, or they can describe what happens in a way that suits them best:

Kalin leads you through the winding streets of Skyfyr. The siege must not be going well for the enemy; many of the buildings show signs of fire damage, but relatively few have been destroyed, and most of the faces of those you pass in the streets show no sign of despair. Skyfyr will not fall anytime soon, at least. Finally, you arrive at the presidential palace—formerly the residence of an aristocrat, no doubt—where Favian Vern has set up an office as president of the republic. The guards on duty recognize Kalin, and wave you all through.

Kalin makes his way to Favian's office, and, without preamble, tells him of what he has seen in the Esterholdian interior. You watch Favian's face as Kalin continues describing what you all have seen, and you see surprise, disbelief, and disgust. But all these emotions are replaced by anger as Kalin says to Favian, "If you, in your call for assistance, actually support the actions of these monsters, then you are no better than despots like Xanthus or Nicodemus, and you have replaced their evil with something far worse!"

Favian stands wordless, staring at Kalin. The entire room seems to absorb every sound, and the very air seems to crackle with tension. After what seems like an eternity of silence, Favian shouts back at Kalin, "I have made mistakes as President of Esterhold, but never would I condone such evil! How dare you accuse me of such a thing! Guards, arrest this man! The rest of you, get out of my sight!"

Before anyone can say another word, a knot of burly guards enters the room from the hallway outside, grabs Kalin firmly, and drags him out of sight.

The DM should allow the PCs an opportunity at this point to intercede on Kalin's behalf. Favian will listen to what they say, but will ultimately dismiss them—he is too angry to listen to reason at this point. After the PCs have had a chance to make their points, Favian will again order them to leave, but he will add that he has a lot to ponder. Whatever happens at this point, the DM should ensure that the PCs do not resort to violent means. It should be clear that Kalin's fate is by no means sealed, but that there is little they can do at this point.

The Bitter Truth

The day after Kalin is arrested, the PCs are summoned once more to Favian's offices. Once they arrive, they will notice that Favian looks very troubled, and that Kalin is there, too. Without preamble, Favian addresses everyone once the guards leave the room.

"It seems I have more than my share of apologies to make. To you, Kalin, I am deeply sorry for reacting so harshly to what I have since found out to be the truth. If only my eyes had not been so clouded with anger, and if only I had been more open to hearing what I had to hear, I would not have treated you so poorly. Please accept my apologies. And to you," Favian says, turning to the rest of you, "I also owe an apology. I should not have dismissed you so readily, for you were acting only in the best interest of Esterhold."

"You must understand, however, how shocked I was when Kalin delivered his report. I spent the night looking into the matter, to see whether these Crimson Avengers are, in fact, operating with my permission. It turns out that they did answer my call, but I had no idea they would be such monsters! I should have paid closer attention! But what is done, is done, however sad the outcome—I must live with the consequences of my shortsightedness."

"My sources have confirmed everything you have told me, Kalin. The Crimson Avengers are waging a campaign of terror not seen since the darkest days of the old empire. They must be stopped at all costs, or everything that we have striven towards will be swept away in a tide of anarchy. I cannot expect other people to correct my mistakes, so I must undertake this task myself. Kalin, I need you to remain in Skyfyr as governor. You have led our troops well and prevented the city's fall thus far, and I am confident that the people will be safe under your leadership and protection. I would ask your companions to accompany me into the interior, if they will, to put an end to the Crimson Avengers, but I will not force them to do so."

DMs should encourage the PCs to accept the request for help, as it is the honorable thing to do. If they do refuse, Favian will be disappointed, but will not reproach them for it—he acknowledged that he was at least partly responsible for the current situation, after all. Assuming the PCs accept Favian's request for aid, he will invite them to his chambers, where they will spend the better part of a day planning the mission. This part of the adventure does not have to be role-played—the DM should skip to Part VI, where Favian and the PCs hunt, and eventually confront, the Crimson Avengers.

If the PCs refuse Favian's request for help, he will embark upon his mission alone, and will succeed (although he will sustain many serious injuries). In the meantime, the PCs could help Kalin coordinate the defense of the city, which, now that the siege is no longer intense, is not an overly demanding job. The DM should then skip ahead to Part VI of the Jennite campaign, where the PCs will accompany Kalin on his personal quest to rescue his brother.

Evils Within & Without (JC)

Synopsis

With the siege going nowhere, Talin focuses his energies on hunting down Alpathian parties that continue to operate in the interior of Esterhold—especially a group known as the Crimson Avengers, who are rumored to be particularly brutal. Talin and the PCs will discover, however, that the Alpathians are not the only ones committing evil deeds. Eventually, Talin and the PCs will meet the Jennite chieftain known as Maltaen, who has been waging a destructive campaign of his own. After a brief skirmish, Talin is captured, forcing the PCs to flee, and seek Kalin's aid.

Dark Rumors

This part of the adventure begins in the Jennite camp, where Talin, realizing that Skyfyr shows no signs of falling anytime soon, begins paying more attention to the rumors circulating concerning the activities of Alpathians. One group in particular, known as the Crimson Avengers, has apparently been rampaging all over the interior of Esterhold, torturing and killing any Jennites they can find. Determined to locate and destroy this group personally, Talin summons the PCs, and tells them of his intentions. DMs may wish to alter the dialogue as necessary.

“Friends, you have served our cause admirably. You have guarded me when I could not watch my own back, and you have fought with valor during our long siege of Skyfyr. But you must know by now that the Alpathians have not lost heart, and still they stand against us. Their magic makes them too strong an opponent to take by force, as we have tried to do, and I do not wish to waste my men in a final, all-out assault that may not succeed. It seems that the only thing left for us to do is to starve them into submission. We control all the roads leading to the city; Skyfyr's harbor is its only link to the outside world. Although most ships have managed to get through, the Alpathians cannot possibly bring in enough supplies to keep the entire populace and garrison well fed and provisioned. This is where I think we can finally best them, for we Jennites know the land, and can live off of it, while the defenders and city folk will surely starve in the long run. But I did not call you here to discuss siege tactics.

“You must, by now, be familiar with the rumors being spread around the camp. The evil Favian Vern and his lackeys, desperate to strike out against us while they cowered behind their walls, hired many Alpathian mercenaries, brigands, and worse, to fight in their name. One group, the Crimson Avengers, has murdered hundreds of innocent Jennites in an effort to clear the land of our people! These evil people cannot be allowed to roam our lands freely! I plan to go out into the interior with Grath, hunt down the Crimson Avengers, and kill them like the dogs that they are! I would like you to come with us; you have proven yourselves to be honorable, and I would like to have dependable people at my side. In the meantime, my commanders will maintain the siege, and ensure that the Alpathians remain bottled up in Skyfyr. What say you?”

Ideally, the PCs should accept the invitation—the DM may have to encourage them. Assuming they do accept, Talin will lead the preparations immediately, and the party will leave camp before nightfall.

Into the Wilderness

This part of the adventure is relatively free-flowing; DMs are encouraged to make extensive use of the Encounters in Esterhold section, and have the party meet Alpathian and Jennite parties over the course of several days. Using the encounter table, substitute encounters with the Crimson Avengers with discoveries of their handiwork, such as burned villages and farms, butchered corpses, and perhaps dazed survivors (occasionally some Jennites are spared so that they can serve as “messengers” for the Alpathian band, although few of them long survive afterwards). As the days pass, Talin will become increasingly incensed over what he sees, and his hatred for the Alpathians grows even more.

Along the way, the party should come across several ruined Alpathian settlements, in which many mutilated bodies (some of them children) are scattered about. At first, Talin will be convinced that this is the work of Alpathians who have turned to banditry, but Grath or the PCs can resort to magical means to determine that Jennites were the aggressors. Talin will at first shrug it off, dismissing it as just retribution for centuries of brutal servitude, but as more such sites are found, he and the PCs should begin to question what sort of allies would do such things, for they are just as bad as the Crimson Avengers. Unbeknownst to the party, they have discovered the work of the Champions of the True Way, zealous followers of the Jennite chieftain known as Maltaen.

Eventually, the DM should roll an encounter with Minboral's Circle (or it should be staged anyway), a party of Alpathian slavers that has been operating in Esterhold for several years. This set encounter should happen only after the PCs have already gone through other encounters, and notably after they have seen several examples of Alpathian exaction. This encounter is intended for the Jennite campaign only; as an option, it could also be added as one more random encounter with an evil Alpathian group in an Alpathian campaign. If both campaigns are played out in parallel, this encounter should happen to the Jennite party, though the Alpathian party could later on stumble upon the encampment of Minboral's Circle after it has been wiped out, so that they would logically assume that it is one Alpathian party or group of refugees that were killed by the Jennites.

Note that this event will spark rumors that Talin encountered the Crimson Avengers (and even a rumor that he met his end at their hands), so it is important that Talin is with the PCs during this encounter. If, for some reason, Talin didn't join the PCs in their search for the Crimson Avengers, then the DM should consider having him join the party right before this encounter.

The Jennite Village

You are still looking for the infamous Crimson Avengers when you spot smoke rising at a distance. You have already seen Jennite camps burned down by the Alpathian warbands, but this one is still burning.

Prudent PCs will probably approach carefully, in order to appraise the situation before rushing into hostile Alpathians, who might still there. Rasher Jennites PCs may decide to dash in (maybe without consulting their friends), either because they hope to surprise the Crimson Avengers and tear them to pieces before they can react, or because they want to save the Jennites that may well be put to the sword while they delay.

If the PCs are not prudent in their approach, the DM may roll for a random encounter. Wild animals, especially scavengers, may have been attracted to the place, while human parties may have been attracted by the fire and came to investigate the place (maybe to loot it)—in which case the PCs may well mistake them for the Crimson Avengers at first glance.

The PCs may search the camp, but unless they can somehow quench the fire, there is little left to investigate by the time the flames die down. Minboral and his men have rounded up everyone still alive after their attack, looted the place (there was little of interest to Alpathians amid Jennite stuff), and set fire to the camp, tossing dead bodies into the flames.

Since the trail is fresh, though, the PCs will probably rather track the Alpathians than wait helplessly for the camp to burn down entirely. Minboral's Circle, with their cargo of chained slaves trailing behind, have left unmistakable tracks that are easily spotted if the PCs look for them. The tracks head north. A successful Wilderness Lore check reveals that the party is made of a score of footmen, and half that many horses. They are only a couple of hours ahead of the PCs, so it won't take too long for the PCs to catch up with them (especially if they ride horses). If the PCs lag at the camp, they will have to roll the necessary Wilderness Lore checks to successfully track Minboral's Circle.

Minboral's Circle

Minboral's Circle is a group of slavers who came to Esterhold to ply their trade—capturing Jennites and taking them to a ship anchored off the northern coast. The slaves are then sold in one of the Naycese nation that has not banned slavery. Minboral's Circle has been operating in Esterhold for years now, and it is not one of the groups of adventurers that Favian Vern sent to Esterhold to stop the Jennite aggression—although that's an easy assumption to make. Minboral's Circle is led by the wizard Minboral, who is accompanied by two servants, two slaves and four freemen.

Minboral (human, level 9 wizard)

Minboral is a wizard from Theranderol, where he possessed a small estate. The destruction of the Alpathian mainland cost him everything he owned: estate, slaves, money, magical items, and even his spellbook. Fortunately, Minboral was in Qeodhar to acquire Ystmarhavner slaves when Alpathia disappeared. The Qeodharans, however, were not gentle with the few Alpathians stranded on their island nation at the time, and Minboral was robbed, beaten, and jailed before he was finally expelled from Qeodhar by a decree from King Norlan. With nothing left, he set upon establishing a new estate in Horken. He built his estate with the lives of the slaves he captured—some of which he keeps for himself, the others he sells. Minboral leads his men with an iron fist, but deep down he is a coward. In combat, Minboral remains behind, flanked by his two bodyguards. He will not hesitate to sacrifice the captured Jennites if needed, and also his servants. If things look really bad, he will run for his life, abandoning everyone to their fates.

Minboral's bodyguards (2 – humans, level 4 fighters)

Minboral's bodyguards are under strict orders to ride beside their master at all times, and to protect him. Both are former slaves, now servants, whose families' relative wealth (and lives) rests upon their fulfilling their duties at all costs. Thus, though they hate their master, they will fight to the death to defend him.

Minboral's slavers (4 – humans, level 4 fighters)

Minboral's slavers are freemen who accompany the wizard for the money (they would not be freemen were it not for the profitable business they partake in). They do not especially like or trust Minboral, but like many Alpathian freemen they are too dependent upon representatives of the upper class to try anything fancy. If Minboral abandons them and they are overwhelmed, they will try to surrender, though.

Minboral's slaves (2 - humans)

Minboral also brings with him on his expeditions a couple of slaves to attend to him. Those slaves are non-combatants (they are not given weapons), and their role is to assist Minboral with every menial task or chore. They are forbidden to obey any orders from the slavers unless that order is backed by Minboral (Minboral does not want his slaves to be at the service of mere commoners), so they do not normally have anything to do with the captured Jennites (that is what Minboral pays the slavers for). Minboral is not a fool, though, and those slaves are not Jennites but slave-born Alpathians (bought in Horken). In a fight, the slaves stay behind with the packhorses, though they may move to Minboral and back if he asks them for an item (a magical item, for example).

Reaching the Convoy

The PCs can easily catch up with Minboral's Circle if they don't let the trail grow cold. When they do, they can try to observe the party, and either decide to ambush it or wait for it to set camp for the night.

If the PCs decide to observe the Alpathian band first, they will have to make arrangements to do it without being spotted. If they come with a reasonable plan, the DM may allow it to succeed automatically; otherwise, the DM may require a successful check or checks from skills appropriate to the exact plan (Wilderness Lore, Hide, Move Silently...). If the PCs are particularly careless in their pursuit of the Alpathians, it is altogether possible for the DM to decide that they just stumble upon the back of the convoy, with no chance of gauging the opposition or preparing an ambush.

When the PCs manage to observe (hopefully undetected) Minboral's Circle, read the following:

The party is quite large, but fortunately more than half of the group walks in chains. That is, it is fortunate for you, but not so fortunate for those poor Jennite prisoners, whose fate looks grim if you don't come up with a plan to free them.

In the front rides an Alpathian, crossbow at the ready, who is looking in every direction for any signs of trouble.

A few paces behind the chained Jennites follow on foot. You count thirteen men and women, plus nine children. Flanking them are two more Alpathian riders, one on each side of the group, occasionally using whips to get the prisoners to keep going.

Behind the Jennites come five packhorses and two Alpathians on foot. A few paces behind the packhorses rides another Alpathian, dressed in rich robes, certainly a wizard. In fact, the wizard does not so much ride as he sits on some sort of palanquin resting on the horse's back. On each side of the wizard rides an armed bodyguard.

Several paces behind the wizard and his bodyguards another Alpathian fighter on horseback, crossbow in hand, makes up the rear.

The PCs may decide to set up an ambush once they have observed the party for some time. The PCs should discuss their plan among themselves, then describe it to the DM. Here are the combat tactics of Minboral's Circle:

The slavers at the front and rear try to fire their crossbows at any enemy target they can see. If they are surprised and engaged before they can fire, they drop their crossbows and draw their long swords. If the enemy closes in on Minboral, they also drop their crossbows (they do not fire bolts in the direction of the wizard for fear of accidentally hitting him); they have no such qualms regarding the Jennite prisoners, though. Once they fire their initial bolt, or if they can't fire, they drop their crossbows, draw their swords, and rein in to engage the PCs. The slavers at the flanks also immediately drop their whips and ride up to engage the PCs with their swords, leaving the prisoners unattended.

Minboral uses spells upon the PCs. Most of Minboral's memorized spells are non-lethal, as he normally uses them to capture Jennites. He will not hesitate to cast spells with an area of effect even if it affects the captured Jennites (no loss in making them helpless), and even his slaves or the slavers if need be. If hard-pressed Minboral will use every means at his disposal to save himself, even if that means killing his slaves and slavers; if he sees he cannot win, he will not hesitate to flee the battle altogether, abandoning his party to their fates.

Minboral's bodyguard do not engage the PCs unless they approach their master, in which case they attack ferociously while trying to keep themselves between the PCs' blades and Minboral. If the PCs fire ranged weapons rather than attack frontally, the bodyguards will guide Minboral's horse away from the ambush, abandoning the rest of the party at least for the time being; once they are in a safer position, they will likely draw their bows and try to take out the PCs while Minboral does the same with spells.

Minboral's slaves will immediately stop the packhorses when the party comes under attack. Then they will stand by the horses doing nothing, unless Minboral orders them to bring them an item from the packs, in which case one of them locates it, runs toward his master and hands him the requested item, and then runs back to the horses. The slaves remain by the horses even if Minboral moves away from the battle or flees; if attacked, they try to dodge blows by crouching or running between the horses.

The captured Jennites will also stop moving once the convoy is under attack. They will remain pretty much unmoving, though, because they are all chained together (including the children), making any organized attempt to move away impossible. If the PCs are hard-pressed, a Jennite may bump into an Alphantian (probably at the cost of his or her life, though), making him lose his initiative or even his next attack, but that is the most the Jennites can do to assist the PCs.

As long as Minboral is alive and does not flee, the Alphantians do not surrender, whatever their losses. If Minboral is killed or flees and half of the slavers are dead or incapacitated, the remaining slavers will try to surrender. As long as Minboral is alive the bodyguards fight on, and they flee at his side if he decides to leave for the hills; if Minboral is killed and the slavers try to surrender, they also surrender. The slaves are non-combatants and do not initiate surrender, but if the slavers drop their weapons or if they are the only ones left they can easily be rounded up.

Encampment

After they have surveyed the Alphantian party for a time, the PCs may decide that it would be more prudent to attack it under the cover of darkness rather than rushing headlong. Also, if the PCs delayed their tracking the party, they may reach it only after dark (at the DM's discretion) though in that case if they attack the camp they may not have an exact headcount of the forces they face.

At night, the camp's organization is as follows:

Minboral's tent stands at the center of the camp. Minboral sleeps inside, resting all night in order to regain his spells in the morning. One of his bodyguards stands guard at the tent's entrance, while the other sleeps inside (they exchange roles after four hours). Spread around this central tent are the slavers' tent, with three slavers sleeping inside and one standing guard (two-hour shifts), the Jennites prisoners sleeping outside still chained, and the horses with the two slaves watching over them (they are asleep unless some disturbance agitates the horses).

If the PCs try to pass by the horses, there is a chance the horses become agitated. The base chance is 10% per PC (20% if wearing armor), halved if the PC makes a successful Move Silently check (assuming the PCs try to be silent!). In some cases the DM may decide that the horses automatically become agitated, for example if one of the PCs is a werewolf. If the horses grow restless, this wakes up the two slaves who then shout in alarm, attracting the slaver on guard duty's attention and alerting the bodyguard on watch, and waking up the rest of the camp.

If the PCs try to walk near or in the middle of the Jennite prisoners, both guards must make a successful Spot check to notice their approach (they are walking directly into the guards' field of vision). The DM may assign a bonus or penalty to the check depending on the PCs' actions. If any guard spots the PCs he shouts in alarm, alerting the other one in case he did not detect the intruders, and waking up the camp.

If the PCs try to walk around the slavers' tent, they have the same chance of being detected as above. If they only move up to the tent and try to cut the fabric to get inside the tent, they are able to walk up to the tent undetected (unless they are clumsy), though the thief must make a successful Move Silently check to cut the tent without waking up the sleeping slavers.

The actions of the NPCs depend upon which side of the camp the PCs attack from, and of course whether they were detected or not.

As soon as the alarm is raised (either because the PCs were spotted or because they caused some commotion by attacking sleeping Alphas), the bodyguard on watch enters Minboral's tent and watches over his master, where he engages the PCs if they are already within that tent, or otherwise waits. The other bodyguard immediately wakes up and grabs his weapon, an action that takes him one round, and then straps on his armor for the next five rounds unless the PCs are already in the tent in which case he attacks unarmored. Minboral also wakes up (one round), then takes another round of grumbling and demanding to know what is going on unless his tent is under attack in which case he immediately starts casting spells. Then, if the tent is not threatened, Minboral rummages for magical items and casts defensive spells upon his person while his second bodyguards finishes putting on his armor, and then finally the trio leaves the tent to assist in the fighting outside (with the two bodyguards going out in front).

The slaver on guard retreats toward the entrance of his tent, unless the disturbance comes from that tent in which case he enters it. The other slavers take one round to wake up and grab their swords, and one more round to don their leather armors (they don't take the time to put on their armor if they are attacked directly). Once they are all ready, they join the other slaver outside where they all attack the PCs.

Once everyone has joined the fray, the tactics become similar to those described in the previous chapter. The difference is that Minboral tries to remain not too far from the horses (or at least in a way that the PCs are not between him and the horses), so that if he decides to flee he runs for the horses, mounts, and rides away, accompanied by his remaining bodyguards.

End of the Circle

Once the PCs have defeated or driven away the Alphas, they can free the captured Jennites that are still alive. If the DM wishes, the freed Jennites may owe the PCs a debt of life (it can be used to introduce new PCs to replace dead ones, or to add henchmen).

What they do with any captured Alphas is up to the PCs. Depending on their exact background (i.e. whether they simply dislike or really hate Alphas), all possibilities are open to them. The decision may involve heated discussion between the PCs, if they differ in background and ethics.

The PCs may believe that they have finally put an end to the misdeeds of the Crimson Avengers—but of course, the Crimson Avengers are still at large doing their mischief. It is not too hard to find out who that group of Alphas really was, if the PCs think to investigate. Here are the clues that the PCs may gather:

1. The rumors told that the Crimson Avengers were bloodthirsty killers. This group was capturing Jennites rather than killing them, and the wizard had neutralizing spells rather than lethal ones. Clever PCs should deduce that they are slavers, which would exclude their being the Crimson Avengers.
2. The Alphan group's composition was clearly based around one wizard, with commoners working for him. Even if the PCs cannot possibly know the composition of the Crimson Avengers, a party organized that way may arouse their suspicions.
3. The Alphas did not harbor crimson, or any kind of banner that flashed crimson. They did not challenge the PCs by calling themselves Crimson Avengers either, they only shouted normal orders and warnings during combat, the only name pronounced being Minboral's.

There are several ways the PCs can confirm their suspicions:

1. They can interrogate prisoners. The Alphas have no reason not to reveal their group's name, organization, leader's name, etc., either because they hope to save their lives by cooperating, or because they are under duress.
2. If none of the Alphas were captured alive, they can still be interrogated through *Speak with the Dead* spells, if the PCs have spellcasters among them.
3. At the DM's option, one of the captured (now freed) Jennites who speaks Alphan may have overheard the captors and give that information to the PCs.

If Minboral escapes, he might become a recurrent problem in the region—or maybe just for the PCs.

After this encounter, the DM should continue using the encounter table, ensuring that more evidence of atrocities committed by both sides is seen. The PCs should encounter Alphan survivors, who may describe Jennite warriors who bear the markings of Maltaen's tribe (for Jennite PCs, an Area Knowledge or similar skill check should suffice, or failing that, Talin can draw the connection). Eventually, the party should realize that Maltaen and his followers are just as bad as the Crimson Avengers, but Maltaen is far more dangerous because he commands a whole tribe of warriors. Talin will decide then to seek out Maltaen, and try to end his bloody campaign.

Meeting Maltaen

After several more days of travel, Talin, Grath, and the PCs should find Maltaen and his followers, who have set up a camp near the ruins of Anchorage. Talin approaches Maltaen directly, and asks him if he knows anything about the massacres of Alphasians living in the interior of Esterhold. DMs may wish to read Maltaen's response to the players, or they may wish to paraphrase it.

Maltaen chuckles softly, casually fingering the large sword hanging from his belt. "I deny nothing. I should be the one asking you about your own motivations, Talin. Perhaps the taint of your brother has affected you, too, hmm? If it's an answer you want, here it is: I have told my people that the Alphasians are a plague, and that we should stop at nothing to cleanse our lands of them! My heart rejoices whenever I hear of another Alphasian village burned to the ground, or another Alphasian gutted on a Jennite spear! It's no less than what the dogs deserve, for all the years they have ruled over us."

"Then you are as bad as the Crimson Avengers!" replies Talin. Our people are no better than dogs themselves if they kill and maim as readily as the Alphasians do."

Maltaen stiffens, and his eyes glaze over, as though coated with a thin sheen of ice. "I would be careful, Talin. As a friend, as a fellow Jennite brother, I would say that, if people heard you say such things openly... there are those among our allies, among the free tribes, who would brand you a traitor as they did your brother. I would hate to see your life endangered, as you surely know it would be. As a traitor, your life would be forfeit. Now then, I would be willing to consider this discussion over, if you would, as well." Maltaen smiles, but the smile does not reach his eyes.

Talin stands quietly, not breaking eye contact with the burly chieftain. "Yes, friend," he replies at last, "I think this discussion is ended." He then looks to the rest of you, and gestures for you to follow him back to your own camp.

It should be obvious to the PCs that Maltaen is making a thinly veiled threat to spread the word that Talin's brother, Kalin, is allied with the Alphasians, should Talin continue to question Maltaen's tactics openly. Such a move would deprive Talin of the support of Maltaen's True Way faction, which could destroy the Jennite alliance utterly. Even if they are not well versed in Jennite politics, most of the PCs should realize that Talin would be considered just as much a traitor as his brother among the more barbaric free Jennites (among whom Maltaen carries some influence), despite his own efforts to defeat the Alphasians, because of their familial connection. Nevertheless, this encounter should not devolve into a fight, and Talin will take steps personally to ensure that the PCs do not strike out, if necessary.

Betrayal

After a few more days of trekking, Talin decides to call a meeting of the Jennite chieftains. He asks the PCs to serve as his personal guards and advisors, but tradition demands that, since they are not chieftains themselves, they may not attend the meeting personally. Given everything they have been through together, the PCs should accept Talin's request.

While the meeting is in session, Talin openly accuses Maltaen and his tribe of resorting to dark deeds to win the war against the Alphasians, which are just as bad, if not worse, than what the enemy would do. Maltaen responds by calling Talin a traitor to the Jennite cause, and demands to have him executed. Many of the Jennite leaders are uncertain, but are swayed to Maltaen's side once they hear that Talin's brother, Kalin, is fighting for the Alphasians, and that, therefore, Talin's motives must be considered suspect. The final decision reached by the chieftains is to arrest Talin for now, under suspicion of treason. Maltaen plans secretly to let Talin escape, and then kill him for attempting to flee before a final verdict can be reached concerning the young man's actions. This, he hopes, will erase any doubts among those chieftains who oppose his tactics.

The PCs become involved when guards come to their part of the camp, and try to arrest them and Grath for being allies of Talin, "a suspected traitor to the Jennite people." At this point, the only real option for the PCs is to flee to avoid capture, fighting their way out of the camp if necessary. The DM should structure this combat so that it is tense, but not impossible; the PCs should have a sense that they are racing against the clock to escape, before too many warriors are brought against them.

Once they are free, the PCs and Grath should consider their options, hopefully with the intent of rescuing Talin. If necessary, Grath can remind them that since they fled, their Jennite allies, rebels and free Jennites alike, will most likely consider them fugitives, and as such it will be difficult to find Talin. After a while, unless the PCs think of it themselves, Grath will suggest they arrange to talk with Kalin, Talin's brother. He should be able to help them find Talin and free him, even if he is on the Alphasians' side, for blood ties are strong among the Jennites. If the PCs are reluctant to approach Kalin and the Alphasians, Grath will offer to meet Kalin himself, explaining that he was the only one to stay calm at the failed meeting during the brief truce at Skyfyr; therefore, Kalin should have less reason to strike out against him. If this is the case, he will ask only that the PCs bring him close to Skyfyr so that he can seek an audience with Kalin.

Assuming that the PCs and Grath make their way to Skyfyr, the DM can turn to the Encounters in Esterhold section once again, to ensure that the journey is not a dull one. Once the party reaches Skyfyr, it is time to go to Part VI, where the PCs can meet Kalin, and hopefully convince him to aid them.

Part VI: Avengers and Rectifiers & Alliance of Enemies

Avengers and Rectifiers (AC)

Synopsis

Led by Favian Vern, the PCs hunt down the elusive Crimson Avengers, and hopefully defeat them.

Encounter Setup

Realizing that it was his call for adventurers that led to the arrival of the Crimson Avengers in Esterhold, and the bloody chaos that followed, Favian Vern has taken it upon himself to rectify the situation. It is assumed that the PCs, whom Favian has invited to accompany him, are going on this mission as well. If this is not the case, the DM should assume that Favian located and destroyed the Crimson Avengers on his own, and the PCs will hear about his triumph after the fact. The journey through the countryside should be like every other the PCs have undertaken thus far—that is, it should be replete with random encounters. The main difference is, once an encounter with the Crimson Avengers is rolled, it will be the real thing!

The Burning Jennite Village

Dou are still looking for the infamous Crimson Avengers when you spot smoke rising at a distance. You have already seen Jennite camps burned down by the Alpathian warbands, but this one is still burning. Favian Vern, teeth clenched and with a pained grin—he has been this way since the beginning of this expedition,—spurs his mount on toward the burning village.

Prudent PCs will probably want to approach carefully, in order to assess the situation before rushing into battle with the dreaded Crimson Avengers, if they are still there. Favian Vern's unwavering resolve to confront the Crimson Avengers makes it difficult to survey the area to any appropriate extent, though if the PCs act quickly enough they may have time to do very basic spying or magical scrying (at least, Favian Vern is not galloping in, only trotting). The PCs also act as Favian's bodyguards, though, so they should by and large ride alongside him.

As you enter the village with Favian Vern, you are taken aback by the brutality of the scene. Several Jennites lie dead about the village, killed by either steel weapons or lethal offensive spells. Most huts and tents are burning, with screams coming from inside, and several Jennites mill about the village, ablaze and screaming, mostly women and children who tried to escape the flames consuming their homes but caught fire anyway. A handful of Alpathians with crimson blazons are enjoying the spectacle, moving about to slay those villagers who miraculously have managed to escape the furnace.

Favian Vern grimly addresses the Alpathians: "Crimson Avengers, in my name and that of Alpathia you have committed heinous crimes against innocent people. I hereby decommission you and order you to let yourself be arrested by my guards, and be taken into custody pending a fair trial on charges of murder and treason."

While villagers are still dying horribly, the Crimson Avengers signal to each other and regroup in front of your party, then one of them, a woman in wizardly robes, replies to Favian Vern: "My lord, we have but executed your orders, combing the peninsula in search of the barbarians who have dared to refuse to serve Alpathia and have rebelled against their rightful masters. Such acts are punishable by death, and we carried out Alpathian justice as per your charter."

"Those villagers are innocent men, women and children who have done nothing to incur such wrath, and your charter did not give you the right to murder the innocent. Surrender to justice or face my wrath," retorts Favian.

"There is no such thing as an innocent barbarian," replies the woman, "Slaves and barbarians cannot be murdered, for their lives must be devoted to serving their masters or be forfeit. We have eliminated the vermin that would not yield. We will not surrender to someone who admires filthy barbarians and betrays millennia of Alpathian heritage."

This situation is a standoff, as both parties believe they are right and the other should surrender. The first hostile act will shatter the spell and provoke a vicious battle.

The PCs may be astounded by the Crimson Avengers' words, yet they are factually true. The Crimson Avengers have indeed not broken Alpathian laws, and although their actions could be deemed to have broken the peculiarities of Esterholdian laws, the fact that the Jennites rebelled and declared independence did remove them from those laws that (somewhat) protected them. The Crimson Avengers have violated Favian Vern's confidence and acted in his name in ways he would not approve of, which may be judged as treason. The thought may give pause to Lawful PCs, though Good PCs who subscribe to Favian Vern's view will probably consider the morality of the deeds rather than their lawfulness.

Neither group will back off, so confrontation is inevitable. It is only a question of knowing who will strike first. The group that strikes first probably gains a combat advantage, but loses on another level as it equates with admitting it was wrong but refused to back down so attacked.

The Crimson Avengers

The group consists of its leader, an Alphatian wizardess named Silbrecca, the wizard Demris Mass from former Dunadale on the Isle of Dawn, the two warrior brothers Assariun and Rostelsic, a cleric of Talitha named Lemele, and an elfen thief named Jerlan.

Silbrecca (human, level 15 wizard)

Silbrecca is a wizardess from Eadrin, who considers all non-Alphatians to be lower life forms that should be eradicated. She is cruel and ruthless in her crusade, and she gives no quarters to any barbarian she encounters. She has assembled like-minded Alphatians into the group known as the Crimson Avengers, which she leads into adventures aimed at slaughtering troublesome barbarians. She especially enjoys killing Thyatians, whom she considers the most despicable scum of them all, but really any non-Alphatian is fair game. The only reason she might stop slaying barbarians is when she tortures them instead. Silbrecca's symbol is embroidered on her robes: two crimson S's (actually the Alphatian 27th letter *sula*), one vertical and one horizontal, crossing in their middle, which represents the death of all non-Alphatians.

Demris Mass (human, level 7 wizard)

Demris is a young wizard from Dunadale on the Isle of Dawn. After Alphatia was destroyed and the Thyatians invaded its former colonies, eventually including the Confederacy of Dunadale, the young man started to loath his Thyatian neighbors. He met Silbrecca's group then, and under her tutorship his feelings for the Thyatians turned to hatred. He totally turned his back on his Dunadaler heritage in favor of Silbrecca's hard-line Alphatian stance and participated in the brutal campaign that the Crimson Avengers waged all around the Isle of Dawn. He was at first less than happy when Silbrecca answered Favian Vern's call for adventurers, but in the few intervening months of following his mentor's guidance he has developed a similar hatred toward the Jennites, thus making him a true Crimson Avenger. Demris carries the Crimson Avengers' banner, a falling eagle struck by a lighting bolt; he will keep it flying throughout the combat until he is struck down.

Assariun and Rostelsic (humans, level 14 fighters)

Assariun and Rostelsic were born in Randel, the sons of an Alphatian wizard and a Minaean slave. The boys always blamed their mother for their lack of magical talent. When their father died, the brothers realized they had no chance of keeping their father's estate, even if they joined Randel's army, for they were not aristocrats. So together they plotted the murder of their mother, planning beforehand their flight from the kingdom with all the wealth they could salvage from their father's estate. They roamed the empire's fringes, occasionally slaying the mongrel offspring of Alphatians and non-Alphatians. They eventually met Silbrecca as they were fleeing from the authorities after one such assassination. The ruthless but charismatic wizardess was the mother they wished they had, and they pledged their loyalty to her, offering her their father's magical items, and the trio formed the core of the Crimson Avengers. The brothers' armors are emblazoned with a chimera dripping (animated) crimson blood.

Lemele (human, level 11 cleric)

Lemele was born to one of the rich families of Horken. Although she showed potential for magic, she was also an indolent girl, who preferred to indulge herself in all kinds of entertainment—the more outrageous and self-gratifying the better; she was mostly famous among her peers for her orgiastic parties with zzonga cocktails, and later on for her practice of dark magics of which dark ceremonies were only the visible part—rather than pursuing academic knowledge. This descent into the dark arts, rumored to be practiced at the expense of those who associated with her, eventually drove away her fellow young aristocrats, who believed she had become a minion of Alphaks the Destroyer, when in fact she had “merely” become a priestess of Talitha. Lemele joined the Crimson Avengers not because she shares their beliefs but because she enjoys participating in their savage massacres. She will stay with them only for as long as she finds their practice amusing, and she will leave them without a second thought once she tires of them, and notably if the fight with the PCs turns against the Crimson Avengers. Her clerical robes portray a crying baby (her patroness's symbol), which she colored crimson to indulge the party (thus it appears that the baby is crying from its wounds, rather than from Talitha's mischief).

Jerlan (elf, level 13 aristocrat/level 6 rogue)

Jerlan was a sophisticated gentleelf from Shiye-Lawr, who lived wealthily—he always was proud of his ability to maintain his status of gentry uninterrupted for more than a quarter millennium—until the Great War disrupted his way of life. During that period, many Shiye-Lawr elves opposed the war (Jerlan did not care much about the war, being more preoccupied with his social life), and several clans left their kingdom to settle in the wilderness of Norwold. Jerlan was thrilled at the novelty, and moved along. His enthusiasm was quickly dashed, though, for Norwold is a frontier land where his dandy attitude and smooth talking were not (in his view) appropriately valued. It did not take long for Jerlan to leave his elfen brethren, who came as religiously-inspired pioneers, and go socialize at the court of Alpha. But although the king was son to the empress, he was still a commoner ruling a frontier land, and the most regal balls in Alpha could not even match the pageantry of the twelfth birthday party of the third daughter of the nephew of a lord of Arkan. Jerlan's plans to return to Alphatia were dashed by its sinking, so he had no choice but to stay in Alpha. The next years were bleak in Alpha without Alphatia, with the encroachment of the Heldannic Knights and the betrayal of several petty lords; Jerlan's joie de vivre disappeared as swiftly as his wealth, and he finally hit bottom when he could no more afford his gentry status—not that it meant much in Alpha anyway, but to Jerlan it was a terrible blow. A broken elf, he spent what was left of his fortune to travel to the Isle of Dawn. There he met the Crimson Avengers, and Silbrecca convinced him that his fall was the fact of Alphatia's enemies: the Thyatians, the Glantrians, the Heldannic Knights, and all the barbarians that plotted the destruction of the most glorious civilization. Jerlan is now a bitter elf whose only joy comes from running his magical blade through barbarian hearts. Jerlan dyes his long, flowing hair crimson.

Wrapping Up

Once the PCs have defeated the Crimson Avengers, their mission is over and they should return with Favian Vern to Skyfyr.

If they captured any Crimson Avengers, it is likely that Favian Vern will take them back to Skyfyr as well, where they will be tried for treason. It is possible that the PCs will be called as witnesses; it is even possible that they will have to testify in favor of the Crimson Avengers, for example to confirm that the Crimson Avengers were acting outside of the boundaries of the kingdom (and thus from Alphetian law), or that they did not initiate the fight with Favian Vern and the PCs (if that is the case), etc. The DM should remember that justice in Alphetia might make use of magic to establish the truth (with spells like *ESP*), and that justice is not the same for aristocrats and commoners. If the PCs have already participated in trials in Alphetia (in whatever capacity), it might be interesting to show them how justice is served in Nayce.

Alliance of Enemies (JC)

Synopsis

Grath and the PCs reach Skyfyr, and send word to Kalin that they wish to meet with him. During the tense meeting, Grath convinces Kalin of the sincerity of the party's purpose, and persuades him to aid them. Together, they locate Talin, and try to rescue him.

A Tense Meeting

Once Grath and the PCs return to the Jennite camp surrounding Skyfyr, they are faced with two options: sneak past the camp and try to enter the city, or try to bluff their way through the camp, and dodge questions about whether Talin truly is a traitor to the Jennite people. If they try to sneak through the camp, then it is a simple matter of using magic or subterfuge to avoid the notice of any sentries who are on duty; although the DM may wish to throw in a few diversions to keep the PCs on their toes, as in previous parts of this adventure.

If the party decides to pass through the camp openly, they will see that all is not well. News of Talin's arrest has reached the camp, and the armies here have been torn apart. Some are still loyal to Talin, others are convinced of his treachery—especially since word spread of an attempt he made to escape—and some Jennites see his absence as an opportunity to gain more power for themselves. The besieging army has not turned on itself yet, but tensions are on the rise, and it should be obvious that it is only a matter of time before infighting breaks out. Given the situation, the PCs would be well advised to keep their sympathies to themselves—Grath can suggest this to them if necessary. It should become apparent that the party will not find too many people willing to help them openly, so they will have to approach Kalin on their own.

Grath will approach the main gates under a flag of truce, accompanied by the PCs, if they wish to accompany him into the city. He asks to see Kalin, and is brought to see him by a handful of tense, well-armed guards. Assuming the PCs accompany Grath, read (or paraphrase) the following:

You are escorted into a large room that might have served as a grand hall at some time, but now it is bare of most furnishings, save for a few chairs and a table. Waiting for you in the room is a tall, young Jennite man wearing battered leather armor underneath a traditional Jennite tunic, who bears a slight resemblance to Talin—you suspect that this man must be Kalin. His expression is guarded, and his voice low, as he acknowledges you.

“You have come openly under a flag of truce, and so I bid you welcome to Skyfyr; you have my word that no harm will come to you while you are within these walls. I know you, Grath, and welcome you as a man of learning. I know you all, too,” he says, looking pointedly at the rest of you, “for you fought on Talin's side against me not long ago. Let us put aside past battles for the moment, and tell me why you have come to see me.”

Grath thanks Kalin for agreeing to meet with you, and proceeds to tell him about the cruel acts being perpetrated by Maltaen and his True Way followers. You watch as Kalin's eyes widen as the wizard lists the atrocities committed by the True Way, and you see concern cross Kalin's face as Grath tells him of the betrayal Talin has suffered at the hands of Maltaen—a betrayal brought on by Talin's desire to end the senseless slaughter being committed by his people. Grath goes on to describe how you escaped from the Jennite camp after Talin was arrested, and how rumors are circulating concerning what has happened to Talin since then. Regardless, the Jennites are now divided, with some supporting Maltaen, and others hoping for a more moderate solution.

Grath finishes his tale by saying to Kalin, “Even as we speak here, Talin's fate hangs in the balance. Maltaen and his followers wished to have him executed on the spot, but traditions, and the need to sway the chieftains to his cause, prevented him from doing so. I feel that it is only a matter of time until Maltaen finds himself an opportunity to have Talin killed. This is why we have come to you, Kalin. Talin's supporters are too widely dispersed in the Jennite camp outside your city to form a cohesive force that can challenge Maltaen and his followers, and it would take far too long to gather them together. Although you fight for the Alphetians, I think you are a reasonable man, and so here we stand, asking you whether you will aid us in our quest to free your brother.”

Kalin stands silently, seeming to weigh Grath's words. At last, he speaks. “Although we stand on opposing sides, my heart tells me that what you say is true. I know you, Grath, to be a true friend of Talin's, and likewise your companions,” he turns and gestures at the rest of you, “have stood with him in difficult times. I know, also, that what you say about Maltaen is likely to be true, for I have fought with his followers, to so-called Champions of the True Way, and they, I assure you, were cruel men, indeed. Let me think upon what you have told me, and I shall meet you tomorrow at dawn. Until that time, you are welcome to stay in this palace as guests. No one will harm you, or they shall answer to me. Otherwise, you are free to return to your camp, and I will meet you outside the main gates.”

The PCs are, of course, free to take the initiative here, and present the case for rescuing Talin without Grath's involvement. If this is the case, Kalin may respond more positively or negatively, depending on what the PCs say, and (at the DM's discretion) how well they role-play the encounter. Regardless, once Kalin dismisses the PCs, they should decide whether they want to stay in Skyfyr, or return to camp. Kalin will keep his promise if they stay—they will come to no harm while they remain inside the palace—but the guards will be instructed to gently, but firmly, prevent them from roaming the city: the two sides are still at war, after all. Should they remain in the palace, Grath and the PCs will receive free food and warm beds, and will be followed by a small squad of guards. If the PCs try to enter the city, Kalin will hear of it, and will trust them less for the remainder of the adventure, unless they prove themselves otherwise.

The next day, Kalin meets them as promised, and tells them that he will help them rescue his brother, for this is, perhaps, the best opportunity to end the war once and for all. He leaves Lyriander in charge of defending Skyfyr, and sends word to Favian Vern (currently hunting the Crimson Avengers) of the situation, and requests information on Talin's whereabouts. He then invites the PCs and Grath to avail themselves of weapons and other equipment from the city's stores as necessary, and the party can then make final plans prior to departure. Once Favian sends the required information by magical means a few hours later, the group leaves.

Rescuing Talin

Once again, the DM should use the Encounters in Esterhold section of the adventure to make sure the journey to the Jennite camp is interesting. Unlike previous journeys, however, there will be no encounters with the handiwork of the Crimson Avengers, who have been eliminated by a team of Alphatian heroes led by Favian Vern. Another significant change is that encounters with Alphatian parties will no longer automatically result in hostilities, due to Kalin's presence; such parties will not be friendly towards the PCs, however. Once the DM feels enough time has passed, the party can finally reach the Jennite camp. The adventure assumes that the party will attempt the rescue at night, so if an attempt is made during the day, the DM will have to make a few modifications. The precise layout of the camp, beyond what is described in this part of the adventure, has been left for the DM to flesh out.

The camp itself is a large collection of tents of various sizes, surrounded by a ring of watch fires manned by armed sentries. The chieftains' tents are located in the middle of the camp, as is the tent where Talin is being held. Since a direct attack against the camp would be suicide, the PCs, Kalin, and Grath must devise a plan to sneak in, locate Talin, and leave without arousing too much attention. Grath's spells may come in handy here, and both NPCs can serve as a mechanism for the DM to provide hints if necessary.

Since the camp holds a large number of Jennite chieftains from many different tribes, the sentries are on high alert, and there is quite a bit of rivalry going on between warriors of different tribes, in terms of who has the keenest eye, as well as the best aim with a bow. Therefore, any skill checks used to sneak into the camp should be penalized, and several checks should be required. Fortunately for the PCs, the light from the watch fires prevents the sentries from seeing too far into the darkness, meaning that the party will see their opponents before they can be seen. If one or more party member is spotted or heard, an alarm will be raised, and 1d6 sentries will rush to where the intruder is thought to be. An intense search will be made of the immediate area for tracks and other evidence for two turns before the sentries return to their posts, provided nothing is found. The party could use this interval to sneak past the outer perimeter, depending on what sort of plan they devise. If the sentries find tracks or other evidence of the party's passing, they will follow them. If this happens, the PCs may find themselves being attacked from behind, unless they hear their enemies coming. If a battle does result, other Jennite warriors will hear the fighting, and 1d4 warriors will enter the fray every 3d4 rounds, until the sounds of fighting cease, or the party manages to flee.

Assuming the party manages to sneak past the sentries, they will have to make their way through a veritable maze of tents, corrals, and cooking fires. Although most of the warriors are asleep, there is a significant amount of traffic, composed mainly of sentries going on or off duty. During every turn spent sneaking through the camp, there is a 30% chance that 1d2 sentries will cross the party's path. If such an encounter occurs, the party will have to make skill checks to avoid detection, unless they are using magical means to conceal themselves. If they are detected, the DM should have the sentries roll for surprise, and, if they fail the roll, the PCs will have one round to dispose of them quietly before their adversaries flee to get help—returning in one turn with another 2d4 warriors.

Once the DM is satisfied that the party has spent enough time navigating the camp, the PCs will finally reach the center. They can use whatever means they have at their disposal to determine which tent holds Talin, but they should be able to figure it out in short order. In the area around Talin's tent, there are two chieftains' tents, each of which shelters one chieftain and his three best warriors. Should the PCs make too much noise, there is a chance (to be determined by the DM) that one or more of the guards will wake up, rousing the others in his tent and then going to investigate the disturbance in two turns. They will attack the PCs without provocation (especially if the PCs are "rebel" or urbanized Jennites), unless they belong to the same tribe as one or more PCs (10% chance if the PCs are free Jennites), in which case they will angrily demand to know why they have ventured into the chieftains' part of camp without invitation. Assuming the PCs can bluff their way out, the warriors will order them to leave immediately, and go back to their tent once they are satisfied the PCs are going away. If the PCs refuse to leave, the warriors will order them to leave once more, saying that by refusing, they are defying the word of their chieftain. If they still refuse to leave, they will be attacked. Such a battle should be tough—chieftains employ only the best warriors to be their personal guards, after all—and runs the risk of being noisy enough to rouse warriors from nearby tents.

Talin's tent shelters one guard in addition to Talin himself, and both are asleep—Talin's guard was confident that no one could possibly sneak this far into the camp without being noticed. Assuming the party manages to enter Talin's tent without being seen or heard, the DM should read or paraphrase the following:

Your eyes adjust to the even deeper darkness of the tent. The tent itself is very large for its two occupants, which is fortunate for you. Aside from a pile of sleeping furs for the dozing guard, the only other furnishing is a bucket of stagnant water. Huddled in the far corner of the tent is a battered young Jennite man dressed in ragged clothing, manacled to a post staked into the ground.

The guard, as stated earlier, is sound asleep, and can be dispatched easily. The chained man is Talin. Upon entering the tent, Kalin will go to him immediately, and try to wake him. Noting the evidence of physical torture, Kalin will ask Talin, once he is awake, who tortured him. Talin will look around the tent with a glazed look in his eyes, and mumble groggily to himself. It should be obvious to the PCs that Talin is not aware of his surroundings—he does not even seem to recognize the PCs right away. Given that there is little the party can do for Talin, the most obvious thing for them to do is leave the camp as quickly as possible—Grath or Kalin can suggest this if necessary.

The flight from the camp is very similar to the party's effort to enter it, except that they are leading Talin, who is dazed. The DM may wish to make skill checks even more difficult due to the situation, or this part of the adventure can pass with few incidents. Regardless, the journey should be tense, as the PCs should feel that they are racing against the clock. Once they are away from the camp, the party can head back to Skyfyr—the DM should use the Encounters in Esterhold section once more. On the way to Skyfyr, Kalin will ask Grath to use his spells to determine the cause of his brother's strange memory loss, which seems to stretch back to shortly after he was captured by Maltaen. Grath will determine that Talin has been subjected to some form of powerful magic, which may be responsible for his apparent memory loss. Kalin will contact Favian, and arrange to have him meet the party en route to Skyfyr to help solve the mystery.

In the meantime, Talin's escape will be discovered by his captors, and Maltaen will use the situation to gain new supporters, as he will declare that Talin could only have escaped with the help of the Alphetians—thus proving that he is a traitor to his people. Hearing of the destruction of the Crimson Avengers, Maltaen will also claim falsely that his own followers accomplished the deed, which will result in many more Jennites rallying to his cause. Maltaen will also send out several parties of Jennite warriors to track down Kalin and the PCs, and kill them. Because Kalin is with them, however, Alphetian parties encountered in the countryside may aid the PCs, but Talin and Grath will not be happy about that. It is now time to move to the final part of this adventure, where the PCs can confront an evil that has plagued Esterhold for many years, and which many people (falsely) thought had been eliminated.

Part VII: Triumphant Brothers

Synopsis (AC & JC)

Favian Vern restores Talin's memory, who then reveals that the evil wizard Nicodemus, who once ruled part of Esterhold, is devising a plot to regain his power. The PCs (Jennite or Alphetian) must go to Draeh with Talin and Kalin to expose Nicodemus, and break his hold over many of the Jennite tribes.

The Answer Revealed

While still in the countryside, Favian Vern, accompanied by a small party of Alphetian heroes (the PCs, if this is an Alphetian campaign), meets up with the brothers, Grath, and a band of Jennite heroes (Jennite PCs, if this is a Jennite campaign). The initial meeting is tense, but Favian makes it clear that he means no harm. Talin is not happy about meeting Favian and his companions, but his curiosity about his memory loss outweighs his hostility towards Alphetians. Favian explains that he will cast a few divination spells to determine the cause of Talin's memory loss, and asks the young man whether he consents to this. Talin expresses reluctance until Grath explains that it is beyond his ability to cast the spell himself, after which he tells Favian to proceed. The DM should read or paraphrase the following:

Favian puts a ring onto his right hand, and utters a brief command word, and intones, "Let that which clouds Talin's mind be lifted; let his memory be clear once more!"

At first nothing seems to happen. Talin closes his eyes, and seems almost to be asleep. Suddenly, his eyes open wide once more, and he shouts, "Nicodemus! Nicodemus has returned to Esterhold! He has disguised himself as a Jennite wizard named Detir, and is manipulating Maltaen and his True Way followers. I saw him using magic to speak to someone else in his tent, an Alphetian man I had never seen before, about using the True Way to divide the Jennites and incite hatred between us and the Alphetians. He wants to turn Esterhold into a chaotic land, so he could move in and rule it again. He saw me, and told me to forget what I had seen!"

"Nicodemus has returned, hasn't he?" says Favian, "This is a serious matter indeed! I thought his evil had been uprooted from the land when he was driven out of Verdan, but it seems he will not give up so easily. We cannot allow him to succeed, or the republic will fall, and any hope we had for peace will be snuffed out. It is too bad that you didn't recognize the other Alphetian—we could have had a chance of destroying this conspiracy once and for all. But no matter, for we know Nicodemus is in Esterhold, and we can deal with him. Our battles must come to an end now, for we now face a common evil. The main question now is, where do we go from here?"

This is an ideal opportunity for the PCs to get involved in planning how to deal with this revelation. The PCs (whether Alphetian or Jennite) will almost certainly know who Nicodemus was, and they will have heard tales about how cruelly he ruled the former Kingdom of Verdan. The main obstacle here is that, aside from Talin's recently restored memories, there is no proof of Nicodemus's involvement. Someone should realize that Nicodemus must be exposed for who he really is in front of the Jennites in order to discredit him, and break his hold over Maltaen's True Way faction—again, an NPC can suggest this if necessary. Another problem that should be made clear is that Maltaen's camp is likely to be on very high alert since Talin's escape—any attempt to sneak into it again would be extremely difficult. Let the PCs think over what they might be able to do for a while, until Favian perks up, with a smile on his face, and says,

"I have just received a message from one of my sources. It seems that Maltaen has broken camp, and he is moving his entire host eastwards, towards Draeh. By all appearances, he intends to take the city by force."

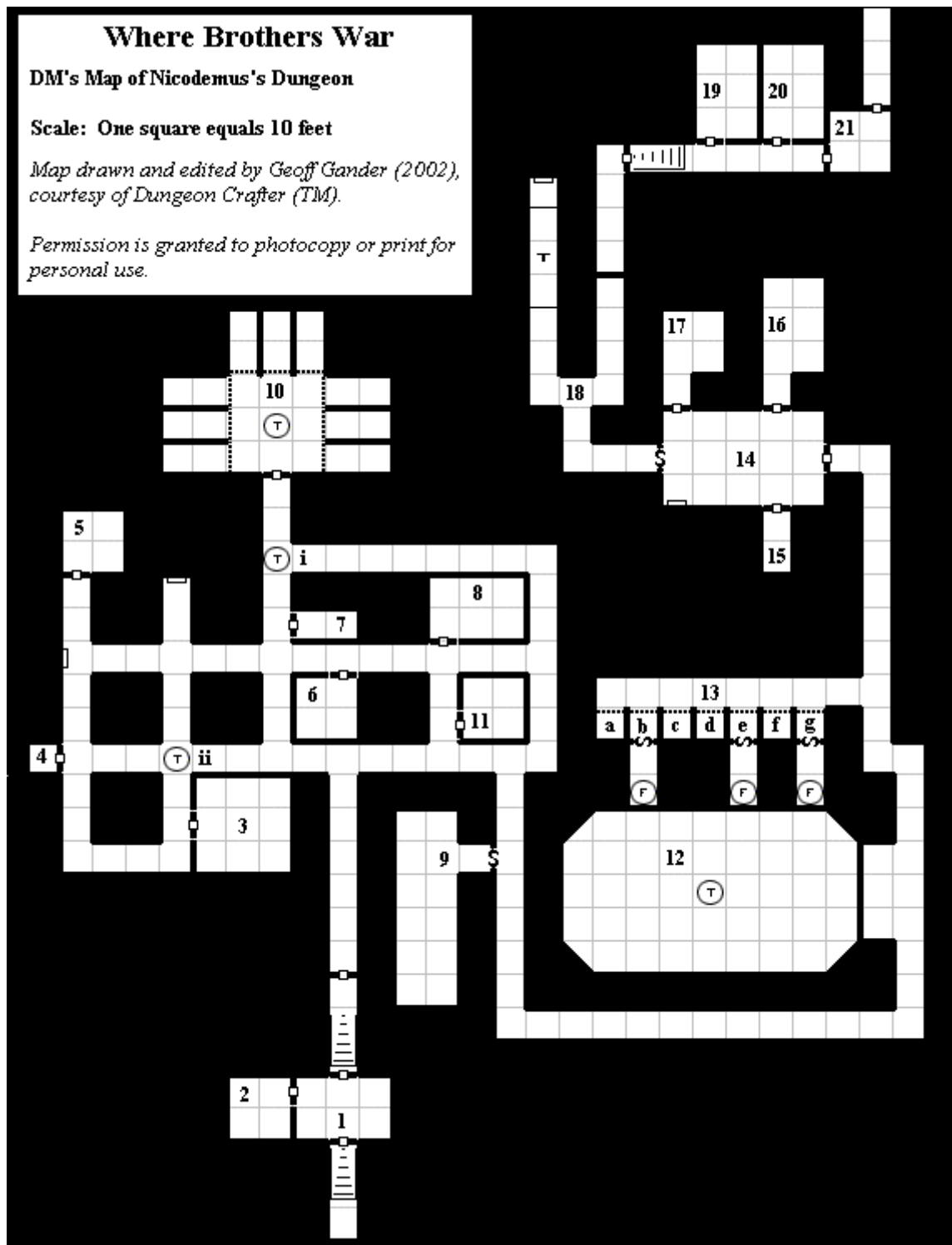
Now that the PCs know where Maltaen's force (and Nicodemus) is heading, planning can begin in earnest. Both Talin and Favian know Draeh quite well. In this, the party has an advantage over Maltaen's True Way faction, most of whom are free Jennites who have never lived in towns or cities. The party has an extra advantage in that Talin was once Governor of Draeh before the current hostilities arose, and before that he was a rebel leader fighting against the Alphetians. As such, he knows of several secret ways into the city. Although many of these might be closed off now, he will suggest that, if they wish to get into Draeh unseen, this is a better way than by approaching it openly. Based on this information, the rough plan should be to sneak into the city, and then expose Nicodemus in front of the Jennites, in the hopes that such a revelation would reduce Maltaen's stature, and make his followers more willing to negotiate.

On to Draeh

The DM should allow the party to make last minute plans, and then they should head to Draeh. Once more, their journey through the countryside should be punctuated with the occasional random encounter, so the DM should use the Encounters in Esterhold section—except that there will be no encounters with the Crimson Avengers, Minboral's Circle, or any other special group. Additionally, any Alphetian party encountered will not be hostile, as long as Favian and Kalin are with the party (a very handy thing, if the PCs are Jennite). Eventually, the party should reach the city of Draeh, only to find that Maltaen and his followers have already taken over, and are busy "cleansing" the inhabitants of their Alphetian corruption—namely, an urbanized existence. The DM may wish to have the PCs encounter one or more groups of refugees fleeing Draeh beforehand, who can tell them about Maltaen's command to destroy every building in the city, and to convert the populace to the "traditional" Jennite lifestyle. Clearly, there is no time to lose!

Talin will lead the party to a thicket of trees just south of Draeh's walls, where, after several minutes of searching, he will open a door in a boulder, and usher the party inside. It is now time for the party to explore the secret complex beneath Nicodemus's old palace, which will allow them to enter the heart of the city. A map of the complex has been provided with this adventure; the DM should refer to it now, and use it while the party is exploring the complex.

Map of Nicodemus's Dungeon



The Secret Stronghold of Nicodemus

During the height of his reign, King Nicodemus had a secret lair excavated beneath his palace, both to provide a secure location in which to conduct his research, and to provide an escape route in the unlikely event that the populace of Faraway might rise against him. Those who dug out the complex for him were executed afterwards (to ensure that they did not spread word of their project to anyone), and Nicodemus later enchanted their remains to serve as guardians for the lower level (see below).

Inside the city, the lair is accessible only from Nicodemus's old throne room. The secret door can only be opened by pressing a cluster of gems set into the throne's armrests in a specific order (a regular Find Secret Doors roll will inform the PCs that something is odd about the gems, a halved Intelligence check is required to figure out the correct sequence to open the door). Once the gems are pressed in the correct order, the throne will slide sideways, revealing a narrow staircase leading downwards; the throne slides back after 30 seconds have passed. At the bottom of these stairs, next to a switch that will open the trapdoor from below, a long dusty tunnel extends southwards for approximately 800 feet (no encounters), ending at an unlocked wooden door. Beyond this door is another flight of steps, leading down into the complex proper.

The complex as a whole is arranged into three sections—a large, meandering lower level, flanked to the north and south by two smaller, upper levels containing only a handful of rooms. The other side of the complex leads to a secret exit to the surface, a fair distance from the city walls. In all cases, tunnels are ten feet wide and eight feet in height, and the floors and walls have been finished with dressed stone. Unless otherwise mentioned, there are no light sources anywhere, and all doors are unlocked. What follows is a series of room descriptions and other DM notes for this dungeon.

Entering the Lair

The secret entrance to Nicodemus's lair is a concealed door located in a thicket to the south of Draeh's walls. The PCs will note that the entrance has been made to look like a mossy boulder, and the door, when closed, is almost invisible (a regular Find Secret Doors roll will locate the door). Behind this door (which is unlocked), there is a tiny chamber, measuring no more than ten feet on a side, and a staircase going downwards, which leads to area 1. Even while Nicodemus was King of Verdan, this portion of his lair was seldom used; the only reason why he would have come here would have been if his palace was in imminent danger of falling to an attack, and he had to flee the city. In such a situation, guards would have been posted here, in case the secret entrance to this portion of the complex was discovered, and Nicodemus's political opponents sought to cut off his escape.

1. Entry Chamber

You are in a bare, rectangular chamber, almost devoid of any furnishings to indicate what its original purpose might have been. On the other side of the room is a large iron door, while to your left is a much less imposing wooden door, which is slightly ajar. On either side of the iron door is an ornate iron sconce, presumably intended to hold a torch.

This room was intended to serve as a collection point for Nicodemus and any of his entourage, should they be forced to flee the palace. There is nothing of interest here. Should the PCs wish to open the iron door, they will find it locked (the lock is very sturdy and complex—penalize Open Lock rolls by –25%). Behind the door is a flight of steps leading down to Nicodemus's lair (see the next section).

2. Guard Room

This square room contains a small round table, two chairs, and two sleeping pallets, all covered with a layer of dust. Mounted in the far wall are three iron torch sconces, all of which contain unlit torches.

Aside from the torches—which are normal in every respect, and have never been used—there is nothing of interest in this room.

The Lair of Nicodemus

This section is accessible via a flight of stairs to the north of area 1. Once the PCs descend the stairs, they will have entered what was Nicodemus's actual lair, where he conducted his most secret experiments.

While it was in use, the lair housed a large number of monsters native to Esterhold, which Nicodemus was intent on studying for his own purposes. During the Week Without Magic, many of the magical wards that kept the creatures in check failed, and they wreaked considerable havoc for several days, killing a number of Nicodemus's guards and apprentices. Although control was established once more, the damage done was significant enough to force Nicodemus to abandon his complex. Since that time, the wards have failed every Day of Dread, allowing the monsters to escape again, but now no one remains to restore order, which means that the lair is now filled with dangerous monsters. Most PCs will find such an environment oddly familiar.

DM Note: While wandering the lower level of Nicodemus's lair, the PCs may run across one or more of the monsters currently on the loose. Each turn, they have a 1 in 6 chance of having a random encounter. If you roll a "1," consult the following table to determine what the PCs encounter. DMs should use combat statistics appropriate to their chosen game system:

d4 Roll	Encounter
1	1-4 crab spiders. Originally brought here as test subjects, crab spiders have run rampant following Nicodemus's abandonment of this complex.
2	2-8 skeletons. Nicodemus used skeletons as cheap, expendable guards and monster handlers. Now that he is no longer here, the skeletons wander aimlessly, attacking anything they encounter.
3	1-2 gelatinous cubes. Due to his desire to maintain secrecy at all costs, Nicodemus relied on trained gelatinous cubes to keep his complex clean. These creatures have since returned to their instincts.
4	2-16 kukarachans. Nicodemus captured some of these creatures years ago, in the hopes of breeding a race of obedient, expendable soldiers for Alphonat. He failed, and now the kukarachans roam the complex in search of prey—that is, anything that moves.

DMs should also be aware that there are a number of *teleportation* traps in the lower level. These are marked on the map with a "T" surrounded by a circle. When the complex was still being used by Nicodemus, a person only needed to say, "Nicodemus" followed by the name of one of the keyed locations, in order to *teleport* there. Thus, to *teleport* to the arena (area 8), a person merely had to step on a *teleport* circle and say, "Nicodemus—arena." There were four locations that could be accessed in this manner: the arena (area 8), the monster pens (area 13), and intersections "one" and "two" (denoted as i and ii on the map). If a person wanted to step on a *teleporter* without being *teleported*, they did not have to say anything; the *teleporters* only worked if the command word was uttered.

Since the Week Without Magic, the *teleportation* system has been malfunctioning. Now, it is no longer possible to control where one is *teleported*, and there is no way of crossing a *teleporter* without being sent somewhere else. The *teleporters* themselves are unmarked; the original inhabitants knew where they all were. Every turn the PCs linger around a *teleporter*, there is always a 20% chance that a wandering monster will be *teleported* to that location from somewhere else in the complex. Treat this as a normal random encounter. If one or more PCs step on a *teleporter*, use the following table to determine where they end up, or just decide randomly:

d4 Roll	PC(s) will be <i>teleported</i> to...
1	Arena (area 12)—roll for a random encounter; subtract 2 from the roll.
2	Monster Pens (area 10)—roll for a random encounter; subtract 1 from the roll.
3	Intersection One (i)—roll for a random encounter (unmodified).
4	Intersection Two (ii)—roll for a random encounter (unmodified).

3. Apprentice Quarters

The door to this room shows signs of having been forced open.

This large, square room was obviously gaudily decorated at one time. Tattered and scorched red banners bearing gold runes and other symbols adorn the walls, and the remains of five canopied, four-poster beds line the far walls. Close by, you see a large square table, surrounded by five chairs, and in each of the far corners of this room there are braziers, all of which have been knocked over. Mounted in the ceiling are four smooth stones, two of which provide a soft white light; the remaining two have been smashed to pieces. Several decayed bodies lie on the floor—two of them appear to have been human; the remainder resemble bipedal insects of some sort.

This room was where five of Nicodemus's most trusted apprentices slept and studied while they were helping him in his experiments. During the Week Without Magic, two of them were attacked in this room by a pack of kukarachans. The apprentices managed to kill several of them with *magic missiles* (hence, the scorched banners), but there were too many, and the young wizards were soon killed.

If the PCs search the room, they will find a pouch containing 18 gems (worth 5 gp each), 37 *crowns*, and 65 *mirrors* under one of the mattresses. Under another bed is a spellbook (belonging to one of the deceased apprentices in area 6) containing the spells *read magic*, *sleep*, *charm person*, and *light*. If the PCs search the apprentices' bodies, they may find a dagger in fine condition. There is nothing else of interest here.

4. Latrine

The reek of old waste and worse things assails your nostrils as you enter this tiny chamber. By the crude wooden bench—whose seat has a hole cut into it—situated over a two-foot wide hole in the stone floor, it is clear that this room served as a latrine.

There is nothing of immediate interest in this room. If the PCs remain here for more than one turn, or try to search the room, six carrion crawlers will emerge from the hole, and attack.

There is nothing of value in the creatures' lair, the 10-foot deep waste pit (thank goodness!), but one of the carrion crawlers contains a small gold ring, worth 80 gp (a remnant of a previous meal).

5. Empty Room

The door to this room is locked. A regular Open Locks roll will unlock it.

This small, dusty chamber is utterly devoid of any furnishings.

This room was originally intended to be a storeroom, but the complex was abandoned before it could be used. There is nothing of interest here.

6. Abandoned Room

Your footfalls echo faintly in this large, apparently empty room, save for a few pieces of broken wood scattered about the floor. The dust lies pretty thick here, and you can clearly discern tracks of various sorts.

When Nicodemus was using this complex, this room housed a large number of servants, who cleaned and maintained the tunnels and chambers of this level. Following the chaos of the Week Without Magic, those servants who had not been killed by the rampaging monsters packed up their belongings and fled, while their master's attention was elsewhere. Since that time, the room has not been in use.

The various pieces of wood are the remains of simple beds and other furniture that belonged to the servants, which were destroyed by wandering monsters in recent years. If the PCs examine the tracks, a successful tracking check will reveal the passage of regular and giant rats, giant insects, and other beasts native to Esterhold. There is nothing else of interest here.

7. Training Room

This relatively small, rectangular room measures roughly 20 feet long and ten feet wide. Lining the walls at regular intervals are weapon racks, most of which are empty. Mounted in the ceiling is what appears to be a stone globe, but it is cracked in several places. The floor is littered with bones and what appear to be scraps of metal.

This was once a weapons training room, specifically for hand-to-hand combat. The most frequent users were the complex guards, who spent many of their off-hours here. During the monster rampage of the Week Without Magic, some of the more intelligent creatures noticed this room, and tried to steal some weapons. The guards here fought bravely, but died. The monsters, some of whom hated light, smashed the *light* stone mounted in the ceiling.

Currently, the weapon racks contain eight usable spears, two leather bucklers, and one bastard sword. The other weapons are now in the possession of the kukarachans. If the PCs search the bones and metal scraps (the remains of three guards and their armor) they will find a rusted key ring holding seven keys. These are the keys that unlock the cells in area 13. There is nothing else of interest here.

8. Barracks

Although it has been neglected for a long time, it is clear that this large room once served as a barracks. Along the wall opposite the door, and the far wall to your right, you can see four intact bunk beds, and to your immediate right are a small round table and two chairs. Set in the walls at regular intervals are softly glowing stones, whose white light provides a ghostly sheen to everything here.

Another thing that you notice is that the entire ceiling, and the far right corner, are covered with spider webs. Spiders of varying sizes crawl about above your heads, and seem to pay you no heed, but your attention is drawn to the much larger spider squatting in the far corner. It is quite large, possibly the size of a small pony, and you cannot help but notice that its two forelegs end in delicate hands, and its head is dominated by a large lump in the back. The light is reflected in its many eyes, as it watches you.

Shortly after the abandonment of this complex, one of Nicodemus's monsters, an aranea, managed to escape from her cell, and set up a lair in this room. Since that time, she has managed to stay alive by feeding off of the kukarachans that inhabit this level of the lair. Despite the abundant food supply, she is desperate to escape the complex, and therefore she will not immediately attack the PCs, curious as she is about them (they are the first intelligent creatures she has seen in years). If the PCs make an attempt to communicate with the aranea, or make no move to attack, she will address them in broken Alphantian (she managed to pick up some of the language from her captors), and offer her knowledge of the complex in exchange for helping her escape.

The aranea (whose real name is unpronounceable, but introduces herself as Velav) is telling the truth; she knows the history of this lair, and the layout of accessible areas of the lower level of the complex (areas 3-8, 10, and 12-14 (she knows about the secret door concealing area 18, and how to open it, but she does not know how to solve the fork puzzle), as well as the corridors connecting these rooms). Velav also knows the original purposes of the rooms she has visited, and has also figured out the location of the *teleportation* traps, but it will not volunteer this latter piece of information. If the PCs have fallen victim to the *teleportation* trap at least once already, and have had a few random encounters, they may be willing to do business with her. PCs of good or lawful alignments may also be inclined to help Velav, since she has shown no hostile intent (DMs may wish to remind players of this, as appropriate).

The challenge in this encounter is to not attack Velav, but to trust her. This may not be an easy thing to do, if the PCs have encountered "regular" araneas before. If the PCs take Velav up on her offer, she will guide them to area 17, and then expect the PCs to keep up their part of the bargain. If the PCs help Velav escape the complex, she will thank them, and scurry off. Afterwards, PCs might encounter her in their travels, in which case she could become an ally. If the PCs try to abandon Velav, she will grow angry with them, and flee, only to track them stealthily, in the hopes of following them outside. Afterwards, Velav could become a dangerous foe, as she will not forget the PCs' treachery.

Although the PCs should not fight Velav, DMs should use the standard aranea statistics of their game system. In addition, secured to her underside in a pocket of webbing is a silver ring set with sapphires (worth 120 gp) and a *wand of fireballs* (10 charges left), and a spellbook (which belonged to one of the apprentices in area 6) containing the spells *read magic*, *light*, and *magic missile*. If Velav is with the PCs, she will fight to defend herself, but will not aid the PCs unless asked, or unless the odds are more than 2:1 against the PCs. Should the PCs manage to escape the complex with Velav, award them her experience point value as a reward; if they kill her, they receive no reward.

Aside from a few dried out kukarachan husks, there is nothing else of interest in the barracks.

9. Secret Laboratory

This room is accessible only via a secret door.

Judging from what is in this chamber, there can be no doubt that this is a secret laboratory. The room is brightly lit by four glowing white stones embedded in the ceiling. The center of this rectangular room is dominated by two imposing worktables, each built of a dark wood. One of the tables is engraved with many runes and strange symbols, and the other is covered by a large form, draped with a sheet. Along the wall opposite the door are three large bookshelves, each of which has only a handful of dusty books. At the north end of the room is a long, low cupboard, built of the same wood as the tables.

The only other notable feature of this room is a collection of skeletons lining the walls at regular intervals.

This room is protected by the skeletons (the remains of the workers who excavated this complex for Nicodemus); if the PCs touch anything in this room without uttering the password (“Nicodemus”) beforehand, the skeletons animate, and attack them. Uttering the word once is sufficient, but if the PCs leave the room, and then re-enter it and meddle with its contents without saying the word, the skeletons will animate. Uttering the word after the skeletons have animated has no effect.

Skeletons (15): DMs should use the statistics appropriate to their game system.

The cupboards used to contain the various chemicals, powders, and other components that Nicodemus needed for his research, but everything of value was removed after the Week Without Magic. Now, the cupboards only contain a few empty glass jars, and a small, sealed clay jug containing preserving fluid (for embalming and related uses). The most valuable books have long since been removed from the bookshelves, but if the PCs look through what is left, they will find a book about the flora and fauna of Esterhold, a book containing drawings of human anatomy (with additional notes in the margins written in a different hand—Nicodemus’s), and a water-stained book theorizing the existence of otherworldly beings who were banished from the known planes long ago, but who plot their return (a vague treatise on the Outer Beings). The other books are either too abstract to be of any use, or they are unreadable due to stains and other damage. All of the books are written in Alphatian.

Both of the tables, constructed of a rare, very hard wood (known as ebonywood) that grows in specific valleys around the Bay of Thorin, are extremely heavy (over 1,000 lbs. each), and are too large to be removed from the room in one piece. If broken down, the wood is worth about 1,500 gp per table. The rune-covered table was used by Nicodemus whenever he had any complicated spellcasting to do. The runes, if studied by a scholar or mage, provide some measure of protection to the caster, and clarity of thought. A careful examination of the runes will also reveal that one of them is, in fact, a cleverly disguised *ring of protection +1* embedded in the table. It is easy to pry out, requiring a regular Dexterity check for success. The other table holds a half-completed, preserved flesh golem, mercifully covered by the shroud. Nicodemus was trying to uncover the secrets of a sect of Alphatian mages known as “fleshcrafters,” but their secrets of making such golems eluded him. When he abandoned the complex, he also abandoned this line of research. Unless the PCs have access to the secrets of the fleshcrafters (highly unlikely), they will not be able to complete and animate this golem.

10. Monster Pens

The door to this room has been smashed to pieces.

This dark room measures roughly 30 feet on a side, and is bounded to the north, west, and east by cages. Some of the cages have been unlocked, but others appear to have had their bars bent aside. The floor of this room is littered with bones, scraps of leather and metal, and other unidentifiable materials. Set into the ceiling are two stone globes, both of which are heavily damaged. The room has a strong musty smell to it.

This room was where Nicodemus’s monsters were kept when he was not performing experiments on them, or pitting them against his prisoners in the arena (area 12). During the Week Without Magic, the wards that reinforced the bars of the cages failed, and many of the creatures managed to force their way out. The guards posted here managed to hold them at bay for a time, and sound the alarm, but ultimately they were either killed or forced to flee. Some of the more intelligent monsters then unlocked the other cells, to free all of the creatures. Although order was eventually restored, too many people had died, and too much damage had been inflicted, for Nicodemus to re-establish himself. The wards have failed every Day of Dread since then, and now all of the creatures roam the complex.

If the PCs search the debris on the floor, they will find scraps of leather and chain mail armor, broken swords, human bones, and fragments of kukarachan carapaces. Hidden in the debris is a leather belt with a silver buckle (worth 60 gp), as well as a short sword whose blade is edged with silver (worth 125 gp). The two globes were once *light* stones, but they were smashed long ago. The cages contain nothing. There is nothing else of interest here.

For every turn the PCs spend in this room, there is a 20% chance that wandering monsters might fall victim to a *teleportation* trap located elsewhere in the complex, and be *teleported* here. If this is the case, treat the event as a regular random encounter, and roll on the encounter table above. The *teleportation* point in this room is in the exact center.

11. Collapsed Room

The door to this room is heavily splintered and battered, but still largely intact. It is unlocked.

You can only progress a couple of feet into this room, before the accumulated mass of rock and other debris blocks your path. Whatever this room once was, it is impossible to tell.

This room was once a simple bath chamber, measuring 20 feet wide and 10 feet long. It contained a simple wooden tub and linen cabinet for the servants and guards of the complex, plus a fire pit over which water could be heated. At the far end, behind a curtain, a porcelain tub, and a linen cabinet containing fine linens, were available for the use of Nicodemus and his apprentices. The room was lit with two *light* stones.

Not long after the Week Without Magic, a minor tremor struck the region around what is now Draeh. Although the city sustained no significant damage, it resulted in the collapse of this chamber. Should the PCs wish to do so, they may try to excavate this room, but it will take 12 hours—*increase the chance of random encounters to 1 in 3 due to the noise*. If they manage to perform this feat, they will find a small silver comb (worth 50 gp), and a round, fist-sized stone engraved with the Alphetian word for “heat.” If this word is uttered while the stone is held, it will begin to heat up, becoming too hot to handle in two minutes, although it will cool down after one hour. This item was used to turn a regular bath into a hot tub experience. On the open market, this heating stone is worth 200 gp.

12. Arena

This room description assumes that the PCs are looking into the room from the observation balcony. If they have entered the room via one of the chutes from area 13, change the description accordingly.

You are standing on a great, railed balcony overlooking what appears to be an arena. This large, oblong chamber measures roughly 90 feet long and 50 feet wide, and the sand-covered floor is ten feet below you. The room itself is lit with three large white glowing stones set into the ceiling. Along the arena wall to your right, there are three wooden doors, hinged from the top. Scattered about the arena floor are weapons and bones, many of which are broken.

This is the arena where Nicodemus pitted some of his prisoners against the monsters that he had captured over the years. Most often, the prisoners found themselves here after falling down the chutes leading from the holding cells (area 13)—a situation which delighted Nicodemus. The three wooden doors cover the chute openings, and are hinged on the top so that a falling prisoner will automatically force open the door. The walls of the arena are comprised of tightly mortared, smooth stone blocks; any climbing rolls will be halved.

If the PCs search the arena floor, they may find buried in the sand a brass *ring of fire resistance*, a tiny agate worth 10 gp, and a silver arrowhead. Scattered about the floor are a number of broken weapons, but some are still serviceable, including two short swords, a dagger, and four arrows. Most of the bones here are those of former prisoners (about 20 in all) but some bones are those of large dogs and lizards, as well as remnants of insect carapaces (remains of kukarachans). There is nothing else of interest here.

For every turn the PCs spend in the arena, there is a 20% chance that wandering monsters might fall victim to a *teleportation* trap located elsewhere in the complex, and be *teleported* to the arena. If this is the case, treat the event as a regular random encounter, and roll on the encounter table above. The *teleportation* point in this room is in the exact center of the arena.

13. Holding Cells

This room is unlit, and therefore the details at the far end will not be visible until the PCs come at least ten feet into the room (assuming they are using torches or simple *light* spells). Otherwise, modify the second sentence of the room description if the PCs merely look into the room from the hallway.

This long, narrow room is unlit, and is bounded on the left-hand side by a series of barred doors. The only other notable features are three empty iron torch sconces set into the right-hand wall at 20-foot intervals, and two overturned wooden chairs in the far right corner.

This room was where Nicodemus held prisoners prior to experimenting on them, or before he decided whether or not to toss them into the arena (area 12). By the time the complex was abandoned, there were only a handful of prisoners here, and most of them starved to death in their cells. The wooden chairs situated outside the cells were where Nicodemus's guards would relax while watching their charges. What follows is a description of each cell, all of which are locked (a regular Open Lock roll will suffice, but the keys are located in area 7):

- a. This cell contains one skeleton. The inner side of the door is covered with scratches and dried blood.
- b. This cell is empty, but contains a secret door in the far wall, that leads to a short tunnel. At the end of this tunnel, a concealed trap door covers a chute leading to area 12. The trapdoor is triggered by any weight greater than 70 lbs. Prisoners placed in this cell (as well as cells e and g) were destined for death in the arena, and the secret tunnel was designed to give them the false hope that they had found a way to escape, only to end up in the arena. The chutes are made of a smooth metal that cannot be climbed.
- c. This cell is empty.
- d. This cell contains two skeletons, each chained with heavy manacles to the floor. Suspended from the ceiling is a strip of dried meat.
- e. This cell contains one skeleton. There is also a secret door and tunnel here, which are identical to those leading from cell b. Stashed in one corner is a ragged leather pouch, containing 4 *judges* and a strip of parchment, upon which is written in Alphatian, "I can go no further. To you who find this, there is a hidden door in this cell—where it leads I know not. Remember that Nicodemus is never what he seems—when he offers you freedom with one hand, he gives you death with the other. Remember also that he worships only one thing—himself?" This is a reference to the presence of many false doors in the complex, as well as a warning not to use the secret door. It also provides the PCs with a clue to exploring Nicodemus's secret laboratory safely—uttering his name.
- f. This cell is empty.
- g. This cell is empty, but contains a secret door and tunnel as per cell b.

14. Anteroom

This appears to be an anteroom. A softly glowing sphere embedded in the ceiling casts a ghostly white light in this chamber, revealing four doors leading off from this location—two to your left, and two to your right. The room itself is very plain, lacking in ornamentation of any sort.

This room is lit with a polished stone enchanted with a *continual light* spell. All of the doors are locked. One of the doors, the one to the far left of the PCs, is false; once unlocked, it will open onto a plain stone wall, in which is embedded a collection of linked dart guns. They will fire the moment the door is opened, and anyone standing on front of the door is automatically hit by 1d6 darts, and must save vs. Poison for each dart or take 1d8 damage per hit. A successful save results in only one point of damage.

There is also a secret door to area 18 here, on the other side of the room. It can be detected with a regular Find Secret Doors roll. There is nothing of interest here.

15. Junk Room

The door to this room is locked; a regular Open Locks roll is sufficient to unlock it. There is so much garbage piled up behind the door, however, that an Open Doors roll is required to open it.

Bathed in the pale glow of a glowing stone set into the ceiling of this tiny chamber, you are confronted with an enormous pile of junk. Scraps of wood, bricks, pieces of metal, and other materials are here, in a pile almost knee-deep.

Initially intended as an additional storeroom, Nicodemus's servants eventually used it as a dumping ground for surplus building materials, broken tools, and other things for which they no longer had a use. By the time the complex was abandoned, there were several piles of junk here, which have since shifted into one large pile. If the PCs decide to search this room, they will find such items as broken shovels and picks, rusted trowels, and broken chairs and tables. Provided the PCs conduct an extensive search—lasting at least two hours—they may find the following items: a pair of engraved silver door handles (worth 50 gp), a gold-tipped writing quill (worth 35 gp), and an antique, three-legged hall table carved out of ebonywood (weighing 15 lbs. and worth 280 gp to a collector).

16. Library

The heavily scratched and battered door to this room is barricaded on the other side. To open it, one of the PCs must make a successful Open Doors roll.

A strong musty odor hits you as you force the door into this chamber open. Illuminated by softly glowing white stones set into the ceiling, the walls on either side of you are packed with book shelves, most of them laden with tomes of varying sizes, and haphazard piles of parchment. A fairly large pool of ink and other chemicals occupies the far right corner of the room, surrounding a collapsed shelf. Right at your feet, however, is an overturned shelf, under which are two withered forms, dressed in decaying robes.

This room was once the main library of Nicodemus's lair. During the Week Without Magic, two of the wizard's apprentices, injured and pursued by kukarachans and lacking their spellbooks, fled to this room, and barricaded themselves inside by pushing a shelf against the door. The kukarachans beat on the door for several hours, and then left, but the apprentices dared not go out, fearing that the creatures would be waiting outside, and that they would not be able to kill enough of them before getting killed themselves. They waited for days, hoping to be rescued, but ultimately died of starvation.

Over the ensuing years, many of the books and scrolls in this room have succumbed to moisture, and are covered with mildew and unreadable. Nevertheless, if the PCs search the shelves, they have a cumulative 10% chance, per turn of searching, of learning about this complex and its purpose. They also have a 5% cumulative chance, per turn of searching, of reading about Nicodemus's secret laboratory (but not its exact location), and about plans for a door that would demand the solution to a riddle, in order to foil intruders. Also hidden amongst the assorted tomes and papers is a *scroll of protection from undead*, and a hollowed-out book containing a *healing potion*.

The apprentices' remains hold nothing of value; neither does the shelf that lies on top of them (it was knocked over when the PCs forced open the door). There is nothing else of interest here.

17. Supply Room

The door to this room is locked; a regular Open Locks roll is sufficient to unlock it.

Rickety wooden shelves, laden with boxes, line the walls of this square chamber, while the room's center is almost completely filled with an unrecognizable pile of garbage. Set into the middle of the ceiling is a softly glowing white stone, which provides illumination.

This room was once used to store general supplies for Nicodemus's lair, such as building materials and tools. Contained within the boxes lining the shelves are nails, hammers, saws, drills, boards, door hinges, and other mundane goods. The overburdened shelves, having been built cheaply, are now on the verge of collapse after several years of neglect. If a PC attempts to move the boxes, there is a 30% chance that that portion of the shelves will collapse, showering everyone within five feet with debris and falling boxes (each affected PC takes 1d8 damage—a successful saving throw vs. Death Ray halves this damage). The noise created by the collapsing shelves will not go unnoticed: for the next 12 turns, DMs should increase the chance of a random encounter to a 1 in 3 chance.

The pile of garbage in the middle of the floor is the remnant of another set of shelves. There is nothing of value there, but the PCs will have to search the pile thoroughly to know for sure. There is nothing else of interest here.

18. Fork

The door to this area is concealed with a secret door. It can be located with a regular, successful find secret doors roll—the door is opened by pressing a slightly protruding brick. The same mechanism exists on the other side.

From where you are standing, two tunnels lead onwards. The right-hand tunnel seems to continue for 30 feet, and then end at a stone wall. The left-hand tunnel trails off into the darkness.

Nicodemus ordered the creation of this obstacle to deter any intruders who might try to use these tunnels to enter his palace.

The left-hand tunnel seems to be the way out—there is a false door at the end of it—but if the PCs progress more than 40 feet down the tunnel, they will trigger a trap door, and must make a saving throw vs. Death Ray or fall 20 feet onto a bed of spikes (which do an additional 1d8 damage per PC). The pit itself is 30 feet long and nine feet wide, leaving a six-inch ledge on either side of the rim. The trapdoor will not be triggered until the leading PC steps onto its middle, in order to catch as many PCs as possible. Those PCs who did not fall in, but who wish to walk around the pit, must make two halved Dexterity checks, or they will fall in. PCs who manage to make it to the other side will find that the door at the end is locked. A regular Open Locks roll is sufficient to unlock the door, but unless someone finds and removes traps beforehand (a regular roll is sufficient), the first person who tries to pick the lock will be jabbed with a poison needle (save vs. poison or take 2d8 damage). Only once they bypass all this, will the PCs realize that the door is false, and opens onto a plain stone wall.

The right-hand tunnel appears to be a dead end, but the far wall is illusory (treat it as though it were cast by a 12th level wizard for dispelling purposes). It can either be *dispelled*, or if something is thrown at it, the item will pass through it. Otherwise, the wall will seem real in all respects. Beyond the wall, the tunnel continues, until it ends at a plain wooden door, upon which is engraved a leering face. The door appears unlocked, but cannot be opened by physical or magical means on this side (the door may be opened normally from the other side). The first PC who tries to open it will be addressed by the face, which animates and intones in a whiny voice, the following riddle in Alphatian:

“To leave the lair of Nicodemus ye seek,

“But answer me this, ‘ere ye depart:

“The rich man needs it,

“The blind man sees it,

“The lover wants it,

“But the poor man already has it.”

“Of what do I speak?”

The correct answer is “Nothing.” If this is spoken, the door grunts, and opens quietly. Any other response will elicit harsh laughter. Once the door opens, the way is clear for the PCs to continue their journey.

The Dungeon

This section comprises the secret dungeon of Nicodemus, where he kept his most valuable prisoners, and which served as a final barrier to intruders. If anyone managed to make it this far, the guards who once staffed area 21, high-level fighters, would have made short work of them. This area, however, has been unoccupied since Nicodemus fled his kingdom, years ago.

19. Interrogation Room

The door to this room is locked (the key is lost now); a regular Open Locks roll is sufficient to open it.

The dusty brazier and rack, tarnished knives, and blood-stained clubs leave mute testament to this room’s former purpose.

This room was where Nicodemus had his special prisoners interrogated (he never used the term “torture”). All of the equipment here shows signs of frequent, though not recent, use. There is nothing of value or interest here.

20. Prison Cell

The door to this room is not locked, but the ambient moisture in this complex has caused it to swell. To open it, an Open Doors roll is required.

The sudden reek of filth that assails your senses when you enter this room, as well as its remaining furnishings, leave no doubt in your mind that this was once a prison cell. Moldy straw lies strewn all over the floor, and mounted in the walls are chains and manacles.

This room was where Nicodemus kept special prisoners—people whom he wished to hold or interrogate secretly. Hidden in the straw are a handful of articles (such as fragments of combs, bead necklaces, and so on) that once belonged to previous prisoners, including a total of 13 *mirrors* and 16 *judges*. If the PCs examine the walls closely, they will note a handful of scrawls on the walls. Most of them are in Alphatian, and they convey the desperation felt by those who once occupied this room.

21. Guard Room

This chamber measures approximately 20 feet squared, and appears to have been a guard room at one time. Along one wall is a square table, surrounded by three simple chairs—all laden with dust. Iron torch sconces are mounted in each wall, and next to the table there appears to be a wooden rack—possibly for spears or similar weapons. Aside from the door through which you passed, the only other feature of note is another oak door in the far wall.

There is nothing of interest here. Behind the northern door is an 800-foot long hallway leading to a flight of stairs, which go upwards. Next to the base of the staircase is an iron lever embedded in the wall, which controls the secret trapdoor leading into Nicodemus’s throne room. Once the lever is pulled, the trapdoor will remain open for 30 seconds, after which it closes once more. This is enough time for a couple of people, running up the stairs, to pass through safely. Anyone who gets caught in the trap door will receive 3d6 points of crushing damage.

To Unmask a Wizard

Having survived the trek through Nicodemus's secret complex, the party finds itself in Nicodemus's throne room—a vast chamber that was obviously once filled with finery. Both Talin and Kalin will suggest leaving the palace as soon as possible, because there are many patrols of True Way warriors wandering the halls. Talin is familiar with the palace's layout, and he can lead the party out fairly quickly. The DM should determine how long it takes to leave the palace, and roll randomly for encounters. Should an encounter be rolled, the party will face 2d8 Jennite warriors, who will attack without provocation. If the fighting lasts more than four rounds, there is a 30% chance, during each subsequent round of battle that another patrol will hear the fighting, and investigate.

Ideally, the party should be able to enter the city proper without too much trouble, and then it will be up to Talin to locate Nicodemus in his disguise as Detir, since he is the only party member who saw him. This part of the adventure is intended to be free-flowing; the party should wander the streets of Draeh in search of Nicodemus. Although Kalin, Talin, and Grath are not likely to attract too much attention, the PCs (if they are Alphatian) and Favian will—the party will need to take steps to avoid attracting too much attention. While the party searches, the DM can underline the sense of urgency by describing how Maltaen's warriors are destroying buildings, arresting rebel Jennites who refuse to convert to the “traditional” Jennite lifestyle, and generally terrorizing the populace.

Eventually, Talin will spot Nicodemus in his disguise. Hopefully, the PCs will have developed a plan by this time, but if they have not, Grath or Favian can suggest *dispelling* Nicodemus's illusion, while the PCs protect them from any assailants. Such an attempt should succeed, which will sow widespread chaos once Detir is revealed to be an Alphatian wizard! Maltaen will be nearby, and, just as shocked as everyone else, will order his warriors to seize the intruders. Before anyone else can react, Nicodemus will *teleport* away.

Although Nicodemus has vanished, the party has not, and many of the Jennites present will turn their anger towards them. The DM may wish to read or paraphrase the following:

Nicodemus has hardly been gone for a few moments, as the masses of free Jennites, and their urbanized cousins, begin to turn towards you. Angry muttering spreads slowly, and some point to you, brandishing their weapons. Some of them pronounce what they have seen to be a deception, and Maltaen, among the loudest in the crowd, calls for your arrest. It looks like you may be in for a tough fight.

Talin steps forward before any of the crowd can advance, and announces loudly, “People of Draeh! People of the plains! Hear me! We did not come to deceive you; we came to help you see with your own eyes once more. My companions used sorcery, yes, but they did so to reveal an impostor. The man many of you know as Detir, the loyal follower and advisor to Maltaen, is none other than who you saw before his flight—Nicodemus!”

Many cries of disbelief erupt from the crowd, but no one advances on you yet. Talin continues, “Yes, my fellow Jennites, Nicodemus disguised himself as one of us, rode with Maltaen and his True Way followers, and he has already begun to poison us, to turn us against each other. Look around you! Draeh was to be ours—our city, run the way we wished—our gateway to the rest of the world. Yet Maltaen and his warriors are destroying it, claiming that cities are the products of Alphatian corruption, and must be destroyed! Why would a leader destroy something that promises us hope? Why would a leader harm his own people? This is what Maltaen is doing—if there is any disease infecting us, then it is infecting Maltaen worst of all! He is under Nicodemus's spell, for he is doing the evil wizard's bidding!”

Maltaen bristles, and denounces Talin as a liar. “Of course I knew Nicodemus was hiding among us, but I was not under his spell! I only allowed him to remain with us so that I could one day expose him, and those who helped him return to Esterhold. I am no traitor to the Jennite people! Talin is obviously an Alphatian lapdog, like his brother, for why else would he defend yet another Alphatian deception? Before you judge, let me remind you all that it was the True Way who defeated the Crimson Avengers!”

“That is a lie,” shouts Favian, “for if Maltaen and his men were the ones who removed the threat of that group, then they should have found... this! Before anyone can react, he pulls a piece of folded fabric from his robes, which he shakes out—revealing the once-feared banner of the Crimson Avengers—a falling eagle struck by a lightning bolt. Many people recoil in shock at the sight of the banner, and shouts of confusion arise everywhere. People denounce Talin, Kalin, Maltaen, Favian Vern and you as deceivers, while others defend your names. The situation deteriorates rapidly, and it seems certain that a fight will erupt right where you stand, when another Jennite chieftain steps forward.

“People, I am Lotam, a chieftain of the Jennite people. My tribe follows the ways of the ancients, and it is to them that we must turn to solve this argument. Either Maltaen has been deceived by Nicodemus, or he has not, and thus Talin tells the truth, or he is a liar without honor. Before the time of the Alphatians, our people held trials by combat to decide who was right in a dispute, and this we must do. You, Maltaen and Talin, are the two parties in this dispute, and so you may choose your champions to settle this matter. This has been the way of our people for years unnumbered, and so neither of you should object.

“Before you choose your warriors, a judge must be found for the fight. Chieftains of the Jennites, who do you choose?”

Lotam's question is greeted with silence, as the various chieftains congregate among themselves, and discuss the matter in hushed tones. The minutes drag on, and finally, one of them steps forward, and chooses Lotam. “So the chieftains have spoken, so it must be,” says Lotam. “There is one final matter before the trial—Talin, you may choose any of your companions, even outsiders, to be your champions, for all have fought bravely at your side. That is, all but the Alphatian, Favian Vern. He is an enemy to our people, and thus he has no business here. Now then, choose your champions, and clear a space for them.”

Talin will turn to the PCs and ask them to be his champions—there is little reason for them to refuse, at this point, and the DM may wish to encourage them to accept if they are reluctant to do so. Assuming the PCs do accept, the DM should prepare a party of Jennite warriors to fight for Maltaen. They should be equivalent in level and strength to the PCs (but they will consist of fighters and possibly shamans only), to ensure that the fight is challenging. Once everything is ready, Lotam steps forward once more, and issues final instructions:

“The rules are simple. Each side must fight until one of them can no longer do battle—whether through death or unconsciousness—or until one side concedes the fight. I will then declare the winner. You may start now.”

The fight, as already stated, should be challenging. There is a good chance that one or more of the PCs could sustain serious injury, or even die. Maltaen’s champions will not pull their punches, and will focus on the strongest-looking PCs first, and then try to finish off the others. They will do almost anything to win, including ganging up on one PC to kill or incapacitate them quickly, blinding them with thrown sand or dirt, and using concealed weapons. Eventually, the PCs should win, and Lotam announces their victory:

“The truth has spoken: Talin is correct about Nicodemus, and Favian Vern did kill the hated Crimson Avengers. Talin is therefore innocent of all charges brought against him by Maltaen, who is without honor. I also declare a truce; let no Jennite raise arms against another, and let the destruction of Draeh cease. I, and the chieftains of the Jennite people, declare this.”

With the PCs’ victory, the fighting among the Jennites will come to an end, for now. Talin, Kalin, and Favian will congratulate the PCs for their bravery and skill, and for securing them the victory they needed desperately. The time has now come for the Jennites and the Alphetians to finally sit down and try to work out a lasting agreement on the fate of Esterhold, because all sides have grown weary of fighting. Favian will promise to do all he can to reach a settlement, and encourage the Naycese Council to accept the outcome of the war. Talin announces that he will cooperate with Favian, and work towards a peaceful solution.

The Future of Esterhold

The following weeks will see many discussions between the various Jennite factions, and between the Jennites and the Alphetians. Depending on their level of involvement, Jennite or Alphetian PCs could have a lot to do here, as their advice could be sought by Talin, or Favian and Kalin. By the end of the year, the agreements are as follows:

Draeh will remain under the control of the rebel Jennites, with Talin as their leader; many of the free Jennite tribes, led by Lotam, return to their original lands east of Esterhold, but some settle newly-acquired territories around Rock Harbor, the ruins of Anchorage and in the interior. Much of Draeh will be rebuilt.

The Alphetians will retain Skyfyr and the surrounding province of Blackrock, as well as Port Marlin and its lands. Kalin will remain as Governor of Blackrock.

Other details remain to be worked out, and the PCs’ involvement depends on their own outlook and preferences. Draeh, for example, will have to forge trading ties with nearby nations, such as Thonia and the dwarven clans to the north, if it is to prosper. Jennite PCs who served Talin well might be entrusted with the task of opening trade negotiations with these countries, and others.

PCs who served Kalin might be employed as intermediaries with the free city of Draeh, as Kalin hopes to rebuild his relationship with his brother, as well as build a bridge between the Alphetians and the Jennites. Like Draeh, Skyfyr cannot prosper on its own; it will need to forge ties with other nations, as well as the city of Draeh. PCs with a diplomatic bent could accompany Favian to Ionace, and convince the council that there is nothing to be gained from further warfare in Esterhold, and that a settlement should be reached with the Jennites as soon as possible. The PCs could also represent the Alphetian dominions in Esterhold abroad, and open trade negotiations with other nations.

In addition, depending on how well the PCs served, and their level, they might be offered lands by Kalin or Talin, which could open the door to further adventures, on top of what has been outlined above. Hopefully, this adventure will have opened the players’ eyes to the adventuring opportunities available in Esterhold. Fierce monsters continue to roam the interior, and not all of the free Jennite tribes eagerly embraced the peace settlement—including Maltaen’s True Way followers, who still remain in the wilderness. Much of Esterhold is also relatively unexplored, and thus both Talin and Kalin will want the fringes of their lands made safe. The PCs could be busy for quite some time yet!

Encounters in Esterhold

During their adventures in Esterhold, the PCs are bound to have some random encounters, notably with other Alphatian and Jennite parties. In fact, their task is to search the countryside for such parties, in order to halt the Jennite movement (if they are Alphatians) or to put an end to the Alphatian harassment (if they are Jennites). They will also be looking for the infamous Crimson Avengers, a group of Alphatian hired by Favian Vern and rumored to use the most violent methods.

DM Note: As stated at the beginning of this adventure, the writers have left this product as “stats-free” as possible. Nevertheless, some entries in this section were designed under the Original Dungeons and Dragons® (OD&D), and no alternative versions were in existence at the time of publication. Therefore, the OD&D statistics for these entries were included out of necessity; those DMs who wish to convert them will have to do so on their own.

Encounter Table

Roll three times a day (once in the morning, once in the afternoon, once at night) to determine whether the party makes an encounter. There is an encounter on a roll of 1 on 1d6 if the party is looking for trouble (which is, after all, their mission), or on a roll of 1 on 1d10 if the party is trying to avoid trouble (for example if they are in bad shape, or if their mission changes).

If an encounter occurs, roll 2d10 and refer to the following table:

2	d10 Roll	Encounter	11	Wild animals
2		Esterholdian bunrab	12	Bears, wolves or mountain lions
3		Crimson Avengers*	13	Humanoids
4		Minboral's Circle**	14	Thoth-Ath gnolls
5		Alphatian party	15	Jennite party
6		Alphatian party	16	Jennite party
7		Alphatian party	17	Jennite party
8		Rakasta (fast runners)	18	Jennite party
9		Kukarachans	19	Jennite party
10		Wild animals	20	Esterhold Devil

* Only Alphatian PCs may play out this encounter, and then only after they ran into other encounters with random Alphatian and Jennite parties, including followers of the True Way (at DM's discretion), and also only when Favian Vern is with them after they have reported to him their prior evidences of the Crimson Avengers' activities. If the PCs are Jennites or are Alphatians but still investigating, this encounter takes them close to the Crimson Avengers but they do not actually meet them, although they see the results of their exactions.

** Only Jennite PCs may encounter Minboral's Circle, and not before they have already encountered other bands of Alphatians (at DM's discretion). Otherwise, substitute an encounter with a random Alphatian party.

Esterholdian Bunrab

(OD&D statistics given for reference purposes)

Armor Class: 6

Hit Dice: 2 (M)

Move: 120' (40")

Attacks: By weapon or kick

Damage: By weapon +1 or 1d8

No. Appearing: 1d8 (3d10)

Save As: F2

Morale: 6

Treasure Type: U (B)

Intelligence: 12

Alignment: Neutral

XP Value: 10

Bunrabs are a race of humanoids who greatly resemble human-sized, bipedal rabbits. On average, they stand 5 to 5½ feet in height, and have an athletic leanness to them. Highly adaptable creatures, bunrabs are capable of making almost any environment their home—an essential survival skill, given that their high fecundity frequently requires the colonization of new territories due to population pressures. Being fairly intelligent, most bunrabs do not hunt and gather their food; rather, they tend to live in small villages and towns, farming the surrounding lands extensively to provide them with the crispy lettuce and carrots they love so much.

In combat, bunrabs can be very fierce, indeed. Due to their inherent strength and toughness, and the fact that they have hands with opposable thumbs (and not paws), they are capable of using any weapon available to them, and of inflicting considerable damage. Even when unarmed, an angered bunrab can be formidable, as its large feet can bludgeon opponents to senselessness with a well-placed kick. Due to their high agility and natural stealth, bunrabs are blessed with a higher armor class, though in battle some do wear breastplates with arms and leg greaves (lowering their AC to 5), and occasionally they use shields, as well. Despite their skill in battle, however, bunrabs are an inherently skittish, even cowardly, race. When confronted with a foe, a bunrab must make a Morale check to determine if it is even willing to fight, and must make another every time it is wounded. The only time such requirements do not apply is when a battle is taken to a bunrab's own home; there, they will often fight to the death (Morale rises to 9).

Being very clannish creatures, bunrabs tend to keep to themselves, and do not actively seek out contact with other races. For every 15 bunrabs, there is a clan leader, who has 5 Hit Dice.

Crimson Avengers

See appropriate segment in Part VI (Alphatian campaign).

Minboral's Circle

See appropriate segment in Part V (Jennite campaign).

Alphatian Party

During their adventures in Esterhold, the PCs are bound to encounter wandering Alphatian parties, some of which are adventuring bands hired by Favian Vern, and some not.

Jennite PCs will probably be on the lookout for such parties, as a goal set to them by their leaders is to put an end to the damage being done by the Alphatian bands, and especially the infamous Crimson Avengers. The PCs will likely encounter several such bands before they encounter Minboral's Circle, and they shouldn't encounter the Crimson Avengers at all. Each time, however, they certainly will want to determine whether the specific Alphatian party they just neutralized is the Crimson Avengers. Each encounter between the PCs and an Alphatian party will probably result in battle, since the PCs' mission actually is to destroy such bands, and the Alphatians are most likely hostile toward the PCs as well.

Encounters between Alphatian PCs and Alphatian parties may range from friendly to hostile, depending on both groups' goals, alignments, and roleplaying.

Random Alphatian Party

Each Alphatian party is composed of 2-10 NPCs. Roll 1d4+1d6 to determine the exact number of party members. Then roll 2d8 for each Alphatian NPC and refer to the following table:

2 d8 Roll	NPC		
2	Human Wiz7 *	9	Human Ftr2
3	Human Rgr3	10	Human Ftr3
4	Hin Rog4	11	Human Ftr1
5	Elf Wiz3	12	Human Rog4
6	Elf Ftr3	13	Human Clr3
7	Human Wiz2	14	Dwarf Ftr3
8	Human Rog1	15	Gnome Ill4
		16	Human Clr7 *

* If you already rolled a 2 or 16 before, each subsequent roll of 1 or 16 indicates a human slave instead.

Human level 7 wizard

This high-level Alphatian wizard is the uncontested leader of the party, and the other party members obey his or her orders—most have probably been hired by him or her, either for this venture or in a more permanent fashion, or are slaves. Roll 1d4 to determine the wizard's goal: (1) capture slaves (2) kill barbarians (3-4) help Favian Vern. This goal will determine the wizard's attitude (and that of the party) towards the PCs: with a roll of 1-2, the Alphatian party will tend to be wary of other Alphatian parties, while with a roll of 3-4 the party will tend to be friendly; the party is hostile to Jennite PCs no matter what the roll is, though its methods will reflect its objectives.

Human level 7 cleric

This high-level Alpathian priest is the uncontested leader of the party, and the other party members obey his or her orders—most have probably been hired by him or her, either for this venture or in a more permanent fashion, or are slaves. Roll 1d4 to determine the cleric's goal: (1) capture slaves (2) convert or smite barbarians (3-4) help Favian Vern. This goal will determine the priest's attitude (and that of the party) towards the PCs: with a roll of 1, the Alpathian party will tend to be wary of other Alpathian parties, while with a roll of 2-4 the party will tend to be friendly; the party is hostile to Jennite PCs no matter what the roll is, though their methods will reflect their objectives—on a roll of 2, they will not attack unless attacked first.

Party Goals

Unless the Alpathian party contains a high-level wizard or cleric (in which case the party's goals are described in their leader's description, above), roll 1d4 to determine the party's goal: (1) capture slaves (2) rampage (3-4) help Favian Vern. This goal will determine the party's attitude towards the PCs: with a roll of 1-2, the Alpathian party will tend to be wary of other Alpathian parties, while with a roll of 3-4 the party will tend to be friendly; the party is hostile to Jennite PCs no matter what the roll is, though their methods will reflect their objectives.

Slaver parties will try to subdue Jennite PCs, and will capture them if they surrender or are rendered helpless. The PCs may then have a chance of escaping, either on their own or in the confusion of a subsequent skirmish with another group later on, or they might be sold in slavery.

Proselytizing parties will try to engage Jennite PCs in discussions about faith (Alpathian faith is mostly about the greatness of the Alpathian civilization and its cultural achievements). If the PCs are not receptive to the cleric's arguments or if they do not wish to talk, the Alpathians attack them ruthlessly.

Rampaging parties will try to slay any Jennite PCs they encounter.

Parties supportive of Favian Vern's ideals, or simply hired by him, will engage Jennite PCs, as they were hired to rid the Esterhold Peninsula of dangerous Jennite warbands (which the PCs obviously are).

Jennite PCs encountering Alpathian parties will probably want to determine whether they are the infamous Crimson Avengers they are after, once they have defeated them. This can be done by interrogating prisoners, or by *speaking with the dead*. To put the PCs on edge, after one such encounter with a random Alpathian party, the DM may have a captured prisoner tell the PCs that they encountered a group called the Crimson Avengers some time ago.

Rakasta (Fast Runners)

Fast runners rakasta clans live in Esterhold. Refer to *Dragon* #147 for further information.

Kukarachans

Centuries ago, during the initial colonization of Esterhold, the Alpathians sought a means of cleansing large swaths of what is now Esterhold of its indigenous Jennite population, who refused to accept Alpathian suzerainty over their tribal lands. A wide variety of magicks were used against them, with the result being the devastation of much of the interior of the Esterhold Peninsula, which became almost saturated with magic for a time. The Alpathians gave little, if any, thought to the potential consequences of their actions during those years, and subsequently founded their Skotharan colony, thinking that they were truly masters of the land. They were quite wrong; while they had gained dominion over the Jennites living in Esterhold, they could not control that which arose from the magic-seared interior of the peninsula—the kukarachans.

The kukarachans are a race of large, semi-intelligent insects descended from cockroaches, who had been exposed to high levels of Alpathian magic during the early years of the conquest of Esterhold. Over the following centuries, they continued to mutate, slowly becoming more intelligent, more resourceful, and more adaptable. Finally, they had reached a stage where they began to leave their own imprint on the lands around them, and they began to spread outwards from their original breeding grounds in central Esterhold. What makes these creatures so formidable is their adaptability—kukarachans can eat almost anything, and, when attacked with magic, they are capable of adapting to that form of magic, with often horrific results.

The kukarachans have been kept in relative check historically by repeated Alpathian forays into Esterhold's interior, which served to reduce the risk to interior communities and mining operations—at least, those that were populated largely by Alpathians. Free Jennite tribes living in central Esterhold had to fend for themselves—a policy that also reduced the number of free Jennites roaming the interior. With Alpathian authority faltering in central Esterhold, the kukarachans have multiplied greatly, and placed even greater pressures on the cultures and communities surrounding them, and already kukarachan warriors are roaming the Esterhold Peninsula unchecked.

(OD&D statistics have been provided for reference purposes)

Kukarachan Warrior

Armor Class: 2

Hit Dice: 1*

Move: 120' (40")

Attacks: 2 weapons

Damage: By weapon +2

No. Appearing: 2-20 (up to 100 per nest)

Save As: F1

Morale: 9

Intelligence: 6

Treasure Type: None

Alignment: Neutral

XP Value: 13

This creature is the most common variant of the kukarachans. Standing about 7' tall, the kukarachan warrior is a powerful (+2 hit and damage) adversary capable of wielding a weapon in either hand. Its carapace provides excellent natural armor.

It communicates with its hideous brethren through chemicals emitted into the air from its antennae. These organs also receive such messages from other kukarachans, with an individual kukarachan being capable of sustaining several such "conversations" at once. These chemicals are also used to manipulate magical fields around its body.

When a group of kukarachan warriors are affected by a given spell, and survive, they transmit chemical messages to all other kukarachans in the immediate vicinity (100' radius), providing information on how to defend against that particular spell. Those who receive this message will become immune to that particular spell for the remainder of their lives. Further attacks have a 1 in 10 chance of causing a transformation, which takes three rounds to complete, and which will result in the creature turning into another form of kukarachan. The immunity lasts for one generation, being passed on to the offspring of the affected kukarachan, but successive generations are not immune.

Kukarachan Mentor

Armor Class: 5

Hit Dice: 5*

Move: 120' (40")

Attacks: By weapon or by spell

Damage: By weapon +1

No. Appearing: 2-12 (up to 30 per nest)

Save As: MU5

Morale: 9

Intelligence: 11

Treasure Type: None

Alignment: Neutral

XP Value: 300

Kukarachan mentors are created when a member of the warrior caste is targeted by a thought-based spell, such as *charm*, *ESP*, and *fear*, according to the guidelines given above under the kukarachan warrior description. During the transformation, the warrior's head grows larger, its armored exoskeleton softens slightly (reducing AC by 3), it becomes more intelligent, and it becomes tougher overall.

Any further magical attacks against the kukarachan mentor allow it to make the same magical attacks in return. Provided it survives the attack, it can store the magical energies from the spell in its chemical field and release it at a time of its choosing. Any spell may be captured in this way, and the relevant characteristics (such as range, damage, and duration) are identical to those of the original caster's spell.

Kukarachan Terror

Armor Class: 9

Hit Dice: 12

Move: 90' (30')

Attacks: 1 bite

Damage: 3d6

No. Appearing: 1-10 (up to 20 per nest)

Save As: F12

Morale: 8

Intelligence: 2

Treasure Type: None

Alignment: Neutral

XP Value: 1,250

If a kukarachan warrior is struck by a matter-based spell, such as *meteor swarm*, or *ice storm*, and it transforms as a result, it becomes a huge four-legged beast, resembling a 30'-long, 12'-tall cockroach with a huge set of mandibles. Its armor class drops to 9 due to its sheer bulk, but it becomes extraordinarily tough. Its intelligence also drops, and therefore it must be guided by more intelligent kukarachans or it will react in fear to everything that moves (50% chance each round that it will attack the nearest living creature—friend or foe).

Kukarachan Dragon

Armor Class: 6

Hit Dice: 10*

Move: 120' (40')

Flying: 240' (80')

Attacks: 1 bite or 1 breath

Damage: 2d8 (bite) or 3d8 (breath)

No. Appearing: 1-10 (up to 20 per nest)

Save As: F10

Morale: 9

Intelligence: 3

Treasure Type: None

Alignment: Neutral

XP Value: 1,750

When a kukarachan warrior is hit by a *fireball* or *lightning bolt* spell, it becomes a kukarachan dragon. In form, these creatures strongly resemble kukarachan terrors, except that they are slightly smaller, and they possess wings. In addition to its vicious bite, a kukarachan dragon may breathe either a line of lightning (3' wide x 30' long) or a cone of fire (30' long and 30' wide at its end), depending on what spell affected it originally.

Kukarachan Zealot

Armor Class: 2

Hit Dice: 3*

Move: 120' (40')

Attacks: 2 weapons

Damage: By weapon +2

No. Appearing: 2-20 (up to 100 per nest)

Save As: C3

Morale: 9

Intelligence: 9

Treasure Type: None

Alignment: Neutral

XP Value: 50

Kukarachan zealots are created when warriors are affected by reversed clerical spells, such as *cause critical wounds*, *curse*, and the like. In all respects they are identical to the typical member of the warrior caste, except that they can manipulate their chemical fields to heal other kukarachans within ten feet of themselves. This healing ability can be used up to five times per day, and each use restores 1d10 hit points to all kukarachans within ten feet of the zealot.

Kukarachan Lich

Armor Class: -2

Hit Dice: 10*

Move: 120' (40')

Attacks: 2 weapons or 1 Death Ray

Damage: By weapon +2 or special

No. Appearing: 1-6 (up to 12 per nest)

Save As: MU10

Morale: 11

Intelligence: 9

Treasure Type: None

Alignment: Neutral

XP Value: 1,750

Kukarachan liches are created whenever warriors are hit by entropic spells, such as *finger of death*. They resemble their common warrior counterparts from a distance, except that they are pale white in color. When approached, however, it soon becomes apparent that they are quite different. Their carapaces, although tough, look as though they are crumbling, and their heads sport empty sockets where their multifaceted eyes once were. Nevertheless, they are just as quick, and even tougher, than their living counterparts. In combat, kukarachan liches may either attack twice per round with melee weapons, or they may cast a death ray, which functions in an identical manner to the *finger of death* spell, once per round. This type of kukarachan is the only one that cannot reproduce, for obvious reasons, and they are almost as likely to start eating their fellow kukarachans as other creatures.

Wild Animals

Roll 1d8 to determine the type of animals encountered:

1. bactrian (two-humped) camels
2. wild asses
3. horses
4. gazelles
5. antelopes
6. moose
7. elk
8. deer

These animals are wild and will generally shy away from the PCs, but the PCs can try to capture them to use as mounts or hunt them for food. Refer to the *Monstrous Manual* for further information.

Bears, Wolves or Mountain Lions

Roll 1d6 to determine the type of animals encountered:

1. bears
2. wolves
3. mountain lions

These animals may attack the PCs, or the PCs may attack them, or maybe they will just leave each other alone. Refer to the *Monstrous Manual* for further information.

Humanoids

Roll 1d6 to determine the type of humanoids encountered:

1. orcs
2. goblins
3. hobgoblins
4. trolls
5. ogres
6. ettercaps

The humanoids are hostile toward the PCs. Refer to the *Monstrous Manual* for further information.

Thoth-Ath Gnolls

Those gnolls are a mounted raiding party who came from the Steppes of Jen, following the wild Jennites. They do not participate in the war, although they hate the Alphatians as much as the Jennites do, but only using the opportunity to do some raiding. They will attack any Alphatian party, although they will flee if they are losing. They may also attack Jennites parties to gain some bounty, but not necessarily so, or they might help them or simply disregard them.

Coexisting with the Jennites in the northwestern portions of the Steppes of Jen, the nomadic Thoth-Ath are the only known gnollish group outside of Brun. They are more intelligent and larger than their western brethren, and speak a language apparently related somehow to Thothian. They are nomadic raiders, and have adopted several cultural elements from the Jennites. The Thoth-Ath often raid into Esterhold and Thonia, and indeed around the year AC 0 they launched, along with the Jennites, a massive invasion into Esterhold that succeeded in temporarily driving most of the Alphatian presence out of Skothar. When the Alphatians returned, they drove both the Thoth-Ath and the Jennites out of the area once more. The Thoth-Ath are famed for their horses, at least among the region. They are larger and stronger than the steeds used by the Jennites, though they are also more wild. Several Jennite heroes are said to have ridden a Thoth-Ath steed.

Refer to the *Monstrous Manual* for further information.

Jennite Party

During their adventures in Esterhold, the PCs are bound to encounter wandering Jennite parties, most of which are rampaging bands of Jennites (mostly free Jennites), including some of the True Way, while others are parties sent by Talin to stop the harassment of the Alpathian bands.

Alpathian PCs will probably be on the lookout for such parties, as a goal set to them by their leaders is stop the Jennite bands before they do more damage in Esterhold. Each encounter between the PCs and a Jennite party will probably result in battle, since the PCs' mission actually is to destroy such bands, and the Jennites are most likely hostile toward the PCs as well; if the PCs are tasked to look for the Crimson Avengers, though, they may start to get away from such random encounters to concentrate on their new mission.

Encounters between Jennite PCs and Jennite parties may range from friendly to hostile, depending on both groups' goals, alignments, composition (free vs. rebel Jennites, especially in encounters with followers of the True Way) and roleplaying.

Random Jennite Party

Roll 1d4 to determine the type of party encountered: (1) rebel Jennites only (2) mixed rebel and free Jennites (3) free Jennites only (4) free Jennite camp.

Each Jennite party is composed of 2-10 NPCs. Roll 1d4+1d6 to determine the exact number of party members. Then roll 2d8 for each Jennite NPC and refer to the following table:

2d8 Roll	NPC		
		9	Human Bbn2
2	Human Wiz3	10	Human Bbn3
3	Human Ftr6 *	11	Human Bbn1
4	Human Rog4	12	Human Bbn4
5	Human Ftr4	13	Human Rog2
6	Human Ftr1	14	Human Rgr3
7	Human Ftr3	15	Human Bbn6 *
8	Human Ftr2	16	Human Clr4

* Party leader. Reroll if there is already one party leader.

Characters from the first column represent rebel Jennites, while the second column represents free Jennites. If the party is not mixed, reroll any result in the wrong column (or pick its symmetric in the other column—only the ranger has no equivalent).

If it is a Jennite camp rather than a simple warband, there will be an additional three non-combatants (women, children, elders, etc.) for each fighting member.

Party Goals

Roll 1d4 to determine the party's goal: (1) stop Alpathian bands (2) kill Alpathians (3) rampage (4) True Way party whose goals include all the above especially the second one. This goal will determine the party's attitude towards the PCs: the Jennite party will tend to be wary of or friendly with other Jennite parties depending on goals and respective compositions; the party is hostile to Alpathian PCs no matter what the roll is, though their methods will reflect their objectives.

Parties sent by Talin will engage Alpathian PCs, as they were sent there to rid the Esterhold Peninsula of the constant harassment of dangerous Alpathian warbands (which the PCs obviously are). They will probably be friendly or neutral toward Jennite PCs.

Bloodthirsty parties will ruthlessly attack Alpathian PCs. They will probably be uninterested in Jennite PCs.

Rampaging parties will try to slay any Alpathian PCs they encounter. Their reaction to Jennite PCs may range from friendly to hostile.

Followers of the True Way will ruthlessly attack Alpathian PCs. They will also likely be hostile towards Jennite PCs (unless they are also followers of the True Way), all the more if the group comprises rebel Jennites and even more if there is a wizard among them.

Esterhold Devil

The Esterhold Devil is a legendary critter of Esterhold. No one has ever encountered it and lived to tell the tale. It is said to feed off the many animals and humanoids that live in Esterhold, including humans.

The PCs will not actually encounter the Esterhold Devil, which should remain a creature of mystery in an Esterholdian campaign. They will, however, feel its dreadful presence. The sounds of nature will cease when the Esterhold Devil is nearby: all animals will freeze and stop making noises, which will be first apparent to the PCs as the birds cease to chirp, and also insects fall silent; also, the PCs' mounts will stop in their tracks. The wind will die and the leaves cease to rustle. Clouds will appear over the area, even if it was bright daylight a minute before, and the whole vicinity will be cast into artificial twilight (with no moon or stars showing through). The temperature will drop to below freezing, causing the PCs to shiver unless they have magical protection against cold. Any attempt to start a non-magical fire or light will fail. Each PC must save vs. fear or also freeze in terror, a successful roll indicates that the PCs is only *slowed* but can still move.

The DM should keep the tension mounting so as to frighten the players until they fear the worst, at which point the tension will suddenly cease (including all the effects associated with the proximity of the Esterhold Devil), as the fabled creature moves on without snacking on the PCs. The Esterhold Devil moves too rapidly for the PCs to follow it, and it is not possible to follow its effects (such as the clouds) from a distance as these are supernatural effects that are only felt when you stand within their radius, but have no actual manifestation outside it.

The PCs can roll a skill check against a DC of 10 if they have Knowledge in the areas of local folklore or geography to understand that they just met the fabled Esterhold Devil. If not, an Intelligence check will do just as well, since the matter at hand is common knowledge (though only for Jennites—outsiders get a chance to roll only if they have the Knowledge skill in a relevant area of Esterhold's myths). Jennite PCs may bring the tale back home, where it might add to the oral folklore of their tribes. Alternatively, the PCs may decide to investigate the Esterhold Devil more closely in the future, something that can become an Esterholdian campaign in itself later on.