

COR6-08



CATCHING BREATH

A One-Round DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® LIVING GREYHAWK™ Core Adventure

Version 2

by Shawn Merwin

Circle Reviewers: Creighton Broadhurst and Stephen Radney-MacFarland

Special Thanks: The Zeif Triad

Reviewers: Samuel Weiss

Playtesters: Mike Shannon, Cory Fliegel, Greg Gerritsen, Matt Atwell, Mike Haakstad, Vernon L. Vincent, Robert Dieterle, Thomas Hendricks, Nathaniel Mohler, Joe Selby, Cary Suter, John Williams, Shane Stephens, Casey Brown, Scott Burns, Britt Frey, Chris Gibson, Theo Judd, Konrad Brandemuhl

Sources: *Complete Arcane* [Richard Baker], *COR4-01 Shedding Scales* [Shawn Merwin], *COR5-07 Clipping Wings* [Shawn Merwin and William Muench], *Monster Manual III* [Rich Burlew, Eric Cagle, Jesse Decker, Andrew J. Finch, Gwendolyn F.M. Kesrel, Rich Redman, Matthew Sernett, Chris Thomasson, P. Nathan Tommey], and *Savage Species* [David Eckelberry, Rich Redman, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes]

A friend in need calls upon a group of heroes to help him deal with problems in a far-off land. These troubles, however, may be ones that even the bravest and experienced of adventurers are not equipped to handle. A roleplaying-intensive one-round Living Greyhawk core adventure set in the Sultanate of Zeif for characters level 1-15 (APLs 2-16), and Part 3 of the "Windows to the Serpent's Soul" series, which began with COR4-01 *Shedding Scales* and COR5-07 *Clipping Wings*.

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Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA event from the RPGA website, or you received it from your senior gamemaster. To play this adventure as part of the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D® campaign set in the GREYHAWK setting—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a HERALD-LEVEL™ gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table Dungeon Master (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a HERALD-LEVEL GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First it is an official game, and you can use the AR to advance your LIVING GREYHAWK character. Second player and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth two (2) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA-sanctioned play on December 31, 2007.

To learn more about the LIVING GREYHAWK character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at www.rpga.com.

Players Read No Farther

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

Preparing for Play

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D rule books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*.

Throughout this adventure, text in ***bold italics*** provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on running the adventure. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in Appendix 1. For your convenience, that appendix is split by APL

Along with this adventure you'll find a RPGA Session Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play. You'll also find a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure Record (AR).

LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportionate to the modified average character level of the PCs participating in the adventure. To determine this modified Average Party Level (APL) follow the steps below:

1. Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts) or the warhorse of a character with the Mounted Combat feat, use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum of step one. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.

Mundane Animals Effect on APL		# of Animals			
		1	2	3	4
CR of Animal	1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
	1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
	1	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4	5
	3	3	4	5	6
	4	4	6	7	8
	5	5	7	8	9
	6	6	8	9	10
	7	7	9	10	11

3. Sum the results of step 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round to the nearest whole number.
4. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC can gain at the end of the adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that character receives only one-half of the experience points and gold for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Furthermore, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure.

LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1st-level characters may find the challenge of an APL 2 adventure difficult. Suggest the following to these groups to help increase their chances of success:

1. Enlist a sixth player.
2. Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them and fight for them.

TIME UNITS AND UPKEEP

This is a standard one-round Core adventure, set in the Sultanate of Zeif. All characters pay 2 Time Units per round.

Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12 gp per Time Unit. Rich Upkeep costs 50 gp per Time Unit. Luxury Upkeep costs 100 gp per Time Unit. Characters that fail to pay at least Standard Upkeep will retain temporary ability damage until the next adventure, must buy new spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may suffer other in-game penalties (or possibly gain in-game benefits) as may be detailed in this adventure.

A character that does not pay for at least Standard Upkeep may also avoid the above-described penalties by living off the wild. If the character possesses four or more ranks in the Survival skill and succeeds at a DC 20 Survival check, the character will heal temporary ability damage as if he or she paid for Standard Upkeep, may refill spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may restock up to 20 arrows or bolts if the character has at least four ranks in Craft (bowmaking). The player is allowed to Take 10 on this roll.

More information about Lifestyle and Upkeep can be found in the "Lifestyle and Upkeep" section of Chapter 3 of the *Living Greyhawk Campaign Sourcebook*.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

During his rise from mortal to lich to god, Vecna called upon the power of an entity known to him as "the Serpent." Something in Vecna's heritage or destiny allowed him to interact directly with this force. The power he was able to harness from the Serpent was just a small rivulet in the deluge that led to his ascension, but even that small portion was not insignificant.

The Serpent existed at the beginning of time as one of the primordial forces in the multiverse: specifically the

force of magic. Along with the other primordial deities, the Serpent allowed the newly created gods to gain domination over certain spheres of influence. The gods, jealous of the power wielded by the Serpent and craving more power, banded together to steal its essence. First they tricked the Serpent into taking physical form as a dragon of astronomical proportions, and then they petrified it. At this point, they were able to steal its magic. Fearing reprisal, they attempted to destroy its physical form but could not. Instead, they decided to divide the Serpent into an inconceivable number of pieces and imprison those sections of the Serpent in spherical pieces of solid land. The residual power within the Serpent's pieces caused life to spring up on these land-prisons, and the creatures that lived on the planets eventually learned to use this residual magic to cast spells and create items of great power.

In the core adventures *COR4-01 Shedding Scales* and *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*, the first two adventures in "Windows to the Serpent's Soul," the PCs had the opportunity to meet many of the NPCs who play a large role in the series: the Chancellor of Keoland's Shelspring Barony Stoakdor Redlee Neheli, his stricken nephew Pross Neheli, the kobold paladin Tajlo, and the young and enigmatic Flan sorceress Ianta.

In *COR4-01 Shedding Scales*, the PCs were asked to escort a group of children to Keoland's Shelspring Barony. On the way, flying creatures under the control of some unknown force (who turns out to be Kroyen, the antagonist of *Catching Breath*) attacked the group and attempted to steal the children, particularly the Flan girl Ianta. Once at the Shelspring Barony, they learned that a diabolical power had stolen the eyes from nearly forty children, with the seemingly fell purpose of using them in a ritual to siphon power (again Kroyen was the force behind this). Chancellor Stoakdor Redlee Neheli asked the PCs to travel into the Rushmoors to investigate an underground complex where he believed one of the sets of eyes might be found.

On their way, the PCs encountered Tajlo, a kobold paladin who was investigating the very same complex when he was attacked and left for dead by monsters. He also revealed that the complex had been destroyed in an apparent earthquake. At the kobold village, which Tajlo was bound by honor to protect, the PCs learned that the kobolds revered a powerful piece of magical stone—a relic that imbued many of the kobolds with increased power, speed, stamina, and intelligence. (These pieces of stone are actually the unearthed remains of the Serpent.) Investigating the ruins of the underground complex, the PCs found another relic created from the same stone as the one worshipped by the kobolds. Clues at the demolished site reveal that part of the mystery led to the Land of Black Ice. The adventure ends with Stoakdor asking the heroes to take an oath to help the children of the Shelspring Barony to the best of their abilities if the need again arose.

Note: Spoilers for the adventure *COR5-08 Clipping Wings* follow! Do not read if you plan to play that adventure!

In *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*, the PCs were asked by Stoakdor Redlee Neheli to travel into the Land of Black Ice to perform several tasks: look for any more of the strange blue-black stone artifacts, see if the rumors of flourishing kobold communities are accurate, look for any crypts associated with Vecna, and most importantly find Ianta, who ran away from Redlee Manor after having strange visions.

The PCs learn that Ianta has indeed been to the Land of Black Ice, and she has traveled—along with her new protector Tajlo the kobold paladin—into the Burneal Forest to investigate the destruction of a kobold village at the hands of humans (Kroyen's followers) searching for the blue-black stone that the kobolds revere.

The PCs rescue Tajlo and Ianta from wolves, investigate the destroyed village, and finally follow the trail of humans to a crypt of an ur-Flan necromancer who first discovered a way to tap directly into the power radiated by physical remnants of the Serpent: the blue-black stone that has started to rise to the surface of Oerth in some areas.

While investigating the crypt, the PCs foil a plot of an as-yet undisclosed person (Kroyen) to use the secrets of the crypt to gain immense power. In the process, however, Ianta throws herself into a column of crackling negative energy to keep it from opening further. The adventure ends with Ianta lost, Tajlo distraught, and the PCs deemed heroes for finding the eyes of the son of the Baron of Shelspring.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins with the PCs receiving a plea for help from Tajlo (if they know him) or from a group on behalf of Tajlo (if they don't know him). The PCs learn that Tajlo has been imprisoned and charged with murder. He claims his victim is actually a follower of Vecna who works for a government official in the court of the Yildwar Dey ibn Yusuf al-Zeir of Nafiq (the leader of the city). This government official is an ambassador in the Dey's court named Kroyen. Kroyen is performing rituals to try to use the eyes he has stolen and the blue-black pieces of the Serpent he has collected to siphon energy and enhance his own powers.

Encounter 1: A false prophet trying to relieve them of some hard-earned gold approaches The PCs.

Encounter 2: The PCs talk to a priest of Al'Akbar, who can give them a brief description of the situation in Nafiq.

Encounter 3: The PCs can talk to Tajlo and learn specific details of his situation.

Encounter 4: The PCs speak with the magistrate who found Tajlo guilty of murder. They must try to convince him to give Tajlo some more time. If they succeed in their talks with the magistrate, the PCs have 24 hours to find the truth about the situation before Tajlo is executed for the murder.

Encounter 5: The encounter deals with some conditions and happenings that may occur during their investigation of Tajlo's circumstances.

Encounter 6: The PCs can attempt to go to Kroyen's house and search for clues. They find nothing conclusive, but could pick up a lead to the docks (encounter 12).

Encounter 7: The PCs can view the body of Trumbull, Kroyen's servant, the man who Tajlo killed. Clues here can lead the PCs to Trumbull's house (encounter 8) or to the alchemist (Encounter 11).

Encounter 8: If the PCs go to Trumbull's house, they find evidence that he was a follower of Vecna. They can also find clues about the password into Kroyen's secret ocean-side layer (encounter 14).

Encounter 9: The PCs can question a deaf man who played a game with Kroyen on occasion. The man can give the PCs clues to the password to enter the secret lair.

Encounter 10: If the PCs are having trouble in their investigations, this encounter can point them in the direction of the alchemist (encounter 11).

Encounter 11: The PCs can question an alchemist who had business dealings with Kroyen. The alchemist can point the PCs to the bargeman who acted as a teamster for Kroyen (encounter 12).

Encounter 12: The PCs can question a bargeman who transported Kroyen and Trumbull to a nearby beach. Elementals sent by Kroyen to silence the bargeman attack. The bargeman can tell them about Kroyen's dealings with a local alchemist (encounter 11) or take them to the beach (encounter 14).

Encounter 13: If the PCs talk to the local authorities, they are moderately helpful, and can point the PCs to various other encounters.

Encounter 14: The PCs arrive at the beach where the bargeman took Kroyen and Trumbull. The PCs can find a secret entrance that is trapped. The password can help them enter without triggering the trap.

Encounter 15: The PCs must fight the Serpent's Breath.

Encounter 16: The PCs find Kroyen, who is slain by The Serpent for his misuse of The Serpent's power. The PCs can then learn more about The Serpent and the fate of Ianta, as well as find the evidence to exonerate Tajlo.

PREPARATION FOR PLAY

Before the start of the adventure, ask to see the ARs from any PC who has played *COR4-01 Shedding Scales*, *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*, or *CORS4-01 Here There Be Dragons*. Note if they have either the "Stigma of the Serpent" or the "Thrall of the Serpent" condition. In addition, verbally confirm the PCs ended either adventure on good terms with the kobold paladin Tajlo. If they played *COR4-01 Shedding Scales* or *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*, use the following Introduction 1: A Plea from Tajlo. If none of the PCs have played either *COR4-01 Shedding Scales* or *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*, or if they left on unfriendly terms with Tajlo, the plea for help is delivered on behalf of the temple of Heironeous or some other appropriate organization. In this instance, use Introduction 2: A Plea on Tajlo's Behalf.

It is also possible that a PC might be wanted for crimes committed in the Sultanate of Zeif. Check with the players to see if this is the case.

You can also have the PCs make a Sense Motive check before play to use when the PCs encounter the false prophetess in Encounter 1: As Istus Would Have It.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

This is a roleplaying-intensive, investigative adventure. As such, it has the potential to run much longer than the usual four hours. If you are running the adventure in a time-sensitive environment like a convention or public game day, you may want to keep the PCs moving in a more linear fashion to ensure they have time to complete the adventure.

The following suggestions can be used to make sure the adventure is finished in roughly four hours. When the PCs talk to Tajlo, have him tell them that one thing he meant to do during his investigation but never got the chance to was search Trumbull's home. That way, after the PCs talk to the magistrate Dahim in Encounter 4, they can go right to Encounter 8, where they can find the clue about the password into the lair. As they leave the home run Encounter 10, during which they see the thief who can point them to the alchemist (Encounter 11). From there, the alchemist sends them directly to the bargeman (Encounter 12), who leads them immediately toward the finale. This path gives them all the clues, experience, and gold necessary to complete the adventure, without having to roleplay the other encounters or "waste time" investigating.

INTRODUCTION 1: A PLEA FROM TAJLO

This introduction assumes the PCs have already met and are together at a location in some civilized area, and that one or more of the PCs know the kobold paladin Tajlo from the adventure *COR4-01 Shedding Scales* or *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*. If the PCs do not know each other, leave a few minutes at the beginning of play for them to meet at a tavern or some other suitable location and introduce themselves.

If all the PCs are from the same region, you may wish to begin in a large town or city in that region. If the PCs are from widely divergent regions, use Greyhawk City. If the PCs are all from Zeif, use the capital city. Please feel free to use your discretion and make the introduction reasonable and feasible for the PCs at the table and the region.

As you share stories with your fellow adventurers, a Baklunish warrior dressed in chain armor and proudly wearing a holy symbol of Al'Akbar approaches you. A falchion is sheathed at his hip. He stops ten feet away,

raises a hand in your direction, and bows his head. Then he holds out a scroll case.

The Baklunish warrior is a paladin of Al'Akbar named Keehan, sent from the nearest temple dedicated to Al'Akbar (or another appropriate location if no temples to Al'Akbar would be nearby). He received a message from a cleric of Al'Akbar named Qatan in the city of Nafiq in the Sultanate of Zeif. The cleric instructed him to take Tajlo's message and find the PC or PCs whom Tajlo identified as his friend(s). Keehan knows nothing of the situation or of Tajlo, although he can provide some basic information about Zeif and the city of Nafiq. See "Information on Zeif and Nafiq" below for talking points with Keehan. If the PCs are from Zeif, they can start in the capital city, and automatically know these basic background details of their own region.

If the PCs wish to gather some information on either the Sultanate of Zeif or the city of Nafiq, use "Information on Zeif and Nafiq". Give all of the information for the DCs that a PC beats with any of the following skill checks: bardic knowledge, Knowledge (local - VTF), or Knowledge (history).

INFORMATION ON ZEIF AND NAFIQ

- **DC 4:** Although not as strict as in some other nations of the Baklunish West, the laws in the Sultanate of Zeif are nevertheless quite strict, especially within the larger towns and cities.
- **DC 6:** The town of Nafiq is located in the Deylik (province) of Balathar.
- **DC 10:** There have been occasions where adventurers have captured a murderous villain, but were then arrested, convicted, and jailed for breaking into the villain's home to find him. They were just lucky they didn't kill their foe!
- **DC 13:** Most Baklunish people follow a code known as the Four Feet of the Dragon: Honor, Generosity, Family, Piety.
- **DC 16:** A major presence in the Sultanate of Zeif is the orcish Urzary. This force of orcs is the Sultan's personal guard, and they live above the law.
- **DC 19:** The arbiters of the law are appointed by the local Dey. Often (but not always) the magistrate is a Qadi of Al'Akbar.
- **DC 24:** Nafiq is home to many retired Royal Navy sailors. In fact, the Dey, Yildwar, is a retired naval officer (and childhood friend of the Sultan).
- **DC 27:** Some magistrates are known to use supernatural means to aid their investigations.

When the PCs open the scroll case, supply them with Handout 1 if one of them played *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*.

Assuming the PCs want to undertake this mission to rescue Tajlo, allow them to make preparations and travel

to Nafiq. Some higher-level parties may wish to *teleport* or use other forms of magical transportation to get there. Allow them to do so. If parties come up with alternate plans, such as casting *discern location* or *scrying* and teleporting directly to Tajlo's cell, allow them to do that as well. In these cases you may have to run the encounters out of order, but be flexible and use your best judgment.

INTRODUCTION 2: A PLEA ON TAJLO'S BEHALF

This introduction assumes the PCs have already met and are together at a location in some civilized area, but that none of them have had dealings with kobold paladin Tajlo or that none of them played *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*. If all the PCs are from the same region, you may wish to begin in a large town or city in that region. If the PCs are from widely divergent regions, use Greyhawk City. If the PCs are all from Zeif, use the capital city. Please use your discretion and make the introduction reasonable and feasible for the PCs at the table and the region.

In this introduction, Qatan, a cleric of Al'Akbar in Nafiq, has recognized Tajlo's plight. Qatan has contacted some organization of Tajlo's choosing and asked them to send help, and that organization in turn asks the PCs to investigate. Below are a number of organizations that might ask the PCs to travel to Zeif to help the kobold, but you can use any organization appropriate to the PCs at your table:

- The Church of Heironeous
- The Church of any Lawful Good deity
- Lawful and/or Good Knighthoods of the western Flanaess
- The Redlee Neheli family of Keoland

Add to the following read-aloud text an appropriate description of the organization contacting the PCs, as well as the individual messenger. Add roleplaying elements as appropriate.

A messenger approaches you. He stops ten feet away, raises a hand in your direction, and bows his head. Then he holds out a scroll case.

When the PCs open the scroll case, supply them with Handout 2.

If the PCs wish to gather some information on either the Sultanate of Zeif or the city of Nafiq, use "Information on Zeif and Nafiq". Give all of the information for the DCs that a PC beats with any of the following skill checks: bardic knowledge, Knowledge (local - VTF), or Knowledge (history).

INFORMATION ON ZEIF AND NAFIQ

- **DC 4:** Although not as strict as in some other nations of the Baklunish West, the laws in the

Sultanate of Zeif are nevertheless quite strict, especially within the larger towns and cities.

- **DC 6:** The town of Nafiq is located in the Deylik (province) of Balathar.
- **DC 10:** There have been occasions where adventurers have captured a murderous villain, but were then arrested, convicted, and jailed for breaking into the villain's home to find him. They were just lucky they didn't kill their foe!
- **DC 13:** Most Baklunish people follow a code known as the Four Feet of the Dragon: Honor, Generosity, Family, Piety.
- **DC 16:** A major presence in the Sultanate of Zeif is the orcish Uruzary. This force of orcs is the Sultan's personal guard, and they live above the law.
- **DC 19:** The arbiters of the law are appointed by the local Dey. Often (but not always) the magistrate is a Qadi of Al'Akbar.
- **DC 24:** Nafiq is home to many retired Royal Navy sailors. In fact, the Dey, Yildwar, is a retired naval officer (and childhood friend of the Sultan).
- **DC 27:** Some magistrates are known to use supernatural means to aid their investigations.

PCs with the home region of Zeif automatically know this basic information about their region.

Assuming the PCs want to undertake this mission to rescue Tajlo, allow them to make preparations and travel to Nafiq. Some higher-level parties may wish to *teleport* or use other forms of magical transportation to get there. Allow them to do so. If parties come up with alternative plans, such as casting *discern location* or *scrying* and teleporting directly to Tajlo's cell, allow them to do that as well. In these cases you may have to run the encounters out of order, but be flexible and use your best judgment.

ENCOUNTER 1: AS ISTUS WOULD HAVE IT

Regardless of how the PCs travel, they should enter Nafiq as dawn breaks over the town. Unless they travel using magic, they should enter town along a road from the east.

Your journey to Nafiq is at its end. The small city spreads out before you, stretching across the plain until meeting the cliffs overlooking the Dramidj Ocean. Activity in the broad, dusty streets is just beginning to increase as farmers bring in their goods for the daily market and fishermen deliver loads of saltwater fish from the dock area. From behind a building, a young woman peers at you, nods, and says, "A lady of fate wishes to speak with you."

If the PCs walk behind the building, read on:

A young and beautiful Baklunish woman wearing dirty white robes sits cross-legged on the ground. Around her neck is a golden spindle pendant on a chain. "Sit with me," she says in a whisper, her eyes staring off as if in a trance. "The Lady of Our Fate has something you should hear." She gestures toward a dented metal bowl resting in front of her, containing a few gold coins and the bones of a small animal.

A DC 12 Knowledge (religion) check or Intelligence check reveals the holy symbol and the robes are associated with priestesses of Istus, the Baklunish goddess of fate. The woman is a chaotic neutral thief named Ghesij who stole the robes and holy symbol from a true priestess of Istus in the capital city of Zeif. She then traveled to Nafiq and started this scam recently, tricking folks with a little spare coin into paying her for some vague and generic prophecy. While in the guise of the priestess of Istus, Ghesij plays the part of an aloof and distracted prophetess. If her bluff is discovered, roleplay Ghesij as a street-smart con artist trying to earn some coin.

If any of the PCs place at least 5 gold pieces into the bowl, Ghesij removes the bones from the bowl and instructs the PC to throw the bones onto the ground. Ask the PC who paid the gold and cast the bones to roll percentile dice, and then pretend to reference a chart at the back of the adventure. Then read the following, which Ghesij speaks in a loud, shrill voice, unlike the hushed whisper she has used up to that point:

"Yes, my Lady sees great suffering in your future. Remember that every door need not have a latch and hinges. The beast you seek to slay may have allies. Oh no!" She pales and her lip trembles. "One of you is destined to die a most gruesome death before sunrise tomorrow." After saying this, her head falls to her chest and she whispers, "Go now. The lady's gift has left me tired."

Consult the PCs' previously rolled Sense Motive checks. If the PCs question her in any way about either the meaning or the validity of her "prophecy," give them a +2 circumstance bonus on the Sense Motive check against the following DCs. The increases in DC represent Ghesij's increasing level and skill in performing her ruse:

- APL 2 – DC 10**
- APL 4 – DC 13**
- APL 6 – DC 16**
- APL 8 – DC 19**
- APL 10 – DC 22**
- APL 12 – DC 25**
- APL 14 – DC 28**
- APL 16 – DC 30**

If a PC makes the Sense Motive check, that PC realizes something is amiss. PCs can, of course, demand their money back or take other actions without resorting to the Sense Motive check.

The woman continues her bluffing as long as she needs to, claiming that Istus works in mysterious ways and that the prophecy will certainly make sense at a later time. If the PCs make the Sense Motive check or are adamant about their disbelief in her words, her lies become outrageous and almost comical (which you can roleplay as you see fit). Then she attempts to flee with the gold they paid her. Her AC is 14 (Dex 18) and her speed is 30 ft. Her hit points are 4 x APL. If she takes any damage of any kind from the PCs, she falls to the ground and admits her scam, begging the PCs not to hurt her or turn her in to the authorities.

If the PCs kill her on purpose, they need to do something quickly to cover it up, as her murder was certainly not justifiable homicide in any way. (Additionally this is an evil act as she is unarmed and does not resist). If the PCs capture her and return the holy symbol to a temple or shrine of Istus (there is one in Nafiq), they receive the Blessing of Istus on the AR. Consult Appendix 2 for details on crime and punishment for manslaughter in Zeif.

She has not been in Nafiq long enough to know anything of relevance about the PCs' current situation. However, if the PCs do not turn her in and promise not to hurt her, she could gather information for them later. They must ask her to do this for them, however, and she does not offer unless asked. Having her do this means the PCs don't have to spend the time or money gathering information, and she automatically succeeds at learning everything the PCs could learn (see Encounter 5: The Investigation Begins for a list of what the PCs can learn with a Gather Information check).

ENCOUNTER 2: AL'AKBAR BE PRAISED

The city of Nafiq is similar to most Baklunish towns, if a bit larger and closer to water.

The PCs can easily find the temple of Al'Akbar by wandering around the small city for 20 minutes, or by simply asking someone. If the PCs enter the temple through the front entrance, an acolyte of Al'Akbar meets them. If they introduce themselves and give the reason for their presence at the temple, the acolyte asks them to wait while he checks on the availability of Qatan. He returns 3 minutes later and asks the PCs to follow him:

The acolyte leads you through a corridor, past several smaller doors to a large set of double doors at the end. Opening the doors, the acolyte steps aside to let you walk past.

When the PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following:

The inner sanctuary holds several trappings depicting various scenes of honor, piety, family and generosity. A tall man wearing a turban and an ankle-length tunic stares at a mural of a golden-skinned human with his hands raised to the heavens. Thick rays of sunshine descend

from the sky to illuminate the man: undoubtedly Al'Akbar himself. The tall man turns when he hears you enter. His smile is broad but sad.

"Al'Akbar be praised. I was not sure if you would come. Truth may yet be served. Please, rest yourselves and let us talk. I am Qatan al-Buyuk Qadi abdu-Al'Akbar."

Qatan offers the PCs simple food and drink. When he has seen to their physical needs, he tells them what he knows. This information is summarized in the bullet points below. Qatan is an animated and jovial man, but his friendliness is tempered by the realization that the chances of saving Tajlo are very slim.

- Tajlo came to Qatan a few weeks ago. The kobold had a letter of reference from a respected paladin of Al'Akbar whom Tajlo assisted on a mission to save a village in the Lands of the Wolf Nomads. Qatan, obviously not trusting such a strange creature, spent a couple of days speaking with him and praying to Al'Akbar for guidance. After that, Qatan could feel that the kobold was a chosen in the army of good and held the powers of a disciple of a good and just deity. He decided to hear the kobold's plight.
- Tajlo told the cleric of his travels and his current mission. (If the PCs ask about it, Qatan tells them to wait and hear the entire story from Tajlo.) Tajlo asked Qatan's help in investigating people currently in power in the government of Nafiq. The kobold wasn't sure who exactly it was, but that someone in the employ of the Dey of Nafiq was performing terrible acts in other parts of the Flanaess.
- Qatan gave Tajlo access to the temple of Al'Akbar to rest at night, and he gave him papers saying that he was a friend of the temple to keep city guards from slaying him simply for being a kobold, but that was the only assistance he gave to the kobold.
- After three days of the kobold's investigations, Qatan heard from one of the other priests that Tajlo had murdered a servant of Kroyen, an ambassador in the court of the Dey, and the kobold had been sentenced for execution the following day. Qatan pulled as many strings as he could to get the execution stayed. He and Dahim, the magistrate of Nafiq who happens to be a priest of Mouqol, are not on the best of terms: Qatan believes that he has been slighted in not being chosen as the Magistrate of Nafiq, and Dahim knows Qatan does not respect him. The best Qatan could do was to get a stay of execution until some of Tajlo's friends could come to speak on his behalf in front of the magistrate.
- Qatan has papers allowing the PCs access to Tajlo at the prison, located at the palace complex of the Dey. These same papers can be shown to

the magistrate Dahim at noon today as he holds court in the Nafiq Bazaar.

- Qatan suggests the PCs first speak to Tajlo at the prison, and then at midday to go the Nafiq Bazaar, where the magistrate Dahim holds court today. Qatan fears that Dahim may end the stay of execution at any moment, so time may be of the essence.

Qatan can provide only general information concerning Nafiq or Zeif. He specifically informs them about the harsh penalties one faces in Zeif for certain crimes. (Use Appendix 2 as a guide.) He doesn't know any details about the NPCs involved in this adventure. He does offer a common room in the temple if the PCs wish to spend the evening or rest, assuming none of the PCs detect as evil. If any of them detect as evil, they must take rooms at an inn or live off the wild if they wish to rest.

Qatan is a 9th-level cleric of Al'Akbar, and he can cast spells for the PCs as needed, at the cost of 90 gp x spell level, plus the cost of any components. Zero-level spells count as first-level spells for the purpose of costs. He will only cast the following spells: *cure light wounds*, *cure moderate wounds*, *gentle repose*, *make whole*, *remove paralysis*, *lesser restoration*, *zone of truth*, *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, *discern lies*, *neutralize poison*, *restoration*, *sending*, *atonement*, *mass cure light wounds*, and *raise dead*. The DC for his spells are 13 + spell level.

ENCOUNTER 3: SPEAKING WITH TAJLO

The palace of the Dey of Nafiq is not really a palace as much as a complex of interconnected plain stone structures. The complex is spread out along the north edge of the city, on cliffs overlooking the sea, making the complex appear much larger and more imposing than it really is.

The four guards at the front gate wear studded leather armor and carry falchions. They are 1st-level warriors who stop the PCs from entering and then question their business at the palace. Unless the PCs do something drastic, the guards only allow them to pass if they provide the paperwork given to them by Qatan. If for any reasons these guards need assistance, they ring a bell. Within 10 rounds four more 1st-level warrior guards arrive. Ten rounds after that, 6 elite guards arrive. The elite guards have the same stats as the guards in Encounter 4: Mouqol's Law.

Assuming the PCs have not already ruined their welcome in Nafiq, they are allowed to speak to Tajlo in his cell, which is located in a secure building near the center of the palace complex.

You are shown into a cell barely large enough to hold a bed and a stool. Sitting on the bed and staring at the wall in silent contemplation is a kobold dressed in a dirty shirt and breeches.

The only other adornment that differentiates him from others of his race is a silver holy symbol in the shape of a lightning bolt grasped in his clenched hand. Seeing you, he hops from his seat and approaches to shake your hands.

Tajlo speaks fluent Draconic, broken Common, and he has even picked up a few words and phrases in Baklunish during his investigation and confinement. He is soft-spoken but zealous in his worship of Heironeous. He should be played as the paladin's paladin, more worried about truth, honor, and justice than his own welfare, willing not only to die for his friends, but for his convictions as well. A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check reveals the holy symbol is that of Heironeous, god of valor and justice. (Followers of Heironeous know this automatically).

Interaction between Tajlo and the PCs in this encounter depends largely on whether the PCs already know Tajlo and whether the PCs played *COR4-01 Shedding Scales* and/or *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*. If they know Tajlo, the introductions needn't take place. If they played *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*, the story of what happened to Ianta in the Crypt of Pi-Zoar can be skipped. Regardless of the PCs' experiences in the storyline thus far, Tajlo gives them an explanation of what he has learned so far and why he has been imprisoned. Use the following bullet points to roleplay a conversation between Tajlo and the PCs; the summaries are separated into the back-stories from the previous two adventures in the series, plus what has happened since the PCs last encountered Tajlo in *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*, if they played that adventure.

From *COR4-01 Shedding Scales*:

- Tajlo was born and raised as a member of the Tallbane tribe in the Rushmoors of the Gran March, near the border of Keoland.
- When he was a hatchling, a powerful kobold named Yolopo appeared, killing the leaders of his tribe and many of the surrounding tribes. Yolopo ordered the kobolds to cease attacking humans and instead search for artifacts made of a strange blue-black stone that were held in ancient chambers or buried beneath the swamp. The kobolds that spent a great deal of time in the presence of these artifacts were blessed with superior attributes.
- Vicious humans, led by men carrying symbols of an eye in a hand, began frequently attacking the kobolds in an attempt to steal the blue-black artifacts they had found. (A DC 15 Knowledge [religion] check reveals that is a holy symbol to Vecna, vile god of magic and secrets.)
- A group of adventurers came into the swamp and saved Tajlo's life after a harpy attacked him. They told Tajlo about children of the Keoish barony that bordered the Rushmoors whose eyes had been stolen and who never aged. The adventurers were in the swamp searching for

the children's eyes and the same blue-black artifacts that Yolopo ordered the kobolds to collect.

From *COR5-08 Clipping Wings*:

- Yolopo disbanded the Tallbane tribe and expelled Tajlo, saying that his caring for creatures other than kobolds tainted him. A paladin of Heironeous took in Tajlo and trained him to use his powers to promote justice.
- After his training, Tajlo came across a young Flan girl named Ianta who was traveling alone toward the Land of Black Ice. Tajlo took an oath to Heironeous to protect her on her vision-inspired mission.
- In the Land of Black Ice, in a tomb dedicated to an Ur-Flan necromancer, Ianta threw herself into a negative energy portal, as her visions had told her she must. The group who Tajlo was with also found more blue-black artifacts and a pair of eyes belong to Pross Redlee Neheli, the son of Baron Jharmok of the Shelspring in Keoland.

Since that time, Tajlo has been busy:

- Humans and fiendish creatures, led by worshippers of Vecna, were decimating the kobolds of the Burneal Forest, who were also collecting blue-black artifacts for their leader Yolopo. Tajlo helped the kobolds fight off the evil humans, just as he had for his tribe in the Rushmoors, and in the process he learned that the forces were under the command of a single person who wanted those blue-black artifacts for some dark purpose.
- He also learned that this same human was behind the attack on the children of the Keoish barony. He is using the eyes as a focus to power the magic held within the blue-black artifacts.
- A prisoner taken during the battles between the kobolds and the humans said that the human behind all this evil planning held a position of authority in the city of Nafiq in Zeif.
- Tajlo arrived here over two weeks ago, and Qatan, a priest of Al'Akbar, assisted him in his investigation. Tajlo learned that the human responsible for the attacks is Kroyen, an ambassador in the employ of Yildwar, the Dey of Nafiq. Kroyen is a mixed Baklunish-Oeridian male who travels the length of the civilized world on diplomatic missions for the Dey (often at the behest of the Sultan himself).
- Tajlo saw a man in the Nafiq Bazaar carrying a dagger decorated with an eye motif. This same style of dagger had been carried by several of the humans who raided kobold villages both in the Rushmoors and in the Burneal. Tajlo followed this man back to the home of Kroyen by sneaking past the guards located at the gate to

the Dey's palace. Kroyen's home is within the Dey's palace complex.

- Tajlo entered Kroyen's dwelling and was attacked by a priest of Vecna. Tajlo slew the priest in self-defense and moved deeper into the residence, but soon the royal guards arrived and arrested him. All evidence of the dead man's priestly ties to Vecna had been removed while Tajlo searched the house, and Kroyen claimed that the kobold had broken in and killed a servant without any provocation.
- Tajlo has been found guilty of murder and sentenced to death, but his friend Qatan called in some favors to stay the execution until someone could come to speak on his behalf. He was also found guilty of several lesser crimes, such as breaking and entering, but none of those crimes carry as stiff a penalty.

Tajlo asks the PCs to do two things: talk to the magistrate on his behalf to get a longer stay of execution, and then investigate Kroyen to prove his complicity in the crimes against the children of the Keoish barony and delving into dark magic.

PCs of a certain level are going to have the means to simply remove Tajlo from his predicament through either brute force or magic. Tajlo, however, refuses to take part in a jailbreak. He makes it clear that he is willing to die following the established laws of the Sultanate of Zeif. If the PCs use magic or force to remove Tajlo against his will, the kobold simply returns to the prison at the first opportunity and turns himself in. Tajlo feels it is just as important to have his own name cleared as to catch Kroyen and find out what happened to Ianta.

Tajlo tells the PCs the magistrate in charge of his case is a priest of Mouqol named Dahim. The priest condemned Tajlo to death based on the testimony of others and the fact that he is a kobold, but the magistrate also ordered the stay of execution. However, Dahim refused to give an exact length on the stay, and Tajlo fears Dahim may revoke that stay at any time. He asks the PCs to speak with Dahim as soon as possible at his court in the center of the Nafiq Bazaar.

ENCOUNTER 4: MOUQOL'S LAW

Following Qatan's or Tajlo's directions, the PCs easily find the Nafiq Bazaar. They can find Dahim without needing to ask for directions:

The Nafiq Bazaar is not much different than many others you have seen in your travels around the Flanaess. Farmers, fishermen, hunters, entertainers, craftsmen, and a variety of other merchants hawk their wares from small shops, stalls, carts, and tabletops. In the center of the bazaar is an area roped off from the bustle of vendors and shoppers. In the

middle of this area sits a robed man on a raised platform. Around him stand several guards and a few scribes making notes on scrolls and in ledgers. A short line begins at the opening of the roped-off area.

There are only three people in the line. One is a human in shackles being guided by two guards. The other two humans in line stand and glare at each other, occasionally whispering threats and insults concerning something to do with a herd of goats and a daughter.

If the PCs wait patiently in line, they witness two rulings. The man in chains is brought before Dahim, accused of attacking and killing a guard in the Sultan's private guard. The man claims that the guard, a Spahi in the employ of the army of the Sultan (the leader of Zeif) himself, assaulted him first. A Spahi wearing a uniform steps forward to testify that he and the slain Spahi are members of the Sultan's royal guard, and that this man is an assassin who was trying to kill a representative of the Sultan whom the Spahis were escorting to Zeif to meet Yildwar Dey (the leader of Nafiq). Dahim orders the assassin beheaded at sundown.

The next ruling is to settle a dispute between a merchant and a goatherd. The goatherd's daughter was married to the merchant's son in an arranged marriage, and part of the dowry was 50 goats from the goatherd's flock. More than half of the goats died after a month, however, and the merchant wants recompense. The goatherd claims that the goats were healthy when the dowry was made and that their deaths were obviously a result of mistreatment or poor handling. As Dahim considers the testimony, a DC 10 Spot check reveals the merchant making an odd gesture with his hands. When Dahim sees this, he waits only a moment before ruling that the goatherd must replace all of the deceased goats or the marriage shall be annulled.

Anyone who sees the hand gestures and also makes a DC 20 check in Profession (merchant) or Knowledge (local - VTF) realizes that both the merchant and the magistrate Dahim are members of the Mouqollad Consortium: an organization that governs trade and commerce in the Baklunish lands. A PC who makes a DC 15 Sense Motive check and saw the hand signals realizes that some sort of private deal was just made, but they don't know the details.

The PCs should be neither encouraged nor discouraged to interrupt the above proceedings—allow events to fall as they may. If the PCs do try to interject themselves into the proceedings, they are asked politely but firmly by the guards not to interrupt. If they interrupt a second time, Dahim himself warns them sternly that any further interruptions mean arrest for the offending PC(s). This also brings a –4 circumstance penalty to any future Diplomacy or Bluff checks with Dahim. Finally, if they interrupt again after Dahim's warning, the guards attempt to arrest the offending PC(s) and Dahim refuses to hear those PCs. He fines anyone who interrupts proceedings 10 gp for each incident after his initial warning. If they are persistently annoying even after being fined, he tells the guards to take them into custody

under the charge of contempt. This means the PC is taken into custody for 1 TU and that PC cannot finish the adventure. This obviously makes stopping Tajlo's execution much more difficult, as if the PCs do not get the chance to talk to Dahim, Tajlo is executed at sundown (7 pm) that same day.

A PC or PCs who are arrested who come up with a good escape plan should be allowed to do so, but should plan the rest of the adventure under no small penalty as they now are wanted by the authorities. If the PCs uncover Kroyen's crimes by infiltrating his lair and gaining access to his records, they still have to answer for their crimes, but they may gain some leniency.

After the problem between the goatherd and the merchant is resolved, the PCs are allowed to step forward and address Dahim:

A guard who stands at the head of the line waves for you to approach Magistrate Dahim. The guard says in a monotone, bored voice, "Approach the magistrate and speak your claim. Keep weapons sheathed and do not get within arms reach unless given permission."

As the PCs approach the dais where Dahim sits, they can make a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check to see and understand that he is a priest of Mouqol, the Baklunish god of trade (and other areas of concern, including negotiation).

Dahim waits patiently for the PCs to speak their claim. He listens attentively, assuming the PCs make a plea for Tajlo's life. Dahim secretly knows that something unusual is happening with Kroyen, so he really wants to give Tajlo's friends a chance to investigate. However, he is under great political pressure from the Dey's government to execute the kobold and keep others from looking into Kroyen's affairs, as Kroyen is an ambassador in the court of the Dey of Nafiq. (The Dey knows nothing of Kroyen's vile doings, and the Dey is out of the city visiting the Sultan for the entirety of the adventure.)

Assuming the PCs make a plea for Tajlo's life, allow the speaking PC to make a DC 15 Diplomacy check. If a PC is a titled representative of a nation or an international organization or appropriate Zeif regional meta-organization (DM's discretion), bestow a +2 circumstance bonus on their checks. The DM may also give up to a +4 bonus for PCs making particularly eloquent pleas. Other PCs who speak can either attempt to assist or make their own checks—these decisions on whether they are assisting or making their own checks must be made before any dice are rolled. If the initial attempts fail, Dahim says that the kobold killed a citizen of Zeif and a servant of the Dey's ambassador and must pay with his life as dictated by law. A second Diplomacy check can then be attempted at a DC of 20 following the same method as above. If that fails, Dahim says that so far the PCs have not given him an adequate reason to stay the execution any longer. A third and final Diplomacy check at DC 25 can be attempted by the PCs. If this fails, Dahim sends the PCs away, saying that Tajlo is to be executed at sundown.

All of the above takes place in the open with everyone at the bazaar watching and hearing the entire exchange. If *any* of the above Diplomacy checks succeed, Dahim asks the PCs to approach the dais. When they do, he leans down to speak to them more privately.

The private exchange at the dais is essentially Dahim asking for a bribe, which he is not subtle about:

"I understand and sympathize with your plea, and I want to give you an opportunity to seek an explanation for the strange little kobold's actions. However, there is great pressure being placed on me to hurry his execution along. Money and favors change hands every day to keep your friend alive, and his time—and by extension his life—is rapidly running out." Dahim nods to a coffer sitting on the dais filled with gold and silver coins.

The bribe needed to buy time for the investigation is 10 gold pieces x APL. Goods and magic can also be placed there instead of coin (at the normal half price for selling an item). If the PCs put more in than necessary, Dahim does not give change. If the bribe is less than Dahim demands, he says something obvious like, "I would think your friend's life is worth more than that." Bribery is a way of life with Dahim, and he does not respond to threats of blackmail. For him, the ability and wisdom to pay is as important as good intentions and moral superiority.

Once the adequate bribe is paid, Dahim makes it perfectly clear to the PCs that their behavior and actions dictate Tajlo's fate. Make sure the following is emphasized and that all the players are paying attention at this point:

"Understand this. My leniency should not be taken for granted. The accused lives for the next 24 hours only because you and the priest of Al'Akbar vouch for him. If I see any reason—any reason at all—to doubt your character or intentions while here in Nafiq, then the life of the accused is immediately forfeit. Nafiq is a large town, but not that large; I will know within minutes if you break any laws, threaten any citizens, or abuse my trust in your honorable and good intentions. Simply put, behave yourselves or you will be arrested and the kobold immediately executed. Your actions are now completely responsible for his life . . . or death. Complete your investigation within 24 hours and report back to me if you want to clear the name the kobold."

Creatures: Lower-level characters should not think they could win or even survive a battle with the cleric and the guards. Higher-level characters, on the other hand, could probably make short work of the guards. Killing anyone here is certainly an evil act, and attacking or using magic to assault or manipulate people is not tolerated.

Questionable acts, even if not evil, could result in Tajlo's immediate execution.

Development: DMs must use discretion here, as well as when running the other encounters within the city. If an action seems like something that would be frowned up, give the PCs an in-character warning by having a passer-by witness the action and shake her head, commenting on how terrible it is that such things can happen in public in this day and age. This one warning should be enough—subsequent questionable acts should result in Tajlo's immediate execution. Note that the PCs can still complete the adventure even if Tajlo is killed, and the PCs might not learn of his execution until they have completed their investigations. Your task as a DM here is to allow the PCs to carry out an investigation, reward good roleplaying, while at the same time holding PCs accountable for their actions.

All APLs (EL 14)

☞ **Dahim:** male human cleric 13 of Mouqol; hp 108; Appendix 1.

☞ **Magistrate's Guards (6):** male human ranger 6; hp 51, 51, 51, 51, 51, 51; Appendix 1.

Developments: If the PCs acknowledge themselves as titled or nobles, or if they carry outward signs that they are representatives of any particular group or nation, then any misbehavior or questionable acts on their part are later reported to the ruler of Nafiq. He then passes this information on to the Sultan, who in turn uses his ambassadors to report the PC's questionable or dishonorable deeds to important figures within the groups or nations represented by that PC that would be upset by one of their members doing such things. This embarrassment could result in loss of rank or title, which should be noted on the character's AR in Play Notes.

If the PCs ask where they can find Dahim should they locate any evidence that exonerates Tajlo, he tells them that he is usually in the temple of Mouqol. This location is detailed in Encounter 7: The Dead Servant.

ENCOUNTER 5: THE INVESTIGATIONS BEGIN

The rest of the adventure involves the investigation of Kroyen and his dead servant Trumbull. Several areas can be investigated in any order, but two pieces of information are needed to proceed to the final encounters and convince the authorities to release Tajlo:

- 1) The location of Kroyen's underground chamber;
- 2) The password to enter the chamber without triggering the trap (the password is set to be different depending on the person speaking it).

During the investigations the PCs also may find evidence that the kobold was justified in his actions against Trumbull and Kroyen. Finding this evidence and showing it to Dahim can result in an extension of Tajlo's stay of execution. That evidence and the time bought

with that evidence can be found within the individual encounters where the evidence is found.

After learning they have 24 hours to investigate Kroyen and save Tajlo's life, the PCs are free to go about their tasks in whatever order they see fit. As the DM, you are provided with several encounters to cover paths the PCs might take. Of course, detailing all contingencies is impossible, so feel free to improvise encounters that the PCs might trigger based on their choices and methods. Do not penalize the PCs for thinking of methods of investigation that the author did not envision. Be flexible, using the guidelines set forth in the other encounters as a guide to handling unconventional PC choices and actions. None of the encounters you need to create to account for PC actions should involve combat, traps, or any other drain of resources, unless the PCs do something to draw the attention of the guards and then attack them or resist arrest.

Dahim's Assistant, Zephyr

Dahim the magistrate employs a jann rogue known as Zephyr to act as a spy for him when certain delicate situations arise. This is one of those situations. Zephyr trails and watches the PCs, using his *invisibility*, hide in plain sight, ethereal jaunt, flight, *hat of disguise*, and other abilities to watch the PCs inconspicuously, remain hidden when necessary. He disappears if spotted. Be sure to allow the PCs Spot checks, Listen checks, or other means of detection they may have active, especially at higher APLs. Zephyr acts as Dahim's eyes and ears. If he notices the PCs doing anything illegal or extremely unethical in their investigations, he immediately goes back to Dahim and tells him, thus ending Tajlo's life. More details about Zephyr's actions are located within each encounter. Stats for Zephyr are located in Appendix 1.

Familiarize yourself with Zephyr's abilities before running the adventure. Zephyr is told by Dahim to simply watch the PCs and make sure they stay within the bounds of the law in their investigations. Zephyr does not interfere with the PCs unless they are assaulting (either magically or by force or arms) an innocent. He fights only long enough to ensure the safety of innocents, and then leaves to inform Dahim of what happened.

The PCs certainly have a chance to spot Zephyr, but that is highly unlikely due to Zephyr's skills. For example, if Zephyr is invisible and flying while the PCs are doing something, and one of the PCs has an *invisibility purge* running, they would still have to make a Spot check since Zephyr can use the shadowdancer's *hide in plain sight* ability.

If the PCs do figure out that Zephyr is following them, he simply tells them that he is breaking no laws, and that they had better stick to their own business instead of worrying about his.

Gathering Information

At any time during the investigation, the PCs may wish to gather general information on Kroyen, Trumbull, and their activities. Each time they do that, it takes three hours to get relevant information and costs 10 gp for each

PC involved in the information gathering. PCs must state ahead of time if they are conducting their own investigation or assisting someone else. Of course, all the PCs can gather information at the same time. The information they can gather is detailed below:

- **DC 5** – Kroyen is a human of mixed Oeridian and Baklunish descent who acts as an ambassador for Yildwar Dey, the ruler of Nafiq. The Sultan himself often asks Yildwar Dey to send Kroyen out on diplomatic missions, especially to Oeridian lands. When in Nafiq, Kroyen lives at a residence in the palace complex of the Dey.
- **DC 10** – A couple of weeks ago, a servant of Kroyen was murdered by an insane kobold at Kroyen's residence. The servant was an Oeridian man named Trumbull, who has lived in Nafiq for several years. His body is being held at the temple of Mouqol in Nafiq. The servant's widow is a Baklunish woman who lives in the town with her two children.
- **DC 15** – Kroyen is rarely seen in the town, although occasionally he is spotted playing a game of jir-tah against an old man in the Nafiq Bazaar. Jir-tah is a game of strategy played with marbles on a board.
- **DC 20** – Kroyen is more than just an ambassador. He is also a mage of tremendous power.
- **DC 30** – Kroyen has spent a great deal of time outside of Zeif in the last three years – much more than was customary in previous years. Kroyen has been working in the employ of the Dey for at least 10 years.

If the PCs try to ask someone a question specifically answered in the above information, and that person is likely to know the answer, allow them to find the answer without having to go through the time and expense of a Gather Information check.

Kroyen's Bribe

After the first important piece of information (location of lair, password to lair, or other evidence) is found by the PCs, a human Baklunish servant of Kroyen approaches the PCs in a public place with an offer. This servant knows nothing of Kroyen's illegal activities, and therefore he is completely unhelpful if the PCs try to intimidate, magically coerce, bribe, or bluff him to find out more. He honestly has no idea where Kroyen is, what evil schemes Kroyen plans, or what vile associations Kroyen has made.

A middle-aged Baklunish man dressed in loose white clothing approaches you. He carries a leather satchel but bears no weapons. He bows before you and says in Common, "I have instructions from my master to make you an offer. He knows you have come to Nafiq, and he knows why you are here. He wants to offer

you a reward for your vigilance so far, and he asks you to accept the gift with his regards. There are 100 pieces of gold in this satchel for each of you. If you take it and travel to Zeir-i-Zeif immediately, he will have much more gold waiting for you at the Temple of Mouqol there – payable after the kobold creature has received its just punishment. He will also offer you access to a gift matching your heart's desire. Might I add that my master has no small amount of power in Zeif, and his generosity should not be questioned."

Indeed, if the PCs decide to give up and leave, they are awarded the Gifts from Kroyen entry on the AR. Please understand that the PCs cannot trick Kroyen into thinking they have left, collect the reward, and then somehow save Tajlo. If they accept the Gifts from Kroyen the PCs must travel to Zeir-i-Zeif (Zeif's capital city) and allow Tajlo to be executed. This means the adventure ends for the PCs, and they are awarded whatever experience points they have earned thus far, as well as full gold piece awards for their APL (which is the gold that Kroyen's servant is talking about). Additionally, the PCs accepting the Gifts of Kroyen are not permitted to play in the finale of the "Windows to the Serpent's Soul" series.

Leaving Tajlo to his fate is not automatically considered an evil act. However, it is definitely not a good act, and any good character that takes the bribe and leaves Tajlo to die moves from good to neutral. If this shift in alignment happens to a character that needs to be good to cast spells or retain class features or abilities, then an *atonement* spell is needed for them to regain their good alignment and standing.

Presenting or Manufacturing Evidence

Throughout the adventure PCs might find evidence that points to Kroyen and Trumbull being involved in something nefarious. This evidence does not necessarily vindicate Tajlo, but it is enough for Dahim to extend Tajlo's stay of execution for a little while longer. In the encounter where the evidence is found, the extension of the stay of execution is listed if PCs present that evidence to Dahim.

Crafty and imaginative PCs may get the idea to manufacture evidence clearing Tajlo's name. If they do this and bring the evidence to Dahim, they have a tough road to travel before their plan works.

First, they must fabricate the evidence and then make a Bluff check (or some other check depending on the type of evidence). The DM can assign a penalty or bonus from -4 to +4 to the Bluff check based on how convincing (or ludicrous) the evidence is. The Bluff check is made against Dahim's high Sense Motive check (+25 modifier), which the DM should roll. Dahim can also cast *divine insight* to gain a +15 bonus to his Sense Motive checks, which he does if the PCs present evidence to him.

If the PCs are able to bluff Dahim, he believes them on this point. If they try to press the issue by bluffing him further with more fabricated evidence, he casts *discern*

lies and questions each of the PCs about the veracity of the evidence they present him. Failed DC 20 Will saves on the part of the PCs means that Dahim knows they are lying.

Dahim fines any PCs who have committed perjury 50 gp and orders Tajlo's immediate execution.

Divination spells can certainly be used by the PCs to help in their investigation, but no such spells can yield evidence that Dahim accepts. Any divinations referring directly to Kroyen fail, as he currently enjoys the protection of the Serpent.

Treasure: PCs can take the 100 gold pieces offered by Kroyen's servant, whether or not they plan to uphold their end of the bargain.

All APLs: Coin – 100 gp.

ENCOUNTER 6: KROYEN'S HOUSE

Some PCs may wish to investigate Kroyen's residence, hoping to find clues. Since his residence is located within the complex that acts as the Dey's palace, doing this is going to be extremely difficult. Do not discourage them trying, but roleplay the entire process.

The first hurdle in investigating the residence is getting past the guards at the gates of the complex. The paperwork that they used to speak with Tajlo does not give them authorization to enter for any other reason. They can bluff the guards that they wish to speak to the kobold again. Since they were inside the complex already once and are more familiar with it, they could use teleportation magic to gain entrance. The can also try to find a place where they can climb over the wall of the complex, burrow under, scale the cliffs, etc. They can also try to bluff their way in, forge papers, intimidate someone to help them in, etc.

For purposes of game mechanics, assign a DC 15 to any opposed checks attempting to get in, adjusted by the ingenuity and specifics of the plan. For example, if the PCs try to climb over the wall during the daylight hours without getting spotted, that would be much harder than doing so at night. Trying to intimidate a servant to get them past the guards by vouching for them is more likely than intimidating the guards themselves.

The second hurdle is getting into Kroyen's residence. Obviously, they are not going to be welcomed in. If they simply knock on the door and ask for admittance, a butler tells the PCs that Kroyen is out of the area on a diplomatic mission, and that he is not expected back for at least a month. As far as anyone here knows, this is true. If the PCs gain entrance using subterfuge or sneaking, again set the DC at 15 and adjust for the specifics of the plan.

Assuming the PCs get past the gate to the complex and gain admittance to Kroyen's residence, they find no evidence of Kroyen's guilt in any of the troubles Tajlo has mentioned, as all documentation of this activity is located at the cliff-side lair. However, they can gain a clue when they overhear one of the servants telling another of large bills that Ambassador Kroyen has been receiving from a

barge owner and teamster named Ramilan, and neither servant can understand why the ambassador would need the service of a local teamster. PCs can then follow up on this investigative thread to Encounter 12: The Barge.

Zephyr follows the PCs as best he can, using all the tools at his disposal. He does not report the PCs actions to Dahim unless they do something severe, like assaulting an innocent. While the PCs who break into Kroyen's residence are later charged with the crime, Zephyr does not report this Dahim immediately. Stealing valuables from the Dey's complex or Kroyen's residence does cause Zephyr to report the PCs to Dahim, thus ending Tajlo's life.

ENCOUNTER 7: THE DEAD SERVANT

Some PCs may want to examine the corpse of the servant who Tajlo claimed was a worshipper of Vecna and the instigator of the attack. The servant was an Oeridian man named Trumbull. He was a low-level priest of Vecna who was tricked by Kroyen into believing the ambassador was attempting to return Vecna to domination on Oerth by searching for and using relics of great power. Trumbull assisted Kroyen at his residence and while on ambassadorial duties, and he also helped the ambassador in his searches for, and rituals using, the eyes and the blue-black artifacts of the Serpent. Trumbull also assisted Kroyen at his cliff-side hideout.

At present, Trumbull's body is being kept at the temple of Mouqol in Nafiq. A *gentle repose* is being used to keep the body fresh at the behest of Kroyen, for he may decide to raise his faithful servant after the kobold is executed for the murder. The PCs can learn about the location of the body by gathering information or asking someone who would definitely know, including Dahim.

Arriving at the temple of Mouqol, the PCs must first deal with the acolyte in charge of welcoming visitors to the temple. This is a young Baklunish man named Vetayil, a very immature commoner with delusions of grandeur about his role in the temple. Vetayil understands two things: bribes and flattery. He is no more than 15 years old, and he has an exaggerated sense of his own wisdom and importance. He begins almost everything he says with, "As the person in charge of this temple" or "Since I have been entrusted with the day-to-day operation of this church."

If asked about the possibility of viewing the body of Trumbull, he first inquires, in the most condescending and know-it-all manner possible, if the PCs have the permission of either Kroyen or the deceased man's widow to view the body.

The only way he allows the PCs to view the body is if they give him at least 10 gp, or if they acknowledge his importance and offer him flattery. Assuming they are able to do one of these two things, or find another way in, he allows them to view the body.

In the chamber are two bodies covered in cloth bearing the symbols and colors of Mouqol. One

body belongs to an elderly Baklunish man, and the other is a middle-aged Oeridian. The Oeridian is Trumbull, and he wears only a pair of coarse breeches. A large gash in his abdomen is obvious.

The other body is off a life-long resident of Naqif named Rahal who died recently of old age. His body is awaiting its final rest.

The PCs have a few options at this point. Investigating Trumbull's body calls for a DC 15 Search check. Anyone succeeding at the check notes 2 oddities with the body. Trumbull has a rash around his neck, and his fingertips are stained black.

A DC 15 Heal check reveals that the rash was probably caused by long-term exposure to an irritant, most likely some kind of metal. It also reveals that the cause of death was a sword wound from a smallish blade that damaged internal organs.

A successful DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check reveals that the substance is certainly not ink, but the substance is rare enough that it is unidentifiable.

A successful DC 30 Craft (alchemy) check reveals that the substance is darksap, a component used in necromantic magic. The substance is extremely rare, and probably only a very adept alchemist would know how to procure and handle the stuff.

The gold necklace he wore as a symbol of his marriage caused the rash around his neck. Asking Vetayil about it reveals that indeed Trumbull was brought to wearing a gold necklace that represents his devotion to his betrothed, but all jewelry was taken and returned to his wife. She can be questioned in Encounter 8: The Family and Home of the Dead Servant. The substance staining his fingers, darksap, can be learned about in Encounter 11: The Alchemist.

The PCs may also cast *Speak with Dead* on the body. Remember that the spell only lasts 1 minute/level, and that only 1 question per 2 caster levels is allowed. Neutral evil in life, Trumbull certainly tries to resist answering the PCs' questions with his Will save of +6. Even if he is forced to answer, his answers are either cryptic or a simple "Yes" or "No" without elaboration. Use the following questions and answers as a guide. (These questions and answers may also be used for PCs resorting to divination spells to get answers about the mystery):

Are you a follower of Vecna? What dedicated worshipper of the Whispered One could reveal a secret like that, even in death?

Where is Kroyen now? I do not know.

Does Kroyen have a hideout or secret lair? Yes.

Where is Kroyen's hideout or secret lair? In a secret place by the ocean where you will never find it.

What is the means to enter the hideout? I do not remember. (Trumbull never could remember, which was why he had to write it down.)

Do you know anything about the children of Keoland whose eyes are stolen? Yes.

What do you know about the children of Keoland whose eyes are stolen? They were

necessary to fuel the return of my lord to Oerth. The children possessed the gift of the Serpent, and through their eyes the Serpent's power can be focused.

Where is the girl Ianta? She mistakenly entered the presence of the Serpent, which probably has killed her.

Did you attack the kobold who killed you? Yes.

Did you attack the kobold who killed you first? Yes, I was defending my master's home against an intruder.

In some cases, higher-level PCs may be foolish enough to simply cast *raise dead* or similar spells on Trumbull. Note that he does *not* want to come back at this time, and he has been dead for 14 days while under the *gentle repose*. Even if they do bring him back from the dead, he does not wish to help them, and he actively resists assisting them in their investigations. If, against all odds, the PCs are able to raise Trumbull, get him to help them despite all resistance, and escape the notice of Zephyr, then Trumbull can take them to the cliff-side hideout of Kroyen. The PCs may also try to raise him and then get him to admit his complicity in the affairs of Kroyen. Again, he resists, but the PCs might be able to pull this off. Dahim is more likely to side with Trumbull than the PCs though.

Since Zephyr works for a cleric of Mouqol, he is well known here and admitted to the temple without question. He dons the attire of an acolyte and keeps an eye on the PCs while they remain at the temple, being in the room with them if possible, and listening at the door if his presence would rouse their suspicion.

ENCOUNTER 8: THE FAMILY AND HOME OF THE DEAD SERVANT

If the PCs arrive at the residence of Trumbull's widow during the daylight hours (before 7 p.m.), she is just leaving the house on her way to make some purchases at the Nafiq Bazaar. If the PCs arrive after dusk (after 7 p.m.), she is preparing dinner or putting her children to bed. With the widow, a young Baklunish woman named Anili, are her two children, a four-year-old boy named Cevan, and a one-year-old girl named Neva.

Whether the PCs encounter Trumbull's family on their way to the market or in their home, here is the crux of the encounter: the widow Anili is still reeling from the death of her husband. She was left with two small children, and it is draining all of her energy just to keep caring for them. When the PCs attempt to speak to her, read or paraphrase the following:

Although the Baklunish woman acknowledges your presence and looks at you when you speak, something is missing behind her eyes. A vacancy of spirit and a sense of loss are prevalent. She carries an infant girl with long

dark hair, and a brown-haired lad of about four years watches you from behind his mother's skirt.

A DC 15 Sense Motive check reveals the mother's condition is nothing magical or extraordinary—it is simply grief and exhaustion. If the PCs ask her about her husband or Kroyen, she answers with short, monosyllabic grunts. She reveals the following information:

- She knows nothing about her husband's religious beliefs. (True. She does not know about his ties to Vecna, nor does she know who Vecna is.)
- She and her husband met and married a little over five years ago. He came to Nafiq to act as an assistant to Kroyen. She doesn't know much about his life before his arrival in Nafiq.
- Her husband traveled with Kroyen on his many journeys, and even when he was in Nafiq he was often away from home from early in the morning until late at night. But when he was around, he was devoted to her and their children.
- Anili managed the house and children and left Trumbull to his work, and she knows nothing of importance about that work except that he assisted an ambassador who traveled frequently.
- Kroyen has been kind to her since Trumbull's death, offering financial assistance until she can find employment or re-marry.

Anili does have one secret that she might reveal to the PCs, but she is in no state of mind to remember it. In order to get her to offer the secret, the PCs must perform two acts of kindness toward her or her children. This can be many things: offering her at least 10 gold pieces to help her with her loss, performing some tasks for her, entertaining her children and making them laugh, etc. For example, if she is walking to the Bazaar, make it obvious she is trying to shop for food, but the children are being demanding of her attention, and she is scraping together some silver to afford a decent meal. If at the home, show her trying to perform chores while the children need to be fed, clothes cleaned, floor swept, and so on.

If the PCs perform at least two acts of kindness for the widow, read the following:

The widow's eyes seem to come into focus momentarily, and she speaks clearly for the first time. "I fear something was wrong with Trumbull's work. He never raised his voice with me or the children, but one day he was in his workroom and forgot to lock the door. Cevan heard him and pushed the door open. My husband forbade us to enter that room, but Cevan was too young to understand. My husband grew very angry and seemed flustered. He yelled at us and used very harsh language. I don't know what upset him so much."

If the PCs ask permission to see the workroom or search the house, Anili grants them entrance only if they have performed these kindnesses. She tells them that she has not been into the workroom. The door is not locked. The home is a modest one-story building with only four rooms: a common room, a bedroom, a washroom, and the workroom. The workroom contains mostly quills, ink, and ledgers detailing trips Trumbull and Kroyen have made. A DC 10 Search check of the workroom reveals a loose floorboard, in which rests a steel holy symbol of Vecna, some robes, and a scroll of *protection from good*.

Most importantly there is a loose piece of parchment with the other items, with a single line of Baklunish written in a hand not Trumbull's. The paper says, "To enter, name greatest fear, place of birth, and mother's name." If the PCs can find some of Kroyen's writing, a DC 20 Spot check or DC 10 Forgery check can match his handwriting. Such writing can only be found at Kroyen's residence or in the cliff-side hideout.

If the PCs find this information and present it to Anili, she tells them she has no idea what they are, what they mean, or who Vecna is. Nothing the PCs say or tell her means anything to her. As far as she knows and cares to believe, her husband was a good man killed by an insane kobold.

If this encounter takes place in public, Zephyr simply mingles with the crowd and keeps an eye on the PCs and Trumbull's family. If the encounter takes place in Anili's home, Zephyr listens to the proceedings through an open window. He is very aware that this is the family of Trumbull, and he reacts immediately if the PCs mistreat the widow or the children in any way, including threats (PCs using the Intimidation skill). The PCs must tread very carefully here or risk Tajlo's life.

If the PCs present the holy symbol of Vecna and scroll as evidence of Trumbull's connection to Vecna and the forces of evil, Dahim claims that he needs more evidence of Trumbull's and Kroyen's connections to evil plots, but he does extend Tajlo's stay of execution by another 12 hours.

Treasure: The PCs can take the gold found beneath the floorboard in Trumbull's workroom

All APLs: Loot – 10 gp each; Magic – *scroll of protection from good* (CL3) (6 gp each).

ENCOUNTER 9: THE DEAF GRANDMASTER

At the Nafiq Bazaar, among the other myriad activities, a deaf and mute Baklunish man of many years named Ymil makes a few coins each day by playing a chess-like game called jir-tah against anyone willing to sit down with him. Ymil arrives early in the morning, sets up his board, plays the game until the Bazaar closes at sundown, goes to his room in a boarding house at the edge of town, eats his dinner, reads, and goes to sleep.

What makes Ymil notable for the PCs is that Kroyen has made of habit of engaging the old Bakluni in a monthly game for a few gold pieces. Ironically, Kroyen

has a compulsive need to speak of his secrets to someone, and he imagines that since the man is deaf and mute, no harm can come of it. What Kroyen does not know is that Ymil can read lips, and the deaf man has picked up on some of Kroyen's secrets, although the cryptic musings mean nothing to Ymil. However, to the PCs they may mean something.

The PCs can easily find Ymil sitting in the Bazaar, engaged in a game. Read or paraphrase the following:

In front of you, two Baklunish men sit on stools, a table and a carved ivory board between them. The older man stares at the board in concentration, his dark and weathered skin wrinkled with age and exposure. Nothing seems to break his concentration. The younger man is obviously not as skilled at the game as older, for within seconds the older man makes a move on the board, nods without looking up, and reaches over to remove three silver coins from a small bowl in front of the younger. The younger man gets up and leaves without saying a word.

If the PCs approach Ymil, he simply points to the bowl across the board from him. He cannot hear the PCs, and he cannot speak. Only if a PC actually beats him at the game or loses a great deal of coin does he look up. He keeps a piece of slate and some chalk for writing messages if he needs to communicate.

A PC who watches a game of jir-tah being played can make a DC 10 Intelligence check to learn the rules. With each game watched the DC lowered by 1, to a minimum of DC 5. Someone understanding the rules can then play. To win, the PC must beat Ymil at an opposed check. The PC can make an Intelligence check, or use the Profession (gambler) skill. Anyone with at least 5 ranks in Knowledge (engineering), Profession (astronomer), or other skill that relies heavily on mathematics can gain a +2 synergy bonus to the check for each relevant skill. Ymil's total bonus to the roll is +15.

The player must place a wager in the bowl before the game starts. Ymil then matches that amount in his bowl. He does not put up more than five gold pieces (he removes any excess coin over five gold pieces), nor does he play for less than a silver piece. The winner gets to take the other person's wager. If a person sits down but does not place a wager, Ymil points to the bowl without looking up. If a person obviously does not know the rules, Ymil waves them away angrily without looking up.

When Ymil is defeated, or when he makes 20 gold pieces from a single PC, or 30 gold pieces from the entire PC party, then he looks up. At this point he can read the PC's lips, and he may be willing to communicate with them. If you have the time, roleplay the questioning of Ymil, his reading of their lips (he can't understand a PC unless he is looking at them and occasionally gets a word or phrase wrong), and his writing answers on a slate.

If the PCs have his attention and ask Ymil about Kroyen in Common or Baklunish, he relates to them the

following information, which is really all he knows about Kroyen:

- Kroyen comes to play jir-tah anywhere from once a week to once a month.
- Ymil gets uneasy whenever Kroyen is around, but he doesn't know why. Kroyen is not particularly good at the game, and Ymil wins every game they play, at 5 gold pieces per game.
- Kroyen talks a great deal when they play, but Ymil generally concentrates on the game. He once did see Kroyen talking, as if he was silently mouthing instructions to someone in an exasperated or frustrated manner. The phrase he mouthed didn't make much sense: "I told you already! Greatest fear, place of birth, mother's name."

Zephyr can easily blend in with the crowd in disguise and keep an eye on what the PCs do. In fact, a crowd often gathers to watch the games, so it would be virtually impossible for the PCs to pick him out from anyone else in the crowd. If the PCs get violent with Ymil, Zephyr interferes and then reports to Dahim.

ENCOUNTER 10: A CHANCE OBSERVATION

If the PCs are having trouble in their investigations, either because they have failed to gather information or because they have mishandled any of the other encounters, you can use this encounter to get them on track.

As the PCs are moving through the city, allow them a DC 5 Spot check. Success indicates that the PCs has noticed a Baklunish man walking ahead of them who is carrying a dagger identical to the one that Tajlo described as belonging to the followers of Vecna who attacked the kobold villages. Of course, this only means anything to the PCs who have spoken to Tajlo and paid attention.

A young Baklunish man weaves through the crowded streets ahead of you. He catches your eye because of the dagger he wears at his hip: its pommel is decorated with a gem that looks like an eye. This reminds you of the dagger that Tajlo mentioned as belonging to those who attacked the kobold villages with the Vecna priests.

The young man is Oliban, a pickpocket who earns his coin by stealing from tourists and unwary citizens at the Bazaar. A month ago he stole the dagger from Trumbull, and he hasn't had the chance to pawn it yet.

If approached by the PCs, Oliban pretends to be a messenger for a fishmonger at the Bazaar. If asked about the dagger, he claims that it was a gift from his dead father, who received it from his father, who received it from his father before him. Anyone making a DC 10 Craft (weaponsmith) or Profession (weaponsmith) or a DC 20

Appraise check realizes the dagger was forged no more than 10 years ago.

If the PCs press him on the issue, catching him in a lie or telling him that the dagger is associated with an evil cult, Oliban relents and admits that the dagger was gained through theft from a non-Baklunish man a month or so ago as he was leaving an alchemist's shop. If asked for a description, Oliban relays a description that fits Trumbull. Oliban happily gives the PCs the information and the dagger if they let him go. (He would be sent to the mines if turned in to the authorities and found guilty.)

All APLs (EL 2)

☞ **Oliban:** male human rogue 2; hp 10, Appendix 1.

If the PCs wish to talk to the alchemist where the pickpocket saw Trumbull, Oliban gives them directions. Proceed to Encounter 11: The Alchemist.

Dahim does not consider Trumbull's possession of the dagger exonerating evidence, as it is only Tajlo's word that the dagger has any connection to evil forces in the first place.

Zephyr watches the PCs interaction with Oliban from a distance. If the PCs rough up the rogue (using intimidation or inflicting nonlethal damage), Zephyr does not interfere, as he knows Oliban's occupation. If the PCs do lethal damage, however, Zephyr interferes and then reports the actions of the PCs to Dahim, who orders Tajlo's immediate execution.

Treasure: Oliban readily parts with the dagger as long as the PCs promise not to turn him in for its theft. The dagger is masterwork quality and is jeweled, fetching a fairly good price if sold.

All APLs: Loot – 50 gp.

ENCOUNTER 11: THE ALCHEMIST

PCs may learn about Kroyen's frequent transactions with a gnomish alchemist by talking to Ramilan (or his assistant) in Encounter 12: The Barge or by talking with the pickpocket in Encounter 10: A Chance Observation.

Stiggo Saltroot is a gnome born and raised in the Good Hills of Keoland, but his much-deserved reputation for doing business with the wrong kind of people forced him to relocate his thriving alchemical trade to Nafiq eight years ago. During that time, Stiggo has been able to keep his reputation relatively clean. He provides services to anyone with coin, but he doesn't go out of his way looking for trouble.

Kroyen began asking Stiggo for some strange alchemical materials starting about five years ago, and although the gnome suspected that these substances were being used for less-than-innocent purposes, the money was good enough for the gnome to ask no questions.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter Stiggo's shop:

The shop you enter is clean but reeks of acrid substances. On one side of a low counter stands a gnome of middle age. He holds a small, uncut gem in his hand and examines it carefully. Across from him a human of mixed heritage stands with his arms crossed.

When you enter the gnome smiles at you and says: "Welcome to my shop. I am almost finished with my business here, and I will be with you momentarily."

The Baklunish man is a gem dealer named Guhl, who is trying to foist some cheap diamonds on Stiggo as components for spells and alchemical mixtures. PCs who say they want to listen to the conversation can make a DC 2 Listen check to hear Stiggo mention to Guhl that only the best diamonds can be used in his work. Guhl replies that these diamonds are as fine as Stiggo will ever see.

If the PCs intervene, they can make a DC 15 Appraise check, Profession (merchant), Craft (gemcutting) or any other check that deals with an in-depth knowledge of gems. A successful check reveals that these diamonds are far from the highest quality, and the price Guhl is asking is outrageous.

If the PCs do not have any of the above skills, or if they fail the checks, a DC 25 Sense Motive check reveals that something is shady about the deal Guhl is offering, but they can't put their finger on exactly what. He is very nervous.

If the PCs step in and save Stiggo from getting swindled, the gnome is very cooperative with the PCs from this point forward.

If the PCs do not intervene, Stiggo pays too much for sub-par diamonds, Guhl leaves, and the gnome asks the PCs what he can do for them. Stiggo keeps on hand normal alchemical gear from the *Player's Handbook*, as well as any potions of 1st-level that can be purchased normally without special access (see the current *Living Greyhawk Campaign Sourcebook*).

If the PCs ask about Kroyen or Trumbull, Stiggo turns noticeably less jovial. He asks what the PCs want, why they want to know about the two, if they plan on buying anything, and what their business is. Stiggo is extremely hesitant to talk about the pair, as he is suspicious they might be dangerous and not appreciative of people gossiping about their business. However, those who save Stiggo from getting fleeced by the gem dealer can count on the gnome's cooperation.

Also, the PCs can make DC 25 Diplomacy or Bluff checks to get the gnome to cooperate if they did not intervene on his behalf in the gem deal. If the PCs make any threats or try intimidation, Stiggo pretends to get scared (+15 Bluff check) and tells the PCs that he has something in the back of his shop he needs to show them that can tell them everything they need to know about Kroyen. He then walks to the back room of his shop, leaves by the back door, and fetches a city guard.

The guard politely asks the PCs to leave the shop, and if they refuse the guard places them under arrest and attempts to drag them in front of Dahim. See Appendix 2

for the list of crimes and punishments in Zeif. He also orders Tajlo's immediate execution.

If the PCs gain the gnome's trust, Stiggo tells the PCs that Kroyen purchases large quantities of hemlock and belladonna, in addition to a rare substance known as darksap—and these purchases have been regular for the last few years. Each of these substances considered individually doesn't mean much, but together they are something that Stiggo knows a necromancer might use to experiment with living tissue.

Stiggo also reveals a teamster named Ramilan picks up these strange materials, as well as other more mundane supplies, for Kroyen and Trumbull. Stiggo knows that Ramilan owns small vessels on the docks that he uses to help merchants transport goods to and from ships in the bay of Nafiq.

Stiggo also can be encouraged to reveal that he once heard Kroyen talking to his assistant about eyes. He has no idea what they meant, but he got an uneasy feeling when he overheard that. (Dahim does not count any of this as exonerating evidence for Tajlo.)

Finally, if the PCs have earned Stiggo's trust, the gnome reveals that Kroyen, after his last visit, left a chest in his basement as payment. Kroyen told the gnome it contained large amounts of gold and uncut gems. Stiggo feels a bit uneasy about Kroyen, so he stays far away from the chest. If the PCs want to open it, he allows them, although he stays far away. He also gives them the contents if they want it. The oak chest is lined with lead and therefore the contents cannot be detected with *detect magic* or similar spells. It is locked with a good lock and is fairly sturdy (DC 30 Open Lock, Break DC 30, hardness 7, hp 40).

Trap: Although the chest itself is not trapped, the contents of the chest are covered with a black cloth. The trap is triggered if someone touches the cloth.

APL 2 (EL 2)

↗ **Burning Hands Trap:** CR 2; magic device; proximity trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*burning hands*, 1st-level wizard, 1d4 fire, DC 11 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

APL 4 (EL 3)

↗ **Burning Hands Trap:** CR 3; magic device; proximity trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*burning hands*, 5th-level wizard, 5d4 fire, DC 11 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

APL 6 and 8 (EL 5)

↗ **Enervation Trap:** CR 5; magical device; proximity trigger (target within 40 ft.); automatic reset; spell effect (*enervation*, 7th-level wizard, Atk +10 ranged touch, 1d4 negative levels); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29.

APL 10 and 12 (EL 9)

↗ **Chained Enervation Trap:** CR 9; magical device; proximity trigger (target within 60 ft.); automatic reset; spell effect (*enervation*, 15th-level wizard, Atk +14 ranged touch, 1d4 negative levels at first target, 1d2

negative levels at every creature within 30 ft. of first target); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29.

APL 14 and 16 (EL 12)

↗ **Energy Drain Trap:** CR 12; magical device; proximity trigger (target within 65 ft.); automatic reset; spell effect (*energy drain*, 17th-level wizard, Atk +15 ranged touch, 2d4 negative levels at two targets); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34.

Treasure: Beneath the trapped cloth are some coin, loot, and a few magic items that Kroyen didn't want or need. This includes some uncut gems, some alchemical equipment, and magic items.

APL 2: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 238 gp—*wand of cure light wounds* (CL1) (63 gp), *pearl of power* (1st) (83 gp), *mithral shirt* (92 gp).

APL 4: Loot – 40 gp each; Coin – 100 gp each; Magic: 426 gp—*wand of cure light wounds* (CL1) (63 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL3) (188 gp), *pearl of power* (1st) (83 gp), *mithral shirt* (92 gp).

APL 6: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 634 gp each—*wand of cure light wounds* (CL1) (63 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (1st) (83 gp), +1 *mithral shirt* (175 gp).

APL 8: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 1199 gp—*wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (2nd) (333 gp), +1 *mithral shirt* (175 gp).

APL 10: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 2074 gp—*wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (2nd) (333 gp), +2 *mithral shirt* (425 gp), *boots of levitation* (625 gp).

APL 12: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 2491 gp—*wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (3rd) (750 gp), +2 *mithral shirt* (425 gp), *boots of levitation* (625 gp), *ring of chameleon power* (106 gp).

APL 14: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 6658 gp—*wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (3rd) (750 gp), +2 *mithral shirt* (425 gp), *boots of levitation* (625 gp), *ring of chameleon power* (106 gp), *rod of flailing* (4167 gp).

APL 16: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 8825 gp—*wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (3rd) (750 gp), +2 *mithral shirt* (425 gp), *boots of levitation* (625 gp), *ring of chameleon power* (106 gp), *rod of flailing* (4167 gp), *wand of restoration* (2167 gp).

If the PCs take the evidence of these particular alchemical ingredients to Dahim, he tells the PCs that he needs more evidence before he can release Tajlo, but that he will extend Tajlo's stay by an additional 12 hours so the PCs may investigate further.

Zephyr only interferes if he witnesses the PCs attack Stiggo or perform some other illegal acts. He does not turn the PCs in if they take the materials from the chest.

ENCOUNTER 12: THE BARGE

PCs who succeed at overhearing the servants at the residence of Kroyen (Encounter 6: Kroyen's House) or who talk to the alchemist (Encounter 11: The Alchemist) can learn about Kroyen's connection to the barge owner named Ramilan.

The PCs have no trouble finding Ramilan by simply asking for him at the docks. When the PCs find him, he is tying his barge to a dock after having transported some goods to a larger vessel moored further out in the bay.

When the PCs get to the dock, read or paraphrase the following:

A person fitting the description of Ramilan stands on a 20-foot-long by 15-foot-wide barge tied off at the end of a 50-foot-long, 10-foot-wide dock that jets out into the calm bay. Beyond him, dozens of watercraft, large and small, carry out the commerce of the sea.

Any PCs making a DC 15 Spot check can see the following and act in the surprise round. Adjust the text based on the time of day:

The sky, which had been only slightly cloudy and very still, suddenly darkens. A strong wind picks up off the shore, and the water that was still moments ago begins to ripple unnaturally. Forms in the air and in the water are moving rapidly toward the dock.

Creatures: Kroyen, using the power of the Serpent, called these creatures to make sure that Ramilan does not reveal his secret to the PCs. Since they are called, they cannot be dismissed.

All APLs

☞ **Ramilan:** male human expert 4: AC12, hp 18.

APL 2 (EL 4)

☞ **Small Air Elemental (2):** hp 9, 9; MM 96.
☞ **Small Water Elemental:** hp 11; MM 100.

APL 4 (EL 6)

☞ **Medium Air Elemental:** hp 26; MM 96.
☞ **Medium Water Elemental:** hp 30; MM 100.

APL 6 (EL 8)

☞ **Large Air Elemental:** hp 60; MM 96.
☞ **Large Water Elemental:** hp 68; MM 100.

APL 8 (EL 10)

☞ **Huge Air Elemental:** hp 136; MM 96.
☞ **Huge Water Elemental:** hp 152; MM 100.

APL 10 (EL 12)

☞ **Greater Air Elemental:** hp 178; MM 96.
☞ **Greater Water Elemental:** hp 199; MM 100.

APL 12 (EL 14)

☞ **Elder Air Elemental:** hp 204; MM 96.
☞ **Elder Water Elemental:** hp 228; MM 100.

APL 14 (EL 16)

☞ **Elder Air Elemental (2):** hp 204; MM 96.
☞ **Elder Water Elemental (2):** hp 228; MM 100.

APL 16 (EL 19)

☞ **Advanced Omnimental:** hp 600; Appendix 1.

One has been added to the EL of this encounter due to the precarious nature of the combat (on a narrow dock over 10-foot-deep water) and because the PCs must protect a civilian during the combat. The water near the dock is calm, so standard Swim checks apply. It requires a DC 10 Climb check to pull oneself from the water into the skiff, and a DC 20 Climb check to pull oneself from the water onto the dock.

Tactics: The creatures begin the encounter 100 feet away from Ramilan out in the bay, and the PCs begin 50 feet away from him at the end of the dock. PCs making the Spot check can act in the surprise round. The elementals attack Ramilan until they are engaged by the PCs, after which they switch their attacks to the PCs. If applicable the air elementals deal with anyone flying or on the dock, and the water elementals deal with anyone in the water or on the boat.

The barge rests 4 feet below the dock, and 1 foot above the water. While onlookers do not interfere in the battle, they jump in to rescue anyone drowning as long as the elementals pose no threat. Zephyr does not assist the PCs against the elementals, but he moves to rescue Ramilan if necessary.

The elementals are tasked to silence Ramilan, but if the PCs are interfering, they are wise enough to divide their attacks. The air elementals can attempt to bull rush PCs into the water, where they are better prey for the water elementals.

At APL 16, the omnimental can use any of its attack feats (Area Attack, Power Dive, Crush) in conjunction with a Flyby Attack. This it can use to hurt both PCs and innocents at the same time, pushing the PCs to both attack and defend simultaneously.

Developments: Assuming the PCs rescue Ramilan, he thanks them for saving him. If the PCs are unable to save Ramilan from the elementals, Ramilan's young assistant Estov approaches the PCs at the end of the battle to offer his assistance in the stead of his now-deceased employer. Either Ramilan or Estov can provide the PCs with the following information:

- The ambassador Kroyen and his assistant Trumbull have indeed used the services of Ramilan to transport all manner of goods and equipment out of the bay to a beach about 2 miles west of the docks.
- The pair told Ramilan that they were carrying out secret meetings and experiments vital to the security of Zeif, and that he must never tell anyone of this, and they paid him well for his

services and silence. The PCs' rescue means that Ramilan (or Estov) now trust them enough to reveal this.

- Ramilan would pick up ordinary goods from certain shops in the city, bring them to his boats, and then take them to this beach. On a couple of occasions, he transported Kroyen or Trumbull as well. Other times he would transport chests and crates that he was instructed not to open.
- Once he took Trumbull alone, but as he was rowing away after dropping off the man and the goods, Trumbull summoned him back and asked for a ride back, mentioning that he forgot the way in.
- Ramilan never saw where the two went. The beach where he dropped off the goods was an isolated beach blocked off by cliffs. There was no visible way off the beach except to scale the sheer cliffs, aside from ocean travel. He believes there might have been secret caves somewhere in the cliffs.
- Most of the equipment was normal furniture, alchemical equipment, and very heavy chests. He accidentally opened a chest once, and it was filled with chunks of blue-black stone.
- Recently Kroyen has been threatening toward Ramilan, and Ramilan began to fear for his life. This elemental attack has persuaded him that he now has nothing to lose by revealing Kroyen's secret.
- Ramilan offers to take the PCs to the beach.

Ramilan is willing to testify to all of this in front of Dahim. While this does not exonerate Tajlo, Dahim extends the stay of execution for 8 hours if Ramilan testifies to the strange behavior on the part of Kroyen. Testimony from Estov does not sway Dahim, however.

Treasure: Ramilan offers the PCs a reward if they save his life.

ALL APLs: Coin: 50 gp.

Zephyr notes if the PCs are heroic in their actions here, and seeing brave or valorous acts sways him to forgive later transgressions. This does not mean he forgives obvious illegal or evil acts, but later acts that may be questionable can be forgiven if he learns of their good intentions here. However, a crime is a crime; while the punishment may be lessened and Tajlo's life spared, the PCs must still pay for their crimes.

ENCOUNTER 13: THE AUTHORITIES

The PCs may decide to go to the authorities directly to see what they can learn about the situation.

If the PCs go to the Nafiq guardhouse, they first encounter a Baklunish male human zabita (town guard) named Sharim (warrior 1). He asks them their business, and when he hears they want information about Tajlo's

case, he tries to send them away. He is not hiding anything—but to him the case is open and shut and he doesn't want it made any more complicated. If the PCs make a successful DC 15 Bluff or Diplomacy check (or use some other persuasive method that does not involve threats or uses of force), he allows them to speak to the investigator in charge of the case.

Assuming the PCs get past Sharim, he escorts them into the office of an investigator. This investigator is a female Baklunish half-orc named Othis (rogue 4). Othis is in a strange position as the daughter of a respected orc in the Sultan's personal guard (Uruzary) and a human woman. She is respected for her abilities, but still treated as somewhat of a pariah for her mixed lineage and because she is a woman.

She is more forthcoming with the PCs, as to her the circumstances of the crime just did not add up. She can supply the PCs with the following information, which should be revealed through roleplaying:

- She was called to investigate the death of Ambassador Kroyen's assistant Trumbull.
- She was able to establish this timeline that she feels is accurate: the kobold followed a household servant of Kroyen back to his residence, sneaking past the palace gate guards by creating a diversion. At the residence, he entered via the front door and was confronted by Trumbull. The kobold attacked Trumbull and killed him with a longsword, and then moved further into the residence in search of Kroyen. During that time, other servants ran and fetched some guards, who came back and took the kobold into custody without a fight. The kobold attacked no one else at the residence. Then Othis was summoned to investigate.
- The only contradiction to the timeline that the kobold insisted upon was that Trumbull was the worshipper of some evil force, and that Trumbull attacked the kobold first with a dagger and magical spells. The kobold claimed self-defense. There were no signs of weapons on Trumbull's body and no evidence in the residence of any evil or magical forces.
- Kroyen was at the residence at the time, and he claimed he knew nothing about the kobold's charges. The kobold claimed that Kroyen followed the same evil path that Trumbull did. Again, no evidence of this was found.
- Othis could not do anything except assume that the kobold was lying, considering Kroyen's position and the words of the servants.

This is the information that Othis parts with freely. She can tell the PCs which guards took Tajlo into custody, and if questioned they can only confirm that when they arrived Trumbull was dead from sword wounds and that the kobold gave them no trouble. They found no weapons on Trumbull, and Kroyen was in another part of the residence when they arrived.

Othis can also tell the PCs, but only if they ask, where Kroyen's house is (Encounter 6: Kroyen's House), where Trumbull's body is currently being kept (Encounter 7: The Dead Servant), where Trumbull's family lives (Encounter 8: The Family and Home of the Dead Servant), and that she occasionally saw Kroyen playing a game at the bazaar with an old human (Encounter 9: The Deaf Grandmaster).

As with other encounters, the DM should feel free to improvise as needed based on the actions and attitudes of the PCs.

Zephyr does not try to get into the guardhouse to keep an eye on the PCs, assuming the guards can take care of themselves. He does, however, wait outside the guardhouse in case any loud disturbances occur, and he continues to follow the PCs when they exit.

ENCOUNTER 14: THE CAVE ENTRANCE

As the PCs pass through the magical portal into encounter 15, they can only go one at a time. This means that some PCs may have to face encounter 15 with reduced numbers. See encounter 15 for more details.

The trip from the docks to the beach takes 50 minutes. When the PCs arrive on the beach where the secret entrance to Kroyen's lair is located, read or paraphrase the following:

You arrive on a sandy and rocky beach that fronts a 250-foot-tall and 400-foot-long cliff. High tide crashes water over rocks resting 60 feet from the cliff's base. Despite the fierce crashing that forces you to yell to make yourself heard, there is no apparent movement or signs of life.

If you have the time and feel like preventing metagaming, draw out this scene on a battle grid and call for Spot and Listen checks. This may cause the players to assume a battle is forthcoming and waste resources.

Ramilan (or his assistant) guides the boat ashore at the place where Kroyen and Trumbull offloaded the alchemical materials. Although tracks are almost impossible to find, Ramilan or his assistant can point to the cliff face where they believe Kroyen and Trumbull headed when left here. PCs have a few options here to locate the exact location of the secret entrance:

- A DC 35 Survival check by someone with the Track feat reveals that extensive care has been taken to cover tracks in the sand that lead up to the exact spot where the secret entrance is located. A successful check finds the trail leading right into the cliff face.
- A *detect magic* spell reveals strong magic of every school in the area of the secret entrance. Since the magic that conceals and protects the entrance is not specific spells but powerful

manipulations of the magic of the Serpent, Spellcraft checks reveal nothing specific. However, a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals that this entrance can only be passed by someone speaking a trigger phrase, and that the magic of the entrance actually reads the mind of the speaker.

- Any PCs with either the "Thrall of the Serpent" or "Stigma of the Serpent" condition from *COR4-01 Shedding Scales* and/or *COR5-08 Clipping Wings* know the location automatically when they are within 10 feet of the secret entrance.
- A DC 22 Search check (or Stonecunning check) reveals that the stone of the cliff face at the secret entrance is slightly different than the rest of the cliff. Indeed, the stone in a six-foot area is comprised of darker, smoother stone than the rest of the cliff. This stone resembles the blue-black stone that plays a key role in this series of adventures.

Once the area is located, the PCs can enter the secret lair by standing in front of the entrance and speaking the following in order: their greatest fear, the place of birth, and their mother's name. The wall can sense if these answers are correct by scanning the mind of the speaker. As long as the speaker tells the truth as he or she knows it, and is not under any sort of protection that eliminates mind scanning (such as *mind blank*), then a shimmer of energy washes over them from the wall and they can pass right through it unharmed. Only one PC may pass per round, and every PC must speak to the wall in order to pass unharmed. If a PC doesn't know their mother's name or place of birth for some reason, the answer "I don't know" suffices. Note that a PC may still pass through the wall without speaking the correct passwords, but doing so triggers the trap as they pass.

Trap: When the PC makes contact with that section of the wall without first speaking the correct phrase, they get the feeling they are supposed to speak something aloud. If they fail to do that, they trigger magical retribution at their trespass. Note that the trap can be detected and disabled. The method of disabling the trap is to attempt a Bluff against the Sense Motive check of the magic of the portal (Sense Motive +20). The PC who makes the Disable Device check can bypass the trap without making the Bluff check, and that PC can tell the other PCs how to bypass the trap, and the PC can also make the Bluff check for the other PC.

The effects of the trap occur after the PC is shunted through the entrance, so none of the other PCs should know what happened. Make every attempt to hide the effects so that the PCs still waiting on the beach cannot metagame. Even if the PC doesn't speak the correct password, he or she can still pass. They simply trigger the trap as they pass.

APL 2 (EL 2)

➤ **Extended Ray of Enfeeblement Trap:** CR 2; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect

(*ray of enfeeblement*, 8th-level wizard, Atk +6 ranged touch, 1d6+4 strength damage, 16 minutes); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 15.

APL 4 (EL 4)

↗ **Extended Ray of Exhaustion Trap**: CR 4; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*ray of exhaustion*, 12th-level wizard, Atk +8 ranged touch, DC 14 Fort save, 24 minutes); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 18.

APL 6 (EL 6)

↗ **Feeblemind Trap**: CR 6; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*feeblemind*, 14th-level wizard, DC 17 Fort save, 24 minutes); Search DC 26; Disable Device 21.

APL 8 (EL 8)

↗ **Power Word Blind Trap**: CR 8; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*power word blind*, 14th-level wizard, no save; Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 23.

APL 10 and 12 (EL 9)

↗ **Polar Ray Trap**: CR 9; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*polar ray*, 15th-level wizard, Atk +10 ranged touch, 15d6 cold damage); Search DC 26, Disable Device DC 26.

APL 14 and 16 (EL 11)

↗ **Polar Ray Trap**: CR 9; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*polar ray*, 18th-level wizard, Atk +12 ranged touch, 18d6 cold damage); Search DC 26, Disable Device DC 30.

↗ **Heightened Eyebite Trap**: CR 9; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*eyebite*, 18th-level wizard, DC 24 Fort save; Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26

Developments: After a PC touches the wall, whether or not they speak the correct phrase, they are shunted through the wall deep into the cliff side into Area 1, which is described in Encounter 15: The Serpent's Breath.

Only one PC may move through the wall at a time, and the PC may get shunted through still reeling from the effects of the trap.

ENCOUNTER 15: THE SERPENT'S BREATH

After the PCs are shunted through the magical secret entrance, they find themselves at the eastern end of a roughly circular chamber. Keep track of the number of rounds that pass between each PC entering the chamber. After all of the PCs have passed through, or when it is apparent that a PC isn't going to enter the chamber, start the encounter in this chamber, bringing in PCs on the rounds they should appear based on the order and timing of stepping through the entrance. Read or paraphrase the

following when the PCs can see the contents of the pitch-black chamber:

The chamber is hewn roughly from the stone of the cliff. Piles of rocks and rubble litter the edges. Despite the unfinished look of the chamber, several images have been carved into the walls of the chamber. Although each carving is different, each resembles the head of a dragon with mouth open wide.

The first PC has one round to act, and then at the beginning of the second round, a dark vapor pours quickly out of the mouths of the dragons, filling the room completely within 6 seconds. The PCs can see this happening and have one full round to act in the round that the vapor fills the room. At the end of that round, the devils coalesce out of the vapor and appear to the PCs, and initiative should be rolled at that point. Combat would thus begin on round 3 after the first PC enters. Place the enemies wherever you like within the chamber. The vapor lingers in the room, but does not hamper vision.

Creatures: The mist coalesces quickly into the form of devils, called here by the power of the Serpent directed by Kroym. These creatures fight to destroy the PCs and keep them out of the next chamber. The creatures are called and not summoned, but they do not use their ability to summon other devils.

APL 2 (EL 4)

☞ **Lemure (2)**: hp 7; MM 57.

APL 4 (EL 6)

☞ **Lemure (5)**: hp 7; MM 57.

APL 6 (EL 9)

☞ **Bearded Devil (2)**: hp 45; MM 52.

APL 8 (EL 11)

☞ **Chain Devils (3)**: hp 52; MM 53.

APL 10 (EL 13)

☞ **Bone Devils (2)**: hp 76; MM 52.

APL 12 (EL 15)

☞ **Barbed Devils (2)**: hp 126; MM 51.

APL 14 (EL 17)

☞ **Ice Devil (2)**: hp 147; MM 56.

APL 16 (EL 19)

☞ **Horned Devil (1)**: hp 172; MM 55.

☞ **Ice Devil (2)**: hp 147; MM 56.

Developments: Two has been added to the ELs of this encounter since PCs might have to fight the devils at reduced numbers for at least a couple of rounds, and may be suffering from the trap effects in encounter 14.

Unless they have a compelling reason not to, the devils make an incredible ruckus during the battle, which alerts Kroeyn to the presence of the PCs.

The PCs can see a passage leading out of this chamber. This passage leads to Area 2 on the map, and Encounter 16: The Serpent's Voice.

ENCOUNTER 16: THE SERPENT'S VOICE

Once the PCs have dealt with the devils, they are free to move into the final chamber, where Kroeyn, Silent Hreve, and the essence of the Serpent await them. When they enter the room, read or paraphrase the following:

This huge, rough-hewn chamber is very cold. A bizarre assortment of furnishings dominates the outer edges of the chamber: three couches, several stuffed chairs, three beds, tables, desks, bookshelves, laboratory equipment, vats, vials, shelves, and an oven. On the shelves rest circular slabs of blue-black stone, and on those stones rest eyes held within gobs of amber resin. Chunks of blue-black stone of various shapes and sizes litter the corners of the room.

In the center of the room stands a man dressed in dark robes. He glares angrily as you enter. Behind him, sitting in a stuffed chair is a small figure. The figure is dressed in a hooded cloak, hiding its features from your sight.

"Fools! You and that blasted kobold just couldn't leave me alone, and now you will find out what power I have at my disposal. However, I will give you one chance to leave. Turn around now, leave me to my plans, and your souls may yet be saved."

The man is Kroeyn, the villain behind the theft of the eyes of the children of the Shelspring Barony in Keoland. He is also the one whose forces scoured the land and attacked the kobolds in order to get the blue-black stone, the pieces of the Serpent, to perform rituals to drain life from the children and drive his own power.

Kroeyn thinks he controls the power of the Serpent, which he knows can instantly kill all but immortals instantly. Therefore, if the PCs parlay with Kroeyn, he speaks with them, answering their questions and revealing his plan, expecting to simply slay them by directing the Serpent to do so:

- Kroeyn is not a follower of Vecna. He mocks the fools who follow the Maimed One. He simply pretended to be working toward the same goal as Vecna's followers to use their abilities and resources to his own ends.
- Kroeyn is going to use the power of the Serpent, as Vecna did, to follow Vecna's path to godhood.
- Some children of the Shelspring Barony showed inherent sorcerous power, making them perfect vessels to fuel the Serpent's resurgence, which

Kroeyn then harnessed to increase his own powers.

- The small figure in the chair behind him is a gnome known as Silent Hreve, a being whom the Serpent currently uses as a vessel to carry its essence. The Serpent grows stronger with each passing month as more of its physical form (the blue-black stone) is unearthed from its prison deep below the surface of all of Oerth.
- Ianta stepped into the portal to a demi-plane where Kroeyn himself was planning to go, where he could bask in the full power of the Serpent without interruption. The portal closed when Ianta entered it a few months ago, and now Kroeyn is searching for the proper time and place where the portal will open again. Kroeyn is very angry about this interruption in his plan.

Assuming the PCs do not simply walk away as Kroeyn requests, at some point they are likely to attack Kroeyn, or vice versa. The moment one or the other side takes hostile action against the other, Kroeyn learns that the Serpent has other plans:

As the battle is about to begin, the figure in the chair behind Kroeyn turns and looks in your direction. The face of an elderly gnome, completely blue behind a snow-white beard, seems passive and empty at first, but then twists into a mask of anger. In what seems like a fraction of a second, a writhing black form explodes out of the gnome, whipping a tentacle of force at Kroeyn. The man's head is then resting at your feet, staring up at you in surprise. Even as the body crumples to the ground, the black form snaps back into the gnome. The placid expression returns to the gnome's face, and he stares at you as if waiting for you to say something.

PCs who played *CORS4-01 Here There Be Dragons* recognize the gnome as Silent Hreve, the one who spoke to them of the Dragon-Lore Prophecies as they entered the village of Farthenmoor.

The PCs are now in direct contact with the essence of the Serpent. As mentioned in the Adventure Background, the Serpent was a primordial deity whose power was usurped by the gods. In some aspects, his power is above that even of the gods. In other ways, his power is very limited.

At this point, any PCs who are "Thralls of the Serpent" are immobilized in rapture. They have the power of the Serpent flowing through them, and they have never felt so alive. (They also receive at the end of this adventure the "Stigma of the Serpent" AR entry). Those PCs who have the "Stigma of the Serpent" are nauseated: they benefited from the power of the Serpent without actually giving in to it and now that power is coming back to haunt them. (They also receive at the end

of this adventure the “Thrall of the Serpent” AR entry). PCs who have neither condition simply feel themselves in the presence of incredible power.

The essence of the Serpent, through its vessel Silent Hreve, hesitates for an uncomfortable moment, and then the Serpent speaks.

The gnome opens his mouth to speak, but the voice is loud, hissing, and definitely unnatural. “I give him access to my power, and all he thinks about is his own godhood—not about the task I had set before him. Just like that whelp Vecna.

It spends a few moments conversing with the PCs before leaving his vessel and traveling to spend time with his new vessel, the girl Ianta.

The Serpent speaks through the gnome. Although the gnome’s lips move, the voice that comes from him is a deep, harsh whisper. (PCs who played *COR5-08 Clipping Wings* recognize the voice as the same one that welcomed Ianta as she stepped into the column of negative energy.) The essence of the Serpent is willing to part with the following information:

- The Serpent has been around since the beginning of time. It is what mortals and gods call magic. The gods teamed up and stole its power, dividing its physical form into countless pieces and imprisoning those pieces within globes of land through time and space.
- Many individuals learned to make use of the residual magic contained in the remains of the Serpent: wizards, sorcerers, bards, hexblades, warlocks, etc. However, some individuals, like Vecna, were able to establish a special connection with the essence of the Serpent and gain unimaginable power in the process.
- The Serpent planned to use these individuals to regain enough power to punish the gods who stole its magic for their own use. However, each of them, like “that whelp Vecna and the idiot Kroyen” ended up trying to use the power of the Serpent to become gods rather than destroy the gods.
- Kroyen was no longer necessary, as the young human Flan girl called Ianta promises to be the one who will assist the Serpent in reclaiming its place in the universe and destroying forever the pesky gods. This wouldn’t necessarily destroy Oerth, but the Serpent doesn’t really care either way.
- The Serpent has used many vessels to carry his essence over the millennia, but Silent Hreve is the current one. He is just a simple gnome with no grand plans for world domination, so others left him alone. Whenever the Serpent has used more powerful creatures as vessels in the past, they have always tried to aspire to great heights, always drawing unwanted attention and getting

killed before the Serpent could use them for its wishes.

The PCs may try to destroy the Serpent by attacking Silent Hreve. However, the Serpent cannot be destroyed and cares little what happens to the old gnome. Silent Hreve is completely immune to magic thanks to the presence of the Serpent, but PCs can still attack him physically. Silent Hreve does not defend himself, and the old gnome has 50 hit points. While the Serpent is in possession, Silent Hreve continues talking no matter how much damage he takes. However, if the PCs do more than 60 points of damage to the gnome, he dies as soon as the Serpent leaves him. The essence of the Serpent is immaterial and immune to attacks of any kind. Read or paraphrase the following when the Serpent leaves Silent Hreve:

The old gnome shudders a bit, and a wavering energy, like an intense desert heat, pours forth from him. The energy is neither light nor dark, hot nor cold. Your magical possessions glow brightly enough to hurt your eyes, and the spellcasters among you begin to perspire uncontrollably. Then the force is gone, and you are cold.

Once the Serpent has left him, Silent Hreve can remember everything that has happened to him in life since the Serpent took control of him as a young lad. Hreve can tell the PCs everything that the Serpent would tell them.

The PCs may try to detect evil or detect magic on Silent Hreve while he is possessed by the essence of the Serpent. The Serpent is not evil, nor is it good. It is a force above all concept of alignment. It is pure magic, and its embodiment wants to reclaim the power that the gods stole from it. It radiates an overwhelming aura of magic of every variety.

Treasure: This room contains a few magical items and alchemical equipment lying around, plus notes and diagrams that detail the vile experiments that Kroyen and Trumbull performed. They used the eyes of living children with untapped sorcerous powers to siphon their life force through the focus of the Serpent’s physical form (blue-black stone). The energy was then harnessed to power Kroyen’s magical abilities. These documents contain more than sufficient evidence to clear Tajlo’s name and ensure all charges against him are dropped.

Developments: The PCs may try to find a way out of these two rooms, but there is not one apparent. However, a DC 5 Search check of this room finds a five-foot-diameter circle carved into the floor in the northeast corner of the room. It radiates strong conjuration magic, and is recognizable with a DC 24 Spellcraft check as a functioning and permanent *teleportation circle* spell. It is only way out of the place, and using the circle transports the PCs to a grassy area about a mile south of Nafiq.

APL 2: Coin – 63 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 74 gp–sleep arrow (11 gp).

APL 4: Coin – 63 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 421 gp–sleep arrow (11 gp), +1 arrow catching buckler (347 gp).

APL 6: Coin – 750 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 671 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp each).

APL 8: Coin – 63 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 1136 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp).

APL 10: Coin – 63 gp; Loot – 2500 gp; Magic: 2861 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp), *+1 seeking shocking dagger* (1525 gp).

APL 12: Coin – 1,638 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 4265 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp), *potion of greater magic fang +4* (200 gp), *+1 seeking shocking dagger* (1525 gp).

APL 14: Coin – 1,638 gp; Loot – 2500 gp; Magic: 8054 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp), *+1 seeking shocking dagger* (1525 gp), *+1 heavy wooden wild shield* (1346 gp).

APL 16: Coin – 5,805 gp; Loot – 2500 gp; Magic: 12221 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp), *+1 seeking shocking dagger* (1525 gp), *+1 heavy wooden wild shield* (1346 gp).

One of the tomes found here discusses Kroyen's plans to create a demi-plane where the energy of the Serpent, enhanced by the ritual of the eyes and the black stone, would allow him to bask in enough energy to give him unimaginable power. Later pages of the tome are written in hasty script, complaining that the portal was used and closed by a young Flan sorceress before he could use it. Calculations in the book attempted to figure out other ways into the demi-plane, and when the demi-plane would open again to let inhabitants out. While none of his calculations could come to an exact conclusion, his best estimate for the next opening of the demi-plane was sometime in CY597. No location was noted.

CONCLUSION

The PCs can take the notes and the eyes back to Nafiq by using the teleportation circle. Seeing this new evidence of Kroyen's and Trumbull's evil experiments, Dahim drops the murder charge. Since Tajlo is still guilty of other crimes, he is fined 100 gp (which he pays) and is released since he has served the time that punishment requires.

If the kobold has already been executed because of the PCs' actions or because the time limit has expired, Dahim offers to cast *raise dead* on the kobold at his own expense.

If the PCs have other means to revive the kobold, Dahim orders the body to be turned over to the PCs. Even if the PCs do not find the exonerating evidence in the cliff-side cave, Dahim still agrees to turn over the kobold's body to them.

At this point the PCs also must face any charges levied against them due to their actions. If they successful

proved Kroyen's guilt, Dahim halves the penalties. See Appendix 2 for details.

The eyes the PCs found in Kroyen's lair belong to the children of Keoland's Shelspring Barony. If the PCs do not remember this, Tajlo reminds them—if the kobold is still alive.

Stoakdor Redlee Neheli, the Chancellor of the Shelspring, thanks the PCs if they contact him about the eyes. He tells them that troubles in Keoland and in his own family prevent him from offering the PCs a reward at this time, but if he can help them in the future, he pledges his help. PCs who return the eyes to Stoakdor receive the Gratitude of Stoakdor on the AR.

EXPERIENCE POINT SUMMARY

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter 1: As Istus Would Have It

Uncover Ghesij's ruse

APL 2	30 XP
APL 4	30 XP
APL 6	30 XP
APL 8	30 XP
APL 10	30 XP
APL 12	30 XP
APL 14	30 XP
APL 16	30 XP

Encounter 11: The Alchemist

Encounter trapped chest

APL 2	60 XP
APL 4	90 XP
APL 6	150 XP
APL 8	150 XP
APL 10	270 XP
APL 12	270 XP
APL 14	360 XP
APL 16	360 XP

Encounter 12: The Barge

Defeat the elementals

APL 2	120 XP
APL 4	180 XP
APL 6	240 XP
APL 8	300 XP
APL 10	360 XP
APL 12	420 XP
APL 14	480 XP
APL 16	570 XP

Encounter 14: The Cave Entrance

Encounter or bypass the entrance trap

APL 2	60 XP
APL 4	120 XP
APL 6	180 XP
APL 8	240 XP
APL 10	270 XP
APL 12	270 XP
APL 14	330 XP
APL 16	330 XP

Encounter 15: The Serpent's Breath

Defeat the devils

APL 2	120 XP
APL 4	180 XP
APL 6	270 XP
APL 8	330 XP
APL 10	390 XP

APL 12	450 XP
APL 14	510 XP
APL 16	570 XP

Story Award

Prevent Tajlo's execution

APL 2	60 XP
APL 4	75 XP
APL 6	30 XP
APL 8	75 XP
APL 10	30 XP
APL 12	135 XP
APL 14	90 XP
APL 16	165 XP

Total possible experience:

APL 2	450 XP
APL 4	675 XP
APL 6	900 XP
APL 8	1125 XP
APL 10	1350 XP
APL 12	1575 XP
APL 14	1800 XP
APL 16	2025 XP

TREASURE SUMMARY

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a "treasure" section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter's treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer* or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the

item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate.

Loot = Looted gear from enemy; Coin = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; Magic = Magic Items.

Encounter 5: The Investigation Begin

All APLs: Coin: 100 gp

Encounter 8: The Family and Home of the Dead Servant

All APLs: Loot – 10 gp each; Magic – *scroll of protection from good* (CL 3) (6 gp).

Encounter 10: A Chance Observation

All APLs: Loot – 50 gp

Encounter 11: The Alchemist

APL 2: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 238 gp– *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1) (63 gp), *pearl of power* (1st) (83 gp), *mithral shirt* (92 gp).

APL 4: Loot – 40 gp each; Coin – 100 gp each; Magic: 426 gp– *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1) (63 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL 3) (188 gp), *pearl of power* (1st) (83 gp), *mithral shirt* (92 gp).

APL 6: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 634 gp each – *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1) (63 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL 5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (1st) (83 gp), *+1 mithral shirt* (175 gp).

APL 8: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 1199 gp– *wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL 3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL 5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (2nd) (333 gp), *+1 mithral shirt* (175 gp).

APL 10: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 2074 gp– *wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL 3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL 5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (2nd) (333 gp), *+2 mithral shirt* (425 gp), *boots of levitation* (625 gp).

APL 12: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 2491 gp– *wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL 3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL 5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (3rd) (750 gp), *+2 mithral shirt* (425 gp), *boots of levitation* (625 gp), *ring of chameleon power* (106 gp).

APL 14: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 6658 gp– *wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL 3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL 5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (3rd) (750 gp), *+2 mithral shirt* (425 gp), *boots of levitation* (625 gp), *ring of chameleon power* (106 gp), *rod of flailing* (4167 gp).

APL 16: Loot – 40 gp; Coin – 100 gp; Magic: 8825 gp– *wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL 3) (375 gp), *wand of magic missiles* (CL 5) (313 gp), *pearl of power* (3rd) (750 gp), *+2 mithral shirt* (425 gp), *boots of levitation* (625 gp), *ring of chameleon power* (106 gp), *rod of flailing* (4167 gp), *wand of restoration* (2167 gp).

Encounter 16: The Serpent's Voice

APL 2: Coin – 63 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 74 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp).

APL 4: Coin – 63 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 421 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp).

APL 6: Coin – 750 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 671 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp each).

APL 8: Coin – 63 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 1136 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp).

APL 10: Coin – 63 gp; Loot – 2500 gp; Magic: 2861 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp), *+1 seeking shocking dagger* (1525 gp).

APL 12: Coin – 1,638 gp; Loot – 100 gp; Magic: 4265 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp), *potion of greater magic fang* +4 (200 gp), *+1 seeking shocking dagger* (1525 gp).

APL 14: Coin – 1,638 gp; Loot – 2500 gp; Magic: 8054 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp), *+1 seeking shocking dagger* (1525 gp), *+1 heavy wooden wild shield* (1346 gp).

APL 16: Coin – 5,805 gp; Loot – 2500 gp; Magic: 12221 gp– *sleep arrow* (11 gp), *+1 arrow catching buckler* (347 gp), *adamantine kama* (250 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp), *+1 seeking shocking dagger* (1525 gp), *+1 heavy wooden wild shield* (1346 gp).

Total Possible Treasure

APL 2: Loot: 200 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 318 gp; Total: 718 gp

APL 4: Loot: 200 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 665 gp; Total: 1,064 gp

APL 6: Loot: 200 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 915 gp; Total: 1,315 gp

APL 8: Loot: 200 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 1380 gp; Total: 1,780 gp

APL 10: Loot: 200 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 3105 gp; Total: 3,505 gp

APL 12: Loot: 200 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 4680 gp; Total: 5,080 gp

APL 14: Loot: 200 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 8109 gp; Total: 8,509 gp

APL 16: Loot: 200 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 12276 gp; Total: 12,676 gp

Special

† **Stigma of the Serpent:** You may only have this condition if you also have the *Stigma of the Serpent*. You realize that you have soaked up some of the power of the Serpent without actually giving in to it. When you fail a saving throw against a necromancy spell, you suffer the affects of the spell as normal, but the power of the Serpent alters that magically energy somewhat, and you gain 1 temporary hit point per level of the spell. The temporary hit points last one hour. Voluntarily failing the saving throw does not count as a failed save in this case.

‡ **Thrall of the Serpent:** A PC can only have this condition if they also have the *Thrall of the Serpent*. You realize that you have part of the essence of the Serpent flowing through them by touching a highly magical piece of the Serpent back in the kobold cave. This latest encounter with the Serpent has awakened something magical in them. Three times only, you may, as a free action, give yourself SR 30 for 1 round. This does not alter magical effects currently on you. Cross out when used.

‡ **Blessing of Istus:** You have gained Istus' special attention. Before one future skill check or ability check you may choose to use this blessing and add a +5 luck bonus to the roll. Cross out when used.

‡ **Gifts of Kroyen:** You accepted the bribe of the evil Kroyen and left Tajlo to die. You receive full gold piece rewards for your APL. In addition, Kroyen gives you access to an item of their wishes. You gain access to a weapon or armor created from any of the following material: adamantine, mithral, darkwood, cold iron, or silver. You must have access to the item to be made from the special material.

Alternatively, you may change access of one item on an AR you possess to Access: Any. This includes access to an item at a higher APL than they played on that AR. This only counts as access for purchasing, not crafting.

You may not play any more adventures in "Windows to the Serpent's Soul" series.

‡ **Charged with a Crime in the Sultanate of Zeif:** You have committed one or more crimes in the Sultanate of Zeif. You receive a -2 penalty on Charisma-related checks with officials and judges in Zeif. This lasts for one calendar year from the date on the AR.

‡ **Gratitude of Stoakdor Redlee Neheli:** Although Stoakdor claims he cannot offer a reward at this time, he promises you future rewards.

APL 6 (all of APLs 2-4 plus the following):

- *Wand of magic missile* (CL5) (Adventure; DMG; 4,500 gp)
- *+1 mithral shirt* (Adventure; DMG; 2,100 gp)
- *Adamantine kama* (Adventure; DMG; 3002 gp)

APL 8: (all of APLs 2-6 plus the following):

- *Wand of cure moderate wounds* (Adventure; DMG; 4,500 gp)
- *Pearl of power* (2nd) (Adventure; DMG; 4,000 gp)
- *Spined shield* (Adventure; DMG; 5580 gp)

APL 10 (all of APL 2-8 plus the following):

- *Boots of levitation* (Adventure; DMG; 7,500 gp)
- *+2 mithral shirt* (Adventure; DMG; 5,100 gp)
- *+1 seeking shocking dagger* (Adventure; DMG; 18,302 gp)

APL 12 (all of APLs 2-10 plus the following):

- *Pearl of power* (3rd) (Adventure; DMG; 9,000 gp)
- *Ring of chameleon power* (Adventure; DMG; 12,700 gp)
- *Banded mail of luck* (Adventure; DMG; 18,900 gp)

APL 14: (all of APLs 2-12 plus the following):

- *Rod of Flailing* (Adventure; DMG; 50,000 gp)
- *+1 heavy wooden wild shield* (Adventure; DMG; 16,157 gp)

APL 16 (all of APL 2-14 plus the following):

- *Wand of restoration* (Adventure; DMG; 26,000 gp)

ITEMS FOR THE ADVENTURE RECORD

Item Access

APL 2:

- *Wand of cure light wounds* (CL1) (Adventure; DMG; 750 gp)
- *Pearl of power* (1st) (Adventure; DMG; 1,000 gp)
- *Sleep arrow* (Adventure; DMG; 132 gp)

APL 4 (all of APL 2 plus the following):

- *Wand of magic missile* (CL3) (Adventure; DMG; 2,250 gp)
- *Mithral shirt* (Adventure; DMG; 1,100 gp)
- *+1 arrow catching buckler* (Adventure; DMG; 4165 gp)

ENCOUNTER 4: MOUQOL'S LAW

☛ **Dahim:** male human cleric 13; CR 13; Medium humanoid (Baklunish human); HD 13d8+13; hp 81; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +10 melee (1d4+1/19-20, +1 dagger); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d4+1/19-20, +1 dagger); SA spells, spontaneous casting, turn undead; AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +14; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 19, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +23, Diplomacy +17, Knowledge (local) +16, Knowledge (religion) +8, Sense Motive +25, Spellcraft +18; Diligent, Negotiator, Skill Focus (Appraise, Sense Motive), Spell Focus (Divination), Greater Spell Focus (Divination).

Languages: Common, Ancient Baklunish, Orc.

Spells Prepared (6/ 7+1/ 7+1/ 6+1/ 6+1/ 3+1/ 2+1/1+1; base DC = 14 + spell level; divination base DC = 16 + spell level): 0— *detect magic* (2), *light* (2), *purify food and drink*, *resistance*; 1st— *comprehend languages* (3), *detect evil* (2), *endure elements*, *sanctuary*, *command**; 2nd— *augury*, *calm emotions*, *divine insight* (2), *zone of truth* (3), *detect thoughts**; 3rd— *dispel magic* (2), *locate object* (2), *magic circle against evil*, *remove curse*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance**; 4th— *discern lies* (4), *sending*, *tongues*, *divination**; 5th— *break enchantment*, *commune*, *scrying*, *true seeing**; 6th— *geas/quest*, *word of recall*, *find the path**; 7th— *repulsion*, *legend lore**;

*Domain spell. Mouqol; *Domains:* Knowledge (all Knowledge skills are class skills, +1 caster level for divination spells); Pact (Appraise, Intimidate, and Sense Motive are class skills).

Possessions: +3 mithral chainmail, +1 dagger, silver holy symbol of Mouqol (2).

☛ **Elite Guards:** male human (Baklunish) ranger 6; CR 6; Medium Humanoid; HD 6d8+6; hp 39; Init +6; Spd 30; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +6; Grapple +8; Atk +10 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2, +1 short sword); Full Atk +8/+3 Two-Weapon (primary) (1d6+3; 19-20/x2, +1 short sword), +8/+3 Two-Weapon (secondary) (1d6+2; 19-20/x2, +1 short sword), +10/+5 One-handed (1d6+3; 19-20/x2, +1 short sword); SA Favored enemy (monstrous humanoid (+2 bonus), animal (+2 bonus); SQ Animal companion, wild empathy; AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8;

Skills and Feats: Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Profession (Soldier) +2, Ride +11, Search +3, Speak Language 1 rank, Spot +9, Survival +9, Swim +3, Tumble +5; Endurance, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Cleave, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (Sword, Short).

Possessions: short sword +1, short sword +1, masterwork chain shirt.

APPENDIX 1: ALL APLS

ENCOUNTER 5: THE INVESTIGATIONS BEGIN

☛ **Zephyr:** male janni rogue 6/shadowdancer 2; CR 12; Medium Outsider (Native); HD 6d6+10d8+32; hp 109; Init +9; Spd 30 ft, Fly 20 ft. (perfect); AC 20, touch 17, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +13; Grapple +18; Atk +19 melee (1d6+5/18-20, +1 rapier); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d6+5/18-20, +1 rapier); SA Sneak attack (+3d6); SQ Uncanny dodge, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense, evasion, trapfinding, hide in plain sight, darkvision; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +19, Will +11; Str 20, Dex 21, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 14;

Skills and Feats: Balance +12, Bluff +19, Concentration +13, Escape Artist +20, Hide +25, Knowledge (local) +9, Listen +20, Move Silently +22, Perform (Dance) +7, Ride +16, Search +6, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +11, Spot +20, Tumble +22; Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Hide).

Possessions: +1 rapier, bracers of armor +2, ring of protection +2, hat of disguise.

ENCOUNTER 10: A CHANCE OBSERVATION

☛ **Oliban:** male human rogue 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid (Baklunish human); HD 2d6+2; hp 10; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk +2 melee (1d4/19-20, masterwork dagger); Full Atk +2 melee (1d4/19-20, masterwork dagger); SA Sneak attack +1d6; SQ Evasion, trapfinding, AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +6, Diplomacy +9, Escape Artist +9, Gather Information +9, Hide +9, Knowledge (local) +6, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +9, Spot +8; Dodge, Skill Focus (Sleight of Hand).

Languages: Common, Baklunish.

Possessions: Jeweled masterwork dagger.

ENCOUNTER 12: THE BARGE

🔥 **Advanced Omnimental:** gargantuan elemental (air, earth, fire, water, extraplanar); CR 18; HD 44d8+288; hp 600; Init +4; Spd 50 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect), swim 50 ft.; AC 32, touch 6, flat-footed 32; Base Atk +33; Grp +57; Atk slam +42 melee (2d8+13 plus 2d8 fire plus 1d8 electricity) or elemental ball +29 ranged (4d6 +13 plus 1d8 fire); Full Atk 2 slams +41 melee (2d8+13 plus 2d8 fire plus 1d8 electricity) or elemental ball +29 ranged (4d6 +13 plus 1d8 fire); Space/Reach 20'/20'; SA death birth, elemental ball; SQ Blindsight 120', DR 10/-, darkvision 60', elemental traits, immune to electricity and fire, vulnerable to cold; AL N; SV Fort +33, Ref +24, Will +16; Str 36, Dex 10, Con 29, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Listen +50, Spot +50, Swim +20; Alertness, Area Attack, Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Crush, Flyby Attack, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (slam), Iron Will, Power Attack, Power Dive.

Languages: Aquan, Auran, Ignan, Terran.

Omnimentals are the descendants of magically created elemental beings. Though originally intended as liaisons between warring elemental armies in ancient times, omnimentals instead became powerful warriors. Now they roam the Elemental Planes with no regard for their original purpose.

This combination of elements lacks several of the attack forms of the specific elementals, but also does not have many of their limitations. For instance, unlike a fire elemental, an omnimental can enter water and nonflammable liquids; when it does so, the water, air, and earth aspects of the creature form protective layers around its body's fire aspect. An omnimental is 48 feet in height and weighs 10 tons.

Death Birth (Su): When an omnimental reaches 0 hit points, it bursts into its component elemental parts, creating four 16HD Huge elementals, one each of air, earth, fire, and water.

Elemental Ball (Ex): As a standard action, an omnimental can detach part of itself to create a clod of flaming earth that it can fling at an opponent up to 100 feet away. Using this ability reduces the omnimental's current hit points by 10.

Source: *Monster Manual III*

APPENDIX 2: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN ZEIF

After dealing with Tajlo's crimes, the magistrate turns to face the PCs. Read the following:

The Magistrate stands before and says: "We have reviewed the evidence against you, and you have been charged with the following crimes:"

Only read aloud the appropriate crimes.

- Vandalism (if the door to Kroyen's house was broken down, or if other damages were done)
- Gross Vandalism (if Kroyen's house was burned down, or other massive damage was done).
- Breaking and entering (entering Kroyen's or Trumbull's house without permission)
- Theft (taking anything not freely given)
- Assault (dealing lethal damage to any person within the city of Nafiq)
- Manslaughter (killing any person within the city of Nafiq)
- Murder (deliberately killing any person within the city of Nafiq)

If the PCs successfully cleared Tajlo's name, and exposed Kroyen, read the following:

"Because of your valiant actions in exposing the vile Kroyen's activities, the sentence has been reduced."

Tally up the sentence for each applicable crime before giving the final verdict. Divide the sentence, both gold and time units, by two if the PCs were successful in the adventure (round fractions down. If a PC cannot pay the fine, they will be imprisoned instead (and put to work) for 1 TU per 100 gp of debt.

- Vandalism: 10gp fine to replace a broken door. Other fines as appropriate (of similar scale) for other damages. No more than 200 gp all together.
- Gross Vandalism: Sent to the mines (or other appropriate service) for 1 week per 100 gp of damages (1 TU per 100 gp damages).
- Breaking and entering: Imprisonment for 1 week (1 TU) and fine of 50gp.
- Theft: Return stolen goods, fined the same amount.
- Assault: Imprisonment for one month (4 TU) and a fine of 200 gp.
- Manslaughter: Sent to the mines (or other appropriate service) for 1 year (52 TU).
- Murder: Execution. (PC manages to escape but must spend 52 TU and 100 gp x level in hiding)

A PC may make an impassioned speech to try to talk a way out of this. If the PCs can convince the magistrate of their sincerity give them a Diplomacy Check (DC 15) to reduce their sentence by half (this can stack with

the earlier reduction, to divide penalties by four). Murder, however, is not forgiven unless it was done in self-defense.

Then read the following:

"For the crimes you have committed in the Sultanate of Zeif, the verdict of this trial sentences you to:" (fill appropriately).

DM AID: NEW RULES

You can cast spells that arc to other targets in addition to the primary target.

Prerequisites: Any metamagic feat.

Benefits: Any spell that specifically targets a single target and has a range greater than touch can be chained so as to affect the primary target normally, and then arc to a number of secondary targets equal to your caster level (maximum twenty). Each arc affects one secondary target chosen by you, all of which must be within 30 feet of the primary target, none of which may be affected more than once. You can choose to affect fewer secondary targets than the maximum.

If the chained spell deals damage, the secondary targets each take half of much damage as the primary target (rounded down) and can attempt Reflex saving throws for half damage (whether the spell allows the original target a save or not). For spells that don't deal damage, the saving throw DCs against the arcing effects are reduced by 4. For example, if a 10th-level wizard normally casts *cause fear* at DC 14, a chained *cause fear* could target a goblin chieftain at DC 14 and up to ten of his nearby guards at DC 10.

A chained spell uses up a spell slot three levels higher than the spell's actual level.

Crush

Savage Species 31

Like a dragon, you can hurl your body onto opponents to deal tremendous damage.

Prerequisite: Huge size or larger.

Size Category	Damage
Huge	2d8
Gargantuan	4d6
Colossal	4d8

Benefit: As a standard action, you can jump or fall onto opponents, using your whole body to crush them. This attack is only useful against creatures at least three size categories smaller than yourself. The base damage for a crush attack depends on your size category, as given on the table above. Add 1 ½ times your Strength bonus to this base damage to determine the total damage for the attack.

A crush attack deals bludgeoning damage and affects as many creatures as can fit under your body. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 10 + Str modifier + size modifier for grapple checks). On a failure, the opponent is pinned and automatically takes crush damage each round the pin is maintained.

Power Dive

Savage Species 38

FEATS

Area Attack

Savage Species 30

You can wield improvised weapons to attack several spaces at once.

Prerequisites: Str 19, Huge size or large, Power Attack.

Benefit: You can use your great size and strength to pick up a heavy object and attack an area as a standard action. Such an attack may consist of swinging a large log or smashing a door down on opponents' heads. The area affected is a half-circle with a radius equal to your reach. You deal damage to all creatures two or more size categories smaller than you within the area. The base damage dealt depends on your size category, as given on the table below. Add 1 ½ times your strength bonus to this base damage to determine the total damage for the attack.

Size Category	Damage
Huge	1d8
Gargantuan	2d6
Colossal	2d8

Though it can deal significant damage, this form of attack is awkward and unbalancing. You incur a –2 penalty to your Armor Class and on Reflex saves until your next action.

Awesome Blow

Monster Manual III 206

A creature with this feat can choose to deliver blows that send its smaller opponents flying like bowling pins.

Prerequisites: Str 25, Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush, size Large or larger.

Benefit: As a standard action, the creature can choose to subtract 4 from its melee attack roll and deliver an awesome blow. If the creature hits a corporeal opponent smaller than itself, with an awesome blow, its opponent must succeed on a Reflex save (DC equal to damage dealt) or be knocked flying 10 feet in a direction of the creature's choice and fall prone. The attacking creature can only push the opponent in a straight line, and the opponent can't move closer to the attacking creature than the square it started in. If an obstacle prevents the completion of the opponent's move, the opponents and the obstacle each take 1d6 point of damage, and the opponent stops in the space adjacent to the obstacle.

Chain Spell [Metamagic]

Complete Arcane 76

You can fall upon an opponent from the sky.

Prerequisite: Str 15, fly speed (average or better)

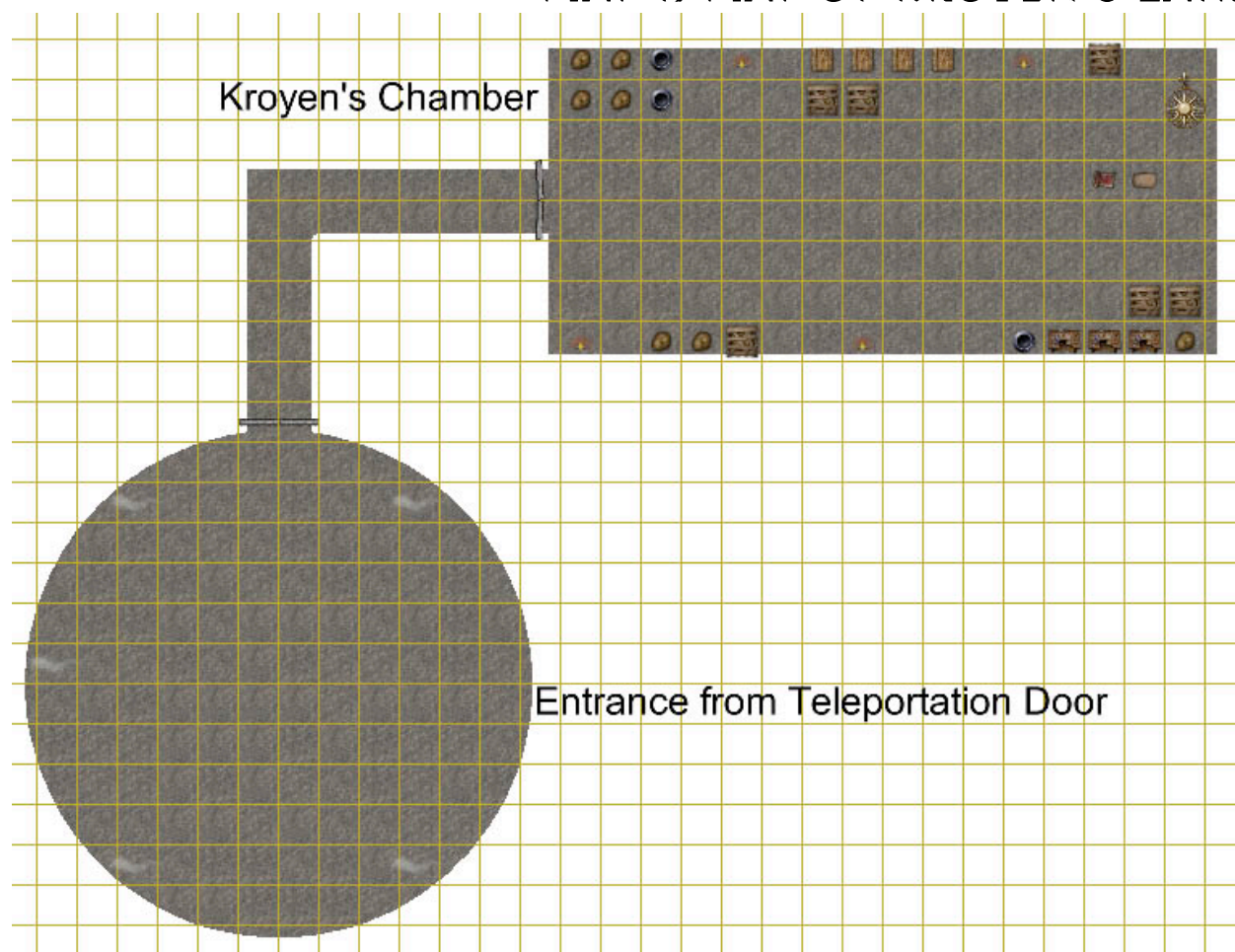
Benefit: When flying, you can dive and land on an opponent to deal additional damage. Using this feat is a standard action, and it can only affect creatures one or more size categories smaller than you. To use this feat, make an overrun attack, but the opponent cannot choose to avoid you. If you knock down the target, you may make an additional slam attack (at +4 for the opponent being prone). The attack deals the base damage given on the table below for your size category plus 1 ½ times your Strength bonus.

Size Category	Power Dive Base Damage
Fine	1d2
Diminutive	1d3
Tiny	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Normal: Without this feat, you can attack with just one natural weapon and do not have a chance to knock down the opponent.

Special: If you fail in your overrun attempt and are tripped in turn, you are knocked down, and you deal the slam damage for the attack to yourself.

MAP 1: MAP OF KROYEN'S LAIR



HANDOUT 1

My Trusted Friend,

Since we parted ways, I spent weeks and months among the kobold tribes of the Burneal Forest looking for clues as to who or what was competing with my kind in pursuit of the blue-black artifacts. I also made every effort to discover what might have happened to the poor human girl Ianta when she pitched herself into the column of negative energy in the crypt.

The attacks on the kobolds of the Forest continued, and I was able to defend some of my kind against the humans who bore the symbol of the hand and the eye. I stood against the attacks and questioned any prisoners I could. One finally had a change of heart and gave me information that greatly aided my quest: the leader of those behind the attacks made his home in the city of Nafiq in the lands known by most as the Sultanate of Zeif.

I cannot say much more in this missive of what actions I took after that, but I did indeed travel to Nafiq. And here I am still, although I am a prisoner of the government of this land due to misunderstandings, treachery, and a general distrust of my race. Only the timely intervention of an acquaintance named Qatan—a priest dedicated to Al’Akbar—has postponed my execution.

My life, and my quest to rescue Ianta from whatever fate has befallen her, will be forfeit unless you can come to Nafiq in Zeif and stand up for me. Time is not a luxury we have. I am being held at a prison within the palace of the Yildwar Dey. You should see my friend Qatan at the temple of Al’Akbar in Zeif. He can tell you how to reach me. May your light shine truth upon my dark circumstances.

Yours in strife and peace,

Tajlo of Heironeous

PLAYER HANDOUT 2

My Trusted Friend,

A strange little kobold by the name of Tajlo recently came to the attention of several members of our organization. Unlike most of his race, he apparently holds a place in the heart of Heironeous. I am told that he is indeed one of the holy warriors who carry the blessings of the Valorous Knight.

We received word recently from a contact in the city of Nafiq in the Sultanate of Zeif that Tajlo has run afoul of the government there, and he has been imprisoned. Through the intervention of a representative of Al'Akbar named Qatan, the little fellow's execution has been stayed pending an investigation. Tajlo has requested our assistance in this investigation, but we have no resources to spare at this time. With that, I call on you and your associates to assist Tajlo.

Details on what happened are sketchy. From what I understand, Tajlo was on a quest in the name of Heironeous, and in the completion of that quest something went wrong. Tajlo himself can supply you with the details when you arrive. He is being held in a prison at the palace of Yildwar Dey in Zeif. You should first contact Qatan at the temple of Al'Akbar in Nafiq. Your presence is expected, and your assistance is appreciated. There is no telling how long Tajlo's execution will be stayed, so swiftness is imperative.

May your path bring light to a dark world!