



XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS

Racing Midnight

Cabal of Shadows Faction Scenario #8

An Adventure for 8th-Level Characters

(Scaled for 7th-10th Levels of Play)

CABAL OF SHADOWSTM Faction SCENARIO 8 for the XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONSTM Campaign

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Recent allies provide the opportunity to infiltrate the pirate alliance that attacked Stormreach but time grows short and night comes. A Xen'Drik Expeditions Faction adventure for the Cabal of Shadows, optimized for 8th-level characters.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

Sources: Dragonmarked [Keith Baker, Michelle Lyons, C.A. Suleiman], Heroes of Battle [David Noonan, Will McDermott, Stephen Schubert], Player's Handbook II [David Noonan], Spell Compendium [Matthew Sernett, Jeff Grubb, Mike McArtor]

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Adventure Background

Stormreach is recovering from the disastrous attack by the pirate's fleet, but who organizes these waterborne rogues and from where they attack from is completely unknown. Exercising its intelligence gathering abilities, the Council of the Obscured has decided that a more direct approach is needed and so the PCs are tapped once again.

Elsewhere, the Cabal of Shadows are not the only organization attempting to learn more about the alliance of pirate captains that threatens Xen'drik. The Arclight Battalion of the Blackwheel Company is tired of how the Dragonmarked Houses use the Company as fodder, and so they have infiltrated the pirate fleets looking for a new ally. Sadly it quickly becomes clear that the pirates are not that ally and a new friend is needed.

Meanwhile, from the hidden atoll of Maggago, Pluresa the Storm Witch, one of the secret masters of the Captain's Alliance, is meeting with her hidden benefactor and preparing for a further assault against Stormreach.

Adventure Synopsis

Adventure Start: Following the attack on Stormreach by an alliance of pirates (*EXP-05 Shargon's Rage*), a recent ally of the Cabal, Looish the Soft (*CSH-06 What Rough Beast*), has informed the leadership that he knows of a local girl often visited by one of the pirate captains. Unable to locate the missing young oracle Charlan (*CHS-07 Whispers Behind the Door*), the Cabal decides to focus its efforts on infiltrating the pirates and after a briefing, dispatch the PCs.

Part One: The party investigates Alinalla and her home and formulates a plan to use her to get close to Captain Egen. While Looish makes some suggestions on different ways the PCs might use his information to infiltrate the pirate crews, it is up to party to formulate a plan appropriate for them. Whether through magic, force or guile, they execute their plan and gain the trust of the visiting rake, Captain Egen.

Part Two: Egen takes the PCs to his ship, the *Falcon* and makes them a part of his crew and ferries them to the isle of Maggago, a hidden atoll that is one of the many bases of the pirate alliance.

Part Three: The PCs turned "pirates" are brought into Maggago where they meet some of those behind the recent pirate actions including Pluresa the siren that cursed Looish and a mysterious dragonmarked man.

Part Four: The party's investigations draw the attention of Oslan Terth, an agent of the Blackwheel Company and a part of the Arclight Battalion. The Company has also infiltrated the pirates and the Arclight Battalion seeks a clandestine alliance with the Cabal. Unbeknownst to the rest of the Company, Arclight has Charlan and will consider handing her over to cement the alliance.

Part Five: Blackwheel attacks the atoll and the PCs must either fight the Company or the pirates to escape.

Ending the Adventure: The PCs return to Stormreach with information gathered on the pirates and a possible new alliance with a faction with the Blackwheel Company.

Troubleshooting

Adventure Secret: There are two places in which an adventure secret might be revealed during this adventure. Should any of the PCs use a card or ability to unlock an adventure secret, they may discover the time and location of Captain Egen's arrival in Stormreach through an word on the street or prophetic revelation (as appropriate for the ability or card). Another option is for the card or ability to warn the PCs that they are not the only group impersonating pirates in Maggago.

Content Warning: As members of an evil faction, Cabal of Shadows adventures often deal with mature themes such as violence or depravity. It is the DM's job to keep the sensibilities of the players in mind when running any adventure and adjust accordingly. Always remember that everyone should be having fun and not made to feel uncomfortable.

Obscura: Some members of the Cabal of Shadows also belong to Obscura, sub-factions within the Cabal. The Obscura often have secret missions for their members, and this time is no different. Ask each player to hand you a note listing his or her Obscura, if any. All players should hand in a note, even if they are not a member of any Obscura in order to keep suspicions evenly spread throughout the party. Return the correct player handout to each player so they understand the details of their secret mission. This should be done immediately following the **Adventure Start** but before **Part One**.

Adventure Start

The adventure begins with the PCs gathered together below the Red Ring, in the former chambers of Burgandy Clor who's gambling operation the Cabal appropriated during the Night of Shadows (CSH05 – *Night of Shadows*). It is morning, two days before the arrival of Captain Egden.

The Red Ring has changed little since the demise of Burgundy Clor. Despite the stormy morning above, the lower halls below the arena are still dark and dank and the cries of prisoners doomed to a bloodied end before the mob still echo. The revenue generated by the gambling and slave trading is a necessary part of funding the Cabal's efforts to control the prophecy but the Red Ring also serves another purpose. The enemies of the Cabal continual search for the Cabal's lair and the tunnels under the Red Ring present an obvious and defensible fortress for them to mistakenly focus their attentions.

These thoughts pass through your mind as you finally arrive at your appointed meeting. The Voice of the Storm, a masked man with a thin sword at his side, confidently reviews the large room filled with cages of rare but ferocious beasts. A fine black cloak depicting the moons of Siberys eclipsing the sun trails from his shoulders as he strides from one cage to the next. In his wake follows a short, thin man with a slim mustache and a slight goatee who offers you a rakish smile with a friendly effeminate manner. The masked man stops to regard you, and spreading his arms wide issues forth a booming welcome. "It is good to see you my friends. Looish was just imparting some very useful information that I think will be of interest to you with our shared plans!"

The Voice of Storms starts the conversation by reviewing recent history for those PCs who were unaware. If everyone is familiar with the pirate attack, the addition of Looish to the Cabal's ranks from the pirate fleet, and the loss of Charlan the young oracle to some unknown force, the Voice of the Storm proceeds to explain why he has summoned the party.

Following the recent attack by the organized pirate fleets, and the continued bad weather disrupting resupply efforts from Khorvaire, the Cabal has decided that of all the factions, they may be uniquely suited to infiltrate the pirate horde. The Council of the Obscured has been interrogating Looish, searching for some weakness to exploit and they believe they may have found one.

Looish explains, "When I was still a member of a pirate crew, I knew of a Captain Egden who lead the crew of a ship called the Falcon. Captain Egden used his booty to keep a girl named Alinalla in Stormreach. From what I had heard, he would visit her nearly every time he made port, and she is more than just a doxy to him. I think they may actually love each other, and he might do just about anything for her."

"And that my friends is what we are counting on," interjects the Voice of the Storm. "Our spies tell us that the Captain still lives, as does his lady friend. As a captain in the pirate fleet that has so recently attacked Stormreach, he knows where they lair and you should be able to use him to infiltrate their membership in order to gather information. This mission is of the utmost importance and should be given your full attention."

The Voice of the Storm answers the party's questions to the best of his ability, using the information provided. He does not want to get off track however, and steers the PCs' focus back to this particular mission wherever possible. Below are some pieces of information he might offer the party in understanding their mission.

- Looish can provide the PCs with the location of Alinalla's home, as well as a description of each of Alinalla and Captain. Egden.
 - Alinalla lives in a flat above a bakery called the *Bread Men Sell No Pies*, that caters to the well-off sailors on the northern edge of the docks. Looish believes Egden rents this space from the baker for his paramour.
 - Alinalla is a human woman of average height with blonde hair. She has a crooked smile and dreamy eyes, and is generally more attractive than any of the women normally found near the dock areas. She tends to dress in expensive gowns and is fond of carrying a parasol. She does not work.
 - Captain Egden is a well-tanned, rakish man about a head taller than Looish (roughly 5'9"). He is often smiling and carries a rapier with a green jewel in the hilt. His hair is dark brown and he often wears open-chested silk shirts of light colors. (A DC 15 Sense Motive suggests Looish is somewhat smitten with Captain Egden).
- Captain Egden will want to keep a low profile when coming to town so it is likely that the *Falcon* will be nowhere to be seen. More likely he will come on a merchant vessel or possibly row ashore in a small boat and walk into town. He will avoid the guards whenever possible so the couple will likely stay indoors or frequent quiet restaurants in the general vicinity of Alinalla's flat.

- The PCs should find a way to force or trick Egden to lead the PCs to at least one of the pirate's hidden ports and then gather as much information as possible without tipping their hand. The Voice of the Storm has several suggestions on ways the PCs might do this, but the final decision is up to them.
 - The PCs might consider abducting Alinalla and blackmailing Egden. This is a dangerous proposition as it is likely the Egden may try to double cross the PCs and free his love at the first opportune time and it is likely that the PCs may be surrounded and outnumbered when such an event occurs.
 - If the PCs have access to powerful magic or psionics, they may be able mentally compel Egden to reveal the location of the pirate base or possible lead the PCs there.
 - If the PCs are especially talented scouts or diviners, perhaps they might follow Egden back to his ship and from there to the pirate hideaway. This plan has the disadvantage of being slow, as the party must wait for Egden to work his way back at his own pace.
 - Looish suggests that Egden has always been quick to form friendships, which he uses to recruit new crew and that might be used against him. If the PCs were able to somehow prove they were worthy (by perhaps rescuing the Captain and his Lady Love from a group of ruffians or watchmen) he would likely look favorably on them if they claimed to be looking for work and were not adverse to a little piracy.
- The Voice of the Storm is willing to provide logistical and monetary support needed for the initial plan. He will supply coin necessary to hire thugs or provide generic nonmagical gear such as ropes, fake uniforms, or weapons. Magical items must be acquired by the PCs using the normal campaign rules. No hirelings will leave the city, though the Voice of the Storm does not mind if any hired thugs are slain as part of the party's ruse.

Once the party has discussed their plan, the Voice of the Storm and Looish bid them good-bye and wish them luck. Proceed to Part One when the players are ready to learn more about Alinalla, her home, or the Captain.

Role-playing Members of the Council of the Obscured

The Voice of the Storm is one of the four individuals that sit upon the Council of the Obscured and make decisions for the Cabal of Shadows. All of them are old and powerful individuals whose goals exceed the daily concerns of normal folk. Their powers exceed anything the PCs may muster. When portraying them, it is important that they maintain an air of otherworldly mystery.

Voice of the Storm: The Voice of the Storm speaks for the Obscura known as the Defiance. A skilled leader and orator, the Voice has no fear of the coming darkness and he urges all to embrace it. He is prone to motivating speeches, filled with grandiose imagery. Among his fellows on the Council of the Obscured, the Voice of the Storm has urged frequent retribution against the Cabal's enemies. In general, though, he would rather see foes suffer than kill them quickly.

Part One: On the Town

This encounter describes the locations and habits of Alinalla and Egden as well as the results of possible plans the party might enact. The author cannot possibly envision all the nuances to the schemes that might occur to your players, so the DM should feel free to adjust accordingly.

Knowledge Checks

Those PCs with Bardic Knowledge or Knowledge (local) may attempt a skill check to know information about Captain Egden and the *Falcon*. Alinalla is not well known enough to have attracted the PCs attention.

- DC 5: It is widely known that the majority of pirates of Shargon's Teeth have banded together in a fleet not seen since the days of Galifar. This menace has severely disrupted trade and even attacked Stormreach.
- DC 15: The crew of the *Falcon* has joined with the pirate fleet and they are a collection of talented sailors and brutal thugs.
- DC 20: The captain of the *Falcon* is known to some as Dashing Egden. A swashbuckling pirate, he is known to temper his crew, limiting their violence. Merchant crews surrendering their cargo are generally allowed to live and some are even allowed to keep their ships. Despite his brilliant smile and polite behavior, he is still dangerous man known to make a bloody example of those who have wronged him.
- DC 25: Rumors say that in addition to his skill with rapier, Captain Egden has some skill with arcane magic.

Bread Men Sell No Pies Bakery

This small bakery on the north side of the docks makes its living baking bread, hardtack, and muffins, largely for ships going out to sea. It operates to some degree at all hours, though it is busiest in the late evening and early morning.

The two-story plaster and wood building echoes with the sounds of activity. The heat and smell of baking bread are obvious. Over the large front door hangs a sign displaying a dead sailor holding a loaf of bread.

The bakery is set up simply. A large front door faces east and leads into the store where bins behind a sales counter display the various kinds of bread or muffins for sale. The bakery is in the rear and can be accessed from both the store as well as a door in the alley behind. There are several large ovens along with the tools and ingredients of the trade inside. Wooden stairs leading up to the apartment are on the southern side. Due to the noise of constant operation and the threat of fire, the bakery is farther away from neighboring buildings than most in the city. There are no buildings larger than the bakery within 100 feet of the bakery. All the neighboring buildings are residential except for a dry goods store where the bakery acquires its flour.

The kitchen operates twenty four hours a day in two twelve hour shifts, each staffed by three bakers. The bakery store is open from 5 AM to 6 PM and is staffed by one of the bakers during that time. The owner of the bakery, Sebris Keln, is generally present from 5 PM till 9 AM. At other times he rests at his nearby home.

Creatures: Sebris is a victim of his own success. Since his bakery has become successful, he finds himself unwilling to be separated from it for long periods of time. As a bachelor with no family, there is no one to complain when he overworks himself. The closest thing Sebris has to a friend is Alinalla, whom he feels a paternal affection for. Because of his relationship with the girl, the generally friendly Sebris becomes suspicious of anyone asking persistent questions about her; afraid they are the Stormlord's men looking to arrest her for her pirate connections. He cannot be bribed into betraying Alinalla, though he might be tricked into helping "friends or family" find her.

Sebris Keln: male human, expert 3, Sense Motive +3.

Bakers (3): male dwarven or human, commoner 1.

Development: The bakers offer no significant threat to the PCs, though if the PCs do cause trouble and allow the bakers or Sebris to escape, they will summon the watch at the first opportunity; possibly disrupting the PCs' plans.

Alinalla's Apartment

Alinalla's apartment can be accessed by climbing the rickety wooden stairs (-2 circumstance penalty to Move Silently checks) on the southern side of the bakery. The stairs lead to a simple wooden door with a simple lock (1 in. thick, hardness 5, hp, Break DC 15, Open Locks DC 20). There is a small shuttered window with no glass on each wall. The shutters have a simple catch, easily opened from the outside, should someone manage to reach them window.

The room inside is well appointed for a flat above a bakery. Fine silks cover the walls and plush bed, large bureau and standing mirror dominate the apartment. Fine clothes drape expensive furniture amidst piles of books in the room that is scented of cinnamon and baking bread.

Alinalla spends a good deal of her time at home, reading the dime novellas and chapbooks that Egden brings her or rearranging her many treasures. She usually goes out at least once a day for a walk through the city for shopping and to visit a handful of female acquaintances. She does not work and leads an idle life filled with shopping and vapid gossiping until her beloved visits once again. Alinalla does not know when Egden will return and spends each day pining for his next visit.

Alinalla: hp 13, female human commoner 4; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics: Alinalla generally avoids combat, largely by screaming shrilly and fleeing. If her beloved Egden was on the losing end of an attack, she might be motivated to ineffectually involve herself by beating the assailant with her parasol or drawing her concealed dagger.

Development: Alinalla is a simple girl and though warned by Egden against the nosing around of the Stormlord's men, she is easily confused, duped, or frightened into compliance. The sight of her paramour fills her with renewed hope however as he has never failed her in the past and she nobly warns him of any impending trap. Further threats bring her back into line; especially if it is clear her love cannot overcome the obstacles arrayed before them.

Alinalla will not contact the watch for aid, regardless of circumstances. If given the opportunity to seek help, she takes some of her jewelry to Sebris Keln and with his help hires four local thugs (use Hired Thugs combat statistics) to come to her aid.

Alinalla CR 3

Female human commoner 4
AL CN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; Senses Listen +0, Spot -1
Languages Common

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+2 Dex)
hp 13 (4 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk dagger +2 (1d4-1/19-20) OR
parasol +1 (1d4-1 nonlethal)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 18
Feats Dodge, Skill Focus (Craft), Skill Focus (Diplomacy)
Skills Craft (sewing) +9, Diplomacy +9, Knowledge (local) +1, Listen +0
Possessions Glamerweave dress, masterwork dagger, parasol, 50 gp in jewelry

Hook "Tell me I look pretty in this dress."

Captain Egden's Arrival

Barring interference by the party, Captain Egden arrives in the early evening on the second day of the adventure just after the bread store closes. Leaving his ship offshore, he brings a small rowboat just inside the north wall of the city and ties it off under the docks. He then climbs up one of the great poles supporting the docks and walks into town. The exact description of his arrival may need to be adjusted based on the actions of the PCs.

A well-tanned man swaggers down the dock through the pouring rain; a green jeweled rapier on his hip. He has a broad smile and carries a large sack over his shoulder.

Egden has come to Stormreach this way many times and is confident in his simple ruse, so it is simple to catch him by surprise once he is inside the city. If the PCs approach him while he rows in, or while he is tying off and climbing up, he is much more suspicious.

Egden's Itinerary: After arriving around 7 PM, Egden and Alinalla spend an hour in her apartment as he gives her the various things he has plundered for her. After opening her presents, the two have dinner and retire for the evening. The next day they have meals delivered and stay in the entire day due to the rain, except for a brief hour around 8 AM when the two go out for breakfast and on the way back, Egden stops for a moment to pay Sebris for Alinalla's rent. The next morning Egden leaves before dawn, exiting the city the same way he got in.

What He Knows: Egden is well aware of the Captain's Alliance that has joined the disparate pirates vessels together in an impressive fleet not seen for hundreds of years. He also knows that while the Captains are the obvious heads of this alliance, they are truly little more than lieutenants behind a group of secret masters. He does not know all their names or even their descriptions, but each of them commands a portion of the fleet. He reports to a bewitching woman named Pluresa who lairs in a hidden base on the atoll of Maggago. Maggago is the pirates' name for the atoll and he does not believe it to be on any maps. Those PCs who have played *CSH-06 What Rough Beast* may remember the name Pluresa as the siren sea witch that cursed Looish with misfortune. Egden does not remember Looish, and Looish was never a member of his crew. If asked about the timeline, it appears Looish was cursed before Pluresa rose to prominence and the crew of the *Flacon* joined the fleet. Egden doesn't know much about Pluresa other than she is bewitching and her requests are impossible to ignore. He knows nothing of the other secret masters or their lairs.

As for her hidden base, Egden is well aware of its location and knows that it is hidden in the center of the atoll. Generally there are five to seven vessels anchored there at any one time with approximately 400 pirates and associated servants. He has heard that it is magically protected in some way, but he doesn't know how. He believes that the secret masters are somehow responsible for the bad weather tormenting Stormreach.

DASHING CAPTAIN EGDEN CR 10

Male human duskblade 10
 AL CN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +6; Senses Listen -1, Spot -1
Languages Common, Giant, Elven

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+9 armor, +2 Dex, +3 shield)
hp 83 (10 HD)
Fort +14, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *shocking rapier* +12/+7 (1d6+5 plus 1d6 electrical/15-20)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +14

Atk Options Arcane channeling (cast touch spell as part of a melee attack), quick cast (2/day quicken a standard action spell)

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *smokestick*

Duskblade Spells Known (CL 10th):

3rd (3/day, 1 used)—†*crown of might* (+2 STR for 10 hours, immediate action end spell for +8 STR for 1 round), *doom scarabs* (standard, 60 ft. cone-shaped burst, 5d6 damage Will half, those with SR that fail SR give you 1d4 temporary hp)

2nd (9/day)—*dimension door*, *see invisibility*, *sure strike* (swift, next attack gains +3 insight to hit), *swift fly*

1st (10/day)—*blade of blood* (swift, for 10 rounds weapon does +1d6 damage or +3d6 if you do 5 points of damage to yourself), *Kelgore's fire bolt* (standard, 200 ft., 5d6 fire Reflex half, does 1d6 to SR resistant targets), *shocking grasp*, *stand* (swift, 50 ft., stand as free action with no AO), *swift expeditious retreat*

0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+12 ranged), *disrupt undead* (+12 ranged), *ray of frost* (+12 ranged), *touch of fatigue* (+13 melee)

†Already cast

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th):

5/day—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 12), *ghost sound* (DC 12), *read magic*

Abilities Str 16 [18], Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 10

SQ Armored mage (light, medium, and heavy shield), spell power (+2 to SR checks against opponents Egden has injured)

Feats Blind-fight, Combat Casting, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Initiative, Improved Toughness, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Concentration +15 (+19 cast defensively), Jump +17, Knowledge (local) +15, Spellcraft +15, Swim +22

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *glamoured mithral fullplate*, +1 *steel shield*, +1 *shocking rapier*, +3 *cloak of resistance*, *ring of swimming*, masterwork rapier, sack full of presents for Alinalla

Hook "Yar, that was a close one lads, but the Stormlords' men loose again!"

Lies, Violence, and Other Ways to Ingratiate One's Self

Eventually the PCs will have to enact some sort of plan to gain access to one of the hidden pirate strongholds. This section provides some guidance on likely plans, but the DM is encouraged to adjust to the whims of the players and whatever other ideas they might come up with.

Blackmail: This may initially seem like the easiest plan to implement, as neither Alinalla nor Egden are significant threats to the party and can be easily taken by surprise. Blackmail is however fraught with danger for the PCs. Egden will consent to taking the PCs back to his ship and from there to the hidden atoll he knows of, but he insists that the PCs bring Alinalla with them so he can be sure of her safety. If they do, he uses the first opportunity to betray them to either his crew, or more likely, the pirates of Maggago. If the PCs wisely leave Alinalla in the care of their Cabal allies, they can buy Egden's cooperation, provided they can somehow convince him of her safety. If they betray him, he stops at nothing trying to bring about their destruction.

Enchantment: For PCs with the capability of casting spells such as *charm person* or *dominate*, it may be easy to magically influence the Captain's actions to get the party as far as the *Falcon*, however once aboard they PCs must come up with a plausible story for their presence or hide themselves away. In addition to their presence on the ship, Egden's strange behavior might also alert the crew to their Captain's peril (especially if he is acting very out of character). Also, in some cases the duration of the spell may be an

issue. Once Egden is not controlled, he will return to the atoll to expose the PCs. Being forced to take the PCs to the hidden atoll of Maggago or reveal its location should be considered an action against Egden's nature for determining any bonuses to his saving throw.

Guile: If the PCs enact Looish's plan, they can easily stage an attack by hired thugs posing as law enforcement or miscellaneous street muggers. Outnumbered with Alinalla possibly in danger, Egden will greatly appreciate any efforts by the PCs to rescue them. He is particularly grateful if he believes the PCs have rescued him from the watch, as he has been expecting trouble with them since the attack on Stormreach. Following any brawl, have Egden make a Sense Motive (-1) against the Bluff of whichever PC spins the party's yarn. Award the PC a +4 circumstance bonus if the thugs appeared to be in some way connected to the city's law enforcement. If the PCs win, Egden trusts them implicitly and offers to take them out for drinks where he might be further talked into aiding them or letting them join his crew. If Egden wins, he remains suspicious about the convenience of the party's arrival and while he thanks them, Egden and Alinalla bid them good day and return directly home; leaving the party to try a second plan. Combat statistics for hired thugs can be found below.

Spying: PCs of this level may be fairly mobile, capable of flight, teleportation, and powerful divinations. Egden has no protections against scrying or being magically followed. Eight days after leaving Stormreach he does return to the atoll, so the PCs could follow him if they are able to keep track of him for that long. The atoll of Maggago does have some protections, so it is unlikely that the party can find it directly or scry on him once he has arrived (see Part Three). Following by ship without the aid of magic is not feasible. If Egden realizes he is being followed he does not return to Maggago. If the PCs are able to sneak aboard the *Falcon* and remain hidden for eight days they might also manage to hitch a ride to the secret base. Unless given pause, the pirates have no reason to hunt for stowaways and the PCs could have an easy time of it.

Hired Thugs CR 7

Male human fighter 2/rogue 5
AL CN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +6; **Senses** Listen +9, Spot +9
Languages Common

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +2 Dex); **Uncanny Dodge**
hp 48 (7 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0; **Evasion**

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk great club +11 (1d10+6) or
sap +9 (1d6+4 nonlethal) or
unarmed strike +9 (1d3+4 lethal or nonlethal)
Ranged light crossbow +8 (1d8/19-20)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +13
Atk Options Sneak attack +3d6, Sunder (+19 with great club)

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8
SQ Trapfinding, trap sense +1
Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (great club)
Skills Climb +6, Hide +10, Intimidate +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +10, Search +9, Sleight of Hand +10, Spot +9, Tumble +10
Possessions *Studded leather armor* +2, masterwork great club, sap, light crossbow, 10 masterwork bolts, thieves' tools, smokestick, black hood with eyeholes cut into it or fake city watch uniforms.

Hook "You lookin' at me?!?"

Part Two: The Open Sea

This portion of the adventure deals with getting to Maggago. In general the adventure assumes that the PCs have somehow befriended or controlled Captain Egden and found their way aboard the elemental galleon *Falcon*. If this is not the case, the DM should adjust appropriately.

The Falcon is an impressive ship. A sleek hull barely touches the sea, buoyed on soarwood runners and powered by both natural sails and a blustery curtain of elemental wind. The foul weather only seems to

encourage the elemental and small streaks of lightning play across the ship's aft. Aboard dozens of men and women of various races prepare to make sail.

The *Falcon* can make it to Maggago in two days under full sail, provided they are going straight there. During that time the PCs can mingle among the crew of 52 sailors, who if the PCs are masquerading as pirates, expect them to pull their own weight. If the PCs have no sailing skills (Climb, Profession (sailor), or Use Rope), they are quickly put to work doing manual labor or staffing the kitchen. First mate Sways brooks goldbrickers and brings out the lash if any PC is particularly troublesome. Such PCs are also likely to find themselves manning the crow's nest in the middle of the storm.

If this adventure is being played in a convention setting where time is short, spend less than fifteen minutes on this encounter; just enough time to make the players nervous that any rouse might be discovered. If this adventure is being played in a more leisurely setting you might offer the PCs a chance to meet and role-play with some of the crew. This encounter is not intended as a combat encounter and should only devolve into such if the PCs are particularly inept.

Below are listed several NPCs the PCs might meet on the ship, along with ways the DM might use them in interacting with the PCs. Assume the average crewmember is a fighter 2/rogue 1, of various races and both sexes.

First Mate Sways (LE female orc, fighter 7/rogue 1): Sways is a bald, no nonsense woman as hard as steel and twice as strong. She expects everyone to follow the Captain's rules and troublemakers find themselves on the end of particularly appropriate but cruel punishments. She frequently carries a large-sized cat-o-nine tails whip which she calls Motivation and the crew rarely gives her cause to use it. If the PCs need guidance working a ship, it is the First Mate who explains their duties and punishes them for their failures. As an example, the *Falcon* used to have a sailor by the name of Gorth who was caught stealing rum from the galley. Sways declared that if he was so thirsty, she would make sure he had all he could drink. While others held him down, Sways poured salt water down his throat till Gorth became delirious and eventually drowned.

Bosun Kalevares (N male dwarf, magewright 1/rogue 4/ranger 1): Kalevares maintains the ships rigging, cables, and anchors, and is the petty officer in charge of the deck crew. He is an old salt given to use of heavy jargon and the telling of tall tales. When not busy, he is casting a line into the sea just to catch a few fresh fish; not that anyone has seen him succeed in many years. If the PCs get assigned to the deck or are looking for someone gregarious enough to talk to talk to anyone, Kalevares is their dwarf.

Arrrgh (CE male shifter, barbarian 5): Arrrgh speaks only in monosyllabic grunts and drawn out wails. In addition to helping out around the ship, he leads the most bloodthirsty of the *Falcon's* crew in any boarding action that they might undertake. He spends his days, working hard, bullying his cohorts, and staying clear of First Mate Sways. It is likely that PCs trying to imitate pirate speech might meet Arrrgh over some confusion over regarding his name.

Saefis (N male half-elf, expert 4/rogue 1): The old cook Saefis is nearly blind, but he knows where everything in the galley is and has an almost preternatural sense of when sailors are trying to steal from him. Those that do tend to find their hand impaled on a cooking utensil. Saefis possesses a bounty of lore about the various sailors in the fleet, and anyone assigned to the galley can get him talking if they do their job well. Of particular note, Saefis remembers Looish from when he was still with the pirates. While he only met him once, he thought Looish a likeable guy though he has heard stories that the flamboyant sailor has since fallen on hard times and was even abandoned by his old crew on the *Bloody Fin*. From tales regarding Pluresa he has pieced together that she is a siren and clearly has significant magical abilities that dwarf believes exceeds everyone onboard the *Falcon*, including the captain.

Napse (NE female goblin, rogue 2, Sleight of Hand +12): Napse is an elderly goblin woman that serves a valuable function; she is constantly stealing from the crew. A quiet favorite of Captain Egden, the tiny Napse casually lifts items crewmembers have stolen from each other and returns them to their proper place. Through this method, Egden limits the number of fights that might otherwise break out among the crew. Officially, Napse is Kalevares' assistant, climbing through the ship looking for cracks, leaks, or other damage; though if Kalevares is asked, Napse never does find anything.

Arrival

A few hours before arriving at Maggago, the Captain informs the PCs that they are nearing their goal. Unless told or manipulated otherwise, he plans to sail directly into port like he normal would. The storm is not nearly as severe this close to Maggago, but there is still a steady rain so the *Falcon* could remain offshore undetected until someone else decides to arrive or leave. Due to the rocks and heavy waves, the ship cannot drop anchor near the atoll.

Through the rain, a column of rock covered in jungle plants rises out of the sea. There are no obvious entrances, but the Falcon veers sharply towards the side of the cliff face and pushes through the tangle of vegetation. There is no violent jarring, as some might anticipate, but rather the ship cuts a swift path through

a dangerously narrow canyon and into the lagoon within. A fortress rises out of the center and six pirate vessels are moored off its docks.

The *Falcon* docks and the PCs are free to move about as they please. Maggago is a relative lawless place and everyone here assumes anyone that got this far belongs here. It should seem to the PCs much like walking through a prison with no guards. Unless otherwise noted, no one is suspicious of the PCs. Proceed to Part Three.

Part Three: Into the Pirate's Den

This encounter details the stronghold of Maggago as well as some suggestions as to how the PCs might gather information inside. How the PCs proceed once they are in Maggago is up to them. If they are controlling Captain Egden or his crew in some way they may have guides in the stronghold, or it might be more prudent for them to move on without that liability. The DM should adjust accordingly while being mindful of play time remaining and the need to place Part Four accordingly.

Maggago is a rough and wild place. The sounds of music and brawls are intertwined and the streets are a chaotic mix of maritime supplies, unconscious drunks, and other trash. It is clear there is no organization and everyone here is well armed.

Exploring the Atoll

The PCs could just walk around looking for useful information. While maybe not the most efficient, it is relatively safe and should provide some helpful notes. The DM is encouraged to keep the PCs on edge by calling for the occasional Bluff check or having drunk pirates accost them momentarily before moving on. Those areas not explicitly shown on the map may be placed at random by the DM.

The easiest way for the PCs to gain information is simple exploration. In most areas the pirates expect others to congregate or walk past and think nothing of someone exploring the complex. New pirates are recruited all the time and it is even not all that rare for someone to ask directions over an ale or two. The exceptions to this are Pluresa's home, and the armories. Anyone approaching these areas are told to move along or they are roughly forced away.

1. Armory/Blacksmith

Black smoke swirls into the stormy sky as several dozen humanoids craft arms in front of hot forges. Some men are chained, while others move freely, but all are under the watchful eye of several minotaur guards. Further into the building, racks of gleaming weapons shine in the dark.

The armories are protected by six minotaur guards who watch over the various slaves and craftsmen who toil here. Anyone who loiters too long is told to move along and then forced to leave should they refuse. Some of the craftsmen, who come from all races, are willing to briefly talk. They are all blacksmiths or weaponsmiths who have either signed on or have been impressed into service (and thus the chains). The fact that they were largely recruited or abducted from Khorvaire suggests the pirate alliance does not get all its members from Xen'drik.

Minotaur Guards (6): Hp 39, MM 188.

2. Guard Post

This simple guard post is staffed by a collection of pirates that look little better than rest of rabble in the streets. The only clear difference is that none of them appear overly drunk.

Here and there throughout the atoll, largely concentrated near the docks or at the entrances to any fortifications are a group of four Maggago Pirates (see Combat Statistics below) that are on guard duty. Standing guard is a choice duty, since it pays better and the guards get to push others around, so the guards tend to be slightly more attentive that the average pirate and are suspicious of anyone trying to gain entrance to the wall or tower fortifications.

Maggago Pirates (4): Hp 71, male half-orc barbarian 2/fighter 2/ranger 2; See Combat Statistics.

3. Ballista Tower

A tall tower sporting a ballista is built into the walls. It has no windows and the only clear exit are the iron bound double doors at its base. Sounds of pirates come from within.

For more details on a typical tower, see Part Four: Sabotage.

4. Pluresa's Home

Stout iron gates are guarded several minotaur and hobgoblin troops. They are well armed and armored and seem particularly unpleasant. Beyond the gates, a narrow bridge crosses the water to a keep built into the rock wall. The keep crawls with guards.

If any of the PCs approach Pluresa's home, proceed with Over Hearing the Enemy. This area has additional magical defenses; see Magical Protections below.

Iron Gates: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 60; AC 5; Break DC 28; Open Locks DC 25.

5. Fresh Water Well

A huge well overflows its sides and pours like a fountain into four different troughs that run through the city. The water seems cleaner the closer one is to the well, though with all the men and women swarming around it, it is hard to tell.

The fresh water well is the life's blood of the installation, and is clearly one of its weaknesses. If the PCs could find some way to poison it, the pirates would suffer. There are no guards, though as the only clean source of water on the atoll, it is always busy.

6. Supplies

A number of men work stacking crates and sacks in this warehouse.

The workers are inventorying supplies needed for both the atoll and its fleet of ships. The containers hold things from candles to grain, to lumber and sailcloth. Any mundane item that an installation of this magnitude might require or a ship might need to resupply can be found in one of these warehouses. The men take no note of PCs wandering through unless they try to steal anything, in which case they call for guards. A guard station (area 2) responds in three rounds.

7. Barracks

This barracks is little better than a flophouse. The smells are rank, the noise loud, and the vermin plentiful. The one benefit is that it appears to be free.

The PCs are welcome to a lice and rat infested straw pallet in any of the barracks. No one has assigned sleeping areas and most carry their belongings with them. It is likely that the PCs can even kick out a drunk sailor and claim his pallet if they wish to sleep near each other, though there is 10% chance that a sleeping sailor is dead, not sleeping. Life in the barracks is rough and pirates are not above knifing a rival in their sleep.

8. Tavern

There seems to be an inordinate number of alehouses in the compound with one or more on every street corner. Raucous noise and boisterous music stream from each, while drunken pirates literally tumble from nearly every window.

The Secret Masters know their men are a simple lot. Wine, women and song keep them will in line, so cheap ale and cheaper women staff each tavern. A hearty meal can even be ordered, though bar brawls are frequent so it is often hard to finish them. The taverns make an excellent place to gather information and where the ale is plentiful, the tongues wag freely.

In particular, one of the taverns known as the Rusty Tap is run by Brewmaster Alfra (human, expert 1, hp 7) who is responsible for brewing the various ales that flow throughout Maggago. It is easy enough to

purchase one of his famous Black Label Ales (4 sp) but killing him with witnesses enrages the crowd and starts a brawl with everyone nearby trying to kill the PCs (use Maggago pirates Combat Statistics).

9. Docks

The docks are abuzz with activity as men and women load and offload the various ships. Clearly life in Maggago is rarely quiet but it seems that they work the hardest on the docks.

All of the pirates are dependant for a livelihood on their ships and so they brook no misbehavior on the docks. Sailors that cause problems are dumped in the drink and if they persist, they are beaten or killed. Curious PCs can determine the names of all the ships currently docked, which include: *the Falcon* (if the PCs allowed them to stay in port), *the Seaspray*, *the Bloody Horizon*, *the Shargon's Cruelty*, *the Strumpet*, *the Deceitful Knave of the Ocean*, and *the Iron Cutlass*. Each ship is crewed at all times by at least twenty sailors, except the tiny *seaspray* which has only three.

Magical Protections

The entire atoll is protected by a handful of magical enchantments put in place by Pluresa and the other Secret Masters. Assume a caster level of 15 if the PCs attempt to overcome these effects in some way. It is impossible to scry in anyway upon the location of the island or locate an individual while they on the island if the caster is not on the atoll. A DC 22 level check required to cast a divination spell while on the island that targets someone else also on the island. Spells that control the weather, create mist or fog, or have the [Air] descriptor must also overcome a DC 22 level check. If they do so, they are cast at +1 cast level. Pluresa is immune to all of these effects.

Pluresa's Home: In addition to the above effects, Pluresa's home is protected by a *dimensional lock* spell and the walls cannot be effect by *stoneshape* *transmute rock to flesh*, or *transmute rock to mud*, as though they had unbeatable SR. While those inside her keep or on its walls all are effected by a *protection from good* spell.

Gathering Information

Some PCs may wish to ask questions of the other pirates and in order to Gather Information. Feel free to role-play these brief encounters, or use the Gather Information skill as fits the temperament of the table. Those that role-play these encounters may receive any of the following information as the judge sees fit, based upon whom they speak with. The PCs should receive an additional +1 to their check for every extra 10 gp they spend (up to +5 for 50 gp spent). Assume rolling Gather Information costs the PC 3d4 gp in drinks and bribes and takes two hours. Depending on whom the PCs specifically approach, the DM may also allow Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks with certain NPCs. PCs receive all information for the DCs they beat or equal with their check.

There are several topics that the PCs may choose to Gather Information upon. Each check only covers one topic and requires an additional two hours.

The Pirate Fleet

- DC 5: *Just about the best job I ever had. We go where we please and take what we want and are rewarded for it.*
- DC 10: *Every time we come here, the captain gives us our share and then I spend it in the tavern or gamble it away. Still it's a better life than most can say, especially since the Captain always knows where the best merchant ships will be.*
- DC 15: *The captain tells me something big is coming. I'm hoping for another raid on Stormreach. Got me a whole lot'a booty that day, I tell you.*
- DC 20: *There's more than a thousand of us now. Quite a fleet, unlike anything seen in a century. And the ships! I don't know where they are getting them but we have more elemental galleons than regular ships.*
- DC 30: *I've seen Pluresa dealing with a dragonmarked man. I wonder if that's where all the magical weapons and expensive vessels be coming from.*

The Captain's Alliance

- DC 5: *I know that while they say it's the Captain's Alliance, each group of captains reports to a boss of their own. Not sure if there more to it than that.*
- DC 10: *You'd think the Captain's would be against all this organizing and reportin' to others, but each Captain is his own lord on his own ship, and they all get paid to be part of the alliance. Makes sense to me, get paid to do what theys was already doin', only now they do it together like.*

- DC 15: *Each Captain's ship has a home base. I'm from the Dragon's Maw, though she's not docked right now we's dock here at Maggago when we go to port. Eyes know the Fury docks somewhere northa here, though everyone is sposed to keep their dock a secret my cousin's a mate on that ship.*
- DC 20: *I've been here since the beginning and I was a part of four crews before the Alliance, so I know a lot of folks. I'd wager there are five of the so-called Secret Masters that run the Captain's Alliance and Pluresa is one of them.*
- DC 30: *I've Pluresa dealin' with a dragonmarked man more than once and from his dress and swagger he's got plenty of coin. Normally our lady is a terrible but regal queen, and all do as she requests, but not with this man. He's the only one I've ever seen her answer to, like the lowliest of cabin boys to a full Captain.*

Maggago

- DC 5: *I don't know much, only barely been here myself. She looks like a fun place though.*
- DC 10: *From what I can tell, Maggago works only cause of the huge fresh water spring in the middle. If not for that we'd need to constantly be shippin' in water and folks would be bound to notice that.*
- DC 15: *Maggago seems to be an eye in the storm. No doubt that's Pluresa's doin'. Some say she's a weather witch, capable of sending wind, rain, and lightning against her enemies.*
- DC 20: *I studied a little bit of the arcane long ago in Arcanix, so I can tell ya that Pluresa's strength is nothing to be trifled with, especially here in her place of power. I'd say she rivaled the power of many of my old teachers.*
- DC 25: *Maggago's main defense is the fact it's hidden, and the approach is so narrow that it would be easy to bottleneck any attacking fleet. There are also several ballista atop the various towers to defend against attack by air or over the walls of the atoll.*
- DC 30: *There is more than meets the eye here. Spells and hexes guard the isle. I hear that not even the eyes of the Dragonmarked Houses can find Maggago.*

Over Hearing the Enemy

If the PCs are exploring the fortifications and should approach the entrance to Pluresa's home (area 4), they have the opportunity to witness an event from afar that may have greater repercussions in the future.

From the distance and across the crowds, a disturbance is forming as the attention of the crowd is drawn towards the bridge that crosses the atoll to a protected keep in the rock wall. A carriage with no horses stops before the gate and a half dozen warforged exit, each clad in a black tabard and wielding the finest of weapons. The metallic warriors are unimpressed by the axe wielding minotaurs and hobgoblin shock troops that protect the gate. Seeing the area secure, one of the warforged signals to the coach and a finely dressed elven man exits, his face and neck covered by blue markings. At the site of him, the bull men stand tall and stiff and the storm clouds overhead begin to swirl. Suddenly two lightning bolts fly from the clouds and where they cross there is a great flash and thunderous boom. In its aftermath floats a beautiful woman, her fire red hair and diaphanous dress whirling in the storm. As she descends, all bow before her majesty; all but the marked man and his black clad soldiers. She smiles and offers the man her hand and two of them fly towards the keep while soldiers bar the way.

The PCs are likely curious of the mysterious dragonmarked man and may ask questions. He is not familiar to any of them, however those who succeed on a DC 25 Spellcraft check recognize his mark as a Greater Mark of the Storm. Those who possess the Mark of the Storm automatically succeed.

This scene is meant for the PCs to witness but not get involved. Their vengeance will come another time. If the PCs persist, warn them of the odds. A crowd of fifty or more pirates (use the Combat Statistics for Maggago Pirates from Part Four) watch on and seem to have a slavish devotion to the Pluresa the Siren. In addition, there are twelve minotaurs (each wears a breastplate and has a masterwork greataxe), twice as many hobgoblins in fullplate with halberds and the six warforged soldiers (fighter 10, *DMG* 117). If the PCs attack, both Pluresa and the mysterious man teleport away via some magical contingency or defense. All of the pirates attack the PCs to the best of their ability, though the warforged retreat unless followed.

If one of the Instrument's of Change PCs uses the magical crystal given to them by the Discordant Voyage in the presence of Pluresa, it turns a smoky dark black.

Development: If the PCs do choose to attack, they will eventually be forced to withdraw. When this happens, Oslan offers them a safe place to hid while he pitches his alliance (part four).

Once the PCs have had the chance to witness this scene, or time for play grows short, proceed to Part Four.

Part Four: Unlikely Allies

This encounter should happen at the DM's discretion, either when the party seeks out traitors among the pirates or when sufficient investigations draw his attention to them. Either way, he tries to meet with them in a secluded corner of the stronghold.

"Come just inside and have a seat. It's time we talked." The man moves inside a nearby room. It's a quiet corner of the pirate hold, with no witnesses present. As he leans against the back wall, a small smile creeps across his lips, "I think you don't belong here, but neither do I and I suspect we have similar motives. Maybe it's time we lay our cards on the table and see how we can best help each other."

The man pulls something from a concealed pocket and tosses it on the table. It is a patch displaying a black wagon wheel with the words "One Aim, United!" stitched upon it. "I've shown you mine, now show me yours."

Oslan is a member of the Blackwheel Company's Arclight Battalion and has been sent to infiltrate the pirates, just as the PCs have. Arclight's leadership has begun to question some of the decisions that the Company has made as they blindly follow the dictates of the Dragonmarked Houses, so this operation is entirely off the books. It does however give Mark's Man Oslan Terth a golden opportunity to recruit new allies for his battalion.

Oslan is a confident and smooth man who was escoriated from House Orien at a young age before leaving to find his future with the Company. Any PC from House Orien can make a DC 10 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or DC 15 Intelligence check to recognize him as a House outcast. Non-Orien dragonmarked PCs may make the same checks, but at a –4 penalty. He knows that the Blackwheel Company is going to attack the atoll in order to extract him very soon, and he would like to come out of it in one piece, preferably with some valuable intelligence and resources. Listed below are a handful of points that Oslan is likely to cover in his conversation with the party, and how he plans to woo them to his side.

- His name and rank is Mark's Man Oslan Terth of the Blackwheel Company's Arclight Battalion. He is on a clandestine mission to uncover information about the Captain's Alliance that makes up the pirate fleet.
- He has made the leap that the PCs are also investigating the pirates based on their actions since arriving in Maggago. That, and most of them are clearly not skilled sailors or pirates. He wants to know who they are and specifically what they are up to so they can help each other.
- He knows the general layout of Maggago, and can give the PCs a rough map.
- Oslan suspects that the PCs are part of one of the other factions in Xen'drik. If the PCs admit as much, he claims that Arclight likely has something to trade them in exchange for an alliance. If the PCs agree to negotiate, he requires the PCs admit to which faction they belong so he can offer the proper things.
- Assuming he can piece together that the PCs represent the Cabal of Shadows, he admits that Senior Battalion Commander Tubal d'Cannith holds the child oracle Charlan in his care and he would be willing to trade her back to the Cabal as a show of good faith and to encourage further negotiations of alliance between Arclight and the Cabal.
- If the PCs ask about why the Arclight battalion seems to be acting of its own accord, Oslan admits that some in his battalion believe the Company is being used as expendable slaves by the Dragonmarked Houses and are looking for better friends.
- Assuming a promising conversation, Oslan writes out papers describing when and where to meet next so they can continue their negotiations and recover Charlan.
- If the PCs are not inclined to form an alliance, Oslan tries to part without violence (since he is outnumbered). If that is not possible, see the Fail Negotiations section below.
- If the PCs are inclined towards alliance with the Arclight battalion, Oslan explains that within the hour, an airship will be coming to extract him and bombard the hold. The PCs are welcome to be evacuated with him, but if so, he will need their help. If the PCs agree, see Oslan's Plan below.
- If the PCs are inclined towards an alliance, but do not wish to be evacuated with the Blackwheel spy, he urges them to flee Maggago as soon as they can.

Oslan's Plan

If the PCs wish to further entwine themselves in Oslan's extraction plan, he could definitely use their help, as he explains.

I will be leaving shortly on a Blackwheel airship and you could as well, but not before my comrades bombard this place back to Mabar. However, I want to make my escape as safe as possible and for that we need to

do our best to eliminate the six ballista that defend this atoll against an air attack. I have already sabotaged two of them and paid off the crew of a third such that they will be away from their post when the ship arrives. A fourth group is eating a meal right now that I've made certain will leave them performing less than their best. That leaves two functional ballista that we must eliminate. I can get to one of them, but I haven't time to do something about both of them. I need you to destroy one of them within the hour.

Oslan wants the PCs to get inside one of the guard posts and sabotage the ballista without being so loud or obvious as to put the rest of the complex on alert. He knows there will be a crew of approximately five pirates guarding it and it should be relatively easy to take them by surprise. He expects the PCs to either eliminate the crew or somehow destroy the ballista subtly.

He gives the PCs two smokesticks; one colored red and one colored green. If the PCs cannot destroy the ballista, he wants them to pop the red smoke on or near the ballista that will mark it as a target. If the PCs want evacuation, they should use the green smoke to mark their evacuation site once the airship has arrived.

Oslan stresses that time is of the essence and encourages them to hurry.

Failed Negotiations

It is quite possible that during their meeting with Oslan, the PCs will decide that he is a liability and decide to eliminate him. If they do so, he screams for help, attracting the attention of a few wandering pirates that come to his aid. They know Oslan, they do not know the PCs, so they believe his claims over anything the PCs might say.

Mark's Man Oslan Terth: Hp 61, male human fighter 2/ranger 1/blade of Orien 5; See Combat Statistics.

Maggago Pirates (2): Hp 71, male half-orc barbarian 2/fighter 2/ranger 2; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics: Oslan tries to stay mobile and away from high damage dealing fighters, focusing on fragile targets such as arcane casters. He continues to shout for aid until aid comes. Arriving one round later Maggago pirates rage and attack the nearest foe. The pirates fight to the death but Oslan uses his dragonmark to flee if brought below 25 hp.

Mark's Man Oslan Terth (d'Orien) CR 8

Male human fighter 2/ranger 1/blade of Orien 5

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Action Points 3

Init +2; Senses Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Common, Draconic, Goblin

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +4 shield)

hp 61 (8 HD)

Resist +4 vs. bull rush, overrun or trip

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *longsword* +12/+8 (1d8+3/19-20)

Ranged composite longbow +12/+8 (1d8+2/x3)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +10

Combat Gear *bead of force*, *potion of aid*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of invisibility*, smokestick, tanglefoot bag

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th (least), CL 11th (lesser)):

3/day—*dimensional leap*

1/day—*dimension door*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 10

SQ Improved dimensional leap (can leap in 5-ft. increments instead of 10-ft.), Korran's strength (can bring a medium creature when you use *dimensional leap*), Olladra's twist (use a *dimensional leap* to switch place with an ally or switch to allies within 30 ft.), Orien's grasp (use a *dimensional leap* to teleport ≤5-lb object into your hand, DC 12), swift leap (use *dimensional leap* as a move action for half distance), wild empathy

Feats Heroic Spirit, Least Dragonmark (Mark of Passage—*dimensional leap*), Least Dragonmark (Mark of Passage—*dimension door*), Orien Battle Stride (free 5-ft. step every time an opponent misses you with an attack), Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Bluff +3, Climb +6, Hide +16, Intimidate +4, Listen +10, Knowledge (nature) +6, Knowledge (geography) +6, Move Silently +11, Search +6, Spot +10, Survival +5, Tumble +13
Possessions combat gear plus chain shirt, +1 *longsword*, +2 *heavy steel shield*, *cloak of elvenkind*, mighty composite longbow [+2], 20 masterwork arrows, dagger

Hook “I think we can help each other.”

Maggago Pirates [Raging] CR 6

Male half-orc barbarian 2/fighter 2/ranger 2

CN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +7, Spot +4; darkvision 60'

Languages Common, Orc

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, -2 rage, +5 armor)

hp 71 (6 HD)

Fort +12, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee +1/+1 *orc double axe* +12/+12/+7 (1d8+8/x3) or
mwk battle axe +12/+7 (1d8+11/x3)

Ranged mwk javelin +7 (1d6+6)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Rage 1/day

Abilities Str 18 [22], Dex 13, Con 16 [20], Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6

SQ Uncanny dodge, wild empathy

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Shadow Marches Warmonger, Track, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (orc double axe)

Skills Handle Animal +1, Listen +7, Spot +4, Survival +7

Possessions mithral breastplate, +1/+1 *orc double axe*, masterwork battle axe, 5 masterwork javelins

Hook “We protect buddy Terth! You die!”

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Remove one Maggago pirate.

9th-Level Characters: Add two Maggago pirates.

10th-Level Characters: Add two Maggago pirates and their dire tiger (*MM* 65) pet.

Part Five: Cleansed by Fire

As the PCs leave their meeting with Oslan, they have roughly one hour before the Blackwheel Company attacks. This encounter has one of two paths. If the PCs have agreed to assist Oslan, proceed to Sabotage below. If the PCs have decided not to ally with Blackwheel, proceed to Attack from Above. If your party is split or pursuing other goals, the DM should adjust accordingly. No group of PCs should face both encounters.

Sabotage

Following this path assumes that at least some of the PCs are attempting to sabotage one of the ballista. To do so, they must infiltrate one of the towers upon which the ballista rests. Oslan can tell the PCs the basic layout of the tower from his experience with the others. He knows there should be a double door granting entrance to the inside, which is a large open thirty-foot square area with only stone stairs climbing the wall to the top where there should be doors to the parapets on either side and an entrance to the roof where the ballista is. The crew could be anywhere inside the tower or near the ballista on the roof. The ballista fills one five-foot square.

Oslan also knows that the walls are heavily patrolled, so he suggests against trying to gain entrance to one of the compromised towers and walking across the wall to the top of the target tower. It is likely that the PCs could defeat many or all of the wall guards but the delay in time and risk of possible alarm is too great.

Getting Inside

The saboteurs will need to come up with some kind of plan to gain entrance to the tower. They might try stealth, guile or force; but whichever they choose the DM should adjudicate the success of their plan accordingly. If in doubt, err on the side of the PCs.

Reinforced Wooden Doors: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; AC 5; Break DC 28; Open Locks DC 25.

Creatures: When the PCs arrive, the troll brute is in the bottom of the tower feasting on a freshly slain lamb. Urtarg and his elf warriors are on the roof. It is easy to trick the troll into opening the lower doors, as he doesn't expect any trouble to come from within Maggago, however the others know no one should be entering from the top and are thus much more reluctant to open any doors to the walls. There are no windows in the tower.

Urtarg the Verdant Flame: Hp 85, male kobold warrior 3/wizard 5/war weaver 4; See Combat Statistics.

Elf Warriors (3) : Hp 63, female and male elf barbarian 2/fighter 2/warrior 1; See Combat Statistics.

Troll Thug: Hp 63, *MM* 247.

Tactics: If it is clear there is a threat the troll rushes towards it, attempting to block any entrance or failing that, the stairs. The elves also enter melee unless the troll has successfully blocked the enemy's progression, in which case they rely on their bows. Urtarg uses *nerveskitter* upon himself when rolling initiative and unleashes his eldritch tapestry at the first chance he gets, casting *fly*, *greater invisibility*, and *mage armor* upon himself and his allies. Urtarg knows that Pluresa will not stand for an attack on one of the ballista and is likely to send reinforcements so he orders everyone to keep fighting no matter what, though if he is the last one standing and is injured he is likely to flee unless his victory seems certain.

Loud noises, such as combat draw little attention from nearby pirates, as the air of Maggago is often filled with the sounds of combat. However flashy spells or the smell of smoke quickly draw attention as neither wizards nor fire are common and both often spell danger for a sailor. A group of four Maggago Pirates (see Part Four for Combat Statistics) who know the ballista crew investigate six rounds after such a disturbance.

Development: If it becomes clear the fight is drawing out or the PCs are likely to loose, the DM should begin the Blackwheel Arrives section, allowing the PCs to use the smokesticks provided by Oslan. The goal of the encounter is to make the fight tense and seem epic while not completely overwhelming the PCs.

Urtarg the Verdant Flame CR 9

Male kobold warrior 3/wizard 5/war weaver 4

LE Small dragon (reptilian)

Init +2; Senses Listen +2, Spot +2; darkvision 60-ft., low-light vision

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Sylvan, Undercommon

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 69 (85 with *false life*) (12 HD)

Immune *sleep*, paralysis

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10

Weakness light sensitivity

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk dagger +5/+0 (1d3-3/19-20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +0

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 11th):

4th—*dimension door*, *dragon breath* (DC 20), [†]*greater invisibility*

3rd—*fireball* (DC 19), [†]*fly*, *haste*, *lightning bolt* (DC 19)

2nd—[†]*false life*, *resist energy*, *scorching ray* (+9 ranged touch), *see invisibility*

1st—*hail of stone*, [†]*mage armor*, *magic missile*, *nerveskitter*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+9 ranged touch), *shield*

0th—*acid splash* (+9 ranged touch), *detect magic* (2), *prestidigitation*

[†]Already cast

Abilities Str 4, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 21 [23], Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ Eldritch tapestry, quiescent weaving 3 (release the three spells in his tapestry to his allies and himself as a move action)

Feats Alertness, Dragonwrought (dragon traits), Enlarge Spell, Improved Toughness, Practiced Spellcaster, Sudden Empower, Sudden Widen, Scribe Scroll

Skills Concentration +16, Craft (weaving) +16, Handle Animal +6, Hide +9, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Move Silently +4, Ride +9, Spellcraft +21, Swim +4, Tumble +9

Possessions masterwork dagger, 2 spell component pouches, *headband of intellect* +2

Quiescent Weaving *fly, greater invisibility, mage armor*

Hook *"My flame burns with the bright, yours will burn brighter when I set you alit."*

ELF WARRIORS [RAGING] CR 5

Female and male elf barbarian 2/fighter 2/warrior 1

CN Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; Senses Listen +6, Spot +6, low-light vision

Languages Common, elven

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 63 (6 HD)

Immune sleep

Resist +2 vs. enchantment

Fort +14, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee greatsword +12/+7 (2d6+7/19-20)

Ranged mighty composite longbow +10/+5 (1d8+3/x3)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +11

Atk Options Favored enemy (human, +2), rage 1/day

Abilities Str 16 [20], Dex 16, Con 14 [18], Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8

SQ Elf traits, uncanny dodge, wild empathy

Feats Instantaneous Rage, Powerful Charge, Reckless Rage, Track, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Climb +8, Handle Animal +8, Listen +6, Search +2, Spot +6

Possessions greatsword, dagger, mighty composite longbow [+3], 20 arrows, studded leather armor.

Hook *"By the blood of my ancestors, you will die this day."*

KILAREO CR 12

Male high elf fighter 4/swashbuckler 1/dervish 7

AL CN Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +5; Senses Listen +16, Spot +1, low-light vision

Languages Common, Elven, and Sylvan

AC 27, touch 18, flat-footed 21 (+3 Dex, +6 armor, +3 shield, +2 deflection, +2 dervish, +1 insight)

hp 136 (12 HD)

Immune sleep

Resist +2 vs. enchantment

Fort +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Speed 40 ft. (5 squares)

Melee +1 *merciful longsword* +17/+12/+7 (1d8+8/19-20 plus 1d6 *merciful*) and
+1 *shocking shortsword* +16/+11 (1d6+3/19-20 plus 1d6 *electrical*)

Ranged composite longbow +16/+11/+6 (1d8+4/x3)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +17

Atk Options Dance of death, dervish dance (+4 to hit and damage) 4/day, elaborate parry

Abilities Str 16 [20], Dex 17, Con 16 [20], Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ Elf traits, movement mastery

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

Skills Balance +8, Bluff +3, Diplomacy +3, Listen +16, Perform (Dance) +14, Sense Motive +5, Tumble +15

Possessions *Mithral breastplate* +1, +1 *animated heavy steel shield*, +1 *merciful longsword*, +1 *shocking keen sword*, *belt of strength* +4, *Amulet of health* +4, *ring of deflection* +2, *dusty rose prism ioun stone*,

potion of fly, boots of haste, MW longsword, MW shortsword, might composite longbow [+4], 20 MW arrows.

Dervish Dance (Ex): A dervish can become a whirling dancer of death a certain number of times per day. While in this dervish dance, she can take a full attack action (for melee attacks only) and still move up to her speed. However, the dervish must move a minimum of 5 feet between each attack when using this ability, and she cannot return to a square she just exited (though she may return to that square later during her full attack). The dervish is subject to attacks of opportunity while dancing, but may tumble normally as part of her move. A dervish prevented from completing her move is also prevented from finishing her full attack.

If a dervish wields a slashing weapon while in a dervish dance, she gains a bonus on her attack and damage rolls. This bonus is +1 at 1st level, and it increases by an extra +1 at every odd-numbered level thereafter.

A dervish may only perform a dervish dance while wielding a slashing weapon (she may use a double weapon, or multiple weapons, only if both ends of the weapon or all weapons are of the slashing type). She cannot perform a dervish dance in any armor heavier than light or if she is using a shield. While dancing, a dervish cannot use skills or abilities that involve concentration or require her to remain still, such as Move Silently, Hide, or Search. A dervish with the bardic music ability can, however, sing while she dances, and a dervish can also use the combat Expertise feat while in a dance. A dervish cannot perform a dervish dance while under the effect of a rage or frenzy ability.

A dervish can perform a dervish dance only once per encounter. A dervish dance lasts 1 round for every two ranks of Perform (dance) that the character has. At the end of a dervish dance, the character becomes fatigued for the duration of the encounter (unless she is a 9th-level dervish, at which point this limitation no longer applies).

Movement Mastery (Ex): A dervish is so certain of her movements that she is unaffected by adverse conditions. When making a Jump, Perform (dance), or Tumble check, she may take 10 even if stress and distraction would normally prevent her from doing so.

Dance of Death: At 4th level, a dervish gains the use of the Cleave feats while performing a dervish dance, even if she does not meet the prerequisites for the feat. She does not have to move 5 feet before making the extra attack granted by this ability.

Elaborate Parry (Ex): When she attains 7th level, a dervish gains an extra +4 bonus to Armor Class when she chooses to fight defensively or use total defense in melee combat.

Hook “Send out your best and I’ll fight him, one on one.”

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Remove one elf warrior.

9th-Level Characters: Add one additional troll (*MM* 247).

10th-Level Characters: Add Kilareo.

New Spells

Dragon Breath

Reference: *Spell Compendium* p. 73.

Evocation [Good or Evil]

Level: Cleric 5, sorcerer/wizard 4

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/level

You gain the ability to breathe a gout of energy as a standard action that mimics a dragon’s breath. Once you’ve used the breath attack, you must wait 1d4 rounds before doing so again.

When you cast *dragon breath*, you choose one true dragon whose breath you’re emulating. If you choose a chromatic dragon, then the spell gains the evil descriptor. If you choose a metallic dragon, then it gains the good descriptor. Particulars for the breath weapons of each of the true dragons are provided below.

Chromatic Dragons

Black: 30-ft. line of acid, 1d8/2 caster levels (maximum 10d8); Reflex half.

Blue: 30-ft. line of electricity, 1d8/2 caster levels (maximum 10d8); Reflex half.
Green: 15-ft. cone of acid, 1d8/2 caster levels (maximum 10d8); Reflex half.
Red: 15-ft. cone of fire, 1d8/2 caster levels (maximum 10d8); Reflex half.
White: 15-ft. cone of cold, 1d8/2 caster levels (maximum 10d8); Reflex half.

Metallic Dragons

Brass: 15-ft. cone of *sleep*, lasts 1d6 rounds; Will negates.
Bronze: 35-ft. line of electricity, 1d8/2 caster levels (maximum 10d8); Reflex half.
Copper: 15-ft. cone of *slow*, lasts 1d6 rounds; Will negates.
Gold: 15-ft. line of fire, 1d8/2 caster levels (maximum 10d8); Reflex half.
Silver: 15-ft. cone of paralysis, lasts 1d6 rounds; Fort negates.

Arcane Material Component: A dragonscale of the appropriate color.

NERVESKITTER

Reference: *Spell Compendium* p. 146.

Transmutation

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 immediate action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature

Duration: 1 round

Saving Throw: None (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes

You cast this spell when you and your party roll for initiative. You enhance the subject's reactions in combat, granting it a +5 bonus on its initiative check for the current encounter. If the subject does not make an initiative check within 1 round, this spell has no effect.

Destroying the Ballista

Once the PCs have dealt with guardians of the ballista, they still have to sabotage the ballista itself. The PCs can easily destroy the bowstring by doing 10 point of damage with a slashing weapon. A thorough party might note that there is a barrel filled with new strings (DC 12 Search) in the barracks area of tower and repairs could be made in under five rounds.

To truly eliminate the threat the PCs should destroy the ballista itself by either hacking it to pieces or setting it ablaze. If all else fails, the PCs can mark the top of the tower with red smoke as instructed by Oslan and the Blackwheel Company airship will bombard the top of the tower as they approach.

Ballista: 5 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 50; AC 5; Break DC 30; Disable Device DC 25; -4 to hit, 3d8/19-20.

Development: What happens if the PCs mark themselves with red smoke or fail to evacuate the bombardment site? The *Quicksilver* fires three bombs in their direction as it descends out of the storm. The bombs have a +0 ranged attack and must hit AC 5 to correctly target the area. They explode in a twenty-foot radius and scatter as a grenade-like missile if they miss, except they miss their mark by 1d6x10 feet due to the extreme distance they are fired from. Each explodes for 1d6x1d8 points of fire and acid damage (half the damage is fire, the other half is acid) with a DC 15 Reflex saving throw for half damage. The ballista automatically fails its saving throws.

Blackwheel Arrives

Once the PCs have successfully defeated the tower guards and destroyed the ballista, or they require additional help, proceed with the section. Use or paraphrase the read aloud text appropriate to the PCs situation. It is quite likely that more than one applies and the DM should use all that are appropriate.

Development: If any of the PCs were captured during their investigations, the bombardment blows open their prison, allowing them to escape.

- If the PCs have successfully destroyed the ballista:

Descending through the storm clouds at high speed is a sleek silvery airship ringed in blue flame. Streaking quickly past you can make out the name Quicksilver on the bow above the symbol of a black wheel. Shouts of alarm rise up from across the city as flaming spheres and hot oils begin to pour from the fast moving ship. Armed men, garbed in black, begin jumping over the sides of the ship's rail, their falls magically arrested at the last moment.

At this point the PCs are free to leave. Any forces still battling the PCs begin a fighting withdrawal since it clear that they are needed elsewhere and the damage here is already done. Proceed with the PCs escape below. Maggago will be severely damaged due to the PCs actions.

- If the PCs have marked the ballista with red smoke:

Descending through the storm clouds at high speed is a sleek silvery airship ringed in blue flame. Streaking quickly past you can make out the name Quicksilver on the bow above the symbol of a black wheel. Shouts of alarm rise up from across the city as flaming spheres and hot oils begin to pour from the fast moving ship, targeting the area you marked with red smoke. A half hearted ballista bolt flies through the air punches through the side of the airship, but seems to effect little damage. Armed men, garbed in black, begin jumping over the sides of the ship's rail, their falls magically arrested at the last moment.

At this point the PCs are free to leave. Any forces still battling the PCs begin a fighting withdrawal since it clear that they are needed elsewhere and the damage here is already done. Proceed with the PCs escape below. Maggago will be severely damaged due to the PCs actions.

Consult the Development box above if the PCs are still in the area of the ballista when it is bombarded.

- If the PCs have failed to destroy the ballista or mark it with smoke:

Descending through the storm clouds at high speed is a sleek silvery airship ringed in blue flame. Streaking quickly past you can make out the name Quicksilver on the bow above the symbol of a black wheel. Shouts of alarm rise up from across the city and the remaining ballista begin to fire. A bolt streaks towards the airship and clips the containment ring. The elemental begins to flare and tendrils of flame lick back across the sides of the ship. The Quicksilver ceases its bombardment as the crew attempts to effect repairs and make a hasty escape.

The damage to Maggago is superficial at best, and the Company soldiers have no time to damage it further or evacuate anyone. Oslan uses his dragonmark to transport himself aboard but unless the PCs do likewise, they will be left behind.

- If the PCs flee the area and do not use their green smoke:

Chaos fills the streets as fire and acid rain from the sky. It is clear that the Blackwheel airship will not be able to sustain an assault once the pirates regroup, but the bedlam they have sown for the moment allows you the chance to make a run for the docks. Several of the ships are already ablaze, but with luck you can still make your escape.

If the PCs have not sent her away, the *Falcon* remains unharmed and the PCs may board and flee with her. If the *Falcon* is no longer in port, then the PCs are able to commandeer a small ship called the *seaspray*, barely bigger than a yacht that can hold eight people and set sail. Have the players make a few Profession: Sailor checks to navigate the treacherous exit, but in the end pronounce them successful (possibly describing damage caused to the vessel as they scrap her along the rocks).

- If the PCs request evacuation with green smoke:

Chaos fills the streets as fire and acid rain from the sky. It is clear that the Blackwheel airship will not be able to sustain an assault once the pirates regroup. Seconds after you ignite the smokestick, green alchemical smoke fills the air. The silver vessel streaks toward you and briefly hovers above. Several black clad men jump over the side with ropes that end in hooks. A rough looking soldier smiles at you as he feeds the hook through your weapon belt. "Don't know who you folks are, but you are in for one hell of a ride!" With that he wraps the rope around his arm, tugs on the line and the both of you are hoisted into the sky as the ship rockets into the storm!

Oslan has already used his dragonmark to transport himself aboard and once the Company have the PCs, they flee the area before Pluresa can retaliate. Have each PC make a Strength check to hold on as they fly through the storm and impress on them the fury of the winds as well as the height and speed at which they travel. Should anyone roll particularly badly, their Company "ally" grabs them before they plummet to their death and just laughs with a hearty appreciation for another day in the Company.

Once the PCs have affected their escape, proceed with Ending the Adventure.

Attack from Above

Following this path assumes that the PCs have rebuffed Oslan's offer and are thus possible targets of the Blackwheel attack. As they move through the streets, they witness the attack.

Descending through the storm clouds at high speed is a sleek silvery airship ringed in blue flame. Streaking quickly past you can make out the name Quicksilver on the bow above the symbol of a black wheel. Shouts of alarm rise up from across the city as flaming spheres and hot oils begin to pour from the fast moving ship. A half hearted ballista bolt flies through the air punches through the side of the airship, but seems to effect little damage. Armed men, garbed in black, begin jumping over the sides of the ship's rail, their falls magically arrested at the last moment. Chaos fills the streets as fire and acid rain from the sky. It is clear that the Blackwheel airship will not be able to sustain an assault once the pirates regroup, but the bedlam they have sown for the moment allows you the chance to make a run for the docks.

As the PCs flee the area they have two brief encounters. Run each in succession and keep up the thrill of a running battle as the forces of the pirates and the Company fight with each other and the PCs attempt to run through it.

Bombardment!

As the PCs flee, the *Quicksilver* bombards an area they pass through. It is clear the ship is streaking towards them and dropping exploding bombs as they go. A group of raging pirates are running toward them from the opposite direction. Give each PC a half action (standard or move) before the ship arrives. Those that seek cover gain a +4 bonus to the Reflex saving throw. The *Quicksilver* fires one bomb in the PCs' direction that has a +0 ranged attack and must hit AC 5 to correctly target the area. It explodes in a twenty-foot radius and scatters as a grenade-like missile if it misses, except it misses the mark by 1d6x10 feet due to the extreme distance it is fired from. It explodes for 1d6x1d8 points of fire and acid damage (half the damage is fire, the other half is acid) with a DC 15 Reflex saving throw for half damage. The pirates fail their saving throws and are incinerated.

One Aim, United!

Just before the PCs make good on their escape, they encounter a group of Blackwheel soldiers moving to sabotage any ships that have survived the bombing run. In order to get to freedom, they will have to make their past the Company one last time.

Creatures: The Blackwheel soldiers are on the lookout for trouble and unless the PCs are being especially stealthy they will run directly into each other as both head for the docks. The soldiers have been told to leave no witnesses, so they move to eliminate the PCs as soon as possible.

Arett: Hp 50, male human expert 1/wizard 6; See Combat Statistics.

Brute Squad: Hp 79, male ogre barbarian 4, MM 199.

Hisp: Hp 31, male tiny viper familiar; See Combat Statistics.

Kamdor Kundarak: Hp 73, male dwarf fighter 6/warrior 1; See Combat Statistics.

Little Nel: Hp 43, female halfling rogue 6/warrior 1; See Combat Statistics.

Svaat Grimmtal: Hp 45, male human cleric 7; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics: Brute Squad and Kamdor charge the nearest foe, trying to eliminate one enemy as quickly as possible. Nel tries to move around to flank or targets a lightly armored spellcaster if one is evident. Svaat and Arett support with spells. Brute Squad fights to the death, but the others try to effect a retreat if more than half of them are down, but they will not leave without the bodies of their fallen comrades.

Arett	CR 6
Male human expert 1/wizard 6 N Medium humanoid (human) Init +2; Senses Listen +0, Spot +6 Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Sylvan	
<hr/>	
AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 10; (+2 Dex, +4 <i>mage armor</i>) hp 38 (50 with <i>false life</i>) (7 HD) Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +7	
<hr/>	
Speed 30 ft. (6 squares) Melee dagger +3 (1d4/19-20) Ranged light crossbow +5 (1d8/19-20)	

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 6th):

3rd—*fireball* (DC 17), *invisibility sphere*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17)

2nd—[†]*false life*, *glitterdust* (DC 15), *mirror image*, *scorching ray* (+6 ranged touch)

1st—*grease* (DC 14), [†]*mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+6 ranged touch)

0th—*daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *prestidigitation* (DC 13), *ray of frost* (+6 ranged touch)

[†]Already cast

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 10, Cha 10

Feats Alertness, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation), Sudden Maximize, Sudden Widen, Weapon Focus (ray)

Skills Bluff +3, Concentration +12, Decipher Script +7, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (local: Iuz Border States) +13, Knowledge (the planes), +13 Knowledge (religion) +13, Spellcraft +13, Spot +6, Tumble +6

Possessions combat gear plus 2 daggers, light crossbow, 10 bolts, 2 spell component pouches, backpack, tindertwig, thunderstone.

Spellbook spells prepared plus 0—All PHB cantrips; 1st—*burning hands*, *disguise self*, *magic missile*, *silent image*; 2nd—*blur*, *minor image*, *see invisibility*; 3rd—*tongues*

Hook “I think we should bring this back to R&D for study.”

Hisp CR -

Male tiny viper familiar

AL N Tiny magical beast

Init +7; Senses Listen +6, Spot +6; Scent

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 18; (+2 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 19 (31 with *false life*) (7 HD)

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +8

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares), climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1 plus poison)

Space 2 ½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** -8

Abilities Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 2

SQ Deliver touch spells, empathic link, improved evasion, poison, scent, share spells, speak with master, speak with snakes

Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +11, Climb +11, Concentration +10, Decipher Script +3, Hide +15, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (local: Iuz Border States) +9, Knowledge (the planes), +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +6, Spellcraft +9, Spot +6, Swim +5, Tumble +7

Kamdor Kundarak CR 6

Male dwarf fighter 6/warrior 1

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +4; Senses Listen +0, Spot +0; 60' darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20; (+1 Dex, +2 shield, +8 armor)

hp 73 (7 HD)

Resist +2 vs. poison, spells, & spell-like abilities; +4 stability

Fort +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee dwarven waraxe +11/+6 (1d10+5/x3)

Ranged light crossbow +8/+3 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Power Attack

Abilities Str 16, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 6

Feats Blind-fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Specialization (dwarven waraxe)

Skills Climb +13, Jump +13

Possessions 2 dwarven waraxes, full plate, heavy steel shield, long sword, dagger, light crossbow, 10 bolts, 50' of silk rope

Hook "One Aim, United!"

Little Nel CR 6

Female halfling rogue 6/warrior 1

CN Small humanoid (halfling)

Init +7; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +10

Languages Common, Halfling

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15; (+1 size, +3 Dex, +4 armor)

hp 43 (7 HD)

Resist +2 vs. fear

Fort +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee rapier +8 (1d4+2/18-20)

Ranged light crossbow +8 (1d6/19-20)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +3

Atk Options Sneak attack +3d6

Combat Gear tanglefoot bag

Abilities Str 15, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ Evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge

Feats Distracting Attack, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Climb +4, Disable Device +9, Escape Artist +12, Hide +16, Listen +12, Search +9, Spot +10, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +8

Possessions combat gear plus chain shirt, rapier, dagger, light crossbow, 20 bolts, thieves tools, sap

Hook "I'll cut you down to size!"

Svaat Grimmtal CR 7

Male human cleric 7

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Abyssal, Common

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 23; (+1 Dex, +8 armor, +2 shield, +3 deflection (*shield of faith*))

hp 45 (7 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +9

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee mwk morningstar +5 (1d8-1)

Ranged light crossbow +7 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4; *freedom of movement*

Special Actions rebuke undead 2/day

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 7th, 8th for chaotic and evil spells):

4th—[†]*freedom of movement*, *summon monster IV*, *unholy blight*^P (DC 18)

3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *invisibility purge*, *magic circle versus good*^P

2nd—*aid*, *hold person* (DC 16) *shatter*^P (DC 16), *silence*, *sound burst* (DC 16)

1st—*bless*, *cause fear* (DC 15), *divine favor*, *obscuring mist*, *protection from law*^P, [†]*shield of faith*

0th—*create water*, *detect magic* (2), *detect poison*, *light*, *mending*

D: Domain spell. Deity: The Shadow. Domains: Chaos, Evil.

[†]Already cast

Abilities Str 8, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 19, Cha 8
Feats Divine Vigor (+10 move & +14 hp for 1 rebuke attempt), Improved Initiative, Improved Toughness, Lightning Reflexes
Skills Concentration +11, Diplomacy +9, Knowledge (religion) +11, Spellcraft +11
Possessions plate mail, heavy steel shield, masterwork morningstar, holy symbol, light crossbow, 10 masterwork bolts, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (10 charges)

Hook “The Company wants you dead and I’m only too happy to oblige.”

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Remove Little Nel.

9th-Level Characters: Add one troll (MM 247).

10th-Level Characters: Add one troll hunter (MM 247)

Escape

Once the PCs have made it past the Blackwheel soldiers, they are free to commandeer a vessel to make good on their escape.

Approaching the docks it is clear that several of the ships are already ablaze, but with luck you can still make your escape. As you run along the dock you see two ships set sail, but one of them slows to stop as its rigging bursts into flame when the Quicksilver pours burning pitch onto it from above.

If the PCs have not sent her away, the *Falcon* remains unharmed and the PCs may board and flee with her. If the *Falcon* is no longer in port, then the PCs are able to commandeer a small ship called the *seaspray*, barely bigger than a yacht that can hold eight people and set sail. Have the players make a few Profession: Sailor checks to navigate the treacherous exit, but in the end pronounce them successful (possibly describing damage caused to the vessel as they scrap her along the rocks).

Once the PCs succeed in a tense escape, proceed with Ending the Adventure.

Ending the Adventure

Once the PCs have escaped the pirate hold, they safely return to Stormreach. Several days later they stand before the Voice of the Storm once again as he listens to their tale. Choose the ending that most represents the PCs actions.

Alliance with the Company

If the PCs successfully made their way inside the pirate hold and forged an alliance with the Arclight Battalion of the Blackwheel Company, the Voice is very pleased.

Once again in the depths of the Red Ring, the Voice of the Storm listens to your tale with a large smile. “You have done well my minions. Soon we will become fast friends with these Arclighters and use them to corrupt the Company from within. Between the information on the pirate fleet and this powerful new tool, you have increased our fortunes tenfold. You will be richly rewarded as you so deserve.”

PCs with this Conclusion receive the story object Blackwheel Infiltrator (EXCS27) and the event treasure.

War with the Company

If the PCs successfully made their way inside the pirate hold and but did not forged an alliance with the Arclight Battalion of the Blackwheel Company, the Voice is displeased.

Once again in the depths of the Red Ring, the Voice of the Storm listens to your tale with a frown. “You have done well my minions in bringing me the information on the pirate fleet, but you have let slip a powerful tool that would have let us become fast friends with these Arclighters and use them to corrupt the Company from within. I am disappointed in you, but never let it be said that I am ungenerous. You will be rewarded as you deserve.”

PCs with this Conclusion receive the event treasure but not the story object Blackwheel Infiltrator (EXCS27).

Incompetence

If the PCs did not even successfully made their way inside the pirate hold the Voice is furious.

Once again in the depths of the Red Ring, the Voice of the Storm listens to your tale, becoming more and more agitated until he reaches throw the bars to grab one of the slaves and strangles him to death. As the pitiful wretch lets out his last gurgle and slumps to the ground, the Voice turns to you. "You are pathetic. I should have sent someone capable of this simple task, but instead I trusted you. Flee from my sight before I put you in the ring!"

PCs with this Conclusion do not receive event treasure or the story object Blackwheel Infiltrator (EXCS27).

Resolving Obscura Secret Missions

Any PC that completes the secret mission given to them by their Obscura at the beginning of the adventure should receive the **Obscura Reward #15** story object. Here is a summary of what must be done to receive this reward.

- *Children of Xoriat*: To succeed in their mission, Brewmaster Alfra must be slain and a sample of his Black Label Ale must be brought back to Sublime.
- *The Defiance*: In order to succeed in their assignment the PC must help forge the alliance with the Arclight Battalion.
- *Instruments of Change*: The PC must witness Pluresa's enrapture of the crowd and use the crystal in her presence.
- *Mourners of Yore*: The PC must gather information or use their own powers to determine what magical protections defend the isle. Use you best to judgment to decide is they are successful in understanding the protections.
- *No Obscura*: The PC must keep Captain Egden alive and make sure the PCs do no harm to the Falcon.

Event Treasure

If you are running *CSH-8 Racing Midnight* as part of another event and the PCs successfully infiltrate Maggago, please have each PC record the following event treasures upon their adventure journals in addition to any story objects. Each PC receives a *potion of fly* and *ring of swimming* to be carried on their adventure journal until the results of this event are reported and their EV is updated.

Adventure Questions

1. How did the PCs deal with Captain Egden?
 - a. They forced him to help through violence or blackmail.
 - b. They magically controlled him.
 - c. They tricked him in to thinking they were allies.
 - d. They failed to gain his aid.
2. How well did the PCs gather information on the atoll?
 - a. They used multiple methods and got lots of information.
 - b. They found some things out.
 - c. They waited for something to come to them and didn't learn much.
 - d. They never made it to Maggago.
3. How did the PCs deal with Oslan?
 - a. They formed an alliance.
 - b. They refused his offer but left amicably.
 - c. They refused his offer and fought with him.
 - d. They never crossed path with the Blackwheel spy.
4. Did the PCs bring back news of the mysterious dragonmarked man?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
5. How best describes flight from Maggago?
 - a. They crushed their foes.

- b. They needed help or were forced to run away.
 - c. They never got this far.
6. Rate the players' role-playing (while keeping in mind limitations of convention time restrictions)?
- a. Excellent, they should all be on the silver screen.
 - b. Good, you had a fun time.
 - c. Fair, someone used a funny voice.
 - d. Poor, they rolled some dice and ignored chances to role-play.

Story Objects

Blackwheel Infiltrator

Code: EXCS27

You are given documents, training, and a uniform sufficient to pose as a member of the Blackwheel Company's Arclight Battalion with the rank of recruit. This gives you +4 competence bonus to Bluff and Disguise skill checks to oppose checks to pierce your disguise.

Obscura Reward #15

Code: EXCS28

You have succeeded in a secret mission given to you by your Obscura. The benefit you receive depends upon the Obscura to which you belong.

Children of Xoriat: You receive a +1 insight bonus to saving throws to avoid intoxication.

Defiance: You have a special relationship with the Arclight Battalion. If you possess EXCS27 Blackwheel Infiltrator, you gain a "promotion" to the rank of dragoon as part of your disguise. If you do not possess EXCS27, you are given sufficient knowledge to gain a +2 competence bonus to Bluff and Disguise checks made to impersonate a recruit in the Arclight Battalion.

Instruments of Change: You receive a +2 competence bonus to Sense Motive checks to determine if someone is under the effects of an enchantment.

Mourners of Yore: Once per adventure before rolling, you may add +1 to any caster level check. If you have no caster level, you may instead use an immediate action once per adventure to add a +1 insight bonus to one saving throw prior to rolling the die.

No Obscura: You receive a +2 insight bonus to Diplomacy checks made with pirates.

DM Aid #1: Maps



Player Handout #1: Obscura Orders

The DM should have each player secretly write down their membership in an Obscura, if any, and then provide them with the appropriate handout. These are SECRET orders and should only be shown to players who PCs are in the listed Obscura.

Children of Xoriat

Sublime: “The pirates are kept docile through the subtle use of alcohol. Spies have told us that Brewmaster Alfra keeps it flowing. Kill him and bring me a sample of his special ale.”

Goal: Kill Brewmaster Alfra and bring Sublime a sample of his Black Label Ale.

The Defiance

The Voice of the Storm: “If you succeed in infiltrating one of the pirate bases, find us a spy or ally within who is willing to betray his fellows. It matters not if they are a loyal pirate, one of their slaves, or someone else.”

Goal: Find the Defiance a spy or ally against the pirate fleet.

Instruments of Change

Discordant Voyage: “We suspect that some of the pirates may be magically controlled. Take this crystal and if you witness an acts of devotion of the pirates for their master, take out the crystal and focus upon it. If you are in the presence enchantment magic, it will turn dark.”

Goal: Use the magical crystal to determine of the pirates are being controlled through enchantment magic.

Mourners of Yore

The Melancholy: “We have growing numbers of refugees to hide and protect, and the pirates seem particularly adept at hiding their bases. Magic must be involved. Determine what, if any magical protections prevent us from locating it.”

Goal: Determine what magical protections hid the pirate base.

No Obscura

Deondag: “I suspect that this Captain Egden and his ship will be of use to us in the future. Keep him alive and make certain his ship comes to no harm.”

Goal: Keep Captain Egden alive and the *Falcon* afloat.