



TEMPLE OF THE SUN CABAL

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13TH AGE IS A FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME BY
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TEMPLE OF THE SUN CABAL

In this issue of *13th Age Monthly*, we present an adventure that owes its roots to a collaboration between Fire Opal Media and *13th Age* fans. At Gen Con Indy 2015, panelists and attendees at the *13th Age* Adventure Design Seminar brainstormed a rough adventure outline using *13th Age* design principles and best practices. We've taken what we think are the best ideas from that session, and developed them into the short adventure you find here.

OVERVIEW

Temple of the Sun Cabal is designed for four to six 5th level player characters. In search of a missing vampire, the PCs are led to a volcanic island in the Midland Sea occupied by fanatical sun cultists. The cultists plan to sacrifice the vampire in a ritual to summon and control a long-lost flying temple to the sun gods, and use its power to “purify” the Dragon Empire by exterminating all other religions. Can the players prevent the dawn of a terrifying new age, ruled by a ruthless theocracy of fire?

You'll find a full write-up of Sunlit—which is now a flying dungeon variously known as the Wild Garden, the Ziggurat, and the Abomination—in *13 True Ways*. You can use this adventure to bring the dungeon into your campaign as a location to be explored; or if that doesn't appeal to you, feel free to have it explode spectacularly or crash into the Midland Sea after it's finished serving its purpose as a momentary threat to the world.

Assumptions: This adventure assumes that the PCs have already formed a group and are open to missions from the icons. If not, you may need to introduce additional scenes to get them started.

Time: You should be able to complete this adventure in a single session of roughly four hours.

Adjustments: If you're playing with only three PCs, you'll want to make the battles slightly easier. Bumping the group all the way to seven PCs means that you should add a bit more than another PC's worth of monsters; you'd probably be fine making the battles as tough as they would need to be for eight PCs because of the high number of synergies in a seven-character adventuring group.

Using icon relationship advantages: The Icons sections attached to each scene mention ways that player characters could use specific icon relationship advantages to help them against the temple's defenders and defenses. Our suggestions cover what might be accomplished with a 6 result.

If the PC uses a 5, the player or the GM needs to make the results a bit more interesting than outright success or nullification of a monster ability. Rather than further complicate a combat scene with a strange consequence from what was intended to be an advantage, we recommend saving the complications

from using a 5 for after the battle. This advice about delaying complications doesn't apply to the last battle, which is already complicated and should be free to get even more complicated!

SETUP

To tune the adventure for your campaign, you'll want to figure out why the icons have taken an interest in this unusual vampire.

THE VAMPIRE

Eleodra Malfador is very, very, *very* old. After she barely escaped her last great battle against heroic adventurers, she decided to leave evil plots and Machiavellian schemes against her fellow undead behind, and retire to a quiet corner of the Dragon Empire. She spent the past several years in a small cliffside tower on the coast of the Midland Sea, reading books, viewing the stars, writing an extensive treatise on astronomy, and draining the occasional villager.

But the world will not allow Eleodra Malfador to live in peace. Centuries ago, she was an eyewitness at a great event, the details of which are now lost to history. Now, one of the icons needs that knowledge.

THE ICONS

Before the game begins, have the players make their icon relationship rolls. Write down which icon rolls had results of a 5 or a 6. Choose one icon from these positive results to be the group's patron for this adventure. Through an NPC contact, this is the icon who sends the PCs on their mission. Optionally, you can ignore the rolls and choose an icon that one or more PCs has a relationship with to be the patron. If you and your players enjoy intrigue, you could also decide that multiple icons are involved, each with their own—perhaps conflicting—agendas. This type of scenario usually results in the PCs working against each other, or working together to figure out how to complete the mission in a way that satisfies all the icons (or none of them).

We've provided write-ups for several icons who might want to know what Eleodra knows. Each write-up includes suggested NPC representatives of that icon, what the icon wants from Eleodra, and what the NPC gave the PCs to offer her as payment. These adventure seeds help get the players invested in this mission, and provide the GM with a storyline that could continue beyond this adventure.



MAGICIANS: THE ARCHMAGE, PRIESTESS, OR DIABOLIST

The NPC quest-giver could be...

- A young, ambitious wizard or cleric who badly wants to impress the icon (or in the case of the Diabolist, strike a blow against her).
- An experienced wizard, cleric, or demonologist who has faced Eleodra in the past and bears her a grudging respect as an honorable (for a vampire) foe.
- A disreputable trader in forbidden secrets.

The event Eleodra witnessed could be...

- A pact with a god, demon, or other powerful magical being. The icon needs Eleodra's testimony to get out of the agreement, enforce it, or use it as leverage against another icon.
- The supposed destruction of a powerful evil artifact, now rumored to have reappeared in a far corner of the Empire.
- A prophecy about a wizard, divine avatar, or a demonspawn who would appear in the 13th age to either aid the icon or destroy them.

In exchange for Eleodra's knowledge, the icon offers...

- A telescope lens of unsurpassed power and clarity.
- Eleodra's lost soul, contained in a snowglobe that shows the humble cottage in which she was born.
- A sealed scroll upon which is written the true name of the demon who cursed Eleodra to undeath.
- An observatory on the moon.



POWER BROKERS: THE DWARF KING, ELF QUEEN, EMPEROR, LICH KING, OR PRINCE OF SHADOWS

The NPC quest-giver could be...

- A greedy or power-hungry noble, merchant, clan leader, or crime boss.
- A noble, merchant, clan leader, or crime boss whose land, wealth, inheritance, or position has been unjustly taken from them.
- A shrewd, seasoned diplomat or deal broker trying to settle a thorny dispute.
- A fighter, paladin, or rogue who's been given an impossible mission by the icon.

The event Eleodra witnessed could be...

- The signing of a recently discovered will that—if it's real—could tip the balance of power between two icons by granting land, title, or power (temporal or supernatural) to an ally or enemy.
- A treaty that settled a conflict between hostile factions, such as the elves and the dwarves, or a former Emperor and High Druid.
- The fall of the Wizard King, including some interesting bits that didn't make it into the history scrolls.
- The secret ritual that made a monster undefeatable, and that named the one thing that could kill it.
- The construction of a supposedly impregnable vault or castle, giving her firsthand knowledge of its secrets.

In exchange for Eleodra's knowledge, the icon offers...

- The deed and title to her ancestral homeland, now ruled by the icon.
- The phylactery containing the life force of the lich who is her most hated enemy.
- The one thing vampires always lack in your campaign, such as: her reflection, her shadow, or the ability to enjoy a nice meal with garlic.
- A silver locket set with glittering, unearthly gems. Inside is something only Eleodra can see or hear, but it will make her weep with joy.
- A loyal forgeborn dog or cat, to keep her company for the rest of her existence.

TOWARD SEABRIGHT

Begin the adventure with a montage, as the adventurers hunt for Eleodra. Each scene in the montage gives one PC a useful piece of information, or a magic item.

Travel montage: Pick one player and ask them to describe a problem that the party faced while searching for the vampire—but not how it was solved. Then, ask the player to their left how their character solved that problem. There is no dice rolling, just a quick narration from each player. As you go around the group everybody will get a chance to create a problem, and everybody will get a chance to have their character solve a problem.

After a player describes how their character solved a problem, give them one of the following items or pieces of information as a reward. Depending on the problem and the solution, the reward could come from a monster or an NPC, or the character could come across it through skill or luck.

- **Information:** Eleodra retired to a cliffside tower on the Midland Sea, but she was kidnapped by the members of a fanatical sun cult.
- **Information:** A short time ago a group of sun cultists moved into an abandoned temple to the sea gods on a volcanic island near the fishing village of Seabright. They are heavily armed and made it clear that visitors aren't welcome.

- **Information:** In the old days, there were three ways to get to the temple of the sea gods: the Path of Welcome, the Path of Battle, and the Path of Cunning.
- **Information:** The clerics of the sea gods abandoned the temple years ago when the island's volcano became dangerously active. Some village youths who sailed to the island on a dare reported seeing fire elementals roaming the temple.
- *Potion of fire resistance (champion tier):* You gain resistance to fire damage dealt by creatures or hazards of champion tier or lower for the rest of the battle, or for five minutes. Attackers must roll a natural 16 or higher on a fire attack roll to overcome your resistance and do full damage. Otherwise, they deal half damage.
- *Rune of cold (champion tier):* If applied to a weapon, the weapon gains the cold energy type and a +2 bonus to attack, and it deals +2d6 + 2 damage. If applied to armor, the armor gains a +2 bonus to AC and PD. In both cases, you do not take damage from the *melee burn* fire elemental ability. The rune's effects lasts for the rest of the battle, or for five minutes.

DAWN OF TERROR

The smell of rain is in the air, and heavy, dark clouds loom overhead as the PCs approach the ancient fishing village of Seabright. A muddy, cart-worn road leads downhill to a village of about 50 sturdy brick buildings tightly packed along cobblestone streets. A long wooden building sits on the harbor (skill check with a relevant background if you think the fact could be important: fish are salted and pressed there, and the oil packed into barrels) sits on the harbor, where a fishing fleet of 30 boats of varying sizes is docked.

Out at sea, perhaps 10 miles offshore, a huge, towering mass of dark clouds hovers over a low, rocky island. A PC with a background related to nature or magic can make a DC 20 Intelligence or Wisdom check to notice that the shape, color, and formation of the clouds don't fit the local weather and climate: they seem unnatural somehow, and ominous.

As the group nears the village, the peaceful scene is shattered by distant screams. A stream of fire erupts from the dockside buildings, lancing into the sky. Moments later the docks are ablaze.

When they arrive at the scene, the PCs see a handful of terrified fishing folk armed with spears, cutlasses, and clubs facing a nightmarish foe: a mummy dressed in archaic red and gold druid's robes, with a gem-studded gold circlet on its head. Sunlight blazes in its eye sockets and mouth, and through gaps in its bandages. An engraved gold tablet hangs from a chain around its neck. The tablet reads, "Zariel, a druid of lost Sunlit. May he one day rise again to joyously greet the dawn."

Four charred bodies lie at the mummy's feet. Nearby is a coffin-sized wooden crate that seems to have fallen off the back of a nearby cart and smashed open. The PCs may not realize at first that the charred bodies were sun cultists; see the After the Battle section below for more details.

# of PCs	Solar mummy	Max fire elementals
4	1	5
5	1	7
6	1	9

TERRAIN & TRAPS

Fire: The solar mummy set the docks on fire and the blaze is growing. On round one, anyone entering (or pushed into) the fire takes 1d6 fire damage, and the same amount if they end their turn there. On subsequent rounds, increase that damage by a number of d6s equal to the escalation die.

TACTICS

The solar mummy sends its summoned fire elementals to attack ranged combatants, relying on its *mortal terror* and *gaze into the eternal sun* abilities to give it an advantage over melee enemies. When it becomes staggered, it commands one or more of the fire elementals (depending on what's happening in the battle) to enter the village and start fires there. While the PCs try to stop them, the solar mummy attempts to disengage from any remaining PCs and escape overland. If it succeeds in escaping, feel free to have it reappear at the adventure's climax and ascend to the Wild Garden on a pillar of flame. Alternatively, Zariel could become a recurring villain in your campaign.

If the mummy falls before the fire elementals, it's your choice what happens next. Maybe the fire elementals peel away and try to set the entire town on fire. Or maybe they just fizzle out.

ICONS

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Priestess, High Druid, or Great Gold Wyrms could use one of them to make a saving throw to avoid being stunned by the solar mummy's *gaze into the eternal sun* attack, or be immune to its *mortal terror* ability. They could also use one or more advantages to persuade the solar mummy that they are not its enemy, and to stop fighting and return to its long sleep—perhaps giving them some information about Sunlit before it does so.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Archmage, High Druid, or Priestess could use them to break the solar mummy's control over a fire elemental, banish a fire elemental (use a standard action to remove it from play), or prevent the solar mummy from summoning more elementals.

SOLAR MUMMY

7th level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +9

Vulnerability: cold

Fiery grasp +11 vs. PD—20 fire damage

Natural 16+: The solar mummy can make a *gaze into the eternal sun* attack against the target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Gaze into the eternal sun +12 vs. MD**—18 psychic damage, and the target is stunned (–4 penalty to defenses and can't take any actions) until the end of its next turn.

R: Shaft of sunlight +12 vs. AC—28 holy damage

Natural even hit: 10 ongoing fire damage.

Circlet of revelation: Once per battle when the solar mummy is hit by an attack that targets MD, it can take half damage from that attack.

Mortal terror: The presence of a mummy unnerves opponents, giving it an unusual fear aura. While engaged with this creature, enemies that have 70 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks. Each time an enemy with 70 hp or fewer attacks the mummy, hit or miss, it must roll a save. On a success, it's no longer affected by the fear aura effects of any mummy in the battle.

Summon fire elemental: At the beginning of its first turn, the solar mummy can summon three fire elementals as a quick action. Once each subsequent round, it can summon a number of fire elementals equal to the escalation die as a quick action (once per turn). Each summoned elemental appears in a spot nearby the solar mummy, and acts immediately after the solar mummy's turn.

Don't worry about the summoned monster rules as they apply to player characters; these just fight like new monsters added to the battle.

Stop summoning new fire elementals when the mummy has summoned the max number of elementals as indicated in the right hand column in the battle building chart above.

AC 23

PD 17

MD 21

HP 108



FIRE ELEMENTAL

5th level wrecker [ELEMENTAL]

Initiative: +10

Whipping flames +10 vs. PD—14 fire damage, and 7 ongoing fire damage to a random nearby enemy (including an unconscious one)

Melee burn: When an enemy makes a natural odd melee attack roll against the fire elemental, that attacker takes 1d12 fire damage.

Resist fire 18+: When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Wildfire transformation: Roll a d10 at the start of each of the fire elemental's turns. If you roll less than or equal to the escalation die, it shifts into wildfire form until the end of the battle. While in this form, it gains the following improved attack (and you stop rolling *wildfire transformation* checks):

C: Elemental wildfire +10 vs. PD (one nearby enemy OR each nearby enemy taking ongoing fire damage)—20 fire damage, and 7 ongoing fire damage

Miss: 7 ongoing fire damage.

AC 21

PD 20

MD 17

HP 64

Loot

The dead sun cultists' belongings are mostly burned up, but they have a total of 100 gp in loose-and-still-hot coins. The solar mummy wears a +2 *circlet of revelation* (*Book of Loot*, page 48), and its gold tablet and other burial jewelry are worth 500 gp total.

Circlet of Revelation (recharge 11+): When you're hit by an attack that targets MD, you can take half damage from that attack. However, in that moment, you're blasted by a divine revelation or vision so profound you cannot ignore it. The GM may describe the vision, or ask you to do it, or get another player to provide it, or use some other random method like flipping through the *13th Age* rulebook and having your character "see" the first picture you come to. Whatever that vision is, your character is temporarily obsessed with it. Quirk: This item's really just a big bundle of quirk wrapped in a little bit of damage mitigation. It's pretty quirky already.

Feel free to make the first few revelations mummy-flavored!

AFTER THE BATTLE

After the battle, the villagers can confirm that the four charred bodies are the remains of sun cultists—one cultist they saw in town regularly, and three newcomers—who were taking the coffin-sized crate to a small sailing boat docked in the harbor. The boat is frequently used by the cultists to carry supplies from Seabright to the island.

The villagers can also confirm that there are three approaches to the island: the Path of Welcome, which leads to an open harbor that is visible from the temple; the Path of Battle to the north, where pilgrims were tested in combat against horrible monsters; and the Path of Cunning to the south, which required a test of skill to pass. No one living today knows what the paths of Battle or Cunning are like.

A PC who has taken note of the plaque around Zariel's neck can roll a DC 20 Intelligence check. Success indicates that they recall that there was once a flying temple to the sun gods called Sunlit that fell to dark forces. If it ever truly existed, it was lost in the skies long, long ago.

If the PCs decide to take the cultists' boat to the island, the villagers will lend them a skilled pilot to sail it. The villagers are also willing to lend the PCs a boat out of gratitude for being saved from the pyromaniac mummy (or sell them a boat, if the PCs are being jerks).

JOURNEY TO THE ISLAND

The party sails out of the harbor and reaches the island without incident. As they approach, they can use a telescope (or make a DC 15 Wisdom check with the naked eye) to see a stone wharf with three medium-sized boats at anchor. A flight of wide stone steps flanked by watchtowers leads up to the crumbling ruins of a temple built from volcanic rock. If the group is approaching at night, the wharf, tower, and temple are lit by torches. The



PCs can't see any activity on land, and no other boats are on the water in the area, but the red banners of the Invincible Sun cult hang from every tower and wall. Clouds of steam billow from the island.

At this point the PCs can choose to continue straight to the wharf (the Path of Welcome, just below), sail north to the Path of Battle (page 9), or south to the Path of Cunning (page 10).

PATH OF WELCOME

Don't be fooled by the name of the path: there's no easy way onto the island!

As the group's boat approaches the island, the sun spear cultists keeping watch in the towers raise the alarm and attack, while sun shield cultists pour from the temple and down the wide stone staircase, ready to fight the PCs if they make it ashore.

TERRAIN & TRAPS

Swim: When the battle begins, the boat is far away from the shore and will reach the wharf in two rounds, taking ranged attacks from the defenders all the way in. (If the PCs did something clever to deceive the lookouts, you *could* start the battle one round closer; or you could pretend you were going to start it three rounds away and keep it at two!)

A PC with a swimming-related background who doesn't want to take missile fire can dive into the water and make a DC 20 Constitution check to swim underwater all the way to shore

without surfacing. When the shore is nearby, the DC drops to 15. Anyone who fails surfaces early and can be targeted with ranged attacks.

Flaming oil: Of course, jumping out of a serviceable boat isn't always a great idea! The area of water nearby the shore is coated with a layer of flammable oil. When set on fire, it burns for three rounds before going out. Any PC swimming in that area takes 10 ongoing fire damage. If the PCs sail the boat into the burning oil, the boat protects them from the fire for one round before the flames spread throughout the vessel. Any PC on the boat then takes 5 ongoing fire damage, and another 5 damage at the start of each round so long as they stay on the boat. If the PCs dawdle and decide to sail around while the boat is on fire, feel free to have it burn to its keel in 2d3 rounds.

Watchtowers: The sun spear cultists in the watchtowers aren't going to choose to come down, so PCs will probably have to go up and get them. The internal staircase takes a move action to climb. A sun spear cultist standing at the head of the stairs gains a +2 attack bonus against enemies on the stairs, and can block people from getting on top of the watchtower for at least a round unless a PC uses a movement trick. PCs could also climb the watchtowers (DC 20 Dex check), use magic to get to the top, or use ranged or close attacks against the cultists (who gain a +2 bonus to all defenses behind the cover of the parapet unless the PC has elevated for a better shot.)

Tactics

The sun spear cultists try to destroy the PCs with *divine light* attacks before they get to shore, focusing their attacks on ranged combatants first. If the boat comes nearby, one of the sun spears uses *sphere of sunfire* to set the oil on the water on fire. If the PCs make it to shore, sun shield cultists maneuver to try and keep the PCs in a group so the sun spear cultists can attack as many of them as possible with *sphere of sunfire*.

Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the High Druid, Prince of Shadows, or the Three could spend it to reduce the DC of a swimming check by 5.

A PC that has relationship advantages with any icon could spend it to intimidate the cultists enough that the PCs can attack first as if it were an ambush (13th Age core book, page 164), or cause one of the cultists to flee the fight.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Archmage, Elf Queen, or Diabolist could spend one to force a spell-casting cultist to reroll their attack, or to gain a +2 bonus to PD for the rest of the battle.

A PC that has icon advantages with the Three could draw on the power of the Red to magically extinguish (or take no damage from) burning oil.

# of PCs	Sun spear (S)	Sun shield (C)
4	3	10
5	3	20
6	4	20

SUN SPEAR CULTIST

6th level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

Golden spear +11 vs. AC—15 holy damage

Natural 16+: 5 ongoing holy damage

R: Divine light +11 vs. PD—21 holy damage

Natural 16+: 10 ongoing holy damage

C: Sphere of sunfire +11 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies in a group)—16 fire damage

AC 22

PD 16

MD 20

HP 90

SUN SHIELD CULTIST

6th level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

Mace +12 vs. AC—12 damage

Lethal intercept 11+: Once per round, an engaged sun shield cultist can roll a save to pop free from one enemy engaged with it and intercept an enemy moving past it. If it succeeds, it can make a *shield smash* attack against the intercepted target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Shield smash +12 vs. PD**—12 damage

AC 22

PD 20

MD 16

HP 23 (mook)

Mook: Kill one sun shield cultist mook for every 23 hp you deal to the mob.

Loot

If the PCs loot the bodies they find treasure equal to 50 gp per cultist in coins, rings and earrings, and personal items including a carved snuff box, an antique dagger, a gold holy symbol of the sun, and a silver belt buckle.

AFTER THE BATTLE

If the PCs defeat the cultists, they can climb the stairs to the ruined temple unmolested. (A pilot from the village, if any, will probably opt to take the boat off shore and come back when the PCs give a signal.) All around, clouds of volcanic steam billow from fissures in the ground. Passing through a grand archway

magnificently carved with scenes of sea gods and monsters, the PCs enter the remains of the Outer Court (page 11). Or if they prefer, the group could instead scale the wall and drop into the Outer Court through one of the many holes in the roof.

GAMEMASTER

If you're skimming quickly instead of hanging on every word, remember that the Path of Welcome is only one of the three ways the PCs can get into the temple. The Path of Battle and the Path of Cunning are still to come.

PATH OF BATTLE

If the Path of Welcome sounded too good to be true, the PCs may have opted for truth-in-advertising: welcome to the Path of Battle!

As the group's boat rounds the northern end of the island, they see the following words chiseled into a cliff:

TO ONE WHO SEEKS PERFECT WISDOM, THE PATH OF BATTLE IS LIKE A RAGING STORM. IF THOU SHOW COURAGE, SKILL AT ARMS, VALOR, AND RESOLVE, YET ARE SLAIN, THOU SHALT DWELL FOREVER IN THE GODS' DEEP HALLS. IF VICTORIOUS, THOU SHALT STAND THIS DAY IN THEIR TEMPLE.

A short distance ahead, the PCs see a small cove with a stone wharf and narrow set of stairs that zig-zag up a cliff. Just then, the sea in front of the bow begins to boil and froth. Moments later a seven-headed, serpentine horror bursts from the waves and attacks.

TERRAIN & TRAPS

Boat: During the battle, the PCs' boat rocks and tosses on the churning waves. While fighting on the boat, a PC must roll an easy saving throw (6+) at the start of each of their turns. On a failure, they take a -2 penalty to attacks, defenses, and skill checks involving Strength or Dexterity until the start of their next turn.

TACTICS

If the hydra is fighting groups of more than four PCs, when the escalation die reaches 3 each of its heads raises and roars. The next turn, harpies swoop down from their cliffside roost and join the battle. If the PCs drop the hydra to 0 hp, any remaining harpies in the battle disengage, flee the fight, and will not return.

If the PCs climb the cliff (DC 25 Dex check) and follow the harpies to their caves, the harpies turn out to be magical servants of the sea gods, performing their duty of spiritually testing those who choose the Path of Battle—both they and the hydra eventually return to life whenever they are slain. Outside of battle, they are peaceful and cooperative. They tell the PCs that shortly after the sun cultists arrived at the island, a small party of cultists tried the Path of Battle. They failed the test, and the harpies have not encountered the cultists since then.

Icons

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Priestess, High Druid, Elf Queen, or the Three could use one of them to cancel out one of the hydra's abilities—for example, to turn a natural even roll by the hydra into a natural odd roll, prevent the growth of an additional head, allow a single PC attack to ignore *too tough to trick*, or prevent the hydra from using *roiling swirl* to move and engage another target.

# of PCs	Hydra	Harpies
4	1	0
5	1	2
6	1	4

SEA GODS' HYDRA

Huge 7th level wrecker [BEAST]

Initiative: +11

Gnashing teeth +12 vs. AC (7 attacks)—25 damage

Natural even hit or miss: The hydra's next *gnashing teeth* attack, if it has an attack left this turn, can be against any nearby enemy instead of against a creature engaged with it.

Miss: 7 damage.

Too tough to trick: Whenever the hydra would suffer any of the following conditions, it ignores the condition and takes 5 damage instead: confused, dazed, hampered, stunned, or weakened.

Roiling swirl: If the hydra has at least two *gnashing teeth* attacks left during a turn, it can expend one of those attacks to move to engage a nearby enemy as a free action (but it will take opportunity attacks for doing so).

Sprout eighth head: The first time the hydra is staggered, as a free action it gains 40 hit points and an eighth *gnashing teeth* attack, and is considered undamaged at its new hit point total. Using the hydra's current hit points as a new baseline, the hydra will be staggered again when it drops below 50% of that total.

Sprout ninth head: The second time the hydra is staggered, as a free action it gains 40 hit points and a ninth *gnashing teeth* attack, etc. Use a new hit point baseline as before, but there is no tenth head waiting to sprout.

Resist opportunity attacks 16+: When an opportunity attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Swims like a shark: If a shark was amphibious . . .

AC 24
PD 21
MD 17

HP 200

TEMPLE HARPY

It's hard to be certain in the middle of a fight to the death, but you think these harpies aren't as hideous as harpies you've fought earlier in your adventuring career. Their unkempt hair smells like seaweed instead of brimstone, but their claws still cut deep.

4th level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

Talons +6 vs. AC—10 damage

Cull: The harpy gains a +5 bonus to attack and damage with this attack against any enemy suffering from any *beguiling song* effect.

C: Beguiling song +10 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—5 psychic damage

Natural 16-17: The target is hampered (easy save ends, 6+).

Natural 18-19: The target is weakened instead of hampered (easy save ends, 6+).

Natural 20: The target is confused instead of weakened (easy save ends, 6+).

Flight: Harpies are neither quick nor graceful, but their wings get the job done.

AC 18

PD 14

MD 17

HP 44

Loot

On the wharf, the PCs find a stone jug containing the equivalent of four champion-tier healing potions.

AFTER THE BATTLE

After the battle with the seven-headed hydra, the PCs disembark at the wharf and see the following chiseled into the cliff before them, next to a flight of stone steps:

THOUGH THE SEA IS ETERNAL, MERCILESS, AND
TERRIBLE, THE BRAVE MAY FIND PEACE ON THE FAR
SHORE. PASS, O WARRIORS, AND ENTER THE PLACE
OF HOLINESS.

When the PCs arrive at the top of the cliff via the stairs, they see a swatch of grass sloping gently downward to the temple, a ruin of volcanic stone blocks with ornate aquatic carvings. Volcanic steam emerges from fissures in the ground around the temple. An ornate archway on the side of the temple facing the PCs leads into the Outer Court (see opposite). The PCs could also scale the wall and drop into the Outer Court through one of the many holes in the roof.



The hydras presented in the 13th Age core rulebook don't deal enough damage because we misapplied our damage math to the hydra's multiple attacks. The sea gods' hydra above doesn't have this problem and will be a much more serious threat. If PCs drop during this fight, thank them for taking the Path of Battle and contributing to the ongoing inquiries of the Hydra Research Project!

PATH OF CUNNING

Rightly guessing that the Path of Welcome is nothing of the kind, and deciding that the Path of Battle was too much truth in advertising, your player characters opted for the Path of Cunning. What could go wrong?

As the PCs' boat rounds the southern end of the island, they see the following words chiseled into a sheer cliff:

TO ONE WHO SEEKS PERFECT WISDOM, THE PATH OF
CUNNING IS LIKE SAILING TREACHEROUS SHOALS. IF
THOU SHOW WIT, QUICKNESS, AND COURAGE, YET
ARE SLAIN, THOU SHALT DWELL FOREVER IN THE
GODS' DEEP HALLS. IF VICTORIOUS, THOU SHALT
STAND THIS DAY IN THEIR TEMPLE.

Below these words, the group sees a stone wharf and a pair of double doors leading into the cliff. The doors are made of a silvery metal—a dwarf PC, or a PC that makes a DC 15 check using a metalworking-related background, recognizes it as a copper-nickel alloy that is highly resistant to corrosion by seawater.

The door is locked with an elaborate mechanism that looks like eight sahuagin whose tridents cross over each other in a complex pattern. A PC can open the lock with a DC 25 Intelligence check (to figure out how the magical locking mechanism works) followed by a DC 20 Dexterity check (to actually open the lock). Don't split the checks: the same PC needs to handle both checks.

If both checks succeed, the doors grind open to reveal a circular tunnel leading into the cliff, its ceiling just high enough for a tall human to stand without stooping. The doors slam shut behind the PCs when they enter the tunnel. The tunnel is lit by a pale blue light from a cave or room about 20 feet ahead.

If one or both skill checks fail, the stone beneath the PCs' feet vanishes and they fall into a rushing torrent of seawater beneath the wharf. The rush of water sweeps the PCs along an undersea tunnel, then spits them out in the same room that the circular tunnel above leads to. Along the way they each take 4d6 damage from slamming into, and being scraped against, rocks and coral.

THE TORRENT CHAMBER

Both routes lead to a circular chamber about 20 feet in diameter and 50 feet high. Eight soapstone statues of sahuagin glowpriests stand evenly spaced around the chamber, their heads tilted back so they look skyward. Spheres of magical light glow at the tips of the coral rods they hold aloft, illuminating the chamber. (Breaking a coral rod requires a DC 20 Strength check and extinguishes the light on that rod.) At the foot of each statue sits a giant clamshell approximately 4 feet in diameter, and a wooden oar. The chamber continues upward to a circular opening, through which the PCs can see the sky.

The torrent of seawater from the tunnel below flows out of a large opening in the center of the chamber and rushes upward, defying gravity, spiraling up the walls of the chamber to exit out the top. The PCs can see rocks jutting from the chamber walls, and geysers of water occasionally shoot outward.

Using the clamshells and oars, the PCs can ride the water up and out of the chamber. Thanks to the gravity-warping magic, the walls of the chamber become “down” for anyone riding on the torrent. Jumping into the torrent without grabbing a clamshell and an oar just spits you back out into the chamber and deals 3d6 damage for your troubles. (Alternatively, you could allow an ill-equipped character to make the journey but with a –2 penalty to their skill checks and defenses.)

It takes three move actions to make the trip. During each move action, each PC riding the torrent must make a DC 20 Dexterity check. (We look forward to hearing how player characters justify applying their backgrounds to these torrent-riding skill checks!)

If a PC rolls a natural 19 or 20, another adventurer of their choice may forgo the skill check during their next move.

When a PC fails the skill check, roll 1d6 and make the corresponding attack below against the PC:

1–2: Geyser +15 vs PD—3d8 damage

Natural 18+: The PC must make a DC 15 Dexterity check or fall back into the sahuagin chamber, taking 4d6 damage.

3–4: Rock +15 vs PD—4d8 damage

Natural 20: The PC takes a –2 penalty to the next Dexterity check they make while riding the torrent.

5–6: Sahuagin spacetime warp +15 vs MD—3d8 psychic damage

Natural 16+: The PC may choose to take an additional 2d8 psychic damage in exchange for asking the GM one question about the adventure. If the GM decides that answering this question truthfully would reveal too much about the adventure, the PC gains an incremental advance as a compensatory blessing instead of hearing the truth or being lied to!

If the PCs decide not to ride the shells and think of another way up the chamber, good for them! This is the Path of Cunning, after all, and the gods smile on those who outwit their traps and hazards.

If most of the PCs make it, but one hapless adventurer keeps falling back into the chamber, trapped by precision geyser blows, consider hand-waving and asking for the story of how they accidentally make it to the top, hapless and battered.

When the PCs make it to the top, the torrent widens into a peaceful river. The PCs can see that it flows into an ornate archway in the side of the temple, a ruin of volcanic stone blocks with ornate aquatic carvings. Volcanic steam emerges from fissures in the ground around the temple. If the group enters the temple through the river archway, they arrive in the Outer Court (section just below). The PCs could also scale the wall and drop into the Outer Court through one of the many holes in the roof.

In case the group enjoys making things hard for themselves, the other two ways into the temple are through the archway described in the Path of Battle, or the front entrance, which is approached via the Path of Welcome.

ICONS

A PC that has icon relationship advantages with the Prince of Shadows could spend one to automatically succeed in one of the skill checks to open the door, or to warn the group just before the stone vanishes (giving everyone on the wharf a DC 20 Dexterity check to avoid falling into the torrent of water).

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Archmage could use them to ignore damage from one *sahuagin spacetime warp*, trigger its ability to grant the player an answer from the GM without taking the additional damage, or perhaps even (by spending multiple advantages) use a *spacetime warp* to teleport themselves to the top of the chamber.

LOOT

As the group drifts slowly downstream toward the temple, they pass a stone pillar with a stone jug resting atop it, within arm's reach. The jug contains the equivalent of four champion-tier healing potions. Your call whether the contents also taste like sahuagin blood.

If one or more PCs are convinced that the clamshell or the oar are powerful magic worth hanging onto, you might humor them in some future adventure. Not in this temple, however.

OUTER COURT

This area was once a domed courtyard where clerics of the sea gods welcomed visitors or passed the time in debate or meditation. Now it is a tumble of fallen rocks with fungus and lichen growing on them, fragments of pottery, and broken statues of sea deities and demigods. A stone bridge leads to the main courtyard across a saltwater stream that enters through an archway on one side of the court (see the Path of Cunning) and exits through an underground channel that leads back down into the sea. A set of steps lead from the stream up to the main courtyard.

When the PCs reach the main courtyard, they hear voices coming from below: a powerful voice shouting, and a chorus of voices chanting in response. They can't make out the exact words, but following the sound, they find a staircase winding down into the heart of the island, where the cultists are conducting their ritual sacrifice. Under looming storm clouds, the PCs descend.

THE SACRIFICE

As the PCs descend the stairs, they can make out what the voices are saying in call-and-response:

We call upon the giver of life to undo the curse of undeath!

The sun, invincible and eternal!

There is no life but that bestowed by the sun!

Let all who worship false gods bow before its might!

With this sacrifice we call down our holy temple of Sunlit, lost in the skies, to take it back from the defiling hands of the Lich King!

Lost Sunlit shall be rekindled: the beacon of a new age!

With the power on Sunlit in our hands once more, we shall become as the sun!

Eternal and invincible!

The stairs lead to a natural tunnel in the rock that connects to a large, humid cavern, thick with sulfurous fumes, its floor a fire-spurting lake of lava. Sun shield cultists stand on ledges ringing the lake and two stone walkways without guardrails arch across it. Standing in the center where the walkways meet, and doing most of the shouting, is a heavily armored figure in a tunic emblazoned with a sun symbol, its face hidden by a helmet. The figure holds a sword that shines as if reflecting bright sunlight.

Near the sun sword paladin, the vampire Eleodra Malfador sits glumly in an iron cage that hangs in midair, suspended from a thick chain leading up through a hole in the cavern ceiling. Through a larger hole elsewhere in the ceiling the PCs can see flashes of light inside the mass of clouds that hangs over the island.

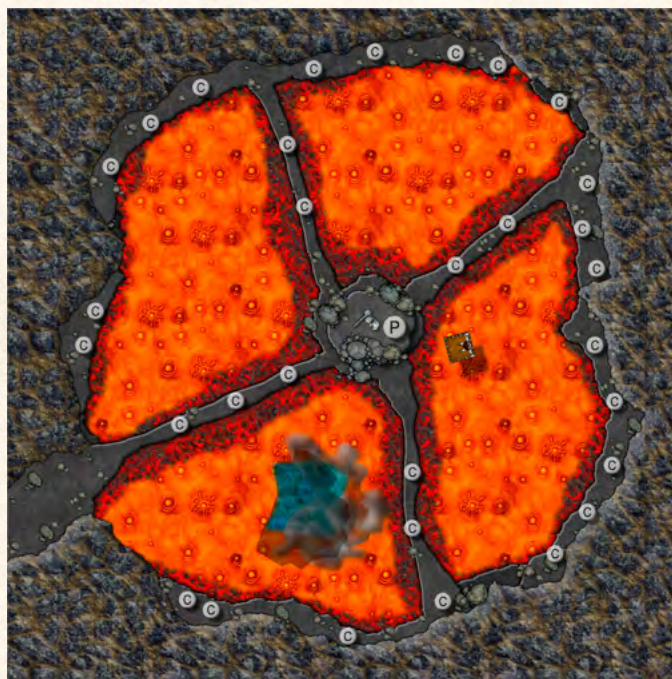
The sun sword paladin concludes the speech and gestures with its sword. With a loud rattle, the cage slowly descends toward the lava. The cage's descent mirrors the descent of the summoned ziggurat the paladin calls Sunlit, dropping down from out of the clouds round by round, as you'll see in the description of the battle below.

TERRAIN & TRAPS

Cage: Unless the PCs stop it, the cage descends into the lava and the vampire is destroyed when the escalation die reaches 5. (If you have PCs who tinker with the progression of the escalation die, you'll probably want to track the number of rounds instead, and at the start of the sixth round, the vampire is toast. If you choose this approach, interpret the timing notes below accordingly.)

The following actions require a DC 20 Dexterity check, which increases to DC 25 when the escalation die reaches 3, and DC 30 when the die reaches 4:

- Jumping from a walkway to the cage, or to the chain supporting it.
- Picking the cage's lock.
- Leaping to safety while holding a weakened vampire.



- Climbing up the chain to the hole in the ceiling, where they can fight the sun cultist operating the machinery that lowers the cage into the lava, and take control of it.

A PC could also leave the battle, run to the surface, find the machinery a short distance from the temple ruins, and stop the cage's descent. It takes two turns to reach the device this way. This seems like a non-fun option, so if a PC decides that this is the way to handle things, make their session more fun by stationing at least two sun spear cultists at the machinery as guards.

Fumes: Toxic fumes rise from the lava. The PCs take 1d6 fire damage when they first enter the cavern, and at the start of each round when the escalation die is even.

The fumes also make it hard to see. Any attacks made against foes you're not engaged with take a -2 penalty. PCs who have icon relationships with the Crusader, Diabolist, Dwarf King, or the Orc Lord ignore the penalty to attacks—they're used to toxic underground environments.

Lava: Close proximity to the lava (hanging above it, flying low over it) inflicts 2d6 fire damage per round to a PC (but not to their enemies). Falling in inflicts 4d6 fire damage per round to a PC or the sun sword paladin, and instant death for a sun shield cultist. A natural 20 roll on an attack knocks a target that's on a ledge or walkway into the lava; a natural 1 roll on an attack causes the attacker to fall into the lava if they're on a ledge or walkway.

Ledges: We've scattered sun shield cultist mooks around the narrow ledges in the chamber. They're supposed to be observing the ritual, but as soon as the PCs show up, they run toward the PCs as best they can. Let them dive over flaming chunks of lava and do other un-mookish stunts to get at the PCs—this is their home terrain and they're high on imminent world domination (or something).

There's not room on the ledges to run around mooks without taking opportunity attacks, and moving that close to the edge could also count as putting yourself in proximity to the lava (2d6 fire damage that turn). You can disengage from one mook and

move to the next without getting too close to the lava, but maybe you should just fight your way through!

There's no need to stick to our even distribution of cultists. GM, if you want to make things tougher on the PCs, place a crowd of mooks between them and the paladin at the start of the battle.

The ziggurat: During each round of battle, Sunlit—transformed by strange magic into the Wild Garden—descends from the clouds and increases its impact on the fight. Apply the following effects at the start of each round.

Before the fight begins: Through the large hole in the cavern ceiling (indicated by the blotch in the lava at the lower left), the PCs see the clouds boiling and churning. A massive, dark shape—the size of a large fortress or castle—grows larger as it descends through the clouds.

Round one: The dark shape resolves into a massive, upside-down stone ziggurat. It is overgrown with strange plant life, and vines and writhing tendrils hang from it.

Round two: As the ziggurat slowly descends, dark, bat-winged creatures emerge from it and swoop down to where the PCs and the cultists are fighting. As they approach, the PCs see that they are living stone gargoyles, half-covered in green and gray plant life.

Round three: Several Wild Garden gargoyles grab $1d4 + 1$ sun shield cultists and carry them screaming into the sky, disappearing into the ziggurat. Sunlit isn't what the Sun Cabal was expecting! The remaining Wild Garden gargoyles attack the PCs.

Round four: At the beginning of the round the ziggurat's pointed base crashes through the hole in the cavern ceiling and chunks of stone fall into the battle. All PCs in the battle must make a DC 20 Dexterity check, and non-gargoyle NPCs must make a hard save (16+), or take $4d6$ damage.

Round five: The ziggurat—which the ritual summoned, but cannot control—starts to drift away. Any remaining Wild Garden gargoyles try to disengage and fly back to the ziggurat with their first action, but fight using their second action if they can't get free. The frantic sun sword paladin flees combat at the beginning of its turn (taking an opportunity attack if engaged) and either climbs the chain or takes the stairs, attempting to reach the surface and climb a vine up into the ziggurat before it flies out of reach. If the sun sword paladin succeeds, the PCs see the paladin disappear into the hanging plant life that covers the ziggurat, and hear horrified screams as the strange edifice flies away.

Round six: Sunlit is gone, but the vampire burns anyway if the PCs haven't done something to stop it!

Tactics

During the first two rounds, the sun shield cultists use *lethal intercept* to try and keep the PCs away from the sun sword paladin and the vampire, while the sun sword paladin uses *blazing beacon* to improve their chances to hit. On the third round, if the sun sword paladin is not engaged with an enemy it will move into melee, using its *tactician* ability to increase the sun shield cultists' damage.



If possible, Wild Garden gargoyles focus on PCs with ranged attacks, since they pose the greatest potential threat to the ziggurat.

Icons

A PC that has icon relationship advantages with the Priestess or Great Gold Wyrm could use one of them to negate the +2 bonus gained by enemies via the sun sword paladin's *burning beacon* attack. A PC that has relationship advantages with the High Druid could use one to delay the solar sun paladin's transformation into fire elemental form by one round, or use two advantages to prevent the paladin from transforming altogether.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the High Druid, Priestess, or Lich King could use them to redirect a Wild Garden gargoyle away from themselves and to another target. A PC that has relationship advantages with the Lich King could reinvigorate the weakened vampire to help with her rescue, reducing the DC of skill checks to free her by 5.

A PC that has icon relationship advantages with the Dwarf King could use them to avoid falling into the lava, or knock one gargoyle, the sun sword paladin, or $1d4$ sun shield cultists into the lava.

A PC that has icon relationship advantages with the Crusader, Emperor, or Orc Lord, and is nearby the sun sword paladin, could spend them to negate its *tactician* ability.

SUN SHIELD CULTIST

6th level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

Mace +12 vs. AC—12 damage

Lethal intercept 11+: Once per round, an engaged sun shield cultist can roll a save to pop free from one enemy engaged with it and intercept an enemy moving past it. If it succeeds, it can make a *shield smash* attack against the intercepted target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Shield smash +12 vs. PD—12 damage**

AC 22
PD 20 **HP 23 (mook)**
MD 16

Mook: Kill one sun shield cultist mook for every 23 hp you deal to the mob.

SUN SWORD PALADIN

7th level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +9

Sword of the sun +12 vs. AC—28 holy damage

Natural even hit: The target also takes 8 ongoing holy damage

R: Burning beacon +12 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—15 holy damage

Natural even hit: All sun shield cultists get a +2 bonus to their next attack roll this battle against the affected targets.

Tactician: Sun shield cultists nearby the sun sword paladin deal damage equal to their level when they miss with an attack.

Fire elemental transformation: Roll a d8 at the start of each of the sun sword paladin's turns. If you roll less than or equal to the escalation die, it shifts into fire elemental form until the end of the battle. While in this form, it gains the following attack (and you stop rolling *fire elemental transformation* checks):

C: Elemental wildfire +12 vs. PD (one nearby enemy OR each nearby enemy taking ongoing fire damage)—30 fire damage, and 11 ongoing fire damage

Miss: 11 ongoing fire damage.

AC 23
PD 21 **HP 108**
MD 17

# of PCs	Sun shield cultists (C)	Paladin (P)	Gargoyles
4	20	1	3
5	25	1	5
6	30	1	7

WILD GARDEN GARGOYLE

As the ziggurat flies overhead, scraping peaks, eliminating towers, and smashing through treetops, its gargoyles—now half-covered in green and gray plant life—fly out to harvest new life forms for the Wild Garden.

5th level troop [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +4

Furious claws and fangs +9 vs. AC—9 fire damage

Natural 11+: The gargoyle can make two more melee attacks as a free action (but never more than three total attacks per standard action, even if you roll another 11+).

Flight: Gargoyles can fly, but not very well. They would rather crawl or climb.

Seed-changed: When staggered, the Wild Garden gargoyle flees battle and flies to sit (upside-down) on the ziggurat again, where it is quickly overgrown by swarming plant life. At the start of its next turn, the gargoyle is absorbed into the ziggurat and is no longer a target.

Nastier specials

Rocky hide: The gargoyle has *resist damage 12+* against attacks targeting AC.

AC 21
PD 24 **HP 60**
MD 14

LOOT

If the PCs loot the bodies they find treasure equal to 50 gp per remaining cultist in coins, rings and earrings, and personal items including a curved glass lens in a silver frame (which can magnify objects or focus the sun's rays), a carved wooden reliquary containing a fragment of bone from a legendary sun priest of the 9th age, and a pair of high-quality boots.

The sun sword paladin also has the following magic items:

Belt of Dusk and Dawn (recharge 6+): Heal with a free recovery at the moment of sunset or sunrise. Quirk: Struck by existential angst in the middle of the night.

Sword of the invincible sun (+2 two-handed sword): When you're fighting under an open sky during the day and you hit with a natural even attack using this weapon, the target takes 10 ongoing holy damage (epic: 25 damage). When fighting in the overworld, increase the ongoing damage by 10. Quirk: Can't abide darkness.

AFTER THE BATTLE

One way or another, after the battle the summoned ziggurat of Sunlit will have moved on, and the sun sword paladin will either be killed, captured by the PCs, or absorbed by the Wild Garden. (Surprise!) If the PCs manage to unmask the paladin, he or she could be an NPC known to the group, or an unknown NPC with a burn-scarred face.

If you wish, the Wild Garden can become part of your campaign as a champion tier dungeon full of deadly, magic-tainted plant life ruled by an undead druid and flying randomly around the Dragon Empire leaving a wake of destruction wherever it goes. Or it could return to the clouds, and only the PCs will know the horrifying truth behind the legends.

