





BY

J. Golin Madden and Kenneth "Axel" Carlsson

WRITTEN BY: J. COLIN MADDEN, KENNETH "AXEL" CARLSSON DEVELOPMENT: DAVID JARVIS ARTWORK: ANTHONY COURNOYER, JOESEPH WIGFIELD EDITING: J. COLIN MADDEN [AYOUT: DAVID JARVIS





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INTRODUCTION

North of the Cradle of Life, near the Trachan Steppes, the Keza-Drak have begun a crusade to hunt down and capture the elusive Narmrothan Horse Lords. They bring back the slaves to encampments in the southern part of the steppes, where the Sundaari Blood Lords perform dark and twisted rituals on them.

BACKGROUND

The first Keza-Drak appeared in Simarra almost ten years ago, after the betrayal of Agärazön the Just, and have since then managed to conquer almost the entire western part of the great continent. The hordes of Keza-Drak are without mercy and those whose lives they spare are doomed to a life in enslavement. The most infamous slave pits in Simarra are those in Thel-Kaza and Naeth-Kügraz, but there are other minor slave encampments spread all-over the realm, serving different purposes.

For years the Narmrothan Horse Lords have evaded capture by the fierce Keza-Drak, but when the Sundaari discovered the potency of the Horse Lords' blood, a great army was sent into the Trachan Steppes to capture the enemy. The Keza-Drak have made their camps in the south, where they can hide in the deep gorges, but when the night comes bringing darkness with it, they hunt on the steppes. Their vision allows them to see in the darkness, giving them a clear advantage over the humans.

The captives are taken to the Sundaari who keep them in chains lest they should think of trying to escape. They extract as much blood as possible, yet not so much that it will kill them. The Narmrothan blood is mixed with poisons and infused into the captives, whose screams fill the camp, but this is only part of the many experiments the Blood Lords perform. The Blood Lords care little for what happens to the Narmrothans, but hope to find the secrets to an eternal life, giving them immunity to disease and poison.

With the capture of their kin, the Horse Lords have moved closer to the southern border, attacking the encampments directly in the hope of freeing their friends and family. These warriors are the fiercest among the Narmrothan and have gained a legendary reputation over the years. Their names are praised around the campfires, but sadly, most of them give their lives to the cause.

HOOKS

To get the heroes involved in the adventure, use one of the following hooks:

• The heroes have been tasked with patrolling the region in search of a Storm Rider courier who is long overdue with supplies of great importance to the freehold the heroes are living in.

During their patrols, they come across a dead great eagle; its carcass hacked for meat. The location of the rider is unknown, but Keza-Drak bodies are nearby as well as a trail leading southwest in the direction of the Salmarin River.

• A friend of the group has been captured by the Keza-Drak and brought back to the slave camp. As a Narmrothan, he is doomed to a life in pain and agony. The heroes have managed to track the Keza-Drak and have located the encampment.

• The heroes are surprised during the night by a small party of hunting Keza-Drak. However, the monstrous creatures are not interested in merely killing the group, but instead try to capture them alive.

Narrators can choose to capture the PC's. They will be brought back to the slave camp where they are thrown into the filthy slave pens. Alternately, the PC's can choose to track any Keza-Drak who flee the battle back to the slave pens.

• It is rumored that a Sundaari Blood Lord has discovered a great secret and plans to use it against the Horse Lords. A Narmrothan war chieftain asks the party to infiltrate the encampment, hoping to find out what the secret is and how it will bring about the downfall of the Horse Lords.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure site is created to challenge four heroes of at least 4th level, but can easily be scaled to challenge higher level heroes.

The way the slave encampment is written, a large group of Keza-Drak are away, hunting on the Trachan Steppes, which leaves the site vulnerable to attacks. Guards have been posted at the Keza-Drak general's tent, to protect it while he is away, but he could just as easily be here with his most important warriors surrounding him.

THE SLAVE CAMP

The camp of Thel-Kedra is located at the bottom of a wide gorge running west to east. A rampart has been built up along the southern gorge wall, with heavy wooden spears set into the dirt to keep out intruders.

There is a small slave pen outside, where the slaves who are not Narmrothan Horse Lords are kept. This is a filthy place and the Keza-Drak care little for them, giving them only small quantities of food and water, which means that not all the slaves survive.

Four huge tents have been erected in the



eastern part of the camp, to house the Keza-Drak general and his mightiest warriors. A hole in the southern wall leads into three caves, which is where the Sundaari Blood Lords have made their camp, and also where they keep the Narmrothan slaves.

1. THE RAMPART

This rampart was created by slaves now long dead. The rampart is around 9 feet high with steep sides where heavy wooden poles have been stuck into the ground. These spears are meant to discourage the Horse Lords from attacking the encampment on horseback.

The dirt is filthy and filled with bones, some from dead animals, but others from the slaves who died here. The only place to properly enter the slave camp is through the northern ramp, which is just broad enough to allow two Keza-Drak to walk side by side.

There is a makeshift gate made from wooden

poles that are easy removed from inside the camp. Four Keza-Drak (1st-level outsiders) wielding mighty bows and curved swords are always stationed near the gate and will only allow other Keza-Drak inside. They will call out for their general if a threat arises and attack if they feel confidant in their winning chances.

Keza-Drak rampart guards (4); Large-sized 1st-level outsider (native); Spd 30 ft.; **Abilities:** Str +4, Dex 0, Con +2, Int +1, Wis -2, Cha -2; **Feats:** Cleave, Rage^B; **Traits:** Damage Reduction +2/supernatural, Darkvision 60 ft.; **Saves:** Toughness +4, Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; **Combat:** Attack +0, Damage +4 (unarmed), +7 (scimitar), +7 (bow), Defense +0, Initiative +0.

2. THE SLAVE PENS

An impenetrable wall of thick iron-fortified poles surrounds the slaves on all sides, allowing no one to escape. There are at least forty slaves here most of the time, but the pens were built to house only half that number. These slaves are humans from other lands, elves, and gnomes. They live and die in their own filth, and no one has ever managed to escape these pens, which are guarded by two Keza-Drak (1st-level outsiders) at all hours of the day.

The lock however is rather poor, crafty Heroes could bypass it and get the drop on the guard or slip quietly out to hide among the tents.

Keza-drak slave guards (2); Large-sized 1st-level outsider (native); Spd 30 ft.; **Abilities** Str +4, Dex 0, Con +2, Int +1, Wis -2, Cha -2; **Feats** Cleave, Rage ^B; **Traits:** Damage Reduction +2/supernatural, Darkvision 60 ft.; **Saves**: Toughness +4, Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; **Combat:** Attack +0, Damage +4 (unarmed), +7 (scimitar), Defense +0, Initiative +0.

Iron Lock; Disable Device Difficulty 20, Strength Check to force open Difficulty 30, Toughness +10.

3. THE KEZA-DRAK QUARTERS

The four tents here house the mightiest of the Keza-Drak warriors. The largest tent is where you'll find the Keza-Drak general, surrounded by his wide selection of exotic weapons; an impressive collection. He keeps two Keza-Drak guards (1st-level outsider) outside at all times and only those, the general wishes to see is allowed inside. The tent is decorated with his war trophies and weapons, a macabre sight to outsiders.

Keza-drak guards (2); Large-sized 1st-level outsider (native); Spd 30 ft.; **Abilities**: Str +4, Dex 0, Con +2, Int +1, Wis -2, Cha -2; **Feats**: Cleave, Rage^B; **Traits**: Damage Reduction +2/ supernatural, Darkvision 60 ft.;

THE WIND ORD

A Thusparri Wind Lord named Aeldai Thurash (3rd-level Adept) was caught on the Trachan Steppes, as he tried to cross the steppes heading for the Feycrag Woods in the far west. He carried with him an important message to one of the Narballan chieftains, asking them to join forces with the elves, attacking the Keza-Drak from two sides.

His griffon companion was brutally slain by the Keza-Drak, but the elf was taken to the slave camp and thrown into the pen. Aeldai Thurash was beaten senseless and had all his fingers broken, but will be able to help the heroes escape if healed properly. He knows some magic that might be useful to the heroes and will do anything to get out of here alive.

Aeldai Thurash; Medium-sized humanoid (elf) 3rd-level Adept; Spd 30 ft.; **Abilities**: Str -1, Dex +2, Con 0, Int +4, Wis +3, Cha +2; **Skills**: Concentration 5 (+8), Diplomacy 6 (+10), Handle Animal 5 (+7), Knowledge (supernatural) 5 (+9), Language 2, Notice 6 (+9), Ride 6 (+8), Sense Motive 2 (+7), Stealth 5 (+7), Survival 6 (+9); **Feats**: Animal Empathy, Mind Over Body, Power x4, Talented (Diplomacy and Sense Motive); **Powers**: Beast Link, Drain Vitality, Enhance Other, Truth Reading; **Combat**: Attack +3 (+2 Dex) or +4 (+2 Dex, +1 mwk), Damage -1 (unarmed), +2 (masterwork spear), Defense +3, Initiative +2, Conviction: 4; Saving Throws: Toughness 0, Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3

Saves: Toughness +4, Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; Combat: Attack +0, Damage +4 (unarmed), +7 (scimitar), +8 (bow), Defense +0, Initiative +0.

4. THE BEAST CAVERN

When the Keza-Drak war band first came here they found a fierce gretchclaw inhabiting these caverns. Instead of killing the beast, they captured it. It is chained to the western wall, but given enough freedom to move around in the entire cavern.

The beast is kept as a guardian, but has learned the hard way to fear the Blood Lords and Keza-Drak warriors. Bones and skulls can be found spread out over the entire cavern. These were the slaves who were fed to the beast to satisfy its hunger.

Every fourth day, the Keza-Drak will pick a slave from the pens outside and bring him or



her to the beast. It is a brutal sight and most often the Blood Lords will watch from the shadows as the creature tears the flesh from its victim's body, bloodying the ground of the cavern. They have a morbid fascination with the gretchclaw and will never release it from its captivity.

Two corridors lead out of this cavern, the southeast being the wider of the two. They both lead to the same cavern, the lair of the Keza-Drak slave guard, K'ragaz. The Keza-Drak are actually too big to move along the southwest corridor, but a medium-sized creature could move through this corridor with a Difficulty 15 Escape Artist check.

Gretchclaw; Large-sized 3rd-level supernatural beast; Spd 30 ft.; Abilities: Str +3, Dex +1, Con +2, Int -3, Wis -1, Cha -1; Feats: Great Fortitude, Tough x2; Traits: Darkvision 60 ft., Poison, Poison Immunity, Scent; Saves: Toughness +6, Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +0; Combat: Attack +3, Damage +5 (claws), Defense +3, Initiative +1.

5. **K'RAGAZ'S [AIR**

The Sundaari Blood Lord keeps a Keza-Drak warrior close to his own quarters, guarding the passage to the gorge. His name is K'ragaz and is the largest Keza-Drak found in the entire slave encampment. The general accepts that the Blood Lord keeps this Keza-Drak as his personal slave guard, as he has caused more trouble among the other Keza-Drak warriors, killing several for no known reasons.

K'ragaz is most often found inside the Blood Cavern, serving his Sundaari master, but when he needs to sleep or eat, he is sent out into his lair. This cave is a filthy place that smells of death and rotten meat, a stench that seems to bother neither K'ragaz, nor the Blood Lord. A wide selection of huge skins can be found in the southern part. This is where K'ragaz sleeps, but also where he keeps his greatest treasure, a huge ruby. The slave guard does not know its real value, but is fascinated by the deep crimson color and how the facets reflect in the light from the fire in the middle of the room. The ruby is worth +4 wealth (+1 for four heroes).

K'ragaz wields a mighty curved blade and will attack anyone who enters his lair who is not the general, one of the Blood Lord's slaves, or the Blood Lord himself. No one has been able to tame the great Keza-Drak warrior, except the Blood Lord whose spells have been able to subdue him a little. He will follow his orders, doing any task he sets them to.

K'ragaz; Large-sized 1st-level outsider (native), 2nd-level warrior; Spd 30 ft.; **Abilities**: Str +4, Dex 0, Con +2, Int +1, Wis -2, Cha -2; **Feats**: Cleave, Endurance, Rage^B, Weapon Training; **Traits**: Damage Reduction +2/supernatural, Darkvision 60 ft.; Saves: Toughness +4, Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0; **Combat**: Attack +2, Damage +4 (unarmed), +7 (scimitar), Defense +2, Initiative +0.

6. THE BLOOD CAVERN

This cavern is the greatest of the three and can be accessed from K'ragaz's lair through a corridor in the western wall. A thin stream of blood runs from the south wall to the north wall. This stream is no deeper than a feet and 5 feet wide. The blood comes from the outside slaves, but has been enchanted by the Blood Lords and is always warm to the touch. This blood sustains the Sundaari.

A Sundaari Blood Lord (5th-level Adept) lives here with his two personal slaves and rarely leave the cavern, except to talk to the Keza-Drak general. He has carved arcane symbols into the cavern walls, which he believes will protect him from intruders. (*See the notes below on the trap.*) The slaves are kept in a hole in the southern part of the cavern, where they must eat and drink what is thrown down to them.

Also in this room are the Blood Lord's two personal slaves, "flesh slaves" as the blood lords are prone to call them. These two tortured beings have through repetitive physical abuse and subjugation to the Blood Lord's powers had their bodies and mind altered to such extremes that they can no longer be recognized as their original selves.

They are completely docile unless commanded to attack or their lord is threatened, at which point they fly into a murderous killing spree, attacking without any regard for personal safely. They are loyal to the Blood Lord to last breath.

TREASURES:

The Blood Lord has several tools hanging on the northern wall, which he uses in his experiments, but the real treasure here is a huge chest with the valuable items that were taken from the prisoners. The chest contains a plethora of various trade goods, a bag of gemstones, a book containing the Elemental Blast Trap ritual (either real or not), candles, five pounds of powdered silver, several bars of iron, a beautiful ornamental elven dagger, and a strange amulet. All told these items equal roughly a +3 Wealth bonus per Hero.

Sundaari Blood Lord (1); Medium-sized 5th-level adept humanoid (sundaari); Spd 30 ft.; **Abilities** Str +1, Dex +2, Con +0, Int +4, Wis +3, Cha +2; **Skills**: Concentration 8 (+11), Intimidate 8 (+10), Knowledge (theology & philosophy) 8 (+12), Knowledge (supernatural) 8 (+12), Medicine 8 (+11), Notice 8 (+11), Search 8 (+12), Sense Motive 8 (+11); **Feats**: Night Vision^B, Power x8; **Powers**: (Rank 8, Save Difficulty 17) Boil Blood, Dominate, Drain Vitality, Flesh Shaping, Harm, Mind Touch, Pain, Second Sight, Suggestion; Saves: Toughness +0, Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +7; **Combat**: Attack +4, Damage +1 (unarmed), +2 (knife), Defense +4, Initiative +2.

Flesh Slaves (2); medium-sized 1st-level humanoid (human); Spd 30 ft.; Abilities: Str +2, Dex +2, Con +2, Int -2, Wis -2, Cha -2; Feats: Dedicated: Blood Lords, Improved Strike; Traits: none; Saves: Toughness +2, Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -2; Combat: Attack +2, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +3, Initiative +2.

Elemental Blast Trap; 10 foot radius, Fire Damage +5, Reflex Difficulty 17 saving through for half. It is up to you as the Narrator to decide whether the Blood Lord succeeded in using the Ritual to creating this trap (or if the Ritual was in fact real or not). If real the Ritual has a Difficulty of 12 so it is likely that with a +6 on the check he will succeed. In that case any one other than the Blood Lord himself, K'ragaz, and the general entering this chamber set off the trap. See the section below for more information on the new Ritual.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Depending on what hook you chose (or if you made one of your own) once the slaves have been freed the party will need to make their way back to Horse Lords (or some other employer) for payment or may choose to lead Aeldai to Feycrag Woods.

Either way if the party has had too easy a time of it feel free to have them hounded by the remaining Keza-Drak who will no doubt be after them once they have discovered the escape. Unless the party has an expert outrider with them they should not be too difficult to

AN ORNAMENTAL DAGGER, A STRANGE AMULET?

Two pieces of equipment found in the chest of the Blood Lord have been intentionally left vague. Either could belong to Aeldai and perhaps hold a secret message? Maybe one or both are magical trinkets of low value, deemed useless by the Blood Lords but useful to one of the Heroes? Perhaps one is an heirloom of a Narmrothan Horse Lord with an inscription hinting as much? No doubt they would be grateful to those who returned it. Whatever you decide it should serve as a springboard to the Heroes' next adventure in the Age of Blood!

track. Just when they are ready to give up hope have them reach the Salmarin River where they can use it to throw their pursuers off the trail.

NEW RITUAL: ELEMENTAL BLAST TRAP

This ritual allows the user to protect an area with an Elemental Blast Trap, strange runes and sigils demark the area as being somehow protected.

Power: Elemental Blast, Fatiguing **Difficulty**: Intelligence check Difficulty 12 (10 + 2 for fatiguing) Each assistant must succeed on a Difficult 10 Wisdom check to aid the ritualist. Will save Difficulty 12 to avoid fatigue (Widened Power). **Ritualists**: The Elemental Blast Trap ritual

requires only a single ritualist.

Components: A pair of candles, a pound of silver dust, at least one pint of humanoid blood.

Aids: A ritualist with at least 6 ranks in the Knowledge (supernatural) skill receives a +2 bonus on her Intelligence check.

Time: 10 minutes

Costs: Wealth 10 + final rank of the power plus the Ritualist's Intelligence score. **Success**: If the ritualist succeeds on his Intelligence check, the area is protected by a trap that creates a single use of the Widened Elemental Blast power (element chosen at the time of use), and may designate himself and additional persons not exceeding his Intelligence score to be allowed to bypass the trap.

Failure: If the ritualist fails her Intelligence check nothing unusual happens, however the Intelligence check should be made in secret, the Ritualist having no idea if it succeeded or not. Either way the ritualist must expend the wealth needed to create the trap.

For more information on Rituals see Chapter 4 of the True20 Companion[®].



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