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## LEGACY OF THE ANUALD: PART TWO THE STAFF OF LIFE

## **AN ADVENTURE FOR LEVEL 2 CHARACTERS**

FEELEY, HO

## STARCALLED STUDIOS PRESENTS ZODIAC EMPIRES

Legacy of the Anuald Part 2 The Staff of Life By Erik Feeley An Adventure for 2nd Level Characters



**STAFF OF LIFE** 





'The Legacy of the Anuald: Staff of Life' is the second of an ongoing adventure series meant for 2nd level characters. In this document you will find all of the information required to run Staff of Life.

#### **HOW YOU GOT HERE**

On a trip to Osept, the party was embroiled in intrigue between the Eyes of Vathis archaeological organization and the nefarious Anuald-worshipping Black Scales. Although the party didn't manage to get to the Eye of Kings in time, the halfling twins, Emmi and Brin Kaliriph, were pleased with their work. The twins have requested to work with the party further, as their resources and manpower are already spread thin. With the party's help, they hope to ensure that the Eyes acquire a number of other Anuald artifacts before the Scales do.

#### A LAND OF ICE AND SNOW

See **Map A** for a corresponding map of the town. Hearing rumors of a powerful magic item from a contact, Alex Kasyanov, The Eyes of Vathis sent the party to Novostok, a border town in Tristan. The party flew by airship to the nearby town of Airelis and began walking the several day trip to Novostok. Assume that every member of the party starts the game with cold weather gear in addition to their normal equipment. As the adventure begins, read the following to the players:

After days of travel through frigid forests that brought you to Novostok, the town itself seems to be little respite from the hardships of the North. From afar, through the swirling flakes of a winter squall, you spy a sparse scattering of utilitarian Trist buildings sitting low in the ever-present snow and ice, half-buried by the biting wind. With the immense tundra of Glaycian as a backdrop, the town seems little more than a collection of dollhouses caught in a snowdrift. As you trudge closer the buildings grow taller, but no more impressive: You find yourselves in the center of what one might call a town, a measly two perpendicular streets. A ramshackle tavern stands to the northeast, and a general store and blacksmith sit to the southwest. A tiny building to the northwest is noted by a simple wooden sign as a Sentinel office and Bluewind terminal, while the other structures surrounding this pitiful town square appear to be run-down apartment buildings. From the moment you entered the town, you have not seen a single living soul.

The general store and blacksmith appear to be closed, their shutters closed tightly in the face of the storm, but the tavern seems to be populated and a warm fire burns on the hearth in a desperate attempt to keep the cold at bay. A single bartender, Roman Kushnarev, stands behind the otherwise abandoned bar, absentmindedly cleaning glassware. He nods to acknowledge the party as they enter the bar, but casts sidelong glances in their direction the entire time they are there as it is quite obvious they are not from the area.

Given the opportunity, Roman will ask their business in the area. If they ask him for information about Alex, he will give them information on his business (he runs a rather successful lumber mill outside of town) and where to find him (a wooden chalet to the northeast of town). Roman has nothing but praise for Alex, claiming that he cares more for Novostok than perhaps even the Trist government. Should the party tip well, he may also tell them about the strange appearance of an inuzen from the north, unusual not only due to the appearance of an inuzen-exceedingly rare in Tristan-but because the northern landmass of Glavcian is unforgiving and inhospitable. Few people live in or travel to Glaycian, and among the ones that do even fewer survive. Roman tells you that shortly after the inuzen (named, rather aptly, Frost) appeared, Alex took her into his home to care for her. It would seem that her foray into the tundra took a toll on her sanity, and she was completely incoherent and close to death when she stumbled into town. Roman tells the party that Frost claims she is from a beautiful green oasis in Glaycian itself, which he dismisses as absurd - few people have seen anything green in or around Novostok besides the tall firs of the Trist forests. Roman does, however, hesitantly admit that when Frost came into town she had a single sprig of beautiful wildflowers clutched tightly in her fist. After admitting this, he refuses to discuss the matter any further and dismisses it as the loose talk of bored townsfolk and drunk patrons.

Should the party remain in the bar, an obviously intoxicated human man (Pavel Yskov) stumbles into the bar and immediately fixates on them, correctly taking them for adventurers. Pavel loudly requests that the party buy a round of drinks for everyone, and he seems happy at the opportunity to get even more inebriated on the party's dime. It is apparent from his rumpled attire and the omnipresent smell of alcohol that he is an uncompromising drunk, and the GM should take every opportunity to present him as an unreliable man with an appetite for ridiculous stories. Perhaps Pavel tells the players about the time he visited a town that was so evil it made people murderers, or the time he flooded an entire underground prison, or the time he used a man's head to make a pun. Pavel tells the party that he knows the inuzen Frost, and that she has told him about a verdant oasis housing a small monastery of inuzen monks in the frozen wastelands of Glaycian, just past the point of no return. In any case, after downing several drinks and telling his absurd stories, he knowingly winks at the party and tells them that he'll be seeing them again soon, taking his leave and stumbling out of the tavern.

The Sentinel office and Bluewind station are confined to a single-room block building, and Egor Surkov, the Sentinel behind the desk, is surly and finds any inquiries about the town bothersome, giving the players only enough attention to complain that he has been assigned to a "backwater shithole." He is willing to

send Bluewind messages for the party, but charges nearly double the going rate, claiming that due to the town's remote location the transmission is more difficult. Players who call out this lie will make little progress, as the Sentinel believes that nothing could be worse than his current predicament. Egor is willing, if a bit rudely, to direct the party to Alex's chalet. When the players leave the town of Novostok, read the following:

As you leave the town of Novostok, your path leads up a dirt path paved with permafrost. Rime-covered trees are your only shelter from the elements. Around half a mile away from Novostok, you crest an icy ridge and catch your first glimpse of what could only be Alex Kasyanov's chalet. A massive log cabin stands in the center of a great clearing, the frozen stumps of thousands of pines attesting to the fact that this area was once densely forested. The path forks, one route leading sharply north into the darkness of the omnipresent evergreen, the other meandering casually towards the entrance of the cabin.

The northern path leads to the logging grounds, and the other path leads (obviously) to the chalet. At the moment the logging grounds should hold little interest for the party, but should they head in this direction they will run into Alex himself as he returns from a walk in the woods.

If they head to the chalet, a simple doorknocker set into the wooden door will announce their presence and the door is opened momentarily by a Mythrayne dwarf named Agar Stoneshape, Alex's long-time compatriot and manservant. Agar leads the players into a warm and well-furnished smoking room filled with easy chairs and soft couches to wait. He assures the party that Alex will be returning shortly from his daily walk. Several minutes later Alex himself enters the room, his face red from the cold. Alex is an older man-he looks to be in his late 70s-but he has a spring in his step and he seems genuinely excited to meet the party. He greets them each in turn with a firm handshake before sitting down and extracting a soot-stained pipe from his pocket, which he lights before thanking the players for coming. Alex then explains the reason he contacted the Eyes of Vathis who called them here: an inuzen named Frost stumbled out of the tundra, close to death and closer still to insanity. Alex had taken Frost in three weeks ago, and has been caring for her since. Frost claims that she came from a monastery within an oasis teeming with life and warmth. The Oasis was built around an ancient relic which Alex suspects was created by the Anuald during the Divine Sands War. He believes that this particular relic is known as the Staff of Life, and is imbued with enormous amounts of healing and life-giving magic. It is of particular interest to the Eyes of Vathis because legends revolving around the staff state that its life energy is boundless and independent of the gods themselves. Alex personally believes that the relic could be used, in part, to help heal the scars left on the world by the Darkest War. He doesn't expect the party to venture into the tundra alone, however: While Frost refuses to return to Glaycian after her sojourn through the snowfields, an adventurer friend of his would be happy and willing to accompany them.

At this point, Alex formally introduces Pavel to the party.

If they've already met him he greets them, if not he introduces himself and, should they doubt his adventuring prowess, tells them some of his adventuring tales (see above). If the party accepts, then he gives them a small stipend with a promise of a much greater sum upon receipt of the staff, but warns them of the dangers of Glaycian and specifically the point of no return. Should they pass this point, their chances of returning without finding the oasis are slim to none.

Give the party time to acquire any reasonable goods or items they may need to travel to Glaycian, then let them set off.

#### A GLACIAL PLACE

Once the party sets out into Glaycian, read the following:

As you set out from the chalet, it seems that even the weather has taken notice of your expedition. A break in the near-constant snow reveals a breathtaking sight—an ever-changing aurora swirls in the sky above, illuminating the seas of snow that stretch before you in dancing patterns of light as far as the eye can see. At your side, Pavel chuckles and takes a long swig from his flask. He looks up at the sky for a moment and says to himself, just loudly enough for you to hear "This is good omen. I think we perhaps survive this, my friends." He takes another quick pull of his vodka, steeling himself for a moment before adjusting the straps on his pack and stepping out into the virgin snow.

The players set off to the north and trudge through miles and miles of snow and pine forests. (It is possible to force the party to keep watch and make camp each night. Do this if there is plenty of time left.) After several days of travel read the following:

Days of slogging through the ice and snow have begun to blur together into what seems like an eternity of cold, wet misery. Even the occasional sunlight that manages to penetrate the constant flurries and cutting wind feels distant and weak. Privately, you begin to wonder if you have stumbled into the frigid center of Vathis itself, far from the familiar glow of Farilis and the warmth of the sun. Every inch of your body aches from the frost that has formed on each exposed inch of your skin, and the eldric heaters you carry seem less and less effective each moment of every passing day. Supplies are running low—perhaps enough to last for two or three days more—and a blizzard is rapidly approaching from behind. In the distance, you spot what might be your salvation, if only for a short while longer: a cave in an icy cliff, only half a mile off.

At this point the players should make Survival checks to make it to the cave without getting lost in the driving snow of the rapidly building snowstorm. The longer they take to make the check, the more they suffer from the cold. A DC 18 check takes them directly to the cave, with each player taking 1 + 1d2 damage for each round they spend in the blizzard. The DC of the Survival check decreases by 2 each time the check is failed. If the party takes refuge in the cave, read the following:

You make your way into the cave, the light of your torches the only source of illumination. The mouth of the cave is lost in the swirling snow of the blizzard, a white veil separating you from the rest of the world. Pavel sighs and drops his pack to the slick icy floor of the cave, unscrewing the cap of his flask and desperately shaking a few meager drops onto his tongue before dropping the now-empty container on the floor with disgust. Its metallic clattering rings through the cave for a moment before echoing to silence, broken moments later by a deep growl. From the further in the cave two adult yetis emerge, howling with rage at your intrusion.

#### **BLOOD GARDEN**

A pair of **Glaycian yetis** attack the players. After they defeat the yetis (presumably as they are recovering or resting from the fight) they spot a glow coming from the back of the cave. Should they investigate, they find what appears to be a wooden door carved into the ice of the glacial cave. If they open the door, a gust of warm and humid air blows forth with the scent of wildflowers and trees in bloom tempered by something metallic and rotten. The door leads down a long cavern of stone densely coated with lichen and fern.

After the players travel a short distance down the tunnel, read the following:

The tunnel suddenly widens, and you find yourself in an enormous cavern filled with the most brilliant foliage you have ever seen. Though there is nowhere for sunlight to enter the cave, the entirety of the area is filled with a pale green luminescence. Exotic trees and bushes of all kinds fill the expansive space from top to bottom, and birds of paradise flit from branch to branch in flashes of color. At the center of the cavern a small building sits. The building is mostly plain besides an ornate stained glass window that frames a pair of wooden doors that are slightly ajar. Despite the breathtaking beauty of this hidden garden, something seems wrong.

See Map B for a corresponding map of this area. The party at this point may make Perception or Investigation checks. DC 20 reveals tiny splotches of blood on bushes beside the path and a single vasar scale. DC 15 will show that some branches and leaves of plants have been broken or trampled recently. DC 10 shows that there are drag marks in the soft soil of the path. If the players investigate the garden itself, it is beautiful and dense. It is obvious that people have been caring for the plants—pots and trowels and watering cans are scattered among the trails and flowerbeds, but the party does find not a single soul tending the garden.

Should they enter the church itself, the metallic scent grows stronger and the source becomes immediately apparent—a line of what were once inuzen are tied to a wall, their throats slit. One last inuzen at the end of the line weeps but remains defiant and refuses to speak as a black-scaled vasar holds a knife to his throat, demanding that he tell the secret to releasing the Staff. Two other vasar stand behind him, puzzling over a wall of vines and trees. As the vasar spots the party, he grunts in rage and stabs the inuzen through the heart before drawing his battleaxe and rushing the group with a roar. The party is then attacked by one **Black Scale Blade** and two **Black Scale Bruisers**.

After the vasar have been defeated, the inuzen stabbed by the vasar weakly calls the party over and explains how to release the staff from its altar. He gives them an amulet of a leaf with three red berries, which he says will unlock the altar if it is inserted into the head of the staff. As he hands it to the players, he dies. The inuzen refuses healing, saying that his time has come to an end and that after his failure to guard the staff he no longer has purpose in life.

The staff itself is entangled in the wall of vines. The vines are immune to nonmagical weapons, and any offensive spells cast will cause sharp thorns to grow in the area of effect but have no other visible result. Should the amulet be inserted into the staff, read the following:

As you slide the amulet into the carved inset on the altar, it seems to become a part of the dark wood that holds the polished staff. For a moment, it seems to have no effect—but then the entangling vines come to life, writhing snakelike as they unentangle themselves from the altar. The bright light that suffused the cavern around you dims, the staff itself suddenly glowing from within with a deep green light, long shadows growing dark around you and your comrades. After what feels like an eternity, Pavel breaks his gaze from the altar with a start, muttering to himself in awe, reaching one hand hesitantly towards the staff before withdrawing in shock. "It pulses. Moves. Like it's alive." He takes a step back from the altar, clearly shaken.

As the party exits the small monastery, the once-verdant garden around them has changed. The plants have begun to rot and wither away, changing the beautiful oasis into a cruel mockery of what it once was. Horrifying vine tentacles wave listlessly, creepers grabbing the now-corpses of the birds, dragging the carrion into the darkness of their twisted root systems. As the party takes in this horrifying change, the cavern itself begins to collapse—it is apparent that the removal of the staff has ended whatever magic was keeping the garden as it was. Perception checks (or previous exploration) reveals a path leading upwards towards the roof of the cavern, where a fault/fissure has opened in the glacier itself. Should the party attempt to exit the way they entered, they find that the door has been blocked by falling ice.

There is a single 'direct' path to the slope, with two hazards:

First, as the party starts down the path, an enormous chunk of ice detaches from the ceiling and falls toward them. DC 15 Dexterity saves must be made, or players take 1d6 damage from falling debris. Failing the check by more than 10 results in 2d6 damage as the slower members of the group are struck by the ice chunk itself.

Further down the path the party is accosted by a small grove of carnivorous plants. They are venus fly traps mutated by the energy of the staff into something much larger and much hungrier. Members of the party can make a DC 14 Knowledge (nature) check to realize that as long as they do not tread on the plants'

sensory organs they will not notice them—the leaves are fairly easily avoided, but a failure to avoid them results in a grasping vine shooting out of the underbrush and grabbing the player by the legs. A DC 12 Strength check is needed to escape the **vine creeper**.

After passing both hazards the party must climb the slope itself. Any players who brought climbing gear will succeed automatically, while any other party members must take a DC 10 Athletics/Acrobatics check to scale the slippery, shaking ice. Three quarters up the slope, the players must leap across a chasm that has suddenly opened in front of them. This requires further checks, DC 13 Athletics/Acrobatics. A failing player may make a DC 13 Dexterity or Strength saving throw to grab the other edge of the chasm while one other player may also make an attempt to grab them and pull them back onto whichever side of the ledge they are standing on.

After passing each of these hazards, the party enters the fissure in the glacier and sees sunlight a great distance off. They should presumably run out as quickly as possible, and as they exit the glacier sags in on itself and collapses, closing off the cavern forever. The party finds a set of eldric sleds, presumably how the Black Scales agents arrived, though there is no explanation as to how and why they arrived so quickly.

#### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The party presumably returns to the town of Novostok and gets in contact with Alex, who takes the staff, telling the party that it will find its way to the Eyes of Vathis. He thanks them for their service. Alex assures them that the staff will have some use, and provides them with their next assignment: Another Anauld relic has been reported in the care of the Antares Templar in the nation of Erygis.

#### REWARDS

If you are using the milestone experience track, the party members do not gain a level here. If you are using normal experience award the following experience to the party as a whole:

- $\cdot$  30 XP per character to make it out of the snowstorm.
- · 200 XP per yeti defeated.
- $\cdot$  400 XP for defeating the Black Scales.
- $\cdot$  50 XP for retrieving the Staff of Life.

 $\cdot$  100 XP per obstacle over come while escaping the collapsing chamber.

## **APPENDIX**

**Glaycian Yeti** 

Large Monstrosity, chaotic evil Armor Class 13 (natural armor) Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12) Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft. STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA 18(+4) 14(+2) 14(+2) 9(-1) 12(+1) 7(-2)Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4 Damage Immunities cold Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13 Languages Yeti Challenge 3 (700 XP) Fear of Fire If the Glaycian Yeti takes fire damage, it has disadvantage on attack rolls until the end of its next turn. Keen Smell The yeti has advantage on Perception checks that rely on smell. Snow Camouflage The yeti has advantage on Stealth checks made to hide in snowy terrain. Actions: Multiattack. The yeti can use its Chilling Gaze and makes two claw attacks. Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit*: 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

**Chilling Gaze**. The Glaycian Yeti targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see the Glaycian Yeti, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw against this magic or take 11 (2d10) cold damage and then be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds, unless it is immune to cold damage. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the target's saving throw is successful, or if the effect ends on it, the target is immune to the Chilling Gaze of all Glaycian Yetis for 1 hour.

Black Scale Bruiser					
Medium humanoid, neutral evil					
Armor Class 16 (Hide armor, shield)					
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)					
Speed 30 ft.					
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15(+2)	14(+2)	13(+1)	8(-1)	11(+0)	9(-1)
Skills Stealth +6, Survival +2					
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10					
Languages Common, Daras					
Traits Brute: A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage					
when the Bruiser hits with it. (included in the attack)					
Actions:					
Black Scale Bludgeon Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 1					
ft., one target. <i>Hit</i> : 11 (2d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.					

**Black Scale Blade** 

Medium humanoid, neutral evil Armor Class 15 (Studded leather) **Hit Points** 65 (10d8 + 20) Speed 30 ft. STR DEX INT WIS CHA CON 15(+2) 16(+3) 14(+2) 14(+2) 11(+0)14(+2)Saving Throws Str +4, Dex +5, Wis +2 Skills Athletics +4, Deception +4 Senses Passive Perception 10 Languages Common, Daras **Actions:** Multiattack The Blade makes two melee attacks: one with its scimitar and one with its longblade Scimitar: Melee Weapon Attack +5 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. Hit 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage Longblade: Melee Weapon Attack, +5 to hit, reach 10ft, one target. Hit: 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

#### Vine Creeper

Medium plant, unaligned Armor Class 15 (Natural) Hit Points 18 (4d8) Speed 0 ft. STR DEX CON WIS CHA INT 10(+0)16(+3) 1(-5) 1(-5)1(-5)1(-5)Senses Blindsight 30 ft.

#### Actions:

**Drag** When a player moves within 30ft of the Vine Thresher, the Thresher bursts a vine out of the ground and makes a grapple check against the place. Opposing grapple checks are made and if the player loses, then the Thresher grapples them and may pull them 15 ft. towards itself each round.

#### Actions:

Acid Vat: *Melee attack, adjacent, one target, target must be grappled.* The Vine Thresher splashes its prey with its naturally secreted acid. The player takes 15 (3d8) acid damage.

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