



PRICE OF PROGRESS

A One-Round DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Adventure for
1st- to 3rd-Level Characters
BLACKWHEEL COMPANY™ Faction Adventure 2 for the XEN'DRIK
EXPEDITIONS™ Campaign

Design: Brian P. Mackey

Blackwheel Company Factionmaster: Brian P. Mackey

Playtesters: Justin Muir, Josh Lingenfelter, Dave McKay, Jonathan Robker, Shawn Daugherty, Christopher Groves, David L. Smith, Chris Humphries

Sources: *Players Guide to Eberron* [James Wyatt, Keith Baker, Luke Johnson, Stan!], *Eberron Campaign Setting* [Keith Baker], *Secrets of Xen'drik* [Keith Baker], *Miniatures Handbook* [Mike Donais, Skaff Elias, Rob Heinsoo, Jonathan Tweet], *Magic of Eberron* [Bruce R. Cordell, Stephen Schubert, Chris Thomasson], *Monster Manual II*, *Monster Manual III*

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

This WIZARD OF THE COAST® game product contains no Open Game Content. This work may be reproduced for personal use or in its entirety for use at RPGA-sanctioned events. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 SYSTEM® License, please visit www.wizards.com/d20.

This product uses material from the v.3.5 revision. This is an official RPGA® play document. To find out more about the RPGA and to learn more on how you can sanction and run DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game events of all sizes, visit our website at www.wizards.com/rpga.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, D&D REWARDS, D&D CAMPAIGNS, DUNGEON MASTER, EBERRON, XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS, COVENANT OF LIGHT, HERALD-LEVEL, RPGA, d20, d20 SYSTEM, WIZARDS OF THE COAST, *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual* and their respective logos are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., in the US and other countries. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, places, or events is purely coincidental. © 2006 Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Visit the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS website at www.rp

INTRODUCTION

Price of Progress is the second faction adventure for the Blackwheel Company faction in the XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS campaign. It is optimized for 2nd-level characters. This means that it's designed and balanced for a group of four to five 2nd-level characters (PCs).

If your group deviates from this size and strength, each encounter features a section titled "Scaling the Encounter" so that you, the Dungeon Master (DM), can create a more enjoyable and better balanced adventure.

If there are only four of five PCs of the same level in your group, it's easy to use this section: just use the level entry that corresponds with the PCs' level (the optimized entry is given in the main adventure text). For groups of mixed levels and groups with six PCs, determine the average level of the PCs, and increase that average by one for groups of six PCs. Treat that level as the groups level. That said, as DM you have discretion when it comes to fitting the challenges of the adventure to your group. If your group finds the challenges too easy or too difficult, feel free to increase or decrease the level of challenge appropriately. The goal is to challenge the PCs and entertain the players, not to overwhelm or even underwhelm them. The most enjoyable D&D games are ones where failure and character death are possible, but success and reward are attainable through daring and smart play.

Price of Progress has been designed to be part of the RPGA DUNGEON & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS: XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS program. Like all DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS adventures, it's recommended that PCs undertaking its challenges have at least one arcane spellcaster, a divine spellcaster (preferably a cleric), a strong warrior, and a rogue. Parties missing these valuable adventuring components may find *Principal of the Matter* very challenging, and the chances of character death higher. Please warn the players of this before play starts. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS allow players to "take one for the team"; that is to play a fastplay wizard, fighter, rogue, or cleric in place of one of their characters, and gain experience point for their character. If the group lacks one of these vital four classes, suggest to your players to take advantage of this option.

RPGA~SANCTIONED PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA even from the RPGA website, or as part of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS retail program. To play *Price of Progress* as part of the XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in EBERRON—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

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

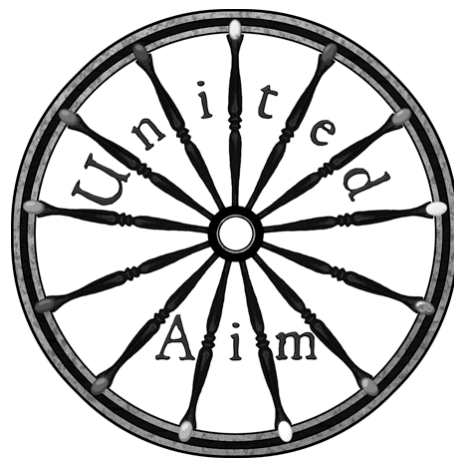
By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a few things. First, it allows the PCs participating in play to accumulate experience points (XP) and gold pieces (gp) to advance their XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS characters. Second, it allows the RPGA to track and record what character did during the adventure, and future adventures a written with what the majority of player did in mind—in this way characters' action shape the future of the campaign. Lastly, player and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth four (4) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA sanctioned play on December 31, 2006.

To learn more about the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS: XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at www.rpga.com.

THIS IS A FACTION ADVENTURE

This is a faction adventure for the Blackwheel Company. This means that the story is suited for that group, and can only be played by Blackwheel Company characters. As the DM you should make sure that only member of this faction play in this adventure, as play of another faction's character could invalidate the entire session.



Blackwheel Company Faction Symbol

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The events of this adventure unfold shortly after the first round of Xen'drik Expeditions adventures and directly after the events that take place in the Principal of the Matter adventure. Relslin ir'Omaren, cousin of the former House Cannith artificer, and current Coin Lord Paulo Omaren, has prepared a special ceremony for all of the Storm Lords. Relslin is a neophyte member of an organization known as The Crimson Codex, and seeks to curry favor for his organization with an impressive display.

Relslin's faction has unearthed a tome that contains cryptic missives surrounding the Caldyn Fragments. Unfortunately, much of the translation is incomplete, and the Codex lacks the appropriate translation tablets to decode the hidden message beneath the surface. Somewhere locked within are secrets that allude to the ancient and deadly Well of Woe. The ambitious Relslin seeks to use it to win favor for himself nonetheless, and has convinced his comrades in the Codex that a safe "ceremonial" display of the beautiful and ancient text filled with the pomp and circumstance of academia, is a wise plan.

Unfortunately for Relslin, the duties of life are complicated—his rise to social status in Xen'drik has come at the expense of his duties as a father. After a particularly venomous fight with his eldest son and heir, the 18-year-old lad was shamed too much. He took it upon himself to show his disdainful father that he was neither worthless nor wasteful. Seizing his courage, he used the knowledge of his father to snatch the tome from the household vault, and set off to find the tablet to unravel the mystery that remains in the strange book. He was gone a full week before his father opened the vault to retrieve the book. It was only then that he realized what had truly happened.

Immediately thereafter, one of his son's retainers returned, bloody and battered, to Stormreach. He sought out Relslin with grave news—four out of the seven of his son's party had fallen in the wild's of the jungle. His maddened, shame-stricken son refused to give up his fool's quest even then. The retainer gave to Relslin the last location he had seen his son alive. Relslin immediately felt the pangs of guilt and anger at himself, and at his foolish son burned within him. He immediately set out to treat with his comrades in the Crimson Codex to organize a search party to bring back the book and his son... dead or alive.

A household servant on the payroll of the Dragonmarked Houses overheard the conversation and immediately informed Blackwheel Company operatives. As word quickly reached the top of the Blackwheel hierarchy, Field Marshal Mackinnon Maceck knew that the window of opportunity would be narrow. The Company must act, and act now. There is much to gain for The Company: obtaining an invaluable piece of the Prophecy, depriving the Crimson Codex of it, gaining a potential ally with ties to the Codex, and a unique opportunity to hone their eager recruits further. A new platoon of top recruits has been formed to carry out this mission with the utmost discretion and precision.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The adventure opens with the PC's receiving an urgent summons to meet with their terse gnoll sergeant: Tragar. Sergeant Tragar will inform the PCs of the mission parameters. The PCs are to assume the identity of a group of rescuers, sent by a forlorn father (and a member of the Crimson Codex) to retrieve his wayward son from the wilds surrounding the Marsh of Desolation. The party will be ferried by boat to the shore near the Marsh and then must track locate the son and his party. Time is of the essence, a real Crimson Codex rescue party is likely to be only a day or so behind. The young man in need of rescue also carries a book of significant relevance to the Caldyn Fragments. Sometime during the rescue this tome is to be secured—preferably without the knowledge of the young man who is carrying it.

As the party prepares to depart, they'll be met by Tubal d'Cannith, chief artificer of the Blackwheel Company. Tubal has a "special request" for the PCs. He's made a passable replica of the tome to be recovered. To aid the PCs in retrieving the book, they should take this book and use it replace the true one. Of course, Tubal has a hidden agenda. The false book has powerful magic that House Cannith hopes to test. Tubal has persuaded the Blackwheel Company to allow him to "scare" the well-connected patrons that are to view it in an upcoming ceremony.

Speed is of the essence, and the PCs will have minimal time to prepare. They will be immediately sailed across the bay to the shore nearest the Marsh. From there they must find the heir by exploring the last section of jungle in which he was seen. Help (or hinderance) from jungle denizens, tracking, and following clues may all help them find their quarry faster.

When the PCs encounter the heir, Kleris, he is imperiled. They will quickly learn that he is not only near-death himself, but is distraught at the loss of his fiancée, who only hours before was taken by denizens of the jungle. She has been slain, but not yet devoured. If the PCs choose to help find her, Kleris will be much more grateful and cooperative.

Time is short on the PCs retreat back to the boat. The possibility of monstrous encounters on the way back exists and the head start the PCs had on the true rescue party may have elapsed. During the time between the rescue and the return, the PCs will likely wish to attempt switching out the book. They may also discover, during their time with the heir, that he's inclined to brag about/mention the translation tablet that he found. Clever PCs will realize that this is a major asset to the study of the Caldyn Fragments, and may wish to attempt to obtain or copy it as well.

If the PCs are successful in returning with the heir alive, the inevitable and important task of slipping away from him before they encounter his father still remains. The party cannot risk being discovered or even spotted by the heir's father or family before they have a chance to escape.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Important Encounters

The most important encounter in the adventure is the PCs first meeting with Kleris. Though it is possible for them to spend significant time lost in the jungle, the PCs should eventually find Kleris imperiled at the edge of the Marsh. It's important not to let the marsh ape kill Kleris at that time. It's reasonable to assume, however, that the ape may try to escape with him if the PCs

hesitate or fail to take any significant action for several rounds.

The other major encounters that occur in the campaign all have some flexibility built into them to give the PCs some choices to make, and to speed things up if time runs short. The PCs need not be forced into switching the book, recovering the translation tablet, finding the corpse of Kleris' fiancée, or encountering/aiding the Crimson Codex rescue party.

Random Encounters

Random encounters should serve to give a sense of danger/excitement to bumbling blindly about the jungles of Xen'drik. Random encounters should only be rolled if the party is lost, not during the central plot events or if the party camps for the evening. If the party spends a significant amount of time lost, try to limit the number of random encounters to no more than two. This mechanic exists to enhance and enrich game play, not to bog it down.

Kleris ir'Omare—Royal Pain

The temptation may exist—given the heir's paranoid disposition and highly emotional nature—to make his interactions with the PCs more difficult than they need to be. Treat Kleris as a puzzle/riddle that the PCs must solve, or a trap they must get past. There are certain "keys" that unlock him; it should be possible for the PCs to find clues to these "keys." Make sure his dialogue and actions reflect the key issues that he's concerned about, and don't be afraid to drop more obvious hints about his personal concerns.

Mission Reminders

The wealth of action and information packed into this adventure can sometimes cause a party to lose sight of their original goal. Don't hesitate to remind the PCs of the original intent of their mission as the adventure progresses: Bring back the Tome of Woe; bring back the heir—preferably alive; don't get seen or caught. It's also appropriate to drop them hints about other side-quests that may come up during the adventure, such as how badly Kleris wants to retrieve his fiancée's corpse or how valuable the Translation Tablet might be to the Blackwheel Company.

Crimson Codex

Although inter-faction tensions often run high in the Xen'drik Expeditions campaign, it's important to note that in this adventure, the Crimson Codex are not the bad guys. In fact, it may be possible for the PCs to befriend or even reach an alliance with them. Being overtly hostile with each other faction is not a tactic that a smart "corporation" like the Blackwheel Company would employ in every situation. In this adventure, give the Codex members a reasonably neutral attitude toward the PCs unless the PCs directly act to harm or subvert them in some ways.

ADVENTURE START

The adventure begins aboard The Glory Road, the Blackwheel Company's massive airship and temporary staging ground until a more permanent stronghold can be established. The recruits are tending to the daily shipboard tasks when a sharp barking call is heard ringing across the decks. The party members are summoned by Sergeant Skyne Tragar and are to meet with her immediately below deck for an assignment of

great importance. As the Blackwheel recruits introduce themselves, Sgt. Tragar outlines the details of their assignment.

PART ONE: OPPORTUNITY

1. MAIN DECK

As the sun's first rays trickle through the starboard railing, recruits bustle efficiently about the ship checking rigging, scrubbing the deck, fastening and refastening ropes, and getting The Glory Road, the Blackwheel Company's titanic airship, ready for morning drills. Sergeant Tragar's sharp, terse bark is unmistakable as it abruptly pierces the still morning air.

"[Character names 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.] below deck, in my office, NOW!"

As the PCs make their way below deck, it's a good opportunity for the players to introduce themselves to each other and describe/introduce their characters as well. Finding their way to Sgt. Tragar's office is automatic.

2. SGT. TRAGAR

Sgt. Tragar's office is a narrow, cramped room shared by several other sergeants, who at the moment are unsurprisingly absent. A smattering of rough desks crowd the room, each covered in a myriad of maps and charts. Daggers and mugs of ale pin down the corners of the nearest map, which displays in bold red script: "Marsh of Desolation." The sergeant takes a moment to level a piercing gaze upon the raw recruits as they enter her office.

Skyne Tragar has a reputation for being the toughest, most unforgiving sergeant in The Company and you along with the recruits at your side happened to be among those unlucky enough to draw her as your commanding officer. Despite her reputation, she is meticulously groomed. Her black fur—unusual for a gnoll they say—is trimmed short, and her "blacks" the standard non-combat uniform of the Blackwheel Company are inexplicably free of either stain or wrinkle. The breast of her uniform is adorned with a heap of medals and decorations—the most noticeable of which is an enameled black wheel with three spokes, a symbol of her rank. A pair of silver griffon wings stand out among a row of medals that also includes a green dragon, a bronze work, a pair of crossed blades, and a medal that you've not seen before, something that appears to be a severed finger made of gold.

Her voice is a low guttural growl as she speaks.

The Sergeant is a stern disciplinarian and an unwavering taskmaster, but she also leads her troops by example, which is why Field Marshal Maceck recruited her. Despite her callous reputation and fearsome appearance, she is not so heartless as some might suspect. She is hard on her recruits because she knows what lies ahead, and as a teacher and a leader, she feels each loss of a fellow soldier acutely. Her personal rule is that no recruit has a name until they've survived 6 months. Tragar has seen too many green soldiers fall in battle, and the loss of each still pains her, even battle-hardened as she is.

In this encounter Tragar should start by offering praise to any character that bears the *Respect of the*

Covenant story object. She may say something like, “The Field Marshal has high expectations for you after your last mission” or “You come highly recommended from the Field Marshal after your last success.”

Characters without that story object are treated as completely green and she will make his expectations for them clear: “This is a rare opportunity to prove yourself to The Company recruit!”

After this brief introduction, he’ll introduce a mission with the following parameters:

- She will explain that Blackwheel Company intelligence operatives have learned that the heir of a wealthy academic and reputed member of the Crimson Codex has become lost in the jungle surrounding the Marsh of Desolation. He was carrying an extremely valuable tome—stolen from his father’s study—of immense significance to the Caldyn Fragments.
- The heir’s name is “Kleris ir’Omaren;” his father, “Relslin ir’Omaren” is a close cousin of the Coin Lord Paulo Omaren (DC 15 Knowledge nobility or local-Stormreach check would tell the character that Paulo is an excoriate of House Cannith that has fled to Xen’drik to try and regain her lost honor—grant a +5 bonus to this check for any member of House Cannith in the party. Or if the party is not in possession of these skills, but has a House Cannith member, allow them to make a DC 15 Intelligence check with a +2 circumstance bonus).
- Relslin is currently pleading with his Crimson Codex associates to organize a rescue party to bring back his son. The Blackwheel Company obtained this information only hours ago and is hoping to beat the Crimson Codex to the punch, as it will likely take them several days to debate and assemble a party.
- The Field Marshal himself has personally ordered a platoon assembled to pose as a rescue party from the boy’s father. They are to rescue the heir, and in doing so, discretely obtain the tome without giving away their true identities or intentions.
- Once the heir has been brought safely back to the city, the platoon must slip away or disappear without compromising their cover. They cannot be seen with the heir by the Crimson Codex or by any family members or those working for the family.
- Time will be short. A ship is waiting to sail across the bay and drop the platoon about a day’s march from the last location the boy was seen. The real rescue party should be mobilized in no more than roughly 24 hours, and the Blackwheel Company *must* secure the heir before they know what’s happened.
- A map is provided with the last known location of Kleris and his party.

This information has been rushed to the Blackwheel Company by their spies in the Omaren household—as such, much of it is incomplete. Tragar will give any and all information she has, but the above outline covers the extent of it. She should also pass on the urgency of the mission and the need for swiftness to the PCs in as clear

and firm manner as possible. The platoon needs to disembark, *now*. Tragar wishes them luck as they depart, and encourages them to make The Company proud.

3. A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

As the platoon makes its way toward the docking portal a man’s voice calls out from a nearby doorway.

“Ah... uh... excuse me there uh... young fellows... Might I trouble you for a moment?”

A bespectacled, silver haired, wizened old man peers out from the doorway and beckons you inside. His uniform is wrinkled and worn, but the insignia on his breast—a wheel with seven spokes—shows that he is of substantial rank in the Company. Pockets cover the non-standard uniform and are crammed with various objects. Wands, rods, and any number of other trinkets hang from the old man’s belt. He appears to be of old age, but his eyes hint that he may be younger at heart than he looks on the exterior.

“Tubal d’Cannith,” he introduces himself, pushing his spectacles up on his nose, “Chief Artificer of the Blackwheel Company, won’t you please join me for a moment?”

Tubal will plead with the PCs to join him in his study, even pulling rank if they are very resistant. He proceeds to ask the party if they are the platoon just assigned to the mission tracking down a lost heir in the wilds outside of the Marsh of Desolation. If the PCs want to know how he came by this information he simply points to his insignia of rank. As the party enters, Tubal quickly closes the door behind them.

Lowering the tone of his voice slightly, the wizened artificer continues,

“Ah... I am very glad to have caught you before you left. As you know, I head the Company branch that researches and develops new equipment for our continuing uh... operations. I was just chatting with the Field Marshal, and I think I may have something that will help you.”

With that grey-haired human pushes up his spectacles again and fumbles around in his pouch for a moment before retrieving a red-bound tome with tarnished gold trim.

“This is an exact replica of the Tome of Woe that you are being sent to retrieve. Well, not exact, since we don’t know all the contents. Still, it would take quite an expert on languages to tell that this is a forgery. I specially prepared it myself. I know that “stealing” a book may not seem noble, but such is the price of progress. We must have the information contained in that tome!”

“I thought that this might help you secure the true Tome of Woe. It’s a very important object, and I’m happy to make your mission easier. Perhaps the young man carrying it won’t notice it missing if you can replace it with this. I do hope you’ll make use of it.”

PCs may be suspicious at this point. A Sense Motive (DC 15) check reveals that Tubal may not be as forthcoming as possible. PCs that made the check to gain information about Paulo d’Cannith’s past may make an Intelligence check (DC 15) to make a connection between Tubal and Paulo. If the artificer is questioned on either of these issues, he bumbles a bit, and shares some additional information. He’ll again emphasize the “*price of progress*” that must be paid in pursuit of unraveling the mysteries of the Draconic Prophecy. He will “admit” that the book contains purposefully misleading information that he hopes falls into the wrong hands—namely those of the Crimson Codex.

If pressed further, he will emphasize how much easier the item should make the platoon's job of securing the book and offer them his personal assurance that Blackwheel Company leaders are aware of this situation and that no harm will come to them from the book. He acknowledges powerful enchantments on the book, designed to conceal its identity and make it look exactly like the true Tome of Woe. A detect magic spell reveals an aura of moderate illusion as Tubal has placed *Nystul's magical aura* on it to make it seem harmless. A Spellcraft (DC 25) or an *identify* spell with a DC 14 Will save reveals moderate evocation magic (from the spell *overwhelming revelations*).

Finally, if the PCs are still reluctant or skeptical, he'll offer them something to sweeten the deal: a cure light wounds potion each.

If the PCs accept the mission, Tubal will thank them, hand them the book, and hustle on his way. If they refuse, he will feign great disappointment and grumble while shuffling his way off. Once the PCs leave Tubal's office, they will be unable to contact him again for any reason. Tubal's true intention is that the book be believably received by Relslin and displayed at an upcoming academic symposia designed to impress the Storm Lords and other notable nobles with the handiwork of the Crimson Codex. House Cannith has a personal vendetta against the excoriate Paulo Omaren and the Blackwheel Company has a vested interest in embarrassing the Codex, particularly in public. The false tome is designed to unleash an enlarged *overwhelming revelations* and scare the wits, literally, out of all present at the pompous viewing ceremony.

OVERWHELMING REVELATIONS

Magic of Eberron 100

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 6

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

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

Area: 20-ft.-radius burst

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will partial

Spell Resistance: Yes

You tap the incredible complexity of the Draconic Prophecy, granting creatures in the area of burst of insight powerful enough to threaten their sanity. Creatures in the area take a -2d6 penalty to Wisdom and are *confused* for 1 round. A successful Will save reduces the penalty by half and negates the *confusion*.

Material Component: A scale from an adult or older dragon.

PART ONE: THE SEARCH

The short sea voyage across the bay is uneventful. Once the PCs disembark the boat they'll have a direct path on their map. It will take the PCs approximately 8 hours of walking to reach the spot on their map where Kleris was last seen alive. It may take anywhere between 1 and 4 days for the PCs to locate Kleris depending on how resourceful they are and how well they handle the surprised the jungle has in store for them.

1. DISEMBARKING

After a 3 hour sail across the bay you arrive at a small natural beach at the end of a narrow cove. Descending from the small vessel the captain gives you a nod. He'll wait 5

days, if you haven't returned by then, he has orders to set sail and inform Sgt. Tragar of your deaths. A dozen yards off the beach, the thick jungle begins. Off to the left, the Marsh of Desolation can be seen, an ominous grey haze hanging over it. A small, overgrown path leads from the beach into the jungle ahead. Your map indicates that you have a good distance to travel along this path to find the heir's last known location.

The beach shows no signs of recent passage or activity. The party arrives at the beach around noon of the first day. Keep track of time, particularly the time they spend lost, the time they spend traveling, and the time it takes them to locate Kleris. As the PCs enter the jungle you should get a marching order from them as it will factor into future encounters.

Though the path leading into the jungle is overgrown, it is still relatively easy to follow. A single Survival (DC 5) check is sufficient to keep the PCs on the crude path until the first encounter. Failing the Survival check indicates that the PCs become lost. The PCs spend an hour wandering aimlessly and must make a Survival (DC 10) check each hour to attempt to find the path again. Each consecutive hour after the first that the PCs spend lost adds one to the DC of the Survival check up to a maximum of 15. The PCs may also choose to ignore the path and instead travel in the general direction of the location marked on their map with a successful Survival (DC 15) check. Success leads the PCs directly to the Ambush encounter. A failure on this check indicates that the PCs are lost and follows the rules for being lost above.

LOST

A single Survival (DC 5) check between each encounter is sufficient to keep the PCs on the crude path during the adventure. Failing the Survival check indicates that the PCs become lost. The PCs spend an hour wandering aimlessly and must make a Survival (DC 10) check each hour to attempt to find the path again. Each consecutive hour after the first that the PCs spend lost adds one to the DC of the Survival check up to a maximum of 15. The PCs may also choose to ignore the path and instead travel in the general direction of the location marked on their map with a successful Survival (DC 15) check. Success leads the PCs directly to the next encounter. A failure on this check indicates that the PCs are lost and follows the rules for being lost above.

While the PCs are lost they risk the chance of a random encounter. Try to limit random encounters to a maximum of two or three. The PCs cannot encounter the Crimson Codex rescue party more than once. Roll on the appropriate table below to determine what the PCs encounter:

Day 1:

1-60: No Encounter

61-70: **Bombardier Beetles (2):** hp 14, 12; Monster Manual 284.

71-80: **Mutated Fleshraker:** hp 31; Combat Statistic.

81-90: **Tentacle Spider (2):** hp 15, 12; Combat Statistic.

91-100: **Crimson Codex Rescue Party:** see Combat Statistic.

Day 2:

1-50: No Encounter

51-60: **Bombardier Beetles (2):** hp 14, 12; Monster Manual 284.

61-70: **Mutated Fleshraker:** hp 31; Combat Statistic.

71-90: **Tentacle Spider (2)**: hp 15, 12; Combat Statistic.
 91-100: **Crimson Codex Rescue Party**: see Combat Statistic.

Day 3:

1-40: No Encounter

41-50: **Bombardier Beetles (2)**: hp 14, 12; Monster Manual 284.

51-60: **Mutated Fleshraaker**: hp 31; Combat Statistic.

61-80: **Tentacle Spider (2)**: hp 15, 12; Combat Statistic.

81-100: **Crimson Codex Rescue Party**: see Combat Statistic.

Day 4:

1-30: No Encounter

31-40: **Bombardier Beetles (2)**: hp 14, 12; Monster Manual 284.

41-50: **Mutated Fleshraaker**: hp 31; Combat Statistic.

51-60: **Tentacle Spider (2)**: hp 15, 12; Combat Statistic.

61-100: **Crimson Codex Rescue Party**: see Combat Statistic.

Day 5:

1-20: No Encounter

21-30: **Bombardier Beetles (2)**: hp 14, 12; Monster Manual 284.

31-40: **Mutated Fleshraaker**: hp 31; Combat Statistic.

41-50: **Tentacle Spider (2)**: hp 15, 12; Combat Statistic.

51-100: **Crimson Codex Rescue Party**: see Combat Statistic.

MUTATED FLESHRAAKER

CR 2

Thin wicked-looking spines bristle from this creature's back, sinuous tail, and muscles forelimbs, dripping with blue ectoplasm. Although it stands upright, you can tell the green and orange striped killer can run on all fours should it desire. A pair of yellow crystalline eyes offsets the ectoplasm dripping from its long, reptilian snout.

N Medium animal

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

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16

hp 28 (4 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee Bite +1 (1d6+1), 2 claws +6 (1d6+3 plus poison), and tail +1 (1d6+1 plus poison)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6

Atk Options Leaping pounce, poison, rake 1d6+2

Special Actions psi-like abilities

Psi-like abilities (ML 1st):

1st (1 per day)-*precognition, offensive*

Abilities Str 17, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 12

SQ low-light vision, scent

Feats Improved Natural Attack (claw), Track

Skills Hide +12 (+22 in wooded areas), Jump +24

Leaping Pounce (Ex): When a fleshraaker charges a foe it can make a full attack including one rake attack. If it successfully hits and damages a target of its size or smaller during a charge, it can make a free trip attack without provoking attacks of opportunity. If the fleshraaker wins the trip check, it can make an

immediate grapple check. If it succeeds the opponent is considered grappled and pinned beneath the fleshraaker. On each subsequent round the fleshraaker can deal automatic claw and rake damage with a successful grapple check against a pinned opponent. If the fleshraaker loses the trip check it cannot be tripped in return.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude (DC 14), initial damage 1d6 Dex, secondary damage 1d6 Dex. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +2 melee, damage 1d6+2.

TENTACLE SPIDER

CR 2

The creature scuttling toward you seems to be a giant spider, but where its fangs should be are four long, writhing tentacles. Eight red eyes gleam above the squirming mass in the midst of its face.

CE Medium aberration

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +2

AC 16, touch 13, fl at-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 13 (2 HD)

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

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles each +4 touch (poison) and bite -1 (1d6)

Ranged writhing web +4 ranged touch (entangle)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1

Atk Options poison (DC 13, 1d3 Dex/1d3 Dex)

Special Actions writhing web

Abilities Str 11, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 2

Feats Weapon Finesse

Skills Climb +12, Hide +8, Listen +0, Move Silently +8, Spot +2

Writhing Web (Ex): A tentacle spider can throw a writhing web up to eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets up to one size category larger than the tentacle spider. The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement.

SIGN CRIMSON CODEX

CR 1

Male personality warforged wizard 2 (abjurer)

LN Medium construct (living construct)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen -1, Spot -1

Weakness vulnerable to spells that affect wood and metal, half benefit from normal healing spells

Languages Common, Draconic, Gnoll

AC 12, touch 11, flat-footed 11

hp 9 (1 HD)

Fort +2 (rat familiar), **Ref** +1, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee slam +1 (1d4)

Ranged light crossbow + 2 (1d6/19-20x2)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 2nd):

1st—*magic missile, shield, protection from chaos, ray of enfeeblement*

0—*detect magic, acid splash, resistance, flare*

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

Feats Unarmored Body, Scribe Scroll
SQ Warforged traits
Skills Knowledge (Dungeoneering) +5, Concentration +6, Craft (Armorsmith) +4, Decipher Script +3, Knowledge (Arcana) +5, Search +3, Spellcraft +6
Possessions *bracers of armor* +1, light crossbow, 20 bolts, dagger, scroll of *magic missile* (CL 1)

FIREMANE MAGEFRIEND CRIMSON CODEX(SHIFTED, RAGING)

CR 2

Female shifter barbarian 2
 CG Medium humanoid (shapechanger)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision 60 ft. Listen -1, Spot -1
Languages Common

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 33 (2 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

[rule]

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee greataxe +7 (1d12+5)

Abilities Str 16 (20 rage), Dex 16, Con 22 (rage, shifted), Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 6

Feats Beasthide Elite

Skills Balance +5 Climb +5, Handle Animal -1, Survival +3, Jump +5, Ride +4;

SQ shifter traits (Beasthide), rage, uncanny dodge

Possessions breastplate, greataxe

Shifting (Su): Shifting is a free action and lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3+ the shifter's Con modifier. Every shifter feat a character takes increases the duration of his shifting by 1 round.

YERRIN CRIMSON CODEX

CR 2

Male human sorcerer 2

CG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +2

Languages Common, Elven, Drow

AC 12, touch 11, flat-footed 11

hp 12 (2 HD, toad familiar)

Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee morningstar +0 (1d8-1)

Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d6/19-20x2)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0

Sorcerer Spells (6/5 CL 2nd):

1st (5 per day)—*magic missile*, *color spray*

0—*detect magic*, *acid splash*, *daze*, *flare*, *light*

[rule]

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

Feats Investigate, Research

Skills Concentration +6, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (Arcana) +7, Knowledge (Nobility) +3, Spellcraft +9, Spot +2

Possessions *bracers of armor* +1, light crossbow, 20 bolts, morningstar, scroll of *charm person* (CL 1), *potion of cure light wounds*

2. Ambush (EL 4)

A small clearing opens amidst the dense foliage of the jungle ahead. Scattered beams of light trickle down through the thick jungle canopy, casting strange shadows across the clearing. A roughly humanoid corpse lies crumpled upon the ground some 20 feet ahead. A short distance away, an ornate sword lies upon the jungle floor, glinting in a tiny patch of sunlight.

Foes: A lone pygmy lizardfolk waits to ambush small groups of adventurers from Stormreach. The sword, a trophy from a previous kill, lies atop the trigger for a snare trap. The lizardfolk hopes to prove itself to the tribe by returning with a worthy kill—and the PCs would make an outstanding catch. The corpse—a long-dead human—is mostly bones and tatters of cloth at this point and is part of the lizardfolk's trap to make the sword look more believable. The sword is a masterwork scimitar and is well polished to catch the eyes of nearby adventurers. A PC that closely investigates the sword or attempts to pick it up will trigger the snare trap. The clearing is a circle roughly 10' in diameter of clear terrain. Treat all terrain outside of the clearing as difficult terrain. Five and 10 foot diameter trees scattered about the area provide ample opportunity for cover.

Pygmy Lizardfolk: hp 22; Combat Statistic.

Tactics: This small lizardfolk lies hidden (Hide + 7) approximately 20' behind the snare trap in the hope that unsuspecting creatures take the bait. The pygmy lizardfolk has been waiting for some time and has become desperate to try and return with a trophy. He will attack even large parties. If one of the PCs is caught in the snare trap, the Lizardfolk will attempt to take advantage of the distraction by attacking weak looking or lightly armored humans—whom it has a particular hatred for—by hurling its shortspear at them, then peppering them with shots from its longbow. In melee it uses both claws and its bite attack against nearby threats. It always attacks humans first if they are present, and prefers to prey upon weaker targets before moving to stronger ones. If the PCs spot the trap or go around it, it lies in wait until it can take an advantageous shot at a weak human near the rear of the party, preferably when many of the more combat-oriented PCs are further away. If the Lizardfolk is badly wounded (less than 5HP) it will attempt to flee back into the deep jungle.

Snare Trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 25 Reflex save avoids; creature pulled up 15 feet suddenly and hangs there until it makes a DC 15 Escape Artist check or until the thick jungle rope holding the PC suffers 4 points of slashing damage (the rope has hardness 0 and an AC of 5); Search DC 20, Disable Device DC 20.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

3rd-level characters: Add a monitor lizard animal companion (hp 20, MM 275)

4th-level characters: Add a 2nd pygmy lizardfolk (hp 24) in addition to the monitor lizard.

PYGMY LIZARDFOLK

CR 1

This shorter-than-average reptilian humanoid is covered in mottled green and brown scales. Barbed claws tip the ends of both of its hands and a sly grin splits its sharp-toothed maw. The ragged leather armor

draped across its body appears to be made of human skin.

LE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

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

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17

hp 20 (2 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee Bite +3 (1d4+1), 2 claws +6 (1d4+2)

Ranged shortspear +5 (1d4+2) or longbow +5 (1d6)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Atk Options favored enemy (human)

[rule]

Abilities Str 15, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ low-light vision, scent

Feats Multiattack, Weapon Focus (claw), Track

Skills Hide +7

Possessions leather armor, longbow (small), arrows (30), shortspear (small)

Favored Enemy (Ex): Due to the extensive study of his chosen foe, the ranger gains a +2 bonus on Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks when using these skills against creatures of this type. Likewise he gets a +2 bonus on weapon damage rolls against such creatures.

3. THE HEIR'S LAST LOCATION

Blood and trampled underbrush swathe the small clearing ahead. The thick, knobby trees that form the edge of the clearing are scored by slash marks and small burns. A leather satchel sits next to a large rotten log. Thick, brownish-orange moss covers the trunks and exposed roots of the trees on the eastern edge of the glade.

A Survival (DC 5) check indicates that this is the location marked as Kleris' last known location on the PCs map. A Search (DC 14) or Investigate (DC 10) reveals signs of combat. Smears of blood lead off in various directions across the clearing and out deeper into the jungle. A character with the Tracking feat can track human footprints toward the East with a Survival (DC 12) check. A Survival (DC 17) check reveals the feline tracks of up to 3 different creatures heading different directions into the jungle. A Search (DC 16) or Investigate (DC 12) check uncovers a trail of blood and bits of leather along with footprints heading toward the East.

If the party sets out any other direction than East, apply the rules for the lost scenario.

Treasure: The pack contains 3 sets of iron rations, numerous shards of glass, and one intact potion of cure light wounds.

4. THE EDGE OF THE MARSH (EL 2)

Patches of ruddy brown muck mark the outer edge of the Marsh of Desolation. Clumps of tall grey reeds with dark, pointed red tips sitting in pools of stagnant black liquid fill the vast expanse of the marsh to the east. A thick mist hangs in the air just above the reeds, obscuring the true size of the vast swamp. Murky tendrils of the mist drift out into the forest between the trees. Approximately 40' from the

beginning edge of the marsh, a large, strange ape clutches a screaming human in its claws.

The PCs have arrived at the edge of the Marsh of Desolation where a marsh ape has cornered Kleris, the heir they seek. A Spot (DC 10) check reveals that the human closely resembles the description they were given of Kleris ir'Omaren.

Foes: This ape is nearly identical to the ape statistics in the DMG except for its appearance. The marsh ape is covered in exceptionally thick, oily black fur covered in orange-brown algae. A marsh ape has a +8 bonus on Swim checks instead of Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on swim checks. It has a swim speed of 20'. Its fingers and toes are webbed, it appears shorter and more squat than a typical ape, and its claws are exceptionally long. The PCs should start approximately 50' from the marsh ape, with the ape between the party and the swamp.

Marsh ape: As ape, hp 33; *Monster Manual* 268.

Tactics: The marsh ape has grappled and pinned Kleris. On its turn, it will make a grapple check (at an additional +4 because of the pin) and attempt to drag Kleris at half-speed into the Marsh. If the PCs come within the marsh ape's reach, it drops Kleris and begins attacking them. If Kleris is freed from the ape's grasp, he attempts to withdraw a safe distance away from combat and watches. If the ape is able to reach the swamp it attempts to swim through the 5' deep water.

Development: If the PCs are able to successfully save Kleris they will have achieved one of the major goals of the mission. If Kleris is slain, the mission is not a total failure, but the PCs might have a more difficult time meeting their objectives. If the marsh ape defeats the PCs or escapes with Kleris, the adventure ends.

Scaling the Encounter:

3rd-level characters: Add a pair of marsh baboons (hp 6, 5 *MM* 268)

4th-level characters: Add a 2nd marsh ape (hp 29, *MM* 268).

PART TWO: THE HEIR RECOVERED

Once the PCs find Kleris, they still have several goals to accomplish before returning to Stormreach. They should return with Kleris to the boat, keeping an eye out for the true rescue party. They may also want to attempt to either steal, switch, or otherwise acquire the Tome of Woe during this time. Additionally, as they learn about the Translation Tablet they may also want to work toward acquiring that.

Negotiating with Kleris

Kleris ir'Omaren wears tattered leather armor covered with tracts of muck and congealed blood. Filthy, matted blonde hair juts out from beneath a battered helmet that appears to be one size too large for the teenage boy. An expensive-looking, yet sturdy pack is strapped to his back and an expertly crafted scabbard hangs empty from his waist. A wide-eyed expression and trembling jaw hint at strong emotions beneath the young heir's battered exterior.

Convincing Kleris of the party's identity and intentions should be a fairly challenging task. Kleris begins with an indifferent attitude toward the PCs. Kleris is wounded, suspicious, and feels extremely guilty about leading such a disastrous expedition. He saw most of his expedition slaughtered, including his fiancée, whose corpse he was forced to abandon to hungry jungle predators. Kleris will not openly take responsibility for these actions and instead blames his father. Kleris has deluded himself into believing that his father is at fault for the expedition because he was "forced" to undertake such a drastic endeavor to earn his father's respect. Each step the PCs move Kleris toward a more positive attitude should make obtaining the Tome of Woe and/or the Translation Tablet easier. Each step the PCs move Kleris toward a more negative attitude, the more difficult the PCs should find it to obtain the Tome and the Translation Tablet.

When the PCs encounter Kleris he will be extremely guarded with his personal possessions and information. His first priority is to ask the PCs to help him recover the corpse of his fiancée, which he abandoned several hundred yards deeper into the jungle.

All Situations. Regardless of Kleris' attitude:

- Kleris discusses his hatred for, and actively complains about, his father.
- He openly blames his father for his current situation because he was "forced" into impressing his father with such a dangerous task.
- He pitifully and openly mourns the loss of his fiancée, Aileen.
- He begs/pleads with the PCs to help him recover the corpse of his fiancée so it can be brought back to Stormreach for burial.
- He openly discusses, but knows very little about the specifics of the Tome of Woe.
- He displays and brags about finding the Translation Tablet.

As long as Kleris' attitude stays indifferent, the following should happen:

- He remains suspicious of the PCs and gains a +2 circumstance bonus to opposed Diplomacy, Sense Motive, or Bluff checks. His wariness of the party grants him an additional +2 bonus on Spot checks and Saving Throws when dealing with the PCs.
- Kleris keeps a close eye on his personal possessions and refuses to willingly allow the PCs to carry/handle or manipulate any of them.

If the PCs actions move Kleris to an unfriendly or worse attitude, The following should happen:

- He is extremely suspicious of the PCs granting him +4 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy, Sense Motive, Spot, and Bluff checks when dealing with the party. He gains a +2 bonus to Will Saves against the PCs as well.
- Kleris becomes hyper-vigilant regarding his personal possessions and refuses to allow the PCs to carry/handle or manipulate any of them.

- He will refuse any aid, help, food, or spellcasting from the PCs (other than being returned to Stormreach).
- He openly threatens to report the PCs actions to the authorities in Stormreach and to his family.

If moved to a friendly attitude, the following should happen:

- The PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy and Bluff checks when dealing with Kleris.
- Kleris will talk more readily with the PCs, sharing as much information as possible at their request.
- While wary of his personal possessions, he may be willing to part with them temporarily for a very convincing reason (Diplomacy or Bluff DC 20).
- He will accept healing, food, or other aid he believes is beneficial from the party.

If moved to a helpful attitude, the following should happen:

- The PCs gain a +4 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy and Bluff checks when dealing with Kleris.
- Kleris will talk incessantly with the PCs, sharing as much information as possible at their request.
- While wary of his personal possessions, he may be willing to part with them temporarily for a very convincing reason (Diplomacy or Bluff DC 10).
- He will accept any offer of aid from the party.
- If the PCs opt to tell Kleris the truth about their mission, he can be convinced to aid them directly (Diplomacy DC 15) by knowingly switching or surrendering the book (provided the PCs assure him that no harm will come to anyone—though he would delight in seeing his father frightened/embarrassed) and giving the PCs the Translation Tablet. He will also agree to lie to his father about the circumstance of the rescue.
- Kleris seeks to befriend the PCs and may be used as a contact and source of information in later adventures.

Conditional modifiers for dealing with Kleris. A number of possibilities exist for modifying Kleris' attitude:

- A -2 penalty on the PCs Diplomacy and Bluff checks if they have mentioned being sent by his father. Kleris is already extremely bitter at his father and the PCs mentioning his involvement will upset him further.
- A -2 penalty on the PCs Diplomacy and Bluff checks if they have mentioned being members of the Crimson Codex. Kleris is aware that his father has involvement with some strange secret organization, but knows nothing about it beyond that.
- A +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Bluff checks if the PCs sympathize

with Kleris' complaints about his father or if they join him in criticizing his father.

- A +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Bluff checks if the PCs actively console Kleris' over his slain fiancée.
- If the PCs engage in open combat or offensive spellcasting against Kleris he immediately moves to a hostile attitude.
- If the PCs retrieve his fiancée's corpse he immediately moves up to the next highest attitude (for example, from indifferent to friendly).
- If the PCs are caught in an attempt to recover the book without notice (such as with Sleight of Hand or magic) he immediately moves down to the next lowest attitude for each failed attempt.

TOME OF WOE

The tome is a large, leather-bound book with clasps made of a material similar to ivory. It weighs approximately 7 pounds and does not detect as magical.

This ancient tome contains text in a strange language that—to this point—has been indecipherable. The language actually appears to be a pictographic code that resembles a mix of draconic and the ancient language of the Gatekeepers. Despite a wealth of attention from academics and scholars in Stormreach, the unusual code has remained an enigma. It is rumored that the ancient forces that sought to keep the madness of Xoriat from dominating Xen'drik created translation keys for the book, and spread them far across the land. Rumor also has it that the book contains either directions to—or descriptions of—an ancient site of power related to the Draconic Prophecy called the Well of Woe.

TRANSLATION TABLET

This grayish triangular object is about the size of a dinner plate. It has the weight and texture of ceramic, but seems to resist chipping and breaking of any sort. It contains raised markings consistent with the pictographic language found in the Tome of Woe. Below the symbols are translations of their meaning carved in the language of the giants. The writing and symbols run all the way to the edges of the tablet, some only half-complete, indicating that there may be other tablets.

In Search of Aileen

Kleris' spirits seem to have risen since you agreed to help him locate the corpse of his fiancée. He seems to have an excellent memory for detail and sense of direction as he backs through the thick jungle toward the place he was forced to abandon her body. After half an hour of slashing through the dense brush the ground becomes noticeably more damp and seems to slope downward. Another few minutes of trudging brings you to a small sump in the jungle floor. Several inches of wet muck cover the ground here. A nod from Kleris indicates that you are nearing the place where he left Aileen's body.

Use this section only if the PCs have agreed to help Kleris recover his fiancée's body. If the PCs have refused to help Kleris recover the body, move them directly to the "The Return Journey" section below. If

questioned Kleris will explain that he made exact note of the location and direction so that he could return later to recover the body. He will also reveal that some horrid, half-wolf half-cat-like creature nearly frightened him to death and was responsible for slaying his fiancée.

1. THE CORPSE

As the evening sun trickles in through the tropical canopy, a trail of gore is spotted winding its way around the trees ahead. Kleris doubles over and retches at the sight of the clotted smear, making enough noise to wake the dead. Ahead, something snarls in response to the noise, and it is clear something is moving. In the distance a large feline creature with a spotted coat and savage, fleshy jaws sits hunched over body, its gaze darting back and forth.

In the thick of a dense patch of underbrush, a lone krenshar has settled in to feast on its hard won meal. Thick tangles of trees and jungle foliage make the area barely passable—though a small path has been flattened by the dragging of Aileen's body.

Foes: The krenshar is determined to guard its meal from any intruders. The krenshar is alerted to the presence of the party as they close within 40' by the sound of Kleris' gagging. The scent feat should help alert the krenshar to any further approach by the party.

Krenshar: hp 16; *Monster Manual* 163.

Tactics: If the Krenshar catches scent of the party at any time, it will attempt to hide until it can spot a potential threat. As soon as it is able to see a target, it attempts to use its scare ability. It will attempt to defend the corpse, holding near to it unless it takes damage from a ranged attack. At that point it will engage in melee combat. Kleris is not susceptible to the krenshar's scare for another 24 hours and remains safely at the rear of combat.

Development: If the PCs succeed in slaying or chasing off the krenshar they will have successfully recovered the corpse of Kleris' fiancée, Aileen. Unfortunately, Aileen is a very large woman—and in her current state, weighs in at nearly 210lbs. Her corpse is badly masticated and a Heal (DC 15) check alludes to the fact that she was likely slain by krenshars—a fact that Kleris will confirm if asked. Kleris is absolutely devastated when he sees the corpse, but it further strengthens his resolve that he must bring her intact body back to Stormreach for proper funeral rites. Kleris is so taken by emotion, however, that he mourns inconsolably for a significant amount of time. The goal to strongly encourage the PCs to make camp in the nearby area for the evening. It should be late in the evening, just prior to sunset when you arrive.

Kleris should be as adamant as possible about remaining the evening to grieve—but don't force the PCs to camp if they are absolutely opposed to it. If they do camp, allow them to set up watches though no random encounters will occur. Camping also provides Kleris with a chance to show off the Translation Tablet and the Tome of Woe, and a chance for the party to work on obtaining them before the return trip to Stormreach begins.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

3rd-level characters: Add a 2nd krenshar (hp 10, *Monster Manual* 268)

4th-level characters: Add a 3rd krenshar (hp 13, *Monster Manual* 268)

PART THREE: THE RETURN JOURNEY

The journey back to the ship begins either when the PCs recover Aileen's corpse, or when they recover Kleris if they choose not to help him recover the corpse. Be sure to provide ample opportunities along the journey back for Kleris to brandish and brag about both the Tome of Woe and the Translation Tablet. Use the "Conditional Modifiers" section above to determine how easy or difficult it will be for the PCs to obtain the Tome of Woe and the Translation Tablet. Pay close attention to how many days it has been since the PCs left Stormreach and note the time it takes them to return to the ship.

Navigating the jungle

It seems to take significantly longer to slash a path back through the jungle toward the boat than it did on the way in to locate the heir. Pulpy, twisted jungle vines explode in green ichor as they are hacked apart. Though your route out of the jungle and away from the swamp is the identical path that you followed in, any sign of prior passage has been mysteriously erased or overgrown.

This scenario follows the same rules as the original trek into the jungle. The path leading into the jungle is overgrown, yet still relatively easy to follow. A single Survival (DC 5) check is sufficient to keep the PCs on the crude path until the first encounter. Failing the Survival check indicates that the PCs become lost. The PCs spend an hour wandering aimlessly and must make a Survival (DC 10) check each hour to attempt to find the path again. Each consecutive after the first that the PCs spend lost adds one to the DC of the Survival check up to a maximum of 15. The PCs may also choose to ignore the path and instead travel in the general direction of the location marked on their map with a successful Survival (DC 15) check. Success leads the PCs directly to the A cry for help encounter. A failure on the Survival check indicates that the PCs are lost and follows the rules for being lost in the sidebar above.

A cry for help (EL varies)

Suddenly, an ear piercing shriek knifes through the fetid jungle air. As the horrid shriek reverberates through the forest, a chorus of alarmed shouts joins it in shattering the calm.

If the PCs have already encountered the Crimson Codex rescue party, skip this section. Read this entry during the trek back to the ship, but before the PCs come too close to returning to the ship. At this time, the Crimson Codex rescue party has been waylaid by a mutated, spellstitched ghast. Hearing the screaming is automatic. A Listen (DC 10) check detects the sounds of combat nearby to the west. A DC 15 Listen check notes the sound of multiple humanoid voices shouting out combat orders. If Kleris is with the party he will be both frightened and curious about the source of the commotion. He will neither prompt the PCs into action, nor prevent the PCs from investigating further.

If the PCs choose to investigate further, begin making Spot checks at approximately 150 feet. At that distance a DC 20 Spot will reveal 4 humanoid figures clad in red, in combat with a grey-skinned humanoid. For each 10 feet the PCs approach, lower the DC of the Spot check by 1. If the PCs draw within 100' of the combat, allow the Crimson Codex party to begin making Spot (DC 20, decreased by 1 for each 10' closer than 100' the PCs approach, or by Hide checks) checks to see the PCs. If the PCs are spotted, any surviving Crimson Codex members call out desperately for aid. If the PCs do not respond within 2 rounds, the Crimson Codex rescue party begins to flee toward the PCs, drawing the ghast with it.

Creatures: The ghast is openly hostile toward the Crimson Codex party it has ambushed at the start of the encounter. It will continue to attack the Crimson Codex party until they are all slain, simply attempting to viciously create as many spawn as possible. If the PCs engage the ghast it angrily engages them in return. If the PCs are within sight of the ghast and it slays all the Crimson Codex members, it engages them if it is above 12 hp. If it is below 10 hp, it snarls at the PCs and begins dragging the bodies off into the woods. If the PCs interfere, it attacks. Kleris maintains a very safe distance, guarding Aileen's corpse, if the PCs move to engage.

Mutated Spellstitched Ghast: hp 27; Combat Statistic.

Tactics: The ghast opens the combat against the Codex members by catching them off guard with an attempt at *scare*. From there it will try to paralyze weaker members first starting with any not affected by the spell, and move to another victim as soon as one is paralyzed. If the PCs join the combat, the ghast unleashes a *stomp*, ordering the PCs to bow down and submit as his soon-to-be-children. It prefers to take 5' steps until it has exhausted its spell reserve and weakened its prey, then follows with melee attacks. If the PCs engage the ghast, then flee, it will pursue them unless it has dropped below 10 HP.

This is a difficult combat that is likely to result in significant casualties unless the Codex and PCs work together. For flavor, have the ghast spit ectoplasm at the PCs and scream at them to "submit to becoming my brood of Khyun Rhech!" If the PCs succumb to his spell or psi-like abilities, have him taunt the PCs during his actions. If the odds turn far into the ghasts favor, have him relish the demise of the PCs by using Intimidate checks to demoralize his remaining victims.

Development: The PCs have the option of choosing not to pursue this encounter or even to explore further. Don't force the encounter upon them or even attempt to influence their decision. If they choose to walk away, simply describe the sound of continued screaming in the distance, and let them move on.

If the PCs choose to get involved, things grow increasingly more complex. If they opt for combat, they will be pulled into combat with the ghast, but also have the option of simultaneously engaging the Crimson Codex members, or even waiting until after the combat with the ghast, then engaging the remaining Codex party.

Once combat has concluded, the roleplay takes an interesting twist. If the PCs assist the Crimson Codex party with the ghast and choose not to engage them in combat, the rescue party members will be extremely grateful and start at a Friendly attitude, granting a +4

bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks with them. If the PCs help treat wounded Codex members, grant an additional +2 bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks. There are, however, some loose threads that will need to be addressed. The Crimson Codex members will instantly recognize Kleris if he approaches (though Kleris may not know who they are) and his appears is not disguised or altered. The Crimson Codex members will also be curious about the PCs and who they work for and how and why they happened upon Kleris. If the PCs attempt to dupe the Crimson Codex members, use Bluff checks opposed by their Sense Motive checks to determine how the rescue party reacts. If the PCs are caught in a lie, the Codex party immediately drops to the next lowest attitude and demands that Kleris (if alive) returns with them. If the PCs refuse to allow Kleris to return with the Codex, they offer to escort the PCs along with the heir back to Stormreach or they threaten political action (as a first option) and force (as a last resort). Even when demanding, they are polite. They are loathe to use force, and do so with grim, reluctant determination. Be sure to give Kleris Sense Motive checks on the PCs Bluff checks as well, unless he has been told the truth about their mission.

If the PCs choose to tell the truth about their mission a DC 20 Diplomacy check convinces the Crimson Codex party to allow the PCs to continue on their way so long as they promise to return Kleris home immediately. By default the Codex rescue party offers to accompany the party back to Stormreach for their mutual benefit and survival. A Diplomacy check between 10 and 19 preserves the Friendly attitude of the rescue party, but they reasonably and politely insist that the PCs immediately turn over Kleris to be returned home. Diplomacy checks of less than 10 garner a less sympathetic response from the Codex rescue party.

If the PCs are able to successfully negotiate this encounter and earn the respect of the Crimson Codex, award them the Crimson Codex Alliance story object.

Scaling the Encounter:

3rd-level characters: Add a pair of ghouls (hp 14, 11, *Monster Manual* 119)

4th-level characters: Add a second ghast (hp 28, *Monster Manual* 119)

MUTATED SPELLSTITCHED GHAST

This foul humanoid's purple-gray flesh is carved with intricate iridescent runes. Its eyes are deep purple crystalline orbs and faint orange ectoplasm drips from its savage fangs and wickedly exaggerated claws.

CE Medium undead

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14

hp 27 (4 HD); **DR** 5/+1

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

SR 18; turn resistance +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee Bite +4 (1d8+1 plus paralysis), 2 claws +1 (1d4 plus paralysis)

Base Atk +2; **Gp** +3

Atk Options multiattack

Special Actions spell-like abilities, psi-like abilities, stench

Spell-like abilities (CL 4th):

2nd (1 per day)-*scare* (DC 18)

1st (3 per day)—*ray of enfeeblement* (+5 ranged touch), *cause fear* (DC 18), *burning hands* (DC 18), *shocking grasp*

Psi-like abilities (ML 1st):

1st (1 per day)-*stomp* (2 PP, DC 15)

Abilities Str 13, Dex 15, Con -, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 16

SQ undead traits, paralysis, create spawn, turn resistance +4

Feats Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite)

Skills Concentration +4, Climb +6, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Intimidate +9, Jump +6, Move Silently +7, Search +6,

Paralysis (Ex): Anyone hit by a mutated spellstitched ghast's bite or claw must succeed at a Fortitude (DC 15) save or be paralyzed for 1d6+4 minutes.

Stench (Ex): Each creature within 10' must succeed at a Fortitude (DC 15) save or be wracked with nausea for 1d6+4 minutes.

Create Spawn (Su): Humanoid victims of a mutated spellstitched ghast that are not devoured rise as ghouls in 1d4 days.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A mutated spellstitched ghast is treated as an undead with 8 HD for the purpose of turn, rebuke, command, and bolster attempts.

Returning to the ship

The ship can be heard in the distance long before it can be seen. A rousing chantey about a scandalous lass named "Maggie May" echoes through the jungle canopy. Whether by carelessness or callousness, the sailors seem oblivious to any additional attention their bawdy singing may attract. Fortunately, as the shoreline comes into sight the boat seems intact and undisturbed. As the sailors see you emerge from the forest canopy, they immediately begin making preparations for departure.

This interlude simply provides another opportunity for the party to interact with Kleris or to conclude an unfinished business before returning to Stormreach. If the Crimson Codex rescue party is with the PCs they agree to use the PCs ship to return to port.

Across the bay

Gusty headwinds make the return trip to Stormreach slightly longer than the original journey.

The short 4-hour sea voyage across the bay gives the PCs one final opportunity to obtain the book, Translation Tablet, interact with Kleris, or prepare for their return to Stormreach. Remind the PCs that their original mission parameters included not being seen with Kleris anywhere in Stormreach upon their return. Encourage the PCs to make a plan for their return and be sure to allow them time at the beginning of the voyage to organize their thoughts.

Docking in Stormreach

How and where the boat docks may be up to the PCs if they ask the sailors to delay until nightfall or approach in a different manner. The sailors refuse to return or dock at any location other than the main docks.

Appropriate Bluff, Hide, Diplomacy, or Disguise checks should be used to help navigate the encounter. Try and keep the DCs around 15 for the checks, and oppose with Spot or Sense Motive checks from the Stormreach Guard or generic bystanders (+1 Spot, +1 Sense Motive). Anticipate that the PCs may attempt to create a diversion to slip away from Kleris and avoid the eyes of the guard. If the PCs have told Kleris the truth about their mission he may volunteer to depart separately from the PCs. They may attempt to disguise or hide themselves or Kleris. If the Crimson Codex rescue party is with the PCs they may just choose to sail right into port.

Development: There are several ways for the PCs to succeed at this mission. The PCs can return Kleris to the city without being seen and give him a plausible reason they need to separate from him before he returns home. The PCs can create a diversion or find some other means or excuse to slip away. Or if the PCs have earned Kleris' trust, they may tell him the truth and ask him to separate from them voluntarily.

PART FOUR: EPILOGUE

Provided the PCs return with Kleris alive and have obtained the tome, the mission is considered a success. If the PCs were unable to keep Kleris alive, but recovered the tome the mission is also a success, but Sgt. Tragar chides them for their carelessness. Recovering the Translation Tablet is an additional bonus for the PCs, and Sgt. Tragar will praise the PCs for their initiative should they return with it. Any intelligence the PCs recovered about the Draconic Prophecy or the Crimson Codex faction will be praised as well. If the PCs have befriended Kleris and he returns to his father, award the story object "A Contact in the Codex."

Returning to the ship

Regardless of the mission's outcome, the twin rings of the Glory Road are a welcome sight after the twisted jungles of Xen'drik. A footman notices as you come aboard and quickly informs you that Sgt. Tragar is in her office. As you enter the cluttered office, Sgt. Tragar looks up from the maps on her desk and rises to salute you.

"Report." She states simply, in a tone that manages to perfectly blend both hope and menace.

Allow the PCs to quickly debrief Sgt. Tragar on the details of the mission. If the PCs were unsuccessful in recovering either the Tome of Woe or in bringing back at least Kleris' body, she will dress them down with unrelenting fury. If the PCs were able to recover the Tome and secure the heir or his body without being seen award them the Dragoon Rank story object. If the PCs were able to recover the Tome, the heir, and the Translation Tablet, award them The Pilgrim's Crest story object along with the Dragoon Rank story object. If the PCs were able to secure the Tome, heir, and the Translation Tablet and the party managed to either

befriend the Crimson Codex directly or secure Kleris as a possible source of information about the Codex, award them the Truce of Wisdom story object in addition to the Dragoon Rank and Pilgrim's Crest story objects.

Be sure that Sgt. Tragar conveys her approval or displeasure at the PCs' actions. If the PCs earned medals, she personally and proudly pins them on. If the PCs failed on their mission she all but throws them out of her office.

Unveiling the Tome

Use this section only if the PCs were able to switch out the original Tome of Woe with the forgery given to them by Tubal d'Cannith. If Kleris was either complicit in the plot to return the false book to his father, or was unaware of the switch and believed the PCs cover story—have the PCs pick up or happen upon a copy of the Stormreach Adventurer (SRM—off the top of your head, does Stormreach have a paper? If not, can we standardize a name for one for adventure purposes?) and read the following eye-catching article:

Arcane Explosion Wreaks Havoc at Unveiling Ceremony

Stormreach, Morgrave University Campus—Dozens of injuries, some serious, but no deaths were reported as a cryptic tome unleashed its ancient secrets by force upon innocent bystanders at an unveiling ceremony for the artifact last night.

Though most witnesses are unable to recall the exact details of the event, some report that hideous creatures made of arcane energy leapt from the book out into the crowd, causing hysteria and madness. Some of the survivors reported that these ephemeral horrors assaulted their minds with words from a strange prophecy. Witnesses that arrived first on the scene after the horrid screaming began noted that many of the affected guests seemed struck by madness; some were gibbering unintelligently, others lying upon the ground clutching at their eyes or ears. An arcane advisor from Morgrave University noted that the arcane energies released may have ties to the Draconic Prophecy.

The unveiling ceremony was the inaugural effort in a series of events highlighting finds from recent expeditions deep into Xen'drik. The mysterious "Tome of Woe" was reported to have contained many wonders as of yet undeciphered from the mystifying language contained within. Those secrets will remain a mystery, as the book destroyed itself upon releasing its potent magic.

The social gala featured many of Xen'drik's most prominent scholars, and one of the Coin Lords, Paulo Omaren as the event's patron. Other Coin Lords sent representatives to the prestigious event, though none were available for comment after the incident. Relslin ir'Omaren, cousin to the Coin Lord, and reputed discoverer of the tome is currently being held by the Stormreach Guard for questioning. Captain Selte of the Guard's Arcane Investigation division has promised a thorough investigation and full report of their findings.

This event should conclude the module if other events have not done so already. Do not allow the PCs a further attempt to gather information or to question Blackwheel Company officials. This event will be left as a loose thread that may entangle PCs later if they were identified by the Stormreach Guards upon returning to the city.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs have had an opportunity to meet with Sgt. Tragar for debriefing and have been read the article from the Stormreach Adventurer (if appropriate) the adventure will have concluded.

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

- Describe the PCs interactions with the Crimson Codex
 - They befriended or made an alliance with the Codex
 - They remained neutral toward the Codex
 - They engaged in open hostility with the Codex
 - They did not encounter the Codex
- How many random encounters did the PCs face?
 - None
 - One
 - Two
 - Three
- In general, how well do you think the PCs planned to recover the Tome of Woe from Kleris and return to port unseen?
 - Excellent, they made an effective plan and carried it out..
 - Okay. They had a plan and attempted it.
 - Poorly. The plan was neither well developed nor well executed.
 - None. There was no plan.
- At the end of the adventure, how did Kleris feel about the PCs?
 - He befriended and/or trusted them
 - He was grateful for the rescue, but not 100% friendly
 - He was indifferent toward the PCs
 - He was suspicious or angry with the PCs
 - He was openly hostile toward the PCs
- Were the PCs able to recover the Tome of Woe?
 - Yes, and they switched it with the false book
 - Yes, but they did not switch it with the false book
 - No
- How did the PCs recover the Translation Tablet?

- It was recovered with Kleris' consent
 - It was recovered without Kleris noticing
 - No attempts were made to recover it
 - Attempts were made, but the PCs were unsuccessful in recovering it
- Rate the group's roleplaying.
 - Fantastic! Everyone had interesting and engaging characters that interacted and challenged the adventure in very fun ways.
 - Good. Most players had interesting and engaging characters.
 - Okay. There was some roleplaying.
 - None. There was no roleplaying. They treated the adventure as nothing more than a set of objectives to be accomplished.

STORY OBJECTS

Dragoon Rank: This object is a small enameled black wheel with a single spoke on it. It is a sign of the second rank in the Blackwheel Company: Dragoon. Within the Blackwheel Company rank is a sign of esteem, leadership, accomplishment, and pay. While rank is not an absolute determinant, lower ranking members generally defer to higher ranking members. Blackwheel Company members gain a +1 bonus on Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks with other Company members of their rank or lower for each spoke on their rank insignia. Dragoons add an additional +150 to their gold piece limit. Like all Blackwheel Company medals and badges of rank, this insignia will magically adhere to armor, skin, or clothing at will.

Pilgrim's Crest: This medal is awarded to Blackwheel Company members that have shown initiative and leadership in the field. This medal is silver in color and depicts a shield emblazoned with a small warforged face with glowing blue eyes. Bearers of this honor gain recognition and esteem within the Blackwheel Company. Bearers of this medal are expected to help their platoons make decisions quickly in tough situations and are held to a higher standard than the average recruit.

Truce of Wisdom: This medal is awarded to Blackwheel Company members in only the rarest of circumstances. In this instance, working for the Company's best interest by forming an alliance with the Crimson Codex shows both foresight and cleverness. The medal is represented by a small golden book with the word "Acropolis" printed across it. Members bearing this medal receive a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks with Crimson Codex PCs and NPCs. Crimson Codex members recognize the cooperation and service accomplished between the two organizations and active, non-hostile Codex members treat Blackwheel Company members bearing this medal as friendly.