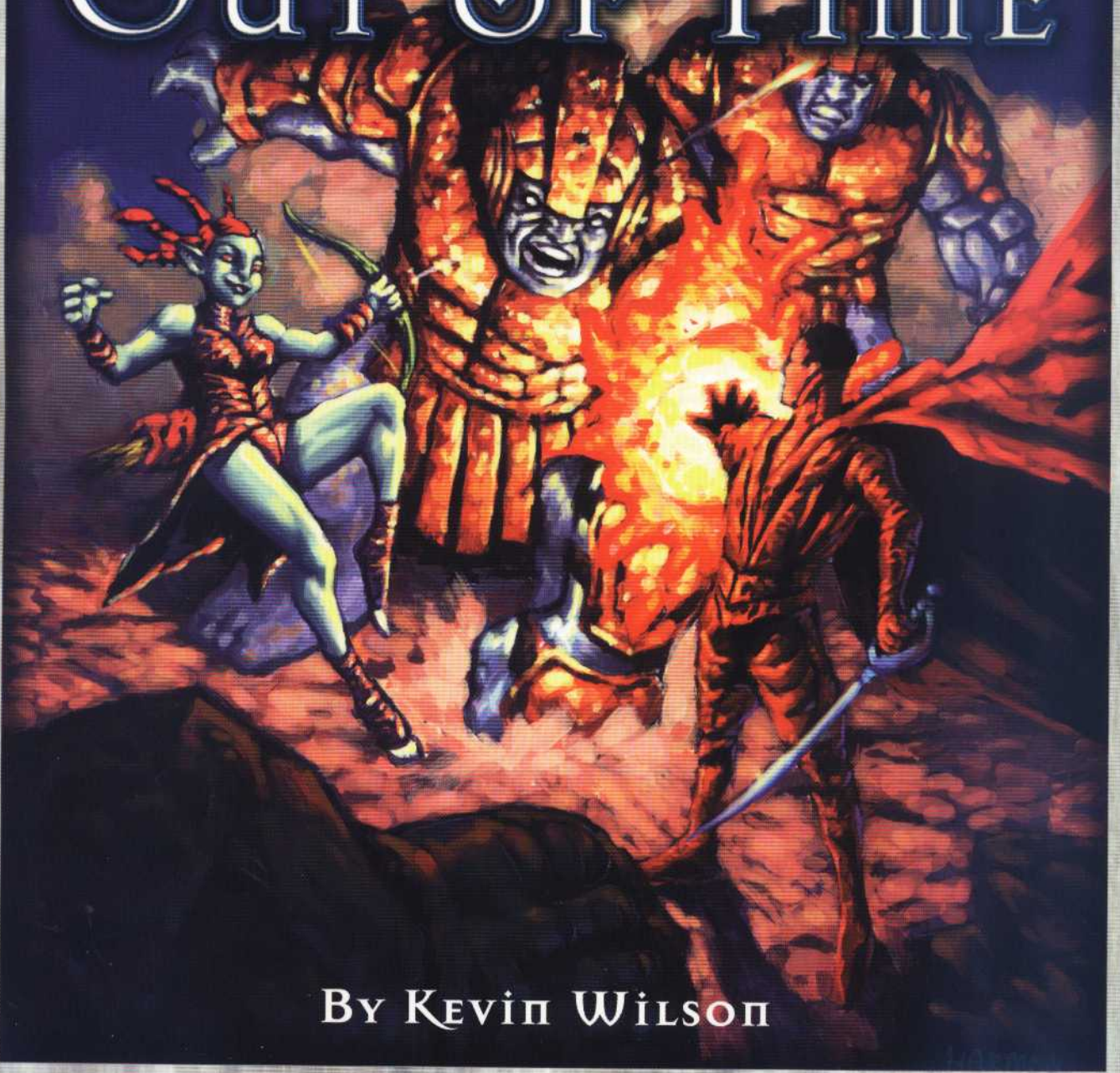


EDEN ODYSSEY

Requires the use of the Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, 3rd Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®

WONDERS OUT OF TIME



BY KEVIN WILSON



WONDERS OUT OF TIME

A VIGNETTE SOURCEBOOK
FOR CHARACTERS
OF 1st - 12th LEVELS

Requires the use of the
Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, 3rd Edition,
published by **Wizards of the Coast®**

CREDITS

AUTHOR: KEVIN WILSON
EDITOR IN CHIEF: M. ALEXANDER JURKAT
COPY EDITOR: ROSS ISAACS **D20 SYSTEM EDITOR:** MATTHEW COLVILLE
ART DIRECTION AND GRAPHIC DESIGN: GEORGE VASILAKOS
COVER ART: PAUL HARMON **INTERIOR ART:** KIERAN YANNER
MAPS AND FLOOR PLANS: ROBERT LEE

PLAYTEST: BASTIAN AVANZINI, TIM BAUER, OLAF BELITZ, MARVIN BENTLEY,
HANS-JURGEN BERGBAUER, WAYNE CANTRELL, ANDY CIANCIOLO, JESS CUPP, LARRY
DODDS, WESLEY DODDS, SHAWN FARREN, ED GILLET, MIKE HALSEY, JASON JONES,
JORN, KAHNB, JEFF KISER, DAVID LEONHARDT, BEAU MARTIN, COREY PEREZ,
ELWIN RUMPLMAYR, DAVID STEGBAUER, PAUL TATE, WES "NAUGHTY ONI"
UNDERHILL, JOHN VARONE, STEVEN WARD, CHRIS WHITE, TED ZWIKEL

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**EDEN
STUDIOS INC**

Eden Studios
3426 Keystone Ave, #3,
Los Angeles, Ca. 90034

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Long ago, the Merithians were the most powerful civilization in the world. They made great sorcerous discoveries, infusing their own bodies with magic. With these discoveries, their armies rolled over their enemies, and they killed those who would not submit to slavery. But after centuries of this treatment, the barbarians in the hills joined forces with one another, and ransacked the Merithians' capital, destroying the greatest repository of sorcerous knowledge in the world. Crippled by this blow, the Merithians faded in power and were gradually absorbed into other cultures. Their splendid works were lost in the sands of time -- until now.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Part One: Enrollment is the material currently being read.

Part Two: The Merithians details the Merithian history and culture for use in these vignettes, or adventures created by the DM.

Part Three: Perinocles' Manor serves as a brief introduction to the works of the Merithians, and later, as the resting place of the greatest -- and most deadly -- of the Merithian secrets. It is designed for 1st to 3rd level characters.

Part Four: The Merithian Farm has been infested by a band of goblinoids. The knowledge to be gained there could lead to one of the greatest Merithian treasures -- if the PCs can recognize it as such. It is for 2nd to 4th level characters.

Part Five: The Lost Merithian Fortress has become the headquarters for ruthless brigands, who do not understand the value of the treasures sitting right under their noses. Clever PCs may rediscover a style of fighting that was used by some of the most famous warriors in history -- the Centurion Knights. It is intended for 3rd to 6th level characters.

Part Six: The Merithian Temple presents dangers that may lead to a medical wonders -- as well as greater understanding of the Merithians themselves. It challenges 5th to 8th level characters.

Part Seven: The Great Library is unearthed by new construction. Among the ruined treasures within is the key to the Merithian language. It plays for 6th to 9th level characters.

Part Eight: The City of Derimos requires the outgunned PCs to gain the aid of the restless dead inhabiting the palace's lower reaches. In the process, they discover the location of the home of the greatest Merithian sorcerer who ever lived -- the manor where all this began. It is written for 9th to 12th level characters.

Appendix contains the new monsters and items introduced in this book, including detailed information on Merithian Red Sorcery, and the new prestige class, the centurion knight.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Wonders Out of Time is sourcebook detailing background material on the Merithian civilization, which may be used as part of any fantasy campaign. It is also a book of short adventures, or "vignettes," designed for use with the d20 system. They are suitable for parties ranging from 1st to 12th level depending on the vignette chosen.

ENROLLMENT

The vignettes are not full-blown adventures, simply small, self-contained, mini-modules. They can be quickly dropped between the larger sessions of a regular campaign to provide a change of pace, or to involve the PCs while other plotlines develop. Alternatively, the vignettes can be used as part of a larger campaign should the DM choose to interweave one or more in a larger storyline. A DM might also choose to string the vignettes together to make larger adventure. Finally, links have been provided in a couple places to other books in the *Eden Odyssey* line for a truly grand campaign.

Before running the vignettes in this book, DMs should familiarize themselves with the Merithian culture in Part Two. This helps answer questions that may not be addressed in the individual vignettes. A photocopy of the important Merithian topics (see p. 4-5) may be kept nearby as well. As for the vignettes, italicized text in boxes is player information, which can be read aloud or paraphrased. Grayed sidebars provide important information for the DM, such as special instructions and links to other vignettes.

Unlike most adventures, the PCs may visit many of the areas described in this book multiple times -- not every secret reveals itself to them on their first visit. Often, they only discover the best-hidden secrets of the Merithians after gaining some crucial piece of information concerning this long-dead culture. In effect, the heroes are going to become archaeologists, delving into secrets long forgotten -- sometimes best left that way.

The focus in this book is on exploration and discovery rather than combat. PCs are rewarded more for careful thought and planning than they are for charging in with spells blazing. GMs may wish to increase or decrease the number of monsters and traps to fit their group's gaming style.

Finally, all the materials in this book may be considered Open Content, and may be used in accordance with the Open Gaming License, reprinted at the end.

GENDER

Every roleplaying game must decide what to do about third person pronouns and possessives. While the males reference (he, him, his) is customarily used for both male and female, there is no question that it is not entirely inclusive. On the other hand, the "he or she" structure is clumsy and unattractive. In an effort to "split the difference," the *Eden Odyssey* line varies between male and female designations when indicating a non-specific person or character.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kevin Wilson is best known as the co-designer of the *7th Sea* RPG. He is 26 years old and currently living in Southern California. Kevin has a BA in Cognitive Science (Artificial Intelligence) from U.C. Berkeley, and hopes to someday pass the Turing test.

THE MERITHIANS

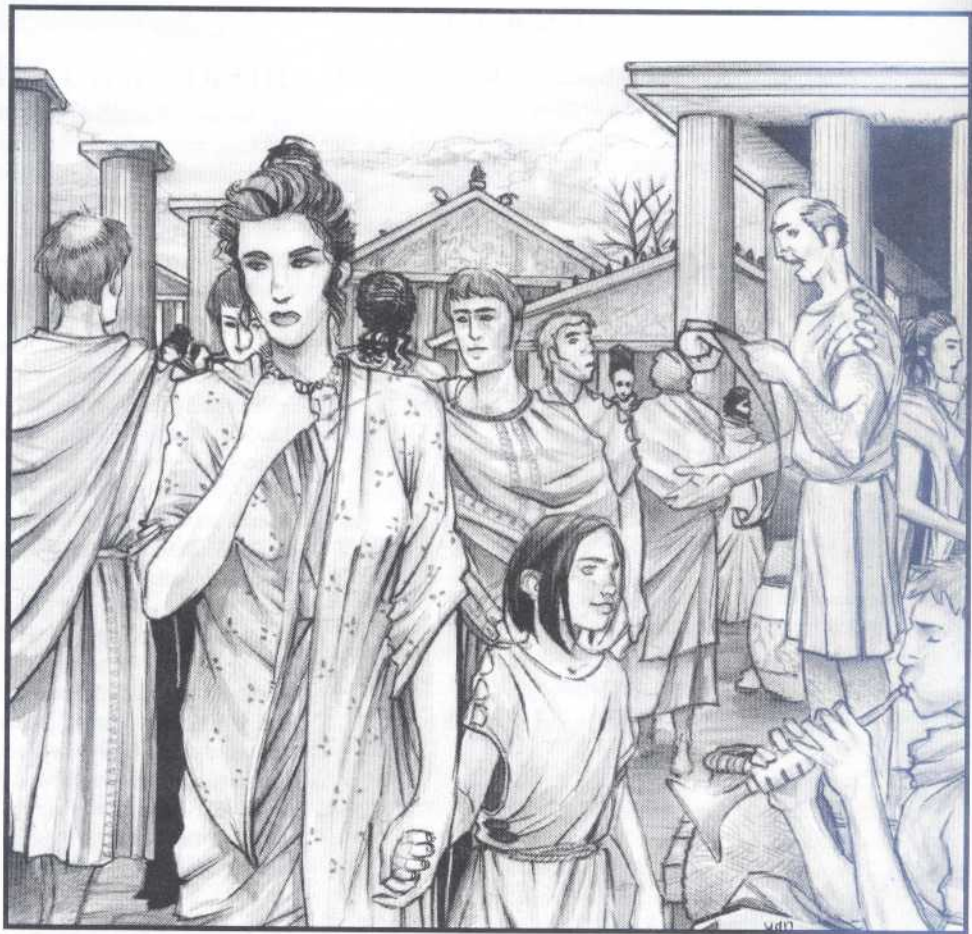
Any mention of the Merithian Empire brings a smile to a well-read treasure hunter's lips. Tales of their sorcery brings out the avarice in even the humblest man. However, the Merithians were more than the wielders of an incredible magic -- they were a race of people who helped shape our world. They were born, they lived, they died, and each of them had a story all their own. As their remains are disturbed and their artifacts stolen, more and more of these stories are lost forever. The lessons we should be learning from history are vanishing day by day.

-- Excerpt from
*Yesterdays
Forgotten*, by
Ulnerius
Featherwright

How would one
describe the
Merithians in
one word?

Complicated.

-- Excerpt from
*Yesterdays
Forgotten*, by
Ulnerius
Featherwright



INTRODUCTION

This section provides a broad overview of the Merithian culture that may be adapted and expanded to fit any campaign. This material should prove useful long after every vignette in this book has been played.

Whenever a new Merithian fact or name is devised, simply write it down in the margin next to the portion it falls under. This way, all Merithian information stays in one place for easy reference.

THE MERITHIAN EMPIRE

The Merithian Empire is loosely based upon the Roman culture. Their clothing and naming practices were much the same, but their philosophy was rather different. The Merithians were fiercely independent and proud, seeking to perfect themselves through exercise, meditation, and sorcery. They had few reservations about altering their own bodies with magic in order to accomplish their long-term goals. Their religion emphasized this pursuit of perfection, stating that it was every Merithian's duty to drive themselves as hard as they could, until perfection -- both mental and physical -- was in their grasp.

Ultimately, their pride was their downfall. Because the Merithians had accomplished so much, they began to believe that they were naturally superior to their fellow men. They forgot that their sorcery did not make them gods, until the barbarians who lived in the nearby hills invaded their capital and reminded them of that. The Merithians' ego could not stand the blow, and the Merithian Empire ceased to be.

USING THE MERITHIANS

There are several good reasons to use the Merithians in an adventure:

- To explore an ancient, exotic form of magic, particularly one that melds with its user or creates artificial life.
- To alert players that the adventure is puzzle- or tactically-oriented.
- To give a sense of antiquity to a location.

However, to get the best effect from the Merithians, follow these guidelines:

- Do not contradict hard evidence that the players have already collected about the Merithians -- stay consistent.
- Build upon previous Merithian adventures, but add a new wrinkle to their ruins each time.
- Do not fill Merithian ruins with lots of magical traps. The Merithians used traps selectively -- to guard their most precious possessions.
- Consider the effects of time and the environment on the ruin. Aging effects can range from none at all (such as the magically preserved manor in Part One) to heavy destruction (such as the ravaged temple in Part Six).

As for locations within an already established campaign world, the Merithian Empire remains may be placed in a remote mountainous area, perhaps as a fabled mountain kingdom in the clouds (like Shangri-la). Or they might be placed in a vast desert, buried under the sands of the ages or the result of some magical disaster. Wherever placed, they should be somewhat out of the way to help explain why no one has unraveled their mysteries until the PCs stumble upon them.

IMPORTANT TOPICS

Under each of the following headers, a number of sample Merithian topics are revealed for PCs who make a Knowledge (history) check. The DC for each topic is listed in parentheses before it. Occasionally, more than one DC is listed, in which case the PC receives all the information after the DCs that are equal to or less than his skill check. The DCs presented assume that the Merithians were as commonly known as the ancient Sumerians are today. These DCs should be adjusted depending on how widely known a DM desires them to be. For example, to make the Merithians as well known as the Romans, subtract three from all DCs below. To make them as obscure as the Olmecs, add three.

If the information has (GM) after it, it is GM info only, unknown to modern scholars. Some of these topics are not used in any of the vignettes in this book -- they are presented as launch points for the creation of new Merithian adventures.

Note to GMs: Feel free to create historical information, songs, plays, and works of literature to add to the stock of Merithian knowledge. As for day-to-day lives, a good deal of inspiration may be taken from books on Roman culture, including Will Durant's *From Caesar to Christ: A History of Roman Civilization* (Volume 3 of *The Story of Civilization*).



MERITHIAN HISTORY

General Knowledge -- (DC 10) The Merithians were famous for their knowledge in general, and their knowledge of sorcery in particular. They were at their height approximately 1,000 years ago, when a barbarian horde attacked their capital city Derimos and gutted it. After that, the Merithians went into a decline, and the Empire gradually fell apart. A man named Ulnerius Featherwright wrote a book about the Merithians titled *Forgotten Yesterdays*.

Building of Derimos -- (DC 20) The design for the city of Derimos came to the first Emperor of Merithia in a dream. It was modeled after crashing ocean waves and was built primarily of arches and other curving structures. (GM) The city has survived to modern times and has been taken over by a cult worshipping the false sun god, Manar.

Decline of Merithia -- (DC 20) After the Siege of Derimos, the Merithian national pride was destroyed. With the Emperor dead and the Centurion Knights decimated, no guiding hand held the Empire together, and it gradually fell to pieces.

Siege of Derimos (DC 10) -- The city of Derimos was destroyed by barbarians. (DC 20) The Centurion Knights were mostly wiped out in that attack. (DC 25) Before they left, the barbarians carved their names into the walls of the palace. The Emperor killed himself in humiliation because of this. (GM) The Emperor's personal guard was never called upon during the siege. Because of this humiliation, they haunt the palace to this day.

Ulnerius Featherwright -- (DC 15) A famous modern scholar who wrote a book on the Merithians. A PC who makes this check knows in which city Ulnerius currently resides.

MERITHIAN CULTURE AND ART

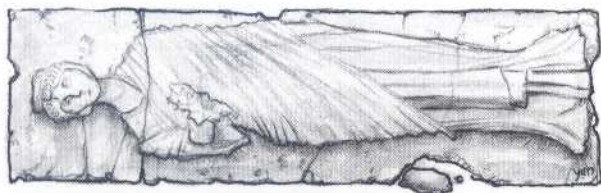
General Knowledge -- (DC 15) In general, Merithian art was quite formal, with paintings tending towards studies of the human body, while books and plays were typically either tragedies or comedies. Not many of these incredible works of art are still intact today. As to the way the Merithians lived -- almost nothing is known.

Ballad of Lenethe and Grisold -- (DC 25) A famous song written by Sophilias, a renowned Merithian bard. It is believed that all copies of the song have been destroyed. A surviving copy would be priceless. (GM) A copy of this song lies in the Great Library of Bastothenes.

False Friend -- (DC 25) One of the surviving plays of the famous Merithian bard Sophilias. It is considered one of the greatest classical works of literature.

Great Libraries -- (DC 15) The Great Libraries of Merithia were famous storehouses of knowledge, both mundane and sorcerous. (DC 20) The libraries were named after the first six Merithian Emperors (Meridius, Octavius, Therion, Bastothenes, Gregarius, and Collus). (DC 25) There was a central library in Derimos that was simply called the Great Library. (GM) The Great Library of Bastothenes, at least, has survived, buried under a modern town. It is unknown if any of the others are left, but the Great Library was probably destroyed in the Siege of Derimos and its contents scattered to a dozen barbarian tribes in the hills.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME



MERITHIAN HEROES

General Knowledge -- (DC 15) The greatest heroes of the Merithians usually came from the ranks of the Centurion Knights -- the Merithians' most celebrated fighting force. However, the Merithians also looked upon their Emperors, and a few of their Red sorcerers, as heroes.

Caius Orphellius -- (DC 15) The last Emperor of Merithia. (DC 25) Orphellius committed suicide in humiliation after the Siege of Derimos by drinking from a golden cup filled with nightshade.

Centurion Knights -- (DC 15) Remembered as one of the greatest fighting forces in history, the Knights were adept at wielding gladius and shield while wearing heavy armor. (DC 20) The Centurion Knights were mostly wiped out at the Siege of Derimos. (GM) A manual explaining how to train as a Centurion Knight still survives, hidden in a Merithian fortress.

Empress -- (DC 20) Little is known of the Empresses of Merithia, since historical documents never mention them in more than passing references.

General Mironades -- (DC 25) The commander of the Centurion Knights at the Siege of Derimos. Little is known of him except his fabled one-man charge on the barbarian hordes when he saw his men penned in and in trouble. He was gravely wounded in the charge, but supposedly survived long enough to write a first-hand account of the battle, which has never been found.

Perinocles -- (GM) The greatest of the red sorcerers. His manor survives to this day, and is the first Merithian structure the PCs stumble upon. He killed himself and his students when his advancing paranoia made him believe that one of his apprentices was a traitor.

Sophilias -- (DC 25) One of the greatest known Merithian bards. Most of his works have been lost to time.

MERITHIAN RELIGION

General Knowledge -- (DC 10) The Merithians worshipped the sun as a god. Not much else is known about their religion. (GM) This assumption is incorrect. The Merithians did not believe in the sun as a deity.

Greeting of the Sun -- (DC 25) The Merithians performed a ritual called the Greeting of the Sun every day. It is unknown what this ritual entailed. (GM) A copy of the ritual survives, hidden in a Merithian temple.

Priests -- (DC 15) It was said that the Merithian Priests had no faces and no form, but no one is sure what that meant.

Worship -- (DC 20) The Merithians believed that their sun god demanded a strict exercise regiment from them. (GM) Not really, the regiment served to aid the Merithians in their pursuit of perfection.

Funerals -- (DC 25) The Merithians believed that a toll must be paid for entry into the afterlife, so they were buried with a gold coin placed on each eye. (GM) A more detailed description of Merithian burial practices has survived in Perinocles' Manor (see p. 10).

MERITHIAN RUINS AND ARTIFACTS

Derimos -- (10) Derimos is the capital city of the Merithians. See also Merithian History.

Oracles of Aradinos -- (20) The Oracles of Aradinos were a series of superstitions that governed the design of Merithian buildings. No known copies of the Oracles remain. (GM) A copy of the Oracles survives in Perinocles' Manor (see p. 10).

Merithian Scrolls -- (15) The Merithians wrote by making triangular marks in clay cylinders. If the scrolls were meant to last, they were baked until dry.

MERITHIAN MAGIC

Bloodscrolls -- (DC 20) The Merithians used a form of magic that was said to be activated by the shedding of blood.

Golems -- (DC 20) The Merithians built golems that were faster and more powerful than those built by modern wizards.

Melding Weapons -- (DC 20) The Merithians supposedly used magical weapons that melded with their user's body when worn. Only a secret word unique to each item could remove these weapons.

Red Sorcery -- (DC 15) Merithian sorcery was named red sorcery, supposedly due to the color of the blood used in the spells. (GM) Actually, although red sorcery was named after the color of blood, it was because the sorcery flowed through the user's veins, not because blood powered it.

OTHER TOPIC DCs

Other sample DCs include:

- (DC 10) Spotting a Merithian artifact or building style.
- (DC 20) Identifying a major Merithian cultural icon.
- (DC 15-30, depending on obscurity) Recognize a particular Merithian place, person, or item.
- (DC 12) Recall a major event in Merithian history.
- (DC 20) Remember a central Merithian philosophy or religious tenet.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

Once the vignettes in this book have been exhausted, the PCs may come across other remnants of the Merithian Empire. Possible suggestions include:

- A haunted coliseum.
- A city buried by volcanic ash.
- A lich surviving from the Merithian time period.
- A dragon that frequently dealt with the Merithians.
- The final resting place of a great Merithian general (and his magical sword).
- A trip back through time to witness Merithia in its prime.
- An encounter with Ulnerius Featherwright, the famous scholar who wrote *Yesterdays Forgotten*, the definitive work on the Merithians. He is eager to trade information with the PCs.

Regardless, a good Merithian adventure should disclose at least one bit of information about the Merithians, and build upon what the PCs already know. Otherwise, it is just a **dungeon crawl**.

PART THREE — PERINOCLES' MANOR



INTRODUCTION

In this vignette, the PCs stumble across the home of one of the greatest wizards of the Merithian Age -- a man named Perinocles. The decline of the Merithian Empire proved too great a strain for the nationalistic wizard's mind, and he went mad. Suspecting that one of his apprentices was a traitor, he killed them all before locking his greatest secrets away in an extra-dimensional deathtrap and casting a spell to destroy himself. In reality, his "traitor" was nothing more than a paranoid delusion.

Although roughly 1000 years have passed since Perinocles committed murder and then suicide, the manor survives completely intact (other than a bit of dust) due to preservation spells he put in place before he went mad. The manor's remote location has kept the building undiscovered until now.

Using This Vignette

This vignette has two parts to it -- the "true manor", and the "shade manor". The true manor is intended as an introductory adventure (1st to 3rd level characters), and the shade manor is intended to conclude the vignettes in this book (9th to 12th level characters). Hopefully, the players will be surprised when they later realize the first ruin they stumbled across was really the home of the powerful Red Sorcerer, Perinocles.

SIRAS: What's this -- a worm in the apple of my home? I have given you a place to live, Keinos. Why do you repay me in disgrace?

KEINOS: You have earned no other coin, Siras. This apple was rotten ere I came. Indeed, another worm had beaten me to its core. And worm you must be, to remain so blind to the love and devotion of your wife.

SIRAS: Be still! I have eyes enough to see the dishonor you have brought -- and a sharp knife to cut the worm from the apple!

KEINOS: A sharp knife, indeed, if you would draw it on the best swordsman in Rames.

SIRAS: Sharp enough to play the words from your tongue!

-- Excerpt from *The False Friend*,
by Sophistas

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

THE TRUE MANOR

This part of the vignette introduces the PCs to the Merithian culture for the first time, and features several small combats that they can largely avoid if they use their heads. The intent of this vignette is to intrigue the PCs and get them interested in the Merithians. This makes later vignettes much easier to introduce.

In order to prepare for this portion of the vignette, re-read Part Two, and the true manor portion of the vignette. Pay particular attention to the "Bone Guardian Patrols," "Preservation Spells," and "Speaking With the Dead" sidebars. Ignore the shade manor material for now -- the PCs cannot accidentally arrive there. They have a long way to go before they unearth enough of the Merithians' secrets to reach the shade manor.

THE SHADE MANOR

The second part of the vignette is intended as a conclusion to the vignettes in this book, and should not be run until after the other vignettes have been played, preferably after the PCs have sporadically encountered Merithian ruins over a period of months or years. This part of the adventure can only be reached with information gained in later adventures.

In order to prepare for this portion of vignette, make sure that the other vignettes in this book have been run. The PCs should have found a description of the Greeting of the Sun in the Temple or the Great Library (see p. 23, 28), and a letter from Perinocles to the Merithian Emperor in the City of Derimos (see p. 33). Only by piecing these clues together can the PCs reach the shade manor and find Perinocles' final secrets.

CHARACTER HOOKS

- An otherwise uneventful trip through a remote area (traveling from one town to the next, for example) reveals this manor. If used in this manner, make it seem like a wandering encounter (roll dice, pretend to check a table, frown).

- The PCs' favorite "adventure starter" -- the local innkeeper, the friendly town preacher, or whoever typically sends your group on adventures -- drop rumors about a mysterious, ruined house in the woods. Or an organization with which one or more of the PCs is affiliated -- a thieves' guild, a knightly order, or religious temple -- wants the group to find the manor.

- A sorcerer or wizard in the party has a mentor who often spoke of a legendary wizard's manor somewhere in the area. The PC either remembers the story and tracks down the manor, or his mentor sends the character to locate it. The mentor distributes rewards to those who participate (in the form of a magic or special items in exchange for bringing back information about the house), and the magic-user in question may even gain access to his mentor's spellbooks.

- The PCs encounter a scholar named Bellen (male human Com4) who is seeking Merithian buildings to study. Bellen tells them that he has a map leading to such a building, but it refers to a local landmark that he is unfamiliar with. The PCs, on the other hand, are quite familiar with the landmark, and Bellen offers to pay handsomely if the party guides him there and helps him explore the building. From there, perhaps Bellen gets killed by one of the guardians lurking in the manor.

- When casting a *detect magic* spell in a remote location, a spellcaster in the party senses the powerful preservation spells on the manor, which may entice the party to go check it out.

THE APPROACH

A stately manor with a flat roof and picturesque support columns rises before you. The area around the manor is overgrown, and there is neither smoke nor noise coming from within. The wooden front double doors are decorated with a stylized carving of a cloud with puffed-out cheeks. Judging by the lack of a beaten path leading up to the manor, it seems unlikely that anyone has been here in a long, long time.

A Knowledge (history) check (DC 15) reveals that the manor is built in the style of the Merithians, but the building seems almost perfectly preserved. The cloud is a Merithian good luck sign (DC 20). No signs of any inhabitants are apparent (DC 15 Search check). The front door has no lock, and opens easily.

THE TRUE MANOR

BONE GUARDIAN PATROLS

Every 20 minutes, groups of three bone guardians (see pg. 35) patrol the true manor. These patrols make a figure-eight circuit of the manor starting and ending at a small hole (A) in the floor of the northeast corner of the manor. The bone guardians attack any group they encounter. PCs can hide in the rooms of the manor to avoid the patrols. The characters may encounter up to 30 bone guardians in this fashion.

PRESERVATION SPELLS

Because of preservation spells Perinocles put in place before he went mad, nothing in the manor ages except for living creatures. The manor shows none of the signs of decay the PCs might expect from a structure over 1000 years old. This also means that the food here and the corpses of Perinocles' apprentices have not decayed -- even the bloodstains in the manor are still fresh.

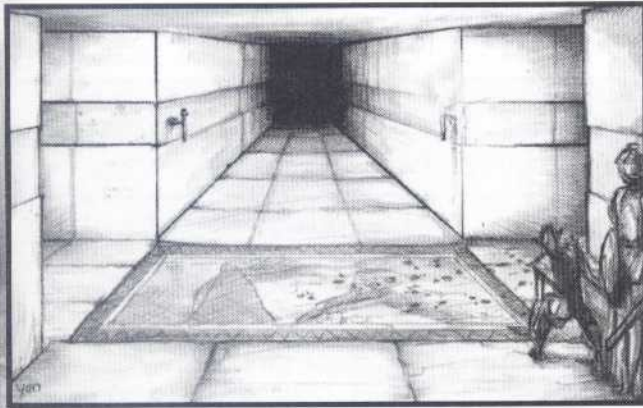
SPEAKING WITH THE DEAD

PCs may attempt to speak with the corpses around the manor if they have access to *Speak with Dead* and *Comprehend Languages*. The apprentices are able to relate the method by which they died, and will assert they are not "traitors."

READING AND SPEAKING MERITHIAN

The PCs most likely need access to a *comprehend languages* spell in order to read any of the written materials in the manor. However, a character can make a Decipher Script check (DC 20) to translate a single sentence of Merithian. If the check is failed, that PC cannot attempt to translate the same sentence again until gaining a level.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME



1. ENTRYWAY AND CORRIDORS

Slightly dusty corridors stretch out to the north, west, and east. Hundreds of small, strange imprints appear in the dust, along with some nearly faded footprints leading to the east. The ceiling is about 10-feet high, and the floor is covered in intricate tile work depicting a woman pointing her hand at a wild-haired barbarian who is falling over dead.

The footprints lead the PCs to location 9, the final resting-place of the thief who made the tracks. They can be followed without a skill check. The tiny imprints are from the bone guardians that patrol the halls. Clever PCs may notice that the imprints do not lead into any of the rooms, thereby gaining a clue on how to avoid them.

The tile flooring depicts several scenes from ancient Merithia. As the characters walk around the manor, they may notice the following scenes:

- A man dressed in bronze armor wielding a gladius and fighting a lion.
- A man dressed in bronze armor wielding a gladius and beheading a wild-haired barbarian.
- An army advancing upon the gates of a city. The soldiers are pointing at the city's gate, and streaks of light shoot out and break it open.
- A person in flowing robes wearing a featureless white mask and praying to the sun.
- A woman in flowing robes carefully examining a small clay cylinder with strange markings on it. (The markings are actually Merithian writing. Translated, they read, "good for tune and health.")

A Knowledge (history) check against a DC 15 identifies the men in bronze armor as Centurion Knights.

A small patch of sticky blood (B) lies on the floor in the center of the middle hallway just to the east of location 4b. This is where Perinocles knelt to complete the ritual needed to enter the "shade" manor after being wounded by one of his journeymen students (see location 7). This blood will not dry so long as the preservation spells remain intact.

Creatures (EL 2): Two bone guardians cling to the front wall above the entryway doors. As the characters enter, they leap off and attack from behind. Unless the characters expressly state they are look up when entering, or succeed at a Spot check opposed by the guardians' Hide skill (+8), the guardians surprise them.

Bone Guardians (2): hp 8, 7 (see pg. 35).

2A-D. SENIOR APPRENTICES' QUARTERS

(2A-2D) A straw mattress in one corner dominates this room, with a wooden trunk nearby. A clay pitcher and water basin rest on a table here as well.

(2A) A young man dressed in a white toga has fallen over backwards onto the table, breaking it and the wash basin and pitcher. He does not appear to be breathing.

(2B) The trunk is open and empty, but some clothes are scattered near it, seemingly dropped there in the owner's haste to leave.

(2C) The straw bed is scorched black, with a burnt human corpse lying on top of it.

(2D) A young elven woman dressed in a white toga has collapsed on the floor, clutching her ears in agony. She does not appear to be breathing. There is a small gold ring on one of her fingers.

These four nearly identical rooms served as quarters for Perinocles' senior apprentices before he went mad and murdered them. Due to the preservation spells on the manor, the apprentices' corpses have not decayed. If examined, the young man in 2a appears to have been struck by a blast of ice, and is still partially frozen (he was killed by a *cone of cold*). The young woman who lived in 2b grabbed her few possessions and attempted to flee Perinocles' wrath, but he cornered her in the pantry (location 6) and killed her there. Perinocles killed the young man in 2c with a *burning hands* spell. The elven woman in 2d was killed with a *power word, kill* spell. The trunks (except for the one in 2b) are filled with clothing and other worthless personal possessions.

Ink Trap

Anyone opening a trunk or other item protected by an Ink Trap must make a Fortitude save (DC 12), or their hands are stained bright red for a month. Those who succeed see a fine red mystical spray cover their hands but then dissipate. This spell was originally intended to make sure the apprentices did not try and steal from each other.

Trap (EL 0): The trunks are protected by Ink Traps (see sidebar, above).

Treasure: The straw bed in 2a has 10 gp concealed inside the mattress. The corpse in 2d has a small gold ring (20 gp) on one finger. The ring worn by the elven woman in 2c is worth 70 gp to the right buyer. The melted remnants of a bag of gold coins (still worth about 20 gp) can be found if the scorched bed in 2c is searched.

3A-B. JUNIOR APPRENTICES' QUARTERS

A ragged straw mattress almost completely fills these tiny rooms, barely leaving enough room for the small, poorly-built wooden trunk at its base. The rooms are very neat and tidy, except for a slight layer of dust that covers everything.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

These two rooms were the quarters for Perinocles' youngest apprentices. Their corpses sit at the table in the kitchen (location 5), where they were fed poisoned honey cakes as a "reward" for their hard work. Their rooms remain undisturbed as a result.

Trap (EL 0): The trunks are protected by Ink Traps (see sidebar, p. 8).

4A-C. JOURNEYMEN'S QUARTERS

(4A-4C) This large room contains a straw mattress, a large, ornate wooden dresser with a clay pitcher and basin on top of it, and a large, polished silver mirror hanging on the wall.

(4A) A man's burnt corpse is huddled in one corner, flinching away from a small, scorched pile of finger bones.

(4B) A beautiful young woman dressed in a flowing green toga is reflected in the mirror hanging on the wall.

(4C) The mattress has a tear in it, like a dagger was driven into it.

These three rooms were the quarters for Perinocles' most senior students, his journeymen. He had to resort to some clever tricks in order to kill his most clever students. The finger bones in 4a are the remains of a bone guardian. On the corpse's finger is a silver ring (see Treasure, below). The journeyman set himself on fire while trying to kill a bone guardian that Perinocles ordered to attack him. Perinocles trapped the young woman in 4b inside the mirror during a magical duel. Breaking the mirror frees her, whereupon she immediately ages 1000 years and becomes a withered husk. Even if she could somehow survive the process, she has gone mad from her long imprisonment and would be a danger to herself and others. The man who lived in 4c can be found in the Practice Room (location 7), where he died fighting Perinocles.

Trap (EL 0): The trunks are protected by Ink Traps (see sidebar, p. 8).

Treasure: The corpse in 4a is wearing a cursed ring of arachnophobia (see p. 43). The silver mirrors are worth 75 gp apiece, although it might be difficult to find a buyer for the mirror from 4b. In addition, the trunk in 4c contains a small leather bag with 200 gp in it.

5. KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM

A small wooden table stands near the door. Two young boys, dressed in brown togas, are slumped over the table. An empty plate sits between them. A clay oven fills the far end of the room, next to a small work area where meals were probably prepared.

The boys were Perinocles' youngest apprentices. When he went mad, he killed them first, using a painless poison he fed to them in honey cakes. A Heal check (DC 15) determines that they were poisoned, and have been dead for a couple hours (solely as a result of the preservation spells). The clay oven is empty.

6. PANTRY

Shelves bearing bags of flour, jars of olive oil, and other foodstuffs line this room. A young woman dressed in a white toga lies motionless in one corner, clutching her heart. Next to her is a sack.

Enough foodstuffs fill this room to feed a group of ten for one month. Thanks to the preservation spells on the manor, none of the food has spoiled. The young woman was one of Perinocles' apprentices. She witnessed his murder of one of her fellow students and attempted to flee. He blocked her escape and cornered her here, where he killed her using a death spell.

Treasure: The young woman's sack contains 60 gp and some clothes.

7. APPRENTICES' PRACTICE ROOM

This enormous room has been scorched, blasted, and abused many times over the years. Several golden lights dart around in seemingly random patterns, while a pile of armor and weaponry fills one corner. In addition, a dummy, missing its head and dressed in a green toga, leans up against the far wall.

The golden lights in this room are a permanent illusion that Perinocles' apprentices used for target practice. The wizard would sometimes animate the weapons and armor to test his students, but they are battered and nearly useless. As for the "dummy," it is actually the corpse of Perinocles' oldest journeyman, who put up quite a fight before the wizard killed him using a stone shape spell to entomb his head within the wall. A dagger lying nearby has some sticky blood on it, showing that the journeyman managed to get in at least one good hit before he died.

Treasure: The dagger lying near the journeyman is a dagger +1.

8. PERINOCLES' QUARTERS

This room contains a large goose feather mattress, a finely carved wooden dresser with a silver basin and pitcher atop it, and an elaborately carved chest.

Perinocles' room is undisturbed. A secret compartment in the chest (Search check at DC 22 to find) contains some of Perinocles' treasure.

Trap (EL 0): The trunks are guarded by an Ink Trap (see p. 8; blue to distinguish it; Fortitude save DC 16). Perinocles did not use stronger security methods because, before his madness, he was a gentle man, and feared that a curious apprentice might get killed poking around in his room.

Treasure: The silver pitcher and basin are worth 25 gp each. The chest contains 140 gp, while the secret compartment contains a gem worth another 200 gp, two potions of lesser restoration (labeled "guardian antidote" in Merithian), a bloodscroll of mage hand, and a bloodscroll of chill touch. The bloodscroll of mage hand has a jagged edge that cuts anyone picking it up, thereby activating it unless they are wearing gloves (bloodscrolls are discussed on p. 41).

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

9. PERINOCLES' LIBRARY

Two small tables are surrounded by chairs in this room. A mortar and pestle rest on one of the tables. A large pile of reddish dirt has been dumped on the floor next to that table. In addition, three oddly designed racks sit around the room. While most of the racks stand empty, there are several cylindrical clay objects left in one of them. Lying in one corner of the room is the corpse of a man dressed in leather armor. Four small white shapes scuttling across the floor towards you.

The cylindrical clay objects are the Merithian form of scrolls. They imprinted symbols around the edges of these cylinders, then baked them to make sure they would last. Perinocles carefully ground up the scrolls he did not want falling into the hands of his imagined enemies. The dust of the scrolls is so mixed up that even magical means cannot mend them. The remaining scrolls require a *comprehend languages* spell to read, and are mostly trivial things such as texts on herbalism. Two are exceptional, however.

The first scroll is titled "The Oracles of Aradinos." The "Oracles" are a superstitious practice the Merithians followed similar to the Chinese practice of feng shui. It describes at length which colors are permissible in which rooms of a home and which plants are lucky to have in the garden. Also, prominently mentioned several times are two central rules: "the walls of a building should face the directions of the four winds," and "each direction, if it has any doors, should have an even number of doors facing it, so that its wind can both enter and leave."

Canny players should be able to use this information to deduce the existence of a hidden door on one of the east walls of the manor. There are two doors facing south, six facing west, four facing north, but apparently only three facing east. The hidden door is in fact located in this room, and requires a Search check at DC 30 to find unless the players have deduced its existence using the Oracles, in which case it requires only a DC 15 Search check.

The second scroll briefly describes the proper Merithian burial practice. First, the corpse is wrapped in white linen, with a gold coin over each of its eyes (so that the spirit can pay the toll into the afterlife), and a short prayer is recited as the body is buried. Good PCs who properly bury the corpses found in the manor should receive an XP award for doing so.

Lastly, the corpse here is the remains of an adventurer who stumbled across the manor and tried to loot it, only to be killed by the bone guardians.

Creatures (EL 4): Four bone guardians attack the characters when they enter the room.

Bone Guardians (4): hp 9, 7, 6, 5 (see p. 35).

Treasure: The dead adventurer has 75 gp., an obsidian *wand of speak with dead* with 2 charges, a scroll of *comprehend languages*, and a *potion of lesser restoration* in a leather pouch at his side. When the adventurer encountered the bone guardians, they swarmed over him. He ran into the library, where they killed him before he could get to his potion.

10. BONE GUARDIAN NESTING ROOM

A large ogre skull on a pedestal oversees this room, rubies glittering where its eyes should be. A nearby table is heaped with rags and carving tools. A clay cylinder lies on top of the rags. Shards of bone litter the floor.

Perinocles created his bone guardians in this workshop. The skull is actually a bone guardian nest, and if the characters disturb it, they may have a desperate fight on their hands. The rags, carving tools, and clay scroll (the cylinder) are the tools Perinocles used to make his guardians, and the shards of bone were left over from the process. Ambitious characters can duplicate the guardians using the materials located here.

Creatures (EL 4): If the ogre skull (or the gems in its eye-sockets) is disturbed, bone guardians pour out of it to attack the characters. Two guardians emerge every round, until either all 16 are out, or someone plugs the skull's nostril hole with something (such as the rags) to trap the rest inside.

Bone Guardians (16): hp 10 (x2), 9, 8, 7 (x3), 6 (x3) (see p. 35).

Treasure: The clay cylinder is a Merithian scroll that must be read using the *read magic* spell (and *comprehend languages*, if the reader does not speak Merithian). It explains the ritual to create bone guardians (see p. 35). Among the rags is a golden whistle, which, if blown once, causes the patrolling bone guardians in the corridors to return to their nest. If blown again, they resume their patrols, but they will not attack the bearer of the whistle, even if the bearer attacks them. The whistle is worth 250 gp. The gems in the eye-sockets of the ogre skull are rubies worth 600 gp each.



WONDERS OUT OF TIME

THE SHADE MANOR

The PCs can only reach this portion of the manor by performing the Merithian Greeting of the Sun, as they learn in the city of Derimos (see p. 33). The Greeting (see p. 23) is simply a figure-eight processional through the house, starting and ending at the bloodstain to the east of location 4b, where a short prayer is recited. This activates a spell that transports the person performing the ritual to location S1.

S1. SHADE MANOR FOYER

You are in an enormous room whose walls are awash with every color of the rainbow. The colors swirl slowly around, making your head hurt. Behind you is a pitch-black circle in the wall. Ahead of you is a door shining so brightly that it is almost blinding to look at.

The room has *prismatic walls*, and anyone who touches them suffers the effects of that spell. Should someone manage to penetrate one of the walls, they simply re-enter the room from another angle. The black circle is the gate back to Perinocles' manor. Anyone who steps through it finds themselves back at the bloodstain to the east of 4b. Any attempt to dispel the magic in this room automatically fails. The glowing door is the only way to proceed deeper into the shade manor, but Perinocles has placed a deadly trap on it.

Trap (EL 2): Anyone attempting to open the brightly glowing door immediately gets hit with a fire blast and hurled across the room. If no one slows the victim's motion, they fly into one of the *prismatic walls*, and immediately suffer the effects of that spell as well. Casting a *darkness* spell (or any other spell that reduces light) on the door dims the glow enough to see the words, "Speak my name to enter" inscribed on the door in Merithian. If someone says, "Perinocles," the door opens without a sound. This trap cannot be disarmed normally.

Blast Trap: CR 5; 5-ft. fire blast; no attack roll necessary (4d6); saving throw (25); Search (DC 29); no Disable Device check possible.

S2. ELEMENTAL TRAP ROOM

The walls of this gigantic room are similar to those of the last, formed from the same swirling colors. Scattered across the floor are thousands of tiny caltrops. To the right, a metal door stands open, invitingly.

Again, the walls of this room are formed from *prismatic walls*, and any attempts to dispel them are futile. Once the PCs enter the room, a cloudy figure appears before them with a clap of thunder and asks, "Who does my master serve?" in Merithian. If the characters answer "Caius Orphellius," or "Merithia," the elemental allows them to pass unmolested. If they fail to answer quickly, or answer incorrectly, the air elemental transforms into a whirlwind and begins sucking up the caltrops. Any character picked up by the whirlwind suffers 4d8 damage instead of the usual 2d8 damage because of the caltrops. On the next round, the elemental expels the character, hoping to throw him into one of the *prismatic walls*.

Creatures (EL 9): A greater air elemental appears with a clap of thunder once the characters step into this room.

Air Elemental, Greater (1): hp 195.

Development: Once the characters answer the elemental's challenge, it will not bother them on subsequent visits.

S3. GOLEM GUARD ROOM

The walls of this chamber are made of marble, rising over 100 feet to the ceiling. An enormous iron door stands closed at the far end of the room. Two massive marble centurions, standing over twenty feet tall, flank it to either side. A deep voice rumbles through the room, speaking Merithian. "Welcome, Caius Orphellius. What were the last words I ever spoke to you?"

The answer is, "While you live, Merithia lives" (in Merithian, of course), but there is little chance of the PCs knowing this. In this case, one of the statues opens the door and allows them into the library. Should the characters hesitate too long or answer incorrectly, the two centurions animate and attack them. Once the golems are defeated, the stone door must be opened, which either requires a Strength check (DC 38) or some creative spellcasting.

Creatures (EL 12): The enormous marble centurions are huge-sized royal golems (see p. 38).

Huge Royal Golem (2): CR 10; Huge-size Construct; HD 13d10; hp 110, 115; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft. (cannot run); AC 27 (-2 size, +2 Dex, +17 natural); Atk 2 slams +21 melee (2d10+10); SQ Construct, magic immunity, damage reduction 35/+2; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 31, Dex 15, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 1.

S4. PERINOCLES' SECRET LIBRARY

The room seems oddly small and plain after the size and grandeur of the last few chambers. A small wooden table, a chair, and a single scroll rack, such as Perinocles has in his manor, adorn the room. Slumped forward in the chair is the body of an elderly man, clutching what appears to be an old knife wound in his side. On the table is a beautiful sword forged from polished silver. Lastly, on the scroll rack are 8 scrolls -- all that apparently remains of Merithia's mightiest sorceries.

The same deep voice that rumbled through the last room speaks again, still in Merithian. "My Lord Caius Orphellius, I am pleased that you came in response to my letter, and gratified that you still remember my last words to you. 'While you live, Merithia lives.' Hold these words close to your heart, and do not despair for the Empire. We Merithians have survived worse than these ignorant barbarians, and our glory shall still shine 10,000 years from now, when they are nothing more than dust. In the meantime, I have left you what tools I can. Use them to hold the Empire together. On the table is a gladius I have forged for you. It is named "Truth", and it will serve you ably. On my finger is a ring. Should you ever find yourself in an impossible situation, rub the ring and state what you need. Once, and only once, the ring will provide it for you. Finally, the scrolls on the rack behind me are my greatest treasures. They detail how to create two things that will serve you well. The first, and lesser of these, are the royal golems guarding my library. The second treasure is the secret of the bloodscrolls themselves. With it, perhaps someday our legions will have the power of sorcery at their beck and call once again. I have done all I can for you, my Liege, I hope it is enough. Farewell, and may the sun shine upon you."

With that, the body seated at the table crumbles to dust. There is a metallic clatter as a ring rolls along the floor.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

Everything is just as Perinocles has described it in his final message. The PCs need merely gather up their spoils and decide what to do with them.

Treasure: The gladius "Truth" is a +3 lawful, speed, spell storing short sword that sheds light equivalent to a torch. Truth is worth approximately 200,000 gp and currently contains the spell *shocking grasp* cast at 25th level. The ring is a *ring of three wishes* with one charge left. The scrolls describe the construction process for *bloodscrolls* (see p. 41) and royal golems (see p. 38).

CONCLUDING THE VIGNETTE

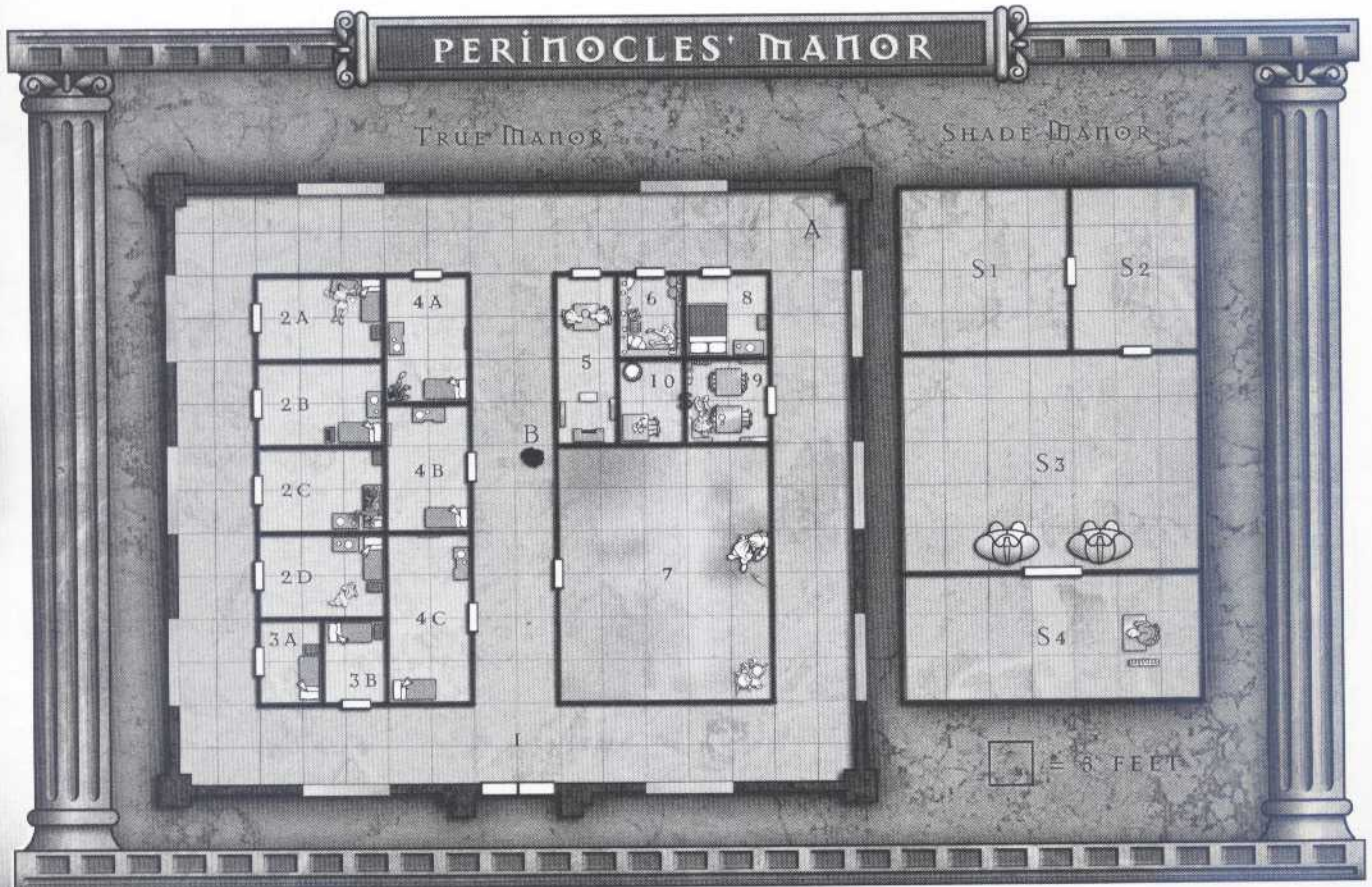
When the PCs finish exploring the true manor, they can do whatever they want with it, even use it as a base of operations. However, the manor is far from the nearest city, making it inconvenient at best. The bone guardians inside continue following their

last command, and travelers occasionally stumble across the manor (possibly to their sorrow, if the guardians are still patrolling). Finally, if the party stays at the manor, but does not give the apprentices a proper Merithian burial, they begin to have nightmares, suffering a -1 to their saving throws until either they bury the corpses properly, or get away from the manor.

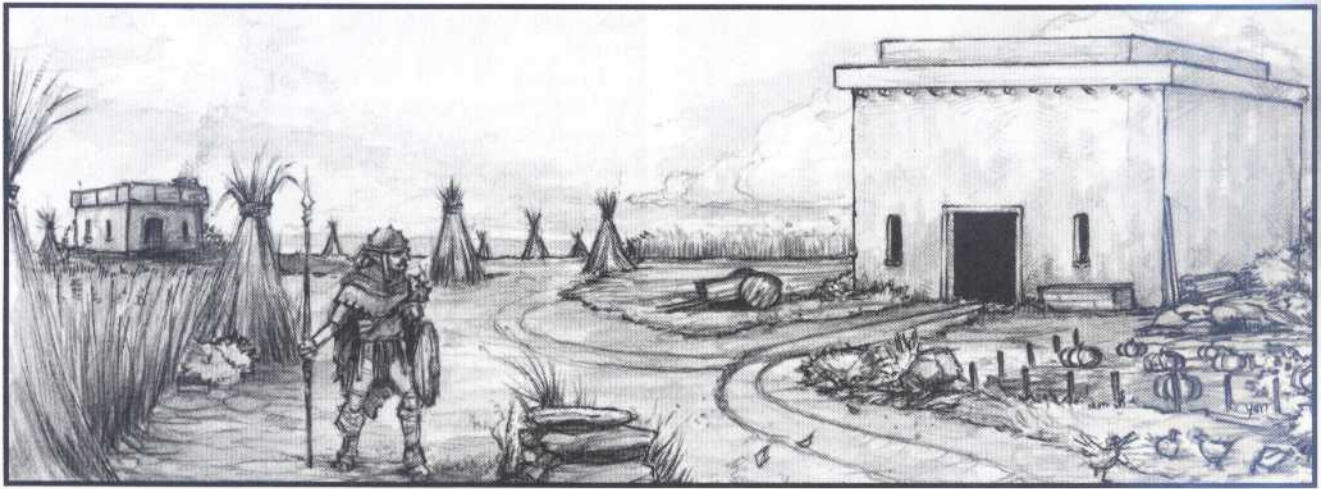
When the PCs finish exploring the shade manor, they have gained some potent treasures and information. What they do with that information is up to them, but if word gets out that the manor once belonged to Perinocles, treasure hunters come from far and wide to pick through the building with a fine-toothed comb. Whether or not they find anything, the manor is likely to be damaged in the search.

PLOT INTERSECTIONS

The Merithian "Oracles" may be used to aid in the detection of secret doors in several other Merithian locations described in this book.



THE MERITHIAN FARM



INTRODUCTION

In this vignette, the PCs come across a farm inhabited by goblinoids. One year ago, two ogres named Gronth and Hirolg took over a small band of goblins known as the Bloody Tusks and forced them to become their servants. Unusually intelligent for their species, the two ogres have since moved their "tribe" into a "castle" for self-defense. The castle, of course, is really just an old Merithian farm that has been rebuilt again and again as the centuries have passed. This unusual behavior is due to the ogres worship of Akrasia (see *Eden Odyssey Akrasia: Thief of Time*). In order to maintain their slothful lifestyle, they have put the goblins to work robbing from passersby.

Unknown to the current inhabitants, the farm was used for agricultural experimentation, and hidden in the barn's cellar are several sacks of grain seed (preserved by magic) that could revolutionize modern farming.

HOW TO USE THIS VIGNETTE

This adventure is intended for four to six characters of 2nd to 4th level. It emphasizes tactics and clear thinking over a frontal assault. The PCs must adapt to deal with the guerilla fighting styles of the goblins, or at least one character is likely to die.

In order to prepare for this vignette, carefully read the goblins' guerilla tactics and come up with a few more to challenge the players. If they are careless and cocky, teach the players some respect for the goblins in this vignette, and save the two ogres for an appropriate moment. On the other hand, if the players approach the adventure with caution and stealth, it is possible they could finish it with only minor injuries.

CHARACTER HOOKS

- The PCs hear a rumor that a group of unusually clever goblins is attacking trade caravans in the area. A survivor of one of the assaults guides them to the scene of the attack. From there, the PCs can track the goblins back to their farm.

- The farm actually belonged to one of the PCs' relatives who has not been heard from in some time. Another relative has asked them to check up on the missing relation. Unbeknownst to the PC, his relative has already been killed and eaten by the goblins.

- While traveling, six of the goblins attack the PCs, only to realize they have bitten off more than they can chew. Pulling back to the farm, the goblins lead the PCs through a series of spike traps like those in the yards and fields (location 2).

A cat may
find a dog
even in
a mouse hole.
Complicated.

-- MERITHIAN
PROVERB

THE FARM

1. THE PATH TO THE FARM

A large building with a stone roof stands ahead and to the right. Off to the left, obscured somewhat by a small field of grain, squats another stone building, about half the size of the first. Haystacks dot the landscape around you, and smoke rises from the chimney of the smaller building. Other than the smoke, there is no sign of anyone living here.

Creatures (EL 3): There are 12 goblins concealed in the haystacks around the farm.

Goblins (12): hp 2, 3, 4 (x3), 5 (x2), 6 (x3), 7, 8.

Tactics: Gronth and Hirolg have carefully trained the goblins to keep sentry. The goblins conceal themselves in large haystacks that they have positioned around the farm (G). They hide two per haystack, and when they spot intruders, one goblin slips out to either the farmhouse or the barn and warns one of the ogres that intruders are approaching. The second attempts to sneak up on the intruders and attack them from the rear. These goblins have Listen +2, Spot +3, Move Silently +4 and Hide +5. After a single attack, the goblin takes off running for his life, trying to reach the grain field and perform the pig switch, as described under location 2, or to draw the intruders into a fight with Gronth or Hirolg.

Even if the entire goblin tribe is alerted, they continue to use guerrilla tactics to harass the intruders, hoping to inflict as much damage with as few losses as possible. The following examples are provide DMs with guidance.

The goblin leads the PC beneath the loft opening of the barn, giving a birdcall. As the PC runs under the opening, two goblins jump on him from above. They must roll their Jump skill (+4) against the PC's Armor Class to land on him, doing 1d3 damage each and forcing the PC to make a Reflex save against DC 10 for each goblin that hits. If the PC fails a save, he is knocked prone. Then, the three goblins split up and run in different directions.

The goblin dives into one of the other haystacks. If a PC goes to investigate, all three goblins hiding within attack the PC. One of them tries to trip him. The goblins then scatter, as above.

2. THE YARD AND THE FIELDS

The grain field waves in the wind nearby, with the small building to the left, and the large building to the right. The dirt here shows signs of heavy traffic in and out of the two buildings. Oddly, the small building has two doors standing not three feet apart from one another.

Those with the Track feat may attempt a Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) to distinguish two types of humanoid tracks around the farm -- small ones (belonging to creatures about 3' tall) and very large ones (belonging to creatures about 8' tall).

When they find themselves in danger, the goblins perform the "pig switch" maneuver in the grain field. When the goblins run through the grain, all their pursuers can see is the grain rustling. The goblins have several spike traps in the field that they know how to avoid, and while these slow down pursuers, they seek out one of the many small holes they have prepared. In each hole is a pig with its mouth tied shut. They let loose the

pig and crawl into the hole in the pig's place. Ideally, the pursuer mistakes the pig's rustling for the goblin and chases after it instead of searching for the goblin (Listen check at DC 20 to notice anything is wrong). Even if the PCs look for the goblin, the holes are well concealed and require a Search check (DC 20) to find. If the goblins get one of the PCs alone in the grain field and outnumber him at least three-to-one, they attack him ferociously, hoping to kill him before his friends can come to his aid.

Creatures (EL 1): There are four goblins concealed in the grain field who try to surprise attack anyone chasing one of their fellows through the field before turning and fleeing themselves. This can lead to a confusing chase, with a pig as the final result.

Goblins (4): hp 4, 5, 6, 7.

Trap (EL 1): For every 10 feet that a pursuer runs through the field, have her make a Reflex save (DC 20). Failure indicates that they have stumbled into one of the goblins' spike traps and taken 1d6 damage. Two rounds are required to get going again after falling into a spike trap.

Development: If the characters burn the field, they be rewarded with the sight of several burning goblins fleeing the area, and the goblins no longer are able to pull the "pig switch" on them. However, the entire troop of bandits (including Gronth and Hirolg) will be alerted and come to fight the party en masse.



WONDERS OUT OF TIME



3. THE FARMHOUSE

This stone building is old and worn, and the ground around it is littered with gnawed bones -- some animal, and some human. Two doors lead inside, and a stylized cloud, complete with blowing cheeks, is carved into the wall between them. The building has been rebuilt several times, but the stones could very well be from the original structure.

A Knowledge (history) check (DC 20) alerts the players to the fact that the cloud is a Merithian symbol of good luck. The left door is rigged with bells that wake Gronth if it is opened (Spot check at DC 25 to notice, Disable Device check at DC 20 to disarm). If the characters enter the building, read them the following:

A clay oven, an old table, and two fur curtains occupy the room. The curtains cordon off two small sleeping areas.

If the bells did not wake Gronth, and none of the goblins have alerted him to the party's presence, add the following:

Sticking out from under the left curtain is a pair of large feet. Snores echo around the small building.

The feet are another decoy, attached to more bells to wake Gronth if disturbed. A small altar to Akrasia (a broken hourglass) sits in one corner of his sleeping area.

Creatures (EL 2): Gronth is asleep on a bed of furs in 3B. He awakens if either the bells on the door or the decoy feet ring, or if he is attacked.

Ogre (1): hp 32.

Treasure: Concealed among the fur in 3A is a chest containing 150 gp.

4. THE BARN

Although this barn has obviously been here for a very long time, it is very solid and well-constructed. Hay covers the stone floor, eight stalls line each wall, and a sturdy ladder leads up to the loft.

Concealed beneath the hay (Spot check against DC 15 to notice) is a trapdoor (B) leading down to the cellar (location 5). It has a carving of a stylized cloud on it with puffed-out cheeks. The ladder leading to the loft (A) creaks loudly if used, and wakes Hirolg up long before anyone manages to climb it.

Creatures (EL 3): There are four goblins asleep in the stalls downstairs (G), while Hirolg is asleep up in the hayloft. If attacked, the goblins make enough noise to wake Hirolg, who leaps down the ladder the following round. If the party killed Hirolg and Gronth outside, the remaining goblins are already gone.

Goblins (4): hp 6, 7 (x2), 8.

Ogre (1): hp 36.

Treasure: Concealed in the hay up in the loft is a small chest containing 250 gp and a *potion of healing* (Spot check against DC 10 to find).

5. THE CELLAR

Dust covers the worn stone walls and floor in this dank cellar. Otherwise, the room is empty. A ladder leads back the way you came.

A Search check (DC 10) finds a large ruby on the floor among the dust. A secret door is concealed in the west wall (Search check against a DC of 25). The DC is only 15 if the characters suspect the door because of the "Oracles" from Perinocles' manor (see p. 10). Both the west wall and the *braingem* radiate magic if detected for, and this also lowers the DC to find the secret door to 15 if the PCs suspect a secret room.

Trap (EL 2): In reality, the ruby is a *braingem* (see p. 42) left to protect the stash (location 6).

6. THE STASH

This small room is filled with several sacks of grain. The grain seems like it has been here for a long time, but looks to be in good condition.

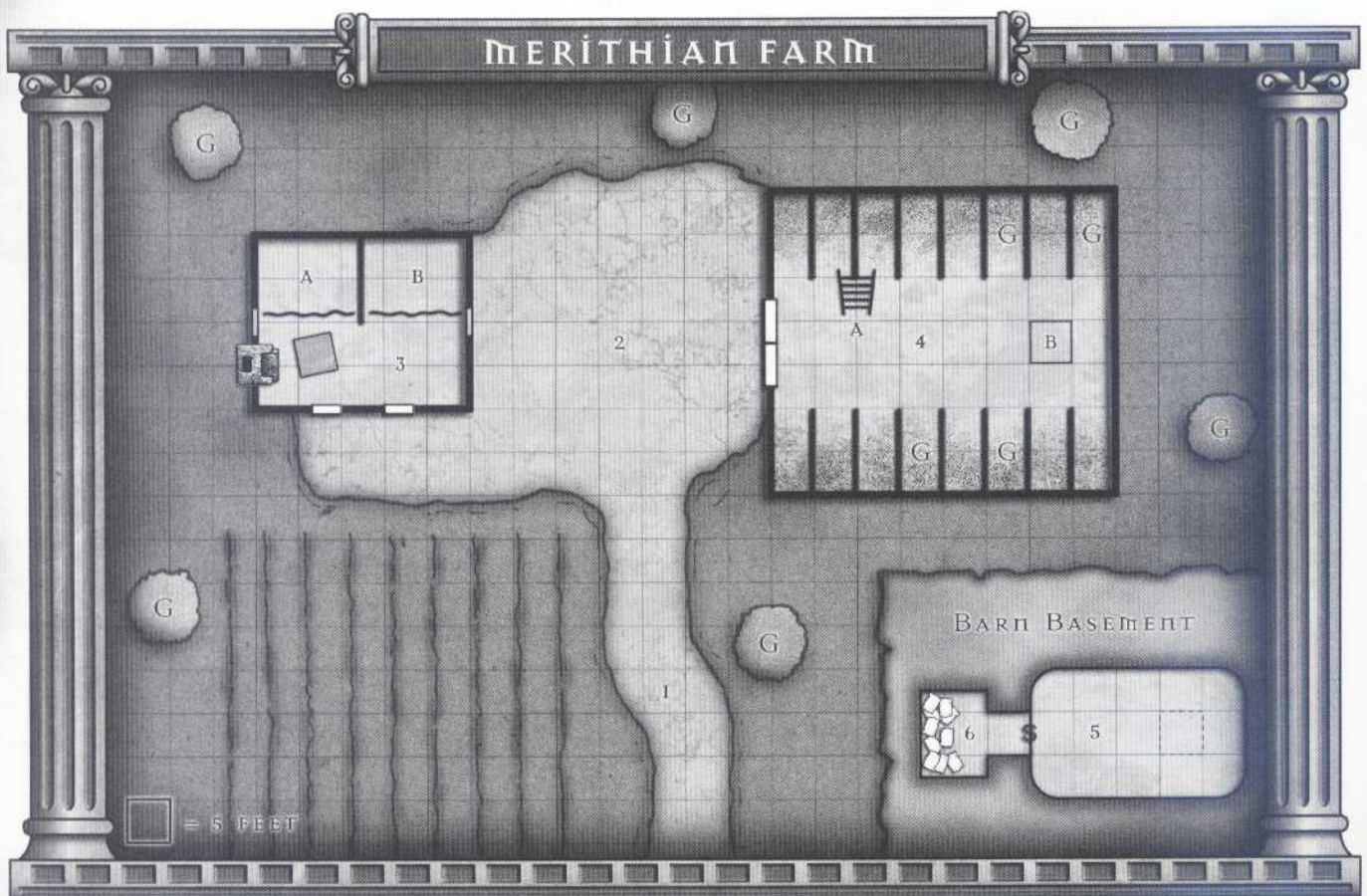
While the walls of this room radiate magic (a preservation spell to keep the grain from rotting), the grain does not, nor does it taste especially good. Druids immediately sense something unusual about the grain, but they are not sure what. The grain produces approximately 30% more yield when planted than modern varieties of grain. That may not seem like much to the characters at first, but it can be an enormous amount to the farmers who grow it -- literally the difference between poverty and prosperity. If the characters plant and grow the grain, or get someone else to do so, its superior qualities immediately become obvious at harvest to any druid or anyone with the Profession (farmer) skill. Carefully managed and used for seed stock, the grain could bring unprecedented prosperity to many people, and make the characters a lot of friends.

Treasure: Eight sacks of high-yield grain, enough to plant several acres.

CONCLUDING THE VIGNETTE

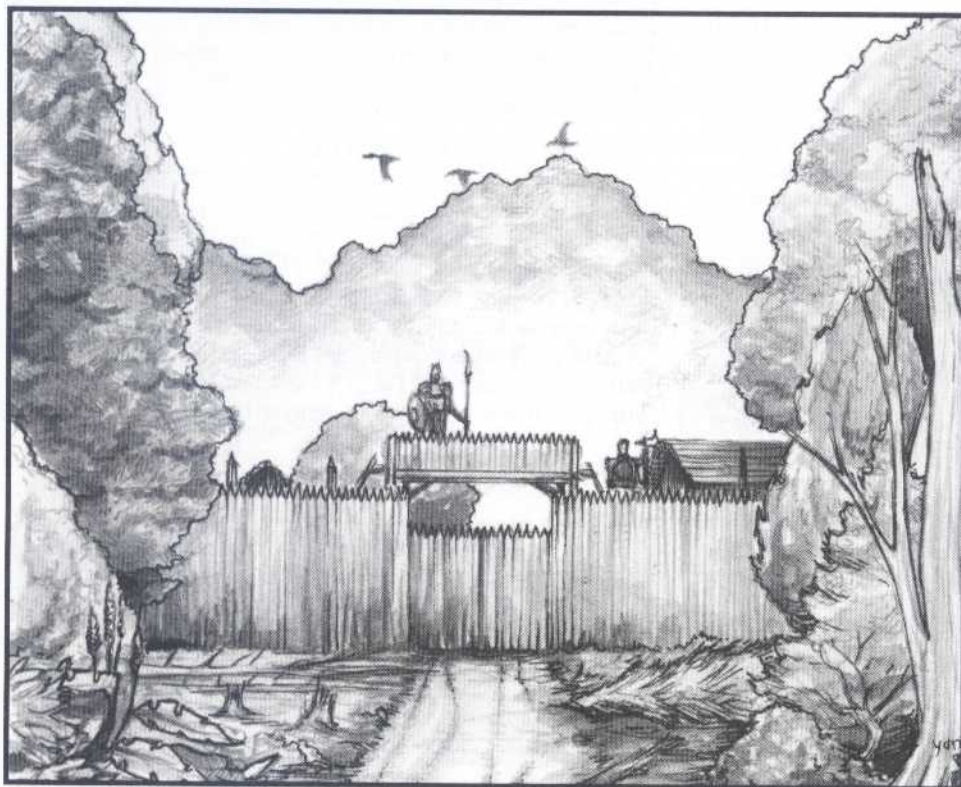
When the PCs finish clearing out the farm, the goblins cease being a problem in the area. Perhaps the locals show their appreciation with a small reward. The innocents killed by the goblins deserve a proper burial, and a priest who thinks of it should receive an XP reward. Finally, the grain is a powerful treasure, if the PCs

do not just leave it in the secret room. Once its value is proven with a season or two of harvests, demand for the grain skyrockets. The PCs must decide who to give the grain to, and what they want in exchange. Perhaps a famine occurs in a nearby kingdom (even clerics cannot feed everyone with *create food and water* spells) and the grain could help alleviate the problem in the short term, but will be consumed in the process. Will the PCs choose to help the starving people, or save the grain, and perhaps do more long-term good. A hungry enough nation might be willing to go to war if the PCs refuse to give them the grain.



PART FIVE

THE LOST MERITHIAN FORTRESS



INTRODUCTION

A thousand years ago, this fortress stood on the edge of the Merithian frontier. The soldiers stationed here protected their families and the realm from the ravaging hordes of barbarians who lived in the mountains beyond. When the great attack on Derimos came, the Merithians found to their horror that they had underestimated the barbarians. The attack bypassed the fortresses protecting the border, striking at Derimos from another direction. With the mighty capital in flames, the life went out of the soldiers stationed here, and the fortress gradually faded in importance until it was nothing more than another crumbling ruin. Looking at the old fort, it is impossible to guess that some of the greatest warriors of their time trained here.

Now, a group of twenty-eight brigands have made the ruined fortress their home. Cutting logs to replace the gate and sweeping out the interior, these thieves have returned the fortress to a state of readiness. Their leader, Haruth the Red, has slowly been whipping them into shape while reinforcing the fort's defenses. Fortunately for the PCs, he has not been given much to work with.

HOW TO USE THIS VIGNETTE

This adventure is intended for four to six characters of 3rd to 6th level. It requires stealth and planning in order to deal with the bandits effectively. A frontal assault will call down an organized, intelligent force -- armed with missile weapons -- that is defending a fortified position.

To prepare for this vignette, examine the map carefully, noting the placement of all the bandits. Read over the spells the PCs have access to and think about the possible effects of casting each of them. Will the spell make a lot of noise or light? If so, it will likely alert the bandits. Re-read the rules on sneak attacks (see Core Rulebook I, p. 47), as any rogues in the party will almost certainly make use of them in this vignette. Finally, think about what the party may do when confronted with the bandit fortress, and be prepared to make rulings on likely strategies, should problems arise.

The Centurion Knights were the pride of the Merithian army. If the Emperor was the head of the Empire, the Centurion Knights were its sword-arm. When they were crushed during the Siege of Derimos, the collapse of the Empire was a certainty. Without their skills, the Empire's enemies fell upon it like a pack of jackals. Never again has such a magnificent or revered fighting force been assembled. The barbarians who killed them should be remembered with as much contempt as a man who smashes a priceless work of art -- they destroyed something magical and irreplaceable, and they deserve only our scorn.

-- Excerpt from
Yesterdays Forgotten
by Ulnerius
Featherwright

CHARACTER HOOKS

- A merchant who was recently robbed by the bandits lost a valuable ring -- a treasured family heirloom -- to Haruth the Red. The bandit leader has taken a shine to the ring and constantly wears it. The merchant wants the PCs to recover it.
- The citizens of a village are tired of paying tribute to Haruth's bandits. Pooling their money, they approach the PCs with their story and a pitifully small sum, asking the PCs to rid them of the scourge in the fortress.
- A druid in the nearby forest is concerned with the impact of having the bandits living so close. Their heavy use of spider venom on their crossbow quarrels is damaging the local spider population. The druid asks the PCs to deal with the bandits.

THE FORTRESS

The woods open on to a clearing. It was once very overgrown, but has been recently cleared, at least in part. Ahead is a squat, foreboding fortress. The stone walls stand nearly 20 feet high, and the front is barred with an enormous gate of freshly cut logs. Faintly, you can hear the sounds of voices coming from inside.

If the characters are Moving Silently as they approach the fortress, make two Listen checks against the PC's skill check total with a +7 modifier. If one succeeds, two nearby guards, Jerome and Toby, notice the party's approach and investigate, using their Move Silently skill (+11) (the PCs get a Listen check to detect them). If they fail to surprise the PCs, the bandits attack normally. If they get the drop on the PCs, read the following:

A man in leathers steps out of the woods nearby, with a loaded crossbow pointed at you. The tip of his crossbow bolt glistens with some brown liquid. Smiling nastily, he says, "Well, well, lookee wot we got 'ere. Buncha spies, I'd say. Now, s'pose you just 'and me over y'or valyoobles and go on y'or way, then me and me pals won't 'ave to dig graves for you, now will we?"

Toby hides (Hide +4, opposed Spot check to see him) in the nearby brush with another crossbow pointed at the party. The duo could get in trouble for trying to take on the party single-handedly, but they want to quietly split the characters' possessions between them.

Creatures (EL 4): The characters may encounter up to four groups of two bandits each, including Jerome and Toby, while near the fortress. One of these groups includes an officer (1 on 1d4).

Bandits (8, 2 at a time): hp 14 each, except the officer who has 27 hp (see p. 40).

Treasure: Each bandit wears leather armor and carries a crossbow, eight crossbow bolts tipped with spider venom (DC 14, 1d4 temporary Str initial/1d6 temporary Str secondary), a short sword and 2d6 sp.

Development: If the characters make a great deal of noise (such as a fireball) during the fight, they rapidly draw the attention of every bandit in the fortress. In addition, if they kill only one of the two bandits in a patrol, the other one runs towards the fortress, crying for help.

BANDIT PATROLS

There are six bandits patrolling the woods around the fortress (hp 14 each; see p. 40). For every 20 minutes the PCs remain within half a mile of the fortress, roll a d12. On a 1, they encounter a patrol of two guards. Roll again -- on a 1-4, the guards are accompanied by an officer (hp 27). Twenty-four hours after the PCs kill a patrol, the fortress goes on the alert, and all guards are doubling for one week.

1. THE OUTER WALL

The walls are fairly simple to Climb (DC 12), but thanks to the watch ramps (2a), a guard likely (80% chance) sticks his head over the wall to look around while the PC is climbing. The guards have 3/4 cover and Spot +4, and if a PC is spotted, the guard sounds the alarm. If the party waits until nightfall to tackle the fortress, their odds increase dramatically. Although the brigands place lit torches atop the watchramps at night, the PCs can exploit small pockets of darkness between them. The PCs may climb in at these spots with little chance of being seen (-8 penalty to the guards' Spot checks).

2. THE COURTYARD

Inside the fortress are three buildings: two small stone keeps, and a much narrower stable near the front gate. Surrounding the keeps is a well-worn path (2B) that goes around and between them. Lastly, several sloping stone ramps lead up to the edge of the outer wall.

The senior members of the bandit group live in the western keep. The unlocked door opens easily. The keep once housed Merithian officers and is more elaborately decorated than the other buildings. The door leading from location 9 to the outside is false, placed there to satisfy the Merithian "Oracles."

The eastern keep housed enlisted Merithian soldiers, and now shelters the bulk of the bandits.

The ramps (a) are the Merithian version of watchtowers, called "watchramps." Guards walked up the ramp, peered over the wall while remaining mostly protected by a stone lip, then walked back down to continue their rounds. In this way, the Merithians used fewer guards, and kept them moving to prevent sleepiness. The worn path around the keeps shows where the soldiers performed a daily religious ritual called the "Greeting of the Sun." Unless the characters have already been through the Merithian Temple (see p. 22), they probably do not know its purpose.

Creatures (EL 5): Two bandits and an officer patrol the courtyard, unless the characters killed one or more of them getting inside. If the characters decide to kill the guards, they have to do it by surprise, since they carry horns (blowing is a move-equivalent action) to alert the fortress to the intruders.

Bandits (3): hp 27 (officer), 18, 16 (see p. 40).

Treasure: Each bandit wears leather armor and carries a crossbow, eight crossbow bolts tipped with spider venom (DC 14, 1d4 temporary Str initial/1d6 temporary Str secondary), a short sword and 2d6 sp.

Development: If someone sounds the alarm, the courtyard fills with all the bandits currently inside the fortress within two minutes. For one week after the attack, the guard in the courtyard is doubled to four bandits and two officers.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

3. STABLES

This is clearly stables. Several horse skeletons lie in narrow stone stalls. Judging by the undisturbed dust on the floor, no one has been here for several months at least.

The bandits avoid the stables, believing them to be cursed. The PCs can easily discover the reason for this if they examine the horse skeletons more closely. Most of the skeletons are ordinary, although somewhat smaller than modern horses (Animal Handling or Riding check with a DC of 15). However, one skeleton towards the rear of the stable is most unusual. Several odd bone protrusions give its hooves the appearance of claws, and small tusks curl around the front of the animal's skull. The skeleton's teeth are even somewhat sharpened, giving the impression that this horse was born and bred to be a meat eater. If detected for, the skeleton radiates magic.

In reality, the horse was wearing a set of *bone barding* when it died (see p. 41) and its bones have remained transformed because the *barding* is still active.

Treasure: Someone who knows the command word ("Aquila") can deactivate the *bone barding* for use on a different horse. The command word can be discovered through various spells.

4. SOLDIERS' BARRACKS

This large room is filled with 20 small, narrow beds mounted on low, wooden frames. These beds seem to be of more recent construction than the building. Candles dimly illuminate the room, and the forms of sleeping men can just be made out.

Unless the characters take the precaution of oiling the door's rusty hinges before opening it (a rogue can make a Spot check against a DC 20 to notice the rusty hinges), a squeal of tortured metal wakes the four bandits sleeping in the room. One of them tries to grab a horn hanging on the wall to alert the fortress.

Creatures (EL 6): If the PCs make no noise, the bandits remain sleeping.

Bandits (4): hp 22, 18, 16, 14 (see p. 40).

Treasure: Each bandit has leather armor (not worn), a crossbow, eight crossbow bolts tipped with spider venom (DC 14, 1d4 temporary Str initial/1d6 temporary Str secondary), a short sword and 2d6 sp. Underneath the beds in this room, the characters can find a total of 467 gp.

Development: If someone sounds the alarm horn here, the other bandits in the fortress rush to the barracks within two minutes. Another pair of guards returns to this room in one hour, tired and cranky, but not too exhausted to notice bloody corpses lying on the floor. If the characters killed all the guards from locations 1 and 2, no more guards are available to discover any corpses here.

5. DRY GOODS STORAGE

Sacks of grain, barrels of salted meat, and coils of rope line the walls. An ancient stone wine vat occupies a large portion of the northeast corner.

If the PCs move the wine vat (requiring a Strength check at DC 30), they uncover a trap door (a). The trap door has a carving of a stylized cloud with puffed-out cheeks on it. A Knowledge (History) check (DC 15) reveals this to be a Merithian good luck symbol.

Treasure: Various dry goods fill the room: six sacks of grain, eight barrels of salt pork, three barrels of pickled fish, four wheels of cheese, 500 feet of hemp rope in 50' lengths, and six kegs of ale. All told, the contents of the room are only worth about 50 gp.

Development: If the characters are in location 6 when an alarm is sounded, guards search this room, and the trap door is discovered within 15 minutes.

6. ARMORY

The stairs lead down into a darkened room filled with shelves along the walls. A small selection of Merithian armor and weaponry line the shelves, but most of the shelves are empty. There is a grinding noise as a bronze statue of a man animates and begins moving towards you.

This was the fortress's armory in the time of the Merithians. The bandits never discovered it, which is just as well for them, because a bronze warrior -- a golem the Merithians designed for its agility and speed -- protects it.

Creature (EL 6): When the characters enter the room, an old, beaten-up bronze warrior animates and attacks them.

Bronze Warrior (1): hp 23 (see p. 36).

Treasure: On the shelves are a pair of leather gloves with bone knuckles (*bone gloves*, command word "Fulcio," see p. 41), a set of leather barding with inset bones (*bone barding*, command word "Aquila," see p. 41), and a beautiful gladius (a masterwork short sword). The other weapons and armor are rusted past the point of usefulness.

7. ENTRYWAY

This corridor has three doors on either side, and one large door at the end. In the center of the hallway stands a startled man lifting his crossbow in order to fire it.

This hallway leads to the senior bandits' quarters, and they have placed a guard here to make sure they are not taken by surprise.

Creature (EL 2): Assuming no alarm has been raised, the PCs catch the bandit here by surprise automatically. If they do not kill him before he gets an action, he yells, bringing the bandits pouring out of their rooms.

Bandit (1): hp 18 (see p. 40).

Treasure: The bandit wears leather armor, and carries a crossbow, eight crossbow bolts tipped with spider venom (DC 14, 1d4 temporary Str initial/1d6 temporary Str secondary), a short sword and 2d6 sp.

Development: If the guard gives the alarm at night, all the bandits in locations 8a-8f and 9 rush out, fully equipped, in six rounds (armor is hastily donned).

8A-8F. OFFICERS' QUARTERS

A wide four-posted bed fills half the room. Next to it is a crudely crafted wooden dresser, and a trunk peels out from underneath the bed.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

The senior bandits of this gang occupy these rooms. Only Haruth the Red, in location 9, holds higher authority than these men. If they are careful, the characters can easily get the drop on them, but they have honed their fighting skills more than the other bandits in the fortress.

Creatures (EL 6): Three of these rooms (A, C, F) are occupied by a sleeping bandit officer, unless the alarm has been sounded. If the bandits are roused, they snatch a loaded crossbow from its place by their bed and fire at the intruder.

Bandits (6): hp 27 each (see p. 40).

Treasure: Each bandit has access to a crossbow, 8 bolts tipped with spider venom (DC 14, 1d4 temp. Str initial / 1d6 temp. Str secondary), a short sword, and leather armor. In addition, the chests in each room contain the bandits' coin: 56 gp in 8A, 62 gp in 8B, 81 gp in 8C, 25 gp in 8D, 32 gp in 8E, and 26 gp in 8F.

Development: If any of the bandits here give the alarm, all surviving bandits in this building rush out, fully equipped, in six rounds (armor is hastily donned).

9. THE CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

A large featherbed is the centerpiece of this well-furnished room. The other furniture includes two trunks, a dresser, and a writing desk pushed in front of an ornate door on the eastern wall. A huge, red-haired man seated at the desk looks up. He is only startled for an instant, then lifts one hand to point at you. A glowing ring is easily visible on his hand.

The door behind the desk has been *arcane locked*, but can be easily opened using a *knock* spell, or broken with brute force (Break DC 37 -- the bandits tried but were unsuccessful).

Creature (EL 4): The red-haired man is Haruth the Red, the leader of this group of bandits. The ring on his finger is a *ring of the ram* with eight charges. He uses one charge on the characters to gain a few precious seconds, then grabs his *longsword* +1 to defend himself.

Haruth the Red: hp 37 (see p. 40).

Treasure: Aside from the items mentioned above, Haruth has a chest filled with 638 gp.

Development: Once they discover that Haruth is dead, any remaining bandits flee the area.

10. THE CAPTAIN'S TREASURE

A three-foot tall marble pedestal supports a black clay Merithian scroll. Hanging from the left side of the pedestal is a finely crafted gladius, while a gleaming iron shield dangles from the other side. Finally, a large map has been carved into one wall.

This was the secret stash of the commander of this fortress back when the Merithians still held it. Anyone disturbing any of the items here triggers a magical trap left by the Merithians.

The map shows all the Merithian sites in the area. In addition to any other adventure seeds desired, it shows how to reach a nearby Merithian Temple (see p. 22). However, the PCs must make a Knowledge (history) check (DC 25) to deduce this information, since the landscape has changed so much over the millennia.

Trap (EL 4): Merely touching any of the objects on the pedestal triggers a flame jet trap.

Flame Jet: CR 4; 1ft.-wide, 50 ft.-long stream of flame (6d6); Reflex save (DC 17) avoids; Search (DC 27); Disable Device (28).

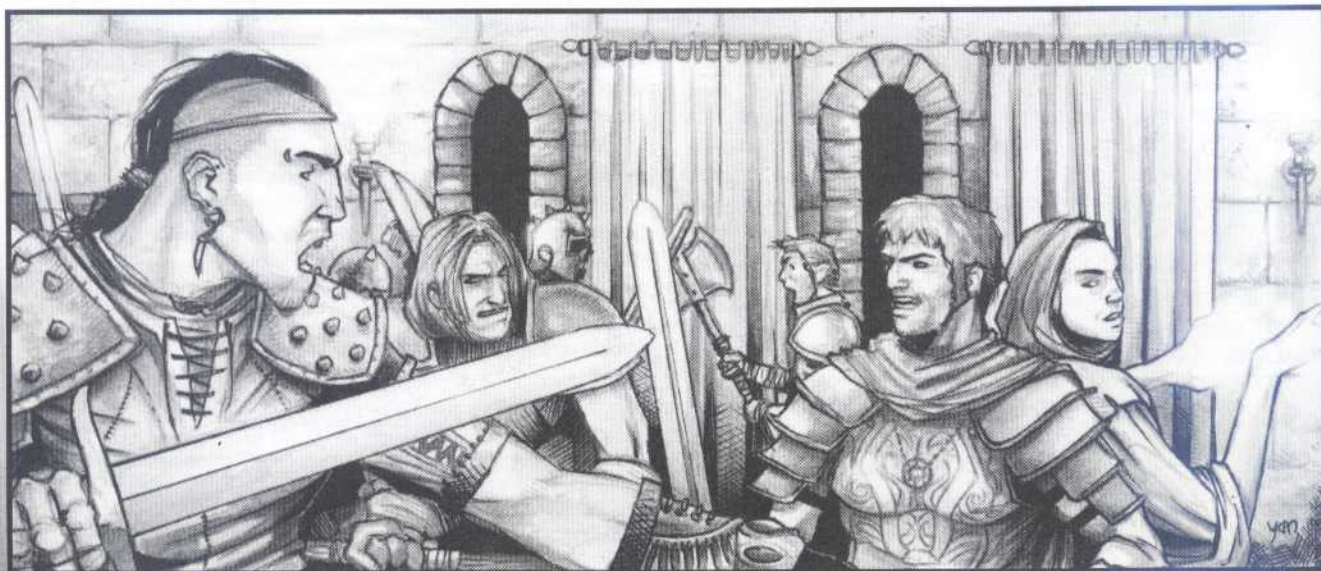
Treasure: The gladius and shield are an *officer's gladius and shield* (see p. 43), while the scroll is a Centurion Knight manual. With this manual, the possessor can train to become a Centurion Knight (see p. 44).

CONCLUDING THE VIGNETTE

When the PCs defeat the bandits, they may choose to set up base in the fortress. However, it is located in an inconvenient spot, and requires a great deal of maintenance due to its age and size. If the PCs were hired to eliminate the bandits, it is likely that their employer wants to do something with the fortress to prevent another group of bandits from moving in.

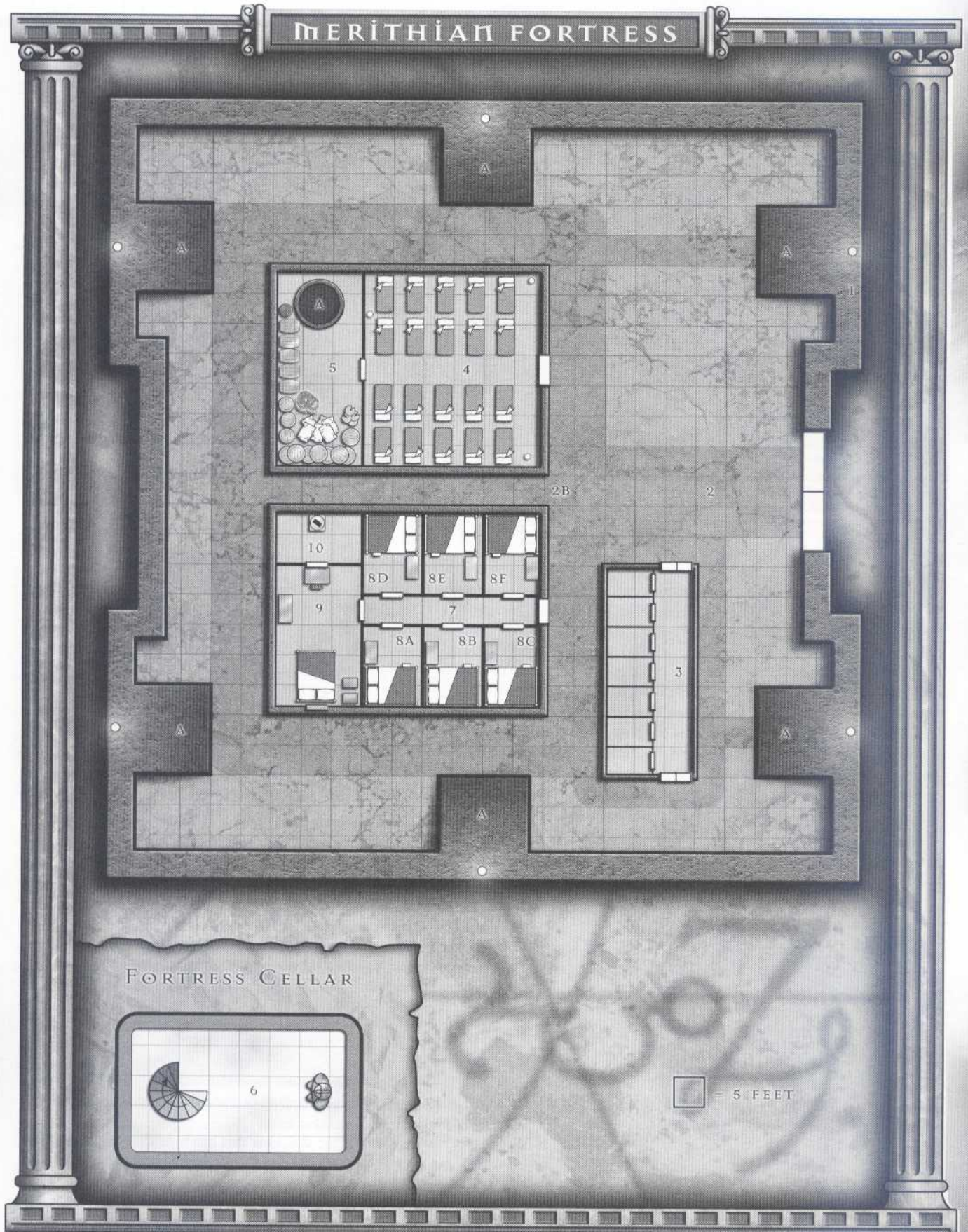
PLOT INTERSECTIONS

The map in location 10 may guide the PCs to the Merithian Temple in Part Six (see p. 22).



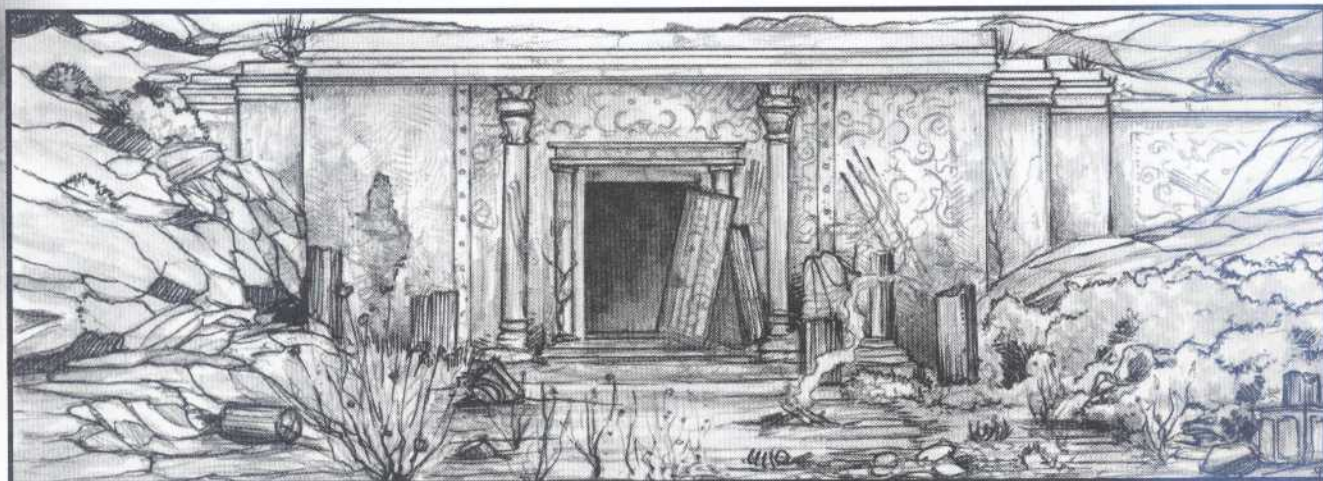
WONDERS OUT OF TIME

MERITHIAN FORTRESS



PART SIX

THE MERITHIAN TEMPLE



INTRODUCTION

Long ago, the Merithians practiced their unique form of worship at this temple. This particular temple was devoted to the perfection of the body, so worshippers who came here underwent grueling physical conditioning in an effort to push their bodies to the limits of what they could achieve. The priests and priestesses were required to remain anonymous in order to maintain the aura of mysticism that surrounded the temple. To do so, they wore magical masks that concealed their identity (see p. 42). The temple was buried in a volcanic eruption, but time and the wind has since exposed it to the air once again.

Now, the temple is in poor condition. It has been open to the elements for quite some time, and an enormous dire bear has moved in. Restless spirits haunt certain areas of the temple, and the bear avoids them. An adventurer named Nordin discovered the temple just a few days ago and ventured within to explore it. Unfortunately for him, he was chased into one of the haunted areas of the Temple (location 6), where he fell prey to a cursed hot spring filled with spirits.

As the sun gives
all things life,
so we revere it.

As all life
reveres the sun,
so it gives them life.

Life and reverence,
the circle is complete.

— Excerpt from a
Merithian sermon

HOW TO USE THIS VIGNETTE

This adventure is intended for four to six characters of 5th to 8th level. The dire bear is an extremely difficult foe to kill, so the PCs are better off avoiding it or defeating it with their wits. To facilitate this, allow them to flee and take cover from the bear without too much difficulty.

To prepare for this vignette, carefully read through the room descriptions, paying particular attention to any item that is mentioned as a possible means of killing the dire bear. Examine the map to see which areas the bear can and cannot enter. Finally, reread the description of Merithian religion in Part Two so that details of the temple may be devised.

CHARACTER HOOKS

- A relative of Nordin (the dead adventurer who was drowned in location 6) hires the party to find him and return him safely. The relative gives them a copy of a map to the temple that Nordin said he was going to follow.
- Fearful villagers ask the party to rid them of the dire bear that has been ravaging their livestock. They show the PCs several butchered carcasses to demonstrate just how powerful and dangerous the beast is.
- The characters notice a Merithian pictogram peeking from the side of a hill while they are traveling through the countryside. It turns out to mark the entrance to the temple.

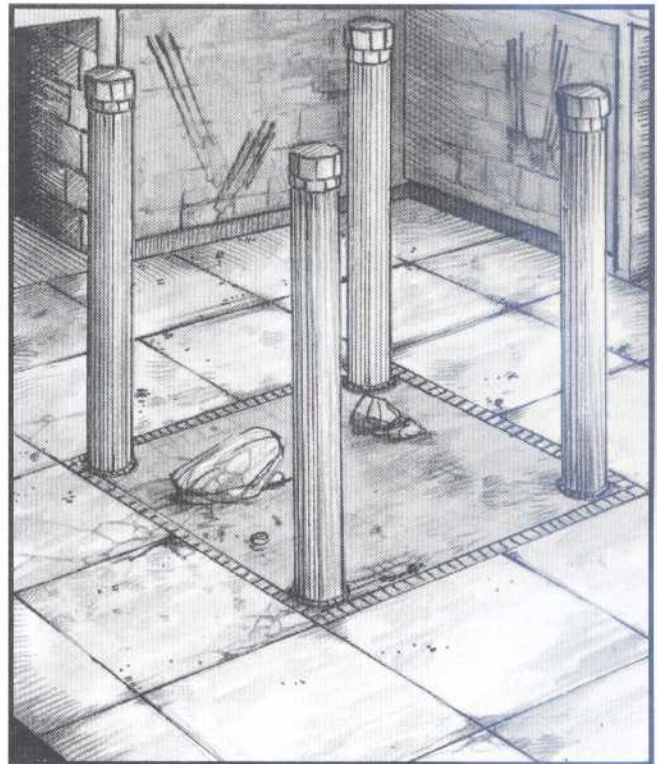
THE TEMPLE

With the depredations of the dire bear, the restrictions of Merithian "Oracles" are satisfied only if the missing doors at locations 1 and 3 are counted.

THE DIRE BEAR

The creature is capable of roaming the central corridors without difficulty, and has defaced and destroyed many of the decorations that once lined them. Only the altar at location 2 has survived due to its sturdy construction. The bear does not venture into locations 5 or 6 because of the spirits living there, and it cannot get through the heavy doors leading into location 4.

In a straight fight, the bear probably massacres the party, and the corpses out front should tell them this early on. However, many unusual items and areas within the temple may be used in a clever manner to kill the bear. For instance, the party might oil the ground leading up to location 7, and then enrage the bear into impaling itself on the spar there. Or, they might set off an explosion near the cave-in at location 3 and bring the roof down on the bear. Any reasonably clever and entertaining course of action should be allowed to succeed.



1. ENTRYWAY

You stand near a large stone facade set into the side of the hill. A passage in the wall stands nearly twenty feet tall and half again as wide. A large wooden door rests shattered to one side, nearly decomposing and covered by overgrowth. The remains of a campfire are scattered around near the opening as well. Enormous scratches mar the wall, starting some twenty feet up its length and descending to a mere ten feet above the ground. Nearby, a pile of very large bones indicates the presence of an enormous predator in the area. Visible around the scratches and dirt on the wall, a stylized carving of a cloud with puffed-out cheeks can be seen.

The ruined door radiates a faint magical aura from a slowly fading preservation spell. A Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) reveals that the campfire is only a few days old. Another Wilderness Lore check (DC 20) shows the scratches in the wall are really the claw marks of some enormous creature -- probably a bear.

As the characters proceed down the hallway, read the following:

The stone walls here are lined with carved murals that show people bowing to the sun, carrying weights up and down stairs, and other unusual, physically demanding activities. Scratches extending nearly twenty feet up the wall have ruined many of them. Several feet along the northern wall, you come across a really big hole leading north.

The dire bear has torn out the door leading into location 3 and made its lair there. Bright lights or loud noises cause it to come charging out of the hole.

All along the corridor, the walls are lined with ruined murals that depicted important elements of the Merithian religion before the dire bear clawed them up.

2. ALTAR

A large, square room sits at the junction of two corridors. Standing in the center of the room is an huge altar built from four tall stone pillars. They extend almost up to the roof, where they are capped with clay tiling. Enormous scratches mar the walls, obscuring and destroying the murals here.

The altar is the only religious artifact in the corridor sturdy enough to withstand the bear's claws. It was once used as the focal point for the Merithian "Greeting of the Sun" ceremony. Among the stones that form its base, different colored stone has been used to highlight a figure-eight pattern around the columns. A large tile at the very center of the altar (A) contains a carving of a stylized cloud with puffed-out cheeks. This tile conceals (Search check against DC 15 to find) a small compartment that holds a brown clay scroll describing the ritual in Merithian:

The Greeting of the Sun is the most important ceremony of our people. It shows the world, as well as the Sun, that we are thankful for each new day given to us. Begin in the center of the area where it is to be performed. Walk south, west, north, east, south, east, north, west, and south again, so that your path makes the symbol of the serpent eating itself and being renewed. When the center is reached for the final time, kneel on the spot where the ceremony began and recite these words: "I give thanks to the sun for the new morn, and for the continued opportunity to perfect myself. I swear that this gift will not be wasted."

Treasure: In addition to the scroll, the compartment holds a small sack of silver coins that are worth 150 sp by weight, but can be sold to the right collector for 1,000 gp.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

3. THE TRACK

Part of this enormous room has caved in, but the remains of some strange concentric ovals carved into the stone floor can still be made out. Evenly spaced between several of the ovals are low walls about three feet high. There is a slight clatter as a stone falls to the floor from the ceiling.

Read the following text if the characters have not yet awakened the dire bear and are carrying lights of any sort:

A low rumbling noise, like thunder, or an earthquake, sounds and then enormous red orbs open up in the darkness just beyond the circle of your light. With heavy thudding noises, it seems as though part of the chamber's wall detaches itself and moves forward, picking up speed.

The dire bear rushes up and attacks the closest member of the party. It continues to attack in this manner until the party is dead. Should the characters flee the temple, the bear chases them for awhile, then returns to its home to sleep once more.

The ceiling is unstable. Loud noises or explosions causes it to collapse further, burying the dire bear if it is within the room, and dealing 4d10 damage to any PCs inside as well. Any PC with Stonecunning can spot the unstable ceiling easily (DC 10).

The concentric circles were once a racetrack used by the Merithians in their daily exercises. The low walls are hurdles.

Creatures (EL 8): The dire bear makes its lair here.

Dire Bear (1): hp 198 (+1 CR bonus due to the unusually high hp).

Treasure: If the characters search the rubble in this room, they find a human skeleton wearing leather boots (*boots of striding and springing*), and a dead dire bear cub, apparently killed with a sword. Nordin came across the cub while the mother was out, and slew it, thinking it to be a full-sized bear. Later, the bear trapped him in location 6. The skeleton is the remains of an adventurer who met his demise in a small cave in years ago.

4. THE WRESTLING RINGS

This room contains three red circles, each about ten feet in diameter, carved into the ground. Low stone benches are clustered near each. In addition, there is a small room to one side of the circles.

The circles were used as wrestling rings, with the benches providing for spectators and those waiting for their turn in the ring.

Treasure: The room contains eight wax-sealed jars of a slippery oil that has survived the ages intact. Treat it as *oil of slipperiness* with half effectiveness. The wrestlers used it to oil up before a match. The characters may be able to use it to formulate a plan to kill the dire bear.

5. THE STAIRWAY

In the center of this room is an enormous stone staircase that rises towards the ceiling (A), then descends back to the floor on the other side of the room. Piled on the floor at either side of the staircase are large, rounded stones. There are also some odd suits of leather armor near the stones that appear to have heavy weights sewn to the arms and legs. However, what draws the most attention in this room are the shadowy figures slowly walking up and down the staircase, weeping tragically.

The staircase was used by the Merithians to build strength and endurance. They would pick up a stone, carry it over the staircase, then pick up a different stone and carry it back. The armor was intended for those Merithians who were so strong that the stones alone were no longer a challenge. They radiate faint magical auras from fading preservation spells. Several Merithian priests became trapped here when they died and are now doomed to walk the staircase until someone accepts their burdens from them or casts a *remove curse* spell on them, at which point they are laid to rest.

Clever PCs might think of a way to use the stones and/or the leather armor to kill the dire bear.

Creatures (EL 5): The eight Shackled Spirits will not attack the characters, but plead with them to hold their burdens for "just a moment."

Shackled Spirits (8): hp 17 (x2), 18 (x4), 19 (x2) (see p. 39).



WONDERS OUT OF TIME

6. THE BATHHOUSE

The two doors to this room are mere feet from each other. Once inside, a huge swimming pool mostly fills this room (A). Unfortunately, there are several cracks in it, and the water has run out, exposing a dusty tile mural of the sun. Next to the swimming pool is a much smaller hot spring (B) that has somehow survived the ages intact. Looking carefully, you can see some gold glinting in the sand that lines its bottom. Lastly, a room (C) sits to one side.

The doors were placed to comport with the Merithian "Oracles." The mural is simply a depiction of the Merithian sun god, while deadly spirits haunt the hot spring. If the characters venture into the room, read them the following:

There is a long wooden table in the center of the room with a chest next to it. A large, ratty curtain covers the far wall.

The wooden table was for the treatment of injured worshippers. The chest is filled with rotten bandages, and jars of long-evaporated herbal remedies. The curtain might be useful to PCs as part of a plan to kill the dire bear. Finally, two odd, blank masks hang on the wall behind the curtain. All non-stone artifacts radiate fading preservation magic.

Trap (EL 6): Anyone who enters or reaches into the hot spring risks being grabbed and pinned (+8 to their check) by hostile spirits. If grabbed, the character is pulled underwater and begins rolling for drowning. Purifying the spring (a *purify food and drink* spell, or a turn undead attempt that affects at least an 8 HD monster) can save the PC. If the spring is purified, a corpse floats to the surface (Nordin). He was chased by the bear, then saw some gold objects glittering in the hot spring and reached in . . .

Treasure: There are two *featureless masks* (see p. 42) hanging on the wall behind the curtain. In addition, concealed within a secret compartment on the chest (Search check at DC 25 to find) is a *healing star* (see p. 42). Finally, several gold statues in the hot spring are worth 1,500 gp in total to the right collector.

7. THE DEAD END

An enormous, jagged stone column sticks out of a collapsed corridor.

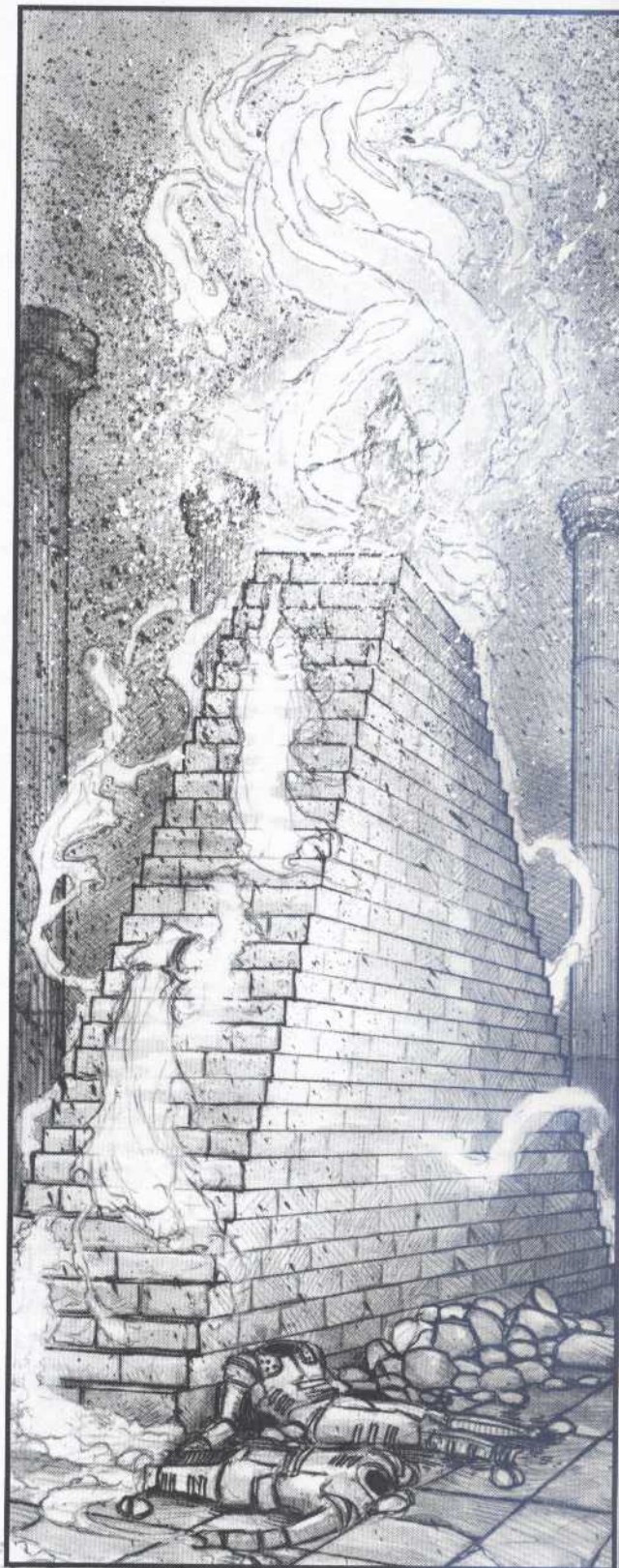
The column is only important because it can be used as one possible way to kill the dire bear. However, the bear is agile enough that without slipping on the oil from location 4, or being blinded by the curtain from location 6, it will not impale itself, even if enraged and lured there by one of the PCs.

CONCLUDING THE VIGNETTE

When the PCs have managed to deal with the dire bear, several other tasks may be undertaken. The PCs can purify the spring and recover Nordin's body in order to take it home for burial. Additionally, the shackled spirits can be laid to rest using *remove curses*. Finally, the temple itself is of great interest to scholars studying the Merithians.

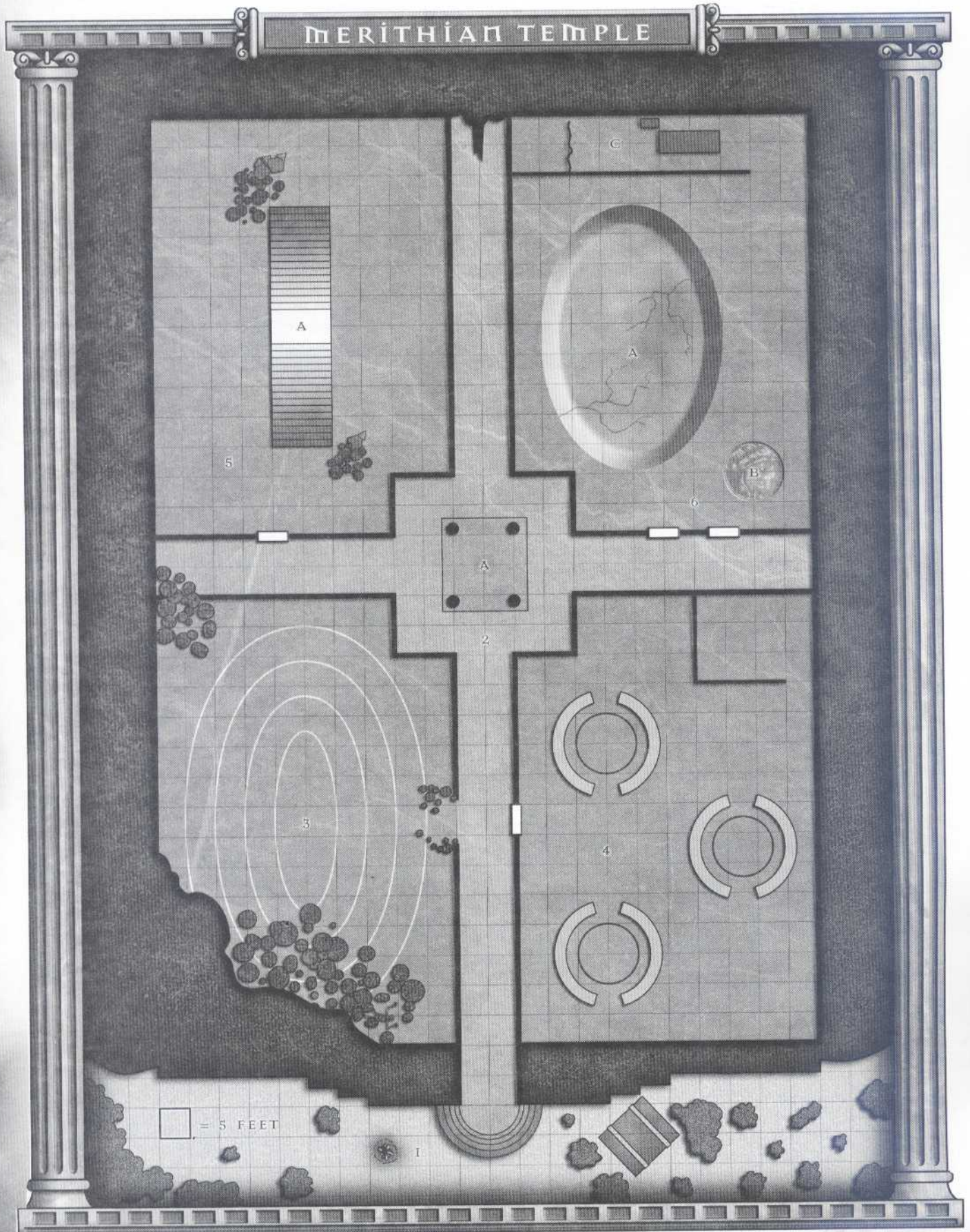
PLOT INTERSECTIONS

The "Greeting of the Sun" can be used to reach the "shade manor" in Perinocles' Manor (see p. 11).

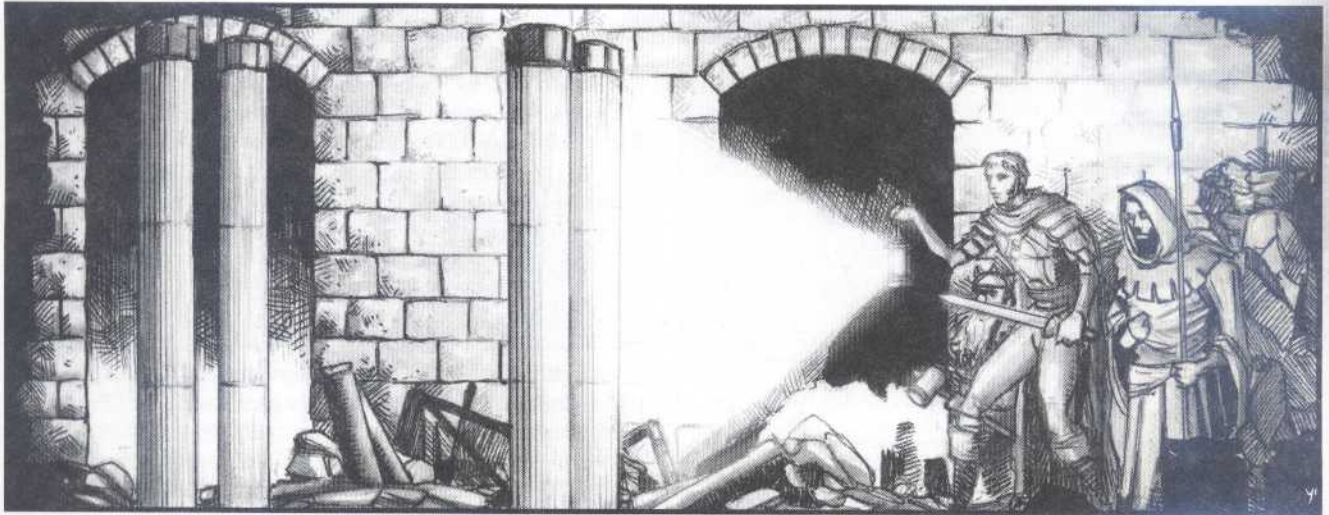


WONDERS OUT OF TIME

MERITHIAN TEMPLE



THE GREAT LIBRARY



INTRODUCTION

Originally, six famous Merithian libraries were located in a ring around the capital city of Derimos. All of these libraries were great repositories of learning, but gradually each vanished from the face of the earth for one reason or another. The libraries were named after the first six Emperors of the Merithian Empire: Meridius, Octavius, Therion, Bastothenes, Gregarius, and Collus. The library of Bastothenes was buried in a mudslide and never rebuilt. The knowledge inside was presumed lost forever.

Eventually, a city was built over the site of the buried library. A tavern was erected directly over the library's central chamber. Most recently, when Sharon Brewer, the owner of the tavern, decided to enlarge her wine cellar, the library was discovered. Curious, a pair of workers went inside to see what they could find. Unfortunately for them, the library's guardian golem was still operative, and beat them severely before they escaped. One of the two snatched up a clay scroll before the golem animated, and this scroll gives the characters the clue that the library is Merithian in nature.

HOW TO USE THIS VIGNETTE

This adventure is intended for four to six characters of 6th to 9th level. This is a short encounter, best used as a lead-in for Part Eight: The City of Derimos. Once the library's guardian is defeated, a great deal of valuable information can be gleaned here.

CHARACTER HOOKS

- If the PCs have been public about their other exploits involving the Merithian culture, Brewer can send for them, having heard of their reputation. In this case, she sends the clay scroll along with her messenger to entice them to come. Brewer offers them up to 5,000 gp and whatever treasure they find to clear out the ruins beneath her tavern so that she can get back to business as usual.

- If the party has kept their Merithian investigations to themselves, the attack on the two workers can occur while the characters are enjoying an ale in the tavern above. When they come in, Brewer apologizes to them for the noise of the workmen below. A while later, some screams are heard, and the foreman of the workers comes running up the stairs. He tells what has happened, and waves the clay scroll in his hand where the characters can see it. If they act like they know what is going on, Brewer makes them the same offer as above: 5,000 gp and anything they find in exchange for cleaning out the cellar.

The other tragic effect of the Siege of Derimos was the loss of the central Great Library. Although the six outlying Great Libraries survived, their primary means of support was removed when the Empire crumbled, and over time each of them faded from the pages of history. With these illustrious centers of learning went thousands of priceless works, including the only copies of several legendary scrolls.

-- Excerpt from
Yesterdays Forgotten,
by Ulnerius
Featherwright

THE LIBRARY

THE LIBRARY'S GUARDIAN

The library is patrolled by a royal golem: hp 110 (see p. 38). The golem is in location 3 when the characters enter the library. After one minute, it walks to location 1. After another minute, it proceeds to location 2, then back to location 1, and so on, making its rounds until it encounters someone. When it sees the characters, it immediately attacks, targeting characters wearing little or no armor first. If it is dropped to 45 or fewer hit points, it flees to either location 2 or 3, where it touches the gem on the wall to receive a *transmute mud to rock* spell, restoring it to full health. It attempts to use the gems only when the characters cannot observe it unless reduced to 20 hp or less, in which case it simply tries to reach one of the gems at all cost. The golem continues healing itself until the charges on the gems run out, or the characters manage to kill it.

1. CENTRAL LIBRARY

The narrow tunnel leading into the earth opens up into a huge room. Several stone racks seem to be uniquely designed to hold the clay cylinders that the Merithians used to write on. Standing in the center of the room is a small altar built from four short stone pillars (A). They are about six feet tall, and they are capped with clay tiling. Among the stones that form its base, different colored stone has been used to highlight a figure-eight pattern around the columns. A large tile at the very center of the altar contains a carving of a stylized cloud with puffed-out cheeks. Across the room are two sculpted metal, one on either side of the remains of a wooden desk. To left and right, corridors lead out of the room.

The two doors are stuck (DC 25) and open inwards, dumping a pile of dirt and rocks on anyone who tampers with them. The library is completely buried, and a wall of earth is all that greets the characters. As in the temple in Part Six (see p. 23), the carved stone conceals a small hollow that contains a blue clay scroll (Search check against DC of 15 to find).

If the party searches the remains of the wooden desk (which radiate from a fading preservation spell), they find a sign that reads (in Merithian) "Bastothenes." A Knowledge (history) check (DC 25) allows the PC to recognize the name as belonging to a famous Merithian ruler and library.

A number of clay scrolls sit in the room, but the party may be interrupted by the guardian before they can read them.

Treasure: The blue clay scroll is a magical Merithian dictionary. It has 7 charges remaining in it, and when touched by anyone who does not speak Merithian, it expends a charge and instantly teaches them how to read, write, and speak the language.

2. WEST WING

This room has seen better days. The west wall has collapsed inwards, burying half of the chamber in dirt and stones. Only a few intact stone scroll racks remain here. A glowing emerald is fixed on a chest-high pillar (B) next to the corridor leading back to the central chamber, providing faint light.

The cave-in destroyed much of the knowledge contained in this room. Excavation reveals that almost all of the scrolls buried in the cave-in have been ruined beyond recovery.

As in location 1, a few surviving scrolls remain in the room, and the royal golem passes through on its rounds every few minutes.

The glowing emerald is a magic item -- the library's guardian uses to heal itself.

Treasure: The glowing emerald not only emits light, it casts a *transmute mud to rock* spell on any construct that touches it. The emerald has two charges remaining.

3. EAST WING

This chamber has several scroll racks along the wall, but the floor is its most interesting feature. Its tiles form a colorful mosaic (C) that could be some sort of map. A glowing emerald is fixed on a chest-high pillar (B) next to the corridor leading back to the central chamber, providing faint light.

The floor mosaic is indeed a map showing Derimos, the capital of Merithia, in relation to the six great libraries. If they know that this is the Bastothenes library, a character with the Craft (cartography) skill can create a map to Derimos with a successful check (DC 20). If none of the characters have this skill, one of the tavern patrons above ought to be able to help them out.

As in location 1, a few surviving scrolls are in the room, and the royal golem passes through on its rounds every few minutes.

The glowing emerald is a magic item used by the library's guardian to heal itself.

Treasure: The glowing emerald on the wall not only emits light, it casts a *transmute mud to rock* spell on any construct that touches it. The emerald has three charges remaining.

THE LIBRARY'S CONTENTS

The library contains scrolls on a variety of topics. The Oracles of Aradinos (see p. 10), the Greeting of the Sun (see p. 23) and Merithian burial practices (see p. 10) are available. Indeed, everything from astronomy to zoology has at least a few scrolls devoted to it. The library is a good place to plant adventure seeds related to the Merithians. Besides any other hints desired, several scrolls of particular note are contained here.

The Book of the Sun, by Pater Domius: This is the primary religious text of the Merithians. The scrolls promote self-reliance and the fulfillment of one's potential. If the characters peruse it, one particular passage catches the eye:

Merithia worships the sun as a lifegiver -- a representation of the bounty that has been given to us. We have received not only life and self-awareness, but also potential. Each man has within him the potential to shake the world to its very foundations. It is our duty to fulfill as much of this potential as we possibly can before we die. Our daily Greeting of the Sun reinforces this promise every day of our lives.

This is the secret of Merithia's glory. Where others look to the stars or their gods to guide them, we make our own decisions. Where others blame demons or devils for their failures, we accept our limitations and work to overcome them. A Merithian understands that nothing is as reliable as his own hands, and never waits for others to do the things he needs done. At the same time, he understands compromise. No one can be everywhere at once. One man cannot conquer a coun-

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

try. To accomplish great tasks, we must learn who we can and cannot depend on, and divide our duties accordingly.

The Powers of the Blood, by Nathardes: One of the few treatises in existence on Merithian red sorcery. If the characters examine it, they find convoluted theories about how and why red sorcery works. Among the technical jargon, the status of its practice at the time the scroll is presented:

Alas, the great red sorcerers are with us no longer. The talents of Jerinias, who slew the giants of the Leriadnes with a whisper, were lost at sea with him a decade ago. The secrets hidden in the head of Erithocles, who pulled down the Niras mountains to stop the advance of the Gants, followed him to the grave when he passed away in his sleep without an apprentice. Even Perinocles, the greatest sorcerer of all -- whose blood boiled with a thousand spells -- has vanished without a trace. I fear that with this last tragedy, we have seen the last of the red sorcery.

The Siege of Derimos, by General Mironades: A Knowledge (history) check (DC 20) reveals this scroll as a historical text believed to have been lost forever. It describes in detail the sacking of Derimos, and has been referred to by other historians throughout the ages as the definitive example of a small, well-trained force being overwhelmed by large numbers of untrained men. If the characters examine it, one part of the General's narrative draws attention:

I wept as I saw the barbarian horde sweep away my army like a man brushing aside a bothersome fly. In spite of the great skill of our legions, the numbers of the barbarians were too great. Each man took a dozen enemies down with him, but it was not enough. Even the Centurion Knights found themselves penned in shoulder to shoulder. With no room to fight, they were mercilessly cut down. The lifeblood of Merithia was spilt, and her heart was torn out. If perhaps we had been accompanied by one of the great Red Sorcerers, we might have held. As it was, there was no hope for us.

The barbarians reduced the city to rubble -- all but the palace of the Emperor. When the Emperor looked out of his window, he saw an army of barbarians encamped on his very steps. They had marched through our Empire, demonstrating our frailty to all, and now, they turned and marched away, leaving the palace intact to mock us. As each man walked off, he paused a minute to carve his name into its marble walls, immortalizing our defeat. The Emperor, always a proud

young man, could not bear the shame. He drank a cup of nightshade that evening.

The Ballad of Lenethe and Grisold, by Sophilias: Sophilias was generally regarded as the greatest bard of his day. However, none of his works are known to survive to the present day. A Knowledge (History) check (DC 25) immediately brings to mind his name, as well as the name of his most famous song. To a bard, this scroll is priceless. Should the characters examine it, they learn why Sophilias was regarded as the master of his craft. Each line is a masterpiece of economy and form.

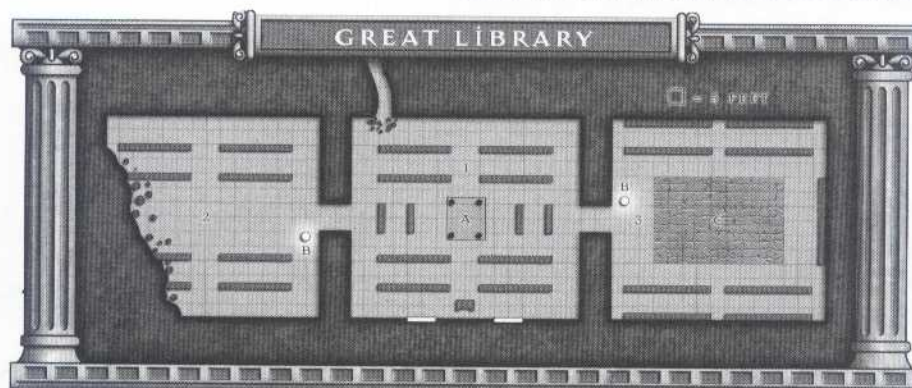
The bard tells the story of a young man named Grisold, and the young woman Lenethe, whom he dearly loved. Sadly, she did not return his feelings, and rather than try to woo her honestly or seek another, he sought out an old witch named Memene and convinced her to brew him a love potion, which she did, for a fee to be named later. Blinded by love, he agreed, and slipped the potion in Lenethe's drink. She drank the brew and went to bed, and Grisold went to his own home, secure in the knowledge that she would love him in the morning. Unfortunately for him, Memene came that evening to collect her fee: his love for Lenethe. When he saw her in the morning, she fawned over him, foolishly, or so he thought. His eyes were opened to all the flaws in her that had been hidden by his blinding love, and he sent her away in disgust. Heartbroken, she killed herself that night. When Grisold heard the news the next day, Memene returned his love for Lenethe to him, and he leapt off a cliff in despair.

CONCLUDING THE VIGNETTE

Once the PCs have defeated the library's guardian, scholars come from near and far to have a look at the legendary Great Library of Bastothenes. Sharon Brewer eventually gives up on trying to drive them off, and simply starts charging admission. Perhaps some intact scrolls turn up in the library later on, feeding the PCs some information leading to another adventure. *The Ballad of Lenethe and Grisold*, in particular, attracts a great deal of attention from the local scholars and nobility.

PLOT INTERSECTIONS

Location 3 contains a map showing the way to the city of Derimos (see Part Eight).

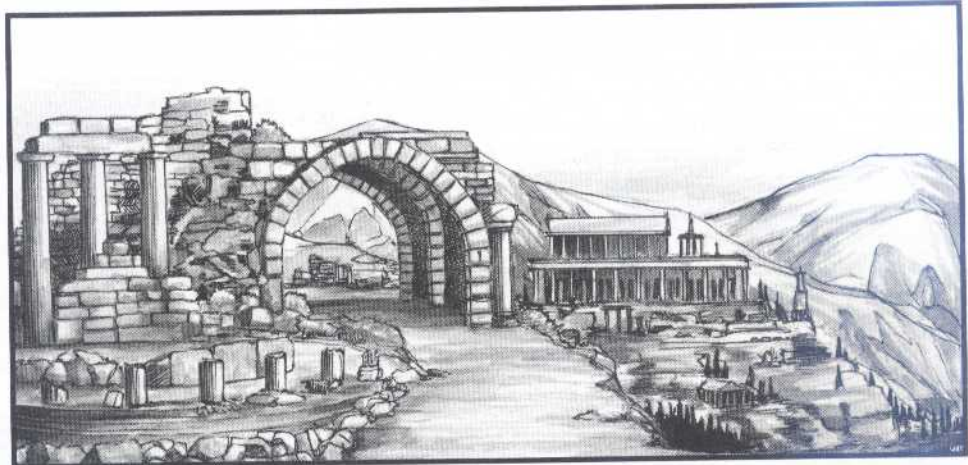


PART EIGHT

THE CITY OF DERIMOS

The city glittered as though she were cast from solid gold. Her noble arches . . . her magnificent towers . . . they stretched so far into the sky that I felt like an infant walking beneath her walls. There was a legend that said sweet Derimos came to the first Emperor in a dream. In that dream, the west wind blew upon the crashing waves of the ocean -- freezing them in place. When the Emperor awoke, he was so taken with the image of the frozen waves that he ordered the creation of a city with the sweeping majesty of an ocean wave. Only now, looking upon the city, can I give any credence to that legend.

-- An ancient traveler writing of his visit to Derimos



INTRODUCTION

As described in the *Siege of Derimos* (see p. 29), Derimos fell to a barbarian horde, who left the palace standing, and instead carved their names on its walls to humiliate the Merithians. The Emperor of the Merithian, Caius Orphellius, was so shamed by this act that he drank nightshade to kill himself. Afterwards, the Empire fell into chaos, the people abandoned the city, and Merithia faded into the pages of history.

A historian named Kareth Danian discovered the city of Derimos four years ago. Always an opportunist, he realized that he could use the fame of the Merithians to build a power base for himself. Kareth invented a false god named Manar, and founded a religion with the sole purpose of making himself a king. The weak-minded and gullible flocked to his new cult, and today there are over 300 members. At the current rate of growth, Kareth estimates that he will have enough men to conquer the surrounding countryside in just a few more months.

HOW TO USE THIS VIGNETTE

This adventure is intended for four to six characters of 9th to 12th level. The characters journey to the lost city of Derimos, which has lain in ruin ever since it was sacked at the hands of barbarian invaders. The characters discover that an evil cult dedicated to "Manar, the sun god of the Merithians" has taken over the palace and plans to launch an assault on the cities in the area in just a few months. The characters must foil the cult's plans with the aid of a legion of ghostly sentries who still stand guard in the cellar of the palace. Their specialized knowledge of the Merithians is vital to convince the sentries to aid them.

In order to prepare for this vignette, reread Part Two one last time, paying particular attention to the culture section. In addition, look through the vignette and be sure to understand how the cultists are organized, and how they react to various situations.

CHARACTER HOOKS

- The characters most likely find Derimos through the map in the Great Library of Bastothenes (see p. 28).
- The PCs can be attacked by some cultists on the road nearby the city.
- The PCs might stumble across the city accidentally.
- A prophecy or vision might lead the PCs to the city.
- Rumors of the growing cult of Manar draw them just to make sure nothing sinister is brewing.

THE CITY

Ruins stretch out ahead for miles, with a marble palace rising majestically from the center of it all, still intact. Suddenly, a piercing scream splits the air, followed immediately by the cheers of what sounds like hundreds of men. It would seem that there are others here.

THE RUINS

Roll 1d10 and consult the following chart when the characters enter a building other than the palace.

- 1-7: The building is empty.
- 8: A wild animal, such as a dire rat or badger, inhabits the building.
- 9: A small object of value (between 50 and 150 gp), such as a statue or other work of art, can be found if the building is searched.
- 0: A black-robed cultist is located in the building, possibly dodging his duties (see p. 40).

THE PALACE

The palace is carved from marble -- a triumph of arches, towers, and beautiful sculptures. Much of it has crumbled into ruin. The central portion, however, appears intact. The place bustles with activity. The sounds of dozens of people can be heard coming from inside. Two black-cowled guards at each front entrance are visible.

MOVING AROUND IN THE PALACE

The characters need to proceed with care if they want to keep their presence from the cultists. Perhaps their best bet is to locate a couple of cultists outside the palace and incapacitate them, taking their black robes as a disguise. No Disguise check is necessary. Because the cult is so large, the members do not all know each other, and the characters can use that to their advantage.

I. ENTRYWAY

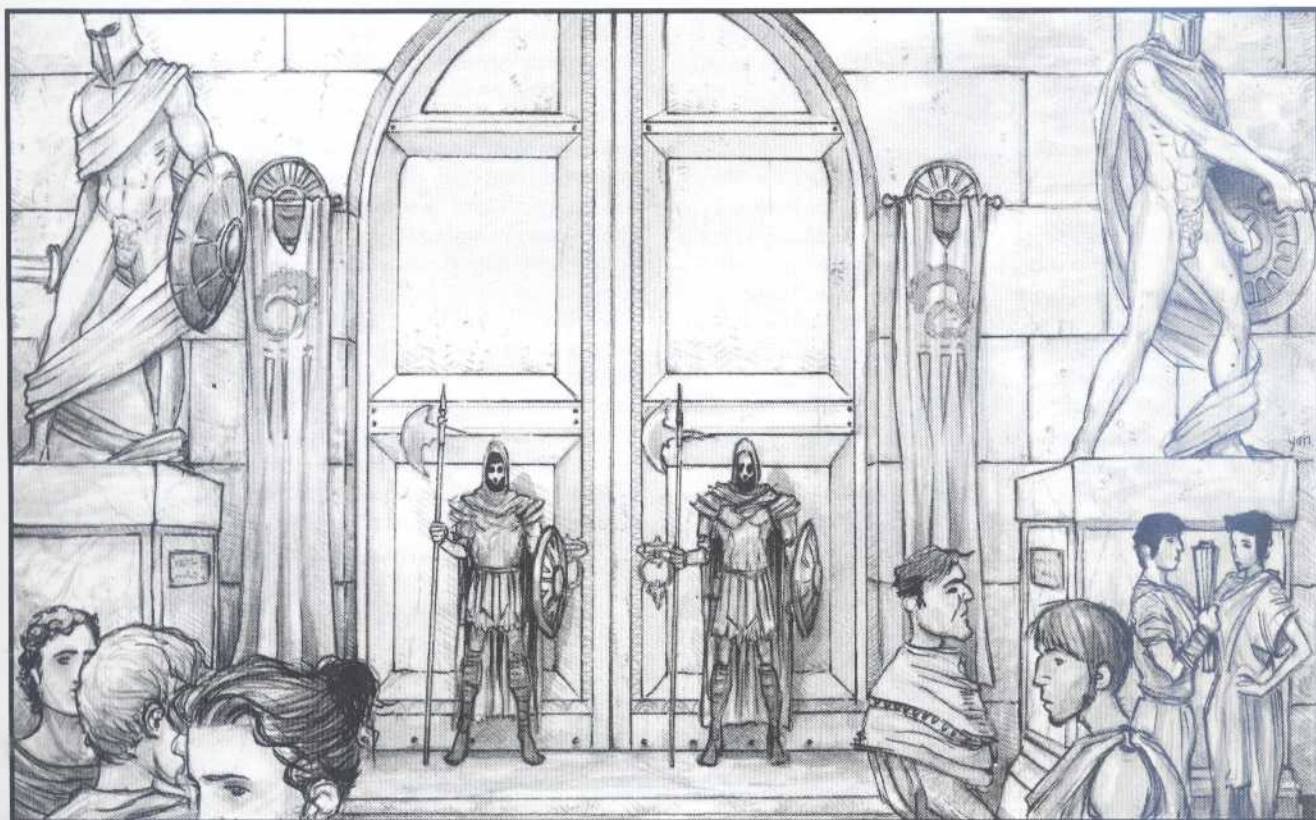
The corridor leads east and west from here, although more noise seems to be coming from the east. Two men in black robes are stationed in the corridor, and eye everyone that approaches them. The doors contain bas-relief carvings of a cloud with puffed-out cheeks on both the interior and exterior surface.

This area gets a lot of traffic from cultists walking back and forth. There is a 9 in 10 chance that at least one cultist walks past here at any given time. In addition, two guards are stationed here, but the characters, whether disguised or not, can walk right past them as long as they seem confident (Bluff check at DC 15). Nervous passersby are asked for the password, which is "Manar illuminate you." If the guards become convinced that the characters are intruders, they attempt to take them, at sword point, to location 10, where Kareth Danian can interrogate them.

Creatures (EL 6): There are two cultists standing guard here.

Cultists (2): hp 39 each (see p. 40).

Development: If the palace is placed on alert, the guard here is doubled.



WONDERS OUT OF TIME

2. CELLAR STAIRS

At the end of the hall, an ornate metal grating covers a stairway leading down into darkness.

The grating can be easily removed. If it is not oiled first, however, 1d4 cultists from location 4 come to investigate the noise.

3-9. SUITES

The room was once a large, delicately carved chamber. Now, it has been partitioned into four separate areas by rough carpentry. Each is crowded with four small cots. A shelf is full of clothing and other personal possessions.

Each area in these suites houses four cultists. When the characters enter an area, roll 1d4 to see how many cultists are in the room at the time. They may be sleeping, reading, meditating, mending their clothing, or anything else desired. If awake, they are understandably annoyed at being interrupted, and ask the characters what they want. As the cultists are not expecting intruders, it should not be too difficult to fast-talk them with a believable lie (Diplomacy check against DC 15), even if the PCs are not disguised as cultists.

Creatures (EL 8): There are up to 4 cultists in each room here.

Cultists (4): hp 39 each (see p. 40).

Development: If the characters get into a fight, an essentially unlimited supply of cultists begin showing up, attracted to the sounds of combat. Once surrounded and/or subdued, the PCs are escorted to location 10, for Kareth Danian to deal with them himself.

10. KARETH DANIAN'S SUITE

These richly decorated rooms are thick with divans, couches, and every other form of comfort a man could desire. The interior wall and door, while solidly built, are obviously recent additions. Seated at a large antique desk is a middle-aged man wearing yellow robes.

The man in the yellow robes is Kareth Danian, the leader of the cult of Manar. He claims to be a cleric, but since Manar is not a god, he has been faking it using his powers as a sorcerer.

If the characters are brought here as prisoners (either conscious, dead or awake), he smiles evilly at them, and says, "No, these people are not of our brethren, and no doubt intend to do us harm. Throw them in the cellar with the haunts. That should teach them not to interfere in other people's business." The characters are marched to location 11 and forced inside, with several guards remaining to watch them.

If the characters attack Danian before his cultists have been taken care of, he casts *dimension door* to reach safety. His men pour into the room in a nearly inexhaustible supply until the party is incapacitated. They are then dumped in the cellar, as above.

Creatures (EL 8): Kareth Danian is here.

Kareth Danian: hp 40 (p. 40).

Treasure: The furnishings of Danian's suite are worth 2,500 gp if hauled off. In addition, there is a small locked chest with 1,000 pp in it. Danian has the key on a cord around his neck.

Development: If the sentries have been freed to wreak havoc, Danian is huddled in his room alone, casting spells at anything that moves. If the characters leave Derimos without eliminating Danian, he finds out who was responsible and tracks them down.

11. GUARD LODGING

This large area retains a spartan splendor, as if transported intact across the ages. It contains row upon row of metal cots, each with a sad ghostly figure standing in front of it at attention. One spirit steps forward and says, in Merithian, "Who goes there? Has Caius Orphellius readied our orders at last? Shall we bring the fight to the barbarians?"

The ghostly sentries here are dead Centurion Knights, awaiting the order to go out and fight the barbarian horde. Ages ago, they were held in reserve to protect the Emperor and never fought the invaders. As a result, these men died feeling they had failed their nation, and their spirits were transported here to wait for eternity.

The PCs best course of action is to trick the sentries into thinking they are Merithians come to deliver their orders at last -- that is what the sentries want to hear. However, the PCs must speak Merithian, and encourage the ghosts up the stairs and into battle immediately upon entering the room. Be sure to roleplay this scene out to the hilt.

If the PCs engage in any lengthy conversation, the sentries soon tire of the parley. They break off the conversation and demand authorization from the PCs -- written papers signed and sealed by an Imperial bureaucrat, or better yet by the Emperor or Empress. The only way they can get that is to forge it, assuming they can write Merithian, and get a copy of the proper signature and seal (see locations 14, 18). If the party fails to present such papers, or cannot come up with a reasonable explanation for being without, the sentries give them a chance to leave and "get them." If they refuse, the sentries attack.

If given the order to attack (either quickly or after authorization has been established), the spirits form into ranks and rush up the stairs with a roar. They tear the grating off its hinges (it is more decoration than anything else) and wade into the cultists with a passion, driving them out of the city. Once the city is scourged of cultists, the sentries dissipate, going to their final rest. Only Kareth Danian remains undaunted by them. He uses his spells to drive the sentries out of his quarters, wounding several of them badly in the process. One of the sentries appears to the characters, wherever they are, and warns them: "There's still one intruder in the eastern wing, sirs. He appears to be a sorcerer of some power. The commander asks that you contain him, as we've had no luck with him. Sorry." With that, the sentry disappears.

Creatures (EL Special): 100 ghostly sentries await their orders. The characters receive no XP if they fight and defeat these spirits. If they give them their orders, award XP as though they had defeated a CR 10 encounter.

Ghostly Sentries (100): hp 26 each (see p. 37)

12. PALACE STORAGE

This area has several items lining its stone shelves, including two suits of leather armor with bone sewn into the seams, two suits of leather barding treated in the same manner, a leather cloak, a gladius, and a shield. The remaining items have crumbled to dust.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

The Centurion Knights kept their magic items here. Once their spirits have been laid to rest, the characters have fair claim to these items. Before then, the sentries try to prevent the characters from entering this room.

Treasure: Two suits of bone armor, two sets of bone barding, a chameleon skin, an officer's gladius and officer's shield (see pp. 41-43).

THE UPPER STORIES

These areas (13-18) are considered together when calculating doorways for the Merithian "Oracles."

13. THE EMPRESS'S ROOMS

Stairs lead down to the ground floor of the palace here. The banisters around the opening and along the stairs are delicately carved stone with a wave motif. The outlines of several human figures are burned into the wall near the stairs.

The cultists, fearful of some deadly trap, have so far avoided these stairs. However, the trap that protected the stairs has long since been triggered. It is perfectly safe now.

14. THE EMPRESS'S BEDCHAMBER

The remains of large, ornate, marble furniture lay about the room, the cloth and padding portions long since rotted away. Jagged shards of a mirrored glass lie beneath a wrought gold frame on the opposite wall. In a shadowed nook of the room, the corner of a perfectly preserved chest peeks out.

The room once contained a bed, dresser, dressing screen and a wall mirror, but all have been ruined. The chest is actually ethereal, but visible. Only an ethereal character can open it. It is unlocked and untrapped.

Treasure: The chest contains 3,000 gp in jewelry as well as several scrolls -- two of which are a pair of love letters between the Emperor and the Empress, written before the two were married. One scroll has the Emperor's signature on it; the other the Empress's.

15. THE EMPRESS'S STUDY

The room is dotted with pieces of crumbled marble and rusted metal -- all that remains of the once fine furnishings.

The room once contained a desk, table, chairs and several scroll racks with an assortment of scrolls. Unfortunately, these things have all been ruined by the passage of time. A secret compartment (Search check against DC 20 to find, or just smash the remains) in the desk contains the Empress's gold seal ring.

Treasure: Other than establishing authorization for the sentries in the sublevel, the seal ring is worth 2,500 gp as metal, and 10,000 gp to the right collector.

16. THE EMPEROR'S ROOMS

Stairs lead down to the ground floor of the palace here. The banisters around the opening and along the stairs are delicately carved stone with a wave motif. The outlines of several human figures are burned into the wall near the stairs.

Again, the cultists have avoided these stairs, but they are safe.

17. THE EMPEROR'S BEDCHAMBER

Partially intact marble furnishings, rubble and rusted metal lay about the room. Other than that, this room is empty.

The remains are the Emperor's furnishings, long since ruined by time.

18. THE EMPEROR'S STUDY

The remains of several marble scroll racks can be seen along one wall. The scrolls they once held lay shattered on the floor. Only the stone desk in one corner has survived the ravages of time, a single, dust-covered scroll perched atop it. Near the desk lies a pile of crumbled marble and metal. An overturned gold cup lies nearby.

The clay scrolls once held by the scroll racks are shattered beyond readability. The rubble was once the chair of Caius Orphellius, Emperor of Merithia. The gold cup is the one from which he drank his famous draught of nightshade. Assuming the PCs have not already made the connection based on the scrolls they found at the Great Library, a Knowledge (history) check (DC 25) allows them to do so. If the players examine the surviving scroll, and can read Merithian, they learn the following:

Hail and Well Met, my Emperor;

One of your centurions recently located my home and delivered your request that I return to service for the good of all Merithia. This is, I fear, impossible. My course is nearly run, and I suspect one of my students is a traitor. Therefore, in order to protect my secrets from our enemies, I am taking steps that will result in the deaths of both my students and myself. However, do not despair: I have placed these secrets where you, and only you, will be able to find them. This scroll has a spell upon it that will reveal to you the location of my home. When you enter, you must beware the bone guardians I have left to guard my home. Proceed to the center of the house and perform the Greeting of the Sun. You will be transported to another place where you will be asked several questions to which only you know the answers. Within, you will find my last gifts to you.

Farewell, Caius Orphellius, I remain your loyal servant, Perinocles

The character holding the scroll receives a mental image that enables him to find Perinocles' manor from anywhere in the world. Any character that has been there before instantly recognizes it as the Merithian manor in Part One (see p. 6).

A secret compartment (Search check against DC 20 to find) in the desk contains the Emperor's seal.

Treasure: The gold cup is worth 3,000 gp by virtue of its quality. However, if sold to a wealthy student of military history, the cup can fetch up to 25,000 gp. Other than establishing authorization for the sentries in the sublevel, the seal ring is worth 2,500 gp as metal, and 20,000 gp to the right collector.

PLOT INTERSECTIONS

The letter in the Emperor's bedroom leads the PCs back to Perinocles' Manor and tells them how to enter the "shade manor."

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

PALACE AT DERIMOS

GROUND
LEVEL

SUBLEVEL

2ND
FLOOR

□ = 5 FEET

NEW MONSTERS



BONE GUARDIAN

Diminutive Construct**Hit Dice:** 1d4 (2 hp)**Initiative:** +5 (Dex)**Speed:** 10 ft., climb 10 ft.**AC:** 19 (+5 Dex, +4 size)**Attacks:** Jab +3 melee**Damage:** Jab 1 plus strength drain**Face/Reach:** 1 ft. by 1 ft./0 ft.**Special Attacks:** Poison**Special Qualities:** Construct, tremorsense**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +0**Abilities:** Str 7, Dex 20, Con --, Int --, Wis 11, Cha 1**Skills:** Climb +8, Hide +8, Jump +8, Spot +8**Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite)**Climate/Terrain:** Any land and underground**Organization:** Colony (8-16)**Challenge Rating:** 1**Treasure:** None**Alignment:** Always neutral**Advancement:** 2 HD (Tiny); 3 HD (Small); 4 HD (Medium);

5-8 HD (Large); 9-16 HD (Huge)

Bone guardians are magically created automatons usually set to protect a Merithian wizard's home while it is unattended. They are fist-sized creatures that resemble five-legged spiders, and are always carefully carved from bone.

A colony of bone guardians always has a nest where they recharge their magical energies. Often, this nest takes the form of a large skull with gems inset in the eye-sockets. The guardians must climb inside and enter an inactive state in order to renew their energies. A guardian must recharge every two days, or after it has inflicted eight points of temporary Strength damage. Typically, a wizard also creates a magical gold whistle that, when blown, causes all the bone guardians to return to their nest until either the whistle is blown again, or until the gems on their nest are disturbed in any way.

COMBAT

Bone guardians are small and fast. They often attack by leaping upon intruders from up to five feet away before sinking a pointy bone finger into them. Larger specimens exist, but are uncommon.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poisons, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Strength Drain(Su): The "poison" from a bone guardian's jab is actually an injection of negative energy similar to the touch of a shadow. It deals 1 point of temporary Strength damage to a living foe. A creature reduced to 0 Strength by the jab of a guardian dies. Each guardian can only use this ability 8 times before it needs to return to its nest to recharge.

Tremorsense (Ex): A bone guardian can automatically sense the location of anything within 30 feet that is in contact with the ground.

CONSTRUCTION

It takes one hand from a humanoid skeleton to create one guardian. In addition, for every colony of up to 16 guardians created, a nest must be constructed from a humanoid skull one size larger than the guardians themselves. The skull must have a gem of at least 500 gp value in each eye socket. The wizard infuses these gems with energy, turning them into the batteries that allow the guardians to recharge their drain strength attack.

Each batch of 4 bone guardians costs 800 gp to create, and requires a successful Craft (sculpture) check (DC 11) to assemble. Each nest costs 1,000 gp (assuming the use of two 500 gp gems) to create, and requires a Craft (gemcutting) check (DC 13) to assemble. In addition, if the creator wishes to make a gold whistle to control the bone guardians, another 500 gp must be spent. A single gold whistle can control up to 4 colonies of bone guardians.

The creator must be 9th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 500 XP from the creator and requires *chill touch* and *animate dead*. This ritual creates 4 bone guardians at once. Note that the ritual varies for creating guardians larger than diminutive size.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME

BRONZE WARRIOR

Medium Construct

Hit Dice: 10d10 (55 hp)

Initiative: +5 (Dex)

Speed: 35 ft.

AC: 30 (+5 Dex, +15 natural)

Attacks: 2 slams +12 melee

Damage: 2d8+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: None

Special Qualities: Construct, magic immunity, damage reduction 15/+1, blur

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +4

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 21, Con --, Int --, Wis 11, Cha 1

Skills: Climb +7, Jump +7, Tumble +7

Feats: Evasion

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 11-13 HD (Large)

A bronze warrior is six feet tall and weighs around 1,000 lbs. Its body is made of forged bronze, typically stylized in the Merithian fashion (i.e., wearing a breastplate, helmet and greaves, and wielding a large bronze gladius).

COMBAT

Bronze warriors are large bronze statues, similar to other golems except for their amazing agility and speed.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poisons, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Magic Immunity (Ex): A bronze warrior is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. An electricity effect slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 1d6 rounds, with no saving throw.

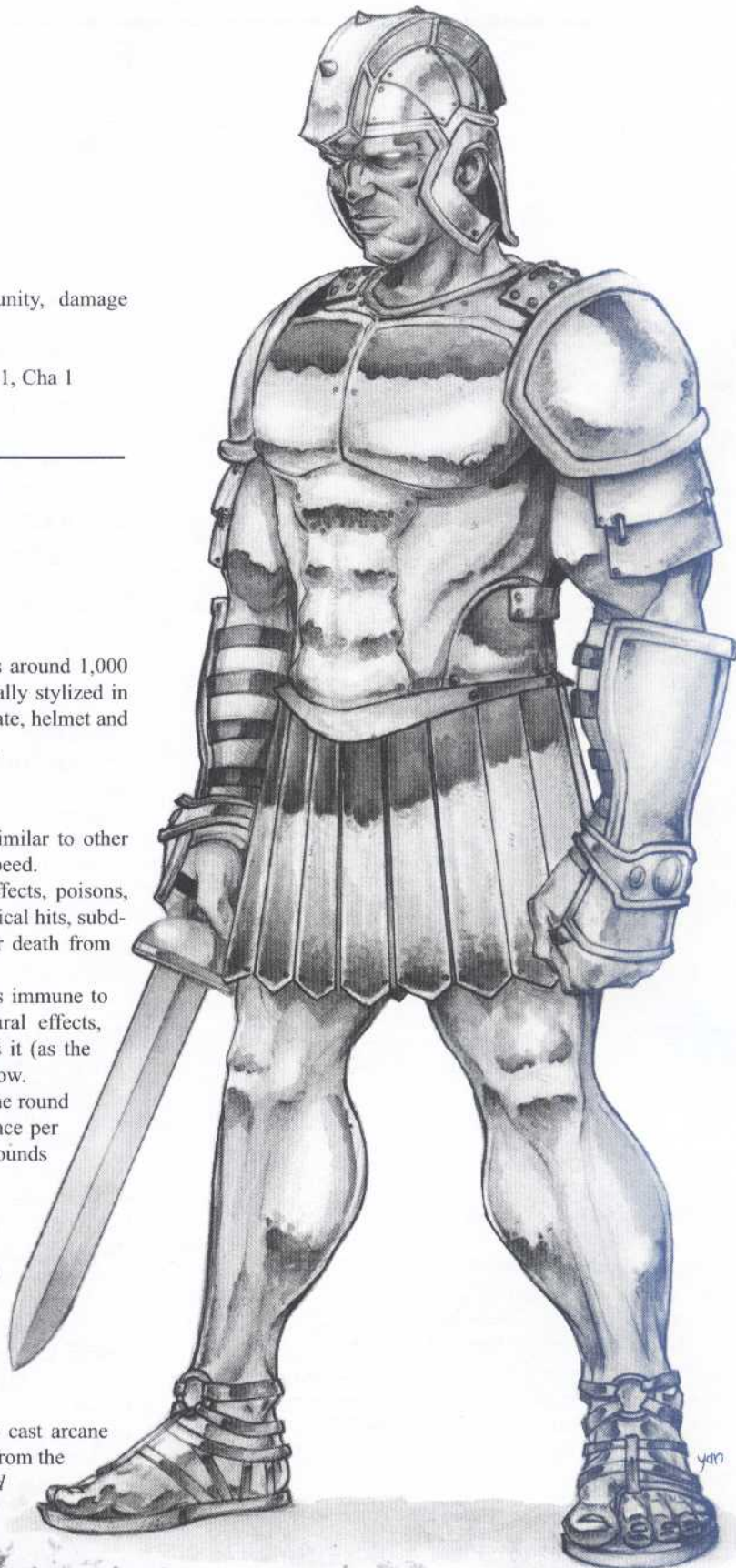
Blur (Su): After it has engaged in at least one round of combat, a bronze warrior can blur itself once per day as a free action. The effect lasts three rounds and is otherwise the same as the *blur* spell.

CONSTRUCTION

A bronze warrior's body is formed from 3,000 pounds of pure bronze.

The golem costs 60,000 gp to create, which includes 1,000 gp for the body. Assembling the body requires a successful Craft (sculpting or masonry) check (DC 15).

The creator must be 16th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 1,000 XP from the creator and requires *blur*, *geas/quest*, *limited wish*, and *polymorph any object*.



GHOSTLY SENTRY

Medium Undead (Incorporeal)

Hit Dice: 2d12 (13 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 19 (+3 Dex, +6 natural)

Attacks: 2 slams +4 melee

Damage: 1 plus strength drain

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Create spawn, drain Strength

Special Qualities: Incorporeal, undead

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +4

Abilities: Str --, Dex 16, Con --, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 13

Skills: Intimidate +10, Listen +9, Search +8, Sense Motive +7, Spot +9

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organization: Squad (8-34)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Any

Advancement: 5-8 HD (Medium)

Ghostly sentries are soldiers who have died with some duty unfinished. They may have been killed from behind while standing guard, murdered before completing an important task or simply died of old age, after training for years to fight in a battle that never came. They haunt the location of their death or unfulfilled mission, always striving to complete the task that binds them to this plane of existence.

Ghostly sentries appear as slightly transparent soldiers dressed in full military regalia, often with the wound that killed them still visible on their body. However, their weapons remain stuck in their sheaths or on their backs, and the sentries are forced to attack with their deadly touch.

Ghostly sentries speak the languages they knew in life.

COMBAT

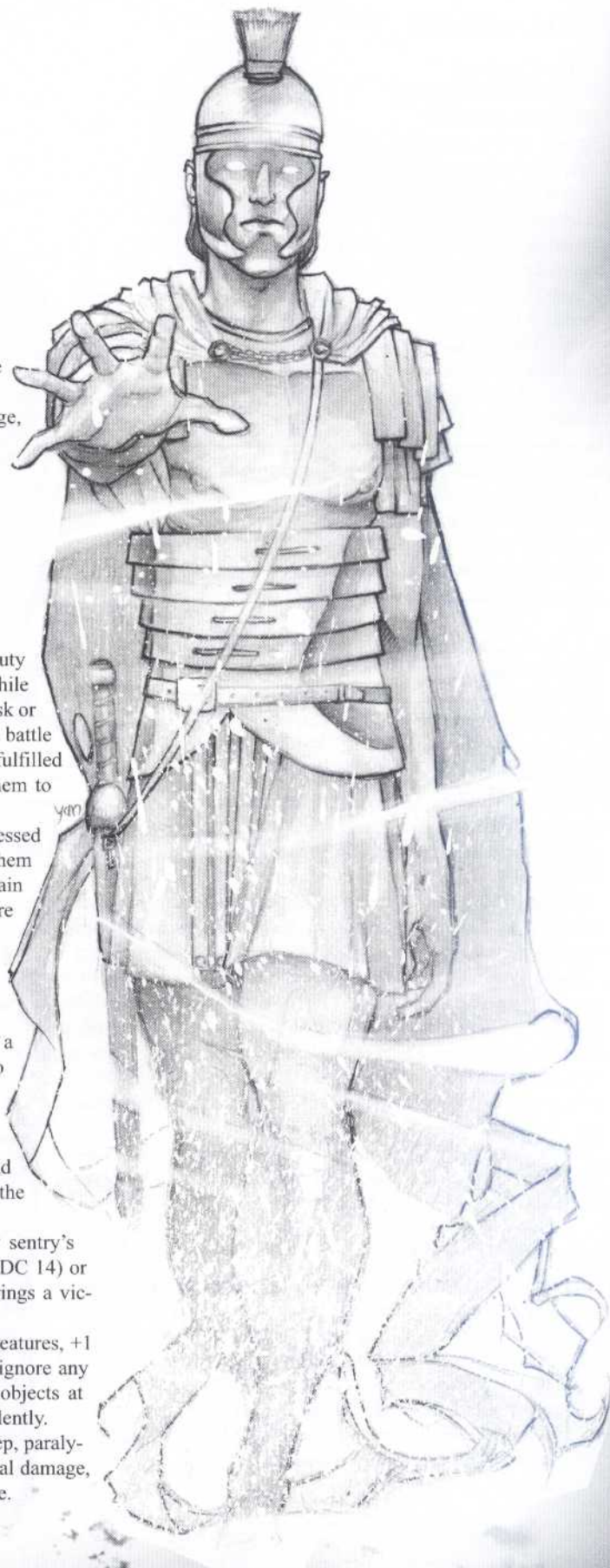
Ghostly sentries attack en masse, focusing their attacks on a single target in an effort to kill that creature and force it to join their ranks.

Create Spawn (Su): Any humanoid slain by a ghostly sentry becomes a ghostly sentry in 1d4 rounds. Spawn are under the command of the sentry that created them and remain enslaved until its death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Strength Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by a ghostly sentry's incorporeal touch attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 14) or suffer 1d2 points of temporary Strength damage. If this brings a victim's Strength to 0, they die.

Incorporeal: Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.



WONDERS OUT OF TIME

ROYAL GOLEM

Large Construct

Hit Dice: 11d10 (60 hp)

Initiative: +4 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft. (can't run)

AC: 28 (+4 Dex, -1 size, +15 natural)

Attacks: 2 slams +16 melee

Damage: 2d10+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: None

Special Qualities: Construct, magic immunity, damage reduction 25/+1, haste

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 27, Dex 19, Con --, Int --, Wis 11, Cha 1

Skills: Climb +5, Jump +5, Tumble +5.

Feats: Improved Evasion

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 9

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 13-15 HD (Huge)

A royal golem is eight feet tall and weighs around 1,500 lbs. Its body is made of smoothly polished marble, typically stylized in the Merithian fashion (i.e., wearing a breastplate, helmet and greaves, and wielding a large stone gladius).

COMBAT

Royal golems are large marble statues, similar to other golems except for one key difference: royal golems are fast, agile, and frequently capable of dodging out of harm's way using their Improved Evasion feat.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poisons, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Magic Immunity (Ex): A royal golem is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. *Transmute rock to mud* slows it (as *slow*) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw, while *transmute mud to rock* heals all lost hit points. *Stone to flesh* does not actually change the golem's structure but makes it vulnerable to any normal attack for the following round (this does not include spells, except those that cause damage).

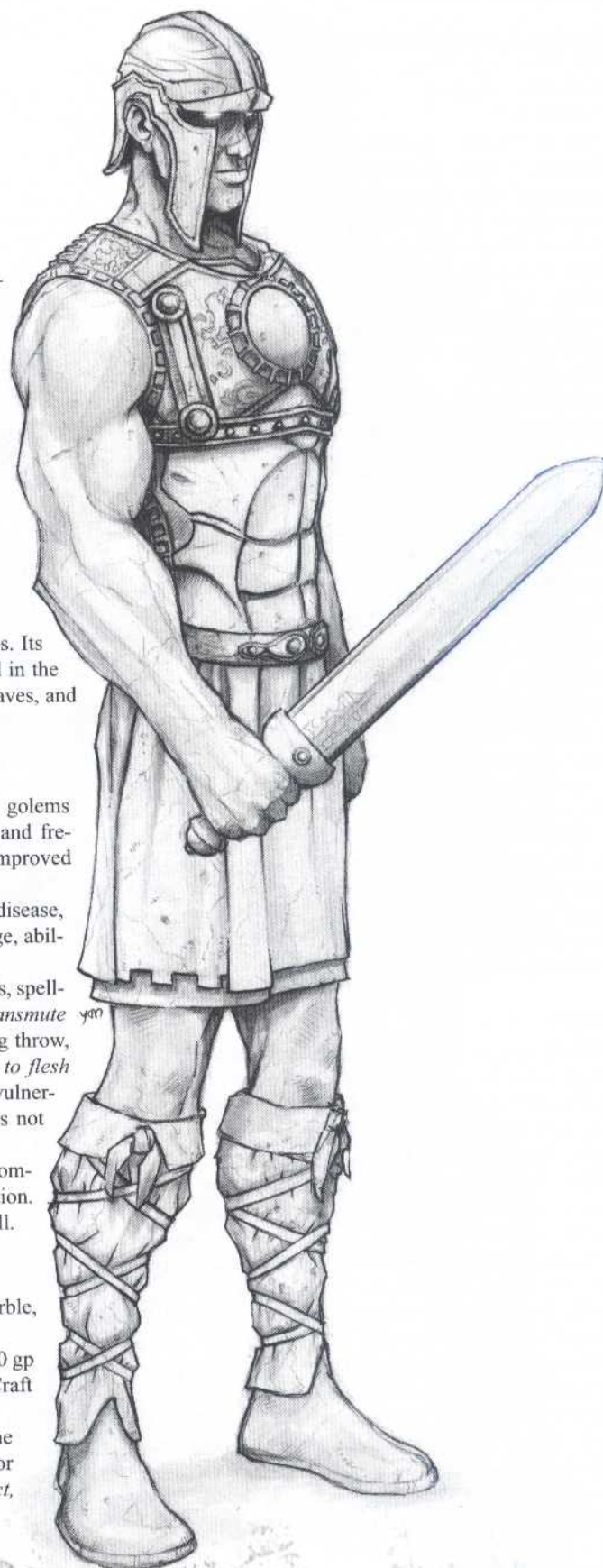
Haste (Su): After it has engaged in at least one round of combat, a royal golem can haste itself once per day as a free action. The effect lasts three rounds and is the same as the *haste* spell.

CONSTRUCTION

A royal golem's body is carved from a single block of marble, weighing at least 3,000 lbs.

The golem costs 100,000 gp to create, which includes 20,000 gp for the body. Assembling the body requires a successful Craft (sculpting or masonry) check (DC 18).

The creator must be 16th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 1,500 XP from the creator and requires *geas/quest*, *limited wish*, *polymorph any object*, and *haste*.



SHACKLED SPIRIT

Medium Undead

Hit Dice: 3d12 (19 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 14 (+4 natural)

Attacks: Special, see below

Damage: Special, see below

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Shackle

Special Qualities: Immune to harm, undead

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 11, Con --, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 13

Skills: Bluff +6, Sense Motive +6

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organization: Pack (2-5)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 4-5 HD (Medium)

These creatures have been imprisoned by the deeds they performed while they were alive, and are doomed to walk the earth in chains until the end of time -- or until they can find someone willing to take their place, whichever comes first.

Shackled spirits resemble incorporeal ghosts draped in heavy chains and weights. They clank and rattle when they walk, and make awful moaning noises.

Shackled spirits speak whatever languages they knew in life.

COMBAT

Shackled spirits do not attack. Instead, they beg and wheedle with any living beings in the area to hold their weights "just for a moment." If the initial request fails, they play upon sympathy or greed to get someone to hold their shackles for them while they take "a little rest." They weep, act innocent, or promise to lead their targets to a great treasure in exchange. Anyone foolish enough to accept their shackles is immediately transformed into a shackled spirit, and the original is free to go on to its final reward (or punishment).

Immune to Harm (Su): Shackled spirits have an improved form of incorporeality that prevents them from being harmed or affected in any way unless someone accepts their shackles.

Shackle (Su): If someone accepts the shackles from a shackled spirit, the original spirit is freed to leave, and the person who accepted the shackles takes their place as a new shackled spirit. The only way to free a shackled spirit without replacing it is to cast a *remove curse* spell on the creature.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.



NPC STATISTICS

Bandits: Human Ftr2; CR 2; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d10+2; hp 13; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather); Atk +2 melee (1d6, shortsword), +5 ranged (1d8 plus poison, crossbow); AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Bandit Officer: Human Ftr3; CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d10+2; hp 19; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +2 leather, +2 shield); Atk +3 melee (1d6, shortsword), +6 ranged (1d8 plus poison, crossbow); AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Haruth the Red: Male human Ftr4; CR 4; Medium-size humanoid; HD 4d10+4; hp 37; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (+1 Dex, +8 full plate, +2 shield); Atk +8 melee (1d10+3, masterwork bastard sword), +7 ranged (1d8 plus poison, crossbow); AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Cultists (2): Human Ftr4; CR 4; Medium-size humanoid; HD 4d8+4; hp 39; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 armor); Atk +4 melee (1d4+2, 19-20/x2, dagger); AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Kareth Danian: Male human Sor8; hp 40; CR 8; Medium-size humanoid; HD 8d4+16; hp 40; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 Dex); Atk Spells; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Spells Known (cast 6/6/6/5/3): 0 -- *arcane mark, detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st -- *comprehend languages, hold portal, mage armor, magic missile, shield*; 2nd -- *cat's grace, darkness, mirror image*; 3rd -- *haste, vampiric touch*; 4th -- *dimension door*.

MERITHIAN RED MAGIC

The magic practiced by the Merithians was somewhat similar to sorcerers' magic, in that it required no elaborate preparation to cast. However, it went the sorcerers one better, infusing the magic into the caster so thoroughly that it was second nature to use. Better yet, warriors could be taught spells using this technique. The primary problem with red magic was that it sapped the vitality of the user, and had serious limitations in the amount and power of its usage.

Only spells of 3rd level or lower can be learned as red magic spells. When a red magic spell is learned, the student's maximum HP is permanently reduced by 2 per level of the spell. The student is then able to use that spell once per day as an innate ability, ignoring the need for material components, with the normal casting time required, and normal rules for spell disruption. The spell is cast at 1/2 the caster's level. A single person may only learn a number of spell levels (counting 0-level spells as 1/2 a spell level each) worth of red magic equal to his Int bonus. A person must have an Int bonus of at least +1 to learn any red magic spells.

Red magic is more efficient for "pure" arcane casters (i.e., any character who only has levels in classes that can cast arcane spells). Pure arcane casters only lose 1 HP per spell level of the spell learned, cast at their full level, and can learn a number of spell levels equal to twice their Int bonus. Should a pure arcane caster no longer meet the requirements of such a caster, all future red magic spells learned do not gain the pure arcane caster bonuses.



WONDERS OUT OF TIME

NEW ITEMS

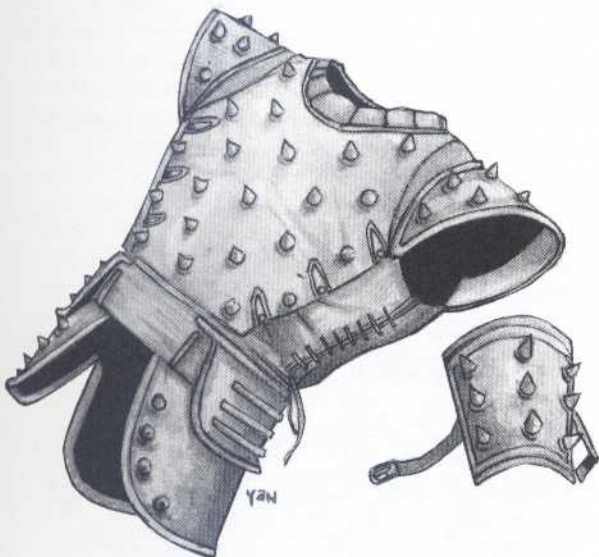
BLOODSCROLLS

Bloodscrolls contain the magic of the Red Sorcerers. These sorcerers specialized in necromancy, and most *bloodscrolls* contain spells of this school.

In order to activate a red clay *bloodscroll*, a creature must cut itself and bleed on the scroll (suffering no damage, as the cut is small). In addition, it must meet the requirements listed under Merithian Red Magic (see p. 40). If these conditions are met, the scroll crackles with energy, teaches the creature its inscribed spell as a red magic spell, and then dissolves into ash.

A *bloodscroll* may only have one spell inscribed on it. Scribing a *bloodscroll* takes one day for every 500 gp in its base price. The base price of a *bloodscroll* is its spell level multiplied by 2,000 gp. To scribe a *bloodscroll*, the creator must spend the base price in XP and use up raw materials costing half of the base price.

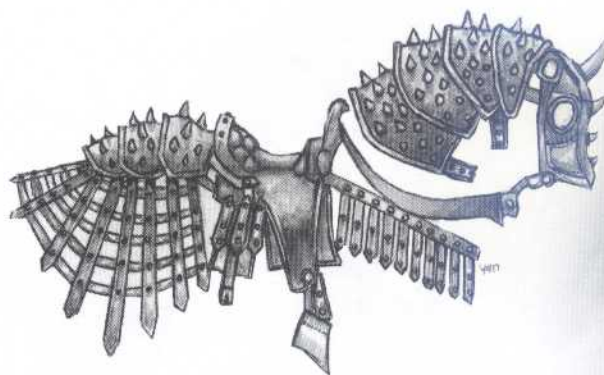
Caster Level: 15th; *Prerequisites:* Scribe Scroll, spell to be written; *Market Price:* 2,000 gp per spell level.



BONE ARMOR

When found, this item appears to be a suit of leather armor inset with protruding bones. When worn, it grafts itself to the wearer. The leather disappears, leaving the bone spikes protruding from the wearer's legs and face. Once grafted to the wearer, it can only be removed by saying its command word. Someone wearing *bone armor* vaguely resembles a spiked monster (-2 penalty to Charisma). While attached, the armor grants the wearer increased speed (double movement rate), protection (+2 deflection bonus to AC), and strength (+1 enhancement bonus to Strength). In addition, all barehanded attacks made by the wearer have their damage increased by two. *Bone armor* may not be worn over *bone gloves*. A character in *bone armor* is considered to be wearing armor, but does not have a Max Dex Bonus.

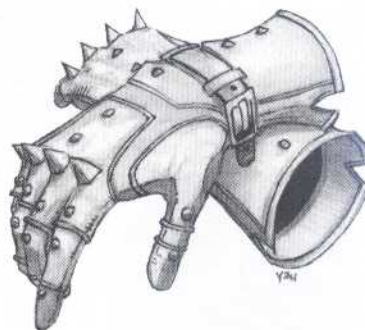
Caster Level: 11th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, bull's strength, haste, shield of faith; *Market Price:* 18,000 gp. *Weight:* 25 lbs.



BONE BARDING

When found, this item appears to be a suit of leather barding inset with protruding bones. When placed on a horse, it grafts itself to the steed. The leather disappears, leaving the bone spikes protruding from the animal's legs and face. The horse vaguely resembles a spiked monster while wearing the barding (-2 penalty to Charisma), and the armor can only be removed by saying its command word. While attached, the barding grants the horse increased speed (double movement rate), protection (+1 deflection bonus to AC), and strength (+1 enhancement bonus to Strength). In addition, all kick and bite attacks made by the animal have their damage increased by two.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, bull's strength, haste, shield of faith; *Market Price:* 7,000 gp. *Weight:* 25 lbs.

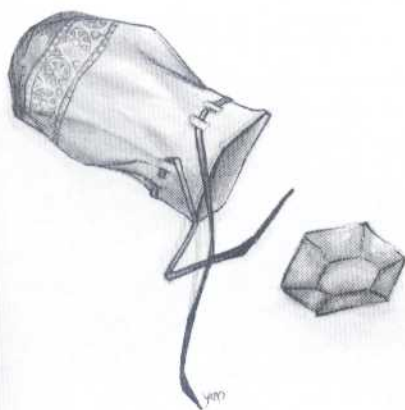


BONE GLOVES

These gloves are made of thin leather with protruding bones sewn into the knuckles. When both are worn at the same time, they graft themselves to the wearer. The leather disappears, leaving the bones protruding from the back of the wearer's hands. The gloves can only be removed by saying their command word. While attached, the gloves grant the wearer a +1 enhancement bonus to Strength. In addition, the wearer's barehanded damage is increased by two.

Caster Level: 6th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, bull's strength; *Market Price:* 3,500 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb., 0 lbs. when attached.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME



BRAINGEM

A *braingem* may appear as any normal precious stone. Anyone who picks it up must make a Will save (DC 20) or press it to her forehead, where it sinks in and begins to control her. Until the gem is removed, the character begins to attack everyone in sight, whether friend or foe. If there is no one in sight, the character crumples to the ground and begins to lose one Intelligence point per hour, although the character still attacks if disturbed. When the character's Intelligence reaches 0, she crumbles to dust -- forever lost. Lost Intelligence returns at a rate of one point per day if the *braingem* is removed. While attached, the *braingem* makes its wearer immune to enchantment and charm spells.

Any amount of electrical damage administered to the character causes the *braingem* to shatter, or it can be pulled free with a Strength check (DC 15), inflicting 1d4 damage to the character in the process. Of course, the character that pulled it free must make a Will save, or the whole process starts over. Finally, if dispelled, the *braingem* falls dormant for the duration of the spell and can be easily removed. When not implanted in a host, a single point of damage destroys a *braingem*.

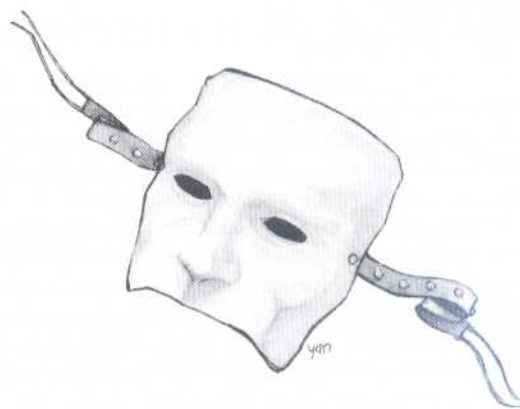
Caster Level: 6th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, charm person; *Market Price:* 2,500 gp; *Weight:* 0 lbs.



CHAMELEON SKIN

This leather cloak operates similar to a *ring of chameleon power*, except that, like bone armor, it grafts itself to its wearer once worn, and requires a command word to remove. *Chameleon skin* cannot be worn over or under bone armor.

Caster Level: 4th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, change self, invisibility; *Market Price:* 15,000 gp; *Weight:* 2 lbs.



FEATURELESS MASK

This mask has a blank, white face. However, the wearer can see through it as though the mask were transparent. A *featureless mask* is intended to mask its wearer's identity completely. While worn, the wearer is continually immune to *detect thoughts*, and *discern lies*. In addition, any attempts to magically discern the wearer's alignment automatically fail. Sense Motive skill checks also cannot be used against the wearer. Observers find themselves unable to remember any details about the way the wearer's body, hair, or clothing looked once the wearer has moved out of sight. All they remember is a featureless white mask.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, non-detection; *Market Price:* 12,000 gp; *Weight:* 1 lbs.

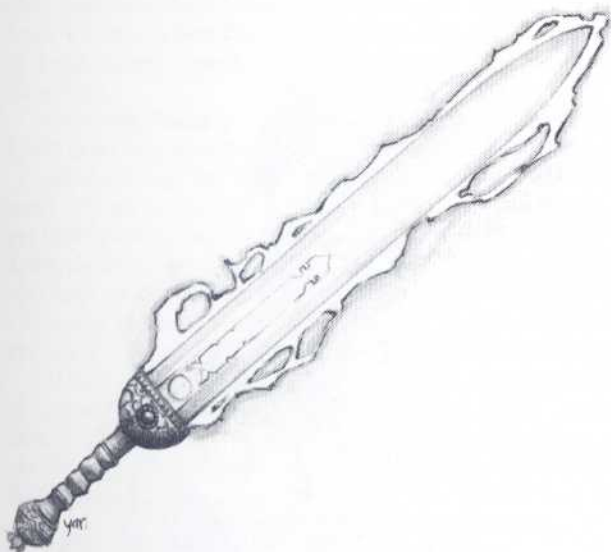


HEALING STAR

This large star sapphire must be placed on a living being's chest and left there to operate. While adorned, the being must remain lying down without moving. So positioned, the being heals one point of damage per level every hour rather than every day. (This ability cannot be aided by the Heal skill.) Subdual damage heals at a rate of one point of damage per level every five minutes. Unlike a *ring of regeneration*, the *healing star* does not allow the user to regrow lost limbs, organs, or other body parts.

Caster Level: 12th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, regenerate; *Market Price:* 40,000 gp; *Weight:* Negligible.

WONDERS OUT OF TIME



OFFICER'S GLADIUS

This +1 lawful short sword crackles with energy. Any time the weapon strikes and does damage, it can immediately cast *shocking grasp* as a 5th-level caster (inflicting 1d8+5 electricity damage) on the victim as a free action. (This ability is a special exception to the general rule that casting a spell from an item takes at least as long as casting that spell normally.) This ability may be used two times/day.

Caster Level: 8th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *order's wrath*, *shocking grasp*, creator must be lawful and a caster of at least 12th level; **Market Price:** 5,310 gp; **Weight:** 3 lbs.

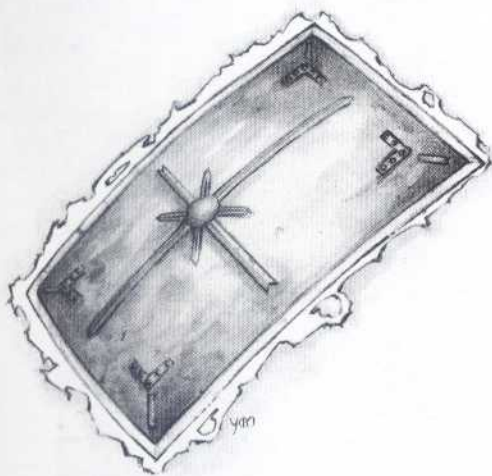


RING OF ARACHNOPHOBIA

This ring is cursed so that once it is worn, it only be removed by means of *remove curse*, *wish*, or *miracle*. While it is worn, all arachnids gain the following special ability against the character wearing the ring:

Despair (Su): At the mere sight of an arachnid, the wearer of this ring must succeed at a Will save (DC 13+arachnid's size modifier) or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, the wearer cannot be affected again by that arachnid's despair ability for one day.

Caster Level: 10th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring, *bestow curse*; **Market Price:** 2,000 gp.



OFFICER'S SHIELD

This +1 animated (see Core Rulebook II, p. 181) large steel shield is specially enchanted to reduce its armor check penalty to -0.

Caster Level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *animate objects*; **Market Price:** 16,170 gp; **Weight:** 15 lbs.

NEW PRESTIGE CLASS

CENTURION KNIGHT

Once the most elite warriors of Merithia, the centurion knights combined power and grace to perform astounding feats of martial acumen. It is said that the knights could hold an egg in their hand tightly enough that no man could take it from them, but gently enough to avoid crushing it.

Rogues and fighters make the best centurion knights, but barbarians, monks, rangers, and paladins also find the knight abilities handy. The combination of flexible advancement, high attack bonuses, and the Armorcunning feat makes the centurion knight a valuable asset in combat.

Since no centurion knights have existed for over 3,000 years, it is up to anyone who rediscovers their secrets to define their position in society.

Hit Die: d8

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a centurion knight, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +7

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Special: In addition, he must be trained by another centurion knight or have access to the centurion knight manual for one month.

CLASS SKILLS

The centurion knight's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the centurion knight prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The centurion knight is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, the net, light armor, medium armor, and shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armor, equipment, or loot carried.

Bonus Feats: At 1st, 4th, 7th, and 9th levels, the centurion knight gets a bonus feat. These bonus feats must be drawn from the following list: Ambidexterity, Blind-Fight, Dodge (Mobility, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack), Exotic Weapon Proficiency*, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Improved Critical*, Improved Unarmed Strike (Deflect Arrows, Stunning Fist), Mounted Combat (Mounted Archery, Trample, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge), Point Blank Shot (Far Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run), Cleave (Great Cleave), Improved Bull Rush, Sunder, Quick Draw, Two-Weapon Fighting (Improved Two-Weapon Fighting), Weapon Finesse*, or Weapon Focus*.

Some of the bonus feats available to a centurion knight cannot be acquired until he has gained one or more prerequisite feats; these feats are listed parenthetically after the advanced feat. A centurion knight can select feats marked with an asterisk (*) more than once, but it must be for a different weapon each time. A knight must still meet the prerequisites for a feat, including all ability score and base attack bonus minimums.



WONDERS OUT OF TIME

These feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels (as per Table 3-2: Experience and Level-Dependent Benefits, Core Rulebook I, p. 22). The centurion knight is not limited to the list given here when choosing those feats.

Centurion Training: At 3rd, 6th, and 8th level, a centurion knight gets a special ability of his choice from the following:

Armorrunning: The centurion knight practically lives in his armor -- it is a part of him. As such, the Maximum Dex Bonus of any light or medium worn by the knight is increased by 2, while its armor check penalty is reduced by 2. Shields used by the knight also have their armor check penalty reduced by 2. Lastly, the knight is so at ease wearing medium armor and/or a shield that he may use his evasion and improved evasion abilities while doing so.

At the Ready: The centurion knight is capable of amazing feats of acrobatics if properly warned of the impending danger ahead of time. At the start of the round, the knight may choose to subtract a number from all melee attack rolls and add the same number to all Reflex saving throws made that round. This number may not exceed his base attack bonus. The penalty on attacks and bonus on Reflex saving throws apply until the end of the round.

Blinding Speed: The centurion knight has honed his reflexes far beyond those of normal fighters. At the start of the round, he may choose to subtract a number from all melee attack rolls and add twice that number to his initiative that round. This number may not exceed his base attack bonus. The penalty on attacks and bonus on initiative apply until the end of the round.

Skill Mastery: The centurion knight selects a number of skills equal to 3 + his Intelligence modifier. When making a skill check with one of these skills, the knight may take 10 even if stress and distraction would normally prevent him from doing so. He becomes so certain in his skill that he can use it reliably even under adverse conditions. The knight may gain this training multiple times, selecting additional skills for it to apply to each time.

Feat: A centurion knight may gain a feat in place of training.

Evasion: At 2nd level, a centurion knight gains evasion. If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage (such as a *fireball*), the knight takes no damage with a successful saving throw. Evasion can only be used if the knight is wearing light armor or no armor. This is an extraordinary ability.

Improved Evasion: This extraordinary ability, gained at 10th level, works like evasion (see above). The centurion knight takes no damage at all on successful saving throws against attacks that allow a Reflex saving throw for half damage (breath weapon, *fireball*, and so on.) What is more, he takes only half damage even if he failed his saving throw, since the knight's reflexes allow him to get out of harm's way with incredible speed.

Opportunist: This extraordinary ability, gained at 5th level, allows the centurion knight, once per round, to make an attack of opportunity against an opponent who has just been struck for damage in melee by another character. This attack counts as the knight's attacks of opportunity for that round. Even the Combat Reflexes feat cannot allow the knight to use the opportunist ability more than once per round.


Uncanny Dodge: Starting at 2nd level, the centurion knight gains the extraordinary ability to react to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. At 2nd level and above, the knight retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker (he still loses his Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.)

At 5th level, the knight can no longer be flanked; he can react to opponents on opposite sides of him as easily as he can react to a single attacker. This defense denies rogues the ability to use flank attacks to sneak attack him. The exception to this defense is that a rogue at least four levels higher than the character can flank him (and thus sneak attack him).

At 10th level, the knight gains an intuitive sense that alerts him to danger from traps, giving him a +1 bonus to Reflex saves made to avoid traps and a +1 Dodge bonus to AC against attacks by traps.

THE CENTURION KNIGHT

Base					
Class	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
Level	Bonus	Save	Save	Save	
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Bonus feat
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Centurion training
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Bonus feat
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Opportunist, uncanny dodge (can't be flanked)
6th	+6	+5	+5	+2	Centurion training
7th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Bonus feat
8th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Centurion training
9th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Bonus feat
10th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Improved evasion, uncanny dodge (+1 vs. traps)



You pause in your search. Dust that has lain in these ruins for centuries claws at your throat. Lifting the wineskin to your lips you notice an oddly-shaped stone just below the ruined carvings at the edge of the ceiling. Strange, you've looked there a dozen times and never noticed it before.

A shallow symbol is etched in the stone. Brushing away the accumulated grime and dirt, you see the Merithian character for "right hand". Smiling at that hard-won bit of knowledge, you turn to your right with renewed confidence in your quest. Ahead, something slithers in the shadows, and your sword seems to leap to your hand . . .

Wonders Out of Time presents a series of vignettes that can be used individually or together to enrich any fantasy campaign using the d20 game system. In it, you will find:

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