

# Way of the Wicked

book one:  
knot of thorns



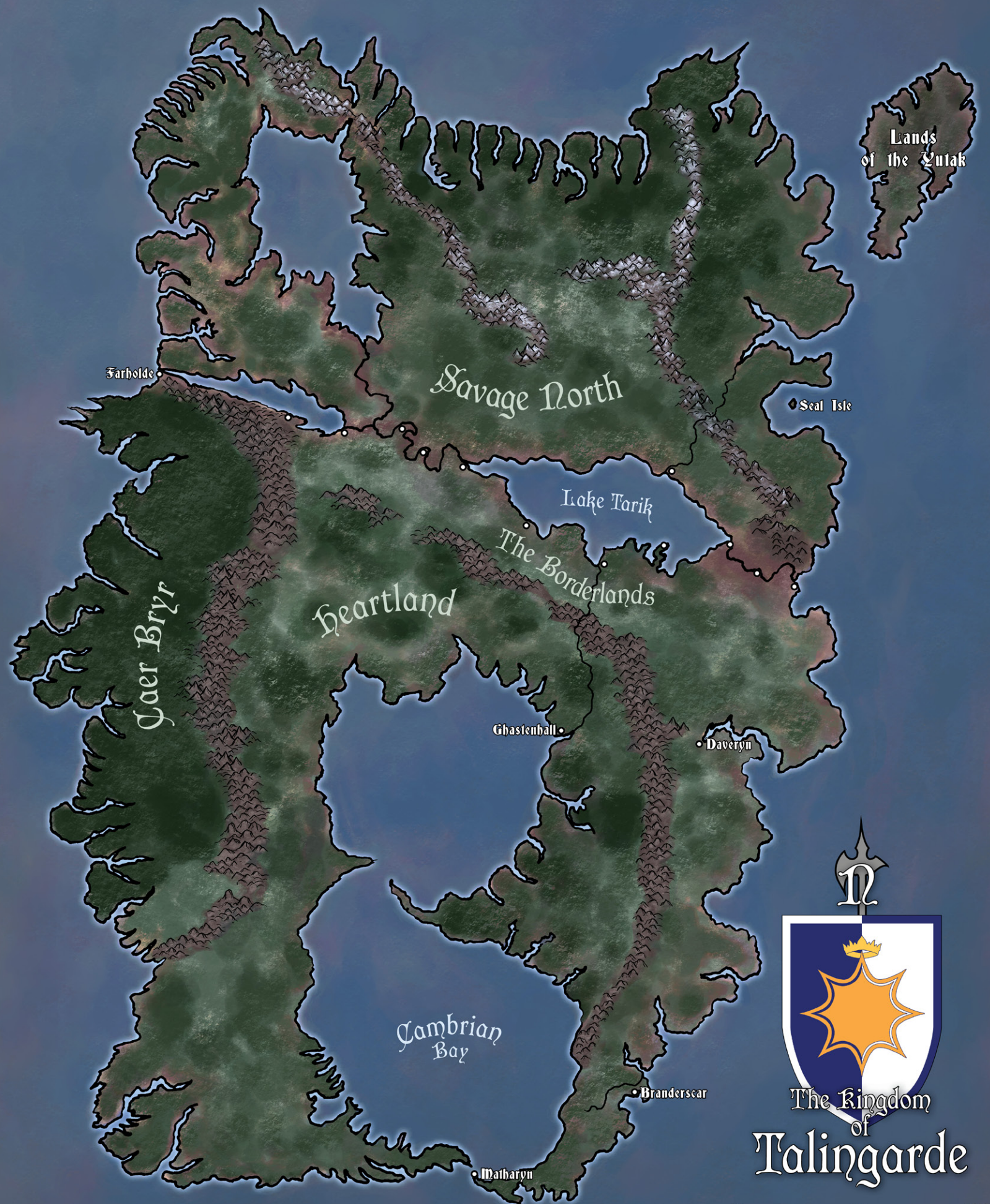
free preview:  
prison break!



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A Villainous Adventure Path by  
Gary McBride & Michael Clarke





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The Kingdom  
of  
Talingarde

0 50 100  
Miles



# Way of the Wicked

## book one: knot of thorns

### Free Preview: Prison Break!

by

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and

Michael Clarke, art

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Introduction</u>	3
<u>Free Preview: Prison Break!</u>	
<u>Adventure Background: From Whence This Darkness</u>	4
<u>Prison Break!</u>	7
<u>Paths to Wickedness: How to Make a Villain</u>	24
<u>Way of the Wicked: Campaign Synopsis</u>	30

*"No one ever became extremely wicked suddenly."*

*--Juvenal*



# INTRODUCTION

How many times have you saved the world? I'm serious. In all interactive entertainment – computer games, roleplaying games, maybe also live action games and choose your own adventure games -- how many times have you personally saved the world? I suspect that the answer is “too many times to count.” I know that's my answer.

Welcome to “Way of the Wicked”. Here, the PCs are not trying to save the world. If anything, the world needs saving from them. In short, you have before you an evil campaign.

It is common wisdom in certain circles that evil campaigns never work out. It may sound like fun to be the bad guys but inevitably, the old saw goes, such games always turn into brutal player versus player vengeance fests. If the players do not simply assassinate one another, then they likely wander the world murdering everything unlucky enough to encounter them. If, miracle of miracles, they manage a motivation beyond repetitive carnage, the campaign is still likely to fall apart in the face of just how hard it can be to come up with an inspiring wicked scheme. Evil games, the naysayers contend, suck.

They have a point.

Evil campaigns face a raft of problems that conventional ‘good guy’ campaigns never have to wrestle with. If you are playing a pack of noble warriors, devout clerics and loveable scoundrels with a heart of gold – you may squabble, but there is little chance of such squabbles coming to blows. And while your game still has plenty of carnage, you do occasionally meet someone else who is inarguably also a good guy and roleplaying will break up the monotony of murder. And who needs a complex plan as a good guy? You have a simple plan – smite evil! How liberating! You work together, defeat monsters, accumulate treasure and levels and maybe by the end of the game save the world. Again. It sounds wonderful.

And it is. That's a fine formula for a campaign. It's such a great formula that I'm sure that if you have been playing RPGs for more than a year or two that you've explored that road probably more than once. In “Way of the Wicked” we are going to travel a darker road. We are going to put together an evil campaign that works. This entire endeavor is dedicated to the proposition that evil games don't have to suck. Yes, they take a little more thought and preparation than a typical campaign. But when done well, they are immensely satisfying. Towards the back of this book, you will find an essay dedicated to helping you, the Game Master, overcome the well-known pitfalls that seem to plague the typical evil campaign. Read it. Take it to heart. Hopefully, it will help you overcome the usual points of failure.

Why bother? Why not always play good guys? The short answer – it is fun to be the bad guy! It's fun to menace the populace in black spiky armor and to call forth the powers of hell to do your bidding. Bad guys get all the best lines. Bad guys have style. Bad guys get to laugh maniacally as they plot the downfall of those fools who dared oppose them!

Take a moment to look at the cover of this book. The cover (painted by the talented Mike Clarke) doesn't show someone the PCs get to meet in this campaign. The cover shows what by this adventure's end a PC in your party could become.

In this campaign, we try our best to put the pitfalls behind us. Here, the forces of evil have a reason to work together. Here, the forces of evil have a purpose beyond simply murdering everything they meet. Here, we provide you with what we hope you agree is a pretty neat wicked scheme. This book is the first of six “evil campaign” toolkits that together will show you how to be the best bad guy that you can be.

So take a break from saving the world. Take a break from restless farm boys and loveable scoundrels who unite to fight an ancient evil. Put on your best black hat and get ready to walk the Way of the Wicked. By the time we're done, the world will tremble in your wake.

– Gary



## FREE PREVIEW: PRISON BREAK!

### ADVENTURE BACKGROUND: FROM WHENCE THIS DARKNESS

The Kingdom of Talingarde (pronounced Talon-guard) is perhaps the noblest, most virtuous and peaceful nation yet founded. The royalty of this dominion has rescued a dispirited people from the brink of despair and darkness. They dealt with their enemies honorably and their allies faithfully. Talingarde is a paragon of the age, a bright shining city upon a hill. Yet the nation faces now its greatest test. That test is you. It is the ambition of our protagonists to do nothing less than destroy Talingarde utterly.

Why must this be done? Not for the sake of simple malice. This is a holy purpose. Once the people of Talingarde (the Talireans as they are known) worshipped a great pantheon of deities deemed worthy of respect. That pantheon included Asmodeus, the Lord of Nessus, the devil god and master of hell. Asmodeus was not necessarily loved, but he was rightly feared and respected. The new royalty, the House of Darius, are devout worshippers of the sun god Mitra, arch-enemy of Asmodeus. They have elevated the Shining Lord to the head of the pantheon. Further, their regime has outlawed the worship of Asmodeus and purged the cults of the Prince of Devils from their island. No doubt this has made Talingarde a better place.

Alas, they missed one.

This plot against Talingarde was born in the mind of that one surviving high priest. Samuel of Havelyn always stood in the shadow of his brother Thomas. Born into a noble house, Samuel was the second son of Lord Richard Havelyn and at an early age was given to the clergy of the great god Mitra. He showed amazing promise and proved a brilliant scholar. In time, he would become a great man of the church and was elevated to the rank of High Priest at an usually young age.

None of these sedentary deeds impressed his father. Lord Richard always viewed his second son as a layabout, inferior to the knight and commander that his first son Thomas had become. Samuel resented the old man but took solace in his scholarly pursuits and his firm faith. Samuel's life seemed destined for quiet contemplation and distance from his family. Then Samuel met Bronwyn. Bronwyn of Balentyne was perhaps the greatest beauty of her generation. Samuel fell deeply in love almost instantly and, using all his wit and charm, befriended her.

His hope was that with time he could turn friendship into love. And who can say -- perhaps, he might have. But fate would not have it so.

Instead, the High Priest Samuel brought Bronwyn to a family gathering to introduce her to his kin. There Bronwyn met the handsome knight Thomas and love had its way. Their love was fast, deep, true -- the stuff of fairy tale and legend. Samuel was unable to feel happiness for his brother and instead burned with fury and jealousy. This was a personal betrayal of the highest order. Thomas had stolen Samuel's beloved!

When Samuel confronted his father and demanded that Lord Richard speak to Thomas, the old man only laughed. "What would you have me do, boy?" the old man rasped. "Tell Tom to avoid the most beautiful girl who ever loved him?" Samuel was devastated. As he watched the love between Thomas and Bronwyn blossom, devastation festered into hatred and rage.

Upon Thomas and Bronwyn's wedding night, Samuel called upon Asmodeus for the first time. He invoked the powers of the inferno to curse the young newlyweds. The curse would claim the life of Bronwyn, causing her to die in child birth. Still her child survived and was named for his grandfather, who had died the year he was born -- Richard Thomasson of Havelyn. This young boy would grow to be a great paladin and will become our band of villains' greatest nemesis.

As for Samuel, his first use of infernal power would not be his last. He diligently pursued the study of the infernal to increase his personal might. He collected a great library of banned and blasphemous books. Even as he did this, he rose to become one of the princes of the Mitran faith -- a Cardinal. But in time he was discovered for what he truly had become -- a cultist of the Lord of Hell. During the Asmodean purges, he was captured, tried, condemned, branded and burned at the stake with his library heaped at his feet. His name was forever stricken from the roles of the church and his family. For any normal man, this burning would have been fatal. But Samuel, thanks to infernal pacts and the resistance to fire they granted, survived the pyre.

Barely alive, this once great man of the cloth crawled naked and scarred from an unmarked pauper's grave into a sacred mausoleum. Cold and alone, the burned husk invoked a great and terrible prayer to the Prince of Hell. He whispered to the darkness promises of fire, death and retribution upon Talingarde, and the darkness heeded. He was reborn that night merciless and immortal -- a lich. He kept his rank calling himself a Cardinal but took the name Adrastus Thorn. He would have his vengeance.



## CARDINAL THORN'S PLAN

Cardinal Thorn fled to the savage north and, guided by his devil-god, met another follower of Asmodeus -- a great black-furred bugbear war chief named Sakkarot. Thorn would gain Sakkarot's allegiance by crafting him an infernal weapon -- an axe made of hellfire. There in exile, Cardinal Thorn conceived how to gain vengeance and to fulfill his oath. He laughed long, loud and terrible in his icy sanctum when he realized that his plan might just work.

Adrastus would bring war to peaceful Talingarde. He would unite the scattered northern bugbear tribes under Sakkarot and weaken Talingarde's defenses through fifth column agents. These agents include the PCs. The shaggy barbarians of the north had attacked Talingarde before but had always been repulsed largely, the learned Thorn knew, for five reasons:

- The bugbears are disorganized
- The Watch Wall guards the frontier
- The Holy Order of Saint Macarius provides healers for army and peasant alike
- The Knights of the Alerion serve as the center of Talingarde's military
- The Royal House of Darius unites the realm

With Sakkarot he would overcome the first obstacle -- uniting the bugbears. Then he would break the other four pillars of Talingarde's might one by one and the land would be left defenseless against the goblinoid onslaught.

Who then in this darkest hour would ride to Talingarde's rescue? None other than an army recruited from the mainland by a banished scion of the royal family that reigned before the rise of Darius. This scion would rout the bugbears, restore the kingdom and become the new monarch.

And who would be this great paragon's patron deity? He would revere none other than the unjustly banished Asmodeus, Lord of Order and Ambition. The people would welcome the devil prince back into their hearts and Talingarde would be given into the hands of the fallen. What greater revenge than to rule over the very land than had once turned against you?

It is an ambitious plan and there is much to be done if it shall come to pass. In secret, Cardinal Thorn turns all his mind, might and magic ceaselessly to this great and wicked work.

## THE GATHERING OF PAWNS

Cardinal Thorn quickly determined that no matter how powerful he may be, he cannot undertake this intricate plan alone. He needed minions! He has decided to gather bands of followers who can each be given individual assignments and will know little of each other. He will have nine of these 'knots' as he calls them, one for each circle of Hell. At the campaign's start, he has already gathered eight. He seeks now a ninth -- the Nessian Knot. This knot shall be more elite and ruthless than any of the others. He will recruit this knot from Talingarde's most infamous jail -- the prison Branderscar.

As fate would have it, Branderscar prison this very day receives a shipment of Talingarde's most infamous criminals. These villains will be shackled securely in their cell and there held for only three days until their sentence can be carried out (be it execution, life at hard labor or inquisition). As they were being transported to the prison, Cardinal Thorn used his substantial resources to research these prisoners. They were perfect! But how can the Cardinal collect these condemned souls without revealing his own presence? Yes, doubtless there was no one at the prison powerful enough to stop him from assaulting the place. But that would reveal his hand far too soon.

Instead, he sends one of his greatest servants, the handmaiden devil Tiadora (in disguise of course), to recruit the ninth knot. Tiadora, with her ability to enthrall the guards, would be able to free the prisoners herself. But Cardinal Thorn wants to ensure he recruits the best. So, instead she simply charms her way into a private meeting with a prisoner and gives to one of the PCs a memento to remember her by -- a *veil of useful items*. She informs them of a rendezvous point and then departs. Escaping the prison is our young villains' first mission.

The player characters will in this first book escape their just fate and join the last bastion of Asmodeus' wicked faith. They are the bright young hope of infernal evil -- dedicated, capable, and ruthless. It will be their purpose to bring down the current regime and restore the Lord of Nessus to his proper place of devotion and dominance here on this island kingdom. Nothing shall save the fools who dared believe they could escape the grasp of Hell.

Talingarde shall burn for its blasphemies.

## THE OTHER EIGHT KNOTS

Cardinal Thorn's cult of Asmodeus, The Knot of Thorns, consists of nine cells of conspirators (or 'knots') -- one for each circle of Hell. The PCs are of course the ninth knot -- the Nessian Knot. But what are the other eight knots up to?



**1<sup>ST</sup> KNOT -- AVERNIAN KNOT**

This is the knot of Sakkarot Fire-Axe and his retinue of bugbear barbarians. All of Sakkarot's followers are dupes who believe that the bugbear chieftain is their true leader. These cultists were the first agents recruited by Cardinal Thorn and their task is to unite the bugbear tribes and lead them into war against Talingarde. Only Sakkarot knows that this great crusade is intended to end in disaster. Ironically, if all goes as planned, the Asmodean Cult will do more to wipe out the northern bugbears than the Mitrans have managed in generations.

**2<sup>ND</sup> KNOT -- DISSIAN KNOT (THE IRON KNOT)**

These were the first humans recruited by Cardinal Thorn. They guard his hidden fortress in the north and serve as Cardinal Thorn's personal bodyguard. They are detailed in Book V.

**3<sup>RD</sup> KNOT -- EREBIAN KNOT**

This knot is a band of assassins intended to kill the royal family when the war begins in order to increase chaos. They fail at this task and are destroyed by the paladin nemesis of our villains -- Sir Richard. The PCs will have to take on the job in Book IV.

**4<sup>TH</sup> KNOT -- PHLEGETHIAN KNOT**

This knot is a group of scouts sent to locate the lost daemonic temple -- The Horn of Abaddon. Though they locate the temple and send a magical message back to Cardinal Thorn, they are then wiped out by the inhabitants of the temple. Their fate is fully detailed in Book II.

**5<sup>TH</sup> KNOT -- STYGIAN KNOT**

This knot is led by a former colleague of Samuel Havelyn, Brother Barnabus Thrain. Secretly Brother Barnabus is a devotee of Asmodeus and leads a group of infiltrators in the capital city of Matharyn. They accomplish two critical parts of Cardinal Thorn's plan -- they spread the terrible disease The Tears of Achlys (recovered by the PCs in Book II from the Horn of Abaddon) throughout the kingdom and Brother Barnabus personally forges the documents that show the scion is a claimant to the throne. This knot's ultimate fate is uncertain and they are a potential ally or enemy later in the adventure path.

**6<sup>TH</sup> KNOT -- MALEBOLGIAN KNOT**

This knot accomplishes two very important tasks for Thorn that largely keeps

them busy outside of Talingarde. They hire the ship *The Frosthamar* and acquire the weapon shipment to send to Sakkarot (see Act 3). They succeed at this mission entirely. They are then sent to the mainland to recruit the army that will serve Cardinal Thorn's scion. They again succeed, though to what degree depends on how much wealth they are sent. They appear in Book VI.

**7<sup>TH</sup> KNOT -- COCYTIAN KNOT (PRONOUNCED KOE-SIT-IAN) (THE KNOT HIBERNAL)**

Led by the witch Elise Zadaria, these are potential rivals. They may work for the same side, but when you worship a god as ambitious as Asmodeus, all must prove themselves. In this adventure, while the PCs are starting the war, Elise is conducting assassinations of key military leaders ensuring that the Talirean response to the bugbear invasion is sluggish and ineffective. They play a larger role in Book II.

**8<sup>TH</sup> KNOT -- CAINITE KNOT**

This knot is led by the elven general Vastenus Barca, one of Talingarde's high commanders. His betrayal of Talingarde is one of Cardinal Thorn's most closely guarded secrets. Vastenus and his knot will appear in Book VI.



Welcome To Branderscar



## ACT ONE: PRISON BREAK!

Read this:

*In the kingdom of Talingarde, many crimes may send you to Branderscar Prison, but the sentence has but one meaning. You are wicked and irredeemable. Each of you received the same greeting when you arrived. You were held down by rough hands and branded upon the arm with a runic F. The mark signifies 'forsaken' and the painful scar is indelible proof that each of you has betrayed the great and eternal love of Mitra and his chosen mortal vassals.*

*Condemned, you face at best a life of shackles and servitude in the nearby salt mines. Others might await the "gentle" ministrations of the inquisitors so that co-conspirators may be revealed and confessions extracted. Perhaps, some of you will be spared this ordeal. Perhaps instead you have come to Branderscar to face the final judgment. In three days, the executioner arrives and the axe falls or the pyre will be lit. Through fire or steel, your crimes will be answered.*

*You have all been chained together in the same communal cell dressed in nothing but filthy, tattered rags. Manhandled and mistreated, any finery you once possessed is either ruined or long lost. No special treatment has been given any prisoner – male or female, commoner or noble – all of the forsaken are bound and imprisoned together. Your feet are secured by iron cuffs tethered by one long chain. Your arms are secured to the wall above by manacles. A guard is posted right outside the cell day and night. Little thought is given to long term accommodations. At Branderscar, justice comes swift and sure.*

*Escape seems hopeless. You have all been well searched and every attempt to conceal anything on your person has failed. And if you could somehow slip your bonds and fly out of this prison, where would you go? Who from your former life would want anything to do with the forsaken? Despised, alone and shackled – all that you can do now is await your doom.*

*For each of you, your old life is over. For each of you, hope is a fading memory. For each of you, justice will be fairly meted. And who can blame fair Talingarde after what each of you has done?*

Let each player have a turn to both describe their character and to reveal what their crime was. Give the characters some time to role-play and to get acquainted. Emphasize this – they are all in this predicament together. They may be villains, criminals and outcasts, but they are united in common cause – every one of them wishes they were somewhere else.

During this time, pick one PC to receive an unexpected visitor. The chosen PC should be one of the most socially capable characters and preferably trained in the Sense Motive skill. And if none of these villains fits that bill, you could always pick randomly.

### EVENT ONE: AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

A group of six guards, heavily armed and ready for trouble, come into the cell led by a fat well-dressed sergeant of the watch. Every PC recognizes Sergeant Tomas Blackerly. This was the man who held the brand that marked each of them. He laughed as their skin burned. Right now, though the sergeant seems a little dazed. A successful Sense Motive skill check (DC 25) reveals that the sergeant is under the effect of some enchantment. Tomas is currently under *charm monster*.

He points to the chosen PC and says gruffly:

*"You there! That's the scum! Get 'em unshackled. If any of you makes trouble, they'll earn a thrashing! Today's your lucky day, scum.*

*You've got a visitor. How you ever warranted such a fine lady is beyond me. Seems she wants to say good-bye. Now step lively. We wouldn't want to keep her waiting."*

What should be immediately apparent to the PC in question is that they are expecting no one.



Sergeant Tomas Blackerly



The chosen PC is escorted roughly to a meeting room down the hall (room 20) and shoved into a chair. There waiting for them is a hauntingly beautiful woman in an elegant black dress and soft silken veil. She looks as if she is headed to a funeral. Her hair is so platinum as to almost be white and her eyes are a vibrant almost unearthly green. She clearly has been weeping.

*"Oh, dearest," proclaims the unfamiliar woman. "I'm so relieved you're alive!" She quickly turns to Tomas. "Could we please have a moment alone, good sir? For pity's sake?"*

*Tomas goes blank for a bit and then quickly agrees. "Of course, my lady. For you, 'tis no problem."*

The PC gets to make another Sense Motive skill check this time with only a DC 15 to see that somehow this woman has power over the guard.

As soon as the guards leave, Tiadora's demeanor immediately changes. She drops all pretense of grief or concern. She is immediately all business.

*"Have you forgotten me, dearest?" the unexpected visitor says with a smirk, dropping her pretense of grief. "Call me Tiadora. We possess a mutual friend who would like to meet you and your fellow cell-mates. Unfortunately, our friend is unwilling to visit you in your present rather shabby accommodations so it seems you must escape. Don't be so dour. Just because it's never been done before is no reason you can't be the first."*

*"If you manage that, cross the moors on the outskirts of town. On the old Moor Road you'll see a manor house with a single lantern burning in the second story. There our mutual friend waits. That is all I know. He did want me to give you this."*

*She takes off her silken veil and wipes away a few fake tears with it.*

*"Something to remember me by, dearest."*

Her message delivered, she is impatient to leave and does little to answer questions. Perfectly reasonable inquiries like 'Who are you working for?' or 'What have you done to the watchman?' are met with smiles and terse rebukes. "The less you know the better..."

'Why should we trust you?' receives a laugh. *"Trust? Who is asking for trust? All our friend wants is a meeting. Do you want to escape or not?"*

'You've charmed the guard! Could you command him to unshackle us?' is answered with *"That is a command he'd never obey. I've helped you as much as I can."* This is a lie. Tiadora could help more, but she has been commanded not to. With a Bluff skill check of +23, it is unlikely the PC's will detect this.

Even the question 'Who are you?' is answered sarcastically *"Tiadora...don't you recognize me, dearest?"*

After the brief exchange and the delivery of the veil, continue:

*Her message delivered, she rises and the guards return. Immediately, her demeanor once more changes and she is again a perfect picture of grief. "No, I can't bear to leave you!" She gives the PC a kiss on the cheek. The kiss is ice-cold and feels somehow alien and inhuman.*

*Tomas shakes his head. "I'm afraid it's time, miss."*

*She looks deep in Tomas' eyes and says, "Thank you for letting me say good-bye. There's no need to search my dearest. You are such a good friend for letting me see my dearest one more time."*

*"Such a good friend," Tomas repeats his voice almost mechanical. Then the watch sergeant seems to snap out of it and bows politely. "A pleasure, madam," She leaves unveiled. Her eyes meet the PCs one last time and she briefly gives them a wicked smile.*

*"Three days," telepathically echoes in the PC's mind. "Don't disappoint me, dearest". The visitation concluded, the PC is taken back to his cell by a cadre of guards and shackled once more.*

The silken veil is a magic item – a veil of useful items (show handout #1) fully stocked.

Returning to their cell, the PCs are again shackled. Once more they are secured in tightly locked bands around their ankles and their hands are shackled above their heads.





Lights are dimmed and the door to their block is locked once more. The guards leave though clearly two of them are stationed at the door.

The PCs are now alone in their cell possessing only the veil and certainty that time is running out.

#### Veil of Useful Items

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 9th  
**Slot** none; **Price** 7,000 gp; **Weight** --

#### DESCRIPTION

This appears to be a fine silk veil of gossamer cloth. Only as it is held and closely inspected can you see small cloth patches of various shapes. One patch can be detached each round as a move action. Detaching a patch causes it to become an actual item. This veil contains:

- 2 daggers
- Bullseye lantern (full, lit and shuttered)
- Hempen rope (50-foot coil)
- Sack full of needed spell components (worth less than a 1 gp) and common clothes in the PCs sizes
- Thieves Tools, Masterwork
- Window (2 ft. by 4 ft., up to 2 ft. deep)
- *Potion of cure light wounds*
- 100 gold pieces
- Unholy Symbol of Asmodeus (silver)

Note that the window patch will create a window (and therefore a hole) in a nearby wall. If there are no nearby walls, it simply turns into a common wooden window frame. It cannot be placed on a living creature however. Once removed, a patch cannot be replaced.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *fabricate*; **Cost** 3,500 gp

**Tomas Blackerly, Corrupt Watch Sergeant**

**CR 2**

**XP 600**

Male human fighter 3

CN Medium humanoid

**Init** +0; **Senses** Perception +4

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +1 Dex)

**hp** 28 (3d10+9)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0 (+1 vs. fear)

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** longsword +7 (1d8+2/19–20)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Tomas is a bully. He prefers to let his men do the dirty work but if he must engage, he does so ruthlessly. Tomas never tries to inflict non-lethal damage always resorting to the sword. First and foremost, he is always focused on his own well-being. He will risk nothing to save his fellow guards.

**Morale** Tomas is underneath it all a coward. If brought to eight or fewer hit points, he flees. If flight is impossible, he drops his sword and begs for his life.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 15, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 16

**Feats** Alertness, Deceitful, Skill Focus (Bluff), Step Up, Weapon Focus (long sword)

**Skills** Bluff +15, Disguise +5, Intimidate +9, Perception +4, Profession (Soldier) +5, Sense Motive +1

**Languages** Common, Goblin

**SQ** armor training I, bravery +1

**Trait** Fast-talker -- +1 trait bonus to Bluff and Bluff is class skill

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure light wounds*

**Other Gear** chainmail, masterwork longsword, sergeant's uniform, 30 gp, key ring



Handout #1: Tiadora's Veil

Act One: Prison Break!



**Prison Guard****CR 1/2****XP 200**

Male human warrior 2

LG Medium humanoid

**Init** +1; **Senses** Perception +2**DEFENSE****AC** 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex)**hp** 13 (2d10+2)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** -1**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** longsword +5 (1d8+2/19–20); club +4 (1d6+2; ½ non-lethal)**Ranged** longbow +2 (1d8/x3)**TACTICS**

**During Combat** All the guards come into the cell block wielding their clubs and will only switch to long swords if a prisoner gets free. If any prisoner starts casting a spell, they are focused on. One of the guards who is hanging back has a signal horn and if the prisoners seem to be getting out of hand and defeating the guard compliment, he blows it summoning four more guards with two guard dogs (see below for stats) in 1d8 rounds. Almost all the guards are nearby, curious about their mysterious, beautiful visitor.

**Morale** If a guard suffers more than nine points of damage, he flees immediately making as much noise as possible. If more than half of the guards fall in combat, the rest flee seeking reinforcements.

**STATISTICS****Str** 15, **Dex** 12, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14**Feats** Alertness, Weapon Focus (long sword)**Skills** Intimidate +4, Perception +2, Ride +5, Profession (Soldier) +5, Sense Motive +2**Languages** Common**Gear** chain shirt, heavy steel shield, longsword, leather club, longbow with 20 arrows, key to a chest in room 9.

by the masterwork quality of the thieves' tools (+2 to Disable Device checks). These locks are all very similar, so after one is picked you should award a +2 circumstance bonus to that particular PC to pick all the rest. These locks are so simple that they will not jam if you fail a roll by 5 or more. However, if a roll is failed, then you have made a small amount of noise or perhaps dropped a pick. The guards have a chance to notice something is amiss.

- First Failure – “Was that a rat?” No chance at success.
- Second Failure – Perception skill check (DC 20; only succeeds on a 19 or a 20)
- Third Failure – Perception skill check (DC 15; succeeds on a 14-20)
- Fourth and Subsequent Failures – Perception skill check (DC 10; succeeds on a 9-20)

If the guards ever succeed at this Perception check, a guard comes into the cell block to check out what is going on. Now, it's not just voices. Now he has heard suspicious noises. He has his club out and is ready for trouble. Successful Stealth checks (made against the guard's Perception skill) could hide incriminating tools, weapons and veils. A successful Bluff checks (made against the guard's Sense Motive skill +5 since the speaker is a prisoner and thus untrustworthy) could convince him nothing is amiss.

If he does notice anything he is quick to signal his partner to blow his trumpet summoning more guards and Sergeant Blackerly. He will not under any circumstances unlock the cell door and enter the cell alone if a prisoner is unshackled. Remember, these prisoners are the worst of the worst. The guards put up a brave front but are terrified of them.

If guards are summoned, they do not attempt to kill the PCs unless the prisoners first kill a guard. They instead try to beat the PCs unconscious, relock them up and remove any contraband they might find. After the first failed escape attempt, Tomas assigns an extra guard to room 17, pressing one of the off-duty guards in the barracks (room 9) into service. He also ends the nightly card game in Room 3c (see below for details) and tries his best to ensure that all the men are sober on duty.

Once the manacles are removed (one successful DC 20 Disable Device check per PC), the foot cuffs can be removed by picking the single lock that secures the chain at its end. This is also a simple lock (DC 20) similar to the manacles.

**EVENT TWO: NO CELL CAN HOLD ME!**

It should be immediately obvious that the primary goal of this adventure is to escape the prison in the next three days. More thoughtful PCs may want to spend some time planning their escape before they try to break out. This is perfectly permissible. Whispered conversations in the cell will not draw the guards from their guardroom (room 17). Loud disagreements will. A single guard will come into the cell block with the second watching from the guardroom, signal horn ready. The guard will check out the situation, and if he finds nothing else amiss, will threaten them to be quiet. A second violation earns the offender a rap on their bare feet with a club (for 1d3 non-lethal damage). A third violation will cause the offender to be gagged. Note that in order to beat or gag the offender, the guard must open the cell.

With the *veil of useful items* in their possession, the PCs have a real chance of getting out of their cell quietly. With the thieves tools they can likely open the locks around their wrists. These are simple locks (DC 20) though they are at a -2 penalty to pick while their hands remain manacled. Fortunately, this penalty is mitigated



That leaves only the cell door. It is another simple lock (DC 20) but dissimilar enough that there is no +2 bonus for past successes. The cell door could also be overcome by using the window in the Veil of Useful Items. Don't forget that properly used, the window creates a hole in one wall. Unfortunately, once created it is also permanent. The first guard that sees this magical oddity immediately blows his horn and summons the other guards and the warden Mathias Richter (a wizard who knows about such weirdness). Compromising the cell gets the PCs moved to another uncompromised cell immediately.

After all those locks have been overcome, the PCs are at last free to escape their cell.

If no one is trained in the Disable Device skill, other means may suffice. *Grease* (granting a +10 to Escape Artist skill checks) makes the DC 30 needed to escape manacles within reach. *Reduce person* would also suffice to allow one person to escape. *Sleep* could incapacitate the guards. *Speak with animals* may convince a passing rat to steal the keys from the guard room. *Command* may cause a weak-willed guard to make a fatal mistake.

*Summon* spells may call forth a stealthy dire rat or mite who can steal a key ring from an inquisitive guard. Bluff might be used to convince wary guards to separate troublesome prisoners. Even raw strength may suffice (these old manacles have a DC 24 Break DC) though this will make a lot of noise. Creativity should be encouraged.

The walls and floor of the Great Hall are thick stone so sound does not travel well to the lower levels. Anything less than a signal horn is unlikely to be heard below. The only living things on this level besides the PCs are the two guards (room 17) and Grumblejack the ogre (room 19).

If the guards can be dealt with, then this level would be temporarily secure and a great place to begin an escape attempt. Grumblejack (who is detailed below) makes no noise unless his life is in grave danger. The ogre never voluntarily aids the guards. If dealt with, it will be 1d8 hours before the guards are due to be replaced by a new shift.

Also remember this: the PCs have nothing save for the items in the *veil* and anything they steal off the guards. Chains and manacles could be used as improvised clubs.

Story Award: Award the PCs a CR 1 award for getting unshackled (400 XP) and a CR 2 award for getting out of the cell (600 XP).

## BRANDERSCAR PRISON

Once an important coastal castle, the old Castle Branding long ago ceased having any military importance. The last warfare seen here was over eighty years ago during the war of succession between House Barca and House Darius.

### LEVEL 1

#### 1. GUARD HOUSE

This small two-room guard house on the mainland is made of grey stone and is the only remains of the old keep that used to protect the shore. There is a curious upside-down portcullis inside a lone stone arch that blocks entry to the bridge.

Two guards and a guard dog are always on duty here. The guards keep a signal horn in the back room and depending on how it is played can send three messages that will be understood by all prison staff: 'visitors at the gate,' 'we are under attack!,' and 'prisoners are trying to escape!'.

The portcullis can be circumvented by making a DC 10 Climb check. Failing that roll however means you slip and fall into the water below unless you are anchored by a rope.

The water is forty feet below and quite deep if you can avoid the sharp rocks. Anyone falling must make a DC 12 Acrobatics skill check or be dashed on the rocks (taking an almost guaranteed lethal 6d6 points of damage). If the diver misses the rocks, they still take 2d3 non-lethal damage from the fall and then must make a DC 12 Swim skill check to avoid being sucked down by the powerful rip tides that circulate where the waves hit the cliffs.

The PC must keep making this swim check until they either succeed or they drown. Each failure causes them another 1d3 non-lethal damage from the fury of the sea and buffeting against the rocks. If anyone reaches zero hit points they are pulled down into the depths unless someone aids them. Anyone aiding another has their own Swim difficulty increased to 15.

Prison Guards (2)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)

hp 13 (see Event One above)

#### TACTICS

Anyone dressed in prison rags is attacked on sight. By the time they reach this line of defense, the guards use lethal force. After all, the prisoners are almost free and who wants to allow such villains to escape? Anyone dressed in more normal clothing is instead challenged. After all, these guards have been drilled to question everyone who enters or leaves to make sure no one smuggles anything into or out of the prison. Anyone trying to pass the gate must know the password "Hesterfield". Otherwise, they are detained and brought back to the prison.

Act One: Prison Break!



**Guard Dog****CR 1****XP 400**

N Medium animal

**Init** +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +8**DEFENSE****AC** 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+2 Dex, +1 natural)**hp** 13 (2d8+4)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft.**Melee** bite +3 (1d6+3 plus trip)**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The guard dog's tactics are straight forward. The dog barks loudly and bites anyone who tries to leave the prison whose scent it doesn't recognize (i.e. the player characters and Grumblejack) unless restrained by a guard. Barking does not immediately draw prison guards. The guard dogs have a bad habit of barking at every squirrel that "infiltrates" nearby trees. But prolonged barking will eventually draw a couple of prison guards to shut the dog up.

**Morale** If brought below five hit points, the guard dog whimpers in pain and tries to run.

**STATISTICS****Str** 15, **Dex** 15, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15 (19 vs. trip)**Feats** Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** Acrobatics +6 (+14 jumping), **Perception** +8, **Survival** +1 (+5 scent tracking); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics when jumping, +4 Survival when tracking by scent

Award full XP for these foes if the PCs pass them by stealth, swimming or guile.

**2. THE BRIDGE**

A wide stone bridge with a two-foot tall guard rail connects to the mainland.

The middle of the bridge is the safest place to jump into the sea. Far from the rocks and the rip tides nearer the castle, it's an easy swim to shore from here. A DC 15 Swim or Acrobatics skill check means no damage is taken from the dive (failure results in 2d3 non-lethal damage).

Once in the water, a DC 10 swim check means that the PC safely swims to shore a few minutes later. Swimming in manacles increases this difficult to 15. Failure means the character takes another 1d3 points of non-lethal damage and must make another swim check. A strong swimmer can aid someone (granting a +2 bonus to the swim check) but this increases their own difficulty by +2.

**3. THE GATE HOUSE**

This three story old gatehouse was once a key defensive part of the old Castle Branding.

**3A. THE ENTRYWAY**

This wide entry has two stout double doors with swing bars and braces that can be put into place with some effort. A murder hole is above and three arrow slits adorn both the west and east wall.

**3B. WESTERN GATE HOUSE GROUND LEVEL**

This largely unused room has a door (sans lock) leading to the courtyard and a ladder leading upward. There are three arrow slits here that grant improved cover when firing into room 3a.

**3C. EASTERN GATE HOUSE GROUND LEVEL**

This difficult to access room must be entered by going up the western gatehouse tower, across level 2 and down. As a result it was largely abandoned. However, these days the chamber is used for illicit games of chance by the guards. There is an old battered wood table, six chairs and a small wooden shelf that holds a half filled keg of decent beer and collection of dirty mugs.

On any night when there has been no significant trouble for the last 48 hours there is a 75% chance that Tomas Blackerly and three guards -- one of the pair from the guard house (1.), the gate house roof (3e.), and the entry hall (8.) -- are here gambling and drinking leaving their posts guarded by a single man. If the Warden knew this was going on he would be livid, but the scholarly Mathias Richter only rarely leaves his tower after dark greatly preferring the company of his owl and his books.

As in 3b, there are three arrow slits here that grant improved cover when firing into room 3a.

**3D. GATE HOUSE LEVEL 2**

This open room has two ladders up and two ladders down. This whole level has twenty arrow slits that grant vision over the bridge, courtyard and walls while providing archers with improved cover. A single well-trained, well-supplied archer could control almost the whole prison from this strategic vantage point.

**3E. GATE HOUSE ROOF**

Complete with crenellated battlements, a small company of archers could hold this gate house for days against an attacking army. If the ladders are raised and the great stone weights placed to cover the trap doors, there is no easy way to access this level.

Two Prison Guards are constantly stationed here with a lit brazier and a bullseye lantern (at night), a signal horn, and an extra supply of arrows (40 additional to what they carry). The night shift here is considered a punishment detail thanks to the relentless cold ocean breeze.

The top level of the gatehouse is among the worst area to dive in the water. Sharp rocks are thick below. It is seventy feet to water's surface and the water is shallow here. Anyone who contemplates this suicidal feat should with a single glance realize the danger.





**Prison Guards (2)**

**CR 1/2**

**XP 200 each (400 XP total)**

hp 13 (see Event One above)

Award the PCs the XP for defeating these foes if they manage to pass the gatehouse without fighting them.

**4. FOUNTAIN**

The courtyard of the castle is adorned by a small fountain. The fountain's centerpiece is a statue of the Mitran pantheon's patron saint of law and order -- St. Dothan the Just. In his outstretched hand is a sword that points to the Great Hall. At the base of his statue is an inscription: "Thus is justice done." A stone path surrounds the fountain and leads around the Great Hall.

**5. THE GARDEN**

This is a small vegetable and herb garden tended by the servants who work in the kitchens of the Great Hall. There are many days' provisions here if one takes time to harvest it.

Also of note -- there is a belladonna shrub (5a) separated from the rest of the garden. Sometimes called deadly nightshade, these poisonous leaves sap the strength of those who consume it and are used to tame more unruly prisoners. Refining the poison into useable doses is no more difficult than making tea. There is certainly everything required in the nearby kitchens (11).

There are currently enough leaves to produce three doses of the poison worth 100 gp a dose. The shrub has obviously been pruned back recently (its poison has been used to sap the strength of Grumblejack the ogre -- room 19). It takes a DC 15 Knowledge (Nature) or Survival skill check to recognize this shrub for what it is.

**Belladonna**

**Type** poison, ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 14

**Onset** 10 minutes; **Frequency** 1/minute for 6 minutes

**Effect** 1d2 Str damage, target can attempt one save to cure a lycanthropy affliction contracted in the past hour; **Cure** 1 save.

**6. GUARD TOWERS AND BATTLEMENTS**

Usually unmanned these towers are each three stories tall with a stout but aged door at their base. No one has bothered to install locks in these old portals. A spiral staircase leads up to a rickety wooden landing that accesses the battlements atop the walls and further up to the crenellated and roofed stone turret. A trap door leads down to what were once store rooms but are now empty chambers left to the rats.

The battlements and guard towers are among the worst place in the whole prison to jump into the sea. The walls are sixty feet up over jagged rocks. The guard towers add another twenty feet to that height. Jumping from here is suicide without magic like *feather fall*. And that won't save you from the riptides in the water.

Act One: Prison Break!



# Branderscar Prison

□ = 10'



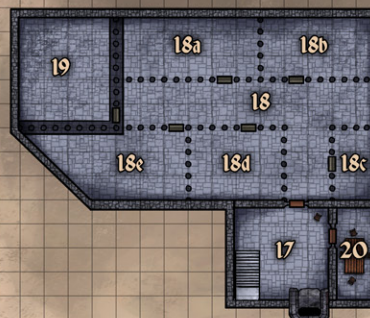
## Gatehouse Level 3



## Gatehouse Level 2



## Great Hall Level 2



## Warden's Tower Level 3



## Level 2





A pair of guards patrols the walls mostly looking for activity in the courtyard. They have a bullseye lantern and a signal horn in case of trouble.

**Prison Guards (2)**

**CR 1/2**

**XP 200 each (400 XP total)**

hp 13 (see Event One above)

Award the PCs the XP for defeating these foes if the PCs get out of the courtyard without fighting them.

#### 6A. GARDEROBE

The bottom of this tower has been converted into the castle privy, dumping its contents into the sea. There is a 50% every hour that one of the off duty guards from the barracks (9.) will come here alone. If he doesn't come back, he will eventually be missed in 2d10+10 minutes and another couple of off-duty guards will come looking for him.

There is another use for the privy for truly desperate PCs – a means of escape. The garderobe dumps its foulness straight into the water forty feet below. The sea here is plagued with riptides and wave breaks – still a strong swimmer could make it shore. Anyone looking down the garderobe can plainly see how dangerous a drop this would be.

Anyone desperate enough to take this route must make a DC 12 Acrobatics skill check or be dashed on the filthy rocks (taking 6d6 points of damage). If the PC misses the rocks, they still take 2d3 non-lethal damage from the fall and then must make a DC 12 Swim check to avoid being sucked down by the powerful rip tides that circulate where the waves hit the cliffs. They must keep making this swim check until they either succeed or they drown. Each failure causes them another 1d3 non-lethal damage from the fury of the sea and buffeting against the rocks. If anyone reaches zero hit points they are pulled down into the depths unless someone stops to aid them. Anyone aiding another has their own swim difficulty increased to 15.

#### 7. KENNEL

This plain wooden kennel houses the other two guard dogs. The dogs in the kennel are always hungry and quickly wolf down any food offered to them. If that food were spiked with some of Blackerly's 'medicine' (see room 15) these dogs would sleep soundly for hours.

**Guard Dogs (2)**

**CR 1**

**XP 400 each (800 XP total)**

hp 13 (see Room 1 above)

Award the PCs the XP for defeating these foes if they put them to sleep with Blackerly's 'medicine'.

#### 8. GREAT HALL ENTRY WAY

The Great Hall is a large dismal stone building that dominates the castle courtyard. A reinforced set of double doors leads into a long bare entry room. It is lit by two sconces holding torches. A pair of guards is stationed here with a signal horn.

**Prison Guards (2)**

**CR 1/2**

**XP 200 each (400 XP total)**

hp 13 (see Event One above)

Award the PCs the XP for defeating these foes if they manage to get out of the Great Hall without fighting them.

#### 9. BARRACKS

Three off duty prison guards are here not wearing their chain shirts or holding their shields.

**Off-Duty Prison Guards (3)**

**CR 1/2**

**XP 200 each (600 XP total)**

hp 13 (see Event One above but with an AC 11)

Besides the guards, this simple room has a few cots and a dozen locked chests containing personal possessions of the guards. If a chest is opened (simple locks; DC 20 to pick) then roll on the random contents table below:

Chest Contents: roll 1d20 (a result can only be rolled once)

1. Empty; this newly hired guard hasn't stocked his chest yet.
2. A change of peasant clothes.
3. Ink, quill and a personal journal that reveals this week's password "Hesterfield" – the Warden's home town – and the details of Blackerly's illicit gambling sessions including exactly when the next game will be (tonight! – see 3c. above).
4. A small coin pouch with 1d6 gold in miscellaneous coinage.
5. A bottle of fine whiskey (smoky, peaty with just a hint of sweetness) without label worth 25 gp.
6. A bottle of absolute rot gut without label worth 5 gp.
7. A silver holy symbol of Mitra (worth 25 gp) and a Mitran holy book (worth 5 gp).

Act One: Prison Break!



8. Hidden under peasant garb are two decks of cards (one regular, one marked) and bag of 12 gp worth of mixed coinage.
9. A surprisingly well written love letter ending in a proposal of marriage to someone named 'Michelle' and a sapphire engagement ring worth 100 gp.
10. A large collection of letters from home. Perhaps they are poignant but they are also worthless.
11. A masterwork lute (worth 100 gp).
12. A small supply of absolutely delicious cookies carefully wrapped in wax paper labeled 'From Lil'.
13. A whetstone, cleaning supplies for chain shirt, extra bowstring, and a small book of military regulations.
14. A collection of cheap, tawdry, crudely printed books (the so-called "penny dreadfuls") about dashing heroes, daring do and amply bosomed damsels prone to fainting and outdoor bathing (no resale value).
15. A set of peasant clothes and a short sword.
16. A small coin pouch with 3 gp in miscellaneous coinage.
17. A small bag of doggy treats.
18. A map of the nearby town of Varyston including the Old Moor road.
19. A traveller's outfit, a finely made pipe (5 gp) with a good supply (1 lb.) of high quality shag tobacco (2 gp).
20. A small bottle with a hand written note "In case of trouble – Love, Mom!" (a potion of *cure light wounds*).

## 10. MESS HALL

This large room has a few wooden tables and benches. It is here that the guards and guard sergeant take their meals. The Warden almost never eats here preferring to have meals brought to him in his tower. A banner emblazoned with the emblem of Branderscar prison hangs on the eastern wall. The banner is not valuable in and of itself but it is a point of pride of the guardsmen. The banner sees use whenever the guard contingent must assemble before a visiting dignitary.

## 11. KITCHEN

This room houses a well-stocked kitchen and pantry. Besides, the usual collection of plates, bowls and other cooking paraphernalia, there are six large knives here (equivalent to a dagger) and a long meat cleaver (equivalent to a short sword). There is also roughly fifty days' worth of food stored here – forty days' worth of perishable and ten days' worth of iron rations.

The fireplace here is a relic of the old castle great hall. It is almost comically large and has a chimney that can be climbed up to level 2 (room 17.) with a DC 10 Climb check. Unfortunately, a fire is always burning in the fireplace as the servants are constantly stewing tough cuts of meat, baking bread or boiling bones for broth. To avoid getting burned, anyone climbing down the chimney must make a DC 15 Acrobatics check or receive 1d6 fire damage.

The four servants (Sam, Myrtle, Gregor and Irena) who toil in the kitchen are all unarmed and unarmored save for grabbing a kitchen knife. Sam and Myrtle are here during the day. Gregor and Irena are here at night. Only for special occasions (which do not happen in the three days the PCs are here) do all four servants work the kitchen. Gregor is a large man who has been known to go into town in the middle of the night to pick up bundles of firewood. Anyone wearing his large green cloak and hood and giving the password will not be accosted by the guard house (1.) security. The servants all know the password "Hesterfield" to cross the bridge.

### Servants

CR 1/3

#### XP 135

Human commoner 1

NG Medium humanoid

Init +0; Senses Perception +6

#### DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 4 (1d6+1)

Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee improvised club +0 (1d4) or dagger +0 (1d4/19-20)

Ranged improvised thrown +0 (1d4)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The servants are all noncombatants and will surrender immediately if threatened with any sort of weapon. If they think they can escape, they will run and yell loudly.

**Morale** Any damage causes the servants to fall to their knees and beg for mercy.

#### STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 11

Base Atk +0, CMB +0, CMD 10

Feats Alertness, Skill Focus (Profession)

Skills Craft (various) +5, Perception +6, Profession (various) +7, Sense Motive +2

Language Common, Dwarven



Award the PCs the XP for defeating the two servants here if they get the password from them or otherwise intimidate them into helping them escape.

## 12. ARMORY

This locked room has an average lock (DC 25). The key is on Blackerly's ring.

Inside are six spare sets of gear for guards: chain shirt, heavy steel shield, long sword and longbow. There is also a rack holding a dozen more leather-wrapped clubs. Further, there is also a stock pile of 240 arrows in twelve quivers. These items (save for the arrows and the clubs) bear the mark of Talingarde somewhere on them.

There is also an assortment of weaponry that the guards have confiscated over the years. These weapons are jumbled together and obviously little cared for. They are also unmarked and thus resalable.

That assortment includes: a shiv made from a woman's metal comb (treat as a dagger), a heavy mace, spear, quarterstaff, battle axe, rapier, great sword, trident and glaive. If there are any other weapons that the PCs are specialized in, they could be added to that assortment.

This room is normally unlit.

## 13. STOREROOM

This room is also locked (average lock; DC 25). The key is on Blackerly's ring.

Supplies for the prison are stored here. There are 200 torches, ten lanterns, two 10 gallon kegs of lantern oil, six spare guard uniforms, dozen signal horns, twenty 50' lengths of rope and two barrels labeled 'emergency rations'.

The emergency rations barrels contain maggots old iron rations that has gotten wet, moldered and not been replaced. They could still be eaten by the brave or the desperate (each barrel contains 100 days of 'food') but there is a 10% chance each day of contracting Filth Fever (see the entry on disease in the Pathfinder Core Rulebook).

Hanging in a special rack is also to be found several brands with the runic F symbol and a specially made brazier for heating them. The PCs immediately recognize these items as the brands that marked them.

This storeroom is very sparsely supplied and could hold much more but thanks to Sergeant Blackerly's skimming, supplies at the prison are sparse.

This room is normally unlit.

## 14. SERGEANT'S OFFICE

This is Sergeant Blackerly's office. It is a plain affair with a single cluttered desk and a couple of chairs. There is mostly uninteresting paper work in the desk, but amidst that clutter there is also a complete map of the prison and the location of all the guard posts. Searching the desk takes a minute and a DC 12 Perception skill check to find the map.

Anyone who takes ten minutes to read the paperwork can make an Intelligence check (DC 15). If successful, they realize there is ample proof here that Sergeant Blackerly is stealing from the prison.

This room is lit by a pair of sconces holding torches.

## 15. SERGEANT'S QUARTERS

At first glance this appears to simply be the slovenly-kept bed chamber of the sergeant of the guard. There is a bed, a small table and wardrobe which contain Blackerly's personal effects which are by in large worthless.

However, under Blackerly's bed is an iron strong box with a good lock (DC 30; the key is on Tomas' ring). Inside that box is a case of rotgut whiskey (a dozen bottles worth 5 gp a bottle) and 1235 gp. This is the lion share of the money that Tomas Blackerly has stolen from the prison treasury (or at least what he hasn't yet spent). It takes no roll of any sort to realize this is a larcenously huge amount of money to be possessed by a common sergeant.

Tomas Blackerly is often here late at night when he isn't on duty or gambling (in room 3c.). Blackerly sometimes has trouble sleeping and so in his wardrobe has a flask of rotgut whiskey mixed with sleep-inducing herbs – his 'medicine' as he likes to call it. Blackerly has been taking it for years and is nearly immune. However if anyone else drinks it, treat it like a poison. Dogs are, for some reason, susceptible to the medicine and receive no save. The flask holds three doses.

### Blackerly's Medicine

**Type** poison, ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 13

**Frequency** 1/minute for 2 minutes

**Initial Effect** Unconsciousness for 1 minute; **Secondary Effect** unconscious for 2d4 hours; **Cure** 1 save

### Tomas Blackerly, Corrupt Sergeant of the Watch

CR 2

**XP** 600

hp 25 (see Event One above)

## 16. STAIRWELL

These stone stairs lead up to level 2 (room 17.) of the Great Hall. The stairwell is lit by a sconce holding a torch. Otherwise there is nothing here of any interest.



## LEVEL 2

## 17. GUARDROOM

Prison Guards (2)

CR 1/2

**XP 200 each (400 XP total)**

hp 13 (see Event One above)

This is a small guard room and the landing for the stairs from the first floor. It is lit by a sconce holding a torch. There are two doors – one leading the cellblock (room 18.) and the other connecting to the interrogation room (room 20.) Otherwise, this chamber is plain with little furnishings save for a small table and two chairs.

The fireplace here is a relic of the old castle great hall. It is almost comically large and has a chimney that can be climbed down to the kitchens (room 11.) with a DC 10 Climb check. The guards up here rarely bother lighting the fireplace since the warmth from the kitchen below is usually sufficient to keep the place warm.

Two guards are permanently stationed here (they are relieved every eight hours at midnight, 8 am and 4 pm) and every 1d3 hours, they open the adjoining door to the cell block (room 18) and perform a quick patrol making sure that all is well. They also come immediately if they hear anything unusual or suspicious. They have a signal horn in case of trouble.

The key to all the cells and all the manacles hangs on a peg on near the door.

Award XP for defeating these foes if the PCs get past them without fighting.

## 18. CELL BLOCK

This windowless stone bunker full of stout iron cells is where the prisoners are held. The bars are solid and almost unbreakable (DC 28). The locks on the cell doors are almost antiques (simple locks; DC 20 Disable Device skill check to open). See Event Two above for details about escaping from this cell.

## 18A – THE PC'S CELL

This is where the PCs begin the game branded and shackled.

## 18B – E – EMPTY CELLS

The four other cells are currently unlocked and empty.

## 19. GRUMBLEJACK'S CELL

This reinforced stone cell holds the only other prisoner currently at Branderscar prison beside the PCs – Grumblejack the ogre. Grumblejack is one of the very few ogres still alive on the Isle of Talingarde and was haunting the local moor making a living as a highwayman when he was caught, dragged here and branded. Two guards died getting him into this cell. He is now being kept here as a trophy by the local constabulary who are waiting for a suitable occasion to publically execute him. Grumblejack is utterly mystified he is still alive and thinks it reveals just how stupid the “little ’uns” are.



Grumblejack



**Grumblejack the Ogre****CR 2****XP 600**

Male ogre

NE Large humanoid (giant)

**Init** -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +2**DEFENSE****AC** 13, touch 8, flat-footed 13 (-1 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)**hp** 30 (4d8+12) currently at 12**Fort** +6, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft. (40 ft. base)**Melee** unarmed smash +6 (1d6+3) (provokes an attack of opportunity)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**TACTICS****During Combat** If given the chance to hurt someone (especially guards), Grumblejack takes it. Intelligent for an ogre but still not brilliant, Grumblejack has a very simple plan in a fight – hit it until it stops moving.**Morale** In Branderscar, Grumblejack has nothing to lose. He fights to the death.**STATISTICS****Str** 21 (17 due to poison), **Dex** 8, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 18**Feats** Iron Will, Toughness**Skills** Climb +7, Knowledge (nature) +2, Perception +2, Stealth -1, Swim +3**Languages** Common, Giant

Grumblejack is not that bad for an ogre (being neutral evil instead of chaotic evil). Of course that still makes him an outlaw and enemy of the state according to Talirean law. He is supremely self-interested but is not needlessly cruel or violent. He is also quite smart and likeable by ogre standards. He does love a good scrap though and would jump at a chance to escape his cell. Still, he takes orders poorly unless brought to heel. He is very superstitious and afraid of magic. Any obvious displays of magic will give the caster a +4 to rolls to intimidate Grumblejack.

Grumblejack is hurt, drugged, unarmed, unarmored and ashamed at being taken prisoner by “little ‘uns”. Magical healing would go a long way towards earning his trust and aid. Properly motivated, Grumblejack could easily become an ally and servant of the player characters. A charismatic devotee of Asmodeus could likely convert him to that faith.

Grumblejack does bear a secret heritage. He is not entirely ogrish blood. He is in the ogre equivalent of a tiefling and at the Horn of Abaddon (see Book II) could fully realize his fiendish heritage and become a very useful ally indeed (perhaps a full-fledged cohort). The only hints of this heritage are his very small horns hidden underneath his mop of black hair. For now, he would be very helpful at smashing a few guards.

Gaining Grumblejack as an ally gains the party the same experience as defeating the ogre (600 XP).

**20. INTERROGATION ROOM**

This room is currently plain and featureless save for a single stout wooden table and four chairs. Closer inspection and a DC 20 Perception skill check reveal that terrible things have happened in this room – telltale bloodstains in the corners and the faint odor of burning flesh.

**THE WARDEN’S TOWER****21. HALL OF HISTORY**

This entire floor is dedicated to the history of the Castle Branding and the subsequent history that led the castle to become Branderscar Prison. It consists of a series of mostly uninteresting plaques that tell of nobles and deeds hardly anyone remembers anymore. There are a number of banners and flags.

One of the wall hangings is an old brocade tapestry that depicts Castle Branding being turned into a prison with the motto “His Judgment Cometh and that Right Soon”. The tapestry is worth 150 gp. It is however very heavy (50 lb.) and awkward (-2 to any Acrobatics, Climb, Jump, or Swim skill checks while carried).

There is a spiral stairway leading up to the second level. This room is lit by four sconces holding torches.

**22. RICHTER’S LIBRARY**

This is the warden’s pride and joy – a large collection of books and scrolls across a wide range of subjects. The most common items in the library are the “penny dreadfuls”. These poorly printed compilations of lurid tales range across the whole gamut of adventure genres. However, the one genre over-represented is bawdy tales featuring amply endowed young maidens in grave peril. This collection is of no real value.

In the more scholarly section, there are fifty five books on subjects ranging from magical theory, history and astronomy. Fifty two of these are common books and tomes worth an average of 3 gp and each weighing a pound. However, three of them are very valuable:

“Astra Mysterii” A rare treatise on astrology written by the mad monk Clivarus, worth 75 gp. It requires a Knowledge (arcana) (DC 15) or an Appraise (DC 20) to identify.

“The Travels of Titus the Mendicant” by Artus Vellor. A valuable first edition of a popular title published before the author was well known, this book would fetch 120 gp amongst collectors. The tome requires a Knowledge (geography) (DC 15) or an Appraise (DC 20) to realize its true worth.



"The Floralegium" by Branthus Hart. An imposing tome of no small age, this beautifully illustrated book of flowers is obviously something special. However it takes a Knowledge (nature) (DC 20) or an Appraise (DC 20) skill check to realize this book's true value. It is worth 250 gp to collectors.

### 23. LANDING

The spiral staircase up ends here at this stone landing. The stairway once continued up to the roof of this tower but now the roof is closed off. This chamber is lit by a single torch on a sconce. To the north is a door bearing a plaque that reads "Office" (it opens to room 24). The southern door has a similar plaque that reads "Private: Keep Out!" (it connects to room 25). It is otherwise empty.



More portable is the Warden's wardrobe including no less than five noble outfits (worth 375 gp in total). This collection of noble finery is mostly elegant silk robes and could fit most anyone.

There is also a sturdy oak chest pushed into one corner of the Warden's private chambers. Richter has long been meaning to learn a little alchemy and this chest contains his latest purchase. It is a well packed alchemist's lab (worth 200 gp; weighing 40 lbs.). It is also stocked with sufficient chemicals and reagents to allow any alchemist PC to regain the normal use of their extracts, bombs and mutagens class abilities.

Mathias is here every night the PCs are in Branderscar. He only emerges if he hears a signal horn.

If the prison is on high alert one of the off duty guards from the barracks (room 9.) will be stationed here with a signal horn.

### 24. WARDEN'S OFFICE

This is the Warden's office. Tastefully adorned in hard wood, the office is dominated by a massive oak desk. Inside the Warden's desk is a neatly folded map of the surrounding area. The map shows the quickest route through the moors. It also shows Old Moor Road – their destination.

The desk has one locked drawer (secured with an average lock; DC 25). Inside is the warden's spellbook.

#### Richter's Tome of Arcane Armament (Level 3 Universalist)

*This beautiful book is made of fine cerulean leather embossed with gold leaf. Its edges are reinforced with brass fittings and strange arcane symbols adorn its cover. It bears the draconic rune of "R" in the center of its front cover.*

Value 350 gp  
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#### SPELLS

- 2<sup>nd</sup> – bull's strength, flaming sphere, hideous laughter, invisibility
- 1<sup>st</sup> – alarm, charm person, expeditious retreat, feather fall, mage armor, magic missile, mount, shield, sleep
- 0<sup>th</sup> – all cantrips in the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rule-book

### 25. WARDEN'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS

This is the warden's well-appointed private bed chambers. There is a fine four poster bed, a full length mirror and an oaken wardrobe. Though the furniture here is of high quality, there is no easy way to get it out.

### WIZARDS AND ALCHEMISTS IN JAIL

It can be very frustrating for wizards to start the game without a spell book or a familiar. After all, they are deprived of a great deal of their power. However, the scenario compensates them by giving them the potential to steal Warden Richter's spellbook thus having access to far more spells than they normally would at 1st level. Also remember, wizards memorized spells before they were caught so they begin the campaign with a typical spell selection. We will presume that they were smart enough not to waste their spells before they arrived at Branderscar. Keep track of those spells carefully! They could be key to escaping Branderscar alive. Inside the sack of clothing in the veil of useful items could also be a spell component pouch.

As hampered as wizards are, alchemists are worse off. All of their powers require access to dangerous chemicals that would never be allowed inside a prison. If an alchemist is in your party, add an item to the *veil of useful items* inside the sack of clothing -- a pouch full of dangerous chemicals. These chemicals allow the alchemist to formulate one day's worth of extracts, bombs and mutagens. They cannot refresh these abilities of course until they find an alchemist's lab.



**Mathias Richter, Warden of Branderscar Prison****CR 3****XP 800**

Male old human aristocrat 1/wizard 3

LG Medium humanoid

**Init** +4; **Senses** Perception +8 (+11 vs. sight-based tests in shadows or darkness)**DEFENSE****AC** 10 (14 with *mage armor*), touch 10, flat-footed 10 (14 with *mage armor*)**hp** 19 (d8 + 3d6 + 4)**Fort** +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft. (60 ft. with *expeditious retreat*)**Melee** dagger +0 (1d4-1/19-20)**Ranged** dagger +1 (1d4-1/19-20)**Special Attacks** hand of the apprentice (8/day)**Wizard Spells Prepared** (CL 3<sup>rd</sup>; Concentration +8)2<sup>nd</sup> – *flaming sphere* (DC 17), *hideous laughter* (DC 18)1<sup>st</sup> – *charm person* (DC 17), *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*0<sup>th</sup> – *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost***TACTICS**

**During Combat** The warden is terrible at melee combat and so uses *expeditious retreat* to avoid it at all costs. If he hears a suspicious sound or a signal horn, he will also delay two rounds and cast *mage armor* and *expeditious retreat* on himself before investigating. His first impulse is to take escaped prisoners alive so he leads with spells like *hideous laughter* and *charm person*. He saves his scroll of *sleep* for emergencies since he has only one. However, if he sees a prisoner kill anyone, the gloves are off and he casts *flaming sphere* as soon as he can.

**Morale** As incompetent as he is, Mathias is no coward. He will fight to the death to keep prisoners from escaping his jail.

**STATISTICS****Str** 8, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 21, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 14**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 10**Feats** Alertness, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Enchantment)

**Skills** Bluff +6, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (nobility) +12, Knowledge (religion) +11, Linguistics +12, Perception +8 (+11 vs. sight-based tests in shadows or darkness), Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +11

**Languages** Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Halfling, Sylvan

**SQ** arcane bond (his owl "Strixia")

**Combat Gear** *potion of cure light wounds*, *scrolls of magic missile*, *sleep*, *hideous laughter* and *invisibility*

**Other Gear** dagger, wizard's college class ring (gold with diamonds worth 250 gp), *ioun torch* (used when he must go out at night)

### EVENT THREE: THREE DAYS, ONE CHANCE THE TOUGHEST PRISON IN TALINGARDE?

There was a time not so long ago when escaping from Branderscar would have been impossible for novice adventurers. The warden before Mathias was Captain Calldan, a veteran cavalier, who ran this prison like a well-oiled machine. But Branderscar is much diminished these days. It is plagued by two problems. The first problem is the warden himself, Mathias Richter. The well-connected patriarch of the Richter family maneuvered Mathias into this prestigious post to better the family name.

Mathias accepted the appointment with a shrug and has since evidenced no real interest or aptitude for running a prison. He mostly spends his time amusing himself with his library.

Instead, he has largely delegated his responsibilities to a man he trusts implicitly and undeservedly – Sergeant Tomas Blackerly. Tomas is Branderscar's second problem. Utterly corrupt, he is skimming the payroll mercilessly. A prison usually garrisoned by forty to fifty guards now routinely employs half that number. But Blackerly didn't stop there. He has taken to running a rotating card game in the old gate house (room 3c.) diverting allegedly on-duty guards from their posts. He sells the men cheap whiskey, pocketing the profits. Though these recreations have made Tomas wealthy and popular with the men, prison security is a shambles.



It is this laxity that allows the PCs a real chance of escape. Likely this jail break will cost Mathias his job and reputation (and perhaps his life). Blackerly on the other hand will weasel his way out of the scandal by blaming Mathias for everything. The man can talk his way out of anything. Of course, it is likely our villains will see that he never gets the chance. Branding dangerous men and then giving them the potential for escape is not wise.

### DRUNKEN GUARDS

As mentioned above, alcohol is a common problem with the guards especially during the night shift. This is only exacerbated by Tomas' rotgut side business. At night, there is a 25% chance that any guard encountered is drunk. During the day, this decreases to 10%.

A drunken guard gains the sickened condition and 1d4 temporary hit points. Sickened imparts a -2 penalty on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

### WE'RE BUSTING OUT OF THIS JOINT

The villain's best chance to break out of Branderscar is to make one well-planned escape attempt, rather than try multiple haphazard attempts. Feel free to explicitly state this to any PC with a wisdom score of 16 or higher.

Act One: Prison Break!



After one failed attempt, the slovenly Sergeant Blackerly will realize how dangerous these individuals are and do his best to increase security. He will, the next day summon replacement guards from town to replace all his losses. All the off-duty guards in room 9 will be posted around the prison including one to the guard room nearest the cell block (room 17). The nightly card games will end. He stops selling whiskey and will do his best to make sure no one is drinking on duty. The chance of encountering a drunken guard plummets to only 5%.

However, before that wake-up call, security at Branderscar is laughable. The locks in this place are antiques (represented by them being simple locks). If one of the PCs manages to get their manacles off, no one comes into the cell and does a close enough inspection to notice. As long as the PC simply places their hand back in the unlocked manacle they will fool the irregular patrols that visit the cellblock.

The password to cross the bridge is changed weekly instead of nightly meaning that “Hesterfield” (the Warden’s home town) will be the password for the entire duration of the PC’s stay. Every guard knows this password. Even the servants who work the kitchens (room 11) know this password.

Further, the guards talk. If the PCs state they are quiet and listen to the guard room, they may roll a Perception skill check. On a DC 15, they hear this exchange:

*“That Blackerly is a damned thief! That game was rigged last night!”*

*“If it’s rigged, why do you keep going back to the gatehouse then?”*

*“The beer’s passable.”*

A laugh is heard. *“Drinkin’ on duty! Damn, this place has gone to hell. Captain Callidan would have never tolerated that crap. That’s for sure!”*

*“Captain Callidan ... he left, what? Two years ago?”*

*“Almost three and since then the place has been straight down the shitter. That old wizard never leaves his tower. He stays up there reading his books and petting his owl!”*

*“Petting his owl? Is that what they call it these days?”*

*The guards enjoy a bit of a laugh.*

Story Award: Successfully escaping Branderscar Prison is a CR 3 reward (800 XP).

## EVENT FOUR: CROSSING THE MOORS

After escaping, the players are not yet safe. They must cross the moors (likely at night) and make their way to the Old Moor Road and find the manor house. The moors outside of Varyston are far from hospitable. These dark, brackish salt marshes team with mosquitos and other buzzing pests. The good news is that the ever present shallow brine pools and streams will make tracking them difficult. The bad news is that these trackless moors are a great place to get lost.

If the PCs found the map in the Warden’s office (room 24) they find their way through without a roll in one hour. Otherwise, the PCs must roll either a Survival or Knowledge (geography) skill check (DC 15) to locate their destination. Each failure delays their arrival by an hour. If dawn breaks and they are still on the moors, guard patrols and soldiery from the nearby town of Varyston start scouring the area for the escaped prisoners.

On the moor, our villains can meet any animal companions, mounts or familiars they are due. Such an animal may (at the Game Master’s discretion) lead them to the house of Adrastus Thorn almost as if some divine patron were sending them a sign.

### Lashtongue, the Giant Toad

CR 2

#### XP 600

N Large animal

Init +1; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +7

#### DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +4 natural, –1 size)

hp 22 (3d8+9)

Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +0

Defensive Abilities poison skin

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 15 ft.

Melee bite +5 (1d6+6 plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks swallow whole (1d4 bludgeoning, AC 12, 2 hp)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Lashtongue is a cunning ambush predator that swims through the pools and streams of the marsh searching for prey. Hidden in the black pools of the moors, he gains a +4 bonus to his Stealth skill test. He will try to gain surprise and swallow someone whole. If he can swallow a corpse whole, he will leave with his prize.

**Morale** If reduced to seven or fewer hit points, Lashtongue flees.

#### STATISTICS

Str 19, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 8, Cha 6

Base Atk +2; CMB +7 (+11 grapple); CMD 18 (22 vs. trip)

Feats Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Acrobatics +5 (+9 jump), Perception +7, Stealth +5, Swim +12; Racial Modifiers +4 Acrobatics (+8 jump), +4 Stealth, +8 Swim

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

##### Poison Skin (Ex)

A creature that strikes a giant toad with an unarmed strike or natural weapon exposes itself to the toad’s poisonous skin.

Skin—contact; save Fort DC 14; frequency 1/round for 4 rounds; effect 1d2 Wisdom damage; cure 1 save.



## LASHTONGUE

There is another danger on the moors, one well known to locals. An aggressive, territorial and grumpy giant toad nick-named Lashtongue prowls the wilderness. Scarred from numerous attempts by local hunters to slay the monster, Lashtongue has so far evaded any effort to bag him. He is the reason that guard patrols will wait till morning before beginning their search. As the PCs cross the moors, Lashtongue catches their scent.

If they kill the toad, the PCs can track it back to its hidden lair (a small cave accessible only through a stagnant brackish pool). This side trip takes a DC 15 Survival skill check to locate and takes another hour per tracking check. However, if they locate the hidden cave they will have a place to rest and hide. Further, the toad has some treasure it gained after killing and eating a foolish skinflint merchant who thought he could save time and money by crossing the moors without a guard. A gold medallion worth 125 gp and scattered coinage worth another 45 gp adorn Lashtongue's lair.

## ENDING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure ends with the PCs finding the manor house.

Read this text:

*After escaping the prison, surviving the monstrous Lashtongue and crossing the moors with guard patrols at your heels, finding the house on the Old Moor Road pales beside your other accomplishments. As promised, a lonely lantern burns in the upper story. The place otherwise shows little sign of habitation. Old but well-appointed, the house is large, imposing and alone on its hill. Painted a dark green and surrounded by barbed wrought iron fencing, nothing about this place seems inviting or a sanctuary. Still, it is your destination. Where will you go if not here? You have an appointment to keep. Best not to keep your nameless benefactor waiting...*

Story Award: Award the PCs a CR 2 award (600 XP) for making it to the manor house.

## THEY DIDN'T ESCAPE. WHAT HAPPENS IN THREE DAYS?

They die.

That isn't quite accurate. After three days, a large party of knights and nobles dispatched from Matharyn led by the high magistrate Lord Solomon Tyrath himself arrives in Branderscar. Warden Richter, if he's still alive, is there to meet the high magistrate at the gates. The magistrate, who has not had cause to come to Branderscar in years, is shocked by what he sees.

Only two guards and a single dog at the gatehouse? Two guards on the walls?! He immediately dresses down Richter and calls for a full investigation of the prison after justice is done.

And then they die.

Or they get sent to the infamous salt mines of Varyston where the martinet overseer implements draconian security measures and the chains have better quality locks. And there, eventually, slowly, painfully -- they die.

There is the possibility of a total party kill here in the first act of this adventure path. Such an early wipeout is no fun. The villains have not gotten to be properly villainous yet! So keep that in mind when deciding just how efficient these guards are.

Remember, this isn't an elite unit of prison guards anymore (though they have that reputation). These are Blackerly's men. After years of corruption and laxity, maybe one of the guard posts is just left empty one night for almost an hour.

Challenge the PCs, of course. And if possible, try to ensure that they have a run in with Blackerly after getting free and finding a few weapons. But try not to wipe them out. Not yet.

In short, give the PCs a break. Just this once.

## WHAT NEXT?

What happens after the PCs discover the manor house? Who is the mysterious benefactor who sent Tia-dora to their aid and what are his plans for this cadre of escaped villains? And now that they have escaped their fate, how can they truly get revenge against noble Talin-garde?

Some of these questions are of course answered in brief in the adventure background (see above) and the campaign synopsis (see below).

But to truly know the full answers, you'll need to explore the rest of the adventure path. Cardinal Adrastus Thorn has only begun to craft his conspiracy against his homeland. He will train his new knot and send them on a mission into the Savage North. From there, the newly forged Nessian Knot will break the Watch Wall and begin a war with only one purpose -- to punish Talingarde for defying Asmodeus. This is not the end. This is only the first step along "The Way of the Wicked".

Discover all the diabolical and dastardly details at our website: [www.firemountaingames.com](http://www.firemountaingames.com).



## PATHS TO WICKEDNESS: HOW TO MAKE A VILLAIN

This section is intended for players. So feel free to make a copy for personal use and distribute it.

### INTRODUCTION

*Guilty. You are a lawbreaker – the worst of the worst. Too dangerous to live amongst the good people of Talingarde, they dragged you in chains before a magistrate and condemned you. They sent you to the worst prison in the land and there they forever marked you. They held you down and branded you with a runic F. You are forsaken. You won't be at Branderscar Prison for long. Branderscar is only a holding pen. In three days – justice comes. In three days – everything ends.*

*What a pity. If only there was a way out of this stinking rat-hole. If only there was a way to escape. If only...*

*No. No one has ever escaped from Branderscar Prison. This is where your story ends.*

### WHAT IS TALINGARDE?

Talingarde is the most virtuous, peaceful, noble nation in the world today. This land is ruled by King Markadian V called the Brave of House Darius. He has only one heir – the beautiful princess Bellinda. This benevolent monarchy is heavily intertwined with the Church of Mitra, the Shining Lord. You are from Talingarde. This is your home. You have lived here your entire life. And if they gave you half a chance, you would have your revenge on all of them.

### WHO IS MITRA?

Mitra, the so-called Shining Lord, is the god of the sun, bravery, honor, justice, charity and other such pusillanimous rubbish. The Church of Mitra is the preeminent religion of Talingarde these days. The Knights of the Alerion, the elite warriors of Talingarde, are a Mitran order. The monks of St. Macarius, who travel the land healing the sick and the helping the needy, are also a Mitran order. The House of Darius, the royal family of Talingarde, are devout followers of Mitra.

It wasn't always this way. Before the Darrians took over, Talingarde worshipped an entire pantheon of deities. Preeminent among those deities was Asmodeus, Prince of Hell, Lord of Ambition and Order. Now it is forbidden to worship Asmodeus. To do so is to be condemned. The Mitrans destroyed all the Asmodean temples and burned his books and priests. There are no followers of Asmodeus anymore in Talingarde – at least none you know of. Devout Mitrans will not say the name Asmodeus. He is simply "The Fallen" or "The Enemy".

### HOW DID THEY CATCH ME?

You tell us. You must pick a crime (there is a list provided below) that you were condemned for. They are only two requirements – you got caught and you really did it.

It's not surprising that the Talireans (the people of Talingarde) caught you, though. Talingarde is a fiercely lawful and good society. Crime (especially heinous crime like yours) is not tolerated.



### SYSTEM

Making a character for the "Way of the Wicked" Campaign is similar to making characters for any campaign using The Pathfinder Roleplaying Game with just a few modifications.

#### STEP 1 -- DETERMINE ABILITY SCORES

Any method will do, but we present here an alternate method appropriate to this adventure path called 'Focus and Foible'. Besides that one, the 25 point buy method is also recommended. It's challenging being a villain with the whole world against you.

#### FOCUS AND FOIBLE

Choose a Focus, an ability score at which you excel. You receive an 18 in that score.

Choose a Foible, an ability score that is your weakness. You receive an 8 in that score.

The other four, roll 1d10+7 four times in order. There are no rerolls or moving of ability scores. Those are your other four scores.



## WHY THIS METHOD?

This method makes slightly more powerful characters on average. A 'Focus and Foible'-built character costs 25 build points to make on average but more powerful characters are not uncommon. It compensates for the potential increase in power by making characters slightly random. Randomness never completely hampers a character though (the lowest total you can roll is '8' after all) and never gives them an ability score higher than their focus.

Therefore your wizard might have a high dexterity and charisma as well as having a high intelligence and a low strength. The writer finds this tends to create slightly more interesting, unusual and diverse characters. If the randomness and potential for character inequity bothers you, you can always use point buy instead.

## STEP 2 -- PICK YOUR RACE

This is unchanged. All races in The Pathfinder Role-playing Game are permitted.

There are certain races that will be more difficult to play in this campaign. Extremely unusual or monstrous races are likely to be troublesome. PCs of those races may find themselves uninvolved in certain parts of this campaign.

The PCs after all are on a secret mission to infiltrate and destroy Talingarde. It will be more difficult to infiltrate anything if you are travelling with a minotaur, goblin or serpent man for example. Tread carefully with these choices.

## STEP 3 -- PICK YOUR CLASS

All classes are permitted except the Paladin. Paladins do not walk the Way of the Wicked. A few classes require some special consideration below.

The Anti-paladin from the Advanced Player's Guide is well suited thematically for this campaign. Alas, the class requires a chaotic evil alignment which is not permitted. Thus it is recommended that your GM allow the house rule "The anti-paladin may be of any evil alignment". Further, the anti-paladin may have cohorts, followers and henchmen who are of any evil alignment instead of the usual "chaotic evil" requirement. Also, a lawful evil anti-paladin may not use their fiendish boon to add the 'anarchic' property to a weapon. Instead, they may add the 'axiomatic' property.

Assassins are a great choice for this campaign. Subtle killing can potentially be useful again and again. Yes, this is a prestige class not a core class. But it's a great prestige class to be working towards at level one.

Barbarians can be a good choice, but since chaotic alignments are not allowed (see below), neutral evil or neutral are the only two possible alignment choices. Barbarians have the challenge of coming up with a good reason why a class as chaotic and rebellious as this one would cooperate with a group of lawful evil followers of Asmodeus. Perhaps a cleric of Asmodeus (another PC?) saved your life and now you owe that priest your service.

Cavaliers are a fine choice for a PC but must be careful about their Order selection. Orders that defend the common folk (The Order of the Shield) or pledge allegiance to the king of Talingarde (The Order of the Lion) are probably not appropriate. Self-serving orders (for example the Order of the Cockatrice) are very appropriate indeed.

Clerics and inquisitors are allowed but must worship a god who approves of the villainous path ahead of you. Worshipping the lawful evil god Asmodeus is strongly encouraged. At the GM's discretion it may be required for divine classes.

Druids are permitted though neutral good druids are not. Evil druids are a perfectly valid choice but you must decide why such a character would ever join an organization that honors a lawful evil god.

Gunslingers are permitted but this adventure path assumes by default that firearms do not exist. There are no guns found in the treasure or adversaries who use firearms. If you want to play a gunslinger, you should talk to the Game Master about this. If they approve this choice, then they will need to modify the campaign accordingly to accommodate your character.

Monks may not be lawful good and are recommended to be lawful evil. A lawful neutral monk is technically allowed but would be a difficult choice. Why would such a law abiding character seek to destroy Talingarde?

Ninja and Samurai are permitted but the campaign as written makes no special allowances for them. Thus there are no eastern weapons or armor in the treasure (katana, wakizashi or naginata, for example). Further you must explain how your villainous ninja or samurai ended up in the western nation of Talingarde. Much like the gunslinger above, talk to the Game Master and work out these special needs.

Rangers will find that Humanoid (Human) and Outsider (Good) are solid choices for their favored enemy.

Sorcerers of any bloodline are permitted. Infernal blooded sorcerers are a particularly good choice.



#### STEP 4 -- PICK SKILLS AND SELECT FEATS

This step is unchanged.

However, this campaign lends itself more than most to a house rule that gives everyone two more skill points per level. The PCs will be on their own for much of the campaign and will have difficulty relying on others for skills. This house rule will make them more self-reliant.

Besides, villains should more competent than the average man.

#### STEP 5 -- BUY EQUIPMENT

The characters begin with nothing. They have no money, no weapons or armor, no gear, no animal companions of any sort and no material possessions besides tattered, dirty prison clothes. Equipment will be acquired in game.

Alchemists begin without their formulae book, extracts, bombs or mutagens. They must have access to an alchemical lab or chemicals to have any of these abilities restored.

Bards begin without their instruments.

Cavaliers have lost their mount. Presumably their mount was slain or given to another during their capture. It can be presumed that their week of mourning is already in the past.

Clerics begin having chosen all their spells for the day. They do not have their holy symbol or any material components however.

Druids also begin having chosen all their spells for the day. They do not, however, have their animal companion with them. Presumably such a companion was slain during their capture or escaped and awaits them outside. Regardless, such beasts would never be allowed inside the prison. Only if they escape from Branderscar prison will they have a chance to reunite with their companion or conduct the ceremony to acquire another.

Inquisitors and Oracles lack their holy symbol if they need one.

Summoners begin the game with their Eidolon unsummoned. They begin the game shackled so they are unable to perform the necessary ritual until they are free.

Witches, Wizards and Magi do not have their spell books, material components, familiars or bonded objects. They do however begin with a full selection of memorized spells from before their incarceration.

#### STEP 6 -- FINISHING DETAILS

As normal except that good and chaotic alignments are not allowed. Every character must be lawful neutral, lawful evil, neutral or neutral evil. Of those four alignments, **lawful evil** is definitely the preferred choice. At the Game Master's discretion, lawful evil may be the required alignment.

Further, every character must choose a crime that landed in them in Branderscar. They were not wrongly imprisoned -- they are guilty of their charge. If you are using the trait system in the Advanced Player's Guide, choosing this crime counts as one of your traits.

There is a further requirement and it is something of an intangible quality. At some point in this adventure path every character is going to have the chance to join an evil organization and swear allegiance to the master of that organization and its patron -- the lawful evil god Asmodeus. The adventure path assumes you say yes to this chance. Therefore, you should make a character who can say yes.

#### THE PATH OF VENGEANCE

Perhaps right now, you may be experiencing a little cognitive dissonance.

This campaign is about breaking out of prison, joining an evil organization and then seeking revenge. Above, we recommend that characters be lawful evil. You may be asking yourself right now "how is breaking out of prison and getting revenge lawful?"

It isn't.

Lawful evil is the recommended alignment not because your character is obeying the laws of Talingarde but because your characters seek to impose a new order.

This is not the campaign for chaotic loners or free-spirited vagabonds. Those campaigns exist in abundance and if they are what you are looking for, perhaps you are in the wrong place. This is a campaign about joining an evil organization with a wicked agenda. Eventually, you may even come to control that evil organization.

"Way of the Wicked" is a chance to play an unusual sort of character. You will play a burgeoning dark lord -- someone who will rise from imprisonment and destitution to become one of the greatest villains of this age. At first, you will be a minion in service to a sinister plot. But eventually, you will be a minion no longer. You, if you can survive, will become the master.

And that is almost the definition of lawful evil.



## CRIMES OF THE FORSAKEN

Each character chooses one heinous crime that has earned them a place in Branderscar Prison. Each crime grants a different benefit, similar to a trait. You may have committed many crimes during your lifetime, but this is the crime that finally got you branded and condemned.

This list of twenty crimes is not intended to be comprehensive. Feel free to invent your own crime, punishment and benefit (with the GM's approval of course).

Besides simply choosing a crime, you should also consider how the crime was done. Was this a well-planned criminal enterprise or a crime of passion? Did you do it alone or did you have accomplices? Was this the first time you did this crime or are you a repeat offender? Answering these questions will help flesh out your character's background.

This has been said before, but it bears repeating. Your character actually perpetrated this crime. You may have done it for what seemed like noble reasons. You may have gotten entangled in this criminal enterprise unwillingly. But there is no doubt that you are guilty. You have not been sentenced to the worse prison in Talingarde unjustly.

You are here because you deserve to be.

### ARSON

You have willfully started a fire that destroyed property. To be sent to Branderscar, you didn't start just a minor little trash fire. Your act of arson threatened a major town, city, church or castle and likely cost someone their life. You'll be punished for your crime by facing the fire yourself.

**Punishment:** Death by burning

**Benefit:** Whenever you score a critical hit with a fire attack, you receive a +2 fire damage bonus to your damage roll. This bonus is a trait bonus.

### ATTEMPTED MURDER

You tried to kill someone and botched the job. To be sent to Branderscar Prison, you did not try to kill just anyone. You likely assaulted someone of great importance and prominence.

**Punishment:** Death by beheading

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 trait bonus to Intimidate checks, and Intimidate is always a class skill for you.

### BLASPHEMY

Either you have defamed the great god Mitra or you have been found guilty of worshipping one of the forbidden deities (who preeminent among them is Asmodeus).

**Punishment:** Death by burning

**Benefit:** +2 trait bonus to Knowledge (religion) and Knowledge (religion) is always a class skill for you.

### CONSORTING WITH THE DARK POWERS (WITCHCRAFT)

You have been found guilty of summoning an evil outsider. Likely you were captured by the famed witch hunter Sir Balin of Karfeld. The last thing he said to you was, "May Mitra have mercy upon your wretched, damned soul." If only you could get a chance at revenge!

**Punishment:** Death by burning

**Benefit:** You receive a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (planes) and Knowledge (arcana) checks, and one of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.





**DESECRATION**

You have violated one of the churches, cathedrals or holy shrines of the great god Mitra. To be sent to Branderscar this was no minor act of vandalism. Instead you have done something flagrant and spectacular to dishonor the Shining Lord.

**Punishment:** Death by burning

**Benefit:** You receive +1 trait bonus on all saving throws against divine spells.

**DESERTION**

You have deserted from the Talirean military and been recaptured. To get sent to Branderscar this was not some minor or routine dereliction of duty. Instead, you abandoned your post during a time of crisis -- perhaps battle or while defending the Watch Wall. Regardless of the exact circumstances, your laziness and cowardness must have caused loss of life.

**Punishment:** Death by hanging

**Benefit:** You receive one bonus skill point per level that must be spent on the Profession (Soldier) skill. Profession (Soldier) is always a class skill for you.

**DUELING UNTO DEATH**

You have engaged in a duel to the death and mortally wounded an opponent. The opponent was honorable enough to say nothing before he expired. Alas that his family or companions was nowhere near so honorable. Dueling was once common in Talingarde before the House of Darius came to power. The House of Barca all but encouraged duels of honor. Now, dueling of any sort is punished severely. Dueling to the death is a sure way to be sent to Branderscar Prison.

**Punishment:** Death by beheading

**Benefit:** You gain a +1 trait bonus to Fortitude saves

**EXTORTION**

You have defrauded money from someone by holding information of their wrongdoing over their heads. To end up in Branderscar, this was no minor act of merely threatening to expose someone. Instead you attempted extortion against someone of great prominence and for exorbitant stakes.

**Punishment:** Life at hard labor in the salt mines

**Benefit:** You receive a +2 trait bonus to Intimidate checks, and Intimidate is always a class skill for you.

**FORGERY**

You have forged documents issued either by the crown or by the Church of Mitra. Alas, that your forgery while competent was not entirely undetectable. To be sent to Branderscar, this was no minor finagling of paperwork. This forged document could have cost lives, undermined the reputation of the Church or endangered the security of the realm.

**Punishment:** Life at hard labor in the salt mines

**Benefit:** You gain a +3 trait bonus to Linguistics skill checks to commit forgery and Linguistics is always a class skill for you.

**FRAUD**

You tried to bilk someone out of their cash. To end up in Branderscar Prison, this was no petty con job or penny ante racket. Instead, you brazenly tried to defraud someone important of a huge sum of money. And it almost worked too!

**Punishment:** Life at hard labor in the salt mines

**Benefit:** You receive a +2 trait bonus to Bluff checks and Bluff is always a class skill for you.

**GRAVE ROBBERY**

It is forbidden by sacred law to dishonor a corpse after it is been sealed in its tomb by a clergy of the Mitran faith. Some may not honor this ban: necromancers, golem crafters, self-styled scientists, and alchemists delving into the forbidden secrets of life and death. These ghouls can expect no mercy from the Talirean Magistrates. And by sending you to Branderscar Prison, you have received none.

**Punishment:** Death by beheading

**Benefit:** You receive a +1 trait bonus to confirm critical hits

**HERESY**

You have denied the supremacy of Mitra and been condemned for it. For this to be a crime, you were not content to keep your heresy to yourself. You tried to sway others. Likely you were captured by the famed witch hunter Sir Balin of Karfeld. The last thing he said to you was: "Mitra may forgive you yet for your lies. Talingarde will not." If only you could get a chance at revenge!

**Punishment:** Death by burning.

**Benefit:** You receive a +1 trait bonus on all saving throws against divine spells.



## HIGH THEFT

You had a foolproof plan to steal some great treasure. Alas, the scheme had a fatal flaw and went horribly awry. To be sent to Branderscar prison, this was no ordinary robbery attempt. You tried to steal something of great value or religious significance.

**Punishment:** Life at hard labor in the salt mines

**Benefit:** You receive a +1 trait bonus to Reflex saves.

## HIGH TREASON

You have willfully worked to bring down the current Monarch of Talingarde -- the beloved King Markadian V called the Brave of House Darius. To be successfully tried for High Treason you have done more than merely dislike the king, you did something tangible to undermine his rule. Alas, that you failed at your plot and are now headed to Branderscar Prison. Treason is the only crime that is still punished by the gruesome ritual of being drawn and quartered. Your stay at Branderscar will be brief.

**Punishment:** Death by drawing and quartering

**Benefit:** You receive a +1 trait bonus to Will saves.

## KIDNAPPING

You have abducted someone perhaps to ransom them or do unspeakable things to them. Unfortunately, you were caught and your victim was rescued (if they weren't rescued -- you would be guilty of murder instead). To be sent to Branderscar Prison, you must have abducted someone of great importance or in a particularly gruesome manner.

**Punishment:** Death by beheading

**Benefit:** You receive a +1 trait bonus to both Disarm and Grapple attempts.

## MURDER

You have killed without just cause and been condemned for it. To be sent to Branderscar Prison, this was no typical killing but a particularly savage and unforgiveable act. You may also have killed someone with powerful friends.

**Note:** You are not allowed to have killed someone in the royal family of Talingarde. You may have tried (his would instead be High Treason -- see above) but ultimately they are too well protected.

**Punishment:** Death by beheading

**Benefit:** You deal 1 additional point of damage when flanking a foe. This additional damage is a trait bonus.

## PIRACY

You have been caught in the act of piracy on the high seas. This is a rare crime these days since Markadian I called the Victorious burned the last major pirate fleet to threaten these isles. Still the crime is punished harshly. Likely you are the sole survivor of your ship.

**Punishment:** Death by hanging

**Benefit:** You may select either Bluff or Intimidate. The selected skill receives a +2 trait bonus and is always a class skill for you.

## SEDITION

You have attempted to covertly stir up rebellion against your rightful sovereign. This differs from high treason in that you attempted to convince others to make war against Talingarde instead of taking direct action yourself. A subtle difference to be sure. But it is the difference between receiving the swift justice of the axe instead of the slow suffering upon the rack.

**Punishment:** Death by beheading

**Benefit:** You receive a +1 trait bonus to Bluff checks and Bluff is always a class skill for you. Further if you ever take the Leadership feat, you gain a +1 trait bonus to your Leadership score.

## SLAVE-TAKING

Slavery is illegal in Talingarde and a very rare crime. Still, once in a great while, slavers from the mainland will foolishly make an incursion into Talirean protected territories. When they are captured alive they are always made an example of.

**Punishment:** Death by beheading

**Benefit:** You receive a +1 trait bonus to both Disarm and Grapple attempts.

## SLAVE TRADING

Slavery is legal in other parts of the world and it can be tempting to the most decadent of Talingarde's nobility to acquire a "souvenir" when traveling abroad or to purchase the object of their desire from a less reputable merchant. However you ended up trading slaves in Talingarde, you were caught red handed and now you will lose more than simply your freedom.

**Punishment:** Death by beheading

**Benefit:** You receive one bonus skill point per level that must be spent on the Appraise skill. The Appraise skill is always a class skill for you.



## WAY OF THE WICKED: CAMPAIGN SYNOPSIS

**Warning:** this synopsis spoils the plot as thoroughly as possible. Read no further if you want to play in this campaign!

### WAY OF THE WICKED BOOK I: A KNOT OF THORNS (LEVEL 1-5)

The characters begin in jail imprisoned justly for their heinous crimes. There they are visited by a beautiful mysterious stranger who smuggles them aid. Escaping, they are recruited by the mysterious Cardinal Adrastus Thorn, the last true high priest of Asmodeus in Talingarde. He trains them and binds them together to create his ninth knot -- the Nessian Knot. He gives them a mission -- to bring war to peaceful and benevolent Talingarde.

They are sent north by sea to Talingarde's frozen frontier to deliver weapons and treasure to a bugbear warlord, Sakkarot Fire-Axe. Once delivered, there stands only one impediment to full-scale invasion -- the Watchtower of Balentyne. They infiltrate that tower, kill its commander Lord Thomas Havelyn and throw wide the gates. The bugbears cross into Talingarde by their thousands. War has begun!

### WAY OF THE WICKED BOOK II: CALL FORTH DARKNESS (LEVEL 6-9)

As the hordes of Sakkarot wreak their havoc, Cardinal Thorn assigns them another mission against Talingarde. They will travel to the very edge of Talingarde -- Farholde. There they will seek out the ancient daemonic temple known as the Horn of Abaddon. Within that damned place they will summon a powerful other worldly entity known as Vetra-Kali Eats-the-Eyes. To call forth this powerful unique daemon they must perform 666 prayers (3 per day). That means they must hold the temple for more than seven months.

After they deal with the temple's defenders (or recruit them to their cause), they must set up defenses. Alas, the temple has a reputation for housing a great treasure (which it turns out is true). As the ritual begins the great Horn begins to radiate an eerie green radiance that draws adventurers from far and wide. They must deal with these intruders and see that the ritual is not interfered with.

Finally, they are confronted by their arch-nemesis, the paladin Sir Richard Havelyn, who seeks not only to stop them but also to avenge his father the murdered commander of Balentyne. Will they defeat him and call forth this darkness as their dread master commands?

### WAY OF THE WICKED BOOK III: TEARS OF THE BLESSED (LEVEL 10-12)

From the Horn of Abaddon, the Knot has managed to gain a great and terrible weapon -- The Tears of Achlys, a magical plague of almost unimaginable destructive potential. The Knot must see that the Tears are safely delivered into the right hands so that war torn Talingarde may suffer another concurrent disaster -- plague.

The Knot then turns their attention to the only ones who may be able to stop the spread of this blight -- the Holy Order of Saint Macarius. This dedicated order of priests has long made it their sacred mission to ease the suffering of the populace and to combat the ravages of pestilence. They also send their healers among the armies of Talingarde and aid the warriors during battle. They must be broken if Talingarde is to fall!

The Knot must raid their monastery, destroy and desecrate it utterly making it look as if this was done by the bugbears led by Sakkarot Fire-Axe. The protectors of the reliquary of Saint Macarius must be defeated with ruthless precision. And the mission must be done quickly. Already the war rages into the Heartlands!

This mission of murder and mayhem is complicated by the revelation that the head of the Order is not a mortal, but a celestial of staggering might. Can they learn this angel's weakness and defeat this servant of heaven? Will our villains be able to ensure that all across Talingarde are heard the tears of the blessed?



## WAY OF THE WICKED BOOK IV: OF DRAGONS AND PRINCESSES (LEVEL 13-15)

The war rages on well into its second year. The major cities of Talingarde become graveyards as the deadly plague rages unchecked. All across the Heartlands, the bugbears inflict terror and death. But in the south the royal house of Darius raises a great army to shatter the invaders and restore its troubled land. Hope yet persists.

The Knot must now deal with the Royal House of Darius. Assassinations have already been tried and have failed. But Cardinal Thorn has a new plan -- to unleash a powerful dragon against the palace of King Markadian. He sends the knot to recruit a fearsome black wyrm named Chargammon.

Chargammon has his own demands before any deal can be struck and the great dragon must be appeased. He demands the Knot seek and destroy his ancient rival -- a venerable copper dragon who has long eluded the black dragon's fury.

Can the Knot lure this wicked and wily wyrm into Asmodeus' service and see the House of Darius destroyed? Can they infiltrate the Adarium, palace of House Darius, and recover the documents that Cardinal Thorn requires? Will their nemesis the Paladin Sir Richard

slay the dragon Chargammon and rescue the Princess Bellinda, daughter of the king, in time to preserve the rightful dynasty of Talingarde? Herein, all this will be decided!

## WAY OF THE WICKED BOOK V: THE DEVIL MY ONLY MASTER (LEVEL 16-17)

The Nessian Knot has arisen to be amongst Cardinal Thorn's most powerful servants. But now, chafing at being mere servitors, at last the Knot has a chance to deal with their master and become masters themselves. During the course of their many missions they have learned that Cardinal Thorn is a lich and now they believe they know the location of his phylactery. Further, using either a devil skilled in infernal contract law or their own wits, they discover a loophole in their Compact that will allow them to lawfully slay their master.

The players visit, without orders, a key location to the pasts of both Sir Richard and Cardinal Thorn. They learn the key to corrupting one and destroying the other. Then they must execute an assault on the sanctuary of their own master in the far north. At the end of this adventure, if they are successful, Cardinal Thorn will be destroyed and the paladin Sir Richard will be their corrupted servant. The armies recruited from the mainland arrive and the PCs are able to assume control of a mighty army. They are at last the masters of the nine knots and the Chosen of Asmodeus. It is time at last to fulfill their destinies and become master of a Talingarde transformed into a devil's playground.

## WAY OF THE WICKED BOOK VI: THE WAGES OF SIN (LEVEL 18-20)

The Knot must "save" Talingarde. They meet Sakkarot's horde on the field and the bugbear warlord and secret devotee of Asmodeus betrays his own kind to slaughter. The same villains who open the gates of Balentyne now turn on these dupes. Thus the war against the invaders is won not by the simpering forces of good but by a lost scion of House Darius who worships the great god Asmodeus -- a role assumed either by one of the PCs or a pawn of their choosing.

Queen Bellinda though remains alive and so she rallies what remains of her loyal forces to meet the Asmodeans on the field of battle. She is outnumbered and her army is ragged from years of war against Sakkarot's horde. The forces of good seemed doomed to defeat. What chance does a ragged but noble queen and her last few devoted followers have against the full might of the devil god's followers?

Will Talingarde fall into darkness or is there hope after all? Will a fallen paladin find redemption? Will a young queen rally her forces to hold against a seemingly invincible invading army led by mighty Nessian Knot? Will the wages of sin finally take their toll upon the wicked?



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*Hail Asmodeus, God of Lawyers, Master of Contracts*

*"E'en hell hath its peculiar laws." -- Faust*



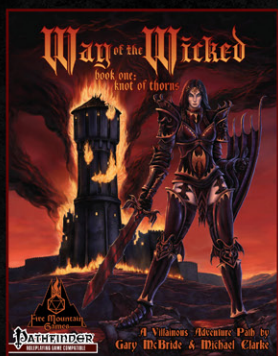
# Way of the Wicked

book one:  
knot of thorns

## Be the Bad Guy

How many times have  
you saved the world?

This time the world  
needs saving  
from you.



An Adventure Path featuring 20 levels  
of Irredeemable Villainy

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# Way of the Wicked

## Be the Bad Guy

The Kingdom of Talingarde is the most noble, virtuous, peaceful nation in the known world. This is the story of how you burned this insipid paradise to the ground. It's only fair. They burned you first.

They condemned you for your wicked deeds. They branded you. They shipped you to the worst prison in the kingdom. In three days, you die. In three days, the do-gooders pray they'll be rid of you.

They've given you three days. The fools, that's more than you need to break out. And then, it will be their turn to face the fire.

Welcome to the free preview of the "Way of the Wicked" adventure path! Inside you'll find:

- "Prison Break!," a short adventure compatible with The Pathfinder Roleplaying Game for 1<sup>st</sup>-level villains by Gary McBride
- Full color art and maps by Michael Clarke
- Rules for creating wicked PCs
- Synopsis of the entire campaign
- A backdrop for running a successful villainous campaign.

And More!

You've saved the world plenty.

Isn't it time you walked the Way of the Wicked?



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