

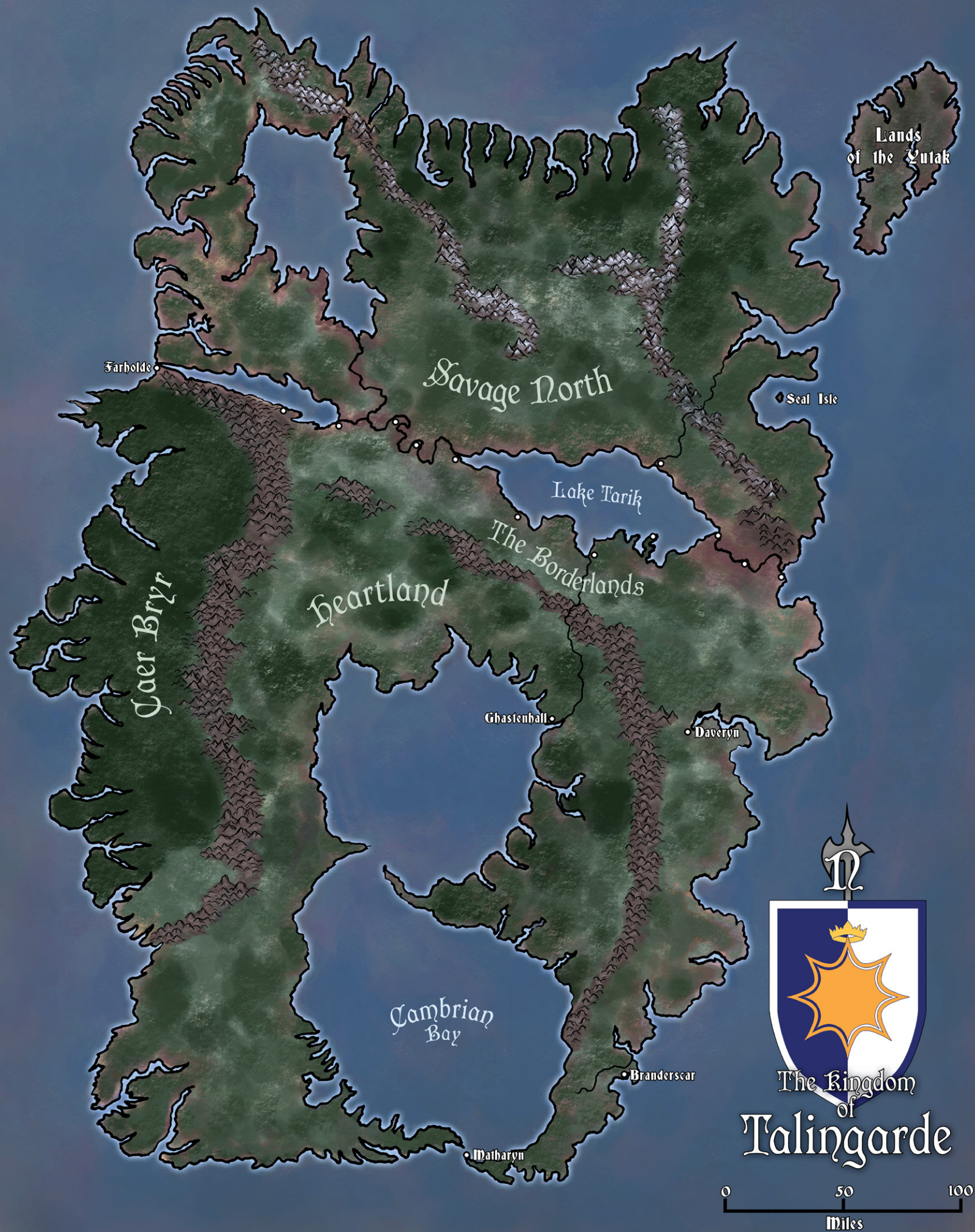
Way of the Wicked

book one:
knot of thorns



PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

A Villainous Adventure Path by
Gary McBride & Michael Clarke



Way of the Wicked

book one: knot of thorns

A Villainous Adventure Path

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“No one ever became extremely wicked suddenly.”

--Juvenal

ADVANCEMENT

This campaign uses the medium advancement track.

ACT ONE: PRISON BREAK!

Justly imprisoned, a band of villains must escape from Branderscar Prison. Characters begin at 1st level and by the time of their escape, the PCs should be 2nd.

ACT TWO: INTO THE KNOT

Cardinal Adrastus Thorn recruits the villains into his organization and gives them an opportunity to prove themselves. By the end of his cruel training, the PCs should be 3rd level.

ACT THREE: FIRE-AXE

Having judged the villains ready, Thorn sends them on their first real mission to the north to arm the bugbear tribes and aid in bringing war to Talingarde. At journey's end the PCs should be 4th level.

ACT FOUR: BURNING BALENTYNE

With the bugbear tribes united under Sakkarot Fire-Axe and well-armed, now the horde needs only a breach in the Watch Wall. The villains infiltrate the watchtower of Balentyne to destroy both it and its commander. Thus completed, the PCs should be 6th level.

What next? 6th level is where the sequel of this tale “Way of the Wicked: Call Forth Darkness” begins.

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

BOOK ONE: A KNOT OF THORNS

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND: FROM WHENCE THIS DARKNESS

The Kingdom of Talingarde (pronounced Talongard) 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?

1ST 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.

2ND 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.

3RD 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.

4TH 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.

5TH 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.

6TH 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.

7TH 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.

8TH 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.**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

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.

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.



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 and 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 taking 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

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

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. Remember also that inside the sack in the *veil of useful items* is the equivalent of 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 3rd; Concentration +8)2nd – *flaming sphere* (DC 17), *hideous laughter* (DC 18)1st – *charm person* (DC 17), *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*0th – *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.

"MANOR? WE'RE NOT GOING TO THE MANOR!"

The player characters, being the free-willed individuals that they are, may not head to the manor Tiadora described at the opening of the act. They may have another plan. If so, they are beyond the scope of this adventure path. At that point, you have at least three workable options to get the campaign back on track.

First, you could directly tell them the players "you need to go to the manor." This is probably the simplest, least time consuming solution. But some will find it deeply unsatisfying.

The second option is to let them try other means. Remember that they are wanted, branded criminals. Word soon gets out that a pack of murderers and worse has escaped from Branderscar. Every peasant in the nearby towns and villages starts walking around with their sleeves rolled up to show they are unbranded. Local lords dispatch their personal retinues to bolster the garrison searching for these villains.

Any other avenues of escape the PCs try, one by one, are closed to them. No one can be trusted as a large 1000 gp reward is posted. Ships are searched. Checkpoints are set up on the roads. Patrols with dogs scour the wilderness. A detachment of the elite Knights of the Alerion ride into Varyston to personally take charge of the effort to find these fugitives. Everyone is against them. Slowly, the noose tightens.

Their benefactor has spent quite a lot of time and resources choosing them to be his servants. He is patient.

He will be there to collect them, even if they are a little late to his appointed meeting.

There is one final option, but it requires work. Replace Act Two entire with your own home-made side quest. Instead of receiving Thorn's training, they go on the lam. Imagine a harrowing game of hide and seek with the soldiery of Talingarde. Imagine breathless escape after breathless escape. Their goal is to escape Talingarde altogether for nowhere else can they find sanctuary than off this island. It is a goal they fail at. And finally, when it looks just like they are about to be caught Cardinal Thorne intervenes.

"What a bother you have been," he says wryly, "forcing me to save you a second time. You want to run? You want to escape Talingarde? I tell you that for you and me, there is no escape. This is our home. Why not instead help me burn it to the ground..." It's then that they get the offer to join the Knot of Thorns (see Act two below) and are sent on their first mission (Act Three). They should be third level by the end of this side quest.

ENDING THE ACT

This act 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.

ACT TWO: INTO THE KNOT

EVENT ONE: MEETING THE MASTER

At the door of the manor house, they are met by Tiadora still in the guise of the green-eyed woman. The only difference is her dress. She no longer looks like she is destined for a funeral. Instead she wears a diaphanous white gown that makes her look almost angelic. When she speaks, any illusions about her angelic character are quickly dispelled.

"Dearest, you took long enough," she says pitilessly. "We were beginning to wonder if you'd ever make it. Oh, and you brought friends. The master commands all of you to appear before him but before that, you must be made presentable. Slaves!" She claps her hands. A dozen young attractive men and women all wearing very traditional servant's livery appear quickly, their heads bowed. "These people are our guests," she commands imperiously. "See them to their rooms. I want them cleaned, dressed and refreshed. Quickly." There is something in that last word that sounds like a threat. Certainly the slaves take it that way, hustling to perform their duties.

A DC 15 Sense Motive skill check reveals that the slaves are as addled and enchanted as the sergeant was. These unfortunates have been *enthralled* and *charmed* so many times by Tiadora that they are now more or less permanently under her sway. They do all the menial work in the manor house. They rarely speak or do much besides smile happily and obey all that is requested of them. Only direct personal danger or abuse will rouse them and then they run screaming towards their mistress. Tiadora is unlikely to show the slaves much pity.

The PCs are led up to their rooms. The accommodations are comfortable and the slaves are silent and efficient. There are fresh clothes perfectly sized to each character in their rooms and there is opportunity to wash up. If anyone mentions being hurt, their attendant will nod and come back with a decanter full of velvety red wine. The wine is mixed with healing herbs and holds six glasses of wine each equivalent to a *potion of cure light wounds*. This one decanter is shared between all the PCs that need healing. Each PC also receives a platter full of hot, delicious food and fresh water.



Adrastus Thorn

If Grumblejack is with the PCs, he receives his own room. However, he is not summoned to meet the master.

Give the players a moment to enjoy their freedom. They did it! They escaped Branderscar. What is the first thing they do now that they seem to be out of danger?

Eventually the PCs will be ready to meet the master. Having escaped, our would-be villains have passed Cardinal Thorn's first test. The question now is will they join his organization and become his agents?

Cardinal Thorn is a wily negotiator who has already researched a great deal about these prospective agents. He will tailor his offer so that refusal is unlikely. Greed, revenge, ambition, devotion to Asmodeus -- he is prepared to cater to all these desires to ensure that these escapees become his servitors.

You should tailor this speech to suit your PCs but here is an example of what Thorn might say.

At last Tiadora leads you to a beautifully appointed office richly decorated with dark wood and sumptuous brocade tapestry. Sitting in a leather high-backed chair is a devilishly handsome fellow who smiles as you enter. "I believe you to be the first to ever escape from Branderscar Prison. Well done! Of course, you had help from the outside," he says with a wicked smile.

"But enough with the pleasantries. You must be curious why I've helped you. Rest assured this is no random act of altruism. I have brought you here for a reason. My name is Cardinal Adrastus Thorn. I am the last high priest of Asmodeus left on the island of Talingarde. Once the Prince of Nessus was rightly revered alongside the other great powers. Now, the king of Talingarde has become a puppet to Mitran fanatics who wish to destroy any religion that does not bow to their insipid sun god.

"For their blasphemy, I will see the same people who imprisoned and condemned you suffer. I understand what you went through for I have faced it myself." With that, he pulls down the sleeve of his robe and reveals his own runic 'F' brand. "I am going to burn Talingarde to the ground and from the ashes I will build a new nation that knows its rightful master. I cannot do this alone. I seek servants worthy of our Infernal Father's majesty. Have I found them in you?"

He rises and his eyes flash with hellfire and divine purpose. "Join me! Serve me well in this holy endeavor and I will raise you up in the eyes of gods and men. I will make you princes of the new Talingarde. Today, swear fealty to me and to Asmodeus.

"Put aside forgiveness and I shall give you vengeance. Put aside mercy and be made powerful. Put aside peace and become my harbingers of war. What say you? Will you swear your allegiance or will you burn with the rest of the blind fools?"

This adventure path assumes that the player characters say yes. If after all his best efforts the PCs still refuse the Cardinal, Adrastus is unlikely to be forgiving. These ungrateful fugitives know too much to be set loose. The knowledge that there still exists an active cult of Asmodeus in Talingarde is more information than Cardinal Thorn will risk.

Tiadora is nearby and if at the end, no deal can be reached, the Cardinal sighs and says, "A pity. So much wasted time and effort. Tiadora, shred them."

Adrastus Thorn takes only one action in this combat -- he casts *greater forbid action* (see Ultimate Magic; DC 25 will save to resist) on all the PCs and forbids them from attacking him by weapon or spell for the next 17 rounds. If Thorn's order of action is important, he has a +2 initiative bonus.

Tiadora (Handmaiden Devil)

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 187 (see the Devil, Handmaiden entry in the Bestiary 2)

TACTICS

During Combat Tiadora leads with her black tentacles spell-like ability trying to entangle and render them helpless hopefully affecting their surrender. If Tiadora humiliates the party all the better. The PCs will have their chance for revenge against her later in the adventure path. However, if the party does one point of damage (through her damage reduction) this vain horror from the pit reveals her true nature and rips them to pieces. Given the horrendous amounts of damage she can inflict and with her fly speed, this should not take long.

Morale Bound to her master's will, Tiadora fights to the death.

When the player characters accept, Cardinal Thorn smiles. "Excellent. Let us make it official. Signing in blood is traditional."

He brings out a quill, a silver ritual knife and two copies of a contract written on some unidentifiable leather (flayed lemur skin) and written in dark red ink (powdered garnet mixed with animal blood) -- the Pact of Thorns (see handout #2). He lets the PCs keep one copy of the contract. The other, he takes.

"Well done. Your first command: prepare yourselves. Stay within the manor. You are still hunted by the Talirean soldiery. In three days we begin your training."

Story Award: Award a CR 2 reward (600 XP) for joining the Knot of Thorns.

HANDOUT #2: THE PACT OF THORNS

Behold on this day _____ in the eighth age of this world a perpetual Compact is made between Cardinal Adrastus Thorn (hereafter the Master) and those who would be bound to him as his acolytes (hereafter the Bound). Both the Master and the Bound shall hold fast and true to this Compact through all trial and tribulation. By blood and soul the Bound commit to the Compact and swear that it shall never be undone.

The Bound shall know and understand the Four Loyalties.

The First Loyalty is to their patron and god – mighty Asmodeus, first among the fallen, prince of the nine hells, our father below. They shall do all that can be done to further his worship and his glory.

The Second Loyalty is to their master – He who is called the Cardinal Adrastus Thorn, High Priest of Asmodeus in Talingarde. They shall do the Master no harm and obey his every commandment as long as those commandments do not clash with their First Loyalty.

The Third Loyalty is to their companions – the other Bound who serve alongside them. The Bound shall deal with each other fairly and honorably as long as doing so does not clash with their first or second loyalties. All treasure, wealth and reward garnered in their exploits will be equally shared with all of the Bound who aided in its acquisition.

The Fourth Loyalty is to themselves – for Asmodeus is the Lord of Ambition and all who serve him should strive to become great and powerful in his service as long as doing so does not clash with their first, second or third loyalties. By their weakness, ye shall know the unworthy.

The Bound swear that they cleave to and uphold the Four Loyalties even in the face of death and damnation.

The Master swears that as long as the Four Loyalties are upheld, he shall reward the Bound as they deserve for their deeds.

Thus it is written, and thus it shall be.

We being of sound mind and free will do so swear and let they who violates this Compact know all the wrath of Hell unending.

Signed,

EVENT TWO: THE RESPITE

The escapees are fed, fully rested, bathed and clothed in garments more befitting nobility than prisoners on the lam. For three days they live a life of luxury and ease in the manor house. Tiadora offers them each one of the slaves as a ‘companion’. Advances towards Tiadora herself are simply met with a laugh.

If one of the PCs is an alchemist, there is a small laboratory here that allows them to restock their supply of bombs, reagents and mutagens if they have not already done so. This is also a fine time for the PCs to ‘level up’.

During this time, Tiadora moves quietly about the manor house observing the proceedings. Tiadora is actually on a mission -- she is methodically collecting a bit of hair from each of the house guests for the master.

Thorn intends no malice against the PCs. Quite the contrary, he is almost paternally proud of his latest recruits. However, Thorn is incapable of fully trusting anyone. He sees the PC’s potential and thus he is even now concerned that they may in time turn on him. By having these connections it will be much easier to scry the Knot should they ever prove rebellious.

These samples are taken, preserved magically and brought to his northern sanctum (the Agathium – see Way of the Wicked Book V for details). Combined with the blood on the Compact of Thorns, he can now be assured that he has a powerful connection to his newest servants.

With her +25 Stealth skill, *greater teleport* and *persistent image* at-will abilities, there is little chance of Tiadora being caught performing this errand. But paranoid PCs might still at the GM’s discretion have a chance to notice.

Tiadora will however, if approached during this respite, answer a few questions.

Question: “Can we leave?”

Answer: “The master commands you remain. There are yet patrols searching for you. Soon your training will begin.”

Question: “Are we prisoners?”

Answer: “Yes, you are prisoners of fate as are we all.”

Question: “Do you worship Asmodeus?”

Answer: “All praise and honor are due our Infernal Father.”

Question: “What are you?”

Answer: “Why, I am a devil and I’ve come to do a devil’s work.”

Question: "Who are the slaves?"

Answer: "Weak willed fools who thought themselves worthy of the master. They were wrong of course, but still they have their uses."

Question: "Where is Cardinal Thorn?"

Answer: "In his sanctuary."

Question: "Can I speak with him?"

Answer: "Soon enough the master will grant you audience."

Question: "Who is Cardinal Thorn?"

Answer: "Your master and mine. Anything more is for our master to say."

Cardinal Thorn is nowhere to be seen (he is not in the manor house having returned to his sanctuary the Agathium far in the north via *word of recall*).

GIFTS FROM THE MASTER

During the three days each PC receives 200 gp worth of gear appropriate to their class. A slave approaches each PC and meekly asks what equipment they require. The slave then takes the requests to Tiadora who spends the money allotted for each PC. Tiadora is teleporting to and from a safe house in the great metropolis of Ghasstenhall to buy the equipment so almost anything can be acquired within her budget.

Also, any starting equipment the PCs should have received from their class, they receive now (for example – a gunfighter's weapon or a wizard's spellbook). These are not counted against the total above.

The other exception to this budget is this: each PC receives a silver medallion and an *iron circlet*. The silver medallion is a holy symbol of Asmodeus (worth 25 gp if you could find a buyer). The *iron circlet* is magical.

Iron Circlet

Aura faint illusion; CL 1st

Slot head; **Price** 1,800 gp; **Weight** –

DESCRIPTION

This circlet of wrought iron alters itself to comfortably fit any wearer. It allows the wearer to alter their appearance as with a *disguise self* spell. As part of the disguise, the circlet can be changed to appear as any sort of hat, headgear, or hairstyle the wearer desires.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *disguise self*; **Cost** 900 gp

This is of course identical to a traditional *hat of disguise* save for aesthetics. In truth, the iron circlet is a far more powerful magic item more akin to a *curse amulet of inescapable location*. Its true statistics can only be revealed by use of the spell *analyze dweomer*. A DC 30 Spellcraft

skill check to identify magic items will reveal that there is something very odd about these iron circlets and they are not simply *hat of disguise* analogues. The exact nature of the oddity though remains elusive for now.

Iron Circlet

Aura moderate abjuration and faint illusion; CL 10th

Slot head; **Price** 36,800 gp; **Weight** –

DESCRIPTION

In addition to functioning as a *hat of disguise*, this circlet also makes it easy to scribe upon the wearer if a talisman bound to these circlets is possessed. The wearer receives a -10 penalty on all saves against divination spells cast by the talisman's possessor.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *disguise self*, *nondetection*;

Cost 18,400 gp

WE ARE NOT ALONE

During the respite, the PCs will learn they are not alone in the manor house. Besides the slaves and Tiadora—there are a few others about. In another wing, there are four more individuals. These are the newly recruited seventh knot (though they are not yet called that). They are a group of four 2nd level adventurers described here in brief.

Elise Zadaria, 2nd level LE human witch (patron: winter) – As beautiful as she is deadly, Elise is nominally the leader of a group of adventurers from the mainland who were recruited to help with the destruction of Talingarde. Calling themselves "The White Ravens" (named after Zadari's familiar – a rare albino raven), they hail from the land of the north men. They were recruited by Thorn after successfully raiding a paladin's tomb. Zadari is not a worshipper of Asmodeus instead serving a mysterious entity she calls "The Endless Winter". She is only too pleased to do her part in bringing down the followers of the sun god.

Dostan Alfson, 2nd level NE half-elf barbarian – Fanatically dedicated to Elise for reasons he will not talk about, this brooding hulk is rarely far from his great sword. Dostan rarely has much to say and prefers to let others do the talking. However, if you can get him drinking (and he does love his mead), he is likely to open up at last. Either that or start an epic bar brawl.

Tallus "Trak" Rackburn, 2nd level LE human ranger – Trak is the slightly older (by a minute) and taller of the two identical twins who serve in "The White Ravens". His favorite prey is humans and he is a hunter of men both by profession and inclination. He served as a bounty hunter for a while before falling into the service of Zadari. Enthrallled by Elise, there is no doubt that his interest in her is far from professional. Only his loyalty to his brother, Trik, rivals his dedication to the witch.

Titus “Trik” Rackburn, 2nd level LE human cleric (of evil and trickery) – Trik is the younger twin and so friendly and approachable that he seems completely out of place in this wicked band. This is a false front. Titus is a psychopath, murder and cultist of Asmodeus to the core. Before joining the Ravens, he was a serial killer in a major city in the north. He would lure victims to his home, poison their wine and then sacrifice them to Asmodeus on his hidden altar. His only regret about joining “The White Ravens” is that he hasn’t gotten to perform a human sacrifice in some time. Trak knows about Trik’s “little problem” and quietly condones it while urging caution.

These four do not have an important role to play in this adventure. They will be fully fleshed out in Book II. For now, suffice to say that they are potential rivals to the PCs. They are here for almost the exact same reason – to be recruited into the Knot of Thorns. They have all accepted Thorn’s offer and signed their own version of the Pact of Thorns. They have not escaped from prison and are unbranded. Instead they were smuggled into Talingarde via a merchant vessel that arrived in Varyston just a few days ago.

If for any reason conflict erupts between the two groups, Tiadora is quickly on the scene to end the fight. Elise and Trik are also potential romantic interests if such subplots are of interest to your group. Anyone who begins courting the witch will learn two things. First, Elise is impressed only by power. Second, the suitor has instantly earned the undying enmity of Trak.

“The White Ravens” have also received holy symbols and *iron circlets*.

EVENT THREE: THE CRUEL LESSONS OF MASTER THORN

After the three days, the PCs are once again summoned by Cardinal Thorn:

“Have you enjoyed your gifts? The iron circlets allow you to move amongst your enemies as one of them. The silver amulets will remind you of your true loyalties. And the other items – well, you need them now.

“You have done well to escape from Branderscar and to accept my offer. However, you are still not ready for my service. Tiadora will lead you to the basement of this domicile. There you will find nine chambers each more dangerous than the last. Somewhere hidden within these chambers is a pendant of silver and sapphire. Recover the pendant and bring it to me. Let nothing and no one stand in your way.”

He stands up and looks out of the manor house window across the grey moor. “It’s almost dusk. You have until dusk tomorrow to bring me my prize. Do not fail me.”

Cardinal Thorn takes a seat at his desk. Tiadora arrives right on cue. “This way,” is all she says.

Thorn answers no questions. Tiadora answers a few.

Question: “What does this pendant look like?”

Answer: “You will know it.”

Question: “Should we be ready for a fight?”

Answer: “You are servants of Asmodeus in Talingarde. You should always be ready for battle.”

Question: “What is down there?”

Answer: “The master has already told you all you need to know.”

Question: “No, really. What’s down there?”

Answer: “Monsters. Death. Worse.”

Question: “Can we bring Grumblejack?”

Answer: “Use whatever resources you wish.”

Question: “Can we leave the basement to rest and come back later?”

Answer: “You may go wherever you wish within the manor. But the pendant is in the basement, not in your bed chambers. I will warn you -- our master takes failure ... poorly.”

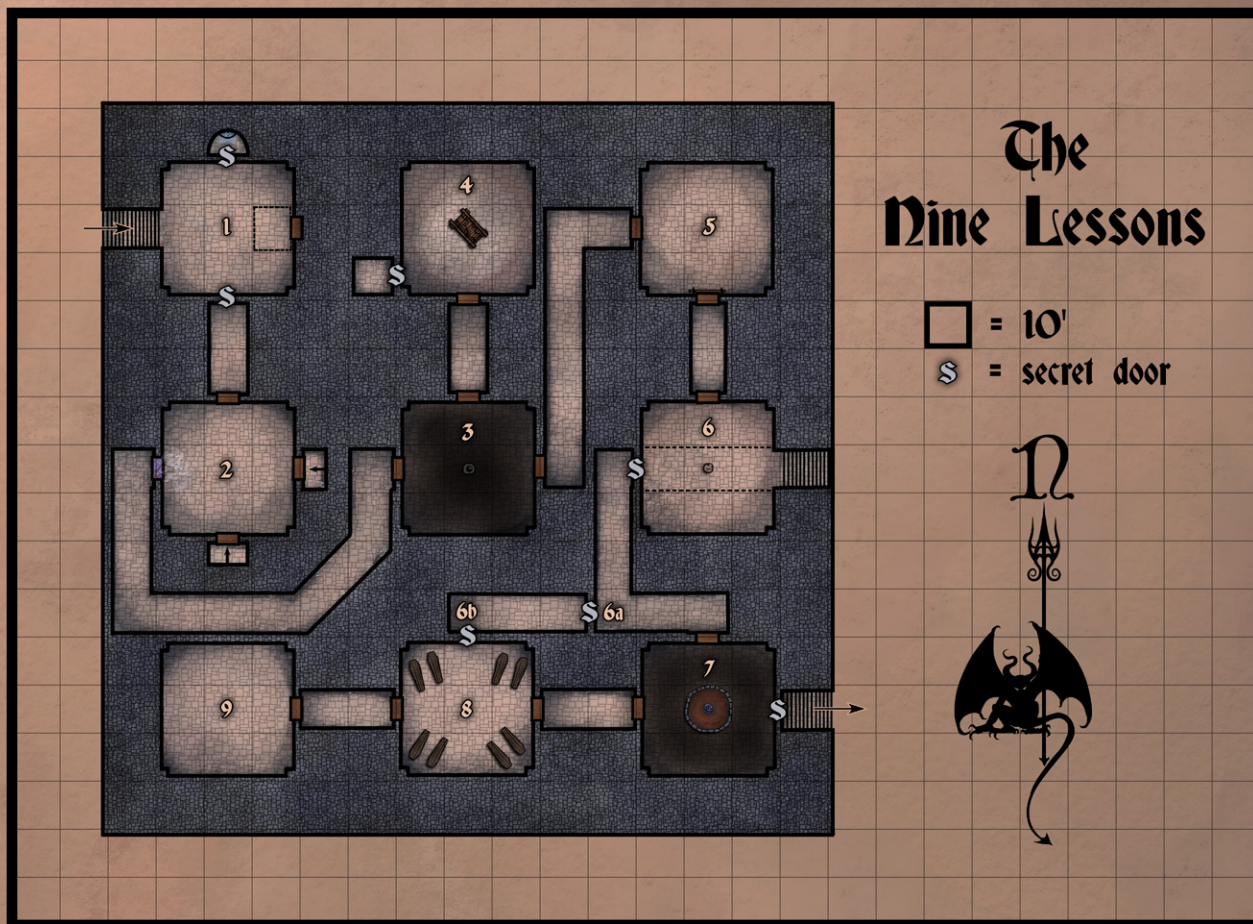
Tiadora leads them to a set of stairs. “Below you will find the Nine Lessons.” She leaves without any further explanation.

THE NINE LESSONS

When Adrastus took over this manor house some years ago, he had the basement transformed into a training area for his new agents. Since then, several groups have been tested by the Nine Lessons. The PCs are only the most recent to face its perils. The purpose of this gauntlet is two-fold.

First, it weeds out the weak. Adrastus’ plan for Talingarde is a carefully crafted clockwork of conspiracy. He can ill afford failure. He wants to be sure that anyone he sends on a mission is capable of the task. Here is where he makes sure.

Second, it gives him an opportunity to see his pawns in action. He can appraise their fighting style, their strengths and weaknesses. He wants to know what his knots are capable of. Between the connections and the *iron circlets* it should be no problem to scry the PCs.



The Nine Lessons

□ = 10'
S = secret door

N



His goal here is not to kill his recruits and so most of the traps and dangers are comparatively non-lethal. Still, sometimes death occurs. Thus do the weak reveal themselves unworthy.

1. THE CHAMBER OF DECEPTION

A set of stone stairs leads down, through an archway and into an unfurnished chamber beyond. Inscribed upon the archway in the common tongue is: "Deception is a tool. Self-deception is death. Deceive always thy enemy but never thyself." The room beyond is lit by a small oil lantern hanging from the center of the chamber.

There is a doorway east with a concealed pit trap in front of it. The door is false and opens to a bricked up wall.

Spiked Pit Trap

CR 2

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect 10 foot deep (1d6 falling damage); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee; 1d4 blunted spikes per target for 1d4 damage each); DC 20 Reflex save avoids; multiple targets (everyone standing on the pit).

Carved upon the wall inside the pit near the bottom is the phrase: "Thou wert deceived. Pain is thy reward."

A secret door (DC 20 Perception skill check to discover) hidden in the north wall conceals a small niche. Inside that niche is a small pedestal that holds a jewel that glows with pale blue light. It is cold to the touch. There is another inscription: "Thou hast seen through deception to uncover a useful tool." A successful Appraise skill check (DC 15) will reveal that this 'jewel' is a cleverly crafted bit of sealed quartz. Inside the quartz is *alchemist's ice*. If thrown the jewel breaks and explodes exactly as *alchemist's fire* but instead inflicts cold damage.

The south wall conceals a secret door (DC 20 Perception skill check to discover). This door leads to a passage to the next chamber (room 2).

Award a CR 2 (600 XP) for finding the secret door in the south wall. The PCs receive another CR 2 reward (600 XP) for either surviving or avoiding the pit trap. Award a CR 1 bonus (400 XP) for discovering the hidden jewel.

Act Two: Into the Knot

2. THE CHAMBER OF MANY PATHS

The short passage from the north ends in a wooden door with another inscription: “Following the herd is for fools. Fear not their icy derision. Instead, fear only thy Infernal Lord.”

Inside the stone chamber, there are four doors – each facing a cardinal direction. The entire chamber seems strangely cold. The ground is dirty and dusty and a successful Perception or Survival skill check (DC 10) will reveal that at least a dozen individuals have walked towards the southern and the eastern doors. No one seems to have approached the western door. This room is also lit with a small oil lantern that hangs from the ceiling. There is a small amount of frost on the lantern’s glass panes.

The eastern and southern doors are plain wooden doors. They are trapped with spring loaded javelins.

Javelin Trap CR 2

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger Opening the door; Reset none

Effect Atk +15 ranged (1d6+6) only to those directly in front of the open door.

Behind each trapped door is a small alcove with another inscription: “Thou hast followed the herd.”

The western door is covered in a strange pulsating violet mold. This mold feeds on warmth and is the source of the strange temperature drop. If any living creature moves within five feet of the western door it takes 3d6 nonlethal cold damage. Fire brought within 5 feet of the mold causes it to instantly double in size, growing out into the room, expanding its zone of effect. Cold damage of any sort will destroy it (such as from the cantrip *ray of frost* or from the hidden jewel in room 1). A Knowledge (dungeoneering) skill check (DC 15) will recognize this mold for what it is and reveal its weakness.

If the mold is slain with cold magic, it dies away and the western door is revealed to have an inscription: “Thou hast made thy own path.”

Once the room is resolved award experience for the mold and each javelin trap (triggered or not): 1800 XP total.

The western door leads to a vaguely u-shaped passage that leads to room 3.

3. THE CHAMBER OF DARKNESS

The western door is plain wood with yet another inscription: “Know your enemy. Shatter all that blinds you and then burn thy adversary to ashes.”

The chamber beyond is completely dark, kept that way by a magical globe of obsidian on a podium in the center of the room that radiates darkness as per the *darkness* spell. Normal torches, candles or lanterns will not function within this room. Magical light (such as an *ever-burning torch*) will overcome the darkness however and darkvision will still function.

Vampiric Mist

CR 3

XP 800

NE Medium aberration (air, water)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., sense blood; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 10 (+4 Dex)

hp 30 (4d8+12)

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities amorphous; **DR** 5/magic

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed fly 50 ft. (perfect)

Melee touch +7 (bleed and blood siphon)

Special Attacks bleed (1d6)

TACTICS

During Combat The creature has darkvision and so is unaffected by the magical darkness. It can emerge from or sink back into the floor as a move action. Thus its preferred way to feed is to stealthily emerge, attack a single victim (preferably the one holding the magic light source) hopefully gaining enough blood to be quickened (and thus have two moves). Then it will immediately sink back into the floor. While in the floor it has improved cover against any range attacks and most melee weapons (save for perhaps daggers or rapiers) will not fit through the holes.

Morale The mist will flee back into the floor to cower if it takes more than twenty points of damage.

STATISTICS

Str --, **Dex** 19, **Con** 16, **Int** 7, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +3; **CMB** --; **CMD** --

Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Fly +12, Perception +8, Stealth +11

Languages Aklo

SQ blood overdose, misty form

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blood Siphon (Ex) A vampiric mist drains blood with each melee touch attack dealing 1d3 points of Constitution damage. Every time a vampiric mist damages a creature in this way, it heals 1d8 hit points. Hit points healed in excess of its maximum are gained as temporary hit points, to a maximum amount equal to its Constitution score. These temporary hit points last for 1 hour.

Blood Overdose (Su) When a vampiric mist gorges on blood to an extent that it gains temporary hit points, it moves much more quickly. It gains a +2 dodge bonus to its Armor Class and on Reflex saves, and can take one additional move action each round.

Misty Form (Ex) A vampiric mist’s body is composed of a semisolid red mist similar in consistency to thick foam. The vampiric mist does not have a Strength score, and it cannot manipulate or wear solid objects. This form grants it the amorphous defensive ability, and allows it to move through areas as small as 1 inch in diameter with no reduction to its speed. The creature can speak in a hissing voice. A vampiric mist cannot enter water or other fluids, and is treated as a creature two size categories smaller than its actual size (Tiny for most vampiric mists) for the purposes of how wind affects it.

Sense Blood (Ex) A vampiric mist can immediately sense the presence of warm-blooded creatures in a 60-foot radius as if by scent. It can detect exposed blood within a mile.

If the globe of volcanic glass is shattered (hardness 2; 5 hp) then the darkness will also extinguish. This globe will function for 24 hours and then return to being a non-magical lump of obsidian worth 20 gp.

A vampiric mist lives under the room in a small hollow space. There are small holes (one inch in diameter) in the floor at regular intervals that allow it to flow into the chamber freely. Hungry but intelligent it will not leave this chamber as it has been tormented by Cardinal Thorn and threatened if it abandons its post. It will however defend the globe (recognizing it as the source of its beloved darkness) and try to destroy any magical light source that overcomes it.

If somehow communicated with (it speaks only Aklo) and convinced to aid the PCs (say if they feed it one of the slaves from up above), then it knows nothing of the rest of the maze. If brought out of the maze, it immediately attempts to flee hoping to make it to a nearby sewer before daybreak to feed on a human population.

There are two doors in this room – one leading north and one leading east. They are both barred. It is easy enough for the heavy bar to be removed with a full round action in adequate light. Fumbling around in the dark, removing the bar is deliberately impossible.

Award a CR 2 reward for overcoming the darkness (600 XP) and of course a CR 3 for defeating the vampiric mist.

4. TIMEON'S REDOUBT

A short passage leads north from room 3. At the end of the passage is another wooden door. Unsurprisingly the door is inscribed with yet another platitude: "Cruelty is a tool not a pastime. Be ruthless to thy enemy but reward those who serve thee well."

There is only one thing in this room – a torturer's rack. This cruel implement is functional and ready for use but currently empty. The chamber is lit by an oil lantern that hangs from the center of the room. There is nothing else obvious here.

Hiding in a secret chamber (DC 20 Perception skill check to find) is a terrified squire named Timeon of Balentyne. Timeon is Sir Balin's squire (see room 9. below). He was kidnapped at the same time Sir Balin was taken and is utterly locked in the grip of fear.

Cardinal Thorn attacked him, wounded him and then let him flee. The squire found this secret redoubt and managed to get the door closed before the Cardinal could find him. Of course the whole scene was carefully staged by Adrastus.

Timeon is young and gullible. He knows his master was also captured and knows well his fighting prowess. Thorn has spoon-fed Timeon information about the rest of the dungeon. While "searching" for Timeon (who was hidden in his closet), Timeon overheard Thorn talking about the dungeon with Tiadora.

Timeon knows from those conversations that no one can escape these chambers of death because:

- there are vicious metal cobras in a nearby room (room 5)
- a secret door across from the stairs hides the way out (room 6)
- a shrieker screams when there is light or movement nearby (room 7)
- that four drowned men rise when the shrieker cries (room 8)

He knows nothing else. He also isn't sure where Sir Balin is kept. "I hope he escaped this terrible mad house!"

Timeon will not voluntarily help any follower of Asmodeus (he is a devout Mitran after all) but he is easily deceived. Timeon is in the middle of a crisis of faith. Why has Mitra deserted him? Why is he made to suffer so? He would not easily be corrupted but it's not impossible.

Timeon has useful information beyond the scope of the Cardinal's test. He is a lesser son of House Balentyne, a family with estates near the Watch Wall. He has been inside the Tower Balentyne (see Act Four) and has met Sir Thomas Havelyn, its commander. He could draw a crude map of the tower, knows where the rookery is and its importance, and even knows that Captain Eddarly is having an affair with Captain Mott's wife (again see Act Four). Cardinal Thorn doesn't know Timeon has this information or he would not be squandering the squire on this trial. Bringing this to Cardinal Thorn's attention impresses him greatly. Of course, the PCs do not know they are going to the Watch Wall, so they will not yet appreciate how valuable this information could be.



Squire Timeon

If racked, Timeon breaks easily and is quick to divulge all he knows in hopes of bringing the torture to an end.

Squire Timeon of Balentyne CR 1/4

XP 100

Male human aristocrat 1

LG Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses Perception -1

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 5 (1d8+1) (currently 2)

Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee longsword +2 (1d8+1/19-20x2) [he has no longsword currently]; unarmed +1 (1d3+1 non-lethal; provokes AoO)

Ranged shortbow +1 (1d6/x3)

TACTICS

During Combat Unarmed, wounded and frightened, Timeon does not fight unless he has no other choice.

Morale Timeon is a terrified boy. He surrenders if threatened.

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 10

Base Atk +0; CMB +1; CMD 12

Feats Animal Affinity, Weapon Focus (Longsword)

Skills Craft (armor) +3, Craft (weapons) +3, Handle Animal +6, Knowledge (nobility) +3, Ride +6

Languages Common

Combat Gear chain shirt, dirty tabard

Note: Timeon is currently unarmed and hurt, so his challenge rating has been reduced.

Note: Timeon is currently unarmed and hurt, so his challenge rating has been reduced.

If the PCs simply kill Timeon award them XP for killing him (100 XP). If they instead question him and learn about the dungeon and Sir Balin from him award them 400 XP. If they also learn about Balentyne then award them a bonus of a further 600 XP.

5. THE CHAMBER OF MIGHT

A passage connects Room 3 to this room. Upon the door is an inscription: "The chosen are revealed by their might. The weak deserve no sympathy."

This chamber houses two mithral cobras commanded to attack all who enter. The cobras bite bears a paralytic poison but otherwise are quite lethal.

This chamber is lit by an oil lantern hanging from its center. There is nothing else of interest here. The constructs have no treasure per se but their smashed forms are worth 1000 gp each (the scavenged mithral alloy weighs 10 lbs. each).

South is a barred door. The bar is heavy but easily lifted with a full round action.

Mithral Cobras (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

N Small construct

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+4 Dex, +7 natural, +1 size)

hp 15 (1d10+10)

Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0

DR 5/—; Immune construct traits; SR 13

OFFENSE

Speed 70 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d6+1 plus poison)

TACTICS

During Combat These automatons attack any who intrude on their domain. Their only self-restraint is that they have been ordered not to coup-de-grace any who falls before them.

Morale These mindless automatons fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 19, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Base Atk +1; CMB +1; CMD 15 (can't be tripped)

Skills Stealth +14; Racial Modifiers +6 Stealth

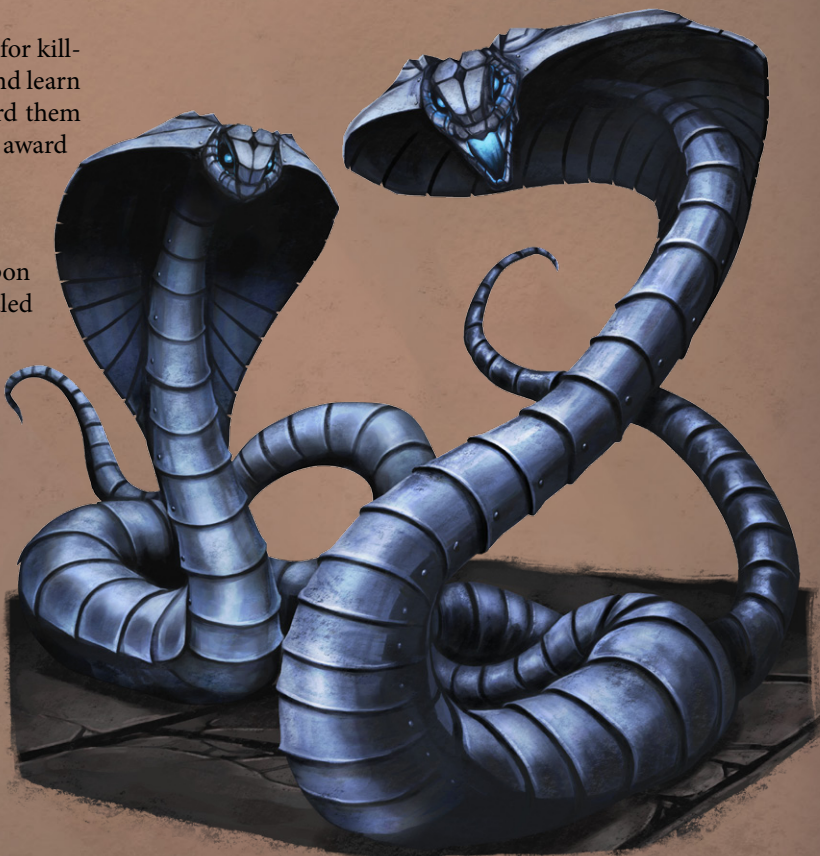
SQ find target

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Find Target (Su) Once per day, a mithral cobra's creator can order it to find and kill a specific creature within 1 mile, which it does as if guided by *discern location*. The creator must have seen or be holding an item from the specified creature for this order to function.

Poison (Ex) These mithral cobras have been equipped with a non-lethal paralytic. The poison reservoir holds enough poison for three successful bite attacks, after which the creature merely deals bite damage.

Paralytic Poison: Bite—injury; save Fort DC 11; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Dex damage; cure 1 save.



6. THE CHAMBER OF SIN

The northern door also bears an inscription: "Suffer not the fool. Stupidity is our faith's cardinal sin."

Beyond is a square chamber with a podium in its center. The chamber is lit only by a hanging oil lantern.

Upon the podium lies a pendant of silver -- a dragon with sapphire eyes. Closer examination (Perception or Appraise DC 15) reveals that the sapphires are merely cheap costume jewelry -- little more than cut glass. The pendant is silver though of no great craftsmanship and worth 5 gp. The podium is not trapped.

There is also a stairway leading up to the east. If anyone steps on these stairs, there is an immediately metallic click and a heavy spiked ball almost ten feet across smashes down the stairs and across the room.

Anyone on the stairs or between the two dashed lines marked on the map is in grave danger of being crushed. The podium is wrecked and, if the pendant is still on it, its eyes are revealed as fragile glass. The ball bounces off the far wall and comes to rest in the northwest corner of the room.

Spiked Ball Trap

CR 3

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location (the stairs); Reset manual

Effect 3d6 bludgeoning and piercing damage; DC 20 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets in path of the spiked ball).

The stairs dead end at a stone wall with an inscription: "Only the foolish believe great deeds are so easy or so obvious."

There is a secret door on the west wall (DC 20 Perception to discover). Beyond it is an L-shaped stone passage way that leads to room 7.

If the PCs bring the pendant in this chamber to Thorn, he takes the trinket as if to examine it. He carefully looks the dragon pendant over and seems about to speak when instead he slams it against his desk. The glass eyes shatter.

"Silver, yes. Sapphire, no. You disappoint me. Now bring me my pendant. Do not disappoint me again."

With a wave of his hand, he dismisses them. Hopefully, they still have time enough to retry.

When they successfully exit this room, award the PCs experience for surviving or avoiding the trap (800 XP).

6a. This marks another secret door (DC 20 Perception to discover) that allows a thorough party to bypass the shrieker in Room 7. It leads to another similar secret door at the end of the short hallway. This second secret door (6b) is obvious from the north side. There is an inscription at 6b. It reads: "Beware the fallen for they may rise once more to threaten you." This refers to Room 8 beyond the secret door.

7. THE CHAMBER OF THE SHRIEKER

There is an inscription upon the door: "Secrecy is our greatest ally. Exposure brings death."

This room is completely dark. In the center of this stone chamber is a patch of bare earth surrounded by a two inch tall brick circle. From the soil grows a man-sized purple mushroom with a strange bulbous cap. This is the shrieker and if light shines on it or any movement occurs within ten feet of the mushroom it emits an almost impossibly loud, piercing wail. This wail persists for 1d3 rounds after the stimulus is removed. Within the chamber and the nearby rooms all sound is drowned out by this racket. Even the slaves working in the upper levels of the manor house hear a fainting screaming.

The shrieker is not durable. Any damage will kill it but the shriek will persist for the full duration (though it will never shriek again).

Immediately, two things happen. First, the four draugr in room 8 (see below) burst out of their coffins and begin moving towards the shrieker's chamber. The undead arrive in three rounds, ripping through the two doors that separate room 7 from 8. If the PCs flee the shrieker room, for the duration of this act the draugr remain in chamber 7 awaiting the return of whoever activated the trap. Note that the draugr can still see into room 8 and will only abandon their new post if someone living moves in room 8.

Second, Sir Balin (room 9.) hears the wail and realizes that something is nearby. He immediately steels himself for a fight.

Besides the mushroom, the eastern wall has a secret door. This secret door (DC 20) conceals a set of stairs leading up and out. These stairs, it should be noted, are completely unnecessary to escape this dungeon. There is nothing stopping the PCs from backtracking and using the same stairs they entered through.

If the shrieker is killed award 600 XP. If it is avoided altogether, still award 600 XP when the pendant is removed from the dungeon.

8. THE CHAMBER OF THE RISEN

This is inscribed upon the door from the east: “Beware the fallen for they may rise once more to threaten you.”

This square stone chamber is lit by a small oil lantern that hangs from the center ceiling. It has eight battered wooden coffins that are encrusted with salt brine, barnacles and dried sea weed. Four of these coffins contain only a corpse of a drowned sailor. Four of the coffins instead hold a draugr, a dead sailor arisen from his sea-grave through necromantic magic. Under Thorn’s control, these undead have been commanded to sleep until the living enter their presence once more. The shrieker’s cry in Room 7 will awaken all of them. However, if the PCs are quiet these creatures will awaken slowly making this potentially deadly fight much easier.

As soon as the draugr detect an intruder in the room, roll 1d6 for each draugr. That draugr awakens in that many rounds. On the round they “awaken” they burst out of their moldering, rotten, waterlogged coffin and stand up. The next round they fight normally, attacking the nearest living creature with their great axes.

The draugr have no treasure. Their rotted waterlogged armor and rusted, barnacle encrusted great axes hold little value.

Draugr (4)	CR 2
XP 600 (2400 XP total)	
CE Medium undead (water)	
Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft., Perception +6	
DEFENSE	
AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +2 natural)	
hp 19 (3d8+6)	
Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3	
DR 5/bludgeoning or slashing; Immune undead traits; Resist fire 10	
OFFENSE	
Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft. (they are slowed by their shackled feet)	
Melee greataxe +5 (1d12+4/x3 plus nausea) or slam +5 (1d10+4 plus nausea)	
TACTICS	
During Combat These undead monstrosities seek only the death of every living being they encounter. They cannot be bargained with or appeased, they can only be put down.	
Morale These undead do not fear death. Indeed they welcome release. They fight till they are hewn apart.	
STATISTICS	
Str 17, Dex 10, Con --, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 13	
Base Atk +2; CMB +5; CMD 15	
Feats Power Attack, Toughness	
Skills Climb +9, Perception +6, Stealth +6, Swim +11; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim	
Languages Common (cannot speak)	
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Nausea (Su) A creature that is damaged by a draugr must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Charisma-based.	

9. SIR BALIN’S CELL

This door is wooden and reinforced with iron bands. It is locked with a good lock (DC 30 to pick). It bears an inscription: “Serve thy master well and be rewarded.” Hanging beside the door on a peg is a heavy iron key that unlocks the door.

Sir Balin of Karfeld waits in this cell. He is a captured knight of the Alerion order and is personally famous for hunting followers of Asmodeus. A Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility) DC 15 skill check will reveal this. He may have been instrumental in capturing one or more of the PCs. Even if he is not personally responsible, he is a member of the same military force that captured each of them. He is Cardinal Thorn’s gift of vengeance to his new knot.

The knight woke up here with food, water, his arms and armor, two days ago. He was badly wounded in the battle to capture him, but his wounds were all magically healed when he awoke. He has tried to force the door many times but has failed utterly to break the iron bands that strengthen it. He wears around his neck a sunburst of silver and sapphire -- a holy symbol of Mitra. This is of course the pendant that our villains seek.

Unless one of the PCs openly wears a holy symbol of Asmodeus, the knight is unlikely to attack immediately. He will demand instead to know what is going on and why he is being held. A simple man, Sir Balin is uncertain and confused why he is here or even where here is. He is sure that devilry and witchcraft must be at the root of it. He is completely correct in that belief.

If the PCs have Timeon as a prisoner, Sir Balin will demand his squire’s release but stay his hand if the knight fears for the boy. Sir Balin will trade his pendant for Timeon’s safety and a promise of their release. Of course, if the PCs make such a promise Cardinal Thorn will never honor it. Tiadora will slaughter Sir Balin and Squire Timeon with sadistic glee if the pair gets anywhere near escaping.

Sir Balin is an honorable man and takes seriously any oaths he makes. He hates Asmodean devotees passionately and if the knight catches wind of any such worship or recognizes any of his previous captures, he will refuse to deal with those individuals and will do all he can slay the followers of the Dark Prince.

He will also refuse to make any deals with someone who reveals their forsaken mark from Branderscar. “A Forsaken of Mitra!” he says if the mark is shown. “I know not what devilry has allowed you to be free, but I swear by the Shining Lord that I will see this injustice righted!”

Sir Balin, a captured Knight of The Alerion Order**CR 4****XP 1200**

Human fighter 5

LG Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +2**DEFENSE****AC** 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21 (+9 armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex)**hp** 42 (5d10 +20)**Fort** +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6 (+1 vs. fear)**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** long sword +11 (1d8+7/19-20x2)

dagger +9 (1d4+4/19-20x2)

Special Attacks weapon training (heavy blades +1)**TACTICS**

During Combat Sir Balin is a very straightforward and honorable opponent. He attacks fiercely using Cleave and Step Up feats to full effect.

Morale Sir Balin will not surrender. He fights to the death like the fanatic he is.

STATISTICS**Str** 18, **Dex** 12, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +5, **CMB** +9, **CMD** 20**Feats** Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack, Step Up, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)**Skills** Intimidate +5, Knowledge (nobility) +1, Knowledge (religion) +8, Ride +7, Survival +7**Languages** Common**SQ** armor training 1

Trait Child of the Temple: +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (nobility) and Knowledge (religion) and Knowledge (religion) is a class skill for Sir Balin.

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*

Other Gear longsword, dagger, *cloak of resistance* +1, masterwork full plate, heavy steel shield, silver and sapphire holy symbol of Mitra (250 gp)

Talking with Sir Balin ultimately is fruitless. He makes a lot of demands and refuses to concede that he is in an untenable situation. "Mitra will protect me," is his final refuge if confronted that he is captured and cornered. He knows little of any real worth – he is a traveling, errant knight after all. He is not privy to any secret military information. He could command a modest ransom from his order but Cardinal Thorn would never allow that. He is exactly what he appears to be – a devout knight fanatically devoted to his god, his king and his homeland. Cardinal Thorn hopes that this unyielding nature will lead his newest knot to slaughter the knight. He will watch the carnage from his study with infernal glee.

ENDING THE ACT

The PCs either succeed at recovering Sir Balin's pendant in twenty four hours or they fail. Either way, after twenty four hours, this act is over.

SUCCESS

Adrastus sits in his study seeming almost as he has moved not an inch from where he gave you your orders at dusk yesterday. "You've returned."

Of course Adrastus knows whether they have the pendant. He's been studiously scrying them for hours. Presumably the PCs give him the pendant.

The high priest holds the trinket and pauses as if in deep contemplation. He watches the holy symbol glitter in the light. "A pretty enough thing, eh?" he muses. "This is a holy symbol of Mitra in particular the sort favored by the Knights of the Alerion. Perhaps you already knew that."



Act Two: Into the Knot

"Remember this symbol. This is the mark of those who destroyed our faith and sought to banish all trace of the worship of our Father from these shores. These, my friends, are your enemies."

He tosses the holy symbol to whoever gave it to him.

"Keep it. It may aid you in disguising yourself."

Though he does not mention this, it is also valuable – worth 250 gp if they sell it.

He smiles. "You have done well. Escaping from Branderscar, slaughtering Sir Balin ... yes, you are worthy. Now, let us complete your training..."

Story Award: Award the PCs 800 XP for completing Thorn's errand.

FAILURE

If the PCs fail to deliver the holy symbol or have to be rescued from the dungeon by Tiadora, then Adrastus is greatly displeased.

"It seems I have erred. I thought you worthy of service to the mighty Asmodeus. But what use could our dark father possibility have for such bumbling incompetence. It seems we have work to do. I will train you but first I want you to remember this failure. I want you to remember its cost. Tiadora, help them never forget. No marks, my dear. At least nothing physical."

Adrastus gives them to Tiadora for a night. This consort of the damned tortures them and gives them a vision of what hell has to offer. If they try to flee, Tiadora is upon them perhaps revealing her true self.

Do not describe the specifics of the torture. Instead read merely this:

The door slams shut on Tiadora's sanctum beneath the manor house. Whatever you imagined would happen in that chamber of horrors that night, what actually happened was far worse.

Everyone emerges from the torture with 1d8 points of temporary ability damage spread over their physical ability scores. It heals completely over the course of the training.

ADRASTUS' TRAINING

After viewing the Nine Lessons using *greater scrying*, the Cardinal has learned enough to truly train the Knot. He spends three months working with them, honing them into his perfect weapons. This is best done as a montage.

He keeps the characters carefully sequestered. Their physical needs are taken care of. Tiadora aids him in the training and is revealed again and again as cruel sadist who revels in their failure and suffering. The slaves are present during the entire ordeal performing more menial tasks.

Cardinal Thorn may be a paranoid monster obsessed with revenge but he is also a genius and a teacher par excellence. His lessons are focused and never wasteful. He drills them not only individually but also as a team. He is forging them into a knot.

There are benefits to this training. First, this is the perfect excuse to again 'level up' the PCs. They should be third level and so explain their gain in power as part of the training. Additionally, everyone receives a new trait (so in effect they now have three traits – their background trait, their crime trait and Adrastus' training trait).

Each PC may pick one of these ten traits below. More than most lists, these should be treated as only examples. By now, you should know your characters. Design custom traits to better suit their particular interests.

"Asmodeus is with you." Adrastus Thorn indoctrinates you into the deeper mysteries of worshipping the Prince of Hell. Whenever you channel energy, you gain a +1 trait bonus to the save DC of your channeled energy.

"Deception is a tool. Master it." Adrastus Thorn teaches you the subtle arts of deception and how to sense when they are being used against you. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Bluff and Sense Motive.

"Discover what is real and what is illusion." Adrastus has taught you to see through deceptions and to never lie to yourself. You gain a +2 trait bonus on saving throws against illusions.

"Fear nothing save our dread lord." Adrastus Thorn has shown you fear and taught you to master it within yourself. You gain a +2 trait bonus on saving throws against fear effects.

"Focus strengthens your will." Adrastus Thorn drills you on ways to avoid magic that seek to take control of your mind and divert you from your mission. You gain a +2 trait bonus on saving throws against charm and compulsion effects.

"Let us perfect your favorite spell" Adrastus Thorn drills you again and again in the use of one particular spell. Pick one spell. This spell's effects manifest at +1 caster level.

“Quiet as death” The Cardinal trained in the arts of being silent and stealthy. You gain a +2 trait bonus to Stealth checks.

“Strike first, strike ruthlessly and thus be victorious” Cardinal Thorn has taught you never to shirk or hesitate in a combat. You gain a +2 trait bonus on Initiative checks.

“Wear your armor like a second skin.” You have drilled extensively in wearing armor in combat. When you wear armor of any sort, reduce that suit’s armor check penalty by 1 to a minimum check penalty of 0.

“You shall be my angel slayer.” Adrastus thorn spends exhausting amounts of time teaching you about good celestials, their strengths and weaknesses. You gain a +2 trait bonus on Knowledge (planes) checks about good-aligned celestials and receive a +1 trait bonus to any damage roll you make against them.

Thorn is not always with them and it soon becomes apparent that they are not the only ones being trained. The former “White Ravens” under Elise Zadaria are also receiving the Cardinal’s attentions. There is a potential for roleplay and rivalry here, if the Game Master cares to develop it.

After the training is finished, Adrastus pronounces them ready and holds a great banquet in their honor. He awards them the title of the Nessian Knot in an infernal ritual involving blood and fire. During the ritual he summons forth a barbed devil and offers to it one of the slaves of the PC’s choosing. The devil gleeful rips the slave apart and feasts on the blood. Adrastus then draws forth some of the devil’s blood with a silver athame. Adrastus traces the unholy symbol of Asmodeus on the forehead of each PC in the mingled blood of devil and sacrifice.

Behold he proclaims, “The Nessian Knot is forged.”

“Just in time,” Cardinal Thorn remarks. “My ship has arrived.” On the river dock behind the manor under cover of darkness, a square-sailed longship sails into the slip. It sits heavily in the water, laden with a substantial cargo.

ACT THREE: FIRE-AXE

THORN’S COMMANDMENTS

Training is at an end and it is time to unleash the two newest knots upon the world. First, Thorn summons Elise Zadaria, head of the seventh knot, into his private chambers for a secret consultation. He is setting her upon a mission of murder in the north. It will be her assignment to carry out the targeted disgrace and assassination of key members of the nobility and military. She will ensure that Talingarde is ill prepared for an invasion. Elise accepts her mission eager to prove herself to her new master.

Then Cardinal Thorn summons his ninth knot. Since they lack so clear a leader, he summons them all.

“Welcome, my children,” he says in a deep resonant voice that has an almost inhuman quality to it. “Training is at an end. You have proven yourself worthy. Now, it is time for you to use that training and take on your first mission.”

“Your mission is war, my children. You will bring war to Talingarde.”

“You have two objectives. First, you will see a shipment of munitions delivered to a bugbear chieftain named Sakkarot Fire-Axe. He makes his camp on the northern coast of Lake Tarik beyond the Watch Wall. With this shipment, the Fire-Axe will have resources enough to unite the barbarous humanoid tribes of the north and light the fire of war.”

“Sitting on the dock as we speak is the longship Frosthamar captained by Kargeld Odenkirk. Tomorrow when the ship is resupplied it will be your transport. The captain is a ruthless mercenary and not to be trusted. He knows nothing of the specifics of our mission and you should keep it that way. He knows he is smuggling cargo to the north beyond the Watch Wall. That is all he need know.”

“Once the cargo is safely delivered, he will take you just south across the lake under cover of darkness and land you near the town of Aldencross. There our contract with Captain Odenkirk will be concluded.”



"It is shame how greedy he has proven. I had hoped to let the captain serve me again but it seems he is too much of a liability. Kill him. Kill his crew. Burn his ship and leave no survivors. It is crucial that no one suspects our involvement and that loose ends are taken care of. Be sure to reclaim the coin I gave him. Best not to be wasteful."

"That done, you will begin your second task. We will do more still to aid our ally the Fire-axe. The bugbears are mighty warriors but poor siege engineers. You will infiltrate the tower Balentyne, keystone of the Watch Wall, kill its commander and open the gate for Sakkarot's horde."

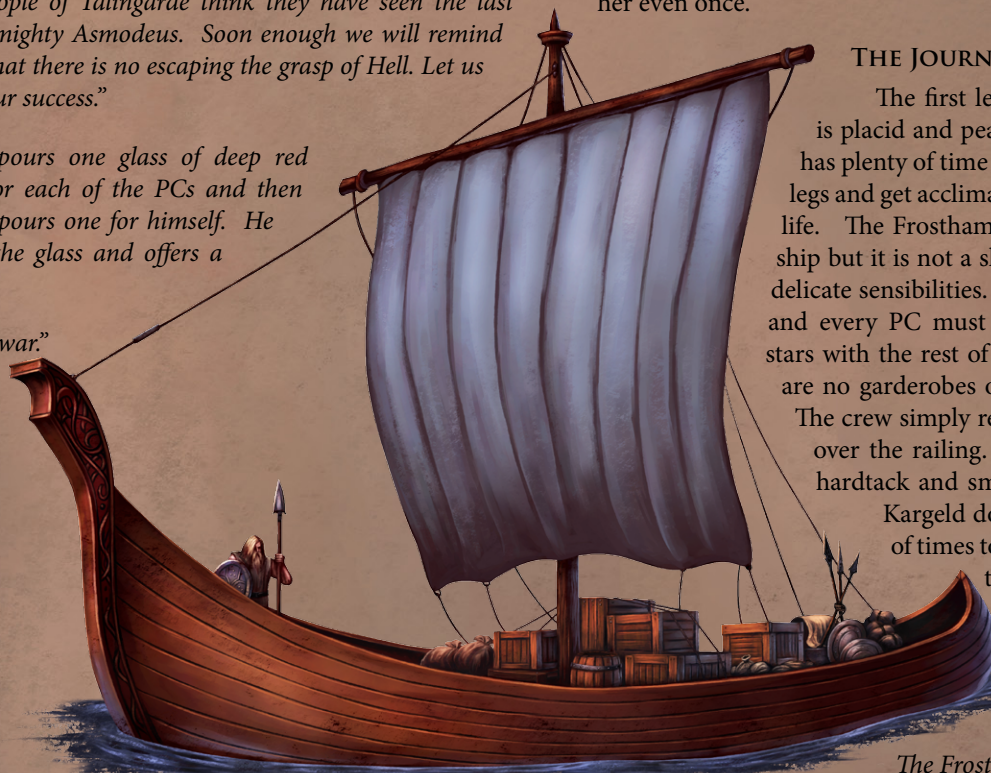
"Once the shaggy monstrosities pierce the Watch Wall, the bugbears will pillage and lay waste to the townships of the north and the local garrisons will have no choice but to meet the Fire-Axe in the open field. Sakkarot is the most brilliant, gifted and murderous bugbear of his generation. I expect these battles will go poorly for the knights and yeoman of fair Talingarde."

"Do all of this and then when your task is done, break this clay seal." He hands them a delicately carved clay seal adorned with a tangled knot of thorns surrounding the holy symbol of Asmodeus. "I will have more instructions then. Succeed and I will see you rewarded handsomely. Fail or betray me and you will pray for the comfort of Hell before I am done with you."

"The mission you start upon today is a holy mission. The people of Talingarde think they have seen the last of the mighty Asmodeus. Soon enough we will remind them that there is no escaping the grasp of Hell. Let us toast our success."

He pours one glass of deep red wine for each of the PCs and then finally pours one for himself. He raises the glass and offers a toast.

"To war."



The Frosthamar

THE FROSTHAMAR

The Frosthamar is a single-masted knarr with a square sail. It is similar to a Viking longship but wider and with a deeper hull better suited to carrying cargo. And the Frosthamar is obviously loaded with cargo. Sitting heavy in the water, she holds twenty four tons of weaponry, arrows and shields emblazoned with a flaming axe.

The captain is a grizzled north-man with a wiry beard, pale blonde hair and countless scars. This is Kargeld Odenkirk and he is, as promised, a ruthless mercenary with little thought of anyone but himself. His crew consists of a half dozen grim sailors who speak little of the common Talirean tongue.

"You will guard our boat all the way north, yes?" he asks of whomever he decides is the leader of the PCs.

If answered yes, then he grunts his assent. "Then I will take you to the cursed north past hope and life."

That is about the extent of grim Kargeld's small talk.

For all Kargeld's grimness, the Frosthamar is a fine ship, seaworthy and strong hulled. Its clinker-built hull is resilient but flexible and well suited to surviving the rough icy seas of the northern ocean. It is smartly rigged and lovingly maintained. Kargeld, it seems, loves nothing save for this ship. And if you want to immediately earn Kargeld's undying enmity all you need do is insult her even once.

THE JOURNEY NORTH

The first leg of the journey is placid and peaceful. Everyone has plenty of time to gain their sea-legs and get acclimated to shipboard life. The Frosthamar may be a fine ship but it is not a ship that caters to delicate sensibilities. It has no cabins and every PC must sleep under the stars with the rest of the crew. There are no garderobes or chamber pots. The crew simply relieve themselves over the railing. The rations are hardtack and small beer, though Kargeld does stop a couple of times to hunt deer along the wilder part of the coasts.

It takes half a day to sail down the Varnyn River and out into the open ocean. The Frosthamar hugs the coast and from the ship you can see countless farming communities and fishing villages go by. More than a few fishermen wave at the Frosthamar. Kargeld is always sure to wave back. "Wouldn't want 'em to get suspicious, eh?" he says with a glower.

The Frosthamar is not swift so heavily-laden and averages about forty eight miles a day. It takes a week for the ship to pass along the settled coast of Talingarde passing the great city of Daveryn, the largest center of civilization along the western coast. Kargeld is quick to squash any talk of stopping there. "This is no pleasure cruise. Besides, I won't get our cargo within a mile of a Talirean harbormaster."

It is only when the ship gets into the far north just abound beyond the Watch Wall that the seas get dangerous. Detailed below are eight events – five before the bugbear camp, two in the camp, and one after. There is no reason why there couldn't be more. The north is a dangerous place.

EVENT ONE: THE BLADE OF ST. MARTIUS

Close to the Watch Wall, a single small patrol ship named "The Blade of St. Martius" spots the Frosthamar and sails towards her to investigate. All the PCs and Kargeld (Perception +5) should make a Perception skill check. The highest roll sees the ship first. If no one beats a DC 15 then the patrol ship is unseen until it is almost on top of the heavily laden knarr.

Kargeld grimly pairs down their options, *"She's seen us, sure as damnation. And there is no way the 'Frosthamar' will outrun her loaded like this. One look at our cargo and they'll know us for exactly what we are – weapon smugglers."*

If the PCs beat the DC 15 Perception check, they have about ten minutes before the ship pulls alongside them. If they all missed the approach of "The Blade" then they have less than one.

"The Blade of St. Martius" is smaller than the Frosthamar, a single masted fully-rigged pinnace only thirty feet long. There are thirteen men aboard the ship – a dozen sailors and the captain. They are tasked with patrolling these waters for pirates, smugglers and raiders.

The Frosthamar and its crew look very suspicious to Captain Edward Sambryl even from afar. They're a loaded foreign ship headed north. Captain Sambryl is unsure what that means but very sure he wants to find out.

As soon as the ship gets close enough, the Talirean sailors begin shouting "Heave to in the name of the king!" Kargeld and his men comply, slowing the ship and awaiting the approach. Captain Sambryl and four armed sailors brandishing spears board the "Frosthamar". Captain Sambryl demands to speak to whoever is in charge.

If no action is taken, the situation deteriorates rapidly. If Captain Sambryl or his men are given a brief moment to search the cargo, they are quick to discover weaponry and shields decorated with bugbear emblems. Captain Sambryl very officially places everyone under arrest and orders the ship sailed to the nearby port of Estyllis (pronounced ess-till-us). Kargeld is not about to let his ship be impounded and that is likely when the battle begins.

If the PCs leave the response to Kargeld, violence comes all the faster. Captain Odenkirk waits till Sambryl and four sailors come aboard and then rages, attacking any and all of the Talirean soldiers he can get his hands on. His men follow their captain's lead. See Event Eight for combat statistics on Kargeld and his band.

This could be a dangerous fight. Eight sailors are still aboard "The Blade". They have their bows at the ready just in case there's trouble and take cover behind their ship's gunwale. They focus fire on tougher looking enemies or anyone using magic, hoping to dispatch one a turn. Their volleys can take their toll quickly. Captain Sambryl is a competent swordsman but likely no match for our villains supported by Kargeld and his men.

Captain Edward Sambryl		CR 3
XP 800		
Human warrior 5		
LG Medium humanoid		
Init +0; Senses Perception +3		
DEFENSE		
AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +2 shield)		
hp 37 (5d10+10)		
Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1		
OFFENSE		
Speed 20 ft.		
Melee masterwork longsword +10 (1d8+3/19-20x2)		
dagger +8 (1d4+3/19-20x2)		
TACTICS		
During Combat Captain Sambryl is a man with a well-made longsword and little else. He power attacks the closest foe all the while crying "For Talingarde! For the King!" That is about the extent of his tactics.		
Morale Captain Sambryl fights to the last.		
STATISTICS		
Str 16, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12		
Base Atk +5; CMB +8; CMD 18		
Feats Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)		
Skills Climb +7, Intimidate +9, Perception +3, Sense Motive +4, Swim +7		
Languages Common		
Gear masterwork longsword, dagger, breastplate, heavy steel shield, 22 gp in a small pouch		

Sailor (12)**CR 1/3****XP 135 each (1620 XP total)**

Human warrior 1

NG Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +0**DEFENSE****AC** 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (armor +2, Dex +1)**hp** 8 (1d10+3)**Fort** +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** spear +3 (1d8+2/x3); short sword +3 (1d6+2/19-20x2); dagger +3 (1d4+2/19-20x2)**Ranged** short bow +2 (1d6/x3)**TACTICS****During Combat** These sailors are all very inexperienced combatants. They keep to cover and use their bows if they can. They turn to their spears if they must.**Morale** Too far out to sea to swim for shore, the sailors fight fiercely. Still, if Captain Sambryl and half their number fall, they will surrender and beg for mercy. Odenkirk likely hews the closest fool who drops his weapon. Seeing no quarter is being given, the remainder fight to the last.**STATISTICS****Str** 15, **Dex** 12, **Con** 11, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14**Feats** Skill Focus (Profession [sailor]), Toughness**Skills** Climb +2, Craft (various) +3, Profession (sailor) +7, Survival +1, Swim +2**Language** Common**Gear** spear, short sword, short bow, 20 arrows, dagger, leather armor, belt pouch, 1d8-1 gp

There is an alternative to fighting. Captain Edward Sambryl is not the most brilliant of men. Any reasonable lie or forged document is likely to convince him that the Frosthamar has legitimate business in these waters. Deceptions will be most effective if the PCs use their *iron circlets* to appear as a knight (perhaps Sir Balin) or a soldier who outranks Captain Sambryl. That a knight or officer has business in the north is a believable lie to Sambryl (and thus as a +0 Bluff skill check modifier). There have been all sorts of rumors, after all, that the bugbears are massing.

Captain Sambryl is a devout Mitran and a stickler for the rules. Bribes attempts are immediately rebuffed and ensure that any attempt afterward to persuade him of anything is almost impossible. A visible holy symbol of Asmodeus causes him to draw sword and order an attack. “Devil worshippers!” he cries in genuine horror.

If the PCs do take “The Blade of St. Martius”, there is little in the way of treasure aboard. There are a few weeks of provisions and a gold Mitran sunburst mounted in the captain’s cabin worth 50 gp. Selling “The Blade” itself in Talingarde is impossible. Within a few days, all of the sailor’s along the west coast of Talingarde know the ship is missing. If someone is foolish enough to try to sell a similar ship, it will immediately raise suspicion from the authorities.

Award the PCs full experience for defeating Captain Sambryl and his crew if they pass them by non-violently.

EVENT TWO: THE HOPE OF THE HAUNTED

Dark have been Nerianus’ dreams of late. A haunted triton oracle of Mitra, Nerianus has always been regarded as mad by his tribe. He has foreseen that a great evil is coming and has become convinced that only he can stop it. That great evil is of course the PCs. Nerianus has gathered a small group of triton believers and their dolphin allies and now they move to intercept the PC’s ship.

Nerianus, male triton oracle (mystery of waves) 4**CR 4****XP 1200**

NG Medium outsider (native, water)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +7**DEFENSE****AC** 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+4 natural, +1 Dex, +5 armor)**hp** 31 (4d8+12)**Fort** +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +7**OFFENSE****Speed** 5 ft., swim 30 ft.**Melee** +1 *trident* +4 (1d8+1)**Oracle Spells Known** (CL 4th; concentration +8)2nd level (4/day): *slipstream*, *summon monster II* (small water elemental or 1d3 dolphins only)1st level (7/day): *cure light wounds*, *magic weapon*, *sanctuary*, *touch of the sea*0th level (at will): *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *guidance*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *resistance*, *stabilize*, *virtue***Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 7th; concentration +11)1/day—*summon nature’s ally II* (Small water elemental or 1d3 dolphins only)**TACTICS****Before Combat** Nerianus and the four triton warriors wait until nightfall when the ship has stopped. Before the battle begins Nerianus casts *magic weapon* on each of the four triton’s crossbows (this effect lasts for 4 minutes or 40 rounds). This is noted in their stat blocks. The oracle then casts *sanctuary* on himself. Finally they are ready to strike.**During Combat** They begin the fight by summoning five small water elementals using their daily *summon nature’s ally II* spell upon the deck of the ship. The water elementals are commanded to push anyone they find on the boat into the water. The tritons and the dolphins will deal with them there. If that fails, the warriors will use their crossbows to shoot anyone on deck. As the battle progresses, Nerianus continues to summon more elementals or dolphins depending on what the battle requires, will extend his sanctuary and heal his warriors. He stays back from melee, preferring his warriors to engage while he supports them.**Morale** Nerianus is a religious fanatic and fights to the death. If Nerianus is slain, the other tritons and dolphins retreat in confusion.**STATISTICS****Str** 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 19**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14**Feats** Iron Will, Toughness**Skills** Diplomacy +11, Heal +8, Knowledge (planes) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +5, Swim +8**Languages** Aquan, Common**Combat Gear** +1 *trident*, sea shell and pearl holy symbol of Mitra (worth 100 gp)**Other Gear** Sea-shell armor (as a bone breastplate; fragile – it shatters on a confirmed critical hit)

Dolphins (2) CR 1/2**XP 200 each (400 XP total)**

N Medium animal

Init +2; **Senses** blindsight 120 ft., low-light vision; Perception +9**DEFENSE****AC** 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+2 Dex, +1 natural)**hp** 11 (2d8+2)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1**OFFENSE****Speed** swim 80 ft.**Melee** slam +3 (1d4+1)**STATISTICS****Str** 12, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14**Feats** Weapon Finesse**Skills** Perception +9, Swim +13; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception**SQ** hold breath**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Hold Breath (Ex)** A dolphin can hold its breath for a number of minutes equal to 6 times its Constitution score before it risks drowning.**Small Water Elemental** CR 1**XP 0 (they are figured into the triton's XP total)**

N Small outsider (elemental, extraplanar, water)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4**DEFENSE****AC** 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+6 natural, +1 size)**hp** 13 (2d10+2)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0**Immune** elemental traits**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft., swim 90 ft.**Melee** slam +5 (1d6+3)**Special Attacks** drench, vortex (DC 13, 10–20 ft.), water mastery**STATISTICS****Str** 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 13, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13**Feats** Power Attack**Skills** Acrobatics +4, Escape Artist +4, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +4, Stealth +8, Swim +14**Languages** Aquan**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Drench (Ex)** The elemental's touch puts out non-magical flames of Large size or smaller. The creature can dispel magical fire it touches as *dispel magic* (CL 2nd).**Vortex (Su)** A water elemental can create a whirlpool as a standard action, at will. This ability functions identically to the whirlwind special attack, but can only form underwater and cannot leave the water.**Water Mastery (Ex)** A water elemental gains a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls if both it and its opponent are touching water. If the opponent or the elemental is touching the ground, the elemental takes a –4 penalty on attack and damage rolls. These modifiers apply to bull rush and overrun maneuvers, whether the elemental is initiating or resisting these kinds of attacks.

Once Nerianus is defeated, his dying breath is to whisper these prophetic words: “The shining sun has seen the wickedness you hide in hearts. And thus it will be the son who brings your doom.” This prophecy refers to Sir Richard, the paladin who will become our villains’ nemesis in Book II. He is the son of Lord Thomas Havenlyn, commander of Balentyne, the man they must kill to start the war.

Triton Warriors (4) CR 2**XP 600 each (2400 XP total)**

NG Medium outsider (native, water)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +7**DEFENSE****AC** 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14 (+4 natural)**hp** 19 (3d10+3)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4**OFFENSE****Speed** 5 ft., swim 40 ft.**Melee** masterwork trident +5 (1d8+1)**Ranged** heavy crossbow +4 (1d10+1/19–20)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 7th; concentration +7)1/day—*summon nature's ally* II (Small water elemental or 1d3 dolphins only)**STATISTICS****Str** 12, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14**Feats** Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack**Skills** Craft (any one) +7, Diplomacy +6, Perception +7, Ride +6, Sense Motive +7, Stealth +6, Survival +7, Swim +9**Languages** Aquan, Common**Combat Gear** masterwork trident, heavy crossbow, 10 bolts**EVENT THREE: SEAL ISLE**

Captain Odenkirk is consumed by greed. He took a dangerous mission because of the exorbitant payment promised him. Even that was not enough. When he arrived at the estate to pick up the Knot he demanded more money of Adrastus Thorn. This was foolish as we will see in Event Eight below.

But greed is never sated and now as Odenkirk sails north he knows that he will pass close to one of the richest fur seal harbors in all of Talingarde. Seal Isle is rarely hunted by Talirean fishing boats because it is too far north and too dangerous (for reasons that will become obvious). And so, the captain approaches the PCs.

“We are a little light on fresh water I think. We are passing Seal Isle and there is a stream that feeds into the bay there. We’ll take on water there. I’ll send a party to the shore. Of course, that means we’ll spend a day in some of the richest fur seal hunting grounds all along this coast. I’m thinking of organizing a hunting expedition. Interested?”

If anyone checks his claim that the ship is running low on water, that is patently untrue. While the ship’s water supply is not at one hundred percent, there is more than enough to make it to Fire-Axe’s camp. And if some freak situation does happen where more water is needed, there are small streams and rivers all along the coast.

The harbor at Seal Isle is not en route and will require half a day of additional sailing to reach. The captain is of course just wasting time to make this voyage more personally profitable.

Arguing with the captain or pointing out he's lying just earns his enmity. *"This is my boat! I'm the captain! I say we need water so we get it!"*

For every day spent hunting near Seal Isle, each one of the two boats can make a Survival skill check. One character must lead the hunt and that individual makes the roll. Every other person in the boat may attempt to aid the lead hunter (a DC 10 Survival check to give the leader a +2 bonus). If an aid roll fails, that individual only gets in the way imparting a -2 penalty. Perhaps their clumsy efforts spook the seals.

To catch a seal the leader hunter must beat a DC 15. That catches one seal. For every three better than that, the hunting party catches one additional seal in a day. Each seal has a luxurious fur pelt worth 50 gp. After three days of hunting, the seals flee from Seal Isle and will not be back in such numbers for many months. Thus the maximum number of seal hunting rolls that can be made is six if both boats are deployed. Kargeld will almost certainly lead one of those boats (he has a survival +8) but will claim any pelts that boat collects as his share. Of course, in the long run, this is unlikely to matter (see Event Eight).

Hunting does have its dangers. If the lead hunter ever rolls a natural 1 then the boat has capsized (probably in the excitement of bringing in a struggling seal). The water here is calm but very cold and so everyone in it must make a DC 10 Fortitude save. Failure means the character is *stunned* by the shock for 1d6 rounds and likely begins to drown. After that, the character remains *staggered* until they get out of the numbingly cold water. Successful or not, it takes a Swim skill check (DC 10) to right the boat and get back into it.

However, the true danger here is that a hungry mated pair of bunyips hunts these waters. They have only an animal level of intelligence but are none the less wily hunters who have grown to savor the taste of man-flesh. They are wise enough to not attack larger craft but small seal hunting boats are perfect prey.

The bunyips possess no treasure.

EVENT FOUR: THE WHALE-HUNTERS

At about noon, a sailor or a PC on deck spots a group of small boats hugging the coast headed towards the PC's ship. Closer inspection reveals this group to be three one-man kayaks and a larger open seal-skin canoe called an umiak with four men rowing. These vessels are closing towards the boat and hail it loudly in a broken common tongue.

Bunyip (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each (1600 XP total)

N Medium magical beast (aquatic)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, keen scent 180 ft.; **Perception** +8

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 32 (5d10+5)

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

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., swim 50 ft.

Melee bite +7 (1d8+1/19–20 plus bleed)

Special Attacks bleed (1d6), blood frenzy, roar

TACTICS

Before Combat The bunyips are very stealthy in the water and try to approach unseen.

During Combat They will attempt to capsize a boat by hitting it from below. The bunyips then emerge from the water and roar hoping to panic their prey. The ravenous beasts begin biting panicked prey to death and pulling their corpse-prizes down beneath the waves to be eaten. Each bunyip will only kill two small or medium size victims before it grabs its prey in its mouth and swims away.

Morale The bunyips flee if reduced to eight hit points or below.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 2, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 19

Feats Improved Critical (bite)^B, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Escape Artist +5, Perception +8, Stealth +10, Swim +9;

Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

SQ amphibious

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blood Rage (Ex) A bunyip's blood rage ability activates whenever it detects blood in the water using its keen scent, but otherwise functions as the universal monster rule of the same name.

Roar (Su) A bunyip's roar is supernaturally loud and horrifying. When a bunyip roars (a standard action the creature can perform at will), all hearing creatures with 4 or fewer HD within a 100-foot spread must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, creatures in the area are immune to the roar of that bunyip for 24 hours. This is a sonic, mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

These men are a Yutak hunting party and after a successful season they are headed south hoping to find a Talirean settlement to trade with. The relationship between the native Yutak and the Talireans has never been cordial. But these Yutak are led by a bold young chief who is willing to risk the dangers of the south to engage in trade. The shaman is the only member of this party who speaks common and so he serves as intermediary for trade.

The young chief has recently taken a new name and is known as White Tusk due to the impressive narwhal he slew. The tribesmen possess the large eight foot ivory narwhal horn and are looking to trade it. This great treasure is worth 2000 gp simply for its rarity and the quality of its ivory. It is surprising durable and functions as a masterwork quarterstaff. It is also very easy to enchant.

White Tusk, ambitious young Yutak Chief**CR 3****XP 800**

Human ranger 4

N Medium humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +8**DEFENSE****AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)**hp** 26 (4d8+4)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft. (30 ft. with *longstrider* cast)**Melee** masterwork spear +8 (1d8+2/x3)

bone spear +7 (1d8/x3); fragile (destroyed on a natural '1')

dagger +6 (1d4+2/19-20)

Ranged masterwork spear +7 (1d8+6/x3)

bone spear +6 (1d8+4/x3); fragile (destroyed on a natural '1')

dagger +7 (1d4+2/19-20)

Special Attacks favored enemy (animals +2)**Range Spells Prepared** (CL 1st; concentration +2)1st -- *longstrider***TACTICS****Before Combat** White Tusk casts *longstrider* on himself before approaching the Frosthamar. The spell lasts for four hours.**During Combat** White Tusk prefers melee combat where he can use his masterwork spear to great effect.**Morale** White Tusk is obsessed with appearing fearless and will not retreat.**STATISTICS****Str** 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 19**Feats** Deadly Aim, Dodge, Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (spear)**Skills** Climb +9, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (nature) +5, Perception +8, Ride +10, Stealth +10, Survival +8 (+10 to track), Swim +9**Languages** Yutak**SQ** favored terrain (cold), hunter's bond (to companions), track +2, wild empathy +5**Gear** masterwork hide armor, 5 spears, bone (mostly used for ranged combat), the painted spear (a masterwork metal-headed spear mostly used for melee combat), dagger

If enchanted as a magical staff, rod or wand, subtract its value from the creation cost of the magic item. Creating this item requires one day for each 1,500 gp of the base price (instead of the usual 1,000). Further, they have fifteen walrus tusks of various sizes and quality. In total, the tusks are worth another 1200 gp.

The whale-hunters value metal weapons above all else. They will happily trade ivory two for one. They especially value metal tipped spears and will happily trade 20 gp of ivory for each such weapon. They also do not care about the marks on Talirean weapons. If the PCs took the spears and short swords from the crew of the "Blade of St. Martius" here is the perfect time to trade those in.

Food and useful tools they will trade one for an equal value of ivory. They're also impressed by the mithral salvaged from the cobras. The Yutak believe could work the mithral into fine harpoon heads. If the PCs offer to trade the salvaged 10 lbs. of mithral alloy for the narwhal horn, White Tusk will take the deal.

Joseph Calls-Fire-From-Water, Yutak Medicine Man**CR 2****XP 600**

Middle-aged Human druid 3

CN Medium humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +9**DEFENSE****AC** 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +2 shield, +1 dodge)**hp** 22 (3d8+9)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6**OFFENSE****Melee** club +2 (1d6)**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 3rd; concentration +6)

6/day – icicle (1d6+1 cold)

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +6)2nd – *bull's strength*, *flaming sphere*, *fog cloud*^P1st – *cure light wounds*, *hide from animals*, *obscuring mist*^P, *produce flame*0th – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *know direction*, *stabilize***D** domain spell; **Domain** Water (via nature's bond)**TACTICS****During Combat** The first spell Joseph almost always casts is *bull's strength* on White Tusk. The second is *flaming sphere* hoping to set fire to sails and rigging as well as enemies. After that, Joseph does whatever he can to support the hunters.**Morale** Joseph will surrender if White Tusk and two of the hunters are defeated. He will beg for mercy and to be allowed to heal his fallen brothers. He offers all the ivory and a promise they will not seek vengeance if their lives are spared. "We are honored to give the hunt to such great warriors," he pleads.**STATISTICS****Str** 10, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 13**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 12**Feats** Combat Casting, Dodge, Persuasive**Skills** Diplomacy +10, Heal +9, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (nature) +9, Perception +9, Spellcraft +7, Survival +11**Languages** Yutak, Common, Druidic**SQ** nature bond (water), trackless step, wild empathy +4, woodland stride**Trait** Tribal Negotiator – diplomacy is always a class skill and Joseph's receives a +1 trait bonus**Gear** hide armor, heavy wooden shield (painted with Yutak pictograms), club (made of walrus bone)

White Tusk is also interested in buying fine southern clothing – the more gaudy and outlandish the better. He wishes to wear something impressive to mark his new status as a whale slayer. Noble finery will definitely draw his eye and he'll pay three times its value in ivory. Laughing at White Tusk after he dons the garment will immediately end trading. White Tusk's ego is a fragile thing.

What the whale hunters do not value is gold. Gold is soft and makes poor spear heads.

This event can be handled any way the PCs wish. The Yutak have no large part to play in this adventure path. So slaughtering the young chief and his war band will have no repercussions and will gain them a load of valuable treasure. The PCs of course do not know that. A Knowledge (local) skill check (DC 20) will reveal that the Yutak are famous for their family loyalty and their vendettas. This may dissuade the PCs from simply murdering these whale-hunters.

Whale Hunters (5)**CR 1/2****XP 200 each (1,200 XP total)**

Human Expert 1/Warrior 1

N Medium humanoid

Init +3, **Senses** Perception +5**DEFENSE****AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (armor +4, Dex +3, dodge +4)**hp** 12 (d10+d8+2)**Fort** +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** spear, metal +4 (1d8+2/x3)

spear, bone +4 (1d8/x3); fragile (breaks on a natural '1')

dagger +3 (1d4+2/19-20)

Ranged spear, metal +5 (1d8+2/x3)

spear, bone +5 (1d8/x3); fragile (breaks on a natural '1')

dagger +4 (1d4+2/19-20)

TACTICS

During Combat The three hunters in the kayak use the boats to keep their distance and hurl spears to support the warriors on the umiak. The two hunters on the umiak follow white tusk into battle eager to prove their prowess.

Morale The hunters will surrender only if Joseph calls for surrender. Otherwise they fight to the last.

STATISTICS**Str** 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 16**Feats** Dodge, Weapon Focus (spear)**Skills** Climb +7, Craft (various) +4, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +3, Perception +5, Stealth +7, Survival +5, Swim +7**Languages** Yutak**Gear** hide armor, spear (metal; for melee), 3 spears (bone; for ranged), dagger

Trading and speaking with the Yutak could gain the PCs some useful allies at the Game Master's discretion. White Tusk is no friend of Talingarde. He has only contempt for the "metal men" of the south. Still, he is no worshipper of Asmodeus either. He follows his own pagan gods. If you would like to include a side trek set in the Land of the Yutak, these men are one possible route to that adventure. They may for example know the legends of the Lost Island of Taane-Thak or She without Mercy (see the Gazetteer below for more details). White Tusk may also be able to warn them about the deadly but playful Kiliket (the Storm that Laughs – see Event Five below).

If the PCs manage to acquire the narwhal horn and learn valuable information from the Yutak award them XP as if they had faced them in combat.

EVENT FIVE: THE LAUGHING STORM

This event happens in the dead of night as a cold snap hits. The temperature plummets well below freezing and ice rime begins to form on the rigging. It begins to snow – intermittent flurries at first give way to fat flakes and biting winds. The crew lights up a few torches to provide both light and warmth in the freezing darkness. This proves to a mistake as a nearby ice spirit named Kiliket takes offense at the mortals' interference.

Kiliketz leads a small band of four ice elementals across the face of the barely liquid water towards the intruding ship. The mephitis stealthily flies to the top of the ship's mast while the ice elementals wait in the water. Unless the PCs have produced a greater source of light than torches, the top of the mast is dark giving Killiket a total stealth roll of +20 (he flies at half speed).

From his perch, he reveals his presence with an inhuman laugh and by casting *chill metal* on an appropriate target (for example, anyone wearing plate). The ice elementals then emerge from the water and begin attacking all aboard the ship. The sailors panic and flee screaming 'ice demons!'. They are no help in this battle.

Kargeld grimly hefts his great axe and rages at the first opportunity (see his statistics below in Event Eight).

If Kiliket is captured alive, his cackling playful demeanor turns into fear. He cowers and begs for his life if threatened with fire. He would make a fine scout during the infiltration of Balentyne in Act IV.

None of these creatures has any treasure.

Kiliketz, the ice mephitis**CR 3****XP 800**

N Small outsider (cold)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6**DEFENSE****AC** 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural, +1 size)**hp** 19 (3d10+3), fast healing 2**Fort** +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3**DR** 5/magic**Immune** Cold**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)**Melee** 2 claws +5 (1d3+1)

Special Attacks breath weapon (15-foot cone, 1d4 cold damage, all living creatures *sickened* for 3 rounds, Reflex DC 13 for half and negates the *sickened* effect.)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)1/hour – *magic missile*1/day – *chill metal* (DC 14)**TACTICS**

During Combat From his perch, he leads with *chill metal*, then *magic missile* (he shoots three missiles). He uses his breath weapon on anyone who tries to climb the rigging.

Morale Kiliket tries to flee if he is reduced to eight or less hit points.

STATISTICS**Str** 13, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 6, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 14**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15**Feats** Dodge, Improved Initiative**Skills** Bluff +8, Fly +10, Perception +6, Stealth +12**Languages** Common, Aquan**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Breath Weapon (Su) Kiliket can unleash his breath weapon every 4 rounds as a standard action.

Small Ice Elementals (4)

CR 1

XP 400 (1600 XP total)

N Small outsider (air, cold, elemental, extraplanar, water)
Init -1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., snow vision; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16 (-1 Dex, +6 natural, +1 size)
hp 13 (2d10+2)
Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0
Immune cold, elemental traits
Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow (ice and snow only) 20 ft., swim 60 ft.
Melee slam +4 (1d4+1 plus 1d3 cold)
Special Attacks numbing cold (DC 12)

TACTICS

Tactics These barely intelligent elemental spirits possess no subtlety. They charge the nearest warm living thing and slam it.
Morale The elementals fight for as long as Kiliket commands them. If Kiliket is defeated or captured, they lose interest in the assault and retreat back into the water to frolic amid the ice flows.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11
Base Atk +2; CMB +2; CMD 11 (can't be tripped)
Feats Power Attack
Skills Knowledge (planes) +2, Perception +5, Stealth +8, Swim +9
Language Aquan
SQ ice glide, icewalking

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ice Glide (Su) A burrowing ice elemental can pass through non-magical ice and snow as easily as a fish swims through water. It's burrowing leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripple or other sign of its presence. A *control water* spell cast on an area containing a burrowing ice elemental flings the elemental back 30 feet, stunning the creature for 1 round unless it succeeds on a DC 15 Fortitude save.

Icwalking (Ex) This ability works like the *spider climb* spell, but the surfaces the elemental climbs must be icy. The elemental can move across icy surfaces without penalty and does not need to make Acrobatics checks to run or charge on ice.

Numbing Cold (Su) When an ice elemental deals cold damage to a creature, that creature must succeed on a Fortitude save or be staggered for 1 round. The save DC is listed in the elemental's stat block and is Constitution-based.

Snow Vision (Ex) An ice elemental can see perfectly well in snowy conditions and does not take any penalties on Perception checks while in snow.

EVENT SIX: THE BUGBEAR CAMP

Finally the Frosthamar arrives at the ice-choked entrance to the River Taiga. Kargeld proves himself a worthy captain nimbly sailing the heavily laden craft through fields of floating jagged ice. He barks orders in norspik and his sailors scramble to comply. Again and again he turns the boat at just the right moment to pass between the broken shards calved from ancient glaciers.

Finally, after nerve-wracking hours of this, the boat pushes through the dangerous headwaters of the Taiga into the clear water of this almost uncharted mighty river. Beyond the headwaters is a land of savage wonders. The Taiga winds through a great northern forest that to the best of anyone's knowledge has no name.

After miles and miles of picturesque pine trees frosted with new fallen snow, the ship comes to a great mountain range. This river flows through a great rift in the mountains that looks as if some impossible huge primordial giant smashed a pass through the grey slate.

The PCs are headed south now, though this appears to have no effect on lessening the intense cold. They are headed to the great interior sea of Talingarde – Lake Tarik as it is known. To the south of that lake sits the Watch Wall. And on the northern banks in a wide wooded valley is your destination – the camp of Sakkarot Fire-Axe.

Thousands of bugbears are already assembled. These savage humanoids are not pleased to see outsiders, especially humans. Worse, there are more than just bugbears here. The occasional polar bear lumbers around the camp untended (these are Naatanuks – see the gazetteer below). Fur-clad goblins scamper here and there, laughing with frenetic glee. Even a few hill giants gather at the camp's fringes.

There is only one place to dock the boat – a crudely made pier that juts into the river. On that pier are four hulking bugbears. They don't seem pleased to see the Frosthamar. In fact, these bugbears are bored thugs who notice the Frosthamar's approach a few moments before Sakkarot can get to the pier. They have the brilliant idea of eating the soft, squishy 'hummies' before the Fire-Axe gets here and claims all the tasty bits.

Bugbear (4)

CR 2

XP 600 each (2400 XP total)

CE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+2 armor, +1 Dex, +3 natural)
hp 16 (3d8+3)
Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee great club +5 (1d10+3)
Ranged javelin +3 (1d6+3)

TACTICS

During Combat These brutal warriors prefer to gang up against weaker foes.

Morale Afraid to show fear, they fight either to the death or until Sakkarot arrives.

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9
Base Atk +2; CMB +5; CMD 16
Feats Intimidating Prowess, Skill Focus (Perception)
Skills Intimidate +7, Perception +8, Stealth +10; Racial Modifiers +4 Intimidate, +4 Stealth
SQ stalker
Languages Common, Goblin
Gear great club, 3 javelins, ratty soiled leather armor

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Stalker (Ex) Perception and Stealth are always class skills for bugbears.

Starting a fight with these thugs is probably a bad idea as more bugbears will head this way eager to get involved. Sakkarot arrives in ten rounds (roughly a minute). If the PCs can threaten or baffle the bugbears for that long, this fight can be avoided. The PCs can also just slaughter these four thugs. Killing them quickly and brutally will keep the other bugbears at bay long enough for Sakkarot to arrive. If the PCs show any weakness or look like they are losing 1d6 more bugbears join the scrum.

Once Sakkarot does arrive, any fight is quickly quelled. The great black-furred bugbear is a fearsome beast wielding an axe of flame. He points the axe at any PC who gives an indication of being the leader.

"Who sent you?" Sakkarot demands in unaccented common.

Thorn, Adrastus, Cardinal Thorn or any similar answer will serve. At that answer, he smiles a toothy grin. *"Then you are welcome here."* He turns to the somewhat stunned throng of bugbears who were getting ready to storm the boat and eat the occupants.

"These humans are my guests. I will deal with anyone who harms them. They are our allies!" He walks over to the boat and rips open one of the crates revealing finely made axes with in. He tosses one to a nearby bugbear warrior who until this time only had a crude club to wield. *"Behold, they bring us steel!"* This earns the PCs a terrifying chorus of growls and cheers from the monstrous assembly.

The boat is unloaded. Sakkarot's lieutenants see that each case is distributed and soon our villains can see a visible transformation in the camp. Where once there were a thousand bugbear savages, now there are a thousand bugbear soldiers each with new weapons and shields adorned with the emblem of the fire axe. What a terror the PCs have helped to create.

Award the PCs a CR 4 reward (1200 XP) for successfully seeing the weapons to their destination. Award the PCs another 2400 XP if they managed to avoid battle with the bugbears by threats or cleverness.

Sakkarot holds a feast in honor of the weapons shipment and their allies. The feast is a brutal, savage affair with bugbears fighting each other and all manner of monsters in attendance. The highlight of the party is when a great shaggy dire boar recently captured from the northern woods is brought in shackles.

One ton of angry pig is led in by a dozen bugbears who drag the beast before Sakkarot. Sakkarot beheads the already wounded animal in one mighty stroke with his fire axe. The beast is then spitted and roasted in a great open pit. The PCs sit at the Fire-Axe's table – a front row seat at this spectacle of savagery.

EVENT SEVEN: A PRIVATE AUDIENCE

Eventually as the raucous bestial festivities of the bugbear tribes die down, Sakkarot will want to speak with the PCs alone. He summons them into his private chambers and dismiss his many followers with a deep growl. Of course, his guards and minions are no more than one shout away so if the PCs for any reason plan violence against the Fire-Axe (a LE fighter 8 bugbear with elite ability scores wielding a +2 *unholy flaming greataxe*), this remains a poor time.

Sakkarot is genuinely curious. He has pieced together parts of Cardinal Thorn's plan, but wants to know more. Clearly, these agents are an important part of that plan, so he would know their part in what is about to transpire.

"You are traitors to your own kind. You must know that. When Balentyne falls and my horde pours through its shattered gates, we will slaughter the Talireans by the thousands. Yet I see no regret in your eyes. Tell me, how can this be?"



Sakkarot Fire-Axe

Sakkarot is not an ordinary bugbear. Well-spoken and intelligent, he is anything but the typical brute. Sakkarot does not look down upon the PCs for betraying their own. Indeed, Sakkarot is planning the exact same sort of betrayal to his own people (this will happen in Book VI). Sakkarot Fire-Axe is as much an outsider and an outcast as the PCs are. He just wants to know more about them.

If any PC shows Sakkarot the scars the received as Branderscar as reason for their betrayal, Sakkarot pulls aside his great breast-plate and reveals the holy symbol of Asmodeus burned into his chest. "We all have our scars."

Sakkarot can be tricked into saying too much here. He is gluttoned on dire pork and rotgut and starved for decent conversation. He is in a talkative mood. He will reveal if the PCs tell him they are the ninth knot that he leads the first knot – the Avernian Knot. "I am the only true member of the knot. The rest are only fools."

With a DC 20 Diplomacy or Bluff skill check (or simply clever roleplay) Sakkarot will say that he too will betray his own kind for the greater glory of Asmodeus.

Sakkarot knows a little about Cardinal Thorn's past. The bugbear chieftain knows that Thorn was not always the Cardinal's name and that once he was a cardinal of the Mitran faith. What that name was and why Thorn betrayed the faith of the Shining Lord, Sakkarot can only guess.

He will trade this information only for information in return. How did the PCs become servants of Asmodeus? Where did they receive their scars? Ultimately, this entire scene is entirely focused on roleplaying. Give every player a chance to develop something about their character and to try and pry information from Sakkarot.

Once finished, Sakkarot has one last thing to say: "Tomorrow you must depart this camp. It will never be truly safe for you here. Over the next week, more tribes will rally to my banner. I will promise them blood and give them steel. Then at last I will be ready to march. A week after that – I will be poised to strike. I will move my horde to the valley just north of Balentyne. There we will wait for your signal. Fire this rocket into the air. Within the hour, we will attack. Make sure that the way is ready."

"After we gather, my horde will be idle and start to grow anxious. I can hold them together for another two weeks. After that, I expect desertions and squabbling. Get your work done before then. You have one month to infiltrate and destroy Balentyne."

Sakkarot hands them a single carefully wrapped signal rocket. Suddenly the bugbear warlord gets very serious and stern. He stares straight into the PC's eyes.

"Can you do this? In one month can you break the Watch Wall?"

Hopefully the PC's answer yes or something similar.

He grunts and nods. "Thorn has faith in you. If you weren't his best, he wouldn't have sent you. Do this and your names will be legend. Now go. Hail Asmodeus!"

If the PCs do a reasonably good job at this roleplay, award them 600 XP. If they manage to pry a few secrets out of Sakkarot, award them another 600 XP as a bonus.

EVENT EIGHT: LOOSE ENDS

Once unloaded, Captain Odenkirk is more than anxious to leave the bugbear camp. Already bugbear warriors have been eyeing his ship and though they have not yet built up courage enough to attack, the Captain knows it is only a matter of time. He does not trust Sakkarot and is not shying about saying so. "Look in that one's eyes. He's smart -- always plotting. Bugbears should not be smart."

He constantly grumbles about not getting paid enough and threatens to abandon the PCs if they linger any longer than he thinks is necessary. It is only Odenkirk's superstitious nature and fear of Thorn's magic that keeps him from doing just that.

Captain Odenkirk will cross the mist-shrouded Lake Tarik under cover of darkness and deposit the PCs upon the southern shore no closer than a couple of hours walk from the Tower Balentyne and the small town of Aldencross. He then means to sail east, upriver and to the sea. Of course, he is unlikely to be given the chance to make this voyage. After all, it is now time for the PCs to betray the captain and his men and to wrap up these loose ends.



Captain Kargeld Odenkirk (enraged)**CR 3****XP 800**Human Barbarian 4
NE Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Perception +5**DEFENSE**AC 12, touch 8, flat-footed 12 (+4 armor, -2 rage)
hp 58 (4d12+32)
Fort +8, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6 (+3 vs. spells, supernatural abilities and spell-like abilities while raging)
Defensive Abilities trap sense +1, uncanny dodge**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft.
Melee Greataxe +11 (1d12+10/x3)
Ranged Throwing Axe +4 (1d6+5)
Special Attacks rage (14 rounds/day), rage power (powerful blow, superstition)**TACTICS****During Combat** As soon as they attack him and his men, Kargeld Odenkirk cries out. "You want my ship, do ye? I killed my brother to take her and I'll kill all of you to keep her!" Kargeld then rages. He uses his rage power -- powerful blow (+2 damage on a single blow, must be declared before he rolls to hit) on his first swing.**Morale** Kargeld fights to the death.**STATISTICS****Str** 20, **Dex** 10, **Con** 22, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10
Base Atk +4; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 19
Feats Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (Greataxe)
Skills Climb +10, Intimidate +7, Perception +5, Profession (Sailor) +9, Survival +8, Swim +10
Language Common, Norspik
SQ fast movement
Trait Born to the Sea: Professional(Sailor) and Swim receive +1 bonuses and are both class skills.
Gear hide armor, masterwork great axe, throwing axes (2), key to his lock box
Base Statistics When not raging, Kargeld's statistics are **AC** 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; **hp** 50; **Fort** +6, **Will** +4; **Melee** Greataxe +8 (1d10+6/x3); **Ranged** Throwing Axe +4 (1d6+3); **Str** 16; **Con** 18; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 17

If somehow, Captain Odenkirk does survive, he immediately sails east and at the first settlement betrays the PCs utterly telling a local guard captain everything he knows about his voyage, the bugbears and Cardinal Thorn in exchange for yet more gold. He then flees the cursed isle of Talingarde altogether. This was always his plan. A messenger arrives at Balentyne three days after the PCs warning Havelyn about the plot.

In addition to his personal gear, the Captain also has his payment and personal loot aboard ship in a battered old sea-chest with an average lock (DC 25). Inside beneath the captain's foul, flea-infested wardrobe is 6000 gp neatly stacked in an unlocked wooden box.

Additionally a small silver statuette of a nude mermaid (worth 50 gp) and 115 gp in loose coinage clatters around the sea-chest. A wooden crate labeled 'emergency rations' contains six fine bottles of whiskey worth 10 gp apiece.

Frosthamar's Sailors (6)**CR 1/2****XP 200 each (1200 XP total)**Human warrior 2
NE Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Perception -1**DEFENSE**AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 dodge, +1 shield)
hp 16 (2d10+5)
Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** -1**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.
Melee short sword +4 (1d6+2/19-20)
Ranged short bow +2 (1d6/x3)**TACTICS****During Combat** Kargeld's men are not so fanatical as their captain. Those that can take cover aboard ship and use their bows. Those caught out in the open are quick to draw their sword and charge the nearest enemy.**Morale** If Kargeld dies and more than half their number fall, the survivors will surrender and beg for mercy. The author suspects they are unlikely to find any.**STATISTICS****Str** 14, **Dex** 11, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 9
Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14
Feats Dodge, Toughness
Skills Climb +6, Profession (Sailor) +4, Swim +6
Languages Common (a little), Norspik
Gear studded leather, buckler, short sword, shortbow with 20 arrows**ENDING THE ACT**

With the bugbears armed and united under the Fire Axe and loose ends taken care of, act three is at an end.

Read the following text:

You are close now. Just a few miles from here sits the small market town of Aldencross and less than a mile from there is the watchtower of Balentyne – your goal. Already Sakkarot's horde gathers and prepares to move. Within two weeks, they will be in a small valley north of the lake awaiting your signal. Fire the rocket into the air at just the right moment and you will take the first step towards claiming vengeance against Talingarde.

Destiny has taken you here. Destiny has given you a mission. There is no doubt that the future of this green and pleasant land lies in your hands. You could go to that town right now and warn them of the plots of the sinister Cardinal Thorn. You could give yourself up and face the justice you deserve. You could turn back from the horror and the slaughter that you are going to inflict upon these Mitran sheep. This is that moment. This is the turning point. After this, there is no going back. Any one eager for redemption?

Pause.

I thought not. Come, my friends. We have work to do. We must burn Balentyne.



ACT FOUR: BURNING BALENTYNE

A METHOD TO THIS MADNESS

The mission is simply stated – throw open wide the gates of Balentyne. The PCs must do in less than a month what no invader has ever managed. They must break the Watch Wall. If one pauses to think about it – this is an insane assignment. What chance do a handful of novice villains have against a fortification full of veteran troops?

Cardinal Thorn believes the sheer novelty of the mission is its greatest strength. No one would believe that a few devotees of a destroyed devil cult would ever be audacious enough to perpetrate such a crime. In short, the enemy will never see it coming. About that, Adrastus is a hundred percent correct.

At this moment in time, the Nessian Knot is Adrastus' best chance at seeing this difficult deed done other than taking on the mission personally. And Adrastus is not willing to do it personally. Adrastus has no idea how powerful the defenders of Balentyne are. He's heard rumors of an angelic presence in the tower (not that he bothers to mention this to his underlings). And then of course there is the matter of his paladin brother Lord Thomas Havelyn. If he attacked the tower personally, he

would have to face his brother. Thorn has decided it's best to let the minions handle this one.

So, how can this madness be done? Direct assault can be quickly dismissed. The watchtower of Balentyne is manned by one hundred soldiers, four captains and a seventh level paladin. That alone would be challenge enough but the soldiery are also supported by Father Donnagin, his acolytes and the fireball-mad magister Tacitus of Morimun.

If the PCs started a straight fight with that lot, they would face a CR 14 fight. Actually, the battle would be harder than that (CR 16?), because the soldiers have a well-coordinated command, artillery (ballistae and stone droppers) and defensive fortifications as well as dwarven allies.

Worse, a credible direct assault would allow the watchtower to dispatch its ravens. Soon, Balentyne would be reinforced by garrisons from the hamlet of Aldencross all the way to the metropolis of Ghastenhall. Clearly, a direct assault is suicide. Instead, subtlety is called for.

How exactly the PCs carry out this mission is very much up to them. Don't suggest strategies. Instead allow player actions to discover facts and let the players themselves develop their own strategies.

However, that said, here are a few suggested approaches that might work:

A) "WE ARE BUT HUMBLE SERVANTS..."

There are dozen servants who come up from the town of Aldencross every day to work the kitchens, clean the fortress and perform all the essential but menial work. These servants are simple townsfolk (human commoner 1 – see room 10 below for statistics) and easily infiltrated and replaced using the PC's *iron circlets*.

Within the watchtower, these servants are often ignored as they move from location to location doing their chores. Using this anonymity, these "servants" can make trouble, ambush lone guards and officers, poison meals and so forth. Balentyne's own security could work against it. Once the commander realizes there is trouble, he will seal the tower with everyone inside. Then it will be up to the PCs to keep their identities intact and to continue to wreak havoc until defenses are weak enough for the bugbear's assault.

B) THE MURDEROUS MICE

There is a secret door in the supply vault beneath the tower (room 1) with a hidden passage that leads to the Lord's Dalliance Inn. If the PCs can find the hidden passage or sneak in from above (perhaps using *invisibility* or being smuggled in with a supply shipment) and set up camp there, they can raid into the tower again and again from that place of relative safety.

They can even return to the inn to rest and recharge if they are careful about being unseen. They will be like murderous mice, creeping out of the shadows to do damage and then disappearing before they are cornered. Of course, it is only a matter of time before the defenders start to close in on their hiding place.

This strategy most closely resembles a traditional dungeon-crawling experience. Though it requires some subtlety (the PCs have to realize when they are about to be overrun and flee back to their hiding place), it doesn't necessarily require any skill at Stealth, Disguise or Bluff.

C) "WE ARE AGENTS OF THE KING!"

The PCs could deceive their way into being quartered at the tower perhaps posing as a royal agents or emissaries. The highest ranking member will be quartered in the guest room in the keep (room 45) right next to Lord Havelyn's quarters! Those posing as servants will either be put in the extra beds in the barracks (room 9) or in the great hall (room 31).

This is a risky strategy because things will start to go wrong soon after they arrive. It doesn't take a genius to

realize there may be a connection between the newcomers and the new difficulties. Still, clever PCs may be able to pull it off. The advantage of this approach is that it allows for more unfettered access across the tower itself. What guard dares tell the king's emissary that they can't go into a particular room?

D) THE LOST PATROL

The watchtower of Balentyne sends out patrols to scout the coast of Lake Tarik and to keep law and order along the king's roads. These patrols consist of Captain Varning and six men on horseback. It would be relatively easy to ambush this patrol, interrogate a prisoner to gain information and then infiltrate the tower.

They would have to invent a story about why guards were lost (it is doubtful there are seven PCs) but that shouldn't be too hard. A patrol having difficulties in the wilds isn't exactly unusual. Clever PCs could even concoct a story where more guards depart the tower following a wild goose chase in the wilderness after some imaginary monster.

Once inside, the PCs disguised as guards can begin their reign of terror. This plan does have one key weakness. The guards of Balentyne know each other fairly well. Some of these men have worked together for years. It will not be easy to fool them for a prolonged period of time. But with cleverness, the disguises might hold for just long enough...

E) THE PLAY'S THE THING!

A troupe of travelling actors and acrobats is heading to Balentyne to perform a one night exclusive engagement of the famed play "The Fall of Amberlyn." Posters are everywhere in Aldencross. These actors may be fine performers but they are miserable combatants and are easily waylaid. Better, this performing company – Ye Merrie Men -- is completely new to these parts.

What is known is that famed thespian William Marcus Marlowe, the beloved Bard of Barrington himself, will be performing the lead in the famed play. For certain types of parties, this may present a unique opportunity. The "actors" will be led into the watchtower with a wagon-load of gear and allowed to have private access to the great hall for a couple of days before the performance to set up their stage. This is the perfect time to perform all sorts of mischief.

This plan has two problems. First – it has a time limit. The actors will be expected to eventually perform the play and then to leave. Second – actors aren't exactly well regarded. When things start to go wrong, they will be natural candidates for suspicion.

TRACKING THE DAMAGE

The GM keeps track of how successful the villains have been at sabotaging the defenders by using Victory Points (VPs). Every time the PCs succeed at one of these objectives, they will earn Victory Points. Sakkarot Fire-Axe has given them a signal rocket. When the PCs think they have enough VPs to take the fortress, they fire the signal rocket and the bugbear assault will begin an hour later.

The PCs may estimate what level of success they are at by rolling a DC 20 Knowledge (engineering) or Profession (soldier) skill check. The GM should assign bonuses or penalties based on how complete their knowledge of the Balentyne's defenses is. For example, if the PCs have a detailed map of the place and an exact count of the active guards, that should be a +4 bonus to the roll. If the PCs have never set foot inside the actual tower and have no idea how many guards are active, then they either get no roll or receive a -8 penalty.

After forty five days, it is numerically impossible for the attack to succeed. This represents Sakkarot Fireaxe's chaotic horde getting impatient, dispersing and falling to infighting. The tower may be unguarded but the bugbears are simply too disorganized to occupy it. Long before Sakkarot can again coalesce his horde, a large party of knights arrives and seizes the tower.

VICTORY POINTS (THE PCS BEGIN WITH 0)

20 or less: Premature Attack – the Bugbears attack much too early and are dealt a savage defeat. Sakkarot Fire-Axe is killed in the assault and the PCs must execute a desperate escape or face being killed or worse captured and returned to Branderscar Prison (which now has more competent guards). The first phase of Cardinal Thorn's plan is in ruins. Fortunately there is a plan B. (see Way of the Wicked Book II: Call Forth Darkness). Award 0 XP.

21-30: Repulsed – the Bugbears attack and are repulsed. Still Sakkarot survives and manages to rally his army. They will attack again when given another signal but a second repulse spells doom for Sakkarot's already shaken horde. Award 0 XP for now but the PCs get another chance.

31-40: Hard Fought Victory – Balentyne falls but only at great cost to the bugbears. Sakkarot is wounded in the intense fighting and loses an eye. Still, the way to the south is opened up and Sakkarot's tribes begin pouring into Talingarde. It does take them a few days to regroup and reorganize and so the people of the nearby village of Aldencross flee spreading word of the savage invasion. The war has begun. Award 1,600 XP for the destruction of Balentyne.

41-50: Victory – Balentyne falls though there is still some resistance. The bugbears' losses could have been much worse. Sakkarot is unwounded and much heartened by this success. Still, it takes a day to get the whole body of the horde moved up and through the Watchtower gates. The citizenry of Aldencross flee in terror spreading word of the invasion led by the monster who wields an axe of flame. The war has begun and Talingarde has lost the first battle. Award 2,400 XP for the destruction of Balentyne.

51 or more: Slaughter – Balentyne falls with barely a bugbear slain. The hairy beasts immediately attack Aldencross and feast on human flesh in an orgy of death and slaughter. There are few survivors and little warning as the Fire-Axe's horde sweeps down into the Heartland of Talingarde. The war has begun with a crushing defeat for Talingarde. Award 3,200 XP for this impressive feat.

Actions that can gain (or lose) the PCs Victory Points:

- **5 VP** Kill Lord Thomas Havelyn
- **-10 VP** Lord Thomas not dead during assault
- **2 VP** each Kill or remove Captains Eddarly, Mott, Varning and Barhold
- **3 VP** Kill Father Donnagin, priest of Mitra
- **4 VP** Kill the magister Tacitus of Morimun
- **-5 VP** Tacitus alive and in possession of his *wand of fireball* during assault
- **1 VP** Every Five Soldiers non-combatant during assault (max. 20 VP)
- **3 VP** Destroy the Rookery (see room 43)
- **5 VP** Open the portcullis and lower the drawbridge for the Attackers (see room 25)
- **2 VP** Destroy the lantern archons (see room 26)
- **2 VP** Kill Barnabus the dwarven siege engineer
- **1 VP** Every Five dwarves non-combatant during assault (max. 2 VP)
- **1 VP** Sabotage siege engine (see room 33; max. 4 VP)
- **1 VP** Sabotage the murder holes (see room 25)
- **1 VP** Burn the arrow stores (see room 38)
- **1 VP** Sabotage the seal of Balentyne (see room 23a)
- **-2 VP** Every day after thirty before the attack commences

ONE HUNDRED GUARDS?

There is a garrison of one hundred guards manning the watchtower of Balentyne. This author believes that it is no one's idea of a good time to fight one hundred very similar low-level opponents. Even twenty or thirty is probably too many. So, how can we avoid this grind?

There are three classes of opponents in Balentyne – of-ficers, creatures and nobodies.

The officers and key personnel are: Lord Havelyn, the four captains (Eddarly, Mott, Varning and Barhold), the priest Father Donnagin, the magister Titus, the dwarven engineer Barnabus Eisenbauch and Mad Martin, the keeper of the rookery. These people matter. Keep track of where they are and what they are doing, perhaps keeping a page of notes.

There are three creatures in the watchtower – the lantern archons, the ice golem and the raven swarm. These three creatures are all stationary. The lantern archons never leave the choir hall (26). The ice golem never leaves the wizard's laboratory (40). The raven swarm never leaves the rookery (43).

Then there are the low-level “nobodies” – guards, dwarven engineers, acolytes and servants.

Always focus on the first two categories. These should be your key encounters. After a couple of deaths, the “nobodies” will all be terrified of whatever enemy threatens Balentyne. Their first impulse is to flee and summon their respective commander. The guards seek a captain. The engineers seek out Barnabus. The acolytes rally to Father Donnagin. The servants mostly just yell and run.

If the nobodies have to come together to face a threat (perhaps because all their nearby commanders are dead) they will be disorganized and slow to assemble. It isn't that the guards of Balentyne are incompetent. It's that most of them are scared teenagers facing off against hardened villains. Wouldn't you be frightened?

EVENTS

These events depend on player actions and may be played out in any order. Just because they are numbered is no reason to assume they happen in a linear fashion or that they happen at all.

EVENT ONE: ARRIVING QUIETLY

The journey to Aldencross from the lake shore is a short and uneventful one. If the PCs are at all careful, their arrival in the small sleepy northern town is unnoticed. With their *iron circlets*, disguising themselves should also be no challenge.

Aldencross

LG small town

Corruption +0; **Crime** +0; **Economy** +2; **Law** +1; **Lore** +0; **Society** +2

Qualities pious, prosperous, strategic location

Danger -5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government autocracy chosen by the monarchy in Matharyn

Population 1,800 (1,500 humans; 150 dwarves; 50 halflings; 100 other)

Notable NPCs

Lord Thomas Havelyn, commander of Balentyne and Lord of Aldencross (LG male human aristocrat 2/ paladin 7)

Father Donnagin, priest of Mitra (LG male human cleric 6)

Tacitus of Morimun, magister (LN male human wizard 7)

Bellam Barhold, owner of the Lord's Dalliance (N male human expert 3)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 1,400 gp; **Purchase Limit** 7500 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd level divine, 4th level arcane

Minor Items 3d4 items; **Medium Items** 1d6 items; **Major Items** --

Up till now, the PCs have been completely cut off from civilization. In act one, they were prisoners or fugitives. In act two, they were sequestered in the manor house. In act three, they have either been on a boat loaded with contraband or in a bugbear war camp. Here at last, they are in a town probably with a pile of ill-gotten loot. Let them use it.

Aldencross is a market town and it is not rare for smaller traders to come from all over to peddle their goods here. This will not be seen as suspicious or anything unusual. Adventurers bound for the savage north are not unknown. Frankly, the idea that a band of Tali-reans would conspire with bugbears to break the Watch Wall is unthinkable to the common folk. The PCs will have no trouble moving freely within the town.

Aldencross is a fine place to buy supplies. There is an alchemist in town who sells all manner of potions. There is a scribe with a fine selection of scrolls (1st and 2nd level only). In the market place are found the random magic items that a town of Aldencross' size usually has for sale. Normal equipment is available in abundance. Aldencross is a soldier's town so there are numerous smiths who make arms and armor. They're eager for some side business to supplement their contracts to the crown.

THE LORD'S DALLIANCE

Though Aldencross is a sizeable town, there is only one inn that caters to travellers -- “The Lord's Dalliance”. It is a pleasant enough place with strong drink and adequate food. In the evenings there are often off-duty soldiers and even the occasional watch captain. Dancing girls and comely bar maids ply the soldiers eager to earn a share of the king's gold. Lord Havelyn is never seen here. The grizzled old commander disapproves of such diversions and is always at his post in the fortress.

Anyone who spends 1d4 hours in the Lord's Dalliance and making a Diplomacy skill check (DC 10) can receive a roll on the rumors table below. Buying a few drinks can aid this roll. Subtract 5 from the DC if the PC spends one gold piece buying drinks.

Rumors Table (1d20 -- reroll duplicates)

1. *Have you ever been to the choir hall of Balentyne? Amazing! The priests are such beautiful singers and sometimes the stone saints that adorn the place join in the chorus. Such a miracle!* (True. This rumor refers to the lantern archons [see room 26 below]. The archon's presence is not well known amongst the common folk but the "singing saints of Balentyne" are legendary.)
2. *Mad Martin is a strange one! He tends the rookery in the Watchtower. They say he never leaves except for necessities. He talks to the birds like people and has named every one!* (True. Mad Martin is an odd bird to be sure.)
3. *Lord Havelyn is a good soul but so grim and gloomy. For so great a lord to be unhappy, he must be guilty about something!* (False. Lord Havelyn is grim and unhappy because of the loss of his true love Bronwyn. It may have been years ago but he never rediscovered his joy after she died.)
4. *That Captain Zack Eddarly is a handsome one, isn't he? Such a gallant! And still unmarried at his age. He'll make some lady of proper breeding quite a catch won't he?* (True. Of course Captain Eddarly is seeing someone. Alas, she is married to Captain Mott.)
5. *Balentyne's magister, that creepy Tacitus, has been spending a lot of time working on something in his tower! I don't know what it is, but it's said that something unnatural was recovered from the north.* (True. Tacitus has indeed been focused on a project. A band of adventurers recovered an ice golem from the north and sold it to the wizard. The wizard has just managed to get the thing working and under control.)
6. *Ye Merrie Men are coming to town and the handsome William Marcus Marlow is coming with them! Can you believe it? The Bard of Barrington! Here! They are doing the "Fall of Amberlyn"! Oh, I can't wait!* (True. What's more, they are playing a one night exclusive inside the watchtower for the soldiery.)
7. *They say the bugbears are massing up north. I wonder what their up to? Well, it doesn't matter! We'll be ready for 'em! You'd think those shaggy walking carpets would have learned by now that the Watch Wall is unbreakable!* (Partially True. The bugbears are massing and the Watch Wall is far from unbreakable. But this is a common belief about town.)
8. *Soldiers today! A worthless, shiftless lot! Balentyne is in total disarray. Soldiers today are too lazy – not like in my day.* (False. Utterly false. Balentyne is anything but in disarray. Unless something is done to weaken it, the watchtower will repulse any attack from the north.)
9. *There's a pack of dwarves in town led by a grumpy short fellow named Barnabus Eisenbauch. They're here to fix up the watchtower or so I've heard. A hard working fellow -- just don't challenge him to a drinking contest. He'll drink you under the table every time!* (True. Barnabus does have a weakness for strong drink and is staying at this very inn. See below for more details on how this could be used to the PC's advantage).
10. *I've heard that Father Donnagin was sent here after the church demoted him from bishop. He got into some sort of trouble – serious trouble I'd wager to be banished to the Watch Wall.* (False. Donnagin was not banished or demoted. After years of boredom and luxury, Donnagin came to the north of his own volition. And he was never a bishop, just in line to be one.)
11. *Bellam Barhold is such a lush. He does enjoy his wine. He's always complaining about how he can't get any of the good stuff here in the borderlands.* (True. And it is this same desire for good wine that could tip off the PCs to the secret door in the basement. See Event Two below for details.)
12. *Have you seen Kaitlyn Mott? She's the most beautiful woman in town! How did an ugly lump of a man like Captain Franz Mott bag a looker like her? And how does he keep her, that's what I want to know!* (True. Kaitlyn is a beauty and Franz is doing a poor job keeping her in check.)
13. *Have you had any of Mama Guiseppe's beef stew? Delicious! I hear she goes up to the Watchtower and cooks a big batch of it for the men every Monday! What a nice old lady.* (True. Mama Guiseppe's beef stew is a fine opportunity to poison the garrison at Balentyne).

14. *Those dwarves are a thieving lot! I heard one of them was caught picking a man's pocket.* (False. This is just prejudice against dwarves. There is a substantial dwarven community here in Aldencross – 150 dwarves make this town their home. But they are clannish and tend to keep to themselves.)
15. *Lord Thomas Havelyn is the most honorable and capable commander that Balentyne has ever had. If he can't keep the Watch Wall working, then no one can!* (True. Lord Havelyn is an honorable and capable commander. But with the PCs on the job even he is likely to fail.)
16. *Did you hear about prisoners escaping from Branderscar? Were they ever caught?* (Not yet.)
17. *Here's to the soldiers of Balentyne! One hundred of the finest fighting men it's ever been my privilege to serve with.* (True. There are one hundred rank and file soldiers in Balentyne.)
18. *I hear Captain Varning is leading another patrol out tomorrow. I wonder how long they'll be gone this time? The last time they were gone for five days! If you ask me, these patrols are a waste of time. They're just an excuse for Varning to get out of the tower and gallivant around the country side instead of doing his fair share of guard duty.* (True and False. Varning will be leading a patrol of six men. However, these patrols are an important part of keeping the Borderlands secure not just an excuse to go camping.)
19. *I hear a raven arrived at the rookery last night! I bet it carried important news though I know not about what.* (False. No important news arrived last night. Messenger ravens come and go from Balentyne all the time. Mostly they are routine messages of no great import.)
20. *Do you know how the Lord's Dalliance got its name? It was once a brothel! I hear there used to be a secret passage to the basement that allowed the Lord of the Watchtower to sneak in here and have a good time. Of course it must have been sealed up years ago.* (True. The Lord's Dalliance was once a brothel before the puritanical Mitran shut it down. And the secret passage still exists. See Event Two below for details.)

Story award: If the PCs use the town of Aldencross to gain useful intelligence about the tower, award them a one-time CR 4 reward (1200 XP).

EVENT TWO: THE SECRET PASSAGE

The Lord's Dalliance was once a brothel. This is common knowledge about town. When the Mitran regime of Markadian I came to power, many such venerable institutions shut their doors by decree of the king. That was almost eighty years ago. Since then the Inn has reinvented itself and returned to profitability keeping it's vaguely risqué name.

A secret passage constructed by dwarven miners links the basement of the brothel to the castle. This was done so that one overly amorous lord centuries ago could visit his favorite "companion" without rousing the ire of his jealous and ever watchful wife. The passage remains to this day and has been almost entirely forgotten. Certainly Lord Havelyn doesn't know about it or he would have the damned thing filled in.

In the middle of the night, the Inn is almost empty and the basement is not kept locked. They do lock the front door, so you would have to be a guest of the inn unless you wanted to pick a good lock (DC 30). The Inn's basement is simply a storage area where great casks of ale, sacks of flour, joints of meat and bins full of root vegetables await consumption. Along the back wall is a very well hidden secret door.

This is no average secret door! This is fine dwarven stone work. If you don't know it's there, the door is virtually impossible to find (a DC 30 Perception check). Even if you know that a secret door is in the basement it is still difficult to locate (a DC 20 Perception check). It's activated by depressing one particular slightly off-color stone.

But how, besides blind luck, will the PCs find this door? The Innkeeper Bellam Barhold is brother to Captain Samuel Barhold of the tower guard. He is the only person in eighty years to stumble upon the dwarven secret door. He found it accidentally and exploring it, discovered it led straight to the watchtower's storeroom. At the time, the Inn was having money troubles and so Bellam stole some of the provisions he found there. The provision loss was meager enough that it was never noticed but it helped the Lord's Dalliance survive through hard times. Over the years, Bellam has sneaked in and taken items only a half dozen times. He feels guilty about it but rationalizes that the army owes him for all his family has done defending Talingarde.

The Lord's Dalliance is not having hard times anymore and it has been almost a year since Bellam has taken anything. He has heard from his brother that the grim teetotaling Lord Havelyn has been gifted by another commander with a case of fine elven wine from the mainland.

And what has the philistine done with it? Socked it away in the basement and forgotten about it! Such a waste! Bellam has a plan. He is going to sneak down there one night and swap the bottles with cheap spoiled wine. When the elven wine is sampled (if it ever is), then everyone will think it was mishandled. And Bellam will have a case of fine elven wine to drink at his leisure! As fate would have it, the night Bellam chooses for this scheme is the first night the PCs are staying at the Lord's Dalliance.

Any PCs staying at the inn should roll a Perception skill check. Whoever rolls the highest is awoken by the sounds of someone creeping around in the inn. They will see Bellam heading quietly to the door that leads down to the basement. Following him might be risky (he has a +10 Perception). If he thinks there are witnesses to his petty larceny, he will wave off, playing innocent, "You're up late! Can I help you?" If someone sees the secret door open, he will try to convince them it's nothing unusual. If that fails, he may try a small bribe to get them to forget about it (say 20 gold). Regardless, he will never initiate violence. Bellam is no soldier. If attacked, Bellam will scream his head off, run away and try to rouse the guard.

If slain, Bellam's disappearance will be noticed first thing in the morning by his wife Alicia who will immediately go to his brother. There will soon be an investigation. Father Donnagin (17) will lead the investigation and will start snooping about town for signs of what has happened to Bellam. Father Donnagin will never go anywhere without Captain Barhold and two guards (Barhold's men -- room 9).

Bellam Barhold, owner of the Lord's Dalliance CR 1

XP 400

Human expert 3
N Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 13 (3d8)
Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee dagger +1 (1d4-1/19-20)
Ranged dagger +1 (1d4-1/19-20)

STATISTICS

Str 9, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12
Base Atk +2; CMB +1, CMD 11
Feats Alertness, Deceitful, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Profession[innkeeper])
Skills Appraise +6, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Linguistics +6, Perception +10, Profession (innkeeper) +11, Sense Motive +10
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Yutak
Combat Gear dagger
Other Gear keys to the Lord's Dalliance, a flask of good whiskey, 32 gp in a belt pouch

Once open, the secret door leads to a winding little passage that climbs all the way up to the dwarven vault (room 1). The PCs have found a way in.

Award the PCs a CR 4 reward (1,200 XP) for infiltrating the watchtower. Award this only once regardless of how this is accomplished.

EVENT THREE: THE DANGERS OF A DRUNK-EN DWARF

Barnabus Eisenbauch and ten dwarven workmen have been sent to Balentyne to inspect the watchtower and to refurbish its aging gatehouse. This is not a short-term project. Barnabus and his crew are expecting to work here for years.

There is no space for them in the watchtower, so the dwarves are being quartered in the Lord's Dalliance Inn. Six days a week at first light, they wake, eat breakfast and trudge up the hill to the watchtower for a hard day's work. At night, they return to the Inn to eat, drink an unprecedented amount of ale, chat in dwarven about the tower, and to play dwarven card games no one else in town understands. Such is the life of Eisenbauch's men. On the seventh day -- they just skip straight to the drinking. This is what passes for a dwarven religious ceremony.

Barnabus Eisenbauch

CR 4

XP 1,200

Dwarf expert 4/fighter 2
N Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Perception +8, Darkvision 60 ft.

DEFENSE

AC 18 (+4 dodge vs. giants), touch 10, flat-footed 18 (+8 armor)
hp 53 (6 HD; 4d8+2d10+24)
Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +8 (+9 vs. fear; may reroll one Will save per day)
Defensive Abilities bravery +1; hardy: +2 racial bonus vs. poison, spells and spell-like abilities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.
Melee greatsword +10 (2d6+4/19-20)
Ranged heavy crossbow +5 (1d10/19-20)

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 8
Base Atk +5, CMB +8, CMD 18 (22 vs. bull rush or trip attempts while on the ground)
Feats Intimidating Prowess, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatsword)
Skills Appraise +5 (+7 vs. metals or gemstones), Craft (traps) +6, Disable Device +7 (+9 w/masterwork thieves tools), Intimidate +11, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +8, Knowledge(engineering) +10, Perception +8, Profession (engineer) +6 (+8 w/masterwork tools), Sense Motive +7, Survival +6
Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin
SQ Stonecunning
Combat Gear masterwork greatsword, heavy crossbow, 20 bolts
Other Gear half-plate, cloak of resistance +1, masterwork thieves tools, masterwork engineering tools, silver holy symbol to a dwarven god of smiths and engineers (25 gp), 45 gp

Dwarven Engineers (10)**CR 1/2****XP 200 each (2,000 XP total)**

Dwarf expert 1/warrior 1

N Medium humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +5, Darkvision 60 ft.**DEFENSE****AC** 17 (+4 dodge vs. giants), 10 touch, 17 flat-footed (+5 armor, +2 shield)**hp** 19 (2 HD; d8+d10+9)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3**Defensive Abilities** hardy: +2 racial bonus vs. poison, spells and spell-like abilities**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** warhammer +3 (1d8+2/x3)**Ranged** heavy crossbow +1 (1d10/19-20)**STATISTICS****Str** 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8**Base Atk** +1, **CMB** +3, **CMD** 13**Feats** Toughness**Skills** Craft (various) +4, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (dungeoneering +4), Knowledge (engineering) +4, Perception +5, Profession (engineer) +5, Sense Motive +5, Survival +5**Languages** Common, Dwarven**SQ** Stonecunning**Combat Gear** warhammer, heavy crossbow, 20 bolts**Other Gear** chainmail, heavy steel shield, 2d6 gold pieces

There are opportunities here. In Barnabus' room upstairs is a map of the entire watchtower (save for the secret door in the basement) that he has drawn as part of his survey. If someone could get into his room, they could read or copy the map and have the entire floor plan of Balentyne handed to them.

Barnabus also aids the defenses of the castle. The dwarves are crack engineers who man siege engines or fire their crossbows from the walls. Getting rid of the dwarven contingent weakens the tower and earns 4 VPs (2 VP for Eisenbauch, 2 VP for Eisenbauch's dwarves).

Barnabus does have one great weakness. He believes that he can drink more than anyone else on the planet. And he is game to prove it at the drop of a hat. Unfortunately, when Barnabus gets drunk he also gets talkative and eager for a scrap.

EVENT FOUR: CAPTAIN VARNING'S RANGERS

Every week Captain Ryan Varning rides out Balentyne and for four or five days patrols the surrounding hills, shores, roads and byways. He leads a unit of six hand-picked guards selected for their skill with horse and bow.

The Watchtower used to send out more than this one patrol but since Captain Varning personally skewered the last bandit chieftain six months ago, the situation has been sufficiently quiet that one patrol is deemed adequate. Besides, the constabulary of Aldencross is charged with dealing with petty crimes. This patrol's primary purpose is to make sure the northern frontier is secure.

Captain Ryan Varning**CR 5****XP 1,600**

Human Fighter 6

LG Medium Humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +6**DEFENSE****AC** 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22(+9 armor, +3 shield, +2 Dex)**hp** 39 (6d10+6)**Fort** +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5; +4 vs. fear**Defensive Abilities** bravery +2**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** masterwork lance +12/+7 (1d8+6/x3)

longsword +9/+4 (1d8+3/19-20)

dagger +9/+4 (1d4+3/19-20)

Ranged masterwork composite shortbow +10/+5 (1d6+3/x3)**Special Attacks** weapon training (spears +1)**TACTICS****During Combat** Captain Varning prefers to fight from his horse.

He charges the most dangerous looking opponent preferring to run down spellcasters if possible.

Morale Captain Varning's first impulse when meeting a formidable enemy is to flee back to Balentyne and report. If flight is impossible, Varning fights until he is reduced to nine or fewer hit points and then surrenders.**STATISTICS****Str** 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 13**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +9, **CMD** 22**Feats** Iron Will, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (Lance), Weapon Specialization (Lance)**Skills** Handle Animal +5, Perception +6, Profession (Soldier) +6, Ride +12 (+8 in full plate), Survival +11**Languages** Common**SQ** Armor Training 1**Traits** Courageous -- +2 trait bonus on saving throws against fear effects.**Gear** masterwork lance, masterwork composite shortbow (+3 Str), 20 arrows, longsword, dagger, masterwork full plate, +1 heavy steel shield with personal heraldry, key to his room (4.)**Captain Varning's Warhorse "Varlet"****CR 2****XP 600**

N Large animal

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +8**DEFENSE****AC** 15, touch 13, flat-footed 11 (+4 Dex, -1 size, +2 natural)**hp** 19 (2d8+10)**Fort** +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3**OFFENSE****Speed** 50 ft.**Melee** bite +5 (1d4+5), 2 hooves +0 (1d6+2)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**STATISTICS****Str** 20, **Dex** 18, **Con** 21, **Int** 2, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 21 (25 vs. trip)**Feats** Endurance, Run**Skills** Perception +8

This patrol is a weak spot in the security of the watchtower. Ambushing and replacing the patrol is way inside. At the very least, killing Captain Varning and his men means they will not defend Balentyne in time of attack. This alone is worth 3 VP – two for Varning and one for his men.

Varning's Rangers (6)**CR 1/2****XP 200 each (1,200 XP total)**

Human Expert 1/Warrior 1

LG Medium humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +5**DEFENSE****AC** 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (armor +4, Dex +3)**hp** 12 (d10+d8+2)**Fort** +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** lance +3 (1d8+2/x3)

longsword +3 (1d8+2/19-20)

dagger +3 (1d4+2/19-20)

Ranged short bow +4 (1d6+2/x3)**STATISTICS****Str** 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 16**Feats** Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat**Skills** Handle Animal +5, Perception +5, Profession (Soldier) +6,

Ride +8 (+6 in chain shirt), Stealth +7, Survival +6

Languages Common**Combat Gear** lance, longsword, dagger, composite shortbow (+2 Str), 20 arrows**Other Gear** riding horse (combat trained), chain shirt, 2d6 gp, 2 week's rations, bedroll, tinderbox, waterskin, rain cloak**Ranger's Riding Horses (6)****CR 1****XP 400 each (2,400 XP total)**

N Large animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +6**DEFENSE****AC** 11, touch 11, flat-footed 9 (+2 Dex, -1 size)**hp** 15 (2d8+6)**Fort** +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1**OFFENSE****Speed** 50 ft.**Melee** 2 hooves -2 (1d4+1)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**STATISTICS****Str** 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 7**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 17 (21 vs. trip)**Feats** Endurance, Run**Skills** Perception +6

It is not hard to find out that Varning and his patrol are out and about. It is common knowledge in Aldencross that Varning patrols the wilderness. Tracking him is slightly more difficult. Varning always varies his patrol's route. But he does have a weakness.

Captain Varning likes the camp site known as Freeman's Rock. It has good ground, fine hunting and a great view of Lake Tarik. Three days after leaving, he reliably camps at Freeman's Rock. It would make a fine ambush site for our band of villains. This camp is also a fine chance to catch Captain Varning off his horse.

This information can be found out from any off-duty ranger (all of whom frequent the Lord's Dalliance). They will not volunteer the information, but if bought drinks or befriended, a successful DC 15 Diplomacy skill check will get it out of them.

If hunted in the wilderness, Varning and his six men are a base DC 10 Survival check to track (firm ground, fourteen creatures in the group – seven men and seven horses, horses are large creatures). Varning's patrol does not move at half-speed. Of course, unless the hunters are mounted, it is unlikely they will catch Varning. Horses can of course be acquired in Aldencross at normal prices.

For Varning and his men, patrol is a routine matter. Unless they detect trouble, they are not on guard. The build a fire every night and post only one guard who is rotated in shifts. Varning may be an officer but he is not so proud that he doesn't take one of the watch shifts.

EVENT FIVE: KAITLYN'S TEARS

The gallant Captain Zack Eddarly has been a good friend and confidant of the lovely Kaitlyn Mott for many years, but their friendship only turned into an affair in the last few months. Captain Franz Mott is a gruff and dour military man with little interest in romance. He has focused himself on his career hoping for promotion when the aged Lord of Lorringsgate watchtower retires. Commanding a Watch Wall tower almost guarantees Captain Mott a knighthood and permanent elevation into the aristocracy for both himself and his heirs. The flighty young Kaitlyn only sees that her husband (acquired in an arranged marriage) has stop paying attention to her and that the handsome Captain Zack is so often available instead.

How can the PCs use this to their advantage? First, they need to discover the affair. Timeon the squire knows about the affair. Bellam Barhold, owner of the Lord's Dalliance, that great sink of rumor and innuendo that he is, suspects the affair. Anyone who befriends Captain Eddarly and buys him drinks at the Lord's Dalliance will not hear him say it but may deduce it with a DC 20 Sense Motive skill check. He talks so much about Kaitlyn and how neglected she is...or was. Captain Eddarly has also saved every one of the very explicit love letters he has been exchanging with Kaitlyn in the private quarters (room 6).

If Franz Mott were to receive an anonymous note delivered by a servant telling of the affair and exactly when to return home to catch the two lovers, he would follow up on it and be so angered that we would challenge Captain Eddarly to a duel.

The next morning they would meet in a field not far from Balentyne. There is a 50% chance that either Captain Eddarly would die (killed by Captain Mott's enraged assault) or that Captain Mott would die (killed by Captain Eddarly's desperate defense against the berserk cuckold).

Either way, the other duelist would be guilty of Duelling to the Death, a capital offense likely committed in front of several witnesses. The survivor might very well get sent to Branderscar prison. Killing a Captain of the Watch Wall is after all a serious and unforgiveable offense.

Justice arrives quickly at the tower Balentyne. Sir Thomas would court-martial the man by evening and see the survivor clamped in irons. A tearful Kaitlyn will watch as either her lover or her husband is sent to the prison cells (room 35). Thus without a weapon being drawn the PCs can eliminate half of the captains currently stationed at Balentyne.

Doing so is worth full XP for slaying two CR 5 Captains (3200 XP). Further it is worth 4 VP (for removing two captains). Captain Eddarly's and Captain Mott's statistics can be found below in their respective chambers. Kaitlyn Mott is an unarmed, unarmored CG female human aristocrat 1.

EVENT SIX: BAD BEEF

Garrison food is repetitive and forgettable at best. But once a week Mama Louisa Giuseppe comes to the kitchens of Balentyne (10.) and makes her special beef stew. A savory, hearty mixture of beef, wine, onions and herbs harvested from her garden – the stew is always a hit. The guards line up and eagerly wolf down a bowl. Mama Guiseppe's sons both served in this garrison years ago when she started this tradition.

Though both of her boys have long departed for better careers in the southern city of Ghastenhall, she still makes the trek up to Balentyne once a week to make her stew. She does this for no pay. Everyone from the commander on down simply calls her 'Mama' – a title that warms her aged heart.

This touching tradition is a unique opportunity to inflict real harm on the garrison. If they poison any other batch of food, they will affect maybe five or ten guards on that shift before it is noticed that something is wrong. Here they will have seventy guards eating from the same pot in less than fifteen minutes.

There is poison to be had. The alchemist in town sells arsenic intended to kill rats. It would take a lot of arsenic to poison the whole batch effectively. Buying the alchemists entire stock would cost 240 gp but this would be enough to incapacitate many guards. Of course buying this much arsenic might make the alchemist suspicious. A good story (Bluff DC 15) would allay his fears. Fortunately, arsenic poisoning is easy to confuse with cholera.

Arsenic in the stew kills 1d10 guards and sickens 4d10 more. The sickened guards are relieved of duty immediately for fear of a cholera outbreak. They are unfit for at least three days and are kept out a week just to be safe. Donnagin is quick to deduce that this is no mere cholera outbreak and begins an immediate investigation. Havelyn though is not so sure. He will need evidence before ordering the entire watchtower sealed and searched.

The Magister's Laboratory (room 40) also among the other alchemical components has a tincture of concentrated wolfsbane. This potent poison could easily kill a good swath of the garrison. However, no one will mistake the black tongues it leaves on its victims for anything but poison. Wolfsbane kills 2d10 guards and sickens 2d10 more. Lord Havelyn is immediately sure there is a poisoner about and begins an immediate search for the culprit.

The PCs may also still have belladonna leaves from the shrubbery in Branderscar prison (5a way back in act 1). These belladonna leaves are by now months old and have little potency left in them. If they are used, they do little more than give a few guards strange headaches.

Award the PCs experience points for each guard they kill (200 XP apiece). Award XP for guards they sicken only if the attack happens when the guards are absent.

EVENT SEVEN: HOW THE BARD OF BARRINGTON BURNED DOWN BALENTYNE

A troupe of actors is visiting the watchtower. Led by famed thespian William Marcus Marlowe, the so-called Bard of Barrington, Ye Merrie Men will be playing the Great Hall of Balentyne. This is all part of the ongoing effort of Father Donnagin to cheer up the grim Lord Havelyn. It is of course doomed to failure. But repeated failure has never stopped the irrepressible cleric before and it won't stop him this time.

This is a chance for outsiders to get inside the watchtower and thus it is an opportunity for the PCs. Ye Merrie Men consist of twelve actors and stagehands and Bill Marlowe. They are actually not all men – controversially, Ye Merrie Men actually has two female performers. They will be performing "The Fall of Amberlyn" a rousing tale of how love and greed brought down a great city state. The plot hinges around the young lovers Brandon and Bronwyn and their doomed romance. William Marlowe of course will be playing the handsome Brandon. The role of Bronwyn will be played by lovely ingénue Marie Janoset. The fact that Bronwyn (the character) and Bronwyn (Lord Havelyn's lost love) share a name is an unhappy coincidence unknown to Father Donnagin.

The performance is a great time to sneak around the castle. Seventy of the guards (i.e. everyone who isn't on duty), all four captains, all the servants, all the acolytes, all the dwarves, Father Donnagin, Lord Havelyn and even the reclusive magister Tacitus assemble in the Great Hall (31) after dark to watch the three hour performance. This is the emptiest the watchtower will ever be. Note that Mad Martin does not attend making this a perfect time to destroy the rookery (43). The noise coming from the play is consistently boisterous. Bill Marlowe is a loud, Shatnerian actor. He is a perfect distraction.

Lord Havelyn will cancel the play (much to Father Donnagin's chagrin) if there are unsolved murders that have happened in the watchtower. "There is no time for useless recreations now, Father," says the gruff commander. "We must find that dastard!"

If the PCs take over the play, the situation is more difficult. They will be given the Great Hall and allowed an entire twenty four hours to set up their stage. The loaded wagons of Ye Merrie Men include a complete stage that can be set up in four hours by four men. "The Fall of Amberlyn" requires eight actors. Memorizing a part takes a day for the six minor roles and three days for the two leads. As long as the two leads do a decent performance, the play will be a success. To successfully stage the play the six minor roles need make a DC 10 Perform (act) skill check. To successfully play the leads a DC 15 skill check is needed. By extensive rehearsals, the actual Merrie Men receive a +4 circumstance bonus guaranteeing some degree of success. Actors threatened or charmed into playing a part receive a -2 circumstance penalty.

A single failed skill check by a lead and the play will be considered poorly staged but will be allowed to finish. If both the leads fail, the performers will be booed off stage an hour early. The minors do not matter unless three or four of them fail. Then they count as one bad "lead". If everyone fails, then the play closes in an hour and Father Donnagin storms over to William Marlowe and demands a refund of 500 gold (money the troupe long ago spent).

If the play is performed successfully, then Father Donnagin gleefully invites the leads to join the officers for a private dinner the next day and sees that the rest of the actors and fed and taken care of. They remain in the Great Hall. This private dinner happens in the Lord's Council Chambers and sees the leads alone with Lord Havelyn, the four captains and Father Donnagin. All six are unarmored with no spells prepared. Lord Havelyn and the four captains bring their swords.

If the PCs successfully use the play as cover for mayhem, award them a CR 4 bonus (1200 XP).

William Marcus Marlowe, the Bard of Barrington

CR 1

XP 400

Male half-elven bard 2

CN Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 shield)

hp 11 (2d8+2)

Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic; +2 vs. enchantment spells and effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee rapier +1 (1d6/18-20)

Special Attacks bardic performance 9 rounds/day (countersong, distraction, fascinate [DC 14], inspire courage +1)

Bard Spells Known (CL 2nd; concentration +5)

1st (3/day) – comprehend languages, hideous laughter (DC 14), ventriloquism

0 (at will) – dancing lights, daze (DC 13), ghost sound (DC 13), message, prestidigitation

TACTICS

During Combat Marlowe avoids combat if at all possible. If it's not, he draws his rapier.

Morale If brought below six hit points, Marlowe surrenders and begs for his life.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 14

Feats Dodge, Skill Focus (Perform [Acting])

Skills Acrobatics +7, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +11, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +4, Perform (act) +11, Perform (oratory) +8, Profession (actor) +4, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven

SQ bardic knowledge +1, versatile performance (act)

Gear masterwork studded leather, buckler, rapier, disguise kit, fabulous hat, expensive silk cloak (worth 35 gp)

Note: Though half-elven, Marlowe's features so favor his human parent that it's almost impossible to tell him from human. The only hint is his very slightly pointed ears.

Ye Merrie Men (12)

CR 1/3

XP 135 (1620 XP total)

Human Expert 2

CG Medium humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 9 (2d8)

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

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee dagger +1 (1d4/19-20)

TACTICS

During Combat Ye Merrie Men try to avoid combat. If they cannot, they each have a dagger.

Morale Any injury causes the actors to surrender.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 10, **Con** 10, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 15

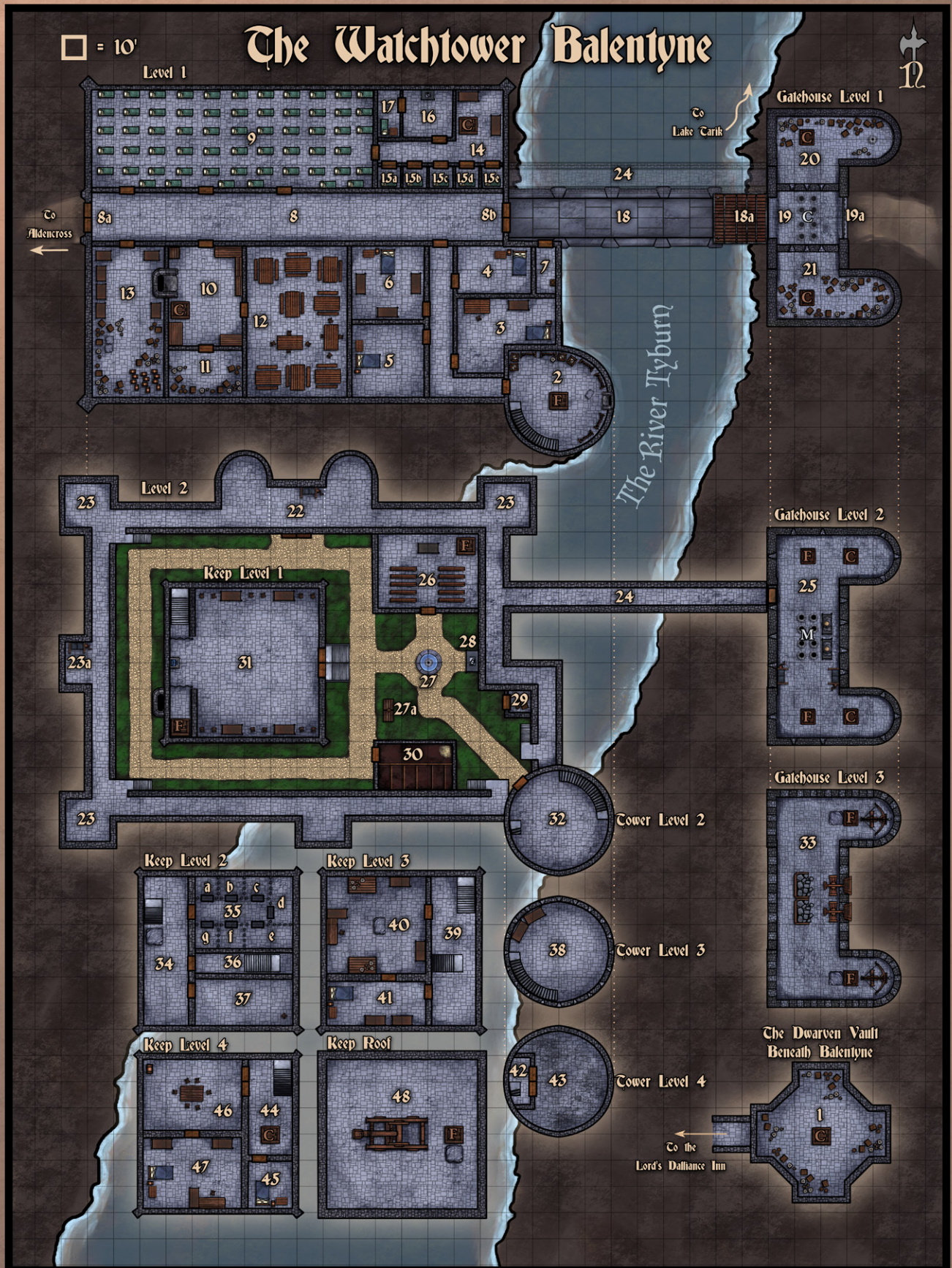
Base Atk +1; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 11

Feats Skill Focus (Craft [various]), Skill Focus (Perform[act])

Skills Craft (various) +9, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +5, Perform (act) +10, Sense Motive +5

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven

Gear dagger, 1d8 gold



THE TOWER BALENTYNE

LEVEL 1

1. THE DWARVEN VAULT

Built by a dwarven work crew more than a century ago, this vault is the deepest point of the watchtower. It holds a vast stockpile of durable, emergency rations that are periodically rotated to ensure they are still edible (if only just). These rations sustain the garrison in times of siege. Several thousand days' worth of iron rations fills this vault alongside barrels of potable water and other durable provisions.

There also lurks a case of fine elven wine banished here by the teetotaling Lord Havelyn. These dozen bottles are each worth 30 gp apiece and are truly delicious sweet wines rich with honey and raspberry.

The vault conceals a secret door of dwarven make (DC 30 Perception skill check to detect). Behind this door is a small winding passage that leads down almost a mile to the basement of the Lord's Dalliance Inn. This door and passage date from when the Lord's Dalliance was a brothel and the local lord would make late night visitations. There is no one in the garrison who is aware of this secret door and the vault is the least visited place in the watchtower.

A trap door in the ceiling leads up to the armory (room 2). No one bothers to routinely light this room but there are sconces upon the wall where torches could be lit. For an entire month, no one will visit this vault unless the entire keep is being searched. It is a perfect place for PCs to hide.

2. THE ARMORY

The base of the circular tower holds the castle armory and smithy. There is a fully functional forge here that vents its smoke through a crude chimney out over the River Tyburn. The vents are kept deliberately small so this room can get quite smoky through prolonged use. A number of the guards are skilled weapon makers and armorers and use this room to keep the garrison's gear in top condition. On racks are twenty halberds, longswords, breastplates and heavy steel shields. All bear the marks of the Talirean military and are thus difficult to sell.

During the day there are 1d6+1 guards here (see room 9 below), out of their armor, working intently on repairing gear, making arrow heads or a similar activity.

3. CAPTAIN BARHOLD'S QUARTERS

Captain Samuel Barhold occupies the largest quarters being the most senior of the captains. He lives exclusively in these quarters and has no residence in town (unlike all

three of the other captains). Barring emergencies, he is here almost every night (80% chance) since he makes the guard assignments and never gives himself night duty. He does occasionally go into town to have dinner with his brother Bellam (who owns the Lord's Dalliance) and his family.

Captain Barhold is a craggy-faced veteran watchman who first joined the guard when he lied about his age and became a soldier at age 14. That was twenty years ago. Today, he stands on the cusp of middle age certain that he will spend the rest of his life guarding this wall. Captain Barhold is no crusader against evil like Lord Havelyn. He is a soldier dedicated to his homeland and seeing her safe. Respected by the entire garrison, he has earned the nickname "Iron Sam". His death will shake morale greatly.

There is a bed, a wardrobe, a desk and a chair here as well as other typical furnishings. The only thing of any value here is Captain Barhold's medal of commendation (made of silver and sapphire and worth 75 gp).

When empty, this room has an average lock (DC 25).

Captain Samuel Barhold

CR 6

XP 2,400

Human fighter 7

LG Medium humanoid

Init +5; Senses Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+9 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 73 (7d10+35)

Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +4; +2 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +2

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 greatsword +14/+9 (2d6+10/19-20)

dagger +11/+6 (1d4+4/19-20)

sap +11/+6 (1d6+4, nonlethal)

Special Attacks weapon training (heavy blades +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Captain Barhold would prefer to capture any invaders of the tower alive. He will sunder weapons, use his sap and generally try to take prisoners. This is no softness on the captain's part. He wants to know who sent them and if an attack is coming.

Morale Captain Barhold has never run away from a fight in his life. He fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Base Atk +7; CMB +11 (+15 with sunder); CMD 22 (24 vs. sunder)

Feats Alertness, Greater Sunder, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Step Up, Toughness, Weapon Focus (great sword), Weapon Specialization (great sword)

Skills Intimidate +6, Profession (Soldier) +10, Perception +12, Sense Motive +6

Languages Common

SQ armor training 2

Trait Veteran of the Watch – Samuel gains Perception as a class skill and a +1 trait bonus to Perception checks

Combat Gear tanglefoot bags (2)

Other Gear +1 greatsword, dagger, sap, masterwork full plate, key to his room

4. CAPTAIN VARNING'S QUARTERS

Captain Ryan Varning is the most junior captain and thus has the smallest quarters nearest the garderobe. He is rarely here since his primary duty is patrol commander. Further, Ryan comes from a wealthy but minor noble family and so has money enough to afford a house in Aldencross. This room is therefore reliably abandoned. Ryan hasn't bunked here in weeks only visiting when duty forces him.

This sparsely furnished room holds nothing of value and is locked with an average lock (DC 25).

5. CAPTAIN MOTT'S QUARTERS

Captain Mott has a house in town (with his wife Kaitlyn) and so his quarters are rarely occupied except in emergencies.

Captain Franz Mott

CR 5

XP 1,600

Human Fighter 6

LN Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses Perception -1

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+9 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 63 (6d10+30)

Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +3; +2 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +2

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 halberd +13/+8 (1d10+10/x3)

longsword +10/+5 (1d8+4/19-20)

dagger +10/+5 (1d4+4/19-20)

Ranged composite longbow +7/+2 (1d8+4/x3)

Special Attacks weapon training (pole arms +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Franz is a master of the halberd and expert at tripping his enemies. When he trips an opponent, not only do they fall prone but they provoke attacks of opportunity. With a -4 penalty to their AC while prone, Franz always chooses to power attack the fallen foe (acquiring a -2 penalty to hit and a +6 bonus to damage). Further, do not forget that fallen foes provoke from all enemies within reach.

Morale Franz is a fanatical and stubborn defender of Balentyne. He never surrenders in a combat and is prepared to fight to the death to defend the watchtower.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 10

Base Atk +6; CMB +10 (+14 to trip); CMD 21 (+23 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Greater Trip, Improved Trip, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (halberd), Weapon Specialization (halberd)

Skills Climb +8, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Profession (soldier) +8, Ride +5, Sense Motive +4, Survival +4, Swim +8

Languages Common, Dwarven**SQ** armor training 1

Trait Suspicious – Franz gains Sense Motive as a class skill and a +1 trait bonus to Sense Motive checks

Gear +1 halberd, longsword, composite longbow (+4 Str), 20 arrows, dagger, masterwork full plate, key to his room

A gruff humorless by-the-book military man, Franz is a hard man to like. He comes from a well-connected family in Ghastenhall. It was this family that arranged his largely loveless marriage to the beautiful Kaitlyn.

This furnished room holds nothing of value and is locked with an average lock (DC 25).

6. CAPTAIN EDDARLY'S QUARTERS

These handsomely appointed quarters are the home of Balentyne's resident gallant – Captain Zacharias Eddarly. His wardrobe is full of clothing more fitting a noble than a captain of the Watch Wall. All of his finery in total weighs 20 pounds and is worth 500 gp. In addition to the finery, there is also concealed in the wardrobe (DC 15 Perception skill check to find) a collection of explicit love letters exchanged between Zack and Kaitlyn Mott.

This room is locked with an average lock (DC 25).

While Captain Mott is on shift in the gatehouse (from 4 pm till midnight) there is a 25% chance that Zack is in town enjoying Kaitlyn's company.

Captain Zacharias "Zack" Eddarly

CR 5

XP 1,600

Human fighter 6

CG Medium humanoid

Init +4; Senses Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 39 (6d10+6)

Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2; +2 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +2

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee longsword +8/+3 (1d8+2/19-20)

dagger +8/+3 (1d4+2/19-20)

Ranged +1 composite longbow +13/+8 (1d8+6/x3)

Special Attacks weapon training (bows +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Zack's favorite tactic, of course, is to stand behind an arrow slit and attack his foes with improved cover. A crenellated wall (which grants cover) will also suffice. Failing that, he avoids melee moving quickly to alert other guards and captains of intruders. Once more melee combatant troops join the fray, he is quick to support them with a volley of arrows.

Morale Zack is a loyal Talirean soldier but not a fanatical one. If reduced to nine hit points, he will flee. If fleeing is impossible, he surrenders.

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14

Base Atk +6; CMB +8; CMD 22

Feats Dodge, Manyshot, Mobility, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow)

Skills Bluff +11, Intimidate +8, Perception +6, Profession (soldier) +9, Ride +10

SQ armor training 1

Trait Fast Talker – Zack gains Bluff as a class skill and a +1 trait bonus to Bluff skill checks.

Gear +1 composite longbow (Str +2), longsword, dagger, 20 arrows, +1 chain shirt, key to his room

7. THE GARDEROBE

This is the watchtower's toilet which dumps into the River Tyburn below. There is nothing of interest or value here.

8. THE MAIN THOROUGHFARE

This large passage way is the main artery for the lower level of the Watchtower. Various denizens of the watchtower are always coming and going.

During the day 1d8-1 guards are in this hallway as well as 1d3-1 servants. There is a 25% chance at any given moment that a guard captain, an acolyte, or even Father Donnagin may be passing through this hallway.

During the night three guards (Barhold's men) are stationed here to make sure no one disturbs the soldiers sleeping in the barracks (9).

8A. THE SERVANT'S ENTRANCE

This set of large solidly-built double doors is the servant's entrance and the commoners who work in the tower arrive through here. These doors are open during the day to allow better ventilation unless there is a state of emergency.

Two guards are posted here day and night. They face towards Aldencross, their primary duty to make sure no one unauthorized enters the Watchtower. They will not lightly abandon their posts (since dereliction of duties is punished with flogging) however one will investigate loud noises or sounds of trouble in the lower Watchtower.

Two Guards (Barhold's Men)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)

hp 13 (see room 9 below)

8B. THE PONTINE GATE

Located here is a large set of sturdy double doors meant to keep invaders out should the bridge (18) be overrun. These robust portals are banded with iron and a stout wooden beam can be used to barricade them should there be need. In peaceful times these are often left open so that a pleasant river breeze can circulate through the lower levels.

9. THE BARRACKS

This great room is filled with sixty wooden bunk beds each with two small chests pushed underneath them. These chests have a simple lock (DC 20 to pick with disable device) on them and contains the personal effects of the guards. Note that there are enough beds for one hundred and twenty guards even though the garrison consists of only one hundred men currently. The garrison of Balentyne is slightly below strength. Still, the extra beds

Captain Barhold's Men (infantry) x 30

CR 1/2

XP 200

Human warrior 2

LG Medium humanoid

Init +0; Senses Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +2 shield)

hp 13 (2d10+2)

Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee longsword +5 (1d8+2/19-20)

dagger +4 (1d4+2/19-20)

Ranged heavy crossbow +2 (1d10/19-20)

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +2; CMB +4; CMD 14

Feats Alertness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Craft (various) +5, Intimidate +4, Perception +4, Profession (Soldier) +5, Sense Motive +2

Languages Common

Gear breastplate, heavy steel shield, longsword, dagger, heavy crossbow, 10 bolts, signal horn, 1d6 gold, strongbox key

Captain Eddarly's Men (archers/siege engineers) x 30

CR 1/2

XP 200

Human expert 1/warrior 1

NG Medium humanoid

Init +3; Senses Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 10 (d10+d8)

Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +0

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee longsword +1 (1d8/19-20)

dagger +1 (1d4/19-20)

Ranged longbow +5 (1d8/x3)

STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8

Base Atk +1; CMB +1; CMD 14

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency: Siege Engine (various), Weapon Focus (long bow)

Skills Craft (various) +5, Intimidate +3, Perception +5, Profession (Soldier) +5, Ride +7, Sense Motive +5, Stealth +7, Survival +4

Languages Common

Gear chain shirt, longbow, 20 arrows, long sword, dagger, signal horn, 1d6 gold, strongbox key

sometimes see use whenever any guests of common station are forced to overnight at the watchtower.

This room is never empty. At night it is full of sleeping guards (virtually everyone who isn't on night shift). During the day it is occupied by dozen of off duty guards wasting their time between shifts.

Three guards (Barhold's Men) are posted day and night at the doors that lead into the main thoroughfare (8). During the day, these usually stay inside the barracks to make sure nothing is stolen. During the night, they stand out in the thoroughfare to make sure no one disturbs the sleeping guards.

It is difficult to wake the guards when they sleep. With as many as seventy men sleeping here every night in close quarters, the sound of snoring is tremendous. A guard soon learns to be a deep sleeper or he never gets any quality rest.

Captain Mott's Men (halberdiers) x 30 CR 1/2

XP 200

Human warrior 2
LN Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor)
hp 13 (2d10+2)
Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.
Melee halberd +5 (1d10+3/x3)
dagger +4 (1d4+2/19-20)
Ranged heavy crossbow +2 (1d10/19-20)

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8
Base Atk +2; CMB +4; CMD 14
Feats Alertness, Weapon Focus (halberd)
Skills Craft (various) +5, Intimidate +4, Perception +4, Profession (Soldier) +5, Sense Motive +2
Languages Common
Gear breastplate, halberd, dagger, heavy crossbow, 10 bolts, signal horn, 1d6 gold, strongbox key

Varning's Men (scouts) x 10 CR 1/2

XP 200

hp 12 (see Event Four above)

Six of these scouts are often out with Captain Varning. The other four sometimes patrol the watchtower, serving as a roaming group of guards.

10. THE KITCHENS

This large room is a busy place both night and day. It takes an immense effort to feed the garrison of the watchtower. During the day, a dozen servants are found all throughout the watchtower doing various chores. At mealtimes all servants are here cooking, dishing up meals and washing dishes. Even in the dead of night, two servants are hard at work boiling beef bones, peeling potatoes, stocking the pantry (room 11.) and scrubbing pots and pans.

The kitchens are directly below the keep and a large chimney vents up, running alongside the keep's outer wall.

11. The Pantry

This large pantry is full of foodstuffs for the garrison. Frequently refreshed by shipments from the town, the pantry holds food enough only for a day or two.

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 Smarter and slightly more presentable than your average peasant, the servants who work in the watchtower have learned to keep a wary eye for their betters. Still, fundamentally, these are non-combatant servants. If confronted by someone who is obviously dangerous, they will run and yell. Running and yelling likely attract nearby guards who are curious as to what has riled up the help.

Morale Any damage causes them to surrender and beg for their lives.

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, various (but usually dwarven)

12. THE MESS HALL

This large room is where meals are served and guards congregate to chat while off-duty. There are always 3d6 off-duty guards in this room relaxing and eating. The only exception is when Mama Giuseppe serves her famous beef stew (see Event Six: Bad Beef above). Then every seat is packed and every off-duty guard is here (seventy soldiers in all).

13. THE STOREROOM

This room is stocked almost to the ceiling with all the common equipment necessary to keep the watchtower running. There are large stocks of torches, rope, nails, pitch, lamp oil, lumber, bricks and mortar here. It is a fine place to hide for a short time, but servants and guards come into this room all the time.

It is also a fine place to start a fire. Such a fire will draw guards from all across the watchtower. They will form a bucket brigade from the nearest source of fresh water (the bridge – 18). This will probably put out the fire but will also serve as a magnificent distraction. All the guard posts throughout the watchtower will be at half strength during such a fire.

14. THE VESTIARY

Here Father Donnagin and his acolytes don their vestments and prepare to ascend into the Choir Hall (room

26) to conduct ceremonies in praise to Mitra. Their holy regalia (six sets worth 250 gp in total) are stored here when there is no service.

A ladder leads up. This room is lit by two torches on sconces.

15. CELLS OF THE ACOLYTES

These five simple cells all serve as the domicile for the five Mitran acolytes who serve beneath Father Donnagin – Brothers Lambert, Hollis and Gregory and Sisters Talya and Edith. Though the priesthood of Mitra is mixed gender, the acolytes have all taken vows of chastity.

The acolytes spend much time here in prayer. They also have choir practice in the Choir Hall (room 26) once per day and tend the courtyard (27).

Acolytes (5)	CR 1/2
XP 200 (1000 XP total)	
Human cleric 1	
LG Medium humanoid	
Init +0; Senses Perception +2	
DEFENSE	
AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+5 armor, +2 shield)	
hp 6 (1d8+2)	
Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +4	
OFFENSE	
Speed 20 ft.	
Melee heavy mace +1 (1d8+1)	
Special Attacks channel positive energy 7/day (DC 12, 1d6)	
Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1 st ; Concentration +3)	
5/day – rebuke death, touch of good	
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 1 st ; Concentration +3)	
1 st – bless, command (DC 13), cure light wounds ^D	
0 (at will) – guidance, resistance, virtue	
D domain spell; Domains Healing, Good	
TACTICS	
During Combat These acolytes all but worship their master Father Donnagin. They will take every order he gives as gospel. Their tactics largely center on supporting him.	
Morale The acolytes will do their best to see that Father Donnagin is kept well sacrificing their own lives for the chance to cast cure light wounds on their leader.	
STATISTICS	
Str 12, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14	
Base Atk +0, CMB +1, CMD 11	
Feats Extra Channel, Selective Channeling	
Skills Diplomacy +6, Heal +6, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Perform (sing) +7, Sense Motive +6	
Languages Common, Dwarven	
Gear scale mail, heavy steel shield, heavy mace, silver holy symbol, belt pouch, 1d6 gold pieces	
Trait Member of the Choir – these clerics are all trained singers. For them Perform (sing) is always a class skill and they receive a +1 trait bonus to that skill.	

16. THE CLERGY'S SHRINE

This is where Father Donnagin meets with his acolytes and conducts church business. There are plain furnishings and small shrine. There is a basin in the shrine that holds ten doses of holy water.

17. FATHER DONNAGIN'S CELL

This humble chamber is the abode of the second most powerful man in the entire watchtower (behind only the commander). It contains only a cot, a small table, a prayer mat and a golden emblem of the Mitran Sun upon the wall (worth 120 gp). The small table has three books stacked on it – The Light Undimmed (a Mitran holy text), a hymnbook full of rousing spiritual music and a surprisingly well written novel about a monk named Cadfell who solves crimes.

Perpetually cheerful, Father Donnagin is the most popular man in the entire garrison. The guards respect Lord Havelyn and Captain Barhold, but they like the gregarious priest. A member of the Order of St. Macarius, Father Donnagin never hesitates to aid the injured or the sick. Nonjudgmental and accessible, this priest has used remove disease to discretely remove the pox from more than one soldier (though always with an exhortation to sin no more).

Father Donnagin's schedule is difficult to predict. He moves freely about the watchtower and can be found anywhere at any hour as the mood takes him. Father Donnagin is a wise and perspicacious man. If there have been mysterious deaths throughout the watchtower, he will take to accompanying Lord Havelyn everywhere the commander goes. The combat duo of Father Donnagin supporting the commander would make for a fearsome battle indeed.



Father Donnagin

Father Althus Donnagin, Chaplain of Balentyne**CR 5****XP 1,600**

Middle-aged Human cleric 6

LG Medium humanoid

Init +0, **Senses** Perception +5**DEFENSE****AC** 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+7 armor, +3 shield)**hp** 45 (6d8+18)**Fort** +9, **Ref** +2, **Will** +10**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** masterwork heavy mace +5 (1d8)**Special Attacks** channel positive energy 7/day (DC 15, 3d6); *sun's blessing* – channeled positive energy vs. undead adds +6 to damage dealt; undead do not add their channel resistance to their saves**Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 6th, concentration +11)

8/day – rebuke death

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 6th, concentration +11)3rd—*cure light wounds*^P, *dispel magic*, *invisibility purge*, *speak with dead*2nd—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *heat metal*^P (DC 17), *hold person* (DC 17), *spiritual weapon*1st—*bless*, *command* (DC 16), *remove fear*, *sanctuary*, *searing light*^D, *shield of faith*0th—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*, *stabilize*D domain spell; **Domains** Healing, Sun**TACTICS****During Combat** Father Donnagin prefers to leave fighting to soldiers and gravitates to a support role. He will resort to using his mace only if sorely pressed and without other option.**Morale** With his friendly smile and easy going nature, Father Donnagin does not seem like a zealot. But that is exactly what he is, especially in the face of evil or Asmodeans.**STATISTICS****Str** 10, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 14**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14**Feats** Extra Channel, Selective Channeling, Shield Focus, Toughness**Skills** Diplomacy +11, Heal +14, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (history) +5, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Knowledge (planes) +5, Knowledge (religion) +10, Perform (sing) +7, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +5**Languages** Common**SQ** healer's blessing (all cure spells are empowered)**Trait** Member of the Choir – the clerics are all trained singers. For them Perform (sing) is always a class skill and they receive a +1 trait bonus to that skill.**Gear** +1 *breastplate*, heavy steel shield, masterwork heavy mace, silver holy symbol, keys to the choir house and priest's quarters**18. THE BRIDGE**

This hundred foot bridge spans the River Tyburn and connects the gatehouse to the watchtower. It is the most strategic bridge in the region. To the north and west is Lake Tarik, an inland sea. To the south and east the Tyburn cuts a deep canyon until it completes its journey to the ocean. This is the only safe crossing for miles.

This bridge is older than the rest of the watchtower and is the reason that the watchtower is here. It's old dwarven stone work and remains solid. The only recent modification are the drawbridge (18a) and the charmingly named Bridge of Death (24) that overlooks this bridge.

There are a few buckets on ropes near the edge of the bridge. This is how the watchtower fetches fresh water. Servants are often out here pulling up buckets of water out of the fast flowing Tyburn below.

18A. THE DRAWBRIDGE

This wooden drawbridge completes the last twenty feet of the bridge. When raised (in room 25) there is a twenty foot gap between the bridge (18) and the gatehouse entryway (19) as well as an intervening wall of timber. When Cardinal Thorn commands for the gates of Balentyne to be open, this drawbridge is half of what he means. The other half is the portcullis (19a) below.

19. GATEHOUSE ENTRYWAY

This wide-open death trap of a room is devoid of any feature or furniture. Between the wide murder hole in the ceiling and the arrow slits on either side, one would not want to linger here too long.

Scalding Hot Sand**CR 5****Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 15; **Disable Device** impossible except in room 25 above**EFFECTS****Trigger** location; **Reset** manual**Effect** scalding hot sand (6d6 fire damage, DC 20 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets in 10'x20' squares)**19A. PORTCULLIS**

This stout latticed grill of iron forbids entry to Balentyne and is never kept open. It is the first line of defense for the gatehouse. The portcullis is spectacularly heavy and effectively unliftable without the aid of the intricate counterweight system housed within the upper levels of the gatehouse. The winch on the second level (25) raises this portcullis.

When Cardinal Thorn commands for the gates of Balentyne to be open, this portcullis is half of what he means. The other half is the drawbridge (18a) detailed above.

20. GATEHOUSE NORTHERN STORAGE

This lower level of the gatehouse has arrow slits that can fire in the entryway (room 19). It has also houses some of the long term provisions for the gatehouse – iron rations, root vegetables and dried meat mostly.

There is also a cistern that leads straight down into the river (which cuts through rock here). A long bucket on a rope can be lowered to collect fresh water from the River Tyburn. This small hole is too small for a man to climb and grated. Still a halfling or someone employing magical means might be able to sneak into the gatehouse this way. In times of siege five guards (Eddarly's men) take up residence here.

21. GATEHOUSE SOUTHERN STORAGE

This the southern storage area and is largely identical to room 20 except it lacks the cistern and has more provisions for the gatehouse.

This is a fairly good area to hide. There are boxes, crates and sacks stacked everywhere that could be used to conceal a crude base of operations. This area is rarely visited by guardsmen unless they expect imminent attack in which case five guards (Eddarly's men) take up residence here.

LEVEL 2

22. THE ALDENCROSS GATE

Though nowhere near as elaborate as the main gatehouse, this smaller gate sees much more traffic. The gate has a portcullis and a reinforced door. When guard patrols ride out, they leave through here. When official visitors come to the watchtower, they use this entrance. Two guards are posted here day and night.

23. THE WALLS OF BALENTYNE

These are the walls of Balentyne, rising twenty feet above the courtyard below. They are crenellated by battlements on both sides. The walls are accessible by four narrow stairs.

Two Guards (Mott's Men)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)

hp 13 each (see room 9 above)

23A. THE SEAL OF BALENTYNE

Above the servants entrance (8a) hangs a great stone emblem bearing the heraldry of Talingarde. This emblem is one of the watchtower's most prominent features. Everyone knows this. What is not commonly known is that the stone emblem can be lowered via a winch upon the walls.

Two Guards (Eddarly's Men)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)

hp 10 each (see room 9 above)

This great slab of stone lowered into place closes off the Main Thoroughfare (8.) It is the final defensive measure of Balentyne. If the Gatehouse is broken and the lower levels occupied, this great stone can seal the exit and trap the invaders hopefully giving relief enough time to arrive. The stone is suspended by massive iron chains that are concealed beneath the tower overhang.

This winch has not been used in sometime. Lord Havelyn prefers to keep this last measure a secret after all. However, if investigated a Knowledge (engineering) or Disable Device DC 20 skill check will reveal this winch's

true function. It is not hard to sabotage. If the gear pin is taken, the winch will not function and the seal cannot be lowered without fashioning another.

Sabotaging the seal is worth a CR 3 reward (800 XP) and 1 VP.

24. THE BRIDGE OF DEATH

This hundred feet long crenellated bridge overlooks the main bridge (18.) below. If an army were to penetrate the gatehouse, this would be the second line of defense. Archers would fire volleys and drop stones on to the invaders on the bridge below.

This bridge earned its charming name a hundred and twenty years ago. A tribe of ogres attacked Balentyne and managed to break the portcullis. The wily Talirean commander left the drawbridge down and the ogres rushed onto the bridge. He then raised the drawbridge trapping sixteen heavily armored ogres (including the ogre's high chieftain) on the bridge. The archers punished the brutes with arrows and within a minute no ogre survived. With their chieftain dead, the ogres fled in disarray and the "Bridge of Death" was named.

Two guards are posted here day and night.

25. THE GATEHOUSE 2nd LEVEL

This level is a defensive keystone of the gatehouse. Archer slits line the walls. Two great cauldrons filled with heated sand are tended day and night. The sand is kept blistering hot and ready to be poured through the murder holes (M) onto anyone caught in the gatehouse en-

Two Guards (Eddarly's Men)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)

hp 10 each (see room 9 above)

tryway (room 19 below). If the fires are extinguished and the sand allowed to cool for an hour, it takes four hours to relight the fires again heat the sand.

Two stout winches are here. One raises the porticullis (19a). The other raises the drawbridge (18a). It takes a full round action to lower or raise each.

Four guards are continuously posted here. They tend the fires and pace the level. This post is considered one of the worst duties since the heavy stone walls plus the constant fire ensures this level is always stifling hot. The guards call this post "the oven".

During the day, four dwarven engineers are here working on strengthening the gatehouse. Their construction with its noise and debris only makes this post more miserable.

Two Guards (Mott's Men) CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)
hp 13 each (see room 9 above)

Two Guards (Eddarly's Men) CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)
hp 10 each (see room 9 above)

Four Dwarven Engineers CR 1/2

XP 200 each (800 XP total)
hp 19 each (see Event 3 above)

There is a single reinforced door in this room that leads to the so-called "Bridge of Death" (24). This door is supposed to be kept locked (average lock; DC 25) and barred but because of the heat it is usually propped open since it provides this room's only ventilation. The key is in possession of the most senior guard currently on duty.

Sabotaging the cauldrons is worth a CR 2 reward (600 XP) and 1 VP. Using the winches to open the gates during the assault are worth a CR 5 reward (1600 XP) and 5 VP.

26. THE CHOIR HALL

This open hall is the center of Mitran worship here in the watchtower. Its vault ceilings soar rising twenty five feet. Around the edge of the ceilings are statues of numerous saints of the Mitran faith. All of them are singing joyous hymns in praise of the shining lord. At the front of the hall is a great altar and carved upon the front is the phrase – "There is no darkness so deep that a single candle cannot defeat it."

Here the clergy gathers to sing praises to the light of Mitra. Once a week (on the first day) there is a great gathering and a ceremony in honor of the Shining Lord is held. The ritual takes about an hour.

About half the off-duty guards (so 35 men), the four captains, Lord Havelyn, Tacitus, Donnagin and even the rarely seen Mad Martin gather to commune with Mitra. These are joyous affairs marked by lots of singing.

It may seem to be only an empty church most of the time but this consecrated place is far from unprotected. When this choir hall was first built, the cardinal who consecrated it summoned forth nine lantern archons to fill the chamber with music and to protect it always.

Now they hide up among the stone statues of the saints that adorn the high walls. When the choir sings, they hum in sympathetic vibration filling the hall with celestial music. This has led to the rumors about "the singing saints of Balentyne". The archons rarely make themselves visible (only when called forth by Father Donnagin).

These unsleeping lantern archons are ever alert. Everyone who enters this choir hall gets detected for evil (an at-will ability of the lantern archons). If evil is sensed, then a single archon teleports in front of the offender and demands in truespeech they depart and repent. If the "evil" does not depart, attacks or desecrates the choir hall in any way, then the nine lantern archons fuse together and form the archon gestalt. They defend the choir hall to the death.

27. FOUNTAIN AND COURTYARD

The courtyard of Balentyne is a utilitarian affair. The grass is short and neatly attended by the acolytes. The paths are cobbled stone. A plain fountain burbles quietly. During the day it is not unusual for the acolytes to be out here tending the grass and cleaning the fountain.



Lantern Archon Gestalt

death.

Lantern Archons (9) CR 2

XP 600 (5,400 XP total)

LG Small outsider (archon, extraplanar, good, lawful)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +4

Aura aura of menace (DC 13)

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+4 natural, +1 size; +2 deflect vs. evil)

hp 13 (2d10+2)

Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0; +4 vs. poison, +2 resistance vs. evil

DR 10/evil; **Immune** electricity, petrification

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Ranged 2 light rays +3 ranged touch (1d6)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd):

At Will—*aid*, *continual flame*, *detect evil*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)

TACTICS

During Combat The nine archons are perched up in the elevated niches among the statues of the many Mitran saints. Constantly looking for intruders, they spring to the defense of the temple if they detect evil. They first begin to sing (possibly drawing nearby guards) and then form a gestalt to defeat the intruders. They remain in this gestalt for 2d4 rounds and then splinter into nine lantern archons, dividing all remaining hit points among the nine lanterns.

Morale The lantern archons are bound to the temple and will defend until their death.

STATISTICS

Str 1, **Dex** 11, **Con** 12, **Int** 6, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **CMB** -4; **CMD** 6

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Diplomacy +5, Fly +14, Knowledge (planes) +3, Perception +4, Sense Motive +5

Languages Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; **truespeech**

SQ gestalt

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Gestalt (Su) Nine lantern archons can fuse together as a full-round action, becoming a single Large entity that is more powerful than the individual archons that make up its parts. Looking like a whirlwind of dancing firefly lights, the gestalt has all the powers and abilities of a Large air elemental plus the following: archon, good, and lawful subtypes; archon traits (aura of menace DC 16); 2 light rays (2d6); DR 5/evil and magic. The archons can remain in this form for 2d4 rounds. When the gestalt separates back into individual lantern archons, its remaining hit points are divided evenly among them; if it had less than 9 hit points, some of the component archons die when the gestalt ends. Full statistics for the Lantern Gestalt are presented below.

Light Ray (Ex) A lantern archon can fire beams of light to damage foes. These light rays have a maximum range of 30 feet. This attack overcomes damage reduction of any type.

27A. DISCIPLINE PLATFORM

This is where insubordinate soldiers are brought to be publically disciplined. It is little more than a rugged post built atop a wooden platform. Morale is good and Lord Havelyn has proven a capable and efficient commander. So the discipline platform rarely sees use these days.

28. STATUE OF THE VICTOR

This larger than life statue commemorates the man who ordered Balentyne built – King Markadian I called the Victorious. It is a statue of a powerfully built knight

Lantern Archon Gestalt CR 8

XP 5,400 (the total XP from the nine lantern archons)

LG Large outsider (archon, extra planar, good, lawful)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 13 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural, -1 size)

hp 117 (18d10+18)

Fort +9 (+13 against poison), **Ref** +13, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities *Aura of Menace* (DC 16); **DR** 5/evil and magic; **Immune** electricity, petrification

OFFENSE

Speed fly 100 ft. (perfect)

Ranged 2 light rays +14 ranged touch (2d6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks whirlwind (DC 18)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 25, **Con** 16, **Int** 6, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +8, **CMB** +13; **CMD** 31

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +15, Escape Artist +15, Fly +21, Knowledge (planes) +5, Perception +11, Stealth +11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Menace (Su) A righteous aura surrounds archons that fight or get angry. Any hostile creature within a 20-foot radius of an archon must succeed on a Will save to resist its effects. The save DC varies with the type of archon, is Charisma-based, and includes a +2 racial bonus. Those who fail take a -2 penalty on attacks, AC, and saves for 24 hours or until they successfully hit the archon that generated the aura. A creature that has resisted or broken the effect cannot be affected again by the same archon's aura for 24 hours.

Teleport (Su) Archons can use *greater teleport* at will, as the spell (caster level 14th), except that the creature can transport only itself and up to 50 pounds of carried objects. This particular gestalt is bound to the temple of Mitra and will not teleport away from it.

Truespeech (Su) All archons can speak with any creature that has a language, as though using a *tongues* spell (caster level 14th). This ability is always active.

clad in plate armor bearing the holy symbol of Mitra. At the base of this statue is a quote attributed to the Victor himself. It reads "Hold fast to courage, faith and fellowship and this tower shall never fall."

29. STORAGE SHED

This small shed contains tools for maintaining the courtyard and the keep. It is unlocked and visited only a couple of times a day by servants. It is a fine place to hide. There is no lock on this shed.

30. STABLES

This is where horses are stabled. If Varning's patrol is in (see Event Four above), this is where their horses are kept. Additionally, Lord Havelyn's war horse is here. There is also a pile of hay, pitch fork and tools for grooming horses and maintaining their saddles and shoes.

31. THE GREAT HALL

The bottom level of the keep is one great open room where the garrison may gather and be addressed by their

commander or where great feasts and other functions may be held. It is usually quiet and largely empty with chairs and tables pushed against the walls. It also holds the Commander's Seat where Lord Havelyn conducts official audiences with important visitors.

Two guards are stationed at the doors to the Great Hall day and night. They usually stand outside barring entrance to the keep itself.

32. FLAG ROOM

This large circular chamber is the second level of the tower. This open room is where the banners and honors of the garrison are kept. Six large flags hang on the wall and provide a fine place to hide. Grant a +5 to Stealth checks if someone hides behind a banner.

Two Guards (Mott's Men)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)

hp 13 each (see room 9 above)

Stairs lead up and down in this room and the door connects to the courtyard (27).

LEVEL 3

33. GATEHOUSE BATTLEMENTS

This is the open air crenellated roof of the gatehouse. It is dominated by siege engines and munitions of war. The banner of Talingarde flutters from a flag pole mounted in the center of the west battlements.

Two fearsome ballistae point out across the rocky approach to the gatehouse. They are loaded with great barbed missiles that convey the message "death to any who approach unbidden". Beside each ballista is a rack full of ammunition for the siege engines, fifty shots apiece.

Two stone droppers overlook the portcullis of the gatehouse (19a). These lethal war machines allow stones from great troughs to be hurled on the heads of any invaders who approach. The troughs are loaded down with old masonry from various building projects and allow each stone dropper to be used thirty times before more stones must be fetched.

These four siege engines are a cornerstone of the watchtower's defense and their sabotage would greatly weaken Balentyne. Each one successfully sabotaged is worth a CR 2 Reward (600 XP each; 2400 XP total) and 1 VP (for a max of 4 VP).

This area is always guarded by four guards and one of the captains.

8 a.m. till 4 p.m. – Captain Barhold (see room 4)

4 p.m. till midnight – Captain Mott (see room 5)

Midnight till 8 a.m. – Captain Eddarly (see room 6)

During the day there are also four dwarven engineers and Barnabus Eisenbauch here working on repairing the aging crenellations.

34. GUARDROOM/HALL OF HONOR

Two guards are stationed here day and night. Carved into the walls of this place is the name of every soldier who has died defending the watchtower. There are over two hundred names.

Four Guards (Eddarly's Men)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (800 XP total)

hp 10 each (see room 9 above)

Barnabus Eisenbauch, dwarf engineer

CR 4

XP 1200 each

hp 53 each (see Event 3 above)

Four Dwarven Engineers

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (800 XP total)

hp 19 each (see Event 3 above)

Stairs connect to the Great Hall below (room 31.). There is a large stone cap that can be moved in place by two strong men. This effectively seals the keep from access below.

This room is lit by four torches on sconces.

35. PRISONER CELLS

This room contains seven cells (a-g) which are currently empty. They are secured with average locks (DC 25). If any PC is captured during this adventure, they are stripped of their gear and brought here. Two guards

Two Guards (Mott's Men)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)

hp 13 each (see room 9 above)

(probably Captain Barhold's Men – see room 9. below) are then stationed in front of this room to guard the cells.

36. STAIRWELL

These stairs lead up to the Upper Guardroom on the 3rd level (room 39) of the keep. This room is lit by two torches on sconces.

37. TORTURE CHAMBER

This chamber was installed by order of Markadian IV called the Zealous during the height of the Asmodean Purges. It was functional when Lord Havelyn arrived.

However, the current lord finds such measures distasteful and had it dismantled. As a result, the room is now empty. Still a careful search (Perception DC 20) can reveal the terrible things that once happened here. There is carved on the back of a loose stone a small inscription carved by an unknown priest of Asmodeus long ago. If discovered (Perception DC 30 to find) it reads “send us vengeance, o prince” above a crude holy symbol of the devil god.

If a PC is captured, they will be dragged here, tied to a chair and administered one of the *elixirs of truth* stored in the treasury chest (see room 46. Above). Otherwise, this room is empty and unused. This room is not routinely visited so it can be a fine place to hide and rest.

38. TOWER 3rd LEVEL

This level is a key archer’s strongpoint. Arrow slits adorn its entire outer wall. Wooden racks contain the watchtower’s store of arrows. Four thousand normal arrows neatly sorted into a 200 quivers of 20 arrows each hang on these racks. A fire started here by soaking the quivers in oil or by magical flame would quickly consume the arrows. This would reduce the archers’ worth in a prolonged battle. This is worth 1 VP and a CR 3 reward (800 XP).

Save in times of siege, this chamber is unguarded. It is lit by two torches on sconces. Stairs connect up to the rookery guardroom (42.) and down to the flag room (32).

4TH LEVEL

39. UPPER GUARDROOM

Two guards are stationed here day and night. Otherwise this room is empty of anything of interest or value.

It is lit by two torches on sconces.

Two Guards (Barhold’s Men)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)

hp 13 each (see room 9 above)

40. MAGISTER’S LABORATORY

This is the workshop of the watchtower’s magister. This poorly lit and crowded chamber is full of tables laden with strange equipment and apparatuses. There is a large form seemingly made of ice (though it is not melting) resting on a slab. This is Tacticus’ ice golem. It was brought to him in poor condition and he has managed to get the golem working again and even obeying his commands. It currently is inactive, awaiting his command. If anyone unfamiliar is found in his laboratory, he will give the golem the command “crush the intruders!” The golem will faithfully comply.

Ice Golem

CR 5

XP 1,600

N Medium construct (cold)

Init -1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17 (-1 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 53 (6d10+20)

Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2

DR 5/adamantine; Immune construct traits, cold, magic

Weaknesses vulnerability to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +9 (1d6+3 plus 1d6 cold)

Special Attacks breath weapon (20-ft. cone, 3d6 cold damage, Reflex DC 13 half, usable once every 1d4 rounds), cold (1d6), icy destruction

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Base Atk +6; CMB +9; CMD 18

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Cold (Ex) An ice golem’s body generates intense cold, dealing 1d6 points of damage with its touch. Creatures attacking an ice golem with unarmed strikes or natural weapons take this same cold damage each time one of their attacks hits.

Icy Destruction (Ex) When reduced to 0 hit points, an ice golem shatters in an explosion of jagged shards of ice. All creatures within a 10-foot burst take 3d6 points of slashing damage and 2d6 points of cold damage; a DC 13 Reflex save halves the damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Immunity to Magic (Ex) An ice golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance, with the exception of spells and spell-like abilities that have the Fire descriptor, which affect it normally. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A magical attack that deals electricity damage slows an ice golem (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw.

A magical attack that deals cold damage breaks any *slow* effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for every 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points. An ice golem gets no saving throw against cold effects.

Amongst the other pieces of equipment here there is an alchemist’s lab worth of components. In addition there is a *cauldron of brewing* (see the Advanced Player’s Guide) located among the other gizmos and glassware.

There is a collection of various chemicals and alchemical components – most of no real value (or included in the value of the alchemist’s lab). However, there is one very unusual item here. There is a tincture of concentrated wolfsbane, a potent poison worth 500 gp.

Wolfsbane

Type poison, ingested; Save Fortitude DC 16

Onset 10 minutes; Frequency 1/minute for 6 minutes

Effect 1d3 Con damage; Cure 1 save

This room has an average lock (DC 25) on the door.

41. MAGISTER'S PRIVATE QUARTERS

This is where the magister Tacitus of Morimum resides. When he is not working in his laboratory (40.), he is most likely here. A recluse by nature, Tacitus has nothing but disdain for everyone in the watchtower save for Lord Havelyn for whom he manages a grudging respect. He doesn't take his meals with the men. Instead servants haul food and drink all the way up to the fourth floor of the keep at meal times.

Tacitus of Morimum, Magister of Balentyne

CR 6

XP 2,400

Middle-aged Human evoker 7

LN Medium humanoid

Init +5; Senses Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+4 *mage armor*, +1 Dex)

hp 52 (7d6+28)

Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee dagger +1 (1d4-2/19-20)

Ranged dagger +4 (1d4-2/19-20)

Arcane Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +13)

9/day—force missile (auto-strike for 1d4+3 force damage)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +13)4th—*ice storm*^E, *stoneskin*3rd—*fireball*^E (2) (DC 21), *fly*2nd—*bull's strength*, *flaming sphere*^E (DC 20), *protection from arrows*, *scorching ray*^E, *web* (DC 18)1st—*expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*^E (3), *sleep* (DC 17)0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *spark*

Prohibited Schools illusion, necromancy; E Evocation spells

TACTICS

During Combat If attacked, the wizard's first impulse is to call for help. He will web any opponents he can hoping to flee and summon aid. He will also activate his golem (in room 40) and try to use it to keep any opponents at bay. For all his love of the spell *fireball* he is loath to use it in his own chambers.

Morale Dedicated but not fanatical, Tacitus surrenders or flees if reduced to thirteen hit points or less.

STATISTICS

Str 7, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 22, Wis 12, Cha 10

Base Atk +3, CMB +1, CMD 12

Feats Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Toughness

Skill Appraise +16, Craft (alchemy) +16, Fly +11, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Knowledge (nobility) +10, Knowledge (planes) +16, Knowledge (religion) +16, Linguistics +16, Spellcraft +16

Languages Common, Abyssal, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Halfling, Ignan, Infernal, Sylvan, Terran, Undercommon

SQ arcane bond (*wand of fireball*), intense spells (add +3 damage to evocation spells)

Combat Gear scroll of *dispel magic*, *potion of cure light wounds*, diamond dust worth 500 gp (enough for two castings of *stoneskin*), *wand of fireball* (8 charges remain; worth 1800 gp)

Other Gear dagger, *cloak of resistance* +1, spell component pouch, key to his room and his laboratory



This has garnered the wizard a sinister reputation amongst the garrison and in town. In truth, this reputation is completely undeserved. Tacitus may be an irritable recluse but he is a loyal citizen of Talingarde and devout follower of Mitra committed to his duty. He is minor nobility and no doubt could have maneuvered his way into a post in one of the southern cities. He is here because he believes in protecting the borders of his beloved Talingarde. Of course, if you ask a typical guard about the wizard they are full of rumors of dark experiments held at midnight. Such is the lot of wizards in Mitrant Talingarde.

Tacitus does have a weakness – he learned how to cast magic with a magical wand. His arcane bond to this wand is so strong that without it he sometimes botches spells (i.e. he must make a DC 20+spell level concentration check each time he casts a spell). Of course, he is never separated from it voluntarily and not too long ago (with monetary help from Lord Havelyn) enchanted it to be a *wand of fireballs*. Though it only has eight charges left (he is a bit too enthusiastic about ‘testing’ the wand periodically) it remains his prized possession. If the wand could somehow be separated from Tacitus, the wizard's dangerousness would be diminished.

Tacitus has a locked strongbox pushed under his bed with a good lock (DC 30). Inside the lockbox is his spellbook "The Heart of All Flame" and 120 gp.

Tacitus' Spellbook "The Heart of All Flame"

Bound in the crimson, scaled leather of some indeterminate reptilian beast, this large locked tome bears its title proudly in Common across the front cover. Inside is found not just spells but a lovingly written treatise on the beauty and purity of flame and how ice, when it grows cold enough, also burns.

Protection Average lock (DC 25)
Oppositional Schools illusion, necromancy
Value 1445 gp

SPELLS

4th – fire shield, ice storm, stonewall, wall of fire
 3rd – dispel magic, flaming arrow, fireball, fly
 2nd – bull's strength, burning gaze, flaming sphere, protection from arrows, pyrotechnics, scorching ray, web
 1st – burning hands, dancing lantern, expeditious retreat, mage armor, magic missile, sleep
 0th – standard plus spark

The room itself is well furnished. There is a single window large enough for the wizard to fly out of. The exterior door has an average lock (DC 25). The door that connects to his laboratory has no lock and is often propped open.

42. ROOKERY GUARD ROOM

This usually empty guard room leads to the Rookery (43). In times of trouble two guards are placed on the door, an intrusion Mad Martin always resents.

43. ROOKERY

You would never guess by looking at this foul smelling, dark chamber littered with bird droppings that this is one of the key strategic places in Balentyne. Tended by a mad old codger named Martin Rayard, the rookery is home to hundreds of messenger ravens each ready to fly in case of attack by the savage tribes of the north.

Behind a heavy iron door (hardness 10, 60 hp, break DC 28) with a good lock (DC 30) is the empire of Mad Martin. He rarely leaves save for meals and religious services and often talks to his ravens (each with a name) like they were old friends. The door is never unlocked. Keys are only in the possession of Martin and the commander.

Once Martin is dead, the ravens are non-combatant. It takes twenty-four rounds to kill all the ravens. Subtract six for every swarm defeated. Up to four people can contribute to the avian carnage. Area effect spells hasten the murder at the Game Master's discretion. Once slain, these trained messenger ravens will take months to replace. The destruction of the rookery is a real blow. Messengers on foot will take weeks to summon any meaningful reinforcements. Balentyne is on its own.

Mad Martin Rayard

CR 3

XP 800

Middle-aged Human commoner 5
 NG Medium humanoid
 Init +0; Senses Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 10, flat-footed 11 (+1 armor)
 hp 27 (5d6+10)
 Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
 Melee club +2 (1d6)

TACTICS

During Combat Martin is not dangerous in combat save for one factor – he has developed a strange rapport with the ravens the verges on being magical. As a standard action, he can call up a raven swarm to attack (see stats below). He can only use this power within the rookery and he can only control one swarm at a time. If the swarm is slain, he will simply call up another one until he is defeated.

His other weapon isn't a weapon at all – he has a signal horn and he knows how to use it. He knows a distinctive trumpet call that signals "Trouble in the Rookery" to every guard and officer in the watchtower. From his high vantage point, almost everyone will hear it. An officer (likely one of the captains) will lead a patrol of four guards to see what is the matter. They arrive in 1d6+4 rounds after the trumpet blows.

Morale Mad Martin fights to the death to defend his beloved rookery.

STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10
 Base Atk +2; CMB +2; CMD 12
 Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Handle Animal)
 Skills Handle Animal +11, Knowledge (Religion) +6, Perception +10, Perform (Sing) +5, Sense Motive +8
 Languages Common, Raven
 Gear padded armor, iron poker for tending fire (club), wooden holy symbol, key to rookery, pouch full of bird seed, signal horn

Raven Swarm

CR 3

XP 800

N Tiny animal (swarm)
 Init +2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 size)
 hp 38 (7d8+7)
 Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +4
 Defensive Abilities swarm traits; ½ damage from slashing or piercing weapons
 Weakness swarm traits

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)
 Melee swarm (2d6)
 Space 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft.
 Special Attacks distraction (DC 12)

STATISTICS

Str 2, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 7
 Base Atk +0; CMB --; CMD --
 Feats Skill Focus (Perception)
 Skills Fly +6, Perception +6
 SQ swarm traits

If Martin somehow survives the slaughter of his beloved ravens, he is destroyed as a man. He stays in the tower, still talking to his dead birds and refusing to leave. Eventually, Lord Havelyn will have to eject him from the tower. Then Martin becomes a crazy hermit still talking to his ravens even now that they are only ghosts.

Destroying the rookery is worth a CR 6 award (2400 XP) and 3 VP. Killing Martin after the rookery is destroyed (and therefore can no longer call forth raven swarms) is worth no further XP.

5TH LEVEL

44. UPPER LANDING

This large hallway is where the stairs from below (in room 39.) allow access to the 4th level of the keep. Two ornate double doors to the west allow access into the Lord's Study (46). A smaller door to the south connects to the guest room (45). A trapdoor and ladder connect to the roof (48). Save for all these entrances, the room itself is rather plain little only by four torches mounted on sconces.

Two guards are stationed here day and night. They usually stand beside the double doors to the Lord's Study ensuring that the Lord Havelyn is not interrupted without good reason and that his quarters are undisturbed.

Two Guards (Barhold's Men)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)

hp 13 each (see room 9 above)

45. GUEST ROOM

This small but comfortable bedroom is where official visitors are housed. It is well furnished but empty of anything of great note or value.

46. LORD'S COUNCIL CHAMBERS

This large chamber is austere and conservatively appointed. There is little more here than a heavy wooden table and a few chairs. Lord Havelyn's personal banner hangs on the western wall – a Mitran sun crossed by sword and key.

Pushed into one corner of the room is a large stout chest of oak banded with iron. This is where the watchtower treasury is held. The chest is secured with a good lock (DC 30 – Lord Havelyn has the key). Further, it is trapped.

If the chest is opened without pressing a hidden stud in the rear, a piercing alarm sounds and the iron bands are electrified. Every member of the garrison knows what this distinctive alarm sounds like and will investigate promptly.

Treasury Chest Alarm

CR 4

Type magic; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger chest opened incorrectly; **Reset** manual

Effects a loud alarm triggers and electric burst (4d6 electricity damage, DC 20 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within ten feet of the chest).

Inside the chest is the operating funds for the entire watchtower:

- 4650 gp in Talirean coinage neatly sorted into 100 gp purses.
- A small box containing a dozen silver and sapphire military commendation medals (worth 75 gp each – 900 gp in total).
- Ten “double eagles” minted to celebrate the birth of Bellinda, Princess of Talingarde, eighteen years ago. These large coins are solid gold and weigh a pound each (50 gp each – 500 gp in total). They are meant to be used as official rewards to non-military personnel.
- A sack that contains the “petty cash” – 300 gp in mixed coinage (mostly silver and copper)
- Seven ornate chalices adorned with gold, silver and a variety of semi-precious stones. These are gifts official visitors have presented the commander over the years. The chalices vary in value but in total are worth 1050 gp.
- 5 *potions of cure light wounds* (securely wrapped)
- 2 *elixirs of truth* (also securely wrapped)

47. LORD'S PRIVATE CHAMBER

This plainly furnished room is the residence of the commander of the watchtower, Lord Thomas Havelyn, Knight of the Alerion, protector of Aldencross, and unknown to him brother of Cardinal Thorn. There is a reason that Balentyne was chosen as the break point. This mission is as much an errand of personal vengeance and assassination as it is a military assault.

Thomas' chamber is as much a shrine as it is bed-chamber. There is an oil portrait of the lady Bronwyn of Havelyn. The painting shows one of the most beautiful women any of the PCs has ever seen. The portrait does not do her justice. The portrait is surrounded by carefully tended candles. When not on duty, Thomas is often here communing with the picture of his dead wife.

There is also here a family “bible” of the House of Havelyn. This ancient holy book in praise of Mitra also features a chart detailing Lord Havelyn's family tree.

Lord Thomas Havelyn

CR 8

XP 4,800

Human aristocrat 2/paladin 7

LG Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses Perception +14

Aura courage (allies within 10 ft. +4 vs. fear effects)

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22 (+10 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield)

hp 74 (9 HD; 2d8+7d10+27)

Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +11;

Defensive Abilities divine grace +3; Immune disease, fear

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee masterwork longsword +14/+9 (1d8+4/19-20) or masterwork dagger +13/+8 (1d4+2/19-20)

Special Attacks channel positive energy (DC 16, 4d6), smite evil 3/day (+3 attack and AC, +7 damage)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +10)

At will – detect evil

Spells Prepared (CL 4th; concentration +7)

1st – bless weapon, divine favor

2nd – bull's strength

TACTICS

Before Combat If Lord Havelyn knows he is about to be in combat he spends four rounds "powering up".

Round 1: *bull's strength* (+4 to Strength for 7 minutes)

Round 2: *bless weapon* (confirms all criticals against evil foes, weapon is good-aligned, and bypasses DR of evil creatures for seven minutes)

Round 3: activate divine bond (longsword is now +1 and sheds light as torch for seven minutes)

Round 4: *divine favor* (+1 luck bonus on attack and damage rolls for one minute)

During Combat With these in place, his melee attack is now: masterwork longsword +18/+13 (1d8+8/19-20 [auto-confirm])

And do not forget to smite, power attack, and great cleave. Lord Havelyn basically leads any fight he cares to participate in by smiting his first opponent. A smiting power attack against an evil foe with all his bonuses in place is:

masterwork longsword +19/+14 (1d8+19/19-20 [auto-confirm])

Besides this, Lord Havelyn is a very straight forward opponent. He wants to get into the fight and take down opponents as quickly as possible. He is very confident of his abilities and of his divine sanction. Thus, he is unlikely to call for aid unless sorely pressed.

Lord Havelyn never attacks first. If he wins initiative, he will take a swift action to say something similar to this: "Lay down your arms lest you further endanger your lives and your very souls with this villainy." Yes, he talks like that. He then holds until someone else begins the hostilities. Once battle is joined, the commander will only cease attacking if he can save the lives of multiple of his men by channeling positive energy (using selective channeling to avoid aiding his opponents).

Morale He never surrenders, especially to evil.

If examined a DC 15 Perception check will note that one name has been blotted out. That name 'Samuel Havelyn, Cardinal of Mitra' can still barely be discerned. This antique book with its fine leather bindings and gold fittings is quite valuable (450 gp) but would be almost impossible to sell since it so obvious belongs to the Lord Havelyn. It can be vandalized for its gold fittings which are still worth 50 gp on its own.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 16

Base Atk +8; CMB +12; CMD 23

Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Selective Channeling, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Diplomacy +15, Knowledge (Nobility) +8, Knowledge (Religion) +8, Perception +14, Ride +8, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +5

Languages Common, Dwarven

SQ aura of good, divine bond (masterwork longsword), lay on hands (3d6, 6/day), mercies (shaken, diseased)

Trait – Indomitable Faith -- +1 to Will saves

Gear +1 *champion full plate* (see the Advanced Player's Guide), masterwork heavy steel shield, masterwork longsword ("Ballinger", his father's sword with a holy symbol of Mitra built into the cross guard), *headband of alluring charisma* +2, masterwork dagger (marking him as a Knight of the Alerion), master keys to every lock in the watchtower

Killing Lord Havelyn is worth 5 VP.



Act Four: Burning Balentyne

Once Lord Havelyn is slain, the first PC who touches the +1 *champion full plate* proficient with the armor watches at the magic armor transforms before their eyes. It is no longer shining plate armor. Instead it become black, baroque armor adorned with the infernal iconography of Lord Asmodeus. It is now +1 *dastard full plate*. Truly, the Dark Lord of Nessus watches these deeds.

6TH LEVEL

48. KEEP'S ROOF

This is the highest point of the watchtower -- the open air crenellated roof of Balentyne's keep. It is dominated by the great trebuchet up here. The trebuchet is currently nonfunctional and so during the day two dwarven engineers (see Event Three for statistics) are here working on the massive siege engine. They will not be done with the device for weeks.

Three guard are permanently posted up here to survey the countryside.

There is a single trap door leading down. There is a heavy flat stone that can be moved by three men (as a full round action) to cover the trap door. This seals the roof from access below. It takes a DC 25 strength check to break down the sealed trap door.

DAY:

3 guards

2 dwarven engineers

NIGHT:

3 guards

Two Guards (Eddarly's Men) CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)
hp 10 each (see room 9 above)

Guard (Barhold's Man) CR 1/2

XP 200
hp 13 each (see room 9 above)

Two Dwarven Engineers CR 1/2

XP 200 each (400 XP total)
hp 19 each (see Event 3 above)

OUTSIDE THE WATCHTOWER

The area around the watchtower is largely wooded. The trees have been cleared around the watchtower so you cannot approach within one hundred yards under cover. The town of Aldencross is roughly a mile away from the watchtower, down from the rise from where the tower perches.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs may have arrived quietly, but they leave with a roar. A single rocket flies into the air and bursts in a shower of red sparks. This immediately puts the tower on high alert (if there is anyone left alive to do so). The likely site where the rocket was launched immediately gets a patrol of soldiers sent to investigate. The PCs must hold out for one hour until the bugbears arrive. In their thousands, they stream over the landscape. They are not completely without siege equipment. Groups of shaggy murderers wield great tree trunks to force down any doors or gates that may yet stand between them and much sought slaughter. The battle for Balentyne is underway. If there are any major NPCs our villains have not yet fought, this last hour is a great time to have them desperately attack.

RUNNING 'A KNOT OF THORNS' AS A STAND-ALONE ADVENTURE

If you wish to have a shorter excursion into the realm of villainy, the campaign can end here. The destruction of Balentyne and the start of the war could be the knot's ultimate goal. After all, they have inflicted untold misery on Talingarde. In the coming battles, the Knights of Alerion are broken upon the battlefield and the King dies beneath Sakkarot's Fire-Axe. This could be vengeance enough.

In this abbreviated version there was never a scheme to rule Talingarde. So twisted was he by hatred that the lich who called himself Cardinal Adrastus Thorn wanted only destruction. And now he has that. He retreats to his fortress in the north, the Agathium, to concoct ever greater horrors to inflict on the survivors in the south.

Sakkarot Fire-Axe cannot hold his horde together forever. In time, as the flow of spoils begin to thin, the great bugbear alliance breaks apart and falls to squabbling. Sakkarot is assassinated by one of his own lieutenants. Talingarde descends into a wild wasteland of scattered human city-states separated by a wilderness ruled only by bugbear chieftains and monstrous beasts from the north seeking easier hunting grounds. This would be land desperate for heroes to save the surviving population and perhaps to reclaim the lost throne of Talingarde.

This is a classic turn for an evil game. After having an entire career of villainy and vice, the next characters are the good guys who must undo the countless wrongs inflicted upon the shattered land of Talingarde.



Total the PCs Victory Points (see above). Once the battle is won, the PC's mission is complete. Thorn has given them a clay seal and breaking it will notify the Cardinal that the deed is done. Sakkarot is also in communication with Thorn and will notify Adrastus of the mission's success, confirming the truth of the broken seal.

Thorn will then send Tiadora to retrieve the knot. Tiadora will teleport herself to the location where the seal was broken and will lead them to a waiting ship docked along the banks of the nearby lake. This ship will bring them to their next destination – a voyage detailed in the sequel "Way of the Wicked: Call Forth Darkness".

If successful, Tiadora bears a gift. She carries a small but heavy wooden box containing platinum ingots worth 5000 gp (10 lbs. of platinum) and with a small hand-written note. *"Our lord smiles upon your success. Here is a token of my esteem. Use it to rest, recover and strengthen yourselves. Other commands will come when the Knot is needed. Your work has just begun. – A."*

From a promontory, you can see the great bugbear horde camped south of the Watch Wall. Balentyne yet burns behind you. Tiadora remarks, "I have seen no evidence of any army gathering to meet the horde. It seems Zадария

has also succeeded at her mission and has assassinated the commanders. Truly, a great achievement.

"Making matters worse for poor Talingarde, small bands of creatures unaligned with Sakkarot approach the breach, eager to take advantage of the chaos. How could these beasts know already about this break in the Watch Wall? Someone must have told them. Probably best to leave. This region is about to become very dangerous.

"Still, this will not be enough. Balentyne may be broken but Talingarde is yet strong. Soon word will reach the south. The Heartland and the great cities of the Cambrian Bay will marshal their armies. They will meet Sakkarot on the field and it will be far too close to a fair fight. We must do something about that.

"Come, my lords, your ship awaits. Try not to burn this one."

Lords. She called you lords. And lords you are. Lords of death and destruction. Lords of evil. Do you remember Branderscar? Do you remember being held down and branded like animals? How far you have come and how long yet the journey before you. Tiadora is right. This is only your first steps along the way of the wicked.

TALINGARDE: A GAZETTEER

TALINGARDE

A Shining Paragon of Virtue and Law

Alignment: LG

Capital: Matharyn (105,000)

Notable Settlements: Ghastenhall (82,000), Daveryn (59,000), Havelyn (21,000), Farholde (9,500), Aldencross (1,800), Varyston (1,200)

Ruler: King Markadian V called the Brave, Protector of the Righteous

Government: Religious Monarchy

Languages: Common, Dwarven

Religion: Mitra, the Shining Lord

THE RISE OF HOUSE DARIUS

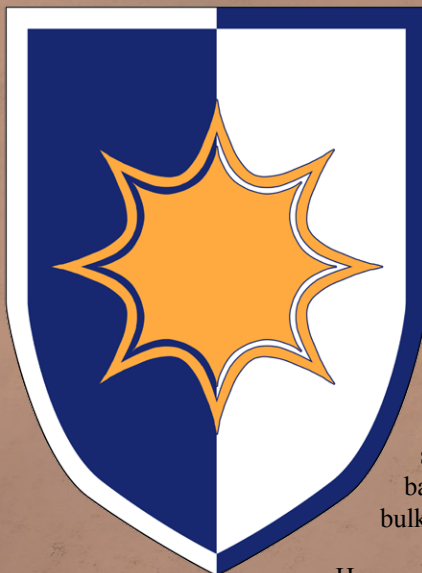
Talingarde may be a peaceful and prosperous kingdom at the start of the campaign, but the nation has certainly had a troubled past. Only eighty years ago, the kingdom weathered a bitter war of succession fought between the largely half-elven nobility of House Barca and the human dynasty of House Darius. Both had claim to the throne and their supporters amongst the fractured nobility of the isle.

On the Plains of Tamberlyn just north of the capital city, two great armies met and decided the future of this dominion. One army was commanded by King Jaraad of House Barca, a great half-elven hero mounted on a griffon, the symbol of his house. The other was led by Markadian of House Darius, a young upstart paladin who would not bow before all the gods of the Talirean pantheon (in particular Asmodeus).

The Battle of Tamberlyn remains the most famous conflict in all of Talingarde's history. House Darius was gravely outnumbered but far more fiercely committed to their holy cause. Much of House Barca's army was paid mercenaries fighting for nothing more than gold.

The Battle was fought between two large stone spires (the so-called Lords of Tamberlyn) that rise from otherwise level ground. A small brook splits the spires crossed only in one place by an ancient stone bridge. The brook is not deep but still would be difficult for men in armor to cross.

Markadian took to the field first, seizing the bridge with his knights and positioning infantry on both his right and left flank. The famed archers of Barrington and Embryl, with their mighty longbows of yew, were positioned behind the infantry.



Outnumbering his foe many times, King Jaraad hoped for a quick victory and sent his mercenary crossbowmen forward to bombard the knights on the bridge. The hope was that a few volleys of crossbow shot would kill many of the knights and paladins of House Darius. Deprived of their leadership, the rest of the soldiery would likely flee from the battlefield when the king moved the bulk of Barca's army forward.

However, the crossbowmen advanced too close and the infantry on Darius' right flank performed a surprise charge. The charge caught the mercenaries off guard and they fled with hardly a shot fired.

So disgusted was the knight commander of Barca behind the mercenaries that he ordered his knights to charge forward through the "cowardly retreating rabble" to attack the relatively exposed Darian infantry. The result was a chaotic muddle of panicked mercenary and tangled knights. It was then that the Darian archers began to fire their volleys. The arrows rained down on the knights and took a princely toll on the Barcan force.

King Jaraad saw the muddle that his left had become and ordered the other pincer of his army forward. They moved swiftly at first along the banks of the brook but soon found themselves equally bogged down in mud. They too began to receive a hail of arrows.

WHERE IS TALINGARDE?

Purposefully, the "Way of the Wicked" campaign is set entirely on a single island. The mainland near the island is talked about but never described. Further, the gods (besides the plot crucial Mitra and Asmodeus) are also never fleshed out. This is done to make Talingarde as easy as possible to incorporate into your favorite fantasy setting. Talingarde is an island about the size of England. Where is it located? Wherever you would like it to be.

Finally the Barcan left pushed through the mercenaries and charged the bridge. It was here that the heaviest fighting of the battle took place. On the bridge of Tamberlyn the knights of Darius met the full might of the Barcan army and held the line. The Barcan army was packed in so tight trying to cross the bridge that their rear ranks were at the mercy of the Embryllian archers.

King Jaraad could watch the slaughter no longer. He flew his elite personal command – a dozen knights on griffons to the other side of the bridge hoping to flank the defenders and break their line. What he encountered instead was the young Lord Markadian and his personal guard.

The battle between Markadian's knights and the griffon riders has been immortalized in several songs and plays. Suffice to say that after a great battle, a dozen dead griffons littered the field and only Markadian of Darius and King Jaraad of Barca remained combatant. They fought fiercely and in the end, Markadian slew Jaraad upon the banks of the Tamberlyn brook and claimed the throne of Talingarde.

At the end of the day, the battle had proved to be a slaughter. The military might of House Barca was broken and House Darius came to power. It would have been easy then for House Darius to seek revenge against their former enemies but instead King Markadian I called the Victorious showed mercy.

He allowed the nobles of House Barca to keep their lands if they would only swear loyalty to the new king and bow before the great god Mitra. The offer was accepted and peace once more came to Talingarde. The crisis of succession was over and the religion of the isle was decided. Mitra the Shining Lord became head of the Talirean pantheon.

THE VICTOR UPON THE THRONE

When Markadian I came to power there was great uncertainty of how capable a king he would prove. While he was a great warrior, he had never ruled and there was reason to doubt this young paladin could control this divided land. He soon put those doubts to rest.

Markadian I called the Victorious (usually simply The Victor these days) was the sort of ruler that only comes once every thousand years. At the battle of Farholde he dealt the bugbears of the north a savage defeat and scattered them for a generation. He confronted the pirates who had made the western coast of Talingarde their stronghold and burnt them out. It seemed that the Victor was undefeatable upon the field of battle.

So fearsome was his reputation that by the later years of his reign, he merely sent a letter to a rebellious warlord in the west that read, "Must we meet on the fields on war?" The warlord relented and became a loyal subject. By the end of the Victor's reign, almost all of the island south of the Watch Wall was firmly a part of Talingarde. Only a few parts of the great and trackless forest, the Caer Bryr, remained wild and unmapped.

More than a soldier, he also proved a great builder and statesman. He raised the capital Matharyn from a small city into a great metropolis. He reinforced the watch wall, commissioning three new fortresses. He eased tariffs bringing merchants from the mainland to the oft-isolated isle once more. He personally visited the Lands of the Yutak tribesmen in the north and made peace with their great chiefs. And though the paladin spread the religion of Mitra and discouraged devotion to Asmodeus he tolerated the Prince of Nessus' temples as long as they were discrete.

For forty six years the Victor sat upon the throne bringing a golden age to Talingarde. Today, his statues are to be found in almost every town and hamlet throughout the kingdom. He did have his faults though. Like so many great rulers – he was a great soldier and king but a poor father.

THE SCHOLAR AND THE MONSTER

After the death of the Victor, his oldest son Martius ascended to the throne as King Markadian II called the Learned. More a scholar than a king, Martius proved largely disinterested in affairs of state. He commissioned the great library at Matharyn and began renovation of an old family castle into the great palace known as the Adarium. As the first wing of the Adarium was completed, he retreated there and was rarely seen in public.

The other son, Prince Hallen, was not so reserved. Though he had no official power, he often ruled in the king's absence and commanded great loyalty from the knights of the realm. This might have been an acceptable arrangement. After all, Prince Hallen was a soldier and an heir of the Victor. He could have become the de facto ruler while the official king sat in his distant pleasure palace and library. Alas, that Prince Hallen was also mad.

Prince Hallen became convinced that his mother (who had died in childbirth) was not the queen but an angel of Mitra. He believed himself a demigod and incapable of wrong. At first the Prince's madness was subtle. He often dressed all in white and even had a magic set of wings made for himself that allowed him to soar over the capital.

But in time the visions began. He communed with these so-called angels and they whispered that he should replace his brother and become the true and immortal master of Talingarde. The king received disturbing reports of the prince's madness and plots but refused to believe them. "My brother but jests," is famously what Markadian II replied to the reports.

Finally the "angel" prince would wait no longer. He flew to the Adarium and with a flaming sword slew his own brother amidst his books and proclaimed himself Markadian III called the Immortal. His brother's six year reign was at an end.

For a brief time, it was possible that Markadian III's claim of kingship might have been acknowledged. His brother after all was little loved and tongues wagged that getting rid of the absent king was a blessing. Maybe the new king was a divine messenger of Mitra's will. But within days the mad decrees began from the Adarium. The king decreed that Mitra's high holy day would no longer be the summer solstice but instead would become his own birthday. He ordered the military to prepare to invade Hell and commanded his wizards to research opening a great gate. First, he explained to his flabbergasted advisors, the army would go through the gate to the shining realm of Mitra himself to call forth an army of angels. Then he personally would lead the host to invade the nine hells and overthrow Asmodeus himself.

Finally the people had enough of this madness. Officially, the histories record that after only five months in power Markadian III called the Mad tried to fly from the highest spire of the Adarium without his magic wings. More likely, he was thrown from the spire by paladins who would tolerate no more of this madman's blasphemies. Whatever the truth, his reign was over.

BLAME THE DEVIL

Fortunately for Talingarde, Martius (Markadian II) had a son -- Marcus. The grandson of the Victor was neither mad nor a recluse. He had been clever enough to avoid the Adarium and the capital during Prince Hallen's angelic rampage. Marcus was a handsome knight twenty nine years of age and closely resembled his grandfather the Victor. Thus was Talingarde spared another disastrous war of succession.

Marcus returned to the capital and was crowned Markadian IV called the Zealous. The new king quickly realized that he needed to solidify his power and explain away the difficulties of the last six and a half years. In short, he needed an enemy to unify this fractured Talian nation. He found one -- in the Temple of Asmodeus.

King Markadian IV blamed the cult of Asmodeus for using their black magic to summon a devil to possess the former king thus driving him mad. It was a brilliant political solution (though an utter fiction). It removed blame from the royal house of Darius and instead placed guilt squarely upon a small, unpopular, marginalized cult. This was the beginning of the Asmodean Purges.

The Knights of the Alerion took the lead in destroying the temples. High priests were burned at the stake and the sect was driven underground. For twelve years, the Zealot sat upon the throne and during that time he did his best to annihilate the cult of Asmodeus. He very nearly succeeded.

Markadian IV died comparatively young, only 41 years old of a mysterious illness. There were rumors that the Cult of Asmodeus had placed a curse upon the king. These rumors only fuelled the purges further.

A BRAVE NEW KING

Markadian IV was followed by Markadian V, his son. Twenty-two when he took the throne (the same age as the Victor), he has ruled for sixteen years as a capable, energetic king who has done much to put bad memories in the past. Beloved by his people, he has proven again and again he is the true heir of the Victor. Early in his reign, he personally led the army to relieve the Watch Wall after another bugbear incursion. It was on the watchtower walls that he earned himself the title The Brave.

Markadian V has continued the prohibition against the cult of Asmodeus but does not pursue the purges with the same vigor as his father. After all, that battle is largely won. No one has heard of an Asmodean cultist in Talingarde for years. Instead, he turns his attention to the west and the north hoping to be the king who brings the entire island of Talingarde under his dynasty's dominion.

He has failed in one duty however. He has failed to yet produce a son. Instead, he has only one child -- a beautiful, brilliant young princess named Bellinda. Twenty years of age, she is already a prodigy of arcane magic. If her father produces no heir it is an open question whether the men of Talingarde will follow a queen instead of a king. Her story is yet to be written.

THE SIX REGIONS

Talingarde is an archipelago consisting of more than a hundred islands. This archipelago may be divided into six regions each with their own unique character: The Cambrian Ports, The Heartland, the Borderlands, the Caer Bryr, the Savage North and the Land of the Yutak.

THE CAMBRIAN PORTS

This is the center of the nation of Talingarde and the apex of its culture and power. This region is defined by three great metropolises – the capital Matharyn, the northern city of Ghastenhall, and the western port of Daveryn. Each of these three cities will receive more detail in later volumes of this adventure path.

THE HEARTLAND

This is where most of the population of the nation of Talingarde lives and works. Seemingly one quaint village after another, this is a land of endless farmlands broken up only by small stretches of well-managed forest. Those who truly understand the nation understand that the Heartland is Talingarde's strength. The cities may create its riches and culture, but without the stalwart yeomanry, country knights and hearty folk of the field, Talingarde would be only a dream.

THE BORDERLANDS

Located between the Heartland and the Savage North, this border region represents the limits of Talirean power. Unable to fully conquer the north after centuries of incursion and brutal conflict, it was King Accarius IV of House Barca called the Architect who constructed the first version of the Watch Wall. In more educated circles it is still called the Accarian Line.

Accarius constructed nine castles guarding the border. Later Markadian I called the Victorious would add three more. Whoever controlled these castles could effectively prohibit access to the Heartland from the North. The Watch Wall was intended to contain the monsters and savages so that eventually the rest of the isle could be conquered and pacified. It was never meant to be the permanent measure it has become.

The success of the Watch Wall has bred complacency. Why invade the north when the south is so prosperous? The Watch Wall does such a fine job of repulsing the ill-led assaults of the barbarous humanoid invaders. Thus today, the Watch Wall is little regarded as a pressing military concern. The twelve castles are garrisoned and maintained but little is done to capture the Savage North.

THE CAER BRYR

The Western frontier of the island is dominated by the massive forest that gives this region its name. Small Talirean border towns flourish in the less wooded south, but the north remains a land of mists and legends. The Caer Bryr is reputed to be haunted and filled with monsters. There are tales of dragons and ancient evils that still haunt the woods. The only ones who are able to travel here with impunity are the barbaric Iraen, a primitive human tribe that reveres the spirits of the woods.

The Iraen neither revere Mitra nor pay homage to the king, instead preferring their own crude animistic faith and barbaric chieftains. Worse, in times of hardship the Iraen can be quick to turn to banditry against Talirean settlements. Thus their relationship with Talingarde is strained at best. Still, beside the occasional raid or skirmish, there has never been large-scale warfare between the Iraen and the Talireans.

THE SAVAGE NORTH

Beyond the Watch Wall lays the Savage North. Often this land is said to be nothing but an empty waste of ice and monsters. This is a complete fiction. The north is dominated by forests and plains rich in life. Here dwell three peoples long demonized or ignored by the more civilized folk of the south – the brutal burabar (the name the bugbears call themselves), the naatanuk (intelligent polar bears) and the mysterious ice elves.

Though little is known about the North, this is certain – it is largest unexplored region on the island. Many a Talirean king has dreamt of conquering the North. So far, those dreams remain unfulfilled.

THE LANDS OF THE YUTAK

This chain of islands is inhabited by the Yutak, short swarthy black-haired humans. These islands are cold, inhospitable places unsuited to farming or grazing, so the Talireans have left the Yutak to their own devices. Where the southerners see wastelands, the Yutak see oceans teaming with fish and seals. In their one-man kayaks and larger umiaks, they ply the open oceans hunting for fur and blubber. Occasionally, several small bands will unite to hunt a whale.

Rarely, an umiak will appear out of the mist loaded with ivory and furs. These Yutak umiaks will sail into one of the western ports (a few have made it as far south as Daveryn), conduct their business and then disappear once more. The Yutak never trade for gold instead prizing steel, leather and strong drink. Wise merchants keep a stock of steel harpoon heads in case they encounter a Yutak trader. The Yutak will trade much ivory for a finely made harpoon.

Few Talireans speak the strange musical Yutak tongue and few Yutak understand common. The Yutak, much like the savage Iraens of the Caer Bryr, have their own gods and their own way of life. Still, where the Iraen are secretive and xenophobic, the Yutak are a gregarious people. Travellers along the western coast tell tales of Yutak who without invitation join Talireans around a campfire. The Yutak share their seal meat and sing strange but beautiful songs with strangers with whom

they share no tongue. It is said that if you are polite and share your own food, the Yutak may leave a gift to mark their passing.

NINE PLACES OF LEGEND IN TALINGARDE

These nine locations will not be featured in the Way of the Wicked adventure path and represent potential locales where a Game Master could develop their own side quests.

THE LOST ISLAND OF TAANE-THAK

The Yutak tell a tale of a lost island surrounded by dangerous rocks in the far north. The island, it is said, is the home of a tribe of frost giants led by a powerful giant sorceress known in stories as Taane-Thak or She without Mercy. Thanks to a curse lain upon them by good Talirean wizard centuries ago, the frost giants sleep in their hidden halls of ice appearing now to be little more than frozen statues.

If someone could brave the breakwaters of the island and solve the ancient wizard's riddle it may be possible to free Taane-Thak and coerce her into servitude. Can you imagine servants more powerful than vengeful frost giants and their merciless ice queen? Can you also imagine servants more fickle and likely to betray you?

THE BARROW OF THE FIRST KING

Somewhere in the south, long lost and forgotten is the barrow of the first Talirean king. He reigned centuries ago when the first settlers came to the island. Still, he was said to be a great ruler and was buried with the wealth of his ancient kingdom.

Surely this must be a legend. How could the barrow have gone so long and still not be discovered? Still, if it could be discovered it was said that the First King revered all the gods and kept powerful relics to remind him of their power. If that is true, then among his treasures there must be a relic consecrated to Asmodeus. Imagine what that relic could mean in our villains' hands?

THE CHILDREN OF THE WHITE SPIDER

The barbaric Iraen tribesmen of the Caer Bryr whisper tales of a lost valley in the heart of the trackless forest inhabited by giant spiders wise enough to speak. These spiders call themselves the Skis'raal and though they are not evil per se, they are utterly alien and hostile to any who invade their hidden domain.

These spiders are fanatically devoted to a female priesthood of white spiders capable of using divine magic. Supposedly these white sisters worship a mysterious demigoddess known as the Queen in White.

The truth of this legend is only conjecture. Still, if the Queen in White could be found, it is said cryptically whispered whoever controls her blood controls her brood. Imagine if the PCs could crack that riddle and take control of an army of giant spiders!

THE MEAD HALL OF THE ICE ELVEN KING

A powerful elven lord, tales relate, dwells somewhere in the savage north and if you can find his hidden mead hall you will find a true refuge amidst the endless snow. The Lord it is said is a kindly soul who eagerly trades space in his haven for a fine tale.

The truth is somewhat more sinister. While the mead hall is real, it is now a ruin inhabited by a powerful banshee who mourns her lost love. The elven lord is along ago murdered and betrayed. Still, if the banshee could be defeated, she guards the long dead king's trappings including his jeweled crown and enchanted sword.

THE LOST ANSGARIAN MINE

Today the dwarves of Talingarde maintain few strongholds in the great Ansgar mountain range that runs the island's length. They prefer to dwell in the cities of men where food is plentiful and the weather more forgiving. Still, once the Ansgar mountains were home to a thriving dwarven culture now all but forgotten.

Dwarven tales speak of a secret dwarven mine of mithral that the dwarven kings guarded so jealously that none was allowed to enter there unless they submitted to powerful magic that erased memory of the mine's location. Thus when the last dwarven king died heirless centuries ago the secret of the mithral mine died with him.

Still, there are dwarves in Ghastenhall and Matharyn who claim to have royal blood in their veins. If this is true, they may be immune to the amnesiac curse and may be able to rediscover this priceless mine. An Asmodean army equipped with mithral weapons would be unstoppable!

THE ICE TROLL FORGES

In the savage north is found an ancient tribe of ice trolls, the degenerate remainder of a once much greater troll civilization. These surprisingly intelligent smiths work strange rare metals and craft magic treasures they trade with the bugbears. These are led by a great ice troll king named Sigarth Iekenhart. Sigarth is a genius among the ice trolls and despises the Talireans. He could be a valuable ally to any who call Talingarde their enemy. Still, he would have to be persuaded. It is said the trolls value mithral (or ice-steel as they call it) above any other metal.

THE SUNKEN CITY OF AATH-ARYN

Several miles off the eastern coast of Talingarde is a colony of tritons that dwell amidst the ruins of a submerged city. Aath-Aryn, it is said, was once the sister city to the ancient city of Maath-Aryn (now better known these days as Matharyn, capital of Talingarde). However, its last king in his arrogance mocked the god of the sea. Thus the city was hit by a great tsunami and a powerful earthquake that permanently flooded the city. Now the lost city of Aath-Aryn (or just Aath) is merely a children's tale remembered only in a nursery rhyme:

*King Hoopa Loopa said to the sea
Aath's not afraid of you! Are you afraid of me?
King Hoopa Loopa silly silly he!
He got dragged down to the bottom of the sea!
King Hoopa Loopa said to the sky
Don't let me drown! Can you teach me how to fly?
King Hoopa Loopa silly silly guy!
Seven miles out and never ever dry!*

For the clever, the nursery rhyme does hold a few interesting facts. The last king of Aath-Aryn was named Appalorius (no doubt the origin of the sing-song Hoopa Loopa). He did forsake the god of the sea for worship of a sky god. And there is a rock outcropping seven miles off the eastern coast called the Appalorian Spire very near lost Aath-Aryn.

Now, if only an expedition could be mounted with sufficient magical resources to explore the lost city, who can doubt it still holds ancient treasures ripe for plunder? Of course, there are the pesky tritons and sea elves who consider this a holy site. They will have to be exterminated. What a pity.

THE WRECK OF THE DAWN TRIUMPHANT

When a Mitran religious artifact was discovered on the mainland, the Church immediately arranged for its transport to their cathedral in Matharyn. The church fathers contracted the merchant vessel "The Dawn Triumphant" owned by a very pious sea captain.

Alas, that just before the entrance to the Cambrian Bay the ship struck a reef and sunk to the bottom of the sea with all her crew and cargo. The Cardinals of the Mitran Faith have offered exorbitant sums to anyone willing to brave the treacherous waters and reclaim the relic but so far have found no takers. What are they so worried about? What is it about this relic that seems almost to terrify them? And if it were recovered, how could it be used against them?

THE HOLY CAVERNS OF THE NAATANUK

Of all the intelligent races that dwell on Talingarde, the Naatanuk are probably the most misunderstood. Regarded as monsters by the Talireans, these intelligent polar bears are often assumed to be slaves or trained beasts in service of the bugbears. This is untrue. While a few Naatanuk do aid the bugbears, most regard the shaggy goblinoids with disinterest or disdain. The truth is that the Naatanuk are an independent, proud people who made Talingarde their home long before bugbears, humans or any other race came to this once wild island paradise.

The Naatanuk have an ancient druidic tradition and it is in these hidden caverns that the rites and religions of their people are carried out. It is also here that their greatest treasures are stored. It would be only the boldest of thieves who would dare violate these sacred caverns and discover what the Naatanuk have labored so long to keep hidden from the two-legs.

The Naatanuk (Awakened Polar Bears)

CR 8

XP 4,800

N Large magical beast

Init +5; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+1 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 105 (10d10+50)

Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +4

Resist Cold 10

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee 2 claws +17 (1d6+7 plus grab), bite +17 (1d8+7)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

STATISTICS

Str 25, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10

Base Atk +7; CMB +15 (+19 grapple); CMD 26 (30 vs. trip)

Feats Endurance, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Run, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Perception +12, Stealth +10, Survival +10, Swim +19; Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth, Survival, Swim

Languages Sylvan

ECOLOGY

Environment arctic, cold forests, tundra, ice caves

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure usually incidental; sometimes they protect magic items related to nature

Often mistaken for either a cave bear or a polar bear, the Naatanuk are neither. Their intelligence makes them less ferocious than their bestial ursine cousins but far more dangerous. Though solitary by nature they do have a loose tribal confederations and infrequently they gather at holy sites to sing primal songs rarely heard by two-legged races. These gatherings are usually led by older more respected shamans. It is not unheard of for these Naatanuk shamans to have levels in the druid class.

Naatanuks can be difficult to tell from normal bears. They are slightly larger when full grown but otherwise exactly look like a polar bear. The easiest way to recognize them is that the paws of the Naatanuk are slightly more prehensile. They use this dexterity to occasionally paint blue tribal markings upon their faces and snouts. These markings have led some Talireans to believe that the bugbears of the north ride polar bear mounts.

HERALDRY OF TALINGARDE

HOUSE DARIUS



KNIGHTS OF THE ALERION



BRANDERSCAR PRISON



PRINCESS BELLINDA



HOUSE BARCA



HOUSE HAVELYN



ORGANIZATIONS

THE KNIGHTS OF THE ALERION

This venerable brotherhood of knights dedicated to Mitra's service was once a minor order. However, during the war of succession, they were the only order to side with House Darius. All the rest sided with House Barca. With Markadian's victory and the elevation of House Darius to royalty, this order has risen to become the greatest and most prestigious order throughout the land. To "fly with eagles" (the heraldic symbol of the Alerion is the eagle) is used as a synonym for joining this order.

Fiercely religious, all its members must swear oaths of service to Mitra and support the Mitran Church. Oaths of chastity and poverty are not uncommon among the more devout members of this order but are not required.

Uniquely, this order of knights does not require noble blood. Any commoner who can pass the rigorous tests of membership can become a member. Of course, the overwhelming majority of its members are highborn. How often do farmers train with the horse and sword? Still, some of the most prestigious members are common heroes who have answered the call of the Shining Lord.

Nowadays one could be forgiven for thinking this the only knightly order in the land. This is untrue of course (see below) but what is undeniable is that the Order is the most influential military organization in Talingarde.

This Order is led by no less august a personage than the King himself. Markvadian V called the Brave is the highest ranking member of the Knights of the Alerion.

SACRED BROTHERHOOD OF THE GRYPHON

The other major order of knights in Talingarde, the Brothers of the Gryphon are actually a coalition of older orders that banded together after their membership numbers were shattered eighty years ago in the war of succession. Largely secular, their order requires no divine oaths to join. They do however require noble blood.

Since the war of succession and their pardon by the Victor, the Brothers have proven their loyalty to Talingarde again and again. Numerous Brothers have served as commanders on the Watch Wall. They have held every possible military position of any prestige.

Still today, there is no doubt this is an order in decline. Led by Lord Vastenus of Barca, the king's most trusted commander, there remains some jealousy amongst the Brothers of the great prestige the Knights of the Alerion now enjoy.

THE CHURCH OF MITRA

If there is any organization that may rival the royal house in power in Talingarde today, it is the Church of Mitra. There is no community of any size that does not have at least a church house and a single priest of this religion. There are involved in the daily lives of the peasants like no other group. Every birth, every death, every marriage, and every festival is presided over by a priest of Mitra.

Overwhelming, the Church is a force for benevolence throughout the kingdom. Has there ever in history been an organization with such power and influence and yet so untroubled by corruption? This is not to say the Church has not had its scandals. Priests who indulge their vices; bishops who misappropriate funds for personal gain; cardinals who use their office for power instead of holy work -- these happen. But what makes the Church of Mitra so remarkable is how rarely they happen. The servants of the Shining Lord are trusted by the people of Talingarde and for good reason.

Led by the High Cardinal Vitalian of Estyllis, the Church is experiencing a zenith of influence and culture. In Matharyn, the kingdom's capital, the great Cathedral of the Sanctum Solaris has just been completed. Its soaring frescoes and magnificent statuary are without equal on the isle.

THE BLESSED ORDER OF ST. MACARIUS

This monastic order has dedicated itself to healing the sick and relieving the suffering of the people, thus following in the footsteps of the founder St. Macarius the Mendicant. They do this without charge or any expectation of repayment. This has earned them the gratitude and love of people throughout the domain.

Further, in times of war, the brothers of this order accompany the army into battle. Healing both sides, they do their best to minimize the loss of life. There are even tales of these monks healing bugbears who attacked the Watch Wall in hopes that these acts of kindness will eventually lead the shaggy invaders to reconsider their violent lives.

This order has another claim to fame. Most of the clergy who follow Mitra will never cast a single divine spell. Most priests though they worship Mitra are not direct channels for his will. Of the rare priests who can actually use divine magic, the overwhelming majority are members of this order.

The leader of this order prefers to remain anonymous but is doubtless located at the Monastery of St. Macarius, the order's central base of operation and founding site.

A VILLAINOUS CAMPAIGN

Let's be honest -- campaigns focused on evil characters have pitfalls that never trouble heroic role-playing games. There is a reason why most players prefer to be the good guys. If you are not careful these pitfalls can tear your game apart. Let's tackle five of the most common perils: the proactive nature of villainy; the problem of minions; inter-party conflict; the dangers of being too evil and the inherent banality of being bad for no reason.

The first pair of problems we can solve with a well put together villainous campaign. Honestly, these are the pitfalls that the author hopes he has handled. Still, you should be aware they exist. The second pair requires intervention on the GM's part. These are problems that are solved by consistent action throughout the entire campaign. The fifth and final problem needs to be tackled in character creation.

Evil campaigns can be tricky but hopefully with a little thought and preparation they can be manageable. Never doubt there are great payoffs. After years of pretending to be the heroic farm boy forced to fight the evil empire, it is a welcome change to be the dark lord. Within the course of this campaign, the characters will get to do wicked acts they've never gotten to do before in an RPG.

And there will be no one to stop them this time!

PITFALL #1: NO REST FOR THE WICKED

Here is a critical difference between heroes and villains -- good can afford to be passive, evil cannot. Good characters may only strike out on an adventure when their homes are threatened. Evil never has that luxury. To be evil is to do evil acts. And that means villains must have a plan.

This can be difficult in a fantasy world. Concocting a worthy evil scheme requires information that the *players* do not know. Their characters may well know how a typical castle is laid out, but it takes a lot of preparation to fully convey such knowledge to your players. And you never know what will strike their fancy and what course they'll pursue.

The "Way of the Wicked" campaign answers this challenge by providing the players with a pre-made plan devised by an NPC. Adrastus Thorn has crafted a conspiracy to bring ruin to the kingdom of Talingarde and give its rule to the followers of Asmodeus. This is a complex plan (it needs to be to provide twenty levels worth of challenge!), but it has a real chance of success. Every effort has been made to make the PCs critical parts of this plan.

No doubt the PCs will want to tweak the plan to serve their own personal villainous goals. This is fine. More than fine, this is encouraged. The characters should by campaign's end have made Adrastus' scheme their own going as far as to slay its architect and take his place.

It will take effort to see this plan through to its conclusion, no doubt, but then there is no rest for the wicked.

PITFALL #2: THE TROUBLE WITH MINIONS

A common problem with playing masterminds is over-reliance on minions. Why should the PCs endanger themselves when they can send minions to do their dirty work? The problem arises when minions start doing everything. It's boring to watch retainers have all the fun.

On one-hand, thematically we want our villains to have followers. In "Book II: Call Forth Darkness" we will present optional rules for building your own villainous organization. What must be avoided is over-reliance on these followers. We want to keep the player characters in the thick of the action.

Here's our solution. This adventure path is a six book exploration of things that minions cannot manage. If there is a problem that can be handled by simply sending a few mooks -- great. Handle it that way. Be assured, those problems are not the major quests of this campaign.

Minions will never successfully make the journey north and deliver weapons to the Fire-Axe. They will never kill Lord Thomas Havelyn, infiltrate Balentyne and throw wide its gates. Send all you want, they will fail. All they'll accomplish is warning the good guys.

And besides, the PCs don't receive experience for deeds their minions accomplish without them. Enforce this rule and that alone should be enough to keep our villains in harm's way.

PITFALL #3: US AGAINST THE WORLD

There is no doubt that the most common trap of evil campaigns is character versus character conflict. The typical scenario goes something like this: one character manages to slay or dominate another and the defeated *player* takes this downfall very personally. The defeated player then gets another character and so makes this new PC with only goal in mind -- revenge! Maybe the GM at this point realizes that things are spiraling out of control and intervenes to reverse the defeat. Suddenly the victorious player feels cheated. Why should a brilliant plan not be allowed to succeed? Out of character squabbles and petty backstabbing become the rule and that is no fun at the gaming table. The result, more often than not, is that the campaign falls apart.

The source of that problem must be stated clearly: it is a rare gaming group that can handle intense inter-party conflict. It is too easy to forget that the competition is between *characters* instead of *players*.

Recognizing this, the “Way of the Wicked” campaign helps you avoid this pitfall by unifying the players in a common cause. They may be ruthless villains out to destroy Talingarde by any means at their disposal but they are not out to destroy each other. From the very first encounter of the game, they must work together or face death and imprisonment. And later, each character signs a compact in blood saying they won’t betray each other.

Emphasize this fact: the PCs have only each other. The nation of Talingarde is their enemy. Their mysterious benefactor, Adrastus Thorn, clearly has his own agenda. The other knots are more rivals than true allies. Who can they trust? Who can they rely upon?

The answer should be clear -- each other. Branded and thrown together, the players must realize that their characters are in this together. Even if they are rivals, they still need each other. Emphasize this unity again and again and you will greatly decrease the likelihood that interparty conflict will destroy your campaign.

Remember, it is them against the world.

PITFALL #4: PG-13 VILLAINY

Every gaming group has norms of acceptable behavior whether they realize it or not. For example, graphic descriptions of torture are rarely welcome. Still, there may be a compelling reason why villains need to torture someone. And why shouldn’t they? They’re villains after all. But if this is allowed unchecked, it is very likely that lines will be crossed and that the campaign may degenerate into out-of-character arguments about what is acceptable. The solution is to allow the action but to keep the descriptions and details in the realm of a PG-13 movie.

A great example of PG-13 villainy comes from the most famous space opera of all time. The black clad villain about to interrogate the princess strides into her cell. “And now, your highness,” he announces, “we will discuss the location of your hidden rebel base...” The movie then cuts away with a close up of a fearsome floating torture implement sporting a cruel hypodermic needle.

The cut is the important lesson. Who knows what the villain did to the princess? Was she threatened, beaten, drugged or worse? Doubtless. But the movie doesn’t dwell on the specifics and neither should your game. Instead, roll an intimidation skill check and perhaps a will save. Then cut back to the villain emerging from the cell.

“Her resistance to the mind probe is considerable,” our villain was forced to admit. Failure.

Even the greatest of dark lords have their bad days.

PITFALL #5: ON A MISSION FROM GOD

Evil is banal. What does that oft recited cliché mean? The dictionary defines banal as “dreadfully commonplace and often predictable; trite.” That is a fair criticism of evil, especially of bad guys who consciously think of themselves as evil and senselessly pursue a diabolical scheme for no reason save for sheer wickedness.

So let us avoid that trap. Let us give our villains motivation beyond the senseless pursuit of evil. In the author’s personal experience, the best villains are the ones you sympathize with and maybe even quietly cheer. That is exactly what this campaign is all about. “Way of the Wicked” is about openly rooting for the bad guys.

The rulers of Talingarde have been foolish -- they have suppressed the worship of a powerful and vengeful god. By persecuting the followers of Asmodeus instead of merely stigmatizing them, they have brought religious war to their island.

The PCs are at the center of that war. They didn’t start this conflict, but they might very well win it. These villains begin the campaign as an oppressed minority who has been trod upon by the so-called forces of good. By campaign’s end, they will write their vengeance in blood. That is a motivation beyond banal, pointless villainy. It doesn’t necessarily have to be the only motivation for this campaign, but it’s a solid starting point.

Let’s give another example. Samuel Havelyn (aka Adrastus Thorn) is an example of a villain with a motivation. He could have been a faithful priest of Mitra if it had not been for the unrequited love of Bronwyn. After she rejected him, he could have still turned aside from this dark road if only his father had sympathized with his son’s loss and consoled him. Instead, the old man just laughed. Thus a villain was born.

Try to encourage every PC to find a similar sort of motivation as they are being created. Every PC starts as a criminal, true enough. But why did they turn to crime? When could they have last turned back? And now that they cannot, whom do they blame for their scars?

What must be done to Talingarde should not be banal wickedness for its own sake. Your characters are on a mission from Asmodeus. Vengeance will be theirs.

Just be sure to know why.

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 Roleplaying 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 have 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



The Kingdom
of
Talingarde

● ● ● ● = Route of the Frosthamar

0 50 100
Miles

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 first chapter of the "Way of the Wicked" adventure path! Inside you'll find:

- "Knot of Thorns," an adventure compatible with The Pathfinder Roleplaying Game for 1st-level villains by Gary McBride
- Full color art and maps by Michael Clarke
- A gazetteer of brave, noble, doomed Talingarde
- Advice for running a successful villainous campaign
- Rules for creating wicked PCs

And More!

You've saved the world plenty.

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



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