# TIT OF THE TERE

book four: of dragons and princesses



A Villainous Adventure Path by Gary McBride & Michael Clarke





# A Villainous Adventure Path

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"Wicked people are always surprised to find ability in those that are good."

--Luc de Clapiers

# ADVANCEMENT

This campaign uses the medium advancement track.

# ACT ONE: THE SACK OF DAVERYN

Our villains arrive in the conquered city of Daveryn. They should be 13th level.

# ACT TWO: CHARGAMMON

Our villains are sent to seek an alliance with the great wyrm Chargammon. They should be 14th level.

# ACT THREE: THE DRAGON'S ERRAND

The great wyrm makes his demands for his aid. By the time the PCs fulfill his wishes and gain his assistance, they should be 15th level.

# **ACT FOUR: ADARIUM**

The PCs must travel to Matharyn, infiltrate the palace of the House of Darius and be ready to assassinate King Markadian V called the Brave when he arrives at his palace. By the time they coimplete this mission of murder they should be 16th level.

# WHAT NEXT?

16th level is where Book Five: The Devil My Only Master begins. Cardinal Thorn's days are numbered.

# **INTRODUCTION: BEYOND ZEE**

I ran my first roleplaying game in 1984. I had toyed around with fantasy adventure games before that, but mostly what we had played was simply a battle game with the thinnest veneer of roleplaying. But in 1984, I ran a real campaign. I didn't realize it then but I did a really terrible job. My friends and I – we had fun anyways. I guess that's all that matters.

My primary mistake was that I completely destroyed player agency. What does that mean? It means that nothing the PCs did mattered. Nothing. The PCs were the agents of a powerful wizard named Zithrandir. That's right. I changed Gandalf's elven name by one whole letter. Sue me. I was twelve. But mostly we called him Zee.

Zee always knew everything – not that he would share this information. He inexplicably preferred to speak in riddles even when the fate of the world was allegedly on the line. But riddles or no, he was always three steps ahead of the party, teleporting wherever he wished and always completely impervious to harm. He seemed uninterested in doing anything himself. No errand was so trivial that he wouldn't pass it off on our hapless PCs. Zee didn't go into town to pick up his own potions. Zee had people for that. By people, I mean PCs.

Finally, only if the PCs utterly failed at a mission and were about to get killed, would Zee step in. He arrived in a poof of deus ex machina and wacked all the baddies in one round. This was actually applauded by my players the one time it happened. It seemed all my fellow twelve year olds cared about was that their PCs got to live another day.

But if they'd thought about it (introspection was in short supply on our playground) they would have realized that this completely undercut their importance in the world. Why did their missions matter? If they succeeded, Zee got what he wanted. If they failed, Zee stepped in and still got what he wanted. Zee's wants and wishes were all that mattered. And of course, Zee was really me – the game master.

It was easy to write adventures when you had Zee. Why are we going to the haunted tower? Zee says so. Why are we exploring the lost temple of the death god? Zee again. Why are we... Zee.

So, has the ghost of Zee haunted this adventure path? Perhaps. Until now, all the PCs' missions have come from Adrastus Thorn. He saved them, he trained them and he gave them purpose. They've had no real opportunity to thwart him and every possibility to be almost ceaselessly observed and punished by him. He most certainly wouldn't save them from failure – I have learned a thing or two since 1984 – but he has been there to keep them in line.

All of that changes in this book.

The characters are thirteenth level as this chapter begins and after the assignments given in Act One, this is the last time that anyone will give them an order they must obey. Afterward, they are on their own. In the next book, they even get to destroy Zee ... err, Thorn. Hopefully, by now you've learned enough about your cadre of villains to have a sense of what motivates them. If you don't, it is time to learn.

This is a major landmark. Way back in Book One we discussed how evil games need structure so they don't devolve into boring murder sprees. If you made it to Book Four of this adventure path, mission accomplished.

For the last thirteen levels, the PCs have worked for an evil organization called "The Knot of Thorns". That evil organization is now crumbling around them. Their leader is beseiged with doubts. Most of the knots are destroyed or only consist of a single individual. Devils associated with the Knots actively scheme against its leadership and each other. The only knot that has really thrived is the Ninth – the PCs.In this book they should become absolutely certain that they are destined to rule this evil organization, and later Talingarde itself.

So, let us exorcise the ghost of Zee. We begin this adventure with a city-sacking sandbox and then move to an open ended adventure that culminates with the death of the king of Talingarde. Neither Zee nor any of his consanguine kin decide our villains' fate now. They must make their own path along the Way of the Wicked.

Gary

# **BOOK FOUR:** OF DRAGONS AND PRINCESSES

# ADVENTURE BACKGROUND: THE FINAL PILLARS

Years ago, Cardinal Thorn surmised that four pillars kept Talingarde intact. The first was the Watch Wall keeping the northern border secure, which collapsed following the destruction of Balentyne (see Book One). The second was the Order of Saint Macarius. The Ninth Knot all but annihilated the Order to the last man (see Book Three). Their leadership is dead. Their center is broken, and their fire is extinguished.

Two pillars remain – The Knights of the Alerion and the House of Darius. Even now, the knights march north against the Fire-Axe. The bugbear warlord's horde has been buttressed with every kind of beast and barbarian that Thorn could muster. Thorn's hope is when the city of Daveryn is sacked, the knights will have no choice but to retake the city. They will engage the Fire-Axe without clerical support, and he will massacre these brave fools. The third pillar will be broken.

What of the fourth pillar, the House of Darius? The original plan was for King Markadian V to be slain by mysterious assassins. This was the task given to the Third Knot, the Erebian Knot. They were well suited for the task – elite foreign assassins trained to infiltrate the Adarium (the great palace of the Darian Kings) and slay both Markadian, and his only child Bellinda, in one night of murder. It was set to happen just as Markadian was about to leave the capitol of Matharyn to march to war. It would have been masterful – pestilence unleashed, faith in Mitra shattered, and the king dead – all in a matter of a month. Talingarde would never endure that sort of calamity. It would be the end of the current kingdom and a chance to build it anew.

Alas, that the Third Knot failed. The Sons of Balentyne, lead by the Paladin Sir Richard, discovered the plot, tracked them to their safe house and slew them. All are dead save for a single assassin who rots in a Daverynian prison. This happened just as the PCs were leaving Valtaerna (covered in Act One below).

Thorn is furious at this critical failure. King Markadian leaves Matharyn at the head of his army with Sir Richard riding at his side. Disaster looms. Markadian's army outnumbers the Fire-Axe's horde more than two to one. The Knights of the Alerion are led by their king, a brave and accomplished general who has defeated bugbears before on the Watch Wall. As the King travels, he draws every able-bodied man to fall in with his forces. The king commands not only his knights and their troops but a sizeable volunteer force of local town watchmen, sheriffs, yeomanry and the like. Markadian's army swells. Against the Brave, the Fire-Axe is doomed. Thorn needs a new plan and he needs one fast.

Desperate, Thorn consults with the greatest of his hidden assets. Thorn sends Tiadora to Vastenus Barca, one of Markadian's most trusted generals and leader of the Eighth Knot. Vastenus Barca suggests an alternate way to slay Markadian. The king loves his daughter above all else. He has had the priests of Mitra fashion for him a pendant that, using *word of recall*, will return him to the Adarium if the princess is ever threatened. Thorn has thus conceived of plan to assassinate King Markadian that is as brilliant as it is wicked.

Thorn will unleash something so dangerous upon the Adarium that it will threaten the princess' life. Her protectors will activate the pendant and Markadian will return to his sanctuary. Thorn's most elite servitors – the Ninth Knot will infiltrate that sanctuary and will be waiting for the king. There they will slay the heir of the Victor, Markadian V, last of the Darian Kings.

What threat could be so terrible that it would ensure that the king would return? Thorn knows of a beast so ancient and evil that he could wreak havoc upon the Adarium and its guards single-handedly. This creature is none other than the great black dragon Chargammon.

Chargammon could be persuaded to attack the Adarium and while the dragon slays Bellinda, the Ninth will be waiting for Markadian in his sanctuary. There is no way the paltry force left at the Adarium will overcome the great wyrm. In one murderous rampage, the House of Darius will be wiped out.

With the king dead, Thorn will move towards his endgame. Vastenus will become the new commander of the Talirean army. In his hands, a disaster at Daveryn for the knights of the Alerion is all but assured.

The Fire-Axe will leave Daveryn and march on the capitol of Matharyn. Just before the bugbear warlord can sack the capital and put Talingarde's greatest city to the torch, an army led by the alleged last Scion of Darius will land in Talingarde. The Scion will defeat the Fire-Axe in one brutal staged battle.

The Scion, victorious, will march into Matharyn and present proof (stolen from the Adarium) that he is an heir of the House of Darius. He will come to power and enshrine his beloved faith – the Church of Asmodeus – by royal decree. At last victory is within Thorn's grasp!

# PIECES IN MOTION

The great game for the future of Talingarde is now in full swing. All across the land pieces are moving that will determine the fate of this nation.

This adventure begins with the PCs in the Vale of Valtaerna, having completed their winter of slaughter, and defeating Ara Mathra and his celestials. Depending on the success of their mission, the PCs either lead their army out of the vale to Daveryn to join up with the Fire-Axe's main force. Or they flee the valley with Markadian's army close on their heels.

Either way, the PCs warrive at the metropolis of Daveryn to discover that the Fire-Axe did not wait for their arrival. Taking a lesson from the Ninth Knot's victory at Balentyne, the Fire-Axe infiltrated the city and broke its formidable defenses. The battle was hard fought but the PCs arrive just in time to find one of the three great cities of Talingarde conquered. The Fire-Axe invites them to join in the sack.

This is the first act of the adventure -a city sacking sandbox. The PCs can either help the attackers root out the last vestiges of resistance, or they can pillage this mighty wreck of a city for all they are worth. The Duke of Daveryn has not yet been captured and if they PCs are clever, they might even track the nobleman to his bolt hole.

It is during the rapine and revelry that Thorn learns of the failure of the Third Knot, and formulates the plan to assassinate Markadian mentioned above. It is also during this time that the Tears of Achlys are fully unleashed on Talingarde. The Fifth's efforts are almost too effective and soon the plague rages out of control from Matharyn to Ghastenhall and all throughout the Heartlands.

The paladin Sir Richard is not idle. This latest catastrophe causes the paladin's band to leave the king's army. He embarks upon a sacred quest to find a cure for the plague. The Paladin will ultimately be successful in his quest and will save Talingarde from total annihilation from this pestilence. But this essential errand ensures that the paladin is busy while the PCs recruit the dragon Chargammon.

The King's army marches through the spring towards the sacked city. Every evening the King consults with his greatest general Lord Vastenus and discusses plans to retake Daveryn. Every night at midnight Vastenus consults with Adrastus and relays these discussions. Adrastus dwells upon them and the fate of Bronwyn's son -- Sir Richard. He has plans for the heroic paladin. But for now they must wait.

# SEEK THE BLACK

Once the Sack of Daveryn is finished, the PCs receive orders via Tiadora. This Ninth's mission will be to seek the hidden Throne of Chargammon. Upon entering his submerged lair along the western coast of Talingarde, the Ninth will petition the dragon and gain his aid by absolutely any means necessary. Thorn is uncertain how this deed can be done, but trusts that the Ninth Knot will find a way if any one can.

Thorn's first plot to kill Markadian was to have Vastenus assassinate him. The general refused. The highborn lord gave all manner of excuses as to why this could not be done but the Cardinal guessed the truth. Vastenus is as terrified of King Markadian as he is envious of his station and his crown.

And so, Vastenus insisted that foreign assassins be used. Thorn needed the general and so he acquiesced. Now Vastenus insists the destroyers of Valtaerna be sent. Again Thorn acquiesces.

If the Ninth is destroyed by Chargammon, Thorn will remove a set of potential rivals and eliminate Vastenus' only remaining excuse. Then Thorn will force the general to poison the king. Since this is the most likely outcome, Thorn only gives half-hearted support to the Ninth on this mission. Succeed or fail, he wins either way.

Can this mission be accomplished? Is it possible to woo Chargammon into service of the Nine Knots? A difficult task to be sure. Chargammon slays all who visit his lair unbidden. This is easy enough to discover.

However, the PCs will have opportunity to learn that the youngest son of Chargammon has been captured and is held prisoner by the Lord of the Eagles in the mountains of the Caer Bryr. If they rescue the dragon, then it will be possible to gain an audience.

Chargammon is not easily swayed to attack the Adarium. He is a very ancient dragon and he has not gotten to be so old by rousing the anger of the rulers of this island. But he does a weakness. The dragon has a rival, an ancient copper dragon known as Eiramanthus (pronounced AIR-ey-man-thus). The copper has long been a thorn in his side and has thwarted his schemes time and time again.

Chargammon wants Eiramanthus dead. If the meddlesome coper dragon could be slain, Chargammon would violate his rules of seclusion and rain death upon the Adarium. He would celebrate the death of his hated foe with an orgy of destruction. And after all, it's been a long time since Chargammon has gotten to eat a princess.

# ACT ONE: The Sack of Daveryn

This act deals with the sack of the great city of Daveryn and the PC's leisure time until they receive another mission from Thorn.

# **EVENT ONE: ESCAPE FROM VALTAERNA**

At the end of Book Three, our band of villains had just finished slaying the angel Ara Mathra and destroyed the Order of St. Macarius. Tiadora, handmaiden devil to Cardinal Thorn, arrived and told them they should go to Daveryn to aid the Fire-Axe. It was then that we arrive at a critical juncture in the campaign. Had the PCs kept the sack of Valtaerna secret through the winter? Had they allowed anyone to escape?

If they did keep their actions secret (a difficult task indeed) then escaping Valtaerna is no more challenging than leaving at the first thaw with whatever remains of their victorious raiding party. They leave Valtaerna in triumph. The bugbear commander Shagoroth Night-mane looks appreciatively at the carnage and chuckles. *"I don't think we're getting invited back."* The army marches north without incident through the mountain pass and southeast to Daveryn.

In this case, the PCs get to keep their evil army. They are now in command of as many as two hundred fifty bugbear grunts plus their own evil organization. In effect the bugbears become part of that evil organization. If you are using the evil organization rules found in Book Two, the following happens:

1) The PCs gain a bonus "bugbear action" every week. This bonus action can only be spent on violent actions and guard duty.

2) increase the Ruthless Score and Survivability Score of the PC's evil organization both by +3. Bugbears are tough, vicious killers.

Most likely, someone got word to Matharyn during the winter. Which means that twenty thousand soliders sit at the entrance to the Vale, led by the King of Talingarde, Markadian V. Our villains and their followers are trapped in the valley, surrounded on all sides by mountains.

No doubt the PCs are surprised to see an army here. It made a forced marched through the cold of winter to be here. This march was only possible with the aid of a powerful artifact of Mitra (recovered by the paladin Sir Richard) that now accompanies the army – *The Sacred Standard of St. Theonas.* 

The Standard, long lost to the Mitrans, increases the morale of any faithful army that marches behind it and grants protection from weariness and weather. Using its boons, the grand army of Matharyn left the capital in the heart of winter and marched through the cold to Valtaerna, eager to avenge the slaughter.

Word reaches the PCs quickly. Even if they posted no guards on the watchtower at the valley's entrance, the sound of twenty thousand men approaching is not unnoticed. The king has his army blast a great fanfare of trumpets as the force seizes the pass that controls entry to the vale.

So how do the PCs escape?

Likely, the PCs themselves are in no immediate danger of being trapped. It is possible that the PCs gained the service of a unit of fiendish hippogriffs (twenty four in number; Book Three, Act Five, Event One). There is nothing stopping them from simply flying out of the valley. There are enough beasts for all the PCs and their named cohorts to escape. Who else escapes and who gets left behind? This is a fine opportunity to preserve any NPCs your PCs have grown fond of, but there are not near enough mounts to save all the grunts. Such a pity.

It is also probable that the PCs have access to teleportation magic, or *overland flight*, or magic items that allow similar effects. In short, it is very likely that even with this bottleneck at the valley's entrance, your PCs are anything but trapped. The question they must answer now (and quickly) is who they betray by abandonment and who they save?

The villains could buy some time. The entrance to the valley of Valtaerna is guarded by a watchtower. The King of Talingarde, upon seeing the watchtower manned and defended, will take a day to prepare to beseige the fortification, moving up catapults and a battering ram. After all, as badly as the king wants to retake this sacred vale, he needs this army intact when it arrives at Daveryn. The king is unwilling to see his men sacrifice their lives in vain.

If that gate has been left undefended, then the situation is more dire. A thousand knights of the Alerion, in full armor and mounted on heavy horse, charge through the open gatehouse and into the valley. The PCs have only a few minutes to make good their escape.

There are likely two significant groups of servants that are left in the valley when the army arrives: their evil organization established in Farholde and the bugbear army given them by Sakkaroth Fire-Axe.

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If the PCs abandon their minions entire, they will have to rebuild their evil organization from scratch. If they abandon all the bugbears, they will have to explain to the Fire-Axe in Daveryn what happened. This is their dilemma.

The bugbears are a comparatively easy problem to resolve. There are likely two bugbear commanders left alive in Valtaerna – Shagoroth Night-mane and Hekkarth the Headtaker. If the PCs can add these two to the roster of the saved, then the bugbear "problem" is largely handled. Saving those two individuals gives the PCs two "trusted" bugbear lieutenants (as trusted as bugbears can be anyways) who can corroborate their story when brough before the Fire-Axe. The rest of the bugbears are mere grunts. Their loss would be no great tragedy.

The two bugbear commanders make some noise about "I'll not abandon my brothers!" when first presented with this scheme. But both of the commanders are survivors. When the choice clearly becomes 'stay here and die valiantly' or 'escape with us and live', these two evil monsters both take the escape. They can always find new "brothers" later.

If the PCs abandon Shagoroth and Hekkarth, their situation in Daveryn is more precarious. The Fire-Axe forgives them for leading two hundred fifty bugbears to their death (what choice does he have?), but his minions are not so magnanimous. Any social interaction with members of Sakkaroth's army receive a -5 penalty from then on. If the PCs ever seek aid from that army, their pleas are only met with laughter and a mocking "It's Valtaerna all over again." Only large bribes will earn even brief assistance. Bugbears may be treacherous bastards, but only amongst each other.

The evil organization is perhaps a more difficult matter. The PCs have likely invested quite a bit of time and energy in recruiting their minions. Will they simply abandon them to the king's army?

The classic evil answer to that question is an unequivocable yes. If the PCs abandon their minions to their fate, then they have a chance to completely rebuild their organization from the prisoners in Tandengate (see location 8 below). Remember, the PCs are evil masterminds and dark lords. Abandoning minions as the heroic vanquishers storm the base is classic genre imagery and a time honored villianous tradition.

Let the PCs relish this moment. As the departing dark lords mount their fiendish hippogriffs to fly away, a veteran minion runs towards them. "My lord, they are at the gate, thousands of them! What do we do?" If any PC laughs, kicks the minion into the icy mud and says anything similar to "you die" then your PCs are truly walking the Way of the Wicked.

It is possible that the PCs may display a brief moment of heroism and try leading their army over the mountains. If a PC can succeed at DC 25 Survival check, they have noticed a tiny goat path along the mountains' edge. Leading an army through the Ansgarian mountain during the last weeks of winter without preparation is an insane scheme. Let the PCs explain their plan and evaluate its merits. If it seems plausible, then the PCs may roll five skill checks. Which skill and DCs depend on the plan.

If the PCs fail all five, then they and their cohorts take 6d6 exposure damage and manage (half-alive) to cross the mountains. Everyone else doesn't make it.

If the PCs succeed at one or two of these rolls then the PCs, their cohorts and Shagoroth and Hekkarth escape. Everyone else dies crossing the mountains.

If the PCs succeed on three out of five checks, then they have somehow managed to lead their army out of the Valtaernan death-trap. Award them the same bonuses as if they kept their army, with one caveat.

If they succeeded on three skill rolls, they receive only a +1 to the Ruthless and Survivability scores, to represent losses taken during the escape.

Four success is a + 2.

Five successes awards them the full +3 bonus. They have managed not only to rescue their army but have done so without substantial losses. How they did this is a tale endlessly retold around the campfires of the Fire-Axe's horde. Shagoroth Night-Mane (a NE bugbear fighter 8) swears his eternal loyalty to the PCs and could become a cohort, if one is needed.

Deciding to stand and fight is suicide. The army of King Markadian V outnumbers the PCs at least thirty to one and includes the elite Knights of the Alerion led by the Paladin Sir Richard. The best the PCs can hope for is capture. King Markadian has little time for prisoners especially those dedicated to Asmodeus. The pyres of purification burn within a day.

**Story Award:** If your PCs abandon their minions with style, award a CR 10 roleplay bonus (9,600 XP). If they save their minions, award a CR 12 bonus (19,200 XP). If they've already received the CR 13 bonus at the end of Book Three for keeping their wickedness secret then award them nothing further. They get to keep their army.

# **EVENT TWO: THE FIRE-AXE'S PRIZE**

However the PCs arrive, the Fire-Axe either has forewarning (via Thorn) or learns of their presence shortly after (via whatever remains of their troops). Either way, Sakkarot Fire-Axe is jubilant and summons them immediately to the headquarters he has set up in City Hall. Losses in the vale are of little concern to him.

The Fire-Axe strikes an impressive figure these days. He is no longer clad in ill-fitting stolen knight's armor. Instead, he wears a black suit of infernal armor, a gift for sacking the city from Thorn. He truly looks the part of a dread bugbear tyrant of the north.

The city hall is crowded with bugbear lords, ogre chieftains, hill giant thugs, scampering goblins and even a frost giant jarl that stands uneasily besides the Fire-Axe. All of them stop and stare at the PCs as they enter the hall. The Fire-Axe rises.

"My lords, welcome to Daveryn! With your skill at throwing open gates, I had hoped to have your aid. But it seems this city could not wait to fall beneath my killers" blades."

That earns a clamorous yell from the assembled throng. The PCs have a moment to publicly address the Fire-Axe if they have any rejoinder. Even light-hearted jabs at the Fire-Axe only earn laughter. The victorious bugbear warlord is in far too good of a mood to have it spoiled.

*"Come, we have matters to attend to."* And with that the PCs and the Fire-Axe retreat to a private war room. The mayor's chambers, where once the future well-being of Daveryn was plotted, has now become the Fire-Axe's war room. The accommodations are much more spacious than the cramped Westkirk castle and much more civilized than the war camp north of the Watch Wall. The Fire-Axe sends away his lieutenants and underlings to be alone with the PCs. With a shout the room will be flooded with his bodyguards, but Sakkarot desires time alone with the Ninth Knot. Fine wine taken from the larder of a duke is poured.

"Are you here on a mission?" he asks first. The truth of course is that the PCs were sent here only to aid the Fire-Axe. "I have one for you, if you're interested. The Duke of Daveryn has escaped me. It's possible he's just gone. He may have had some magical means of leaving the city, so it may be a fool's errand. But I suspect not. Duke Martin famously hated wizards. I suspect he's holed up in the city somewhere, but so far my killers have failed to find him. I would love to have him dragged before me in chains. It would be good for morale. "Other than that, enjoy the city. I care not what you do to this place. I'll be rid of it soon enough. There are pockets of resistance here and there, I'm told. You are welcome to deal with those however you see fit. Or you can simply loot the ruins. I'll warn you though, my killers are thorough. If you want the best treasure, you'll have to find places they can't get. Ah, look at me. Lecturing you like you were whelps. You know all of this."

He takes a long deep drink of wine and suddenly turns more melancholy. "Truth told, that isn't what I wanted to talk to you about. This city was so easily taken because the Duke was an idiot and it was lightly defended. The baron of Westkirk revealed a secret entrance from the sea caves to the palace. Anyone with any sense would have collapsed it as soon as my army drew near, but Duke Martin imagined he could escape through it if things got bad.

"I have captured a hollow city. Most of the army was missing. They mass in the south under the king's banner. I know it. An army marches towards me led by King Markadian himself. It is an army I cannot hope to defeat on the open field. Do you know anything of this?"

It is possible that the PCs have seen the army upon their escape (see Event One above). Telling him of its size and might only confirms what he has already guessed.

"What is Thorn's plan to deal with the king's forces? He must have one! Yet whenever I speak to the devil-harlot Tiadora all I get are sneers and japes. Do you know Thorn's mind? What does he intend?"

In truth, Thorn has not shared his plan with the PCs. The piece of the plan that neither the Fire-Axe nor the PCs know is that the king's second-in-command, General Vastenus Barca, is actually a member of the Knot of Thorns (he is the sole member of the Eighth Knot). Essential to Thorn's plan is that Vastenus' loyalties remain absolutely secret and so he shares this information with no one. Without this revelation, it seems that the Fire-Axe is doomed. Sakkarot is smart enough to see this future calamity, but not quite clever enough to imagine a solution. While he is outwardly jubilant and confident, inwardly he is a mass of worry. He becomes angry if the PCs claim they do not know Thorn's plan either.

"I was supposed to be victorious against the armies of Talingarde. I was supposed to crush them! That was always the plan! I was only to lose to..."

The Fire-Axe pauses, uncertain if the PCs know this scheme yet. Sakkarot has been commanded by Thorn to speak to no one of the plan. And yet, it seems to Sakkarot that Thorn has abandoned him. The Fire-Axe senses he is being led to the slaughter. He wants to trade information with the Ninth for anything they may know about Markadian's host. If the PCs are clever and reveal information that seems useful to Sakkarot, he will reveal his past and the part he will play in Thorn's plan to conquer Talingarde. It should not be difficult to get Sakkarot to speak. He aches to tell someone his tale before all is lost.

"When Thorn found me, I was dying, poisoned and weak. I had been outcast from my tribe and branded across my chest with a giant slash from a shaman's obsidian blade – the mark of the defeated and the banished. I was cast out into the ice to die alone and unmourned.

"Thorn took me in, healed me. He drew the poison from my wound. And with his magic, the scar of the outcast was remade into the Asmodean star. He marked my flesh and my soul – I was then and forever bound to the Cardinal and to the Lord of Hell.

"Do not think me a victim. Willingly I gave myself to his service. What did I have to lose? All that remained of my old life was death and disgrace.

"Thorn

set me upon another path. The Cardinal said that if I would but serve him, he would give me all I wished for. He has been true to his word. He has made me mighty amongst my people. He has erased the dishonor of banishment and given me a new name.

"He has bestowed me with mighty gifts. I am most famous for my axe, true enough, but even more than that, he gave me this." He reaches up and removes an iron circlet that had blended into his black fur.

"This crown of iron - it makes me wise and wary. I am able to speak to my people with authority. It makes me truly worthy of being a king." He replaces it and it again fades from view.

"But there was always a price. In time, I will face an army not of Talireans but of those under the banner of Asmodeus. And when I face that army, I will lead my force to utter destruction and defeat.

"All those who chant my name and honor me now, I will betray. My killers have become like my children and upon the altar of war, I will sacrifice them for the glory of Asmodeus the most high.

> "Then I will go to the Throne of Iron far in the north. I will serve there for the rest of my life at the side of Thorn. My time of glory will be over. Then begins my time of service to pay for what I have been given."

He takes another deep drink, emptying the wine bottle. *"I enjoy every day of my dominion. I savor every moment of my prize,*" He smashes the wine bottle against the far wall.

"But I know it will not last."

# EVENT THREE: LORDS OF THE RUIN

Their audience with the Fire-Axe complete, the city is theirs. Daveryn, once a city of almost sixty thousand citizens, the jewel of Talingarde's western coast, lies in ruins. Everywhere bugbears camp, building great bonfires from wrecked homes and shops. Ogres, trolls, goblins and even giants move amongst the detritus and debris searching for loot and survivors.

The victorious monsters are largely inactive. They are well-fed and sated. They have glutted themselves on the wealth and foodstuffs of this city, and they know that the war is not over. Soon enough they will be on the march. These seasoned raiders are enjoying their downtime and await the inevitable blare of the host's war horn calling them to serve their dread lord once again.

If the PCs move amongst the camps looking the part of Lords of Evil, openly displaying unholy symbols and appropriately wicked arms and armor, they are mostly left alone. Even the rank and file monsters know by now that the Fire-Axe has unholy allies. All have either witnessed or heard stories about the infiltration of Balentyne and the sack of Valtaerna. They are not eager to tangle with these elite servants of darkness.

However, if any PC makes the mistake of moving through the city dressed as a peasant or Talirean soldier, they will have to fend off swarms of these marauders. The Fire-Axe has put a bounty on all surviving soldiery and these ruthless killers are all eager to claim their share.

As the PCs investigate the wreckage of Daveryn, sights of casual horror are to be seen everywhere. Bodies impaled on spikes are not uncommon sights. Most still wear the tattered remains of armor and livery of Talingarde and House Daveryn. Flocks of crows feast on the newly dead.

Away from the camps, the city is deathly quiet. Most of the populace is gone. Those not slain in the initial assault have fled, refugees escaping this catastrophe. The whimper of a few captives is to be heard, here and there. But the bugbears are brutal hosts. They have been masters of this city less than forty eight hours. Still, that is long enough that most of their "guests" have perished thanks to the bugbears "hospitality".

It is evident that this was once a bustling city. But now its large plazas are silent and lifeless. Hearths are cold. Stores and taverns, once boisterous and busy, are now empty and quiet. A few sections of the city are burnt out hulks only hinting at former glories. But thanks to a heavy rain the previous evening, the major fires are mostly extinguished. All that remains are ghosts and ashes.

# **EXPLORING DAVERYN**

For simplicity, the city is divided into thirteen districts on the PC's map (see page 13). There is also the Palace, but that has been occupied by the Fire-Axe and has already been thoroughly looted by his retinue. There is nothing of interest there.

The Thirteen Districts S	tarting Loot Table
Angleton (farming village)	Average
Argyntile (artisans district; burned	l) Poor
Bandelthyn (artisans district)	Good
Cliffward (shanty town)	Average
Duward (nobles district; city cente	r) Good
Gattleton (faming village)	Poor
Glassboro (artisans district)	Average
Goldenhall (merchants district; bu	rned) Poor
Haverston (farming village)	Average
Mardleston (farming village; burne	ed) No Loot
Seaward (the docks)	Excellent
Smallward (traders district)	Good
Tythers (religious district)	Good

It is assumed that the PCs stay together as a single group. Conquered Daveryn is a still a dangerous place. If a small group runs into trouble, they may be in over their heads. However, if you wish to allow the PCs to split up then handle each group seperately.

Every day, each group follows this formula:

1. Gather Information

2. Pick a district the PCs are visiting

3. Is there an encounter in a district?

a. Do the PCs know about it or ...

b. Do the PCs stumble across an encounter randomly?

4. Roll for events

5. If the PCs have not fled the district by day's end, they may roll on the appropriate looting table.

## **STEP ONE: GATHERING INFORMATION**

This step is voluntary. The PCs may skip this step and randomly search a district, or perhaps act on information they gained the day before. Gathering information can garner useful information but takes considerable time.

If they search for information, one PC per group may roll a Diplomacy check (DC 20). Success means a roll on the rumor table on the next page.

A bribe of at least 20 gold pieces grants a +2 on this Diplomacy check. Also, intimidation (a successful DC 20 Intimidate check) helps coerce the bugbears, ogres and such towards being more talkative. Award another +2 to on the Gather Information check.

#### RUMOR TABLE (ROLL 1D20)

1. You're looking for the Duke? He's dead. Snagrot the troll killed him and ate his corpse. (Utterly false though it is a common camp rumor).

2. Don't go near the Ballerina School o' sword fighting. No wait, that's not it. The Balleryn school in Glassboro. Yeah that's it. Those fops are dangerous with those little swishy pokes of theirs. (True. See location 4.)

3. I hear there's some soldiers left nearby in Smallward! Anyone want to go eat 'em? (True. This bugbear's directions take you to location 1.)

4. The Duke's not the only one who's missing. We didn't catch the Cardinal either. He's gotta be somewhere around here. (True! See 9.)

5. You know where I'd hide if I was the Duke? Right in his throne room. Nobody'd ever look for 'em there! (False. The Fire-Axe is in the palace throne room. The duke's not there. The PCs waste a day if they search there.)

6. The Frosties are damned traitors! They work for the ice elves or so I hear. They'll stab us in the back sure as rain. (False. The 'frosties' [i.e. frost giants] may not be the most loyal of servants and aren't pleased to be operating this far south, but they aren't traitors. And they'd sooner eat an ice elf than work with one.)

7. There's a damn wizard still holed up in his tower in Bandlethyn. Everyone who gets near it gets fried. (True. Polydorus still holds his tower. See location 2).

8. "You been down to Seaward?" "The docks? Hell no. What business do we have with boats. Burn the lot of 'em, I say!" (In fact, almost all bugbears hate boats and as result, the docks are these least looted district in the city.)

9. Never travel alone in this city. Them that goes off alone, never come back. There's still enemies about, hidden underneath this city like rats. (True there is remaining resistance. It is being coordinated by the single surviving watch captain in Argyntile – see location 6.)

10. Did you hear about the ghost tower? Anybody who goes in there, becomes ghosts! (True. They are actually talking about the magical defenses that ward the Sable Tower in Duward – see location 7. This is where the crown jewels of the House of Daveryn reside.)

11. "I heard there was still fighting over at the prison in Cliffward. We should round up some killers and check it out." "Good idea...after we finish this last barrel of beer." "We've got three barrels of beer." "After we finish the last THREE barrels of beer." (True. See location 8). 12. I hear there's a diamond shop in Goldenhall no one's looted yet. It's got some sort of magical invisible curse...thing... on it. (False. There's no invisible diamond shop in Goldenhall or anyplace else in Daveryn.)

13. Those ogres are traitors, the whole lot of them. Those bastards'll work for anyone who pays 'em. I heard half of them have already been bought off by the Tallie King. (Mostly false. The ogre tribes are prone to disloyalty, true enough, but King Markadian is far too honorable to employ such monstrous curs.)

14. Don't go near the Cathedral in Tythers! It's got angels guarding it! (False. Daveryn's cathedral [location 9] is completely unguarded by good celestials. However this superstition keeps it relatively intact.)

15. Word is we're done with raiding for a bit. We're gonna hole up here and wait for the enemy to come to us. (True. It reveals how lousy bugbear lieutenants are at keeping secrets that the rank and file already knows this.)

16. They say one of the noble houses in Angleton ain't been looted yet. We should check it out! (True. The Baroness Vanya of Veryn has managed to hold her house. She could be a useful ally or at least a valuable conquest. See Location 3 for details).

17. This smells like an ambush to me. We took this city way too easy. The duke must be plannin' something sneaky. Be on your guard. (False. This is simple paranoia. The duke is an idiot who sent too many of his troops south and relied upon a flawed fortress to keep him safe.)

18. Look what I found! A diamond as big as me fist! I'm the richest bugbear in the world! (False. What this bugbear found is a beautiful piece of leaded crystal worth about 5 gp. Someone clever could learn where the bugbear found it, find the other five matching 'diamonds' still hanging on the chandelier in a nearby house and sell them to jealous bugbears for 1d4x500 gp a piece in legitimately valuable loot. This action doesn't take a day.)

19. The merchant's quarter of Goldenhall has the best loot! Tomorrow, I'll sack it again and be twice as rich! (False. Or rather now false. Virtually every bugbear has figured this out and so now Goldenhall is thoroughly looted and partially burned.)

20. I heard strange noises in the Trade Hall in Smallward. I think that place might be haunted! All I know I grabbed my loot and got out. I'm glad to be rid of that place. (False and yet useful. The Trade Hall is not haunted. There is a secret chamber where the duke occasionally met with powerful merchants to broker secret deals. Duke Martin is hiding there – see location 10.)

#### **STEP TWO: PICK A DISTRICT**

This is where the PCs choose where they will adventure and loot each day. In brief, the thirteen districts are:

#### Angleton

Encounter: 3. The Baroness (Perception DC 15)

This small farming district was untouched by the fighting and has proven uninteresting to looters so it remains in suprisingly good condition. Still, a large force of bugbears and goblin wolf riders hold the gatehouse and patrols the roads and bridge. Their presence has been enough to keep the Baroness Vanya of Veryn trapped in her well defended manor house (see location 3 for more details).

#### Argyntile

Encounter: 6. Hope's Last Hold (Perception DC 30)

This once bustling artisan's district has been burned to the ground. There are virtually no intact buildings left in this district, and those that remain mostly house belligerent ogres awaiting their next orders. However, if looters are willing to sift through the ashes, there are few treasures here and there, particularly in amongst the old burned-out silver smithies.

#### Bandelthyn

Encounter: 2. Polydorus' Tower (Perception DC 15)

This artisan's district was reputed by city wags to be the most boring part of the city, giving it the nickname 'Blandlethyn.' Far from the initial invasion in Duward, this population was largely able to flee the city. What they couldn't carry with them is still to be found in their countless abandoned homes and shops.

#### Cliffward

Encounter: 8. Tandengate Prison (Perception DC 10) Once this was Daveryn's bad part of town. Now, it is one of the safest. This shanty town was where most of Davern's vagrants and homeless clustered. A few of these opportunists still cluster here and the loot they've stolen make this a solid choice for looting. Further, The warden of Tandengate Prison still holds the jail and this has kept the bugbears largely out of this area.

#### Duward

Encounter: 7. The Sable Tower (Perception DC 20)

The name is a shortened corruption of the Duke's Ward. This was once the home of almost every power player and wealthy noble in the city. Now, they are either dead or have fled. This area is well looted and heavily occupied. Regardless, Duward was so wealthy, that the remaing loot here isn't bad. And no one has yet managed to get past the magical security of the Sable Tower and claim the crown jewels yet. Perhaps the PCs will manage.

# Gattleton

Encounter: none

This farming ward was never rich to begin with. Now, little remains thanks to the fighting and refugees.

#### Glassboro

Encounter: 4. The Balleryn School (Perception DC 20) This was once the largest and wealthiest of the city's artisan districts. Still, it was sacked fairly thoroughly. However, there are sections still relatively intact thanks to the bravos of the Balleryn school (location 4).

## Goldenhall

Encounter: none

Sandwiched between the docks and Duward, money once flowed through this ward like a river. Unfortunately, everyone knew this. This ward has been burned to ashes and the ashes have been twice sifted through. If you find anything here, it is likely the loot that the bugbears gained from elsewhere and abandoned because they couldn't carry it, burdened as they were with new wealth.

#### Haverston

Encounter: none

This was a small farming village on the city's outskirts that has escaped the worst of the looter's ravages so far.

#### Mardleston

Encounter: none

Pity poor Mardleston. This farming community was annihilated by the Fire-Axe's forces to serve as distration for the real raid striking into the city's heart (where the Fire-Axe had infiltrated the palace). There is nothing left.

#### Seaward

Encounter: none

These are the docks. Bugbears famously despise ships, the sea and sailing. As such, every unit of the Fire-Axe's army assumes someone else has gotten around to looting this place. Many warehouses sit empty and untouched. This is the single best place to loot in all of Daveryn.

#### Smallward

Encounters: 1. Last Stand (Perception DC 15);

10. Find the Duke! (Perception DC 35)

Physically the smallest of the thirteen wards, this trader's hub is in good shape. The looting is good here.

#### **Tythers**

Encounter: 5. The Hidden Guild House (Perception DC 30); 9. The Cathedral (Perception DC 10)

This is the religious ward and home to Daveryn's famed Cathedral to Mitra. Superstition and fear have kept it unspoiled.



# **STEP THREE: ARE THERE ENCOUNTERS?**

If the PCs learn of an encounter from rumor and information gathering then refer to the encounters detailed below.

If the PCs are randomly searching an area associated with an encounter, they may blunder across it. Have every PC roll a Perception check. If they beat the target number, then they are given a hook that may lead them to the encounter. Perhaps they see a resistance member returning to their headquarters or hear strange noises in the Trader's Hall. Whatever the case, they have the opportunity to engage that encounter.

# **STEP FOUR: ROLL FOR EVENTS**

Every day the PCs search the ruins, roll a d20. Each of these events (save for "Better Pickings") can only be met once. They revert to "no event" on subsequent rolls.

1: The Invaders are Restless. A group of bugbears, ogres and a particularly vicious ettin are bored. They take one look at the PCs and decide they're easy marks for some fun. The biggest of the ogres approachs the PCs and demands a toll for passing through their new "king'un". Of course, these fools are in far over their heads. If the PCs make an example of them, they will have little trouble with the locals from then on

CR 2
CR 3
CR 6

hp 65 (see the Ettin entry in the Bestiary)

#### 2-9: No Event.

**10: Hiding Survivors.** The PCs spot 12 peasants (human Commoner 2) hiding in the ruins. The PCs can either capture them (for whatever nefarious purpose) or try to buy their loyalty (all they want is out of town). If the PCs do befriend them, they might know where something valuable is (granting one bonus loot roll for the day – if the roll turns up nothing, bugbears already stole it.)

**11: Butcher Bonanza.** The PCs come across a butcher shop that stinks of rotting meat. The meat hanging in the front is indeed foul and rotten. However, if the PCs search it anyway (DC 15 Perception check), they will discover that the cold room in the basement is still stocked and filled with quality beef – hundreds of carcasses. If the PCs share this bounty with the Fire-Axe's horde then they become beloved and have a +2 bonus to social interactions with horde members for the rest of the month.

**12:** The Burning Smithy. The PCs see a silver smithy on fire. Bugbears made a cursory search and then tossed a torch inside. If the PCs fight the blaze successfully or dash in and succeed at a DC 25 Perception check, they discover a strong box (average lock; DC 20) holding 1d6\*100 gp in silver ingots. If they don't extinguish the fire in ten rounds, the smithy collapses burying the ingots under tons of debris and inflicting 8d6 damage (DC 20 Reflex for half) to anyone still inside.

**13: Plague Victim.** The PCs discover a male human citizen succumbing to the last stages of the Tears of Achlys (see Book Three for details). He is almost too weak to move. The Tears are keeping him alive, hoping to find another host. If the PCs come close, they will serve.

#### The Tears of Achlys

Type disease, contact, inhaled or injury; Save Fortitude DC 16
Onset variable but at least 1 day; Frequency 1/day
Effect 1d6 Con damage; Cure None. The Tears of Achlys can only be cured by casting *remove disease* on the victim.
Note The Tears has an INT of 3 and can do less damage (perhaps even seeming to be cured) to better infect more victims.

**14: Drunken Hill Giants.** Four hill giants are roaring drunk and randomly toss rocks at anyone who gets too close. That happens to include the PCs.

CR 7

#### Hill Giants (4)

XP 3,200 each (12,800 XP total) hp 85 (see the giant, hill entry in the Bestiary)

**15: Fine Steeds.** Running through the streets of Daveryn, wild and free, are six fine warhorses that the bugbears haven't managed to eat yet. They are incredibly skittish but are valuable if caught. These well trained heavy warhorses are worth 300 gp a piece.

**16: Boom!** One random PC, while searching a ruined alchemist's shop, steps on a buried vial of alchemicist's fire. With an impressive boom it sets off a chain reaction of other volatile alchemical compounds. The unfortunate PC and 1d3 other random PCs and/or cohorts take 8d6 points of fire damage (Reflex save DC 16 for half).

**17-19: Better Pickings.** The PCs discover that this area has better pickings than previously thought. Improve the loot table for this district by one catergory (up to Excellent). This event can be encountered multiple times.

**20:** Cowering Noble. A terrified young noble, Sir Godfrey of Glassboro (male human aristocrat 3), is hiding amidst the rubble when the PCs see him. He bolts. If the PCs catch him, he begs for his life. He has a few items of trifling value (a masterwork rapier and 200 gp of jewelry). His most valuable commodity is information about the missing duke. *"He was headed to Smallward. I think to the trader's row."* His information, if heeded, gives a +5 bonus to search Smallward for the Duke (location 10).

14

#### **STEP FIVE: LOOTING**

If, after encounters and events, the PCs are still in the ward, each of them may roll on the appropriate looting tables below. For larger finds, these may represent one impressive haul, or it may represent a day of scavenging smaller items.

If the PCs took time to gather information, subtract two from their roll. This represents less time for looting that day. Note that this penalty does not increase the chance of lowering a district's quality. Only natural rolls do this.

When coins are discovered, this is a mix of gold, silver and copper coinage. There is a surprisingly large amount of coin still to be found since the bugbears value money less than liquor, food and weapons. Goods could be any trade goods (silk, tea, spices, bar silver, whiskey, or art).

If two PCs roll the same number on the same day (for example if they discover a merchant's life savings twice), then they actually found a larger single cache together (thus the value is still doubled).

No Loot: No treasure. Searching here wastes a day.

#### Poor: Roll 1d20

Natural 1: Picked clean. After today, there is no loot. 1-12: Nothing of any value.

13: 1d3 free cows (worth 10 gp each and edible!)

- 14: 1d4\*10 gp in goods
- 15: (1d4+1)\*10 gp in coins
- 16: 1d6\*10 gp in goods
- 17: (1d6+1) \*10 gp in coins
- 18: 1d8\*10 gp in goods
- 19: (1d8+1)\*10 gp in coins
- 20: Random Magic Item: Roll 1d4 (see below)

## Average: Roll 1d20

- Natural 1: Ransacked. After today, this area is poor.
- 1-10: Nothing of any value.
- 11: 1d6\*10 gp in goods
- 12: (1d6+1)\*10 gp in coins
- 13: 1d8\*10 gp in goods
- 14: (1d8+1)\*10 gp in coins
- 15: 1d10\*10 gp in goods
- 16: (1d10+1)\*10 gp in coins
- 17: 1d12\*10 gp in goods
- 18: (1d12+1)\*10 gp in coins

19: A merchant's life savings: Inside a stout chest with a good lock (DC 30) is found (1d10\*20)+100 gp in coin and jewelry plus important legal documents concerning property and business contracts here in town (these are now worthless).

20: Random Magic Item: Roll 1d6 (see below)

# Good: Roll 1d20

Natural 1-2: Pillaged. After today, this area is average.

- 1-8: Nothing of any value.
- 9: 1d8\*10 gp in goods 10: (1d8+1)\*10 gp in coins
- 11: 1d10\*10 gp in goods
- 12: (1d10+1)\*10 gp in coins
- 13: 1d12\*10 gp in goods
- 14: (1d12+1)\*10 gp in coins
- 15: 2d8\*10 gp in goods
- 16: (2d8+1)\*10 gp in coins

17: An unsacked warehouse: 2d10\*100 gp in goods that are alas heavy. Each 1 gp of value weighs 1 lb.

18: A piece of jewelry worth 1d6\*50 gp

19: A bottle of Cerulean, a fine liquor worth 100 gp. (see Grumblejack's bet below for details)

20: Random Magic Item: Roll 1d10 (see below)

#### **Excellent: Roll 1d20**

Natural 1-3: Looted. After today, this area is good.

1-8: Nothing of any value.

- 9: 1d10\*20 gp in goods
- 10: (1d10+1)\*20 gp in coins

11: 1d12\*20 gp in goods

- 12: (1d12+1)\*20 gp in coins
- 13: A fine weapon (masterwork)

14: A noblewoman's wardrobe: 1d10\*100 gp in fine clothing and jewelry.

- 15: 1d20\*20 in goods
- 16: (1d20+1)\*20 in coins
- 17: Family heirloom armor: a masterwork suit of plate 18: bottle of Cerulean, a fine liquor worth 100 gp. (see

Grumblejack's bet below for details) 19: Noble's liquor cabinet: 6 fine silver goblets worth

50 gp apiece and 1d12 bottles of high end brandies, whiskeys and fortified wines worth 100 gp apiece. One of these bottles is Cerulean.

20: Random Magic Item: Roll 1d12 (see below)

**Random Magic Item:** Each item can only be found once. If an item has already been found treat the d20 as a 19 on the respective table.

- 1: 2 potions of cure moderate wounds and keen edge oil.
- 2: 1 ounce of sovereign glue

3: candle of truth

4: glowing glove

- 5: An *efficient quiver* holding 3 *sleep arrows*.
- 6: stone of alarm (in box w/ command word "teros")
- 7: marvelous pigments
- 8: incense of meditation (1 block)
- 9; gloves of swimming and climbing
- 10: pipes of haunting
- 11: wind fan (command word "ventus" on handle)
- 12: periapt of health

# **DAVERYN ENCOUNTERS**

# 1. THE LAST STAND

A small company of fifteen haggard soldiers hold out in Smallward. They have barricaded off a street from both directions and valiantly fight on, hoping that somehow reinforcements will get to the city in time to save them. So far, they have proven deadly enough with their focused volleys of crossbow fire that the bugbears have started avoiding this small concentration of resistance. Of course, the Ninth Knot is another matter all together.

Defeating this band has little effect upon the fortunes of Daveryn. The city has fallen. This lone captain and his rag-tag stalwarts are not numerous enough to change the course of the battle. However, victory here does open up an unspoiled section of the trader's district to pillaging and ransacking.

Captain Tom Durning CF	۲5
XP 1,600	
Human Fighter 6	
LG Medium humanoid	
Init +1; Senses Perception +4	
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 masterwork halberd +13/+8 (1d10+9/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	
<ul> <li>During Combat Captain Durning fires his bow at enemies to kee them away from the barricade, but he much prefers to use he halberd to trip and skewer his opponents. When he trips a opponent, not only do they fall prone but they provoke a tacks of opportunity. With a -4 penalty to their AC while prone Captain Durning always chooses to power attack the fallen for (acquiring a -2 penalty to hit and a +6 bonus to damage). Fue ther, do not forget that fallen foes provoke from all enemies within reach.</li> <li>Morale Captain Durning is in desperate straits. He knows the bug bears are merciless. He hopes reinforcements are comir from the south and so he will fight to the last hoping to ho out till they arrive.</li> </ul>	, is in t- e, oe ir- es g- ig
STATISTICS	
<ul> <li>Str 18, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 10</li> <li>Base Atk +6; CMB +10 (+14 to trip); CMD 21 (+23 vs. trip)</li> <li>Feats Combat Expertise, Greater Trip, Improved Trip, Iron Wi Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (halberd), Weapon Specialization (halberd)</li> <li>Skills Climb +8, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Penception +4, Profession (soldier) +8, Ride +5, Survival +4, Switt +8</li> </ul>	on r-
Languages Common, Dwarven SQ armor training 1	
Trait Votoran of the Watch Percention is a class skill and us t	

Trait Veteran of the Watch -- Perception is a class skill and +1 to Perception

Gear masterwork halberd, longsword, composite longbow (+4 Str), 20 arrows, dagger, masterwork full plate, 1 weeks rations If the PCs actively loot this area, instead of rolling on the normal table, they find a merchant's trading house in fine shape. The trading house itself is empty. However there are small living quarters in the back where several weeks of dried foodstuffs are stowed. The abandoned silverware and gilded candelabras (worth 250 gp) are easy to find. The hidden safe in the back office is more difficult (DC 25 Perception check to find).

The safe is not easy to open (DC 30 Disable Device check) and anyone who knew the combination is long dead. However, within is the merchant's life savings – 600 platinum pieces, 2 pieces of jewelry worth 3200 gp in total and the deed to his other major piece of property in Matharyn. Quite a score!

The deed is a useful item. With it the PCs could set up a legitimate safe house at the now deceased merchant's small villa on the edge of the city. The deed details the location of the Restinly Manor in Carsburn (see the gazetteer in the appendix for more details).

With but a stroke of the pen, the current deceased owner Marcus Restinly can transfer his property to anyone the PCs care to name. The property is quite valuable and could fetch 10,000 gp on the open market in Matharyn even during this time of war. Of course, selling such a property could be problematic for PCs who bear the mark of the Forsaken. Still, with magic and clever renovation of the facts, anything is possible.

Veteran Soldiers of Daveryn (14)	CR 3
<b>XP 800 each (11,200 XP total)</b> Human warrior 5 LG Medium humanoid <b>Init</b> +0; <b>Senses</b> Perception +3	
DEFENSE	A.
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) Ranged heavy crossbow +5 (1d10/19-20x2)	
TACTICS	20
During Combat They first try to use their heavy crossbockeep enemies away from their barricade. When that fail draw swords, grimly fighting and power attacking with longswords. They cleave when ever the opportunity aris Morale These haggard survivors have seen what sort of mer bugbears and their allies give. They fight to the death.	s they n their es.
STATISTICS	
<ul> <li>Str 16, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12</li> <li>Base Atk +5; CMB +8; CMD 18</li> <li>Feats Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longs Skills Climb +7, Intimidate +9, Perception +3, Sense Motir Swim +7</li> <li>Languages Common</li> <li>Gear masterwork longsword, dagger, breastplate, heavy shield, tabard of the city of Daveryn: 1 weeks rations</li> </ul>	ve +4,

## 2. THE TOWER OF POLYDORUS

Polydorus the Seer, once the High Wizard of the city, still dwells in Daveryn. This handsome noble half-elf hails from a well regarded family and had a reputation as an advisor to important men across Talingarde. His horoscopes were widely sought, his counsel well regarded. But in Daveryn, he was all but outcast. He was forbiddan to live in the city center and Polydorus the seer was all but banned from the palace. Such was Duke Martin's hatred of wizards and other arcane casters.

Unlike every other remaining resident, Polydorus is not trapped. He is waiting. As the horde of the Fire-Axe approached, he promised that if Duke Martin could get to his tower in Bandelthyn, the wizard would teleport the lord to safety. The duke scoffed at his offer. "They will never take this city in a hundred years!" Duke Martin boasted. Daveryn fell in less than two days. Still, Polydorus intends to honor his promise. He hopes that by saving the duke he can change the way wizards are viewed throughout all of the kingdom of Talingarde. He has recorded this in his journals kept at the top of the to

tower.
Invisible Stalkers (6) CR
XP 3,200 each (19,200 XP total) N Medium outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar) Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12
DEFENSE
AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+4 Dex, +6 natural) hp 80 (7d10+42) Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +4 Defensive Abilities natural invisibility; Immune elementa traits
OFFENSE
<b>Speed</b> 30 ft., fly 30 (perfect) <b>Melee</b> 2 slams +12 (2d6+4)
TACTICS
During Combat The stalkers lie in wait at the bottom of the towe and pummel any intruders who enter here. Morale Elemental servitors bound to defend this tower, they figh until destroyed and thus banished back to their home plane. STATISTICS
Str 18, Dex 19, Con 22, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 11
<ul> <li>Base Atk +7; CMB +11; CMD 25</li> <li>Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (slam)</li> <li>Skills Acrobatics +14, Bluff +10, Fly +22, Knowledge (planes +12, Perception +12, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +14, Survival +12</li> <li>Languages Auran, Common</li> <li>SQ improved tracking</li> </ul>
SPECIAL ABILITIES
Improved Tracking (Ex) An invisible stalker takes no penalty to

Survival checks when tracking and moving at any speed.

Natural Invisibility (Ex) This ability is constant-an invisible stalker remains invisible at all times, even when attacking. As this ability is inherent, it is not subject to the invisibility purge spell. Against foes that cannot pinpoint it, the invisible stalker gains a +20 bonus on Stealth checks when moving, or +40 when standing still-these bonuses are not included in the statistics above.

#### Polydorus the Seer

XP 6,400 Male half-elf diviner 10 NG Medium humanoid (elf, human) Init +11; Senses low-light vision; Perception +19 DEFENSE AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 armor)

hp 35 (10d6) Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +9; +2 vs. enchantments Immune sleep OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. Melee quarterstaff +5 (1d6)

Arcane Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +14) diviner's fortune 7/day

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 10<sup>th</sup>, concentration +14) 5<sup>th</sup>— cold of cold (DC 19), lightning arc (DC 19), teleport 4<sup>th</sup>—ball lighting (2) (DC 18), scrying, stonekin, wall of ice (DC 18) 3<sup>rd</sup>—fireball (2) (DC 17), lightning bolt (2) (DC 17), tongues 2<sup>nd</sup>—mirror image, see invisibility, scorching ray (4) 1<sup>st</sup>—comprehend languages, mage armor(2), magic missile (2), shield o (at will)—detect magic, light, message, read magic

Prohibited Schools enchantment, necromancy

#### TACTICS

During Combat Polydorus stays on the top floor of his tower, cast-
ing spells down out of the window to keep invaders out. He
has memorized a panopoly of evocation spells to inflict grave
damage upon anyone who attacks his tower.

He only has enough diamond dust to cast stoneskin once, so he saves that spell until he is sure he is facing powerful opposition. However, he keeps mage armor cast on himself at all times. Before he comes to the aid of the stalkers he will also cast see invisibility, shield and mirror image on himself. This cautious nature means that a powerful party could quickly slay the stalkers and catch Polydorus alone preparing his defenses.

Morale Polydorus knows better than most the many horrors that have been inflicted upon this city. He has no intention of being captured. He fights until he is at half hit points or all six of the invisible stalkers are destroyed and then casts teleport fleeing to Matharyn. If teleportation fails, then he fights to the death.

ATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 12 Base Atk +5; CMB +5; CMD +17

- Feats Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Greater Spell Focus (divination), Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (perception), Spell Focus (divination), Spell Penetration
- Skills Diplomacy +11, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (planes), Perception +19, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +17
- anguages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Halfling Q arcane bond (amulet), forewarned +5, half-elf traits, scrying adept

ombat Gear 250 gp worth of diamond dust

Other Gear mwk amulet (arcane bond item), quarterstaff, spell component pouch, spellbook, 1250 gp in coins and gems

The Duke is trapped in his hiding place in Smallward (see location 10.) and crossing the full length of this conquered city has not proven an easy task. The duke has remembered Polydorus' promise and every night attempts to reach the tower. A patrol or other calamity has prevented this from occuring but it is only a matter of time.

For his part, Polydorus, is not defenseless. On the bottom floor of the tower are six invisible stalkers who attack any intruders. The creatures were bound to the tower by Polydorus' mentor and have served faithfully ever since.

Polydorus believes that the rank and file bugbears and ogres are unable to defeat these guardians, but is certain that it is only a matter of time before the Fire-Axe makes a more dedicated effort at storming the tower. Then the guardians will fail and Polydorus will be forced to flee. He hopes the Duke arrives before that moment comes.

Polydorus is uncertain if the duke is even alive. He has been unable to scry on him (ironically because of the duke's own *amulet of proof against detection and location*). So he waits, anxiously pacing and peering out his tower window for any sign of attack or the duke's return.

For the PCs, the Tower of Polydorus is a chance to gain some real treasure. If Polydorus can be kept from fleeing (perhaps using *dimensional anchor*) his spellbook and magic items are substantial rewards. Even if Polydorus does teleport away, he will still leave behind some substantial treasure. A massive silver scrying mirror is mounted on the wall of his tower worth 1000 gp. Though he departs with all the loose coinage and gems, he still leaves behind a well-appointed and unlooted tower. His noble finery and easily portable valuables are worth 2400 gp. He also has twelve bottles of red ale (called Mudhen; see Grumblejack's Bet below) stowed in his cellar.

But more important, is the information he leaves behind. His collection of letters, essays and books includes four items of note:

# THE LORD OF EAGLES LETTER

To Polydorus, Seer of Daveryn, Unwinged but wise:

Behold, I the Stormborn King need your counsel. I have taken Chargammon's whelp, the black dragon Jeratheon Knightsbane. He foolishly tried to lay claim to my dominion and by talon and thunderbolt did we humble this night hunter. My heart speaks to slay this monster and see his evil forever removed from both earth and sky. Still, I worry this would bring the wrath of his sire.

So I send to you. What say the stars? Will the death of Jeratheon invite disaster or will it bring only justice and relief? I await your word.

I remain the Lord of All Eagles and the Stormborn King

#### Polydorus' Primer of Prognostication (Level 10 Diviner)

This heavy tome is plain enough on the outside – a rugged leather volume bearing its title in the common tongue. Inside, the book is simply crammed with spells and notes, with every page (and even margins) laden with text. Still, if one cares to actually delve into the voluminous text this primer reveals itself to a broad and reaching text with amazing insights regarding the nature of magic in general and divination in particular.

#### Value 2850 gp Blank Pages o

SPELLS

- 5<sup>th</sup> Abjuration: *dismissal*; Divination: *prying eyes, telepathic bond*; Evocation: *cold of cold, lightning arc*
- 4<sup>th</sup> Abjuration: stoneskin; Divination: locate creature, scrying; Evocation: ball lightning, wall of ice
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Abjuration: dispel magic; Divination: arcane sight, clairaudience/clairvoyance, tongues; Evocation: fireball, lightning bolt
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Divination: see invisibility, locate object; Evocation: scorching ray; Illusion: mirror image
- 1<sup>st</sup> Abjuration: alarm, endure elements, protection from evil, shield; Conjuration: mage armor, mount; Divination: comprehend languages, identify; Evocation: magic missile; Transmutation: expeditious retreat
- o<sup>th</sup> all cantrips in the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook save for those of the conjuration and necromancy schools.

1) His journals reveal that Polydorus remains because of the duke, who the seer believes is alive and hiding.

2) There is a strange letter written on a scrap of untanned skin with jagged writing as if it has been etched by a claw. This is the letter from the Lord of the Eagles.

3) An essay on the cyphers of the scholar Bademus. With this, the PCs can decipher his Codex (found in Book III). Whoever takes 48 hours to read the book gains a permanent +2 bonus to Knowledge (arcana) if they are already trained in that skill. It is also a useful bargaining tool for gaining access to Eiramanthus (see Act 3).

4) Polydorus has written a book entitled "Dragons of Talingarde." It details the five greatest dragons in the land:

Antharia Regina – a silver elder wyrm from the north not seen in a century; mother of Argossarian; presumed dead. She could take human form and loved to move amongst mortals.

**Eiramanthus the Traveller** – an ancient copper dragon famed for his planar travels. It mentions his three beloved consorts who would die to defend him: Setia Swims-the-Sea-of-Stars; Sakura Yoshimune of the Toshigami; and Shakti Shobhana the Redeemed.

**Chargammon the Black** – a black dragon elder wyrm. "The vilest serpent in a nest of vipers;" It gives the location of his lair. This beast has spawned more than twenty seven young many of which still trouble this world. Amongst them:

**Jeratheon Knightsbane** – an adult black dragon and hunter of men. He dwells in the swamps of the Caer Bryr.

**Nythoggr, Striker-in-the-Dark** – An ancient cairn linnorm of the Savage North of whom little is known.

#### **3. THE BARONESS**

In the farm town of Angleton sits a single unsacked manor house. This is the House of Veryn and within dwells a Barcan blooded noblewoman – the Baroness Vanya of Veryn. Her family once ruled the Duchy of Daveryn but lost their rights to it when they supported Barca over Darius in the last war of succession.

When the Palace fell she committed none of her personal guard toward saving the city or Duke Martin (who she regards as an idiot). Instead, she tried to flee the city and half her guards perished at the hands of goblin wolfriders. The survivors fled back to her fortified manor house and there they remain. The redoubt is well provisioned and ready for a prolonged seige. She is certain the King of Talingarde must be on his way. Her goal is to discretely remain in her manor until he arrives.

This passive plan of inaction grates upon the baroness. She despises the House of Darius and detests the fact that she must rely upon those righteous fools for rescue. She is certain she could cut a deal with the Fire-Axe if only she could reason with someone in authority. She tried to treat with a roving warband of bugbears and all it accomplished was the gruesome deaths of more guards she can't afford to lose. But as violent as the bugbears have been, they have proven incapable of seizing her manor.

The Baroness realizes all too well how precarious her situation is. One good push by the Fire-Axe and the best she can hope for is her head on a spike. But what other choice does she have? Certain that every day is her last, she locks herself in her extravagant wine closet and drinks herself unconscious every night. She prays to whatever gods may listen that this is not her end and, even though she is not particularly religious, she has begun fervently praying to Asmodeus recently.

This is where the PCs come in. They can learn about the manor house either by rumor or simply visiting Angleton. It only takes a DC 15 Perception test to notice the standing manor house or a DC 15 Gather Information test if the PCs talk to the local bands of bugbears and goblins. The bugbears will mention that they rushed the manor house yesterday and four of their number were cut down by crossbows. They've been considering another push but have found easier pickings elsewhere.

Our villains can handle the Baroness several different ways. They could simply storm the manor house. Her guards have dwindled (though those that remain are formidable and loyal) and she is not a particularly adept warrior. This also allows them to sack an unspoiled manor house. If they sack the manor, for one day they may roll on the excellent loot table above. A more constructive tactic would be for the PCs to treat with the Baroness. If they approached under a banner of parley, the baroness' men (who have improved cover and a two hundred foot kill zone around the manor) will not fire. They will let the delegation approach and the Baroness will agree to speak to them.

Her first inclination is to claim a position of strength. She claims to have fifty veteran soldiers in her manor house (a successful DC 25 Perception will put the number at the correct strength of twenty). "By the gods, we will fight to the death if you charge this manor!"

If the PCs make a more friendly overture, she changes her tune. "You lead this rabble? Most excellent. I am the Baroness Vanya of Veryn, rightful duchess of Daveryn, deposed by damned Darian usurpers. Who might you be?"

"If you can promise to be civil and not steal the silverware, you can come in and we can discuss terms."

To some degree, the Baronness is bluffing here. Even if the PCs are rude and abusive, she is still going to invite them in to discuss terms. At least they aren't trying to sneak in at night and cut her throat like the bugbears and goblins. She realizes quite correctly that negotiating with this group could be her last chance to make it out of this nightmare alive. Baroness Vanya is a potential ally. She is a genuinely evil Barcan noble. While not devout, she reveres Asmodeus for his doctrine of might makes right. For years, under the very nose of Duke Martin, the Baroness has kept the old shrine to the devil-god intact and used its blood-magic to keep herself vital and ageless. She is ready to betray House Darius in a heartbeat.

Further, with her impressive +28 sense motive, she is an excellent advisor to bring to any negotiation the PCs may engage in. The Baroness can smell most deceptions a mile away. She is witty, charming and beautiful. And if she believes taking a paramour amongst the PCs will help her position, she is both willing and able. A side-effect of her long use of the Shrine is that she is both sterile and immune to disease.

She has something else useful to trade as well. The Baroness has been to the Adarium as a guest and can draw a very detailed map of that palace. This would be of great use later in this adventure (see Act Four).

**Story Award:** If the PCs ally with the Baroness, award them XP as if they had defeated her and her men (CR 13; 25,600 XP)

Baroness Vanya of Veryn	CR 10
XP 9,600 Female human middle-aged aristocrat 12 LE Medium humanoid Init +5; Senses Perception +20	
DEFENSE	all and the
AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex) hp 54 (12d8) Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +15; immune disease	
OFFENSE	and the second
<b>Speed</b> 30 ft. <b>Melee</b> mwk dagger +9/+4 (1d4–1/19–20) <b>Ranged</b> mwk dagger +11 (1d4–1/19–20)	
TACTICS	and the second
During Combat The Baroness avoids combat at a her men handle such brute activities. If force flees. If cornered, she surrenders. If give no ot draws her dagger.	ed to fight, she
Morale If reduced to 27 hit points, she surrenders a life. The Baroness is not proud and will do what alive.	
STATISTICS	22
Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 18 Base Atk +9; CMB +8; CMD 22 Feats Alertness, Defensive Combat Training, Impr Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Persuasive, Skil Motive) Skills Bluff +15, Diplomacy +23, Intimidate +23, K	ll Focus (Sense
gion) +5, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge	e (nobility) +15,

- Linguistics +5, Perception +20, Perform (dance) +10, Perform (piano) +10, Perform (sing) +10, Ride +6, Sense Motive +28 Languages Common, Draconic, Elven Gear masterwork dagger, *brooch of shielding, cloak of resistance*
- 42, elixir of truth, elixir of vision, figurine of wondrous power (silver raven), headband of mental prowess +2 (Wis, Cha)

The	Baroness' Men (20) CF
XF	9 800 each (16,000 XP total)
	man warrior 5
	Medium humanoid
	t +o; Senses Perception +3
DEFE	
	18, touch 10, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +2 shield)
	37 (5d10+10) rt +5, <b>Ref</b> +1, Will +1
OFFE	
	eed 20 ft.
	lee masterwork longsword +10 (1d8+3/19-20x2)
	dagger +8 (1d4+3/19-20x2)
Ra	nged hvy crossbow +5 (1d10/19-20x2)
ТАСТ	ICS
Du	ring Combat These men when defending the manor stay be
	hind cover and use their heavy crossbows to maximum effect
	If melee is joined, they draw their longswords and charge int
	battle. They power attack against most foes and cleave whe
	they can. They are try to surround and flank any foe they ou number.
	nomber.
Мо	rale These men realize that the Baroness is the best bet for
	staying alive and they are all personally loyal to her.
STAT	ISTICS
	16, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12
	se Atk +5; CMB +8; CMD 18
	ats Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longswor ills Climb +7, Intimidate +9, Perception +3, Sense Motive +
JKI	Swim +7
Lar	nguages Common
	mbat Gear 20 bolts
Ge	ar masterwork longsword, heavy crossbow, dagger, breas
	plate, heavy steel shield, livery of the House of Veryn, 2d6 gp
The	Blood Altar of House Veryn
Au	ra strong divination (evil); CL 13 <sup>th</sup>
	t none; Weight – (cannot be moved)
DESC	RIPTION
Thi	s stone altar is a massive stone block adorned with the unmi
	takable iconography of hell. Leering devils cavort with morta
	across its stone block. Written upon the altar in infernal is th
	phrase "By blood and devotion to thee, O Lord of Hell, are w
	preserved forever."
On	ce a year, any individual may engage in an exacting one hou
	ritual in praise to the god Asmodeus. The ritual culminate
	with the sacrifice of a sentient that must be young (but not
	child), strong and beautiful (An age 18-35 human for examp
	with a Charisma score of at least 13).

- At the conclusion of the ritual, several effects happen. First, whoever actually made the sacrifice will now be effected by the spell greater age resistance for one year. Second, that individual will now detect as evil (if they didn't already). Devils will recognize the taint of Asmodeus about them and the individual receives a +2 to bluff and diplomacy checks when dealing with devils and other outsider servants of Asmodeus.
- The ritual can be renewed every year. This will not prolong the users life but it will keep them young and vital up until their death. If the ritual is used three times or more, the sacrificer is no longer entirely human and becomes sterile and immune to disease.

DESTRUCTION

The Blood Altar can be destroyed by pouring a vial of holy water upon each day for seven days and reciting a prayer to a good god. On the seventh day the altar cracks and loses its magical properties.

# 4. THE BALLERYN SCHOOL

The Balleryn (pronounced BALL-lair-in) school of dueling is little more than an open courtyard. wherein seven braggards humiliate all who dare challenge them. The headmaster is not from Talingarde. Rodrigo Garza Diego Guillermo Valentino Estanza de Garradora (usually Rodrigo will suffice) is definitely a foreigner. He's a swarthy man of uncertain accent who occassionally breaks out in a rapid fire language no one on this island understands. Regardless, this short, dark and handsome foreigner has managed to establish himself as one of the premier swordsmasters for hire in just a few years, and gathered together a band of dedicated bravos desperate to prove themselves to their master.

Understand first that Rodrigo is, by any reasonable standard, insane. He has time enough for only three things in life: dueling, drinking and wooing. Yet, this isn't what makes Rodrigo insane. His madness comes from his bravery. Where some men claim to be fearless, Rodrigo is very nearly so. He believes himself the greatest swordsman in the world and will eagerly take any challenge to that title. He never refuses a duel (even though dueling is patently illegal in Talingarde) and is all too eager to prove his prowess with a blade to anyone who happens by.

Rodrigo was amongst the most hated men in Daveryn before the city fell. He has dueled, cuckolded and disgraced so many nobles that it is a wonder he survived to see the city fall. Despite several solid tries, the minions of the Fire-Axe have failed to slay him and his surviving students. In fact, Rodrigo has decorated the entryway to the courtyard of his school with the heads of three ogres, five bugbears, eight goblins and one hill giant. Beside the heads written is blood is scrawled the words "Open for business. All challengers welcome."

Rodrigo is easily dealt with by storming the school. The PCs are likely more than capable of finally defeating this self-proclaimed "greatest of swordsmen". However, he could also be gained as a cohort or ally. He must simple be defeated in an honorable duel (no spells) one on one. Whoever accomplishes this task and leaves Rodrigo alive, will either have to kill the duelist or will gain him as an eternally faithful follower.

Rodrigo is completely unconcerned with ideology. He will happily follow a devotee of Asmodeus (or any other evil god) as long as he is allowed to perfect the art of dueling. Rodrigo's students, however are not so flexible in their ideology. They are all good, loyal sons of Talingarde. They only follow Rodrigo because he is the greatest duelist and monster slayer any of them have ever met. They will have to go.

Rodrigo, Swordmaster of the I	Balleryn School CR 8
XP 4,800	
Male human duelist 3/fighter	(weapon master) 6
CN Medium humanoid Init +10; Senses Perception +	13
DEFENSE	12
-	2 (+2 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 Int)
hp 73 (9d10+24)	
Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +5; +2 vs	. fear effects
Defensive Abilities canny def	fense, enhanced mobility
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft.	
Melee +1 keen rapier +16/+ (1d4+1/19-20)	-11 (1d6+5/15-20) or dagger +13/+8
Ranged dagger +13/+8 (1d4+:	1/19-20)
	ise strike (+3), reliable strike 1/day,
weapon training (rapier +	
TACTICS	which it is a
During Combat Rodrigo is a	bold combatant who never shirks in
	anger. He particularly despises spell-
	dishonorable) and will focus his initial
	ver, if challenged to a one on one duel Rodrigo halts everything and eagerly
accepts.	Roungo hars everything and eagerry
Morale This fearless duelist n	ever surrenders.
STATISTICS	
Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14	, Wis 10, Cha 10
Base Atk +9/+4; CMB 10; CM	D 26 (28 vs. disarm, sunder)
	ative, Iron Will, Mobility, Quick Draw,
pier), Weapon Specializat	, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (ra-
	6, Climb +13, Escape Artist +16, Per-
	nce) +12, Sense Motive +6
Languages Common, Elven,	
SQ improved reaction (+2), w	
Trait Fearless: +2 to saves vs. Combat Gear	rear effects
Other Gear daggers (4), leath	ner armor, +1 keen rapier
Students of the Balleryn Scho	ol (6) CR 4
XP 1,200 each (7,200 X	P total)
Male human aristocrat 1/warr	ior 5
CG Medium humanoid	
Init +7; Senses Perception +9 DEFENSE	The Part of the Pa
AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 1	
hp 38 (6 HD; 1d8+5d10+6)	3 (+3 amoi, +3 Dex)
Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1	
DFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft.	and the states
Melee mwk rapier +10 (1d6+1	1/18-20) or dagger +8 (1d4+1/19-20)
Ranged dagger +8 (1d4+1/19	-20)
TACTICS	
	dos follow Rodrigo's lead and support
their master in any battle	
flee.	heir courage fails and these bravados
STATISTICS	
Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10	Wis 10 Cha 12
Base Atk +5; CMB +6; CMD 1	
	uick Draw, Weapon Finesse, Weapon
Focus (rapier)	
	5, Intimidate +5, Perception +9, Per-
form (dance) +9, Sense N	lotive +9
Languages Common Combat Gear	
	erwork rapier, studded leather
55 - 151	

# 5. THE HIDDEN GUILD HOUSE

Daveryn was, before its conquest, a thriving port city ruled by a less than competent duke. Therefore, it was also a haven for organized crime. The largest and most expansive criminal organization in the city was not controlled locally. The Ghastenhall crimelord Nicholas "Neck-breaker" Breuder had taken control of the thieves and mobsters in Daveryn five years ago in a brutal street war. He sent his own cousin Anton Breuder to oversee operations and ensure the gangster received his cut.

Anton Breuder was one of the first people to know the city was in trouble. His men on the docks saw bugbears using crude barges to float down to the sea caves north of Cliffside, in order to take the secret passage into the heart of the palace. When he received the report, the crime lord gathered up his most loyal lieutenants and immediately made for their safe house in the city sewers beneath old Tythers. There they remain.

Having laid low and kept quiet, there is no rumor of their presence floating about the city amongst the bugbear invaders. However, they are not so well supplied that they don't need to send out scavengers to acquire foodstuffs. So it is possible that observant PCs might see one of their men at night scavenging amongst the ruins (DC 30 Perception check). The PCs can either capture the thief or follow him back to the guild house.

Behind a well-hidden secret door in the sewers is a small complex of four rooms. It is here that Anton Breuder and two dozen footsoldiers have holed up. Anton believes that the army of the Fire-Axe is not going to occupy Daveryn for long. The bugbears will loot, burn and move on. All his gang has to do is hold out until the city is abandoned and they can rebuild their criminal empire.

If discovered by someone who presents themselves as an ally of the Fire-Axe, Breuder will try to negotiate rather than fight. He knows his little gang is no match for even a fraction of the Fire-Axe's army. Breuder himself is a thoroughly wicked crime boss with no attachment or interest in the House of Darius or Mitra or any other pious rubbish. Breuder will say something like this:

"You guys...you got a mission. I respect that. And I don't want to get in your way. Me, I'm just a business man. My family did business before anyone ever heard of House Darius. And we'll still be in business when they're long gone. My stock and trade is information. All sorts of useful information. I could help you in ways you don't even know.

"Daveryn...this is town is chump change. This isn't what you want. You got your eyes on the big prize. Am I right? You want the crown and that means Matharyn. "My name is Anton Breuder, cousin to Nicholas Breuder. Nikki, he's based out of Ghastenhall but he's got his fingers everywhere. He's got people in Matharyn right now. You play ball with me, I'll introduce you to them. I'll set you up. The Fire-Axe took down Daveryn real easy. Let me assure you, the capitol is a different matter. They will defend Matharyn to the bitter end. You need people on the inside and I can provide that. You kill me, you get nothing.

# "What do you say? You want to make a deal?"

If the villains, for whatever, reason don't take the deal, then the rogues break and run. They aren't interested in dying today. If defeated they have only their gear and Anton's emergency fund of 2,000 gp in mixed coinage.

So, how can Breuder help the PCs? First, he is a well connected information source. Breuder knows this city and his thugs have kept him current on its condition. For example, he knows that the best looting in the city is in Seaward. He knows about the tower of Polydorus (location 2.). He knows that Captain Rikkon Harbold is still alive (location 6.) and has a fair idea where he's hiding (in the sewers beneath Argentyle). He knows the Sable Tower hasn't yet been looted (location 7). And he knows Tandengate Prison is still secure (location 8.) He will use this information to stay alive. What he doesn't know is the location of the Duke or the Cardinal. Though, if asked about the Cardinal he laughs. "Have you checked the cathedral in Tythers?" It turns out he's completely correct.

Breuder was not bluffing about having connections in Matharyn. He can arrange a safehouse and get the PCs in contact with a former servant who was fired from the Adarium when caught stealing. The servant, Kyler Jaemeson, lives in Matharyn and can provide the PCs with a crude sketch of the interior of the Adarium and information about how to impersonate a servant.

Beyond immediate needs, Breuder is a potential long term source of information and contacts. He could even become a cohort. Anton has long sat in his cousin Nicholas' shadow and would love a chance to seize control of the Breuder crime family. Anton is an intelligent, charismatic thief who is anything but the rough and tumble thug he sometimes pretends to be. He cares nothing about politics or religion and would love to be a part of a new evil regime in Talingarde as long as he gets his cut.

Anton Breuder	CR 10
XP 9,600	
Male NE human rogue 11	
hp 60 (see the crime lord entry in the Gamemastery Guide)	
Breuder's Footsoldiers (24)	CR 1
XP 400 each (9,600 XP total)	
Male NE human fighter 1/rogue 1	
hp 16 (see the street thug entry in the Gamemastery Guide)	

Book Four: Of Dragons and Princesses

#### 6. HOPE'S LAST HOLD

Rumors of a fledgling resistance movement buzz around the city. Several bugbear soldiers have been found murdered in blind alleys, by something other than fellow bugbears. An ogre head was found impaled on a wrought-iron spike. Several servants of the Fire-Axe have gone mysteriously missing. Maybe Daveryn isn't as subdued as it appears.

Ultimately, the PCs need do nothing. The resistance is far too little and far too late to alter the course of the war. Still, such killings left unanswered are bad for morale and could cause dissension in the ranks. For a horde as wild and savage as this, such dissension can flare into internal violence very easily. The Fire-Axe desires this resistance be put down.

Finding the resistance headquarters hidden in the sewers of Argentyle is no easy feat. Divination magic could make things simpler. But, capturing a rank and file soldier and torturing them for information is just as good. Also, with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (local) check, the PCs could narrow their search to the quarter where most attacks happen. If the PCs stake it out at night, they have a 50% chance every evening of being near an attack. Then they could follow the culprits back to their lair.

The truth is that this resistance movement is primarily one man – the last surviving watch captain – Captain Rikkon Harbold. Captain Harbold, during his days as a watchman, led the most competent and least corrupt squad in the entire city. Harbold and his Heartbreakers were terrors of the underworld. Now, the Heartbreakers are history, but he's scraped together every last soldier and watchman he can find into Daveryn's last real fighting unit. Captain Harbold knows that the king marches to Daveryn to liberate the city. Harbold's purpose is to do as much damage to the Fire-Axe's force as possible before the king arrives. "Every dead bugbear is one less our lads will have to meet in the field."

Captain Harbold is a mean, cussed, ugly, scarred mountain of a man who is rarely seen without his trademark cigar. Though he looks and talks like a villain, there are actually very few men in all of Talingarde more dedicated to the cause of justice and law. Captain Harbold will not stop his raids until he is found and slain. If he is not slain, he will do a great amount of damage to the Fire-Axe's force. However, if the Captain is slain, it is the end of this town's organized resistance. A few diehard soldiers may try to fight on, but they lack the skill and sheer moxie to replace Captain Harbold. If the Captain knew about Warden MacAnders (see location 8) he would definitely ally with him. Together, they could become a great thorn in the Fire-Axe's side.

Rikkon Harbold, Last Watch Captain of Daveryn CR 10
XP 9,600
Male human fighter 11
LG Medium humanoid
Init +1; Senses Perception +10
DEFENSE
AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 21 (+10 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex,
+1 dodge)
hp 85 (11d10+25)
Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +5; +3 vs. fear Defensive Abilities bravery +3
OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft. Melee +1 glaive +19/+14/+9 (1d10+11)
<b>Ranged</b> composite longbow +13/+8/+3 (1d8+5/×3)
<b>Special Attacks</b> weapon training (polearms +2, bows +1)
TACTICS
During Combat Harbold is a master spearman who prefers to fight
alongside massed ranks of his men. He recognizes that spell-
casters are the greatest danger to his men and so focuses on
taking them down first. Harbold and his men aren't particu-
larly stealthy so they instead rely upon quick raids where they
slay all enemies and then retreat back to the sewers.
Manula Cantaia Dildon kalisusa that kisusiti istkis taun/alast kasa
Morale Captain Rikkon believes that his unit is this town's last hope to hold together. He'll never surrender and fights to the death.
STATISTICS
Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 10 Base Atk +11; CMB +15; CMD 28
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Disruptive, Dodge,
Improved Vital Strike, Lunge, Mobility, Spellbreaker, Spring
Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (glaive), Weapon Speciali-
zation (glaive), Whirlwind Attack
Skills Diplomacy +5, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +13, Knowledge
(dungeoneering) +6, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Knowl-
edge (history) +4, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +4, Perception +10, Profession (soldier) +14, Ride +9, Sense
Motive +5, Survival +4
Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin
SQ armor training 3
Combat Gear potions of cure light wounds (2), 20 arrows
Other Gear +1 <i>full plate</i> , +1 <i>glaive</i> , composite longbow (+4 Str), <i>belt</i>
of giant strength +2, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection
+1, 10 cigars
Soldiers of the Watch (48) CR 1/2
XP 200 each (9,600 XP total)
Human warrior 2
LG Medium humanoid
Init +o; 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 glaive +5 (1d10+3) 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 (glaive)
Skills Craft (various) +5, Intimidate +4, Perception +4, Profession
(Soldier) +5, Sense Motive +2
Languages Common
Gear breastplate, glaive, dagger, heavy crossbow, 10 bolts, signal
horn,1d6 gold, dirty town livery, 2 days iron rations, waterskin

# 7. THE SABLE TOWER

The Sable Tower still contains the ducal regalia of House Daveryn. The guards are dead and long since eaten. A large camp of bugbears surrounds the place. They have seen the treasure on the upper floor. But everyone who goes up there, gets killed. Five bugbears have already tried and the traps still remain.

The upper floor is a single plain round room, thirty feet in diameter with only one door granting access. The door, once guarded and locked, is now smashed to splinters. At the center of the room in a locked glass case is the crown, scepter and ceremonial robe of Daveryn on display in all their bejeweled splendor. It would seem, at first glance, that all one has to do is walk across the room and smash the glass case. Of course, the five blasted bugbear corpses demonstrate that this room is trapped.

The bugbears have never managed to get past the first trap – the *sapphire of storms*. This magical artifice harnesses a chain lightning trap that activates anytime anyone enters the chamber without the special magical rod of office (which was lost and long since swept out to sea after the last living tower guard threw it in the river). This trap's focus is a beautiful piece of raw sapphire set into a clasp of wrought iron and mounted upon the ceiling in the very center of the chamber.

The sapphire, untouched by the hands of any jeweller, hums and sings with caged magical lightning of an intensity rarely seen upon this plane. The magic of the trap depends upon the sapphire remaining intact. A skilled thief, using fine tools, could mar the jewel and thus render the trap inert.

Getting to the trap is not trivial, but it could be approached by a master thief. The thief could climb up the wall of the chamber to the crystal jewel (a DC 25 Climb check) and disrupt the magic of the lightning jewel (a DC 31 Disable Device check). Failing the climb check causes the thief to fall (taking 1d6 falling damage and activating the trap). Failing the disable device check requires another climb check to continue to hang on upside down for another attempt.

A successful *dispel magic* cast against the jewel will disrupt the effect for 1d4 rounds which getting to it much easier. This would also allow a smash and grab job.

Sapphire of Storms	CR 10
Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31	
FFECTS	
Trigger proximity (alarm) Reset automatic (every three Effect spell effect (chain lighting, 12d6 lightning dama Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (up ondary targets within 30 ft. of the primary target, D save for half)	ige. DC 19 to 12 sec-

Unfortunately, there is a second layer of defenses – purely mechanical. The panes of the display case are not glass at all but perfectly clear rock crystal of superlative strength and hardness. It has a hardness of 8 and 30 hit points. It can be smashed in one blow by a DC 25 Strength check.

There is a catch of course (once opened by the key mounted in the hilt of the same rod of office that by-passed the *sapphire of storms*).

It is a small superior lock (DC 40 to pick) combined with an adamantine needle coated in deathblade poison. The adamantine needle ensures it will pierce even the strongest armor and the poison will slay all but the toughest of intruders.

The Adamantine Needle	CR 10
Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 2	5
EFFECTS	
<b>Trigger</b> touching the lock <b>Reset</b> manual <b>Effect</b> +15 melee touch attack (1 damage + deathblade poi adamantine needle jabs into the hand of the intruder ministers a single dose of deathblade.	
Deathblade poison	
Type poison, injury; Save Fortitude DC 20 Frequency 1/round for 6 rounds Effect 1d3 Con damage; Cure 2 consecutive saves	

The ducal crown of Daveryn is a brass circlet adorned with many small sapphires and one large stone known as the Cloudstone. This gigantic jewel has unique impurities that make it look as if white clouds where suspended in a blue sky. Together the crown, the silver scepter and the gold brocade ceremonial robes are worth 45,000 gp.

Even then, the prize is not yet won. There are twenty four bugbears and two ettins outside the tower who think the treasure should be theirs. Or at least, they want a cut since "they found it". The PCs could simply slay these interlopers (they are all together a CR 12 fight) or they could use some magical means to escape from the tower (the bugbears have no way to follow flight or teleportation).

Another possibility is intimidation. The PCs, as the Ninth Knot, have a reputation as both friends of the Fire-Axe and as the destroyers of Balentyne and Valtaerna amongst these rabble. A successful Intimidate skill check (DC 25) will persuade these monsters to give up on the loot and go elsewhere to find easier pickings. Bugbears (24) CR 2

CR 6

D0ybears (24)	
XP 600 each (14,400) XP total)	
hp 16 (see the bugbear entry in the Bestiary)	
Ettine (a)	

XP 2,400 each (4,800 XP total) hp 65 (see the Ettin entry in the Bestiary)

# 8. THE SECOND WORST PRISON IN TALINGARDE

Tandengate Prison in Cliffward is an old castle perched precariously on a cliff overlooking the sea. It has a reputation for being a brutal jail, only slightly better than Branderscar. Now it's in poor shape for a fortification, and yet its Warden and twelve prison guards still hold the walls. They crouch atop the battlements guarding their posts and praying to Mitra that reinforcements come.

Sir Arnon knows time is short. Most of his guards have deserted him. All that remains are a handful of elite diehards who will not abandon their post despite the hopelessness of their cause. Sir Arnon believes another push by the enemy will come soon and his aim is to make it a costly one. In fact, Sir Arnon greatly overestimates how much the enemy cares about the prison. The local bugbear warlords are certain there is almost no food left in the jail and are content for the humans inside starve to death. It's a strategy that is working.

So the warden waits for a heroic moment that isn't coming. The PCs may decide to charge in and give him the battle he craves. However, there is a danger in leaving Sir Arnon alive. There are other holdouts in the city (for example Captain Harbold, locatoin 6.). If Arnon could join up with them, they could become very dangerous.

There is another way to defeat Sir Arnon. Sir Arnon is no genius, and a wily group could present themselves as knights in the service of the king who have fought their way through the city. He could be bluffed into giving up his post and joining a band that fill his ears with tales of liberating the city. Faked messages from the king would also do the trick.

#### **MORE MINIONS!**

After the collapse of the Horn and the flight from Valtaerna, it is very possible that the PCs have abandoned their minions to death and obliteration at least twice. The Tandengate Prison is a wonderful place for the PCs to refresh their evil organization.

After defeating the Warden, the PCs will discover a whole wing of ragged, poorly fed prisoners. These men range from mere thieves to murderers and rapists. A charismatic PC could convince them to join them with promises of power (Diplomacy DC 20), lie to them with promises of an easy life ahead (Bluff DC 25) or terrorize them into service (Intimidate DC 25). Whatever the case, if the PCs replenish their evil organization, feel free to reset its stats back to starting or even grant a +2 to Survivability and +1 to Ruthless and Espionage scores. However our villains deal with the defenders, inside they discover more than a hundred prisoners starving, chained up and filthy. These men weren't well treated before the city fell. After, they have been given only scraps and enough water to stay alive. They are desperate and would do anything to escape this slow death.

would do anything to escape this slow death.
Sir Arnon MacAnders, Warden of Tandengate Prison CR 10
XP 9,600 Male human warrior 12
LG Medium humanoid
Init +0; Senses Perception +13
DEFENSE
AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield) hp 114 (12d10+48)
Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +5
OFFENSE
Speed 20 ft.
Melee mwk longsword power attack +12/+7/+2 (1d8+11/19-20) Ranged shortbow +12/+7/+2 (1d6/x3))
TACTICS
During Combat MacAnders is a valiant knight but very tactically
simple. He loves to wade into a mob of inferior foes and cleave
them to pieces.
Morale Warden MacAnders will fight to death to keep Tandengate
inviolate.
STATISTICS
Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14
Base Atk +12/+7/+2; CMB +15; CMD 25 Feats Cleave, Cleaving Finish, Great Cleave, Improved Cleaving
Finish, Power Attack, Skill Focus (intimidate), Toughness
Skills Diplomacy +14, Intimidate +23, Perception +13, Sense Mo-
tive +13
Languages Common, Dwarven Combat Gear arrows (20), 2 potions of cure moderate wounds
Other Gear heavy steel shield, masterwork longsword, shortbow,
+1 splint mail, tabard of Tanderngate Prison, keys to the prison
Elite Prison Guards (12) CR 3
XP 800 each (9,600 XP total)
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) Ranged heavy crossbow +5 (1d10/19-20x2)
TACTICS
During Combat These few remaining guards follow Sir MacAn-
der's order and follow their fearless commander into battle.
Morale These diehards are ready to fight to the last man.
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
Combat Gear 10 bolts, potion of cure light wounds

Gear masterwork longsword, dagger, breastplate, heavy steel shield, heavy crossbow, tabard of Tandengate Prison

let Ope: The Sack of Daveryn

#### THE FOREIGN ASSASSIN

Chained in isolation within the prison is the remnant of one of Talingarde's victories over the Knot of Thorns. There is a strange looking foreigner covered in exotic tattoos. He is the last remaining member of the Third Knot. This is Irfan al-Janbiya. His name literally means "the wisdom of the knife".

He and his companions were brought here by Cardinal Thorn to assassinate King Markadian V. Unfortunately, they ran afoul of a paladin leading a small band (this is of course Sir Richard; this was among the deeds he accomplished while the PCs were destroying Valtaerna).



# XP 12.800

Male human assassin 7/ rogue 5	
LE Medium humanoid	
Init +8; Sense Perception +15	
DEFENSE	

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 Dex) hp 54 (12d8)

Fort +3, Ref +12, Will +3; +3 vs. poison

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +1

CR 11

# OFFENSE

# Speed 30 ft.

- **Melee** dagger +12/+7 (1d4+1/19-20) or dagger +10/+5 (1d4+1/19-20) and dagger +10/+5 (1d4+1/19-20)
- Ranged dagger +12/+7 (1d4+1/19-20) or dagger +10/+5 (1d4+1/19-20) and dagger +10/+5 (1d4+1/19-20)
- Special Attacks death attack (DC 18), quiet death, sneak attack +7d6, true death

#### TACTICS

- During Combat Irfan is a deadly opponent when using ambush and stealth. In a stand-up fight his usefulness is diminished.
- **Morale** Irfan was brought to Talingarde to kill the king. He remains fanatically devoted to that cause. Once that is done, he is free to find another cause.

# STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +8/+3; CMB +9; CMD 23

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +17, Diplomacy +10, Disable Devise +12, Disguise +17, Escape Artist +17, Knowledge (local) +9, Perception +15 (+17 to find traps), Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +17 (+24 to hide weapons), Stealth +17

Languages Common, Alambrian (a foreign tongue)

SQ hidden weapons +7, poison use, rogue talents (fast stealth, surprise attack), trapfinding +2

Gear crude homemade shank (equivalent to a dagger) hidden in his dirty prison clothes

They have already branded Irfan with a runic 'F' and he knows he was due to be shipped off to some place called Branderscar. But then Daveryn fell and he's been trapped here. He has sworn an oath to see the king dead and remains fixated on his mission.

Irfan is a potential cohort for the PCs or at least a temporary ally. If the PCs can convince him that by aiding them he will eventually get to face King Markadian, Irfan will sign on to serve them.

Irfan is not a worshipper of Asmodeus. Instead, he serves an infernal order of assassins from a far away land known as the Nine Knives. A mysterious emissary (a member of the Sixth Knot) contracted with his organization to perform this duty. He will pursue it to his death, but once the king is dead Irfan will be a man without a purpose. A charismatic PC could convince him that his new destiny and purpose are here and the he should help the PCs.

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# 9. THE CATHEDRAL OF MITRA BENEFICENT

This is one of the four great Cathedrals in Talingarde (the other three are in Matharyn, Ghastenhall and Valtaerna). The bugbear raiders are just superstitious enough that this Cathedral has largely been left alone. Rumors of good outsider guardians have also helped to ensure that this is one of the least ransacked places in all of Daveryn.

The structure is certainly impressive. The cathedral itself presents a great gothic edifice; every inch covered in intricate decoration that celebrates an endless procession of saints and heroes of the faith. Familiar aphorisms written in both common and celestial adorn the stonework. Saying such as:

"There is no darkness so deep, that a single candle cannot defeat it."

"The suns sees and blesses us all with light and life."

"The sun may set and winter may come; but always there will be another dawn and summer will return triumphant."

Great flying buttresses, stained glass windows and a mighty facade complete the cathedral. It is truly a place of awe and reverence for the exaltation of Mitra.

As the villains push open the facade and walk into the cathedral, the first impression will likely be amazement. It looks as if the place has weathered the sack of Daveryn completely unaffected. It hasn't been dusted in a few days certainly, but otherwise, a congregation could file in and start their prayers without a moment's pause.

The PCs' first thought will likely be that there must a trap. There is no way this place could have remained unspoiled this long. There is loot here. The golden fixtures and sacremental vessels are still neatly positioned on the central altar. Unlike most Mitran temples with their silver items, these are older artifacts and largely made of gold. In fact there are 8,000 gp in Mitran gold scattered about.

Beyond mere material wealth, there is something else hidden here. Beneath the altar is a well concealed secret door (DC 30 Perception check) that leads down to the reliquary. The reliquary is a small cell that contains the musty, massive bones of St. Vitarius the Generous and the current living cardinal of Daveryn, Cardinal Ignatius Mark. This prince of the faith is well stocked with supplies and there is even a small garderobe off the cell that leads to the sewers. He is also in possession of three bottles of fine brandy worth 20 gp each (St. Vitarius' Smile; see Grumblejack's Bet below for details). The Cardinal prays day and night for the king's return, and for mercy from the armies of darkness, here in his little refuge. The Cardinal Ignatius (LG male old human aristocrat 4/expert 4) is no combat threat to the PCs. He has no armor, no arms greater than a masterwork dagger and can cast no spells. He is an intelligent, wise, well-spoken fellow, but that is unlikely to avail him much against our villains.

What he has is information. The Cardinal is one of the highest ranking men in the kingdom. He has sat in council with the king and the high men of the church many times. He will not give up his secrets easily, for Ignatius is a loyal and devout servant of Mitra. But the PCs can always drag it out of him with torture.

He has the following facts to divulge:

1) The High Inquisitor, Lord Solomon Tyrath, has been charged with the defense of the Castle Matharyn and the Old Palace while the king is away on campaign. Lord Tyrath is a powerful individual who scares the Cardinal to death. (More details appear in Book VI).

2) Markadian V has a surprise ally. He has been in communication with a powerful outsider of living flame. named Brigit of the Brijidine. Brigit, a queen of fire beneath the mountains, is revered as a goddess amongst the Iraen. By convincing her of the eminent threat of Asmodean followers, Markadian hopes to gain the Iraen's aid in the coming war. Already an Iraen delegation awaits within the Adarium. (see Act IV below).

**3)** King Markadian V's second in command is the masterful elven general Vastenus Barca. Vastenus impresses the Cardinal much. He is clearly one of the great tactical geniuses of this age.

4) The king takes the security of his daughter Bellinda very seriously. So seriously, that he has paid an immense sum of money to have a golem of solid mithral constructed to defend the Adarium. There are other lesser golems in the Adarium but all together they pale before this monster. Cardinal Ignatius has never been to the Adarium so he cannot draw a map of the place (In fact, only two people in all of Daveryn have been – the Baroness Vanya of Veryn and Duke Martin).

**5)** Polydorus the Seer was the only wizard in Daveryn of any note. His tower had bizarre magical defenses. The Duke disliked Polydorus but tolerated the old conjurer.

None of this is essential. The PCs can get it all from other sources and much of it they don't even know they need yet. The Cardinal is an alternate information source.

**Story Award:** Award a CR 12 (19,200 XP) reward for capturing the Cardinal alive. Award nothing for killing him.

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#### **10. FIND THE DUKE!**

When a hundred bugbears emerged from the secret door led by the Fire-Axe himself, Duke Martin realized his folly. He sent his personal guard to their deaths to buy time and fled his childhood home, the Palace of Daveryn. In a panic, he witnessed the bugbears charge out of the Palace and catch the few defenders at the Northgate completely unawares. He fled, certain he must remain alive, both to preserve his House and to report this tragedy to his distant cousin the king. He went to the only safe house he could think to trust - a secret chamber in the Trade Hall of Smallward, away from the slaughter in the north of the city.

He managed to hole up in that secret chamber and tried not to listen to the slaughter he heard all around him. Still, he's survived the worst of it. He remembers the promise of that wretched wizard Polydorus. What are the chances that ingrate arcanist will actually hold to his oath? The duke is certain he has no chance but to try. Every night, he creeps from his secret room and tries to cross the inner city to get to Polydorus' tower in Bandelthyn. And every night, bugbear patrols or simply his own cowardice drives him back into hiding.

For the PCs to catch the duke, they either have to be supremely lucky or find Polydorus' journals (see location 2) to learn that the Duke will eventually seek out the wizard's tower. By killing Polydorus and claiming his tower, the PCs can wait for the Duke to come to them. He will manage the trek across the city in 5+1d12 days. If Polydorus is still in control of his tower, the duke will be gone in flash of teleportation. If the PCs can get there first, they will be able to trap the duke.

Returning the Duke to the Fire-Axe greatly pleases Sakkarot. He calls for a great feast to celebrate the capture of this high-lord of Talingarde. First, the duke suffers a week of torture. In truth, it takes far less time to extract this information, but the torturers do enjoy their sport.

1) Most of the Duke's army has marched south to join the Grand Army of Talingarde that assembles under the king. Duke Martin isn't sure of its exact size, but it must be 20,000 soldiers and knights at least.

2) The King himself leads that army and nothing will take him from the side of his men.

3) One thing could seperate the King from his army. He wears an amulet around his neck. If his beloved daughter, the beautiful princess Bellinda, is ever threatened by a threat so grave that his trusted veteran knights cannot deal with it, they will summon the king. He will rush to the Adarium via the amulet.

#### Duke Martin of Daveryn CR 12 XP 25,600 Male human aristrocrat 10/fighter 5 LN Medium humanoid Init +6; Sense Perception +10 DEFENSE AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 shield) hp 87 (10d8+5d10+15) Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +9; +1 vs. fear Defensive Abilities Bravery +1 OFFENSE Speed 35 ft. Melee +2 rapier +20/+15/+10 (1d6+6/15-20) or silver dagger +17/+12/+7 (1d4+2/19-20) Special Attacks weapon training (light blades +1) TACTICS During Combat If the duke sees an enemy, he flees. Immediately. The PCs must track this fleet opponent down and keep him from escaping in order to capture the duke. He only fights if cornered, using vital strike to stab and then run. Morale Certain that only torture awaits him if he's captured, Duke Martin will fight to death to avoid be taken ... STATISTICS Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14 Base Atk +12; CMB +14; CMD 26 Feats Dodge, Fleet, Improved Critical (Rapier), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Vital Strike, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Rapier) Skills Bluff +17, Diplomacy +28, Disguise +11, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +10, Linguistics +6, Perception +10, Perform (dance) +11, Perform (sing) +11, Perform (string) +11, Ride +12, Sense Motive +10 Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Halfling Combat Gear potion of cure light wounds, potion of invisibility; Other Gear +2 glamered chain shirt, masterwork buckler, +2 rapier, silver dagger, circlet of persuasion, cloak of resistance +1, signet ring of House Daveryn (worth 500 gp), 4 days food, waterskin

4) The Duke has been to the Adarium and can sketch a crude map of the wing where the princess resides.

5) Distracting the king does not means the end of the army's might. His second in command is General Vastenus Barca, a veteran soldier and considered by some to be a military genius.

After that information is pried out of him and shared with the PCs, the bugbears celebrate. More of Daveryn burns and Sakkarot has the Duke roasted in a large open pit. The Fire-Axe and his lieutenants eat Duke Martin. "His city and his power are now mine," proclaims the Fire-Axe to his assembled throng of monsters. They roar back in bestial and brutal delight. The frenzied celebration lasts long into the night.

Sakkarot rewards the captor of the Duke by proclaiming them a general of the horde and giving them 5,000 gp in gold taken from the ruin. Further, Sakkarot has a great stable of slaves taken from the captured citizens of Daveryn. He invites our villains to claim one each.

Book Four: Of Dragons and Princesses

## BONUS ENCOUNTER: GRUMBLEJACK'S BET

This is an optional encounter and it could happen any time that the PCs are traveling through the city looting and exploring. It assumes Grumblejack (the ogre the PCs met way back in Book One) is still alive and with the PCs, but could as easily be accomplished by Raiju the Exile (see Book Three) or another monstrous NPC. It could even be done by a PC if someone is playing a monstrous race.

One of the Bugbear commanders named Burzak Gut-Eater is, besides being a remorseless killer and hunter of men, a connoisseur of strong drink. He has heard that once, every district of Daveryn was famous for making its own kind of alcohol. And he is offering the golden sword of the Baron of Westkirk to anyone who can bring him all thirteen in unopened bottles.

This challenge is only for members of the horde, not stupid "hummies" no matter how much the Fire-Axe likes 'em. A bugbear explains it like this "Burzak don't want no hummie crap in his liquor." Explaining that all thirteen were likely made by "hummies" gets you nowhere. Grumblejack takes one look at the obviously magic golden greatsword and he wants it. So, he tries to talk the PCs into helping him with the scavenger hunt for liquors. The Thirteen drinks in question are:

Angleton – Harper's Malt (a malty dark beer): This is easy to find since Angleton was spared the worst of the fighting. A DC 15 Perception test will turn up 1d8 bottles.

Argyntile – Crystalshine (a clear unaged whisky made from potatoes grown in small local gardens; rotgut): Since Argyntile is burned, there is no surviving Crystalshine in that district. However, it can be found in the surrounding districts (Bandelthyn, Glassboro, Goldenhall and Tythers with a DC 30 Perception check).

Bandelthyn – Black Bitterbiter or 3Bs (a very bitter stout ale almost completely black; definitely an acquired taste.) Easy to find in Bandlethyn. A DC 15 Perception check turns up 1d3 bottles.

Cliffward – Viander Vino (a charming white wine grown from grapes that flourish south of the city). You can find this in Cliffward (DC 20 Perception check) and in the wine closet of the Baroness (see location 3).

Duward – Cerulean (a bright blue liquor made from a proprietary blend of herbs. Cerulean is so thick and viscous that it is almost a syrup. It is meant to be diluted with chilled water and then poured through a special mesh coated in honey. Undiluted, it is almost undrinkably bitter. Diluted and sweetened it is quite sophisticated. It has mild hallucinogenic properties; definitely a decadent nobleman's drink.) Cerulean was always rare. However, the Baroness Vanya (see location 3) has one of the last bottles left in the city in her wine cellar. Bottles can also be found on the "good" and "excellent" loot tables.

Gattleton – Gattletale (a barley beer that is never bottled but served in small little wooden kegs instead) These little kegs are easy to find in Gattleton (DC 15 Perception check to locate one).

Goldenhall – Godsmead (not actually a mead; instead this is a triple distilled apple brandy sweetened with honey. A favorite of the local gentry). Can be found in the ruins of Goldenhall (DC 25 Perception check to find one).

Glassboro – Blood-rum (they actually import this deep red rum made of sugarbeets from Ghastenhall; but they make the bottles in Glassboro) Can be found in Glassboro (DC 20 Perception check to find 1d4 bottles).

Haverston – The Ninepenny Knockout (a famously giant 2 gallon bottle of strong beer; very cheap and low quality, but very alcoholic). You can find this in Haverston (DC 25 Perception check to lcate a bottle).

Mardleston – Mudhen (A very good red ale made from local grain; on the label is an old lady chasing a muddy chicken as it gets her hanging laundry dirty. What this has to do with beer is anyone's guess.) Hard to find in Mardleston after the sack and burning (DC 30 to turn up a closed bottle). However, Polydorus loves Mudhen and keeps a case in his tower.

Seaward – Slambam Sam's Best Dram (a very good local whiskey made from river water, local malt and smoke with peat harvested from the northern bogs; smoky, strong and smooth; aged for seven years.) A DC 20 Knowledge (Local) check will reveal that this was only sold in one place. Instead of a loot roll, the ruins of Seaward can be searched for Slambam Sam's. A DC 25 Perception test finds the place and though it has been looted, a case (12 bottles) of the Dram remains undiscovered.

Smallward – Astoria's Weakness (a pleasant spiced apple cider; the least alcoholic of all the drinks.) You can find it in Smallward (DC 20 Perception check).

Tythers – St. Vitarius' Smile (a strong sweet brandy made from imported wine). The Cardinal has some bottles hidden in his bolt hole and they are scattered about Tythers (DC 25 Perception check).

The PCs have 20+1d10 days to win the contest before some other monster manages the feat. The prize is a +2 *menacing greatsword* perfect, for Grumblejack.

# **EVENT FOUR: THE MESSENGERS**

Our band of villains has made powerful enemies and some of their wickedness finally catches up with them. A pair of powerful celestials have been sent from the higher planes to deal with these fiends. They have only one mission upon this plane – slay those who slew Ara Mathra. Ara Mathra, after all, is not actually dead. When he was slain here, he was banished from this plane and immediately returned to the heavens. There he sought out two old friends – Maul and Clarion. They have descended to the prime material plane to avenge Ara Mathra's defeat and to see that noble Talingarde is made safe once more from these villains.

They arrive in Daveryn knowing only the physical description of Ara Mathra's slayers (via *true seeing* they are undeceived by any illusions that may have been put in place). They *plane shift* into this world missing Daveryn by almost fifty miles. Clarion then uses *scrying* to try and find the slayers (they count as having first-hand knowledge of their enemy thanks to divine guidance). If successful and their enemies are alone, they teleport to them and immediately attempt to slay them. Only if the villains are surrounded by many will they hold off their assault. They wish their strike to be surgical after all. They have not been sent here to slay every evil minion. They are here only to avenge the death of Ara Mathra.

If they fail to fnd their quarry, they will wait a day and Clarion will use *commune* to find out more information. They will take the form of humans and, if they are in Daveryn, even bugbears. Soon enough they will track down their foes and see righteous vengeance inflicted upon them. They are implacable hunters and will not be dissuaded from their hunt. If they are defeated and manage to escape, they will not stop. They rest, heal and return again to perform their errand of vengeance.

Clarion and Maul seem an unlikely pairing. Maul is a brash and gregarious celestial, quick to laugh and eager to see justice done. Clarion on the other hand is far more reserved, seeming almost detached from his duties. The archon never speaks only making any appreciable sound when he blows his trumpet. Maul is, on the other hand, sociable and quick to chat with anyone he meets. He is quite personable and, though they have never been to this particular plane before, Maul is quick to pick up on local customs and manners. If the pair have a weakness as infiltrators it is this – they never lie. They may be somewhat evasive, but they never resort to actual falsehood.

When they finally engage the PCs, the pair of avengers pause only long enough for Maul to deliver a brief message: "Villains, know that now thou shalt answer for thy wickedness."

#### Maul, an Astral Deva

#### XP 38,400

NG Medium outsider (angel, extraplanar, good)

Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +26 Aura protective aura

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 25 (+4 Dex, +15 natural; +4 deflection vs. evil)

hp 172 (15d10+90)

Fort +16, Ref +13, Will +11; +4 vs. poison, +4 resistance vs. evil Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge; DR 10/evil; Immune acid, cold, petrification; Resist electricity 10, fire 10; SR 25

#### OFFENSE

#### Speed 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (good)

Melee +2 disrupting warhammer +26/+21/+16 (1d8+14/×3 plus stun) or slam +23 (1d8+12)

#### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th)

At Will—aid, continual flame, detect evil, discern lies (DC 20), dispel evil (DC 21), dispel magic, holy aura (DC 24), holy smite (DC 20), holy word (DC 23), invisibility (self only), plane shift (DC 23), remove curse, remove disease, remove fear

7/day—cure light wounds, see invisibility

1/day—blade barrier (DC 22), heal

#### TACTICS

During Combat Maul is first and foremost a melee combatant. He charges into battle wielding his great hammer and tries to crush evil-doers with an almost reckless abandon. When facing many foes, he slams his hammer into the earth which actives his holy smite ability. Being a fast flier, he particularly enjoys flying into melee with evil spellcasters used to being able to avoid enemies by flying above the fray.

Only if melee is proving unproductive does Maul resort to his other spell-like abilities. He prefers to leave the spellcasting to Clarion, his partner. The exception to this is his *blade barrier*. He enjoys the terror this mighty spell imparts to the wicked probably slightly more than he should.

Morale Maul has been sent to this plane by the immortal powers of light and goodness to avenge the death of Ara Mathra. He will neither relent nor stop until his task of righteous vengeance is complete. He may retreat temporarily if a situation seems truly hopeless, but he will be back.

#### STATISTICS

# Str 26, Dex 19, Con 21, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 23

Base Atk +15; CMB +23; CMD 37

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (warhammer) Skills Acrobatics +22, Craft (any one) +22, Diplomacy +24, Fly +26,

Intimidate +24, Knowledge (planes) +22, Knowledge (religion) +19, Perception +26, Sense Motive +26, Stealth +22

Languages Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech SQ change shape (*alter self*)

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

Stun (Su) If an astral deva strikes an opponent twice in one round with its warhammer, that creature must succeed on a DC 25 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1d6 rounds. The save DC is Strength-based.

Union of Good Maul and Clarion are an unusually pairing. It is atypical to see an angel and an archon working so closely together. But these two have worked together so frequently that they have become in a sense almost one being. As a result, when Maul and Clarion hold hands, Maul can use *alter self* on either of them and any other ability that usually only effects self. They can also communicate with each other instantly and telepathically. Not that they often need to. They have worked together so often they rarely need even say a word. They are one soul united in this mission of vengeance.

# Clarion, a Trumpet Archon

#### XP 38,400

LG Medium outsider (archon, extraplanar, good, lawful) Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +22 Aura aura of menace (DC 22), magic circle against evil

CR 14

## DEFENSE

CR 1/

AC 27, touch 13, flat-footed 24 (+3 Dex, +14 natural; +2 deflection vs. evil)

#### hp 175 (14d10+98)

Fort +16, Ref +9, Will +14; +4 vs. poison, +2 resistance vs. evil DR 10/evil; Immune electricity, petrification; SR 25

# OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (good) Melee +4 greatsword +23/+18/+13 (2d6+11/19-20) Special Attacks trumpet

#### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th)

**Constant**—magic circle against evil

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

#### Spells Prepared (CL 14th)

7th—holy word (DC 22), mass inflict serious wounds (DC 22)

- 6th—banishment (DC 21), heal (2)
- 5th—dispel evil (DC 20), mass cure light wounds, raise dead, scrying(DC 20)
- **4th**—dismissal (DC 19), divine power, neutralize poison (DC 19), spell immunity
- 3rd—cure serious wounds, daylight, invisibility purge, magic vestment, protection from energy
- 2nd—bull's strength, consecrate, cure moderate wounds (2), lesser
  restoration (2), owl's wisdom
- **1st**—bless, cure light wounds (3), divine favor, sanctuary (DC 16), shield of faith

TACTICS

During Combat In battle, Clarion always announces the presence of these two avengers of good with a blast of his trumpet. After that, he primarily employs his considerable magic to support Maul, healing and empowering the brash maul. He uses *divine power* upon Maul (thanks to Union of Good see below) as soon as possible.

Morale Though the silent Clarion lacks Maul's relentless bluster, he is no less committed to this errand of righteous vengeance. And he will see it completed no matter what the cost. STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 17, Con 25, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 17 Base Atk +14; CMB +19; CMD 32

Feats Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Persuasive, Power Attack

Skills Diplomacy +24, Escape Artist +17, Fly +24, Handle Animal +20, Knowledge (religion) +20, Perception +22, Perform (wind instruments) +20, Sense Motive +24, Stealth +20 Languages Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech

# SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Trumpet (Su)** All creatures except archons or angels within 100 feet of the trumpet's blast must succeed on a DC 19 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Charismabased. The archon can also command its trumpet to become a +4 greatsword as a free action. Out of the archon's hands, it is a chunk of useless metal.
- Spells Trumpet archons can cast divine spells as 14th-level clerics. They do not gain access to domains or other cleric abilities.
- **Union of Good** Similar to Maul, any power of Clarion that normally effects self can be used to effect both Maul and Clarion together as if they were one being. Thus, by holding hands, Clarion can teleport Maul using *greater teleport*.

o (at will)—detect magic, purify food and drink, stabilize, virtue

# ACT TWO: CHARGAMMON

This act details how our villains gain the aid of the great dragon Chargammon.

# **EVENT ONE: THE FOOLS' ERRAND**

After a month of exploration and recreation in the sacked city of Daveryn, the PCs are finally contacted by Tiadora. She does not arrive alone this time. Though Tiadora still bears human form, she is accompanied by all of the nine sisters in their full infernal regalia. They flock and fly about her, her attendants and servants.

"Greetings, Ninth Knot. The Cardinal Adrastus Thorn, your master and mine, sends his greetings. Have you enjoyed your stay in beautiful Davern? I hear you've been quite the tourists, traveling across the whole span of this metropolis. Tell me, have the locals been friendly?"

Regardless of how the PCs answer, she simply smirks and continues. "Victory over Talingarde and the culmination of your vengeance draws near, and yet still there is one final errand that must be done. It is time for King Markadian V called the Brave to die. You shall be our chosen assassins.

"Even now the king moves towards Daveryn at the head of an army, easily numbering twenty thousand strong. He is surrounded day and night by his mightiest and most loyal knights. Attacking him at his camp is folly. But the king does have a weakness. He has not marched to war with his beloved daughter, the princess Bellinda, heir and last scion of House Darius. She is watched over by a relatively small honor guard at the Adarium, the palace of House Darius, near the capital city of Matharyn.

"Perhaps it would be within your purview to infiltrate and slay Bellinda, but that is not our aim. The princess is merely a teenage girl and of little consequence by herself. Instead, it is your mission to endanger the princess.

"Everywhere the king of Talingarde goes, he bears with him a magical pendant. If ever his daughter is endangered, the talisman signals her peril. With but a word, he can return to the Adarium. He will teleport into his sanctum beneath the palace, eager to save his daughter.

"Your mission is first to proffer the gravest peril, and when it strikes the Adarium, you are to be in that sanctum awaiting the king's return. As he appears, destroy him. In one swift stroke, you will decapitate the House of Darius. With his death and the death of Bellinda, there will be no ruler of Talingarde. The Fire-Axe will defeat the army here in the ruins of Daveryn and then Talingarde will be ours. "But what peril could be so calamitous that the king's most trusted servants would call Markadian away from his campaign to save the kingdom? It can be no simple threat. It must be a threat of legend.

"Thorn has pondered this problem long and decided there is only one threat in all of Talingarde of worthy stature – the elder wyrm Chargammon the black. You must find a way to gain Chargammon's service and have him attack the Adarium and slay Bellinda.

"Chargammon's sunken throne is easy enough to find but it is a fool's errand to enter unbidden. Chargammon slays all who enter without his warrant. And he gives his warrant to no one. Still, Thorn has confidence that you will find a way. This is your mission. Gain the dragon's assistance and then kill the king.

"There is one more trifling matter. After the king is slain and his palace lies in ruins, Thorn bids you find a book. Perhaps it will be in the sanctum or perhaps in the king's personal chambers. It is the Liber Darian – a large bound volume containing the chronicles of the House of Darius. Fetch it and then break this seal. And then your labors will be done and you shall be rewarded for them.

"You must sense that this may well be your last mission for the Cardinal. Soon the armies of Talingarde will be broken and their leadership will be shattered. Thorn has always known that Talingarde stands because of four pillars. The first pillar was the Watch Wall Balentyne keeping the northern border secure. It burned by your hand.

"The second pillar was the Order of St. Macarius. You extinguished their flame. This third pillar is the Knights of the Alerion. They march to their doom against the Fire-Axe. And now the final pillar will fall by your hand – the House of Darius. Of all of Thorn's servants no one has done more than you to see the triumph to its conclusion.

"Do not think this will be forgotten when the rewards are given. You will be princes of the realm. The great game enters its last phase. Soon Talingarde will be ours."

CR 14

CR 8

# Tiadora (Handmaiden Devil)

XP 38,400 hp 187 (see the Devil, Handmaiden entry in the Bestiary 2) TACTICS

**During Combat** Tiadora realizes that the PCs are no longer to be trifled with. She pulls no punches and uses every power at her disposal. Tiadora or the Nine Sisters however are not able to summon any more devils to aid them.

**Morale** Without her master present, Tiadora will not fight to the death. If a battle goes poorly, she flees.

# The Nine Sisters (erinyes)

**XP 4,800** hp 94 (see the Devil, Erinyes entry in the Bestiary) Tiadora will linger long enough to answer a few questions.

**Q:** Wait, how are we going to stop Chargammon from killing us?

A: Thorn has confidence you'll think of something.

**Q:** That's it? "We'll think of something?" Is Cardinal Thorn trying to kill us?

A: Of course not. If the master wanted you dead, you'd be dead. Cardinal Thorn leaves nothing to chance. He didn't tell you how to infiltrate Balentyne and you managed. He didn't tell you how to acquire the Daemon's Gift and you managed. You should be flattered. I deliver many commands of the master to his servants. He trusts you enough to leave you room for your own discretion.

**Q:** Isn't the army that's coming to Daveryn far mightier than the Fire-Axe's horde. What's the plan for defeating them?

A: I am not privy to all of Thorn's secret machinations, only what he chooses to tell me. However, from what I can gather, our master has something special planned for the forces of Talingarde.

#### Q: How soon must this mission be done?

A: As with every mission Thorn gives you, sooner is always better. However, the army marches across the length of Talingarde. It will likely not be here for a month or two. You have that much time to ensure that it arrives here without the king to command it.

**Q:** Wait, we took down three of the four pillars? Do the rest of the Cardinal's minions just suck?

A: Perhaps it is true that you have risen to be Thorn's most elite servants, but do not overestimate your importance. You may have infiltrated and thrown open the watch wall, but it was only because of the Fire-Axe's army that the wall was broken. You may have recovered the Daemon's Gift but it was only distributed because of Brother Thrain and his dupes. You have been aided every step of the way along your missions. Never forget that.

Q: What do we know about the Princess Bellinda? A: What is there to know? She's a nineteen year old girl who has scarcely been out of the Adarium in all her young life. I hear she's quite beautiful. A pity she's going to get fed to a dragon.

**Q:** Are there really no other members of the House of Darius?

A: There are cousins and relatives by marriage. But King Markadian and the Princess Bellinda are the last two surviving direct descendants of the Victor. With their death, the House of Darius will be effectively destroyed. **Q:** Dragons usually have big piles of treasure hidden somewhere. After Chargammon eats Bellinda is there any reason why we can't slay the dragon and claim his wealth for ourselves?

A: You plan to betray the great wyrm Chargammon? You are either the bravest souls I have ever met or the most foolish. Chargammon is more than 1,200 years old. He is incredibly wary and fearsome. Betraying him is fantastically dangerous. In fact, I would be cautious of the dragon betraying *you*. The beast is wicked and honorless or so I hear. But, if you do manage to slay him, his hoard is yours if you can find it.

**Q:** Should we keep our plan secret from Chargammon? **A:** You should tell the wyrm as little as possible. However, the ancient beast is a genius and will already know much of what you intend. And I would be wary of lying to Chargammon unless you want to be eaten.

Still, do not mention the Cardinal or your ultimate aims. Merely tell him the truth – that you crave vengeance against the House of Darius. Say nothing more.

#### **Q:** Any advice for dealing with the dragon?

A: Be polite. Do not call the dragon by name. Instead, refer to him as something flattering like "Your Magnificence." Dragons have fantastic egos. You could do worse than to play to this.

## Q: Will the Cardinal help us bribe the dragon?

A: Bribery? Old Chargammon is already wealthier than all your dreams of avarice. It is unlikely he will aid our cause for mere coin. Still, a present to soothe his ego might be wise. No, no – money will not be enough. He will require some service. Do whatever must be done to gain the dragon's aid.

**Q:** This Chargammon sounds dangerous. Surely, there is some other way to threaten the Princess.

A: Unlikely. The Princess is not alone. Trusted knights and priests of Mitra guard her and see to her safety. These retainers will not raise the alarm unless faced by a truly impressive and overwhelming threat. Chargammon fits the bill like nothing else can.

Even if you slip in and slay the princess, the king will simply be told of the tragedy. No, we need him to rush to her aid. And that takes a threat like Chargammon. The Cardinal has long researched this and sees no other way. I would trust his judgment if I were you.

After answering these questions, Tiadora bows. "May fortune favor you, my lords, and know that the Dark Father watches your every deed." Tiadora and her retinue depart, leaving the PCs to their mission.

# **EVENT TWO: THE LORD OF EAGLES**

Weeks ago, Jeratheon Knightsbane, a rambunctious black dragon of Chargammon's brood, decided that all the Caer Bryr and the nearby Ansgarian mountain range were now his hunting range. He did not bargain for the fact that this range was already claimed by a powerful and noble ruler – the Stormborn King, Lord of Eagles.

The Stormborn King is not a true eagle at all. He is a very old, very wise thunderbird who long ago came to these mountains and claimed lordship over the avian tribes that dwelt there. He has sired many broods since his arrival and it is because of his lineage that so many many of the eagles grow so large and intelligent in these mountains.

The Lord of Eagles and his avian warriors captured the invading black dragon. The Stormborn King was uncertain what to do with the evil beast, so he sent word to several powerful and wise individuals he trusted for counsel. On one hand, The Lord did not want to draw the wrath of Chargammon but neither could he simply free the wicked Jeratheon to inflict further evil upon this already troubled isle. By chance, one of those he consulted was the High Wizard of Daveryn, Polydorus the Seer. The wizard was considering the matter when Daveryn was sacked. If the PCs recover the Eagle Lord's letter (see Act One above), they will have the opportunity to devise a rescue on their own. If the PCs locate Anton Breuder, he also knows about Jeratheon's capture (perhaps by spying upon Polydorus). The PCs may have already made an ally of the contract devil Dessiter (see Act Three) who may know of Jeratheon's plight. Regardless, you should give the PCs the chance to learn about Jeratheon's capture before they treat with Chargammon.

Using this information, they can learn the location of the Lord of the Eagle's aerie fairly easily. This mythic place is known to many Iraen. The PCs can travel to Farholde and find out the location from an Iraen scout with a Diplomacy check (DC 22). There are even a few Iraen prisoners in Daveryn who may know of it, and the information can be found amongst Polydorus' notes. The PCs have several methods to learn where to find the Lord of the Eagles. Rather than spoon-feed it to them, let them use these resources.

Once the location is determined, it is easy to teleport there or use any number of magical means. Mundane overland travel will also work, though it will be slow. When the PCs arrive, they can approach this encounter several ways. The direct approach will work of course, though the Lord of Eagles and his courtiers will not surrender the dragon without a fight.
#### The Stormborn King, Lord of the Eagles

#### XP 12,800

NG Gargantuan magical beast

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, stormsight; Perception +21

Aura storm aura (100 ft.)

#### DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 10, flat-footed 21 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +15 natural, -4 size) hp 147 (14d10+70) Fort +14, Ref +12, Will +10 Immune electricity, sonic

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 120 ft. (good)

Melee 2 claws +18 (2d6+8/19–20 plus grab), bite +18 (2d8+8/19–20) Ranged thunderbolt +13 ranged touch (6d6 electricity and 6d6 sonic)

Space 20 ft.; Reach 20 ft.

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 11th; concentration +12) **At will**—control weather

#### TACTICS

During Combat The Stormborn King prefers to use his thunderbolts, circling high above in his aerie raining down death upon his foes.

Morale Proud and powerful, the Stormborn King fights to the death to defend his throne. STATISTICS

Str 26, Dex 17, Con 21, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 15 Base Atk +14; CMB +26 (+30 grapple); CMD 40 Feats Critical Focus, Dodge, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Acrobatics +13, Diplomacy +16, Fly +11, Perception +21, Perform (sing) +8, Sense Motive +11

Languages Auran, Common

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

Thunderbolt (Su) The Lord of Eagles can fire a ray of thunder and lightning from its outspread wings as a standard action. This attack has a range of 200 feet with no range increment, and requires a ranged touch attack to hit. A creature critically hit by a thunderbolt is stunned and deafened for 1 round if it fails a DC 22 Fortitude save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

- Storm Aura (Su) The Lord of Eagles can, with a free action, call forth a 100-foot-radius spread of severe winds that blow out from the center, dissipating swiftly at the limit of the aura's range. In this area, ranged weapons (but not siege weapons) take a -4 penalty on attack rolls, Fly checks are made at a -4 penalty, and exposed flames are extinguished. Small creatures must make a DC 10 Strength check (if on the ground) or a DC 20 Fly check to move toward the Lord, while Tiny or Smaller creatures can be knocked backward (1d4 × 10 feet if they are on the ground and fail a DC 15 Strength check, or 2d6 × 10 feet if they are flying and fail a DC 25 Fly check). Creatures on the ground that are pushed back take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per 10 feet, and flying creatures that are pushed back take 2d6 points of nonlethal damage regardless of the distance they are pushed.
- In addition, once every 1d4 rounds, a bolt of lightning strikes a random creature (other than the Lord or any of his eagles) within the area of its storm aura. This bolt of lightning deals 12d6 points of electricity damage (DC 22 Reflex halves). The save DC for the lightning bolt is Constitution-based, while those for resisting the wind effects are fixed.
- **Stormsight (Ex)** The Lord of Eagles ignores all vision penalties and concealment from weather effects, including those created by *fog cloud, obscuring mist*, and similar spells.

Courtiers of the Stormborn King, Giant Eagle Warrior-Elite (8)	CR7
XP 3,200 each (25,600 XP total) NG Large advanced magical beast Init +7; Senses low-light vision; Perception +15	1.1.1
DEFENSE	
AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +7 natural, –1 size) hp 60 (8d10+16) Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +4 Defensive Abilities evasion	
OFFENSE	-
<b>Speed</b> 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average) <b>Melee</b> 2 claws +13 (1d8+5), bite +12 (1d6+5) <b>Space</b> 10 ft.; <b>Reach</b> 5 ft.	
TACTICS	
During Combat The eagles swoop and attack their foes, using th flyby attacks to full effect. Morale As long as the Stormborn King remains alive, the eagles fig till the bitter end. But if their lord falls and more than half th number are dead, the remainder of the eagles flee the Ae	ght eir
never to return.	_

Base Atk +8; CMB +13; CMD 26 Feats Alertness, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (claws)

Skills Fly +12, Perception +19, Sense Motive +4; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

Languages Auran (cannot speak)

Deception is another possibility. The Lord of Eagles will be glad to see his old friend Polydorus. If the PCs have defeated the wizard and scoured his tower, they likely have enough information to impersonate him, at least for a time. "Polydorus" could counsel the Lord to remand the dragon into his custody. The Lord would be hesitant but a successful DC 25 Bluff check would convince him this is the wisest course.

What the Stormborn King is not suspectible to, is bribery or threats. Such attempts merely earn his contempt and he orders his warriors to attack. The Lord of Eagles is a proud and honorable bird and he will not relinquish his great prize to evil-doers without a struggle.

Stealth is very risky. The Stormborn King and his eagles have incredibly keen senses. It would take a master of stealth to sneak into this aerie. And even then, it would be impossible to sneak the dragon out. Still, an invisible sneak might be able to free the dragon and gain its aid during the battle. Jeratheon is certainly eager to be free of these captors who openly discuss every day whether slaying him would be the best course.

The Courtiers come and go (there are always approximately eight in the aerie at any one time). However, these days the Stormborn King leaves but rarely, especially with a dragon in his care. The Lord of Eagles is only 10% likely on any given day to leave for no longer than 1d6 hours. Still, with patience such a moment that would be the perfect time to strike the Aerie.

#### THE AERIE

The Aerie is a great cavern built in a hollow mountain peak. The entrance (A) is a round natural fissure in the side of the mountain. The aerie is not lit, though natural sunlight streams in during the day, more than sufficient for the eagles with their lowlight vision.

The cave floor is rough and full of stalagmites and debris. It's entire surface counts as difficult terrain.

Two ledges (B) forty feet high surround the main cavern and this is where the great courtiers of the Stormborn King perch and squawk their petitions to their sovereign lord. The Courtiers are of extraordinary size even for giant eagles and most of them bear the blood of the Stormborn king within their veins. Though it is rare for more than eight of them to be in attendance at any one time, they are certainly not all of the Stormborn's retinue.

Across the span of the western Angarian range and into the Caer Bryr, his multitude of subjects (Courtiers and more typical giant eagles) hunt and nest. If some of these great birds are slain in combat, their numbers are replenished at the rate of 1d2 per day. If the Stormborn King feels truly threatened, he may send a call for more reinforcements at the Aerie until danger is past. Pride makes abandoning the aerie impossible and unthinkable. In the center of the aerie is the Throne of the Stormborn King (C). This natural column of stone rises sixty feet and is the preferred roost of the Lord of Eagles. He sits upon the rise, listening to the calls and cries of his many Courtiers, rarely answering, often considering. His mind is troubled these days with many concerns.

It was at the foot of this throne that Brastius Star-feather (see Book Two) likely petitioned the Stormborn King for aid. Neither Brastius nor his warriors have returned and dark rumors abound concerning the Horn of Abaddon. His sharp-eyed eagles speak to him of trouble and massing darkness. The Stormborn King ponders what to do and considers that perhaps it is time for the eagles to fly to war. But first, there is the matter of this dragon.

The Stormborn King's private perch (D) is where the Lord of Eagles nests. It is his refuge and place of comparative solitude. He retreats there to rest and silently contemplate his cares. The perch is neatly kept and there is a great golden pendant that the Storm King wears only when presiding over official matters. This heavy golden pendant adorned with a great eagle's talon was gift from the dwarves given in friendship and in exchange for dragon-gold. It's worth 6500 gp for its weight and fine workmanship. Besides that treasure, a key and a great nest of sticks and feathers there is nothing else of any worth.



#### FREEING JERATHEON

Jeratheon is chained (E) to the wall below the Stormborn King's roost, but it was not the eagles who bound him. They defeated him, dragged him here and employed local Ansgarian dwarves to chain the dragon for safe keeping. Arch-enemies of evil dragonkind, they were all too glad to aid the Lord of Eagles.

The dwarves crafted a cunningly-made mithral chain with a superior lock (DC 40 to open) to bind the dragon. The assembly includes a mithral muzzle that makes it impossible for Jeratheon either to talk or use his breath weapon. If removed undamaged this is worth 1200 gp.

The key is located in the perch of the Stormborn King. Jeratheon has already rubbed his long sinuous neck raw trying to pull against the chain. He is now quite certain he is not strong enough to break it or its deep anchor in the stone wall. Unable to fly, breathe acid, bite or even speak – the once great black dragon is truly a pathetic sight to behold.

Still, Jeratheon was dying when brought to this cave. His captors have treated him well. He has been well-fed and given water. He did scrap with a curious Courtier who got too close and the dragon tried to slash with his claws. The bound dragon received a savaged beating for that. Regardless, he has regained some of his strength but is still terrified and humiliated. His loss to the Stormborn King was the first time that the overconfident black dragon ever knew true defeat.

Jeratheon is only a hundred twenty years old – barely an adult dragon, but he is big for his age (being huge instead of the typical large for his age group). He hasn't really grown into his size yet and has not truly taken advantage of it. He has much to learn about being a dragon and it is likely he will learn some hard lessons from the PCs.

If the PCs make the mistake of freeing Jeratheon without bargaining first, the dragon bolts for the cave entrance and takes wing. He flies at double speed (an impressive four hundred feet per round) and does all he can to avoid pursuers and obstacles. This is not a failure, though the PCs may think so at first. Jeratheon will still speak to his father about his rescuers. Suspicious and curious at to why they would help his blundering son, Chargammon will grant them an audience.

It is possible to remove Jeratheon's muzzle without fully freeing the dragon. This will allow Jeratheon to both talk and use his breath weapon. Jeratheon is not so stupid to reward potential rescuers with a faceful of acid however. So he refrains from doing so until he is free. Even if the Lord of Eagles is defeated before his eyes and he is unmuzzled, Jeratheon will first threaten his rescuers to free him. He speaks in a deep, resonant growl saying "Do you know who I am? I am Jeratheon Knightsbane, the son of the great wyrm Chargammon. Free me now and I will ask my sire to spare you when he arrives. He is doubtless on his way now!"

The PCs likely know that Jeratheon has been chained here for weeks, and that Chargammon isn't coming. If the PCs stand up to Jeratheon's bluster and point this out, the dragon turns to pleading and bargaining.

"Free me! I have a great hoard of treasure in my cave! All of it is yours if you will but free me."

This is not actually true. He did have a sizeable pile of treasure in his cave, but he knows the Lord of Eagles discovered it. What isn't on the perch was traded to the dwarves for the chain and their labor. Where they took it, Jeratheon can only guess.

"Free me and I will pledge thee my service. I will serve as your faithful mount carrying you amidst the clouds."

This is utter rubbish. Jeratheon is not eager to trade one form of slavery for another. He will serve his new "masters" only until he is fully healed. Then he will betray them in heartbeat.

If the idea is presented to Jeratheon that the PCs wish to speak with his father, Jeratheon is flabbergasted. For a moment he even forgets himself and says:

"You wish to speak with my sire? Why? You must know he'll destroy you. He kills everyone who dares enter his lair."

However, no matter how idiotic the idea sounds to Jeratheon he will promise to speak to Chargammon and grant them an audience. Ultimately, the dragon will say anything to be freed. His word is meaningless, of course, but Jeratheon is no great expert at lying. His deceptions are likely to be artless and obvious.

However, the dragon can be held to aid the PCs by either truly terrifying the dragon (a DC 30 Intimidate check) or by threatening him with magic. Taking a drop of the dragon's blood will scare the dragon. He knows enough magic to know what that means and anyone who can slay the Lord of Eagles does worry him.

As soon as the dragon is free, unless somehow restrained, he bolts and flies straight back to his father. If the PCs restrain him and keep the dragon with him, he can actually be of some use on Chargammon's island but he does whine the whole way.

#### Jeratheon Knightsbane, Son of Chargammon

#### XP 12,800

Male adult unique black dragon CE Huge dragon (water) Init +5; Senses dragon senses; Perception +24 Aura frightful presence (180 ft., DC 19)

AC 27, touch 10, flat-footed 26 (+1 Dex, +18 natural, -2 size) hp 175 (14d12+84); currently 40 Fort +14, Ref +10, Will +12 DR 5/magic; Immune acid, paralysis, sleep; SR 22

#### OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +21 (2d6+10), 2 claws +20 (1d8+7), 2 wings +15 (1d6+3), tail +15 (1d8+10)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (80-ft. line, DC 22, 12d6 acid), corrupt water

#### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th)

At will-darkness (60-ft. radius)

#### Spells Known (CL 3rd)

1st (6/day)—alarm, mage armor, obscuring mist

o (at will)—dancing lights, detect magic, mending, message, read magic

#### TACTICS

During Combat Jeratheon almost always has *mage armor* cast on himself, increasing his AC by 4. He uses *darkness* when fighting any foe he knows cannot seein the dark and uses his breath weapon as often as he can. Besides that, he loves to swoop in and rip his foes to pieces with his formidable melee arsenal.

Morale Right now, Jeratheon is badly hurt, chained and humiliated. Given the chance to run, he flees. He will say anything to get free and then when he is free, he flies to Chargammon's island.

When healed and his dignity is restored, Jeratheon is a tenacious and vicious combatant. He flees only if reduced to 43 hp or less.

#### Str 25, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 14

Base Atk +14; CMB +22; CMD 33 (37 vs. trip) Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Fly +12, Handle Animal +16, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Perception +24, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +20, Swim

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

+32

**Corrupt Water** (Sp) Once per day an adult or older black dragon can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-based magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will save (DC 19) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 180 ft.

- **Speak with Reptiles** (Sp) A young or older black dragon gains the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals. swamp stride, water breathing
- Swamp Stride (Ex) A very young or older black dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.
- Water Breathing (Ex) A black dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

#### THE THRONE OF CHARGAMMON

The great wyrm Chargammon makes his lair upon a small inhospitable rocky island off the western coast of Talingarde. The isle is surrounded by hull-ripping reefs save for one side. It is rarely named on maps and usually just marked "here there be monsters". A flock of particularly large and aggressive drakes (see location 1.) do a fine job of making sure that visitors are rare.

The weather here is harsh. The skies are oppressively grey and the wind howls relentlessly day and night. Rain is frequent and driving, furiously pounding the island. Every few years a powerful cyclone emerges from the great open ocean and batters the ragged island further, scraping clean the jagged, chipped grey stone.

The isle is dominated by three jagged short mountains rising from of the sea. Lashed by wave and wind, little grows on the island. The grim bare rock has little soil. Terrestial plants, when they appear at all, are small, scrubby and battered. The plants that thrive are carnivorous viper vines (see location 2.) and their presence is no accident. Long ago, Chargammon transplanted these vicious plants to his island from the Caer Bryr to serve as yet another barrier to any foolish visitors.

Besides these monsters, the only animals that live around these parts dwell in the sea. A few hardy seabirds and a small colony of wary aquatic ignuanas on the isles southermost point are the sole exceptions. These animals are skittish and with good reason. The drakes are not picky eaters.

Under the waves however, the island is rich with life, and yet everything in these waters seems to be spiny, poisonous or both. Sea urchins, barbed crabs and venomous sea snakes team amongst the reef. Fish school in their millions and the drakes (see location 1.) feed upon them.

Chargammon himself does not hunt near his island. Every few months the great beast slips out of his dominion through the secret underwater entrance (location 4a.) and hunts the deeps of the sea. He returns a few days later with a great prize – usually a whale, a great shark or occassionally a sea serpent. He feasts upon his catch for a few gluttonous days and then does not eat again for many months.

Of course, once in a great while, Chargammon decides he is tired of such fare and hunts ships full of sailors that venture too close to his throne. Pity these unlucky souls for Chargammon does not slaughter them quickly. He enjoys his sport with such rare catches. Tales of such horror are enough to ensure that most sensible captains give the Throne of Chargammon a wide berth.



#### **1. THE LESSER COUSINS**

Jagged sea cliffs rise up on either side of the one useable harbor on the island. Hanging from the sea cliffs are the rapacious "lesser cousins" of Chargammon and Jeratheon. Exactly how these so-called river drakes came to colonize the island is uncertain but they only remain because Chargammon tolerates their presence. There are currently eight of these beasts hanging off the cliff. The colony is larger than that, but the rest are out at sea hunting. If the PCs defeat one group they will forever be left alone by the rest.

The drakes are the great wyrm's door guards and pets. They both revere and are terrified by Chargammon. They would never betray their master and will not even say his name. Instead he is simply "the master."

Anyone foolish enough to visit this island is assumed to be food. The drakes rarely waste any time on conversation. Instead they dive off the sea cliffs, swooping down to tear would be visitors to shreds. Their preferred tactic is to knock anyone who cannot fly into the roiling lagoon using their caustic acid spit. The lagoon is a seething cauldron of rip tides and razor sharp rocks. Entangled unfortunates usually drown and, being powerful swimmers, the drakes can fish their corpses from the briny breakwater and squabble over the tasty bits. There is only one way to pass these drakes without a fight. If the PCs have managed to keep Jeratheon with them, the drakes recoil at the sight of Chargammon's son.

One hisses at Jeratheon in draconic, "Why do you return, shamed one? Are ye not banished from thy sire's sight?"

Jeratheon roars in answer to their jab. "Banished? We quarreled once decades ago. I was but a hatchling then. I have returned great and powerful!"

"And who are your smooth-skin friends? Have you brought them for supper?" The drakes eye the PCs hungrily, eyeing them like they were slabs of sirloin.

At this point, the PCs (if they speak draconic) have a chance to intimidate the drakes with a display of prowess or magic. A successful DC 30 Intimidate check will keep the hungry drakes at bay on their cliffs unless attacked. A display of powerful magic should add a +5 to the intimidate check. If the check fails or the PCs initiate combat, the drakes attack. They avoid Jeratheon, not eager to tangle with Chargammon's brood. The drakes have no treasure.

**Story Award:** If the PCs manage to intimidate the drakes award them XP as if they had defeated them

#### The Lesser Cousins (8)

XP 3,200 each (25,600 XP total) Advanced giant river drake NE Large dragon (aquatic, water) Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception

#### DEFENSE /

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+2 Dex, +6 natural, -1 size) 73 (7d12+28)

Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +5 Immune paralysis, sleep; Resist acid 20

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (average), swim 30 ft. Melee bite +13 (3d6+5), tail slap +7 (2d6+3) Special Attacks caustic mucus, pounce

#### TACTICS

During Combat The drakes are aerial ambush predators. If not looked for, they blend in quite nicely with the dark grey stone of the sea cliffs. They enjoy pouncing upon unwary prey and then biting and slapping with their powerful tails.

They also use their caustic mucus to entangle foes and make them more vulnerable to being swooped upon. These aquatic crea-tures are equally at home on both land, sea and sky and will use any one of those terrains to their advantage.

Morale The drakes will fight until half their number have fallen and then rest will flee. From then on the PCs will occassionally see drakes hiding amidst the rocks, but will not be attacked by them.

#### STATISTICS

CR 7

Str 21, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 9 Base Atk +7; CMB +11; CMD 23

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack,

Weapon Focus (Bite) **Skills** Fly +12, Intimidate +9, Perception +10, Stealth +12, Survival +10, Swim +16

Languages Draconic SQ amphibious, speed surge

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Caustic Mucus (Su) As a standard action, a river drake can spit a ball of caustic mucus that explodes in a 5-foot-radius spread. This attack has a range of 50 feet, deals 3d10 points of acid damage, and entangles creatures in the area. A DC 17 Reflex save halves the damage and negates the *entangle* effect. An entangled creature takes 1d6 points of acid damage each round on its turn, and may attempt a new saving throw at the end of its turn every round to escape the entanglement and end of its turn every round to escape the entanglement and end the acid damage. Once a river drake spits mucus, it cannot do so again for 1d6 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Speed Surge (Ex)** Three times per day as a swift action, a river drake can draw on its draconic heritage for a boost of strength and speed that allows it to take an additional move action that round

#### 2. THE GARDEN OF CHARGAMMON

This large open field is almost like a bowl, sheltered on three sides by stark grey peaks. Where most of the island is bare of vegetation, here great masses of thorny vine and creeper form large tangled briars. Because of this overgrowth the whole area counts as difficult terrain. Here and there, a few strange and vividly colored flowers bloom. The entire garden reeks of the sickly sweet smell of decay. The odor of rotting fish and blooming flowers commingles to create a strange, almost otherworldy aroma. Nothing about this place is familiar or comforting. It is like stepping onto another world – primeval and

#### inimical. Viper Vines (2)

#### XP 25,600 each (51,200 XP total) N Large plant

Init +8; Senses low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +13 DEFENSE

CR 13

AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +13 natural, -1 size) hp 190 (20d8+100)

Fort +16, Ref +12, Will +6 Immune acid, plant traits Weaknesses cold lethargy

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 10 ft. (unaffected by the difficult terrain in the garden) **Melee** bite +23 (2d6+8/19–20 plus 3d6 acid), 4 tentacles +21 (1d6+4 plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (20 ft. with tentacle) Special Attacks captivating cloud, constrict (1d6+8)

#### TACTICS

During Combat The viper vines hide amongst the other greenery remaining perfectly still until they detect prey. They begin by using their captivating cloud ability to try to lull the minds of their victims into a haze of complacency and lure them directly into their maw. Then the viper vine strikes using its tentacles and maw to grab and rend their chosen prey.

Morale The viper vines do not possess the intelligence or ability to flee. They fight until they are slain.

#### Str 26, Dex 19, Con 19, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 6

stitution-based.

Base Atk +15; CMB +24 (+28 grapple); CMD 39 (can't be tripped) Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (tentacle) Skills Perception +13, Stealth +13 SPECIAL ABILITIES

Captivating Cloud (Su) Once per day as a swift action, a viper vine can emit a transparent cloud of pollen in a 6o-foot spread that has the power to lull the minds of those that smell it. Once activated, the cloud persists for 5 rounds unless dispersed by moderate or stronger wind. All creatures in the cloud must succeed on a DC 24 Will saving throw each round or become captivated. Once a creature becomes captivated, it takes no actions save to approach the viper vine via the most direct route possible. If this path leads it into a dangerous area, such as through fire or off a cliff, that creature receives a second saving throw to end the effect before moving into peril. A victim that is attacked by the viper vine gets a new saving throw was a free action during each of the vine's attacks to overcome the effect. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Con-

Cold Lethargy (Ex) Exposure to any cold effect slows a viper vine (as a *slow* spell) for 1d4 rounds.

Hidden amongst these briars, dwells two viper vines. These living plants remain utterly motionless at first, waiting for their chance to capture new prey. Infrequently they will catch an unwary drake. As a result, the 'lesser cousins' avoid this garden at all costs. If the PCs flee here, the drakes will not follow.

The vines are unintelligent and bear no particular loyalty to Chargammon or his son. Jeratheon knows about the existence of the viper vines but little else (for example, he does not know about their cold lethargy weakness). Jeratheon will not mention them unless threatened and directly questioned, hoping that during the confusion he can escape and flee to his sire.

If the Viper Vines slay anything medium sized or larger, they begin to feed on their prize, and only attack if someone interferes or attacks them. A way to get past these vines is to send two horses (or similar sized prey) into the garden. The vines will be so distracted feeding, the PCs can walk past unharmed. Award full XP for defeating the viper vines if this method is used.

#### **3. THE CAVERNS OF WELCOME**

The PCs are not the first to visit Chargammon. Over the years, the great wyrm has been visited by knights eager to prove their valor, treasure hunters seeking his hoard, and scholars desiring his secrets. They remain here in these cold, wet caverns. Their bones litter the floor.

Many of the carcasses stored in these caves are halfmelted. The dragon's acid breath softened these victims' skeletons and their living tissues flowed like molten metal. Eventually what remains dries and re-hardens, forming weird sculptures of bleached and fleshless bone. The dragon has adorned him domain with these many grisly trophies.

Even more, there are broken weapons and melted armor. There is a mastodon skeleton in one of the side caverns that has been cut neatly in half by a wave of acid taller than a man.

In truth, these aren't here to scare off visitors. Chargammon is certain that if intruders hve made it past the drakes and viper vines, a few bones won't dissuade them from coming further. Rather, this is what Chargammon considers beautiful. These bones are a monument to his power. Nothing is here by chance. He has adorned his foyer with undeniable proof of his might. Chargammon is making a statement – by coming here, you have chosen to join the dead.

These bones are well picked over and there is nothing of value left. But neither is there anything truly dangerous here.

#### 4. THE GROTTO OF CHARGAMMON

Finally, the PCs have discovered the expansive grotto that is Chargammon's lair. It is a gigantic flooded cavern adorned only with scattered human and whale bones and murky water. Chargammon himself moves through the water like a gargantuan water snake. The ancient dragon has an unusually acute sense of smell for his kind and so it is very difficult to surprise him in his lair. Unseen opponents merely cause him to cast *true seeing* and pounce to the attack. He despises such rude intrusions.

If the PCs announce themselves he erupts from the water and reveals himself in his full glory. Chargammon is a monster of legend. He is gigantic – just shy of fifty feet long. His frame is light for his size and still this beast crests more than forty five tons in weight. His wet skin is gloss black and everywhere a litany of scars and small wounds reveal centuries of foolish dragon hunters trying to slay this horror. His eyes burn red as hellfire and there is an almost palpable evil aura about him. The only light in his cavern is a half-dozen green *ever-burning torches* set on heavy iron sconces. They do little but cast the grotto into shadow and cause rippling green reflections of both fire and water to play across Chargammon's massive form.

Chargammon's first impulse is murder. He desires nothing more than to rip the guts out of foolish lesser races who invade his domain. Wise characters realize this immediately and it should become perfectly clear that stepping into this beast's lair is perhaps the most dangerous task they have ever performed. Chargammon is one insult, one slight away from forgetting any purpose beyond slaughtering these interlopers.

When Chargammon speaks, it is always in a rumbling hiss. He is quick to threaten, arrogant in the extreme and takes everything said to him personally. Make no mistake, Chargammon is a monster and the world would be better if he was slain. His first question is always the same of anyone who visits him.

"Has your life proven so worthless, sub-creature, that you have come here to offer it to me?"

It is at that moment that his aura of fear takes full hold of anyone in the grotto.

Anything but polite obeisance prompts an attack. Chargammon tolerates no arrogance within his throne but his own. Regardless of the PCs answer, he pauses and great nostrils sniff the air. "You stink of my son. You must be the fools who inflicted the worthless coward on me once more." That is as close as Chargammon gets to saying "thank you."

At that moment, Jeratheon reveals himself, emerging from the water. Hopefully, the presence of not one, but two black dragons will make plain how futile an attempt at combat would be.

"To do such a deed, you must want something. Speak! Why you seek audience with the great Chargammon?"

Chargammon is ancient and utterly evil. He understands neither gratitude nor honor. He will say whatever he must to get what he wants. He is talking to the PCs now for two reasons – first, their action of saving his son puzzles him. Who are these mortals who would risk their own life to save one of his brood? Second, from Jeratheon's description and his own communion with creatures of the swamp, he is fairly sure this is the same band who summoned Vetra-Kali from the Horn (see Book Two). He is curious about that as well. So, Chargammon grants the PCs his ultimate level of courtesy. He does not immediately attack them.

If the PCs complain about the various beasts that attacked them getting here (for example the lesser cousins or the viper vines) – Chargammon once more sniffs the air. "Yes, I can smell your wounds and your weariness. They weakened you, did they? Did they make you easy prey?" Other than that threat, he says nothing else.

At this point, let the PCs make their case for the assault upon the Adarium. Chargammon is actually out of touch. He does not realize how weak Talingarde has become thanks to the war and the Tears of Achlys. He listens silently.

#### DOES CHARGAMMON LOVE HIS SON?

Yes, in his own violent sadistic utterly evil way, Chargammon loves his children. Chargammon is more than twelve hundred years old. It is unlikely he will ever sire another clutch of eggs. Besides, he has slain all the eligible female black dragons in Talingarde to secure his own power. Aside from his own life, Chargammon values his children more than anything else. That said, Chargammon is a model of chaotic evil parenting.

From Chargammon's point of view the best thing he can do for his son is be cold, ruthless, brutal and vicious to him at every turn. By doing these things, he will ensure his son survives and becomes the strongest dragon he can be. So when Chargammon beats his son for being captured and then sentences him to a century of servitude that is actually Chargammon's way of saying "I love you, Jeratheon." It's touching, really. Ultimately, Chargammon should say yes to the PCs request (after all, the rest of the adventure hinges on it). The wyrm loathes the nation of Talingarde and the House of Darius. He loves the idea of attacking them when they are weakest and feasting upon the flesh of the king's firstborn. The fact that she's a young and possibly virginal princess only adds to the appeal. Chargammon wants to say yes. But he wants to know the PC's true motives and wishes to convince them that he was hard to sway.So, Chargammon raises several objections.

*"Why should I bother? Within my lair I am all power-ful! None threaten me."* 

"If I slay the princess and the king survives, surely he will seek vengeance against me. Why rile such a hornet's nest?"

"How do I know this is not some trick? How can I be sure you do not foolishly try to lure me forth?"

The best answer to all these questions is some variation of "Oh magnificent and mighty one, chiefest of calamities, master of all dragons, lord of all the world – how could we/they threaten your greatness?"

Chargammon listens to the answers of these questions carefully and searches for deception. The dragon is paranoid and what he really wants to be certain of is that this is not some elaborate trick to get him out in the open and slay him. Lying to Chargammon is very dangerous (with his +36 Sense Motive skill check). A detected deception causes him to shower the liar in scalding acid.

Tiadora was right about one thing – bribes generally do nothing to gain Chargammon's aid. Still, there are two kinds of presents that earn his favor. Chargammon loves artistic depictions of himself (particularly statues) and living sentient offerings. Those presents may even sate him enough to give a rude visitor a second chance.

Finally, when he's heard enough, Chargammon speaks. "You make a fine case, but you must think me a fool if you think I'll attack the Adarium for nothing."

Responses like "But we saved your son" are met with a growl. "My son? My pathetic worthless worm of a son? He slaps the younger dragon and sends him sprawling.

*"He is worse than nothing!"* Jeratheon hisses back but another growl from his sire silences him.

"No, before I slay your princess, you must answer my errand with an errand of blood of your own. I too have an enemy who has long pained me. I too have a rival I would see destroyed.

#### OTHER WAYS TO GAIN AN AUDIENCE

This adventure assumes that the PCs rescue Jeratheon. However, your PCs may develop an alternate plan to see Chargammon. Chargammon loves the taste of magic flesh (such as the kirin in Book Three within the labyrinth). An offering of freshly slain kirin would gain his brief favor. Perhaps the PCs could hunt a herd a unicorn within the Caer Bryr and offer Chargammon their horns, meat and pelts.

Whatever the other method, Chargammon is (despite his anger and bluster) concerned about his son. He will require that instead of doing one errand, the PCs do two – slay Eiramanthus and rescue his son from the Lord of Eagles.

When rescued, Chargammon is still just as furious and abusive to his prodigy and still commands Jeratheon to serve the PCs for a century.

"South of here almost two hundred and fifty miles, where the Ansgarian Mountains and the Caer Bryr ends is the isle of the pathetic reprobate, the dragon Eiramanthus. It is sometimes named the Straya Avarna on maps.

"Eiramanthus is a copper wyrm who has long thwarted my plans and mocked my efforts. He thinks himself superior to me because he is beloved by so many. He believes that he is my rival! Hah! He is a bloated, decadent fool! He sits on his island and laughs at me, while he copulates with his three non-dragon concubine-whores. You come grovelling to me for aid? First you will aid me!

"I want him broken and decapitated. I want him purged from this world. You will burn every book, shatter every statue, slaughter every consort and lay waste to his entire island. I want it made into a desolation! I want every passing ship to marvel at its ruin!" Chargammon growls in implacable fury.

"Do this for me and I aid you. Now go. And If Eiramanthus still lives return to me only if you wish to die."

**4A** – A hidden passage (Perception DC 25) to the sea.

4B – A submerged cavern whose entrance way is both concealed (Perception DC 35) and blocked by a great stone that only someone with a 36 Str can move aside. Beyond is the hoard of Chargammon (4C) worth 200,000 gp. Its exact contents are up to you.

**Story Award:** Award the PCs a CR 13 reward for both surviving their audience with Chargammon and gaining his aid.

#### Chargammon, Black Dragon Great Wyrm

R 19

XP 204,800

CE Gargantuan dragon (water) Init +3; Senses dragon senses, scent; Perception +39 Aura frightful presence (360 ft., DC 28) DEFENSE

AC 41, touch 5, flat-footed 41 (-1 Dex, +36 natural, -4 size) hp 377 (26d12+208) Fort +23, Ref +14, Will +21 DR 20/magic; Immune acid, paralysis, sleep, SR 30

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +36 (4d6+19 plus 6d6 acid), 2 claws +35 (2d8+13), 2 wings +33 (2d6+6), tail slap +33 (2d8+19)

- Space 20 ft.; Reach 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)
- Special Attacks acid pool (60-ft. radius), acidic bite, breath weapon (120-ft. line, DC 31, 24d6 acid, useable every 1d4 rounds), corrupt water, crush (Medium creatures, DC 31, 4d6+19), tail sweep (Small creatures, 2d6+19, DC 31)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 26th, concentration +31) At will—darkness (120-ft. radius), insect plaque, plant growth

#### Spells Known (CL 15th, concentration +20)

**7th (4/day)**—forcecage (DC 22), power word blind

6th (6/day)—acid fog, contingency, true seeing

- 5th (7/day)—cone of cold (DC 20), dominate person (DC 20), wall of force, waves of fatigue
- 4th (7/day)—arcane eye, black tentacles, dimension door, enervation
- 3rd (7/day)—dispel magic, heroism, hold person (DC 18), slow (DC 18)
- 2nd (7/day)—blur, glitterdust (DC 17), invisibility, summon swarm, whispering wind
- 1st (8/day)—alarm, mage armor, magic missile, obscuring mist, true strike

o (at will)—dancing lights, detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, message, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance

#### TACTICS

During Combat Chargammon always leads with his breath weapon, spewing forth a massive wave of acid. After that, he will use *forcecage* to neutralize a few enemies so that he can take down his foes piecemeal. Failing that, this supremely intelligent beast uses his spells and fearsome melee to best dispense with his enemies. Chargammon adapts his strategies against any foe.

Chargammon always has a *contingency* (*dimension door*) cast on himself. If he falls below 100 hit points, he dimension doors out to sea (1000 ft. due west) upon the ocean floor. There in a hidden cache, he keeps twenty potions of *cure serious wounds*. He drinks until he is fully healed (or there all gone) and then returns using another *dimension door* to punish the invaders to his lair.

Morale If Chargammon has a weakness, it is his overconfidence. Still, if reduced to 100 hp or less, the cowardly instinct that has kept him alive for 1200 years emerges and he flees. STATISTICS

### Str 37, Dex 8, Con 27, Int 24, Wis 23, Cha 20

Base Atk +26; CMB +43; CMD 52 (56 vs. trip)

- Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Critical Focus, Flyby Attack, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (Bite), Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)
- Skills Bluff +31, Fly +14, Handle Animal +31, Intimidate +34, Knowledge (arcana) +36, Knowledge (history) +36, Knowledge (geography) +36, Perception +39, Sense Motive +36, Spellcraft +36, Stealth +22, Survival +35, Swim +50; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim
- Languages Common, Aboleth, Aquan, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc SQ charm reptiles, speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Acid Pool (Su) An ancient or older black dragon can use its breath weapon to create an acid pool as a standard action. This acid pool has a radius of 60 feet. When an acid pool is created, anyone inside its area takes 24d6 points of acid damage (Reflex half). Any creature that starts its turn touching this pool takes damage, but can make a Reflex save for half. Each round, the total damage dice of the pool is halved (10d6 round 2, 5d6 round 3, 2d6 round 4, 1d6 round 5) until the result would be less than 1d6. The acid pool floats on water, and deals damage to anything on the surface.
- Acidic Bite (Su) At old age, a black dragon's bite deals an additional 2d6 points of acid damage. An ancient dragon's damage increases to 4d6, and a great wrym's to 6d6.
- Charm Reptiles (Sp) A great wyrm black dragon can use this ability three times per day. It works as a mass charm monster spell that affects only reptilian animals. This ability is the equivalent of an 8th-level spell.
- Corrupt Water (Sp) Once per day an adult or older black dragon can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-based magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will save (DC equal to the dragon's frightful presence) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is equal to that of the dragon's frightful presence.
- Crush (Ex) A flying or jumping Huge or larger dragon can land on foes as a standard action, using its whole body to crush them. Crush attacks are effective only against opponents three or more size categories smaller than the dragon (medium creatures in Chargammon's case). A crush attack affects as many creatures as fit in the dragon's space.
- Creatures in the affected area must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 31) or be pinned, automatically taking bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off them. If the dragon chooses to maintain the pin, it must succeed at a combat maneuver check as normal. Pinned foes take damage from the crush each round if they don't escape. A crush attack deals the indicated damage plus 1-1/2 times the dragon's Strength bonus.
- Dragon Senses (Ex): Dragons have darkvision 120 ft. and blindsense 60 ft. They see four times as well as a human in dim light and twice as well in normal light
- Speak with Reptiles (Sp) A young or older black dragon gains the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.
- Swamp Stride (Ex) A very young or older black dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.
- Tail Sweep (Ex) This allows a Gargantuan or larger dragon to sweep with its tail as a standard action. The sweep affects a half-circle with a radius of 30 feet, extending from an intersection on the edge of the dragon's space in any direction. Creatures within the swept area are affected if they are four or more size categories smaller than the dragon. A tail sweep automatically deals the indicated damage plus 1-1/2 times the dragon's Strength bonus (round down; +19 in Chargammon's case). Affected creatures can attempt Reflex saves to take half damage (DC 31).
- Water Breathing (Ex) A black dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.





# ACT THREE: The Dragon's Errand

Within this Act the PCs seek out and slay the great dragon Eiramanthus and thus earn the favor of Chargammon the black.

#### THE DRAGON'S DOMINION

The isle of Eiramanthus is a location of almost unfathomable beauty. It is an otherworldy place that seems almost alien to this plane of existence. Eiramanthus is not merely a citizen of this world. His reputation and scholarly pursuits have taken him to countless other realms beyond the imagination of mundane beings.

What the dragon has loved the most, he has collected here and this island is as much a museum of his travels as it is his home and sanctuary. Eiramanthus does not live alone. He abides upon this island with three beautiful inhuman consorts who he wooed in his travels.

The consorts are here by their own choice and though they are rivals for the attentions of Eiramanthus, they have also become friends. They will certainly cooperate against intruders to their magical island home. At times, petty moments of jealousy manage to creep into to this unconventional love quadrangle, but the wit and wisdom of mighty Eiramanthus always manages to soothe such consternation. Clever PCs might be able to capitalize upon this jealousy and cause dissension that could weaken the defenses of this isle. Still, in the end the consorts are all fanatically devoted to Eiramanthus and will not betray him.

Eiramanthus' island is known as Straya Avarna (pronounced STRAY-ya AH-var-NAH) which in old draconic means 'jewels I could not part with'. Using his innate abilities, he has crafted every inch of this island to his liking, creating a personal pleasure palace. He is not finished here and likely never will be. Every day, he continues to perfect this handmade paradise.

The island is adorned with great crystalline formations at once natural but also too balanced and deliberate to have formed by happenstance. Strange plants mingle and grow amongst the fragile monuments that arise everywhere.

The animals here are unlike animals seen anywhere else in this world. Four winged birds glowing with blue light dance amongst the crystal glens. Six-legged lizards that seem almost carved from crystal themselves feed on the living stone. Unidentifiable little creatures crawl and fly and ooze amongst the island's alien features. The island is like something out of a mad poet's storybook where every beast is invented anew upon each turning page. In truth, the life here is alien. Most come from other worlds that Eiramanthus has visited. The powerful magics of this place keep the creatures from leaving and if any are taken, they soon sicken and die. After all, it is not the dragon's will to create invaders. He only wishes to live in a paradise that reminds him of his many journeys.

#### THE REEF

Eiramanthus enjoys his privacy and so he has created an intricate barrier of stone, crystal and coralline reefs just beneath the surface of the sea that surrounds the isle. The reef teems with sea life every bit as alien as that which dwells upon the isle itself. Strange fish in a wild riot of color dance amongst the reefs, sharing the sea with stranger beasts unseen before upon this world.

The reefs make any approach by ship very dangerous. There is a narrow safe passage through this labyrinth at the south end of the island. But without an expert sailor and more than a little luck (succeed at a DC 30 Profession [sailor] skill check to navigate the channel), a ship is likely to wreck upon those jagged rocks.

Of course, this is unlikely to hinder the PCs. They should be 14th level before they travel to this island and likely have means to either teleport or fly directly to its shores. The crystalline structures omnipresent upon the island make teleportation further into the island difficult. Increase the chances of a teleportation mishap by 50%. Of course a skilled user of teleportation magic (with a DC 25 spellcraft check) will sense the danger.

#### THE MISSION

For all of his sound and fury about wanting every book burned, every statue shattered, every consort slain and the whole isle wrecked – Chargammon will be satisfied simply with Eiramanthus' head. Still, there is good reason to slay the three consorts before confronting the mighty Eiramanthus. The dragon can signal his three paramours and each of his consorts can teleport (or *tree stride*). If the three consorts are not defeated piecemeal, the PCs may not face a single CR 17 dragon (bad enough!) they may face three CR 15 consorts as well (a CR 19 encounter) come to aid their beloved! That is almost certainly a battle they cannot win.

Fortunately, the PCs know about the three consorts thanks to Chargammon and are hopefully prudent enough to hunt them all down one by one. This also gives the PCs good reason to explore the island and see its many wonders and dangers, rather than simply rushing into battle with the dragon.

#### ISLAND ENCOUNTERS

#### 1. THE LAGOON OF THE CONSORT IN BLUE

Setia Swims-the-Sea-of-Stars is a beautiful female cetaceal that Eiramanthus met on one of his many transplanar jaunts. The dragon and the agathion had an intense affair and when finally the dragon decided to return to his home plane, the agathion accompanied him, intent on enjoying his company for a few more centuries.

Setia was not pleased when she learned that she would not be the only consort living on the island (see location 2. and 3.), but in time she has come to accept the other two. She has even grown to like the passionate Consort in Red, Shakti. Sakura however remains too distant for her to find any true common ground with.

Now Setia frolicks in the reef maze. Her lair is the lagoon proper but she frequently patrols the entire maze. Any approach by sea will almost certainly be noticed, and anyone unknown will be challenged by the consort. She will not attack first, but will demand to know their business.

Setia is wary of outsiders. She knows that the great treasure hoard of Eiramanthus draws thieves. What she will not be able to imagine is that anyone would be so evil as to actually work Chargammon for the Black. She will not attack (unless attacked herself) but will instead warn away. "The island is closed," she says in her soft musical voice "and the reefs are dangerous. Turn back or imperil your lives."

Still, she can be persuaded to let outsiders pass. Eiramanthus is a great scholar and lover of esoteric lore. In Book Three, the PCs had an opportunity to find a truly rare tome – The Codex of Bademus the Stargazer. In the tower of Polydorus, they even had a chance to decode it. Eiramanthus would love to get a copy of this book and his three consorts know he searches for it. Mentioning that they have it, will cause her to let the PCs pass. She will even escort them through the reef maze into the lagoon and the dock there.

Other deceptions might work as well. Eiramanthus has friends within Talingarde: Polydorus the Seer, Ara Mathra (Book Three) and Calliaste Shanda the lillith (Book Two). Mentioning them or impersonating them could get our villains past Setia.

Infrequently, the cetaceal is not alone. There is a 5% chance that a very frisky dolphin swims around her, rubbing against her. This is actually Eiramanthus poly-

morphed into the form, spending time with his beloved consort. If there is trouble, that dolphin will immediately dispense with that polymorph and revert to his true form.

Book Four: Of Dragons and Princesses

#### Setia Swims-the-Sea-of-Stars

#### XP 51,200

NG Medium outsider (agathion, aquatic, extraplanar, good) Female cetaceal agathion

- Init +8; Senses blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +28
- Aura protective aura (20 ft.)

#### DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 15, flat-footed 25 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +15 natural) (+4 deflection vs. evil)

hp 212 (17d10+119); regeneration 5 (evil weapons and spells)
Fort +17, Ref +16, Will +9; +4 vs. poison, +4 resistance vs. evil
DR 10/evil and silver; Immune cold, electricity, petrification; Resist sonic 10; SR 26

#### OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., swim 80 ft.

Melee +1 shocking burst shortspear +28/+23/+18/+13 (1d6+10 plus 1d6 electricity), tail slap +22 (1d6+4 plus push and stun) Special Attacks shockwave, push (tail slap, 10 ft.)

#### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +20)

**Constant**-speak with animals

- At will-detect thoughts (DC 15), light, lightning bolt (DC 16), hold monster (DC 18), message, greater teleport (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)
- 7/day-break enchantment, cure serious wounds, neutralize poison, remove disease
- 3/day-cone of cold (DC 18), cure critical wounds, greater restoration, heal

1/day-awaken, summon monster VIII (water elementals only)

- During Combat Setia first uses her summon monster VIII to call forth an elder water elemental. She sends it to engage enemies while she uses her *cones of cold, lightning bolts* and *hold monster* abilities to support the elemental. Only when the elemental is defeated will she engage in melee. If reduced to below half hit points, she will *heal* herself.
- Morale If called to defend Eiramanthus, she fights to the death to defend him. On her own, she flees when reduced to 63 hit points or less. She teleports away and tries to warn her beloved. STATISTICS

#### Str 29, Dex 19, Con 24, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 17

Base Atk +17; CMB +26; CMD 41 (can't be tripped)

- Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spell Penetration, Weapon Focus (shortspear, tail slap), Wind Stance
- Skills Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +14, Heal +21, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (nature) +19, Knowledge (planes) +22, Perception +28, Sense Motive +24, Stealth +24, Swim +17; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception
- Languages Aquan, Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; speak with animals, truespeech

SQ amphibious, lay on hands (8d6, 11/day, as a 17th-level paladin) SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Protective Aura (Su) Against attacks made or effects created by evil creatures, this ability provides a +4 deflection bonus to AC and a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws to anyone within 20 feet of Setia. Otherwise, it functions as a magic circle against evil effect and a lesser globe of invulnerability, both with a radius of 20 feet (caster level 17). The defensive benefits from the circle are not included in the above stat block.
- Shockwave (Su) Once per day, Setia can release a 100-foot radius burst of energy. All creatures in the area take 17d6 damage; half of this damage is cold, and half is electricity (DC 25 Reflex save halves). The save DC is Constitution-based.
- Stun (Ex) Any creature moved by Setia's push attack must make a DC 25 Fortitude saving throw or be stunned for 1 round. The DC is Constitution-based.

Setia is probably the easiest consort to slay without Eiramanthus noticing. Willful and independent, Setia often heads out into the deep ocean to be alone with her thoughts and her friends among the whales, dolphins and other creatures of the sea. She does this often without bothering to tell anyone, so her absence will not necessarily raise warnings that something is amiss. In fact, it will be many days before the dragon can be sure that she is not simply taking some time to herself.

Everything else on the island knows of Setia but few other denizens truly know her. Most of the oread guardians and other elemental earth creatures find the agathion too alien to befriend. Eiramanthus loves her dearly and treasures his time dancing with his beautiful princess of the waves.

Setia wears a beautiful pearl and blue coral necklace worth 3,500 gp, a gift from her dragon prince.

Elder Water Elemental CR –
<b>XP o (included in Setia's XP)</b> N Huge outsider (elemental, extraplanar, water) <b>Init</b> +6; <b>Senses</b> darkvision 6o ft.; Perception +19
DEFENSE
AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 natural, -2 size)
hp 152 (16d10+64)
Fort +14, Ref +18, Will +5
DR 10/—; Immune elemental traits
OFFENSE
Speed 20 ft., swim 90 ft.
Melee 2 slams +24 (2d10+10/19-20)
Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.
Special Attacks drench, vortex (DC 28, 10-60 ft.), water mastery
TACTICS
During Combat The elemental slams its enemies. In water it uses
vortex to drag air-breathers down to a watery grave.
Morale The elemental fights to the death for its summoner.
STATISTICS

Str 30, Dex 22, Con 19, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11

- Base Atk +16; CMB +28; CMD 45 Feats Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Sunder, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack
- Skills Acrobatics +25, Escape Artist +25, Knowledge (planes) +19, Perception +19, Stealth +17, Swim +37

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* (caster level equals elemental's HD).
- 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.

#### 2. GARDEN OF THE CONSORT IN GREEN

At first glance, this glade appears to be nothing more than a serene forest glen, with a beautiful elder cherry blossom tree at its center. There is something obviously magical about this place, and strange little brightly colored birds and insects nest and crawl upon unfamiliar flora. If examined more closely, diminuitive sprites can be seen dwelling amongst the many flowering plants. At night they twinkle like miniature stars amongst the verdant garden.

The sprites are the spirits of the garden and more than a hundred of them dwell here. They are non-combatant and flee anything that detects as evil. If grabbed, they may try to dazzle someone with their *color spray* (DC 11 will save) otherwise they simply try to flee any intruder.

If the sprites were the only thing in this garden, then it would hardly be a dangerous place. However, there is another dweller here. She is the consort in green, Sakura Yoshimune. Torturing or slaying sprites is a fine way to rile her to urgent action.

Years ago, while traveling in the east, Eiramanthus fell in love with a forest teeming with spirits. He spent years lost in its secluded beauty. When he finally established this island, he offered the princess of the forest a chance to join. So enamored was Princess Sakura, that she went with him and joined him in this garden of crystal.

But she could not entirely leave her old life behind. Amidst the beauty of the earth, she has brought forth a garden of life. It is her dwelling and besides Eiramanthus himself, her greatest love.

Sakura was not pleased at first when the other two consorts arrived. Her time as the dragon's only love ended and she has had to find some peace in sharing his affections. Still, she loves him too much to leave him. So now she dwells within her forest sanctuary alongside her hundred little children flitting and dancing while she reminesces of better days. Sakura has befriended neither of the other consorts, nor the oreads nor the caretakers nor anyone else on this island. She shares too little in common with them. Instead, she keeps to herself. When the dragon finds time to spend with his consort, he always urges her to get to know the others. She simply smiles at the idea.

Sakura has considered leaving the island many times and returning to her far off home land. But Straya Avarna is aptly named, for the dragon's love is the jewel she cannot part with. And so she lingers. Intruders to the garden are not attacked immediately unless they kill a sprite or destroy the plants. Instead, Sakura emerges and asks who they are. The sprites (who can sense both good and evil) are quick to whisper in her ear in the sylvan tongue and tell her which these visitors are. Remember that the sprites can be fooled with a simple *undetectable alignment* spell. Evil visitors are immediately asked to leave.

Sakura does not keep track of the dragon's visitors so she is ready to believe any plausible story about how the PCs were invited to the island. She might even be used to gather important information. She knows about the oreads, the other two consorts, the caretakers, the carnivorous crystals and much about Eiramanthus himself. She doesn't know anything about his visitors (like the xorn or the witchwyrd). She is simply too detached to keep up with such comings and goings.

While she will not knowingly betray her beloved, she is actually very lonely and tractable, especially if the PCs pretend to be interested in her plants or the fey. She may reveal much information while chatting with what she believes are harmless visitors. For example, she could mention that Setia sometimes disappears for days at a time without announcing her departure. This would be useful to anyone seeking to murder the cetaceal (though Sakura would be shocked at even the idea that the information could be used this way).

If attacked, Sakura will try to flee to warn Eiramanthus and bring reinforcements. However, she can be effectively trapped into fighting here by threatening the elder cherry tree at the center of the garden (her ward). Any enemy who demonstrates that they intend to harm her ward will be fought to the death. Sakura is not slain by the destruction of her ward, but she has a connection to it as deep as her love for the dragon. It is her soul and she will never abandon it.

There is a small chance (5%) that Sakura is not alone in her garden, but is attended by an affectionate treant. This is no true treant but the dragon Eiramanthus using *Plant Shape III* to spend time with his lovely blossom. If there are intruders in the garden of his beloved consort, Eiramanthus will cast off his form and confront his foes here and now.

The toshigami wears a beautiful necklace of exquisite amber and darkest ebon wood strung upon a delicate strand of mithral. The necklace, a gift from her beloved, is worth 3,500 gp.

# The Spirits of the Garden (100)CR 1/3XP o (usually 135 XP but these are no threat)hp 3 (see the Sprite entry in the Bestiary 3)

#### Sakura Yoshimune

#### XP 51,200

NG Medium outsider (kami, native)

Female Toshigami

Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft., deathwatch, true seeing; Perception +25

#### DEFENSE

- AC 30, touch 20, flat-footed 22 (+6 Dex, +2 dodge, +2 insight, +10 natural)
- hp 210 (20d10+100); fast healing 10
- Fort +11, Ref +23, Will +16

DR 10/cold iron and evil; Immune bleed, mind-affecting effects, petrification, *polymorph*; Resist acid 10, electricity 10, fire 10; SR 26

#### OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft. (30 ft. without haste), fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee +2 quarterstaff +22/+22/+17/+12/+6 (1d6+4 plus touch of ages), +2 quarterstaff +22/+17/+12 (1d6+3 plus touch of ages) or touch +22 (touch of ages)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +27)

- Constant—deathwatch, fly, foresight, haste, speak with plants, true seeing
- At will—cure moderate wounds, tree shape (cherry tree only), tree stride (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)

3/day—greater restoration, slow (DC 20)

- 1/day—finger of death (DC 24), time stop, waves of exhaustion
- **During Combat** Sakura is a peace loving toshigami and would prefer to never engage in combat. However, when what she loves is threatened she is a ruthless and efficient combatant.
- The kami normally uses here quarterstaff strikes to mentally degenerate her foes into either imbeciles or invalids. She resorts to finger of death only against those who threaten her beloved or her ward.
- Morale If called to defend Eiramanthus, she fights to the death to defend him. She will also die to defend her tree ward. However, if neither is threatened she flees at 105 hit points or less.

STATISTICS Str 15, Dex 22, Con 20, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 25 Base Atk +20; CMB +26; CMD 39 Feats Agile Maneuvers, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff) Skills Bluff +30, Diplomacy +30, Fly +20, Heal +25, Knowledge (nature) +25, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +29, Survival +25 Languages Common, Sylvan; speak with plants, telepathy 100 ft. SQ merge with ward, ward (cherry tree) SPECIAL ABILITIES Touch of Ages (Su) When a toshigami hits a target with a touch attack or any melee weapon, the target must succeed at a DC

attack or any melee weapon, the target must succeed at a DC 27 Fortitude save to avoid being magically aged. When a toshigami strikes a foe, it must decide whether it wishes to physically increase the target's age or mentally reduce the target's age. If it increases the target's physical age, the target takes 1 point of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution drain. If it decreases the target's mental age, the target takes 1 point of Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma drain. Combined with the toshigami's numerous attacks, this can quickly devastate a target, but once a target succeeds at its saving throw against the touch of ages, it can no longer be affected by this ability for 1 round. This is a magical aging effect, but does not actually alter the victim's true age—it merely simulates the creeping effect of age on the flesh or the reversion to an increasingly infantile state of mind. The save DC is Charisma-based.

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Act Three: The Dragon's K

#### 3. TEMPLE OF THE CONSORT IN RED

Other than the dragon's massive dome (see below) there is only one other building on the island – the pagoda of the redeemed rakshasa. It is a beautiful building with the exterior elaborately adorned in frescoes of green stone. They depict strange scenes of multi-armed gods and bold inhuman heroes engaged in battle against wicked animal-headed demons. Together they have traveled to a thousand worlds and the dragon has shown Shakti wonders she could only dream of. Over time their friendship has changed into love and Shakti has become the dragon's third consort. Her arrival as a permanent fix-

> ture was received icily by the other two consorts at first.

Unlikely enough, the bestial Shakti and Setia have managed to form a true

#### The

tiered tower rises four stories and is capped by an elaborately eaved roof that rises to a point. Thousands of wind chimes hang from the eaves and fill this portion of the island with an enchanting but arthymic music.

Eiramanthus met Shakti during his adventuring days on another world. The tataka named herself empress and wore the face of a goddess, presiding over a cruel hobgoblin empire that spanned continents. Empress Shakti the Merciless launched wars that cost the lives of tens of thousands. She laid waste to her enemies and inflicted incalculable cruelties and woe upon those who dared oppose her. By her own hand her world wept and bled because of her ambitions.

Finally, the dragon defeated her in single combat and rather than slay her, he took her away from her empire of blood. Together on this very island within a temple of harmony they built together, Eiramanthus persuaded this spirit of evil that there was more to life than conquest and cruelty. friendship. Perhaps both being outsiders upon the prime material (though of radically different sorts) was

enough for them to find common ground. Sakura remains distant as ever.

Shakti does not plan to remain here forever. She meditates daily and tries to purge herself of her last remaining doubts and violent impulses. When she is ready, she too will travel back to her homeworld and attempt to make amends for the many calamities she has authored.

Eiramanthus understands that this is a critical step along the road of redemption but has so far been unable to part with her. The dragon is persuasive and so far he has kept her here. But he knows that their time is short. With the next century or so, Shakti will leave Straya Avarna and return to her world to once more become a goddess. This time she is resolved that she shall be a goddess of peace. The bottom floor of the pagoda is the spartan barrack of the oread servitors (see location 4.).

#### 3a. 2nd Floor - Chamber of Sins

Eiramanthus and Shakti together (using the dragon's *stone shape*) made this room as a concrete way of recording Shakti's past sins, lest she ever forget and revert to her old ways. This entire chamber is covered in frescoes depicting a six-armed warrior goddess leading armies of hobgoblins into battle against peaceful nations. After the conquest, the frescoes turn to recording the countless atrocities committed by her words and deeds.

#### 3b. 3rd Floor - Chamber of Atonement

The story of Shakti's life continues here in relief. These frescoes show the same six-armed conquering queen meeting a great dragon upon the field of battle. The dragon defeated her and rather than slay her, took her across the world to show her the many crimes and their repercussions. Then the dragon took her away and showed her worlds without number and the countless wonders therein. And the six-armed warrior goddess wept with the realization of the evil she had done.

#### 3c. 4th Floor - Chamber of Peace

This floor shows the most current chapter of the warrior-goddess' life. It shows her and the dragon entangled in scenes of gentle intimacy amidst a garden of crystal. These frescoes are the last thing visitors notice, for Shakti herself is almost always here meditating. She sits cross-legged, a great six-armed sublime ogress. The serenity across her face makes it hard to believe that she once, with a word, condemned ten thousand innocents to slaughter.

She has little to say to intruders besides, "Leave me. Can you not see I am meditating?" She will not initiate combat. Still, once battle is joined, there is a gleam in her of relish and eagerness. Even after years of meditation, the bloodlust of the rakshasa yet survives.

There is a small chance (5%) that Shakti is not alone but is in the company of an affectionate tiger-headed rakshasa dressed in copper colored robes decorated with the insignia of a dragon. This is, of course, the dragon Eiramanthus spending time with his consort using *polymorph*.

Shakti possesses only one treasure – a beautiful necklace made of wire gold and brilliant flame-red fire opals worth 3,500 gp. Upon this beautiful necklace there is an inscription in the common tongue: "To my goddess of war who has conquered my heart. -- E."

And the second second	hobhana CR 15
XP 51,	
	e outsider (native, rakshasa, shapechanger)
	redeemed tataka rakshasa S <b>enses</b> darkvision 60 ft., scent, <i>true seeing</i> ; Perception +19
DEFENSE	Jenses darkvision oo n., seene, troe seeing, rereeption rig
	ouch 13, flat-footed 24 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +15 natural, -1
AC 20, U size	
	, 18d10+126)
	8, <b>Ref</b> +9, <b>Will</b> +12
	ood and piercing; SR 30
OFFENSE	I the stand and the tradition of the
	oft.; air walk
	unarmed strike +24/+19/+14/+9 (2d6+7/19-20), bite +19
(108	
	o ft.; <b>Reach</b> 10 ft. <b>Attacks</b> <i>detect thoughts</i> (DC 24), martial artist
Special	
Spell-Li	ke Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +20)
	nt—air walk, true seeing
-	and the second state of th
	nown (CL 12th; concentration +17)
	<b>ay)</b> —heal <b>ay)</b> —flame strike (DC 20), teleport (DC 20)
	ay)—charm monster (DC 19), dimension door, freedom of
	rement
3rd (7/d	ay)—dispel magic, fireball (DC 18), haste, rage
	day)—acid arrow, cure moderate wounds, death knell (DC
	invisibility, misdirection
	ay)—command (DC 16), mage armor, magic missile, ray of
o (at wi	eblement (DC 16), shield of faith II)—acid splash, bleed (DC 15), light, mage hand, mending,
	sage, open/close, prestidigitation, read magi
TACTICS	
	ombat Shakti is trying to walk the path of redemption and
	e up her violent ways, so she will not start a fight. However,
	acked or if anyone who dwells on the island is threatened, s quick to join battle.
SHEIS	dolek to join battle.
She uses	her magic to break up groups of foes and to vanguish en-
emy	spellcasters. She will use air walk to fly above enemies and
	use repeated flame strikes to target casters. However, what
she ti	ruly relishes is the thrill of battle and hand-to-hand combat.
Morale H	called to defend Eiramanthue. Chaleti fights to the death
	called to defend Eiramanthus, Shakti fights to the death fend him. In the temple, she is more careful and will try to
	ort away when she reaches 56 hit points or less. She will go
	ediately to the dragon's dome and try to warn Eiramanthus
abou	t the intruders.
STATISTICS	
	Dex 16, Con 25, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 20
	k +18; CMB +26; CMD 40
	Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Dodge, Great ave, Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Improved Vital
	ke, Power Attack, Vital Strike
	crobatics +18 (+22 when jumping), Bluff +23, Climb +17,
Disc	guise +26, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (religion) +10, Per-
cept	tion +19, Sense Motive +19, Survival +16, Swim +18; Racial
	difiers +4 Bluff, +8 Disguise
	ges Common, Infernal, Undercommon
	nge shape (any humanoid; alter self or giant form I)
SPECIAL AB	A DE CONTRACTOR
Martial	Artist (Su) A tataka's unarmed strikes deal 2d6 points of
dam	nage. Her unarmed strikes function as lawful and good
dam	hage. Her unarmed strikes function as lawful and good pons for overcoming damage reduction.
dam wea	pons for overcoming damage reduction.
dam wea <b>Spells</b> A	

able to a sorcerer. Cleric spells are considered arcane spells for

a tataka

#### **4. SERVITORS**

The crystalline garden is not without its defenders and caretakers. Primary amongst them are a contingent of twenty one oreads. These are the remnants of the original inhabitants of the island. Once this island was not entirely made of crystal. It was an island like any other and a small tribe lived there. A sorcerer with the blood of the shaitan (genies of elemental earth) arose among them and, in his mad pursuit of power, performed a forbidden ritual that bound the island to the elemental plane of earth and crystallized it entire. The wizard did not survive the ritual and it seemed that his people might also

CR 7

#### be destroved. Crystal Shapers (4)

#### XP 3,200 each (12,800 XP total) Male and female oread clerics 8

CG Medium outsider (native) Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

#### DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield) hp 52 (8d8+16)

Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +10

Resist acid 10

#### Speed 15 ft.

**Melee** warhammer +8/+3 (1d8+2/x3)

Ranged light crossbow +7 (1d8/19-20)

- Special Attacks channel positive energy 5/day (DC 16, 4d6), holy lance 1/day (4 rounds)
- Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8<sup>th</sup>; concentration +12) acid dart 7/ day (1d6+4 acid), touch of good 7/day

**Oread Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 8<sup>th</sup>, concentration +12) 1/day—magic stone

#### Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 8<sup>th</sup>; concentration +12)

- 4<sup>th</sup>—dismissal (DC 18), divine power, freedom of movement, holy smite<sup>b</sup> (DC 18)
- 3<sup>rd</sup>—dispel magic, magic circle against evil<sup>®</sup>, prayer, searing light, stone shape
- 2<sup>nd</sup>—hold person (DC 16), lesser restoration, silence (DC 16), soften earth and stone<sup>D</sup>, spear of purity (DC 16)
- 1<sup>st</sup>—bless, bless water, comprehend languages, detect evil, protection from evil<sup>®</sup>, sanctuary (DC 15)
- o (at will)—detect magic, light, read magic, stabilize

D domain spell; Domains Earth, Good

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** These oread priests use their divine magic to support their fellow oread servitors. They avoid the front line preferring instead to heal, remove enchantments and silence enemy spellcasters.

**Morale** These fanatic devotees of the dragon are willing to lay down their lives to defend his island.

#### STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 19, Cha 10

- Base Atk +6/+1; CMB +8; CMD 19
- Feat Armor Proficiency (heavy), Combat Casting, Extra Channel, Improved Channel

Skills Heal +15, Knowledge (religion) +11, Spellcraft +11

Languages Common, Terran

SQ aura, elemental affinity, oread traits

Combat Gear bolts (10)

Other Gear banded mail, heavy steel shield, light crossbow, warhammer But then Eiramanthus arrived and using his own magic made the place more liveable. He saved the halfhuman/half-crystalline dwellers and taught them how to survive. Those that remain have pledged their undying loyalty to their draconic savior. Undying as it turns out is not a figure of speech. The oread servitors do not age as long as they remain here. However, their capacity to learn and adapt has also crystallized and so they change very slowly. Still, it is a happy life and the twenty one remaining oreads work tirelessly to keep order.

Though this chamber is their barracks, the oreads rarely gather here. Instead, they roam the island in small patrols (4-10 individuals) making sure that all is well.

Crystal Sorcerers (2)	CR 7
XP 3,200 each (6,400 XP total)	-
Male and female oread sorcerers 8	
CG Medium outsider (native)	
Init +6; Sense darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0	
DEFENSE	
AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 mage armor)	
hp 44 (8d6+16)	
Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6	
Resist acid 10	-
OFFENSE	-
Speed 20 ft.	
<b>Melee</b> dagger +5 (1d4+1/19-20)	
Ranged dagger +6 (1d4+1/19-20)	
Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th, concentration +12) 7/0	day—
elemental ray (1d6+4 acid)	
Oread Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8 <sup>th</sup> , concentration +11)	
1/day—magic stone	
Louy mage score	
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 8 <sup>th</sup> , concentration +12)	
4 <sup>th</sup> (4/day)—shout (DC18)	
3rd (6/day)—fireball (DC 17), lightning bolt (DC 17), protection	from
energy	
2 <sup>nd</sup> (7/day)—false life, flaming sphere (DC 16), scorching ray (D	C 16),
web (DC 16)	
1 <sup>st</sup> (7/day)—burning hands (acid) (DC 17), enfeeblement (DC	. 15),
grease (DC 15), mage armor, magic missile, shield o (at will)—detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, message,	proc
tidigitation, ray of frost, read magic	pres-
Bloodline elemental (earth)	
TACTICS	
During Combat These powerful channelers of raw magical er	herav
use their many attack spells to support the other oread an	
fend the island. They bombard their enemies with a non	
barrage of fire and lightning.	36
Morale These fanatic devotees of the dragon are willing t	o lay
down their lives to defend his island.	
STATISTICS	
Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16	
Base Atk +4; CMB +5; CMD 17	
Feats Combat Casting, Elemental Focus (acid), Eschew Mate	
Greater Elemental Focus (acid), Improved Initiative, To	ough-
ness Chille Knowledge (groups) and Knowledge (globes) and Shel	Laws C
Skills Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (planes) +11, Spel	icraft
+11 Languages Common, Terran	
SQ bloodline arcana, oread traits	
Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds	
Other Gear daggers (4)	
The state of the second st	

#### Oread Scouts (4)

#### XP 3,200 each (12,800 XP total) Male and female oread rogues (sniper) 8 CG Medium outsider (native) Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +4 Dex) hp 52 (8d8+16) Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +3 Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge Resist acid 5

#### OFFENSE

#### Speed 20 ft.

**Melee** shortsword +7/+2 (1d6+1/19-20) Ranged composite longbow (+1 Str) +11/+6 (1d6+1/x3) Special Attacks accuracy, deadly range (+20 ft.), sneak attack +4d6

Oread Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +7) 1/day—magic stone

#### TACTICS

During Combat These trained ambushers patrol the grounds eager to snipe intruders with their deadly crystalline tipped arrows.

Morale These fanatic devotees of the dragon are willing to lay down their lives to defend his island.

#### STATISTICS

#### Str 12, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Base Atk +6/+1; CMB +7; CMD 21

- Feats Bullseye Shot, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (shortbow)
- Skills Acrobatics +13, Climb +10, Craft (bows) +11, Disable Device +13, Escape Artist +13, Perception +12, Sleight of Hand +13, Stealth +13, Swim +10

Languages Common, Terran

SQ elemental affinity, oread traits, rogue talents (snap shot, sniper's eye, surprise attack, weapon training)

Combat Gear arrows (20)

Other Gear chain shirt, composite shortbow (+1 Str), shortsword, thieves' tools

#### Phalanx of Stone (10)

#### XP 3,200 each (32,000 XP total)

Male and female oread fighters (polearm master) 8 CG Medium outsider (native)

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +1

#### DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +3 Dex) hp 60 (8d10+16) Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +5 Resist acid 5

#### OFFENSE

#### Speed 15 ft.

Melee glaive +14/+9 (1d10+7/x3) or spiked gauntlet +11/+6 (1d4+3) Ranged javelin +11 (1d6+3)

Special Attacks pole fighting -3, polearm training +1, steadfast pike +1

Oread Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +7) 1/day—magic stone TACTICS

During Combat These masters of the glaive form ranks and impale any enemy who dares approach upon their many points. Anyone who flees is followed and struck as well.

Morale These fanatic devotees of the dragon are willing to lay down their lives to defend his island.

#### STATISTICS

CR 7

Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8 Base Atk +8/+3; CMB +11; CMD 24 Feats Combat Reflexes, Following Step, Greater Weapon Focus (glaive), Improved Initiative, Step Up, Step Up and Strike, Toughness, Weapon Focus (glaive), Weapon Specialization (glaive) Skills Climb +10, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +11, Swim +10 Languages Common, Terran SQ elemental affinity, oread traits **Combat Gear** javelin (4) Other Gear breastplate, glaive, spiked gauntlet CR 14

#### Brarex Azerion, Captain of the Guard

XP 38,400

Male oread barbarian 15

CG Medium outsider (native)

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+3 armor, +5 Dex, -2 rage, +1 shield) hp 187 (15d12+90)

Fort +14, Ref +10, Will +9; +13 vs. enchantment

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, indomitable will, trap sense +5; DR 3/-

#### Resist acid 5

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee two-bladed sword +20/+15/+10 (1d8+5/17-20) or two-bladed sword +18/+13/+8 (1d8+5/17-20) and two-bladed sword +18/+13/+8 (1d8+5/17-20)

Ranged composite longbow (+2 Str) +20/+15/+10 (1d8+2/x3)

Special Attacks greater rage (34 rounds/day), rage powers (intimidating glare, moment of clarity, perfect clarity, renewed life, regenerative vigor, renewed vigor, renewed vitality)

#### Oread Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15<sup>th</sup>; concentration +16) 1/day—magic stone

TACTICS

During Combat The captain rages immediately and charges into the fray. Whether alone or supported by his guard, it matters not to this furious combat monster.

#### Still, unlike many barbarians, the captain does maintain a measure of control during his rages. His moments of clarity allow him to best use his rage. He is also quick to use his renewed vigor since this grants him fast healing throughout the rest of his rage.

Morale Moreso even than the rest, the Captain of the Guard is a fanatic devotee of Eiramanthus.

Base Statistics When not raging, the captain of the guard has AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14; hp 157; Fort +11, Will +6; Melee two-bladed sword +17/+12/+7 (1d8+2/17-20) or two-bladed sword +15/+10/+5 (1d8+2/17-20) and two-bladed sword +15/+10/+5 (1d8+2/17-20); Str 14, Con 14; CMB +17; CMD 32; Climb +19

#### STATISTICS

CR 7

#### Str 20, Dex 20, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12 Base Atk +15/+10/+5; CMB +20; CMD 33 Feats Double Slice, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (two-bladed

sword), Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Critical (twobladed sword), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Toughness, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting

Skills Acrobatics +22, Climb +22, Intimidate +19, Perception +19 Languages Common, Terran

SQ elemental affinity, fast movement, oread traits

Combat Gear arrows (20)

Other Gear composite longbow (+2 Str), studded leather, twobladed sword

#### 5. THE CARETAKERS

The crystalline gardens of Eiramanthus are guarded by more than oreads. A wing of six four-armed crystal gargoyles patrol the grounds. These caretakers keep the garden clear of litter but their primary mission is security. When not patrolling, the mesa is their preferred roost.

They are introduced to every visitor who comes to the island during the customary tour Eiramanthus gives to new arrivals. They are intelligent enough to remember such introductions and do not attack these visitors. Even if such visitors damage the garden, the gargoyles only warn them away and fetch their master. The caretakers defend themselves if attacked.

They are far more stern to intruders they do not recognize. Unintroduced intruders to the garden are surrounded. The caretakers demand, in their halting common, that any intruders accompany them to the vault of their master. The six gargoyles then attempt to lead them to the dragon's dome (see 11.) to show their master what they've caught. If the intruders do not come willingly then the gargoyles attack.

They try to infect any enemies with their crystalline disease. Once transformed into crystal, the intruders are easy to transport to the master and the dragon can decide whether or not to transform them back.

These gargoyles are no great intellectuals and are easily deceived by magic or guile. Any guests of the dragon, his servants, or consorts are always politely received though they avoided if possible. They have been given strict orders not to disturb the master's guests and they usually interpret this as a command to stay well away. If a visitor seeks them out and gives them a simple command that does not involve harming their master or the garden, they will try their best to accomodate the honored guests of Eiramanthus.

The caretakers do know about a few dangers of the garden. If asked, they will warn about the carnivorous crystals (see 7.). They know there is something magical about the chessboard (see 8.) and that it is best avoided. They do not know the solution to its puzzle. They occassionally have dealings with the oread servitors in Eiramanthus' service. They ignore these servitors and do not follow their commands.

They possess no treasure.

**5A.** A great crystal statue of a hooded oread overlooks the crystal garden beside a high jewel-clear sapphire blue lake. This is all that remains of the sorcerer whose ritual originally crystallized this island.

The Caretakers (6), Four-armed crystal gargoyles CR 10
XP 9,600 each (38,400 XP total)
N Large monstrous humanoid (earth)
<b>Init</b> +3; <b>Senses</b> darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15
DEFENSE
AC 30, touch 12, flat-footed 27 (+3 Dex, +18 natural, -1 size)
hp 115 (10d10+60)
Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +9
Resist acid, cold, electricity, fire 10; Light immunity (see below);
DR 10/magic
Vulnerable sonic
OFFENSE
Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)
Melee bite +16 (1d8+7 plus disease), 4 claws +16 (1d6+7/19-20 plus
disease), gore +16 (1d4+7)
Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.
Special Attacks rend (1d6+7)
TACTICS
During Combat Their tactics are very straightforward. They fly
straight at intruders and rip them apart with their many attacks.
straight de inclodels and hp chern apare with their many accaels.
Morale These bound creatures fight to the death defending their
garden domain. They only flee to warn Eiramanthus of dangers.
STATISTICS
Str 25, Dex 16, Con 22, Int 6, Wis 15, Cha 11
Base Atk +10; CMB +18; CMD 30
Feats Great Fortitude, Hover, Improved Critical (claws), Power At-
tack, Skill Focus (Fly)
Skills Fly +20, Perception +15, Stealth +12; Racial Modifiers +2
Stealth (+6 in stony environs)
Languages Common, Terran
SQ freeze, light amplification, light immunity
SPECIAL ABILITIES
Freeze (Ex) A gargoyle can hold itself so still it appears to be a stat-
ue. A gargoyle that uses freeze can take 20 on Stealth checks
to hide in plain sight as a stone statue.
D'Ille at Destributes (C.) The second set of a start set of a local set of the second
Brilliant Pestilence (Su) The creature's natural attacks inflict a su-
pernatural disease.
Bite or claw—injury; save Fort DC 23; onset 1 day; frequency 1 day;
effect 1d6 Dex damage; cure 2 consecutive saves.
A greature where Deuterity is reduced to a by the disease is petri
A creature whose Dexterity is reduced to o by the disease is petri- fied and transformed into lifeless crystal. A creature with the
earth subtype that is petrified by this disease revives 24 hours later and gains the crystal creature template. Once trans-
formed, only <i>miracle</i> , <i>polymorph</i> any <i>object</i> , or <i>wish</i> restores
the transformed earth creature.
Dazzling Form (Ex) The caretakers refracts and reflects a dazzling
cascade of light when illuminated. In normal light, this radi-
ance extends 30 feet; in bright light, it extends 60 feet. Within
this area, all sighted creatures are dazzled for 1 minute if they
feile Fertitude environ (DC environ (a the exection of a model Lith Dien en

- this area, all sighted creatures are dazzled for 1 minute if they fail a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 the creature's racial Hit Dice + the creature's Charisma modifier). Creatures within this radius that are looking at the crystal xorn must save every round or become permanently blind (Fortitude negates); this is a gaze attack. The DC of these abilities increases by +2 in bright light.
- Light Amplification (Ex) A crystal creature's body naturally captures and magnifies light that strikes it. When in normal light, it sheds normal light in a 30-foot radius. In bright light, it sheds normal light in a 60-foot radius.
- Light Immunity (Ex) A crystal creature is immune to the harmful effects of bright light (including effects that blind with light); effects with the light descriptor; and other light-based attacks such as *color spray*, *prismatic spray*, and *searing light*. If the creature is hit with such an effect, the DC for its dazzling form attack increases by +2.

Book Four: Of Dragons and Princesses

#### **6. A STRANGE VISITOR**

This portion of the crystalline garden is currently occupied by a xorn, a strange trisymmetrical rockeating sorcerer of the elemental plane of earth. This is Xkr'Xkz'Xko (or simply "Xekar"), a sorcerer of the living earth. It has come here as an ambassador of the King of the Xorn, King Bokkakamandu CXLVII Hide-Red-As-Rubies to find out if it is true, that within the hoard of Eiramanthus is to be found the fabled Jundarian Stone, and if so what can be done to acquire the treasure.

Xekar has been waiting patiently for three days now and though the food has been excellent (he has been gnawing upon the choice delicacies of the crystalline garden) the xorn is anxious for an audience. It is expecting a delegation and if the PCs approach the xorn in an anything resembling an official manner, it will happily begin discussing the king's business with them. And if Xekar can't seem to tell one PC from another, they'll just have to forgive the xorn. All organics look alike to Xekar.

Xekar is charismatic and charming for a xorn. When it speaks, the xorn's voice is a deep gravelly growl but his words are always very polite and formal. Xekar is almost certain that the dragon Eiramanthus has the Stone in his vault. It seeks both confirmation and the dragon's terms.

The Jundarian Stone, to organic eyes, looks like a mildly interesting boulder imbedded with many obsidian shards. It does detect as magic, but *identify* will reveal that it has no properties save for a powerful dweomer that keeps the stone from being destroyed.

In fact, the Jundarian Stone is a religious artifact of the Xorn. It is a chip of the original great world-mountain from which the elemental plane of earth was born. The Xorn believe that if all the lost stones of the Earth-Mountain can be reassembled, a new golden age of xornic glory will begin. The stone was stolen from them by the Shaitan, wicked free-willed spirits of the earth. Eiramanthus won it in a game of riddles with a particularly ingratious Shaitan Noble who the dragon later ended up having to slay in self-defense to claim this isle. Eiramanthus knows the Shaitan valued the stone, but is not sure what it does. It was one of those projects he hasn't quite found the time for in the last century.

Xekar fervently wants the stone. The xorn believes it is blasphemy that it is in non-xorn hands. It bears a pouch of flawless rubies (worth 25,000 gp) to exchange for the stone. Xekar could be deceived into believing that the dragon is unwilling to give up the stone and become a method to break into the dragon's vault without solving the riddle (see location 12). With the xorn's earth glide ability, no vault of stone can stop Xekar.

	z'xko (or "Xekar"), Xorn Sorcerer CR 1
	8,400
	nced Xorn Sorcerer 7
	dium outsider (earth, extraplanar)
	4: Senses all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 6 ; Perception +22
DEFENS	
ACad	, touch 12, flat-footed 27 (+13 natural, +4 armor, +2 Dex)
	9 (7d10+7d6+77)
	12, <b>Ref</b> +6, <b>Will</b> +12
	bludgeoning; Immune cold, fire, flanking; Resist electricit
1	
OFFENS	and the second sec
	d 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.; earth glide
Mele	bite +15 (4d6+5), 3 claws +15 (1d4+5)
Blood	lline Spell-like Ability (CL 7 <sup>th</sup> ; Concentration +11)
	- tremor
	rer Spells Known (CL 7 <sup>th</sup> ; Concentration +11)
	day) – diamond spray, shifting sand, spiked pit
	day) – bear's endurance, create pit, darkvision, stone call day) – comprehend languages, expeditious excavation, grease
	lentify, mage armor, magic missile
	acid splash, arcane mark, detect magic, detect poison, mag
h	and, prestidigitation, read magic
Blood	lline Deep Earth
TACTICS	Combat Xekar has not come here to fight but to negotiat
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lightly. It knows of the dragon's reputation and power. Actually, its first inclination if attacked is to flee to the dragon and seek his aid. If Xekar ever does meet with the dragon, it is likely the dragon will return the stone.

**Story Award:** Award XP as if the Xorn had been defeated if the PCs deceive the Xorn into aiding them.

Act Three: The Dragon's Errand

#### 7. AN UNUSUAL FORMATION

As the PCs approach this plaza of the garden they see three strange yet beautiful crystalline spikes, each as tall as a man, rising from its center. The crystals lean in towards the center of the plaza almost as if they are sheltering something unseen at the center.

If the plaza is carefully checked (a DC 20 perception check), our villains will note that it is encircled by strange vibrant red stone of a type never seen before. The stone is not magical but it does seem to have a strange hum about it.

In his many travels, Eiramanthus has happened upon many stranges entities, but here in this section of his crystalline garden are amongst the strangest. Here dwell three carnivorous crystals. These alien creatures are actually animate crystalline formations that feed upon living tissue. Eiramanthus has never quite seen anything like them so he transported them to his garden for further study. He feeds them fish from time to time (they require very little to thrive) and continues to observe their alien ways with great interest.

The dragon has placed them within a plaza of his garden and lined it with a strange natural red stone also from their native world. The crystals will not cross this stone and distance themselves from it (that is why they are all clustered in the center of the plaza) though the dragon does not understand why.

By encircling the plaza with this stone, the carnivorous crystals are contained and do not threaten his guests and consorts. He always warns new visitors about them and so far the crystals have harmed no one (well...other than the occassional unwary squirrel-like creature). Even the caretakers avoid this plaza, leaving the feeding of them to the dragon.

Eiramanthus finds them quite beautiful, and once a year upon the summer solstice, they spontaneously begin to hum, creating a beautiful ethereal music that the dragon simply adores. As a result, he keeps them and sees they are well fed. The fact that they serve as an additional level of security against intruders in his garden is merely a happy byproduct.

To the uninvited PCs they are a danger that can emphasize the strangeness and otherworldliness of this place. Their subsonic hum can make them quite dangerous if the PCs are unlucky at resisting this attack. However, these crystals use no tactical savvy. And if they manage to kill a foe, they still continue to attack it, eating the enemy even as they are being attacked. Full consumption takes four rounds for a medium sized creature.

The crystals need make no stealth check until they attack. They appear to be three beautiful columns of crystal. If they succeed at their Stealth check vs. their targets Perception they may attack from surprise. The plaza counts as rocky terrain for the purpose of their stealth roll.

They possess no treasure.

AC 17, touch 5, flat-footed 17 (-5 Dex, +12 natural) hp 136 (16d8+64) Fort +9, Ref +0, Will +0 DR 10/; Immune cold, electricity, ooze traits; Resist fire 20 Weaknesses brittle, vulnerable to sonic OFFENSE Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft. Melee slam +18 (7d8+9/18-20 plus entrap) Special Attacks crystallize, entrap (DC 22, 1d10 rounds, hardness 10, hp 10), razor sharp TACTICS During Combat Possessing no true intelligence, these creatures are driven only by their need to feed. They have cunning only enough to remain perfectly still and hidden until prey draws close (within ten feet). They then activate their subsonic hum, charge and at- tack the nearest moving thing they detect with their blindsight (though they never attack each other), slamming it repeatedly trying to entrap it. The carnivorous crystals continue to attack their prey until they have consumed it completely. Morale These creatures do not wits enough to flee and fight to the death always trying to consume their prey. STATISTICS Str 22, Dex 1, Con 18, Int, Wis 1, Cha 1 Base Atk +12; CMB +18; CMD 23 (Can't be tripped) Skills Climb +14, Stealth +0 (+5 in rocky environs); Racial Modifiers +5 stealth (+10 in rocky environs) SO freeze, split (critical hit from a bludgeoning or sonic attack, 15 hp) SFECIAL ABULTIES Brittle (EX) Bludgeoning and sonic attacks can inflict critical hits on a carnivorous crystal. A successful critical hit from such at- tacks causes the carnivorous crystal to split, even if the attack causes and damage, such as damage from sneak attacks. Crystallize (Ex) A creature entrapped by a carnivorous crystal's at- tack must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save each round or be- come helpless. If a helpless creature fails this save, it becomes petrified as its body crystallizes. In 1d4, hours, the petrified vic- tim shatters and a new carnivorous crystal emerges from the remains. The save DC is Constitution-based. Razor Sharp (Ex) A carnivorous crystal's slam attack deals devas- tating piercing and slashing damage, and threatens a critical hi	mey possess no neasure.	
<ul> <li>XP 12,800 each (38,400 XP total) N Medium ooze (earth, extraplanar) Init -5; Senses blindsight 120 ft; Perception -5 Aura subsonic hum (60 ft, DC 22) </li> <li>DEFENSE A 17, touch 5, flat-footed 17 (-5 Dex, +12 natural)  hp 36 (a68+64) Fort +9, Ref +0, Will +0 DR 10/; Immune cold, electricity, ooze traits; Resist fire 20  Weaknesses brittle, vulnerable to sonic OFFENSE Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft. Melee slam +18 (7d8+9/18-20 plus entrap) Special Attacks crystallize, entrap (DC 22, 1d10 rounds, hardness 10, hp 10), razor sharp TACTICS During Combat Possessing no true intelligence, these creatures are driven only by their need to feed. They have cunning only enough to remain perfectly still and hidden until prey draws close (within ten feet). They then activate their subsonic hum, charge and attack the nearest moving thing they detect with their blindsight (though they never attack each other), slamming it repeatedly trying to entrap it. The carnivorous crystals continue to attack their attack the: always trying to consume their prey. STATISTICS Str 22, Dex 1, Con 18, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1 Base Att +12; CMB +38; CMD 23 (can't be tripped) Skills Climb +14, Stealth +0 (+5 in rocky environs); Racial Modifiers +5 stealth (+10 in rocky environs); Racial Modifiers +5 stealth (+10 in rocky environs); Racial Modifiers +5 stealth (+10 in rocky environs); SO freeze, split (critical hit from a bludgeoning or sonic attack, 15 hp) SPECIAL ABILITIES Brittle (EX) Bludgeoning and sonic attacks can inflict critical hits on a carnivorous crystal - A successful critical hit from such at tacks causes the carnivorous crystal to split, even if the attack causes no damage. The crystal remains immune to precision-based damage, such as damage from sneak attacks. Crystallize (EX) A creature entrapped by a carnivorous crystal's attack must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save each round or become he</li></ul>	Carnivorous Crystals (3) CR	11
N Medium ooze (earth, extraplanar) Init -5; Senses blindsight 120 ft; Perception -5 Aura subsonic hum (60 ft, DC 22) DEFENSE AC 17, touch 5, flat-footed 17 (-5 Dex, +12 natural) hp 136 (16d8+64) Fort +9, Ref +0, Will +0 DR 10/-; Immune cold, electricity, ooze traits; Resist fire 20 Weaknesses brittle, vulnerable to sonic OFFENSE Speed 10 ft, climb 10 ft. Melee slam +18 (7d8+9/18-20 plus entrap) Special Attacks crystallize, entrap (DC 22, 1d10 rounds, hardness 10, hp 10), razor sharp TACTICS During Combat Possessing no true intelligence, these creatures are driven only by their need to feed. They have cunning only enough to remain perfectly still and hidden until prey draws close (within ten feet). They then activate their subsonic hum, charge and at- tack the nearest moving thing they detect with their blindsight (though they never attack each other), slamming it repeatedly trying to entrap it. The carnivorous crystals continue to attack their prey until they have consume their prey. Stratistics Str 22, Dex 1, Con 18, Int, Wis 1, Cha 1 Base Att +12; CMB +18; CMD 23 (can't be tripped) Skills Climb +14, Stealth +0 (+5 in rocky environs); Racial Modifiers +5 stealth (+10 in rocky environs) SQ freeze, split (critical hit from a bludgeoning or sonic attack, 15 hp) SPECIAL ABILITIES Brittle (EX) Bludgeoning and sonic attacks can inflict critical hits on a carnivorous crystal. A successful critical hits ons earnivorous crystal a successful critice and rote or precision- based damage, such as damage from sneak attacks. Crystallize (Ex) A creature entrapped by a carnivorous crystal's at- tack must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save each round or be- come helpless. If a helpless creature fails this save, it becomes petrified as its body crystallizes. In 1d4, hours, the petrified vic- tim shatters and a new carnivorous crystal sam attack deals devas- tating piercing and slashing damage, and threatens a critical hit on a roll of 18, 19, or 20. Subsonic Hum (Su) An active carnivoro		
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<ul> <li>Special Attacks crystallize, entrap (DC 22, 1d10 rounds, hardness 10, hp 10), razor sharp</li> <li>TACTICS</li> <li>During Combat Possessing no true intelligence, these creatures are driven only by their need to feed. They have cunning only enough to remain perfectly still and hidden until prey draws close (within ten feet). They then activate their subsonic hum, charge and attack the nearest moving thing they detect with their blindsight (though they never attack each other), slamming it repeatedly trying to entrap it. The carnivorous crystals continue to attack their prey until they have consumed it completely.</li> <li>Morale These creatures do not wits enough to flee and fight to the death always trying to consume their prey.</li> <li>STATISTICS</li> <li>Str 22, Dex 1, Con 18, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1</li> <li>Base Att +12; CMB +18; CMD 23 (can't be tripped)</li> <li>Skills Climb +14, Stealth +0 (+5 in rocky environs); Racial Modifiers +5 stealth (+10 in rocky environs)</li> <li>SQ freeze, split (critical hit from a bludgeoning or sonic attack, 15 hp)</li> <li>SPECIAL ABILITIES</li> <li>Brittle (Ex) Bludgeoning and sonic attacks can inflict critical hits on a carnivorous crystal. A successful critical hit from such attacks causes the carnivorous crystal to split, even if the attack causes no damage. The crystal remains immune to precision-based damage, such as damage from sneak attacks.</li> <li>Crystallize (Ex) A creature entrapped by a carnivorous crystal's attack must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save each round or become helpless. If a helpless creature fails this save, it becomes petrified as its body crystallizes. In 14, hours, the petrified victim shatters and a new carnivorous crystal emerges from the remains. The save DC is Constitution-based.</li> <li>Razor Sharp (Ex) A carnivorous crystal's slam attack deals devastating piercing and slashing damage, and threatens a critical hit on a roll of 18, 19, or 20.</li> </ul>	Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.	
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national some visitations. Any inving creature starting its torn	natural sonic vibrations. Any living creature starting its tu	rn
within this aura must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or be	within this aura must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or h	be

stunned for 1 round. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same carnivorous crystal's subsonic hum for

24 hours. This is a sonic mind-affecting effect. The save DC is

Constitution-based.

#### 8. THE CHESSBOARD

The dragon's vault is a great three level tower of white stone that rises from the crystalline garden. A heavy massive wooden door is carved with a poetic inscription:

> Would I trade three kings' crowns for the Dark earth of her wilds? Would I trade war's red renown for Even one of her smiles? Would I trade five thousand ships For her vast sea white with foam? Would I trade a thousand worlds for a fine day spent at home?

#### The door is not locked or barred.

Inside the first level is a giant chess set sized for a beast the scale of Eiramanthus. The chess set is a magic item and though the pieces look like they should be too heavy to be moved save perhaps by giants, they actually respond to verbal commands and gently float from their holding area to play upon the board.

Anyone who carefully examines the pieces will note there is one oddity with the set – there are three queens, one white, one red and one black. There are otherwise only two sets of complete pieces, both white and black.

In fact, the chessboard is the entry to the dragon's vault beneath (see location 12.) keyed to a magical code that is hidden within the poem. Each of the first three lines of the poem has a color, a number and an oddly capitalized letter. Together these form which of the three Queens must be on what square. The dragon created this magical combination lock after the last of his three consorts arrived and it is his tribute to his lady loves.

If the black queen is placed upon square 3D, the red queen placed upon square 1E, and the white queen is placed upon square 5F, then the chessboard magically melts away revealing a spiral staircase that leads down into the dragon's treasure vault.

Eiramanthus has shared this riddle with no one on the island though the Visitor in the Stacks (See location 10.) figured it out while playing chess with the dragon (much to the dragon's annoyance). The consorts all know that the dragon's treasure chamber is beneath the tower and sealed away by magic, but would never voluntarily share this information with anyone they deemed an outsider or an enemy.

**Story Award:** Award anyone who figures out the chessboard riddle a CR 14 award (38,400 XP).

#### 9. THE LIBRARY

This is Eiramanthus' pride and joy. From his many travels across the planes, the dragon has collected an immense collections of tomes, codices, scrolls and even stranger objects that defy easy description. This the dragon's library and woe to any who defile it.

There is an inscription upon the entranceway written in a dozen different languages (including common, dwarven and elven). It reads: "Touching a dragon's library without permission is HARMFUL to your health."

This blunt warning is indeed accurate for a powerful magical curse has been laid upon this libray. Anyone who touchs any of the books in this chamber without permission or damages them in any way, is afflicted by a powerful warding spell. They suddenly feel light-headed and then fall to the ground at least greviously hurt and often stone dead. This is the *Silence of the Library*.

Silence of the Library	CR 15
Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31	
EFFECTS	12-12-12
Trigger touching the books without permission or attemp damage the library <b>Reset</b> automatic (every minute)	oting to

Effect spell effect (*harm*, +10 melee touch, 130 damage, DC 19 Will save for half, cannot be reduced to less than 1 hit point)

To be removed, this trap must first be located (it is actually at  $\mathbf{A}$  on the map; a DC 31 Perception check is required to find it as it is hidden behind books). Then it must be carefully defused. Failing to defuse the trap activates it against the intruder.

If the magic can be removed, this library is a true treasure. There is information here that could advance technology in Talingarde a hundred years. Amongst these texts is the science necessary to invent a microscope, a crude steam turbine and a cannon. If the books were sold to collectors they would net 30,000 gp. But their true value comes to light if the PCs succeed in ascending to the throne of Talingarde and sponsor the developments described within these books. With this learning, they could transform Talingarde into not a wicked kingdom, but a *technologically advanced* wicked kingdom. More details about ruling Talingarde can be found in Book Six.

Of more immediate use: this library can, with a day of research provide a +6 circumstance bonus to any single knowledge skill check.

Removing this library would take a vast amount of effort. There are almost five tons of books here. However, a skilled appraisal check (DC 25) can find twenty valuable old tomes that are known on this world that can fetch 10,000 gp of the 30,000 gp total value and weigh less than a hundred pounds.

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#### **10. THE STACKS**

This musty cramped archive is filled almost beyond reason with countless strange texts and tomes deemed too esoteric for the main library. Together as a collection, they are quite valuable and if the tons of books here could somehow be removed (a laborious process to be sure) there are more than 20,000 gp worth of tomes.

The Visitor in the Stacks	CR 15
XP 51,200 Hermaphrodite Witchwyrd Abjurer 9 LN Medium monstrous humanoid Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., detect magic; Perception +	
	1/
DEFENSE	-
AC 24 touch 15 flat-footed 22 (+4 armor +2 Dex +5 nati	ural +2

deflection) hp 152 (8d10+9d6+85)

Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +15; 1/day may reroll a will save

Defensive Abilities absorb force; DR 5/magic; Resist 5 acid; energy absorption (27 hp/day)

### OFFENSE

#### Speed 30 ft.

Melee ranseur +15/+10 (2d4+4/×3), 2 slams +10 (1d4+1 plus grab) or 4 slams +15 (1d4+3 plus grab) Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with ranseur)

Special Attacks force bolt

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +13) Constant-detect magic, floating disk, mage armor, resist energy

(one at a time), unseen servant 3/day—dispel magic, displacement, suggestion (DC 18)

1/day—dimension door, plane shift, resilient sphere (DC 19)

- **Wizard Spells** (CL 9<sup>th</sup>; concentration +14) 5<sup>th</sup> *teleport, wall of force, wreath of blades*
- 4<sup>th</sup> ball lightning, curse of magic negation, globe of lesser invulnerability, stoneskin
- 3<sup>rd</sup> dispel magic (2), fly (2), hold person, nondetection
- 2<sup>nd</sup> cat's grace, communal protection from evil, create pit, protection from arrows, resist energy (2), web
- 1<sup>st</sup> alarm, magic missile (4), protection from evil, shield
- o<sup>th</sup> detect poison, mage hand, prestidigitation, read magic Prohibited schools: illusion, necromancy

#### TACTICS

During Combat The Visitor is first a defensive wizard and so will try to gain time enough to activate his favorite defenseive spells such as stoneskin, shield and wreath of blades. Then, flying above his enemies he will use wall of force of keep them at bay as he rains down curses, fireballs and force bolts.

Morale Unless prevented from teleporting, the visitor will teleport away and seek other allies to deal with those who attack it.

#### Str 16, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 24, Wis 13, Cha 20

Base Atk +12; CMB +15 (+19 grapple); CMD 27

- Feats Craft Wondrous Item, Deflect Arrows<sup>B</sup>, Greater Spell Focus (Abjuration), Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Persuasive, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Abjuration), Toughness
- Skills Appraise +22, Bluff +22, Diplomacy +20, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (geography) +22, Knowledge (planes) +22, Knowledge (religion) +22, Perception +17, Sense Motive +14, Use Magic Device +9
- Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal, Terran; tongues
- Gear Headband of Vast Intelligence +4, Belt of Mighty Constitution +2, 250 gp worth of powered lead and platinum (for curse of magic negation), 500 gp of diamond dust (for stoneskin), wand of fireball (39 charges), ring of protection +3, amulet of natural armor + 2

However, the stacks are not unused. Currently, researching some esoteric transdimensional matter is the Visitor. Neither the Visitor's race nor gender is immediately obvious as he wears a great robe and hood made of some otherworldly fabric. What is apparent is that the Visitor is not any familar race, featuring four arms and translucent grey skin. The Visitor searches through books written in a language never before uttered on this plane. And is content to continue his research unless disturbed.

If the PC try to speak with the Visitor, he speaks no tongue native to this world. However, using tongues and his knowledge of transdimensional languages, most parties should be able to speak with him. He introduces himself with a name that sounds very similar to a whistle followed by many clicks. If anyone tries to repeat it they inevitably get it laughably wrong and he just answers "A Visitor will do."

He is eager to continue his research but will pause long enough to answer a few questions. He has been granted permission by the dragon to be here and use the library. He knows nothing of Talingarde or any other nation on this plane and cares nothing for their politics.

If asked why it is here, the Visitor grows excited and is eager to explain: "I believe at last I have found a solution to Vargat(more whistling)'s conundrum. The transpositioning of irradiant vectors is transcendentally possible! You see, its been here right before us all along. Consider the Halooth and Vandrissial Vorniths. Child's play I know. But when considered in the light of this text by \*much throating clearing\* then see, it is possible to conceptualize the fundamental axes of eternity. You need only frombotz the kintoozler."

Anyone who makes a DC 35 Knowledge (planes) will recognize that he is talking about planar travel through some very esoteric technological means. Beyond that the Visitor's gibberish remains impenetrable.

Unless the PCs attack, the Visitor will return to his studies. He will be here for another three days before he disappears mysteriously. How he leaves or where he goes is anyone's guess.

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Absorb Force (Su) Once per round, a witchwyrd can use a free hand to "catch" a magic missile fired at it. This absorbs the missile and manifests as a glowing nimbus around that hand (which is no longer considered free). The energy lasts 6 rounds or until it is used to create a force bolt. To use this ability, the witchwyrd must be aware of the incoming magic missile and cannot be flat-footed.
- Force Bolt (Su) A witchwyrd can "throw" a magic missile (1d4+1 damage) from each free hand as a free action (maximum of two per round). If it has absorbed a magic missile, it can throw an additional force bolt that round, expending the absorbed energy (maximum of two additional bolts per round).

#### 11. THE DRAGON'S DOME

This grand vaulted chamber is the lair of the dragon Eiramanthus the Traveler. Here the dragon spends most of his time, studying old volumes of forgotten lore and remembering his many exploits and adventures. He is here 70% of the time, visiting one of his consorts 15% of the time and wandering the crystal gardens in one of his various forms otherwise. He is considering another jaunt into the planes and doubtless will in the future. But for now, he is enjoying a decade or two of relaxation and keeping the three loves of his life from killing each other.

Anyone who enters uninvited is immediately addressed. "Ah, guests! And uninvited ones at that. That means you are either thieves or dragon hunters. Tell me, friends, which one is it today?" Eiramanthus engages in friendly, lighthearted banter as long as intruders wish. He'll only start a fight under two circumstances: if the PCs say Chargammon sent them or if they confess they've killed his consorts. Of course, he defends himself.

If anyone says anything about working for or with Chargammon, Eiramanthus is briefly gobsmacked. "You're actually working for that old wyrm? Ye gods and greasy green gargoyles are you mad? You must know the blackheart is going to betray you!"

If asked how he knows that, "Because he betrays everyone! He can't help it, the poor old beast. That's the reason he can't kill me. In a one on one fight, no doubt he's more powerful. He is considerably older. But we never fight one on one, do we? I have friends, allies, consorts. Oh, speaking of which...have you met my girls?" And with that he bellows a great shout that reverberates across the entire island and even into the nearby waters. The shout is a single draconic word: "Invaders". Every surviving oread, caretaker and consort make their way to the dome eager to protect the master. Hopefully, the PCs have slain the consorts and at least blocked the stairs. If not, this fight could become one our villains have little hope of slithering away from.

If Eiramanthus learns that our villains have slain one or all of his consorts, his demeanor changes. "You murdered her/them. You murdered my beloved(s) to get to me. Bastards! Monstrosities! You wish to fight a dragon, eh? Then a fight you shall have!"

#### And with that battle begins.

Assuming the PCs stay civil, the dragon proves a friendly host. "I suppose I should be flattered. I so rarely get guests native to my home plane. All I get are planar travelers. After a few centuries abroad, I shouldn't be surprised. You're locals, though. The accent sounds Talirean.

"You know, it's funny. I live right off the coast of Talingarde, but I haven't visited it in ... oh, two hundred years. Tell me, how is the old isle getting along? The dragon listens with great interest to the news. He is legitimately fascinated with the comings and goings of the shorter lived races. If the PCs are clever they can use this exchange to actually learn a thing or two from Eiramanthus.

If anyone asks him when he was last in Talingarde. "Oh, I was summoned to the north by my dear Antharia. Ah, now there's a beauty I haven't seen in far too long. Almost eighty feet of pure silver elegance. It was of course about that little problem with the tomb of the Nameless Tyrant. The less said about that ugly affair the better!" He's referring to Antharia Regina the silver (see Book Six) and how he captured the Nameless Tyrant (a powerful lich, now reduced to only a skull, see below).

Eiramanthus actually knows more about Talingarde than he's letting on. While it's true that he personally hasn't been to the isle in more than two centuries, he does have contacts who keep him up to date. In general, Eiramanthus is useful for foreshadowing important events to come (the Agathium was once the fortress of the Nameless Tyrant; Antharia Regina appears in Book Six).

If the PCs have deciphered the Codex of Bademus the Stargazer, this fascinating book completely distracts the dragon. He begins to read the rare tome and mutters "Amazing! Such revelations!" This distraction allows our villains to suprise attack the ancient dragon.

Of course all good things must come to an end and violence is inevitable. No matter how civil the PCs are, they are here to kill the dragon. If the PCs have been capable and thorough in removing the dragon's minions, there is no reason they shouldn't be able to deal with Eiramanthus. He'll waste his first actions trying to summon his followers. So unless our villains are particularly clumsy, they should receive the first strike.

Only when battle is joined does the dragon's slow aura come into effect. He surpresses it when he has guests, but that ends immediately with combat. Eiramanthus is a fearsome foe and regardless of what advantages they've managed to gather, this should not be an easy battle.

This vaulted chamber rises up eighty feet and has small crystal paned windows around its top.

11A. A beautiful, well-tended tree where Sakura emerges.

11B. A small pool of shallow water where Setia arrives.

**11C.** A mural depicting a six-armed goddess of war sitting serenly cross-legged where Shakti teleports.

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#### Eiramanthus the Traveler

CR 17

#### XP 102,400

Male unique ancient copper dragon CG Huge dragon (earth) Init +4; Senses dragon senses; Perception +32 Aura frightful presence (300 ft., DC 27), slow

AC 39, touch 8, flat-footed 39 (+31 natural, -2 size) hp 310 (23d12+161) Fort +20, Ref +13, Will +19 Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge; DR 15/magic; Immune acid, paralysis, sleep; SR 28

#### OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor); climb stone

Melee bite +32 (2d8+16/19-20), 2 claws +32 (2d6+11/19-20), 2 wings +27 (1d8+5), tail slap +27 (2d6+16)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (100-ft. line, DC 28, 20d6 acid), crush, mass laughter, slow breath

#### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 23rd)

At will—grease (DC 17), hideous laughter (DC 18), stone shape, transmute mud to rock, transmute rock to mud, wall of stone 1/day – plane shift

#### Spells Known (CL 15th)

7th (4/day)—plant shape III, reverse gravity 6th (7/day)—antimagic field, mislead, programmed image (DC 23) 5th (7/day)—mind fog (DC 21), polymorph, sending, teleport 4th (7/day)—confusion, rainbow pattern, stone shape, stoneskin 3rd (7/day)—dispel magic, haste, suggestion (DC 19), tongues 2nd (7/day)—glitterdust (DC 18), invisibility, phantom trap, pyro-

- technics, see invisibility 1st (8/day)—expeditious retreat, magic aura, obscuring mist, shield, silent image (DC 18)
- o (at will)—dancing lights, detect magic, ghost sound (DC 17), light, mage hand, message, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Eiramanthus generally leads with a joke, hoping that *mass laughter* will incapacitate enough enemies to allow him to either call in reinforcements or win the day. What he does next depends upon the character of his enemies.

- If it appears that his enemies primary strength is spellcasting, the dragon uses antimagic field and tries to engage them in melee.
- If it appears that the PCs are primarily focused on melee, he flies to the top of his stone dome and hangs there like a great bat, using his magic and breath weapons to sow chaos and inflict death upon his foes.
- A trickster at heart, Eiramanthus is quick to use more "playful" magic like *reverse gravity, mislead*, and *programmed image*.
- Morale This island is Eiramanthus' home and he will not surrender it to those who serve Chargammon or have murdered his beloveds. He fights to the last of his strength to see that this does not come to pass. STATISTICS

#### Str 33, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 24, Wis 23, Cha 22 Base Atk +23; CMB +36; CMD 46 (50 vs. trip)

- Feats Combat Expertise, Greater Trip, Improved Critical (bite, claw), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (illusion), Vital Strike
- Skills Bluff +32, Craft (sculpture) +33, Craft (traps) +43, Diplomacy +32, Fly +18, Knowledge (geography) +33, Knowledge (history) +33, Perception +32, Perform (comedy) +29, Sense Motive +32, Spellcraft +33, Stealth +18, Use Magic Device +32
- Languages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Halfling, Terran

#### THE DRAGON'S ISLE IS OURS!

With the death of Eiramanthus, our villains may wish to keep Straya Avarna for their own base of operations. This is perfectly allowable and rather commendable. After all, it is shielded from scrying (within the dome), difficult for outsiders to access, has a vault for storing their treasures, a great library, a pool and other amenities besides. Truly it is a pleasure palace.

Of course, to truly claim it they will need to defeat all of its current inhabitants. None of the oreads, caretakers or three consorts (if they are still alive) will abide such intruders. Even the strange otherworldly visitors (such as Xekar and the witchwyrd) will be horrified at the murder of Eiramanthus.

Still, murder should be no problem for your villains. If the PCs do claim and conquer the island and make it their home, you should allow them to keep it. What a fine retreat this island will make for the dark days ahead. They may even discover, once they conquered the island that it obeys their commands and shapes to their will.

Climb Stone (Ex) A copper dragon can climb on stone surfaces as though using the *spider climb* spell.

- Dragon Senses (Ex): Dragons have darkvision 120 ft. and blindsense 60 ft. They see four times as well as a human in dim light and twice as well in normal light
- Mass Laughter (Sp) An ancient copper dragon can tell a fantastic joke once per day as a standard action. All creatures within 10 feet per age category must make a Will save (DC 22) or laugh for 1 round per age category (10 rounds in this case), as if affected by *hideous laughter*. The save DC is Charisma-based. This is equal to a 6th-level spell.
- The joke the dragon uses: "Follow your dreams, except for that one where you're naked at work."
- Slow Aura (Su) An old or older copper dragon is surrounded by an aura of slowness. All creatures within 5 feet of the dragon must make a Will save or be affected as per *slow* for 1 round. An ancient dragon's aura extends to 10 feet. For great wyrm copper dragons, those opponents that fail their saves are slowed for 1d4 rounds. The DC of this save is equal to the dragon's breath weapon. A copper dragon can suppress or activate this aura at will as a free action.
- Slow Breath (Su) Instead of a line of acid, a copper dragon can breathe a cone of slowing gas. Those in the cone must make a Fortitude save or be slowed (as per the spell *slow*) for 1d6 rounds plus 1 round per age category of the dragon (10 rounds in the case of Eiramanthus).
- Trap Master (Ex) A juvenile or older copper dragon receives a +1 bonus per age category on Craft (traps) and Perception checks made to locate a trap. Upon becoming a mature adult, he can also use Disable Device to disarm magic traps as if he had the rogue's Trapfinding class feature.

Book Four: Of Dragons and Princesses



#### 12. THE DRAGON'S VAULT

This chamber is where Eiramanthus keeps his hoard of treasure. Of course if you were to ask the dragon, he would probably say something like that the greatest treasures on this island are his beloved consorts and his library. Regardless that does not change the fact that this is a giant pile of material wealth. Stored here are:

Three chests full of fine silverware labelled "For Lunaria, my princess of the moon." These items all have a lunar motif and are pure silver. The collection weighs 450 lbs., is of startling craftsmanship and is worth 9000 gp.

#### Bag of Holding Type IV

*Broom of Flying* labelled with a tag that reads "Acquired from one E.L. Phaba, W.W.o.t.W., after she threatened to 'send her flying monkeys after me."

A small golden idol of fat demonic or infernal figure of uncertain origin with two ruby eyes worth 6,500 gp.

A platinum statuette of a running horse (weight 1 lb.). If this statuette is kept in the possession of a mounted rider it functions as a *turqoise sphere ioun stone*.

A large collection of one thousand different gold pieces from across the planes, no two alike. They are shocking similar in weight and purity. Worth 1,000 gp.

A beautiful and intricate rug made of silk and gold wire covered in arabesque motfs. It is worth 2,300 gp.

A *metamagic rod, extend*. It is a fine black ebony wood walking stick with a silver cobra head. When extending a spell, the cobra's eyes glow a fearsome red.

A spice cabinet imbued with magic that prevents stored food from spoiling. The chest is full of 100 lbs. of exotic spices of great diversity. It is worth 1,500 gp.

A single massive mammoth tusk made of unblemished ivory. It weighs 300 lbs. and is worth 4,500 gp.

A golden sextant in a lacquer case easily fifty or sixty years ahead of current technology. It grants a +4 circumstance to Survival checks to navigate above ground. It is worth 1,000 gp.

*Ring of Blinking*, this ring is made of mithral with two green jade studs on either side. By squeezing the studs with your other fingers, you *blink*.

+1 heavy steel shield of invulnerability. This shield is solid black at first. However, when wielded, the shield forms any device desired upon the black field.

A chest full of finely made board games from a dozen worlds and different eras. The collection is worth 1,200 gp.

6 *potions of good hope* wrapped and contained in a belt pouch. A note inside reads : "Drink for hope."

A mask of the skull, this vicious looking helm is made from a human skull and features jagged iron horns.

A heavy wooden wine rack with a sign that reads "Medicinal Liquor Only." There are a 100 bottles of rare brandies, whiskies and other liquors from across the planes. The collection is worth 5,000 gp to a collector who can ascertain its true value.

A carefully hidden small wooden jewelry box that contains two finely made necklaces each worth 3,500 gp. One is adorned with flawless amethysts linked together by platinum wire. The other is an electrum chain adorned with bright yellow citrine.

The Jundarian Stone, a large block of magical obsidian of no real worth save to Xorns (see location 6.)

A life-size bronze statue of an elegant nude female elf. Hollow, this statue weighs 250 lbs. and is worth 3,500 gp.

A collection of more than a hundred copper drinking vessels of almost any style imaginable. Most are adorned with a dragon motif. They are (almost all) scaled for human-sized drinkers. This collection is worth 2,600 gp. However, one of them is not a drinking cup at all but a *horn of blasting*.

A box full of skulls. Careful identification reveals a chimera, manticore, wyvern, aboleth, river drake (a "lesser cousin"), cyclops, hill giant, and warg as well as other less identifiable bones. This collection isn't valuable, but Eiramanthus did like remembering some of his various foes he's defeated through the years.

A ruby sword pommel. This is the pommel of the blade Helbrand (see Book Three). The pommel screws into place and the blade whispers, "complete me and I will serve thee." Reattaching the pommel causes Helbrand to become a +4 good outsider bane bastard sword.

Amidst these valuables, there is also a strange item – a crystalline vessel containing a floating skull. The skull is actually a demilich that has been imprisoned with a cunningly made artifact that binds the creature for all eternity. Long ago the bound demilich forgot his own name. Now it is only known as the Nameless Tyrant. As the PCs enter the vault, the demilich is deep in torpor. Only touching the crystalline vessel will awaken it.

Once awakened, the skull speaks. "Free me," it whispers with a hideous hiss. "I will grant thee immortality, if you will but free me." Freeing it is no more difficult than smashing the crystal vessel. Freeing the Nameless Tyrant is of course a terrible mistake. It laughs and attacks immediately, eager to destroy its liberators. However, the Nameless Tyrant is helpless. The crystalline vessel is both inescapable and completely effective at robbing the demilich of its powers. Nothing it can do affect the outside world while caged. Truly it is desperate.

The Nameless Tyrant is knowledgeable on many subjects and could serve as a potent advisor. It also has *true seeing* at will. But its greatest treasure is that the Nameless Tyrant possesses the secret of becoming a lich.

**Story Award:** Award the PCs a CR 14 award (38,400 XP) for cowing the Nameless Tyrant into their service.

XP 38,400

- NE Tiny undead
- Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., true seeing; Perception +27 DEFENSE
- AC 25, touch 21, flat-footed 21 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural, +5 profane, +2 size)

hp 142 (15d8+75)

Fort +14, Ref +15, Will +21

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +5, rejuvenation, unholy grace; DR 20/—, Immune acid, cold, electricity, magic, *polymorph*, undead traits

Weaknesses torpor, vorpal susceptibility

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect) Space 2-1/2 ft.; Reach o ft. Special Attacks devour soul

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +25)

**Constant**—true seeing

At will—greater bestow curse (DC 21), telekinesis (DC 19), wail of the banshee (20-ft.-radius spread centered on the demilich; DC 24)

TACTICS

- During Combat If freed within the vault, the demilich rises up to the top of the vault and begins to devour souls until all its gems are full. Anyone who manages to damage it receives a greater curse designed to make them helpless. Wail of the banshee and telekinetic storm are also used to aid in defeating any particularly stubborn foes or anyone wielding a *vorpal weapon*.
- When all its ten gems are full or all enemies are defeated, the skull leaves the vault eager to find either other living souls or a sanctum to slowly regenerate into the lich it once was.
- Morale Helpless now for several centuries, the Nameless Tyrant will do anything to be free and to restore itself. If given an opportunity to escape it will fight to the bitter end to seize the chance. STATISTICS

Str 6, Dex 17, Con —, Int 21, Wis 20, Cha 21

Base Atk +11; CMB +12; CMD 30

- Feats Ability Focus (devour soul), Alertness, Defensive Combat Training, Dodge, Flyby Attack<sup>8</sup>, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility
- Skills Bluff +20, Fly +23, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +20, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (planes) +15, Knowledge (religion) +18, Perception +27, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +23, Stealth +24

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Draconic, Giant, Infernal SPECIAL ABILITIES

Devour Soul (Su) As a standard action with a range of 300 feet, a demilich can imprison the soul of a living creature within one of 10 special gems embedded in its skull. If the target succeeds at a DC 24 Fortitude save, it gains two permanent negative levels. If it fails, its soul is immediately drawn into one of the gems in the demilich's skull. The soul remains trapped within the gem, visible as but a gleam except under true seeing. The soulless body corrupts and decays rapidly, reducing to dust in a single round. As long as the dead creature's soul remains trapped in the gemstone, it cannot be restored to life via any means save direct divine intervention. Gems with souls trapped in them can be retrieved from a destroyed demilich, at which point they can either be crushed to release any souls within to their afterlife or used in the place of the usual material components to restore the soul and body with resurrection or true resurrection. After 24 hours, the demilich can choose to consume any soul trapped in a gem, healing it 1d6 hit points per Hit Die of the soul, at which point only miracle or wish can restore the dead creature to life. The save DC is Charismabased, and includes a +2 bonus for the Ability Focus feat.

- Greater Bestow Curse (Sp) This spell-like ability functions like *be*stow curse, but can have one of the following effects: -12 to one ability score; -6 to two ability scores; -8 penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks; or a 25% chance to act normally. This ability is treated as a 6th-level spell.
- **Immunity to Magic (Su)** A demilich is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A *dispel evil* spell deals 2d6 points of damage, with no saving throw.

Holy smite affects a demilich normally.

A *power word kill* spoken by an ethereal caster deals 50 points of damage to the demilich if it fails a Fortitude save (with a DC determined as though the spell allowed a saving throw). A *shatter* spell deals 1d6 points of damage per two caster levels (maximum 10d6), with no saving throw.

- **Rejuvenation (Su)** A destroyed demilich reforms in 2d6 days. To permanently destroy a demilich, holy water must be poured over its remains within the area of a *hallow* spell. To complete the destruction, *holy word* or *dispel evil* must be cast. If the caster succeeds at a caster level check with a DC equal to 10 + the demilich's Hit Dice, the demilich is permanently destroyed.
- Telekinetic Storm (Su) As a special use of its *telekinesis* spell-like ability, a demilich can churn up its treasure, dust, bones, and other loose debris in the area into a whirling storm about its skull. The storm obscures vision as a *fog cloud* within a 20-foot spread centered on the demilich's skull. Creatures within the storm take 12d6 points of damage per round on the demilich's turn (Reflex DC 20 for half damage). The demilich can maintain the storm indefinitely by concentrating.
- Torpor (Ex) A demilich takes no actions against intruders unless its remains or treasure are disturbed.
- **Unholy Grace (Su)** A demilich gains a bonus on saves and a profane bonus to AC equal to its Charisma modifier.

Vorpal Susceptibility (Ex) Vorpal weapons of any kind ignore a demilich's damage reduction.

#### **BECOMING A LICH**

With the capture of the Nameless Tyrant, it is possible that one or all of your PCs may seek to become a lich. You should allow this assuming they can actually complete the ardous ritual. Still, there are complications that could arise. First and foremost, this should be used to enrich the story, not to make one PC superior to the others.

Exactly what is involved mechanically is discussed in much detail in the appendix "Children of the Night" (in this book and Book V) which discusses having undead PCs in your party. Read this carefully if someone is considering walking this road. Not only does it give mechanics for the transformation, it also suggests advice on how to balance out the rest of the adventure path. After all, what could be more iconicly evil than allowing a lich to join the ranks of those walking the Way of the Wicked?

#### EVENT ONE: A PROPOSAL OF MURDER

This event happens just after Eiramanthus has been slain and the PCs are triumphant in the great dome that is the dragon's home. The dome itself is actually a powerful magic item created by Eiramanthus after years of study. It has a permanent *mage's private sanctum* spell cast on it. The dragon uses it to ensure his tranquility and privacy from the many foes and dragon hunters who intend him harm. The cunning devil Dessiter has decided to exploit it to plot the downfall of Cardinal Thorn.

You may recall that the PCs have met Dessiter before in Book Three (Act Two, Event Four). He visited our villains to prepare for this moment. He has come here to discuss the destruction of their master.

As soon as the victory is won, the sound of one person clapping their hands resounds and echoes through the dragon's great hall. Dessiter strolls into the chamber and bows, "My lords, 'tis well done. You are once more victorious. It is a shame that your victory will be so short lived."

Presumably someone will ask him what he means and at that moment, he explains. "It is my sad and unwelcome duty to report that you are betrayed. When this mission is complete, I know for certain that you will receive an invitation to visit Cardinal Thorn in his secret fortress far to the north. He named it the Agathium, the place of agony, in parody of the great palace of the House of Darius – the Adarium. He will summon you to his throne and there he will destroy you."

If asked why, he shakes his head. "Paranoia has seized his mind and driven the Cardinal to madness. He has grown to fear you. He is terrified that you rise too quickly and someday soon you will supplant him. With every victory, with every deed, he sees the future more and more clearly. It is a future where he is no longer master of the Knot of Thorns."

#### Q: How do you know this?

**A:** "I have heard it from the lips of the master himself. Even now, he sets the trap. If you go to the Agathium at my dear sister's invitation, you will die."

#### Q: Your sister?

**A:** "Tiadora. We share a bond ... uncommon amongst devils."

#### Q: Tiadora is against us as well?

A: "Tiadora is bound by spell and oath to the master. As long as he lives and possesses control of her, she will do his bidding. I doubt she bears you any true malice. She is simply following orders. But if you could free her from Thorn, she would be useful ally."

#### Q: Why should we trust you?

A: "A just question, my lords. In this time of treachery and dark maneuvering, you should trust no one. I come to you with counsel and a warning. Tiadora has already given you the clay seal. When you break it, she will visit you once more and when she does she will offer to take you to the Agathium. If you do not believe me, then by all means, go.

"In a way, though you do not trust me, I am trusting you. There is nothing stopping you from betraying me to Cardinal Thorn besides the truth of my warning. No, if I wanted you dead, far easier to do nothing.

"But you know my warning is true, don't you? You can sense your master's growing distrust of you. Once he appeared to you in person, did he not?. Now he sends only proxies. Why would he do this unless fear of your magnificent power builds up within him?

"The truth is that he was worried about you since you held the Horn for seven months. That worry turned into genuine fear when you slew Ara Mathra. And now you are poised to gain the service of Chargammon the Black. Who can blame him for being a little nervous."

#### Q: Why do you help us?

A: "I care not one wit which of you rules Talingarde. I would see my infernal master restored to the prominence he deserves and I fear that the Cardinal Thorn is no longer capable of the deed. He is beset by doubts and gripped by fears. This is not the manner of an Asmodean conqueror.

"In you, I see an alternative. In you, my lords, I see a band far stronger than Cardinal Thorn ever was. You will complete Thorn's plan and return Talingarde to the hands of my master. You will be lords of a new realm where my master is honored above all other gods."

# **Q:** If you truly think he is unworthy, why don't you kill him?

**A:** "I am but a lowly servant of my dark master, my lords. He has given me much, but he has not seen fit to make me powerful enough to deal with one as mighty as the great Cardinal Adrastus Thorn."

#### Q: Fears and doubts? What fears and doubts?

A: Bronwyn of Balentyne was truly a beauty without compare. She was so beautiful, she captured the heart of a Cardinal of the Church of Mitra named Samuel Havelyn. Samuel became obsessed with her and she, alas, fell in love with Samuel's brother, Lord Thomas of Havelyn. Such a tragedy. They had one child before Bronwyn died in childbirth – a son named Richard. Thar child has now grown to manhood and become a paladin. Cardinal Thorn should be hunting this paladin to the ends of the earth. But he cannot bear to murder his nephew, the last remaining vestige of his beloved Bronwyn's blood. Yes, Cardinal Adrastus Thorn is Samuel Havelyn. And though he never forgave his brother Thomas (even sending you to kill him), he has also never stopped loving Bronwyn. Love clouds his judgment. Love has made him weak.

The Paladin threatens our plans. He has left the side of the king and quests to destroy the Tears of Achlys.He rebuilds his band and hunts my master's followers from one end of Talingarde to the other. And yet, Thorn does nothing.

#### Q: So what you have us do?

A: You honor me, O great lords, by asking my counsel. Complete your mission. Slay the King. But refuse the summons. Instead, you must find the Cardinal's heart. Perhaps you have guessed by now, that the Cardinal is not a living man. By the might of my master, he is reborn – a lich. Like all liches, he is bound to a phylactery. While that survives, Thorn is undefeatable. Find it and you will be able to finally defeat the Cardinal. And then you shall be the master.

#### Q: Where is his phylactery?

**A:** "Cardinal Thorn keeps that secret, my lords. I cannot say now where it is, but I promise you, I will not cease to search for it. If it can be found, I will accomplish the deed.

**Q:** Wait! I signed a contract! I can't kill Thorn, can I? **A:** "*Ah*, yes. Now we come to the crux of the matter. It is true that you are bound by the Pact of Thorns. To break an oath to my dark master is a serious matter. Even if there are no reprecussions while you live, when you eventually die, well what did the contract say? "Let they who violate this compact suffer all the wrath of Hell unending?" Not pleasant to be sure. But fear not. I have found a loophole.

#### Q: And that is?

A: "My lords, know that if it were up to me, I would tell you immediately. However, I am bound by my dark lord to first demand a task of you. Within the Adarium is a powerful enemy of my lord – Brigit of the Brijidine. She moves against us. Slay her and then I shall rid you of your burden. When the king and Brigit are dead, we shall speak again."

When finished, he bows and teleports away.

Story Award: Award a CR 14 (38,400 XP) reward for<br/>gaining important information from Dessiter.Dessiter of the PhistophilusCR 10

XP 9,600 hp 136 (see the Devil, Contract entry in the Bestiary 3) TACTICS

During Combat Dessiter is not here to fight. If threatened, he will try to defuse the situation . Failing that, he curses and flees. Morale If attacked, he flees immediately.

#### **EVENT TWO: THE ERRAND DONE**

Assuming the PCs return with the head of Eiramanthus, Chargammon's mood immediately brightens. He laughs. He actually laughs – a dark brooding hissing laugh to be sure – but a laugh nonetheless. The only thing that could brighten his mood further is if the PCs captured any of the three consorts alive and brought them to the dragon. Chargammon taunts them for a few moments and then devours them.

Finally, Chargammon relents. "It has been a long time since I have feasted upon the flesh of a princess. So be it. Tonight is the new moon. One month hence, at the moonless midnight – I will gorge upon the flesh of House Darius."

Once the agreement is struck, Chargammon turns to his son, who is still hiding in the shadows. "Weak and wretched thing, come forth." He hisses at Jeratheon. For a moment, the son actually stands up to his sire, but then Chargammon growls and bites Jeratheon upon the raw spot upon the neck where he was chained. Jeratheon yelps in pain and recoils. Chargammon seizes the moment and pounces, pinning his son against the grotto wall. It seems for a moment that Chargammon might rip his own son's throat out but instead he speaks.

"You are my greatest failure, my greatest shame. To be captured by filthy birds and rescued by men. I should snap your neck and eat your wretched heart!

"Death is better than you deserve and it is a mercy I deny you. Instead, I sentence you to a century of servitude. For one hundred years, you shall be slave to the subcreatures who saved your worthless hide. Obey their every word or I shall see you suffer as you deserve. Get your carcass from my sight!"

Jeratheon finally speaks. "Father, please! No!"

"You dare speak to me!" Chargammon lunges at his son and the terrified Jeratheon breaks and flees. Jeratheon is now the servant of the Ninth Knot. So terrified is Jeratheon of his sire, that he will never betray the PCs, serving them faithfully for a century. Even if Chargammon dies, he will never truly believe his sire is gone.

Chargammon settles his gaze on the PCs. "He's yours now. Treat him as he deserves and return him to me in a hundred years. Now leave, sub-creatures. Return not to my dominion. I will not spare your lives a third time."

It is time to kill the king.

**Story Award:** Award a CR 15 (51,200 XP) reward for gaining Chargammon's aid.

## **ACT FOUR: ADARIUM**

Within this act the PCs raid the palace of the House of Darius, slay King Markadian V called the Brave and clear the way for *their* conquest of Talingarde.

#### EVENT ONE: A DARK CORNER OF THE CITY OF LIGHT

Our villians have one month to get to Matharyn, infiltrate the Adarium and be ready for Chargammon's rampage. Honestly, this is probably more time than a band of 15th level dark lords need. With teleportation and invisibility magics, they can probably accomplish these feats in a day or two. But it gives them time to explore the city and prepare themselves for the dangerous events to come.

If the PCs think about it, they aren't just readying themselves for the battle with King Markadian V. They are also preparing for dealing with Thorn, since one event will happen rapidly on the heels of the other. In truth, this is their last respite for the breakneck events of this Act and Book V: The Devil My Only Master. Wise players will realize this and make good use of the time.

It is easy to hide in Matharyn. Even in this time of war and pestilence, the great metropolis is still a place of commerce. Talk of war is everywhere, but so far the actual battles remain confined to the borderlands and Daveryn. To many Matharians, the struggle still seems far off. By the time the PCs are done here, that is likely to change.

There is little the city cannot provide. The only items that are truly difficult to get are those connected to evil religions (for example unholy water) or illegal items (such as slaves or poisons). Other than those and the most powerful of magic items, almost anything is for sale here.

The city is also a potential source of information. Any PC who spends an evening in a local tavern can make a roll on the rumor table (see the next page). Truly adept PCs who buy a few drinks and make a DC 20 Diplomacy check can pick up two rolls per night.

They can also seek out specific information. No doubt the PCs will be interested in learning more about the Adarium. Of course, the more secret the information they seek, they more difficult it will be to procure. The real problem with information gathering in Matharyn is that most of the people living in the city are lawful good supporters of the king and the royal family. They are utterly unwilling to give up any information that may be harmful to their beloved monarch and his beautiful princess daughter.

#### SCOUTING OUT THE ADARIUM

The Adarium is not actually in Matharyn proper. It is across the mouth of the Cambrian Bay. The Adarium is not the only thing on that side of the bay (there are also farms and villas) so getting a ferry there for 1 silver per head is easy enough.

However, the Adarium is not an easy place to get inside or to visit, as it is not a public place. This is a place of security and seclusion for the Royal Family. They go here to get away from their very public lives.

Surrounded by a great iron fence and expansive rigorously patrolled gardens, the security here is always tight. There are servants, but they live inside the Adarium. To serve within the great palace is to live a life of isolated priviledge.

Great pains have been taken to keep the layout and interior of the palace secret. Of course, if the PCs have gained the assistance of the Baroness Vanya or captured the Cardinal of Daveryn, those efforts have largely been for naught.

Still, as good as these security measures are, they are likely of little use against the PCs. Hundreds of guards patrolling vast gardens may keep out the riffraff, but they will do little to deter a small party of powerful, villianous interlopers.

The Adarium does have magical defenses. When he had the Adarium constructed, Markadian II contracted with a powerful foreign wizard. Because of the wizard's efforts the entire building is under the effect of a permanent *mage's private sanctum* spell cast by a 19th level caster. No one can scry the interior, see or hear inside (even with darkvision) or use *detect thoughts* upon anyone inside.

Only during the reign of Markadian IV called the Zealot was the *forbiddance* spell effect added to the Adarium. Anyone who is not lawful good who enters the Adarium without saying the password "Mitra-my-heart-is-thine" suffers the effect of this spell. And it means that no one can teleport into this building. However, the forbiddance effect does not extend to the sanctuary beneath the Adarium (though the sanctuary is shielded by the mage's private sanctum). This makes it possible for the king to use his word of recall pendant. Unfortunately, though they have been into the Adarium and know the password, neither the Baroness nor the Cardinal have ever been to the secret sanctuary. The PCs are going to have to discover the location of that room on their own. However, if they can make it inside the Adarium, there are some within who know its whereabouts.

#### RUMORS IN MATHARYN(ROLL 1D20):

1. The Adarium is deserted. I hear they moved the Princess to some secret place until the war is over. (False. The Princess Bellinda is in the Adarium still).

2. Beware the Tears of Death! It's everywhere, I tell you, everywhere! Oh Mitra, why hast thou forsaken us? (This sentiment is common in the city as hundreds of deaths from plague slowly turn into thousands of deaths.)

3. My son's gone to war to serve beside the Brave! A toast to their victory and swift return! Death to the Fire-Axe! Victory to the Victor's Blood! (a common slogan and sentiment.)

4. What monster could have ordered a raid upon sacred Valtaerna? I took a pilgrimage their only last year! What creatures of darkness could commit such an atrocity. (Who indeed?)

5. All the calamity's of the last few years – I know what began 'em. It began when we defaced and burned the temples and priests of the Adversary. Aye, I've no love for the devil-god. But his reach is long and his memory is eternal. I have no doubt that the true author of these ills is Asmodeus himself. (True of course. And those nearby gasp that someone would even dare say the name.)

6. Daveryn – sacked! I can't believe it. My uncle Herbert lived in Glassboro. I hope he's okay! (He's not okay.)

7. I hear most of the Adarium is empty and they've packed many of the greatest national treasures in the vaults of the Old Palace in the city center. Still, the brave princess dwells there with her retinue. How brave she is! (True. The Adarium is comparatively empty and the Princess is still there.)

8. I don't understand it! How can bugbears take Daveryn and Westkirk and Lorringsgate and Balentyne. 'Taint natural! There's something evil behind this. (You think.)

9. My sister is dead. She wept herself to death. Oh, such evil times. Who will save us now that Mitra has abandoned us! (Wept to death is a fine description of how the Tears of Achlys kills its victims.)

10. Mitra has failed us. Mitra failed to defend the Watch Wall and Daveryn from bugbears; failed to defend Ghastenhall from plague; failed to defend Valtaerna from raiders. How long before Mitra fails us? Tonight, when I say my prayers, I won't only be praying to the Lord of Light. I'll say my prayers to any god that cares to listen to save us from these evils! (Again, a common sentiment.)

11. Avoid anyone with red-eyes! That's the first sign of the Tears of Death! (Actually, very practical advice.)

12. I was there, in the throne room as a servant when the great paladin Sir Richard of Havelyn spoke to the king. His words, so passionate. I'll never forget 'em. "Do I march alone, my liege?" and the king answered "No good, sir knight, I march with thee!" Can you believe it? (This is a fairly accurate if abbreviated retelling of the paladin's plea for action to Markadian V [detailed in Book Three].)

13. The plague's spread to every corner of Talingarde. And it's just starting! The streets will be choked with corpses before this business is finished. (Gloomy but probably true.)

14. Why did the king wait so long to march to war? And what happens if he's defeated. Lord of Light, I pray we never find out. (But you will, sir, you will.)

15. I saw the army leave Matharyn. What a sight! Thirty thousand strong at least! They shook the ground as they passed me by. The Fire-Axe had best enjoy his time as Lord of Daveryn. It won't last. (Though guilty of exaggeration [the army was closer to half that number when it left] this is an otherwise accurate account and a common sentiment about town.)

16. Here's to the Brave! May his second campaign against the bugbears be as successful as his first! (This recounts the Brave's previous victories on the Watch Wall.)

17. Refugees from Daveryn are arrivin'. I've got a cousin put up in my attic. You can't believe the stories he tells about the Fire-Axe's army. It's not just bugbears – the beast marches with ogres, trolls, giants and devils! (True.)

18. There's an easy cure for the Tears of Death. Simply make a tea of these rare herbs. But one dose a day for a week cures it. (False, this poor sap has been conned.)

19. I wonder who the Princess will marry? She is almost twenty. If she stays single much longer, she'll be an old maid! (Not at the rate she ages.)

20. "I've heard rumors about the Princess Bellinda. They say that the king's hired her a magical tutor – the greatest wizard in all the land. And even that wizard is terrified of Bellinda's magical prowess. She's only nineteen and yet she wields powers beyond imagining."

"Bah! You're ale has addled your brains. There's no hint of wizardry amongst the rest of the Victor's heirs. Why should there be any with the princess?" (True, though the princess is not a wizard – she's a sorceress. And she gets her power not from her father's side, but her mother.) Act Four: Adarium



Book Four: Of Dragons and Princesses
### THE ADARIUM

The central palace of the Adarium is not the entire complex. In fact the palace is surrounded by other support buildings not shown on the map – servant's quarters, barracks, stockyards and gardens just to name a few. In many ways the Adarium is a small town unto itself.

However, our concern is only the central palace. That is what is depicted upon the map and where the key events of the chapter will occur.

Keep one important thing in mind: the PCs will never hold the Adarium for long. Though diminished, there are still hundreds of Talirean soldiers and knights who will rush into to retake the palace. The PCs must get in, accomplish their villianous goals and get out.

### LEVEL 1

### 1-1. The Grand Entranceway

A set of broad marble stairs is flanked on each side by rows of columns supporting a great stone roof. Every conceivable surface is covered by carvings showing both the glory of Mitra and the great military victories of Markadian I called the Victor.

Massive bronze double-doors more than twelve feet high control entrance to the hall. They are flanked by two *everburning torches* permanently ensconced that burn a royal blue. The doors have no lock and are so well-balanced they can be open with a gentle push. However, they can be barred if need be. Barred, the doors are incredibly durable (hardness 10; 120 hit points; DC 28 to break).

### 1-2. The Front Hall

This massive front hall, appointed in regal marble and beautiful bronze fixtures, ccould hold a great number of guests and enterainers, but now it is silent and empty. The two side chambers (2A) are both large cloak rooms clearly meant to be staffed by a pair of servants. In this time of crisis and royal absence, they are empty. Two elegant spiral staircases lead upstairs to the great dome.

### 1-3. The Chamber of Light

This large open chamber is accessed by five beautiful archways that open it up into almost a courthouse. The walls are adorned in stunning blue marble and in the center of the room is a magnificent magical fountain where the water never ceases to flow. Submerged glowing stones radiate subtle shades of pale light that ripples through the flowing water and illuminates the entire chamber in a rainbow of dancing light. Even the most jaded of villains can admire its ethereal beauty, before they blow it up.

Trusted Knights of the Realm (4) CR 12
XP 19,200 each (76,800 XP total) Male human fighter (armor master) 13 LG Medium humanoid Init +3; Senses Perception +9
DEFENSE
AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 shield) hp 110 (13d10+39) Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +6 Defensive Abilities deflective shield +3, light fortification; DR 2/-
OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft. Melee mwk longsword +18/+13/+8 (1d8+6/17-20)
TACTICS
<ul> <li>During Combat These knights are not in their full battlefield armor instead relying on breastplate and shields. They charge into battle, swords drawn, eager to slay the foes of the House of Darius.</li> <li>Morale These veteran knights fight to the death to defend the pal-</li> </ul>
ace, the princess and their king.
STATISTICS
<ul> <li>Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 11</li> <li>Base Atk +13/+8/+3; CMB +15; CMD 29</li> <li>Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Die Hard, Dodge, Endurance, Greater Shield Focus, Greater Weapon Focus (longsword), Greater Weapon Specialization (longsword), Improved Critical (longsword), Mobility, Shield Focus, Spring Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)</li> <li>Skills Climb +17, Knowledge (nobility) +7, Perception +9, Ride +10, Survival +16, Swim +17</li> <li>Languages Common</li> </ul>
SQ armored defense, armor training 3, fortification Trait Peer of the Realm - Knowledge (nobility) +1 Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds (2) Other Gear masterwork breastplate, masterwork light steel shield, masterwork longsword, livery of the Adarium, 4d12 gp 1-4. The Guardroom
1-4. The Guardroom

This elegant hallway is decorated with scenes of soldiers following the Victor to glorious triumph after triumph. It is also attended by four trusted, veteran knights who have been entrusted with the defense of the Adarium. These are not necessarily always the same knights (they rotate out every eight hours or so). But regardless, they all have the same character and temperment.

If the PCs are posing as servant or soldier, they are stopped and asked for a password. The password is changed daily but is always either patriotic (like "Hail the Victor") or religious ("Till All is Light"). Still, the password is given to so many people (servants, soldiers and so forth) it is not hard to acquire, especially with magical or divinatory means.

Anyone they don't recognize who enters this palace is assumed to be an intruder and immediately attacked. At first, they are trying to arrest the intruders for questioning. But if any one of their number is slain, they seek to avenge their brother by slaying his murderer. Act Four: Adarium

The knights are on high alert and, will rush to investigate if they hear commotion. Of course, with these thick wooden walls clad in marble and bronze, it is unlikely they will hear anything beyond this floor.

### 1-5. Side Galleries

These large side galleries, no doubt intended to entertain guests, are now empty and unused. Still, they remain impressive with beautiful friezes carved in Ansgarian marble depicting the faith, wealth and power of the people of Talingarde.

### 1-6. Shrine of the House of Darius

When originally built by Markadian II, this was simply a shrine to the memory of the Victor. However, the current king has renovated it to honor all of his predecessors. A statue of the Victor still takes center stage, but on the side walls, there are images of Markadian II (showing a wise man holding scrolls), Markadian III (a VERY rare image of the mad king, showing him wearing his angel wings and looking far off into the distance) and Markadian IV bowed in prayer. Five magical candles burn eternally in this place, both providing illumination and honoring each of the kings. "Daria Aeterna – Donec Omnia Lux" is carved prominently beneath the Victor's statue which translates "Darius Eternal – Until All is Light".

The candles can be stolen though they are of no great material value. However, each of the statues has beautiful carved sapphire eyes (even though Markadian II had brown eyes). If the statues are violated, 6,000 gp worth of sapphires can be pried out.

### 1-7. Servants' Chamber

This chamber is intended for servants to work preparing food and drink for guests. It is largely packed up. and empty. However, the wine closet (7A), though locked with a superior lock (DC 40), is still well stocked with 2,350 gp worth of fine wine and liquor. There is a stout wooden door to the outside here as well. This is the servant's entrance. It too has a superior lock though numerous servants have copies of the key.

### 1-8. Main Kitchen

This is the kitchen for the central palace. It is still in operation, with meals being prepared each day for the few people left in the Adarium following the king's departure. There is a 50% chance, day or night, that there are 1d4 servants (unarmed non-combatant human expert 4) working intently here. The pantry (8A) is well stocked with fine food and unlocked. It possesses a minor magic that prevents food from spoiling.

### 1-9. The Palace Armory

With most of the soldiers gone, this room is largely empty, being a collection of empty weapon racks and armor hooks. The four knights in the guard room (room 1-4) have taken to storing their gear and personal effects here while they are on duty. There is nothing here of any great worth or importance. This door has a superior lock (DC 40) but since the armory is empty, no one has bothered to lock it in days.

### 1-10. Main Hallway

This is the massive main hallway that connects to all the first floor guest rooms and the king's grand chamber beyond. This hallways is adorned with countless portraits of members of the House of Darius through the years. There is a portrait here of the beautiful Princess Bellinda painted when she was seventeen (two years ago). She appears to be nothing more than a beautiful blonde teenage girl. There are also portraits of the Victor, Markadian II, Markadian IV and the current king.

There are a few other pictures here the PCs may recognize: Sir Valin Darian (of Farholde; See Book Two), Duke Martin of Daveryn (see Act One) and Bronwyn of Balentyne (who was a distant cousin). Conspicuously absent is any picture of the late queen. A Knowledge (nobility) check DC 15 will reveal the Queen Aria died in child birth with Bellinda, but where is her portrait? Of course, the truth is that this well-known story is false. Queen Aria was an alias for the princess' true mother who was kept a secret for several reasons.

First, the king and this woman had an affair before the king was married. Second, the "woman" wasn't human. Bellinda's mother is actually the silver dragon elder wyrm Antharia Regina. When Markadian V called the Brave as a young man lead an expedition to the north to defeat the bugbears, his valor attracted the attention of the dragon. She aided him in breaking several bugbear tribes and then met with Markadian. Antharia became enamored of the handsome young human and, in human form, sired a single child with him – Bellinda.

Markadian V was heart-broken when the powerful dragon refused his offer to be his queen. "Your people will never understand," the dragon explained. And so Antharia sent Bellinda to be raised amongst the humans and departed. The story of Queen Aria was created to explain the daughter and Bellinda has been princess ever since. The result of this union is that Bellinda is no ordinary child. The blood of an elder wyrm flows in her veins and unimaginably powerful magic is hers to command. Virtually no one in Talingarde knows this.

### 1-11. Guest Rooms

These many rooms once housed countless dignitaries, visitors and other important individuals of the court (when duty demanded they remain in the Adarium). Now, they are neatly tended, clean and empty of anything of any interest. The furnishings here are quite valuable but none of them are at all portable.

### 1-12. Thatch's Chamber

The wizard Heironymous Thatch, tutor to the princess Bellinda is using this guest room as his private quarters. Heironymous does not look like a wizard. He has no beard and does not wear robes. Instead, he dresses like a noble courtier and acts the part as well. He even wears a fine rapier upon his belt (though only because of status, he's never drawn it his life). One would never guess by appearances that Lord Thatch is one of the most powerful wizards in the country.

Of course, upon speaking with him, he shows his true stripes. He is a scholarly and irrascible man with little patience for fools. The king himself requested Heironymous to come here and help the princess with her magic. These efforts have largely been utter folly. First, the princess needs no help with magic. She is a dazzling prodigy whose talent for magic has frankly terrified Lord Thatch. Second, she is a sorcerer. Her magic works fundamentally different from the wizardry of Lord Thatch.

Lord Thatch keeps very regular hours turning in promptly at 10:00 pm every evening. He took a room two floors below the princess (who is on the third level) because he enjoys his privacy when he is not at work. It is very possible that the PCs might catch Lord Thatch asleep and slay him in his bed. This would be fortunate, for if he wakes up and hears intruders, he teleports up to room 3-3 and gathers the dwarven honor guard. He follows them downstairs to deal with the intruders using his magic to support the dwarves. Together, they would be a very difficult encounter.

Lord Thatch has little of value in his room besides his personal equipment. He does have a bottle of very expensive cologne (worth 1,000 gp; 10 doses; grants a +2 circumstance bonus to diplomacy for 24 hours except to those who at the GM's discretion would not be swayed by the scent) and 52 gp in "walking around money". His spellbook however is many miles away at his manor.

He keeps a journal in his room. Mostly filled with pedantic nonsense of no interest, but it does have one interesting line: "Why am I here? The princess needs no instruction with magic! Such power! How could a nineteen year old girl wield such might?"

	d Heironymous Thatch, Court Wizard CR 1
	<b>7 51,200</b> le human evoker 16
	Medium humanoid
	: +6; <b>Senses</b> Perception +18
DEFE	
	16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 mage armor) 88 (16d6+32)
	<b>t</b> +6, <b>Ref</b> +7, <b>Will</b> +12
OFFE	
1	eed 30 ft.
	lee dagger +7/+2 (1d4-1/19-20)
	nged dagger +10/+5 (1d4-1/19-20)
Spo	ecial Attacks intense spells +8
Arc	ane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16 <sup>th</sup> , concentration +21)
	force missile 8/day (1d4+8)
	zard Spells Prepared (CL 16 <sup>th</sup> , concentration +21) —greater shout (2) (DC 25), stormbolts (DC 25)
	–delayed blast fireball (2) (DC 24), greater teleport, limited wish
	-chain lightning (2) (DC 23), greater dispel magic, true seeing
	-cone of cold (2) (DC 22), lightning arc (2) (DC 22), teleport, wal
5	of force
4 <sup>th_</sup>	–ball lightning (2) (DC 21), dimension door, shout (2) (DC 21), wal
	of fire (DC 21)
	–dispel magic, fireball (2) (DC 20), haste, lightning bolt (2) (DC 20
2 <sup>nd</sup> -	-invisibility, mirror image, shatter (4) (DC 19), scorching ray (4)
ct	web (2) (DC 19)
1~-	–mage armor, magic missile (5), shield st will)—detect magic, light, ray of frost, read magic
Pro	bhibited Schools enchantment, necromancy
ГАСТ	
-	ring Combat The wizard does not wish to fight alone against
	any enemy and tries to get away and gather help (he particu- larly trusts the dwarves in room 3-3). Failing this, he lashes out with <i>stormbolts</i> and <i>chain lightning</i> hoping to keep his enemies away long enough for him to escape.
Мо	rale Heironymous is not a fanatic and if reduced to 22 hit points
	uses greater teleport to escape. Unfortunately, he flees to the side of General Vastenus Barca (a man he thinks his friend)
	The general questions him furiously about what has happened
	in the Adarium and then murders the badly wounded wizard.
STAT	ISTICS
	8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 14, Cha 10
	se Atk +8/+3; CMB +7; CMD 27
	nts Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand
	ats Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring
	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im-
	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel
	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness
Ski	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24
Ski	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl
Ski	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness <b>IIs</b> Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl- edge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +18
	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24 Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl- edge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +18 Spellcraft +24
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Lar SQ	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24 Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl- edge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +18 Spellcraft +24 nguages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Inferna
Lar SQ	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl- edge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +18 Spellcraft +24 guages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Inferna arcane bond (ring)
Lar SQ Coi	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24 Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl- edge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +18 Spellcraft +24 <b>nguages</b> Common, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Inferna arcane bond (ring) <b>mbat Gear</b> potion of cure moderate wounds; scrolls of greater dispel magic, teleport and mount; wand of ball lightning (12 charges)
Lar SQ Coi	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl- edge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +18 Spellcraft +24 <b>nguages</b> Common, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Inferna arcane bond (ring) <b>mbat Gear</b> potion of cure moderate wounds; scrolls of greater dispel magic, teleport and mount; wand of ball lightning (ag charges) <b>ner Gear</b> masterwork rapier, daggers (2), ring of wizardry (II
Lar SQ Coi	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24 Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl- edge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +18 Spellcraft +24 <b>nguages</b> Common, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Inferna arcane bond (ring) <b>mbat Gear</b> potion of cure moderate wounds; scrolls of greater dispel magic, teleport and mount; wand of ball lightning (13 charges) <b>her Gear</b> masterwork rapier, daggers (2), ring of wizardry (II (arcane bond item), spell component pouch, diamond worth
Lar SQ Coi	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl- edge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +18 Spellcraft +24 nguages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Inferna arcane bond (ring) mbat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds; scrolls of greater dispel magic, teleport and mount; wand of ball lightning (ag charges) ner Gear masterwork rapier, daggers (2), ring of wizardry (II (arcane bond item), spell component pouch, diamond worth 1,500 qp (for limited wish), courtier's clothing, 200 qp worth or
Lar SQ Cor Otl	Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Forge Ring Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Im- proved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spel Penetration, Toughness IIs Appraise +24, Craft (armor) +24, Craft (weapons) +24 Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowl- edge (planes) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +18 Spellcraft +24 <b>nguages</b> Common, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Inferna arcane bond (ring) <b>mbat Gear</b> potion of cure moderate wounds; scrolls of greater dispel magic, teleport and mount; wand of ball lightning (13 charges) <b>her Gear</b> masterwork rapier, daggers (2), ring of wizardry (II (arcane bond item), spell component pouch, diamond worth

level 2 residences (see location 2-2).

### 1-14. King's Guardrooms

This is the entryway to the king's private quarters. The door is locked with a superior lock (DC 40). Two side rooms (14A) are available for quartering a small contingent of guards to secure the king's person. With the king absent, the guardrooms are empty. There is also a fine brocade curtain that seperates the guardrooms from the main chamber beyond.

### 1-15. King's Private Quarters

These are the opulent personal quarters of the King of Talingarde. There is a personal bathing chamber that can only be described as opulent (15A). It includes a tub that magically fills with heated water, and is big enough to seat four comfortably. The bedchamber (15B) is ludicrously gigantic (4000 sq. ft.), being larger than many nice homes. That said, these chambers are mostly empty. The King's personal effects are with him on campaign. The furnishings that remain (a massive four poster bed, a desk, book shelves, wardrobe and full length mirror) are worth thousands of gold but would be difficult to transport. Besides, all are marked with the royal seal of Talingarde. That they are stolen would be beyond obvious.

The personal library (15C) has a few books on the shelves but none of any great value. Markadian V is no scholar-king and has largely neglected the library. If your villains truly ransack these quarters, they can scrape together 500 gp in books and smaller stolen fixtures.

### 1-16. King's Private Shrine

The door to this room is locked with a superior lock (DC 40). Further, there is a warning inscribed upon the door: *"He that violates this shrine shall gain nothing but ashes, nothing but death."* 

If anyone enters this room who is not accompanied by the King or Bellinda, they will be subject to a potent magical disintegration trap "Nothing but Ashes".

Nothing But Ashes	CR 16
Type magic; Perception DC 33; Disable Device DC 33	
EFFECTS	-
<b>Trigger</b> sight ( <i>true seeing</i> ) <b>Reset</b> none Effect spell effect (empowered <i>disintegrate</i> , +10 ranged tou	ch,

damage to 5d6 plus 50%)

Inside, they discover a humble personal shrine to Mitra. The shrine is little more than a place to kneel before a statue of the three-fold god. But there are two very important items concealed with this shrine. They are great secrets of the royal family and their discovery is criticial to the success of our villain's mission. Behind the statue of Mitra, hidden on the left is a small secret vault. It is well hidden (DC 30 Perception check to find). Even if discovered the vault is defended by a potent magical death trap "Nothing but Death".

Nothing But Death	CR 16
Type magic; Perception DC 33; Disable Device	e DC 33
EFFECTS	100
Trigger sight (true seeing) Reset none	

Effect spell effect (*horrid wilting*, 15d6 damage to everyone in the shrine, DC 19 Fort save reduces the damage to half)

If the trap can be overcome, the vault must still be unlocked (DC 30 Disable Device check) or it can be smashed open (hardness 8, 45 hp, DC 25 to break). Inside there is only one thing – the Liber Darian. This Mitran holy text includes a complete family history of the House of Darius. It explicitly lays out that the Princess Bellinda is the daughter of Antharia Regina, the silver dragon elder wyrm. It also mentions that Argossarian (see Book Two) the silver was the half-brother of Bellinda.

The authenticity of this book is beyond question and with a stroke of their pen on one page, the PCs could add someone to the lineage of House Darius and thus create a missing scion who could assume the throne without a crisis of succession. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (nobility) check will reveal this. But there is more. Written in the book during the first days of the Victor's reign is this:

"King Jaraad, last ruler of House Barca, appealed to his finest seers in his last days to know the future. All in one accord, they predicted disaster in the upcoming battle. In his desperation, he called out to the darkness and the darkness sent him a mighty gift – the runeblade Helbrand. Though Helbrand reaped a great toll in sacred blood it was not enough to spare Jaraad from his destiny. He died and Helbrand was captured. Though it could not be destroyed, it was broken in three. The blade was stored in Valtaera, the pommel was given to the great dragon Eiramanthus to hide deep in his vaults, and the hilt was bricked up into the Throne of Talingarde so that it would never be unguarded. May it never again see the light of day."

A DC 25 Knowledge (nobility) check reveals that the old throne was relocated by Markadian II to the Adarium's great dome. Helbrand's hilt is here!

There is one more thing hidden in this room. There is a secret door in the floor (DC 30 Perception check to find) that leads down in to the hidden basement (see B-1 below). This is where the king's sanctum is and it is here he will teleport to save Bellinda.

**Story Award:** Award a CR 15 (51,200 XP) reward for finding the Liber Darian and realizing its importance.

### LEVEL 2 (THE GREAT DOME)

### 2-1. The Great Dome

Two spiral staircases lead to this open chamber divided by ten feet high partition. The great dome itself rises more than eighty feet and is adorned with stained glass windows that honor Darius and Mitra. It seems more like a cathedral than a gathering place for royalty and their courtiers. But now, in this time of war and worry, there are no courtiers or social functions. Instead, it is empty and quiet. That is except for a powerfully built angel who sits upon the king's throne. He speaks as our villains enter.

"I've waited for you. My brother said your road of woe and wickedness would lead you here. My name is Ara Zandra. You banished my brother from the world he sacrificed so much for. Your journey ends here upon the throne you would steal. Righteous vengeance is mine."

### And with that, the angel attacks.

Once defeated, the old throne can be broken with little trouble. Buried inside is the third and final piece of Helbrand – the hilt. Assembling Helbrand (which is no more complicated than touching its components together) immediately awakens the sword. Helbrand is as much an NPC as a weapon. It whispers into its wielder's ear, urging the destruction of good outsiders and devotion to Asmodeus, naming its wielder as "the master" and itself "the blade". "The blade thanks the master who has awoken it. Together the master and the blade will write their names in blood upon the pages of history."

Helbrand is quick to offer cold but brilliant advice. "He says the master should rush to battle. But the blade believes the master should rather be judicious, patient. Speak to them. Deceive them. Discover what they know. And only then, should the master honor the blade by allowing it to taste their blood."

Helbrand is an intelligent +4 unholy good outsider bane bastard sword (LE, Int: 12, Wis: 16, Cha: 14, Ego: 19; telepathy; darkvision 60'; purpose: defeat the servants of Mitra and return Asmodeus to dominance in Talingarde; 1/day: dimensional anchor, greater infernal healing; CL 18th; cost 112,400 gp).

Story Award: Award a CR 15 (51,200 XP) reward for reassembling Helbrand.

### Ara Zandra, Angel of Vengeanc

### XP 51,200

Male Unique Empyreal Angel

LG Large outsider (angel, extraplanar, good, lawful)

Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft., detect evil, low-light vision; Perception +28

### Aura aura of goodness, protective aura

### DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 13, flat-footed 23 (+4 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size; +4 deflection vs. evil)

hp 136 (13d10+65)

Fort +15, Ref +12, Will +8; +4 vs. poison, +4 resistance vs. evil DR 10/evil; Immune acid, cold, petrification, death effects; Resist electricity 10, fire 10; SR 26 OFFENSE

### Speed 40 ft., fly 70 ft. (good)

Melee +3 flaming longsword +23/+18/+13 (1d8+10 plus 1d6 fire) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. Special Attacks radiant blast

### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th)

Constant—detect evil

- At will—aid, continual flame, discern lies (DC 19), dispel magic, holy smite (DC 19), invisibility (self only), plane shift (DC 22), remove curse (DC 19), remove disease (DC 18), remove fear (DC 16)
- 5/day— cure moderate wounds
- 3/day— blade barrier (DC 21), cure serious wounds, flame strike (DC 20), scorching ray (3 rays) 1/day—heal, raise dead

### TACTICS

During Combat Ara Zandra leads with his radiant blast and prefers to circle the fray raining down blade barriers and flame strikes upon his foes. He will use heal on himself at an opportune moment to restore his strength, but mostly focuses on destroying his enemies. If his magic fails, he turns to his sword of flame.

Morale Ara Zandra will not stop until the banishment of Ara Mathra is answered or he too is removed from this plane of existence. STATISTICS

### Str 24, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 20 Base Atk +13; CMB +21; CMD 35

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Diplomacy +21, Fly +22, Heal +20, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (planes) +20, Knowledge (religion) +17, Perception +28, Sense Motive +24, Stealth +16, Survival +20; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech Gear +3 flaming longsword (reduces to ashes if he is slain) SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Goodness (Su) An empyreal radiates an aura in a 30-foot radius spread around its form. Any non-evil creature in this area must succeed on a DC 23 Will save or be overcome with awe and unable to attack the empyreal that round.

Evil creatures within the area must make a successful DC 23 Will save or be unable to even look at that empyreal for one day. An affected evil creature functions as if blinded (as the blindness spell) when attacking that empyreal. On a successful save, a creature is immune to the aura of goodness of that empyreal for one day. The save DC is Charisma-based and includes a +2 bonus.

Radiant Blast (Su) Once per day, an empyreal can increase the radiance of its form and release it in a cone-shaped blast to a range of 60 feet that deals 15d6 points of damage and blinds any creature in the area (as the blindness spell) for 3d6 minutes. Affected creatures can make a successful DC 21 Reflex save to halve the damage and avoid being blinded. The save DC is Constitution-based..

### LEVEL 2 (RESIDENCES)

### 2-2. The Main Hall

This is the L-shaped main hall for the second level. It is lit by everburning torches and sees little traffic these days. The occasional servant (20% at any given moment) ventures up here seeing to the Iraen delegation in 2-5.

### 2-3. The Pyres of Judgment

This chamber secures the Council Chamber (2-4) beyond. Four large constructs (**P**), built by Markadian IV called the Zealot to burn heretics alive, have been tasked with guarding this chamber. They have been instructed not to attack any member of the King's Council, family, or servants. Everyone else who enters the chamber is subjected to these heavy, clanking horrors and their vicious attacks and eternally burning fire. They cannot speak so they do not call for aid.

Besides these monsters, there is another danger with fighting a battle in this chamber.

### The Pyres of Judgment (4)

### XP 19,200 each (76,800 XP total)

N Large construct

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

CR 12

AC 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (-1 Dex, +18 natural, -1 size) hp 122 (16d10+34)

Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6

DR 5/adamantine; Immune fire, construct traits OFFENSE

### Speed 20 ft.

Melee bite +23 (2d6+8 plus grab), 2 slams +18 (1d6+8) Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks swallow whole (2d8 fire damage, AC 18, 40 hp), trample (2d6+12, DC 25)

### TICS

During Combat The Pyres lumber into battle, attacking intruders and trying to swallow foes. Once swallowed they fight to keep their caged victim entrapped, so it will roast alive within them.

Morale The Pyres of Judgment are automatons with neither free-will nor fear. They fight till their destruction.

### Str 26, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 12, Cha 1 Base Atk +16; CMB +25 (+29 grapple); CMD 34 (38 vs. trip) SQ conductive

SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Conductive (Ex)** Anytime a pyre is affected by an effect that deals fire damage, determine how much damage the construct would have taken if it were not immune to fire. Creatures currently swallowed whole by the construct take fire damage equal to half of this amount.

Swallow Whole (Ex) Once swallowed by a pyre, those entrapped takes 2d8 fire damage every round and is trapped inside the creature's hollow interior. If the trapped individual casts *create* water or uses similar magic, this damage may be suppresed for a round.

Once swallowed, the construct's maw locks down, preventing creatures from climbing back out. A creature can attempt to hack or smash its way out as normal, but a pyre's stomach has hit points equal to one-tenth its actual hit points plus its bonus hit points for being a construct (totaling 42 hit points). Alternatively, a swallowed creature can attempt to pick the lock on the iron hatch in the stomach by making a DC 30 Disable Device check. If a creature exits by picking the lock, the pyre closes its hatch and can swallow whole again. These locks can also be picked from the outside, but only after the golem is slain. A Large pyre's belly can hold 1 Medium creature at a time.

There is a chance, unless extraordinary measures are employed, that the PCs will draw the attention of the Iraen delegation in 2-5 (50% chance for them to notice after every round of combat). If they hear the sounds of fighting, 1d6 rounds later, they arrive curious about the commotion. If they see obviously dangerous and villianous foes fighting the King's golems, the Iraen delegation intervenes, hoping by this deed to gain favor with the the king.

The golems have no treasure.

### 2-4. Council Chambers

Here the king meets with his council of advisors and steers the ship of state. It is empty now, devoid of anything but a large table and many chairs.

However, the two side chambers (4A) contain military records. The record rooms contain a very detailed map of Talingarde and the most current reports from the front. There are maps of every fortification in Talingarde. There are estimates of troop strength and how many conscripts can be raised from any region. No doubt, this information must seem imporant. Unfortunately, most of it is verging on obsolescence with the battle of Fallingsbridge looming (see below). Regardless with careful study the PCs can learn some crucial information.

1) They learn that the rumors they've been hearing about the king doing nothing are false. The king has been busy at work gathering his forces from all across the kingdom. Markadian believes he will have only one real chance to crush the northern invaders and once he does, that the North will be largely empty of foes. He plans, after defeating the Fire-Axe, to invade the North and once and for all bring all of the isle under one banner. "We will turn this moment of crisis into a moment of triumph!"

2) The king knows about the Knot of Thorns. He doesn't know much, but he's pieced together than an Asmodean cult remnant is behind his kingdom's troubles. What he doesn't know is where they are based. His inquisitors scour the land looking for a secret headquarters. He's had one lead – the great cairn linnorm, Nithoggr, is said to guard a powerful artifact of both evil and Asmodean magic called by one inquisitor as "The Devil's Heart". Could that linnorm guard their stronghold? (In fact, no. But the linnorm does guard Thorn's phylactery.)

3) The paladin Sir Richard has been the king's greatest information source about the Knot of Thorns. Over the course of the campaign, have your PCs made any other secrecy slip ups? These deeds are recorded here as well.

4) The king's general is Vastenus Barca. Even though the Barcans and Darians once fought, the king believes in this time of crisis the past is long forgotten.

**Story Award:** Award a CR 15 (51,200 XP) reward if your PC's figure out where Thorn's phylactery is hidden.

### 2-5. Chambers of the Iraen

A delegation of the barbaric Iraen (humans native to the great Caer Bryr forest) have been summoned to the Adarium to meet with Talirean leaders about the great evil that has risen on their island.

### Keara Kilkerran

XP	38	3,40	0
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Female half-elf druid 15

CN Medium humanoid (elf, human) Init +4; Senses low-light vision; Perception +30

### DEFENSE

- AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+5 armor, +2 Dex, +3 shield, +4 natural)
- hp 67 (15d8)
  Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +13; +2 vs. enchantment; +4 vs. fey and planttargeted effects

Defensive Abilities resist nature's lure, venom immunity; Immune poison, sleep; Resist cold 20

### Speed 20 ft.

OFFENSE

Melee mwk scimitar +12/+7/+2 (1d6/18-20) Ranged sling +15 (1d4) Special Attacks wild shape 6/day

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th, concentration +19) icicle 7/ day (1d6+7 cold)

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 15th, concentration +19)

- 8th—horrid wilting<sup>D</sup> (DC 22), mass cure serious wounds
- 7th—elemental body IV (water)<sup>0</sup>, heal, mass cure moderate wounds 6th—cone of cold<sup>0</sup> (DC 20), greater dispel magic, mass cure light wounds, sirocco (DC 20)
- 5th—call lightning storm (DC 19), cure critical wounds (2), ice storm<sup>b</sup>, wall of fire
- 4th—ball lightning (DC 18), cure serious wounds (2), control water<sup>b</sup>, dispel magic, flame strike (DC 18)
- 3rd—burst of nettles (DC 17), call lightning (DC 17), cure moderate wounds (2), daylight, water breathing<sup>D</sup>
- 2nd—barkskin, chill metal (DC 16), flame blade, fog cloud<sup>D</sup>, lesser restoration, spider climb
- 1st—cure light wounds (2), endure elements, entangle (DC 15), obscuring mist<sup>D</sup>, produce flame

o (at will)—create water, detect magic, light, stabilize

D domain spell; Domain Water

During Combat Keara prefers to avoid melee combat, instead letting her devoted warriors defend her while she supports them with her powerful array of spells. All of the men who travel with her, are her kin (though some very distantly). She will do everything in her power to keep them alive. She is quick to heal them and will use her mass cure spells very liberally.

- When not healing them, she instead uses her powerful magic to punish her foes. The Adarium is not Keara's home. She has no problem burning it to the ground with her fearsome magic.
- **Morale** Keara is not here to fight but to negotiate and learn about an enminent threat of evil. Her first inclination is to talk but she'll fight if she has to.

#### STATISTICS

TACTICS

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 14 Base Atk +11/+6/+1; CMB +11; CMD 23 Feats Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus

- (conjuration), Greater Spell Penetration, Natural Spell, Skill Focus (perception), Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Penetration, Wild Speech
- Skills Handle Animal +20, Heal +22, Knowledge (nature) +21, Perception +30, Spellcraft +19, Survival +24

Languages Common, Druidic, Iraen, Sylvan

- SQ a thousand faces, half-elf traits, nature bond (domain), nature sense, timeless body, trackless step, wild empathy +17, woodland stride
- Combat Gear bullets (10)
- Other Gear healer's kit, heavy wooden shield, +1, hide armor +1, mwk scimitar, sling, amulet of natural armor +4

### Iraen Hunters (4)

CR 9

XP 4,800 each (19,200 XP total) Male human ranger 9 CN Medium humanoid Init +4; Senses Perception +14

### DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +4 Dex) hp 67 (9d10+18) Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +5

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. Melee short sword+13/+7 (1d6+1/19-20) Ranged composite longbow (+1 Str) deadly aim +10/+4 (1d8+7/x3) Special Attacks favored enemy (animal +4, human +2)

- Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 6<sup>th</sup>, concentration +8)
- 2<sup>nd</sup>—barkskin, cure light wounds 1<sup>st</sup>—gravity bow, longshot, longstrider

### TACTICS

- During CombatThese hunters use their bows to support the other Iraen, focusing fire on spellcasters in particular.
- **Morale** These cunning hunters are here to protect Keara who they almost worship as a goddess. They will die to defend her.

#### STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +9/+4; CMD +10; CMD 25

- Feats Deadly Aim, Endurance, Far Shot, Improved Precise Shot, Manyshot, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Finesse
- Skills Heal +14, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +12, Knowledge (nature) +12, Perception +14, Spellcraft +12, Stealth +14, Survival +14 (+18 to follow tracks)
- Languages Common
- SQ favored terrain (forest +4, underground +2), hunter's bond (companions), swift tracker, track +4, wild empathy +9, woodland stride
- Combat Gear arrows (20)
- Other Gear mwk hide shirt, composite longbow (+1 Str), short sword

The Iraen have no central government or king, but a very powerful druidess has answered the call and taken the unprecedented step of travelling to Matharyn. She arrived without notice and while the king was away. Still, she and her followers have been put up in one of the larger guest rooms and well treated. In a few days, a delegation from Matharyn will meet with them. In the meantime, her savage company has been making themselves at home.

Our villians could simply slay Keara and her company. That would effectively end any chance of an alliance between Talingarde and the Iraen (at least for now – see Book VI). If the PCs simply avoid Keara's band, then likely they still die when Chargammon attacks.

Clever PCs however might see a possibility. If the PCs use illusion magic to appear as delegation from Talingarde, it would be easy to ruin relations between the Iraen and the Talireans for a generation. One simple way to do this would be to simply threaten Keara. "Help us against this evil, or we will consider you their accomplices."

### Iraen Warriors (4) CR a XP 4,800 each (19,200 XP total) Male human barbarian 9 **CN** Medium humanoid Init +2; Senses Perception +13 DEFENSE AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 12 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, -2 rage) hp 150 (9d12+72) Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +6 Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +3; DR 1/-OFFENSE Speed 40 ft. Melee greataxe power attack +12/+7 (1d12+1d6 acid+15/x3) Ranged composite longbow (+4 Str) +11/+6 (1d8+4/x3) Special Attacks rage (22 rounds/day), rage powers (elemental rage, knockback, knockdown, lesser elemental rage) TACTICS During Combat When Keara gives the word, they rage and charge. That is basically the extend of their tactical sophistication. Morale These fierce warriors are here to protect Keara who they almost worship as a goddess. They will die to defend her. Base Statistics When not raging, the Male Barbarian has AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; hp 126; Fort +8, Will +4; Melee greataxe power attack +10/+5 (1d12+12/x3); Str 22, Con 18; CMB +13; Climb +14, Swim +14 STATISTICS Str 22, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8 Base Atk +9/+4; CMB +15; CMD 25 Feats Cleave, Cleaving Finish, Great Cleave, Improved Cleaving Finish, Power Attack, Toughness Skills Acrobatics +12, Climb +16, Perception +13, Survival +13, Swim +16

Languages Common, Iraen

SQ fast movement

Combat Gear arrows (20), potion of cure moderate wounds

Other Gear mwk hide shirt, composite longbow, greataxe

Keara is a proud daughter of the forest. She will not knowingly ally with evil but neither will she give up what precious little sovereignty the Iraen yet possess. She has come here because she does senses that a great evil stalks the land but also because she wants to secure a treaty where in the House of Darius will acknowledge that the Caer Bryr is an independent nation.

If an Asmodean ruler where to offer her that pledge, she might be persuaded to pledge her neutrality. With her word, she could ensure that many of the great war chiefs of the Caer Bryr do nothing in the coming war.

### 2-6. 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Guestrooms

These are the unused guestrooms of the 2nd floor. Similar to the first floor, though well kept, there is nothing of any real portable value here.

### 2-7. Stairwell

This room at the end of the main hall is a spiral stairway leading up to the third level of the Adarium (3-1).

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### LEVEL 3

### 3-1. Stairwell

This stairwell connects to the second floor (room 2-7). Otherwise it is a room well lit by *everburning torches* and empty of anything else of note.

### 3-2. Main Hall

This large empty hall connects all the rooms of the third level of the Adarium. Beautifully constructed, the hallway has arched ceilings and murals upon every wall that display the glorious history of the rise of the House of Darius.

Darius.	
The Sleepless Knight, a Mithral Golem C	R 16
XP 76,800	
N Huge construct	
<b>Init</b> +7; <b>Senses</b> darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0	
DEFENSE	
AC 31, touch 15, flat-footed 24 (+7 Dex, +16 natural, -2 size)	
hp 172 (24d10+40)	
Fort +8, Ref +15, Will +8	
DR 15/adamantine, evasion; Immune construct traits, magic	
OFFENSE	
The second resident second	
Speed 50 ft.	
Melee 2 slams +33 (4d10+11)	
Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.	
Special Attacks fluid form, quickness	
TACTICS	-
During Combat The mithral golem uses its fluid form to turn in	
liquid metal knight of terrible power and slams its enemies a	igain
and again until all resistance is crushed.	
Morale The Sleepless Knight guards the princess' chamber with	th all
its might. It fights to the death to guard its charge.	in un
STATISTICS	-
Base Atk +24; CMB +37; CMD 54 Feats Dodge <sup>B</sup> , Mobility <sup>B</sup> , Run <sup>B</sup> , Spring Attack <sup>B</sup> SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Fluid Form (Ex) A mithral golem's body can take on a form liquid silver as a swift action. While in this form, the mit golem's reach increases to 30 feet and its DR becomes bludgeoning and adamantine. A mithral golem in this fi can also move through any crack or hole in a wall or door matter how small, without impeding its movement. A mit golem can maintain this form for up to 10 rounds per day, these rounds do not need to be consecutive. Reverting to normal form is a free action.	hral 15/ orm r, no hral but
Immunity to Magic (Ex) A mithral golem is immune to any s or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addit certain spells and effects function differently against a mit golem, as noted below.	ion,
A slow spell cast on the golem causes it to lose its quickness ab for 1d6 rounds.	ility
A haste spell heals the golem of 1d6 points of damage per leve the caster (maximum 10d6).	el of
Hitting a mithral golem in fluid form with any spell of 6th leve	el or
higher with the cold descriptor causes the golem to take 1 points of damage (no save) and lose the use of its fluid f	.od6

Quickness (Ex) A mithral golem is incredibly quick. It can take an extra move action during its turn each round. This means it can move up to double its speed and still make a full attack.

ability for 24 hours.

At the far end of the easternmost part of the 'T' of this hall sits a single suit of what appears to be massive, empty mithral armor. This is the Sleepless Knight, the guardian of the upper levels. This powerful mithral golem has been charged to deal with all intruders who invade the upper floor. It will not leave its post under any circumstances.

The golem can be deceived. It has been trained to recognize the king, the princess and a host of servants and guards by sight. If someone who appears like one of these authorized individuals approach the door, they will not be harassed. However, anyone who acts destructively or threatens the princess will be attacked regardless of what they look like.

### 3-3. Guardroom of the Dwarven Honor Guard.

The Princess is not protected by the golem alone. When Talingarde and the dwarves of the Ansgarian mountains long ago made peace, the treaty required a unit of elite dwarven soldiery be permanently assigned to serve the king. Eight members of that elite dwarven unit are here, assigned to keep safe the princess and the Adarium while the king is away on campaign. None of the dwarves are happy about this assignment, preferring the glory of battle, but they take their duty seriously none the less.

Dwarven Honor Guard (8) CR 9 XP 6,400 each (51,200 XP total) Male dwarf fighter (weapon master) 9 LG Medium humanoid (dwarf) Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +2 DEFENSE AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+10 armor, +1 Dex) hp 103 (9d10+54) Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +5; +2 vs. poison, spells and spell-like abilities Defensive Abilities mirror move (greataxe +2) Speed 20 ft. Melee+1 greataxe power attack +15/+10 (1d12+19/19-20/x3) Ranged throwing axe +10 (1d6+4) Special Attacks reliable strike 1/day, wpn training (greataxe +2) ACTICS During Combat The dwarven honor guard of the Adarium is known

for three things: their gigantic beards, their unshakable discipline, and the power of their axe strokes. Their plan is pretty much to charge into battle and cut every that looks like an enemy with their axes. Why part with tradition? **Morale** Death before dishonor! Fight to the last!

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 8

Base Atk +9/+4; CMB +13; CMD 24 (26 vs. disarm, sunder; 28 vs. bull rush, trip)

Feats Cleave, Cleaving Finish, Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus (greataxe), Improved Cleaving Finish, Improved Critical (greataxe), Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe)

Skills Climb +10, Swim +10

Languages Common, Dwarven

**SQ** dwarf traits, weapon guard (greataxe +2)

Combat Gear throwing axe (4)

Other Gear masterwork full plate, +1 greataxe, livery of the dwarven honor guard Act Four: Adarium

### 3-4. 3rd Floor Guestrooms

Usually these well-appointed guest rooms are filled with courtiers, ladies in waiting and even the occassional suitor for the hand of the Princess. But now, with the king away at war and the Adarium closed, they are empty (save for one) and devoid of anything of value.

### 3-5. Chamber of the Priest

This is the one guest room on this floor with an occupant. Bellinda's spiritual advisor, Father Isaiah O'toole (LG old male human cleric 4), has remained with the girl both at the king's request and because of his own concerns. He is unarmed, unarmored, decrepit and certainly no threat to the PCs. The dwarves and the golem are here to guard the princess, not this aged priest.

However, he has in his possession a valuable magic item. He carries a small ivory pendant that if broken, will summon the king of Talingarde to his Sanctum (B-2). He is not the only one who possesses such a pendant. The High Inquisitor Solomon Tyrath and the major domo of the entire Adarium (who is in one of the outlying buildings) also carry such pendants. But he is the only man in the main palace who possesses such a device at present.

Father Isaiah is a man who enjoys the king's complete confidence and for good reason. Absolutely loyal and perfectly devout, he would gladly die rather than betray the House of Darius. He believes the House to be the very manifestation of Mitra's light. He will also never knowingly aid a follower of Asmodeus. He does not lightly break the pendant. He knows the importance of the king's current campaign all too well. In fact, if the princess is "merely" kidnapped, he is far more likely to seek out the assistance of the High Inquisitor Solomon Tyrath (LN male human inquisitor 20 with elite ability scores; he's fully described in Book VI) than to summon the king. He only summons the king if the princess is in clear mortal danger.

There is a reason that Father O'toole might seem cavalier about the princess' well-being. He has deduced the truth about her, thanks to his own observations and several overheard conversations between the king and Bellinda's tutor Lord Thatch. He realizes that princess is not entirely human and has vast magical powers that terrify her tutor. In short, anyone who kidnaps her is likely in for a shock. This information he might share if approached in the right way by someone who pretends to be a friend. He also knows the location of the King's sanctum.

Besides the pendant and a finely made silver and sapphire holy symbol (worth 250 gp) he has nothing of value.

### 3-6. Chambers of the Princess Bellinda

These are the private chambers of the sole child of King Markadian V, the Princess Bellinda of Darius. To say that they are opulent is to engage in wild understatement. The king denies his daughter nothing.

This one girl occupies a 9000 sq. ft. majestic suite. Within is a private bathroom that would make an emperor blush (6A); a grand personal library and office (6B) and a beautifully appointed waiting room (6C). All of this pales before the main bedroom which features a four poster bed of almost ludicrous proportions, a wardrobe so expansive that the princess could go months without wearing the same dress, jewelry, baubles, a virtual museum of toys and wonders, a harpsichord, and a ocean of powders, perfumes and cosmetics. In short, this the room of a true princess of Talingarde.

The Princess' finery is valuable indeed though much of it will be difficult to sell in Talingarde (almost all of it bears her seal). Still the jewelry is worth 12,000 gp; the clothes are worth 9,400 gp; and the perfumes and cosmetics could easily fetch 5,000 gp. There is a further 6,000 gp in toys and trinkets. Together this all weighs 1200 lbs.

And yet, easily the greatest treasure here is Bellinda herself. Her beauty is as impossible to describe as it is to deny. Bellinda has lived most of her life in the golden cage of the Adarium. She yearns for nothing so much as freedom. And she could have it. She long ago figured out how to dispel the *forbiddance* upon her chambers and could teleport away. She stays because she loves her father.

How could a nineteen year old girl be capable of removing the Zealot's powerful forbiddance from the palace? The answer to that is one of Talingarde's greatest secrets. When Markadian V earned his title the Brave in the north defeating bugbears, he actually met the silver dragon Antharia Regina. The young brash soldier and the elder female dragon (in human form) were drawn to each other. For Antharia, the young king, so noble and heroic, quickened her and reminded her that there was yet good in the world. For Markadian, Antharia was like a goddess.

Theri time together was brief and yet it changed them both. Antharia, who had long ago swore she had her last child in the form of the brash Argossarian, once again found a mate. From that brief union came Bellinda. Antharia desired that the child should not be raised as a half-dragon in the north, but instead in her younger years should know what it was to be a mortal. She gave the child to Markadian, visiting her daughter only once a year upon her birthday. Most of the kingdom believes that Markadian V briefly married a foreign princess and that Queen Aria died in childbirth. This is a deception meant to protect those who would judge the young heiress as somehow inhuman or unnatural. Markadian wants his daughter to have as normal a life as is possible for one so high-born.

But the truth is, that is impossible. Bellinda is not a normal young woman and she is certainly not a flighty young girl. Bellinda is a prodigy of arcane magic. Just as Mozart composed his first music at age four, Bellinda cast her first cantrip as she was barely walking, causing toys to float about her bedroom. That is part of the reason for her rare public appearances.

The king has remained worried that his daughter cannot entirely control her amazing gifts. The court wizard has done his best to teach her wizardry, but his efforts have largely been folly. Bellinda is not a wizard; she is likely the most powerful sorcerer on the island of Talingarde today and perhaps ever. In many ways all that the well meaning Lord Thatch has accomplished is to stunt her magical development.

Bellinda is not alone in her chambers. The paladin Sir Richard Thomasson now Lord of Havelyn has rushed to her side. After completing his quest to destroy the Tears of Achlys (see Book V for how that went), he was party to a *commune* spell that he hoped would reveal the Ninth Knot's next move. The yes/no questions were surprisingly on target and revealed that the Ninth Knot would go the Adarium. However, he has made a few unfounded assumptions. He assumes that the villains are coming to the Adarium to kill or kidnap Bellinda. He is wrong about that and does not understand that they are in fact here to kill the king. And so he has taken to staying in the waiting room (**6C**) awaiting our villains' arrival.

He has spent days in the presence of the princess. And while they waited for the assassination attempt, they have chatted. In truth, the princess was glad for the comapny and was eager to hear this traveler's tales of a life of excitement and adventure away from these palace walls. The princess begins to feel something for this handsome adventuring paladin so dedicated and yet so distant.

But there is no time for such feelings now. The princess is worried about her father. Her dreams have been dark as of late and something whispers to her that she will never see him again, at least alive. She has heard a hundred reassurances. "Your father marches at the head of the greatest army to ever move upon this isle. He will be victorious, beautiful one, and then he will return to you." But still the feelings gnaw at her, costing her much sleep. It is actually unlikely that the PCs will meet Bellinda in this book and in fact to be discouraged. The PCs are not here to kill or kidnap the princess. They are here to kill the king. Sequestered as she is in her chambers behind her dwarven guards and golem protector, she is intentionally very difficult to reach. If she hears the sound of combat, she seals her chambers with a *wall of force* (that lasts 19 rounds). For all her power, she is yet afraid and uncertain. She may be a prodigy and a powerful sorcereress but in her entire life she has never fought a single battle nor cast even one spell in anger.

With the force wall up and the forbiddance effect in place, her chambers become near impenetrable. The paladin will use the time to open one of the shuttered windows and blow a signal horn for reinforcements. Hundreds of soldiers will be on there way, but the PCs will have plenty of time to escape or to hide themselves in the king's sanctum (location B-2) which will not be searched.

If the PCs do somehow manage to get through all of these defenses, then in a moment of panic she dispels the forbiddance effect and teleports Sir Richard and herself far far away. All that the PCs find is her empty chambers.

The event detailed below, Dark Wings over the Adarium does happen, because the princess returns to her bed chamber when the coast is clear (and the PCs are about to ambush her father). It is there the princess meets the dragon Chargammon. That event must happen, for it is in that moment that the Princess Bellinda realizes what she is capable of and what she must do to save her people. But is it already too late? Has the darkness that festers in Talingarde become already too strong? We shall see.

### KIDNAPPING THE PRINCESS?

The PCs mission here is not to kidnap the Princess Bellinda. She is merely bait for her father. But it is easy to see how the PCs could decide this is a good side goal. If the PCs decide to capture the princess, let them try.

The golem and the dwarven honor guard should give the PCs a nasty fight all on their own and these guardians will give the princess and the paladin plenty of time to escape.

What should not happen yet is that the PCs should not yet fight Sir Richard and the Princess Bellinda. They will have their chance in later books. Still, the PCs being the PCs may come up with a way where battle becomes inevitable. If so the Princess is a female NG human sorcerer 19 with elite ability scores; Sir Richard is a LG human paladin 16 with elite ability scores. Their full stats appear in later books. Act Four: Adariu

### Brigit of the Brijidine

#### CR 17

### XP 102,400

CG Medium outsider (azata, earth, extraplanar, fire)

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +26

Aura flaming body, holy aura

### DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 19, flat-footed 27 (+4 deflection, +5 Dex, +13 natural) hp 256 (19d10+152)

Fort +22, Ref +15, Will +21

DR 10/cold iron and evil; Immune electricity, fire, petrification; Resist cold 10; SR 28

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

### OFFENSE

### Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee +1 flaming burst keen longsword +25/+20/+15/+10 (1d8+8/17-20 plus 1d6 fire and burn)

Ranged lava blast +24 (16d6 fire plus burn and entrap)

Special Attacks entrap (DC 26, instantaneous), burn (2d6, DC 26), trample (1d8+7, DC 24)

### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 19th; concentration +25)

Constant-holy aura (DC 24)

- At will-flaming sphere (DC 18), heat metal (DC 18), meld into stone (self only), soften earth and stone, stone shape
- 5/day—cure serious wounds, flame strike (DC 21), move earth, spike stones (DC 20), stone tell, summon nature's ally V (earth and fire elementals only), wall of stone (DC 22)

3/day-earthquake, fire storm (DC 23), heal, stoneskin, wall of fire

- During Combat The chamber of stone is actually far from her preferred sort of battlefield. Brigit is a mobile combatant, preferring to flit about unleashing almost unimaginable damage against those who would dare challenge her. She despises these cramped quarters.
- Still, her prefered weapon is her lava blasts with their devastating heat and entrapment effects. However she turns to the sword and summons earth elementals if it become clear her enemies are largely immune or resistant to fire damage.
- Understanding that she is a guest in the Adarium and, being unwilling to do permanent damage, she refrains from using *earthquake* anywhere within the palace and any of her more dramatic fire powers outside of the chamber of stone.

Brigit is quick to heal herself if she is reduced to half hit points or less.

Morale Now that Brigit understands the nature of her enemy and has seen their face, she will not rest in warring against them. Though she may flee for a time to regroup, she will be back until either they or she is dead. For now, if reduced to 64 hit points or less she flees into the chasme of fire. STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 21, Con 24, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 23 Base Atk +19; CMB +24; CMD 43

- Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Lunge, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Toughness
- Skills Craft (any one) +24, Escape Artist +27, Fly +9, Heal +26, Knowledge (nature) +24, Knowledge (planes) +24, Perception +26, Perform (oratory) +25, Sense Motive +26

Languages Celestial, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal, Terran; truespeech SQ heat stone, obsidian blade SPECIAL ABILITIES

Flaming Body (Su) A brijidine's body is molten rock covered in dancing flames. Anyone striking a brijidine with a natural weapon or unarmed strike takes 1d6 points of fire damage. A creature that grapples a brijidine or is grappled by one takes 6d6 points of fire damage each round the grapple persists.

- Heat Stone (Su) Whenever a brijidine uses her meld into stone, soften earth and stone, spike stones, stone shape, or wall of stone spell-like abilities, she can have the affected stone radiate intense heat for 1 minute. Any creature within 5 feet of the stone takes 1d6 fire damage per round.
- Lava Blast (Su) A brijidine can hurl a glob of lava at a target as a standard action. This attack has a range increment of 30 feet.
- **Obsidian Blade (Ex)** At will as a free action, a brijidine can create a blade of jagged volcanic glass that functions as a +1 *flaming burst keen longsword*. One round after it leaves the brijidine's grasp, the weapon decays into useless powder.

### B-1. The Chasm of Fire

In Book Three, Taranea of the Ghael (the emissary in white; Act V, 2-5) either escaped to warn her mistress of the enemy raid or never returned from Valtaerna. Either way, a powerful azata noble named Brigit of the Brijidine, a friend of the phoenix Suchandra, became involved. She decided she would no longer stand idly by.

No one was more surprised that the king when, in a moment of solitude, the ground shook and a rift of flame erupted near his Sanctum (B-2). Brigit emerged and pledged her aid in defeating the rising tide of evil.

Honestly, this put the king at something of a loss. While he welcomed the aid of this powerful spirit, he had no idea how to employ her offer of assistance. Then an idea came to him. The Iraen revere powerful natue spirits such as Brigit. He immediately sent summons to the Iraen hoping that Brigit would convince the barbaric inhabitants of the Caer Bryr to ally with Talingarde.

It is because of Brigit that Keara Kilkerran (See 2-5) has come to Matharyn. However, another thing has kept the powerful azata here. She senses something. She cannot fully explain her premonitions, but she senses that the forces of evil will come to her. And so Brigit waits with the patience that only an immortal can muster. She bathes in the lava filled chasme and awaits her foe. With the PCs arrival, her moment is at hand. She whispers to them from the chasme.

"I am Brigit of the Brijidine, born of earth and fire, and I have divined your wicked designs. The land itself now rises against you. How can you do anything but burn?"

And with that she attacks.

Brigit is standing waste deep in a pool of magma. If she manages to entrap anyone in a glob of lava next to her, she will take a standard action to pull them into the lava and submerge them. Being fully submerged in lava does 20d6 fire damage. Even a creature immune to fire will drown in this lava pool if submerged.

Brigit has no treasure.

### **B-2** The Sanctum

When the PCs arrive in this room, it is likely empty. This room is the sanctum of King Markadian V of Talingarde. When the king truly wanted to be alone and shut out all the world, he would retire to this quiet, isolated, subterranean chamber to contemplate the future of his

realm. So busy as the king been with the crises of recent months, that the sanctum has seen little use and a fine layer of dust cloaks everything in a pail grey.

There is little here besides eight stone columns circular and pedestal. The eight columns each portray one of the eight Mitran virtues: Honesty, Honor, Humility, Compassion, Valor, Justice, Piety and Self-Sacrifice. Instead of directly stating these principles, the columns show them in visual parables. For example the column of justice shows a magistrate delivering sentence upon the guilty. However a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) can easily figure out what these are.

Anyone who casts detect magic here will sense a powerful magical aura about this place from the school of abjuration. There is also a powerful good aura as well. A difficult

knowledge (religion) check (DC 35) will recognize this aura for what it is – the lingering spirit of the king's line that gather in this place and protect and guide their son. The only way to dispel these spirits is to cast *dispel good* (the spirit has a +14 Will save bonus to resist).

Of course, a few minutes after midnight during Chargammon's attack, this place changes dramatically. Upon that moment, a magical portal opens and the King himself and six companions step through.

> In the second before the king arrives, a very powerful magical pulse flashes through out the chamber. unless the aura noted above has been dispelled. Any magical effects intended to harm the king or his companions are effected as if a *greater dispel magic* (cast by a 17th level caster) had targeted them.

> > This only effects magics directly harmful to the king. This will not effect, for example, an evil wizard using mage armor. It would effect though a *symbol* intended to harm or disable the king.

As the king emerges, he is stunned if the chamber is not empty.

*"Where is my daughter?"* he demands.

The PCs have a chance here to gain advantage against the king. If they say something in the vein of "we have her," the king will hesitate and command his servants to hold. This

could give the PCs a chance to gain surprise or to spring an ambush. Any hint the PCs have harmed her or that she's dead and the king attacks red with rage.

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### King Markadian V called the Brave

CR 15

### XP 51,200

Male human fighter (shielded fighter) 16 LG Medium humanoid Init +8; Senses Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 17, flat-footed 24 (+6 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, +6 shield) hp 152 (16d10+64)

Fort +16, Ref +11, Will +7; +4 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities active defense +4, bravery +4

### OFFENSE

### Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 longsword +23/+18/+13/+9 (1d8+7/19-20) or +2 heavy steel shield +25/+21/+16/+11 (1d4+10)

Ranged +2 composite longbow (+2 Str) +20/+15/+10/+5 (1d8+4/x3) Special Attacks shield buffet (swift action), shield fighter +3

#### TACTICS

- During Combat In almost all situations, the king uses his combat expertise to increase his armor class. He can even use his shield to deflect ranged touch attacks (ray shield). He knows that spellcasters are often his greatest foes, so tries to close with them so he can disrupt their spells and lay them low with an avalanche of blows. In the tight spaces of the sanctuary, they cannot fly away from him, so he uses this to his full advantage.
- **Morale** Has been summoned here because he believes his daughter's life is in mortal danger. He will gladly give his life to save hers. He fights to the death to for the life and honor of his daughter.
- Modified Statistics When wielding a shield and using Combat Expertise, King Markadian V has AC 40, touch 26; Melee +2 longsword +18/+13/+8/+3(1d8+7/19-20) or +2 heavy steel shield +21/+16/+11/+6 (1d4+10); CMB +16; CMD 51

### STATISTICS

### Str 16 (20), Dex 18, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14

Base Atk +16/+11/+6/+1; CMB +21; CMD 42

- Feats Combat Expertise, Die Hard, Disruptive, Dodge, Endurance, Greater Shield Focus, Greater Shield Specialization (heavy shield), Improved Initiative, Improved Shield Bash, Missile Shield, Mobility, Ray Shield, Shield Focus, Shield Specialization (heavy shield), Spellbreaker, Spring Attack, Toughness, Whirlwind Attack
- Skills Bluff +18, Climb +18, Diplomacy +18, Sense Motive +16, Swim +18

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven

Combat Gear arrows (20), potions of cure serious wounds (3)

Other Gear +2 composite longbow (+2 Str),+2 chain shirt, +2 heavy steel shield, +2 longsword, amulet of natural armor +2, belt of physical might (Str, Dex) +2, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2

Another possible tact is for the PCs to pretend to be servants of the king and lure him into an ambush. The king is no fool but he is used to be attended to by his many servants. Regardless, the king will not be delayed long. He knows his daughter is in peril and longs to rush to her aid. If the PCs claim to have his daughter, he will demand to see her. If they can't produce her, he cries "I will not be deceived by your lies, serpent!" He attacks.

Combat is almost certainly inevitable. The PCs are here to kill the king. Markadian will tolerate no delays in rushing to his daughter's side. Anyone who stands in his way will face his wrath. It is as simple as that.

### Father Dorian DeMascas, Inquisitor of Mitra

### XP 38,400

Male human inquisitor 15 LG Medium humanoid Init +8; Senses Perception +25

### DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+9 armor, +1 Dex, +4 shield) hp 97 (15d8+30) Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +12 OFFENSE

### Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 longsword +16/+11/+6 (1d8+4/17-20) or +2 longsword improved vital strike +16 (3d8+4/17-20) or +2 longsword judgment (destruction, justice) +20/+15/+10 (1d8+10/17-20)

Ranged javelin +12 (1d6+2) or javelin improved vital strike +12 (3d6+2) or javelin judgment (destruction, justice) +16 (1d6+8)

Special Attacks exploit weakness, greater bane (15 rounds/day), holy lance 2/day (7 rounds), judgment 5/day (destruction, justice), solo tactics

#### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15<sup>th</sup>, concentration +18)

15 round/day—discern lies

At Will—detect alignment (chaos, evil, good or law)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15<sup>th</sup>, concentration +18) touch of good 6/day

#### Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 15<sup>th</sup>, concentration +18)

- 5<sup>th</sup> (3/day)—flame strike (DC 18), mass cure light wounds, righteous might, true seeing
- 4<sup>th</sup> (4/day)—cure critical wounds, divine power, freedom of movement, holy smite (DC 17)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> (6/day)—cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic circle against evil, prayer, searing light
- 2<sup>nd</sup> (6/day)—aid, align weapon, cure moderate wounds, resist energy, silence (DC 15), tongues
- 1<sup>st</sup> (6/day)—bless, comprehend languages, cure light wounds, protection from evil, sanctuary, true strike
- (at will)—acid splash, create water, detect magic, light, read magic, stabilize

### Domain Good

TACTICS

- During Combat The inquisitor casts *true seeing* (15 minute duration) and *righteous might* (15 round duration) just before stepping through the teleportation circle. Thus, he arrives as a large-sized warrior of justice who uses his judgments and spells to terrifying effect.
- He prefers to engage the enemy directly with his longsword. Even though a potent spellcaster, he relishes punishing the wicked with swift sword strokes.
- **Morale** This fanatical servant of Mitra views himself as the king's personal bodyguard. He will die to defend King Markadian or to follow his commands.

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 14 Base Atk +11/+6/+1; CMB +13; CMD 24

- Feats Alertness, Armor Proficiency (Heavy), Combat Casting, Coordinated Defense, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Lookout, Out Flank, Shield Caster, Shield Wall, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (longsword)
- Skills Diplomacy +20, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (religion) +18, Perception +25, Sense Motive +32, Spellcraft +18, Survival +21 (+28 to follow tracks)

Languages Common

SQ cunning initiative +3, monster lore +3, stern gaze +7, track +7 Combat Gear javelin (4), potion of cure serious wounds Other Gear +2 banded mail, +2 heavy steel shield, +2 longsword

Book Four: Of Dragons and Princesses

### Brother Quintus of Austea

CR 1

XP 38,400

Male human cleric 15 LG Medium humanoid Init +1; Senses Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+9 armor, +1 Dex, +4 shield) hp 127 (15d8+60) Fort +13, Ref +9, Will +15

### OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 longsword +17/+12/+7 (1d8+5/17-20)

**Ranged** +2 *light crossbow* +14 (1d8+2/19-20)

Special Attacks channel positive energy 6/day (DC 22, 8d6), holy lance 2/day (7 rounds), staff of order 2/day (7/day)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15<sup>th</sup>, concentration +19) touch of good 7/day, touch of law 7/day

### **Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 15<sup>th</sup>, concentration +19)

- 8<sup>th</sup>—holy aura<sup>D</sup> (DC 22), stormbolts (DC 22)
- 7<sup>th</sup>—holy word<sup>D</sup>(DC 21), regenerate, resurrection
- 6<sup>th</sup>—banishment (DC 20), blade barrier<sup>D</sup> (DC 20), greater dispel magic, heal
- 5<sup>th</sup>—breath of life, dispel evil<sup>D</sup> (DC 19), disrupting weapon (DC 19), flame strike (DC 19), righteous might
- 4<sup>th</sup>—death ward, dismissal (DC 18), divine power, freedom of movement, holy smite<sup>D</sup> (DC 18), tongues
- 3<sup>rd</sup>—archon's aura (DC 17), dispel magic, magic circle against evil<sup>o</sup>, prayer, searing light, wrathful mantle
- 2<sup>nd</sup>—aid, align weapon (good)<sup>D</sup>, bull's strength, consecrate, shield other, spear of purity (DC 16)
- 1<sup>st</sup>—bless, comprehend languages, detect evil, divine favor, protection from evil<sup>®</sup>, shield of faith
- o (at will)—*detect magic, light, read magic, stabilize* D domain spell; Domains Good, Law

#### TACTICS

- During Combat Brother Quintus' primary mission in any combat is to keep the king alive and empowered. Just before they teleport here, Quintus casts *archon's* aura, *prayer* and *holy aura* on the entire party and *bull's strength* on the king. *Holy aura* still has 13 rounds left and *prayer* has 12 rounds remaining as the band arrives in the sanctum. *Archon's aura* and *bull's strength* will last for roughly fifteen more minutes.
- When battle begins, he uses his more powerful spells to destroy enemies only if it appears the king is in no immediate danger. If the king is magically afflicted, he uses *greater dispel magic* to end the effect. If the king's significantly wounded, he heals his liege. If the king dies, he immediately resurrects him. He will do everything he can to make sure the king survives.
- **Morale** A religious fanatic and life-long supporter of the House of Darius, Brother Quintus will gladly die to defend the king or the princess.

### STATISTICS

### Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 16 Base Atk +11/+6/+1; CMB +14; CMD 25

Feats Armor Proficiency (heavy), Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Channel, Improved Critical (longsword), Leadership, Selective Channeling, Spell Penetration, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Heal +22, Knowledge (religion) +18, Spellcraft +18 Languages Common

### SQ aura

Combat Gear bolts (10)

Other Gear +2 banded mail, +2 heavy steel shield, +2 light crossbow, +2 longsword, cloak of resistance +2, headband of alluring charisma +2, healer's kit, silver holy symbol, diamond worth 10,000 gp (for resurrecting the king or the princess)

### Knights of the King's Guard (4) XP 6,400 each (25,600 XP total) Male human cavalier 10 LG Medium humanoid Init +5; Senses Perception +13 DEFENSE AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield) hp 85 (10d10+30) Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +5; +3 vs. fear OFFENSE Speed 20 ft.

CR 9

Melee battleaxe +13/+8 (1d8+3/x3) Ranged throwing axe +11 (1d6+3)

Special Attacks aid allies, cavalier's charge, challenge 4/day, greater tactician 2/day (8 rounds), strategy

### TACTICS

During Combat These knights would rather being following the king in a valiant cavalry charge. But since they must fight in these cramped quarters, they still do their best, charging into the fray. They use their battleaxes to hew through both the enemy or any door that may be keeping the king from his daughter.

Morale These knights fight to the death to defend the king.

### Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14

Base Atk +10/+5; CMB +13; CMD 24

- Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lighting Reflexes, Mounted Combat, Outflank, Paired Opportunists, Ride-By Attack, Skill Focus (ride), Spirited Charge
- Skills Handle Animal +15 (+20 with his mount), Intimidate +15, Perception +13, Ride +14 (+20 with his mount), Survival +13 (+18 find food and water, protecting against harsh water)

### Languages Common

- SQ banner 2, expert trainer +5, mount (horse), order (order of the dragon)
- Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds
- Other Gear banded mail, battleaxe, heavy wooden shield, throwing axes (4)

### **BLACK WINGS OVER THE ADARIUM**

In the midnight hour on the night of the new moon, Chargammon fulfills his oath. He flies in low, gliding upon the powerful night winds that sweep off the southern ocean into the Cambrian Bay. He is silent, wings unflapping. He is cloaked in magical darkness. His comes like a thief in the night.

And then he casts aside stealth. His onslaught ensues by drowning the upper halls with a wave of acid, one hundred and twenty feet long. Servants and guards die and melt into an unidentifiable slurry of molten flesh. The great wyrm begins to rip the top of the palace off and bellows a war cry that reverberates through the moonless night. Even in Matharyn across the bay, they hear his wail. And fear seizes the capital of Talingarde.

A contingent of knights rush upward, eager to defend both the palace and the princess. This is their last mistake. Chargammon summons a fog of caustic vapor and fights them even as it sears their flesh. Brave soldiers of Talingarde die screaming in his wake. Chargammon sniffs the air and catches a scent unlike the soldiers. This must be Bellinda. He moves like a great angel of death through the palace. Anyone in the Adarium with any sense, flees. A few valiant soldiers do not. They meet Mitra quickly.

At last, Chargammon nears his prey. No *wall of force* will stop him. He rips off the roof and burrows in through the ceiling. He enters the princesses opulent bed chamber and discovers one guardian not fleeing – Sir Richard Thomasson. The paladin faces the dragon alone. Chargammon lets forth a laugh that would chill an ice devil's blood. "So, you desire to die in battle with a legend?"

"No," answers the paladin. "I intend to slay one."

The dragon's laugh turns into a scowl. His eyes burn with the full wrath of hell. Chargammon does not tolerate insults nor does he suffer fools. He lashes out with a blast of acidic fury and is annoyed to discover the paladin still standing in its wake.

It becomes a standing fight then – dragon against knight. Sir Richard answers the dragon's impressive assaults with powerful blows, smiting the dragon with painful sacred sword strokes. Each blow leaves horrid scars across ancient black scales. Chargammon for his part, inflicts horrid wounds upon the paladin that would kill any lesser man. He lashes the knight with claw, tooth, tail and wing. He lacerates flesh from bone and soon the dragon stands over the fallen wreck of Sir Richard.

"Pathetic. Time to die, little hero," the dragon says as the paladin uses all his strength to rise one last time.

And then something happened that Chargammon did not anticipate. Dressed in a robe of silver, a beautiful young maiden emerges from her sanctum and stands in front of the stricken knight. Upon her robe is embroidered the star of Mitra and a white unicorn.

Chargammon sniffs the air. Yes, this is her. But there is more. He smells something else, something familiar. And suddenly he recognizes the scent.

"Antharia," the dragon whispers.

The princess speaks. "Ah, you've met my mother."

And for the first time, she unleashes herself. Four powerful meteor strikes rip into the great wyrm one after another. Chargammon enjoys powerful magic defenses and this magic tears them asunder. In his old age, the dragon is not as quick as in his youth and the four darting meteor smash into him with blinding speed. How could the princess miss as gigantic a target as this vast dragon? Already badly mauled from his battle with the paladin, the *meteor swarm* is too great. The dragon topples. This is how the great wyrm Chargammon dies. No one is more stunned than the princess herself.

"Did...did you see that?" says Bellinda. "I did that!"

The wounded knight rasps, "You are your mother's daughter. More than that, you are Mitra's chosen. You are our light in this time of darkness. Maybe the last light..."

Bellinda faces her protector. "Richard, you're hurt!"

"I'll recover, your highness. The dragon...is not alone. He has allies ... the Knot of Thorns. They're everywhere."

"The Knot of Thorns? Who are they?"

"They are the root of this war, this pestilence and all the ills that have befallen Talingarde. They are our true enemies, highness. And until they are destroyed, you are in the gravest danger."

"Tell me more. Tell me everything." And with that, she touches the Paladin and they are gone.



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### **CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE**

With the assassination of King Markadian and the PC's departure from the Adarium, this adventure is at an end. As long as King Markadian is slain, their mission is a success. The King is dead, Chargammon is slain, the Adarium is in ruins and the Princess Bellinda has fled with the wounded Sir Richard. Possibly the PCs also completed some of the optional "side-quests". Did they:

- 1) Slay Brigit of the Brijidine or did she escape?
- 2) Find the Liber Darian?
- 3) Figure out where Thorn's phylactery is hidden?
- 4) Reassemble the sword Helbrand?

If they succeeded at all four tasks, congratulations are in order. Your PCs have come to the Adarium and emerged triumphant. If they failed at any of those tasks, fear not. Encounters in Book V will allow them to either rectify those failures or face the consequences.

The end of this adventure dovetails straight into the beginning of the next. Soon Tiadora will seek out the PCs one last time. And this time, if the PCs follow her commands, then they march to their deaths.

Cardinal Adrastus Thorn is now terrified of the Ninth Knot. That they were capable of raiding the Adarium, slaying King Markadian V and escaping with their lives does nothing but fill him with fear. His life's work is coming to fruition before his eyes and it is being accomplished not by him, but by masterminds he unleashed from their cells in Branderscar prison. He knows now that he must act quickly. He must slay the Ninth Knot. Talingarde is *his*. These usurpers will not take it from him.

### "OF DRAGONS AND PRINCESSES" AS A STANDALONE ADVENTURE

By itself, this adventure is focused upon killing the King. The PCs are a band of villains tasked with slaying Markadian V. With his death and the battle of Fallings Bridge, Talingarde is utterly defeated. There is no complicated plot of betrayal. involving Cardinal Thorn. Dessiter does not visit them in the dragon's dome. And when Chargammon attacks the Adarium, he gobbles up the naive young (entirely human) Princess Bellinda in one delicious bite.

The House of Darius is downfallen and Talingarde is ready to be given into the hands of Asmodeus. You could have a short follow-up session where the PCs deal with Chargammon's inevitable betrayal. The PCs could have one more climatic encounter where they deal with the dragon they used to bring down the kingdom.

### **TROUBLESHOOTING THE ADVENTURE**

Of Dragons and Princesses is a player driven adventure. Little happens that forces the PCs to participate in any portion of this book. Still, this is an adventure path rather an a sandbox. And so we presente advice here how to steer your villianous band towards the major plot elements all the while maximizing their freedom and ensuring the importance of their decisions.

### My PCs don't care about sacking Daveryn

There is no particular reason that they should. The sack of Daveryn is a chance for the PCs to get to acquire extra allies, treasure and experience. It is effectively a sidequest. However, if the PCs do nothing the duke and the seer Polydorus escape. Make sure the PCs meet them later at the Adarium. The PCs miss out on treasure and experience, but you can make up for this by making their travels through the Ansgarian Mountains to rescue Jeratheon more dangerous. Speaking of Jeratheon, one of the bugbears finds the Eagle Lord's letter in the empty tower of Polydorus and brings it to the Fire-Axe. Unsure what it means, he sends it to the PCs.

*My PCs are done taking orders from Thorn. They ignore Tiadora's orders.* 

The PCs are not yet in a position to successfully oppose Thorn. Tiadora and the nine sisters are very deadly foes if threatened or attacked. If Tiadora is rebuffed, then the devil teleports away. Thorn's stats are given in Book Five. With his phylactery still secure, he can attack the PCs with impugnity, demanding their obedience. He hates to use such blunt implement however. He would prefer the PCs be cowed into service with threats upon their immortal, damned souls. Regardless, Thorn will stop at nothing to see the last phase of his master plan completed. Remember, even though now beseiged by doubts and fears, Cardinal Adrastus Thorn is a ruthless, determined foe. The PCs cross him at their peril.

### The PCs are too terrified to visit Chargammon

Ultimately, if the PCs refuse to visit Chargammon, then they must find another way to draw the king to the Adarium. Honestly, they probably have the means to accomplish this. By this level they can likely cast some truly impressive and destructive spells. The problem with making themselves the focal point of the king's enmity, is that they must fight not only the king but every guard and knight who rushes to answer this emergency. They will be fighting an army by themselves. Perhaps emphasizing this reality as they plan their assault will encourage them to rethink visiting Chargammon. Talking to Chargammon is certainly risky, but it really is the best plan. But if not, you have all the mechanics you need to run this epic and potentially lethal battle. It should probably run similarly to the Battle of Saintsbridge (see Book Three) with wave after wave of Mitran soldiery attacking them to defend the princess. And in the last battle, they face the king himself. The princess though should still get away. Instead of fully realizing her powers with *meteor swarm*, she instead discovers them with a powerful greater teleport that rips through the wards of the Adarium. Her moment of confidence and awakening is not slaying Chargammon, it is seeing her father murdered. The PCs should well understand how powerful a motivator vengeance can be.

### The PCs are not going to visit Eiramanthus' isle either!

If the PCs bypass Chargammon, you can still arrange for them to visit Eiramanthus' isle. It is mentioned very briefly that Eiramanthus has contacts within Talingarde who keep him up to date on current events. Perhaps these contacts have lead him to offer aid to the king. In the Council Chambers (2-4 of the Adarium) or in the King's Quarters (1-15) the PCs could discover concrete proof that the king has gained a new and powerful ally – the dragon Eiramanthus. They must face him alone in his domain or face him at the head of an army of Talirean knights. At this point, Act Three can be run unchanged as the PCs move to counter a new and deadly ally of their enemy.

### The PCs really want to try and capture Bellinda!

This is discussed above. However, capturing Bellinda signficantly changes the course of the adventure. Bellinda is actually one of their major opponents in Book VI. She needs to get away. And she has all the resources to accomplish this. Bellinda is a CR 19 opponent (for now – she will get worse as she learns to fully control her gift). By herself, this little waif of a girl is actually more dangerous than the entire retinue of King Markadian including the king himself. She is over the PC's head.

Still, who am I to tell you or your PCs what to do? If your PCs want to fight Bellinda, you can let them. If so and the PCs are triumphant, the major enemy of Book VI instead becomes Bellinda's mother the elder wyrm Antharia Regina, returned to avenge her slain daughter (and also likely slain son – didn't the PCs also slay Argossarian in Book II?).

Instead of the good folk of Talingarde rallying around a nineteen year old queen, instead they rally around the reborn Queen Aria returned from the grave to save Talingarde in its moment of greatest darkness. If the PCs aren't careful, they may lose their throne to a dragon.

### My PCs failed to kill the king. What now?

This is a major failure. If the king survives, he returns to his army and takes over command. In time, Vastenus Barca's treachery is discovered and the general is slain.

With the army in the hands of King Markadian, the Battle of Fallingsbridge (see below) never happens. The Talirean army does not attack the fortified northern gate and instead attacks through the comparatively weakened southern wall. He pauses and builds great trebuchets to batter down the defenses. Fearing that he is about to be attacked by an invincible foe, the Fire-Axe launches a beautifully executed night raid near Tandengate.

The Battle of Tandengate is a brutal affair almost without precedence in modern warfare. The bugbears, with their night vision, inflict horrific losses upon the army of Talingarde, but they are simply outnumbered too badly. Great bonfires are lit, illuminating the night and soon the battle turns into a rout. Knights ride down the Fire-Axe's horde like grass.

The Fire-Axe himself is whisked away to the Agathium by Tiadora and the nine sisters, barely surviving the blood bath. Almost every other member of his horde is destroyed. The Fire-Axe's string of victories come crashing down in one definitive defeat at Tandengate. Talingarde suffers greatly for the victory, but it is a victory. Sir Richard has found a way to destroy the Tears of Achlys and the hordes of the Fire-Axe are broken. Talingarde is triumphant. They have weathered the Cardinal's twin trials unbowed.

But there may still be a way to salvage victory for ou villains. If the PCs can destroy Thorn and become master of the Nine Knots, they can learn that Thorn has another army he has been amassing on the mainland. Some part of the Cardain's plan can be salvaged. These possibilites are covered in more depth in Book Five and Book Six. The Way of the Wicked continues, but not in triumph. Instead, the PCs are once more in hiding from a newly resurgent Darian-led Talingarde. Everywhere are heard prayer of thanks to the Shining Lord, Mitra.

The more things change....

### Can this be the end of the campaign?

Very easily. The Princess is only a frightened girl, not the daughter of a dragon. Thorn would never betray his most loyal servants – he instead rewards them with the throne. The PCs must still slay Sir Richard, of course. Hunting him down could be the final climactic encounter. Talingarde is defeated. Evil is triumphant!

### THE BATTLE OF FALLINGSBRIDGE

Another event of great import happens while the PCs are raiding the Adarium. In the city of Daveryn, General Vastenus Barca leads the armies of Talingarde into battle against the forces of the Fire-Axe. He gives a rousing speech to his assembled throng before the battle about how "...in one glorious stroke we will free Daveryn and slay the monster that threatens us all!" His men gallantly raise their swords and salute their high-born general.

General Barca orders these valiants en masse to attack the northern gate. "They think their flank conquered and pacified. They will never expect we men of the south and west to attack them from the north!"

Thanks to the treacherous infiltration of the city, Northgate was completely undamaged in the fighting as the city was taken. The gate house of Northgate plus its two flanking towers are fully manned by the Fire-Axe's most veteran troops as the battle begins. Every square foot of those ramparts is crammed with hardened killers. Behind the gate waited a host of ogres and trolls kept in line by a mighty frost giant.

Again and again, the men of Talingarde charged those gate houses. Valiant knights, hardy yeomanry, and a thousand low-born volunteers here only because they believed in the dream that is Talingarde – charged those walls following the *Sacred Banner of St. Theonas* that had shielded through the winter chill. And upon those walls they died. Not by the tens nor the hundred, but by their thousands. They hallow the ground with their sacrifice.

Duty officers and lesser soldiers beg General Barca to stop the assault. "No," he answers, "I can feel the enemy breaking. And once broken here, we shall break them everywhere." The slaughter continued unabated.

Northgate was Duke Martin's masterpiece of fortification. The Duke knew that the Fire-Axe ws coming for him and so he had dedicated uncountable resources to shoring up this gatehouse over the last winter to be ready for the northern invaders. Its walls were buttressed by stone masons forced to work through winter nights. Its gates framed in iron by smiths heated only by their forge fires. Its armories stocked with tens of thousands of arrows made by every fletcher in the city.

Only a single bridge crossed the River Briden, here at its deepest and swiftest. This bridge was named for its architect – Sir Falstaff. The locals named the old stone crossing Fallingsbridge almost as a joke since it was so sturdily built. And upon that bridge, for hours upon one fine spring day, did the armies of Talingarde at the behest of a treacherous lord, give their lives for a king already dead. It is almost shocking how well the men of Talingarde fared in a battle so horrifically stacked against them. They charged the gate house not once but seven times. They managed to push a battering ram up to the gate even under the most intense hail of missile fire imaginable. Even as boiling oil poured upon their ranks like a black waterfall, they broke the outer gate and swarmed into the gatehouse. Past countless murder-holes and arrow slits they pushed. They broke the inner gate and there they met the frost giant king's personal guard. And only there in the streets of conquered Daveryn did their might at last wane.

Every giant, ogre and troll who barred their passage died that day. The knights of the Alerion led the charge and finally managed to achieve what seemed for a moment a pyrrhic victory. But the survivors of the slaughter were too few. And just as it seemed this might be the most horrific sort of triumph – The Fire-Axe himself took the field leading his cadre of lieutenants and their personal warbands. And with one charge, every hero left alive beneath the Northgate died.

The Fire-Axe raised the fallen *Standard of St. Theonas* that had marched at the armies fore. With his infernal weapon he set it aflame and cried victory loud enough for even hell to hear. Far away upon the field, Vastenus Barca broke a clay seal. His work was done. Tiadora and her furies teleported to his location and slew all that remained of his high command. Tiadora approached General Barca, covered in the blood of his most trusted subordinates, and bowed. *"Well done, Lord of the Cainite Knot."* 

General Barca looked upon the slaughter that surrounded him and shed a single tear. *"You promised me a crown! Where is it?"* 

### "You shall have your crown."

General Barca teleported away to the Agathium, Cardinal Thorn's stronghold far in the North. General Barca will be reborn, remade into the Scion. He is Thorn's chosen to be the next king of Talingarde. He will be perfect. Utterly wicked, dedicated to Asmodeus and kept in line by threat of revealing who he truly is and what he has done. He will be Thorn's puppet upon the throne. General Barca does not recognize it yet, but his bargain with devils to become king has earned him only a lifetime of slavery. He belongs to Thorn body and soul.

And perhaps he has earned not even that. Soon enough a band of villains even more ruthless and dangerous than Cardinal Thorn will attack the Agathium. And it will be only by their choice if Barca will earn his traitor's crown.

But that is a tale yet to be told...

### GAZETTEER: MATHARYN

**Note:** This article builds on the *Talingarde Gazetteer* found in Book One: Knot of Thorns.

### Matharyn

### LG metropolis

Corruption -2; Crime +0; Economy +3; Law +2; Lore +2; Society +0

Qualities Pious, Prosperous, Strategic Location Danger 8

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government hereditary autocracy

Population 105,000 (89,450 humans; 6,700 dwarves; 5,200 halfelves, 1,400 halflings, 850 elves, 210 aasimar; 1190 other )

Notable NPCs

Markadian V called the Brave (LG male human fighter 16) Princess Bellinda of Darius, daughter of Markadian and Antharia Regina the silver (LG female human sorcerer [draconic bloodline] 20)

High Inquisitor Solomon Tyrath (LN male human inquisitor 20)

**High Cardinal Vitallian of Estyllis,** head of the Mitra Church in Talingarde (LG male human aristocrat 5/expert 10)

Lord Vastenus Barca, General of the King's Army (LE male elven fighter 15/aristrocrat 4)

Brother Quintus of Austea, spiritual advisor to the king (LG male human cleric 15)

Heironymous Thatch, court wizard and tutor to the princess (NG male human wizard 15)

Mayor Hubert Rowen (LG male human aristocrat 10)

Sir Janus, Adarium Watch-Captain (LG male human fighter 13) MARKETPLACE

Base Value 22,400; Purchase Limit 150,000 gp ; Spellcasting 8<sup>th</sup> level divine, 7<sup>th</sup> level arcane

Minor Items nearly all are available; Medium Items 4d4; Major Items 3d4

### THE ELDER CITY

To understand the history of this great city, you must understand the history of Talingarde itself. Every major civilization on the island has claimed this place for its own at one time or another. Matharyn is the oldest human settlement in all of Talingarde. Located at the south-

ernmost reaches of the island – it enjoys a mild climate. By the sea and the bay, the fishing is legendary. The promontory here commands entrance to the rich Cambrian Bay beyond. And the land upon the nearby peninsula is rich and arable. The only surprise about Matharyn would be if it were ever uninhabited.

The first civilized settlers here were dwarves and they likely took it from the bugbears that once spread across this entire island. The old dwarven fortress controlled access to the bay and guarded against threats to the wealthy dwarven mountain holds within the inner kingdom. The old dwarvish word for 'gate' is 'maat' and likely that is where this place first got its name. When the first humans came – the Iraen – they settled here and in when the dwarves fell from prominence, the fortress fell into the hands of the barbarians. What name it bore then, none now know. Exact timelines become difficult throughout an age of illerate barbarian warlords. Exactly how many claimed lordship and how long they reigned is a matter of conjecture for scholars. However, the town was little more than a hill fort built from crumbling dwarven ruins surrounded by hovels when the Talireans arrived. Through the following years, what was once a single village had split into two, because of the squabbling of ancient chieftains. And so it was the Iraen who gave the city the second part of its name.

Ira Annoch Araen (Ear-ah An-knock Ae-rain) means roughly 'the place of great lordship over all the people'. Of course foreigners could make little sense of such a complex and unpronouneable title, and so the second village was often simply called 'Araen'.

The twin villages of Maath and Araen were amongst the Talireans first conquests. The Iraen were caught off guard by the foreign invaders and unable to defend against their superior military might and unity. Maath-Aryn (this being the invaders' best attempt at pronouncing the old Iraen words) was born under the Barcan kings of old. It became their capital. Then they built the sister city of Aath-Aryn. Though Aath was lost in a disastrous earthquake and now lies at the bottom of the sea, legends of lost Aath persist to this day.

In time the Barcan kingdoms unified after a grueling civil war and the nation of Talingarde was born. By then, the name of Maath-Aryn had shifted to its modern spelling Matharyn and the city began to take on its more modern character. At first, it was a small city by the standards of the kingdoms of the mainland. The isle of

> Talingarde was always regarded as a remote backwater by more established kingdoms and Matharyn was scarcely known outside of the realm.

It was only under the reign of the Victor that the city truly exploded in size and influence. The Victor, always a confident ruler, swept away the xenophobic isolationism of the Barcan regime and opened up trade with the mainland. Even though much of that trade ended up going through Ghastenhall, some went to Matharyn and the king taxed it all. The city grew rich and prosperous. From across the land, settlers moved to live near the shining court of the Victor. Matharyn

doubled in size and doubled again. It became a true metropolis by the end of the Victor's fourty-six year reign. With the Victor's much mourned death, his son Markadian II came to power. Though Markadian II was a poor and disinterested king who only lasted six years upon the throne, he did fancy himself an architect. Under his reign, many public works projects were commissioned and he founded several of Talingarde's universities, libraries and places of learning. To this day the colleges of Talingarde still celebrate "the Scholar King". Perhaps most famously, the great palace across the channel – the Adarium – was built at his command.

Markadian III called the Mad reigned far too briefly to have any true impact upon the city. He did leave one lasting legacy. He had the highest tower of the Castle Darian expanded upwards to he could fly about the city from this high perch. It was from this very tower where he ended his reign after several of his knights tossed him from it when he began plotting an invasion against hell itself. To this day, the high tower stands and is sometimes called "Angel Height" or even "the King's Plunge".

With the death of the mad Angel-King, Markadian IV called the Zealot came to power. This King would transform the city as well. The faith of Mitra has always been prominent under the Darian regime, but under the Zealot, it became the state religion. He destroyed every trace of the Asmodean faith by fire and inquest.

The other faiths he did not persecute directly, but they were sufficiently discouraged that they largely fell into obscurity. Now few even remember that under the Barcan regime, Matharyn was a nation of many gods. The Zealot reigned for twelve years and during that time, he build the great cathedral of Matharyn and innumerable other religious structures. He turned the city of Matharyn into a city of Mitra. His mark is still indelibly stamped across the polis and he has been canonized into the Mitra Faith as St. Markadian Pious.

By comparison the current king's impact, though he has already reigned longer than his father, has been more negligible. He has allowed the city to grow of its own accord. He did expand the Adarium considerably to accommodate his daughter and her needs. There are also a few monuments about town of his deeds, but largely Markadian V called the Brave was happy with the city he had inherited – Matharyn, City of Light.

Still, there are those that whisper that hints of its past remain. There are stories of dwarven ghosts, ancient Iraen burial mounds connected by the sewers, bugbear artifacts and Barcan secret chambers in the old castles. The old ghosts still linger, the storytellers say. The elder Matharyn still bears its secrets and even today there are places where the light of Mitra has never shone.



Gazetteer: Mathary



### THE CITY OF LIGHT

In the entire world, there is perhaps no other city the size of Matharyn so dedicated to the concepts of law and good. Matharyn is not perfect by any means, but this is a city of more than a hundred thousand people where many citizens do not lock their doors at night. This is a thriving metropolis that once went five months without a single reported mugging. Matharyn is not paradise, but it may be as close to paradise as this mortal plane could produce without the direct intervention of the divine.

In their travels, the PCs have encountered a few statues of the Victor (the first Darian King of Talingarde). Here in this city, they are inescapable. Depictions of the Victor and the current king are everywhere. There are hundreds of marble monuments honoring the deeds of the Victor and the Brave. Markadian IV (the Zealot) has a few here and there (mostly connected with religious institutions). Even the Princess Bellinda has a statue of her erected just last year in the Circus Virginius just south of Arynsill. These statues may be erected by state decree, but the care and attention they receive prove that the people of Matharyn truly love their royal family.

Likewise the Church of Mitra is beloved in this city of light. In places like Ghastenhall and Farholde with their malcontent remnant of Barcan nobility, it may be easy to convince oneself that the Mitran faith was forced on the Talireans. Here that is a hard sell. The faith of the Shining Lord is everywhere. Nary a home is without a wooden holy symbol hung over the gate. Churches and houses of faith are ubiquitous. Chandlers can barely keep sacred candles in stock and every night a thousand lights burn in defiance of the darkness.

Matharyn is also a city of charity. While there are places of excess like the mansion of the Golden Bow, there are also numerous hospitals and houses of healing. Even with the tragic destruction of the Order of St. Macarius, healers are not a rare profession in this town. And though they charge well-off citizens to make ends meet, almost all of them donate some part of their labor to ease the suffering of the poor and unfortunate. It is better to be poor here than any other city in the world.

Visiting Matharyn may be a sobering moment for our villains. This is what they are fighting against. This peaceful, thriving, idyllic city is what they seek destroy and replace with something they insist could be better. The beloved and temperate monarchs, exemplified by good king Markadian V, are whom they seek to supplant. No doubt your villains will be quick to find reasons for their heinous deeds. But here in the streets of the city of light, those rationales may seem hollow and self-serving.

### SEVEN HILLS AND A RIVER

The city of Matharyn consists geographically of seven hills that surround a single river, The river Danyth is small and runs a few miles up the pennisula before it breaks into a hundred little streams and largely disappears. Still, it brings gentle fresh water that rinses the inevitable filth of the city out into the endless ocean. Farmers also use the Danyth to barge in tons of grain and produce to the green markets of Carsburn. Around that gentle sustaining river rise seven hills, each covered with the city itself.

### Kingsill

The tallest of the seven hills by far, this is where the Castle Darian and the old palace are located. This is also the only part of the city that is still walled. Two great walls encompass the hill. One surrounds Barsyndale, the oldest district in the city, and the other surrounds the castle and the old palace. Two gates lead to this hill – Victorsgate (on the west) and Ferrygate (on the east; pronounced Fair-a-gut). To get to Ferrygate, you must (unsurprisingly) take a ferry.

Kingsill is place of old wealth and ancient traditions. Not everyone who lives in this part of town is well off. In fact, some of the old neighborhoods are quite poor. Still there is a feeling among the people living here that they share in the city's history more than most and that they are the heart of Matharyn, and indeed the whole kingdom.

There are a few houses left in this district that still have traces of dwarven architecture. They tend to be very sturdy and well-built and fetch a high price. There are also lingering tales that most of them are haunted.

### Norsill

The northernmost hill, this small broad rise is barely detectable anymore. It is completely covered by houses and shops, traders and artisans. Norsill (along with nearby Carsburn) is where the city-life of the metropolis begins to fade and the endless rural townships of the upper pennisula and Heartland begins. The houses here much more resemble the quaint country cottages of the farmlands than the tight row houses of the city. This is not accidental – a large number of retired farmers live here.

Distinguishing between Carsburn (detailled below) and Norsill is an artificial distinction. Their mutual business feeds the rest of Matharyn. Produce comes from all over the pennisula and ends up here, where it is sold to small green grocers throughout the entire city. If you are looking for something that once grew in the ground, this is where you look.

### Haldynsill

Usually just called Haldyn, this is hill is dominated by artisans and their homes. Ten thousand craftsmen work ceaselessly to provide the city everything it needs. The endless noise of industry in Haldynsill has led to its perhaps more famous nickname of Hammerhill.

Though Matharyn's dwarven population is small compared to Ghastenhall and other communities nearer the mountains, more than six thousand dwarves make this city their home. Virtually all of them live here.

The dwarves call their section of the hill Hamara. Hamara is an affectionate nickname in old dwarven for the smallest and most delicate of the forge-hammers that dwarves use in blacksmithing.

### Arynsill

This is the only one of the seven hills that touches the sea and drops off suddenly into steep grey cliffs. Arnsill is also dominated by artisans and craftsmen. Once a great dwarven bridge connected Haldynsill to Arynsill but it collapsed long ago. The great stone blocks have since been hollowed out and a line of heavy stone buildings traces the route of the bridge.

Long ago, Arynsill was the site of the old Iraen capital and so residents are forever digging up small bits of pottery and stone arrow-heads in their gardens. Every once in a while someone will find something genuinely magical. These items can be quite dangerous as they have been buried for so long that the original magic has degraded. Still, there is a frequently repeated tale about a poor cooper who found an ancient magic ring of an Iraen warlord that turned out to be worth more than 50,000 gp! Tales like this keep the locals digging.

### Cathsill

Pronounced Cassel (rhymes with tassel), this seaward rise is where the great Cathedral of the Shining Lord was built by Markadian IV so that every ship entering the Bay of Cambria could know that Mitra reigned in this city. The hill is covered with religious buildings of every sort and is truly the center of the Mitran church in Talingarde.

In addition to the Cathedral, the palace of the High Cardinal is here. High Cardinal Vitallian of Estyllis lives in a magnificent three-story estate that is said to contain more than a hundred rooms. It is said that only the Adarium is grander. From his palace, the High Cardinal conducts the business of the church. These days that business is dark indeed, as messengers have revealed that no less than half of the great cathedrals have been violated by infidels. Cathsill has one other prominent landmark. The great lighthouse built by the Barcan king Accarius dominates the horizon. It is the second highest place in the city, overshadowed only by the Angel Height of the Castle Darian. This great lighthouse is truly a wonder of both magic and engineering. Hundreds of everburning lights shine through a great crystal producing a directed beam that shines across the water for miles.

### Varsill

This is the smallest of the seven hills and is center of culture and learning. Theaters, colleges and pubs dominate this small ward. While there is nothing here to rival the great library of Ghastenhall, it is still an impressive center of education and scholarship.

Though small, Varsill is tall and steep. The phrase "Made the trek up to Varsill" is also another way of saying, took the time to become educated and cultured. Of course, the many carriages that run within the city provide a simple way to get up the hill if you have the means. Perhaps there is a lesson in that.

Regardless, Varsill is also the location of another quiet revolution. Varsill is the only place in Talingarde that has working printing presses. The technology was not developed here. Instead they were perfected in a far distant kingdom on the mainland. But there are now three working presses in Varsill. One of them does nothing but print copies of Mitran holy texts, while the other two are for hire. Printed books and pamphlets have started to appear throughout the city and though the Talireans do not yet recognize it, Talingarde stands on the precipice of a cultural renaissance.

### Sorsill

The southernmost hill of the city, this is where the military might is concentrated (except for what is permanently stationed at the Castle and the Adarium). Weaponsmiths and armorers toil endlessly here to see that Matharyn is well defended.

Talingarde maintains little in the way of a permanent army, instead relying upon knightly orders, city watches, town sheriffs and conscripts in times of war. This was one of the reasons it took so long to assemble the king's grand army.

Still, what permanent military there is, is based out of Sorsill. The Knights of the Alerion have their grand chapterhall here where all the great deeds of previous members are chronicled and honored. This is where the ceremonies of induction are held for squires and knights of the order.

Book Four: Of Dragons and Princesses

### FIVE BURNS AND A BOW

Besides the seven hills, the town also consists of five lowland boroughs (called the burns) and the Golden Bow. The burns are the poorest parts of the city. The Golden Bow is by far the richest.

### Bayburn

Sandwiched between Arynsill and Cathsill, this lowland region includes almost all the docks and warehouses of the city. Though Matharyn sits upon the sea, it is not a typical port city. Most of the foreign trade goes past this port to Ghastenhall. Instead, this port sees primarily domestic travel via local boats. Farmers and artisans from across Talingarde ship their produce and wares via barges across the Cambrian Bay to sell in mighty Matharyn.

It is a very cosmopolitan part of town and sights unusual to anywhere else in Talingarde are commonplace here. It is probably the best place for unusual races and folk to go unnoticed in all the city. It is also the easiest place to get news of the wider world away from Talingarde.

### Carsburn

This westermost borough is where the great metropolis of Matharyn begins to fade away and the endless rural expanse of the upper pennisula begins. Carsburn takes its name from the endless lines of farmer's carts that traverse the roads loaded with food into the markets and trading houses of the borough.

Carsburn is not a fancy place to live. It is a place in the city where one must best be ready to work hard and dirty their hands. The residents of this borough (the Carsters) are famous for their down-to-earth attitudes and their stubborness. The phrase "Yeah? Try and sell that it in Carsburn" is another way of saying, "what you are saying is outlandish and I don't believe you."

### Millburn

Originally, this borough tooks its names from the mills that lined the river Danyth. But there hasn't been an actual mill in Millburn in living memory. This ward is the poorest part of the city, and if you can't get work in Carsburn or on any of the hills, you end up here.

Millburn is not a place of misery and squalor, though. Instead, it is a great expanse of quaint little neighborhoods where the local peasantry go about their simple business as best they can. It is a tribute to the charity of the church of Mitra and the wisdom of King Markadian how little suffering there is here, even amongst this city's poorest.

### Southburn

The southermost borough of the city, it is also amongst the most miserable, and not because the people here are poor. Indeed, there is plenty of work to go around. It just happens that the work done here is universally unpleasant and foul.

A city of Matharyn's size needs several very odorous industries to support its population. This is where the tanneries, the butchers and the slaughterhouses are kept. These industries, by royal decree, are clustered in Southburn. Here the great winds that sweep from the west can blow the stench east and out to sea. Still, every so often the wind shifts and comes in from the south. Then they can smell the funk all the way to Kingsill.

### Wayburn

The northernmost borough, this is the traveler's quarter. Visitors from all across Talingarde coming to visit the capital either on business or on a pilgrimage to see the great Cathedral can find ample inns and accomodations of all sorts. If any part of Matharyn can be said to have a crime problem, it is Wayburn. The pickpockets here are the best and busiest in the city.

### The Golden Bow

This is not so much a district as a line of manors that cover the western edge of the broadest and deepest part of the River Danyth (sometimes called The Lake). The fine houses comprise the richest single district in the entire city. To own a part of the Golden Bow is to be part of city's elite. There are only forty four seperate lots along this part of the river and so the owners are often called the Forty Four Finest or simply the Forty Four.

To be part of the Forty Four is to be on the cusp of the Talirean social scene. The social season in Talingarde lasts from the Summer Solstice to the Vernal Equinox (roughly ninety days). Every other day, one of the Forty Four throw a party and the wealthy compete to see whose will be the grandest. The Forty Fifth party is always the Royal Gala at the Old Palace in Kingsill that occurs upon the Vernal Equinox. That marks the end of the season.

These parties are invitation only and most of the people in Matharyn (while they've certainly heard of them) have never actually been. As a result, the gossip about the decadent excesses of these gatherings is legendary. The typical citizen assumes they are orgies of vice and depravity. The truth is, most of the parties are fairly boring affairs with aging nobles sitting around sipping fine wine and talking about the weather. Gazetteer: Matharyn

### **TEN SIDEQUESTS IN MATHARYN**

The PCs need do very little in Matharyn. With information gathered from other sources (the Baroness, the Duke of Daveryn) they may already have a solid plan of how to complete their mission. Still, if the PCs are lagging behind on XP, a sidequest or two in the City of Light can provide a welcome break to the main plot arc.

### 1. The High Cardinal Must Die

Thorn could easily add another assignment to their Matharyn mission – a revenge killing against the head of the Mitran church. This assassination is certainly not a necessary one. Vitallian of Estyllis is not a powerrful spellcaster nor a potent foe. He is simply a politically powerful figure in the capital. Still, his death could be disheartening to the believers and be another step in revealing Mitra's weakness. His assassination won't be easy. In these troubled times the High Cardinal is guarded day and night by an elite squad of knights templar and also, it is rumored, by an angelic bodyguard (actually an aasimar cleric 15 raised in the church as an orphan).

### 2. Breuder's Promise

It is possible the PCs received a promise from Anton Breuder (Act I, location 5.) to aid them in Matharyn. Anton is good to his word. He claims to know the location of an ancient Asmodean Temple in the sewers of Matharyn. He does and within that temple is a furious horned devil named Gethran Hate. Gethran has been trapped here for decades thanks to an agreement made with a long dead priest. Anyone who can free him would be welcome to take the relics to Asmodeus (including a pair of medium magic items). Anyone who can't ... well, its been a while since Gethran has had souls to play with. At least that would pass the time.

### 3. Poison in the Punchbowl

The Vernal Festival at the old palace is soon upon us. If the PCs can get an invitation and get inside that gathering of Matharyn's elite they can do great damage, in one night, to the City of Light's most powerful citizens. The real prize this year is that the mayor himself, Hubert Rowen will be in attendance.

### 4. The Book of Iron and Hellfire

The last high wizard of Matharyn under the Barcan regime, Barthurian Thrax, was an open worshipper and admirer of Asmodeus. He died in the battle of the Lords of Tamberlyn. His spellbook was in his office safe and was seized by the new Darian regime. Rather than destroy it, they kept it because of its powerful and rare spells. The Book of Iron and Hellfire (as the spellbook was labelled in infernal) is still kept within a vault within the Old Palace. Clever PCs could learn this information and devise a way to sneak it and claim it. Who knows what unique infernal spells are sealed within its covers?

### 5. Payback to the House of Richter

Remember the warden way back in book one – Mathias Richter? This was the man who oversaw the branding and imprisonment of the young PCs. His family is actually from Matharyn and their ancestral home is one of the Fourty Four within the Golden Bow. Maybe a retired and disgraced Mathias (if he survived) still lives there. At least, his family does. This campaign is a mission of vengeance, after all. Maybe it's time to get some.

### 6. Raid the Mint

Within Kingsill is located the royal mint of Talingarde. This is where they make the money and it has a large supply of precious metals. A daring group of PCs could raid the mint, steal its wealth and slaughter the guards. This will not be easy. The Mint is guarded day and night both magically and with military might. Still, with their ever growing power, the PCs might just manage to do the deed.

### 7. Devil's Night

By coincidence the PCs will be spending an important Asmodean (or other evil god) high festival of fire and vengeance within Matharyn. Three days before the events one of the more religious villains receives a dream that they should celebrate the festival with fire and fury to show the insipid population the power of hell. The PCs have three days to prepare. How will they celebrate Devil's Night in the City of Light?

### 8. War, Pestilence and now... Famine.

Somewhere during the course of the campaign (perhaps in the Book of Iron and Hellfire above), our villains have come across a powerful ritual that destroys and spoils every foodstuff within a twenty mile radius. With one performance of this damnable ritual, the grain houses of Matharyn would be annihilated and the food markets of Carsburn would be wiped out.

Performing this ritual is not trivial. It requires thirteen blood sacrifices performed over thirteen nights within a desecrated holy site. No doubt the PCs could manage this and also no doubt this will draw the ire of the faithful before the ritual is finished. Still, if it could be done, in one stroke the capital of Talingarde would be plunged into utter chaos and desperation.

Book Four: Of Dragons and Princesses

### 9. The Golem Workshop

There is a powerful mithral golem in the Adarium that guards the princess (see Act Four). It is possible that the PCs have learned about the golem's existence from the Cardinal Ignatius in Daveryn (see Act One). Cautious PCs might want to learn how this golem was made and what (if any) weaknesses it has.

In fact, it was constructed here in Matharyn by the visiting wizard Tiberius Feign (who just achieved 18th level and thus can build the golem). In exchange for building the golem, Tiberius Feign has received the first royal grant ever to build a magical college in Talingarde. After the war is over, it will be established here in the capital on Varsill with the king's blessing.

Though Tiberius Feign is away in Ghastenhall during the events of this adventure (he is detailed in Book VI), he still has a workshop here in Matharyn. Our band of villains could learn of its location, break into the archmage's workshop, defeat his apprentices and acquire the plans to the mithral golem. They can learn its weaknesses and what spells work against it and even acquire a *golembane scarab*.

The workshop is not unguarded of course. Two prototypes (golems made of silver instead of mithral; use the stats for iron golems) guard the workshop as well as other earlier efforts of the arch-mage. Within the tower of the wizard there are doubtless many other secrets and treasures waiting to be acquired. Of course, raiding this workshop and killing his servants could make dealing with him later more difficult.

### MINIONS IN MATHARYN?

PCs may be tempted to have their villianous organizations (which if you are using the rules in Book II likely now large and powerful) operate in the capital during their visit. This is perfectly acceptable but a keep a few things in mine. This is a very lawful city. Violent actions are going to be at least difficult (DC 16) and very difficult (DC 20) for more heinous crimes is not unwarranted.

Every neighborhood has a watch. Almost every citizen is a devout Mitran raised on talk on civic duty, the benefits of law and eternal rewards for those who do uphold virtue. Even the poor and disaffected in Matharyn have seen the power and potential for good of the Church of Mitra. In short, this is a tough town to be a bad guy. In a normal campaign, Matharyn would be a boring place to visit. In an evil campaign, enemies are everywhere.

### 10. The Barcan Conspiracy

It is possible by now that the PCs have made a great number of contacts and allies amongst the old Barcan nobility (Baron Arkov Vandermir in Book II; Duke Hadrian of Ghaster in Book III; Baroness Vanya of Veryn in Book IV). They might even have learned of the treachery of Vastenus Barca, general of the armies of Talingarde. Having spent all this time making these inroads into the aristrocracy, now might be a fine time to let these contacts pay off (Book VI will also provide a chance.).

There is another high ranking Barcan noble in Matharyn who bears no love for the House of Darius – Count Leothyn Barca (LE male old half-elven aristocrat 12). He is a distant cousin of both the Baroness Vanya and Baron Vandermir. In fact, the count is no less a than the last surviving brother of the last Barcan King of Talingarde, King Jaraad, slain at the battle of Tamberlyn. With the connections of their noble friends, an audience could be arranged at the count's estate within the Golden Bow. The count could be persuaded to aid a band of adventurers who seek to gain quiet entrance into the Adarium.

High ranking nobles are occasionally allowed to visit the Adarium to petition the king or one of his most high ranking advisors. The Count is high-ranking enough and well connected enough to make this happen. He would go the Adarium upon the pretext that he wished to He would not be expected to come alone. Instead, it is expected that such noble visitors will have an entourage. The PCs could be that entourage.

However, the Count is not a creature of generosity. First he must be convinced the plan has a reasonable chance of success and then promised that if the House of Darius falls, he will be rewarded with land and titles commensurate to his aid. The Count is no devotee of Asmodeus or indeed any religion. He will not be persusaded by appeals to his devotion. But he is certain that the Darian regime is weaker than it has ever been and would love to see it fall. Assure him a place in the new regime and he will assist the PCs.

And he requires on more thing. When his brother was slain, his armor was taken and remains a trophy within the king's personal quarters. The Count dreams of the day when he shall reclaim his brother's armor and see the murdering ursurper line of the Victor forever crushed. Do this and the count will aid our villains however he can. The count realize that the next king of Talingarde, should the Darian dynasty fall, will not be one of the House of Barca. All he wishes, before he leaves this world is one last taste of vengeance.

### CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT: VAMPIRES AND LICHES IN WAY OF THE WICKED

Are vampire and lich PCs permitted in the "Way of the Wicked"? The short answer – yes, absolutely. With Prince Gaius Vestromo (in Book Three) and The Nameless Tyrant (in Act Three above), PCs have clear routes towards gaining those templates. It is equally easy to remove those routes. Simply remove the Nameless Tyrant from Eiramanthus' vault and make the Prince unwilling to create any new vampires. Perhaps a better question is "Should I allow vampire and liches into my campaign?" There are two consideration: plot and mechanics. Here we consider plot. In Book V, we'll address mechanics.

### VENGEANCE OF THE UNDEAD

Undead fit seemlessly into the "Way of the Wicked" adventure path. Whether living or undead, the motivations of the PCs are unchanged. There goal remains the utter destruction of Talingarde and vengeance for their imprisonment in Branderscar. It is unlikely that a PC begins the game undead. Instead, through out the course of the campaign each must finds their own route to unlife.

Since evil clerics channel negative energy and can cast *inflict* spells, healing undead is not difficult. It is also easy to ntroduce "negative healing" potions into the game – *potions of inflict light wounds* (sometimes called *potions of undead vigor*). They would revitalize only the dead. No doubt for vampires, living blood would be an essential component of these vile draughts.

A lich player character effects the course of the plot little. A lich can go everywhere a mortal can and do anything a living PC could accomplish. They are undead so there is now a whole host of spells and magic items that dramatically effect them and are likely to be in the hands of their mostly good-aligned enemies. But this is balanced by a powerful template (discussed below).

Liches do have some special considerations. Every lich has a fear aura and a negative energy touch attack. The template does not answer the question – can these be turned off? If they cannot, the lich cannot touch any one alive without harming them and cannot move through crowds without spreading fear.

You can simply declare the lich can deactivate these powers at will, but as a house rule may the author suggest a more interesting solution. As long as the lich hides its appearance (perhaps using disguise self or the *iron circlets*), the fear aura is negated. But as soon as the illusion falls and the lich is revealed in its full undead glory, the fear aura takes its normal effect. Likewise, as long as the lich avoids actual skin to skin contact (perhaps wearing gloves), the negative energy is also blocked. This is easily accomplished but give the PC play a lich character a definite sense that they are no longer entirely human. This could be a rich and unusual source for roleplaying and character building.

You could also have an encounter based off the fact that casual contact with a lich could be lethal. Perhaps while the PCs are staying at an inn in Matharyn, the flirtaeous serving girl, gently caresses the lich's cheek hoping to increase her tip. She falls stone dead at a very inconventient moment and the PCs must move quickly to avoid having her father call the town guard. If the PCs are not careful their presence in the capitol would be revealed!

Of course, the classic lich weakness is that they must be careful with their phylactery. If it falls into the hands of another PC, that character would have a powerful bargaining chip against the lich. Worse, it could fall into the hands of an enemy NPC. Cardinal Thorn in particular, who would love to gain control of a PC so completely. It would almost guarantee his control over that servant.

If someone makes a lich, you should try to incorporate at least one subplot about the phylactery being threatened. If they keep it on their person, perhaps it gets stolen by a pick pocket. If they store it elsewhere, perhaps an adventuring party breaks in and steals it. Regardless, a phylactery is a plot hook waiting to be used. Don't ignore it.

Vampire player characters are slightly tricker to accomodate within your campaign than liches. Vampires have three weaknesses in particular that must be discussed: the aversion to sunlight, the dependency upon a coffin, and the inability to enter a dwelling uninvited.

Aversion to sunlight is probably the most famous vampire weakness. When you allow a vampire into the party, you are allowing a PC who cannot effectively operate during the daylight hours. The other PCs might embrace this and begin doing all their business at night. But the concern is that with a PC who cannot go out during the day, substantial portions of the adventure may occur with them unable to participate. That leaves the player potentially sitting around for hours and doing nothing. That is no fun.

So, before you add a vampire PC to your party, you should have a frank discussion with the players in your party. There are no major plot points in this campaign that require they are done during the light of day. In fact, many of them benefit from being accomplished at night. Make it clear to the players that they should make every effort to include the vampire PC in their plans. There is another alternative – a special magic item that allows vampires to travel about during daylight – *the shroud of the daywalker* (see below for details). By making this magic item available shortly after you gain a vampire player character, the problem with sunlight is largely averted and the PC may participate in daylight adventures though still at a penalty. This allows the vampire to still participate in daylight adventures but to have a definite mechanical incentive to talk the other PCs out of them.

Shroud of the Daywalker
Aura moderate necromancy; CL 9th Slot none; Price 18,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.
DESCRIPTION
This funeral shroud at first glance appears to be made of the fin- est silk no doubt in some dark color such as black, burgundy or deepest blue. However upon closer inspection, it reeks of death and corruption.
When worn by the living, this shroud makes the wearer seem to be undead. Nonintelligent undead cannot detect the wearer as if cloaked by <i>hide from undead</i> . Even intelligent undead may fail to notice you unless they succeed at a DC 11 Will save.
When worn by a vampire, however, this shroud has a very different effect. The darkness woven into the cloak shrouds the vam- pire and allows them to move about during the day. Instead of taking damage from sunlight, they are only dazzled in ar- eas of bright sunlight or within the radius of a <i>daylight</i> spell. This magic item does not free a vampire from its need to sleep however. A vampire who spends hours awake during the day must make up those hours by sleeping in their coffing at night.

Regardless whether living or dead, once per day, as standard action, the wearer may call forth the darkness within the shroud to make them invisible for up to nine minutes.

### CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, darkness, hide from undead, invisibility; Cost 9,000 gp

Their dependence upon this magic item also gives you a fine plot hook. After a vampire has grown accustomed to having the shroud, steal it from them for a session or two. With the item gone, the PC must adapt quickly or face destruction.

The second problem all vampires must face is that they need to have a coffin readily at hand. They sleep within their coffin and must flee to it if reduced to zero hit points. Lugging around a coffin can be quite an obstacle but is likely a surmountable one. No doubt the vampire will either establish a lair or perhaps bring a carriage with them that contains their coffin and shields it from the light of the sun. Minions can be used for guard duty (see Book II for information about minions and guard duty) to secure the wagon when the vampire must be away from the coffin. Though not mentioned in the template, in traditional vampire lore, the coffin can be desecrated and rendered unuseable by holy water or the blessings of a holy man. The desperate search for a coffin after a Mitran priest ruins it is a natural plot hook. For the Game Master, this is again a plot hook that should be exploited. At least once during the campaign a sidequest that dealt with the coffin being stolen and the vampire needing to recover it before dawn would be an exciting, tense, time-dependent side quest. Be wary, though. The goal is to endanger the PC not actually destroy them.

The third disadvantage is one often forgotten about both in roleplaying games and fiction, but is perhaps one of the most interesting. A vampire cannot enter a private home or dwelling unless invited by someone with the authority to invite them in. This definitely includes Eiramanthus' dome, the Adarium, Polydorus' tower and the Manor of the Baroness. It means that the vampire PC must find a way to, by trickery or guile, get invited into these places.

It is not hard to imagine how this could be done. In the case of Eiramanthus' Isle, the dragon or the consorts all have the authority to invite people inside. Setia of the Cetaceal will glady invite someone to visit the dragon if, for example, they possess the rare volume The Codex of Bademus. Any sort of deception might do the trick.

For the Adarium, anyone who permanently resides there could invite the PCs in: the Princess Bellinda, the court wizard, the priest Father Isaiah, or any of the knights. It should not be too difficult to convince them the PCs need to be allowed in and with one invitation the vampire's weakness is overcome. Do not think of this so much as a weakness as it is a rich source of plot hooks for your PCs. Still, you shouldn't make this too difficult. The goal is for it to be a small sidequest that encourages roleplaying, not a major obstacle that neutralizes the vampire's involvement in the adventure path.

The other vampire weaknesses – holy symbols, mirrors, garlic and running water – can all make for colorful incidents but are unlikely to be major hinderances to a vampire fitting into a party.

There is one more vampiric challenge – the creation of vampire spawn. An endlessly replenishable supply of CR 4 minions can be unbalancing. However, if you read the template carefully, this can be managed. First, the PC vampire can only control twice its hit dice in spawn. Any additional become free-willed vampires. Most newly created free-willed vampires will try to flee their creator and so will be of no use as minions. CR 4 spawn are unlikely to be terribly useful in combat at level 12 plus when the PCs are likely to actually have minions in their midst. What can you can do is allow minion organizations a one-time bonus of +2 to Ruthless checks made after dark after a vampire joins the party.

### THE EMPIRE OF NIGHT:

### WAY OF THE WICKED AS A VAMPIRIC CAMPAIGN

The PCs begin as mere mortals, but when Tiadora comes to them, she is not using the powers of a devil to charm her way into Branderscar prison. Instead she is the progeny of the most powerful vampire in all of Talingarde – Cardinal Adrastus Thorn. Once Talingarde was infamous for it vampires and synonymous with terror.

That changed with the rise of the sun-worshipping House of Darius. The Victor defeated the vampire-blood tainted House of Barca and overthrew the powerful havens of the undead. The purges were completed by Markadian IV called the Zealot who found the last vestiges of the undead and destroyed them. Everyone believed that the vampires of Talingarde were destroyed. Alas, they missed one.

The so-called "Cardinal" Thorn is centuries old. Long has he moved through mortal society often posing as a holy-man. He is a vampire so powerful and so magically adept that he has found a way even to move in sunlight (though the light does still irritate him). He infiltrated the Church of Mitra and found refuge there. No doubt he could have hidden forever, if not for ... her.

The mortal Bronwyn of Balentyne was the greatest beauty of her age – a Helen, a Guinevere. When Thorn first laid his unliving eyes upon her, he knew that he must possess her. The desire filled him, consumed him. This ancient undead who had possessed no mortal desires in centuries, felt for the first time in centuries some vestige of his long-lost humanity return. He felt ... almost human once more. He must have her!

He first became friends with her as a spiritual advisor and discovered she was already betrothed to the gallant and handsome Sir Thomas of Havelyn. No matter! He began to use his powerful mind magic to infiltrate her mind and dreams. It was not his desire to turn her into a dominated robot. Instead, Thorn wanted her to willingly accept his gift of immortality and walk forever with him in the night.

At last he came to her in the night and offered her immortality. She refused him. Overcome by anger, in a frenzy, he attacked Bronwyn and bit her upon the neck. Thomas of Havelyn rushed in an found the beast upon his bride and drove a stake into the Cardinal's heart. As he was staked, a powerful contingency spell activated and the Cardinal was teleported to his secret fortress in the far north – the Agathium. His servants, who were supposed to remove the stake betrayed him and for years, the vampire was imprisoned in his coffin. The bite infected Bronwyn – not enough for her to become a true vampire, but enough that her unborn child became a dhampir, a half vampire. She would die giving birth to that half-human child. Sir Thomas (now Lord Thomas) saw in the child its inhuman nature. He raised a stake to destroy it, but could not. Her...it was all that was left of her. He wept bitter tears and sent the child to the Vale of Valtaerna to be raised within the church. So was the dhampir paladin Brother Richard born.

Thorn languished, imprisoned in his frozen coffin in the savage north. But then, a ragged outcast bugbear discovered the coffin even as he took sheltered in the abandoned Agathium. He removed the stake, perhaps eager to become a vampire himself, and Thorn once more awoke. Thorn did not turn the bugbear who saved him into a vampire. Instead, he rewarded him with an axe of flame. This is how Sakkarot Fire-Axe, first of Thorn's servants, was recruited.

Thorn will have his revenge. He will teach the whole world of his fury. By all the powers of Hell and darkness at his command, he will see Havelyn, Talingarde and every mortal witin suffer as he has suffered. He will turn this land into a nation of the dead. So he swore and so began.

But he could not do it alone. He needs allies – nine cabals who would serve him and aid him in his plan of vengeance. The PCs are the ninth to be recruited. He sends them aid in the form of a veil in prison but when they escape and they come to his manor, they are not trained. No, he instead transforms them. He drains them of blood and raises them as the Ninth Cabal. His children in blood, they shall serve him and become his greatest servants in authoring his vengeance.

### **BOOK ONE: KNOT OF THORNS**

Act One is unchanged except that Tiadora is a vampire not a devil (not that the PCs will know this at first). Act Two sees the PCs all converted into vampires, children of Thorn. He creates them as free-willed vampires (not spawn) but does keep some of their blood. Each PC receives the vampire template. Skip the Nine Lessons. The PCs do not need the level increase. Thorn trains them and they feed upon the servants of the manor house.

The PCs are transported in coffins by the Frosthamar to Sakkarot's camp. They are dependent upon the captain to keep them save, but still at night they must help defend the ship. It is at night when the poor doomed Blade of St. Martius sees them and tries to overtake them. No doubt the hungry young vampires use it as a fine opportunity to feed.

### **BOOK TWO: CALL FORTH DARKNESS**

This book needs virtually no changes. Tiadora is revealed to be an older vampire sorcerer (she is the only one of Thorn's elder children who did not betray him when he was staked). She sends the PCs to the Horn to call forth the daemon and claim his gifts.

Of course, the PCs no have the additional challenge of not only defending the Horn but relying upon their minions to keep it safe during the day. Still, with their increased vampiric might, it should be possible. The PCs summon Vetra-Kali and claim the Tears of Achlys for their undead master.

However, before this can be done, they must overcome the dhampir paladin, Brother Richard. He leads the Sons of Balentyne who are eager for vengeance and know full well they face a vampiric foe. The PCs must be careful and defend their coffins well or they may all face the true death at the hands of these fearless vampire hunters.

### BOOK THREE: TEARS OF THE BLESSED

The PCs deliver the Tears of Achlys to Brother Thrain, a human thrall of Thorn's will. They also learn that in Ghastenhall there is another surviving elder vampire – Lord Gaius Vestromo. Thorn wants him either as an ally or destroyed. *The Chalice of Aurelius Vestromo* becomes a major prize that may tempt the PCs to betray Prince Gaius.

Otherwise, the mission is largely unchanged. The PCs must assault the Vale at the head of a bugbear army and then destroy all the holy creatures that dwell within. They have the additional power that comes from being undead, but face the additional challenge of virtually everything in the vale having holy powers particularly effective against them.

They also meet in this chapter Dessiter, who remains a contract devil. Dessiter has learned that the dhampir paladin the PCs fought in the Horn is still alive. He has been saved not by his sun-god Mitra, but by Cardinal Thorn himself. It seems that Cardinal Thorn is fond of the halfvampire (who shares his blood after all) and is unwilling to destroy him. Dessiter senses this weakness and begins to device a plan to destroy the Cardinal and see this new Cabal of Blood become the new masters of Talingarde.

### BOOK FOUR: OF DRAGONS AND PRINCESSES

Daveryn becomes the PC's feeding grounds for a month, but then they receive much the same mission again delivered by Tiadora. They must still recruit Chargammon, slay Eiramanthus and kill the king. Ah, the ecstasy of feeding upon royal blood!

Dessiter still contacts them in the dome of the dragon, but his concern is not about the phylactery but for a powerful anti-vampiric magic item *The Silver Stake of St. Hubert.* A vampire as old and as powerful as Thorn, Dessiter is sure that only the silver stake will permanently destroy him.

The weapon Helbrand should also be changed. It is no longer an angel-hating weapon, but a human bane weapon with the purpose of seeing a vampiric king upon the throne of Talingarde. It name is now changed to Helthyrsta, the Hell-thirster.

### BOOK FIVE: THE DEVIL MY ONLY MASTER

The PCs must still face Nythoggr and acquire in his hoard, the silver stake. With that weapon in hand, they may begin their assault of the Agathium and once and for all destroy their former master.

Though the fundamental storyline is largely unchained, some mechanical adjustments must be made. Virtually all of Thorn's human minions should be transformed into vampires. Thorn's bodyguard and Grigori Sherkov should both be vampires at a minimum.

### BOOK SIX: THE WAGES OF SIN

With the final book, the kingdom that the PCs are building is not enslaved to Asmodeus but instead they are building a vampire's paradise. By reinstating the ancient house of Barca and destroying the Church of Mitra once and for all, they have rid Talingarde of the only obstacles to a return to the days of vampiric dominance.

Of course, they still must deal with Bellinda and her army. She has still crafted an alliance between the last of the true Mitran faithful and the Iraen, but now they rally not against hell but against the blood-drinkers who would turn this island into an empire of night. She leads her army to conquered Matharyn. And it is at night, as she camps within striking distance of the city, that the second battle of Tamberlyn must be fought.

But the battle is not truly won until the dhampir paladin who has dogged their steps the entire campaign is defeated. Only then will Talingarde truly be theirs and may they then reign forever in their empire of night.

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Hail Asmodeus, God of Lawyers, Master of Contracts

"He that is kind is free, though he is a slave; he that is evil is a slave, though he be a king."

--Saint Augustine



# The Lord of Elagles Letter

To Polydorus, Seer of Daveryn, Unwinged but wise:

Behold, I the Stormborn King need your counsel. I have taken Chargammon's whelp, the black dragon Jeratheon Knightsbane. He foolishly tried to lay claim to my dominion and by talon and thunderbolt did we humble this night hunter. My heart speaks to slay this monster and see his evil forever removed from both earth and sky. Still, I worry this would bring the wrath of his sire.

So I send to you. What say the stars? Will the death of Jeratheon invite disaster or will it bring only justice and relief? I await your word.

Iremain the Lord of All Eagles and the Stormborn King









# May of the Mickey

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