

Way of the Wicked

book six:
the wages of sin



PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

A Villainous Adventure Path by
Gary McBride & Michael Clarke
with **Jason Bulmahn**

Player's Map



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A Villainous Adventure Path

by

Gary McBride and Jason Bulmahn, words

and

Michael Clarke, art

Jesse Emerson and Douglas Muir, editing

Special Thanks:

Carl and Shirley McBride, Mike and Teresa Hall, Jim Hall, Michelle McBride-Hall, Kimberly Knight.

Fire Mountain Games LLC

www.firemountaingames.com

18795 SW Marko Ln

Beaverton, OR 97007

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"The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble."

--Proverbs 4:19

ADVANCEMENT

This campaign uses the medium advancement track.

ACT ONE: VICTORIOUS

After Thorn's death, our villains seize power in Talingarde. They engineer the destruction of Sakkarot Fire-Axe's horde and march on the capital with their army of hired cutthroats. By this chapter's start, they should be 18th level.

ACT TWO: TYRANTS OF TALINGARDE

For three years, our villains rule Talingarde with little opposition. This act presents them with a Tyranny sandbox and lets them seize control of this once proud and noble nation and do with as they will. By the end of their reign they should be 19th level and well on their way to 20th.

ACT THREE: WHITE UNICORN

The Princess Bellinda, long absent, returns to liberate her homeland from these tyrants and usurpers. Our villains gather their forces, marshal their allies and prepare for battle. By act's end the PCs should be 20th level.

ACT FOUR: TAMBERLYN

This is the climactic battle that will determine the fate of both Talingarde and our villains. Herein everything is resolved for good or ill and the Way of the Wicked comes to its conclusion.

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INTRODUCTION: A CRESCENDO OF VILLAINY

We come to it at last – the end of the “Way of the Wicked.” This isn’t just the end of Fire Mountain Game’s first adventure path, it is also amongst the highest level Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible adventures ever published.

By the end of this adventure, your villains should be 20th level. They will have gone all the way to the end of their journey as dark lords. This is no small feat, and both they and you are to be congratulated. In the authors experience this is a rare thing. Most campaigns end long before this apex is achieved.

If you made it this far, you are either a glutton for punishment or you greatly enjoy being the bad guy. This is nothing to be ashamed of. Count me amongst your number. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again – it’s fun to wear the black hat once in a while. But getting to be a 20th level dark lord? Now we’re into new and uncharted terrain.

We’re going to give your PCs the chance to experience some events they almost never get to do in more traditional zero-to-hero style roleplaying campaign. Your villains will get to cast 9th level spells and actually get to claim and use their end of class of special abilities. But more than that, your villains have the chance to claim the throne of a great nation and tyrannically rule it for three years. Your villains have the opportunity to gain the service of a Pit Fiend and command it upon the field of battle. Your villains will survey all their wicked schemes and cackle at their culmination. They have done it – Talingarde is theirs!

And then, you face the most important choice of this campaign – how will it end?

We’ve put two endings in this book. One is the darkness triumphant ending. The last fight is a fair fight that the Player Characters are almost certain to win. This ending very closely resembles the typical “adventure path” resolution. The PCs are victorious and all that they have hoped for comes to pass.

But there is also another ending in this book. And I hope, as the author, you seriously consider using it. This is the ending where your villains are utterly and irrevocably defeated. The bad guys die with their empire of villainy collapsing around them.

Since the first moment of Book One when our villains lay rotting in Branderscar Prison, this campaign has been about letting the players experience what it is like to be a dark lord. Here within this final chapter they get the chance to experience the quintessential dark lord moment – being defeated even as victory seems inevitable. Your villains will get to experience one more thing that PCs almost never get to experience – total defeat.

They get to die gloriously. This is not some cop out ending. Oh no, they fight with all their might and magic to the last. As each villain falls make sure they get their last words. Be certain that their defeat is not a down-played and depressing moment. Make it a crescendo of villainy! But they are doomed. To quote the scripture “the wages of sin is death” and now it is time to pay up. For the Ninth Knot their moment has come. It is time to reap what they have sown.

But is this a good idea? Will it make your players hate you the Game Master forever? Will they curse your name over their dice and pizza for years to come? Can your fellow gamers, to be succinct, handle losing?

My suggestion is this. Take a moment and talk to your players out of character before the final session. Ask them about this at the meta-game level. Do they want evil to be triumphant? Or do they want to end this campaign with the forces of good, at the very last moment when all seems darkest, able to pull out a victory? The choice is one best made together.

Either way, I hope that this campaign culminates into one of your most memorable role-playing moments. And even if our villains die and fall to utter ruin and defeat, can there be any doubt that they have paid Talingarde a hundred-fold for the misery inflicted upon them?

Well done, dark lords. Well done.

– Gary

BOOK SIX: WAGES OF SIN

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND: THE DOOM THAT CAME TO TALINGARDE

Who could have guessed that a few short years ago, the mighty and virtuous nation of Talingarde would be on its knees on the very edge of oblivion. But that is exactly where the nation sits today. The Watch Wall is broken and barbaric creatures and monsters have made the Borderlands into a wild and savage realm almost without law. The third largest city in the kingdom is burned and sacked. The army is annihilated after the disastrous battle of Fallingsbridge. The king is dead. His only heir has fled. And the fiercest horde the island has ever seen moves every day closer to the capital to deliver Talingarde its death blow. No one with a hope of stopping it remains upon the island.

How did it ever come to this?

It didn't happen by accident, of course. This doom is the masterpiece of the now slain Samuel Havelyn, better known to your villains as Cardinal Adrastus Thorn. He saw the nation's weaknesses and devised a vile scheme to exploit them. He recruited and trained villains who were equal to the task. And then those same villains turned on him and murdered him for showing even the smallest hint of mercy. Now, the fate of Talingarde lies in the hands of those selfsame villains – our PCs.

Welcome to the final chapter of "Way of the Wicked". It is herein that the fate of Talingarde shall be decided. We will learn whether evil is to be triumphant or whether there is hope for the forces of good.

The first part of this adventure features the PCs finishing the plan that Cardinal Thorn began. They will lead an army of mainland mercenaries to smash the horde of Sakkarot Fire-Axe that threatens the capital. Then they shall claim the throne and give birth to a new dynasty.

For three years they shall rule this kingdom unopposed – masters of the nation that once imprisoned them and branded them forsaken. And then, just as their victory seems complete, a last hope for virtue will arise. The exiled Princess Bellinda will return at the head of the Army of the White Unicorn. She will lead this army of light into the jaws of death itself.

Upon the ancient battlefield of Tamberlyn where once the first Darian king claimed his throne, the doom of the age shall be decided. There we will learn whether the great shadow that has haunted the kingdom of Talingarde shall endure and reign triumphant, or in this darkest hour – at last, the dawn.

THE LAST BEST HOPE

Talingarde has only a single hope. At the end of Book IV, the Princess Bellinda revealed herself not to be just a frightened nineteen year old girl, but a magical prodigy and the most powerful sorceress this kingdom has ever known. She slew the wyrm Chargammon the Black and rescued her would-be protector Sir Richard Havelyn from certain death. And then she fled the capital. She began to understand that the enemy she faced was utterly ruthless and would stop at nothing to enslave her home. She became utterly resolved to save it.

How could this be done? It was not a deed that could be accomplished alone. She needed allies. She went to Ghastenhall and there gathered knights who had survived the slaughter of Fallingsbridge. She sent Sir Richard to Chargammon's isle to recover the dragons hoard. From this errand, the knight did not return and she was greatly saddened. Her protector, it seemed, had fallen.

For a moment, she had doubts. Could this be right? Was she meant to lead men to their deaths in this quest to retake Talingarde? Was this truly Mitra's will?

Heartbroken, she sought out not a grand cathedral but a humble peasant's church in the Heartland. For seven days she fasted and prayed. In the last minutes of the seventh night, with the coming of dawn, she received an answer. Before her stood an angel, shining like the sun. By her act of pure faith Bellinda thus called forth Phaethysa of the Radiant Dawn, Solar of Mitra.

Phaethysa delivered to her a great gift – the *Veil of Mitra*. This veil would make it impossible to scry her or reveal her location, even with the most powerful of mortal magics. More than that, those of evil heart could not see her. She was concealed from their eyes and agents until the moment was right. Using her concealment, she began to work.

She went first to the North, following in the footsteps of Sir Richard, and there found her mother – the Great Wyrm Antharia Regina. After a joyous reunion, the princess, the dragon and the angel came to an accord. They would build a great army of all the remaining faithful and reclaim Talingarde from the wicked threat that even then was close to fulfilling its dark dreams.

In secret, the Princess moves quietly amongst her people, everywhere meeting with small cadres and cabals. Those who can see her, are invited into her army. Those who cannot, are passed over. She works steadily to gather her forces and beat back this tide of darkness. She knows she will have only once chance and must be patient. She bides her time, waiting for the perfect moment...

THE TALE OF THE SIXTH KNOT

Cedrick Malthus has been bound for hell almost all his life. A murderer, a manipulator, a liar, a scoundrel and a braggart – these are amongst the best things that can be said about this villain. Were it not for the Ninth Knot and their ilk, Cedrick could claim to be one of the wickedest men to afflict poor Talingarde.

Cedrick hailed from Ghastenhall and garnered his criminal expertise from the crime families of the city without loyalty. He had worked extensively for the Breuder clan before he finally went freelance. The parting was not amicable. Boss Nicholas “Nikki” Breuder would gladly pay a pretty penny even to this day for Cedrick’s head.

The source of this enmity is uncertain. Rumors circulate that Cedrick attacked Nikki’s eldest daughter or wife, but the truth is simpler and less personal. Cedrick thought he could make more money going freelance. Nicholas Breuder prizes loyalty above all else and believes that Cedrick is loyal to no one. The boss would like this loose end tied up.

Thus Cedrick, hunted by both lawmen and law-breakers, left Ghastenhall and relocated to Matharyn. Cedrick hated the lawful city almost immediately and soon decided it was time to leave Talingarde altogether. However, just before he was to depart, fate intervened. At a gathering of the Matharyn’s elite Forty Four, he happened to meet a man who would change his life. Cedrick Malthus met Cardinal Samuel Havelyn. The two villains became associates, each eager to exploit the other.

Cardinal Havelyn was clever enough to recognize in the young, dashing, deadly bravo someone who could be of great use to him. Though Cardinal Havelyn was, in those days, far from formulating his final plot of destruction and vengeance against Talingarde, he was already a pillar of corruption in the Mitran Church.

The Cardinal hired this wandering mercenary bravo to get rid of troublesome enemies and acquire information by less than legal means. Cedrick, for his part, relished these wicked acts and performed them admirably. The rogue became the preferred catspaw of the Cardinal during his days of respectability.

When the Mitran Inquisition finally caught up with Cardinal Havelyn, Cedrick was clever enough to realize that the gig was up. He used one of his false identities to board a merchantman bound for the mainland. Cedrick left Talingarde and assumed he would never return. He shed his isle of birth no tears. He was more than ready to move on.

For years, Cedrick practiced his preferred trade in the cities of the mainland. His specialty was assassination by dueling. He would insult a nobleman and then kill him with a poisoned rapier in a seemingly honorable duel. He was a master of disguise, executing his contract and then moving on. Wherever he went, he always played the role of a travelling noble, often claiming to be from Talingarde. Of course, this was all a ruse. Cedrick was a low-born ruffian from the streets of Ghastenhall. Not a drop of noble blood courses through his veins.

He was an outsider, but a skilled one, and quickly gained for himself a reputation amongst countless criminal gangs, pirate clans and mafia families. He was convinced more than ever that Talingarde was solidly in his past. However, that changed one day when a mysterious woman dressed all in white visited his private apartments. Tiadora had found Cedrick Malthus.

When Thorn returned from the pyre a lich, Cedrick wasn’t the first person the cardinal contacted, but he was always a part of Thorn’s plan for vengeance. Thorn recruited the rogue into his service once more. Cedrick’s first mission was to arm the bugbears in the north. It was because of Cedrick that the Frosthamar captained by Kargeld Odenkirk arrived at the manor house loaded with armaments (see Book I).

His second mission was to be far grander in scale. Cedrick Malthus was to hire a mercenary army. It could not be just any small band of raiders. Cardinal Thorn wanted a mercenary force of unprecedented size and viciousness.

Cedrick was only too eager to see this mission done. The only thing that appealed to him more than never setting foot on the isle of Talingarde again, was returning there at the fore of a vast gang of killers who would seize control of the land of his birth.

The bravo moved amongst the mercenary commanders, gang leaders, pirate captains and bandit chieftains of the mainland. He called a council of warlords. From this rabble, Cedrick has assembled an army twenty thousand strong. It is made up of the scum of countless cities and kingdoms. The army he has gathered owes loyalty to no one except the coin. They are as ruthless and vile a collection of thugs, thieves and cutthroats as the world has ever seen assembled in one great throng.

The charming Cedrick has completed both of the Cardinal’s tasks admirably and now sits on a foreign shore wondering why Thorn has not contacted him and delivered his final payment for the mercenaries. He is eager to complete his mission. The army is his gift to Talingarde and he cannot wait to see it delivered.

ACT ONE: VICTORIOUS

EVENT ONE: CLAIMING THE NINE KNOTS

With the death of Thorn and the claiming of the mantle of high priest of Asmodeus in Talingarde, there is no doubt that the PCs are the undisputed masters of the Nine Knots. So what does this mean?

That depends on the PCs. The Nine Knots are in shambles. The PCs are almost certainly personally responsible for the destruction of the Second Knot (led by Marcel Wolfram) and the Seventh Knot (led by Elise Zadaria). The Third and Fourth Knots were casualties of the struggle against Talingarde. That leaves four knots to concern ourselves with.

THE FIRST KNOT

The First Knot is of course Sakkarot Fire Axe. We'll discuss him and his horde in greater detail in Event Four below.

THE FIFTH KNOT

The Fifth Knot consists entirely of Brother Barnabus Thrane. By this time, the PCs have had opportunities to interact with him several times (primarily in Books III and V). Brother Barnabus remains loyal to Father (i.e. Asmodeus) and to Thorn. But what does he think of the PCs? That depends on how they treated him.

Barnabus knows almost immediately that Thorn is dead. He is a 10th level cleric of Asmodeus and has been casting *commune* frequently, seeking information about Thorn and why the Master of the Nine Knots will no longer speak with him. By chance, he casts the spell the day after Thorn is destroyed and the *commune* reveals his master's destruction.

So what does Brother Barnabus do? Possibly, the PCs have already gained his loyalty and recruited him into their organization (see Act II of Book V). But if they have missed that opportunity or Thrane has grown to dislike or distrust the PCs, he may flee. He will definitely do so if the PCs have consistently threatened him. Brother Barnabus may be a very talented cleric of Asmodeus, but he is certain he is no match for the Ninth Knot. Anyone who could destroy Thorn is out of his league.

If the PCs go to Barnabus and try to persuade him to join their new Knot of Thorns, he is initially Unfriendly. Revealing proof that they have the blessing of the pit fiend Naburus will give a +4 circumstance bonus to any Diplomacy checks to gain his service. Meeting in the presence of any devil (for example Dessiter) also gains this bonus. Barnabus will only swear fealty if he is made Helpful by their efforts.

If Barnabus bolts, his departure is noticed by one of his comrades in the library of Ghastenhall. This priest of Mitra passes the word along and Bellinda's agents learn of this event. These agents manage to capture the fleeing traitor-priest and bring him in chains before the princess herself.

At last, his charms and protections swept aside, Thrane is revealed for what he truly is – an agent of Asmodeus amongst the clergy of Mitra. He falls terrified before the feet of Bellinda. The powerful sorceress could slay him with but a word, but instead, she speaks to him at great length. She learns his tale and begins to appreciate the truth – that Barnabus is, in his own way, a victim. He was corrupted and led astray by Thorn so many years ago. Barnabus, wracked with guilt about the countless atrocities he has helped author, breaks before the princess.

And he spills everything. Everything he knows, he tells to the PC's chief remaining enemy on the isle of Talingarde. And Barnabus knows a lot. He knows the location of the Agathium and about the power struggle between the Ninth and Thorn. He knows anything the PCs have told him in their many meetings. He's met the Ninth and likely knows most if not all of their members. If the PCs have been at all incautious with information, this is where reckless behavior may come back to bite.

So how do the PCs prevent this worse case scenario? The best way would be to treat Barnabus well since their first meeting with the priest back in Book III. If the PCs have been respectful to the priest, he does not flee. Instead, he could become a useful ally when they assume control of Talingarde.

After all, Thrane is a fully ordained priest of Mitra. Once they become rulers of Talingarde (see Act Two below), the PCs' would be within their rights to promote Thrane to the rank of Cardinal or even High Cardinal. Appointing Thrane to such an exalted station would ensure his loyalty and allow the PCs to corrupt what remains of the church from the inside.

Of course the true faithful of Mitra would never bow to this obvious puppet. They'll flee to the princess' secret army. But most of the clergy and servants of the church are not fanatics. They will bow to the new High Cardinal and accept this as the new way of things. With Barnabus' help the PCs could take a major step forward in transforming the very soul of Talingarde into a far more wicked place.

Story Award: Recruiting Thrane into their service is worth a CR 16 (76,800 XP) reward. If the PCs already gained this award in Book V, they cannot earn it again.

THE SIXTH KNOT

The Sixth Knot under Cedrick Malthus has their own event detailing gaining their service. See Event Three below.

THE EIGHTH KNOT

Is General Vastenus Barca still alive after the events in Book V? He is fully detailed in Room 2-12 of the Agathium.

With Thorn's death, General Barca will realize that the deal he made is defunct. He will try to strike another with the PCs. He will claim that if he is made king, he will bring a note of legitimacy to their new dominion. *"I am of true Barcan blood. The nobles will acknowledge me as their rightful sovereign. Thus will you be spared a lengthy civil war."*

This isn't entirely true. The brother of the fallen Barcan king yet survives and lives in Matharyn. Count Leothyn Barca (LE male old half-elf aristocrat 12) survives and is the heir of the Barcan heritage. It is possible that the PCs may try to capitalize on this. If they have allied with General Barca, then Leothyn may also be a target for assassination. This would not be hard. The half-elf maintains no extraordinary security and would probably die of old age in the next decade anyway. His death would hardly be suspicious. Doing this and working toward making him king would earn General Barca's full loyalty.

Of course they may also ignore this claim. After all, the Barcans have been out of power for more than eighty years. No one seriously respects their claims any more. The only reason that General Vastenus Barca is so insistent about them is because of Thorn's promises. The truth is that only a few old nobles still have any true loyalty to the Barcan house anymore.

Putting General Barca upon the throne is a terrible idea. General Barca was never the most stable of personalities. While a capable military commander, he was always more than a little insane and when put in a position of power, his insanity will start to become fully evident.

General Barca, if put upon the throne, will become increasingly paranoid and will see enemies everywhere. Only the closest of controls will keep his reign from becoming a tyranny with the mad king issuing daily batches of execution orders to enemies both real and imagined. In short, the reign of King Vastenus, if allowed to come to fruition will be a brutal and insane one. After the sanity and sense of the reign of King Markadian, the princess Bellinda will only find her rebel army bolstered by his disastrous reign. If the PCs allow this madness, apply a -1 to their Might score (see Act II for what this means)

THE DEVILS

The devils in Talingarde are creatures of a practical sort of evil. To a one, they will work with whoever has the best chance of transforming the island of Talingarde into a land where the worship of their master may flourish. They shed no tears for Thorn.

If Tiadora is still alive and free (both are unlikely), she will offer her service to the new high priest of Asmodeus in Talingarde. If her new master lacks her true name (see room 2-20 in the Agathium, Book V), she serves him but is a fickle servant. She will do things her way and always with a sadistic streak. Tiadora relishes human suffering and degradation. Everything she does emphasizes this desire. Whoever Tiadora serves, also gains the service of the Nine Sisters (the nine erinyes) if they survive.

The contract devil Dessiter has seen his plans largely come to fruition. Sir Richard Havelyn is dead or corrupted. Thorn is destroyed. And a group of individuals wicked enough to seize control of Talingarde have been assembled. He sees only one possible threat to his goals – the Princess Bellinda. He begins earnestly seeking her out and trying to learn about her rebel army. What he learns will play out in later acts.

For now, Dessiter is only too happy to play the fawning lackey. Every time he meets with the Ninth Knot he is as effusive as ever and downplays his roles in any successes that have come to pass. If asked for advice, he gives what aid he can but is always careful to couch his advice in conditionals and vagaries. After all, he does not want to be held responsible if any of his advice goes south.

The pit fiend Naburus continues to play his long game for now. However, the time is coming when he may join more directly with the Ninth Knot and aid them against the powerful forces that will soon rise to oppose them. Naburus knows that the great threat to a new Asmodean dominion yet remains hidden in Talingarde. He knows that the great dragon Antharia Regina and her progeny the Princess Bellinda survive. His great work is not yet finished. And even though the Ninth Knot seems promising, he knows that nothing is certain. Victory may seem assured, but Naburus is old enough and wise enough to know that such beliefs are always dangerous.

And what of the others -- the bone devils trapped within the mirror, Zaerabos emissary of Zaebos, the Hamatulan Host? Their disposition depends on how they've been treated. As a rule, if the PCs work towards making Asmodeus master of Talingarde, they will aid them.

Story Award: Award a CR 19 (204,800 XP) reward for becoming Masters of the Nine Knots.

EVENT TWO: THE RING OF BLACK FIRE

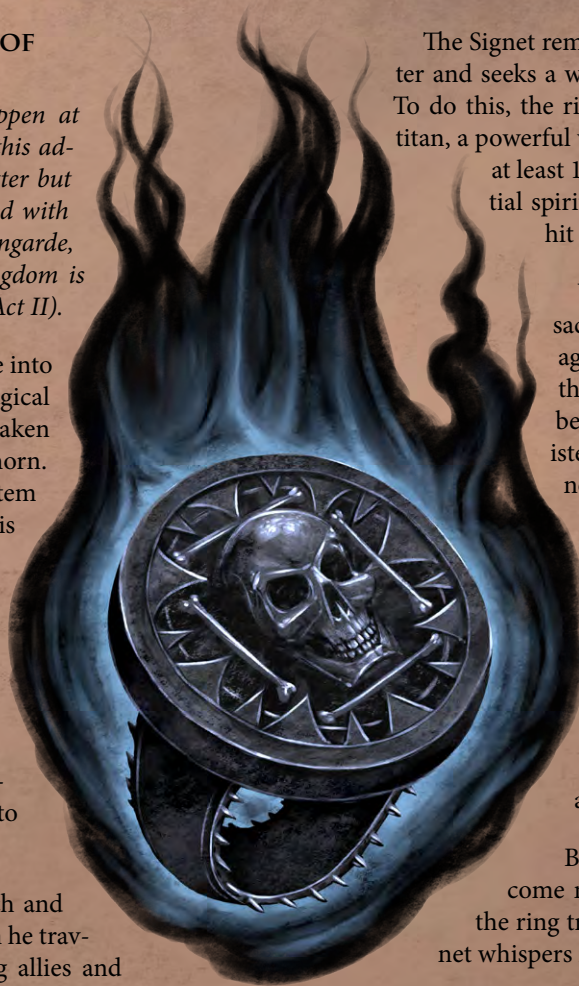
NOTE: This event can happen at any time during the course of this adventure. Sooner is probably better but if the PCs are feeling too rushed with the matter of taking over Talingarde, it can be delayed until the kingdom is firmly under their control (i.e. Act II).

In Book V, our villains came into possession of a powerful magical item – the Hadean Signet – taken from the vault of Adrastus Thorn. While a valuable and potent item in its own right, the Signet is more than has yet been revealed. There is a reason that Thorn kept it in his vault and was reluctant to don the thing. And now, with a member of the party in possession and likely even blood bound to the ring, the Sigil's true power and corruption will start to become more evident.

Thorn was an 18th level lich and for a time after his resurrection he travelled the lower planes seeking allies and power that would aid him on his mission of vengeance. It was during these trips that he gained the amulet of Zaerabos of the Cornugon and bound Tia-dora and the Nine Sisters to his will. But it was in a long forgotten tomb near the headwaters of the River Styx that he found the Hadean Signet.

The ring had belonged long ago to a titan named Menoetius (pronounced Muh-nee-shee-us) who after the unsuccessful war against the gods, found himself banished to Abbadon. There he became a bondsman of Charon, archdaemon of death. In time, Menoetius became a valued servant of the Lord of Death and was awarded the signet to show his station within the court.

Alas, the thanatotic titan was not to be sated by service in the court of the eldest horsemen. Menoetius remained both ambitious and rebellious and in time came to try and usurp the throne of his new master. This second rebellion was no more successful than his first and the titan was once more defeated. His cursed half-living corpse was buried under Abbadonian stone on the banks of the Styx. There he was condemned to eternal imprisonment. It was there that a wily lich named Adrastus found the Signet in his travels.



The Signet remains eternally bound to its master and seeks a way to restore Menoetius' might. To do this, the ring must consume the soul of a titan, a powerful wicked spirit (an evil outsider of at least 16 hit dice) and a powerful celestial spirit (a good outsider of at least 16 hit dice).

With the might of these three sacrifices, the dread titan will live again. Worse, Menoetius will slip the bonds of the netherworld and be summoned to this plane of existence. His presence here will be nothing but a harbinger of untold suffering for mankind.

Whoever binds themselves to the ring, begins to hear whispers in the quiet watches of the night. The whispers are at first indistinct – a few hazy words. A whispered phrase that may well have simply been a passing figment.

But eventually the whispers become more and more distinct. Finally the ring truly speaks. This is what the signet whispers in a voice of deathless malice:

TITANS IN TALINGARDE?

The angel and fiend sacrifices are relatively easy to fulfill. Before this adventure is over, the PCs will get to fight planetars and solars both of whom qualify as power “celestial spirits”. And the Marilith (see Act II, Event Twenty Six: Court of the Two Queens) will suffice for the “wicked spirit” requirement.

But there are only two possible titans in all of Talingarde and one of them is not at all obvious. Brontes God-Hammer, an Elysian Titan who accompanies Bellinda (see Act IV) is the obvious titan, but he doesn't appear until the end of the adventure path.

The other titan is the daughter of Typhon, the kraken Teuthia Stormsinger (Act II, Event Twenty Two). She is the daughter of a Titan and definitely counts as a worthy sacrifice. Normally, this would be less than obvious, but as soon as the ring is within three hundred feet of her, it will whisper to its “master” – at last, a titan draws near!

Menoetius

CR 22

XP 614,400

Male unique thanatotic titan

CE Colossal outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 120 ft., true seeing; Perception +31

DEFENSE

AC 38, touch 2, flat-footed 38 (+12 armor, +24 natural, -8 size)

hp 471 (23d10+345)

Fort +22, Ref +15, Will +20; +8 resistance vs. mind-affecting

DR 15/lawful and epic; Immune aging, death effects, disease; SR 33

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft. (40 ft. in armor)

Melee +3 unholy battleaxe +37/+32/+27/+22 (6d6+22/19-20/x3), claw +29 (2d8+9) or 2 claws +34 (2d8+19)

Ranged rock +16/+11/+6/+1 (4d6+28)

Space 30 ft.; Reach 30 ft.

Special Attacks godslayer, rock throwing (100 ft.), trample (2d8+28, DC 40)

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

Constant—air walk, mind blank, spell turning, true seeing

At will—bestow curse (DC 21), break enchantment, divination, greater dispel magic, sending

3/day—disintegrate (DC 23), greater scrying (DC 24), heal, mass suggestion (DC 23)

1/day—imprisonment (DC 26), meteor swarm (DC 26), true resurrection

TACTICS

During Combat The titan Menoetius may be a genius intellect, but he suffers almost fatally from hubris. He believes himself to be greater than the gods, worthy to rule over all creation. In combat, he will demand obedience over mortals, wasting time rather than getting about the business of winning the battle.

When he does join battle, he uses magic only sparingly. He much prefers proving his prowess by hacking apart his foes with his mighty battleaxe. Still, if reduced to 117 hit points or less, he will use *heal* to restore his strength.

Morale Menoetius does not take insults from mortals lightly and against any mortal who dares engage him in combat, he will fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 49, Dex 10, Con 41, Int 27, Wis 20, Cha 24

Base Atk +23; CMB +50; CMD 60

Feats Awesome Blow, Bleeding Critical, Critical Focus, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (battleaxe), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Vital Strike

Skills Bluff +33, Craft (weapon smith) +34, Diplomacy +30, Intimidate +33, Knowledge (arcana, history, and planes) +34, Knowledge (religion) +31, Perception +31, Perform (sing) +30, Ride +18, Sense Motive +31, Spellcraft +34, Stealth +5, Use Magic Device +33

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common; telepathy 300 ft.**SQ** bound to the ring, change shape (any humanoid, alter self)**Gear** +3 colossal unholy battleaxe, +3 colossal full plate (both melt away when Menoetius is slain)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bound to the Ring (Su) As long as the *Hadean Signet* survives, Menoetius can only be imprisoned. He returns from the grave 66 days after being slain.

Godslayer (Su) When Menoetius damages a creature capable of casting divine spells, that creature must make a DC 28 Will save or be unable to cast any divine spells for 1d4 rounds and be shaken. If the save is successful, the creature struck is merely shaken for 1 round. A thanatotic titan's attacks are treated as epic and evil for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. The save DC is Charisma-based.

*By blood I awoke and by blood will I rise
To heal what is broken then three spirits must die.
The light of heaven falters, an angel is slain.
A fiend upon my altar, its death is our gain.
A titan's life lost, immortality fails
Pay the blood cost, and forever prevail*

This "offer" is a lie. A successful Knowledge (arcana) DC 30 check reveals that something is amiss. Such a powerful conjuration aura could mean the ring is a gate. It could teleport something to the wielder and with a magic item this powerful, no ward or anchor cast by mortals will stop the arrival.

With the first two sacrifices, the ring grows in power, becoming an artifact of terrible capacity. With the third, the trap is sprung and the titan arrives. Menoetius wastes little in the way of words of gratitude to his liberator. "You have freed me, sub-creature. I give you this one chance to live. Bow before me and be my slave. Enslavement is life. Defy Menoetius and know the exquisite perfection of death." It is possible that Bellinda may return to discover a titan ruling from the corpse-city of Matharyn.

The Hadean Signet

Aura overwhelming abjuration, conjuration and evil; CL 20th**Slot** ring; **Weight** –

DESCRIPTION

This heavy signet ring of black iron does not seem particularly valuable. Lacking a jewel, any obviously valuable metal or even a device, it seems almost like a commoner's ring. However, closer examination reveals this as a magical artifact of fantastic evil and power. To activate it the wielder must offer the ring some of their blood (which the ring seems to drink). From that point forward the *Hadean Signet* counts as part of them for the purpose of scrying and spells. Also the wielder immediately understands the initial properties and powers of the Signet.

Once bound, the *Hadean Signet* is a +5 ring of protection, a ring of regeneration and an arcane signet ring. Further, every time the wielder slays a good-aligned spellcaster of at least 10th level and bathes the Hadean Signet in their blood the ring gains one charge. These charges can be spent as a swift action and cast *deeper darkness* as if it had been cast by a 20th level caster. While the darkness is in effect, the wielder gains darkvision 120 ft. that functions even in this supernatural darkness.

If a good outsider of at least 16 hit dice is sacrificed to the ring then the wearer gains immunity to acid, cold and petrification and ignores the DR of any good outsider they attack.

If an evil outsider of at least 16 hit dice is sacrificed then the wearer gains immunity to fire and poison and ignores the DR of evil outsiders.

If a titan (or the child of a titan) is sacrificed then the wearer gains immunity to death effects and an SR 21.

If all three are sacrificed, then Menoetius is freed and appears at to reclaim his signet. The ring grants no benefits against the titan. This property is not revealed by the ring until its too late.

DESTRUCTION

The Hadean Signet can only be destroyed by summoning Menoetius, slaying him and then bathing the ring in his blood. After that the ring may be shattered as easily as any iron ring.

EVENT THREE: THE KING OF CHARLATANS

At a distant port on the mainland, dwells Cedrick Malthus. He headquarters at a fine inn and enjoys the company of a few well chosen camp followers. He waits for a message and a pile of money he expects the devil Tiadora to deliver any time now.

He isn't waiting alone. Bunked outside the holdings of a terrified local lord sit twenty thousand mercenaries. These mercenaries aren't just any professional soldiers – they are the cream of the continent's killers, cutthroats, criminals, gangsters, pirates, thieves and bandits.

These vile bastards have been promised more than the initial payment that drew them to this rendezvous. They have been promised that if they win the war in Talingarde, they will each be given land. They seek not just gold but plunder and a fresh start in a distant land.

Cardinal Thorn invested the lion's share of his accumulated wealth hiring these twenty thousand professional killers. Cedrick travelled the continent seeking out bandit chieftains, mob bosses, mercenary commanders and petty warlords. To each one he spoke of a distant island in the grip of a monstrous army. He spoke of a cunning plan to ambush that army, seize its plunder and take control of the island. Not one of these villians understands the full scheme but they all believe that they are a critical part of it and will profit immensely from its success.

Cedrick needs money to finish the deal. Transporting this army to the island is not cheap. Cedrick needs at least 75,000 gp. to hire the flotilla of ships, and outfit and pay his army. He would prefer twice that. With the additional money he could hire and transport the mercenary army of the villianous Herr Volker Eisenmark (another 5,000 men!) alongside his collected forces.

Cedrick has been promised that the funds will arrive shortly and so ... he waits. Cedrick knows his position is precarious. Already his army is attracting attention from local kings and potentates. It is only a matter of time before they take direct action against him. But honestly, that is not what has Cedrick sweating. Local lords he can handle. Assassins he can dodge. The constabulary he can bribe.

No, it is his own men that truly terrify Cedrick Malthus. This charlatan supreme has made a lot of promises to very dangerous, very well-armed men. If the gold doesn't materialize soon, he knows his life will shortly not be worth a plug copper piece. He has broken several clay seals and sent increasingly urgent messages to Thorn but so far has been greeted with only silence. He becomes more and more certain that something has gone wrong.

He considers every day running but wonders, amidst the wine and women, if there is any place far enough to flee. It is one thing to betray a single thieves' guild. What Cedrick would effectively be doing is betraying all of them ... at once.

This desperation is actually good news for our PCs. It means that Cedrick is pleased to speak to anyone who contacts him via his current seal (Room 2-17 in the Agathium in Book V). If told plainly that Thorn is dead and deposed, he is startled but rolls with the punch.

"Does that mean you're in charge now?" he asks smugly.

If the PCs pay off his debts, Cedrick breathes a deep sigh of relief and happily joins their cause. If the PCs found Thorn's vault, they have more than enough cash to pay his demands. They even have enough money to hire Herr Eisenmark. Of course, just because the PCs have the money doesn't mean that they'll give it to Cedrick. They may refuse to pay or try to low-ball the needed cash. Cedrick responds to these sort of negotiations with a laugh.

"You need not negotiate with me. It's not my money, my friends. Oh no. Camped right outside this quaint little port town are twenty thousand mercenaries. And when I say mercenaries, I mean twenty thousand of the continent's finest and most merciless killers, cutthroats and criminals. I have spent the last few years bribing my way into the councils and cavern hideouts of every bandit lord, mob boss and murder gang in the nine kingdoms.

"They've gathered here not because they have any love for me. Most scarcely even know my name. In truth, most would murder me in a heartbeat if they thought there was any gold in it. No, they are here not because of personal loyalty, but because they have been promised something. They have been promised that if they aid in conquering the island of Talingarde, that they will be given land and a fresh start. They have been promised a future in a far off green and pleasant land.

"They are here because I have sold them hope, my new masters. I have sold them not a small measure of hope. Oh, no. Small measures would not have gathered so large a congregation of scum and villainy. I have sold them hope by the long ton. I have fed it to them in great cauldrons. I have sold them a river of hope.

"If you don't give them the money they have been promised then that hope will fade. And then all that will be left in that nearby camp is twenty thousand of the most ruthless, desperate men ever assembled in one place. And when that happens, be somewhere else, my dread masters. So, do we have a deal?"

The PC could say no and slaughter Cedrick where he stands, instead using trickery or bribery to become commanders of the army. Killing Cedrick doesn't save them a single silver. He wasn't lying about the money. But it does mean they don't have to listen to the 'hope speech' again.

HERR EISENMARK

Herr Volker Eisenmark (LE male human fighter 12 [two-handed fighter]) is perhaps the Nine Kingdom's most accomplished and infamous mercenary general. Famous for his ruthless sack of the city of Staszic, his name is synonymous with merciless slaughter. He is a jovial killer, quick to jest, easy to smile and utterly without mercy. He is the sort who will slap a man on the back and share a beer with him just before he slits his throat. In addition to being a remorseless murderer, he is also a capable general who has built a fine rapport with his men.

Herr Eisenmark was in his youth a handsome, dark-haired lad. Today, he is a scarred veteran soldier, missing an eye and most of his hair. He has a salt and pepper beard and an eye-patch of green dragon scale. He smokes an antique meerschaum pipe colored sepia with years of constant use. He wears a suit of fine (and magical) half-plate and wields a gigantic two-handed sword with a blade in the shape of a flame (a flamberge).

Herr Eisenmark commands five thousand veteran mercenaries. Two thousand men are heavy infantry wielding halberds and greatswords. Another two thousand are crossbowmen. The final thousand are heavy lancers – his feared Kriegersreiter Truppe.

Herr Eisenmark never accepts military rank. He is not a general nor a colonel nor a captain. He is simply Herr Eisenmark (literally Mister Eisenmark). When he makes a contract, he honors it to the letter. If you fail to include a clause that he must save you as well as conquer the city, do not expect Eisenmark to ride to the rescue.

Herr Eisenmark recognizes Cedrick Malthus for exactly what he is – a charlatan. But what has him curious is that he seems to be a charlatan with deep pockets. Clearly someone wealthy is bankrolling this buffoon. But who? It is that curiosity that has brought Herr Eisenmark to this assembly. His hope is that Cedrick will reveal himself as a thief and a liar, because if then true he could drag the man to a nearby tree and hang him until he is dead.

If the PCs will meet his price (75,000 gp), Herr Eisenmark will follow them to Talingarde. It is a decision that in years to come, they are unlikely to regret.

Story Award: Award a CR 19 (204,800 XP) reward for gaining Cedrick Malthus' army.

Cedrick Malthus, Agent of the Sixth Knot

CR 17

XP 102,400

Male human rogue 3/fighter 4/duelist 10

LE Medium humanoid

Init +14; Senses Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 20, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +6 Dex, +1 Dodge, +2 deflection, +1 canny defense)

hp 137 (14d10+3d8+47)

Fort +13, Ref +21, Will +11; +1 Will saves vs. fear

Special defense deflect arrows when wielding a rapier

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 human bane rapier +25/+20/+15 (1d6+15/15-20)

Ranged mwk dagger +22 (1d4+1/19-20)

Special Attack +2d6 sneak attack; bane weapon: vs. humans +2 to hit, +2d6+2 damage; crippling critical

TACTICS

During Combat Cedrick Malthus does not enjoy combat and would often rather talk his way out of a fight. However, this often causes people to assume he doesn't know how to fight. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Cedrick wields his rapier with deadly precision. Before using Cedrick, you should read up on the duelist prestige class. Cedrick has many complex combat options.

However, in general, he seeks always to flank his foes (gaining sneak attack) and keep on the move (gain 50% concealment with lightning stance).

Morale Cedrick Malthus is no hero. He flees any foe he believes he cannot defeat. If reduced to 34 hit points or less, he surrenders.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 22, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16

Base Atk +16; CMB +17; CMD 33

Feats Dodge, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Lightning Stance, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Rapier), Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +22, Bluff +19, Climb +8, Diplomacy +13, Disable Device +12, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +28, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +18, Perform (oratory) +9, Ride +11, Sense Motive +18, Stealth +31

Languages Common, Elven

SQ acrobatic charge, combat reflexes (when wielding a rapier), elaborate defense, enhanced mobility, grace, no retreat, parry, riposte, rogue talent (false friend), trapfinding, trap sense +1

Combat Gear potions of cure serious wounds (3), potions of gaseous form (2), potions of invisibility (2)

Gear +3 shadow mithral shirt, +2 human bane rapier, belt of incredible dexterity +2, cloak of resistance +3, ring of protection +2, vest of escape, masterwork dagger, noble garb, bottle of ludicrously expensive brandy (120 gp), jewelry (650 gp), 125 gp, selection of signet rings

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Crippling Critical (Ex) When you confirm a critical using a light or one-handed piercing weapon, you apply one of these penalties in addition to the damage: reduce target's speeds by 10 ft. (min. 5 ft.), 1d4 points of STR or DEX damage, -4 penalty on all saving throws, -4 penalty to AC, or 2d6 bleed damage. These penalties last 1 minute, except for ability damage, which must be healed normally, and bleed damage, which continues until the target is magically healed or a DC 15 Heal skill check.

False Friend (Ex) Cedrick gains a +4 bonus to Bluff checks to convince someone he has never met or who doesn't know him well that they are previously acquainted or know each other well.

EVENT FOUR: TIME TO DIE

The Fire-Axe's victorious army has outlived its usefulness. One way or another these monsters must be dealt with. If not stopped, the horde will pillage south and finally arrive at its promised prize – the city of Matharyn. These monsters will burn that city to the ground and then break apart. The scattered tribes of bugbears, hill giants, trolls and humanoids will infest the southern peninsula and be almost impossible to permanently uproot and destroy. They will trouble the kingdom of Talingarde for decades to come. Here, while the horde is concentrated, is one chance to smash the forces of the Savage North and end their threat to Talirean power forever.

The players may not agree. They may not want to attack the horde. After all, if this motley war machine could be brought into line then they could end up with two armies. But the truth is that there is no controlling this monstrous army for long. They will sack Matharyn.

Even if the Fire-Axe were to order his followers not to do this, they would rise up, replace him and then do it anyway. Every creature in this army relished the brutal sack of Daveryn (see Book IV). But Daveryn they know was only a small prize compared to the wealth of the capital. They will sack and plunder Matharyn. For months these beasts have dreamed of little else.

For most of these creatures, this drive goes deeper than mere greed. For centuries the men of Talingarde have pushed these tribes back, repulsed their counter-attacks and driven them into the coldest, most isolated parts of the island. Almost every bugbear in this horde has had kin die trying to break the Watch Wall in another fruitless raid. Sacking Matharyn is payback for centuries of defeat and humiliation by the Talirean army. Matharyn will burn!

Sakkarot is canny enough to realize his host of killers will not relent. He understands their anger and humiliation because once he shared it. If asked, he is candid in his opinion. This horde will not be swayed from its goal.

By this point, the PCs almost certainly do not want Matharyn annihilated. The Talirean army is destroyed (thanks to General Barca and the Battle of Fallingsbridge). The capital and the crown are theirs to claim. Ironically, they have been transformed from the greatest threat that the Kingdom of Talingarde has ever faced to its last hope. This was always Thorn's plan.

So if the PCs want a kingdom to rule and a capital to rule it from, then this horde, that they themselves helped arm and organize must be wiped out. How can this be done?

The PCs have one great asset – the Fire-Axe himself. As long as the Fire-Axe pretends that his ultimate goal is the sack of Matharyn, the horde will follow his commands. They have learned to trust their brilliant commander who has lead them to victory after victory. He could easily use that trust to lead the horde to utter ruin. He has likely confessed that he knows this will happen and has accepted it (see Act One, Event Two, Book IV).

TREACHEROUS PLANS

How the PCs appear to the Fire-Axe is up to them. They could visit him openly or they could secretly appear in his private pavillion. Either way, he takes them aside and consults with them in private. This will arouse no suspicion in his followers. After all, it has been happening from even before they stormed the Watchtower Balentyne.

Sakkarot Fire-Axe is not a stupid creature. He has sensed, as his army marched south, that the time is close for the end of his campaign. He is not surprised that the Ninth Knot are the messengers of this news.

What will surprise him is news of Thorn's demise. Of course, there is no reason for the PCs to tell him that now. They could always pose as Thorn's messengers. Sakkarot has no reason to doubt their loyalty unless they themselves reveal their treachery.

If the PCs do reveal their coup, Sakkarot demands an explanation. *"What did Cardinal Thorn do that warranted his destruction?"*

Remember that Sakkarot is a loyal Asmodean. He has a gigantic holy symbol of the devil god branded into his chest. If a PC presents himself as the new high priest of Asmodeus and explain that Thorn had betrayed the Lord of Hell, then Sakkarot will be shocked.

"You have proof of this?"

Assuming the PCs are persuasive and have proof of their allegations, he will eventually come around. Having a devil such as Dessiter talk to the Fire-Axe will also go a long way towards assuaging his doubts. A diplomacy roll may be called for, but presenting this proof is likely better handled by roleplaying. As long as the PCs stick to Thorn's plan, the Fire-Axe is unlikely to turn upon them. He knows what he must do.

"So be it. If then you are the new masters of the Nine Knots, then I will remain your First Knot. Hail Asmodeus!"

Story Award: Convincing Sakkarot to remain in their service is worth a CR 18 (153,600 XP) reward.

Regardless of how the PCs explain the circumstances of the betrayal to him, Sakkarot sighs and states: "So it has come at last, eh? The time of my betrayal has arrived."

He pulls back the heavy cloth flap of the pavillion and from a slight rise looks across the great horde he has assembled. His demeanor changes. He is no longer the jovial warlord, master of ten thousand killers. Instead, he turns dour and dark. Perhaps in that single moment he considers another way. He could bellow out to his assembled horde and have them attack his tent en masse. He could wield the Fire-Axe against these agents of Asmodeus and hew them down. And then, he could lead his army to Matharyn and fulfill his promise to these killers. He could rule from the ruin of Talingarde, lord of the sacked isle.

But no. Sakkarot is a creature of honor in his own strange way. He will keep to the plan and lead his army to destruction. He lets the flap of his pavilion fall free.

"Then let it be done. I have known the moment was close at hand for some time. I believe I even know the perfect place to see it done. A few days march from here is the small town of Brandelburn."

He pulls out a map and shows it to the PCs.

"Just to the south of Brandelburn are open fields surrounded on three sides by bluffs. My most trusted scouts spotted them days ago. The bluffs do not appear that high, but they are loose rock. Climbing them is all but impossible."

"Any army that enters those fields is entering a slaughter house. Archers could take position on the three bluffs and rain death upon the force with little threat of retaliation. The bluffs would become a natural battlement. There would be no cover for their targets and no way to retreat if cavalry were to flank us from the rear."

"An army so cornered would have only one choice. They could run across the entire length of the field sustaining countless losses and enter here into this small break. There they could take shelter from the hail of arrows and reform. Of course if there were an elite group of infantry already positioned there that held the break, then they would stack up at the entryway. It would be a slaughter."

"Holding the break would be dangerous. Only the hardiest of diehards and my most elite would make it so far. If they escape, then they will never call forth an army as potent as my horde, true, but they will make immense amounts of trouble. It is probably best for you to hold the break personally."

If asked where he would be in all this, he shrugs.

Sakkarot Fire-Axe

CR 15

XP 51.200

Male bugbear fighter 13

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 24 (+11 armor, +2 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 172 (3d8+13d10+87)

Fort +13, Ref +9, Will +9; +3 on Will saves vs. fear

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +4 *unholy flaming great axe* +31/+26/+21 (1d12+20+1d6 fire +2d6 vs. good-aligned foes/19-20x3)

TACTICS

During Combat Sakkarot while brilliant for a bugbear, remains a straight forward combatant. He loves to use fear to his advantage and often tries to intimidate foes he believes to be less powerful than himself, starting off a fight using the demoralize option under the intimidate skill.

Against greater foes, he does not bother. Instead, Sakkarot on his first round of combat invokes the *righteous might* power of his armor. And besides those few subtleties, he charges into melee wielding his axe of flame.

He power attacks on every stroke with the *Fire Axe* (-4 to hit, +12 to damage). He focuses on a single foe, eager to cut them down. Instead relying upon his impressive cleave to spread out damage to other enemies.

Sakkarot knows the great power of spellcasters. He targets them preferentially if he gets the chance.

Morale If attacked by the PCs or their servants, Sakkarot realizes he has nothing left to live for and fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 24, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14

Base Atk +15; CMB +20; CMD 32

Feats Bleeding Critical, Cleave, Cleaving Finish, Critical Focus, Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus (great axe), Greater Weapon Specialization (great axe), Improved Cleaving Finish, Improved Critical (great axe), Improved Iron Will, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness, Weapon Focus (great axe), Weapon Specialization (great axe)

Skills Intimidate +24, Perception +9, Profession (Soldier) +17, Sense Motive +18, Stealth +11, Survival +7; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Intimidate, +4 Stealth

SQ armor training, bravery, stalker, weapon training (axe +3, bows +2, polearms +1)

Traits Suspicious: +1 bonus on Sense Motive and its always a class skill

Indomitable Faith (Asmodeus): +1 to will saves

Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin, Infernal

Gear The Fire Axe (+4 *unholy flaming burst greataxe*), +2 *unrighteous full plate*, Belt of Physical Might +4 (Str, Con)

"I have never led my horde from the front. I have always been in the midst of my killers and there I will remain. You will have to arrange my escape. Can you do this?"

If given reasonable reassurances he simply nods. He knows a betrayal is likely, but he says nothing. He has long ago accepted his fate.

"Fine then. I will be at Brandelburn in seven days. Be ready. We will cross the field at dawn. There will all our glories perish."

EVENT FIVE: THE BATTLE OF BRANDELBURN FIELDS

The so-called Battle of Brandelburn fields is not a true battle. This is choreographed slaughter. On a small patch of advantageous ground just a few miles from a humble and insignificant farming town (the burrough of Brandelburn) this magnificent piece of murderous theater will be performed.

The timing of exactly when the battle begins is in the PCs hands. They have some flexibility. With Sakkarot commanding one army and them commanding the other, it isn't hard to coordinate this slaughter. Presumably it will be shortly after the Sixth's Knot army lands in Talingarde. Brandelburne is not far from the eastern coast of Talingarde, so it would be an easy march of just a few days.

Sakkarot's army is lax about sending out scouts. After weeks of travelling with little resistance, the horde has little reason to suspect that the Talireans will meet them again in the open field. The Fire-Axe's killers believes that their next great battle will be at Matharyn and not before.

The horde makes camp not far from Brandelburn fields alongside a small creek that flows between the two rises. The creek provides fresh water and even a few river fish that make a fine breakfast.

Just the day before, the horde sacked a small farming community, so provisions are plentiful and the horde even has a few captive slaves dragged along in irons. The bugbears have yet to decide whether these pitiful souls are better used for sport or on a spit.

Before the battle, the Horde of Sakkarot Fire-Axe has reached its apex in size and ferocity. Virtually every bugbear warrior in the Savage North is here. Even the stragglers who dodged the main campaign do not want to miss the sack of Matharyn. Absolutely every surviving male ogre (except for Grumblejack), ettin, hill giant and troll in Talingarde marches with the Fire-Axe. Even the goblin tribes, which had been hesitant to serve a bugbear, have committed to the campaign and the ranks swarm with the little monsters. A few frost giants, dire bears and naatanuk (awakened polar bears) still accompany the rag-tag force. Altogether, the final count is almost thirty thousand. This is a monstrous horde of legend.

These monsters are not unarmored or unarmed. In an army as chaotic and murderous as this one, the raiders must always be ready for battle. But not one of these monsters forsees the slaughter that is to come this day – save their commander. Today will simply be another day marching to their glorious victory.

Sakkarot knows otherwise. The great black-furred warlord has not been able to sleep. He spent the night alone in his personal pavillion, sending away the usual harem of shaggy wives he has accumulated over the course of the campaign. Shagoroth Night-Mane, his most accomplished lieutenant, realizes that his commander is in a foul temper but cannot divine why. Sakkarot, for his part, does nothing but brood.

With dawn, Sakkarot emerges from his tent, wearing the magical armor given to him by Thorn. He hefts his namesake fire-axe and watches it flame with infernal fire. More than just armor, he is also appointed in a fine cloak and golden jewelry – the rich spoils of dead Daveryn. Shagoroth is quickly at his side.

"A fine morning for marching," the bugbear underling growls. "Each day Matharyn draws ever closer. It will be your greatest victory."

"Matharyn..." muses the Fire-Axe. "Yes, not far at all."

"Your orders?"

"We'll keep beside this stream and follow it south all day. The scouts report it's clear. Maybe we'll catch a few farmers and millers off-guard who weren't smart enough to flee."

"The lads love the sport," says the Night-Mane with a wicked chuckle. "And what about the scouts? The wolf-riders are almost all back. You want me to send them out again this morning? Those hills and bluffs ahead should be searched for ambushers."

"Ambushers, here?" answers the Fire-Axe. "We haven't even seen an enemy patrol in days. I think they concentrate what remains of their forces south in defense of the city. Besides, these low bluffs offer scant cover. We'll see any enemies miles away."

"No, let the scouts stay with the horde for a while and rest up," says Sakkarot with a growl. "We've been driving them hard. We'll need them fresh when we approach the southern peninsula and close upon the capital. The humans won't just hand us their largest city."

The Night-mane nods. "As you wish, mighty Sakkarot."

"Now break camp. I want this rabble marching within the hour."

Sakkarot watches his lieutenants begin to scurry about carrying out his orders. He grasps his axe firmly. There. It is done. The trap is set and his oaths are fulfilled.

"Time to die, my friends," he whispers only to himself.

The Battle of Brandelburn Fields

1" = 100 yards

● = hidden archers

The Horde
of
Sakkarot
Fire-axe



The Break

Act One: Victorious

RUNNING THE BATTLE

This is a moment in the campaign to let the PCs fully vent their might. Our villains are 18th level. They have spells and resources to spare. They command an army of at least twenty thousand soldiers plus their own evil organization. There are dozens of ways they could destroy the Horde of Sakkarot Fire-axe. Ultimately, the one they choose is probably better than any method the author might suggest.

If the PCs have an alternate plan, let them implement it and if it's at all reasonable – let it work without a hitch. There are dark and perilous days ahead for our villains. The Battle of Brandelburn is not one of those days. This is a day of complete triumph for the forces of evil. Thorn may be dead(er), but on this field on this day, his great plan comes to fruition.

If the PCs follow the Fire-Axe's suggestion, this is likely how the battle plays out. The Horde of Sakkarot Fire-Axe marches into the fields of Brandelburn. The low bluffs that rise to either side do nothing to arouse their suspicion. They march south certain of their invincibility.

And then the trap is sprung. Cavalry appears to the north, flanking the great horde. The entire column wheels to face the foe and confusion reigns. And then the archers appear on the bluffs. They loose great clouds of arrows that fall into the massed column. Faced with an unexpected enemy on three sides, panic grips the horde.

Suddenly their great commander rises to the challenge of the moment. "An ambush!" Sakkarot screams. "South, my killers! We'll form a defensive line at the break!"

The horde answers their commander's call and charges away from the cavalry towards the small gap. The doomed raiders must cross four hundred yards of clear ground while protected archers choose their targets without fear. The fields of Brandelburn become a slaughter house. The targets are so thick and plentiful that even unaimed, arrows cannot help but hit something.

As the carnage begins, many of the mounted scouts break ranks and flee the massacre back towards the cavalry line. If the PCs have hired Herr Eisenmark, the fleeing wolf-riders run headlong into his veteran mercenary cavalry – the *Kriegsreiter Truppe*. The scarred and merciless mercenary commander leaves no survivors.

If the PCs chose not to spend that money, then several hundred wolf-riders escape, eluding less experienced cavalry by bounding over the rocks. This has no real impact upon the campaign, but in Act Two to mention at least once that wolf-riders menace central Talingarde.

Shagoroth Night-Mane (assuming he's still alive and with the Horde) leads a small band of more elite bugbears, ogres and hill giants against the western slope. The bluffs are not high – only rising fifteen feet in places. He hopes to climb the walls and clear the archers. The giants in the band can perhaps even reach a few of the closer archers without having to climb.

It is then that the Night-Mane discovers the brilliance of this trap. The bluffs are not high, true. But the stone girding their face is loose shale and crumbling limestone. Even the smallest amount of weight causes them to crumble away. The bugbears that try to climb the wall tumble back down. Hundreds of arrows fall like rain into their confused ranks. The giants earn special attention, falling dead so covered in arrows that they look like weird feathered beasts. The Night-Mane, despite all of this, actually makes it up the cliff. As he faces a hundred armed men alone, he charges defiantly hewing into their ranks. They pile upon him and cut him down with a dozen blows.

Soon the field is littered with the dead and dying. Bugbear corpses burdened with the loot of Daveryn adorn the field by their thousands. Goblins clambered so thickly that in places, a single arrow impaled three of them. Troll corpses burn with a dozen flaming arrows.

But the battle is still not entirely won. At the Break a small band of diehards charge forth. They are led by one particularly hard and ornery hill giant barbarian known as Arn Flintskin. He and a small band of diehards actually reach the breach alive and still ready for a fight. If there is not someone there to stop them then they will break free and escape. Hopefully the PCs have followed Sakkarot's advice and there is someone there to meet them.

If Arn and his diehards escape the battlefield, then the pugnacious hill giant chieftain dominates every survivor he can find left from the horde. He amazingly manages to put together an effective humanoid bandit gang just north of the capital. They burn farms, harass caravans, pillage towns and generally make a nuisance of themselves. Eventually they have to be hunted down (this is likely handled by local soldiery and sheriffs).

The end result of all this mayhem is that the PCs lose 1,000 gp a month in revenue for 1d6 months at the start of their reign while the gang is hunted down. If a 6 is rolled then hunting them down takes so long and so many resources, that it actually substantially weakens the new regime. Apply a -1 penalty to Might (See Act II for details about income and the Might Score).

Regardless, the band of Arn Flintskin is the horde's last hurrah. After that, they pass into history.

THE DIEHARDS (CR 19; 204,800 XP TOTAL)

Arn Flintskin

CR 16

XP 76,800

Male hill giant barbarian (scarred rager) 9

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +10

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (+7 armor, +1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 rage, -1 size)

hp 280 (19 HD; 10d8+9d12+177)

Fort +22, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities improved tolerance, rock catching, scarification, tolerance; **DR** 2/-

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *greatclub* +28/+23/+18 (2d8+17/19-20) or 2 slams +25 (1d6+10)

Ranged rock +16 (1d8+14)

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

Special Attacks rage (26 rounds/day), rage powers (body bludgeon, increased damage reduction, knockback, superstition +4)

TACTICS

During Combat Arn Flintskin has no loyalty to "his men" and is only too happy to sacrifice each and every one of them to accomplishing his real goal – escaping alive. However, being the most powerful creature in this mob, he has been given the mantle of leader (a role he is terrible at). Arn's plan is to focus his resources on the break, smash everything in his way and get out of this killing field as soon as possible. Arn is desperately hoping Sakkarot shows up soon and takes over.

Arn arrives at this fight already enraged (and in fact he's already used half of his rounds of rage) and holding a rock. He has chugged a few healing potions so he's unhurt. He starts the fight by throwing the rock (along with all the other hill giants) and charging into the fray.

Anyone small who gets in his way is going to get bull-rushed or knocked out of the way with his awesome blows. Anyone who proves resistant to that, gets focused on by his magical greatclub.

Arn is focused on escape for now and will not attack fallen foes. Any enemy who drops is an enemy who is not in his way. Only if the chieftain is cornered does he seek to slay his foes.

Morale Arn has no choice in this brutal bottleneck but to fight to the death.

Base Statistics When not raging, Arn Flintskin's statistics are AC 29, touch 10, flat-footed 28; hp 186; Fort +20, Will+10; Melee +2 *greatclub* +26/+21/+16 (2d8+14/19-20) or 2 slams +23 (1d6+8); Ranged rock +17 (1d8+11); **Str** 26, **Con** 23; **CMB** +25, **CMD** 36; **Climb** +19.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 12, **Con** 27, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +27; **CMD** 36

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greatclub), Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greatclub)

Skills Climb +21, Intimidate +14 (+19 against non-tribal humanoids), Perception +13

Languages Giant

SQ terrifying visage

Combat Gear potions of cure serious wounds (2); **Other Gear** +3 *hide*, +2 *greatclub*, *amulet of natural armor* +3, *belt of giant strength* +2, *cloak of resistance* +1; bag full of loot from the sack of Daveryn containing gold, jewelry and ivory carvings worth 3200 gp; 5 gallon cask of beer, dead pig tied to back



Great Cyclops

CR 12

XP 19,200

CE Huge humanoid (giant)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +22

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 9, flat-footed 25 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +13 natural, -2 size)

hp 195 (17d8+119)

Fort +12, **Ref** +6, **Will** +14

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee mwk *greatclub* +24/+19/+14 (3d8+19), *gore* +17 (1d8+6) or *gore* +23 (1d8+13), 2 slams +23 (2d6+13)

Ranged rock +11 (2d6+19)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks powerful charge (*gore*, 4d8+24), rock throwing (120 ft.)

TACTICS

During Combat The cyclops is not a tactical genius. Its plan is to charge through the break and smash everything in its way.

Morale Trapped and desperate, the cyclops has little choice but to fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 36, **Dex** 13, **Con** 25, **Int** 7, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +27; **CMD** 38

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Critical Focus, Diehard, Endurance, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Staggering Critical

Skills Perception +22

Languages Common, Cyclops, Giant

SQ flash of brutality

Gear masterwork club, hide armor

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Flash of Brutality (Su) Once per day as a swift action, a great cyclops can gain a burst of savage of inspiration. When it does, it doubles the threat range of all weapons, natural attacks, and rock attacks it makes until the start of its next turn.

Furthermore, once per day, when the great cyclops reaches 0 or fewer hit points and is conscious because of its Diehard feat, this ability recharges, allowing it to use the ability a second time that same day.

Act One: Victorious

Troll (5)**CR 5****XP 1,600 each**

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +8**DEFENSE****AC** 16, touch 11, flat-footed 14; (+2 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)**hp** 63 (6d8+36); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)**Fort** +11, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** bite +8 (1d8+5), 2 claws +8 (1d6+5)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** rend (2 claws, 1d6+7)**TACTICS**

During Combat This pack of trolls idolizes Burgle and Slashabak and follows the warrior troll into the break. There they will attack anything that gets in their way, ripping it to pieces with their teeth and claws.

Morale The trolls follow their two-headed leader to the bitter end.

STATISTICS**Str** 21, **Dex** 14, **Con** 23, **Int** 6, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 22**Feats** Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception)**Skills** Intimidate +9, **Perception** +8**Languages** Giant**Burgle and Slashabak, Two-Headed Troll****CR 13****XP 25,600**

Male advanced two-headed troll fighter 4

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +18**DEFENSE****AC** 29, touch 11, flat-footed 27 (+6 armor, +12 natural, +2 Dex, -1 size)**hp** 170 (13 HD; 9d8+4d10+130); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)**Fort** +12, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** mwk longsword +23/+18 (2d6+13/19-20) and mwk flail +23 (2d6+11) or 2 claws +21 (1d6+11), 2 bites +21 (1d8+11)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** rend (2 claws, 1d6+11), superior two-weapon fighting**TACTICS**

During Combat Burgle and Slashabak lead a squadron of trolls alongside the giants and ettins towards the break. They have no plan other than attack everything in their way.

Morale Like the rest of the diehards, the two-headed troll has little choice but to keep on fighting until it escapes or it is dead.

STATISTICS**Str** 32, **Dex** 15, **Con** 29, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 32

Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness, Weapon Focus (Flail), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

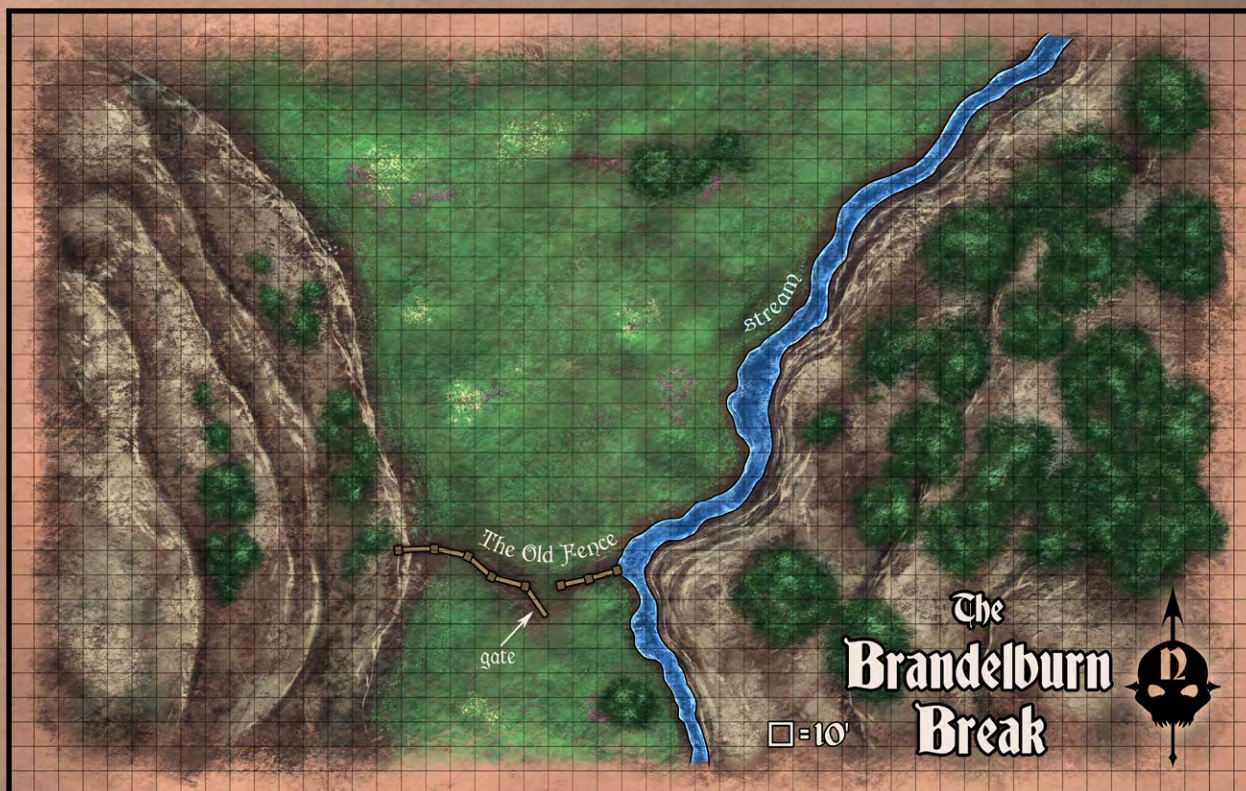
Skills Intimidate +13, **Perception** +18**Languages** Giant

Gear Breastplate, mwk flail, mwk longsword

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Superior Two-Weapon Fighting (Ex) A two-headed troll fights with a flail or longsword in each hand. Because each of its two heads controls an arm, the troll does not take a penalty on attack or damage rolls for attacking with two weapons.





Hill Giants (5)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each (16,000 XP total)

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init -1; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +6

DEFENSE

AC 21, **touch** 8, **flat-footed** 21 (+4 armor, -1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)

hp 85 (10d8+40)

Fort +11, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities rock catching

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor)

Melee greatclub +14/+9 (2d8+10) or 2 slams +13 (1d8+7)

Ranged rock +6 (1d8+10)

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

Special Attacks rock throwing (120 ft.)

TACTICS

During Combat Each one of these hill giants on orders from Arn Flintskin has picked up a rock. They start this combat by pelting the break with a barrage of stones.

After that, they let out a great yell and charge into the break. Anything that gets in their way is going to get smashed with a great club until it isn't in their way.

Morale Fight to the death or die like the rest of the tribe. That is these hill giants' only choice...

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 8, **Con** 19, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 24

Feats Cleave, Intimidating Prowess, Martial Weapon Proficiency (greatclub), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub)

Skills Climb +10, Intimidate +12, Perception +6

Languages Giant

Ettins (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each (4,800 XP total)

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +12

DEFENSE

AC 18, **touch** 8, **flat-footed** 18; (+2 armor, -1 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 65 (10d8+20)

Fort +9, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee 2 flails +12/+7 (2d6+6)

Ranged 2 javelins +5 (1d8+6)

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

Special Attacks superior two-weapon fighting

TACTICS

During Combat The ettins follow the hill giants, throwing javelins at first and then smashing anything that gets in their way..

Morale Like the other diehards, there is only death or escape.

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 8, **Con** 15, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 23

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Handle Animal +8, Perception +12; **Racial Modifiers** +4 on Perception

Languages pidgin of Giant, Goblin, and Orc

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Superior Two-Weapon Fighting (Ex) An ettin fights with a flail or javelin in each hand. Because each of its two heads controls an arm, the ettin does not take a penalty on attack or damage rolls for attacking with two weapons.

Frost Giants (8)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each (51,200 XP total)

CE Large humanoid (cold, giant)

Init -1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, -1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)
hp 133 (14d8+70)

Fort +14, Ref +3, Will +6

Defensive Abilities rock catching; Immune cold

Weaknesses vulnerability to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee greataxe +18/+13 (3d6+13) or 2 slams +18 (1d8+9)

Ranged rock +9 (1d8+13)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks rock throwing (120 ft.)

TACTICS

During Combat The frost giants join in the initial barrage of rock throwing and then charge forward wielding their greataxes and cutting through anything that stands in their way.**Morale** Much like all the diehards, what choice do these giants have but to fight to the death?

STATISTICS

Str 29, Dex 9, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11

Base Atk +10; CMB +20; CMD 29

Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Martial Weapon Proficiency (greataxe), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Climb +13, Craft (any one) +7, Intimidate +7, Perception +10, Stealth +2 (+6 in snow); Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth in snow

Languages Common, Giant

Gear chainshirt, greataxe, rock

Note: If the PCs have used their alliance with Queen Ellisif to avoid fighting the frost giants (see sidebar), then award them XP as if they had defeated them.

AFTER THE SLAUGHTER

As soon as the PCs defeat Arn Flintskin and his diehards, the field of battle is theirs. The cohorts of archers eventually can find no further targets and then with a great cry, the infantry sweeps around the bluff and enters the field. The archers too break their cover and run down the crumbling bluffs amongst the sea of their victims.

These warriors are not here to fight. They are here because they know that the Horde of Sakkarot Fire-Axe bear the pillaged treasures of the borderlands and lost Daveryn. They are here to loot the looters.

What the mercenary army discovers is a scene of brutal carnage. Littering the ground here are ten thousand dead monsters. Blood pools up everywhere. The once beautiful little river and spring has been transformed into a fountain of gore and monster ichor. Carrion birds already pick at the dead.

The few survivors groan in agony clutching at their wounds. They live only long enough for the mercenary warriors to end their misery as the cutthroat mob begins the gory business of looting.

The PCs can join in if the pillaging if they like, though the pickings here (by their standards) are scant. A warrior who takes to the field can claim 1d6x100 gp in scattered loot without too much trouble. There are a few great treasures hidden among the dead and if they are quick the PCs might be able to claim a few. A successful DC 30 Perception check (both to find the item and get it before another soldier hides it away) yields instead 1d10x1000 gp in monetary treasure.

Soon the day wears away and the sun begins to set. Great bonfires of burning corpses fill the valley with the acrid smoke of roasting monster flesh. In great columns of smoke the last of the Fire-Axe's horde fades into memory. The trap was so effective that it is difficult to imagine how anything could have survived. There are scattered tales of a few monsters making it up the bluffs at a few easy to climb points. Some of those killers might have escaped. But even they are mostly killed as the cavalry patrols the area around the battlefield.

What no one in the mercenary army has are prisoners. The idea never even occurs to them. Mercy is not a natural state for this band of murderers and thieves.

A few local townsfolk have ridden out and from the surrounding hills watch everything that is happening in the valley. They ride off just as suddenly as they appear and soon begin to spread the good news. The Horde of Sakkarot Fire has been destroyed.

SPARE THE FROST GIANTS?

It is possible that in Book V the PCs have made an alliance with Queen Ellisif. If so, the battle of Brandelburn represents an opportunity for the PCs to do their part in that alliance. Travelling with the Fire-Axe are thirty frost giant warriors, miserable to be so farth south and in such warm climes.

The frost giants are not a significant portion of Sakkarot's military might, but they do represent a significant portion of the surviving frost giant soldiers in Talingarde. Queen Ellisif does not want them slaughtered for a mere ruse. If she knows anything about this scheme, she will do all she can to have the giants spared.

This is not difficult to do. Sakkarot could easily concoct a reason why the giants are not with the main body of his horde. He could send them to the rear to check out a rumor of knights shadowing the horde. If this is done, a giant alliance could be of use during the PC's reign (see Event Sixteen in Act II below).

EVENT SIX: DEALING WITH THE FIRE-AXE

After the battle is concluded and the breach is held, the PCs have one more issue – what should be done with Sakkarot Fire-Axe himself? He has honored his oaths. He has led his army across the face of Talingarde inflicting glorious slaughter, unconquerable save by treacherous design. But now his horde is vanquished and broken, destroyed almost to a monster.

It is easy to see why the PCs would just kill him. The paranoid could envision him as a threat since he knows many damning secrets. He knows who broke the watchtower of Balentyne and started this war. He knows how they engineered the Battle of Brandelburn. It seems obvious that killing him would tie up a loose end.

And yet the author suspects that most groups won't kill him. He will likely be kept alive and sent back to the Agathium or someplace similar.

And why not? He's a fine warrior and a competent general. He has proven his loyalty. And if he did turn on the PCs (something he has no intention of doing), who would believe him?

In the eyes of most Talireans, Sakkarot Fire-Axe is the most hated name on the island. Almost every family has lost a loved one fighting this monster. He has ravaged half the island and come closer than any bugbear in the history of the kingdom to sacking the capital.

If Sakkarot appeared one day in court and spoke against a sitting ruler, all this would accomplish is him being dog-piled by soldiers and publicly executed at dawn. The people would come in their thousands to see him hang. No one would even listen to the accusations of this national boogey-man.

He can't even flee back to his own people. Because of him, there are hardly any tribes left in the Savage North. And what broken remnants remain would kill him on sight if they could. Such is Sakkarot's reward for brilliant service to Asmodeus – almost universal loathing. Killing him might seem a sort of mercy.

Sakkarot has no illusions where he stands. When Thorn rescued him from exile years ago, Sakkarot came within a whisper of death from exposure and starvation. The bugbear sees every day as a gift of the devil god. He has accepted Asmodeus' mark and pledged his soul for fleeting glory. And now that glory is gone. Sakkarot is ready to die.

Perhaps the PCs could change that. Maybe they could find him a new place in the kingdom they are building. He could be bailiff of the Agathium in the north, taking the role once held by Marcel Wolfram. He could be given a new charge and a new command. Doing this would give Sakkarot a new lease on life.

So rewarded, Sakkarot Fire-Axe would become their most loyal servant. He will pledge himself to the new masters of the Nine Knots and mean it. He will ensure that no matter how disastrously things go in coming years, they have a refuge and a loyal servant waiting for them. In the times to come, they will need it.

If they do decide to slay Sakkarot, what then? He knows the inevitability of defeat and yet he will not go down without a fight. Sakkarot emerges from the Battle of Brandelburn fields at half hit points, but otherwise ready for a scrap. He will brandish his fire-axe one last time as the betrayal comes.

"So, this is what I have earned. First Thorn and now me. Fine then! With axe in hand I go fighting into my father's kingdom! I have only one prayer – that in whatever hell I have earned, there is only war. ASMODEUS!"

He charges into the fray, eager to not go to hell alone.

In time, Sakkarot becomes Talingarde's equivalent of Atilla the Hun. He is a fierce warrior of legend, celebrated as much as he was reviled in life. With the passage of decades, military scholars will study his brilliant campaign from Balentyne to Brandelburn and note its many strokes of strategic genius. What Sakkarot will never be is forgotten. With an axe of flame, he has burned his name into history.



EVENT SEVEN: THE PALADIN RETURNS

NOTE: This event is optional. It only occurs if Sir Richard fell in Book V (see Act II, Event: Fallen).

When Sir Richard gave himself to Asmodeus, the contract devil Dessiter took the fallen paladin to stand before the pit fiend Naburus (also detailed in Book V). The pit fiend first laughed at the paladin's plight but then saw within this soul great potential. The fiend formally petitioned the hierarchy of hell for the creation of an anti-paladin. Slowly, painfully, Sir Richard was transformed, wracked in hellfire and devil's iron. All he had was taken away from him and instead he became a tool of hell.

At some point before the PCs take control of Talin-garde, Dessiter brings Sir Richard to them. To say that the paladin is changed is an understatement. Even more than his infernal black armor, he is a grim shadow of his former self. He is a creature of vengeance, eager to repay those who failed him before with death and damnation.

Dessiter is his usual fawning self: *"Greetings, great and powerful lords. It is my pleasure to stand again in the presence of your infernal majesties. Today I am not alone. I bring an ally and petitioner to your service. May I present the anti-paladin Sir Berithor, who has sworn service to our father and bound himself to hell. He has something to say..."*

The once proud knight bows before you. "I offer you my sword and my service, if you will have it."

"Ah," says Dessiter, "How pleasant to see old enemies reconciled."

If the PCs ask some variant of "what are we supposed to do with him?" Dessiter has an answer to that question: *"Why make him king of course."*

The devil takes the PCs aside from the anti-paladin. *"Sir Richard, Lord of Havelyn was once a noble of fine pedigree. I'm sure you'll even find a way to make him a long lost relative of King Markadian. You always were so clever, my masters. He'll be the perfect puppet. Being king is a boring, and frankly dangerous, job. He can fill the role perfectly and leave you free to do whatever you desire with your new throne."*

If the PCs rebuff this plan saying *"He'll be your puppet not ours"* or something similar, Dessiter is quick to answer the charge.

"You wound me with your distrust. Regardless, if you need assurance of his loyalties, we could have him swear any an oath in blood to you here and now that would guarantee his loyalty."



"Surely you remember the Pact of Thorns. He could sign something similar. And then you could make him a leader of a knot. You must have a few openings by now..."

If the PCs point out that the Pact of Thorns didn't stop them from killing Cardinal Thorn, Dessiter is dismissive.

"Only because he didn't seek proper legal counsel! Fortunately, O great ones, you have me to make sure we end up with an iron clad contract."

Dessiter will quickly produce a contract binding Sir Berithor to our villains service. If the PCs balk at making him king, then Dessiter will suggest that perhaps he could fill some other role. "Royal bodyguard. Or perhaps an executioner. He is quite dangerous with that sword."

If the PCs utterly reject the anti-paladin, Dessiter is visibly saddened. "How unfortunate that he can find no place in your coming regime for so talented a servant. Well, alas, Master Naburus was most specific. He cannot return with me. I suppose there is only thing to do – set him free to serve Asmodeus as he sees fit."

Dessiter is hoping that the prospect of a roving anti-paladin in Talingarde will shake up our villains into accepting Sir Berithor. And why does Dessiter want the anti-paladin in the PC's court so badly? Because, without knowing it, Sir Berithor is actually a spy for Dessiter. Everywhere Sir Berithor goes, Sir Dessiter can see using *greater scrying*. By letting in the anti-paladin, they are assuring that Dessiter has complete access to anything the anti-paladin knows.

Regardless, Sir Richard is now theirs to do with as they please. Dessiter will not take him back. The devil has done what he was ordered to do – corrupt a paladin and put him to work against the forces of Mitra.

The PCs can kill Sir Richard of course, though he will fight back. They can send Sir Richard far away, perhaps putting him in charge of Farholde. They could make him king (he's actually a good choice – he has an 18 Charisma and can often sense when people are lying to him). He has even appeared in Markadian's court and was publicly acknowledged by the former king as a man of worthy character (see the conclusion of Book III).

Turning him loose is the worst option. If Sir Richard is left to his own devices, he heads north into the wilds. There on the fringes of society, he builds a fanatical cult of devil worshippers. These devil worshippers soon degenerate into a vicious bandit gang, stealing and abducting victims for their bloody rituals. Their brutal actions weaken the reputation of Asmodeus and the regime in Talingarde (-1 to Might; See Act II for details).

Sir Berithor, Anti-Paladin of Asmodeus

CR 18

XP 153,600

Male human anti-paladin 18

LE Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses Perception +2

Aura cowardice (10 ft.), despair (10 ft.), vengeance (10 ft.), sin (10 ft.) and depravity (10 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 13, flat-footed 32 (+12 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex, +2 natural, +6 shield)

hp 171 (18d10+72)

Fort +20, Ref +13, Will +19

Defensive Abilities unholy resilience +4; Immune disease; DR 5/good

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +3 longsword power attack +21/+16/+11/+6 (1d8+17/19-20)

Special Attack channel negative energy (DC 22, 9d6), smite good 6/day (+4 attack and AC, +18 damage), touch of corruption (+22 melee touch attack, 9d6 plus a cruelty, 13/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th; concentration +22)

At Will—detect good

Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 15th; concentration +19)

4th—litany of vengeance, unholy sword

3rd—bestow curse (DC 17), magic circle against good

2nd—bull's strength, darkvision, hold person (DC 16), litany of entanglement (DC 16)

1st—bane, cause fear (DC 15), death knell, murderous command (DC 15), protection from good

TACTICS

Before Combat Sir Berithor casts *darkvision* (duration 18 hours) every morning. Before a fight if given a chance he casts *bull's strength* (18 minutes), calls upon his fiendish boon (18 minutes) and casts *unholy sword* (18 rounds).

If he can do all of this and smite a good foe, then his attack becomes:

Melee +5 flaming keen unholy longsword power attack smite +29/+24/+19/+14 (1d8+37+1d6 fire +2d6 vs. good /17-20)

During Combat Sir Berithor smites first and asks questions later. He is an avatar of infernal death when fully prepared for battle. He uses his *litany of vengeance* (a swift action) to further enhance his death-deathing capacity.

In any battle, he holds nothing back. He fights like a man possessed and after his conversion to the worship of Asmodeus, perhaps he is.

Morale Sir Berithor remains as much a fanatic as he ever was as Sir Richard, and now wracked with guilt, is almost eager to give his life in service to his new dark master. He fights to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +18, CMB +22, CMD 33

Feats Cleave, Cleaving Finish, Great Cleave, Extra Mercy (now Cruelty), Improved Cleaving Finish, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Diplomacy +25, Knowledge (religion) +21, Sense Motive +23
Languages Common

SQ aura of evil, cruelties (blinded, cursed, dazed, paralyzed, poisoned, sickened, stunned), fiendish boon +4, plague bringer

Traits Resilient: +1 trait bonus to Fortitude saves

Hatred of Mitra: +1 damage of celestials and followers of Mitra

Combat Gear 3 potions of cure serious wounds

Other Gear +3 longsword, +3 full plate, +3 heavy steel shield, amulet of natural armor +2, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2, ring of sustenance, silver holy symbol (Asmodeus), a silver swatch of cloth marked with a white unicorn (the favor of the Princess Bellinda)

EVENT EIGHT: MARCHING INTO MATHARYN

With their victory in Brandelburn, the PCs and their army can now simply march to Matharyn. The capital is about three days ride from Brandelburn Fields. By the time the army arrives, word has long reached the desperate and panicked populace that Sakkarot Fire-Axe's horde is shattered and defeated.

To say that the populace of Matharyn is jubilant is an understatement. Everywhere the typically reserved people of this lawful good city engage in raucous celebrations. With the army defeated at Fallingsbridge, the citizenry had been organizing an ad-hoc militia to defend the city. But everyone knew that if thousands of knights and soldiers could not defeat the Fire-Axe, their chances were nil. Still, they had to try. Almost every adult male was, until the news arrived of Fire-Axe's defeat, certain they would be dead in three days. These people, despite all they have suffered, have reason to celebrate.

The city is currently devoid of any sort of leadership. The king is slain. The princess has fled the capital. The head inquisitor Solomon Tyrath and his minions have vanished. Those soldiers and watchmen who didn't march with the king have mostly fled with the princess. There is virtually no nobility to be found in Matharyn. This is a people who are on their own. It is a testament to their strength that the city is as calm as it is.

The closest thing to authority is Mayor Hubert Rowen (LG male human aristocrat 10). Mayor Rowen is a well-meaning minor nobleman of neither great intelligence nor wisdom. He is a fine public speaker and it is this measure of charisma that has enabled him to rise to prominence. He and a dozen minor officials form a delegation and go forth to meet the capital's mysterious savior.

Travelling with Mayor Rowen is the real power left in the city – Count Leothyn Barca (LE male old half-elven aristocrat 12) and a small retinue of a dozen Knights of the Griffon (you can find their coat of arms and a brief description in Book I). Count Leothyn is the aged brother of the last Barcan king – King Jaraad. He is so frail, he can barely stand. But his mind has lost none of its potency. He is carried upon a litter by non-combatant servants.

And who meets this delegation? Who comes to the city in triumph to be heralded as the savior of Talingarde? That decision is entirely the PCs. Who do they trumpet as the victor at the Battle of Brandelburn? One of the PCs? Vastenus Barca? A corrupted Samuel Havelyn? Someone else? There is a surreal atmosphere to the meeting. Everything the citizens of Matharyn thought they knew has been turned upside down. The House of Darius has abandoned them. It must be decided who will rule next.

What is certain is that a decision must be made now. If the PCs wait too long, there is the danger that the people may turn back to the House of Darius and rashly coronate Queen Bellinda in absentia. This is exactly what this delegation is here to find out. Who are these saviors and what do they want?

Mayor Rowen opens the negotiations timidly. *"Hail, saviors of Matharyn! I am Mayor Hubert Rowen. We presume you come to our fair city..."* He swallows nervously. *"...in peace?"* The Mayor bows.

If General Barca is here, Count Leothyn is shocked. *"Vastenus! You're alive! What has happened here! Who are these people and where did the army you lead come from?"*

If Barca is not obviously with the delegation, Count Leothyn has his litter moved up next to the mayor. He thumps the mayor with his cane. *"Stand up, Hubert, you damned fool. Any army that could break the Fire-Axe could take Matharyn in a heart-beat. What we want to know is who are you and what do you want?"*

The PCs can play this any way they want. They can pander to the delegation saying that they only came to help. Mayor Rowen is greatly relieved by this assurance but Count Leothyn doesn't buy this for a second. No one organizes an army of this size just to "help."

They can plainly speak their demands and say that they have come to claim the throne. The PCs may be in possession of the Liber Darian taken from the Adarium (Book IV, Act IV, room 1-16). With that book they can establish that anyone they want is actually an heir to the Throne of Talingarde. This persuades Mayor Rowen without an afterthought.

Count Leothyn is more wary. He knows that the Adarium was attacked during the king's assassination. He suspects that this book being in their possession only proves that he is looking at the king's assassins. But for now, Count Leothyn keeps quiet. He will invite the PCs to join him at his manor upon the Golden Bow. See Act Two, Event Ten for how that meeting may go.

The PCs could also just wipe out this delegation. There are no real threats to them here. Mayor Rowen is unarmed. Count Leothyn is almost an invalid. The dozen knights are veteran warriors (male half-elven fighter 6), but nowhere near a threat to a band of 18th level PCs. With a single ninth level spell, every member of this delegation would be likely dead. And the PCs could ride into Matharyn, its conquerors.

Regardless, there is no doubt that our villains are victorious and can claim the throne at their leisure.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE PRINCESS?

Bellinda was not in Matharyn when the Battle of Brandelburn was fought. She was in Ghastenhall already hard at work raising an army to destroy the Fire-Axe's horde, defend her homeland and restore Darian rule. When she learned about the "great victory" over Sakkarot Fire-Axe, suddenly the plans of her enemy became clear to her. The last few pieces fell into place and she understood what the Asmodeans were trying to achieve.

She had been mystified up until that moment, truth be told. It appeared that the Asmodeans, by breaking the Watch Wall and unleashing the Tears of Achlys and sacking Valtaerna, were simply trying to destroy Talingarde. This was not the enemy's usual *modus operandi*. The servants of Asmodeus do not revel in mindless destruction.

But now with the annihilation of the Fire-Axe's horde she understands that the corruption of Talingarde was always the goal. The Asmodeans do not work to destroy the kingdom. They want its soul.

By this point in the campaign, Bellinda is traveling under the *Veil of Mitra* with the solar Phaethysa. She speaks at length with her celestial companion and begins to realize what she must do and the sacrifices she must make to free her people. Even if every able bodied soldier and knight still alive in the kingdom rallies to her banner, she could not be certain of defeating the mighty mercenary army of the Nine Knots. The losses from the disaster at Fallingsbridge are too many. She needs allies from more distant lands if she is to prevail.

But she had never stepped foot outside of the island of her birth. How could she do this? The angel and her dragon mother comfort her. They would travel with her. They would help her seek out the forces she needs to accomplish her destiny and deliver the island from the hands of the wicked. They would show her the way. But one thing was certain.

She must leave Talingarde.

She does not want to leave, to abandon her own people in their hour of greatest need. She is dying to confront her father's murderers and deliver justice unto them. Every fiber of her being screams that she must stay and fight, no matter the odds.

But she also knows that facing them prematurely would only result in her death and deliver to them their ultimate victory. She will go forth and build a great army of the virtuous – the Army of the White Unicorn. At the head of that army, she will return in time to free her homeland.

That course of action means leaving the monsters who murdered her father alive and unpunished. It means allowing the Ninth Knot free reign to corrupt the heart of her homeland for three long years. This is easily the hardest decision that the princess has ever had to make. But she makes it none the less.

However, she will not leave Talingarde entirely undefended. She seeks out the High Inquisitor Solomon Tyrath, who has already fled the capital. She delivers to the Inquisitor a sacred charge.

"I must leave for a time if Talingarde is to be redeemed. But I will not leave my people undefended. Instead I leave them in your care. Organize a resistance and keep hope alive, Solomon. Do everything you can to undermine the current regime. Weaken them. Demoralize them. Confuse and dismay them. And at every turn reveal them for the monsters that they truly are. Fight this fight for me, Solomon, and I will be forever in your debt. And never doubt that I shall return."

Solomon answers the charge with a nod. *"I am forever your servant, my queen."*

"No," she speaks, *"I am not your queen yet, Master Tyrath. I have not yet earned that honor. I will be queen only once the wicked usurpers are defeated once and for all. I will only be queen after I have broken the Nine Knots."*

THE VEIL OF MITRA

So, what is the *Veil of Mitra*? What caster level is it? Can the PCs defeat it? Can the PCs beseech Asmodeus or use an empowered *miracle* to defeat it?

The in-game answer is that the *Veil of Mitra* is the divine will of the sun god extending to their chosen servants. Just as Asmodeus has been helping the PCs in subtle ways throughout the campaign, now Mitra helps his servant Bellinda.

The more honest answer is that the *Veil of Mitra* is the reason that the PCs can't just scry and then assassinate Bellinda, Phaethysa and Antharia one by one. Seeing those characters dead would make Act IV anti-climatic. By preserving these NPCs with this bit of plot fiat, then we are keeping the game exciting.

So, the PCs can try all they want – there is no way to breach the Veil. They can try *wish*, *miracle*, use an artifact, anything. It doesn't work. The Princess is beyond their grasp for now. They'll have their chance at her by campaign's end.

ACT TWO: TYRANTS OF TALINGARDE

The PCs are now masters of Talingarde. Whoever is the actual king, the PCs are surely the actual powers behind the throne. And so for this act, we present a sort of tyranny sandbox wherein you can play out the wicked reign of the Ninth Knot. Talingarde is theirs. Now what will they do with it? Here are twenty four suggestions.

Hold a Grand Coronation? See Event One: A Tyrant's Crown.

Rebuild the Church of Asmodeus? See Event Two: A Devil's Paradise.

Weaken, Corrupt or Destroy the Church of Mitra? See Event Three: Mitran Sunset.

Purge the House of Darius? See Event Four: The Victor's Blood.

Disband the Knights of the Alerion? See Event Five: Fallen Eagles.

Disband and Hunt Down the Inquisition? See Event Six: Sons of Solomon.

Gain the savage Iraen of the Caer Bryr as allies? See Event Seven: Catch the Caothach Ool.

Hunt Unicorns for Sport in the Caer Bryr? See Event Eight: Broken Horns.

Try to Find the Princess and Crush the Growing Resistance? See Event Nine: Shadow War.

Deal with the House of Barca? See Event Ten: The Griffon's Fate.

Turn the Adarium into their own Pleasure Palace? See Event Eleven: A Palace of Vice and Villainy.

Make Slavery or Prostitution Legal in Talingarde? See Event Twelve: Innocence Lost.

Build a Coliseum in Matharyn? See Event Thirteen: Blood Sports.

Clear the Borderlands and Rebuild the Watch Wall? See Event Fourteen: Rebuilding Balentyne.

Rebuild Daveryn? See Event Fifteen: From the Ashes.

Conquer the Savage North? See Event Sixteen: War in the North.

Reward the Army that Put Them into Power? See Event Seventeen: Twenty Thousand Thieves.

Visit Farholde? See Event Eighteen: Return to Farholde.

Ally with Either the Duergar or the Dwarves? See Event Nineteen: Dark Grudges.

Bankrupt the Nation for Personal Gain? See Event Twenty Empty Coffers.

Trade with or Conquer the Yutak? See Event Twenty One: The Forgotten Folk.

Open up Trade with the Mainland? See Event Twenty Two: Kingdom of the Kraken.

Restore the Agathium into a Secret Refuge? See Event Twenty Three: The Hidden Fortress

Bonus: What about Grumblejack? See Event Twenty Four: Grumblejack's Dream

Further, after those events (and the seven crises detailed on the next page), you'll find a list of things you can assign your minions to do during the PC's reign.

This is not meant to be a comprehensive list. Doubtless the PCs will be able to come up with other wicked deeds to fill their time on the throne. Read these twenty four examples carefully and you should be able to model just about anything the PCs can come up with. Always remember this – for the last eighteen levels, the PCs have been on the run, outcasts and pariahs. Let them enjoy their power for change. And if they want to become mad tyrants acting like Caligula, let them. In fact, encourage them. Their moment of reckoning will come.

Also, this list of deeds does not also need to be run in any particular order. If the PCs want to crush the resistance first thing, so be it. Be flexible and let the PCs guide the action.

The limiting factor here is time. Each of these deeds costs the PCs time (noted at the top of each event). Instead of keeping track of what the PCs are doing day by day, instead each event will cause months to pass. This is not meant to say that PCs are doing nothing else. It can be assumed that on other days, the PCs are going about the normal business of ruling Talingarde. We are only concerned with the most important of moments.

In three years (thirty six months), the Army of the White Unicorn is going to arrive in full force in Talingarde. At that moment, proceed to Act Three.

THE SEVEN CRISES OF LEADERSHIP

Ruling Talingarde isn't easy under the best of circumstances. During their three year reign, the PCs have to deal with seven challenges of leadership that test their ability to hold onto power. Below is a timeline of events.

The First Crisis (On the first day of their reign): The Duke of Ghastenhall reveals himself as the only major noble in Talingarde who is neither dead nor fled. He sends a letter to the capital congratulating the PCs on their victory and also making it clear that unless Bellinda is dead, he is remaining neutral. See Event Twenty Five: A City without Loyalty.

The Second Crisis (3 months into their reign): The PCs have made many enemies, not all of them good and noble. From across the planes come demonic assassins – the vile Two Queens. These deadly slayers appear without warning and attack our villains in their most secure fortress. They are detailed in Event Twenty Six: 'Court of the Two Queens.

The Third Crisis (13 months into their reign): The Tears of Achlys, thought wiped out, yet persists in a corner of their kindom. Can they wipe it out before a new pestilence erupts into their lands? This is detailed in Event Twenty Seven: Last Tears.

The Fourth Crisis (17 months into their reign): Religious children flock to the Vale of Valtaerna intent upon calling a powerful spirit of Mitra into this world. This is detailed in Event Twenty Eight: Children's Crusade.

The Fifth Crisis (22 months into their reign): A powerful and wicked mainland empire sends a courtier to seduce the current king/queen and become their consort. If the PCs play this correctly, they can gain a powerful ally. If they are not careful, they could become servants once more, this time to a distant empire. These difficult choices are detailed in Event Twenty Nine: Wicked Queen

The Sixth Crisis (29 months into their reign): A powerful and ancient malevolence awakens in the savage north. If the PCs are clever, they can gain a great artifact. If they are not careful, they may see a doom unleashed on Talingarde that makes their own schemes pale by comparison. This potential cataclysm is described in Event Thirty: Shadows in the North.

The Seventh and Final Crisis (36 months into their reign): The arrival of the Army of the White of the Unicorn is the final crisis of leadership. This challenge is detailed in Act Three and culminates with the Second Battle of Tamberlyn, Act Four. It is in this crisis that our villains' future is determined once and for all.

THIRTY EVENTS? ARE YOU MAD?

It may seem that all of this is a lot to keep track of. And in truth, it is. What you, the Game Master, should do is make a copy of these pages or perhaps print out these two pages from the printer friendly version of the PDF.

Keep that two page spread in front of you as the PCs govern Talingarde. If the action ever starts to lag or your players seem confused about what to do next, have an NPC advisor come to the PCs and suggest pursuing one of the events that catches your fancy. If your band of villains take the hook, then go straight into that event. And then mark that event off your list perhaps make a very brief note in the white space on page twenty four about how things turned out. And if you have your own ideas, this is a great place to add them.

Don't sweat the small stuff. If the PCs want a few thousand gold worth of magic items, they can get it. Remember that they have a nation with more than a million inhabitants at their disposal. If they need some muscle, no problem. They have twenty thousand plus soldiers on their payroll. If they need grunts, they have them.

There are limits to what grunts and petty cash can do. Grunts are not monster hunters and the kingdom is not so rich it can buy major magic items. Keep in mind these few restraints, but otherwise let your villains remake Talingarde into their own vision. They have earned the right to rule... for now.

TALINGARDE'S MIGHT SCORE

During our villains three years reign of tyranny, you will secretly be keeping track of the kingdom's Might score. This number roughly equals the number of thousand soldiers that the PCs can field to face the Army of the White Unicorn. But more than that, the number represents how prepared the new Talingarde is to face the sixth and final crisis of leadership – the invasion of the last true Darian heir – the Princess Bellinda. What the Might score means is fully detailed in Act IV.

Each of the thirty events and minion actions have the potential to affect this score. This is noted throughout this chapter. The score begins at 20 if the PCs didn't hire Herr Eisenmark and 25 if they did. Note also that there are events in the Battle of Brandelburn (in Act I) that can affect the score. But largely, our villains' three years of rulership will most profoundly shape the final score.

The Might score should be kept secret. If the PCs want to run the kingdom into the ground, let them. Give no hint that there are repercussions until it is far too late.

EVENT ONE: A TYRANT'S CROWN

The PCs can assume rulership over Talingarde with as much or as little ceremony as they desire. The crown jewels of the Darian House are gone. They were taken by the high inquisitor Solomon Tyrath when he and the last of his inquisitors departed the capital before the PCs arrival.

Still, the High Inquisitor couldn't take everything. He left behind several of the old Barcan trappings which are housed in a small side gallery of the Old Palace in Kingsill. Together the trappings are worth 55,000 gp. They consist of the golden griffon crown, a formal robe of golden brocade and a beautiful golden scepter adorned with emerald and ruby. Of course, these trappings are resplendently adorned with the rampant griffon heraldry of House Barca. These could become the new crown jewels of the new king of Talingarde.

Or, the PCs could quietly sell those old relics to foreign merchants, quickly acquiring about half their value (27,500 gp) in liquid cash and acquire a crown some other way. For example, in the Horde of Nythoggr (Book V, Act III) the PCs found a *rod of splendor* and a hammered gold crown. Those would also make fine tokens of kingship.

The PCs could also melt down the gold and remove the jewels and command artisans in the capital to make them into items of their own design. Let the PCs be creative with the trappings of power. Note: Destroying the Barcan relics earns Count Leothyn Barca's eternal hatred.

The actual coronation ceremony is also up to our villains. Technically, the law of the land specifies that the crown of kingship must be placed on the head of the next monarch by the High Cardinal of the Church of the Mitra, Vitallian of Estyllis. Assuming he is not dead (did the PCs assassinate him in Book IV as a side quest?) he is easy to find in the Cathedral in Cathsill.

Vitallian (LG male old human aristocrat 5/expert 10) is a faithful believer of Mitra and a kindly old man, but he is also a realist. He knows there is nothing he can do to prevent the new regime coming to power and so he will perform the coronation if it is demanded of him. What he would rather die than do, is perform any sort of Asmodean ritual. Anything he presides over will venerate only Mitra as is the law as he understands it. Vitallian does not want to be a martyr, but he would rather suffer here than condemn his soul to hell.

The PCs may choose to hold the coronation in the Cathedral of the Shining Lord in Cathsill (this would be traditional). Or they may break with tradition and use the Old Palace or even somewhere else. The choice is entirely theirs.

Ask how lavish the PCs want the coronation. They have three choices: low key, splendid or lavish. If they choose a low-key ceremony, then the affair is small and happens almost in secret. Few are invited and there is little in the way of ceremony. Our villains choose a king and that's that. To the tradition-bound populace this is upsetting. It takes away from the legitimacy of the new regime. This lack of support haunts the new ruler for his entire reign. Apply a -1 penalty to Might.

A splendid ceremony is what might be considered a typical level of pageantry. A day of celebration is proclaimed through the kingdom. The people turn out in great numbers. A formal ceremony is held at the Cathedral or the Old Palace. It is quite a to-do. This is what the people expect and it brings at least a hint of legitimacy.

A lavish ceremony requires our villains to pull out all the stops. A three day festival is held throughout the capital. The new king sponsors everything and sees that great quantities of food and drink are dispensed to the populace. The actual ceremony is richly adorned in utter splendor and baroque new symbols of power are created. This earns the peoples' affection. After the disasters of the last few years, such a celebration implies the beginning of a new golden age. Apply a +1 bonus to Might.

Regardless of expense, if the PCs hold an Asmodean ceremony, whatever crown is placed on the king's head become a *crown of hell* (see Hellbound pt. 2 below). The Lord of Hell approves of their rise and conquest.

When the PCs take over Talingarde, they are seizing control of a kingdom that is largely broken and in disarray. This should come as no surprise. Why is the kingdom in such shabby shape? It is their fault.

The treasury of Talingarde holds a paltry 100,000 gp in liquid cash. This is what Bellinda could not carry off. If the PCs hold a lavish coronation, the total is halved to 50,000 gp. This is not the total wealth of Talingarde. This is the money easily at hand. This is far too little to rebuild the kingdom. They can acquire more cash (see Event Twenty Two: Empty Coffers below) by pillaging their holdings and abusing their station.

But the kingdom does have a solid stream of revenue. The taxes and tariffs are enough that, after expenses are paid, the royal household will receive 10,000 gp a month in liquid income. The king could issue edicts increasing taxes to the breaking point. Doing this would double his income. This would earn our cadre of villains great wealth, but it would also establish them as hated tyrants.

Apply a -2 to Might if the PCs ever increase the taxes.

CHARACTERS IN THE QUISLING COURT

quisling (n.) – A traitor who collaborates with an enemy force occupying their country.

Much of the Darian nobility of Talingarde has fled the city. In the richest quarter of Matharyn, the Golden Bow, twenty of the forty four great manors are abandoned. But not everyone has fled. There are a few quisling nobles who are ready to supplicate themselves to their new overlords.

Count Leothyn Barca

Dealing with the Barcans is discussed in detail in Event Ten: The Griffon's Fate below.

Mayor Hubert Rowen

The mayor of Matharyn has not and will not flee the city of his birth. He simply has too much loyalty to the city to give her up in this time of crisis. He was stunned when he received news of the king's death and even more stunned when Bellinda fled the city. Since then, nobles and important people of every sort have been disappearing. Mayor Rowen is utterly baffled by this turn of events. How can they leave when Matharyn needs them most? He feels more than a little betrayed and that sentiment is common throughout the capital.

Mayor Rowen is out of his depths in the court. Far from a brilliant man, he is easy to manipulate. He wants to do the right thing and he wants to make sure his people are well treated. Mayor Rowen may be a minor noble, but he is the closest thing to a voice of the common man in the quisling court. But ultimately, it may be that he will be duped into condoning unconscionable acts.

Lord Gaius Richter

Yes, those Richters. Lord Gaius (LE middle-aged male human aristocrat 10) is a handsome and distinguished looking middle-aged man without scruples. It was because of him that his studious uncle got appointed to be Warden of Branderscar (the post carries an almost automatic knighthood upon retirement). Lord Gaius has been working tirelessly to increase his family's status for years. Though low-born, he has managed to acquire a minor title thanks to an advantageous if loveless marriage.

Lord Gaius plays the respectable noble impeccably. He is always polite, well-dressed and well-appointed. He dresses in dark colors and up until recently always wore a holy symbol of Mitra. He keeps a concealed, poisoned sword cane in his ivory-handled walking stick. His dress and speech marks him as an elegant noble gentleman.

Beneath that veneer, Lord Gaius is an utter snake. He sees in this new regime great opportunity and is only too happy to bow before Talingarde's new masters, however wicked they may be. Lord Gaius has come to the court with a bargaining chip. He knows that when Solomon Tyrath left the city, he left behind a single inquisitor to serve as his eyes and ears.

Thanks to an overheard conversation, Lord Gaius is almost certain where the Inquisitor is hiding in the city. See Event Six: Sons of Solomon for more details about this. He wishes a private audience and wants to trade the information for both a more formidable noble title and one of the abandoned mansions in the Golden Bow. Lord Gaius has even picked out the barony and the mansion he wants in exchange for the information – Barrington. The town of Barrington was until recently held by Lord Arthur Barrington who died without heir leading his knights at the Battle of Fallingsbridge.

Once granted his Barony, Lord Gaius' usefulness does not have to end. He is willing to do almost anything to curry favor with his new masters. He has lived in this city for years and has local knowledge that could be of use.

Master Mallory Hawthorn

There are many honest merchants in Matharyn who have made their fortunes through hard work and shrewd but fair dealings. Master Hawthorn is not one of them. Hawthorn is a living epitome of greed. An obese, gluttonous hedonist, Hawthorn's ultimate goal is to be the richest man in Matharyn.

He owns a large number of inns in Wayburn and scattered throughout the kingdom. Master Hawthorn is ruthless merchant who for years has been constrained by the policies of House Darius.

He wants to see prostitution legalized (see Event Twelve: Innocence Lost) and trade established with the mainland (see Event Twenty One: Kingdom of the Kraken). But more than that, he wants a monopoly over the foreign wine trade. With such a valuable monopoly signed and sealed by the king, he would become immensely wealthy.

Master Hawthorn is unsure what these new rulers would want for a such a monopoly at first, but as he begins to investigate them, he formulates a plan. He sends one of his sons, Gregory, to infiltrate the resistance in Matharyn and arrange a meeting at one of his inns late at night. When the PCs start actively hunting the resistance (See Event Nine: Shadow War) he can provide them with the location of an active cell here in the city.

EVENT TWO: A DEVIL'S PARADISE

Time: *1 month to plan a new Cathedral of Asmodeus*

Likely, your party reveres the arch-devil Asmodeus. If you count an anti-paladin, cleric or inquisitor of the infernal god amongst your villains, it should prove no surprise that they want to change Talingarde's primary religion and reinstate Asmodeus' worship. The first part of this process is easy.

The king can simply declare that the worship of Asmodeus is no longer illegal in Talingarde. If this is done without a rousing speech or eloquent proclamation, this causes great doubt and trepidation in the people.

Apply a -1 penalty to Might for legalizing the worship of Asmodeus suddenly.

This penalty can be avoided by an eloquent presentation of the Asmodean point of view. The King can gather a great percentage of the capital's population in the great courtyard outside the Old Palace just beyond Victorsgate in Kingill. There he may directly address his people.

First, let the player making the address (or who wrote it) speak at least a minute or two of the speech. Just listen to what they have to say. Evaluate the speech. Do they do a good job of convincing a typical citizen of Matharyn, weary of war but devout in the worship of Mitra, that allowing Asmodeus to return will not be so bad? Do they bring up that the army that defeated the Fire-Axe was led by an Asmodean? Do they show how oppressing Asmodeus has hurt the kingdom? Do they point out that the Church of Mitra has also made many mistakes and abandoned them in their hour of greatest need?

In the end, you must decide how persuasive they are and then assign a bonus or penalty (from +5 to -5). If your players are nervous about public speaking, don't be too hard on them. A few ummms or ahhhs or pauses is not a bad thing. Think of this speech as the rehearsal for the real proclamation that is to come.

And then the character who makes the speech must roll a DC 30 Diplomacy skill check (or Perform [Oratory]) to persuade the crowd that Asmodeus' return is not such a great change after all.

But the speech is only the beginning. To really establish the Church of Asmodeus as a permanent fixture in Talingarde, the Church needs a Cathedral in Matharyn of grandeur equal to that of Mitra. Anything less will establish the Church of Asmodeus as only a minor faith. Building such a Cathedral will cost a hefty 270,000 gp. Suddenly our villains need a great pile of cash.

It takes twenty four months to build the Cathedral (the three months mentioned above is merely the time to plan and finance the Cathedral). The money to build the Cathedral requires 30,000 gp to get started and then 10,000 gp a month in on-going expenses until it is completed.

If the PCs raised taxes and picked an advantageous site (see below) they can actually build this with no out of pocket cash. Or they can leave taxes alone and come up with the money on their own.

Once financed, there are three potential sites for the Cathedral in Matharyn. The Old Palace in Kingsill itself has an extensive back lot full of gardens and even a hedge maze. That could be paved and the Cathedral of Asmodeus built there. Once finished the Cathedral would adjoin with the Old Palace. This would be a way of symbolically saying the Church of Asmodeus is a ruling power of the nation.

A second potential site is at the northern end of the Golden Bow where the fourth estate is abandoned thanks to the death or flight of the former Court Wizard Heironymous Thatch (see Book IV, Act IV, 1-13). Heironymous' estate abuts up to a grand park that has been much neglected over the last few years thanks to all the chaos. This would be a fine site for a Cathedral and even has the advantage of already having a massive laid foundation which will save 1,000 gp off the monthly cost (saving 24,000 gp!). Building it here says that the Church of Asmodeus is a wealthy and influential church but not part of the government.

The third site is the most controversial. The PCs could desecrate and raze the Cathedral of the Shining Lord (Mitra's most sacred temple; sometimes called the Sanctum Solaris) and turn it into the Cathedral of Asmodeus. See Event Three for details on destroying the Cathedral. This is also the cheapest option. That will halve the initial cost of the Cathedral (saving 15,000 gp) thanks to use of salvaged materials and lower the monthly cost by 1,000 gp (saving a further 24,000 gp). It will also symbolically say to the people that organized worship of Mitra is finished. Asmodeus is the new Mitra of Talingarde. However, doing this will offend many citizens and make the PCs many enemies.

Apply a -2 Might penalty for leveling Mitra's great cathedral in order to build an Asmodean Temple.

Now the PCs can appoint a High Priest (Thrane? One of their own number?) and voila! The Church of Asmodeus is back. But what about those pesky Mitrans?

Story Award: Restoring the Church of Asmodeus in Talingarde is worth a CR 18 (153,600 XP) reward.

EVENT THREE: MITRAN SUNSET

The PCs have been pursued and persecuted by the Mitrans from day one of this campaign. And now, it's payback time. Or is it? There is the possibility that your PCs might adopt a public "live and let live" attitude to the Church of Mitra. They may make a public gesture of friendship to the High Cardinal Vitallian (no one will be more surprised than he!) and assure him that his church may continue to practice its faith in Talingarde. If the PCs do this, it actually earns them a measure of respect from a populace who expected acts of petty revenge. Apply a +1 bonus to Might. And thus did the Churches of Asmodeus and Mitra reconcile and live happily ever after.

Yeah, right.

What kind of villains do you think we're dealing with here? Far more likely, the PCs will try to weaken the church through edicts, corrupt the church by putting a puppet into power, or obliterate the church by making it illegal and destroying its temples.

WEAKEN (TIME: 1 MONTH)

Weakening the Church means acting against them, but subtly. The king could do several things to greatly weaken the church with a stroke of his pen. The king could lift the ban on other religions having temples in Matharyn and remove the exemption on paying taxes that the church currently enjoys.

Taxing the church is not easy. It has been decades since the church has had to pay even a cent in taxes. Tax assessors would have to be sent and laws would have to be drafted. This wall of paperwork requires a month of time during their reign.

The faithful grumble at this treatment and hatred festers in their heart. Apply a -1 Might for taxing the church. However, it does bring in quite a bit of currency. Add 2,000 gp a month to the royal revenue.

CORRUPT (TIME: 2 MONTHS)

The best way to corrupt the Church of Mitra is to put a puppet High Cardinal into place at its head. This is not actually that difficult. Seven cardinals elect the High Cardinal. These seven cardinals are from Matharyn, Daveryn, Ghastenhall, the Wilds (includes all of the Caer Bryr), Havelyn (the northern Heartlands), Vaasten (the southern Heartlands) and Estyllis (the borderlands).

Of the seven cardinals, Cardinal Ignatius of Daveryn is likely dead (see Book IV, Act I, Location 9). The Cardinal of Estyllis died in the battle of Westkirk. Three of the other cardinals have fled. And the High Cardinal in Matharyn is at their mercy.

That means that currently sitting cardinals consist of Cardinal Leo Arestes of Ghastenhall (LG old male human aristocrat 7/cleric 1) and Cardinal Clemens of Havelyn (NG venerable male human aristocrat 6/cleric 4). These two old men did not flee because they hope they can still do some good within the Church and are too old to be of any real use to the resistance.

If summoned by the new king, they will answer though it will take them about a month to make the journey. They are, of course, easily assassinated. If the PCs were to replace the council of Cardinals with their own puppets (Brother Thrane would have many suggestions of men of 'appropriate character' to fill the seven positions), they could easily get the puppet of their choice elected to High Cardinal. Of course before this happened, the current High Cardinal would need to die...

A corrupt High Cardinal could devastate the Mitran faith. He could issue edicts supporting the new king, justifying whatever wicked deeds they choose to accomplish. Really, it's up to the players' imagination how corrupt their puppet could become. Such a puppet angers the faithful and sends them by droves into the hands of the resistance: Might -2. But, the corrupt High Cardinal could pay kickbacks to the royal house (add 2,000 gp a month to revenue) and perform a one-time handover of church lands that nets 45,000 gp.

OBLITERATE (TIME: 3 MONTHS)

And then, there is the nuclear option. The king could with a single proclamation pass an edict banning the worship of Mitra, seizing all its holdings. The gold and silver religious trappings of the church could be melted down and the priests that publically refused to cooperate with the seizures burned at the stake, beheaded or hanged.

For three months, the PCs will have to inflict a reign of terror upon the people of Talingarde to hunt down the priesthood of the Sun God. Secret police will pay informers to find hidden shrines and rat out conspirators who hide priests in their homes. The holy symbols of silver and sapphire will become illegal to display.

This outrage will infuriate the faithful and the PCs will have to send soldiers to enforce their will in the countryside and put down small peasant revolts throughout the Heartlands. Apply a Might -3 penalty (yes, this stacks with leveling the Cathedral to make it a Church of Asmodeus). But the PCs could garner a one-time cash grab of 250,000 gp in seized church wealth once the purges are completed. Why that's enough to pay for a beautiful new cathedral to Asmodeus! What a coincidence!

Story Award: Crushing the Church of Mitra in Talingarde is worth a CR 18 (153,600 XP) reward.

EVENT FOUR: THE VICTOR'S BLOOD

Time: *1 month to make Bellinda the Victor's last heir.*

If the PCs possess the Liber Darian (recovered in Book IV, Act IV, 1-15) then they will realize that the House of Darius is not just the deceased king and his daughter. There are more than two hundred people scattered throughout the kingdom who are related by blood to the Victor. Most come from minor noble houses with little claim to the throne. The young Markadian I before ascending to the throne had seven siblings after all.

In Book Two, our villains saw that there was power in the blood of House of Darius. It was only with the sacrifice of Sir Valin Darian that the seal was broken and the Tears of Achlys were unleashed. And perhaps there is something real to fear in a line that has produced so many paladins and is now mingled with silver dragon blood. It is possible that the PCs may order the purging of everyone of Darian blood, no matter how faint.

Truth told, this could easily become a mad hunt. Most of the descendants are minor country nobility living near the towns of Vaasten and Havelyn. Those that are true threats have already fled to join up with Bellinda. Those that remain are largely noncombatants. Slaying them will do little but reveal the brutality and wickedness of the current regime to the people. This sort of petty revenge will only aid Bellinda, even though it will break her heart to lose so many cousins.

Apply a -1 penalty to Might for purging minor members of the House of Darius.

There is another way to handle this. Instead of simply killing the Darrians, they could be rounded up and imprisoned in the dungeons of the Old Palace. These prisoners would be largely the elderly, women and children. They would make valuable hostages. These prisoners need not be treated poorly. In fact, they could even be invited to the Old Palace as "honored guests". Of course, they would be no less prisoners regardless of how they arrive.

Their presence would give pause to even Bellinda's most stalwart supporters. Most importantly, some of the Princess' borderline supporters in the Heartlands will not join the Army of the White Unicorn if they fear it will bring the death of their loved ones.

Award a +1 bonus to Might for taking the Victor's kin hostage. However, treating them well costs 1,000 gp a month.

Story Award: A CR 18 (153,600 XP) award is given for taking hostages of Darian blood.

EVENT FIVE FALLEN EAGLES

Time: *1 month to destroy the Knights of the Alerion who have not fled.*

The Knights of the Alerion have their main chapter house in the military district of Sorsill here in Matharyn. If our villains don't know that fact then Count Leothyn or Lord Gaius, long time adversaries and rivals of the knights, will happily bring it to their attention. The chapter house is not a fortification. Instead, it is simply a great hall and chapel built in front of a grave yard.

The grave yard is actually where the original honored dead from the Battle of Tamberlyn were buried when the House of Darius came to power. Since then, only the most worthy and honorable of the Knights have been chosen to rest within that little plot. The Chapterhouse is where the archives of the order are kept, as well as their relics and standards. It is also where all new knights go to petition to join the order and where new knights are tested and trained.

The Knights of the Alerion are, unlike distant relatives of the Victor, a real threat to the new regime. No doubt over the course of this campaign our villains have earned plenty of real grudges against them. They seem an obvious target and it is unlikely that after countless scrapes that our villains would show them any real mercy.

Most of the knights are gone from the chapter house. So many have died over the course of the war, particularly at Fallingsbridge, that the Order was already greatly depleted. And with the news that Bellinda had fled, many departed to seek her. What remains is a small group of twenty two young petitioner squires and the veteran Knight Commander Errol Greymantle. Sir Errol only holds the Commandership temporarily. The true master of the Order was King Markadian V. But since he is dead and there has been no opportunity to appoint another, Sir Errol has assumed the duties until such a time where the Order can be restored.

This is not a combat encounter. Sir Errol is a seventy four year old knight (granted in remarkable shape for his age) leading twenty two first and second level squires (mostly fighters, warriors and cavaliers). Even if the PCs choose to come to the chapterhouse alone, they would not be tested by this battle.

And why would they come alone? Why not send a few hundred of their countless soldiers to seize the place and seal off all potential exits? No, this is not a battle that will be won through force of arms. But there is actually a battle to be won here, though the PCs may not at first realize it.

When Sir Errol realized that the capital of Matharyn was about to be handed over to these so-called liberators, he sensed immediately the truth of the situation. This veteran knight was no paladin, but still he knew evil when he saw it. He guarded the record of every single knight who had ever served in the Order and, more critically every knight still serving. With these records, the new king could track down the family of every knight and use that to doubtless draw out hundreds of knights who are laying low across the country awaiting the Princess' return. He knew what he had to do.

Sir Errol walked into the records annex with a torch in hand. He knew it was critical that he burn every scroll and parchment. He must leave nothing for the enemy to use. He stood in there for almost an hour as the torch slowly burned down.

He couldn't do it. He could not destroy every record of so many valorous knights. He could not purge from this world the deeds of so many companions and worthies. So, in secret, he employed a few trusted friends (not the squires) to help him box and carry the records to one of the largest mausoleums in the graveyard. It is there that the rolls of the Order of the Alerion remain, hidden beneath the earth in the tomb of St. Martius of the Blade.

These rolls would allow our villains to carry out a target pogrom annihilating most of the hidden knights and weakening the fledgling Army of the White Unicorn greatly. Yes, this atrocity would make more enemies, but that is far outweighed by the destruction of some of Tal-ingarde's most veteran remaining soldiers.

So, how do the PCs find the records? Simply searching the graveyard is difficult. There are hundreds of mausoleums and the records are hidden beneath loose tiles in the floor. A DC 30 Perception check would be required and that check would only be allowed if the PCs state they are going mausoleum to mausoleum, taking another month to search the graveyard thoroughly.

Far simpler is to find out from Sir Errol. The stoic knight commander is a man of great honor and valor but is guileless. When the hall is stormed, he makes a fatal mistake.

"Greetings, vipers. You're too late. I've burned the records and now I go to fly in the company of eagles! St. Martius guide my blade!"

He attacks. The PCs can just kill him, but that is exactly what he wants. Far better to capture him and put him under inquest. Under torture, he may break but again that takes weeks. However inadvertantly in his battle cry, he has already given away everything if the PCs are clever.

Knight Commander Errol Greymantle

CR 12

XP 19,200

Male old human fighter (armor master) 13

LG Medium humanoid

Init +5; Senses Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 24 (+11 armor, +1 Dex, +3 shield)

hp 97 (13d10+26)

Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +9

Defensive Abilities deflective shield +3, light fortification; DR 2/-

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 longsword +20/+15/+10 (1d8+8/17-20)

TACTICS

During Combat Sir Errol is not eager to engage in a battle he knows he cannot win, but neither will he simply allow the chapter hall of the knights of the Alerion to be desecrated without a fight. He charges into battle with his longsword drawn, eager to bring a few devils with him into the grave.

Morale Sir Errol remains a fanatic devotee of his god, his king, his order and his country. He will gladly give his life to defend any of those.

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 12

Base Atk +13/+8/+3; CMB +15; CMD 29

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Die Hard, Endurance, Greater Shield Focus, Greater Weapon Focus (longsword), Greater Weapon Specialization (longsword), Improved Critical (longsword), Improve Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Shield Focus, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

Skills Climb +17, Diplomacy +18, Knowledge (nobility) +14, Perception +10, Ride +8, Sense Motive +15, Survival +12, Swim +17

Languages Common, Celestial, Dwarven,

SQ armored defense, armor training 3, fortification

Traits Peer of the Realm - Knowledge (nobility) +1

Commander of the Alerion - Diplomacy is a class skill; +1 to diplomacy

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds* (3)

Other Gear +2 full plate, masterwork light steel shield, +1 longsword, ancient silver thread robe of the Knight Commander of the Knights of the Alerion (worth 3500 gp)

If the PCs even cursorily search the graveyard after that, they will notice on a DC 25 or better the large mausoleum of St. Martius of the Blade. The fact that Sir Errol mentioned it should catch their attention. And there, hidden under the floors are the records.

Sacking the chapter house yields 50,000 gp in masterwork swords, masterwork armor, gold and silver fixtures and other relics of the chapter's history. Further, assuming the PCs don't simply burn the place, Count Leothyn would delight in having the chapterhouse turned into the headquarters of the Knights of the Gryphon. "Some of what was stolen has been reclaimed," he gloats.

Using the records to annihilate the majority of the remaining Knights of the Alerion gains our villains a +4 bonus to Might.

Story award: Finding the hidden records and using them is worth a CR 19 award (204,800 XP). Slaying Sir Errol is worth nothing.

EVENT SIX: SONS OF SOLOMON

When High Inquisitor Tyrath fled Matharyn, he left a single inquisitor in the city. Father Dorian Demascas (Book IV, Act IV, B-2), the king's bodyguard who almost certainly died defending him, has an identical twin brother – Marius. When Solomon asked for a volunteer, Marius was quick to accept the mission.

The inquisitor's mission is not to assassinate the newly crowned king or any of his regime. His mission is to foment revolution and discontent against the new royal house. Marius has no illusions about his chances and knows it will likely cost his life. He puts his trust in Mitra and is prepared to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to see Talingarde once more free and in Mitran hands.

Unfortunately, even from the beginning Father Marius' mission is in grave jeopardy. In one of his earliest contacts, he was seen by Lord Gaius Richter (see event one) entering a safe house in Carsburn. What Gaius thinks he saw is two resistance collaborators meeting in a safe house. What he actually saw was Father Marius in one of his countless disguises inducting a young recruit.

If our villains were to stake out that safe house, they would discover that Marius returns there every three days or so to meet with various individuals. Those he meets are small fry, novices in his service. The safe house itself is an empty apartment. Father Marius himself is the prize. If he were dead, the resistance in Matharyn will lose one of its most important resources.

Tracking Father DeMascas is not easy. He casts *undetectable alignment* every morning. He goes invisible at the smallest hint of trouble. He often changes his appearance with his *hat of disguise*. And the *amulet of proof against detection and location* (given to him by the High Inquisitor himself) wards him against all but the most powerful divination. Without his name or appearance, even powerful divination spells can be challenging to phrase correctly to learn anything about this shadow of a man.

With Gaius' information, patient, careful PCs have a real chance of either catching Father DeMascas or learning enough about him to find him. Killing Marius awards a +1 to Might. Under pain of torture, Father DeMascas can be broken (though it will take a month) and with his "help" the PCs can all but eliminate the resistance in the capital. Award a further +1 to Might for this. If Marius is still alive and free by the beginning of Act III, the PCs receive a -2 penalty to Might due to his efforts.

Story award: Award an CR 18 (153,600 XP) award for killing or capturing Father DeMascas and using him to break the resistance in Matharyn.

Father Marius DeMascas, Inquisitor of Mitra

CR 15

XP 51,200

Male human inquisitor 15

LG Medium humanoid

Init +8; Senses Perception +27

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21 (+6 armor, +1 Dex, +4 shield)

hp 97 (15d8+30)

Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +14

OFFENSE

Speed 30 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 15th, concentration +18)15 round/day—*discern lies*At Will—*detect alignment (chaos, evil, good or law)*Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th, concentration +18) touch of good 6/dayInquisitor Spells Known (CL 15th, concentration +18)5th (3/day)—*flame strike* (DC 18), *mass cure light wounds*, *righteous might*, *true seeing*4th (4/day)—*cure critical wounds*, *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *holy smite* (DC 17)3rd (6/day)—*cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *magic circle against evil*, *prayer*, *searing light*2nd (6/day)—*aid*, *cure moderate wounds*, *invisibility*, *resist energy*, *silence* (DC 15), *undetectable alignment*1st (6/day)—*bless*, *comprehend languages*, *cure light wounds*, *protection from evil*, *sanctuary*, *true strike*o (at will)—*acid splash*, *create water*, *detect magic*, *light*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

Domain Good

TACTICS

During Combat Before any dealings concerning the resistance, Marius has always cast *freedom of movement* on himself. Marius avoids combat if at all possible. If cornered, he uses *righteous might* and *flame strike* as desperation measures. But his first priority is always escape.

Morale A fanatic, Father Marius is prepared to give his life. However, he always flees if possible, hoping to carry on his mission. If escape becomes impossible, Father Marius might very well commit suicide to avoid capture.

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 14

Base Atk +11/+6/+1; CMB +13; CMD 24

Feats Alertness, Combat Casting, Coordinated Defense, Improved Critical (*longsword*), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Lookout, Out Flank, Shield Caster, Shield Wall, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (*longsword*)

Skills Diplomacy +20, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (religion) +19, Perception +27, Sense Motive +34, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +24, Survival +22 (+29 to follow tracks)

Languages Common

SQ cunning initiative +3, monster lore +3, stern gaze +7, track +7, solo tactics

Combat Gear javelin (4), *potion of cure serious wounds*

Other Gear +2 mithral shirt, +2 heavy steel shield, +2 *longsword*, *amulet of proof against detection and location*, *cloak of elvenkind*, *hat of disguise*, holy symbol of mitra (hidden), holy scripture of Mitra (hidden), 220 gp

EVENT SEVEN: CATCH THE CAOTHACH OOL

During their reign, our villains will become more and more certain that Princess Bellinda is gathering an army to retake her father's throne. This realization alone may be enough to make them seek allies. With the Savage North laid to waste, there is one other source of allies and fortunately, they largely hate the Talireans and the House of Darius – the barbaric Iraen of the Caer Bryr. They would make useful allies if they could only be convinced to fight.

If the PCs ask about the Iraen, they may make several skill checks.

Knowledge (history) skill check

DC 10: The Iraen are an ancient people who have lived here in Talingarde for a long time.

DC 20: The Iraen once dominated the whole island of Talingarde. Centuries ago, the Talireans took it from them by force and invasion.

DC 25: In fact, the capital of Matharyn actually takes its name from the Old Iraen tongue.

DC 30: Though the Talireans consider these events trivia these days, the Iraen most certainly do not. The Iraen very much want their island back. At the very least, they want their own sovereign nation in the Caer Bryr.

DC 40: In fact, it is speculated by some scholars of history that when the Victor went to Farholde (and destroyed the Horn of Abaddon) he was in fact going there to meet with an Iraen envoy of chieftains and druids. This secret meeting likely did happen and, because of religious differences, little came of it. Because of this, old wounds were reopened.

Knowledge (local) skill check

DC 10: The savage barbarians of the Caer Bryr are called the Iraen.

DC 15: The Iraen are not one tribe, but many. They are fierce warriors and hardy survivors who have squabbled many times with the Talireans over the years.

DC 20: The Talireans have never acknowledged Iraen sovereignty and always considered it their right to eventually own the whole island.

DC 25: This lack of respect and understanding has caused a deep and permanent rift between the two peoples that persists to this day.

DC 30: Though the Iraen are led by male chiefs, the true power in the Iraen tribes resides in an order of half-elven female druids. These druids, though technically a member of no tribe, are universally respected.

DC 40: The Druids have a secret conclave in the heart of the Caer Bryr known as the Taigh Eolach (Tie-eh-lock; lit. The House of Wisdom). This hidden city is the center of Iraen culture and the best place to seek their council.

Knowledge (religion) skill check

DC 10: The Iraen are a very superstitious people who revere the wilderness.

DC 15: They do not worship Mitra.

DC 20: In fact, they do not worship any gods directly in the way the Talireans do. Instead, they revere the nature spirits that live all around them in the wild.

DC 25: Even more than reverence, the Iraen have long considered mating with the fey-elves of the Caer Bryr is a sacred rite. The children of these unions are almost always female and form a priest caste of druids. These half-elven druids are held in immense respect and are the true political power amongst the Iraen.

DC 30: The druids have a secret tongue, secret rites and a secret hold somewhere within the Caer Bryr. It is dangerous to visit though. Entering without permission is punishable by death.

DC 35: The druidic tongue of the Iraen isn't just secret. It is a magical gift. If you have not been anointed into the order of the priesthood, then you will never be able to master this tongue.

DC 40: The priesthood has a great legend concerning a mighty and seemingly immortal beast that prowls the Caer Bryr – The Caothach Ool (CAW-thok-ool). This primal terror will eventually be slain, says the prophecy, and whoever slays the beast will come to the House of Wisdom wearing only its hide, marked with its blood. This chosen one will unite the people of the Iraen and speak their destiny. Whatever that destiny may be, the people of the Iraen cannot say. But to ignore it brings disaster.

The PCs can of course learn all of this simply by making the skill checks themselves. This takes no time. They can also call scholars from across the kingdom to brief them on the Iraen. This will take one month of their rule but will net them all of this information as they engage in endless consultations with long winded professors before at last gleaning a few useful facts.

In Book IV, the PCs may have met Keara Kilkerran (Act IV, 2-5), the single most powerful druid amongst the Iraen today. Our villains may have either slain Keara or managed to negotiate her neutrality. What Keara wants remains unchanged. She desires the Caer Bryr to be an independent nation under the protection of the Iraen. With the PCs in charge of Talingarde, she would be willing to trade neutrality for a sacred oath made in blood.

However, what Keara cannot do, and in fact no living priestess can do, is unify the Iraen. Centuries of squabbling, blood feuds and petty rivalries have made unification all but impossible. There is only one way to bring the Iraen together. Someone must slay the Caothach Ool and pronounce the destiny of the Iraen.

The destiny could be anything. It could be as short term as “fight against the White Unicorn in the coming war.” It could also be long-term such as “submit to the new king in Matharyn and once more become one mighty nation under that king.” Ultimately there are few limits. Anything short of “You smelly barbarians should all slit your own throats” will be well received and obeyed. In a single stroke, the PCs would have raised a local army that has not been unified in centuries. Truly it is a legendary deed. There is only problem – the Caothach Ool is an unstoppable death machine.

The Den of the Caothach Ool is well hidden. For such a massive beast, you would think it would leave a great trail, but the truth is that the beast is silent as death and all but impossible to track. Still, with the mighty divination magic the PCs can bring to bear, finding the Caothach Ool should not prove too challenging. And even if it does, the PCs could meet with the druids in Taigh Eolach and learn its location without too much difficulty. They are so certain that death awaits the PCs that they are only too happy to show them the way to the creature’s den.

The den is located in the heart of the forest behind a waterfall. Behind that peaceful and idyllic pool is a muddy cavern and a series of great natural steps that lead up to a completely dry landing. The steps are adorned with beautiful natural formations – almost magical seeming sheets of polychromatic flowstone, stalagmites stained brilliantly blue and crimson, stalagmites as delicate as they are massive.

Beyond the steps is a great dry stone landing and there on a bed of fur and bones, sits the refuge of the Caothach Ool. The beast is of only animal intelligence and yet it has collected a great hoard of treasure from the many foolish heroes who have sought to write themselves into history by confronting the beast.



The Caothach Ool, Legendary Terror of the Caer Bryr CR 19

XP 204,800

Female unique primal bandersnatch

N Gargantuan magical beast

Init +11; **Senses** blindsense 120 ft., darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +28

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 13, flat-footed 26 (+7 Dex, +22 natural, -4 size)

hp 310 (23d10+184); fast healing 10

Fort +23, **Ref** +22, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities quick recovery, quill defense;

DR 10/cold iron; Immune fear, paralysis, poison, sleep; **SR** 30

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +34 (2d8+15 plus grab), 2 claws +34 (2d6+15/19-20), tail slap +29 (2d8+22/x3 plus pain)

Ranged 4 quills +28 (1d10+15/19-20)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with tail slap)

Special Attacks bounding charge, brutal tail, gaze, lash out, pounce, rake (4 claws, +34, 2d6+15/19-20), rend (2 claws, 2d6+22)

TACTICS

During Combat. The Caothach Ool is an ambush predator and its preferred method of hunting is to track its prey, sneak upon them within the forest of the Caer Bryr, get close enough to use its gaze, impale them with a round of spikes and then pounce. That tactic hasn't failed to kill any prey in many years.

However, if that does fail or the Caothach Ool is cornered in its den, the bandersnatch is a wary and canny foe. In its den, the beast will likely not attack first, instead cautiously watching to divine its foes intentions. Once combat begins, it will use its climb speed to hang off walls and ceilings, using its great reach to attack foes who cannot reach it with melee attacks.

If anyone proves effective with ranged attacks or spells, they will earn a barrage of quills and perhaps even being pounced.

The Caothach Ool has two special swift combat actions - *gaze* and *lash out*. Do not forget to use one of them every round. Confusion in particular can sow chaos in the battle plans of the PCs.

Remember, that the Caothach Ool receives a +4 to confirm criticals (because of critical focus). Further, thanks to the bandersnatch's critical mastery feat, it can apply both the bleeding critical (2d6 bleed damage) and exhausting critical feats to any critical hits it scores.

Morale. The Caothach Ool is a monster without peer in the Caer Bryr and a super predator without rivals. It hasn't had to flee from anything in centuries. However, if reduced to 62 hp or less, it does instinctually realize its peril and try to flee to heal up and try again. With its fast healing and quick recovery special ability, it will be back fully refreshed in mere minutes to deal with this stubborn prey.

What it will never do is give up the hunt. The Caothach Ool will fight until slain to defend its territory.

STATISTICS

Str 40, **Dex** 29, **Con** 31, **Int** 2, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +23; **CMB** +42 (+46 grapple); **CMD** 61 (69 vs. trip)

Feats Bleeding Critical, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Critical Mastery, Exhausting Critical, Improved Critical (claws), Improved Critical (quills), Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Stealth), Tiring Critical

Skills Acrobatics +21 (+33 when jumping), Climb +23, Perception +28, Stealth +20 (+32 in forests), Survival +5 (+25 tracking);

Racial Modifiers +8 Acrobatics, +10 Perception, +4 Stealth (+12 in forests), +20 Survival when tracking

SQ one with the forest, planar acclimation, relentless tracker

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bounding Charge (Ex) A bandersnatch can move through difficult terrain when it charges.

Brutal Tail (Ex) The quills and barbs on a bandersnatch's tail cause triple damage on a critical hit from its tail slap.

Gaze (Su) Confused, range 30 feet, Fortitude DC 31 negates. A bandersnatch can direct its gaze attack against a single foe as a swift action. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Lash Out (Ex) As a swift action, a bandersnatch can make a single attack with a bite, claw, or tail slap. A bandersnatch cannot lash out on the same round it charges.

One With the Forest (Su) The Caothach Ool counts as if it was always under the effect of *pass without trace*.

Pain (Ex) Whenever a creature takes damage from a bandersnatch's tail slap attack, quills, or quill defense, that creature must make a DC 30 Reflex save or a quill lodges in its flesh, causing the creature to become sickened until the quill is removed. Removing one quill requires a DC 20 Heal check made as a full-round action. For every 5 by which the check exceeds the DC, one additional quill can be removed. On a failed check, a quill is still removed, but the process deals 1d10+7 points of damage to the victim. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Planar Acclimation (Ex) A bandersnatch is always considered to be on its home plane, regardless of what plane it finds itself upon. It never gains the extraplanar sub-type.

Quill Defense (Ex) Any creature that strikes a bandersnatch with a non-reach melee weapon, unarmed strike, or natural weapon takes 1d10+7 points of piercing damage from the bandersnatch's quills and suffers from the bandersnatch's pain attack.

Quick Recovery (Su) A debilitated bandersnatch recovers with frightening speed. If a bandersnatch starts its turn affected by any or all of the following conditions, these conditions end at the end of its turn: confused, dazed, dazzled, exhausted, fatigued, nauseated, sickened, and stunned. Furthermore, a bandersnatch affected by ability damage, ability drain, or a mind-affecting effect that allows a save receives a single additional save against the effect of its choice at the original DC at the end of its turn in order to shake off the effect.

Quills (Ex) With a snap of its tail, a bandersnatch can loose a volley of four quills as a standard action (make an attack roll for each spike). This attack has a range of 300 feet with no range increment. All targets must be within 30 feet of each other. Launched quills regrow in a single round, during which the bandersnatch's defensive abilities are unaffected.

Rake (Ex) The Caothach Ool gains extra natural attacks when it grapples its foe. In addition to the options available to all grapplers, this monster gains four free claw attacks that it can use only against a grappled foe. The bonus and damage caused by these attacks is included in special attacks. A monster with the rake ability must begin its turn already grappling to use its rake—it can't begin a grapple and rake in the same turn.

Relentless Tracker (Ex) The beast can move at up to double its speed and still track without penalty. It gains a +10 competence bonus on Survival checks to track creatures it has wounded.

Rend (Ex) If the Caothach Ool hits with two or more natural attacks in 1 round, the creature can cause tremendous damage by latching onto the opponent's body and tearing flesh. This attack deals an additional amount of damage, but no more than once per round. The type of attacks that must hit and the additional damage are included in the creature's description.

TREASURE HOARD OF THE CAOTHACH OOL

The Caothach Ool possesses only a bestial intellect and yet a portion of its lair is surprising neatly arranged. It is almost as if some of the items were deliberately placed here and the beast were set to guard them. Whatever the truth of this, it is also certain that the cave is stocked with many wonders.

Set into the far wall of the cavern is a small obviously man-made niche. Upon that niche is a natural crystal, smooth on its base and its top festooned with jagged points that almost look like crystalline thunderbolts. The crystal is pale blue in color and seems almost to hum with electrical energy. This is in fact an *orb of storms*.

Other small ledges hold four elegantly made gold ceremonial items of obvious antiquity each adorned with almost flawless ruby. These items depict no definite divine figure but instead are decorated with golden knotwork and intricate geometric patterns. There is a brazier, a chalice, a ceremonial dagger and a horn. None of these are magical but they are quite valuable thanks to the purity of the gold and their fine craftsmanship. These would fetch 1,500 gp apiece and 8,000 gp as a set. Returning them to the druids in Taigh Eolach would earn a gift of a protective amulet (*amulet of natural armor* +5).

Besides those items, the rest of the Caothach Ool's treasure is tossed and scattered about the cave. Some of it is buried in its great fur bed. Iraen warriors often wear torcs of silver and jewels. Telling, there are more eighty of those torcs (many bent and partially crushed) scattered about the refuse. All together these eighty trinkets if collected are worth 9600 gp.

Smashed weapons, broken armor and other bits of shattered gear adorn the cave. However amidst this litter are a few items that have survived the abuse. There is a much mauled *ring of animal friendship* that looks as if it had been eaten and passed through digestive track of the beast. It is so worn that the animal design on it can barely be seen anymore. Still it remains magical and functional.

There is also a soiled canvas bag that is somehow in perfect condition. This is actually a *bag of holding* type IV. As valuable as the bag is what is inside it is even more amazing. The bag is very nearly almost filled with ancient silver and gold coins bearing druidic symbols worth a total value of 48,000 gp. There is also amongst the heaped treasure a small chest that contains clothes, personal effects, a writing set of no real value, and a leather bound journal of a Talirean explorer. The last entry reads: "Have completed pillaging the old Iraen tombs near Taigh Eolach. Soon we'll depart this wretched jungle all rich men. I believe the worst is behind us."

TRIUMPHANT INTO THE HOUSE OF WISDOM

With the slaying of the Caothach Ool, it is time for the PCs to claim their rights. One of our villains must don the beast's hide, mark themselves with its blood and enter otherwise unencumbered into Taigh Eolach. The Iraen warriors and druids are stunned as the marked one enters their midst. At first, they prepare to repel the strange intruder, but one by one, they begin to understand. The Caothach Ool has been slain.

The marked one is led to the central longhouse. There, a hastily assembled group of female half-elven druidesses gasp with realization. If Keara Kilkarren is still alive, she is there. If she has fallen, then her successor Fianna Man-nochmor (pron. Fee-ann-ah Man-nock-more) leads the assembly. Regardless, the assembly is deathly silent.

Finally the high druidess speaks. "You... you are the one..." That is all she manages. Let the slayer have a moment to boast of what has been done. And if they immediately deliver the proclamation of destiny, fine as well. Regardless of what is said after a moment the high druidess regains her composure and says:

"We all know the signs. We have heard the whispers amongst the trees. We all know what has been written in the stars in recent years. At last our moment has come. We have been cast out of our own land. We have been made to hide from the children of our conquerors. We have waited for our destiny. And here it is."

"Our fate it would seem, for good or ill, is with you, O child of destiny."

And with that proclamation, the PCs have gained another army. The druids will muster an army of 5,000 barbarian warriors. All of the major tribes rally to their summons. The PCs receive a +5 bonus to Might.

There is more to this alliance than just the ritual death of a primal super-predator. Each of these tribes has a long litany of complaints against the Talireans. Every Iraen has suffered and been marginalized since the rise of the Kingdom of Talingarde even before the House of Darius came to power. What has become so clear to the druids is that the PCs are not like the House of Darius. These are powerful individuals who will reshape the fate of all the island. And the Iraen are tired of being on the losing side of history. This is their chance to rise from their defeated past and return once more to prominence. And if it takes allying with devil worshippers to make that happen, then so be it.

Story Award: A CR 19 (204,800 XP) should be given for creating an alliance with the Iraen.



Act Two: Tyrants of Halingarde

EVENT EIGHT: BROKEN HORNS

Time: 1 month to organize a unicorn hunt

If the PCs take control of the Iraen, they can simply return to Matharyn. However, there is one thing further in the wild woods that may interest them. Once King Jaraad (the last Barcan King) famously hunted unicorns within the Caer Bryr. The pelts are valuable and the horns are useful in the magic crafting. But more than that, to wear a cloak of fine unicorn hide is a mark of regal distinction to both Talirean and Iraen alike. Since the days of the rise of Darius, this “noble” tradition has been abandoned.

Once the PCs have begun to research the Caer Bryr, have them roll a DC 25 Knowledge (history) skill check. If they succeed, read them this:

During the reign of King Jaraad, the Barcan nobility used to organize expeditions to hunt the wild unicorn herds of the Caer Bryr. The tradition was stopped after the rise of the House of Darius.

That alone may be enough incentive to go on a unicorn hunt. But for those who need more, they may roll a Knowledge (nature) and Knowledge (arcane) check additionally. Beating a DC 15 in either of those reveals that unicorn hides are quite valuable and the horns useful particularly in the crafting of wands, rods and staves.

To hunt unicorn, the PCs must declare a hunt master. They can hire (or simply request) an NPC huntmaster. This will get a remorseless Iraen unicorn hunter with a Survival skill +14 (and a special +4 bonus for local familiarity). There is likely a PC with a better survival skill than this and they can instead lead the hunt. Roll a Survival skill check DC 30. If someone can cast *dimensional anchor* (or some similar anti-teleportation magic) add a +5 to the roll. Succeed and the party kills a single unicorn. For every 5 over, they bag 1d3 more. If the PCs hit a 50, then they manage to hunt down the great Black Stallion of the Caer Bryr (an advanced celestial unicorn).

Every unicorn they catch yields 200 gp in rare hide and a horn worth 300 gp (counts as 50% more if used to craft wands, rods, and staves). The Black Stallion is a singular beast. His gleaming black pelt and horn resemble liquid onyx and are worth 20,000 gp for the hide and 50,000 gp for the horn.

Iraen Huntmaster**CR 9****XP 4,800**

hp 67 (see Book IV, Act IV, 2-5 for a full stat block)

TACTICS

During Combat The huntmaster has no interest in fighting those who can slay the Caothach Ool. He tries to flee, fighting only if cornered

Morale If attacked, the huntmaster tries to escape but if that proves impossible surrenders at .16 hp or less.

EVENT NINE: SHADOW WAR

During the entire three year reign of our villains, there is a secret war going on throughout their kingdom. The Princess Bellinda has instructed Solomon Tyrath to spread the word about what is truly going on all across Talingarde, gather allies and prepare for her return. In a thousand secret meetings, devotees of the House of Darius and the Mitran faith meet in the dead of night to discuss deposing the so-called king.

So, how can our PCs win this war? The best way to defeat the resistance, honestly, is being capable rulers who corrupt subtly rather than performing gross acts of violence against the old regime and the Mitran faith. Most common folk don't give two shakes who is king. They're glad the war is over and the bugbears are defeated. But if the PCs starting burning cathedrals, taking slaves and behaving like mad despots, then the people will grumble and begin to pine for the good ol' days of Darian rule.

Honestly, the author hopes your PCs abuse their power and behave badly. In any other adventure path, the point of ruling a kingdom is to govern it well and become a beloved sovereign over your clockwork-efficient dominion. This is not that campaign. The PCs are wicked tyrant-usurpers ascendant to the Throne of Talingarde by murder, mayhem and deceit. Now that they're in power, why not abuse their authority? Who cares what those miserable peasants think! Our villains command a twenty thousand man army, a ruthless cult and have devils for allies. Damn the peasants!

And when the people get angry and resist, the PCs can squash their dissent violently using their thugs to teach them what it means to oppose the followers of Asmodeus. This event is about doing *exactly* that.

If the army hired by Cedrick Malthus is their mailed fist, the evil organization they have been building since Book II (where you can find the rules for organizations) is likely their poisoned dagger. The PCs can use these organizations in at least five ways: infiltrate the resistance, discredit the resistance, offer bounties, send torturers across the nation and make a brutal example of a hotbed of resistance activity.

Let's discuss each in turn.

INFILTRATE THE RESISTANCE (TIME: 1 MONTH)

Infiltrating the resistance is not difficult. They are constantly recruiting, and in smaller villages, fairly openly. Most of the meetings are presided over by a low level Mitran cleric, adept or oracle who starts the meeting by casting *detect evil*. With *undetectable alignment* this measure is easily defeated.

A *potion of undetectable alignment* costs 300 gp and a *hat of disguise* costs 1800 gp. For a few thousand gold our villains could equip a crack infiltrator who looks like a local and does not reek of villainy. In one meeting, the infiltrator could gather names and descriptions of dozens of resistance members and use this information to brutally squash it in a single town or borough.

Let the PCs describe how they're going to infiltrate the resistance. If their plan sounds half-hearted and ineffectual, it encourages the resistance. Apply a -1 to Might penalty. If their plan seems adequate and effective, award a +1 Might bonus. If their plan strikes you as a masterpiece of brutal repression award a +3 Might bonus.

DISCREDIT THE RESISTANCE (TIME: 1 MONTH)

This is the propaganda front of the shadow war. This front the PCs are certain to lose. The people simply love the House of Darius too much. Everywhere small swatches of cloth imprinted with crudely drawn white unicorns are found. The PCs can print fliers, give speeches, send out criers and still the people wait and hope that their princess will return to them. What will end this hope? See Act IV.

OFFER BOUNTIES (THIS COSTS ONLY MONEY)

The PCs can always use cash to break up the resistance. The PCs offer up rewards to those who sell out the leaders of the resistance. After the devastation of the war, this "carrot" instead of "stick" tactic works well. The danger here is that greedy individuals turn in innocents to collect easy reward money. For every 10,000 gp in rewards, the PCs receive a free Ruthless check DC 12.

Natural 1	-2 Might
Failure	-1 Might
Success	+1 Might
Natural 20	+2 Might

Bribery cannot earn more than a +5 Might bonus total over their three year regime.

A TORTURER IN EVERY TOWN (TIME: 1 MONTH)

The PCs could send out torture squads to almost every township in Talingarde whose job it is (likely after a round of infiltration) to torture key members of the resistance into giving up their contacts. This plan is not a good one. The torturers are almost certain to torture many innocents and all that does is harden the people against the new regime.

Have the PC's minions roll a DC 25 Ruthless check. On a success, the torture sessions generate enough intelligence to do more good than harm. Add a +1 to Might. On a failure, they only galvanize the people (-1 to Might)

THE LESSON OF VARYSTON (TIME: 1 MONTH)

In no corner of Talingarde is the resistance operating as openly as in Varyston. Town preachers openly condemn the new regime with every sunrise. There was even a public meeting in the town square calling for citizens to restore Bellinda to the throne. If the PCs set their minions to discovering hotbeds of resistance, they find Varyston on a DC 12 Espionage roll.

Varyston is famous for only thing – Branderscar Prison. Yes, if you look way back in Book I, you will note that Varyston was the town nearest to the prison. It was where almost all the guards of that prison were from and it is the site of the rightly feared salt mines (a great place to send the PCs own enemies).

Subtlety with these people is pointless, but they would make a fine example. Varyston is a town of 1,200 people. Even a small part of their army could crush the town with ease. Every man, woman and child could be put to the sword. And the nearby mine could be used to supply an effort to salt the earth of Varyston so that nothing grows there for centuries.

For a change, brutality works. This gross display of power causes fear throughout the kingdom. Thousands of people burn their white unicorn insignias and become much more paranoid about aiding the resistance. Receive a Might +2 bonus. Increase the bonus to Might +3 if the PCs spend a month salting the earth of the town.

Story Award: If the PCs accumulate Might +3 fighting the resistance award a CR 19 (204,800 XP) reward.



EVENT TEN: THE GRIFFON'S FATE

By this point in the campaign, the PCs have likely dealt with the old Barcan nobility many times. From the Baron Arkov Vandermir in Farholde (Book II) to Duke Hadrian of Ghaster (Book III) to Baroness Vanya of Velyn (Book IV) to General Vastenus Barca (Book V) and now Count Leothyn, the PCs have always seemed to find themselves in the company of this fallen royal house. Now that storyline comes to a head.

Our villains have managed to do what no defeated Barcan has ever managed. They have defeated the House of Darius and seized the throne of Talingarde. By now our villains should be absolutely clear that the House of Barca still holds ambitions to retake the lost throne for their own. It is even possible that the PCs are using Vastenus as their puppet king. So, what is to be the Barcan's fate? As the author sees it there are primarily five choices: ally with them, purge them, ignore them, cow them into submission or subtly manipulate them. Let's look at each of those in turn.

BARCAN ALLIES (TIME: 1 MONTH)

The Barcan's are fairly easy to ally with. Count Leothyn is desperate for a private audience with the new king. The old man wants to be named advisor to the king and guaranteed a seat on the privy council. At first, he will make vague promises about using his "contacts" to aid them. If pressed what those contacts are and of what use they can be, he will be a bit more specific. Leothyn Barca knows virtually every noble in Matharyn who hasn't fled. He could very easily introduce all of them to the new king and ensure their loyalty.

He has another bargaining chip though one he is slightly more reticent about committing. Count Leothyn commands the loyalty of the Knights of the Gryphon. The Knights of the Gryphon is a coalition of older knightly orders that unified into one after the disastrous Battle of Tamberlyn eighty years ago. Though they have been trying desperately ever since to prove their loyalty to House Darius, the truth is that much resentment remains amongst the membership.

Without any intervention by Count Leothyn, the knights will continue to do what they have been doing for the entire duration of the war so far – nothing. The Knights are a hidebound and pompous band of nobles convinced of their own superiority. They are also racists believing in the superiority of the Talirean race in general and those of noble birth in particular.

But regardless of those loathsome personal habits, they command twelve hundred heavy horsemen each equipped with warhorse, barding, masterwork plate, shield, sword and lance.

Before Count Leothyn will say one word to the Knights of the Gryphon, he will demand a position of importance and expansion of his family's holdings. He has a list of a dozen different holdings possessed by nobles who either died at Fallingsbridge or fled with the Princess Bellinda.

With these grants his family will be the wealthiest landowner in Talingarde save for the royal family itself

So bribed, Count Leothyn plays the loyal retainer and offers any advice he can. He is a capable advisor, knowledgeable and well-connected. However, the Count never gives up on his ambitions. Leothyn still dreams of the return of the Barcan dynasty. If he see a chance to make that dream real, he will take it.

Gaining the service of the Knights of the Gryphon adds +2 to Might.

Story Award: Gaining the service of the Knights of the Gryphon is worth a CR 19 (204,800 XP) reward.

PURGE THE BARCANS (TIME: 2 MONTHS)

Purging the Barcan's (excluding Duke Hadrian of Ghastenhall – see Event Twenty-Five below) is not difficult. With the absolute power of the monarchy at their disposal, it is simply a matter of signing orders of execution. Count Leothyn begs for his life like the pathetic little worm he always was when the agents of the crown come for him. But is there any reason to declare the Barcan's traitors other than petty revenge?

As it turns out – yes. The Barcan's aren't only vindictive racists who will inevitably betray any regime they do not rule. They are also rich. Rounding them up and executing the lot of them means their property can be seized.

However, taking control of the Barcan holdings incites a small scale civil war. For three months, the mercenary army of the regime and the Knights of the Gryphon clash. The end result is inevitable. The twenty thousand plus ruthless murderers of Cedrick Malthus' army greatly outmatch the dilettante knights of the Barcan household.

However the war weakens the regime. Apply a -2 penalty to Might. The seized holdings increase royal revenues by 5,000 gp a month and give a one-time bonus in cash equal to 50,000 gp.



IGNORE THE BARCANS

This is probably the worst way to handle the Barcans. Ignoring Count Leothyn simply causes him to fester with anger. He withholds the support of the Knights of the Gryphon and begins to actually miss the Darrians. At least with the miserable Mitrans, you know where you stand.

If Leothyn believes after three years of rule that he is being utterly excluded from power, he will take a drastic step. When the Army of the White Unicorn arrives in Talingarde, he will secretly send messengers to the Knights of the Gryphon to join Bellinda's ranks. Better to finally prove their loyalty to those insipid Darrians than to be completely discounted by these Asmodean usurpers. Apply a -2 penalty to Might.

TERRORIZE THE BARCANS

Count Leothyn Barca is a difficult man to frighten. At his age, he's seen every trick under the sun and a few idle threats aren't going to make him run. Still, terrorizing this old man is no difficult than visiting his villa in the Golden Bow and forcefully threatening his life. A DC 30 Intimidate skill check convinces him you are serious. Award bonuses from +2 for breaking things to +8 for murdering a few servants in the Count's presence.

Such acts of terror will convince Count Leothyn to stop skulking around court, trying to arrange a private audience with the king. What it won't do is earn the Asmodeans the support of the Knights of the Gryphon. In fact, if Count Leothyn truly believes his life is in jeopardy, he will flee the capital like the coward he is. He will go to Ghashtenhall and seek shelter from his cousin, Duke Hadrian.

Duke Hadrian cannot stand the old codger, but out of respect for family will put him up in his palace until this all blows over. If ordered by royal edict to hand over Leothyn, the Duke proves utterly inept at keeping him from escaping his grasp.

The net effect of terrorizing Leothyn is much the same as ignoring him. When the Army of the White Unicorn arrives, the Knights of the Gryphon will be fighting at their side. Twelve hundred heavy horse who could have served the king are fighting with Bellinda because the Asmodean regime refused to be diplomatic. There is a lesson in there somewhere. Apply a -2 penalty to Might.

MANIPULATE THE BARCANS (TIME: 1 MONTH)

Leothyn is a clever man, but he is also an old man with many strongly held beliefs that clever PCs could capitalize on. First, Leothyn believes that House of Darius hates House Barca and secretly works to destroy his house at every turn. This is a false belief. In Bellinda's mind, the war of succession eighty years ago is ancient history. She holds no anger or resentment against the House of Barca. She has even met Duke Hadrian and finds him quite charming. The Duke is a bachelor and one of the few men on the island of sufficient rank that Bellinda might consider marrying him if times were different.

Leothyn believes none of this. The Darrians hate him and his entire family. It's an article of faith with him. So, if the PCs were to have Darian assassins almost kill Leothyn, he would have no trouble believing they were capable of such tactics. He would seek protection from the current regime and might even be willing to make concessions based on a phantom threat.

An invented threat against Count Leothyn's life would cause him to wholly throw in with the war effort against Bellinda. He would commit the Knights of the Gryphon to the Asmodean cause (Might +2) and might even be persuaded to help bankroll the government...only temporarily of course. That would add 2,500 gp to the PCs monthly income. He would still demand a seat on the privy council and want some holdings after the war is completed.

The danger with this tactic is that Count Leothyn might figure out he's being deceived. The Count hates being played for a fool and might very well have his knights change sides at the last moment during the Second Battle of Tamberlyn (see Act IV below). Deception is a risky strategy.

In order to fool Leothyn, he must be beaten three times in a Bluff vs. Sense Motive skill test (his Sense Motive skill total is +20). If he ever beats his deceiver by more than five, he figures out the scam. He then runs a scam of his own. He acts like the deception is still working, but in secret prepares the Knights of the Gryphon to betray the Asmodean army during the Darian invasion everyone knows is inevitable. Such a reversal is a military disaster far worse than if the knights were simply fighting on the other side (Might -4).



EVENT ELEVEN: A PALACE OF VICE AND VILLAINY

Time: 1 month to renovate the palace.
Variable to descend into utter decadence.

Our band of villains has been living on the run for years, dodging the inquisition, otherworldly foes and Thorn's agents. It is completely understandable for them to feel they deserve some rest and relaxation. And it is also easy to see how a little recreation can turn into a life style of utter depravity.

The Adarium, the palace of the Darians, sits empty and unused just across the river (you can find the map in Book IV). The PCs could occupy the place with only a few comparatively minor expenditures, and put the place back in working order. 20,000 gp would transform the place back into a true palace.

But that would simply make a palace like it was under the Darians. Perhaps the PCs have more exotic tastes. Perhaps they wish to transform it in to a true palace of earthly delights. As king, it is within their purview to make the palace into a non-stop orgy of sin and sensuality if they so desire.

For a cost of 30,000 gp more and 2,000 gp a month, the Adarium could become a hedonist's fantasy. Daily feasting, endless revels, nightly parties, and concubines and consorts of any variety desired are the rule.

Some would say that such carnal pleasures are reward enough. However, such decadence does impart some benefit. Constant revelry and the minor intrigues of the decadent court hone the social skills. Every month that the PCs spend in such well-funded decadence imparts a +1 bonus to either Diplomacy, Bluff or Sense Motive (the PCs choice; maximum +3 in any skill). Note: these bonuses do not stack with the Skill Focus feat.

In effect, after three months honing a single skill, the PC will receive the skill focus feat in the appropriate skill as a bonus feat. It is possible that the PCs could spend half their reign doing nothing but exploring the pleasures of the flesh. If so, they each acquire three bonus feats.

However, there are also costs to this excess. Every three bonuses thus acquired also imparts a -1 Might penalty. An absent king is not an effective ruler. Even as the decadent wretch pursues ever more exotic pleasures, the resistance flourishes beneath his very nose and the servants of Solomon Tyrath work tirelessly to weaken his reign. This pleasure palace is filled with cunning courtesans who seek only to enrich their own purses and false friends who will flee at the first sign of Bellinda's army.

EVENT TWELVE: INNOCENCE LOST

Time: 1 month to legalize and tax brothels.
1 month to legalize and tax the slave trade.

There was a time when prostitution was commonplace in Talingarde. Under the Barcan regime, brothels were to be found throughout the island. Markadian I with a single stroke of his pen ended the legality of that profession. At first, this declaration did little. The brothels continued their trade, only now they did not need to pay taxes. But as the House of Darius and the Church of Mitra cemented their dominion, one by one, the brothels were shut down. Madams and pimps were chased off the island or arrested. The venerable institution of prostitution virtually disappeared from the island over the course of a few short years.

It never entirely went away, of course. Illegal prostitution still survived in Ghastenhall's infamous Red Quarter and places like Drownington in Farholde and Seaward in Daveryn. But visitors from foreign cities were oft amazed by how difficult it was to find a lady of the night in Matharyn.

With a single edict, that ban imposed by the House of Darius could be lifted. The day that edict is announced a few enterprising merchants in Wayburn (the traveler's quarter of Matharyn) will hire a few girls to try and start attracting foreigners to their inns. Shortly they will discover that the oldest profession is an amazing money maker, especially after such a long absence from the City of Lights.

In a few months, brothels will have spread to almost every corner of the city and will be big business. This distresses the lawful good population of Matharyn less than you would imagine. While older women grumble about the degradation of society, younger men sneak off to "have a look" at these new houses of ill repute. The complaints of the puritanical and the relief of the frustrated, more or less cancel each other out. So, legalizing prostitution has no effect on Might.

What it does most certainly accomplish is to provide a new revenue stream to the regime. Within 1d3 months of the edict being made, taxes start to role in. Add 3,000 gp a month to the royal income as licenses are sold and taxes are collected.

If the Mitran church still exists, they will rail in their pulpits against this spreading moral degradation and the faithful will nod their heads solemnly. How many among those congregations, later in the night, quietly visit their favorite doxy? In short, prostitution does not radically change the kingdom for good or ill.

Slavery is an entirely different matter. The brutal and inhumane institution of slavery has never had a friendly home here in Talingarde. Being a slaver or slave-owner, by proclamation of the Victor, was a capitol offense answered by public beheading. But even under the Barcan kings, slavery was illegal and despised. Yes, a few very rich nobles had a foreign “servant” or two who were in truth slaves. And if they were well-connected enough, perhaps a blind eye was turned. But even then, it was risky and a potential scandal.

However, our villains are devotees of Asmodeus. According to the tenets of the Asmodean faith, slavery is not only legal, it is moral and merciful. The slaver’s argument goes like this – slavery is only ever imposed upon someone who otherwise would have faced the death penalty for their crimes. Thus, slavery actually spares the lives of the condemned. This is a mercy to those wretched enemies of the state and besides, some people are little more than sheep and were meant to be slaves.

Of course, this insidious argument overlooks that slavery encourages raids against otherwise peaceful foreigners. This argument also forgets that once someone is enslaved, they are denied recourse to the law (since they are now property) and thus cannot contest if they were put into bondage illegally. The reality is that there are few businesses that compete with the slave trade for cruelty and vileness.

Legalizing slavery does increase revenues. The institution is slow to get going. After 1d10 months, revenue becomes substantial – add 1,000 gp to the monthly revenue. This represents the slave trade finally taking off. A slave market is built in Matharyn and Ghastenhall. At first, the markets mostly deal in foreign slaves brought in for the delight of nobles and wealthy merchants. But then the slavers begins raiding up north, taking Yutak and Ice Elven prisoners. Revenues increase again. Every 1d4 months, increase the revenue another 1,000 gp until it plateaus at 5,000 gp a month. At that moment, slavery becomes an established institution in Talingarde.

The Talireans as a whole are not pleased. Virtually no one appreciates this horrid institution. Preachers rail against it in their pulpits. Workers become afraid that their jobs will be replaced by slaves who work for nothing. Riots flare in the Heartlands and have to be put down.

Assess a -2 penalty to Might for legalizing slavery.

Legalizing slavery does have one other benefit. It allows for the legalization of gladiators and thus at last can Talingarde gain...

EVENT THIRTEEN: BLOOD SPORTS

Time: 1 month to build a coliseum.

Mastery Mallory Hawthorn (see Event One above) eventually comes to the King with a splendid proposal. During the reign of the Barcans, there was once a tradition of having convicted criminals not just executed but forced to fight in public gladiatorial spectacles. They were wildly popular, or so the history books claim. By Darian law such spectacles are, of course, illegal. Might it be time to reinstate this glorious tradition?

A knowledge (local) skill check DC 25 will reveal that the old coliseum still exists. It is actually in Varsil and currently being used as an amphitheater showing plays of great artistic merit. Seizing it earns only the enmity of few drama professors and aging playwrights. If a paltry 25,000 gp were spent, the coliseum could be refurbished and restored to its prior glory, able to seat crowds of 20,000 cheering spectators. The renovation would take one month of the regime’s time to organizing and have plans drafted. The actual project would be accomplished in three months. And then, let the games begin!

Such blood sports do not require slavery. The people who fight in the arena could be only condemned criminals. However, this gains only 1,000 gp in a month in revenue. and never gains wild popularity.

However, if the Coliseum is established and slavery is legalized, then a couple of gladiatorial stables arise in the city (one of them owned and run by Master Hawthorn). Beasts are imported from the mainland and the Caer Bryr. Gladiatorial combat has truly come to Talingarde!

At first, the citizens are revolted by these gory spectacles. But then over the course of six months, everything changes. Gladiators are lionized by their ever growing legions of fans and the sons and daughters of Matharyn begin to follow these battles enthusiastically and passionately. Blood sports become a popular affair and Matharyn is soon abuzz with discussion over the next up and coming champion. Adjust Talingarde’s alignment one step towards lawful evil.

Further, the PCs can now muster a small forces of veteran gladiators with only the promise of their freedom. This is worth a +1 Might bonus.

After six months, the 1,000 gp increase shoots up to 3,000 gp. The coffers of the king fill with wealth as slaves spill their blood in the sands of the new arena. Glorious!

Story Award: Restoring gladiatorial games to Talingarde is worth a CR 18 (153,600 XP) reward.

EVENT FOURTEEN: REBUILDING BALENTYNE

Time: 3 months to clear the Borderlands and order Balentyne rebuilt

The PCs should well know that the Watch Wall is broken. After all, they broke it. And further, they may remember that the Borderlands are overrun with creatures from the Savage North. Again, their fault.

It is within the PC's power to lead an expedition up to the Borderlands, hunt down whatever beasts trouble the region and allow for the reestablishment of villages along the border. This isn't just a good idea because it will secure their northern territory. It would be a political coup. This is something that the Darrians could not do. The new king has destroyed the Fire-Axe's horde. To then reconquer the Borderlands would be a major feather in their cap. A PC could figure this out with a successful Knowledge (Local) DC 25. Or failing that an advisor such as Leothyn Barca could point it out.

It won't take their entire army to pacify the Borderlands. A small force of a few thousand soldiers could accomplish it in a swift summer campaign. 5,000 is probably overkill. What will help is heavy cavalry. The Knights of the Griffon (if they managed to ally with the Barcans; See Event Ten above) or Herr Eisenmark's heavy lancers (if they were hired) are an invaluable aid during the campaign. The reason is this – most of the creatures that trouble the borderlands are “heavies” such as ogres, hill giants and the naatanuk (awakened dire polar bears). One on one, few human soldiers can match them. But a small band of these creatures are no match for a few hundred heavy cavalry barrelling down upon them at a full charge.

So, rather than run a number of small battles, we're going to handle this narratively. Read this to your players:

The decision has been made to lead a campaign to reclaim the Borderlands. Your army is gathered at Matharyn and with no small amount of fanfare, you depart to the north.

Do the PCs want to visit Ghastenhall? This is a natural time for them to do so since they will pass so close. See Event Nineteen: A City Without Loyalty below to see how such a visit might go.

Ask the PCs how many thousand troops and, in broad strokes, what types of troops they bring. They have several choices – infantry, archers, light horse and heavy cavalry. The only decision that matters (though do not tell the PCs this) is if they bring heavy cavalry. Also, which PCs accompany the expedition? Does the king lead the army personally? Is there a competent general along?

Keep the planning brief but have the PCs draw up a very general sketch of their plan to retake the Borderland.

Total up the modifiers from this list

+4 500 or more heavy cavalry accompany the army (only receive this bonus once)

+1 per full 1000 troops in the army (including heavy cavalry)

+1 Per PC that accompanies the army

+1 If the King accompanies the army

+1 The army is commanded by a general with at least 10 ranks in Profession (soldier) or similar skill.

+1 The army is commanded by someone with the feat skill focus (Profession[soldier] or similar skill)

+1 the army is commanded by a general who has actually lead an army into battle before.

+1 to +3 If any part of the PC plan impresses you, award them a special bonus. For example, award a bonus for bringing along a unit of aerial hippogriff riders (the PCs likely received such a unit in Book III, Act Five, Event One).

Once the modifiers are totalled, add them to a d20:

9 or less – The campaign is an utter fiasco. It is mishandled from the start. Few monsters are even seen for most of the season until finally, your troops foolishly pursue an enemy into an ambush. Yes, you were outsmarted by hill giants and ogres. The army can likely recover. Your pride may have suffered a more permanent wound. Half of the men involved are slain, the Borderlands are not retaken and three months of the PC's reign is utterly wasted. Further, they are permanently humiliated before their subjects. -1 Might for every thousand men they lose and -2 Might lost out of sheer disgrace.

10-13 – The campaign is a fiasco. You fight a few successful battles but fail to capitalize on them. The enemy regroups and suprisingly the ogres form a crude alliance to beat back your forces. A quarter of the men are slain (round down to the nearest thousand) and the Borderlands are not retaken. They lose -1 Might for every thousand men they lose and a -1 Might for the disgrace.

14-19 – A hard fought victory. After several tough battles you finally manage to break the union of the ogre, hill giant and naatanuk tribes. The borderlands are yours! However you have lost 1d4+1x10% of your army. They lose -1 Might for every thousand men slain and a +2 bonus to Might for retaking the Borderlands.

20+ – You retake the Borderlands with little difficulty. The chaotic ogres, hill giants and naatanuk are no match for well-led army and are easily swept aside. Your casualties are inconsequential. Award a +3 Might bonus for this great victory,

Once the PCs have recovered the Borderlands, the logical question is what next? They really have two meaningful choices. They can order the watch wall rebuilt and return to the pre-war status quo or they can invade the Savage North and try to unify the entire island once and for all. Your villains could be conquerors and do what the cowardly Darians never dared!

Rebuilding the Watch Wall is costly. It is broken in five places. Balentyne was, obviously, destroyed. The Fire-Axe caught the commander of Lorringsgate unawares and destroyed that fortress from the rear. Fyringhold, Lake-watch and the Accarian Shield (the three fortresses that actually border Lake Tarik) were all abandoned and subsequently sacked. Repairing and resupplying those fortresses will cost 30,000 gp a piece. Of course, the money wouldn't need to be spent all at once. Each fortress needs 2,000 gp a month for fifteen months to be fully repaired.

If the PCs do rebuild Balentyne, take a moment to explain the irony of the situation. The PCs have both burned and rebuilt the Watchtower of Balentyne. They return again to the site of their first mission for Cardinal Thorn. What condition did they leave it when last they left? And what has happened to it since? Does the old rookery still stink of raven and Mad Martin?

There is an alternative to this great expense. The Watch Wall was always a bad idea. For centuries now the Talireans have stared across the water wondering when the next attack would come, allowing their barbaric enemies a safe place to regroup and try again. The only reason the Fire-Axe's horde existed was because the Talireans gave the bugbears a refuge to rebuild their numbers. The PCs need not repeat the mistake. They could gather a formidable army and march on the Savage North. That would be a harder and longer campaign. But it would make repairing the Watch Wall unnecessary. That battle is covered in detail in Event Sixteen: War in the North.

In order to attack the Savage North, the PCs will need to resupply their army and equip it to move through the cold weather of the north of the island. There is only one town in the north of the island that has enough trade and resources to support such a campaign – Farholde. Visiting Farholde is discussed in Event Eight below.

Regardless, always keep this in mind. Bellinda's army is coming back, but the PCs don't know when. They keep receiving swatches of fabric marked with white unicorns. Do they dare lead an army to conquer the Savage North now? What if Bellinda takes advantage of their absence?

Story Award: Reclaiming the borderlands is worth a CR 19 (204,800 XP) reward.

EVENT FIFTEEN: FROM THE ASHES

Time: 1 month to order Daveryn rebuilt and assign it a new ruler.

Eventually the PCs may want to rebuild Daveryn. After all, it was once the third largest city in Talingarde. This is no small task. The Fire-Axe's horde camped there for months and between the sack and two battles, the city is a complete wreck. However, there are reasons to undertake this great project. Rebuilding the city gives them a dukedom that they can use as reward to a faithful minion and it could increase their tax revenue.

The PCs have already likely met one NPC who would love to become the Duchess of Daveryn – Baroness Vanya of Velyn (Book IV, Act I, 3.) In fact, she considers rule of Daveryn her ancestral right. If the PCs give it to someone else and she is still alive and in their service, then the Baroness will turn against them. Depending on who they appoint, she will try to arrange that person's death so that she will again have a chance to claim the title. If that is impossible, instead she will start secretly funnelling information and money to the resistance hoping that when Bellinda returns, she can leverage this into being given Daveryn by a restored Darian regime.

She will always deny it means that much to her. She acts nonchalant about the disposition of the city (a Sense Motive versus her +15 Bluff though reveals the truth). But she does all she can to secure her ancestral holdings, even performing actions that could be seen as reckless.

If Daveryn is given to anyone but the Baroness, they report back that it will take 100,000 gp to repair enough of the city to allow resettlement. After a year, Daveryn will again be a thriving city (if substantially smaller) and will start to generate 3,000 gp a month in tax revenue to the PCs and give a +1 Might bonus.

However, if the Baroness is given control of Daveryn, things go differently. She claims that she needs no money to rebuild her home city. The Baroness knows the city well and she knows its people. At her own expense, she sends out messengers to every refugee of the city she can find (particularly those she is related to). She organizes a council dedicated to rebuilding the city and raises the money from dispossessed nobles and her own coffers. Daveryn is still rebuilt within a year (with the same benefits), but with no out of pocket expense.

There is a downside. The new duchess entrenches herself in the city. Everyone she appoints is loyal to her, not to the new regime. Eventually, she will likely go visit her "Uncle Gaius" in Ghastenhall and become a vampire. The PCs have effectively put an immortal rival into power.

EVENT SIXTEEN: WAR IN THE NORTH

Time: 4 months to conquer the Savage North

If the PCs could conquer the Savage North, gain the service of the Iraen and ally with the Yutak, then the current regime will have done what no king, Barcan or Darian or otherwise has ever done. They will have unified the island of Talingarde into one kingdom. Still, conquering the north is easier said than done. There is a reason that the Watch Wall was constructed and maintained for several hundred years.

That said, there has never been a better chance to conquer the North. The destruction of Fire-Axe's horde has broken the back of the bugbear and other humanoid tribes that once so fiercely defended this place. Still, there are two sentient races that did not significantly participate in the invasion – the ice elves and the naatanuk (awakened polar bears). These two peoples have no interest in being subjugated.

The ice elves are a small tribe of pale skinned, dark haired elves that cluster around their capital – the hall of Issengolth. Never numerous, there are less than ten thousand ice elves in all the north. But they make up for those small numbers by being effective soldiers and knowledgeable of the land. They are led by a nearly immortal elf queen (CN female elven ranger 20) named Carnaya. Carnaya, haughty, proud and wild, will never ally with Talireans, especially those who venerate Asmodeus.

Alongside the elves are the Naatanuk. These bears are few and some fought with the Fire-Axe. But mostly these protectors of the wild care nothing for the affairs of the south. They will join with Carnaya to form a fearsome army to protect their homelands. They are led by druidic shamans, great bears of wisdom and magical power.

The easiest way to conquer the Savage North is to have someone else do it for you. If the PCs have allied with Queen Ellisif and spared the frost giants at Brandelburn, the PCs have allies in the north. Queen Ellisif will conquer the north for the PCs, with only two things: first, she wants to be named Duchess of Hrimholl (the frost giant fortress) and to be appointed to the privy council of the king. Second, the foes she faces are fearsome indeed. She wants 5,000 troops placed under her command until the campaign is concluded. If the PCs do this, Ellisif will lead a great campaign in the north and win a hard fought victory. Roughly half of the men given to the giantess never return home (Might -2) but this is more than made up for by gaining frost giant allies and earning the title of Conqueror of All Talingarde. (Might +3, for a net Might +1).

If the PCs prefer to lead themselves. Roll 1d20. Use the same list of modifiers found in Event Fourteen.

9 or less or a Natural 1: Disaster in the north! The army is lured into an ambush. The PCs, the king and cohorts manage to escape, but their army is wiped out to a man.

10-13: A hard fought defeat. After months of bitter fighting, your army is driven south losing half its warriors (-1 Might per 1000 lost). The good news is that the enemy can ill afford their losses. If you try again, receive a +2 bonus on this table.

14-16: Standstill. You lose a quarter of your army but are not driven from the north. You can continue to fight for another three months and receive another roll. Before you roll, you have a chance to reinforce your army.

15-19: Hard fought victory. You take the north, but it costs you dearly. You lose half your army. You sack Issengolth and choose either to allow the ice elves and naatanuk to live as vassals or wipe them out to a man. +3 to Might (though don't forget your losses affect might). The royal share of the plunder is 1d20*20,000 gp.

20-24: Victory. As above but lose a quarter of your army.

25 or more: Absolute Victory! You take the north in a brilliant campaign. As above but your casualties are inconsequential and in fact, you gain units of ice elven mercenaries who would rather fight for you than against. +4 Might and gain 1,000 cruel ice elven mercenaries.

Story Award: Claiming the Savage North is worth a CR 20 (307,200 XP) reward.

A MORE DETAILED WAR?

A single die roll to determine a six month campaign may not be completely satisfactory to certain players and game masters. That's understandable. Indeed you could run an entire adventure campaign based around the subjugation of the Savage North, post-Brandelburn. But this is not the focus of "Way of the Wicked". This campaign is focused much more on destroying Bellind and the last vestiges of the House of Darius.

Therefore expanding the war beyond this simple die roll is left to the game master. There are any number of perfectly serviceable systems for resolving the war. You could detail the PCs roster of battle taking into account what allies they have made. You could create an enemy army based on a desperate alliance of the ice elves, the natanuk and surviving humanoids. This could be a very exciting additional act of your campaign where the PCs play generals plotting out their campaign and waging a war of conquest to unify their island. To battle!

EVENT SEVENTEEN: TWENTY THOUSAND THIEVES

Time: *1 month to bribe their mercenary army*

The current regime, if you pause to think about it, is in a very precarious position. They came to power not at the head of a loyal army of followers, but because of the actions of twenty thousand well-paid thieves. After a few months of obvious and unequivocal victory, this army is no longer going to be satisfied with promises that they will be rewarded eventually or warnings about how at some time in the future a princess may return. They came to Talingarde to receive grants of land and to start a new life.

This army is a loaded gun. The truth is that twenty thousand thieves, cutthroats and criminals are never going to simply settle down and become peaceable farmers. It is a fine thing to say that you're going to Talingarde to start a new life. The truth, most of these men are not going to be happy pushing a plough. Far more likely that they'll return to their previous livelihood as bandits and legbreakers. The only difference – on the mainland, there was a well disciplined military to keep them in check. Here, the military has largely been either slaughtered or fled. They are the military.

There is a better solution and if the PCs haven't slain Leothyn Barca and he is on their privy council, he will suggest it. The PCs can also come up with it on their own with a successful DC 25 Sense Motive skill check (to detect the soldiers displeasure) and DC 20 Knowledge (local) skill check to devise a remedy. These men don't want to work the land. They want to be thugs. Fine. Let them. Just make sure they are *our* thugs.

Draw up a list of all the chieftains, commanders, ring-leaders and so forth of this rabble you call an army. Make those men lesser landed nobility, their station dependant on how many men they lead. The rank and file become their soldiers. The men aren't farming. They're guarding farmers who will provide their money and livelihood.

If only the kingdom has a region that was completely devastated and almost empty of nobility...

There is such a region. The Borderlands from Balentyne to Daveryn is where the majority of the fighting during the Fire-axe's campaign took place. Send the restless part of your army there to settle and rebuild. This should keep them from turning bandit. And as nobles and soldiers, they'll be armed and ready should you need them again (say in Act III). Of course the region will need to be cleared of monsters (see Event Fourteen above). If the PCs don't come up with a solution, assess a Might -3 penalty as the men turn to banditry and spread chaos.

If the PCs do successfully bribe their army, it costs them money for transport and to establish their grants. The total cost is 30,000 gp (each 10,000 gp buys off a point of might penalty noted above).

Story Award: Bribing their mercenary army is worth a CR 18 (153,600 XP) reward.

EVENT EIGHTEEN: RETURN TO FARHOLDE

There are any number of reasons the PCs might return to Farholde (see its gazeteer in Book II). First, there may be no real authority here. Duke Argus Welshire was killed in the war. Baron Arkov Vandermir might have been eaten by a dragon. The only Darian almost certainly died on the altar of Vetra-Kali. In short, this city has been without any substantial rulership since the PCs left. Mayor Hugo Hallynbeck has been desperately holding things together.

If the Baron survived the events of Book II, then he has turned Farholde into his personal corrupt playground. He will be only too glad to receive the new king and will do all he can to ingratiate himself to the new regime. He has a small army of two hundred thugs he will gladly pledge to the defense of the kingdom, but in the grand scale of war, it is not worth even a single point of might.

The PCs may also be here to use Farholde for the staging area for their campaign against the Savage North. If this is so, then Farholde makes an adequate headquarters for their campaign. See Event Sixteen for details about how the campaign might go.

The most useful thing that can be done in Farholde is to notice what is not here anymore. The Order of St. Cynthia-Celeste, the warrior nuns who once aided in keeping Farholde safe, are missing. A Knowledge (local) DC 20 and a Perception DC 20 will cause a PC to remember that they should be here and that they have fled the city.

In fact, they have set up a hidden refuge in the Savage North in a lost tomb that their adventuress-founder cleared out years ago. There, three hundred elite battle nuns pray and await the return of Princess Bellinda. If they are not destroyed by the end of the PCs reign, they will join the Army of the White Unicorn as a special fanatical elite unit. Apply a Might -2 penalty.

However, they are unprotected from divination. The PCs could easily find them and purge them from their cavernous redoubt. A single *earthquake* spell could collapse the whole cavern complex on them without even a struggle. Or the PCs could storm the caves with several thousand soldiers. Either way, the nuns are doomed.

Story Award: Award a CR 18 (153,600 XP) reward for wiping out the Order of St. Cynthia-Celeste

EVENT NINETEEN: DARK GRUDGES

Time: 1 month to send emissaries to either the duergar or the dwarves seeking a new alliance.

The duergar of Zhaansen-Kryr aided the PCs at the Battle of Valtaerna and thus must seem to be natural allies against the Princess Bellinda. The PCs may once more send emissaries to the duergar hoping to receive aid in exchange for more dwarven offerings. Thane Zargun Arzen (NE male duergar fighter 10) rules now having successfully poisoned his father in a coup a few years before.

The duergar prince will receive them as friends and allies. He will seem to shrewdly bargain for favor and in the end promise the PCs the aid of his people. This is all a ruse. When the Army of the White Unicorn arrives, not one duergar warrior will march to war. This betrayal has a simple cause. The duergar have only survived in the past because of their secrecy and their paranoia.

If Bellinda wins (the far more likely outcome the Prince believes) and the duergar betray the PCs, they will remain concealed from the restored Darrians. If they come to the PCs aid, they will reveal themselves and almost certainly set themselves up for betrayal by the new regime and attack by the dwarves of Talingarde. Best to stay concealed within their fortress-city and prepare a bribe to mitigate the anger of the new regime in the unlikely event the Asmodeans triumph.

Anyone who deals with Thane Zargun may roll a DC 25 Sense Motive skill check to sense he is hiding something and that his loyalty is suspect. Only mind-reading magic or divination magic will reveal the whole story (he has a +8 Will save vs. such spells).

There is a better way to use the duergar. The PCs know the location of one their most important strongholds. They even have the Prince's confidence enough to be granted entrance through its well-guarded gates. The dwarves of Talingarde who dwell amongst the populace have long known that the duergar exist and that they occasionally abducted dwarves for torture and sacrifice. But they have no idea where their strongholds are. The best use of the duergar is to betray them first.

Thane Turin Brightmetal (LN male middle-aged dwarf fighter 4/expert 7) lives in the Lord's Quarter of Ghastenhall in a tall stone house that looks like it was carved from a single block of stone. Every wall is covered in murals showing the past glories of his people. This dwarven dwelling is completely out of synch with human sensibilities. From there the Thane runs a business empire – a successful metal commodities trading company.

This one hundred and seventy year old dwarf holds no official noble title or position of importance in Talingarde, but a successful Knowledge (local) (DC 15 for a dwarf; DC 25 for anyone else) will discover that he is actually a direct descendant of the old Ansgarian kings. He holds tremendous respect amongst many of the dwarves scattered throughout the kingdom and even routinely introduces himself as “Thane” even though that title now carries with it no official sanction.

Thane Turin appears at first meeting to be a stereotypical dwarf – irascible but noble, conservative and tradition-bound. But the truth is far different. Thane Turin is a revolutionary dwarf who has long been dissatisfied with the status quo in Talingarde. It was not that the House of Darius treated them badly. King Markadian V always dealt with the dwarves honorably and respectfully. But the Darrians were above all devout Mitrans. And the truth is that the dwarves are not.

In a way, the Church of Asmodeus and the dwarves of Talingarde share much in common. They have both been the victim of religious discrimination. The dwarves have been all but banned from practicing their ancient rituals venerating Father Mountain. Dwarves were even arrested under the reign of Markadian IV for claiming that Father Mountain created the world instead of Mitra.

Thane Turin wants to change that. He wishes the establishment of an independent dwarven kingdom and a guarantee of dwarven freedom to worship. He would also love to see the duergar purged from the island. If the new regime approaches Turin and offer him a kingdom in the mountains and the destruction of Zhaansen-Kryr, Turin would be sorely tempted to accept, even given his doubts about the Asmodean's character.

A successful DC 40 Diplomacy check would even make Thane Turin Brightmetal accept an arrangement where the dwarven kingdom would serve and pay homage to a High King in Matharyn who would stay out of day to day affairs.

If such an arrangement is made, Thane Turin calls a great convocation of the dwarven people. From all across Talingarde, dwarves gather at Ghastenhall. After days of negotiation, titles are handed out and a new dwarven kingdom is founded. Dwarven soldiers will aid PCs in raiding Zhaansen-Kryr. And even more than that, Thane Turin has concocted a plan to wipe the duergar from Talingarde once and for all. He advises the PCs to use their “friendship” with Prince Zargun to infiltrate and throw open the gates of the duergar stronghold. The dwarves will storm the place and answer the ancient dark grudges between dwarf and duergar in a single night of slaughter.

Zhaansen-Kryr is seized and restored to dwarven hands. The dwarves rename it Khaazen-Turin (lit. The Vault of Turin) and make it the capital of their empire. A lawful neutral dwarven kingdom is birthed in the mountains, likely subservient to the Asmodean king in Matharyn.

Doing this has two major effects. First, most of the dwarves who would have rallied to the banner of the White Unicorn do not. They are too busy establishing their new kingdom. This denies Bellinda an ally and awards the PCs a Might +1 bonus. But even more importantly, a year after being granted the title of king, the tribute begins to arrive. The tribute increases the royal monthly revenue by 4,000 gp a month and arms most of the PCs army in fine dwarven-made arms and armor. This grants a further Might +1 bonus.

Story Award: Award a CR 18 (153,600 XP) reward for entering into alliance with Turin Brightmetal.

EVENT TWENTY: EMPTY COFFERS

When your PCs take over Talingarde they will perhaps be shocked at how financially busted the kingdom is. One hundred thousand stinking gold pieces?! They probably spent more than that hiring and transporting the mercenaries. So, your PCs may decide it's time to pillage their kingdom for personal gain. After all, pleasure palaces don't build themselves...

The House of Darius has vast holdings both in the Heartland and seized from the House of Barca (you'll find these on the GM's map labelled Royal Holdings). The PCs could demand larcenous tribute and even sell off some of the land to make quick cash. This generates large amounts of gold in the short term, but of course undermines their budding dynasty's long term prospects.

If the PCs decide to do this, ask what level of money they would like to extract. They have three choices: only what's reasonable; as much as I can without doing too much damage; and every last stinking gold piece!

If they choose only what's reasonable, their monthly income increases by 2,000 gp for a Might -1 penalty. The peasants suffer only a little.

If they choose as much as they can without doing too much damage, they increase their income by 4,000 gp and receive 20,000 gp in cash immediately for a Might -3 penalty. The peasants are cast into misery and poverty.

Every last gold piece does not increase income, but does give them 200,000 gp immediately and a Might -5 (!) penalty. Their holdings look like they've been raided!

EVENT TWENTY ONE: THE FORGOTTEN FOLK

Time: 1 month to either scatter or recruit the Yutak tribes of the far north.

There is another tribal people besides the Iraen who lives in Talingarde. They are so elusive that they are often forgotten and certainly have never significantly played a role in Talirean politics – the Yutak. The PCs have met them exactly once way back in Book I (Act III, Event 4).

If the PCs didn't kill him, the young and ambitious White Tusk (now N male human ranger 12) has risen to be a great chief of his people. He is still advised by Joseph Calls-Fire-From-the-Water (CN male middle-aged human druid 7). If the PCs traded White Tusk a gaudy item of clothing, he still wears it proudly.

Attacking only wastes time and resources. The PCs could catch a few villages off guard and inflict a great tragedy upon these nomadic hunters. But that only causes the other tribes to take to their kayaks and umiaks and hide amongst the countless lesser islands and caves of the north. Tracking down these thousand small bands of mobile, skilled survivors even with powerful magic would be all but impossible. Certainly it would take more time than the PCs have. The yutak would weather this storm and the PCs would gain little besides meager loot from a few sacked villages which would barely pay for the cost of the expedition. This has no effect on Might or income.

Allying with the Yutak, however, presents some intriguing possibilities. The Yutak have always been neutral in politics of the south, but White Tusk is not a typical chieftain. He dreams of something more than an empire of ice and whale blubber. He would jump at the chance to gain a title and land. In particular, he has seen the trading town and fortress of Estyllis (the most northern Talingarde holding on the eastern coast; part of the Watch Wall) and been much impressed with its castle of stone. The last adult Baron of Estyllis, Lord Jasper IV, died fighting the Fire-Axe. His five year old son, Jasper V, sits on the baronial seat of Estyllis, his lands truly governed by the Bishop Clivarus, Mitran priest and cousin of the baron.

If the PCs gave Estyllis to White Tusk, he would speak on their behalf in the councils of the Yutak. There are not enough Yutak to field great hosts, but Yutak scouts could patrol the eastern coast of Talingarde. Their shamans could speak to the spirits of the water. The result – the PCs will have early warning of the Army of the White Unicorn's arrival. More warning, means more time to prepare and gather strength. Award Might +1.

Story Award: Allying with the Yutak is worth a CR 18 (153,600 XP) reward.

EVENT TWENTY TWO: KINGDOM OF THE KRAKEN

Time: 1 month to go kraken hunting

Talingarde suffers from calamity that is as grave as it is unknown. One reason that the island is so isolated is because a powerful kraken named Teuthia Stormsinger prowls the sea that separates the eastern coast from the mainland. For years this daughter of Typhon has hunted the depths free and unfettered without any enemy to stop her fearsome predations.

The beast doesn't take ships that often – only a half dozen a year. Compared to the dangers of storm and reef, this is not so great a toll. Still the terror it has instilled in the mainland merchants is one of the reasons Talingarde gets so little commerce. It's also why Cedrick had to pay 75,000 gp to get the army passage from the mainland.

Neither the Barcans nor the Darians ever realized that the kraken even existed. They never left the island and considered any talk of krakens to be mere sailors' fancy. Further, both houses were run by nobles preoccupied with causes other than "mere trade". And finally, Teuthia is a reclusive horror who takes great pains to hide herself lest the surface races decide to trouble her.

But the new regime is broke. And they are looking for ways to replenish their coffers and restore their income. If the PCs ever ask, "Why don't we get more tariffs from trade" and Cedrick Malthus is part of their privy council, he's quick to answer, "Why, the kraken of course."

He says this matter of factly, like it's the sort of thing that every school child knows. But quickly it becomes apparent that no one else has heard of the kraken. Actually that's not true. Leothyn has heard of it and is quick to dismiss the existence of the beast.

"You've been listening to those addle-brained sailors too much! A kraken? Nonsense. Have you ever seen this kraken?"

Cedric laughs in response. "Seen it? I'm alive aren't I? Of course I haven't seen it. Maybe it is just an old fish story, but I do know this. There is something in the sea between the eastern coast of Talingarde and the mainland that scares the piss out sea-going merchants. Every captain I talked to (and that's a lot) all consider the passage to Talingarde to be hazardous duty and demanded extra for the journey if they'd take it at all.

"You wanted to know how to increase the amount of taxes you collect every month. Well, here's a way. Destroy whatever is scaring those captains. Do that and you'll open up trade with the mainland."

If the PCs decide to take the kraken rumor seriously, they can have their minions seek out any captain or sailor who has claimed to have seen the beast. With a successful Connections roll (DC 16) the minions will find Captain Curtis O'farthing. He relates this:

"The kraken is real. Everyone knows that. But I'm one of the few to have seen it and lived. I was aboard the merchantman Grindal's Last Guilder out of Berckport. I was just an able seaman then. Suddenly it started to storm something fearsome. Blew up out of nowhere like the gods themselves were furious with us. That's when the tentacles hit us. Great ropey lashes they were, thicker than a man. They tore the ship in half like you would rip a biscuit.

"By luck, I happened to buy a charm honorin' the sea queen before I rode the waves. Paid two gold for it. Best two gold I ever spent! For the sea queen sent me the broken masthead and I floated away from the wreck as sharks the size of elephants swarmed up from the water and began to feed upon the crew. The ghastliest thing I ever heard, your grace...the sound of a hundred men being eaten alive. I floated for three days till a small cutter picked me up. The kraken's real, your grace. That's the gods' own truth."

This story does relate a genuine incident and in fact reveals two of Teuthia favorite tactics – controlling weather and summoning sharks.

Using divination magic, the PCs can almost certainly determine the kraken is real. They can also learn its approximate location. With their connections it is no problem to acquire a ship. King Markadian V's flagship "Darkest Fore the Dawn" (or usually just the Lady Darkest to her sailors) is docked and could be taken. If the PCs just randomly hunt, they have a 10% chance per month to find the Kraken. With magical assistance, they can go right to her.

The PCs might try to negotiate with Teuthia. At first, it does seem the Stormsinger is amicable to a deal. The wise old beast speaks in a resonate whisper so powerful it sounds as if a hundred people were speaking at once. If Teuthia is paid in tribute (3,000 gp a month) she will relent from her attacks for a while (1d8 months). But the truth is, Teuthia doesn't attack ships because she needs to (she rarely even eats a sailor). Teuthia attacks ships because it's fine sport.

She revels in watching her sharks rip apart sailors. She adores using the stolen loot to decorate her cave. She enjoys killing surface dwellers and seeing the seas roil with their warm blood. She won't give this up. Eventually, she will break any alliance unless she is killed or driven off. To open the trade routes, the PCs need to defeat her.

Teuthia Stormsinger

CR 20

XP 307,200

Female unique elder kraken

NE Gargantuan magical beast (aquatic)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +32**DEFENSE****AC** 36, touch 6, flat-footed 36 (+30 natural, -4 size)**hp** 348 (24d10+216)**Fort** +23, **Ref** +14, **Will** +13**Immune** cold, mind-affecting effects, poison; **Resist** electricity 30;
SR 31**OFFENSE****Speed** 10 ft., swim 40 ft., jet 280 ft.**Melee** 2 arms +31 (3d6+11/19–20 plus 1d6 electricity), bite +31 (2d8+11), 8 tentacles +29 (1d8+5)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (60 ft. with arm, 40 ft. with tentacle)**Special Attacks** constrict (tentacles, 1d8+10), ink cloud, rend ship**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 19th; concentration +24)

3/day-chain lightning (DC 21), dominate person (DC 20), summon monster IX (1d4+1 dire sharks only)

1/day-call lightning storm (DC 20), control weather, control winds, dominate monster (DC 24, animal only), greater teleport, resist energy

TACTICS**Before Combat** Before the kraken begins any combat, she swims deep beneath the water for ten minutes casting *control weather* calling up a fearsome storm.**During Combat** The kraken loves to play with her victims before completing the kill. She will spend three rounds summoning a swarm of dire sharks and then try to grab opponents to drag them into the water and feed them to her pets.

However, if ever reduced to half hit points, this play comes to halt. She will try to wreck the ship and then once she has her enemies in the water, either leave them to the sharks or pick them off one by one.

Morale The kraken is no fanatic. If reduced to 87 hp (25%) or less, she releases her grapples and flees into the depths. Teuthia will seek out easier hunting grounds and no longer trouble this section of the sea.**STATISTICS****Str** 32, **Dex** 10, **Con** 29, **Int** 21, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 21**Base Atk** +24; **CMB** +39; **CMD** 49 (can't be tripped)**Feats** Bleeding Critical, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Expertise, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (arm), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (arm), Improved Trip, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike**Skills** Intimidate +29, Knowledge (geography) +29, Knowledge (nature) +29, Perception +32, Stealth +15, Swim +46, Use Magic Device +29**Languages** Aquan, Common**SQ** tenacious grapple**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Ink Cloud (Ex)** A kraken can emit a cloud of black, venomous ink in an 80-foot spread once per minute as a free action while underwater. This cloud provides total concealment, which the kraken can use to escape a fight that is going badly. Creatures within the cloud are considered to be in darkness. In addition, the ink is toxic, functioning as contact poison against all creatures caught within it. The ink cloud persists for 1 minute before dispersing. The save DC against the poison effect is Constitution-based.**Kraken Ink:** Ink cloud—contact; save Fort DC 29; frequency 1/round for 10 rounds; effect 1 Str damage plus nausea; cure 2 consecutive saves.**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Jet (Ex)** A kraken can jet backward as a full-round action, at a speed of 280 feet. It must move in a straight line, but does not provoke attacks of opportunity while jetting.**Rend Ship (Ex)** As a full-round action, a kraken can attempt to use four of its tentacles to grapple a ship of its size or smaller. It makes a CMB check opposed by the ship's captain's Profession (sailor) check, but the kraken gets a cumulative +4 bonus on the check for each size category smaller than Gargantuan the ship is.

If the kraken grapples the ship, it holds the ship motionless; it can attack targets anywhere on or within the ship with its tentacles, but can only attack foes on deck with its free arms and can't attack foes at all with its beak. Each round it maintains its hold on the ship, it automatically inflicts bite damage on the ship's hull.

Tenacious Grapple (Ex) A kraken does not gain the grappled condition if it grapples a foe with its arms or tentacles.**Dire Sharks**

CR 9

XP – (included in Kraken)

N Gargantuan animal (aquatic)

Init +6; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft., keen scent; **Perception** +25**DEFENSE****AC** 23, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (+2 Dex, +15 natural, -4 size)**hp** 112 (15d8+45)**Fort** +14, **Ref** +13, **Will** +8**OFFENSE****Speed** swim 60 ft.**Melee** bite +17 (4d10+15/19–20 plus grab)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.**Special Attacks** swallow whole (2d6+15 damage, AC 17, 11 hp)**TACTICS****During Combat** Swim. Bite. Swallow. Repeat.**Morale** Summoned by the Kraken, these monstrous sharks fight to the death for the pleasure of their wicked lord.**STATISTICS****Str** 30, **Dex** 15, **Con** 17, **Int** 1, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +25 (+29 grapple); **CMD** 37**Feats** Bleeding Critical, Critical Focus, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Perception)**Skills** Perception +25, Swim +18

Teuthia is a vain beast and can be taunted into battle. The danger here is that the more you taunt the kraken, the more likely she is to take the battle personally.

If she's defeated, it takes a few months for folks to accept that the kraken's gone. But in 1d4 months, trade picks up and the royal revenue increased by 4,000 gp a month.

Even better, if they find the kraken's cave (located in a sea trench in water two thousand feet deep), they will be able to haul out the various treasures the kraken has collected over the years. The kraken's cave holds a trove almost beyond description. There are 325,000 gp in silver, gold and jewelry – the plunder of a hundred shipwrecks. But there is also a singular treasure of legend. Buried amongst the other loot is in a intact *apparatus of the crab*.

EVENT TWENTY THREE: THE HIDDEN FORTRESS

With Matharyn and the Old Palace under their control, your PCs may have abandoned the Agathium entirely. Yet, it is also possible that they will hold on to Thorn's great Asmodean cathedral in the North and use it as a base of operations. The PCs almost certainly have not one, but two evil organizations that serve them currently. They have the Nine Knots (their covert organization) and their more public servants, Malthus' army. While the military is almost certainly controlled from the Old Palace in Matharyn, the Agathium is the perfect hidden headquarters for the Nine Knots.

If the Tyrant's Mechanism (2-6) is intact, the Agathium is a shelter they can retreat to, shielded from scrying and teleportation. Further, the grave knights likely still guard the place, serving as an elite security force. And with its living quarters, prison cells, summoning chamber, throne room and hidden vault it really is a complete evil headquarters that is move-in ready. The Agathium is inaccessible, sure, but that just adds to its mystique. And the distance cannot pose a serious challenge to 18th+ level PCs. Surely by using teleportation magic (they are attuned to the Mechanism by now, right?) they can overcome this minor challenge. The Agathium adds panache to their villainous exploits. They could order the deaths of thousands of innocents anywhere, but how much better to order them from the baroque Throne of Thorns?

SIDEQUESTS OF THE AGATHIUM

Running the Agathium could be a source of adventure. Here are three possibilities to develop.

1. The Dorning Expedition – Independently of local events, a group of high-level foreign good adventurers raid the Agathium. Their information comes from the Nameless Tyrant era. Their goal – find and destroy the Hadean Signet which they know is key to calling a death titan into our world. This could be a call-back to the dungeon defense days of Book II.

2. Vengeance of the Nameless Tyrant – It was a terrible mistake to bring the demilich back to this place. He communes in secrets with the grave knights and the great mechanism. He is beginning to regrow his body. The Tyrant shall be reborn! And then all of Talingarde will die.

3. The Hidden Level – There is another level beneath the Agathium. Sealed off long ago, you can still access it via a magically concealed door in the back of the Vault of Adrastus (2-20). After all these years, who knows what's down there?

Grumblejack, Exalted Daemonic Cohort of the Ninth Knot CR 18

XP 153,600

Male half-fiend ogre fighter 10

LE Large outsider (giant, native)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24 (+9 armor, +6 natural, –1 size)

hp 157 (14HD; 4d8+10d10+84)

Fort +16, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8; +3 vs. fear

Immune poison; resist acid, cold, electricity and fire 10; DR 10/magic; **SR** 29

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)

Melee large mwk greatsword power attack +27/+22/+17 (3d6+29/17-20) or 2 claws power attack +20 (1d6+15) and bite +22 (1d8+9)

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

Spell-like Abilities (CL 14th)

3/day – *darkness*, *poison*, *unholy aura*

1/day – *blasphemy*, *contagion*, *desecrate*, *unhallow*, *unholy blight*

TACTICS

Before Combat Grumblejack always tries to cast *unholy aura* on himself before any fight.

During Combat Grumblejack's primary purpose is to support his masters in the Ninth Knot in a fight. He does this primarily by flying over next to spellcasters, disrupting their castings and walloping them repeatedly with power attacks from his greatsword. If they happen to be a good spellcaster, he is quick to smite them as well.

Grumblejack is very bright for an ogre, but remains a very straightforward combatant. He is always ready to draw his great sword and show the enemies of the Ninth Knot how deadly it can be.

That said, Grumblejack has gained (thanks to his daemonic heritage) a host of spell options and though he is not a great spellcaster by any means, he revels in unleashing his powers. In fact, if Grumblejack has a weakness, he is over enthusiastic with his abilities and will sometimes over-use them. He loves to use *blasphemy* to slay or paralyze large groups of lower level foes. Against foes without darkvision, he will use *darkness* to gain advantage.

Morale Grumblejack flees when he is reduced to 39 or less hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 10, **Con** 20, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 18

Feats Cleave, Disruptive, Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus (greatsword), Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Power Attack, Spellbreaker, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (great sword)

Skills Climb +18, Fly +10, Intimidate +19, Perception +19, Survival +11

Languages Common, Giant

SQ armor training, bravery, weapon training (heavy blades +3, close +2, axe +1)

Gear large masterwork greatsword, large full plate

Note: Grumblejack's gear is dependent upon the PCs. Have they provided him with better equipment than just his greatsword and armor? If so, adjust his stats appropriately.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, as a swift action, the half-fiend can smite good as the smite evil ability of a paladin of the same level as the half-fiend's Hit Dice (+1 to hit, +14 to damage), except affecting a good target. The smite persists until target is dead or the half-fiend rests.

EVENT TWENTY FOUR: GRUMBLE-JACK'S DREAM
(BONUS ENCOUNTER)

Have the PCs managed to keep their first servant along with them the entire campaign? Does the same ogre they freed in Branderscar yet travel with them? If so, here is one more special encounter that involves the ogre. If Grumblejack is dead, it could as easily be done by another monstrous companion or ally as well. It could be Raiju the Ogre Mage (see book III) or a rejuvenated Sakkarot Fire-Axe. This event can happen at any time during our villain's reign before Event Thirty: Shadow in the North (see below).

Grumblejack is not just an ogre, he is an ogre possessing daemonic blood. Whether the ogre realizes it or not, there are powerful planar forces moving in the world. His connection to worlds beyond means that one night he experiences a startling and vivid dream. The next day he will find his masters and tell them this:

"Last night, Grumblejack had a dream. I saw a black lake and something came out of the lake. Something ... wrong. Something very wrong and very old. Grumblejack tried to fly away, but it grabbed me and pulled me into the water. As I was being pulled down I saw that there was something at the bottom of the lake. Something buried in the muck and slime. There was writing on it, but I could not read it. It looked like little squiggles. I grabbed for anything and got a hold of a shard of black glass. I cut free of the thing that tried to drown and flapped my wings pushing upwards. It reached for me, trying to drag me down. But I flew upwards, breaking the surface of the lake, gasping for air..."

He pauses deep in contemplation. If someone asks him what next, he shrugs.

"Then Grumblejack wake up."

A DC 15 Sense Motive skill check will reveal that the dream has shaken the usually exuberant ogre. But what really scared Grumblejack was this. When he awoke, he was wet. Not just sweaty, but actually wet like he had been swimming. If anyone questions him about this, he will say only, "Maybe not just a dream..."

Though Grumblejack does not realize it, he has in fact connected very tenuously with the realm of the twin horrors Ygg and Yggotha who even now are beginning to awaken and stir in the Savage North (again see Event Thirty for more details). His dream, though easy to dismiss, actually gives a vital clue about something hidden in the cave of Ygg and Yggotha, the tablets beneath the underground lake. If the PCs are clever they can use this ogre's words to find a powerful and ancient artifact.



EVENT TWENTY FIVE: A CITY WITHOUT LOYALTY

This is the first of seven crises of leadership that the new regime must face. These events differ from the ones above that they happen at a definite time during the three year span of the regime. If they are not dealt with, disaster may ensue!

Duke Hadrian of Ghaster (N male human aristocrat 5/rogue 6) still rules the city of Ghastenhall (see the Gazetteer in Book II) and has no interest in relinquishing his power. As soon as the PCs take power, he will send the new king both a gift and an invitation to visit his court.

The gift is an ornate wooden box made of breathtakingly beautiful varnished baobab wood harvested from the Caer Bryr. The box stands almost five tall, three feet wide and three feet deep. It has no visible hinges or devices but is everywhere covered by carvings of lords and ladies dancing. On one side is written a poem:

*I have no legs to dance
I have no lungs to breathe
I have no life to lose or thrive
And yet I do all three.*

The answer to this riddle is “fire” or “flame”. If that word is spoken within earshot of the wooden box, then the box opens and alights with fire, burning brightly (this is actually a *programmed illusion*). And while it burns for three minutes, a beautiful little fey of living flame emerges from the conflagration, dances wildly about while singing various beautiful tunes in Old Iraen.

The fey is also an illusion and cannot touch nor burn anything. The “fey” knows about a dozen songs, some wild, some sad and some simply breathtaking in their beauty. It will emerge only three times per day. *The Fire Chest* (as this magic item is known) is little more than a toy and yet it would easily fetch 12,000 gp for its grandeur and artistry.

The *Fire Chest* is delivered by servants of the Duke along with a proclamation. “Hail, King/Queen [name]! Your servant the Duke Hadrian of Ghaster regrets his absence and humbly invites you to visit his court in the hour of his choosing.”

Duke Hadrian hopes this lavish and magical gift will intrigue the new ruler enough to visit on friendly terms. What Hadrian has no interest in doing his leaving his fortress. The Duke has been busy preparing for himself a safe house. He has no interest in leaving it now. This is the crux of the crisis. The Duke will disobey the king’s orders if he believes it will get him killed. A disobedient noble of such stature challenges the very authority of the king.

The Duke does not want to disobey. He prefers the semblance of obedience while keeping his independence. For example, when Markadian V asked for aid, the duke sent aid. He sent every soldier he knew was more loyal to Talingarde or Mitra than himself. He retained the lion’s share of his own personal guard and has been hiring politically unattached mercenaries ever since. Duke Hadrian himself currently sits at the center of a grand fortress (newly renovated) with 5,000 troops either in the fortress or with a day’s travel of it. He has used *forbiddance* (aligned to neutrality) and a permanent *mage’s private sanctum* to ward his fortress against intrusion or attack.

Why all the paranoia?

A few years ago, there were three nobles on this island of rank enough to command a major city: himself, Duke Martin of Daveryn and King Markadian V. Of those three, two are dead. Duke Hadrian is eager not to complete the set. And so until the war between Bellinda and the new regime is finished, he is fortifying his position and staying neutral. Eighty years ago, Hadrian’s grandfather took a side in a civil war. The results were disastrous for the city and his family. He will not repeat the mistake.

Maintaining this level of security is slowly bankrupting him, but fortunately he had the foresight to build up a large war chest over the last few years (since the Watch Wall was broken). He is willing to spend every penny to stay in power and to stay alive.

Duke Hadrian would like to meet with the new king, and make it plain that he is no threat. But he is not about to stick his head into the noose. That means he will not go to Matharyn. Emissaries will take his place. If pressed the emissaries will cough and mutter something about the Duke’s health and that he is unable to travel.

The Duke doesn’t shirk his responsibilities lightly and tries to act the king’s loyal servant. The Duke pays his taxes. Ghastenhall’s trade accounts for a fair percentage of the money coming into royal coffers every month.

If the Church of Mitra is declared illegal, the Duke will seize the Cathedral and all the churches in his city in the name of the king and carefully keep them intact and under guard. They are empty, sealed up but unspoiled. And he seems to be completely inept at catching priests. Why is he doing this? Because if Bellinda comes back and defeats the usurpers, he doesn’t want anyone to be able to say “the Duke of Ghastenhall sacked a church of Mitra.”

If the PCs declare the worship of Asmodeus the new state religion, he immediately funds a small temple. He never visits or steps foot in it. That would mean leaving his fortress. But a temple is built.

He will do almost everything the new regime asks, except leave his fortress, surrender power, disarm, attack Bellinda or harm the city of his birth. How the new regime takes Duke Hadrian's actions is up to the PCs. There are several ways they could handle the situation: ignore the duke, besiege Ghastenhall, assassination, replacement, demand a public show of obedience or bribery. Let's consider each in turn.

IGNORE THE DUKE

This is exactly what the Duke wants – to be ignored until the war is over. He wants Ghastenhall left out of the ongoing national disaster that has played out ever since the Watch Wall failed. If the PCs give him the opportunity to remain out of sight, the duke takes it. For the three years, Duke Hadrian is not seen publicly. His refusal to visit Matharyn costs the regime legitimacy and his neutrality gives the resistance a comparatively safe city to plot and organize. Assess a -2 penalty to Might.

BESIEGE GHASTENHALL

Attacking the second largest city in the nation is a costly and likely disastrous undertaking. Attacking Ghastenhall costs the regime the tax revenues from the city as merchants avoid the siege. Income drops by 5000 gp. Income remains lowered for 2d6 months after the siege ends as merchants are slow to return to a dangerous port. Further, attacking Ghastenhall outrages the entire kingdom (not to mention the almost ten percent of the population who lives there). The PCs gain thousands of new enemies who believe them mad dogs. Might -5.

There is also the very real possibility that for all their trouble, they might lose. Duke Hadrian has been hiring men for years in preparation for this day. His castle is in good condition and well supplied. He has a number of “spiritual advisors” stationed in his castle (i.e. clerics capable of casting *create food and water*) who can help his food supply last. 5,000 troops await his beck and call to defend the fortress. Wizards from the college rally to the Duke as do a sizeable contingent of dwarves. Further, any siege is going to have to deal with the disgruntled people of Ghastenhall themselves who fully support their duke.

The PCs are likely to realize how foolish the attack would be. A knowledge (local) DC 20 would reveal the duke's many strengths. Far better to deal with the man either through diplomacy or somehow indirectly. The PCs could try anyways. If so, use the war resolution table in Event Sixteen except assess a -10 penalty and the presence of heavy horse adds no special bonus.

ASSASSINATE THE DUKE

This is what Hadrian expects. Direct attack surprises him. But assassination? This is how the king died.

So, can the PCs assassinate him? With *forbiddance* in place keeping everyone good or evil out of his fortress, it will not be easy. The best opportunity to assassinate him would be at a private meeting between the duke and the king. The duke is a formidable political figure, but in a fight against 18th level PCs, he is outmatched. Of course, the assassins would find themselves surrounded by 5,000 mercenaries who are not thrilled to find their meal ticket slain. Once word of the duke's death become public, mercenaries sack the palace and desert. The PCs receive no military aid and none of the duke's cash. But they do cement their reputation as ruthless. Might +1.

REPLACE THE DUKE

This is without a doubt the best solution to this crisis. After assassinating the duke, the PCs could replace him with a doppelganger or even one of their own using disguise magic. This need not be a long-term deception. After all the duke has been avoiding public appearances as of late. A few strategic proclamations would be enough to secure their power. Currently the duke's successor is his nephew Count Hector of Ghaster, a bored teenager being warehoused against his will in another wing of the duke's castle. Another successor could be named or Count Hector could easily be mentally controlled.

However the PCs accomplish the deed, they gain access to his mercenary army (Might +5) and sizeable warchest (300,000 gp in cash). They could even keep his collection of fine liquor, mistresses and man servants (the duke is bisexual) housed in his private quarters.

DEMAND A PUBLIC SHOW OF OBEDIENCE

If the new regime sends word to Duke Hadrian that they will allow him his neutrality if he will make a public show of submission, the Duke happily complies. He sends an emissary magically disguised to Matharyn and the “the duke” publicly bows and pledges his allegiance to the regime. Privately in his fortress, the true duke keeps dated letters where he condemns “the farce in Matharyn”. He will use these as proof should the Darrians return that he kept the faith. The PCs gain legitimacy but Ghastenhall remains safe for the resistance. Might +0.

BRIBE THE DUKE

Our villains might try to lure the Duke into their service using bribery. This is more difficult than it sounds. The duke will not trade his safety for mere money or a few paltry titles. There is only one thing that might lure the duke to back them. If he were publically named heir to the throne, he would back the regime and send his half his army to attack Bellinda. Might +3.

Story Award: The Duke's public support is worth a CR 18 reward (153,600). Military support is CR 20 (307,200).

EVENT TWENTY SIX:

COURT OF THE TWO QUEENS (13 MONTHS)

Our villains may not realize this, but by helping Hell gain so solid a foothold on this island, they have made more enemies than just celestials. For centuries, the countless lords of the abyss have been trying to gain a foothold upon this world. They have never succeeded. But in Talingarde, one of them sees an opportunity.

Thus is born the second crisis of rulership. A band of demonic assassins called "The Court of the Two Queens" is hired and sent to the prime material plane to slay our villains so that hell's influence will be curtailed and so that the kingdom of Talingarde, leaderless, will descend into utter chaos.

Glabrezu Slaves of the Two Queens (4)**CR 13****XP 25,600 each (102,400 XP total)**

CE Huge outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Perception +26**DEFENSE**

AC 28, touch 8, flat-footed 28 (+20 natural, -2 size)

hp 186 (12d10+120)

Fort +18, Ref +4, Will +11

DR 10/good; **Immune** electricity, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; SR 24**OFFENSE**

Speed 40 ft.

Melee 2 pincers +20 (2d8+10/19-20), 2 claws +20 (1d6+10), bite +20 (1d8+10)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Special Attacks** rend (2 pincers, 2d8+15)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 14th)**Constant**—*true seeing***At will**—*chaos hammer* (DC 19), *confusion* (DC 19), *dispel magic*, *mirror image*, *reverse gravity* (DC 22), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *veil* (self only), *unholy blight***1/day**—*power word stun***TACTICS**

Before Combat The glabrezu use *veil* to disguise themselves and get into position to attack the Queens' targets. While disguised, they will cast *mirror image*.

During Combat These demons have been ordered to charge into melee and engage the foe as quickly as possible. Since enemies as powerful as the PCs are likely to save against their attacks, instead their focus is doing as much damage as possible and keeping any spellcasters off balance.

Note: Glabrezu can usually summon other demons and grant wishes to mortals. These bound glabrezu are unable to use either of these powers.

Morale Bound to the Queens' will, these demons fight until to the death or until their mistresses flee the battle.

STATISTICS

Str 31, Dex 11, Con 31, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 20

Base Atk +12; CMB +24; CMD 34

Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (pincer), Persuasive, Power Attack, Vital Strike**Skills** Bluff +28, Diplomacy +22, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (local) +18, Perception +26, Sense Motive +18, Stealth +7, Use Magic Device +17; Racial Modifiers +8 Bluff, +8 Perception**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic, telepathy 100 ft.**S'zara and Iggerath, the Two Queens****CR 17****XP 102,400 each (204,800 XP total)**

CE Large outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Perception +31**Aura** *unholy aura* (DC 25)**DEFENSE**

AC 32, touch 17, flat-footed 28 (+4 deflection, +4 Dex, +15 natural, -1 size)

hp 264 (16d10+176)

Fort +25, Ref +18, Will +13

DR 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** electricity and poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; SR 28**OFFENSE**

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 longswords +24/+19/+14/+9 (2d6+8/17-20), 5 +1 longswords +24 (2d6+4/17-20), tail slap +17 (2d6+3 plus grab) or 6 slams +22 (1d8+7), tail slap +17 (2d6+3 plus grab)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** constrict (tail slap, 2d6+10 plus crushing coils), infuse weapon, multiweapon mastery**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th)**Constant**—*true seeing*, *unholy aura* (DC 25)**At will**—*greater scrying* (slaves only), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *project image* (DC 24), *telekinesis* (DC 22)**3/day**—*blade barrier* (DC 23), *fly***1/day**—*summon* (level 5, 1 marilith 20%, 1 nalfeshnee at 35%, or 1d4 hezrous at 60%)**TACTICS**

Before Combat If the Two Queens have the time, they will cast *fly* on themselves before the battle begins. If they fight the PCs in the throne they will use *project image* to infiltrate the balcony disguised as servants and cast *blade barrier* to block the two exits. They then deliver the message from their employer and fly to the attack.

During Combat The Two Queen favor one style of combat. They love to fly into melee and slice their opponents apart with a storm of flashing blades. Dissecting the living is their greatest joy. One ability they are loathe to use is *summon*. Summon means they would owe the demon who comes to their aid favors.

Morale The Two Queens are hired assassins. While dedicated to destroying their targets, they do not want to be destroyed. So at 66 hp or less (25%), they will flee the battle using teleportation.

STATISTICS

Str 25, Dex 19, Con 32, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 25

Base Atk +16; CMB +24 (+28 grapple); CMD 42 (can't be tripped)

Feats Bleeding Critical, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Disarm, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)**Skills** Acrobatics +23, Bluff +26, Diplomacy +26, Fly +18, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (engineering) +20, Perception +31, Sense Motive +23, Stealth +19, Use Magic Device +26; Racial Modifiers +8 Perception**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft.**Gear** 5 +1 *longswords*; 27,500 gp in golden jewelry adorned with otherworldly jewels**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Crushing Coils (Ex) A creature that takes damage from a marilith's constrict attack must succeed on a DC 25 Fortitude save or lose consciousness for 1d8 rounds. The save DC is Strength-based.

Infuse Weapon (Su) Any weapon a marilith wields gains a +1 enhancement bonus to attack and damage, and strikes as if it were a chaotic and evil cold iron weapon (in addition to retaining the qualities of its actual composition).

Multiweapon Mastery (Ex) A marilith never takes penalties to her attack roll when fighting with multiple weapons

S'zara and Iggerath are only too eager to fulfill the whims of their nameless masters. And so they have come to this world.

These are not subtle agents of chaos, who infiltrate the populace and slowly learn about their targets. No, the Two Queens and their slaves are pure agents of destruction. They have been given the location of the Throne Room of the Old Palace. One of the Glabrezu slaves will use their veil to conceal themselves in the upper gallery of the Throne Room and the Queens will scry upon their slave, watching it until finally their quarry is in the Throne Room.

Then, the entire cadre will arrive in one dramatic flourish. The Glabrezu drops his illusion moments before they appear.

"Bow, mortals! Beg for mercy! For the Court of the Two Queens has come!"

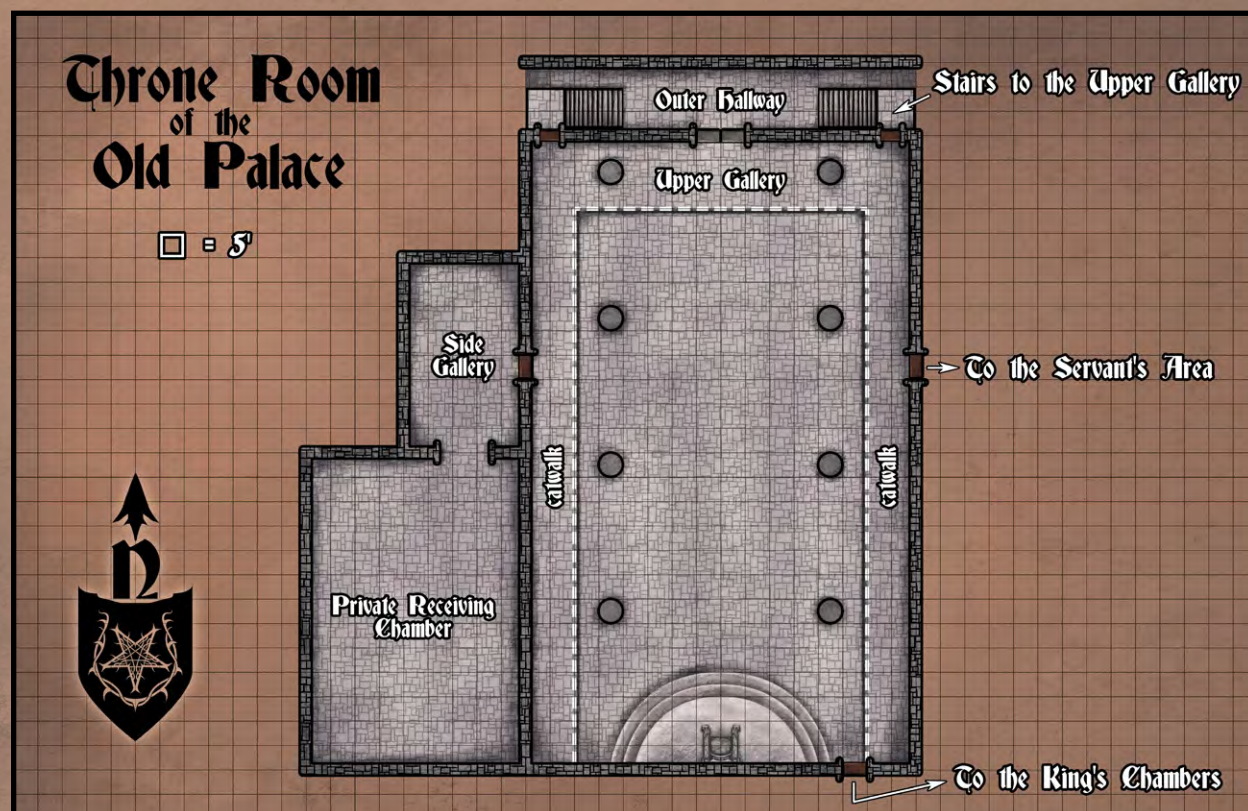
The two marilith and the other three glabrezu arrive together in the center of the Throne room. Any NPC (save Grumblejack or cohorts) who happens to be in the throne room screams in terror and flees before these otherworldly horrors. The Two Queens, coiling around each other, make a loud proclamation in unison with a voice like wild thunder.

"So the Devil God and his running dog bitch Naburus want a mortal realm of their own do they? And you... you must be their mortal dupes. If this realm is worth stealing, maybe we should take it for our own. Slaves! Skin these wretched mortals alive. And bring me that crown. The Two Queens will soon be the only law in this cursed land."

And with that, battle begins. For all of their bluster and destructive power, this is probably the simplest of the seven crises. The Two Queens may be a difficult fight, but once it is complete, that will be the end of their threat. If the PCs defeat the demons, the lords they serve will turn their eyes to other worlds and other more urgent atrocities. Talingarde was never that important to the demons of the Abyss. They just didn't want to give it to Asmodeus without at least one fight.

If the PCs consult Naburus about the attack, the devil is dismissive. *"The demon lords excel at authoring a single moment of chaos and destruction, but they have no patience for the long game. You should be honored. For them to send assassins as great as the Two Queens means they truly thought you worthy of destruction."*

Fear not, mortals. I suspect you will see little more of demons. If they truly cared about this realm they would entered the game long ago. Now it is too late. Talingarde bows to Asmodeus. Thus shall it ever be.





EVENT TWENTY SEVEN: OUR LAST TEARS (13 MONTHS)

The king receives a messenger:

The township of Barrington is being afflicted by the Tears of Achlys. Dozens are already dead. Oh great and powerful monarch, please send aid to your people!

Mayor Byron Tynsedale

The note does not lie. The township of Barrington, famed for its longbowmen (DC 20 Knowledge [local]) is suffering from the last outbreak of the dreaded Tears of Achlys. In fact, though, a small population of the Tears (remember that it is vaguely intelligent) was clever enough to hide infecting only wild animals, awaiting the perfect time to return and begin the infection once more.

That time is now. With the priests of Mitra either dead or in hiding, the plague descends on Talingarde once more. The cure that Antharia concocted has already left this plane. That leaves our villains to save the population.

The PCs could simply quarantine Barrington. That will contain the disease and allow it to die out. Of course that will also turn Barrington into a ghost town. Doing this has two effects: it garners anger against the regime but also wipes out one of the greatest sources of longbowmen for The Army of the White Unicorn. These two effects cancel each other out and so, no Might is lost for letting Barrington waste away under a callous quarantine.

A better solution is to gather spellcasters who can cast *remove disease* twenty times a day. With twenty castings for a two weeks, all active cases will either die out or be cured. The disease will be gone. Vetra-Kali's great masterpiece, at last, is purged from this world. Saving the village earns the grudging respect of the bowmen. When the White Unicorn calls, fewer answer. Might +1.

If the PCs bring less than that number of castings, for every one less there is a 5% chance that the disease breaks out of Barrington and flares up again island wide. So, if the PCs can only cast 10 *remove diseases* a day, they face a 50% chance of reinfection. The disease again stalks Talingarde. It kills thousands including mercenaries and shakes confidence in the regime. Might -3.

Story Award: Award a CR 19 (204,800 XP) reward for destroying the Tears once and for all.

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.

EVENT TWENTY EIGHT: CHILDREN'S CRUSADE (17 MONTHS)

More than a year and a half into their reign, our villains receive word that children by their thousands are flocking to the Vale of Valtaerna and praying ceaselessly for Mitra to return to Talingarde. Rumor has it they are being led by a common shepherd boy named Stephan.

It is easy enough to send soldiers to Valtaerna and slaughter the children. However, doing this will earn the undying enmity of the people of Talingarde toward the regime. The king will scarcely be able to travel through a town in Talingarde without clods of feces being thrown at him and distant cries of "killer of children!" When the Army of the White Unicorn arrives, they will be joined by massive angry mobs who bear as their unit standard a broken shepherd's crook. Might -3.

Another danger is that if they are not stopped, the children may actually summon forth a host of angels. A Knowledge (religion) skill check will reveal:

DC 15: Mitran scriptures are full of these acts of simple humility being rewarded.

DC 25: You have already seen evidence that Mitra rewards such simple acts of faith. The great seal in the Horn of Abaddon for example was primarily made not by powerful spellcasters but by faith.

DC 35: Mitra has a great servant known as Cassiel who is known as the protector of children. There is a real danger that Cassiel might manifest in Valtaerna.

In fact, if the PCs allow this great ritual to continue for seven months, at the end the prayers of the children will seem to take solid form and a flock of almost a thousand (in fact 777) cassissian angels will come to Talingarde. This host of lesser angels will circle the Vale and then change into a flock of doves. All through out Talingarde these doves will do small acts of kindness and whisper that Mitra has not forsaken them. When the Battle of Tamberlyn happens, the PCs will have to deal with a host of lesser angels fighting alongside Bellinda. Might -3.

The best solution to this problem is to go to the Vale and use an illusion to deceive the children into thinking they have already completed the ritual and they should disperse. The children gather around a great central bonfire. A *major image* of an angel arising from the fire would convince these young, naive followers of Mitra, for example. Asmodeus approves of this use of trickery.

Story Award: Award a CR 19 (204,800 XP) reward for stopping the crusade without resorting to slaughter.

EVENT TWENTY NINE: WICKED QUEEN (22 MONTHS)

No one in Talingarde expects the arrival of Lady Jezerael Della Torre. But within a matter of days, she will be introduced to the king. She hales from a distant land on the mainland known as Verochanza. It is land known for its wicked noble houses, Byzantine politics and open worship of Asmodeus.

The Lady Jezerael is a regal beauty almost beyond description. She is a Helen, a face that could easily launch a thousand ships. She is lithe and yet curved exactly where she should be. The aroma of scented wood and jasmine follows her wherever she goes. Her long tresses are raven dark. Her eyes are haunted green. And her smile could easily start a war. She is the product of the Verochanzian high courts – witty, fascinating, charming and utterly ruthless. Instantly, at whatever function she attends, she lets it be known how enamored she is to the king.

The next day after such a function, a messenger arrives. The messenger carries a sealed letter to the king that smells faintly of jasmine. The Letter reads:

Your Most August Majesty,

I know that it is most inappropriate for a lady of the court to contact your person, but I could not contain what I felt last night. It was a spark within my heart and it refuses to die. I felt something that goes beyond mere words but it is my sincerest wish that you felt it too.

You can reach me at the Rosebauer Estate within the Golden Bow, which I have rented for a time during my stay in your fair land. I hope that you find reason to call.

*Yours truly,
Jezerael Della Torre
Countess Montesano, etc.*

The Lady Jezerael is indeed interested in a romance with the king and hopefully, in time, becoming his wife. She came here to take a look at this (likely single) monarch and assess if he was indeed suitable. If the king, by chance, isn't single that does not matter either. It just means she has one more obstacle to being queen. If there is such an obstacle, she merely has one of her agents plant evidence of infidelity. Back in Verochanza, infidelity usually ends in the headman's block and she hopes that is true here. Regardless, she has much to offer if the king will but accept and reciprocate her interest. The Lady Jezerael comes from a powerful and well connected family – the House Della Torre. Her father, the Duke of Della Torre, is one of the richest, most powerful men in all the Nine Kingdoms.

Lady Jezerael can offer a personal bodyguard of two thousand mercenaries (Might +2); a dowry of 50,000 gp and trade contracts that will add 2,000 gp a month to royal income. In exchange for this, she expects that the king will execute his current wife (she has no interest in a divorce that may leave a rival) and marry her. This is a very mechanical way of expressing the deal. Lady Jezerael expresses it as an offer of love and alliance and does her seductive best to intrigue the king. What she will not do is actually have relations until the deal is sealed.

Harming Lady Jezerael is foolish. Her father blames the king for any misfortune that befalls his beloved daughter (even if it isn't his fault). As a result when the Army of the White Unicorn lands, they travel with 3,000 mercenary Verochanzian soldiers (Might -3).

If the king marries Lady Jezerael, she proves a capable wife and advisor. But there is danger here. Lady Jezerael wants Talingarde to be a province of Verochanza. She will maneuver for ever closer alliance. She will see that her retainers receive choice appointments. In short, she tries to take over. Within a year of being married, she delivers a son. And then the king's life is in danger. If he were dead, her son would become king and she would be regent.

Story Award: Award a CR 19 (204,800 XP) reward for making an alliance with Lady Jezerael.

Lady Jezerael Della Torre, Countess of Montesano CR 14

XP 25,600

Female human aristocrat 15

LE Medium humanoid

Init +11; Senses Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex)

hp 67 (15d8)

Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +17

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +12/+7 (1d4/19–20)

Ranged mwk dagger +14 (1d4/19–20)

TACTICS

During Combat Jezerael has no taste for melee and never initiates.

If forced to fight, she flees. If cornered, she negotiates. Only if denied any choice does she draw her dagger.

Morale If reduced to 33 hit points, she surrenders.

Note: If more appropriate that Jezerael be male, then rename him Lord Jezeran Della Torre.

STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 20, Cha 25

Base Atk +11; CMB +10; CMD 24

Feats Alertness, Defensive Combat Training, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Noble Scion (Scion of War), Persuasive, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Skills Bluff +21, Diplomacy +32, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (religion) +5, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (nobility) +19, Linguistics +7, Perception +25, Perform (dance) +13, Perform (harp) +13, Perform (sing) +13, Ride +7, Sense Motive +33

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Native Tongue

Gear masterwork dagger, brooch of shielding, cloak of resistance +3, figurine of wondrous power (silver raven), headband of mental prowess +4 (Wis, Cha), noble finery and jewelry worth 10,000 gp, signet ring of Montesano

EVENT THIRTY:

SHADOW IN THE NORTH (29 MONTHS)

The Savage North once held many secrets. But with the likely destruction of Nythoggr, the conquest of the Agathium (both in Book V), the sack of the hidden city of the ice elves (Event Sixteen) and an alliance with Queen Ellisif of the frost giants, it must seem much less mysterious. Still it has one terrible revelation yet to be revealed.

The bugbears call the mountain Uzat Angor, which in old goblin means Two Horns. Two Horns is a strange peak, bent and bifurcated. It rises high enough that the ice never leaves. Last week, the mountain erupted. But it did not spew forth lava. Instead down the slopes of Two Horns came liquid shadow. Everything this umbral flow touched, withered and died.

This is an incredibly remote portion of the North. No one lives here so the first individuals to see this strange event were likely a few ragged bugbear survivors. Curious, they investigated and were quickly consumed by the shadow wave. The next individuals who saw it were the frost giants (assuming they have not been decimated and scattered). One of their scouts approached too close as well and was also consumed by the shadow. But one escaped and fled to Hrimholl to speak of what he had seen.

If the PCs ally with Queen Ellisif of the Frost Giants then the dispatch comes from her. If not, then it comes from a borderlands patrol. And if they have not conquered the north, it likely comes from terrified ice elven rangers unsure who else can aid them.

The shadow moves and expands. It grows outward at a the rate of about a mile a day, ever expanding in area. Nothing lives that touches the shadow. If it is not stopped, all Talingarde will be consumed. Everyone who has seen it is terrified of what they have seen (Sense Motive DC 15) but is unable to fully express their fear.

If the PCs investigate, they discover the reports are not lies. Uzat Angor bleeds a dull black liquid from its lower caverns. This liquid shadow spreads ever farther out from Two Horns. And where it passes nothing survives. Something within that mountain threatens the entire island. Our villains have done a very thorough job chasing away every do-gooder from their island. So, they must rescue Talingarde. One of the wages of sin, it seems, is the necessity to sometimes play hero.

The reports about the expansion are not inaccurate. Every day the zone of death spreads about a mile. That means in about three months it will start to eat the northern frontier of the borderlands. In a half year it will creep into the heartland. In a year it will cover the entire island and consume Matharyn. Something must be done!

Investigating the shadowstuff proves dangerous. It does not detect as magic or as evil or as anything. In fact, it appears to be only liquid nullification. Touching it is lethal (see below). Even getting within a pace of it causes it to strike. It craves life. Little tendrils leap and scurry at its edge eager to grasp anything alive. Nothing harms it. Steel, fire, ice, lightning, acid, sonic, anything...it disperses for perhaps a second but then the shadow reforms and continues its hungry search. What is interesting is that it does not effect undead or constructs.

The mountain cannot be approached on foot, but by air, its heights can be reached. Aerial surveillance or spying reveals that the base of the mountain bleeds a torrent of the deadly shadowstuff. Higher up appears to be clear and a landing is possible. There are high caverns choked with what appears to be black ice.

The high caves are a maze. Their walls are coated with black ice – shadowstuff frozen in solid form. The frozen shadowstuff does not grow or leap, but direct contact is still lethal. To traverse the maze means finding a way to travel without touching its curving ice-coated walls. The caverns are wide. Even a huge creature could fly through without touching the walls (DC 15 Fly check). Finding the center requires either a day of trial and error searching or a DC 12 Intelligence check.

At the center of the maze is a cavern, the dwelling of two shoggoths. These powerful idiot monstrosities (who are immune to the shadowstuff) did not create this affliction. They are the children of it. Day and night they circle the pool screaming praises to it, pausing only occasionally to engage in loathsome incestuous coupling. They attack anything that enters their cavern. Uzat Angor was once a factory of the elder things. These long extinct creatures created life here in these eldritch caverns. But now their machinery has malfunctioned and threatens all life.

Within the cave is the source – a vast pool of bubbling anti-life. In its center, thirty feet below the black deadly pool are nine tablets arranged in a precise geometric order. To access the tablets, either an undead or a construct must enter the pool. Removing all nine of the tablets breaks the machine of the elder things and the shadow stuff dissipates into harmless mist. Our villains have saved Talingarde. But will anyone be grateful?

Touch of the Shadowstuff

CR 20

XP 307,200

EFFECTS

Any creature who directly touches the shadowstuff is attacked by a spell effect (heightened *destruction*, 190 damage, DC 23 Fortitude save reduces damage to 10d6). This attack repeats every round as long as contact persists. Anything living getting within five feet of the shadow stuff causes it to leap five feet (DC 19 Reflex save to avoid). If that save is failed, contact occurs. Undead and golems are unaffected by the shadowstuff.

Ygg and Yggotha, Sibling Spawn of the Primal Foulness CR 19

XP 204,800 each (409,600 XP total)

Male and female (?) unique shoggoths

CN Huge ooze (aquatic)

Init +11; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent, tremorsense 60 ft.; **Perception** +33

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 15, flat-footed 26 (+7 Dex, +18 natural, -2 size)

hp 333 (23d8+230); fast healing 10

Fort +19, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15

DR 10/—; **Immune** blindness, charm effects, cold, deafness, ooze traits, sonic; **Resist** acid 20, electricity 20, fire 20; **SR** 30

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

Melee 4 slams +30 (3d6+15/19–20 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (3d6+15), maddening cacophony, engulf (4d6+22 bludgeoning damage plus 8d6 acid damage, AC 19, hp 33), trample (4d8+15, DC 36)

TACTICS

During Combat The shoggoths seek to destroy any living thing that invades their lair. Even if someone can speak Aklo and manages to engage the beasts in conversation, all that they say (amidst the maddening babble) in a whispered voice is “die now...”

The Siblings always rush into combat, eager to rampage and feed. They use their cacophony creating a weird synchronized harmonic chorus of madness. They try to slam and consume any invaders they can reach.

What they will not do is leave their lair. Further, anyone who slays their beloved sibling is especially despised and attack preferentially.

Morale The twin spawn will fight to the death to defend their lair and the result of their incestuous union.

STATISTICS

Str 40, **Dex** 24, **Con** 31, **Int** 5, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +34 (+39 grapple); **CMD** 51 (cannot be tripped)

Feats Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Staggering Critical

Skills Climb +23, **Perception** +33, **Swim** +23; **Racial Modifiers** +4 **Perception**

Languages Aklo

SQ amphibious

SPECIAL ABILITIES

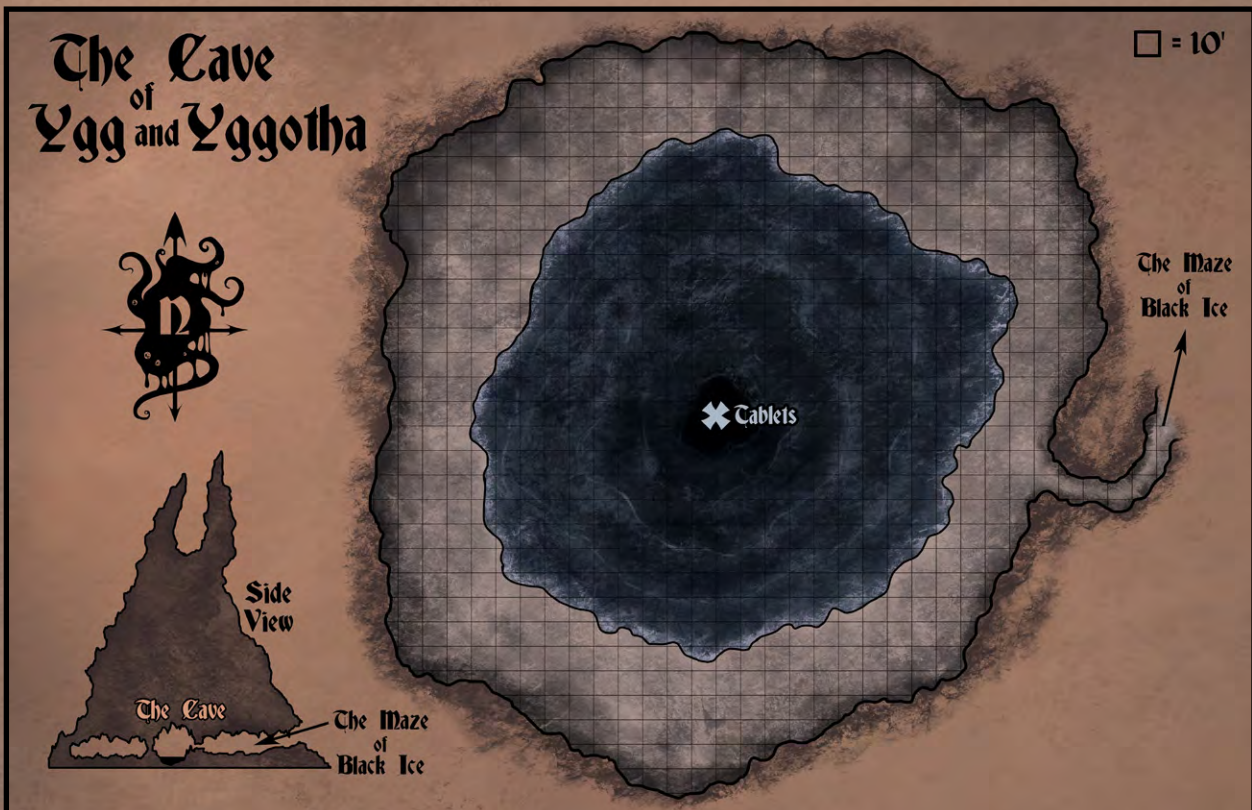
All-Around Vision (Ex) A shoggoth’s many sense organs grant a +4 racial bonus on **Perception** and immunity to flanking.

Maddening Cacophony (Su) As a free action, a shoggoth can give voice to sounds and words sane life was not meant to hear. All creatures in a 60-foot radius must make a DC 22 **Will** save or be confused for 1d6 rounds. Each round a creature is affected it takes 1d6 points of **Wisdom** damage.

A creature that saves cannot be affected by either Ygg or Yggotha’s maddening cacophony for 24 hours. This is a sonic mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Engulf (Ex) To use this ability, the shoggoth must begin its turn grappling a creature or must trample. A shoggoth may attempt to engulf as many creatures as it grapples or tramples in a round. This ability otherwise functions as swallow whole, save that a creature that cuts is way out of a shoggoth leaves no hole in the protoplasmic creature’s body.

Twin Terrors (Ex) Ygg and Yggotha share a bond that defies the laws of our world. Roll only once for initiative for both creatures. They always act together. At the end of their turns total up both Ygg and Yggotha’s total hit points and divide the total evenly amongst them. Fast healing still happens individually.





Act Two: Tyrants of Halingarde

INVESTIGATING THE TABLETS

The tablets are heavy slabs of polished green material covered in strange writing each weighing almost a quarter ton (500 lbs.). They are heavy as rock, but are so smooth, polished and translucent, they appear almost as if they if they made of glass or perhaps jade. Whatever they are made of, it is unearthly and unlike anything seen before. It is also appears completely unbreakable.

Story Award: Award a CR 20 (307,200 XP) reward for saving Talingarde from the deluge of shadowstuff. This is awarded in addition to the experience gained by defeating the shoggoth and surviving the deadly black ice.

Tablets of the Black Pool

Slot none; **Aura** overwhelming conjuration; **CL** 20th; **Weight** 4,500 lbs. (9 500 lbs tablets)

DESCRIPTION

These bizarre tablets are of inestimable antiquity and strange construction. They are rectangular in shape, approx. 3.65 ft on one side and 5.87 ft on the other. They are covered in rows upon rows of strange dot patterns that seem that they must be some strange form of writing.

Deciphering the writing is no easy task. The strange dot patterns upon the stone give little clue to their meaning. Still, someone with an almost miraculous gift for language could manage it (DC 40 Linguistics skill check). Other than that, it will take either a *miracle* or a *wish* to translate these tablets.

Once translated, these tablets give themselves no title. They reveal the inhuman doings of the Elder Things and reveal small hints of their extraterrestrial technomagical super science. With a lifetime of study, a wizard or alchemist could go dramatically mad pondering the secrets of these tablets. But they do have a more immediate use.

If they are translated and then a DC 40 Knowledge (arcane) skill check is succeeded, then the reader can learn how to call up some failed elder thing experiments banished to a plane of nightmares. These tablets describe how to summon and control a strike force of 111 gugs.

The ritual requires correctly arranging the tablets in a precise and assymetric stack and then intoning a repeated gibberish prayer. This will summon the strike force and force them to serve the summoner for one full day. If fielded at the Battle of Tamberlyn, this grants the PCs a +4 bonus to their Might.

The tablets then nebulously speak of spacially rearranging themselves after the ritual is complete. What this means is that the tablets disperse to another unknown location upon another plane, likely never to be seen again. It is possible to stop this rearrangement only be using a *wish* or *miracle* before the ritual is cast. Otherwise the tablets will be lost.

There are no doubt other uses for the tablets that could be called upon by discovering other arrangements. Fundamentally, they appear to be conjuration nexuses capable of opening gates to many different strange and esoteric planes of reality and controlling what passes through them. However, using them is dangerous in the extreme and accidents such as the black deluge that was unleashed seem almost inevitable.

DESTRUCTION

These tablets can only be destroyed by taking them to a strange place at the bottom of the world known as The Carven Rim and casting them into the utter abyss that lies beyond.

WHAT ABOUT THE MINIONS?

Here are twenty three sample wicked deeds minions could be doing during the PC's three year reign:

1. Build Monuments to your Glory

Everyone should know of your glory! You erect statues, murals and portraits. You can execute this action once for each city and region. (Matharyn, Ghastenhall, Daveryn [if rebuilt], Heartlands [north and south], Royal Holdings and Borderlands [if reconquered]). If you manage to cover the entire kingdom, the peasants are cowed by your omnipresence. +1 to Might. This action requires no roll, only seven actions.

2. Deface Statues of the Victor

Down with Darius! Tear down the symbols of the Victor's reign. If this is done in all seven regions, it's disheartens the resistance. +1 Might. No roll is required.

3. Recruit New Knots

Recruit nine new knots to serve you! These elite units make your organization more effective in a host of tasks. Make a DC 20 Espionage roll. Success adds +1 to the organization Ability Score of your choice. This action can be performed up to nine times during the PCs reign.

4. Minions Serve as Your Secret Police

Hunt down those who stand against you! You use minions to aid in your shadow war against the resistance. Make a DC 20 Espionage roll. Every time you succeed roll a d10. On a 10, you caught someone important. Might +1. You can only gain this benefit thrice in your reign.

MODIFYING THE MINION RULES

The minion rules in Book Two hopefully served you well for holding the Horn of Abaddon, but on a kingdom scale, they can become a little unwieldy. So, let's fix that.

Total up the number of actions your evil organization would get in a month. So for example if you have 8 actions a week, that's 32 actions per month. Divide that number by 10. That's the number of kingdom-scale actions you can do per month. This section provides twenty three sample kingdom scale actions. If the PCs come up with more, use the examples to decide how to handle them.

You can still assign cohorts and powerful underlings to help with kingdom scale actions. But instead of adding their relevant ability score, they only add +2. They are not generally as much help.

5. Indoctrinate the Children of Talingarde

Train the children to do your bidding! Usually this is disguised as improving education. DC 20 Connections yields +1 to Espionage as children spy on their parents.

6. Hire New Mercenaries from the Mainland

Spend 20,000 gp and make a DC 16 Connections roll. Success equals Might +1. Failure means the money is lost. This can only be done five times during your reign.

7. Loot Sacred Mitran Relics to Sell/Melt Down

Ruthless DC 20 collects 2,000 gp in hidden relics.

8. Burn Mitran Holy Texts

Ruthless DC 20 to terrify the faithful. Succeed and you roll a d10. On a 10, +1 to Might.

9. Hunt Down the Clergy of Mitra

Purge the faithful from your lands! Put the priests upon the pyre! It's fine practice for your men. Ruthless DC 20. Success increases Ruthless by +1.

10. Trap Fearsome Beasts for the Coliseum

Ruthless DC 20 collects impressive beasts for the arena. Monthly income increases by 1,000 gp. You can only gain this benefit three times during your reign.

11. Search for Mithral Mine in Ansgarian Mts.

Find the legendary lost dwarven mine. Roll 1d20. On a natural 20, you find it. Increase monthly income by 20,000 gp. You can only find this mine once.

12. Exterminate the Tritons

Go fishing for the tritons off the eastern coast! Roll Ruthless DC 20. Succeed three times, you exterminate them and your men gain expertise. +1 Might. If by reign's end you fail to garner three successes, you give Bellinda a new ally who harasses your ships. -1 Might.

13. Put Your Face on the Coins

One action puts your face on every copper, silver and gold piece in the kingdom. No roll is required.

14. Purge the North of the Last of the Naatanuk

Slay the bears! Roll DC 25. If you succeed once, they are wiped out and you pillage their cairns. Gain 1d6*10,000 gp in treasure. If you try and by the end of your reign have not succeeded, Bellinda gains a fearsome

new ally. Might -2. You can only succeed once at this task.

15. Purge the Great Eagles from the Mountains

Purge the lord's brood! Roll Ruthless DC 20. Succeed three times, you exterminate them. +1 Might. If by reign's end you fail, Bellinda has a new aerial ally. -1 Might.

16. Capture Eagle Chicks and Eggs

Immediately after you purge the eagles, you may roll this special action. With a Connections DC 20, your men climb the tall aeries of the eagles and collect their precious eggs and chicks. Gain 1d6*10,000 gp.

17. Raise a Quisling Militia

Spend 10,000 gp and make a DC 20 Connections roll. Success gains Might +1 (maximum of three times). Failure means you train and equip the resistance. Might -1.

18. Bread for the Poor, Clothes for Orphans

Win hearts and minds through bribery. Spend 10,000 gp and make a DC 20 Connections roll. Success gains allies. +1 Might (you can receive this benefit three times during your reign). Failures gains you nothing. Natural 1 means you supply the resistance (Might -1).

19. Take over the Crime Syndicates

Ruthless DC 20. Each success increases monthly income by 1,000 gp (max. +5,000 gp). Failure lowers by 1,000 gp. Natural 1 is Ruthless -1 as you takes losses.

20. Hunt Down Hidden Mitran Monasteries

Crush Mitran mountain monasteries. DC 20 Espionage action finds them. A seperate DC 20 Ruthless action destroys them. A destroyed monastery nets 1d6*2,000 gp in looted relics. A natural 1 causes Ruthless -1.

21. Capture Griffons for the Barcan Knights

DC 25 Ruthless captures wild griffons. 1d6 months later, you gain +2 Might if you ally with the Knights of the Gryphon (see Event Ten) thanks to elite flying knights.

22. Run a Legitimate Business

Connection DC 16 gains 1,000 gp.

23. Eradicate Banditry

Succeed at a Ruthless DC 16 in all seven regions and cities and even your enemies admit you do a fine job keeping order. +1 Might. You only gain this benefit once.

ACT THREE: WHITE UNICORN

This act covers all events from Princess Bellinda's return to the Second Battle of Tamberlyn.

EVENT ONE: SHE'S BACK

After thirty six months of absence, the Princess Bellinda arrives in Talingarde once more. Ships, well paid by the money that was once in the Talirean treasury, deposit her army upon the island. She arrives in the centralmost of the three fjords that define the southern peninsula not far from Matharyn. But she does not head to the capital.

Instead, her army marches straight to the Lords of Tamberlyn, the historic battlefield where the Victor (Bellinda's great grand father) defeated King Jaraad more than eighty five years ago. There the solar Phaethysa extends the Veil of Mitra into a great dome. It stops teleportation and plane shifting into a radius about a mile out.

Riders are dispatched in all directions to carry the news that the princess has returned. They all bear the same message: *"Flock, ye worthy to storied Tamberlyn to join your princess. The hour of our victory is at hand!"*

How long does it take the PCs to get the news? That depends on many factors. Are the PCs fighting a war in the north? It could take weeks. Have the PCs executed everyone who ever delivered them bad news? No one wants to tell them. Have the PCs rebuilt the Nine Knots and established an effective secret police network through out the island? Did they hire the yutak to patrol the shores looking for vessels in Event Twenty one? They could know the day the princess arrives.

So, what then? Very likely the first question on the PC's mind is going to be "what is the size of her army?" That's also a good question and again the answer is that it depends. Now is the time to take stock of how the PCs have affected Bellinda's recruitment efforts.

The smallest army Bellinda travels with consists of:

Bellinda/Antharia Regina/the Solar

Brontes God-Hammer, an elysian titan, and the Heroes Brigade, an elite collection of 500 paladins, priests and adventurers recruited from across the Nine Kingdoms.

The Knights of the White Unicorn, every single surviving Knight of the Alerion who made it off the island after Fallingsbridge and a few who were already off on errant quests. 1000 heavy horse.

2000 infantry and 2000 longbowmen, the remnants of the Talirean army.

Yes, Bellinda arrives in Talingarde with only 5,500 men. If the PCs hired Herr Eisenmark, they could outnumber her 5 to 1. If they recruited the Iraen and others, it could be even more than that. But more flock to her aid.

Have the PCs angered the faithful by oppressing the Mitran Church and hounding the Blood of the Victor (see Events Three and Four)? Then thousands of outraged zealots march to swell her ranks.

Did the PCs destroy the hidden Knights of the Alerion (see Event Five)? No? Then 2,000 heavy horse dig up their hidden armor, mount their steeds once more, and ride to join her army from every corner of the island.

Is Father Demascas still alive (see Event Six)? If yes, then he breaks cover at last and brings the 1,000 resistance fighters he's recruited in Matharyn to Tamberlyn.

Were the Barcans forced to ally with the hated Darrians because of the regime's cruelty (see Event Ten)? Then 1,200 Knights of the Gryphon rally to Bellinda.

Did the PCs wipe out the Sisters of Saint Cynthia-Celeste (see Event Eighteen)? If not, the nuns have received a message weeks ago via the solar and even now race to rendezvous at Tamberlyn.

Did the PCs forge an alliance with Thane Turin Brightmetal to wipe out the duergar and forge a new dwarven kingdom (see Event Nineteen)? If not, then he leads 1,400 dwarven warriors to aid the Princess Bellinda.

Did the peasants in the Royal Holdings suffer under the PCs greed (see Event Twenty)? Then they march by their thousands to join with Bellinda. Anything is better than these tyrants!

Did the PCs allow Barrington to die of plague (see Event Twenty Seven)? If not, then 500 of the famed longbowmen of Barrington march to her aid.

Did the PCs slaughter children by the hundreds in Valtaerna (see Event Twenty Eight)? Then 3000 peasants bearing a broken shepherd's crook march to Tamberlyn. If they didn't stop the children, there may also be 777 casinian angels in her army!

And if the PCs slew Lady Jezerael (see Event Twenty Nine) then Duke of Bella Tore sends 3,000 mercenaries to avenge his daughter.

Depending on their rule, the PCs could face a mighty army indeed. Such are the wages of sin.

EVENT TWO: LIGHTS OVER MATHARYN

If our villains are not yet certain that the Princess Bellinda has returned, all doubt is about to be taken away. One clear morning over Matharyn, two angels swoop down and in voices like thunder declare the following:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice ye worthy and ye who are downtrodden! For the righteous have returned to Talin-garde! Let the wicked tremble for now is the hour in which they shall reap what they have sown.

All through out the capitol, people emerge from their homes and businesses amazed. Above Matharyn, the sky blazes with angelic fire. The angels fly through the heavens like burning comets. No doubt the PCs are not going to tolerate this nonsense for long. By this level, the PCs have the ability to fly either by steed or by spell. The PCs should meet the angels of Mitra in the skies over the capital and there fight the first battle of the coming war.

Mana-Mitra and Amaratat, Planetars of Mitra CR 16

XP 153,600 total (76,800 XP each)

NG Large outsider (angel, extraplanar, good)

Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft., *detect evil*, *detect snares and pits*, low-light vision, *true seeing*; **Perception** +27

Aura protective aura

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 13, flat-footed 28 (+4 Dex, +19 natural, -1 size; +4 deflection vs. evil)

hp 229 (17d10+136); regeneration 10 (evil weapons and effects)

Fort +19, **Ref** +11, **Will** +19; +4 vs. poison, +4 resistance vs. evil

DR 10/evil; **Immune** acid, cold, petrification; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 90 ft. (good)

Melee +3 *holy greatsword* +27/+22/+17 (3d6+15/19-20) or *slam* +24 (2d8+12)

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

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th)

Constant — *detect evil*, *detect snares and pits*, *discern lies* (DC 20), *true seeing*

At will — *continual flame*, *dispel magic*, *holy smite* (DC 21), *invisibility* (self only), *lesser restoration*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*, *remove fear* (DC 18), *speak with dead* (DC 20)

3/day — *blade barrier* (DC 21), *flame strike* (DC 22), *power word stun*, *raise dead*, *waves of fatigue*

1/day — *earthquake* (DC 25), *greater restoration*, *mass charm monster* (DC 25), *waves of exhaustion*

Spells Prepared (CL 16th)

8th — *earthquake* (DC 25), *fire storm* (DC 25)

7th — *holy word* (DC 24), *regenerate* (2)

6th — *banishment* (DC 23), *greater dispel magic*, *heal*, *mass cure moderate wounds* (DC 23)

5th — *break enchantment*, *dispel evil* (2, DC 22), *plane shift* (DC 22), *righteous might*

4th — *death ward*, *dismissal* (DC 21), *neutralize poison* (DC 21), *summon monster IV*

3rd — *cure serious wounds* (2), *daylight*, *invisibility purge*, *summon monster III*, *wind wall*

2nd — *align weapon* (2), *bear's endurance* (2), *cure moderate wounds* (2), *eagle's splendor*

1st — *bless* (2), *cure light wounds* (4), *shield of faith*

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

This battle is fought entirely in the air, about three hundred feet up. The angels will not land and if the PCs do not stop them, they will continue to declare doom to the wicked loudly for about twenty rounds (two minutes) and make their way to the Old Palace where they will cast *earthquake* twice upon the central structure. Two *earthquake* spells are enough to destroy every stone wall thirteen inches thick or less (which is every wall in the palace but the great curtain that surrounds the whole structure). They will annihilate roughly twenty thousand square feet of the palace in one round if they are not stopped. A great cloud of devastation will arise in the center of the capital. It is a powerful symbol of hope. -1 Might if that happens.

Hopefully, the PCs will defeat the angels, slaying them in sight of the populace and hurling their limp celestial corpses down to the ground. If they do this, give the PCs a chance to address the throng as they look upon them in terror and despair.

TACTICS

During Combat These soldiers of Mitra have come to the prime material to punish the wicked and wreak destruction upon their schemes. They are thus quick to use their most powerful destructive spells such as *earthquake* and *fire storm*.

As a general tactic, one of the planetars engages the enemy wielding its *holy greatsword* to terrible effect. The second planetary stands back (likely flying above the fray) delivering powerful spells against their enemies. If after a few rounds of this, one of the planetars becomes beleaguered, then they will reverse these roles, giving the other a chance to use its panoply of healing spells to restore itself.

If either planetary is ever reduced to 76 hit points or less (a third of total), then the angel will use its *heal* spell to restore itself as quickly as possible.

If these angels have a weakness it is this — they are unwilling to endanger the innocent. And so if their wicked targets cravenly hide behind bystanders, they will curtail the use of their more damaging area effect spells.

Morale These messengers of righteous wrath fight without fear or thought of their own lives. They fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 19, **Con** 24, **Int** 22, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +26; **CMD** 40

Feats Blind-Fight, Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +24, Craft (any one) +26, Diplomacy +27, Fly +26, Heal +24, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (history) +23, Knowledge (planes) +26, Knowledge (religion) +26, Perception +27, Sense Motive +27, Stealth +20

Languages Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech

SQ change shape (alter self)

Gear +3 holy greatsword (melts away when the angel dies)

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 the angel. 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 17th). The defensive benefits from the circle are not included in an angel's statistics block.

EVENT THREE: MUSTER THE WICKED

The PCs must gather their forces quickly to meet Bellinda's army. The Might score is a shorthand for the PCs strength of arms relative to Bellinda's army. But it is also worth considering the composition of their army.

What remains of their mercenary army gathered in Act One? Did they hire Herr Eisenmark?

Did they hunt the Caothach Ool (see Event Seven) and gain the aid of 5,000 Iraen soldiers?

Did they convince Leothyn Barca to ally with them and lend them the aid of the 1,200 Knights of the Gryphon (see Event Ten)? Did they capture wild griffons early enough to train an elite unit of griffon riders (see Minion section at the end of Act II)?

Did they build a coliseum and recruit a band of gladiators that will trade their expertise with the blade for promises of freedom (see Event Thirteen)?

Did they engage in wars of conquest that cost them troops (see Event Fourteen and Sixteen)?

Did they fail to give their mercenaries the land and titles that were promised them (see Event Seventeen)?

Are they counting on the duergar to answer their call for aid only to be bitterly disappointed (see Event Nineteen)?

Did they ally with White Tusk and gain the Yutaks as scouts (see Event Twenty One)?

Did they replace the Duke of Ghastenhall with an agent, gaining the service of his 5,000 mercenaries (see Event Twenty Five)?

Did they gain 2,000 mercenaries by advantageous marriage with Lady Jezerael (see Event Twenty Nine)?

Did they exhume the tablets from center of the dark lake in the cave of Ygg and Yggotha and learn the secret to summoning forth a unit of brutal gugs from the realm of nightmares (see Event Thirty)?

Did they send agents and money to the mainland to recruit more mercenaries (see Minions section)?

And of course, it is inevitable your PCs did something else to increase their troop strength. Here is when you must pause to consider the effect of their actions. And then take a moment. Describe each unit one by one as they muster (or not) to the PC's call. This is their army. They have built it with their will. Time to use it.

EVENT FOUR: SOLOMON'S GAMBIT

Solomon Tyrath is a fanatic servant of Mitra but he is not a good man. He believes that the princess is foolish to meet the honorless dogs of this regime upon the field of battle. Who knows what trickery they use to win the battle? Who knows what wickedness they will stop to. She should have used her time not only to seek heroes, but also to hire assassins.

But Bellinda will hear none of this. She waved away talk of such tactics. *"We will not lose our souls to win one battle, High Inquisitor,"* she told him.

Solomon could only clench his teeth. *"You think you know these men, Highness, but you do not. You do not understand the depth of their wickedness."*

"You would disobey me?"

"No, highness. I will not hire assassins. I will be your assassin."

And with that Solomon Tyrath left the princess' side to plan his moment to strike. He considered and came up with a plan that was ruthless enough to spare Talingarde this coming battle. Solomon would infiltrate the Old Palace (a place he knew like the back of his own hand) catch the leaders of the regime off guard and deliver to them justice. Once they were slain, he would go to the great balcony of the Old Palace which overlooked the mustering army. He would throw the head of the usurper king to this army of mercenaries and yell, *"Your employer is dead. Talingarde is yours no longer. Mitra comes to judge each and every one of you!"*

Then he would turn invisible and watch as this army of murderous cutthroats fell to chaos and broke up. In one stroke he would save the naïve princess from herself.

It is an arrogant plan. But then, High Inquisitor Tyrath is an arrogant man. He has never known defeat at the hands of the wicked. And believes he will not today.

So, when does the Inquisitor attack? If his man in Matharyn (Father Demascas; see Event Six) is still alive, he consults with him and tries to find out the PC's schedule. He will try to attack them at night or when they are alone and vulnerable. Failing that, he will attack them in council when they are likely to be unarmored and ill prepared. He will try to find the perfect time to attack.

But even if the PCs are thorough in their security, the Inquisitor still attacks. Like all fanatics, he is utterly confident in the rightness of his cause. And like all fanatics he will be startled when he fails at his "holy" mission.

Solomon Tyrath, High Inquisitor of Talingarde

CR 20

XP 307,200

Male human inquisitor of Mitra (The Fire Undying) 20

LN Medium humanoid

Init +14; **Senses** Perception +33**DEFENSE****AC** 30, touch 15, flat-footed 30 (+10 armor, +5 natural, +5 deflection)**hp** 210 (20d8+120)**Fort** +17, **Ref** +6, **Will** +22**Immune** fire**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** *Malleus Lex* +25/+20/+15 (2d6+11/17-20)**Special Attack** exploit weakness, greater bane (20 rounds), judgment (7/day, three judgments), slayer, true judgment (DC 30)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 20th, concentration +30)20 round/day—*discern lies*At Will—*detect alignment (chaos, evil, good or law)***Domain Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 20th, concentration +30)

13/day — fire bolt (+15 ranged touch, 1d6+10 fire damage)

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 20th, concentration +30)6th (7/day)—*blade barrier, greater dispel magic, harm, heal, undeath to death*5th (7/day)—*banishment, break enchantment, flame strike, litany of vengeance, true seeing*4th (8/day)—*cure critical wounds, death ward, detect scrying, litany of sight, spell immunity, stoneskin*3rd (8/day)—*dimensional anchor, greater magic weapon, keen edge, nondetection, speak with dead, ward the faithful*2nd (8/day)—*castigate, cure moderate wounds, knock, silence, spiritual weapon, zone of truth*1st (8/day)—*alarm, cure light wounds, disguise self, litany of sloth, true strike, vocal alteration*o (at will)—*brand, create water, detect magic, detect magic, light, stabilize***Domain** Fire**TACTICS**

During Combat Almost anytime Solomon attacks, it is with his judgment class ability. He typically selects destruction (+6 damage to all weapon damage rolls), justice (+4 to hit, +8 to confirm criticals), and protection (+4 to AC, +8 to stop critical confirmations). Further do not forget Solomon's potent true judgment ability. He will doubtless reserve it for a worthy foe.

Morale Solomon Tyrath is a religious fanatic. He would give his life if he believed it would further the cause of Mitra.

STATISTICS**Str** 20, **Dex** 10, **Con** 20, **Int** 12, **Wis** 30, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 27

Feats Allied Spellcaster, Coordinated Defense, Coordinated Maneuvers, Dazzling Display, Duck and Cover, Gory Finish, Improved Initiative, Instant Judgment, Intimidating Bane, Intimidating Gaze, Outflank, Shatter Defenses, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Stealth Synergy, Toughness, Weapon Focus (Greatsword), Weapon Proficiency (Greatsword)

Skills Skills Diplomacy +13, Disguise +23, Heal +23, Intimidate +39, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +14, Knowledge (nature) +14, Knowledge (planes) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Perception +33, Sense Motive +43, Stealth +23, Survival +23 (+33 to follow tracks)

Languages Common, Celestial

SO cunning initiative +10, monster lore +10, stern gaze +10, track +10, solo tactics, stalwart

Combat Gear potions of cure serious wounds (3), potions of gaseous form (2), potions of invisibility (2)

Gear *Malleus Lex* (+4 axiomatic keen heartseeker greatsword), belt of physical might +6 (strength, constitution), +4 mithral breastplate, sapphire holy symbol of Mitra (250 gp), +5 amulet of natural armor, ring of protection +5



Act Three: White Unicorn

EVENT FIVE: NABURUS

The PCs may seek aid from the Marquis of the Fourth Misery himself, Naburus the Pit Fiend. By appealing to him, they are seeking the aid of the most powerful devil in Talingarde. But is the pit fiend willing to aid them?

For centuries Naburus has been manipulating Talin-garde towards this critical moment. In the great game for the destiny of mortal souls, the forces of light and of darkness have long realized this nation was a keystone. If Talingarde could be made into a stronghold of hell and a people as strong-willed and numerous as the Talireans corrupted, then it would be a major step towards claiming the entire world for Asmodeus. So, there is reason that Naburus should stir himself to action and move directly to aid the fledgling regime.

Visiting Naburus in his enclave on the border ethereal should not be difficult for a 19th level party of adventurers. And even if they can't manage the task themselves, then certainly they can contact Dessiter the contract devil and he will take them to have audience with Naburus. If the PCs do not think of talking with Naburus themselves, then you could always have Dessiter visit the PCs. But the scene works better if the meeting is their idea.

Naburus is uncertain about coming to the prime material plane. He knows that Antharia Regina, the great silver dragon, is stirring. He has sensed that a solar is visiting this plane. He has not accomplished all that he has by being rash. If the forces of Mitra mass, they *want* him to come to them. Why give them what they want?

Convincing Naburus to directly participate requires a DC 40 Diplomacy check. Let the PCs present their case before rolling dice. Several points persuade the pit fiend.

+4 bonus if the PCs argue "Bellinda may be powerful but she is the last heir of the House of Darius. Wiping out this line is worth the risk." Naburus agrees and has been working to destroy the House of Darius for decades.

+4 bonus if the PCs argue "Bellinda is not alone. She has brought with her heroes from across the Nine Kingdoms. Victory here means victory in many different places". The possibility of such as victory appeals to the ambitious Naburus.

+2 bonus if the PCs mention the planetary attack on Matharyn. The presence of celestials operating openly emphasizes how critical this moment is.

-4 penalty if the PCs try to threaten Naburus. The pit fiend may be an agent of corruption, but he also possesses a vast ego and does not take threats by mortals lightly.

Naburus the Pit Fiend

CR 20

XP 307,200

LE Large outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +13; Senses darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; Perception +33

Aura fear (20 ft., DC 23)

DEFENSE

AC 38, touch 18, flat-footed 29 (+9 Dex, +20 natural, -1 size)

hp 350 (20d10+240); regeneration 5 (good weapons, good spells)

Fort +24, Ref +21, Will +18

DR 15/good and silver; Immune fire, poison; Resist acid 10, cold 10; SR 31

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee 2 claws +32 (2d8+13), 2 wings +30 (2d6+6), bite +32 (4d6+13 plus poison and disease), tail slap +30 (2d8+6 plus grab)

Space 10 ft., Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks constrict 2d8+19, devil shaping

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th)

At will—*blasphemy* (DC 25), *create undead*, *fireball* (DC 21), *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *greater scrying* (DC 25), *invisibility*, *magic circle against good*, *mass hold monster* (DC 27), *persistent image* (DC 23), *power word stun*, *scorching ray*, *trap the soul* (DC 26), *unholy aura* (DC 26), *wall of fire*3/day—*quicken fireball* (DC 21)1/day—*meteor swarm*, *summon* (level 9, any 1 CR 19 or lower devil, 100%)1/year—*wish*

TACTICS

Before Combat Naburus is a brilliant enemy and never leaps into battle without preparation. He uses *greater scrying* to examine a battlefield before teleporting in. He uses his knowledge skills to try to understand any foe and will gladly consult with any allies.

If given time to prepare, he turns invisible, summons an immolation devil vassal named Exuroth (detailed below), uses *persistent image* to make the immolation devil look like himself, and then casts *unholy aura*. Only then will he join battle.

During Combat Naburus has many options in battle and is a brilliant and adaptive foe. Therefore, in any fight the Gamemaster should take a moment to consider how Naburus may best use his many spell-like abilities to full advantage.

Against a single foe, Naburus is a melee combatant almost without peer. He loves to leap into battle and shred his foes with his many attacks. If he succeeds in grabbing someone of medium sized, he likely flies straight up for several rounds at that point if possible. After all, if they escape his grasp then they plummet. If they do not escape, he may constrict them to death.

Against groups, Naburus usually leads with his *meteor swarm* and in the first three rounds of combat, fires off his quickened fireballs. He is also quick to use *mass hold monster* against groups of living foes. Once his enemies are paralyzed, he takes great relish in ripping them to pieces one by one.

Naburus hates celestials intensely. If there are ever any good outsiders on the battlefield, Naburus will focus on slaying them even when it may not be the best tactical choice. If Naburus can be said to have a weakness, it is this — after centuries of subtlety and intrigue on the mortal plane, he is probably too confident of his own brilliance. The idea that he has missed something will simply never occur to this overconfident lord of hell.

Morale Naburus, though relentless in the service of Asmodeus, also knows that if he is slain, he will be banished from this plane of existence for centuries to come. Thus if he reaches 70 hit points or lower (20% of his total), he departs the battle, teleporting to safety. If he believes that he can still aid the cause, he may return several minutes later, fully regenerated.

These are only sample arguments of course. As a rule of thumb, as the PCs present arguments you consider persuasive, they can accumulate bonuses up to +10. They still have to persuade Naburus that they have a reasonable chance of victory and are worth supporting. And that requires the diplomacy check.

If the roll is successful, the fires of Naburus flare. *"Long have I waited for this great conjunction. Long I have desired to at last move openly amongst the worms of Talin-garde. Hell has found her captain upon this plane in you, masters of the Nine Knots. And so I, Naburus, Marquis of the Fourth Misery, pledge myself to your cause. I will fight along side you. Now, tell me...what is you plan to wipe out this rabble that moves against you?"*

And with that, the PCs have gained the temporary service of a pit fiend. Naburus does not come to battle alone. He summons his vassal Exuroth the Immolator. Together they are fearsome indeed.

Story Award: CR 20 (307,200 XP) reward for gaining the service of Naburus. This is more than a single diplomacy check. This is a culmination of all their villainous works.

STATISTICS

Str 37, **Dex** 29, **Con** 35, **Int** 26, **Wis** 30, **Cha** 26
Base Atk +20; **CMB** +34 (+38 grapple); **CMD** 53
Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (fireball), Vital Strike
Skills Appraise +17, Bluff +31, Diplomacy +31, Disguise +27, Fly +30, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (planes) +31, Knowledge (religion) +31, Perception +33, Sense Motive +33, Spellcraft +31, Stealth +28, Survival +22, Use Magic Device +28
Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Devil Shaping (Su) Three times per day, a pit fiend can spend a minute to transform nearby lemures into other lesser devils. A pit fiend can transform one lemure for every Hit Die the pit fiend possesses. It can then reshape these lemures into a number of Hit Dice's worth of lesser devils equal to the number of lemures affected. For example, a typical 20 Hit Dice pit fiend could transform 20 lemures into two bone devils (10 HD each), or three bearded devils (6 HD each, leaving two lemures unchanged), or any other combination of lesser devils.

Lemures to be reshaped must be within 50 feet of the pit fiend, becoming stationary and unable to move once the shaping begins. After a minute passes, the lemures reform into the shape of a new lesser devil ready to follow the orders of the pit fiend. Although pit devils can, technically, elevate a mass of 20 lemures into a new pit fiend, most are hesitant to do so since they have no special control over a devil created in this manner.

Disease (Su)

Devil Chills: Bite—injury; save Fort DC 32; onset immediate; frequency 1/day; effect 1d4 Str damage; cure 3 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Poison (Ex)

Bite—injury; save Fort DC 32; frequency 1/round for 10 rounds; effect 1d6 Con damage; cure 3 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Exuroth the Immolation Devil, Servant of Naburus

CR 19

XP - (summoned by Naburus)

LE Large outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful)
Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft., true seeing; Perception +27

DEFENSE

AC 36, touch 17, flat-footed 28 (+8 Dex, +19 natural, -1 size)
hp 315 (18d10+216); regeneration 5 (good weapons or good spells)
Fort +23, **Ref** +19, **Will** +14
DR 15/good and silver; **Immune** fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 30

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)
Melee bite +29 (2d6+12 plus burn), 2 claw +29 (1d8+12 plus burn), gore +29 (2d8+12 plus burn), 2 wings +27 (1d8+6)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Special Attacks burn (2d6, DC 31), hellfire

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th; concentration +24)

Constant—fire shield, true seeing

At will—fireball (DC 20), greater teleport (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), persistent image (DC 22), wall of fire

3/day—dictum (DC 24), fire storm (DC 25), mass charm monster (DC 25)

TACTICS

During Combat Exuroth almost always goes into combat disguised as Naburus using either his own or Naburus' persistent image spell-like ability. His mission is to absorb all the attacks and damage that otherwise might be focused against his master. It is a duty that Exuroth does not relish but does accept.

Exuroth has two goals in every fight — impress Naburus and burn his foes to ash. Given his choice, Exuroth would prefer to fly over a battlefield and unleash a non-stop barrage of firestorms and fireballs. He will however land to accord any particular troublesome foes the honor of being ripped apart as well as burned to death.

Exuroth finds fire immune or resistant foes infuriating. He will give them special attention unleashing his dictums against them and using mass charm monster to convince others to attack them.

Morale Exuroth, unlike Naburus, has nothing invested in this plane of existence. He cares nothing about being banished from here and cares everything about impressing Naburus to earn his promotion to pit fiend status. Thus Exuroth will gladly fight to the death to defend Naburus and carry out his commands. That said, if Naburus flees, Exuroth follows him as soon as possible.

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 26, **Con** 35, **Int** 24, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 24
Base Atk +18; **CMB** +31; **CMD** 49
Feats Blind-Fight, Blinding Critical, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Stand Still
Skills Bluff +28, Diplomacy +28, Disable Device +26, Fly +31, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (arcana, nobility) +25, Knowledge (engineering, planes) +28, Perception +27, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +28, Stealth +25
Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Burn (Ex) Exuroth deals fire damage in addition to damage dealt on a successful hit in melee. A creature affected by the burn ability must also succeed on a Reflex save (DC 31) or catch fire, taking the listed damage at the start of its turn for an additional 1d4 rounds. A burning creature can attempt a new save as a full-round action. Dropping and rolling on the ground grants a +4 bonus on this save. Creatures that hit the devil with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take fire damage as though hit by the monster's burn attack and must make a Reflex save to avoid catching on fire.

Hellfire (Su) Any fire damage caused by an immolation devil's abilities and spells is half fire damage, half unholy damage.

EVENT SIX: WHISPERS TO THE FALLEN

NOTE: This event is optional. It only occurs if Sir Richard (now Sir Berithor) is alive and part of the regime.

What have the PCs made Sir Berithor do over the course of their regime? What horrid deeds has the anti-paladin been party to? How many conquests and slaughters has he authored? How many innocents and partisans has he hunted? In short, Sir Richard, what have you done?

Whether Sir Berithor is a king, a retainer of the regime or a wanderer in the Savage North leading a band of Asmodean cultists, if he is still alive one night he is visited by the ghost of his mother – Bronwyn of Balentyne. Bronwyn is not a permanent ghost. She returns to the mortal plane for only one night.

She whispers, "My son, do you know me?"

"Mother," he gasps almost instinctively, saying the first word he has ever spoken to her. "Mother, you're alive?"

"No...not alive. I died the night you were born. I was never there for you. And your father ... so grim. So sad. He was never there either. He is with me now and at last his tears are ended. I wish you could hear his laugh, Richard, just once..."

Suddenly, Berithor grew furious. "What do you want of me, spirit? Are you here to tell me I'm wicked and wretched? Are you here to tell me I should repent? It's too late for any of that. I've turned my back upon that future. I have failed my people so many times. Today I work only for the hell that I deserve."

Bronwyn wept at her sons words. "Then it is true. This is my fault, my son. It was I who authored this calamity. I created the monster Adrastus. And it was Adrastus Thorn who started all of this in motion. I knew that Samuel had feelings for me and when I fell in love with your father, I gave no heed to the poor priest. I inflicted upon him the greatest sort of cruelty – pretending that there was nothing between us."

Berithor snarled in answer. "What does any of that matter now, mother? Father's dead. Samuel...Thorn... whatever you want to call him, he's dead. They're all dead! Am I to see them too? Are you just the first spirit to torment me?"

"No, my son. It's just me. You are right, you know. They are all dead. Today on a distant battlefield, your last cousin died ambushing a caravan carrying supplies to feed the great army of evil that is about to march. You are, in all the world, the last son of Havelyn. Our blood line lives or died within you. We already have managed to create one monster, my son. Will you be one too?"

And a man once called Richard wept in shame and disgrace, as his mother's shade faded from his vision. And then there came a shadow into Richard's presence.

"Having a moment of doubt are we, Sir Berithor? Seeing ghosts? They are just figments, my friend. Passing fancies that soon enough fade." Dessiter smiled. "We all have our moments of weakness. Best to not let your imagination run away with you."

"It was not my imagination," Sir Berithor whispered. "She was real and what she said...it was true. You get so used to hearing lies that when someone finally says something true, it just sounds ..."

The contract devil lost his smile. "You're becoming tire-some, Sir Berithor. Why don't you get some sleep? Things will seem different with the morning."

"Sleep? No... I slept too much." The knight sounded almost in a daze.

"You sound very strange, my friend." said Dessiter impatiently. "Let's be sensible about this. You have given your sacred word to your Father, brave knight of hell. You've signed contracts in blood. There is no turning back now."

"Yes..." said Sir Berithor. "Perhaps you are right..."

"Of course I'm..."

The sword slid out of its scabbard with one smooth motion. He stabbed into the core of the contract devil in one great push. There was a great rush of energy with him. This was not the wave of unholy power that he could wield as an anti-paladin. No! This was a true smite of Mitra.

The devil stumbled back, bleeding from the wound. "Idiot! You think you can defy me?! I own your damned soul. I've got your name. You cannot oppose me!"

Again the paladin struck and again, another great wound stripped across Dessiter's chest.

"For this offense, I'll see suffer for twenty years with coals packed up your ass. Do it again and I'll make it fifty, damned knight!"

A third powerful blow. "Sir Berithor..." was all Dessiter managed.

"No, My name is Richard." And with that, the contract devil's head parted neatly from his corpse. Sir Richard watched the devil's corpse melt away before him. It was done. Now all that remained was to wait for the forces of hell to come and claim his soul. He swore he'd make them earn it.

HUNTING DOWN THE PALADIN

Naburus immediately knows that his servant Dessiter has been slain on this plane. The pit fiend scribes the contract devil's remains and quickly discovered what has happened. He appears to his allies, our villains, and informs them of everything that has transpired.

"It seems Dessiter has been slain by Sir Richard, who is working very hard to reclaim his title of paladin. I was always uncertain about this plan. But Dessiter was so enthusiastic about the prospect of the corruption."

"It doesn't matter! It'll take more than a moment of doubt to break his agreements with us. But it doesn't change the fact that he could be a threat if he reaches Bellinda's camp."

"I know exactly where he is. I have his true name and his contract. Anyone care to go with me and slaughter a paladin? He's still under promise of damnation. We can watch his soul be consumed by hellfire together."

Hunting down Sir Richard is not hard. Naburus is completely correct about being able to find him and besides, he's not gone far.

Sir Richard is a dangerous opponent in a sense (he is an 18th level paladin). But he will be wildly outclassed by a full party of villains reinforced by a pit fiend. Naburus is right. This "battle" will be a slaughter.

But that does not matter. Sir Richard fights to the end. He does not run nor does he flee. He fights with all his might and strength. He fights to the end.

Even if the PCs don't kill him immediately, it's unlikely they will leave him alive for long. If they even suggest it, Naburus is against it.

"He's too dangerous to leave a prisoner. He had his chance. I say send him to hell."

When Sir Richard dies, a great crevasse opens in the earth and a thousand devils pull him down to into damnation. And then there is a tremendous flash of blue light. Naburus' mood suddenly turns foul.

"The celestials will answer for this! He is ours! He is ours!" cries the pit fiend. The tightly clutched contract catches fire and burns with bright blue flame.

Anyone who rolls a Knowledge (the planes) DC 35 will understand what has happened here. The contract with Dessiter was signed under duress. It became null and void when the paladin repented. Sir Richard, dead, goes to his just reward. His story, it would seem is ended.

Sir Richard Thomasson the Redeemed Paladin

CR 19

XP 204,800

Male human paladin 19

LG Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses Perception +2

Aura courage (10 ft.), resolve (10 ft.), justice (10 ft.), faith (10 ft.), righteousness (10 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 13, flat-footed 32 (+12 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex, +2 natural, +6 shield)

hp 180 (19d10+76)

Fort +20, Ref +13, Will +19

Defensive Abilities divine grace +4; Immune charm, disease, fear; DR 5/evil

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +3 longsword power attack +22/+17/+12/+7 (1d8+17/17-20)

Special Attack channel positive energy (DC 23, 10d6), smite evil 7/day (+4 attack and AC, +19 damage)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th; concentration +21)

At Will—detect evil

Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 14th; concentration +18)

4th—holy sword, resounding blow

3rd—magic circle against evil, prayer, wrathful mantle

2nd—bull's strength, fire of entanglement (DC 16), resist energy, wake of light

1st—bless, divine favor, knight's calling (DC 15), protection from evil, rally point

TACTICS

Before Combat The paladin casts *holy sword*, *bull's strength*, *prayer* and *wrathful mantle* upon himself before charging into battle against his foes. Richard has a premonition just before he is attacked and so has time to cast these spells. Still, they are not figured into his stat block. Cautious foes could approach him once and let him exhaust his reservoir of spells and then return to fight him weakened.

During Combat Sir Richard's enthusiasm for battle is greatly diminished and yet he has never been more powerful. Granted one last great push of power, he has been given by his mother's grace, one chance at forgiveness. He takes it eagerly.

One the first round, he casts *resounding blow* (a swift action). He smites with every strike, realizing he will likely be spent long before Mitra's grace. He will pause from his slaying only to lay hands on himself to keep him in this last desperate battle.

Morale Sir Richard fights with a grim determination to the last, eager to repent himself of his wicked deeds in the crucible of battle.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +19/+14/+9/+4; CMB +23; CMD 36

Feats Cleave, Cleaving Finish, Great Cleave, Extra Mercy, Improved Cleaving Finish, Improved Critical (longsword), Power Attack, Shield Focus, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Diplomacy +24, Knowledge (religion) +20, Sense Motive +22

Languages Common

SQ aura of good, divine bond (weapon +3), lay on hands (9d6, 12/day), mercies (blinded, cursed, deafened, diseases, paralyzed, poison, sickened, stunned)

Traits Resilient: +1 trait bonus to Fortitude saves

Hatred of the Dark Prince: +1 damage to devils and followers of Asmodeus

Combat Gear 3 potions of cure serious wounds

Other Gear +3 longsword, +3 full plate, +3 heavy steel shield, amulet of natural armor +2, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2, ring of sustenance, silver holy symbol, 135 gp, a silver swatch of cloth marked with a white unicorn (the favor of the Princess Bellinda)

ACT FOUR: TAMBERLYN

Within this act plays out the climactic battle of Tamberlyn and the Way of the Wicked comes to an end.

EVENT ONE: THE BOARD IS SET

Eventually the situation should become clear. Every day that Bellinda waits at Tamberlyn, new allies rally to her cause. The peasants rise up by their thousands and beat their plowshares into spears. They march to the side of their beloved princess.

Cardinal Adrastus Thorn, for all his genius, was wrong. He believed that by saving Matharyn from the Fire-Axe that the people of Mitra would forget their faith and their rulers and turn in gratitude to the new regime. Thorn was too blinded by his own cynicism and treachery to see the true heart of Talingarde.

Thorn believed that there were four pillars that made Talingarde strong: the Watch Wall, the Knights of the Alerion, the Order of St. Macarius and the House of Darius. In this he was simply mistaken. There is only one pillar that holds up Talingarde and that is the love and worship of the shining lord Mitra. And though that faith has been sore-tested in recent years, the people have not forgotten it.

The Talireans are a faithful and long suffering people. They are not quick to change their ways. They only accepted the House of Darius after generations of Barcan depravity, corruption and ineptitude. For eighty years (with a few exceptions) the House of Darius defended them and made them proud. Did Thorn really believe that the simple folk would abandon their rulers because of one defeat?

No, after all that has happened, Bellinda remains beloved from one end of the island to the next. And they rally to her, eager to do what they can do to see her triumphant. The Battle for Talingarde is not yet fought, but already our villains have lost the battle for the heart of the people.

If the PCs don't act soon, about ten percent of the island's total population is going to rally to her, armed for battle. They could, in a few weeks face an army of more than a hundred thousand men. Granted, most of them will only be armed peasants, but many are sturdy armed yeoman and town watchmen and even a few surviving soldiers and knights. This must be stopped now! Bellinda must die. The only way that the people of Talingarde will ever give up on the House of Darius is if they are utterly destroyed. This must be the PCs main mission – death to the House of Darius! Death to Bellinda!

The PCs know where her army is. Indeed, almost every living person in Talingarde knows where her army is. She quarters beneath the stony Lords of Tamberlyn. She shows no sign of leaving, at least not yet. There can be no cause for delay. She must be destroyed and soon.

So, it is time for the most important battle of this age. We come now to the second battle of Tamberlyn. And it is here that Talingarde's future will be decided for centuries to come. It is here that all things end.

The PCs have time to prepare. Even at best speed, their own army can't be ready for at least a few days. It's time enough to buy some additional potions, write a few scrolls, purchase one last magic item. The PCs probably have planar travel by now. They could even travel to the marketplaces of the City of Brass and buy one last infernal wonder.

Emphasize to them that this is the moment to hold nothing back. In this battle there will be no second chances. There is only victory or death. Take a moment and insist that the PCs exactly detail what equipment they are bringing. If they do not list it, there will be no revisions or "take backs".

Declare it now or forever hold your peace.

FOCUS ON THE PCs

This campaign has given you a lot of backstory about important NPCs, perhaps too much. Act Three was all about finishing up those backstories and giving closure to those various plots. But let us take a moment to not forget who this campaign is *really* about.

This campaign is about our villains – the PCs. And so, be sure to customize the events of the last few days to close up their backstories. Has a rogue been working since day one to establish himself as the boss of bosses of the criminal organizations of Talingarde? Then be sure to include a scene where he meets for the last time with his lieutenants and sets up the fate of his criminal guild.

Take a moment and consider what each PC has been working towards throughout the campaign. Write a scene that resolves that goal, whether for better or worse. If you can do this in the context of an NPC – fine. But ultimately the PCs should be the stars!

Only then will our villains be ready to march to Tamberlyn.

THE FIELDS OF TAMBERLYN

The first and perhaps only thing you notice about the fields of Tamberlyn are the great stone spires that rise from this grassy, muddy field and tower over all around them. Besides the two spires (actually three – people always forget the comparatively small Squire that attends the Greater Lord) the land is flat and featureless. There is nothing in the way of cover besides a few small boulders less than a quarter the height of a man. A small stream drains between the Lords of Tamberlyn. A local town-ship has built a bridge to help merchants to get from Matharyn to their market.

The Lords themselves seem that they must be unnatural, placed there by some impossibly scaled giant. The Greater Lord is almost four hundred yards across at its widest, more than a quarter mile! It rises twice that height into the air almost straight up, ending in a great jagged point. The Lesser Lord is scarcely smaller, considerably slimmer at the base but almost as tall. Even the “tiny” squire rises nine hundred feet into the air.

These great towers of stone are everywhere covered in ledges and outcroppings. Some are big enough that a massive dragon could perch and watch the surrounding countryside. The many smaller nooks are thick with nesting birds. Swallows stitch their nests in every nook and crevice of these great towers.

These colossal upthrust rocks are neither mountains nor karst (like the Horn of Abaddon). Incredibly, they were launched through the air by the same great calamity that in unfathomable prehistory created the Godscar hundreds of miles north of here. If they could be excavated, it would be discovered that the Greater Lord is only a quarter exposed.

Sometime in the distant past, when the great elemental powers of this world grew furious, a spear of stone a mile long shot through the heavens and travelled nearly five hundred miles to embed itself here. As it arced downward that great stone spear shattered beneath its own weight and fell in three great pieces. Thus were the Lord of Tamberlyn born.

Tamberlyn is actually the name of the knight who discovered them shortly after the first wave of Talirean settlement on this island. Any details of his life or the story of his discovery has been forgotten, but his surname stuck. He is actually buried here, in a small hollow beneath the Greater Lord. No one remembers this because shortly after he was entombed, the creek shifted and his tomb was covered in mud. There is nothing in his tomb of any value, but there is an inscription that reveals Lord Tamberlyn's full name – Sir Althus Tamberlyn.

It should come as no surprise that before the Talireans arrived, the Iraen revered this place. For the Iraen the Lords were not so much an object of interest but of fear. They regarded the Lords as haunted and proof of the gods' terrible power. They saw in that giant spear of stone a divine lesson – respect the gods or face their wrath.

In modern times, the battlefield is little changed from its distant past. The little stone bridge that Markadian fought on has been replaced by a larger sturdier construct. Beside that bridge is a small stone shrine that commemorates his victory. It features a statue of the Victor and a famous quote of his carved in white marble: “Not by virtue nor by fortune nor by strength of arms am I victorious this day, but by Mitra alone.”

Students of history know that the fields of Tamberlyn are treacherous. The small stream that runs between the Lords (now informally called Victorbrook) shifts frequently throughout the year overflowing its shallow banks, flooding random parts of the field. This creates vast patches of oily mud that can be as deep as a man's waist. The terrain of the battlefield can change drastically even week to week. Although the victory at the First Battle of Tamberlyn is popularly attributed to Markadian's great prowess, what actually won him that battle is mud.

If the Barcan right had not been bogged down, it wouldn't have mattered how brave or skilled he was. His small force of knights would have been caught on that bridge between two numerically superior groups of mounted cavalry. Instead, the Barcan right sank into the mud and got shot to pieces by longbowmen.

The muddy field has changed between eighty years ago and today. The eastern side of the brook remains as muddy as ever, but drainage off the Lesser Lord has also made the field to its northwest a wide band of sinking mud. Any cavalry that tries to pass that ground will be stuck for sure. Bellinda knows this and hopes to lure the cavalry of her enemies into that bog. Note that the muddy ground is not labelled on the PC handout version of the field. Be sure this is what your players are shown.

You should let the players plot out their strategy. Let them discover the enemy and plot their own course of battle. They can make as much of this or as little as they decide. They could also just hand over generalship and observe the battle, serving instead as a special strike force.

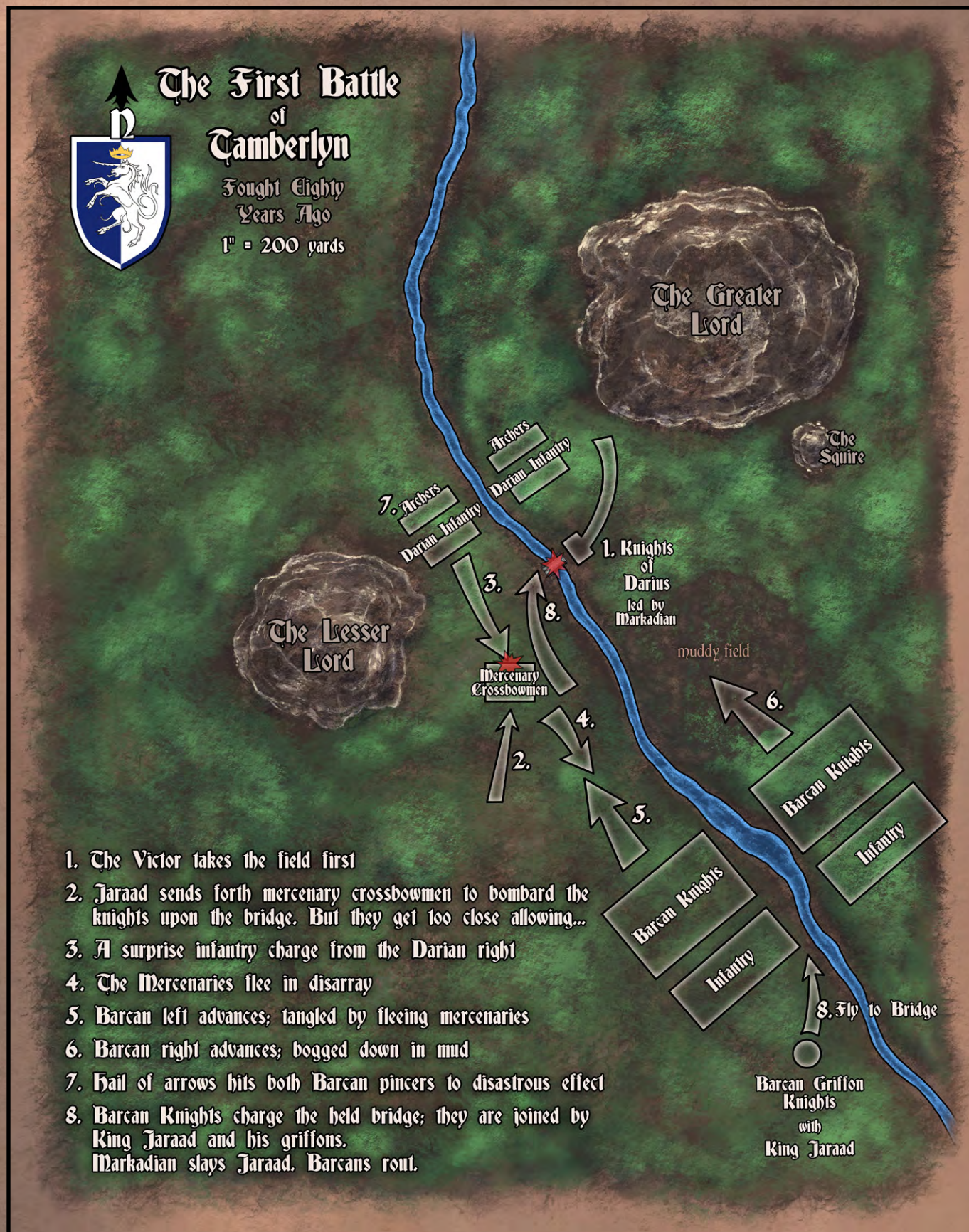
What is certain is that, though the clash of infantry and cavalry are interesting, it is not armies that will determine the day. This battle will be determined by the fate of one princess. If Bellinda falls nothing will hold together her army. If she survives, nothing can stop her.



The First Battle of Camberlyn

Fought Eighty
Years Ago

1" = 200 yards



1. The Victor takes the field first
2. Jaraad sends forth mercenary crossbowmen to bombard the knights upon the bridge. But they get too close allowing...
3. A surprise infantry charge from the Darian right
4. The Mercenaries flee in disarray
5. Barcan left advances; tangled by fleeing mercenaries
6. Barcan right advances; bogged down in mud
7. Hail of arrows hits both Barcan pincers to disastrous effect
8. Barcan Knights charge the held bridge; they are joined by King Jaraad and his griffons. Markadian slays Jaraad. Barcans rout.



The Second Battle of Camberlyn

1" = 200 yards

muddy ground



The Lesser
Lord

Antharia
(invisible and in human form)

Belfinda's
Knights

Archers

Infantry



The Greater
Lord

The
Squire

Archers

Infantry

Brones

Shrine

muddy ground

Act Four: Camberlyn

EVENT TWO: GOD-HAMMER

During the last three years, Bellinda has travelled the Nine Kingdoms seeking heroes willing to join her crusade. Many rallied to her cause, pledging their service to the princess. But what she did not find was a warrior of sufficient power and stature to lead these heroes into battle against the Asmodean horde. When she asked her mother about such a man, the dragon simply smiled.

"You do not need a man, my child. You need a titan."

Antharia and Bellinda left the mortal lands for a while and travelled into the wilder worlds along the branches of the world tree. In one primeval paradise they discovered the ancient titan, Brontes God-Hammer. The Princess pleaded her case before the colossal warrior like a miniature figurine begging a man to aid them.

As the God-Hammer listened, he was struck by the nobility and purity of her convictions and her cause. It moved this man-mountain to leave behind his immortal paradise and again stray into the world of men. He has brought his hammer and Brontes intends to use it to lay low this unchecked villainy. He does not travel alone. He has summoned an old ally – Tassia of the Ghael.

Brontes has been charged by Bellinda to lead the heroes' brigade. It is his duty to hold the bridge. He will stand where the Victor stood eighty years before and bring destruction to any foolish enough to cross his path. It is a job he could probably do alone. Backed by five hundred elite warriors, paladins, priests and adventurers, he is a formidable presence on the battlefield.

Quickly it should become apparent to our villains that they must personally deal with the God-Hammer. None of their rank and file dare approach him. And the spectacular blows that those few who stray within reach receive only terrify the men further. With him in place, The Army of the White Unicorn controls the center of the battlefield. He must be laid low!

The PCs could send Naburus and Exuroth against the God-Hammer (assuming they successfully invoked the pit fiend's aid, see above). The pit fiend against the titan would be an epic battle (Note: Bronte's hammer is made of a mithral alloy and so counts as both good and silver against the devil's damage reduction). If the PCs do send Naburus let them take control of the pit fiend and his devilish ally and play the battle out. The author suspects that your players will jump at the chance to see this battle unfold. If, however, this does not appeal you can always simply roll dice. Brontes wins 50%, the Pit Fiend wins 40% and they destroy each other 10% of the time.

Brontes God-Hammer**CR 21****XP 409,600**

Male Elysian Titan

CG Colossal outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, good)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., *true seeing*; **Perception** +33**DEFENSE****AC** 37, touch 5, flat-footed 34 (+9 armor, +3 Dex, +23 natural, -8 size)**hp** 409 (21d10+294); regeneration 15 (evil)**Fort** +21, **Ref** +15, **Will** +21; +8 resistance vs. mind-affecting**DR** 15/evil; **Immune** aging, death effects, disease; **SR** 32**OFFENSE****Speed** 60 ft. (40 ft. in armor)**Melee** *maul of the titans* +33/+28/+23/+18 (6d8+28/17-20) or 2 slams +30 (2d8+17)**Space** 30 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.**Special Attacks** trample (2d8+25, DC 37)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 20th; concentration +27)**Constant**—*air walk*, *mind blank*, *true seeing***At will**—*bestow curse* (DC 21), *break enchantment*, *divination*, *greater dispel magic*, *sending***3/day**—*greater scrying* (DC 24), *heal*, *mass suggestion* (DC 23)**1/day**—*freedom*, *greater planar ally*, *meteor swarm* (DC 26)**TACTICS**

During Combat Brontes God-Hammer wields a hammer that could shatter a castle. He brought it to use it. He gets into melee as quickly as he can and then brings the hammer down. He will only pause to use some of his other magic if forced to do so. He will also use meteor swarm to break up large groups of enemies. If reduced to 102 hit points or less (25%) he will use *heal* to restore himself.

Morale Brontes is overconfident that he will emerge victorious. As a result, he waits too long to retreat. He only flees if he is out of *heal* spells and reduce to 40 hp (10%).

STATISTICS**Str** 45, **Dex** 16, **Con** 39, **Int** 21, **Wis** 28, **Cha** 24**Base Atk** +21; **CMB** +46; **CMD** 59**Feats** Awesome Blow, Critical Focus, Greater Sunder, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Vital Strike**Skills** Bluff +31, Craft (any) +29, Diplomacy +31, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (engineering) +26, Knowledge (planes) +29, Perception +33, Perform (any) +28, Sense Motive +33, Spellcraft +29, Use Magic Device +31**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Common; telepathy 300 ft.**SQ** change shape (any humanoid; *alter self*)**Gear** *maul of the titans*, +3 *breast plate***Tassia of the Ghaele****CR 13****XP — (She is Brontes' planar ally)**

CG Medium outsider (azata, chaotic, extraplanar, good, shape-changer)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect evil*, low-light vision, *see invisibility*; **Perception** +20**Aura** *holy aura***DEFENSE****AC** 28, touch 16, flat-footed 26 (+4 deflection, +1 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural)**hp** 136 (13d10+65)**Fort** +17, **Ref** +11, **Will** +16**DR** 10/cold iron and evil; **Immune** electricity, petrification; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 25**OFFENSE****Speed** 50 ft., fly 150 ft. (perfect)**Melee** +2 *holy greatsword* +22/+17/+12 (2d6+12)**Ranged** 2 light rays +14 ranged touch (2d12)**Special Attacks** gaze**OFFENSE****Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 13th)**Constant**—*detect evil*, *holy aura* (DC 21), *see invisibility***At will**—*aid*, *charm monster* (DC 17), *continual flame*, *cure light wounds*, *dancing lights*, *detect thoughts* (DC 15), *disguise self*, *dispel magic*, *hold monster* (DC 18), *greater invisibility* (self only), *major image* (DC 16), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)**3/day**—*globe of invulnerability***1/day**—*chain lightning* (DC 19), *prismatic spray* (DC 20), *wall of force***Spells Prepared** (CL 13th)**7th**—*holy word* (DC 21)**6th**—*banishment* (DC 20), *heal* (DC 20)**5th**—*flame strike* (DC 19), *raise dead*, *true seeing***4th**—*death ward*, *dismissal* (2) (DC 18), *divine power*, *restoration***3rd**—*cure serious wounds* (3), *searing light* (2)**2nd**—*aid*, *align weapon*, *bear's endurance*, *lesser restoration* (2)**1st**—*bless*, *command* (DC 15), *divine favor*, *obscuring mist*, *shield of faith***0** (at will)—*detect magic*, *purify food and drink*, *stabilize*, *virtue***TACTICS**

During Combat Tassia's focus is on supporting Brontes. She stays in light form with *greater invisibility* and *globe of invulnerability* on her self. She uses her light rays to damage the foes of Brontes and her other spell-like abilities to destroy his enemies (particularly *chain lightning* and *prismatic spray*). She cannot cast spells, but she can use *dispel magic* to try and eliminate any magic that afflict the titan.

If Brontes is in grave danger, only then will she cast off her light form to use *heal* upon the great titan. Thus revealed, she remains corporeal and begins to use her spells against the powerful foes she faces.

Morale As long as Brontes remains, Tassia fights beside him. Only if he falls does the shocked Tassia flee.

STATISTICS**Str** 25, **Dex** 12, **Con** 20, **Int** 16, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 17**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 31**Feats** Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Lightning Reflexes**Skills** Diplomacy +19, Escape Artist +17, Fly +25, Handle Animal +19, Knowledge (nature) +16, Knowledge (planes) +19, Perception +20, Sense Motive +20, Stealth +17**Languages** Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech**SQ** light form**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Gaze (Su) In humanoid form, a ghaele's gaze attack slays evil creatures of 5 HD or less (range 60 feet, Will DC 18 negates, shaken for 2d10 rounds on a successful save). Nonevil creatures, and evil creatures with more than 5 HD, must succeed on a DC 18 Will save or be shaken for 2d10 rounds. A creature that saves against a ghaele's gaze is immune to that particular ghaele's gaze for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DCs are Charisma-based

Light Form (Su) A ghaele can shift between its solid body and one made of light as a standard action. In solid form, it cannot fly or use light rays. In light form, it can fly and gains the incorporeal quality—it can make light ray attacks or use spell-like abilities in this form, but can't make physical attacks or cast spells. This ability otherwise functions similarly to a bralani's wind form ability.

Light Ray (Ex) A ghaele's light rays have a range of 300 feet. This attack bypasses all damage reduction.

Spells Ghaeles cast divine spells as 13th-level clerics. They do not gain access to domains or other cleric abilities.

EVENT THREE: THE PRINCESS, THE DRAGON AND THE ANGEL

After the defeat of the titan Brontes, there are only three combatants on the battlefield who truly matter to the PCs. First, is the dragon Antharia Regina. She perches invisible and concealed upon the Lesser Lord, surveying the battlefield. She is looking for the Lords of the Nine Knots, hoping to spring at them and engage them in one on one combat. The dragon knows that defeating these villains is key to her daughter's survival.

The dragon is patient and waits for just the right moment. Of course, the PCs may spot her and use magic to reveal her true nature. They may attack her, battling her at the top of the pillar. The battle between a flying silver great wyrm and our villains atop a great pillar of stones sounds suitably epic, so best to let that play out.

Defeating Antharia will be a major blow to the forces of good, but will only harden the Princess' resolve. The princess is with her knights and is accompanied by the solar who flies invisible above her at all during the battle.

At first, the princess uses only her wand of fireballs, blasting a fireball every round across the battlefield. She is saving her powerful spells for the great battle she knows is to come.

The solar will not remain invisible for long once battle is joined. She drops her *invisibility* as she fires barrages of *slaying arrows* at the forces of the Asmodean regime.

Where exactly Bellinda and the solar meets the PCs is dependent upon them. The princess has *overland flight* cast on herself, so she can fly to anywhere if need be. It could be that this is also an aerial battle. Bellinda and the solar are certainly prepared for such.

Wherever the confrontation takes place, this is the one which truly matters. If the princess is slain, her knights rush to her side too late. If her death is revealed to not be an illusion or other Asmodean trickery, then they fall back in panic and confusion. Of course, death is not necessarily the end for the princess. Both the dragon and the solar can resurrect her, given time. Thus it is important that all three of them be defeated together.

This final battle features three foes of immense complexity. Study their statistic blocks carefully and adjust their tactics to make this an exciting fight. The gloves are off for this epic battle. Do all you can to slay your PCs. If they emerge victorious, it will only make the results more memorable. And even if you do use the ending where the PCs die (see below) still play out the battle. This could be, even in defeat, your villains' finest hour.

THE FATE OF ARMIES

Compare the final Might score to this chart to determine the course of battle.

Might 0 or less: The bedraggled army of evil that comes to the Lords of Tamberlyn has suffered much in the last three years and this is the final indignity. The few mercenaries who actually hold their ground are run down by the Knights of the White Unicorn like grass. Still, if the PCs can slay Bellinda and make it back to the capital alive this still could be a sort of victory.

Might 1-5: Bellinda's army greatly outnumber the battered mercenary army that takes the field. Still, most of her troops are raw recruits and these are veteran mercenaries who have endured three years of non-stop conflict. This will be no easy victory, though odds greatly favor Bellinda.

Might 6-10: Bellinda's army outnumbers the regimes but only barely and many of her soldiers are fresh recruits. This could be a very close battle.

Might 11-15: Bellinda's army is outnumbered but less than two to one. What they lack numbers, they make up with conviction. The villains brings mercenaries fighting for pay. Bellinda brings heroes fighting for a cause.

Might 16-20: Bellinda's army is outnumbered by more than two to one. The regime has used their prestige and power to recruit many allies and now they come to Tamberlyn prepared for victory. Still, the army of Bellinda seems resolute and eager. Perhaps they have some small hope of victory.

Might 21-25: Bellinda's army is outnumbered by more than three to one. The regime's army is superior it would seem in every way save for spirit and determination. Still, the princess faces a grave defeat.

Might 26-30: Bellinda's army is outnumbered more than four to one. The army of the regime closes in on the small band of determined, but seemingly, doomed heroes who hold the field.

Might 31-39: Bellinda's army is outnumbered by more than five to one. A great war machine takes the field and before it, the princess' small band of heroes seems like a small shepherd boy facing a goliath.

Might 40+: Bellinda's army is outnumbered more than ten to one. There is little hope for the brave band of defenders who face this onslaught of evil. The regime's battle lines almost encircle the field of battle. Can there be any hope of victory against such overwhelming odds?

Bellinda of Talingarde

CR 22

XP 615,000

Female unique half-dragon elite human sorcerer 20

LG medium humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *see invisibility*, *true seeing*; **Perception** +28**DEFENSE****AC** 24, touch 12, flat-footed 24(+4 armor, +8 natural armor, +2 luck)
hp 210 (20d6+140)**Fort** +20, **Ref** +13, **Will** +27; +8 vs. mind-affecting spells and effects**Immune** cold, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 32**DR** 10/adamantine (150 hp until discharged)**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)**Melee** 2 claws +13/+8 (1d6+3+1d6 cold)**Special Attacks** breath weapon**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 20th; concentration +35)**9th (8/day)**—*fiery body*, *meteor swarm*, *time stop*, *wish*^B**8th (8/day)**—*form of the dragon III*^B, *mind blank*, *polar ray*, *storm bolts***7th (9/day)**—*banishment*, *form of the dragon II*^B, *greater teleport*, *mage's sword***6th (9/day)**—*chain lightning*, *form of the dragon I*^B, *greater heroism*, *true seeing***5th (9/day)**—*cone of cold*, *dismissal*, *mage's private sanctum*, *permanency*, *spell resistance*^B**4th (9/day)**—*charm monster*, *fear*^B, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*, *wall of ice***3rd (10/day)**—*dispel magic*, *fly*^B, *keen edge*, *lightning bolt*, *phantom steed***2nd (10/day)**—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *disguise other*, *resist energy*^B, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility***1st (10/day)**—*expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *protection from evil*, *shield*, *unseen servant***0 (at will)**—*arcane mark*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic***Bloodline** draconic**TACTICS**

Before Combat Every day, Bellinda casts *mind blank* and *mage armor* on herself. She has a permanent *see invisibility* on herself as well. She has *stoneskin* active (200 minutes duration) also. Before the battle begins she casts *true seeing* and *spell resistance* on herself (both have durations of 20 minutes). All of these effects are included in her statistics.

Bellinda's great fear is that she will face a foe who, in this critical battle, will strip her of her magic. So, earlier today she used *wish* with this phrase: "I wish that today no spell cast by myself will be dispelled or negated by anyone but myself." This falls under the wish category of "undo misfortune". So if anyone casts a *dispel magic* or *mage's disjunction* against Bellinda and it penetrates her spell resistance, this lingering magic leaps into effect and cancels the magic. This powerful magic will only work once.

During Combat As soon as combat begins with the Nine Knots, Bellinda casts *time stop*. She uses her time stop to cast *form of the dragon III* and *fiery body* upon herself, becoming a huge dragon of silvery flame. If she has any additional actions she also casts *greater invisibility*, *bear's endurance* and *protection from evil* in that order.

Form of the Dragon III and *fiery body* together makes her immune to fire, blindness, critical hits, ability score damage, deafness, drowning, electricity, poison, stunning and all spells that effect physiology or respiration. She gains a +10 size bonus to STR, +8 size bonus to CON, and a +6 enhancement bonus to DEX. She gains a *frightful presence* (DC 35), and her darkvision increases to 120 ft. There are other effects, but these are the major ones. These spells last for 20 minutes each. They are not included in her statistics.

If, despite her *wish*, these effects are removed, she will immediately cast *time stop* again and try to reestablish them if she has spells remaining.

Though through her magic, Bellinda has become a fearsome melee combatant, she still realizes this is likely not her strongest suit. Instead, she uses her massive array of spells to rain down death upon her foe. Her favorite spell is *meteor swarm* (made ore dangerous by *fiery body*) and she uses it as often as she can. Using her spell perfection feat she can also follow that with a quickened *cone of cold* (using her 5th level slots). She can keep up this one-two punch of fire and ice for many rounds. Though she has some healing with her, she largely relies on her allies to heal her, instead preferring her spells.

If she faces obviously infernal foes, she will use *banishment* to send them to back to hell.

Morale Bellinda knows that today she must prevail. She fights to the death.

STATISTICS**Str** 16, **Dex** 10, **Con** 20, **Int** 18, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 40**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 23**Feats** Eschew Materials, Extend Spell, Greater Spell Focus (Evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Maximize Spell, Quickened Spell, Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Penetration, Spell Perfection, Toughness**Skills** Diplomacy +39, Fly +23, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Perception +28, Sense Motive +25, Spellcraft +27, Use Magic Device +28**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Infernal**Traits** Princess: Gain a +1 trait bonus to diplomacy and intimidate and diplomacy is always a class skill for you.

Indomitable Faith +1 to will saves

Combat Gear *potion of magic vestment* +5, 4 *potions of cure serious wounds***Other Gear** *headband of mental superiority* +6, *staff of power*, *wand of fireball (50 charges)*, *cloak of resistance* +5, a small pouch of silver dragon scales, holy symbol of Mitra, signet ring of House Darius, Crown of Talingarde (worth 75,000 gp in mithral and diamond)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Bloodline Arcana (Ex): Whenever Bellinda casts a spell with an energy descriptor of cold that spell deals +1 point of damage per die rolled.

Breath Weapon (Su): Bellinda has a breath weapon. This breath weapon deals 20d6 cold damage (DC 35 vs. Reflex for half). The breath weapon is a 30 ft. cone. Bellinda can use this ability three times per day.

Claws (Su): Bellinda can grow claws as a free action. These claws are treated as natural weapons, allowing her to make two claw attacks as a full attack action using your full base attack bonus. Each of these attacks deals 1d6 points of damage plus your Strength modifier plus 1d6 points of cold damage. These claws are considered magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming DR. Bellinda can use these claws for 18 rounds per day. These rounds do not need to be consecutive.

Dragon Resistances (Ex): Bellinda gains resist cold 10 and a +4 to natural armor.

Power of Flight (Su): Thanks to Bellinda's unusual parentage, she has a flight speed even though she does manifest wings. Instead this flight is a purely magical effect. She has a fly speed of 60 feet with perfect maneuverability.

Power of Wyrms (Su): At 20th level, Bellinda's full draconic heritage becomes manifest. She gained immunity to paralysis, sleep, and cold damage. She also gained blindsense 60 feet.



Antharia Regina the Silver**CR 22****XP 615,000**

Female unique silver dragon great wyrm

LG Colossal dragon (cold)

Init +2; **Senses** dragon senses, fog vision; **Perception** +40**Aura** cold(10 ft., 2d6 cold), frightful presence (360 ft., DC 32)**DEFENSE****AC** 50, touch 0, flat-footed 50 (-2 Dex, +11 armor, +39 natural, -8 size)**hp** 420 (29d12+232)**Fort** +24, **Ref** +16, **Will** +26**Defensive Abilities** reflective scales, true courage; **DR** 20/magic;**Immune** acid, cold, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 33**Weaknesses** vulnerability to fire**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft., fly 250 ft. (poor); cloudwalking, graceful flight**Melee** bite +36 (4d8+21/19–20), 2 claws +35 (4d6+14), tail slap +33 (4d6+21), 2 wings +33 (2d8+7)**Space** 30 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (30 ft. with bite)**Special Attacks** breath weapon (70-ft. cone, DC 32, 24d8 cold), crush (4d8+21, DC 32), paralyzing breath, tail sweep (2d8+21, DC 32)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 19th; concentration +37)**At will**—*control weather, control winds, detect evil, feather fall, fog cloud, reverse gravity***Spells Known** (CL 19th; concentration +27)**9th (4/day)**—*imprisonment* (DC 27), *true resurrection***8th (7/day)**—*greater spell immunity, holy aura* (DC 26), *mass cure critical wounds***7th (7/day)**—*greater scrying, holy word* (DC 25), *mass invisibility***6th (7/day)**—*banishment* (DC 24), *greater dispel magic, heal***5th (7/day)**—*break enchantment, flame strike* (DC 23), *plane shift, wall of force***4th (8/day)**—*dimension door, freedom of movement, restoration, solid fog***3rd (8/day)**—*cure serious wounds, dispel magic, hold person* (DC 21), *wind wall***2nd (8/day)**—*augury, cure moderate wounds, invisibility, resist energy, web* (DC 20)**1st (8/day)**—*bless, divine favor, protection from evil, shield, true strike***0 (at will)**—*detect magic, flare* (DC 18), *light, message, prestidigitation, read magic, stabilize, resistance, virtue***Note:** A silver dragon can cast cleric spells as arcane spells**TACTICS**

Before Combat Feel free to tinker with Antharia's spell list to match the strengths and weaknesses of the villains. Antharia has spoken extensively with her daughter and between those conversations and the divinatory powers of herself and Phaeton, you can assume she is very familiar with the PCs.

She casts *freedom of movement* (190 minutes), *greater spell immunity* (190 minutes) and *resist energy* (fire, electricity and sonic; also 190 minutes) on herself before the Battle of Second Tamberlyn. She reserves *holy aura* (19 rounds) until the final engagement.

Antharia will change shape before the battle and assume the form of a typical knight of the Alerion. She will keep close to her daughter, serving as her bodyguard. Antharia hopes that by staying in disguise, her presence in the battle may be undetected until the moment of the inevitable final show down between the Lords of the Nine Knots and her daughter. Only then, will she reveal herself and swiftly bring about their doom. It pains her to not take a more direct role in the battle, but this must be done.

During Combat Antharia is an extremely versatile combatant with countless battle options. She is also both brilliant and wise and so is able to quickly adapt to any situation..

Still, she has prepared something "special" for our villains. Antharia has mastered the spell *imprisonment*. She has kept her knowledge of the spell a closely guarded secret and hopes that the villains will not have *freedom* prepared. She intends to imprison any melee combatants (who likely have low will saves) in the earth and leave them to rot their for all eternity

Unsupported, she can then attack spellcasters with her powerful paralyzing breath (which requires a DC 32 fortitude save to resist) or rip them to pieces with her vicious melee barrage. With her magical armor, her armor class is simply insane and so Antharia is not at all afraid to wade into battle against any foe. This confidence can be a weakness, as Antharia is very susceptible to touch attacks and spells with reflex saves.

Morale Though Antharia has been content to act subtly for centuries, she is now certain that she faces the greatest evil of this age. She fights to the death to defeat it.

STATISTICS**Str** 39, **Dex** 6, **Con** 27, **Int** 26, **Wis** 27, **Cha** 26**Base Atk** +39; **CMB** +51; **CMD** 59 (63 vs. trip)**Feats** Arcane Armor Training, Arcane Armor Mastery^B, Critical Focus, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Light Armor Proficiency, Lighting Reflexes, Medium Armor Proficiency^B, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Skill Focus (Fly), Snatch, Weapon Focus (bite)**Skills** Acrobatics +27 (+31 jump), Diplomacy +40, Fly +24, Heal +40, Intimidate +40, Knowledge (arcana, history, local, nobility, planes) +40, Perception +40, Sense Motive +40, Spellcraft +40, Survival +40**Languages** Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Halfling, Giant, Terran**SQ** change shape**Gear** mithral heavy fortification breastplate +5**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Change Shape (Su) A silver dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form 3/day as if using polymorph.

Cloudwalking (Su) A very young or older silver dragon can tread on clouds or fog as though on solid ground.

Cold Aura (Su) An old or older silver dragon is surrounded by an aura of cold. All creatures within 5 feet of the dragon take 1d6 points of cold damage at the beginning of the dragon's turn. An ancient dragon's aura extends to 10 feet. A great wyrm's aura damage increases to 2d6. A silver dragon can suppress or activate this aura at will as a free action.

Fog Vision (Ex) A juvenile or older silver dragon can see perfectly well in fog and clouds.

Graceful Flight (Ex) A young or older silver dragon's aerial maneuverability is one step better than normal.

Paralyzing Breath (Su) Instead of a cone of cold, a silver dragon can breathe a cone of paralyzing gas. Creatures within the cone must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 32) or be paralyzed for 1d6+12 rounds.

Reflective Scales (Su) Any spell that targets an ancient or older silver dragon but fails to penetrate the silver dragon's spell resistance might be reflected. If the caster level check to penetrate the dragon's spell resistance is failed by 5 or more, the spell is reflected. If the check fails by 4 or less, the spell is merely wasted. This otherwise functions as spell turning.

True Courage (Ex) A great wyrm silver dragon can fight on through pain and death. When reduced to below 0 hit points, it remains conscious, automatically stabilizes, and can continue to act (although it is staggered). If it takes damage or is the target of a spell that causes its death, it remains alive for 1 round and can act normally (it is not staggered for this final round).

Phaethysa of the Radiant Dawn

CR 23

XP 819,200

Female Solar (of Mitra)

NG Large outsider (angel, extraplanar, good)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *detect evil*, *detect snares and pits*, *true seeing*; **Perception** +33**Aura** protective aura

DEFENSE

AC 44, touch 11, flat-footed 42 (+14 armor, +1 Dex, +1 dodge, +19 natural, -1 size; +4 deflection vs. evil)**hp** 363 (22d10+242); regeneration 15 (evil artifacts, effects, and spells)**Fort** +25, **Ref** +14, **Will** +23; +4 vs. poison, +4 resistance vs. evil**DR** 15/epic and evil; **Immune** acid, cold, petrification; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 34

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., fly 150 ft. (good); 35 ft., fly 100 ft. (good) in armor**Melee** +5 *dancing greatsword* +35/+30/+25/+20 (3d6+18) or slam +30 (2d8+13)**Ranged** +5 *composite longbow* (+9 Str bonus) +31/+26/+21/+16 (2d6+14 plus *slaying arrow*)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)

Constant—*detect evil*, *detect snares and pits*, *discern lies* (DC 21), *true seeing***At Will**—*aid*, *animate objects*, *commune*, *continual flame*, *dimensional anchor*, *greater dispel magic*, *holy smite* (DC 21), *imprisonment* (DC 26), *invisibility* (self only), *lesser restoration*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*, *remove fear*, *resist energy*, *summon monster VII*, *speak with dead* (DC 20), *waves of fatigue***3/day**—*blade barrier* (DC 23), *earthquake* (DC 25), *heal*, *mass charm monster* (DC 25), *permanency*, *resurrection*, *waves of exhaustion***1/day**—*greater restoration*, *power word blind*, *power word kill*, *power word stun*, *prismatic spray* (DC 24), *wish*

Spells Prepared (CL 20th)

9th—*greater communal spell immunity*, *mass heal*, *miracle*, *storm of vengeance* (DC 27)**8th**—*fire storm* (DC 26), *holy aura*(2) (DC 26), *mass cure critical wounds* (2)**7th**—*destruction* (DC 25), *dictum* (DC 25), *ethereal jaunt*, *holy word* (DC 25), *regenerate***6th**—*banishment* (DC 24), *heroes' feast*, *mass cure moderate wounds*, *undead to death* (DC 24), *word of recall***5th**—*break enchantment*, *breath of life*, *dispel evil* (DC 23), *plane shift* (DC 23), *righteous might*, *symbol of sleep* (DC 23)**4th**—*cure critical wounds* (3), *death ward*, *dismissal* (DC 22), *neutralize poison* (2) (DC 22)**3rd**—*cure serious wounds*, *daylight*, *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against evil*, *prayer*, *protection from energy*, *wind wall***2nd**—*align weapon*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *consecrate*, *cure moderate wounds* (2), *eagle's splendor***1st**—*bless*, *cure light wounds* (3), *divine favor*, *entropic shield*, *shield of faith***0 (at will)**—*detect magic*, *purify food and drink*, *stabilize*, *virtue*

TACTICS

Before Combat Before the final battle, the solar will have talked extensively with Bellinda about all she knows about our villains. Between that consultation and divine inspiration straight from Mitra, you can assume that Phaethysa knows your PCs as well as you do. Thus, you should feel free to tinker with her spell list to make sure she is ready for whatever tricks the PCs most commonly use. She will use greater communal spell immunity to resist any favorite or signature spells of the PCs.

Given time to prepare the solar will cast *greater communal spell immunity* (choose five spells; 200 minutes divided amongst allies), *resist energy* (sonic; lasts for 200 minutes), *death ward* (20 minutes) and *holy aura* (20 rounds) on itself before any battle.

TACTICS

During Combat The solar is an incredibly versatile, powerful combatant. With so many spells and spell-like abilities at her disposal there is almost no tactic which this powerful celestial could not adopt if it so chose. This is an enemy you should sit down and take a moment to both research and tailor to your PCs. The time you spend will make the final fight all the more epic and climactic.

The solar generally prefers to keep to the air and use barrages of *slaying arrows* plus its massive spell compliment to destroy its foes. In particular, it will target slaying arrows preferentially at spellcasters, as it realizes they are likely to be more susceptible to a DC 20 Fortitude save and the 50 points of damage if they fail.

If melee combat looks likely, the solar will sacrifice an action to activate its greatsword's dancing ability. It will then let the sword fight as it uses its spell array to compliment the damage the greatsword can deal.

Trying to mob the solar with lesser minions is a futile gesture. The solar simply flies above such a mob and casts *storm of vengeance*. For ten rounds, the solar will destroy almost anything within a 360 ft. radius.

Do not forget that Phaethysa has epic damage resistance. In the entire campaign, the PCs will only encounter two items that can potentially grant them the epic tag. A fully assembled *Helbrandr* should count as epic against this angel and if the PCs managed to enhance the *Hadean Signet*, it will grant them epic attacks.

If this mighty angel has a weakness it is this – the solar is perhaps too quick to aid its allies. When it should be focusing on laying its foes low, it will instead take an action to cast spells like *mass heal* and *greater dispel magic* to save the lives and alleviate the suffering of its allies. Clever opponents could use this to their advantage, threatening allies of Phaethysa and thus causing the angel to waste actions.

Fundamentally, you can think of Phaethysa as a divine assassin. She has been sent to this plane with only one mission – ensure that Talingarde does not fall into Asmodean hands. What has become so clear to Mitra is that the only way to ensure this is to destroy the Nine Knots once and for all. Once broken and sent to hell will Talingarde be free of their blight.

Morale Phaethysa is completely dedicated to her mission here upon the prime material plane. She will not rest until the will of Mitra is done and she is fearless in the face of evil. She will only retreat temporarily to save a comrade and then only long enough to ensure that they are safe. Phaethysa otherwise fights to the death. Her mission is too critical to deserve anything less.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 20, **Con** 30, **Int** 23, **Wis** 27, **Cha** 25**Base Atk** +22; **CMB** +32; **CMD** 47**Feats** Cleave, Deadly Aim, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Power Attack, Toughness**Skills** Craft (any one) +31, Diplomacy +32, Fly +32, Knowledge (history) +31, Knowledge (nature) +31, Knowledge (planes) +31, Knowledge (religion) +31, Perception +33, Sense Motive +33, Spellcraft +31, Stealth +21, Survival +31**Languages** Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech**SQ** change shape (alter self)**Gear** +5 *full plate*, +5 *dancing greatsword*, +5 *composite longbow* [+9 Str bonus], 25000 gp in diamond dust (for *miracle*)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Slaying Arrow (Su) A solar's bow needs no ammunition, and automatically creates a slaying arrow of the solar's choice when drawn.

Spells Solars can cast divine spells as 20th-level clerics. They do not gain access to domains or other cleric abilities.



Act Four: Tamberlyn

ENDING #1: DARKNESS VICTORIOUS

Read this to your players:

With the death of Bellinda, Antharia Regina and the Solar the great triumvirate of Mitra is broken on this plane. The great powers of good have been thwarted and their forces have been scattered. And this has been done in full sight of almost every virtuous hero from both this country and its neighbors. There can be no doubt who rules this land now – Asmodeus and his servants.

Talingarde is yours.

For each of you, this is the culmination of all your hopes and dreams. For the last three years you have reigned in name only. Always the common people of Talingarde, no matter how they bowed and scraped before you, knew that somewhere out there, hidden by the hand of Mitra, was their beloved princess. Their princess who had slain Chargammon the Black would return in time with a new army and wipe you devil-worshipping heretics from creation.

She did return.

And she failed.

And all now know it.

Even for the most devout, there can be no doubt. It is time to accept that the world has turned. The reign of the Asmodeans has come. This darkness shall endure.

You lead what remains of your army back to Matharyn. There is no victory celebration. No peasants throng and cheer. Few can even meet your fearsome gaze. The city has fallen silent. Everywhere news of the princess' death spreads like wildfire.

Back at the Old Palace the mood is more jubilant. Your pack of quislings are more effusive even than usual and the praise of your great victory never ceases. Talk circulates around of arranging a formal triumph, a celebration in the style of the kings and emperors of old.

Yes, they heap their praises upon you. But even here among this pack of lackeys, you can sense something behind their every word.

Fear.

They are terrified of you. They are terrified of what you've done and what you will do. They shake and tremble at your passing.

They are right to be afraid. Now you truly have rulership over a kingdom. This slaughter was only the beginning...

ENDING #2: DARKNESS DEFEATED

The Battle of Second Tamberlyn may seem deadly enough with out any changes, but it is possible to create a battle that your PCs cannot win. Phaethysa of the Radiant Dawn is not alone. A second solar (identical statistics) has joined her and this avatar of vengeance wears the face of the fallen Sir Richard.

Several times in this entire campaign, since the triton Nerianus lay dying at their feet, holy men and celestials of Mitra have spoken the words *"it will be the son who brings your doom."* At last the prophecy is fulfilled. Here is a shining son of Mitra, come at last to deliver justice for our villains' thousand sins and to atone for his own.

Antharia Regina does not attack first and alone. She waits until battle with Bellinda is joined to reveal herself. The PCs in their final battle face two solars, a silver dragon great wyrm and a level 20 elite half-dragon sorcerer. That encounter would be worth roughly 2.8 million XP. It's off the charts of the xp table of the Pathfinder Core Rulebook but would probably be CR 27. And this must be done after fighting a CR 21 titan. Is Naburus still here? He abandons them as he sees what is mustered against them. Only Grumblejack amongst their cohorts stays with them to the last, ready to die alongside his masters. Do the PCs also flee? Neither fast nor far enough.

No matter how optimized or how many allies they bring, that should be enough. Is it not? Do you worry about the PCs actually winning? You could always add a half dozen planetars (you'll find their stats in Act III) to support Bellinda. Mitra will not be denied his victory. Once the battle is finally over and the last PCs remains barely alive and surrounded by enemies, read this:

How can this be? How can you have been defeated by that...that...girl! Dragons! Angels! How did she muster such might? Where was Asmodeus? Where was your dark father? He has always aided you before. Why not now? Where were his legions to answer Mitra's might?

But now, it matters not. With your last breath, you see knights holding the standard of the white unicorn charge the field and scatter your army. Your glorious, mighty, worthless army. They betrayed you. They all betrayed you!

Darkness comes in time for us all and today it comes for you. One by one your lives are extinguished and your enemies lay you low. One by one you perish. By their thousands they cheer your destruction. Unmourned you die in the shadow of the uncaring Lords of Tamberlyn.

And then comes the fall. You pass beyond the veil of this world and into the next, and there, into the embrace of fire...

EPILOGUE:

WHAT COMES AFTER?

With the Second Battle of Tamberlyn completed, one way or another we are finished with this campaign. Either the PCs are all dead or they have dealt with every major enemy upon this island that you could throw against them. They are now this island's unquestioned masters. Either way, we are finished here. "Way of the Wicked" is complete.

And there really is little room for more adventures to come. After all, the PCs are 20th level. The Pathfinder Roleplaying Game goes no further. I suppose that you could use the soon to be published Mythic rules to keep on playing, but you are on your own there. And besides, I suspect that you are ready for a change of pace. It's fun to be a bad guy. I hope we've proven that. But it's also fun to be a hero. Why not give that a try for a while?

Actually, there is just one more thing...

Put away the dice. You've likely been playing this campaign with people the author hopes are your friends for several months and perhaps years. You've come a long way together. Whether this is your first campaign together or whether you are a well established group, you've earned a moment of reflection.

Read this to your players:

And so we are finished with this campaign. At last together we have come to the end of "The Way of the Wicked." But I have one more question for each of you to answer. Whether you succeeded at your goals or failed dramatically, each of your villains has lived a life of consequence. You have changed the fate of at least Talingarde and perhaps the world. But how?

Now is the time to answer that question. In a hundred years who will remember your villain's name? Will they curse you as a monster who afflicted the land or will they see you more sympathetically? In short, I want to know – what is your character's legacy?

We'll go around the table and answer this each in turn.

And then, my friend, it is time to do something most game masters find nearly impossible – be quiet. Listen to the players' answers and say nothing. Let each player have a last in-character moment to describe what their villain's legacy will be and what it means. Don't correct them. Don't contradict them.

Let them speak.

When they are at last done, then it is time to have your say. You ran the campaign, so you get the last word. Pause for a moment. Evaluate carefully everything they have said and everything that they have done in the course of this adventure path and decide what Talingarde will look like in a hundred years and perhaps beyond. Describe the world that they have made through their repeated and unabashed acts of villainy.

I'm afraid that this is text I cannot write for you. What needs to be said is simply too dependent upon your PCs actions, hopes and dreams. I suppose I can make a few suggestions.

Let your own imagination run free. There are no right answers or wrong. You no longer have to worry about the repercussions of your decisions upon the playability of the campaign. Anything is possible. There are no limits. There is only something that you and your players have built together – the future of this ragged, wartorn isle.

Will Talingarde ever recover from having such villains work and scheme within it? Will Talingarde return to being the shining pinnacle of virtue it once was? Has this period of roughly five or six years scarred it too badly? Or has surviving such unimaginable hardship only made the people stronger. Will they arise anew – tested and triumphant. Will the new Queen Bellinda called the White lead it to a glorious future?

Or has Talingarde earned a darker sort of destiny. Has there arisen from this island a new dynasty of unimaginable wickedness? Perhaps Talingarde is only the first nation to fall before this new regime. Perhaps in just a few years an infernal warmachine emerges from this once obscure island that challenges the freedom of the entire world! Perhaps our villains' legacy is ultimately one of conquest and death and spreading darkness...

Or is it something else altogether? Have you and your PCs together accomplished something far cooler, far more imaginative than anything this writer could have ever conceived?

I hope so.

THUS ENDS THE WAY OF THE WICKED

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

HELLBOUND PART TWO

OPTIONS FOR THOSE IN THE SERVICE OF ASMODEUS

BY JASON BULMAHN

SPELLS

Those who draw upon the magic of hell do so at great risk to their eternal soul. The infernal powers give their gifts easily, but they always come with a price. Yet many spellcasters are willing to risk damnation for a chance at even greater magic.

These spells are available to the appropriate divine classes automatically as long as they remain in Asmodeus' good graces. For arcane casters with an evil bent, they can either be acquired through personal research or perhaps as gifts from Thorn for superlative service.

Corrupt Item

School evocation; **Level** antipaladin 2, cleric 2, sorcerer/wizard 2, witch 2

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S

EFFECT

Range touch
Target one object of up to 2 cu. ft./level
Duration 1 min./level
Saving Throw Will negates (object); **Spell Resistance** yes (object)

DESCRIPTION

This spell infuses an item with the foul powers of hell. The item gains an evil aura, equal in strength to its magic aura. Whenever a creature bearing this item presents it to an evil outsider, he gains a +4 bonus on all Charisma-based skill checks made in relation to the creature. If the item is a weapon, it counts as evil for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction and it deals an additional 1d6 points of damage to any good creature it strikes.

Any good creature possessing the item gains one negative level. This negative level remains as long as the item is in the creature's possession and disappear when the item is put down or dropped. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in anyway while the item is in the creature's possession.

Dark Blessing

School enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** antipaladin 1, cleric 1, inquisitor 1

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, DF

EFFECT

Range 50 ft.
Area The caster and allies within a 50-ft. burst, centered on the caster
Duration 1 min./level
Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

DESCRIPTION

Dark blessing grants you and your allies a spark of infernal power. You and each ally in range gains a +1 morale bonus on weapon damage rolls and on saving throws against compulsion effects

Gift of Asmodeus

School transmutation; **Level** antipaladin 4, cleric 6, inquisitor 5

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, DF

EFFECT

Range personal
Target you
Duration 1 round/level

DESCRIPTION

The infernal power of Asmodeus surges through you, causing you to become a twisted version of yourself. Your skin turns red and scaly, granting you a +2 enhancement to your natural armor bonus and DR 10/good. Your hands twist into a pair of wicked claws that grant you two primary natural attacks that deal 1d8 points of slashing damage (if you are Medium).

In addition, your tongue becomes long and forked, allowing you to make a primary natural attack that deals 2d6 points of fire damage on a successful hit. This attack has reach, but can be used to attack foes adjacent to you.

You are also surrounded by a nimbus of flame. Any creature that is adjacent to you at the start of your turn takes 2d6 points of fire damage. This nimbus also grants you resist fire 10.

Finally, you can end this effect prematurely to unleash a ray of pure hellfire as a standard action. Hitting a target with this ray requires a ranged touch attack. The ray deals 4d6 points of damage plus 1d6 points of damage for each round you have remaining in the duration. Half of this damage is fire damage, while the other half is unholy which ignores any resistances the target might have. Any spell resistance the target might have applies to this ray.

Hellfire

School evocation [evil, fire]; **Level** magus 3, sorcerer/wizard 4, summoner 3, witch 4

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (a pinch of brimstone)

EFFECT

Range short (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area 10-ft.-radius spread
Duration instantaneous (see text)
Saving Throw Reflex half (see text); **Spell Resistance** yes

DESCRIPTION

By uttering certain blasphemous incantations, you can cause a roiling ball of hellfire to explode nearby. This hell fire deals 6d6 points of damage to all those caught within. Half of this damage is fire damage, while the other half is unholy damage that is not reduced by resistances or immunities. A reflex save halves both damage types equally.

In addition to the damage, good creatures caught in this blast is covered in painful burns and blisters that cause the creature to take a -2 penalty on Reflex saving throws and all Dexterity-based skills and checks for one round per level of the caster.

In addition, the burns cause good creatures to lose any resistance they have to fire damage and it reduces any immunity to fire damage such creatures might possess to resistance 20 against fire.

If the good creature succeeds at its Reflex saving throw against this spell, the duration of the burns is also reduced to just one round.

Inferno Crevasse

School evocation [evil, fire]; **Level** antipaladin 4, cleric 6, inquisitor 5

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S

EFFECT

Range 100 ft.
Area up to one 5-ft.cube/level (S)
Duration 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw none (see text); **Spell Resistance** no

DESCRIPTION

This spell causes a great crack to open up from the ground that leads directly to the darkest pits of hell. The crack starts in a square adjacent to you, and each additional area containing the widening crack must be adjacent to another square. Creatures occupying one of these squares when the crack forms takes 1d6 points of damage per level of the caster. Half of this damage is fire damage, while the other half is unholy damage that is not reduced by resistances or immunities. A successful Reflex save halves this damage. After the crack opens, any creature entering a square containing the crack takes this damage, with no save allowed.

In addition, each round, on the caster's turn the claws and tails of devils reach out from this crack, attacking any non-evil creature occupying or adjacent to a square containing the crack. These attacks are made with a bonus equal to the caster level + the caster's Charisma modifier. Only one attack is made against each creature. These attacks deal 1d8 points of slashing damage + the caster level. If the attack hits, the target is also entangled until the caster's next turn. Targets entangled in this way lose the condition if they move to a square that is not adjacent to any square containing the crevasse.

Finally, if any summon spell is cast within 30 feet of the crack, the creature summoned must be a devil or a creature with the fiendish template and such creatures appear by crawling out of the crack. The duration of any such spells is doubled so long as it was cast near the crack. This doubling does not stack with the Extend Spell feat or similar effects.

Taint of the Pit

School transmutation (polymorph); **Level** bard 4, cleric 5, sorcerer/wizard 5, witch 5

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S

EFFECT

Range touch
Duration 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

DESCRIPTION

This spell causes a creature to take on the aspects of a creature from the lower planes. The creature gains darkvision out to a range of 60 feet. It also gains resistance to cold and fire, as well as damage reduction, depending on its total Hit Dice, as noted on the following table.

Hit Dice	Resist Cold and Fire	Damage Reduction
1-4	5	—
5-10	10	5/good
11+	15	10/good

In addition, the target of this spell can smite a good creature as a swift action, adding its Charisma bonus on attack rolls against that creature and a bonus on weapon damage rolls equal to its Hit Dice against that creature. This smite only affects good creatures and it persists until the creature is slain or this spell ends. The target of this spell can only smite good once per day, even if this spell is cast upon it more than one time.

A creature under the effects of this spell detects as evil and is affected by spells and magic items as if it were an evil creature, in addition to any other alignment it might possess. If the creature already possesses any of these traits from another source (such as the fiendish simple template), these abilities do not stack.

MAGIC ITEMS

The gifts of Asmodeus take many forms, but few are as insidious as the magic items created by his devils and other servants. While some are used to further the tyrannical goals of Asmodeus, others are left for the innocent to find, to further spread his corruption and influence.

These treasures represent the pinnacle of diabolic magic here on the prime material plane. They are direct expressions of the Devil God's will. And so, using them should give our villains a unique opportunity to be wicked.

Amulet of Flame

Aura moderate conjuration; **CL** 7th
Slot neck; **Price** 3,800 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

This stylized bronze amulet is made to look like a dancing flame, suspending from a spiked chain. The wearer of this amulet gains fire resistance 10. Once the amulet has absorbed 100 points of fire damage, it melts and summons the Slave of the Amulet (a medium fire elemental with the fiendish simple template; see below for stats). This elemental is thoroughly evil and not under the control of the wearer, but it can be bargained with, as per the spell *lesser planar ally*.

If no accord is struck within 3 rounds, the elemental attacks the former wearer of the amulet until slain. If a deal is agreed upon, the elemental remains for up to 1 week before returning to the lower planes. Regardless of the outcome, this amulet is destroyed once it has absorbed 100 points of fire damage.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *lesser planar ally*, *resist energy*; **Cost** 1,900 gp

Blade of the Pit

Aura strong conjuration; **CL** 13th
Slot none; **Price** 68,735 gp; **Weight** 8 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This +2 *keen flaming bastard sword* is made from a solid piece of jagged black stone, carefully carved to look like a tongue of flame. Once per day, when the wearer successfully confirms a critical hit against a creature, he can, as an immediate action, send that creature to hell, as per the spell *plane shift*. The target can make a DC 20 Will save to negate this effect. If the saving throw fails, the creature arrives in a special prison in hell.

Each round that the creature spends in hell, the pitiful soul takes 8d6 points of fire damage and 4d6 points of piercing damage from the ever constricting chains that surround it. Each round, the creature can attempt a new Will save, with success indicating that the creature is returned to the spot from which it was imprisoned (or the nearest open square if his previous square is occupied). The creature can act normally each round it spends in hell and can use its abilities to escape if possible.

The sword is very evil, and any good character that wields it gains two negative levels. These negative levels remain as long as the sword is wielded and disappears the moment it is dropped or stored. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way while the sword is wielded.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *fireball*, *keen edge*, *plane shift*; **Cost** 34,535 gp

USING THESE MAGIC ITEMS

None of these magic items appear in this campaign (besides the *Crown of Hell* in Act II above). So the reader may rightly ask what use are they? These items can either replace more standard treasure or they could represent gifts from the dark lord himself.

For example, if you have a hand to hand combatant in your party, when he uses his fists to pummel his first good celestial, the blood of that angel may coagulate and harden into a set of *claws of asmodeus*. In this way, you allow these items to come into play, emphasize the villainous nature of this campaign and create a memorable way of introducing a new treasure.

Slave of the Amulet

CR 3

XP —

Unique fiendish fire elemental
LE Medium outsider (elemental, extraplanar, fire)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +7

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural)
hp 30 (4d10+8)
Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +1
Immune elemental traits, fire; **SR** 8
Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.
Melee slam +7 (1d6+1 plus burn)
Special Attacks burn (1d6, DC 14)

TACTICS

During Combat The Slave either obeys its masters command or tries to kill its so-called master (see the magic item above for details). Either way it moves swiftly and slams repeatedly seeking to burn its enemies to death.

Morale The elemental fights to the death or until it returns to the infernal realms from whence it came.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 17, **Con** 14, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 12
Base Atk +4; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19
Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative^B, Mobility, Weapon Finesse^B
Skills Acrobatics +8, Climb +5, Escape Artist +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +7

Languages Infernal, Ignan

SPECIAL QUALITIES

Burn (Ex) A fire elemental deals fire damage in addition to damage dealt on a successful hit in melee. Those affected by the burn ability must also succeed on a Reflex save or catch fire, taking the listed damage for an additional 1d4 rounds at the start of its turn. A burning creature can attempt a new save as a full-round action. Dropping and rolling on the ground grants a +4 bonus on this save. Creatures that hit a burning creature with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take fire damage as though hit by the burning creature and must make a Reflex save to avoid catching on fire.

Smite Good (Su) Once per day, the fiendish creature may smite a good-aligned creature. As a swift action, the creature chooses one target within sight to smite. If this target is good, the creature adds its Charisma bonus (+1) to attack rolls and gains a damage bonus equal to its HD against that foe (+4). This effect persists until the target is dead or the creature rests.

Claws of Asmodeus

Aura moderate enchantment; **CL** 7th
Slot hands; **Price** 19,000 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

These leather gloves are blood red and appear to be made from the scaly flesh of a devil. The wearer can transform his hands into twisted claws upon command, granting him two primary natural claw attacks that deal 1d6 points of slashing damage (if the wearer is Medium). In addition, these claw attacks deal 1d6 points of fire damage on a successful hit.

Once per day, when the wearer makes a successful claw attack, he can call out to Asmodeus to attempt to enslave the target. The target can make a DC 16 Will save to negate this effect. If the target fails, he treats the wearer as his friend, as per *charm monster*.

These gloves are evil, and any good character that wears them gains one negative level. This negative level remains as long as the gloves are worn and disappears when the gloves are removed. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way while the gloves are worn.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *alter self*, *burning hands*, *charm monster*; **Cost** 9,500 gp

Crown of Hell

Aura strong evocation; **CL** 12th
Slot head; **Price** 64,200 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This wretched crown appears to have once been made of finely sculpted gold that has been subjected to extreme heat, causing it to melt and twist. The wearer of the crown gains a +4 profane bonus on Will saves made against compulsion effects. Any natural or manufactured weapons wielded by the wearer are considered evil and magic for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. The wearer can, at will, produce a small cone of flame from his mouth, as per *burning hands*, that deals 5d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 11 half).

In addition, once per day, the wearer of the crown can call down a *flame strike*, dealing 12d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 17 half). Finally, once per week, the wearer of the crown can summon 1 erinyes, 1d3 bearded devil, or 1d4+1 hell hounds as if casting *summon monster VI*.

The crown is evil, and any good character that wears it gains one negative level. This negative level remains as long as the crown is worn and disappears when the crown is removed. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way while the crown is worn.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *align weapon*, *burning hands*, *flame strike*, *summon monster VI*; **Cost** 32,100 gp

Figurine of Wondrous Power, Brimstone Imp

Aura moderate transmutation; **CL** 11th
Slot none; **Price** 14,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This tiny figurine is carved to look like a leering imp. When tossed onto the ground, and the command word spoken, it transforms into a normal imp, under the command of its possessor, typically to spy on his enemies. The item can be used three times per week for up to 6 hours per use. When 6 hours have passed, or when the command word is spoken, the brimstone imp reverts to a tiny statue.

The imp can use its *commune* ability only once per week, and it can only ask one question. Frequent use of this ability is sure to attract the attention of one of the more powerful devils in hell.

This statue otherwise functions as all other figurines of wondrous power.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *animate objects*, *lesser planar binding*; **Cost** 7,000 gp

Ring of Corruption

Aura faint abjuration; **CL** 5th
Slot ring; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

This simple silver ring is set with a small ruby at its center. On the inside of the ring is a tiny mark, which can be identified as the mark of corruption in the infernal language with a DC 20 Linguistics check.

This ring is a cursed item. The ring provides a +1 deflection bonus to anyone wearing it, but they soon find that the ring cannot be removed. Each day, the wearer must make a DC 15 Will save or suffer terribly dreams that evening. If the wearer every fails three such saves in a row, he finds that he is overcome with a foul mood and dark desires. His alignment shifts one step toward Lawful Evil, first moving from Chaotic to Neutral and then Lawful, followed by Good to Neutral and finally Evil.

This shift is permanent so long as the ring is worn. Those who know the wearer can make a DC 20 Sense Motive skill check to notice subtle changes in the wearer's behavior, such as rigid new grooming habits, a desire for order in all things, and a lack of empathy for other living creatures.

The ring can only be removed after a successful remove curse or by cutting off the digit that bears the ring. These foul rings are frequently made by the servants of Asmodeus and given as gifts to noble rulers or left to be found by foolish interlopers.

CONSTRUCTION

Magic Items Ring of Protection

Shield of Hell

Aura moderate illusion; **CL** 10th
Slot shield; **Price** 46,170 gp; **Weight** 15 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This +2 *fire resistance heavy steel shield* is made from crude iron, but the front of the shield is sculpted to look like the face of a sneering devil. The wielder of this shield can see perfectly well in darkness of any kind, even magical darkness, out to a range of 30 feet.

Once per day, the wielder can cause the shield to belch forth a cloud of black smoke that spreads out in a 50-foot emanation, centered on the wielder. The smoke creates an illusion of hell that overlays the landscape within the area.

Those inside the area (other than the wielder, devils, and other lawful evil creatures) must make a DC 14 Will save or be shaken as long as they remain in the area, as well as take an additional –2 penalty on saves against fear effects. This illusion does not move with the wielder once created and lasts for 10 minutes.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *darkvision*, *resist energy*, *visions of hell*; **Cost** 23,170 gp

WAY OF THE WICKED CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

This appendix will attempt to lay out in one place a complete summary of the events of this campaign and how long they will most likely take to accomplish. Of course any such timeline cannot take into account the full range of choices that the PCs might make. Still, this should serve as a handy reference of when various events most likely happen and what level (roughly) the PCs should be.

The real world calendar is used here for convenience's sake and because it is easily adapted to any campaign world.

BOOK ONE: KNOT OF THORNS

PCS ARE LEVEL ONE

July 24, Year 16 in the reign of King Markadian V called the Brave (Day Zero): The PCs are brought in chains to Branderscar Prison. They have no realistic hope of escape and in three days will face just punishment for a crime they did commit.

July 25 - July 27 (Days 1-3): The PCs receive a beautiful and unexpected visitor, Tiadora, who delivers them a magical veil that gives them a chance at escape. Over the next three days the PCs escape from Branderscar Prison and make their way to Thorn's manor house on the Old Moor Road.

PCS ARE LEVEL TWO

July 28 (Day 4): The PCs meet Adrastus Thorn and sign the Pact of Thorns. Thus they are inducted into the Knot of Thorns, Adrastus' conspiracy to destroy Talingarde.

July 29-31 (Days 5-7): The PCs are given a three day respite to heal, receive equipment and prepare for Thorn's cruel training.

August 1 (Day 8): The PCs are sent into the Nine Lessons. There they face many dangers designed to prepare them for the challenges ahead. Their crucible culminates with facing Sir Balin, a famed witch hunter and Knight of the Alerion.

August 2 - October 30 (Days 9-98): Three months of training are received directly from their enigmatic master Adrastus Thorn. The Knot is trained and equipped and is then ready to be sent on their first true mission in service of the Nine Knots.

PCS ARE LEVEL THREE

October 31 (Day 99): The feast and infernal ritual wherein the Nessian Knot is forged.

November 1 (Day 100): The PCs receive their orders to begin a war by arming bugbears and breaking the Watch-wall. They board the Frosthamar. By the end of the day, they have sailed down river and out into the open ocean.

November 2-8 (Days 101-107): The Frosthamar sails uneventfully along the civilized eastern coast.

November 9 (Day 108): The Frosthamar encounters The Blade of St. Martius, a Talirean patrol vessel, on the edge of civilized waters.

November 10-16 (Days 109-115): The Frosthamar passes beyond the civilized coast of Talingarde into the Savage North. The ship encounters several dangers and encounters along the way. This journey may include a stop for hunting at Seal Isle if the Frosthamar's greedy captain has his way.

November 17 (Day 116): The Frosthamar enters the River Taiga, pushing past iceflows into the wild waters beyond.

November 18 (Day 117): Sailing south through the River Taiga. The PCs get their first real look at the Savage North of Talingarde.

November 19 (Day 118): The PCs arrive at Sakkarot Fire-Axe's camp. They deliver the cargo of the Frosthamar, supplying the bugbear army with steel weaponry and are honored with a feast thrown by the Fire-Axe. At an audience after the feast, they learn much of Sakkarot's true character.

PCS ARE LEVEL FOUR

November 20 - December 19 (Days 119-148): The PCs have a month to infiltrate the township of Aldencross and, from there, destroy the watchtower Balentyne.

During this difficult and dangerous month the PCs must accomplish with only themselves and what resources they can cobble together what hasn't been accomplished by centuries of bugbear, ogre and giant raids. They must break the Watch Wall.

PCS ARE LEVEL FIVE

By month's end, the watchtower is broken and Sakkarot Fire-Axe's horde has invaded Talingarde. The war is begun. In the course of doing so, the PCs murder its commander Lord Thomas Havenlyn, thereby setting his son on a mission of revenge.

PCS ARE LEVEL SIX

BOOK TWO: CALL FORTH DARKNESS

December 20 - December 30 (Days 149-159): Tiadora retrieves the Knot from the wreckage of Balentyne and places them upon a river raft, The Halystyn's Folly, headed to Farholde. Tiadora spends the trip burning local villages and tormenting villagers in the name of helping along Thorn's plan. In truth, this is more just her venting her personal sadism.

December 31 (Day 160): Thorn appears aboard the Folly and delivers to the PCs their next mission – bring him the Tears of Achlys.

January 1, Year 17 in the Reign of King Markadian V called the Brave (Day 161): The PCs arrive in Farholde.

January 2 (Day 162): The PCs have dinner with the Baron Arkov Vandermir at his manor in the Calliver Green district of Farholde.

January 3 (Day 163): The Seventh Knot arrives in Farholde. They ally with the PCs.

January 4-10 (Days 164-170): During this week (or so) the PCs explore Farholde and find the Horn of Abaddon. Exploring the Horn, they discover the ritual to break the Seal and take over management of the Horn of Abaddon

PCs ARE LEVEL SEVEN

January 11 - August 20 (Days 171-393): The PCs hold the Horn of Abaddon for 222 days and conduct the ritual to call forth Vetra-Kali. Major events during that period include:

January 11 (Day 171): The First Prayer in the Dirge. The Horn alights with green flame showing everyone in Farholde the location of this once hidden ruin.

January 19 (Day 178): Zadaria's warning about Hal-lack's Crew arrives. Over the next week, the PCs must deal with their first visitors.

February 22 (Day 214): The Baron Vandermir's 105th birthday party, held at his mansion in Farholde.

March 7 (Day 228): News reaches Farholde that the army they sent to aid in the war has been wiped out at Upandshire.

March 21 (Day 242): Argossarian the silver dragon is seen flying over Farholde.

March 28 (Day 248): Inquisitor Mathias Harkon and his followers attack the Horn.

April 14 (Day 262): The Events of MinionQuest I unfold.

May 2 (Day 282): The Second Prayer. The ritual is half-way to completion.

May 10 (Day 290): A gang war breaks out in Farholde.

May 17-May 23 (Days 297-303): Elise Zadaria of the Seventh Knot fully betrays the PCs and sends the Banner Verdant as her cat's paws against them. The PCs discover her treachery and have an opportunity to destroy the Seventh Knot, eliminating a hated rival.

June 8 (Day 319): A crime wave grips Farholde. During the chaos, a wealthy merchant, Lady Marsten, tries to use the PCs to accomplish her own murderous goals.

June 15 (Day 326): Argossarian attacks the manor house of Baron Arkov Vandermir, perhaps slaying him.

June 22 (Day 333): A fair comes to Farholde.

June 29 (Day 340): Sir Valin Darian and his knights attack the Horn of Abaddon.

PCs ARE LEVEL NINE

August 16-August 20 (Days 289-393): The final five days of defending the Horn the Abaddon. Earthquakes strike. Allies betray them. Argossarian the silver dragon attacks the Horn. And finally they get to battle Sir Richard Havelyn, son of Lord Thomas. In the end, they break the seal and call forth Vetra-Kali. From the daemon prince they receive the Tears of Achlys, the object of their quest.

PCs ARE LEVEL TEN

BOOK THREE: TEARS OF THE BLESSED

August 21 - September 19 (Days 394-423): The PCs leave Farholde and travel to Ghastenhall likely by ship. Of course, if the PCs use some other method of travel, this journey may be shorter. This journey is uneventful.

September 20 (Day 424): Meeting with Barnabus Thrane in Ghastenhall and delivering to him the Tears of Achlys.

September 21 - October 20 (Days 425-454): A month at leisure in Ghastenhall.

October 21 (Day 455): Tiadora appears once more to summon them to an audience with the Fire-Axe in the conquered Westkirk Castle.

October 21 - December 18 (Days 456-515): The PCs build their army as they best see fit and march it to the Vale of Valtaerna. They must deal with the Watchtower of Saintsbridge or face getting bogged down there in the battle to come.

December 19 (Day 516): The Battle of Saintsbridge is fought wherein the PCs sweep away the defenders who protect the Vale of Valtaerna.

THE PCs ARE LEVEL ELEVEN

December 20 - March 19, Year 18 in the Reign of King Markadian V called the Brave (Days 517-606): For three months (an entire winter), the PCs hold the Vale of Valtaerna. Unlike the Horn of Abaddon (with its definite events) this is a more freeform mission of exploration and destruction.

During that time they defeat the Vale's many guardians and sack the Cathedral of Mitra Made Manifest. Their rampage culminates in facing Ara Mathra, the most powerful celestial in all of Talingarde, and extinguishing the three flames of the Order of St. Macarius. They have broken the back of that holy order and made Talingarde all the more ready to be delivered into the hands of evil.

THE PCs ARE LEVEL THIRTEEN

BOOK FOUR: OF DRAGONS AND PRINCESSES

March 20 - March 31 (Days 607-619): The PCs escape Valtaerna and travel to the sacked city of Daveryn.

April 1 - April 30 (Days 620-649): The PCs explore and rest inside the conquered city. They may, if they choose, help the Fire-Axe capture the missing duke, sack the Cathedral and join in the looting of this doomed city. For a month, our villains get to play in a city-sacking sandbox. The play here is very freeform and largely location based.

THE PCs ARE LEVEL FOURTEEN

May 1 (Day 650): Tiadora gives the PCs their next mission – gain an alliance with the black dragon Chargammon and use him to slay the king of Talingarde.

May 2 - June 30 (Days 650-709): The next part of the adventure is extremely open-ended. The PCs must gain an audience with Chargammon (perhaps by rescuing his son Jeratheon Knightsbane), receive the dragon's errand and then invade the isle of the rival dragon Eiramanthus and assassinate him. They also receive Dessiter's warning that Thorn is now trying to kill them. This involves quite a bit of travel, so we'll assume it takes about two months.

THE PCs ARE LEVEL FIFTEEN

July 1 (Day 710): The PCs return to Chargammon and gain his aid. He will attack the Adarium in one month. They also likely gain the service of the dragon Jeratheon.

July 2-July 30 (Days 711-739): The PCs travel to Matharyn, infiltrate the Adarium and prepare themselves for the dragon's attack.

July 31 (Day 740): Chargammon attacks the Adarium. King Markadian V comes to the aid of his daughter only to be ambushed by the PCs and assassinated. Thus ends the eighteen year reign of King Markadian V, the last king of Talingarde to bear his name. The Princess Bellinda slays the dragon Chargammon and flees the Adarium.

August 1 (Day 741): The Battle of Fallingsbridge occurs at Daveryn, wherein the grand army of Talingarde is destroyed by the treachery of General Vastenus Barca.

THE PCs ARE LEVEL SIXTEEN

BOOK FIVE: THE DEVIL MY ONLY MASTER

Estimating an exact timeline of this book is almost impossible. The PCs are under no time table and completely on their own recognizance. They must negotiate their way through a web of infernal intrigue, perhaps seek vengeance against their old nemesis Sir Richard, and then locate Thorn's phylactery.

THE PCs ARE LEVEL SEVENTEEN

During this period there is no king in Talingarde and the army has been destroyed at Daveryn. These are lawless days, with the Horde of the Fire-Axe drawing ever nearer to the capital.

Eventually the PCs attack the Adarium and slay their master Cardinal Adrastus Thorn.

THE PCs ARE LEVEL EIGHTEEN

BOOK SIX: THE WAGES OF SIN

After the death of Thorn, the PCs take control of the Nine Knots. They contact Cedrick Malthus of the Sixth Knot and pay him to bring a mercenary army to Talingarde from the mainland. They stage the destruction of the Fire-Axe's Horde and march into the capital to take control of Talingarde.

For three years, they reign unchallenged, transforming Talingarde into their personal playground.

THE PCs ARE LEVEL NINETEEN

The Army of the White Unicorn led by the Princess Bellinda lands in Talingarde. Loyalists to the House of Darius rally to her banner and the PCs must do what they can to stop her army from gaining more strength. Battle lines are drawn and the army marches towards the capital. It stops near the Fields of Tamberlyn.

THE PCs ARE LEVEL TWENTY

The climactic second battle of Tamberlyn decides the fate of both Talingarde and our villains.

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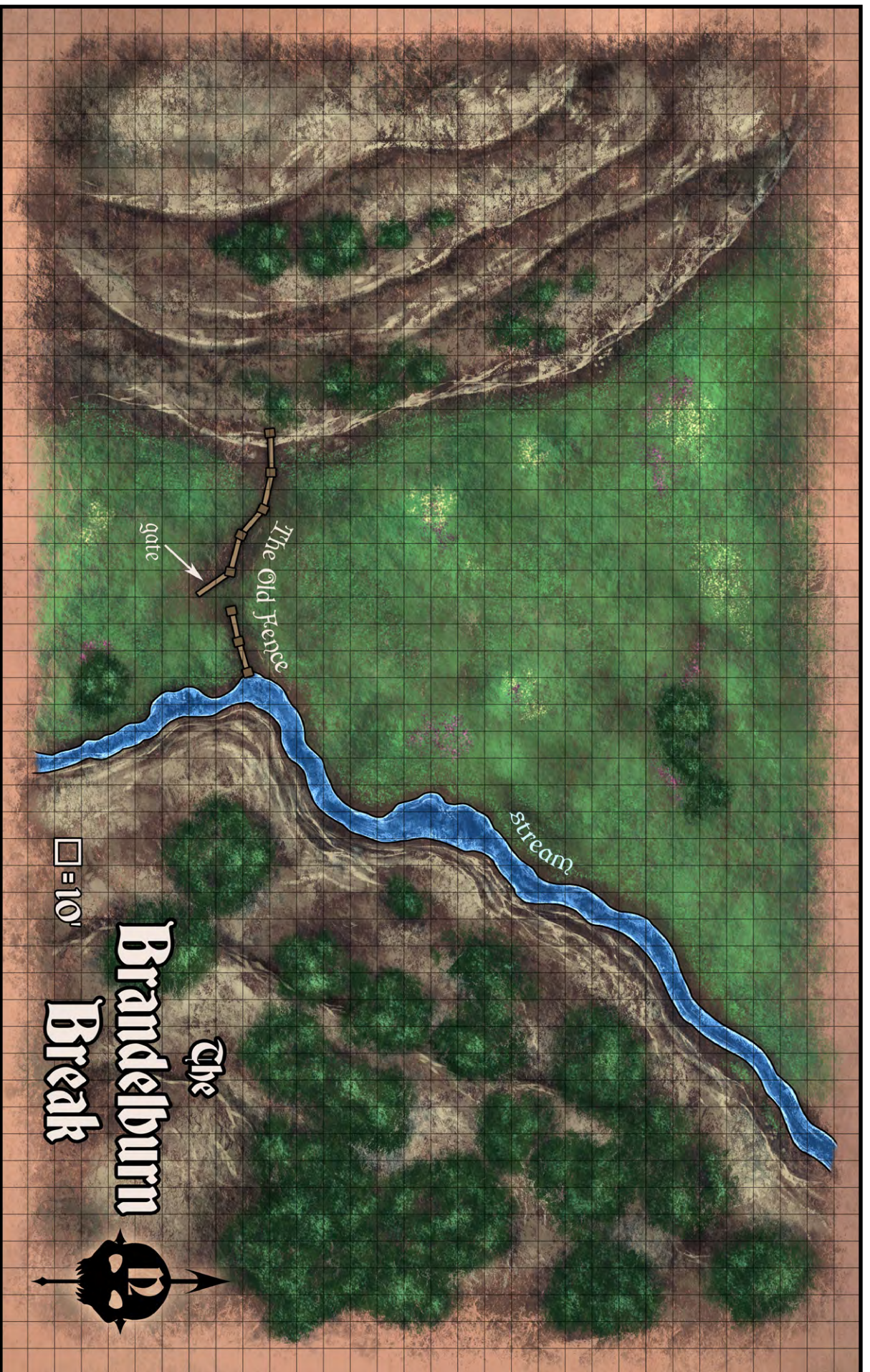
I know many books which have bored their readers, but I know of none which has done real evil.

--Voltaire

The Battle of Brandelburn Fields

1" = 100 yards





□ = 10'

Windy
Cavern

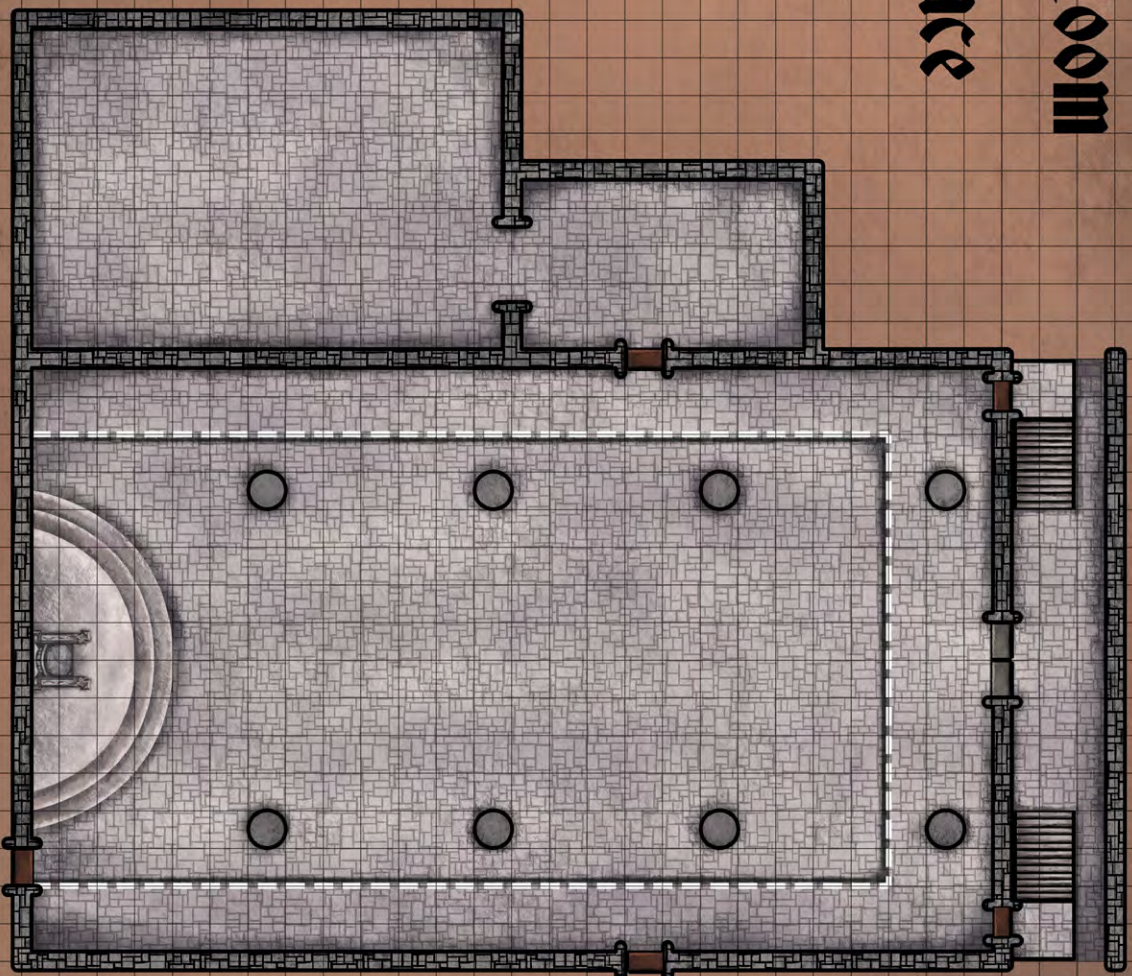
waterfall

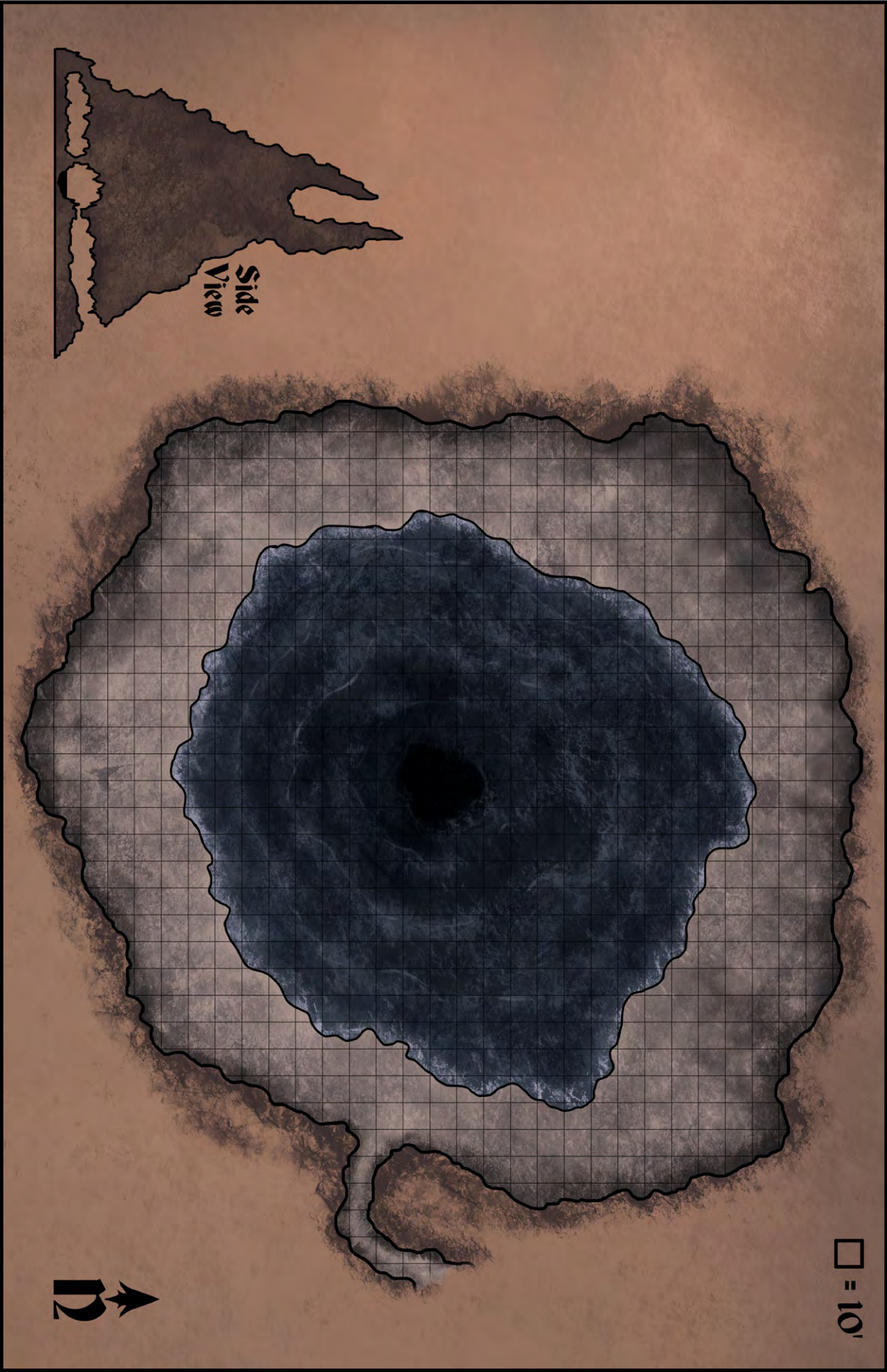




Chrono Room of the Old Palace

□ = 5'





Side
View

□ = 10'





The First Battle of Camberlyn

Fought Eighty
Years Ago

1" = 200 yards



1. The Victor takes the field first
2. Jaraad sends forth mercenary crossbowmen to bombard the knights upon the bridge. But they get too close allowing...
3. A surprise infantry charge from the Darian right
4. The Mercenaries flee in disarray
5. Barcan left advances; tangled by fleeing mercenaries
6. Barcan right advances; bogged down in mud
7. Hail of arrows hits both Barcan pincers to disastrous effect
8. Barcan Knights charge the held bridge; they are joined by King Jaraad and his griffons. Markadian slays Jaraad. Barcan rout.



Camberlyn
1" = 200 yards



**The Greater
Lord**



**The
Squire**



**The Lesser
Lord**



GM's Map



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