



PRINCIPAL OF THE MATTER

A One-Round DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Adventure
for 1st- to 3rd-Level Characters
BLACKWHEEL COMPANY™ Faction Adventure 1 for the XEN'DRIK
EXPEDITIONS™ Campaign

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Sources: *Players Guide to Eberron* [James Wyatt, Keith Baker, Luke Johnson, Stan!],
Eberron Campaign Setting [Keith Baker], *Secrets of Xendrik* [Keith Baker, Jason Bulmahn,
Amber Scott], *Miniatures Handbook* [Mike Donais, Skaff Elias, Rob Heinsoo, Jonathan
Tweet]

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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INTRODUCTION

Principal of the Matter is the first faction adventure for the Blackwheel Company faction in the XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS campaign. It is optimized for 1st-level characters. This means that it's designed and balanced for a group of four to five 1st-level characters (PCs).

If your group deviates from this size and strength, each encounter features a section titled "Scaling the Encounter" so that you, the Dungeon Master (DM), can create a more enjoyable and better balanced adventure.

If there are only four of five PCs of the same level in your group, it's easy to use this section: just use the level entry that corresponds with the PCs' level (the optimized entry is given in the main adventure text). For groups of mixed levels and groups with six PCs, determine the average level of the PCs, and increase that average by one for groups of six PCs. Treat that level as the groups level. That said, as DM you have discretion when it comes to fitting the challenges of the adventure to your group. If your group finds the challenges too easy or too difficult, feel free to increase or decrease the level of challenge appropriately. The goal is to challenge the PCs and entertain the players, not to overwhelm or even underwhelm them. The most enjoyable D&D games are ones where failure and character death are possible, but success and reward are attainable through daring and smart play.

Principal of the Matter has been designed to be part of the RPGA DUNGEON & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS: XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS program. Like all DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS adventures, it's recommended that PCs undertaking its challenges have at least one arcane spellcaster, a divine spellcaster (preferably a cleric), a strong warrior, and a rogue. Parties missing these valuable adventuring components may find *Principal of the Matter* very challenging, and the chances of character death higher. Please warn the players of this before play starts. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS allow players to "take one for the team"; that is to play a fastplay wizard, fighter, rogue, or cleric in place of one of their characters, and gain experience point for their character. If the group lacks one of these vital four classes, suggest to your players to take advantage of this option.

RPGA-SANCTIONED PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA even from the RPGA website, or as part of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS retail program. To play *Principal of the Matter* as part of the XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in EBERRON—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a HERALD-LEVEL gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of

making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table DM (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a Herald-Level GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

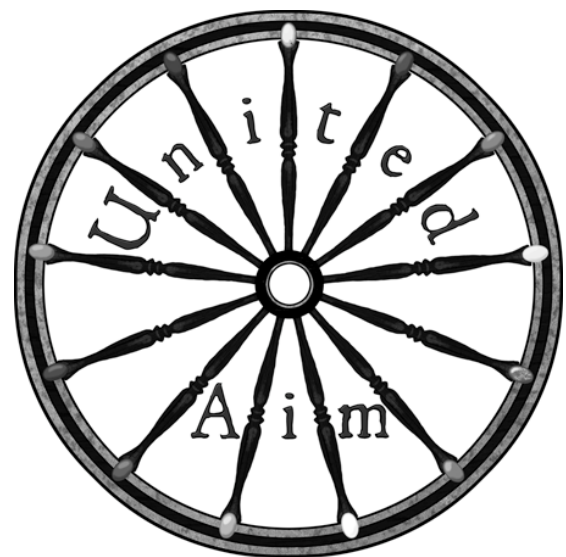
By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a few things. First, it allows the PCs participating in play to accumulate experience points (XP) and gold pieces (gp) to advance their XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS characters. Second, it allows the RPGA to track and record what character did during the adventure, and future adventures a written with what the majority of player did in mind—in this way characters' action shape the future of the campaign. Lastly, player and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth four (4) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA sanctioned play on December 31, 2006.

To learn more about the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS: XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at www.rpga.com.

THIS IS A FACTION ADVENTURE

This is a faction adventure for the Blackwheel Company. This means that the story is suited for that group, and can only be played by Blackwheel Company characters. As the DM you should make sure that only member of this faction play in this adventure, as play of another faction's character could invalidate the entire session.



Blackwheel Company Faction Symbol

PLAYERS READ NO FARTHER

If you are planning to play this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, *Monster Manual*, and the *Eberron Campaign Setting*. It is also a good idea to have a copy of the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, as it is possible that some character playing in this adventure will be kalashtar utilizing the psionics rules.

Throughout this adventure, blocks of *italicized* text provide player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on running or expanding the adventure. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in a section directly after each encounter in a section titled "Combat Statistics" or can be found in the *Monster Manual*.

This adventure may use material from various other D&D sourcebooks and other official sources. While many times the adventure text notes where this information came from, the adventure is designed so that you don't need to have those sources during play.

Either attached to the adventure, you'll find a special *RPGA Session Tracking Sheet* tailored for this adventure. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

After nearly six months of intense training the recruits of the Blackwheel Company are finally being called into action. The PCs are introduced to this adventure as their first assignment for the Company. The Company's highest ranking officer, Field Marshal Mackinnon "Mace" Maceck personally issues the challenge to the PCs selected "platoon": A substantial debt is owed to House Lyrandar by a reclusive, ancient holy man. Recover the debt and return with it to the Blackwheel Company's headquarters in Stormreach.

The opening of this adventure will see the PCs departing from The Company's clandestine training camp in Q'barra for the city of Stormreach in Xen'drik by way of airship. The Company is hoping to inspire loyalty and awe in the recruits (and anyone else watching) by selecting such a high-profile form of transportation for its first mission. This job is the first of its kind for the Blackwheel Company many of the recruits are anxious to test their skills and prove their worth to the company.

Field Marshal Maceck is similarly anxious to test the resolve of his young recruits. The Blackwheel Company has

been formed by the combined will and resources of the Dragonmarked Houses, and their potential—in theory—is limitless. It happens to be serendipitous that the first opportunity for testing their potential puts them directly into conflict with another of the mysterious factions seeking to harness the power of the *Caldyn Fragments*. The intelligence network of the Houses has learned of a rare artifact in possession of the group that call themselves the "Covenant of Light."

Blackwheel Company brass consider the Covenant to be tremendously dangerous in that they have put aside their apparent religious differences to work toward a common goal. This opening to both thwart their plans subtly and exert the presence of the Blackwheel Company is a valuable opportunity. Pursuit of the *Caldyn Fragments* is of primary importance, but cementing the resolve and reputation of the newly-formed Company is vital as well. Field Marshal Maceck has ordered a small, discrete detachment of recruits to use their judgment to recover the artifact in the most rapid fashion. Maceck intentionally restrains himself from ordering either the use of force or negotiation overtly, hoping to learn quickly about the level of resourcefulness and judgment possessed by his recruits.

The Blackwheel Company has finally decided to make its presence known in Xen'drik, and the connection between the sword, the Covenant, and the Prophecy have presented the perfect opportunity. To this end, they've devised a plan to recover *Dirgesinger* and bring a bit of the Prophecy under the control of the Blackwheel Company.

The artifact at the heart of the mission is one of the legendary four Singing Swords of Tantarar. *Dirgesinger* was the personal defender of Heris Graccen, one of the first missionaries from Khorvaire to bring the word of the Sovereign Host to the savage, untamed wilds of Xen'drik. Dubbed the "Grim Knight," he was a solemn and often brutal man, determined to bring the word of the Host to the jungle savages by force. According to local legend, in the sunset of Graccen's life, the sword began singing strange prophetic missives. Graccen, enraptured by the enigmatic words, followed the prophetic directives deep into the Marsh of Desolation. Graccen was presumed dead and the sword assumed lost with him in the foul bog. Shortly before Caldyn's work began with the draconic Prophecy, the sword turned up again in the hands of Heris' son, a man who calls himself "Herent the Modest." Since then, Herent has it on display religious relic in an ancient and sacred temple to the Host. Recent reports from bewildered and shaken Host acolytes indicate that the sword has spontaneously started singing on its own again. This time, the words have a clear link to *Caldyn Fragments* as they've come to relate to the draconic Prophecy. Unfortunately, the singing sword has attracted quite a bit of attention, and was reported stolen several days ago. A strange group of dark-skinned shadowy figures were observed fleeing the scene.

Unknown to both the Blackwheel Company intelligence and lay folk of church alike, the Covenant of Light was actually contacted by higher authorities in the Church and asked to "secure" this sword that was terrifying parishioners and clergy alike. Herent the Modest is aware of this deal and helped negotiate it with the head priest at this particular temple, a human named Bale'orgn. Bale'orgn is happy to see the sword gone but is unaware of the true nature of the Covenant. He was merely content that some fellow Host followers have taken it for "further study."

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs begin this adventure with a quick battle to set the pace of the early adventure. The move directly to a personal visit with the Field Marshal himself. Mackinnon Maceck, shows up to personally “inspire” the handpicked platoon and give them a mission of some importance to the Company. He urges wisdom and discretion, but purposefully withholds information about the Covenant and declines to offer them suggestions as to how to complete the mission. The PCs are told only to recover the sword in lieu of a debt owed to House Lyrandar and their means and method shall be entirely up to them.

The PCs are introduced to Quartermaster Gridd, who provides them with the specifics of the mission. He gives them Herent's location on the eastern edge of Stormreach near the Foundry. Herent is a grumpy and very old human. He isn't particularly interested in helping or harming the PCs and his reactions depend entirely upon the treatment he receives from them. In either event, he's likely to tell them one of two things: A) A half-truth—That he gave the sword to a temple of the Sovereign Host to display as a religious relic. Or B) The actual truth—That the sword was given to the temple but that he was recently approached by a strange group offering to help discretely make the irksome artifact “disappear.”

If the PCs use force, threats, overt intimidation, or other forms of aggression, they're very likely to receive option a half-truth. Herent offers them a bit of misleading information and have them go to the temple first to look for the sword. When the PCs find it missing they can confront the head priest, do their own detective work, or return to confront Herent. Returning to confront Herent involves a trek from the northern edge of the city back to the southern, but likely yields more information than confronting the head priest, who certainly doesn't want the item to be found or returned.

If the PCs speak with Bale'orn the head priest at the temple in this scenario they are likely given slightly incorrect information. The temple in question is currently in the midst of a local festival that will span the next four days and is packed with worshippers. This should help reduce the possibility of open violence and gives Bale'orn a reason to stay very occupied and hence be very curt with the PCs. Whether the PCs return to interrogate Herent or gain information from the head priest or on their own, they are directed to a set of ancient underground ruins where the Covenant members were holed up.

Fortunately for the Covenant, if the PCs are on path A, their mistake has given Herent a chance to send a messenger to warn the Covenant. By the time the PCs arrive they have already gone to meet the ship. A dying creature or a number of other clues left behind point out the rendezvous location to the PCs.

When the PCs reach the rendezvous point under path A, violence is almost certain to ensue. The Covenant group reacts with hostility toward pursuit, and combat is likely to happen at the shore where the Covenant members are meeting their transport.

If the PCs end up on path B—Herent gives them the location of the ruins where the Covenant members are holding the object. The ruins are more heavily inhabited this time around and the PCs catch the Covenant members waiting with the sword. In this event, some parlay might take place between them. It is possible that the PCs could recover the sword without violence toward the Covenant.

TROUBLESHOOTING

This adventure can be a little tricky to picture initially because of the forked paths for the PCs to take. A key concept to keep in mind is that threats and aggression result in a more difficult and obscured path, while more tactful negotiation or bargaining lead toward a more direct route to recovering the sword. It's important to let the players choose their path here and not to give “hints” that may sway their decision in one way or another. In the Blackwheel Company actions have consequences, just like in the real world, and the Blackwheel Company brass are interested in seeing the path that their recruits choose.

After the choice is made, the PCs may need a little spurning in one direction or another. If you're going to err on the side of giving a little kick-start, part three is a better place to do so. Again, keep in mind the end goal and work from there.

NAVIGATING STORMREACH

Stormreach is a massive city with any number of wonders, locations, and events that can sidetrack a party. Focus on getting the party to the main adventure points. Details are always nice, but foot travel here is designed only to add an extra “time pressure” element to the adventure. The time pressure part should keep the PCs from wandering too much, but use your discretion here. If they get side-tracked by the vastness that is the frontier city of Stormreach—give them a nudge back in the right direction.

IMPORTANT ENCOUNTERS

There are two critical encounters: The initial meeting between Herent the Modest and the PCs and the meeting between the PCs and the Covenant members carrying *Dirgesinger*. Each encounter in between is designed to help lead the PCs in the right direction and to provide a consequence for their decision about negotiation tactics. Don't fret if the PCs immediately sniff out the seemingly “easier and quicker” path B. There is plenty of flexibility built into the path B “Ancient Ruins” encounter to keep the PCs busy and challenged. Furthermore the roleplay with Herent and with the Covenant members at the conclusion of the adventure can be quite challenging. It's most important that the PCs ultimately end up in the ancient ruins by either path. Even if they can't make their way through the ruins to the Covenant members, giving them the chance to do so is vital to the theme of the adventure.

TROUBLE IN NIGHT'S GRACE TEMPLE

The temple is a situation that's designed to avoid combat. Still, some PCs may be frustrated by this point and resort to threats, intimidation, or force. Generally the sheer number of people at the temple prevents any sort of foolishness. Even so, the party may try to steal an item or pick a pocket. All of these result in the temple guards being summoned against the party. The temple has nearly 30 guards, making any encounter overwhelming for a party of 1st-level adventurers, and this fact may need to be made clear if the party appears to be leaning in this direction. The guards first escort the party out of the temple and ask them not to return. Faced with open combat, they attempt to subdue the PCs, ending the adventure.

A FOCUS ON ROLEPLAY

This adventure starts with combat, but needs to have an action-oriented focus on roleplay through the middle. Combat-oriented PCs may grow a little impatient—keep them involved in the roleplay by making comments about their characters, having NPC's interact with them, or encouraging them to pursue clues and leads as appropriate. Part of the challenge of this adventure is based upon the party's ability to make decisions and negotiate. It makes the start a bit slow for players that are used to heavy combat. Remember, navigating a complex conversation with a clever NPC can be just as challenging as any swordfight. Don't be afraid to spar with the players, but keep in mind what Herent's reactions should be. The same can be said for the PCs negotiations with other NPC's like Bale'orgn or the Covenant members. Pay close attention to the goals of the each of the NPC's and use them to keep the roleplay exciting and challenging.

ADVENTURE START

The adventure opens with immediate combat. The PCs, as part of their final training mission for the Blackwheel Company, have tracked a rogue lizardfolk envoy and are preparing to unleash a well-planned ambush. Unfortunately, a torrential thunderstorm adds an unexpected surprise to the encounter.

Most of the lizardfolk tribes of Q'barra coexisted peacefully with the small, clandestine training village, known as Salvage to Blackwheel Company recruits. The Shek'ssin tribe, however, has been a constant bane to Company operations. The mission assigned by Sgt. Tragar was clear: Stop the meeting between the rogue Shek'ssin tribe and a local group of sahuagin. An envoy was dispatched, subdue the envoy if possible, but prevent the meeting at all costs.

After days of tracking, the ambush had been set. The forces of nature did not see fit to cooperate as the final

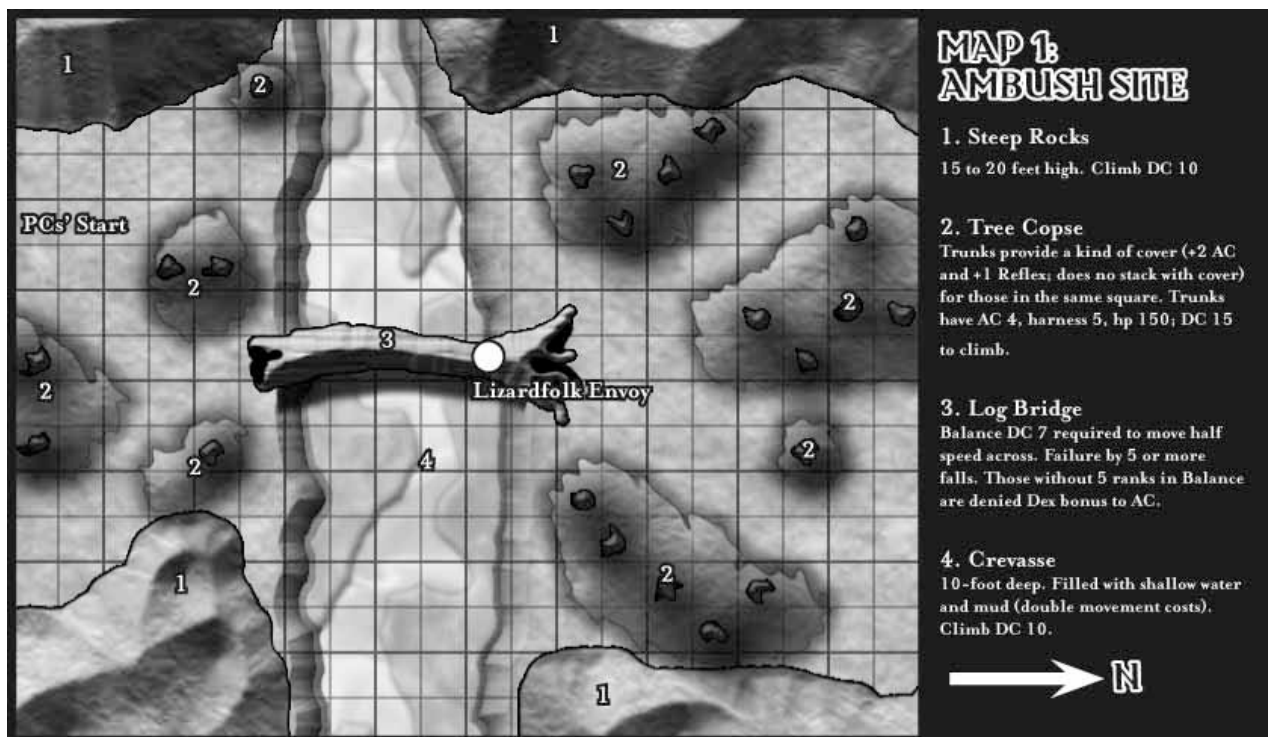
stage of the mission approached. As you lie in wait in the dead of night, dug into the side of a jungle ravine, a notorious Q'barra thunderstorm quickly progresses from a distant rumbling menace to a potent adversary. The rain is blinding as it pours down in curtains.

While the thunder shakes the very firmament beneath you, the lightning cracks ferociously. The acrid smell of smoke suddenly fills the air after a brilliant bolt obliterates a tree only a few hundred yards in the distance.

In the brilliant flash of instantaneous daylight created by the nearby strike, a reptilian figure can be seen crossing the log bridge ahead. The moment of your final test as recruits approaches.

Be sure and give the PCs an assessment of the current situation, and allow them a minute or two to plan the ambush as they would have been expected to do as a platoon.

Foes: The encounter takes place late at night (shadowy illumination due to lots of background lightning). The lizardfolk envoy is lightly armed with a club and javelin, but his torch has been extinguished by the strong wind. Any natural flames used or summoned by the PCs have a 50% chance of being doused. The heavy rain causes visibility to be reduced by 75% and imposes a -8 penalty on Spot, Listen, and Search checks. The heavy wind and rain make ranged weapon attacks impossible. This storm produces an unusual amount of brilliant lightning. A bolt of lightning strikes every 1d4 rounds (no chance of striking the PCs or the lizardfolk). Characters subject to the dazzle effect must make a Fortitude (DC 12) save or be dazzled for 2 rounds following a flash of lightning. During a round in which lightning strikes, treat the area of the encounter as having bright illumination. Casters must succeed at a Concentration (DC 5) check or lose their spell or infusion. Initiative begins with the PCs having spotted the lizardfolk on the fallen log bridge. The lizardfolk has not yet spotted the PCs. Use hide checks for the PCs to





determine if he's able to Spot them after that point. The lizardfolk is not intentionally hiding, but the storm requires a Spot (DC 8) check, not including penalties for the rain, distance or light, for the PCs to spot the lizardfolk again.

Shek'ssin Lizardfolk Envoy (Lizardfolk): hp 10; MM 169.

Tactics: The terrain plays a significant role in the outcome of this combat. The PCs may catch the lizardfolk on the bridge. A Balance (DC 7) check is required to move at half-speed across the bridge. Creatures failing by 5 or more fall.

Unless the PCs have 5 ranks in Balance they (along with the lizardfolk envoy) are denied their Dex bonus to AC while on the log bridge. The lizardfolk's natural bonus to Balance checks makes the log bridge a great place for him to make his stand. The lizardfolk should be sufficiently surprised that he fights for a round, and then flees if possible.

Development: If the PCs successfully subdue the lizardfolk they earn the commendation of their commander (grant them a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks with Blackwheel Company members for this adventure). Their superiors go out of the way to point out their success on this early mission. If the PCs slay the lizardfolk, their mission is considered a success, but grant them no additional bonus. If the PCs fail to capture or kill the lizardfolk they earn the disapproval of their commander (they suffer a -2 penalty on Diplomacy checks with Blackwheel Company members). From the conclusion of this encounter, flash the party forward in time to Part One.

PART ONE: THE FIRST MISSION

Part One is brief and takes place entirely aboard the Blackwheel Company's massive airship, *The Glory Road*. Here the PCs meet the Company's commander as well as their contact for Stormreach-based missions, a gangly half-orc named Gridd. After part one is complete, the PCs will not be able to meet the Field Marshal again, but they may return to contact Gridd. They will return to *The Glory Road* at the end of the mission. At the start of things the PCs are standing at attention aboard the deck in a military fashion.

ON DECK

Part One opens aboard the Blackwheel Company's massive airship: *The Glory Road*. A fresh batch of recruits, including the party, has just arrived from the Company's clandestine training camp in Q'barra. The training has been particularly brutal, but Q'barra's jungles have the Blackwheel Company recruits feeling prepared for the wilds of Xen'drik. This will be the first major operation for the Blackwheel Company in Xen'drik, and establishing a presence in Stormreach is an important goal for all members.

As the airship begins docking procedures, the recruits have lined the deck and are standing at attention.

The massive airship shudders momentarily as the few crew not standing at attention prepare it for its berth in Stormreach. Nearly 100 recruits are aboard The Glory Road, resplendent in the black and iridescent blue of the Blackwheel Company.

Sergeant Tragar gruffly barks out, "We have selected the best among you to form new platoons. Only one platoon will be going ashore now." The gnoll is an

unforgiving commander, but his tone carries the slightest hint of understanding for those that were not chosen.

[TPC Names 1,2,3,4,5 and 6] report immediately to the Field Marshal's personal quarters. You will report to mainland Xen'drik immediately."

At this point the gnoll sergeant leads the PCs personally to Field Marshal Mackinnon Maceck's quarters aboard the ship where they are to be given their first mission.

THE FIELD MARSHAL'S QUARTERS

Field Marshal Maceck is tall for a dwarf—and despite his warm smile—looks somewhat imposing in the stately black regalia of The Company dress uniform. He has an elaborately carved adamantine peg where the bottom half of his left leg should be. His quarters are quite large for an airship—symbolic of his rank—and are in immaculate condition. He greets you openly and without military formality as you enter and beckons you all to sit comfortably for a moment.

The Field Marshal, despite his rank, is generally a jovial and easygoing fellow. A former barkeep and noted adventurer during the Last War, he was selected to the position for his lack of any racial, territorial, or political allegiances combined with a great affinity for winning the hearts and minds of his soldiers. His reputation for discretion was equally as important as his reputation for leadership.

He has already taken a personal interest in a number of the recruits, and a small group of those sit before him now. He wants to impress upon them the importance of the success of this first mission, which is why he is personally issuing the charge. He hopes to inspire them with the personal touch and give them a sense of personal investment in The Company.

He outlines the mission with the following parameters:

- ❖ A debt of some 25,000 gold pieces is owed to House Lyrandar for transporting a huge group of missionaries to Xen'drik some years ago. It is long past time for this debt to be collected, and this money will help finance the early activities of the Blackwheel Company in Xen'drik.
- ❖ The debtor is an ailing old human who calls himself Herent the Modest. As The Company has come to understand things, he leads a life of poverty as a religious man. He has a close affiliation with a local church of the Sovereign Host.
- ❖ Herent clearly does not possess the money to satisfy the debt, but he does possess an object of great interest to the Company. A sword that formerly belonged to his father, and a relic of great power and value, was rumored to have a connection with the *Caldyn Fragments*.
- ❖ Tales exist of this legendary sword signing verses of new and striking prophecy around the same time as Caldyn's discovery of the *Fragments*. The Blackwheel Company would be willing to accept this sword in lieu of the money owed, and absolve Herent of his debt.
- ❖ He has *personally* selected the PCs because of the importance of this mission. He has *high* expectations for them.
- ❖ Quartermaster Gridd is their point of contact for this mission. Seek him out for mission specifics or to answer any further questions.
- ❖ Point out the PCs success or failure in capturing the Shek'ssin lizardfolk envoy.

It is critical to note that the Field Marshal is purposefully trying to avoid suggesting how the PCs should attempt to recover the debt. If he makes any point very clear to them, he really wants to convey the high expectations and personal stake he has in selecting them for this task of vital importance to the Company. He does not answer many more questions, stating that Quartermaster Gridd can provide any additional details. He will not be available for further questioning, and the PCs will report back to Quartermaster Gridd when the mission is complete. Once he has finished providing the PCs with this minimal information, he'll ask them to please hurry along to Quartermaster Gridd at the docking portal and complete the mission with all due haste. Currently it is early afternoon on day one.

QUARTERMASTER GRIDD

You locate Gridd, a spindly, too-tall half-orc near the docking portal. He is presently shirtless, helping to unload cargo from the ship with the dockworkers. A massive tattoo of a 12-spoked black wheel covers the entirety of his back. "Allo lads," he grins as he wipes the sweat from his brow, "I've been expectin' yas. Keenin' for a bit of an adventure then?"

Gridd is genuinely helpful, but is himself lacking much additional information about the mission. He spontaneously provide the PCs with the following information:

- ❖ Herent the Modest is a thin, balding old man that is almost always dressed in red. He resides in a former giant outhouse in the northernmost quarter of Stormreach near the Foundry.
- ❖ Herent is too ill to leave his home most days.
- ❖ Herent's home is easily identified by the red painted roof.
- ❖ If you don't find him in his home, being a zealous follower of the Sovereign Host and Herent can be found at the Night's Grace temple on the southern quarter of town, adjacent to Molou's Distillery.

Gridd expects this to be a fairly straightforward mission. Maceck's ordered him t not to give advice on how the PCs should recover the debt. If anything he's a bit hasty to send them out into the city and get them after the collection of the debt. If pressed for further information he may reveal the following.

Diplomacy (DC12—circumstance bonus already applied)

- ❖ His father was a strange missionary of some sort, who brought one of the *Singing Swords of Tantar* with him to Xen'drik
- ❖ Night's Grace temple worshippers primarily follow Dol Dorn and are lead by a man called Bale'orgn

Diplomacy (DC 18—circumstance bonus already applied)

- ❖ Herent is known to be an honest and fair man and would likely acknowledge the debt
- ❖ The singing sword is called *dirgesinger* and has a stylized skull on the pommel guard that has been known to sing prophetic verses from time to time
- ❖ The presence of the sword has caused quite a commotion on that side of the town in the past weeks

Gridd's answers should depend largely on what the PCs ask about specifically if they pass their Diplomacy check. Gauge the approximate time you estimate the PCs to have spent talking with Gridd.

PART TWO: DEALING WITH DEBT

The first location in Part Two, the Debtor's Outhouse, is easy to locate. Feel free to describe the travel from the airship docking tower to the northernmost quarter of the city. If they make no stops along the way the journey should take about an hour and a half to negotiate the complex maze of streets and the normal traffic. Attempts at gathering information along the way are unlikely to be successful because Herent is relatively unknown and keeps to himself. If a truly exceptional Gather Information check occurs (DC 25), refer to the information from Quartermaster Gridd above.

THE DEBTOR'S OUTHOUSE (EL 2)

The oversized outhouse is made of solid stone. Crude red paint, now cracking and peeling from the heat and humidity, has been haphazardly slathered over the roof. The structure itself appears to be solid stone and but a single room. It stands a full 20 feet tall, but it may be as tall as it is wide. The door is a tattered bit of cloth draped across the main portal.

The PCs should have found their way to Herent's home without much difficulty. If they arrive anytime between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., Herent is sleeping. Otherwise, Herent is awake and within. He responds to any knocks or calls from outside by asking the PCs to enter the dwelling (unless openly hostile).

The interior of the outhouse is a single, small room with few decorations or ornaments. A weathered, wrinkled human sits in a simple wooden chair at the room's center. His eyes appear sunken and hollow, and veins protrude from his bald head. He wears a well-worn robe of faded red cloth and a walking stick sits in his lap. He looks up.

The outhouse is Herent's home and is a simple 20-foot-by-20-foot square stone room. A crude wooden bed and small table, and a small wooden box are the only furnishings. The room is exceptionally clean as Herent values discipline and orderliness.

Herent greets the PCs with tired indifference, but puzzled that a group of non-church related visitors have sought him out. As soon as he sees a group of diverse, well-armed adventurers, he suspects they have come for something other than pleasant conversation. His initial reaction is to greet the PCs and ask them why they're here.

Herent's attitude should mirror that of the PCs. If they are polite and friendly he is also. Herent's starting attitude is a cautious indifferent to downright unfriendly (PH 72) based on how the PCs approach him. Just how polite and friendly he stays depends on a Diplomacy check.

Herent is reluctant to offer up any substantial information. Where the conversation proceeds from there is directly up to how the party chooses to approach the situation.

All Situations: Herent gives brief answers to direct questions on these topics and convey the following information, curtly if his attitude is unfriendly.

- ✖ He admits ownership of the debt. He makes no qualms about having incurred the debt and acknowledges the source of that debt (House Lyrandar helped him transport a large group of missionaries).
- ✖ He admits ownership of the sword. He does not discuss specifics about the sword, except that it's not currently in his possession.

- ✖ He discusses himself in limited detail. He's an old man that, if unprovoked, is happy to share stories about his missionary days. If unfriendly, he verbally spars with the PCs. He does not elaborate much on his current position with the church. He is also happy to waste time while the sword travels further and further away.
- ✖ He is willing to exchange the sword as payment for his debt.

As long as Herent's attitude stays indifferent or better, he relays the following information.

- ✖ The sword is in the custody of some "friends" who have taken it for further study.
- ✖ These "friends" are currently "exploring" a set of ruins on the northeastern edge of the city, just outside the city walls near the mouth of the river.

If the PCs actions move Herent to an unfriendly or worse attitude, he stymies them with false information:

- ✖ The sword is currently on display at the Night's Grace temple.
- ✖ The Night's Grace is a Sovereign Host temple located in the northern quarter of the city near The Foundry.
- ✖ The temple's head priest will likely be very willing to part with the sword because it makes him uncomfortable.

If moved to a friendly attitude, Herent gives fairly complete information, missing a few details:

- ✖ The sword was formerly in the possession of the Night's Grace temple as a religious relic. It was removed for further study because it began singing strange songs.
- ✖ The sword is a singing sword and belonged to his father.
- ✖ These "friends" of Herent's are members of a secret organization dedicated to studying religious artifacts.
- ✖ They are in the ruins awaiting transportation from a shipping company that is due to ferry the sword back to Khorvaire.

If moved to a helpful attitude, Herent gives the full truth:

- ✖ The sword was signing verses of the draconic Prophecy. It had done so more often of late.
- ✖ Because it was frightening church members, Herent offered to have a group that calls itself the Covenant of Light steal it from the church.
- ✖ The head priest of the church, Bale'orgn, knew the sword was going to be stolen and approved of the plan.
- ✖ The Covenant of Light is an organization dedicated to studying the religious significance of the *Caldyn Fragments* as they relate to the draconic Prophecy.
- ✖ The Covenant of Light members currently in possession of the sword are hiding out in the ruins to avoid running into several groups of overzealous guards and parishioners from the Night's Grace temple that have taken it upon themselves to go in search of the stolen artifact.
- ✖ He is also willing to sign a writ or write a short note to the current holders of the sword authorizing its release in payment of the debt.

Again, if the PCs are hostile or aggressive toward Herent his tone of voice and answers should reflect that. He is a naturally grumpy old man, and becomes increasingly standoffish and taciturn as the conversation continues. He knows his time left to live is very short and has no problem goading the “arrogant” or “heathen” PCs into further escalating the situation.

Herent the Modest: Male human adept 3; hp 11; Combat Statistics.

Tactics: Herent avoids combat if possible. If he is treated poorly, he hopes to provoke the PCs. If he decides the PCs are too unworthy, dangerous, or arrogant to possess the sword he is willing to sacrifice his life to buy time for the Covenant to make their escape with it.

Wooden Box: The box is unlocked and contains a small wooden holy symbol to Dol Dorn, minor personal effects, and 6 cp.

Development: After too much talk or when the PCs have exhausted Herent’s patience or the information he has to give, he will ask the PCs to leave an old man to his rest. If the PCs have treated Herent poorly and he has told them the sword still remains at the temple, proceed to the Path A adventure. Herent sends a messenger ahead to the ruins to warn the Covenant members of the PCs interest in the sword.

If the PCs were respectful, polite, or neutral with Herent and they received the story about the ruins, skip them ahead to Path B of the adventure.

COMBAT STATISTICS HERENT THE MODEST

CR 2

Male human adept 3

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init + 0; **Senses** Listen + 1, Spot + 1

Languages Common

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 11 (3 HD)

Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee quarterstaff +1 (1d6)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1

Adept Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):

1st—*command* (DC 12), *comprehend languages*, *bles*

o—*cure minor wounds*, *mending*, *light*

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

Feats: Enlarge Spell, Scribe Scroll, Brew Potion

Skills Craft (Sculpting) +6, Hide +0, Knowledge (Local) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +1, Move Silently +0, Spot +1

Possessions quarterstaff and wooden holy symbol of the Sovereign Host.

Description A withered, balding human. His skin clings to his bones like parchment and veins protrude from his balding head. He wears simple robes of red and his eyes are sunken and hollow.

PART THREE: IN SEARCH OF THE SWORD

PATH A: THE LONG ROAD

As a result of the misleading information given to them by Herent the Modest, the PCs are likely to seek out the Night’s Grace temple first. The temple is a 90-minute walk from Herent’s home and approximately an hour’s walk from the airship. It is located in the north-eastern corner of town near the Foundry.

The temple is currently in the middle of its mid-Lharvion celebration to Dol Dorn and his packed with worshippers. The PCs have number of options upon arriving at the temple. They almost certainly want to speak with the head priest. They can also talk with local worshippers or other temple employees like guards or acolytes.

NIGHT’S GRACE TEMPLE

The temple is a large, circular structure. Two stone columns carved as powerfully built, handsome men hold up the archway that forms the main entrance. Worshippers of all races are streaming into the temple, many chatting excitedly.

The temple itself is a large rotunda with a narrow vestibule entrance. In the midst of one of the year’s biggest celebrations, the temple is filled with close to 300 worshippers. The ceremony is currently underway and most of the parishioners have already arrived.

Entering the temple you are greeted by the sight of several hundred people of various ages and races. Acolytes are humming and chanting in the background. Painted frescoes of metallic dragons interacting with the same muscular human line the circular walls of the temple. A tall, burly human dressed in reflective silver robes leads the prayers from the center of the rotunda. Roughly two dozen lightly armed guards are positioned around the temple and many acolytes assist the ceremony or wait to relieve other acolytes from their duties.

The Pilgrimage of Strength takes place each Lharvion and is marked by two days of feasting and exercise.

Worshippers remain in the temple for up to two days being lead by priests and acolytes through a series of exercises similar to yoga forms that venerate Dol Dorn’s perfection of body. Short breaks occur every several hours where worshippers eat and drink specially prepared hollow fruits stuffed with bread or a type of vegetable paste.

The PCs have arrived near the beginning of the ceremony, which makes it difficult for them to obtain the one-on-one attention of any of the worshippers or temple clergy. The high priest, Bale’orgn, a proud, muscular human, is the man in the silver robes at the center of the temple leading prayer. The PCs have to be very persuasive or very patient to obtain an audience with him.

The PCs should have a number of potential options at this point. They can wait for a break in the action and attempt to speak with Bale’orgn. They can approach lesser acolytes not directly involved in the ceremony or temple guards. They could attempt to speak with some of the worshippers or they could simply take a look around by themselves.

RELICS ON DISPLAY

There is a large niche in the northernmost wall of the rotunda about 10 feet off the ground. Several suits of armor, a handful of longswords, and several other religious artifacts are prominently set on display here.

Artifacts significant to the Sovereign Host are displayed here proudly during the ceremony. Most of these relics are nothing more than ordinary equipment that was used by famous priests, missionaries, or worshippers. They are all kept in good repair, but many are quite old. A Search check (DC 20) or Investigate (DC 12 to analyze clues) turns up a small empty spot in the display where a sword might have been kept. *Detect magic* reveals faint abjuration (*Alarm*, Spellcraft DC 21) magic on the display, but no magical equipment. Any attempt by the PCs to disturb or take any artifact is immediately spotted by the guards, who escort the party out of the temple and ask them not to return.

GATHERING INFORMATION

The party has any number of options to attempt to gather some information about the location of the sword. The most obvious may be to approach some of the unoccupied temple acolytes, who are easily spotted and approached in the temple. The party may also attempt to question guards or worshippers about the sword, or they may wait for Bale'orgn to be unoccupied.

Any worshiper, guard, or acolyte the PCs talk to about Bale'orgn quickly conveys that the priest may be busy for a long time and that the Pilgrimage of Strength lasts for another two days. Further questioning these folks can yield more information, if the PCs can cajole it out of them (Diplomacy check). All of the temple's staff starts with an indifferent attitude. . Don't hesitate to give up to a +2 circumstance bonus to these checks, particularly if the PCs have already seen the relic display and noticed that the sword is missing, and point that out to the staff.

As long as the staff member has attitude is indifferent or better, and if the PCs mention the missing sword, it yields the following information:

- ✖ There was a magic sword present in the temple, but it's been stolen.
- ✖ The sword was stolen just last night.

Moving the staff member to a friendly or better attitude gains even more information:

- ✖ The sword frightened worshippers because it would suddenly start singing for no apparent reason.
- ✖ Rumor has it that some of the guards saw a pair of red-clothed men fleeing the scene last night.
- ✖ Some of the guards went after the thieves.
- ✖ Bale'orgn doesn't seem too upset about the sword's disappearance

Adjusting the attitude to helpful really gets the staff member talking:

- ✖ The sword was called *Dirgesinger* and it sometimes spouted cryptic prophetic songs
- ✖ Bale'orgn hated the sword because it would suddenly interrupt his sermons, frightening worshippers
- ✖ Some of the guards are upset because they thought they had located the thieves, only to be called back by Bale'orgn to help in the ceremony even though plenty of guards were already present.

Once the PCs are on the track that some of the guards may know more, whoever gave them the initial information is happy to point out one of the guards that followed the thieves. The guards are more than happy to give the PCs directions to the thieves last known locations.

BALE'ORGN

A broad-shouldered, tall, muscular human hustles over to you. He is dressed in elaborate silver robes and beads of perspiration have formed on his brow. He speaks in a hurried, hoarse tone: "I'm sorry I don't have much time to talk, what is it that you need?"

Bale'orgn is frustrated at the PCs interruption. He's in a terrible hurry and wants nothing more than to get back to his ceremony. If the PCs are circumspect and don't reveal their intentions, he assumes that they're just treasure hunters and tells them that he can't afford to hire them to find the sword. His goal is to get them out of his way and out of the temple as quickly as possible. Bale'orgn has no interest in seeing the sword returned and claims that he knows nothing about its disappearance, who took it, or where it might be.

If the PCs speak about Herent or reveal their true intentions, he'll feel better that the sword isn't going to be returned to him. Nonetheless, he'll be wary of the PCs, suspecting that Herent must have been up to something to send them here first when he already knew the sword was gone. If the PCs are persuasive (Diplomacy DC 15) and honest he gives them the location of the ruins. If the PCs are difficult or disrespectful, or if he becomes overly suspicious about their interaction with Herent, he'll instead refer them to speak with the guard that might know more.

If the PCs arrive already having spoken with the guards he'll confirm their story. If the guards haven't yet revealed the location of the ruins, Bale'orgn does.

PART FOUR: DELVING THE RUINS

The ruins are a long-forgotten slab of rock located just outside Stormreach's walls in the northeastern corner, near the mouth of the river. Once some sort of storehouse, most of the structure has collapsed. Above the ground the ruins consist of nothing but age-worn rubble and dust, long overgrown with local foliage. Beneath is a snaking hallway connecting several intact rooms—though much of what lies beneath has collapsed as well.

The PCs have arrived here by either one of two paths. Again, if aggression and hostility was shown toward Herent be sure the PCs start at Path A. If the PCs were originally given the location of the ruins by Herent, start them on Path B.

PATH A: EMPTY RUINS

Thick creeper and dense weeds choke what is left of this structure. Ancient rubble ground to dust and small fragments by eroded by time can be seen beneath the vegetation. What remains of a staircase is barely visible among the stones and rock. Downward is heavily obscured by dust, vegetation, and thick darkness.

No light is present in the ruins below. They are also unoccupied. While the PCs were at the Night's Grace temple, Herent's messenger arrived and warned the Covenant of the PCs approach. The Covenant members have left early for the rendezvous point. Signs of brief skirmishes with between something can be seen. In a room at the rear, a dying creature can clue the party in to the location of the sword.

1. WITHIN THE RUINS

The stairs are narrow and steep, plunging down nearly twenty feet into the darkness. Emerging from the stairs is a grimy hallway that snakes around and off to the right. Several doors dot the hallway as it winds its way around.

The hallway is 10 feet wide by 20 feet high and loops around to the right of a cluster of central rooms. As the PCs explore a Search (DC 15) check reveals bits of blood, a broken torch, and some arrow fletching.

2. SLEEPING CHAMBER

The wooden door to the room is scattered in fresh, jagged shards around the interior of this small chamber. The remains of a crude wooden bed rot in the far corner. Except for thick dust, shards of wood, and cobwebs, the room appears to be empty.

Minor signs of a struggle are present and the dust has been disturbed in several locations. Searching the bed reveals only woodworms and fungus.

3. STOREROOM (EL 1)

The interior of this room is littered with debris. Small scraps of moist, rotten paper and wood cling to the walls and cover the entirety of the floor. The faint odor of fetid flesh mingles with the cloying stench of refuse.

The door to this room is closed, but not locked. Opening it triggers the the arrow trap within. The room is otherwise empty. A Search or Investigate (DC 10) check reveals small bits of gray, cleaved-off flesh.

Trap, Basic Arrow: CR 1; mechanical; proximity trigger; manual reset; Atk +10 ranged (1d6/x3, arrow); Search DC 20, Disable Device DC 20.

4. PLANT ROOM

A makeshift garden was constructed in this room, though the plants now lie trampled and crushed. Soil and vegetable matter are strewn about haphazardly, but there appears to be little else remarkable in the room.

This garden belonged to the sickly, wayward troglodyte that formerly inhabited these ruins. The struggle that took place in here crushed any potential plants of value.

5. RUBBLE ROOM

Giant fissures line the ceiling of the room and networks of cracks run along the southern and eastern walls of the room. Chunks of rock from the ceiling and walls, some quite sizable, cover the floor. A pile of bones sits in the northwestern corner of the room.

The room contains nothing of value. The pile of bones in the corner appear to be animal bones, some very small. Most of them are crushed or masticated beyond recognition.

6. BROKEN CRATES (EL 1)

Pairs of doors sit on opposite sides of this room. Smashed crates of various sizes, most decomposing and useless, are strewn about. A single intact crate, mold and fungus growing on the outside, sits on a broken pallet in the corner.

Another gift has been left for any pursuers by the Covenant. The crate has simply been patched back together to attract attention. A Search (DC 15) notices the reconstruction is unusual and patchwork. The crate contains the trigger for the spear trap.

Trap, Spear: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger, manual reset; Atk +12 ranged (1d8/x3, spear). Search DC 20, Disable Device DC 20. *Note:* 200-ft. max range, target determine randomly from those in its path.

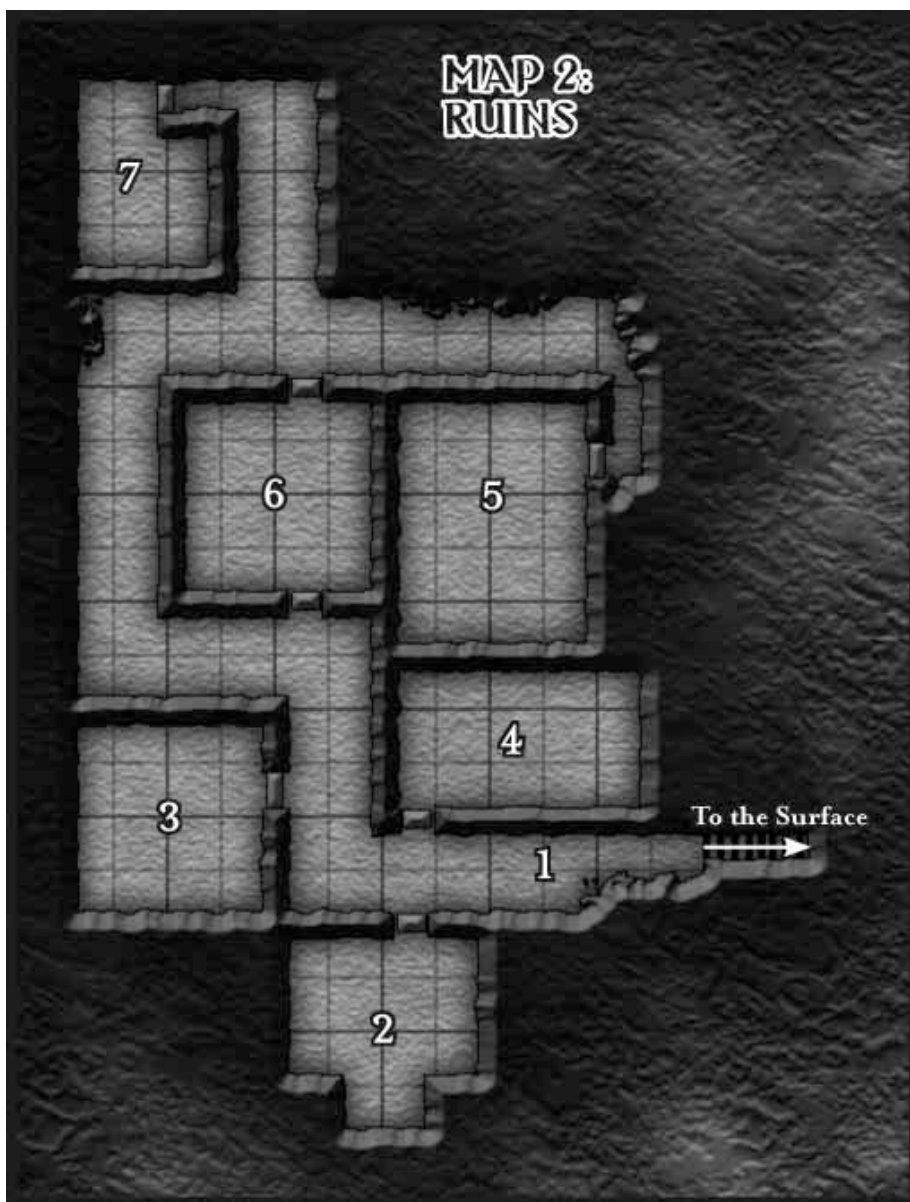
7. TROG'S LAIR (EL 2)

Flecks of slime cling to the slick gray walls of this room. The stench of foul earth, heavy musk, and blood is overwhelmingly potent. A frail reptilian creature lies crumpled in an odd angle against the back wall. Next to it sits a small metal box. A crumple of red cloth lies in the other corner.

The lone inhabitant of this ruin is a sickly troglodyte, dying from the wounds inflicted upon it by unwanted trespassers. As the PCs enter they are subject to the troglodyte's stench effect (DC 13 Fortitude—sickened for 10 rounds). The troglodyte is dying (-6 hp) and is not stable. It is seconds away from death when the PCs arrive. The party may attempt a curative spell or a Heal (DC 15) check to stabilize the creature. If they do it becomes conscious and begins babbling in a few minutes. If they do not, the creature perishes shortly.

The pile of red cloth consists of a pair of human-sized red robes.

If the troglodyte becomes conscious, it rambles in broken Common, coughing frequently. If the PCs mention the red robes or the sword it begins coughing violently. It eventually tells the PCs that it overheard the men talking about meeting a ship just outside the ruins. The troglodyte points to the northeast to indicate the direction the men were talking about going. He mentions a shoreline only a few hundred yards past the entrance to the ruins. Use this conversation to impress upon them a sense of urgency at finding the sword.



The metal box has been intentionally left as a temptation for the PCs and opening it will trigger the trap contained in the lid.

Inflct Light Wounds Trap: CR 2; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (inflict light wounds, 1st-level cleric, 1d8+1, DC 11 Will save half damage); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

Development: If the PCs learn of the rendezvous point at the shore then proceed immediately to Part 5 of the adventure. If the PCs do not learn of the rendezvous point, the adventure ends.

PATH B: INHABITED RUINS

Thick creeper and dense weeds choke what is left of this structure. Ancient rubble ground to dust and small fragments by eroded by time can be seen beneath the vegetation. What remains of a staircase is barely visible among the stones and rock. Downward is heavily obscured by dust, vegetation, and thick darkness.

Only begin with this path if the PCs treated Herent in a friendly or respectful manner.

No light is present in the ruins below. They are also occupied by several nasty inhabitants. The Covenant members below carrying the sword are holed up in a room awaiting the appointed time to slip out and meet the ship. Undead have recently wandered in, attracted by the the scent of blood, and the party may encounter them wandering around or in the areas listed below.

1. WITHIN THE RUINS

The stairs are narrow and steep, plunging down nearly 20 feet into the darkness. Emerging from the stairs is a grimy hallway that snakes around and off to the right. Several doors dot the hallway as it winds its way around.

The hallway is 10 feet wide by 20 feet high and loops around to the right of a cluster of central rooms. As the PCs explore a Search (DC 15) check reveals bits of bits of grey rotting flesh, a broken torch, and some scattered green plant matter.

2. SLEEPING CHAMBER (EL 2)

Scraps of flesh and bone litter the floor of the chamber. The remains of a crude wooden bed rot in the far corner. A thick, musty smelling dust covers the floor and cobwebs cling to the walls and ceiling. Three gray-skinned half-rotted humanoids are hunched over a corpse in the corner.

Sound: A Listen (DC 15) check reveals the sound of bones

snapping, chewing, and a shuffling noise.

The zombies are snacking on the remains of a troglodyte, the ruin's former inhabitant. They attack as soon as the PCs enter.

Carcass Eaters (3): hp 9, 8, 8, Combat Statistic.

Tactics: Carcass eaters tend to prefer fresher blood, and they happily abandon their current snack for a chance to feast on the PCs. The carcass eaters are not savvy predators and shouldn't use the opportunity to gang up on a particular PC.

Development: If the carcass eaters are defeated, the PCs may wish to search the troglodyte corpse. A Heal (DC 15) check reveals that the troglodyte died from piercing and slashing wounds, though the zombies are unarmed. A Search check (DC 15) reveals an arrow, broken at the head, embedded in the trog's thigh—the wound appears to be relatively recent. Searching the bed reveals only woodworms and fungus.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

2nd-Level Characters: There are four carcass eaters (hp 9, 8, 8, 6).

3rd-Level Characters: There are five carcass eaters (hp 9, 8, 8, 7, 6).

3. STOREROOM

The interior of this room is littered with debris. Small scraps of moist, rotten paper and wood cling to the walls and cover the entirety of the floor. The faint odor of fetid flesh mingles with the cloying stench of refuse.

The door to this room begins the encounter as closed, but not locked. If the PCs have encountered the zombies, they may suspect that they've already been here. The room is otherwise empty. A Search or Investigate (DC 10) check reveals small bits of gray, chewed-off flesh.

4. PLANT ROOM

A makeshift garden was constructed in this room, though the plants now lie trampled and crushed. Soil and vegetable matter are strewn about haphazardly, but there appears to be little else remarkable in the room.

This garden belonged to the sickly, wayward troglodyte that formerly inhabited these ruins. The struggle that took place in here crushed any potential plants of value.

5. RUBBLE ROOM (EL 1)

Giant fissures line the ceiling of the room and networks of cracks run along the southern and eastern walls of the room. Chunks of rock from the ceiling and walls, some quite sizable, cover the floor. A pile of bones sits in the northwestern corner of the room.

The room contains nothing of value. The pile of bones in the corner appear to be animal bones, some very small. Most of them are crushed or masticated beyond recognition.

Creatures: A large monstrous centipede is curled beneath one of the boulders in the southwestern corner of the room, and attacks if the PCs draw within 10 feet. If the PCs don't provoke or encounter the centipede there is a 25% chance that it sneaks up and ambushes them as they explore each additional room. A Listen (DC 15) or Spot (DC 12) check alerts the PCs to the creature's approach.

Large Monstrous Centipede: hp 14, MM 286.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

2nd-Level Characters: There are two Large monstrous centipedes (hp 16, 14).

3rd-Level Characters: There are three Large monstrous centipedes (hp 16, 14, 12).

6. BROKEN CRATES

Pairs of doors sit on opposite sides of this room. Smashed decomposing crates of various sizes are strewn about. The remains of the crates have mold and fungus growing on the outside and bits of crushed pallet are scattered beneath.

The contents of these crates have long since been pillaged. Little remains but dust, splinters, and cobwebs.

7. TROG'S LAIR (EL 9)

Flecks of slime cling to the slick gray walls of this room. The stench is overwhelmingly of earth and musk is quite pungent. A pair of well-armed humans chat quietly one corner. A crumple of red cloth lies in the other corner, next to a long metal box.

Sounds: A Listen (DC 15) check reveals the muffled sounds of conversation. The language appears to be Common, but the conversation is too soft to be intelligible. A Listen check that equals or exceeds DC 20 should be able to identify small bits of talk related to "waiting for the ship to arrive to be rid of this sword."

Foes: Here, two Covenant members, Saull and Tafala, have holed up until the ship arrives to ferry them and the sword away. They start out with an unfriendly attitude, but combat need not occur if the PCs can move that attitude to friendly, but the pair only entertains diplomacy if the PCs approach in a non-threatening manner. Presenting a letter or other symbol from Herent grants a +2 circumstance bonus to that check. If the PCs attempt to bribe them, they take offense and attack immediately.

It will take a significant amount of convincing to get them to hand over the sword (moving them to a helpful attitude, allow a second Diplomacy check after the PCs move them to a friendly attitude), but if the PCs are persistent and seem honest about their intentions, the Covenant members part with the sword.

Saull Derrin: male human cleric 1; hp 10; Combat Statistic

Tafala Brightaxe: female human rogue 2; hp 9; Combat Statistics.

Tactics: These two young Covenant members are new recruits to the organization and eager to test themselves. If combat ensues Saull casts *bless* and charges ahead, trying to block the doorway in an attempt to block the PCs' entrance. Tafala hangs back using *Precise Shot* to her advantage until Saull falls or she is directly engaged. Tafala picks off any spellcasters first if she has a clear shot. If Saull becomes surrounded and Tafala has a chance for a flank, she takes it.

Development: If the PCs are able to successfully negotiate with the Covenant members, they gain *Dirgesinger*, one of the *Singing Swords of Tantamar*, without a struggle. The sword sits in the metal box in the corner of the room. The Covenant members ask to take their leave immediately if they agree to part with the sword. They do not reveal anything about their organization, save to say that they are a group of "holy brothers" with a keen interest in the draconic Prophecy. Completing this segment of the mission without bloodshed earns the PCs the story object: "Respect of the Covenant" (see sidebar).

If the PCs defeat the Covenant members, they will have successfully completed the mission. Recovering the sword by combat will earn the PCs the story object: "Enmity of the Covenant."

Failing to recover the sword, either because the PCs fall in combat or they are unable to locate the Covenant members effectively ends the adventure.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

2nd-level Characters: The pair is served by a lantern archon (hp 4; MM 16).

2nd-level Characters: The pair is served by a pair of lantern archons (hp 5, 4; MM 16).

COMBAT STATISTICS

CARCASS EATER

CR 1

N Small animal

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +3, Spot +3

AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 12

hp 9 (1 HD)

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

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 10 ft.

Melee bite +4 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +0; **Grp** -5

Special Actions blood frenzy

Abilities Str 8, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

SQ Low-light vision, scent

Feats Track, Weapon Finesse^b

Skills Hide +7, Listen +3, Spot +3

Blood Frenzy (Ex) A carcass eater that deals damage in combat against a living creature scents blood, which causes it to fly into a frenzy the following round. While in a blood frenzy a carcass eater gains +4 to Str, +4 Con, and -2 AC. If a carcass eater brings a victim to negative hit points, it immediately gains an additional bite attack against its fallen foe. The attack automatically hits dealing 1d4+1 points of damage. A carcass eater cannot end its rage voluntarily.

Description This gore-streaked, four-footed animal seems a cross between an overlarge rat and a wolf, though even that can't explain the extraordinary size of its toothy jaws.

SAULL DERRIN

CR 1

Male human cleric 1 (of Arawai)

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17

hp 10 (1 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee morningstar +1 (1d8+1)

Ranged dagger +0 (1d4+1/19-20)

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +1

Special Actions spontaneously cast *cure* spells, turn undead (4/day; +1; 2d6+2)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 1st):

1st—Bless, *command* (DC 13), hide from undead^D

0—detect magic, inflict minor wounds, resistance, vigor

^DDomain Spell: Life (Once per day grant 1d6+1 temporary hit points to creature touched, they last one hour);

Weather (Vision is unobstructed by nonmagical weather conditions; Survival is class skill).

Abilities Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 12

Feats Combat Casting, Toughness

Skills Concentration +4, Diplomacy +2, Heal +4, Knowledge (religion) +1

Possessions breastplate, heavy steel shield, morningstar, dagger, wooden holy symbol of Arawai

TAFALA BRIGHTAXE

CR 2

Female human rogue 2

NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12

hp 9 (2 HD)

Fort +0, **Ref** +5, **Will** +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee short sword +1 (1d6/19-20)

Ranged light crossbow +4 (1d6/19-20)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1

Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Special Atk Sneak Attack +1d6

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

Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Skills Appraise +7, Balance +7, Climb +3, Craft (trapmaking) +7, Diplomacy +1, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +7, Hide +6, Jump +7, Listen +1, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +7, Search +5, Sleight of Hand +3, Spot +1, Tumble +9

Possessions leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, dagger, bolts (20), thieves' tools.



PART FIVE: CONFRONTING THE COVENANT (EL 5)

The party will have come this far only if they were on Path A and learned of the rendezvous point from the dying troglodyte.

Thick, overgrown vegetation quickly gives way to massive slabs of black stone. The porous rock is slick with moisture and has a thin white crust from the salt spray. Suddenly, the maze of rocky pillars gives way to open shoreline. Several hundred yards off shore a double-masted ship lies anchored. As you emerge, you see four figures carrying supplies, dashing toward a rowboat.

A small team of Covenant members has assembled to row the sword out to the ship lying in wait. A battle occurs in the shallows near the shore. This is a very challenging encounter, but the PCs have earned a surprise round, which they can use to make some headway. The battle takes place in 1-2 feet of seawater, which counts as difficult terrain.

Saull Derrin: male human cleric 1; hp 10; Combat Statistic

Tafala Brightaxe: female human rogue 2; hp 9; Combat Statistics.

Chord: male personality warforged paladin 1; hp 12; Combat Statistics.

Estig Highgallows: male dwarf marshal 1; hp 9; see Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The encounter begins with the two sides 50 ft. apart. The Covenant members will quickly drop what they're doing and join the battle. Saull begins with a *bles* spell and takes cover with the rest of the party behind the rocky outcroppings. They prefer to use ranged attacks, having cover to their advantage. If they are clearly facing superior ranged attacks, they charge forward to meet the PCs. In either event, when melee is joined Estig uses his aura to encourage his troops to flank the party.

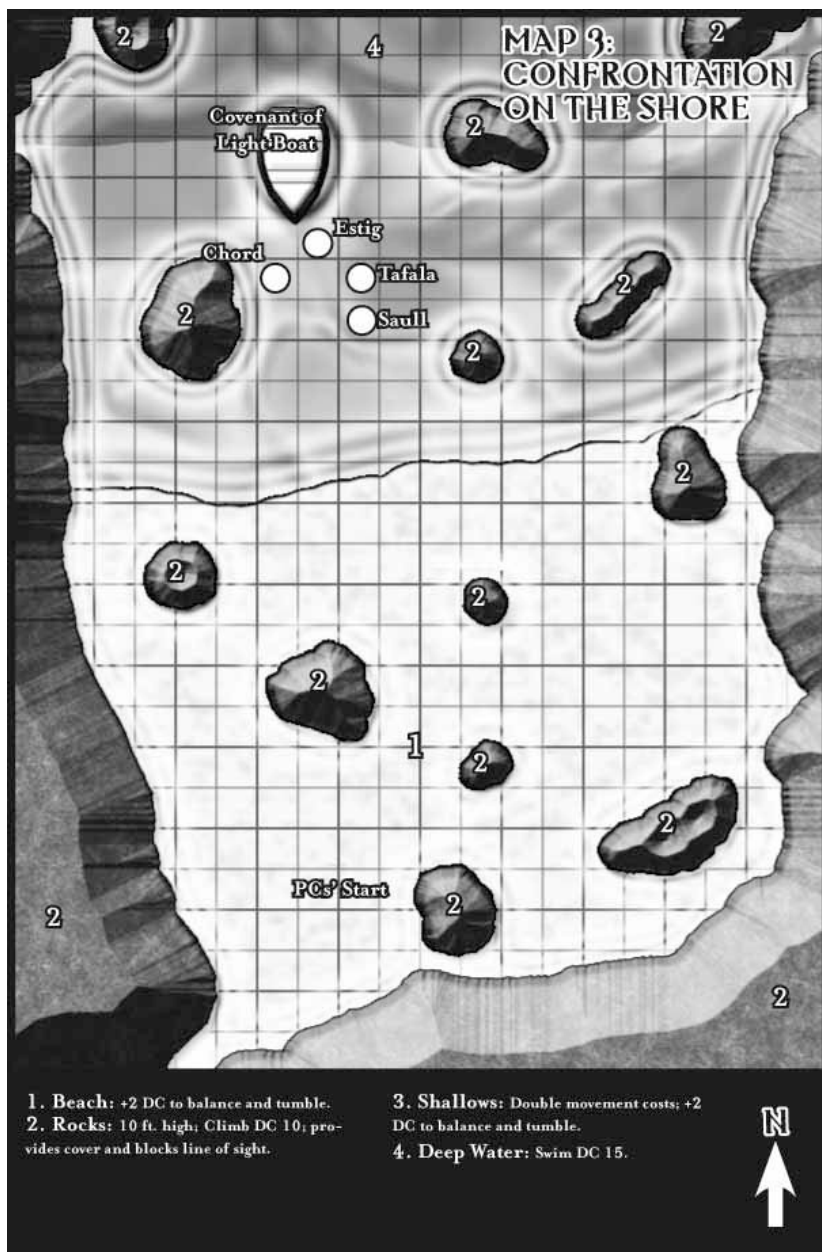
Development: This is the PCs final opportunity to recover *Dirgesinger*. If the party is able to defeat the

Covenant they find the sword in a metal box within the rowboat. Defeating the Covenant in this manner earns them the "Enmity of the Covenant" story object. If the PCs are defeated, the Covenant members row out to the waiting ship and slip away with the sword and the adventure ends.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

2nd-level Characters: The pair is served by a lantern archon (hp 4; MM 16).

2nd-level Characters: The pair is served by a pair of lantern archons (hp 5, 4; MM 16).



Ranged shortbow + 2 (1d6/x3)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3
Atk Options smite evil (1/day; +1 damage)
Abilities Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 6, Cha 6
Feats Mithral Body
Skills Concentration +3, Craft (armorsmithing) +0, Ride +2, Sense Motive -1
SQ detect evil
Possessions heavy steel shield, longsword, shortbow, 20 arrows, warforged repair kit

SAULL DERRIN CR 1

Male human cleric 1 (of Arawai)
 LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +0; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common
AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17
hp 10 (1 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** +4
Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee morningstar +1 (1d8+1)
Ranged dagger + 0 (1d4+1/19-20)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** +1
Special Actions spontaneously cast *cure* spells, turn undead (4/day; +1; 2d6+2)
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 1st):
 1st—Bless, *command* (DC 13), hide from undead^D
 0—detect magic, inflict minor wounds, resistance, vigor
^DDomain Spell: Life (Once per day grant 1d6+1 temporary hit points to creature touched, they last one hour); Weather (Vision is unobstructed by nonmagical weather conditions; Survival is class skill).
Abilities Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 12
Feats Combat Casting, Toughness
Skills Concentration +4, Diplomacy +2, Heal +4, Knowledge (religion) +1
Possessions breastplate, heavy steel shield, morningstar, dagger, wooden holy symbol of Arawai

COMBAT STATISTICS

CHORD

Male personality warforged paladin 1
 LG Medium construct (living construct)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen -1, Spot -1
Aura good
Languages Common
AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17
hp 12 (1 HD); light fortification
Immune poison, sleep, paralysis, disease, nausea, fatigue, exhaustion, sickening and energy drain
Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1
Weakness vulnerable to spells that affect wood and metal, half benefit from normal healing spells
Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee longsword +3 (1d8+2/19-20) or slam + 3 (1d4+2)

CR 1

TAFALA BRIGHTAXE

CR 2

Female human rogue 2
 NG Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven
AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12
hp 9 (2 HD)
Fort +0, **Ref** +5, **Will** +0
Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee short sword + 1 (1d6/19-20)
Ranged light crossbow +4 (1d6/19-20)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1
Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Special Atk Sneak Attack + 1d6
Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 10
Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Skills Appraise +7, Balance +7, Climb +3, Craft (trapmaking) +7, Diplomacy +1, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +7, Hide +6, Jump +7, Listen +1, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +7, Search +5, Sleight of Hand +3, Spot +1, Tumble +9

Possessions leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, dagger, bolts (20), thieves' tools.

ESTIG HIGHGALLOWS

CR 1

Male dwarf marshal 1

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +4

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; +4 dodge against giants

hp 9 (1 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** +2; +2 save against poison, spells, and spell-like abilities.

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee longspear +1 (1d8+1/x3) or
warhammer +1 (1d8+1/x3)

Ranged longbow +1 (1d8/x3)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with longspear)

Marshal auras

Minor—*maser of tactics*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +5, Sense Motive +1, Spot +4, Perform (oratory) +5

SQ stability, stone cunning

Possessions banded mail, warhammer, longspear, longbow, 20 arrows

minor aura, master of tactics: grants a +3 bonus to allies' damage when flanking. A marshal's auras are considered a sonic effect. Allies must be within 60 ft., able to understand the marshal's language, and have an Intelligence score of 3 or higher. A marshal's aura is a swift action to activate or change. A marshal's aura is dismissed if he is dazed, unconscious, helpless, paralyzed, or unable to be heard.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

For all intents and purposes, the adventure ends when the PCs recover *Dirgesinger*, or upon the realization the strange sword is lost to the Covenant of Light.

RECOVERING THE SWORD

At some point if the party recovers the sword, they hear a humming from the box. Upon opening the box, *Dirgesinger* begins singing aloud. It sings the following slow, sad sound song. Remind the PCs that this Prophecy could play a role later, and that they should keep it in mind.

*Suppliant and bowing, I lie,
my soul, fallow, like ash:
In this beginning...
Have a care for the end.*

*For ash is all that remains,
when fire and flame abandon,
but way, now rich for growth.*

*What in flames quench shall die,
and false prophet's ruin:
Heralds the rise of the acropolis*

*When those accursed are silenced,
sentenced to piercing flames,
call me with the prophets true.*

*Tearful that day,
on which will rise from ashes
a servant of the dragon's word.
So have mercy, on this new prophet.
For his shell and husk false have passed,
grant them rest.*

Give each PCs a copy of Handout 1. The Story Object they receive for success is based on the manner of the sword's recovery (see below).

As event treasure, successful PCs also gain the following: potion of *cure light wounds* or *oil of repair light damage*, a vial of *silversheen*, and a vial of *alchemist frost*.

Event treasure is tracked on your Adventure Journal, and becomes part of your equipment list for the duration of the event it was gained. After that event, it is exchanged for an increase in your Equipment Value (EV) as reported on the online character tracking.

EVENT TREASURE EXTENSION

Until XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS character tracking is up and running, you can keep event treasure between events. We'll announce the end of event treasure carrying on the RPGA website, but it will end prior to the campaign's official launch at Gen Con Indy 2006.

If time remains, allow them to experience returning with the sword to The Glory Road. Quartmaster Gridd greets them heartily and cheers from the other recruits await them.

MISSION FAILURE

If the PCs have failed in their mission, but return alive, the Blackwheel Company commanders voice their disappointment in true military manner, and the failure is marked in the records of the Company (give the PCs the Mission Failure Story Object). If the PCs are slain, the Company adds their names to the growing list of recruits that were unfit for duty.

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGNS (of which XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS is part of) tracks character progress digitally. At the adventure's end, you report what the characters did, by answering a number of questions. The answers to those questions are tallied, and determine not only what happens in the campaign, but also the experience (XP) and gold piece (gp) value increase each characters gains.

At the end of this adventure, you'll find the RPGA Session Tracking form, tailored for this adventure. On the section titled "Adventure Questions" fill in the bubble that corresponds to the best answer for the questions below.

Many time the questions ask whether or not the PCs defeated an encounter. Defeating doesn't necessarily mean killing all the enemies, but many times such an event suffices as defeating an encounter. Sometimes the PCs merely bypass an encounter. Through luck or circumstance a group of PCs can avoid encounters unscathed. Does bypassing an encounter earn the XP that defeating it would? No. The reward for getting past an encounter without actually interacting with it is having extra resources to bear in the next encounter. Where is the line? You are going to have to make that decision, because you are the DM.

For traps, PCs get experience points just for encountering them, whether or not they have been disabled.

Sometimes the PC's actions don't really fit the actions of a particular adventure question perfectly. This especially happens when you play the adventure using the 'Scaling the Encounter' options. In these cases, find the answer that best fits the spirit of their results.

- 1) Did the PCs treat Herent the Modest with respect?
 - a) Yes, it was quite clear they treated him well.
 - b) Maybe, the encounter had its ups and downs; Herent had his doubts about the party.
 - c) No, Herent was treated poorly or conflict occurred with the party.
- 2) The PCs ended up on which adventure path?
 - a) Path A—Herent sent them off on a false errand.
 - b) Path B—The party went directly to the ruins after speaking with Herent.
- 3) In general, how well do you think the PCs investigated the swords disappearance, regardless of what path they were on?
 - a) Excellent, they followed leads, spoke with everyone, and used appropriate Diplomacy, Sense Motive, Search checks, etc..
 - b) Okay. Some investigating was done, but the PCs missed a lot of leads and clues.
 - c) Poorly. Most leads and clues were missed, or never followed up on.
- 4) What did the PCs encounter in the Ruins?
 - a) Carcass eaters and a centipede.
 - b) Carcass eaters
 - c) A Centipede
 - d) Traps
 - e) None of the above.
- 5) How did the PCs recover *Durgesinger*?
 - a) Combat with the Covenant of Light in the ruins.

- b) They bargained or parleyed with the Covenant of Light in the ruins.
 - c) Combat on the shoreline with four Covenant members.
 - d) The party did not recover the sword.
- 6) Rate the group's roleplaying.
- a) Fantastic! Everyone had interesting and engaging characters that interacted and challenged the adventure in very fun ways.
 - b) Good. Most players had interesting and engaging characters.
 - c) Okay. There was some roleplaying.
 - d) None. There was no roleplaying. They treated the adventure as nothing more than a set of objectives to be accomplished.

If the PCs were not able to recover *Durgesinger* from the Covenant of Light agents, they get the following Story Object. Of course, they also don't hear the sword sing, so don't give out Handout 1.

MISSION FAILURE

Cert ID: EXBC03

You have failed your first mission in Xen'drik for the Blackwheel Company. This failure is a blemish on your record, and you will have to work harder to prove yourself to Company superiors.

STORY OBJECTS

Story objects are digital story information tracked with character. You'll notice on both your Session Tracking Sheet, and in the online reporting on the RPGA database, there's a section titled certification or cert. These sections allow you to enter up to two groups of five alphanumeric characters. At the end of each adventure, usually in a sidebar of in the Conclusion section, there is a list of story objects unique to the adventure. This list also features a description of the object, and the five alphanumeric character code you place on the Session Tracking Sheet and the online reporting to grant a character a particular story object. The story object then is reported with the adventure questions, and appears on the character's online character record after the session is reported.

Principal of the Matter has three Story Objects, each connected to events and items in the adventure. It's only possible for the PCs to have one of these story objects. The circumstances will dictate the items.

If the PCs were able to negotiate with the Covenant of Light agents to secure *Durgesinger*, they gain the following Story Object.

RESPECT OF THE COVENANT

Cert ID: EXBC01

As a result of your fair dealings with rival Covenant of Light agents, the Covenant views the relationship between themselves and the Blackwheel Company as more of a healthy competition between equals. Covenant members have heard stories of your dealings. This story object grants you a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks and on other appropriate dealings with non-hostile members from the Covenant of Light. This could also be beneficial in expeditions adventures played with member of the Covenant.

If the PCs took *Durgesinger* from the Covenant of Light agents by force, they gain the following Story Object.

ENMITY OF THE COVENANT

Cert ID: EXBC02

As a result of dealings gone sour with rival Covenant of Light agents, you are a marked individual. The Covenant tends to view you with disdain, and the Blackwheel Company is regarded as a dangerous cutthroat organization as it applies to you. You receive a -2 circumstance penalty on Diplomacy checks and other related dealings with Covenant of Light members. This penalty could have adverse effects in expedition adventures played with a member of the Covenant.

HANDOUT 1

*Suppliant and bowing, I lie,
my soul, fallow, like ash:
In this beginning...
Have a care for the end.*

*For ash is all that remains,
when fire and flame abandon,
but way, now rich for growth.*

*What in flames quench shall die,
and false prophet's ruin:
Heralds the rise of the acropolis*

*When those accursed are silenced,
sentenced to piercing flames,
call me with the prophets true.*

*Tearful that day,
on which will rise from ashes
a servant of the dragon's word.
So have mercy, on this new prophet.
For his shell and husk false have passed,
grant them rest.*

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