



# HEATHEN

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**T**HE SEARCH for a missing paladin takes the PCs deep into the heart of a frontier torn apart by cult wars—and face to face with an ancient evil.

“Heathen” is a 4th-edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for five characters of 5th level. The adventure takes place in remote frontier territory that can easily be placed into any campaign setting.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For five years, the Hand of Naarash has extended its dark hold over the borderlands. This cult of Bane was born in the Moonsfall Mountains, spreading across the frontiers of fallen Nerath and into settled lands. The cult’s death squads target isolated settlements for “cleansing”—the folk of the frontier given the choice of joining the Hand or accepting the salvation of death.

As the cult’s power has grown, a martial order called the Light of the Sun has risen to fight against it. A year before, the order sent a team deep across the frontier to strike at the cult’s hidden heart—an ancient temple known as the Pillars of Night. This group was led by the paladin Jaryn, a noble warrior and veteran of countless cult campaigns.

He and his compatriots were never seen by the order again.

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Now, a chance meeting with Light of the Sun members sees the PCs recruited to retrace Jaryn's journey across the borderlands—and to uncover the secret of his dark fate.

## ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

In an isolated frontier settlement, the PCs intervene when a Hand of Naarash death squad attacks a group of refugees fleeing the frontier. Upon meeting members of the Light of the Sun, the PCs are recruited for a journey into cult territory. Their quest: Retrace the route of the paladin Jaryn as he sought the temple known as the Pillars of Night.

A skill challenge sees the PCs make their way through the isolated villages of the frontier, seeking information on Jaryn's group and the road they sought. The Black March is a secret trail leading north to the Pillars of Night, its location a closely guarded secret. The PCs hear word of Jaryn's passage, the deaths of three of his party, and his oath to destroy a cult warlord named Larkazh. Then a confrontation with a Hand death squad reveals that the cult is smuggling weapons and armor across the frontier—the Hand of Naarash is building an army in the north. The PCs discover that the Hand is aware of their pursuit of Jaryn when a group of doppelganger assassins attempts to end the party's quest.

Setting out on the dangerous Black March, the PCs come to the isolated citadel of Adakmi. Alerted to dangers on the road ahead, they chart a new course up the white-water rivers of the Moonsfall Mountains, confronting another of the cult's death squads in a burning village. From the survivors come more clues indicating that Jaryn passed this way. Then the PCs are attacked by a tiefling darkblade—Jaryn's last surviving companion, now under the control of the cult.

The PCs arrive at the Pillars of Night—the ruins of a sprawling giant-built temple reclaimed by the Hand of Naarash. The temple complex is one part frontier city and one part military enclave—its people dedicated to the cult's dark mission. But when the PCs undertake a skill challenge to subtly infiltrate the cultists and determine Jaryn's fate, they discover that the paladin did make it to the Pillars of Night—and that he remains here, the new leader of the Hand of Naarash and the architect of the cult's future.

In the inner temple, the PCs fight their way through magical defenses and the lurking horrors of the past. They then defeat Jaryn's personal guard before facing the paladin himself. Jaryn has been corrupted by the latent evil of a demonic presence named Naarash, bound to a stone that the giants discovered and named the Eye of Naarash. The demon's evil destroyed the giants, and Naarash waited, biding its time until the temple ruins were discovered by hobgoblins five years ago. Having slain the hobgoblin who led the cult, Jaryn has rebuilt the Hand in his own broken image.

Whether the PCs fight Jaryn or manage to break the hold of Naarash's evil, they must face the demon in the end—a final battle to determine the fate of the cult and the borderlands.

The old adage that the journey matters as much as the destination is the guiding principle of "Heathen." The adventure is an excursion into the unknown for the PCs, but the ultimate shape of that journey is up to you and the players. For a party that wishes to focus on combat and skill challenges, you can shortcut the narrative and travel time to play "Heathen" as a traditional adventure whose encounters are separated by geography.

However, "Heathen" can also be used as a framework for a mini-campaign. You can expand the social encounters, throw more wandering monsters and cult patrols onto the Black March, or add additional skill challenges from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. If the party levels up once or twice during an expanded adventure arc, adjusting the levels of later encounters is easy. See "Advanced Encounters" in "Chapter 4: Building Encounters" of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Light of the Sun's plea for the PCs to seek Jaryn can be given more weight by introducing a previous connection between the party and the paladin's quest. The war-torn frontier might border on the homeland of one of the PCs, or the Hand of Naarash could be known for specific brutality against certain PC races. Any paladin or cleric of Pelor in the party might feel a strong sense of obligation to take up Jaryn's cause.

Alternatively, the Light of the Sun can be reworked as an order dedicated to any good or lawful good deity, or it could be an order of a specific race or culture dedicated to overthrowing the cult's evil.

## THE FRONTIER

The borderlands are an untamed expanse of wilderness and hardscrabble villages far from the centers of civilization. The PCs are passing through this frontier or might have arrived here in the aftermath of their previous adventure. The town they stop in resembles any other frontier settlement. However, a recent influx of refugees has swollen its population to the bursting point.

As the PCs arrive in town or go about their previously established business, read:

What was once a grassy common in the center of town has become a field of makeshift tents. The number of refugees is hard to count, more arriving each day to replace those picking up to head east for civilized lands. The exiles are a mix of races and cultures, but they share a common purpose according to the villagers you overhear discussing them—all are fleeing the predation of some frontier cult.

## F1. A TIMELY RESCUE

While making their way to or from their inn one evening, the PCs note a disturbance that turns ugly.

*The rain started that morning and shows no sign of letting up; the track through the center of town has turned to mire. As you approach the common, a shout rings out through the downpour. Sunrods light the refugee camp where a tent is pulled down. Five figures storm through the adjacent shelters as people scatter before them. You hear a child scream as a mace is raised.*

**Tactical Encounter:** “A Timely Rescue” (page 35).

## DEVELOPMENT

The town militia shows up when the fight is done. Beneath travel-stained cloaks, three of the cultists wear loose-fitting gray tunics with the symbol of Bane painted across the chest. The other two have the symbol painted directly onto their chainmail.

If the PCs allowed any cultists to survive, they obtain no useful information from them. They are recent converts who know nothing of the Pillars of Night or the Black March, and they do not wear the Naarash talisman of the temple cultists (see the sidebar on page 34).

**Treasure:** The PCs can claim 10 gp and a *potion of healing* carried by the mage.

## THE LIGHT OF THE SUN

As the refugees put their camp back together, another group appears to lend a hand.

*The newcomers are well-armed, all in gray cloaks set with the sun of Pelor. When the last of the injured has been taken care of, a tall human woman approaches, greeting you deferentially.*

*“Well met,” she says. “And thanks to you for a timely intervention. We have been hard after these cult butchers for three days now. Had you not been here, our arrival would have come too late.”*

Emesha is a cleric of Pelor. She and her companions are members of an order called the Light of the Sun. (Any PCs who worship Pelor recognize the name.)

*“These are cultists of the Hand of Naarash, a sect of Bane that spreads like plague. The Hand seeks converts in the isolated settlements, meeting resistance with steel and fire.”*

Emesha and the others stay with the shaken refugees. However, as the PCs take their leave, the cleric approaches again:

*“Friends, if you will be here in the morning, I would speak with you. It concerns a matter of some importance and a favor that we might humbly beg in Pelor’s name.”*

Emesha agrees to meet the PCs at a time and place of their choosing.

## F2. MISSION TO THE BORDERLANDS

The next day, Emesha makes an impassioned plea for the party’s aid:

*“Our order fights the Hand of Naarash at every turn, but still the cult’s strength grows. Our hope a year ago was that striking at the heart of the cult would grant us an advantage. That hope has been dashed until now—should you decide to aid us. We need a group willing to seek a paladin named Jaryn, lost across the frontier. Your actions last night, putting yourselves in danger to defend others, makes me hopeful that you might undertake this quest.”*

Any Insight check shows that Emesha speaks the truth. In response to specific questions regarding the mission, she replies with the following:

**Who is Jaryn?** “Jaryn is a stalwart of our faith and a veteran of countless campaigns against the cult. He and a group loyal to him undertook a mission a year ago that would have struck a mortal blow at the heart of Naarash.”

**What was Jaryn’s mission?** “While our order defends the villages of the frontier, Jaryn and four companions sought to take the battle to the heart of the cult. Naarash’s faithful are based in a great temple in the Moonfall Mountains. The Pillars of Night, they call it. Jaryn swore to break the cult by destroying its leaders.”

**What happened to Jaryn and his group?** “Our last contact with Jaryn was a *sending* ritual six months ago that placed him deep in the borderlands at the head of a trail he called the Black March. We have had no further word.”

**Who else was in Jaryn’s party?** “Four faithful of Pelor—Andressa and Annika, sister-clerics of our order; the fighter Kelma; and Dajani, a tiefling sworn to Pelor’s cause.”

**Who is Naarash? What is the Hand of Naarash?** “Naarash is said to be a hobgoblin prophet

of Bane before the fall of Nerath, but no history speaks of that name. The Hand of Naarash arose as a hobgoblin cult five years past, though it now counts all of the borderlands' races among its members."

**What activities does the cult engage in?** "They prey on the most isolated frontier villages for converts and spoils. Townsfolk are given the choice of joining the Hand or accepting the salvation of death."

**Why do you need our help?** "Our own operatives are too well-known among the cultists. Two groups have tried already to follow Jaryn's path. Neither returned. A capable party unknown to the cult might succeed where others have failed."

## DEVELOPMENT

Jaryn's group made its way west through the settled frontier, then north along the Black March. Emesha can sketch out a map that will see the party through the first stage of the journey. She gives the PCs a description of Jaryn, noting a prominent scar on his left cheek earned in battle with a hobgoblin war chief.

Emesha and her group carry little wealth, but she can cobble together a 100-gp stipend for the party as the PCs prepare for their expedition.

**Quest XP:** The mission to seek Jaryn is a major quest worth 200 XP for each PC. The outcome of that quest is likely to be different from what the PCs expect.

## F3. THE FRONTIER

Having accepted Emesha's mission and equipped themselves for a long journey, the PCs set out.

*With a last word of thanks, Emesha and her compatriots take their leave of you as they escort a group of refugees to larger settlements south and east. Your destination is west, and the frontier road is all but empty as you head out.*

## SKILL CHALLENGE

**Level 5, Difficulty 5 (1,000 XP)**

In this initial stage of the adventure, the PCs follow Jaryn's trail across the borderlands. Endurance and Nature checks in this skill challenge occur once per day. Other checks occur only when the PCs arrive in an inhabited village, as determined by the results of their Nature checks.

**Setup:** The PCs seek out frontier villages, searching for information on Jaryn, the cult, and the location of the Black March.

**Primary Skills:** Endurance, Nature, Streetwise, Perception.

**Endurance (DC 18):** The frontier is an inhospitable expanse of scrub and grassland that offers little in the way of food or shelter. Each day that the party spends traveling, its members must make a group Endurance check. Low DC Penalty: The group takes a -2 penalty to its next Endurance check (each character takes that penalty).

**Nature (DC 22):** In the absence of trade roads, the PCs must use Nature to seek out the intermittent foot and cart paths crisscrossing the wilderness.

**Streetwise (DC 26):** While in a village, the PCs talk with the locals. However, the folk of the frontier are reluctant to speak of the Hand of Naarash to strangers, and only one Streetwise check can be made per PC. High DC Bonus: The party gains one piece of information (see below).

**Perception (DC 22):** While in a village, one of the PCs eschews conversation in favor of poking around town or eavesdropping. In addition to victory, the party gains one piece of information (see below).

**Other Skills:** Diplomacy

**Diplomacy (DC 22):** The folk of the frontier are unused to strangers, and it takes time to earn their trust. Each day they remain in a town, the PCs can make a single Diplomacy check. This skill does not yield victories or defeats. On a failed check, the townsfolk reject the party's attempts at sociability; the PCs take a -2 penalty to subsequent Streetwise and Perception checks and cannot make further Diplomacy checks in that town. On a successful check, the PCs gain the trust of the townsfolk, granting a +2 bonus to their next Streetwise or Perception check.

Each of the villages the PCs pass through can be similarly described:

*The intermittent trails you follow eventually join a faint track. Ahead, scrubland gives way to fields dotted with farmhouses. However, even before you reach the village, you feel the eyes on you. Through shuttered windows, the villagers watch your approach with dark suspicion.*

Settlements of this size have no inns or taverns, and the PCs must seek shelter in private homes and farms. The folk of the frontier are uniformly suspicious of strangers but downright fearful of the Hand of Naarash. However, a DC 18 Diplomacy check and 1 sp each procures a night's shelter for the PCs (and their mounts, if applicable).

**Success:** From the final village, the PCs are given directions to the Black March. See "Village Show-down" below.

**Failure:** The PCs' inability to gain the complete trust of the folk of the frontier sees them stymied in their efforts to find the Black March.



## RUMORS ON THE ROAD

The reward for success in this skill challenge is the location of the Black March. However, each Streetwise or Perception check can shed light on Jaryn's quest. Information can be given out in the order presented, or you can decide what to reveal based on the specific information the PCs tell you they are seeking.

## F4. VILLAGE SHOWDOWN

In one of the villages the PCs stop in as they make their way across the frontier, they become targets of a Hand of Naarash death squad. Incorporate this encounter into the preceding skill challenge when the PCs are one check away from either victory or defeat.

*The last three settlements you passed have been burned out, human and hobgoblin bodies scattered in the ash. Just before dusk, you find a settlement still standing. The track*

*meets up with a wide stream ahead, green fields to both sides. As you approach, a figure on horseback rides out from the nearest farmhouse. An older human man hails you, one hand resting on the longsword at his hip.*

Perren Auldwyl is a widower and elder of the town of Erstlin. Guessing that the PCs are seeking a place to stay the night, he offers the use of his well-kept farmhouse. While the PCs rest, he prepares a meal, steadfastly keeping any conversation steered toward mundane topics. If the party chooses to seek lodging elsewhere, Auldwyl shows up later unannounced, forcing any other townsfolk to keep quiet. Either way, the following exchange occurs as soon as the PCs attempt to ask about the Black March or the cult:

*"Not the first time I've heard such questions from outsiders," Auldwyl says. "And I'll tell you straight what I told them—Erstlin don't need no would-be heroes making*

*trouble. Best you take your questions and head back to your precious cities at first light."*

Whether the PCs argue or prepare to leave, read:

*From outside comes the sound of hoofbeats through the dark night. Auldwyl sprints to a window, carefully peering through the shutters. "Fools!" he hisses as he turns back. "You don't know what you've done."*

**Tactical Encounter:** "Village Showdown" (page 36).

## ERSTLIN'S SECRET

Beneath their cloaks, the cultists wear gray tunics marked with the symbol of Bane. The rough appearance of their clothing is a stark contrast to their well-made arms and armor, and to the *magic rod* the warcaster carries. Any search of the cultists reveals that all wear identical silver talismans (see the sidebar).

### RUMORS

- 1 "I saw this paladin of yours. He and his group were headed west. I told him all he'd find west was cult trouble. He was smiling as they rode off."
- 2 "Used to be you'd only ever see the Hand of Naarash out west and north. These past months, their banners have been flying in every corner of the frontier."
- 3 "The Hand's enforcers were always after silver and gold, but that's changed. More of their death squads are on the hunt for arms and magic now."
- 4 "Used to be, the cult's hobgoblins were thugs that a strong threat and a pitchfork could drive off. Now, they fight like soldiers."
- 5 "I remember the paladin and his group. Hobgoblins hit us two days before, black-haired butchers. Your folk healed up our wounded, helped us give rites to the rest, then headed west."
- 6 "We were hit by the Hand twice in the past year. Your Jaryn and his group came through, told us not to worry about the Hand no more. Cult came back just the same."
- 7 "I never saw him, but I heard about him from three different villages northwest. Jaryn and his band of Pelor faithful were going after a Hand chieftain named Larkazh—foulest hobgoblin Hell ever spawned."
- 8 "Heard about a fight between the paladin and a force of Hand members come down from the north to hunt him. Didn't see it, but the crows were thick over the hills."
- 9 "That fight was eight months back. Naught there but hobgoblin bones now and three cairns on the field, each capstone painted with Pelor's sun."
- 10 "I talked to a trapper just come down from the Harsmad Hills. Said he saw nothing but burned villages there. Said, too, that he met a lone knight and a tiefling on foot seven months back, heading into the hills as he was heading out."
- 11 "I heard a story from a refugee family out of the Harsmad that met a holy knight of Pelor. Said he looked like a wild man—mud and brambles in his hair, a string of hobgoblin teeth around his neck."
- 12 "Caravan of refugees came through four months past on its way south. Refugees said they met a knight heading the other direction. Shared a campsite with him. Said he preached the faith of Pelor. When they woke up, he was gone. But there by the fire was his gear—armor, shield, and all. He took his sword and waterskin and naught else, heading straight for the heart of the hills and the Moonsfall Mountains beyond."

## CLOTHES MAKE THE CULTIST

All the cultists the PCs face wear the symbol of Bane—either painted in black on a loose-fitting gray tunic (worn over leather armor if applicable), or painted directly onto heavier armor. The PCs can collect these tunics or paint Bane’s symbol on their own armor to disguise themselves when they reach the Pillars of Night.

Auldwyl recovers consciousness with or without the PCs’ assistance. Though he is grateful for their handling of the cultists, he remains angry.

*“Unless you’re planning to stick around to take on the group that comes looking for this one, you ain’t done us no favors.” Auldwyl pulls aside the curtain to the bedroom, showing the crates stacked there. He opens one, revealing a brace of black-fletched arrows. Another crate contains longswords, and a third is packed with steel helmets.*

*“The Hand is running weapons north,” the old man says quietly. “Erstlin’s a stop-off point, last town short of the wilds. We give their smugglers free run of the town, the Hand leaves us alone.”*

This group of hobgoblins arrived a day before to take delivery of the arms and armor. Auldwyl met the PCs in an attempt to keep them out of sight. He knows that the cultists’ destination is the Black March, but he does not know its location, nor do the cultists carry maps.

**Treasure:** The townsfolk are happy to let the PCs have the *magic rod* +2, but the weapons and armor are claimed by Auldwyl for Erstlin’s defense.

## COMPLETING THE SKILL CHALLENGE

With the cultists defeated, the townsfolk of Erstlin emerge from their houses and converge around the

battle site. Have the PCs make their final Streetwise or Perception check in the skill challenge from encounter F3. For having stood against the cultists, the PCs gain a +2 bonus to the check.

On a successful check, read:

*At the edge of the crowd, a young woman steps forward. “Name’s Shandra. Hobgoblins killed my pa when they first came. Said it was a warning. I followed them, meant to take revenge but I couldn’t keep up. But I saw where they went. I can make you a map for finding their Black March.”*

If the PCs are unsuccessful in the skill challenge, Auldwyl and the other townsfolk can give them only a rough bearing on the route the cultists take when they leave town. The encounter “Blades in the Night” gives the PCs a second chance to find the Black March.

The PCs can purchase supplies in Erstlin for their continuing journey, including up to ten days trail rations each.

## F5. BLADES IN THE NIGHT

The lands beyond Erstlin turn to hilled forest, offering better shelter and obviating the need for Endurance checks. Three days out, the party is confronted by doppelganger agents of the Hand.

*As dusk approaches, you stumble upon an ancient ruin shrouded by stunted spruce—a shrine or temple reduced to a foundation pit and half a dozen pillars among the trees.*

The doppelgangers gather intelligence for the cult. They have been trailing the PCs since picking up word of their search for Jaryn from an earlier village.

**Tactical Encounter:** “Blades in the Night” (page 38).

## DEVELOPMENT

It is important that one of the doppelgangers escapes this encounter. See “The Dark Stairs” (page 50) for more information.

Dead doppelgangers revert to normal form, revealing cult tunics and Naarash talismans (see below).

If the PCs failed to obtain the location of the Black March in Erstlin, one of the doppelgangers carries a parchment map of the area. It shows a narrow pass through the foothills that leads to the Black March.

**Treasure:** One of the dead doppelgangers wears a purse containing the assassins’ operating funds—a black pearl (500 gp) and 50 gp.

## NAARASH TALISMANS

The cultists sent out from the Pillars of Night wear a rough silver talisman set with a chip of blood-red stone. This is a fragment of the Eye of Naarash, and cultists who wear the talisman are bound to the demon’s service. Through the talismans, Naarash feeds on the dark energy of the cultists’ murderous acts. This connection grants temple cultists wearing the talisman 1 action point.

When a cultist dies, the stone dissolves into blood-red mist. PCs searching slain cultists find them wearing talismans with an empty space where a stone should be set. Cultists who are captured alive have intact talismans, but removing a talisman automatically slays a cultist, the stone dissolving as a result. (Captured cultists typically kill themselves by tearing their talismans off, preventing torture and interrogation.)

A talisman whose stone has faded is magically inert. A DC 26 Arcana check detects the magic of an intact talisman and its elemental power source.

## A TIMELY RESCUE

Encounter Level 3 (725 XP)

### SETUP

A Hand death squad has pursued these refugees across the frontier on an unholy mission of execution.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

**2 human bandits (B)**

**2 human guards (G)**

**1 human mage (M)**

The cultists expect no resistance, and the PCs gain a surprise round if they attack at once. The injured refugees scatter when the fight begins. Attempts at Diplomacy are met with open scorn.

### TACTICS

The two bandits reserve *dazing strike* for use against a striker or defender. The guards focus on weaker foes, hoping to dispatch them quickly. If they fight with the bandits, they use *powerful strike* to knock a foe prone, leaving the bandits to finish him off. The mage uses the cover of the tents to his advantage, striking at a distance with *thunderburst* and *dancing lightning*. The cultists fight until slain.

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The mage and one of the guards carry sunrods (bright light out to 20 squares).

**Tents:** Tents can be opened from any side. One tent wall provides cover; two provide superior cover.

**Fallen Tent:** This heap of canvas is difficult terrain.

**Buildings:** Shops and houses are blocking terrain.

2 Human Bandits (B)		Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid		XP 125 each
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +1	
HP 37; Bloodied 18		
AC 16; Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12		
Speed 6		
⬇	Mace (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+4 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage, and the human bandit shifts 1 square.		
↘	Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +6 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.		
⬇	Dazing Strike (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon	
Requires mace; +4 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage, the target is dazed until the end of the human bandit's next turn, and the human bandit shifts 1 square.		
<b>Combat Advantage</b>		
The human bandit deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.		
Alignment Any	Languages Common	
Skills Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9		
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 10 (+1)	Cha 12 (+2)
Equipment leather armor, cult tunic, mace, 4 daggers		

2 Human Guards (G)		Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid		XP 150 each
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +6	
HP 47; Bloodied 23		
AC 18; Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14		
Speed 5		
⬇	Halberd (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the human guard's next turn.		
⬇	Powerful Strike (standard; recharge ☒ ☐) ♦ Weapon	
Requires halberd; reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked prone.		
↘	Crossbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 15/30; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.		
Alignment Any	Languages Common	
Skills Streetwise +7		
Str 16 (+4)	Dex 14 (+3)	Wis 11 (+1)
Con 15 (+3)	Int 10 (+1)	Cha 12 (+2)
Equipment chainmail with Bane's symbol, halberd, crossbow with 20 bolts		



Human Mage (M)		Level 4 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid		XP 175
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +5	
HP 42; Bloodied 21		
AC 17; Fortitude 13, Reflex 14, Will 15		
Speed 6		
⬇	Quarterstaff (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+4 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.		
↘	Magic Missile (standard; at-will) ♦ Force	
Ranged 20; +7 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage.		
↘	Dancing Lightning (standard; encounter) ♦ Lightning	
The mage makes a separate attack against 3 different targets: range 10; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 lightning damage.		
⚡	Thunderburst (standard; encounter) ♦ Thunder	
Area burst 1 within 10; +7 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).		
Alignment Any	Languages Common	
Skills Arcana +11		
Str 10 (+2)	Dex 14 (+4)	Wis 17 (+5)
Con 12 (+3)	Int 18 (+6)	Cha 12 (+3)
Equipment robes, cult tunic, quarterstaff, wand		



## VILLAGE SHOWDOWN

Encounter Level 4 (1,050 XP)

### SETUP

Having seen that the house is surrounded, Auldwyl ignores the PCs as he runs to secure the front door. If the PCs choose to look out, only the bugbear warriors are seen.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

- 3 bugbear warriors (B)
- 2 hobgoblin archers (A)
- 1 hobgoblin warcaster (W)

When the bugbears break in, read:

*Even as Auldwyl attempts to lock the front doors, they slam inward with a crash, knocking him to the ground. The hulking figures of two bugbears surge past him, snarling a challenge as they heft morningstars and attack.*

Auldwyl spends the fight unconscious. If this encounter takes place in another house in town, any resident NPCs take shelter beneath a bed, a table, or a desk. Do not involve them in combat.

### TACTICS

The bugbears flank the closet PCs, using the confined space within the house to keep from being flanked. They attempt to drive the PCs outside where the archers and the warcaster are waiting.

The hobgoblin archers advance to the closest windows, smashing in the shutters with a minor action and firing at any PCs within sight. If PCs move outside, the archers retreat to fire from the cover of the trees, staying within 5 squares of each other and concentrating fire on a single foe.

The hobgoblin warcaster slips into the house 1 round after the bugbears, using his *shock staff* against any PC not engaged in melee. If the PCs leave the house, he follows, using *force lure* and *force pulse* to keep targets in the light.

The fanatical cultists fight to the death.

2 Hobgoblin Archers (A)		Level 3 Artillery	
Medium natural humanoid		XP 150 each	
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +8; low-light vision		
HP 39; Bloodied 19			
AC 17; Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 13			
Speed 6			
Action Points 1			
⬇ Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
+6 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.			
⤴ Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
Ranged 20/40; +9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the hobgoblin archer grants an ally within 5 squares of it a +2 bonus to its next ranged attack roll against the same target.			
<b>Hobgoblin Resilience</b> (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin archer suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)			
The hobgoblin archer makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.			
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Goblin		
Skills Athletics +5, Stealth +12			
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 19 (+5)	Wis 14 (+3)	
Con 15 (+3)	Int 11 (+1)	Cha 10 (+1)	
Equipment leather armor, cult tunic, longsword, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows, Naarash talisman			

Hobgoblin Warcaster (W)		Level 3 Controller	
Medium natural humanoid		XP 150	
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +4; low-light vision		
HP 46; Bloodied 23			
AC 17; Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 14			
Speed 6			
Action Points 1			
⬇ Staff (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage.			
⬇ Shock Staff (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏ ⏏) • Lightning, Weapon			
+8 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the hobgoblin warcaster's next turn.			
⤴ Force Lure (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Force, Implement			
Ranged 5; +9 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 4 force damage, and the target slides 3 squares.			
⬅ Force Pulse (standard; recharge ⏏) ♦ Force			
Close blast 5; +9 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 4 force damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone. Miss: Half damage, and the target is neither pushed nor knocked prone.			
<b>Hobgoblin Resilience</b> (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin warcaster suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)			
The hobgoblin warcaster makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.			
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Goblin		
Skills Arcana +10, Athletics +4, Stealth +10			
Str 13 (+2)	Dex 14 (+3)	Wis 16 (+4)	
Con 14 (+3)	Int 19 (+5)	Cha 13 (+2)	
Equipment robes, cult tunic, staff, +2 magic rod, Naarash talisman			



<b>3 Bugbear Warriors (B)</b>	<b>Level 5 Brute</b>
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200 each
<b>Initiative</b> +5	<b>Senses</b> Perception +4; low-light vision
<b>HP</b> 76; <b>Bloodied</b> 38	
<b>AC</b> 18; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 15, <b>Will</b> 14	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
<b>Action Points</b> 1	
⬇ <b>Morningstar</b> (standard; at-will) ⬆ <b>Weapon</b>	
+7 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.	
⬇ <b>Skullthumper</b> (standard; encounter) ⬆ <b>Weapon</b>	
Requires morningstar and combat advantage; +5 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone and dazed (save ends).	
<b>Predatory Eye</b> (minor; encounter)	
The bugbear warrior deals an extra 1d6 damage on the next attack it makes with combat advantage. It must apply this bonus before the end of its next turn.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Goblin
<b>Skills</b> Intimidate +9, Stealth +12	
<b>Str</b> 20 (+7)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 14 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 16 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+2) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+2)
<b>Equipment</b> hide armor, cult tunic, morningstar, Naarash talisman	

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Lanterns (bright light out to 10 squares) in each room of the house. Open windows and doors shed dim light for 2 squares outside. All other areas are dark.

**Post:** These rough-cut ceiling posts provide cover.

**Walls:** Rough plank walls make the squares they bisect difficult terrain.

**Window:** Perception checks made through a shuttered window take a -5 penalty. Windows can be opened as a free action from inside. From outside, they can be forced open with a DC 13 Strength check (a minor action). Open windows provide superior cover.

It costs 2 squares of movement to move through an open window.



**Curtains:** Heavy wool curtains on ceiling hooks extend the length of the house's interior walls. They provide total concealment. It takes a DC 8 Strength check to pull a curtain down.

**Crates:** The two stacks of crates hold weapons and armor smuggled by the cult. Each stack is 5 feet high and grants cover. It can be climbed with a DC 5 Athletics check.

**Bed:** The bed provides cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up on the bed. A character can

make a DC 15 Strength check to tip over the bed, which can then grant superior cover.

**Chairs:** These are difficult terrain.

**Table and Desk:** A Small creature can move under a table or desk and possibly gain cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up on a table or desk. A character can make a DC 10 Strength check to tip over a table or desk, which can then grant superior cover.

**Fireplace:** A fire blazes in this open hearth. A creature forced into the square completely covered by the fireplace takes 1d6 fire damage per round.

**Trees:** Close-growing stands of alder provide cover and are difficult terrain.

**Treasure:** The warcaster's +2 *magic rod* can be recovered once he has been defeated.

## BLADES IN THE NIGHT

Encounter Level 7 (1,400 XP)

### SETUP

One of the doppelganger assassins has met Jaryn at the Pillars of Night. All the doppelgangers take the paladin's form to confuse the PCs.

This encounter includes the following creatures:  
**4 doppelganger assassins**

Allow the PCs to decide where they camp on the map. To avoid alerting them to imminent combat, do not place a miniature for the first doppelganger when it appears as the wounded Jaryn. The other doppelgangers stay behind the trees, which provide cover.

**When the doppelganger approaches, read:**

*A cry rings out. A crashing of branches precedes a male human with the sun of Pelor on his cloak, blond hair hanging ragged, lurching into the light. As he stumbles toward you, you see a prominent scar on his left cheek.*

Give the PCs time to recognize Jaryn. If they are too wary to approach, the doppelganger stumbles to within striking distance.

**When the doppelganger attacks, read:**

*The paladin's mouth widens in a leer, and a short sword whips out from under his cloak as he attacks.*

### TACTICS

Roll initiative for the first doppelganger's attack, then have the other doppelgangers ready actions. After the

4 Doppelganger Assassins		Level 8 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger)		XP 350 each
Initiative +13	Senses Perception +10	
HP 69; Bloodied 34		
AC 23; Fortitude 18, Reflex 21, Will 21		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⊕ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+13 vs. AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.		
⊖ Shapeshifter Feint (minor; at-will)		
+11 vs. Reflex; the doppelganger assassin gains combat advantage against the target until the end of the doppelganger assassin's next turn.		
⚡ Cloud Mind (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ♦ Charm		
Close burst 5; +11 vs. Will; the doppelganger assassin is invisible to the target. Affected targets are unable to see the doppelganger for as long as it sustains the effect, until the doppelganger attacks, or until it is hit by an attack.		
<b>Combat Advantage</b>		
The doppelganger assassin deals an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.		
<b>Change Shape (minor; at-will) ♦ Polymorph</b>		
A doppelganger can alter its physical form to take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual (see Change Shape, MM 280).		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common	
Skills Bluff +15, Insight +12, Stealth +14		
Str 12 (+5)	Dex 21 (+9)	Wis 12 (+5)
Con 15 (+6)	Int 13 (+5)	Cha 19 (+8)
Equipment dagger, cult tunic, Naarash talisman		

first doppelganger attacks, it retreats to the trees so that another doppelganger (also appearing as Jaryn) can attack from a different location. When the PCs have determined that the Jaryn they are fighting is more than one creature, the doppelgangers attack en masse.

When three doppelganger assassins fall, the fourth uses *cloud mind* to flee into the darkness.

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Whatever light the PCs use.

**Columns:** These stone columns provide cover and can be climbed with a DC 10 Athletics check.



**Trees:** Gnarled spruce surround the ruins, their trunks providing cover. Their thick foliage grants total concealment and is difficult terrain. A tree can be climbed with a DC 10 Athletics check.

**Foundation Pit:** This rubble-strewn pit stands 5 feet below the surrounding terrain. Jumping into the pit costs 2 squares of movement.

**Stairs:** The rubble-choked stairs are difficult terrain.

**Rubble Slope:** This mass of gravel and scree is difficult terrain. Any character descending the rubble slope must make a DC 18 Acrobatics check or fall prone at the slope's bottom edge.



## BLACK MARCH, WHITE WATER

Beyond the roadless plains of the frontier, the Black March is a well-marked track through forested hills.

*The landmarks on the map hold true, and another three days across open plains brings you to the foot of the hills the locals call the Harsmad. There, a narrow pass marks the beginning of the Black March. True to its name, the road is a dark scar through densely forested hills, the gloom of the trees broken only by the brief light of noon.*

*For seven days, your path slowly climbs, the track offering glimpses of the Moonsfall Mountains ahead. A half-dozen times, you see hobgoblin patrols on foot, but the cultists make so much noise that they are easily avoided in the shadows off of the trail. The Hand of Naarash must believe that few would be brave—or foolish—enough to pursue them into the heart of their domain.*

### B1. HUNTER AND HUNTED

Unless the players tell you they are staying cautious despite the apparent freedom of the road (watching for signs of ambush, scouting ahead, and so on), the PCs can make only a passive Perception check at the start of this encounter. A group of shadow hounds comes across the party during a hunting run through the woods. A DC 25 Perception check spots the hounds moving past nearby trees:

*From the corner of your eye, you see sudden movement. The shadow beneath the trees shifts and ripples like water disturbed by the passage of some fast-moving creature.*

**Tactical Encounter:** “Hunter and Hunted” (page 46).

### B2. ADAKMI

Assuming the previous encounter inspires continued caution, the party travels two more days along the Black March without incident. At dusk on the ninth day out from Erstlin, the road tops a low rise:

*The jagged slopes of the Moonsfall rise to the north. They are blood-red in the gathering dusk. A surging waterfall descends from a cleft, feeding the dark line of a river twisting off to the south. However, what catches your eye isn't the natural landscape but an unexpected sign of civilization in the midst of it—a walled citadel below the falls. The Black March continues past into the mountains, quickly disappearing from sight.*

The PCs might assume that the city ahead is a cult enclave. However, when they are close enough to make Perception checks, read:

*Along the rough stone walls of the citadel, bodies are lashed. Most are hobgoblins by their misshapen look, but a few humans hang among them. Thin strips of leathery flesh cling to eyeless skulls. Crows swarm the more recent dead. All wear the tunics of the Hand of Naarash, the symbol of Bane at their chests.*

The guards are on constant alert against Hand attacks and fire on anyone attempting to approach unseen (use the human guard statistics on page 35). However, PCs approaching openly on the road can reach the citadel gate without incident.

Before the fall of Nerath, Adakmi was the center of a wide-ranging culture of forest villages, nomadic hunting tribes, and isolated mining towns dotting the lands of the Moonsfall. In these dark days, most

of those on the road are refugees. The PCs are asked their identities and their purpose in seeking the citadel. Any talk of fighting the cult sees the gate opened at once.

### IN THE TOWN

Within its walls, Adakmi could be any other frontier town. If the players are in a hurry to keep the action going, point them directly toward Glasur (see “The Last Moonboat,” below). Alternatively, Adakmi makes an ideal midpoint break in a longer campaign arc. You can expand the PCs’ time in the town with role-playing encounters, and can turn finding Glasur into a skill challenge.

Adakmi was once an outpost of Nerath. When the empire fell, the scattered folk of the mountains initially abandoned their villages and gravitated here for safety before expanding outward again. They created a well-defended enclave that now supports a population of two thousand, mostly humans, elves, and half-elves.

Any supplies and equipment the PCs need can be purchased here, and lodging can be found in rooms above the Sundial Tavern. All prices are 25 percent higher than standard because of the city’s isolation.

The location of the citadel places it in direct proximity to the Hand of Naarash, but Adakmi remains defiant. Hatred of the Hand is a subject the folk of the town discuss freely. When the PCs mention their goal of reaching the Pillars of Night, they receive the following information in response:

*“The temple’s two weeks north along the Black March. Problem is, you’ll be dead within two days along that road. In the villages the cult razes, those they don’t kill are taken north. The strongest and the toughest join the cult by*

slaughtering their own kin. That's who hunts along the north March, fast and silent—not like the hobgoblin rabble south of the mountains. Only other way north is the river, but you'd need a moonboat for that and the boats are long gone."

### B3. THE LAST MOONBOAT

Since before the fall of Nerath, brave river captains have plied the waters of the Moonsfall—fast-flowing glacial torrents winding their way from the plateaus of the north to the southern foot of the mountains. These dangerous trade routes opened up the far-flung frontier, but they have been abandoned since the rise of the cult.

Shortly after the PCs hear of the moonboats, a taciturn dwarf seeks them out at the tavern.

*From beneath a flat cap, the thickly muscled dwarf gives a deferential nod. "Heard you're looking for a way north. People tell you the road is death; they're right. People tell you the moonboats are gone; they're wrong. I've seen the Pillars of Night. I can get you there."*

Glasur is the last of the captains who once sailed the Moonsfall rivers. He estimates a nine-day trip to the Pillars of Night, telling the PCs they should take the Falls Road at dawn when they're ready to leave.

In response to any questions of payment, the dwarf says that a mere 20 gp will cover his costs. However, a DC 18 Insight check notes that his



mood grows dark. Before he takes his leave of the PCs, he says:

*"Glasur's not Adakmi-born. Had a family in a village upriver once. Not anymore. Cult saw to that."*

### THE MOONDOCKS

From the gates of Adakmi, the little-used Falls Road runs north, zigzagging up the flank of the mountain as it climbs past and then above the cascading

waterfall. At three places along the way, the road has disappeared beneath rockslides that take a DC 26 Athletics check to clamber across.

*An hour of steep climbing brings you out above the mist, the river a rough torrent where it tumbles toward the falls. Along banks of dark shale, a deserted dockyard spreads, ruined wharfs clinging to blackened pilings. Where a dozen boats might once have moored, a ramshackle 35-foot cutter floats, "Blacksnake" etched on its prow. The boat is sheltered by a central awning, a raised tiller deck behind*



it. Glasur is at the prow, tying off ropes. He acknowledges your approach with a nod.

The boat has no mast, however. But even as you wonder whether Glasur expects you all to row against the raging current, you see movement in the foaming water. Two pike-like fish half the length of the boat thrash there, both creatures harnessed to the ropes Glasur is setting.

“River’s slow this time of year,” the dwarf calls. “Been a while since my girls got a chance to run. We leave when you’re ready.”

Like all the riverboats that once ran north, the *Blacksnake* is powered by a team of trained dire pike. Against the furious current, they make solid headway at a rate of 20 miles per day.

For four days, you make steady progress north. Glasur’s dire pike pull the moonboat with unceasing strength by day; the dwarf unharnesses them each night to hunt in the river’s frigid depths. In that time, you pass the remains of three villages burned to the ground by the cult, and the river grows narrow, twisting in places through canyons of black stone. No signs of life or movement can be seen on either shore.

The river courses that Glasur follows run parallel to the Black March, winding north on the other side of the mountains.



## B4. FIRE ON THE WATER

As the PCs head upriver, they come across a cult death squad razing an isolated village.

*Over the next two days, the white-water canyons of the river’s middle reaches begin to give way to wide gravel banks spilling down the mountainsides. Then ahead, you see the sky darkening beyond the bend of the river, a heavy plume of gray-black smoke twisting on the wind.*

If he is asked what lies ahead, Glasur responds darkly:

*“There’s a village a mile up,” the dwarf rumbles. “Or there was a village, by the look of it.”*

The PCs continue upriver for another half-mile before Glasur puts into shore out of sight of the village. A short walk lets the party approach without being seen.

**Tactical Encounter:** “Fire on the Water” (page 47).

## DEVELOPMENT

Death squad members wear Naarash talismans and the tunic or armor of the cult. When the fight is done, the surviving villagers return to the ruin along the river. The villagers' leader is Yrma, an elderly woman with a dour disposition. She thanks the PCs for their aid, but tells them their efforts will amount to nothing in the end:

*“Two strangers came this way not four months past. The human said the cult would soon be a memory. Instead, it is our life here that will be forgotten.”*

The paladin Jaryn and the tiefling Dajani are the strangers Yrma speaks of. In response to any questions, she relays the following:

*“They were bound for the Pillars of Night, seeking the cult chief Larkazh. Half mad, the human looked to me, threatening on his blood to besiege the temple single-handedly.”*

Provide the PCs with one or more rumors they were unable to obtain as they sought the Black March (see page 33). The villagers gather what they can and head south to Adakmi, joining the flood of refugees seeking new lives beyond the frontier.

**Treasure:** The human mage wears a *diadem of acuity* that Yrma and her people are happy to let the PCs have as thanks for their aid.

## B5. THE FRIEND OF MY ENEMY

In the aftermath of battle, Glasur is anxious to get under way. The dwarf is clearly on edge.

*As you make your way upriver, you note Glasur glancing back over his shoulder to the thickly forested shore. “When I pulled in before the village, could’ve sworn I saw something moving. No matter, I guess. Can’t follow us through these trees, whatever it was.”*

No sign of any creature can be seen by the PCs, their pursuer taking precautions after being spotted by Glasur. Dajani is Jaryn's only surviving companion—a tiefling darkblade who turned to the faith of Pelor in an attempt to control his wicked nature. Unfortunately, that nature made it all too easy for him to follow Jaryn into darkness.

Charged with observing the city for Jaryn's new order, Dajani arrived in Adakmi a few days after the PCs. He heard about the party's mission and has pursued the *Blacksnake* north ever since. From the Black March, he ordered a death squad to the village, hoping to draw the PCs in. Failing in his attempt to ambush them on their return to the boat, he seeks another opportunity before the canyons to the north make pursuit impossible.

**Tactical Encounter:** “The Friend of My Enemy” (page 49).

## DEVELOPMENT

Over the standard cult tunic and a Naarash talisman, Dajani wears a filthy cloak matching that worn by Emesha and the Light of the Sun. A DC 26 Perception check reveals a hidden pocket in the cloak containing a diary and a stub of charcoal pencil.

The first half of the diary's pages record Jaryn's journey west and north, filling in additional missing rumors from page 33. After a number of torn-out pages, the tiefling talks of setting aside his former life for the power of the new age, though he makes no

specific mention of Jaryn's fall or his leadership of the cult.

**Treasure:** In addition to his *boots of striding*, Dajani carries a *potion of healing*, 40 gp, and a piece of carved ivory embossed with platinum (250 gp). This scrimshaw is in the shape of Pelor's sun.

## THE PILLARS OF NIGHT

After two days with no encounters, the PCs notice a change in the landscape.

*The riverbanks have flattened. Stunted gray trees cling tenaciously to rocky hills beyond. The sun is setting, and the dire pike are thrashing against the white-water current. And then in the distance, you see it—a twisted rise of dark stone, its lower third carved into perfectly aligned upright slabs. As the peak disappears into the descending dusk, the pillars appear to hold up the dark sky itself. The temple lies before you, a day's march away.*

Darkness falls as Glasur finds moorage in a sheltered side channel, giving the PCs one final night to make plans. The dwarf is amenable to waiting for their return. From the river, the PCs have no trouble making their way through the surrounding scrub hills for the distant temple.

*For the better part of the day, you hike toward your goal, finally slipping through a screen of scrub trees and up a low rise. Winding its way through forest a mile or two off, you see the Black March end where it meets the base of the mountain and the settlement spreading beneath it. Straight-edged roads of cracked flagstone run between huge buildings of timber and stone.*



*Many of those structures have collapsed, but the inhabited core of the temple grounds has the appearance of any northern village. No slaves or prisoners can be seen here. Though groups of cultists train with sword and shield, no guards or apparent overseers can be seen. Only folk in the now-familiar garb of the cult—children among them—are visible as they go about frontier life.*

*At the base of the mountain, an oversized avenue leads to a wide flight of immense stone steps. These rise to a portal open in the mountain's face. Firelight flares from within a wide hall running into the mountain's heart.*

Allow the PCs to move closer to the temple grounds, and then continue:

*Great sections of the rocky landscape are given over to gardens and orchards. Mule teams haul logs and deadfall from the nearby woods. Sheep and cattle are herded into rough stone corrals as dusk falls. At different sites, construction is evident, new living spaces being reclaimed from the ruins. Fires begin to spring up. The smells of roast meat and woodsmoke drift toward you on the breeze.*

The PCs can estimate that some five hundred cultists dwell in the central temple grounds, but more camps can be seen scattered through the surrounding forest. No fence or other boundary surrounds the complex, and cultists move freely within it. The cult has no fear of incursion or attack, trusting the patrols on the Black March to take care of any intruders. As long as the PCs disguise themselves—most easily with the tunics

worn by the cultists they have slain—they can literally walk in and make themselves at home.

A majority of the cultists are human and hobgoblin, but dragonborn, dwarves, and tieflings are common in the temple complex. Elves, half-elves, and eladrin can easily pass for human as long as they wear temple garb. Halflings can disguise themselves as children.

## THE TEMPLE GROUNDS

Cultists encountering the PCs assume they are new recruits newly arrived along the Black March. A DC 18 Bluff check from any one of the PCs maintains this facade.

When the PCs have had time to observe the cult close up, read:

*Beneath the initial appearance of a communal village, this place has a hard and dangerous edge. A rigid sense of order and hierarchy permeates the labors of the people*



around you. Select cultists wearing a black sash appear to be wardens of some type, but no other signs of rank can be seen. The people of this place are uniformly whipcord lean. Where nine- and ten-year-old children roughhouse with sticks, they show off a ruthless precision in their relentless attacks.

Perception checks or Insight checks made against the cultists reveal a sense of driven energy and focus that speaks to a high degree of regimentation. It might resemble a village, but Naarash is very much a military enclave.

*Small groups are spelled off from their labors at intervals, training hard with sword and shield or chanting Bane's dark rites. At the fires, people take their meals with the same stoic intensity they apply to the labors of the day—the same intensity you saw in the killers you met on the long road that led you here.*

Fighter or warlord PCs recognize advanced tactics in the cultists' training. Their weapons and armor are the same quality as the smuggled gear seen in Erstlin. Characters with the Religion skill recognize the rites the small groups engage in as ceremonies of personal strength.

If the PCs investigate the stairs leading into the mountain, read:

*Access to the stairs is open, but the dozen guards lining both sides of the approach inspire you to keep a safe distance. The staircase is easily twice a normal size, each step and riser a full pace wide. The size of the stone buildings in the complex makes sense now. These are giants' ruins, and old by the look of it.*

The PCs discover that the talismans worn by the cultists they fought are absent from the residents of the temple grounds, even the wardens. Read the following at an appropriate time:

*In the midst of the day's labors, you witness a group descending the mountain stairs. A ceremonial procession takes them to the head of the Black March, down which they depart to cheers from the assembled cultists. Their livery marks them as a death squad. Around their necks, they wear the blood-red stone talismans.*

If the PCs ask about lodging for new arrivals, they are directed to an empty dwelling that offers privacy. Alternatively, the party can claim any number of unoccupied ruins.

## B6. AMONG THE WOLVES

The PCs are close to uncovering Jaryn's ultimate fate, but this will not be a standard intelligence-gathering mission. The temple grounds offer no equivalent to the local tavern, and characters cannot simply walk up to a cultist and start asking questions.

### SKILL CHALLENGE

**Level 5, Difficulty 3 (600 XP)**

With free run of the temple complex, the party must win the trust of the cultists to obtain information regarding Jaryn's fall. Checks are made by individual PCs, so it is possible for the party to obtain all relevant information in two or three days. Alternatively, characters can spend a few days getting acclimated to life in the temple (attempting only moderate-DC checks) before attempting to find out what the cultists know.

## THE STRAIGHT-UP APPROACH

It will be obvious to most players that the hall within the mountain is where the endgame of the adventure will be played out. If the PCs forgo interaction with the cultists in favor of a stealth assault on the mountain, add a combat encounter to take the place of the skill challenge of encounter B6.

The improvised combat encounter takes place in areas T1 and T2 (page 50). Use six advanced human berserkers (page 56) as elite guards in the grand hall. The PCs can approach in the guise of cultists, but the guards attack if anyone tries to move past their position. To protect the inner temple, the guards close the main doors during the fight, activating the magical wards.

Players who take this shoot-first-talk-later approach will gain no knowledge of Jaryn's fall into the ranks of the cultists. Fill in bits of this information as appropriate from interrogated guards, hidden notes and journals, or the newer writing in area T5.

**Setup:** The party must adopt not just the guise but the culture of the temple cultists, joining them in their labors and faith to earn their trust. If they are successful, they gain information regarding the whereabouts of Jaryn and the inner workings of the cult.

**Primary Skills:** Athletics, Religion

**Athletics (DC 21):** A PC takes his place alongside the cultists for their day's labor or military training. Low DC penalty: The PC fails to pull his weight, taking a -2 penalty to all subsequent Bluff or Diplomacy checks. High DC bonus: The PC demonstrates exceptional effort or skill, gaining a +2 bonus to his next Bluff or Diplomacy check, as well as one piece of information regarding Jaryn's fate (see below).



**Religion (DC 13):** A character can draw on knowledge of Bane's faith to lead a ceremony. Low DC penalty: The PC's incomplete knowledge leaves the cultists unimpressed, imposing a -2 penalty to his next Bluff or Diplomacy check. High DC bonus: The PC earns the respect of a cleric of Bane, granting a +2 bonus to his next Bluff or Diplomacy check, as well as one piece of information (see below).

**Other Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy

**Bluff (DC 13):** As the PCs work alongside the cultists, they seek favorable position. Each day, a PC can make a single Bluff check. This skill does not yield victories or defeats. Low DC Penalty: The PC's Bluff attempts make him appear arrogant, imposing a -2 penalty to his next Athletics or Religion check. High DC Bonus: A cultist treats the PC as a confidant, granting a +2 bonus to his next Athletics or Religion check.

**Diplomacy (DC 13):** A character is able to get into the cultists' good graces. Each day, a PC can make a single Diplomacy check. This skill does not yield victories or defeats. Low DC Penalty: The PC's attempts at conciliation are taken as a sign of weakness, imposing a -2 penalty to his next Athletics or Religion check. High DC Bonus: The PC is able to increase his standing with the cult; he can reroll a single upcoming Athletics or Religion check, keeping the higher of the two rolls.

**Success:** Word of the labors and piety of these "new recruits" reaches ranking members of the cult. The PCs are to be taken to the inner temple at sundown that night to partake of a ceremony called the Rite of the Eye.

**Failure:** The PCs' failed attempts to pass themselves off as cult members force them to flee to the inner temple before they are exposed. Use the sug-

gestions in "The Straight-Up Approach" sidebar (page 42) to create a combat encounter to take the place of the failed skill challenge.

## JARYN'S FATE

As the PCs gain the cultists' trust, they pick up information on the inner workings of the temple and the surprising fate of Jaryn. Information can be given out in the order presented, or you can decide what to reveal based on the specific information the PCs tell you they are seeking.

### INFORMATION

- 1 "I was here when Jaryn was dragged up the Black March in chains. I was here, too, when he stood atop the Dark Stairs as the Voice of Naarash."
- 2 "Jaryn and Larkazh met between the river and the Black March. Two dozen of Bane's best against the paladin and his tiefling, and in the end, Larkazh was the only one standing."
- 3 "Larkazh's two brothers were cut down by Jaryn's own hand. He brought Jaryn and Dajani back alive and to the inner temple, a sacrifice to Bane. Come morning, Jaryn walks out, Dajani one step behind him, and Larkazh's head is in Jaryn's hand."
- 4 "Everything changed under Jaryn. Used to be, the death squads ran the temple, killed each other as fast as they could. Jaryn got them under control and made them an army."
- 5 "The enclave at Adakmi will be the start of it. The eathens will be nailed to their own walls and their citadel made the staging ground for Bane's armies as they move south."
- 6 "Jaryn might look human, but he's not. Bane's blood flows in those veins. The chosen one, he is."
- 7 "The fall of Nerath was the first sign. The gods of light have been broken and have left this world to Bane. The dark god's hand squeezes shut, and when it opens, only the chosen will remain."
- 8 "Bane's voice speaks through Jaryn, and his word welcomes the darkness of a new age. He is the god arisen, Naarash's heir. The strong shall inherit this world, while the weak shall fall before them and be lost."

## HUNTER AND HUNTED

Encounter Level 6 (1,250 XP)

### SETUP

Place the PCs on the road in the middle of the map, then place only the four shadow hounds closest to the road. The fifth stays within the trees to gain total concealment.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

5 shadow hounds (S)

Taking the party to be one of the cult patrols they routinely hunt for sport, the shadow hounds attack at once.

When the shadow hounds attack, read:

*A hoarse baying suddenly rings out through the forest to both sides of the track. Four canine shapes unfurl from the shadows around you, their slavering jaws open wide.*

### TACTICS

Four shadow hounds attack at once, the fifth hanging back to target any PC who breaks off from the group. Their *shroud of night* aura dims the light in the area, granting the hounds concealment (-2 to attack rolls) on the road. They gain total concealment (-5 to attack rolls and targets cannot be seen) in the undergrowth unless the PCs bring light sources to bear.

The hounds use their *baying* attack one at a time as long as three or more PCs are within range, maximizing the length of time characters are affected. Using their *shadow ambush* power, they target lightly

armored characters first. The shadow hounds fight to the death.

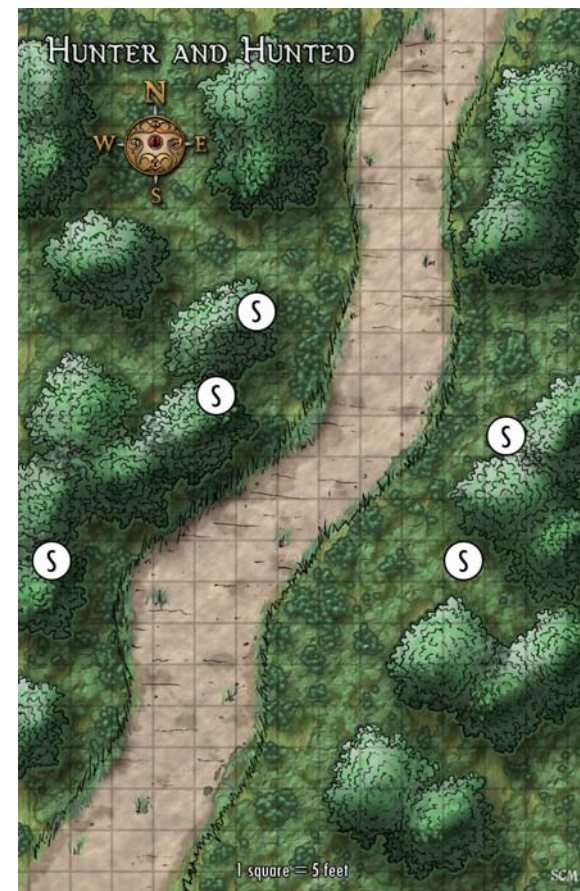
### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Daylight (bright) on the road; dim light in the undergrowth and the trees.

**Undergrowth:** Thick stands of creepers, vines, and saplings are difficult terrain.

**Trees:** Close-growing conifers rise along both sides of the road. They grant total concealment. It takes a DC 10 Athletics check to enter the trees, and they are difficult terrain.

5 Shadow Hounds (S)		Level 6 Skirmisher
Medium shadow magical beast		XP 250 each
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +9; darkvision	
Shroud of Night aura 2; bright light in the aura is reduced to dim light, and dim light becomes darkness.		
HP 70; Bloodied 35		
AC 19; Fortitude 20, Reflex 18, Will 17		
Vulnerable 5 radiant		
Speed 7, teleport 7		
⊕ Bite (standard; at-will)		
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage; see also <i>shadow ambush</i> .		
◀ Baying (minor; recharge ☼ ☼) ♦ Fear		
Close burst 5; +8 vs. Will; the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until the end of the shadow hound's next turn.		
Shadow Ambush		
When the shadow hound teleports adjacent to an enemy, it gains combat advantage and deals an extra 1d6 damage on the next attack it makes against that enemy this turn.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Endurance +10, Stealth +10		
Str 19 (+7)	Dex 15 (+5)	Wis 13 (+4)
Con 14 (+5)	Int 6 (+1)	Cha 16 (+6)





## FIRE ON THE WATER

Encounter Level 5 (1,050 XP)

### SETUP

The PCs approach the village from around a river bend. Scrub trees along the shore offer concealment.

When the village is in sight, read:

*Between the river and the thinly forested mountainside, a village burns. Along the river's edge stand the hulking figures of three dragonborn in scale armor marked with the fist of Bane. Some human villagers attempt to flee, but have nowhere to go.*

This encounter includes the following creatures:

- 3 dragonborn soldiers (D)
- 1 death cultist mage (M)
- 1 bugbear strangler (B)

When the dragonborn spot the PCs' approach through the scrub trees, they give up terrorizing the villagers and await the party's approach. The villagers flee to safe positions in the woods until combat is done. Do not place the human mage and the bugbear strangler until they are seen.

When the PCs are seen, read:

*One of the dragonborn bellows a warning as he spots you. His two companions turn away from the villagers, who quickly disappear along the shore to the north.*

### TACTICS

The dragonborn stay in the thick of melee to take advantage of their *impetuous spirit*. They hold back with their breath weapons until bloodied or until they can maximize the number of targets.

The human mage moves to the southern window, attacking with *dancing lightning* (against PCs that have spread out) and *thunderburst* (against targets clustered together). He stays inside the building until threatened by fire or the PCs, whereupon he escapes through the south or west window. Outside, he keeps his distance from the PCs, sniping with *magic missile*.

The bugbear strangler slips through the door in hopes of catching a lone PC moving between the buildings. It readies an action to shift into the smoke, using *Stealth* to gain combat advantage for its strangle attack.

The cultists have come to expect only token resistance as they scour the remote mountain villages. All five fight to the death.

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Daylight (bright).

**Burning Buildings:** Fire has already jumped to the last two houses along the riverfront. It spreads at a rate of 1 square per round in a direction of your choosing. Creatures that pass through the flames take 3d6 fire damage per round.

**Smoke:** Squares within 5 feet of the fire are filled with a haze of acrid smoke, spreading as the fire does. A creature that ends its turn in the smoke must make a saving throw or become dazed.

**River:** The water adjacent to the village is shallow enough that the effect of the fast-flowing current is not felt. The river is difficult terrain.

3 Dragonborn Soldiers (D)	Level 5 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200 each
<b>Initiative</b> +6	<b>Senses</b> Perception +3
<b>HP</b> 63; <b>Bloodied</b> 31; see also <i>dragonborn fury</i>	<b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 18, <b>Reflex</b> 16, <b>Will</b> 15
<b>Speed</b> 6	
<b>Action Points</b> 1	
⚔ <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	+10 vs. AC (+11 while bloodied); 1d8 + 3 damage.
↵ <b>Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold</b>	Close blast 3; +6 vs. Reflex (+7 while bloodied); 1d6 + 2 cold damage.
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)	A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls while bloodied.
<b>Impetuous Spirit</b> (immediate reaction, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	The dragonborn soldier makes a melee basic attack against an enemy, even if the enemy is shifting.
<b>Martial Recovery</b> (free, when the dragonborn soldier misses with a melee attack; encounter; recharges when the soldier uses <i>impetuous spirit</i> ) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	The dragonborn soldier makes another melee attack against the same target.
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +9, History +4, Intimidate +8	
<b>Str</b> 16 (+5)	<b>Dex</b> 15 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 15 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 11 (+2) <b>Cha</b> 9 (+1)
<b>Equipment</b> scale armor with Bane's symbol, light shield, longsword, Naarash talisman	

**Furnishings:** Furnishings are difficult terrain. Furnishings occupying more than 1 square provide cover.

**Window:** Perception checks made through a shuttered window take a -5 penalty. Windows can be opened as a free action from inside. From outside, they can be forced open with a DC 13 Strength check (a minor action). Open windows provide superior cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to move through an open window.

**Treasure:** The equipment carried by the villains can be recovered after the PCs are victorious.

**Bugbear Strangler (B)** **Level 6 Lurker**

Medium natural humanoid

XP 250

**Initiative** +11 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision  
**HP** 58; **Bloodied** 29  
**AC** 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16; see also *body shield*  
**Speed** 7

**Action Points** 1⊕ **Morningstar** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+10 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage.

↓ **Strangle** (standard; sustain standard; at-will)

Requires combat advantage; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized (until escape). A target trying to escape the strangle takes a -4 penalty to the check. The bugbear strangler can sustain the power as a standard action, dealing 1d10 + 4 damage and maintaining the strangle.

**Body Shield** (immediate interrupt, when targeted by a melee or a ranged attack against AC or Reflex; recharge ⓁⓁⓁⓁⓁ)

The bugbear strangler makes its immobilized victim the target instead. The bugbear strangler can't use this power to redirect attacks made by a creature it is currently strangling.

**Predatory Eye** (minor; encounter)

The bugbear strangler deals an extra 1d6 damage on the next attack it makes with combat advantage. It must apply this bonus before the end of its next turn.

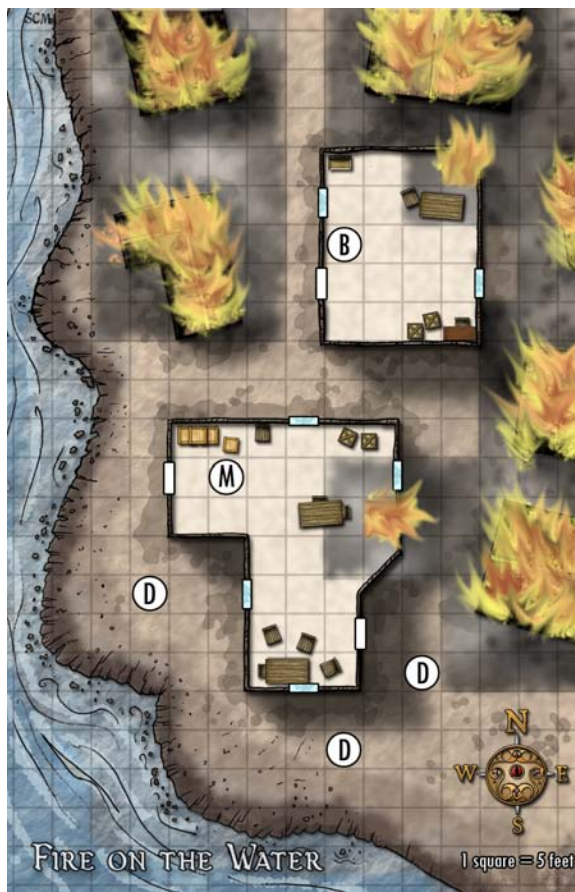
**Alignment** Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin

**Skills** Intimidate +10, Stealth +14

**Str** 18 (+7) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+5)

**Con** 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)

**Equipment** leather armor, cult tunic, morningstar, rope garrote, Naarash talisman

**Death Cultist Mage (M)** **Level 5 Artillery**

Medium natural humanoid

XP 200

**Initiative** +4 **Senses** Perception +7  
**HP** 48; **Bloodied** 24  
**AC** 18; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16  
**Speed** 6

**Action Points** 1⊕ **Quarterstaff** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+5 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.

⊗ **Magic Missile** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Force**

Range 20; +8 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage.

↘ **Dancing Lightning** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Lightning**

The mage makes a separate attack against 3 different targets: ranged 10; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 lightning damage.

⚡ **Thunderburst** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Thunder**

Area burst 1 within 10; +8 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

**Alignment** Evil

**Languages** Common

**Skills** Arcana +11, Insight +7

**Str** 10 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+5)

**Con** 12 (+3) **Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+3)

**Equipment** robes, cult tunic, quarterstaff, wand, *diadem of acuity*, Naarash talisman



## THE FRIEND OF MY ENEMY

Encounter Level 4 (875 XP)

### SETUP

The day after the river village, the PCs find moorage and make camp. A shale beach provides a chance to rest outside the cramped quarters of the boat. Allow the PCs to decide where to place their campsite.

If the PCs take Glasur's warning to heart, allow them to take precautions against ambush—keeping weapons or magic close at hand, having characters pretend to go to sleep on first watch, and so on.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

**Dajani, tiefling darkblade (D)**

Unless the PCs have some means of seeing Dajani, he uses *cloak of lurking* to approach invisibly from the northeast, gaining surprise when he *teleports* in.

**When Dajani attacks, read:**

*A blur of motion erupts in camp. A cloaked figure appears from nowhere, two black-bladed short swords in his hands.*

### TACTICS

Dajani initially *teleports* between two PCs, attacking with surprise. He then uses *cloak of lurking* to move from one PC to another, attacking invisibly each time.

Unless the PCs spread out, Dajani attacks two targets per round. When bloodied, he does not worry about retaliatory melee attacks, counting on the *demonic frenzy* granted by his connection to the Eye of Naarash to even the odds. He fights until slain.

**Dajani, Tiefling Darkblade (D) Level 4 Solo Lurker**  
Medium natural humanoid XP 875

**Initiative** +12      **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision

**HP** 224; **Bloodied** 112

**AC** 21; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 16

**Resist** 12 fire

**Saving Throws** +4

**Speed** 7; see also *cloak of lurking*

**Action Points** 2

⊕ **Poisoned Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Poison, Weapon**  
+9 vs. AC (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d6 + 4 damage, and Dajani makes a secondary attack against the same target.  
**Secondary Attack:** +10 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

‡ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)  
Dajani makes two poisoned short sword attacks (see above) but cannot make both attacks against the same target.

**Cloak of Lurking** (move; at-will) ♦ **Teleportation**  
Dajani teleports 5 squares and becomes invisible until the end of his next turn.

**Infernal Wrath** (minor; encounter; recharges when first bloodied)  
Dajani gains a +1 power bonus to his next attack roll against an enemy that hit him since his last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, Dajani deals an extra 3 damage.

**Demonic Frenzy** (immediate reaction, when attacked by an adjacent enemy while bloodied; at-will)  
Dajani makes a frenzied short sword attack against the enemy: +9 vs. AC (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d6 + 4 damage.  
**Secondary Attack:** +10 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

**Alignment** Chaotic evil      **Languages** Common, Supernal

**Skills** Bluff +13, Stealth +15

**Str** 13 (+4)      **Dex** 20 (+8)      **Wis** 14 (+5)

**Con** 16 (+6)      **Int** 13 (+4)      **Cha** 16 (+6)

**Equipment** cloak, leather armor, cult tunic, 2 poisoned short swords, *boots of striding*, Naarash talisman

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Whatever light the PCs use.

**Shale Rubble:** Areas of racked and splintering stone are difficult terrain.

**Boulders:** Huge chunks of fractured stone litter this low beachhead, providing cover. A DC 5 Athletics



check allows a character to jump up on a boulder as part of a move. Otherwise, they are difficult terrain.

**The Blacksake:** The fast river keeps the deck moving even in this sheltered slip. It takes a DC 10 Athletics check to jump from the shore; DC 5 to jump back. On a failed check, a PC makes the jump but falls prone.

**River:** The water adjacent to the village is shallow enough that the effect of the fast-flowing current is not felt. The river is difficult terrain.

**Treasure:** The equipment carried by Dajani can be recovered after the PCs are victorious.

## THE TEMPLE OF NAARASH

In this final stage of the adventure, the PCs go up against the ancient defenses and hidden terrors of the ruined inner temple before facing Jaryn and the evil that has consumed him.

### HISTORY

This ruin was an ancient temple built by a lost race of giants. Within the mountain, the giants discovered a magically resonant stone they called the Eye of Naarash—never suspecting that the stone’s power was a demonic presence bound within it. Over time, the giants destroyed themselves, consumed by the murderous spirit of Naarash. The few survivors turned the temple into a prison for the evil that had destroyed their people.

Over millennia, much of the complex collapsed, its magical wards weakened. Five years ago, a hobgoblin shaman named Anak unsealed the main doors and entered the mountain. The power of Naarash quickly consumed him. Under the demon’s direction, Anak reinvented an ancient cult as a sect of Bane’s church. Naarash is a temperamental master, however. The Hand has gone through twelve leaders in the five years since, each slain when another gained the demon’s favor.

When he was brought to the temple in chains, Jaryn had been driven to the brink of madness by his single-minded obsession with destroying the cult. The spirit of Naarash sensed the paladin’s fury and consumed him, giving him the strength to slay Larkazh and claim leadership of the cult. Jaryn has since reshaped the Hand of Naarash in his own image—

a twisted melding of the beliefs of the cult and his former faith.

### FEATURES OF THE TEMPLE

The scale of the temple reflects the giants who built it.

**Ceilings:** All ceilings are 15 feet high at the walls, arching to 30 or 40 feet in the center of each chamber. The one exception is area T6 (the black cells), whose slab ceiling is a uniform 20 feet in height.

**Floors:** The floors are rough flagstones, with wide patches of rubble in areas T4 and T5.

**Doors:** When the PCs enter, they activate ancient wards that seal all the doors with *arcane locks*. Area T6 was previously sealed and trapped to prevent its occupants from escaping. All *arcane locked* doors are surrounded by a faint magical glow. Information on each door is presented at the start of the encounter area that the door leads into.

**Stairs:** The giant-sized stairs in the temple feature steps and risers approximately 2-1/2 feet high and wide.

**Illumination:** Except in areas T2 and T7, the temple has no light. The sunrods that the PCs are given should last for the duration of the PCs’ time here unless players take an extended rest.

### T1. THE DARK STAIRS

The PCs are called to the foot of the ancient staircase at dusk, ready to partake in the Rite of the Eye.

*The sun has slipped behind the mountains as you are led along the ruined avenue. Two sash-wearing wardens silently hand a sunrod to each of you at the foot of the great staircase. The guards watch you climb; no escort*

*accompanies you. High above, a pair of massive stone doors stand open with firelight flickering from within.*

The cult’s faith in discipline gives the PCs free access to the inner temple. However, as they reach the half-way point of the stairs, a disturbance below catches their attention.

*The silence of the temple grounds is broken by distant shouting as a figure on horseback races in from the Black March. Even at a distance, you recognize the form of a doppelganger as it reins up near the fires at the center of the compound.*

This rider is the surviving doppelganger assassin from the “Blades in the Night” encounter. In the time that it takes the PCs to observe, the doppelganger hears that a party matching the one he met is heading into the temple.

*A shout goes up from around the fires. The guards at the foot of the stairs scramble after you. Clear through the darkness, you hear the doppelganger screaming: “Heathens! Kill them all!”*

The guards are already coming up the stairs, leaving the PCs with only one direction to flee.

### T2. GRAND HALL

*A great hall beyond the immense double doors is empty, its vaulted ceiling rising to a height of 40 feet. Burning braziers illuminate oversized stairs to the west. Two more sets of open double doors stand beyond the stairs. From below, the shouts of the guards grow louder.*



The doors can be barred from inside with immense stone bolts (Strength DC 13 to push each door closed, Strength DC 17 to slide the bolt into place). If the PCs decide to push into the temple, the guards shut the doors behind them, trusting the temple's wards and Jaryn's personal guard to destroy the party.

*Arrows splinter against the doors as they are slammed shut and barred. However, even as the stone bolts slide home, both doors flare with a brilliant white light that fades to a faint glow. From behind comes a deafening boom as both sets of double doors on the high landing slam shut of their own accord.*

Though the temple's wards were overcome, the cultists did not have the power to disable them. By closing the front doors, the PCs have reactivated these ancient defenses.

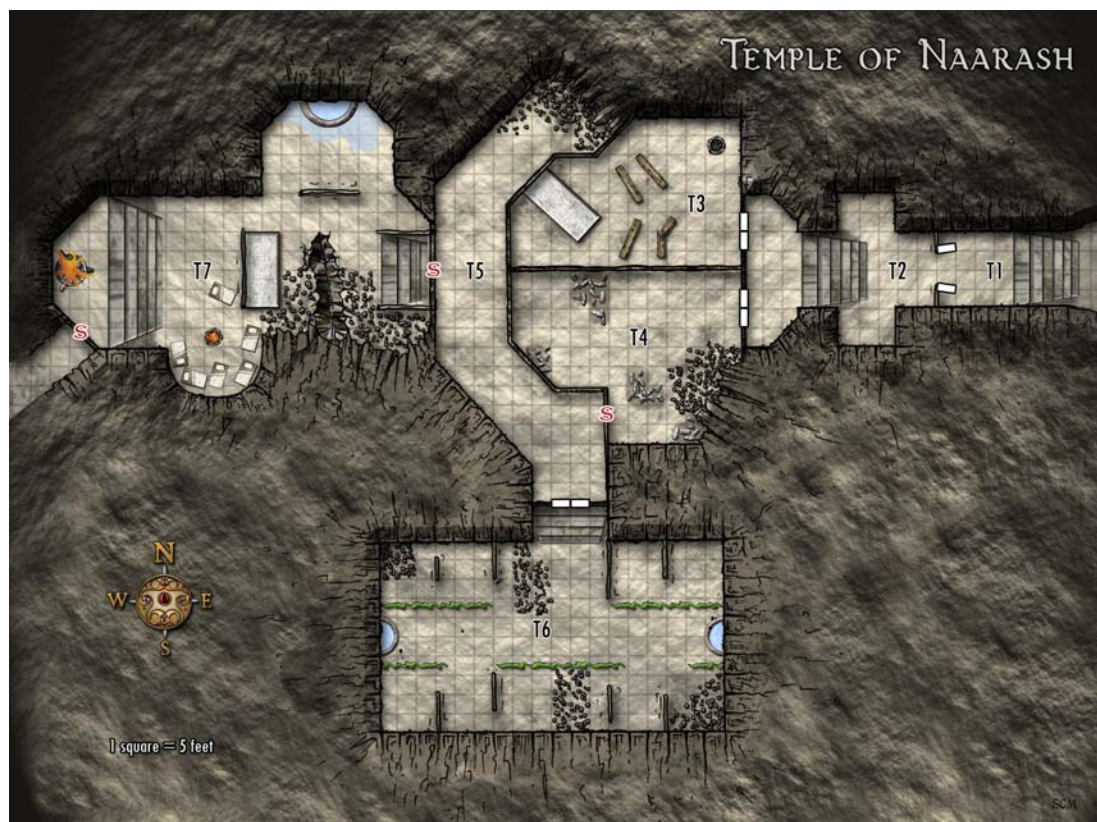
When the PCs have time to look around, read:

*The walls here are carved with regular rows of oversized runes, an unknown alphabet etched in letters a foot high.*

The runes are tantalizingly familiar to both the Common and Davek scripts, but this ancient tongue is beyond modern knowledge. A DC 22 History check or a DC 25 Perception check reveals a snippet of information—that this temple was built by an ancient giant race and dedicated to a spirit named Naarash.

### T3. HALL OF FAITH

The double doors to this area are *arcane locked* (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through).



*This immense chamber was once a chapel. Huge wooden benches have collapsed before a 10-foot-high stone shrine. In the northeast corner, scorch marks mar the floor and the high ceiling. Finely carved reliefs of noble giant kings and queens cover the walls.*

The northeast corner of this room was used as a campsite during Anak's initial exploration of the temple five years before.

### T4. HALL OF WARRIORS

The doors to this room are *arcane locked*, but rubble prevents them from fully closing. A DC 13 Strength

check opens them initially, but they become magically sealed (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through) if closed again.

*This chamber appears to be a former armory. Six giant-sized suits of rusted plate armor stand against the walls, each clutching a halberd. More armor and weapons are strewn across the floor. The wall and part of the vaulted ceiling have collapsed to the southeast.*

It takes a DC 26 Perception check to discover the secret door (see area T5, below).

**Tactical Encounter:** "Hall of Warriors" (page 54).

## T5. HALL OF HISTORY

The secret door into this area (Perception DC 26) pivots out from the southern corner. It is *arcane locked* (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through). This hall once ran to the now-buried inner reaches of the temple.

*A set of double doors stand to the south of this once-grand hall, but passage to the northeast is blocked where the ceiling has collapsed. Runic writing covers the walls. However, part of the western wall has been plastered over and filled with Goblin and Common script. A mosaic makes up the center of the western wall—the clenched fist of Bane rendered 15 feet long on each side in black stone.*

A DC 22 Perception check made to search the mosaic notes five dark purple amethysts worth 100 gp each. However, the arcane ward that has sealed the secret door makes an attack (+8 vs. Reflex, 1d4 radiant damage) when a PC pries a gem loose. It takes a separate DC 26 Perception check to discover the secret door. Opening the door (see area T7) makes it safe to remove the gems.

A DC 22 History check or a DC 25 Perception check reveals more information from the runes. The earliest writing talks about a beneficent faith dedicated to the weal of the giants and other sentient peoples. By the time of later inscriptions, the giants' faith had become warlike and unforgiving of weakness. The group's core faithful were identified as soldiers in an army called the Hand of Naarash.

The writing on the western wall claims the Hand to be the creation of the shaman Anak. Its apocalyptic tone speaks of Bane's faithful seizing the world from the heathen races.

## T6. BLACK CELLS

This area was sealed and trapped before the PCs activated the temple's wards. The doors are *arcane locked* (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through) and protected with a permanent glyph of warding active on both sides of the door.

### Glyph of Warding

Level 7 Warder Trap  
300 XP

*A door or similar portal or barrier is enchanted with a magical and hidden glyph that detonates when a creature touches it.*

### Perception

◆ DC 28: The character notices the glyph.

### Additional Skill: Arcana

◆ DC 24: The party gets a +2 bonus to Perception checks to find the glyph and Thievery checks to disable it.

### Trigger

When a creature touches the surface, the glyph explodes and attacks.

### Attack

**Immediate Reaction** Close burst 3

**Targets:** Creatures in burst

**Attack:** +10 vs. Reflex

**Hit:** 4d6+4 radiant damage and blind until save

### Countermeasure

◆ An adjacent character can disable the glyph with a DC 28 Thievery check.

*Beyond the double doors, cracked stairs lead down into a flat-ceilinged chamber. Two broken stone walls jut out of northern wall. Beyond the wall fragments, large fountains can be seen against the room's eastern and western walls. Sheets of tattered black cloth block the view of the much of the northern and southern walls. The scent of rot hangs in the chill air.*

This place was the living quarters of a group of giant priests, their meditation cells partitioned behind black curtains. These priests slew each other when the temple was abandoned, rising as zombie hulks. Anak discovered them and sealed this area off.

**Tactical Encounter:** "Black Cells" (page 55).

## DEVELOPMENT

A DC 26 Perception check made to search what's left of the chamber finds a scrap of parchment near a fountain—a journal of one of the priests who died here. A DC 22 History check or a DC 25 Perception check reveals that the temple collapsed to anarchy in the end. The writer blamed the Eye of Naarash for the destruction of his people and hoped that sealing the temple would keep this evil contained.

## T7. THE EYE OF NAARASH

The secret doors in this area (Perception DC 26) are *arcane locked* (DC 26 Thievery to disable, DC 26 Strength to break through).

This area is the site of two tactical encounters split up by the PCs' confrontation with Jaryn. After playing the first tactical encounter, return to this section to play out the social encounter. Then return to the second tactical encounter for the final battle.

*High walls flank a flight of oversized stairs leading up. A high-ceilinged chamber above is lit by everburning torches. The walls and ceiling to the south have collapsed, rubble trailing out to a rift that splits the floor. The room continues past a wall that abuts a rough stone shrine. To the north stands another wall and a splashing fountain.*

Jaryn waits here with his personal guard, knowing that enemies are in the temple. He believes that the



spirit of Naarash seeks to test his strength, sending a challenger in the same way he challenged Larkazh in this place. If the PCs defeat his warriors, Jaryn will face them in combat to decide the fate of the cult.

**Tactical Encounter:** “Last Stand” (page 56).

## JARYN'S SECRET

Jaryn seems to take no notice of the defeat of his guard, ignoring their bodies as he greets the PCs.

*“You have had a long journey, I expect. I knew that my time here would be limited, but I did not expect the challenge so soon. Please, sit. Rest and refresh yourself before the end.”*

Jaryn offers the PCs a potent wine from a decanter on the stairs, explaining that it will restore their strength for the test to come. Drinking it allows a character to regain a used healing surge. A DC 18 Arcana or Nature check confirms the wine's effect and safety.

While the PCs take a short rest (allowing them to recover their encounter powers), Jaryn speaks to them. Characters are welcome to roam the chamber as they see fit.

Under the control of the Eye of Naarash, Jaryn's vision is corrupted but he is not an automaton. He remains dedicated to humanity—but he has lost hope that humanity can survive the darkness that has descended on the world.

In response to questions, Jaryn answers as follows:

**What is this place?** “The temple is older than human history. It is a place of great power, and from it, a great power will rise.”

**What is the stone on the altar?** “The Eye of Naarash is the material embodiment of Bane's might.

It is the source of the strength the god grants us. The giants discovered it, but they were not worthy.”

**What is the Rite of the Eye?** “The Rite of the Eye binds the faithful to Bane. Those who take the rite bear the talisman that commits their own life force to Naarash and the greater glory of the Hand.”

**Why did you let your guards die? What do you mean by a challenge?** “The faith of Bane allows no weakness. Only the strongest can lead the Hand. I was made Voice of Naarash by the blood of Larkazh, even as he slew the master before him. You are here by Bane's will to challenge me. Should you succeed,



you are destined to build on what I have built until you are challenged in turn.”

**What happened to you to change your faith?** “My faith has not changed. It has simply been re-focused. The fall of Nerath marked the end of this world, but humanity lingers like the condemned man

who cannot accept the end. Pelor is dead. The good, the moral, the light—these things are no more.”

**Why have you taken control of the cult?** “Humanity's lot in this new world is struggle and death, but not all are suited to such hardship. Those who are strong will inherit the mantle of humanity. Those who cannot embrace the darkness will suffer. My way ends the torment for them. My way is mercy.”

**Tactical Encounter:** “The Wrath of Naarash” (page 58).

## AFTERMATH

Any of the PCs' unanswered questions regarding the Naarash can be answered with journals found on Jaryn's body or hidden behind the shrine.

**Treasure:** In addition to Jaryn's +2 vicious greatsword, a secret compartment beneath the shrine (Perception DC 22) contains a gem-cut chunk of amber (100 gp) and a giant-sized gold moonstone pendant (250 gp) suitable as a belt for smaller characters. Beneath the bedrolls, the PCs find personal effects and wealth totaling 100 gp.

## AFTER THE ADVENTURE

The rough tunnel beyond the southwest secret door leads through the mountain, emerging a safe distance away from and above the temple grounds. There, the PCs behold a scene of chaos as cultists fight each other and flee the area in droves. The demon's destruction has been felt by its unwitting followers, and the Hand of Naarash is no more.

When the PCs return to the river, they find Glasur and the Blacksnake waiting for them. The dwarf is a willing audience for the tale of the party's triumph as the PCs begin the long journey home.

## HALL OF WARRIORS

Encounter Level 4 (750 XP)

### SETUP

The suits of armor in this chamber are actually steel keepers—guardian constructs created by the giants. Three were reanimated by the magical wards activated when the door was closed. The other three have lost their magic over the centuries and now stand harmless. The remains of three more steel keepers—now piles of armor—will attack PCs if they get too near. When the first PC steps within 2 squares of one of the active steel keepers, all three come to life.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

**3 steel keepers (S)**

Use the same miniatures for the steel keepers and the inert armor, so that PCs assume the armor is a threat.

**As the steel keepers animate, read:**

*A grinding of metal on metal rings out as the suit of giant-sized plate closest to you begins to move. Two more of the suits of armor detach from the walls at the same time, their rusted halberds raised as they attack.*

### TACTICS

The steel keepers harry the PCs with halberd attacks to prevent them from reaching the secret door, using *iron defense* to immobilize foes staying out of reach. They pursue the PCs into any part of the complex. If the party manages to retreat into area 2 and close the doors behind them, the constructs break through the doors in 2 rounds.

The steel keepers fight until destroyed.

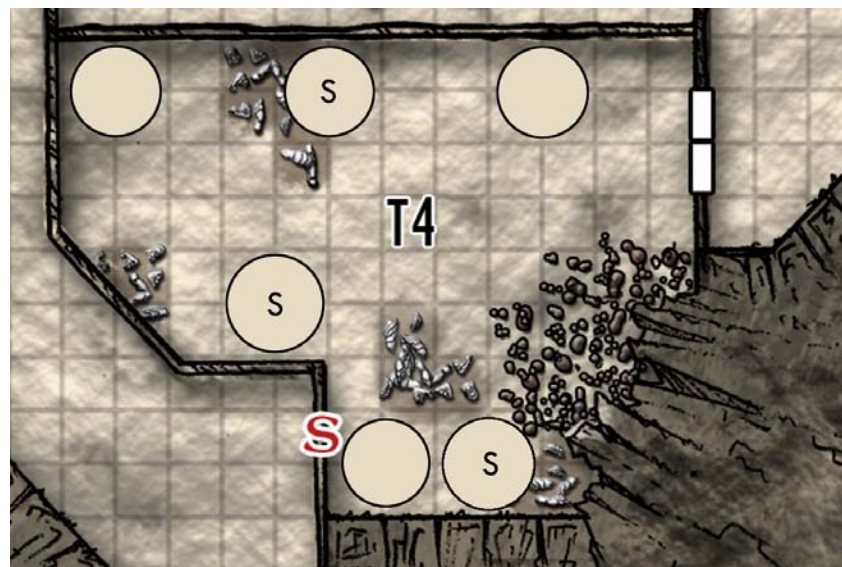
### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** None (dark).

**Rubble:** Loose rock and gravel spreading from the southeast is difficult terrain (costs 1 extra square).

**Armor:** The remains of three other steel keepers are piled in the areas indicated on the map. These areas are difficult terrain (costs 1 extra square). In addition, PCs moving through or stopping in one of these areas are subject to attack as armor pieces animate and batter them (+8 vs. Reflex; 1d4 damage and knocked prone). The animated armor does not attack the steel keepers.

3 Steel Keepers		Level 6 Controller
Large natural animate (construct)		XP 250 each
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +7; darkvision	
HP 72; Bloodied 36		
AC 20; Fortitude 19, Reflex 18, Will 16		
Immune disease, poison		
Speed 6, burrow 4		
⬇ Halberd (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 4; +10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends); see also <i>door guard</i> .		
✦ Iron Defense (standard; at-will)		
Area burst 1 within 5; affects only creatures in contact with the ground; +9 vs. Reflex; the target is immobilized (save ends).		
<b>Door Guard</b>		
The steel keeper deals an extra 1d6 damage against targets adjacent to the secret door.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Str 20 (+8)	Dex 15 (+4)	Wis 11 (+2)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 5 (-1)	Cha 8 (+1)





## BLACK CELLS

### Encounter Level 6 (1,400 XP)

#### SETUP

After centuries of isolation, the zombie hulks trapped here are ravenous but patient. They wait in silence until a PC moves past the bottom of the stairs before they burst out to attack, likely with surprise. The black curtains give the zombie hulks total concealment. Do not place their miniatures until they appear.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

**3 zombie hulks (Z)**

**As the zombies attack, read:**

*Suddenly the black curtains across the room are torn away by an immense gore-stained fist. A monstrous bloated creature staggers toward you with a bloodcurdling howl.*

#### TACTICS

The zombie hulks mindlessly attack the closest foes to start, focusing their wrath on the character who dealt the killing blow when they rise again. If any PCs use the walls as cover, the zombies plow through them (see “Features of the Area”). The zombie hulks pursue the PCs into any part of the complex and fight until slain.

#### EXPERIENCE

This encounter awards additional XP for the hazard of the collapsing ceiling. If the fight moves out of this area for more than half its duration, award XP only for the zombies destroyed.

3 Zombie Hulks (Z)		Level 8 Brute
Large natural animate (undead)		XP 350 each
Initiative +2	Senses Perception +3; darkvision	
HP 108; Bloodied 54; see also <i>rise again</i>		
AC 20; Fortitude 23, Reflex 17, Will 18		
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic; Vulnerable 10 radiant		
Speed 4		
⊕ Slam (standard; at-will)		
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage.		
⊕ Zombie Smash (standard; recharge [5])		
Reach 2; targets Medium size or smaller creature; +12 vs. AC; 4d8 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone.		
Rise Again (move; the first time the zombie hulk drops to 0 hit points or fewer; encounter)		
Make a new initiative check for the zombie hulk. On its next turn, the zombie hulk rises (as a move action) with 45 hit points.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Str 21 (+9)	Dex 6 (+2)	Wis 8 (+3)
Con 18 (+8)	Int 1 (-1)	Cha 3 (+0)

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** None (dark).

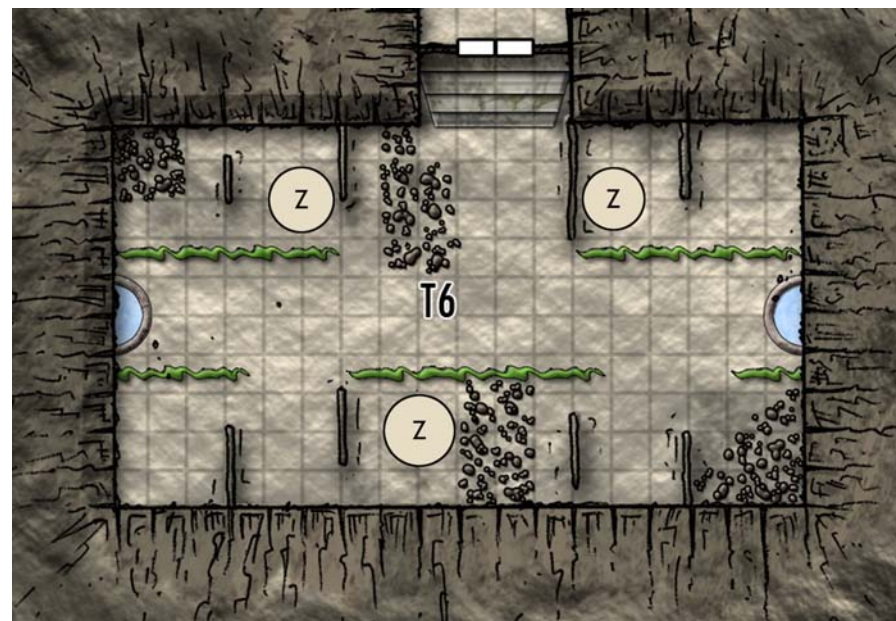
**Black Curtains:** These tattered draperies provide total concealment. It takes a DC 5 Strength check to pull a curtain down.

**Fountains:** The wide basins of these cracked marble fountains stand 6 feet off the ground. It takes a DC 10 Athletics check to climb into or over a fountain. A Small character who climbs into a fountain gains cover.

**Ruined Walls:** These crumbling floor-to-ceiling walls are weak enough that the zombie hulks can push through them. When a wall is pushed over, it makes an attack (+8 vs. Reflex, 1d8 damage on a hit) in two adjacent squares in the direction of the zombie’s movement. A zombie hulk knocks over an entire wall regardless of how much of the wall remains, taking 5 damage in the process.

When a wall collapses, the ceiling in the area gives way the following round on the zombie hulks’ initiative. The collapse makes an attack in adjacent squares as indicated on the map (+12 vs. Reflex; 3d8 damage on a hit, 1d8 damage on a miss).

Areas of collapse are difficult terrain thereafter.



## LAST STAND

### Encounter Level 5 (1,000 XP)

#### SETUP

The walls alongside the stairs run to the high ceiling overhead, blocking the PCs' view of the human berserkers until they move into their positions on the map.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

**2 advanced human berserkers (B)**

**1 blazing skeleton (S)**

**1 hobgoblin commander (C)**

**1 advanced hobgoblin warcaster (W)**

Do not place the miniatures for the hobgoblin warcaster, the hobgoblin commander, and the blazing skeleton until they have attacked or the PCs have seen them.

**When the first PC passes the top of the stairs, read:**

*Suddenly, a shout rings out. Two human warriors move around the walls along the stairs, their armor painted with the black fist of Bane.*

2 Advanced Human Berserkers (B)		Level 5 Brute
Medium natural humanoid		XP 200 each
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +2	
HP 76; Bloodied 38; see also <i>battle fury</i>		
AC 16; Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 15		
Speed 7		
⬇	Greataxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 4 damage (crit 1d12 + 16).		
⬇	Battle Fury (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter)	
The human berserker makes a melee basic attack with a +5 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 1d6 damage on a hit.		
↘	Handaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.		
Alignment Any		Languages Common
Skills Athletics +10, Endurance +10		
Str 17 (+5)	Dex 12 (+3)	Wis 11 (+2)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 10 (+2)	Cha 12 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, cult tunic, greataxe, 2 handaxes, Naarash talisman		

Blazing Skeleton (S)		Level 5 Artillery
Medium natural animate (undead)		XP 200
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +4; darkvision	
Fiery Aura (Fire) aura 1; any creature starts its turn in the aura takes 5 fire damage.		
HP 53; Bloodied 26		
AC 19; Fortitude 15, Reflex 18, Will 16		
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 fire, 10 necrotic;		
Vulnerable 5 radiant		
Speed 6		
⬇	Blazing Claw (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire	
+8 vs. AC; 1d4 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).		
↘	Flame Orb (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire	
Ranged 10; +8 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Str 13 (+3)	Dex 18 (+6)	Wis 15 (+4)
Con 17 (+5)	Int 4 (-1)	Cha 6 (+0)

Hobgoblin Commander (C)		Level 5 Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid		XP 200
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +5; low-light vision	
HP 64; Bloodied 32		
AC 21 (23 with <i>phalanx soldier</i> ); Fortitude 21, Reflex 18, Will 19		
Speed 5		
⬇	Spear (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage; see also <i>lead from the front</i> . If the hobgoblin commander hits with an opportunity attack, it shifts 1 square.		
⬅	Tactical Deployment (minor; recharge ☞☞☞)	
Close burst 5; allies in the burst shift 3 squares.		
Lead from the Front		
When the hobgoblin commander's melee attack hits an enemy, allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against that enemy until end of the hobgoblin commander's next turn.		
Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin commander suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)		
The hobgoblin commander makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.		
Phalanx Soldier		
The hobgoblin commander gains a +2 bonus to AC while at least one hobgoblin ally is adjacent to it.		
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, Goblin
Skills Athletics +14, Intimidate +7, Stealth +11		
Str 20 (+7)	Dex 14 (+4)	Wis 16 (+5)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 12 (+3)	Cha 10 (+2)
Equipment scale armor with Bane's symbol, heavy shield, spear, Naarash talisman		



**Advanced Hobgoblin Warcaster (W) Level 5 Controller**  
Medium natural humanoid XP 200

Initiative +5 Senses Perception +4; low-light vision

HP 62; Bloodied 31

AC 19; Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 16

Speed 6

Action Points 1

⊕ Staff (standard; at-will) • Weapon

+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

⊖ Shock Staff (standard; recharge ☐☐☐☐) ◆ Lightning, Weapon

+10 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the hobgoblin warcaster's next turn.

↘ Force Lure (standard; recharge ☐☐☐☐) ◆ Force

Ranged 5; +9 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 force damage, and the target slides 3 squares.

⬅ Force Pulse (standard; recharge ☐☐☐☐) ◆ Force

Close blast 5; +9 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 force damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone. Miss: Half damage, and the target is neither pushed nor knocked prone.

**Hobgoblin Resilience** (immediate reaction, when the hobgoblin warcaster suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)

The hobgoblin warcaster makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Goblin

Skills Arcana +10, Athletics +4, Stealth +10

Str 13 (+2) Dex 14 (+3) Wis 16 (+4)

Con 14 (+3) Int 19 (+5) Cha 13 (+2)

Equipment robes, cult tunic, staff, Naarash talisman

## TACTICS

The human berserkers throw their handaxes from close range. They then wade into combat with their greataxes against the closest foes.

The blazing skeleton is an ageless guardian of this hall, raised by the power of Naarash. It wades into melee if two or more PCs are adjacent and can be affected by its *fiery aura*. Otherwise, it makes ranged *flame orb* attacks from behind cover.

The hobgoblin commander flanks with the berserkers, granting them its *lead from the front* bonus. If

the berserkers fall, the commander joins the warcaster to gain the defensive advantage of its *phalanx soldier* power.

The hobgoblin warcaster uses *force pulse* and *force lure* to drive weaker PCs into the berserkers, or to slide powerful combatants into the rift. It enters melee with its *shock staff* if a PC goes past or around the northern wall or if the human berserkers are killed.

Jaryn's personal guard all fight to the death.

## DEVELOPMENT

The PCs see Jaryn when the fight moves out of the eastern half of the room.

**When one of the PCs passes the central wall, read:**

*To the south, bedrolls surround a cold fire pit. A wide staircase to the west leads up to an altar, an immense red stone glowing there. On the topmost step, a figure stands—a male human, hair tied back to reveal a prominent scar on his cheek. He holds his greatsword beside him, watching your fight with a weary intensity.*



If the PCs attack Jaryn at once, the paladin takes total defense or joins with them to defeat his last defenders. This should hopefully give the characters pause at killing him outright, allowing you to reveal his final secrets.

When Jaryn's defenders are defeated, return to page 53 for information on what Jaryn can reveal. Then go to the next tactical encounter for the PCs' final fight.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

See the "Wrath of Naarash" tactical encounter, following.

## THE WRATH OF NAARASH

Encounter Level 8 (2,450 XP)

### SETUP

The PCs have rested and spoken with Jaryn. Now the paladin is anxious to face his fate. This encounter uses the same tactical map as the previous encounter, “Last Stand.” Place Jaryn’s miniature and the PCs in whatever location their previous conversation left them.

This encounter includes the following creatures:

**Jaryn, elite paladin of Bane**  
**Naarash, barglura demon**

**When Jaryn finishes speaking to the PCs, read:**

*The paladin stands, pacing away from you as he hefts his sword. “I have told you what I can, and you now know what you must know to stand in my place—if indeed that is your fate. I commend your bravery, friends. Now let us end this.”*

### TACTICS

Jaryn is driven by his twisted faith and the strength granted to him by the Eye of Naarash. He shows no mercy, staying in motion to prevent flanking and focusing his attacks on injured PCs. If he is harried by ranged attacks in the open western half of the room, he tries to move the fight to the east. With his faith in Bane unshakable, Jaryn fights to the death.

## MERCY FOR THE FALLEN

Altruistic PCs might balk at killing Jaryn outright, instead attempting to talk him back to sanity. If so, improvise a skill challenge alongside the fight. Even as some of the PCs attack Jaryn (or just fend off his attacks), other characters can attempt Bluff or Diplomacy checks. Each successful high-DC check (DC 21) chips away at the paladin’s fury and the hold Naarash has on him.

With two defeats, the PCs only manage to enrage Jaryn even more, granting him a +1 on all attacks until the end of the encounter. However, with four successes, Jaryn stops fighting, stumbling back from the fray. He whispers “Pelor forgive me” before tearing the talisman from his neck, killing himself.

Instead of giving an XP reward for this impromptu skill challenge, award full experience points for Jaryn no matter how he is slain.

### DEVELOPMENT

Whether Jaryn dies at the PCs’ hands or his own, the demonic spirit of Naarash has not counted on his new champion falling this way.

**When Jaryn falls, read:**

*The everburning torches suddenly flicker and dim. At the top of the western stairs, the Eye of Naarash flares brighter, a sickly blood-red. Then a fountain of flame erupts from the stone, scouring the upper landing and the ceiling above as a misshapen figure appears. The apelike creature stands 10 feet tall, ropes of twisted muscle rippling beneath its mangy red fur. Its foul voice echoes from the stones as it hisses: “You have slain my champion and have shown your worth. Who among you accepts the mantle of Voice of Naarash?”*

<b>Jaryn, Human Paladin</b>		<b>Level 8 Elite Soldier</b>
Medium natural humanoid		XP 700
<b>Initiative</b> +8	<b>Senses</b> Perception +4	
<b>HP</b> 164; <b>Bloodied</b> 82		
<b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 24, <b>Reflex</b> 22, <b>Will</b> 24		
<b>Saving Throws</b> +3		
<b>Speed</b> 6		
<b>Action Points</b> 1		
⚔ <b>Greatsword</b> (standard; at-will) ⚔ <b>Weapon</b>		
+13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 9 damage (plus an additional 2d12 damage on a critical hit)		
⚔ <b>Holy Strike</b> (standard; at-will) ⚔ <b>Divine, Radiant Weapon</b>		
Requires greatsword; +13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 9 radiant damage. If Jaryn marked the target, he deals an additional 3 damage.		
⚔ <b>Thunder Smite</b> (standard; encounter; recharges when first bloodied) • <b>Divine, Thunder, Weapon</b>		
Requires greatsword; +13 vs. AC; 2d12 + 9 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone. Can score a critical hit against a marked enemy on a roll of 19–20.		
⚔ <b>Valiant Strike</b> (standard; at-will) ⚔ <b>Divine, Weapon</b>		
Requires greatsword; +13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 9 radiant damage; Jaryn gains a bonus to the attack roll equal to +1 per enemy adjacent to him.		
<b>Divine Strength</b> (minor; encounter) ⚔ <b>Divine</b>		
Jaryn applies his Strength bonus (+5) as extra damage on his next attack this turn.		
⚔ <b>Divine Challenge</b> (minor; at-will) ⚔ <b>Divine, Radiant</b>		
Close burst 5; targets one creature; the target is marked until Jaryn uses this power against another target. If the target makes an attack that doesn’t include Jaryn as a target, the target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls and 6 radiant damage.		
<b>Bane’s Rebuke</b> (immediate reaction)		
When Jaryn is hit by a melee attack, he makes a basic attack.		
<b>Second Wind</b> (standard; encounter) <b>Healing</b>		
Jaryn spends a healing surge and regains 41 hit points. He gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of his next turn.		
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Supernal	
<b>Str</b> 20 (+9)	<b>Dex</b> 11 (+4)	<b>Wis</b> 16 (+7)
<b>Con</b> 10 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 13 (+5)	<b>Cha</b> 12 (+5)
<b>Feats</b> Human Perseverance, Improved Initiative, Ritual Caster		
<b>Equipment</b> +2 vicious greatsword		



The demon is not known for its patience, and the PCs cannot stall for long before refusing the offer. (If one of the PCs decides to accept Naarash's offer, the adventure is over and you're on your own.)

#### When Naarash attacks, read:

*The demon's tusked mouth opens in a howl as it leaps down the stairs toward you.*

Naarash's dark life force is tied to the great stone in which the demon was bound millennia before. It has the ability to manifest in this chamber but cannot leave it. Having waited endless centuries for a chance to renew its power in the world through the Hand of Naarash, the demon has no intention of allowing the PCs to thwart its plans.

## TACTICS

Naarash wades into the PCs with vicious double slam attacks, reserving both uses of its *tormenting howl* for the maximum number of targets. If the PCs spread out, the demon is happy to focus its attacks on a single foe, cutting the party down one by one. When bloodied, Naarash attempts to stay in the midst of as many foes as possible, maximizing the effect of its *demonic frenzy*. The insane demon knows only rage and the thirst for destruction, and it fights until destroyed.

## DEVELOPMENT

The Eye of Naarash is destroyed when the demon falls. Incorporate this into Naarash's *death burst*.

*Even as the demon is slain, the stone on the altar flares again, blood-red light blinding you. With a shriek like*

Naarash, Bargura		Level 8 Solo Brute
Large elemental beast (demon)		XP 1,750
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +12; low-light vision	
HP 360; Bloodied 180		
AC 23; Fortitude 24, Reflex 19, Will 19		
Saving Throws +4		
Resist 10 variable (1/encounter; see MM 282)		
Speed 8, climb 8		
Action Points 2		
⊕ Slam (standard; at-will)		
Reach 2, +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, or 2d8 + 6 damage if the bargura is bloodied.		
⊕ Double Attack (standard; at-will)		
The bargura makes two slam attacks (see above).		
Tormenting Howl (minor; encounter)		
All enemies within 5 squares of Naarash take a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of its next turn.		
Bloodied Torment (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter)		
Naarash recharges and uses <i>tormenting howl</i> .		
Demonic Frenzy (immediate reaction, when attacked by an adjacent enemy while bloodied; at-will)		
Naarash makes a frenzied slam attack against the enemy: +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage.		
⚡ Death Burst (when reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ Fire		
Naarash explodes in a burst of flame: close burst 10; +10 vs. Reflex; 2d8+5 fire damage. Miss: Half damage. The demon and the Eye of Naarash are destroyed.		
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal	
Skills Athletics +15		
Str 22 (+10)	Dex 16 (+7)	Wis 16 (+7)
Con 18 (+8)	Int 6 (+2)	Cha 12 (+5)

*rending steel, the Eye of Naarash shatters, its fragments cascading down the stairs to dissolve into blood-red mist. When it clears, a smoking stain on the floor is all that marks the place where the demon fell.*

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Everburning torches (bright 5) along all walls.

**Rubble:** Loose rock and gravel spreading from the south is difficult terrain.

**Fissure:** The floor of this chamber collapses into a fissure 10 feet deep. It can be jumped with a DC 20 Athletics check (DC 10 with a 2-square running start). Characters who enter the fissure take 1d6 damage and must make a DC 18 Acrobatics or Athletics check to clamber up its crumbling walls.

**Bedrolls and Fire Pit:** These are difficult terrain.

**Ruined Shrine:** This shrine is 10 feet high. It provides superior cover to anyone behind it and can be scaled with a DC 10 Athletics check.

**The Eye of Naarash:** This immense chunk of blood-red stone sits atop a circular black altar, glowing with a diffuse red light.

**Stairs:** The oversized staircases in this chamber are difficult terrain (costs 1 extra square).

**Fountain Pool:** The pool of water and the wet floor around it are difficult terrain.

**Treasure:** The equipment carried by Jaryn can be recovered after the PCs are victorious. ✕✕

### About the Author

Scott Fitzgerald Gray (9th-level layabout, vindictive neutral) started gaming in high school and has worked as a writer and editor much of the time since then. After belatedly realizing he could combine both vocations in 2004, he's been making up for lost time as a freelance RPG editor and designer, primarily for Wizards of the Coast. He lives in the Canadian hinterland with a schoolteacher, two daughters, and a large number of animal companions.