



Brother Gregor of Oghma is a not-altogether-unwilling prisoner in a tower, reachable only by specialized magic. In this tower, Gregor carries out alchemical experiments, searching for a cure to the ravages of the Spellplague's blue fire. However, competing forces covet his knowledge and secrets, or else want him dead so no one else can possess them.

"Gregor's Tangent" is a D&D® encounter for five 12th-level PCs. It is a continuation of the events from the *Forgotten Realms*® novel *The Edge of Chaos*. You can run this as a one-shot encounter or weave it into your campaign as part of a longer adventure.

By Shawn Merwin

cartography by Jason A. Engle

THE EDGE OF CHAOS: GREGOR'S TANGENT

ADVENTURE

BACKGROUND

In the city of Ormpetarr, perched precariously on the edge of the Plaguewrought Land, is the headquarters of the Order of Blue Fire. The order's publicly stated mission is to assist those who have been afflicted by the Spellplague or to encourage those who wish to touch its blue fire in an attempt to gain power. Secretly, however, the Order's leadership seeks to expand the Spellplague's reach to cover the entire world.

Also residing in Ormpetarr is the Temple Complex, a coalition of priests and healers dedicated to caring for scar pilgrims injured or killed—or left even worse—by exposure to the blue fire. One of those healers was Brother Gregor, a disciple of Oghma and a highly skilled and motivated alchemist. Through years of study and divine inspiration, he created a formula that he thought might protect people from the blue fire's effects.

Brother Gregor assumed that his alchemical breakthrough would serve the Order of Blue Fire by protecting people from the negative consequences of exposure. Despite warnings from allies, he allowed the Order to use his concoction. Instead of using it

to protect innocents, though, the Order incorporated his formula as into a ritual intended to expand the borders of the blue fire so that it would wash over the entire city of Ormpetarr.

Fortunately, others learned of the terrible plans and thwarted the Order before it could destroy thousands of innocents. One powerful creature, the copper dragon Tyrangal, decided that Brother Gregor's knowledge was too dangerous to be left unchecked—especially given his susceptibility to manipulation. She confined Gregor in a tower with no exits. Although he is treated well and even allowed to continue his experiments, Gregor is a prisoner.

The Masters of Absolute Accord have undertaken numerous attempts to locate and liberate Brother Gregor, because his work still presents great opportunities for them. So far unsuccessful, they have called upon a mercenary force that specializes in finding hidden things: Barstow's Bloodhounds. This force has learned of Brother Gregor's whereabouts and is in the process of breaching his tower prison. The mercenaries have been instructed to bring him back to the

Order of Blue Fire—or kill him so that his knowledge no longer threatens the Order's goals.

ENCOUNTER SYNOPSIS

The PCs are on the trail of a group of mercenaries called Barstow's Bloodhounds, directed by one of the mercenaries' past victims. The trail eventually leads the party to the Jewel, a festhall in Ormpetarr. There the PCs can find the teleportation circle the

mercenaries used to enter Brother Gregor's prison tower.

Arriving at the tower, the PCs find Barstow's Bloodhounds and two Blue Fire accordants in the middle of delivering Brother Gregor an ultimatum: Leave with them, or die. The PCs must defeat the enemies before they can kill or kidnap Gregor.

The portal out of the tower collapses before the PCs can depart. This leaves them trapped with

Gregor, dead or alive. The copper dragon Tyrangal then arrives to see who has disturbed her captive. The PCs must then convince Tyrangal that they are worthy of release.

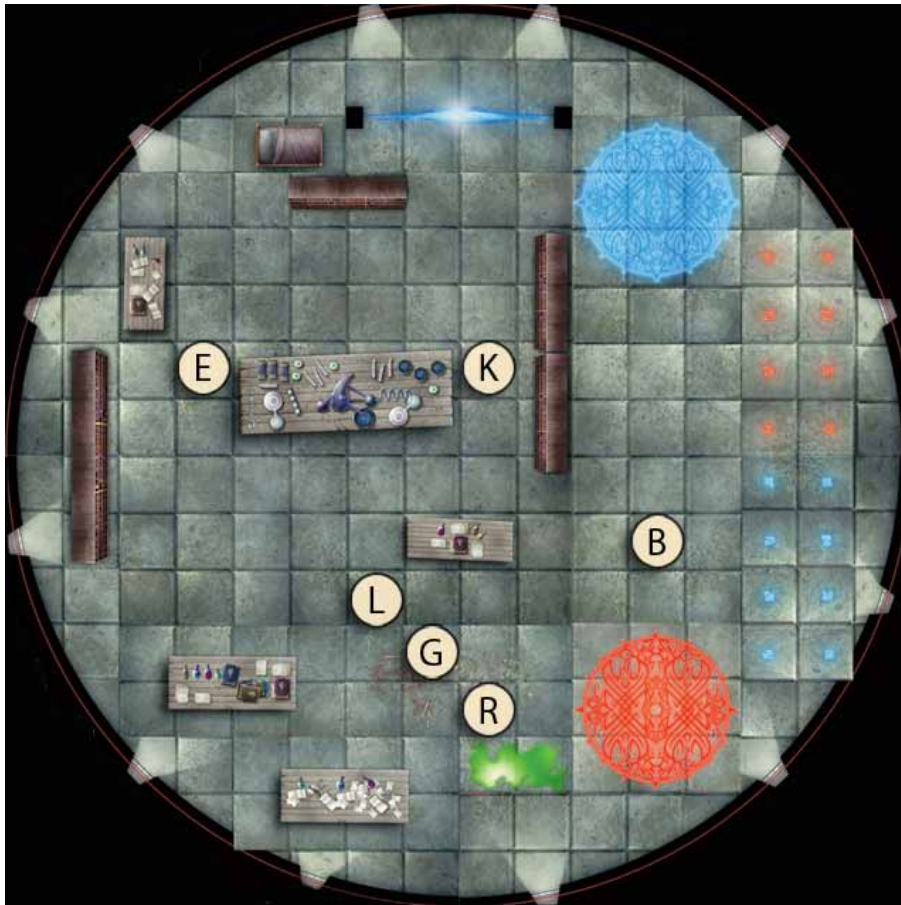
RUNNING THE ENCOUNTER

The introduction to this encounter provides a plot hook in which a past victim of Barstow's Bloodhounds hires the adventurers. If you want Barstow's Bloodhounds to be recurring villains, you can create your own hook incorporating them into your campaign.

This encounter introduces two other forces that can play a large role in a campaign. The Order of Blue Fire seeks total destruction of Faerûn through the spread of the Spellplague. This encounter can be a springboard to other adventures pitting the PCs against the machinations of the Order. The copper dragon Tyrangal is a well-known treasure-seeker who often hires adventurers to retrieve relics and items of power for her collection. She might also oppose the same evil plots that the PCs seek to avert. The dragon makes an ideal patron for adventurers—or a possible foe if her and the PCs' goals remain at cross-purposes.

You can build the map for this encounter using two sets of D&D Dungeon Tiles from the *DU4 Arcane Towers* set.

For more background on the NPCs who appear here, see *The Edge of Chaos* novel by Jak Koke.



HOOK: A FAMILY GRIEVES

This plot hook gets the PCs quickly into the encounter, and is altered easily to fit into an ongoing campaign. The introduction takes place in the city of Waterdeep.

Associates of yours have informed you that a rich merchant in Waterdeep is searching for adventurers. Although they didn't know exactly what the merchant needed, your associates heard that it had to do with a certain matter of revenge.

The characters learn that the merchant in question is Livingston Mather, a high-ranking member of the Fellowship of Carters & Coachmen. They meet Mather in his well-appointed home in North Ward. He is a man of later middle age, well-dressed and refined in manner. However, his accent reveals that his station in life was not hereditary. He reveals the following information.

- ◆ Mather is hiring adventures to mete out justice to a small group of mercenaries who call themselves Barstow's Bloodhounds. He says they are little more than hired killers who brutally murdered his son Kline by drowning him in the foul waters of the Mistshore.
- ◆ The murder of his son was revenge for perceived crimes Mather committed while coming to power in his guild. Mather admits that he was ruthless in his rise, but he truthfully denies breaking any laws or committing any evil acts.
- ◆ Mather is handling the people who hired Barstow's Bloodhounds separately. He wants

someone to kill the mercenaries, or at least bring them back to Waterdeep for justice. (He would prefer them dead, though.)

- ◆ Using divination rituals, Mather has learned that Barstow's Bloodhounds are on a new assignment. They are currently in the city of Ormpetarr in the Vilhon Wilds, staying at a festhall called the Jewel.
- ◆ He is willing not only to pay the PCs to find and deal with Barstow's Bloodhounds, but also to cover the costs of magically transporting the party to Ormpetarr.

Livingston Mather offers the PCs 500 gp total for accepting the mission, and promises them 1,500 gp more if they return to him with proof that they have dealt with Barstow's Bloodhounds.

ENCOUNTER PRELUDE: THE JEWEL

Once the PCs are ready, a wizard in the employ of Mather performs a ritual to teleport them to Ormpetarr, a small city of about 4,000 residents. A large tent city has sprung up on the outskirts, where people who are making a scar pilgrimage have set up temporary lodging.

The PCs can ask around (DC 12 Streetwise) or wander the city for a few minutes to find a building sporting a sign reading "The Jewel." A male half-orc named Pritchov tends its bar. When the PCs enter, the common room is empty of patrons. Pritchov makes small talk, offering the PCs drinks.

When the topic of Barstow comes up, Pritchov gets noticeably agitated (DC 10 Insight) and says that no such person is or was ever here. The PCs

can get Pritchov to talk with a DC 16 Diplomacy or Intimidate check. He reveals that a male dwarf calling himself Barstow had just coerced Moirah, one of the Jewel's most popular workers, to accompany him to the last room down the hallway along with two female human twins. Half an hour ago, two spell-scarred humans had joined them. They had warned Pritchov that if they were disturbed, Moirah would be in mortal danger. Some strange chanting had been heard coming from the room, but it has been quiet since then.

The door to the room is locked, but the PCs can pick the lock (DC 10 Thievery) or break the door down (DC 16 Strength). Inside, they find Moirah tied up but otherwise unharmed. The wooden floor is marked with a blue glowing circle.

Moirah tells the PCs that the group performed some sort of ritual, stepped into the circle, and disappeared. She believes that she was a hostage to ensure their plan would not be interrupted.

If the PCs step into the circle, they are instantly teleported into Gregor's Tower, and the combat encounter begins.

COMBAT ENCOUNTER: GREGOR'S TOWER

Encounter Level 14 (5,200 XP)

Barstow (B)

Elia and Kelji (E, K)

Lohm, Commander Accordant (L)

Rapt, Loremaster Accordant (R)

Gregor (G)

The PCs enter the tower through the translucent blue energy screen at the top of the map. Combat starts as soon as they come through it.

When the PCs enter, Lohm is grabbing Gregor by the collar, threatening to kill the alchemist if he refuses to leave with them.

You step out of a blue energy field within a tower room that appears part living quarters and part laboratory. A male dwarf and two female human twins watch two spellscarred humans threaten another human in robes.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The area is brightly lit by magically simulated sunlight.

Ceiling: 20 feet high.

Bookcases: The bookcases are bolted down but can be pushed over with a DC 21 Athletics check. A bookcase crashes into an area 2 squares deep directly adjacent to its long side and makes an attack against each creature in that area: +13 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 4 damage, and the target falls prone. Afterward, the area is difficult terrain until cleared.

Protection from Cold: The red dots on the map indicate areas where Gregor has created a zone of

protection against cold. Creatures in these squares gain resist 10 cold.

Protection from Fire: The blue dots on the map indicate areas where Gregor has created a zone of protection against fire. Creatures in these squares gain resist 10 fire.

Rune, Heating: The area covered by the red rune is used by Gregor to heat his experiments. When any creature enters or starts its turn within that area, it takes 1d10 fire damage. A creature that spends 3 consecutive rounds in the area also takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Rune, Freezing: The area covered by the blue rune is used by Gregor to freeze his experiments. When any creature enters or starts its turn within that area, it takes 1d10 cold damage. A creature that spends 3 consecutive rounds in the area also is slowed and weakened (save ends both).

Spill: The green puddle is where Gregor spilled an elixir he was working on when Barstow entered his tower. This elixir protects against powers wielded by creatures that use blue fire. As a standard action, a creature can scoop up some of this substance and splash itself with it. After doing so, the creature is immune to the next two attacks before the end of the encounter from powers with the force, polymorph, or psychic keywords.

A character can learn the substance's property by taking a minor action to make a DC 21 Arcana check (or Gregor might tip off his rescuers to make use of it).

Tables/Bed: The tables and bed are blocking terrain. As part of a move, a character can jump over them with a DC 21 Athletics check or roll underneath with a DC 16 Acrobatics check.

TACTICS

Initially, the mercenaries and cultists focus their attacks on the PCs and ignore Gregor, who hides under a table or behind a bookcase. After the first bad guy falls, though, Lohm and Rapt decide to kill Gregor so as to keep his formulas from falling into anyone else's hands. The alchemist has defenses of 18 and 50 hit points; he falls unconscious at 0 hit points and is dying.

Lohm and Rapt attack Gregor only if they have a clear path to him and are not marked by PCs or risk provoking opportunity attacks.

DEVELOPMENT

The portal is temporary, closing 5 rounds after the PCs enter. There is no other way to escape from the tower using teleportation, phasing, or any other type of magic. (The Order of Blue Fire created a unique ritual to gain access.) The windows in the tower are false.

If Gregor is still alive, he tells the PCs that he is a prisoner, although the prison is as much to protect him as to prevent his escape. A creature calling herself Tyrangal keeps him here but allows him to continue his experiments in search for a cure for the Spellplague's blue fire.

If Gregor died, the PCs can search the premises and find notes and a journal revealing the same information as above.

Whether or not Gregor survives, Tyrangal arrives to see who has breached the tower (see "Encounter Conclusion").

Barstow (B) Level 14 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 2,000

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 216; **Bloodied** 108
AC 27; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27
Saving Throws +2 (+7 against poison effects)
Speed 6
Action Points 1

⊕ **Reaper's Touch** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Cold, Necrotic**
+17 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 6 cold and necrotic damage, and the target is weakened until the end of Barstow's next turn.

↗ **Necrotic Ray** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 10; targets one or two enemies; +19 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 6 necrotic damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends). If Barstow attacks only one target, the ongoing damage increases to 15.

↖ **Ghostly Barrage** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Illusion, Psychic**
Close blast 5; +18 vs. Will; 2d8 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw*: The target is restrained and weakened (save ends).

✱ **Dark Flames** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Fire, Necrotic**
Area burst 1 within 10; targets enemies; +18 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 6 fire and necrotic damage.

Arcane Leech
Whenever Barstow is hit by an arcane attack, his next attack before the end of the encounter deals 1d10 extra damage.

Spell Shaper
When Barstow uses a close or area attack power, he can choose up to two allies in the power's area of effect. Those allies are not targeted by the power.

Endless Power (minor; recharge [E])
Barstow regains the use of an expended encounter power.

Stand Your Ground
When an effect would push, pull, or slide Barstow, he moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock Barstow prone, he can roll a saving throw to avoid being knocked prone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Arcana +18
Str 10 (+7) **Dex** 9 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 18 (+11) **Int** 23 (+13) **Cha** 20 (+12)
Equipment robes, wand, pouch of necrotic powder

Lohm, Commander Level 11 Skirmisher (Leader)
Accordant (L)
Medium natural humanoid, human, spellscarred XP 600

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +15
HP 113; **Bloodied** 56
AC 25; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24
Speed 6

⊕ **Spellplague Touch** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Force**
+14 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 6 force damage, and ongoing 5 force damage (save ends).

↻ **Spellplague Orb** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Force**
Ranged 20; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 6 force damage, and ongoing 5 force damage (save ends).

⊕ **Spellplague Spirit** (standard; recharge [E][E]) ♦ **Force, Polymorph**
Lohm becomes a spirit of blue flame. He becomes insubstantial and gains phasing, then flies 8 squares. If he enters another creature's space, he makes a melee basic attack against that creature. He can enter a given creature's space only once per round. He resumes his normal form at the end of this move.

↖ **Blue Fire Succor** (minor; encounter) ♦ **Healing**
Close burst 5; one ally within the area regains 11 hit points (plus Constitution modifier if a spellscarred or plaguechanged creature). In addition, that ally gains 1d6 temporary hit points in the form of a shimmering blue aura.

Changing Shift (move; at-will) ♦ **Polymorph**
Lohm gains fly (hover), which he can use only to shift 2 squares. During this shift, he is insubstantial and gains phasing.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Arcana +11, Heal +15, Stealth +14
Str 11 (+5) **Dex** 18 (+9) **Wis** 21 (+10)
Con 17 (+8) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+6)
Equipment hide armor

Rapt, Loremaster Accordant (R) Level 11 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human, spellscarred XP 600

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 90; **Bloodied** 45
AC 23; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23
Speed 6

⊕ **Force Staff** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Force, Weapon**
+15 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 6 force damage.

↻ **Changing Ray** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Force, Polymorph**
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 6 force damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Rapt's next turn.

↖ **Changing Wave** (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ **Polymorph**
Close blast 5; +15 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is slowed and weakened until the end of Rapt's next turn.

↗ **Accordant Vision** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Psychic**
Ranged 20; +15 vs. Will; 1d12 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Arcana +15, Dungeoneering +14, History +15, Insight +14
Str 10 (+5) **Dex** 11 (+5) **Wis** 19 (+9)
Con 17 (+8) **Int** 21 (+10) **Cha** 12 (+6)
Equipment robes, staff

Elia and Kelji (E, K) Level 14 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 1,000

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 168; **Bloodied** 84
AC 26; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 24
Speed 6

⊕ **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+17 vs. AC; 2d12 + 6 damage (crit 2d12 + 30), and the target is slowed (save ends).

⊕ **Executioner's Swing** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+17 vs. AC; targets a slowed creature; 3d12 + 6 damage (crit 2d12 + 42).

↖ **Bloody Arc** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Weapon**
Close burst 1; +16 vs. AC; 2d12 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends). If the target is bloodied, the ongoing damage increases to 10.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Intimidate +11, Stealth +15
Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 17 (+10) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 18 (+11) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 8 (+6)
Equipment hide armor, greataxe

ENCOUNTER CONCLUSION

Once the PCs learn that there is no way out of this tower and realize the gravity of the situation, Tyrangal arrives in her humanoid form.

Suddenly and silently, a woman appears standing atop a bookcase. She seems to be an elf but is strangely tall, at least a head above an average human. Her coppery skin and knee-length metallic auburn hair practically glow.

CONVINCING TYRANGAL CHALLENGE

The PCs must prove to Tyrangal that they have not breached the tower to kill, kidnap, or free Gregor. Even if Gregor speaks on behalf of the PCs, the dragon is suspicious, since Gregor could be lying to gain his freedom. If Gregor is dead, the PCs start the skill challenge with one failure.

Level: 14 (XP 1,000).

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Insight, Intimidate.

Arcana (DC 16): The character demonstrates knowledge of the Spellplague and of alchemical matters. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

Bluff (DC 21): Tyrangal cannot be bluffed. However, she is impressed with the character's glibness and concedes that such a good liar might be useful to her. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

Diplomacy (DC 10): The character points out the dead enemies strewn about the tower to convince

Tyrangal that the party is not evil and does not present a threat. This skill can be used to gain 2 successes in this challenge.

History (DC 16): This skill is available only to characters who recognize Tyrangal (see the secondary Arcana check, below). Pointing this out both impresses Tyrangal and reawakens her shame at the destruction she wrought in her madness. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

Insight (DC 16): This skill is available only to characters who make a successful Perception check (see below). The character convinces Tyrangal that the party also opposes the Blue Flame and its machinations. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

Intimidate (DC 16): Tyrangal laughs at attempts to intimidate her, but she is impressed with a character who is tough and willful enough to try, acknowledging he or she could be useful to her. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

Secondary Skills: Arcana, Perception, special.

Arcana (DC 16): A success with this check reveals that Tyrangal is really a copper dragon who lost her mind during the Rage of Dragons. That character can now make a primary History check during this encounter.

Perception (DC 19): The character notices how Tyrangal stares at the bodies of the spellscarred humans and recognizes her hatred for the Order of Blue Flame. That character can now make a primary Insight check during this encounter.

Special: A character with the Alchemy feat gains a +5 bonus to the primary Arcana check.

Success: The PCs convince Tyrangal that they are no threat, and they impress her enough that she considers them a potential asset. She agrees to release

them and rewards them for defeating the intruders (one treasure parcel). She might also offer them future work.

Failure: The PCs fail to impress Tyrangal. She keeps them prisoner until she needs them to perform a dangerous task in return for their freedom, with no other compensation.

CUSTOMIZING THE ENCOUNTER

If you wish to adapt this encounter to your own campaign, consider the following options.

- ◆ Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* rulebook presents detailed advice for running skill challenges, if you want to vary or expand on the challenge presented here.
- ◆ If you plan to introduce the assassin class (exclusive to *DRAGON Magazine*) to your game, you can alter the encounter's NPCs to make use of assassin powers.
- ◆ If the characters are foolish enough to pick a fight with Tyrangal, you can find statistics for copper dragons in *Monster Manual 2* (page 77). The *Draconomicon: Metallic Dragons* supplement provides further information on their lairs and lore, if Tyrangal remains in your campaign.

About the Author

Shawn Merwin is a freelance writer, editor, and writing teacher. His latest work in the gaming industry includes *DRAGON Magazine's* "Ecology of the Rust Monster", the *DUNGEON Magazine* adventure "Massacre at Fort Dolor", and *P3: Assault on Nightwyrms Fortress*. Shawn is currently the Global Administrator for the Western Hemisphere (North) in the RPGA's **Living Forgotten Realms** campaign. He lives in western New York, near the shores of Lake Erie, with his wife and daughter.