

PARAGON

11-20



FORGOTTEN REALMS®

MONUMENT OF THE ANCIENTS

By Brian R. James & Matt James

An adventure for 13th-level characters

illustrations by Eric Belisle

cartography by Sean Macdonald

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Panicked refugees are pouring into the port city of Phlan, fleeing from barbarian attacks in the Moonsea North. Something ominous and ancient drives the horse nomads to attack their neighbors. Poised to shatter the ancient monument keeping him from Faerûn, a “lost god” from Toril’s past sends an agent from the Elemental Chaos to herald his long prophesized return...

Monument of the Ancients is a 4th-Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure for five characters of 13th-level. This adventure is set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting. The *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Guide* and the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Player's Guide* contain material that can enhance the play experience, but neither of those books is essential to this adventure.

In 1988, Strategic Simulations, Inc. (SSI) published the first computer adaptation of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® roleplaying game, entitled *Pool of Radiance*. Like the adventure you're reading right now, *Pool of Radiance* was set in Phlan and its environs.

More personally, *Pool of Radiance* was my first exposure to the fantastic world of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting. Enjoying the rich setting and its detailed history, I picked up a copy of the module *Ruins of Adventure* from my local hobby shop and started a new D&D® campaign set in the ruined city of Phlan. I was hooked, and twenty-one years later I remain just as passionate about the Realms as that 14-year-old boy firing up *Pool of Radiance* on his family's Commodore 128.

It's with great pride that I present to you an adventure set in the great city of Phlan; and doubly so, since I've had the pleasure of designing this adventure with my not-so-little brother Matthew. Enjoy.

Brian R. James

BACKGROUND

As it has countless times since its founding, the city of Phlan once again stands unknowingly at the precipice of utter ruin. Hundreds of miles to the northwest, in an overgrown hollow of the Frozen Forest, stands a towering edifice of stone and iron constructed during the First Flowering by a lost civilization of man: the Monument of the Ancients.

If myth and legend are to be believed, the antediluvian monument defends a region of Faerûn where the boundary between the world of Toril and the Elemental Chaos is weakest. At the monument's heart lies the Anchor of Chaos, an arcane bulwark sealing a cosmic fissure between the planes. Were the enchantment powering the Anchor to fail, the Moonsea North would stand defenseless against a full-scale invasion by forces of elemental evil. Unbeknownst to the citizens of Phlan, that day is nearly upon them.

SEVEN SIGILS WAR

Scholars knowledgeable in the study of civilizations past have a saying: "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Those are wise words indeed, for the calamity about to befall the Moonsea North has occurred at least once before.

In the centuries leading up to the raising of the Standing Stone and the signing of the Dales Compact, the Moonsea Reaches were veritably unsettled by "civilized man." The fabled precursor civilization, architects of the Citadel of the Raven and Monument of the Ancients among others, had long before descended into barbarism, intermarrying with the indigenous tribes of the region.

In the fifth century before Dalereckoning, the arrogant Empire of Netheril constructed a massive

gate in the Gods' Legion Mountains (modern-day Desertsouth Mountains), foolishly seeking to conquer settlements in the outer planes beyond Toril. Unfortunately for the archwizards, immortal beings more powerful than themselves poured through the gate into Netheril.

High in intelligence though lacking in wisdom, the Netherese archwizards of Rdiuz sought to counteract the immortal invaders by pitting them against their longtime nemesis, elementals. Knowing of the legend of the Monument of the Ancients, the foolish archwizards intentionally sabotaged the Anchor of Chaos, releasing a primordial and his minions into the Realms.

After raging for more than a century, the horrendous conflict known to historians as the Seven Sigils War ended with the Netherese finally imprisoning or banishing the great majority of planar beings, both elemental and immortal. One primordial, however, escaped.

MARAM OF THE GREAT SPEAR

Fleeing northeast toward the lands where his connection to the Elemental Chaos was strongest, the ancient primordial Maram of the Great Spear carved a swath of destruction through the heart of the great Rystall Wood. On the far side of the elvish forest, Maram easily subjugated the primitive human tribes, who soon worshiped the elemental prince as a god.

Maram's designs on the region were cut short, however, when in the Year of Sycophants (-357 DR) an unlikely coalition joined forces to confront the ancient primordial. Marching north alongside Horreb artificers came the war wizards of Barze, the horse nomads of Varm, the gnoll warriors of Flindyke, the goliath hunters of Mount Akoro, and the gnome

hammers of Forharn. This bizarre alliance was led by three equally improbable heroes hailing from lands beyond the Moonsea North: a shadowy assassin, a brooding necromancer, and a dour warlord.

Under the icy boughs of the Frozen Forest, thousands of brave souls, man and beast, valiantly gave their lives to cleave a path to the Monument of the Ancients. There, in the shadow of the great ziggurat, the leaders of the alliance faced off against the raging primordial. In the end, the heroes were victorious, driving Maram back to the Elemental Chaos and resealing the Anchor of Chaos. The celebration was short lived, for soon the victors came to measure the full scope of their losses.

Ill fortune dogged the expedition on its long trek home. Many of the injured succumbed to infections that magical healing could not cure. Without the Dark Three to hold the coalition together—the brooding heroes chose instead to remain behind and study the monument further—the alliance soon dissolved and parted ways. Of the 50,000 souls that marched to war, less than 2,000 returned to their homes.

Less than a year later, the kingdom of Barze would lie in utter ruin, its cities overrun and set aflame by the Twisted Ones and their demonic general Tyranthraxus. Some whisper that the Dark Three had a hand in unleashing this new menace against their former allies, but that is a tale for another adventure . . .

RECENT EVENTS

Despite inhospitable winter weather and rough terrain, trails leading into Phlan from communities in the north are typically open year round. So it came as a bit of concern to city officials when trade caravans from the north abruptly stopped arriving in the markets of Phlan a few weeks ago.

Within days, a trickle of refugees arrived in the city with alarming tales about horse nomads overtaking their caravans and setting them aflame. As the days progressed, more refugees arrived, all telling similar tales of growing barbarian aggression.

Troops from Castle Vathar (an ancient keep north of the Phlan in the eastern foothills of the Dragon-spine Mountains) increased patrols throughout The Ride, but still the attacks increased.

Finally, not fully a tenday past, the settlement of Whitehorn (a small mining community in the remote White Peaks) came under barbarian attack. Fearful for their lives, panic-stricken refugees in the thousands poured into Phlan not only from Whitehorn but also Verdigris, Ilinvur, and smaller communities up and down The Ride.

HOOK: GRIM TIDINGS

With the refugee problem growing more dire every day and its military forces stretched thin, Phlan is in need of Heroes. Lord Protector Anivar Daoran spares no expense but sends for those brave enough to quell the barbarian uprising in the north. Accepting the commission, the PCs set sail for Phlan immediately, borne across the Moonsea in a swift, four-masted schooner.

HOOK: FEY CROSSROAD

The heroes are far from the Moonsea Reaches and wholly ignorant of the growing threat to that part of the world, but fate sometimes has a way of calling heroes to action.

Half a world away, the PCs make camp under the light of the full moon, Selûne's silver radiance filling their dreams with acts of glory against impossible odds. When they awake, the adventurers discover

they are no longer in the familiar territory where they camped the night before. The PCs later discover that they inadvertently triggered a fey crossroad and were peaceably teleported to the Quivering Forest not a mile from Phlan.

THE QUESTS

“Monument of the Ancients” offers a few opportunities to earn quest XP. Provided here are the adventure's major quests. Minor quests are included throughout the adventure proper.

Major Quest: Bring Me Their Heads!

The Lord Protector has demanded the heads of the barbarian warlords. This brutal act is hardly heroic, but it will grant the heroes favor in the Lord Protector's eyes. **Reward:** 4,000 XP

Major Quest: Seal the Anchor of Chaos

The Varm chieftain begs the PCs to thwart Maram's return by sealing the planar fissure at the Anchor of Chaos. **Reward:** 4,000 XP. **Bonus:** 2,000 XP if the players solve the puzzle challenge in the first round.

Major Quest: Unlock the Cube

The PCs are rewarded for unlocking the Horreb Ritual Cube, granting them full access to the relic's power and ritual library. **Reward:** 4,000 XP

Minor Quest: Spare the Innocent

The heroes are rewarded for their quick reaction in saving the lives of the refugee caravan from Ilinvur. **Reward:** 800 XP

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

“Monument of the Ancients” begins in Phlan, a burgeoning city on the northern shore of the Moonsea. The PCs arrive late in the month of Tarsakh in the Year of Deep Water Drifting, 1480 DR, as the spring melt frees the port from Auril’s icy grasp.

From there, the PCs travel to the untamed frontier of the Moonsea North. As they fight to drive back a crushing elemental incursion, the heroes explore the wild steppes of The Ride, trek across the unforgiving terrain of the Tortured Lands, and brave the deadly elements of the Frozen Forest.

KEY EVENTS

To aid your storytelling and keep the adventure moving forward, refer to the following timetable of key events.

Welcome to Phlan

As the PCs arrive in Phlan they are met at the wharf by the Lord Protector’s trusted seneschal, Rolf. They have an appointment to dine with Lord Daoran later that evening, but Rolf first acquires accommodations for the PCs in one of Phlan’s finest inns, then offers to give the heroes a tour of the city. It is during this period that the adventurers witness firsthand the refugee crisis gripping the city. That evening the heroes are escorted to Valjevo Castle to dine with Anivar Daoran, the ruling monarch of Phlan.

Roleplaying Encounter: Audience with the Lord Protector, page 65.

Journey North

The PCs agree to journey to Castle Vathar, a remote fortress in the north. Even mounted upon hippogriffs, the journey takes most of a day, so the PCs

must awaken early to get a head start. Just as the sun begins to set behind the Dragonspine Mountains, the heroes arrive over Castle Vathar. In the distance, the heroes spot a merchant caravan being waylaid by horse nomads.

Tactical Encounter: Defend the Caravan, page 67.

Best of a Bad Situation

Listening to the horrible accounts of an elemental invasion recounted by the terrified merchants, the PCs have a clear decision to make. The settlements of The Ride under Phlan’s protection have come under barbarian attack. Whitehorn and Verdigris have already fallen, but there may yet be time for the PCs to aid in the defense of Ilinvur.

Tactical Encounter: Civil Defense, page 69.

Following the encounter the heroes are approached by horse nomads under a sign of peace. A mystic among them describes the tale of Maram of the Great Spear and presents the PCs with a ritual cube.

Dark Days for Phlan

Hurrying back to Phlan, the heroes discover the city in lockdown. The gates to the old city are sealed tight and the Lord Protector has no interest in welcoming the heroes. Sneaking into the old city, the PCs head to Mantor’s Library, where they gain the aid of Sage Opanrael in unlocking the secrets of the ritual cube.

Skill Challenge: All This Has Happened Before...., page 71.

From Bad to Worse

With the ritual sequence nearly complete, one final query remains unanswered: Where stands the Monument of the Ancients? As the heroes journey back to the north to seek council from the gnome’s

of Forharn, the mounting forces of elemental chaos cause the long dormant volcano Kossuth’s Ire to erupt! Their only hope lies with the gnolls, so the PCs travel to the ruins of Flindyke. There, the characters explore the frozen ruins and encounter an ancient gnoll chieftain and his sycophantic minions.

Tactical Encounter: Lyceum of Rimefire, page 73.

Crucible of Chaos

Having obtained the location of the Monument of the Ancients, the PCs endure days of perilous trekking through frozen tundra beset by chaos tempests, elemental beasts, and bone-numbing temperatures.

Skill Challenge: Crucible of Chaos, page 75.

Monument of the Ancients

Crossing into the Frozen Forest, the heroes arrive at an ancient ziggurat of stone and iron: the Monument of the Ancients. As they approach, the characters are summoned within the structure to the Anchor of Chaos. There they must battle Pyricus, an elemental prince in service to the primordial Maram of the Great Spear, known to sages of the Realms as one of the “Seven Lost Gods.”

Tactical Encounter: Anchor of Chaos, page 76.

Conclusion

The adventure culminates with the death of Pyricus and the sealing of the Anchor of Chaos. With the ritual cube in hand, the heroes can pass through the planar fissure anytime they choose, perhaps beginning a series of expeditions into the Elemental Chaos itself.

PREPARING FOR ADVENTURE

“Monument of the Ancients” takes the PCs north from the city of Phlan to the untamed frontier of the Moonsea North. As they fight to drive back a crushing elemental incursion, the PCs will explore the wild steppes of The Ride, trek across the unforgiving terrain of the Tortured Lands, and brave the deadly elements of the Frozen Forest.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

This adventure requires all of the normal necessities of playing a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure, such as the *Player’s Handbook*[®]. As well, it is recommended that the Dungeon Master prepare himself with knowledge of the Moonsea region by reviewing pages 150–151 in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Guide*.

TREASURE PREPARATION

“Monument of the Ancients” makes use of the parcel system of treasure rewards described in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*[®]. The characters should accumulate eight parcels by the end of the adventure; more if you utilize optional encounters. You can use the list of parcels below, or you can create your own using the rules in Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*.

If you’re using the “wish list” suggestion in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, you can assign magic items based on those lists. Otherwise, select magic items from the *Player’s Handbook* rulebooks or the *Adventurer’s Vault*[™] supplements appropriate for your characters and the adventure.

TREASURE PARCELS

- Parcel A: _____, R1. Audience/Lord Protector
 Parcel B: _____, M1. Defend the Caravan
 Parcel C: *Ritual cube*, M2. Civil Defense
 Parcel D: _____, S1. All This Has Happened Before
 Parcel E: _____, M3. Lyceum of Rimefire
 Parcel F: _____, S2. Crucible of Chaos
 Parcel G: _____, M4. Anchor of Chaos
 Parcel H: _____, P1. Sealing the Portal

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, the following parcels can go in the spaces above. Rely on the wish lists your players gave you for half of the parcels.

- Parcel 1: Magic item, level 17
 Parcel 2: Magic item, level 16
 Parcel 3: Magic item, level 15
 Parcel 4: Magic item, level 14
 Parcel 5: 5,500 gp; 5 opal cowrie shells worth 100 gp each, with a ravenar gemstone worth 1,000 gp set in each.
 Parcel 6: 8,100 gp; an ornamental warhammer embossed with the symbol of Tyr (100 gp value), inset with eight Zendalure gemstones (1,000 gp each)
 Parcel 7: A chest carved of fine amber containing a ritual scroll inscribed with Shadowwalk and 1,000 “electrum marks” (5 gp value each) minted in Impiltur.
 Parcel 8: Horreb ritual cube, see page 61

ADVENTURE PACING

It’s important that the DM instill in the players a sense of urgency while working to save the Moonsea North from the invasion of elemental forces. In a wilderness trek, players who don’t feel the press of time may use their daily powers in the first encounter, then make camp for the night. Make it clear to them that advancing at such a measured pace may have dire story consequences.

If that isn’t enough to keep the characters moving and preserving their daily powers for the big moments, then extra encounters during their extended rests might be. Making camp and setting a watch doesn’t automatically end the day’s encounters. If players make a habit of expending their daily powers in the day’s first encounter, be sure to hit them with more unplanned encounters before they can complete an extended rest. Before long, they will learn the value in pacing themselves.

WELCOME TO PHLAN

A sea vessel is the most common method of conveyance for PCs journeying to Phlan.

If the PCs arrive in Phlan at the port, read:

Stepping down off the gangplank onto a wide pier, you take in the sights and smells of the legendary city of Phlan. The many and divergent styles of architecture before you bespeak a city destroyed and rebuilt multiple times over its storied history. Towering well above the neighboring structures loom the turrets and pennons of Valjevo Castle, home to the city’s ruling monarch Anivar Daoran, the Lord Protector.

Whispering a quick thanks to Valkur for a safe journey across the sea, you prepare to enter the city proper when you are approached by a smiling gentleman of middling years,

with the look of a lion about him despite his ornamental sword and fine attire.

“Behold the Jewel of the Moonsea, friend adventurers!” he begins with a great flourishing bow. “My name is Rolf, Seneschal to the Lord Protector, His Royal Majesty Anivar Daoran, and it is my most humble pleasure to welcome you the fair city of Phlan.”

ROLF

Rolf is a male human of middle age. He is 5’8” tall and has a wise face. He is the seneschal to the noble court of Phlan. Like the generations of family before him, Rolf is one of the most loyal citizens of the city. Rolf is a good source for the heroes when they need information of any kind: where to find places of interest in the city, where to gain common information, where to go when adventuring. The DM should take care, however, to ensure that Rolf is not overused as a means of easy knowledge or to bypass necessary investigation and discovery. He is a fail-safe should the PCs encounter trouble figuring out what to do.

TOUR OF THE CITY

Rolf explains to the characters that the Lord Protector is unavailable to meet with them at present. Instead, Lord Anivar requests the PCs join him for evening feast at Valjevo Castle.

In the meantime, Rolf is happy to escort the adventurers on a tour of the city, pointing out and answering questions about the city’s notable landmarks (see page 54). Learning the layout of Phlan now may prove useful to the characters in the future, when they will need to sneak back into the city’s

AUDIENCE WITH THE LORD PROTECTOR

That evening, the heroes are escorted to Valjevo Castle to dine with Anivar Daoran, the ruling monarch of Phlan.

Roleplaying Encounter: Audience with the Lord Protector, page 65.

CITY OF PHLAN

The city of Phlan stands as a testament to the stubbornness of the humans who populate the Moonsea Reaches. Despite the city’s current prosperity, the people of Phlan know all too well how quickly Beshaba can turn her fickle gaze upon the fortunate. The city has been ruined countless times over the centuries by war, invasions, and dragon strikes, only to be rebuilt each time. One need only dig in one’s own cellar to unearth artifacts of a prior age, mundane or otherwise.

Today the city is thriving. With almost 20,000 permanent residents, Phlan is by far the largest and most prosperous settlement on the northern shore of the Moonsea. It is a pivotal crossroads for trade in and out of the Moonsea North.

Gems, rare ore, and other precious treasures flow into the city daily from vassal mining communities in the north. Until very recently, even the thick-bearded nomads of the frigid plains—the so-called Barbarians of the Ride—traded freely in the markets of Phlan, leading caravans burdened with silky furs, heavy wools, and precious ivories of beasts long forgotten in lands further south.

The city’s oldest neighborhoods are built on Valjevo Isle, a large shoal swaddled by the Stojanow River delta. Fabled Valjevo Castle dominates the skyline and serves as a strong reminder of the city’s

resilience in the face of adversity. On the mainland, the burgeoning community has spread beyond the high walls of the Old City.

WHAT THE PCS KNOW

Between conversing with the seneschal and gossip picked up on the streets, the PCs learn quite a bit about the city of Phlan.

DC 25 Insight: Despite its outward appearance, there is something unsettling about the city. Despite the squalid living conditions of the refugees, very few speak out publicly. It could be that Rolf is here more to keep an eye on you than to roll out the welcome carpet.

DC 23 Perception: The citizens of Phlan are very deferential toward the city watch and officials. Though you witness no incidents of oppression or abuse, you can see that they tolerate their leaders more than respect them.

DC 18 History: Early in the last century, Phlan was ruled by a city council. That changed in the Year of the Blazing Hand (1380 DR) when Zhentarim Hate-master, Cvaal Daoran, dissolved the Council of Ten and established himself as Lord Protector of Phlan.

DC 25 Streewise: Rumor has it that Lord Caleb Randol of Kovel Mansion has commissioned the Vilhon Mercenary Corps to undermine Black Fist operations in the north. It’s an open secret that Lord Randol longs to see council rule restored in the city.

DC 20 Religion: Despite a prominent temple of Bane within the old city, the banite priests of Phlan keep a low profile, preferring not to evangelize openly. Word among religious circles says that this unorthodox branch of the faith is wholly divorced from the mainstream church, which is headquartered in Mulmaster.



PHLAN

Phlan is an ancient city-state situated at the mouth of the Stojanow River along the northern shore of the Moonsea. The city is famous for having been constantly rebuilt in the face of repeated attacks. Today, the city is enjoying a period of growth and prosperity, fueling bards to dub the port city “the jewel of the Moonsea.”

Population: 20,000, plus an additional 3,000 or so who work farms or live in small homesteads in the surrounding region. Most are humans and dwarves, although sizable populations of halflings also reside here.

Government: Anivar Daoran is monarch and Lord Protector of Phlan as well as governor of the vassal communities of Whitehorn, Verdigris, and Ilinvur. Anivar is a weak sovereign, however, leaving much of the daily governance of the city to a confederation of merchant families, including houses Sokol, Jannarsk, Cadorna, and Bivaunt.

Defenses: The Black Watch, a militia of 900 trained fighters, is the city’s primary police force. The Watch

is one branch of a greater organization, the Knights of the Black Fist. The Knights report directly to the Lord Protector and deal primarily with external threats to the city. Phlan’s harbor shelters a small flotilla of warships to discourage pirate activity in the region.

Inns and Taverns: Laughing Goblin (inn), Cracked Crown (inn), Bitter Blade (inn), Nat Wyler’s Bell (tavern). The Velvet Doublet (festhall) caters to wealthy patrons with exotic appetites.

Supplies: Brice Vang (armorer), Randolph Tzintin (leather clothier), Vondor Thond (carpenter), Alero the Smithy (weaponsmith). The Red Plumes mercenary company maintains a barracks and training hall in the city.

Temples: Lyceum of the Black Lord (temple of Bane). Smaller shrines venerate Umberlee, Auril, and Amaunator. Worshipers of Shar are actively persecuted within the city.

Stojanow Gate

Bard’s tales claim that fire giants constructed Stojanow Gate in tribute to the warrior kings of old. Older, less fanciful accounts point to ancient dwarven craftsmanship. Whatever the truth is behind the structure, its architecture is awesome to behold, with likenesses of civic heroes, dragons, and even gods adorning its walls.

The vaulted monument stands nearly 60 feet high, with 30-foot-thick walls stretching over 100 feet between the two channels of the Stojanow River. The vaulted arch is secured by two sets of massive, iron-bound doors which seal the gate. Both are left open except in times of war.

Lyceum of the Black Lord

The largest and most prominent temple in Phlan is the Lyceum of the Black Lord, which serves the faithful of Bane. Unlike the tyrannical and caustic dogma espoused by the mainstream Church of Bane headquartered in Mulmaster, the priests of Phlan preach a moderate doctrine of meticulous self-discipline and simple vassalage to the city’s lords.

Valhingen Graveyard

This large cemetery stands outside of the city proper, along the western spur of the Stojanow River delta. Iron gates along the west and east walls permit entry to what appears at first glance to be a sprawling city park. Thick stands of blueleafs wave their brightly colored branches above tangles of witchgrass that grow tall over gravestones. Violet bougainvillea and other thorny vines grow unimpeded over the handful of mausoleums interspersed here and there within the confines of Valhingen’s high walls.

NOTABLE LANDMARKS

Some of these locations include minor quests that the PCs can acquire. Use these as extra adventure hooks, rewards for befriending townsfolk, or ways to expand the story of your campaign.

Valjevo Castle

Citizens speak of Valjevo Castle with great civic pride. Standing several stories tall, with majestic marble and granite walls and awe-inspiring turrets soaring one-hundred feet or more, Valjevo Castle is unquestionably the largest and most palatial edifice in all the Moonsea.

Milsor the Valjevo commissioned the palace after reestablishing the city in the Year of the Lost Lance (712 DR). Construction on the palace was completed in the Year of the Jovial Mage (730 DR), during the final year of his reign. Despite many misfortunes befalling the city over the intervening centuries, Valjevo Castle has remained standing, an enduring symbol of Phlan’s resilience in the face of adversity.

Today the palace is home to the city’s ruling dynasty, House Daoran. Anivar Daoran, Lord Protector of Phlan, rules from the Cinnabar Throne in the castle’s Great Hall.

Despite rumors of past incidents with undead, no unholy pall hangs over Valhigen Graveyard today. Acolytes in service to Kelemvor tend the grounds and perform interment services for the dead.

One of the more prominent crypts serves as the eternal resting place for the legendary paladin Miltiades. Carved upon the granite doorway to the tomb are the scales of justice, the archaic symbol of Tyr.

Nobles' Quarter

The Nobles' Quarter is far cleaner than other parts of the city. Attendants can be seen at all hours of the day sweeping and maintaining the smooth cobblestone roads. The most storied and opulent of the district's fine homes is assuredly Kovel Mansion. This architectural beauty was constructed centuries ago of rare, fossilized "Rowewood," ensuring the structure's longevity. The estate is guarded at all hours by well-dressed and well-armed sentinels patrolling the grounds.

Podol Plaza

This large, open-air market draws large crowds with its plentiful selection of goods from the length and breadth of Faerûn. Here young children sell broadsheets of thin parchment with the news of the day for a copper each.

Scholar's Square

This area of town is the center of learning in Phlan. Mantor's Library is the most significant landmark, though trade schools, wizard academies, sage houses, and other structures of learning can be found here.

Kuto's Well

Kuto's Well, as its name implies, is a nondescript well drawing water from an ancient cistern beneath the city. If someone climbs down the well, a successful passive Perception check (DC 29) reveals a secret wall about halfway down the shaft. This is one of many concealed entrances to the notorious catacombs of Phlan, peopled with cutthroats, drug addicts, and other dregs of society.

Thorn Island

A sandy, wind-buffed islet resting offshore in the Bay of Phlan, Thorn Island serves as a natural breakwater against the ravages of the Moonsea. The isle's most prominent feature is Sokol Keep, fortress and headquarters of the formidable Sokol merchant house. House Sokol's commercial holdings throughout the city are second only to the ruling Daoran's. A beacon atop the highest tower of the Keep serves as a lighthouse for ships entering the Bay of Phlan. A ferry to the city's Dock District runs every hour from a small quay on the isle's eastern extent.

Cracked Crown

If the characters request lodging, Rolf arranges for them to receive accommodations at the city's finest inn, the Cracked Crown, at no cost.

Because this is a high-end establishment in a quiet section of town, the Watch generally responds quickly and in force to disturbances there. However, because the inn attracts a wealthy clientele, it also makes a tempting target for cutpurses and second-story men.

KNIGHTS OF THE BLACK FIST

Formed a century past, the Brothers of the Black Fist (as they were known at that time) were a tyrannical order of blackguards affiliated with the Church of Xvim. In the Year of Risen Elfkin (1375 DR), Zhentilar forces under the command of Hatemaster Cvaal Daoran marched upon Phlan and seized the city. Thereafter the order became the *de facto* armed forces of the city. The citizens of Phlan warmed considerably toward the order after the "Knights" aided Phlan in repelling a Netherese invasion.

Today the order is only loosely affiliated with the Church of Bane. It pays a nominal tribute annually to church leadership in Mulmaster.

JOURNEY NORTH

In order to speed the heroes' journey north, the Lord Protector offers them the use of his prized hippogriff steeds. Each character gains a Vanguard Hippogriff Dreadmount as a mount for the duration of the adventure (or until the creature is slain).



Vanguard Hippogriff Dreadmount Level 10 Soldier
Large natural beast (mount)

Initiative +12 **Senses Perception** +12
HP 109; **Bloodied** 54
AC 26; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Speed 4, fly 10, overland flight 12

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.

‡ **Wing Slam** (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent enemy shifts or moves into a nonadjacent square; at-will)
+13 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is knocked prone. The dreadmount cannot use this power while flying.

Sturdy Mount (while mounted by a friendly rider of 10th level or higher; at-will) ◆ **Mount**
When an attack forces the dreadmount to move, it moves 1 less square than the attack specifies. When an attack would knock it or its rider prone, the dreadmount can roll an immediate saving throw to prevent it or its rider from falling prone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 24 (+12) **Dex** 20 (+10) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 5 (+2) **Cha** 9 (+4)

ECTOR BRAHMS

This stoic, coarse individual is a high-ranking officer in the Knights of the Black Fist. As a longtime advisor to the Lord Protector, Ector spends most of his days in Castle Valjevo issuing orders and planning troop movements. Though he would never let on, he is eager to escape the doldrums of castle life to join the heroes on their expedition north.

Ector has been ordered to join the PCs on their flight to Castle Vathar, but if they would have him, the Knight Commander would gladly remain with them throughout the duration of the adventure. Ector makes a great supporting character for a party missing a leader (or needing an extra healer). See *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* for rules on supporting characters.

Otherwise, he will stay behind upon reaching Castle Vathar to command the evacuation effort in the north.

Ector Brahms, Knight Commander Level 13 Leader
Medium natural humanoid, human

Initiative +11 **Senses Perception** +9
HP 82; **Bloodied** 41; **Healing Surges** 13
AC 28; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27
Speed 5

⊕ **Halberd** (standard; at-will) ◆ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 10 damage, and Ector and one ally adjacent to him gain a +1 power bonus to AC until the end of Ector's next turn.

‡ **Warlord's Favor** (standard, encounter) ◆ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and one ally within 5 squares gains a +3 power bonus to attack rolls against the target until the end of your next turn.

‡ **Bolstering Blow** (standard, encounter) ◆ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 3d10 + 10 damage, and one ally within 5 squares gains 10 temporary hit points.

Inspiring Word (minor; twice per encounter) ◆ **Healing**
Close burst 5; Ector or one ally in the burst spends a healing surge.

Mounted Combat
Ector is considered to have the mounted combat feat for purposes of commanding his hippogriff mount.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +15, Intimidate +11
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 10 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 10 (+6) **Int** 14 (+8) **Cha** 11 (+6)

Equipment halberd, scale armor

STEER CLEAR OF THE FOREST

Mounted on hippogriffs, it takes the party roughly 11 hours to cover the 65 miles between Phlan and Castle Vathar. Observant PCs (Perception DC 15) note that their flight path never crosses over the Quivering Forest. Every two-and-a-half hours the Knight Commander signals for the party to land, to give the mounts a rest and allow the PCs to stretch their legs. Despite the many threats known to stalk the western frontier of Thar, the Knight Commander seems more preoccupied with the shadowy forest to the west.

If the heroes ask the Knight Commander about the Quivering Forest, read Journal Entry 19, page 81.

If the PCs intentionally enter the woods, the DM may consider the following optional encounter:
Fey Sentinels (Level 14 Optional Encounter, XP 5,000): Many denizens of the Feywild are found throughout this ancient wood.

- ◆ 1 centaur mystic (level 13 controller, MM2)
- ◆ 2 centaur ravagers (level 12 brute, MM2)
- ◆ 2 centaur hunters (level 12 artillery, MM2)

OVERLAND TRAVEL

Over the course of the adventure, the characters will be expected to cover vast distances with haste. Players and DMs may wish to review the Exploration section of Chapter 8 in the *Player's Handbook*, page 260.

Rituals such as Shadow Walk (Level 12 Ritual, *Player's Handbook*, page 312) and Traveler's Chant (Level 1 Ritual, *Player's Handbook 2*, page 217) can certainly come in handy in situations like this.

Travel Distances, Overland

| Point A | Point B | Distance |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Phlan | Zhentil Keep | 70 miles |
| Phlan | Melvaunt | 55 miles |
| Phlan | Castle Vathar | 65 miles |
| Castle Vathar | Ilinvur | 100 miles |
| Castle Vathar | Verdigris | 50 miles |
| Verdigris | Whitehorn | 110 miles |
| Ilinvur | Flindyke | 120 miles |
| Flindyke | Alaphaer Run | 175 miles |
| Alaphaer Run | Monument of the Ancients | 85 miles |

CASTLE VATHAR

This massive, ancient structure is the summation of centuries of upgrades, rebuilds, and improvements. Being one of the more magnificent fortresses in the region, Castle Vathar has been built to last the test of time. When a massive blizzard pelted the region in 1409 DR, Castle Vathar was able to house most of the refugees from the surrounding regions and keep them in good care until the weather cleared. Castle Vathar has had several famous units garrisoned within its walls over its lifetime, including the Knights of the North, a famed adventuring company from the past century.

When the PCs arrive at Castle Vathar, read:

Just as Castle Vathar's dusky walls come into view, the distinctive metallic roar of a glaur horn echoes upon the canyon walls. Scant moments later, a more distant horn repeats the clarion call.

The Knight-Commander's otherwise cheerful visage suddenly turns hard and purposeful. Lowering his helm, he signals toward the looming citadel before urging his hippogriff to accelerate. Your own well-trained mount lurches into action, climbing swiftly in pursuit.

As the PCs approach the fortress, it is clear that a distressed caravan is careening toward the safety of the fortress. What is also clear is that a force is chasing closely after them on horseback, weapons drawn, giving the caravan little chance at survival.

Any character that successfully makes a DC 25 Arcana (or DC 30 History) check can identify the horseback marauders as the Vaegould tribe of the Barbarians of the Ride.

The PCs are likely to rush into the fray once they realize the caravan of refugees is trying to reach the safety of Castle Vathar. Time is not on their side, and players should feel urgency if they're going to succeed. When they engage, the heroes are free to use the hippogriffs provided but do not retain any of the mount's special abilities unless they possess the Mounted Combat feat (*Player's Handbook*, page 199).

Tactical Encounter: Defend the Caravan, page 67.

AFTERMATH

Once the barbarian threat is averted, the heroes and any surviving caravan passengers are escorted into Castle Vathar to meet with the castellan.

The characters are free to fulfill the bounty put forth by the Lord Protector; however, it may affect their alignment to do so. The DM is encouraged to explain the horrific nature of such an act and the implications thereof.



BEST OF A BAD SITUATION

At this point, the PCs are fully aware of the horrors that have befallen the mining community of Ilinvur. With no time to spare, the PCs should prepare for their journey to the remote outpost.

Despite the pleas of the merchants, the PCs and their weary mounts must wait out the evening in Castle Vathar. In the morning the PCs fly out, hoping they are not too late.

ILINVUR

Ilinvur is a small mining outpost far to the north beyond The Ride. The community is managed by two leaders, one for the defense of the outpost and the other for administrative duties. Though small, a lot of exotic traders can be found here, as it is their last major stopping point before heading off into the truly unknown.

INCURSION OF ELEMENTAL EVIL

As the heroes approach Ilinvur, they can see smoke still rising from the ruins of several buildings. There is no sign of life, and all appears quiet save for the cold wind—a common trait of the region. Upon closer inspection, they can see several elementals rummaging through the area.

Tactical Encounter: Civil Defense, page 69.

ILINVUR

This lonely mining outpost under the protection of Phlan serves as a refuge for miners, prospectors, and folk too foolhardy to live elsewhere. In recent years, Ilinvur has enjoyed increasing trade with neighboring Vaasa, though most folk here still distrust the Warlock Knights of that land.

Population: Approximately 250. Ilinvur consists mostly of humans but also contains several dozen dwarves and even a family of gnomes.

Government: Diarchy. Ilinvur has two leaders with equal power who manage the defense and administration of this mining community.

Defenses: There is no formal military, but each member of the community is expected to form a temporary militia when required for the town's defense.

Inns and Taverns: There is only a single inn within this community, and it also serves as the only tavern. The Pick is a homely establishment that most visitors enter at some point in their stay.

Supplies: The best shops and stalls are located in the town's square. Though originally created for temporary purposes, this location has become popular for merchants and adventurers who are trying to hock their recently-acquired treasures.

Temples: Though no large temples exist in this frontier settlement, shrines exist to Bane, Gond, Tempus, and Selûne.

AFTERMATH

Horselords on the outskirts of town peacefully reveal themselves as the Varm, a tribe more aligned with the balance of the land. They rebuke the beliefs of the Vae-gould and urge the PCs to challenge Maram's return.

The PCs are offered the Major Quest—Seal the Anchor of Chaos: 4,000 XP.

To aid the heroes in their task, the shaman presents them with a Horreb ritual cube (page 61). She explains that this item has been handed down through generations of shamans in her tribe. She doesn't understand its secrets, but she knows that it was created as a safeguard against the time when Maram would try to reenter the world. Because that

event seems imminent, she implores them to unlock its secret magic, that they might use its power to save these lands.

An insightful player may suggest that the characters return to Phlan to report this news to the Lord Protector. Afterward, they might take the ritual cube to Mantor's Library to research the ancient relic.

On their return trip to Phlan, the PCs notice an increasing number of elemental patrols in the region. DMs may wish to introduce an optional wilderness encounter along the PCs' path.

DARK DAYS FOR PHLAN

With the shaman's words weighing heavily on their thoughts, the characters hurry back to Phlan to report their findings to the Lord Protector. Arriving at the city, the PCs are aghast to learn the city has been completely locked down. By order of the Lord Protector, the city gates have been sealed, and no one (the heroes included) is admitted into the old city. Worse still are squads of Black Fist Knights patrolling the boulevards of the new city, rounding up refugee squatters and harassing honest citizens alike.

GAINING ENTRANCE

The heroes should realize that they have little hope of unlocking the secrets of the puzzle cube without access to Mantor's Library, which sits securely behind the high walls of the old city.

- ◆ Brute force is one tactic the characters might consider, but no matter how powerful they believe themselves to be, they'll not last long against the marshaled forces of the Knights of the Black Fist.
- ◆ Bribing the Black Watch guardsmen defending the gates is the easiest way to get past. This is not a cheap proposition, however, requiring a total bribe of 1,000 gp (100 gp to each guardsman).

- ◆ Sneaking into the city via the catacombs is a cheaper, though less elegant, solution. The entrances to the catacombs include a sewer grate under the Bay of Phlan, a crypt within Valhingen Graveyard, and a hidden passage leading from the Velvet Doublet festhall. Once inside, the PCs can exit the catacombs at Kuto's Well.

UNLOCKING THE PAST

Once inside the old city, the PCs are free to seek out Mantor's Library in Scholars Square. There, they can further research Maram of the Great Spear and learn more of the alliance that thwarted the primordial centuries past.

OPANRAEL THE SAGE

As Master Librarian and Head Curator at Mantor's Library, Opanrael the Sage is knowledgeable about a great many subjects, though he is especially astute in the field of world religion and its history.

When the characters inquire about the Horreb ritual cube at Mantor's Library, read:

Recognizing at once the significance of the ancient relic, the Master Librarian shuffles you quickly into his private study.

"What you hold there, my friends," the old sage begins, his typically cold eyes now alight with keen interest, "is a Horreb cube. Only a dozen, more or less, are thought to have survived the fall of that once great civilization."

Opanrael goes on to describe the basic purpose of the artifact as an implement for storing and invoking rituals.

BARBARIANS OF THE RIDE

Also known as the Horse Nomads of the Golden Steppes, these primitive plains dwellers consist of many independent tribes, each with distinct customs and governed by feuding war-chieftains.

The Vaegould: One of the more aggressive tribes of the Ride, Vaegould tradition demands young warriors perform the "ritual of bloodfire" before they are accepted as full members of the tribe. The bloodthirsty "gods" worshiped by the Vaegould are in fact elemental princes or aspects of ancient primordials. The imminent return of Maram of the Great Spear has brought this tribe out of the remote wilderness to harry the more civilized settlements of The Ride under the protection of Phlan.

The Varm: Unlike the Vaegould, the Varm practice totem magic and venerate primal spirits. They are also a more contemplative tribe, eschewing war for peaceful coexistence with their neighbors. Centuries ago, the Varm joined in the alliance to drive Maram of the Great Spear from these lands.

When the heroes mention Maram of the Great Spear from the account of the Varm shaman, read:

“Maram of the Great Spear!” the startled Opanrael exclaims in a high whisper.

“Though that name is unknown to most living today, in centuries past its very mention would bring about an involuntary shudder and a momentary vision of unconscionable acts of violence and brutality. Maram is one of the Seven Lost Gods—a misnomer, of course, as he was in fact no god at all, but a prince of elemental evil, a primordial scion of the Elemental Chaos. The primitive tribes of the Moonsea North, human or otherwise, venerated the Lost Seven. In exchange, their debased sorcerers and shamans were granted power of raw elemental fury.

“In the end, Maram was driven back to the Inner Planes, locked away from the mortal world by a powerful Imaskari ritual known as Divine Barrier.”

Further research on Maram (History DC 20) reveals more clues. Read Journal Entry 2 and Entry 5, page 79.

SOLVING THE PUZZLE CUBE

With the fable recounted by the Varm shaman and the additional clues provided by Opanrael the Sage, the PCs can scour the city for clues on the purpose and operation of the Horreb ritual cube. Only by unlocking its mysteries will the characters learn that the artifact they are carrying offers a clue to the crafting of a powerful ritual used to bind elemental creatures.

Skill Challenge: All This Has Happened Before..., page 28.

At the conclusion of the skill challenge, read:

As you put the correct pieces into place, you notice one side of the cube beginning to glow. While the remaining five sides remain dormant and cold, this one grows warm and luminous.

Horreb Ritual Cube Level 18

Arcane glyphs of unknown origin are etched upon the face of this intricate, mechanical puzzle cube.

Wondrous Item priceless

Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to saving throws.

Power (Consumable): Standard Action. By rotating the cube's faces into the proper arrangement and making a DC 23 Arcana or Religion skill check, the holder of the cube triggers the ritual stored in it during the cube's creation.

HORREB RITUAL CUBE

A Horreb ritual cube can have a ritual stored inside it during the cube's creation, and that ritual can later be released as a standard action. Physically, the cube is approximately 3 inches on a side, composed of smaller, interlocking cubes about 1 inch on a side (thus, each of the cube's six faces is composed of nine smaller cubes in a three-by-three square, showing 54 faces in total). Each face is marked with a unique glyph. The sides can be rotated individually in such a way that the smaller cubes are maneuvered across it, and the entire cube can be arranged in a bewildering number of ways. This mechanism serves as a lock to prevent anyone from releasing the ritual prematurely or unwisely. The ritual can be released only when the cube's faces are placed in a specific arrangement.

This particular cube contains a ritual that was created for one purpose only: to keep Maram of the Great Spear locked in his prison. It is a failsafe against anything ever allowing him to re-enter the mortal realm. With the faces in the proper arrangement, the characters holding the cube can trigger the stored ritual as a standard action with a DC 23 Arcana or Religion skill check and reseal the gates of Maram's prison (see page 71).

FROM BAD TO WORSE

With the ritual sequence nearly complete, one final query remains unanswered: Where stands the Monument of the Ancients? To answer that question, the sage Opanrael suggests one of two courses of action: Speak with the reclusive gnomes of Forharn in their hidden city lying somewhere in the lightless depths under the volcano Kossuth's Ire, or brave the wilds of the Tortured Lands to attempt parlay with the demonic gnolls of Frozen Flindyke. Both factions once comprised the alliance to thwart Maram, and there exists the possibility that someone among them knows the location of the ancient monument.

Once again, the heroes gear up for another grueling journey into the Moonsea North.

KOSSUTH'S IRE

Independent of the characters' wishes, fate ultimately intervenes and takes the decision away from them.

As the PCs cross into The Ride on their journey north, read:

Despite having been gone from The Ride for less than a tenday, the influence of malign elemental forces at play in the region is unmistakable. Where only days before had stretched mile upon mile of rolling fields of golden savannah, now lays a barren wasteland of dry scrub and cracked earth.

Aloft on your hippogriffs, you see smoke rising from the caldera of Kossuth's Ire a mere 10 miles away. As you watch, the mountain erupts in a massive plume of lava and ash. The shockwave nearly tumbles you from your saddle, and the smoke and ash roiling past chokes your lungs and burns your eyes and exposed flesh.

The hippogriffs wheel and plunge away from the blast, reaching relative safety beneath the cloud. The city of Forharn, hidden beneath the volcano, is hopelessly cut off from you, if it survived at all.

Being less than an hour's flight north of Castle Vathar at the time of the eruption, the PCs may seek refuge at the castle before deciding on their next course of action. With the hidden city of Forharn either obliterated by the eruption or cut off by lava-filled tunnels, the characters have no other choice than to seek council from the gnolls of Frozen Flindyke.

THE TORTURED LANDS

The Tortured Lands are largely unknown to the civilized folk of the Realms. The western reaches are rocky and parched, with deep canyons gouging the landscape. In the east, the earth turns brittle and cold, dunes of frozen sand rising in weird, broken shapes. The region's unforgiving landscape and severe temperature swings make the Tortured Lands uninhabitable to most.

Heroes researching the region in Mantor's Library come across a curious passage. Read Journal Entry 3, page 79.

FROZEN FLINDYKE

With their hope attached to a tribe of bloodthirsty gnolls, the PCs need to tread with care as they enter the ancient gnolls' den.

As the characters near the Lyceum of Rimefire, read:

A dull roar of chanting can be heard echoing throughout the deep river chasm. Though the words are foreign and muffled, it's clear that a prayer is being recited.

Tactical Encounter: Lyceum of Rimefire, page 73.

With map in hand, the PCs depart Frozen Flindyke heading north, thus beginning the final leg of their journey toward the Monument of the Ancients.

THE FATE OF FORHARN

The gnome city is far below the volcano proper and is not damaged by the eruption, although it is cut off from the surface—temporarily. The Hammers of Flandal, a ruling council composed of senior miners, master smiths, and the Arandhammer, will likely wait for several months before sending expeditions beyond their warded catacombs to assess the extent of the damage.

Also surviving the eruption, a fact that would greatly alarm the human miners of Whitehorn, are two dragons raised from birth by the city's priests—the adult red Rauklarnemis and the elder blue Trakaulorr.

CRUCIBLE OF CHAOS

The further north one travels from Flindyke, the more rugged, perilous, and inhospitable the wilderness becomes. Even with mounts and/or rituals to speed their way, the cross-country trek toward the Monument of the Ancients will be long and perilous. While the heroes are braving the elements, run them through the Crucible of Chaos skill challenge.

Skill Challenge: Crucible of Chaos, page 75.

WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

You may increase the difficulty of the heroes' wilderness trek by introducing the following optional encounters along their path.

Archon Patrol (Level 14 Optional Encounter, XP 5,200)

The foothills of the Abbey Mountains are swarming with archons and their elemental servitors.

- ◆ 3 ice archon hailcourges (level 16 artillery, MM)
- ◆ 1 chillfire destroyer (level 14 brute, page 70)

Avalanche! (Level 14 Optional Encounter, XP 5,000)

Crossing the unforgiving tundra of the Moonsea North, the characters disturb a slumbering frost titan.

- ◆ 1 frost titan avalanche (level 14 solo brute, DRAGON #377*)

**D&D Insider subscribers may view the full statistics for this creature in the D&D Compendium or D&D Monster Builder.*



TIMELINE

The following timeline provides a rough guide for the PCs' journey. It assumes that the heroes are on horseback. If they tarry or take shortcuts, adjust the timetable accordingly.

Day 1: Following the Remorhaz Ride

The icy path leading north from Frozen Flindyke barely qualifies as a road. A few gnoll caravans struggle through these icy lands, hauling 40 to 60 ore-laden sledges from Ghaethlauntar to Flindyke. Few humans have seen Mount Ghaethlauntar and lived. Then again, few today want to see it.

Day 2: Into the Open Tundra

As the Remorhaz Ride curves north along the Great Glacier, the heroes need to abandon the road for the open tundra. Aiming for the distant foothills north of Turnback Mountain, the PCs feel alone and exposed on the chaos-marked expanse.

In centuries past, the open tundra between Flindyke and the Frozen Forest was territory claimed by the gnolls. In the decades following the Spellplague, a new menace began encroaching on the gnolls' ancestral lands—marauding remorhaz, themselves driven from the Great Glacier by even greater threats.

Days 3-5: The Abbey Mountains

Passing among the northern foothills of the Abbey Mountains, known locally as the “mammothbacks,” the characters now set their course south, on line with Selûne’s Crest, the highest peak of the range.

Millennia ago, the ancient Netherese worshipers of Selûne constructed the Abbey of the Moon upon its grand alpine summit. Today only a few stone markers and toppled columns remain from this once magnificent edifice.

Days 6-7: Navigating the Alaphaer Run

Finally, the heroes come upon the Alaphaer Run, a swift torrent flowing under 10 inches or more of packed ice. The river is free from pollutants and safe to drink. But as the water is impossibly cold, anyone breaking through the ice suffers 15 cold damage per turn, and 15 ongoing cold damage (save ends) after climbing out of the water. Blessed by Auril herself (Alaphaer being an archaic name for the Frostmaiden), the river actually travels in and out of her Astral realm in the Deep Wilds as it winds north toward the Frozen Forest.

Day 8: The Frozen Forest

The Frozen Forest is a foreboding, boreal woodland; its thick conifers are sheathed in glittering ice. Malevolent fey creatures abound in this arctic hinterland swathed in perpetual twilight.

After nearly a tenday of trekking through impossible conditions, the PCs break through the dense trees into a wide clearing. Dominating the glade before them rises a colossal step pyramid—the Monument of the Ancients.

MONUMENT OF THE ANCIENTS

The Monument of the Ancients is a magnificent sight. Constructed entirely of stone and metals never before seen and exotic even to the Elemental Chaos, this broad ziggurat extends high above the ancient, frozen trees of the region, hinting at an ancient society indigenous to the area.

ANCHOR OF CHAOS

Deep within the Monument of the Ancients lies an ancient antechamber that contains another, smaller (but still massive) pyramid. Each of its four sides has ornate, portal-like structures that contain the properties of the four major elements; fire, water, air, and earth. Centered on the very top resides a horrific creature seemingly anchored to the earth, orchestrating some form of corruption as if it were a symphony for its masters to witness.

When the characters arrive, read:

Seemingly hidden from the world beyond, you find a massive ziggurat of mystifying glory deep within the frozen trees of this unexplored land. Your stomach tightens from the sharp smell of sulfur in the air. Moments later, your vision spins as you are summoned elsewhere...

Tactical Encounter: Anchor of Chaos, page 76.

CONCLUSION

After the defeat of the Herald of Maram and the sealing off of the planar fissure to the Elemental Chaos, the PCs still face a long and arduous trek back to Phlan. Even by the most direct route it’s nearly 200 miles to Ilinvur and another hundred back to Phlan.



Pyricus, the Herald of Maram

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Defeating Pyricus ends the threat to the Moonsea North for now. Of course, insightful characters know that Maram’s designs on the region are far from finished. Proactive adventurers may propose taking the fight to Maram. With the Horreb ritual cube in their possession, the heroes can reopen the planar fissure any time they please, allowing passage into the Elemental Chaos.

RI: AUDIENCE WITH THE LORD PROTECTOR

Roleplaying Encounter

The characters are not granted an audience with the Lord Protector immediately upon their arrival. Lord Daoran has asked for the heroes to join him at supper later that evening.

Anivar is a paranoid ruler. In the hours before supper, he sends his spies and informants to collect information on the heroes, gauging where their loyalties lie and ascertaining any threat they may present to the Lord Protector himself.

As the time for the dinner engagement draws near, the PCs are escorted by Rolf to Valjevo Castle with a retinue of black-armored knights following in step.

As the characters enter the grand dining hall of Valjevo Castle, read:

The dining hall stretches on for what seems like hundreds of feet. The centerpiece of the chamber is the opulent dining table itself, crafted of rare and precious Morcant Burl, a purple-hued hardwood which grows only in the nearby Quivering Forest. As you take your seats, ready to enjoy a hearty banquet of gourmet cuisine, the chamberlain announces the arrival of the Lord Protector, Anivar Daoran.

ANIVAR DAORAN

Unlike the warrior-kings who sat on the Cinnabar Throne before him, Anivar Daoran is ill-suited to rule. He is a far cry from his illustrious grandfather, Cvaal Daoran, who single handedly slew a shade prince during the Shadowbane War of 1383 DR. Anivar is a dainty, pampered, cowardly noble with a bare modicum of wit and intelligence.

Privately, Anivar despises the responsibilities of rule and cares little for his subjects. His call for heroes was a political maneuver to satiate the rabble. If the adventurers die in the north, so much the better. He will use the heroes' failure as an excuse to consolidate power and to rid his city of refugees by conscripting them and throwing them at the barbarians en masse.

DEVELOPMENTS

In addition to the Lord Protector and his personal guard, the characters are joined by Knight Commander Ector Brahms of the Knights of the Black Fist, Opanrael the Sage of Mantor's Library, and the Lord's Seneschal Rolf.

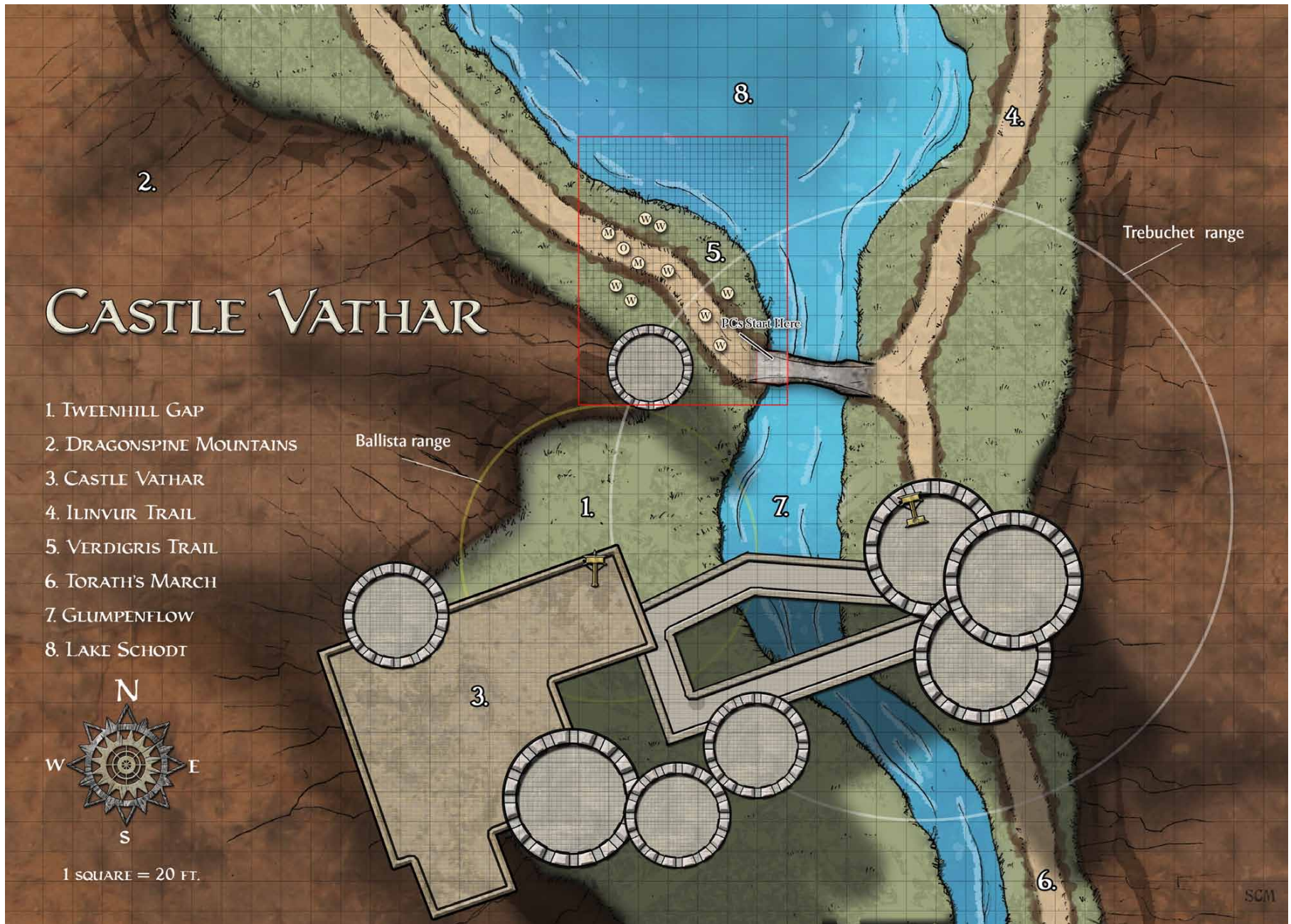
As the PCs dine, they may converse freely with the Lord Protector or any of his guests. For his part, Anivar is interested in only one outcome: soliciting the agreement of the PCs to thwart the barbarian incursions in the north.

Once dinner is concluded and the characters have given their oath, they are escorted out of the castle and back to their suites at the Cracked Crown. They are asked by the Knight Commander to report to the hippogriff aerie atop Castle Atuke (Location U on the Phlan city map) in the hour before dawn for their long flight to the north.

When the heroes are ready to depart for the evening, read:

Rising from the table, the Lord Protector glares at you with barely contained rage etched on his features. Slamming his fist upon the dinner table he calls out, "The heathen barbarians dare attack our holdings in the north, and for that I would see them driven from completely from The Ride. Bring swift justice to our enemies, Knight Commander, for they'll surely offer none in return. Return to Phlan triumphant and present to me the heads of their chieftains. This I demand!"

The characters are offered the Major Quest—Bring Me Their Heads. Reward: 4,000 XP.



CASTLE VATHAR

- 1. TWEENHILL GAP
- 2. DRAGONSPINE MOUNTAINS
- 3. CASTLE VATHAR
- 4. ILINVIR TRAIL
- 5. VERDIGRIS TRAIL
- 6. TORATH'S MARCH
- 7. GLUMPENFLOW
- 8. LAKE SCHODT



1 SQUARE = 20 FT.

MI: DEFEND THE CARAVAN

Encounter Level 14 (5,200 XP)

SETUP

Oshikam (O)

2 Vaegould marauders (M)

8 Vaegould warriors (W)

This encounter takes place before the walls of Castle Vathar in rugged wilderness north of Phlan. As the PCs arrive at the citadel, they spot a caravan in the distance attempting a desperate dash toward the safety of Vathar. In pursuit of the beleaguered merchants is a raiding party of horse nomads.

When the heroes reach Castle Vathar, read:

You arrive above the castle walls just as the evening sun descends behind the craggy peaks of the Dragonspine Mountains. Looking north beyond the citadel, your eyes are drawn to a great cloud of dust, the haze stirred up by the hooves of a barbarian raiding party moving fast down Verdigris Trail. Its quarry is a column of wagons desperately racing for the protection of Castle Vathar.

When Warlord Oshikam is first attacked, read:

You see a human figure that appears afflicted by some sort of elemental infusion. Streaks of vivid hues surge through his veins, giving an eerie glow. He is armed with a longspear that bears many trophies of battle—scalps, medallions, and other emblems taken from foes. He shakes the weapon at you, roaring “I am Oshikam, slayer of a hundred men! The sacred tokens of my spear grant me power! You cannot slay me!” Then he spurs his mount and thunders toward you.

TACTICS

The Barbarians of the Ride are no fools. The raiding party knows the defenses of the fortress are too strong for a straightforward assault. Their intent was to harass the caravan briefly, then feign a panicked retreat in the hope of drawing the castle defenders into pursuit. Once the pursuers moved beyond view from the castle, they would be waylaid by a reserve force waiting just north of Lake Schodt. The arrival of the PCs is likely to throw that plan out the window.

Warlord Oshikam still tries to move the battle away from the castle if only to stay beyond the range of the trebuchets. If the characters follow, he leads them as far away as possible. In any event, his supporting cavalry arrives when the warlord becomes bloodied.

MOUNTED COMBAT

This is a great opportunity to give your players experience with mounted combat and to reward those players who took the Mounted Combat feat. If the PCs are having difficulty with this encounter, let them realize (with an Insight skill check) that a barbarian opponent becomes less effective if knocked off of his horse or if the horse is slain. Vaegould Marauders are experienced riders with bonuses against being dismounted, but this could nevertheless be a powerful tactic to use against them.

While the characters are engaged in melee, the Horselord Marauders use ranged attacks while remaining mobile. They pick out the weakest of their opponents and concentrate their attacks against them. The Horselord Warriors always protect their chieftain. If he is killed in the fight, some try to recover his longspear and flee with it while others cover their retreat.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Trebuchet: A weapon crew on the castle walls aids the characters by firing massive stones at the horse nomads with a large trebuchet.

| Trebuchet and Crew | Level 6 Artillery |
|--|----------------------|
| Large natural humanoid | XP 250 |
| Initiative +8 | Senses Perception +8 |
| HP 50; Bloodied 25 | |
| AC 23; Fortitude 24, Reflex 17, Will 20 | |
| Speed 0 | |
| ☠ Launched Stone (standard; recharge ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) | |
| Area burst 1 within 40 (minimum range 10); +15 vs. AC; 4d6 damage. | |

Illumination: Twilight (dim light).

Glumpenflow: The river is 5 feet deep and is difficult terrain. Characters in the water gain cover except against attacks from submerged enemies. Fighting in the water imposes a -2 penalty to attack rolls except with spears and crossbows.

Lake Schodt: Beyond the shallow shoreline, the water varies from 10 to 15 feet deep. Creatures in deep water gain cover except against attacks from submerged enemies. Fighting in the water imposes a -2 penalty to attack rolls except with spears and crossbows, and powers that have the fire keyword take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

DEVELOPMENTS

If characters don't go to the defense of the caravan by immediately attacking the nomads, then the caravan is overrun and everyone in it is massacred within sight of the castle walls. There will be no survivors to warn of attacks on Ilinvur, and the heroes might arrive too late to save the village.

| Oshikam (O) | | Level 15 Elite Soldier (Leader) | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Medium natural humanoid, human | | XP 2,400 | |
| Initiative +13 | | Senses Perception +9 | |
| HP 290; Bloodied 145 | | | |
| AC 30; Fortitude 28, Reflex 27, Will 27 | | | |
| Saving Throws +2 | | | |
| Speed 6 (8 when mounted on steppe pony) | | | |
| Action Points 1 | | | |
| ⊕ Longspear (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon | | | |
| Reach 2; +22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage (crit 3d10 + 26). | | | |
| ⚔ Saddleback Skewer (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon | | | |
| While mounted; Oshikam charges and makes a <i>longspear</i> attack. On a hit, the target is knocked prone, and Oshikam makes another <i>longspear</i> attack against a different target within reach. | | | |
| ⚡ Jolting Hex (minor; recharge ⏳ ⏳ ⏳) ♦ Lightning | | | |
| Range 10; +20 vs. Will; 2d8 + 6 lightning damage, and the target is marked until the end of Oshikam's next turn. Using this power does not provoke opportunity attacks. | | | |
| ⚡ Vaegould Retribution (immediate reaction, when an ally within 5 squares is reduced to 0 hit points; at-will) ♦ Thunder | | | |
| Close burst 5; targets enemies; +18 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 6 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone. | | | |
| Call of the Warlord (when bloodied) | | | |
| At the start of its turn, the vaegould warlord calls into battle four additional vaegould warriors | | | |
| Alignment Evil | Languages Common, Primordial | | |
| Skills Athletics +20, Endurance +15, Nature +14 | | | |
| Str 26 (+15) | Dex 19 (+11) | Wis 15 (+9) | |
| Con 17 (+10) | Int 14 (+9) | Cha 18 (+11) | |
| Equipment longspear | | | |

If the heroes question a captured Vaegould tribesman, they will get no useful information through any means. The PCs can use a DC 27 Intimidate check on the Vaegould warlord, Oshikam. If successful, they will learn about the true nature of the barbarian attacks and their connection to some great elemental power. The DM is encouraged to ad lib this portion and give out small details about the larger threat to the region, namely the invasion of elemental forces and possibly the connection to a long dormant "lost god."

Warlord Oshikam's longspear is a powerful symbol to the clan, and it's important to the heroes as a clue to a puzzle that arises later in the adventure—see Skill Challenge S1: All This Has Happened Before, page 71. If Warlord Oshikam escapes, or if he dies but one of his warriors escapes with the longspear, then the characters won't have access to that glyph's position.

| 8 Vaegould Warriors (W) | | Level 11 Minion Skirmisher | |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Medium natural humanoid, human | | XP 150 each | |
| Initiative +14 | | Senses Perception +7 | |
| HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. | | | |
| AC 25; Fortitude 23, Reflex 24, Will 22 | | | |
| Speed 6 (8 when mounted on steppe pony) | | | |
| ⊕ Hand Axe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon | | | |
| +16 vs. AC; 7 damage. | | | |
| ⚡ Shortbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon | | | |
| Ranged 15/30; +16 vs. AC; 8 damage. | | | |
| Brotherhood of the Ride | | | |
| The vaegould warrior doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving while mounted. | | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages Common, Primordial | |
| Skills Athletics +15, Endurance +12, Nature +12 | | | |
| Str 20 (+10) | Dex 24 (+12) | Wis 15 (+7) | |
| Con 15 (+7) | Int 15 (+7) | Cha 12 (+6) | |
| Equipment hand axe, shortbow | | | |

| 2 Vaegould Marauders (M) | | Level 13 Skirmisher | |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Medium natural humanoid, human | | XP 800 each | |
| Initiative +14 | | Senses Perception +9 | |
| HP 128; Bloodied 64 | | | |
| AC 27; Fortitude 24, Reflex 26, Will 22 | | | |
| Saving Throws : +5 against being dismounted | | | |
| Speed 6 (8 when mounted on steppe pony) | | | |
| ⊕ Waraxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon | | | |
| +18 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage. | | | |
| ⚡ Mounted Archer (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon | | | |
| Range 20/40; +18 vs. AC; 3d6 + 6 damage. | | | |
| ⚡ Three-Fingered Release (standard; recharge ⏳ ⏳ ⏳) ♦ Weapon | | | |
| Range 20/40; +18 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). | | | |
| Brotherhood of the Ride | | | |
| The vaegould marauder doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving while mounted. | | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages Common, Primordial | |
| Skills Athletics +20, Endurance +15, Nature +14 | | | |
| Str 26 (+15) | Dex 19 (+11) | Wis 15 (+9) | |
| Con 17 (+10) | Int 14 (+9) | Cha 18 (+11) | |
| Equipment waraxe | | | |

| Steppe Pony | | Level 6 Brute | |
|--|--------------------|--|--|
| Large natural beast (mount) | | XP 300 each | |
| Initiative +7 | | Senses Perception +12; low-light vision | |
| HP 90; Bloodied 45 | | | |
| AC 20; Fortitude 19, Reflex 17, Will 17 | | | |
| Speed 8 | | | |
| ⊕ Kick (standard; at-will) | | | |
| +9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage. | | | |
| ⚔ Trample (standard; at-will) | | | |
| The steppe pony can move up to its speed and enter enemies' spaces. This movement provokes opportunity attacks, and the steppe pony must end its move in an unoccupied space. When it enters an enemy's space, the steppe pony makes a trample attack; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 8 damage, and the target is knocked prone. | | | |
| Charger (while mounted by a friendly rider of 6 th level or higher with the Mounted Combat feat; at-will) ♦ Mount | | | |
| The steppe pony grants its rider a +1 bonus to attack rolls on charge attacks. | | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages — | |
| Str 24 (+11) | Dex 17 (+7) | Wis 17 (+7) | |
| Con 20 (+9) | Int 5 (+1) | Cha 13 (+5) | |

M2: CIVIL DEFENSE

Encounter Level 14 (5,400 XP)

SETUP

- 1 Vaegould elemental (E)
- 2 tempest wisps (W)
- 2 chillfire destroyers (D)
- 1 stormstone fury (F)

The characters arrive at the small village of Ilinvur to find it ransacked and destroyed. As they approach, they can see the smoldering ruins of several buildings from a distance. Near the small town square, they are attacked by some remaining elemental forces.

When the PCs arrive in town, read:

The town square appears to be the best place to look for survivors. As you approach you witness two hulking beasts milling around a small well. Caliginous rocky husks form over their bodies as steam hisses out between cracks. They step back from the well when they spot your approach.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Merchant Stalls: These stands are made of reinforced wood and are permanent structures of this area. They are 10 feet in height and width and provide superior cover to any creature that hides behind them. A successful DC 11 Athletics check allows the structure to be scaled.

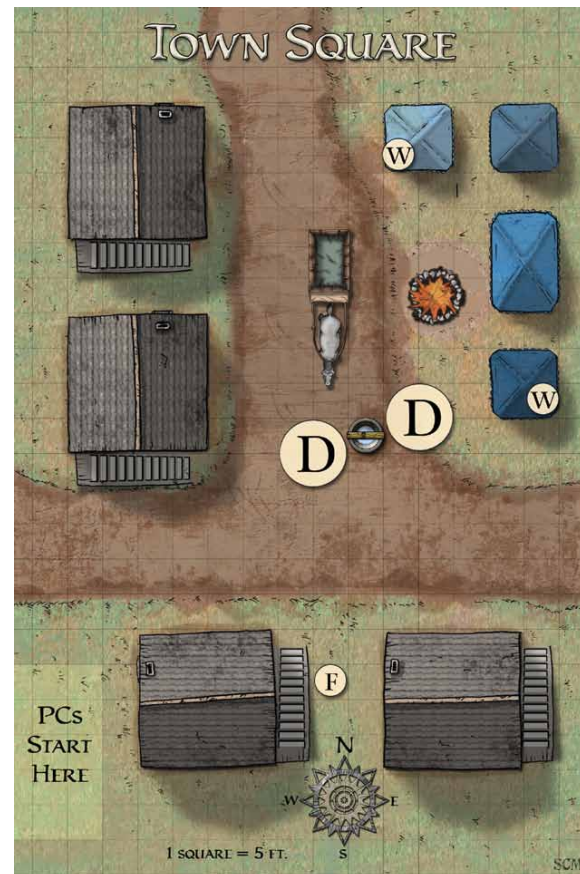
Houses: Two-story bungalows stand around the perimeter of the town square. They are 30 feet high and have stairwells to the side that count as difficult terrain.

Fire Pit: This is a communal fire that the merchants and other denizens of Ilinvur use to keep warm in the cold climate of the area. Any creature

that starts its turn within the fire takes 1d10 fire damage and 5 ongoing fire damage (save ends).

Cart and Horse: The corpse of a horse is still harnessed to a small cart here. The cart provides superior cover to any small creature that stands behind it.

Well: The well in the center of the town square is constructed of mortared stone and is roughly 3 feet high. It counts as difficult terrain for movement. Any medium or small creature that starts its turn on the well must make a DC 18 Acrobatics check to avoid falling to the bottom. Creatures that fall to the bottom



take 2d10 points of damage and must make a DC 18 Athletics check to climb back out.

TACTICS

The elementals in this encounter are interested mainly in holding the ground they have already secured. The chillfire destroyers move immediately to flank the fire pit square. The Vaegould elemental appears in the fire pit at the start of its turn on round 2. Once on the field of battle, the Vaegould elemental will rain devastating attacks from a distance. The tempest wisp remains hidden until Vaegould elemental arrives, then use their whistling wind attack to slide their enemies into positions that are most beneficial to their allies.

| Vaegould Elemental (E) | | Level 13 Controller |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid, human | | XP 800 |
| Initiative +9 | Senses Perception +9 | |
| HP 131; Bloodied 65 | | |
| AC 27; Fortitude 25, Reflex 32, Will 25 | | |
| Speed 8 | | |
| ⊕ or ⊕ Haunting Spirits (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic | | |
| Ranged 5; +18 vs. Will; 1d10 + 6 psychic damage. Until the end of the Vaegould elemental's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to an ally of the elemental's choice. | | |
| ⚡ Earthrage Spirit (standard; recharge [1]) ♦ Thunder | | |
| Close blast 5; enemies only; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone. | | |
| ⚡ Raging Storm Spirit (standard; encounter) ♦ Lightning, Thunder, Zone | | |
| Area burst 5 within 10; +18 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 7 lightning damage. Until the end of the encounter, the elemental and any ally deals 1d6 extra thunder damage when it hits an enemy that is within the zone. The zone lasts until the end of the encounter. | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages Common |
| Skills Athletics +12, Endurance +15, Nature +14 | | |
| Str 13 (+7) | Dex 16 (+9) | Wis 22 (+12) |
| Con 19 (+10) | Int 16 (+9) | Cha 19 (+10) |

| | |
|--|---|
| 2 Tempest Wisps (W) | Level 13 Controller |
| Medium elemental magical beast (air) | XP 800 each |
| Initiative +10 | Senses Perception +10 |
| HP 134; Bloodied 67 | |
| AC 27; Fortitude 26, Reflex 24, Will 24 | |
| Immune disease, poison; Resist insubstantial while not bloodied | |
| Speed 0, fly 7 (hover) | |
| ⊕ Air Slash (standard; at-will) +16 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 damage. | |
| ☹ Whistling Wind (standard; at-will) Ranged 10; +16 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the tempest wisp slides the target 1 square | |
| ↘ Tumbling Updraft (standard; recharge ☹☹☹) Ranged 10; +20 vs. Fortitude; the target is lifted up 20 feet (4 squares) and restrained (save ends). <i>Failed Saving Throw</i> : The target is lifted up another 20 feet. <i>Successful Saving Throw</i> : The target falls and takes falling damage, if applicable. | |
| Alignment Unaligned | Languages Primordial |
| Str 15 (+8) | Dex 19 (+10) Wis 19 (+10) |
| Con 22 (+12) | Int 9 (+5) Cha 14 (+8) |

| | |
|--|---|
| 2 Chillfire Destroyers (D) | Level 14 Brute |
| Large elemental magical beast (cold, fire) | XP 1,000 each |
| Initiative +12 | Senses Perception +12 |
| Leaking Firecore (Fire) aura 2; while the chillfire destroyer is bloodied, each creature that starts its turn within the aura takes 10 fire damage. | |
| HP 173; Bloodied 86; see also <i>firecore breach</i> | |
| AC 26; Fortitude 26, Reflex 25, Will 25 | |
| Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 cold, 10 fire | |
| Speed 5 | |
| ⊕ Freezing Slam (standard; at-will) ♦ Cold Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 1d12 + 6 damage plus 1d12 cold damage. | |
| ↓ Trample (standard; at-will) ♦ Cold The chillfire destroyer moves its speed and can move through enemies' spaces. The destroyer makes an attack; +15 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 damage plus 1d10 cold damage, and the target is knocked prone. | |
| ↶ Firecore Breach (when the chillfire destroyer drops to 0 hit points) ♦ Fire The destroyer does not die until the start of its next turn. Until then, the destroyer can take no actions. At the start of the destroyer's next turn, it makes an attack: close burst 3; +15 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 6 fire damage. | |
| Alignment Unaligned | Languages Primordial |
| Str 16 (+10) | Dex 20 (+12) Wis 20 (+12) |
| Con 23 (+13) | Int 5 (+4) Cha 12 (+8) |

| | |
|---|--|
| Stormstone Fury (F) | Level 14 Artillery |
| Medium elemental magical beast (air, earth) | XP 1,000 |
| Initiative +12 | Senses Perception +9 |
| HP 113; Bloodied 56 | |
| AC 26; Fortitude 26, Reflex 25, Will 25 | |
| Immune disease, petrification, poison; Resist 10 thunder | |
| Speed 6 | |
| ⊕ Grinding Stones (standard; at-will) Reach 2; +21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage. | |
| ↘ Hurling Thunderstone (standard; at-will) ♦ Thunder Ranged 20; +21 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage. <i>Miss</i> : Half damage. <i>Effect</i> : One square the target currently occupies becomes the origin square of a burst 2 attack that occurs at the start of the stormstone fury's next turn: +19 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 6 thunder damage. | |
| ↶ Shrapnel Burst (minor; recharge ☹☹☹) ♦ Thunder Close burst 2; +21 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage plus 1d6 thunder damage, and the stormstone fury pushes the target 2 squares. | |
| Meld to Ground (when first bloodied; requires the stormstone fury to be on the ground; encounter) ♦ Teleportation The fury disappears, and no creatures have line of sight or line of effect to it. At the start of its next turn, the fury appears within 10 squares of its previous space. | |
| Alignment Unaligned | Languages Primordial |
| Str 16 (+10) | Dex 20 (+12) Wis 15 (+9) |
| Con 23 (+13) | Int 6 (+5) Cha 20 (+12) |

SI: ALL THIS HAS HAPPENED BEFORE...

Encounter Level 13 (4,000 XP)

The Horreb ritual cube has 54 individual glyphs covering its surface (3 glyphs per row, 3 rows per side, 6 sides). In order to successfully activate cube and cast the ritual of Element Binding, the PCs must first identify the nine glyphs which comprise the ritual sequence.

In preparation for this skill challenge, the Dungeon Master should print out the nine glyphs displayed on page 82.

PART 1: DECIPHERING THE GLYPHS

Part 1: Deciphering the Glyphs Skill Challenge

Level 13
XP 3,200

Desperate to identify the correct glyphs for the binding ritual, you pore through stacks of dusty tomes searching for that proverbial needle in a haystack.

This skill challenge plays out over the course of several days. With the necessary travel, research, consultation, and study, each character can make just one skill check or aid another check per day.

Complexity

4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills

Arcana, History, Insight, Streetwise.

Success

The party is able to find the 9 correct glyphs out of the 54 on the Horreb ritual cube.

Failure

The characters are able to discern the 9 correct glyphs out of the 54 on the Horreb ritual cube, but each character suffers a -2 penalty to all skill checks during Part 2.



Ritual

Consult Mystic Sages (level 10) The PCs consult mystic sages to aid in their research. This ritual can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

Arcana

DC 18 (2 successes maximum) The character understands the nature of magical artifacts and is able to discern one of the arcane glyphs.

History

DC 18 (no maximum) While rummaging through old tomes in Mantor's Library, the character finds ancient writings on the glyph.

Insight

DC 23 (1 success maximum) The character identifies one of the glyphs through deductive reasoning.

Religion

DC 18 (2 successes maximum) The character understands the nature of magical artifacts and is able to discern one of the arcane glyphs.

Streetwise

DC 23 (2 successes maximum) By hobnobbing with the right folk, the character uncovers the nature of an arcane glyph.

PART 2: UNLOCKING THE RITUAL

With the nine glyphs identified, the heroes must find the correct sequence on the cube to trigger the ritual. Regardless of the number of successes, the PCs can know the locations of a maximum of seven glyphs by the end of this skill challenge—six from this challenge and one from Warlord Oshikam's longspear.

Part 2: Unlocking the Ritual Level 13 Skill Challenge XP 800

Unlocking the correct sequence to trigger the ritual is another challenge altogether.

This skill challenge likely plays out over the course of several days. With the necessary travel, research, consultation, and study, each character can make just one skill check or aid another check per day.

Note that only successful Arcana and Thievery checks allow players to fill in any glyph of their choice. Other skills fill in specific glyphs. No matter when successful Arcana and Thievery checks are made in the sequence of skill checks, wait until the end of the challenge to fill in those glyphs, to prevent duplication of another skill's discovery. As glyphs are discovered, place (or draw) the corresponding glyph anywhere on a 3-by-3 grid, so players can see their progress clearly.

Complexity

2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

Success

The party figures out the correct locations of six glyphs. This will aid them greatly when the time comes to activate the device (see *Sealing the Portal*, page 78).

Failure

The players correctly locate fewer than the six glyphs possible at this time. This will make it more difficult to find the correct sequence when they need to activate the device.

Arcana

DC 23 (1 success maximum) The character gains the correct location for one of the nine glyphs. The player selects any unplaced glyph at the end of the skill challenge and learns its placement. Read the associated journal entry for the glyph.

Insight

DC 18 (no success) While a successful check does not yield a success in the challenge, it grants a +2 bonus to the next skill check for this challenge.

Thievery (trained only)

DC 23 (1 success maximum) A successful Thievery check allows the character to find the correct location of a glyph through his understanding of such mechanically complex devices. The player selects any unplaced glyph at the end of the skill challenge and learns its placement. Read the associated journal entry for the glyph.

History

DC 18 (1 success maximum) Research in Mantor's Library reveals the history of Barze. Read Journal Entry 1, page 79.

Religion

DC 18 (1 success maximum) Within a dusty crypt of Valhingen Graveyard the characters uncover a dark passage. Read Journal Entry 10, page 80.

Intimidate

DC 18 (1 success maximum) Priests at the Lyceum of the Black Lord (location C on the Phlan city map) recognize the archaic symbol of Bane. Read Journal Entry 12, page 80.

Diplomacy

DC 18 (1 success maximum) The chamberlain of House Jannarsk is well studied in the heraldry of the Moonsea. Read Journal Entry 15, page 81.

Streetwise

DC 18 (1 success maximum) Blindfolded and led into the catacombs beneath the city, you are 'interviewed' by the local thieves' guild. Read Journal Entry 6, page 79.

Nature

DC 18 (1 success maximum) A missionary druid visiting the city from the Vanishing Hills recognizes the ancient goliath rune. Read Journal Entry 8, page 80.

The seventh glyph's position is hinted at by one of the trophies slung on Warlord Oshikam's longspear (from M1: *Defend the Caravan*, page 67). If characters picked up or examined the longspear after the battle, then the first time during this challenge that a player rolls 25 or higher on a skill check, or rolls successfully with a skill that has already succeeded once before, the character has a flash of intuition that leads them to Journal Entry 17 (page 81) and correctly places the Varm glyph. If the longspear was carried off by one of the barbarians or the characters ignored it after the battle, then this realization comes only with any skill check result of 25 or higher.

Proper placement of the Forharn and Flindyke glyphs (journal entries 4 and 14, respectively) cannot be obtained from this challenge. The PCs need to travel to those locations to uncover their positions.

M3: LYCEUM OF RIMEFIRE

Encounter Level 14 (5,750 XP)

SETUP

Chaku'kawr (C)

2 havoc gnoll prey-takers (P)

10 gnoll sycophants (S)

The heroes arrive at Frozen Flindyke during the fading hours of the day. The ancient city bears true to its name as all infrastructure has been encased in a thin veil of ice. The PCs come across a natural auditorium where they find a congregation of gnolls. If any of the characters understand the abyssal tongue, they know that the chieftain is speaking of the incursion of elementals into the region and is delegating authority for defense. If the PCs try to interact with the gnolls by any means, they are immediately attacked.

TACTICS

The gnolls of Flindyke are merciless and clever. Working flawlessly together, the congregation uses its superior numbers to swarm their foes. During combat, the sycophants work to bring down one target at a time. The gnoll chieftain prefers to sit back and control as much of the battlefield as he can, using *vortex of chaos* to daze enemies. The havoc gnoll prey-takers use their nets to entrap opponents and skewer them with their spears.

PARLAY?

When the gnoll chieftain Chaku'kawr becomes bloodied, he commands his followers to stand down while he attempts to parlay with the heroes.

If the heroes are agreeable to a cessation of hostilities, Chaku'kawr speaks:

"The cube you carry—its likeness I have seen before. This is most fascinating. Please, sheathe your weapons and be at ease, for by my order no harm shall befall you. Your coming has been foretold, cube-bearers. I shall take you to the sanctorum if you will but follow me."

Leading the characters along a narrow path descending the Pelauvir Gorge, Chaku'kawr stops before a solid wall along the cliff face. Speaking the words "Great Spear" in the Abyssal tongue, a doorway slides open in the earth. After descending through a labyrinth of tunnels, the PCs arrive at their destination, the Gnoll Sanctorum. Inside, Chaku'kawr provides the PCs with the correct placement for the gnoll glyph (Read Journal Entry 14, page 80) and a map with detailed directions to the Monument of the Ancients.

If the characters persist in their attacks, read:

"You are possessed of the same heart as the Dark Three, then? So be it. If I'm called to Yeenoghu's Realm this day, I'll take you screaming to the Abyss with me!"

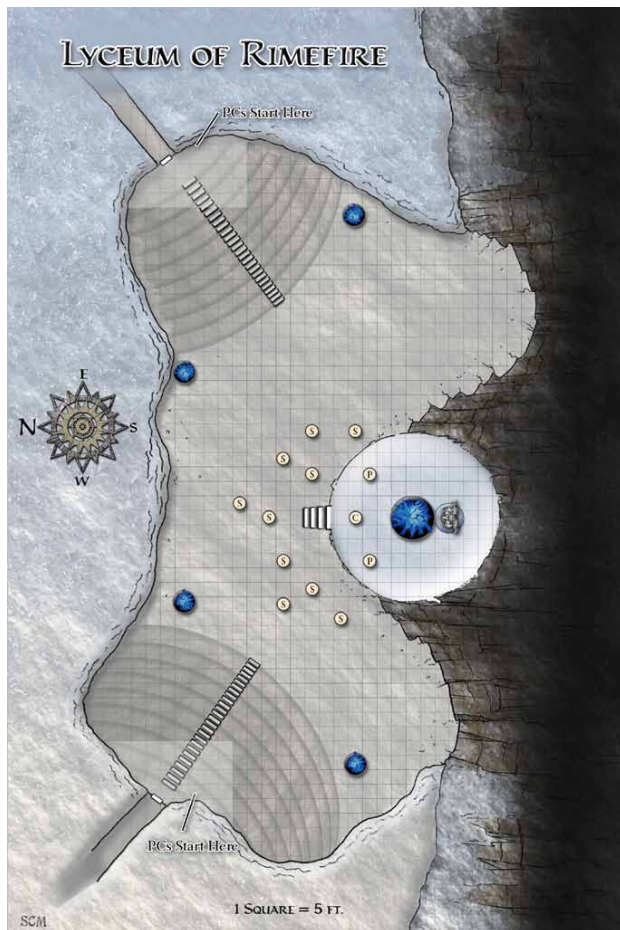
Chaku'kawr fights to the death. The heroes will need to learn the location of the Monument of the Ancients in some other manner left up to the DM. (They might, for example, interrogate a dying gnoll after this fight, or discover a scrap of parchment on Chaku'kawr's

body which leads them to the sanctorum after a suitably hazardous search.)

| | | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Chaku'kawr (C) Level 16 Elite Controller (Leader) | | |
| Medium natural humanoid, gnoll | | XP 2,800 |
| Initiative +13 | Senses Perception +12, low-light vision | |
| Bloodlust aura 3; all allies inside the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls. | | |
| HP 314; Bloodied 157 | | |
| AC 32; Fortitude 30, Reflex 27, Will 31 | | |
| Resist 10 variable (1/encounter) | | |
| Saving Throws +2 | | |
| Speed 7 | | |
| Action Points 1 | | |
| ⚡ Caustic Touch (standard; at-will) ⚡ Fire | | |
| +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 fire damage, or 2d8 + 9 fire damage while bloodied. | | |
| ⚡ Arcing Chaos Bolt (standard; at-will) | | |
| Ranged 10; targets one or two enemies; +19 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of Chaku'kawr's next turn. | | |
| ⚡ Furious Blastback (standard; recharge ⚡⚡⚡) ⚡ Fire | | |
| Close blast 3; +20 vs. Fortitude; 4d10 + 7 fire damage, or 4d10 + 9 fire damage while bloodied, and the target is pushed 6 squares. | | |
| ⚡ Vortex of Chaos (standard; encounter) ⚡ Fire, Psychic | | |
| Area burst 1 within 10; +18 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 8 fire damage, and target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both). | | |
| Sycophantic Fervor (minor 1/round; at-will) | | |
| A gnoll sycophant within sight of Chaku'kawr makes a basic attack as a free action. | | |
| Shun the Nonbeliever (immediate reaction; when an enemy moves adjacent to Chaku'kawr; at-will) | | |
| The target slides 3 squares. | | |
| Pack Attack | | |
| Chaku'kawr deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more allies adjacent to it. | | |
| Alignment Chaotic Evil | | Languages Abyssal, Common |
| Skills Arcana +17, Religion +20 | | |
| Str 15 (+10) | Dex 16 (+11) | Wis 18 (+12) |
| Con 21 (+13) | Int 19 (+12) | Cha 24 (+15) |

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Braziers: Four caldrons aflame with blue-tinted rimefire stand near the base of the spectator stands. A larger caldron rests on the grand dais, spewing azure flame high into the sky. These caldrons are difficult terrain. Any creature that passes through or starts their turn within the caldron takes 2d10 cold damage and ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends).



Gorge: In front of this natural amphitheatre is a gorge that drops 50 feet to the river below. Any creature that is pushed over the edge and falls to the icy water below takes 5d10 cold damage.

Ice-covered Dais: Perched on the edge of the gorge is a raised, circular dais covered in a thick layer of ice. The entire dais counts as difficult terrain. Any creature other than Chaku'kawr who begins their turn on the dais must make a DC 11 Acrobatics check or be knocked prone.

Statue: The menacing statue of Yeenoghu on the dais serves as a grim reminder of the demon lord the gnolls venerate. Any enemy of the gnolls who ends their turn next to the statue is subject to the following attack: +15 vs. Will; ongoing 10 necrotic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to saving throws (save ends both).

10 Gnoll Sycophants (S) Level 12 Minion Soldier

Medium natural humanoid XP 175 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +17, low-light vision

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 28; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21

Speed 7

⚔ **Handaxe** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; 7 damage.

🏹 **Longbow** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +19 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Pack Attack

A gnoll sycophant deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Skills Intimidate +7, Stealth +11

Str 26 (+14) **Dex** 23 (+12) **Wis** 18 (+10)

Con 18 (+10) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 11 (+6)

Equipment handaxe, longbow

2 Havoc Gnoll Prey-Takers (P) Level 11 Artillery

Medium natural humanoid XP 600 each

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +13, low-light vision

HP 91; **Bloodied** 45

AC 24; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22

Speed 6

⚔ **Spear** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+16 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.

🏹 **Spear** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +18 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage

🕸 **Net** (standard; medium or smaller creature only; recharges when no creature is immobilized by this power) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 4/8; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone and immobilized and cannot stand (until escape).

Ranging Leap (move; recharge ☞ ☞)

The prey-taker shifts 3 squares and ignores difficult terrain for this move.

Net Master

The prey-taker deals an extra 1d6 damage on attacks made against an enemy immobilized by its net, and it takes no penalty for attacking a prone creature with a ranged attack when that creature is immobilized by its net.

Pack Attack

A gnoll sycophant deals an extra 10 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Skills Intimidate +14, Stealth +16

Str 19 (+9) **Dex** 22 (+11) **Wis** 16 (+8)

Con 19 (+9) **Int** 15 (+7) **Cha** 18 (+9)

Equipment leather armor, net, 2 spears

S2: CRUCIBLE OF CHAOS

Encounter Level 12 (2,800 XP)

SETUP

Start this skill challenge when the PCs set out for the Monument of the Ancients from Frozen Flindyke.

This skill challenge spreads out over the entire trek, which is sure to take several days.

Crucible of Chaos

Skill Challenge

2,800 XP

Spending any amount of time in the frozen north requires great stamina, nerves of steel, and a bit of luck. The most pressing challenge that must be overcome is exposure to the harsh terrain and elemental hazards endemic to the region.

Complexity

4 (10 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills

Acrobatics, Athletics, History, Nature, Perception

Success

The characters arrive at the Monument of the Ancients and recover any healing surges lost during this skill challenge (see special).

Failure

The characters reach the Monument of the Ancients but they have been unable to replenish their healing surges.

Special

After making a primary skill check (regardless of success or failure), the character must make a DC15 Endurance check. Failure on the Endurance check results in that character losing one healing surge.

In addition, when a character fails at a primary skill check, every character in the group automatically loses one healing surge.

Endure Elements Ritual

(1 success maximum) The characters ward themselves from Pazunia's extreme temperatures. Success on this ritual eliminates any further Endurance checks.

Acrobatics

DC 18 (2 successes maximum) You help guide the party over hazards such as icy patches of ground and sudden gusts of wind that would otherwise knock party members off their feet.

Athletics

DC 18 (2 successes maximum) Your athleticism helps your allies negotiate treacherous crags, traverse hazardous scree fields, and leap frozen tributaries.

History

DC 18 (2 successes maximum) Referencing maps and lore on the region, you identify landmarks that help the party find a safe route.

Nature

DC 18 (4 successes maximum) You build a shelter, granting your party a temporary reprieve from the harsh elements. The characters have a 1 in 6 chance of triggering a random hostile encounter while camped.

DC 23 (2 successes maximum) You locate a small, flowing spring from which to quench your thirst.

Perception

DC 18 (4 successes maximum) Your keen senses allow you to locate safe paths, avoid hazards, and otherwise help guide the group on the trek.

M4: ANCHOR OF CHAOS

Encounter Level 13 (4,800 XP plus 150 XP per minion)

SETUP

Pyricus, Herald of Maram (P)

Earth hellions (H)

Azure savages (S)

Incendiary vilifiers (V)

Frozen racers (R)

The PCs arrive at the frosty keep where the monument of the ancients was erected. Standing atop a shallow-sided pyramid, reaching toward the sky, they see the monstrosity that is Pyricus—a lesser primordial used to herald the coming of Maram of the Great Spear. Above him, swirling and bathed in unearthly colors, is a partially-formed portal to the Elemental Chaos. As soon as the heroes have taken in this unnerving sight, they are immediately summoned next to Pyricus at the top of the spire.

When the PCs arrive at the Anchor of Chaos, read:

As you stare toward the elemental evil that is Pyricus, your skin tingles and the sharp smell of sulfur fills the air. As you begin to react, you are instantly teleported to the spire within easy reach of the hulking abomination.

When a character is first hit by Pyricus, read:

“You have come so far, brave mortals, only to die before my feet. Soon you will know the true power to my liege, Maram of the Great Spear!”

TACTICS

Pyricus is rooted to the ground until the PCs close the gate to the elemental chaos. It will defend the area with all of its might to prevent that from happening.

If Pyricus notices the hero that has the cube, it will immediately target that character until they are slain.

At the beginning of each round including the first, four elementals (one of each type) are summoned to the corresponding altars. They remain in play until killed. As long as the portal remains open, an elemental of each type is summoned each round, regardless of how many are already in the fight and regardless of whether Pyricus is alive or dead.

| Earth Hellion | | Level 11 Minion Brute | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Medium elemental magical beast (earth, thunder) XP 150 each | | | |
| Initiative +7 | Senses Perception +7 | | |
| HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. | | | |
| AC 23; Fortitude 24, Reflex 23, Will 23 | | | |
| Speed 6 | | | |
| ⚡ Earth Smash (standard; at-will) ⚡ Thunder | | | |
| +14 vs. AC; 7 thunder damage and ongoing 5 thunder damage (save ends). | | | |
| ⚡ Thunderous Destruction (free, when reduced to 0 hp; encounter) ⚡ Thunder | | | |
| Close burst 1; each non-elemental creature in the burst takes 10 thunder damage. | | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages – | |
| Str 15 (+7) | Dex 15 (+7) | Wis 15 (+7) | |
| Con 21 (+10) | Int 15 (+7) | Cha 10 (+5) | |

| Azure Savage | | Level 11 Minion Soldier | |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Medium elemental magical beast (air) XP 150 each | | | |
| Initiative +9 | Senses Perception +11 | | |
| HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. | | | |
| AC 27; Fortitude 25, Reflex 22, Will 20 | | | |
| Speed 6 | | | |
| ⚡ Crackling Slash (standard; at-will) ⚡ Lightning | | | |
| +18 vs. AC; 7 lightning damage, and the target is marked until the end of the azure savage's next turn. | | | |
| ⚡ Shocking Destruction (free, when reduced to 0 hp; encounter) ⚡ Lightning | | | |
| Close burst 1; each non-elemental creature in the burst takes 8 lightning damage. | | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages – | |
| Str 15 (+7) | Dex 15 (+7) | Wis 12 (+6) | |
| Con 21 (+10) | Int 12 (+6) | Cha 18 (+9) | |

| Pyricus, Herald of Maram (P) | | Level 13 Solo Controller | |
|--|---|--------------------------|--|
| Huge elemental magical beast | | XP 4,000 | |
| Initiative +9 | Senses Perception +16; truesight 20, tremorsense 20 | | |
| Chaotic Rebuke (Psychic) aura 1; any creature that starts its turn within the aura takes 5 psychic damage. | | | |
| HP 512; Bloodied 256 | | | |
| AC 30; Fortitude 31, Reflex 25, Will 28 | | | |
| Resist 10 fire, cold, lightning; Vulnerable 10 acid | | | |
| Saving Throws +5 | | | |
| Speed 4 | | | |
| Action Points 2 | | | |
| ⚡ Tentacle Lash (standard, at will) | | | |
| +17 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 psychic damage and the target is pushed 2 squares. | | | |
| ⚡ Chaos Lash (standard; at-will) ⚡ Psychic, Cold | | | |
| Tentacles lash out and strike all nearby opponents. Close burst 3; +17 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 psychic and cold damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares. | | | |
| ⚡ Kinetic Explosion (standard; recharge when first bloodied) ⚡ Psychic, Force | | | |
| Range 20; +17 vs. Reflex, 3d10 + 6 force damage, and the target is stunned (save ends). | | | |
| ⚡ Mind Breaker (minor; recharge when an enemy within 5 squares spends a healing surge) ⚡ Psychic, Charm | | | |
| Pyricus unleashes horrific visions of the elemental chaos. Close burst 3; +17 vs. Will; 3d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). | | | |
| ⚡ Brutal Riposte (immediate reaction, when subjected to forced movement; recharge when first bloodied) ⚡ Lightning, Psychic | | | |
| Close burst 1; +18 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 lightning and psychic damage, and the target is stunned until the end of the herald's next turn. | | | |
| ⚡ Turbid Armament (standard, recharge ☞ ☞) ⚡ Cold | | | |
| Area burst 1 within 10; +17 vs. Reflex; 3d6 cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of Pyricus's next turn. | | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages Primordial | |
| Str 22 (+12) | Dex 13 (+7) | Wis 22 (+12) | |
| Con 19 (+10) | Int 22 (+12) | Cha 13 (+7) | |

Incendiary Vilifier **Level 11 Minion Skirmisher**
 Medium elemental magical beast (fire) XP 150 each

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 23; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 23
Speed 7

⊕ **Searing Snap** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire**
 +16 vs. AC; 3 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

⊖ **Burning Destruction** (free, when reduced to 0 hp; encounter) ♦ **Fire**
 Close burst 1; each non-elemental creature in the burst takes 8 fire damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages**—
Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 15 (+7) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 15 (+7)

Frozen Racer **Level 11 Minion Skirmisher**
 Medium elemental magical beast (cold, water) XP 150 each

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 24; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 22
Speed 6

⊕ **Frosty Bite** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Cold**
 The frozen racer can shift its speed before making this attack. +16 vs. AC; 7 cold damage.

⊖ **Frozen Destruction** (free, when reduced to 0 hp; encounter) ♦ **Cold**
 Close burst 1; each non-elemental creature in the burst takes 8 cold damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages**—
Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 27 (+13) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 12 (+6) **Int** 18 (+9) **Cha** 12 (+6)

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The Pyramid: The sides of the pyramid rise at approximately a 30-degree angle to a height of 10 feet above the ground. Each side is built of smooth, fitted stone and has a 5-foot-wide flight of seven steps ascending to the top, which is also smooth and flat. Characters can move and fight normally on the top of the pyramid and on the steps. The smooth, sloping sides of the pyramid, however, offer poor footing.

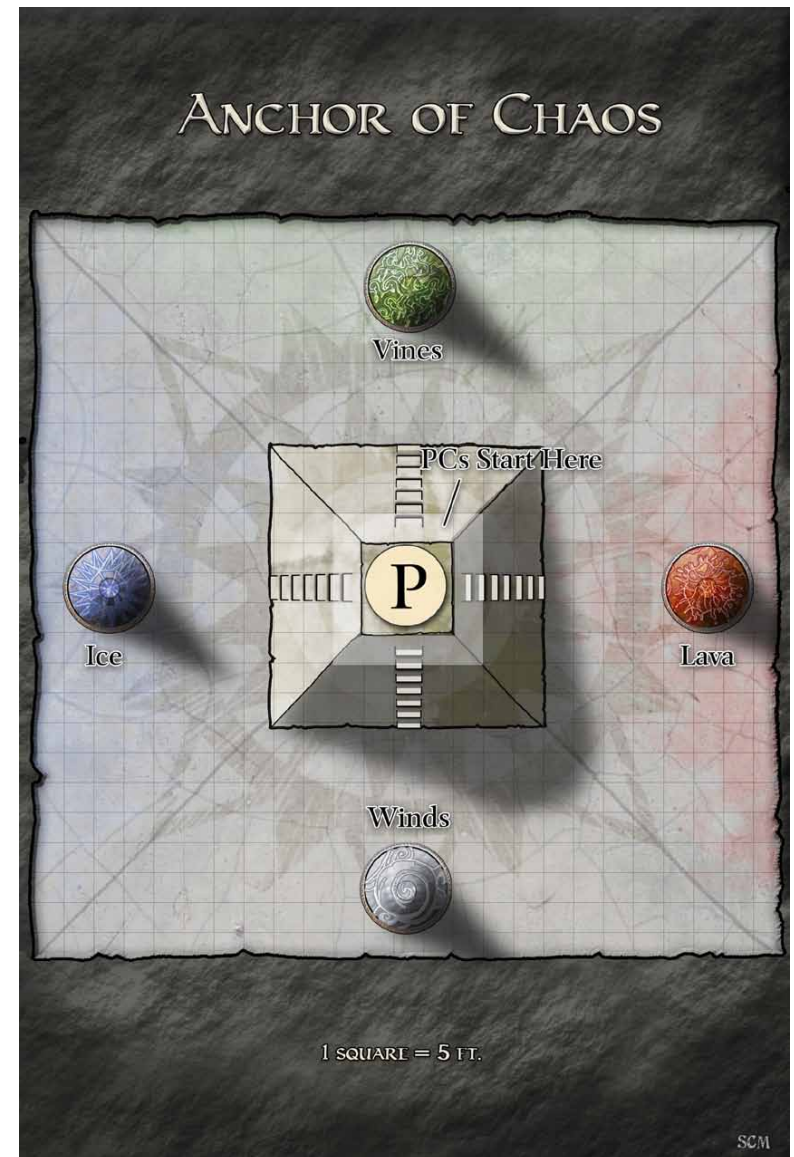
Whenever a character or monster is hit in combat and at least half of the squares it occupies are non-step sides of the pyramid, it can also be slid 1 square (or 1 additional square) down the pyramid, at the attacker's choice. This slide can be straight or diagonal, as long as it moves the creature downward. Pyricus has two exceptions: It can be slid downward by this rule only by Large or larger creatures, and creatures it hits are slid 2 squares (or 2 additional squares) downward instead of 1.

Garden of Vines: This ornate archway is covered in vines and other living plants. Flowers of many exotic varieties are blooming, and a green glow emanates all around it. Earth hellions emerge from this shrine.

Shards of Ice: Large, jagged crystals of ice protrude from this frigid altar. Melting ice creates pools of water that freeze once more when they reach the ground. Frosty racers emerge from this shrine.

Winds of Chaos: A low bellow of air is created as dust and debris whirl around this entranceway from the elemental chaos. Winds that are impossibly strong are centered directly on it, foretelling a horror beyond. Azure savages emerge from this shrine.

Fountain of Lava: Lava oozes out of this huge, obsidian bowl to the ground beneath, only to disappear again through mithral gates below. Incendiary vilifiers emerge from this shrine.



SEALING THE PORTAL

Now is the time when the characters' detective work at solving the Horreb ritual cube pays off. The DM should prepare a 3-by-3 grid (or use a corner of the battlemat) to represent the side of the ritual cube. Print and cut out the nine glyphs that have been identified, and place those whose positions have been solved in their correct spots. (Alternatively, the DM could draw the solved glyphs in their places and use any unique tokens for the glyphs whose positions aren't known.)

To activate the Divine Barrier ritual stored in the cube, all nine glyphs must be placed correctly. A character can manipulate the cube as a standard action on her turn. One standard action allows a player to either place a glyph in an empty grid square or swap the positions of two glyphs. When the player's action is done, the DM points out which glyphs are in the correct slots. The correct arrangement is shown below.

When all nine glyphs are properly positioned, the cube grows warm and thrums with eldritch might from a prior age. It is ready to reseal the portal.

The ritual stored in the cube can be triggered as a standard action by the character holding the cube. It requires an Arcana or Religion skill check at DC 23.

AIDING THE PLAYERS

If the players are unsure of what to do with the ritual cube and the fight is going against them, offer them hints such as, "the cube is vibrating in its pouch," or "the cube's faces are reorienting themselves randomly," or "the glyphs you've already positioned correctly are glowing weakly and the cube seems drawn to the portal."



If the skill check fails, all is not lost; the caster can try again on subsequent turns. When the skill check succeeds, five things happen.

1. The ritual cube grows intensely hot in the caster's hand before breaking from his grip and rising into the air to within a few yards of the swirling portal.

2. Mystical energy flows from the portal into the cube, which grows ever brighter until it's painful to look at it. Suddenly, the portal spews elemental debris in all directions, shrinks to a point while emitting an ear-piercing, grinding shriek, then finally, both the portal and the cube blink out of existence with a blinding flash of colorless light.

3. Pyricus immediately takes damage equal to one-half its remaining hit points.

4. Pyricus is no longer immobilized.

5. No more elementals are summoned to the battle, but those already present keep fighting.

APPENDIX: ADVENTURERS' NOTEBOOK

These entries include notes which the adventurers might copy or file in the journal as they travel. Some information described here is freely given, while other entries require skill checks to acquire. Where a glyph is shown, characters learn that glyph's location on the cube when they discover the journal entry.

JOURNAL ENTRIES



Entry 1

Excerpt from a lengthy volume, *The Great Diaspora of Netheril*; Chapter Seven: Year of Hostile Badgers (-457 DR).

The arcanist Barze then led his persecuted flock away from Negarath Enclave, traveling on foot for many months beyond the eastern frontier of Netheril. As Alaphaer's first snows began to fall, the beleaguered exiles came upon a fertile dale sheltered by two great mountain ranges. There Barze founded his self-titled kingdom, and for a time the war-weary archwizard knew true happiness.

Entry 2

Excerpt from Urgund's *Description of Darkness*, a black-bound tome written in a strange, halting hand. *...and seated foremost in the hall of Minor Courtiers were the lesser powers: Maram of the Great Spear; Haask, Voice of Hargut; Tyranthraxus the Flamed One; Borem of the Lake of Boiling Mud; and Camnod the Unseen. These too fell down and became servants of the great lord Bane.*

Entry 3

From *The History of the Moonsea North*, a highly colorful and often exaggerated account of the region. One excerpt in particular catches your interest. *Ten days' ride north of the Varm is a barren and dead country called the Lee-wai, land-in-pain or land-of-suffering. Further to the south this place is known as the Tortured Land. It is said to be an evil place, shunned by the Riders. They speak little of this land but yearly during Ches they make a trip into its heart. There they go to venerate the spirit of a glowing spring. This they have done for ages and so shall they do for years to come.*



Entry 4

A hand-scrawled note written on the back of a shipping invoice for goods arriving in Phlan from Whitehorn, dated the fourth day of Marpenoth in

the Year of Plagued Lords (1471 DR).

Stern-faced gnomes came into town today asking around about that peculiar cache of iron trade bars adventurers unearthed last tenday up in Flandal's Dell. Elder folk say the gnomes hail from Forharn, a whole community of the little buggers living beneath Kossuth's Ire. That's nonsense though, right? Who in their right mind would build a city beneath an active volcano?

Entry 5

Carefully prepared notes scribed on precious Ra-Khati vellum, uncovered in the rubble of Mantor's Library during its reconstruction in the Year of the Gate (1341 DR).

He has fooled me. All this time he has called himself Tyranthraxus the Flamed One. He exhibited his flame, and spoke of deeds attributed to Tyranthraxus. But today, while he did not know I was around, he revealed his true identity. He spoke into the great pool in his lair. I think he spoke to Lord Bane himself. And he referred to himself by his true name: Maram. Maram, he of the great spear, is also a servant of Bane.

DM's Note: This entry is a red herring meant to confuse the players. Tyranthraxus and Maram are separate entities.



Entry 6

A passage from a heretical text unearthed from the ruins of Zhen-til Keep following the cyrinishad debacle in the Year of the Banner

(1368 DR).

It was by the hand of one once hailed as a hero that the sorcerer-king Barze was laid low; executed silently and without a struggle. The assassin and his dour companions left the kingdom that very day; the murderers unchallenged as they passed. It was not long after that the Twisted Ones came to finish off what was left of the grieving realm.

Entry 7

An utterance from the ghost of Ferran Martinez, who haunts the old chapel of Sokol Keep:

The city fell long ago to the unblessed creatures imbued with the might of a magical pool. Chief among these were Tyranthraxus, Edranka, and Torath. With their powers they ruled and united all else, driving forward to destroy us all. The Sage Mantor worked hard to gather record of all these things, but they are lost now, his library overrun.



Entry 8

Excerpt from Heart of the Mountain, a controversial work on the origins of goliaths in the Realms.

Like all goliath tribes, the Akoro trace their ancestry back to the Golden Age of Netheril. To the Rengarath barbarians of that age, the sacred mountain range known as the Columns of the Sky were home to gods. As the fortunes of the Rengarath declined with the increasing desertification of their lands, the Rengarath began to doubt their gods.

Demanding answers, a select group was chosen to enter the sacred mountains and seek the domain of the gods. Climbing peak after peak, the seekers tackled unforgiving elements and ferocious beasts with equal skill and determination. Finally, when they had scaled the last and greatest peak, they beheld a sight which struck them dumb and thoughtless with awe.

What they saw is a matter of speculation and myth, but what is certain is that the seekers had grown taller and stronger, their flesh hard as stone, their spirits infused with primal power.

Entry 9

The Grand Historian's Records of the Arts of War. This moldering old tome is strongly moralistic, attempting to set forth the proper principals of government in times of warfare. From the crumbling pages comes the following passage:

At this time there ruling the Twisted Ones was a powerful general named Tyranthraxus. He strode before his armies cloaked in flame and led the Riders out of the Waste. At his hand the kingdom of Barze was conquered. Turning south he led his army to conquer the Horreb and the Vane. Tyranthraxus was a cruel man and leveled all that he had taken, murdering the princes of these lands. But the flame that surrounded him consumed him, destroying his body. Freed of its shell, it flew among the men of his army, lighting on each and claiming it. It was then when Baron Schodt imprisoned Tyranthraxus in a vial of water which shone like the light of day. This he sank in the watery depths of Lake Longreach, thus defeating the armies Tyranthraxus had raised.



Entry 10

Etched upon a mausoleum wall within Valhingen Graveward:

The necromancer was the most reserved of the three dark heroes, a gangling man of advancing years, speaking in a high whisper and largely keeping to himself. His emaciated form was shrouded within dark robes, the man's cold eyes bespoke of malign intelligence and eldritch might. His given name: Myrkul Bey al-Kursi, Crown Prince of Murghôm.

Entry 11

A tattered parchment fragment, its lettering worn and barely legible:

...and there on blood-soaked fields of Grong-Haap, Edranka's goblin armies were swept away by Hargut of the Gray Pestilence.



Entry 12

Testimony given under pain of death by Hatemaster Ansgar Theoderich at the Lyceum of the Black Hand:

This glyph is the archaic holy symbol of Bane, from the time before the Avatar Crisis. The priests of the Lyceum of the Black Lord in Phlan subscribe to the heresy that Bane was utterly destroyed by Torm during the Time of Troubles. The being they worship as Bane today, the heretical priests say, is in fact none other than the Godson of Bane, Iyachtu Xvim, having adopted his father's name to more quickly achieve the status and power of a greater god.

Entry 13

Old tavern tale spread by inebriated patrons of the Bitter Blade. In recent years the rumor has been adopted by parents at their wits' end to convince young children to do their chores. *Buccaneers operate a slave auction out of a hidden camp near Stormy Bay.*



Entry 14

Passage from Legacy of Ostoria, a treatise penned by Sage Archembald of Yûlash and published in the Year of the Empty Goblet (1252 DR).

When the jotunbrud retreated into the Abbey Mountains in the final days of the Age of Dragons, the stone giants had grudgingly abandoned Moch-Fanan, a mighty citadel of rune-etched iron built near a great bridge spanning the icy Pelvuria River. For millennia the keep had served the giants well, guarding the trade crossing into the realm's southern border.

It was not long before opportunistic scavengers took up residence in the citadel and claimed the region as their own. Known as Gnolls, these tyrannical creatures soon began construction of a settlement centered on the giant keep and the nearby bridge. In time bards began to sing of "Frozen Flindyke," the fabled city of beast-men at the heart of the Tortured Lands.



Entry 15

A tightly bound scroll, seemingly immune to the ravages of time.

Early Phlan was a trading outpost, established to facilitate commerce between the elves of Myth Drannor, the

dwarves of the Dragonspine Mountains, and the primitive human tribes of Thar and the Ride. It was at this time that the fey planted the Quivering Forest north of the city; the copse enchanted to grow the great wood in the span of a human generation.

Entry 16

Two chaps conversing over ale at the Laughing Goblin:

My cousin in Hillsfar says undead roam freely in the western Dalelands, along with malicious fey and creatures spawned of shadow. I'd wager ten crowns those terrors were released by the Empire of Netheril!



Entry 17

From the scribblings of Gaylyn Dimswart Wyvernspur, Sage Most Learned of the Royal Court of Cormyr, in the Year of the Halls Unhaunted (1407 DR).

New evidence supports my theory that the Barbarians of the Ride are the product of a mingling between two ancient peoples: the Rengarath tribes of Netheril and the remnants of an even older civilization of man that fell into ruin during the First Flowering. The oral traditions of one tribe in particular, the Varm, bespeak of direct descendancy from the founders of the Citadel of the Raven and its fabled progenitor culture.

Entry 18

Spoken by a guard of the Black Watch stationed at Traitor's Gate in Phlan:

You might wonder at this gate's odd name; many do. It was named after a lost scion of House Cadorna, Porphrys. Nearly a century and a half ago, Porphrys advanced to rule the city council, and many respected and trusted him. But he had been possessed by the spirit of fire, and later was driven from the city by heroes quite like yourselves.

Entry 19

A warning provided by Knight Commander Ector Brahms, while taking a short rest just outside the Quivering Forest:

Smart folk don't go into that wood. A century back, when the Netherese razed Zhentil Keep and threatened to do the same to Phlan, Lord Cvaal Daoran, grandfather of the current Lord Protector, made a pact with the dark fey of the Quivering Forest. In exchange for their aid, the wee folk demanded the forest remain off limits to travel and timber cutting.

Our last Lord Protector learned the hard way that the agreement was still being enforced, when he sent loggers into the wood in 1456. Lord Talaric Daoran went missing from Valjevo Castle the following day, never to be seen again.

About the Authors

Brian R. James is a freelance game designer living in the Seattle area. His works include *The Grand History of the Realms™*, *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Guide*, *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead™*, *DRAGON Magazine Annual* and *Underdark™*. Follow Brian online at www.twitter.com/brianrjames.

Matt James is a disabled combat veteran, having earned a Bronze Star and Purple Heart from his recent service in the United States Army. When not exploring the fantasy worlds of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®*, he enjoys spending quality time with his wife Dawn and two Chihuahuas, Peanut and Sammy. Follow Matt online at www.twitter.com/matt_james_fr.

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