

URD2-04



BRIGHT PROSPECTS

A One-Round D&D[®] LIVING GREYHAWK[®]
Duchy of Urnst Regional Adventure

Version 1

by Jonathan Ingram

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The tal'Shaki tribe occupies dangerous middle ground between two powerful foes. Can you sway them into alliance with the Duchy or will they join forces with Rary the Traitor? A roleplaying-intensive scenario for a balanced group of characters levels 1-10.

This scenario is recommended for members of the Ducal Guard, Diplomatic Corps, and registered noble characters.

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

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This is an RPGA Network scenario for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. Most sanctioned events delegate a four-hour time block for each round of this scenario, with actual playing time will around three hours. The rest of the time is spent in preparation before game play, and reward distribution and scoring after the game. The following guidelines are here to help you with both the preparation and voting segment of the game. Read this page carefully so that you know and can communicate to your players the special aspects of playing an RPGA scenario.

PREPARATION

First, print this scenario. This scenario was created to support double-sided printing, but printing it single sided works as well. There is enough room along the inside margin to bind the adventure, if you desire.

Read this entire adventure at least once before running the event Familiarize yourself with any special rules, spells, or equipment presented in the adventure. It may help to highlight particularly important passages.

When you run an RPGA D&D adventure we assume that you have access to the following books: the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. We also assume that you have a set of dice (at least one d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20), some scrap paper, a pencil, an RPGA scoring packet, and your sense of fun. It's also a good idea to have a way to track movement during combat. This can be as simple as a pad of graph paper and a pencil, as handy as a vinyl grid map and chits, or as elaborate as resin dungeon walls and miniatures.

Instruct the players either to prepare their characters now, or wait until you read the introduction, depending on the requirements of the scenario described in the introduction.

Keep in mind that you must have at least three players (not counting the DM), for the game session to be a sanctioned RPGA event. You cannot have more than six players participating in the game.

Once you are ready to play, it is handy to instruct each player to place a nametag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for both the players and the DM to keep track of who is playing what character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying. But, as the DM, you can bar the use of even Core Rulebooks during certain times of play. For example, usually the players are not free to consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* when confronted with a trap or hazard, or the *Monster Manual* when confronted with a monster.

Text that appears in ***bold italics*** is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase as appropriate. Text in appendixes contains important DM notes, for you, offering insight to issues particular to the adventure. Monster and nonplayer character (NPC) statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form. Full monster statistics for standard monsters are provided in the *Monster Manual*, while statistics for unusual monster and unique individuals are profiled in the Appendix at the end

of the adventure. You should review all of these statistics before the game starts to refresh you memory of the creatures' abilities.

SCORING

After the players have completed the scenario or the time allotted to run the scenario has run out, the players and DM score the game. The RPGA has three ways to score its games. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use for this scenario:

1-No-vote scoring: The players write their names and RPGA numbers on the scoring packet grid. You fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.

2-Partial scoring: The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the event coordinator wants information on how the DMs are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.

3-Voting: Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the "best" amongst the group, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes.

When using voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities. It's a good idea to have the players vote while you determine treasure and experience awards for the scenario.

After voting, give the Scoring Packet to your event coordinator.

This is a LIVING GREYHAWK adventure. As a LIVING™ adventure it is expected that players bring their own characters with them. If players do not have a LIVING GREYHAWK character generated, get a copy of the current LIVING GREYHAWK character generation guidelines, and a character sheet from your convention coordinator or the RPGA Web site (www.wizards.com/rpga), and then have any players without a character create one. Once all players have a LIVING GREYHAWK character, play can begin.

Along with the other materials that you are assumed to have in order to run a D&D game, it is also recommended that you have a copy of the *LIVING GREYHAWK Gazetteer*.

LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportioned to the average character level of the character participating in the adventure. To determine the Average Party Level (APL):

1) Determine the character level for each character participating in the adventure.

2) If characters bring animals that have been trained for combat (usually war horses and riding dogs), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars, a paladin's mounts, and so forth) use the following chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum above. Add each character's animals separately. A single character may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.

CR	1	2	3	4
1/4 and 1/6 0	0	0	1	
1/3 and 1/2 0	0	1	1	
1	1	1	2	3
2	2	3	4	5
3	3	4	5	6
4	4	5	6	7

3) Sum the results of 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure-round up.

4) If you are running a table of six characters, add one to that average.

By following these four steps, you have determined the modified APL. Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge that the characters face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience you may gain at the end of an adventure. If your character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL that this adventure is played at, that character will receive only half of the experience points awarded for the adventure. This simulates the fact that

either your character was not as challenged as normal, or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Note: LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Three or four, or sometimes even five 1st-level characters may find difficulty with the challenges in a LIVING GREYHAWK adventure. If your group is APL 1 there are three things that you can do to help even the score.

1) Attempt to create a table of six 1st-level characters, or try to enlist higher-level characters to play at that table.

2) Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them. All riding dogs are considered trained to attack. Characters who want their dog to attack they must succeed at a Handle Animal or Charisma check (DC 10). Failure indicates that the animal will not attack that round. This is usually a free action (see *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* Chapter 2: Characters) that may be attempted each round. If an animal loses half or more hp in a single round it flees, unless another check is successful.

3) A group of APL 1 adventurers who desire an extra hand can "enlist an iconic." The stats for the 1st-level versions of Tordek, Mialee, Lidda and Jozan are given at the end of each adventure. The group may pick one of these characters to joint them on this adventure. The DM controls that NPC.

TIME UNITS AND UPKEEP

This is a standard one-round Regional adventure set in the Duchy of Urnst. All characters playing in region pay one Time Unit to participate in the adventure. Adventures' Standard Upkeep costs 12 gp. Rich Upkeep costs 50 gp, and Luxury Upkeep costs 100 gp. Characters playing out of region pay double these amounts.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

Tales of increased attacks from Bright Desert dervishes have spread throughout the Duchy of Urnst, drawing adventurers into the Eastern March of the Abbor-Alz to counter the dervish attacks.

Lord Drenylyn Teranor, an evil wizard of some power and one of the driving forces behind House Teranor's activities, initially organized the dervish attacks. Lord Drenylyn made contact with the Bright Desert dervishes and swayed many of them, including some of the youths of clan Dru'shi, one of the High Clans, to his cause by promising them riches and glory in battle.

Little is known about the dervishes of the Bright Desert, save that they are of Flan stock like the other desert nomads of the Bright Desert. The dervishes that were allied with House Teranor are religious fanatics, dedicated to old rites and traditions of the ancient Flan. They do not welcome outsiders, and have a long-standing hatred of the Duchy of Urnst. They are no friends of Rary

of the Bright Lands, but neither are they likely to aid any of Suel descent. The dervishes speak a dialect of Flan; their leaders know Common as well.

On the Duchy side, word spread throughout the land of increased hostility by the dervishes, and reinforcements were sent to Castle Seh, the seat of the Warden of the East March of the Abbor-Alz. The Warden increased the frequency and strength of patrols from Castle Seh, but had been unable to completely stop the attacks by the dervishes until a group of adventurers discovered the dervish lair and defeated the dervishes.

When House Teranor fell, Lord Drenylyn was consumed by demonic power. He died instantly, but some of his dervish companions became infected with the taint of evil and were granted magical abilities. These dervishes considered themselves to be the heirs to Drenylyn's power. Some of the dervishes journeyed back into the desert to recruit more followers from the dervish tribes there, unaware at the time of the defeat of their comrades.

Now these tainted dervishes need more raiders so that they can return to the Duchy; the boldest among them, D'ran dru'Shi, decided that his best strategy is to sway the tal'Shaki dervish tribe to their cause and return to the Duchy with a force of hundreds of warriors. D'ran has been visiting with the tal'Shaki for some time, attempting to sway their leaders over to his cause and winning a few converts. However, the tal'Shaki generally dislike Dru'shi and the leaders of the tribe seem to be disposed against his proposed alliance. D'ran would have given up by now, except that he has fallen in love with Umaera, daughter of the tribe's chief and the tribe's high priestess of Pelor.

During this time, the leaders of House Pontirun have been trying to expand their power by reclaiming holdings that were lost by their House long ago; secret holdings in the Bright Desert that brought the house to power in the first place.

To accomplish this illicit goal, Lord Brondar Pontirun has asked his old friend Margren Waithek for a group of resourceful soldiers who can serve as guards on a diplomatic expedition, ostensibly to negotiate for the trade of foodstuffs to the tal'Shaki, who control a portion of the Bright Desert under which ancient ruins lie, ruins that hold wealth beyond the dreams of even Suel avarice. The March Warden is more than happy to help out his old friend, but he doesn't know the real reason for the mission. However, the March Warden is very interested in obtaining new sources of intelligence and even potential allies against Rary the Traitor's forces, so he has suggested that Lord Brondar also try to secure an alliance with the tal'Shaki, who have a reputation as one of the more moderate of the dervish tribes.

INTRODUCTION

Before play begins, determine if any of the players are members of the Ducal Guard or the Diplomatic Corps, or both, although this would be very unlikely). The March

Warden of the Abbor-Alz East March Ducal Guard assigns character-members to this mission. Character-members of other branches of the Ducal Guard receive orders through their normal channels asking them to go on the mission as part of their duties. Members of the Ducal Guard pay no lifestyle or time unit costs for this scenario; they are assigned to this mission by the March Warden of the East March as part of their duties in the Ducal Guard, and have already paid their time unit cost as part of their Ducal Guard duties.

Members of the Diplomatic Corps are assigned to Lord Brondar's mission at the request of March Warden Lord Margren Waithek, who wishes for Lord Brondar to pursue a formal alliance with the tal'Shaki in addition to pursuing his grain deal. Members of the Diplomatic Corps also pay no lifestyle or time unit cost for this scenario, having already spent the requisite time units as part of their membership in the Diplomatic Corps.

Noble characters can be asked by their houses to help House Pontirun as payment of a minor debt or favor.

Other characters are hired directly by House Pontirun as bodyguards for Lord Brondar Pontirun. Each character that chooses this option is paid a flat fee of 12.5 gp per APL for their services. Note that this is the only way in which out of region players can play this scenario without a character whose home region is the Duchy of Urnst. It is up to the players at this point to come up with a reason why they would be in the employ of House Pontirun for this scenario.

Players who do not wish to use any of these options may not participate in this scenario. You should ask the player to select another character for which this mission would be considered appropriate or to leave the table.

Finally, this is a diplomatic mission. Under no circumstances does Lord Brondar or the March Warden accept any character on the mission who openly bears the emblems of evil deities or powers. Good-aligned nations do not approach new allies by displaying the symbols of evil powers or faiths. Characters who possess these items are ordered to leave them behind with Lord Moran Grek for safekeeping. If someone refuses to do so, that character is not accepted on the mission.

A character that is visibly diseased is unacceptable for this mission as well. For example, a character who wears the mask from ADP1-10 *Sinkhole* cannot participate in this scenario.

Characters that show up for the audience with the March Warden in a drunken, filthy, decrepit, or unkempt appearance or state are forcibly cleaned up, bathed, sobered up, hair cut, clothes mended, and so forth. Likewise, any character that uses armor spikes on their armor, are ordered to remove them. Bloody weapons and armor are cleaned. Damaged weapons or armor are replaced with functional equivalents, to be exchanged upon the character's return. Basically, the characters will be made to look their best.

Take the time to find out about the characters that are being played and make it clear that certain types of characters aren't acceptable due to the nature of the

mission. Suggest that those players either try to play this scenario at a later time or select another character.

If a character chooses not to participate in this scenario, take time now to refigure the APL.

Read or paraphrase the following text to members of the Duchy of Urnst's Ducal Guard or Ducal Diplomatic Corps:

A messenger delivers a sealed order to you, which reads, "A matter of some importance has arisen, in which I need a few who are loyal to the Duchy and understand the importance of silence. You are hereby directed to present yourself immediately before me in Seh." The order is signed "Lord Margren Waithek, March Warden of the East March of the Abbor-Alz."

Read or paraphrase the following text to nobles who are members of House Pontirun:

A messenger delivers a message to you, the wax seal marked with a small scorpion imprint from a signet ring. The message reads, "Please attend me in Seh at your earliest convenience on a matter of importance to our family." The message is signed, "Lord Brondar Pontirun," a name you recognize as being of some importance within House Pontirun.

Read or paraphrase the following text to nobles who are members of other noble houses and who are not members of the Ducal Guard:

A messenger delivers a message to you, marked with the emblem of your house. The message reads, "Please attend Lord Brondar Pontirun in Seh at your earliest convenience. Family honor requires that we repay a minor debt." The message is signed by a minor functionary in your house, whom you recognize as a servant of the head of your house.

Read or paraphrase the following text to those players with characters who are retainers of House Pontirun:

Guarding wagons full of food isn't exactly the noble adventure you had in mind when you signed on with House Pontirun, but it keeps you well fed and comfortable when the sun isn't beating down or the rain isn't pouring. Unfortunately, those days are entirely too few.

So, the chance to escort Lord Brondar Pontirun on an expedition to Seh at least offers you a change of pace.

Once all the characters have a reason for being present, read or paraphrase the following text to all the players collectively:

You stand in a large room outside the March Warden's audience hall, waiting patiently as ordered. A number of other individuals stand in the room with you.

Allow the players a moment to introduce their characters to each other before proceeding with the following.

A bell rings and you are led into the hall, a vast room decorated with the banners of the dominant noble houses of the Duchy.

Standing before you are several older Suel men, dressed in the fine garb that easily identifies them as nobles. One of the men wears a Ducal Guard uniform and is obviously a high-ranking officer.

Another of the men is tall and regal, dressed all in green and yellow; his clothing is decorated with green scorpions intertwined in a confusing dance of stings and crawls. A dark green jade scorpion pendant dangles from his neck.

Noble characters can make a Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 10) to recognize the colors of yellow and green and the scorpion motif as the livery of House Pontirun, one of the most influential noble merchant houses in the Duchy; character members of House Pontirun automatically succeed at this check. A successful Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 15) allows noble characters to recall that House Pontirun is in the business of growing, shipping, and distributing food throughout the Duchy. Character members of House Pontirun receive a +2 circumstance bonus to this check.

Non-noble characters may recognize the yellow and green livery combined with scorpion designs as the livery of House Pontirun if they succeed a Knowledge (nobility and royalty) skill check (DC 15). A check at DC 20 allows the character to identify House Pontirun's business interests in the Duchy.

A successful Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check at (DC 27) identifies the man with the March Warden as Lord Brondar Pontirun, the diplomat who successfully arranged for shipments of grain to be delivered to the restored Shield Lands recently.

A character that wishes to appraise the dark green jade scorpion pendant may do so. A successful Appraise check (DC 25) correctly identifies the value of the pendant at 250 gp.

The remaining man seems stern and quiet spoken, but the other two seem to defer to him. He has the look and bearing of a soldier, but does not wear a uniform.

Characters who previously played URD1-07 *Fools' Gold* recognize the quiet noble as Lord Margren Waithek, March Warden of Seh and Lord Commander of the Abbor-Alz East March Ducal Guard. They also recognize the man in uniform as Lord Captain Moran Grek, Castellan of Seh.

Looking up at you, the quiet man rises from his seat and walks toward you. The other two men become quiet as he speaks. "Greetings, I am Lord Margren Waithek, March Warden of the East March of the Abbor-Alz."

"You've been assembled to escort my old friend here on a diplomatic mission to the Bright Desert, something about negotiating a grain deal with a tribe of dervishes. At my suggestion, he's also going to attempt to convince the dervishes to ally with us against Rary's forces. You're expected to look after him along the way and to not embarrass him or yourselves while he's busy negotiating."

"This is Lord Brondar Pontirun," he says as he motions to the man at his side. "You are under his command until you return. You'll be leaving just after dawn, so I suggest that you make appropriate preparations for a desert journey. I believe Lord Moran can fill you in on the rest and give you a bit of information about the dervishes."

When he's finished, he leaves the room and Moran Grek, Castellan of Seh and Lord-Commander of the East March, addresses you. "You can draw horses from the stables for this mission if you need them," he says. "Naturally, you'll be expected to return them. In addition, the Quartermaster has prepared four pack mules that you'll take along to carry the necessary supplies."

Lord Moran says, "I'll let Lord Brondar fill you in on some of the details about the tal'Shaki now." He then takes a seat and seems to be listening rather intently.

Lord Brondar steps forward. "It's a pleasure to meet you," he says. "I'm going to be negotiating with the tal'Shaki tribe of dervishes. I expect you'll all follow the March Warden's advice and try not to embarrass me. I may as well get started now. What do you know about the dervishes in the Bright Desert?"

At this point, the players have a chance to ask Lord Brondar questions. Two points that Lord Brondar emphasizes here are:

- What happens to someone caught stealing from the tal'Shaki
- The relationship between guest and host and guest and guest

Once he's rambled a bit, Lord Brondar seems to be a bit fatigued and flustered. Wrap up with:

"I'm sure you have more questions, but we'll have plenty of time to talk on the trip through the Abbor-Alz. I'm a bit tired, if you don't mind." With that, he turns, nods at Lord Grek, and exits the room.

Lord Moran steps forward again, "You should report to the Quartermaster immediately to finalize the arrangements for your supplies. Get a good night's sleep; Lord Brondar wants to get started early tomorrow."

Allow the characters to make reasonable preparations for a desert journey. Equipment from the *Player's Handbook* can be purchased in Seh at list price; monies spent here should be recorded as expenditures during the adventure on the adventure certificate.

The March Warden is providing enough food and water for three weeks and is also providing four pack mules, so the characters do not need to worry about these supplies or how to carry them; however, the mules cannot carry additional weight at this point, as they are burdened with a large amount of food and water. On the way back, two of the mules will be able to carry looted equipment. The mules are well trained and only moderately stubborn. If you have time, you can feel free to throw in some shenanigans with the mules such as Handle Animal checks to get them moving, and so forth. Have fun with them.

Two servants accompany Lord Brondar on this mission. One of them is Dur'ok, a dervish who instructs Lord Brondar in the culture and ways of the tal'Shaki and serves as a guide for the party. He speaks only Flan and is something of a coward, hence his service to Lord Brondar rather than remaining with his tribe. Dur'ok's statistics are below:

☞ **Dur'ok:** Male human Rgr1; hp 11; see Appendix I.

The other servant is Admo, Lord Brondar's personal manservant who oversees Lord Brondar's baggage and cooks his meals. When combat occurs, Lord Brondar and Admo do not get involved unless their lives are threatened, and then would prefer to run away. Dur'ok tries to hide when combat starts; only if combat lasts for six or more rounds does he use his bow to help out.

☞ **Lord Brondar:** Male human Ari3.

☞ **Admo:** Male human Com1.

If any character is an officer in the Ducal Guard, bears the rank of Subaltern, Lance Colonel, or Colonel, Lord Waithek names that officer as second in command of the mission and charges him personally with the success of the mission.

ENCOUNTER 1: TAKING INVENTORY OF THE SITUATION

You make your way through the courtyard to the quartermaster's "office", a rather large building that resembles a warehouse more than anything else. A scarred, one-armed clerk wearing a Ducal Guard uniform sits here doing paperwork. He looks up as you enter and demands that you state your business.

Once the characters have made it clear why they're here, the "clerk" identifies himself as the quartermaster:

"Ah, I was told you'd be coming soon. I'm Master Sergeant Loshor, the quartermaster. I've got standard desert supplies all ready to go and the mules will be ready and packed in the morning. You've all been to the Bright Desert before, yes?"

The characters might have questions about traveling in the Bright Desert. The quartermaster can provide them with these gems of knowledge:

- Carry and drink lots of water.
- Make sure you have cold weather gear for the nights; it gets cold out there.
- Don't wear metal armor, and don't use barding on your horse.
- When a sandstorm occurs, find a place to hunker down rather than trying to travel through it.

- Water your horses as often as you can.
- If you see any dervishes, kill them as quickly as you can. Yes, this contradicts their mission. The quartermaster lost his arm to nomads during a fight and basically considers dervishes and nomads the same people.

The quartermaster also needs to know the answers to some questions:

- Who needs a cold weather outfit?
- Who needs to use a horse?
- Is there any other equipment you need to check out?

The characters can check out any needed equipment. The quartermaster makes it clear that everything checked out should be returned in good condition and that if it's not it comes out of their pay.

Once all questions are answered and the characters are equipped, proceed with the following:

You are summoned before dawn the next day to prepare yourselves for departure. A breakfast is readied for you, but there is no sign of Lord Brondar. The sun rises and climbs into the sky, but still there is no sign of Lord Brondar. Finally, as the morning bell finishes ringing ten times, Lord Brondar can be seen ambling down the street towards you.

Once Lord Brondar arrives and mounts up, the group departs.

Run three game days of travel through the Abbor-Alz and into the Bright Desert. The general flow of this travel is as follows:

- **Day 1:** Travel through the village of Tolann, where Lord Brondar insists on stopping for a few minutes to look at the battlefield where the Ducal Guard recently destroyed a large orc army. Lord Brondar listens intently if any characters were present at the battle and can relate stories of it to him. The group camps about 30 miles south of Tolann that night, clearly on the way to cross the Abbor-Alz into the Bright Desert. There are some signs of orcs, but no orcs are spotted.
- **Day 2:** Travel up and over the crest of the Abbor-Alz. As the group begins their descent, the vastness of the wasteland before them becomes clear. The party camps that night at the end of the Abbor-Alz foothills, right on the edge of the Bright Desert.
- **Day 3:** The party travels through the Bright Desert. Have each player make Fortitude saves as described in the Travel in the Bright Desert section of this scenario. The party camps for the night about 50 miles into the desert near a large rock outcropping that shelters them from the cold wind; because of this, Fortitude saves against the cold won't be necessary.
- **Day 4:** The party begins their approach to the tal'Shaki encampment. They have Encounter 2 early in the day, before any Fortitude saves are made.

You should try to get through this rather quickly, as it's basically boring travel stuff intended to provide some semblance of the travel experience. However, it also provides the characters a chance to interact with Lord Brondar and find out more about the tal'Shaki.

Let the characters ask Lord Brondar questions about the tal'Shaki. He patiently explains to them as much as they ask about the tal'Shaki culture. He does not volunteer information; it is the characters' responsibility to ask.

Proceed to Encounter 2.

ENCOUNTER 2: FOUL WIND

A small pond seeps from the desert floor here, protected from the sun and wind by the shade of several large rock formations to three sides. Thick, brightly colored brush and even several small-to-medium trees emerge from the ground here, fed by this wellspring of life in the harsh desert. The muddy area around the small pond is covered with tracks of all sorts; this is obviously a well-used watering hole.

Lurking in the brush is an achaierai that is looking for a little fun. At higher APLs, there is more than one of these creatures. The bird has been lurking near this water hole in the hopes of ambushing some travelers to entertain itself (or themselves at higher APLs). The bird waits until the group seems to have relaxed and is concentrating on the water supply before it moves to attack.

The bird(s) use the bright coloring of the desert plants to camouflage themselves, giving them a +5 circumstance (for contrast) bonus. Detecting the achaierai while they are hiding requires a successful Spot check with the following DCs.

- APL 2 (DC 11)
- APL 4 and 6 (DC 30)
- APL 8 and 10 (DC 32)

The birds, if more than one are spread out throughout the brushy area, typically about 20 feet from one another. If not spotted and if no one stumbles into them accidentally, the bird(s) wait for their prey to be in position.

If someone stumbles into the bird(s), the bird(s) deal with that person and then, depending on the situation, either flee, if the party appears too formidable or it has been reduced to half hit points or lower by spells or missile fire while dealing with the serendipitous fool) or close with the rest of the party if it still thinks it has a reasonable chance of killing them all.

The characters might reasonably expect an ambush of some kind here before they move into the area. If they express this concern to Lord Brondar or Dur'ok, Lord Brondar will discuss it with Dur'ok:

Lord Brondar turns and says something to Dur'ok. Dur'ok responds, and Lord Brondar says, "Dur'ok assures me that places

such as this are considered neutral territories in the desert. Water is hard to come by, and even mortal enemies put aside their differences here. It is for this reason that many great meetings are held in these places. Of course, there are occasional predators, but no dervish will harm us while we're here."

Characters who speak Flan, sometimes called Flanae, can understand Lord Brondar's conversation with Dur'ok.

The characters might still choose to post a watch. The logical place to do so is on the approach to the watering hole. If the group places a watch here, the achaierai uses its black cloud to deal with the guard(s) at a moment when the rest of the characters seem to be distracted by the watering hole.

Refer to DM Aid 1: Map of Encounter 2 for the layout of the area.

APL 2 (EL 5)

➤ **Achaierai:** hp 39, see *Monster Manual*.

APL 4 (EL 7)

➤ **Achaierai, Advanced:** hp 60; see Appendix I.

APL 6 (EL 9)

➤ **Achaierai, Advanced (2):** hp 60, 60; see Appendix I.

APL 8 (EL 11)

➤ **Achaierai, Advanced (3):** hp 80, 80, 80; see Appendix I.

APL 10 (EL 13)

➤ **Achaierai, Advanced (5):** hp 80, 80, 80, 80, 80; see Appendix I.

Tactics (single bird): A single achaierai approaches as quietly as possible, hoping to take the prey by surprise. Once within range it uses its black cloud to try and disable anyone on lookout, then concentrates on opponents in the following order of preference:

- Anyone who seems to prefer using a bow; the bird is aware that it is extremely vulnerable to missile fire
- Anyone who is lightly armored or unarmored who might be an arcane spellcaster; the bird is aware of the nature of arcane magic and moves to protect itself. The bird is intelligent enough to recognize a spell component pouch.
- Anyone wearing medium or heavy armor; the bird is aware of the threat that weapons pose, but considers missile fire and spells more dangerous. It relies on attacks of opportunity to hinder more heavily armored opponents until it can deal with archers and spellcasters

Tactics (multiple birds): The achaierai work together, moving in to use a blanket of black clouds to cover their opponents. They attack in pairs when possible, against

opponents in the order listed above. Each pair works together, acting on the same initiative number and moving toward the same purpose. At APL 8, one pair attacks spellcasters, while the other single achaierai engages fighter-types. At APL 10, one pair attacks spellcasters, the next pair goes after melee fighters, and the final lone achaierai seeks out archers.

Remember, achaierai are intelligent and evil. They delight in causing pain and misery, but do not do so if it means certain death for them. They do not do stupid things in combat, and they do not provoke attacks of opportunity unless it allows them to gain an advantage over the characters.

If the entire party is killed here, the achaierai make short work of Lord Brondar and his two associates. The bodies of the group are recovered by a special patrol of the Ducal Guard, sent to find out what happened to the mission, but it is several weeks before the group is considered missing.

If the entire party is killed here, their bodies are eventually be recovered (with equipment intact) and returned to the Duchy. Anyone who wishes to be raised from the dead requires a *resurrection* spell rather than a *raise dead* spell because of the time that has elapsed. Anyone raised from the dead because of a total party kill here lose six time units (in addition to the time unit(s) spent on the scenario) before their bodies are recovered and they are raised. There is not a cleric of sufficient level in Seh to cast *resurrection*, so the bodies are transported to Seltaren for the spells. No regional influence point are required for these spells as the March Warden wants to know what happened and has pulled some strings, although the characters are still be expected to pay for the spells themselves.

Treasure: A successful Knowledge (arcana) skill check (DC 12) or an Appraise skill check (DC 18) reveals that achaierai feathers are usable for fine quill pens, and are prized by arcane spellcasters in the Duchy of Urnst for scribing scrolls. Each intact feather has a value of 5 gp, and a total of 20 per bird are available.

APL 2 and 4:	100 gp
APL 6:	200 gp
APL 8:	300 gp
APL 10:	500 gp

Development: It's reasonable for the characters to wish to camp in the area of the watering hole. It's well protected from the elements and relatively defensible. Lord Brondar agrees with camping if the characters wish it. However, it's early in the day; the party can make the tal'Shaki encampment in only a couple of hours.

Once all is resolved, proceed to Encounter 3.

ENCOUNTER 3: AMBASSADORS

Following the route selected by Dur'ok, you crest a large hill and face a breathtaking sight; hundreds of tents, of varying sizes, lie

below the hill on the other side. A herd of horses, easily numbering over a 1000 and most rivaling the best that House Naleara's stables can offer, wanders the grassy desert foraging for food. The camp below you is quiet; the only movement is that of the guards on the camp perimeter and the small group of riders that are approaching you.

The party has arrived at the encampment of the tal'Shaki, a moderate tribe of Bright Desert dervishes who have been hard pressed by Rary's forces of late. The group approaching the party is a welcoming committee of sorts; Lord Brondar and his friends are expected.

As the riders approach, you see that one of them is a beautiful Flan woman in her mid-20s with long, flowing black hair and a well-tanned complexion.

The woman is escorted by four riders, each carrying a scimitar, dagger, and a composite longbow and each perfectly comfortable in the saddle. The riders stop about 100 yards away from you, then the woman approaches you on horseback alone.

As the woman draws near, you can see that she is dressed in white robes with gold trim and wears a holy symbol around her neck in the shape of a golden sun emblazoned with the face of a wise old man. She rides quickly to your group and halts before you. "Greetings," she calls out in the Common tongue, "I bid welcome to the guests of the tal'Shaki. I am Umaera, High Priestess of the tal'Shaki. I bid you to come and take water with us."

Allow the party to make Knowledge (religion) skill checks (DC 10) to recognize the holy symbol as that of Pelor, god of the Sun. A skill check at DC 15 allows the character to recall that Pelor is a Flan deity. Clerics of Pelor or Mayaheine receive a +5 competence bonus to these skill checks.

Lord Brondar dismounts slowly and bows, then addresses Umaera in another language. They exchange words briefly, then Lord Brondar turns to you, "This is Umaera, the High Priestess of the tal'Shaki. She is, I believe, also the daughter of one of the elders from their Council of Horses. She says that she has prepared a fine tent for us, and she will be taking us there now."

If a character that speaks Flan is present, that character can understand Umaera and Lord Brondar's conversation. Lord Brondar has represented the truth to the characters.

If any character is injured, Umaera approaches and asks permission (in Common) to heal that person's injuries. Umaera carries enough spells to fully heal every person present.

If a cleric or paladin of Pelor or Mayaheine is present, Umaera addresses that individual as "Sunbrother" or "Sunsister" as appropriate to the character's gender.

If the party bears any dead with them and asks about the possibility of raising the dead party members, Umaera explains that the tal'Shaki consider death to be a beginning rather than an end and that it would be wrong to bring someone back from their journey through the sky. The tal'Shaki do not raise the dead. Umaera offers to cast *preserve corpse* on the body so that the fallen warrior

can be buried in his homeland, which Lord Brondar readily accepts.

Umaera leads your party into the midst of the dervish encampment and stops before a large pavilion-style tent of white cloth. "This is the dwelling we have prepared for you. It is our hope that it will shelter you from the heat of the sun during the day and the cold of the night. Inside, we may share water."

Umaera leads you into a lushly appointed tent. Plush pillows cover a fine rug on the ground beneath the tent. A large bowl of fruit and another of fresh pure water are in the room, as is obvious space for bedding. There appears to be another chamber on either end of the tent for sleeping.

Umaera steps up to the bowl of water and takes a handful, drinking slowly from her hand. She then motions for each of you to come and drink from the bowl. "This is the sharing of water," she explains in Common.

If there is a male cleric or paladin of Pelor or Mayaheine present, Umaera approaches that character and takes him/her by the hand and leads the character to the bowl. Allow the characters to make a Sense Motive check (DC 20) to determine that Umaera seems to have some affection for that character. If more than one cleric or paladin of Pelor or Mayaheine is present, choose the one with the higher Charisma score.

Refer to DM Aid 2: Map of Encounter 5 to see the layout of the tent.

Once everyone has had a drink from the water bowl, continue:

Umaera smiles at you pleasantly and takes her leave of you. Lord Brondar speaks, "My manservant and I will take the northern bedchamber. The rest of you can settle into the southern bedchamber with Dur'ok. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must prepare to meet with the Council of Horses. You all should remain here. A dervish will be outside if you need anything; he will fetch Umaera. Remember, behave yourselves."

With that, he motions for his manservant to carry his baggage into the northern bedchamber of the tent and disappears into his quarters.

Once the party is settled in, read the following to the group.

Shortly after departing, Umaera returns with two dervishes. She smiles pleasantly and asks if Lord Brondar is prepared.

Lord Brondar emerges from his private chamber in your shared tent, dressed in a fine noble's outfit. "I am going to visit with the Council of Horses," he says, "the group of men that leads this tribe. You should remain here on your best behavior. I will return soon. Umaera has stationed two dervishes outside the door who understand some of our tongue; if you need anything, ask them and they will fetch her. She does ask that you remain in the tent here, at least until the hot part of the day is over."

The characters should note that despite the apparent heat outside, their tent remains at a comfortable temperature. Anyone using a *detect magic* spell detects that the tent is radiating Transmutation magic. If anyone asks Umaera about this, she says that she has asked Pelor to protect the

tent's occupants from the harsh desert climate during their stay.

If anyone leaves the tent during this time, the dervish guards escort the guest back to his quarters if they notice him. If they don't notice him, start making the character perform the required Fortitude saves. A couple of hours later, the dervishes can bring back the unconscious and sunburned body of the escapee.

Approximately four hours later, Lord Brondar returns from his meeting with the Council of Horses, waves his hand at you as if gesturing you away, and enters his bedchamber without speaking. He seems to be tired from the heat.

Development: Proceed to Encounter 4.

ENCOUNTER 4: RITES OF PASSAGE

When the sun begins its passage down to the horizon, the air cools, and the camp begins to come alive. Gradually, the sounds of laughter and music can be heard in the distance. Soon, a messenger arrives at your tent to speak with Lord Brondar, who in turn speaks to you.

"It is a custom of the tal'Shaki to honor the arrival of guests. We are invited to a feast in our honor. Clean yourselves and array yourself in your best attire. Polish your armor and weapons until they gleam.

"Finally, if you find yourself speaking to a dervish, be polite and inoffensive while remaining truthful. Nothing offends these people so much as thievery or lies." With that, he goes to his chamber to prepare himself for the feast.

Allow the characters to put on their best. This is the time to polish armor and weapons, put on nobles outfits, polish weapons, and so forth. If any character has shown a propensity for womanizing or being overtly sexual in any way, Lord Brondar makes it clear that such behavior is extremely offensive to the tal'Shaki and might cause the offender serious trouble.

If any character does not wish to attend the party, Lord Brondar informs them that it simply isn't an option. To decline the invitation would offend the tal'Shaki and prevent them from allying with the Duchy. Even worse, it would prevent them from even agreeing to his grain deal.

During this encounter, the characters have a chance to roleplay. Keep careful track of who the characters impress and offend. The action of the characters here decides whether or not the tal'Shaki choose to ally with the Duchy or to give up the fight against Rary's forces, so it's imperative that the characters be on their best behavior.

Remind the players that for this encounter, everything they say will be in character.

You can use the tracking sheet provided in DM's Aid 4 to track the results of this encounter. Once the players are ready to proceed, read or paraphrase this text:

Umaera arrives with two dervishes who seem rather friendly and who speak halting Common. "It is the custom of the tal'Shaki to honor those who become our guests with a feast. Please follow me."

She turns and motions for the Lord Brondar and the party to follow. Lord Brondar takes the place besides Umaera and begins chatting with her as she leads the party through the encampment toward a large pavilion-style tent flying several brightly colored streamers. The evening air seems to be taking a chill rather quickly, even though the sun has barely fallen below the horizon.

Two dervishes hold the tent flaps aside as you enter, and you behold a lavish sight: brightly colored rugs and cushions cover the ground everywhere.

Large silver bowls are filled with fresh water and what appears to be a punch or wine. Platters of food line the center of long, narrow tables that run the length of the tent. Most of the food is fruit and vegetables, but loaves of fresh bread and large platters of meat are also present in abundance. A silver fountain springs from the floor in the center of the room, where many young, beautiful tal'Shaki women are gathered.

At the northern end of the tent is a long narrow table that runs perpendicularly to the rest of the tables. Several older dervishes sit at this table, drinking, talking, and laughing. At the other tables, more dervishes drink, talk, and laugh, although many eyes now look at you as you stand before the gathered tal'Shaki tribe.

Umaera says, "Please enjoy yourselves. I have arranged for each of you to have an escort who speaks your language, albeit with some difficulty; few of us have traveled to Rok'she Nare. Please share your stories with our people and tell them of your land, the valley by the sea that you call home. Lord Brondar, the Council of Horses has arranged a place for you with them so that they can continue discussing your proposal."

With that, Umaera leads Lord Brondar toward the north end of the tent. Dervishes approach each of you, some uttering rather good Common and others barely seeming to understand.

If the players ask, none of them recalls seeing this tent earlier in the day when they arrived and none of them heard it being raised. This tent was created with a *rod of splendor* and radiates several different kinds of magic if someone is rude enough to cast *detect magic* during the reception.

If the characters ask the dervishes, they say that Umaera crafts this tent using magic from time to time. They know of the *rod of splendor*, but do not differentiate between spells and magical items. To them, it is something that Umaera does.

Pay careful attention to characters who meet any of the following characteristics or who carry out any of these behaviors:

- Characters who carry the holy symbol of Pelor, the primary deity of these dervishes. The leaders of the tribe watch these characters with great interest and question the character at length about life in the Duchy and about the worship of Pelor in the Duchy. This character gets to spend a great amount of time

paired up with Umaera, who has many questions about the worship of Pelor in the Duchy of Urnst.

- Characters who carry the holy symbol of Mayaheine, a deity familiar to most worshippers of Pelor. Umaera is aware of Mayaheine's existence.
- Characters who carry the holy symbol of Heironeous, a deity with which these dervishes are extremely familiar, although they primarily worship Pelor.
- Characters who espouse the Skeptic philosophy or who try to debate such philosophy with the dervishes, questioning the divinity of the dervishes' deity is not a way to win influence among the tribe.
- Characters who are flirtatious in their conduct, who ogle dervishes in a lustful way, or who make romantic or sexual overtures to dervishes; such behavior is offensive and inappropriate to the tal'Shaki. The first offense causes a character to receive some very harsh and intimidating glares. A second offense causes the "victim" to challenge the character to a horse race.
- Characters who challenge a member of the tribe to a horse race without having been "insulted" by a member of the tribe.
- Characters that openly question the credibility of tales told by a dervish. These dervishes do not lie about their exploits in battle.
- Characters that are obviously boastful braggarts; the tal'Shaki are not impressed by empty bragging. When a character is telling her tale, ask if she is exaggerating significantly. If she is, have her roll a Bluff check (DC 20). If she succeeds, she manages to sound genuine. If the check fails, she sounds like a braggart and tallies a negative mark.

The actions of these characters can have a severe impact, positive or negative, on the outcome of this scenario. While most of the dervishes do not speak Common, there is at least one dervish of some influence who does speak Common for each character, and another two for Lord Brondar. Thus, each character has an equal chance to participate in this encounter.

Explanations of behavior that offend the dervishes do not sway their initial opinions. To the dervishes, their first impression is the impression they remember. Only drastic occurrences can change a dervish's mind about someone, such as someone who was thought to be a coward or braggart boldly rushing into combat against heavy odds.

If any character who adheres to Skeptic philosophy was espousing Skepticism in an offensive manner or if any character made any kind of disparaging or insulting remark about the religion of the tal'Shaki, word of the remark spreads throughout the tribe quickly and all the votes later are against alliance with the Duchy.

Lastly, allow characters that make a successful Spot check (DC 20) to see a man with a dark scorpion-shaped mark on his right cheek (D'ran Dru'shi) present at the reception. He seems to intently watch Lord Brondar and

the characters. A successful Sense Motive check (DC 25) reveals that he seems to dislike the characters and Lord Brondar in a non-personal sort of way. If a character tries to corner or question D'ran Dru'shi, he ignores them and continues talking to some of the dervishes that seem friendly to him.

During the festivities, D'ran does, at some point get close enough to Lord Brondar to hear him discussing an alliance between the tal'Shaki and the Duchy. The characters might ask about this or try to follow D'ran around the tent.

Questions asked about D'ran Dru'shi are met with polite refusals from the dervishes. They don't talk about their guests to other guests. If the character presses the matter beyond two refusals, tally a negative vote for that character.

If the characters ask Lord Brondar about D'ran Dru'shi, he simply says that he is apparently another guest of the tal'Shaki and reminds the characters of the code between the guest and the host that the tal'Shaki hold. Hopefully, the characters have the prescience to ask this question in private or at least very quietly.

Each negative vote grants a -2 circumstance penalty to the Diplomacy check required in Encounter 6. At your leisure, severe or repeated offenses can incur a larger penalty; use your best judgment here.

Each positive vote grants a +2 circumstance penalty to the Diplomacy check required in Encounter 6. Add up all the penalties and bonuses here and record the total bonus (or penalty) for use later in Encounter 6.

If any character carries the mighty composite longbow from Fools' Gold, D'ran takes special note of that character. During Encounter 5, D'ran concentrates his combat efforts on that character if given the chance.

Assume that Lord Brondar impressed the tal'Shaki leaders; this counts for a +2 circumstance bonus as well.

For each character present that can converse with the tal'Shaki in Flan, add another +1 circumstance bonus to the Diplomacy skill check that occurs in Encounter 6.

If the question should arise, the tal'Shaki are aware that there were centaurs in the Bright Desert until recently, but they have no specific information about the Scouring Wind tribe of centaurs featured in URD1-02 *To Save the Scouring Wind* and URD2-01 *Dust in the Wind*. They know that some of the centaurs fought against Rary, but they have not heard of these centaurs for some time. If a character should mention that the Scouring Wind tribe chose to seek safety from the predations of Rary's forces in the Duchy, add another +2 circumstance bonus to the Diplomacy check that is to be made in Encounter 6.

If the characters ask the tal'Shaki about the achaierai, the tal'Shaki tell them that they know of these "sand demons" and that they seem to be in Rary's service. A few, no more than two or three, of the tal'Shaki openly wear achaierai feathers as part of their apparel. The tal'Shaki speak of the "belching cloud of death" and the "sinister laughing howl" of the birds; they also mention that Umaera "rains fire on them from the sky," meaning that when the birds attack, she targets them with *flame strike* spells.

Note that the negotiations have yet to happen; no decisions have been made by the tal'Shaki yet, but these first impressions are the most important ones, unless there is a tie of sorts. In that event, the negotiation skill of the character that does the negotiations has some importance.

The dervishes themselves discuss racing and riding at every opportunity. If a character expresses an interest in participating without directly challenging an individual dervish, the dervishes ask the character to participate in a "grand race" involving multiple riders at sunset in two days time. Have the character make a Ride check. Assume that the best tal'Shaki rider makes a 30 on his Ride check. If the character beats DC 30, she wins the race and the group earns an additional +2 circumstance bonus on the Diplomacy check in *Encounter 6*. This bonus can be earned by more than one character; if four characters beat DC 30, the group gets an additional +8 circumstance bonus to the Diplomacy check in *Encounter 6*.

If anyone wishes to buy or trade for a tal'Shaki bred horse, the dervishes tells the interested buyer that such trades are only made with trusted friends, which the characters aren't, at least not yet.

Development: Proceed to *Encounter 5*.

ENCOUNTER 5: THIEF IN THE NIGHT

Friendly people who seem to wish them only goodwill surround the characters. If the characters ask Lord Brondar about setting a watch, he tells them that it is taboo for a dervish to attack his guests or for guests to perform hostilities against each other in any way and that basically setting a watch would be overdoing it on paranoia.

If the characters set a watch, characters are paranoid, after all, Lord Brondar does not allow a guard to be posted in his quarters, as it is an affront on his privacy, or outside the tent that houses the characters, as it would insult the tal'Shaki. The characters have to make do with a guard just outside Lord Brondar's bedchamber.

Allow the character or characters on watch at approximately 3 AM to hear D'ran Dru'shi moving up to Lord Brondar's bedding. At this point, D'ran Dru'shi has cut his way into Lord Brondar's section of the tent and is almost upon his intended victim, so there is no chance of a guard interfering with what is about to happen.

Whether or not the guards hear anything or even if there are no guards posted, Lord Brondar hears D'ran moving toward him and awakens in time to draw his longsword and engage D'ran. If the guards heard D'ran moving, this happens just as they begin to react. Read the following text aloud to all the characters.

You hear a sudden shout and the clatter of steel on steel. The sounds of combat erupt from Lord Brondar's chamber and you

hear a few heated blows being exchanged and then a loud scream that can only be Lord Brondar.

The characters presumably rush in to find D'ran Dru'shi having just defeated Lord Brondar. Lord Brondar was hit with a critical hit with D'ran's scimitar and received enough damage to go beyond -10 hit points. Admo sleeps quietly and soundly, in the dark corner of the tent beyond Lord Brondar's now-dead body. Dru'shi cast his *sleep* spell into the area in an effort to put both Admo and Lord Brondar to sleep before he entered. Unfortunately, Lord Brondar made his saving throw.

Refer to DM Aid 2: Map of *Encounter 5*.

The experience award for this encounter is reduced to reflect that the characters only need to combat D'ran for 3 rounds. If the party is in serious danger of being wiped out, bring in the dervishes early. If the players seem to enjoy the challenge, feel free to stretch it out a round or two longer.

Remember, by default, guards interrupt the fight in three rounds. Once they arrive, continue the battle with the guards' assistance. They attack to subdue until one of their number is dropped.

D'ran surrenders if reduced to less than 10 hit points. The guards do not kill him if he surrenders or is rendered unconscious, and in fact stabilize him if he is mortally wounded, using untrained Heal checks (DC 15).

Umaera accompanies the dervish guards, but does not participate in the battle. She does attempt to stabilize any dying characters or guards with *cure minor wounds*.

APL 2 (EL 8)

☛ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr8; hp 60; see Appendix I.

☛ **tal'Shaki Guards (4):** Male human Rgr4; hp 36, 36, 36, 36; see Appendix I.

APL 4 (EL 10)

☛ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr10; hp 74; see Appendix I.

☛ **tal'Shaki Guards (4):** Male human Rgr4; hp 36, 36, 36, 36; see Appendix I.

APL 6 (EL 12)

☛ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr12; hp 88; see Appendix I.

☛ **tal'Shaki Guards (6):** Male human Rgr4; hp 36, 36, 36, 36, 36, 36; see Appendix I.

APL 8 (EL 14)

☛ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr14; hp 102; see Appendix I.

➤ **tal'Shaki Guards (6):** Male human Rgr4; hp 36, 36, 36, 36, 36, 36; see Appendix I.

APL 10 (EL 16)

➤ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr16; hp 128; see Appendix I.

➤ **tal'Shaki Guards (8):** Male human Rgr4; hp 36, 36, 36, 36, 36, 36, 36, 36; see Appendix I.

Dru'shi was able to overhear conversation at the reception earlier and has decided to put an end to any proposed alliance. He's aware that if an alliance does happen, it will likely be sealed by Lord Brondar's marriage to Umaera, or one of the characters, if that's more appropriate, and quite simply he's a jealous man. He thinks that killing Lord Brondar and framing Admo for the murder will stop the alliance; he didn't count on Lord Brondar waking up.

As described above, three rounds after the characters begin engaging Dru'shi, a group of tal'Shaki dervishes accompanied by Umaera enter the tent with weapons drawn, assess the situation, and attempt to apprehend Dru'shi; he is clearly guilty of the murder of Lord Brondar.

This of course, assumes that the characters don't do something stupid like attack the dervish guards as they enter the tent; make it clear that the dervishes seem intent on apprehending the apparent assassin, not assisting him. Anyone who attacks a dervish has violated a strong tal'Shaki custom and is punished in the traditional manner, and since it might come up, the body of a character driven from camp for attacking a dervish is not recoverable. The character is dead and cannot be raised. Should a character attack one of the guards, impose a -10 circumstance penalty on the Diplomacy check in Encounter 6.

If the characters don't prevent it, Dru'shi is stripped of all property and driven into the desert at first light without water. His property is given to the characters so that it can be returned to Lord Brondar's family. It is a matter of honor amongst the tal'Shaki that amends be made for the death of a guest; the assassin's equipment will fill this need.

If a character left a bad impression with the dervishes earlier, she can erase that image now if she challenges D'ran Dru'shi to a first blood duel in front of the dervishes. The dervishes grant the request to duel Dru'shi if the character wishes to do so, and watch solemnly while the combat plays out. No matter who wins, Dru'shi is forced from the camp at first light and instructed not to return. The dervishes do not allow more than one character to fight Dru'shi under any circumstances; if anyone asks, change the "vote" for that character to negative. Attempts to "buff up" the challenger have a similar negative impact.

If a character possesses the power to raise Lord Brondar from the dead and attempts to do so within sight of Umaera, Umaera informs the character that the beliefs of the tal'Shaki prohibit raising the dead. "We do not

disturb those who journey through the sky with Pelor. Death is the beginning of their glorious light as it shines on us." She offers to cast *gentle repose* so that Lord Brondar can be buried by his family when the party returns to the Duchy of Urnst.

If asked, she also casts *speak with dead* (five questions) on behalf of the party so that they can ask questions of Lord Brondar. Regardless of who casts the spell, the characters can gain two free insights into Lord Brondar's intended negotiating tactics here. Refer to the list of "bonus points" that the negotiator can make to help sway the Council toward alliance in Encounter 6 and give the players two of them.

If the character raises Lord Brondar anyway, there is no hope for an alliance. The tal'Shaki are friendly but not overly pleasant, and do not speak or look directly at Lord Brondar. Once Lord Brondar has recovered, Umaera delivers a request that the negotiating party leave the camp at dawn the next day.

If it becomes an issue, Lord Brondar does want to be raised from the dead, even if it causes the failure of the negotiations.

The smart thing for the characters to do at this point is accept Umaera's offer to cast *preserve corpse* and have the diplomat raised when they return to the Duchy.

Development: Proceed to Encounter 6, unless someone foolishly raised Lord Brondar from the dead against the tribe's explicit wishes. If that's the case, proceed to Encounter 9.

ENCOUNTER 6: THE BARGAINING TABLE

Lord Brondar lies dead from an assassin's blade and your mission lies in chaos. The tal'Shaki seem saddened by the death of Lord Brondar and insulted that one of their guests committed an act of violence against another guest.

D'ran Dru'shi was hobbled and driven from the camp without water at dawn of the morning after he slew Lord Brondar. Umaera explains to you that this is the way of the tal'Shaki and is the law of the desert. One does not betray the hospitality of one's host. Umaera and the elders offer their regrets for the betrayal of D'ran Dru'shi and the death of Lord Brondar.

If any of the characters wish to pursue the negotiations at this point, Umaera informs them that the Council of Horses is considering Lord Brondar's proposal and that the group should select someone to stand in Lord Brondar's place. She makes it clear if there is a follower of Pelor, Mayaheine, or Heironeous present that the Council expects that person to continue the negotiations.

Continue with the following text.

Life continues much as usual for the tal'Shaki. Hunting parties come and go, music is played and songs are sung, and horses are raced. The tal'Shaki seem to have been born in the saddle.

Shortly after nightfall on the third day, Umaera presents herself before your group and says that the Council of Horses wishes to meet with the representative of Rok'she Nare shortly after dawn tomorrow to discuss Lord Brondar's proposal.

Lord Brondar is dead, and someone has to sit down at the negotiating table with the leaders of the tal'Shaki and negotiate the alliance. The tal'Shaki expect one character to be present. If more than one character is present, it is a sign of weakness and counts as a strike against the alliance.

Let the characters decide who does the negotiating. If there is a cleric or paladin of Pelor, Mayaheine, or Heironeous (Pelor preferred) present, the tal'Shaki expect that person to be the Duchy's representative at the negotiating table. Umaera makes this clear by pointedly delivering her message to that character and ignoring everyone else. You, as the DM, should respond to questions for Umaera from only that character and make eye contact with only that character; they'll get the hint quickly. If they don't, give the group an additional -2 circumstance penalty to their Diplomacy check.

Read the following text to the character who does the negotiations:

Umaera leads you into a small tent near the large pavilion-style tent in which the reception was hosted to celebrate your arrival. Inside the tent, you see the members of the Council of Horses patiently waiting. Umaera motions for you to sit before the Council and then seats herself beside you.

Umaera then speaks, "The Council has considered Lord Brondar's proposal of alliance with Rok'she Nare, but wishes to hear more. What reasons do you have why the tal'Shaki should share water with the people of Rok'she Nare? You may rely on me to convey your words with accuracy and truth to the Council."

Umaera looks expectantly at you, apparently ready to translate your arguments for the members of the Council.

The DC of the Diplomacy skill check that the negotiator makes here depends on the APL at which the scenario is played:

- APL 2: DC 32
- APL 4: DC 34
- APL 6: DC 36
- APL 8: DC 38
- APL 10: DC 40

Once the negotiator has made his case to the Council of Horses, have the character roll a Diplomacy check. You can award a +2 circumstance bonus to the character's check for each of the following arguments she makes:

- The tal'Shaki would make an excellent ally for the Duchy of Urnst, as their knowledge of Rary and the Bright Desert would provide help the Duchy of Urnst needs to protect itself and the tal'Shaki against Rary now and in the future.

- The Duchy of Urnst could do well to interbreed its horses with the fine horses of the tal'Shaki.
- The Duchy of Urnst would be a powerful ally for the tal'Shaki, able to offer assistance against the predations of Rary's forces
- The Duchy of Urnst would be able to trade with the tal'Shaki, offering grain and weapons in exchange for horses.
- The people of the tal'Shaki would be welcome to take shelter in the Duchy of Urnst.
- Two people with a common enemy can more easily defeat that enemy united.

You can apply additional penalties for insulting or offensive remarks, creative use of desert metaphors, or other well thought out remarks as you see fit.

If the character made his argument in Flan, add an additional +1 circumstance bonus to the Diplomacy check.

Total all these bonuses, add in the net bonus or penalty from Encounter 4, and apply the sum to the character's skill check.

Read the following text to the negotiating character:

There is some murmuring and excited discussion among the Council of Horses then each grows quiet and stares at you for several minutes. When you go to speak, Umaera waves her hand slightly as if indicating that you should wait before speaking.

If the Council has decided in favor of the alliance, read the following text to the character who is negotiating:

Slowly, each of the members of the Council of Horses stands and draws his scimitar, then turns the hilt towards you and lays it on the ground before him. Finally, the apparent leader of the tal'Shaki stands and repeats the process.

Umaera says to you, "The Council has decided to accept Rok'she Nare's offer of alliance. We will ride together and battle the forces of Rary, and we will give water and shelter to your forces while they are in the desert."

You must now determine if the alliance is to be sealed with a marriage. First, determine if there's an acceptable character present. If not, the Council of Horses makes no mention of the marriage and accepts the alliance without a marriage.

Greedy characters—you'll have to observe the character in play to make the call—are not acceptable. Remember, the richest man in the tal'Shaki is the most generous. You can assume that if you think the character is greedy that the tal'Shaki think the character is greedy. Anyone with "it's mine" or "dibs" syndrome definitely qualifies.

The following characters are acceptable candidates for marriage into the tal'Shaki, in order of highest preference to lowest preference on the part of the dervishes:

- Male human or half-elven clerics of good alignment who worship Pelor
- Male human or half-elven paladins of Pelor
- Male monks of good alignment who worship Pelor
- Male human or half-elven clerics of good alignment who worship Heironeous
- Male human or half-elven paladins of Heironeous
- Male monks of good alignment who worship Heironeous
- Male human or half-elven clerics of good alignment who worship Mayaheine
- Male human or half-elven paladins of Mayaheine
- Male monks of good alignment who worship Mayaheine
- Male monks of good alignment

If no character that meets these criteria is present, the agreement cannot be sealed with a marriage. The alliance still happens, but there no mention of a marriage.

If two characters rate equally high on the list of acceptable candidates, choose the one with the higher Charisma score. If they have the same Charisma score, choose the one with the highest Wisdom score. If there is still a “tie”, choose the one who made the best impression on the tal’Shaki in your opinion.

Read the following only if an acceptable candidate for marriage is available in the party and that person is not present at the negotiation:

There is a bit more discussion among the elders, and then one of them whistles. A young dervish boy approaches the chief, who whispers something into his ear. The boy then leaves the tent quickly.

The boy has gone to fetch the candidate groom.

A few moments later, the boy returns with <insert character name here> at his side and motions for him to sit beside you.

The chief of the tal’Shaki stands and speaks in halting common, “Do the people of Rok’she Nare wish to seal the agreement with marriage? The Council has decided that <appropriate character name here> is an acceptable husband for Umaera. Will you offer this man to become my son and seal the agreement between our peoples?”

If the acceptable candidate for the groom is the negotiator, read the following text.

The chief of the tal’Shaki stands and speaks in halting common, “Do the people of Rok’she Nare wish to seal the agreement with marriage? The Council has decided that you are an acceptable husband for Umaera. Will you offer yourself to become my son and seal the agreement between our peoples?”

You may tell the player that the character will be out of play for at least one year and possibly longer as tal’Shaki custom demands that the husband and wife remain constantly together until a child is born, but should not tell the character any of the changes that will take place to

his character as a result of going through with the wedding. Do not show the Bride in the tal’Shaki certificate to any player before the wedding takes place, and then you should present it directly to the player who is Umaera’s new husband.

If the player wants to know how Umaera is reacting to the pronouncements, you may tell them that she simply seems to be sitting and listening.

The character may wish to know if refusing to marry Umaera can endanger the alliance. Unless the characters asked some very specific questions of Lord Brondar earlier, they’re not likely to know the answer and you should not give them one.

Development: If a wedding is to occur, go to Encounter 7.

If the alliance isn’t secure, proceed to Encounter 8.

If the alliance is secured but there is no wedding, go to Encounter 9.

ENCOUNTER 7: WEDDING DAY

This is a roleplaying encounter in which the wedding occurs. You may abbreviate it if time is running short.

Shortly before dawn the next day, a young dervish priestess, with shining black hair and dressed in a fine white silk robe edged in shining gold, enters your tent. “I am Jyasmena,” she says. “The appointed hour has arrived. Pelor approaches and the union must be sealed in his first light of the day.” She hands each of you a golden holy symbol of Pelor and explains, “These are our gifts to you, our brothers from Rok’she Nare. You will need them for the ceremony.”

She leads your group outside of the tent, where two fine white horses stand together. Arrayed behind the white horses sits the entire Council of Horses. Arrayed behind the Council of Horses and around the entire area, is the bulk of the tal’Shaki dervish tribe. Each member of the tribe openly wears the holy symbol of Pelor and all have joined hands. Jyasmena whispers, “You should all take your places in the circle to participate in the blessing.”

Umaera stands beside one of the white horses. Jyasmena takes <character name> by the hand and leads him to stand beside the other.

Umaera’s father, the eldest member of the Council of Horses, speaks in perfect, flawless Common, “I am U’fun tal’Shaki, 67th in the line of the horses. I would wed my daughter to this man.”

He then turns to the collected party members and says, “Our custom is to seal agreements between tribes with a marriage. In this way, the two tribes become one tribe and share one fate, one destiny. In this way, the two tribes become one family.

“The burden is on you, <character name>, to join our tribes together. You will become tal’Shaki and ride the sands with us, learning our ways and honoring our traditions. You will trade horses for my daughter if she wishes and beget her with a daughter so that our line may continue.”

U'fan dismounts and approaches Umaera, speaking softly, "Umaera, my daughter, my pride, my child of the sun, do you wish to wed this man?"

Umaera speaks, clearly and without hesitation, "I wed for the tal'Shaki and for myself. This man is acceptable to me, and I will wed him when Pelor climbs into the sky if he wishes."

U'fan looks at <character name>, then speaks again. "<character name>, I offer the hand of my daughter Umaera to you, to tie the tal'Shaki and the Rok'she Nare together. Our lands are yours, and your lands are ours. We will hunt and ride together. You are my son, the husband of my daughter. I bid you welcome to the tal'Shaki. My tents, my horses, my water, are yours."

With these last words, the sun broaches the horizon to the east and the area is bathed in golden light reflecting off hundreds of shimmering holy symbols. A wave of divine energy fills the air, and a loud cheer goes up from the collected members of the tal'Shaki.

Once the wedding is complete, the character that marries Umaera is expected to remain with the tribe until he and Umaera have a child. However, the tal'Shaki understand that the character needs to finish his mission first. Two dervish warriors (both of whom speak Common and Flan) travel with the character and escort him back to the tribe. They do not get involved in combat unless the newly married character does, and frowns on him taking risks, as he is endangering the tribe before fathering a child; he should remember that he is tal'Shaki now. They risk their lives in combat to save Umaera's husband, but do not risk their lives to save any other character, unless Umaera's husband makes it clear that he will do so if they don't.

☞ **M'lorn and Va'ell:** Male human Rgr2; hp 18; see Appendix I.

Development: Proceed to Encounter 8.

ENCOUNTER 8: THE ROAD HOME

The characters go through this encounter if an alliance with the tal'Shaki has been reached.

Your arrangements for departure are made with a sad heart. The tal'Shaki have shown incredible hospitality and have treated each of you like family over the past few days of celebration of the new alliance between the tribe and the Duchy of Urnst, or "Rok'she Nare" as they call it. But you must return to Seh to deliver the news of the alliance to the March Warden and to bear the news of Lord Brondar's death.

The Council also presents you with a long scroll and a detailed map of the northern part of the Bright Desert. The scroll outlines the history of the Sulm Empire from the beginning through the disaster that struck and created the desert, then discusses the origins of the tal'Shaki.

The Council also offers you each the chance to trade for a fine tal'Shaki horse of excellent desert breeding and trained for battle, as a symbol of your friendship with the tal'Shaki.

Finally, the Council appoints two stout dervish warriors to accompany <character name> and make sure that he arrives safely back at the encampment of the tal'Shaki once his mission is complete.

The scroll and map were requests of Lord Brondar for his efforts to locate the old holdings that led House Pontirun to power originally. He believed that through careful study, the documents might yield some clues to the location he sought.

The characters can't keep the scroll and map; they're to be delivered to representatives of House Pontirun in the Duchy. Lord Brondar was directed to ask the tal'Shaki for these documents, knowing that the tal'Shaki would likely honor the request of their guest.

However, the characters do have a long journey back to Seh ahead of them, which gives them plenty of time to copy these documents. If a character chooses to copy the documents, the player should indicate on her adventure cert that she received a copy of the scroll and map during the scenario.

The characters have the opportunity here to purchase or trade for fine tal'Shaki warhorses. Only light warhorses are available, at 200% of the normal price (and 200% of the normal value; these are exceptional, well-trained animals). Any expenditures of gold or items totaling 300 gp or more is an acceptable trade, and should be recorded on the adventure certificate as wealth spent during the adventure.

Proceed to Encounter 10.

ENCOUNTER 9: THE ROAD HOME

The characters go through this encounter if no alliance has been arranged.

Your arrangements for departure are made with a heavy heart; the tal'Shaki have refused Lord Brondar's offer of alliance with the Duchy of Urnst. The tal'Shaki are quiet but polite with each of you, giving you the sense that you have become less than welcome. The time has come to return to Seh and inform the March Warden of the mission's failure and the death of Lord Brondar.

Umaera rides with your group to the edge of the encampment. "I am sad that our two tribes will not become one, and saddened by the death of Lord Brondar at the hands of D'ran Dru'shi. I would have liked to see Rok'she Nare.

"Please tell to your leaders that we will continue the fight against Rary as best we can. My father has convinced the Council of Horses to at least grant your forces safe passage through our lands.

"Lord Brondar's guide has chosen to remain here with us. You will reach Rok'she Nare safely if you travel straight to the north to the mountains you call the Abbor-Alz.

“Perhaps someday we shall meet again, my friends. I wish you a safe journey and may the blessings of Pelor be upon you.” With that, she turns and gallops back to the encampment of the tal’Shaki.

Proceed to Encounter 10.

ENCOUNTER 10: HEROES OF THE ABBOR-ALZ?

Reword the text below as appropriate if the patrol is facing a pair of ogres (APL 2) or a single giant rather than a pair (APL 4).

Your journey to the Abbor-Alz goes smoothly; a few minor windstorms pop up and vanish quickly. As you climb into the Abbor-Alz, you hear shouts from around a bend in the trail ahead. As you round the bend, you behold a terrifying sight.

Several burning wagons fill the sky with smoke, and fallen guards litter the ground. Several of the dead appear to be officers or sergeants. It’s obvious that if the patrol doesn’t get help soon that the guards will be wiped out to the last man.

A pair of giants <or one giant at APL 4, a pair of ogres at APL 2> presses a rapidly dwindling number of men wearing the uniforms of the Ducal Guard, most of them injured. One giant figure raises his mighty club and swings it, smashing yet another guard into a bloody heap as the rest scramble to get clear.

A patrol of the Ducal Guard has been ambushed by a hill giant (or pair of hill giants at higher APLs, ogres at APL 2) that live in the area. Refer to DM’s Aid 3: Map of Encounter 10. The characters start the fight 100 feet from the giant.

Only 16 (8 at APL 4, 4 at APL 2) guardsmen now remain to fight off the giant(s), and most of those are injured.

Start tracking time now. For every five seconds the players discuss what to do, kill off another guard. This means that the players have a little over a minute of real time to get involved before all the guards are dead.

Once all the guards are dead, the giants notice the characters and begin targeting them with rocks from a distance before closing with the party.

APL 2 (EL 4)

➤ **Ogres (2):** hp 26, 26; see *Monster Manual*.
Each carries 2 large javelins (1d8+5).

APL 4 (EL 6)

➤ **Hill Giant:** hp 102; see *Monster Manual*.

APL 6 (EL 8)

➤ **Hill Giant:** hp 140; see *Monster Manual*.

He is wearing chainmail: AC 22 (touch 8, flat-footed 22). Each carries 4 rocks for throwing.

APL 8 (EL 10)

➤ **Hill Giants (2):** Male hill giant Bbn1; hp 135; see Appendix I.

APL 10 (EL 12)

➤ **Hill Giants (2):** Male hill giant Bbn3; hp 159; see Appendix I.

Tactics: Once the giants are aware of the characters, the giants turn to face them. The guards (remember, they’re mostly injured) back off and take ineffective shots until they run out of arrows. None of the guards should actually hit the giant(s) with arrows, as none of them have the Precise Shot feat. None of the guards try to shoot through cover provided by the characters.

Treasure: The hill giants are carrying a rather large gold nugget that can be sold for 25 gp at APL 2, 50 gp at APL 4, 150 gp at APL 6, 400 gp at APL 8, and 800 gp at APL 10, and a collection of various coins totaling approximately 175 gp.

The characters can make a Search check (DC 10) to find the giants’ tracks in the area, but it takes the Track feat and a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 25) to follow the tracks of the giants back to their lair through the rocky terrain. Clever parties may find other ways to track down the lair, such as aerial scouting, use of divination magic, or animal companions with scent. Success of such methods is up to DM discretion.

Assuming the characters do so, they find the following treasure:

- In a large rock “coffer” of crude construction, 200 gp and a rather badly damaged ring that can be sold for 45 gp.
- At higher APLs, a cache of flawed rubies and sapphires captured from a mining caravan. There are no gems at APL 2. Their value is 250 gp at APL 4, 500 gp at APL 6, 1000 gp at APL 8, and 2000 gp at APL 10.
- Hidden in the bedding of one of the giants, a masterwork breastplate marked with the emblem of a noble house. A successful Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 20, 15 for noble characters) identifies the colors and markings as those of House Vaer. If the skill check beats DC 25, 20 for noble characters, the character recalls that House Vaer has some holdings in this area, that the house deals primarily in gemstones and precious metals, and that Lord Vaer’s youngest son was recently lost on a patrol in the East March of Abbor-Alz.

There is nothing else of interest in the cave that the giants were using as a lair. The cave itself is filled with bones; there is a large cook pot that has obviously seen recent use.

Proceed to Conclusion (Part 1).

CONCLUSION

PART 1: BACK TO SEH

The rest of your journey passes uneventfully as you descend from the Abbor-Alz and approach the village of Tolann. A vast field of bones, mostly orcish, greets you as you pass north through the battlefield from earlier in the year, where the Ducal Guard routed an army of thousands of orcs.

As you ride through the town of Seh and approach the gates of the castle, a grizzled veteran looks you over quickly before stepping forward to declare, "In the name of Duke Karll, you are ordered to halt, identify yourselves, and state your business."

Allow the characters to explain themselves. Characters who have completed URD1-07 *Fools' Gold* may recognize this man as Sergeant Rollis if they succeed an Intelligence check (DC 15), or just happen to recall the name.

Once the characters have explained themselves, continue:

The soldier walks up to your group slowly and speaks, "I am Master Sergeant Rollis, in command of the South Gate today. Your presence will be reported to the March Warden and I'll escort you to someplace where you can clean up."

If an officer of the Ducal Guard or someone who identifies himself as a noble is with the party, Master Sergeant Rollis shows all the proper respect. He dispatches a messenger to carry the news of the party's arrival to the March Warden and then escorts the characters to somewhere where they can get cleaned up. Any soldiers with the party are escorted to the barracks, or temple of Lydia if necessary.

If two dervishes are accompanying Umaera's husband, the characters need to explain their presence. Sergeant Rollis sees that they're made safe and comfortable outside the gate. They'll also be kept under a watchful guard; remember, the only good dervish is a dead dervish.

Sergeant Rollis ushers you into an officers' barracks with orders to get cleaned up for your meeting with the March Warden. Approximately an hour later, Sergeant Rollis returns, chuckling rather obviously. "The March Warden is quite interested to hear how you managed to lose Lord Brondar and pick up these stragglers. So, hurry it up; the March Warden is waiting."

Sergeant Rollis escorts you into the great keep of Seh. Guards stand aside and defer to you as Sergeant Rollis leads you into the March Warden's audience chamber, where the banners of the noble houses of the Duchy are arrayed. Among them is the black hart on a white field, the emblem of House Lorinar. Several chairs are arranged around a table that is covered with food and drink. Seated at the table, and rising as you enter, is March Warden Lord Margren Waithek. He watches patiently as you approach and motions for you to take seats at the table. Sergeant Rollis joins you at the table.

Lord Waithek speaks, "Sergeant Rollis has informed me that you managed to lose Lord Brondar along the way to your destination and pick up some stragglers on the way back. Perhaps you should share the tale with me."

At this point, the characters need to explain to the March Warden about Lord Brondar's death, the status of the alliance with the tal'Shaki, and the rescue of the patrol from the hill giants.

If an alliance was reached, proceed to Part 2a: Alliance.

If no alliance was reached, proceed to Part 2b: No Alliance.

PART 2A: ALLIANCE

The March Warden listens to your tale with considerable interest. He is disappointed to hear about the death of Lord Brondar, but is pleased that the tal'Shaki chose to ally with the Duchy and also seems pleased that you have disposed of the hill giants.

Read the next section only if a character was married into the tal'Shaki:

The March Warden approaches <character name> and heartily shakes his hand. "I suppose congratulations are in order. For my part and the Duchy, I thank you for the sacrifice you've made on the part of the Duchy. You have my gratitude."

If a character member of the Ducal Guard was married into the tal'Shaki, that character is excused from the Ducal Guard, assuming that they want to be, with the thanks of the March Warden.

Proceed to Part 3: House Pontirun.

PART 2B: NO ALLIANCE

A disappointed look passes over the March Warden's face. Then he stands and speaks sternly to you. "Not only have you lost Lord Brondar, but you have failed to secure the alliance with the dervishes. Only the fact that you rescued those guardsmen and destroyed the giants redeems your efforts. I am grateful for your efforts there, but I wish you had succeeded. Rary grows stronger as each day passes, and those dervishes would have made strong allies."

He stands and continues, "Sergeant Rollis, they're free to go about their business. Escort them out when they're done dining." He then turns and leaves the room rather quickly.

Sergeant Rollis says, "I wouldn't worry too much about it. You did a good job saving those guards, and they're going to remember it. We all will, even the March Warden." He then escorts you out of the keep so that you can go about your business.

Proceed to Part 3: House Pontirun.

PART 3: HOUSE PONTIRUN

Once the meeting with the March Warden is over, representatives of House Pontirun contact the characters to claim the map and any other possessions of Lord Brondar, including the equipment from D'ran Dru'shi. They also take possession of Lord Brondar's body.

If the characters buried Lord Brondar's body, House Pontirun dispatches people to go and claim it.

House Pontirun doesn't care if the characters have copies of the documents, as long as House Pontirun has the originals.

It becomes publicly known at this point that House Pontirun had Lord Brondar raised from the dead shortly after his body was returned to Seh. He claims the possessions of his would-be assassin as macabre souvenirs of the experience, but provides a small token of their value to the party as a reward for their valiant, if unsuccessful, efforts, assuming they didn't bury his body in the desert. This amount (per party member) is 100 gp each at APL 2, 200 gp at APL 4, 300 gp at APL 6, 500 gp each at APL 8, an 800 gp each at APL 10. This reward is not given if D'ran Dru'shi's possessions were not recovered.

If anyone chose to play this adventure as an employee of House Pontirun, they also receive a payment of 12.5 gp per APL for this scenario at this point. Members of the Ducal Guard and Ducal Diplomatic Corps do not qualify for this payment.

The End

EXPERIENCE POINT SUMMARY

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value to each character.

Encounter 2: Foul Wind

Defeat the achaierai.

APL 2	90 XP
APL 4	150 XP
APL 6	240 XP
APL 8	330 XP
APL 10	390 XP

Encounter 5: Thief in the Night

Hold off D'ran Dru'shi until help can arrive (minimum 3 rounds).

APL 2	75 XP
APL 4	150 XP
APL 6	180 XP
APL 8	210 XP
APL 10	240 XP

Encounter Ten

Defeat the giants/ogres.

APL 2	75 XP
APL 4	180 XP
APL 6	270 XP
APL 8	330 XP
APL 10	390 XP

Story Award

This experience is awarded if the tal'Shaki chose to ally with the Duchy rather than remain an independent opponent of Rary.

APL 2	60 XP
APL 4	120 XP
APL 6	180 XP
APL 8	240 XP
APL 10	300 XP

Total Possible Experience

APL 4	300 XP
APL 4	600 XP
APL 6	870 XP
APL 8	1110 XP
APL 10	1320 XP

TREASURE SUMMARY

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a "treasure" section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter's treasurer.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minute per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (that is, not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold piece each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer*, or similar spell to determine what the item does, and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasures from each encounter add it up and that is number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the Gp Gained field of the adventure certificate.

TREASURE KEY:

L = Looted gear from enemy; C = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; M = Magic Items.

Encounter 2: Foul Wind

Defeat the achaierai.

- APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 20 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 20 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 40 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 60 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 10: L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0 gp.

Encounter 10: Heroes of the Abb or-Alz?

Sell the giant's armor to a collector.

- APL 2: Not applicable
- APL 4: L: 30 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 6: L: 60 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 8: L: 60 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 10: L: 60 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0 gp.

Defeat the hill giants, whether or not armor was sold to a collector.

- APL 2: L: 6 gp; C: 40 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 4: L: 33 gp; C: 45 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 6: L: 66 gp; C: 65 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 8: L: 66 gp; C: 115 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 10: L: 66 gp; C: 195 gp; M: 0 gp.

Follow the hill giants' trail back to their lair:

- APL 2: L: 35 gp; C: 50 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 4: L: 35 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 6: L: 35 gp; C: 150 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 8: L: 35 gp; C: 250 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 10: L: 35 gp; C: 450 gp; M: 0 gp.

Conclusion

For retainers of House Pontirun.

- APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 25 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 50 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 75 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 10: L: 0 gp; C: 125 gp; M: 0 gp.

For delivering D'ran Dru'shi's possessions to Lord Brondar.

- APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 200 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 300 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 500 gp; M: 0 gp.
- APL 10: L: 0 gp; C: 800 gp; M: 0 gp.

Adventure Maximums

- APL 2: 276 gp.
- APL 4: 513 gp.
- APL 6: 791 gp.
- APL 8: 1186 gp.
- APL 10: 1831 gp.

Notations for the Standard Adventure Certificate

Scroll of the tal'Shaki (Frequency: Adventure; Requirements: not applicable; Market Price: 1 gp): This is a copy of a scroll provided by the tal'Shaki tribe of the Bright Desert as a gift to the family of Lord Brondar

Pontirun. The scroll details the history of the Sulm Empire from founding until founder and also details the origins and history of the tal'Shaki tribe.

As this is only a copy of materials provided by the tal'Shaki, the only value is in the information contained in the scroll and the material involved in crafting it.

With the scroll is a detailed map of the Bright Desert. The map provides a +2 circumstance bonus to all skill checks relevant to navigating through the Bright Desert. If a character spends eight hours researching the scroll, she can gain a +2 circumstance bonus to any Knowledge skill checks pertaining to the Sulm Empire, the Bright Desert, or the tal'Shaki tribe of dervishes.

Unless noted differently in the play notes for the scenario, the scroll is written in Flan and can only be utilized by a character that is able to read that language.

Frequency: Adventure

tal'Shaki Bred Warhorse (Frequency: Adventure; Requirements: not applicable; Market Price: 300 gp)

The warhorses bred by the tal'Shaki are without equal. Born and bred to the harsh climate of the Bright Desert, each differs from a standard light warhorse in the following ways:

Tal'Shaki Bred Warhorse: CR 1; HD 3d8+12; hp 25; Spd 70 ft.; AC 15 (touch 11, flat-footed 13); Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, 2 hooves) and -1 melee (1d3+1, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ Scent, subdual fire damage reduction (-/5); AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 3, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7

Riding a tal'Shaki bred warhorse gives the rider a +2 circumstance bonus to Ride and Handle Animal skill checks to control or train the animal.

Notations for the Marriage Adventure Certificate Married to Umaera

The above-named character is married to Umaera, High Priestess of Pelor for the tal'Shaki Tribe of Bright Desert Dervishes. The character is considered to be a full member of the tal'Shaki tribe of the Bright Desert, although the character does not receive the full benefits of having been part of that tribe since birth. The character and Umaera have a daughter together, a beautiful blond child with golden eyes named Ah'risa.

The character is out of play for one full year (note the date this certificate was issued here: _____); thereafter, the character must spend at least 26 time units for each year with his wife and the tal'Shaki tribe in the Bright Desert. These time units must be marked off before the character spends any other time units for the year.

One year after this certificate is issued, the character is immediately granted enough experience to place him at the beginning of his next character level. The character must take this level as Ranger.

If the character does not speak the Flan language, two of the skill points gained from the new level must be

spent on the Speak Languages skill to learn Flan; two more of the skill points must be spent on Wilderness Lore to learn the set of sounds and trail signs the tal'Shaki dervishes use. Any remaining skill points may be spent as the character wishes.

The above-named character cannot be raised from the dead, as this violates the customs of the tal'Shaki. If they are raised they are forever more the enemy of the tal'Shaki people.

As part of Umaera's dowry, the character has received the following gifts from the tal'Shaki:

- A matching set of a jeweled scimitar and a jeweled dagger (total value 150 gp) that identify the bearer as a member of the tal'Shaki. If sold, these weapons bring full value to the seller due to their unusual design and elaborate bejewelment.
- A tal'Shaki bred light warhorse that conforms to all the normal statistics for tal'Shaki bred warhorses that has become acclimated to the character and will only bear the character unless instructed to do otherwise by the character. The horse also knows the following tricks: Attack, Come, Defend, Guard, Home, and Play Dead. Once per campaign year until the year 600CY, House Nelaera will pay the character a stud fee of 200 gp for the right to breed this fine stallion into the bloodline of their horses. In order to take advantage of this offer, the character must expend four time units per campaign year. This time is spent as a guest of House Nelaera and the character automatically receives the Rich lifestyle at no cost for these time units. The approximate gold value of this horse is 800 gp.

Dervish Trained Light Warhorse (800 gp, N/A, N/A, Unusual, Tradable: No): This exceptional quality stallion comes from a long line of dervish horses trained for speed and stamina. The light warhorse conforms to all the statistics of a standard light warhorse, with the exception that its base movement rate is increased to 55 feet instead of the usual 50. In addition, the horse is considered to have the Run feat in addition to its natural feat(s).

The character gains a +2 familiarity bonus to all Ride checks made while riding this particular horse. Furthermore, this horse will never allow another individual to ride it unless commanded to do so by the character to who it is bonded.

Tal'Shaki Bred Warhorse: CR 1; HD 3d8+12; hp 25; Spd 70 ft.; AC 15 (touch 11, flat-footed 13); Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, 2 hooves) and -1 melee (1d3+1, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ Scent, subdual fire damage reduction (-/5); AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 3, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7

This horse is trained to know the following tricks: Attack, Come, Defend, Guard, Home, and Play Dead. The horse

can understand verbal commands issued in Flan and can also understand the whistle code and hand signs used by the tal'Shaki.

In 592CY, House Nelaera will pay a stud fee of up to 250 gp for the rights to breed this excellent mount into their famous line of horses. The character must pay four time units to allow House Nelaera to breed the stallion; the character cannot expend time units that he does not have (i.e., the character cannot "go negative" in time units to pay this cost).

The DM should complete the record below when the character chooses to breed the stallion to House Nelaera's mares.

- DM: _____
- RPGA # _____
- Date: _____

APPENDIX I: NPCS

INTRODUCTION

☛ **Dur'ok:** Male human Rgr1; CR 1; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 1d10+1; hp 11; Init +2; Spd 30 ft. or 60 ft (mounted); AC 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 12); Atk +2 melee (1d8+1/18-20, scimitar) or +3 ranged (1d8/x3, composite longbow); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +6, Intuit Direction +4, Move Silently +6, Ride +8, Wilderness Lore +6; Run, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track.

Possessions: leather armor, light warhorse, saddle, bit and bridle, saddlebags, scimitar, composite longbow, quiver with 20 arrows; 2 waterskins.

ENCOUNTER 2: FOUL WIND

APL 4 (EL 7)

☛ **Achaierai, Advanced:** CR 7; Large outsider (evil, lawful); HD 10d8+20; hp 60; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 20 (touch 10, flat-footed 19); Atk +13 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws) and +8 melee (4d6+2, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Black cloud; SR 19; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +16, Jump +16, Hide +15, Listen +14, Move Silently +13, Sense Motive +14, Spot +14; Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack.

Black Cloud (Ex): Up to three times per day an achaierai can releasing a choking, toxic black cloud. Those other than achaierai within 10 feet instantly take 2d6 points of damage. They must also succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be affected for 3 hours as though by an *insanity* spell cast by a 16th level sorcerer.

APL 6 (EL 9)

☛ **Achaierai, Advanced (2):** CR 7; Large outsider (evil, lawful); HD 10d8+20; hp 60; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 20 (touch 10, flat-footed 19); Atk +13 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws) and +8 melee (4d6+2, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Black cloud; SR 19; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +16, Jump +16, Hide +15, Listen +14, Move Silently +13, Sense Motive +14, Spot +14; Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack.

Black Cloud (Ex): Up to three times per day an achaierai can releasing a choking, toxic black cloud. Those other than achaierai within 10 feet instantly take 2d6 points of damage. They must also succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be affected for 3 hours as though by an *insanity* spell cast by a 16th-level sorcerer.

APL 8 (EL 11)

☛ **Achaierai, Advanced (3):** CR 8; Large outsider (evil, lawful); HD 12d8+24; hp 80; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 20 (touch 10, flat-footed 19); Atk +15 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws) and +10 melee (4d6+2, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. by

5 ft./10 ft.; SA Black cloud; SR 19; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +18, Jump +18, Hide +17, Listen +17, Move Silently +17, Sense Motive +16, Spot +17; Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack.

Black Cloud (Ex): Up to three times per day an achaierai can releasing a choking, toxic black cloud. Those other than achaierai within 10 feet instantly take 2d6 points of damage. They must also succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be affected for 3 hours as though by an *insanity* spell cast by a 16th level sorcerer.

APL 10 (EL 13)

☛ **Achaierai, Advanced (5):** CR 8; Large outsider (evil, lawful); HD 12d8+24; hp 80; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 20 (touch 10, flat-footed 19); Atk +15 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws) and +10 melee (4d6+2, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Black cloud; SR 19; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +18, Jump +18, Hide +17, Listen +17, Move Silently +17, Sense Motive +16, Spot +17; Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack.

Black Cloud (Ex): Up to three times per day an achaierai can releasing a choking, toxic black cloud. Those other than achaierai within 10 feet instantly take 2d6 points of damage. They must also succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be affected for 3 hours as though by an *insanity* spell cast by a 16th level sorcerer.

ENCOUNTER 5: THIEF IN THE NIGHT

APL 2 (EL 8)

☛ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr8; CR 8; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 8d10+8; hp 60; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 14, flat-footed 14); Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+3/18-20, scimitar) and +9 melee (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +11/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+2/x3, mighty composite longbow); SA Favored enemies (orcs, animals); AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +14, Intuit Direction +13, Knowledge (nature) +13, Listen +13, Move Silently +14, Ride +14, Wilderness Lore +15; Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track.

Possessions: +1 leather armor, +1 scimitar, +1 dagger, ring of protection +1, potion of cure serious wounds, ~~scroll of freedom of movement~~, masterwork mighty composite longbow (+2), 20 masterwork arrows, quiver, whetstone, 2 waterskins, light warhorse, saddle, saddlebags, bedroll, belt pouch, spell component pouch.

Spells Prepared (2/1; base DC = 12 + spell level): 1st - entangle, ~~pass without trace~~; 2nd - sleep.

Items and spells that are crossed out have already been used by Dru'shi and are presently in effect.

APL 4 (EL 10)

➤ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr10; CR 10; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 10d10+10; hp 74; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (touch 14, flat-footed 18); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+4/15-20, scimitar) and +12 melee (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +13/+13/+8 ranged (1d8+2/x3, mighty composite longbow); SA Favored enemies (orcs, animals, magical beasts); AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +16, Intuit Direction +15, Knowledge (nature) +15, Listen +15, Move Silently +16, Ride +16, Wilderness Lore +17; Improved Critical (scimitar), Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track.

Possessions: +2 leather armor, +2 scimitar, +2 dagger, ring of protection +3, amulet of natural armor +1, *potion of cure serious wounds*, ~~scroll of freedom of movement~~, masterwork mighty composite longbow (+2), 20 masterwork arrows, quiver, whetstone, 2 waterskins, light warhorse, saddle, saddlebags, bedroll, belt pouch, spell component pouch.

Spells Prepared (2/2; base DC = 12 + spell level): 1st – entangle, ~~pass without trace~~; 2nd – protection from elements, ~~sleep~~.

Items and spells that are crossed out have already been used by Dru'shi and are presently in effect.

APL 6 (EL 12)

➤ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr12; CR 12; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 12d10+12; hp 88; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (touch 14, flat-footed 19); Atk +14/+9/+4 melee (1d8+4/15-20, scimitar) and +14/+9 melee (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +15/+15/+10/+5 ranged (1d8+2/x3, mighty composite longbow); SA Favored enemies (orcs, animals, magical beasts); AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +18, Intuit Direction +17, Knowledge (nature) +17, Listen +17, Move Silently +18, Ride +18, Wilderness Lore +19; Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track.

Possessions: +2 leather armor, +2 scimitar, +2 dagger, ring of protection +3, amulet of natural armor +2, *potion of cure serious wounds*, ~~scroll of freedom of movement~~, masterwork mighty composite longbow (+2), 20 masterwork arrows, quiver, whetstone, 2 waterskins, light warhorse, saddle, saddlebags, bedroll, belt pouch, spell component pouch.

Spells Prepared (2/2/1; base DC = 12 + spell level): 1st – entangle, ~~pass without trace~~; 2nd – protection from elements, ~~sleep~~; 3rd – cure moderate wounds.

Items and spells that are crossed out have already been used by Dru'shi and are presently in effect.

APL 8 (EL 14)

➤ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr14; CR 14; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 14d10+14; hp 102; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (touch 14, flat-footed 20); Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+4/15-20, scimitar) and +16/+11 melee (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +17/+17/+12/+7 ranged (1d8+2/x3, mighty composite longbow); SA Favored enemies (orcs, animals, magical beasts); AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +20, Intuit Direction +19, Knowledge (nature) +19, Listen +19, Move Silently +20, Ride +20, Wilderness Lore +21; Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track.

Possessions: +3 leather armor, +2 scimitar, +2 dagger, ring of protection +3, amulet of natural armor +2, *potion of cure serious wounds*, ~~scroll of freedom of movement~~, masterwork mighty composite longbow (+2), 20 masterwork arrows, quiver, whetstone, 2 waterskins, light warhorse, saddle, saddlebags, bedroll, belt pouch, spell component pouch.

Spells Prepared (3/2/1; base DC = 12 + spell level): 1st – delay poison, entangle, ~~pass without trace~~; 2nd – protection from elements, ~~sleep~~; 3rd – cure moderate wounds.

Items and spells that are crossed out have already been used by Dru'shi and are presently in effect.

APL 10 (EL 16)

➤ **D'ran Dru'shi:** Male human Rgr16; CR 16; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 16d10+32; hp 128; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25 (touch 14, flat-footed 22); Atk +18/+13/+8/+3 melee (1d8+4/15-20, scimitar) and +18/+13 melee (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +19/+19/+14/+9/+4 ranged (1d8+2/x3, mighty composite longbow); SA Favored enemies (orcs, animals, magical beasts); AL N; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +22, Intuit Direction +21, Knowledge (nature) +21, Listen +21, Move Silently +22, Ride +22, Wilderness Lore +23; Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track.

Possessions: +4 leather armor, +2 scimitar, +2 dagger, ring of protection +3, amulet of natural armor +3, *potion of cure serious wounds*, scroll of freedom of movement, masterwork mighty composite longbow (+2), 20 masterwork arrows, quiver, whetstone, 2 waterskins, light warhorse, saddle, saddlebags, bedroll, belt pouch, spell component pouch.

Spells Prepared (3/3/1/1; base DC = 12 + spell level): 1st – delay poison, entangle, ~~pass without trace~~; 2nd – hold animal, protection from elements, ~~sleep~~; 3rd – cure moderate wounds; 4th – ~~freedom of movement~~.

Items and spells that are crossed out have already been used by Dru'shi and are presently in effect.

All APLs

☛ **tal'Shaki Guards:** Male human Rgr4; CR 4; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 4d10+8; hp 36; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 12); Atk +5 melee (1d8+2/18-20, scimitar) and +4 melee (1d4+1/19-20, dagger) or +6 ranged (1d8+2/x3, mighty composite longbows); SQ Favored enemy (animals); AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +7, Listen +8, Ride +9, Spot +8, Wilderness Lore +8; Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

Possessions: leather armor, masterwork scimitar, dagger, mighty composite longbow (+2), 20 arrows.

ENCOUNTER 7: WEDDING DAY

☛ **M'lorn and Va'ell:** Male human Rgr2; CR 2; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 2d10+2; hp 18; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 12) Atk +3 melee (1d8+1/18-20, scimitar) or +4 ranged (1d8/x3, composite longbow); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +5, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +5, Move Silently +7, Ride +9, Wilderness Lore +7; Run, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track.

Possessions: leather armor, light warhorse, saddle, saddlebags, scimitar, composite longbow, 20 arrows, 2 waterskins.

ENCOUNTER 10: HEROES OF THE ABBOR-ALZ

APL 8 (EL 10)

☛ **Hill Giants (2):** Male hill giant Bbn1; CR 8; Large giant; HD 12d8+1d12+65; hp 135; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 24 (touch 10, flat-footed 23); Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (2d6+13, greatclub) or +12/+7/+2 ranged (2d6+9, rock); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Rock throwing, rage; SQ Rock catching, fast movement; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 29, Dex 12, Con 21, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Climb +9, Jump +9, Listen +5, Spot +5; Cleave, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Possessions: large chainmail, huge greatclub, 6 throwing rocks.

Rock Throwing (Ex): Adult giants are accomplished rock throwers and receive a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls when throwing a rocks. A giant of Large size can hurl rocks weighing 40 to 50 pounds each (Small objects) up to 5 range increments. The range increment is 120 feet for hill giants.

Rock Catching (Ex): A giant of Large size can catch Small, Medium-size or Large rocks (or projectiles of similar shape). Once per round, a giant that would normally be hit by a rock can make a Reflex save to catch it as a free action. The DC is 15 for a Small rock, 20 for a Medium-size one, and 25 for a Large one (if the

projectile has a magical bonus to attack, the DC increases by that amount). The giant must be ready for and aware of the attack.

APL 10 (EL 12)

☛ **Hill Giants (2):** Male hill giant Bbn3; CR 10; Large giant; HD 12d8+3d12+75; hp 159; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 24 (touch 10, flat-footed 23); Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (2d6+13, greatclub) or +14/+9/+4 ranged (2d6+9, rock); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Rock throwing, rage; SQ Rock catching, fast movement, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +16, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 29, Dex 12, Con 21, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Climb +9, Jump +9, Listen +6, Spot +6; Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Possessions: large chainmail, huge greatclub, 6 throwing rocks.

Rock Throwing (Ex): Adult giants are accomplished rock throwers and receive a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls when throwing a rocks. A giant of Large size can hurl rocks weighing 40 to 50 pounds each (Small objects) up to 5 range increments. The range increment is 120 feet for hill giants.

Rock Catching (Ex): A giant of Large size can catch Small, Medium-size or Large rocks (or projectiles of similar shape). Once per round, a giant that would normally be hit by a rock can make a Reflex save to catch it as a free action. The DC is 15 for a Small rock, 20 for a Medium-size one, and 25 for a Large one (if the projectile has a magical bonus to attack, the DC increases by that amount). The giant must be ready for and aware of the attack.

APPENDIX 2: TIPS FOR THE DUNGEON MASTER

You'll find it useful to study the following sections of the *Player's Handbook* before running this scenario:

- Wilderness Lore skill (*Player's Handbook*)

You may also find it useful to read up on the following rules from the *Dungeon Master's Guide* before running this scenario:

- Fatigue
- Heat dangers
- Cold dangers
- Weather hazards

Two additional sections of information are provided for you below that you should prepare before running this scenario:

- Travel in the Bright Desert
- The tal'Shaki tribe and their culture
- Understanding Skepticism

Lord Brondar and Dur'ok are familiar with the information in both of these sections and can convey this information to the players. However, it is up to the players to ask for the information.

You should spend considerable time preparing Encounter Four before running this scenario. It is a roleplaying intensive encounter and your familiarity with the tal'Shaki will contribute a great deal to the players' enjoyment of the scenario. It is impossible to run this encounter properly without preparation work and knowledge of the tal'Shaki.

Likewise, you should emphasize the dangers of desert travel and the hostile environment of the Bright Desert to the players to enhance their enjoyment of the scenario.

TRAVEL IN THE BRIGHT DESERT

The Bright Desert is perhaps the harshest environment that many characters ever adventure in. Scorching heat, strong winds driving sand at blasting speeds, and few landmarks beyond the occasional rocky outcropping make the desert an unpleasant place at best. Only the view of the Abbor-Alz Mountains and the presence of a guide prevent the characters from becoming hopelessly lost in the desert.

Remarkably, the Bright Desert still supports life. In places, oases shelter vegetation and fresh water, but these places are few and far between.

The Bright Desert adheres to the normal rules for very hot conditions in the early morning and early evening. Characters must make a Fortitude saving throw each hour (DC 15 + 1 for each previous saving throw) or sustain 1d4 points of subdual damage. Anyone wearing heavy clothing or armor suffers a -4 penalty to these saving throws.

During the middle of the day, the desert qualifies as an area of extreme heat. Every ten minutes, characters must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15 + 1 for each previous saving throw) or sustain 1d4 points of subdual damage. Again, anyone wearing heavy clothing or armor of any sort suffers a -4 penalty to the saving throw.

A character reduced to an unconscious state begins taking 1d4 points of real damage each hour from the heat. Anyone who has taken subdual damage is considered to be *fatigued* (May not run or charge and suffers an effective penalty of -2 to Strength and Dexterity).

An *Endure Elements* (fire) spell, or higher-level magical protection against fire, negates the need for these saving throws.

Once the sun has set, the desert qualifies as an area of cold weather. Anyone not properly outfitted for cold weather, or under the effects of magical protection from cold, such as an *Endure Elements* spell, must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15 + 1 for each previous saving throw). Failing this saving throw indicates that the character takes 1d6 points of subdual damage.

Characters may use the Wilderness Lore skill to try to obtain bonuses on these saving throws. An *Endure Elements* (cold) spell (or higher level protective magic against cold) negates the need for these saving throws.

Enforce these saving throws periodically as the characters travel through the desert to accurately convey the real danger of traveling in the hot desert to them.

THE TAL'SHAKI TRIBE AND THEIR CULTURE

The tal'Shaki are one of the largest tribes of dervishes that still openly resist the might of Rary the Traitor. The tal'Shaki are a good-natured lot as far as dervishes go; their culture emphasizes peaceful interaction and the tribe follows the teachings of Pelor devotedly. Unlike most of the other nomads and dervishes of the Bright Desert, their faith teaches them to value men and women equally and to recognize the worth of outsiders who prove their strength. The present high priestess of the tribe is Umaera, the daughter of the chief of the tal'Shaki. The dervishes of the tal'Shaki all wear the holy symbol of Pelor in some way.

Despite their peaceful culture, their warriors are fierce beyond belief. The members of the tribe from a very young age practice with the horse, the sword, and the bow; by the time a child reaches maturity, s/he is already a competent warrior. The harsh environment, which the tribe exists in, is a harsh unforgiving terrain filled with enemies who seek to use the tribe for their own purposes, drives this aspect of the tribe.

Marriage within the tal'Shaki is usually arranged at an early age, but arranged marriages are not certain to occur. If either party wishes to back out of the arrangement, no offense is taken. Marriage to outsiders is rare, but has been known to occur. Marriage is sometimes used as a method of sealing an agreement (an instance of this occurs in this scenario potentially). However, marriage based on romance is almost as common as an arranged marriage.

When marriage occurs, it is for life and both partners are expected to be faithful. Children are important in a marriage, as a childless mother cannot pass her property onto anyone; a childless marriage is an unlucky omen.

Both partners in a marriage are considered equal. It is not unusual for a married couple to see each other only one or two weeks out of four after they have had a child; until a child is born, however, both husband and wife are expected to live and work together.

Once a child has been born, both parents share equally in the child's upbringing, one often taking a sole support role while the other travels. The urge to wander is common in the dervishes, and being gone for weeks at a time hunting or traveling out of what we would call wanderlust is a natural thing. It is considered a great sacrifice to give up this traveling until a child is born, but in this way the survival of the tribe is made more certain.

Inheritance within the tal'Shaki is matrilineal; women hold all the property in the tal'Shaki. However, only men may conduct business negotiations to sell or acquire property beyond acquiring the basic means of existence. Most trade is conducted by barter. Consequently, marriage in the tal'Shaki is as often a partnership as it is a romantic affair.

Romance within the tal'Shaki is a private affair; open boasting of romantic encounters is considered rude. Flirtatious behavior is offensive at best and at worst causes the offended party to challenge the offender to a race. The outcome of the race is unimportant. What is important is that the offended party made the challenge, thus standing up for her honor. To be challenged to a race is a shameful thing to the dervishes, as it means that you have somehow impugned the honor of another person.

Drunken behavior is also offensive to the tal'Shaki, since it often leads to more offensive types of conduct. Obviously, water is a commodity to the tal'Shaki as well; wasting water would be considered endangering the tribe.

Each member of the tal'Shaki has a code of personal honor to which she adheres. Personal honor, generosity, courage, and truthfulness mean a great deal to the tal'Shaki. A steady hand and firm control of one's mount are also respected qualities, but to the tal'Shaki a man is nothing if he is not honorable. Theft and lies are the signs of cowardice and greed, and the qualities of someone who is without honor.

All the tal'Shaki carry weapons at all times, due to the harsh nature of their home and the constant threats they face from Rary's forces. They show no mercy when dealing with Rary's forces, and his servants are dispatched as quickly and efficiently as possible.

When the tal'Shaki are dealing with guests, certain customs apply:

- A celebration of the arrival of guests is customary (such an occasion occurs during this scenario). Such gatherings often involve tales of deeds done.
- The host (i.e., any dervish) may not attack a guest without being attacked or without a guest being attacked. A host who does so is driven from the tribe without water. All personal property of the offender becomes the property of the victim. Note that in these cases, it is possible for the victim to forgive the host in front of the tribe. In such cases, no punishment is meted out, but the guest who forgives in this manner receives the highest form of personal honor within the tal'Shaki. Note that at no time in this scenario will a member of the tal'Shaki attack a character without first being attacked, even if under magical compulsion. This is a very strong taboo among the dervishes.
- Guests who commit violence against their hosts or against other guests are driven out of camp without water at first light.

Stealing from a member of the tal'Shaki is a crime punishable by spending one year as a servant of the victim of the crime. Most offenders find this life unacceptable, despite the traditional kindness of the master.

If a character tries to steal from the tal'Shaki, she most likely is caught. To escape detection, the would-be thief must succeed at a Bluff check for the thief against a target DC of 30, due to the suspicious and perceptive nature of their hosts. The tal'Shaki generally do not steal, and their only other guest (D'ran Dru'shi) knows better; therefore, if a theft occurs

one of the characters must be responsible. There are few enough strangers in camp that the tal'Shaki are likely able to identify the thief based on the locations of the individual characters within the camp at the time of the theft, even if they pass the Bluff check. The high priestess uses a *zone of truth* spell to question the suspect, the save DC is 16.

If the thief is caught, have the character spend 52 time units immediately (dipping into 593 time units if necessary). Complete the player's adventure certificate, awarding the experience that the character has earned so far and no treasure. The player may then sit and watch the rest of play, but not participate in any way, including talking with the other characters in character. It may be preferable, depending on the personality of the player and you (the DM) if you just ask the player to leave the table. Be nice about it, but be firm when telling the player that she is no longer involved in this scenario and that her character is out of play until the beginning of the next campaign year.

All members of the tal'Shaki are proficient with all simple weapons, the scimitar, and all bows except crossbows, as well as light armor and shields. They also receive a +2 racial bonus to Ride checks and a +2 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks related to survival in the Bright Desert.

A character that gains the opportunity to join the tribe by marrying Umaera does not receive these benefits. Only those born among the tal'Shaki receive these benefits.

The tal'Shaki are ruled by a group of leaders called the Council of Horses. The name is highly symbolic and originates from the frequent talk of horses that pervades the group's conversations; characters making jokes about the name within earshot of the dervishes could adversely affect the outcome of the negotiations.

The tal'Shaki refer to the lands controlled by the Duchy of Urnst as Rok'she Nare (literally, "valley by the sea" in Flan).

UNDERSTANDING SKEPTICISM

Skepticism is a movement in the Duchy of Urnst that questions the divinity of the deities. Most skeptics don't doubt the existence of the deities; they simply don't believe the deities are divine. They believe that anyone can have the same power as the deities.

In game terms, the Skeptics are wrong. The deities are divine. However, there are players out there with Skeptic characters.

In game, the Skeptics seem to thrive despite overwhelming evidence on the part of the deities and various faiths that no one is able to duplicate what the deities can accomplish. However, this hasn't stopped the Skeptics movement in the Duchy of Urnst from growing rapidly.

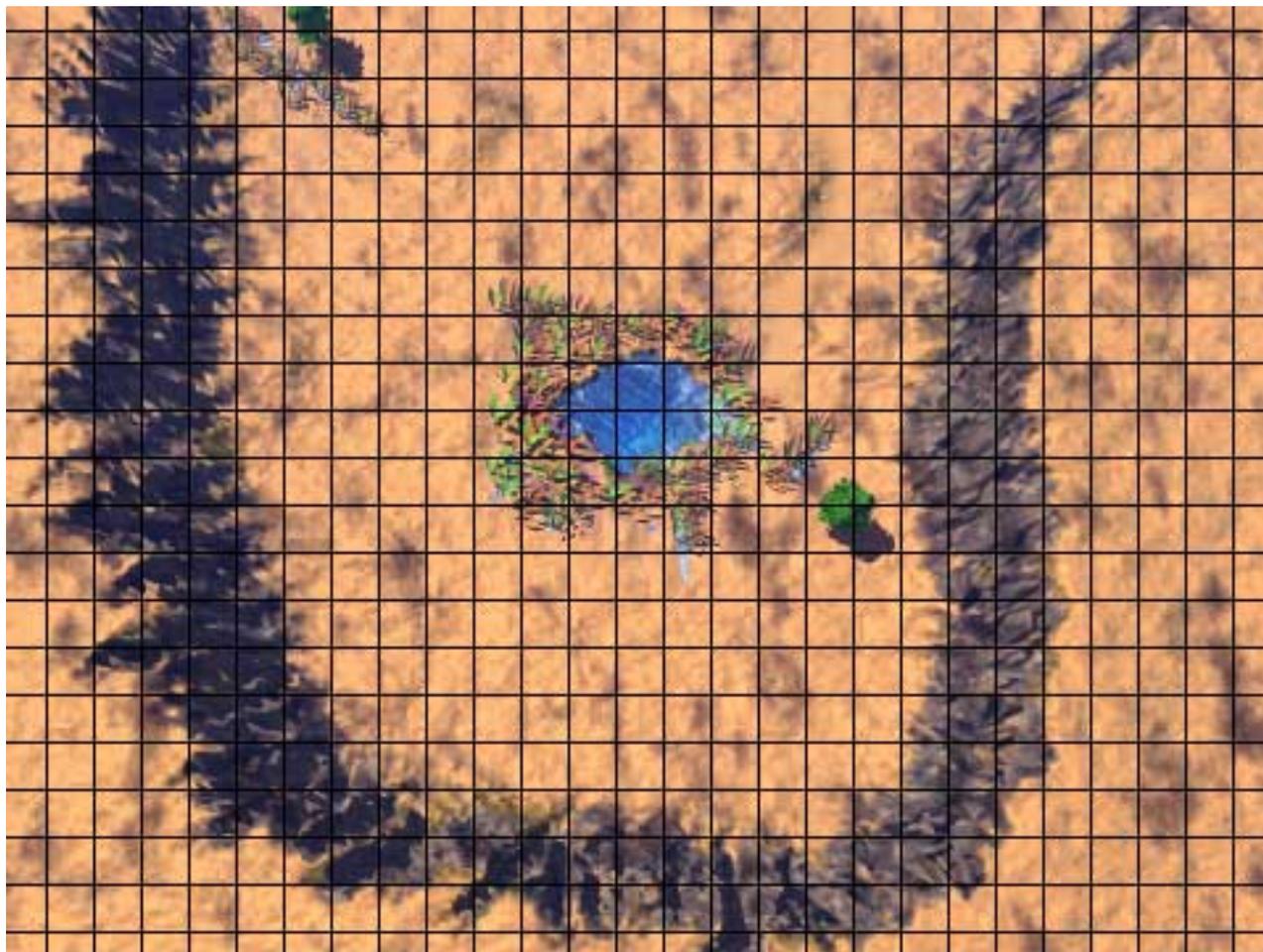
The Skeptics movement was indirectly behind the Temple Coalition Revolt in 571 CY. Duke Justinian, a Skeptic himself, chose to raise taxes on the temples by 300%. Several prominent temples refused to pay the increased taxes, and Justinian responded violently by arresting priests and destroying the temple of Zilchus. The churches responded with an exodus from the Duchy of Urnst. The few priests that remained refused their service to any in service of the rulers of Urnst, proclaiming them heretics. Prior to the revolt, Justinian also replaced many of the members of the Honorable Chamber with Skeptics, and many of those men hold their positions to this day, seats that were once held by the temples.

Justinian himself died a Skeptic. Mortally wounded by dervishes from the Bright Desert (not the tal'Shaki), he succumbed to his wounds after clerical healing was denied to him. Skeptics maintain that Justinian in fact refused their aid, believing he had the power within himself to overcome his wounds.

His brother Karll, the present Duke, succeeded Justinian on the throne. Karll is favorably inclined toward the temples, and is himself a devout worshipper of Ehlonna, and has been working to heal the wounds of the Temple Coalition Revolt. He faces considerable opposition from the Skeptic faction of the Honorable Chamber.

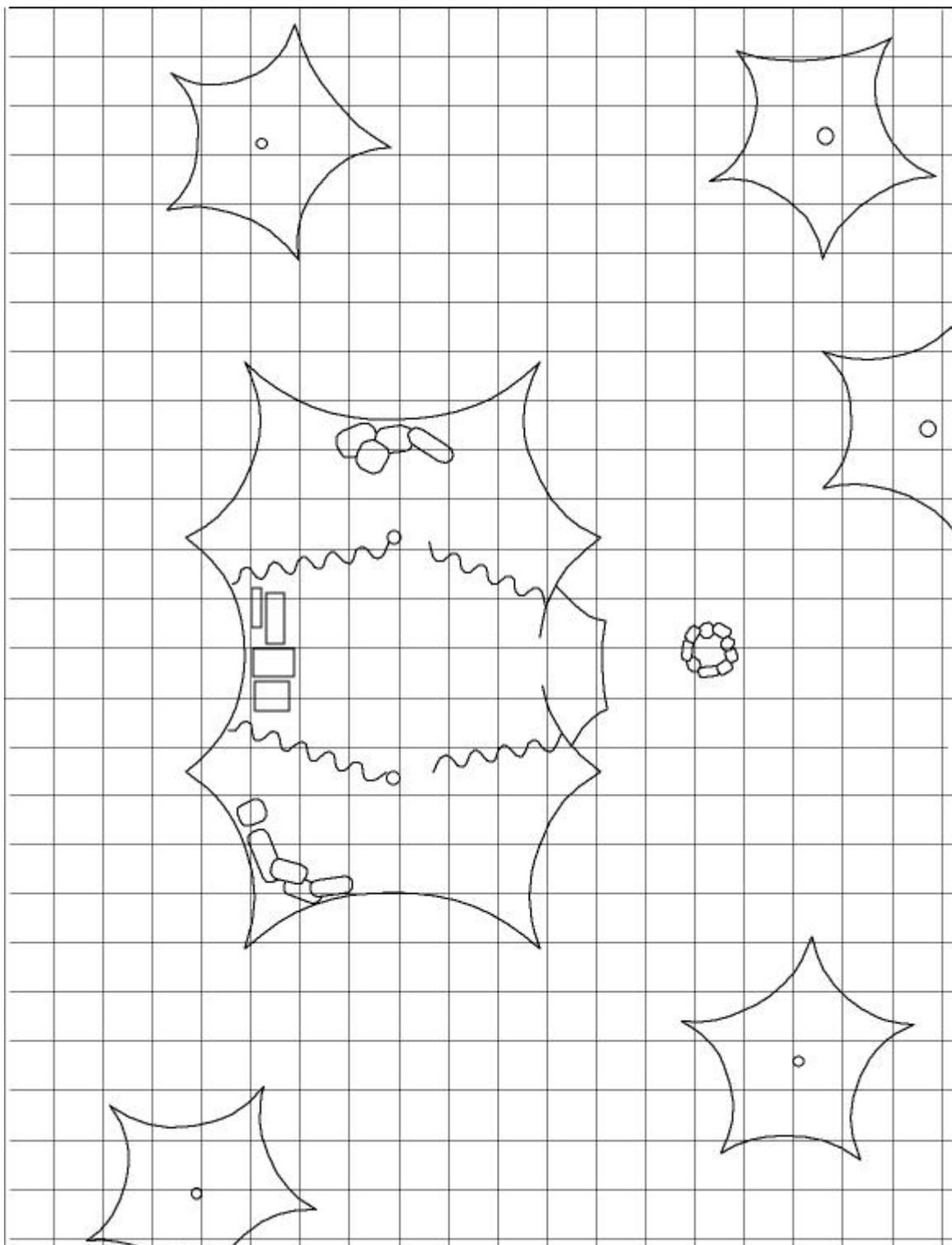
Characters who openly discuss the Skeptic philosophy in the presence of the tal'Shaki are inviting disaster.

DM'S AID 1: MAP OF ENCOUNTER 2



Light vegetation extends to a distance of 20 feet on each side of the oasis, even where not shown on the map. The achaierai are spread out through this vegetation.

DM'S AID 2: MAP OF ENCOUNTERS 3 AND 5



DM'S AID 3: MAP OF ENCOUNTER 10



If there is only one giant, use the lower G. If there are less guards than shown, remove the rear ranks first. The stands of trees are large enough to provide 25% concealment even for giants, should they move behind them.

DM'S AID 4: DIPLOMACY TRACKING SHEET

You should use this sheet to track the various bonuses and penalties that the characters can accumulate for themselves for the Diplomacy check that will be made in Encounter Six.

Condition	Total Bonus	Total Penalty
Characters who received positive "votes" from the tal'Shaki (+2 per character)		0
Characters who received negative "votes" from the tal'Shaki (-2 per character)	0	
How many characters speak Flan? (+1 per character)		0
Did the characters tell the tal'Shaki about the Scouring Wind? (+2 if they did)		0
Did any character win a horse race (Ride skill check, DC 30)? (+2 per character)		
Lord Brondar's efforts (this is a fixed bonus)	+2	0
SUBTOTAL		
Did anyone steal from the tal'Shaki?	0	-4
Did anyone openly question the divinity of Pelor or the gods in general (see the discussion of Skepticism)?	0	-10
SUBTOTAL		
FOR EACH OF THESE ARGUMENTS THE CHARACTER MAKES DURING ENCOUNTER 6		
Were the arguments made in Flan? (+1 bonus)		0
The tal'Shaki can help the Duchy against Rary. (+2 bonus)		0
The Duchy would do well to interbreed its horses with the horses of the tal'Shaki. (+2 bonus)		0
The Duchy would be a powerful ally for the tal'Shaki. (+2 bonus)		0
The Duchy would be able to trade with the tal'Shaki, offering grain and weapons in exchange for horses. (+2 bonus)		0
Two peoples with a common enemy can more easily defeat that enemy united. (+2 bonus)		0
SUBTOTAL (max +11)		
TOTALS		

ENLISTING THE ICONIC

☞ **Tordek, male dwarf Ftr1:** CR 1; Medium-size humanoid (dwarf); HD 1d10+3; hp 13; Init +1; Spd 15 ft.; AC 17 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Atks +4 melee (1d10+2/x3, dwarven waraxe), or +2 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); SQ Dwarven traits; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +0, Jump +0; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe).

Possessions: Traveler's outfit, scale mail, large wooden shield, dwarven waraxe, shortbow, quiver with 20 arrows, backpack with waterskin, 1 day trail rations, bedroll, sack and flint and steel.

☞ **Mialee, female elf Wizr:** CR 1; Medium-size humanoid (elf); HD 1d4+3; hp 7; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 10); Atks +0 melee (1d6, quarterstaff), or -6 melee (1d6, quarterstaff) and -10 melee (1d6, quarterstaff), or +3 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); SQ Elven traits; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +4, Knowledge (arcane) +6, Listen +3, Search +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +3; Scribe Scroll (virtual), Toughness.

Spells Prepared (3/2; base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*daze, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*mage armor, sleep*.

Spellbook: 0—all of them; 1st—*charm person, mage armor, magic missile, sleep, summon monster I*.

Possessions: Traveler's outfit, quarterstaff, shortbow, quiver of 20 arrows, backpack with waterskin, 1 day trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, 10 candles, map case, 3 pages parchment, ink and pen, spell pouch, spellbook.

☞ **Lidda, female halfling Rogr:** CR 1; Small humanoid (halfling); HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (touch 14, flat-footed 13); Atks +1 melee (1d6/19-20, short sword) or +4 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow), or +1 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) or +5 ranged (1d4/19-20, dagger); SA Sneak attack +1d6; SQ Halfling traits; AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Disable Device +6, Gather Information +1, Hide +11, Jump +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Open Locks +7, Search +6, Spot +4, Tumble +7, Use Magic Device +1; Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Explorer's outfit, leather armor, shortsword, light crossbow, 10 crossbow bolts, dagger, Backpack with waterskin, 1 day trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, thieves' tools hooded lantern, 3 pints of lantern oil.

☞ **Jozan, male human Clr1:** CR 1; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 1d8+2; hp 10; Init -1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (touch 9, flat-footed 15); Atk +1 melee (1d8+1, heavy mace), or -1 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SA Turn Undead 4/day 2d6+2; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref -1; Will +4; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +6, Heal +6, Listen +4, Knowledge (religion) +0, Spellcraft +4, Spot +4; Alertness, Scribe Scroll.

Spells Prepared (3/2+1; base DC 12 + spell level); 0—*detect poison, guidance, read magic*; 1st—*bles, protection from evil**, *shield of faith*.

* Domain spell; *Deity:* Pelor; *Domains:* Good (good spells cast at +1 caster level) and Healing (healing spells cast at +1 caster level).

Possessions: Cleric's vestments, scale mail, large wooden shield, heavy mace, light crossbow, 10 crossbow bolts, backpack with waterskin, 1 day of trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, wooden holy symbol (sun disk of Pelor), 3 torches.