

KEO6-03

Baby's Breath

A One-Round D&D® LIVING GREYHAWK™ Keoland Regional Adventure

Version 1.3

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The past three years in the County of Linth have seen tremendous upheaval - civil war, and the collapse of the ancient house which ruled those lands. The fate of the kingdom has at times revolved around the Countess Hannah Linth, the only known survivor of her depraved and wicked royal family. But now, as the eldritch blight of the County takes a dramatic turn, the kingdom may find this child to be its only hope. A Keoland regional adventure for APLs 12-16, and the conclusion to the *Tales of Linth* series which included KEO3-03 *Will of the People*, KEO4-05 *A Last Dance at Midnight*, and KEO5-03 *Closure and Disclosure*. This adventure includes an optional encounter at increased TU cost; if played, this event should be scheduled as a two-round adventure.

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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For rules questions specific to this document and the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign email rpgahq@wizards.com.

Introduction

This is an RPGA® Network adventure for the Dungeons & Dragons® game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for each round of this adventure, but the actual playing time will be closer to three and a half hours. The rest of the time is spent in preparation before game play, and record-keeping 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 adventure.

Preparation

First you should print this adventure. This adventure was created to support double-sided printing, but printing it single sided will work 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 you run your game. Be sure to 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 is 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.

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

Playing the Game

Instruct the players either to prepare their characters to participate in the adventure before the session begins, or wait until you read the introduction, depending on the requirements of the adventure as described in the introduction.

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 the players (and the judge) to keep track of who is playing which character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying. That said, you as the judge can bar the use of even core rulebooks during certain times of play. For example, 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.

Some of the text in this adventure is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in bold italics. It's strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text instead of reading it aloud. Some of this text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

Tracking

After the players have completed the adventure or the time allotted to run the adventure has run out, the players and judge fill out the RPGA Tracking Sheet. The judge should complete the top of the form and list his name and RPGA number. The players should each list their name and RPGA number. After the form is filled out it should be given to the Event Coordinator.

LIVING GREYHAWK

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, 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 discussed in the Preparation section above 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 PCs participating in the adventure. To determine the Average Party Level (APL):

1. Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely being war horses, dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (i.e. animal companions, familiars, paladin's mounts, etc.) use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum above. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately. Nevertheless, if a character has the Mounted Combat feat, he may bring a single warhorse, light or heavy, with him in the adventure and it will not count toward the APL calculation.

- Sum the results of 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round to the nearest whole number.
- If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

By following these four steps, you will have determined the APL. Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs will 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 and gold a PC may gain at the end of the adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that character will receive only one-half of the experience points for the adventure. Further, if the PC is three character levels or more lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that PC will receive one-half gold for the adventure as well. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Further, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure unless the highest APL supported by the adventure is APL 12.

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

- Attempt to create a table of six 1st-level characters, or try to enlist higher-level characters to play at that table.
- Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them. All riding dogs are considered trained to attack. PCs who want their dogs to attack must succeed at a Handle Animal or Charisma check (DC 10). Failure indicates that the animal will not attack that round. This is a move action (spoken command) that may be attempted each round. If the animal is wounded or has taken any nonlethal damage or ability score damage, the DC increases to 12.

Time Units and Upkeep

This is a standard one-round Regional adventure, set in Keoland. Characters native to Keoland pay one Time Unit per round, all others pay two Time Units per round.

Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12gp per Time Unit. Rich Upkeep costs 50gp per Time Unit. Luxury Upkeep costs 100gp per Time Unit. Characters that fail to pay at least Standard Upkeep will retain temporary ability damage until the next adventure, must buy new spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may suffer other in-game penalties (or possibly gain in-game benefits) as may be detailed in this adventure.

Mundane Animals Effect on APL		# of Animals			
		1	2	3	4
CR of Animal	1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
	1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
	1	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4	5
	3	3	4	5	6
	4	4	6	7	8
	5	5	7	8	9
	6	6	8	9	10
	7	7	9	10	11

A character who does not pay for at least Standard Upkeep may also avoid the above-described penalties by living off the wild. If the character possesses four or more ranks in the Survival skill and succeeds at a Survival check (DC 20), the character will heal temporary ability damage as if he or she paid for Standard Upkeep, may refill spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may restock up to 20 arrows or bolts if the character has at least four ranks in Craft (bowmaking). The player is allowed to Take 10 on this roll.

More information about Lifestyle and Upkeep can be found in the "Lifestyle and Upkeep" section of Chapter 3 of the LIVING GREYHAWK Campaign Sourcebook.

The Secret History of Linth

This adventure is the conclusion to the *Tales of Linth* series of adventures. To put this adventure into perspective, it is necessary to review heretofore-unrevealed background information on the County of Linth, as well as those adventures that have come before this one.

Early History and the Coming of the Keogh

The region that would become the Duchy (later Earldom, and finally County) of Linth was a collection of disparate Flan tribes that had been brought under control by the Suel house known as Linth. Confident in their place as rulers by preordination, and filled with a sense of superiority for their magic and technology, the Linth and their favored Suel allies expelled the previous Suel overlords and inherited whatever Flan were still around. These Flan were told by the Linth to leave their homes, as these new Suel had no use for them, either as allies, servants or slaves. The Flan left this broad swath of land, their ancestral homelands that included present-day

County of Nimlee and Barony of Riverwatch. They fled across the Sheldomar River into neighboring Ulek, and across the open plains to the Good Hills.

Around -356 CY, a new group of humans entered the Sheldomar Valley. These were a large, organized tribe of Oeridians who called themselves the *Keogh* ("Earth-Blessed").

The Keogh were settling through the Heartlands, and a large contingent set down on the western bank of the Sheldomar River, on the location of what is present-day Segor, the current capital of the Earldom. His contemporaries knew Prince Alane as "the Reaver" for his vicious treatment of the Firstcomer Suel. Alane saw the coming of the Keogh as nothing short of an act of war against his own House Linth and the entrenched governing Suel houses that owed him fealty. Prince Alane invited the Keogh's leaders to his manor house under the pretense of opening diplomatic relations with his new "neighbors." Desirous of good relations the Keogh accepted. The head of the leader of the emissaries was struck atop Alane's lance as the Lord of Linth took a large contingent of mounted troops and infantry to strike down what he thought was a now-leaderless collection of Oeridians in a rugged riverside camp. Priests of Joramy and fire-wielding battle-mages among the Keogh had received a vision from their goddess of Prince Alane's treachery. By the time Prince Alane and his soldiers had arrived, the clerics of the goddess of wrath had stoked the Keogh into a bloody frenzy. The crazed Oeridians struck from all sides and savaged the army of the Suel traitor. The battle ended when Prince Alane and his troops, as they attempted a fighting withdrawal, were swallowed up in a storm of fire called forth by the enraged clerics and Oeridian battle-mages.

Unlike most of his soldiers, Prince Alane survived, but his burns were disfiguring and horrific, and the pain of his wounds drove him utterly mad. Making his way back to Linth Manor, he would never again be seen without his charcoal-colored armor and full helm. He would forever hide his grotesque burns from the sight of others.

News of the Reaver's treachery against the Keogh brought many other Oeridians to the Segor camp. From there, the two armies marched northwest and southwest. As long as they did not fight, any mixed humans were allowed to go unmolested; the Keogh killed any Suel they encountered. The net effect of this, at least as far as the dominant Houses Neheli and Rhola were concerned, was that the Keogh were replacing the Linth as the buffer and "blunt instruments" that they were using to subdue the valley and expel the Firstcomer Suel.

By -342 CY, the whole situation threatened to branch out into areas of pre-Keoland and destroy the stability the Suel warlords had worked so hard to create. The Great Council of Niole Dra was called, desperate to get the Keogh to attend. When they did, they knew a strong statement against House Linth's aggression must be made if there was to be any peace with the Oeridians.

The Council of Niole Dra's edicts humiliated House Linth. Lord Alane was reduced in stature from a Prince to that of an Earl. The County of Nimlee and the Barony of Riverwatch were severed from the Earl's lands and guaranteed an Oeridian governor in perpetuity. (This arrangement remains to this day – Countess Rheyd of the County of Nimlee, for example, is Oeridian.) In the final nod of the other collective Suel houses towards peace in the Sheldomar Valley, they christened their new kingdom "Keogh-land" – later, simply referred to as Keoland.

Earl Alane now found he was censured and shunned by his Suel fellows, the lands under his rule reduced by two-thirds and his own lands swollen with Keoghish Oeridians who hated him. The Earl died twenty years later, consumed with hate for both the Oeridian "parasites" that now "infested" his land as well as a hatred for the Suel houses of the Neheli and Rhola for humiliating his House to win favor with the Keogh. Unfortunately for the Keogh, he did not die without an heir. The Linth family line continued with new descendants. But its history of treachery, deceit and destruction remained unchanged.

For a long while, House Linth turned inward, as Earl Alane's treachery had cast such a light of attention on the House that its subsequent leaders understood the prudence of maintaining a low profile. A Linth dutifully attended the Council in Niole Dra, voted with the will of the majority, and generally kept his or her head down. Earl Alane's awful injuries kept him from returning to the field as a warrior, so he began to dabble in magic and sorcery. He was naught but a cursory student of the magical arts before his death, but he passed his interest along to his children.

The Reign of Countess Sera Linth

This interest in sorcery was passed down a few generations, and by the time it had reached Alane's great-granddaughter Sera it had blossomed into full bloom. The matriarch of House Linth from -250 CY until her death, Countess Sera was a witch of considerable power, and she had been weaned on tales of how the incursion of the "filthy Keogh immigrants" had brought her family so much misery. She began to seek out ways to increase her family's power in general and in particular a way to use it against the Keogh "parasites."

Her magical research led her to the Crypt of Sekhel. Nestled in the grasslands south of Niole Dra, near the northern border of the Countess' lands, it was rumored that a cleric who venerated an ancient devil known as Dispater had been buried along with a trove of dark magic. The crypt was uncovered by a cult of debauched devil worshippers and was made their place of worship. The reigning Suel lords of the time sent a small contingent of warriors to destroy the cultists, but they were met by a devil the cultists had summoned and were nearly massacred. The only wizard present cast a spell that collapsed the main entrance to the crypt, and then

scribed holy symbols upon the great iron doors in the hopes of sealing the evil and the cultists in forever. The Suel lords were fearful of the panic that might ensue if a nest of evil such as the Crypt were known to be so close to the capital, and the tomb's existence was never revealed.

Sera only discovered its existence from the wizard's own journals. She ignored his rambling writing of nightmares and his evident descent into madness; she instead focused on the wizard's report of magic and gold "beyond counting" gathered by the cultists to sacrifice in tribute to their dark masters. Most promising of all, the wizard mentioned the cultist's possession of the *Nethernight*, an ebony talisman that augmented any wizard's magic with unholy might.

Gathering herself, she set off northward towards the crypt, using magical divinations to guide her to the place where the crypt lay buried. The labor of a pair of summoned earth elementals excavated the site, and the magic of the iron doors was broken using Sera's magic in combination with the ill-fated wizard's own notes about his casting of the spell.

The wizard moved into the darkness, and was immediately beset by the warped undead that were once the cultists. Defeating them, she moved into the crypt itself, where a devil-queen barred her path. The combination of her magic and the brute force of Sera's earth elemental companions allowed her to defeat the guardian devil and finally to have the riches of the tomb to herself. She claimed the *Nethernight* and the riches of the tomb and returned to Linth Manor to plot and scheme. Unknown to Sera was that the *Nethernight* was cursed, and the power it provided its wearer came with a horrific price... but one that would only become evident later.

Countess Sera devised a simple, vicious plan to attack the Keogh of Segor. Using the various librams of necromancy recovered in the Crypt of Sekhel, she created a virulent pox within the city with a spell of *epidemic*, a spell she had discovered within the crypt.

The spell devastated Segor and condemned thousands of Oeridians to terrible, wasting deaths. The King placed the entire city under quarantine, allowing only the protected paladins in service to Keoland to enter the city and minister to the sick. But the spell's awful power was such that even those shielded from the disease's effects could still be carriers, and soon the sickness had spread within all of the Earldom and even into adjacent provinces, including Niole Dra.

Countess Sera played the part of the saving angel, announcing at an anxious meeting of the Council that she had devised a way to break the power of the spell. Her "discovery" of a cure went a long way towards lifting much of the stigma against House Linth that had been in place since the Council of Niole Dra. The Oeridians within Segor were so weakened that the Countess' offers

of monetary aid, soldiers to protect against looters, and "future magical warding" against such another occurrence were met with grateful, open arms. In exchange, the Countess asked the Oeridians to accept the Linth as their rulers, to "demonstrate the trust" between these "former" adversaries. This was made law by the Act of Segor, signed in -235 CY.

The *Nethernight* and the Death of Countess Sera Linth

With her plan successful, the evil Countess turned inward, locking herself away to study the *Nethernight*. The hideous artifact and her prolonged exposure to it broke even the Countess' formidable will, and she became totally deranged. Sera accepted an invitation by the Baron of Dilwyth to travel there to rest and recover. But on the sixth anniversary of the signing of the Act of Segor, the evil Countess hung herself from the balcony of the Dilwyth ancestral estate. Her new Oeridian subjects buried her with the reverence and display of grief fit for a queen; her corpse was later stolen from its grave by her son, the new Count, and entombed in the attic of the Linth Manse – ironically, to protect it from "the depredations of Keogh tomb robbers."

Unbeknownst to anyone, the *Nethernight* was an artifact of power created by the arch-devil known as Dispater. This immensely powerful being had an evil plan involving the Sheldomar Valley, and whose precise extent remains unclear. What is known is that the *Nethernight* absorbed Sera's tormented spirit, turning her into a banshee, and magnified that awful spirit's power to corrupt the land around her. So powerful was the *Nethernight* that even when Sera's banshee was destroyed, the Blight upon Linth would not abate.

The Razing of Steffenmoor

A black dragon of considerable size razed the city of Steffenmoor in 202 CY. The city boasted a large network of dams along the Sheldomar, and the beast did so much damage that the ten square miles of land around the city became a field of muck. The dragon somehow formed a swamp from this flooded land, and the place became a haven for evil creatures, including a cult of demon worshipping lizard men (a splinter group from a larger cult located in the Rushmoors). The dragon was killed by a company of experienced adventurers sixty years later, but the ruins have never been resettled.

The Bargain of the Knights of the Watch

Wishing to move their operations out of an urban center and creating a post to protect the western shores of the Sheldomar River, the mysterious Knights of the Watch received permission in 354 CY of establishing a garrison-fort Goarada, only a few miles from Segor. At the time Goarada was founded, the ruling Earl was Rierdan Linth. Often looking pale and unsteady, barely able to lift the ceremonial rapier that hung from his belt, the Earl made up for his physical deficiencies with a keen mind and

personal magnetism. In the generations following the Act of Segor, House Linth began to put pressure on the Oeridian majority over which they lorded. By the time of Earl Rierdan, most peasant Oeridians had been taxed into submission, barely able to eke out a subsistence living. The middle class fared somewhat better, but they could hardly be considered comfortable.

The charity and goodwill of the Knights was well known to the people of Keoland, who viewed the knights with such fanciful names with a degree of awe and curiosity. There was little protest to their presence within the Earldom. The leaders of the Knights decided to open up a dialogue with the noble family who lorded over their lands.

In the Linth camp, Earl Rierdan sought the beneficence of the Knight to solidify his control over the Oeridians. It had been the fear of every Earl of Linth that the Oeridians would someday revolt against their Suel lords. Rierdan realized that the Knights – not officially beholden to the Lion Throne – could be valuable allies if the worst should come. Rierdan began actively courting the favor of the commander of Goarada – Most Vengeful Ettin Nikos Barasta.

Ultimately Nikos and the Earl came to an agreement whereby the Knights of the Watch stationed in Goarada would act on the Earl's behalf in a variety of roles. The Knights would serve to police the region, to collect the Earl's taxes, and protect the House in times of war. In exchange, the Knights would receive favored status and use of Goarada for the duration of the Linth legacy.

The Truth of the Prophecy of Azmarender

The alliance of the Knights of the Watch made little sense, even to their own members. But Nikos was doing as he had been commanded to do. The reason was so to grant the Watchers a place beside House Linth – to more easily choke the life out of it when the time came.

The reason for this arrangement came about years earlier. The sage-prophet founder of the Knights of the Watch, Azmarender, had a seven-day vision regarding the House of Linth and the Lion Throne of Keoland. When he awoke, scribes hastily recorded his feverish words:

*In a dark house stained with Oeridian blood,
Two women carry the fate of the valley,
The first by hate, consumed and was consumed
Beneath the fields, from a devil's womb
From within the darkness, it is darker still
She brought the artifact that sealed her doom
A curse was placed upon her house
The next countess will slay the lion
She bring the empire to ruin and flame
Keogh against Suel, peasant against lord
The curse ends only with the house.*

An entire generation of Watcher scribes and diviners pondered the prophecy, and brought their results to Grandiose Imperial Wyvern. What they said was

frightening. First, Azmarender had seen through Sera's treacherous act, and in so doing discerned that she and her family could not be trusted. More ominously, whatever the "artifact" was of which Azmarender spoke, it was the catalyst for an awful event. When the next first-born female child of House Linth assumed rulership of her family's ancestral lands, it would signal the collapse of the Kingdom of Keoland.

And so, the Watchers accepted the post of the constabulary of Linth, so as to have a permanent base of operations to keep an eye on House Linth, for the good of the Kingdom and the Valley. But their time in Linth, and the exposure to the evil force of the *Nethernight*, began to corrupt even these vigilant warriors from within.

As the Knights of the Watch went about collecting the Earl's oppressive taxes, the populace's opinion of the Knights began to rapidly degenerate. Many were seen as little more than tools of the Suel nobles who ruled them. It did not help matters that most of the Knights stationed at Goarada were (at the Earl's request) predominantly Suel.

The Murder of Lady Magdaline

In 442 CY, the first-born of the reigning Earl of Linth was announced to be a daughter named Magdaline. In 457 CY, when the Earl of Linth was announced to be on his deathbed. A commander in the Knights of the Watch known as Nils Perris tended his resignation to his second-in-command and rode towards the Linth's ancestral home. Nils was a hero, but one whose heroism would never be known. For it was he who had been secretly chosen to prevent the prophecy from occurring, and in so doing would sacrifice himself in the name of his order. He quit his rank in the hopes of not sullying the knighthood he loved.

As the knight was considered a friend of House Linth, as were all of his ilk, he was welcomed as always. When Nils entered he was greeted by Lady Magdaline, who assumed he was there to inquire about her father's failing health. Saying nothing, he drew his sword and beheaded the teenage girl with a single stroke. As her head tumbled wide-eyed to the floor, staining the rich carpets in crimson, the former Knight fell upon his own sword. The Earl died later that afternoon, leaving his youngest son the new Earl. The prophecy had been kept from fruition – at least, for the moment.

The Night of the Long Lances

Disastrously for the Oeridians of the Earldom, Watcher Perris was one of the few Knights remaining of Goarada who was of Oeridian ancestry. The new young Earl, a boy of only thirteen, reacted to this with a demonstration of ham-handed force not yet seen in Linth. The Earl stoked the fires of panic among the other Suel nobles, painting the assassination of Lady Magdaline as an abortive *coup d'etat* against the House of Linth by its Oeridian subjects. The other Suel houses responded in turn, coming down

harshly on the Oeridians in their counties and taking the chance to rid themselves as troublemakers.

Even the Knights were not immune to participating against the violent backlash against the Oeridians. They felt humiliated that one of their own was involved in such a treasonous act, and were already succumbing to the *Nethernight's* influence. The younger (and predominantly Suel) Knights scattered about the Earldom, looking for Oeridian "dissidents." Clashes between the Knights and peasants soon followed, further souring relations between the two groups.

In Linth, the Oeridians remember this time of chaos as "The Nights of Long Lances." This seven day period commemorates when the Knights of the Watch (whose acts become more reviled with each subsequent generation's telling of the stories) punished the Oeridians for an assassination committed by one of their number. It is at this time that tempers flare, Oeridians cry for independence, and the flames of revolt burn in the hearts of the Keogh.

Lugh Narthistle, Lost Son of Linth

In 540 CY, the Countess of Linth gave birth to fraternal twins, born a few minutes apart. The firstborn was named Garr, and the other Lucius. As had become standard practice since the Nights of Long Lances, the children of the Earl never ventured out of the Linth manor, remaining under heavy guard. Indeed, the children were not seen by even other members of the Suel nobility – the paranoia of the Linth family had grown worse with each passing generation.

In 550 CY, the grieving Earl announced the murder of his eldest son by "Oeridian assassins" – one of whom had managed to penetrate the House's defenses and kill the boy. This prompted another wave of police action against the non-Suel and accelerated the calls for revolt among the populace. Lucius Linth would ultimately inherit the title of Earl of Linth.

In truth, no such event occurred. The Earl's son Garr was very Oeridian in his features – at least as far as the mentally-unbalanced Earl was concerned. So bothered was he by this that he desired to disown Garr. So he sent his son to the family of one of his Viscount, Lord Narthistle, instructing him to adopt the child as his own even as he made the announcement of his son's supposed assassination. While Lord Narthistle honored his lord's wish, he told Garr – now Lugh Narthistle – of his birthright. Lugh fell into service with the Watchers, and became the Commandant of Fortress Goarada, stronghold of the Watchers in Linth. But Lugh was as black-hearted as most of his family, and came to be seduced into the growing faction of Dispaters-worshippers in Keoland known as the Iron Cabal. He would ultimately use his influence to corrupt Linth's Watchers from within.

In 586 CY, Earl Lucius' wife gave birth to her first child, Lady Hannah. She was the first female firstborn child of

House Linth since the murdered Lady Magdalene. Sadly, the Countess would give birth to two other sons, but both were said to have died in their sleep (in truth, they had their necks broken by the hands of little Hannah, who even at that early age understood enough to know that any other siblings would be her rivals).

KEO3-03 *Will of the People*

In KEO3-03 *Will of the People*, the heavy-handed rule of the Earl of Linth, Lucius, was being ever more hotly protested by the oppressed Keogh peasants of his lands. King Kimbertos forced the Earl to open negotiations with the rebels in the hopes of quashing the threat of rebellion. The adventurers detailed to secure the negotiations foiled an assassination attempt on Estren, the bard who was representing the Keogh rebels. Estren blamed the assassination attempts (incorrectly) on the Earl, and this assignation of blame almost led to the collapse of the talks. The adventurers discovered that a second attempt on Estren's life was to be made by Milo Astra, a rebel who had once been a Knight of the Watch and who had been driven insane by his inadvertent discovery of the Prophecy of Azmarender. Milo had hired the assassins, and later tried to kill Estren himself, because he knew that in so doing the talks would collapse and the Earl would be removed from his seat of power by Kimbertos. In so doing, the Prophecy's vision of the fall of the Kingdom could be prevented. Milo spoke the words of the Prophecy of Azmarender even as he tried to slay Estren, and in so doing revealed it to those outside the Watchers for the first time.

KEO4-05 *A Last Dance at Midnight*

A year later, the banshee of Countess Sera had been released from the *Nethernight* and was, each night, forcing the then-eight year old Lady Hannah to dance herself to exhaustion each night in their mansion's ballroom. The banshee hoped to kill the child then possess her when she was inevitably raised from the dead – destroying Hannah's spirit upon its return and substituting her own. In this way, she could easily subvert the House of Linth from within when she became countess. The Earl was fearful for his daughter's life, fearing she would be danced literally to death. Against his family's xenophobia, he again summoned the aid of adventurers. The heroes recovered various fetters of the spirit from throughout the manor, and in so doing saw firsthand the sick corruption of the ancient Suel family. With the fetters granting them power over her spirit, the heroes defeated Sera, but not before the banshee's wail killed the Earl, his wife, and his sister. In so doing, Sera served Dispater well, as this disaster left Hannah as the new Countess of Linth.

Shortly after these events, Lady Maressa Linth, the late Earl's niece, married Grand Duke Luschan of Gradsul. The Grand Duchess retained control over the Shadowdark, the guild of thieves who once had preyed upon the Keogh, but who now turned more towards espionage on behalf of Maressa and her husband as her feeling for them softened.

Blackrazor

The Iron Cabal continued their schemes for Dispat, recovering the necromantic blade known as Blackrazor. Keoish troops were ordered into the ruins of Steffenmoor to pre-emptively recover the blade. The purpose of the weapon's recovery was made painfully clear at the end of 594 CY, when the King of Keoland was assassinated with the weapon as it was being presented to him by Lord Holphin Neheli (who had been briefly possessed by a *magic jar* cast by an agent of the cabal).

Hannah, now well along into madness, blamed the Keogh for the assassination in her warped mind, and set Lugh and his Watchers to begin the genocide of any of those people in the county. Paralyzed by the power struggles of interregnum and the manipulation of the Iron Cabal, the armies of Keoland stood by as the slaughter commenced.

KEO5-03 *Closure and Disclosure*

Hugo of Geoff, Grandiose Imperial Wyvern and leader of the Knights of the Watch, had been struggling to marshal the Watchers in Linth to action to do something about Hannah, but the corruption of the Watchers by Lugh thwarted his hand. So concerned did he become about the excesses of the Watchers in Linth that he sent Dispatcher Kialla Skotti, daughter of the assassinated King, to look into the matter (KEO5-03 *Closure and Disclosure*). Escorted by adventurers, she took in the conditions in Linth with disgust. Upon her arrival at Fortress Goarada, she was nearly slain by the now-corrupted Watchers and the devils that had come to walk the halls of the fortress. Escaping to make her report to Hugo, he ordered the full force of the Watchers down on Goarada, and the edifice was cleansed. Lugh escaped, and rescued Lady Hannah from a mob of Keogh even as her manor was burned and the county slid into total anarchy.

The Court of the Land appointed Kialla's sister, Countess Jessa Skotti, to the Regency of Keoland, to help bring order to the kingdom as the Court battled to find a successor to the fallen King. She sent the Keoish army into Geoff and the Uleks to deal with the growing threats of the giants and the armies of Turrosh Mak, but she reserved a large force to forcibly evacuate the Keogh from Linth. This evacuation was completed in the autumn of 595 CY.

KEO5-06 *A Tale of Two Lions*

A group of adventurers discovered that Regent Jessa was the leader of the Iron Cabal, and that she and her loyal cronies had already revoked the ancient laws prohibiting a female monarch. Jessa was poised to become the first queen of Keoland, but the heroes confronted and defeated Jessa. With her death, the Iron Cabal's scheme collapsed, and the still-unknown nobles who remained slinked into the shadows to plot another day.

Recent Events

Linth has remained a wasteland, still twisted by the Blight. Lugh brought Hannah to the Crypt of Sekhel in the northwestern edge of the county, from which the *Nethernight* had been recovered. Lugh has been in communion with his dark lord. With the revelation of his master's latest plot and the collapse of the Iron Cabal, it would seem that if the arch-devil cannot possess the Kingdom of Keoland, no one will...

Adventure Summary

This adventure is quite different in style and play than any you may have run in Living Greyhawk, so please read it carefully.

The PCs have been contacted by Reynard Yargrove, Great Druidess of the Sheldomar Valley. The great magic Blight on the County of Linth has exploded beyond its borders, threatening to turn the entire kingdom into a wasteland. She has tasked the adventurers with putting an end to it – something that her magic heretofore has been unable to accomplish. It is all she can do to muster the energy of the Valley itself to keep the Blight from spreading any faster than it already is.

She has determined that the source of the unholy energy powering the Blight was centered, until very recently, in the vicinity of Dredstadt, where the ancestral manor of House Linth was located (see the map of the County of Linth in the Appendix). When it burned to the ground, the mad child Countess Hannah Linth disappeared, and the source of the power moved to the northern edges of the kingdom. Reynard believes that this is no coincidence, and that Hannah either carries or is herself the source of the energy behind the Blight.

The PCs journey to the area and discover the Crypt of Sekhel. It had once been a crypt for an infamous follower of Dispat. Later, a cult worshipping that arch-devil had taken up habitation there. They were discovered by a Red Lion (the Red Lions being a group which would eventually become Keoland's National Academy of Wizardry) who attempted to destroy the threat. But the force sent in were driven insane, though the last member of the group managed to magically seal the entrance before he lost his mind.

Upon entering the crypt, the PCs find it to be a place of respite for the now-disgraced Lugh Narthistle, as well as a sect of mind flayers who have turned their backs on their own race in favor of the worship of the Iron Duke.

When the adventure begins, the PCs have already fallen afoul of the mind flayers and are subdued. The illithids and Narthistle are eager to know the PCs secrets and why they have come, so the mind flayers have attached themselves to the unconscious PCs' skulls and inserted their tentacles within. Rather than drawing out the brains, the illithids are using their psionics and subtle vibrations of their tentacles to place the PCs in a lucid

dream state, one manipulated by the mind flayers. The PCs are being observed as they operate in this subconscious state. Even as the PCs believe they are moving about, walking and talking and looking into the problem of the Blight, the mind flayers are attached to their skulls, caressing their brains and controlling the PCs' environment to find out more about them.

In other words, all but the conclusion and optional encounter of the adventure takes place entirely in the dreams of the PCs.

It is important that the PCs do not know about this situation until they finally break free of the illithids' mind control! When they do, the revelation should be jarring, and will lead to the final clash of the PCs against the fallen Knight of the Watch. In so doing, they must decide once and for all the fate of Hannah Linth and, in so doing, the Kingdom of Keoland.

In the Introduction, the PCs begin by being in audience with Reynard Yargrove. She explains the situation regarding the Blight, and prevails upon them to look into the matter. She encourages them to seek out clues about the source of the Blight. She gives the PCs the journal of Countess Sera, which has come into her possession since it was recovered during KEO4-05 *A Last Dance at Midnight*. An examination of the contents finds a reference to her gleaning the location of the crypt from the journal of a Red Lion wizard. These "Red Lions" are the predecessors to the National Academy of Wizardry, who maintained a chapterhouse and library in Dredstadt before the Keoish Army forcibly evacuated the county.

(Note that the real Reynard had informed the PCs of the location of the Crypt of Sekhel, but the mind flayers have something else in store. Remember, even at this point, illithids are attached to the PCs skulls and are manipulating each and every scene, with results which are, to them, indistinguishable from reality.)

Encounter One takes the PCs to the Dredstadt chapterhouse of the National Academy of Wizardry. To see their physical prowess, the illithids will challenge the PCs with a rakshasa *rajah* and his servants. Once their dream foes are vanquished, the PCs can recover a record of the location of the Crypt of Sekhel after a thorough search.

In Encounter Two, the PCs journey to the Crypt of Sekhel. After penetrating the tomb, they come across Hannah Linth, lying motionless on a slab-like altar. Any PCs that touch her (by checking to see if she's alive, most likely) they will disappear (at least as far as their companions are concerned). From the PCs perspective they have been sucked into Hannah's tortured consciousness; in truth, the illithids have simply linked the shared dream of the PCs with that of Hannah.

Unbeknownst to the mind flayers, however, there is a danger to this tactic. Hannah is insane, and this fact, coupled with her surprisingly strong will, gives her the ability to briefly take control of the shared reality. The

PCs must take advantage of this break in the illithids' hold over them, by reasoning with Hannah and making them realize that they are there to help her. In so doing, they help jar her and themselves out of dreamtime. These events are handled in Encounters Three and Four. Although the PCs may feel like they are dealing with Hannah for an extended period of time, the break in the illithids' control in real time lasts but a few seconds. Encounter Three can be particularly gory, so pay particular attention to the table and revise the read-aloud text as necessary.

Encounter Five is the climax of the adventure. If the PCs are able to aid Hannah in jarring them loose from dreamtime, the mind flayers will be stunned from the psychic feedback and will be slow to respond to the newly-released PCs. If they are not able to do so, they must break control themselves – a supreme test of will against the mind flayers. With their release, Lugh Narthistle and the collected servants of Dispatier will fight the PCs for control of the *Nethernight*.

If the PCs are successful, the Conclusion deals with the ending of the Blight, and of the final disposition of the evil artifact which has plagued the lands of the Linth for generations. Dealing with the latter may result in an optional encounter in which the PCs descend into the hells to finally destroy the *Nethernight* once and for all.

Adjudicating Dreamtime

For all intents and purposes, you should be running this adventure as you would any other while the PCs are in their dream-state. However, there are some special rules to consider.

- *Divination* spells which grant advice (*augury*, *divination*, *contact other plane*) will give advice to the PCs that best matches what the illithids want them to do (in other words, to proceed forward along the likely lines of the adventure as detailed in the Adventure Summary).
- Should a PC be killed in dreamtime, the trauma of the psychic shock will likewise kill her in the real world. Should the PC be raised, they suffer all applicable penalties and costs, and continue the adventure as normal
- There are two spells that will not work in dreamtime – *holy word* and *word of chaos*. Being lawful evil in alignment, the mind flayers cannot conceive of what such a word would sound like, and so cannot replicate it in dreamtime. As a result, when these spells are cast, they will fail. The casting PC does not lose the spell from her repertoire, nor does this take any time; the caster is free to cast a different spell. Allow PCs to make Spellcraft or Knowledge: arcane checks but ignore the results; there is no way for the PCs to determine the true reason why the spells won't function until they are out of dreamtime.

- Any spells cast that require the expenditure of experience points and/or expensive material components or spell foci are not actually spent. Have the player note the expenditure as normal, but remember not to actually deduct them from the player's AR.
- Any equipment recovered by the PCs in dreamtime is unavailable to them (for obvious reasons) for the battle against the mind flayers. On the other hand, PCs will find that any consumable items or charges that they thought were expended in dreamtime were not.
- Should the players choose to abandon the adventure at any point before touching Hannah Linth and being pulled into her mind, fill out the AR as usual. The PCs are considered never to have reached the crypt and never to have fallen into dreamtime.

Preparation for Play

Before starting play, it's a good idea to check to see which players are playing PCs that have participated in any of the following adventures: KEO3-03 Will of the People, KEO4-05 A Last Dance at Midnight, KEO5-03 Closure and Disclosure, and KEO5-06 A Tale of Two Lions.

You should also have a method by which you can quietly and inconspicuously keep track of the passage of time (a digital watch will fit the bill).

Introduction

You stand in the wasted lands of Linth, near the border of the Earldom of Gand. Here, trees are warped into disturbing shapes, and the heels of your boots cause the ground to bleed, and once, to scream. The air is thin and still.

The woman before you is regal in her bearing, yet somehow wild and untamed, almost feral. She wears simple armor of leather and hide, adorned with the symbol of Obad-Hai. This is the Great Druid of the Sheldomar Valley, a primal force of nature taken shape in the form of a woman. This is Reynard Yargrove, and she is dying. Her face is a ghastly pallor, the color of a fish's belly, and creases mar her features like the cracks of parched earth. She sits with her knees drawn to her chest, coughing and trembling.

Seven days ago, the Blight plaguing the lands of Linth in the Kingdom of Keoland burst their barriers, exploding in all directions across the valley. In those seven days, the Blight crossed the mighty Sheldomar into the County of Ulek, warping the trees of the Silverwood. In the west, it had reached the Good Hills; one of those small peaks had been reported to have grown a mouth and screamed for longer than an hour. Not even the

capital city of Nirole Dra was spared; the great royal gardens of the king lay in ruins. Death stalked the land. Ten miles a day – at that rate, the entire Valley could be destroyed.

As the Blight grew, so did Reynard's sickness. The ley-lines so important to the druids were sundered, losing their power. For Reynard, so attuned to the land, the severances were slowly killing her.

A wheeze brings your attention back to the woman. A half-dozen Dreadwalkers stand protectively around her and their faces show their fear and worry. One steps forward, his sharp features and well-defined ears betraying his olve blood. "The Green Man of the Valley is dying with her. Before she was struck down, she told us that she had communed with the earth, and it had begged for your help, and named each one of you." He looks at Reynard with sadness. "The earth itself chose you as its champions. You stand the best chance of ending this Blight. She told us to find you, to bring you here to her, and to give you these, since she knew that she would not be able to speak by the time you arrived."

The woodsman hands you two things. The first is a well-constructed journal, and the second a note embossed with a symbol of Obad-Hai.

"She told us nothing more," finishes the Dreadwalker.

Neither of the objects radiates magic, though Reynard herself radiates overwhelming necromantic energy (the power of the Blight attempting to kill her). These Dreadwalkers are the honor guard of Reynard, and will not leave her side under any circumstances. Reynard is so ill as to be beyond communication; she cannot even reliably blink her eyes or nod a response to a question. Their leader, Hoden, can only answer queries or confirm details that can be considered reasonably general knowledge. Below are listed some things of which he is aware.

- The Blight began in 588 CY. It has defied the efforts of the Great Druid and the royal archmage alike to remove it.
- The men came here by foot, since normal mounts brought into these lands inevitably are consumed by the Blight and become grossly metamorphosed.
- Hoden fears that Reynard will not live long enough to see the PCs' success or failure.
- The Dreadwalkers will not be lingering here; the Great Druidess is to be brought by them to Grayhill, where Archmage Lashton keeps a residence and will be attending to her.

Give the players Handouts #1 and #2, which represent the journal entry and the letter from Reynard.

Development:

The best starting point is the one posited by Reynard in the letter. Should the PCs use divination magic, all such spells will urge them (courtesy of the controlling illithids) to go to the Dredstadt chapterhouse of the National Academy of Wizardry.

Encounter 1: Dredstadt and the Chapterhouse

Refer to DM Aids #2 and #3.

By the reckoning of the PCs, they are twenty miles south of Dredstadt, and it is a quick if disturbing journey to the city. PCs may expedite their travel via magic if they wish. Read or paraphrase the following as they reach Dredstadt.

The city of Dredstadt is a ghost town. Only a few months ago, the Keoish army removed the people of Linth at the behest of Regent Jessa. In some ways, the city still seems in mid-breath, with signs abounding that the citizens left neither slowly nor willingly. Your boot-heels sound far louder than they should in the empty city; occasionally they find a gap in the cobblestones and draw blood from the ground beneath.

The chapterhouse of the National Academy of Wizardry stands vacant, its great windows shuttered from within. Wide stone stairs lead to a single-story central building, from which a pair of two-story wings extend east and west. Abutting the rear of the central building is a five-story tower. A pennant displaying the Keoish Lion Rampant hangs limply in the still air of this land.

General Notes about the Chapterhouse:

The chapterhouse is of stone construction. Despite its hasty abandonment, the structure remains in good shape and is sturdily built.

You can review the general map of the chapterhouse provided at the bottom of DM Aid #2. The map's lack of detail is not an oversight; for purposes of the adventure, the library (the topmost map on the page) is the only area within the chapterhouse that is important. You should feel free to improvise descriptions of any other areas that the PCs explore.

The interiors of the chapterhouse are well lit by *continual flame* spells. All ceilings are nine feet in height, including the library. Doors are of metal-reinforced wood.

The Entrance Hall:

The entrance hall's exterior double doors are warded with an *alarm* spell cast by the rakshasa sorcerer within. This will cause the outsider to receive a mental warning of the impending arrival of the PCs, and will begin casting preparatory spells. Note that this spellcasting cannot be heard from outside due to the presence of a *Mordenkainen's private sanctum* spell on the library (see below).

The Library:

The library has been warded with three spells:

- An *alarm* spell (cast by the rakshasa sorcerer, with the same parameters as above) has also been cast on the double doors.
- The library interior is warded with a *Mordenkainen's private sanctum* spell that has been subject to a *permanency* spell. This will prevent PCs from scrying or otherwise seeing into the library until they actually enter.
- A magic trap (see below for specifics) has been cast on the floor inside the library, immediately in front of the double doors. It is marked on the map as *Trap*. The traps appear as glowing sigils on the floor and are readily evident to anyone passing into the room. While easily avoided, doing so impedes the PCs free movement through the room.

APL 12

↗ **Glyph of warding (Blast):** CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 5th-level cleric, 2d8 acid, DC 14 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5'); Search DC 28; Disable DC 28.

APL 14

↗ **Reciprocal gyre trap:** CR 6; magic device; mechanical trigger (pressure plate); automatic reset; spell effect (*reciprocal gyre*, 9th-level wizard, Will DC 17 save for half, then DC 17 Fort negates [see spell description in Appendix 1]); Search DC 30; Disable DC 30.

APL 16

↗ **Twin reciprocal gyre traps:** CR 6 each (total CR 8); magic device; mechanical trigger (pressure plate); automatic reset; spell effect (*reciprocal gyre*, 9th-level wizard, Will DC 17 save for half, then DC 17 Fort negates [see spell description in Appendix 1]); Search DC 30; Disable DC 30. Note that each trap is independent of the other.

Entering the Library:

A pair of bronzedwood double doors is marked with a simple brass plaque stating "Library."

Note the presence of an *alarm* spell on these doors. Should the PCs open the door, read the following:

At the border of the threshold of the doors swirls a grey mist. You stare as hard as you are able into it, but you cannot see beyond it.

As soon a PC opens the door, the rakshasa inside will begin their preparatory spells. For every minute of real time the players discuss the mist and its implications,

give the rakshasa one round of actions. The sorcerer will begin casting his spells as listed in the setup, and will order the other rakshasa to hold their ground. When a PC crosses the threshold and penetrates the *sanctum*, read the following. You may need to make on-the-fly modifications to the below read-aloud text (if the sorcerer cast *invisibility*, for instance).

This entire wing is a grand library. The room is almost sixty feet across and half as wide. On the ground floor are library stacks. A second-floor gallery overlooks a study area. A spiral staircase on the far side of the room allows access to the gallery.

Close to the double doors, you see brightly-glowing sigils on the floor of the library.

Standing on the far end of the room, on the upper gallery, is a human woman dressed in pale blue robes of fine silk. A pair of leather-clad wood elf archers stands on points along the upper gallery. On the ground floor, three stout mountain dwarves, clad in scale mail armor, with large swords at their hips.

The rakshasa have all used their change shape special ability to appear as described. If the PCs should have a *true seeing* effect enabled when they enter the room, they will see the rakshasa in their true forms, and you can read the following:

Standing on the far end of the room, on the upper gallery, is a creature that looks like a bipedal tiger, dressed in pale blue robes of fine silk. A pair of similar creatures whose fur is deep brown in color stands on either side of him, longbows in hand. Below him, on the first floor gallery, are three more of them, clad in scale mail armor, with large swords at their hips.

The rakshasa will attack immediately upon PCs passing through the *sanctum* and into the library.

Creatures:

APL 12 (EL 15)

☛ **Nazarthune rakshasa** (2): hp 99 each; see Appendix 2.

☛ **Rakshasa Sor 2**: hp 75; see Appendix 1.

☛ **Zakya rakshasa** (3): hp 68 each; see Appendix 2.

APL 14 (EL 17)

☛ **Nazarthune rakshasa Ftr 2** (2): hp 130 each; see Appendix 1.

☛ **Rakshasa Sor 4**: hp 87; see Appendix 1.

☛ **Zakya rakshasa Ftr 1 / Exotic Weapon Master 1** (3): hp 104 each; see Appendix 1.

APL 16 (EL 19)

☛ **Nazarthune rakshasa Ftr 4** (2): hp 152 each; see Appendix 1.

☛ **Rakshasa Sor 6**: hp 109; see Appendix 1.

☛ **Zakya rakshasa Ftr 3 / Exotic Weapon Master 1** (3): hp 130 each; see Appendix 1.

Setup: If the PCs have failed to hide their presence from the rakshasa, the sorcerer amongst their number will begin casting the following spells, in the order listed below, as rapidly as he can before combat begins:

- *haste* (on all rakshasa; +1 to hit rolls, +1 dodge bonus to AC, increased movement, one additional attack per round)
- *invisibility* (on each nazarthune, to help them maximize the use of their sneak attack abilities)
- *bear's endurance* (on self - +4 to Con, +18 hit points, +2 to Concentration skill, +2 to Fort saves)
- *shield* (on self - +4 shield bonus to AC, negates *magic missile* attacks)
- *magic circle against good* (centered on self, 10-foot radius emanation - +2 deflection bonus to AC and +2 resistance bonuses on saves made vs. spells/attacks of good creatures, wards against possession and mental control, and against bodily contact by summoned creatures)
- *bear's endurance* (on each nazarthune - +4 to Con, +26 hit points, +2 to Concentration skill, +2 to Fort saves)
- *invisibility* (on self)

Should the PCs manage to take the rakshasa by surprise the sorcerer will cast *haste* but will not waste time casting further non-offensive spells.

Tactics – All APLs:

All of the rakshasa, being figments of the PCs imaginations and having nothing to lose, fight to the death.

The rakshasa know that their Achilles' heels are good-aligned piercing weapons. They will be on a keen lookout for any PC in possession of a missile weapon, and a PC that demonstrates an ability to overcome their damage reduction becomes the focus of the rakshasas' fury. The zakya will attempt to close and sunder the offender's weapon as rapidly as possible, the sorcerer will pound away with spells, and the nazarthune archers will spray the archer with arrows. Likewise, PCs casting spells like *align weapon* on piercing weapons receive similar treatment.

Tactics – APL 12:

Rakshasa sorcerer: The sorcerer will attempt to lay down as much damage as he can in as short a time as possible. His spell selection at this level is relatively limited. He will rely principally on *ice storms* to do steady, reliable damage to PCs, switching to *magic missiles* if the melee is such that he cannot use the spell without adversely affecting his own forces. PCs that show resistance to *magic missiles* (protected by *shield* or wearing a *brooch of shielding*) will receive *acid arrows* instead. If personally attacked in melee, the rakshasa will use *dimension door* to move to the other side of the battlefield. He is also likely to try a *glitterdust* against foes that look likely to have substandard Will saves (fighter- and rogue-types).

Nazarthune archers: These archers are capable of a devastating opening volley. They begin within 30 ft. of the double doors. As soon as combat begins, they pour arrows into any target they can. If the unfortunate is flat-footed, they suffer 6d6 additional sneak attack damage. If the nazarthunes have a choice of flat-footed targets, they will concentrate on whichever seems more lightly armored, hoping for a quick kill.

Once the PCs are no longer flat-footed, the archers change tactics. They will use their hide in plain sight abilities and will attempt to snipe (hiding, shooting, and hiding once more) in an attempt to keep attacking PCs when they are flat-footed. They ready an attack against any spellcasting PCs, seeking to thwart such attempts. One nazarthune will do so each round, unless it's clear there's no spellcasting going on.

Zakya rakshasa: The zakya's primary goal is to run interference against any PCs seeking to get up onto the gallery. While they can't do much against flying foes, they will focus their attacks on any PCs attempting to put the nazarthunes or the sorcerer out of action. A PC who presents as an exceptional danger is likely to be subject to multiple sunder attempts by the creatures which will rely on natural attacks should they be disarmed in turn.

Tactics – APL 14:

Rakshasa sorcerer: The sorcerer will attempt to lay down as much damage as he can in as short a time as possible. He will lead off with a *confusion* spell in the hopes of destroying the cohesion of the attackers. From there, he will rely on *cones of cold* or, if many of the PCs demonstrate evasion, *ice storm*. He will switch to *magic missiles* if the melee is such that he cannot use the spell without adversely affecting his own forces. PCs that show resistance to *magic missiles* (protected by *shield* or wearing a *brooch of shielding*) will receive *acid arrows* instead. Any flying PC who attempts to access the gallery will be hit by a *reciprocal gyre* spell. If personally attacked in melee, the rakshasa will use *dimension door* to move to the other side of the battlefield. He is also likely to try a *glitterdust*

against foes that look likely to have substandard Will saves (fighter- and rogue-types).

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Zakya rakshasa: The zakya's primary goal is to run interference against any PCs seeking to get up onto the gallery. While they can't do much against flying foes, they will focus their attacks on any PCs attempting to put the nazarthunes or the sorcerer out of action. A PC who presents as an exceptional danger is likely to be subject to multiple sunder attempts by the creatures which will rely on natural attacks should they be disarmed in turn.

Tactics – APL 16:

Rakshasa sorcerer: The sorcerer will attempt to lay down as much damage as he can in as short a time as possible. He will lead off with a *confusion* spell in the hopes of destroying the cohesion of the attackers. From there, he will rely on *cones of cold* or, if many of the PCs demonstrate evasion, *ice storm*. He will switch to *arcs of lightning* and *magic missiles* if the melee is such that he cannot use the spell without adversely affecting his own forces. PCs that show resistance to *magic missiles* (protected by *shield* or wearing a *brooch of shielding*) will receive *acid arrows* instead. Any flying PC who attempts to access the gallery will be hit by a *reciprocal gyre*. If personally attacked in melee, the rakshasa will use *dimension door* to move to the other side of the battlefield. He is also likely to try a *glitterdust* against foes that look likely to have substandard Will saves (fighter- and rogue-types).

Nazarthune archers: These archers are capable of a devastating opening volley. They begin within 30 ft. of the double doors. As soon as combat begins, they pour arrows into any target they can. If the unfortunate is flat-footed, they suffer 6d6 additional sneak attack damage. If the nazarthunes have a choice of flat-footed targets, they will concentrate on whichever seems more lightly armored, hoping for a quick kill.

Once the PCs are no longer flat-footed, the archers change tactics. They will use their hide in plain sight abilities and will attempt to snipe (hiding, shooting, and hiding once more) in an attempt to keep attacking PCs when they are flat-footed. They ready a Manyshot against any spellcasting PCs (the Manyshot is a standard action, so this is legal), seeking to thwart such attempts. One nazarthune will do so each round, unless it's clear there's no spellcasting going on.

Zakya rakshasa: The zakya's primary goal is to run interference against any PCs seeking to get up onto the gallery. While they can't do much against flying foes, they will focus their attacks on any PCs attempting to put the nazarthunes or the sorcerer out of action. A PC who presents as an exceptional danger is likely to be subject to multiple sunder attempts by the creatures which will rely on natural attacks should they be disarmed in turn.

Development: The rakshasa revert to their natural forms upon their death.

Following the conclusion of the melee, the PCs are free to explore the library. A PC that examines the stacks will find something unusual. With a DC 20 Search check, they will be able to note about sixty or seventy book titles but, curiously, there seem to be many duplicated books in the library. An especially astute PC (DC 30 Search) will notice not just the above detail, but that that each stack's contents appear to be the same. Unbeknownst to the PCs, this is because the mind flayers, intelligent as they are, can only conceive of a finite amount of books in their imaginations and therefore are limited in what they can project into dreamtime.

The Journal

A search of the rakshasa (the sorcerer, but feel free to put the journal on some other rakshasa if need be) will recover a bound journal of significant age. The book is battered and is tied with what appear to be wide cords. A DC 20 Knowledge (dungeoneering) reveals that they are actually mind flayer tentacles (a bit of foreshadowing for the PCs).

The book features a locking clasp bearing a glowing sigil. The lock itself is a DC (18 + APL) Open Locks check; alternatively, the clasp can be smashed open:

APL 12-14: 5 hp; hardness 5.

APL 16: 90 hp; hardness 15 (these inflated numbers are due to the *greater sign of sealing* on the lock.)

The clasp is ward by pre-cast spells (at APL 14 and 16, they were cast personally by the rakshasa):

APL 12

↗ **Glyph of warding (Blast):** CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (glyph of warding [blast], 5th-level cleric, 2d8 sonic, DC 14 Reflex save for half damage);

multiple targets (all targets within 5'); Search DC 28; Disable DC 28.

APL 14

↗ **Sign of sealing:** CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*sign of sealing*, equivalent 15th-level sorcerer, 10d4 damage, DC 19 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 30' radius); Search DC 28; Disable DC 28.

APL 16

↗ **Greater sign of sealing:** CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*sign of sealing*, equivalent 15th-level sorcerer, 17d6 damage, DC 23 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 40' radius); Search DC 31; Disable DC 31.

None of these discharges will destroy or even damage the book (the mind flayers have willed it as such – this was a test by them to see how well the PCs perceive hidden threats).

If the PCs manage to open the book, give them Player Handout #3. The information in the first paragraph is what the PCs need to decisively locate the Crypt of Sekhel (see Encounter 2).

Encounter 2: The Crypt of Sekhel (Dreamtime)

Refer to DM Aid #3. Note that when drawing out this area, the map in question shows a number of details that aren't present – the teleporters, the monsters, and Narthistle. Draw only the location itself, the pentagram, the statue, and the altar with Hannah atop it.

Approaching the Crypt:

The trip is about a hundred miles, most of which is over roads in reasonable repair. It will take three days by horse to reach the crypt. Of course, high-level PCs have means available to them that allow them to reach the site more quickly, and they may utilize them.

The two deep gullies of which the doomed Red Lion wrote lie before you. They drive at each other, their intersection forming an eastern-pointing arrow. You watch with sick fascination as the cliff walls expand and contract in a mockery of labored breathing.

Your eyes track downward to the floor of the rifts' intersection, a hundred feet below. There, you can make out what appears to be a cave mouth.

When the PCs investigate:

The cave is not a natural one. It extends briefly to a pair of great stone portals, each more than ten feet in height. They hang slightly open, allowing you to

see into the long eastward-traveling hallway that disappears into darkness.

The doors are neither locked nor trapped. The PCs can make their way into the complex without incident.

When they arrive in the central chamber, read the following:

The square chamber is forty feet on each side, with a simple ceiling twenty feet over your heads that is reinforced by broad beams of timber. A large statue of a diabolical-looking man stands opposite the entry portals. He is regal-looking, and certainly a devil - the Iron Duke himself.

A pentagram seared on the floor takes up most of the room. In the pentagon formed by the intersection of the lines is a stone slab, perhaps an altar. On it is a fair-haired human girl no more than ten years old. She is laying on her back, eyes closed and in repose.

Any PC that makes a DC 15 Knowledge (nobility) roll, or has played KEO4-05 *A Last Dance at Midnight*, will recognize the Countess Hannah Linth. She is about nine years old, and is dressed in a frilly white gown and gloves with pearl embroidery. She does *not* bear the *Nethernight* around her neck. The upcoming read-aloud text assumes that the PCs recognize her; if they don't, you will need to make some *ad hoc* changes to it.

No magic will be able to rouse her. Indeed, the only thing that will is the touch of one of the PCs. Any PC that indicates that they are examining her (particularly with a Heal check) is assumed to have touched her. This need not be flesh-to-flesh contact; touching her dress through a glove or gauntlet will do. Read the following to that player when their PC does so:

As you examine the girl and assess her situation, her eyes snap open. Wild-eyed, her pupils dilated with terror, she grabs your hand and says with a frightful whisper, "They've got us! Right now! Help me break free! Together..."

Your companions watch your form fold up like a piece of paper, suddenly two-dimensional, collapsing ever smaller into a point in space seemingly within the Countess' palm before you fade away with a single, anguished wail.

In the wake of that scene, Hannah's face becomes one of grim resolve, as if struggling with some inner demon. "Join us..." she murmurs. As she does so the walls of this place briefly flicker, reminding you of the way heat makes the air shimmer and distort. Things return to normal a moment later.

Hannah's battle against the mind flayers' control has begun, and she has reached out to the PCs via her own tortured mind to do it. She is unable to speak or communicate with the PCs any further; any magical attempts to read her mind (*detect thoughts* and the like) are

useless; it is as if the PC is trying to hear someone speaking while she stands in a hurricane.

Development: In the fraction of a second this entire encounter represents, the mind flayers have become preoccupied with bringing Hannah under control, and so the scene here in the crypt will remain static. The PCs are free to explore the place, but will find nothing of interest.

Hannah remains unable to move or communicate. The PCs will find that they cannot rouse her, or do anything to either heal or harm her – spells fail to function on her, weapons do no harm, and so on. Any PC that touches her (as before, even while not making flesh-to-flesh contact) will find themselves folded up and sucked into Hannah's palm as described earlier. PCs that indicate that they have no intention of doing so (you should pull the player aside and verbally confirm this with them out-of-character, if need be) will be "left behind" in the adventure.

Troubleshooting: PCs cannot continue the adventure without touching Hannah Linth and being drawn into her mindstate. For any PC who refuses to touch Hannah Linth but remains in the cavern to guard her, they will find themselves next able to act in Encounter Five, as they awaken and find that at somewhere along the line the mind flayers rendered them unconscious and put them on the slabs with the rest of the Heroes. Any PC who refuses to touch Hannah and leaves the cavern will be allowed to leave but will find themselves unable to find the cave again. It's simply not there,

Handling Dreamtime and PC Efforts to Interact with Hannah

Hannah's consciousness has drawn them into her own mind, even as the mind flayers desperately attempt to regain control of the situation. The illithids and Hannah Linth are engaged in a violent test of wills, with the cold logic of the mind flayers being sorely tested by the iron will of an insane child. The PCs are caught in the middle.

In each scene, it will become apparent to the PCs that they are in some sort of altered reality. They *must* find a way to make Hannah aware of this fact as well, or they may not escape dreamtime alive.

Encounter 3: Invitation to Tea

Note that this encounter can be particularly unsettling to younger players. By this point you as the DM should have a good grasp on what kind of table you are running this event for. If a player at the table is likely to have a problem with the depiction of blood and gore following, paraphrase the read-aloud text and substitute the blood references for stuffing, as if the animals were toys. If your table is more mature and ready for some elements of gothic horror, use the text as written. The most important thing to remember is that the players are here to have

fun, so take their age and maturity into account for this encounter.

You find yourself in what appears to be a child's bedroom of immense size. The wood-framed bed with pink comforter is big enough for a cloud giant, and the windowsill must be forty feet off the ground.

You are seated at a sizable round table. A tea service, the only thing here not out of proportion, is in front of each guest - a number of creatures who appear to have been awkwardly jammed into their seats. You have a moment of realization that they are your companions and, like you, they have been transformed into small animals.

Hannah is here, humming to herself. She seems to have grown to the size of a hill giant. Perhaps it is you that are out of proportion, and not the room. She dotes about with something of a detached, dreamy look on her face. She seems to be preparing to join you at the tea party. In her left hand is a knife, nine feet in length, whose edge is ominously matted with blood and hair.

Setup:

The DM should randomly assign the PCs one of the following animals as their new form – a kitten, hamster, guinea pig, puppy, baby rabbit, or yellow chick. Any PC that played KEO4-05 *A Last Dance at Midnight* will recollect that Hannah has a penchant for torturing and killing small animals, which she then uses as guests at her “tea party.” Even if the PCs don’t know this, it doesn’t take much to deduce that this is a bad situation...

At the start of this encounter, you should *inconspicuously* begin keeping track of the time as soon as you finish reading the initial introductory text. The PCs have seven minutes of real time to interact with Hannah. Their goal is to get the Countess to (re-)perceive that she is caught in a dream world. In doing so, the PCs empower her to escape dreamtime and take the PCs with her.

To represent this, you should grade the PCs on how well the PCs explain to Hannah that there’s something wrong, and that things aren’t as they seem. You should score this grade from a 0 (the lowest) to a 4 (highest). As a guide, here is how you should interpret this system:

- **Zero:** The PCs made no effort, even accidentally or incidentally, to make Hannah understand that there is something very wrong with the situation. Any PCs that have met Hannah make no effort to jog her memory regarding their previous encounter. The PCs basically do nothing but remain silent or engage her in idle chit-chat which has no value to her efforts to free herself and the PCs from the mind control.
- **One:** The PCs make a few mentions of past events, past meetings with Hannah, or of the strange goings-on so far. However, they were unconvincingly or

half-heartedly presented; mentioned infrequently; were not especially memorable; or were mentioned incidentally or by accident.

- **Two:** The PCs make several mentions of past events, past meetings with Hannah, or their suspicions that something isn’t right with what’s going on. At this level, the PCs still aren’t really making a focused “pitch” to Hannah.
- **Three:** The PCs are making a deliberate effort to make Hannah understand what’s going on. Citations of past events, past meetings, or the strange goings-on are frequent. At this level, the PCs are making a focused “pitch” to Hannah, doing an adequate but not spectacular job. Perhaps the PCs are split in how they are doing it, or are interrupting each other, or wandering off topic.
- **Four:** The efforts on the part of the PCs are focused and deliberate. Citations of past events, past meetings, or the strange goings-on are frequent; role-playing and the arguments being put forth by the PCs are effective.

At the conclusion of this encounter, a space has been included for you to write the number grade within it. Do so as soon as you finish the scene, so you won’t forget the grade you gave the players.

Roleplaying:

The PCs will find that they are literally a captive audience. They have been lashed to the chairs with cord, and no amount of effort will allow them to free themselves. Their physical forms are too weak to free themselves and they will instinctively realize that they cannot cast spells or use any magical abilities (the mind flayers are busy battling with Hannah and have “locked down” anything that the PCs might do to free themselves from the scene). The PCs are able to speak and understand any languages they normally speak.

Hannah’s general demeanor should be depicted as detached, dreamy, and vaguely threatening. The DM has been provided with some guidelines as to how to handle PC efforts to interact with her. Note that Hannah *will* be able to interact with the PCs in a distant, dream-like fashion; the comments below are random things that you can drop into the conversation to make her sound detached from reality.

The general push the players should be making to Hannah is that this place is obviously not real, and that Hannah should be freeing them rather than preparing them for tea. If you have an entire table of players who have never played an adventure in the Earldom of Linth, and who don’t know Hannah at all, gently steer them in this direction.

Hannah will look distant and make comments like:

PCs mention past meetings with Hannah:

- “I don’t recall meeting you... we get so few visitors here.”
- “Father dislikes my talking to strangers. Why are we speaking? Animals don’t talk... but they *do* scream.”
- “I don’t think we’ve met. I haven’t met anyone to whom I wasn’t related. You don’t look like a Linth.”
- “I’ve been so very tired lately... father looks worried, and he says I’ve been up late dancing, though I’ve no recollection of it at all. Who did you say you were, again?”

PCs talk about the Blight:

- “I think my cousin Averyn said something about people being hungry? Is that what you mean? I’ve never been hungry.”
- “I like to eat meat. I’ve only ever eaten animals, though. I hear people in my family have tried... other kinds, though.” (Giggles)
- “Sometimes the ground bleeds, and the trees outside my window weep. One choked the other to death one night. It crashed down and hit the side of our manse. Father was so angry that he chopped both the trees into firewood just out of spite. I couldn’t sleep that night... the logs kept screaming as they burned in the hearth.”
- “They say grass is supposed to be green and trees are supposed to have leaves... but I don’t believe them.”

PCs talk about Hannah’s family:

- “Have you ever met my father? He makes me laugh. He comes to me and tries to scare me, and tells me that he’s dead. But I laugh and tell him he’s teasing me, because I can hear and see him just fine. He wails so sadly when I tell him that.”
- “Father and my aunt would disappear into the bedchambers and make queer noises. I asked my mother about it, but she just wept and went back to talking to the ghosts in the manor.”
- “I love my cousin Maressa. She’s married to an important duke, you know. But she got cross with me killing all the Keogh and making marionettes from their corpses. I went back to wood ones, though – the ones made from people get all stiff and don’t move after a while.”
- “Sometimes I go upstairs in the attic and play with the corpses there. My father would be mad if he found out, but the ghosts up there tell me that they are grateful for the company.”

PCs talk about the Nethernight:

DM Note: Hannah doesn’t know the name of the Nethernight, so she won’t be able to entertain questions

about it unless the PCs indicate that it’s the necklace passed down through the Linth line.

- “It’s shiny. It feels warm on my skin. Sometimes, if I stare at the shiny obsidian for long enough, I can make out faces in it. I think the faces are screaming because they are jealous that I’m so pretty.”
- “Father once told me that I needed to mind my jewelry or I’d lose it, but he told me never to worry about my necklace. I might not be able to find it, but he said that it would always find me. I once left it outside, and by the time I ran back to the manor it was back around my neck.”
- “Boys carry weapons. Girls wear jewelry. My necklace is both.”
- “Sometimes if I pretend I’m asleep, my necklace goes out for a walk. It unclasps itself and slithers like a shiny snake down the hall and out of my room. Once, I followed it, and saw a man with red skin and horns in the library. He was talking to it, but I couldn’t understand the words. He never looked at me but I think he knew I was there. I ran back to my bedroom, locked the door, and climbed into bed. When I laid my head down on the pillow, the necklace was already there, and snapped into place around my neck.”

Development:

After seven minutes of real time, read the following and then fill in the PCs “grade” for this encounter.

“Enough talking. Time for tea,” she says happily. She dotes on each of you, laying the tea service before you all before becoming wild-eyed and slaughtering the kitten with a quartet of savage knife-blows to its head. Blood and gore spatters her petite white dress and mottles her face. All the while, she never stops humming a ditty, even as she then fills the silver cups with the rapidly-cooling blood and places them in front of you. But her hands begin to tremble and she drops the last cup. The countess’ face becomes lucid with fear even as the porcelain shatters. “Not enough,” she gasps. There is a look of desperation in her. “You’ve got to work harder...”

The rooms’ walls darken and great shadows peel away from them, falling over all of you like a shroud. It feels like a tight hood of silk has fallen over your mouths. The last thing you hear is an alien voice that says, “We must regain control.”



INTERACTION GRADE – Encounter 3:

Proceed to Encounter 4.

Encounter 4: History

Hannah's dreaming consciousness has seized control of the situation from the mind flayers, and she subconsciously chooses another setting. This one is chosen from her imagination, having read about the final climactic battle of her ancestor, Earl Alane Linth against the Keogh he wronged (see *Early History and the Coming of the Keogh* on page 4). She has re-envisioned the battle and set the PCs within it.

From the darkness, you hear the sounds of battle and smell burning flesh. You briefly ponder how this could be when you're dead. You realize that the shroud isn't causing the darkness any longer. Instinctively, you tear at your face, removing a helmet that had been covering your head.

You stand amongst a force of furious warriors, armed in leather jacks and wielding a random assortment of weapons. They stand, hurling insults at the soldiers across the battlefield from them. You are in a row of soldiers. The battle lines on both sides stretch beyond your ability to see, into the depths of the low-lying fog that blankets the field.

Your opponents are fifty yards away, arrayed in an intimidating battle line. Each soldier is dressed in full plate armor, a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. Amongst your number, one man steps out in front of the line. "Show yourself, Duke Alane of Linth!"

Across the plain, the soldier line parts and a man dressed in black plate steps forth. He removes his helm, revealing handsome chiseled Suloise features. "I didn't know dogs could speak, Keogh," he calls across the battlefield. The soldiers on his side chuckle and laugh.

The man's jaw sets. "You slaughtered our delegates, sent to you under a flag of truce. We have come here to make restitution. Can a dog speak? Perhaps not," replies the Keogh as he and several others withdraw various objects from the folds of their clothes. "But Joramy can."

The smug look on the man's face vanishes as balls of flame erupt in the lines of the Linth army, and men fall screaming to the ground. Others see their armor glow white hot and they are cooked alive in their metal skins. From the fingers of the Keogh speaker bursts a pair of projectiles that look like small meteors. They streak a trail of flame and rocket towards Alane Linth, erupting even as a cylinder of fire slams down from the sky upon him.

The forces that survive the assault scream and begin charging at their foes that do the same.

The PCs retain their normal possessions.

Ask the PCs to make a Spot check and read the following to whichever PC(s) rolls the highest (regardless of how high the roll actually is):

As the two armies slam into each other with a crash, you think you briefly see a small figure in a white dress near the epicenter of the battle, but you lose sight of it in the ensuing melee.

For the moment, the PCs can weave their way towards where they spotted the figure (Hannah) without engaging the troops. However, if they dawdle (say, tarry in-game for a minute or more before moving) they will be engaged by fifty Linth soldiers (see *Creatures*, below). This will happen every few minutes; the supply of soldiers of both sides is inexhaustible in dreamtime.

PCs taking a moment to observe the battle will notice that the size of the forces here are tremendous; the battle rages hundreds of yards in every direction, and the low-hanging fog blocks sight out to a distance. A PC that makes a DC 20 Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local – Sheldomar Valley) check will know that this is inconsistent with the details of the battle. In reality, while it was a significant clash, the skirmish involved far fewer troops than are present on this battlefield, and the weather was fair.

When the PCs make their way forward:

Maneuvering your small band through the raging carnage of the battle, you peer into the mists, straining to see until you catch sight of Hannah Linth. The Countess is skipping about, a handful of daisies clenched in her delicate pale hand. She stops every now and again and cheerfully places one of the flowers into the hands of various corpses.

Catching sight of you, she waves and holds aloft the flowers. She is oblivious to the twin columns of Linth infantry at her back. They emerge from the mists, a hundred men total, who are charging across the field at her, sure to trample or impale her in moments.

Creatures:

All APLs (EL ½)

☛ Countess Hannah Linth, female human Arix: hp 26; see Appendix 1.

Note: In this encounter, the Nethernight does not protect Lady Hannah beyond its normal function of a maximized false life spell (+20 hp; included in above totals).

APL 12 (EL 12)

☛ Mob of Linth soldiers (2): hp 247 each; see Appendix 1.

APL 14 (EL 14)

☛ **Mob of Linth soldiers** (2): hp 247 each; see Appendix 1.

APL 16 (EL 16)

☛ **Mob of Linth soldiers** (2): hp 247 each; see Appendix 1.

Setup:

No map is provided since this battle takes place on an open field and is easily set up. Hannah forms the center point of the battlefield. The edges of the two mobs that are closest to Hannah should be placed thirty feet away. The PCs begin thirty feet away from Hannah, directly opposite the field from where the soldiers are emerging.

Tactics:

Hannah will turn, scream when she sees the soldiers bearing down on her, and throw her arms over her head in fright (and will do nothing of note other than cry until the fight is concluded). The soldiers will run (60' total; they are in full plate and are thus limited to triple movement), bringing the edges of their bases adjacent to Hannah's.

In the following round, the soldiers will attempt to use swarm tactics; you should move the base to encompass as many PCs as possible within the swarm damage effect (consider Hannah a PC in terms of this tactic). Remember Hannah's presence; she can probably survive a round of swarm damage or trampling, but any more and she might be in danger of death. Likewise, while area effect spells are of great use against the mobs, they run the risk of clipping Hannah.

DM Note: In this situation, reducing the mob to zero hit points or fewer mean that the PCs have caused the soldiers to rout and flee the field.

Grabbing Hannah:

It is likely PCs will attempt some heroics to save Hannah (hopefully; that's the point of this encounter). Seizing the screaming girl is an attack (basically it's an un-resisted grapple attack; it's still possible that the PCs might miss the attack roll itself, however). PCs with the Spring Attack feat can grab her "on the run" and make off with her.

For encumbrance purposes, the struggling Hannah weighs 75 lbs. (this may be significant for a low-Strength, nimble PC who will find her movement reduced due to the additional weight of the girl).

Development:

Hannah's life has been one all but devoid of love and affection; as such, PCs valiantly defending her and keeping her from injury is jarring to her, and is just what

the PCs need to do to help increase her cognizance that she is in dreamtime. This section's "grade" is how good a job the PCs do in protecting Hannah. Use the following as guidelines to what "point grade" to award the PCs.

The maximum grade in this section is 5 points!

- **Zero:** Hannah is slain on the field.
- **Two:** The PCs keep Hannah from being slain, but she is injured (lethal or non-lethal damage) or is subject to an ill effect (such as paralyzation or entanglement). The PCs rescued her, but maybe not before she was injured by the mob, or perhaps they had to get a bit rough with her or subject her to an unpleasant spell or effect to do so.
- **Four:** The PCs succeed in getting Hannah out of danger, and the child suffers neither injury (lethal or non-lethal) nor ill effects (such as paralyzation, entanglement, etc.); a completely clean rescue.
- **+1 point:** In the course of the battle, one or more of the PCs lose 50% or more of their total starting hit points to damage from the mobs. (Hannah is impressed by their willingness to put themselves in harm's way on her behalf.) She need not be conscious or alive to witness this happening, as she will recollect it later in dreamtime. This result is not cumulative with the "+3 point" result, below; take the better of the two.
- **+3 points:** In the course of the battle, one or more of the PCs are slain. (Hannah is moved by their willingness to put themselves in harm's way on her behalf.) She need not be conscious or alive to witness this happening, as she will recollect it later in dreamtime. This result is not cumulative with the "+1 point" result, above; take the better of the two.
- **-3 points:** One or more of the PCs refuse to put themselves in danger on Hannah's behalf (this is judged by the DM – a PC like an archer or wizard who normally doesn't engage in melee would not be penalized, but ones that refused to try and help in *some* fashion would). A PC that expresses cowardice ("I'm not going in there!") or callousness ("Let her die!") would earn this penalty. This result is cumulative with the others listed above.

When the battle is concluded, if Hannah is still alive, read the following text. As always, take the nature of your audience into account:

Tears streaming down her face, Hannah looks at you, her tiny hands balled into fists. "I hate this place!" she says. Her eyes widen in fear as a pair of thin, mucus-covered tentacles force their way out of her clenched hands, trembling before driving their points into Hannah's eyes moments before the ones in your own palms do the same to you.

If she is dead:

Hannah's mangled corpse begins to stir. A pair of hideous, mucus-covered tentacles burst from her back, pushing her to her feet, even as more erupt from her grossly distended mouth. You can barely make out her gargled accusations that "you could have saved me..." before the points of those tentacles drive themselves deep into your eyes.



INTERACTION GRADE – Encounter 4:

Proceed to "Calculating the Dreamtime Grades."

Calculating the Dreamtime Grades

The PCs have now had two chances to rouse Hannah from dreamtime – once through words, and once through actions. At this point, the psychic battle between the insane child and the mind flayer host has reached its climax. Compute the average of the two grades from Encounters 3 and 4, and round down.

If the score is zero, the PCs and Hannah are lost in dreamtime. The mind flayers probe the minds of the PCs for anything they know, and then all are slain as the mind flayers consume their brains. Proceed to Conclusion E. (This is a harsh ending, but it should be all but impossible for PCs to fail *this* badly).

For any other score, this represents the total number of rounds in which the mind flayers (not Ezra, but the mind flayers who are attached to the PCs' skulls) in Encounter Five are *incapacitated*. The worse the score, the less time the PCs have to deal with Narthistle and Ezra before the other mind flayers rouse themselves.

Proceed to Encounter 5.

Encounter 5: Revelation

Refer to DM Aid #3.

Your head is pounding. You hear a violent gargling noise in your mind. As your eyes open, you blearily take in the scene.

You are once again standing in the Crypt of Sekhel. Countess Hannah still lies on the slab of stone, but much has otherwise changed.

A pair of devils can be seen guarding the doors. (At APL 12-14 add:) A third devil stands near the statue of Dispater.

Standing before the statue is an imposing figure wearing full plate, greatsword held easily in one hand. His tattered tabard is black and white, bearing an owl upon it. His face is one of surprise and anger. His gaze is directed at one of several mind flayers in the room. It stands within a pentagram, and its

tentacles are recoiling from the head of Hannah Linth.

Around you, your companions stir. The other mind flayers' tentacles are thrown over the top of all of your heads. All are stumbling backwards, their suckers making a sickening popping noise as they detach from your skulls. Blood oozes from the holes where their tips had been anchored; those awful tentacles had been caressing your brains...

The human is in mid-sentence. His voice is angry and accusatory. "... just an insane child!"

"Her will was too strong!" counters the mind flayer beside Hannah, its tentacles trembling. Its voice appears only in your heads, its tone frantic. "They're loose! Stop them! STOP THEM!"

Creatures:

All APLs (Untiered)

☞ **Countess Hannah Linth:** hp 26 (but invulnerable to harm as she wears the *Nethernight*); see Appendix 1. The *Nethernight* will shield Hannah from any damage in this encounter. The PCs might not realize this right away and so may make needless efforts to avoid catching her in area effect spells.

☞ **Mind Flayers (one per PC):** hp 54 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 186.

Important DM Note:

Due to the psychic trauma these mind flayers have just undergone, they are initially *incapacitated*. (Their leader, Ezra, is *not* so affected.) In the first round of combat, they fall to the ground prone and take no actions until the number of rounds has passed equal to the players overall score in dreamtime. At that point, they may act, but can only utilize their physical attacks or their *plane shift* ability – *not* their mind blast or other psionic abilities. This restriction lasts for the rest of the combat.

APL 12 (EL 15)

☞ **Devil, erinyes (3):** hp 88 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 54.

☞ **Ezra, male mind flayer Mnk8:** hp 138; see Appendix 1.

☞ **Most Penitent Banshee Lugh Narthistle, male human Mnk2/ex-Pal1/Blackguard 10:** hp 121; see Appendix 1.

APL 14 (EL 17)

☞ **Devil, barbed (3):** hp 126 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 51.

☛ **Ezra, male mind flayer Mnk9:** hp 153; see Appendix 1.

☛ **Most Penitent Banshee Lugh Narthistle, male human Mnk4/ex-Pal1/Blackguard 10:** hp 138; see Appendix 1.

APL 16 (EL 19)

☛ **Devil, ice (2):** hp 147 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 56.

☛ **Ezra, male mind flayer Mnk11:** hp 185; see Appendix 1.

☛ **Most Penitent Banshee Lugh Narthistle, male human Mnk4/ex-Pal1/Blackguard 10/Tattooed Monk 2:** hp 157; see Appendix 1.

Setup:

The map designates where everyone begins. For the devils, the first two present are always blocking the doorways (for Large-sized devils, the marked square is the lower right edge of their base). The mind flayers that were attached to the PC's heads are prone on the floor next to the PCs.

The ceilings are 20 feet high.

Teleporters:

The area is warded with a number of repeating *teleport* points that keep PCs from leaving the crypt. These are labeled A and B on the map. Any PC that exits the crypt via the main doors while on the ground will find they are magically sent back into the chamber's northeast or northwest corner (the matching A or B point on the map). This effect can be dispelled normally (treat the caster as a 17th-level wizard), though it will take two such attempts to remove both teleporters. A PC spending the time to concentrate via a *detect magic*, or using a greater spell such as *arcane sight* or *true seeing*, will see that there is a point between the teleporters, about eighteen inches in width, where a PC could move between them without setting them off. Alternately, PCs may make an appropriate Jump check to pass over the teleporters without triggering them.

Tactics – Ezra (all APLs):

The mind flayer monk's primary objective is to prevent anyone from seizing Hannah Linth, so he will remain near her, using his *mind blast* ability repeatedly, unless he cannot do so without affecting Narthistle. He knows his kin cannot use their own *mind blast* ability and, in desperation, he might well unload a *mind blast* into them if it will catch a large number of PCs as well. If a *mind blast* can't be done, he will use his *charm monster* ability to order a PC to "leave the crypt," knowing that the presence of the teleporters makes this difficult (and in so doing will keep the PC out of combat for a while).

If a PC engages the mind flayer directly, it will use its Improved Trip feat to bring the PC down, and then will flail at him with tentacles in the hopes of successfully grabbing her and consuming the PC's brain. If this tactic doesn't work, however, Ezra won't hesitate to continue hammering away with *mind blasts* or *charm monster* spells. Should the creature be reduced to 10% or fewer of its hit point, it will attempt to *plane shift* to the Nine Hells.

Tactics – Lugh Narthistle (all APLs):

Narthistle is a powerful blackguard who has also had some monk training, as is common for members of the quasi-monastic Knights of the Watch. If any PC provokes an attack of opportunity from him, he is likely to initiate a sunder attempt against that PC's weapon. His Close-Quarters Fighting feat makes it a challenge to grapple him, and his prowess at unarmed combat can make doing so a painful experience for PCs that rely overmuch on this tactic. He will size up the opposition and take on the most physically capable PC, leading off with a sunder attempt against the PC's weapon and then engaging that PC normally with damage. Should a PC sunder his own sword, he will simply resort to unarmed strikes. Remember that a number of his monk abilities don't work because of his full plate armor. It's unlikely that Narthistle will have the time to cast any spells, but if he does so *divine sacrifice* will be the first one cast, followed by *curse weapon*.

Tactics – Mind Flayers (All APLs):

The dreamtime score calculated in the previous section represents the total number of rounds in which the mind flayers (not Ezra, but the mind flayers who are attached to the PCs' skulls) in Encounter Five are *incapacitated*. Due to the psychic trauma these mind flayers have just undergone, they are initially *incapacitated*. They fall to the ground prone and take no actions until the number of rounds has passed equal to the players' overall score in dreamtime. At that point, they may act, but can only utilize their physical attacks or their *plane shift* ability – not their *mind blast* or other psionic abilities. This restriction lasts for the rest of the combat.

The creatures will attempt to use their natural attacks to the best of their ability, but if the PCs already have the upper hand by the time the illithids recover from their incapacitation, they flee via their *plane shift* ability. Any mind flayers will seek to retreat in this manner if the combat is clearly hopeless.

Tactics – Erinyes (APL 12):

The erinyes begin the combat by separating themselves and flying upwards towards the 20-foot ceiling to keep out of the reach of melee weapons. They will repeatedly use *unholy blight* on the party unless the PCs show unusual resistance to it (such as a party of all neutral-aligned PCs, or many PCs in the party having the Mettle special ability). If that tactic doesn't work, they use their bows on the PCs and may ready Manyshot actions to

interrupt spell-casters (if within 30' of one) They use their *true seeing* ability to keep tabs on invisible PCs.

Tactics – Barbed Devils (APL 14):

The barbed devils won't immediately seek to get into melee. They will lead off with an attempt to *summon* another barbed devil (35% chance of success and is treated as a 4th-level spell). Once the PCs have acted, and are probably closer together to one another, they begin using their area-effect abilities, *unholy blight* and *order's wrath* (choosing which to cast based on how effective previous casting by their fellows upon the party might have been). Any devil not engaged in melee by the next round will use *scorching ray*. Beyond that, the devil will attempt to grapple (via Improved Grab following a successful claw attack) and impale foes as quickly as possible on its body spikes. Remember that creatures striking a barbed devil with hand-held weapons lacking reach, or with natural weapons, suffer damage, and any PC taking damage from barbed devils is subject to *fear*.

Tactics – Ice Devils (APL 16):

The ice devils have many options available to them, due to their numerous spell-like abilities.

Initially, the ice devils will activate their *fear* auras. They then try and separate PCs from each other via *walls of ice*. This tactic is most effective if most of the PCs have not yet acted before the ice devils. If they have, they are likely to be more or less clumped together, and the ice devils will try a *cone of cold* against as many enemies as possible – they will avoid hitting Narthistle with this effect, but won't worry if Ezra is within it, since the latter has evasion.

If neither tactic is effective in the opening round, the devils will use their *unholy aura* ability instead.

In the second round, both devils will attempt to *summon* another ice devil (each attempt has a 20% chance of success and is treated as a 4th-level spell). Regardless of their success, they will also begin moving towards the melee to bring their superior reach and number of attacks into play.

Any ice devil that gets beaten down in melee will attempt to *fly* and control the field from the air via its spell-like abilities.

Development:

The devils and Narthistle will fight to the death.

What the devils know: Should any of the devils be captured, they only know that they were sent here by agents of Dispat, their master, and told to stand over the child. They understand that the continuing well-being of the girl is crucial to the spreading Blight, and so long as she bears the *Nethernight* and lives, the curse cannot be undone. They have no idea how the *Nethernight* can be destroyed, but they surmise that it would involve

great effort; it is an artifact of the arch-devil's personal creation, after all.

What Narthistle knows: Lugh is fiercely proud despite his capture; he regards any attempts to goad him to anger as juvenile and ignores them. He will not divulge any information unless forced or tricked to do so. If so, he reveals the above information. He also is aware that the Blight, unchecked, will ruin the Sheldomar Valley – its power is that strong.

Lastly, Narthistle has a deep secret – he is the lost brother to the slain Earl, the rightful heir to the House of Linth. Though his father claimed that his son was assassinated by Keogh agents, he was in truth spirited away and became a squire in the Knights of the Watch (see *Lugh Narthistle, Lost Son of Linth* in the Adventure Background).

Regardless of whether or not the PCs get him to reveal what he knows, Narthistle states that he is a noble of Keoland and demands a trial by his peers as is his right. Any Keoish PC, or one who makes a DC 18 Profession (barrister) or either Knowledge (local – Sheldomar Valley) or (nobility) will know this claim is valid. By Keoish law, the PCs are obligated to bring him to justice. PCs that beat the above check by 5 or more are also aware of a clause that allows the Knights of the Watch to make him stand trial; the PCs could opt to turn him into that group as well. Any PC Knights of the Watch automatically know this is an option. If the PCs turn Narthistle over to either group, they gain the *Just Rewards* (*Knights of the Watch*) or (*Lion Throne*) AR item, as appropriate.

Hannah Linth: Hannah can be taken by the PCs, and she will follow them without resistance. She speaks only when directly spoken to, and she seems dull and listless. The PCs will be unable to remove the *Nethernight* from her neck (it will simply vanish and reappear around Hannah's neck a few moments later), or to be able to affect it in any way. (Note: In Encounter Six, the PC will have explained to them by Reynard a way by which they may destroy the *Nethernight*.)

Encounter 6: Decisions

At this point, it is likely that the PCs will be debating the fate of Countess Hannah, who lies in deep unconsciousness following her psychic duel with the illithids. The PCs have several options at this juncture.

Kill Hannah: This is a very harsh way to end the Blight, but it's one that will indeed work. Slaying Hannah breaks the curse of the Linth. The curse of the House of Linth is finally broken; proceed to Conclusion A.

This is an extremely grey area. The PCs could make the argument that slaying Hannah will save the lives of countless thousands, and they would be correct. In this situation, it is advisable to let the players make their decisions as the feel their PCs would act, but you

shouldn't question their reasons or intentions. In short, let the chips fall where they may.

The DM also needs to be aware that this can be a very touchy subject both in- and out-of-character. If the debate about Hannah's fate gets unproductive or hostile, encourage the players to delay making the decision at this time and instead tell them to proceed as they would have if such an option had been unavailable to them.

Return with Hannah to Reynard: This option has its own challenges and carries its own price. Regardless of how quickly the PCs manage to return to Reynard, she hovers at death's door. She is currently in Grayhill, being attended to by Lashton, Archmage of Keoland and Reynard's lover. The curmudgeonly wizard is distraught over her fate.

As quickly as you are able, you gather up Hannah and travel to Grayhill, where Reynard has been taken. Her honor guard quickly meets you and escorts you to a quiet grove. There, the ghastly withered form of Reynard Yargrove lies still, held in the arms of an older man dressed in the robes of the Keoish wizard's academy.

PCs that have played past Keoland events may know and recognize Lashton, as will any PC members of the National Academy of Wizardry, or those making a DC 18 Knowledge (arcana) or (nobility) check, or a DC 15 Knowledge (local – Sheldomar Valley) check. It is possible that some of the PCs may have earned Lashton's disfavor or hostility. In this particular circumstance, he sets aside those feelings for the good of his love – unless the PCs are truly belligerent, in which case he ignores them.

Reynard has suffered like she has never done before in her attempts to abate the Blight. She has gained one less than her total character level in negative levels, and has suffered ability damage sufficient to reduce all her physical abilities to 1.

The man looks up at you, his spectacles smudged. His voice is desperate. "Did you fail? You must have, Reynard is still dying." His chin droops to his chest. "Tell me everything... while we still have time."

Lashton waits for an explanation from the PCs as to what they have discovered. He listens carefully but impassively. When they have finished, read the following.

"This child's curse and the thrice-damned necklace she wears are beyond the power of Reynard and I to undo. The necklace must be destroyed, but I don't know how to remove it from her neck..."

A strangled gasp comes from Reynard, and Lashton kneels to attend her. But it's clear that Reynard is only trying to speak. "We don't. It is... a thing... of evil... and death. Balance... must be restored."

"How?" Lashton asks urgently.

"One good... pure of heart... need only touch the necklace... and in their willing death... break it." She coughs. "The only other way... is to take the girl... and the necklace... to the place of its creation. Snap it from the girl's neck... with the tools from which it was forged... and throw it into the forges."

"The hells," Lashton murmurs. Reynard can say no more, and she slips from his fingers, falling into a deep coma. Silence reigns amongst you all.

The Nethernight can be destroyed in one of two ways – by the selfless sacrifice of the life of a PC (and not a follower or retainer!), or one final jaunt into Dis, second layer of the Nine Hells, and the demesne of the Iron Duke himself.

Note that Lashton and Reynard are both unable to simply will themselves as a sacrifice to destroy the Nethernight. This sacrifice must come from another avenue. Reynard is too weak to sacrifice herself, and Lashton is not the kind of man to sacrifice himself without a potential avenue of success.

Self-Sacrifice: Any PC can voluntarily touch the Nethernight. This must be a conscious choice by the PC who understands the desired effect – casually touching the necklace won't do it. When they do, their selflessness shatters the necklace and consumes them utterly. Proceed to Conclusion B. PCs cannot offer their retainers or followers in their place. This has to be a real sacrifice. PC possessions left behind cannot be taken by the other PCs. A PC who makes this sacrifice is *permanently dead and out of the campaign*. However, the player who made this sacrifice receives the special Legacy AR item.

Into the Hells: If the PCs are unwilling or unable to make the personal sacrifice needed to break the curse of the House of Linth, they can instead opt to take the battle to the Iron Duke at the seat of his power. Proceed to Encounter 7. Lashton cannot aid the PCs in this task beyond providing a means to reach Dis and to escape (he knows that the unwelcome arrival of an arch-mage of his stature would be immediately sensed and detected by Dispater, and the arch-devil on his home plane would be an impossible challenge, even with the combined forces of the PCs). To facilitate this, Lashton will create a gate to Dis for the PCs. If they take the necklace off Hannah and step through the gate, they *should* have enough time to find a way to destroy it before it makes its way back to the Prime. Note that accepting this mission adds +1 TU to the total TU cost of this adventure (+2 TU if the PC is out of region).

An Unlikely Hero: Should the PCs be unwilling or unable to sacrifice one of their own, or to enter the Hells, Lashton will do so, even though he knows it will surely mean his doom. He will not allow other PCs to accompany him, demanding that they remain behind to guard the portal and close it should he fail. Proceed to Conclusion C.

Encounter 7: Arrival at Dis

Accepting the Challenge

Having agreed to venture into Hell to destroy the necklace and end the blight upon Linth once and for all, Lashton regards you with a mixture of respect and anxiety. "It will be difficult, heroes. You will be going to the Iron City, called Dis, upon the second layer of the hells. It is a place rife with danger, the foundry of the hells from which the baatezu ever arm and armor their forces in the endless Blood War. The forges there run without end and the agents of the Iron Duke are everywhere."

The wizard gives a thin smile. "The Iron Duke's tower is impregnable, but fortunately, that is not where you're going. In my research about Dispater, I recall that he keeps a series of royal forges for his own use, separate from his tower. There is one, larger than the rest, in which he would have forged an artifact such as the necklace. I don't know where this forge is, but at least I can warn you of one place where it is not. Avoid his tower," Lashton warns, "as the devils there kill anyone who wanders too close to it. They are as paranoid as their master."

"Lastly, know this. Dis is the home of the Iron Duke. He has a connection to the very plane itself. Do not underestimate how much he knows about your plans, or about what you're doing while you're there. Were I to accompany you, an arch-mage of my ken I would surely be sensed by him, and I would not be able to defeat him even with your help. But your band stands a better chance of completing this task. Be quick, but be cautious, and keep to yourselves. The city hosts a large and eclectic throng of visitors, so do your best to blend in."

"For now, rest. When you are ready, I will create the gate that will take you there. Do you have a means of escaping the Hells on your own?"

If the PCs respond negatively:

Lashton hands each of you a thin rod made of silver. "Hold that in your hand and say the word 'home' in Common when you need to return."

Lashton has given each of the PCs a rod enchanted with an enhanced *refuge* spell devised by Lashton himself. (Normally, *refuge* doesn't work outside of the same plane, but this version does.) It will unerringly whisk them home when the time comes.

If any PCs have Knowledge (the planes), you can allow them to make a check to glean additional information about Dis, using the guidelines about that skill's use as listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

The PCs are free to take one day, and no more, to rest and rejuvenate themselves. Any more time, and Reynard will surely die (and Lashton will enter the portal himself).

When the PCs are ready:

Having made what preparations you deem necessary, you meet with Lashton and a contingent of Dreadwalkers on a grassy field in Grayhill. The wizard begins murmuring and, using a piece of azure crystal, draws out an elaborate pattern in the air. It leaves lines of softly glowing light in its wake that glow ever more brightly as the pattern nears its completion. When it is finished the portal flashes open, becoming a tear in reality though which you see a dark city beneath a gloomy, snowy sky.

Lashton glances at the gate. "Not snow, but ash. Now," he says, his voice softening, "good luck... and... thank you, from both of us." As he says that, the portal suddenly wavers, and begins to shrink. Lashton snarls, "The Iron Duke has sensed the magic! Go through, now!"

Any PCs that don't immediately leap through the gate will be stuck on the other side. As a ruler of a plane, Dispater can close such a portal, and has opted to do so.

Adventuring in the Hells

Review the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, pages 163 (dealing with the Nine Hells of Baator). In general, the only thing that PCs will find directly affecting them is the mildly law- and evil-alignment of the plane (as explained on page 149 of the DMG). All PCs who are good or chaotic in alignment suffer a -2 penalty to all Charisma-based checks; if they are both chaotic and good, this penalty is -4. The second layer of the hells to which the PCs are headed, known as Dis, possesses no other unusual traits beyond the above.

Carrying the Nethernight

Lashton suggests that the *Nethernight* not be touched by naked flesh, as he is unsure of its exact powers. Doing so has no problematic effects, however.

Dis, the Second Layer of Hell

The Iron City of Dis is the sprawling centerpiece of this plane of hell. At the center of this city is the Iron Tower, an impregnable fortress made to protect the always-paranoid arch-devil, Dispater, who is this plane's absolute ruler. The sprawling expanse of the city seems to ooze outwards from the central point of the Tower like a cancer. The air is heavy with ash and soot from Dis' never-quiet forges, as diabolic smiths work the spoils of this plane's titanic iron mines. The baatezu smiths – typically the more powerful sorts of devils – are always desperate for fuel, sometimes resorting to burning alive slaves and even lesser devils to keep the fires roaring. Everything in the plane is covered in a fine layer of sickly gray-white ash.

The most common sorts of devils seen in Dis are erinyes, Dispater's favored servants, and the insectoid korachons (described in *Book of Vile Darkness*, though not appearing

in this adventure), who are Dispaters's torturers. Many other beings come to the city – rakshasa sages, yugoloth mercenaries, mind flayer slavers, vampire blood merchants, neogi flesh peddlers, and of course evil humanoids of all types. They are equally likely on either evil business or depraved pleasure, but all know to avoid the Iron Tower. Those who wander too close to it are usually slaughtered out of hand by the baatezu guards, who are every bit as paranoid as their master. They will ignore the PCs – even those who are obviously good-aligned “outsiders” – as the residents of this city are wholly self-interested, even the baatezu.

Countess Hannah

As in previous encounters, Countess Hannah is safe from all forms of harm so long as she wears the *Nethernight*. The beings of the plane ignore her, assuming that she is either some *shapechanged* being or (more likely) that the girl is to be sold for slavery, used for sacrifice, or something similar by the (presumably) evil PCs who have brought her here.

The buildings of the city are all exclusively made of metal or stone, as wooden structures would surely ignite from the ever-present hot ash. The streets are paved in shiny black cobblestones which radiate an uncomfortable amount of heat; you soon find your boot heels permanently singed after some time in the city.

The ever-present ash lends the city a vague similarity to one beneath a blanket of light snow. Lemures labor incessantly to keep the streets clear and dispose of the steady fall of ash. The “precipitation” forces all beings (excluding the undead, but including even the devils) to swath their mouths and noses with drab scarves, in order to filter it out, lending a certain level of anonymity to all the residents. Still, the sounds of strangled coughing can be heard on every street. You would think that all of the living residents here, baatezu or otherwise, eventually succumb to some respiratory disease.

Exploring the City

When the PCs arrive, they will most likely be unaware of the location of the foundry. There are a number of ways in which the PCs can glean the location of the foundry:

- The PCs can use divination magic to locate it. Such a spell will work, but this sort of magic guarantees notice by the paranoid residents of the plane. PCs have a base 100% chance of being confronted by an enforcer patrol (see below) within 1d6 minutes of the completion of the spell. If the PCs think to cast these spells *before* they arrive, they will find that Dispaters can sense such magical queries about his home demesne, and so the patrols remain a danger. *The PCs will not be confronted by more than one patrol, total, in this encounter.*
- The PCs can ask around, using the Gather Information skill in a DC 18 skill check. Five or more ranks in Knowledge (planes) affords a +2 synergy bonus to this check; remember that lawful or good-aligned PCs suffer penalties to Charisma-based checks such as this one (see above). This process will take one hour. If the PCs fail, they do not glean the information. They may try again if they wish. However, the Iron City is riddled with Dispaters's spies, and the PCs have a 50% chance of speaking with one of them in the course of their investigations. If this occurs, they will be confronted by an enforcer patrol (see below) after one hour (and the conclusion of their investigations). *The PCs will not be confronted by more than one patrol, total, in this encounter.*
- The PCs can roam the city. This takes the longest amount of time, as this place is immense. The base amount of time that this takes is six hours. For every PC that makes a successful DC 20 Search check, the amount of time is reduced by one hour, to a minimum of one hour. Five or more ranks in Knowledge (planes) affords a +2 synergy bonus to this check; remember that chaotic or good-aligned PCs suffer penalties to Charisma-based checks such as this one (see above). For every hour that this searching takes, the PCs have a consecutive (not cumulative) 10% chance of prompting investigation by an enforcer patrol (see below). *The PCs will not be confronted by more than one patrol, total, in this encounter.*
- As DM, you should modify the above percentage checks as you see fit based on the strategies of the party. An especially stealthy team of PCs who takes extra time to remain hidden and sticks to the back alleys of the city should have a reduced chance of detection. A cautious party, searching on their own and who have taken steps to conceal their appearance and/or alignments should have virtually no chance of detection by patrols.

Enforcer Patrols by APL

The PCs will be confronted in one of the dingy back ways that makes up much of the geography of the city. An essentially random crossroad of streets means that the combat will not draw undue attention from anyone assuming the PCs don't linger and announce their triumph over evil on the street corner. The Patrol will arrive and attack, not attempting to communicate with the PCs – they are as paranoid as their master, and they kill first and ask questions later.

For a map of the combat, simply make any set of intersecting streets, with numerous alleys and cross paths. All main roads are at least 10' wide, though the PCs can find some 5' wide streets to flee down should they wish.

Creatures:

APL 12 (EL 12)

☛ **Devil, Erinyes (2):** hp 99 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 54.

☛ **Swarm, Hellwasps (2):** hp 117 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 238.

The erinyes carry great iron globes, each of which contain one swarm. In the opening round of combat, they hurl the globes to the ground, which come undone on impact and release the hellwasps. Each swarm is of sufficient size to have an Intelligence of 6 (see the Hive Mind extraordinary ability in the creature's write-up) until reduced to less than 12 hit points, and so can follow the orders of the erinyes enforcers.

APL 14 (EL 14)

☛ **Troll, War (2):** hp 153 each; see Appendix Two.

Note that these trolls are not of the Giant type, but are Monstrous Humanoids.

APL 16 (EL 16)

☛ **Devil, Horned:** hp 195; see *Monster Manual*, page 55.

Encounter 8: The Royal Foundry of Dis

The destination of the PCs, and the place of the Nethernight's forging, is the great Royal Foundry. These forges work only for the purposes of supplying the Iron Tower and Dispater's personal needs. It is well-defended, though perhaps not quite as well as it should be, since the focus of this plane's security is on the Iron Tower and not on ancillary buildings such as these.

The foundry is a large, excavated pit surrounded by six immense brick smokestacks which spew the ash of the forges below into the sky. A winding, wide stone staircase spirals down the circumference of the pit, connected to dozens of iron foundry doors as it descends. Work crews of lemures, slaves, and lesser devils stream in and out of the staircase. You notice that they seem to be reporting to a tiny figure, some sort of imp, who hovers in mid-air and directs the work crew traffic. A small cigar hangs out of the corner of his mouth.

"Look alive, hellspawn! Production is down two percent this cycle, and by the royal ruby red ass of Asmodeus himself I'll see it increased!" A hobgoblin slave howls as the imp stabs it in the rump with his tail, sending him scurrying. "You lot!" The imp seems to have noticed you. "Get over here!" He beckons impatiently for you to come to him, even as he continues chomping on his cigar.

The forge of the Iron Duke himself is at the very bottom of the pit. This is the PCs ultimate destination. However, the sheer number of devils around this place makes an attempt to storm into it or enter without permission (barring blind teleportation or magical scrying, which carries their own risks; see above regarding the use of divination spells in Dis) suicide. However, a bit of fast-talking by the PCs with Joffee, the imp Pit Master, might get them inside without arousing alarm.

Interacting with Pit Master Joffee

This little imp is more than he appears to be. A hundred years ago, Joffee was known as Jofehru, among the mightiest of all pit fiends. He was sent by Dispater to deal with a paladin who was troubling his cultists, and in the ensuing battle the pit fiend was slain by the knight. The pit fiend's soul was sent back to hell, where it became reinvested into the body of an imp. Joffee must once again work his way upwards through the ranks of the various sorts of devils, a process that promises to take several hundred more years.

In deference to his previous station and loyal service, Dispater gave the imp this plum assignment. Other devils know what Joffee once was, what he will someday again become, and whose ear he has, so they obey him without question despite his reduced stature.

The DM should keep the above in mind when role-playing Joffee.

The imp is currently curious as to the presence of the PCs. The royal forges do occasionally perform consignment work for outside parties (read as: non-devils), so the presence of a group of adventurers from the prime material plane is not necessarily unusual. If the PCs play their cards correctly, they can get past him.

In general, there are three ways to deal with Joffee – Diplomacy, Bluff, or Intimidation. Don't forget the possible Charisma-based skill check penalty for chaotic-and/or good-aligned PCs.

Intimidation: Trying this approach is a *really* bad idea. Joffee will react to initial threats by warning the PCs *once* not to try and throw their weight around, and will be utterly unfazed by any attempts to cow him, regardless of the player's roll. (Anyone that regularly reports to an arch-devil is unfazed by intimidation of lesser beings.)

Should they persist – or should they actually lay hands on him – he will begin shouting for help, and a pair of enforcer patrols (see Encounter 7) will arrive within 1d3 rounds to protect this sensitive area of Dis. The rest of the lesser devils will scatter, moving into Dis and shouting for reinforcements. The PCs will be hit with additional enforcer patrols, one per five minutes thereafter, until the PCs are slain. Should they suggest that they will fight their way into the foundry, tell the PCs flatly out-of-game that the legions of devils there will begin *summoning* others of their ilk and attack, and that the PCs will eventually be overwhelmed. If they persist, the PCs die

under an endless wave of devils and enforcer patrols, and are treated as unrecoverable losses.

If the PCs have blundered badly as noted above, they must either flee back to the portal (for their sake, assume they elude any further patrols and manage to get away if they do so) or attempt a blind teleportation or similar spell.

Diplomacy: Using Diplomacy on Joffee is not a viable approach, since the PCs aren't negotiating for anything. He will accuse such PCs of being "mealy-mouthed simian-spawn" and tell them to get to the point as to why they're here.

If they persist in this approach, consult pages 71-72 in the *Player's Handbook*. Joffee starts out as Unfriendly, but because he is guarding a sensitive area and the PCs are suspicious strangers, you should treat him as effectively Hostile. The PCs should make their Diplomacy checks, and you should consult the table at the bottom of page 72 to see if they manage to sway him:

- **Hostile** (Diplomacy check was DC 19 or less): The PCs failed to make a dent in his attitude, and now Joffee is gravely suspicious of the PCs. No further Diplomacy checks are allowed. Joffee demands the PCs leave, accusing them of having no legitimate business here. The PCs can only depart, try to Bluff him, or Intimidate him (which will call him to automatically scream for the enforcer patrols – he already gave the PCs a warning). See above, for what happens if the PCs attempt to move into the area by force.
- **Unfriendly** (Diplomacy check was DC 20 to 24): Joffee is unmoved by these suspicious characters, although he's not willing to call for the enforcers just yet – perhaps these Primes are simply that confused. Allow the PCs to opt to try another approach, or to persist in Diplomacy. If they do, they may try a second roll, but suffer a -4 penalty to this second roll.
- **Indifferent** (Diplomacy check was DC 25 to 34): Joffee believes that the PCs are here to pick up something from the forges, but he's not inclined to be helpful. He will allow the PCs entry.
"I don't know what consignment order you have, but go down there and find it. The lowest forge is off-limits. Find it, get back up here, and pay me for it, so you can be on your way."
- **Friendly** (Diplomacy check was DC 35 to 49): For whatever reason, Joffee finds these Primes who say so much and state so little entertaining. He gives a toothy grin and says,

"What a line of vrock dung you people spew! I don't know what consignment order you have, but go down there and find it. The lowest forge is Dispater's own, so it's off-limits. Find what you ordered, get back up here, and pay me for it,

so you can be on your way. Oh, and if you like, I have some scrap green steel available." He points to some odd greenish scrap metal piled near the pit. "I'll take a thousand gold coins for it, or equivalent in trade, if you want it."

If the PCs agree and pay Joffee, they gain the *Greenish Scrap Metal* from Dis AR item. This material is Baatorian Green Steel (from the *Arms and Equipment Guide*) and the PCs can each acquire enough to be crafted one weapon of their choice. This must be a weapon to which they already have access.

- **Helpful** (Diplomacy check was 50+): There's such a thing as doing a job too well. Treat this result as Friendly, above, with the added complication that Joffee insists on escorting the PCs into the forge area himself. Refusal by the PCs to go with Joffee will result in Joffee's becoming gravely suspicious of the PCs. If they allow Joffee to escort them into the forges, he will quickly figure out that the PCs have never been here before, and will confront them accordingly. At this point, the PCs have only the options of escape, assault (and death), or one last attempt to Bluff Joffee.

Bluff: Ultimately, this is the best and easiest approach. Joffee opposes Bluff attempts with his Sense Motive skill (which he doesn't have, so he uses a Wisdom check of +1 instead). If the PCs succeed, the imp says,

"I don't know who your masters are, but they might want to get servants that can afford to buy a clue. I don't know what consignment order you have, but go down there and find it. The lowest forge is Dispater's own, so it's off-limits. Find what you ordered, get back up here, and pay me for it, so you can be on your way. Oh, and if you like, I have some scrap green steel available." He points to some odd emerald-colored scrap metal piled near the pit. "I'll take a thousand gold coins for it, or equivalent in trade, if any of you want it."

If the PCs agree and pay Joffee, they gain the *Greenish Scrap Metal* from Dis AR item. This material is Baatorian Green Steel (from the *Arms and Equipment Guide*) and the PCs can each acquire enough to be crafted one weapon of their choice. This must be a weapon to which they already have access.

Disguise: PCs may have disguised themselves in more appropriate forms. While it's doubtful that the PCs could pass themselves off as devils to one of those creatures, there are other evil creatures by which the PCs could disguise themselves. An elf could pass for a drow; a human could pass as a vampire, and so forth. If the PCs are disguised, make an opposed Spot check for Joffee (+7). If the PCs beat the check, and have chosen reasonable alternate appearances as noted above, they will be "look correct" to the Pit Master, who will usher them into the pit:

"I don't know who your masters are, but they might want to get servants that can afford to buy a clue. I don't know what consignment order you have, but go down there and find it. The lowest forge is Dispaters' own, so it's off-limits. Find what you ordered, get back up here, and pay me for it, so you can be on your way. Oh, and if you like, I have some scrap green steel available." He points to some odd emerald-colored scrap metal piled near the pit. "I'll take a thousand gold coins for it, or equivalent in trade, if any of you want it."

If the PCs agree and pay Joffee, they gain the Greenish Scrap Metal from Dis AR item. This material is Baatorian Green Steel (from the Arms and Equipment Guide) and the PCs can each acquire enough to be crafted one weapon of their choice. This must be a weapon to which they already have access.

Descending into the Forges

You begin the slow spiraling descent down into the forges. The devils and slave beings ignore you, focused on the frantic toil demanded by their overseers, who in turn are too busy whipping and ordering the laborers to pay much attention to you. As you proceed deeper, you see fewer and fewer workers, and by the time you've reached the bottommost forge – a half-hour later – you haven't seen a living thing other than yourselves for the last half of your trip.

The great doors of the lowermost forge are constructed of heavy, emerald-colored metal. You do see a keyhole, however.

The door is easily smashed through by PCs with adamantite weapons; it is Baatorian green steel and is not especially resistant to sundering. This approach will automatically set off the trap protecting the door. The door lock can be successfully picked (Open Locks DC 40), but the PC cannot take 20 unless the door trap is dealt with (or discharged).

The doors are counter-weighted to close behind the PCs, but they do not lock.

The *alarm* spell on the door serves two purposes. Aside from being the trigger for the trap, it also alerts the nimblewrights in the next room (see below). Should either the *alarm* spell be tripped or the trap discharged, the nimblewrights within will begin preparing themselves for battle (see the Tactics section, below).

Trap:

All APLs (EL 7)

⚡ **Chain lightning Trap:** CR 7; magical device; proximity trigger (*alarm* spell); no reset; spell effect (*chain lightning*, 11th-level wizard, 11d6 electricity to target nearest center of trigger area plus 5d6 to each of up to 11

secondary targets, DC 19 Reflex save for half damage); Search DC 31; Disable DC 31.

The Royal Forge of Dis

Refer to DM Aid #4.

The immense forge of the Iron Duke lies before you. The temperature is well over a hundred degrees. It is rectangular and of great size. A wide fountain of molten metal descends through an aperture, high in the ceiling on the opposite wall. The liquid metal tumbles into a large cauldron which in turn flows into a reservoir, which is at floor level. This cauldron is thirty feet in height, and rests on a massive stone platform. You can only assume that either magic or stone channels somehow recycle this molten metal in an endless stream. The forge fires illuminate the room in a garish crimson light. Racks and racks of stone tools line the walls.

Standing near the form is a pair of lithe forms. By the shape of their armor, there is one male and one female. Each is eight feet tall, by a quick reckoning, and both bear a rapier in each hand. Their armor and full-face helms are of an unusual clam-shell design.

The male's voice booms out. It carries over the tumbling molten metal's noise. "Look, dear sister. Intruders."

She responds, "About bloody time. We've been without a challenge for two long."

He laughs. "What makes you think," he chuckles as he sweeps his rapier in the air with a flourish, "that they'll be a challenge?"

The doors to this room are counter-weighted and close unless actively held or propped open.

These beings, despite their banter, are actually humanoid-like, sentient constructs known as nimblewrights.

Creatures:

APL 12 (EL 15)

➤ **Advanced (30 HD) nimblewrights (2):** hp 270 each; see Appendix 1.

APL 14 (EL 17)

➤ **Advanced (38 HD) nimblewrights (2):** hp 336 each; see Appendix 1.

APL 16 (EL 19)

➤ **Advanced (46 HD) nimblewrights (2):** hp 402 each; see Appendix 1.

DM Note: As the *Monster Manual* notes, the HD range of monster advancement is not the absolute maximum;

exceptions do occur, but are rare (pg 7). As these constructs were forged by Disputer himself, they are the exception that proves the rule, exceeding the usual maximum HD at APL 14-16 (though their size does not increase).

Setup:

These constructs are blisteringly fast, and are the favored guardians of Disputer, who crafted them in these very forges to protect them. If the PCs hope to destroy the *Nethernight* once and for all, these beings must be defeated. They begin at the points marked 1 and 2 on the map.

The nimblewrights begin at an advantage if the PCs discharged the trap or triggered the *alarm* to get into the chamber. If they did, the nimblewrights begin casting pre-cast spells in response to its discharge. They begin using the following spell-like abilities, in order: *cat's grace*, *entropic shield*. They will then gain a surprise round on PCs moving into the forge, and will use that round to *haste* themselves.

Tactics (All APLs):

The nimblewrights begin at an advantage if the PCs discharged the trap or triggered the *alarm* to get into the chamber. If they did, the nimblewrights begin casting pre-cast spells in response to its discharge. They begin using the following spell-like abilities, in order: *cat's grace*, *entropic shield*. They will then gain a surprise round on PCs moving into the forge, and will use that round to *haste* themselves.

If the PCs managed to get the drop on the nimblewrights, they will spend the first round using *haste* before engaging in melee. They will focus on lightly-armored targets that they can quickly bring down with Power Attack-driven impaling, tripping blows on low-AC targets. The nimblewrights are aware of their vulnerabilities, and will target either those PCs that demonstrate the ability to exploit them, or against glaringly dangerous targets.

It's important to remember that these creatures use natural attacks, *not* rapiers. They have feats that they would not be able to use on weapons (such as Improved Natural Attack). Because these are natural attacks, they can neither be disarmed, nor can the rapier-hands be sundered.

Also, the nimblewrights have a tripping thrust special attack that is treated as a trip if successful. It therefore works in tandem with their Improved Trip feat.

Tactics (APL 12):

At this APL, the nimblewrights are content to harry the PCs by making Spring Attacks from a comfortable distance. They will focus on obvious melee types unless there is a spellcaster that demonstrates an ability to use the fire or cold effects that are part of their vulnerabilities (see Appendix 1). These constructs will not hesitate to

rely on their high Tumble skill to attack foes in the rear ranks if need be.

Tactics (APL 14 & 16):

The nimblewrights have exceptional Spring Attack abilities at this APL. They are able to make three such attacks per round (via their Bounding Assault and Rapid Blitz feats).

Tactics (APL 16):

At this APL the nimblewrights gain bonuses to damage if neither they nor their foe threaten each other at the start of the round (which is typically the case when using the Spring Attack feat; see the Combat Tactician feat).

If forced into close combat by an attacker with iterative attacks, they will use their Robilar's Gambit feat in the hopes of striking an opponent prone with the attacks of opportunity which the feat provides.

Additional Combat Notes:

Try to give the PCs the impression that they are fighting living creatures. If the PCs use a spell to which the nimblewrights are immune, pretend to roll the saving throw, for instance. If the PCs score a critical threat, roll percentile dice and tell them that the critical doesn't seem to have any effect – the players might think that the creatures are wearing *fortification* armor.

The nimblewrights have a special weakness. Should they be somehow flung fully into the molten forges of their creation, they are instantly destroyed. The molten metal is just as lethal to any PC not protected from heat and drowning – even a PC immune to fire can still drown in it. Immersion in the molten steel does 75 points of fire damage per round, and a PC can drown in it as if it was water. The metal is 20 feet in depth in the reservoir.

Development – Destroying the *Nethernight*:

To break the necklace from Countess Hannah's neck would normally be impossible – even adamantine weapons fail to break the links. However, any of the tools present in the forge room are capable of doing so (treat them as clubs, doing 1d6 damage, against which the *Nethernight* has no Hardness; (APL x 2) hp of damage or more will snap a link and make it possible for the necklace to be removed from Hannah).

Once broken, the *Nethernight* regenerates all of its damage, making itself whole the following round. Thus, the necklace cannot be destroyed with the tools – only temporarily damaged.

Simply hurling the *Nethernight* into the molten liquid won't work. The necklace will leap from the metal, snake-like, refusing to go under without a fight – swimming back to the edge of the forges at a rate of 5' per round. The PCs will need to use some means to hold the necklace down in the steel – the large prongs on the equipment tables will do nicely (no attack roll required; the stated intentions of the PCs is enough).

Should the *Nethernight* be destroyed, the nimblewrights (if still functional) will cease attacking. Regardless of whether or not they are still active, the following will occur:

Like a writhing serpent, you watch as the necklace fights to escape the molten metal. The artifact sprays the steel everywhere, in an effort to somehow injure its destroyers. But you begin to see the links fall apart, and with an unholy wail, the jewelry sunders, and the pieces vanish into the depths of the molten reservoir.

At long last, the curse on Linth is over.

The double doors into this room suddenly crumble, falling into a rapidly-collapsing pile of rusted ruin. Standing beyond is a being with whose visage you are now familiar. He is seven feet in height, with dark hair and small horns. He is dressed in regal finery, carrying a heavy mace in one hand and an ornate rod in the other. A pair of pit fiends stands behind him, their great maws dripping with hissing venom and trembling with anticipation of the kill.

Unnervingly, Dispater is smiling.

"I think," he says pleasantly, "that you were just leaving. There are few who can say they have undone my plots, and none dare boast of it." He punctuates his words by finishing with a slow, languid clap that echoes eerily in the vast emptiness of the forge.

This is indeed Dispater, the Iron Duke himself. As described in the *Book of Vile Darkness*, Dispater is pleasant and never shows his anger. While the Iron Duke is indeed furious at these mortals for braving all to undo his machinations, he also respects power and strength. He is willing to allow them to leave, but they will be forever marked – and watched. They earn the *Watched* by Dispater AR item.

The arch-devil turns away, passing the pit fiends who stare at him, slack-jawed, as he leaves without a fight. They look at you and the eyes of each narrows into slits. Fists balled in frustration, the great devils depart, following in the shadow of their master.

A PC that decides to be rude, get mouthy, or make snide comments about Dispater or his pit fiends (even after he's left, so long as they're still in Dis) will find they have earned the *Ire of Dispater*. If the PCs want to get out of here without earning his *Ire*, they need only keep their mouths shut, recognize when they're outgunned, and return home quietly.

If they should actually attack him or the pit fiends, he wades into battle and slaughters the offending PC, captures that PC's soul, and transforms it into a lemure for all eternity. In short, this PC's arrogance has earned her an unrecoverable death. This being is invulnerable to anything the PCs bring to bear – don't bother running such combats and assume instead that the PC(s) lose. There's always a bigger fish...

PCs that successfully destroy the *Nethernight* and escape gain the *Nethernight Destroyed* AR item.

Proceed to Conclusion D.

Conclusion A: Hannah is Slain to Break the Curse of the House of Linth

*You do the deed as quickly and painlessly as you are able. With the death of Countess Hannah, the necklace she wears writhes in agony like a serpent, before each segment of the *Nethernight* separates and falls to the ground. Although not made of any metal, the pieces molder and collapse into small piles of greenish-tinged rust.*

The force behind the Blight has been broken, and a child has paid the price.

A week later, you and your companions stand with Reynard and Lashton on a low hill. The sun is beaming, and the land has already begun to right itself. Green grass has been spotted for the first time in years within Linth. But the mood here is somber, for you stand in silence observing a small grave.

Reynard speaks. She has recovered well, if slowly, and her hand rests comfortably within that of the older wizard's. "All of us have done what we needed to do. The kingdom is safe. The cancer has been excised from the Green Man of the Valley. And..." she pauses, looking down at the grave. There, several white buds have appeared.

The great druidess smiles gently and kneels in the dirt. She points to them with a slender finger. "Baby's breath," she says softly. "It is a symbol of renewal and hope." She gently plucks a bud, handing one to each of you. "Keep this safely with you. A gift from Lady Hannah, and a gesture of forgiveness."

She says nothing more and guides her lover away, leaving your group alone with your thoughts.

Each of the PCs receives the *Baby's Breath* AR item.

Do not read the Epilogue.

The End

Conclusion B: A PC Sacrifices Herself to Destroy the *Nethernight*

*With the brave touch of your companion, the necklace falls away from the neck of Countess Hannah. It writhes in agony like a serpent, before each segment of the *Nethernight* separates and falls*

to the ground. Although not made of any metal, the pieces molder and collapse into small piles of greenish-tinged rust.

The force behind the Blight has been broken, and one of your own has paid the price.

A week later, you and your companions stand with Reynard and Lashton on a low hill. The sun is beaming, and the land has already begun to right itself. Green grass has been spotted for the first time in years within Linth. But the mood here is somber, for you stand in silence observing your companion's grave.

Reynard speaks. She has recovered well, if slowly, and her hand rests comfortably within that of the older wizard's. "All of us have done what we needed to do. The kingdom is safe. The cancer has been excised from the Green Man of the Valley. And..." she pauses, looking down at the grave. There, several white buds have appeared.

The great druidess smiles gently and kneels in the dirt. She points to them with a slender finger. "Baby's breath," she says softly. "It is a symbol of renewal and hope." She gently plucks a bud, handing one to each of you. "Keep this safely with you. It is a gift from your companion, and a gesture of love."

She says nothing more and guides her lover away, leaving your group alone with your thoughts.

Each of the PCs receives the Baby's Breath AR item, except the PC who sacrificed herself. That player receives instead the Legacy AR item.

Proceed to Epilogue.

Conclusion C: Lashton Ventures into Dis to Destroy the Nethernight

Being unwilling or unable to enter the hells on behalf of Reynard, Lashton nods to you.

"I ask too much of you," Lashton says quietly. "Too long has the kingdom relied on the strong backs of a few gallant souls. I will go myself."

The following morning, you meet with Lashton and a contingent of Dreadwalkers on a grassy field in Grayhill. Lashton begins murmuring and, using a piece of azure crystal, draws out an elaborate pattern in the air. It leaves lines of softly glowing light in the air, which glows ever more brightly as the pattern nears its completion. When it is finished, the portal flashes open, a tear in reality through which you see a dark city beneath a gloomy, snowy sky.

Lashton glances at the gate. "Not snow, but ash. I will return when it is over, if I'm able."

Saying nothing more, you watch as the wizard steps inside. The gate wavers and closes a moment later, deliberately collapsed from the other side. But by Lashton, or the Iron Duke?

You and your Dreadwalker companions hunker down, keeping a vigil over Reynard. After an hour has passed, you see her eyes snap open, and she gasps. Almost immediately, color returns to her face. She sits bolt upright, smiling. "The curse is broken... the Blight is ended. But where..." She sees all of your grave faces and she realizes the one that is missing, and her features contort with panic.

You never see Lashton again.

Reynard recovers – physically at least – over the next several days, but her heart is clearly broken. Even the news of the abeyance of the Blight and the sightings of the first few sprigs of green grass in Linth in years does not cheer her.

You have succeeded. But the cost has been high.

Proceed to Epilogue.

Conclusion D: The PCs Venture into Dis and Destroy the Nethernight

The force behind the Blight has been broken. A week later, you and your companions stand with Reynard and Lashton on a low hill in the County of Linth. The sun is beaming, and the land has already begun to right itself. Green grass has been spotted for the first time in years here.

Reynard speaks. She has recovered well, if slowly, and her hand rests comfortably within that of the older wizard's. "The kingdom is safe. The cancer has been excised from the Green Man of the Valley. And..." she pauses, looking down at the ground. There, several white buds have appeared in the newly minted grass.

The great druidess smiles gently and kneels in the dirt. She points to them with a slender finger. "Baby's breath," she says softly. "It is a symbol of renewal and hope." She gently plucks a bud, handing one to each of you. "Keep this safely with you. It is a gift from the land, and a gesture of love."

She says nothing more and guides her lover away, leaving your group alone with your thoughts.

Each of the PCs receives the Baby's Breath AR item.

Proceed to Epilogue.

Conclusion E: The PCs fail to awaken Countess Hannah from Dreamtime

The tentacles drill past your eyes, deeper, into your soul. You feel yourself become weightless, and then for a final second, everything snaps into focus once more. You wish it hadn't.

Around you, your companions writhe in agony. You are within the temple to Dispater, but you recall now that you had been here before – several days ago, after receiving your orders from Reynard. Mind flayers had ambushed you and your companions, stunning you into submission. And now their tentacles are thrown over the top of all of your heads. They have been manipulating your thoughts, your memories, walking you through a dream world of their own design and control.

You hear awful cracking noises, like the breaking of a lobster's shell to get at the meat inside. Those awful tentacles had been caressing your brains... it had all been a dream world from which you could not muster an escape. The last thing you feel is an odd feeling of suction against the back of your skull and two tentacles dropping before your eyes, mercifully obscuring the scene.

The mind flayers withdraw the PCs brain and consume them, slaying them all. Countess Hannah remains in Narthistle's clutches. Reynard dies not long afterwards, and the final force holding the Blight back is lost. It expands across the kingdom of Keoland, plunging it into a famine the likes of which it has never seen.

DM and players should contact the Keoland Triad to resolve what happens to the PCs in this instance and as to whether or not the characters are recoverable.

The End

Epilogue: Commitment

"Welcome to your new home."

Countess Hannah clutched her battered doll to her chest and looked around, her face a mixture of fear and trepidation. Around her swirled the chaos of the Dilwyth asylum. One woman stood shrieking on the top of a chair, while a man snapped with his mouth at phantom flies.

Tears began to fall from the child's face. She took a step back, but a strong and firm hand held her fast. "You musn't be afraid," said the strong voice. "We're doing wonders here with those who are sick and in need of help."

She looked up at Baron Malweig. He was smiling, and speaking in that voice that did not seem to quite

match his body. "I'm sorry, my love," he said, kneeling down to wipe away the tears, "but as I've found, not all stories have happy endings."

Hannah nodded. That much, at least, she understood.

The doors out of the asylum closed behind the pair with an authoritative clang.

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 (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter One

Defeating the rakshasa

APL 12: 450 xp.

APL 14: 510 xp.

APL 16: 570 xp.

Encounter Four

Defeating the mob

APL X: 360 xp.

APL Y: 420 xp.

APL Z: 480 xp.

Encounter Five

Defeating the Narthistle and the mind flayers

APL 12: 450 xp.

APL 14: 510 xp.

APL 16: 570 xp.

Discretionary roleplaying award

APL 12: 315 xp.

APL 14: 360 xp.

APL 16: 405 xp.

Total possible experience

APL 12: 1,575 xp.

APL 14: 1,800 xp.

APL 16: 2,025 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 treasure.

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 minutes 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 (i.e., 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 pieces 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 treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the 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. Because this is a Regional adventure, characters may spend additional Time Units to practice professions or create items immediately after the adventure so this total may be modified by other circumstances.

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

Encounter Five:

APL 12: L: 1 gp, C: 333 gp, M: +2 buckler (347 gp); +2 full plate (471 gp); adamantine +1 greatsword (446 gp); amulet of health +2 (333 gp); bracers of armor +4 (1333 gp); gauntlets of ogre power (333 gp); gloves of dexterity +4 (1333 gp); 2 x ioun stone, dusty rose prism (417 gp each); ioun stone, iridescent spindle (1500 gp); ioun stone, pink rhomboid (667 gp); periapt of wisdom +2 (333 gp); ring of

protection +1 (167 gp); ring of protection +2 (667 gp); vest of resistance +1 (83 gp); vest of resistance +2 (333 gp).

APL 14: L: 1 gp, C: 333 gp, M: +2 buckler (347 gp); +3 full plate (887 gp); adamantine +1 wounding greatsword (1779 gp); amulet of health +2 (333 gp); belt of giant strength +4 (1333 gp); bracers of armor +4 (1333 gp); gloves of dexterity +4 (1333 gp); 2 x ioun stone, dusty rose prism (417 gp each); ioun stone, iridescent spindle (1500 gp); ioun stone, pink rhomboid (667 gp); periapt of wisdom +4 (1333 gp); ring of protection +1 (167 gp); ring of protection +2 (667 gp); vest of resistance +2 (333 gp); vest of resistance +4 (1333 gp).

APL 16: L: 1 gp, C: 500 gp, M: +3 buckler (762 gp); +3 full plate (887 gp); adamantine +1 wounding greatsword (1779 gp); amulet of health +2 (333 gp); belt of giant strength +6 (3000 gp); bracers of armor +4 (1333 gp); gloves of dexterity +4 (1333 gp); periapt of wisdom +4 (1333 gp); ring of protection +2 (667 gp); ring of protection +3 (1500 gp); 2 x ioun stone, dusty rose prism (417 gp each); ioun stone, iridescent spindle (1500 gp); ioun stone, pink rhomboid (667 gp); robe of stars (4833 gp); vest of resistance +3 (750 gp).

Encounter Five:

APL 12: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: none.

APL 14: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: 2 x vest of resistance +1 (83 gp each).

APL 16: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: 2 x vest of resistance +1 (83 gp each); 2 x brooch of shielding (125 gp each).

Total Possible Treasure (Maximum Reward Allowed)

APL 12: L: 1 gp, C: 333 gp, M: 9126 gp – Total: 9460 gp (3300 gp).

APL 14: L: 1 gp, C: 333 gp, M: 14345 gp – Total: 14679 gp (6600 gp).

APL 16: L: 1 gp, C: 500 gp, M: 21927 gp – Total: 22428 gp (9900 gp).

Items for the Adventure Record

Special

☛ **Baby’s Breath:** The Great Druid of the Sheldomar bade you to carry this small bit of baby’s breath with you. Should this PC be reduced to -10 hp or less, this AR effect is automatically expended; mark it as USED when this occurs. When expended, this PC does not die as normal at -10 or fewer hp in this one instance. Instead, they are set back to -9 hp, and this PC is considered automatically stabilized. This does not protect you from subsequent damage this PC might suffer, nor does it protect from being slain by sources that do not kill by hp damage.

☛ **Greenish Scrap Metal from Dis:** You have availed yourself of an offer from Pit Master Joffee to purchase

some odd scraps of a strange greenish metal. You may expend this AR effect to gain access (Frequency: Adventure) to purchase any one weapon to which you already have access. The weapon chosen must be composed in whole or in part of this green metal. The material from which the item is crafted is Baatorian green steel (from the *Arms & Equipment Guide*). You need not pay the cost of the special material, since you already possess it; you need only pay the cost of the masterwork weapon itself. Mark this AR effect as USED when it is expended.

✦ **Watched by Dispater:** The Iron Duke has you earmarked for special attention. The ramifications of this, if any, are unknown at this time.

☛ **Legacy:** To save the life of Hannah Linth and the Kingdom of Keoland, this PC has valiantly sacrificed themselves. This PC is permanently dead with no hope of recovery, but your greatness will live on in the form of one of your kin (see the special AR).

☛ **Nethernight Destroyed:** You have journeyed to destroy the Nethernight. This costs 1 additional TU (2 for out-of-region PCs). For doing so, you gain the following additional gp and xp, and the xp and gp caps for this adventure are increased by the same amount: APL 12: +787 xp, +1,650 gp; APL 14: +900 xp, +3,300 gp; APL 16: +1,012 xp, +4,950 gp.

☛ **Just Rewards:** You have honored the request of your prisoner to be tried in a court of his peers. You have turned him over to either the Knights of the Watch or the Lion throne (circle the appropriate one). If you turned him over to the Knights of the Watch, this PC gains free Rich upkeep in any nation of the Sheldomar Valley. Also, if this PC is a member of that order, you are considered to have “defeated a foe of impressive power” for the purposes of your Promotion Point totals. If you turned him over to the Lion Throne, the Kingdom of Keoland rewards you with free Luxury lifestyle for any adventures which take place wholly or in part in Keoland. In either case, this PC also gains access (Frequency: Regional) to purchase any one +1 weapon, armor, or shield special ability upgrade from the DMG.

✦ **Ire of Dispater:** You should have kept your mouth shut – speaking ill of an arch-devil is always a bad idea! Since your return from this adventure, this PC has found that swords he wields seem to quickly lose their edge, and metal armor seems to weaken in contact with his body. This PC suffers a -1 profane penalty to attack and damage rolls made with metal weapons and a -1 profane penalty to AC while wearing metal armor. For purposes of this effect, metal weapons and armor are defined as an item made partially or entirely of metal. This effect cannot be removed by any means at this time.

☛ **Legacy:** To save the life of Hannah Linth and the Kingdom of Keoland, this PC's kin valiantly sacrificed themselves. Their greatness lives on in the form of this

PC, and nature will remember their sacrifice on its behalf by providing this PC with powerful allies.

Mark this Adventure Record as #0, the first AR of this new PC's stack. This PC must be of the same race as the PC who made the sacrifice (with the exception that an elf can have half-elven kin, a half-elf can have elven or human kin, and a human can have human, half-elven, or half-orc kin).

If the first level taken by this PC is either druid or ranger, this PC gains the Natural Bond feat (*Complete Adventurer*) as a free bonus feat.

Item Access

APL 12:

- +1 Adamantine Greatsword (Adventure; *Dungeon Master's Guide*)
- +1 Flaming Composite Shortbow, +5 Str Bonus (Adventure; DMG)
- Bracers of Armor +4 and Gloves of Dexterity +4 (Adventure; DMG)
- Ioun Stones: Dusty Rose Prism, Pink Rhomboid, Iridescent Spindle (Adventure; *Dungeon Master's Guide*)
- Mithral Chain Shirt, +2 Full Plate, and +2 Buckler (Adventure; DMG)
- Ring of Protection +2 (Adventure; *Dungeon Master's Guide*)
- Vests of Resistance +1 and +2 (Adventure; *Complete Arcane*)

APL 14 (all of APL 12 plus the following):

- +1 Adamantine Wounding Greatsword (Adventure; DMG)
- +2 Bastard Sword (Adventure; *Dungeon Master's Guide*)
- +3 Composite Shortbow, +4 Str Bonus (Adventure; DMG)
- +3 Full Plate and +3 Mithral Chain Shirt (Adventure; DMG)
- Belt of Giant Strength +4 and Periapt of Wisdom +4 (Adventure; DMG)
- Large Items: Breastplate, Masterwork Greatsword, Masterwork Composite Longbow (+10 Str Bonus) (Adventure; DMG)
- Pearl of Power, 2nd Level Spell (Adventure; *Dungeon Master's Guide*)
- Vest of Resistance +4 (Adventure; *Complete Arcane*)

APL 16 (all of APLs 12, 14 plus the following):

- Belt of Giant Strength +6 and Cloak of Charisma +4 (Adventure; DMG)
- Bracers of Archery, Greater (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Brooch of Shielding and Ring of Protection +3 (Adventure; DMG)
- Robe of Stars and +3 Scale Mail (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Vest of Resistance +3 (Adventure; Complete Arcane)

Appendix 1: Monsters and NPCs (All APLs)

Encounters 3, 4, and 5

Countess Hannah Linth, female human Arii: CR ½; small humanoid (human); HD 1d8; hp 26 (base 6; +20 from maximized *false life*); Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 15 (+1 size, +3 deflection, +1 Dex); touch 15, flat-footed 14; BAB/Grp +0/-6; Full Atk unarmed strike -2 melee (1d2-2); AL CN; Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 6, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills & Feats: Bluff +4, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +4, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Listen +5, Perform (dance) +6, Sense Motive +9, Spot +5, Tumble +3; Iron Will, Negotiator.

Languages: Common, Keoish, Suloise.

Possessions: White dress, shoes, and elbow-length gloves, *ring of mind shielding*, *ring of protection* +3, *Nethernight* (unique artifact: provides a maximized *false life* effect [+20 temporary hit points] once per day of unlimited duration; if the effect is dispelled or the temporary hit points are lost, it renews the effect 1d4 rounds later. In Hannah's case, it renders her completely invulnerable to all forms of harm. It renders the wearer immune to all divination spells. It acts as a *necklace of strangulation* should anyone other than Hannah attempt to wear it after its links have been broken and it is removed from her neck. Its other powers are unknown).

Appendix 1 – Monsters & NPCs (APL 12)

Encounter 1

Rakshasa Sor2: CR 12; Medium Outsider (Native); HD 2d4+7d8+36; hp 75; Init +4; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 30 (+6 armor [greater mage armor], +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +9 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 26; BAB/Grp +8/+8; Atk bite +8 melee (1d6; 20/x2); Full Atk bite +8 melee (1d6; 20/x2) and 2 claws +3 melee (1d4; 20/x2); SA Detect thoughts (DC 18), spells; SQ Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing; darkvision 60 ft., spell resistance 29; AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +12; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 19, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 24 (26).

Skills & Feats: Concentration +16, Diplomacy +19, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Listen +12, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +18, Spot +12, Tumble +5. Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (Conjuration, Evocation).

Spells Known (6/8/8/6/5 per day; DC 17 + spell level; +1 for Conjuration or Evocation spells; total effective caster level as 13th-level sorcerer due to Practiced Spellcaster feat): 0 – *arcane mark, detect magic, light, mage hand, message, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue*; 1st – *alarm, comprehend languages, magic missile, protection from good, shield*; 2nd – *bear's endurance, glitterdust, invisibility, Melf's acid arrow*; 3rd – *greater mage armor, haste, magic circle against good*; 4th – *dimension door, ice storm*.

Possessions: ring of protection +1, vest of resistance +2, potion of displacement, potion of cure serious wounds, cloak of charisma +2, robes, spell component pouches.

Encounter 4

Mob of Linth soldiers, male and female human Ftr5: Gargantuan humanoid (human); CR 8; HD 30d8+90; hp 247; Init +0; Spd 10 ft. (2 squares); AC 17 (+8 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield, -4 size), touch 7, flat-footed 16; BAB/Grp +22/+37; Full Atk –; Space/Reach 20 ft./0 ft.; SA swarm (5d6), trample; SQ Mob anatomy; AL LN; SV Fort +19, Ref +11, Will +9; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Climb -3, Handle Animal +5, Knowledge (history) +4, Profession (soldier) +1, Ride +8. Cleave, Improved Bull Rush^B, Improved Overrun^B, Improved Toughness, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Languages: Common, Keoish.

Possessions: Full plate, heavy steel shield, longsword, dagger.

Mob Anatomy (Ex): A mob has no front or back or discernable anatomy, so it is not subject to critical hits

or sneak attacks. A mob cannot be flanked, tripped, grappled, or bull rushed.

Unlike standard swarms, mobs are made up of relatively small numbers of individual creatures, so spells or effects that target specific numbers of creatures can have an effect on mobs. Each specific creature that is slain, disabled, or otherwise incapacitated by spells or effects that target specific creatures bestows two negative energy levels on the mob. A mob that gains negative levels equal to its hit dice breaks up as if reduced to 0 hit points. Negative levels gained in this matter are not the result of negative energy (and thus cannot be blocked by *death ward* or removed by *restoration*), but never result in a permanent level loss. A mob takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons and evocation spells.

Trample (Ex): A mob that simply moves over a creature and doesn't end its movement with that creature in one of its occupied squares can trample the creature. A trampled creature takes damage equal to 2d6 + 1 ½ times the mob's Strength modifier. The victim can either make an attack of opportunity against the mob or make a Reflex save (DC 25 + the mob's Strength modifier) to take half damage.

Encounter 5

Ezra, mind flayer Mnk 8: medium aberration; CR 12; HD 16d8+72; hp 150; Init +7; Spd 50 ft. (10 squares); AC 34 (+4 armor, +2 deflection, +7 Dex, +1 insight, +3 natural, +7 misc.), touch 27, flat-footed 27; BAB/Grp +12/+19; Atk tentacle +16 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2) or unarmed strike +16 melee (1d10+3; 20/x2); Full Atk 4 tentacles +16 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2) or unarmed strike (flurry of blows) +15/+15/+10/+5 (1d10+3; 20/x2) and tentacle +14 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2); SA extract, flurry of blows, improved grab, *ki* strike (magic), mind blast (60-ft. cone, Will DC 18 or stunned for 3d4 rounds), psionics; SQ evasion, fast movement, monk AC bonus (+6), psionics, SR 33, still mind (+2 saves vs. Enchantment spells or effects), slow fall 40 ft., purity of body, telepathy 100 ft. wholeness of body (16 hp per day); AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +16, Will +19; Str 16, Dex 20 (24), Con 16 (18), Int 18, Wis 20 (22), Cha 14.

Skills & Feats: Balance +14, Bluff +13, Climb +9, Concentration +23, Diplomacy +15, Escape Artist +12, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (religion) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Listen +25, Sense Motive +9, Spot +16, Tumble +26. Ability Focus (mind blast), Combat Reflexes^B, Improved Critical (tentacles), Improved Grapple^B, Improved Toughness, Improved Trip^B, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Multiattack,

Weapon Focus (tentacles), Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Possessions: Bracers of armor +4, gloves of dexterity +4, vest of resistance +1, robes, ioun stones (dusty rose prism, pink rhomboid, iridescent spindle), periapt of wisdom +2, ring of protection +2.

Most Penitent Banshee Lugh Narthistle, male human Mnk 2 / ex-Pal 1 / Blackguard 10: CR 13; medium humanoid (human); HD 11d10 + 2d8 + 36; hp 121; Init +2; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 26 (+10 armor, +1 Dex, +1 deflection, +1 insight, +3 shield), touch 13, flat-footed 25; BAB/Grp +12/+20; Atk *adamantine* +1 *greatsword* +15 melee (2d6+5; 17-20/x2) or unarmed strike +15 melee (1d6+3; 20/x2); Full Atk *adamantine* +1 *greatsword* +15/+10/+5 melee (2d6+5; 18-20/x2) or unarmed strike +13/+13/+8/+3 melee (1d6+3; 20/x2); SA flurry of blows, rebuke undead (1d20+1; 2d6+9 turning damage), smite good 4/day (+2 to hit, +10 damage), sneak attack +3d6; SQ aura of despair (all enemies within 10 ft. suffer -2 to all saves), aura of evil (strong), dark blessing (+2 to all saves), poison use; AL LE; SV Fort +18, Ref +11, Will +11; Str 14 (16), Dex 12, Con 14 (16), Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +19, Diplomacy +4, Escape Artist +2, Handle Animal +7, Hide +2, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (nobility) +3, Knowledge (religion) +2, Knowledge (the planes) +2, Listen +6, Ride +10, Spot +6. Cleave, Close-Quarters Fighting, Combat Reflexes^B, Improved Buckler Defense, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Grapple^B, Improved Sunder, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Power Attack.

Blackguard Spells Prepared (3/3/2/1 per day; DC 12 + spell level): 1st – *corrupt weapon*, *divine sacrifice* x2; 2nd – *darkness*, *death knell*, *eagles' splendor*, *shatter*; 3rd – *cure serious wounds*, *protection from elements*; 4th – *cure critical wounds*.

Possessions: +2 full plate, +2 buckler, *adamantine* +1 *greatsword*, amulet of health +2, gauntlets of ogre power, dusty rose prism ioun stone, ring of protection +1, vest of resistance +2, two brass unholy symbols, 2000 gp diamond.

Encounter 8

Advanced (30 HD) nimblewright: large construct; CR 13; HD 30d10+60; hp 270; Init +9; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 27 (+9 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size), touch 18, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grp +22/+37; Atk rapier-hand +29 melee (2d8+11; 15-20/x2); Full Atk 2 rapier hands +29 melee (2d8+11; 15-20/x2); SA Spell-like abilities, tripping thrust (Reflex DC 36); SQ Augmented critical, construct traits, SR 27, vulnerabilities; SV Fort +6, Ref +13, Will +8; Str 32, Dex 29, Con –, Int 13, Wis 19, Cha 18.

Skills & Feats: Balance +14, Jump +26, Listen +15, Sense Motive +17, Spot +15, Tumble +24; Cleave, Combat Expertise^B, Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge, Elusive Target, Great Fortitude, Improved Disarm, Improved Toughness, Improved Trip, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (rapier-hand).

Possessions: None.

Augmented Critical: A nimblewright threatens a critical hit on a natural attack roll of 15-20. On a successful critical hit, its foe is subject to a tripping thrust attack (see above).

Spell-like Abilities: At will - *alter self*, *cat's grace*, *entropic shield*, *feather fall*, *haste*. Caster level 10th; save DC 14 + spell level. The save DCs are Charisma based.

Tripping Thrust (Ex): A nimblewright's rapier-hand attacks are powerful enough to push over creatures its own size or smaller. An opponent who is the target of a successful critical hit from a nimblewright must make a Reflex save (for this nimblewright, DC 36) or be knocked prone as if tripped. The save DC is Strength based.

Vulnerabilities: A cold effect slows a nimblewright for 3 rounds, and a fire effect stuns it for one round.

Appendix 1 – Monsters & NPCs (APL 14)

Encounter 1

Nazarthune Rakshasa Ftr2: CR 13; Medium Outsider (native); HD 2d10+1d8+65; hp 130; Init +12; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 28 (+7 armor, +6 Dex, +5 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 28; BAB/Grp +13/+17; Atk +1 *short sword* +21 melee (1d6+5; 19-20/x2) or claw +23 melee (1d4+4; 20/x2) or +3 *composite shortbow* (+4 Str bonus) +24 ranged (1d6+7; 19-20/x3); Full Atk +1 *short sword* +20/+15/+10 melee (1d6+5; 19-20/x2) or 2 claws +21 melee (1d4+4; 20/x2) or +3 *composite shortbow* (Rapid Shot) (+4 Str bonus) +22/+22/+17/+12 ranged (1d6+7; 19-20/x3); SA Detect thoughts (DC 16), sneak attack +6d6; SQ Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, hide in plain sight, improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, outsider traits, shadow jump, spell resistance 23; uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +19, Will +8; Str 18, Dex 26, Con 21, Int 16, Wis 10; Cha 12.

Skills & Feats: Balance +23, Bluff +19*, Climb +18; Diplomacy +3, Disguise +19* (+21 acting), Escape Artist +21, Hide +21, Intimidate +3, Jump +21, Listen +14, Move Silently +21, Search +16, Spot +14, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks), Tumble +23, Use Rope +7 (+9 bindings). Improved Critical (composite shortbow), Improved Initiative, Manyshot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Finesse.

Possessions: +3 *composite shortbow* (+4 Str bonus), +3 *mithral chain shirt*, two +1 *short swords*, *cloak of resistance* +1, *potion of cure serious wounds*, quiver and 40 arrows.

Rakshasa Sor4: CR 14; Medium Outsider (Native); HD 4d4+7d8+44; hp 87; Init +4; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 31 (+6 armor [greater mage armor], +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +9 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 27; BAB/Grp +9/+9; Atk bite +9 melee (1d6; 20/x2); Full Atk bite +9 melee (1d6; 20/x2) and 2 claws +4 melee (1d4; 20/x2); SA Detect thoughts (DC 18), spells; SQ Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing; darkvision 60 ft., spell resistance 31; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +13; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 19, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 22 (24).

Skills & Feats: Concentration +19, Diplomacy +19, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Listen +12, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +21, Spot +12, Tumble +5. Practiced Spellcaster, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (Conjuration and Evocation).

Spells Known (6/8/8/6/7/5 per day; DC 17 + spell level; +1 for Conjuration or Evocation spells; total effective caster level as 15th-level sorcerer due to Practiced Spellcaster feat): 0 – *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*, *mage hand*, *message*, *read magic*,

resistance, *touch of fatigue*; 1st – *alarm*, *comprehend languages*, *magic missile*, *protection from good*, *shield*, *silent image*; 2nd – *bear's endurance*, *glitterdust*, *invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *see invisibility*; 3rd – *greater mage armor*, *haste*, *magic circle against good*, *sign of sealing*; 4th – *confusion*, *dimension door*, *ice storm*; 5th – *cone of cold*, *reciprocal gyre*.

Possessions: ring of protection +2, *potion of blur*, vest of resistance +2, *potion of displacement*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, *cloak of charisma* +2, *pearl of power* (2nd level), robes, spell component pouches.

Zakya Rakshasa Ftr 1/Exotic Weapon Master 1: CR 10; Medium Outsider (native); HD 2d10+7d8+63; hp 104; Init +3; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 29 (+5 armor, +2 Dex, +9 natural, +3 shield), touch 12, flat-footed 27; BAB/Grp +9/+16; Atk +2 *bastard sword* +19 melee (1d10+11; 17-20/x2) or claw +16 melee (1d4+7; 20/x2); Full Atk +2 *bastard sword* +19/+14/+9 melee (1d10+11; 17-20/x2) and bite +11 melee (1d6+4; 20/x2) or claw +16 melee (1d4+7; 20/x2) and bite +11 melee (1d6+4; 20/x2); SA Detect thoughts (DC 11), spell-like abilities; SQ Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing, darkvision 60 ft., exotic weapon stunt (uncanny blow), outsider traits, spell resistance 24; AL LE; SV Fort +17, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 25, Dex 17, Con 24, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills & Feats: Bluff +13, Climb +10, Concentration +16, Craft (weaponsmith) +6, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +13*, Intimidate +12, Jump +14, Listen +10, Sense Motive +11, Spot +10. Blind-Fight, Cleave^B, Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Critical (bastard sword), Power Attack^B, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)^B.

Possessions: +2 *bastard sword*, +1 *heavy steel shield*, +1 *scale mail*, *cloak of resistance* +1, *potion of cure serious wounds*.

Encounter 4

Mob of Linth soldiers, male and female human Ftr8: Gargantuan humanoid (human); CR 10; HD 30d8+90; hp 247; Init +0; Spd 10 ft. (2 squares); AC 17 (+8 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield, -4 size), touch 7, flat-footed 16; BAB/Grp +22/+37; Full Atk –; Space/Reach 20 ft./0 ft.; SA swarm (5d6), trample; SQ Mob anatomy; AL LN; SV Fort +19, Ref +12, Will +11; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Climb -3, Handle Animal +5, Knowledge (history) +4, Profession (soldier) +4, Ride +9. Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush^B, Improved Overrun^B, Improved Toughness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Languages: Common, Keoish.

Possessions: Full plate, heavy steel shield, longsword, dagger.

Mob Anatomy (Ex): A mob has no clear front or back and no discernable anatomy, so it is not subject to critical hits or sneak attacks. A mob cannot be flanked, tripped, grappled, or bull rushed.

Unlike standard swarms, mobs are made up of relatively small numbers of individual creatures, so spells or effects that target specific numbers of creatures can have an effect on mobs. Each specific creature that is slain, disabled, or otherwise incapacitated by spells or effects that target specific creatures bestows two negative energy levels on the mob. A mob that gains negative levels equal to its hit dice breaks up as if reduced to 0 hit points. Negative levels gained in this manner are not the result of negative energy (and thus cannot be blocked by *death ward* or removed by *restoration*), but never result in a permanent level loss. A mob takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons and evocation spells.

Trample (Ex): A mob that simply moves over a creature and doesn't end its movement with that creature in one of its occupied squares can trample the creature. A trampled creature takes damage equal to $2d6 + 1 \frac{1}{2}$ times the mob's Strength modifier. The victim can either make an attack of opportunity against the mob or make a Reflex save (DC 25 + the mob's Strength modifier) to take half damage.

Encounter 5

Ezra, mind flayer Mnk 9: medium aberration; CR 13; HD 17d8+85; hp 166; Init +7; Spd 60 ft. (12 squares); AC 34 (+4 armor, +2 deflection, +7 Dex, +1 insight, +3 natural, +7 misc.), touch 27, flat-footed 27; BAB/Grp +12/+19; Atk tentacle +16 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2) or unarmed strike +16 melee (1d10+3; 20/x2); Full Atk 4 tentacles +16 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2) or unarmed strike (flurry of blows) +16/+16/+11/+6 (1d10+3; 20/x2) and tentacle +14 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2); SA extract, flurry of blows, improved grab, *ki* strike (magic), mind blast (60-ft. cone, Will DC 18 or stunned for 3d4 rounds), psionics; SQ evasion, fast movement, improved evasion, monk AC bonus (+6), psionics, SR 34, still mind (+2 saves vs. Enchantment spells or effects), slow fall 40 ft., purity of body, telepathy 100 ft. wholeness of body (18 hp per day); AL LE; SV Fort +16, Ref +19, Will +23; Str 16, Dex 20 (24), Con 16 (18), Int 18, Wis 20 (24), Cha 14.

Skills & Feats: Balance +14, Bluff +13, Climb +9, Concentration +22, Diplomacy +15, Escape Artist +13, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (religion) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Listen +25, Sense Motive +9, Spot +16, Tumble +25. Ability Focus (mind blast), Combat Reflexes^B, Improved Critical (tentacles),

Improved Grapple^B, Improved Toughness, Improved Trip^B, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (tentacles), Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Possessions: Bracers of armor +4, gloves of dexterity +4, vest of resistance +4, ioun stones (dusty rose prism, pink rhomboid, iridescent spindle), periapt of wisdom +4, ring of protection +2.

Most Penitent Banshee Lugh Narthistle, male human Mnk 4 / ex-Pal 1 / Blackguard 10: CR 15; medium humanoid (human); HD 11d10 + 4d8 + 42; hp 138; Init +2; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 27 (+11 armor, +1 Dex, +1 deflection, +1 insight, +3 shield), touch 13, flat-footed 25; BAB/Grp +14/+23; Atk *adamantine* +1 *wounding greatsword* +19 melee (2d6+8; 17-20/x2) or unarmed strike +19 melee (1d8+5; 20/x2); Full Atk *adamantine* +1 *wounding greatsword* +19/+14/+9 melee (2d6+8; 17-20/x2) or unarmed strike +17/+17/+12/+7 melee (1d8+5; 20/x2); SA flurry of blows, rebuke undead (1d20+1; 2d6+9 turning damage), smite good 4/day (+2 to hit, +10 damage), sneak attack +3d6; SQ aura of despair (all enemies within 10 ft. suffer -2 to all saves), aura of evil (strong), dark blessing (+2 to all saves), *ki* strike (magic), poison use, slow fall 20 ft., still mind (+2 saves vs. Enchantment spells/effects); AL LE; SV Fort +18, Ref +10, Will +11 (+13 vs. Enchantment spells and effects); Str 16 (20), Dex 12, Con 14 (16), Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +19, Diplomacy +4, Escape Artist +3, Handle Animal +7, Hide +1, Knowledge (nobility) +2, Knowledge (religion) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +2, Listen +3, Ride +8, Spot +3, Cleave, Close-Quarters Fighting, Combat Reflexes^B, Endurance, Improved Buckler Defense, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Grapple^B, Improved Sunder, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Power Attack.

Blackguard Spells Prepared (3/3/2/1 per day; DC 12 + spell level): 1st – *corrupt weapon*, *divine sacrifice* x2; 2nd – *darkness*, *death knell*, *eagles' splendor*, *shatter*; 3rd – *cure serious wounds*, *protection from elements*; 4th – *cure critical wounds*.

Possessions: +3 full plate, +2 buckler, *adamantine* +1 *wounding greatsword*, *amulet of health* +2, *belt of giant strength* +4, *dusty rose prism ioun stone*, *ring of protection* +1, *vest of resistance* +2, two brass unholy symbols, 2000 gp diamond.

Encounter 8

Advanced (38 HD) nimblewright: large construct; CR 15; HD 38d10+68; hp 336; Init +10; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 28 (+10 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size), touch 19, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grp +28/+43; Atk rapier-hand +35 melee (2d8+11; 15-20/x2); Full Atk 2 rapier hands +35 melee (2d8+11; 15-20/x2); SA Spell-like abilities, tripping thrust (Reflex DC 40); SQ Augmented critical, construct traits, SR 27, vulnerabilities; SV Fort +10, Ref

+18, Will +13; Str 32, Dex 30, Con –, Int 13, Wis 20, Cha 18.

Skills & Feats: Balance +19, Jump +30, Listen +20, Sense Motive +22, Spot +20, Tumble +29; Bounding Assault, Cleave, Combat Expertise^B, Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge, Elusive Target, Great Fortitude, Improved Disarm, Improved Toughness, Improved Trip, Mobility, Power Attack, Rapid Blitz, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (rapier-hand).

Possessions: Vest of resistance +1.

Augmented Critical: A nimblewright threatens a critical hit on a natural attack roll of 15-20. On a successful critical hit, its foe is subject to a tripping thrust attack (see above).

Spell-like Abilities: At will - *alter self*, *cat's grace*, *entropic shield*, *feather fall*, *haste*. Caster level 10th; save DC 14 + spell level. The save DCs are Charisma based.

Tripping Thrust (Ex): A nimblewright's rapier-hand attacks are powerful enough to push over creatures its own size or smaller. An opponent who is the target of a successful critical hit from a nimblewright must make a Reflex save (for this nimblewright, DC 40) or be knocked prone as if tripped. The save DC is Strength based.

Vulnerabilities: A cold effect slows a nimblewright for 3 rounds, and a fire effect stuns it for one round.

Appendix 1 – Monsters & NPCs (APL 16)

Encounter 1

Nazarthune Rakshasa Ftr4: CR 15; Medium Outsider (native); HD 4d10+11d8+75; hp 152; Init +12; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 28 (+7 armor, +6 Dex, +5 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 28; BAB/Grp +15/+19; Atk +1 *short sword* +24 melee (1d6+5; 19-20/x2) or claw +23 melee (1d4+4; 20/x2) or +3 *composite shortbow* (+4 Str bonus) +29 ranged (1d6+10; 19-20/x3); Full Atk +1 *short sword* +24/+19/+14 melee (1d6+5; 19-20/x2) or 2 claws +23 melee (1d4+4; 20/x2) or +3 *composite shortbow* (Rapid Shot) (+4 Str bonus) +29/+29/+24/+19 ranged (1d6+10; 19-20/x3); SA Detect thoughts (DC 16), sneak attack +6d6; SQ Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, hide in plain sight, improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, outsider traits, shadow jump, spell resistance 25; uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +14, Ref +20, Will +9; Str 18, Dex 26, Con 21, Int 16, Wis 10; Cha 12.

Skills & Feats: Balance +23, Bluff +19*, Climb +18; Diplomacy +3, Disguise +19* (+21 acting), Escape Artist +21, Hide +21, Intimidate +3, Jump +22, Listen +15, Move Silently +21, Search +16, Spot +15, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks), Tumble +23, Use Rope +7 (+9 bindings). Improved Critical (composite shortbow), Improved Initiative, Improved Rapid Shot, Manyshot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (composite shortbow), Weapon Specialization (composite shortbow).

Possessions: +3 *composite shortbow* (+4 Str bonus), *bracers of archery* (greater), *cloak of resistance* +1, *potion of cure serious wounds*, +3 *mithral chain shirt*, two +1 *short swords*, quiver and 40 arrows.

Rakshasa Sor6: CR 16; Medium Outsider (Native); HD 6d4+7d8+65; hp 109; Init +4; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 31 (+6 armor [greater mage armor], +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +9 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 27; BAB/Grp +10/+10; Atk bite +10 melee (1d6; 20/x2); Full Atk bite +10 melee (1d6; 20/x2) and 2 claws +5 melee (1d4; 20/x2); SA Detect thoughts (DC 19), spells; SQ Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing; darkvision 60 ft., spell resistance 33; AL LE; SV Fort +14, Ref +13, Will +14; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 22 (26).

Skills & Feats: Concentration +20, Diplomacy +20, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Listen +12, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +21, Spot +12, Tumble +5. Practiced Spellcaster, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (Conjuration, Evocation, and Necromancy).

Spells Known (6/8/8/6/7/7/5 per day; DC 18 + spell level; +1 for Conjuration, Evocation, or Necromancy spells; total effective caster level as 17th-level sorcerer due to Practiced Spellcaster feat): 0 – *arcane mark*, *detect*

magic, *detect poison*, *light*, *mage hand*, *message*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st – *alarm*, *comprehend languages*, *magic missile*, *protection from good*, *shield*; 2nd – *bear's endurance*, *glitterdust*, *invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *see invisibility*; 3rd – *greater mage armor*, *haste*, *magic circle against good*, *slow*; 4th – *confusion*, *dimension door*, *enervation*, *ice storm*; 5th – *arc of lightning*, *cone of cold*, *reciprocal gyre*; 6th – *disintegrate*, *greater sign of sealing*.

Possessions: *cloak of charisma* +4, *potion of cure serious wounds*, *ring of protection* +2, *vest of resistance* +2, *potion of displacement*, *pearl of power* (2nd level), *brooch of shielding*, robes, spell component pouches.

Zakya Rakshasa Ftr 3/Exotic Weapon Master 1: CR 12; Medium Outsider (native); HD 4d10+7d8+77; hp 130; Init +3; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 31 (+7 armor, +2 Dex, +9 natural, +3 shield), touch 12, flat-footed 29; BAB/Grp +11/+17; Atk +2 *bastard sword* +21 melee (1d10+11; 17-20/x2) or claw +18 melee (1d4+7; 20/x2); Full Atk +2 *bastard sword* +21/+16/+11 melee (1d10+11; 17-20/x2) and bite +13 melee (1d6+4; 20/x2) or claw +18 melee (1d4+7; 20/x2) and bite +13 melee (1d6+4; 20/x2); SA Detect thoughts (DC 11), spell-like abilities; SQ Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing, darkvision 60 ft., exotic weapon stunt (uncanny blow), outsider traits, spell resistance 26; AL LE; SV Fort +18, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 25, Dex 17, Con 24, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills & Feats: Bluff +13, Climb +12, Concentration +16, Craft (weaponsmith) +6, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +13*, Intimidate +12, Jump +16, Listen +10, Sense Motive +11, Spot +10. Blind-Fight, Cleave^B, Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Critical (bastard sword), Mobility, Power Attack^B, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)^B.

Possessions: +2 *bastard sword*, +1 *heavy steel shield*, +3 *scale mail*, *cloak of resistance* +1, *potion of cure serious wounds*.

Encounter 4

Mob of Linth soldiers, male and female human Ftr10: Gargantuan humanoid (human); CR 12; HD 30d8+90; hp 247; Init +0; Spd 10 ft. (2 squares); AC 17 (+8 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield, -4 size), touch 7, flat-footed 16; BAB/Grp +22/+37; Full Atk –; Space/Reach 20 ft./0 ft.; SA swarm (5d6), trample; SQ Mob anatomy; AL LN; SV Fort +19, Ref +12, Will +11; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Climb -3, Handle Animal +5, Knowledge (history) +4, Profession (soldier) +7, Ride +9, Speak Language +1. Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dive for Cover, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush^B, Improved Overrun^B, Improved Toughness, Iron Will, Lightning

Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Possessions: Full plate, heavy steel shield, longsword, dagger.

Mob Anatomy (Ex): A mob has no clear front or back and no discernable anatomy, so it is not subject to critical hits or sneak attacks. A mob cannot be flanked, tripped, grappled, or bull rushed.

Unlike standard swarms, mobs are made up of relatively small numbers of individual creatures, so spells or effects that target specific numbers of creatures can have an effect on mobs. Each specific creature that is slain, disabled, or otherwise incapacitated by spells or effects that target specific creatures bestows two negative energy levels on the mob. A mob that gains negative levels equal to its hit dice breaks up as if reduced to 0 hit points. Negative levels gained in this matter are not the result of negative energy (and thus cannot be blocked by *death ward* or removed by *restoration*), but never result in a permanent level loss. A mob takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons and evocation spells.

Trample (Ex): A mob that simply moves over a creature and doesn't end its movement with that creature in one of its occupied squares can trample the creature. A trampled creature takes damage equal to $2d6 + 1 \frac{1}{2}$ times the mob's Strength modifier. The victim can either make an attack of opportunity against the mob or make a Reflex save (DC 25 + the mob's Strength modifier) to take half damage.

Encounter 5

Ezra, mind flayer Mnk 11: medium aberration; CR 15; HD 19d8+95; hp 185; Init +7; Spd 50 ft. (10 squares); AC 37 (+4 armor, +3 deflection, +7 Dex, +1 insight, +3 natural, +9 misc.), touch 30, flat-footed 26; BAB/Grp +14/+21; Atk tentacle +18 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2) or unarmed strike +18 melee (1d10+3; 19-20/x2) or +5 *shuriken* +26 missile (1d2+8; 20/x2); Full Atk 4 tentacles +18 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2) or unarmed strike (flurry of blows) +18/+18/+13/+8 (1d10+3; 19-20/x2) and tentacle +16 melee (1d6+3; 19-20/x2) or +5 *shuriken* +26 missile (1d2+8; 20/x2); SA extract, flurry of blows, greater flurry, improved grab, *ki* strike (lawful, magic), mind blast (60-ft. cone, Will DC 18 or stunned for 3d4 rounds), psionics; SQ diamond body, evasion, fast movement, monk AC bonus (+6), psionics, SR 36, still mind (+2 saves vs. Enchantment spells or effects), slow fall 50 ft., purity of body, telepathy 100 ft. wholeness of body (20 hp per day); AL LE; SV Fort +18, Ref +21, Will +25; Str 16, Dex 20 (24), Con 16 (18), Int 18, Wis 20 (22), Cha 14.

Skills & Feats: Balance +14 Bluff +13, Climb +8, Concentration +23, Diplomacy +17, Escape Artist +20, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (religion) +12,

Knowledge (the planes) +12, Listen +27, Sense Motive +12, Spot +27, Tumble +26. Ability Focus (mind blast), Combat Reflexes^B, Improved Critical (tentacles), Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Improved Grapple^B, Improved Toughness, Improved Trip^B, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (tentacles), Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Possessions: Bracers of armor +4, gloves of dexterity +4, *periapt of wisdom* +4, *ring of protection* +3, *vest of resistance* +4, *ioun stones* (dusty rose prism, pink rhomboid, iridescent spindle), *robe of stars* (six +5 *shuriken* remaining).

Most Penitent Banshee Lugh Narthistle, male human Mnk 4 / ex-Pal 1 / Blackguard 10 / Tattooed Monk 2: CR 17; medium humanoid (human); HD 11d10 + 6d8 + 51; hp 157; Init +2; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 29 (+11 armor, +1 Dex, +2 deflection, +1 insight, +4 shield), touch 14, flat-footed 28; BAB/Grp +15/+25; Atk *adamantine* +1 *wounding greatsword* +21 melee (2d6+9; 17-20/x2) or unarmed strike +21 melee (1d8+6; 20/x2); Full Atk *adamantine* +1 *wounding greatsword* +21/+16/+11 melee (2d6+9; 17-20/x2) or unarmed strike +19/+19/+14/+9 melee (1d8+6; 20/x2); SA flurry of blows, rebuke undead (1d20+1; 2d6+9 turning damage), smite good 4/day (+2 to hit, +10 damage), sneak attack +3d6; SQ aura of despair (all enemies within 10 ft. suffer -2 to all saves), aura of evil (strong), dark blessing (+2 to all saves), *ki* strike (magic), poison use, slow fall 20 ft., still mind (+2 saves vs. Enchantment spells/effects), tattoo (unicorn); AL LE; SV Fort +22, Ref +14, Will +15 (+17 vs. Enchantment spells and effects); Str 16 (22), Dex 12, Con 14 (16), Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +23, Diplomacy +4, Escape Artist +5, Handle Animal +7, Hide +1, Knowledge (nobility) +2, Knowledge (religion) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +2, Listen +11, Ride +8, Spot +3. Cleave, Close-Quarters Fighting, Combat Reflexes^B, Endurance, Improved Buckler Defense, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Grapple^B, Improved Sunder, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Power Attack.

Blackguard Spells Prepared (3/3/2/1 per day; DC 12 + spell level): 1st – *corrupt weapon*, *divine sacrifice* x2; 2nd – *darkness*, *death knell*, *eagles' splendor*, *shatter*; 3rd – *cure serious wounds*, *protection from elements*; 4th – *cure critical wounds*.

Possessions: +3 full plate, +3 buckler, *adamantine* +1 *wounding greatsword*, *amulet of health* +2, *belt of giant strength* +6, *dusty rose prism ioun stone*, *ring of protection* +2, *vest of resistance* +3, two brass unholy symbols, 4000 gp diamond, 2000 gp emerald.

Encounter 8

Advanced (46 HD) nimblewright: large construct; CR 17; HD 46d10+76; hp 402; Init +11; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 29 (+11 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size), touch 20, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grp +34/+49; Atk rapier-hand +41

melee (2d8+11; 15-20/x2); Full Atk 2 rapier hands +41
melee (2d8+11; 15-20/x2); SA Spell-like abilities,
tripping thrust (Reflex DC 44); SQ Augmented critical,
construct traits, SR 27, vulnerabilities; SV Fort +13, Ref
+22, Will +16; Str 32, Dex 32, Con –, Int 13, Wis 20,
Cha 18.

Skills & Feats: Balance +26, Jump +36, Listen +26,
Sense Motive +28, Spot +26, Tumble +36; Bounding
Assault, Cleave, Combat Expertise^B, Combat Reflexes^B,
Combat Tactician, Dodge, Elusive Target, Great
Fortitude, Improved Disarm, Improved Toughness,
Improved Trip, Mobility, Power Attack, Rapid Blitz,
Robilar's Gambit, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus
(rapier-hand).

Possessions: Brooch of shielding (101 hp), vest of
resistance +1.

Augmented Critical: A nimblewright threatens a
critical hit on a natural attack roll of 15-20. On a
successful critical hit, its foe is subject to a tripping
thrust attack (see above).

Spell-like Abilities: At will - *alter self*, *cat's grace*,
entropic shield, *feather fall*, *haste*. Caster level 10th; save
DC 14 + spell level. The save DCs are Charisma based.

Tripping Thrust (Ex): A nimblewright's rapier-
hand attacks are powerful enough to push over
creatures its own size or smaller. An opponent who is
the target of a successful critical hit from a
nimblewright must make a Reflex save (for this
nimblewright, DC 44) or be knocked prone as if
tripped. The save DC is Strength based.

Vulnerabilities: A cold effect slows a nimblewright
for 3 rounds, and a fire effect stuns it for one round.

Appendix 2: New Rules

New Feats

Bounding Assault [General] (PHB2 p75)

You can move and attack with superior speed and power.

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, base attack bonus +12

Benefit: When using the Spring Attack feat, you designate two foes rather than one. Your movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity from either of these foes. While using an attack action with the Spring Attack feat, you can make a second attack with a -5 penalty. You can use both attacks against one of the opponents targeted with this feat, or split your attacks between them.

Combat Tactician [General] (PHB2 p77)

You excel at approaching an opponent from an unexpected direction to deliver deadly attacks. As you approach your foe, you duck and weave to confuse his defenses. Alternatively, you draw a weapon and make a quick attack that surprises your foe.

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Dodge, base attack bonus +12

Benefit: You can designate one specific foe as the target of this feat as a free action. If neither you nor the target threatens each other at the start of your turn, you gain a +2 bonus on melee damage against that target during your turn.

Dive for Cover [General] (CV p108)

You can dive behind cover or drop to the ground quickly enough to avoid many area effects.

Prerequisite: Base Reflex save bonus +4.

Benefit: If you fail a Reflex saving throw, you can immediately attempt the saving throw again. You must take the second result, whether it succeeds or fails. You become prone immediately after attempting the second roll.

Elusive Target [Tactical] (CW p110)

Trying to land a blow against you can be a maddening experience.

Prerequisites: Dodge, Mobility, BAB +6.

Benefit: The Elusive Target feat enables the use of three tactical maneuvers.

Negate Power Attack: To use this maneuver, you must designate a specific foe to be affected by your Dodge feat. If that foe uses the Power Attack feat against you, the foe gains no bonus on the damage roll but still takes the corresponding penalty on the attack roll.

Diverting Defense: To use this maneuver, you must be flanked and you must designate one of the flanking attackers to be affected by your Dodge feat. The first attack of the round from the designated attacker automatically misses you and may strike the other flanking foe instead; the attacking creature makes an attack roll normally, and its ally is considered flat-footed. If the designated attacker is making a full attack against you, its second and subsequent attacks function normally.

Cause Overreach: To use this maneuver, you must provoke an attack of opportunity from a foe by moving out of a threatened square. If the foe misses you, you can make a free trip attempt against this foe, and the foe does not get a chance to trip you if the attempt fails.

Improved Buckler Defense [General] (CW p100)

You can attack with an off-hand weapon while retaining a buckler's shield bonus to your Armor Class.

Prerequisite: Shield proficiency.

Benefit: When you attack with a weapon in your off hand, you may still apply your buckler's shield bonus to your armor class.

Normal: Without this feat, a character wielding a buckler who attacks with an off-hand weapon loses the buckler's shield bonus to AC until his or her next turn.

Special: A fighter may select Improved Buckler Defense as one of his fighter bonus feats.

Improved Rapid Shot [General] (CW p101)

You are an expert at firing weapons with exceptional speed.

Prerequisites: Manyshot, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot.

Benefits: When using the Rapid Shot feat, you may ignore the -2 penalty on all your ranged attack rolls.

Special: A fighter may select Improved Rapid Shot as one of his fighter bonus feats.

Improved Toughness [General] (CW p101)

You are significantly tougher than normal.

Prerequisites: Base Fortitude save bonus +2.

Benefits: You gain a number of hit points equal to your current Hit Dice. Each time you gain a HD (such as by gaining a level) you gain 1 additional hit point. If you lose a HD (such as by losing a level), you lose 1 hit point permanently.

Special: A fighter may select Improved Toughness as one of his fighter bonus feats.

Practiced Spellcaster [General] (CA p82)

Choose a spellcasting class that you possess. Your spells cast from that class are more powerful.

Prerequisites: Spellcraft 4 ranks

Benefits: Your caster level for the chosen spellcasting class increases by 4. This benefit can't increase your caster level to higher than your Hit Dice. However, even if you can't gain from the full bonus immediately, if you later gain Hit Dice in levels of nonspellcasting classes, you might be able to apply the rest of the bonus.

For example, a human 5th-level sorcerer/3rd-level fighter who selects this feat would increase his sorcerer caster level from 5th to 8th (since he has 8 Hit Dice). If he later gained a fighter level he would gain the remainder of the bonus and his sorcerer caster level would become 9th (since he now has 9 Hit Dice).

A character with two or more spellcasting classes (such as a bard/sorcerer or a ranger/druid) must choose which class gains the feat's effect.

This feat does not affect your spells per day or spells known. It increases your caster level only, which would help you penetrate spell resistance and increase the duration and other effects of your spells.

Special: You may select this feat multiple times. Each time you choose it, you must apply it to a different spellcasting class. For instance, a 4th-level cleric/5th-level wizard who had selected this feat twice would cast cleric spells as an 8th-level caster and wizard spells as a 9th-level caster.

Rapid Blitz [General] (PHB2 p82)

You charge across the battlefield, combining your speed and fighting ability to move and attack with unmatched skill.

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Bounding Assault, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, base attack bonus +18.

Benefit: You can designate a third target for your Spring Attack feat. In addition to the second attack you gain from your Bounding Assault feat, you can make a third attack with a -10 penalty.

Robilar's Gambit [Fighter, General] (PHB2 p 82)

By offering Robilar's Gambit, you absorb damage to place yourself in an advantageous position. This dangerous sacrifice is not for the unfit or unwise, for one failed retaliatory strike can undo the advantage gained. Lord Robilar, a rash and impetuous fighter, gained fame using this technique against his enemies.

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes, base attack bonus +12

Benefit: At the start of your action, you can adopt a fighting stance that exposes you to harm but allows you to take advantage of your opponent's exposed defenses as they reach in to attack you. Anyone who strikes at you gains a +4 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against you. In return, they provoke attacks of opportunity from you each time they swing. Resolve your attack of opportunity after your foe's attack.

Normal: Opponents do not provoke attacks of opportunity by attacking. Further, when an opponent provokes an attack of opportunity, you resolve your attack before he completes the action that provoked the attack of opportunity.

New Magic Items

Vest of Resistance (CA p150)

These garments offer magic protection in the form of a +1 to +5 resistance bonus on all saving throws.

Faint abjuration; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *resistance*, caster level must be three times that of vest's bonus; Price: 1,000 gp (+1), 4,000 gp (+2), 9,000 gp (+3), 16,000 gp (+4), 25,000 gp (+5).

New Monsters

MOB (Template) (Abridged; DMG2 p59)

An angry mob represents the most dangerous form of crowd.

A mob is treated as a single entity similar to a swarm, except that it is made up of larger creatures. A mob can be composed of Small, Medium, or Large creatures, but all the individuals must be of the same type.

"Mob" is an acquired template that can be added to any Small, Medium, or Large creature. A mob uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: A mob is a Gargantuan creature composed of either 48 Small or Medium or 12 Large creatures. The mob's type remains unchanged from the base creature.

Hit Dice: A mob has a single pool of Hit Dice and hit points. All mobs have 30 Hit Dice; this number represents the mob's mentality and physical mass rather than its race or class, since the individual members of a mob don't use their own abilities or experience to aid the whole. The type of Hit Dice rolled is set by the mob's racial Hit Dice, not any class level the mob might have. Thus, a mob of commoners would roll d8s for hit points, not d4s.

Reducing a mob to 0 hit points or lower causes it to break up, though damage taken until that point does not degrade its ability to attack or resist attack. Mobs are never staggered or reduced to a dying state by damage.

Initiative: A mob's initiative modifier is always 0.

Speed: A mob's speed is 10 feet slower than that of the base creature.

Armor Class: As the base creature, modified by -4 for the mob's Gargantuan size.

Base Attack: Since all mobs have 30 Hit Dice, their base attack bonuses are set depending on their type:

- Fey or undead: +15 BAB
- Aberration, animal, construct, elemental, giant, humanoid, ooze, plant, or vermin: +22 BAB
- Dragon, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, or outsider: +30 BAB

Grapple: As base attack bonus, modified by +12 for its size, and as appropriate for its Strength modifier.

Attack/Full Attack: Mobs don't make standard attacks. Rather, they are treated similar to swarms in combat. A mob deals 5d6 points of bludgeoning damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move, with no attack roll needed. Mob attacks ignore concealment and cover. A mob's attacks are nonmagical, unless the base creature's attacks are considered magical. Damage reduction applies to mob attacks.

Space/Reach: A mob occupies a square 20 feet on a side, but its reach is 0 feet. In order to attack, it moves into an opponent's space, which provokes an attack of opportunity. It can occupy the same space as a creature, since it tramples over and moves around its victim. A mob can move through squares occupied by enemies, and vice versa, without impediment, although a mob provokes an attack of opportunity if it does so. A mob can move through openings large enough for its component creatures.

Attack Options: The individual creatures that make up the mob are unable to use any attack options that require actions, such as breath weapons, spell-like abilities, and the like. If the base creature has attack options that reflect the damage it deals (such as poison, energy drain, ability damage, improved grab, constrict, rend, or swallow whole), those attacks function normally on any creature damaged by the mob. Attack options that function constantly, such as gaze weapons, continue to function normally. The save DCs of any of these attacks should be recalculated based on the mob's 30 Hit Dice.

In addition, mobs gain one or both of the following attack options.

Expert Grappler (Ex): A mob can maintain a grapple without penalty and still make attacks against other targets (ignoring the usual -20 on grappling checks to do so). A mob is never considered flat-footed while grappling.

Trample (Ex): A mob that simply moves over a creature and doesn't end its movement with that creature in one of its occupied squares can trample the creature. A trampled creature takes damage equal to $2d6 + 1\frac{1}{2}$ times the mob's Strength modifier. The victim can either make an attack of opportunity against the mob or make a Reflex save (DC $25 +$ the mob's Strength modifier) to take half damage.

Special Qualities: A mob retains all the special qualities of the base creature. In addition, it gains the following special quality.

Mob Anatomy (Ex): A mob has no clear front or back and no discernable anatomy, so it is not subject to critical hits or sneak attacks. A mob cannot be flanked, tripped, grappled, or bull rushed.

Unlike standard swarms, mobs are made up of relatively small numbers of individual creatures, so spells or effects that target specific numbers of creatures can have an effect on mobs. Each specific creature that is slain, disabled, or otherwise incapacitated by spells or effects that target specific creatures bestows two negative energy levels on the mob. A mob that gains negative levels equal to its hit dice breaks up as if reduced to 0 hit points. Negative levels gained in this matter are not the result of negative energy (and thus cannot be blocked by *death ward* or removed by *restoration*), but never result in a permanent level loss. A mob takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons and evocation spells.

Saves: A mob's saving throws are calculated as for a 30 HD creature of its type. A mob's base good save is +17, and its base bad save is +9.

Abilities: A mob's abilities are the same as the base creature, except that its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores drop to 10. If the base creature's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores are already lower than 10, they do not change.

Skills: Same as the base creature; do not recalculate based on the mob's 30 Hit Dice. The mob's new Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores might grant some skills different modifiers.

Feats: Same as the base creature; all mobs gain Improved Bull Rush and Improved Overrun as bonus feats.

Organization: Solitary, pair, or gang (3-12 mobs).

Challenge Rating: 8, or +2 if the base creature's CR is 7 or higher.

Advancement: –

Level Adjustment: –

NIMBLEWRIGHT (Abridged, MM2 p162; incorporates issued errata)

Medium Construct

Hit Dice: 10d10+20 (75hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

AC: 24 (+7 Dex, +7 natural), touch 17, flat-footed 17

Attack: Rapier-hand +11 melee (1d6+4/15-20)

Full Attack: 2 rapier-hands +11 melee (1d6+4/15-20)
Face/Reach: 5 ft. / 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities, tripping thrust
Special Qualities: Augmented critical, construct traits, spell resistance 27, vulnerabilities
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +6
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 24, Con –, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 19
Skills: Balance +9, Jump +19, Tumble +22
Feats: Combat Expertise^B, Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Mobility, Spring Attack
Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always chaotic
Advancement: 11-15 HD (Medium); 16-30 (Large)
Level Adjustment: +6

Nimblewrights are rapier-wielding constructs that disguise themselves as being humanoids. They often serve as hired bodyguards, but many are employed to infiltrate organizations and secret societies or to spy on individuals. Unlike most constructs, a nimblewright is created with intelligence and a distinct personality that allows for intuitive thinking and responsiveness. Like a golem, a nimblewright is a powerful creation that combines awesome magic with elemental forces. Its animating force is a spirit from the Elemental Plane of Water. The process of creating a nimblewright binds the unwilling spirit to the artificial body and subjects it to the will of the creator.

An undisguised nimblewright appears as a non-descript, steel-colored, mechanical human. When disguised, it wears clothes and uses spells to hide its true nature. In this way, it can appear as almost any Medium-size humanoid it wishes to become.

A nimblewright speaks Common, Dwarven, and Elven.

COMBAT

A nimblewright is an extremely dexterous combatant. In battle, it brings to bear all of its special fighting skills to deprive opponents of their weapons before running them through. If a nimblewright has ample warning of a fight, it enhances its combat skills with *cat's grace* and *haste* before joining melee.

The monster fights with two rapiers that are actually parts of its body. These rapiers are treated as natural weapons. When not in use, the weapons fold into its forearms. A nimblewright can fully deploy both of these rapiers as a free action.

Augmented Critical: A nimblewright threatens a critical hit on a natural attack roll of 15-20. On a successful critical hit, its foe is subject to a tripping thrust attack (see above).

Spell-like Abilities: At will - *alter self*, *cat's grace*, *entropic shield*, *feather fall*, *haste*. Caster level 10th; save DC 14 + spell level. The save DCs are Charisma based.

Tripping Thrust (Ex): A nimblewright's rapier-hand attacks are powerful enough to push over creatures its own size or smaller. An opponent who is the target of a successful critical hit from a nimblewright must make a Reflex save (DC 19) or be knocked prone as if tripped. The save DC is Strength based.

Vulnerabilities: A cold effect slows a nimblewright for 3 rounds, and a fire effect stuns it for one round.

RAKSHASA, NAZTHARUNE (MM3 p136; incorporates issued errata)

Medium Outsider (Native)

Hit Dice: 11d8+44 (93 hp)

Initiative: +9

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armor Class: 24 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +5 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 19

Base Attack/Grapple: +11/+13

Attack: Short sword +17 melee (1d6+2/19-20); or claw +16 melee (1d4+2); or composite shortbow (+2 Strength bonus) +16 ranged (1d6+2/x3)

Full Attack: Short sword +15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+2/19-20) and short sword +15 melee (1d6+1/19-20); or 2 claws +16 melee (1d4+2); or composite shortbow (+2 Strength bonus) +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d6+2/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Detect thoughts, sneak attack +6d6

Special Qualities: Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, hide in plain sight, improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, outsider traits, shadow jump, spell resistance 21, uncanny dodge

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +12, Will +7

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 15

Skills: Balance +21, Bluff +20*, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +20* (+22* when acting), Escape Artist +19, Hide +19, Intimidate +4, Jump +8, Listen +14, Move Silently +19, Search +16, Spot +14, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks), Tumble +21, Use Rope +5 (+7 bindings)

Feats: Improved Initiative, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (short sword)

Environment: Warm marshes

Organization: Solitary or pair

Treasure: Standard plus mithral shirt

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +5

This being is garbed in dark clothing. Its body seems mostly human except for a luxurious coat of black fur and its black, tiger-like head.

While some theorize that rakshasas are the very embodiment of evil, those rare few who have survived an encounter with the deadly naztharune know it to be fact. Like other rakshasa, the palms of a naztharune rakshasa's hands are where the backs of the hands would be on a human. While this physical feature doesn't detract from the creature's manual dexterity, it does make a rakshasa look very disturbing to those unfamiliar with the creature.

Naztharune rakshasas, like most rakshasas, tend to be solitary creatures but will work with other rakshasas when necessary and even team up with other naztharunes on a continuing basis. They sometimes work as infiltrators and spies for more powerful rakshasas, and sometimes hire themselves out to other creatures as mercenaries or assassins. Naztharune rakshasas have a hearty contempt for all creatures except other rakshasas, but they can suppress this feeling when it profits them to do so. Unlike most of their rakshasa brethren, naztharune rakshasas feel less of a need to be "the boss" in every operation. They are much more mercenary in their desires and needs.

A naztharune rakshasa is about the same height and weight as an elf (5 feet tall, 100 pounds). Naztharune rakshasas speak Common, Infernal, and Undercommon.

COMBAT

Unlike their spellcasting cousins, a naztharune rakshasa enjoys sneaking up on a target and killing it in close combat. Whenever possible, it uses allies to distract opponents and maneuver into flanking situations.

Detect Thoughts (Su): A naztharune can continuously use *detect thoughts*, as the spell from an 18th-level caster (save DC 17). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Change Shape (Su): A naztharune can assume any humanoid form, or revert to its own form, as a standard action. In humanoid form, a naztharune loses its claw and bite attacks (although it often equips itself with weapons and armor instead). A naztharune remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the naztharune reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Evasion (Ex): If a naztharune rakshasa is exposed to any effect that normally allows it to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, it takes no damage with a successful saving throw.

Hide in Plain Sight (Su): A naztharune rakshasa can use the Hide skill even while being observed. As long as it is within 10 feet of some sort of shadows, a naztharune rakshasa can hide itself from view in the open without anything to actually hide behind. It cannot, however, hide in its own shadow.

Improved Evasion (Ex): This ability works like evasion, except that while a rakshasa still takes no damage on a successful Reflex save, it now takes only half damage on a failed save.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): A naztharune rakshasa cannot be flanked except by a rogue of at least 15th level.

Shadow Jump (Su): A naztharune rakshasa has the ability to travel between shadows as if by means of a *dimension door* spell. The limitation is that the magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. A naztharune rakshasa can jump up to 20 feet each day in this way; this can be a single jump of 20 feet or two jumps of 10 feet each.

Sneak Attack (Ex): If a naztharune rakshasa can catch an opponent when he is unable to defend himself effectively from her attack, she can strike a vital spot for extra damage.

The naztharune rakshasa's attack deals extra damage any time its target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the naztharune rakshasa flanks its target. This extra damage is 1d6 at 1st level, and it increases by 1d6 every two rogue levels thereafter. Should the naztharune rakshasa score a critical hit with a sneak attack, this extra damage is not multiplied.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): A naztharune rakshasa can react to danger before her senses would normally allow her to do so. It retains its Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if caught flat-footed.

Skills: A rakshasa has a +4 racial bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks. *When using change shape, a rakshasa gains an additional +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks. If reading an opponent's mind, its circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks increases by a further +4.

RAKSHASA, ZAKYA (*Eberron Campaign Setting* p297, abridged)

Medium Outsider (Native)

Hit Dice: 7d8+35 (66 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), base speed 50 ft.

Armor Class: 27 (+2 Dex, +9 natural, +4 scale mail, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 12, flat-footed 25

Base Attack / Grapple: +7/+12

Attack: +1 *bastard sword* +14 melee (1d10+8/19-20) or claw +12 melee (1d4+5)

Full Attack: +1 *bastard sword* +14/+9 melee (1d10+8/19-20) and bite +7 melee (1d6+2); or claw +12 melee (1d4+5) and bite +7 melee (1d6+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Attack: Detect thoughts, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing, darkvision 60 ft., outsider traits, spell resistance 22

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +6

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 11

Skills: Bluff +14, Climb +9, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +14, Intimidate +12, Jump +13, Listen +11, Sense Motive +11, Spot +11

Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave^B, Combat Reflexes^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Power Attack^B, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)^B.

Environment: Warm marshes

Organization: Solitary, band (2-5 plus 1 rakshasa), company (20-50 plus 2-8 rakshasas)

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +7

This being resembles a humanoid tiger clad in scale mail, carrying a large sword and a heavy shield. Its form seems human except for a tiger head and a luxurious coat of fur visible through gaps in its mail.

A zakya can twist its backwards hands, enabling it to wield weapons normally. Like other rakshasas, a zakya is about the same height and weight as a human.

Zakyas speak Common, Infernal, and Undercommon.

COMBAT

Unlike other rakshasas, Zakyas enjoy combat and plunge into melee with relish. They are accomplished fighters and masters of their chosen weapons. They supplement their martial skills with limited spell-like abilities useful for weakening their enemies.

Detect Thoughts (Su): A zakya can continuously use *detect thoughts*, as the spell from an 18th-level caster (save DC 12). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day – *chill touch* (DC 11), *true strike*, *vampiric touch* (DC 13). Caster level 7th; save DC 10 + spell level. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Change Shape (Su): A zakya can assume any humanoid form, or revert to its own form, as a standard action. In humanoid form, a zakya loses its claw and bite attacks (although it often equips itself with weapons and armor instead). A zakya remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the zakya reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Skills: A rakshasa has a +4 racial bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks. *When using change shape, a rakshasa gains an additional +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks. If reading an opponent's mind, its circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks increases by a further +4.

Feats: A zakya receives bonus feats and meets feat requirements as though it were a 7th-level fighter.

TROLL, WAR (MM3 p181; incorporates issued errata)

Large Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 12d8+84 (138 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 30 ft. in breastplate (6 squares); base speed 40 ft.

Armor Class: 31 (-1 size, +14 natural armor, +5 breastplate, +3 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 28

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+22

Attack: Masterwork greatsword +23 melee (2d8+15/19-20) or masterwork composite longbow (+10 Str bonus) +15 ranged (2d6+10/x3)

Full Attack: Masterwork greatsword +23/+18/+13 melee (2d8+15/19-20) and bite +19 melee (1d6+5); or 2 claws +21 melee (1d8+10) and bite +19 melee (1d6+5); or masterwork composite longbow (+10 Str bonus) +15/+10/+5 ranged (2d6+10/x3)

Space/Reach: 10ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Dazing blow

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/adamantine, dark-vision 90 ft., low-light vision, regeneration 9, scent, spell resistance 20

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +12

Abilities: Str 31, Dex 16, Con 29, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 10

Skills: Listen +11, Spot +12

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary, pair, or gang (3-9)

Challenge Rating: 12

Treasure: Standard (including masterwork greatsword and masterwork composite longbow [+10 Str bonus])

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +6

This hulking creature stands upright. Although it has the feral features of a troll, its rubbery green skin has a dark, metallic tinge and it wears substantial armor. The creature holds a greatsword with ease and is clearly a skilled warrior.

These intelligent and dangerous creatures were bred specifically for war. Never without their weapons and armor, war trolls know nothing of peace, only the chaos of constant battle. They typically travel from battle to battle in mercenary bands. Like forest trolls, they are capable of sophisticated tactics that most other trolls cannot match.

Although they are now a separate variety of troll, war trolls were once ordinary trolls of unusual strength and intelligence. Gathered together by a powerful cabal of arcane spellcasters, these trolls were magically engineered and augmented. They were then bred to produce soldiers of incredible power.

War trolls have a great love of magic weapons and armor, and they actively seek such equipment if it is properly sized for their frames. A typical war troll is 9 feet tall and weighs about 700 pounds. War trolls speak Giant.

COMBAT

Unlike their troll kindred, war trolls are precise and methodical in combat. They trust their regenerative abilities to see them through a fight against even powerful warriors, so they focus their attention on spellcasters early in any skirmish.

Dazing Blow (Ex): The force of a war troll's blow can be overwhelming. If a war troll hits with a weapon or claw attack, the opponent must make DC 25 Fortitude save or be dazed for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Regeneration (Ex): Unlike with their lesser cousins, acid (not fire) deals normal damage to a war troll. If a war troll loses a limb or a body part, the lost portion regrows in 2d4 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

New Prestige Classes

Exotic Weapon Master (CW p30-31)

Characters of any race or background can become exotic weapon masters; the only real requirement is commitment and perseverance. Nevertheless, most exotic weapon masters are human, because members of that race have the most exposure to new cultures and thus the most opportunity to take up exotic weapons.

NPC exotic weapon masters often open training arenas or schools for those interested in learning to fight with unusual weapons or tactics. They often take levels in other prestige classes and can be found as champions or leaders among bands of warriors.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify to become an exotic weapon master, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +6.

Skills: Craft (weaponsmithing) 3 ranks.

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (any exotic weapon), Weapon Focus (any exotic weapon).

Special: Races that have familiarity with an exotic weapon (such as the dwarf's familiarity with the dwarven waraxe and the dwarven urgosh) are considered to have the Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat for the purpose of meeting the requirements of this class.

Class Skills

The exotic weapon master's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Craft (Int), Intimidate (Cha), and Profession (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int Modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the exotic weapon master prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Exotic weapon masters gain no proficiency with any weapon or armor.

Exotic Weapon Stunt (Ex): At each level, an exotic weapon master learns a special trick that he can use with any exotic weapon for which he has the Weapon Focus feat. He must select the trick learned when he gains the level, and once selected, the choice cannot later be changed. He can't select the same stunt more than once.

Uncanny Blow: When wielding a one-handed exotic melee weapon in two hands, the character can focus the power of his attack so that he deals extra damage equal to this Strength bonus x2 instead of his Strength bonus x1-1/2. If he has the Power Attack feat, he treats the weapon as two-handed for purposes of determining his bonus damage on rolls.

Table 2-9: The Exotic Weapon Master

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Exotic weapon stunt

Tattooed Monk (Abridged) (CW p82-85)

Certain monastic orders bestow supernatural or spell-like powers on their members by inscribing magic tattoos on their skin. These tattooed monks shave their heads, speak in cryptic riddles and maxims, and – in many cases – travel the countryside furthering their quest for enlightenment by facing and conquering temptation.

The great majority of tattooed monks begin their careers as monks. A small number of fighters, druids, and even a few clerics adopt the tattooed monk prestige class. In general tattooed monks are drawn from almost exclusively from rural or wild regions, though more “civilized” individuals who gain the favor of the order are sometimes allowed to join.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a tattooed monk a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Alignment: Any Lawful.

Base Attack Bonus: +3.

Skills: Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks.

Feats: Endurance, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike.

Class Skills

The tattooed monk's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

Skills Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the tattooed monk prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Tattooed Monks gain no proficiency with any weapon or armor.

Monk Abilities: A tattooed monk's class level stacks with his monk levels for determining his unarmed damage, AC bonus, and unarmed speed bonus.

Tattoo (Su or Sp): Tattooed monks gain their powers from the magic tattoos that eventually cover their bodies. A 1st-level tattooed monk has one tattoo and gains another tattoo at every odd-numbered level. A tattooed monk can choose his tattoos from among those described below. Note that three of the tattoos (centipede, crescent moon, and phoenix) have minimum class level requirements.

All tattoos are magical, and the abilities they bestow are supernatural (except for the crescent moon). A tattooed monk in an *anti-magic field* loses all benefits of his tattoos. Unless the effect of a tattoo is continuous, activating a tattoo is a move action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Unicorn: A character with this tattoo gains the power of good fortune, usable once per day. This ability allows the tattooed monk to reroll one d20 roll that he has just made. The character must take the result of the reroll, even if it's worse than the original roll. The character must declare the reroll before the result of the original roll has been determined.

Multiclass Note: A monk who becomes a tattooed monk may continue to advance as a monk.

Table 2-34: The Tattooed Monk

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+2	+2	Monk abilities, tattoo
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+3	—

New Spells

Arc of Lightning(SC p15)

Conjuration (Creation) [Electricity]

Level: Druid 4, sorcerer/wizard 5, windstorm 5

Components: V, S, M/DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./21 levels)
Area: A line between two creatures
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: No

This bolt deals 1d6 points of electricity damage per caster level (maximum 15d6) to both creatures and to anything in the line between them.

Both creatures must be in range, and you must be able to target them (as if this spell had them as its targets). Draw the line from any corner in one creature's space to any corner in the other's space. The bolt affects all squares in this line.

Arcane Material Component: Two small iron rods.

***Divine Sacrifice* (SC p70)**

Evocation

Level: Blackguard 1, paladin 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level

Your first attack each round for the duration of the spell deals an extra 5d6 points of damage if it hits, and you take 10 points of damage each time you make such an attack, whether or not the attack is successful.

***Mage Armor, Greater* (SC p136)**

Conjuration (Creation) [Force]

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: No

This spell functions like *mage armor* (PH 249), except that it requires no material component and its tangible field of force provides a +6 armor bonus to Armor Class.

***Reciprocal Gyre* (SC p170)**

Abjuration

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100-ft. + 10-ft./level)
Target: One creature or object
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will half, then fortitude negates; see text
Spell Resistance: No

The target takes 1d12 points of damage per spell level of each functioning spell or spell-like ability currently affecting it (maximum 25d12). In addition, any creature that fails its save must then succeed on a Fortitude save or be dazed for 1d6 rounds.

Only spells specifically targeted on the creature in question can be used to create the backlash of a *reciprocal gyre*, so spells that affect an area can't be used to deal reciprocal damage to creatures within their area. Likewise, persistent or continuous effects from magic items can't be used to deal reciprocal damage, but targeted spell effects can be.

Material Component: A tiny closed loop of copper wire.

Sign of Sealing(SC p190)

Abjuration

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One door, chest, or other opening up to 30 sq. ft./level in size

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Reflex half; see text

Spell Resistance: No

You seal a door, chest, or similar closure with a prominent magical sigil that bars entry and prevents opening. A door or object protected by this spell can be opened only by breaking (add 10 to the normal break DC) or by the use of *knock* or *dispel magic*. If the door or object is forced open by any means (magical or physical), then the *sign of sealing* deals 1d4 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d4) in a 30-foot radius (Reflex half).

A *knock* spell doesn't negate or automatically bypass a *sign of sealing*, but will suppress the sign for 10 minutes on a successful caster level check (DC 11 + the caster's level of the sign's creator). A *sign of sealing* is a magic trap that can be disarmed with a successful DC 28 Disable Device check. You can pass your own sign safely, and it remains set behind you.

Material Component: A crushed emerald worth 100 gp.

Sign of Sealing, Greater(SC p 190)

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 6

Components: V, S, M

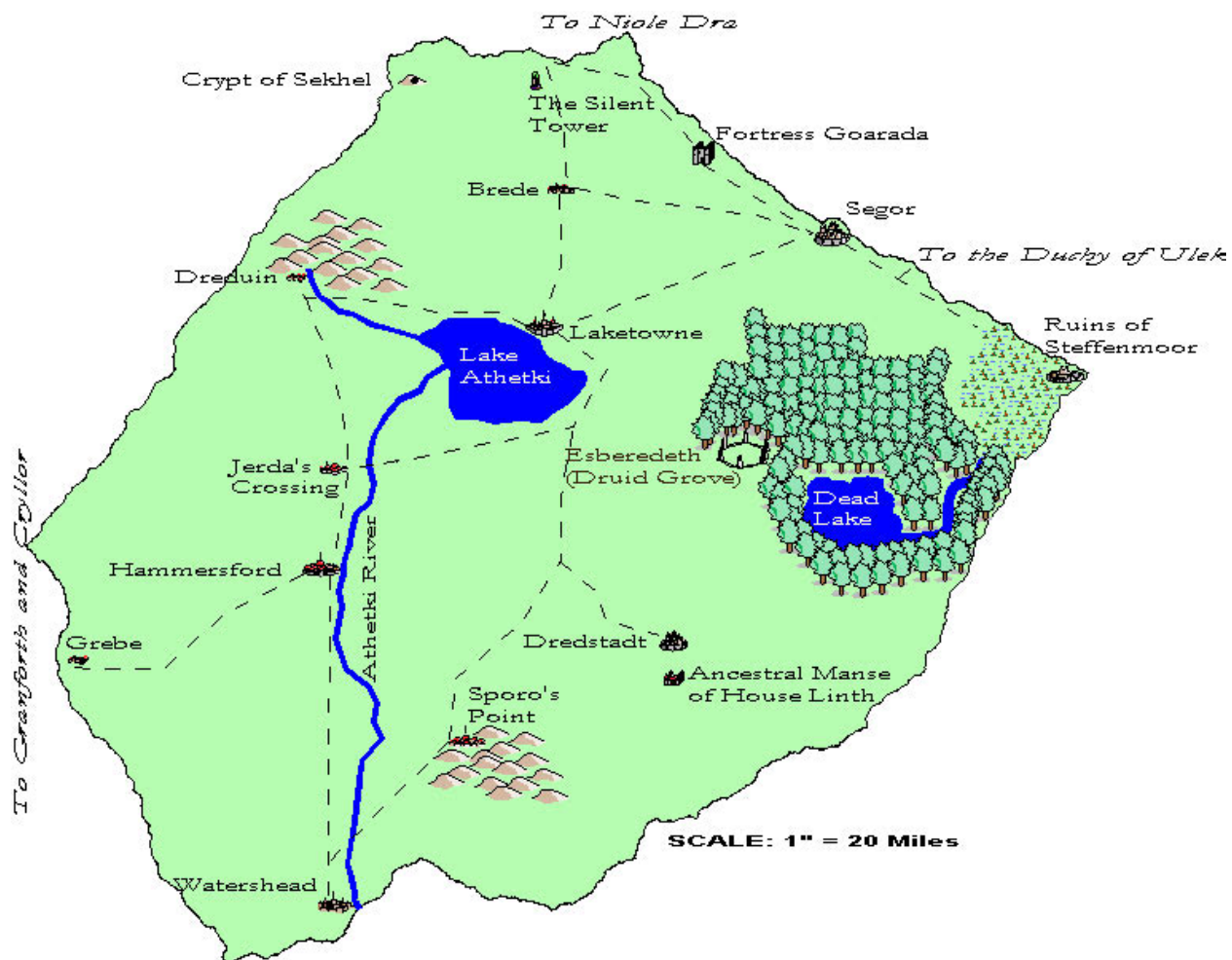
Casting Time: 10 minutes

This spell functions like a *sign of sealing*, except that it can also be used to seal an open space (such as a corridor or an archway), creating a magical barrier of force that repels any creature attempting to pass. In addition, doors and objects protected by a *greater sign of sealing* are strengthened, increasing their hardness by 10 and gaining 5 hit points per caster level. Any object protected by the sign is treated as a magic item for the purposes of making saving throws and gains a +4 resistance bonus on all saves. If its seal is broken, a *greater sign of sealing* deals 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 20d6) in a 40-foot radius (Reflex half).

A *greater sign of sealing* cannot be passed with a *knock* spell, but it can be dispelled (DC 15 + the caster level of the sign's creator). It can be disarmed with a successful DC 31 Disable Device check.

Material Component: A crushed emerald worth at least 500 gp.

Map of the County of Linth



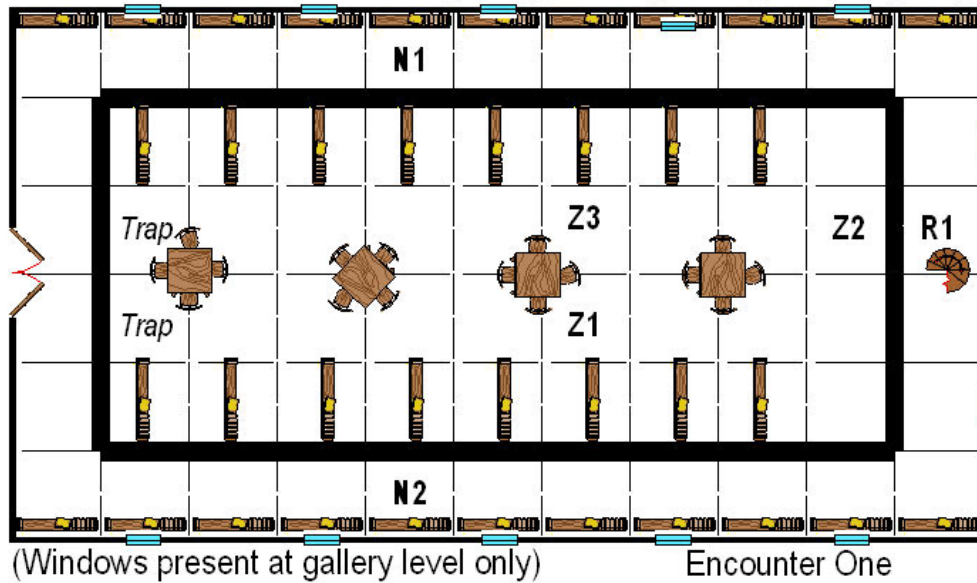
DM Aid #2

Z1-3 = Zakya rakshasa
 N1-2 = Nazarthune rakshasa
 R1 = Rakshasa Sorcerer

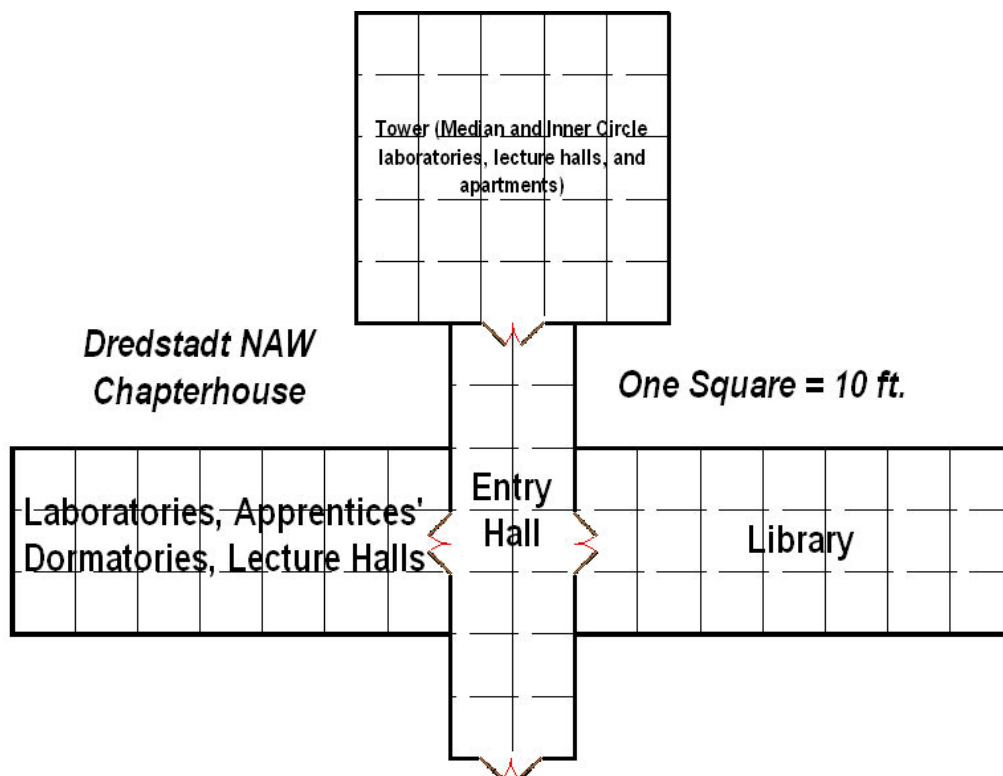
Trap on bottom
 floor only

(note: Zakya rakshasa on ground floor;
 all other rakshasa are in the gallery)

Heavy black line denotes
 edge of upper floor gallery



Encounter One
 Scale: One square = 5 feet



Crypt of Sekhel
One Square = 5 ft.

KEY

A & B: Corresponding
teleporter points

I1 - I6: Mind flayers
(1 per PC)

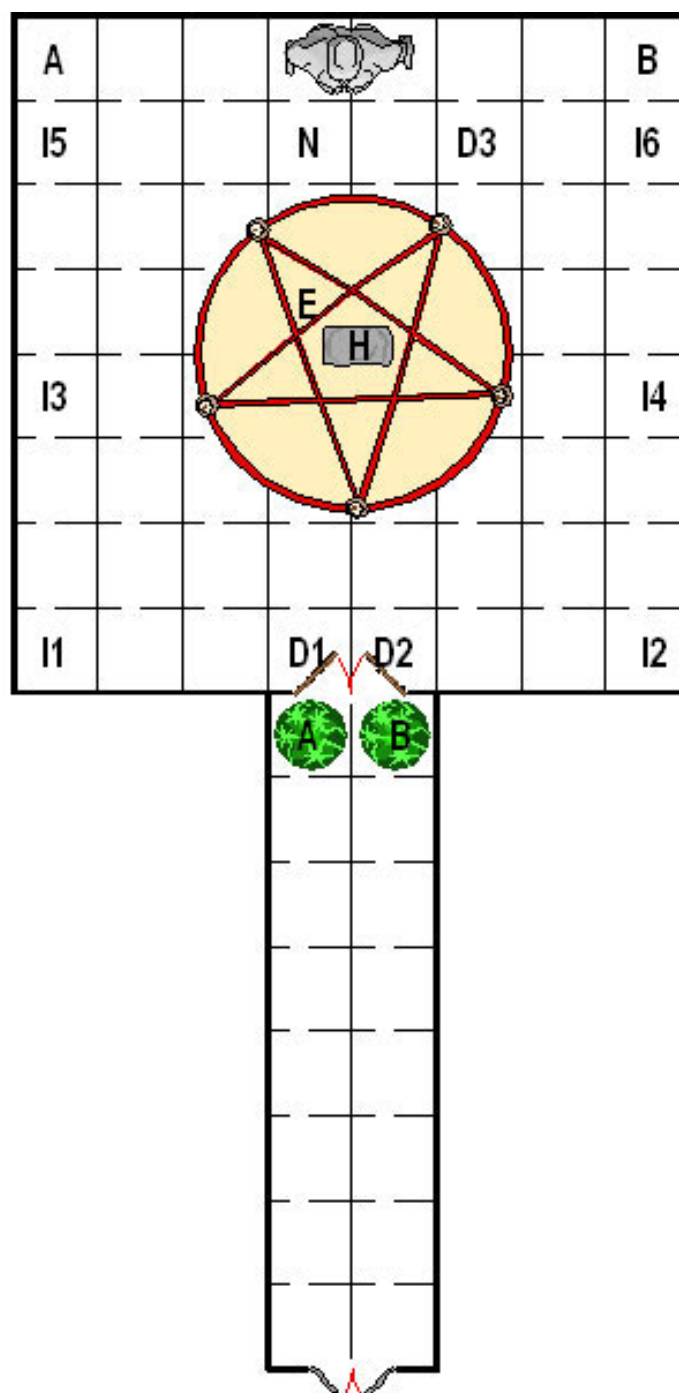
E: Ezra

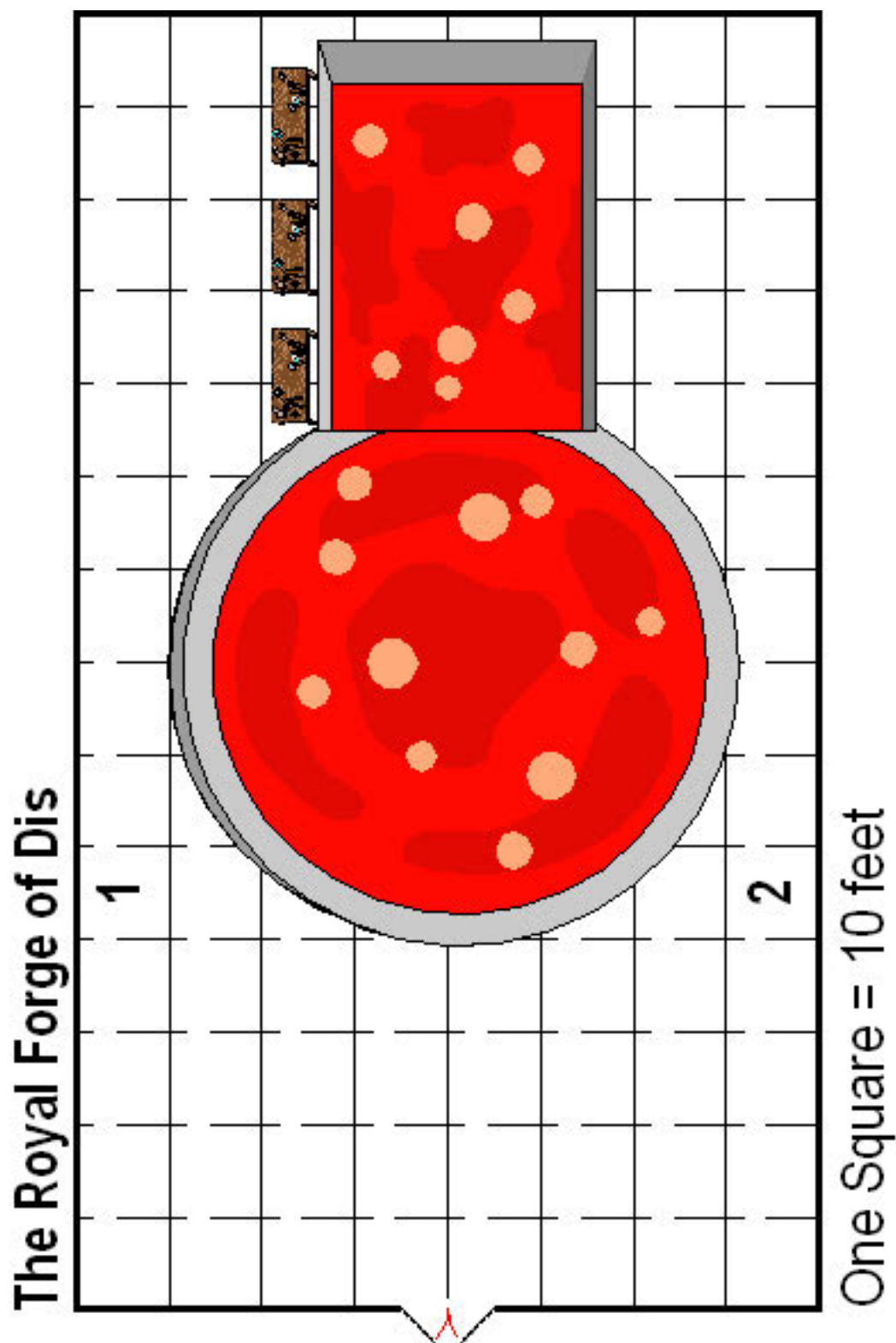
H: Countess Hannah

N: Lugh Narthistle

D1-D3: Devils

North





Player Handout #1

Excerpts from the journal of Countess Sera Linth.

...The Keogh spread across my family's lands like a plague. I have watched since the days of my youth as they whittle and whittle at our fortunes. We lose status at court, reduced to a minor house, and these filthy beggars are to blame. By Dalt, I will find the key to reversing our fortunes. I will make them pay, and they will kiss my feet for it.

... I have left the clergy of Wee Jas. I am finding the binding of the Gods to be too restrictive. I still pay homage to the dread lady, but my holy symbol no longer adorns my chest.

(Several Pages Later)

My training in the Art progresses well. Magister Henren says he has never seen a student progress through the mundane work as quickly as I have. He has no idea what drives me.

(Several Pages Later)

...Cleaning Henren's library, I found the diary of one of the Red Lion mages, a court wizard of some type I've never heard of. It started off lucidly but devolved into rambling rather quickly. "Gold beyond counting" exists in a sealed crypt near Niolo Dra, but it is filled with devils and their worshippers...

...believe I've located the crypt. Already preparations are underway to mount a small expedition.

(Several Pages Later)

...found the crypt, as described. The Red Lion mage had sealed the entrance, but I was able to use his notes to dispel the warding. Inside were the animated remains of some type of cultist. They had unholy symbols of some sort. These minions were destroyed easily enough by my summoned elementals. More worrisome was the she-devil they had managed to trap inside with them. Fortunately I won out, and my servants have returned the treasures in the crypt to my estates. There are many tomes I have recovered that bear studying, and the most unusual necklace. It radiates the most powerful magic I have ever felt, and I cannot fathom its purpose.

(Several Pages Later)

Success! My laborious translation of the tomes from the crypt has borne fruit. I have discovered a powerful spell which I believe I can use to cause a plague upon the Keogh parasites. The land will grow

fallow and their flesh will rot on their bones. I will let them die by the thousands, and then I will save them only to become their master.

Vengeance is a dish best served cold.

(Several Pages Later)

The spell is cast. The drain was more than I could bear. This buzzing in my head will not cease. Have I gone too far? No. No, I must doubt now. Is that a voice?

(Several Pages Later)

Our strength has returned, but slowly. The Keogh bodies pile up and the Epidemic spreads. The King searches for an answer, but only we have it. Tomorrow we will meet with a council and we will offer the cure.

(Several Pages Later)

We are victorious! The Keogh have sworn fealty to us. In the setting sun of our own hall we received the parasites and we took their oaths as they offered us their most important possessions as tribute. Farmers gave tools, scholars gave pen and ink, and the holy men gave their icons. Symbolic and petty, yes, but they need to know that the only thing they need is us. The plague recedes and they bless us. We are at peace.

(Several Pages Later)

We are unable to think. Sleep eludes us. Our thoughts are jumbled. Baron Prisper of Dilwich has sent his regards, and invited us to stay there for a spell. Perhaps the burden of leading has gotten to us. We have accepted his offer.

(Several Pages Later)

It is lovely here, and we wish we had come earlier. Something vexes us, however. We have sent several letters to Linth, requesting our spellbook, staff and holy necklace of Wee Jas. Nothing has arrived. Do they not understand how important these things are to us? We will flay the skin from their bones and make a fine stew after we return.

Player Handout #2

(A letter from the Great Druidess written in feminine cursive with a quavering hand.)

Time is short, and I cannot be certain that I will be alive when you arrive. I must be brief. By divination, you have been foretold as the heroes who can bring about an end to the Blight of Linth. Would that I could do so, but I have my own part to play. The Blight has burst its borders, and has since spread ten miles a day; without my efforts to hold it back, it would already have reached Cryllor and Gradsul. But in so doing, I have invested much of myself, and I am being brought to ruin along with the land whose energies I wield.

At long last I had finally tracked the source of the power behind this Blight to a location somewhere within the ancestral manor of House Linth, outside of Dredstadt. Before I could arrive to seize who or what was behind it, the manor was burned to the ground by the rioting and starving peasants. In the confusion, the child Countess, Hannah Linth, was spirited away by Lugh Narthistle, a disgraced and corrupted Knight of the Watch. The energy disappeared when she did, and I believe that the source of this Blight's power is either in possession of the girl, or it is the girl herself.

I sensed the dark power again, this time in the northwestern corner of the lands of Linth – but not enough to pinpoint where it lay. Perhaps the evil behind the Blight sensed I was closing in, and the next day it broke the boundaries of Linth and began pouring out across the valley. My only clue as to where this place might lie is in the journals of the long-dead Countess Sera Linth. You should have been given it along with this note. She mentions a crypt, one in the same area from which I sense the dark power. I do not believe this is a coincidence.

She spoke of finding the notes in the possession of a "Red Lion." A friend tells me that these were the names given to the predecessors of the wizards who would form Keoland's National Academy of Wizardry. At the time the journal was written, the only place in Linth where these Red Lions had a presence was in the edifice which later became the Dredstadt chapterhouse of the Academy. Begin your search there. Would that I could aid you, but my place is here, arresting this wicked rape of our lands. May the Shalm guide your path.

- RN

Player Handout #3

A very old journal with writing that gets harder to read as the entries go forward in time.

“... seem to have uncovered the location of a lost place of interest known as the Crypt of Sekhel. I believe that Sekhel is not the name of the entombed, but a corruption of the words “*second hell*,” referring to that plane ruled by the Iron Duke, the arch-devil Dispater. The crypt lies in the north-westernmost edge of the Linth lands, at the convergence of a pair of natural canyons which, when viewed from above, form an arrowhead-like outline pointed at the Lonely Tower of the Silent Ones...”

“... penetrated the tomb today. The site was unguarded but buried by tons of soil and rock - no impediment to a wizard of my skill. The site contained gold beyond counting, jewels, and artifacts of all kinds. I recovered a necklace of particular interest and beauty. A headache has prevented me from examining the item, but it looks to be of significance to those who worshipped there, having been put in a place of honor. It is strange why the item is significant, since it does not radiate magic. But it radiates such awful evil, I declined to take it with me. My fingertips still tingle where I touched it, even though I was wearing gloves.”

“... I may have disturbed something I should not have. My headaches grow worse, and my lovely rose garden has fallen into ruin. All the plants are dead, twisted into strange shapes. What could be causing it?”

“... shadows on the walls. One of them makes a lovely dance partner. I never liked to dance before, and now I can't seem to stop myself. Maybe the stress of this cloistered academic existence... I can hear music!”

“... This morning my mirror bled. I didn't want to be rude so I cut myself and did the same...”