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ORACLE OF ORCAS

Exploit



9TH LEVEL



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The Oracle of Orcas



Renphoto

This exploit for 9th-level characters.

EXPLOIT SYNOPSIS

A prophecy foretells of the rider of Cymbas, a horse bearing a cloven hoof, will become a plague to humanity by becoming the greatest death knight upon destruction. A young girl, named Lynn, is the present owner of the marked horse.

A cult devoted to Orcas seeks her immediate death so she can transform and lead them. As PCs approach the area of the ambush the cultists set for the girl, they hear a scream.

EXPANDING THE EXPLOIT

This is a great exploit should characters seek a clue or an answer pertaining to an important question as part of a quest or campaign adventure. Maybe characters learn of the sleeping sentinel (see below) elsewhere and seek it out for this purpose only to first encounter Lynn and her attackers.

TREASURE PARCELS

This adventure uses the treasure parcel system found in the D&D 4E DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE. We encourage you to insert appropriate treasures that fit with the wishes of your individual gaming group.

CULTIST AMBUSH

ENCOUNTER 9-1

Encounter Level 9 (1,100 XP)

- 1 Cult Priest of Orcas
- 4 Tiefling Darkblades
- 2 Battle Wights

SETUP

The cult priest of Orcas leads several possessed cultists - the tiefling darkblades -to attack Lynn. As soon as the PCs arrive, the leader summons forth two battle wights for aid.

Read or paraphrase the following before characters enter the fray:





Several shadowy people slink from the underbrush surrounding a young, defenseless peasant girl. Though cloaked by shadows and foliage, you spot demonic features and mannerisms of your nefarious foes. A cloaked priest, bedecked with bone trinkets and arcane sigils of death, leads the group.

A passive Perception check (DC 14) reveals the following:

Leaves and underbrush stir as ancient undead rise to continue some long forgotten skirmish under the control of the lead acolyte.

Place the two battle wights adjacent to the two PCs with the lowest passive Perception.

Cult Priest of Orcas		Level 9 Controller (Leader)	
Medium natural humanoid (human)		XP 400	
Initiative +5		Senses Perception +10	
Blessing of Orcas aura 2; allies in the aura gain a +2 power bonus to AC.			
HP 95; Bloodied 47			
AC 23; Fortitude 20, Reflex 20, Will 23			
Speed 5			
⊕	Mace (standard; at-will) † Necrotic +14 vs. AC; 1d8+3 damage and 1d6 necrotic damage.		
↘	Bolt of Black Death (standard; at-will) † Fire, Necrotic Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 1d8+2 fire and necrotic damage, and two allies gain a +1 power bonus to hit on their next attack roll against the target.		
↙	Eyes of Orcas (standard; encounter) † Fear, Necrotic Close burst 2; +12 vs. Will; 3d8+5, and target is pushed 2 squares.		
Alignment	Unaligned	Languages	Abyssal, Common
Skills	Arcana +11, Religion +12		
Str 15 (+6)	Dex 13 (+5)	Wis 17(+7)	
Con 15 (+6)	Int 14 (+6)	Cha 20 (+9)	
Equipment			

TACTICS

The battle wights try to keep the distance between the PCs and the cult priest of Orcas. The priest uses this advantage to fling bolts of black death at foes finally using the eyes of Orcas once characters close the gap.

The tieflings strike intermediately, targeting particularly weak characters or those hitting consistently with ranged attacks.

TREASURE

A treasure parcel lies partially buried where the battle wights rose from the earth.

ROLE-PLAYING

Lynn has no idea why the cultists attacked her. Frightened and scared, she wishes to find her horse and go home immediately.

DEVELOPMENT

A search of the cultists reveals tattooed markings of a cryptic arcane symbol similar in shape to a scarab beetle. After thanking the PCs, Lynn points to the parchment claiming she seen the sigil once before at the old storyteller.

If PCs help Lynn find her horse - the attack frightened it away - have characters make a Nature check (DC 8). Those successful take note that that the horse has a cloven hoof.

THE SLEEPING SENTINEL

ENCOUNTER 9-2

Encounter Level 10 (2,500 XP)

Secret Lore Skill Challenge

Glyph of Warding

1 Ettin Spirit-Talker

SETUP

As PCs enter a small clearing with a dense copse of trees, read or paraphrase the following:

A small clearing reveals a mysterious mound of vines and leaves swallowing a giant that sleeps against a tree. The foliage crept up and around his large humpback leaving only his head and his left bare chest exposed.

A variety of mystical symbols and arcane runes mark his chest. A few of these markings are tattoos, while others appear engraved or seared into the giant's skin.

As the giant gently exhales, smoky breath and spirits exit its mouth and weave brilliant stories and fantastic scenes.

History

DC 14: Legends claim a mighty wizard placed a sleeping enchantment upon a great sleeping sentinel.





SECRET LORE SKILL CHALLENGE

Setup: To interpret the symbol and unlock the prophecy, they must correctly navigate the arcane sigils on the giant's body. This skill challenge is divided into six parts

Level: 9

Complexity: 2 (6 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Athletics, Religion, Bluff

Arcane (DC 14; immediate reaction to a failed result; see below): *The giant shifts slightly by the disturbance. However, you weave a subtle spell to reinforce the hundred year old sleeping enchantment placed on the giant.*

A failure counts as a failed result for the skill challenge and they must try again with either Athletics or Bluff check.

Part One

Religion (DC 14): *You locate and decipher the series of symbols related to the tattooed markings of the cultist.*

Success indicates that characters move on to the next part of this skill challenge. A failure results in an misinterpretation or characters begin following a different path of arcane sigils. It also counts as a failed result.

Part Two

Athletics (DC 19): The path of arcane sigils needed to unlock the prophecy run beneath the ettin. Characters must lift the giant slightly to continue their interpretation. A failure does not immediately lead to a failed result unless characters also fail an Arcane check (see above).

Part Three

Religion (DC 19): *Whispers begin escaping the mouth of the giant as wisps of bluish, divine breath form cloudy images.* Success indicates that characters move on to the next section of this skill challenge. A failure results in characters unlocking a different story or prophecy. It also counts as a failed result.

Part Four

Bluff (DC 19): Subtlety is needed to lift the giant's massive arms to glimpse the sigils underneath. Characters must distract the sleeping ettin by provoking a light itch on the nose or some other subtle disturbance. A failure does not immediately lead to a failed result unless characters also fail an Arcane check (see above).

Part Five

Religion (DC 14): *The images finally become clear. A great horse, called Cymbas, with a cloven hoof bears the weight of a evil rider that brings pestilence and misery to those that befall its path. The owner of the horse must first die, then, as the prophecy foretells, will arise to become a vicious death knight.* Success indicates that characters move on to the next section of this skill challenge. A failure results in a telling of a favorite children's fable. It also counts as a failed result.

Part Six

Perception (DC 28): An arcane glyph of warding seals the prophecy. The cult leader placed this trap upon the giant should anyone come to interpret the sigils pertaining to the death knight. A success allows characters to make an immediate Thievery check (DC 28) to disable the glyph while a failure results in the trap exploding.

Success: The PCs interpret and unlock the secret prophecy. They discover the importance of the horse and possibly, its present owner, Lynn.

Failure: There are two different failed results. First, should characters fail, before setting off the trap, the ettin awakens, but only one head is conscious until the second round of combat. If characters set off the glyph of warding trap, the ettin awakes with both heads conscious.

TACTICS

The glyph of warding trap is designed to go off from two distinct stimuli. First, should anyone interpret the prophecy and second, should the ettin ever awake. The cult leader did not wish to accidentally awaken the ettin during her interpretation of the divine sigils without a bit of leverage.

Glyph of Warding

4d6 thunder damage and dazed (save ends). Note that the ettin automatically saves against the dazed effect at the end of its turn should it initially fail (see the D&D 4E DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE for further details).

DEVELOPMENT

Once PCs deal with the ettin they can begin to interpret the death cult symbol to unlock the





prophecy if they have not already done so. Should the characters return to see Lynn and question her about her horse, she sadly tells them that it was once belonged to her uncle, Theobold, however he passed away recently.

TREASURE

If PCs wish, they can carve a symbol of their own into the ettin flesh to unveil an answer to one question. Treat this as if PCs cast a *consult the mystic sages* ritual. They can only do this once.

DEATH CULT LEADER

ENCOUNTER 9-3

Encounter Level 12 (3,500 XP)

- 1 Lamia
- 3 Flame Snakes
- 2 Rot Scarab Swarms
- 1 Burning Building

SETUP

Characters take the initiative and visit the local parish church to investigate the gravesite of Theobold. Once characters arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

The gravesite lies disturbed as if someone or something clamored from the dark soil. Something small burrows in the dirt and upon closer examination appears to be a scarab beetle. A sudden piercing shriek of laughter mixed with frustration echoes from the parish resonating from the church bell. Smoke bellows from the wooden doors as a simple priest flings himself from the church completely on fire.

Akana, the lamia death cult leader, is frustrated to her wits end and set fire to the church and priest to alleviate her stress. As did the characters, she too realized that the horse belonged to another before Lynn. However, when she rushed here, she soon discovered she was too late and the corpse of Theobold was gone.

As characters enter the church, read or paraphrase the following:

A shapely woman belays the appearance of a regal fairy-like creature, but the shadowy visage of death clings to her as she moves about the flaming

church. Her simple peasant clothes does not hide her pale skin and twilight sheen nor the shifting of a multitude of scarab beetles beneath her dress.

With a flick of her wrist, flames take the form of snakes as they slither and scorch the flagstone beneath them.

She addresses you briefly before launching herself upon you, "The One Who Fell, The Angel of Death - Orcas - is not forgiving of failure. Let this burning church serve as a funeral pyre and you my sacrifice."

Burning Building

Level 8 Blaster

Hazard

XP 350

Flames consume the building surrounding you threatening to collapse the structure at any moment.

Hazard: A single room or building is on fire.

Perception

† **DC 24:** The character notices an unsafe area prior to attack and receives damage on a hit as if the trap missed. A missed result deals no damage.

Initiative: +5

Trigger

When a character enters the room or building, it makes its first attack as an immediate reaction. It then rolls initiative, attacking a random creature each round.

Attack

Immediate Reaction or Standard Action

Close burst 1

Targets: Each creature in burst

Attack: +11 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d8+4 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Critical: A part of the building or roof collapses upon the target. Target is also restrained.

Miss: Half damage, no ongoing fire damage.

Countermeasures

† Restrained characters can use Acrobatics or Athletics (DC 24) to free themselves or Athletics to free another. This is a standard action.

† A character can engage in a skill challenge to put out the fire. DC 28 Nature. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 2 failures). Success puts out the fire. Failure causes a portion of the building to give way (close blast 3, 2d8+4 fire damage and target is restrained; targeting each creature in the blast) and the hazard continues.

† During a second wind, a character may make an Endurance check (DC 24) to spend an additional healing surge to ignore any ongoing fire damage from this hazard for the remainder of the encounter.

Upgrade to Elite (700 XP)

† Increase all DCs by 2.

† Increase the area of attack to a close burst 3.





AREA FEATURES

Burning Building: The church is on fire. Roofing timber and flames rain down on the interior.

Special: The flame snakes are immune to the *burning building* hazard, but attacks them nonetheless. Any hit to a fire snake that causes ongoing fire damage instead provides them with concealment as long as they remain in the burst area (save ends).

TACTICS

The lamia keeps her distance, using her ranged powers to pacify or swarm foes and lets her conjured flame snakes whittle down her opponents. Afterward, she engages.

The flame snakes interfere with any characters closing toward Akana always focusing their attacks on the closest enemy. Once at least two rot scarab swarms are present (see below), they spread out and also keep their distance.

ROLE-PLAYING

Instead of placing the rot scarab swarms on the battle map, keep them in reserve until PCs hit the lamia for the first time. On the first hit, place one swarm immediately adjacent to the lamia. Do the same for the second time she is hit. Place the last swarm when the lamia finally becomes bloodied. This will keep characters on their toes when battling this particular creature.

TREASURE

The church priest or local minor noble grants characters a treasure parcel. The parish priest also grants them a place to stay at his modest home whenever they pass through the area. If characters voluntarily help to rebuild the church or offer a donation, grant them XP equivalent to a minor quest.

CONCLUSION

What happened to the corpse of Theobold? Did it really rise from the dead to become a great death knight or did the priest move the body from consecrated ground once he too found out about the prophecy?

Also, it is possible that Akana escapes the final encounter using her *squeezing swarm* power to leave the burning building. Therefore, she might become a recurring villain.

