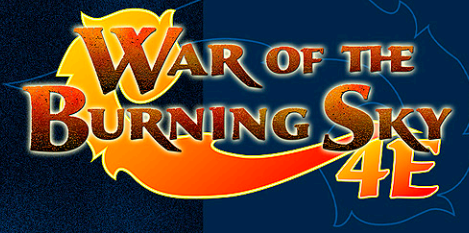


War of the Burning Sky Campaign Guide



For All Character Levels

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PROLOGUE

November

Desolation. Gray earth trod beneath boots on the march; snapped trees waiting for the flames. And soon, the victorious emperor knew, there would be that fire. There always was. Often enough, he brought it, but even when he didn't, it arose. After every battle, something burned — as if the universe followed some unwritten protocol that conflagration should be the epilogue to carnage. It was even more reliable than the crows.

Castle Korstull was taken. The mighty emperor figured he'd lost, at worst, one man in twenty. He'd known it would be so. Tonight, he would sleep on the sheets of a fallen prince, and the only cost had been a week's planning and the blood of men he did not know. If the victory had meant anything to him, he would've called it a bargain.

When had conquest lost its luster? Was it just the ease, or was it something else? The glorious emperor stared into the flames of the torch he bore in his left hand, the famed artifact he had christened the Torch of the Burning Sky. Since the day he had acquired this strange token, born a century before in miracle and catastrophe, he had never lost a battle. It was as if he'd forgotten how.

He feared his own restlessness, and was all the more frustrated to realize that it might be the only thing he feared. What would the ache for challenge drive him to? The inscrutable emperor had begun to calculate the betrayal of his oldest ally; whether it was out of strategy, ambition, or boredom, he could not tell.

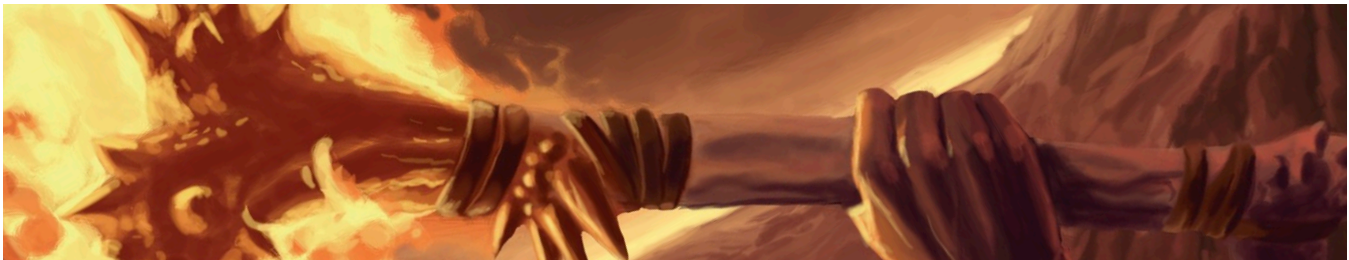
That ally, of course, planned to turn on him first. There had been no intelligence of such an act, but it went without saying. His ally went by the unlikely name of Shaaladel, and if the invincible emperor had forgotten how to lose, Shaaladel had forgotten how not to betray.

The all-knowing emperor's foresight fatigued him. He'd spent the final hours of many brave men's lives hoping for some surprise — a sudden ambush, unexpected reinforcements, even a mere change in tactics — that might lend the least excitement to this clash of nations. But like the planets in their courses, his enemies plodded, unwavering, along the path he had laid out to their defeat.

Fate's arsenal had been emptied, it seemed, and no ordeals remained to try the blessed emperor. He had conquered Sindaire tonight, a nation that had already been his in all but name, for no better reason than that they had given him an excuse. Soon, he would test him-

self against his other neighbors — Ostalin, Dassen — but knew that they would fall just as quickly. He wondered what he'd done to anger the gods before his birth, that they should curse him by giving him only a single world to conquer. Perhaps, he mused, he should avenge himself on the heavens. He peered up through the gathering cloud-rack and contemplated this, until his view was obscured by a high-vaulted arch passing overhead. He trained his gaze forward now, as the warhorse he sat upon ambled through the yawning entryways of the castle.

Built to resemble the maw of some great beast, the front gates of Castle Korstull had impressed the magnificent emperor when he'd first seen them, but he had raised palaces of his own in the decades since. Now they looked to him like nothing more than the hastily assembled sets of some Wayfarers' comedy. He remembered what Leska had told him before he'd left, that some young bard in Ragos had penned a play about his life, probably in an attempt to earn his patronage. He'd laughed at the folly of that, yet he found himself wondering about it now, about how such a play might begin, about what soliloquies this crowing upstart had written into his mouth.



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Would there be a scene of his childhood, a half-orc raised among backwoods highlanders, tribesmen who wandered the mountains of the North, having no land to hold as their own? How many acts would it take him to carve out a nation for his kin, how many trumpets and alarums as he turned it into an empire? Which of his enemies would be judged worthy of their own death scenes, which allies would rhyme couplets after his dramatic exits?

He was certain Shaaladel would be the handsome scene-stealer, declaiming regally on the nature of their fragile peace as they debated the rebellion in Gate Pass, with no hint of the craven schemer beneath the regal façade. And surely Leska would be cheated of her rightful prominence, as misunderstood by a grasping playmaker as she was by all the rest of his subjects. They all looked at her and saw a frightful mask, unaware that the creature behind that grisly visage was far more human — and more terrifying — that they could have imagined. Leska should've been the subject of a play, he thought. She had all the makings of a tragedy, while he had none. His play would be boring, the legendary emperor decided. After all, he always won.

As soon as he dismounted his horse, he was frightfully attended. Inquisitor bodyguards in their horrific masks and blood-splattered lieutenants with word from General Magdus fell in step behind him as he walked. Within a few moments, they had ascended to the throne room, where he took his dinner and dispatched orders. The throne room and the royal bedroom adjoining it were appropriately princely, festooned with tapestries, murals, and other palatial regalia. When the castle was built, these rooms had been prayed over by priests for three days. It was said no one could enter these rooms against the will of the one who sat upon the throne. The great emperor was unimpressed. He placed the Torch of the Burning Sky in a ruby-studded scone, scraped his boot against the corner of the throne to remove a clump of gray mud, then sat down and called for the leaders of the force that had resisted him.

Hoping their deaths would provide some distraction, he ordered their executions on the spot. He watched attentively, eating stew from a brass tureen, as his bodyguards went about their work. Inquisitors all, trained in the art of torture by Leska herself, the men of his personal guard sensed the dread emperor's apathy, and stretched their imaginations to

make each prisoner's end more entertaining than the previous one. But the spectacle soon descended into farce and common vulgarity; he grew listless again. He called for wine from the castle cellars and sat in silence, drinking 50-year-old vintages straight from their bottles. Before long, he grew lethargic and announced that he would retire.

All but a handful of his guards bowed deeply and left. The remaining three would stand outside his chamber as he slept. The immortal emperor extinguished the torch as he pulled it from its sconce and walked towards the bedroom, yet he stopped before the door, turned to one of his guards, and began to speak. He said, "I am more weary than I ever knew a mortal or immortal man could be. This world of half-men and vain posturing, this age of sheep who masquerade as lords, diminishes in my eyes by the day. I thought the gods would not long tolerate ambitions such as mine, but like a pack of beaten whores, they offer not defense but more accommodation. Everything that I once coveted turns stale. I grasp the fruits of conquest and each morsel tastes of ashes in my mouth. In seven months, my pennants could cast shadows over all the nations of the known lands, and yet this spent and whelping bitch they call the world cannot, for all my ravaging, yet birth a cur whose sharpest fangs don't break against my skin. When I bid you to kill those men tonight, I found myself searching their eyes for signs that, in their fatal throes, their dying souls might glimpse another realm, a realm that better suited me. But I saw none. Did you see anything at all?"

The Inquisitor, Darius, stared for a long time into those wild eyes, dumbstruck by this strange and sudden candor. In the end, shamed by his lack of a proper answer — or any answer at all — the bodyguard merely shook his head. Somehow disappointed, and knowing himself a fool for it, the doomed emperor walked away without a word and locked his bedroom door behind him. His name was Drakur Coaltongue, and his curse was to be the most powerful man in the world.



The General of the Emperor's First Army camped far from the castle that night. He did not eschew the comforts of the stronghold he had seized out of some sentimental desire to sleep in the same conditions as his soldiers. Even in the

field, he had a larger tent, better food, assistants to see to his needs, and finery on which to rest. He simply felt as though here, with his troops, he could get things done, and in the castle he would be up sending messages all night. General Magdus was a practical man, and from the camp he could run his army better.

Yet for all his practicality, he was superstitious. Soldiers were like sailors that way, spending so much of their lives subject to the whims of fate that they sought signs of good and bad luck, not out of imagination, but out of fear. And the general did not like the clouds racing above his head tonight.

A storm brewing would be trial enough. Trudging through rain and muck was enough to demoralize even disciplined men. But these low black clouds moved faster than the wind, it seemed, as if intent on their destination. And they all seemed to be congregating in one place. The black thunderheads billowed highest directly above Castle Korstull. And they were not traveling, but remained stationary, whirling in place like water down a drain.

It was clearly an ill omen, he decided. Magdus was practical enough to grant fortune its place in his calculations. He gave orders to increase the frequency and size of his patrols, and told his adjutant to wake him half an hour earlier in the morning. All the confidence his victory had afforded him was melting away, and he was left with a deep unease. There weren't enough soldiers between here and the sea to give his army a moment's worry, but who could say what trouble the raging heavens might bring him?

As he put his head down to seek sleep, the general was reminded of a strange saying he'd once heard from an old sergeant. "You can conquer a land's people; you cannot conquer its gods." He didn't know if he believed that, or even what it was supposed to really mean, but he did believe this: if the heavens were angry, tonight someone would be paying the price.



Darius saw the other two bodyguards die before he even knew they were under attack. The murder in the peripheral vision to his left he barely saw. It was just a smudge of motion that made a wet sound before it was over. But turned to his right as he was, he caught his other comrade's end. He saw the last half-second of a man stepping from the shadows in the corner, as if walking out of a door, slashing the guard's

throat with a curving black blade and receding as swiftly and stealthily as he'd come.

Hefting his mace, Darius drew in air to shout, but there was a sound like a thunderstrike and a sharp pain as something lashed across his adam's apple. He saw a woman in the doorway — had it opened just now or had she been there all along? She yanked the handle of a whip, and he found himself pitching forward, his throat burning and constricted. Her weapon had him by the neck, and he struggled to keep his feet as she pulled him towards her.

Helpless against the tight constriction of his windpipe, he struck out wildly with his mace, bludgeoning the air. The woman was rushing towards him — or he was hurtling toward her — and for a split second he had the incongruous realization that she was beautiful.

Yet the colors of her hair and skin were wrong. Had she dyed them? Something knocked the mace from his hand. Her face came at his. What was happening? Was she head-butting him; was she going to bite him? Had the Emperor been attacked by lunatics?

Still choking, he felt her lips on his. A kiss. Her mouth was warm. Was he awake? She tasted like blood.

When she released him, there was something in his mouth. A grainy liquid, it tasted the way violets smelled. He felt the whip slip from around his neck, and realized the woman had already moved past him, towards the Emperor's bedroom. He spun, looking for his mace, but the world kept spinning when he stopped, and he crumpled to the ground. This was no dream. He'd been poisoned.

When he recovered his breath, he finally called out. There was a clatter as the Inquisitors from the waiting chamber rushed in, but of the attackers he could hear nothing, until the din of clashing blades arose. His vision was too blurry now to see who fought or who fell.

The poison moved through Darius like a shiver. Helpless, the world dimming around him, he thought of the Emperor's question, hours before. Would he see a better world now, he wondered, in what had to be his last moments?

But there were only shadows moving in the blur. Now, as before, Darius could see nothing.



It was instinct that awoke him. There was someone in his room.

The Emperor's reflex was to spring from his bed and find a weapon, but as soon as he had opened his eyes, his torso exploded in pain. He went to move and found himself pinned to the bed. He looked down at his chest.

Someone had driven a stake through his heart.

Another man would have panicked. But Coaltongue had faced death many times before, and while he was alarmed, he could not help being curious. He looked around the room, but saw no sign of his attacker. None of his generals would've pulled this off, not with dog-loyal Magdus, the best of them all, camped so close. Shaaladel would've planned something more intricate, more unnecessarily complex, something he would've seen coming. Leska?

His hands had found the stake — everything was harder now, it seemed, with his heart not pumping blood — and tried to summon up the strength to pull it out at once.

Then, from the shadows, an aged face, dyed with ashes. A black scimitar, edged with smoky diamonds, arcing at his throat.

Him? Coaltongue thought. *Of all the enemies I have in this world? Him?*

The blade fell. Staked to the bed, the emperor could not roll out of the way, and his arms were too weak to pull it out or block the blow.

The pain of the beheading was not much, he found. Far less than that of being stabbed in the heart. He was less conscious of the blow itself than of the cold air on the insides of his neck. Completely severed from his body, Coaltongue's head rolled over to the left side of his pillow.

His head was still alive, still conscious and bewildered. From the angle at which his head had fallen, he could see a second assailant, her hands lifting the Torch of the Burning Sky from the wall-mount where he'd left it. They were thieves as well as assassins.

The Emperor heard sounds of swordplay from the room outside. There were at least three of them, then. It was all starting to make sense. He even knew how they would make their escape. Suddenly, he became very tired. It seemed to happen all at once. He tried to rub his eyes, but obviously could not, and this simple fact provoked in him a very acute distress.

He was falling asleep. There was no preventing it. The Emperor of Ragesia had gone down without a fight, without even a sword in his hand. In other circumstances, he

might have laughed.

As oblivion claimed him, he thought, *I have to hand to it to the Fates. This, I did not see coming.*

Then there was a sudden pang of regret; disappointment that he would not be there to see the cataclysmic change his death would wreak, the conflict. This, he thought, would've been a world worthy of me.

Then, blackness.



Magdus couldn't sleep. It wasn't just the turmoil in the heavens, he knew. He was a life-long soldier, hardened by decades of warring, yet he often found himself sleepless the night after a battle. The images of slaughter in his memory needed time to fade, and until then they haunted his mind's eye like fever-dreams. He had not attempted to purge himself of this frailty. He thought, perhaps, it made him better at his job.

He threw on a tunic and his boots, and grabbed his cloak on the way out of his tent. His walk through the camp was punctuated with crisp salutes and the occasional "Sir." Troubled as his mind was, he tried to return them all.

The general jogged up a pebble-strewn path up the side of the canyon to a look-out point. No bodyguards accompanied him, though the men stationed outside his tent had reported his sudden departure to their officers, who noted it but bade them only to sit out the remainder of their watches. Their general was a private man, and they'd grown accustomed to his frequent need for solitude. They did not worry for his safety. After all, Sindaire had been conquered.

At the top of the rise, Magdus met the watchmen he had posted here and gave them permission to stand down and start a fire. The wind had teeth at this high above the camp, and he wished he'd brought furs instead of just a cloak.

The sky looked just as angry as before. The clouds were no longer in motion, but perched threateningly above the towers of Korstull, the obscured moon barely silvering their edges. There was neither lightning nor rain, but the thunderheads seemed to pulse like black hearts beating in the firmament.

Perhaps he had overreacted to this suspected omen. The night, it seemed, was passing quietly. There were few lights from the castle windows.

In his life, he had heard many tales of signs

before catastrophe, most unheeded until after the event. Here in Sindaire, just before the first time Ragesian armies had crossed its borders, prize royal horses had fought each other like baited dogs, with the winners eating those they killed. They said a lioness had whelped in the streets of Kistan the night the first Khagan of Ostalin had passed away. Fifty years before, the day before the First Dasseni Civil War had begun, there had been an eclipse of the sun. Certainly, a strange formation of clouds was not so dramatic as these.

Then, Magdus realized what each one of those strange portents had in common, and all at once his blood ran cold. Each one had heralded the death of a king.

As if in answer to his realization, lanterns began to flare in the distant windows of Castle Korstull. From this far he could not hear cries of alarm, but the general knew at once that his instincts were far more than paranoid superstition.

He shouted to the nearby watchmen, "Sound an alarm! Run down to the camp, now, and tell your Captain to take a detachment to the castle at once!"

The men blew their horns, then rushed down into the canyon. Magdus remained, watching the castle. In close succession, three flaming arrows were fired from the battlements, a signal. His fears had been confirmed. There were attackers in Korstull.

The lights in the stronghold's windows were being answered by torches being lit in the camp below. If it were an assassination attempt, there was little he could do from here, but he would mobilize his forces and be prepared to hunt the would-be murderers to the ends of creation.

Hoofbeats on gravel echoed across the canyon, and Magdus saw a clutch of his officers riding up to meet. Adjutants brought his horse and armor, and — he was grateful — heavier garments.

The general hurried to dress and mount his horse. The armor could wait. All of his captains, just jolted out of bed, began to ask questions at once. He quieted them quickly and began to dispense orders.

A yellow-orange light suddenly shone across the assembled faces. Magdus turned to see that the roof of the castle had erupted into a rising column of flame.

The officers stood in silence, mouths agape. The general clenched his jaw, enraged, calculating.

"Prepare for a siege," he called out, not taking his eyes from the fiery pillar atop Castle Korstull. "We have taken this castle once today. We may have to do so again. Tell your cavalymen..."

Magdus never finished his order. The ominous heavens, already roiled with rage, opened up and gave the general a sign no man could disbelieve.

Above Castle Korstull, the sky began to rain fire.

December

Snowflakes fell fast that New Year's Eve, too fast, racing at the earth like falling stars. Watching it come down like that, it was easy to believe what they were saying in the east, that such a punishing winter had to be the retribution of an angry god.

Washing a glass, Viv Finner looked out the window of her closed-down, boarded-up pub and saw the snow still piling in the streets. It would be a long walk to her brother's house tonight, she decided, so she had better hurry.

The Poison Apple Pub was a dive, but a popular one. A shabby, low-class establishment in one of the poorer districts a mile from the West Gate, it had a coterie of devoted regulars and reputation for not watering down the drinks.

Everyone knew the man who owned the place, Trehan Finner, was a magus. They knew it as much from the twinkle in his eye and his perpetual smirk as they did from the fact that he could put a rowdy customer to sleep with a handful of dust. But no one seemed to mind. Most Gate Passers didn't trust magi as a group, but just about everybody who knew Trehan Finner liked him.

When the City Council announced they hoped to appease the approaching army by handing all of the town's users of magic over to the Ragesian Inquisitors — the ruthless magus hunters known locally as the Scourge — in order to spare the town conquest by the Ragesian army, few people complained. But when the city guard came for Finner, the pub's regulars were in an uproar. All over the district, everyone who knew the man could be heard loudly decrying the unfairness of it all.

Everyone, that is, except Trehan's wife.

Viv Finner did not cry when she found out her husband had been taken, nor did she panic. Instead, she quietly bundled up her children

and took them to her sister-in-law. She told her eldest to be brave, and to take care of his brother, and told both her sons she might not see them for a little while. That done, the suddenly husbandless mother of two headed down the Emelk Way to the Chapel of the Aquiline Cross. She walked right up to the curate, announced she knew the Chapel was a Resistance safe-house, and asked how she could go about joining.

After hours of Viv's refusals to leave or take no for an answer, the curate, a Knight of the Aquiline Cross named Buron Watcher, finally said that if she really wanted to help the Resistance, they did need a private place to meet a contact. Viv already knew Torrent, who was an occasional patron of the Poison Apple, and she volunteered her pub for the meeting. But if the priest had hoped that contributing her family's place of business for the night would be enough to satisfy Viv, he was disappointed. On the way out of the temple, she stopped and said, "After the meeting, I'll be back for another mission."

Though her pub was closed, she had taken the meeting so seriously that she'd gone back and cleaned it up until it was as nice as it had been the day she and her husband bought it. Every glass was polished, every corner swept, even the rags were washed and bleached. Viv imagined brave fighters of the Resistance coming here, making plans to fight back against the monsters who had taken her husband away. Such champions, she had determined, would get the best of everything if she could help it.

Finishing the glasses, Viv stole a glance at the melting candle she had lit when she'd started and realized how late it was. Time for her to get going. She planned to be long gone before Torrent arrived. She bundled herself up against the cold, lit a lantern, blew out her candle, and let herself out the back door.

On the way out, she paused and looked around the lantern-lit interior of the pub. Had she done everything? Was it all be suitable?

Then she remembered what kind of place it was. It was local watering hole; not much to look at, but tended with love by its owners and loved equally by its regulars. People came here to laugh, to cry, to recollect, to tell ludicrous stories to old friends and hear their approbations or derision. They didn't come because the wood was polished, they came to drink with people they liked and trusted and share with them the joys and woes of being alive.

It was, she decided — as she locked the door and vanished into the snow — a perfect meeting-place for heroes.



Gate Pass's skyline seemed to sag beneath the mantle of snow. The city huddled between the mountains, looking wary as a beggar in an alley, tucking in under a white blanket and wondering where to turn for a friendly face. Its streets were thick with slush, barely foot-printed. Rumors of war, Kathor thought, must have been keeping even the drunks at home.

The usual all-night parties and intoxicated revelry weren't spilling out of doors this year, and the folks who were celebrating seemed to have all picked their tavern early in the evening and stayed there. Some cities capered and caroused on the eve of war, a final riot in the face of destruction, but tonight, in the Free City-State of Gate Pass, the celebrations seemed muted, solemn, almost funereal. The city was dark, the waning moon only a thin silver splinter, and there weren't lights in most of the windows. Even a few inns had closed their doors at sundown.

No one was doing business outdoors tonight, it appeared, except for the Resistance. And because the Resistance was on the move, so were their enemies.

The bounty hunters called themselves the Black Horses. Their leader was a man named Renard, but those inside the city walls tonight were under the command of Renard's second, a former soldier who hailed from Ragesia, the vast empire just west of Gate Pass. That was Kathor, and he didn't want to be there.

Standing high above the streets now, atop one of many vantage points in this city of towers and buttresses, Kathor could see out for miles, over the ice-topped walls and into the west. Across the valley and the bottom of the nearby pass, distant fires dotted the horizon. Scattered in groups, they twinkled through the falling snow like earthbound constellations. The glorious Second Army of the Ragesian Empire was camped on the city's doorstep, far sooner than expected, and the locals expected an attack within the week. But Kathor knew how fast that force could move, and to his mind, a week was very wishful thinking.

He couldn't help thinking that he belonged out there, with the army. With his father. For a second, impossible as it was, Kathor let

himself search for the blur of a high banner in the wind, or the circle of larger fires that would surround the general's tent, before he turned away, shaking his head. Even if he knew where the old man was, what would be the point?

As much as Kathor wanted to be out there with the army, he knew the conquest of Gate Pass would not be for the glory of the Empire. It would be for the glory of one woman. Since the assassination of Drakus Coaltongue, the Emperor of Ragesia, less than two months before, the world had descended into madness. Coaltongue's chief allies and lieutenants had immediately begun positioning themselves as the next in line. Over time, two candidates had risen as the likely successors: Lord Shaaladel, ruler of the Shahalesti elves, and Leska, Coaltongue's Supreme Inquisitor.

It was Leska who had seized command of the scattered Ragesian armies. Instead of summoning them together, she had set those forces to work on pursuing new conquests of Ragesia's neighbors. This tactic provided multiple benefits: it kept the generals too busy to plot against her, and kept rival nations too busy to interfere. But the conquest of Gate Pass was different.

The Free City-State of Gate Pass had been free since the insurrection forty years before because of its location. Gate Pass was named for the narrow passage between the mountains that separated Ragesia and Shaaladel's kingdom of Shahalesti. In Coaltongue's time, keeping that central city neutral had held together the peace and sometime alliance between the Emperor and Shaaladel. But now that Lord Shaaladel had emerged as her chief rival, Leska was surely seizing the city to gain further advantage against the elven king.

Dragging his gaze from the far-away encampments, Kathor looked down on the pair of humble two-story buildings he'd come up to reconnoiter. They were connected by a bridge, leading from the top floor of the taller one to the roof of the shorter. The taller was a home, while its squat companion was a pub, named the Poison Apple in an example of the locals' flair for the perverse.

Gate Pass was a city packed with bridges and heights, a web of widening arches crisscrossing over every street, all now rimmed with ice and snow, yet in many places still welcoming, even majestic. A marvelous place, Kathor had thought, years before, when he'd admired the tall buildings. Back then, he'd seen them as a

testament to clever citizens who made the most of the narrow mountain pass confining their city.

Nowadays, Kathor didn't feel much wonder walking these streets. Perhaps, he mused bitterly, the novelty of those clever citizens' achievement had worn off when he'd started kidnapping them.

Tonight's targets were meeting at the Poison Apple. The pub was closed, since the owner, a magus, had been carried off by the city guard the night before — Kathor didn't have to read the note on the door to know that, having led the city guard there himself.

The guardsmen had already been locking up the city's magi when Kathor had arrived in town, as an attempt to appease the Ragesians and forestall further hostilities. But sometimes, when orders came from Ragesia, he was told to make sure certain ones were picked up immediately, before they could sneak out of town. Yesterday, such an order had come for the magus who owned the Poison Apple. Tonight, one had come for a member of the Resistance, a witch called Torrent.

Information said Torrent would be using the empty tavern to meet a contact. How and when his Ragesian employers got their intelligence, he didn't know, but all their messages so far had been eerily precise. The plan was to attack right after midnight, when the noise of an ambush could be mistaken for nearby New Year celebrations.

Glancing down at an alley around the corner from the Poison Apple, Kathor saw his men trying to look nonchalant as they waited for his signal to attack. Some kicked at the brownish snow shoveled into a pile at the curb, others fiddled with a tarp that hid the weapons on their wagon, but most just couldn't stop creeping to the corner to peek out at the pub. Clearly, the Black Horses weren't used to being subtle.

Kathor found it hard not to hate them.

He wished he hadn't brought so many. Kathor had only joined these bounty hunters a month before, and he was already fed up with their company. But Torrent was a witch, and their source said she had a bodyguard of some kind, so overwhelming force had seemed like the safest strategy.

Now, watching all ten men fumbling attempts to stay inconspicuous on the street, he was rethinking his tactics. *If Torrent were tipped off...*

Mid-thought, he caught his first glimpse

of her, strolling down the alleyway along the city's southern wall, a few blocks away. As expected, she was walking with a massive man, two heads taller than she, wearing a bearskin as a cape over a small fortune in armor. He looked Ragesian. No doubt he was some kind of bodyguard, who would escort Torrent to her mysterious meeting. But he was unlikely to accompany her to the meeting itself; surely the Resistance would not trust any Ragesian, even a turncoat, to be privy to its secretive dealings.

Kathor figured the bodyguard was too tall not to have orc blood in his veins. Half-orcs never went down easy, and though this one would probably be long gone before Torrent reached the Poison Apple, Kathor decided bringing ten men had been right after all.

As for Torrent herself, she looked just like the description he'd received: tall for a woman, shock of short white hair, carrying herself like a soldier, and sporting an expensive breastplate he could see gleaming in the dim moonlight even from a distance. Tonight she was wearing a dark winter coat, open in the front, probably because the heavy fur concealed a weapon and she wanted ready access to it. She didn't look like a witch.

Then again, Kathor thought, *neither do I. And if I weren't, I'd be outside these walls where I belong.*

He leaned over the railing to try and catch one of his men's attention. It took longer than it should have. Kathor was six stories up, watching from the balcony of a boarded-up temple to the Red Archer, a god of summer, of sunrise, and hope, a god who seemed to be out of worshippers nowadays.

When he finally got one of the Black Horses to look his way, Kathor's signal had them back on task in a hurry, but it took him a long minute to decide Torrent and her friend hadn't seen him trying to get the bounty hunters to notice his gestures. Fortunately for him, they were stopping often, taking quick turns, clearly more concerned with making sure they weren't followed than watching for signs of ambush at their destination.

He spared a glance to check on his men — they had one of the wheels off the wagon now, as planned, and were doing a passable job of pretending to try and repair it — then made a quick estimate of how long it would take Torrent to reach the tavern.

She was closer now, and he could just make out the handle of a weapon slung across her

back, not hidden, but carried openly in defiance of city law. Her companion had no obvious arms, but a man didn't wear that much armor without expecting to fight, so he probably had something. Either way, despite all the battlefield trappings, the two strolled casually beneath a picturesque array of icicle-draped archways and bridges, and their constant looking back to avoid being tailed made them look more like tourists than members of an armed insurgency.

An insurgency against an occupation that hasn't even happened yet, Kathor reflected, with grudging admiration. Say what you would about the folk of Gate Pass, there was no doubt they had courage. The Resistance, the movement that had helped drive out Gate Pass's Ragesian conquerors forty years before, had never broken up, presciently choosing to remain vigilant against future incursions. Torrent was one of their more prominent agents, which might have been why Ragesia had marked her for special attention.

Not that the why mattered, Kathor reminded himself. Being second-in-command of this gang of thugs was how he paid the bills, even if he had grown to dislike the men — or more accurately, loathe them — in the past few weeks. Their leader, Renard, had been the first to take Kathor in when he left the army, and that debt had to be respected. Sure, there was no honor in hauling these alleged "enemies" of Ragesia away from their homes and loved ones, but there was honor in fulfilling an obligation. Besides, as much as he

hated the work, he'd left behind the only other world he'd ever known, and he honestly had no idea what else to do.

"This is my life now," Kathor said, out loud, shaking himself out of his reverie. He took one last look at his father's army in the distance, and then rushed down the stairs. Whether they were fighting for their freedom or not, whether they were witches or not, and whether they deserved it or not, it was time to take these two in.

If he'd planned right, they'd go down quickly. There wouldn't be any surprises inside the Poison Apple; Kathor already had a spy inside to make sure of that. Except for the owner's wife, no one else had entered the pub all night.

Beyond better intelligence and better control of the battlefield, Kathor had numbers. He had eleven Black Horses, including himself, although he didn't expect to fight — Kathor still thought of himself as an officer, after all, and there was no honor in ambushing outmatched foes. The targets would be only Torrent and whoever she was meeting, and his information said that group would be fewer than half the number of soldiers he'd brought. And if Torrent or the others had witchcraft, well, he had an answer for that too, didn't he?

Everything was set, Kathor thought, as he emerged from the temple and joined the company of the men he despised. When the time came, and the midnight bells chimed the New Year, he would be ready.

by Jeremy Forbing



CAMPAIGN SAGA OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

As the new year dawns, weather across the lands of Ragesia takes a sudden chill turn. The sky darkens with the shades of oncoming winter, and worry rises as regular channels of communication between nations suddenly cease. Throughout the lands claimed by the Ragesian Empire, rumors slowly spread between isolated villages, traveling by foot and horse and word of mouth, rumors that Drakus Coaltongue, the immortal emperor whose armies conquered every land he set his gaze upon, has fallen in a distant land to the west. The populace of the Lands does not know how the tyrant was defeated, but if it is true, everyone knows that a war is coming. The generals of Emperor Coaltongue will strike for control, oppressed peoples will rise up in rebellion, and dangers once held in check only by fear of the immortal emperor will bring doom to the world.

Those in power are preparing for the coming conflict, readying fervent armies and powerful weapons and subtle, deceptive plots, but two questions burn in their minds: who killed the immortal Emperor Coaltongue; and what has become of the artifact that would let a man rule of the world? Who has the Torch of the Burning Sky?

War of the Burning Sky is a high fantasy campaign saga that thrusts the heroes into a war of mythic proportions. Powered by mighty magic and fervent faith, ever-escalating conflicts threaten the heroes' freedom and lives, and even the very world the heroes inhabit.

Driven from their homelands by the dogs of war, the heroes head for a distant safe haven, a mages' school named Lyceum, which has sent up a rallying cry for those who wish to resist the warmongers. Recognized for their valor and destinies, the heroes are sent on missions by the leaders of Lyceum to form alliances and build an army, but they discover strange secrets that underlie the conflict. As the war reaches a climax, powerful magic superweapons threaten to scorch the world or sunder it into nothing but nightmares.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. Throughout the course of the saga, a party of heroes will become involved in an escalating war between mighty magical nations, and after many adventures, military battles, and mysterious intrigues, it will be up to them to decide who will rule the Lands of the Burning Sky in the aftermath.

Starting any campaign and seeing it through to the end can be challenging, so we present this document as a dungeon master's overview of the campaign saga, the characters and locations involved, and the optional material you can show the heroes, such as new feats, class abilities, spells, and items. In addition to the rules found within this document, it also assumes you have a copy of the *War of the Burning Sky Player's Guide*, the D&D 4E *PLAYER'S HANDBOOK*®, the D&D 4E *DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE*®, and the D&D 4E *MONSTER MANUAL*®. Additionally, the D&D 4E *PLAYER'S HANDBOOK*® 2, the D&D 4E *ADVENTURER'S VAULT*™ and the D&D 4E *MONSTER MANUAL*® 2 provide useful expansions to provide even richer immersion into the world.

If you are a player, we highly recommend you don't read any further. Any rules material you need is presented in the *War of the Burning Sky Player's Guide*, available separately.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT IN THE NEW EDITION?

This version of *War of the Burning Sky* offers new surprises and story threads that allow you to add more to the campaign and surprise even players familiar with the original edition. With every adventure, new mysteries will surface. Events that were resolved in one way in the original edition may take a different path. The role of dragonborn and tieflings will introduce new dimensions to the epic saga. The broad strokes of the story will remain, but the path to victory will offer new quests and challenges for the heroes throughout their careers.

As a Game Master (GM), you will gain exclusive access and be allowed the freedom to explore the world unfettered by the storyline. We hope to make this a compelling place to visit for many adventures to come.

GAMING THE CAMPAIGN

RULES OF WAR

This saga is designed to rely on rules presented in the Fourth Edition (4E) *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* (D&D) rulebooks listed in the Introduction. No other supplements or adventures are needed to play the whole campaign.

SPOILS OF WAR

Each adventure is written assuming a party of five adventurers of the appropriate level built from the options appearing in the D&D 4E *PLAYER'S HANDBOOK*, D&D 4E *PLAYER'S HANDBOOK* 2, and, if you are using it, the D&D 4E *ADVENTURER'S VAULT*. The adventures offer treasure parcels and levels at the standard pace, though each adventure overshoots the XP awards somewhat to ensure that all the heroes start the next adventure at the proper level.

Nothing is sacred or set in stone in regards to how you award magic items. If your players desire different things, then feel free to give them away. Simply swap out the undesired item for one of equal level and continue playing. Every critical artifact and device in the campaign will be separate from any treasure parcel allotment and will be clearly marked as such.

IMPORTANT NOTE

While *War of the Burning Sky* encompasses many pages of content, we want you to feel free to customize and personalize the campaign saga as needed to suit your style, your players, and their characters. This is *your* campaign now!



THE POINT OF THE CAMPAIGN SAGA

While every adventure should be fun and exciting, when we designed the War of the Burning Sky campaign saga, we wanted to do something novel, and give the players a chance to influence political events in the world, to lead armies into battle, and to possibly rule the world or let it be destroyed as they see fit. The heroes will get to play with some big guns, and as the campaign nears its climax you will witness the horrifying potential of magic on the field of war. Before the campaign is over, the players will:

- ♦ Fight the living incarnation of an eternal forest fire.
- ♦ Battle a cell of magical spies while a hurricane rages around them.
- ♦ Carry out military operations ranging from infantry maneuvers and spying, to cavalry charges and tactical strike missions.
- ♦ Adventure through the memories of an enemy ruler in order to learn her secrets.

- ♦ Defend against a battalion of soldiers mounted on war mammoths and their frost giant allies in an arctic waste in order to protect a vital teleportation circle.
- ♦ Engage in street-to-street fighting in an occupied metropolis, led by a traitor toward a trap that will destroy the entire city.
- ♦ Get their hands on an artifact and actually use it to turn the tide of the war.
- ♦ Participate in an epic battle between civilizations.
- ♦ Assault a mile-long living airship, infiltrate a cruel and unusual prison where the agonies of tortured magic-users are used to fuel a magical superweapon, battle dream monsters and magic-scouring Inquisitors, and much, much more!

The complete campaign saga is designed to move the heroes from their humble heroic tier beginnings to the epic destinies that they choose for themselves. If you'd prefer to

avoid the admittedly complicated events of high-level adventures, we've included ways to end the campaign satisfactorily after the fourth or eighth adventure. If you'd like to start the campaign with heroes that are already reasonably powerful, we've included ways to instead start the campaign with either of those two adventures. But of course we hope you'll take the campaign from its portentous beginning to its epic finale.

Finally, while not everyone looks for morality tales in their gaming, we hope that players may find more in this war than simple heroism and epic conflicts. The most memorable stories in war are not about the battles, but about the people and how they are affected. At its heart, the campaign saga is designed to encourage peace and victory through the aid of allies, even those who might normally be perceived as enemies. While the heroes will face true villains and scoundrels, this is not wholly a battle between good and evil. Seeking peace is the harder option, but without peace, even the final enemy's fall cannot bring true victory.



CAMPAIGN OUTLINE

War of the Burning Sky consists of twelve adventures that take the heroes from 1st to 30th level. We've included options for running an abridged version of the campaign later in this section.

THE PLOT IN A FIERY NUTSHELL

War of the Burning Sky begins after Drakus Coaltongue, the emperor of the Ragesian Empire, is assassinated. Various leaders seek to claim power in the resulting vacuum. While this will eventually lead to open war, the most immediate threat comes in the form of the Scourge, the basis for the first adventure.

In all, there are four major factions who each seek to capitalize on the chaos left from the emperor's assassination.

- ◆ Supreme Inquisitor Leska commands Ragesia's anti-magic Inquisitors to begin the Scourge — all disloyal users of magic in Ragesia and surrounding lands are to be captured or killed. Leska believes the Scourge will not only assure her mad dream of power, but also further her ambitions towards stealing divine power from the gods themselves.
- ◆ Shaaladel, ruler of the eladrin Shahalesti nation, which has an unstable peace with

Ragesia, attempts to retrieve the Torch of the Burning Sky, source of Emperor Coaltongue's power.

- ◆ In the remote Monastery of Two Winds, a wizard named Pilus creates a doomsday weapon in the form of a living airship powered by elemental forces, which he plans to use to seize power after he betrays his Ragesian allies.
- ◆ A race of dream monsters called the trillith ascend from deep underground, sensing a weakness in the material plane that will let them sunder the world and transform the entire material plane into a dimension of dreams.

Now, as the Ragesian armies scramble to quell the rebellions that followed in the wake of the emperor's fall, those magic-users at the edges of the Ragesian Empire see a brief window to escape. All that stops them is the question, where can they hide? For no land is beyond the cruel, searing reach of the Ragesian Empire.

Hope comes from the south: in a meager coastal town called Seaquen, a small magical academy known as the Lyceum has called those who oppose the Empire to rally under its banner. All across the Ragesian Empire, thousands of stalwart or desperate heroes have set out, hoping to find safety at this insignificant, overlooked academy.



FAMOUS NAMES AND IMPORTANT PLACES

Emperor Coaltongue

Drakus Coaltongue has ruled Ragesia for decades, slowly expanding its borders through cunning and conquest. He was rumored to be immortal, but now he is rumored to be dead, which has Ragesia up in arms.

The Torch of the Burning Sky

Coaltongue's success heavily depended on the Torch, an artifact he acquired years ago. All the common person knows is that when the emperor lights the torch, he calls a pillar of fire down from the sky that carries him and his armies to wherever he desires.

Gate Pass

The Free City-State of Gate Pass lies in the Ordar Mountains, which is the eastern border of Ragesia. The pass a major conduit between Ragesia and their eladrin allies to the east, the Shahalesti. Control of it is vital. See the *War of the Burning Sky Player's Guide* for more about Gate Pass.

The Shining Land of Shahalesti

The eladrin of Shahalesti cast their lot in with the Ragesians years ago, which allowed the rather insular nation to rise to power, but now their alliance is strained. Everyone knows that the eladrin ruler, Lord Shaaladel, has his sights set on inheriting after Coaltongue's death. Shaaladel's daughter Shaloshia is not power-hungry like her father, and she provides an avenue for alliance with the heroes.

Supreme Inquisitor Leska

One of Coaltongue's closest advisors, the aged witch named Leska, has trained a mighty force of clerics specialized in countermagic. Concealed by bear-skull masks, the Inquisitors do Leska's every bidding.

Dassen, Sindaire, and Ostalin

These three nations on the borders of Ragesia and Shahalesti might be allies or enemies.

Pilus, Master of the East Wind

The monk-sorcerer Pilus, a master of air magic and the creature-sculpting art of biomancy, sees the war as an opportunity to claim power. He may feign allegiance with the heroes, but he is merely a cunning liar.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSSES

ONE THE SCOURING OF GATE PASS

by *Ryan Nock*

Level 1–3

The Ragesian army marches upon the neutral city of Gate Pass, and the heroes must retrieve vital war intelligence from a spy and deliver it to the distant wizards' school of Lyceum. First they have to find a way out of a besieged city before Gate Pass falls and the Inquisitors, Ragesia's infamous mage-hunting clerics, find them.

TWO THE INDOMITABLE FIRE FOREST OF INNENOTDAR

by *Jacob Driscoll*

Level 4–6

The journey between Gate Pass and distant Lyceum is dangerous; along the way the heroes must survive passage through a forest that has burned for decades, where a dream monster known as a trillith holds sway. The trillith, which calls itself Indomitability, is trapped by the last survivors of the forest, a clan of pernicious fey whose magical song holds the key to defeating these strange nightmare beings.

THREE SHELTER FROM THE STORM

by *Ryan Nock*

Level 7–9

Once the heroes reach Lyceum, located in a small seaside village named Seaquen, they have to navigate various political dangers (like spies from Ragesia, power hungry refugees, and a fleet of hostile Shahalesti eladrin), prove themselves loyal to the fight against Ragesia, and rescue the town when a magical hurricane conjured by agents of an unknown villain strikes. They learn that teleportation magic has gone awry and that it has something to do with the missing Torch of the Burning Sky.

At the end of the adventure, word comes that Ragesia has taken note of Lyceum, and that an army has been dispatched to destroy the school.

FOUR THE MAD KING'S BANQUET

by *Shane O'Connor*

Level 10–12

Lyceum sends the heroes on a mission to find allies in the nearby nation of Dassen before Ragesia's army arrives. When they arrive, the heroes discover that a trillith named Madness, another dream monster like the one in the fire forest, is manipulating the king. The heroes help a sympathetic noble named Duke Gallo battle the forces of the mad king. Seaquen's survival depends on their success.

FIVE MISSION TO THE MONASTERY OF TWO WINDS

by *Andrew Kenrick*

Level 13–15

The heroes are sent on another mission by Lyceum and travel from Seaquen to a monastery in Ostalin where monks who worship the wind are being threatened by the remnants of the late Ragesian emperor's army. The heads of the monastery, a pair of brothers named Longinus and Pilus, offer to aid the heroes in retrieving the lost Torch of the Burning Sky if they help fight the army, but clues suggest that the monastery may have been responsible for the hurricane in Seaquen.

SIX TEARS OF THE BURNING SKY

by *Ken Marable and Ryan Nock*

Level 16–18

The heroes race an enemy army through a firestorm miles in diameter and fight their way inside Castle Korstull, the abandoned fortress in the nation of Sindaire where Emperor Coaltongue was slain.

Inside, the heroes find that the castle is now overrun by undead, animated by a strange fiery rip in the fabric of the planes. The castle holds a vital clue that can tell the heroes what has happened to the Torch, but the heroes will have to fight to learn it.

SEVEN THE TRIAL OF ECHOED SOULS

by *Ari Marmell and Ryan Nock*

Level 19–20

In the haunted forest of Ycengled, the heroes locate the assassins who have the Torch, but learn that they have damaged it by removing a key piece of its magic in a nearby psionic temple. The party must brave the temple if they wish to use the powerful artifact; there the heroes face dangers of the past, and learn secrets that drive the next several adventures. The Torch is only partially repaired, giving the heroes mobility but not enough power to teleport armies.

EIGHT O WINTRY SONG OF AGONY

by *Jeremy Anderson and Ryan Nock*

Level 21–22

A clue from the temple leads the heroes to a secret facility operated by minions of Leska in the frozen reaches of northern Ragesia. Under the facility is a strange prison where waves of agony overwhelm the inmates — all of them captured mages seized by the Scourge. The agony comes from a trillith who is being used to power experiments with some strange Ragesian superweapon. The heroes rescue Etinifi, a prisoner who knows Leska's weaknesses.

NINE THE FESTIVAL OF DREAMS

by *Ryan Nock*

Level 23–24

With whatever allies they have secured, the heroes return to the city of Gate Pass to liberate the city and sway the allegiance of Leska's armies. They learn that Leska is trying to use the dream monsters as fuel for a device that will let her control magic over a long distance, while the trillith have another desire — to release the bonds of the world and turn it into nothing but dreams. When a defiant religious festival is interrupted by the appearance of a nightmare swarm, the heroes must locate a disloyal trillith who can help them stop the incursion.



TEN SLEEP, YE CURSED CHILD*by Wolfgang Baur**Level 25–27*

With the news that Leska is preparing a magical superweapon and that Pilus's airship is aimed at Seaquen, the heroes must reactivate the Torch so they can respond to both threats. Their mission takes them deep underground to the lair of the Mother of Dreams, the source of the trillith whose power created the Torch of the Burning Sky and who may be able to fix it. While war rages on the surface, the heroes must find unlikely allies amid the evil races of the deep, and must battle the nightmares of a sleeping dragon in order to free her from her curse.

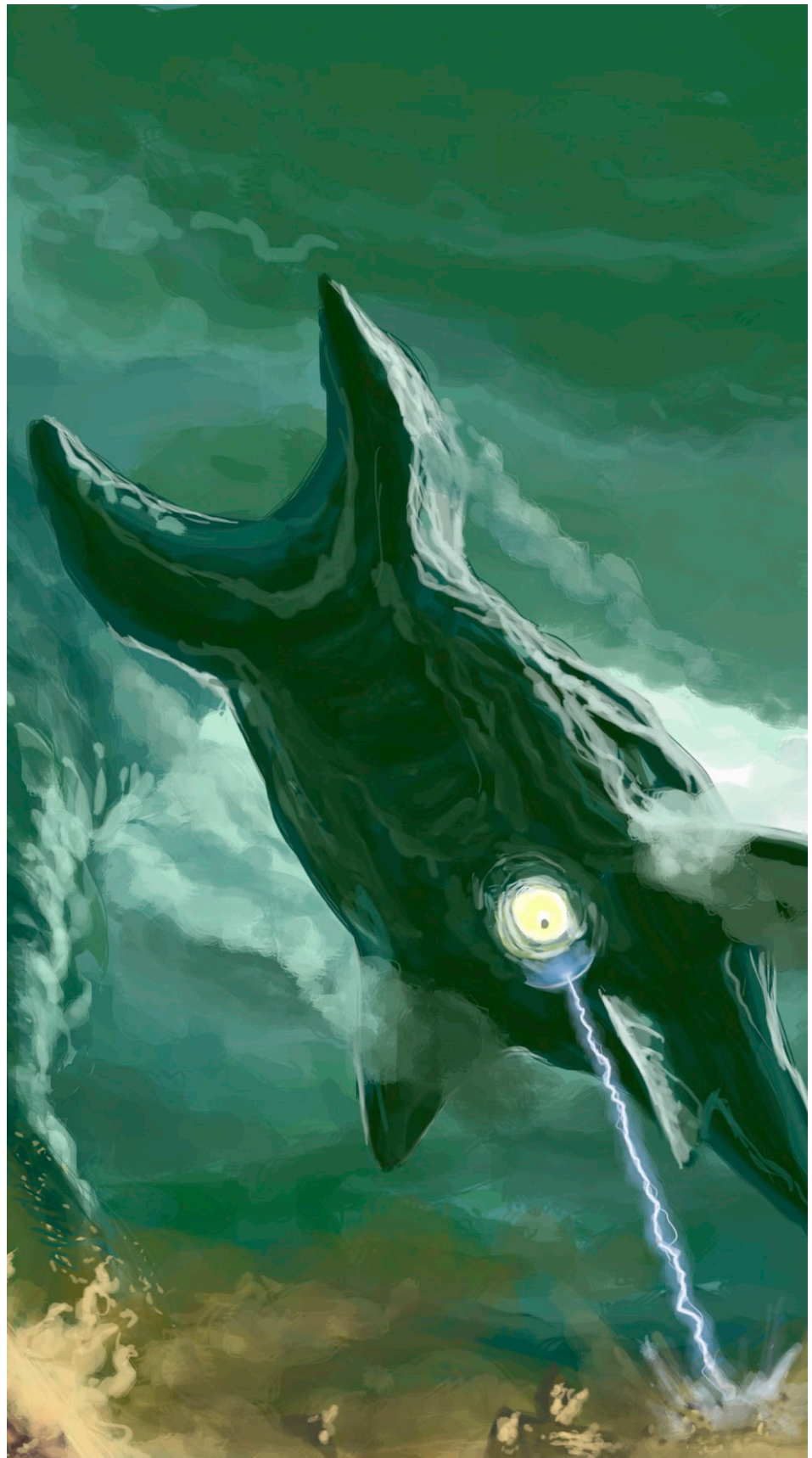
ELEVEN UNDER THE EYE OF THE TEMPEST*by Wil Upchurch**Level 27–28*

Certain of his own invincibility, the stormy archmage Pilus sets his sights on destroying his old rivals, the mages of Lyceum Academy. Once again a storm rolls over the town of Seaquen, but this time the onrushing tempest bears an army amidst its thunder. The heroes board Pilus's mile-long living airship and fight their way to its brain, but they must slay the beast in order to kill the leviathan's master, as the lich Pilus has chosen an unusual form for his phylactery.

TWELVE THE BEATING OF THE AQUILINE HEART*by Ryan Nock**Level 29–30*

The immortal blood of Avilona, elemental spirit of air, runs in the veins of Supreme Inquisitor Leska, and she has had more than enough time to gather her power and begin her quest for her ultimate destiny.

Leska's armies defend the great rift called the Heart of History where lies the still-beating Aquiline Heart, and the heroes must gather their forces and lead one final assault into the fiery breast of the Ragesian Empire.



TIMELINE FOR THE WAR

The timeline below presents the full version of the campaign, assuming the heroes succeed in their adventures. You should feel free to expand or compress periods of time to account for the heroes taking side quests, traveling at different speeds, or spending time training or crafting magic items. In particular, a swift means of travel, like teleportation, may speed up some of the listed events. In general, though, the war moves at the speed of marching troops; no small group of teleporting adventurers can destroy an entire army by itself.

At least not until they reach the epic tier.

◆ **November** — Emperor Coaltongue is killed in Castle Korstull and abducted by the drow assassins. Teleportation becomes deadly. The first Ragesian army is left stranded in Sindaire under the command of General Magdus. He orders a retreat from the flaming storm over Castle Korstull.

◆ **December** — Supreme Inquisitor Leska, who seeks to seize control of Ragesia with a strong show of force, orders General Magdus moves his forces to settle in for the winter and then join up with the Ragesian imperial navy when it begins a blockade of Turinn, the capital city of Sindaire, in March. Ragesia announces its intention to retaliate against the nations of Sindaire and Shahalesti for their involvement in the assassination of Emperor Coaltongue. In response to the announcement, Shahalesti sends out diplomatic envoys to nearby nations, seeking allies.

◆ **January** — The second Ragesian army under command of General Danava assaults Gate Pass (*The Scouring of Gate Pass*), while the fourth army marches through the mountains in the northlands, both attempting to press into Shahalesti. Gate Pass resists, and so Danava lays siege, demanding that the city open its gates to a contingent of Ragesian Inquisitors who will check whether the city is harboring enemies. Gate Pass kowtows, allowing the Inquisitors inside, but this is a ruse to lure them away from the bulk of the army, leaving the Ragesians vulnerable to evocation magic cast by the archmage Gabal and his students. The Inquisitors slay Gabal, but not before he destroys the Ragesian siege engines. Danava retreats to regroup.

◆ **February** — The trillith begin locating lost brethren, gathering their power while secretly working with Leska to develop her Scourge (*The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*). The third Ragesian army under the command of General Revulus joins with Danava's army, and by the end of the month they assault Gate Pass again. The fight lasts more than a month. A fleet bearing the Shahalesti diplomatic envoy arrives in Dassen. The paranoid king Steppengard believes they are his enemy, so the envoy tries to contact other people in power, including the head of the mage's school Lyceum in Seaquen.

◆ **March** — Despite the fact that winter seems not to be turning to spring, a supernatural hurricane strikes Seaquen, destroying the Shahalesti fleet at an inopportune moment and ruining the chance for diplomacy (*Shelter from the Storm*). Seaquen looks for defenses against Ragesia and others, and sends envoys of its own to various Dassen nobles. They also send a group to the Monastery of Two Winds, to investigate clues that suggest the hurricane was directed by someone there. In northern Shahalesti, the fourth Ragesian army conquers a few cities, and heads for Nacaan, capital of the northern Shahalesti state. In Sindaire, the blockade of Turinn begins, but before the first army under Magdus can move to their aid the army of Ostalin invades Sindaire from the south, looking to expand its holdings. Magdus stays put and protests with Leska, who he does not recognize as the legitimate ruler of Ragesia.

◆ **April** — Gate Pass falls to Ragesia, a costly first step into Shahalesti. Danava's second army marches on to Shahalesti, while Revulus takes his third army south, into Dassen. They make their first assault toward the end of the month and find little resistance, since Steppengard the paranoid king has pulled all his armies in to defend him, leaving the borders unsecured. However, Dassen loyalists hold off their entrance to the country thanks to the aid of Seaquen (*The Mad King's Banquet*). The fourth army captures Nacaan. Things look bleak for Shahalesti as the fourth and second army link up and make plans to march on Calanis, the capital.

◆ **May** — Shalosh of Shahalesti contacts General Magdus and convinces him her nation will support him as the new ruler of Ragesia. Looking for allies, an ambitious archmage named Pilus, from the Monastery of Two Winds, hosts the ruler of Ostalin, Khagan Onamdamin. Pilus shows him his experimental airship, The Tempest, which is large enough to carry an army. The airship is close to completion, but while Pilus plans to use it to seize power for himself, Pilus's brother Longinus clears away the firestorm over Castle Korstull to help agents of Seaquen (*Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds*).

◆ **June** — Magdus and Shalosh pursue the agents of Seaquen to Castle Korstull, but are unable to retrieve clues to the location of the Torch of the Burning Sky (*Tears of the Burning Sky*). Lord Shaaladel, knowing that the Torch would let his people stop the Ragesian drive into their territory, devotes a massive amount of resources to tracking down those who pursue the Torch.

◆ **July** — Agents of Seaquen recover the Torch, and lend its aid to their allies (*The Trial of Echoed Souls*). Who those allies are will depend solely on the actions and opinions of the heroes.

◆ **August** — The counteroffensive against Ragesia begins with an attack against Leska's research fortress, where she was developing her Scourge superweapon (*O Wintry Song of Agony*).

◆ **September** — Having succeeded in stopping the push by Ragesia into their homeland, Shahalesti battles over the city of Gate Pass while trying to gain its own foothold in Ragesia. Both armies are driven away by the arrival of a massive horde of trillith from the Underdark (*The Festival of Dreams*).

◆ **October** — The conflict comes to a head, although this could happen many possible ways. The trillith discover where the Aquiline Heart is located, and they attempt to create the dream of Annihilation so they can destroy the Heart and with it the material world (*Sleep, Ye Cursed Child*). Meanwhile, Pilus and his airship are loaded with the army of Ostalin, and allies with whoever the party likes least as it sets out to destroy Seaquen (*Under the Eye of the Tempest*).

Finally, Supreme Inquisitor Leska must be defeated before she activates the Scourge, powering it with the blood of the Aquiline Heart (*The Beating of the Aquiline Heart*).

WHAT IF THEY DO NOTHING?

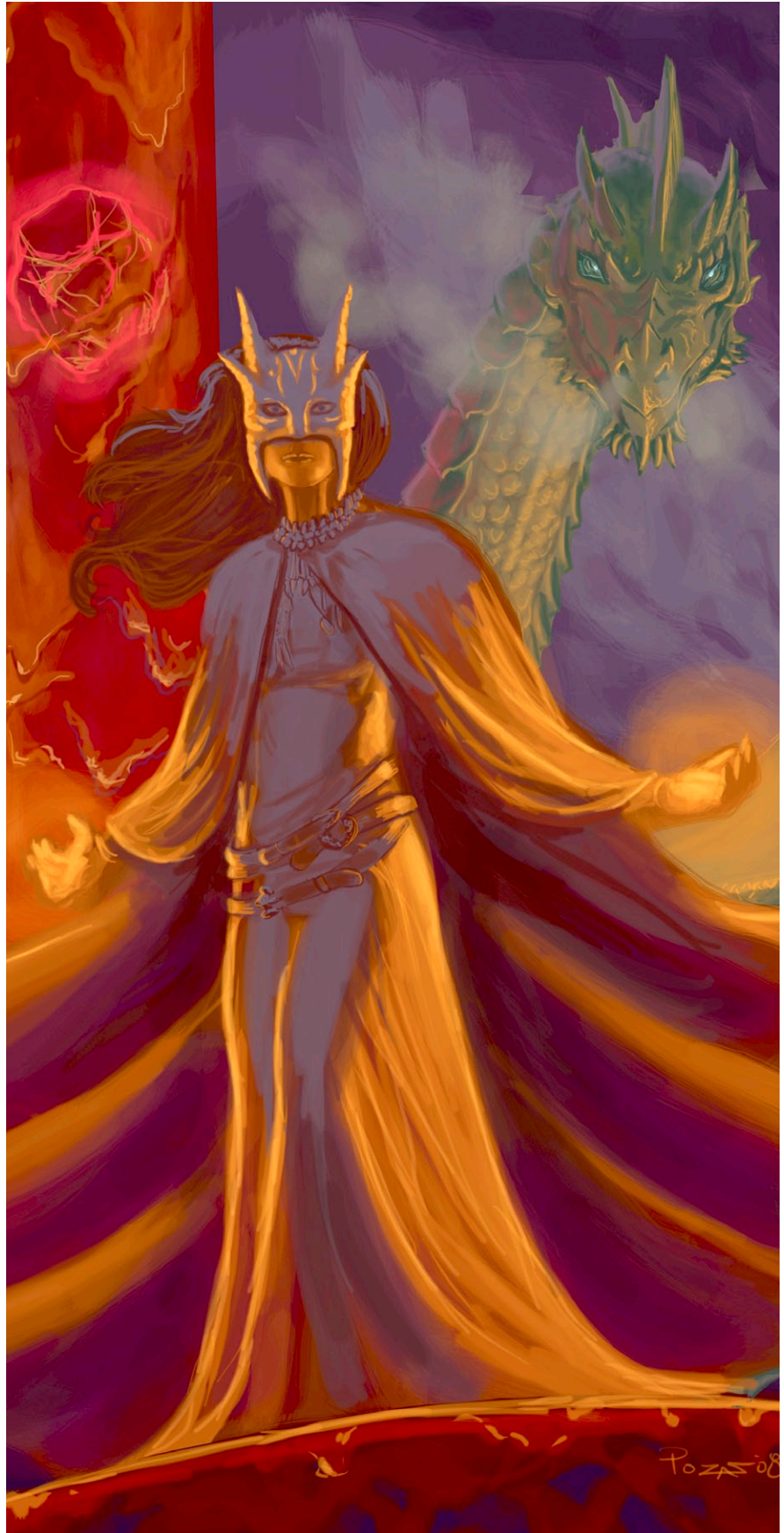
Without the heroes present, things go much the same up until adventure four. Without the aid of the heroes, Dassen falls before the army of Revulus. Then, when the heroes would be getting help from Longinus at the Monastery of Two Winds, instead Shalosha convinces Magdus to remove his garrison, and so it is Shalosha and Magdus who head to Castle Korstull to find out where the Torch is.

Then, while Shahalesti elite forces rush to retrieve the Torch, Magdus takes his army to Turinn, capital of Sindaire, which is under naval blockade and under attack by Ostalin. Magdus's army, aided by the native Sindairese, break Ostalin's forces then use treachery to destroy the Ragesian fleet. Pilus, seeing his success, sides with Magdus and the Shahalesti with full intention of betraying them later. Ostalin turns its attention to Dassen, and either they or Revulus's third army destroy Seaquen.

The Shahalesti retrieve the Torch, and use it to their advantage, but because they do not have access the military intelligence that the party delivered out of Gate Pass way back in the first adventure, they don't know about Leska's superweapon. Even with the aid of the Torch and Pilus's airship, they cannot do much when Leska starts using her superweapon to deactivate arcane magic across the Lands. After a few spectacular aerial assaults, Pilus's airship falls unceremoniously from the sky.

Eventually, Shahalesti forces destroy the device powering the Scourge, and it looks like the war will devolve into a traditional, gritty ground war, with armies slowly grinding for territory. Shahalesti starts rounding up captured orcs and half-orcs and discreetly has them killed even though they are officially prisoners of war. Then, while no one is paying attention, the trillith destroy the Heart, and everyone dies.

In short, the actions of a few low-level heroes in the first adventure will indeed be pivotal.



CAMPAIGN VARIANTS

ABRIDGED CAMPAIGNS

In the full version of the campaign, there are two major nations at war — Ragesia and Shahalesti — plus Pilus as a third party who wants to seize power, and the trillith who see the war as an opportunity to reshape reality to their whims. The conflict engulfs the region, and the party must deal with multiple foes and allies at once, but they ultimately have the chance to decide who will rule in the war's aftermath.

ALTERNATIVE 1 FREEING GATE PASS

This shortened version uses adventures 1 through 4 and stops when the heroes are around 8th level. The conflict begins the same, between Ragesia and Shahalesti, and the party's goal is to gain allies to come to the aid of the neutral city Gate Pass, which is a proxy battleground between the two nations. The campaign ends once the party succeeds in bringing in Dassen as a third power to force an armistice.

ALTERNATIVE 2 DEFEATING THE RAGESIAN EMPIRE

This version uses adventures 1 through 8, stopping when the heroes are around 20th level. As above, the party seeks allies to rescue Gate Pass, but Ragesia does not relent, and the party must recover the Torch, ally with Dassen and Shahalesti, and kill Leska while she is overseeing the final stages of her

superweapon's construction. (This endgame should play out like *Return of the Jedi*.) Pilus and the trillith play only a minor role.

ALTERNATIVE 3 RESTORING THE RIGHTFUL RULER

In this abbreviated campaign, which uses adventures 4 through 8, Dassen becomes part of Ragesia, loyal to the fallen emperor. Leska had the emperor killed and kidnapped (hiding him so he could not be raised), and she intends to secure her rule through a reign of terror. The party must first defend Dassen from Leska's armies, then locate and rescue Coaltongue, climaxing with an assault on Leska's base of operations in the northern tundra.

ALTERNATIVE 4 THE TRILLITH INCURSION

This final alternative uses adventures 8 and 9, then 11, 12, and finally 10. The trillith have corrupted the empress Leska, and with their ally Pilus they seek to destroy the world. This story arc begins with the party learning about a strange research facility in the tundra, and upon investigating they learn of the trillith's plan. The trillith make Leska attack Gate Pass with her armies, allowing them to emerge and take bodies. The party must stop Pilus and his airship of nightmare creatures from laying wastes to cities, then thwart the trilliths' plans to seize the Aquiline Heart. Finally, the party must delve deep underground to finish off the dreaming mother of the trillith.

TWEAKING THE SETTING

War of the Burning Sky is intended to fit into any setting, but we use a baseline setting as the core of the campaign saga. If you want to place this campaign saga in an existing setting, you might simply say that Ragesia and the lands around it lie far from the realms the heroes have previously experienced or in a distant part of the world. Or you might prefer to find an area that closely parallels the terrain and nations of the campaign saga.

You can easily change a great many details about the adventures in the campaign saga to fit your own setting, without ruining the plot of the adventures. There are only three major requirements for choosing a location for the campaign. First, two nations must be willing to go to war, and several nearby lands must be affected or threatened by this war. Second, the two main nations must have some sort of difficult passage separating them, which they must claim before they can press into each other's land — a mountain pass, a narrow isthmus, a magical portal, or a safe road through trackless wastes. Third, you have to be willing to create a few minor locations, such as towns, monasteries, temples, and forests.

To help reduce the amount of work necessary to make the campaign fit to your setting, the following section provides suggestions on what you want to look for when choosing what people and places will stand in for those of the campaign saga.

NATIONS AND CITIES

When looking for nations in an existing setting, Ragesia's stand-in should be able to field a large enough army to potentially conquer all its neighboring lands. Shahalesti's stand-in should be slightly weaker than Ragesia, somewhat militant but not evil. The two nations should be neighbors or fairly close to one another. The events of adventures one and nine hinge on there being a neutral city between the two nations that stands in the way of their conflict; any restrictive terrain works as well as the mountain range assumed by the adventure.

The rest of the surrounding nations can be whatever you want, though you will want to try to keep a similar geography in the relation between Ragesia and Dassen, so that the fire forest of adventure two can provide an actual shortcut. It's a small enough area that it should not be hard to add.



There could be many smaller nations involved in this conflict, but whatever you do, make sure that the conflict doesn't stretch far enough that nations far more powerful than Ragesia and Shahalesti get involved. The heroes should feel like they're the underdogs, and that they have a big fight ahead of them. Other nations should not be interested enough to simply sweep in and save the day; that's for the party to do.

MAJOR NPCs

The two biggest motivators for war are the vacuum left after the fall of a powerful warlord, and the desire to retrieve the artifact that let him come to power in the first place. The specifics can vary easily. Emperor Coaltongue's stand-in must be feared, cunning, and experienced in commanding armies, but his age, race, and even class could certainly change. He might have only recently begun his march to power, and he might only have had the Torch of Burning Sky for a short time.

Leska and her anti-magic Inquisitors are a fairly large component of the campaign setting, but any group of ominous minions can be made to work. The Inquisitors could be a recent development rather than a Ragesian institution. As the villain, Leska's stand-in needs to be a hands-off manipulative genius.

A group of non-good elves or eladrin who aren't drow might not fit a lot of settings, so any group that mixes warcraft and spellcraft can be substituted for the Shahalesti. Their ruler Shaaladel's stand-in needs to be motivated by a sense of moral superiority, not "evil intent," and charismatic enough to have convinced people to do things they might normally think wrong — people that might choose otherwise if given the option.

Pilus, the trillith, and the leaders of Seaquen had no political power before the start of the war, and so are easy to fit in anywhere.



IMMORTALITY AND THE AQUILINE

HEART

The Aquiline Heart, an artifact whose existence is hinted at throughout the campaign saga, provides immortality to those who taste of its blood. Destroying it will undo the immortality but might have other disastrous consequences.

The myth of the Aquiline Heart can be a famous old legend that people only half believe, like the tales of the Holy Grail, or it could be a little-known legend isolated to Ragesia. If you substitute an existing legend of the setting you might lose some of the phoenix imagery in the later adventures, so try to find something that involves fire so it ties in well with the "burning sky" theme of the campaign.

Leska is immortal by virtue of the Aquiline Heart, which means that she does not age and that she regenerates from any wound not caused by a true dragon. The Heart gives the heroes a memorable way to strike a seemingly invincible foe in her weak spot.

TRILLITH

The trillith are a totally new group, and since their existence is relatively unknown it should be easy to fit them in. You might need to alter the timeline of the Mother of Dreams somewhat to make sure she keeps her ties with the creation of the Torch.

ADVENTURE LOCATIONS

Any setting has enough uncharted terrain that it shouldn't be hard to work in a fire forest, a monastery, a psychic temple, and an underground prison. Don't worry about having to use famous locations from a setting. Just because the heroes don't personally fight the battles in a well-known city doesn't mean that the battle isn't happening. The conflict should appear massive, much bigger than the heroes. Of course, players like to feel a little bit legendary, so at least in the climax adventures try to use notable locations.

A few adventures, particularly *The Mad King's Banquet*, *Mission to the Monastery of Two Winds*, and *O Wintry Song of Agony* are intended to give you as GM a lot of leeway as to exactly where they take place. You need only decide where strategically important battles should occur, then send the heroes on the particular missions of the adventure which are intended to be pivotal to the conflict.

EXPANDED CAMPAIGNS

As designed, the campaign saga should take a party from 1st to 30th level. However, you might choose to award experience more slowly, or perhaps you want to use more encounters to showcase the scope of the war. You might try expanding and exploring some of these adventure hooks:

GATE PASS

The Spells of the Master: Some time in the middle of the campaign saga the party might return to try to recover the spellbooks of Gabal, full of spells designed to thwart Inquisitor tactics. Perhaps they are guarded by the ghosts of his students, by a rampant golem, or by the spells themselves, brought to life by latent energy of the trillith.

Unity Wedding: The roguish hero Rantle has fallen in love with Shalosh, the princess of Shahalesti, and despite the chaos of war they plan to be wed with a proper ceremony. Rantle, who holds quite a bit of sway in Gate Pass, enlists the party and some of his thieves' guild to make sure the ceremony doesn't get interrupted by unwanted guests (such as the father of the bride).

The Singing Chasm: The Shahalesti escape from Gate Pass in the first adventure by tunneling into a strange underworld called the Singing Chasm. Surely great wonders exist below, but now there is a bridge between this deep chasm and the world above. Does Gate Pass usher in a golden age of adventure or become a doorway for even greater evils?

FIRE FOREST

War Crimes: After the war is over, the party might need to race against an effort by the Shahalesti to hide their crimes, such as the slaughter and burning of the Innenotdar Fire Forest. The party needs to find a way to protect the evidence. Of course, the dead might still be able to offer testimony.

SEAQUEN

More Spies in the Steam Tunnels: Under Seaquen lies a complex hive of caverns carved by sea and magma. In addition to providing steam that keeps the city warm during the winter, these tunnels can also be the lairs of spies. The spies try to sabotage the party, steal vital magic items, or trigger a volcano by accessing a hidden seal that leads to a fiery portion of the Elemental Chaos.



Dreamcatcher: A trillith who calls itself Wanderer passes through Seaquen, appearing as a tall man wrapped head to toe in sandy robes and veils, with a staff that curves at the top ending in a knot that looks like an eye. He is collecting the dreams of the city's inhabitants — many of whom are refugees who have seen great horrors and tragedies — to be distilled and refined in order to torment Trilla and create new, unique trillith. He lurks on the Wayfarer's Theater, enjoying the psychic emanations of people watching their performances.

Amphibious Assault: A fleet from Ostalin, accompanied by hippogriff cavalry, attempt to seize the Seaquen docks.

DASSEN

Civil War: The nobility is up to it again, letting their claim to the throne override the immediate needs of stopping the world from ending. The pretender might be endorsed by one of the other powers in the war, or he might just be megalomaniacal.

The Shrieking Wurm: People report hearing a vicious keening in the bayou north of Seaquen. In truth, it is a large brood of infant green dragons wailing for their mother, who was injured by a lost military convoy. If the party can nurse her back to health and protect her children, she might be willing to lend her aid to the war. Unfortunately, the father is territorial, and he wants custody of the children.

Refugee Train: In a line of thousands of desperate refugees, many are neglected or exploited, and some are not what they seem.

The Poison of Madness: King Steppengard may still be alive, and though the progression of his madness is stopped, the cure requires the heroes to brave the vast underground below Castle Korstull for the fabled Ebon Vitellin, a mushroom with magical powers to heal the mind. For the surviving family this mission is their last hope to restore the mad king.

OSTALIN

Fight or Flight: A small group of Ostalin expatriates, trained by Longinus and Pilus, are trying to rally their people to resist Khagan Onamdamm while his army is distracted. The monks plan a strike against the breeding aeries for the nation's hippogriffs, stealing mounts of their own and killing those they can't acquire.

Feast or Famine: A rich merchant with a fleet of ships is supplying food to the Ragesians, who are having trouble feeding their armies with the extended winter. The party might try to destroy the shipments, or stow away on board in order to sneak into Ragesia, or through the blockade in Turinn. However, one of Pilus's agents has slipped a biomanced creature on board — a fast-breeding horde of hybrid rat-cockroaches that devour everything they find.

The Dragonborn Ultimatum: Smarting from the treacheries of the Khagan and his rabid search to eliminate all his bloodline, the honorable dragonborn seek new allies to depose him.

SINDAIRE

Small Wars: After the assassination of Coaltongue, his army splintered. Without a clear chain of command, many smaller units took it upon themselves to crush the rebellion that originally brought Coaltongue to Sindaire. The party would gain the favor of many if they could protect the commoners in the region, but the most notorious of these rogue Ragesian warbands is actually on a noble mission: trying to track down a demon-summoner who is using the townsfolk as a human shield.

Fey Tracks: The party hears a local legend of a faerie who lived in a nearby grove for a time, his feet wilting grass with every step and his touch rotting trees, but who was still favored by the forest's druid. They hear a barkeep whistling a tune identical to the song of the fey of the fire forest while he wipes down his tables. The party can earn the old woman's favor if they brave the natural guardians of the druid's grove, where she will tell them a story of meeting the fey Etinifi and possibly offer them aid.

RAGESIA, LOWER

Nature's Aid: The party hears of a druid who lives with a herd of horses that would make fine mounts for whichever side can curry his favor. He sets up a competition between the heroes and a troop of Ragesian rangers: a race through twenty miles of dangerous wilderness.

Catch Me If You Can: A gnome caravan, trying to protect a pair of injured sorcerers fleeing the Scourge, have been chased for weeks by a small Ragesian cavalry detachment and now are trying to cross the mountains into Dassen. They cross paths with the heroes, and ask them to help with a tricky plan to stop the Ragesians from following them.

RAGESIA, UPPER

The Old Fashioned Way: The heroes are called upon to assassinate Rowern, head of intelligence operations for the Ragesian army, and then impersonate him in order to sow misinformation for as long as possible. Rowern likes to spend his evenings drinking with some of his old army buddies at an upscale brewery in Ragos, the Ragesian capital. Of course, magical disguises are all but useless in a city so full of Inquisitors, so the party will have to use more traditional techniques to pull off the caper.

Failed Experiments: A traveler who was lost in the wastes of northern Ragesia reports that he came upon a ghost town in a crater shaped like a giant feather, where the only activity he saw was a distant, hulking shape loping across the frozen lake in the crater's center. The town resulted from a failure of Leska's Scourge superweapon, and a small group of Inquisitors are roaming the city to examine what went wrong.

SHAHALESTI

Moral Dilemmas: A camp of tortured orcish prisoners and a captured erinyes spy, their celestial overseers, and the hateful eladrin summoner in charge of the camp are the ingredients for an unorthodox rescue mission. The erinyes has stolen the soul of an eladrin general and hidden it. She is a valuable agent in the war and the party could benefit greatly from her knowledge, but she just happens to be blisteringly evil.

Pride Before the Falls: In the capital city of Calanis, the party is close to convincing the Shahalesti to ally with them. Unfortunately, one of Shaladel's generals, an egotistical wizard who believes he is the greatest spellduelist of all time, is keeping the ruler from siding with the heroes. If the party can prey on the general's pride or insult his honor, he might decide to settle his dispute with a spell duel at high noon on the cliffs overlooking the city's majestic waterfalls.

POWER GROUPS

The following three groups play a role in the campaign saga. More details are provided whenever they show up in the adventures.

KNIGHTS OF THE AQUILINE CROSS

Small chapels that teach the doctrine of the Order of the Aquiline Cross have grown up throughout the lands of Ragesia and its neighbors, preaching mercy, sacrifice, and a fierce defense of life. Knights of this order dress in white and red tabards marked with a cross surrounded by a halo of feathers.

THE WAYFARERS

Every port in the region has at one time or another been host to the Wayfarer Theater, a beautifully-decorated ship that is both home and base of operations for the Wayfarers. The Wayfarers are both master acrobats and skilled mages, and are prone to dress in elaborate and eclectic costumes cobbled together from dozens of lands.

THE INQUISITORS

Dressed in bear skins, their faces concealed by bear-skull masks, Inquisitors are the feared blade of Ragesia, expert in cutting out those who resist its rule. They fervently serve Ragesia's Supreme Inquisitor, an aged witch named Leska. Ragesian Inquisitors are divine spellcasters who revere their leader Leska almost as a god. Inquisitors must be evil or unaligned, and typically are heretics of gods of fire or magic.

As NPCs, Inquisitors have access to counterspell powers that are not necessarily available to player characters. Inquisitors are also granted an aura of fear known as "Leska's Light" which is always active. These powers are detailed in each appropriate stat block.

A sample Inquisitor is shown on page 18.

KNIGHTS OF THE AQUILINE CROSS

History or Religion

- » **DC 10:** The Knights of the Aquiline Cross are clerics and paladins who see healing as the best way to fight evil. They cannot refuse using their healing powers for those who ask (though they're not required to heal enemies who have not surrendered). Followers of the order who maintain their vow of healing are said to miraculously survive injury, as if they simply do not bleed from even seemingly-fatal wounds.
- » **DC 13:** Many knights of the order go on quests to try to locate the Aquiline Heart, a healing relic said to have been torn from the chest of a mighty eagle by a fierce dragon.
- » **DC 18:** The original Order of the Aquiline Cross was exterminated entirely by the wrath of a demon, but was reborn recently by an act of divine inspiration. A young human paladin named Entras found an abandoned chapel of the order in the wilds of Shahalesti, and she vowed to continue the order's quest.
- » **DC 25:** The order's true goal in seeking the Heart is not to use its healing power, but to heal the Heart itself. It is said that if one gives up his life to the Heart, it will be reunited with the Eagle, and the life of the land will be renewed.
- » **DC 30:** One sage found the Aquiline Heart and claimed he had been granted immortality by drinking blood that still pumped from it. All his wounds healed at an incredible rate, and he would even return from the dead. He told only his most trusted friends this, afraid others would find the Heart and abuse its power, or worse destroy the Heart. The Heart is the only surviving piece of a mighty creature of elemental air, and its destruction would upset the balance of the elements with catastrophic effects. Eventually the sage ended his life by letting a dragon devour him whole.

WAYFARERS

Arcana, History, or Streetwise

- » **DC 10:** The Wayfarers are a famous troupe of performers who travel from port to port in a huge sailing ship that contains its own theater. Strangely, no one ever sees them enter or leave port; people claim they simply appear and vanish in the blink of an eye. In addition to being welcome performers for the rich, Wayfarers serve as elite couriers, delivering news between major cities. They are very well paid for their services.
- » **DC 15:** Said to be larger on the inside than out, the Wayfarer Theater is just one example of the troupe's mastery of travel magic. However, the group's performances are done entirely without magical aid, as the wayfarers stress physical mobility as well as magical prowess.
- » **DC 20:** Rumors say that the Wayfarers regularly extort those in power — from merchants to entire nations — by threatening to withhold their services. They aggressively hunt down anyone who competes with their monopoly on teleporting goods and information. Some think that the Wayfarers have a curse that can stop a person from ever using planar magic.
- » **DC 30:** The first Wayfarer performed for Emperor Coaltongue in an attempt to save himself from execution. Coaltongue so enjoyed the man's performance that he took him as an advisor and shared with him some of the power of the Torch of the Burning Sky. Many Wayfarers still view Coaltongue fondly, but have consistently refused service to Inquisitors.



Inquisitor

Level 7 • XP 300

Medium natural humanoid (orc)

Initiative +4; **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision

Leska's Lesser Light (Fear) aura 5; any enemy in the aura takes a –2 penalty to its attack rolls.

HP 80; **Bloodied** 40

AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20

Speed 5

 ✎ **Inquisitor's Claw** (std; at-will) ✦ Weapon
 +12 vs AC; 1d6+5 damage (crit 11).

 ✎ **Leska's Expurgation** (std; at-will) ✦ Divine, Implement, Fire

A bright, red-tinged ball of flame seeks to cleanse the evil within your enemies.

Area Burst 1 within 10; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d6+3 fire damage.

 ✎ **Leska's Exhortation** (std; enc) ✦ Divine, Implement, Psychic

An admonishing voice fills your enemy's mind; the pain of its exhortation immobilizes him.

Ranged 10; +11 vs. Will; 2d6+3 psychic damage and target is immobilized (save ends).

 ✎ **Rebuke Lesser Arcane Magic** (std; 2/enc)

The apostate's manipulation of magic is destroyed by the powerful word of Leska.

Ranged 10, targets a conjuration or zone made by an arcane power; +11 vs. Will of originating caster; the conjuration or zone is destroyed, including any of its effects, even those normally lasting until a target saves.

 ✎ **Thunder Call** (std; enc) ✦ Thunder

The air contorts around your enemies and returns to its original shape, releasing a blast of sound in the process.

 Area Burst 2 within 10; +11 vs. Fortitude, 2d6+5 thunder damage and any target in the area is knocked prone. *Miss:* half damage, and the target is not knocked prone.

 ▶ **Reactive Counterspell** (imm int; when hit by an arcane spell)

You are granted a moment of clarity, presaging a spell's effect, allowing you to avoid its result.

The attacker must reroll the attack roll made against the Inquisitor and use the new result instead. All other attack rolls are unchanged.

The Inquisitor's next standard action is spent doing nothing.

Alignment Evil; **Languages** Common, Giant

Skills Arcana +8, Intimidate +10, Religion +10

Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 8 (+2) **Wis** 16 (+6)

Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)

Equipment Inquisitor's claw, lesser Inquisitor's mask

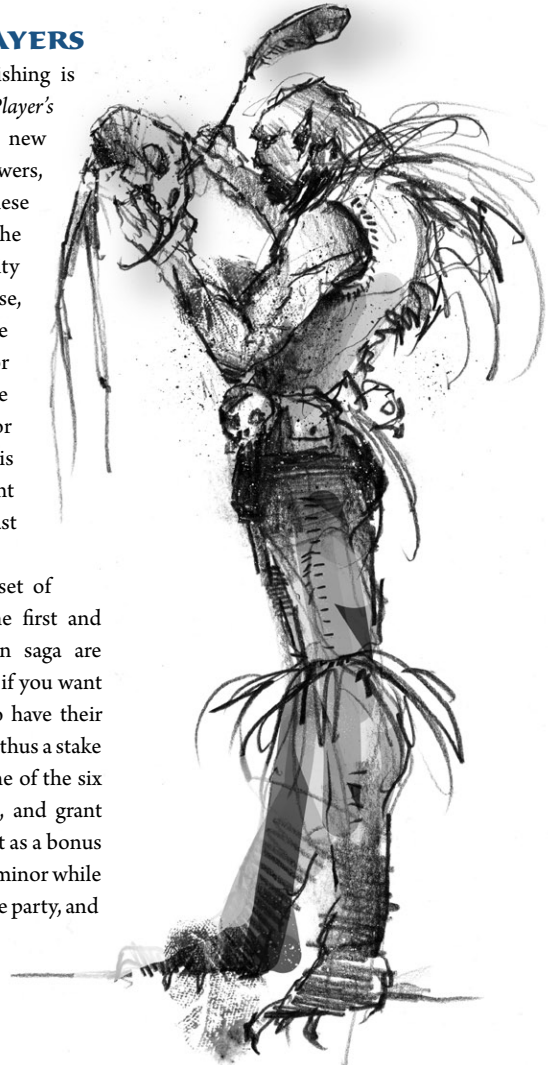
INQUISITORS
Arcana or Religion

- » **DC 10:** The Inquisitors hunt for dangerous magic, which in their mind pretty much means any arcane magic used by other people. They have special skills for stopping other mages' spells. Most Inquisitors are humans, orcs, or half-orcs, and they carry metal claws on their hands. Many Inquisitors are skilled interrogators who use their claws to slit the wrists of prisoners, forcing the prisoner to answer quickly.
- » **DC 13:** Inquisitors are almost exclusively divine spellcasters who prefer spells of divine fire and protection. They wear masks to shield their souls, and thus are more resistant to mind-affecting magic. No one has seen Supreme Inquisitor Leska's face for nearly forty years.
- » **DC 18:** Inquisitors cannot turn or control undead, instead channeling necromantic energy to dispel magic.
- » **DC 25:** Supreme Inquisitor Leska is rumored to be gathering information on how to steal divine power — not to become a god herself, but to make herself strong enough to never be beholden to a deity. Consequently, her followers are all considered the worst kind of heretics, and they cannot be raised from the dead except as undead abominations.
- » **DC 30:** Those in the imperial palace whisper that when Leska was just a young servant of the Ragesian Empire, she had an audience with the Emperor and offered him immortality if he agreed to make her one of his advisors. Coaltongue was intrigued, but one of his guards struck down Leska with a spear for her impudence. She pulled the spear from her throat, and a moment later the wound had healed.

MATERIAL FOR PLAYERS

Also available from E.N. Publishing is the free *War of the Burning Sky Player's Guide*, which presents additional new game materials — feats, class powers, magical items, and rituals. These items show up throughout the campaign saga, but their availability for players is up to you. Of course, we encourage you to let them, since we feel they will add a unique flavor to the campaign. While some of the abilities are designed primarily for the antagonist groups, if a player is interested in the abilities they might make their character be an outcast from the villainous group.

Among these new rules are a set of feats called “Gate Pass” feats. The first and ninth adventure of the campaign saga are based in the city of Gate Pass, and if you want to give the players an incentive to have their characters have ties to the city (and thus a stake in its survival), let them choose one of the six city groups to be associated with, and grant them the appropriate Gate Pass feat as a bonus feat. The feat abilities are relatively minor while providing interesting options for the party, and they make it a little easier on you as the GM to get the players invested in the campaign from the beginning.



NEW GAME RULES

While there are a fair number of new toys for the players, what follow are rules that players should generally not be aware of from the start of the campaign. As explained in the *War of the Burning Sky Player's Guide*, any character with a power having the Teleportation keyword is already aware of the Burning Sky effect.

SKILL CHALLENGES TO CHANGE ATTITUDES

The heroes will encounter many intelligent creatures who can communicate and reason. A given creature will have one of the following attitudes towards the heroes when it first meets them: **Hostile**, **Unfriendly**, **Wary**, **Indifferent**, **Friendly**, or **Helpful**.

To further the goals of an encounter, the heroes may need to change the attitude of one or more creatures. This is accomplished by using a skill challenge based on the degree of the change; changing a creature's attitude from **Hostile** to **Friendly** is far more complex than changing from **Friendly** to **Helpful**. The complexity of a skill challenge is the number of steps required to move to the desired end. Thus, changing a **Hostile** enemy's attitude so that it is **Friendly** to the characters is a complexity 4 skill challenge, requiring 10 successes before 3 failures to succeed.

Skill challenges defined in this way are resolved as normal, but allow greater latitude for partial success. As the skill challenge is performed, each time a complexity threshold is crossed, the attitude of the creature changes. For example, an **Indifferent** character needs to become **Helpful** in order to provide an important clue in the adventure. The desired change is two steps (**Indifferent** – **Friendly** – **Helpful**), making the overall complexity of the skill challenge 2 (6 successes before 3 failures).

If the heroes achieve 4 successes before 3 failures, they have completed a complexity 1 challenge and are partially successful; the creature becomes **Friendly**. Even if the overall challenge fails, the new attitude remains unless specific instructions indicate otherwise.

In many cases, the party can revisit a partially successful challenge. A time of waiting (usually 24 hours) should be established and the complexity revised based on the current attitude of the creature. The skill checks should reflect changes from the previous situation; the characters may need to discover some new information, defeat a foe, or perform some act of service in order to proceed.

ACCEPTABLE SKILLS

Not all creatures will respond to the same skills; the heroes should choose accordingly. For example, a princess may consider Bluff, Diplomacy, and Athletics more important than History or Arcana, while an old ex-fighter from the battle-torn wastes may put a high premium on Intimidate and Nature.

It may also be appropriate to incorporate a combat encounter in the challenge. For example, a warlord may be swayed by how the heroes respond to a barroom brawl. A suggested best mix will be provided in some encounters, but most of these interactions are impromptu and will require your best judgment. For more information on skill challenges, please consult the D&D 4E DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE.

SETTING APPROPRIATE DCs

As a quick option for moderate difficulty changes, set a DC 10 for heroic tier challenges, DC 17 in the paragon tier, and DC 24 in the epic tier. Increase the DC by 5 to reflect a harder challenge. These DCs will favor the heroes' success. DCs for these skill challenges

can also be derived using the Difficulty Class and Damage by Level table in the Additional Rules section of the D&D 4E DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE.

MAGIC EVOLVED

WONDROUS MAGICS

The Lands of the Burning Sky have a history of powerful magic; in some cases, magic more powerful than that seen in a baseline D&D world. The secrets of easy access to these powers have been long lost, but some students of the arcane have begun to tap into them with new approaches. The studies are dangerous, and, as with alchemists who seek to turn lead into gold, the cost can be high in coin, blood, and sanity. These magical forces are not meant to be commonplace and after encountering them the heroes may never see or be able to replicate them again.

Some of these wondrous magics are an orb that is able to create hurricanes, a seagoing galleon that can teleport, and even the Torch of the Burning Sky itself. Though not designed as standard artifacts, their legend and power are formidable.

CHARMS

Certain long-term charms encountered throughout the saga are also not available to the heroes. At no time will these powers be used against them, but some adversaries will have influenced other NPCs with them. Little that can be done to remove such a charm, and unless the proof is overwhelming, most arcanists will laugh at the suggestion that a spell or device to create such charms even exists at all. This magic is not available to the players. Burn the scrolls, break the machines, or have the dragon eat the ritual book — this effect is a story device, not a rules addition.

WARSPELL MAGIC

Warspell magic is cooperative in nature and turns daily attack powers into powerful rituals for use on the battlefield. A group of up to six spellcasters performs a ritual to increase the effectiveness of a ranged or area attack power.

ATTITUDE EXPLANATIONS

Attitude	Description	Possible Actions
Hostile	Will take risks to hurt you	Attack, interfere, berate, flee
Unfriendly	Wishes you ill	Mislead, gossip, insult
Wary	Believes you are dangerous	Avoid, watch suspiciously, mislead
Indifferent	Doesn't much care	Socially polite or accepted interaction
Friendly	Wishes you well	Chat, advise, offer limited help, advocate
Helpful	Will take risks to help you	Protect, back up, heal, aid

HEROIC FEAT: WARSPELLER

You can turn a daily power into a battlefield ritual.

Prerequisite: Member of a class that has Arcana or Religion as a trained skill; have the power prepared

Benefit: Up to six spellcasters with the Warspeller feat and the same prepared power may modify a daily attack power’s effectiveness on the battlefield. For each participant, the power’s range, damage dice, and radius of effect are all increased by 1.

The ritual can be modified by using healing surges. For each surge spent, the range, damage, or radius can be improved by 1, by taking 1 point from another attribute. A group of four wizards spending healing surges could thus cast a wizard’s *stinking cloud* spell (Wizard Attack 5) as a burst 3 within 20 squares that deals 9d10 + the caster’s INT modifier damage. If they cast the spell without spending healing surges, it would be a burst 5 within 23 squares that deals 4d10 + caster’s INT modifier damage.

The ritual takes 1 minute per participant to perform. Each participant uses the spell when the ritual is completed.



THE BURNING SKY

The Torch of the Burning Sky, an artifact with teleportation powers, is closely tied to the barrier between planes as well as to a fiery portion of the Elemental Chaos. An assassin intentionally damaged the Torch when Emperor Coaltongue was killed. The planar boundary is now suffused with energy from fires within the Elemental Chaos, which has two effects: climate change and teleportation dangers.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Things are getting colder. The campaign starts in early winter, and there is no spring in sight for Ragesia and the lands bordering it. Druids sense something is amiss, and the sky is filled with flocks of confused birds trying to flee this unnatural winter. Late in the campaign saga, temperatures in the region are perpetually below freezing, with some areas even colder. By the campaign’s finale, the heroes will have a chance to end the winter, and for a few months, spring renews the land, until the natural turn of seasons again takes its course.

TELEPORTATION AND PLANAR TRAVEL

Teleportation and other forms of planar travel are hot and dangerous. This effect, which will come to be known as the Burning Sky, has a limited effect on travel between planes and teleportation within the material world.

NON-COMBAT PLANAR SHIFTS

Whenever a creature undergoes non-combat related planar travel to or from the lands involved in this campaign, that creature takes 4d6 points of fire damage. Creatures arrive in a small burst of flame, enough to easily alert onlookers. This affects all summoning, calling, and teleportation spells that bring a creature from one plane to another.

WORLD TELEPORTATION EFFECTS

The Burning Sky has a greater effect on travel across the world. This has created quite a problem for the Shahalesti and their *fey step* ability, as well all characters who make use of teleportation.

CHAOTIC TELEPORTATION

Even short-range teleport powers deal fire damage to the traveler, although fire resistance or immunity can mitigate this damage. The damage is applied after the teleport is

completed. After a teleportation and until the start of their next turn, the traveler’s melee weapon gains a +5 fire damage bonus.

Teleporting 100 feet or greater increases the fire damage effects, but not the accompanying damage bonus for melee weapons.

Bypassing this danger typically involves either transforming into a creature immune to fire or using a spell to grant fire resistance. Desperate characters might climb into a bag of holding and let the wizard hope he has protections to withstand the heat of the journey.

The reach of the Burning Sky is up to you, but it covers the entire region of Ragesia and the nations surrounding it. Characters who wish to teleport outside the area during the campaign will have to sail or hike outside the reach of the Burning Sky.

Distance	Damage
100–1,000 ft.	50 fire damage
1,000 ft.–1 mile	100 fire damage
1–10 miles	150 fire damage
10–100 miles	200 fire damage
100–1,000 miles	300 fire damage
1,000 miles or more	500 fire damage

DESIGN NOTES

The damage that results from teleportation is designed to make all teleport travel equally dangerous, including that used by eladrin and fey pact warlocks. As GM, you must decide whether to apply this damage in combat encounters. The mechanics of an encounter will not suffer if some combat actions ignore the fire damage, but this campaign assumes the Burning Sky is a serious problem that affects all within the region. The extra fire damage benefit of the Burning Sky does promote some originality, and teleporting an enemy can be an effective battlefield tactic. The damage bonus is meant to offset the hit points lost and it ultimately presents an intriguing trade-off for enterprising players.

OPTION FOR LOW LEVELS

If you decide combat teleportation at the heroic level causes too much damage, then allow 10 squares of movement without damage, and assign 1 point of fire damage for each square over 10 traveled. This suggestion also applies to the heroes’ enemies. The easiest way to explain this to your players is to suggest that teleportation is partly powered by life energies, and they form a protective cocoon around the individual within 50 feet of travel.

NEW EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS

HAND CLAW

One-handed simple melee weapon

Prof. +2

Damage 1d6

Price 5 gp

Weight 1 lb.

Group Unarmed

Properties Off-hand

Note Worn on the back of the hand, this weapon leaves the wielder's hand free to grasp items and perform spell gestures, though they cannot use the claw as a weapon while holding anything else in the hand. Effectively this is a slashing spiked gauntlet. This weapon occupies the hands slot for magic items.

HEAD SLOT ITEMS

INQUISITOR'S MASK

Inquisitors believe that their masks protect their souls from hostile magic. Male Inquisitors favor masks carved to resemble (or actually made from) bear skulls, while female Inquisitors prefer ones that look more like heavily-decorated masquerade masks.

Inquisitor's Mask Level 15

Item Slot Head 25,000 gp

Property Gain a +4 item bonus to Intimidate checks. Gain a +3 Will defense bonus against charm attacks. Take a -2 item penalty to Diplomacy checks. As a free action, you may alter your voice to make it sound more menacing and feral.

Inquisitor's Mask, Lesser Level 5

Item Slot Head 1,000 gp

Property Gain a +1 item bonus to Intimidate checks. Take a -2 item penalty to Diplomacy checks. You may alter your voice as a free action to sound more menacing and feral.

Note These masks are given to novice Inquisitors.



NEW MONSTER SUBTYPE

TRILLITH

The trillith are one of the key antagonists in *War of the Burning Sky*. These creatures are the manifested dreams of a dragon whose dreams have the ability to become reality. Each trillith spawned has a unique nature and personality associated with a theme like Justice or Foresight or even Deception; each is named in the saga based on its nature.

TRILLITH RACIAL FEATURES

Trillith are a race of dream-spawned monsters that lack bodies of their own. Every trillith has a visual appearance that is unique to it based on its nature. The trillith's stats and abilities match its form, but normally a trillith is completely insubstantial and cannot easily affect the material world. However, a trillith can create a body for itself if it has appropriate material, and some magic can turn a trillith substantial.

When viewed through a True Form ritual (see the *War of the Burning Sky Player's Guide*), a trillith appears as a wispy, sinuous dragon with no wings. However, a trillith normally appears as some sort of monstrous creature or disguises itself in a humanoid form. Each trillith only has a single monstrous and a single humanoid form. In all its forms, a trillith's appearance is still determined by its nature, so a trillith that normally takes the form of a flaming stag would look fiery in its draconic true form, and its humanoid form might be a mighty orc with antlers, dressed in red furs.

Throughout the course of the campaign, it will be discovered the trillith have psychic powers that can cause a permanent charm to be placed on a creature. This charm is symbiotic in nature, and a trillith will seek a creature with similar traits to its own, attempting to possess the target permanently. Once accomplished, the trillith will direct and guide the creature with all the extra benefits that a trillith has. The creature possessed loses its free will and is effectively an NPC to be directed by the GM.

TRILLITH TRAITS AND POWERS

Knowing the dream that spawned a particular trillith provides a +5 bonus to all skill challenge checks concerning that trillith. In combat, this knowledge adds Vulnerable 10 psychic to the trillith beyond what it may already have.

Trillith are naturally insubstantial, but can use material items to create an embodiment of themselves or project an image that is different from their natural form. Additionally, they are hard to kill and rejuvenate over time. All trillith speak Draconic.

Trillith do not sleep, and they do not need to eat or breathe unless they are trapped in a physical form. The nature of a given trillith can change over time, and if a trillith's personality alters significantly, it may change its powers and appearance as well as its name. Such a change is very rare, and seldom happens more than once in a given trillith's life.

✓ Embodied Composition (std, at-will) ♦

Polymorph

Move over an object or objects equal to trillith's size and use a standard action after the move to create a material form from the objects. The trillith's natural appearance is retained, so if it normally appears as a human with tentacles for arms and legs, the final shape will reflect that, whether it is made of sawdust, a pool of blood or dead fish.

An embodied composition loses the insubstantial resistance.

A trillith can spend a standard action to release its embodied form and become insubstantial unless prevented by a power.

▶ Project Image (std; at-will)

A trillith that is insubstantial can project an appearance into the material world. Each trillith has a choice to appear as a single humanoid or single monstrous creature. Most trillith prefer to keep their natural form unless they need to conceal their identities or want to avoid disturbing people.

▶ Rejuvenation

As trillith are creatures of dream and not of flesh, it is hard to kill them. If a trillith (or its host) is reduced to 0 hit points or less, it does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later.

BOONS

All trillith have a unique power that can be given to a creature. A *boon* provides an extra power to a character and is lost when the trillith dies or chooses to remove it. If it dies, its *boon* power is removed from any accepting creatures and redistributed in a burst of energy that radiates outward from its corpse. Each *boon* is unique for each trillith and is provided in the adventure modules.

✔ **Grant Boon** (std; at-will)

A trillith can confer its *boon* power to a number of humanoid creatures equal to its Charisma ability score bonus. It must touch a willing creature; creatures with an Intelligence score of 4 or less are automatically willing. While under the effect of a *boon*, any damage sustained by the target is also suffered by the trillith as psychic damage. The trillith can remove the *boon* as a minor action.

◀ **Death Boon** (imm int; when the trillith is reduced to 0 hp)

Close Burst 10 (ignore concealment and cover); targets all creatures; +10 vs. Will; 1d10 psychic damage, and the trillith's *boon* is given to the target until it is used or until the end of the next extended rest.

SYMBIOTIC POSSESSION

All trillith have an attack which triggers the *symbiotic possession* disease. Depending on the level and power of the trillith, the disease may be easy or hard to resist. For example, the trillith Deception (15th level) has the following attack and disease. Other trillith will have similar features.

✔ **Psychic Symbiosis** (std; at-will) ♦ Disease

+20 vs. Will; 1d10+6 psychic damage, and the target contracts *Deception's possession* (see below).

Deception's Possession Level 15 Disease

Endurance improve DC 23, maintain DC 18, worsen DC 17 or lower

- ▲ The target is cured
- ▲▼ **Initial** The target takes a -2 penalty to Will.
- ▲▼ The target is dominated by Deception at the start of an encounter or skill challenge (save ends). The target suffers a -2 penalty to the saving throw.
- ▼ **Final** The target is fully possessed by Deception and no longer has any free will until Deception leaves the target.

KILLING A TRILLITH

A trillith can permanently die in only two ways: if it dies while trapped by a *song of forms*, or if all the damage it suffers in a single combat is psychic damage.

A trillith killed while trapped by a *song of forms* remains in its material form. In addition, its *death boon* ability is automatically triggered.

NEW MAGIC

THE SONG OF FORMS

In the second adventure of the campaign saga, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*, the party encounters a group of fey, the seela, who sing a magical song, the Song of Forms. The seela originally used this song in prayers to the spirit of their forest, believing that they could give the forest a body so they could see its physically-embodied majesty. When the ruler of Shahalesti put their forest to the torch, the seela called out to the forest spirit for help, but their song conjured something they did not expect. This song and the Elemental Voice feat that allows it can only be learned from the seela.

ELEMENTAL VOICE

You have the elemental ability to sing across the planes.

Prerequisite: Trained in Arcana and Insight, CHA 13+, speak Elven

Benefit: You are able to sing *song of forms* feat powers.

Special: You can gain this feat as a bonus feat at any level when it is taught by the fey of the Fire Forest of Innenotdar.

Song of Forms: Corporeal Cantata

A haunting song fills the astral sea around you and the thrum of its power draws the insubstantial into the material.

Feat Power ♦ Elemental, Implement (orb, instrument, or weapon)

Standard Action; Encounter

Close Burst 10

At 11th Level Burst 15

At 21st Level Burst 20

Target Each insubstantial creature in burst

Attack CHA vs. Fortitude

Hit For each creature made substantial, the caster takes a number of hit points of damage equal to the creature's level as he uses his own life energy to create the change. The creature becomes substantial for as long as the song is sung. A creature with "resist insubstantial" currently possessing another creature cannot leave its host.

Creatures that have a shape in their insubstantial form assume that shape in material form. If the shape permits certain move actions, like flying, it can use those actions. For creatures with no defined form, some form of locomotion is created to allow



it to move. The base speed is 6 squares. The creature retains all its attacks except for those that allow it to become insubstantial again. If the creature has no standard melee attack, treat it as using an unarmed weapon (or a slam attack).

If the creature is possessing a target and the target dies, the possessing creature immediately becomes corporeal, is bloodied and dazed (save ends); it is also weakened for the duration of the encounter.

Sustain Minor The song persists. The caster must make a saving throw or take 1 hp of damage for each remaining creature made substantial.

Special After using the song, the caster is exposed to *astral ripple sickness*. See the rules on disease in the D&D 4E DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE.

Astral Ripple Sickness Level 3 Disease

Your life energy is disrupted by ripples in the Astral Sea.

Attack +5 vs. Fortitude

Endurance improve DC 20, maintain DC 15, worsen DC 14 or lower

- ▲ The target is cured.
- ▲▼ **Initial** The target loses one healing surge that it cannot regain until cured.
- ▲▼ The target is weakened.
- ▼ **Final** The target permanently loses a Constitution point.

SAMPLE NPCs

Throughout the heroic tier of play, the heroes escort or work with various NPCs who can easily step into an encounter and help “save the day.”

TORRENT

The most prominent one is a young cleric woman named Torrent. It is through her that the heroes start their epic journey and learn of the threats the Lands face.

As tall and strong as the typical warrior, Torrent is a distinctive looking woman with tanned skin and short white hair. Under a dark winter coat she wears a breastplate decorated with blue wave-like etchings, and a holy symbol to a sea god is tied to her wrist with a leather cord. Her demeanor is smooth but forceful, like an ocean wave.

When first met, Torrent is attempting to prove herself within her faith by delivering vital intelligence stolen from the Ragesians to the growing resistance movement centered in Seaquen. Her previous missions have been successful and she is confident that she has planned for every contingency. You should play her as mostly cool and resolute, but when things go wrong, her veneer of self-assurance cracks and she will view any concerns or questions as criticism. If her leadership is openly attacked, she will become defensive and possibly play the role of a martyr, attempting to prove her worth all the more through reckless decisions and foolhardy fighting.

When in control, Torrent takes on the air of a delegating leader. At heart she feels she is a battle cleric, but her latest training places her learning the gentler aspects of her god. Her current mentor is Lee Sidoneth, a caretaker of water based in Seaquen, whose many observations revolve around the sea and the shore. Torrent tends to quote his sayings often. As part of her current training, Torrent will tend to the wounded or dying before engaging in battle. She shares no party XP unless she becomes bloodied and simply advances in level when the heroes do. Torrent is not afraid to shout out orders to help the heroes notice a tactical error or take advantage of an opening. As the GM, she is your conduit to help the players fulfill their class roles and make an effective party.

If a hero is knocked out or killed during an encounter, you may opt to give the player temporary control of Torrent. This keeps the battle running, and streamlines play until the

character revives or a suitable replacement can be fit into the story.

Overall, Torrent immerses the players in the Lands by providing plot guidance, healing, and character replacement at critical moments. She will take a less prominent role as the heroes grow in stature and fame, but appears again towards the saga’s end. Hopefully, you will enjoy playing her as much as the players enjoy their own characters. ☺

Torrent

Level 2 Controller (Leader) • XP 125
Medium natural humanoid (human)

Initiative +1; Senses Perception +4

HP 37; Bloodied 18

AC 18; Fortitude 14, Reflex 12, Will 15

Speed 5

☑ **Battleaxe** (std; at-will)

+6 vs. AC; 1d10+3 damage. Add +1 damage when used two-handed.

✓ **Watermark** (std; at-will) ♦

Divine

Your attack is divinely favored; one of your companions receives your god’s guidance.

+6 vs. AC; 1d10+3 damage, and one ally within 5 squares of Torrent gains a one-time +2 power bonus on an attack roll against the target until the end of Torrent’s next turn.

✓ **Crashing Wave** (std; enc) ♦ Divine, Force

The boldness of your attack is like a wave crashing over your enemy.

+6 vs. AC; 1d10+3 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Torrent’s next turn.

✓ **Tidal Force** (std; at-will) ♦ Divine, Force, Implement

The blast of force that strikes your foe gives pause to your enemies, and one of your allies takes advantage of the moment.

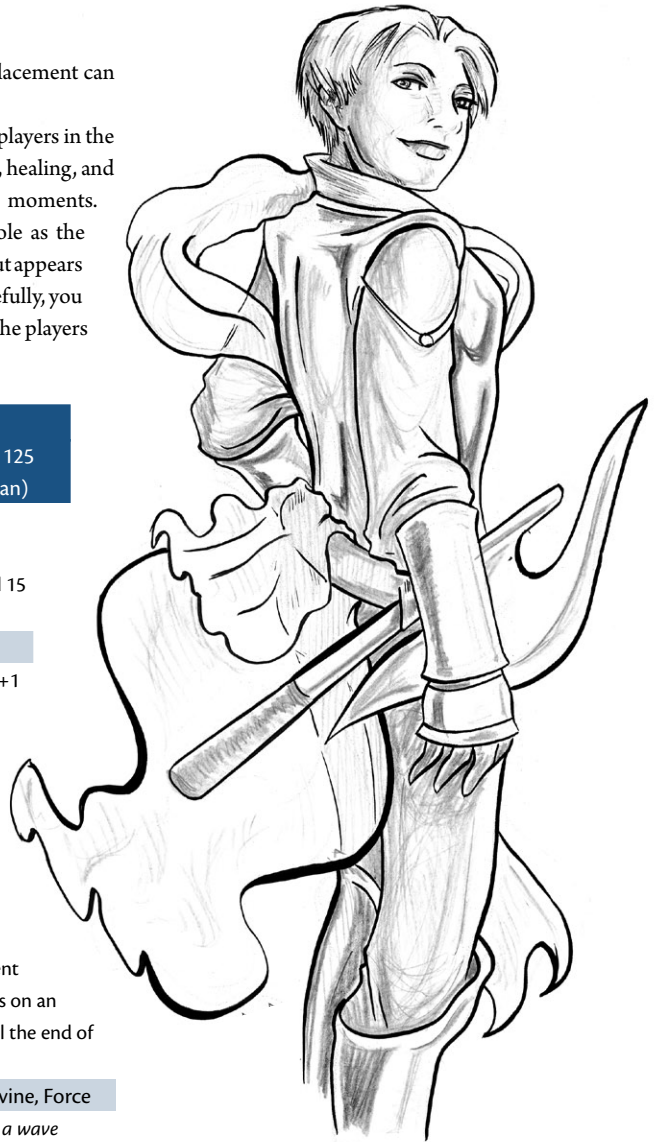
Ranged 10, +7 vs. Reflex; 1d8+4 force damage (crit 12), and one ally Torrent can see may shift one square as a free action.

✓ **Healing Word** (minor; 2/enc [1/rd]) ♦ Healing

Ranged 5; the target spends a healing surge and adds another 1d6 + 3 hit points.

☞ **Refreshing Wave** (std; daily) ♦ Divine, Healing, Implement

As you smite your enemies, the favor of your god washes over you and your companions, giving back life for the righteous cause.



Close Burst 3; targets enemies; +7 vs. Will; 1d6+4 damage (crit 10), and the target is weakened until the end of its next turn. All allies in the burst regain 5 hit points; Torrent adds +5 hit points to all her healing powers until the end of the encounter.

☞ **Turn Undead** (std; enc) ♦ Divine, Implement, Radiant

Close Burst 2; targets all undead in burst; +7 vs. Will, 1d10+4 radiant damage (crit 14), and the target is pushed 6 squares and immobilized until the end of Torrent’s next turn.

Alignment Good; **Languages** Common

Skills Athletics +7, Diplomacy +7, Heal +9, Religion +6

Str 15(+3) **Dex** 10(+1) **Wis** 16(+4)

Con 13(+2) **Int** 11(+1) **Cha** 13(+2)

Equipment Battleaxe, chainmail armor





War of the Burning Sky Campaign Guide

War of the Burning Sky is a high fantasy campaign saga that thrusts the player characters into a war of mythic proportions. Ever-escalating conflicts, powered by mighty magic and fervent faith, threaten the heroes' freedom and lives, and even the world itself.

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