

LEGENDARY ADVENTURES 5

# ROAD TO WAR

## THE EQUINOX CROWN



By **JIM GROVES AND NEIL SPICER**



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## The Equinox Crown

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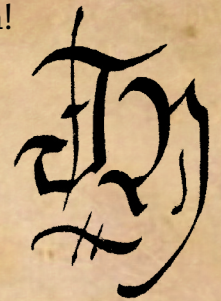
# WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE ROAD TO WAR:

## The Equinox Crown

When the fiendish forces of the Abyss and their malevolent mortal minions unleash unholy war upon an unsuspecting world, true heroes are required to stand in the breach and reclaim what was lost in their onslaught. Ancient kingdoms left in ruins by the forerunners of this interplanar invasion may have left long-lost treasures of knowledge and power that can fortify the crusaders of today to push back the powers of corrupted chaos and insensate evil. *The Equinox Crown*, a relic of the elder druid circles of the north, may be a key in thwarting the swarming hosts of the Locust Lord, and your heroes uncover clues to its whereabouts even as they must lead an incursion into hostile territory to reclaim a fallen fortress. In a battle the world dare not lose, your heroes must keep their faith and weapons at the ready on the *Road to War!*

**Road to War** is a 5th Edition adventure for 6th to 7th-level characters, which can be run as a traditional end-to-end narrative

or separated into episodic elements that are intertwined throughout the heroes' other adventures. It can easily be integrated into any 5E campaign where Abyssal enemies have run amok, using the quest for the *Equinox Crown* as a touchstone to connect a series of richly detailed and cunningly designed events that offer them the chance not only for heroic adventure but to establish themselves as true leaders in military and political landscape of the campaign world. The Legendary Games tradition is to combine rich story and background, innovative layout, beautiful aesthetics, and excellence in design that is second to none. This product is the latest in that tradition, and we hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed making it. Game on!



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## INTRODUCTION

Road to War assumes a great military crusade is waging war against the fiendish powers dominating the once verdant druid lands of Ancient Sarkulis. As holy crusaders march into enemy territory to recapture a location of vital strategic importance, a number of obstacles bar their way. Road to War defines these challenges with additional encounters and opportunities for the PCs to gain XP. Designed for levels 6th through 7th, this plugin's encounters don't represent a single, self-contained adventure. They can, however, specifically augment the campaign by widening the experiences of the Demonic Incursion when taken together. The adventure also features a unique sub-plot in the form of a new legendary item called the Equinox Crown, which the PCs can acquire and unlock as they play through the encounters. Road to War also includes full details on how to completely awaken this item for the larger campaign and wield its power against the demons overrunning Ancient Sarkulis.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The *Road to War* starts immediately after the heroes and their allies fend off a major attack by demons and their minions against the city where their crusade first began. The PCs receive command of a small army with orders to retake an important fortress behind enemy lines. Their initial march brings them to a devastated village in the north, occupied by fearful refugees. These villagers look to the PCs as saviors come to retake and defend their homes, but the crusaders must convince them to flee the fiendish outbreak before demons overrun their position. The villagers also share that winged demons stole an ancestral relic from their town and beseech them to prevent this item from falling into the hands of the Abyssal horde. The following night, the crusader encampment suffers an attack by the same hala demons which destroyed the village, leading to an opportunity to recover this relic—a dormant, legendary item once belonging to the druids of Ancient Sarkulis, known as the *Equinox Crown*.

As the PCs continue north, officers of their army soon call on them to adjudicate a matter of desertion, having captured a group of soldiers fleeing the front lines. Unaware that these men carry a demonic pestilence, they bring them before the PCs for judgment, putting the entire camp in danger. After dealing with this fiendish ploy, the PCs lead their army west and enter the

## EXPERIENCE COUNTS

We feel these short adventures work best using the milestone method of rewarding experience and gaining levels. Instead of tracking each individual number, concentrate more on the story and just level up each character at the conclusion of each adventure. You are certainly welcome to reward experience points as you go, whatever you and your players will have more fun with.

Demon Lands. The road ahead requires the heroes to scout for a safe passage through the treacherous countryside, bringing them into conflict with a territorial frost drake and a cunning ettin.

From there, the *Road to War* assumes the PCs successfully retake the demon-held fortress they were sent to reclaim, consequently using it as forward base from which to launch their own forays against the fiendish tide. However, establishing full control of the region requires one final task associated with the *Equinox Crown*. An otherworldly terror plagues a circle of standing stones once held as a holy site among the druids of Ancient Sarkulis. To free this site of demonic taint, the PCs must contend with a confused elemental and its battle against a derakni creating further tears in the fabric of reality between Sarkulis and the Abyss. Defeating this corruption not only prevents an unspeakable plague from descending on their fortress, but it also unlocks the true potential of the *Equinox Crown*, giving the PCs an all-new weapon in the war against the Abyss.

### A. REFUGEES (CHALLENGE 3)

**Distance from starting city:** 25 miles

**Travel time for army from starting city:** 1 day

Northeast of the city where the Demonic Incursion first struck, the PCs and their army should reach a small village set among unusually verdant and agriculturally sustainable farmland. The village was founded prior to the Demonic Incursion by the adult daughter of a powerful druid trained in the traditions of Ancient Sarkulis named Vorian. The surrounding countryside remained fertile and encouraged the growth of orchards and fields of grain, such that the village once provided a key resource for supplying food to

## A Standing Army

While *Road to War* involves the PCs leading an army toward the crusader fortress deep behind enemy lines, for the purpose of the adventure this army operates in the background while the spotlight and the action of the adventure focus on the PCs and their actions, allowing them to showcase their talents in dramatic fashion. Nevertheless, some players may question their army's activities during these individual encounters, so the following suggestions may help define an appropriate backdrop explaining their presence, describing the army's actions that are occurring simultaneously with the PCs facing their own challenges.

**Encounter A.** This social encounter takes place in the army's presence with the town's citizens interacting with the soldiers and PCs alike.

**Encounter B.** This attack occurs at the army encampment where hala demons keep their army pinned down with weather-based, area attacks while three more individually assault the PCs.

**Encounter C.** This battle involves a massive swarm assaulting the PCs and their army simultaneously. While the soldiers suffer no lasting damage, the swarm prevents them from effectively contributing to the battle, leaving it to the PCs to take control of the situation.

**Encounter D.** This scene includes a large-scale battle with direct participation by the PCs and their army. Their army engages the bulk of the demonic forces that have the Condemned pinned down in a box canyon, while the PCs face off against an elite squad of demons. If the PCs are victorious, their army is likewise assumed to have driven off the remainder of the demons while taking substantial casualties. However, the rescued soldiers of the Condemned can be added to the PCs' army to replenish their numbers and fighting strength for the battles ahead.

**Encounter E.** After their advance scouts fail to report back, the PCs must blaze ahead to secure a safe passage for their army.

**Encounter F.** The individual scouting mission culminates with this encounter as the PCs defeat the last significant threat on the road ahead. The adventure assumes they rejoin their troops following this battle and continue their assigned mission to retake the demon-held fortress in the north.

**Encounter G.** This encounter can take place at any point after the PCs recapture the fortress, leaving their army behind to defend it while they continue exploring the surrounding Demon Lands.

the crusade. Unfortunately, the recent demonic outbreak has nearly decimated the town. A number of villagers and their families have taken refuge at nearby farms and homes located on the outskirts of town.

Deprived of news and a broader perspective on the war, they continue to hold out in the hope that help will arrive to drive off the hala demons lurking across the nearby river. For their part, the demons tarry on the far shore, gathering in strength before mounting an all-out assault meant to overwhelm the townsfolk.

When the PCs arrive, their army's presence brings a welcome reprieve from this threat. The townsfolk prove exceedingly grateful and welcoming, believing their salvation has finally come. Many press small gifts of food, free lodging, and repairs upon them in an effort to curry favor with the PCs and their troops. Any PC with the soldier or any military background who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence check can easily determine the town's defenses stand a poor chance of surviving another demon offensive. However, convincing the villagers to give up their homes and evacuate to the larger, more fortified cities of the south proves difficult. Anyone attempting to do so must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check, but others may assist these efforts with Help action to roll with advantage.

**Development:** The PCs may think to end the village's plight by arraying their forces to fight the demons, but any PC with a military Background (City Watch, Knight of the Order, Mercenary Veteran, Nobile Knight or Soldier for example) automatically realizes the folly of such a plan. The town no longer has an easy means to cross the rivers its only ferry was destroyed in the last battle. Additionally, based upon the villagers' description of the demons' tactics, the hala are unlikely to engage the PCs on anything but their own terms. With their night-vision and ability to fly, they won't risk a fight with an entire army during the daytime. It's also clear that a prolonged battle at this vulnerable village will only delay and hinder their army from successfully reaching its true goal—the heavily-defended fortress in the Demon Lands.

If the PCs successfully persuade the villagers to evacuate, one of the community's leaders also tells them about a sacred relic known as the *Equinox Crown*, stolen by the demons from a local shrine. The silver cirlet belonged to the legendary druid whose daughter founded the town centuries ago. The *Equinox Crown* has never evidenced any magic powers before, but the locals know it belonged to Ancient Sarkulis and fear what the demons might do with it. Even if the PCs cannot promise to restore

the village, they're asked to reclaim the *Equinox Crown* and keep it safe, if given the opportunity.

**Story Award:** If the PCs successfully convince the villagers to leave, award them XP equivalent to a challenge 3 encounter.

## B. NIGHT DEMONS (CHALLENGE 6)

**Distance from ruined village:** 27 miles

**Travel time for army from ruined village:** about 1 day

**Creatures:** The following night, the army campsite comes under attack from the same hala demons which harassed the ruined village. Unknown to the PCs, a spy among their troops slips away to send a *sending* spell to the demons. The spy effectively outlines the PCs' goals and movements to the hala demons so they can relay this information to the Demon Knights of Subversion. While a scattering of hala demons maintain their distance to create hailstorms to pummel the army itself, three others directly assault the PC's command tent, as pointed out to them by the spy. The demonic trio hopes to kill the upstarts before their quest can get fully underway.

### Hala Demon (2)

*Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 104 (12d8+24)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** lightning, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Abyssal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 4 (1100 XP)

**Magic Resistance.** The hala demon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Stormwind Aura.** Halas surround themselves with a buffering shroud of supernatural, windstorm-force winds. These winds shield a hala from any other wind effects and form a shell of breathable air around it, allowing it to breathe underwater. Ranged



weapons and gases directed toward a hala are affected as the spell *wind wall*.

**Vengeful Wind.** Anytime a hala takes damage from a critical hit, a powerful blast of wind and lightning explodes forth in the direction of the attacker. This is a 30 foot cone. Creatures in the area must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (3d6) lightning damage.

**Spellcasting.** The hala demon's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). The hala demon can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *gust of wind*

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The hala demon makes three attacks, one with its bite and two with its claws

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage.

**Hailstorm (recharge 5-6).** A hala can call down hailstones from surrounding clouds. To use this ability a hala must be outside and there must be clouds in the sky. These hailstones deal (3) 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage and (3) 1d6 points of cold damage to all creatures within a 20 foot radius in an area it can see that has no overhead cover. A successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw halves the total damage.

**Treasure:** One of the hala demons carries a *bag of holding* (type I) containing the *Equinox Crown*, a *potion of blur*, *scrolls of lesser restoration* and *energy resistance* (fire), 87 gp, 44 sp, three rubies worth 100 gp each, a silver canister worth 50 gp holding three separate vials of holy water, a pair of loaded gambling dice, and a *feather token* (fan).

## C. DESERTERS (Challenge 6)

**Travel time from previous night's campsite:** 4 miles

**Travel time for army from previous night's campsite:**

About 1 hour, 45 minutes

The late morning after the hala demon attack (**Encounter B**), scouts return to the main army with three captured deserters from the front lines named Nandus, Olen, and Rezzik. They present these prisoners to the PCs for judgment, and a crowd of onlookers soon gathers. Whether in public view or out of sight for interrogation, the deserters all tell the same tale without exception. They fled their last battle against a superior army of cultists and their demon allies, claiming all others were killed or scattered into the countryside. They explain the demonic leaders displayed an extreme appetite for abusing their captured victims and each deserter fled rather than face such torture. When presented, each still has their armor but has had their weapons and gear confiscated.

**Creatures:** One of these captives, a soldier named **Nandus Tarn** (use SRD statistics for a **knight**) tells a more detailed story than the others about the horrors inflicted by the demon leaders. This results from personal experience, as their forces captured him when he tried to flee. He endured horrendous torture before they surprisingly let him go. They only did so, however, to use him as a cruel ruse meant to spread fear and panic among the crusader ranks. For Nandus now carries a unique parasitic infection of Abyssal larvae inside him.

PCs can try Wisdom (Insight) checks on each deserter, but a successful DC 16 check reveals only the truthfulness of their hardships and cowardice. A successful check while questioning Nandus, however, also discerns his distracted demeanor and unhealthy pallor. Despite these outward concerns, discovering his larval infection is much more difficult, requiring a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check. A successful examination reveals his condition, but also determines he's beyond any immediate help. The GM should proceed immediately to the encounter described below, but with no chance for the swarms Nandus is about to unwittingly unleash to gain surprise.

Whether the PCs interrogate or punish him, Nandus eventually grows sick and vomits forth a fiendish locust swarm which engulfs the PCs, gaining surprise. When Nandus first begins to choke and cough, PCs who make successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) checks receive enough warning to realize something is terribly wrong and remain unsurprised by the swarm. On the subsequent round, more swarms erupt as Nandus' skin sloughs away under the parasitic onslaught of his infection, releasing a veritable cloud of demonic locusts into the crusader camp. The swarms attack the PCs as well as the soldiers, driving most of the crusaders into their tents. Fending off the locusts proves difficult as they move over and among the encampment where area attacks endanger the PCs' forces as much as the swarms themselves.

## Fiendish Locust Swarm (2)

*Medium swarm of tiny beasts, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 84 (13d8+26)

**Speed** 30ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	13(+1)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	11 (-5)

**Damage Resistances** cold, fire, bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** blindsight 15ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** -

**Challenge** 4 (1100 XP)

**Magical Resistance.** The swarm has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another



## D. CONDEMNATION'S END (CHALLENGE 8)


Following the route northeast the PCs cross a river ford enroute to an important strategic location, a small border town on the edge of the Demonic Incursion. Twenty miles northeast of the ford, scouts belonging to the PCs' army encounter **Garidan Sharne** (use SRD statistics for a [bandit captain](#)) and escort him to their attention. Garidan salutes the PCs and identifies himself as a sergeant from a battalion of convicted criminals known as the Condemned all of whom received pardons in exchange for enlisting in the crusades. The Condemned were assigned to a greater field commander named **Darvan Bataari** (use SRD statistics for a [knight](#)), a disdainful noble who often complained of having to accommodate the Condemned, and resented their presence alongside his more valued knights. Darvan was tasked with patrolling the only road between the ford and border town to the northeast. When he received reports of a demon army headed for the ford, he decided their forces should ride to its defense.

Unfortunately, Darvan planned to rid himself of the Condemned by having them harry the demon army into chasing them towards the cliffside canyons to the west—a dead-end sure to pin them down until the demons overwhelmed them. For his part, Darvan and his knights were to circle behind, breaking through to the south to reinforce the ford and eventually assault the demon army pursuing the Condemned in a two-pronged pincher strategy. Garidan reports this maneuver never happened. Instead, the Condemned became trapped without Darvan's reinforcements. Garidan volunteered to slip away from the siege to seek help and to determine why Darvan never followed through on the plan. Now, he seeks the PCs' assistance in locating Darvan and saving the Condemned.

Assuming the PCs travel northeast to where Darvan's company was last seen by Garidan, read the following description:

A chill wind sweeps across the swollen river, ruffling the pitched banners and pennants of hundreds of dead and dying men strewn across a ravaged battlefield. The reinforcements supposedly heading for the ford have been annihilated. Trampled and burned tents, as well as other camp fixtures, call into question whether these crusaders ever broke camp before the demons slaughtered them.

At this sight, Garidan swears loudly and begins searching



creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

### ACTIONS

**Bites.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 26 (6d8+2) piercing damage or (14) 3d8+2 piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

**Development:** If the other two deserters survive, the PCs are within their rights under law to arrest and imprison them—or even see them executed, without risk of alignment violation. Compassionate PCs however may redeem them as well. By pointing out that Nandus's fate is what every man, woman, and child faces without good people coming together and taking a stand, the PCs can persuade the remaining deserters to rediscover their courage and join their army. The GM can adjudicate this through good roleplaying or a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) skill check for each deserter.

**Story Award:** Grant the PCs 200 XP for each redeemed deserter.

among the bodies for any of the knights who still clings to life. He finds at least one soldier who makes a deathbed confession: Darvan ordered his knights to stand fast, making clear his intention to abandon and sacrifice the Condemned in order to weaken the demons chasing them and delay their arrival at the ford. The field commander thought his knights could then hold out on their own until more reinforcements (such as the PCs) arrived from the south. In this way, Darvan's knights would suffer the least casualties—and Darvan could appear as the heroic leader who weathered the assault and held onto the strategic river crossing. With this revelation, Garidan makes an impassioned plea to the PCs that his soldiers deserve better than the grisly death Darvan's vanity has brought them. If the PCs consent, 5 miles to the west they can locate the box canyon where a platoon of schir demons (goat-headed humanoids covered in a mangy gray hide) continue to assault the surviving members of the Condemned. While the soldiers fight off the army, four demons confront the PCs.

## Schir Demon (4)

*Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 102 (12d8+24)

**Speed** 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)	6 (-3)

**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** lightning, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Abyssal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 4 (1100 XP)

**Magic Resistance.** The schir demon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Spellcasting.** The schir demon's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 10). The schir demon can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *see invisibility*, *tongues*

3/day: *arcane lock*, *protection from evil and good*

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Schir demon makes two attacks with its

barbed halberd.

**Barbed Halberd.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d10+3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw against disease or suffer disadvantage on all Strength attack rolls, ability checks and skill checks. After every long rest the creature must repeat the saving throw; a success cures the disease. The disadvantage remains until the disease is cured.

**Treasure:** If the PCs help defeat the demon army and rescue the Condemned, Garidan vows to repay them, returning to the riverside massacre to locate Darvan's body next to his tattered war banner. He then provides them with Darvan's suit of +1 *full plate*. The knight's +1 *longsword* also lies a few feet away, but it has been sundered in combat. The GM may decide that the PCs, with the proper tools and proficiencies, can repair the sword (named *Hemel*, "whose blade can never be tarnished or stained"). Garidan offers these treasures to the PCs in thanks. If, for some reason, the PCs refused to help Garidan, the GM should consider these items to have been claimed by the demon army which slaughtered Darvan and his knights.

**Development:** Tragically, too few of the Condemned remain to form their own army again. But Garidan vouches for their courage, determination, and unconventional strategies. If the PCs accept them, they may add remnants of the Condemned to their army.

## 3. Hunter in the Sky (Challenge 7)

**Distance from a recently conquered holding:** 5 miles

**Army travel time from a recently conquered holding:** about 2 hours

The hills attain a much higher elevation here, giving a panoramic view of a river valley and its far shore to the south and east. A winding trail leads northeast before wrapping back west and a slow descent into a cloud-filled valley below.

The PCs and their army must march up a steep slope in order to crest the hills that separate the river valley the main horrors of the Demon Lands. Their army's scouts fail to return from the ridge and their commanders express concern the army cannot proceed into unknown territory without a navigable path. Rather than delays in doubling back, they suggest the more powerful PCs forge ahead to scout the ridge and clear the way. The army



scales the hills at a considerably slower pace anyway and the PCs should make better time without them. The GM should strongly encourage this plan, and point out some situations in the Demon Lands are better handled by smaller group of more powerful heroes. See the development below if the players prove unwilling to do so.

**Creatures:** A giant frost drake hunts the skies of this borderland, partially concealed in the low-lying clouds. This beast is fiercely territorial and has already had several battles against hala demons, causing the local fiends and their flying allies to give it a wide berth. When the PCs venture into the hills, it soon attacks where the trail descends toward the west.

Sections of the icy slope act as difficult terrain. Any PC without a means to safely walk on the ice who moves their normal speed to safely walk on the ice who moves their normal speed must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) skill check to remain upright. Moving at half speed does not provoke these checks. Failure means they fall prone and slide 1d4 squares in the direction of the downward slope. PCs who come in contact with other creatures pose no risk in knocking them prone. A sliding PC who cannot slide to an unoccupied square or reaches a square not covered in ice immediately stops sliding.

## Frost Drake

*Huge dragon (cold), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 147 (14d12+56)

**Speed** 20ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)

**Damage Immunities** cold

**Senses** darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** Draconic

**Challenge** 8 (3900 XP)

**Icewalking.** This ability works just like the spell spider climb, but the surfaces the drake climbs must be icy and icy terrain is never difficult for the drake.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The giant frost drake makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 15 (3d6+5) piercing damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 14 (2d8+5) bludgeoning damage.

**Freezing Mist Breath (recharge 5-6).** The frost drake



exhales a ball of liquid that bursts into a cloud of freezing mist up to 60 feet away. Each creature in the 20 foot radius must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. The mist cakes all surfaces in the area with a sheet of slippery ice that turns the area into difficult terrain for 1 minute.

**Development:** If the players stubbornly refuse to separate from their army despite the loss of their scouts, have the frost drake appear from the low-lying clouds to perform fly-over surprise attacks with its freezing mist breath weapon. With its formidable bite, flyby attacks, and total concealment among the clouds, the PCs are better off advancing and drawing the drake to ground, which it will never do when confronted by an entire army.

## F. GET AIN SURVIVALIST (CHALLENGE II)

Distance from site of the frost drake attack: 3 miles

**Travel time from site of the frost drake attack:** about an hour

The trail descends more sharply here before leveling out into a narrow ravine. Giant logs with scratch marks from some unknown beast lay anchored in the hardened mud, shoring up the embankment against landslides.

This gorge once served as a gathering place and training ground for the ancient druids of Sarkulis. Since the Demonic Incursion, it has lain fallow and unused by their cults. Several tracks, however, lead through the mud. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) skill check can identify they belong to a large grizzly bear (see **Traps** below).

Since no scouts have explored beyond the frost drake ridge, the army commanders are reluctant to press forward without once again knowing the trail ahead. They point out the risk a dead end canyon (such as the one the Condemned recently survived) which could delay their progress and leave the troops in a vulnerable position if another threat like the frost drake or more hala demons arrive. Everyone agrees this risk will be significantly reduced if the PCs advance ahead and ensure the path is clear. See the development below if they refuse to undertake this task.

**Creatures:** An embattled ettin with separate personalities called Junner and Vetter lies in wait here, along with his companion grizzly bear named Ripclaw. The ettin purposefully directed the bear to leave tracks to lure visitors into the pit trap, and both creatures have prepared an ambush for anyone trying to aid those who fall inside. Obsessed doomsday survivalists, Junner and Vetter are the last of their tribe, having weathered demons, monsters, and crusaders alike in their shared bid to eke out a living in the hills. Smarter than their regular kin, the ettin's two heads often debate the wisdom of living so close to the Demon Lands and hunting the hills. But, so far, Junner and Vetter have stood their own, surviving by stalking and eating any prey which wanders the trail.

**Trap:** The bear tracks lead directly through the middle of the trail where a cleverly disguised pit trap awaits. Those who fail a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 damage from the 30-foot drop.

**Treasure:** Junner and Vetter have collected an odd assortment of crusader shields and armor. While far undersized for the ettin, it keeps this collection strategically placed around the ravine to catch rainwater.

## Junner & Vetter, Advanced Ettin

*Large Giant, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (scavenged armor pieces)  
**Hit Points** 160 (20d10+60)  
**Speed** 40ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

**Senses** darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 9  
**Languages** Giant, Orc  
**Challenge** 8 (3900 XP)

**Two Heads.** The ettin has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned and knocked unconscious.

**Wakeful.** When one of the ettin's heads is asleep, its other head is awake.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The ettin makes two attacks: one with its battleaxe and one with its Morningstar, or twice with its javelins.

**Battleaxe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8+6) piercing damage.

**Morningstar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10+5) bludgeoning damage.

**Javelin.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage.

## Ripclaw, Man-Eating Grizzly Bear

*Large Beast, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 160 (20d10+60)  
**Speed** 40ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

**Skills** Perception +6  
**Senses** passive Perception 13  
**Languages** -  
**Challenge** 6 (2300 XP)

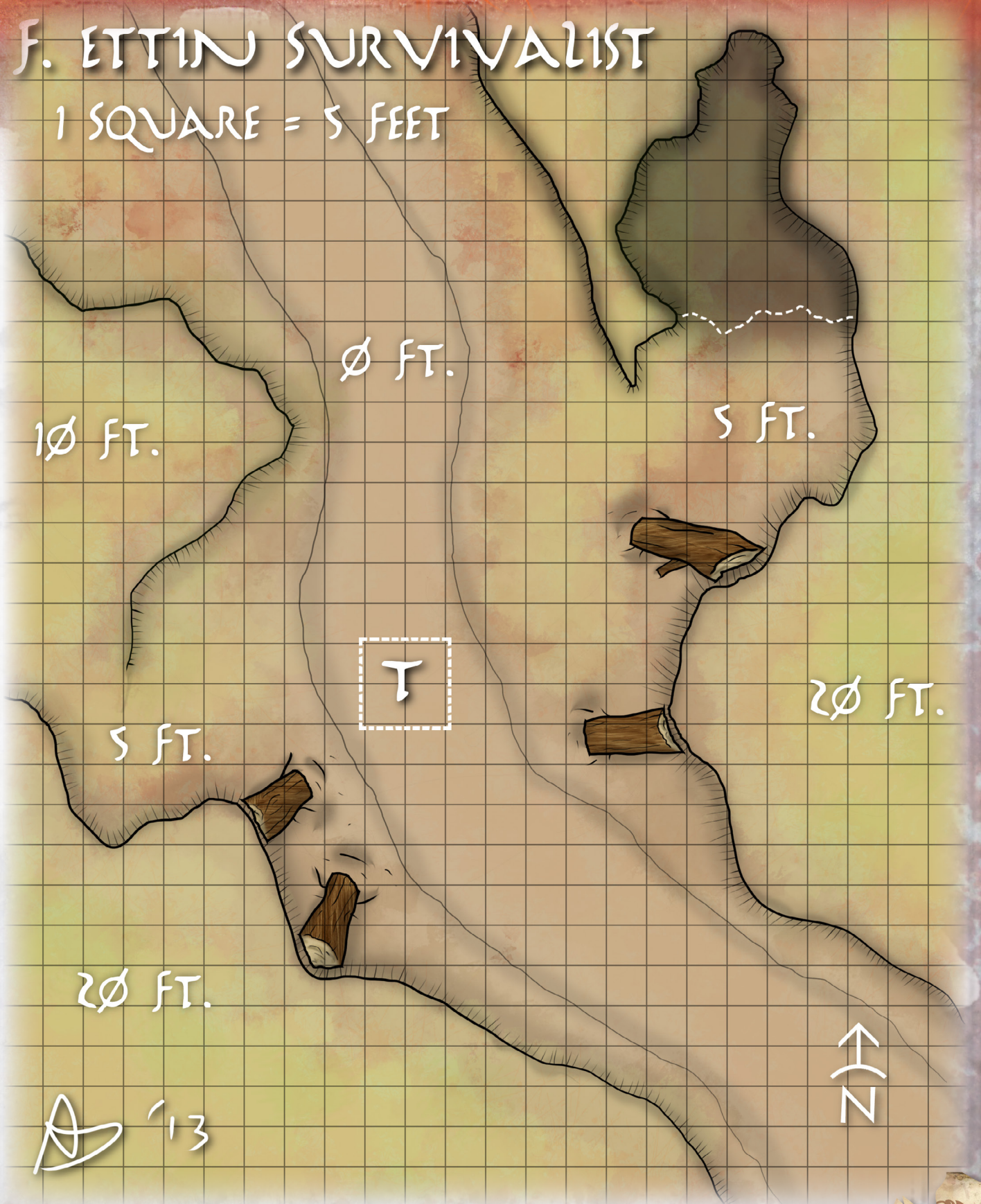
**Keen Smell.** The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The bear makes three attacks: one bite and two claws.

# F. ETTIN SURVIVALIST

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



13



**Bite. Melee Weapon Attack:** +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

**Hit:** 14 (2d8+5) piercing damage.

**Claw. Melee Weapon Attack:** +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

**Hit:** 16 (2d10+5) slashing damage.

**Development:** If the PCs refuse to explore ahead of their army, Junner, Vetter, and Ripclaw will certainly become aware of an advancing army on their home. They evacuate the area and the ettin takes his treasures with them (he'll replace his rain-catchers once the army is gone). The GM may consider with their knowledge of the immediate area, ettin and grizzly may circle around to the top of the ravine and trigger an avalanche which automatically inflicts 2d4 points of damage to the army—after which they flee before the PCs can locate the source of the falling rocks.

## G. MENHIR MALEVOLENCE (CHALLENGE 7 AND CHALLENGE 12)

**Distance from a recaptured military holding:** about 20 miles

This encounter takes place after the PCs have completed the goal of retaking the fallen stronghold deep in the Demon Lands. It assumes their army stays behind to defend the fortress as they explore the surrounding region on their own. The GM may introduce this encounter as a random location as the party sets about this exploration. Or, alternatively, it can be treated as a mini-quest to learn more about the *Equinox Crown* and research its origin.

This encounter plays out in two stages. The first situation can be resolved through social interaction or combat, but the encounter which immediately follows pits the heroes against a demon which brooks no intrusions or interruptions of its goal to corrupt the standing stones of the ancient druids of Sarkulis. Unlike the earlier encounters in *Road to War*, it's advised the PCs be at least 10th level before taking on this location.

An immense circle of standing stones lies atop this sloping hill, their ring shape still very apparent despite a few menhirs having long since toppled to the hard-packed dirt supporting them. Each stone is carved with ancient symbols and runes, portraying a variety of nature-themed depictions. And the hill itself is a small plateau with a flattened top, sloping down sharply just past remnants of the circle. A number of smaller rocks and boulders form outer rings in the sickly grass and exposed ground surrounding the hill. Some distance outside these rings of stone, stands a singularly tall menhir, set apart and leaning at an odd angle.

The native druids of Ancient Sarkulis once used

this circle of standing stones as both a seasonal calendar and focal point for elemental forces. The demons have mostly ignored the menhirs due to their relative isolation and dormant power. Nevertheless, several ley lines also intersect at this geographic location, and any perceived lack of usefulness speaks more to the demons' laziness and lack of imagination than actual fact—a status quo which recently changed when a derakni demon named Zillconnox came across the site and discerned its potential value with the looming equinox. Given power by the Demon Lord of Locusts himself, Zillconnox has started using the site to more actively corrupt the surrounding terrain, magnifying the demonic taint of the Abyss by turning the elemental energy back on itself. This magical dissonance has further fractured the terrain, tearing more Abyssal rifts in the already fragile dimensional fabric of the Demon Lands. As these rifts expand, they pose an increasingly dire threat to any liberated territory which the PCs and their crusaders have gained.

The circle of standing stones also provides a curious power to characters of the druid class. By expending a



Hit Dice (usually reserved for healing during rests), druids casting spells within the circle make Constitution checks with advantage. Additionally, the next spell they cast is treated as if cast one level higher. If that wouldn't make a difference then choose either the Range or Duration to increase by 50%. Druids can spend additional Hit Dice to augment spells cast within the circle this way.

**Creatures:** The circle of standing stones is inhabited and protected by a durdalis called Grumtarr. Grumtarr draws on the site for his sustenance and in turn has protected the druidic site from further harm for decades. He's aware of the derakni's presence and knows there's something wrong with the circle, but hasn't yet managed to confront the source of this corruption. The mystic energies he once relied on are now making him sick and confused even as Zillconnox draws on them to spread the taint of the Abyss. Angry, but also very afraid, he's unsure of what to do, lashing out at anything which comes near, believing it to be the source of his misery. Consequently, he has a starting attitude of hostile and mistakes the PCs as demons in disguise who have come to further torment him in his home. Grumtarr eschews subtlety for outright aggression. Before attacking, he roars a challenge, "You defile my home! You are bad! You hurt me and the land! And now I hurt you!" This should provide a clue that he sees himself as the injured party and the PCs as the wrongful party (see development, below). As a result, the PCs might manage to reason with him if they can weather his assault and calm him down.

The real culprit behind Grumtarr's misery is the derakni, Zillconnox, who watches from the Ethereal Plane while his foul presence tangles and pollutes the ley lines among the standing stones. The demon doesn't have to "do" anything to eventually win this conflict, only maintain the status quo and for the PCs to do nothing. When the PCs arrive, he bides his time, hoping Grumtarr's misplaced aggression unwittingly disposes of them on his behalf. If the PCs reconcile with the durdalis, Zillconnox still stays his hand, focusing on equinox alignment to open an irreversible Abyssal rift. Unfortunately for the derakni, he doesn't realize the PCs have the means to force him onto the Material Plane (see development, below). Once forced to be manifest, the demon has no choice but to eliminate the heroes in order to put his sinister plan back on track. If the PCs befriend Grumtarr, he joins in battle against the demon.

## Grumtar the Durdalis

*Medium elemental, true neutral*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 144 (18d8+72)

**Speed** 20ft., burrow 30 ft.

## The Durdalis

Durdalis are short, squat, elemental beings composed of living rock. So earthen is their appearance that a durdalis need only tuck in its arms and legs and curl up on itself to be mistaken as a boulder, or sit up against natural stone and close its eyes and mouth to appear as a rocky outcropping. The durdalis originate from the Elemental Plane of Earth but occasionally migrate to the Material Plane when opportunity permits, especially to locales rich in mineral resources, natural ores, or in some cases—areas with abundant ley lines, fey magic, or Inner Plane elemental vertices. Despite appearances, durdalis do not subsist on actual rock, but rather energy which flows from the Inner Planes to Material Plane. Druids and naturalists speculate that while the Elemental Plane of Earth provides for their needs, the mixture of other elemental forces creates a richer, more satisfying habitat—hence their rare planar migration.

Naturally peaceful, durdalis rarely trouble other races. Some sages liken them to treants, but even more reticent. They dislike stone buildings and dungeons, since they feel no connection with quarried and worked stone. Typically, dwarves come to an accord with durdalis by respecting their territories, which presents little hardship on either party as durdalis communities tend to be small on the Material Plane. Adventures and explorers report the hulking stone creatures rarely concern themselves over small amounts of precious metals and gemstones removed from their lairs, reserving their greatest anger for unscrupulous miners with whom they cannot negotiate.

Occasionally, durdalis leave their mountainous or cavern homes to take up residence near menhirs, standing stones, and other sites sacred to druidic worship. This results not from a sense of piety, but to draw from the rich backwash of ambient mystical energies between the planes. Druids seldom discourage this practice, as the durdalis fall quite easily into the role of guardians and caretakers of such sites.

Typical durdalis are 5 feet tall and weigh 800 lbs. Larger durdalis use the giant simple template and can reach 9 feet tall and over 2000 lbs. An elder durdalis is the base creature with both the advanced and giant simple template, taking on a more hardened, rough exterior glistening with unique—and some say magical—mineral deposits.





## G. MENHIR MALEVOLENCE

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

**Damage Immunities:** acid, lightning, poison

**Damage Vulnerabilities:** thunder

**Condition Immunities:** exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Common, Terran

**Challenge** 7 (2900 XP)

**False Appearance.** While the durdalis remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal boulder.

**Regeneration.** The durdalis regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and is surrounded by areas of rough, natural stone, or near any connection to the Elemental Plane of Earth.

**Steady.** The durdalis has advantage on checks to resist being shoved or knocked prone.

**Spellcasting.** The durdalis's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14). The durdalis can innately cast the following spells requiring no material components:

1/day each: *stone shape*

3/day each: *meld into stone*, *wall of stone*

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The durdalis makes two attacks with its slam.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 17 (2d12+5) bludgeoning damage.

## Zillconnox the Derakni (locust demon)

*Large fiend (demon), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 230 (10d10+120)

**Speed** 30ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)	19(-1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)

**Damage Immunities:** lightning, poison

**Damage Resistances:** acid, cold, fire, bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

**Condition Immunities:** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic, Telepathy 100 ft.

**Challenge** 13 (10000 XP)



**Drone.** When a non-demon creature starts its turn within 30 feet of the derakni and the derakni is flying, the creature must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature can't take reactions until the start of its next turn and is *confused* per the spell. A deaf creature is immune to this effect.

**Keen Smell.** The derakni (locust demon) has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Locust Aura.** The derakni is surrounded by a locust swarm which floats around it and envelops its personal space to a distance of 15 feet. Any creature in the area has its speed halved and if it fails on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw it is bitten for 3d8 piercing damage. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage.

**Magic Resistance.** The derakni (locust demon) has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Poisonous Blood.** Any creature that scores a critical hit against a derakni with a piercing or slashing melee weapon is sprayed with poison and must succeed on a DC 16 constitution saving throw or suffer one

level of exhaustion.

**Spellcasting.** The derakni's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17). The derakni can innately cast the following spells requiring no material components:

1/day: *insect plague*

3/day: *contagion, etherealness, gust of wind, ray of enfeeblement, teleport*

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The derakni makes three attacks, twice with its claws and once with its bite or once with its sting.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6+6) piercing damage plus 17 (5d6) poison damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8+6) slashing damage.

**Sting.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10+6) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or suffer two levels of exhaustion.

**Development:** Grumtarr has a Hostile starting attitude; PCs can try to change his attitude to Indifferent with a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check (this is DC 15 for a druid to make)—even if he is attacking. A PC who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check can also discern that Grumtarr is more fearful than angry, and he does not know for sure if the PCs are responsible for his suffering. This knowledge also allows his attitude to be treated as indifferent instead of Hostile, and grants the party another opportunity to make a Charisma (Persuasion) check, even if they previously tried and failed. If Grumtarr's attitude improves to friendly, he breaks off his attack to parlay. The durdalis explains that a demon haunts the circle and has "been doing something bad" to corrupt and pollute the "earth force" upon which he survives. He wishes for nothing more than to fight the demon and drive it away, but describes it as "removed from the world" and "beyond my reach." The PCs may attempt a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check to surmise the demon may be watching from the Ethereal Plane.

By this point in the *Road to War*, the PCs likely possess the means to force Zillconnox to the Material Plane. If a PC openly wears the *Equinox Crown*, Grumtarr immediately recognizes its presence once he's calmed down. The circlet is depicted on several carvings among the stones. And, in many instances the crown's wearer is depicted as facing the sun's last rays as it sets over the tall "heel" stone on the circle's outer perimeter. Grumtarr believes this alignment will flood the circle with enough "earth power" to shove the demon back into phase with the Material

Plane. He offers to use his own great strength and earth related powers to set the now leaning heel stone back to its original angle. The PCs can also discover this information themselves by studying the menhirs and making a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. They can push the heel stone back to the proper angle themselves with a successful DC 20 Strength check (multiple PCs can help). If a PC wearing the *Equinox Crown* faces the sunset while standing at **G1**, this mini-ritual abruptly forces Zillconnox to the Material Plane without warning (he'll have been observing but will not realize the implications of what they're doing). This surge of energy from the Elemental Plane of Earth also prevents the derakni from using his *etherealness* spellcasting ability for 24 hours. Alternatively, if the PCs cast *hallow*, or *magic circle* (against fiends) within the stone circle, the spell is consumed but Zillconnox is also forced to the Material Plane, as described above.

If the PCs die or retreat during this battle, Zillconnox swiftly refocuses on opening the Abyssal rift, exerting his own power to rip at the dimensional fabric between the Abyss and Material Plane. If Grumtarr survives, he sadly abandons his home and flees for the nearest mountains, eventually leaving Ancient Sarkulis altogether. The implications of the Abyssal rift's opening is left for the GM to decide, but Zillconnox may soon coax a more powerful demon to cross into the region, or direct a steady series of demon minions to infiltrate and subvert the PCs' stronghold.

**Treasure:** Neither Grumtarr nor Zillconnox keep material wealth, but if the PCs reconcile with the durdalis and he survives, he uses his burrow movement to venture deep beneath the earth and retrieve a proper gift in gratitude. By locating the tomb of an ancient druid buried deep beneath the circle, he returns with a suit of +1 *studded leather* armor.

**Story Award:** The defeat of Zillconnox unlocks the Selective Metamagic ability of the *Equinox Crown*. If the PCs convince Grumtarr to cease his attack, award them XP as if they defeated him in combat and an additional 500 XP if he survives the battle against Zillconnox.

## CONCLUSION

By the adventure's end, the righteous heroes have acquired allies and treasures to aid them along their journey to the fallen fortress. What they find there lies beyond the scope of this adventure, but whether you choose to have the fortress still beleaguered and besieged by holding out in hope of the relief the heroes bring, or entirely crushed beneath the heel of the invaders, the PCs will find themselves in the thick of an extra-dimensional battle with conflicts both martial and political. With luck they have already acquired the *Equinox*

Crown and unlocked some of its power, adding it to their growing arsenal of legendary weapons and forging their legacy dedicated to ending the Demonic Incursion once and for all.

## APPENDIX: NEW ARTIFACT

### Equinox Crown

*Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)*

Prior to the fall of Ancient Sarkulis, a terrible Demon Lord of Locusts supplanted himself as a nature spirit, albeit a destructive one, in the pantheon of spiritual beings alternately venerated or propitiated to maintain the balance of natural forces. This subversion grew uncontrolled, and on more than one occasion, led to great suffering before the demonic infestation was driven off by more benevolent divinities. Although learned druids and shamans exposed the Demon Lord as having no part in the natural order, the culture and people of Ancient Sarkulis lacked a central authority and strong, universal belief system to remain free of his influence. Destructive and harsh forces were often viewed as part of the cycle of nature. And, when times grew hard, small clans often returned to the old ways of appeasing and beseeching demonic powers as a means to insure themselves from harm. These lapses in faith allowed the Demon Lord's evil to creep back into Ancient Sarkulis again and again, always in search of the wicked and foolhardy.

Vorian, a respected hierophant, made it his mission to travel Sarkulis to educate the clans on the peril of mistaking infernal entities for the destructive spirits in nature. Time and again he would expose the veneration of the Lord of Locusts and scour his cults from the countryside. His unquestioned zeal became legendary and his followers dubbed him the "Autumn Lord" whose chilly wrath spelled a season's end for all tiny and loathsome things which crawl, slither, and fly. When Vorian passed away, the silver circlet he wore upon his brow became an extension of his personal legend and cause. Known as the *Equinox Crown*, it was placed in a shrine in a village named after Vorian's only daughter. When the Demonic

Incursion sundered the world, the relic had already fallen far from memory. And, after centuries of neglect, the crown became inert and tarnished. Yet, with the growing proximity of the demonic forces, the crown has begun to stir once more, driven by Vorian's zeal even well after his death.

When first handled by any character capable of casting spells, the tarnish on the silver circlet abruptly vanishes as if the metal were polished clean. When worn, it grants a +2 bonus to whatever ability score you use to cast spells (Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom—or, Charisma for non-spellcasters). Certain events and tasks can further awaken the *Equinox Crown*, eventually transforming it into a powerful magic item. These powers are listed below with suggestions for suitable triggers to unlock them.

In addition, the *Equinox Crown* automatically attunes with a wearer when worn in any battle against an insect swarms (such as the swarms in Encounter C.).

**Beneficial Power:** Three times per day you may expend an action to sense any demon within 1000 feet of you and its general position relative to you on a compass.

**Detrimental Power:** While attuned to the item your body emits a glow once the sun goes down, like that from a dim candle out to five feet.

Twice per day you may call on the circlet to grant you the following powers.

**Steadfast:** If you defeat an evil fiend capable of control over swarms, the *Equinox Crown* unlocks its steadfast ability. This ability permits the wearer make Concentration checks with advantage.

**Selective Metamagic:** If you defeat a derakni demon (such as Zillconnox in Encounter F), the *Equinox Crown* unlocks a new ability. You gain a Metamagic option as a sorcerer would at 3<sup>rd</sup> level. This grants an additional metamagic ability for sorcerers who already have one. NOTE: Even if the artifact has attuned to a wearer as noted above, the crown must still be worn by the attuned character for 24 hours for this to manifest.

**Repel Magic:** If you slay a challenge 13 or greater demon (as opposed to permitting it to flee), the *Equinox Crown* unlocks another ability. You may cast one of the following spells once per day with this power:



*Protection from evil and good, magic circle or banishment.*

**Cannibalize:** If you defeat a challenge 16 or greater demon, a final ability is made available. You may command a swarm to cannibalize upon itself instead of any other creature. You target a swarm you can see within 60 feet of you. It must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or the swarm deals its swarm damage only to itself and no other creature for one round. At the end of swarm's turn it may attempt another Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success. Once a swarm successfully saves against this effect it cannot be affected again for 24 hours. The swarm is unaffected by any of its own secondary effects, such as disease, or poison and you cannot control where it moves. Any small, medium or large swarm can be affected by this ability.



## Destroying the Crown

The circlet must be sundered by an artifact weapon wielded by the Demon Lord of Locusts.

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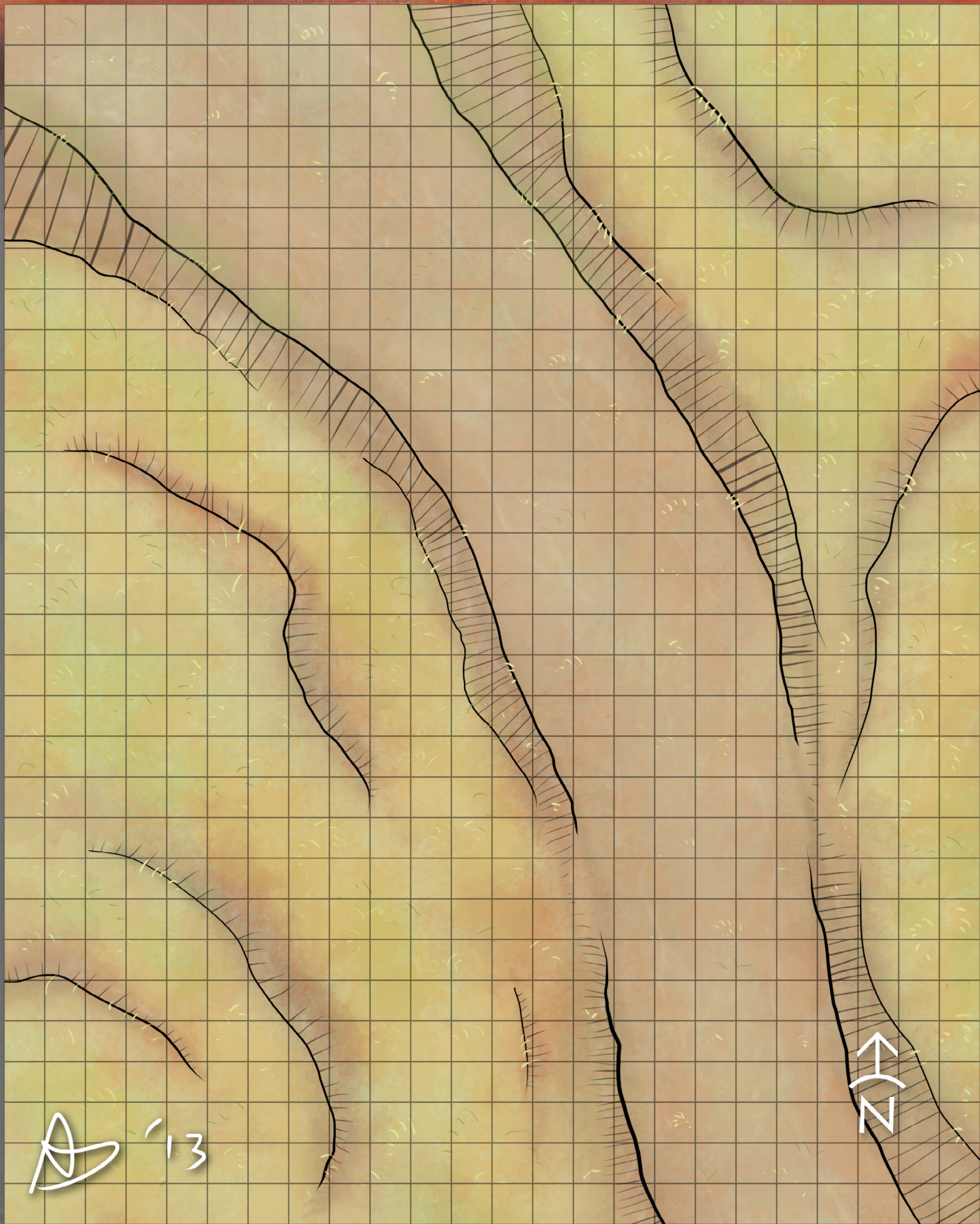
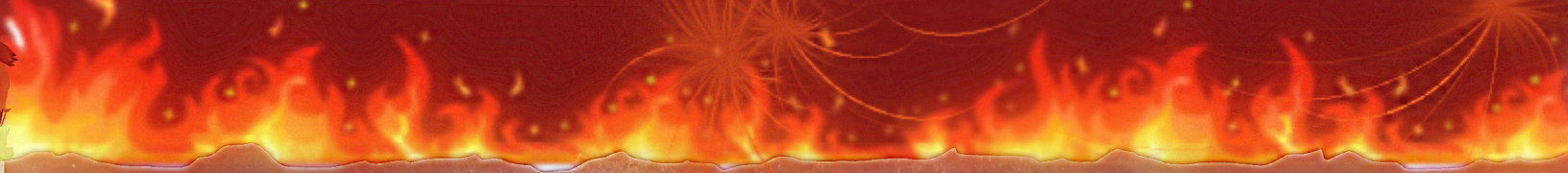
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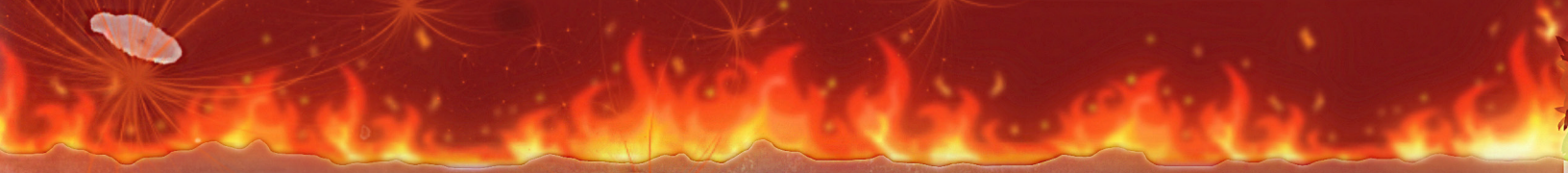
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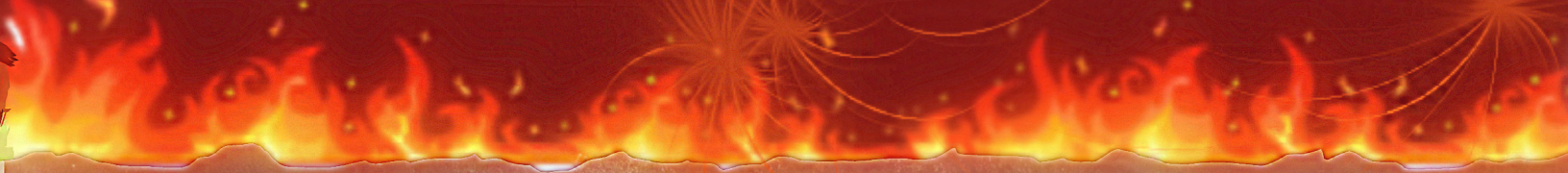
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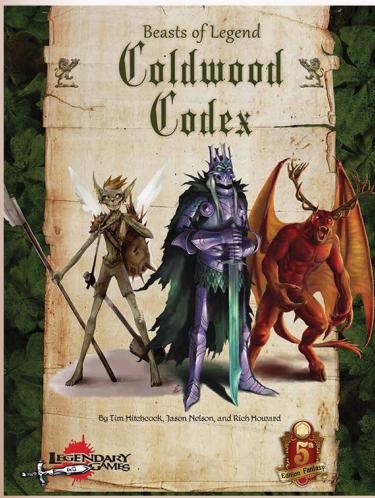


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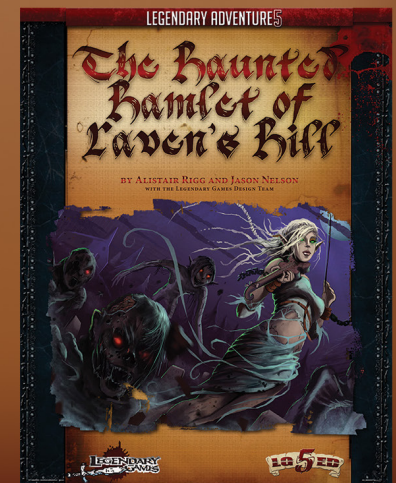
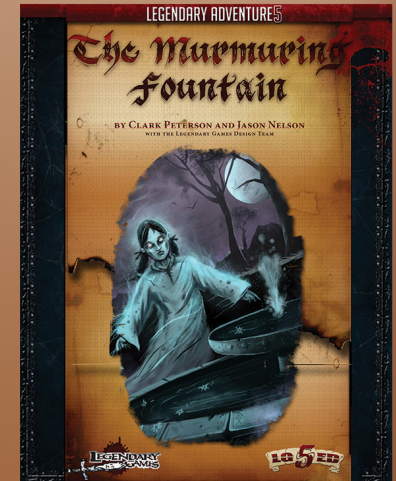
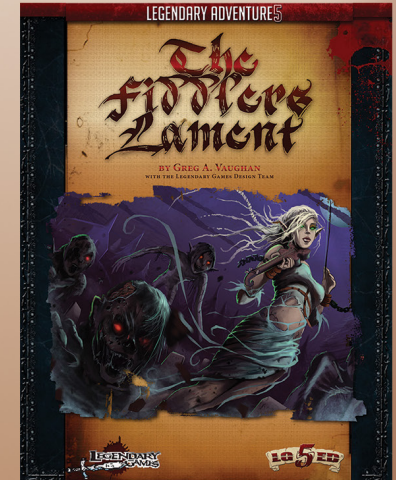
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