

PARADIGM CONCEPTS

PRESENTS A



ADVENTURE

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4-hour Introductory Adventure
Intro #1

A Nawal of the Yhing Hir calls upon a group of travelers to retrieve the body of his dead son from a place where no Horseman may ride.

An **Introductory** adventure for Tier 1 characters (levels 1 through 3) optimized for **1st level** characters.

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CREDITS

Author: Henry Lopez

Editors: M. Seam Molly, Lucas Amodio

5th edition Conversion: Richard Lescouflair & Pedro Barrenechea

CAMPAIGN

INTRODUCTION

Campaign Staff

Author Liaison: Cody Bergman

Chief Editor: Joe Cirillo

5e Rules Manager: Pedro Barrenechea

Living Arcanis Liaison: Pedro Barrenechea

RUNNING AN ARCANIS ADVENTURE

When you run an Arcanis adventure you are charged with bringing the world to life. We pride ourselves on delivering a deep world where a player's actions are just as, if not more, important than their die rolls.

We ask our GMs to be familiar with the location the adventure is set in and the cultures the players may encounter. But we also understand that during convention play some GMs may be forced to run an Arcanis adventure on short notice, as such when cultural details come into play we will do our best to call them out in "Arcanis Cliff Notes" side bars.

Beyond that, the important job you have as a Game Master is to make the table as fun as possible by engaging players and drawing them into the story.

Pay close attention to the player's actions (not character's, players), are they on their cell phone or tablet? Do they seem disengaged? Distracted? Don't be afraid to engage them or shift the spot light to their character a little.

To facilitate this, you are empowered to adjust and modify the adventure in a number of ways:

- You may make on the fly adjustments to the adventure if the players find a clever way to tackle a problem, especially when out of combat. As long as the idea is reasonable, run with it! When you must say "no" always try and say "no, but," This keeps the game moving and makes it fun for everyone,
- Don't be an adversarial GM. Some tables like to be challenged, but there is a difference between being adversarial and offering a challenge. At the same time, don't make an adventure so easy that the players become bored.
- Keep the pace going in order to keep players engaged. Switch the spot light, have them make some skill rolls, ask them what their character is doing. If the party is stuck nudge them though some skill rolls or improvised details, just keep the game going.
- During conventions and game days be aware if you are running short or long on time while running an adventure. If necessary, skip some encounters but try and tell the entire story. Give the players closure, even if you need to fudge the numbers.
- Read-aloud text may be adjusted as you see fit, but make sure you give the players the appropriate hints and clues needed to keep the story going.

ADJUSTING ENCOUNTERS

Before you begin play you should determine the average strength of the party and compare that to the base level of the adventure. Each combat encounter has a box titled “scaling the encounter” guiding you on how to adjust the encounter to the party’s power level.

These adjustments are suggestions; if a party is having an easy or hard time don’t be afraid to adjust the difficulty.

To set the adventure difficulty you must first determine your tables Average Party Level.

Add up all the levels of all the characters, then divide by the number of players. Round up fractions to the nearest whole number. This is the Average Party Level

Consult the table below to set the adventure difficulty based on the APL

ADVENTURE DIFFICULTY

This adventure has a base level of 1; it has been optimized for a table of 5 players playing 1st level characters.

#of Players	APL	Adventure Difficulty
3-4	Equal to BL	Easy
3-4	Greater to BL	Normal
5	Less/Equal	Normal
5	Greater than	Difficult
6-7	Less/Equal	Difficult
6-7	Greater	Perilous

SPELLCASTING SERVICES

While in a settlement, town, or city characters may visit a temple or shrine to request spell casting at the cost of a substantial donation. You may only utilize these spell casting services three times per adventure. Any spell casting provided through the story of the adventure, such as an NPC casting a spell for the party, does not count against this limit.

Shrines do not house a clergy with which to attend to the needs of the faithful. Instead one or two itinerant priests tend to the shrine and the needs of the people.

Temples and churches are larger structures attended by full staffs of the faithful, including Templars.

The following spell services are common to all temples, with additional options available at specific temples as noted in each adventures.

Shrines, regardless of their deity, may only provide players with *cure wounds* and *lesser restoration*.

General Spell Services

Spell	Cost
<i>Cure wounds (1st level)</i>	10 gp
<i>Greater restoration</i>	450 gp
<i>Lesser restoration</i>	40 gp
<i>Prayer of healing (2nd level)</i>	40 gp

Initiate of the Gods background/ Acolyte background/divine spell casters may receive **one free spell casting** as long as it is from temple or shrine of the same religious faction as the character (Mother Church for example).

If the character in questions worships the same god as a particular temple but are part of another church, they can get a one time

50% discount instead.

ADVENTURE RELATED INFORMATION

This adventure begins and probably ends in the **settlement** of **Baktara**, located in the Hinterlands. Few permanent structures exist here as the majority of the inhabitants live in elaborate tents as befits a nomadic people. This is just an illusion, as the Khur Gi tribesman who live here have given up their transient lifestyle to live a more sedentary life.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

- Shrine to the Bringer of the Life-giving Rains (Hurrian)
- Shrine to the Wandering Lost (Anshar)

Organizations

Baktara is too small of a settlement to attract the attention of the societies that manipulate the currents of fate upon Onara. As such, there will be no meeting places for members of the various secret societies to make contact with superiors or one another

Portals of Anshar

There are no known Portals of Anshar available to the Heroes in this adventure.

SCENE 1 INTRODUCTION

The Heroes begin in the backwater town of Baktara, south and west of the city of Mil Takara, on the banks of the Niechau River.

Why their Heroes have arrived in Baktara is up to the individual players. They may be here to bet on the small, but famous gladiatorial arena or to purchase one of the wild Yhing Hir horses that are highly prized in this area.

Read or paraphrase the following when everyone is ready to begin:

Your travels have brought you to the very edge of the Hinterlands, to the town of Baktara. Baktara is a small wart of a town on the cracked hide of the Hinterlands. It is famous for its arena, where many of the most celebrated and glorified gladiators of the Empire first began their careers. From these humble stables come some of the fiercest warriors to ever kill for sport.

Baktara is also considered the gateway to the Hinterlands, being the first settlement to be encountered when crossing over the border from Canceri.

Originally founded by a small group of Cancerimen, the settlement was eventually flooded with members of the Yhing Hir tribe known as the Khur Gi. They are considered to be brutal horsemen even amongst the other Yhing Hir tribes.

The influx of Khur Gi however, brought an unexpected boon in the form of their highly prized and powerful horses, which may be purchased here. Few permanent structures exist as the majority of the inhabitants live in elaborate tents, befitting a nomadic people. This is just an illusion, as the Khur Gi tribesman who make their homes in Baktara have given up their transient lifestyle for a more sedentary one.

Foreign spices waft through the air, titillating the senses and causing stomachs to growl with anticipation. The sound of a dozen languages battle each other for dominance, creating the raucous roar that is the heart beat of Baktara.

Many options are available to the curious and adventurous; from betting on up-and-coming gladiators to purchasing a proud Yhing Hir steed.

Allow the Heroes to decide what they want to do.

If they wish to go to the Arena, proceed to **Scene 1A**.

If they wish to purchase horses or other basic equipment, proceed to **Scene 1B**.

If they don't wish to take in the local color, go to **Scene 2**.

SCENE 1A

BREAD AND CIRCUSES

The arena of Baktara is renowned for its intimate atmosphere as the amphitheater is actually little more than a 10-yard radius sized sandy pit surrounded by three tiers of stone benches.

Here the audience is so close to the battle that care must be taken not to have an errant gout of blood ruin the spectator's fine robes. But it is exactly that proximity and intimacy that brings gladiatorial aficionados from the Known Lands over. Today there is a free for all match featuring five gladiators, all fighting at once until only one remains standing.

Bets may be placed on the gladiator of choice if so desired.

If the Heroes wish to bet, there is a 5 Imperial (gold piece) maximum as well as a one Imperial minimum. As the highest odds are 5:1, the most any Hero can make is 25 Imperials (gp).

There are five gladiators competing today. If the Heroes start asking around about the fighters have them roll a few **Charisma (Persuasion)** ability checks. Anyone who rolls a 5 or more learns about one fighter, and they learn about an additional fighter at DC 10, 15, 20 and 25.

Chaq – A Chauni warrior from the far western lands, he is a fast and wiry combatant who prefers to fight with twin daggers.

Grellick – A rare gar gladiator, Grellick is a veteran of these pits and is favored to win. The inhuman gladiator fights solely with a long spear.

Katarina – A gladiatrix from the Milandisian Duchy of Sylvania, Katrina fights with cold precision and an icy calm. She favors the use of a long sword and shield in the arena.

Bors – A hulking brute of a man from the coastal province of Salantis, this newcomer has only won two matches thus far, but has already earned a reputation as a deadly combatant wielding an unusual weapon, the trident.

Anktemet – This Myrantian gladiator has lost an arm from the elbow down and in its stead has had the deadly blade of a gladius strapped into place. It's said that the blade was the same one which severed his arm and that he wretched it from the cold hand of the Coryani legionnaire that owned it.

Once the Heroes have placed their bets, merely roll on the chart below in the order presented until one fails. Continue round after round until only one remains standing. Should you come to a point where all the gladiators have fallen except for the last one, then there is no need to roll. That gladiator has won.

Note: The battle here is not to the death, but until incapacitation.

Gladiator	% of Success	Odds
Chaq	10 %	5:1
Katrina	45%	4:1
Anktemet	52%	3:1
Bors	64%	2:1
Grellick	71%	1:1

For example, round 1 roll for Chaq. If you roll from 1 - 10 on a percentile die, then he survives the first round. If you roll 11-00, then poor Chaq fell to his opponent and is eliminated.

Once the battle is over, pay the PC his bet and proceed to **Scene 2**.

SCENE 1B HORSE TRADING

Besides the Gladiatorial Arena, Baktara is famous for its prized horses. Here the herds of the Yhing Hir are brought to be sold at a market on the western edge of the settlement.

If the Heroes wishes to purchase a horse, they will be directed to Hissan Po, a “most reputable merchant”.

Po is a Khur Gi and has a stable of horses ready to sell to any foreigner that can meet his prices. He will show off excellent specimens of equine beasts, but in reality these are the ones that the Khur Gi didn't want. While by no means sickly or old nags, these horses are only of average quality, though Po will try and get a high price for them by touting their breed and heritage.

Any player wanting to purchase a horse may first make an **Intelligence (Nature) DC: 15** to determine the quality of the horse. A successful check will conclude that while it is a fine horse,

it is not of exceptional quality and determine the price that Hissan Po will sell at.

Po has a variety of horses for sale, from draft to light riding horses and even one warhorse.

Horse Type	Failed Check	DC 15	DC 20
Horse, Draft	50	40	30
Horse, Light	75	65	55
Warhorse	420	400	300

Once the Heroes are finished with their purchases, proceed to **Scene 2**. The stats for these horses are in the core rules monster section.

SCENE 2 THE SUMMONS

Once the Heroes have completed their desired activities, read or paraphrase the following to them:

A bald, thin man wearing a plain, clean robe approaches you in a clearly non-threatening manner. In fact, his bare hands are spread out with the base of his palms touching each other.

A thin chain made of silver hangs about his neck and trails off over his shoulder, much like the leash of a dog. He is apparently waiting to speak to you and patiently waits for your acknowledgement.

The man is a Canceri born human of middle age, thinly built but appearing to be in good health. He is a slave, owned by the Khur Gi Nawal, Chen Lo Wei and acts as both his major domo and

messenger. Born **Varanov**, he now answers to **Canceriman**, as his master has never called him by anything else.

Once Canceriman has the heroes' attention, he will begin. Read or paraphrase the following to the Heroes.

“Brave and worthy adventures, I bring greetings and wishes of long life from the master of Baktara, Nawal Chen Lo Wei, the Mandarin of the East.

“His Glorious Eminence hopes that your stay in his city has been full of wondrous sights and awe-inspiring diversions. My most generous master is loath to intrude upon your time here but grave matters have been brought to his attention and assistance that only strangers such as yourself can provide is required.

“My master’s generosity is legendary; bards from several empires have immortalized it in song. He would be most willing to show you just how generous he can be if you would accompany me to his palatial domicile.”

The man patiently awaits your answer.

Canceriman is not in a hurry nor does he have anything to hide. He was tasked with finding up to 6 foreign adventurers (i.e. not Khur Gi tribesman) and to bring them to his master's tent. Any **Wisdom (Insight)** checks will find that he seems to be exactly what he says he is.

What if one of the Heroes is a Khur Gi?

This will not be an issue as each subsection of the Khur Gi tribe has its own customs and mores. On the off and very rare chance that someone decided to make a Khur Gi from this area ask them to pick another character, change their city of origin, or play their character as an outcast.

If asked about himself, Canceriman's calm poise will momentarily crack as he is taken by surprise by the question. In the past 20 years, no one has taken the time to ask about him and he will be shocked by the fact that tears have appeared in his eyes.

He will explain that his true name is Varanov and that as a young man he was apprenticed to a Sarishan priest in Nishanpur. Wanting to impress his master with his prowess in brewing new and more powerful potions, he came to Baktara in order to obtain (read: steal) a few petals of the rare yellow lotus that blooms only in the low hills that dot this area. The yellow lotus petals are known as potent and necessary ingredients in the brewing of magical pigments or strong hallucinogens.

Unfortunately, he was captured by the Khur Gi and sold into slavery, where he eventually found himself in service to his current master, Chen Lo Wei, the Mandarin of the East.

He is well fed and cared for as he is an educated man. He eventually came to serve his master as major domo of his demesne as well as being entrusted for the most important of endeavors.

If asked about the Nawal or why he is called the Mandarin of the East, Canceriman will explain that his master traces his lineage back to one of the Mandarins of the Khitani Empire, a vast and huge empire to the north and west that rivals the Coryani in power.

The title of Mandarin is given to the most powerful of personages in the Khitani Empire and implies control over a certain region.

If asked why he is summoning only foreigners, Canceriman will say he is not sure,

but can imagine it has to do with the Nawal's missing son. He will refuse to say more, saying that it is not his place.

If asked about the silver chain/leash, he will explain with down turned eyes that it is a symbol of his servitude.

Once the Heroes have agreed to go with him, he will ask them to accompany him as he has a few more people he needs to contact (i.e. the rest of the Heroes).

Once all the Heroes have been rounded up, continue with **Scene 3**.

Should any of the Heroes not wish to accompany Canceriman, thank them, give them whatever XP and coin they may have earned to that point and inform them that the adventure is done for him/her.

SCENE 3 OF LOST SONS AND INNOCENCE

You have been led to the largest pavilion in the settlement. It appears to be made from a conglomeration of over two dozen large tents of different colors and sizes.

Looking more like an organic hive of some colorblind insect, the garishly multi-colored "palace" of the Mandarin of the East is striking amidst the other smaller and modestly decorated tents that you have seen throughout Baktara.

Just to the side of the entrance, scores of handlers can be seen preening their charges with care and a bit of showmanship. A quick count shows that your host commands over three score of the most powerful looking horses in the settlement.

Any Player may attempt an **Intelligence (History) DC: 10** check to realize that this exhibition was made on their behalf. Given that the Yhing Hir believe that a man without a horse is not a man, the Mandarin is clearly showing you how powerful he is by the number and quality of horses he owns.

If the Hero succeeds in his check, he/she will also know that lavishing praise upon the Nawal about his horses will be seen as a great honor and show that the character is a man/woman of culture and breeding. That Hero will gain advantage on all **Charisma (Persuasion)** skill checks when interacting with the Nawal.

As the Canceri slave opens the entrance flap to the elaborate pavilion, the strong smell of sweet incense meets your nostrils as well as a cool breeze from within.

The way towards the interior of the Nawal's tent is through a labyrinthine path woven from tent to tent, each one strewn with greater and greater shows of opulence and overt wealth. In each one, a different beverage or food is presented to you as pass; sweetmeats in one, ripe fruit in another, and goblets brimming with thick fermented goat's milk in the next.

Finally, after what feels like you must have traveled to the very heart of the Hinterlands itself, Canceriman opens the final flap and you enter into a high topped gilded tent, festooned with golden ornaments and strewn with silken pillows stuffed to the point of bursting. Your feet sink into the plush rugs covering every square inch of the floor.

At the far end is a group of men, appearing to be half drunk, but looking no less dangerous for their inebriated state. They stop their ribald jokes as you enter and peer at you through red-rimmed eyes, slowly retreating from the figure they surrounded.

Smoking from a large water pipe and reclining upon a throne of thick cushions, the Mandarin of the East is revealed. His sallow skin and almond shaped, cat-like eyes giving credence to his claim of Khitani ancestry.

He is a slender, athletic looking man with his jet black hair waxed into long, full curls matching the ebony darkness of his long moustache, whose ends are capped with golden bulbs.

Long lacquered fingernails twitch like the forelegs of a hairless tarantula as they signal you to approach. Chen Lo Wei does not stand but does sit up straighter, making himself a head taller than the tallest of you due to his silken perch.

You can hear the unique Yhing Hir lilting accent as he speaks in Low Coryani. He addresses his manservant without once taking his eyes off of your party. "You have done well, Canceriman, as always. You shall be rewarded for your astute senses. Yessss...these foreign born shall be more than sufficient.

"I am Chen Lo Wei, humble master of Baktara, whom my fellows call the Mandarin of the East.

Whom do I address?"

Give the Heroes the chance to address Chen Lo Wei and identify themselves. Any Player that flatters the Mandarin, complimenting him on his wealth and power, is who the Mandarin sees as the leader of the party and whom he will negotiate with.

Should more than one Hero do this, have each make a **Charisma (Performance)** contest, the winner benefiting as noted above.

Once all the Heroes have introduced themselves, continue to read or paraphrase the following:

"A matter of grave and personal tragedy has come to me this day. Instead of the pleasurable tunes of the kwei bird waking me this morning, I was drawn from slumber with words of sadness and loss. You may not be familiar with the customs of the Khur Gi, but our male children undergo a trial in the desert to be seen as worthy of manhood. They are to go out into the sun-baked lands and live for twenty days with nothing more than a spear and a cloak.

"This morning three boys returned horribly wounded two days before the required time had lapsed. They spoke of enduring the hardships of the desert until a morning when they were beset by a huge slaving beast.

"This creature pounced upon one of the boys, crushing his throat with one snap of its jagged jaws before leaping upon the next. This other boy would have also been killed had it not been for Luj, who stood before the creature and commanded it to flee. The boys told of the beast hesitating for a moment before chasing after Luj, giving the others time to flee themselves.

"The last they saw of him, the beast was almost at his heels. But then their voices faltered. They saw that in the chase Luj had fled up a small hillock bounded by tall stakes topped off with the skulls of men and that which is not man. This was the home of one of the Ehtzara, those who are touched by madness and consort with unclean spirits.

"This Ehtzara's home is taboo for any of the Khur Gi of my tribe to enter and so I cannot command any of my people to do what must be done. I humbly request that you go to the mound of this Ehtzara and retrieve the body of Luj. I owe this to his mother, for you see,

Luj is my son.

Allow the Heroes to ask questions of the Mandarin. Note that while Chen Lo Wei is speaking using the humblest of terms, this is a false modesty. He is quite a proud individual and will not allow his bravery or that of his son or men be called into question.

Use the following information to answer any questions the Heroes may have:

1. The way to the Ehtzara's mound is not difficult. One of the boys returned relatively unharmed and was able to describe it. This mound is well known to the Khur Gi and accurate directions can be given to the Heroes.
2. The mound appears to have been deserted as the Ehtzara was nowhere to be seen. This is not uncommon as Ehtzara's are known to travel the width and breadth of the Hinterlands. The odds that this beast would return when the Heroes are there is slim at best.
3. The Mandarin cannot allow any of his men to accompany the Heroes there. To do so would imply a distrust of their abilities and he would never insult his guest in such a manner.
4. The Mandarin will happily reward the return of his son's body with a pick of his riding horses. Remind the Heroes that these horses are highly valued and an honor to have one gifted to them.
5. If they already have horses or reject that offer (a very unwise choice), the Mandarin will distastefully suggest that he can pay them in gold, as he would a common mercenary.
6. If asked to be paid in yellow lotus petals, the Mandarin will laugh and say that even one petal is worth more than the worth of many of the nobles in Milandir. He will not offer the petals as payment.
7. If asked if instead of payment, he will release Canceriman from slavery, he will laugh and say that Canceriman has been treated like a valued member of the tribe. However, if all the Heroes agree to accept Canceriman's freedom in lieu of payment, he will agree.
8. From the boy's description of the beast, it could have been anything from a jackal to a rogue shadow lion. It does not however, appear to have been a magical creature of some sort. Nature is quite capable of crafting a mundane beast that can kill a man easily.
9. They do not have any magical weapons to loan/give to the Characters, although they can lend them spears if they require aid. Of course, asking for aid of this sort will diminish the worth of the Heroes in the Mandarin's eyes.
10. The journey to the mound is four days by foot or two by horseback. The Mandarin will not advance the players their pay, so should they not have their own horses, they'll have to go on foot.
11. The Mandarin will remind the Heroes that he expects all of the boy's personal effects be returned along with the body, specifically a lapis-lazuli ring given to him by his mother as a good luck charm.

Once the Heroes have finished with their questions, the Mandarin will bid them the Smiling Goddess' Fortune (i.e. Good Luck) and send them on their way with directions to the mound.

Proceed to Scene 4.

SCENE 4

MAN IN A GILDED CAGE

The trail directions given to you by the Khur Gi have been flawless and the last four days have passed uneventfully. You are not following in the footsteps of the children as they were taken to a certain point in the wasteland and told to go and survive. You have the advantage of having a set destination, thus your trek has been fairly straightforward; turn east at the rock formation that looks like the crown of Illiir, then head north until crossing the second shallow creek. It was here, a couple of hours before sunset that you paused in your journey, but not for the purpose of filling your water skins in the cool waters of the stream. A few hundred yards from the creek grows a huge tree, its sparsely leaved limbs waving in the breeze as if it were a call for help from a drowning man.

Were it not for the odd way the limb waved back and forth you would not have noticed a small square iron cage hanging on the far side of the large tree, partly concealed by its massive trunk.

The Heroes may either investigate the iron cage or continue on their journey.

Should they opt to bypass this encounter, proceed to **Scene 5**.

If they decide to investigate, continue:

Arriving at the tree, you note that a small cage made of iron bars hangs from the lowest of its thick limbs. Within this crudely assembled torture device is the body of a man, bruised and battered and wedged into its cramped confines. Resting on the unfortunate's chest are broken arms that end in there charred and twisted remains of his hands.

The man is alive, yet has been obviously tortured to within an inch of his life. He can't speak as he is suffering from dehydration, his chapped and broken lips pleading for water.

He is naked save for a dirty loin cloth wrapped around his waist. His arms and legs were broken so that he would fit inside the small box.

If carefully taken out of the box and given some water and healed at least 1 hit point, he will be able to speak after resting for a couple of hours.

During this time, the man's stumps can be examined. It is apparent that both his hands were cut off with a sharp blade and that a hot flame was then used to cauterize the wounds.

This man is an Ehtzara, though he will not claim to be so and deny even knowing what an Ehtzara is. He used the last vestiges of his power to commune with the spirit of the tree and have it wave its limb in the hopes of attracting attention.

He will say he is a holy man named Ool who was offering prayers when he was beset by two powerful men in white lacquered armor.

These men fell upon him and he thought they might be brigands, but instead they spoke of ***"cleansing this benighted land of heathens"*** and was told to ***"convert or die"***.

His shock of grey hair still has strands of red identifying him as one of the Vanomir tribe of the Yhing Hir. While many of his people worship some of the gods of the Pantheon, he still believes in the old ways and worships the spirits of the land.

After many hours of beatings, he still refused to renounce his beliefs and was rewarded by having his hands sawed off and thrown into this makeshift cage that they made from the remains of armor that they carried on their wagon. He was left here to die and would have had it not been for their intervention.

Obviously stripped of all possessions, he has no way to repay their charity at the moment, but he says that they will meet again in the future and that all debts will be repaid.

He will only accept some food, water and perhaps a cloak before saying he must leave. If asked where he is going, he says he must cleanse his spirit of this horrid experience before he can once again commune with the spirits of the land.

If asked which way his tormentors went, he will say he did not notice as he passed out from the pain of having his hands cut off.

Once the PCs let him go, proceed to **Scene 5**.

Scene 5

FOOD FOR THE BUZZARDS

The following day passes in a blur as each rock formation or multihued patch of desert sand is more beautiful and breathtaking than the last.

Unfortunately, the serenity of the land is broken by the screams of rage and desperation coming from just on the other side one of the many small hillocks that are so common in this area.

The Heroes may, of course, bypass this encounter. Should they do so and stay on course, proceed to **Scene 6**.

If they decide to investigate, they will discover that on the other side of the hillock is a dried river bed and evidence of a savage battle.

The body of human divested of his armor and weapons lies in an undignified heap alongside the carcasses of seven jackal headed humanoids.

Looking over their ill-gotten goods in the shade of an upturned wagon is a group of these same jackal headed humanoids, pushing and shoving each other. The bigger

one appears to be demanding the juiciest pick of the loot.

The screams of rage come from a second human, very much alive, but buried up to his neck in the dirt. His throat hoarse from his endless screams, which alternate from pure rage to threats against these creatures. For their part, the man-beasts seemed content to ignore the human.

COMBAT

In all this combat consists of

- **Three (3) hyena-men**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy:** Remove one hyena-men
- **Difficult:** Add two hyena-men
- **Perilous:** Add three hyena-men

Tactics: The Heroes should begin combat on one side of a small hillock with the hyena-men on the other side. If the Heroes are stealthy in their approach, they can surprise the hyena-men.

Once combat has been successfully completed, continue here:

With the last of the beasts vanquished, the man buried in the sand addresses you. "Bless Illiir that He brought you to my aid. Have faith in the Emperor and he shall deliver. Thank you, my friends, thank you. Now, please dig me out of this pit, I can't stand to be stuck here another moment."

The man's name is Helmut Lowach and he claims to be a knight from Milandir who answered the call of the Mother Church and went to aid her righteous forces in the recent crusade against the forces of the Unsealed Lands.

Once the heretic's forces were vanquished, he and a fellow Knight decided to travel into the heathen wastes of the Hinterlands, spreading the word of the Mother Church and the Gods.

A **Wisdom (Perception) check DC:10** will inform the PCs that the armor in the pile of loot appears to be white lacquered. PCs specifically going through the loot will notice this automatically.

If asked if they had come across an older man who claimed to be a holy man, he will proudly say yes:

"We found the man calling upon evil spirits and consorting with twisted creatures of the night. We came upon him quickly and caught him unawares but gave him the chance to repent and embrace the glory of the true gods before meting out the final fate all those with heresy in their hearts must ultimately face. But he spat in our faces and called down blasphemies upon our Lords.

"Thus we had no choice but to do what all good members of the Mother Church would do when confronted by a Black Sorcerer and Infernal worshipper; we made a box of cold iron and hoisted him above the ground so that he would not continue to corrupt the land the gods granted us."

The man is unrepentant for his actions and feels that he truly did the world a favor by vanquishing evil.

He will even use the party's recent actions as an argument vindicating his actions.

"Did you just now not fall upon these beasts with righteous fury and dispatch them from this earth? Then why are we in the wrong just because the evil we faced wore a more familiar face. I assure you; that made it no less evil."

If asked how he found himself in this situation, Helmut will sheepishly say that they had stopped to relieve themselves and rest when they were ambushed by these creatures. He was knocked out from a lucky blow from behind and when he came to, he was buried up to his neck and his comrades were dead.

It is ultimately up to the party as to what to do with Helmut. They can either free him, in which case he will ask for his equipment.

Another option is to just leave him there buried in the sand. Paladins and holy champions of Illiir, Neroth, Belisarda, and Hurrian would see this as being tantamount to cold blooded murder. Some, such as holy champions of Cadic or Nier may see this as karmic justice for the man's actions against the Ehtzara in Scene 4.

Let the Heroes role-play out their determination of this man's fate, but do not allow them to attack each other. *Player vs. Player attacks are not condoned.*

Lastly, he could be freed but forced to go out into the desert like the Yhing Hir children, with only a cloak and a spear. Thus his survival would be in his hands and the hands of his god.

Regardless of their choice Helmut will demand to properly bury his companion, even if he must dig the grave himself, weapons and armor in all, befitting his rank. He will allow the Heroes to take his friend's explorer's pack though.

Inspiration

Anyone that even argues for the man's life is granted Inspiration.

Any religious character who agrees to and assists in the burial of Helmut's comrade is also granted Inspiration.

Refer to the treasure summary for the items that may be scavenged from this encounter.

Once the PCs have dealt with Helmut, proceed to **Scene 6**.

SCENE 6 UNHALLOWED GROUND

Your journey finally ends as you see sight of the mound. The ground hereabouts is covered in a deep layer of gritty sand,

dotted by dozens of boulders. In the very center of the area, a small mound rises up with a collection of stones forming a crown at its apex.

Surrounding the mound is a series of tall stakes topped with the skull of various animals or humanoids. Faded ribbons flutter nervously in the light wind, tied as they are three quarters of the way up the stake.

The characters have arrived at the Ehtzara's home. Entry onto the mound is not barred by either magic or other mundane means.

Should a Hero ask to see if there are any tracks in the sand, let him know that there appear to be many sets of animal tracks scattered throughout the area around the mound. Due to the wind and the fact that the tracks go over themselves, the character is not able to track where they go to or from.

The Heroes may make an **Intelligence (Nature) DC: 12** check and if successful will know that one set of tracks comes from a quadruped animal, either a jackal or hyena. The other appears similar but larger and heavier.

A quick scan of the area will reveal nothing as the predators are in their well camouflaged den and will not come out as yet.

Traveling up the mound will note that the stones at the top form a small cave or dwelling with an obvious entrance facing west.

Have the Heroes attempt a **Wisdom (Perception) DC: 15** check once they begin to climb the hill and discover the western entrance. Those who succeed notice a small figure trying to hide in the entrance of the cave.

Optimally this will occur while the Heroes are on the mound but have not yet entered the cave.

The figure is the boy Luj. He is trying to determine whether the characters mean him any harm or not. Describe that the boy is skittish and will recoil back into the cave if the PCs make any threatening moves.

A successful **Charisma (Persuasion) DC: 12** check will convince the boy that the characters mean no harm. If the Heroes mention that they are here to escort the boy back to his father, he will gasp and head back into the cave.

Luj understands that entering this taboo area means that he is dead in the eyes of his tribe and that should he be returned to them he will be sacrificed so that evil spirits do not haunt his people.

If the Heroes rush up to the top of the mound, they will find that the boy is thin and pale, but there is not a scratch on him. He holds clenched in his hand a lapis lazuli ring sized for a grown man.

Story Note: The Ring and What Happened Before

If asked about the ring, Luj will say that it is his father's and is purported to have the magical property of making animals more receptive to his commands.

That was why he bravely launched himself in front of the hyena when his group was attacked. He believed that the ring's power would make it easy prey. Killing the beast on his own and dragging its carcass back to Baktara would have won him great praise and a high position in the settlement.

When he tried it against the Infernal Hyena, the power failed to work and it was only through luck that he managed to not be killed and run to this place.

The boy will explain that he has not been able to escape because the devil-hyena and its mate have been circling here waiting to devour him.

This is partly true. The infernal hyena and its mates are in the area but the boy is only an incidental snack for them. The infernal hyena can sense that the barrier between the planes is weak here and it believes it can escape back to the Infernal Planes. Unfortunately, the Ehtzara's wards have so far made it impossible for it to pass through and travel up the mound.

The Heroes have only two choices here. Either snoop around the cave dwelling or face the hyenas as they try and escape. Before they do either, determine which path the party has taken as listed below:

If the characters have saved the holy man from Scene 4, proceed to **Scene 7A**.

If they did not, proceed to **Scene 7B**.

SCENE 7A DEBTS REPAID

Before you continue, a familiar voice rings out clearly from within the cave, startling the boy. "I see the fates have brought us together again as I foresaw. Welcome to my home."

Emerging from the cave entrance is the holy man you rescued earlier, but this time wearing a long tasseled and hooded robe. Where his hands should be are still two bandaged stumps, though they look like the dressings have been changed and rewrapped. How he could have managed this without hands is beyond belief.

If confronted, he will admit that he is an Ehtzara and that this is his home, but he will deny consorting with evil spirits or demonic beings.

If asked why the beasts don't charge up here, he will explain that he has placed wards about his home to protect him from unnatural creatures.

He will then ask the characters what they plan to do with the boy.

The Heroes only have three choices:

1. They can take Luj back to face certain death. This will satisfy the Heroes' obligation to Chen Lo Wei and they will receive their payment.
2. They can offer to let the boy go. The Ehtzara will offer to take the boy in and care for him. He will say that the boy will be his hands now.
3. If the Heroes are clever, they will take the ring back as proof of the boy's demise and claim that there was not enough to bring back. The boy will happily give up the ring in exchange for his life.

The Ehtzara will make the same offer as #2.

If option #2 or #3 is taken, the boy will agree to stay with the Ehtzara. Better than a life as an outcast, alone in the desert.

Whichever plan the Heroes decide upon, the Ehtzara will apologize for not being able to help them further personally, but will offer to ask the spirits to intervene on their behalf and assist them in their impending battle.

In gratitude of their earlier assistance, the Ehtzara will gratefully invoke the spirits of this mound to come to their aid. He will explain that they will confound and distract any creature not of this Mortal Plane. For the purposes of Scene 8, the PCs will be under the effects of a Bless spell.

The party may rest as long as they wish before leaving the mound.

Once they are ready to face off against the Fiendish Hyena, proceed to **Scene 8**.

SCENE 7B

ALONE AGAINST THE NIGHT

If the Heroes decide to investigate the dwelling, they will find it deserted and sparsely furnished with only some jars of cold, fresh water and some dried fruit and meats.

At this point, the Heroes will have to decide the boy's fate. They have only three obvious choices:

They can take Luj back to face certain death. This will satisfy the Heroes' obligation to Chen Lo Wei and they will receive their payment.

They can offer to let the boy go. He will have a life of an outcast and wanderer in the desert, but he will at least be alive.

If the Heroes are clever, they will take the ring back as proof of the boy's demise and claim that there was not enough to bring back. The boy will happily give up the ring in exchange for his life. Again, better to be an outcast than be sacrificed by his own father.

The party may rest as long as they wish before leaving the mound.

Once they are ready to face off against the Infernal Hyena, proceed to **Scene 8**.

SCENE 8

THE WICKED BEAST

Once the Heroes leave the mound, the infernal hyena will attack.

COMBAT

In all this combat consists of:

- **One (1) infernal hyena**
- **Two (2) hyenas**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Remove one hyena
- **Difficult:** Add two hyenas
- **Perilous:** Add three hyenas

Tactics: The Heroes begin combat at the top of the hill, inside the Ehtzara's mound, and the hyenas will not climb up the hill due to the wards. Instead, they circle the base of the hill, waiting to attack any who leave the circle of wards. If Ool is assisting the Heroes with his magic, treat all the hyenas as if they were under the effects of a *bane* spell for the duration of the combat.

Remember that the infernal hyena is a bit more intelligent than the average hyena and will use tactics to flank his opponents whenever possible. The infernal hyena can communicate with its more mundane fellows and coordinate their attacks.

Once combat is over, proceed to the conclusion based upon what the Heroes plan to do with the boy.

- If they decide to take the boy back to his father, go to **Conclusion A**
- If they decide to let the boy go, go to **Conclusion B**.
- If the Heroes bring back the ring as proof of the boy's death, go to **Conclusion C**.

Non-Combative Solution

There is a way out of this without any combat whatsoever, but it will take specialized skills.

Should there be any Heroes who can speak or communicate with animals or speak Hells Speak

he/she can ask the infernal hyena what it wants and why it is set on killing the boy.

The infernal hyena will respond that the boy is inconsequential. It is a survivor of a battle months ago. It was summoned from the Infernal Planes and now wishes to return.

It senses that the veil between the planes is weak near the top of the mound, but it cannot enter because of the wards surrounding it.

It will agree to leave peaceably if the Heroes can negate the wards and let it through. It will also command the other hyenas to leave this area and leave the characters unmolested.

If the Ehtzara is present, he will agree and after a moments concentration, will temporarily drop the wards.

If he is not present, the characters can make a **DC: 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check** to realize that the stakes with the skulls atop act as a kind of ward. By removing them, they will allow the creature to enter.

Once the wards are dropped, the Infernal Hyena will stalk by the characters and enter the cave. It will not return.

CONCLUSION A

Word of your return with the boy has reached the ears of the Mandarin of the East. He and his entourage meet you at the edge of Baktara and ask you to stop.

A pair of men that appear to be shamans go to you to collect the boy and lead him away from the settlement and you.

Chen Lo Wei bows his head to you. "I thank you for bring back the body of my son. Please accept these gifts as a token of my gratitude." Without another word and with

head bowed low, Chen Lo Wei slowly turns back to his demesne. He appears not to hear the screams of his son as he walks away.

If the Heroes ask about what will happen to the boy, they will be informed that his body has been tainted but that his soul may still be saved.

They will say no more.

Award the Heroes the reward they chose, either a Riding Horse or 37 gp.

CONCLUSION B

Your decision to let the boy go may have cost you a monetary reward, but the knowledge that the boy will be able to have a long life more than makes up for it.

With a light step, you wander off yourself in search of the next adventure the fates may have in store for you.

The Heroes do not receive an award from Chen Lo Wei.

CONCLUSION C

Word of your return has reached the ears of the Mandarin of the East. He and his entourage await you before the entrance to his vast pavilion.

He listens to your words of consolation, explaining that the beasts left nothing of your son to return back to him, but that you did manage to find the ring his mother had gifted him.

Chen Lo Wei bows his head to you. "I thank you for bring back proof of my son's bravery. Please accept these gifts as a token of my gratitude."

With a final bow, Chen Lo Wei reenters his palace. Before entering, he turns towards you one last time and a quick grin flashes upon his face. Then he is gone.

Award the Heroes the reward they chose, either a Riding Horse or 37 gp.

THE END

ADVENTURE REWARDS

After an adventure make sure players record what experience and treasure they acquire on their adventure chronicle, after which check their numbers, mark off any favors, boons, or curses and add any particular game notes before signing the adventure chronicle and having it back to the player.

EXPERIENCE REWARDS

Arcanis adventures do not necessarily reward experience points for winning combats. Instead experience is rewarded for achieving particular tasks or reaching important story points.

Task, Achievement	
Experience for completing adventure	300 Exp

FOUND ITEMS

Players may keep any item without an Item Certificate that they find during the adventure. Remember that carrying a flintlock without the right to do so is a crime.

When a player keeps an item, the item's sale value is removed from the shared treasure reward the party splits at the end of the adventure. If the amount removed is greater

than a player's share of the coin, the player in question must make up the difference or the other players can chip in from their shares.

The number and distribution of items found in a Living Arcanis adventure is always calculated using the base level of the adventure and a table of 5 players. Even if the party goes through the adventure at a higher difficulty and fights more enemies, any items beyond what is listed here are unsalvageable. This helps the Campaign Staff have a better grasp on campaign economy.

SCENE 5

Each hyena man was equipped with

- Hide armor (5 gp)
- Spear (5 sp)
- 2 Javelins (5 sp)

If the Heroes buried Helmut's companion, they receive his Explorer's pack (10 gp). If they release Helmut with his equipment they get none of his gear, but if they force him off into the night with only a spear and cloak...

Helmut's Equipment

- Longsword – 7 gp
- Shield – 5 gp
- Armor (Chain Shirt) – 25 gp
- 1 Light Crossbow (10 bolts) – 12.5 gp
- Holy Symbol, Iron (Hurrian) – 2.5gp
- Explorer's Pack – 5 gp

Knight's Equipment

- Longsword – 7 gp
- Shield – 5 gp
- Armor (Chain Shirt) – 25 gp
- 1 Light Crossbow (10 bolts) – 12.5 gp
- Holy Symbol, wood (Illir) – 2.5gp
- Explorer's Pack – 5 gp

CONCLUSION A OR C

- 1 Ying Hir riding horse (see core rules) or 37 gp instead of the horse

- Share of 18 gp, with an additional 5 gp if the Heroes sell the Explorer's pack from Scene 5.
- If the Heroes take equipment from Helmut or his companion, they can keep it or sell it for half value, as shown above.

CONCLUSION B

- 1 *ring of animal empathy* – Only if the heroes demand the boy's ring as compensation.
- Share of 18 gp, with an additional 10 gp if the Heroes sell the Explorer's pack from Scene 5.
- If the Heroes take equipment from Helmut or his companion, they can keep it or sell it for half value.

CERTED ITEMS

YING HIR LIGHT WARHORSE

Found in Conclusions A or C

You have been gifted a fine Ying Hir light warhorse by Chen Lo Wei, the Mandarin of the East. Among the Ying Hir there are few greater honors than the gift of a horse.

Effect: Treat this animal as a Riding Horse with 18 hit points instead of 13.

RING OF ANIMAL EMPATHY

Found in Conclusion B

Ring, Uncommon (requires attunement)

As long as this lapis lazuli and cast iron ring is worn, you gain advantage on all ability and skill checks related to dealing with animals.

NOTICE OF THE HARVESTERS

This only pertains to characters who cast arcane magic.

Every time during the adventure an arcane caster casts spells in a public place within sight of common people there is a chance that they

had been spotted by a harvester or a harvester informant.

Unless the caster goes out of their way to hide such spell casting, news of their abilities will, eventually, reach the ears of the “wrong” people.

If the hero was open about their spell casting in public or failed two consecutive attempts to disguise it, they get 1 point of Harvester Notice.

COMBAT APPENDIX 1

SCENE 5

COMBAT

In all this combat consists of

- **Three (3) hyena-men**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy:** Remove one hyena-men
- **Difficult:** Add two hyena-men
- **Perilous:** Add three hyena-men

Tactics: The Heroes should begin combat on one side of a small hillock with the hyena-men on the other side. If the Heroes are stealthy in their approach, they can surprise the hyena-men.

Hyena-Man

Medium Humanoid (Hyena-Man), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (hide armor, shield)

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14	12	11	6	10	7
(+2)	(+1)	(+0)	(-2)	(+0)	(-2)

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., *passive Perception* 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Rampage. When the Hyena-Man reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on its turn, it can take a bonus action to move up to half its speed and make a bite attack.

ACTIONS

Bite - *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage

Spear - *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage or 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage if used in a two handed melee attack.

Javelins - *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d8+1) piercing damage

COMBAT APPENDIX 2

SCENE 8

COMBAT

In all this combat consists of:

- **One (1) infernal hyena**
- **Two (2) hyenas**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Remove one hyena
- **Difficult:** Add two hyenas
- **Perilous:** Add three hyenas

Tactics: The Heroes begin combat at the top of the hill, inside the Ehtzara’s mound, and the hyenas will not climb up the hill due to the wards. Instead, they circle the base of the hill, waiting to attack any who leave the circle of wards. If Ool is assisting the Heroes with his magic, treat all the hyenas as if they were under the effects of a *bane* spell for the duration of the combat.

Remember that the infernal hyena is a bit more intelligent than the average hyena and will use tactics to flank his opponents whenever possible. The infernal hyena can communicate with its more mundane fellows and coordinate their attacks.

HYENA

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 5 (1d8+2)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +3

Senses *passive Perception* 13

Languages None

Challenge 0 (15 XP)

Pack Tactics. The hyena has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of its allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn’t incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage

Although they have only animal intelligence (Int 2), hyenas are very cunning. They are pack hunters, which means that they employ tactics such as flanking and circling, and will attempt to gang up on a single creature and weaken it to the point where it can be taken down.

Infernal HYENA

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 45 (6d10+12)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16	14	14	4	12	7
(+3)	(+2)	(+2)	(-3)	(+1)	(-2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., *passive Perception* 13

Languages: Hells Speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Rampage. When the hyena reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on its turn, the hyena can take a bonus action to move up to half its speed and make a bite attack.

Pack Tactics. The hyena has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of its allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Ravage. Once per day, on a successful bite attack the Infernal hyena may deal one extra die of its damage with its massive jaws. – *Hit:* 9 (2d6+3) piercing damage. (Cannot be used on PCs of 1st level. **(Unless the heroes are having an easy time of it, do not use this ability on 1st level heroes, if you do, do not use the instant death rules, the hero is simply reduced to 0 HP)**)

ACTIONS

Bite – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage

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