

War of the Burning Sky

The Mad King's Banquet

by Shane O'Connor



A fantasy adventure for 7th-level characters



Requires the use of a Roleplaying Game Core Book published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.



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An Adventure for 7th-Level Characters
By Shane O'Connor

Original Script by Lydia Dene

Cover Art by Shannon White

Interior Art by Claudio Pozas
Todd Schumacher
Joe Slucher
and artists of history*

Cartography by Sean MacDonald

Layout by Eric Life-Putnam

Playtested by Theodore A. Brzinski III
Neil D'Cruze
Michael Gallogly
Tom Jones
Judson Stowe



Campaign Director Ryan Nock

Note on Rules Content: *This adventure uses Open Game Content as well as material that is in the System Reference Document but is not in the core rulebooks. All the information you need to use this material is presented in this adventure, but if you are interested in learning more, search for the System Reference Document online, available through various sources.*

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EN PUBLISHING
1646 Ridge Road
Vankleek Hill, ON
Canada K0B 1R0

EN Publishing is an imprint of EN World.
Please visit <http://www.enworld.org>

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fourth adventure in the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. In previous adventures, war erupted between the mighty Ragesian Empire and its eastern neighbor the Shining Land of Shahalesti. Caught in the middle, the heroes escaped from the besieged neutral city of Gate Pass, carrying stolen war intelligence and a plea for help. Their path passed through the perilous Fire Forest of Innenotdar, where a wraith-like entity calling itself Indomitability demanded their aid in freeing it from a prison of enforced flesh. Beyond the borders of the fire forest, the heroes traveled through the countryside of the nation of Dassen, following bands of refugees fleeing the war to a distant safe haven called Seaquen.

Seaquen is rallying the other nations in the region in an effort to stand against the fiery might of the Ragesian Empire, and more urgently to stop The Scourge, a drive by the new Ragesian empress Leska to capture or kill all magic-users hostile to her rule. The heroes have already saved Seaquen from one destructive plot that would have annihilated the fledgling resistance with a magically conjured hurricane. Now they face a more conventional threat: as winter's end nears, the mountain passes will thaw, and Ragesia will be able to march an army to destroy Seaquen.

Lying between Seaquen and Ragesia is the Kingdom of Dassen, currently neutral in the war. Ragesia has pledged to respect that neutrality if the nation's ruler, King Steppengard, gives one of Ragesia's armies safe passage to Seaquen in order to destroy it. The leaders of Seaquen know they cannot stand against the Ragesians yet, so they must convince Steppengard not to agree to the Ragesians' terms. Time is short, and in this perilous moment Seaquen looks to its most recent heroes to sway the conscience of the king.

In *The Mad King's Banquet*, the heroes are tasked with winning Dassen's pledge to resist the advance of Ragesia. They travel to an audience with the king, only to learn that the king's family has been murdered, and that Dassen is on the

ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE

The Mad King's Banquet fills a unique role in the campaign saga. If you are running an abridged version of the campaign, it can serve as the climax of the campaign, wherein the heroes secure the safety of Seaquen in a time of war. You might shuffle the events of Acts Two and Three, so that the king's madness is dealt with first, and that the battle at Gallo's Fend is actually against the advancing Ragesian army. For the adventure's conclusion, you can have whoever ends up ruling Dassen pledge to fight for the liberation of Gate Pass, and so resolve the conflict that began the campaign saga.

If you are choosing this point of the story to *begin* the campaign, *The Mad King's Banquet* throws the heroes immediately into a struggle of politics and warfare. The heroes might still be representatives of Seaquen, though they would not be famed for any heroic deeds yet, or they could be a contingent from Gate Pass, trying to arrange an alliance with Dassen to liberate their city from the Ragesians.

Finally, you might simply use the adventure as a stand-alone for a party of 7th-level characters, transporting the events to any your own setting. Dassen can easily be replaced with any small country, as long as there are enemies across a border, and that border has a natural barrier like a mountain range that Duke Gallo can defend.

If you are picking up the campaign at this point, you will want to make yourself familiar with the *Campaign Guide* and *Player's Guide*, which are available freely through E.N. Publishing. The *Campaign Guide* contains additional information for working the events of the game into your existing campaign setting and suggestions for getting the characters involved. It will also give you an overview of events from this point on.

brink of civil war. Accused of being enemies of the state, the heroes' best hope of accomplishing their mission is to ally with Duke Gallo, framed for ordering the murder of the royal family. The king, mad with grief, sends his armies to destroy Gallo, and in so doing cripple the defenses of his lands. The heroes will have an opportunity to turn the tide in a battle between armies, and to shape the fate of an entire country.

BACKGROUND

The following information details only the background of this adventure. If you are running it as part of the campaign saga, you will find more information in the Campaign Guide.

Just days before the adventure begins, King Steppengard of Dassen received a diplomatic emissary from Ragesia and agreed to let the Third Ragesian Army march through his lands under escort, with the intent of destroying Seaquen, a village on the kingdom's southern border that has never claimed allegiance to Dassen. The heroes are dispatched in response to this, on a mission to get King Steppengard to reverse his decision.

However, in the time between the heroes' departure and their arrival in the capital of Bresk, tragedy strikes. A large-scale assassination attempt kills the queen and each of the king's eighteen children, through a combination of poison and mysterious magic. Steppengard alone survives, and his most trusted advisor, a gnome wizard named Nina Glibglammer, has uncovered evidence that a member of the landed nobility was behind the plot. The heroes arrive in Bresk as paranoia and a vengeful hunger grips the populace.

It is still unclear which noble was responsible, but many suspect that a civil war looms in the near future. Coupled with the recent aggression of Regesia, there is a sense the entire population is holding its breath and taking bets.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The heroes' main goal in *The Mad King's Banquet* is to retrieve military help for Seaquen either from Steppengard or one or more of his high

nobility, the Council of Nine. Unbeknownst to them, Steppengard's advisor has been replaced by a trillith named Madness, who has been confusing the king's mind, driving him to acts that will destroy his nation from within. In this manner the Ragesians hope to arrive to find only weak, disorganized opposition. (The dreamborn trillith made their first appearance in adventure two, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*, and more information about them can be found in the Campaign Guide.)

The heroes travel to the capital of Bresk, seeing along the way signs of political unrest and perhaps getting on the bad side of Steppengard's military. When they reach Bresk, they find a very paranoid King Steppengard embroiled in a series of kangaroo court trials to root out the source of the treachery, and as a result he is entirely unwilling to listen to the heroes' request for aid. Others are willing to listen however, in particular the representatives of the three nobles who are most at risk were Ragesia to invade – Duke Gallo, Lord Dashgoban, and Lady Timor. They present an avenue for winning support.

Before they can act on this opportunity, the heroes fall afoul of the king's advisor Nina Glibglammer, actually the trillith Madness, who frames them as being part of the conspiracy to destroy the royal family. She sends an assassin to kill them and soldiers to capture them, or at the least drive them to flee north to the lands of Duke Gallo. While doing so holds the best chance for the heroes to accomplish their mission, it also plays into the Ragesians' plans, since it implicates Gallo as the one behind the assassination attempt.

Duke Gallo receives the heroes as a mixed blessing, while King Steppengard musters his army to march on Gallo's Fend. Gallo wishes to ally with Seaquen, but must first survive the wrath of his king because of a crime he did not commit. Facing a two fronted battle, Gallo seeks the aid of the heroes to find proof that Ragesia's intentions are not neutral, sending them to investigate the mountain outposts which are the first defense against Ragesia. Only by retrieving evidence that the Ragesians are planning to invade can Gallo secure the aid of his two neighbors, Timor and Dashgoban, in defending against their own king.

Time is short, and if the heroes don't help either by cutting through dangerous terrain to deliver the evidence to the nobles, or by slowing down the advancing army, help cannot possibly reach Gallo's Fend in time. When the Battle of Gallo's Fend begins, if the heroes have not secured Timor and Dashgoban's aid, they face a grueling struggle against an overwhelming force.

The battle's resolution is not the end of the adventure, however. If Steppengard is victorious, he claims he was given new evidence exonerating Gallo, and says they must decide how to deal with the Ragesians. If he is defeated, he calls for a gathering to negotiate an ending that will not lead to more infighting. Either way, after the battle King Steppengard requests the Lords of the Eight Lands to return to Bresk for a peace banquet, and for a festival celebrating the aversion of civil war. Gallo cautiously agrees, asking the heroes to accompany him as bodyguards and an extra set of eyes.

In truth however, Steppengard no longer cares for his kingdom, and all he desires is to see his enemies destroyed as his family was destroyed. Poisoned by the trickery of Madness, Steppengard plans to slay all his nobles with a toxin that will drive them to kill each other in a fit of insane frenzy. If the heroes do not find the clues and stop Madness's scheme, Dassen will tear itself apart.

CHARACTER MOTIVATION

If the heroes saved the day in *Shelter from the Storm*, Seaquen comes to them with this mission. Otherwise, the heroes can be representatives of any group with interests in the war. In addition to seeking an alliance to protect Seaquen (or whichever place they represent), the heroes might want to try to get support for an eventual push to liberate Gate Pass from Ragesia.

The heroes almost certainly need to be involved with a group that can arrange an audience with the king, though they might simply be representatives of one of Dassen's own nobles, or they might be looking for a way to win land for themselves, to fight their way into the nobility.

PSIONICS IN THE ADVENTURE

As in all of the adventures in the campaign saga, the psionics rules are not necessary in *The Mad King's Banquet*. Madness is a trillith, one of several dreamborn monsters that play a major role in the campaign saga, and though many of their abilities are inspired by psionic powers, you can easily portray them as a unique form of dream magic. If you are using psionics however, psychically sensitive characters should feel a strange familiarity when they see Madness, a sense that is fully realized when they witness Madness's true form and realize she is a trillith, just like Indomitability and Deception from the fire forest.

RAILROADING?

The events as described in this adventure are just one assumption of what can happen. The adventure does assume that after leaving Bresk the heroes end up with Gallo, since he is the only noble willing to work with Seaquen. If the heroes take another route – such as by going to a different noble seeking shelter – they can still end up at Gallo's Fend, perhaps having gained additional allies or enemies along the way. Unless the heroes plan to abandon their mission, anyone they go to for aid will tell them that Gallo is their best hope for success.

Of course, the heroes can go completely off the suggested track. They might decide to ally with the mad king, pledging Seaquen's powers to help destroy Gallo if Steppengard is willing to rebuke the Ragesians. They might decide to ally with Ragesia, and could play Gallo and Steppengard against each other to drive the country closer to civil war. Or they might flee south to Seaquen to recruit allies to overthrow Steppengard directly, though given the relative sizes of the forces, that plan is likely doomed to failure.

Remember also that by this adventure, you're likely several months into the campaign. The players should be getting more into their characters and have goals of their own, though some of the initial excitement from starting a new campaign might

be wearing off. When looking for ways to keep the adventure dynamic, we encourage you to play up the things your players and their characters would be interested in. Every adventure in the Campaign Saga is fairly modular, so if your players totally annihilate Dassen in adventure four, it won't ruin adventure five, which takes place in Ostalin, though it might paint events in a new light.

THE KINGDOM OF DASSEN

The Kingdom of Dassen lies to the south of Ragesia, and the southwest of Shahalesti, its borders defined by craggy mountains defended by hundreds of small dwarven strongholds. Dassen's people, a swarthy assortment of humans and dwarves, cherish their land, to the point that superstitious cavalymen even put dirt in their boots so they never have to stop touching the soil of their homeland.

Originally known as the Eight Lands, when Dassen was unified fifteen years ago a ninth region was carved out, which became the holding of King Steppengard. Today Dassen is divided into nine regions, forming a loose ring around the central mountain range, the Toraest Steppes. King Steppengard rules over the eight feudal lords and ladies, as well as dozens of minor dwarven nobles who govern their own small holdings in the mountains.

There are no mighty cities in Dassen, only thousands of farms and towns growing out from the nine castles of the king and his dukes. The largest city, Bresk, is a hilly community built both above and belowground, a sprawling walled fortress on the banks of the Nasham river. It is home to King Steppengard's castle. The second most prominent settlement is Gallo's Fend, a fortress city on the northern border, hundreds of years old, which long served to keep enemies from entering the nation.

The Council of Nine

As a country, Dassen has had trouble remaining unified. Originally an alliance of eight kings, for three centuries the nation was bound by the rule of the Book of Eight Lands, a lesser artifact that traced the lineage of each of the nobles in charge of the different lands, and kept clear who was the rightful

ENEMIES ON THE FLY

We have tried to provide tools to make this adventure more flexible. In Appendix One you will find the stats for all the foes the heroes will encounter throughout the adventure, divided by which side they owe allegiance to. You can easily take these standard groups to generate encounters for the heroes should they set off on a path the adventure does not prepare for.

For instance, if the heroes attempt to abduct King Steppengard and replace him with a double, you could have a mage very similar to Kelkin protecting the king's chamber, with Madness lurking in the room, manipulating his thoughts through horrible dreams, and numerous guards outside who are identical to The Blade of the Kingsguard (though wielding only normal +1 greatswords).

ruler of the overall nation, by bloodlines. The book, heavily guarded by whoever was the current king, also provided magical protection to those nobles, to ensure that each ruler was free of compulsions and ensorcellment.

Five decades ago the current king was slain by the next in line, which set off a civil war that purged many of the bloodlines, as the nobles used the book as a sort of to-do list of who to kill to gain power. Twice Dassen stabilized, but twice more it fell again into civil war again. While it was a chaotic time, it kept the Ragesians from conquering the land, since keeping control of it would not have been worth the effort.

Fifteen years ago a new king, Steppengard, came to power. He had no siblings, and had formed alliances to keep the nation stable, but to further ensure that there would be no more wars he established the Council of Nine. All major matters of policy must be voted on by the council (often by proxy), which gathers at Steppengard's castle in Bresk. Each Lord and Lady has one vote and the King's vote counts as three. Cooperation is ensured by an agreement that the rest of the Lords will combine forces to march on a Lord who breaks faith with the Council.

The Book of Eight Lands still grants its boon to the current rulers of each of the old kingdoms, and to the king of Dassen himself, but it no longer officially dictates the line of royal ascension. Steppengard had a large family, with eighteen children as of the new year, to ensure that he would be able to pass down his throne without further wars.

King Steppengard. The ruler of the nation, Steppengard is an old, experienced warrior who has a reputation for preferring negotiation to combat. Steppengard would likely have been willing to listen to Seaquen's offer, were it not that the death of his family has left him grieving and slightly unhinged.

Lord Gallo. Gallo was named Duke by Steppengard as a reward for his land's service in protecting Dassen from invasion. Across the Nasham River which defines the northern border of Gallo's lands is a mountain pass called the Alydi Gap, the only easy passage between Ragesia and Dassen. Most other routes through the northern mountains are protected by the dozens of dwarven strongholds, though none are as smooth a trip as Alydi Gap, so it has fallen to Gallo's family throughout the centuries to hold back invaders. Gallo does not want to let the Ragesians through his land, and so will be the most receptive ally for Seaquen.

Lady Timor. Timor is a wizard of modest power. Her lands are protected from invasion by the Glaskeel Cliffs, a strange icy landform half a mile high that separates her territory's plateau from the lowlands of Gallo's lands. Other routes into her lands are circuitous and easily defended. However, Timor is very frightened of the Ragesian Scourge, and so she is willing to ally with Seaquen if she thinks they have a chance of succeeding.

THE BURNING SKY

As detailed in the *Campaign Guide*, teleportation is hazardous during the adventure due to a strange mishap tied to the Torch of the Burning Sky. Any creature teleporting takes fire damage based on the distance traveled. For more details, see the *Campaign Guide*.

Lord Dashgoban. Dashgoban is the only dwarf among the eight lords, and he was one of the three nobles who had to sacrifice part of his family's lands to create Steppengard's holding (the other two were Lady Dene and Lord Iz). He thinks of Steppengard as a weak man, and would like to see him replaced, but he himself has no interest in ruling the whole kingdom.

Lord Megadon. Megadon is one of the richest nobles, controlling both coastline and access to the Nasham River. He does not believe Ragesia is a threat to him.

Lord Iz. The lands of Iz are rocky and inhospitable, home to strong warriors. However, Iz is loyal to the Council of Nine, and will obey his king.

Lord Rego. The poorest of the noble lords, Rego has also suffered a great brunt of refugees passing through his lands. He is actively hostile to Seaquen, and would like to see it destroyed.

Lady Dene. The beautiful Lady Dene expects to profit greatly from traffic passing through her lands to and from Seaquen, though she is nervous because she has only a weak army of her own.

Lady Namin. Namin has ties to the Shahalesti, whose nation her lands border. She has heard rumors that agents of Lyceum attempted to kill the princess of Shahalesti and destroyed part of the Shahalesti fleet, so she is hostile to Seaquen. When the king's wife was killed, Lady Namin was already in the capital city, and she quickly begins maneuvering to become the new queen.

ACT ONE: MESSAGE FOR THE KING

In this act the heroes are recruited on a mission for Seaquen, travel to Bresk, and have an audience with the king. They can gain the favor of other nobles, but they attract the ire of Madness, who is posing as the king's advisor. By the end of the act the heroes will likely be fleeing from Bresk, perhaps after escaping prison.

MEETING AT LYCEUM

A week after the hurricane (see *Shelter from the Storm*), the heroes are notified – either by letter or by an NPC that they trust – that their presence is desired at Headmaster Simeon's office at the Lyceum academy to discuss their next mission.

As they head across the campus to the main tower, call for a Spot check (DC 15). Among the groups of students strolling under the walkways with their instructors is a scrawny young man, no older than sixteen, with straw-colored hair and expensive clothes. He is watching the heroes, and is distracted from his lesson about how to defend against mind control magic.

This is Jineer Bremman (N male human sorcerer 2), a student at Lyceum who has heard that the heroes might be headed to Dassen. Jineer is the son of Proxy Jinis, the representative of Duke Gallo at Steppengard's court. He does not plan to approach the heroes yet, but if the heroes go talk to him, see A Letter Home, below.

Simeon's office is on the fifth floor of the main tower of the Lyceum academy, its door guarded by four soldiers and four mages. The office fills a quarter of the tower's floor, and is furnished with several comfortable couches set up to serve as a conference area, plus a desk and numerous bookshelves for Simeon. Maps, sculptures, and weapons adorn the walls, and a broad window looks out westward over the still-devastated Seaquen harbor. Simeon Gohanach (LG male human diviner 7/lorekeeper 6) is here on one of the couches, and next to him stands Kiernan Stekart (LN male dwarf abjurer 11), the head of the War Department.

On another couch is Katrina (CN female sorcerer 9), the opportunistic mage who helped get the heroes into the good graces of Seaquen over the past month. She has already managed to parlay their success into an advisor position for herself. So far no one suspects that she is actually a spy for the Ragesians. If Haddin Ja-Laffa (NE male human wizard 9) survived the flight from Gate Pass, he might be here as well, coughing and wheezing quietly, since he is nearly as manipulative as Katrina.

Also seated is a person the heroes have not spoken to before, Balan Bastom.

Balan Bastom

CR 7

An Ostalin man nearing middle age with a thick sandy brown muttonchop beard, Balan dresses in nobleman's finery, and always situates himself to be as comfortable as possible without looking improper. He keeps an exotic leather-bound case beside him, stitched with his family's coat of arms.

Male half-elf bard 7

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2, low-light vision

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Orc, Terran

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 34 (7 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +4; +2 vs. enchantment

Immune sleep

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +5 +1 *shortsword* (d6, 19–20/x2), +0 accordion case used as makeshift flail (d6–1 nonlethal)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4

Spells Known (CL 7th)

3rd (1/day) – *deep slumber* (DC 16), *glibness*

2nd (3/day) – *cure moderate wounds*, *detect thoughts* (DC 15), *misdirection*, *tongues*

1st (4/day) – *charm person* (DC 14), *comprehend languages*, *disguise self*, *silent image*

0 (3/day) – *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16

SQ bardic knowledge +8, bardic music (7/day – countersong, fascinate, inspire courage, inspire competence, suggestion)

Feats Negotiator, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Skills Bluff +15, Diplomacy +26, Intimidate +17, Gather Information +17, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Perform (keyboard) +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +12.

Possessions masterwork accordion in a fine accordion case, noble's outfit, +1 masterwork shortsword (jeweled and etched, worth 2,500 gp), *stone of alarm*, 150 pp and 300 gp for bribes

Bardic Music (Su): Seven times per day, Balan can use a bardic music performance to oppose hostile sonic or language-dependent effects, to fascinate onlookers when not in combat, to grant his allies a +1 bonus to attack, damage, and saves against fear, to grant an ally a +2 bonus to a skill check, or to implant a *suggestion* (Will DC 16) into the mind of a creature he has already fascinated. Because nothing is more fascinating than a man pumping away at an accordion.

Balan is originally from Ostalin, where he was officially a noble, though he has no actual political power. Now he is serving as an advisor to Seaquen, and has been chosen as the diplomat to represent the town's interests in Dassen.

Balan enthusiastically waves them over.

"Come on and sit down," says the half-elf stranger. "I'm Balan Bastom, distantly related to the Bastom house of Ostalin. Pleasure to meet you. Simeon and I were just trying to figure out how long it had been since we'd seen a storm anywhere near as big as the one we had last week. The best we can figure was twenty-two years ago. Good job on that, by the way."

Katrina smirks. "We owe them our lives," she says. "Guys, we've got a mission for you. I've promised them that you disappoint us."

Simeon smiles and makes introductions, gets everyone drinks of their choice from a well-stocked cabinet, and lets some small talk take place before getting to business.

The large-bodied Balan sips delicately at his ale and casts a wan smile in your direction. "I suppose

WITHOUT BALAN

If the heroes have a party member who is very diplomatic, feel free to excise Balan from the adventure, to let the heroes carry the spotlight. However, Balan provides an easy way for you to help the heroes avoid getting lost or confused in the admittedly complicated political situation of this adventure. Additionally, even if the heroes are not going to be the primary negotiators at first, they will have an opportunity to play a major role in the diplomacy. Balan will likely die early on anyway.

you are wondering what this is all about," he says, "and I can't say I blame you. Have you heard the recent news out of Ragesia? They're dispatching an army to come take care of us. As soon as the mountain passes thaw on the border between Ragesia and Dassen we'll have forty thousand or more soldiers headed our way. The downside of notoriety I fear.

"Regardless, with the damage to the town, even if the entire refugee population mustered, Seaquen can't hope to defend itself on its own against the Ragesian army. Normally it would be a simple matter of requesting help from King Steppengard, since officially Seaquen is part of Dassen. Not like we actually pay taxes, though." He grins.

"But the Ragesians have gone and made a non-aggression pact with the King." Balan frowns. "We just got word this morning. An envoy from Ragesia promised that Empress Leska will not attack Dassen if their army is allowed to march through unmolested. Depending on how the weather goes, it looks like we have a month or two before our resistance is cut short.

"That's where I, and hopefully we, come in. Simeon here has asked me to journey to Bresk and use my humble persuasive skills to convince the King to change his mind. We've already sent ahead a courier requesting an audience for us, so hopefully they'll be expecting us. Now, we're not particularly keen on officially allying with Dassen,

but if we pledge our magical support to King Steppengard in this war, and play to his ego about how he is letting the Ragesians bully him, I think we have a shot."

At this point, Simeon interrupts. "Try not to give away the town, Balan. Remember, we want to 'offer our assistance at the king's pleasure,' not 'pledge loyalty.' We're not joining his country, and we're sure as hell not going to pay him taxes. We —"

Balan shakes his head. "I'll try, but let's not get too full of ourselves. We're not a sovereign nation here. I'll say and do whatever is necessary to make sure that all the people here are safe from the Scourge. If Steppengard won't listen, maybe one of the other nobles will.

"Anyway," Balan continues, "back to you. As you can probably see, I am not a great warrior, nor am I an experienced traveler. The Ragesians already have an envoy in Bresk, so we should expect some trouble. Simeon has vouched for you fully. We need your help. I shudder to think what would happen to Lyceum if the Ragesian Scourge were to reach us."

From here on the conversation turns to the practical considerations. Simeon can provide maps and Balan can explain the political nature of Dassen. Kiernan says little unless asked about military matters, which he has been actively researching for the past few weeks. Surprisingly, Katrina has as much information about the Ragesian army as Kiernan does, which she explains by saying she had a few friends in the Gate Pass resistance over the years. They all encourage the heroes to ask questions and get a clear sense of how their mission will play out.

Travel. While Seaquen was being struck by a bizarre winter hurricane, weather in Dassen

and further north has been terribly cold. The temperature is already taking a downward turn in Seaquen, and it looks like it will snow within a week, even though winter should be coming to an end soon.

The Nasham River that runs north through most of Dassen has frozen, whereas the King's Road, while normally an easy highway, is currently buried under snow and would be difficult passage. After a bit of overland travel to get out of the swamps near Seaquen, the heroes could buy a few sleds and dogs, reindeer, or horses to pull them. Balan would cover the cost of these, at Seaquen's expense.

The heroes might mention hiring the Wayfarers to teleport them, but experiments of how to survive the "Burning Sky" effect, wherein teleportation causes fatal burns (see the *Campaign Guide* for details of this ongoing problem), have not yet been successful.

News of the War. Gate Pass is still a battleground, with the Second Ragesian Army now controlling several districts, and Shahalesti forces working to aid the city's defense. Shahalesti and Ragesia are also battling in the northern reaches of Shahalesti, as the Fourth Ragesian Army heads for Nacaan, capital of the northern Shahalesti state. The Ragesians apparently plan to join up their two armies after conquering Gate Pass, in order to drive for Calanis, the Shahalesti capital.

The Ragesian fleet is blockading Turinn, the capital of Sindaire, while General Magdus of the First Ragesian Army marches to take the city from inland, though his forces are split up, and he is making slow progress as he tries to get them to return to the main body. There is also word that Ostalin is preparing to invade Sindaire from the south, though news out of Ostalin is spotty right now.



Getting Ready to Go. Simeon expects the heroes will make ready to leave in the morning. He encourages them to purchase whatever they suspect they'll need for the mission, seeming pleased that a strong war economy is keeping people busy in the city. He promises to make sure any of their belongings they must leave behind are taken care of, and wishes them luck. Before they leave, he gives them a scroll of *sending* if anyone in the party can use it, telling them to use this to alert Kiernan if anything goes horribly awry. "Good news," he says, "can wait. Bad news will refuse to."

LETTER HOME

This encounter can happen pretty much anytime while the heroes are still in Seaquen but it is most likely to happen soon after they leave their meeting with Simeon and Balan.

OTHER SEAQUEN MISSIONS

While the heroes are busy securing the safety of Seaquen against an army, four other groups of agents are on missions of their own.

One group is headed for the Monastery of Two Winds, on the border of Ostalin and Sindaire, following clues that suggest the monastery might have been involved in the hurricane plot. Another group, recruited by General Xavious, has been sent to find any evidence about the fate of the Torch of the Burning Sky. They are all very elite adventurers, and are in daily contact with Simeon. The other two groups have been sent to Shahalesti and Ostalin following other leads Simeon and Kiernan are not talking about right now.

The first two groups will eventually fail in their missions, which will be the basis for the heroes' goals in the next two adventures. That is not to say that everyone on those missions dies, however, so if the heroes have made friends or enemies in the city, one or more of those NPCs might be involved with these missions, only to show up unexpectedly later on.

Jineer, son of Duke Gallo's proxy at the Dassen royal court, has heard rumors that a mission is being planned to Dassen, and he wants the heroes to get in touch with his father, about whom he is worried. If Crystin Ja-Nafeel has survived since escaping Gate Pass, then she had a vision about Jineer's father, telling him, "Your father will be caged by Madness" (which, honestly, is probably the most literal vision she has had so far). If Crystin is not available, Jineer simply has a feeling something has gone wrong.

Eventually Jineer approaches the heroes, if they don't talk to him first.

You meet the eyes of a skinny teenaged boy cursed with a mop of unruly blond hair. He turns a brilliant red and says, "I ... I'm sorry for following you. I, uh, wanted to ask, if you're going to Bresk could you take this letter to my father? His name is Jinis, and he's Lord Gallo's proxy to the royal court. You are going, aren't you?"

"Please, I'm afraid something bad is going to happen to him. I ... I can offer a few coins if you'll get this to him."

Jineer has not heard from his father for a few weeks, which is normal, since letters aren't delivered often during winter. He has, however, heard the news that Ragesia is going to march through Dassen, and he knows that Gallo will be the one the heroes will need to speak to if they want to convince the country not to acquiesce to the Ragesians' demands. He says his father can help them. In the letter he has written about what brave heroes they were, and how they saved the town from the hurricane. He is willing to pay a measly 10 gp.

The letter is unsealed and basically expresses Jineer's worry and tells his father to trust the party. Despite his issues with verbal communication, Jineer writes eloquently.

THE TRIP TO BRESK

The journey from Seaquen to the edge of the marsh will take about two days, after which the heroes can reach the Nasham River, purchase a sleigh and animals to pull it, and begin traveling the

120 miles to Bresk, at a rate of (at most) forty miles a day. The terrain is coated with snow, and anyone the heroes speak to along the way expresses that such cold is unnatural this close to spring. While the river has frozen during the occasional rare cold snap in the past, it has never done so this far south.

Late Refugees (EL 7)

As the heroes are traveling along the frozen river, after they have gone ten miles upstream, have them make Listen and Spot checks. At a distance of 100 feet, plus 10 feet per point of the highest check, the heroes notice a distant commotion off the eastern bank of the river. A large crowd of people are fleeing across the rolling, snow-covered hills, screaming in panic, pursued by a towering monstrous centipede with glowing red plates along its back.

This group of forty refugees, recently forced out of Lord Rego's lands where they had been trying to settle, were headed to Seaquen on foot when the heavy beat of dozens of feet attracted the attention of a remorhaz. The remorhaz has pursued the people for miles, stopping only to kill or swallow those who stumble and lag behind. Though the monster is not any faster than the refugees, with its higher Constitution it can run much longer than they can, so every few minutes it manages to kill a few stragglers, after which it runs again to catch up with the mobile buffet. At this point it has already eaten its fill, and it is just following them for fun.

Right now the remorhaz is only thirty feet behind its prey. Once they reach the river, the creature's weight and heat will shatter the ice, stranding or drowning most of the terrified refugees. If the heroes can kill it or delay it for a few rounds, the refugees will be able to get to safety on the far side of the river. If attacked, the remorhaz will turn its attention from its food to its enemies.

Remorhaz (CR 7): 73 hp, MM and Appendix.

The remorhaz's gullet is already filled, so if it establishes a hold it deals automatic bite and heat damage each round, but it cannot swallow whole.

Aftermath: The refugees are mostly 1st-level adepts and their families, who just want to get to Seaquen. They have lost a dozen people already to this monster, but the one they blame is the Dasseni noble Lord Rego, who drove them out of his lands. After being rescued, the refugees will take some time to rest and overcome the shock of what has happened. Then, knowing nothing else to do, they'll head to Seaquen.

When the heroes eventually return to Seaquen, they will find that the refugees they saved have told the tale of their rescue, for which the heroes are greatly lauded.

Bodies in the Water

This encounter happens when the heroes are sixty miles from Bresk. Their sleigh comes to an abrupt stop and the animals pulling it cannot move any farther.

When the heroes get out to investigate they will find one of the runners on the sleigh is caught on an ornate loop of leather. Further investigation reveals that the loop of leather is actually a belt belonging to a corpse frozen in the ice. There are, in fact, three bodies frozen in the ice, all men, their features distorted. It takes only about a minute of hacking to free the bodies, since the ice here is thinner than normal.

If the bodies are freed, the heroes can see that each has the same device somewhere on their clothing – a leopard and a serpent dancing under a sunburst. A Knowledge (local or nobility & royalty) check (DC 15) reveals that it is the device all of Lady Dene's people wear. Two were killed by crossbow bolts in the back, while the third looks to have been hanged. A Search check (DC 15) reveals that the ice around where the bodies lie does not match the rest of the river surface. It appears to have been melted with fire, and is covered with notably less snow.

This is the heroes' first clue that foul things are afoot. What happened was that an envoy serving Lord Dashgoban was headed to Lady Dene's lands to deliver news of the recent assassination and to ask for Lady Dene's presence at the court. But Steppengard's newly formed Talon police force suspected them as conspirators, so they chased them down and killed them.



A Survival check (DC 12) can locate the tracks of a group of at least five men on horseback who left a few hours ago, their tracks still visible despite recent snow. There is a tree on the bank of the river nearby, where the one man who surrendered was hanged. The men on horseback headed upstream on the King's Road, and so will be traveling more slowly than the heroes.

Police Brutality (EL 7)

This encounter occurs twenty miles upstream of the previous encounter. The heroes are likely the only ones on the river, but there is a lot of traffic on the King's Road.

On the road beside the river is a colorful caravan of three covered wagons pulled by husky ponies. It appears the halfling caravan has been stopped by five humans riding light warhorses, one of them looking like a military officer. The men are rifling through the wagons throwing items about while the officer watches on, ignoring the emphatic gestures of one of the halflings.

A Knowledge (local or nobility & royalty) check (DC 15) reveals that the humans all wear King Steppengard's symbol – a male sphinx rearing, surrounded by eight small triangles. The halflings are merchants from Ostalin, leaving Bresk and heading home, but the soldiers are suspicious that the halflings are spies.

As the heroes approach or pass by, they hear a woman screaming, following by a clamor from among the half-dozen halflings. The soldiers have found a crawlspace under one of the halfling wagons, and are pulling out a woman. The halflings were helping the woman, Hethal Bekoff (N female human aristocrat 2), sneak out of the country because she was romantically involved with one of the suspected assassins. As the heroes watch, the soldiers yank the woman out of her crawlspace, and the commander draws a sword, looking ready to execute the woman on the spot.

If the heroes approach, the commander's first action is to strike the woman down, then order his men to kill the halflings. If the heroes attack, the commander and his soldiers retaliate.

Steppengard Soldiers (4)

CR 2

Male human fighter 2
 N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18
hp 20 (2 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee +6 masterwork flail (d8+2, 19-20/x2)
Ranged +4 masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str] (d8+2, x3), or +3 grenade-like acid flask (d6)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4
Combat Gear potion of *cure serious wounds*, five flasks of acid

Abilities Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (flail)
Skills Handle Animal +4, Ride +6
Possessions banded mail, heavy shield, masterwork flail, masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str] with 20 arrows

Steppengard Commander

CR 5

Male human commander 4/fighter 1
 N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; **Senses** Listen -1, Spot -1
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22, Dodge
hp 32 (5 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee +9 masterwork flail (d8+3, 19-20/x2)
Ranged +3 grenade-like acid flask (d6)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7
Combat Options leadership performance, direct orders
Combat Gear two potions of *cure serious wounds*, five flasks of acid

Abilities Str 16, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14
SQ battle cry, initiative bonus
Feats Dodge, Fearless Leader, Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader, Weapon Focus (flail)
Skills Craft (weapons) +7, Diplomacy +9, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +10, Perform (oratory) +10, Ride +8
Possessions +1 full plate, +1 heavy shield, masterwork flail

Leadership Performances (Ex): Three times per day, the commander can inspire or direct his allies (within 40 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +1 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect the commander himself.

Direct Orders (Ex): As a swift action each round the commander can choose to grant all allies within 40 ft. a +2 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits.
- Attack rolls while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Battle Cry: Once per hour as a free action, the commander can shout a battle cry – "Avenge the royal family!" – to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Initiative Bonus: Allies within 40 ft. of the commander gain a +1 bonus to initiative checks.

The band of searchers are members of the new secret police, the Talon. Though officially they're tasked with protecting the crown, they're not above harrasing some foreigners to line their own pockets. They do truly believe that there are assassins trying to flee the country, so they show no mercy. If it should come to a fight, the soldiers attack to kill, while the commander directs his men. The halflings will not help in the battle, choosing to hide beneath their wagons. While the soldiers do have horses, they are not trained in mounted combat, and so stay on foot.

Balan is against getting directly involved but

will not stop the heroes if they wish to. If the heroes approach but don't get involved, the soldiers will decide they need to search the heroes' belongings too. If they find Jineer's letter to his father they confiscate it and begin asking a lot of questions.

If a fight turns badly for the soldiers, one runs for his horse and tries to flee to Bresk. If he reaches the city, the heroes will have a very unfriendly reception, but their diplomatic papers will keep them out of immediate trouble.

Aftermath: If the heroes talk to either the soldiers or the halfling and their refugee, they can find out that just three days earlier the king's entire family was slaughtered. His five eldest children, ranging in ages from twelve to seventeen, were at a party in which everyone was slaughtered, cut to pieces, with no sign of the assassins. Within minutes of that the King's wife and thirteen of his youngest children were killed by poison at dinner, a fate which Steppengard only managed to escape because one of his nobles came to him complaining about the Ragesian ambassador.

In every case, as the bodies were being taken away for safe-keeping, to determine if any magic could be used to safe them, the hearts were extracted and burned.

The enraged king ordered his soldiers to begin searching anyone who appeared at all suspicious, and set his advisor, Nina Glibglammer, to divine who was responsible for the horrible crime. Steppengard has spent the past two days in mourning, and the funeral was earlier today. Many people are trying to flee Bresk and Dassen, and the Talon are causing people to panic that they might be wrongfully accused.

THE CAPITAL OF BRESK

The walled city of Bresk rises above the hills around it, with the castle perched on a rocky protrusion called the Great Hill. It overlooks the wide river and the Toraest Steppes to the east. Much of the castle is said to be underground, as are many parts of the city, which is home to several thousand dwarves. The city itself is generally unfriendly to outsiders, and most of the *real* culture of Bresk lies underground in tunnels excavated by dwarves over the centuries.

Most foreigners never delve below the surface to see the bustling markets and solemn temples, illuminated by clever skylights and mighty braziers.

Bresk (Small City): Conventional; AL LN; Population 10,000; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 7,500,000 gp; Mixed (65% human, 28% dwarf, 5% orc, 1% half-orc, 1% other).

Architecture is stout and broad, adorned with various great cats, gem-patterns, and sphinx statues. People dress in multiple layers of drab clothes, clearly unaccustomed to such chill weather, though the tunnels underground are much warmer.

While the traditional religions were mostly devoted to strength and warfare, since the unification of the nation, a sect of the cave goddess Donhofreya (LN lesser goddess, domains: Earth, Healing, and War) has devoted itself to healing the nation. The prelates of Donhofreya have gained much respect, and many of them serve in the army, showing an eager mixture of militarism and medicine. The Order of the Aquiline Cross (detailed in the *Player's Guide*) is on good terms with the Donhofreya prelacy.

The south gate of Bresk is open to a long snaking column of people of beasts trying to enter the city, and a smaller, more daring line of those trying to get out. Dozens of guards watch the gate and question people as they pass, searching belongings and lending suspicious eyes on foreigners. Balan's diplomatic papers will get the heroes into Bresk with little in the way of questioning, as long as the heroes do not cause trouble.

Once inside Bresk, Balan leads them to the Golden Griffon, an inn near the castle on the westward face of the great hill. They have a large suite on the second floor, with a main common room and a bedroom for each of them. They have a few hours to rest as Balan gets in touch with the right people, verifying that their audience is scheduled for several days later (or the next afternoon, depending on how quickly the heroes traveled). In the meanwhile, Balan says, he wants to get their help planning their argument. With the new development of the royal family assassination, it's imperative that they don't make any missteps when speaking to the king.



When all the heroes are inside the suite, Balan takes his *stone of alarm* and puts it on the doorknob, to help keep people from getting into the suite. “It helps me sleep a little easier at night,” he says.

Group Diplomacy (EL 7)

The heroes, representing Seaquen, will be speaking to the King and the proxies of the Council of Nine, except that Lord Gallo's proxy has been arrested for treason, and Lady Namin is there in person. Rather than having five people talk at once, Balan (or a similarly persuasive member of the heroes) will present their case.

However, this does not mean that the rest of the group cannot aid the primary speaker's Diplomacy check. However, instead of aiding the primary speaker at the time, they can aid him in preparation.

Encourage the heroes to spend some time discussing just how to present their case. By taking time prior to the actual event to prepare, the heroes can Aid Another, each making Diplomacy checks

(DC 10) to grant Balan a +2 bonus. Balan will actually make three Diplomacy checks, one to those proxies who are willing to listen to Seaquen (starting attitude Indifferent), one to those who are neutral (starting attitude Unfriendly), and one to those who are actively opposed (starting attitude Hostile).

Additionally, certain decisions on the part of the heroes regarding what exactly to say can have beneficial or negative consequences. If the heroes are willing to explore the city and ask around, a Gather Information check (DC 15) reveals one of the following pieces of information, plus another piece for every 5 points they succeed by.

Depending on how interested in politics your players are, this could be resolved with a simple roll, or it could turn into an evening of roleplaying as the heroes locate where the various proxies spend time, track down their friends, play tavern games and win drinking contests to earn the trust of their contacts, pray at the same temples to hear the priests' opinions, and possibly seduce secrets from the proxies, all to help them plead Seaquen's case.

Prominent Information

The Demeanor of the Lords and Ladies. The heroes can learn the leanings of the various nobles, as detailed in the Council of Nine (see page 4), namely that Gallo, Dashgoban, and Timor are not fond of the Ragesian's non-aggression pact; that Lord Iz and Lady Dene are uncertain, but are loyal to the king; and that Megadon, Rego, and Namin are hostile to Seaquen. Failing to find out this information incurs a -5 penalty to Balan's Diplomacy checks to the Hostile proxies as he directs pleas to the wrong people.

Glibglammer's Stance. Gnomish advisor Nina Glibglammer was supposedly an ally of Seaquen, she herself being a wizard, but recently she has expressed that she views Seaquen as a threat. If the heroes and Balan plan to rely on Glibglammer to support their case, Balan suffers a -5 penalty to his checks with the Unfriendly and Hostile proxies, since the gnome woman has already predicted such arguments, and has warned the representatives at the court not to listen to them.

THE BOOK OF EIGHT LANDS

In addition to Gather Information checks, the heroes can recall information about this vital artifact with Knowledge (history or nobility & royalty) checks, or Bardic Knowledge checks.

DC Information

- 10 The Book of Eight Lands magically records the lineage of all the rulers of the lands of Dassen, and its text automatically records any births, marriages, deaths, or other changes in succession.
- 15 The book is so named because the nation once consisted of eight kingdoms, though fifteen years ago Steppengard united the region and added a ninth region for himself. In the past the Book served almost as a checklist of whom to kill in order to move closer to the throne, so it inspired much civil conflict. It is no longer used to determine succession, however, by mutual agreement of the nobles.
- 20 The Book grants special magical defenses to those who rule each of the lands of Dassen, and to their immediate families, intended to let them rule without being swayed by charms or compulsions.
- 25 The book is protected in the vault of King Steppengard's castle. Any human, dwarf, or half-human may ask to view the book by addressing the guards in Dwarven, stating, "I pray that my blood is worthy of Dassen."

The Issue of Succession. According to normal bloodline succession detailed in the Book of Eight Lands, Lord Megadon is next in line to the throne after Steppengard, but Lady Namin wants to marry Steppengard and become queen. Everyone is nervous that another civil war might break out, and they want Steppengard to make a clear decision as to who will succeed him, instead of turning again to the Book. It does not particularly matter what Balan says in this regard, but if he does not address the issue at all, it will demonstrate a severe lack of understanding

of the situation, incurring a –10 penalty to Balan's checks with all the proxies.

Other Influences. If the heroes go out of their way to meet or speak with one or more of the proxies the evening before the audience, they might gain a +2 bonus regarding that particular noble. If the heroes mention that Lady Dene's servants were likely killed by Steppengard's new police, the Talon, they gain a +5 bonus with her, but a –5 penalty with the other Neutral and Hostile proxies, who view this as crass rumor-mongering.

Ad-Hoc Experience: If the heroes find out at least one piece of the above information to give Balan, reward them for a CR 5 challenge. If they find two pieces, reward them instead for a CR 6, and if all three, reward them for a CR 7 challenge.

Audience with the King (EL 11)

The next morning Balan and the heroes head to the castle and wait in a grand hall until noon, when they are ushered into the audience chamber just in time to see the end of a trial.

After navigating a variety of irritating functionaries and a warren of corridors leading deeper into the hillside, the heroes are ushered into a throne room – wide, high-ceilinged, its walls studded with small shaded windows and a single skylight over the throne itself, illuminating it and the space just before it in pale amber light. A crowd of dozens of people – proxies for nobles, their assistants, ambassadors, and servants all linger in the shadows, watching the spectacle.

The heroes are directed to the right side of the room, where they are positioned beside the entourage of Lady Namin, slender, platinum-haired, dressed in mourning black. She is the only noblewoman who is personally in attendance. All the other nobles are represented by their proxies.

A pair of lavish thrones sit on the dais, the left one empty and covered with a black shroud. In the other sits an aging but still vital looking man who can only be King Steppengard. His brown beard is unkempt, his clothes wrinkled, even his crown somewhat askew, and it looks like he has not slept well in days.

In front of him is a slim man in manacles, being harangued by a gnome woman with curly hair that seems to shift from black to purple as she moves. She holds a book in her hand and stalks around the man in a circle, her voice shrill.

The woman leans close to the man and says, "You do realize that the king is offering you a chance to recant, to confess, to admit your role in this tragedy, and to ask for his mercy? You do realize that, don't you?"

"It is no secret that Gallo has—"

The man interrupts, "Duke Gallo. His family has defended our nation since its birth, and you should pay him the respect he has earned!"

"Gallo," the woman says. "He had the most opportunity to profit if the king had been killed. This was clearly some attempt to frame the Ragesians."

She gestures to the audience gathered in the darkened edges of the room, to a space opposite where you stand. You spot a man dressed in rich Ragesian red clothes, marked with symbols of a torch. He is guarded by an inquisitor in a heavy cloak, the white of his bearskull mask darkened by etched runes.

"The Ragesians," the gnome continues, "who have offered to protect us in this time of war. But no, *Gallo* is too arrogant to accept that. He must have his war. Is it not true?"

The man starts to reply, but stammers, looking confused.

The woman laughs. "Your lies have begun to confuse even you, poor man. Please, answer my questions, and explain to us how Duke Gallo was involved in the terrible, tragic, tyrannical attempt to break the mighty back of our kingdom."

Any of the other spectators can tell the heroes that the gnome is Nina Glibglammer, the King's top advisor and the head of his newly commissioned police, the Talon. They can also tell them that the man in the manacles, named Relder, is the clerk to Lord Gallo's proxy, a man named Jinis, who is currently in jail for treason. Lord Gallo himself is not in Bresk.



The questioning continues for several minutes, Glibglammer's questions all revolving around where Relder the clerk was on the evening King Steppengard's family was killed, who Proxy Jinis saw over the week previous, and how Gallo was involved in the poisoning of Steppengard's family. The man seems confused often, like he's struggling to tell two stories. One paints him and Gallo's associates as innocent, whereas the other is a fervent, irrational babbling about poison and meetings late at night.

What has actually happened is that Nina (in reality the trillith Madness) senses that people are being swayed by the sincerity of the clerk, and is using her ability to make the man confused, then to implant a *suggestion*.

People in the audience nearby you mutter that it looks like the clerk is being mind-controlled, though they're uncertain if Nina is responsible, or if she was trying to break some previous enchantment. Just then, Nina breaks off her

questioning, shakes her head, and turns to the throne, addressing the king.

"I'm convinced, Your Majesty, that this man's mind has been charmed, and his memory altered."

Finally King Steppengard moves, straightening in his chair, looking somewhat ghoulish in the overhead light.

"Nina, thank you for your service. It worries me that someone could be using such sorcery in the seat of my nation's rule. Though I wish for nothing other than to execute this man for his part in," he draws a breath, "my family's murder, I must serve justice. Take him back to the prison. Until such time as other evidence comes to light, I cannot pass sentence on him."

Three guards come up and drag the manacled man away. The gnome woman steps to stand before the king, just beside his throne.

"I tire of trials," King Steppengard says. He waves wearily. "I will take audiences now."

The window blinds are raised, and the room brightens comfortably, so that now the heroes can see who all is gathered. Proxies for all the nobles are in attendance, except for Lady Namin's (she is here in person), and Lord Gallo's (who has been arrested for treason).

The heroes' envoy from Seaquen is the first group called before the king. As the heroes come up to speak, the gathered crowd whispers excitedly. They can feel the heavy gaze of the Ragesian inquisitor on their backs. It is now time for Balan and the heroes to plead their case.

Have the players briefly reiterate all the points they wish to make (out of character, if they're more comfortable with that), and then have Balan roll a Diplomacy check for each of the three groups – Indifferent, Unfriendly, and Hostile, using the modifiers determined beforehand.

Indifferent. This group contains the proxies of Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor. If Balan's check beats DC 15 they become Friendly, and if he beats DC 30 they will become Helpful and will ensure that their respective superiors respond favorably to the heroes later in the adventure.

Unfriendly. This group contains the proxies for Lady Dene and Lord Iz. If Balan's check beats DC 15 they become Indifferent, and if he beats DC 25 they become Friendly. Only if he beats DC 40 will they become Helpful.

Hostile. This group contains the proxies to Lord Rego and Lord Megadon, as well as Lady Namin herself. If Balan's check beats DC 20 they become Unfriendly, or Indifferent if he beats DC 25, or even Friendly if he beats DC 35. If somehow Balan beats DC 50, they become Helpful.

Aside from helping secure aid from Timor and Dashgoban in Act Two, these results have little effect in the course of the adventure, but they determine the heroes' overall success at the adventure's conclusion. Also, if the heroes manage to sway any noble to Helpful, they should learn as much, realizing that they have supporters on the Council of Nine. You might even give the heroes some leeway in the Battle of Gallo's Fend, such as by having some of the hostile soldiers serving alongside Steppengard's own forces hesitate, retreat, or even switch sides at a pivotal moment.

After Balan has presented their case, the crowd is murmuring with a bevy of responses, and Steppengard is leaning low to listen to the advice of Nina Glibglammer. After a moment Steppengard raises a hand for silence. He points to one of the heroes who has not been speaking, preferably a warrior.

"You," Steppengard says. "You don't have the silver, honeyed tongue of your companion. Tell me plainly. How many friends have you lost in this war? How many family?"

He waits for the hero's response, likely scoffing.



"I have lost *nineteen*," he says. "My wife. My children. I would have gladly lost my own life instead. I have suffered enough for my entire country. I will not have any others lose their family because of a fight that is not ours. If you were my subjects, I would have you executed for treason for even suggesting such a thing."

He stands and scans the crowd. "None shall offer aid to this nest of serpents, these mages of Seaquen and their allies."

He looks back to the heroes, glancing briefly to the Ragesian envoy. "To you, I give three days in my city. Perhaps in that time you can use some of your poet's tongue to persuade the Ragesians to show you mercy. I truly hope none of you will have to feel the same loss that I have, but by leaping to war you are calling such a wound down upon your house, your kin, your selves.

"Who next wishes to address their king?"

The heroes' audience is clearly over at this point. Steppengard goes on to listen to more mundane requests, though the proxies of Timor and Dashgoban come over and speak to the heroes, encouraging them to stay in Bresk for a while, to see if the king might reconsider.

They suggest that, if the heroes do leave, that they head north to speak to Duke Gallo. They don't believe the claims about him, and suspect he might be able to convince other nobles to support Seaquen. After all, by the charter of the Council of Nine, if a majority of the council – meaning six nobles, since the king has three votes – disagree with the king, their decision stands. However, at this time no one is willing to speak out against the king. The proxies promise to contact their Lord and Lady, and to offer what support they can.

The heroes may speak with other proxies, or with Lady Namin, though she brushes them off, either rudely or apologetically, depending on how

friendly they made her. Even if she agrees with them, she wants to stay in Steppengard's good graces, and must maintain proper decorum.

Guards will not let the heroes get close enough to Steppengard or his advisor to speak to them again.

Finally, the heroes might speak to the Ragesian Ambassador Serrimus (LE male human aristocrat 6/sorcerer 1), a cunning middle-aged diplomat with an almost militaristic presence, and his bodyguard, Torrax (LE male half-orc cleric 9/expert 1), a highly experienced Inquisitor who flaunts his apparent savagery, wearing little but furs and leather straps amid all the nobles.

This will likely be the heroes' first opportunity to speak to a Ragesian of any great standing, so be sure to present them as haughty and cruel. They are fanatics, loyal to the glorious destiny of their great homeland, and view mages such as those in Seaquen as mental inferiors who use the savage, sorcerous tools of elves and heretic gods, rather than the pure might of civilized Ragsia.

Serrimus gladly offers anyone who looks receptive an opportunity to surrender themselves to Ragesia, gaining merely an exile instead of death, if they are willing to betray Seaquen. He'll also make the offer if he thinks it will just anger them, because he likes toying with inferior foreigners. Torrax is generally silent and menacing, though if anyone begins to get belligerent with them he will grab the person under their jaw with his clawed right hand, sneering from behind his rune-etched skull mask.

Any violence in the throne room is quickly put down, and even the Ragesians know not to start a fight. Eventually Balan will bore of standing around, and will suggest they leave, return to the inn, and come up with a new plan. As they depart, they notice Advisor Glibglammer watching them intently.

Ad-Hoc Experience: For completing this encounter, reward the heroes for a CR 8 challenge. Successfully swaying the Indifferent proxies earns no experience, but for the Unfriendly and Hostile proxies, reward the heroes for a CR 6 encounter for each group they make Indifferent, or CR 7 for Friendly, or CR 8 for Helpful. Thus this encounter could be worth as much as three CR 8 challenges.

CURING THE KING

The King's madness is not the result of a curse, *per se*, but rather a unique magical poison that has altered his very mind. This, combined with Steppengard's fragile state after his family's death, and his trust of his advisor, allowed the trillith Madness to trick the king into temporarily undoing the protections granted to him by the Book of Eight Lands. Madness offered the king solace in illusions and enchantments, taking away his grief, while at the same time twisting his thoughts toward insanity. At the beginning of the adventure His Majesty is only slightly unstable, but by the climax he practically has a second personality, one that desires only the destruction of those things he once loved.

Neutralize poison or *dispel magic* cannot cure the insanity. The insanity can only be removed with *break enchantment* (caster level 11th), as well as by *greater restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, and *wish*. Should the heroes manage to do this early on, the adventure suddenly turns from battling against the king to tracking down Madness and taking revenge on her, and then fighting back the armies of the Ragesian Empire at Gallo's Fend.

THE FIRST RULE OF ASSASSINATION

If the heroes seem interested in leaving the next day, these events happen the evening of the audience. Otherwise, they occur the next evening. If the heroes leave Bresk immediately they can avoid these events, though Madness will still seek to direct them northward to Gallo.

Madness wants first to silence Balan, who is too convincing and a threat to the control she has over the Council of Nine, and second to make the heroes look complicit in the assassination of the royal family, and finally third to connect the heroes with Duke Gallo, creating the appearance of a conspiracy. To get the heroes ready to move in the direction she desires, she first compels one of the king's

minstrels to bring the group a warning. Then later that evening she sends an assassin to kill Balan and scare the rest of the group, and arranges for soldiers to go arrest the group a few minutes after Pixis the assassin strikes. She expects the group to either flee on their own, or to be captured, in which case she can arrange for them to escape prison and be guided to Gallo, guaranteeing that Steppengard will strike out at one of his own nobles.

Aside from Pixis, the stats for all the foes in these encounters are presented in the Appendix, since the exact nature of the forces may vary.

Mysterious Warning

While the heroes are getting dinner or otherwise relaxing, a tall gangly man approaches them. He looks nervously over his shoulder before leaning over and whispers, "You must leave! You are in danger!"

This is Hrumbrand (N male human bard 4). The heroes may recognize him from their audience with the king, though there was no music that day. If the heroes think to question his story, a Sense Motive check (DC 25) reveals that the man is under the influence of some enchantment, at which point a Spellcraft check (DC 28) reveals that he is under the influence of a *suggestion*.

The man avoids questions, saying that he can't be seen with them, but that people will try to kill them. If pressed he explains that the king is insane, and that he has sworn out an arrest warrant for the heroes, which amounts to an order of execution in these times. Their only chance of escape is to flee north to the lands of Duke Gallo. Gallo can help them. If they leave tonight, Hrumbrand says, he'll have someone waiting at the north gate to let them out.

After delivering his message, Hrumbrand tries to bolt. Careful pursuit of him can discover that he returns to the castle, hands himself over to the guards, and is taken to the castle prison.

Silencing Balan (EL 8)

An assassin named Pixis enters the Golden Griffon, cases the joint, and sneaks into the heroes' suite in whatever way is most efficient. She uses a wand of *detect magic*, notices the *stone of alarm*, and so does not use the front door, perhaps instead coming in by cutting a hole in a window. Preparing for a fight, she drinks potions of *darkvision*, *mage armor*, and *magic fang* so she can still sneak attack in the darkness.

Because the suite might have more or fewer rooms based on the size of the heroes' party, design the battleground appropriately. The suite's common room is at least 20 feet by 30 feet, with a large window opposite the door that leads to the rest of the inn. The side of the room nearest the window has a table and a bookshelf. The bedrooms adjoin the common room, each one 10 feet by 10 feet with a bed and a wardrobe. There is also a restroom with plumbing and running water from a roof cistern. Each door has a lock (Open Lock DC 25).

Pixis sneaks in, moves silently, and opens doors one by one until she locates Balan or is detected. She takes 10 on her Move Silently checks, so the heroes must succeed a Listen check (DC 24) to hear her, with a -10 penalty if they are asleep, and a further -5 if their door is closed. They should receive a new check each time she opens another door.

Once she locates Balan she tries to render him unconscious with a flurry of blows which are sneak attacks. If she is able to knock Balan out before he is able to call for help, she drags the man out of the room and hands him over to the soldiers, who carry him off to prison. Then she departs, her job done, though you can feel free to bring her back for later missions. She leaves the door cracked open, so the innkeeper eventually enters and sets off the *stone of alarm*, or otherwise awakens the heroes.

If at any point she is detected, she fights viciously, attempting to stun and then sneak attack with a flurry of blows, hoping to take out the heroes before they can swarm her. When things start to look bad she flees as best she can.

Pixis the Assassin

Female human rogue 6/monk 2

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +11, darkvision 60 ft. with potion

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 15 (19 with *mage armor*), touch 15, flat-footed 15
hp 49 (8 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8; evasion

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee +9 unarmed strike (d6), or +7/+7 flurry of blows (d6)

Ranged +9 masterwork shuriken (d3), or +7/+7 flurry of shuriken (d3)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5

Combat Gear potion of *darkvision* ×2, potion of *mage armor* ×4, potion of *magic fang* ×4, wand of *detect magic* (35 charges)

Combat Options combat reflexes, stunning fist (3/day, DC 16), sneak attack +3d6

Abilities Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Stunning Fist, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed)

Skills Climb +9, Escape Artist +14, Hide +14, Jump +9, Listen +11, Move Silently +14, Open Locks +14, Search +12, Spot +11, Tumble +14, Use Magic Device +8

Possessions masterwork shuriken, *boots of striding and springing*, *cloak of resistance* +1

Under Arrest

A few minutes after the heroes defeat Pixis, or when they attempt to leave the tavern, they are confronted by members of the Talon police force, come to arrest the heroes for conspiracy. If the heroes do not come quietly, a fight breaks out in the street. If the heroes do not try to flee, Madness has arranged for a second wave of overwhelming force to take them down, using a few nonlethal attacks at first, and then following up with lethal damage until the heroes fall.

First Wave of Police (EL 12) – Twelve Steppengard soldiers (CR 2), two Steppengard commanders (CR 5), one Steppengard prelate (CR 7), and two criosphinxes (CR 7).

CR 8

Second Wave of Police (EL 14) – Thirty-two

Steppengard soldiers, four Steppengard commanders, two Steppengard prelates, and four criosphinxes.

Flight and Chase

Things can go many different ways in this encounter, but Madness wants the path of least resistance to guide the heroes north to Gallo, not south to Seaquen. Should the heroes head south, they will find the gate on alert, the roads crawling with soldiers and commanders, and the sky patrolled by criosphinxes.

Southern Patrol (EL 12) – Eight Steppengard soldiers (CR 2), three Steppengard commanders (CR 5), and three criosphinxes (CR 7), plus possibly more reinforcements as the soldiers sound horns to call in assistance.

The force should never be lethal, and if the heroes insist on trying to fight their way through, let them.

If they head north as Madness wants, the gate is open for them, saddled light warhorses waiting for them, and an eager-looking sergeant waving them through and shouting good luck to them as they ride past. The horses have special cleated shoes for taking the icy river. It is 70 miles to the border of Gallo's land, which means a two day trip if they follow the river, and then another 50 miles to Gallo's Fend. On the morning of the day after the heroes leave Bresk, they spot riders to the south, visible from three miles away as a dark blight on the snow. A large patrol pursues them with orders to drive them northward but not to catch up until they cross into Gallo's lands.

If a fight breaks out, the horses of the patrol will likely be near death already, having been pushed for several hours each day, but nevertheless the heroes face a dangerous battle. However, a patrol from either Gallo or Dashgoban will join up with the heroes before they get close enough to engage Steppengard's forces.

Northern Pursuit (EL 10) – Eight Steppengard soldiers (CR 2) on light warhorses, with one Steppengard commander (CR 5) on a light warhorse and a criosphinx scout (CR 7).

Allied Patrol – Four Dashgoban knights (CR 4) on heavy warhorses. These same stats can be used for knights serving Duke Gallo.

Aftermath: If the heroes end up anywhere other than with Duke Gallo, they will be encouraged to seek his aid. Don't push this, however, if the players want to pursue a different goal. When they do reach Duke Gallo's lands they are given an escort by a mounted patrol. News of the assassination has reached the Duke, as well as rumors that Steppengard thinks Gallo was somehow responsible. A homing pigeon delivered word about the heroes to the Duke, and now he wants to speak with them, to see if they might be able to help each other.

If the heroes turn themselves over to the authorities, or if they are defeated in their escape attempt, they are taken to prison. Unless the heroes manage to pull something amazing off, it should become apparent quickly that they are not here to await a fair trial, just an excuse for execution.

CASTLE STEPPENGARD PRISON

If captured, the heroes are rendered unconscious by repeated beatings with saps, then divested of their gear. They are strip-searched and branded with a small mark near their left wrist, shaped like an X. *Lesser restoration*, *cure serious wounds*, or greater magic can remove the tiny scar. Everyone is dressed in baggy gray shirts and pants.

Mages are manacled in a unique device with cuffs that keep their hands closed like a fist, and they are gagged with a device similar to a boxer's bit. It distorts speech enough to make spells with a verbal component have a 50% chance of failing, but the character can still speak clearly enough to be understood. Either device can be removed with a Disable Device or Open Lock check (DC 25), or pulled apart with brute force (Break DC 25).

They are dragged into Cell F of Area 1 on the Castle Steppengard Prison map. The floors are covered in thick straw, and parts of the floor are warmed by some sort of heating apparatus, but the prison is still around 50 degrees at all times. Balan, if he lives, is not with the group, and is instead taken to

Area 5 to be tortured for information by Inquisitor Torrax. As the group slowly regains consciousness, some of them hear what sound like screams coming from the floor, mixed with a chorus of soft hisses, but those noises are gone by the time they are fully conscious.

If the heroes truly do not try to escape on their own, have strong, prepared guards carry one of them off, chosen randomly, for torture by Torrax. Guards drag the hero into the torture chamber, pull Balan's body off the table, do something near the grate in the northeast corner, then open it and throw Balan's body down the pit. They close the grate, drag the hero to the torture table, and strap him down.

Torrax asks some questions, and when he thinks the hero is holding out he surgically removes a ligament from the prisoner's left knee, then closes the incision with *cure light wounds*. This renders the hero permanently unable to run, and halves his speed until he receives a *restoration* spell or similar. After a few more questions, Torrax has the hero dragged back to his cell, hoping the sight of their crippled comrade will convince the other heroes to be more cooperative. See if the heroes don't change their minds then.

Area 1: Prison Cells

Area 1 has 11 cells. The heroes are all together in cell F. Proxy Jinis (LG male human aristocrat 6) is in cell E. The king's minstrel Hrumbrand is in cell G, and is gibbering madly, like he has lost his mind. The other cells are empty, though only recently. The area is well-lit, however, by three *continual flame* spells cast along the ceiling of the central aisle.

The guards in Area 2 come by once every hour to check on them. The guards work in four-hour shifts, before being replaced by an identical group, including a prelate with fresh spells. During each check-up, the guards are protected by a prelates' *magic circle against chaos* or *protection from chaos*, warding off enchantment magic, which they expect to be the most likely way for prisoners to sneak out. Meals are brought by twice a day. Holes in the floor serve as latrines, and the intense stench suggests they do not go very deep. Things appear bleak.

Castle Steppengard Prison



SCM

Proxy Jinis engages the heroes in conversation once they awaken. He explains that he was fingered almost immediately as being involved in the assassination plot, and that from time to time he felt himself actually believing it, against his own free will, but he knows it is a lie. He suspects that Nina is responsible, or perhaps the Ragesians, or both in concert. Indeed, he has a lot of somewhat wild conspiracy theories of his own.

However, he recognizes the heroes as an avenue of escape, and he does his best to help them. He says that the only way to set things right is to get word to his lord, Duke Gallo, who can hopefully sway the other nobles to get King Steppengard away from his advisor long enough to cure him.

Jinis knows that the heroes' gear is likely being kept on this level, beyond the guard's room, in Area 3. He knows that the latrine empties into the river, and that there is a grate to the latrine in the nearby torture chamber, though he would not be surprised if some sort of trap keeps people from sneaking in or out. Perhaps most importantly, he has a pair of knives and a fork, which he managed to keep from previous meals. These can serve as pitiful weapons, or as improvised lockpicks.

If the heroes mention his son Jineer, or manage to get him the letter (which would still be among their possessions in Area 3), Jinis thanks them deeply and excuses himself for a moment as he cries, happy to know that his son is safe. From that point on he will be a loyal companion to the heroes.

Jinis will gladly participate in any plan that seems to have a chance of success, even being willing to confess in order to get out of his cell, or to sacrifice his life. He is a patriot, and is willing to die to restore his country.

Area 2: Guard Room (EL 8)

Area 2 is guarded at all times by three Steppengard soldiers and a Steppengard prelate, though usually three of them play cards while the other naps. Their stats are provided in the appendix, though none of them have ranged weapons, and they only wear chain shirts with no shields (AC 15).

Guard Contingent (EL 8) – Three Steppengard soldiers (CR 2), one Steppengard prelate (CR 7).

This room is much warmer, lit by a large open firepit. The stairs lead up to barracks, but a heavy door at the top of the stairs will block the sound of combat.

The guards are a little gullible, and will fall for any of various "classic" escape tricks. If a fight does break out they do not immediately run for help, assuming they can handle the situation themselves. They would rather not let their superiors know they had failed, and won't flee until one of their number is dropped. Even at this point, the door at the top of the stairs is mysteriously locked, as Madness wants to make sure the rest of the castle guards aren't alerted.

Unarmed, escaping here could prove rather difficult. Encourage the heroes to improvise weapons, such as by prying out a loose brick, or snapping off a rusted bar for a makeshift club. This is a good time to reward mages who took the Eschew Materials feat, and monks and rogues in particular should have a chance to shine. Amusingly, perhaps the most powerful class ability in this scene would be a paladin's ability to summon his mount.

Areas 3 and 4: Supply and Storage

Area 3 holds gear that belongs to prisoners, an old practice held over from more peaceful times when most prisoners were nobles expecting to be quickly released. Their gear is locked up in chests, the keys to which are carried by the prelate. Any familiars and animal companions of Medium size or smaller would be kept here in cages (Open Lock DC 20). Larger creatures are kept elsewhere, and the heroes won't likely get a chance to retrieve them until Act Three.

Area 4 holds supplies, like blankets, pillows, food trays, wood for the fire, and so on.

Treasure: In addition to the heroes' gear, a scroll case in one of the chests in area 3 holds two scrolls of *mass cure light wounds*.

Area 5: Torture Chamber (EL 8)

Area 5 is a classic torture chamber, though somewhat small and poorly stocked. The shelves

have numerous small hooks, implements of pain, and a 20-foot-long rope ladder, but the focus of the room is the table that serves as a stretching rack. Numerous blood stains lead from the table to the grate in the corner, from which an ominous chill radiates.

When the heroes reach this room, they find a horrifying sight. Balan's corpse is strapped to the rack and covered in tiny puncture wounds. On his open torso lies a notebook, written in Orcish, detailing the various procedures used to extract which bits of information about Seaquen's population and defenses. The front inside cover of the book is signed – a gift to Torrax from another inquisitor named Guthwulf. The inscription reads, "The road of education is painful. Enjoy it." A thorough reading of the book grants the reader a +5 bonus to Intimidate checks whenever he uses torture on a subject.

It appears that Balan gave up a great deal of information when tortured, though some of it appears to be fabricated. Torrax is nowhere to be seen now, however.

Escaping the room seems a simple matter of moving the grate in the northeast corner, but forcing it requires a Strength check (DC 28). More likely, the heroes will notice a blood-rusted latch which can be pried open with a little effort, allowing the grate to be lifted more easily (Strength DC 20). However, unless the heroes succeed a Search check (DC 28), they overlook that this latch is connected to the secret door in the northwest corner. If this connection is not overridden (either with a key the prelate carries, or with a DC 28 Disable Device check), lifting the grate opens the secret door.

Behind this door (which can be noticed itself with a DC 28 Search check) lurks the castle's oldest prisoner, a terrible mass murderer named Jutras, who had sought to be king of Dassen fifty years ago. For his crimes, he rose as a mohrg after being hung, and the malicious executioner decided to take advantage of the monstrosity, rather than destroy him.

Now Jutras serves as a unique tool of torture, since many prisoners who do not fear for their lives fear for their souls when threatened with becoming one of the undead. Jutras has come to enjoy his role

LORE OF JUTRAS

A Knowledge (history or nobility & royalty) check or Bardic Knowledge check (DC 20) recognizes Jutras by the crest on his rotted noble's outfit – a serpent coiling around a spear. A check that beats DC 25 recalls that Jutras was obsessed with the occult, and believed up until his execution that the bat-winged demon Ineluki was going to rescue him and reward him for his service to evil. Also, bizarrely, Jutras was horribly afraid of chickens, due to a prophecy he was once given by a drunken seer.

If the heroes claim to be here on behalf of Ineluki, Jutras desperately wants to believe his deliverance is here, so he immediately breaks off hostilities and asks what he needs to do. He is somewhat gullible, but will eventually realize if he is being tricked.

If the heroes create an illusion of a chicken, Jutras retreats for one round, and even after he realizes the chicken is fake he will try to keep away from it.

of causing pain, and does not try to escape. But if his private chamber is opened, Jutras expects to feed. Typically he will terrorize a prisoner and then finish him off, dumping the body into the septic tunnel where it eventually becomes a zombie.

Jutras, mohrg (CR 8): 91 hp, MM.

When released, Jutras squeezes into the main room and strikes targets one by one, hoping to paralyze each so he can feed. However, if he manages to grapple a foe, he will take advantage of his position, attempting to drag the victim over to the grate and drop him into the septic tunnel.

During normal weather, the refuse-filled tunnel under the prison is filled with dozens of hungry zombies, kept in check by steel grates on either end of the chamber. The fierce winter, however, has frozen them in the muck, so that now only their arms and heads reach out. The pit drops twenty feet to the surface of the ice, and the cave ceiling is ten feet high.

Zombie Pit (CR 6)

Every 5-foot square of the cave under the prison is filled with two or three zombies, frozen in place, waiting quietly until something they might be able to eat walks by. The squares count as heavy undergrowth, requiring quadruple normal movement cost, and a creature that passes through one of these squares is attacked by bites, gropes, and slams (+2 melee, 1d6+1 damage). A creature that ends its turn in this area is attacked once for each square it occupies or is adjacent to.

Each square of zombies has AC 5, DR 5/slashing, and 16 hit points, and counts as 4 HD of undead for the purposes of turning. "Turned" frozen zombies cannot flee, but they do stop attacking. Destroyed ones are annihilated, their bodies shattering like ice struck with a hammer.

Escape

The tunnel leading northeast out of the zombie pit is blocked by a steel grate, the lock of which has rusted away. All that is required is breaking the ice to get out. Then, after three hundred feet of tunnel, the frozen stream emerges at the edge of a graveyard, a long-abandoned place outside the walls of Bresk.

Observant heroes might notice (Spot DC 15) a concealed tower hidden among trees, brush, and tall obelisk-like tombstones. The 20-foot high, 20-foot diameter tower looks abandoned from the outside, but if the heroes get inside (Open Lock DC 30), the place is well-furnished with winter clothes, and looks like it has been in use recently. The windows of the tower provide good line of sight to the stream that leads out of the castle. Normally there would be guards here, but Madness had them dismissed for the evening.

Less than a half mile away from the graveyard is the main body of the Nasham River, still frozen, and on the far bank is a small village named Macon where the heroes might acquire mounts for a journey. If they escaped with Proxy Jinis, he recommends they head north to Duke Gallo.

THE ROAD TO GALLO'S FEND

Once the heroes reach Gallo's lands they are safe, and an escort of knights will lead them to Gallo's Fend. All along the way the towns the group stops at for the night are quiet, their citizens nervous, having heard rumors that Steppengard believes Duke Gallo a traitor. In addition to protecting the heroes, the knights, led by a dwarf named Commander Hertiage (N male dwarf commander 7), speak to the towns' leaders and priests, telling them to prepare their people for war, and to be ready to send troops to aid Gallo's Fend.

Commander Hertiage is a sturdy dwarf who has survived many battles after being laid low, such that he is reported by his men to be the luckiest dwarf alive. He's an outspoken supporter of Gallo and of the cause of Seaquen, and he pretends that his men have asked to hear their stories, when in truth Hertiage is the one who is most curious. He suspects the heroes are the sort of tough survivors he would get along with, and in the two or three days it takes to ride to Gallo's Fend, Hertiage will likely become fast friends with any warriors among the heroes.

For his part, Hertiage has a lot of stories to tell about fighting savages and the occasional Ragesian incursion over the past few decades. He's got a feeling that a good fight is coming, and he's glad to know the heroes are on his side.

ACT TWO: GALLO'S FEND

In this act, the heroes join forces with Duke Gallo, a Dasseni noble who agrees with Seaquen that the Ragesians must be stopped. Aware that Steppengard will send his armies to overthrow him, Gallo needs to call upon the aid of his fellow nobles. At Gallo's behest, the heroes set out to find evidence that the Ragesians are truly marching for war, and not simply to destroy Seaquen. Once they have such proof, the heroes must bypass roadblocks set up by Steppengard in order to reach Gallo's two neighboring nobles, Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor. In the climax, the heroes take part in a massive battle to defend Gallo's Fend from the army of King Steppengard.

THE SHIELD OF DASSEN

Similar to Bresk, the city of Gallo's Fend is walled, built into a rocky rise of land with a river on one side. However the defenses here are much more substantial, since this is the most obvious route of approach into Dassen from the north. Gallo and his ancestors have defended against the Ragesians and others before them for hundreds of years, watching the Alydi Gap, a low pass through the Otdar mountains broad enough for an army to march in force. Other routes through the mountains are narrower, more easily defended by the numerous independent Dwarven lords who serve Dassen faithfully, but the Alydi Gap is Dassen's most vulnerable point, so Gallo's Fend acts as a sturdy shield.

Gallo's Fend (Small City): Conventional; AL LG;

Population 7,000; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 5,250,000 gp;
Mixed (55% human, 38% dwarf, 5% orc, 1% half-orc,
1% other).

The Nasham River here is roughly 500 feet wide, normally fed by many mountain streams, though in the fierce clutch of this late winter it remains frozen. An enemy army that reaches the bank of the river, however, will be bombarded by catapults and trebuchet fired from Gallo's castle, which is built on

a 200-foot-high rise across the river. Rough cliffs prevent a direct assault. During normal weather, a small fleet of ships loaded with archers patrol the river, based in Stratendoch, the heavily defended waterfront of Gallo's Fend. During the winter, the docks are perhaps the weakest point in the fortress city's defenses.

Cliffs 100 feet high protect the city along the line of the river, while sturdy walls 40 feet high guard from a land assault. As impregnable as Gallo's Fend is, it would be useless if it could not actually threaten an enemy army passing through. Dwarven strongholds dot the northern cliffs along the Nasham River, as well as in the surrounding hills, many of them connected by masterfully hidden tunnels which can be collapsed if compromised by an enemy force. Likewise, just south of Gallo's Fend is Wicked Hill, which hides two dozen underground outposts beneath what appears to be simple farmland. Soldiers can pass between Gallo's Fend and these outposts using a network of tunnels, riding out to harry enemy forces, or pincering any army foolish enough to try to lay siege to the city.

Though vast underground storehouses hold enough food to support Gallo's Fend against prolonged sieges, the Otharil Vale is nevertheless the bread basket of the area. Home to many retired soldiers turned farmers, these plains have been the site of four major battles in the past two hundred years.

The last major outpost in the Fend's defenses is Markhold, a squat fortress overlooking the river. It is large enough to serve as a fallback position for the farmers of Otharil Vale, and is manned by several hundred soldiers. An army that wants to cross the river would first have to get past Markhold, passing through the line of fire of its ranged weapons.

The armies of Gallo are as skilled with large field formations as they are in defending against sieges, and have never failed to stop an army that has managed to cross the Nasham River. Invaders cannot easily run past the defenses of Gallo's Fend, and attempting to sack the city itself is suicide.

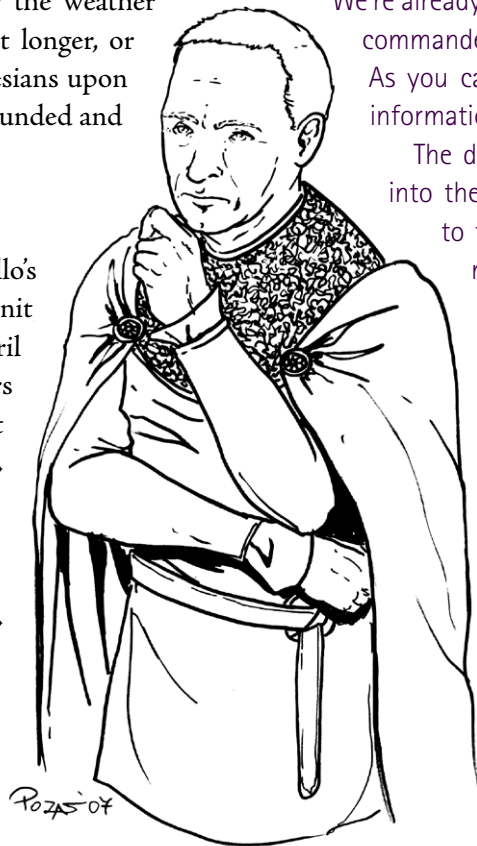
Now, however, Gallo's Fend faces an assault from behind. Enraged at new "evidence" his advisor Nina Glibglammer has uncovered, King Steppengard intends to rally his nation's armies to destroy Duke Gallo, claiming that he is a traitor who threatens the safety of their entire nation.

Gallo knows that he could hold out against a siege, even one launched by his own king, but he knows that if he were in such a position he would be unable to deploy his forces in enough strength to keep the Ragesians from entering Dassen. His plan, then, is to meet his king on the field of battle, hoping for a swift victory. His own forces are likely not enough for this, but if he called upon his two nearest neighbors, Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor, he would have enough men to rebuke the king, at which point he could demand surrender or peace talks. He can only pray the weather holds this unnatural chill a bit longer, or else a thaw will bring the Ragesians upon them when they are already wounded and exhausted.

DUKE GALLO

As the heroes ride to Gallo's Fend they pass a small cavalry unit practices near the road in Otharil Vale, but most of the soldiers are on foot, fairly evenly split between humans and dwarves. Guards recognize Commander Hertiage and let the heroes in, at which pointed they are hurried toward the main castle. The city is bustling, everyone doing their best to prepare for coming battles.

The heroes are met at the entrance of the castle by Duke Gallo and his retinue.



Before the heavily fortified main gate of Gallo's castle waits a group of a dozen people. Soldiers and manservants flank a tall nobleman with blonde hair turning gray. He nods to you as you approach, then

steps forward to shake your hands.

"I am Michael Gallo. If what the rumors say about you are true, you are welcome in my city. It's good to know there are people out there who aren't crazy enough to actually trust the Ragesians."

He waits for introductions, making sure to point out a manservant named Rodger (N male human expert 2), whom he will assign to answer their questions about Gallo's Fend and tend to their needs. If the heroes have arrived with Proxy Jinis, Gallo is overjoyed to see his friend and servant.

"Follow me inside, please," Duke Gallo says. "Your mounts will be tended to, and we'll get you rooms soon enough – outside the castle, sadly. We're already pretty filled up here. But I and my commanders will want to hear everything. As you can guess, it's hard to get reliable information out of Bresk right now."

The duke and his retinue turn to head into the castle, and Gallo waves for you to follow close. He pulls out a small metal case lined with cigarettes, takes one for himself, and offers the rest of you one if you'd like.

"The one thing we have heard – and maybe it's rumor, but I'm not going to risk not believing it – is that Steppengard is preparing to march his army here to take me down. He's still my king, even if he wants me dead, but he's making a major strategic mistake.

"I've read up on how this new Ragesian empress thinks. Leska, she's a tricky one. See, Coaltongue, you could rely on

him to come in and conquer by force if he wanted your land, and if he made a treaty, well, he was an honorable man, even if he was a megalomaniac. But this 'Supreme Inquisitor?' She created a whole group of followers who wear

masks. I think the only thing we can trust of her is that she lies.

"I tell you, by the dirt between my toes, the Ragesians aren't planning to just destroy a sweet little swamp town. They're here for Dassen too. I hope you kids are ready for a war."

Gallo leads the heroes to a small dining suite, where he serves drinks and fine food, and asks for the whole story until now. He says that he needs some time to think of his next move, so he asks that they let Rodger escort them to a small manor house down by the docks, where they're welcome to stay for as long as needed. He expects to send for them tomorrow morning, after he's had a chance to plan with his advisors.

He thanks them for coming, and promises that they can trust him. None of them want the Ragesians to get their way.

AROUND GALLO'S FEND

The heroes have an evening to explore the city, though for now Rodger recommends they just get some rest, since they'll have time tomorrow to prepare for whatever lies ahead. Gallo's Fend has little in the way of entertainments this evening, though the heroes could have quite a shopping spree. Due to the immediate need for weapons and armor, such items can be sold for three-quarters of their normal value, instead of the usual half price for resales.

Gallo's Fend is clearly built to be a fortress. Even normal household windows are narrow, like arrow slits, and every child above the age of ten carries a sword or dagger. Most houses have guests these days, many of them recent refugees. Indeed, the manor house where the heroes stay is also home to five other foreigners, as well as a large staff that Gallo and Rodger both vouch for. Feel free to make some of these foreigners have a connection to the heroes' interests. Perhaps they are from Gate Pass, or are affiliated with some group the heroes are interested in.

The mood starts grim, but the food is full of strong cheese and juicy meat, and served in large portions. If the heroes make an impression this

evening, perhaps by being encouraging to the frightened refugees, or by performing masterful music or acting, or simply with tales of their own adventures, word spreads, and within a few days people around Gallo's Fend begin to recognize the heroes.

THE DUKE NEEDS A FAVOR

The next morning Gallo summons the party to the war room of his castle. If the heroes rescued Proxy Jinis, Gallo formally thanks the heroes before a gathering of his advisors, and gives them a promissory note worth 2,000 gp, which he suggests they use to prepare for their next mission. If the heroes delivered Jineer's letter to Proxy Jinis, the grateful father instead convinces Gallo to give the heroes a promissory note worth 4,000 gp.

Duke Gallo has a favor to ask them.

"Here's where we stand. Steppengard is marching an army of ten thousand, taking the frozen river northward so he can avoid the normal defenses along my border. Now, ten thousand men is a laughable number, really. I have nearly that many here in the city and in the various outposts in the area, and, as I'm sure you know, you need an attacking force three times as large as the defenders to hope to take an entrenched foe. Steppengard can't expect to actually take the city that size of force.

"The problem is, the only thing holding back the Ragesians is that the mountain passes haven't thawed yet. If Steppengard decides to lay siege to me, or even try to do a frontal assault, he won't win, but he'll weaken my defenses, making it easier for the Ragesians to get in. And by last count, the Third Ragesian Army numbers something like forty thousand soldiers.

"We need to resolve this quickly. My commanders suggest that we face Steppengard's forces in open battle. If we can win a decisive victory, we can force the king to surrender, and then I would escort him back to Bresk, summon the other nobles, and convince them that we have to defend against the Ragesians.

"Steppengard will be here in a little more than a week. After that, I assume we have two weeks, three at most before the Ragesians arrive. That should be enough time to sway the Council of Nine and get the necessary reinforcements here. Even if I lose a quarter of my men defeating Steppengard, with the aid of the rest of the kingdom we could easily hold the Gap.

"If we lose against the king, however, I suspect that whoever had tricked him into believing I am responsible for the assassinations will also trick him into leaving the Gap undefended. So I can't risk losing this fight. Steppengard's force has the aid of units from three other nobles – Iz, Namin, and Megadon – and outnumbers my own by enough that, even though I like to think of my soldiers are the best in the land, I can't be certain we'll win without great losses.

"This is where you come in. I need to convince my neighbors, Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor, to join forces with me. I sent carrier pigeons requesting aid, but even though I suspect both of them agree with me, it's likely they won't be ready to fight their own king simply because I ask them to. I need proof that the Ragesians have hostile intentions, and not much time to find it in.

"Just across the river is the Alydi Gap. The Ragesians are going to have to come down that way, and if they really are planning to attack Dassen, they'll have to silence some of the watchposts I maintain along the mountain pass. I need a group who can ride up the pass quickly, check on the outposts, and look for signs of Ragesian activity. The men in the outposts would not have gotten news of what's happened here, so they might not have sent word even if they spotted a few Ragesian scouts.

"You'll need to ride fast and hard, get any news there is to be had, and if we're lucky the Ragesians will have slipped up. I'll need you to bring back two of the forward lookouts, because Timor and Dashgoban will want to talk to them personally. You aren't from around here, so you don't know how much we worry about setting

off another civil war, so before they'll come to my aid, they'll need to see the proof with their own eyes.

"Can I count on you?"

If the heroes agree to go to the mountain outpost, Gallo can provide them with directions, with sturdy and fast warhorses, and with a pair of wands of *cure light wounds*, which he expects them to use up completely if necessary. It is possible to ride a horse to death, so the wand will keep the horses alive and running longer than would normally be possible.

Gallo expects them to leave immediately, as there is little time to spare, and can send servants to purchase anything they need for the trip (paid for with the heroes' coin) while his advisors brief them on the mission. Gallo recommends they bring along Commander Hertiage, whom the outpost soldiers will recognize.

If the heroes succeed a Diplomacy check (DC 20), they can get Gallo to send along with them four Gallo soldiers (see the Appendix) on light warhorses. A larger group would just have a greater chance of getting lost and slowing each other down.

Hoofing It

If the heroes do not dally, they will be across the frozen Nasham River by 10 am. There is an outpost every five miles up the Alydi Gap, the last one being thirty miles away, right at the border of Ragesia. The snowy mountain terrain slows their speed by half, so if the heroes hustle their horses they should be traveling at least 4 miles an hour, at which pace they could reach the final outpost in seven and a half hours of travel, dealing 95 points of damage to each of their horses. The heroes could expend fourteen charges of the wand of *cure light wounds*, on average, to keep a given horse alive during the run.

The heroes will need to rest their horses after those eight hours, but could, if they push their horses near death and manage to clear out the outpost in one evening, accomplish the mission in two days.

TIMELINE OF STEPPENGARD'S ASSAULT

The heroes arrive at Gallo's Fend on Day 0. Steppengard's army is ready to march on Day 1. The army passes Pitchwood on Day 4. They reach the outskirts of Gallo's Fend on Day 8. The first attack occurs around noon on Day 9.

Delay the departure by 1 day for every proxy or noble among Iz, Megadon, and Namin whom the heroes made Friendly, and by 2 days for each they made Helpful.

The heroes set out to the Alydi Gap Outpost on Day 1. If they hurry, they can return by the evening of Day 2.

It is 100 miles from Gallo's Fend to Dashgoban's capital if they take the road, or 60 miles if they either go through Pitchwood or risk traveling on the river, which is patrolled. It is 80 miles from Gallo's Fend to Timor's capital if they take the road, or 40 miles if they scale the Glaskeel Cliffs. It is 120 miles from Dashgoban's capital to Timor's capital if they take the road, or 80 miles if they go through Pitchwood and up the Glaskeel Cliffs.

It takes Dashgoban's forces 5 days to muster and reach Gallo's Fend. It takes Timor's forces 3 days to muster and reach Gallo's Fend.

If the heroes come up with a plan to delay Steppengard's forces, such as by burning pitch on the river, this delays the arrival at Gallo's Fend by 2 days.

Assuming that the heroes use light warhorses and travel 40 miles a day (by pushing their mounts a little, and using modest healing magic to keep them going), the heroes could easily travel 60 miles from Gallo's Fend to Dashgoban through Pitchwood, arriving around noon on Day 4, which would mean Dashgoban's forces would reach Gallo's Fend just in time to join the battle. If the heroes then traveled 80 miles up the Glaskeel Cliffs to Timor, they could arrive in the afternoon of Day 6, which is not quite fast enough for Timor's forces to reach Gallo's Fend before the battle joins. However, the heroes could still travel the 40 miles back to Gallo's Fend in

time to be ready.

You should try to maintain an appearance that time is short, but if the heroes are competent, and managed to sway a few of the opposing proxies at Steppengard's court, or if they have the presence of mind to slow the army's advance up the river, they should get back to Gallo's Fend, with reinforcements, with time to spare.

OTHER SOLUTIONS

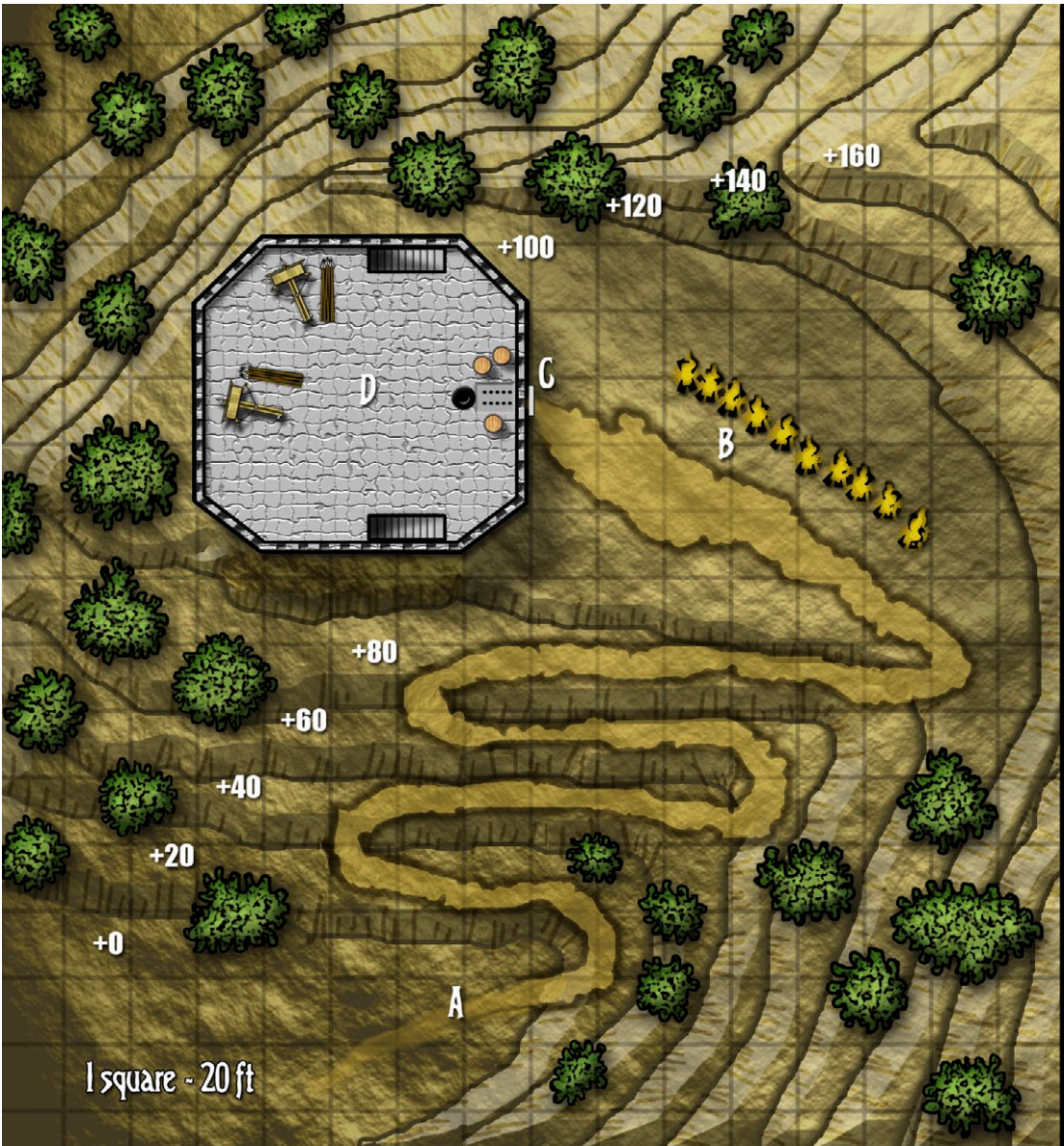
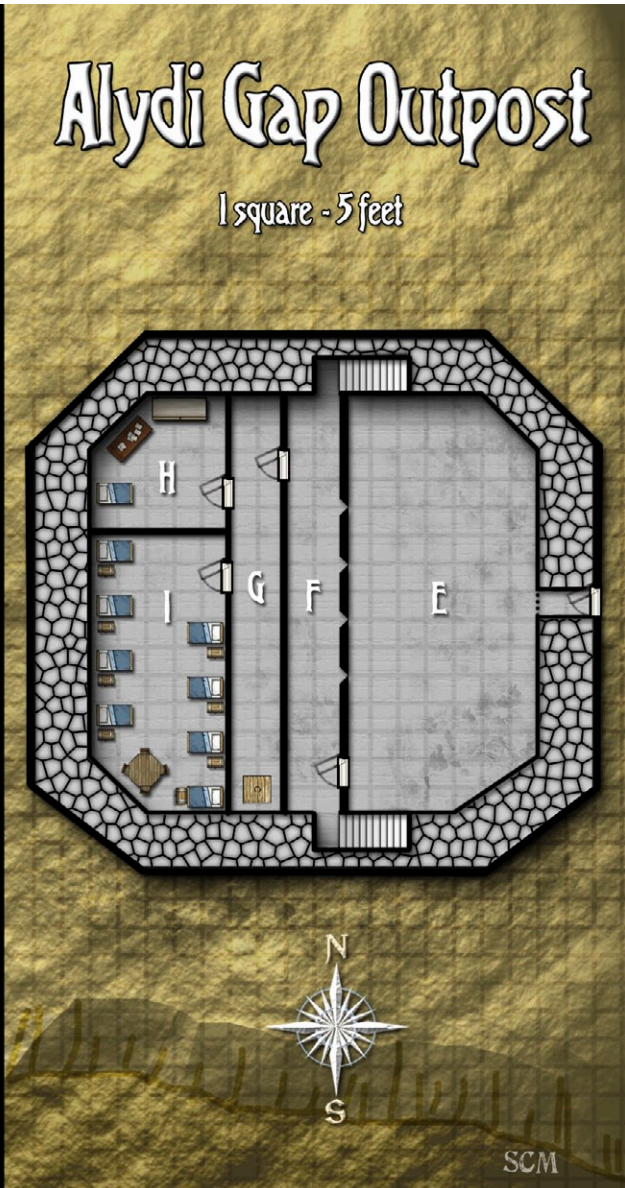
If the heroes limit themselves to conventional methods, they must race time in order to get the word to Dashgoban and Timor. However, a little creativity or magic can quickly skip over a large portion of this act.

It should still be necessary to explore the Alydi Gap Outposts. The two nobles are canny enough to see through bald lies, and will not appreciate attempts to trick them. They each have good Sense Motive skills, and with the aid of their advisors it's unlikely the heroes can deceive them all.

Scrying may seem like an option to avoid having to ride up the Gap to get proof, but the guards at the outpost that has been seized are all dead, so the spell will fail. The characters might still try to scry on the Ragesians, with a slim chance of success.

Once they verify that the Ragesians are there, the heroes could split up, delivering the message to the two nobles more swiftly, but increasing the dangers on the road. They might use *sending* to contact the nobles, though this alone will not get them to commit their forces unless the heroes managed to make their proxies in Bresk helpful through Diplomacy. It is, after all, hard to be persuasive with only 25 words; attempting to this imposes a -10 penalty on any applicable Diplomacy check.

Of course, the focus of this act is the battle at Gallo's Fend, so if the heroes find a clever way to circumvent traveling and delivering messages, reward them for overcoming the challenges, and move on.



ALYDI GAP OUTPOST

The heroes ride past five outposts, each hidden well up a cliffside, concealed behind brush, or carved out of the side of a mountain. At each outpost, the soldiers are shocked to hear the news of what is going on in their homeland, but none of them have seen any signs of Ragesians. Each fort has roughly the same garrison – a Gallo chaplain (CR 7) and eight Gallo soldiers (CR 2). These chaplains always have *sending* prepared, so they can alert Duke Gallo with just ten minute's notice.

They don't have much in the way of provisions, but the soldiers offer the heroes food and warm drink to keep them strong for their mission. Time after time the heroes push their horses, spot the next outpost, ascend warily, learn that there is no danger, and then must quickly turn back to the deep snow, the deathly cold, and the perilous paths of the frozen Alydi Gap.

Every hour, have one of the heroes make a Survival check (DC 15) to avoid pitfalls and false routes. (The character can take 10 on this check.) Each failed attempt requires a Reflex save (DC 15) for every horse and rider to avoid taking 2d6 points of damage from losing footing on a steep slope, being struck by falling rocks, stumbling into a small sinkhole, and so on.

As the heroes approach the sixth outpost, nothing looks out of place. At this point the heroes are barely ten miles from the border of Ragesia, and if they were to ride much further they would come upon the vast camp of the Third Ragesian Army, commanded by General Revulus, sprawled across the craglands of Chathus.

First, however, is the furthest outpost of the Kingdom of Dassen. Situated on a rocky spur one hundred feet high, the fortress is concealed from northern approach by a rolling ridge that rises even higher. On the southern side of the spur, switchbacks lead up a 45-degree angle slope, before reaching the plateau upon which the stone fort is constructed.

From the bottom of the mountain pass it is impossible to see the condition of the fort, so the heroes will likely have to ascend the switchbacks to the plateau.

What has happened is that an advance party for Ragesia has already made it to the fortress. General Revulus is not certain Leska's ploy to destabilize Dassen will work, so he has dispatched small units of infiltrators to take over the garrisons along the path. They know that the garrisons are only relieved every month or two, and that relief is even more unlikely in winter, so the infiltrators just intend to stay put until the army is ready to march. Then they will advance ahead of the army, discreetly seizing outposts one by one, hopefully letting the Third Ragesian Army reach the southern edge of the Alydi Gap before the Dassen forces at Gallo's Fend are ready for them.

Ragesian Forces

In total, the forces at the outpost consist of two Ragesian infiltrators (LN male half-orc rogue 3/ fighter 2; CR 5), six Ragesian soldiers (LN male half-orc fighter 2; CR 2), the inquisitor Crona (LE female orc cleric 4; CR 4), and infiltration leader Jass (LN male half-orc fighter 6; CR 6), plus the occasional presence of Wyvern Knight Stonum (LN male human fighter 6; CR 6) and his mount Dractyl (male wyvern; CR 6).

If the heroes traveled at the expected pace, they likely arrive just before sunset. Stonum and Dractyl have been responsible for delivering supplies to the infiltrators, and they only fly at night, to avoid being spotted by random travelers. If the heroes wait until midnight, the knight and his wyvern depart.

The outdoor trails are covered in light snow, which does not impede movement. Off the trail the ground has thick snow, which counts as difficult terrain. A few scattered trees offer an option for a stealthy approach, though the climb is difficult because of the snow (Climb DC 15).

At Ease Positions

If the heroes manage to sneak up on the fort, there is one infiltrator, one soldier, and Dractyl the wyvern on the roof. The inquisitor Crona is in the office in room H. Five soldiers, infiltration leader Jass, and Wyvern Knight Stonum lounge in the barracks in room I. One infiltrator walks the length of hallway F, keeping an eye on area E through the arrow slits.

On Alert

Once the alarm is sounded, one soldier goes down from the roof, alerts everyone in the fort, then returns to the roof after two rounds. It takes Wyvern Knight Stonum five rounds to reach the roof and mount up. The second infiltrator and a second soldier also heads to the roof, so there are four archers to harry the heroes' approach.

Jass and Crona set up in hallway F behind the soldiers, directing the fight and lending aid without getting in range of enemy attacks. The following descriptions assume the fort is on alert.

Approaching the Fort

The infiltrator lookout on the roof of the fort remains hidden (Spot DC 18, modified by range), and his Spot check to notice heroes coming up the switchbacks is 16, enough to spot a group of travelers before they even begin their ascent if they do not use stealth. The lookouts all have darkvision, but if the heroes approach at night they should be able to get closer before they even have to worry about being seen.

Area A: Switchback Trail

The switchback trail counts as a gentle slope, but is 560 feet long from the base of the cliff to the plateau. Because of the hill's slope, characters on the switchbacks have no cover against attacks made by enemies at the top of the plateau or atop the fortress.

Area B: Torchlit Approach (EL 8)

Alongside the trail on the plateau is a line of torches, laid out 5 or 10 feet apart. They have all burned out at this point, but every other night the Ragesian soldiers light fresh torches to let the wyvern rider who delivers their supplies spot the outpost from the air. There is no cover here, making sneaking up a near impossibility during daylight.

If the heroes take more than 5 rounds to enter the fort after being spotted, Stonum and Dractyl take flight from the roof of the fort, circling over the plateau and switchbacks. Stonum spends two rounds softening his foes with crossbow fire, then

has Dractyl swoop in and try to snatch a foe with the aid of his *hurling bracers*. If his foes are ever in a nice cluster, he'll drop his dragonbomb.

Dractyl, wyvern (CR 6). 59 hp.

Wyvern Knight Stonum (CR 6). 50 hp.

Area C: Fort Entrance (EL 4)

The entrance to the fort is a single iron door (Hardness 10, 60 hp, Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 30) that opens to a 10-foot-long narrow hallway. An iron portcullis (Hardness 10, 60 hp, Lift DC 25; Disable Device DC 20 and 2d4 rounds) blocks entrance into area E, the shooting gallery. Murder holes from the roof make this entrance perilous.

Murder Hole Trap (CR 4). Above the entrance hallway are murder hole slots, through which iron balls can be dropped. Normally these holes are closed. As a full-round action, a character on the roof can load one of the barrels of murder balls, and then as a standard action a lever can be thrown, opening the holes and dumping numerous iron balls. This deals 4d6 points of damage (Reflex half DC 15) to each character in the hallway. Disabling this device is easy (Disable Device DC 10, 1 round), but the character must be able to reach a mechanism 15 feet off the ground. On the other hand, *hold portal* simply keeps the trap from opening.

Area D: Roof (EL 7)

Somewhat short-staffed, infiltration leader Jass only has one of the infiltrators and one of the soldiers on the roof at any given time. Additionally, dractyl the wyvern lounges here. However, when on alert the other infiltrator and a second soldier go to the roof.

Ragesian Infiltrator (2, CR 5). 32 hp.

Ragesian Soldier (2, CR 2). 20 hp.

The infiltrators and soldiers take potshots with their bows, hiding behind the crenelations, which grant cover. If the heroes are swift, Dractyl might still be here, but he does not join the fight without his rider unless he is attacked first.

The roof of the outpost has two +1 *dragonbane ballistae*, intended to shoot down dragons, wyverns, and similar aerial creatures. A single creature can operate the gears to aim the siege weapon, but its massive size incurs a -4 penalty to a Medium user's attack roll, or -6 to a Small user, and reloading takes two full-round actions for creatures smaller than Large. There are twenty ballista bolts for each of the weapons. A normal, non-magical ballista is a simple weapon that deals 3d8 damage, has a critical threat of 19-20/x2, and a range increment of 120 feet. The ballistae cannot fire below the level of the roof.

If the heroes are having trouble taking out Stonum and Dractyl, encourage them to come up here. A Bardic Knowledge or Knowledge (history) check (DC 25) reminds them that these outposts are particularly well-equipped for shooting dragons out of the sky.

Area E: Tower Entrance (EL 6)

The largest room of the fortress is a shooting gallery. Four arrow slits face into the room, and within four rounds of spotting the heroes, the Ragesian soldiers set up in Area F, bows trained on the entrance. An iron door (hardness 10, 60 hp, Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 30) leads from the shooting gallery to the first hallway. The arrow slits provide superior cover (+8 AC, +4 Reflex, and improved evasion).

Ragesian Soldiers (4, CR 2). 20 hp.

Area F: First Hallway (EL 7)

If the heroes make it into the first hallway, the archers drop their bows, ready their shields, and draw their axes. Inquisitor Crona lends her modest antimagic abilities to try to thwart area-attack spells, and Jass shouts up the northern staircase for the warriors on the roof to come down the southern staircase to flank the intruders. The infiltrators, in particular, will be keen to come at the heroes from behind, even being willing to leap off the roof and come in through the front entrance.

Inquisitor Crona (CR 4). 30 hp.

Infiltration Leader Jass (CR 6). 50 hp.

Area G: Second Hallway

This hallway ends with a wooden trap door that leads to the basement. The basement is too crowded for fighting, and only has mundane supplies.

Area H: Chaplain's Chamber

Once the chaplain's room, the inquisitor Crona lives here now. She has a dufflebag beside her bed with more "normal-looking" clothes than what she wears when she is trying to play the role of intimidating inquisitor. On the dresser next to the bed is a printed book, propaganda published by the Ragesian Empire denouncing the various other nations and aggrandizing the destiny of Ragesia.

Area I: Barracks

The normal soldiers sleep here. In the pack of Infiltration Commander Jass is a series of orders. These simply amount to: "Take the first outpost, then stay put, receiving supply drops every other day. When we learn of the success or failure of Madness, our weather mage associates will break the winter over the Alydi Gap. When the thaw begins, prepare to take additional outposts."

The gear of all the original occupants has been carried away by previous wyvern knights, taken to the main army.

Aftermath: The papers with commander Jass's orders will prove more than enough to convince Timor and Dashgoban that the Ragesians are planning an invasion. The heroes should hurry back to Gallo's Fend to prepare for the next stage of their mission.

Two Missions

When the heroes return with evidence that Leska's forces are imminently going to invade they are immediately ushered into a conference chamber at the castle. Chaplains tend to their wounds, and they are assured that grooms are at work making sure their horses are ready for another trip, if necessary.

Inside the conference chamber are Duke Gallo and an assortment of commanders and advisors, looking at a table map depicting Gallo's lands as a topographical model. They are discussing ways to

slow down Steppengard's advance. A human advisor is in favor of ordering Pitchwood Burg – a small town in Dashgoban's territory on the banks of the Nasham river – to spread this year's harvest of pitch over a large section of the river and ignite it, thereby melting the river. This would slow Steppengard's forces, but would be financially devastating for the people of Pitchwood, even if Gallo could convince them to do it. At this point Gallo turns his attention to the heroes and asks them what their news is.

Once Gallo hears the news and sees their evidence, he quickly works with the heroes to come up with a course of action on how to activate the mutual defense pacts he has with Lord Dashgoban and Lady Timor. He sees the best chance of success if the heroes can escort his proxy (Jinis if the heroes escaped with him; otherwise a man named Makhesson) first to Lord Dashgoban, then to Lady Timor, stopping along the way to convince the people of Pitchwood to melt the river. However, he'll accept any plan that sounds like it will work, and his advisors can quickly calculate how long it should take the heroes to take a given path. If the heroes do take along Gallo's proxy, the man has a +19 bonus to Diplomacy checks.

Gallo is reluctant to send traditional couriers, because Steppengard likely has his new police, the Talon, watching the roads near the borders, to make sure Gallo cannot get any aid against the invasion. Instead, to assure swift contact with Dashgoban, the heroes could ride through Pitchwood, shaving a day off their trip, though they would have to face the dangers of the fey pitchlings. Likewise, to quickly reach Lady Timor the heroes could scale the half-mile high Glaskeel Cliffs, bypassing the long winding roads which will no doubt be blockaded.

If the heroes do not volunteer, Gallo will ask them. If they refuse, it is very likely no aid will reach Gallo's Fend.

Path through Pitchwood (EL 8)

Pitchwood is a dense forest of pitch pines that stretches between the Otdar mountains and the Nasham River, along the border between Lord Gallo and Lord Dashgoban's lands. Normal traffic

goes around its edges, because of a tribe of fey called pitchlings who harrass travelers through their woods.

A Bardic Knowledge or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 14) lets the heroes know that the pitchlings are immune to fire damage, and that they only speak Sylvan, not common. A DC 19 check alerts the heroes to a mild defense they can use to avoid being ambushed. If the heroes hold unlit torches as they ride through the woods, as soon as a pitchling gets within 100 feet the torches will spontaneously light. Pitchlings like to ambush, so if the heroes use this torch trick, they have an opportunity to call out and speak to the fey before a fight can begin.

The straightest path through Pitchwood is a 15-mile road, where various unfriendly lurk to rob, harrass, or kill interlopers. The trees are thick, the road narrow and overgrown, and the shadows of the woods abuzz with eerie noises, like a mixture between giggles and thick, greasy dripping sounds. When the heroes are about 5 miles into the woods, a group of six pitchlings come in for an ambush. If they get within 30 feet without being seen, they attack the intruders, intending to take the pretties for themselves. If they are spotted, or if the heroes use the torches trick, the pitchlings hesitate for a minute, waiting to see if the heroes talk to them before they attack.

Pitchlings (6)

CR 3

These slender fey step nimbly through the forest, naked except for a coating of black pitch smeared across their bodies. They carry jagged longbows, but no arrows, though rows of long, sharp spines stick out from their backs. As one trains its bow on you, it snaps a spine off from its shoulder and nocks it like an arrow.

CN Medium Fey (fire)

Init +5; Senses Listen +9, Spot +9, low light vision

Languages Sylvan

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 13

hp 18 (4 HD); DR 5/cold iron

Fort +2, Ref +9, Will +6

Immune fire; Weak cold

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +2 bows (d4, 19–20/x2)

Ranged +8 masterwork spiked longbow (d8, ×3), point blank shot, precise shot

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2

Combat Gear greater alchemist fire ×4

Combat Options spell-like abilities

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6)

At will – *entangle* (DC 13), *ghost sound*, *speak with plants*

3/day – *deep slumber* (DC 15), *flame arrow*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14

Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Skills Craft (alchemy) +7, Hide +12, Listen +9, Move

Silently +12, Spot +9, Survival +9

Possessions masterwork spiked longbow (functions as a longbow, but can also be used as a two-handed melee weapon that deals dagger damage)

Tactics: If the pitchlings manage to sneak up on the heroes, they start by unleashing *entangle* and *deep slumber* spells, likely taking out horses rather than heroes. Then they shout in broken Common, “Leave money and stuff! You go or we burn you!” They start as Hostile, but if made Unfriendly they’ll back off and not fight.

The plant life in Pitchwood is highly flammable, though burning areas do not spread. Any fire damage ignites the plants in a particular square, which burns for 1d4 rounds before smoldering out.

Negotiating: Before or after a fight, the heroes might try to talk to the pitchlings. While some might simply want to avoid a conflict, clever heroes can use the pitchlings as a weapon against Steppengard. While the majority of Steppengard’s forces are traveling along the frozen Nasham River, the ice is not strong enough to support his siege weapons, so they will have to travel through Pitchwood. The heroes could try to get the pitchlings to attack the siege weapons.

Because the pitchlings hate outsiders anyway, they only start as Indifferent to this idea. If made Helpful, they will harrass Steppengard’s forces as they deliver the siege weapons through their forest. The results of this are detailed at The Battle for Gallo’s Fend (see page 42).

NEW ITEM

Greater Alchemist Fire

These wooden flasks of alchemist fire are only created by pitchlings, though an alchemist with access to freshly-harvested pitch from the skin of a pitchling could create such items (Craft (alchemy) DC 30). They function identically to normal alchemist fire, except that they do twice as much damage (2d6 on a direct hit, or 2 splash). Market value – 100 gp.

Ad-Hoc Experience: If the heroes get the aid of the pitchlings against Steppengard, reward them for a CR 4 encounter.

Castle Dashgoban (EL 7)

Once through the Pitchwood, only twenty miles separate the heroes from the home of Lord Dashgoban. Dashgoban’s castle is built into a stone outcropping steaked with old erosion from rain so that it looks like a great monster clawed rents in the side of the rock. There is no surrounding city, just scattered farms and villages.

Dashgoban’s cavalry are practicing exercises as the heroes arrive, and if they stop to talk, the heroes learn that the soldiers are relieved Gallo’s messengers have finally arrived. The warriors of Dashgoban are eager for a fight, but their lord will not let them march until he receives a formal request.

Lord Dashgoban is a pale-haired, aging dwarf with a soft beard. He styles himself a great commander, though he admits he lacks the experience of Duke Gallo. He does not like the rule of King Steppengard, but he’s not a fool, and will not send his men to war unless he can be convinced such a course of action benefits him.

If the heroes already managed to make Dashgoban’s proxy at the royal court Helpful, all they have to do is show him the evidence from the Aldyi Gap outpost, ask for his aid, and then share a drink with him, and the proud Lord Dashgoban will immediately order the one thousand cavalry and two thousand foot soldiers he has mustered to march to join the forces at Gallo’s Fend.

Otherwise, Dashgoban's attitude matches whatever level the heroes managed to sway his proxy to. The heroes will have to attempt more diplomacy to convince him to join the fight.

Ad-Hoc Experience:

Reward the heroes for a CR 7 challenge if they secure Lord Dashgoban's aid quickly enough for his forces to reach Gallo's Fend before the battle.

Delaying Steppengard (EL 4)

The town of Pitchwood Burg lies squeezed between the southern border of the forest and the Nasham River. It is one of several towns that harvest pitch from the forest, having made loose agreements with the fey not to harm each other.

Pitchwood Burg (Hamlet):

Conventional; AL N;
Population 300; 100 gp limit;
Assets 1,500 gp; Isolated (96% human, 2% dwarf, 1% halfling, 1% other).

If the heroes pass through the town, they might try to convince the townsfolk to spread their harvest of pitch on the river and ignite it when Steppengard's army is less than a day away. This will melt the ice and leave it weak for days, delaying Steppengard's arrival in Gallo's Fend by two days. However, to do so, the heroes would have to sway the head of the town, Father Albert (N old male human cleric 4). He starts as Unfriendly to the plan, and must be made Helpful before he agrees, since enacting the plan will cripple the town financially, and might provoke the wrath of Steppengard's army.

If the heroes offer compensation to the tune of 300 gp, they get a +5 bonus to their Diplomacy

check, since that will feed everyone in the town for a few weeks. A payment of 1000 gp or more grants a +10 bonus. If the heroes bring a letter from Lord Dashgoban giving the dwarf's blessing to the plan, that provides a further +10 bonus.

Alternately, if the heroes befriended the pitchlings, they might be able to convince the fey to melt the river. Doing so would likely require some test of cunning or skill, perhaps besting a pitchling in an archery competition, or in a "fire hurling" contest, where the contestants take a ball of pitch in their hands, light it, and throw it as far as possible.

Ad-Hoc Experience: If the heroes manage to melt the river and delay Steppengard's march, reward them for a CR 4 encounter.

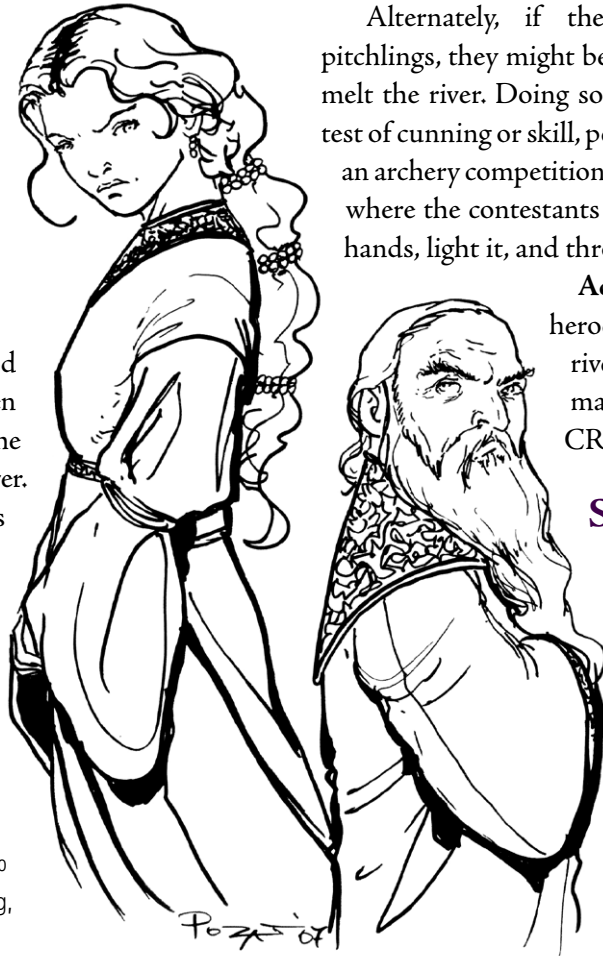
SCALING THE GLASKEEL CLIFFS

The heroes' journey to recruit Lady Timor to aid Lord Gallo's forces has two main options. They could take the main road, in which case they would run into a blockade of Steppengard forces, or they could attempt to scale the Glaskeel Cliffs, avoiding

the road entirely and heading straight to the plateau upon which Timor's castle is built.

Steppengard Blockade (EL 9)

A force of the Talon, Steppengard's new police, watch the roads, and have specific orders to stop couriers from traveling out of Gallo's lands. If the heroes take the road, at one point they reach a bridge across one of the many gorges on the border of Lady Timor's land. The stone bridge is twenty feet wide and sixty feet long, and as the heroes reach the middle of the bridge, several soldiers ride out from a copse of trees on the far end, demanding the heroes stop and identify themselves. Meanwhile, a troll



mercenary who has been lurking under the bridge climbs up and blocks off the heroes' path of retreat.

Steppengard soldiers (6, CR 2). 20 hp.

Steppengard commander (CR 5). 32 hp.

Rip, Troll Mercenary (CR 6). 83 hp.

Rip is one of four troll mercenaries working for Steppengard. If the heroes kill him here, he won't appear at the Battle for Gallo's Fend.

Scaling the Cliffs (EL 7)

The Glaskeel Cliffs form a natural border between Lady Timor's lands and Lord Gallo's. The cliffs are almost a half mile tall, with few trustworthy ledges, and sharp, shearing winds. Caves pock the cliffs, but these do not provide a swifter route past the obstacle of the cliffs.

The cliffs are 2,500 feet high, and are constantly subject to severe winds, enough to check Medium climbing creatures, or buffet Medium flying creatures back and forth along the wall. While the heroes may still possess Indomitability's boon, and thus would not be affected by intense winds, if they are trying to bring along a proxy it will be difficult to make fast progress.

Persistent heroes could simply *fly* over the cliffs. Ascent is at half speed (30 feet, or 20 feet if encumbered), but a character could double move, traveling 600 feet per minute (400 feet if encumbered). At the heroes' current level, they could manage to make it, though on the way up they would be tossed about by winds, and would probably arrive nauseous. However, this assumes the party can spare a *fly* spell for each hero.

Climbing is tough (Climb DC 20, because the surface is slippery), and though a mountaineer can cut hand-holds in the icy cliff face with a hatchet (reducing the DC to 15), such a route might simply be beyond some groups. If every hero has a climber's kit and they are all tied off to each other, an experienced climber can aid his allies, so that as long as they do not have a Strength penalty they should be able to ascend at least five hundred feet an hour. But the heroes would need to have their armor stowed, and

would still have to contend with the wind slowing them down.

Once the heroes reach 400 feet, have them make Spot or Survival checks (DC 15) to notice signs that the area they are climbing is inhabited by some sort of brachiating creature. If the heroes make a great deal of noise in the area, they alert a territorial girallon, who clammers across the cliff and tries to be rid of the interlopers. Alternately, the heroes might attract a cruel hieracosphinx, who wants to knock the heroes to their deaths, just to listen to them scream as they fall.

Girallon (CR 6). 58 hp, MM.

Hieracosphinx (CR 5). 67 hp, MM.

Ad-Hoc Experience: If the heroes succeed in traveling over the Glaskeel Cliffs (even if they use magic), reward them for a CR 7 challenge.

Castle Timor (EL 7)

Lady Timor's castle is just a mile from the edge of the Glaskeel Cliffs, an easy walk on foot. Consisting of a cluster of over a dozen towers, surrounded by moats and connected by bridges, rooftops patrolled by mages trained for war, the castle of Lady Timor is easily the most magically gifted in Dassen. She styles herself as a young archmage, and lives in a tower of her own. She receives the heroes on a seventh-floor balcony, magically warmed, overlooking the snowy Glaskeel Cliffs.

Like Dashgoban, Lady Timor's attitude matches whatever the heroes managed to sway her proxy to. Even if she does want to help, she takes her time reviewing the heroes' stories, and if they provide her with the written orders of the Ragesian infiltration commander she has them taken away by a diviner to verify they are legitimate.

Additionally, she has heard rumors about the heroes, and wants them to answer some of her questions. Depending on how the heroes resolved adventure two, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*, Lady Timor may be somewhat irritated with the heroes. If the forest's fires ended because of the heroes' actions, she asks about their passage

through the fire forest, and then laments the fact that now there is a second opening through which the Ragesians can invade Dassen. Once the Second Ragesian Army conquers Gate Pass, they will be able to simply march through the now burnt-out Innenotdar valley and emerge in the northern reaches of Timor lands. This does not incur any penalty to Diplomacy with Lady Timor, but she wants them to know that their actions may have jeopardized her land and her people.

If the heroes make her Helpful, she commits a division of fifty mages, an escort of eight hundred foot soldiers and two hundred cavalry, and a particularly precious elemental ally to the defense of Gallo's Fend. Additionally, to ensure that the heroes can get back to Gallo swiftly, she has several of her mages escort them to the edge of the cliffs and cast *fly* on them, which lasts more than long enough for the heroes to return to the bottom of the cliffs.

Ad-Hoc Experience: If the heroes secure Lady Timor's aid, reward them for a CR 7 encounter.

WAR PLANS

When the heroes return to Gallo's Fend, the armies of King Steppengard might already be preparing to assault the city, or might still be several days away. Regardless, most of the villagers in Otharil Vale have abandoned their homes, retreating to a tent city between Markhold and Wicked Hill. Duke Gallo welcomes any news that aid is on its way, and thanks the heroes deeply for the assistance they have lent. He promises to defend Seaquen against the Ragesians in payment for their honorable behavior.

However, there is still a battle to be won. Gallo half-jokingly says that if they leave now they'll regret not being the ones who save the day. Instead, he suggests, they should fight alongside his forces, and those of Dashgoban and Timor.

Gallo is still the ruler of his land, and while he'll consider suggestions by the heroes, he already has his overall battle plan drawn up. He will, however, offer the heroes several choices in what allies serve with them in the coming battle.

Steppengard's Forces

Steppengard's army is commanded by Konigsmarshal Malkan (LN male old human commander 12), under the supervision of Advisor Nina Glibglammer. The war wizard Kelkin Thravanvost (LN male middle-aged dwarf evoker 9), trained in Gabal's combat techniques, will be directing the army's magical forces. King Steppengard himself remains at his castle in Bresk.

Malkan commands roughly ten thousand soldiers, drawn from the lands of Steppengard, Iz, Megadon, and Namin. He also fields a variety of monstrous mercenaries. Stats for all the foes the heroes will face are presented in the Appendix, but feel free to add new types of foes if the heroes manage to defeat their foes easily and want to aid other companies of soldiers.

The Steppengard army is camped behind Itnevel Hill, with various lookouts watching from the woods. Malkan's command tent lies in the center of the camp, and not far away is the tent of Nina Glibglammer. A representative of each of the three assisting nobles – Iz, Megadon, and Namin – stay in their own section of the camp, near their own forces.

The warmage Kelkin likes his isolation, so his tent is at the edge of the main camp, atop Itnevel hill, near the woods. Malkan was only able to convince the mage to have a small force of guards, which worries the Konigsmarshal, because Malkan's presence is critical to maintaining the allegiance of some of their units. Malkan has under his control a beautiful *charmed* gynosphinx named Nashara, and the dozens of criosphinxes who serve with the army do so primarily to win the female sphinx's favor. If Malkan lost control of Nashara, there is a good chance the criosphinxes would abandon the fight.

The two flanks of the camp are watched by two clusters of castraments – temporary dirt forts which are excavated on site, each less than 100 feet square, with 10-foot-high walls surrounded by a 10-foot-deep ditch, set with sharpened wooden spikes. These castraments help ensure that Gallo's forces will not try to flank around the hill.

Only about a quarter of Steppengard's forces can be effectively fielded at a time due to the limitations

of the terrain, so during major combat the majority of the soldiers will stay in reserve.

Gallo's Forces

Duke Gallo commands ten thousand soldiers, spread throughout Gallo's Fend, many of them stationed in the hidden forts on Wicked Hill or in similar bunkers throughout Otharil Vale.

If the heroes earned the aid of Lord Dashgoban, Gallo is bolstered by one thousand cavalry and two thousand traditional soldiers. If Lady Timor is sending aid as well, this adds fifty warmages, eight hundred foot soldiers, and two hundred cavalry, plus the elder xorn Tupof Dzequifs.

Gallo has a wide variety of siege weapons in place, allowing him to control the distance at which the battle begins. He plans to strand Steppengard's lines out in the fields of Otharil Vale, where they will be vulnerable to mass archery from Gallo's reserve units. The Duke intends to keep only a minimal number of troops behind in the city, choosing instead to deploy the majority of his forces along a line stretching roughly a mile, just southeast of Markhold and Wicked Hill. Since his forces will be close to safe havens, it will be easy for him to swap units in and out, keeping fresh soldiers busy putting pressure on Steppengard's lines.

The Heroes' Role

Gallo's forces are under the control of various high commanders, with individual commanders in charge of groups of between twenty and fifty soldiers. Gallo wants the heroes to be part of one of these groups, though he will only offer to let them command one if they possess the proper demeanor for command. Commander Hertiage will serve alongside the heroes, and if they do not want to be in charge of the unit, he will. The heroes' division has two main responsibilities. First, they are to ensure that none of Steppengard's forces get past the roughly 150-foot-wide stretch of land that has been assigned to them (each division is assigned its own patch of land, forming a long line). Second, they are to defeat all the forces that come at them.

If the heroes acquired no aid, their unit consists

of themselves, Commander Hertiage (N dwarf commander 7), two Gallo chaplains (NG human cleric 7), and thirty-two Gallo soldiers (LN dwarf fighter 2).

If the heroes secured the aid of Lord Dashgoban, they can choose instead to serve with cavalry, so their unit consists of themselves, Commander Hertiage, a Gallo chaplain, and sixteen Dashgoban knights (LN human fighter 4), plus Woody Rust-Wrangler (LN human expert 6) and his rust monster minion, Granule (advanced large rust monster).

If the heroes secured the aid of Lady Timor, the general make-up of their unit doesn't change, but they can add two Timor warmages (N human wizard 5) to their forces. Additionally, they can call upon Tupof Dzequifs, an elder xorn who has served the Timor family for many decades. Tupof spends the battle earth-gliding wherever he is needed. The heroes are given a "thumper," a one-use magic item emits a rhythmic thrum for several rounds when struck against a solid surface. When they throw the thumper, 1d4 rounds later (roll in secret) Tupof arrives at the spot of the thumper, rises up from the ground and simply begins fighting the nearest or most imposing enemies unless he is given more specific orders. As long as he is enjoying himself and is not getting too hurt, Tupof will fight for a minute, before someone else's call pulls him away. Of course, Tupof can be an ace in the hole for if you need to get the heroes out of a dangerous situation.

Since the heroes should likely be 8th level by this point, with the aid of their unit they should be roughly equivalent to an EL 14 group. Therefore, while the large number of foes they face at The Line at Otharil Vale may seem overwhelming, they should be able to handle it.

THE BATTLE FOR GALLO'S FEND

While the focus of Gallo's plans are to hold the Line at Otharil Vale, certain other missions can make a major difference in the battle. The heroes do not have to participate in all these missions, and indeed if the party has no stealth skills they would be ill-suited for some of them. However, Duke Gallo will ask them to participate in whichever missions they are suited for.

Siege Sabotage: The heroes destroy enemy siege weapons, which spares them some bombardment at the beginning of the battle of the line.

Mage Assassination: The evening before the battle, the heroes attack the tent of warmage Kelkin Thravanvost, who is almost more dangerous than a battery of siege weapons.

The Line at Otharil Vale: The heroes and their fellow soldiers face wave after wave of Steppengard forces.

Coup: After the first wave of the battle of the line, Steppengard's commanders will send reinforcements out, leaving their camp only weakly defended. The heroes will sneak in through dwarven tunnels and attempt to capture or kill the enemy commanders.

To aid their missions, Duke Gallo can provide them with uniforms matching the tabards of Steppengard, Iz, Megadon, or Namin forces, and will let the heroes requisition magical gear worth up to a total of 750 gp x the number of characters in the party. Such gear is expected to be returned if it does not have limited uses.

If the heroes are defeated during any of these missions, their foes do their best not to kill them, instead preferring to take captives, which they can ransom back to the losers.

Siege Sabotage (EL 8+)

The evening before the battle, under the cover of darkness, Steppengard's siege weapons are lined up on Otharil Vale, just beyond two thousand feet from Gallo's battle lines, safely out of range of archers and opposing catapults, but close enough that a group of stealthy heroes might be able to sneak in and sabotage them. While simply running up to the siege weapons across a snow-covered open field would be suicidal, a group of dwarven sappers can excavate a tunnel that gets within 60 feet of the siege weapons. Four sappers (N dwarf expert 4) can lead the heroes to the exit, and wait behind for the heroes' return. Once the heroes get back in the tunnels, or when it becomes apparent that the heroes will not be getting away, the sappers collapse the exit so they cannot be followed.

WINNING THE BATTLE

Each of the following conditions is worth a number of victory points. If the heroes earn Duke Gallo 20 victory points, he wins a decisive victory over Steppengard. If Gallo has at least 10 victory points, a truce is called, and if he has fewer victory points, Gallo is defeated.

Securing the aid of Lord Dashgoban	8 points
Securing the aid of Lady Timor	8 points
Killing Kelkin Thravanvost before the battle	4 points
Succeeding in holding the line at Otharil Vale	4 points
Capturing or killing Konigsmarshal Malkan	8 points
Defeating Madness	4 points
For each siege catapult not destroyed before the battle	-1 point (max -10)

The specifics of victory, truce, or defeat are detailed in *Aftermath of Gallo's Fend*, below.

If the heroes did not secure the aid of the pitchlings, the full complement of ten heavy catapults and eight ballista wagons are here. If the pitchlings agreed to harass Steppengard's forces, there are only three heavy catapults and two ballista wagons. Destroying the catapults is essential, whereas destroying the ballistae only helps if the heroes are planning to fly much.

The catapults are arrayed in a line, each 40 feet from the next, surrounded by a 5-foot ditch and a 5-foot dirt wall set with a fraise of wooden spears. The ballistae are mounted on wagons pulled by heavy warhorses, so they can be wheeled close to the battle to take out flying threats if necessary.

Defenses

Each of the heavy catapults has a squad of four siege engineers (N dwarf expert 4), who are non-combatants. They are each guarded by four Steppengard soldiers (N human fighter 2), and a

Steppengard commander (N human commander 4/ fighter 1). Additionally, the entire area is patrolled by Nikkhuar, a wyrmling red dragon, who flies in erratic ellipses, scanning the line of siege weapons with his 60-foot blindsense every few rounds.

Steppengard commander (1+, CR 5). 32 hp.

Steppengard soldiers (4+, CR 2). 20 hp.

Nikkhuar, wyrmling red dragon (CR 5). 59 hp.

If any of the catapults fall under attack, the soldiers sound the alarm, which call the attention of the other guards. Half of them leave their posts to respond to the more immediate threat, while the rest stay at their assigned catapults. Additionally, twenty rounds later a reserve force of eight Steppengard knights (N human fighter 4) and a Steppengard prelate (LN dwarf cleric 7) arrive. Additional reinforcements take ten minutes or more to arrive.

Destroying and Disabling

There are ten catapults, or three if the heroes got the aid of the pitchlings. The heavy catapults are Huge objects, with AC 3, hardness 5, and 100 hit points. The ballistae are Medium objects, with AC 5, hardness 5, and 25 hit points.

A character may attempt a Disable Device check (DC 25, 2d4 rounds) to rig a siege engine so when it is fired it breaks itself, and to do so in such a way that normal inspections will not reveal the sabotage. Though this damage can be repaired, it is sufficient to keep the weapon inoperable for the duration of the battle.

Ad-Hoc Experience: If the heroes destroy all of the catapults, reward them for a CR 7 encounter.

OVERWHELMED

This encounter has too many foes to be won by simply charging in and killing everyone. Make sure the heroes understand that they will either need to be creative, or they will likely have to retreat before winning a total victory. Duke Gallo is content even with a partial success.

Mage Assassination (EL 11)

Kelkin Thravanvost, a dwarven warmage who helped the famed Gabal of Gate Pass develop some of his techniques, now serves as chief wizard of war for King Steppengard. On the day of the battle he will be a holy terror, so Gallo wants the heroes to kill him the evening before.

Uncomfortable around the gnome Nina Glibglammer (actually the trillith Madness), Kelkin stays in a tent at the edge of the Steppengard camp. The tent lies amid sparse woods on the southeastern edge of Itnevel Wood, five hundred feet from the rest of camp. The night before the battle, Kelkin goes to bed early. His tent is broad, 20 feet square and 15 feet high, but it merely serves to conceal the *secure shelter* Thravanvost actually sleeps in. An *alarm* spell, set to sound audibly unless the password “unity” is spoken, is centered on the tent, extending 10 feet out from each wall.

Six soldiers stand in a ring twenty feet from the tent. The guards all know the password, and can reveal it if intimidated or charmed. If the guards are attacked, at least one of them moves closer to the tent to set off the *alarm*. In addition to the guards, Kelkin’s charmed gynosphinx guardian Nashara paces around the tent, or sleeps lightly right beside the hut.

Captured and brought back as a curiosity to King Steppengard’s court from a distant land, Nashara is under a *charm monster* spell that Kelkin (whom she believes is a good and dear friend) casts on her every week or so. He tells her it’s a long-lasting defensive spell, and so convinces her to voluntarily fail her save. Nashara wants to help Kelkin consolidate the kingdom, sure that he will help her be accepted at Lyceum once that is done.

She has created only one magical symbol this week: a *symbol of stunning*, placed on a small rug which Kelkin has placed in front of his *secure shelter* as a welcome mat. Any creature that moves across the welcome mat triggers the symbol unless he says the password “dissension.” All the guards have already said the password, so they remain immune to the symbol as long as they do not move more than 60 feet from the front door of the *secure shelter*.

WHY IS KELKIN A THREAT?

While a 9th-level wizard is nothing to sneeze at, he lacks enough spells to be a threat to an entire army. The answer to this mystery is that Konigsmarshal Malkan has several large chests of scrolls, potions, and wands that Kelkin will use during the battle. While Malkan is willing to let Kelkin gamble with his own life by sleeping at the edge of camp, he isn't about to risk tens of thousands of Dasseni gold octets, so he keeps the chests secure at his command tent.

The symbol, when triggered, stuns a creature unless it succeeds a Will save (DC 22).

Kelkin Thravanvost (CR 9). 42 hp.

Steppengard Soldiers (6, CR 2). 20 hp. Spot +1, Spot +1.

Nashara, gynosphinx (CR 8). 52 hp. Listen +17, Spot +17.

Tactics: Nashara is the most observant of the guards, but even she relies on the *alarm* if the heroes are invisible, in which case her first action is to cast *see invisibility*. Then she will direct the soldiers to attack, use *dispel magic*, or simply leap into combat.

The noise of the alarm awakens Kelkin, who spends two rounds preparing for battle before emerging from his shelter. First he casts *lesser globe of invulnerability* and *shield*, using his move actions to don his robes and his mithral buckler, and then strides confidently into combat.

He stays behind his guards if he can, using discerning attacks like *magic missile* and *flaming spheres*. He keeps his *still charm person* for in case he is grappled. If he is cornered and out of allies, he would rather surrender than risk dying. Because of this, he acts honorably in combat, so as not to arouse the ire of people who might eventually decide whether to kill him or take him prisoner. Kelkin's raven familiar stays at the main command tent, in case the commanders need to reach him with an urgent message.

If Kelkin appears to be seriously injured, Nashara will go to him and let him climb on her before she takes to the air, to fly him to safety.

If the heroes are able to dispel the charm on Nashara, she will immediately turn on Kelkin in a furious attempt at revenge. Her wrath also extends to the guards, but she will not die for her revenge. Once the immediate enemies are dead, she will beg the heroes for succor.

Should the battle last more than ten rounds, a group of four Steppengard knights come riding to the warmage's rescue.

The Line at Otharil Vale (EL 14)

Early in the morning, drums and horns sound the approach of battle. A warm breeze blows from the south, snapping banners in a militaristic cadence, and by an hour after sunrise the armies of Gallo and Steppengard are assembled and ready for battle.

Steppengard's forces will need to march through Otharil Vale to reach Gallo's Fend. Rather than ceding that land to him, Gallo intends to confront him in a straight-up fight. Thousands of foot soldiers and cavalry, hundreds of magic-users, and scattered monstrous forces line up two thousand feet apart, awaiting the order to attack.

The heroes are assigned a 150-foot-wide line of terrain that they and their allies are to hold. For ease of play, assume that no enemies who are angling to the adjacent groups of soldiers cross over to attack the heroes' division, or vice versa. The heroes will have to defeat several waves to be victorious. If they are being defeated they can retreat, and fresh forces will relieve them, but for the purpose of this encounter they will have suffered a defeat.

Commander Herriage, who is either in charge of the unit or is assisting the heroes, suggests the heroes take the center of the line of forces. Whether they have foot-soldiers or cavalry, their unit is just large enough to fill a 150-foot-wide line with some to spare. If the unit consists of foot soldiers, Herriage says the line should have two gaps, dividing it into three roughly equal parts, with archers set up behind a fraise (a ring of outward-pointing spears) in the gaps. The majority of the soldiers will fight in melee, but the archers will be protected and able to target particularly dangerous foes, or aerial enemies. Any mages with good ranged attacks should also be set up in these fraises.

Hertiage also suggests the chaplains remain behind the battle line, and preferably should be mounted, so they can reach the injured quickly. Duke Gallo can provide light warhorses for the chaplains (and for the heroes, if they ask).

Terrain and Advancing Forces

The battlefield is 150 feet wide and 2,000 feet long (catapult range), though this is well beyond the scope of most battle maps for miniature combat. Since the opposing forces will approach in a steady line, it may be easiest simply to set up the enemies on the opposite side of a battle map, and to just keep a running tally of how far away they are each round, until their positions can actually be represented on the map.

The land on the vale is almost completely flat, though the heroes can set up two fraises wherever they desire. A fraise is a line, curve, box, or arrowhead-shaped row of outward pointed spears, usually up to 30 feet across. The fraise makes four attacks against any creature passing through it, or eight attacks against Large creatures (+0, 1d10 damage). A Jump

check that clears six vertical feet can avoid the fraise.

The heroes might also try to set up some hazards along the line they intend to defend, spending the morning or evening before digging rough ground, scattering caltrops, setting up traps, or erecting other barricades to direct the flow of enemies.

Opening Volley (EL 4)

Steppengard's army blares its horns, and the vast line of soldiers begins to advance at a hustle. If the heroes stay put to take advantage of stationary defenses, the enemy forces hustle at 40 feet per round for 35 rounds, traveling 1400 feet. Then they begin to run, traveling 60 feet per round for 10 rounds, traveling the remaining 600 feet.

If the catapults were not all destroyed, the catapults also advance a hundred feet over ten rounds, being slowly pushed into position. A bit of spying by Madness has determined where the heroes are deployed, so she has directed one catapult to focus its efforts specifically on them. Every three rounds for the next 30 rounds, that heavy catapult fires a shot aimed at the heroes.



Because of the incredible distance, the catapult only strikes its target if its operator rolls a natural 20 on his attack roll. On a miss, the shot goes so wide that it completely misses the heroes' division. Even on a natural 20, roll 1d10 to determine if the attack scatters 5 feet in a random direction. (1–2: no scatter, 3: north, 4: northeast, 5: east, 6: southeast, 7: south, 8: southwest, 9: west, 10: northwest.)

Creatures in the struck square take 6d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 15 half). Once the catapult gets a successful hit, the operator will not re-aim it, and so further shots will come at a rate of one every other round, until the heroes's forces move. The catapult stops firing once the Steppengard forces get within 200 feet of the heroes' line.

First Wave (EL 13)

The first volley of enemy forces consists of thirty-two Steppengard soldiers, one Steppengard commander, one Steppengard prelate, two criosphinxes, and Brakken the Blitzter, a minotaur mercenary.

Steppengard Soldiers (32, CR 2). 20 hp.

Steppengard Commander (CR 5). 32 hp.

Steppengard Prelate (CR 7). 59 hp.

Criosphinxes (2, CR 7). 85 hp.

Brakken the Blitzter (CR 7). 67 hp.

The commander has already used two leadership performances to give his allies a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls and saves against fear for the first 5 rounds of combat, and also to let them use the result of his Perform check (20) in place of the first save against fear they make in the battle.

Since Brakken can run faster than the rest of the group, he drinks his *potion of bull's strength* when he is 600 feet away, and arrives with two minutes left on the potion's duration. Similarly, the criosphinxes run along the ground until they are 200 feet away, at which point they leap into the air and fly behind the heroes' lines, attacking warmages, chaplains, and archers. One round before the warriors reach the heroes' line, the prelate stops 60 feet away and casts *summon monster IV* for a fiendish dire wolf.

The Steppengard commander has decent intelligence about the heroes' powers, so if one of the heroes is renowned for using area attack spells, once combat begins the commander always readies an action so he can use a leadership performance to have his soldiers scatter (granting an immediate move action), getting them out of fireball formation.

The first wave does not retreat, though if things look bad a few soldiers may throw down their arms and surrender. About the time that this wave reaches the heroes, the second wave sets out. The heroes will have little time between them to rest.

Ad-Hoc Experience: Rather than calculate exactly how to reward a few PCs from among dozens of allies, simply reward the heroes for a CR 8 encounter if they defeat the first wave.

Second Wave (EL 13)

This wave consists of the four troll mercenaries (Rip, Snort, Gut, and Buelah), plus sixteen Steppengard knights.

Rip, Snort, Gut, and Buelah (CR 6). 83 hp.

Steppengard Knights (16, CR 4). 35 hp.

The trolls and horses keep pace at 160 feet per round, and reach the heroes' line 13 rounds after the first wave strikes. This wave has received a *bless* spell, which will last for 10 rounds after they reach the heroes.

When the second wave is 500 feet away from the heroes, a nasty surprise will strike them from behind. An invisible androsphinx flies three hundred feet behind their lines and unleashes a roar as he swoops past. Everyone in the heroes' division (as well as any surviving enemies from the first wave) must succeed a Will save (DC 19) or become panicked for 2d6 rounds. On a successful save, a creature is shaken for 1 round. The androsphinx flies up and away, not intending to get into combat. This will likely break the heroes' line, sending soldiers fleeing back toward base just as the second wave is closing in for the kill.

The knights focus on the leaders and on those enemies still able to fight, while the troll mercenaries gleefully cut down weaker foes.

Ad-Hoc Experience: If the heroes defeat the second wave, reward them for a CR 9 encounter.

War-Mage Artillery (EL 10)

If the heroes have not killed Kelkin Thravanvost, once or twice during the battle, a *fireball* (5d6 damage, Ref DC 14 half) comes in from hundreds of feet away. He is riding his heavy warhorse, escorted by six Steppengard knights, a commander, and a prelate, as well as Nashara the gynosphinx. He never comes within range for melee combat, and does not linger long, preferring to strafe along the battle lines. Should the heroes make an effort to ride him down and face him, they will find Kelkin and his bodyguards relatively alone in the wasteland between the two enemy lines.

Kelkin Thravanvost (CR 9). 42 hp.

Steppengard Knights (6, CR 4). 35 hp.

Steppengard Commander (CR 5). 32 hp.

Steppengard Prelate (CR 7). 59 hp.

Nashara, gynosphinx (CR 8). 52 hp.

After the Second Wave

Once the heroes have defeated the second wave, it looks like there will be a lull of a few minutes before the next wave comes in. What happens next depends on how well the heroes are doing. By this point the battle has lasted perhaps ten minutes, and before the heroes get far in preparing for the next stage, a courier bearing Duke Gallo's banner rides up, waving for the heroes to come to him. He says that the heroes' unit is being relieved by fresh forces, and asks that they follow him to Markhold, where they will meet with Duke Gallo.

When the heroes reach Markhold, they pass the medical tents where the injured are being carted in, though as is typical in a fantasy war, almost as many soldiers are heading out of the tents to rejoin the battle. Gallo is just inside the fortress of Markhold, examining a detailed map of the battle, which is still unfolding.

If the heroes have earned Gallo enough victory points to ensure even a truce, Gallo thanks them for their services and tells them that the battle will take

a while to peter out, but the result has already been determined. It looks like they will win, or at least force a retreat by Steppengard's forces. Gallo wants to make sure the heroes are safe, so he asks that they let his own forces handle the rest of the battle.

If, however, Gallo does not have enough victory points to earn even a truce, he explains that things look grim. He has a desperate plan that might turn the tide, but it could be suicidal. The group of warriors he was originally counting on to perform this mission were killed by an overwhelming rush, and he suspects that the enemy somehow divined what he was planning and knew how to cripple his plan.

The plan called for the now-deceased warriors – expert dwarf tunnel fighters – to take a tunnel that passes under the Steppengard camp, nearby the command bunker. The warriors were to breach the surface and either kill or capture Konigsmarshal Malkan, a coup that would bring the battle to a sudden halt. Now, however, Gallo has a nearly complete tunnel, but no one to lead the mission.

If the heroes agree, they will cross the frozen Nasham River, enter one of the hidden forts on the northern shore, and then take a 2-mile long tunnel to the breach point. If the heroes leave now and hurry, they could reach the command bunker in half an hour. The heroes will be accompanied on this mission by ten soldiers.

Coup (EL 13)

Note that this mission is very dangerous, and you should likely avoid it unless the heroes have otherwise lost the Battle for Gallo's Fend.

On the surface, a 30-foot-diameter command tent conceals Konigsmarshal Malkan's actual headquarters. Worried about aerial attack, Malkan had his soldiers excavate a small bunker, 40 feet square, 20 feet below the surface, with a 10-foot-high ceiling. The tent itself has been set up to look like a command center, but Malkan generally stays in the bunker. A trap door covered by a rug conceals the stairs that lead down to the bunker, protecting the Konigsmarshal from attempts to attack him in his tent. The defenses, however, make no consideration for a subterranean attack.

The 40-foot-square bunker has wooden staircase in the northwest corner, a bed and dresser in the southwest corner, chairs and a conference table in the southeast corner, and a cheap desk covered with maps and troop deployment records in the northeast corner. *Everburning torches* are spaced around the room at 10-foot intervals.

The tunnel the heroes use to reach the bunker is an old one, part of a decades-old defense, and is wide enough for two people to walk side by side. Scouting by a small earth elemental has allowed the sappers to find out exactly where to dig up, and the tunnels come to within 2 feet of the surface. The dwarves have set up explosive charges (magic items that unleash a *shatter* spell) in two places. One set of charges is for the breach point, and will collapse the floor in the northeast corner so the heroes can get inside. The second set of charges is positioned under the northwest corner, intended to destroy the staircase so that Malkan cannot retreat.

The tunnel runs east-west under the bunker, with two side passages that lead to the staircase and the breachpoint. The tunnel under the staircase will be completely filled with debris when the charges go off, whereas the breach tunnel will just count as difficult terrain. The stairs leading up out of the bunker will be useless, so getting out will require a Climb check (DC 20).

Two dwarves with short ladders wait just outside the breach point, and when the heroes give the signal they shout the command word to detonate the charges. A deafening crack shakes the tunnel, and blinding brown dust fills the air. The dwarves then rush in and place the ladders against the walls, holding them steady so the heroes can get in in a hurry. Moving up the ladders into the bunker takes

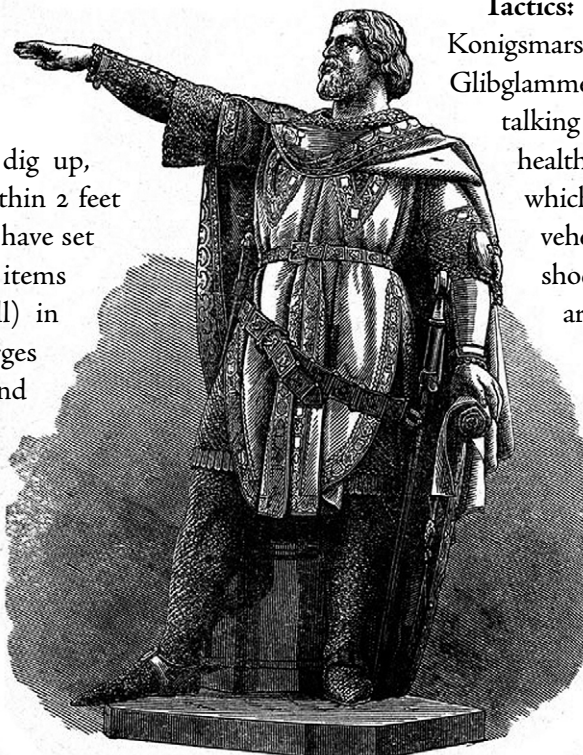
just 10 feet of movement and no Climb check. It is time to roll for initiative.

Konigsmarshal Malkan (CR 12). 58 hp.

Madness (CR 11). 105 hp.

Steppengard Prelate (2, CR 7). 59 hp.

Steppengard Knight (effectively unlimited, CR 4). 35 hp, upstairs.



Tactics: When the ambush is sprung, Konigsmarshal Malkan and Advisor Nina Glibglammer are in the southwest corner, talking about the king's declining health and fragile mental state, which the gnome woman denies vehemently. The detonation shocks them both, but they are far enough away not to be stunned. There are two Steppengard prelates in the bunker when the heroes attack, standing near the center of the room. They are knocked down, but are not stunned.

The entirety of the 40-foot-square bunker is filled with a dust cloud, which grants concealment to any creature 20 feet away or further. A ring directly around the 10-foot-wide breach point is filled with debris that counts as difficult terrain. The room's furniture has been knocked askew.

The prelates stand and do their best to keep the heroes from reaching Malkan. The Konigsmarshal responds quickly, taking cover behind the nearest furniture, crouching, and attacking intruders with his repeating crossbow.

Madness, a little shaken but not actually frightened (since right now she is incorporeal), simply moves to hide and take cover, watching from behind a bed or couch. If she is attacked, she giggles, shakes her head in disapproval, and begins using her *extended lesser confusion* ability to befuddle the heroes.

She does not take on a corporeal form, and if the heroes think to sing the Song of Forms she flees in a panic, terrifying the guards in the tent above as her monstrous serpentine form squeezes its way out of the bunker. She is willing to let Malkan be captured, and will not put herself in harm's way for his sake.

After a few rounds of combat she grows bored and simply glides into the wall incorporeally, preferring to leave rather than reveal her true form.

Should the heroes manage to force her into her true form but not defeat her, rumors spread quickly among Steppengard's soldiers, and everyone becomes very wary around the gnome woman, suspicious that she is some sort of demon. If the heroes manage to discredit "Nina," instead of her it will be the Ragesian ambassador who endorses Steppengard's suicidal plan in Act Three, though Madness will still linger in the shadows.

Reinforcements: On the surface, several Steppengard knights are guarding the tent. When they hear the boom they run to the trap door; it will take three rounds from the detonation before the door in the ceiling is opened. Even then, the knights will have to drop 20 feet to get into the room. Only one enters per round. However, the camp quickly mobilizes to respond to the ambush, and thus the reinforcements do not stop coming. The heroes' only escape (short of killing several hundred soldiers one by one) is to retreat back down the tunnel. The dwarven sappers will detonate a final set of charges to seal the tunnel.

Aftermath: If the heroes are defeated, they are taken captive, but will be reunited with Duke Gallo early in Act Three, during the "peace conference," though their gear will be confiscated.

If the heroes manage to nab Malkan, they can retreat down the tunnels, their dwarven allies holding off pursuit and detonating the charges to make good their escape. If the heroes are losing, the dwarven sappers shout for the heroes to retreat. In either case, as the heroes are making their way down the tunnels, Madness appears before them, still incorporeal. She giggles, applauds lightly, and thanks them for the good show. She is quite pleased that they and Duke Gallo have done such a good job killing soldiers of Dassen, and she suggests that with their experience,

they might make good recruits for the Ragesians. She floats off then, telling them to, "Sleep well," and vanishes into the wall.

WRAPPING UP THE SECOND ACT

Unless the heroes managed to capture or kill Konigsmarshal Malkan, the battle of the Line at Otharil Vale continues for several more hours, before the losers retreat (or both sides call a truce). Steppengard's forces take no more hostile actions, and then two days later a courier rides out from Steppengard's camp with a message for Duke Gallo.

The precise wording depends on whether Gallo won, lost, or called a truce, but the message is that King Steppengard does not wish for more fighting. He is recalling his army, and requests (or demands, if he is victorious) that Gallo attend a peace conference in Bresk. All of the nobles will be required to attend, and here Steppengard hopes to avert a civil war, and to protect his nation. Steppengard claims that new evidence has been revealed to him, and he wants to present it publicly to all his nobles, and simultaneously establish a plan to hold off the expansionist threat of the Ragesians.

To help quell hostilities, the king is throwing a two-day festival at Bresk, and Lord Gallo and his servants are all invited. The first day will be an opportunity for recent enemies to compete casually in tournaments games and reestablish friendly bonds, while the second day will be filled with parades and parties for the commoners, while the nobles discuss how to save their nation.

This is a very suspicious announcement, and Lord Gallo knows it. However, despite what the heroes may say, he has no choice but to accept. If he doesn't, the king will be able to call Gallo's patriotism into doubt, and could use it to marshal the other nobles against him. Besides, if there is any chance that the country can be united to stand against Ragesia's invasion, they must take it.

Still, Gallo is no fool. He fully expects to be betrayed. As a great show of trust, he offers a knighthood to each the heroes, and asks that they accompany him as bodyguards. If the heroes accept, they leave tomorrow.

ACT THREE: SERVED COLD

In this act, the heroes attend a peace conference, called by King Steppengard to reunite his kingdom after the recent battle, with the supposed intent of planning a defense against the Ragesians. However in truth Steppengard has completely lost his mind, and desires to destroy his kingdom, and himself with it. He plans for all the nobles to be poisoned with a toxin developed by Madness, which will drive them all into a murderous madness.

The day before the banquet, Steppengard throws a festival and tournament to distract attentions while he prepares his scheme. Informants contact the heroes and alert them to suspicious goings-on at the castle, prompting them to sneak into the castle to find evidence of what looks like an assassination attempt. Taking a hidden path into the castle's prison, the heroes discover the Ragesian inquisitor Torrax has just delivered the madness-inducing poison to agents, who will dose all the food at the banquet. The heroes rush to stop the plot, and ultimately confront King Steppengard and his trillith advisor the throne room, in a battle to defeat the king's madness.

If the heroes do not piece together the clues to stop the king's scheme, some time between the soup and the pork, the leaders of Dassen will tear each other to pieces.

THE POISONING PLOT

Steppengard is mad enough to listen when Nina suggests that he could take revenge on all those who killed his family, and he is particularly happy that the poison being used will cause the nobles to murder each other. However, the toxin has a magical mind-affecting component, which means that before it can take effect, the Eight Lands Boon must be revoked.

The Eight Lands Boon, granted by the Dasseni artifact the Book of Eight Lands, protects all the nobles and their families from mind-affecting magic and divination, and removing someone's name requires the approval of the Council of Nine. Destroying the book is difficult, and removing it

from the castle vault is practically impossible because of various old wards, even for the king. However, the book is not powerful enough to function from another plane.

Madness's simple plan is for the Ragesian Ambassador Serrimus to enter the vault – this right is accorded to any human or dwarf – so that he may check his ancestry. Once inside, the ambassador hides the book inside a *rope trick* and leaves an illusionary replica behind. The ambassador will concentrate on the illusion for about an hour or so, by which time the poison plot will be complete. The *rope trick* will end, and the book will appear simply to have fallen off its stand.

While the book is hidden in the *rope trick*, the entirety of the Dasseni nobility will be vulnerable to the effects of the Red Madness poison. Every dish of the multi-course banquet will have several doses of the sweet poison, enough to ensure that everyone, eventually, succumbs.

PROCLAMATION OF PEACE

Gallo leaves his retainers to see to the Fend in the aftermath of the battle, and brings along the heroes and forty men as an armed escort. They follow a half day behind Steppengard's retreating army, and reach Bresk in three days.

If Gallo lost the battle, instead Gallo is taken into custody, though he is allowed to have the heroes accompany him still as bodyguards, as this is a political arrest, intended mostly to keep Gallo from running. The three-day trip back to Bresk is calm and uneventful. Unless the heroes talk to someone else first, no one in Steppengard's army does anything more than give them a glance every now and then.

NEW POISON Red Madness

Ingested (Will DC 17). Initial damage *confusion* for one hour. Secondary damage *rage* for one hour. Price 500 gp.

PARADE OF THE VICTORS

When Gallo and the heroes reach Bresk, they are part of a parade. Banners fly from rooftops, drums beat out a military cadence, and fresh soil has been spread along the army's path – this is to reward their return by letting them walk proudly upon the earth of their homeland.

If the heroes successfully defended Gallo's Fend, Gallo's troops enter the city first, greeted by nervous but hopeful citizens lining the streets. Word has spread that Gallo will force the king to end his witch-hunts, and that peace will be returning to Dassen.

If the heroes lost, instead they are paraded along in the middle of Steppengard's forces, shown off as prisoners of war. The crowd is still nervous, but they cheer because they expect Gallo will be executed, and that things will quiet down afterward.

If the two sides called a truce, Steppengard's forces march first, and then Gallo's. Both are treated by cautious cheers, since people really have no idea what this means, but they know they're supposed to cheer the returning armies.

Regardless of the circumstances, Gallo reminds the heroes to maintain proper decorum. After an hour-long march, the parade reaches the courtyard of Castle Steppengard. Trumpeters blare victorious tunes and children throw flowers, and a line of the other seven nobles stand ready to greet Gallo's arrival. Various retainers and guards surround the courtyard, and in a shadowed corner stand the Ragesian ambassador and inquisitor Torrax. King Steppengard (possibly with Nina) stands in front of the nobles, and he steps forward as Gallo and the heroes approach.

King Steppengard looks healthier than you last saw him, more restrained perhaps, as if he is contrite over a great mistake. He offers a hand to Gallo, then turns to address the gathered crowd. The music comes to an end.

"My people," begins Steppengard, "recent times have been dark for our country. From the tragedy that befell my own house to the recent rumors of sedition, no one can say that these have been good days. But I am here to tell you, better days

AREN'T WE DONE?

After saving Gallo's Fend, the heroes may think they're done, that they have secured Dassen's aid. If they are planning to return to Seauen, emphasize that a few things need to be finalized. You might even present Act Three as just denouement, implying that nothing dramatic will happen, but that the heroes are expected to go along to represent Seauen, and to get their fair rewards.

As with all parts of the adventure, however, if the heroes decide to leave, it's their choice. They can learn a few days later that all the nobles of Dassen killed each other, and that the nation is falling into civil war. That chaos, at least, should slow the Ragesian advance for a little while, but there is nothing else to be done in Dassen. Lyceum will be looking for alternate solutions, which include sending the heroes on the trail for the Torch of the Burning Sky, which is the focus of adventures 5 through 7.

are ahead! I have invited all of Dassen's Lords and Ladies here to Bresk, so that the petty squabbling may be brought to an end, and that we may forge a new, brighter future together.

"Duke Gallo, long-respected defender of the gates of Dassen, I commend you for your brave and steady heart. Though we disagreed, and though our swords crossed because of it, I know now that you acted with only love for your homeland. I have called you and your fellow Lords and Ladies here to bring an end to our struggle. There is information, both to relieve our heavy shoulders and to chill our marrow, but because of heroes like you, Duke Gallo, and your brave warriors who attend you, our nation will survive this.

"I welcome you into my house, and offer you, as I have with all the other nobles, a chance to have your champions compete in the Tournament of Unity. Tomorrow there will be games to cheer the heart of our subjects, and in the evening we shall speak of unpleasant but necessary matters. Thieves and tricksters lurk at our borders, I now

know, and it will fall to all of us, not as Eight Lands but allied as one nation, to defeat them.”

The crowd applauds, and Gallo, still shaking his king's hand, leans forward and speaks so that you can barely hear him.

“You *are* talking about the Ragesians, right?”

Steppengard simply maintains his smile as if he has not heard.

Attempts to detect lies fail because Steppengard's *Eight Lands Boon* renders him immune to divination, and it takes a DC 36 Sense Motive check to see through his bluff, because the king made sure to quaff a *potion of glibness*. Even if the characters should succeed on this check, they learn only that the king is hiding something, and they detect no immediate hostile intent.

If the heroes were captured in Act Two, they are present for the arrival of Duke Gallo, and are unceremoniously handed over to his custody after the king's speech. Likewise, if their familiars or animal companions were taken captive in Act One, they are returned now.

All the Lords and Ladies and their envoys are welcome to stay in any inn, tavern, or manor in the city, at no charge. If the heroes want, they could try to speak to the Castellan in order to get lodging in the castle itself (Diplomacy DC 30). Otherwise, however, Gallo finds a friendly minor dwarf aristocrat who lends him his manor for a few days – a lavishly furnished house with twenty rooms, all equipped with warm, running water.

Lady Timor and Lord Dashgoban visit the evening of Gallo's arrival, and will discuss the situation, share their misgivings, and either commiserate on their failure or celebrate their victory at Gallo's Fend.

TOURNAMENT OF UNITY

The schedule for the next day has various tournament games from sunrise to sunset, and then a banquet in the evening. The nobles are expected to attend the tournament, and are welcome to bring aids to the banquet. Gallo wants the heroes to come with him to both events. The heroes have become

celebrities, and if they do well in the tournament it will bolster support for him when he is negotiating with Steppengard and the other nobles. Also, he would like the heroes to be close in case someone tries something treacherous.

Additionally, if the heroes were not captured in Act One (and thus did not have a chance to rescue Proxy Jinis), Gallo has a special request. He knows that his proxy was arrested for suspected treason, and when he asked about the man's status, he was simply told that Jinis would be returned to him after the banquet. Gallo suspects that Jinis might know something, and so he wants the heroes to try to locate his proxy.

Gallo hopes that he might have some allies among Steppengard's staff, and so there might be someone at the tournament who has news of Proxy Jinis. Gallo himself will be too closely watched for any of Steppengard's retainers to approach him, but the heroes might be more approachable.

The heroes have a day to do as they please. Try to make sure, however, that they are at the castle by sunset, so they can attend the banquet. Some sources of information can help the heroes figure out what

NOTORIETY AND TAUNTING

One way to motivate the heroes to participate in the festival games is to play on their pride. Several times during the day, various hecklers loyal to the “lovely and patriotic Lady Namin” pick the heroes out of the crowd and begin to verbally taunt them, citing their support of the “treacherous cur Gallo.” The hecklers suggest that the heroes are cowards if they don't participate in a particular competition.

While the heroes may initially think that Lady Namin is trying to harrass them or ruin their names, the truth is far less insidious. Lady Namin knows the heroes are fairly popular with the commoners, and she wants to increase her own name by having her subjects triumph over them. Every little bit helps toward her goal of convincing the king to marry her.

Steppengard is planning, but for the sake of drama don't have them speak to the heroes until it is near time for the banquet. While it is perfectly fine for the heroes to find out about the plan and avert it well in advance, the climax will be much more dramatic if they find out at the last possible moment, and have to hurry to save the day.

The Tournament Grounds

A broad field outside the walls of Bresk has been set up with warm tents, scattered stages, and broad wooden bleachers, and dozens of games and tournaments have been announced. Servants of the various nobles are competing, as are a scattering of locals, desperate refugees who were too poor to finish the trip to Seaquen, and would-be heroes who want to claim glory in the coming battles. Because of the short timespan and inhospitable weather, less than a thousand people actually attend the festival, and only two score are actually competing, but for Bresk this is quite an event.

There are several major competitions with a single prize being awarded for each, plus various minor festival games. In addition to the games, the heroes might take in a mock sword fight between a pair of masochistic dwarves, watch a short play put on by a Wayfarer with no hands named Budger and his one-thumbed goblin assistant Lucky, sample various festival food and drinks, dance on a public stage with half-elf exotic dancers from Ostalin, or listen to a musician playing an accordion. This last event takes on a sinister air if Steppengard's men killed the heroes' associate Balan, since the performer purchased Balan's old accordion.

If the heroes cause any trouble, the local guards are not equipped to stop them easily, so they simply threaten to get Steppengard's royal guards (a Blade of the Kingsguard, detailed in the Appendix, and several prelates), and try to talk down the heroes, saying that fighting will reflect poorly on their liege, Lord Gallo.

For further tournament options, see E.N. Publishing's *Tournaments, Fairs, & Taverns*.

Dasseni Idol

"Do you sing?" asks a dwarf with a curled blonde beard. "Perform at all? Can you make a fool of yourself? The nobles need entertainment, and the king's coffers are open to pay you to show off your talents."

A dwarf named Bleur Himage (N male dwarf bard 4) wanders the festival with a thick shoulder bag full of certificates providing people with permission to perform for the nobles during the intermissions between jousts. All he asks is for a brief demonstration of some talent (Perform DC 10), and he pushes a certificate into the person's hand and tells them when and where to be.

This is an easy opportunity for characters to use the Perform skill to make some money, earning 5 times the normal amount for a given Perform check. Additionally, any performer who beats DC 25 gets called back to perform before the final joust. With a huge crowd in attendance, each of the performers has a chance to earn the favor of the crowd.

Other than the heroes, the best performance is a stirring oratory by Konigsmarshal Malkan about the first eight kings of the Eight Lands (Perform check of 31). If Malkan is not present (like if he's dead), instead Duke Gallo is the leader, demonstrating his surprising skill at comedy. He talks to random people in the audience and various competitors in the joust, making sarcastic and satirical jabs at himself and his fellow nobles, while mostly focusing his insults toward the Ragesians (Perform check of 27).

If any of the heroes beat those checks, they win the cheers of the audience, and King Steppengard stands, as does Lady Dene, and together they rewards the winner with a deed to a 20-acre plot of land, located in the woods of Lady Dene's lands. Lady Dene personally thanks the hero for his performance, and whispers discreetly that she is glad to know that Seaquen will be safe against the Ragesians now.

Freshness Guaranteed

Walking through the crowded streets, you notice that the festival workers aren't the only ones making a profit during the celebrations. A number of food vendors line the streets, hawking exotic and tasty treats to the delight of the people, who likely only get such fare rarely.

One such food cart doesn't seem to be doing so well, however. You notice one man holding a plate with an exquisite-looking cut of steak on it, talking to the cook, a halfling standing on a step-ladder, who grows more and more upset as the conversation continues. Finally, in a rage the cook knocks the food out of the man's hands, dashing the finely prepared meal to the ground.

"Bah!" he roars, "As though you, an eater of gruel, would understand the finer aspects of the culinary arts?! Take your money and begone!"

Throwing a few coins in the man's face, the cook sends the man running, shouting curses at him until he's gone. With his victim out of sight, the unhappy chef returns to his cart and looks around grumpily.

Noticing your gaze upon him, he glares at you and demands, "What?"

The angry chef is, in fact, the head cook for King Steppengard, Randas Slabovalles (LN male halfling expert 10, Craft [cooking] +17). He had just begun to prepare for the banquet that the king was going to be throwing when he was rudely informed by several guards that the king would be bringing in several "specialists" for the banquet for the visiting nobles, and that the head cook and his staff were to work at the festival until then. Naturally, Randas is deeply insulted that any "specialist" cooks were brought in to cook for an important state dinner, and he has been taking his displeasure out on any customers he receives.

Randas' food cart is ridiculously over-equipped, with ingredients for gourmet meals, not simple festival fare. The cheapest meal he will cook costs 5 gp per person: a black bean tortilla soup that is probably the tastiest thing the heroes have ever eaten.



If the heroes are willing to wait ten minutes while Randas cooks something for them, he will angrily mutter about how unfairly he is being treated, and how he was not meant to serve food to swine.

The heroes can try to calm him down, and though he is snappy all he really wants is some validation and respect. If the heroes are kind to him, he starts a conversation with them, mentioning that he regularly cooks for His Majesty the King, but that for some reason he has been temporarily suspended, replaced by outside help.

Soon after the heroes get the chef to open up, however, a man dressed as one of King Steppengard's royal guards approaches and tells them to move along. He has been ordered to make sure the chef doesn't talk too much, and if it comes to it he will attempt to drag the halfling away forcibly. Even if the heroes don't provoke a fight, eventually some of the other lesser cooks – who have also been assigned to the tournament – hear what happened, and they come to the heroes to complain. None of them suspect the truth, however.

Even if the heroes don't cause a scene, the next time they walk past this stall, it is being closed down by a pair of city guards, and Randas is nowhere to be seen. The guards were simply told to report here and take the cart away, and don't know what's going on.

Informant

You are passing a crowd of festival-goers when suddenly one of their number steps from his crowd into the middle of your group. A dark-haired dwarf in non-descript clothes, the stranger keeps his head down and hisses, "Try not to look at me. I've got to warn you about tonight. If any of the king's guards see me, it will ruin everything."

"I'm a guard at the castle. Strange things are going on, people being reassigned and moved, and I think it's so we don't see what the king is planning. I normally watch a weak point in the castle's backside. There's a hidden watchpost in an old graveyard on the shores of the Nasham, because the castle's sewers let out there. Normally the outflow is gated off, but we've got to make sure people don't sneak in.

"A couple of weeks ago I got reassigned to the royal vault. I checked around, and *nobody* has replaced me. So last night I snuck back to see what was up. I mean, the ass end of the castle is exposed to the world now, and if anyone thought to they could just up and sneak in.

"What I saw there makes no sense. A group of priests were waiting at the entrance of the sewer, and they met up with bunch of men who unloaded a sleigh filled with casks, like they were delivering wine or something. The priests took the casks, paid the men, and then, damndest thing, the priests *went into the sewers*. They weren't picking up drinks for the banquet, I'll bet you that.

"There is something foul, and not just the frozen shit in the sewer. I told you where I was reassigned – the royal vault? Well I was relieved tonight, told to take the day off and enjoy the festival. Far as I can tell, nobody's replacing me *tonight* either.

"Now maybe I'm crazy, but I know you don't stand well with the king, so I thought you might want to know this. Don't tell anyone we talked."

Another group of revelers are coming close, and the dwarf slips away, not looking back.

The informant is Burnomn Valder (NG male dwarf fighter 4), one of the guards for Steppengard's castle. If the heroes try to talk to him he does his best to get away before anyone sees him. He doesn't have much else to say, and most things the heroes could ask him they could find out from other people just as easily.

What Burnomn witnessed was a trio of prelates purchasing some of the ingredients for the poison that will be used at the banquet tonight. The prelates then entered the sewers, cast *hide from undead*, and brought the casks to Inquisitor Torrax, who completed the poison recipe.

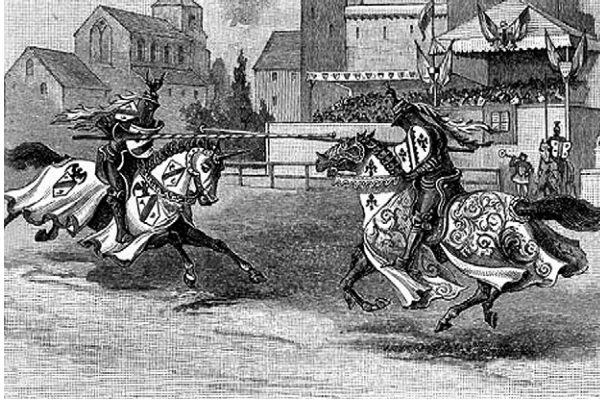
If the heroes do cause a scene, Burnomn tries to run, which may attract Steppengard's guards. If Burnomn is caught or the heroes mention what he said to Steppengard's people, the entrance to the prison is much more heavily guarded, and visibly so, to discourage investigation.

Jousting

The biggest attraction of the festival is a field the length of a city block, surrounded by bleachers and wooden guard rails, near which numerous warriors in plate armor wait beside horses. Magic-users wait at ready to ensure the lances these jousters wield will only inflict nonlethal blows, and healers stand ready just in case something goes awry. Nearby, a parallel area caters to more casual jousters. Men in leather armor, with flexible wooden poles mount up on nags, and do not have the benefit of magical protection.

Both sets of jousts seem to be attracting a great deal of betting, and one entire section of the bleachers has been cordoned off so the nobles can watch comfortably. Duke Gallo spots you and nods his head toward the registration booth.

If the heroes would be interested in jousting, they should visit the joust early in the day to be placed in the tournament bracket. The commoners joust has five rounds, with none of the jousters any more skilled than a 2nd-level warrior. The entry fee is 5 gp, and the prize is 100 gp and a seat at the



king's banquet this evening. If the heroes do not get involved, the winner is Ben Roots (NG male human warrior warrior 2).

The main joust has four rounds with sixteen contestants (including any heroes). The fan favorite is Silvia Cossala (LN female human fighter 8), a knight jousting on behalf of Lady Namin. Should one or more heroes compete, they must face the following foes. Most of these use the "typical joust" stats in the appendix. The entry fee is 100 gp.

Magic cast upon all the jousters causes the damage they deal to be nonlethal, and clerics are present to heal any wounds. Magic items are allowed, but no jousting may receive any spells to enhance his prowess, except those he casts himself. Each round takes one hour, so jousting have some time to heal up on their own between bouts.

1st round – Quincy Fellthuf, from the lands of Lord Rego (typical jousting). If there are two heroes competing, the second hero faces Wodbart Erfis, from Bresk (typical jousting).

2nd round – Grim Morgensen, a refugee from Ragesia (unique NPC in appendix). If there are two heroes competing, the second hero faces Zwergenkarsh Hectonoff (Dashgoban Knight).

3rd round – Jereth Buchaven, a soldier of Steppengard (Steppengard Knight). If a second hero is competing, he faces Silvia Cossala in this round.

4th round – Silvia Cossala (or the hero who beat her).

When the gamekeeper calls for both opponents to charge, both will ride forward and attack on the same initiative. All jousting in this competition are skilled enough to succeed the Ride check (DC 5) to avoid being dehorned when struck for damage, so they instead charge and attempt to bull rush their foes. A rider can make a Ride check instead of a Strength check to resist a bull rush attempt. Silvia uses her Jousting Blow feat, and with a spirited charge she has a very good chance of knocking her unconscious even if she fails to dehorn him.

If the initial pass doesn't dehorn a rider, the jousting take additional passes at each other. If both are dehorned simultaneously, the knights roll for initiative and fight on foot until one yields or is knocked unconscious. If both are knocked unconscious simultaneously, the riders are restored to consciousness and then try again.

The winner of the joust receives as a prize the Eowhisperer Charm, a purse of 500 gp, and any one suit of standard barding with a +1 enhancement bonus (such as +1 *full plate barding*, or +1 *chain shirt barding*, but not +1 *mithral breastplate barding*).

NEW ITEM

Eowhisperer Charm

This magic item, an ornate shawl that fits over the horse's mane and ears, allows a creature with an Intelligence of 1 or 2 to understand the Common tongue as if it were affected by a *speak with animals* spell. This item fills the head body slot. An animal wearing this can be handled as a free action or pushed as a move action, and it eventually begins to exhibit signs of an uncanny intelligence.

Faint divination; CL 1; Craft Wondrous Item, *speak with animals*; Price 1,700 gp, Weight 1 lb.

Ring Tossing

As you pass through the crowded streets, you notice one of the impromptu games that has sprung up during the festival. Off in an alley, several people have pounded a small iron rod into the road. Two men stand over a dozen feet away from it, and take turns throwing metal horseshoes at it, trying to land them around the rod. As the last horseshoes are thrown, one person looks up at they notice you.

Characters playing the game stand 15 feet from the pole and make a ranged touch attacks against AC 9, but with a -4 non-proficiency penalty and a -2 penalty for range. Players get three horseshoes each.

There is no prize for this game, but the man who owns the horseshoes offers to buy drinks for people who play with him, with the result that eventually everyone's skill goes down, but their fun goes up.

Shell Game

You can't help but notice part of the crowd that is unusually silent, huddled around a booth. Stepping closer, you notice that they are observing the man behind the booth slide three upside-down drinking cups around the booth counter in a dizzying array, before finally sliding them into a row. He looks at a young man across from him expectantly, and after a moment's notice, the youth picks the center cup. Clucking his tongue, the man raises it, revealing that it has nothing underneath. Cursing, the young man walks away as the people around him laugh good-naturedly.

"Who's next?" calls the man behind the counter. "Place a coin on the counter, and if you can find it after I'm done hiding it, you'll win double your money back! I tell you this game is so easy I once lost a week's winnings to a blind man. You, sir, you have both your eyes. Why not try your luck?"

If the heroes take up the challenge, they must make a Spot check (DC 15) to locate the coin. Failure by 4 or less means the hero loses track of the

coin, whereas a worse result means he is tricked into picking the wrong one. The worker lets the heroes play twice, taking it easy at first, and then decides to cheat if they play a third time and agree to go for double or nothing.

This time he palms the coin as he moves the cups, removing it from the counter entirely. A Spot check (DC 25) sees through the ruse, but if caught the worker plays off his cheating with a smile, producing the coin behind the ear of a beautiful woman he keeps nearby, joking that he was just giving them a hard time.

Spell Dueling

While magic-users don't have the same tradition of magical duels as the students at Lyceum, because of the heroes' presence, a group of eight mages announce a small competition to see if any of them can stand up against the "famous spell duelists of Lyceum." A crowd of interested townsfolk and awed children assemble to watch the magic at work.

More information on spell dueling is presented in adventure three, *Shelter from the Storm*.

Test of Strength

As you walk through the crowd, you notice several people crowded around a man with a large hammer over his shoulder. Standing by him is a large vertical board with a groove running up the center, with a bell perched at the top. At the bottom of the contraption is a small metal weight at the bottom of the groove, sitting on a small platform, laid lopsided over a level, making the other end of the platform stick upward.

Twirling the hammer, the man calls out, "Come one, come all, and test your might in this competition of strength and prowess! Who among you has the muscular fortitude necessary to swing this mighty mallet hard enough to ring the bell? Provide pure proof of your power to your friends and lady friends for only one gold piece!"

Heroes who take up this challenge make an attack roll against a tiny target with AC 7. The amount of

damage the hero inflicts determines how high the weight rises. The hammer counts as a warhammer, and so nonproficient characters take a -4 penalty, while those with Weapon Focus and similar feats can apply those. The easiest way to win is to swing the warhammer in two hands with Power Attack. A blow that deals 25 points of damage rings the bell. (This damage does not actually harm the device.)

A representative of Lady Niman is here to challenge the party. Sting Watchall (N male human warrior 7, Atk +5 [d8+20 damage]) is a burly man who has served in Lady Namin's military for years, though has seldom seen combat. He enjoys heckling the heroes, but could be swayed to like them, since he is a little envious of the fact that they have seen so much actual combat.

If Sting and a hero both ring the bell, the game's director suggests they try swinging one handed instead.

The Magic is Gone

Wandering through the crowded streets of the festival, you suddenly notice several flashes of light accompanied by loud crackles. Turning, you see a collection of parents and children gasping happily over a series of small fireworks that just finished putting on a show for them. A man in a fake beard and rather gaudy wizard's robes, complete with pointy hat, takes a bow as the show apparently comes to an end.

"Thank you, thank you," he lisps. "Whizbang's Fwabulous Fi'awo'ks will have another showing tonight. Please tell your friends all about it!" Smiling as the crowd begins to disperse, Whizbang gathers his supplies as they depart. Once they're gone he sighs and shakes his head, then looks to you.

"Pardon me, folks," he says without a lisp, "do you know some place to get a nice drink?"

If the heroes get to talking with Whizbang, actually Zacharr Fillip (CN male human bard 2), he complains that he might have to cancel the rest of his shows for the day. All five of the alchemists from

whom he normally buys his supplies have closed down shop for the past three days. Apparently they are all working on something at the king's castle. "Whizbang" just used up the last of his fun incendiaries.

Fizbang needs smokesticks, thunderstones, and tindertwigs for his show later. If the heroes happen to have any, he has 20 gp to spend for them, but he promises to pay them back for anything they can provide. "And besides," he says, "think of the children!"

If the heroes agree, he thanks them profusely, saying they're his saviors. Just as they're about to part ways, Whizbang spins and asks if the heroes happen to have any vials of antitoxin. He always buys some before major festivals because he's found they let him drink more without a hang-over.

Whether the heroes help him or not, Whizbang says he hopes they have a fun evening, and tells them not to drink and play with explosives at the same time.

TOURNAMENT'S END

The final joust takes place at three in the afternoon, after which the winner is expected to ride at the front of a parade through the streets of Bresk. The parade will end after an hour, and the sun will set at six in the evening. If one of the heroes wins, Gallo comes to them in the few minutes it takes for the parade to assemble.

Gallo says that Steppengard is not acting suspiciously at all, such that he's starting to wonder if he was just being paranoid himself. He asks what if anything the heroes have learned. If they warn Gallo that the chef has been replaced and that alchemists have been called in, Gallo suspects that the king might be trying to poison him, or someone else. At this, Gallo smiles.

"It's an old tradition," Gallo says. "When I was growing up my father always had the family exchange plates after we were served but before we ate. It's sort of like when you toast and try to slosh some of your mead into your enemy's cup, so any poison gets shared. I'll ask to do that. If my King is trying to kill me, he'll hesitate."

"Just in case, I'll get one of my chaplains to ward me against poison. They won't have enough magic to completely protect you as well, but I think they can delay the onset of any poison, just in case you're targets too."

As to the possible tampering with the Book of Eight Lands, that could signal that Steppengard is planning some sort of coup, and wants to destroy the book so that no one will be able to back a claim to the throne to oppose him.

However, right now they just have innuendo, rumors, and theories. Circumstantial evidence is not enough for Gallo to act on. Rather than wait for Steppengard to make a mistake, Gallo asks the heroes to look into the situation. He wants them to sneak into the castle to find out what is going on, particularly for hints of some sort of poisoning plot, and to check on the safety of the Book of Eight Lands. Plus, if the fate of Proxy Jinis is still unknown, he wants them to try to rescue him.

Gallo can provide a rough layout of the castle map, though it will be up to the heroes on how to get inside. The castle's normal entrances will of course be watched, and decades of defenses have been developed to ruin normal magical attempts at stealth (such as *hallow* spells with *invisibility purge*, *alarms* set to sound at random archways if the person passing through isn't visibly displaying an appropriate badge, and so on). However, the informant who approached the heroes has given them a hint on how to get inside. The graveyard watch post he mentioned is the same place that the heroes would have emerged from in Act One if they escaped from prison. The heroes can take that route into the castle's prison, and if their informant wasn't trying to trick them, they should be able to get in without being seen.

Assuming the heroes report all this to Gallo, he is protected at dinner with *neutralize poison*, and if the heroes want they could be protected by *delay poison* before they set off to check out the secret entrance to the castle.

If the heroes are oblivious to the clues, you can skip directly to The Dinner (page 63).

The Graveyard (EL 9)

Bresk has several graveyards. The one you seek is old and seldom used, lying a short distance outside the city walls on the banks of the Nasham River. Surrounded with a rusted iron fence, the place is clearly in a state of disrepair. Lichen grows unchecked over gravestones, some of which have toppled over in their neglect. Dead trees sway slowly, covered in a glaze of snow and ice. The sky is thick with clouds, and the air on the ground is thick with the cold, subtle stench of frozen excrement: yet another type of death.

The heroes may be returning here, but even if this is their first time, it should be easy for them to locate the icy ditch that flows out of the sewer tunnel. The tunnel goes in 300 feet before reaching a steel grate, the lock to which has rusted away. Beyond the grate, low groans and hisses sound (unless the heroes already destroyed the frozen zombies in this area when they first escaped from the prison). Animals without the heel trick will not go into the tunnel, and even then will be nervous and skittish.

Before the heroes reach the grate, however, they hear a horrified voice wailing behind them. Gliding out of the wall is a spectral figure shrouded in ashen gray robes, its face flickering between the silent horrified screams of a half dozen different people. If any of the heroes' allies have been captured and not rescued by this point, such as Balan, they see his face here, wailing mutely.

This is a tragedy, an undead monster created by Inquisitor Torrax in a dark ritual by sacrificing the many people whom Steppengard had arrested on suspicion of treason. The tragedy blocks the heroes' retreat out of the tunnel, and it tries to drive them into the zombie-filled latrine. A second tragedy lurks on the far side of the latrine, waiting until after the anticipated clerical undead turning before it attacks.

Tragedies (2, CR 7). 69 hp.

Castle Steppengard Prison



Breaking Into Prison (EL 9+)

The locations here match those of the prison detailed in Act One, except that the heroes will be passing through in the opposite direction.

Zombie Pit (CR 6)

Every 5-foot square of the cave under the prison counts as heavy undergrowth, requiring quadruple normal movement cost, and a creature that passes through one of these squares is attacked by bites, gropes, and slams (+2 melee, 1d6+1 damage). A creature that ends its turn in this area is attacked once for each square it occupies or is adjacent to.

Each square of zombies has AC 5, DR 5/slashing, and 16 hit points, and counts as 4 HD of undead for the purposes of turning. "Turned" frozen zombies cannot flee, but they do stop attacking. Destroyed ones are annihilated, their bodies shattering like ice struck with a hammer.

Area 5: Torture Chamber

Getting into this room requires a Strength check (DC 28) to lift the grate, which unleashes the mohrg Jutras from its hidden chamber. Alternately, the heroes can disable this trigger (Disable Device DC 28), which also allows them to more easily lift the grate (Strength DC 20). If the heroes tipped off Steppengard's guards that they might be trying to approach, an *alarm* spell fills this room, and the door to the hallway is open, so that the guards in Area 2 are ready to respond. Otherwise, the door is locked.

If the heroes were not already prisoners, they find either Balan or Proxy Jinis here, pinned up and tortured, as detailed in Act One, albeit slightly rotted.

Area 4: Supply

This room's contents have been pushed to the wall, and alchemy tables have been set up. Torrax crafted the poison here, and a notebook on a counter has a bookmark set to the recipe for Red Madness. The effects, as described, are confusion, leading to eventual rage and murderous violence. A Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check (DC 23) lets heroes realize that this poison would not have any effect on nobles protected by the Book of Eight Lands.

Area 3: Storage

This room is still simply a storage chamber.

Area 2: Guard Room

If the heroes have not tipped anyone off, this room is unguarded, since there are no prisoners to watch. Instead, Ambassador Serrimus and Inquisitor Torrax lounge here, enjoying a job well done and waiting for news that the nobility of Dassen has destroyed itself. They plan to retreat out the sewer if something goes amiss, or to destroy the evidence with a nice *wall of fire* if they are successful.

Serrimus drums his fingers idly on the side of his chair while he composes a 25-word message for a *sending* back to their contact, Inquisitor Guthwulf. So far he has two options:

"Guthwulf, Serrimus here. Plan successful. Dasseni nobility (almost) annihilated (except x, y, z). Lyceum agents dead/escaped. Check Innenotdar valley. Rumors of new safe passage. Please reply with retrieval location."

"Guthwulf, bad news in Dassen. Plan stopped by (x). (We are suspected./No one suspects us.) Further instructions? Also, check Innenotdar valley. Rumors of new safe passage."

Meanwhile, Torrax smokes a pipe under his inquisitor mask and reads a hand-bound book of humorous prisoner confessions coerced through torture. If caught off guard he is chuckling when the door is opened to this chamber, and his pipe drops out of his mouth as he realizes he is about to be attacked.

If the heroes tipped off Steppengard's men, Torrax instead waits pensively beside the stairs, while four Steppengard knights wait to attack intruders. Serrimus is waiting outside the door at the top of the stairs, and will flee if the fight sounds bad.

Ambassador Serrimus (CR 6). 22 hp.

Inquisitor Torrax (CR 9). 69 hp.

Steppengard Knights (4, CR 4). 35 hp.

Tactics: The knights are loyal to Torrax, having betrayed their country for Ragesian coin. They follow the inquisitor's orders, which in this case were

somewhat strange. He asked them each to hold a pair of onyx gems in their mouths, and to be certain not to stray more than arm's length from him. Thus the knights form a phalanx in front of the inquisitor, and they do not speak.

If three or more of the knights are dead or dying, Torrax uses *death knell* to finish off one still clinging to life, then casts *animate dead*. To give himself time to do this, Torrax may use his wall of fire to blockade the heroes from coming to his side of the room.

Treasure: If the knights are not animated, two 25 gp onyx gems can be retrieved from each of their mouths. A Spellcraft check (DC 18) identifies this as the material component for *animate dead*.

Area 1: Prison Cells

The cells are empty save one. The single imprisoned man is barely recognizable for having been beaten so badly, but as his eyes widen in shock, the heroes realize it is Randas, the chef from the festival. Randas explains he was dragged here by the king's guards shortly after the heroes met him. Torrax interrogated and tortured him briefly, but mentioned something about turning him into an undead, but "not having enough ingredients to be worth the spell."

In classic villain fashion, the inquisitor made a point to taunt the halfling by explaining that the people he would normally be serving were going to be poisoned this evening. Having no combat ability, Randas just asks to be let free. If pressed, he is willing to go try to warn someone.

Aftermath: If the heroes interrogate any of the prisoners, the knights suspect someone is getting poisoned, but they haven't asked any questions. They also heard Torrax speaking with the king's gnomish advisor about the Book of Eight Lands, about which they likewise asked no questions. Torrax is hard to break if captured, but he carries his own undoing. The scroll of *speak with dead* he carries will get the heroes any answers they seek.

THE DINNER

The banquet hall is laid out as follows:

Area 1: Main Hall

The banquet hall has three tables for the nobles and six for their entourages. The central table seats Steppengard, Lady Namin, and Duke Gallo. The two tables flanking him each seat three nobles. A Gallo chaplain and the king's chief defender, the Blade of the Kingsguard, stand behind the king. The rest of the tables are crowded with assistants and bodyguards. Advisor Nina Glibglammer lurks in the northeast corner.

The walls are covered in elaborate tapestries depicting the eight lands of Dassen, four on the east wall, four on the west. The north wall is devoted to King Steppengard and the great battles he fought to unite the kingdom.

Area 2: Stage

A group of actors perform on this stage, but leave before dinner.

Area 3: Actors' Dressing Rooms

The desks here are full of make-up and costumes hang on racks, but the actors are already gone by the time the meal is served.

Area 4: Men's Privy

A secret door (Search DC 25) can be opened by standing on the toilet seat and pressing a button in the ceiling. The secret passage leads into the throne room.

Area 5: Women's Privy

This area has no special features.

Area 6: Servants' Privy

This area has no special features.

Area 7: Throne Room

A *hallow* including *freedom of movement* fills a 40-foot radius centered on the throne.

Area 8: Kitchen

It's too late for the heroes to stop the poison being applied to the food, but they might be able to stop the food being served if they get here quickly enough.

Area 9: Stairs

These lead to barracks, servants quarters, and the prison.

Events at dinner unfold as follows unless the heroes interrupt.

Before dinner, drinks are served, mostly wine and mead, and Duke Gallo invokes an old tradition wherein everyone exchanges dishes with a neighbor of their choice. Steppengard smiles cunningly at this, but obliges. People drink, and a ten-minute comedy play lightens moods.

After the play, the actors file out as the soup course is served, and again everyone shuffles dishes around, with some bemusement. Idle conversation passes for a few minutes, and then servants bring in boar's head and other pork dishes, which again get shuffled around, to no small degree of amusement. People continue to eat.

After this, King Steppengard stands, asks that the doors be closed, and then toasts. He suggests that Duke Gallo start the discussion, since he seems to know the most of what is going on with Ragesia.

Gallo says that his king had mentioned he would present new evidence, since as of right now Gallo is officially charged with assassination. He is about to go on when he notices that some of his fellow nobles are staring off into space blankly and giggling. Just then, for no apparent reason, Lady Timor grabs a steak knife and stabs Lord Dashgoban sitting next to her. At this moment, madness breaks out.

Steppengard and Madness, already insane, are unaffected by the poison, as is Duke Gallo, because he had a cleric cast *neutralize poison* on him. Neither are the Blade of the Kingsgard or Gallo's chaplain affected, because none of them eat the tainted food. But all the other twenty-five people dining around the room begin to fall under the effects of the poison. Most are simply disoriented or panicked, but some attack randomly. Because confused persons always

counterattack, the banquet hall quickly erupts in a massive brawl.

Steppengard begins to laugh, and he pulls out his flail from behind his chair, then attacks Duke Gallo. Once he has killed Gallo, he and his bodyguard retreat to the restroom and take the secret door to the throne room, leaving the nobles behind to kill each other. Steppengard sits on his throne, and does not move, even when his horrified castle guards find him and kill him.

Saving the Day

The timeline of this encounter depends on how swiftly the heroes have broken into the castle, but unless the players are keeping close track of time, assume that by the time they defeat Torrax they are only minutes away from the beginning of the banquet.

The door to the rest of the castle is unlocked, but getting where they need to be to stop the plot will be difficult. The majority of the castle is amazingly unguarded, but a secure ring of checkpoints surround the king wherever he goes. The banquet hall and throne room are only three flights of stairs above the prison and less than fifty feet down the hall, but guards watch the stairs, and it would be nearly impossible to even get within shouting distance of the king and other nobles.

Steppengard Knights (32, CR 4): 35 hp.

Steppengard Prelates (8, CR 7): 59 hp.

Of course, fighting through isn't the only option. If the heroes explain that they are part of Duke Gallo's retinue and can convincingly explain why they were some place they weren't supposed to be, the guards may let them through. The truth, elaborate and contrived though it sounds, is worrisome enough that some of the guards will rush into the banquet to keep anyone from eating, just to be safe.

Invisibility spells could work, though the paths are crowded. *Teleportation*, though painful, would bypass the guard checkpoints, though the sound of the fiery explosion would alert the guards, forcing the heroes to rush before they were taken down.

Banquet Hall

Legend

- 1. Banquet Hall
- 2. Stage
- 3. Actor's Suite
- 4. Men's Restroom
- 5. Women's Restroom
- 6. Servant's Restroom
- 7. Throne Room
- 8. Kitchen
- 9. Stairs to Prison



On the other hand, reaching the royal vault to check on the safety of the Book of Eight Lands is much simpler, requiring going up one flight of stairs, proceeding down a long hallway filled with busy castle servants, and passing through the vault doors, which currently have only one guard, who has been ordered to let people inside after only a cursory look-over. If the heroes can present evidence to that guard that the Book has been tampered with (or if they simply *charm* him), he can grease the wheels and get the guards to let the heroes into the banquet, though under scrutiny.

Somewhat cruelly, if the heroes simply find the *rope trick* and get the Book out, its protections will again extend to the nobility, who will be safe from the poison. Their retainers will still be poisoned, however, and while some deaths will result, this will provide clear evidence of a plot.

Finally, if the heroes can get to the kitchen they can check the food for poison. Only a few of the cooks, who have fallen prey to Madness's *suggestions*, are responsible for the unknowing application of the poison. However, getting to the kitchen still requires getting past the guards.

Reactions: If the heroes get stopped before they get within earshot of the banquet hall they are delayed long enough for the insane brawl to break out. The guards do their best to knock out nobles without killing them, but Madness uses her magic to turn the guards into more victims. At this point the best the heroes can do is defeat Madness, and then try to knock the other crazed nobles out in

order to mitigate the damage.

If the heroes cause a commotion and don't manage to get into the banquet hall, a cautious Duke Gallo hears something going on outside and asks to find out what has happened, and he gets outside of the banquet hall and demands the guards stop attacking his bodyguards. Likewise if the heroes do get into the banquet hall, the nobles want to know what's going on before they are comfortable to eat.

When Steppengard hears the heroes' accusations, he snaps. Unable to hold back his hatred anymore, he screams:

"I, poison? True vile is the poison clutching my heart day and night, damning my blood. And know, all you, my blood is Dassen's blood. You slew my wife, my bright children. You cut my line of blood, and so your king, and so too your homeland, should die as well. This land I created. This land I kill!"

The King, now beyond all reason, grabs his flail from behind his chair and knocks over the table, angling to attack the heroes. His bodyguard, the Blade of the Kingsguard, loyally follows him; if Madness is present, she applauds, giggles wildly, and assumes her monstrous, serpentine form.

King Steppengard of Dassen (CR 10). 57 hp.

Blade of the Kingsguard (CR 6). 65 hp.

Madness, trillith (CR 11). 105 hp.

Duke Gallo (CR 6). 33 hp.

Gallo Chaplain (CR 7). 52 hp.

Lord Dashgoban (CR 5). 33 hp.



Lady Timor (CR 6). 37 hp.

Other Ladies and Lords (5, CR 5). 21 hp. Typical Dasseni

Noble, see Appendix One.

Various bodyguards (18, CR 2). 20 hp. Use Steppengard soldier stats.

Tactics: Madness is playing for keeps here, holding nothing back as she attempts to salvage what's left of her plan. She blocks the doorway with her body, and her first action is to use *confusion*, trying to catch as many people as possible before lashing out at the heroes, hoping to engulf them as the rest of the room kills each other.

Those nobles who aren't affected by Madness flee as best they can, ordering their bodyguards to protect them. Most of the bodyguards balk, however, at the presence of Madness. People running past her get bitten and poisoned with attacks of opportunity, causing some of them to return to the battle in confusion.

King Steppengard is not so flummoxed, however. He immediately starts screaming orders to the dozen of his soldiers in the hall to kill anyone who leaves the banquet room, an order which they reluctantly obey. Their morale for this fight is weak, however, and if Gallo makes it into

the hallway he orders them to attack Madness, and to try to subdue the king.

Steppengard and his bodyguard stride around the room, chasing after nobles with a lion's ferocity. He is in no rush, and he savors each kill, particularly those of Lady Namin, who thought she could replace his wife, and Duke Gallo, whom he still believes responsible for his family's death.

While the king is not an immediate threat to the heroes, if he manages to kill all the nobles, Dassen will fall into chaos.

If Steppengard is dropped, Madness laughs in celebration, then tries to engulf the king to make sure he is torn apart and cannot be raised from the dead. Madness will not retreat, even if the heroes use the Song of Forms.

If Madness is defeated but isn't trapped by the Song of Forms, her body collapses and she screams from her many mouths, then vanishes, a wave of maddening images washing across all present but fading just as quickly. If Madness is truly slain, the heroes and others assisting in her defeat receive her boon.

With Madness's defeat, the king wavers, his insane determination shaken. He is stunned for a minute, during which time his guards knock him down, disarm him, and tie him up. At the end of this time he begins to weep, realizing what he has done. (If Madness was defeated previously in the adventure, the king fights until dropped.)



CONCLUSION

PASSING OF THE CROWN

If Steppengard lives, after a few minutes, the king's subjects gather around and cautiously untie their liege. If the king was killed but his body is in such a state that he could be brought back with *raise dead*, this scene happens in the castle's Chapel of the Aquiline Cross.

Slowly climbing to his feet, Steppengard looks around at the shocked faces of his wounded and frightened subjects. His face is sunken with horror and disbelief. One of his aides hands him his crown, which was knocked away in the battle. He does not put it on, but instead holds it before him like he doesn't know what he's looking at.

"What have I done?" he whispers softly. "I let that ... that creature control me, tie me into a knot with my own grief."

The king puts his face in his hands, and seems to give in to despair. For a long moment everyone is still, waiting to see what will happen next. Then slowly, as though bearing an enormous weight, the king manages to straighten up, and looks at you and Duke Gallo.

"I fear I wronged you most of all. I nearly destroyed our nation, but you saved it."

He looks to his crown, then raises his hand to throw it away.

If the heroes move to stop Steppengard, their simple action convinces the king to have the strength to stay in control of his nation until it is safe. Otherwise, the king renounces his throne, and in the coming hours the other nobles will decide that Lord Iz should become the next king, since he is eldest, has the most central territory, and is in general least-hated.

If Steppengard is dead and unrecoverable, in the aftermath of the battle, while nobles are calming down, one of the surviving nobles (Lady Namin, preferably) picks up the king's crown and offers it to Duke Gallo. Similarly, Gallo takes it, then considers

throwing it away unless the heroes stop him.

Either way, the nobles of Dassen, those who survive at least, owe the heroes a great debt. Dassen tries to convince the heroes that, at this time of danger, asking for compensation is tacky and will hurt the war effort, but if they insist, the royal coffers can provide 10,000 gp to each of the heroes (or enough to get them up to the recommended wealth for characters of their level, if they're lagging). For their services, the heroes are offered minor land holdings, and later in the campaign saga they might marry or succeed their way into position as one of the Council of Nine.

If all of the nobles are slain, the heroes have failed, and they likely end up dead, though some of them may have escaped. Dassen is a lost cause, and in future adventures the safety of Seaquen will not be a foregone conclusion.

AFTERMATH

Whether the heroes have saved Dassen or failed it, the Third Ragesian Army will be arriving within two weeks, barely enough time for the survivors to arrange a defense. However, whatever state the Council of Nine is in, it seems clear that Ragesia was responsible for the attempt to destroy Dassen, and so now officially their nation is at war with the Ragesian Empire.

If the heroes were successful in their mission, their allies in Seaquen decide there's little more they can help with, and call for them to return to Seaquen, to prepare for a new mission. If instead they failed, their superiors decide to send other agents who might fare better than the heroes, and likewise call the heroes back for their next mission.

The weather is growing warmer, and spring is arriving quickly. The Nasham River thaws, though snow still covers the ground. If nothing else, the actual land of Dassen, the soil which is most sacred to its people, is visible again. This is an omen that life still has a chance to prosper.

APPENDIX ONE – COMBAT STATS

This appendix contains all the statblocks from the fourth adventure of the War of the Burning Sky, *The Mad King's Banquet*, to make it easier to find the combat stats you need for a particular encounter without having to flip between pages. Some characters possess new feats, which are marked with

an asterisk and detailed in Appendix Two. New items are detailed with their appropriate characters, and are also compiled in Appendix Three.

These stats are divided into six sections – Allies and Neutral NPCs, Gallo's Forces, Dashgoban's Forces, Timor's Forces, Steppengard's Forces, and Ragesian Forces.

ALLIES AND NEUTRAL NPCs

Balan Bastom

CR 7

An Ostalin man nearing middle age with a thick sandy brown muttonchop beard, Balan dresses in nobleman's finery, and always situates himself to be as comfortable as possible without looking improper. He keeps an exotic leather-bound case beside him, stitched with his family's coat of arms.

Male half-elf bard 7

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2, low-light vision

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Orc, Terran

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 34 (7 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +4; +2 vs. enchantment

Immune sleep

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +5 *+1 shortsword* (d6, 19–20/x2), +0 accordion case used as makeshift flail (d6–1 nonlethal)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4

Spells Known (CL 7th)

3rd (1/day) – *deep slumber* (DC 16), *glibness*

2nd (3/day) – *cure moderate wounds*, *detect thoughts* (DC 15), *misdirection*, *tongues*

1st (4/day) – *charm person* (DC 14), *comprehend languages*, *disguise self*, *silent image*

0 (3/day) – *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16

SQ bardic knowledge +8, bardic music (7/day – countersong, fascinate, inspire courage, inspire competence, suggestion)

Feats Negotiator, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Skills Bluff +15, Diplomacy +26, Intimidate +17, Gather Information +17, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Perform (keyboard) +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +12.

Possessions masterwork accordion in a fine accordion case, noble's outfit, *+1 masterwork shortsword* (jeweled and etched, worth 2,500 gp), *stone of alarm*, 150 pp and 300 gp for bribes

Bardic Music (Su): Seven times per day, Balan can use a bardic music performance to oppose hostile sonic or language-dependent effects, to fascinate onlookers when not in combat, to grant his allies a +1 bonus to attack, damage, and saves against fear, to grant an ally a +2 bonus to a skill check, or to implant a *suggestion* (Will DC 16) into the mind of a creature he has already fascinated. Because nothing is more fascinating than a man pumping away at an accordion.

Remorhaz

N Huge Magical Beast

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.

Languages none

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 19

hp 73 (7 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); burrow 20 ft.

Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.

Melee +13 bite (2d8+12)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +23

Combat Options awesome blow, power attack

Abilities Str 26, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ improved grab, swallow whole, heat

Feats Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Skills Listen +8, Spot +8

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a remorhaz must hit an opponent least one size category smaller than itself with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can attempt to swallow the opponent the following round.

Swallow Whole (Ex): When a remorhaz begins its turn with a grappled opponent in its mouth, it can swallow that opponent with a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 2d8+12 points of bludgeoning damage plus 8d6 points of fire damage per round from the remorhaz's gizzard. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal 25 points of damage to the gizzard (AC 15). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. A Huge remorhaz's interior can hold 2 Large, 4 Medium, or 8 Small opponents.

Heat (Ex): An enraged remorhaz generates heat so intense that anything touching its body takes 8d6 points of fire damage. Creatures striking a remorhaz with natural attacks or unarmed attacks are subject to this damage, but creatures striking with melee weapons do not take damage from the remorhaz's heat. This heat can melt or char weapons; any weapon that strikes a remorhaz is allowed a DC 18 Fortitude save to avoid destruction.

CR 7

Typical Dasseni Noble

Human aristocrat 6

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc, Terran

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 21 (6 HD)

Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Immune divination, mind-affecting

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +3 dagger (d4-1, 19-20/x2) or +3 shortsword (d6-1, 19-20/x2)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 8, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13

Feats Negotiator, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Knowledge - Nobility & Royalty), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +19, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Perform (varies) +10, Sense Motive +13.

Possessions Eight Lands boon, noble's outfit

Eight Lands Boon (Su): An aged book lies in the vaults of Steppengard's Castle in Bresk, which magically tracks the complete genealogy of the king and the heads of the eight lands of Dassen. This book minor artifact records who is the current ruler of the country and each of the lords of the eight lands, and provides a boon to each of those people, as well as their spouses and their children with those spouses. As long as they are touching soil from Dassen, each such affected noble is protected by *mind blank*, rendering them immune to all attempts to detect, influence, or read their emotions or thoughts. The beneficiaries of this boon can choose to lower it willingly. This effect's caster level is 15th.

According to the book, there is no line of succession after Steppengard. Changing the book manually requires the approval of all of the current lords of the eight lands.

CR 5

Pitchlings

These slender fey step nimbly through the forest, naked except for a coating of black pitch smeared across their bodies. They carry jagged longbows, but no arrows, though rows of long, sharp spines stick out from their backs. As one trains its bow on you, it snaps a spine off from its shoulder and nocks it like an arrow.

CN Medium Fey (fire)

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +9, Spot +9, low light vision

Languages Sylvan

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 13

hp 18 (4 HD); **DR** 5/cold iron

Fort +2, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

Immune fire; **Weak** cold

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +2 bowspikes (d4, 19–20/x2)

Ranged +8 masterwork spiked longbow (d8, x3), point blank shot, precise shot

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2

Combat Gear greater alchemist fire x4

Combat Options spell-like abilities

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6)

At will – *entangle* (DC 13), *ghost sound*, *speak with plants*

3/day – *deep slumber* (DC 15), *flame arrow*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14

Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Skills Craft (alchemy) +7, Hide +12, Listen +9, Move Silently +12, Spot +9, Survival +9

Possessions masterwork spiked longbow (functions as a longbow, but can also be used as a two-handed melee weapon that deals dagger damage)

New Item – Greater Alchemist Fire: These wooden flasks of alchemist fire are only created by pitchlings, though an alchemist with access to freshly harvested pitch from the skin of a pitchling could create such items (Craft (alchemy) DC 30). They function identically to normal alchemist fire, except that they do twice as much damage (2d6 on a direct hit, or 2 splash). Market value – 100 gp.

CR 3

Typical Light Warhorse

N Large animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages –

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 22 (3 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

Speed 60 ft.

Melee 2 hooves +4 (1d4+3) and bite –1 (1d3+1)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +9

Abilities Str 16, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Feats Endurance, Run

Skills Listen +4, Spot +4

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a light warhorse is up to 230 pounds; a medium load, 231–460 pounds; and a heavy load, 461–690 pounds. A light warhorse can drag 3,450 pounds.

Typical Heavy Warhorse

N Large animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +4

Languages –

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 30 (4 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 hooves +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Abilities Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Feats Endurance, Run

Skills Listen +5, Spot +4

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

Typical Jousting

Male human fighter 4

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, dwarf

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 35 (4 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee +9 masterwork lance (d8+5, ×3) +8 masterwork flail (d8+3, ×2)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Abilities Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +4, Ride +10

Possessions full plate, heavy steel shield, masterwork flail, masterwork lance, heavy warhorse, military saddle, scale mail barding

Reaper, Stalwart Mount

N Large animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +4

Languages –

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural); evasion (if Grim is within 5 feet)

hp 50 (11 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 hooves +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Abilities Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Feats Endurance, Run

Skills Listen +5, Spot +4

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301-600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601-900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

Tricks (Ex): Attack any creature, come, defend, down, guard, heel, seek, stay, work

CR 4 Grim Morgensen

Behind a day's worth of stubble watch the wary eyes of this dark-haired Ragesian. Dressed like one of the famed Chatham mounted archers, he looks completely at ease on his horse. His left leg is bent awkwardly, as if from an old wound that healed poorly.

Male ranger 2/fighter 6

NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common, Goblin

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 20

hp 62 (8 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares – injured leg); Ride 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee +10/+5 masterwork lance (d8+1, ×3), or +10/+5 masterwork spiked gauntlet (d4+1)

Ranged +14/+9 +1 composite longbow [+1 Str] (d8+4, 19–20/×3), point blank, precise, and rapid shot

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +9

Combat Gear two tanglefoot bags, four flasks of acid, four alchemist fire

Abilities Str 13, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ favored enemy (goblinoid +2), wild empathy +1

Feats Equine Stalwart*, Improved Critical (composite longbow), Mounted Combat, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Ride), Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow), Weapon Specialization (composite longbow)

Skills Handle Animal +10, Heal +6, Listen +6, Ride +18, Spot +6, Survival +6

Possessions +1 composite longbow [+1 Str], +1 chain shirt, ring of protection +1, handy haversack, masterwork spiked gauntlet, masterwork lance, masterwork leather barding

Equine Stalwart (Ex): Grim can handle his mount Reaper as a free action and push it as a move action. He gains a +4 bonus to all Handle Animal checks with it.

Silvia Cossala

CR 8

A statuesque blonde female knight sneers a taunt in your direction, holding her gauntlet in a posture that you suspect would be a vulgar hand gesture if it had more articulation. Her hair is short, and behind her shoulders she wears a mantle of bull horns.

Female human fighter 8

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, dwarf

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21

hp 65 (8 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee +16/+11 masterwork lance (d8+8, ×3), or +13/+8 masterwork battleaxe (d8+4, ×3)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12

Combat Options power attack

Abilities Str 19, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Elite Training* (lance), Improved Mounted Strafe*, Jousting Blow*, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Power Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)

Skills Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Ride +14

Possessions +1 full plate, heavy shield, +1 lance, masterwork battleaxe, *mantle of bull's strength* +2, military saddle, banded mail barding

GALLO'S FORCES

Duke Michael Gallo

CR 6

Male human middle-aged elite aristocrat 6

NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc, Terran

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 33 (6 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Immune divination, mind-affecting

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +3 dagger (d4-1, 19-20/×2) or +3 shortsword (d6-1, 19-20/×2)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16

Feats Negotiator, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Knowledge - History), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Skills Bluff +12, Diplomacy +23, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Perform (comedy) +12, Sense Motive +13.

Possessions Eight Lands boon, *ring of friend shielding* (other ring is worn by bodyguard), noble's outfit

Note: When playing the board game *Conquest*, Gallo has a +14 bonus in the first two rounds, and +24 thereafter.

Commander Hertiage

CR 7

Tall for a dwarf, this commander wears dull plate armor and a helmet with a red phoenix flaring its wings outward on the back. He has trimmed his russet beard short enough that you can see an old white scar on his throat – an arrow wound that probably should have killed him.

Male dwarf commander 7

N Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22

hp 49 (7 HD), Diehard

Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +8 masterwork warhammer (d8+2, ×3)

Ranged +5 grenade-like alchemist fire (d6 for two rounds)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +7

Combat Options leadership performance, direct orders

Combat Gear six *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of resist energy (fire)*, five flasks of alchemist fire

Abilities Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14

SQ battle cry, initiative bonus

Feats Diehard, Endurance, Fearless Leader, Iron Will,

Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader

Skills Craft (weapons) +10, Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +12, Intimidate +12, Perform (oratory) +12, Ride +11

Possessions +1 full plate, +1 heavy shield, masterwork warhammer

Leadership Performances (Ex): Three times per day, Hertiage can inspire or direct his allies (within 40 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +1 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect the commander himself.

Direct Orders (Ex): As a swift action each round Hertiage can choose to grant all allies within 40 ft. a +2 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He can also spend an immediate action to replace his current orders with a different type of bonus.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits.
- Attack rolls while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Battle Cry (Ex): Once per hour as a free action, Hertiage can shout an iconic battle cry (such as "Stick to The Plan!") to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Initiative Bonus (Ex): Allies within 40 ft. of Hertiage gain a +2 bonus to initiative checks.

Gallo Soldier

Male dwarf fighter 2
 LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1, darkvision
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19
hp 22 (2 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1; +2 vs. poison, spells, spell-like abilities

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee +6 masterwork waraxe (d10+2, ×3) or +6 masterwork shortsword (d6+2, 19–20/×2), or +5 glaive (d10+3, ×3)
Ranged +4 masterwork heavy crossbow (d10, 19–20/×2)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*

Combat Options power attack

Abilities Str 15, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6
Feats Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (warhammer)
Skills Climb –2, Craft (weapons) +5
Possessions half-plate, heavy shield, masterwork waraxe, masterwork heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, masterwork shortsword

Tactics: Gallo's soldiers are well-regimented, trained to focus their efforts against a few foes at a time, rather than each soldier picking his own opponent. Gallo calls this, "The Plan," and a soldier who gets too hungry for glory will often get shouted at with, "Stick to The Plan!" The other common shout is "Duck!" typically used when enemy mages attack with an area of effect spell.

Remember that, if readying their glaives against a cavalry charge, the dwarves must first unready their shields, and will put their shields back on before returning to combat.

CR 2

Gallo Chaplain

Female human cleric 7
 NG Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Dodge, Mobility
hp 52 (7 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), 30 ft. with *longstrider*
Melee +4 masterwork gauntlet (d3)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5
Combat Gear wand of *cure moderate wounds* (40 charges), wand of *bless* (10 charges), wand of *cause fear* (10 charges), scroll of *prayer* ×2, scroll of *dispel magic* ×2
Special Actions turn undead (3/day, 1d20+2), healing emanation (7/day, 10-ft. radius, heals 1 damage)
Spells Prepared (CL 7th, DC 13 + spell level; CL 8th with healing spells)
 4th – *dimension door*^D, *restoration* ×2
 3rd – *cure serious wounds*^D, *magic circle against evil* ×2, *prayer*
 2nd – *cure moderate wounds*^D, *remove paralysis*, *resist energy* ×2, *shield other*
 1st – *bless*, *longstrider*^D, *sanctuary* ×3, *shield of faith*
 0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison* ×3, *virtue*

D Domain spell Domains Healing, Travel

Abilities Str 10, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10
SQ turn undead, spontaneous casting (cure spells), travel domain freedom (7 rounds/day)
Feats Dodge, Mobility, Tower Shield Proficiency, Vow of Healing*
Skills Concentration +12, Heal +13, Knowledge (religion) +10
Possessions full plate, tower shield

Tactics: Just in case she has to use *dimension door* to rescue an injured warrior, the chaplain casts *resist energy (fire)* before battle, gaining fire resistance 20, which should be enough to safely teleport 400 feet. She also uses *longstrider* so she can more easily reach the wounded. When combat begins, her first action is usually to cast *sanctuary*.

CR 7

DASHGOBAN'S FORCES

Lord Dashgoban

Male middle-aged dwarf arisocrat 6

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init -2; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Dwarven, Giant, Orc

AC 12, touch 8, flat-footed 12

hp 33 (6 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** +5, +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

Immune divination, mind-affecting

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +5 masterwork mace (d8-1) or +3 shortsword (d6-1, 19-20/x2)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 8, Dex 7, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 12

SQ dwarf traits

Feats Negotiator, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Weapon Focus (mace)

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +21, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Sense Motive +12.

Possessions Eight Lands boon, masterwork chain shirt, masterwork mace, noble's outfit

CR 5

Dashgoban Knight

Male human fighter 4

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 35 (4 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee +9 masterwork lance (d8+5, x3) or +8 masterwork battleaxe (d8+3, x3)

Ranged +5 heavy crossbow (d10, 19-20/x2)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Combat Gear 2 potions of *cure light wounds*, potion of *cure moderate wounds*, oil of *magic weapon*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (lance), Weapon Specialization (lance)

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +4, Ride +10

Possessions full plate, heavy steel shield, masterwork battleaxe, masterwork lance, four daggers, two javelins, net, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 2 days of rations, heavy warhorse, military saddle, scale mail barding, 10 gp

CR 4

Woody, Rust-Wrangler

Male old human expert 6

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common

AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 12

hp 35 (6 HD), Diehard

Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +2 long prod (d4–2 nonlethal, reach)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +2

Abilities Str 6, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 16

Feats Animal Affinity, Diehard, Endurance, Skill Focus (Handle Animal)

Skills Craft (armor) +9, Handle Animal +20, Heal +11, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Ride +10

Possessions Granule the mighty rust monster, hide armor, +1 hide armor barding for Granule, circlet of persuasion (made of wood, not silver)

Granule, Advanced Rust Monster

CR 6

N Large Aberration

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +12, darkvision 60, scent

Languages –

AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21

hp 96 (15 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +12

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.

Melee +14 touch attack antennae (rust) and +10 bite (d6+4)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +19

Combat Options rust

Abilities Str 18, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8

Feats Alertness, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Track, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Listen +12, Spot +12

Rust (Ex): Granule's successful touch attack with his antennae causes the target metal to corrode, falling to pieces and becoming useless. Magic items made of metal must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 25) or be dissolved. Granule has been trained to target armor first.

Tricks (Ex): Granule has been trained for hunting, and has the tricks attack, down, fetch, heel, seek, and track.

CR 5 TIMOR'S FORCES

Lady Timor

CR 6

Female human wizard 5/aristocrat 2

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Common, Dwarven, Terran

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

hp 37 (7 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +2 dagger (d4–1, 19–20/x2)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2

Combat Gear scroll of cold-substituted *fireball* x4, scroll of cold-substituted *burning hands* (CL 5) x4

Combat Options warmage strike (3d6 cold damage, range 30 ft., 5-ft. radius burst, Ref DC 17 half)

Spells Prepared (CL 5th)

3rd – *fireball* (cold, DC 17)

2nd – *flaming sphere* (cold, DC 16) x2, still *charm person* (DC 14)

1st – *burning hands* (cold, DC 15) x3, *endure elements*
0 – *light* x2, *message* x2

Abilities Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 13

Feats Energy Substitution (cold), Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Still Spell, Warmage Strike*

Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +17, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +11, Spellcraft +13, Sense Motive +9

Possessions spellbook (listed spells, plus *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *dispel magic*, *see invisibility*, *arcane lock*, *continual flame*, *eagle's splendor*, *resist energy*, *enlarge person*, *magic missile*, *reduce person*, *shield*, *sleep*, *identify*), combat gear, dagger.

Energy Substitution (Ex): When Lady Timor prepares spells, she can replace any energy descriptor with [cold]. The spell now deals cold damage instead of its normal type, but is otherwise identical. This does not increase the spell's level.

Timor War Mage

Female human wizard 5

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

hp 24 (5 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 dagger (d4-1, 19-20/x2)

Ranged +3 ranged touch wamage strike (3d6 cold damage), 60 ft.

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1

Combat Gear wand of *fireball* (5th level, 10 charges), scroll of *dispel magic* x2, scroll of *slow* x2, scroll of *haste* x2

Spells Prepared (CL 5th)

3rd – *fireball* (DC 16)

2nd – *flaming sphere* x2 (DC 15), *see invisibility*

1st – *magic missile* x3, *shield*

0 – *light* x2, *message* x2

Abilities Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 13

Feats Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Wamage Strike*

Skills Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +11, Listen +4, Spellcraft +13, Spot +4

Possessions spellbook (listed spells, plus *sleet storm*, *dispel magic*, *invisibility*, *web*, *continual flame*, *resist energy*, *grease*, *color spray*, *sleep*, *identify*), combat gear, dagger.

CR 5

Tupof Dzequifs, Elder Xorn

N Large Outsider (Extraplanar, Earth)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +18, Spot +22, all-around vision, darkvision 60, tremorsense 60

Languages Common, Terran

AC 25, touch 9, flat-footed 25

hp 130 (15 HD), DR 5/bludgeoning

Fort +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9

Immune cold, fire; **Resist** electricity 10

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); burrow 20 ft.

Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.

Melee +21 bite (4d8+7) and +19 three claws (d6+3)

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +26

Combat Options awesome blow, great cleave, power attack

Abilities Str 25, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10

SQ all-around vision, earth glide

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness

Skills Hide +14, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +18, Listen +18, Move Silently +18, Search +22, Spot +22, Survival+18

All-Around Vision (Ex): A xorn cannot be flanked.

Earth Glide (Ex): A xorn can glide through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth except metal as easily as a fish swims through water. Its burrowing leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripple or other signs of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a burrowing xorn flings the xorn back 30 feet, stunning the creature for 1 round unless it succeeds on a DC 15 Fortitude save.

CR 8

STEPPENGARD FORCES

Steppengard Commander

CR 5

Male human commander 4/fighter 1

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; Senses Listen -1, Spot -1

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Dodge

hp 32 (5 HD)

Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +9 masterwork flail (d8+3, 19-20/x2)

Ranged +3 grenade-like acid flask (d6)

Base Atk +4; Grp +7

Combat Options leadership performance, direct orders

Combat Gear two *potion of cure serious wounds*, five flasks of acid

Abilities Str 16, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14

SQ battle cry, initiative bonus

Feats Dodge, Fearless Leader, Iron Will, Leadership

Performance, Maneuver Leader, Weapon Focus (flail)

Skills Craft (weapons) +7, Diplomacy +9, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +10, Perform (oratory) +10, Ride +8

Possessions +1 *full plate*, +1 *heavy shield*, masterwork flail

Leadership Performances (Ex): Three times per day, the commander can inspire or direct his allies (within 40 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies who hear it +1 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.
- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 40 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect the commander himself.

Direct Orders (Ex): As a swift action each round the commander can choose to grant all allies within 40 ft. a +2 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits.
- Attack rolls while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one).
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Battle Cry (Ex): Once per hour as a free action, the commander can shout an iconic battle cry (such as "You weren't *trained* how to die, soldiers!") to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Initiative Bonus (Ex): Allies within 40 ft. of the commander gain a +1 bonus to initiative checks.

Steppengard Soldier

Male human fighter 2

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18

hp 20 (2 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +6 masterwork flail (d8+2, 19–20/x2)

Ranged +4 masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str] (d8+2, x3), or +3 grenade-like acid flask (d6)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Combat Gear potion of *cure serious wounds*, five flasks of acid

Abilities Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Feats Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (flail)

Skills Handle Animal +4, Ride +6

Possessions banded mail, heavy shield, masterwork flail, masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str] with 20 arrows

CR 2

Steppengard Prelate

Female dwarf cleric 7

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3, darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19

hp 59 (7 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8; +2 vs. poison, spells, spell-like abilities

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +9 masterwork flail (d8+2)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +7

Combat Gear wand of *cure moderate wounds* (50 charges)

Special Actions turn undead (1/day, 1d20–2), turn air creatures or command earth creatures (1/day, 1d20–2)

Spells Prepared (CL 7th, DC 13 + spell level; CL 8th with healing spells)

4th – *cure critical wounds*⁰, *summon monster IV*

3rd – *cure serious wounds*⁰, *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against chaos* ×2

2nd – *calm emotions*, *cure moderate wounds*⁰, *remove paralysis*, *resist energy*, *silence*

1st – *bles*, *command*, *cure light wounds*⁰, *detect chaos*, *protection from chaos* ×2

0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison* ×3, *virtue*

D Domain spell Domains Earth, Healing

Abilities Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 6

SQ spontaneous casting (cure spells), dwarf traits

Feats Martial Weapon Proficiency (flail), Toughness, Weapon Focus (flail)

Skills Concentration +13, Heal +13

Possessions full plate, light shield, masterwork flail

CR 7

Steppengard Knight

Male human fighter 4

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18

hp 35 (4 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Ride 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee +9 masterwork heavy flail (d10+6, 19–20/x2) or +8 masterwork lance (d8+3)

Ranged +6 heavy crossbow (d10, 19–20/x2) or +5 ranged touch (d6, acid flask)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *oil of magic weapon*, 4 acid flasks

Abilities Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Power Attack, Trample, Weapon Focus (heavy flail), Weapon Specialization (heavy flail)

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +4, Ride +10

Possessions full plate, masterwork heavy flail, dagger, four flasks of acid, masterwork lance, masterwork heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 2 days of rations, heavy warhorse, military saddle, scale mail barding, 10 gp

CR 4

Pixis the Assassin

Female human rogue 6/monk 2

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +11, darkvision 60 ft. with potion

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 15 (19 with *mage armor*), touch 15, flat-footed 15

hp 49 (8 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8; evasion

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee +9 unarmed strike (d6), or +7/+7 flurry of blows (d6)

Ranged +9 masterwork shuriken (d3), or +7/+7 flurry of shuriken (d3)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5

Combat Gear *potion of darkvision* x2, *potion of mage armor* x4, *potion of magic fang* x4, *wand of detect magic* (35 charges)

Combat Options combat reflexes, stunning fist (3/day, DC 16), sneak attack +3d6

Abilities Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Stunning Fist, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed)

Skills Climb +9, Escape Artist +14, Hide +14, Jump +9, Listen +11, Move Silently +14, Open Locks +14, Search +12, Spot +11, Tumble +14, Use Magic Device +8

Possessions masterwork shuriken, *boots of striding and springing*, *cloak of resistance +1*

CR 8

Jutras, Mohrg

CR 8

An emaciated ghoul with a long barbed tongue crawls from the shadows with eerie swiftness, wearing noble regalia from hundreds of years ago.

CE Medium Undead

Init +8; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +15, darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Dodge, Mobility

hp 91 (14 HD)

Fort +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +12 slam (d6+7) and +12 melee touch tongue (paralysis)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +12

Abilities Str 21, Dex 19, Con —, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10

SQ undead traits, improved grab, paralyzing touch, create spawn

Feats Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility

Skills Climb +13, Hide +21, Listen +11, Move Silently +21, Spot +15, Swim +9

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Jutras must hit a Medium or smaller creature with his slam attack. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Paralyzing Touch (Su): Jutras lashes out with his tongue in combat. An opponent the tongue touches must succeed on a DC 17 Fortitude save or become paralyzed for 1d4 minutes.

Create Spawn (Su): Creatures killed by Jutras rise after 1d4 days as zombies under his control. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Brakken the Blitzer

CR 7

Minotaur barbarian 2/ranger 1

CN Large Monstrous Humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +7, Spot +5, darkvision 60, scent

Languages Common, Giant

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20, uncanny dodge

hp 67 (9 HD)

Fort +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.

Melee +15 masterwork large greatsword (2d8+7, 19–20/x2), or +11 two claws (d6+7) and +6 bite (d6+3), +2 damage vs. dwarves

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +18

Combat Options powerful charge (4d6+7), power attack, reckless offense, rage (7 rounds)

Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength*

Abilities Str 20, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ favored enemy (dwarves +2)

Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Reckless Offense, Track, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Intimidate +2, Jump +17, Listen +7, Search +2, Spot +5

Possessions masterwork large greatsword

Powerful Charge (Ex): When charging, Brakken can make a single gore attack with a +14 attack bonus that deals 4d6+7 points of damage.

Reckless Offense (Ex): Brakken can take a –4 penalty to AC to gain a +2 bonus to his attack rolls for one round. He typically uses this as an excuse to Power Attack for more.

Rip, Snort, Gut, and Buelah

CR 6

Troll barbarian 1

CN Large Giant

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +6, darkvision 90, low-light vision, scent

Languages Common, Giant

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20

hp 83 (7 HD)

Fort +14, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.

Melee +11 two claws (d6+7) and +6 bite (d6+3)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +14

Combat Options rend (2d6+10), rage (12 rounds)

Combat Gear two *potions of resist energy (fire)*, two *potions of resist energy (acid)*

Abilities Str 25, Dex 16, Con 25, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ regeneration 5

Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Track

Skills Listen +5, Spot +6

Possessions +1 *large breastplate*

Rend (Ex): If a troll hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+9 points of damage.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and acid deal normal damage to a troll. If a troll loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Nikkhuar, Wyrmling Red Dragon

CR 5

CE Medium Dragon (Fire)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +10, Spot +10, darkvision 120, keen vision, blindsense 60

Languages Draconic, Dwarven

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16

hp 59 (7 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

Immune fire, sleep, paralysis

Weak cold

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); fly 150 ft. (poor)

Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.

Melee +10 bite (d8+3) and +5 two claws (d6+1) and +5 two wings (d4+1)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10

Combat Options breath weapon

Abilities Str 17, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10

Feats Blind-Fight, Flyby Attack, Multiattack

Skills Appraise +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (local) +10, Listen +10, Spot +10

Possessions handy haversack strapped across his chest (contains 1600 gp), control amulet

Breath Weapon (Su): 30-ft. cone, 2d10 fire (Ref DC 15 half), every 1d4 rounds.

Tactics: Nikkhuar is generally content to fly around strafing with his breath weapon, but the young dragon has a particular hatred for invisible foes, since the handler who is raising him uses *invisibility*, so that Nikkhuar will not be able to take revenge on the man once he is free. Around his neck, Nikkhuar wears a small platinum control amulet, which forces him to obey the orders of the man who raised him. The chain will break when Nikkhuar grows old enough and large enough, however.

Criosphinx

N Large Magical Beast

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +1, darkvision 60, low-light vision

Languages Common, Draconic, Sphinx

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21

hp 85 (10 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Fly 60 ft. (poor)

Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.

Melee +15 gore (2d6+6) and +10 two claws (d6+3)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +20

Combat Options cleave, flyby attack, power attack

Abilities Str 23, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11

SQ pounce, rake

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Power Attack

Skills Intimidate +8, Listen +11, Spot +1

Possessions *hand of the mage*, *bracers of armor +1*, golden headdresses and necklaces worth 700 gp

Pounce (Ex): A criosphinx can make a full attack when it charges, including two rakes.

Rake (Ex): +15 melee, 1d6+3

CR 7

Nashara, Gynosphinx

N Large Magical Beast

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +17, Spot +17, darkvision 60, low-light vision

Languages Common, Draconic, Sphinx

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 20

hp 52 (8 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +8

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); Fly 60 ft. (poor)

Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.

Melee +12 two claws (d6+5, counts as a magic weapon)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +16

Combat Options cleave, flyby attack, power attack, pounce, rake, spell-like abilities

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): (CL 14)

3/day – clairaudience/clairvoyance, detect magic, read magic, see invisibility.

1/day – comprehend languages, locate object, dispel magic, remove curse, legend lore.

1/week – *symbol of death*, *symbol of fear*, *symbol of insanity*, *symbol of pain*, *symbol of persuasion*, *symbol of sleep*, and *symbol of stunning* (CL 18, DC 22); each symbol remains a maximum of one week once scribed.

Abilities Str 19, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 19

Feats Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Iron Will

Skills Bluff +15, Concentration +12 (+16 to cast defensively), Diplomacy +8, Disguise +4, Intimidate +13, Listen +17, Sense Motive +15, Spot +17

Possessions *amulet of mighty fists +1*

Pounce (Ex): Nashara can make a full attack when she charges, including two rakes.

Rake (Ex): +12 melee, 1d6+3.

CR 8

Kelkin Thravanvost

CR 9

A magnificent silver mantle hangs over this middle-aged dwarf's shoulders, and a gleaming silver skullcap rests on his head. His black beard is woven with coins bearing the faces of seven generations of kings. His silver-trimmed black cloak looks stiff, like it is made of stone.

Male middle-aged dwarf evoker 9

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2, darkvision 60

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Giant, Orc, Sphinx

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13

hp 42 (9 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee none

Ranged none

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Combat Gear wand of hold portal (9 charges), potion of cure light wounds ×9, potion of invisibility

Combat Options warmage strike (5-ft. radius burst, 30-ft. range, 4d6 earth damage, Ref DC 22 half)

Spells Prepared (CL 9th)

5th – cloudkill (DC 20), cone of cold (DC 22)

4th – charm monster (DC 19), lesser globe of invulnerability, secure shelter, wall of fire

3rd – dispel magic, fireball ×3 (DC 20), wind wall

2nd – flaming sphere ×3 (DC 19), glitterdust, shatter (DC 19), still charm person (DC 16)

1st – alarm, magic missile ×5, shield

0 – daze ×3 (DC 15), detect magic

Prohibited Schools Illusion, Necromancy

Abilities Str 9, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 20, Wis 14, Cha 7

SQ dwarf traits

Feats Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Concentration), Still Spell, Spell Focus (evocation), Student of War^B, Warmage Strike*

Skills Concentration +17, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Spellcraft +19

Possessions skullcap of intellect +2, +1 mithral buckler, ring of sustenance and protection +1 (market value 4,500 gp), permanently glamered cloak that looks tough and impenetrable

Spellbook listed spells plus blink, continual flame, detect secret doors, erase, explosive runes, grease, identify, hold person, hold portal, locate object, protection from arrows, protection from energy, reduce person, rope trick, sepia snake sigil, shout, stonewood, transmute rock to mud, wall of stone, and whispering wind; the spellbook also contains the three pages of mnemonic enhancer, which Kelkin transcribed before he realized how utterly useless it is.

Student of War (Ex): Kelkin can spontaneously modify any spell he casts, extending its casting time as if he were a sorcerer applying a metamagic feat to the spell. When he does so, if the spell affects three or more creatures, the spell's save DC is increased by +1.

Vellin, Raven Familiar: 21 hp. Fly 40 ft. (average). Atk +8 (d2–5)

Creegshuff, Heavy Warhorse: 30 hp.

Konigsmarshal Malkan

CR 12

Saddled astride a beautiful young warhorse in chain barding, this weathered old man looks out upon the battlefield with a relaxed, knowing nod. Dressed in a heavy winter uniform, the horseman's only apparent armor is a oversize mithral archery bracer serving as a buckler. He holds an ornate but mechanically complicated crossbow, and wears his badge of office – a golden flail – at his hip.

Male old human commander 12

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 19

hp 58 (12 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +5 golden flail (d8–4, 19–20/x2)

Ranged +12/+7 +1 heavy repeating crossbow (d10+1 plus 1d6 cold, 17–20/x2), point blank shot, precise shot

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +6

Combat Options leadership performance, direct orders

Combat Gear four *potions of cure light wounds*

Abilities Str 5, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 22

SQ battle cry, initiative bonus, chain of command, equine stalwart

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (heavy repeating crossbow), Fearless Leader, Equine Stalwart, Improved Critical (heavy repeating crossbow), Iron Will, Leadership Performance, Maneuver Leader, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (heavy repeating crossbow)

Skills Bluff +21, Diplomacy +25, Handle Animal +21, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +17, Perform (oratory) +21, Ride +16, Sense Motive +16

Possessions *cloak of charisma* +2, *gloves of dexterity* +2, +1 *mithral chain shirt*, +1 *mithral buckler*, *ring of deflection* +1, *amulet of natural armor* +1, golden flail, +1 *heavy repeating crossbow* w/4 clips (20 bolts), 10 additional clips (50 bolts) on horse's saddle, +2 *chain shirt horse barding*, *fimbulwinter charm*

Leadership Performances (Ex): Three times per day, Malkan can inspire or direct his allies (within 50 ft.) in one the following ways.

- Give a one-minute speech to grant himself and allies

who hear it +2 to attack and weapon damage rolls and saves against fear effects, lasting for the first 5 rounds of combat in the next hour.

- Give a one-minute speech and make a Perform check. He and all his allies can use the result of his Perform check in place of the first saving throw they make against fear in the next hour.
- As a standard action, grant every ally within 50 ft. an immediate move action. This does not affect Malkan himself.
- As a standard action, grant a single ally within 50 ft. an immediate extra attack at its full base attack bonus.
- As a standard action, make a Perform check. Every ally within 50 ft. currently under the influence of a fear effect makes a new save against that effect, using your Perform check in place of their Will save. Malkan can only do this if he himself did not fail his save against the same effect.

Direct Orders (Ex): As a swift action each round Malkan can choose to grant all allies within 50 ft. a +6 bonus to one of the following types of checks until his next turn. He can also spend an immediate action to replace his current orders with a different type of bonus.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits.
- Attack rolls while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves (choose one)
- Grapple checks.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.

Battle Cry (Ex): Once per hour as a free action, Malkan can shout an iconic battle cry (such as "What king do you serve?," to which his men reply in unison, "Steppengard!") to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Initiative Bonus (Ex): Allies within 50 ft. of Malkan gain a +3 bonus to initiative checks.

Chain of Command (Ex): Malkan can expend one of his leadership performances to let a subordinate be able to use it instead, for one hour. This loaned performance functions as if Malkan himself had used it.

Equine Stalwart (Ex): Malkan can handle his mount Ahram as a free action and push it as a move action. He gains a +4 bonus to all Handle Animal checks with it.

New Item – Fimbulwinter Charm: A silvery cord threaded with several rings of sapphire-studded silver rings, when wrapped around the handle of a weapon, this charm can cause the weapon to deal +1d6 cold damage with each strike. However, attacks that deal cold damage deal 1 additional point of damage to the weapon's wielder.

Faint evocation; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms & Armor, *ice storm*; Price 3000 gp; weight –.

Ahram, Equine Stalwart

N Large animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +5, **Spot** +4

Languages –

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural); evasion (if Malkan is within 5 feet)

hp 41 (9 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 hooves +6 (1d6+4) and bite +1 (1d4+2)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Abilities Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Feats Endurance, Run

Skills Listen +5, Spot +4

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301-600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601-900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

Tricks (Ex): Attack any creature, come, defend, down, guard, heel, stay, work

Madness

CR 11

The body of the grinning gnome woman slowly fades away as a massive coiling form materializes where she once stood. Her smile is the last part of her to vanish, just as the monstrous form snaps its multiple viper jaws. Before you slithers a roiling swarm of serpents, each bigger around than a man's torso. Venom glistens on their fangs, and light reflects squamously across their scales, like the interior of the swarm is impossibly deep. You look upon it, and you know its name is Madness.

NE Huge aberration (trillith, incorporeal)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen -2, Spot -2; darkvision 60 ft.

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 18; **Dodge**, **Mobility**; **miss chance** 20%

hp 105 (11 HD); fast healing 5

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

SR 16

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.

Melee +11 eight bites (d10+4 plus poison)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +20

Combat Options Combat Reflexes, spell-like abilities

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11)

At will – extended *lesser confusion* (DC 15), *suggestion* (DC 17)

3/day – *confusion* (DC 17), *dream*, *mislead*, *nightmare*

Abilities Str 19, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 15, Wis 6, Cha 15

SQ poison, amorphous body, engulf, maddening spirit, project image, embody, endow, grant boon

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Bluff +16, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +18, Spellcraft +16

Poison (Su): Injury, Will DC 17. **Initial damage** *confusion* for two rounds; secondary damage permanent mental disorder, such as an intense phobia, vicious paranoia, hallucinations, or a splinter personality. *Neutralize poison* or *dispel magic* can end the confusion and stop the poison from dealing its secondary damage, but cannot cure the insanity. The insanity can only be removed with *break enchantment* (caster level 11th), as well as by *greater restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, and *wish*.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): Madness can only use *suggestion* against creatures that are confused. Creatures who fail their save are no longer confused, and instead follow the instructions of the suggestion. When she uses *mislead*, she smiles a wide grin, and then her body dissolves into tiny illusory serpents that writhe on the ground and flee, though her smile remains in place for a round.

Amorphous Form (Ex): Because Madness moves in nonlinear dimensions, she fills the space of a Huge creature, even though her body is simply one large viper. She appears multiple times within that space, resembling a coiling mass of serpents with multiple heads. Madness can occupy any adjoining area of nine squares, or as few as four adjoining squares. Madness cannot be flanked.

Engulf (Ex): Because most of her space is empty, Madness can move up to her base speed and enter areas occupied by other creatures as a full-round action.

Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against Madness as she attempts to engulf them, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 20) or be engulfed. On a successful save they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as Madness moves forward.

Engulfed creatures are considered grappled, and can escape with a successful grapple check. Madness can divide her attacks however she chooses among creatures she threatens and creatures she has engulfed. If Madness moves, she does not carry engulfed creatures with her.

Maddening Spirit (Su): Whenever Madness is targeted by mind-affecting or divination (including *detect* spells and *true seeing*) effect, the creature that cast or created that effect must make a Will save (DC 19) or be *confused*. Each round thereafter the creature may make a save as a free action to attempt to break free of the confusion.

If Madness fails a save against a mind-affecting effect, on its next turn it can attempt one additional save against the same DC to break free.

Because Madness exists partially in multiple places at once, all spells and attacks against her have a 20% chance not to affect her. This is not a miss chance because of concealment, however, so sneak attacks

can still affect Madness. Creatures currently under the influence of effects that cause confusion, or who are otherwise insane, are not affected by this miss chance. With their grip on reality loosened, such creatures are able to see the underlying impossible form of Madness, and strike the iteration of her serpentine non-Euclidian form that is most manifested in our world.

Likewise, a creature that is confused or insane automatically beats Madness's spell resistance.

Project Image (Su): At will when she is incorporeal, Madness can assume the appearance of a creepy dark-haired gnome woman. Madness's true form is only visible to creatures using true seeing.

Embody (Su): Madness is naturally incorporeal and so cannot do much to harm her foes other than to use *confusion* and *suggestion*. However, as a full round action, Madness can create a corporeal form for herself by entering an object (or group of objects) of roughly Huge size that resembles a giant serpent or a mass of snakes. Madness still keeps the same general shape, though her composition would be that of the matter used to create her body.

When the heroes face Madness, she will likely use either debris and remains from a shattered wooden staircase to create her body, or she will embody a massive tapestry in Steppengard's throne room, ripping it down from its hangings and turning into a coiled serpentine shape twisting upon itself.

While embodied, Madness loses the incorporeal subtype, and loses her fly speed. Madness can leave this body as a standard action. Any damage dealt to the embodied form affects Madness normally, and stays with her even once she returns to incorporeality.

If Madness is affected by the fey Song of Forms (see Adventure Two, *The Indomitable Fire Forest of Innenotdar*), she spontaneously embodies, not requiring any object to enter. If she is already embodied she cannot leave her body.

Endow (Su): As a full round action while incorporeal, Madness can grant its power to any living creature within 30 ft. When she does so, she vanishes, effectively absorbed by the creature. At will, or when the creature dies, Madness reappears within 30 ft. of the creature, unharmed by the ordeal. The endowed creature gains Madness's boon.

A trillith that is endowing a creature can be targeted and affected by mind-affecting effects, and can be driven out with remove curse, break enchantment, or a similar effect. However, the trillith itself cannot be harmed while endowing a creature, except by mind-affecting effects.

Grant Boon (Su): Madness can lend her power to several creatures at once without actually entering their bodies. To do so she must touch each creature. She gains a negative level, and the creature gains the ability to once per day try to shake free of a mind-affecting effect. If the creature fails a save against a mind-affecting effect, she can attempt the save again 1 round later at the same DC. This boon is the equivalent of a magic item with a price of 1,500 gp.

If Madness is slain while affected by the Song of Forms, the nearest ten intelligent creatures within 150 ft. gain her boon, which is permanent unless dispelled. Madness can grant this boon to up to ten creatures.

Rejuvenation (Ex): As Madness is a creature of dream and not of flesh, she is hard to kill. While incorporeal or while embodied, if Madness is destroyed she does not die, but instead reforms 1d6 days later.

Madness can only be truly slain two ways. If her body dies while she is trapped by the Song of Forms or similar magic, she dies, and her corpse remains even after the magic ends. Alternately, if Madness is destroyed and all the damage is caused by mind-affecting or negative energy effects, the trillith's spirit is obliterated. In this case, no creature gains the benefits of Madness's boon.

Blade of the Kingsguard

Human fighter 6

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

hp 65 (6 HD), friend-shielding the King

Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +10 *Blade of the Kingsguard* (2d6+6, 19–20/x2)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Combat Options combat expertise, combat reflexes, hold the line, stand still

Abilities Str 14, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Hold the Line, Improved Initiative, Stand Still, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)

Skills Intimidate +8

Possessions *ring of friend shielding* (other ring is worn by King Steppengard), chain shirt, *Blade of the Kingsguard*

Hold the Line (Ex): You may make an attack of opportunity against a charging opponent who enters an area you threaten. Your attack of opportunity happens immediately before the charge attack is resolved.

Stand Still (Ex): When a foe's movement out of a square you threaten grants you an attack of opportunity, you can attempt to stop your foe in his tracks. If your attack of opportunity hits your foe, he must succeed on a Reflex save against a DC of 10 + your damage roll (the opponent does not actually take damage), or immediately halt as if he had used up his move actions for the round.

New Item – Blade of the Kingsguard: The Blade of the Kingsguard is a minor intelligent item. In addition to being a +1 *greatsword*, the Blade of the King has enough of its own willpower (Lawful Neutral, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 4) to be able to activate its special power, which is to cast *cure critical wounds* on its wielder once per day (caster level 7th).

Note that only the highest ranking of the king's royal guards actually carries this blade. The others wield normal +1 *greatswords*, and do not have a *ring of friend shielding*.

Faint conjuration and evocation. Price 3100 gp.

CR 6

King Steppengard of Dassen

CR 10

Though no longer the young warrior who united eight kingdoms into a single country, King Steppengard still has a lion's strength. Tall, brown-haired, with a short-cropped beard, the ruler of Dassen stands tense with restrained scorn. Weakness, however, seems to grip the king's mind, and his eyes look uncertain, his gaze unfocused.

Human middle-aged commander 2/fighter 8

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elf, Giant, Infernal, Orc, Sphinx, Terran

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 20

hp 57 (10 HD), friend-shielded by bodyguard

Fort +9, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6

Immune divination, mind-affecting

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +17 +1 *heavy flail* (d10+11, 17–20/x2)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +13

Combat Options combat expertise, improved feint, improved trip, power attack

Abilities Str 18, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ initiative bonus +1, direct orders +1

Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Elite Training* (heavy flail), Great Cleave, Improved Critical (heavy flail), Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Focus (heavy flail), Weapon Specialization (heavy flail)

Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +23, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Sense Motive +6, Survival +6

Possessions *glamered +2 full plate*, +1 *heavy flail*, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *ring of protection +1*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, Eight Lands boon, *ring of friend shielding* (other ring is worn by bodyguard), noble's outfit

RAGESIAN ENEMIES

Ambassador Serrimus

CR 6

Human aristocrat 6/sorcerer 1

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc, Terran

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 22 (7 HD)

Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +3 dagger (d4-1, 19-20/x2) or +3 shortsword (d6-1, 19-20/x2)

Base Atk +4; Grp +3

Combat Gear *ring of counterspells* (holds *charm person* now)

Spells Known (CL 1)

1st (4) – *charm person*, *silent image*

0 (5) – *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13

Feats Iron Will, Negotiator, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +19, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Perform (percussion) +10, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +3.

Possessions noble's outfit, scroll of *rope trick*

Jaas, Ragesian Infiltration Leader

CR 6

Male half-orc fighter 6

LN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +5; Senses Listen -1, Spot -1, darkvision

Languages Common, orc

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20

hp 50 (6 HD)

Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +12 +1 battleaxe (d8+7, x3) or +10 silver shortsword (d6+3, 19-20/x2)

Ranged +8 masterwork composite shortbow (d6+4, x3)

Base Atk +6; Grp +10

Combat Gear three potions of *cure light wounds*, potion of *cure serious wounds*

Combat Options power attack

Abilities Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)

Skills Intimidate +4, Ride +5

Possessions full plate, cold iron heavy shield, +1 battleaxe, masterwork composite shortbow [Str +4] with 20 arrows, silver shortsword, 5 days of rations

Crona, Ragesian Inquisitor

CR 4

A hulking, hairy orc woman, covered with rough hide armor and numerous magical charms strapped to cords, and wearing a jaggedly curved claw on her right hand, this inquisitor has an eerily beautiful face – a mask, half obsidian, half ivory, with slots only for the eyes and the bottom of her mouth.

Female orc cleric 4

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2, darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, orc

AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 12

hp 30 (4 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +5 hand claw (d4+2)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Combat Gear brooch of shielding (101 charges), scroll of cure light wounds ×4, wand of hold portal (10 charges)

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (3/day, 1d20+4), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Spells Prepared (CL 4th, DC 12 + spell level)

2nd – cure moderate wounds, produce flame^D, silence, sound burst

1st – bane, burning hands^D, cause fear, command, endure elements

0 – create water, detect magic ×3, guidance

D Domain spell Domains Fire, Magic

Abilities Str 14, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11

SQ light sensitivity, rebuke magic (see below), spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Feats Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +12, Spellcraft +7

Possessions Hand claw, lesser inquisitor's mask, hide armor

Reactive Counterspell (Ex): The inquisitor can counterspell even when she has not readied an action, as long as she is aware of a spell being cast. If she does so, she gives up her standard action on her next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su): Three times a day, the inquisitor can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. She rolls 1d20+4 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect. See Campaign Guide for more details.

Torrax, Ragesian Inquisitor

CR 9

Proudly savage, this half-orc wears nothing but furs, leather cords, and a menacing bearskull mask, etched with runes. His only weapon is clawed bronze gauntlet, but the air around him feels heavy with danger.

Male half-orc cleric 9/expert 1

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3, darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, orc

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14

hp 77 (10 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +11

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +9 +1 hand claw (d4+3)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Special Actions reactive counterspell, rebuke magic (3/day, 1d20+9), turn water creatures or command fire creatures (3/day, 1d20)

Spells Prepared (CL 9th, DC 13 + spell level)

5th – flame strike, spell resistance^D

4th – divine power, sending, wall of fire^D

3rd – animate dead, create food and water, dispel magic^D, invisibility purge, searing light

2nd – hold person, produce flame^D, resist energy, silence, sound burst

1st – bane, bless, burning hands^D, cause fear, command, endure elements

0 – cure minor wounds ×4, detect magic ×2

D Domain spell Domains Fire, Magic

Abilities Str 14, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10

SQ rebuke magic (see below), spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Feats Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Reactive Counterspell, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Skills Concentration +11, Craft (alchemy) +5, Intimidate +6, Spellcraft +12

Possessions +1 hand claw, amulet of health +2 and natural armor +1, +1 hide armor, inquisitor's mask, tobacco supplies and pipe, scroll of speak with dead

Reactive Counterspell (Ex): Torrax can counterspell even when he has not readied an action, as long as he is aware of a spell being cast. If he does so, he gives up his standard action on his next turn, having effectively already used it.

Rebuke Magic (Su): Three times a day, Torrax can attempt to counterspell or dispel, as if with *dispel magic*. He rolls 1d20+9 against DC 11 + caster level of the targeted effect. A given use of Rebuke Magic can dispel no more than one magical effect. See the Campaign Guide for more details.

Tactics: Torrax enjoys the smell of burning flesh, and so likes to trap his foes behind *walls of fire*. He is fairly straightforward in combat, using his offensive spells rapidly with a frightening smile, before resorting to using his claw. If he gets a chance, before combat he casts *resist energy (fire)* on himself.

New Item – Inquisitor Mask: (Originally presented in the *Campaign Guide*.) Inquisitors believe that their masks protect their souls from hostile magic. Male inquisitors favor masks carved to resemble (or actually made from) bear skulls, while female inquisitors prefer ones that look more like heavily decorated masquerade masks. An inquisitor mask takes up the eyewear item slot.

A creature wearing an *inquisitor mask* can choose as a free action to have the mask alter his voice to be more menacing and feral, granting a +2 enhancement bonus to Intimidate checks. Additionally, for 3 rounds per day the mask makes its wearer immune to possession, and to attempts to exercise mental control, as with *protection from good*. This effect functions immediately when needed, and ends when it is no longer needed. The rounds can be spread across the day.

Faint abjuration; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *cause fear*, *protection from good*; Price 2,600 gp; weight 2 lb.

Ragesian Soldiers (6)

CR 2

Male half-orc fighter 2

LN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1, darkvision

Languages Common, orc

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19

hp 20 (2 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +1, **Will** –1

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +7 masterwork battleaxe (d8+3, ×3)

Ranged +4 masterwork shortbow (d6, ×3)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*

Abilities Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10

Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe)

Skills Intimidate +2, Ride +3

Possessions half-plate, heavy shield, masterwork battleaxe, masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, 5 days of rations

Ragesian Infiltrators (2)

Male half-orc rogue 3/fighter 2

LN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +6, darkvision

Languages Common, orc

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14

hp 32 (5 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +9 masterwork shortsword (d6+3, 19–20/x2), or +7 unarmed strike (d3+3); or +7/+7 two masterwork shortswords (d6+3/d6+1, 19–20/x2)

Ranged +7 masterwork shortbow (d6, x3)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +11

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (shortsword)

Skills Climb +11, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Open Locks +8, Spot +6

Possessions masterwork studded leather, masterwork buckler, two masterwork shortswords, masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, 5 days of rations, climbing kit

Tactics: Infiltrators typically work in pairs, sneaking into an area. When they catch a sentry off guard one grapples the man and holds him while the other delivers multiple sneak attacks. They are very aggressive, often rushing at anyone who spots them before he can call for help.

CR 5

Stonum, Ragesian Wyvern Knight

CR 6

This knight is small, but still well armed. More noticeable is the massive wyvern serving as his mount.

Male human fighter 6

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, draconic, orc

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15

hp 50 (6 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Ride 60 ft. (flight, poor, 12 squares)

Melee +8/+3 masterwork shortsword (d6+1, 19–20/x2)

Ranged +11/+6 masterwork light crossbow (d8+2, 19–20/x2), rapid reload

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7

Combat Gear 2 potions of *cure light wounds*, 2 potions of *cure moderate wounds*, *oil of magic weapon*, Ragesian dragonbomb

Abilities Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe*, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (light crossbow), Weapon Specialization (light crossbow)

Skills Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (history) +5, Ride +14

Possessions mithral chain shirt, buckler, masterwork shortsword, masterwork light crossbow with 60 bolts (40 normal, 10 cold iron, 10 silver), wyvern mount, exotic military saddle, Ragesian dragonbomb

Dractyl, Wyvern

CR 6

N Large Dragon

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +13, Spot +16, darkvision 60, low-light vision

Languages Draconic

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 17

hp 59 (7 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); fly 60 ft. (poor)

Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.

Melee +10 sting (d6+4 plus poison) and +8 bite (2d8+4) and 2 wings (d8+2). If using flyby attack, 2 talons (2d6+4)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +15

Combat Gear *hurling bracers*

Combat Options flyby attack, improved grab

Abilities Str 19, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 19

SQ poison

Feats Ability Focus (poison), Alertness, Flyby Attack, Multiattack

Skills Hide +7, Listen +13, Move Silently +11, Spot +16

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability the wyvern must hit with its talons. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and stings.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fort DC 17, initial and secondary 2d6 Con.

Rake (Ex): +11 melee, 1d6+2.

New Item – Hurling Bracers: These items can be activated as a swift action once per day. For one round, the wearer is treated as one size category larger for purposes of lifting capacity, grappling, and what sort of weapons the creature can wield. If being treated as larger would be a detriment for any given effect, it may use its normal size instead. (For instance, a human would not suddenly be unable to use a Medium dagger just because he counts as being Large). Typically wyverns use these bracers to pick up enemies during a flyby attack (taking a –20 penalty to their grapple check so they can keep moving), and then drop them before the bonus wears off.

Moderate transmutation; CL 7; Craft Wondrous Item, *polymorph*; Price 2000 gp; weight 1 lb.

New Item – Ragesian Dragonbomb: This weapon is dropped by wyvern riders, functioning as a grenade-like weapon. Because the weapon simply drops, the rider makes a ranged touch attack, with a –2 penalty per 20 feet of altitude. If the attack misses, the bomb strikes in a random direction, and the distance from its intended target is equal to half the speed the attacker flew that round (minimum 10 feet).

A dragonbomb consists of little more than a compilation of existing alchemicals. It has 10 flasks of oil, 5 alchemist fire flasks, and a thunderstone in a clay shell that shatters on impact. In addition to whatever damage the bomb inflicts by striking its target, it also creates a deafening boom as a normal thunderstone. Alchemist fire coats everything within 5 feet of the target, dealing 1d6 fire damage for two rounds. Additionally, burning oil spreads a further 5 feet, dealing 1d3 fire damage for two rounds. The alchemicals typically last long enough to set fire to flammable objects, which burn on their own.

Price 150 gp; weight 20 lb.

Tragedy

CR 7

A shadowy, incorporeal creature emerges from the wall, its body composed of ashy shrouds. Twisting, roiling faces push up from within its form, faces of men unjustly arrested by the king, wailing mutely at their tragic end.

CE Medium undead (Incorporeal)

Init +7; **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., Listen +14, Spot +14

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 13

hp 69 (7 HD); 50% miss chance (incorporeal)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (perfect)

Melee +6 incorporeal touch (1d8 plus negative level)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** –

Abilities Str –, Dex 16, Con –, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15

SQ energy drain, incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, undead traits, unholy toughness

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track

Skills Hide +13, Intimidate +12, Listen +14, Search +12, Spot +14, Survival +12 (+14 following tracks)

Energy Drain (Su): A creature struck by the tragedy's touch gains a negative level, and the tragedy gains 5 temporary hit points. These negative levels go away after one hour, and never cause permanent level loss.

Unholy Toughness (Ex): The tragedy gains a bonus to its hit points equal to its Charisma modifier times its Hit Dice.

APPENDIX TWO – NEW FEATS

Several of the characters in this adventure have new feats.

Elite Training [Fighter]

Choose a weapon you have weapon specialization in. You are elitley trained with weapons of that type.

Prerequisite: Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization, fighter level 8th (or fighter level 4th and base attack bonus +10).

Benefit: With the chosen weapon and all weapons with the same damage type, you gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage. If the weapon has multiple damage types, choose one of its damage types.

Equine Stalwart [Fighter]

Your skill with horses is masterful, and your preferred mount stands above other horses because of how you have trained it.

Prerequisite: Handle Animal 4 ranks, Ride 9 ranks, Mounted Combat

Benefit: If you spend at least one day training with a warpony or light or heavy warhorse, that steed becomes more stalwart and attains an exceptional connection to you, like a druid's animal companion. You can only have one stalwart mount at a time.

You can handle your stalwart mount as a free action, and push it as a move action. You gain a +4 bonus to all Handle Animal checks with it.

Additionally, based on the number of ranks you have in Ride, your stalwart mount gains additional Hit Dice, similar to advancing an animal, so that its total Hit Dice is equal to the number listed in the table below. Your ranks in Ride also grant your mount bonus tricks, and it gains evasion (or improved evasion) as long as you are within 5 feet of it.

For example, a rider with 9 ranks in Ride could give a stalwart light warhorse 2 extra Hit Dice, or a stalwart heavy warhorse 1 extra Hit Die, for a total of 6 either way. These extra Hit Dice grant new feats, skill points, and ability score increases, as normal for adding Hit Dice. Your horse does not increase in size.

Table: Stalwart Mount Hit Dice

Ride Ranks	Total HD	Bonus Tricks	Special Ability
9–11	5	1	Evasion
12–14	7	2	
15–17	9	3	
18–20	11	4	
21+	13	5	Improved evasion

Improved Mounted Strafe [Fighter]

You can cut down foe after foe as you ride past them.

Prerequisites: Ride 8 ranks, Mounted Combat, Mounted Strafe

Benefit: When mounted, you may make a full attack while moving. Your attacks can each come at any point during your mount's movement, though if your mount moves more than 5 feet you must move at least 5 feet between each attack.

Normal: You can only make melee attacks while mounted at the beginning or end of your mount's movement. You can only make ranged attacks while mounted at the beginning, end, or precise middle of your mount's movement. You cannot make more than one melee attack in a round if your mount moves more than 5 feet.

Jousting Blow [Fighter]

Your charges knock your foes flying.

Prerequisite: Str 13, Ride 8 ranks, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack (or Mounted Strafe), Spirited Charge.

Benefit: When you use a charge action to attack while mounted, you may take a –4 penalty to your attack roll and deliver a jousting blow. If you hit a corporeal opponent that is smaller than your mount, that creature must succeed a Reflex save (DC = damage dealt) or be knocked flying 10 feet in the direction of your charge, falling prone. If an obstacle prevents the completion of the opponent's move, both the obstacle and the creature take 1d6 points of damage, and the opponent stops in the square adjacent to the obstacle.

A mounted opponent may substitute a Ride

check in place of his Reflex save to resist being dismounted, and he gains a +2 bonus if he is using a military saddle.

Mounted Strafe [Fighter]

You can attack as you ride past your foe.

Prerequisites: Ride 5 ranks, Mounted Combat

Benefit: When mounted, you may perform a standard action at any point during your mount's movement. When you attack a creature in melee when mounted, for the movement to and from that creature, neither you nor your mount provoke attacks of opportunity from that creature.

If you perform a charge action while mounted, you can attack any creature adjacent to or along the line of your movement. Your mount must still move in a straight line, but you can choose to attack a creature as you pass it by.

Normal: You can only make melee attacks while mounted at the beginning or end of your mount's movement. You can only make ranged attacks while mounted at the beginning, end, or precise middle of your mount's movement.

Special: You may use this feat to qualify for feats and prestige classes as if it were Ride-By Attack.

Vow of Healing [General]

(Originally detailed in the *Player's Guide*.)

You have pledged yourself to heal all those in need, friend or foe. For this sacrifice, you are blessed with greater healing power.

Prerequisite: Heal 4 ranks, ability to cast *cure* spells or otherwise magically heal.

Benefit: Once per level per day, as a free action you can release a 10-foot-radius emanation of positive energy. Every living creature in the area immediately heals 1 point of damage, while unliving creatures take 1 point of damage. Additionally, you gain one bonus spell slot of your highest spell level, which can only be used for a *cure* spell, *heal*, or a similar spell.

You cannot refuse to heal any injured living creature who asks you for healing, though you are not obligated to provide more than 1 point of healing, and you are not required to heal enemies unless they surrender and you are reasonably sure they cannot

betray you. You cannot perform a coup de grace on a living creature, nor can you target damage against a dying living foe (you may deal damage to them with area attacks, though you must make a best effort to avoid doing so). If you violate this oath, you lose the benefit of this feat for 24 hours. Repeated or flagrant transgressions can result in permanent loss of this benefit until you receive an *atonement* spell.

Warmage Strike [Wizard]

You can unleash repeated magical attacks of weak power without expending your spells.

Prerequisite: Arcane caster level 5.

Benefit: When you select this feat, choose an energy type from among acid, air, cold, death, earth, electricity, fire, force, light, sonic, and water. You must be able to cast a spell with a descriptor that matches the chosen energy type. Additionally, choose an attack form from among blast, burst, cone line, shield, or touch.

Whenever you regain spells each day, you can choose to sacrifice a spell slot that you could normally use to cast or prepare a spell with the chosen descriptor. For the rest of the day, as a standard action you can use your warmage strike. The damage your strike deals is based on the energy type you chose and the spell level sacrificed for that day.

If you chose the energy type acid, cold, electricity, or fire, the strike deals 1d6 damage per level of the sacrificed spell slot. If you chose a different energy type, the strike deals one fewer die of damage.

Your chosen attack form determines how your strike works. If the blast allows a save, the DC is 10 + sacrificed spell level + primary spellcasting stat. Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus (evocation) improve the save DC for your warmage strike.

- *Blast.* The strike is a ranged touch attack with a range of 60 feet.
- *Burst.* The strike is a 5-foot-radius burst, with a range of 30 feet. A Reflex save halves the damage.
- *Cone.* The strike is a 15-foot cone, and uses d4s instead of d6s. A Reflex save halves the damage.
- *Line.* The strike is a 20-foot line. A Reflex save halves the damage.

- *Shield*. The strike affects every creature within 5 feet of you, but does not harm you. A Reflex save negates the damage.
- *Touch*. The strike is a melee touch attack.

The warmage strike is a spell-like ability with the same spell level as the sacrificed spell slot. Creatures

are immune to warmage strike damage from an energy type that matches their subtype, and undead are immune to death damage.

Special: A wizard can select Warmage Strike as one of his bonus feats at every 5th level. You can select this feat multiple times. Each time you do, choose a new energy type and attack form combination.

APPENDIX THREE – NEW ITEMS

Several of the characters in this adventure have new items, magical or otherwise.

MUNDANE ITEMS

Greater Alchemist Fire

These wooden flasks of alchemist fire are only created by pitchlings, though an alchemist with access to freshly harvested pitch from the skin of a pitchling could create such items (Craft (alchemy) DC 30). They function identically to normal alchemist fire, except that they do twice as much damage (2d6 on a direct hit, or 2 splash). Price 100 gp.

Ragesian Dragonbomb

This weapon is dropped by wyvern riders, functioning as a grenade-like weapon. Because the weapon simply drops, the rider makes a ranged touch attack, with a –2 penalty per 20 feet of altitude. If the attack misses, the bomb strikes in a random direction, and the distance from its intended target is equal to half the speed the attacker flew that round (minimum 10 feet).

A dragonbomb consists of little more than a compilation of existing alchemicals. It has 10 flasks of oil, 5 alchemist fire flasks, and a thunderstone in a clay shell that shatters on impact. In addition to whatever damage the bomb inflicts by striking its target, it also creates a deafening boom as a normal thunderstone. Alchemist fire coats everything within 5 feet of the target, dealing 1d6 fire damage for two rounds. Additionally, burning oil spreads a further 5 feet, dealing 1d3 fire damage for two rounds. The alchemicals typically last long enough to set fire to flammable objects, which burn on their own.

Price 150 gp; weight 20 lb.

Red Madness

Ingested poison (Will DC 17). Initial damage *confusion* for one hour. Secondary damage *rage* for one hour. Price 500 gp.

MAGIC ITEMS

Blade of the Kingsguard

The Blade of the Kingsguard is a minor intelligent item. In addition to being a +1 *greatsword*, it has enough willpower (Lawful Neutral, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 4) to activate its special power, which is to cast *cure critical wounds* on its wielder once per day (caster level 7th).

Note that only the highest ranking of the king's royal guards actually carries this blade. The others wield normal +1 *greatswords*.

Faint conjuration and evocation. Price 3100 gp.

Book of Eight Lands

An aged book lies in the vaults of Steppengard's Castle in Bresk; it magically tracks the complete genealogy of the king of Dassen and the lords of the eight lands of Dassen. This book, a minor artifact, displays the name of the king and each of the lords of the eight lands, and provides a boon to each of those people, as well as their spouses and their children with those spouses. As long as they are touching soil from Dassen, each such affected noble is protected as if by *mind blank*, rendering them immune to all attempts to detect, influence, or read their emotions or thoughts. The beneficiaries of the book's boon can choose to lower it willingly. This effect's caster level is 15th.

According to the book, there is no line of succession after Steppengard. New names may be recorded in the book manually, but this requires the approval of all of the current lords of the eight lands.

There is no market value for the book or the boon it bestows.

Eowhisperer Charm

This magic item, an ornate shawl that fits over the horse's mane and ears, allows a creature with an Intelligence of 1 or 2 to understand the Common tongue as if it were affected by a *speak with animals* spell. This item fills the head body slot. An animal

wearing this can be handled as a free action or pushed as a move action, and it eventually begins to exhibit signs of an uncanny intelligence.

Faint divination; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *speak with animals*; Price 1,700 gp; weight 1 lb.

Fimbulwinter Charm

A silvery cord threaded with several rings of sapphire-studded silver rings, when wrapped around the handle of a weapon, this charm can cause the weapon to deal +1d6 cold damage with each strike. However, attacks that deal cold damage deal 1 additional point of damage to the weapon's wielder.

Faint evocation; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms & Armor, *ice storm*; Price 3000 gp; weight –.

Hurling Bracers

These items can be activated as a swift action once per day. For one round, the wearer is treated as one size category larger for purposes of lifting capacity, grappling, and what sort of weapons the creature can wield. If being treated as larger would be a detriment for any given effect, it may use its normal size instead. (For instance, a human would not suddenly be unable to use a Medium dagger just because he counts as being Large). Typically wyverns use these bracers to pick up enemies during a flyby attack (taking a –20 penalty to their grapple check so they can keep moving), and then drop them before the bonus wears off.

Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *polymorph*; Price 2000 gp; weight 1 lb.

Inquisitor Mask

(Originally presented in the *Campaign Guide*.)

Inquisitors believe that their masks protect their souls from hostile magic. Male inquisitors favor masks carved to resemble (or actually made from) bear skulls, while female inquisitors prefer ones that look more like heavily decorated masquerade masks. An inquisitor mask takes up the eyewear item slot.

A creature wearing an *inquisitor mask* can choose as a free action to have the mask alter his voice to be more menacing and feral, granting a +2 enhancement bonus to Intimidate checks. Additionally, for 3 rounds per day the mask makes its wearer immune to possession, and to attempts to exercise mental control, as with *protection from good*. This effect functions immediately when needed, and ends when it is no longer needed. The rounds can be spread across the day.

Faint abjuration; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *cause fear*, *protection from good*; Price 2,600 gp; weight 2 lb.

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The Mad King's Banquet

by Shane O'Connor

While Seaquen recovers from an unnatural natural disaster, the heroes undertake a quest to find allies in the nearby nation of Dassen before Ragesia's army arrives.

But the heroes discover strange tidings surrounding Dassen's King Steppengard. What afflicts the king, and is Duke Gallo truly conspiring against him? Seaquen's survival depends on unraveling the mystery.

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