



# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS<sup>®</sup> Campaigns<sup>™</sup>

## XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS

### **Greater the Fall** **Covenant of Light Faction Scenario #11** **An Adventure for 11<sup>th</sup> Level Characters** **(Scaled for 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Levels of Play)**

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Some maps originally by Mike Schley

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# Adventure Background

The darkest chapter in the history of the Covenant of Light is about to reach its end. For years, Seraphen Cryheart has been the faction's greatest enemy. This enmity is all the more tragic because Cryheart was once the second in command of the Covenant beside his mentor and friend, Lord Xandrin Corvalis.

As a paladin of the Sovereign Host, Seraphen did great things in the name of Good. His early deeds are among the greatest legends of the faction. These mighty works of Light including rescuing a tribe of raptorans, bringing down an entire cabal of Dark Six adepts and leading a defensive army against a horde of dark elves seeking to take Radiant Hold – the fortress of the Covenant.

Seraphen seemed destined to someday take over leadership of the Covenant and was being trained to do exactly that by Lord Corvalis. There was no animosity between them in this. Xandrin was proud of his protégé and Seraphen was eager to carry on his mentor's exemplary work. The entire faction had come to know Captain Cryheart as a voice of reason, bravery and authority both on the battlefield and off it. It was a bright time for the faction and their works flourished in Stormreach.

Then, disaster. While grieving for the loss of Lady Corvalis and his friend's terrible anguish (detailed in CVN-5 Things Fall Apart), Seraphen traveled into the dark heart of the Xen'drik jungle to try and put down a rising power of evil there. He took with him a contingent of Covenant troops and vowed to return before the passage of a month.

The man who kept that oath was no longer Seraphen Cryheart as anyone knew him, nor were his troops recognizable as the brave souls that had left the keep in glory and goodness. The blackguard Cryheart sent his twisted minions against the gate of Radiant Hold, laying three full days and nights of the worst siege the fortress has ever known. Hundreds perished on both sides and while the Hold repelled the assault, the damage had already been done. The bulk of the Covenant's military might was shattered, ending Lord Corvalis' plans to lead an army of Light against the Inspired of Dar Qat and secure the city as a force for good in the emerald continent.

Though defeated in his desire to take Radiant Hold and destroy the Covenant of Light, Seraphen escaped the battle and disappeared into the jungle to lick his wounds and plot his next assault. No one in the faction has ever known what became of the Seraphen they knew or why he fell from grace. Xandrin spent thousands of gold and sent many agents to try and learn the answer, all lost in vain.

Seraphen's fall was the result of a deadly combination of sorrow, idealism and pride. Thinking that the power of Good could sustain him and his men through any battle and too distracted by his worry over Xandrin's tragedy, Seraphen recklessly threw himself against a dark creature too powerful to be destroyed by mortal means – a true rakshasa rajah trapped on Eberron by the power of the couatl ritual centuries beforehand. Outmatched and nearly dead, Seraphen was faced with a terrible choice of his own.

Saar'aakh, the Naztharune rajah offered Seraphen a black bargain. Serve him "body and soul" and the rajah would spare the lives of his troops and allow them to return to Radiant Hold. Still remembering the great sacrifice his friend Xandrin had just performed, Seraphen agreed to the pact.

The rajah upheld his end of the bargain, though the spirit of the agreement was as corrupt as the rakshasa himself. The soldiers' lives were spared but at the cost of their will as each one was suddenly subjected to a massive psychic assault by parasitic ooze pouring out of the walls of the rajah's ruined palace. In its time of captivity, Saar'aakh had made contact with many powerful entities looking for a way to escape his imprisonment. Among these dark contacts, the most productive was an alliance with the daelkyr lord Kyrzin. Kyrzin's slimes had come to try and erode the rajah's prison. They failed but in Seraphen's troops, they found new purpose.

This horrid fate was not for Seraphen, however. Saar'aakh had other plans for him. The willing servitude of a paladin's "body and soul" was enough for Saar'aakh to finally slip his bondage and be free...

...almost. The rajah joined with Seraphen, overwhelming his mortal spirit and merging with him into a new being, one with Seraphen's memories and form but Saar'aakh's great evil and terrible power. The rajah had underestimated Cryheart's innate purity, however, and the bond was not complete. Seraphen retained control and Saar'aakh's consciousness was forced back into the imprisoning ruins to howl in impotent, frustrated rage while the tainted blackguard ordered a full retreat and left his would-be master behind.

In the many months since this foul transformation, Seraphen has led many actions against the Covenant, slaughtering its champions, laying siege to its holdings and striking at his former friend Corvalis with increasing vehemence. The memory of what he was haunts Seraphen constantly, driving him to try and destroy the faction and end his torment.

His latest scheme is perhaps his darkest. Through an alliance with the same clan of harpies that he originally rescued the raptorans from, he has devised a way for them to take their revenge for the tribe's 'betrayal'. With special disguising necklaces made by his Dark Six cabal servants, Seraphen has enabled the harpies to get aboard the Aerie, the raptoran's skyship, and catch them unawares.

What the harpies do not know is that the necklaces also contain a magical explosive and when the time is right, he will detonate them all and send the Brightwing's skyship plunging down into Radiant Hold,

destroying the Aerie and leaving the fortress vulnerable in a single, fiery blast. His troops are poised for an assault, hidden in the dense green of the nearby jungle. At his command, they will attack through the sudden breach in Radiant Hold's defenses and end the Covenant of Light once and for all.

To make his victory complete, there is one other loose end Seraphen must tie up. The power and instincts from Saar'aakh have left him with an irrational hatred for the couatl. The Covenant of Light has a couatl ally named Shyyr-dahna. This glorious creature lairs in the rocks near Radiant Hold and rarely appears even to her friends in the faction. Convinced she will come out during his assault, Seraphen has concealed himself near her perch and will ambush her when she shows herself.

The traps are set, events are set in motion and the final battle is ready to be waged. Both the Covenant of Light and Seraphen Cryheart have become powerful in the years since their parting. But for one of them, a great fall is coming.

## Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins with the PCs seeing a trio of raptoran youths waiting for a magical lift beneath the shadow of the Aerie, the raptoran tribal skyship high above Radiant Hold. While this is a common enough sight since young raptorans cannot truly fly yet, several signs are present to let the PCs know that something is not right about this group.

Following the three 'raptorans' using a second lift, the PCs arrive to find the guards around the entrance hold of the Aerie dead and bloody tracks leading deeper into the vessel. What follows is a hunt through the ship to find the traitorous birdmen, a hunt that ends with a single harpy (the real identity of the killers) getting caught and defeated after a heated battle. The harpy, slain or at risk of being captured, tries to will the necklace it wears to *teleport* it to safety as she was told it would.

That was a lie, of course, and instead the necklace detonates along with all the others aboard the Aerie. Explosions rock the ship but, because the PCs intercepted the one harpy before all of them could get into position to take the ship, the blasts do not immediately cripple the vessel and send it plunging down in a ball of burning wood and steel.

The PCs have a chance to either evacuate (the safer route, though doomed to failure) or try and regain some control over the crashing ship. The Aerie is going down either way but if they stay to be heroes, the PCs can save a lot of lives. With the Aerie on the ground, either destroying half the main keep of Radiant of Hold or just breaching the outer wall, Seraphen's troops attack!

The PCs miss most of this battle, having been struck unconscious by the impact of the Aerie. When they awaken and manage to pull themselves from the wrecked vessel, they can participate in a very important rear guard action, intercepting Cryheart's vile commander and a pair of magical bombs that would have completely changed the tide of the siege. In this way, they are instrumental in saving Radiant Hold and bringing an end to Seraphen's dark army.

As for Seraphen himself, the premature detonation of the necklaces caused his personal plan to go awry. He was not expecting the couatl to appear as a reaction to the deaths of the raptorans aboard the Aerie. Unprepared, he failed to ambush Shyyr-dahna efficiently and although he did deal her a terrible wound, she was able to cry for help before he could silence her.

Responding to the distress call with a retinue of elite guard, Xandrin arrived in time to save Shyyr-dahna from a killing stroke and engaged Seraphen in battle. The duel raged for some time with Seraphen clearly better but drained from his fight with the couatl. Defeated and brought low, the blackguard was spared because Xandrin could not bring himself to kill his best friend, no matter how far the man had fallen. Cryheart was brought back to Radiant Hold in chains and imprisoned until the faction's Lord could decide what to do with him.

When the PCs see Xandrin next, he has had a long conversation with the sorely wounded couatl and needs their aid once more. Radiant Hold is in terrible peril and needs him here more than ever but something just as important must be done. He bids them to speak with Shyyr-dahna and do as she asks. He is very adamant that no matter what she asks, they swear upon their honor as members of the Covenant that they will do it.

Once he has their oath, he sends them to a tent pitched on the dais of the Starried Shard, a stone platform in the middle of the Hold where a massive golden dragonshard hovers and glimmers with dozens of flashing inner lights. Inside the tent, the couatl is being tended by acolytes of the faction, doing all they can to heal her grievous injuries. She sends them out with a gentle hiss, wishing to speak with the PCs alone.

Her first request is a straightforward one. She knows what darkness has befallen Seraphen Cryheart and she thinks she may be able to restore him to the Light. If they can discover from him the location of the ruins where he encountered the "thing that turned him", she can provide them with a way of ending its evil and giving Seraphen a chance at redemption. "This will only be the first step, but it must be done. The second will be harder," she tells them.

Though the PCs may assume getting Seraphen to talk will be difficult, it is surprisingly easy to obtain the ruins' location from him. With no loyalty to the rajah and a suspicion that the rakshasa's death will provide him with even greater power, he happily (perhaps even eerily) gives them what they ask.

Armed with this knowledge and Shyyr-dahna's gifts (rainbow feathers that will allow the PCs' weapons and spells to harm the rajah), the PCs are sent into the jungle via a strange ground-traveling contraction called a tumbler. One of the Covenant's greatest secrets, the tumbler and its quirky gnome pilot gets them hundreds of miles into the jungle interior very swiftly and (for once) without incident.

There, the PCs face a dangerous green obstacle before coming face to face with the black-furred rajah himself. Always one to parley and charm, he tries to convince them to ally with him and offers them great power in exchange. Assuming they rebuff his offer, battle commences. Killing the rajah is a great victory for Good, a valiant act that is instantly rewarded by the divine powers supporting the Covenant from afar. The rajah's spiritual hold is broken on Seraphen, freeing him from his madness.

Unfortunately, this does nothing to "free" him from the evil inside his corrupted soul. Lucid and focused in a way he never could be before, Seraphen begins to exact his escape even as the PCs are racing back to Radiant Hold to meet once more with Shyyr-dahna.

It is here that the PCs are faced with a horrible choice. Shyyr-dahna reveals to them that Cryheart is not yet cured of his rakshasa corruption. Because he never willingly became evil, there is a chance his soul can be saved but it will require a great sacrifice. The PCs must be the instrument but she is to be the vessel. To save Seraphen, they must purge the rakshasa taint in his soul by giving him a draught of her heart's blood. Only her power can combat the foul darkness of a rajah's evil.

Though the PCs will undoubtedly be against the idea of sacrificing a couatl, they are under oath to do as she asks. She will tell them that she is already dying and nothing can be done to save her in any case. "Most of my people have already left this world. It is long since past time for me to rejoin them."

What the PCs do is up to them but if they do as she asks, they will also be filled with her power as her dying gift to them. "Go now," her spirit commands as it fades away, "go and save him if you can. Remember that he is not himself. You may have to fight him and destroy what he is if you are to reclaim what he once was."

Shyyr-dahna's words are prophetic. Seraphen has killed his guards, recovered his unholy sword and made his way into the Master's tower to confront his old friend one last time. Their final battle had raged all across Xandrin's suite, ending in the foyer as the PCs arrive. The outcome of this battle is entirely up to you as the DM; you get to have a direct hand in determining the future of the Covenant of Light.

One way or another, the PCs must confront Seraphen Cryheart and defeat him in battle. They are fully healed, empowered by Shyyr-dahna's last blessing and pitted against a foe of truly epic power. Only by rendering him unconscious or killing him can they fulfill the couatl's wish and feed him her blood. The holy power of that libation is enough to drive the shard of the rajah's soul out of Cryheart, allowing him to seek his own redemption free of its evil.

The greater the fall, the more one grows by getting back up...

## Troubleshooting

Though it ranges into several locales, this module is fairly simple to keep on track and only has two major points of possible difficulty for a GM. The first is the mood. This adventure culminates a major plotline in the Covenant of Light and needs to be treated with that gravity of importance. The events in the scenario are a huge part of the Covenant storyline and one scene in particular (the final duel between Xandrin and Seraphen) will change the outcome of the faction's campaign forever.

Mood and tone need to be carefully expressed during play. If the Players can sense that the characters in the adventure are all deathly serious (with the notable exception of Glitch) and that their PCs are literally risking their lives in epic battles, you have done your job properly in this respect. This module runs the emotional gamut from sorrow and sacrifice to low comedy in the form of Glitch the gnome. Keep these in mind when setting up each scene.

The second issue is pacing. There are a lot of scene changes in this module and three separate locations to deal with. The module can easily run over its allotted time limit if the pacing is not watched carefully. The battles in this scenario can also become quite involved, requiring a lot of play time to run properly. Preparing the battles ahead of time and knowing what options the enemies have that their disposal (especially Seraphen Cryheart and Saar'aakh the rajah) will help you achieve a timely completion of these scenes.

# Adventure Start

Give the PCs Player Handout One and give them a chance to read and discuss it before proceeding. The PCs with the highest Charisma in the party (or one determined by you to be the most likely to have been approached by Lady Savya directly) has received an additional warning from her.

“Death comes from the sky, bright wings turned black.”

*For once, portents of doom seem nowhere to be found. Though you have arrived in the courtyard of Radiant Hold as the cryptic message from Lady Savya instructed, there is nothing much to be seen. People are moving about on their daily routines, guards wave to you from high walls and the air is rich with the scent of white roses as they grow unchecked over the keep's battlements.*

*Whatever tragedy you are here to avert must be well hidden indeed...*

Allow the PCs to react to this non-event as they see fit. Most will likely start using skills such as Spot or Search to try and find the source of Lady Savya's troubling vision. Others will seek to roleplay and some may try to wander off. Keep the PCs together as much as possible, moving to the next section as soon as you feel it appropriate.

Though the PCs can certainly make any skill checks they wish, you should not penalize them for bad rolls at this early stage in the game. At least one of them should notice the following and be given the understanding that it may be more important than it looks. Suggested skill checks DCs are given but you should not feel bound to them. Make sure the PCs have the motivation and information to continue with the adventure in a timely manner even if they “fail” these rolls.

- **Spot (DC 15):** This check lets the PCs notice the small group of raptoran youths waiting for their lift ride into the Aerie.
  - *“Nearby, three feathered children wait impatiently as a metal platform lowers to the ground on lines of pulsing blue light. They are raptoran youths of the Brightwing tribe, their wings not fully fledged yet, and the platform is one of two lifts that will take them up into their home – the skyship known as the Aerie.”*
- **Search (DC 20):** This check gives the PCs a puzzling clue to what is happening overhead.
  - *“In the dirt at your feet, there are three small drops of blood. There is no sign of anyone wounded nearby.”*
    - This blood came from one of the slain guards in the dock of the Aerie. Allow any PC with the Investigation feat (or its equivalent) a second check at DC 20 to determine this as a likely source for the spilled blood.
- **Listen (DC 20):** If the PCs make this check, they can overhear the disguised harpies as they mutter to each other while they wait.
  - *“The raptoran children are whispering intently, looking up and then back at each other while they wait for the lift. Even once they board the hovering platform, they seem caught up in their private conversation.”*
    - If the PCs speak the raptoran tongue, they will be able to determine that the children are not speaking in that language. Their speech is more clipped, harsh sounding and vicious. (This is the language of harpies.)
      - If the PCs can translate the harpies' voices, they will overhear, *“Idiot, the others will have started without us.” “It is not my fault. I was certain the guard could see us true!” “It doesn't matter. There will be slaughter enough for us all.”*
- **Sense Motive (DC 25):** This is the toughest skill check, mostly because the harpies are all quite skilled at bluffing and are trying to maintain a low profile.
  - *“There is just something about the way the young raptorans are standing that seems... off. Their eyes have none of the kindness and wonder that their race's fledglings possess. These raptorans appear agitated, perhaps even hostile.”*

Once the PCs have their attention drawn to the raptoran youths and the skyship above them, proceed to the next part of the introduction. Read or paraphrase the following text, giving the PCs every chance to catch the next lift and follow the raptorans up into the Aerie.

*The raptorans have ascended into the Aerie by the time the second platform lands, settling against the earth of Radiant Hold's courtyard with a quiet thud. Attached to the ship high above by lines of blue magical force, it will only stay on the ground a short time before rising again.*

The PCs should be given this opportunity to follow the disguised harpies. It is also possible that they may wish to move against the raptorans before the trio disappears into the belly of the ship above. While this would be difficult to accomplish if the PCs cannot fly, they should be allowed to intercept their foes if that is their wish. Open attack against the raptorans without proof of wrongdoing would be an evil act, especially since they appear as children, but non-lethal force might be acceptable.

That begs the question of revealing the harpies in some way. Their disguise is very good, coming as it does from potent magical items, but it is not infallible. Adjudicate the situation as you see fit if the PCs do something unexpected and do **not** railroad them into the Aerie if they have no intention of going up into it as the module suggests.

Of course, if they do not follow the raptorans into the ship, the harpies will most likely secure the ship and set their terrible plan in motion. This means the ship will crash as Seraphen intended, doing severe damage to Radiant Hold in the process. See the boxed text section below for details on what to do if this should come to pass.

Be it as the adventure assumes or in some other way, the PCs are ready to move to the next section – Final Flight of the Aerie.

### **So They Don't Follow the Harpies?**

If the PCs do not go up the second lift after the disguised harpies, all is not lost. You will have to run the first section of the game a different way but being flexible and adaptive is far better than railroading the Players into a scene they would have otherwise avoided.

The first thing to keep in mind is that the harpies are disguised very effectively as raptoran children. This will make it difficult for the PCs to just openly attack them even if they have overheard and understand the harpies for what they are. The guards on the walls and in the courtyard do not have the benefit of this knowledge and they will react poorly to the PCs opening fire on “innocent” fledglings. Make sure the Players are aware of this before they do something that would likely be wildly out of character for them.

If the PCs dispel the magical disguise off a harpy, very bad things will happen. The other necklaces near the targeted one will detonate, doing massive damage to the inside of the surrounding keep and possibly overwhelming the PCs themselves depending on placement. If the *delayed blast fireballs* would be too much for the PCs to take, consider having the PCs simply struck unconscious by the force of the explosion and skipping straight to the last section of Part One – We All Fall Down.

One way or another keep in mind the setting and the very real danger overhead. Let the PCs do as they will but make sure that the events set in motion around them are going to occur with or without them. Give them the chance to be heroes but ensure that what is going to happen *does* happen.

## Part One: Final Flight of the Aerie

This is a location-based scene that takes place on the Aerie, the huge skyship that serves as the home and nesting ground of the Brightwing raptoran tribe. Refer to the Aerie map in the Appendix for this part of the adventure, keeping in mind that it is a partial representation of the enormous vessel. Feel free to make up additional chambers and details as the PCs move through the ravaged halls of the ship; it is far bigger than the map given here.

Also, images on the map are representational and may not exactly match the descriptive text. Whenever there is a difference between the text and the image, assume the text is accurate.

The harpies have been here for some time, not counting the straggler group the PCs are following. They have already done a massive amount of damage, wreaking bloody revenge on the raptorans for the “crimes” of escaping their enslavement and stealing the harpies’ airship. No matter how this scene plays out, the Brightwing tribe is decimated by this chapter in the Covenant’s history; very few of them are fated to survive what transpires here.

That said, the PCs can still do a lot of good here. The harpies have not made it to every part of the ship yet and there are still rooms with survivors. The PCs can be heroes in this scene if they do what they can to save the ship once the detonations go off. By steering the ship down instead of just abandoning it to save themselves, the PCs can do the right thing and earn the lasting gratitude of the surviving tribe (as shown in the story object Brightwing’s Boon).

### 1. The Lifts (EL n/a)

*The lift ascends, bringing you high above the sprawling fortress of Radiant Hold below. Slowly, it rises into the hold of the Aerie, coming to a stop as it locks against a bronze railing around three sides. The other lift passed you as you came up, no longer carrying the three raptorans you saw before.*

*The scene around you as you dock with the Aerie's underside is one of carnage. Two raptoran guards lie sprawled on the floor, their armor torn open and their bodies shredded at throats and vitals. Blood drips everywhere, feathers stuck to the walls in a grim display of brutal ambush. Red footprints lead away, more than a dozen sets heading deeper into the hold and the rest of the vessel.*

The PCs have come across the first signs of the tragedy that has befallen the ship. There is nothing they can do for these two hapless raptoran windguards. The pair was taken by surprise by the first group of 'children' harpies and killed before they could even raise an alarm.

Searching here (DC 15) will find a blood-stained silver whistle around the neck of one of the windguard corpses. If it is found and blown, it is a clarion call recognized by the members of the Brightwing tribe. They are all taught to respond to it instantly; the sound can even awaken sleeping raptorans with ease. This (or any other suitable alarm sound at your discretion) will make a huge difference for the raptorans in room 5, Broken Home.

There are also a dozen *floatrings* mounted to the walls, emergency *feather fall* devices in case the ship must be abandoned by people without the power of flight. These may become very useful later.

## 2. Supply Hold (EL n/a)

*The door to this room is wide open, blood on the floor beneath it and all over its brass handle. Inside, a jumbled mess of boxes, crates, barrels and stored furniture bear silent witness to the wild ransack that must have taken place here just a short time ago.*

This room's only real purpose is to waste the PCs time should they choose to search it. The harpies have been through here looking for shiny things and treasure. They have taken almost everything of use or value but if the PCs are determined to go through the room foot by foot, a DC 30 search check will find a single glass vial under a shattered chest in the far west corner.

This *potion of cure serious wounds* is event treasure and, if not used during the scenario, goes away at the end of the adventure. The penalty to finding this vial is that unless the PCs have a faster way to search than normal, the raptorans in room 5 will all be dead by the time the PCs reach it.

## 3. The Bloodied Stair (EL n/a)

*Crimson tracks cover this area, marking passage around the corner from the lifts to this wide flight of bronzedwood stairs. A dead raptoran, her throat torn out and a wide eyed look of shot on her red-spattered face, lies in a crumpled heap halfway up, one arm still curled around the shattered fragments of a slipped water pitcher. Before the top of the stairs, there are three other bodies, all similarly ravaged.*

The harpies tore their way through this area, killing everyone in their path. The raptorans have nothing of value on them and they are all far past aid. These poor innocents never had a chance, surprised by bloody handed children of what appeared to be their own race racing for them, eyes wide with murderous glee.

There are tracks leading north as well but these all lead to rooms filled with dead raptorans in pools of viscera. A Sense Motive (DC 15) or a similar Investigate check will show that whatever did these horrid deeds was motivated by rage and viciousness. These are not just deaths; these are the result of truly evil minds bent on cruelty.

## 4. Elemental Cores (EL 11)

*Two huge arcane machines of mysterious design churn away in this part of the wide central gallery of the ship, each covered in glowing crystals and circular windows looking into the devices' inner workings. One of them is cracked, sparks hissing around its sundered lines. A grey mist is flowing out of this broken window, swirling into a column of clouds.*

*Angry, storming clouds.*

The harpies killed a raptoran working on these skyship engines and in their haste to carry on deeper into the ship, they left the broken window he was trying to replace. The shattered pane has allowed a significant amount of power from the ship's power source to leak out, resulting in the formation of a massive, uncontrolled air elemental.

**Foe:** The air elemental is unreasoning and impossible to negotiate with in any way. It will have to be slain or neutralized in some way if the PCs intend to get past this part of the ship. It will attack the first PC to come into range or the first one to successfully inflict hit point damage on it, focusing on that target until either it or the target drops. The elemental will not coup de grace any PCs even if they are all unconscious, making it a lot easier to survive this fight if things go poorly.

**The Engine Core Storm;** air elemental, elder; hp 200; *Monster Manual 96*; This particular elder air elemental does not have the Whirlwind special attack. Instead it inflicts +1d6 electric damage with each slam attack in melee.

### Scaling the Encounter

The elemental is a direct expression of the power that fuels the ship's ability to fly. As such, it is only a single entity and it should not be joined by other elementals. However, additional elementals can manifest as mephitis as noted below.

**10<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Reduce the elemental's hit points to 100.

**12<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** The elemental is joined by 6 air mephitis (*Monster Manual 181*).

**13<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** As 12<sup>th</sup> level, but with 6 steam mephitis as well.

**14<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** No change from 13<sup>th</sup> level (6 air, 6 steam).

The death of the elemental force(s) will not detrimentally affect the engines but any PC with Knowledge (engineering) will be able to find the replacement window and fix it without need of a skill check. This fix will provide a bit more power to the ship and helps with the end scene immensely (it can make the difference between hitting the keep during the crash or barely missing it).

### 5. Broken Home (EL n/a)

*Ragged bedding covers the floor, turned over nests and perches filling this huge communal sleeping room. Several raptorans have bled their last amid the debris, their bodies trampled by whatever assault took their lives. Against the far side of the room, there are dozens of smaller beds, a children and fledgling sections that looks to have been similarly torn apart.*

What the PCs find in this room greatly depends on how long the PCs have taken to get to this part of the ship. You can reward the PCs for their quick progress (and/or for blowing the alarm whistle) by having the back of the room filled with living young raptorans and a handful of battered guardian adults. The harpies hit this room in a wave of death, tearing through everyone near the front entrance before abandoning the battle because of the approaching PCs or the sounded alarm. (They did this because they do not want to engage concerted resistance until they have wrested control of the ship and get it away from Radiant Hold.)

If the PCs have taken a long time to get here in your estimation, the harpies have ripped their way across the chamber and killed everyone, leaving only broken bodies and the tragedy of slain children for the PCs to find. Nothing else remains, no lives that can be saved.

Surviving raptorans are too injured and frightened to be of use to the PCs in battle but their information may be quite valuable. They can tell the PCs that the invaders looked like raptorans children but there were some serious differences. They were able to fly, which young raptorans are usually unable to do, and they were singing as they slaughtered. The song was hypnotic and many of the raptorans slain did not put up any kind of fight.

This may clue the PCs on to the harpies' true identities. If you wish, a Knowledge (nature) check may allow for the same revelation if the PCs get this information. Also, a Track check (DC 25) may glean enough details in this room to come to the same conclusion.

Let the PCs be heroes in this room if they wish, even giving them raptorans to heal or aiding the survivors in abandoning the ship if they prefer. The shape of their deeds is entirely up to them but give them the chance to be as heroic as they can be. This chamber is the perfect opportunity for them to engage in the kind of heroism that comes when combat is over.

### 6. The Nesting Place (EL 11)

*This wide-open chamber has a high ceiling overhead string with ropes and climbing poles. Five large columns rise twenty feet into the air, leaving a ten foot gap between their tops and the roof. On each one, a large nest of wood, cushions and straw has been built as a sort of literal "crow's nest".*

*Several bodies, some young and others older, lie scattered and dead on the dead, raptorans slain either from terrible wounds or from the impact of falling to their deaths. A few sport broken shafts of pale wood, arrows that have riddled their corpses from above.*

This room is the grim result of just one harpy's bloody work. Ashiira, a harpy archer, has systematically slain every raptoran in this room, hurling them down and firing arrows into the few who survived their fall. She has retreated into the middle pillar's nest to carve kill notches in her beloved bow as a testament to her "skill" and that is where she is when the PCs enter the room.

**Foe:** Ashiira is a deadly opponent with the advantages of height and distance on the PCs. She loves to kill weaker, more vulnerable opponents first and will not hesitate to put arrows in a fallen foe if she can do so safely. She will use every trick her equipment and skills provide, looking for the most kills she can achieve in the shortest period of time. After all, she thinks her magical necklace somehow makes her invulnerable, a belief that will be proven false much sooner than she thinks.

**Ashiira the Archer;** female harpy fighter 7; hp 105; *Monster Manual* 151

**Tactics:** Unless the PCs succeed in a Listen check (DC 20) to hear her carving in the nest, Ashiira gets a surprise round and uses it to fire a +2 arrow (add the bonus to attack and damage appropriately) at the least visibly-defended PC. After that, she dedicates her attacks to that target unless others pose a more visible threat.

**Development:** This fight is all about positioning and if the PCs have no good way to negate Ashiira's elevated position and cover, they may be in for a nasty battle. Keep in mind the penalties PCs will face if they must climb to reach Ashiira for melee attacks. Ashiira will not leave her defensible post, enjoying her cover bonus to Armor Class and unobstructed view for as long as she can.

When Ashiira is either captured (because she then uses what she *thinks* is a teleport power of her necklace) or killed, her necklace explodes, ushering in the downfall of the Aerie. Refer to the boxed text below when this occurs.

### Scaling the Encounter

For the most part, this encounter does not scale. Its purpose is to set the stage for the fall of the Brightwing's skyship and the end of safe days for these avian people. Even so, you can use the following adjustments if you want to keep things interesting for other levels of play.

**10<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Ashiira makes enough noise in the nest that she is denied a surprise round and instead is surprised when she looks up from its confines and sees the PCs.

**12<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** No change.

**13<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Ashiira's bow is enchanted with *shocking* as well as *frost*.

**14<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Ashiira has the 13<sup>th</sup> level additions *and* a single *arrow of slaying* (humans).

**Treasure:** Ashiira's equipment is all considered event treasure and can be distributed and divided freely among the PCs as they see fit. At the end of the scenario, it disappears but can be used without restriction until then. The items gained are: +3 *studded leather*, +1 *frost composite longbow* (+1 strength bonus), 6 *cold iron arrows*, 5 *silvered arrows*, 3 +2 *arrows*, *lesser bracers of archery*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of cat's grace*, *cloak of resistance +2*, *ring of protection +1*

### Downfall of the Aerie

As written, the doom of the Aerie skyship is caused by the death of Ashiira the Archer and the detonation of her necklace. If events during play would change this, run the scenario accordingly.

Once Ashiira's necklace explodes, all the others explode aboard the ship in a deadly chain of fireballs from one end of the vessel to the other. Because this happens prematurely, the ship does not drop in a sudden, deadly plummet as Seraphen had planned. Instead, the ship is crippled and will crash within moments but still has a chance to be steered away from the Hold and hundreds of innocent people.

When this happens, read or paraphrase the following:

*A blazing jewel around the archer's neck pulses brightly, revealing her to be a dark skinned woman with vulture's wings and taloned hands. A moment later, she is instantly consumed as the gem erupts in a ball of rippling fire. The ceiling of the nesting room is shattered open, flames gouting into the rest of the ship.*

*Elsewhere, several more explosions can be heard, each punctuated by the painful shriek of the dying. The ship lists suddenly, veering out of control as its hull is torn open many times!*

Once this is read, once it occurs, the race is on. Make it evident to the PCs that they are in a race against time now, their lives in danger as the ship begins to dive. Suggest that they can either try to get out of the ship or try to make their way to the steering room and save the vessel if they can. Do not emphasize either choice; let them make their own decision and live with its consequences.

If the PCs choose the road of self-preservation, they are bound to be disappointed. Turning back to get to the hold or seeking some other escape from the enclosed vessel, they are caught in the collapse of the ship from within as noted here.

*As you flee the doomed vessel, the wooden corridors around you buckle and writhe. Damaged sorely from within, the Aerie has become unstable and is collapsing inside its own broken hull. Timbers and iron shoring come crashing down around you in a rain of doom, bringing with them fire and smoke from the burning belly of the ship!*

*There is a roar of thunder, the crush of many tons and the sudden darkness of being smashed unconscious by it all...*

This may seem like an unfair and arbitrary way of incapacitating the PCs but this scene is as cinematic as any in the Covenant series. No permanent harm is being done to them and they will survive the scene as scene below.

If you are completely against knocking out the PCs without recourse to rules or saving throws, let them move through the ship as normal to the hold (as it is the only safe path out of the Aerie). Each round, they must make a Reflex save to avoid getting caught in a collapse. These do 5d6 bludgeoning damage and 3d6 fire damage each and act as a dragon's Crush ability with a grapple bonus of +16 and only the fire damage being continuous. These "traps" will not kill the PCs, just render them unconscious.

If the PCs (or just some of the PCs) escape this way, you will have to adjudicate the Attack on the Hold interlude below as you see fit. From a storyteller's standpoint, however, the scene plays much better if the PCs awaken together as given in the text.

## 7. Wheelhouse (EL 10)

*The passage to this room is marked by fires, holes in the deck where other harpies have exploded and critically damaged the vessel. Many other bodies litter the corridors on the way to this room, raptorans caught in the sudden blasts.*

*Once you reach this room, there is little left of it. The wheel has been blasted clean off the steering post, leaving only exposed gears and pulleys. Three charred skeletons, all of which may have been raptorans, smolder near the post, all that remains of the command crew of this once-proud ship. Without a wheel to guide the falling vessel, there may be no way to save her.*

If the PCs have chosen this path, they may be crestfallen to see what remains of the wheelhouse. There is no easy way to save the ship from a fiery descent into Radiant Hold below but there *is* a way. Several, in fact, if the PCs are clever enough.

The wheel can be restored by a *make whole* spell or similar magic. *Repair damage* magic will also work but *mending* will not as some of the damage is from fire. A DC 15 Search of the room will discover a small brass box on one wall with a scroll of *make whole* for just such an eventuality. This can be kept as event treasure if it is not needed for this scene.

A PC with Knowledge (engineering) or Craft (shipwright or something similar) can repair the wheel post and get back control of the ship.

A Small sized PC can breach into the broken post and steer the ship by pulling on the ropes and cables hidden there. This will achieve as much as steering would, especially since there is only a modicum of control that can be exercised at this point.

Other ideas the PCs come up with should be rewarded with success if they seem like they would have any chance of working. The point here is that the PCs think and use their resources to solve the "trap" of the ruined steering post. As long as they try, they should be allowed to succeed.

Unfortunately, steering the vessel is not the same as saving it. The ship is far too badly damaged to be rescued completely. It is going down, albeit at an angle, and the PCs will have to struggle not to take a goodly part of Radiant Hold with them.

This challenge is an extended Dexterity check (DC 25) with five rolls allowed. The following bonuses apply to the check:

- If the wheel has been repaired in some fashion, this adds +2 to the check.
- If any of the PCs wishing to help have Profession (sailor), they add +2 as if they were automatically using Aid Another.
- If any of the PCs are dragonmarked of House Lyrandar, they add +5 to the check.
- If there are any surviving raptorans in room 5, one of them comes to the wheelhouse and adds +2 to every check after the first one.
- If even one of the PCs has the "Favor of the Lady" story object (CVN – DM's Mark 2), all checks gain a +1 sacred bonus.

- If even one of the PCs has one of the “Blessing of the Sovereign Host” story objects, the first failed check succeeds automatically.
- If even one of the PCs has the “Faith of the Four” story object (CVN-9 Choir of Angels), they may retry one failed check.
- If any of the PCs have the “Traveller’s Boon” (CVN - DM’s Mark 8) story object, their total number of successful checks is increased by one after all checks have been made.

What happens at the end of this scene depends entirely on how many checks the PCs were able to make successfully. Just for making the attempt, they have saved many lives because their delaying the crash allows several raptors to evacuate the Aerie, carrying fledglings with them.

Use this chart to determine the outcome of the PCs’ desperate efforts.

# of Successes	Result
None	Unwieldy and barely controlled, the Aerie crashes into the north half of the Lord’s Tower keep before smashing through the northeastern wall. The damage is immense.
One	The upper two floors of the Lord’s Tower keep are smashed by the keel of the Aerie before it smashes through the northeastern wall. Though the damage is massive, loss of life is far less than it could have been.
Two	The roof of the Lord’s Tower Keep is caved in as the Aerie grazes it before smashing through the northeastern wall. Damage is extensive but few lives are lost.
Three	The Aerie is controlled enough in its crash to miss the Lord’s Tower keep completely. The ship still smashes through the northeastern wall but no lives are lost in the Hold.
Four	The Aerie only strikes the northeastern wall, piercing it halfway before splitting open and grinding to a halt. No additional lives are lost in Radiant Hold or aboard the ship.
Five	Control over the crashing skyship is good enough that it only glances the northeastern wall, splitting it open before it keel-lands in a long trench of rent earth a hundred yards from Radiant Hold. The ship is actually salvageable, though it may never fly again.
Six	(This result is only possible if every check was passed <b>and</b> the PCs benefited from the Traveler’s Boon story object) Somehow, through hard work and perhaps divine aid, the ship missed Radiant Hold completely. It can be salvaged and may one day take to the skies again. [In this instance, Seraphen’s troops have to breach the Hold themselves, a move that costs them many men and saves hundreds of Covenant soldiers.]

Once the end of the scene is determined above, move to the next section – Attack on Radiant Hold.

## Interlude: Attack on Radiant Hold (EL 11)

The crash of the Aerie is the signal Cryheart’s troops have been waiting for; they surge forward amid the smoke and confusion to breach the hold in a massive swarming assault. While the PCs languish in unconsciousness either in the wheelhouse of the Aerie or trapped somewhere inside her decks, a desperate battle is waged inside Radiant Hold itself.

This mass combat happens “off camera” while the PCs slumber but they are still going to play a decisive role. Let the Players sweat a bit before revealing that they wake up after the crash. This is a good point to announce a break, leaving the Players unsure as to their survival for a few tension-filled minutes.

When you are ready to proceed, read the following. (If the PCs are not on the ship’s bridge, be sure to paraphrase the details to something more appropriate.)

*Slowly, the smoke clears. Small fires still burn around you but the worst of the wreck appears to have passed. You all lie amidst the remnants of the ship’s wheelhouse, miraculously alive despite dreadful wounds and the evidence of a brutal impact as the Aerie came down.*

*But there is no rest for the righteous, it would seem. Somewhere outside, there is the ring of steel on steel, the terrible sound of blood being shed and the cries of pitched combat!*

The PCs have awakened near the end of the Battle of Blackheart’s Falling, not that it will be named that for some time to come. They can pull themselves free and take stock of their injuries but there is combat to be joined and they will not be able to dally long if they intend to join the fight.

The PCs are all at half the number of hit points they had when the vessel crashed (this arbitrary number reflects the impact damage they have suffered). They will have to drag themselves out of the wreckage (a process that will take a few minutes without adamantite weapons and the desire hack their way free) and when they emerge into the blood-dimmed tide of battle.

Once they are free of the ship's carcass, they can engage the enemy as described below. The rest of the fighting has already swept into the Hold and is nearly at an end but if the convoy about to reach Radiant Hold gets where it is headed, the defenders of Light and Good will suffer a terrible fate indeed.

*Two black iron carriages emerge from the jungle treeline, charging over broken ground and the dead alike as their dark, hell-horses surge as fast as flaming hooves can take them. The drivers of the coaches are inside their armored confines, protected from the sporadic arrow fire of the few defenders that have spotted them. From every slit and narrow gap in the carriages' armor plating, a sickly black vapor rises into the suddenly poisoned air.*

*With them, a powerful looking woman with blood-red wings flies overhead, a pale commander urging the steeds onwards to vile victory!*

These two coaches represent Seraphen's last stab at Radiant Hold, an attack he has saved until his siege forces were nearly all dead. The black fumes are a vile concoction Seraphen's cabal of Dark Six adepts made for him – a foul brew that turns any dead body it touches into a ravenous, wrathful undead. If the carriages get to the Hold, they intend to just ride into the carnage and explode, spraying their noxious loads all over the corpse-strewn battlefield inside. The results would be catastrophic.

**Foes:** Each of the carriages is being pulled by a herd of four nightmares, hellish horses drawn from the pits of Khyber itself. The lone driver inside each is a maddened cultist with no real combat ability except an explosive jewel like the ones in the harpies' necklaces from earlier. These insane marauders are fully aware of what will happen if they smash the jewels but they eagerly welcome death, believing the Dark Six will reward them for the evil their sacrifice causes.

The woman is actually Commander Faytahl, an erinyes warrior, and Seraphen's second in command. She will also fight to the death, knowing that if this last gambit is a failure, her dark lover is as likely to slay her for her incompetence as he is to forgive. She would rather die than disappoint him.

**Carnage Carriage Horses (8):** nightmares; hp 50 each; *Monster Manual 194*.

**Commanded Faytahl:** erinyes; hp 101; *Monster Manual 54*. Faytahl carries a +1 *unholy longsword* and wears just enough armor to add +2 as an armor bonus to her AC. Factor these changes into her statistics.

**Tactics:** Unlike most creatures of ineffable evil, these nightmares are quite willing and able to fight as teams. Each of the two groups will fight together, freeing themselves of their yokes as a standard action to surround chosen targets, aid each other and beat them down. The nightmares care nothing for their existence on this world and will fight to the death without hesitation, disappearing into rancid mist if killed.

If the nightmares are all slain, the drivers inside the carriages will exact the only revenge they can, detonating their carriages for 10d6 fire damage in a 20 foot radius around each coach. They are too crazed to think logically and will do this the moment the last nightmare falls even if no one is in range. The cultists might even catch Faytahl in this explosion, too insensate and mad to know or care.

The fellmist cauldrons inside will dissipate harmlessly into the air, only a danger to the PCs if there are humanoid corpses within 100 feet of the detonations. If there are, each one becomes a ghast in 1d4 rounds and immediately attacks the nearest living being.

This encounter does not scale, though if you want a tougher fight for 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> level PCs, replace the packs of nightmares with one *cauchemar* (also on page 194 of the *Monster Manual*) per carriage.

### When It's Over

The PCs have managed to keep the tide of battle from turning against Radiant Hold and can join the fight in its last stages if they wish. Radiant Hold would certainly be happy for the aid. This part of the scenario is best done as a summary as follows, though you are welcome to set them against a few token foes if you wish. Undead and humanoid enemies drawn from Eberron sourcebooks are perfectly acceptable in this instance but try to keep any actual combat short and swift.

*The broken wall of Radiant Hold is stained with the blood of defilers and the righteous alike. For what feels like hours, the battle to save her from the marauding waves of enemies uncountable is waged in every corner of the fortress. No one's blade is unstained, the Covenant's survivors counting themselves both lucky and blessed to be alive.*

As a rough estimate, the percentage of Radiant Hold's troops to survive this scene is 20% + 10% per success the PCs made on their control check for the Aerie's crash. Another 5% is added for each of the carriages the PCs managed to stop before they reached the Hold and detonated.

Amid the loss and fire, a likely familiar friend finds the PCs and bids them to follow him. The battle is still raging in some isolated corners of the fortress but their presence has been requested immediately.

*A sorely wounded raptoran with black feathers and taloned feet seek you out through the smoke of the burning courtyard. "Paragons, wait! I need to speak with you!"*

*Korvin, a scout for the Covenant of Light and one of Lord Corvalis' highest ranking commanders, moves quickly to you. "Please, come with me! The battle here is won but your presence is requested with all haste. Follow me, good folk."*

**Korvin**; male raptoran scout 12; hp 90

He leads the PCs to a small red tent in the middle of the Hold's courtyard. Inside, they see the following:

### **Somewhere, Over the Rainbow**

*Three acolytes, two human and one half-orc, surround a wide pile of cushions and pillows. Atop them, cut in more than a dozen places, is a glorious if gory sight. The rainbow serpent's wings are a myriad of scintillating colors, each hue matching a patch sewn into the acolyte's blood stained robes. This must be Shyyr-dahna, the Covenant's legendary couatl ally, seldom seen and often thought only a rumor.*

*The adepts are frantically trying to heal her wounds, none of which are responding to their magical or mundane attempts. Upon seeing you, the serpent lifts her head and in a surprisingly clear, feminine voice, says, "You are here at last. Leave us alone, my friends. I would speak with these champions alone."*

*Reluctantly, the adepts and Korvin leave the tent, permitting the near-divine being of Light the privacy she desires.*

The PCs are free to do as they wish in this scene, with most likely trying to help the couatl in any way they can (which is why they are considered heroes, after all). Unfortunately, her wounds will not heal because of the weapon used to inflict them and the terrible venom used on its blade. Because of this, her wounds are beyond mortal care.

*"Paragonsss, hear me. I need to ssssspeak on a matter of great import."*

*Before she can continue, an armored man in a glameweave tabard with the symbol of the Covenant of Light inset with glowing dragonshards strides through the opening of the tent. He sees Shyyr-dahna and his expression falls from concern to sorrow. "Is there anything we can do?", Lord Corvalis asks the couatl.*

*"Yesss, my friend, but not you. Your place issss here. These brave onessss must do the ressst."*

*Xandrin Corvalis rests his hand on the hilt of his sword, looking down and nodding sadly. "Of course. I must return to the fray then. There are still a few clusters of Seraphen's troops to deal with." He gestures for you all to come closer.*

*"I beg you all, no matter she asks you to do this day, do it. Give her whatever she seeks, go wherever she bids and perform whatever tasks she needs done, no matter what they might be. Please, swear upon the Light that this will be so."*

Xandrin is not bluffing. Many months ago, he spoke with Shyyr-dahna about this day and how it will end. He had always hoped it was just a possible future and not a true prophecy but now he knows the grim future is upon them both. By the next rising of the sun, one or both of them will be dead.

As soon as he gets their oath, he leaves the PCs to speak with the couatl in peace.

*Shyyr-dahna manages to lift her head up off the stained pillows. "He that attacked me issss sssstill here in the Hold, mortalssss. Corvalissss sssstopped him before he could sssslay me and took him captive. Though it hurtsss him to conssssider it, he feelsss he mussst put hissss old friend to death for the evil he hassss become.*

*"There issss another way. The fallen knight did not embrace the darknesssss willingly. His sssoul might sssstill be redeemed but the journal back to the light will be a long and difficult sssstruggle."*

*She looks at each of you in turn. "It issss not one he can take alone. For him to have a chance at redemption, many mussst make great sssacrifices to see it come to passs. Yoursss will be the firsssst. I assss you to undertake a perilous journey to sssstrike down the one who brought the Crying Heart to this dark end. I will aid you in sssslaying the foul beasst but I know not where he resssides."*

*Staring deep into your souls, she asks, "Will you do assss I ssssay?"*

If the PCs are the heroes they should be, they will accept without question. Shyyr-dahna gives each of them a single feather from her wings, bidding them to tie it to their weapon of choice or to their wrists if they "prefer magic to mundane toolsss". These feathers are detailed in the New Magical Items appendix.

Once they agree, she speaks to them again.

*“Ssseek out Corvaliss and ask to speak to the Crying Heart yourssselvess. He knows where his downfall began and with this knowledge, you can ssseek it out and put an end to it. Sssever his tie to hisss dark passst and a brighter future might ssstill be had. When the rajah is ssslain, bring my featherssss quickly back to me and I will know it hasss been done.”*

The adepts return at the sound of the couatl's suddenly hacking cough and bid the PCs to leave them to their work. It is obvious that they can do little for Shyyr-dahna but as her rainbow adepts, they are determined to try.

The PCs can find Xandrin easily; he is shouting orders to a ragged division of soldiers engaged in combat against a small handful of corrupt slayers trapped against the western wall of the Hold. They do not attempt to surrender and he offers them none, killing them to the last man before turning to see what the PCs require of him.

*“So she asked you to talk with Seraphen? Fine, but I warn you, though stripped and bound, he is as dangerous with his mind as any fully armed warrior could ever be. Speak with him if you like and get what you can from him.”*

*Then, reluctantly he adds, “Short of killing him, do whatever it takes to make him talk. Only his life is under my protection right now. The rest, I leave to your judgment.”*

He means it; Xandrin's patience and compassion toward Seraphen is at an end. He has seen too many friends and heroes die today for anything to be left in that regard. He actually would not be averse to letting the PCs kill Seraphen this very moment but his sense of honor will not let him go quite that far.

Blood-edged sword and battered shield in hand, he leads them to the Hold's prison himself. Along the way, he tersely answers any questions the likely confused PCs might have. This is where you can inform the Players about the nature of the attack on Radiant Hold, the duel between Xandrin and Seraphen and the events leading to his arrest.

Once they reach the holding cells, Xandrin takes the lead again. The guards do not question him when he tells them to let the PCs in to speak with the prisoner privately.

When you are ready to proceed, read the following section.

### **Chains of Steel and Shadow**

*In the middle of the room, a man sits bound to a chain by several steel chains. Manacles keep his hands behind him and his feet shackled to both front legs of the chair. Additional bands of steel around his chest and upper legs keep him firmly in the chair, each of them held shut with solid Mror-crafted padlocks.*

*Even so confined, a fierce look of defiance burns in the dark-haired man's eyes. Handsome despite several shallow cuts across his cheek and brow, Seraphen Cryheart looks up as far as his restraining collar will allow and smiles wickedly.*

*“Ah, more guests. Do forgive me if I don't offer you much by way of hospitality. I seem to have the only seat in the room.”*

Seraphen is fiercely intelligent and creative, having once been a bard before the pressures of war turned him into a knight and a soldier. He has a refined wit and an educated manner of speech, two things that should be conveyed in conversation.

Because they have every reason to believe the blackguard will be difficult with them, the PCs may well be inclined to bully, cajole or even beat what they want to know out of Seraphen. If they do so, they will be sorely disappointed. While Cryheart would love to see “paragons of Light” stoop so low, he is more than happy to tell the PCs where he fell from grace.

Read or paraphrase the following as soon as someone asks him what the couatl asked them to learn.

*“Did Shyyr-dahna send you all? I was getting lonely; how considerate of her. I'm almost glad I didn't quite manage to cut her sibilant, babbling head off... Almost.”*

*“What was that? Where can you find the black soul that did this to me? An excellent question! If my hands were free I'd draw you a map but it won't be necessary. My dearest friend Xandrin can tell you exactly where to go, though you'll have to tell him that it's the Flooded Fane you're after.*

*“That's where I met Rajah Saar'aakh and had my eyes opened to the realities of the world. I don't expect you Covenant drones to understand but maybe after meeting him, you will too. I doubt it, though. I definitely took the better part of him with me when I left him still chained to that lightstorm marble pillar. Oh, the look on his feline face...”*

*Seraphen laughs softly, a bitter sound that fills the room with an eerie unease. “You want him, he's all yours. Do mind the mess, though. I left a lot of my soldiers there and even if they're dead, they may still be cluttering up the place.”*

With the name of their destination in hand, the PCs are ready to begin their fateful journey. They are free to stay and talk with Seraphen if they wish but he becomes rapidly more sarcastic and cutting with them in conversation. He enjoys causing them discomfort and, truth be told, he is as eager for them to go kill the Rajah as Shyyr-dahna is to see the foul rakshasa lord finally dispatched from this world.

When they return to Xandrin, he leads them to the last stage of this interlude, the underground hangar of the vehicle they will be using to get halfway across the Xen'drik jungle in a matter of hours. Continue below.

### **Chamber of the Lady... Cannonball**

*The basement room Xandrin leads you into has been completely taken over by shelves and work tables. Supplies of a hundred different varieties cover the walls and much of the large chamber's floor space is occupied with alchemical experiments, engineering gear, an odd blacksmithing forge that does not seem to produce any smoke from its blazing hearth, and other production and experimentation facilities too strange to easily identify.*

*In the middle of the room, surrounded by a circular barrier four feet high, is a gigantic metal sphere with a dozen or more thick spikes protruding from its surface. On one side of the sphere, the seam of what might be some kind of doorway can be spotted and light appears to be emanating from within.*

*On top of the sphere, a small shape is jumping up and down, waving a polishing cloth covered in the dark stains of tarnish. "Hello there!" shouts the figure in an unmistakably gnomish voice.*

If the PCs have been here before, they recognize the room, the sphere and the gnome. Glitch is happy to see them even if he has never met them; he seldom gets visitors since his presence at Radiant Hold is technically a secret. Paraphrase the following text if the PCs have met Glitch before but keep him nice and verbose. He likes to talk and he is quite prone to tell people things they already know... over and over and over again...

*"Pleased to meet you! Say, isn't Lady Cannonball a beauty! She sure is, true enough. Are you the people I'll be taking in her to wherever it is you need to go? I assume so since I really don't get many visitors down here. Well, none really except Mister Xandrin here and he only comes down to scowl at me and ask me not to blow up the Keep! As if I'd do that, since the basic laws of compression clearly show that any explosion here so far underground would squash me into a pulp long before the blast could endanger the keep. Still, I just think he likes yelling at me. How about you all? You seem nice, so no yelling at me, okay? Okay!*

*"So I'm Glitch! Who are you all? Don't say much, do you?"*

"Lady Cannonball" is a tumbler, a magical conveyance that uses earth elemental energy to travel underground at incredible speeds. Though use of Lady Cannonball has always led to painful misadventures, this time will be surprisingly peril-free. The pain and danger will all be waiting for them at the end of the ride instead.

You are welcome to ad lib as much of the journey under the earth as you wish but getting them to the Flooded Fane is the end goal of this scene and it should not be delayed overmuch. As mentioned before, this scenario can run very long is not tightly controlled. Feel free to have fun but do not let the game run long in the process.

*The tumbler is a cramped but swift ride, taking you through the churning soil and stone of Xen'drik's underearth as quickly as Glitch can make her go. "Boy! This is great! I have never channeled so much power through the Lady before!"*

*Then, with a laugh, he points to a blinking jewel in front of him. "Great! That means we might be about to explode! Awesome! I wonder what happens if a tumbler explodes underground? Maybe we'll find out! Isn't this exciting?"*

Despite this ominous amusement, the tumbler does not explode. Instead, the PCs get to the southernmost edge of the Flooded Fen map (labeled Ruins of the Rajah in the Appendix) after four awkward hours of close-quartered near-death experiences.

# Part Two: Ruins of the Rajah

Once, these ruins were a vast city of stone, built by the giants of Xen'drik and conquered by an army of abominations led by a mighty rakshasa rajah named Saar'aakh. Black as night, with a soul just as dark, Saar'aakh bent giants and elves alike to his foul will and carved a quite sizable kingdom out of the jungle for himself. When the elves turned on their giantish oppressors elsewhere on the continent, a pair of couatls (of whom Shyyr-dahna was one) took the distraction as an opportunity to bring the rajah low.

Their efforts resulted in the city's sinking almost completely, the rising of a previously underground lake and the imprisonment of the rakshasa lord to a mystical pillar of lightstorm marble – a special stone focus that prevents evil magic from functioning in its immediate surrounds.

Now the Flooded Fane is mostly a curiosity, a set of sunken ruins that has yielded nothing to explorers aside from a few glyph-covered building tops and water-ruined relics of a lost age. The true power in the ruins, Saar'aakh, has remained hidden to all but a few cultists whose fevered dreams led them to this place and into contact with the captive rajah.

It was through them that Seraphen Cryheart learned of the evil creature back when he was a paladin of the Light. Determined to see its villainy at an end and woefully uninformed of the rakshasa's true power, he gathered a strike force and attacked the ruins with considerable, but doomed, righteous fury.

## 1. Sentinel Stones (EL n/a)

*This grey pillar rises out of the murky water at an angle, its weather-worn top still deeply engraved with runes and glyphs of ancient design. Hovering above the sharp terminus point of the four sided column, a stone head hovers and slowly spins. Carved in an abstract style, the head is worked to resemble a humanoid wearing a full helm, its glowing eyes visible through a pair of angular slits.*

At one time, these pillars were the giant city's early warning system and first line of defense. The pillars were a kind of construct, immobile but capable of detecting *invisible* and *ethereal* creatures as well as normal sight within 120'. Each one had *tremorsense* out to 60' and *blindsense* at 30'. The sentinel stones could attack autonomously, targeting Medium sized or larger creature that was not a giant or elf with twin blasts from its eyes (+15/+15, 5d6 force damage each). Lastly, they would generate a *shout* spell if any target survived a single round of attacks. This would have its usual effect but also served to warn the city of impending intruders.

Fortunately for the PCs, these stones were rendered mostly inert by the couatl pair when they destroyed the vile rakshasa kingdom. Now their heads spin impotently, once-dangerous guardians of a city that has long since been lost.

If you want to scare the PCs or make these would-be encounters more interesting, have the head stop and track one of them at random, its eyes glowing brighter as if it is going to attack but otherwise be completely harmless. There is no trap to disarm here and no monster to avoid but the PCs do not know that. Let them be cautious, since it is a good habit to be in, but eventually let them pass unharmed.

## 2. Tombs of Princes Past (EL 11)

*This building is tall enough to rise a considerable distance out of the water. It has many windows, each of which is a façade of sun-bleached stone and ornately wrought rusted iron trellises. The half-dead remains of what were once thick growths of flowering ivy still cover the windows, completely obscuring whatever might still rest within.*

This wide tower was the city's mausoleum long before the rajah came and conquered the giants that built it. In addition to housing the dead, it served as a point of pride for the city's inhabitants and functioned as a civic gathering point. When Saar'aakh took the city, he conjured a terrible form of plant life to grow over the royal tomb-tower, forbidding entrance into it and rendering it too dangerous for anyone to attempt to do so. This helped to crush the spirits of the city's survivors and secured the rajah's victory even more.

Now the tower serves as a deadly trap to anyone visiting the Flooded Fane. If the vines are disturbed physically, it awakens the dormant plant creature whose roots still twist through the corpses of the inhabitant of that window's room. Nothing of value exists in the mausoleum any longer; only death lingers there now.

**Foes:** Each of the crypt tower's interred dead has been turned into food for a greenvise, a deadly plant beast with a hunger for new victims. There are ten greenvise above the water's surface and dozens more beneath the still waves of the city's lake prison. If the PCs are wise, they will only have to fight one, none of them leave this building alone.

**The Princefeeder;** greenwise; hp 110; *Monster Manual II* 120.

**Tactics:** Each greenwise attacks the same way, only one being able to reach the PCs at any given time due to the size of the tower. They grapple as quickly as they can, lying low and pretending to be harmless foliage until a victim is in reach. Once they grapple, the swallow whole at the first opportunity, releasing their death fog to deter any attempts by other PCs to rescue its would-be meal.

This battle does not scale. The PCs are in for an intense battle at the Rajah's obelisk; this combat is just to illustrate the kinds of dangers these old ruins can pose to the unwary and those who would explore the ancient world of Xen'drik. There is no glory or treasure to be had in the Tombs of Prince's Past. Sometimes the dead should just be left alone to rot.

### 3. The Rajah's Obelisk (EL 12)

*This stepped dais rises out of the dark, swirling water, a barren platform with a single spire at its center. The pillar is glowing grey and white, a spinning ring of glittering crystals crowning its blazing point. Across the spire's surface, a dark shadow seems to flicker, constantly in motion as the light of the spire drives it away from its edges, forcing it deeper into its luminous recesses.*

The rajah has slept fitfully since losing part of himself to Seraphen, a slumbering malevolence trapped in the heart of this lightstorm marble pillar. Saar'aakh's confinement was once all but absolute but now that a fragment of the rakshasa's essence is free, he can manifest for short periods of time just outside the pillar itself. This occurs when the any PC gets within 60 feet of the pillar:

*A deep roar of outrage rings through the marble obelisk like crystalline thunder. The shadow darkens and intensifies, emerging from its depths like a summer squall of darkness and hate. The shadow manifests in a heartbeat, becoming a black furred feline humanoid more than ten feet tall. Bound to the pillar by glowing lines of energy around its neck and wrists, the figure is still free enough to slowly stalk towards you.*

*"I smell the stench of my enemies upon you! The human and the serpent send assassins to finish their work, yes?" The tiger-headed giant snarls viciously. "I will send you back to them in pieces!"*

**Foe:** This is Saar'aakh, the greatly diminished but still terrifically powerful rakshasa rajah that once claimed many miles of this jungle as his personal kingdom and domain. Now, determined to regain his former greatness, he will kill anyone who stands in his way. The PCs just happen to be first.

**Saar'aakh the Night Rajah;** male rakshasa; hp 77; *Monster Manual* 211. Saar'aakh is exactly as listed in the *Monster Manual* with a few notable changes. His AC is 27 (gaining a +6 deflection bonus), damage reduction is 15/epic, he gains Fast Healing 10 and most notably his claw attacks always benefit from *true strike* (adding a total of +28 to each attack roll) and inflict 3d4+3 instead of 1d4+1. Lastly, his residual near-divine power completely negates the first three successful attacks (be they melee, ranged, or spells that get past his Spell Resistance). They simply strike a shadowy barrier that weakens each time until it vanishes after the third hit.

This combat power comes at a cost; he has no ability to cast spells other than his innate *detect thoughts* and *change shape*. Saar'aakh was once far more powerful but time and confinement combined with Seraphen's "betrayal" has diminished him greatly. Even so, without the *scintillating feather tokens* given to them by Shyyr-dahna, the PCs would not stand much of a chance against him.

**Tactics:** Saar'aakh fights with abandon and rage until the second hit against his shadow shield. He switches to defensive combat and stays hostile until the third hit. If he survives that round, he tries to reason with the PCs, holding up one hand as if magnanimously granting them a royal audience. If they stop to listen, he speaks as follows. (He also seeks to parley if harried by ranged PCs as noted in Development.)

*"Hold a moment, heroes. I can see you are powerful, yes? Perhaps you are too great to be used as the pawns they would have you be? Listen and I will tell you we might both profit from this encounter, yes?"*

Saar'aakh will say or do anything to convince a PC to accept a "spiritual union". If a PC foolishly agrees, he or she immediately becomes the target of a *magic jar* spell (CL 15) without the benefit of a saving throw. The soul of the PC becomes trapped in the lightstorm pillar and the rajah is finally free. With a howl of victory, he *teleports* away, sparing the other PCs mostly because he forgets about them in the rush of finally escaping the couatl's trap. The PCs are free to leave now, though the chosen PC is effectively dead and gone. Such is the price of dealing with true evil.

If the PCs refuse and press their attack, Saar'aakh fights to the death. Destruction is, after all, another sort of freedom and he would rather taste oblivion than return to the pillar.

**Development:** Saar'aakh cannot physically move more than 30 feet from the lightstorm marble pillar, limiting him greatly against ranged foes. He will try to counter this by using the indestructible pillar as cover against such attacks but if there is more than one such foe, he may have no real defense. He has no ranged attacks of his own; this may be the best way to fight him.

## Scaling the Encounter

**10<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** The Rajah's powers are slow to awaken. He does not gain his +6 *deflection* bonus until round 2 and his melee claw strikes only do 2d4+2 damage per hit.

**12<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Saar'aakh begins the combat *hasted*, a condition that lasts 5 rounds.

**13<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** As for 12<sup>th</sup> level but Saar'aakh's melee attacks also inflict *blindness* as per the spell (DC 18 Will save).

**14<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** As for 13<sup>th</sup> level but in addition to *haste* and *blindness*, Saar'aakh can cast an *eldritch blast* one per round as a ranged touch attack. This blast is night-black, has a 60 foot range and inflicts 6d6 fire damage.

**Treasure:** There is nothing of value here for the PCs to claim when they defeat Saar'aakh. However, they do reap a potent reward for finally ending the life of such a potent and ancient evil. The moment Saar'aakh falls, rotting away into a billowing char of black ash and foul stench, the PCs immediately gain the Fourth Blessing of the Host story object.

*The radiance of the lightstorm marble pillar, prison of the dark rajah for centuries, washes over you as its power can finally be released to return to the heavens above. Its glory passes through you, a celestial song of triumph and gratitude that echoes through your souls long after the light has faded away.*

The rakshasa rajah is gone but there is still much work left to do. Glitch is waiting for the PCs when they return from the Flooded Fane, a speedy journey that will also amazingly be without incident.

## Interlude: The Dying of the Light (EL n/a)

That is, unless one counts Glitch surfacing right next to the courtyard dais in Radiant Hold an incident. The gnome has taken Xandrin Corvalis' orders to bring the PCs "right back home so they can see the couatl without delay" literally, putting them within a few second's walk of the serpent lady's tent. The emergence of the tumbler in the heart of their citadel will cause the defenders of the Covenant some concern but the few people who know of its existence will be able to calm the battle-agitated guards of the fortress down.

*The moment your ride opens, you see Lord Corvalis, armor stained with the signs of many battles, and a small group of soldiers right outside. Instead of coming up in the Hold's basement, you are in the open air of the fortress' courtyard, much to Xandrin's obvious irritation.*

*"You," he says angrily as he points at the gnome, "I'll talk to you in a moment. For now, your passengers have somewhere they have to be." Motioning for his guards to stand down, he gestures for you to disembark quickly.*

*"Paragons," he says with a touch of fatigue in his voice, "I pray you bring news of victory."*

Assuming they have defeated the rajah and not just allowed him to go free, Xandrin reacts with emerging hope and even manages a tired smile. He bids them follow him to Shyyr-dahna's tent as fast as they can go. There is not much time left for the dying couatl and he knows it.

*"Go inside and remember your oath to me. You have made me very proud of you but the worst is yet to come. Light be with you all."*

Describe the scene inside the tent by paraphrasing the text from the time the PCs were here before. Only one rainbow adept remains. Her name is Brigitte and she has been serving the couatl at Xandrin's request. Though she is utterly devoted to her "master" Corvalis, she has learned much from Shyyr-dahna in her short time with the couatl and the young girl's life has been changed forever by the experience of knowing her.

**Brigitte;** female human rogue 2/cleric 1; hp 18

The other two much older adepts are sleeping off their utter exhaustion in the barracks to the west. The remaining adept looks as if she is about to drop as well but is stubbornly refusing to leave her mistress' side. Out of courtesy to her adept's devotion, Shyyr-dahna does not ask her to step out of the tent before addressing the PCs.

*"Sso good to ssee you return, paragonsss. You have do all I have assked and more than I had dared hope wasss possbile. I am pleasssed, sso very pleasssed."* A wracking cough that undulates through the rent serpent body of the rainbow fletched couatl interrupts her for a moment.

*"Pleassse press the featherssss I gave you back into my wingssss. I mussst have all my sstrenth for what isss to come."*

*The couatl looks up at each of you, her head not lifting off the pillows as she did before. "You have ssevered the tie as I asked but this only givesss the Crying Heart a chance at redemption. For him to take it, the dark power forced upon him by the rajah must be desstroyed as well. The blood of the rakshasssa flowsss in his veins."*

*She glances at the adapt beside her. "It isss time. I need but one lassst ssservice, sssweet child."* Her tail strokes the young priestess' face affectionately before falling to the cushions. Sorrow falls like a shadow over the girl's face as she nods, tears in her eyes while she walks toward you. In her hands, she bears a golden chalice and a crystal knife.

*"Only my heart'sss blood, taken from me willingly, can disssolve the darknesss in him. Ironic, isss it not, that had he ssslain me, hiss only chance at absssolution would have been lossst."*

Shyyr-dahna is in fact asking the PCs to sacrifice her life and use her blood as an elixir to free Seraphen from his spiritual bondage. She is dying anyway and will not live to see the sun again but she is determined to serve the Light even to her last breath. Nothing can undo the evil that Seraphen Cryheart has done but if she can redeem him with her death, she will submit to the knife without hesitation.

This may be a terrible quandary for the PCs and the scene should be allowed to run as long as it must. Some will understand the necessity of the sacrifice while others will rail against the idea of killing Shyyr-dahna even if she is asking them to do so. Some may even question the value in redeeming such a bloody-handed killer. Let them speak to Shyyr-dahna all they wish but keep in mind the facts of the situation.

Only a *miracle* spell, something the Covenant has no access to at this time, could save Shyyr-dahna and now that Saar'aakh is dead, she would only be returning to her celestial homeland anyway. This is merely a physical death for her; her spirit will be free to go home and be with her slain mate at long last. She is more than willing to explain this to the PCs, though she had hoped their sense of honor and their oath to Xandrin would be enough to get them to do as she has asked.

Also, only the PCs can perform this macabre task. They were the ones to slay Saar'aakh and the power of the lightstorm marble pillar is still within them. They are as important to the sacrifice as the couatl herself. If they do not do this, no one else can.

**DO NOT** force the PCs to sacrifice Shyyr-dahna if they refuse to do so. Though she will be saddened at this lost chance to redeem Seraphen, she believes in free will and cannot coerce the PCs any more than she already has. *"Very well. If you will not do thiss, there isss no freedom for the Crying Heart but that of death. Please go tell Corvaliss that darknesss fallsss. He will understand."*

If the PCs agree to perform the sacrifice, Brigitte will attend to them and show them where to cut so as to cause a swift death and the least pain possible. Shyyr-dahna thanks them for their actions, whispering that she can finally go home and when they strike, she dies peacefully. A channel in the knife causes the blood to flow easily into the chalice, filling it almost perfectly to the rim before it stops and the great servant of the Light fades away into prismatic motes of joy and sweet release.

### **Warning! Mature Content Involved!**

No matter how you look at it, this scene is mature even for a roleplaying game setting intended for an older gaming audience. Blood rituals and sacrifice are not normal topics associated with heroic roleplay except when being performed by villains the PCs hopefully thwart before anyone gets hurt. When the knife is in their hands, so to speak, things change considerably.

Please be certain your Players are capable of handling the disturbing nature of this scene. If you have any doubts, feel free to change it in any way you see fit. The crystal knife may be omitted altogether and the chalice intended to catch the couatl's tears of compassion before she fades away.

Shyyr-dahna should die at the end of this scene no matter how you choose to run it. Hers is the last act of kindness, the dying gasp that can save a tortured soul. That is a theme any Player or PC should be able to handle with ease.

One way or another, the PCs will be set to return to Xandrin either with a chalice of the couatl's glowing blood or with her cryptic message to deliver (preferably the former). Proceed to the section below entitled, "Let This Be Our Final Battle" when you and the PCs are ready.

## Part Three: Let This Be Our Final Battle

The setting for this final scene is the private chambers of Lord Corvalis himself. Though the PCs may not feel any specific sense of urgency in getting their burden to Xandrin, this will change as soon as they get to the Lord's office and hear the sounds of battle being waged. Describe the journey through the grand keep all the way to its topmost floor (which may be considerably damaged, depending on how successful the PCs were at saving the Aerie).

If the PCs scored fewer than three successes on guiding the Aerie down, the map for this scene will have to be modified. At two successes, there are large chunks of debris everywhere in the office and bedchamber area and holes in the ceiling. One success means that the office and storage rooms are completely caved in and impassible. If the PCs got no successes at all, this scene takes place in an open air rooftop ruin with only partial walls and shattered furnishings all around.

### 1. Entry Hall (EL 10)

*A strong oak door bars entry into Lord Corvalis' office and chambers. The lock and handle are gleaming steel and the hinges are capped in polished bronze. A glittering symbol of the Covenant of Light is inlaid on the door front, a foot wide representation of the Starred Shard that hovers over the courtyard outside.*

The PCs can knock as loud as they wish; Xandrin is quite preoccupied inside with Seraphen's sudden arrival. To get inside, they will have to get past the locked (DC 26 to pick) and trapped door (noted below). If the PCs turn to leave or intend to find someone else to let them in, catch their attention with the sudden sound of combat in Xandrin's bedchamber. That should motivate them to take the "direct approach" and get inside however they can.

The door has a non-fatal but very effect trap on it. Getting past this enchanted barrier will require great skill, magic or bullsh endurance.

**Stunning Trap:** CR 10; psionic device; proximity trigger (alarm); automatic reset; divine spell effects (*symbol of stunning* and *magic mouth*\*\*); 13th-level cleric, DC 21 Fortitude save negates); multiple targets (up to 17 creatures); Search DC 10\*; Disable Device DC 30.

\* This trap is especially easy to find.

\*\* This component of the trap announces in a loud voice inside Lord Corvalis' office and bedchamber, "*Attention. Someone is attempting to gain entry. Attention.*"

### 2. Lord's Office (EL n/a)

*This room is quite cluttered, showing both sighs of attempts to organize massive stacks of parchments and tomes along with piles of documents haphazardly situation around a huge bronzed wood writing desk against one wall. Two flickering lanterns shed a surprising amount of light in this room, illuminating more than a dozen maps tacked to the wood-lined stone walls and an empty bird cage hanging in one corner.*

This is Xandrin's personal office and, in recent months, has suffered from his preoccupation with combat training and direct leadership over the Hold's garrison of troops. While he does allow trusted aides and friend into this room, he asks everyone who visits to leave the chamber alone. The utter mess here is actually a functional filing system for him and while it may seem like sheer chaos, he can find anything he needs in a matter of moments. Usually.

The bird cage is a gift from Lady Lirashana, the celestial head of the faction, and he keeps it here to honor her. Though it appears empty, it contains a small *gate* that leads to the lady's home realm. Whenever she wishes to contact him or just send him messages (it is rumored that some of these are actually love notes), a fledgling phoenix appears in the cage to deliver them.

### 3. Storage (EL n/a)

*If the office outside seemed messy, this small room looks like a cyclone has struck it. Overstacked bookshelves, overflowing boxes and hundreds of containers ranging from urns to ewers can be found here, all arranged in no apparent order to speak of.*

Everything Xandrin does not immediately need gets stored here wherever he can find room. Over many months, this collection has become so eclectic that even he is unsure what all is in here now. It would take hours and careful searching to find anything of use here; even Xandrin would be hard-pressed to locate a specific document or potion vial in less than several minutes.

If you think the PCs have any specific needs for the battle ahead, this room is the perfect place to have them find such items. Even if they are dead set on heading to the sound of the combat, you may be able to entice them to investigate this room by describe some exotic glow of letting them glimpse whatever treasure you wish them to acquire.

This room is where Xandrin was keeping Seraphen's captured items. If the PCs investigate the room, they will find a steel chest, seemingly torn open by hand, completely ransacked and empty.

### 4. Waiting Room (EL n/a)

*A well appointed sitting room, this chamber contains three high backed chairs, a lounging bench, a low table with a pitcher of clear water and a bowl of candied fruit and a small basin for freshening up in one corner under a silvered mirror on the wall.*

This room is exactly as it appears to be and some Players may recognize it as a place their characters have been many times while waiting to speak to Xandrin during past missions for the Covenant. The room is of no special interest and the PCs will likely not waste any time here.

### 5. Secret Stair (EL n/a)

*This narrow hallway has a door that was likely once concealed but hangs open now, revealing the stairs behind it completely. The stairwell seems to head down into the lower levels of the keep, a secret passage that someone has recently used to gain entrance to Xandrin's chambers. Even at a distance, the smell of blood is quite strong from within.*

On his way out of his prison cell, Seraphen slew his guards and made his way to this secret staircase, knowing from past experience that it lead directly to his old friend's office and bedchamber. Though there were guards posted halfway up on a landing, they were no match for Cryheart's rakshasa-infused strength and they were messily dispatched.

The PCs can find the two hapless guards and a trail of carnage leading back to Seraphen's cell if they wish to track it but they are far more likely to follow the sounds of combat and make their way quickly to the Sun Room and the balcony beyond it where the blackguard and their paladin Lord are doing battle.

### 6. Washroom (EL n/a)

*Ornamented in silver, bronze and white marble, this water closet is fairly opulent, easily big enough for two, especially the inset warming tub and flowing water fixtures.*

There is little to be said for this room; it is what it is. The only feature of note about it is a small stain of blood near the door. Seraphen came across Xandrin as he was coming out of this room. Though he did not immediately draw his blade and attack his old friend because of an inner conflict against striking an unarmed opponent (old moral habits die hard, even in a corrupted soul), Xandrin ended up cutting himself on some of Seraphen's armor spikes when he tried to break for his bedchamber and the sword rack there.

### 7. Bedchamber (EL n/a)

Just before the PCs arrive at this room, tell them that they hear the shattering of glass. The duel between Xandrin and Seraphen has broken through one of the windows in the Sun Room and made its violent way out onto the Balcony.

*This shattered room contains a full four poster bed, now only three posters because one has been cleaved through and lies in a tangle of fallen curtains beside the mattress. There are bloodstains spattering the floor, leading from the front door past the bed and across to an overturned, empty weapon rack. Broken heirlooms, splintered pictures and rent furniture cover the floor in shards of wood and glass.*

This room has suffered greatly at the hands of Seraphen and Xandrin, bearing the deep marks of large blade being swung in desperate arcs by both combatants. Even without armor, Xandrin is a potent combatant and Seraphen has found it difficult to score a telling blow on his old friend. This bedroom has paid the price of the blackguard's frustration. The battle's move to the Sun Room has as much Xandrin's attempt to save what few memories he still has intact as it was because of the press of combat.

#### 8. The Sun Room (EL n/a)

*A many sided room with large full-height windows in an array of colored plates, this room is bathed in tinted moonlight. One panel is in pieces, however, shattered outward and completely ruined. Past it, the sounds of pitched battle can be heard!*

Each of the stained glass panels here tells a different story. The first, the one facing southwest, is an image of the Lady Lirashana rising over a battlefield at the end of the Last War. The south one has a beautiful mosaic of small glass pieces forming a gathering of warriors and priests to receive the Lady's blessing. The broken pane once showed an image of the founding of Radiant Hold, a fitting image to have been shattered by the terrible duel taking place on the balcony.

The last panel of stained glass, the one facing east, is a prophetic image given to Xandrin by the Lady and never explained. It shows the Starried Shard as if exploring, hundreds of smaller fragments all hovering and shining with an inner light of their own.

#### 9. Balcony (EL 12+)

*This once peaceful overlook is bathed in both moonlight and blood. Its view encompasses the courtyard outside and the surround countryside that stretches like a sea of dark emerald silk for miles around. Against the eastern railing, the last act of a terrible battle is taking place just as you arrive!*

This is where you as a Covenant of Light DM get to make a very fateful choice for the faction. Choose one of the following two passages to read next, keeping in mind your Players and your own desires in how the future of the Covenant of Light will play out from this moment forward.

#### **Choose either:**

##### **Passing of an Age**

*There is a flurry of steel, a clashing cry as an ancient holy sword strikes edge to edge with a blade of utter evil. The scream of relics light and dark fills the open air as both seek to withstand the inexorable force of the other. For a moment, Lord Corvalis stares up at his long lost friend, eyes beseeching him to turn away from this terrible path.*

*Then the runeblade in the blackguard's hand reaps a horrid swath through both relic and bearer, shattering the sacred blade and cutting down the paladin that wielded it. Xandrin Corvalis drops to his knees, a deep wound in his shoulder and neck. "... pray you find peace now, my... friend..." escapes Xandrin's paling lips as he falls backward, tumbling from the balcony to the cold stone far below.*

*"I'm glad his end had an audience," Seraphen says as he turns to face you. "A shame you won't live long enough to speak of it."*

#### **OR**

##### **Merciful Heavens**

*There is a flurry of steel, a clashing cry as an ancient holy sword strikes edge to edge with a blade of utter evil. The scream of relics light and dark fills the open air as both seek to withstand the inexorable force of the other. For a moment, Lord Corvalis stares up at his long lost friend, eyes beseeching him to turn away from this terrible path.*

*Your approach has not gone unnoticed, however. With a roar of rage, Seraphen pulls his runeblade away from the sparking, deeply scored sword in his former master's hands. A sudden lash with his clenched fist catches Xandrin by surprise and drops him to the balcony floor unconscious.*

*"You I'll kill later," the blackguard hisses. "These pawns of yours I'll slaughter right now."*

Either way, the final battle of Seraphen Cryheart is at hand. This time, it is the PCs who must bring him to the justice he has evaded for so long. This may be the toughest combat the PCs have ever faced and if they feel that way when you run it, you have done your job perfectly. This conflict should feel epic; do whatever you must to make this conflict seem epic for your players. Keep in mind that no matter what level the PCs are, Quietus has been damaged and acts merely as a +2 adamantite greatsword.

**Foe:** For all his madness, Seraphen is a master tactician and an incredibly powerful warrior in his own right. While his battle with Seraphen has depleted him of his recently rakshasa-given strength, he still has most of his own resources and abilities to draw upon in combat. The extent of his power is dependent on the average level of the PCs but no matter how potent and capable they are, he is going to give them a battle to remember!

**Seraphen Cryheart, Scourge of the Light;** male human bard 1/ex-paladin 7/blackguard 10; hp 110; See Appendix for Combat Statistics. Note that he has no blackguard spells left to him for this fight. They have all been spent in his escape and the dual with Xandrin.

## Scaling the Encounter

**10<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** Seraphen's runeblade has been badly damaged in the battle with Xandrin. It only acts as a weapon listed in the Combat Appendix and it has no darksoul venom.

**12<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** As 10<sup>th</sup> level but the darksoul venom is intact.

**13<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** As 12<sup>th</sup> level but Seraphen enjoys one last burst of dark power from the death of the rakshasa rajah. His first attack roll against the PCs automatically hits and threatens a critical hit.

**14<sup>th</sup>-Level Characters:** As for 13<sup>th</sup> level but the attack is an automatic critical hit, likely resulting in massive damage to the first unlucky PC struck.

**Development:** Seraphen is playing for keeps here. He is no fool; he is behind enemy lines and in full view of dozens of Covenant guards. Even if he defeats the PCVs, he will never make it out of this fortress alive and he knows it. As such, he has entered a sort of death trance. Inwardly horrified at what he has either done to his best friend (or intends to do if Xandrin is still alive), he subconsciously wants to die and welcomes it with corrupt, open arms. The PCs will have to put him down to end this battle.

Pay attention to Seraphen's hit points. If the PCs take him -10 or lower, he will simply die and cannot be redeemed even if they have Shyyr-dahna's blood and give it to him immediately. At 0 to -9, he is still alive and can be forced to drink the elixir if the PCs choose to administer it. Seraphen will **not** drink it willingly under any circumstances.

Once he is forced to drink the elixir of blood, his body convulses and he exhales a horrific cloud of bilious black vapor that screams and claws at the air like a shadowy, feline wraith before breaking up and disappearing. Though his soul is free and technically redeemed, it will be a long time before Seraphen comes to terms with the things he has done (especially if he murdered Xandrin just as the PCs arrived as noted in the scene above).

If Seraphen dies during this battle, he cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*. The dark powers that watch over him claim his soul as a last act of mockery against the Light. If this happens, he truly is lost. Though he may someday return from the grave to haunt the Covenant again, he will never be redeemable again. This is his one and only chance.

Once Seraphen falls, either to be saved or slain, proceed to Ending the Adventure.

## Ending the Adventure

When the battle ends, regardless of the outcome, the scenario draws to a close. Just how things conclude is up to you and depends largely on who is alive, who is dead and whether Seraphen Cryheart has been redeemed. No matter what the outcome of this scene and this adventure, the PCs are treated as great heroes by the Covenant, even if their actions would not have earned them such a reputation.

The members of the faction only know that the PCs have embarked on a great journey to stop a terrible evil and then returned to defeat the blackguard Cryheart. This makes the PCs the heroes of the hour, even longer if either or both Seraphen and Xandrin are slain. With such a void in their leadership, the faction might well be looking to the paragons for guidance in this dark time...

...but that is a tale for another day.

Here ends **Greater the Fall**.

# Adventure Questions

- 1. Which best describes the apparent attitude of the PCs toward their mission during the scenario?**
  - a) The PCs were totally professional and seemed genuinely interested in upholding the faction's goals during the mission.
  - b) The PCs were motivated but seemed to be more interested in rewards than in serving the common good or their faction's needs.
  - c) Aside from the desire to earn experience and get another mission "over with", the PCs did not seem to have any motivation at all.
  - d) They were completely disinterested and had no desire to perform this task at all.
  
- 2. Did the PCs constantly monitor their surroundings during the mission for clues and leads?**
  - a) If there was a hidden coin under an alley rock, the PCs would have found it.
  - b) They maintained a strong vigilance but there were things they could have found and did not (such as the Wail of the Banshee trap or the six-sided coin).
  - c) The PCs only found things that snuck up and hit them in the face.
  
- 3. How did the PCs fare in the task of saving the Aerie and its raptorans?**
  - a) They did very well. Radiant Hold was only slightly damaged or not directly harmed at all.
  - b) Radiant Hold and the ship both suffered serious damage but lives lost were kept minimal.
  - c) There was severe damage to both the Hold and the Aerie but the PCs at least tried to save both.
  - d) The PCs cared only for themselves and tried to abandon ship.
  
- 4. Did the PCs behave appropriately when they met with Shyyr-dahna?**
  - a) They did. The PCs were every inch the paragons of Light they are expected to be.
  - b) There were a few incidents of poor behavior but for the most part things were calm.
  - c) The PCs were rude and self-serving, alienating Shyyr-dahna while still managing to get sent on their mission to the Flooded Fane.
  - d) Either by choice or by poor behavior, the PCs were unable to get anything useful from Savya.
  
- 5. How did the PCs handle themselves during the strike against the Rajah?**
  - a) Constantly heroic, constantly maintaining their morals and good alignments, the PCs handled themselves admirably and defeated the ancient feline evil without serious losses.
  - b) Things got ugly in places but the PCs handled themselves well and emerged victorious.
  - c) The PCs were unable to get to or past this step; Saar'aakh was too much for them to handle.
  
- 6. How did the PCs deal with the moral choice of sacrificing Shyyr-dahna?**
  - a) As paragons of Light and virtue, the PCs kept their oath and ultimately did as the lady asked.
  - b) Though they swore an oath to Lord Corvalis, the couatl just asked too much and they could not bring themselves to do what she wanted.
  
- 7. What was the outcome of Let This Be Our Final Battle?**
  - a) Lord Corvalis lived, Seraphen was defeated and then redeemed through Shyyr-dahna's blood.
  - b) Lord Corvalis died, Seraphen was defeated and then redeemed through Shyyr-dahna's blood.
  - c) Whether Xandrin lived or died, Seraphen was slain and not redeemed.
  - d) The PCs were simply outclassed and defeated by the fallen knight.
  
- 8. How would you rate the group's roleplaying?**
  - a) Exemplary! Everyone was in character and having a grand time.
  - b) Good! Most of the Players were enjoying themselves and acting in character.
  - c) Decent. There was some in-character action but not a considerable amount.
  - d) None! The game was little more than tactical decisions and dice rolling.

# Story Objects

## **"Brightwing's Boon"** (Story Code: EXCL32)

*You have saved the last members of the Brightwing raptoran clan from a terrible fate. You will forever be remembered among them and whenever you go, you carry their gratitude and best wishes.*

This story object unlocks the following rules items:

**Base Class:** scout (Complete Adventurer)

**Prestige Class:** *skypledged, stormtalon* (Races of the Wild)

Where necessary, the requirements of being raptoran and having some form of flight are waived for these classes. The survivors of the Brightwing tribe will teach this lore to you out of sheer gratitude, treating you as one of their own. The ability to fly is not conferred by this story object and will be needed to make the most of its benefits.

## **"Fourth Blessing of the Host"** (Story Code: EXCL33)

*The Powers that Be bless the members of the Covenant of Light according to their worth. The forces of Good have been watching you closely and deem you worthy of their highest recognition.*

*You have received an invisible mark on your brow shaped like the Sovereign Host's symbol.*

*This sigil, only visible to full and half celestial beings, brands you as a truly champion of the Light. If you possess no other Blessing story object, you may cast cure moderate wounds three times each day.*

*If you possess the First Blessing or Second Blessing story objects, once per day, you can also invoke an aid spell as a spell-like ability in addition to powers from the other Blessing.*

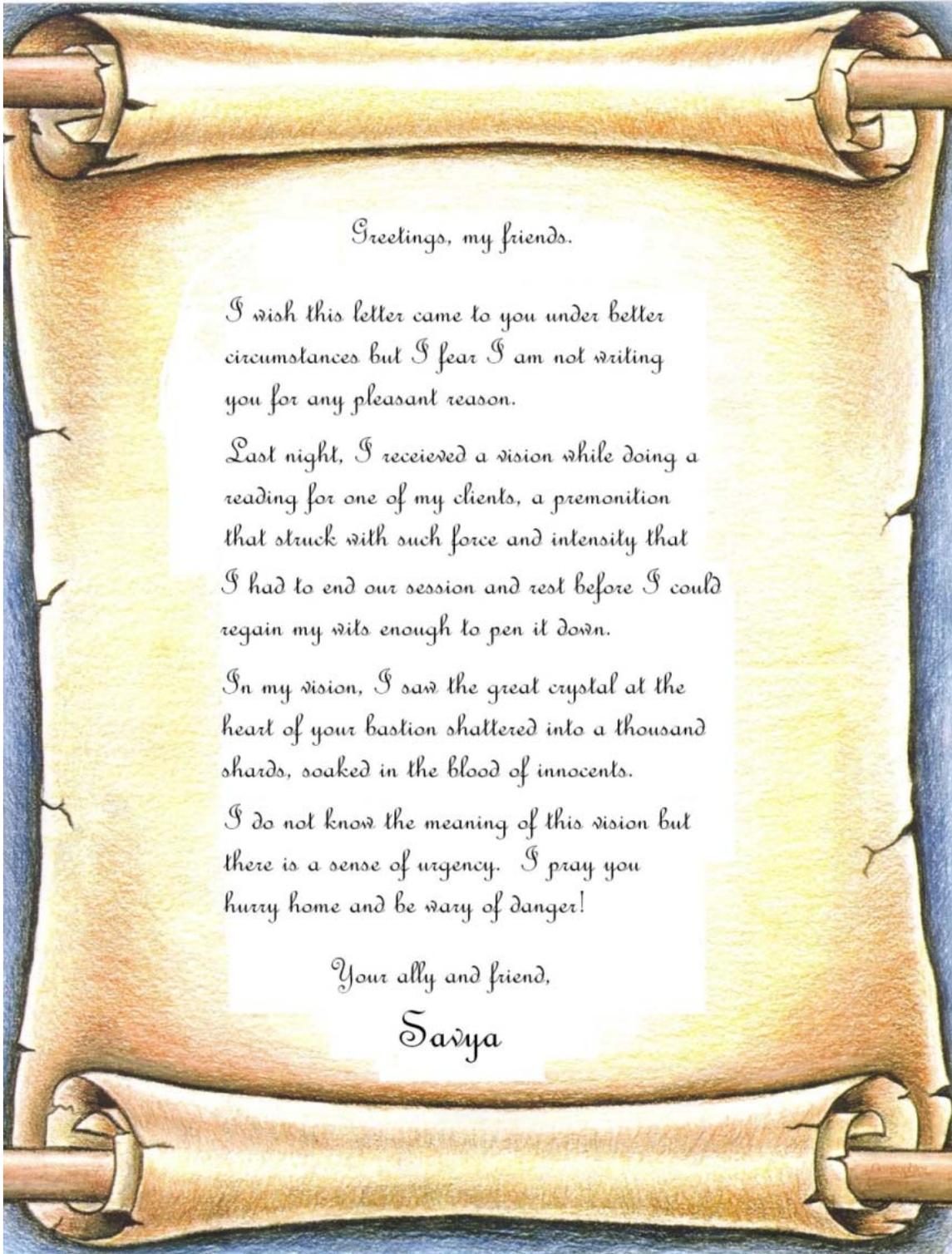
*If you possess BOTH the First Blessing and the Second Blessing, you receive the powers listed above and also gain the ability to cast protection from evil twice a day as a spell-like ability.*

*If you possess ALL THREE previous Blessing of the Host story objects, you gain the ability to utter a holy word (as per the spell) once per day.*

*The caster level of all spell-like abilities gains from these story objects is the same as your character level. This story object supersedes all prior Blessing of the Host objects.*

# Appendix One: Player Handouts

## Player Handout One



*Greetings, my friends.*

*I wish this letter came to you under better circumstances but I fear I am not writing you for any pleasant reason.*

*Last night, I received a vision while doing a reading for one of my clients, a premonition that struck with such force and intensity that I had to end our session and rest before I could regain my wits enough to pen it down.*

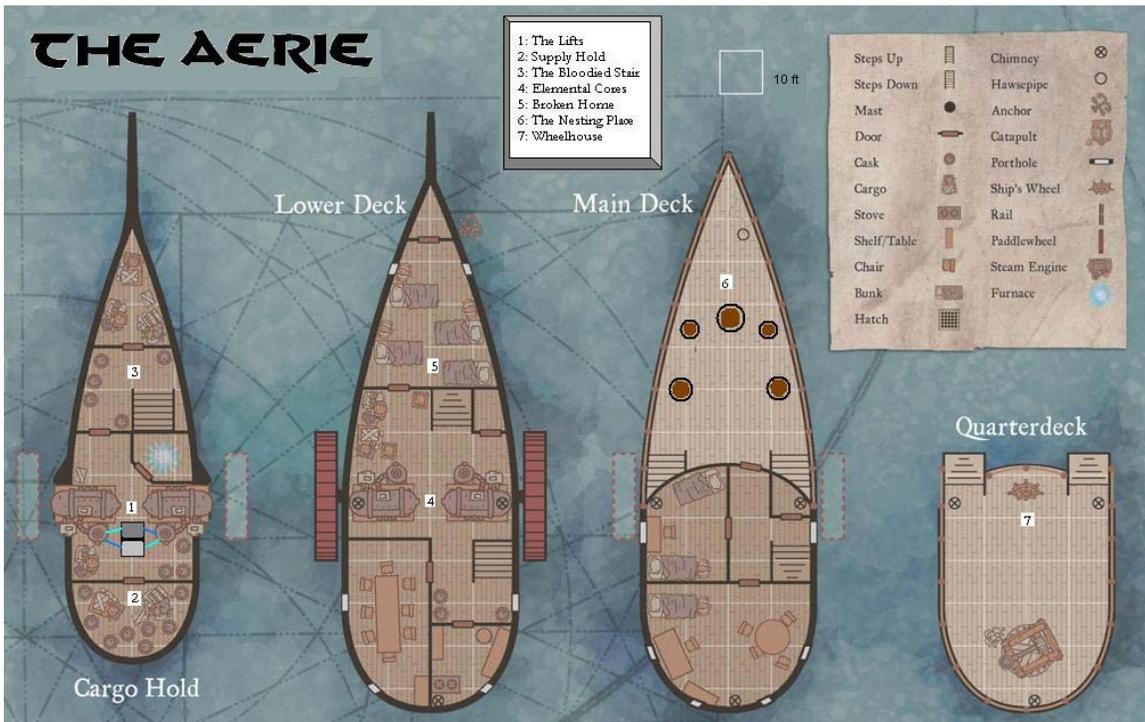
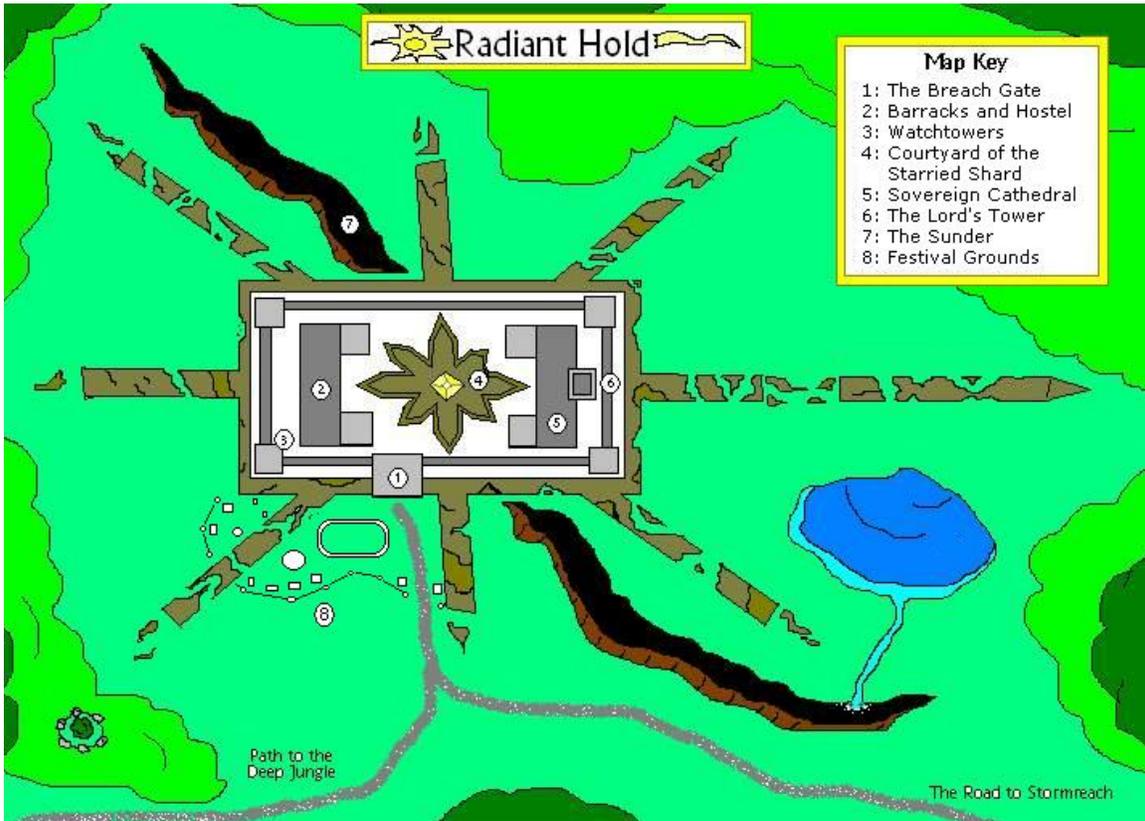
*In my vision, I saw the great crystal at the heart of your bastion shattered into a thousand shards, soaked in the blood of innocents.*

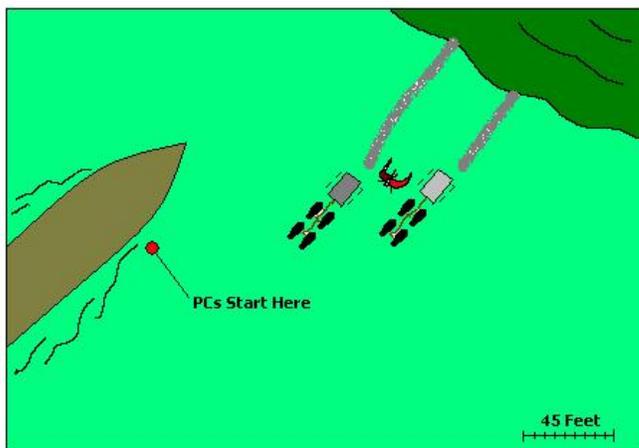
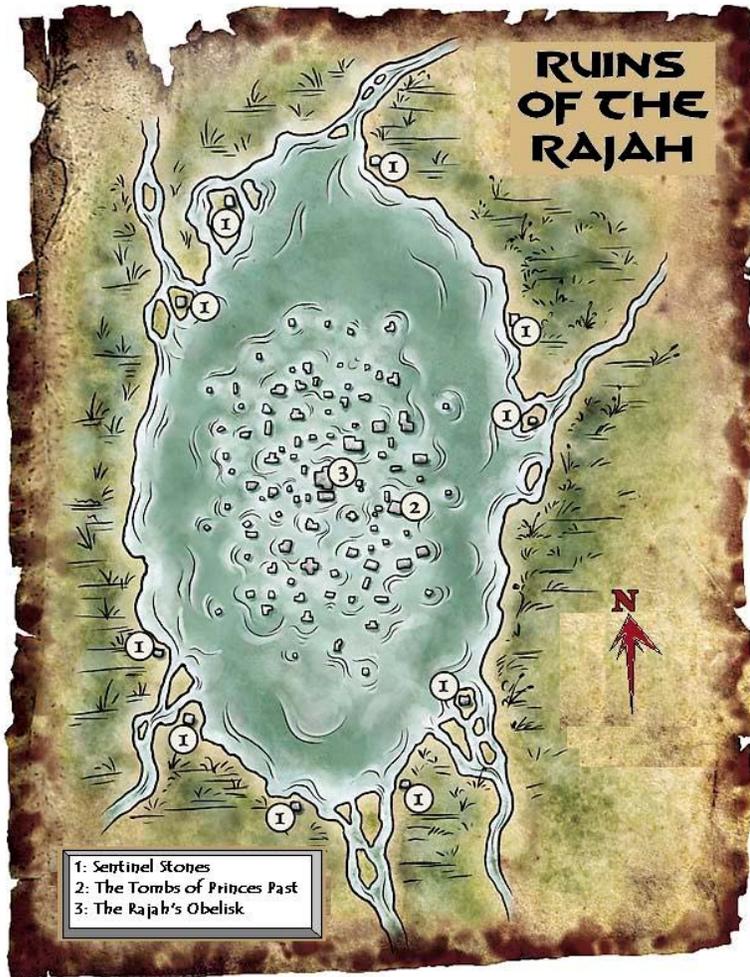
*I do not know the meaning of this vision but there is a sense of urgency. I pray you hurry home and be wary of danger!*

*Your ally and friend,*

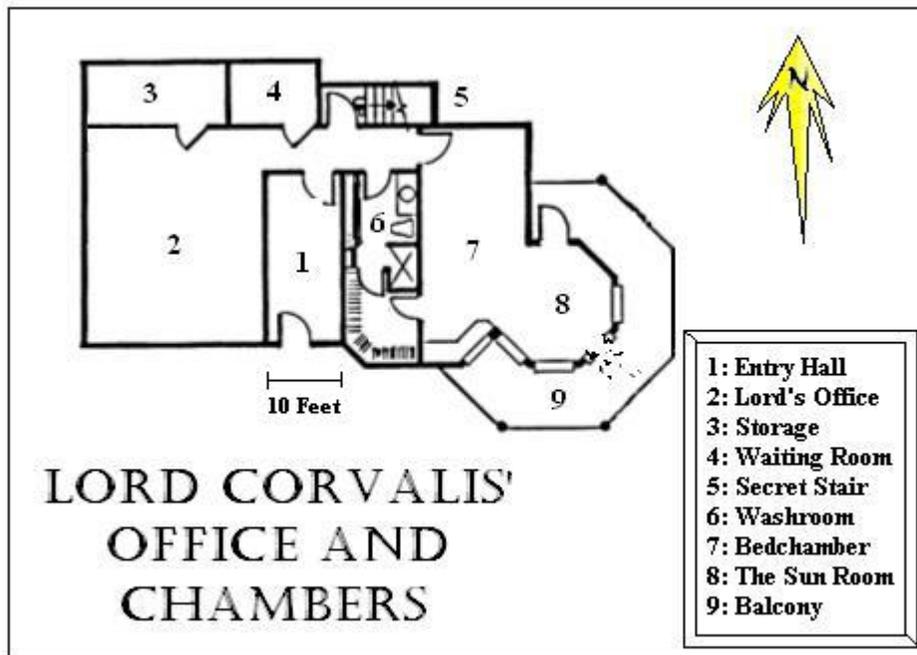
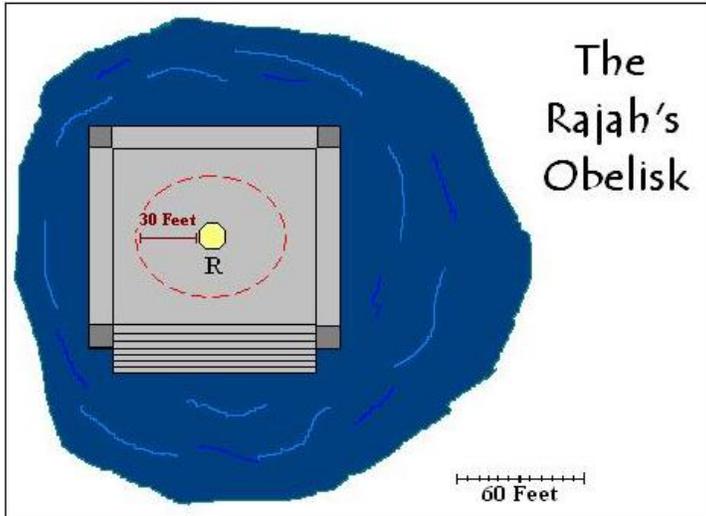
*Sadya*

# Appendix Two: Maps





The Black Wind of Undeath



# Appendix Three: NPC Statistics

## Combat Statistics

Xandrin Corvalis, Lord of Radiant Hold CR 17

Human Paladin 9/Fighter 8

LG Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +5; **Senses** Listen +4, Search +2, Spot +4

**Languages** Common, Celestial, Gnoll

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**AC** 27, touch 11, flat-footed 26

**hp** 201 (17 HD)

**Resist** Immune to disease.

**Fort** +18, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14

**Action Points:** 12 (d6)

---

**Speed** 30 ft. (6 squares)

**Melee** +20/+15/+10/+5 unarmed (1d3 nonlethal or lethal) or

**Melee** +23/+18/+13/+8 sun blade (1d10+6)

**Base Atk** +17; **Grp** +17

**Special Actions** *Detect evil* (at will), lay on hands (27 hp/day), *remove disease* (2/day), smite evil (2/day), turn undead (6/day), blessing of the light

**Paladin Spells Prepared** (CL 6<sup>th</sup>):

2<sup>nd</sup> (1): *shield other*

1<sup>st</sup> (2): *bless weapon, protection from evil*

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**Abilities** Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 16

**SQ:** aura of courage, aura of good, divine grace, divine health, the Celestial Kiss (DoI Arrah)\*

**Feats** Action Surge, Cleave, Improved Turning, Iron Will, Knight Training (fighter), Leadership, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword), Improved Initiative

**Skills** Climb +2, Concentration +10, Craft (calligraphy) +1, Diplomacy +15, Gather Information +3, Handle Animal +5, Heal +10, Intimidate +20, Jump +12, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Profession (scribe) +5, Profession (siege engineer) +5, Ride +15, Sense Motive +20, Survival +5, Swim +0

**Gear:** *mithril full plate of speed, boots of striding and springing, ring of shooting stars, gauntlet of the Stoneguard* (acts as a *ring of elemental command (earth)* and grants a +3 natural armor bonus), *robe of stars* (in the form of an ornate tabard), +2 *mithril large shield* (intelligent; Lawful Good, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 14, *status* at will, constant *detect scrying, zone of truth* 3/day, *invisibility purge* 1/day)

The Lord of Radiant Hold is something of an enigma, even to those of his own Faction. It is well known that of the original founders of the Covenant of Light, only he and Lady Lirashana have survived to the present day. As much a symbol of the faction as the justice archon herself, his power within the Covenant is made all the greater by the Lady of the Dawn's constant absences and off-putting celestial demeanor.

Known to be generous, understanding, and compassionate, Lord Corvalis is also the center of some controversy regarding the disappearance of his wife shortly after the construction of Radiant Hold. Rumors abound as to what may have occurred during the dark, storming night in question but the only details that anyone can prove involve a dead housemaid, an unearthly chill that settled over the entire keep, and the sudden departure of both Xandrin's son and the circle of Eldeen druids that had been serving the faction a few days later. Lord Corvalis refuses to speak of the night, warning anyone that inquires too closely that some secrets should be left buried.

Regardless of past events, Lord Corvalis still rules Radiant Hold unchallenged and is considered the mortal master of the Covenant of Light. He personally never uses any such title and seems content to make requests of the faction's Scions rather than giving direct orders.

It is also interesting to note that while he had not used his title of paladin since the disappearance of his shifter wife, he does not seem to have lost the powers and abilities associated with the class. No one in the faction has seen him use any of his paladin abilities since that night but when the Lady addresses him, she still uses the word paladin, much to his apparent dismay. Again, Xandrin does not answer questions about this and does everything short of having inquisitive people arrested if they dig too closely. A persistent rumor states that while Lord Corvalis does nothing to directly stop people from digging into his past, those who do so disappear in the night from their beds and are never seen again.

In recent months, Lord Corvalis has been apparently driven to regain some of the skills his slowly advancing age has taken. He trains in the yard with his men every morning and has even left the keep on occasion to battle darkness on his own. The change in him is a notable one though to what end his newfound energies will be put remains to be seen.

## Combat Statistics

Seraphen Cryheart, Scourge of the Light CR 18

Human Bard 1/Ex-Paladin 7/Blackguard 10

LE Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +1; **Senses** Listen +2, Search +2, Spot +2, darkvision 60'

**Languages** Common, Abyssal

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**AC** 28, touch 16, flat-footed 27

**hp** 211 (18 HD)

**Resist** Immune to Insanity, Fear and Horror, damage reduction 3/-, 75% chance to resist sneak attacks and critical hits

**Fort** +23, **Ref** +15, **Will** +17

**Action Points:** 14 (d6)

---

**Speed** 30 ft. (6 squares)

**Melee** +24/+19/+14/+9 adamantine greatsword (2d6+11 + darksoul venom, 17-20 x2) **or** +26/+21/+16/+11 *Quietus greatsword* (2d6+13 + 2d6 unholy + wounding + *blind* + *deafen* + darksoul venom, 17-20 x2) [Seraphen does not have Quietus' abilities for this scenario.]

**Base Atk** +18; **Grp** +23

**Special Actions** *Detect good* (at will), lay on hands (50 hp/day), smite good (5/day), command undead (10/day), fiendish summoning, sneak attack +4d6, bardic music, countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage

**Blackguard Spells Prepared** (CL 10<sup>th</sup>):

4<sup>th</sup> (2): *freedom of movement*, *cure critical wounds*

3<sup>rd</sup> (3): *deeper darkness*, *inflict serious wounds*, *protection from elements*

2<sup>nd</sup> (3): *death knell*, *shatter* x 2

1<sup>st</sup> (4): *cause fear*, *corrupt weapon*, *doom* x 2

**Bard Spells Prepared** (CL 1<sup>st</sup>)

0<sup>th</sup> (2): *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

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**Abilities** Str 16(20), Dex 13, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 20(24)

**SQ:** aura of despair, aura of evil, dark blessing, poison use, bardic knowledge

**Feats** Iron Will, Cleave, Leadership, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Skill Focus (Perform), Improved Sunder, Improved Critical (greatsword)

**Skills** Bluff +9, Craft (alchemy) +5, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +20, Gather Information +9, Handle Animal +15, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (history) +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Knowledge (religion) +7, Perform (oratory) +11, Ride +16, Sense Motive +6, Use Magic Device +10

**Gear:** +4 *adamantine full plate of moderate fortification*, *boots of striding and springing*, *ring of shooting stars*, *cloak of charisma* +4, *belt of giant strength* +4, *gauntlets of dark might* (+2 *profane bonus to melee attack and damage against good targets*, *radiates protection from good at all times*), *periapt of wound closure*, *mantle of defense* (shirt slot, +5 *deflection bonus to Armor Class*), *ring of free action*, *ring of shadow stars* (as *ring of shooting stars* + *darkvision 60'*), 2 doses of *darksoul venom* (new item), *Quietus* (new item)

Seraphen Cryheart is one of the saddest chapters in the history of the Covenant of Light. A long time companion and fighting mate of Xandrin Corvalis, Seraphen joined the Covenant alongside his friend and they rose in the ranks of the faction together. When Xandrin was named the Lord of Radiant Hold, Seraphen was honored to take up the role of Captain of the Guard and continue to serve. The two were inseparable until the night of Lady Mianaara's disappearance from the Hold.

The next day, Paladin Cryheart rode out into the jungle on a secret mission and never returned. Rumors abound as to what befell him but only a few things are confirmed through divination and religious augury. Seraphen was attacked by a powerful psionic entity from another plane, one that tore his spirit asunder and corrupted him from within. Seraphen left Radiant Hold as a paladin; he returned to it as a blackguard.

For nearly two years, the fallen knight has been the Covenant of Light's most implacable foe. Xandrin's feelings towards Seraphen have kept him from organizing the faction against this dark knight, enabling the vile warrior to inflict loss after loss upon the Covenant with little to no retaliation. Lord Corvalis knows that someday he will have to set aside his love for his best friend and destroy the mockery Seraphen has become. The longer he waits, the more difficult that task will become.

Seraphen's dark plans have all come to fruition. His final move against Radiant Hold is nearly ready to be made and his forces are in place to make this assault their last. Under cover of darkness, he intends to murder a great being of the Light and with her stolen power put an end to the Covenant once and for all.

# Appendix Three: New Monster

## GREENWISE

### Huge Plant

**Hit Dice:** 12d8+48 (102 hp)

**Initiative:** +0

**Speed:** 10 ft.

**AC:** 16 (-2 size, +8 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 16

**Attacks:** +4 slams +16 melee and bite +11 melee

**Damage:** Slam 2d4+9, bite 1d6+4

**Face/Reach:** 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Death fog, improved grnb, swallow whole

**Special Qualities:** Acid immunity, plant traits, woodsense

**Saves:** Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 29, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 6

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate or warm hills, plains or marsh

**Organization:** Solitary pair, or patch (3–8)

**Challenge Rating:** 10

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 13–18 HD (Huge), 19–36 HD (Colossal)



Greenwises are ambulatory vegetable horrors that stalk the fringes of some humanoid settlements. These carnivorous plants are not bold—they prefer to ambush lone prey that happens to come too near. Greenwises rest at night and actively hunt during daylight hours, repositioning themselves throughout the day if prey in a particular hunting area proves scarce.

A greenwise is a larger, sturdier version of the venus flytrap, with a thick, green, trunklike stem and four sturdy tendrils that hang down like vines. When the creature opens its mouth, a mottled pink maw lined with toothlike thorns is revealed; when closed, the mouth structure resembles an ordinary leafy bush. A greenwise has small, tendrillike roots that it uses to move.

### COMBAT

After setting itself up in an appropriate location, a greenwise lies in wait for prey to pass. It lunges at the first living creature it senses, using all its tendrils to grab the prey and transfer it to its maw. An extremely hungry or seriously hurt greenwise releases a death fog to weaken its opponents and obscure their vision. Although multiple greenwises are sometimes found together, they do not share their prey, and thus do not assist each other in combat unless many potential victims are present.

**Death Fog (Su):** Twice per day, a greenwise can emit an acidic fog that functions like an acid fog spell, except as follows. The death fog's area is a 40-foot-high spread with a 60-foot radius. Within this area, all sight, including darkvision, is limited to 5 feet. A creature within 5 feet has one-half concealment (attacks against it have a 20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker can't use sight to locate the target). Any creature attempting to move through the death fog progresses at one-tenth normal speed, and each of its melee attack and melee damage rolls incurs a –2 circumstance penalty. A death fog prevents effective ranged weapon attacks, except for magic rays and the like.

In addition to obscuring sight, a death fog is highly acidic. Each round, the fog deals 3d8 points of acid damage to every creature and object within it (no saving throw). A severe wind (31+ mph) disperses these vapors in 1d2 rounds; otherwise, the effect lasts for 3d6+1 rounds. The greenwise is not impeded by its own death fog, so it can move and fight within the fog freely.

**Improved Grnb (Ex):** If a greenwise hits an opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself with a slam attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity (grapple bonus +26). If it gets a hold, it can transfer the opponent to its maw with another successful grapple check, dealing automatic bite damage, then try to swallow in the next round. Alternatively, the greenwise has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use its tendrils or maw to hold the opponent (–20 penalty on grapple check, but the greenwise is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals slam or bite damage, as appropriate.

**Swallow Whole (Ex):** A greenwise can swallow a single creature that is at least one size category smaller than itself by making a successful grapple check (grapple bonus +26) provided it already has that opponent in its maw (see Improved Grnb, above). Once inside the greenwise, the opponent takes 2d6+9 points of bludgeoning damage and 2d4 points of acid damage per round from the plant's stomach. A successful grapple check allows the swallowed creature to climb out of the greenwise, each and return to the greenwise's maw where another successful grapple check is needed to get free. Alternatively, a swallowed creature can try to cut its way out with either claws or a light piercing or slashing weapon. Dealing at least 20 points of damage to the stomach (AC 18) in this way creates an opening large enough to permit escape. Once a single swallowed creature exists, muscular action closes the hole; thus, another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. A greenwise's stomach can hold 1 Large, 4 Medium-size 16 Small, or 64 Tiny or smaller opponents.

**Plant Traits (Ex):** A greenwise is immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and polymorphing. It is not subject to critical hits or mind-affecting effects. The creature also has low-light vision.

**Woodsense (Ex):** A greenwise can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with vegetation, even objects or creatures that are not in contact with the same vegetation, as it is.

# Appendix Three: New Items

**Darksoul Venom:** This vile toxin is brewed from a mixture of foul ingredients, many of which are necromantic and profane in nature. Only alchemists capable of casting divine magic can channel the energies needed to make this evil poison; other crafters are simply unable to make the venom properly and most are killed by the vapors from their flawed creation.

When created successfully, darksoul venom is an insinuating poison used to coat darts or other weapons. It acts upon the souls of its victim, the strength of its effect directly related to their moral and spiritual purity. Darksoul venom only harms good-aligned creatures.

Victims possessing the Aura of Good class feature suffer a terrible secondary effect if they fail the initial saving throw. Wounds caused to them by a weapon covered in darksoul venom cannot be healed by anything short of a *miracle* or *wish* spell until 24 hours have passed. Creatures suffering this effect also bleed for 1 hit point of additional damage each hour until the 24 hour duration is up.

Though darksoul venom is exceedingly deadly, it is also blessedly rare and the formula for making it is nearly lost lore possessed only by mad cultists and the favored servants of dark powers devoted to poisons and disease.

Poison	Type	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Price
Darksoul Venom	Injury DC 17*	1d4 Str + 1d4 Wis	1d4 Str + 1d4 Wis	750 gp

\* Only affects good-aligned creatures

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**Medallion of Mischief:** These small amulets seem fairly innocuous, golden discs on wide chains with a glittering red crystal set at their hearts. They bear three important enchantments, only two of which are technically under the wearer's control. At will, the wearer can use the *disguise self* spell. As a standard action, the wearer can also silently command the medallion to use its secondary power. This second power also activates automatically if the necklace is taken off while the *disguise self* is in effect.

The "mischief" comes in the fact that few wearers are ever told about the true nature of the secondary power. They are usually lied to, informed that the necklace can *teleport* them on command. Instead, the *medallion of mischief* contains a 10d6 *fireball* and will detonate instantly when willed to activate.

The *medallion's* tertiary power is that if it detonates for any reason, all other *medallions of mischief* within 100 yards will similarly explode. This can cause a deadly chain reaction if *medallions* are within range of others that are then within range of even more of their kind.

Moderate illusion, powerful evocation; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, *disguise self*, *delayed blast fireball*, *detect magic*; Price 8,000 gp.

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## Quietus, The Sword of Ruin

This +4 *keen*, *unholy*, *wounding* adamantite greatsword bears a line of blood-red runes along its intricately styled blood groove and a wide hilt of silver and hematite worked to resemble thorn vines. As deadly as its name suggests, Quietus carries a small part of the dolorous plane of Dolurrh forged within it. Any successful attack against a living target (warforged are immune to this effect) forces the target to make a Fortitude save and a Will save, both as a DC 20. If the first is failed, the target is blinded for 4 rounds. If the second save is failed, the target is deafened for 4 rounds. If Quietus achieves a critical threat against a target that is both blind and deaf from this power, the threat automatically confirms.

In addition, one hit point of damage from every attack made with Quietus is considered vile damage. The bearer of Quietus can sense any target suffering from one or more points of vile damage caused by this weapon as if he possessed the spell-like ability of *discern location*. Only one target can be detected in this way at a time and use of this ability requires a full round action.

Strong transmutation, divination, necromancy and enchantment; CL 24<sup>th</sup>; Weight 10 lb.