

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons<sup>®</sup>  
2nd Edition

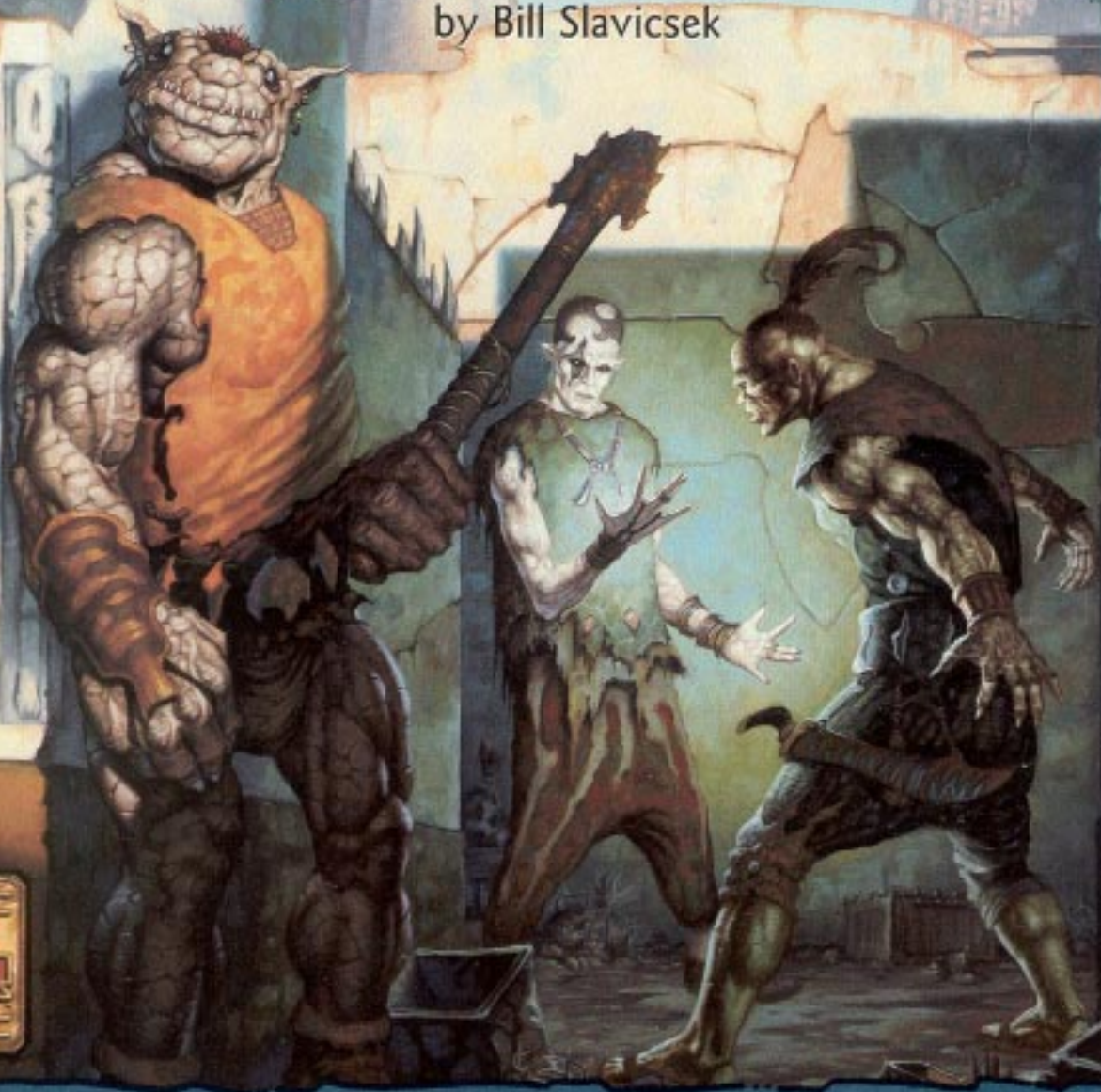
# DARK • SUN

W O R L D

Official Game Adventure

## Arcane Shadows

by Bill Slavicsek





The image is a book cover for 'Dark Sun World'. At the top, a stylized sun with orange and yellow flames arches over a small globe of the Earth. Below this, the title 'DARK SUN' is written in large, bold, orange letters with a metallic, jagged border. Underneath the title, the word 'WORLD' is written in smaller, spaced-out letters. The central illustration depicts two characters in a tense, confrontational pose. On the left, a character with pale, almost white skin and dark markings around his eyes looks towards the right. He wears a simple, light-colored tunic. On the right, a more muscular character with a dark, leathery or scaly skin is shown in profile, leaning forward. He has a ponytail and is wearing dark, layered clothing with a red and blue striped sleeve. The background is a dark, atmospheric landscape with a large, glowing red and orange structure on the left, possibly a volcano or a massive structure. The overall tone is gritty and dramatic.

# DARK SUN

WORLD

The battle  
for  
Athas's  
rebirth  
begins

Player's Book



## Arcane Shadows

A DARK SUN™ Campaign Adventure

## Player's Book

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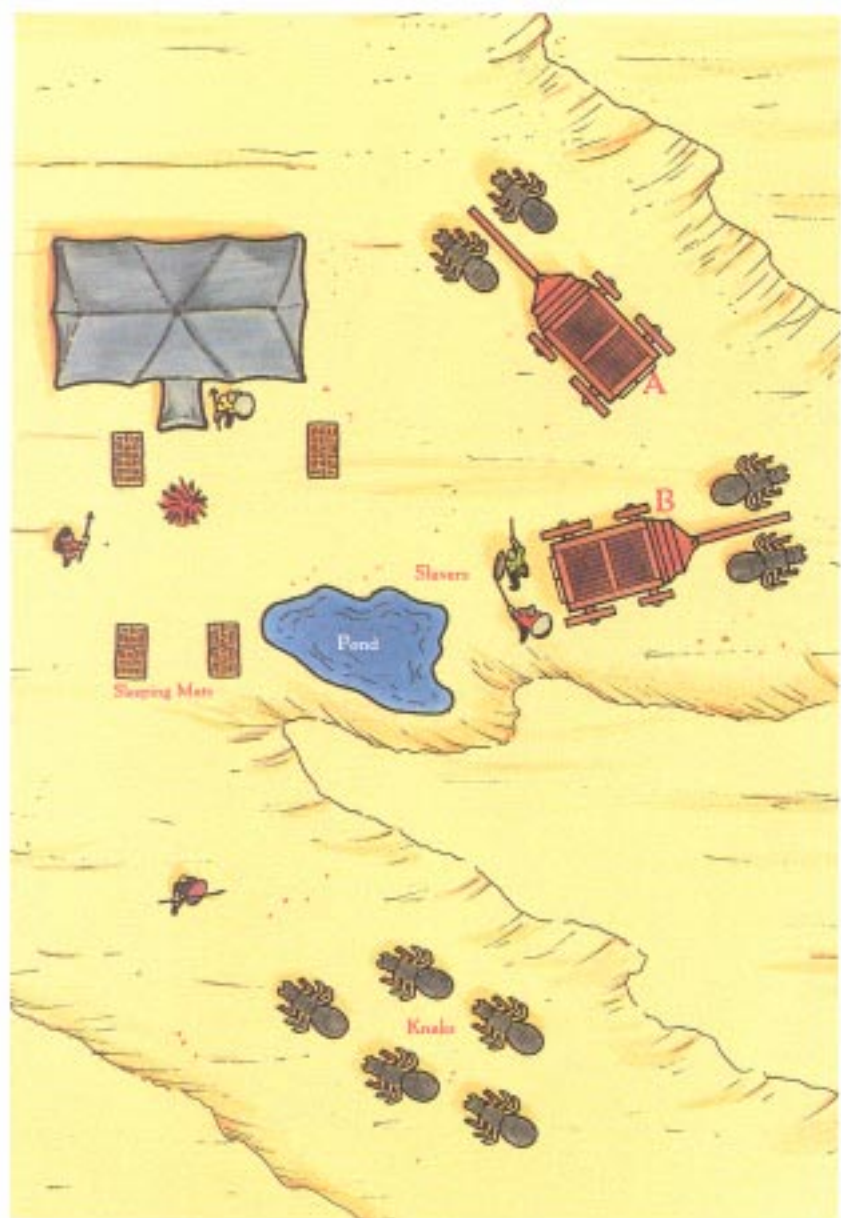
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One:  
To Tyr . . . But . . . the Roads





Two:  
Slavers' Camp



Three:  
Night Attack



Four:  
The Caravan





Five:  
Wild Muls

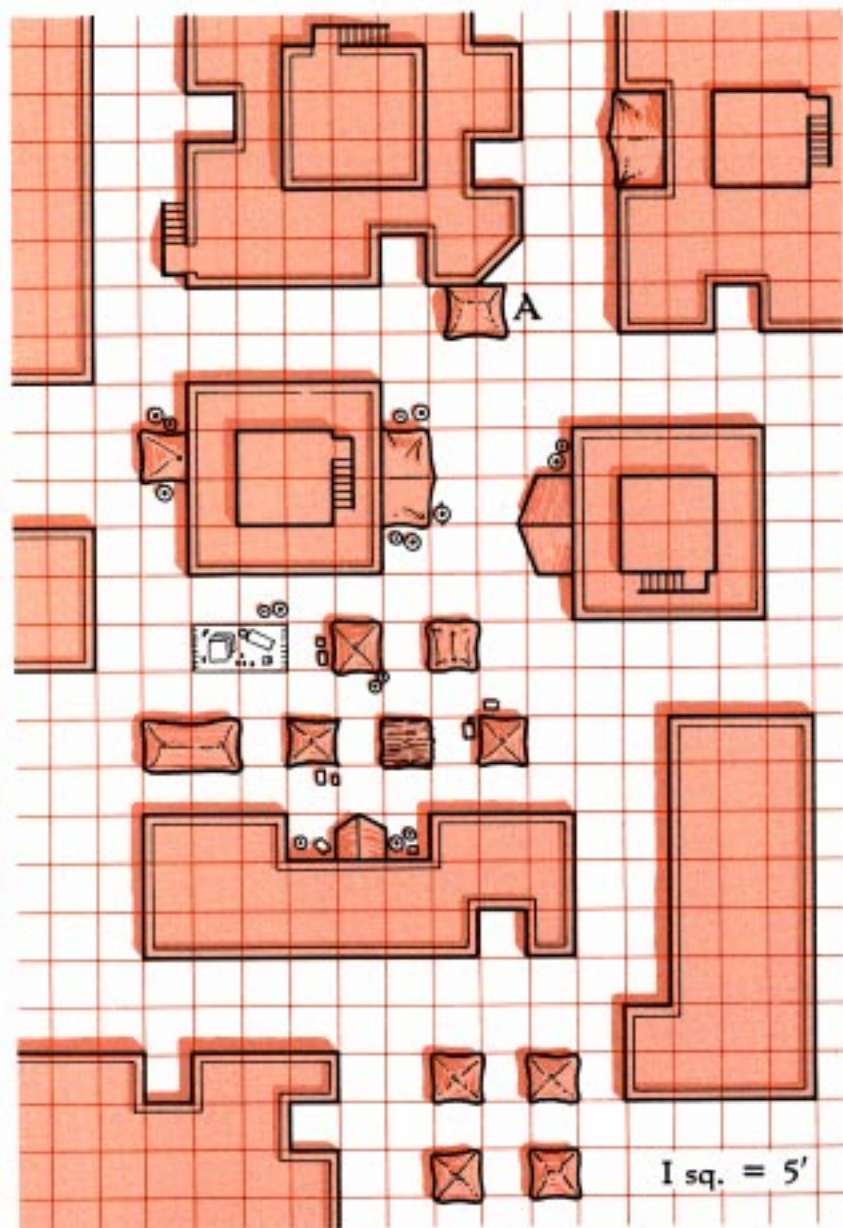




Six:  
Spirit of the Land



Seven:  
Street of Exotic Goods





## Eight: Malestic Again



The templar named Malestic calls to you from behind a natural fortification of sand. "You have led me on a wild chase through these forsaken wastes, but the chase ends here. Before I have you killed, I offer you one last chance to surrender. I'm sure you shall refuse, like the fools you are," he says, sniffing in disdain, "but I can be merciful, if given half a chance." Malestic pauses for a moment, then asks, "What will it be, worthless ones? The shackles . . . or the blades?"

Nine:  
Street Scene





Ten:  
Recent Remains

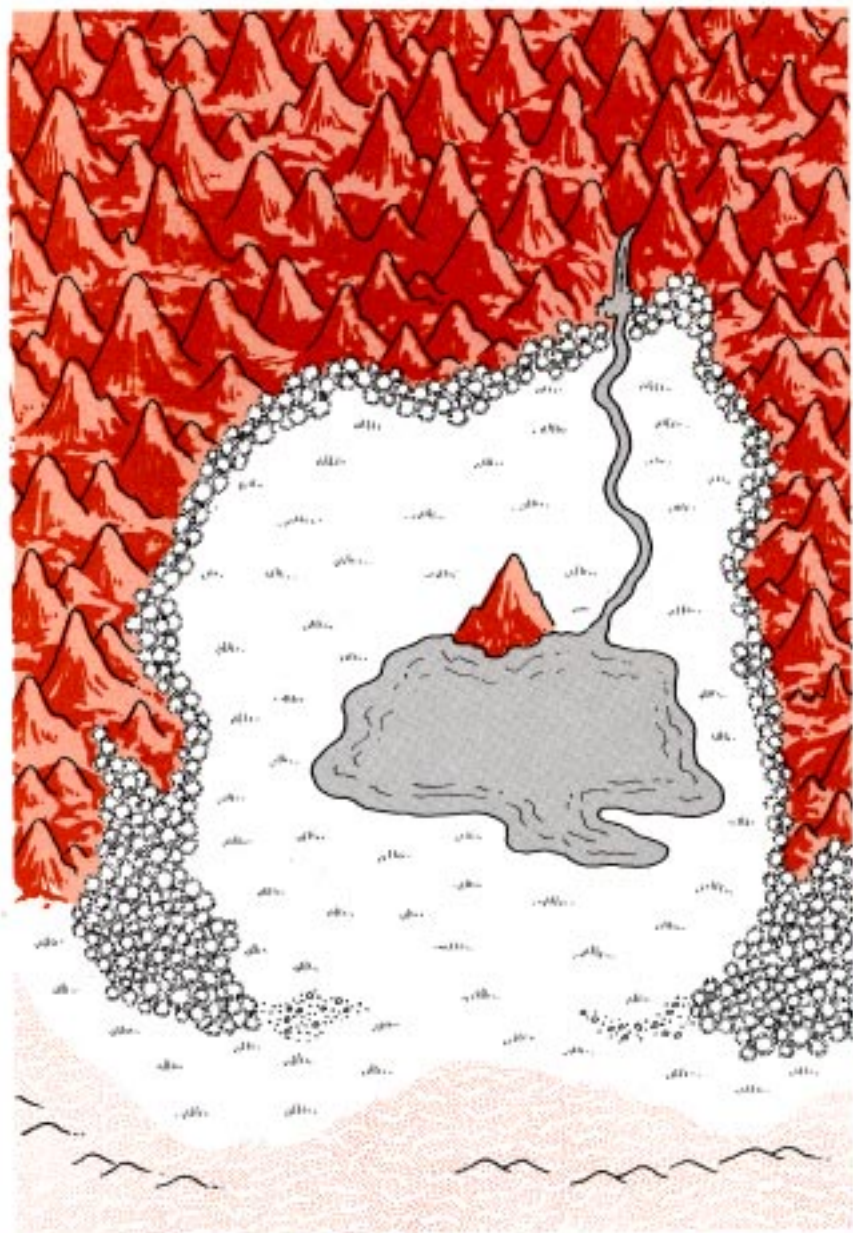


Eleven:  
Preservers' Meeting





Twelve:  
The Valley

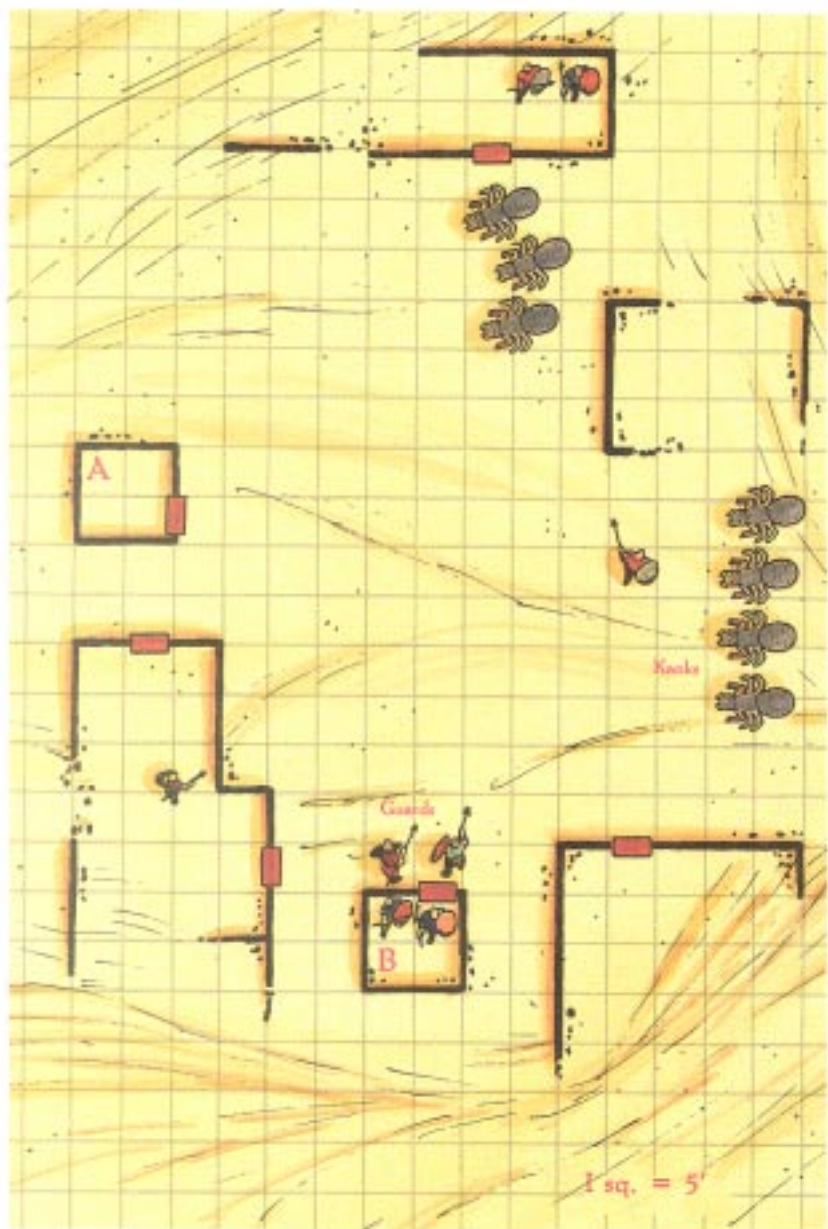


Thirteen:  
Hungry Beast





Fourteen:  
Raiders' Camp



Fifteen:  
Street Scene

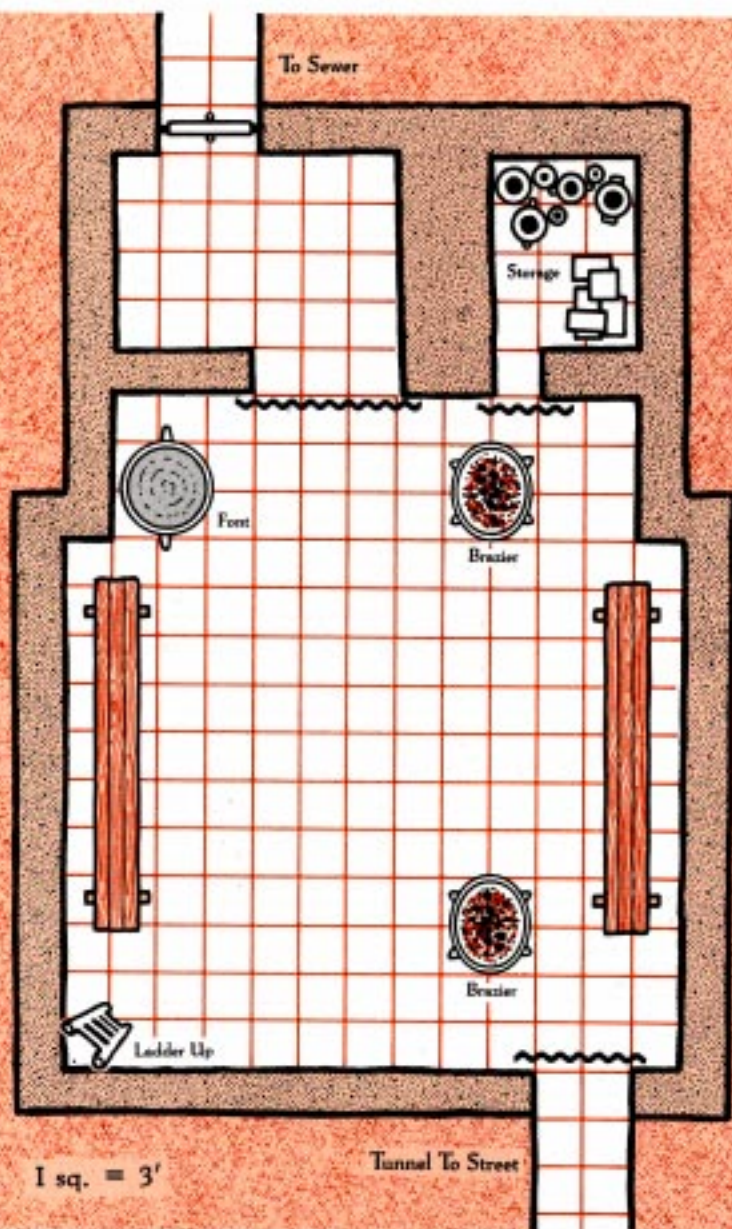




Sixteen:  
First View



Seventeen:  
Meeting Chamber





Eighteen:  
T'Kkyl

Thri-Kreen Gladiator  
7th Level  
Lawful Neutral

Str 15

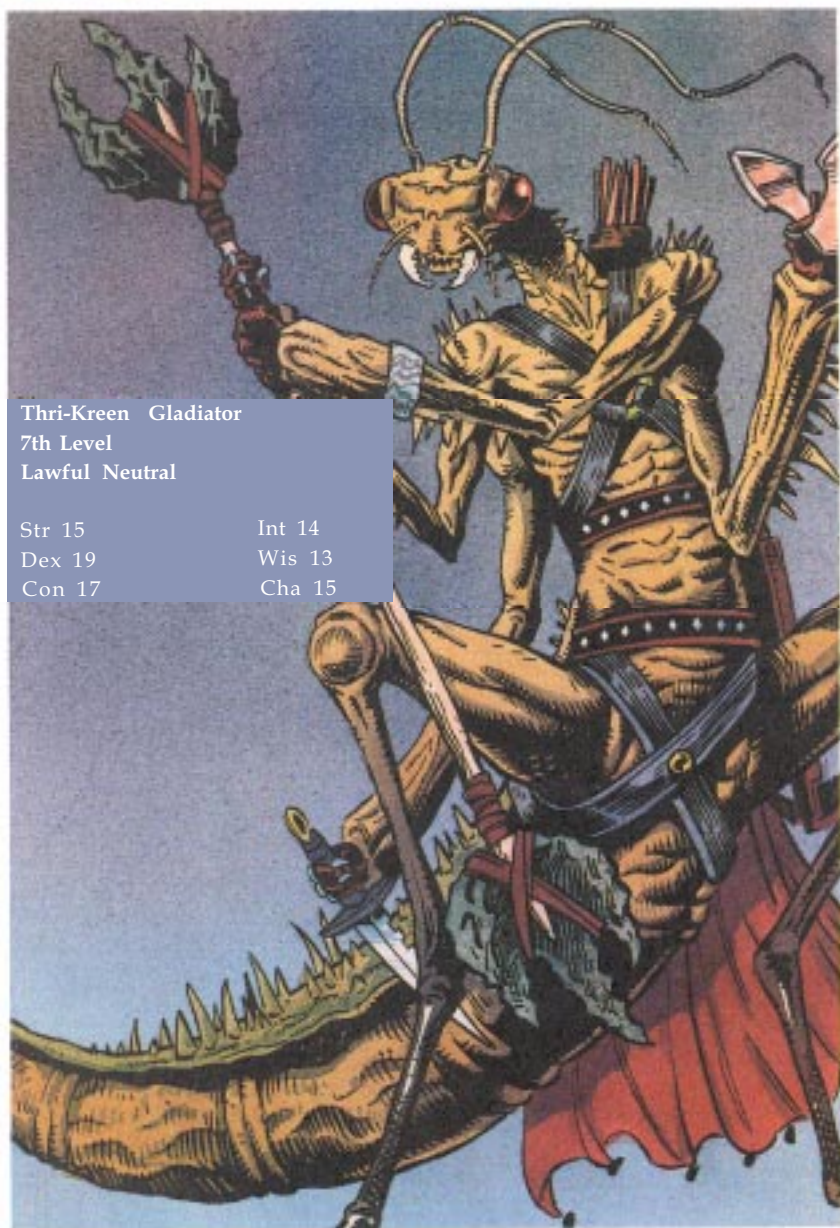
Int 14

Dex 19

Wis 13

Con 17

Cha 15



## Nineteen: Anavias of the Split Rock

Female Human Psionicist  
7th Level  
Lawful Neutral

Str 17

Dex 19

Con 13

Int 19

Wis 15

Cha 18



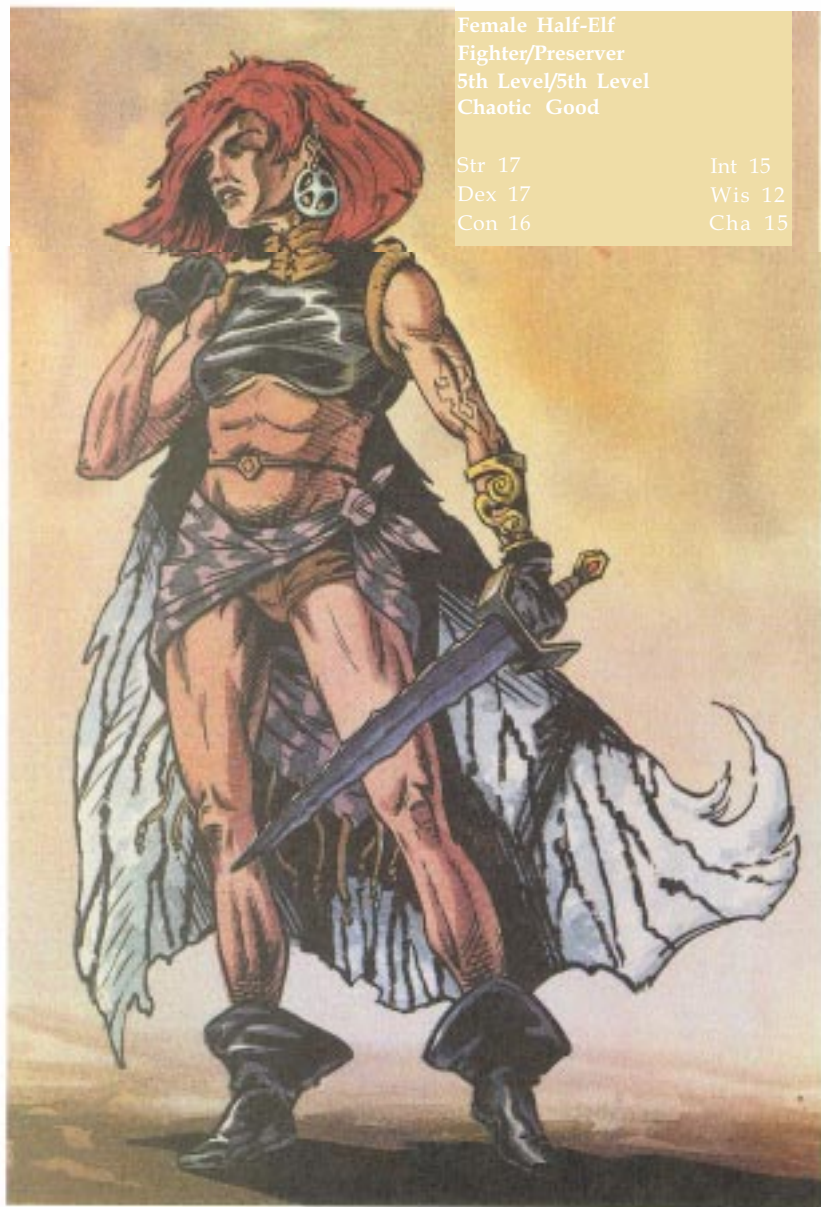


Twenty:  
Vaerhirmana

Female Half-Elf  
Fighter/Preserver  
5th Level/5th Level  
Chaotic Good

Str 17  
Dex 17  
Con 16

Int 15  
Wis 12  
Cha 15



Twenty-One:  
Herminard the Eloquent

Male Human Bard  
8th Level  
Neutral Evil

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| Str 12 | Int 15 |
| Dex 18 | Wis 10 |
| Con 11 | Cha 17 |





## Twenty-Two: Azhul the Hasty

Male Half-Giant Fighter  
7th Level  
Lawful/Neutral/Chaotic Good

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| Str 21 | Int 12 |
| Dex 14 | Wis 10 |
| Con 15 | Cha 8  |



## Twenty-Three: Chivald

Male Halfling Cleric/Psionicist  
5th Level/5th Level  
Neutral Good

Str 15

Int 17

Dex 19

Wis 16

Con 15

Cha 16





## Twenty-Four: Chivald (Cont.)

Reaction Adjustments: surprise +3  
NPCs +5

#AT: 1 THACO: 18;

Bone Spear, -1 to hit, +3 thrown  
Obs. Hand Axe, -2 to hit, +3 thrown

Damage: Bone Spear 1d6-1/1d8-1  
Hand Axe 1d6-1/1d4-1

AC: 6/4 in leather armor (modified for Dexterity)

Hit Points: 33

Cleric of Air Spells: Five 1st-level spells  
Five 2nd-level spells  
One 3rd-level spell  
(includes bonus spells for high Wis)

Prim/Sec: Psychoportation/Telepathy  
Sciences:

**Banishment** (Int -1, IC 30, MC 10/rd, R 5 yds)

**Mindlink** (Wis -5, IC contact, MC 8/rd, R unlimited)

**Teleport** (Int, IC 10 +, R infinite)

Devotions:

**Astral Projection** (Int, IC 6, MC 2/hour)

**Contact** (Wis, IC varies, MC 1/rd, R special)

**Dimensional Door** (Con -1, IC 4, MC 2/rd, R 50 yds +)

**Dream Travel** (Wis -4, IC 1/25 miles, R 500 miles)

**ESP** (Wis -4, IC contact, MC 6/rd, R unlimited)

**Identity Penetration** (Wis -3, IC contact, MC 6/rd, R unlimited)

**Life Detection** (Int -2, IC 3, MC 3/rd, R 100 yds)

**Teleport Trigger** (Int +1, IC 0, MC 2/hour, R infinite)

**Time Shift** (Int, IC 16 + special, R 0)

**Time/Space Anchor** (Int, IC 5 MC 1/rd, R 0)

Defenses: Intellect Fortress, Mind Blank, Thought Shield

PSP: 68

Saving Throws

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 9  | 13  | 9  | 15 | 14 |

Weapon Proficiencies: club, hand axe, spear

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: **Harness Subconscious**, **Heat Protection**, Herbalism, Leatherworking, **Meditative Focus**, **Rejuvenation**, **Sign Language**, **Somatic Concealment**, **Water Find**

Languages: Halfling, common

Equipment: bone spear, leather armor, obsidian hand axe; backpack, bag of carved casting sticks, 7 globes of kank honey, seeds of the home tree

Money: 6 cp (Chivald does not see a need for money)

### Background

You were sent from your home in the wilderness beyond the Ringing Mountains on a special quest to seek wisdom for the tribe in the lands of humans. As this important mission came from Chief Huc, you decided he would not mind if you took his finest casting sticks with you on your quest. The people beyond the mountains have been teaching you their rude ways for some time now. In Tyr, you met with a group of adventurers and have been traveling with them.

## Twenty-Five: Azhul (Cont.)

Reaction Adjustments: surprise 0  
NPCs 0

#AT: 3/2 (2/1 with two-handed sword)

THAC0: 14; +4 due to Str

Bone-studded gauntlet, -1 to hit

Obsidian two-handed sword, -2 to hit, +1 specialization

Sling, no modifiers

Damage: Bone-studded gauntlet  
1d3+8

Obsidian two-handed sword  
1d10+10/3d6+10

Sling stones 1d4/1d4

AC: 10/6 in braxat hide armor (no Dexterity bonus)

Hit Points: 77

Wild Talent: Catfall

Power Score: Dex -2

Cost: 4

PSP: 28

Saving Throws

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 10 | 12  | 11 | 12 | 13 |

Weapon Proficiencies: mace, short sword, sling, spear

Weapon Specialization: two-handed sword

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Animal Lore, *Armor Optimization*, Endurance, *Heat Protection*, Stonemasonry, *Water Find*, *Weapon Improvisation*

Languages: Common

Equipment: bone short sword, bone studded gauntlet, braxat-hide armor, obsidian two-handed sword, sling, pouch with 40 stones, stone-headed mace; fire kit, leather backpack (to size), 50' hemp rope, map case, tent (to size), 5 waterskins

Money: 1,500 cp

### Background

You were born near the Ringing Mountains, but over the years you have followed the practice of your kind and have recreated your life many times over. Your newest incarnation is that of a freedom fighter, defending freedom from its enemies with your companions. Prior to that, you were a soldier-guard in Tyr, serving King Kalak. Your sense of mercy always got in the way of your job, however, and you changed into your newest role when Kalak fell.

You and your companions recently left Tyr (and the contacts of your past life) to fight off the advancing Urikite army. Now you find yourself in Urik, painfully aware that the freedom Tyr has found does not exist within Urik's thick walls. Perhaps, you think, you and your companions can rectify this situation.



## Twenty-Six: Herminard (Cont.)

Reaction Adjustments: surprise +2  
NPCs +6

#AT: 1

THAC0: 17;

Bone wrist razor, -1 to hit  
Chatkcha, +2 to hit (Dex)  
Sling, +2 to hit (Dex)

Damage: Bone wrist razor 1d6-1/  
1d4-1

Chatkcha 1d6+2/1d4+1  
Sling stone 1d4/1d4

AC: 6/4 in leather armor (modified for  
Dexterity)

Hit Points: 32

Wild Talent: Time/Space Anchor

Power Score: Int

Cost: 5/1 per round

PSP: 37

Thieving Percentages

|    |    |      |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|------|----|----|----|----|----|
| PP | OL | F/RT | MS | HS | HN | CW | RL |
| 65 | 40 | 15   | 45 | 45 | 20 | 65 | 15 |

Influence Reactions: -2 die modifier

Inspire: +1 THAC0, +1 Saving  
Throw, or +2 Morale

Identify Magical Item: 40%

Poisons Known:

B (Injected, Onset: 2-12 min.,  
Str 20/1-3)

C (Injected, Onset: 2-5 min.,  
Str 25/2-8)

E (Injected, Onset: Immed.,  
Str Death/20)

G (Ingested, Onset: 2-12 hrs.,  
Str 20/10)

I (Ingested, Onset: 2-12 min.,  
Str 30/15)

J (Ingested, Onset: 1-4 min.,  
Str Death/20)

K (Contact, Onset: 2-8 min., Str 5/0)

Musical Instrument: Balician Lyre

Saving Throws

|    |     |    |    |    |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
| 12 | 12  | 11 | 15 | 13 |

Weapon Proficiencies: chatkcha, dag-  
ger, sling, wrist razor

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Appraisal,  
Disguise, Etiquette, Heraldry, Local  
History, Reading Lips, Read/Write  
Common, Ventriloquism

Languages: Common, elven, halfling

Equipment: bone hook, bone wrist ra-  
zor, chatkcha, pouch with 40 stones,  
sling; thief's tools, 80' ball of twine, belt  
pouch, 4 glass vials, various herbs (for  
poisons), Balician lyre

Money: 800 cp

### Background

Since leaving Balic, your life has been nothing but pain and misery. You were chased across the wastes by Dictator Andropinis's templars, finding refuge beyond the gates of Tyr. You expected a patron to recognize your talents, but instead found yourself in the horrid slave pens. You escaped death in the riot following Kalak's assassination, but the series of close calls made you re-evaluate your solitary existence.

Now you travel with companions, and you are making every effort to place their interests at least on par with your own. Well, maybe your interests are still on top, but theirs are closer than they used to be. You'll stick with them at least until you find someone who will appreciate your skills enough to make you rich.

## Twenty-Seven: Vaerhirmana (Cont.)

Reaction Adjustments: surprise +2  
NPCs +3

#AT: 1; THAC0: 16; +1 due to Str  
Javelin, +2 to hit (Dex)  
Obsidian bastard sword, -1 to hit  
Short bow, +2 to hit (Dex)  
Stone club, -1 to hit

Damage: Javelin 1d6-1/1d6-1  
Obsidian bastard sword,  
one-handed 1d8/1d12  
two-handed 2d4/2d8  
Bone arrows 1d6-1/1d6-1  
Stone club 1d6-1/1d3-1

AC: 7/6 with shield (modified for Dex)  
Hit Points: 32

Wild Talent: Hear Light  
Power Score: Wis -3  
Cost: 6/3 per round  
PSP: 34

Spells: Four 1st-level spells

Spell Book

### 1st Level

Change Self  
Detect Magic  
Enlarge  
Magic Missile  
Phantasmal Force  
Read Magic  
Shield  
Unseen Servant

### 2nd Level

Scare  
Summon Swarm  
Web  
Wizard Lock

### 3rd Level

Lightning Bolt  
Slow

Two 2nd-level spells  
One 3rd-level spell

### Saving Throws

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 11 | 11  | 12 | 13 | 12 |

Weapon Proficiencies: bastard sword, club, javelin, short bow, short sword  
Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Ancient History, *Armor Optimization*, *Heat Protection*, *Psionic Detection*, Survival (stony barrens), *Somatic Concealment*, *Weapon Improvisation*

Languages: Common, giant, thri-kreen

Equipment: obsidian bastard sword, quiver with 20 bone-tipped arrows, short bow, stone club, wooden javelin, hide shield; backpack, bone map case (spellbook), bottle of ink, 43' rope, 5 sheets of papyrus, quills and quillcase, 3 waterskins

Money: 900 cp

### Background

As a half-elf, you have endured more than your share of hatred and prejudice. The small village where you were raised was never home, but it was all you had—until the peasants stoned Thangros, your old master, to death.

Life did not get easier when you went to Tyr. Before the first day ended, you were a slave, toiling on the great ziggurat. You joined a group of other slaves, and together you survived the bloodbath that led to freedom for all of Tyr's slaves. You established a few contacts in Tyr's preserver community, and they gave you the name of a preserver in Urik. You hope to find this new contact before nightfall.



## Twenty-Eight: Anavias (Cont.)

Reaction Adjustments: surprise +3  
NPCs +7

#AT: 1; THAC0: 17; +1 due to Str  
Bone dagger, -1 to hit, +4 thr. (Dex)  
Bone spear, -1 to hit, +4 thr. (Dex)  
Stone club, -1 to hit

Damage: Bone dagger 1d4/1d3  
Bone spear 1d6/1d8  
Stone club 1d6/1d3

AC: 6/4 in leather (modified for Dex)  
Hit Points: 25

Prim/Sec:

Psychokinesis/Telepathy/Clairensentience  
Sciences:

*Aura Sight* (Wis -5, IC 9, MC  
9/rd, R 50 yds)

*Mindlink* (Wis -5, IC contact, MC  
8/rd, R unlimited)

*Project Force* (Con -2, IC 10, R  
200 yds)

*Telekinesis* (Wis -3, IC 3 +, MC  
1+/rd, R 30 yds)

Devotions:

*Animate Shadow* (Wis -3, IC 7,  
MC 3/rd, R 40 yds)

*Ballistic Attack* (Con -2, IC 5, R  
30 yds)

*Conceal Thoughts* (Wis, IC 5, MC  
3/rd, R 0)

*Contact* (Wis, IC varies, MC 1/rd,  
R special)

*Control Light* (Int, IC 12, MC 4/rd,  
R 25 yds)

*Control Sound* (Int -5, IC 5, MC

2/rd, R 100 yds)

*Danger Sense* Wis -3, IC 4, MC  
3/turn, R special)

*Ego Whip* (Wis -3, IC 4, R  
40/80/120 yds)

*Inertial Barrier* (Con -3, IC 7, MC  
5/rd, R 0)

*Know Location* (Int, IC 10, R 0)

*Molecular Agitation* (Wis, IC 7,  
MC 6/rd, R 40 yds)

*Soften* (Int, IC 4, MC 3/rd, R  
30 yds)

Defense Modes: Mental Barrier, Mind  
Blank, Thought Shield, Tower of Iron  
Will PSP: 84

Saving Throws

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 12 | 13  | 9  | 15 | 14 |

Weapon Proficiencies: club, dagger,  
spear

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: *Harness  
Subconscious, Heat Protection, Medi-  
tative Focus, Psionic Detection*, Read/  
Write Common, *Rejuvenation, Sign  
Language*, Survival (sandy wastes)

Languages: common, gith, halfling,  
thri-kreen

Equipment: leather armor, bone dagger,  
bone spear, stone club; belt pouch, bot-  
tle of ink, 3 candles, fire kit, papyrus,  
personal seal, quill, sealing wax, water  
bladder; riding kank, saddle, bridle

Money: 1,145 cp

### Background

From the age of twelve, you have studied and practiced the secrets of the Way. Master Ghil was your teacher, but he soon abandoned you. Of course, he claimed that it was a test—only alone could you truly find the Way.

From the moment you set out, the tests began. Now, you and your companions have made your way to Urik. What tests await you here, you cannot imagine.

## Twenty-Nine: T'Kkyl (Cont.)

Reaction Adjustments: surprise +3

NPCs +3

#AT: 2 (bite and weapon) or 3/2 (crossbow) or 3 (1 bite and 2 attacks with chatkcha, dagger, and gythka) or 5 (4 claws and bite)

THAC0: 14

Natural weapons, + / - 4 to punching/wrestling attacks

Chatkcha, +4 to hit (Dex, spec.)

Light crossbow, +3 to hit (Dex) (+5 point-blank, due to specialization)

Obsidian gythka, -2 to hit, +1 specialization

Steel dagger, +1 to hit (spec.), +4 thrown (Dex, spec.)

Damage: Bone-tipped quarrels 1d4-1/1d4-1

Bite 1d4+1 and Save vs. Paralyzation

Claws 1d4

Chatkcha 1d6+4/1d4+3

Obsidian gythka 2d4+1/1d10+1

steel dagger 1d4+2/1d3+2

AC: 1 (modified for Dexterity)

HP: 57

Wild Talent: All-Round Vision

Power Score: Wis -3

Cost: 6 initial, 4 per round

PSP: 46

Leap forward 50 feet, leap up 20 feet

Saving Throws

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 10 | 12  | 11 | 12 | 13 |

Weapon Proficiencies: All (2 slots unused)

Weapon Specializations: chatkcha, dagger, gythka, light crossbow

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Direction Sense, Navigation, *Sign Language*, Survival (stony barrens), Tracking

Languages: thri-kreen, common, elven

Equipment: 20 bone-tipped quarrels, crystalline chatkcha, light crossbow, obsidian gythka, steel dagger; fire kit, pack (fitted for thri-kreen), 7 sacks of kank honey, waterskin

Money: 780 cp

### Background

Native to the stony barrens of the Tablelands, your pack, through misadventure and misfortune, fell prey to human exterminators (marauding bands who make a living hunting down thri-kreen "criminals") in retaliation for hunting raids on passing caravans. Only you and a few others survived, but you were later separated from the pack by fierce sandstorms.

That period of your life is long past. Since then you have been a slave in Tyr, present for the Great Riots that followed Kalak's assassination. You have a new hunting swarm, other ex-slaves you met at Tyr. Together you saw the first stirrings of freedom in the old city, and you joined the army which defended it from Urik. Now, you and your new pack of humans, halflings, and others have decided to visit Urik. You aren't sure why you have come here, except that your pack wanted to go. You are uncomfortable among the other races, and long for the day when you can again hunt them for food—except those in your pack, of course.



Thirty:  
Surprise Attack!



Thirty-One:  
The Oasis





## Thirty-Two: The Ceremony



Korgunard's discourse changes in tone as he begins to toss items into the burning brazier before him. He tosses a vile, black shape into the flames, causing the fire to leap excitedly. Then he begins to speak words of power, like the words the preservers you have known have uttered while using magic. These words echo through the chamber, and though you do not understand them, you know that Korgunard has begun to cast a spell. He tosses more items into the flames and magical energy begins to fill the room. The water in the large bowl begins to swirl and small clouds of gentle rain rise up. The flames and rain swirl around Korgunard, forming a cocoon of light and water which clings to him like a well-worn, sparkling cloak. The sparkling cloak, you note, is strangely beautiful. You do not feel threatened by these events. In fact, you feel calm and at peace.

Thirty-Three:  
Raiders Strike!





Thirty-Four:  
The Great One



Thirty-Five:  
Street Scene





Thirty-Six:  
Traveling the Wastes



Thirty-Seven:  
Arcane Shadows



## Thirty-Eight: Rumors



**Jeevo** "We have heard many things concerning your group. It is said that you carry the Great One with you, though we do not know what the Great One is. Yes, there are rumors. There are always rumors. But who puts stock in such old slave tales? As far as we have been told, Elentha was instructed to find a group of escaped slaves who fled Urik a few days ago. She believes you are these slaves. Are you? No matter. I just want this mission to end so that we may return to our village. The wastes have become strange in recent days. Animals stand still for long periods of time, staring north toward Urik as though waiting for someone or something to come. Other places have been deserted by the animals, leaving the inhabitants of the wastes hungry and more violent than usual. Why are these things happening?"



**Nenburri** "I know why the wastes have gone crazy! It is because of this Great One we have heard tales of. Great One, bah! This Great One is evil and dangerous. I say he is an agent of the sorcerer-kings. Perhaps he is a sorcerer king himself! You all heard what happened in Tyr. There are no Great Ones. There are only masters and slaves. The masters are all evil and cruel, the slaves are all dead or dying. That is why these things happen. That is why everything happens! Preservers, defilers, templars, sorcerer-kings—they all serve themselves. This Great One is just another master."



**Hecco the Mul** "I say you are wrong. Has a preserver ever done anything to hurt us? Elentha has done nothing but help the tribe since she joined. I say this Great One is our salvation. I have also heard the name Gossamer, though I don't know if it applies to the same being. The stories I have heard speak of water welling from the ground wherever the Gossamer walks, of trees sprouting from dead sand, of rocky ground splitting open to reveal fertile soil. The Gossamer is a being of nature and balance. He can save Athas, I feel it in my battle-weary muscles. He will cause the land to be reborn!"



**Varrel the Half-Elf** "Fools! The Great One is not salvation! There is no salvation! The Great One is the damnation of Athas! Haven't you realized yet that the world is dead? It just hasn't cooperated by lying down yet. Well, this Great One has come to remind Athas that it died long ago. It will suck up the small amounts of life that still remain like a hungry giant sucks up thri-kreen stew. Everywhere it travels will become black and lifeless as it speeds up the slow process of death that has been unfolding since long before our fathers' fathers were born. That is what the Great One is, and I welcome it! I welcome an end to this existence we have wrongly called life!"



Thirty-Nine:  
Arcane Shadows

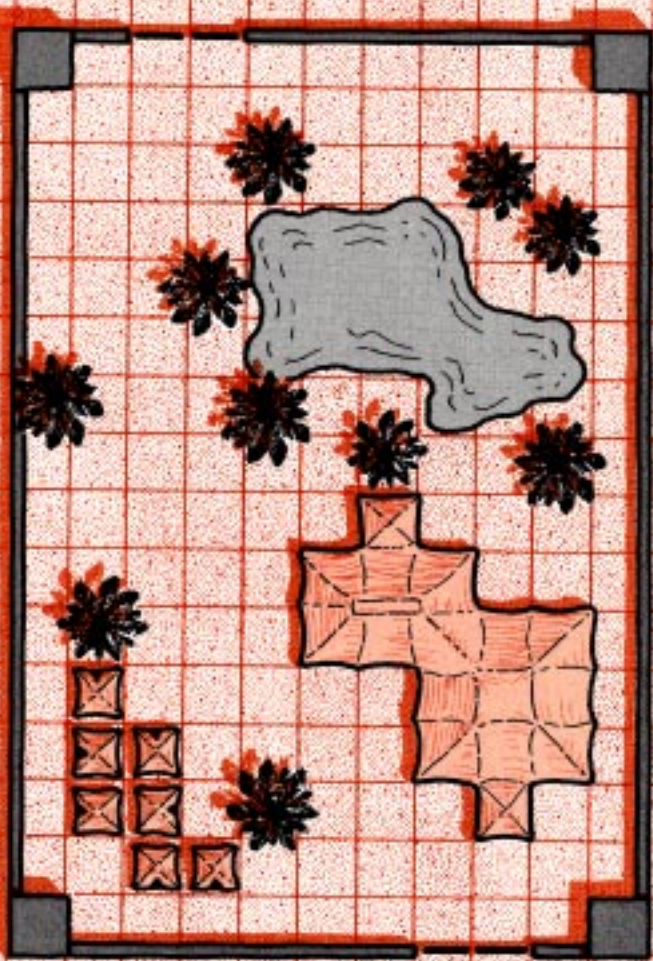


Forty:  
Concealed Door





Forty-One:  
Silver Spring Map



1 sq. = 5'



## Forty-Two: Korgunard Arrives



Jaggo pulls back the curtain. Standing in the doorway is a tall, imposing figure. His bald head is held high and his strange, golden eyes move across the occupants of the chamber. You feel his gentle, understanding gaze rest upon you before passing on. His skin has a metallic glow, appearing to be coated in the same golden shine that fills his eyes. "I am Korgunard, preserver and long-time member of the Veiled Alliance. Thank you all for accepting my invitation. I have traveled the wastes of Athas for many years now, often remaining alone for much of my journeys. But now I need the help of the Alliance and its friends in order to accomplish something of extreme importance. It concerns the fate of Athas, and it concerns all of you, as well.

"I would like to wait for Leoricus to arrive," Korgunard continues, "but time grows short and the twin moons are climbing through the sky. I had hoped that Thania would come, too. The division of Urik's Alliance saddens me." He sighs, then again gazes at the crowd. "It is time to begin. When we have finished, I promise that you shall witness a shift of power from the sorcerer-kings to those who wish to restore Athas to its former glory and abundance."

Forty-Three:  
The Defiler





Forty-Four:  
Peace-Bringer





Forty-Five:  
The Free



Forty-Six:  
Preserver





Forty-Seven:  
Friendly Slave Tribe









# DARK SUN

The  
battle  
for  
Athas's  
rebirth  
begins

DUNGEON MASTER™ Book





## Arcane Shadows

A DARK SUN™ Campaign Adventure

## DM's Book

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## Starting the Adventure

*Arcane Shadows* is designed for four to six player characters of levels 5 to 9. In the city-state of Urik, the player characters witness a secret arcane ceremony that could be the salvation of their dying world. But evil forces interrupt the ceremony before it can be completed. Now the savior's life is in the hands of the player characters, to protect or lose, depending on their courage and their skill.



**Materials Needed to Play.** In addition to this module, you must have copies of the AD&D® 2nd Edition rulebooks, the DARK SUN™ boxed set, and *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.

You may also want to read the first two *Prism Pentad* novel series: *The Verdant Passage* and *The Crimson Legion*. These novels describe the world of Athas.



Note that this module follows the events previously described in the *Freedom* and *Road to Urik* adventures. *Arcane Shadows* can be played as a stand-alone adventure or used in conjunction with the first two modules to create a continuing story centered around your player characters. Thus, you might consider reading and playing the previous DARK SUN adventures first, but your enjoyment of *Arcane Shadows* will not be diminished if you decide to begin here.



Additionally, you may want to have copies of the *Slave Tribes* and *Dragon Kings* supplements, and the DARK SUN Appendix of the *Monstrous Compendium*, as these products provide greater details about some of the creatures and characters encountered during this adventure.

**Preparing for Play.** Look over the pregenerated characters in the *Player's Book* and decide if you want your players to use them or create their own. If you played *Freedom* or *Road to Urik*, you may recognize some of the pregenerated characters. They have gained some abilities and a level or two, reflecting the experience awarded in the previous adventures. If you decide to use these characters, remove pp. 19-24 from the *Player's Book* and let each player select one.

Be sure that each player understands all the information on the character sheet, particularly any special class or racial abilities, as well as psionic powers. Answer all questions concerning the characters' abilities before starting play. Next. Turn the page and continue reading How to Use this Booklet and Adventure Organization before looking over The Course of the Adventure. After that, you'll be ready to start the adventure.

## How to Use This Book

If you are familiar with other AD&D® adventure modules, you will find the organization and format of the DARK SUN™ products different than what you're used to. Aside from the different booklets (described on the inside cover of the module folder), this adventure does not follow the progression used in many other modules. The characters spend their time involved in a swirl of events and activity, instead of journeying or exploring underground settings. Monsters and NPCs do not wait to be encountered and the story does not unfold in a set A-B-C pattern. Player characters often face multiple problems at the same time, and it is up to them to decide which problems to tackle and when. The decisions they make can affect later events, altering encounters and even changing the course of the adventure. (Some events occur no matter what the PCs do, though.) As DM, your job is to direct and shape events to match the personalities and ambitions of the players and their characters. You cannot simply describe what is waiting behind the next door; you must create situations, conflicts, and sometimes interpret your players' unstated desires in order to fashion an exciting adventure. Consequently, some of the burden lies with the players, as they must act out, as well as react to, the unfolding story.

This adventure offers you many tools to help you direct the story. We've included more encounters than you'll probably need—you select only those encounters most suited to your playing style and group. The NPCs herein provide a rich background of potential friends and enemies for the player characters. Many of these NPCs have not been designed to affect the course of the story—they are story tools and foils to use as you see fit. By the end of *Arcane Shadows*, the player characters will have met many companions, villains, and an assorted supporting cast who can show up again and again in adventures of your own design. Using these NPCs in future adventures will give your campaign a feeling of continuity.



### *Freedom, Road to Urik, and Arcane Shadows*

You do not need to play the previous DARK SUN adventures to enjoy *Arcane Shadows*. Elements of *Freedom* and *Road to Urik* can add more detail to the adventure, however; NPCs whom the PCs met during the course of the earlier adventures can continue to provide the PCs with information, support, protection, or security. Also, the world-shaking events of *Arcane Shadows* build from the plots and endings of the previous modules. While the events and details of *Freedom* and *Road to Urik* need not affect this module, the previous story lines help provide context for the events and NPC motivations which unfold herein. Finally, the attitudes of the player characters can be profoundly affected by their adventures in the previous modules.



## Adventure Organization

This adventure contains encounters, scenes, and background material broken down into discreet units that seldom run more than one page in length. Encounters are the heart of the adventure, presenting situations for characters to act upon. Each encounter further develops the events into a complete story line.

Each encounter is organized into several sections which provide you with all of the information you need to run it.

**Setup** briefly describes the encounter, lists materials you may need, and also may tell you when to use them. **Start** sets the scene for the encounter, most frequently with a short passage you can read to your players. **Encounter** is the heart of the event, describing the general course of action. **Role-playing** provides notes on the behavior, attitudes, and reactions of the principal NPCs for that encounter. Snatches of sample Dialogue that can serve as starting points for role-playing encounters are frequently included in this section. **Reactions** describes how NPCs might respond to PCs' actions during the encounter.

**Statistics** lists any information on NPCs or monsters for that encounter, or it tells you where to find these numbers. Outcome presents the likely results of an encounter. (Of course, not every possibility can be accounted for, only the most likely or logical results. You must be ready to improvise in case the player characters attempt something completely unexpected—a very likely result!)

**Next** tells you where to look in the booklet to continue play. There are often a number of choices, so you can tailor the adventure to your needs.

*Arcane Shadows* does not use wandering monster or random encounter tables. Instead, scenes at the beginning of most adventure sections describe an incident involving an NPC, creature, or problem appropriate to the section. In *Urik*, scenes involve templars, merchants, and other city types. In the wilderness, the scenes deal with creatures, slave tribes, and the environment itself. Some scenes are connected to the plot (such as an NPC whom the PCs already know), but most are simply incidental events. Use these scenes whenever you wish, perhaps to introduce an NPC or to provide action during a slow moment of play. The scenes are merely tools for your use, not requirements.

Finally, background material is included in different sections of the adventure. The background material, which may take up more than one page, outlines the different encounters in that section and may describe places or people common to many encounters and scenes. The background information will help you create descriptions and handle unforeseen events.

## The Course of The Adventure

The player characters begin (or continue) their adventure in the city-state of Urik. Here, either by accident or invitation, the PCs witness the beginning of an arcane ceremony conducted by a legendary preserver in the presence of the Veiled Alliance. Circumstances place the life of this great mage in the hands of the player characters, and they must escort him safely through the wilderness to an unknown destination near Tyr. The PCs are free to chart their own course and make their own plans, but even the best plans run aground when battered by the hot winds of Athas.

The first part of the adventure centers around the secret meeting of the Veiled Alliance meeting that has been called for the express purpose of performing an arcane (and totally unprecedented) ceremony. The events leading up to the meeting are designed to get the PCs involved. The meeting itself takes a strange turn, for the legendary preserver's speech turns into a magical ceremony that supposedly will set Athas on the path to rebirth. Before the ceremony can be completed, templars and the city guard arrive and the preserver suffers a grievous wound. The PCs must recognize that they cannot stand against the templars' superior forces—escape is the only option. The catch is, they must take the preserver with them.

The second part of the adventure deals with the player characters' escape from Urik. They know only a hint of the last words spoken by the preserver before he lapses into unconsciousness. "Toward Tyr," he urges in a deathly whisper, "but not by the roads." It is up to them to decide the manner of their escape from the city-state, and to use their skills and cunning to get past the city guards.

The third part of the adventure follows the PCs' trek from Urik toward Tyr. The challenges of the wilderness await them as they travel the road and cut across the wastes and barrens. They must also contend with agents of Urik, hot on their trail and hungry for the preserver's blood.

In the fourth part of the adventure the PCs receive some unexpected aid from a legendary slave tribe called the Free. In these scenes they learn about life in a slave tribe and hear plenty of rumors concerning the wounded and unconscious preserver in their care. Some call him Athas's savior, others, the world's destruction. They must decide what they think of the man and then mission—should they continue or leave him for the templars? They also learn that their destination is not Tyr, but a hidden valley near the turbulent city.

The fifth part of the adventure follows the PCs into a hidden valley where they must fight their way past the deadly Black Sand Raiders to reach their destination. The evil slave tribe seeks the preserver for their defiler, who wants to use the magically-charged person for an arcane ceremony of his own—a foul, evil ceremony, to be sure.

In the last section, with the assistance of the valley's occupant, the PCs must help the preserver finish his ceremony. This becomes increasingly difficult as the templars from Urik finally catch up with their quarry. Will the PCs win the day and set Athas on the slow path toward rebirth? The only way to find out is to start the adventure . . . .

## Part One: The City of Urik

Urik lies northeast of Tyr, on the edge of the Great Alluvial Sand Wastes. It is ruled by the sorcerer-king Hamanu, who calls himself King of the World, King of the Mountains and Plains, King of Urik. He is a self-styled warlord, a warrior king who has built a city to house his great army. Urik is much like the other city-states ruled by sorcerer-kings. Slaves are plentiful, working as domestic servants, as artisans in the craft shops, as soldiers, and as workers in the obsidian quarries. A thriving merchant's quarter features mundane and exotic goods from all over the Tyr region. In the very center of the city stands a great walled fortress. This is Hamanu's palace, Destiny's Kingdom, which covers a square mile of land. It serves as more than the sorcerer-king's residence, however. It is also the administrative center for his templars and the base for his army.

Urik is known for both its prowess in war and its obsidian. Its army stands as one of the most feared in the region, even with its recent defeat against Tyr (see the *Road to Urik* module and *The Crimson Legion* novel for more details). The army consists of both freemen and slaves, and special units of halflings and half-giants add a unique punch to Hamanu's forces. Obsidian, mined from the nearby Smoking Crown Mountains with the sweat and blood of slaves, is Urik's most prized commodity. It is exported to the other city-states, filling Hamanu's coffers to overflowing. Obsidian weapons and tools are among the best available in this metal-poor world.

While Hamanu plays soldier and personally trains his troops, his templars take care of the day-to-day running of the city. Urik follows a strict, unforgiving code of laws. The obsidian quarries are full of visitors and citizens, alike, who broke one of Urik's many laws. Visitors are advised to carry extra money in case they need to bribe a templar to maintain their freedom.

### The Arcane Ceremony

Those who have read *The Verdant Passage* novel know that sorcerer-kings have a foul ceremony available to them whereby they can draw life energy from living beings and convert it into magical energy. Kalak of Tyr used such a ceremony to transform himself into a dragon king. Luckily for Athas, Rikus the mul and his companions were able to kill Kalak before he completed his dark ceremony.

In this adventure, the PCs learn that the preservers have a similar ceremony available to them. Much of this ceremony will remain secret, even to the DM, revealed through hints and glimpses as the adventure progresses. What you need to keep in mind is that the preservers' transformation process is beneficial to Athas, quite the opposite of that of the sorcerer-kings. As the sorcerer-kings become dragons, so too do the powerful preservers change. What they become are even more legendary than the dragons, and whispers of Great Ones and Gossamers are the extent of the identifying tags the PCs will hear in this adventure. Let the secrets unfold as they are presented in the encounters. Don't give away more than the text indicates, because the PCs have never seen anything like what Korgunard becomes.



## Part One: Introduction

The first part of *Arcane Shadows* is broken into three sections, with a few possible encounters in each. **Part One: A** starts the adventure. It is presented as two different openings, depending upon whether the PCs are “Invited” or “Uninvited” to the upcoming meeting of the Veiled Alliance. The purpose of this encounter (whichever one you use) is to get the PCs to the preservers’ meeting. Use **Part One: A—Invited** if the PCs have a contact in the Veiled Alliance. (If your players are using the pre-generated characters, Vaerhirmana has contacts in the Alliance.) Use **Part One: A—Uninvited** if the PCs have no Alliance contacts or are new to Urik.

**Part One: B** presents the meeting and introduces the PCs to the Veiled Alliance and the legendary preserver named Korgunard. The meeting changes focus when Korgunard begins an arcane ceremony that he promises will shift power from the evil sorcerer-kings to those who wish to restore Athas to its former glory and abundance.

**Part One: C** revolves around the unexpected arrival of the city guard and their templar masters. Not only does this surprise attack disrupt the meeting and interrupt the ceremony, but it leads to the near-mortal wounding of Korgunard. The attack continues long enough for the PCs to realize they are outnumbered and outclassed. Now comes the decision of whether to stay and die or run, to fight another day.

**Part One: D** details the PCs’ escape from the templars’ ambush and sets up the main situation that drives the rest of the adventure—namely, the remaining preservers give Korgunard into the PCs’ care. They must safely transport the dying mage to an unspecified location, to save his life and complete the ceremony.

Before plunging into the first set of encounters, you might want to give the PCs a chance to explore a little of Urik. In the *Player’s Book*, pp. 9, 15, and 35 contain illustrations designed to provide some of the flavor of Urik. Of course, the PCs may attract trouble before they even get to the Veiled Alliance meeting, which could lead into the events in **Part One: A—Uninvited**.

**General Role-playing.** The purpose of **Part One** is to set up the motivation for the rest of the adventure by giving the PCs a mysterious and powerful figure to protect (Korgunard) and a goal to achieve (a location near Tyr). The encounters also provide them with new allies and enemies, and tantalizing hints about the activities of the Veiled Alliance. As you play, record the actions of the PCs in regard to those they meet. This information will determine future events during the course of the adventure.

To begin play, choose one of the two beginnings to start the adventure. A short description of each follows:

**Uninvited.** While wandering the streets of Urik, the PCs attract the attention of the templars. A chase ensues, forcing the PCs to finally take refuge in an unmarked building. In this way, they come upon the Veiled Alliance meeting. They also wind up unwittingly leading the templars to the spot.

**Invited.** The PCs’ contact within the Veiled Alliance invites them to an important meeting. In this option, the PCs are treated as friends and made welcome.

**Next.** Go to **Part One: A** and select **Uninvited** or **Invited** to start the adventure.

## Part One: A—Uninvited

**Setup.** This encounter takes place in the merchant quarter of Urik. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 7— The Street of Exotic Goods.

**Start.** Read the following aloud:

You wander down the Street of Exotic Goods in the merchant quarter of Urik, marveling at the variety of items for sale in the shops and stalls. Far off, a horn blows, signalling the changing of the guard throughout the city. As the horn's blast fades, a merchant in a nearby stall motions for you to come closer.

The PCs enter the street from the top right side of the map. The merchant is in the stall marked A. The street seems less crowded after the horn sounds. Ask the players what they are doing, then start the encounter.

**Encounter.** The merchant offers the PCs a finely-crafted obsidian long sword. As he haggles for a price, a beggar wrapped in robes wanders by and stands aloof, watching. The merchant starts with an asking price of 200 cp; he wants 150 cp, but settles for 100 cp if the PCs are particularly stubborn. Once money changes hands, the beggar throws off his wraps and reveals himself as a templar. At the same time, half-giants spill from the buildings on each side of the stall.

The templar is Malestic. His statistics appear at the end of the *Background Book*. He works with the merchant to trick unwary visitors into breaking Urik's laws. The two then split whatever the visitors are carrying before shipping them off to the obsidian quarries. Malestic wants the PCs alive and relatively unharmed. Dead slaves, after all, are worthless slaves. He has 12 half-giants under his command.

When he reveals himself, Malestic informs the PCs that they have broken Hamanu's sacred law: no one shall purchase a weapon during the changing of the guard. If they don't fall for the merchant's scam, there are plenty of other laws they could break before the second horn blows and Malestic reveals himself. They could take a drink, sit in the shade, or any of a dozen other things. He smiles sadistically as the far-off horn blows a second time, signalling the completion of the procedure. He tells them they are under arrest, tossing the merchant a sack of coins.

**Role-playing.** The merchant should be played as an over-eager salesman. He wants to sell the obsidian sword in the worst way, and is willing to take a loss to do it. Once trouble starts, he disappears. Malestic treats the PCs with contempt. Even if they were tricked into breaking a law, they are still nothing more than common criminals in his mind. He doesn't expect them to try to run, however, and this is the PCs' biggest advantage. The half-giants are excellent warriors, as arrogant and condescending as their master, but they are also slow to react and dimwitted.

### *Dialogue*

"Have you no respect for the laws and codes of Hamanu, King of the World?"

"Take them to the slave pits! King Hamanu needs more glass diggers!"

## Part One: A—Uninvited (Cont.)

**Reactions.** If the PCs ignore the merchant, Malestic (disguised as a beggar) asks them for a bit of ceramic. If they refuse to give him any, he'll follow them down the street until they violate one of the laws pertaining to the changing of the guard. Once he reveals himself as a templar, Malestic calls forth his half-giant guards and orders the PCs to surrender their weapons. If they refuse, a battle begins. The half-giants and the templar will try to knock out the PCs unless the characters prove to be extremely powerful. At some point, the PCs should realize that fleeing is a better idea than fighting. If they do flee, the templar and his guards give chase.

**Statistics.** *Half-Giant Guards (12):* F2; AL N; AC 6 (mekillot hide); MV 15; HD 2; hp 46; THAC0 19 (+4 hit prob.); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 +7 (-2 obsidian long sword, +9 Str); ML 12; Str 21; Dex 14; Con 16; Int 11; Wis 9; Cha 9.

**Merchant:** F0; AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 -1 (bone dgr); ML 7; Str 7; Dex 8; Con 11; Int 13; Wis 10; Cha 10.

**Outcome.** If the PCs stand and fight, the battle proceeds to its natural conclusion. The PCs either win or they are killed or captured. In no case should Malestic be killed at this point in the adventure. If things don't go his way, he flees to gather more soldiers. If the PCs win, you'll have to figure out another way to get them to the Veiled Alliance meeting. As the best course is for them to come across the meeting by accident as they flee the templar and his guards, you may want to keep adding more guards to the fray until the PCs are overwhelmed or forced to run away.

If the PCs are captured, the adventure can still proceed. While awaiting transport to the quarries, the PCs meet up with another recently captured visitor who is actually a preserver. The preserver was on his way to the upcoming meeting of the Veiled Alliance when he was taken by Malestic. He has an escape planned. If the PCs offer to help the preserver escape, he invites them to the meeting—provided they can all get out of Malestic's clutches. Allow any reasonable escape plan to work, for Malestic has figured out who the preserver is and wants him to get away. The templar hopes the preserver will lead him to the Veiled Alliance's secret meeting place in the merchant quarter (which he will, if you run this scene).

If the PCs flee from the templar and his guards, use the street map to play out a short chase. Once the PCs have gotten a little ahead of Malestic and his guards, tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 40. As they turn a corner, they notice a young woman slip into a concealed door. This concealed door can be found easily, once the PCs know where to look, and it offers them an excellent hiding place. Once they pass through the concealed door and into the shop's hidden room, they find a ladder leading downward. The ladder takes them to the meeting of the Veiled Alliance.

**Next.** If the PCs escape on their own and enter the concealed door, continue with **Part One: B**. If the PCs are captured and meet the preserver, continue with **Part One: A—Invited** after they all escape from Malestic.



## Part One: A—Invited

**Setup.** This encounter takes place in a hidden room beneath the shop of Abbin the Pottery Maker. It introduces them to the Alliance and gives them a chance to make some powerful friends. (If you began the adventure with Part One A: Uninvited, do not use this encounter unless the PCs were captured by Malestic, met the preserver, and subsequently escaped. That preserver then becomes their contact.) Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 11 — **The Veiled Alliance Meets.**

**Start.** Read the following to a PC preserver (or anyone who has a contact):

Your contact asked you to come to Abbin the Pottery Maker's shop, in Urik's merchant quarter. He told you to ask the shopkeeper for an agafari wood ceremonial bowl. You did, and the shopkeeper ushered you into a back room and down a ladder hidden beneath a trap door. At the bottom of the ladder, a group of people stand in a large room. You feel a sharp tap on your shoulder and an angry voice asks, "Whet are you doing here?"

**Encounter.** The PC preserver has been tapped by a tall woman with dark hair and large eyes. Her angry voice is barely more than a whisper, but the PC hears it very clearly. Others step closer, listening intently for the PC's response. There are 10 people in all, six men and four women. Humans make up the majority of the group, but there are also two half-elves. The PCs do not see their contact anywhere.

**Reactions.** If the PCs respond in a friendly manner and explain that they were invited, they will be asked to identify their contact. If they give the proper name (meaning, if they supply the name of the Veiled Alliance contact in your campaign), the tall woman smiles and welcomes them to the meeting. She is Elentha, a preserver from the Free slave tribe, though she does not reveal this at this time. Her statistics can be found in the *Background Book*.

If the PCs behave in a hostile or belligerent fashion, the preservers refuse to trust them. Their contact appears at this time to prevent a battle from breaking out, and the PCs will be allowed to stay, but none of the other members of the Veiled Alliance will have anything to do with them.

**Role-playing.** After the PCs respond to Elentha's question, the meeting begins. The PCs' contact whispers excitedly that this is a very important meeting, perhaps the most important since Morlek, leader of Urik's Veiled Alliance, disappeared a few months back. Even the other preservers appear excited or agitated. They all wonder why they have been called here. A half-elf casts doom and gloom, telling all who will listen that something terrible must be happening to initiate such an unprecedented meeting. An old human takes the opposite opinion, claiming that some wonderful new spell has been discovered, or maybe the Alliance has finally found a way to strike out at the defilers and sorcerer-kings. Elentha asks the contact why the PCs were invited, and the contact replies meekly that, "Jaggo asked me to bring them."

## Part One: A—Invited (Cont.)

### *Dialogue*

"I've heard that a defiler has joined forces with an undead spirit somewhere in the sandy wastes. Maybe that's what this is all about."

"Maybe there's news about Morlak."

"It does little good to stand around guessing. Where is Jaggo, anyway?"

"What if this is a trick of Thania and her people?"

"Have any of you heard of a peace-bringer working in the region?"

"The Black Sand Raiders have been very active between here and Tyr."

**A Note About Urik's Alliance.** The Veiled Alliance operating in Urik has recently split into two factions. Its long-time leader, Morlak, disappeared a few months back, and since that time two preservers have been vying for leadership. The group the PCs meet is led by Leoricus the Untamable. The other faction is led by a female half-elf named Thania. Neither faction has much use for the other these days, and friends of one are considered enemies of the other.

**Outcome.** The meeting continues in a disorganized fashion for a time as the members of the Veiled Alliance await the arrival of the one called Jaggo. Only the PCs' contact converses with the party unless the PCs were friendly and truthful to Elentha. The Alliance has at least three psionics at the meeting, and each of these probes for lies and hidden deceptions in the minds of the PCs. If the PCs decide to hide anything, chances are the Alliance will be aware of it, and certain members may even be able to discern what the secret is.

During this opening portion of the meeting, there is no set agenda. The mages relate information about the city and the surrounding region to each other, which the PCs can overhear. Among this information are the following rumors:

- A defiler and an undead spirit are working together. (True. The defiler is a high-ranking member of the Black Sand Raiders.)
- A peace-bringer has been detected in the area. (True, although no one will say anything else on the subject, or explain what a peace-bringer is.)
- The Black Sand Raiders have been active on the road to Tyr. (True.)
- The Dragon has been seen in Urik. (False.)
- Thania's faction claims to have been in contact with Morlek. (True, that is what they claim; false, they have not heard from Morlek.)
- Rikus, the hero from Tyr, has been captured by slave traders. (False.)

If the PCs press their contact for more information about this meeting and the PCs' part in it, the contact shrugs. He knows as much as the others, he explains. He told Jaggo about the PCs and the old preserver thought it would be a good idea to invite them to the meeting. He has no idea why Jaggo came to this conclusion.

**Next.** After the PCs have heard everything you want them to and have had a chance to interact with this gathering of the Veiled Alliance to their satisfaction, it is time to begin the real meeting. Turn to **Part One: B—Preservers' Meeting.**

## Part One: B—Preservers' Meeting

**Setup.** This encounter continues the meeting of the Veiled Alliance. It introduces the PCs to a preserver/psionicist named Korgunard and provides them with a glimpse of one possible path to Athas's rebirth. If the PCs started with **Part One: A—Uninvited**, use **Start: Uninvited** to begin. If they were invited, use **Start: Invited**. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 17 —**Meeting Chamber**.

**Start: Uninvited.** Have the players indicate where in the meeting chamber their characters are standing. Then read the following aloud:

The ladder leads down to a large chamber. A group of men and women stand around the room, discussing matters that make little sense to you. After a moment, a tall, dark-haired woman points an accusing finger and demands to know what you are doing here. Before you can respond, a curtain parts to reveal an old man with gray hair and a beard. He raps a gnarled bone staff on the floor and calls, "Leave them be. They may remain for the duration of the meeting."

**Start: Invited.** Have the players indicate where in the meeting chamber their characters are standing. Then read the following aloud:

After a while, the conversations turn to mundane matters and you realize that the legendary Veiled Alliance doesn't always contemplate arcane lore and world-shaking events. Then, as you stand around waiting for who-knows-what to happen, the chamber falls silent and all conversation stops. A curtain parts, revealing a wizened old man with long gray hair and a long beard. A gnarled bone staff holds his aged body upright, but his eyes are clear and bright.



**Encounter.** Everyone falls silent as the old man enters, letting the curtain drop closed behind him. He scans the room with his bright, clear eyes. His gaze pauses briefly upon the PCs (especially on the PC preserver or the PC with an Alliance contact, if they were invited to the meeting). Then he taps his bone staff three times. Before he can say a word, however, Elentha speaks first. "Jaggo, my old friend," she begins, "why the mystery? And why have you allowed these . . . others . . . to participate?" Her contempt for the PCs is quite evident in her tone and mannerisms.

The old wizard named Jaggo smiles. "Mystery?" he says, his voice full of good humor. "All of life is a mystery, Elentha. As for these others, they have been invited to witness the events which will unfold. Korgunard has asked for them personally."

Excited whispers run through the chamber. The PCs can only make out a few of the words, but it is evident that this Korgunard is a big deal among the Veiled Alliance. All speak of him in revered tones, and all steal glances at the PCs—glances which have changed from hostility and suspicion to something akin to curiosity.

Note that there is little interaction during this encounter. The PCs stand around, watch, and gather information which will be important to the rest of the adventure.



## Part One: B—Preservers' Meeting (Cont.)

**Role-playing.** Old Jaggo knows that the few clues he has dropped concerning this meeting of the Veiled Alliance—most notably, the name of Korgunard—have excited and mystified his audience. He is a showman, and the present situation allows him to satisfy that portion of his ego. The other preservers want to know what this is all about, while Jaggo wants to play out the moment and build anticipation for the secret he is about to reveal. Let the PCs ask questions along with the members of the Veiled Alliance if they so choose. Jaggo simply nods, smiles, and shakes his head a lot, no matter what anybody asks. Use the samples of dialogue to spark this portion of the encounter, then go on to **Korgunard Arrives!** below.

### *Dialogue*

"Korgunard? I thought Korgunard was just a legend."

"Have you ever met Korgunard? I've heard he's more ancient than Jaggo."

"Are you going to spend the whole day smiling, Jaggo, or are you going to tell us what this is all about before the templars arrive?"

**Korgunard Arrives!** Once the PCs are suitably intrigued by the deepening mystery, Jaggo grips the curtain and pulls it wide. Behind it stands a tall, imposing figure—the legendary preserver/psionist, Korgunard. Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 42 —**Korgunard Arrives!** Have them read the text beneath the picture of the tall, bald wizard aloud, as this officially opens the meeting.

**The Ceremony.** Korgunard's opening address leads directly into an arcane ceremony that takes everyone, including Old Jaggo, completely by surprise. Outside, the twin moons of Athas have risen into the night sky, but inside, the chamber crackles with fire light. Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 32 —**The Ceremony.** Have them read the text beneath the picture of Korgunard performing a magical rite, as this describes the beginning of the ceremony.

**Reactions.** If the PCs ask questions of Jaggo, he simply smiles, refusing to give a verbal answer. If they try to explore the room beyond the curtain, Korgunard emerges and begins the meeting. The PCs should get the impression that Korgunard is talking directly to them throughout the meeting. If the PCs try to leave they will find that all exits have been magically sealed for the duration of the meeting.

**Outcome.** The ceremonial spell that Korgunard has begun casting takes six hours to complete. During the first three hours, the PCs grow more comfortable and inspired as the serene, peaceful process plays out. They should feel a sense of wonder and admiration for the legendary preserver; or at least recognize his power for what it is—a great force of good and life. However, evil forces are about to interrupt the process.

**Next.** Before the ceremonial spell can be completed, agents of the sorcerer-king attack. Turn to **Part One: C—Surprise Attack.**

## Part One: C—Surprise Attack

**Setup.** This encounter takes place halfway through Korgunard's ceremonial spell. In the midst of the serene, peaceful process, all of the members of the Veiled Alliance have dropped their guard. The attack begins, quite horribly, with Korgunard being struck down. Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 30 —**Surprise Attack!**

**Start.** The encounter begins with the appearance of a city guard. Read aloud:

You are as wrapped up in the serene ceremony as the members of the Veiled Alliance, with your gaze locked on the noble features of Korgunard. The cocoon of light and water seems to thicken around him as you watch, cloaking him in the glow of light. The curtain behind him is drawn back, and another figure appears. Too late, you see that it is an officer of the city guard. Too late, you see the guard's metal sword swing forward in a deadly arc. Too late, you see Korgunard fall beneath its sharp, cutting blow . . . .

**Encounter.** The surprise attack on the Veiled Alliance meeting has begun. If the PCs came to the meeting through the **Uninvited** encounter, then they led the templar and the city guard to this hidden location. If they were invited, the surprise attack is the culmination of a long investigation by Malestic the templar.

The city guards swarm into the meeting chamber through its three entrances: Malestic and a force of 20 half-giants descend from the pottery shop's ladder; six low-level templars lead a squad of 12 human guards through the tunnel leading to the street; and a guard officer, two mid-level templars, and four human guards emerge from the back room behind Korgunard and Jagger.

Malestic, standing behind the first four half-giants in his force, calls for everyone to throw down their weapons and surrender in the name of King Hamanu.

**Role-playing.** Malestic wants to take the members of the Veiled Alliance alive—at least a majority of them. His templars and guards, however, are nervous about taking on such a large group of wizards in their own lair. Most of them will strike to kill, hoping that at least a few of the wizards wind up only wounded. The officer, aware that the bald wizard and his aged companion are probably the most dangerous, has decided to take them out first. The templars all cast *silence, 15' radius*.

Because the preservers were all wrapped up in Korgunard's beautiful ceremony, the guards and templars take them totally by surprise (no roll allowed). The PCs suffer from this as well, but they get to make surprise rolls with a -4 modifier. Even those PCs who remain unsurprised can do nothing to stop the officer's first attack on Korgunard. They can, however, stop him from striking the preserver again and can prevent his companions from attacking Jagger.

Jagger tries to protect Korgunard, as does the PCs' contact (or an unnamed preserver if there is no contact). Elentha leads a handful of mages into the tunnel, against those forces. The remaining preservers fight Malestic and his half-giants. A few surrender after a couple of rounds of combat. The rest battle to the death.

## Part One: C—Surprise Attack (Cont.)

### Dialogue

“Save Korgunard! Do not let them kill him!”

“Run, preservers! Escape if you can!”

“What’s happening? What is going on? How did this happen?”

“Fools! I want some of the preservers alive, or you’ll answer to Hamanu!”



**Statistics. Malestic:** See the *Background Book*.

**Malestic’s Half-Giants (20):** Use the statistics on the NPC *Master Table* on the inside cover.

**Low-Level Templars (6):** Use the statistics on the NPC *Master Table*. Spells: *cause light wounds, silence 15’ radius*.

**Mid-Level Templars (2):** Use the statistics on the NPC *Master Table*. Spells: *curse, commend, detect magic, find*

*traps, silence 15’ radius*.

**Human Guards (16):** Use the statistics on the NPC *Master Table*.

**Human Guard Officer:** F7; AL N; AC 4 (kank armor & shield plus Dexterity); MV 12; HD 7; hp 42; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8 +2 (metal long sword +1, +1 Str); ML 14; Str 16; Dex 15; Con 13; Int 13; Wis 11; Cha 10.

**Outcome.** If the PCs stand and fight Malestic and his half-giants, they will probably be killed or captured. If they are captured, see **Part One: A—Uninvited** for suggestions on continuing the adventure (though in this case they will be taken to where Korgunard lies dying in a coma by the captured preserver they escape with, not to the meeting—continue with the **Outcome** section of **Part One: D—Escape**). If by some chance of fate and luck the PCs manage to hold their own or even win against the force of half-giants, a second squad comes down the ladder. The PCs should either be forced to flee or go down in defeat—they should not win this battle.

If the PCs follow Elentha into the tunnel to the streets, they stand a better chance of escaping, but the odds are still against them. If they do escape, Elentha leaves them behind as she disappears into the night. Another preserver comes to them before dawn to play out the **Outcome** scene from **Part One: D**.

If the PCs engage Malestic and his half-giants or follow Elentha, their contact (or another preserver) calls for them to go to Korgunard’s aid.

If the PCs go to Korgunard’s aid immediately (which is the preferred outcome), they can save Jaggo and open an escape path for the wounded Korgunard. They should feel particularly motivated toward this course of action because of the impression the legendary preserver should have made on them during the serene ceremony they witnessed. It should have made them protective of the noble, peaceful soul with whom they temporarily joined.

**Next.** If all the PCs are captured, go back to **Part One A: Uninvited** to improvise an escape scene. Otherwise, turn to **Part One: D—Escape**.



## Part One: D—Escape!

**Setup.** This encounter starts with the battle to save Korgunard and Jagger, then continues with a request by Korgunard and the remaining preservers. After the battle, have them turn to *Player's Book* p. 1— To Tyr . . . but . . . the Roads.

**Start.** The encounter begins when the PCs rush to Korgunard's aid. Read:

The officer of the guard and his squad of templars and human guards emerge from the room behind the curtain. A guard and a templar grab Jagger forcefully, shaking him and threatening him with their weapons. The officer prepares to deliver another blow to Korgunard when he sees you approaching.

**Encounter.** The officer, two mid-level templars, and four human guards have attacked Korgunard and Jagger. The group fights to the death, inspired by its leader's success. Statistics for these villains can be found on the *NPC Master Table* on the inside cover and in **Part One: C—Surprise Attack**.

After the battle is over, the PCs can easily carry Korgunard into the back room and out through the sewer exit. Jagger, their contact, or another preserver accompanies them to lead the way. Once they reach a place of relative safety, the PCs are asked to perform an important and dangerous task.

**Role-playing.** The officer is full of confidence and bravado after taking down the legendary Korgunard. His guards and templars draw on this confidence, at least until the officer is defeated. Until the PCs engage them, the guards and templars will attempt to wound or kill Jagger as well. Jagger defends himself as best as he can, but he cannot call upon his spells. The PCs' contact or another preserver rushes to aid the old wizards, fighting as hard as he can to save his mentor and the legend.

**Reactions.** If the PCs manage to defeat the officer, any remaining templars and guards suffer a morale penalty of -2. After half of the force has been defeated, one of the remaining guards will try to disengage from the combat to call for help. If the PCs don't stop him, 1d6 half-giants will join the fray in 1d4 rounds.

**Outcome.** After the battle, a preserver leads the PCs into the sewers. They must carry Korgunard, who slips in and out of consciousness. Because the wound was caused while Korgunard was in the midst of a mysterious and powerful spell, no healing magic will work on him. In fact, he is cloaked in a thin aura of glowing water, an after-effect of the unfinished spell. In the sewer, Korgunard whispers to the preserver, "Must go . . . finish spell . . . toward Tyr . . . but not by the roads . . ." before collapsing into a coma. The PCs might be able to pick up "To Tyr . . . but . . . the roads" if they strain to listen. The preserver, however, turns to them and says, "Korgunard must go to Tyr by the quickest route. Will you help?"

**Next.** Continue with **Part Two**.

## Part Two: Introduction

### Leaving Urik

The player characters should be in hiding somewhere in the sewers beneath Urik. With them are Korgunard, Jaggo (if he survived the surprise attack), and one other preserver (either the PCs' contact or some other mage—but not Elentha). They have been asked to take Korgunard to some undisclosed destination. The only directions Korgunard was able to provide were, "Toward Tyr, but not by the roads." Unfortunately, the preserver attending him changed those directions. As none of the other preservers knew of Korgunard's ceremony before it began, they also have no idea how to interpret the mage's last words. Their best guess is that Korgunard has been in contact with the Veiled Alliance in Tyr, and that these preservers are familiar enough with the magical process to finish the spell and save Korgunard's life.

Normally, the Veiled Alliance would be able to provide the PCs with plenty of help to escape the city. However, due to the surprise attack, many of its members are engaged in rescues and escape plans throughout Urik. The best the Alliance can do is point them to two possible ways out of the city. They may disguise themselves as members of a merchant caravan or as part of a slave detail heading to a noble's plantation. Of course, the PCs are free to come up with their own plan for getting out of Urik. The scenes that follow should help you run a few encounters, no matter what method of escape the PCs decide to take.

### The Alliance's Pledge

While the PCs tend to Korgunard, another figure appears out of the dark sewer. It is Lodo Gansky, the dwarven aid to Leoricus, leader of the Alliance faction the PCs have been interacting with. Lodo apologizes that neither he nor Leoricus were able to be at the meeting, but now his leader is trying to assist the other preservers. Lodo pledges that the Urik Alliance (at least his faction) will always be in their debt if they agree to carry out Korgunard's last wish.

### What About Korgunard?

Korgunard received a grievous wound from the officer's magical sword. A jagged cut across the top of Korgunard's skull has rendered the preserver unconscious. The magical energy of the spell he was performing has remained like a glowing cocoon of water around the preserver and has placed him in a life-sustaining coma. This coma will keep Korgunard alive, but he will be unable to lend any assistance or explanation to the PCs (except through a process called *arcane shadows*; see Parts Three and Four). While the cocoon of arcane power remains in place, no other magic will work upon the preserver, including healing spells (consider him to be 100% magic resistant). To save Korgunard's life, the PCs must get him through the wilderness to a place that is somewhere along the route toward Tyr.

## Part Two: Scenes—Escape Plans

The scenes below provide brief incidents to help you run the PCs' preparations for leaving Urik. You will combine them with the scenes concerning escape obstacles that appear on the next page. Both sets of scenes occur over a period of one or more days (or nights). This period of time should give the PCs ample opportunities to plan and implement their exodus from the city.

**The Veiled Alliance.** The faction of preservers in Urik which the PCs have met has suffered a terrible blow and is in upheaval. Not only are the templars hot on the preservers' trail, but the opposing faction is taking this opportunity to gain more power. If the PCs have been helpful and have agreed to take Korgunard to Tyr, the faction (through Lodo Gensky) can offer the following assistance: it can give the group 300 cp for supplies or bribes; it can supply enough water for the entire group for three days; it can provide the name of a merchant (Beffig) whose caravan is leaving soon, and who might be willing to take them with him; it can add the party to a slave work detail that operates outside the city, which will at least get them past the city walls. Any other aid is up to you, but it is suggested that Lodo not make things so easy for the PCs that this part of the adventure becomes a cake walk.

**Beffig the Merchant.** Beffig works for House Jarko of Balic, and the wagons and goods in his caravan belong to that prestigious merchant house. Beffig is also a preserver and a secret member of the Veiled Alliance. If the PCs come to him with proof of their association with the Alliance (Lodo's code phrase, "The peace-bringer avoids Urik this day," works nicely), he agrees to provide whatever assistance he can. He will either let the PCs join his caravan or he will give them their own small wagon so that they can pretend to be non-affiliated dune traders.

**Gregen the Half-Giant.** Gregen the half-giant serves as a guard in a slave work detail. He owes a few favors to the Veiled Alliance, and if the PCs come to him with the right code phrase ("Hurrums sing in the wilderness"), he lets them join the detail. He will store their gear and Korgunard in one of the detail's supply wagons, and he will make sure their shackles are not secure. Other than that, the half-giant makes no promises. Once the detail passes through the city walls, it will be up to the PCs to decide when they want to make their break. Gregen won't aid them, and he may even have to try to stop them if the templars are watching.

**The Wanderer's Friend.** If the PCs simply ask the preservers to point them toward a friendly trading post, they send the party to The Wanderer's Friend. This general store has everything from wagons and herd animals to all kinds of supplies needed to trek across the harsh Athasian wilderness. The owner, a dwarf named Porpor, owes the Alliance a favor or two. He promises to look the other way concerning the PCs. He even provides whatever supplies the PCs are willing to buy at one-half of the list cost. He has no magical items for sale.



## Part Two: Scenes—Obstacles

The scenes below provide brief incidents to help you run the PCs' escape from Urik. You will combine them with the scenes concerning their travel preparations that appear on the previous page. Both sets of scenes occur over a period of one or more days (or nights). This period of time should give the PCs ample opportunities to plan and implement their exodus from the city.

**Templar Patrol.** As the PCs wander Urik, preparing to leave the city, patrols increase in frequency. Most patrols consist of one templar and two to six human or half-giant guards. They are specifically looking for any of the preservers who escaped the surprise attack. They are especially interested in finding Korgunard. Use the statistics from the *NPC Master Table* when the PCs encounter a patrol.

**Elf Informers.** Because Malestic and King Hamanu desperately want to recover Korgunard (who they believe is a high-ranking Alliance official), they have posted a reward for information leading to any preserver's capture. A pair of raffish-looking elves recognize the PCs from the descriptions being passed around the city. If the PCs do not notice them, the elves lead a templar patrol back to capture them. Use the statistics from the *NPC Master Table* when the PCs encounter the elf informers.

**Slave Overseers.** If the PCs decide to join a slave work detail in order to exit the city, they may have to deal with overseers. There are two low-level templar overseers, four half-giant guards, and six human guards watching over the slaves. In addition to the PCs, there are 20 slaves in the detail. They will not fight or try to escape unless the PCs convince them that there is a chance for success. Fighting alongside them and taking down two or three guards is a good start toward convincing them. The detail has been loaned to a noble by the king. The best chance the PCs have of winning their freedom (and perhaps that of the other slaves) is to make a break after the detail has moved out of sight of the city walls but before it reaches the noble's plantation. Use the statistics from the *NPC Master Table* when running this scene.

**Gatekeepers.** If the PCs try to exit a city gate on their own, they will have to convince the gatekeepers that they are innocent citizens on legitimate business. Each gate is manned by two human guards (use the statistics on the *NPC Master Table*). The guards are on the lookout for persons matching the PCs' descriptions. If the guards recognize them, they will subtly suggest that a bribe may be in order. ("Opening and closing the gates is tiring work, after all.") The guards will not settle for less than 100 cp each. If the PCs short-change them or refuse to pay, they call for help. One templar patrol (see above) will arrive every 1d4 rounds. If the PCs make it through the gate before the first patrol arrives, they are home free. If they don't, they will be chased by the patrols until they lose them, destroy them, or are captured.

**Next.** After the PCs leave Urik, the trek to Tyr begins. Continue with **Part Three**.



## Part Three: Introduction

Part Three deals with the PCs' trek across the wilderness from Urik toward Tyr. The encounters that follow are not in any set order, although they are presented in an order that makes sense. Which encounters you use depends on decisions made by the player characters. The PCs will probably travel to Tyr by the roads until they realize they are better off cutting across the wastes.

### By the Roads

This path holds a number of dangers, perhaps some of the worst on the PCs' trek. There was a definite reason that Korgunard urged his protectors not to take this route. Take a look at the map of the Tyr region that came with the DARK SUN™ boxed set. The road from Urik to Tyr is clearly marked. It winds its way past the Dragon's Bowl and over the Tablelands to a stop at the Silver Spring Oasis, then turns west across the Great Alluvial Sand Wastes toward Tyr.

Along the way, the PCs can meet with a band of dune traders traveling toward Urik, wind up as the main course at a thri-kreen dinner, and argue with the elves of Silver Spring over watering rights. The greatest danger, however, comes from the slave tribe known as the Black Sand Raiders. If the PCs do not cut across the wilderness, but stay on the roads, they should run across this encounter.

### Across the Wastes

This path provides a set of dangers that are more random than those connected to the road. First, the PCs will have to deal with the environment—thirst, hunger, and exposure. Other dangers include antloids, a hungry cha'thrang, and a tribe of wild muls. Any or all of these obstacles can be thrown into the path of the PCs. This route is harder to navigate than the roads, and it is easier to get lost. Korgunard will do his best to point the PCs in this direction while they are traveling the road. The PCs can also run into a slaver hunting party that is seeking the group for Malestic. If the PCs leave the roads, they should run into the slavers.

### Events and Endings

Two events definitely occur during the trip. Sometime during the journey, the PCs are visited by a dream vision (an arcane shadow). It comes from Korgunard (though the PCs are not told of this) and points the PCs away from the roads and into the wastes. Also, Malestic and a small army are in pursuit of the PCs. They could catch up with them during the trek, depending upon choices the PCs make. The trek should take two weeks or more. This part of the adventure ends when the PCs are captured, either by the Black Sand Raiders *or* the slaver hunting party (but not

## Part Three: Events

### Event One: Arcane Shadow

**Setup.** Use this event the night before either the party reaches Silver Spring or the Black Sand Raiders attack. A vision comes to them while they sleep. Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 39 –**Arcane Shadows**.

**Start.** The event takes the form of a dream of warning. Read aloud:

Sleep overtakes you after a day of travel. As you fall deeper and deeper into sleep, strange images begin to fill your mind. The images are fast-moving shadows—dark shapes that have no definition, no substance. But there is an urgency to the scenes, a dread foreboding that you can't quite understand. You see a dark tower, shadowy nightmare attackers framed by bright moonlight, and a strange, somehow peaceful being of winged night. You hear a distant voice whisper, "not by the roads." The images flash into your mind with painful force, then you awaken in a cold, clammy sweat . . . .

**Outcome.** The images come from Korgunard as he tries desperately to communicate with the PCs. The image of the dark tower might suggest Tyr's ziggurat, but it actually represents the major landmark in the valley Korgunard needs to get to. The nightmare attackers represent the Black Sand Raiders. Fear accompanies this image. The peaceful being of winged night represents what Korgunard is becoming, but the image is ill-defined. This image implies longing and makes the PCs think about new beginnings. The words are part of what Korgunard said before lapsing into his coma. This should hint that the PCs want to leave the road for the rest of their trip. The dream should remain mysterious even after the PCs wake up.

### Event Two: Followed

**Setup.** Malestic follows the PCs and continues to chase them, whether they are on the road or in the wilderness. This event can occur numerous times during their trip, adding urgency to their trek and suspense to even the most innocent travel scene.

**Encounter.** After a few days, the PCs should begin to see subtle signs which may or may not indicate that they are being followed. Perhaps they notice a cloud of dust on the horizon behind them. Maybe they feel the probing of a psionic scan. If they dawdle or need to backtrack, they might run into a scouting party or two. Malestic has eight half-giants, 10 human guards, and six low-level templars with him.

**Outcome.** This repeating event is designed to make the PCs nervous and wary. They should not come face to face with Malestic yet. They should see that the distance between themselves and the Urikite forces is steadily decreasing. If the PCs do run into a scouting party, it will consist of three guards, one templar, and one half-giant.



## Part Three: By the Roads

This part of the adventure allows you to do a little free-form role-playing. In other words, this part of the adventure is a road trek and anything can happen. Both you and the players have choices to make that will effect the player characters. Indulge yourselves! The following guidelines describe one way to incorporate the encounters, events, and choices of the PCs into the overall story.

Depending on how the PCs got out of Urik, they will either be prepared for their trek or not. If they decided to accompany Beffig and his caravan, they have the added protection of six guards (use the statistics from the *NPC Master Table*) and a caravan-full of supplies. The PCs will have to part company with Beffig at Silver Spring. The merchant tells them that their path lies west while he plans to continue south. He does not stop at the oasis. If they strike out on their own, keep careful record of their supplies and how often they use them. Even by the roads, hunger, thirst, and heat exhaustion can be fatal. See **Part Three: E** for details on the effects of Athas's environment on characters. Note: unless otherwise noted, statistics for NPCs in each encounter can be found on the *NPC Master Table*.

You are encouraged to add encounters to those presented here. The trip to Tyr by the roads could take more than two weeks and only a sample of possible encounters could be fit into this adventure. Also, not every encounter needs to be run in its entirety. Even if they do decide not to visit the oasis, they should still run into the lack Sand Raiders before leaving the road.

One night before encountering the Black Sand Raiders, run **Part Three: Event—Arcane Shadow**. This dream vision comes to the PCs as they sleep. The vision is a range blending of magic and psionics which originates in Korgunard's mind. While the coma has made it impossible to communicate with the PCs through normal means, the magical forces wrapped around him provide him with another avenue of expression. However, such a sending leaves him even weaker than he was, and the images are as confused as the preserver's wounded mind. The PCs should not know where the vision comes from. They will have to interpret it as best as they can.

At some point in the PCs' travels, run **Part Three: Event—Followed**. This event lets the PCs slowly become aware that their escape from Urik was not as complete as they thought. The templar Malestic (and a small army of half-giants, human guards, and lesser templars) is hot on their trail. Whether he catches up to them depends on the PCs' actions and the course of the adventure you choose to pursue.

### Black Sand Raiders

The Sand Raiders are ex-slaves that engage in an unending spree, of killing and plunder. The tribe is described fully in the DARK SUN™ accessory *Slave Tribes*. In brief, the tribe is a dark, evil wraith that haunts the Tablelands. Travelers fear even the mention of their name, thinking that to speak it aloud will draw their murderous attention. In this adventure, the PCs will meet a small force of the Raiders, as the tribe has been scattered to search for Korgunard.

## Part Three: A—Dune Traders

**Setup.** This encounter occurs along the road from Urik to Tyr. It takes place at the end of the day. Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 4— **The Caravan**.

**Start.** This encounter begins one afternoon as the PCs prepare to make camp or right before they decide to halt for the day. Read the following aloud:

You hear the noise before you see its source—sand and gravel crunching beneath massive stone wheels, the roar of cantankerous mekillots, the snapping of whips. On the horizon, coming in your direction, is a huge, fortified caravan wagon. Two mekillots pull it, raising clouds of dust with each step they take.

**Encounter.** This caravan belongs to the merchant house of Inika, bringing goods from Gulg to Urik. A single wagon, drawn by two mekillots, makes up the caravan. Inside the wagon, guards and passengers impatiently wait for the trip to end. If the PCs want, they can easily avoid this encounter. The caravan will not leave the road and its captain is reluctant to deal with other travelers, anyway. If they decide to approach the caravan, they will be cautiously welcomed as the wagon stops for the night. Other than providing information and supplies (if the PCs can pay for them), this encounter can be a role-playing feast. The travelers are a varied lot of merchants and freemen. The guards are nervous. A thief waits to plunder the PCs' supplies.

**Role-playing.** The caravan captain is a cruel, no-nonsense sort who takes the notion "my word is law" to new extremes. He will be cordial but distant with the PCs, ready to suspect them of treachery at the slightest provocation. His guards, 12 strong men, are nervous and ready to fight. The moods of the travelers vary greatly. Some are open and friendly. Others are frightened and shy. The thief is an amiable sort who wants to become fast friends.

### *Dialogue*

"Where are you headed? What's in that wagon?"

"Don't stand too close to the mekillot. He likes to snack on travelers."

**Outcome.** If the PCs behave in a friendly manner, they can learn some of the following information: "Silver Spring isn't worth the money unless you're really thirsty; Tyr has changed since the sorcerer-king was killed; we saw a pack of thri-kreen a few days back; we passed a caravan that was destroyed by the Black Sand Raiders." If they act in a hostile fashion, the captain will order his men to drive the PCs away. At some point during the visit, the thief will strike. If the PCs catch him in the act, they can deliver their own justice or allow the captain to decide the law. If they don't catch him, they find some of their items missing in the days ahead. The thief takes some food and water, some money, and three choice items (DM's choice). He also sees Korgunard and sells this information to Malestic (or gladly gives it to the Raiders).

**Next.** Continue with either **Part Three: B, C or D**, or one of the events.

## Part Three: B—Thri-Kreen

**Setup.** As the PCs travel the road toward Tyr, they come upon the site of a recent battle. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 10— **Recent Remains**.

**Start.** Run this encounter at any time during the trip. If they have met with the traders, they may be thinking about the Raiders. Let them. Read aloud:

The scene before you is disturbing. A caravan of small wagons, presumably pulled by kanks, has been attacked. The road ahead is littered with broken wagons, spilled goods, and discarded weapons. If there were any animals, they have been taken or have run away. You see no signs of life.

**Encounter.** This merchant caravan consisted of six small wagons, eight kanks, and a dozen merchants and guards. They were not attacked by marauders, but by a thri-kreen hunting pack. As is the practice of the thri-kreen, only things that could be eaten were taken from the wagons— kanks, merchants and guards, obvious foodstuffs, and fallen thri-kreen. A search of the wagons turns up supplies that the PCs can use, including a small amount of water and food that was missed. There is also money (600 cp, 30 sp, 10 gp), an assortment of bone and stone weapons, and plenty of trade goods (pottery, textiles, etc.). If marauders did this, they left all of the best loot behind. As the PCs continue to search, the thri-kreen return in search of more “food” — this time it’s the PCs who make up the bulk of the menu.



**Role-playing.** The thri-kreen pack has turned to raiding in order to survive. As such, they consider the PCs as nothing more than prey to be hunted and killed for food. If there is a thri-kreen with the party, it will be allowed to join the pack if it wants. If not, it will be killed as prey. There are 10 members killed in the pack. They will not talk with their prey unless a single PC defeats their leader in one-to-one combat.

### *Dialogue*

“The pack hunts. The prey dies. We are the pack. You are the prey.”

“The Great One. You carry the Great One with you.” [Said with awed voice]

**Outcome.** If the PCs flee, the tireless hunters will stalk them and wait for an opportunity to attack. If the PCs fight, the thri-kreen will break off after six of their number have been killed or incapacitated. Even though the pack destroyed the caravan, it lost a few hunters in the fray and is reluctant to lose more. If the PCs prove to be too strong for the hunters to handle, they will flee into the wastes. If the thri-kreen somehow view Korgunard in his present state, they immediately cease fighting. They call him “The Great One,” and each steps forward to touch their antennae to the glowing aura around Korgunard. Then they silently disappear into the wastes.

**Next.** Continue with either **Part Three: A, C or D**, or one of the events.



## Part Three: C—Silver Spring

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs reach the oasis of Silver Spring. Have the players turn to the illustration on *Player's Book* p. 31— **The Oasis**, then have them turn to p. 41 —**Silver Spring Map**.

**Start.** Read the following aloud:

The road passes by a stone wall which surrounds a small oasis. This must be Silver Spring, but there is nothing silver about it. The small pool of water is brown, the bushes in the surrounding scrub plains are dun-colored and thorny, and the rocks are burnt orange—the same color as the rest of the stoney barrens. As you draw closer, an elf warrior calls from the wall, “A piece of silver each or turn back now.” He brandishes a short bow, an arrow already nocked.

**Encounter.** If the PCs want to stop at the oasis to rest, they will have to pay for the privilege. The elves who control the spot offer a small level of protection, and though the water is foul-tasting, it is better than nothing. The elves demand one piece of silver for each traveler and animal in a caravan. If their price is met, the gate is opened and the travelers are admitted to the oasis. For an additional silver each, visitors may spend the night under the tents of the travelers’ camp, a sort of outdoor inn provided by the elves. Travelers receive a tent, a rug, and a place to start a fire. The elven compound also features an elven marketplace, but prices are higher.

The travelers’ camp houses a few travelers with whom the PCs can interact. One is a pyreen (see **Part Five**) in disguise who is checking on the PCs’ progress. She asks how they are, how their traveling companion is, and urges them to get back on the road as soon as possible. “Don’t tarry,” she tells them, “for there is evil searching the wastes.” If they try to find this mysterious woman again, she has disappeared.

The elves try to get as much money out of the PCs as possible. There is a fee for everything, and everyone has something to sell. If the PCs show any signs of hostility, the elven warriors attack. There are 20 warriors in the tribe, in addition to the elven chief, women, and children.

**Outcome.** If the PCs refuse to pay, the elves refuse to let them near the oasis. They will fight to defend Silver Spring against most threats. If the PCs do pay, they can explore the oasis at their leisure. During the course of this encounter, a young elven thief may try to rob them, plenty of merchants will try to cheat them blind, and the elven chief will ask lots of questions. He has been ordered by the Black Sand Raiders (whom he reluctantly does business with) to be on the lookout for the PCs. If he finds out about Korgunard, he whispers the word “Gossamer,” then does his best to keep the PCs at the oasis. He invites them to dinner, to a festival, whatever. If they agree and stay the night, they must contend with the Black Sand Raiders.

**Next.** If the PCs spend the night, continue with **Part Three: D**. Otherwise, continue with another encounter, either **Part Three A, B or D**, or with one of the events.

## Part Three: D—Black Sand Raiders

**Setup.** This encounter occurs in the dead of night while the PCs are resting at Silver Spring Oasis or while they are in a camp of their own making. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 33— **Raiders' Strike**.

**Start.** Once the PCs have settled down for the night, read the following aloud:

After a hot, hard day of travel, your weary body sinks comfortably into sleep. But rest does not come easily. Before you drop into unconsciousness, a noise snaps your senses back to full alert. Someone or something shrieks like a dwarf banshee and you hear the clatter of weapons and the pounding of running boots.

**Encounter.** The party is attacked by a small band of Black Sand Raiders, vicious marauders who revel in causing pain and destruction. The tribe members are all ex-slaves who have pledged themselves to the tribe's leader, Zeburon. Normally, the Raiders sweep across the Tablelands in large parties, but Zeburon has broken the tribe into smaller groups in order to cover more territory. Zeburon's chief advisor, the defiler Fevil, has somehow sensed the drawing of power needed for Korgunard's ceremony. He also knows that the ceremony was left unfinished. Divination spells have provided him with glimpses of the preserver and his companions, and the general direction they are traveling, but more specific information has so far eluded him. He wants Korgunard in order to conduct his own ceremony—a foul, evil ritual which involves the ancient undead. And, unfortunately, what Fevil wants, Zeburon also wants. In his present state, Korgunard can be used like a *tree of fife* by the defiler to charge his defiling spells (see the DARK SUN™ *Rules Book*, p. 61-62).

The PCs will not meet Zeburon and Fevil in this adventure (unless they fail terribly). Instead, they must contend with a band of 12 Black Sand Raiders and their leaders, Lokee and Hespulto. The leaders' statistics can be found in the *Background Book*. The Raiders want to capture the party and the unconscious preserver they carry. They are not adverse to causing pain and even wounding the party members, but they know that Fevil wants the group alive. Of course, the halfling Lokee might keep one of the travelers for himself if he thinks he can get away with it.

**Outcome.** The Raiders will use every means at their disposal to capture the PCs without killing them. They employ nets, blunt weapons, and defiler spells to best advantage. This part of the adventure might end with the PCs being captured by the Raiders. If the PCs prove more resourceful and manage to escape, more power to them. However, be sure they then encounter Werrick's Stalkers (**Part Three: H**). Under no circumstances should Hespulto be killed during this encounter. He flees at the first sign that the battle is going badly. Lokee could be defeated, but he also knows when to run from a losing cause.

**Next.** If the PCs are captured, continue with **Part Four: A—Rescue**. If the PCs win the battle, continue with Part Three: **A, B, C**, or one of the events.

## Part Three: Across the Wastes

Like the encounters that take the PCs by the roads, this part of the adventure allows you to do a little free-form role-playing. Because this part of the adventure involves a wilderness trek, anything can happen. Remember, at some point in their travels the PCs should leave the roads to travel the wilderness. This section deals with what happens to them as they strike out across the wastes. The guidelines that follow describe one way to incorporate the encounters and choices the PCs make into the overall plot of the adventure.

Depending on where the PCs are when they decide to leave the roads, they will either be prepared for their journey or not. Keep track of the supplies they begin with and how often they use them. Hunger, thirst, and heat exhaustion are real and fatal threats in the Athasian wilderness. Unless otherwise noted, statistics for NPCs in each encounter can be found on the *NPC Master Table*.

There are a number of ways for the PCs to wind up leaving the roads after running through some of the previous Part Three encounters. The thri-kreen from **Part Three: B** could chase them into the wastes if the PCs lose the battle with the hunting pack. To throw off the Black Sand Raiders or Malestic, the PCs may decide of their own accord to cut across the wastes. And, if they correctly interpret Korgunard's arcane shadow, they may decide that the wilderness is where they have to go, anyway. You are encouraged to add encounters to those presented here, as only a sample of possible wilderness encounters could fit into this adventure. Also, not every encounter needs to be run in its entirety. If the PCs make smart choices, reward them by letting them avoid the sand storm, see the cha'thrang before it attacks, or whatever. Continue to run **Part Three: Event— Followed** as the PCs travel the sandy wastes. This event should add a level of tension and suspense. Malestic is coming after them, and he will not be distracted by changing directions or hot, blowing sand.

### Werrik's Stalkers

Werrik's Stalkers is a tribe of ex-slaves that supports itself by hunting down and capturing runaway slaves. The tribe is described fully in the DARK SUN™ accessory *Slave Tribes*. In brief, the tribe calls itself Werrik House, thinking that such a title adds prestige to their occupation. They decided long ago that, in order to remain free, they would have to take up the whips and shackles of their one-time masters and use them against other slaves. They have accepted a contract from Malestic to find the PCs and hold them for the templar. They do not plan to fail.

### Ending Part Three

This portion of the adventure should end with the PCs in some sort of dire trouble—either they have succumbed to the elements, have been captured by the Black Sand Raiders or Werrik's Stalkers, or have fallen to one of the **Part Three** encounters. When one proves to be too much for the PCs, go to **Part Four**.



## Part Three: E—The Wilderness

**Setup.** This encounter is a series of scenes that can be us any combination, in any order, and any number of times during the trek across the wastes. In addition, many of the conditions described below will also affect the PCs if they are traveling by the road, particularly dehydration and starvation. Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 36 —**Traveling**.

**Start.** As the uncharted wilderness of Athas opens before the PCs, read aloud:

The road fades away behind as you strike off across the sandy wastes. Ahead, you see a vast expanse of yellow sand. Heat shimmers over the surface of the sand in waves, and the sun reflects off dunes of various shapes and sizes.

**Terrain Rules.** In the sandy wastes, humans and demihumans must rest 12 hours each day or reduce their movement rates from exhaustion. In the stoney barrens, humans and demihumans can move at only half-walking speed while kanks can go no faster than walking speed. In the rocky badlands, movement rates are cut in half because of the winding canyons.

**Encounters.** There are a number of hazards inherent in traveling the unsettled wastes of Athas. The terrain between Urik and Tyr consists of rocky badlands, stony barrens, and sandy wastes. Combine these natural hazards with the encounters that follow (**Part Three: F, G, and H**) to create suspenseful, challenging scenes.

### *Sandstorms*

Blowing sand can quickly turn into a nasty sandstorm. There are two types of sandstorms—mild and driving.

Mild sandstorms last 1d20 rounds. On a roll of 20, a mild sandstorm becomes a driving sandstorm after 10 rounds. In a mild sandstorm, visibility is reduced (see *DARK SUN™ Rules Book* p. 84). In addition, movement must be reduced to half speed or the party risks getting lost. If the party does not reduce its rate of movement, the lead character (or animal driver) must make a Wisdom check every round the storm lasts to stay on course. Don't tell the players that this is what the roll is for because, if they fail, they should not know that they have gone the wrong way. How badly a party fails its Wisdom check determines how much time is added to their trek. In mild sandstorms, the difference translates into hours. For example, Azhul the Hasty leads the way through a mild sandstorm. His Wisdom is 10, but he rolls a 14. The party travels an extra four hours (14- 10 = 4).

Driving sandstorms last 1d10 rounds. In a driving sandstorm, visibility is reduced and movement must be reduced to one-quarter speed to keep from getting lost. Wisdom checks are needed every round as described above, but these checks are made at +5. How badly the party fails determines how much time is added to travel in the form of days. For example, if Azhul, with his Wisdom of 10, rolls a 7, the party adds two days to their trek (7 + 5 - 10 = 2).

## Part Three: The Wilderness (Cont.)



### *Dehydration*

Because the PCs are active, they must each consume one gallon of water per day of the trip. Spending a full day in the shade and traveling by night cuts that amount in half. Those who do not receive the full allotment of water suffer Constitution losses as follows: half allotment, 1d4 per day; less than half, 1d6 per day. If a character drops to 0 Constitution, he dies. The trip to Tyr (or actually to the beginning of **Part Four**) normally takes 12 days. Getting lost, taking a slower pace, resting a lot, or getting sidetracked by encounters can add days to the trip. See the *DARK SUN™ Rules Book* pp. 86-87 for more information about dehydration, rehydration, and animals and dehydration. Note: Korgunard does not require food or water while the life-giving magic surrounds him. It will begin to fade after 10 days, however. By day 20, the magic unwraps and Korgunard dies unless the PCs have gotten him to the hidden valley (see **Part Five**). Also note: Characters with the survival proficiency have a chance to locate food and water (see *DARK SUN Rules Book* p. 48).

### *Madness*

Water deprivation can cause a temporary form of madness. If one of the PCs dies from lack of water, successful Wisdom checks should be made for each surviving character every day to avoid madness. See *DARK SUN Rules Book* p. 43.

### *Starvation*

A character can go without nourishing food for a number of days based upon his combined Strength and Constitution score, as follows: 15 or less, four days; 16-19, five days; 20-24, six days; 25-30, seven days; 31-35, eight days; 36 or more, 10 days. Every 12 hours after this time period elapses, the character reduces both attributes by 1. In the case of Constitution, this reduction is in addition to any reductions caused by dehydration. If either score reaches 0, the character dies. A character must eat the equivalent of a poor meal each day to keep from starving.

**Outcome.** If the characters become so lost as to be unable to reach the hidden valley before Korgunard's magic aura fades, one of the following encounters should be used to get them back on track. They can be attacked and captured by the Black Sand Raiders (**Part Three: D**) or Werrik's Stalkers (**Part Three: H**). They can receive aid from the pyreen (see the *Background Book* and **Part Five**). They can encounter the Free (**Part Four: A**). The same is true if the PCs are in danger of dying of thirst or starvation, though the encounters can be particularly deadly.

**Next.** Continue with another **Part Three** encounter, or go on to **Part Four** if the PCs are in desperate need of help.

## Part Three: F—Hungry Cha'Thrang

**Setup.** This encounter can take place during any portion of the PCs trek across the wilderness, either in the sandy wastes, stony barrens, or rocky badlands. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 13— **Hungry Beast**.

**Start.** The PCs meet with one cha'thrang as they travel, unaware that two others wait to join the attack. Read the following aloud:

Ahead, you see a patch of broken bamboo. As you get closer, you notice that the dead plant looks more like bone than vegetable matter. Then, without warning, the patch of dead plants moves.

**Encounter.** The patch of broken bamboo is actually a cha'thrang, a tortoise-shaped creature with a multitude of short, reed-like appendages protruding from its shell. It has four strong limbs and curved foreclaws for digging and hugging the ground. A cha'thrang normally attacks low-flying creatures, firing tethered, lime-coated projectiles from its shell protrusions (only upward; they cannot attack creatures on the ground). It can fire many of these lines at once, but only one can hit (1d6 damage). When hit, a target must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or suffer 15 points of damage (10-30 rounds to take effect). Targets can break the line with a successful bend bars/lift gates or (if no Str) saving throw vs. paralyzation.

Because this creature and its hidden mates are very hungry, they have decided to attack the PCs. If the PCs fail surprise rolls, the first cha'thrang gets a free round to attack. If they notice it, determine initiative normally. After 1d4 rounds of combat, the other two cha'thrang emerge from their hiding places (buried under the sand, hidden behind large rocks, etc.) to join the battle. Because they are so hungry, the cha'thrang fight to the death. If the PCs are observant (Intelligence check), they notice that these beasts look hungry, shrunk, and smaller than normal.

**Statistics.** *Cha'thrang* (3): AL N; AC -2 (shell), 8 (underbelly); MV 3; HD 8 + 3; hp 34, 42, 47; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4 (claws), 1d12 (bite); tethered darts attack, upward only, fire 1d4 times per day; SZ M; ML 10.

**Outcome.** Though the cha'thrang are determined to fight to the death to secure food, they will withdraw into the sand if reduced to less than half their starting hit points. One round later, the beasts will spring out of the sand again to attack by surprise. The beasts will not accept standard rations as food. If the PCs try to bribe them into not attacking by offering them food, the food must be either live or recently-killed animals. Nothing else will be recognized or accepted as nourishment by the cha'thrang. If the PCs do make an appropriate offer (such as an extra kank or a spare erdlu), make a morale roll for each cha'thrang. Those that make successful rolls continue to attack. Those that fail the roll consume the offered meal.

**Next.** Continue with an encounter from Part Three (E, G, or H) or with **Event Two**.



## Part Three: G—Wild Muls

**Setup.** This encounter can take place at any time during the PCs' wilderness travels. Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 5 —Wild Muls.

**Start.** The band of wild muls tracks and observes the PCs for a day or two after the party crosses into their hunting territory. Observant PCs might even feel the mul eyes upon them as they continue their trek, possibly thinking that Malestic has caught up to them again. When the muls confront the PCs, read aloud:

Strange sounds echo across the wastes, battering you with their tones of promised violence. It takes a moment to recognize the sounds, then you remember them—the war cries of mul gladiators that fill the arenas. The cries increase in volume and intensity, though you see no one in the surrounding countryside.

**Encounter.** There are five wild muls stalking the PCs. Four of them have wild psionic talents in addition to their battle skills. The leader is a full psionist. While these muls have made it a practice to add intelligent races to their diet, they only hunt such prey when they are particularly hungry. At first, they believe that the PCs have been sent by templars to return them to the gladiatorial pits in Urik. If this belief is not changed, the muls will ambush the PCs in order to kill them. If the PCs somehow prove that this is not the case, the muls decide to raid them for plunder. They do not usually kill those they plunder. All of the wild muls have a savage, primitive look.

**Role-playing.** The muls fight in tandem, using every skill and trick ever learned in the arenas to full advantage. The psionist stays out of sight, using his psionics to weaken the party. The muls treat every combat like a game (although games of combat are serious business), demonstrating the showmanship of the arenas.

**Statistics. Wild Mul Warriors (4):** AL NE; AC 8 (carru leather); MV 9; HD 5 + 5; hp 25,29,33,35; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (-1 bone long sword, +1 Str); SZ M; ML 12; Str 16; Dex 14; Con 13; Int 11; Wis 9; Cha 10. Wild Talents (one each): Awe, PS 8, Cost contact/4 rd, PSP 33; Shadow-form, PS 7, Cost 12/3 rd, PSP 40; Time Shift, PS 11, Cost 16/na, PSP 32; Animate Object, PS 8, Cost 8/3 rd, PSP 36.

**Wild Mul Psionist:** AL NE; AC 8 (carru leather); MV 9; HD 5 + 5; hp 39; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (-1 bone long sword, +1 Str); SZ M; ML 14; Str 16; Dex 13; Con 14; Int 13; Wis 14; Cha 11. Psionic Summary: PS 13; PSP 80; At/Df MT/M-, TS; Psychokinesis—Sciences: project force; Devotions: levitation, control body; Telepathy—Sciences: ejection; Devotions: conceal thoughts, inflict pain, mind thrust, mind blank, thought shield.

**Next.** After the PCs defeat the muls, continue with another **Part Three** encounter (**E, F, or H**) or **Event Two**. If the muls defeat the PCs, continue with **Part Three** or go on to **Part Four** if the PCs have been significantly weakened.

## Part Three: H—The Slavers

**Setup.** This encounter takes place near the end of the PCs' trip through the wilderness, after you have run both events. If the PCs have avoided capture by the Black Sand Raiders, they can be captured here. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 47 — **Friendly Slave Tribe**.

**Start.** As the PCs near the end of their journey, about three days or so outside of Tyr, in the rocky badlands, they meet members of a friendly slave tribe. Read aloud: You come upon a small band of ragged-looking men and women. They are busily preparing a campsite in the narrow, twisting canyon ahead. This part of the badlands features a poor but usable oasis which the band seems to have claimed. One of the men spots you, smiles, and waves for you to join them.

**Encounter.** The friendly band claims to be part of a tribe located elsewhere in the wastes. If the PCs mention that they are ex-slaves or that they are opposed to the sorcerer-kings and their templars, band members let slip that they are members of a slave tribe. If questioned further, one will respond, "Have you ever heard legends of the Free?" Other than this statement, the band will not confirm or deny their identity. In truth, this band is part of a slave tribe—the tribe called Werrik's Stalkers. The Stalkers are ex-slaves who hunt other ex-slaves for profit. The tribe has accepted a contract from Malestic to capture the PCs. To accomplish this task, the tribe has divided into three teams of 10 (there are 30 members in the tribe) and gone hunting. This group has decided to try guile instead of force to subdue the party.

**Note:** All of the slavers are bald except for long braids that fall back from the top of their heads. The braid is adorned with bits of bone and twisted into a single tail.

**Role-playing.** The Stalkers pretend to be friendly, asking for news of Urik and parts north and giving news of the south in return. The hottest topic of conversation is the freeing of the slaves in Tyr. The Stalkers invite the PCs to share their camp and their evening meal. If the PCs eat or drink what is offered, they must make successful saving throws vs. poison (-5) to avoid falling into a deep sleep. Those who make the save become groggy, suffering a +5 to initiative and a -5 to THAC0 rolls. In this state, spellcasting and psionics cannot be used. Once the powerful sleep drug takes effect, the Stalkers quickly bind unconscious PCs and subdue groggy ones. If the PCs remain suspicious or discover the drugs, the Stalkers attack. They fight to wound and knock unconscious, not to kill.

**Outcome.** If the PCs lose, they awaken in a small wagon that is basically a jail cell on wheels. If the PCs defeat the Stalkers or otherwise escape from them, they are free to continue in whatever direction they choose.

Next. If the PCs are captured, continue with **Part Four: A—Rescue**. If the PCs are not captured, continue with **Part Four: B—Meeting the Free**.

## Part Four: Introduction

This part of the adventure provides the player characters with information concerning their unconscious traveling companion and their as-yet-unknown destination, and it gives them an opportunity to make contacts outside the city-states.

### Starting Part Four

There are three ways to begin this portion of the adventure. If the PCs were captured by the Black Sand Raiders, Werrick's Stalkers, or anyone else they met, begin with **Part Four: A—Rescue**. This encounter sets up the situation the PCs find themselves in if they were captured, gives them an opportunity to stage their own escape, then provides them with a little help from a raiding tribe called the Free.

If the PCs are in desperate need of assistance due to the outcome of **Part Three** encounters (they are dying of thirst or starvation, they are hopelessly lost, they have been left for dead by thri-kreen hunters, etc.), start this section with **Part Four: B—The Free**. If the PCs have successfully defeated, avoided, or otherwise made it through all of the encounters in Part Three unscathed, then they meet the Free before they reach Tyr's outlying plantations—begin with **Part Four: B**.

### Encounters and Events

The course of this part of the adventure depends upon the actions and decisions of the PCs. Encounters include **A—Rescue**, **B—The Free**, and **C—Acts of Trust**. The first provides an effective means for getting the PCs out of the clutches of the evil slave tribes, the second gives the PCs a chance to interact with the Free and learn what they can about Korgunard and events in the wastes, and the third sets up a number of tests the PCs must pass to gain the full trust of the Free. These can also be used if the PCs decide that they want to join the tribe.

Two events need to occur sometime during this part of the adventure. The first event, Rumors, provides information which the PCs must decipher on their own. The second event, Arcane Shadows, is Korgunard's second attempt to communicate with the PCs. This time he provides hints concerning the location he must reach.

### The Free

The Free are a tribe of ex-slaves whose exploits have become legends to those slaves still in bondage. Like most legends, the stories associated with them (tales of golden caravans which take slaves to a city-state that has no masters) have become tall tales built around a small kernel of truth. The Free conduct raids against those who keep or sell slaves, freeing those slaves they come across if the opportunity presents itself. Above all, they are interested in maintaining their own freedom. See the DARK SUN™ accessory *Slave Tribes* for more detailed information.



## Part Four: A—Rescue

### DMing Part Four: A

The PCs can get to this encounter in a variety of ways. The most likely path is through capture by the Black Sand Raiders or Werrik's Stalkers. This encounter presents information on running **Part A** from either of these outcomes. The situation remains the same—the PCs have been captured. The setting and captors will be different, depending on who captured them, but the PCs' plight remains desperate.

If the PCs were captured by characters in one of the other **Part Three** encounters (wild muls, thri-kreen, or Malestic's posse), they can still be given a chance to plan their own escape. The Free can also appear to lend a helping hand, as in this encounter. You will need to make adjustments in the actions of the captors, the setting in which they are held, and the number of NPCs or monsters holding them.

If the PCs succumbed to the wilderness, the Free raiding party provides whatever help they need (giving them some water or food, showing them the proper path, etc.). They also question them about who they are, as in the encounter below.

**Setup.** This encounter serves as a follow-up to either **Part Three: D—Black Sand Raiders** or **Part Three: H—The Slavers**. It can also be used if the PCs were captured in one of the other **Part Three** encounters. If the PCs are being held by the Raiders, have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 14—**Raiders' Camp**. If they are "guests" of the slavers, tell them to turn to *Player's Book* p. 2 —**Slavers' Camp**.

**Start.** This encounter begins in some kind of holding cell. Read the following aloud: Your captors have left you unattended for the time being, and you can use this brief reprise to examine your surroundings. You are being held in a small, dark, hastily-constructed cell. Outside, you can see parts of a camp and a number of people engaged in various tasks. From the urgency with which these people work, you imagine that time is running out for you.

**Raiders Encounter.** If the PCs are in the clutches of the Black Sand Raiders, they are being held in a small room fashioned of hard clay bricks. The bricks appear to be extremely old. A single door leads out of the room, and it is barred from the other side. A single window, no more than a small hole cut high in the wall, looks out upon sand-covered ruins. They have sent for Zeburon and Fevil, but the PCs will have ample opportunity to get away before the leaders arrive in  $1d4 + 2$  days.

If Lokee and Hespulto still live, they run the camp. They have with them all of the Raiders who survived **Part Three: D**, as well as an additional  $1d6$  men. A few of the Raiders are in plain sight (marked on the map). You must decide where the remaining Raiders are before the encounter begins. The PCs are held in building **A** on the map. The door is locked and must be forced open (successful lift gates roll). Korgunard is in building **B**, constantly watched by four guards. The PCs can try to make their own escape, attempt to interact with the Raiders (who are mean and cruel), or simply wait. Whatever they decide, the Free attack by midday.

## Part Four: A—Rescue (Cont.)

**Slavers Encounter.** If the PCs are in the clutches of Werrik's Stalkers, they are being held in a small jail-cell wagon. It is basically a sealed box with four wheels, pulled by four kanks. A single door leads out of the box, and it is barred from the other side. Very small holes cut near the top of the box provide light, fresh air, and a limited view of the outside. Through these holes, the PCs can look upon the slavers' camp. The encounter begins shortly after the slavers have stopped to rest. They hastily establish a small camp. All of the slavers who survived **Part Three: H** are here. They are taking the PCs to rendezvous with the rest of the Stalkers.

A few of the slavers are in plain sight (marked on the map). You must decide where the remaining slavers are before the encounter begins. The PCs are held in wagon **A** on the map. The wagon door is locked and must be forced open (successful lift gates roll). Korgunard is in wagon **B**, watched by two guards. The PCs can try to make their own escape, attempt to interact with the slavers (who ignore them), or simply wait. Whatever they decide, before the slavers break camp, the Free attack.

**Role-playing.** The Raiders will interact with the PCs more than the slavers because they are not as cautious, and each Raider has a mean streak. Lokee likes to taunt captives by telling them how he is going to prepare them for a grand feast—he particularly likes dwarves cooked in a faro-leaf stew. The slavers are much more serious and businesslike. They are also better prepared for trouble. It is easier to trick the Raiders than it is the slavers. Other than the guards and the defiler, neither the Raiders nor the slavers get too close to Korgunard's cell.

### *Dialogue*

"You look somewhat tasty. Maybe I'll have you for dinner tonight."

"Do you think it's catching?" [Captors talking about Korgunard's condition]

**Statistics.** *The Free and the Slavers/Raiders:* see the *NPC Master Table*.

**Outcome.** No matter what the PCs decide to do, a raiding party from the Free attacks the camp before the day ends or the slavers resume traveling. If the PCs have broken free and are fighting their captors, the Free lend a hand. If the PCs are still locked up, the Free smash the lock and tell the PCs to find their own freedom. Once the Free arrive, the slavers attempt to escape and the Raiders fight to the death. Lokee can stay and fight or flee, depending on whether or not you want the foul halfling to become a recurring villain in your campaign. Hespulto takes off at the first sign of trouble. The Free, who have come to rescue Korgunard (see **Part Four: B**), ask specific questions to get the PCs to say they are ex-slaves (even if they aren't). Once they say they are ex-slaves, the Free invite the PCs to follow them to safety.

**Next.** If the PCs were in the clutches of the slavers or they tell the Free they are ex-slaves, they are urged to follow the Free as the slave tribe raiding party makes off with its plunder. Continue with **Part Four: B—The Free**.

## Part Four: B—The Free

**Setup.** In this encounter, the PCs meet the Free. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 45 – **The Free**.

**Start.** This encounter takes place soon after the PCs have been rescued from their captors or otherwise saved by the Free, or just before they reach Tyr's outlying plantations. If they have previously met the Free raiding party (in **Part Four: A**), the crowd which appears is in addition to them. Read the following aloud:

They appear out of the surrounding countryside like ghostly specters, forming a loose circle around your small band. They are over two dozen strong, carrying a variety of bone, stone, and even a few metal weapons. "Who are you?" one man asks. "Be you slave or master?" a woman adds. A chorus of similar questions assaults you, but the crowd keeps its distance, waiting for your response.

**Encounter.** The Free have agreed to assist one of their members in a special mission. Elentha is a high-placed member of the Free. Bartras, the leader of the Free, knows she is also connected to the Veiled Alliance, though none of the other tribe members know this. Bartras has allowed Elentha to take a raiding party in search of Korgunard. The party only knows they are searching for a group of escaped slaves and that Elentha has been granted command of this mission. They now suspect the mission is more complicated, and strange rumors are beginning to spread.

If the PCs do not respond to the questions, respond incorrectly (claiming to be masters, etc.), or fight, then Elentha makes her presence known. She invites the PCs accept the hospitality of the Free. If they hesitate, she implores them. "Remember a ceremony," she says. "I can help you end your mission."

**Role-playing.** This encounter is designed to introduce the PCs to the Free, reintroduce a Veiled Alliance member from the beginning of the adventure, and give the PCs the opportunity to acquire some assistance to complete their quest. The Free and its members are much different than the other slave tribes the PCs may have met in their journeys. Once they get over their initial suspicion of strangers, the Free are very animated and friendly. They are as eager for news about other places as the PCs are for news about them. While they will not give away the location of their main camp, almost anything else is open to discussion. The Free are good-natured and full of humor. If the PCs do not return the friendliness, the Free respond in kind.

**Outcome.** If the PCs act in a friendly or non-hostile manner, the Free are friendly or courteous in return. If the PCs attack or behave rudely, Elentha will try to break it up. If she cannot stop the fight, she orders the Free to retreat. If she does manage to stop it, the Free refuse to talk and watch the PCs or signs of treachery. If the PCs don't want her help, she bids them good luck and the Free disappear into the wastes.

**Next.** Continue with either **Part Four: C** or one of the events.



## Part Four: C—Acts of Trust

**Setup.** This encounter is divided into three parts. You can run any or all of them depending on the course of your adventure. When the text tells you to, have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 46— **Friendly Advice**, and p. 3 —**Night Attack**.

**Friendly Advice Scene.** If the PCs agree to speak with Elentha, she takes them to a private spot, out of earshot of the Free but within sight of her companions. Have the players turn to p. 46 to see an illustration of Elentha. She explains that it is very important to get Korgunard to his destination before the spell he weaved back in Urik loses potency and fades away. “Has he been able to communicate with you in any way?” she asks. If the PCs say no, she looks troubled, sighs, and says, “Then the only hope is that someone in Tyr knows what he was doing.” She has a few ideas as to what Korgunard was attempting, but she tells the PCs only that the magic he was using was unlike anything she ever witnessed before. If the PCs tell her about the dreams they had (see **Part Three: Events**), she realizes that they could have been Korgunard’s doing. She asks the PCs if they would allow her to try to reestablish the contact this evening. (“Night is the best time for dreams,” she says.)

**Friendly Advice Outcome.** Elentha’s respect for the PCs has risen, especially if they have been doing all they can to protect Korgunard and if they have been courteous to the Free. If they are candid with her, she tells them that Korgunard is a legend even among the higher-ranking members of the Veiled Alliance. It was said that he had something important to share with the Alliance, but no one ever spoke about a magical ceremony. But whatever he was trying to do must be important, for it has tied him into the life force of the world itself. That is why he is still alive. If they did not tell her about their dream visions, she suggests that she and the Free accompany the PCs to Tyr. She knows a relatively safe approach to the city, and the added protection provided by the Free should keep Korgunard safe. If they did tell her about the visions and agreed to allow her to reestablish the contact, she initiates the next set of visions (go on to **Part Four: Event—Arcane Shadows**).

**Night Attack Scene.** If the PCs accept the Free’s hospitality and spend the evening in their camp, they are offered a unique opportunity to win the trust of the slave tribe. If you run **Event—Arcane Shadows**, this scene takes place immediately after the visions end. Antloid soldiers from a nearby warren have happened upon the Free’s camp during one of their nightly raids for food. Though the giant ants attack the camp in force, the PCs must only deal with eight of the creatures. Four antloids attack a group of sleeping tribesmen near the PCs (use statistics from the *NPC Master Table*). If the PCs go to their aid, run the battle. If the PCs ignore them the tribesmen die. While the PCs are engaged with the first four antloids, they notice another four rummaging around the wagon where Korgunard sleeps. Elentha goes to the comatose mage’s aid, but she will need the PCs’ help to defeat the antloids. Have the players turn to p. 3.

## Part Four: C—Acts of Trust (Cont.)

**Statistics.** *Antloid Soldiers* (8): AL N; AC 3; MV 18; HD 6 + 1; hp 29, 36, 37 x 2, 42 x 3, 44; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 3d6 (mandibles); special poison attack; SZ L (10'); ML 13.



These large creatures have a mottled, dark-colored exoskeleton and large, sharp mandibles. Infantry soldiers can deliver a poison attack with a stinger located at their rears. A successful attack inflicts 1d4 points of damage and injects a deadly neurotoxin. Archer soldiers shoot the poison from a gland instead of delivering via stinger, giving them a ranged attack (50'). Victims must make successful saving throws vs. poison, a failure means the character suffers 30 points of poison damage and success means less of the poison was delivered, so the character takes only 2d6 damage. There is one archer in each of the two groups the PCs must face.

**Night Attack Outcome.** While the PCs engage the antloids, the rest of the Free deal with other attacking antloids. If the PCs go to the aid of the defenseless Free they must defeat four antloid soldiers. After three rounds, the Free join the attack. There are six defenseless Free. During the second round of combat, the PCs notice another group of four antloids attacking Korgunard's wagon and Elentha. If they do not help, Elentha is wounded, but other tribesmen arrive to deal with the antloids. By helping to defend the camp, the PCs win the trust of the Free and may even receive an invitation to join the tribe. If they stay back and protect only themselves, the Free will never trust them and may even turn them away. The scene ends when 16 dead antloids litter the camp. The other attackers flee.

**The Raid Scene.** If the PCs have won the trust of the Free, they are offered an opportunity to join the tribe. One of the tests they will be asked to undergo is to help them conduct a raid. An independent band of slavers has come to the area around Tyr to hunt for slaves. The band has 12 members (use the slaver statistics from the *NPC Master Table*), two wagons (filled with 18 captives), and a number of herd animals to pull them. The Free attack the slavers for supplies and to set the recently captured slaves free. The PCs are asked to join six tribesmen in the raid. The slaver! fight fiercely, but will attempt to flee if the battle is not going their way.

**The Raid Outcome.** If the PCs agree to help, their worthiness in the eyes of the Free goes up. If the raid is successful, particularly because of the actions of the PCs, they win the friendship of the tribe—even if they don't accept the offer to join the tribe. If the slavers prove to be too tough for the combined Free/PC raiding party, the raiding party leader orders his raiders to retreat.

**Next.** After these scenes, continue with **Part Four: Events** or go to **Part Five**.

## Part Four: Events

### Event One: Rumors

**Setup.** Use this event while the PCs are with the Free, to provide them with information for consideration. Some of the information is true, some of it false, and some of it is a combination of both. Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 38—**Conversations with the Free.**

**Start.** The event occurs around the evening camp fire, during the afternoon meal break, or whenever the PCs and the Free are talking in a somewhat friendly fashion. Read the following aloud, then have the PCs read p. 38 (for good effect, have a different player read each rumor, pretending to be that person):

As you sit around the camp, one of the Free clears his throat. You remember someone calling him Jeevo. He looks at you for a moment, then begins to speak.

**Outcome.** After the conversation has ended, the Free go back to the tasks they were involved in before the short break. The PCs can now discuss what they have heard, trying to put all of the pieces before them into perspective.

### Event Two: Arcane Shadows

**Setup.** Use this event during the night, either as part of Elentha's attempt to connect the PCs with Korgunard or simply as the PCs sleep. The vision effects all of the PCs, whether they are asleep or not. Have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 37—**Arcane Shadows.**

**Start.** This event takes the form of a dream of urgency. Read the following aloud:

Sleep overtakes you and strange images fill your mind. The images seem alien, as though they originate from somewhere outside your subconscious. The images are fast-moving shadows, dark shapes with little definition and no substance. There is an urgency to the images, as though they are trying to tell you something important. You see a dark, jutting stone shape with human features imploring you to come closer, motioning for you to join it inside a narrow canyon of some sort. You hear a low, far-away voice. "Must go . . . finish spell . . . toward Tyr . . . but not by the roads . . . must go . . . the valley." You awaken in a cold, clammy sweat . . .

**Outcome.** The images come from Korgunard as he tries to communicate with the PCs. The image of the jutting stone represents the major landmark in the valley Korgunard needs to get to. This image implies destination and completion, as well as a sense of urgency. The human features upon the stone represent the spirit of the land that inhabits the valley. This spirit can help the PCs finish Korgunard's spell. All they need to do is get him to the valley. This vision also includes a low voice, which the PCs recognize as Korgunard's. It reminds them of his actual directions—*toward* Tyr, not to Tyr.



## Part Five: Introduction

This part of the adventure ties up any loose ends that your players have left (except for Malestic) on their way toward Tyr. It also gets them to the hidden valley of Desverendi, a spirit of the land. In **Part Five: A**, the PCs meet a ground mole that acts more intelligently than any animal they have ever happened upon before. The PCs must also defeat a major menace that survived previous encounters with them—the Black Sand Raiders, Werrik's Stalkers, or one of the lesser groups. The pyreen can appear at this time to offer a final bit of aid. Then she disappears again.

The second encounter in this section deals with the PCs' first view of Desverendi's hidden valley. Scores of small burrowing animals form a receiving line for the coming of the Great One (the mysterious being Korgunard is becoming). These animals also provide the PCs with a last-minute warning before Malestic arrives.

Note that the Free refuse to accompany the PCs, having little tolerance for magic. They wish the PCs luck, then go on their way. Elentha stays, however.

### Guiding the Players

Up until now, most decisions have been left to the PCs (which path to take, how to travel, etc.). Now the only way for them to find the valley is to give them specific help in the form of guides. These guides come from Desverendi, a spirit of the land, and take the form of small burrowing animals. If the pyreen makes an appearance, she can verbally tell the PCs where to find the valley.

### The Major Menace

The PCs have to overcome one obstacle in this section. We suggest that this menace be the Black Sand Raiders. If the PCs met with this group earlier, then Hespulto has followed them to this point. As soon as the Free bid farewell to the PCs, the defiler strikes. If the PCs set out across the wastes before running into the Raiders, then this is the first time they meet with them (remember, the Raiders are looking for the PCs, per the orders of their leader). **Part Three: D** provides information on the Raiders. Other possibilities for menaces include any remaining members of Werrik's Stalkers, the wild muls from **Part Three: G**, the thri-kreen from **Part Three: B**, and the antloids from **Part Four: C**.

### Animal Reactions

When Korgunard gets close to the animals of Desverendi's valley, they seem to sit in reverence, their tiny eyes turned in the direction of the comatose mage. A few approach slowly and bow their tiny heads. Others mewl softly. None run away, though they do part to let the mage and those with him pass.

**Next.** Start this part of the adventure with **Part Five: A—Loose Ends**.

## Part Five: A—Loose Ends

**Setup.** After the PCs have finished with the Free, they received a distinct sign concerning the direction they must go. Later in the encounter, the players may be instructed to turn to *Player's Book* p. 43— **Defiler** and/or p. 44— **Peace-Bringer**.

**Start.** Shortly after the PCs resume their journey, they meet a different kind of traveler in the wastes. Read the following aloud:

The ground ahead of you bulges slightly as a small amount of dirt and sand erupts out of the ground. A small animal, which you recognize as a ground mole, emerges from the newly-formed hole, panting heavily from obvious exertion. The mole, apparently hungry and thirsty, looks at you, then runs toward you, stops, and runs in a straight line to the west. It does this three times. Then it collapses from exhaustion, its twitching nose pointing west toward the Ringing Mountains.

**Encounter.** This type of scene should occur a few times until the PCs get the idea that someone or something is behind the actions of the animals. When they strike out due west, toward the mountains, one additional animal makes an appearance. It emerges from the ground, mewls softly after bowing to Korgunard's wagon, then turns and runs west along the path the PCs are now traveling. Along the way to the valley, the PCs can tie up any loose ends they left behind by dealing with one or more of the following situations. If the PCs are weak from their journeys, then only one menace should appear. For most dramatic effect, it should be Hespulto and the Black Sand Raiders, but you are free to determine which menace you want to use (use the statistics from the *NPC Master Table*).



**Black Sand Raiders.** If the PCs met the Raiders earlier, then this is a return engagement. The Raiders have been reduced to whoever survived the earlier encounters (including Hespulto) or six warriors, whichever is more. If they haven't met earlier, the Raiders are at full power (see **Part Three: D**). If you use this menace as a final obstacle to the hidden valley, have the players turn to *Player's Book* p. 43— **Defiler**. This meeting ends in the defeat of the PCs or in the deaths of the Raiders. If you want to use any of the Raiders as future villains, they may escape if the battle turns against them. The PCs will not deal with the Raiders again in this adventure.

**Werrik's Stalkers.** If any slavers survived the earlier encounters (**Part Three: H** and **Part Four: A**), they may come after the PCs one last time. If they do, it will be to gain revenge against the PCs, not to capture them. They will set up an ambush that allows them to attack with ranged weapons. If they are successful enough to cut the party's numbers significantly, they may decide to capture any survivors. If the PCs prove too strong again, the remaining slavers flee at the first opportunity.

## Part Five: A—Loose Ends (Cont.)

**Thri-Kreen Hunters.** If the PCs caused significant damage to the thri-kreen hunters (**Part Three: B**) and no other menace remains to use as an obstacle, the thri-kreen may come after them. The pack declares a blood hunt against the PCs, and the tireless hunters have tracked them to the area north of Tyr. There will be six thri-kreen or whatever remained of the original pack, whichever is more. These thri-kreen are interested in only one thing—the death of their prey. They fight to the last hunter.

Note: If the thri-kreen responded to Korgunard in the earlier encounter (see **Part Three: B**), you can use them in a different fashion. Instead of serving as another menace to throw at the PCs, the hunting party can be used to aid them, if things are going badly. The thri-kreen hold the emerging Great One in high esteem, and it is not out of the question that they would lend him assistance.

**Wild Muls or Antloids.** Either of these two menaces can also return to haunt the PCs if you desire. In the case of the wild muls (see **Part Three: G**), survivors went in search of the rest of their band (another three mul warriors) in order to bring revenge upon the PCs. They seek another match—this one a grudge match—that won't end until only one "team" remains standing. In the case of the antloids (see **Part Four: C**), the antloid warren sends another group of soldiers after those who killed the first hunting patrol. The warren's queen has ordered the death of the "murderers," and the soldiers live to obey her. If you use this scene, the PCs must face six antloid soldiers, including two archers and four infantry. If the PCs defeat either the muls or the antloids, they will not be troubled again by either during the remainder of this adventure.

**Outcome.** Whichever menace becomes this part of the adventure's major obstacle, the PCs are forced into a battle to protect themselves and Korgunard again. Elentha uses her spells to aid the party, fighting alongside them as if she has been with them all along. If the PCs and Elentha take a lot of damage and are in danger of losing, they receive aid from an unexpected source. The woman whom the PCs might have met at Silver Spring (see **Part Three: C**) appears again to lend a hand.

The woman is really a mysterious being known as a pyreen or peace-bringer (see the *Background Book* for her statistics). She uses her psionic and druidic powers to help the PCs defeat whatever menace faces them. She particularly uses her powers against Hespulto if the PCs are fighting the Black Sand Raiders. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 44 when the pyreen makes an appearance.

After the fight, whether the pyreen assisted them or not, she now appears to point them toward the hidden valley. "The valley lies that way," she says, pointing west. "Hurry. Korgunard does not have much time and Desverendi grows impatient." With that, she changes into a small animal and darts into the wilderness.

**Next.** With the menace defeated, the PCs can enter the hidden valley of Desverendi. Continue with **Part Five: B**.



## Part Five: B—The Hidden Valley

**Setup.** This encounter brings the PCs, Elentha, and the comatose Korgunard to the hidden valley of Desverendi, a spirit of the land. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 16— **First View**, and p. 12— **The Valley Map**.

**Start.** As the PCs approach the hidden valley and look at p. 16, read:

Ahead, the sands gently fade into a grassy plain as the land rises, becoming forest. An opening in the forest reveals a protected valley full of lush vegetation. You see a jagged rock jutting up, overlooking a still blue pond that reflects the rock on its mirrored surface. In the distance, you hear the unmistakable sound of falling water. The most amazing sight, however, is the odd collection of small animals waiting like some noble's procession before the forest passage.

**Encounter.** The animals pay homage to Korgunard. When the PCs step onto the carpet of grass, they feel goodwill and peace radiate out of the valley and the lush growth. They also feel much better as the spirit heals their wounds and restores their vitality. Korgunard, however, does not benefit from this boon. After a moment, Desverendi, an ancient earth spirit, makes his presence known and welcomes the PCs. The spirit says the following, its voice echoing out of the valley like an earthquake: I, Desverendi, welcome the protectors of the Great One. Peace to you all. Bring the Great One into my presence and we shall finish what was begun.

**Statistics.** *Desverendi the Earth Spirit:* AL N; AC 2; MV 48; HD 20; hp 123; THAC0 5; #AT 2; Dmg 4d8/4d8; special attacks, see below; +3 or better weapon to hit; SZ H (20' tall); ML 20.

Desverendi is an earth spirit who is tied to this hidden valley. He inhabits the giant rock formation above the clear pool. Desverendi has two special powers: he can gate in earth to drop upon opponents (for 10d6 damage), and he can cause an earthquake (like the spell), centered around a specific target for an effective radius of 100'. If Desverendi manifests (as a huge elemental emerging from the rock formation), he can use all spells from his sphere as innate abilities. Desverendi, a long-time friend of Korgunard, helped the preserver develop the spell to transform him into a Great One. Desverendi does not know the full spell, but he can guide any preservers in a ceremony to bring Korgunard back to consciousness.

**Outcome.** The PCs should realize they are in the presence of a spirit of the land. If they enter Desverendi's valley in peace, they are made welcome by the animals and the earth spirit. If the PCs ask questions in a humble fashion, Desverendi responds favorably. The spirit refuses to say too much about the Great One, however, explaining that all will be answered when the Great One awakens. When the PCs feel at peace, Desverendi declares it is time for the final ceremony.

**Next.** Continue with **Part Six**.

## Part Six: Introduction

**Part Six** features the dramatic conclusion of *Arcane Shadows*. During most of **Part Six**, two distinct encounters occur simultaneously. They are presented as single encounters for the purposes of explanation and setup, but the two encounters should be run at the same time to give the climax of the adventure a cinematic and suspenseful feel. Besides reading this introduction, DMs should also read all of Part Six in order to fully understand how these encounters fit together before proceeding.

### A—Final Fight

This encounter pits the nonpreservers in the player character party against Malestic and his force of Urikite half-giants, guards, and templars. The PCs must keep Malestic and his men from entering the valley and disrupting the ceremony. Korgunard, Elentha, the preserver PCs, and even Desverendi are most vulnerable during the final stages of the magical ceremony. If the chief templar and his henchmen get through, the preservers are doomed. Malestic senses the vast amounts of magical energy in the valley, and he does everything to get to its source.

### B—The Ceremony

This encounter focuses on any preserver PCs, Elentha, Desverendi, and Korgunard. The PC preservers get to assist in a ceremony to return Korgunard to consciousness. The PCs then help Korgunard finish the spell of transformation.

### A and B Together

The two encounters take place at the same time. While one group of PCs fights to keep Malestic out of the valley, the other group participates in the magical ceremony. Cut from one location to the other after every round of action. This builds suspense by creating tiny cliffhangers as you cut between groups. If either side fails, the whole quest could end in disaster. Weave the tension and action from the battle to the ceremony and back again. The tension should be greater through the use of this technique, and the players will be on the edge of their seats, waiting to see what happens to their characters.

### Endings

Once Malestic is defeated and Korgunard is brought out of his coma, all of the PCs can join in for the final stages of the transformation spell. They can help determine the level of success of Korgunard's rebirth by providing their own life force to that of Elentha and Desverendi. Because this is preserver magic, they can do this without suffering adverse effects. In the end, they should witness the birth of a new being, receiving the being's gratitude and promise of a future favor.

## Part Six: A—Final Fight

**Setup.** The PCs prepare to help awaken Korgunard when the valley animals cry out a loud warning. While any PC preservers (or the most powerful PC psionicist if there are no PC preservers) stay to assist Korgunard, the rest go to defend the valley from Malestic. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 8 —**Malestic Again!**

**Start.** This encounter and the next (**Part Six: B**) occur simultaneously and should be run at the same time by cutting from one encounter to the other (see the introduction for details). Read the following aloud, then cut to **Part Six: B**:

The animals of the valley raise an alarm by crying out in frightened tones. You see riders approaching the valley. You see large men who can only be half-giants, as well as human guards and a few templars. You recognize one of the templars as the priest who gave you so much trouble in Urik—the templar who calls himself Malestic. As you take defensive positions, Malestic shouts to you in a strong, clear voice. [Have the players read the text on p. 8 of the *Player's Book* ]

**Encounter.** Malestic has four half-giants, five human guards, and two low-level templars with him when he reaches the valley. They take up positions behind the far sand dunes in order to assess the situation.

**Role-playing.** Except for Malestic, who enjoys taunting the PCs, the rest of the Urikites concentrate on the battle. Malestic, in true master-villain form, converses with the PCs throughout the conflict, urging them to surrender to superior forces.

### *Dialogue*

"Where do beings who are less than kank honey get such audacity?"

"You try my patience! Better to surrender now than to face my wrath later!"

**Statistics.** Malestic's statistics are in the *Background Book*. The others can be found on the *NPC Master Table*. All carry short bows with 12 arrows each, in addition to melee weapons.

**Outcome.** *Combat Round 1:* Malestic's band takes positions and orders the PCs to surrender. *Rounds 2-5:* From cover, the band fires volleys of arrows. *Round 6:* Templars cast spells as others fire arrows. *Rounds 7-9:* Human guards rush to engage in melee. *Round 10:* Surviving humans retreat under arrow cover. *Rounds 11-13:* More arrow fire. *Round 14+:* Malestic orders everyone except two half-giants into melee. *Round 16:* Malestic and half-giant guards enter melee.

Malestic is extremely overconfident. He does not believe he can lose this battle, even if his men are falling around him. Even alone, he feels he is more powerful than the PCs. Because of this attitude, he fights to the death (though he will be very surprised if the death is his own).

**Next.** Cut between here and **Part Six: B**. When both end, go to **Part Six: C**.



## Part Six: B—Ending the Ceremony

**Setup.** The PCs prepare to help the spirit of the land awaken Korgunard when the valley animals cry out a loud warning. While the rest of the PCs go to defend the valley, any PC preservers (or the most powerful PC psionicist) stay to assist Korgunard. Tell these players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 6— **Spirit of the Land**.

**Start.** This encounter and the previous one (**Part Six: A**) occur simultaneously and should be run at the same time by cutting from one encounter to the other (see the introduction for details). Read the following aloud, then cut to **Part Six: A**.

You ignore the cries of animals to concentrate on the rock formation rising over the clear pool. As you watch, the rock shimmers, taking on distinctive human features. You realize you are seeing an earth elemental emerging from the rock. "I am Desverendi," the earth spirit says. "Add your magic to mine to save the Great One." You open your well of magical energy, feeling the others doing the same. The sensation reminds you of the arcane shadows that invaded your dreams, but you are fully awake. You join with Desverendi and Elentha to break the shield of unconsciousness currently in place in Korgunard's mind.

**Encounter.** While the other PCs defend the valley, the mages must help bring Korgunard out of his coma. The most critical part is the first 20 minutes. It takes 10 rounds to bring Korgunard to consciousness and 10 rounds to revitalize him. While the earth spirit holds the magic together, the PCs must lend the spirit their own magic energy. To simulate this, the PCs and NPCs must make Intelligence checks every round. Success sends energy to the earth spirit. A failed roll can be turned into a success by expending one memorized spell. The spell does not take effect, but it is expended as its energy goes to the spirit. If there is not at least one success in a round, the process continues but takes longer to accomplish. After 10 successful rounds, Korgunard awakens. After another 10 successful rounds, he becomes revitalized enough to continue the ceremony from where he left off in Urik.

**Role-playing.** Encourage the PCs involved in this ceremony to interact with Elentha and Desverendi (and later Korgunard) as they weave their magic.

### *Dialogue*

"I can feel Korgunard's mind stirring! Hurry now, lend me your strength!"

"Forget the battle! What we do is too fragile to withstand distractions!"

**Outcome.** After Korgunard becomes revitalized, he takes over the ceremony. He remains connected with the preserver PC and even adds the other PCs into the connection if they have finished with Malestic. Remember, it takes 20 *successful* rounds to reach this point, not just 20 rounds. If the villains are defeated before Korgunard is revitalized, you can skip the rest of the rolls.

**Next.** Cut between here and Part Six: A. When both end, go to **Part Six: C**.

## Part Six: C—The Great One

**Setup.** If the PCs fail to defend the valley, they either wind up dead or prisoners of Malestic. In this case, Athas loses the benefits of perhaps the first Great One to walk its parched surface. If they succeed, Korgunard finishes his spell. Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 34— **The Great One**.

**Start.** Read the following:

Korgunard, still wrapped in a cocoon of sparkling blue water, stands before the rock formation. Now the cocoon is a swirling blur of water and lightning dancing excitedly around the legendary preserver. You hear Korgunard's clear, powerful voice in your mind as he calls to you. "You have performed a service beyond any I could ever hope to repay," he says, and it sounds like nature's song to you. "You have done well. But I must call on you all for one more favor. Add your life to mine to complete the spell of transformation."



**Encounter.** The final ceremony lasts three hours. During this time, the PCs become one with the valley, its current inhabitants, Korgunard, and even Athas itself. All share a measure of their own life force to aid Korgunard's transformation. Unlike the ceremony used by the sorcerer-kings to transform into higher beings, this ceremony is not destructive or dangerous. Everything interacts in balance, and the PCs can only be made better by the experience. They get to share in the mysteries of life and death, and they get to witness one possible path toward rebirth for their

dying world.

As the magical energy flows between all of the participants and the land itself, read the following aloud:

As you open yourself to Korgunard, you feel yourself joining with the others in the valley, with the spirit of the land, with the animals and insects, and even with the grass and plants. Energy flows from you and into Korgunard, slowly changing the preserver into something . . . wonderful! Then the energy flows back into you, passing through the land as it returns. In its sparkling wake you see flowers bud, see them grow and flare open where no flowers had been before. You see blades of grass sprout, thicken, and form lush green carpets. You are participating in a ceremony of life, and you can feel its song singing in your deepest soul.

## Part Six: C—The Great One (Cont.)

As the ceremony nears its conclusion, the PCs witness the coming of the Great One. Read the following aloud:

The animals of the valley grow increasingly excited as the ceremony nears its completion. Even the elemental spirits of the world seem to have come to this hidden valley for the proceedings. You feel the earth shift slightly beneath your feet. You hear waves lap against the shore in the previously still pool. You see heat ripple in the air. You feel a breeze blow into the valley, singing through the surrounding trees. Then your attention turns to Korgunard.

The metallic glow of the preserver's skin glitters in the sunlight as life-giving forces dance over his body. His eyes, which always seemed to glow, now become the brightest silver. These eyes are at once gentle and all-seeing, noble and caring. Then, as you watch in awe, small gossamer wings sprout from his back and shoulders. The wings themselves are filmy and nearly transparent, budding out to only three feet, but they are the most beautiful wings you have ever beheld. You hear the booming, earthquake voice of Desverendi claim, "Hail Greet One! Hail Gossamer! Hail Korgunard!" You think you hear the proclamation in the wind, the heat, and the waves. Korgunard's heed wound has healed, but not faded. Instead, it appears as glowing fire across the top of his regal head. You realize that what should have been completed in a few hours in Urik has taken weeks, but now that it is done, Athas's rebirth can begin.

**Reactions.** The animals, the elements, even the land itself seems to reach toward the transformed Korgunard. Everything wants to bask in his life-giving glow. In the future, the Greet One will have much to do to help Athas, but for now he is content to rest with those who helped him achieve this state in the hidden valley. Of course, if any of the villains of the adventure lived to run away, they will take tales of the Greet One to every city, village, and oasis they visit. This could make the PCs targets of defilers, templars, or other agents seeking information concerning this new being.

**Outcome.** If the PCs helped Korgunard finish his transformation, he owes them a favor. What form that favor takes and how far-reaching the effects are will be left for another session. Also, they will find themselves with friends in the Veiled Alliance—namely, Lodo Gensky, Jaggo, and Elentha, among others. Help may come to them at the most unexpected times and from the most unexpected sources.

They may also have formed friendships with the Free and a variety of other characters. And, of course, they have made enemies. The Black Sand Raiders, Werrik's Stalkers, Thania's faction of the Veiled Alliance, and a host of others may want to enact vengeance upon the PCs.

If the PCs failed, they could be killed or sent back to the slave pens of Urik. Korgunard does not transform and the Veiled Alliance may actually hold the PCs to blame. What this means to the future will be up to you, for the sands of Athas are ever-shifting, and few know what lies beyond the next dune.





# Facets

William W. Connors

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"You impress me, Pallinius."

"Why is that, Kendium?"

"Not one man in a thousand could have matched our pace across the desert, yet you showed the stamina and speed of an elf."

Pallinius looked up at the dark face of the elven chief. He dabbed at the sweat on his brow with a damp cloth and allowed himself a rare smile. His memory of the marathon from Altaruk was one of blistering sun, a seemingly endless wasteland, and the relentless pace of Kendium and his tribe of nomadic merchants. He was exhausted, and Kendium's words were a welcome reward for his effort. He didn't dare to tell the elf chieftain that he had been aided by a magical elixir. Without that mysterious concoction, he would have fallen far behind the others and collapsed at the end of the first day.

"I can't say that it was easy." Pallinius said in a voice dry from the desert air. Now it was the elf's turn to smile. Kendium reached out and placed his slender brown hand on the man's shoulder. His expression changed to one of solemnity.

"I offer you employment, Pallinius. Your sword has shown itself to be as strong and true as its master. I dare say that you saved my life when those gith raiders attacked. I will pay well and you shall amass much honor fighting the terrors of the desert."

Pallinius was shocked. Few men ever earned the trust of an elven tribe enough to travel with them, let alone be asked to remain in their ranks. It was an offer that he knew would never be made again, and it was tempting. The challenging life of an elf, moving from town to town and surviving by only your own abilities, had a great appeal to him.

"You do me a great honor, Kendium," he said, lowering his head in regret, "but I cannot accept. If the woman that I have been told of does turn out to be my sister, we'll have a lot of years to catch up on."

Kendium assumed the stern look that he wore when receiving hard news. "I wish you luck then, Pallinius. I hope that your search ends here. But if the reports of your sister turn out to be erroneous, we will be in Tyr for



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three days. I shall not consider my offer closed until we depart.”

“Again, I am honored.” Pallinius said. He stood and lifted the leather satchel that contained his few belongings. “If I do not see you again, may the road you follow always end well.”

“And yours, Pallinius.”

It was well past noon by the time Pallinius located the small adobe home that he sought. Over the course of the past six years, he had followed up leads like this many times. In every case, though, his search had remained unfinished; never had he found his beloved sister, Kaliana.

He held little hope that this time would be any different. The traveler that he had met in Urik spoke of a woman with a rune-brand on her shoulder, similar to the one Pallinius himself bore. Such brands were not uncommon among the tribes of escaped slaves like the one he and his sister had grown up in. The brands that marked his tribe were in the shape of a pterrax, the great reptilian fliers that curled and danced in the skies of Athas. It was the tribe’s totem, for it was silent and graceful when moving, but deadly and inescapable when it struck. Such was the mark of their people, before they were destroyed by a savage tribe of thri-kreen raiders.

Now, the few who had survived the thri-kreen attack were scattered throughout the Tyr region. He had met a few of them, but they had been unable to offer any information that would help him find Kaliana. Still, they were able to confirm that she had survived the attack and escaped into the desert.

Not long after he had taken up his watch, Pallinius caught sight of a cloaked woman stepping up to the adobe house.

There was certainly a similarity to his sister. The face was slender, the skin paler than was usual, and the height and weight, as best he could judge, were similar. The woman was adorned with long curls of sandy hair that ran down and vanished into the folds of her cloak. Kaliana had darker hair and generally wore it very short, giving her an almost masculine look. Certainly, it was possible to lighten one’s hair and allow it to grow longer.

If this was Kaliana, the move to a city might well have prompted her to abandon her tribal looks in favor of those more appropriate to a sophisticated city dweller.

The woman entered the house and closed the door behind her. Pallinius decided that he could not be certain that this was his sister, but neither could he say with authority that she was not.

As the setting sun spilled a wash of crimson light across the bleached walls of Tyr’s buildings, Pallinius wandered a little way down the street until he found a corner that looked like a decent place to spend the night. This wasn’t the first time he had passed the night on a street, and he was certain that it wouldn’t be his last.

Pallinius spent the next several days following the woman. He dared not approach her until he knew for certain that she was Kaliana. Too many people were anxious to find Pallinius and repay him for deeds he had done in the past.

On three occasions she had visitors. Each time that they knocked on her door, they used a special combinations of taps. Pallinius memorized this knock, assuming that it was part of some code that identified the visitor as a friend. They seldom stayed long, never more than half an hour, and came only very early in the day or just after sunset.

At first, Pallinius thought nothing of these habits. Then, however, he remembered something that his mentor and protector, Amundius, had told him. During the seemingly endless hours of their classes in spell casting, the wise old man had said that many of the city-states had organizations of wizards. These groups—he called them Veiled Alliances—took great care to protect their members from the ever watchful eyes of the templars. He had urged them to seek out such an organization and join it if they ever found themselves within the walls of a city. It might well be that, if this was Kaliana, she had done just that.

Two days later, Pallinius was fairly certain that this woman was indeed Kaliana. His heart swelled at the thought, but he resolved that nothing would be settled without a face to face confrontation, despite the risk that it imposed. The time had come for him to make himself known.





He made a brief trip to the merchant's quarter and paid far too much to wash, shave, and make himself look less like something that had run all the way from Altaruk and spent two nights living on the streets.

Pallinius stepped up to the faded wooden door. It was set on stout leather hinges anchored to the adobe by wooden pegs. The skull of large serpent, its exact type unfamiliar to him, hung in the center of the door, its jaw clearly intended for use as a knocker.

Remembering the code that her visitors had used, he reached for the yellowed bone. Suddenly, he caught a scent that brought his hand to the hilt of his obsidian sword. Years of battle, as both mercenary and adventurer, had trained him to detect even the most subtle signs of danger. He looked down and saw that a thin trickle of crimson had slithered out beneath the door. The metallic scent of blood, faint though it was, had been enough to trigger his keen senses.

A rush of exhilaration swept through him, as it always did before a fight, and he kicked the door with a powerful leg. It swung open easily under the blow, obviously not locked. Pallinius sprang through the pale arch of the doorway. He saw no obvious foe, and edged into the room. He was moving slowly now, watching to make sure that none of the shadows shifted and that he did not expose himself to any attack. All seemed still and safe.

There were no lamps or candles burning, but the shaft of sunlight that reached in through the open doorway brought a dim illumination to the room. It was a typical city dweller's home, sparsely furnished and, to Pallinius' mind, very claustrophobic. The walls were yellow-white, here and there marked with a rune or icon in a futile attempt to add some color to the otherwise bleak building. There were two round windows set into the walls, each closed with bone shutters against the heat of the vermilion sun.

The furniture, largely wooden and wicker, had been overturned and splintered. The entire floor was littered with shards of broken pottery, shattered boxes, and shredded cloth. A number of potted plants, carefully tended and nurtured, stood in clumps of soil around the room. Each of the pots had been smashed and the earth

around the plant's roots broken up to make sure that nothing was hidden within it. Someone had done a very thorough job of ransacking this tiny home.

Still, many valuable items remained. Pallinius noted that even a stupid thief would have helped himself to the metal dagger that lay in the center of a clean spot on the floor. Further, at least one of the broken boxes had contained a number of coins that were now scattered about the floor.

Satisfied that he was alone in the room, Pallinius knelt down and picked up the knife. It was a fine antique, no doubt of great value and perhaps even magical. He would check that later.

Pallinius closed the door, bolted it, and turned his attention back to the slender trail of blood that had brought him in. It seemed to be coming from underneath a fallen tarp just inside the door. There was an uneven mound in the sheet of canvas that could only be made by a body. Pallinius' blood pounded in his ears as he stepped over to the hidden figure and pulled back the impromptu shroud.

The crumpled body of the woman he had been watching lay curled in a pool of crimson before him. A single sword thrust, directly through her throat, was the obvious cause of death and the source of the rivulets of blood that crept across the uneven floor. Pallinius bent low over the body. His hand, normally strong and solid, trembled as he reached for the shoulder of her tunic. With a sharp motion, he pulled the cloth away from her neck. It ripped sharply and fell away to reveal her slender shoulder. A red tattoo in the shape of a soaring pterax stood half revealed on her shoulder blade.

A wild hope that he might be wrong, that this might not be Kaliana at all, gripped him. He turned the body over and tilted the woman's head back. Just under the jaw was a slender scar, left by a patch of slashweed that they had stumbled across while playing as children. Pallinius had made no mistake.

The cry of agony that leapt from Pallinius' heart echoed in the shadowy room. He had indeed found his sister. Had he come forward even one day earlier, he would have been at her side when she was attacked.



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His years of searching loomed over him like the rolling mass of a sandstorm. He lashed out violently, smashing the few items that had not been destroyed by the thieves. He cursed loudly, calling upon darkest of spirits to help him find the people who had done this to his sister. Once, there was a pounding on the door and the voice of an angry neighbor demanded silence. Pallinius roared back a threat of unspeakable violence, and the neighbor was silent.

Finally, Pallinius' rage passed. His mind returned to the present. Exhausted, he sank down beside the body and cradled the lifeless Kaliana in his arms. He bent low to kiss her forehead and trembled.

Kaliana was two years younger than he. Her features were fair and smooth, something very uncommon even among city dwellers. The crimson brand on her shoulder showed less brightly, even against flesh that was markedly pale from a loss of blood. He ran his coarse fingers through the curls of her sandy hair. She was as beautiful now as she had been when he had last seen her.

Tears rolled down his checks, drying in the hot air before they could fall from his face. He remembered their parting, so many years ago, and his promise that he would return for her. She begged him to stay with the tribe, to continue the study of magic under the tutelage of Amundius, the aging wizard. He had told her that he knew enough of sorcery, a craft that required more patience than he could muster in his fiery youth. He wanted to travel in the world and see the wonders of Athas.

When he returned several months later, the tribe was gone, the camp destroyed, and its people vanished. A lone figure remained at the camp: Amundius the wizard. Pallinius sat with him and heard the tale of the barbarous thri-kreen attack. The survivors had fled, Kaliana among them. Amundius had remained to mourn the dead that his magic had not been strong enough to save. He had always been like a father to the tribe, and now that his child had died he would not leave its grave.

Pallinius stayed with the old man for a fortnight. Then, he left the despondent hermit to his mourning and began the quest that would claim the next several years of his life. Now, the fates seemed to mock him and

everything that he had dedicated himself to.

At last, Pallinius got to his feet. He straightened the tarp and laid it neatly over the body. Soon, he vowed, he would return and set a pyre for it, as was the custom of their destroyed people. He closed his eyes and swore a silent oath to avenge her death with his own obsidian sword.

Pallinius turned his attention back to the debris scattered about the room. Whoever had been here was searching for something specific. Common thieves would not have left so many things of obvious value behind.

Kaliana was as clever and resourceful a person as he had ever known. She had mastered the spells that Amundius taught her quickly and easily. If she had something important enough to kill for, she would have hidden it well. Certainly too well for the thieves to find it, perhaps too well for Pallinius to find it.

Pallinius began to search the house. He checked what was left of the furniture for concealed compartments, but found none. He tapped along the walls in an attempt to find a hollow area within the adobe, but this proved futile. He considered the few magical spells that he knew but set them aside, for none were suited to this task.

Several hours later, as the sun began to sink behind the horizon, he reached for a small clay lamp. It had survived the thieves' brutal search, although it had obviously been closely examined. He lit it, and the flickering yellow light spread out in a futile effort to fill the room. He found two more lamps, lit them, and had enough light to continue working.

As he righted an overturned chair and placed the last of the lamps upon it, the sputtering light fell across the pool of blood that had spread out from the tarp under which Kaliana lay. It was dry and cracked now, after hours in the open air. No doubt the porous stone of the floor would bear the mark of this murder for all time. There was, however, something unusual about the stain that caught Pallinius' attention. One edge of the stain was rough and rounded, conforming to the worn contours of the uneven floor. The other, however, was much sharper. In fact, it almost formed a straight line.

Pallinius dove to the floor and pulled the metal knife



from his belt. He scratched away the dried blood from the straight edge of the stain and looked closely. There was a thin crack in the floor through which the blood was seeping. He slipped the blade of the knife into the minute fissure and applied force. A small piece of the floor, roughly square and about a foot wide, popped loose. He let out a guttural cry of victory and lifted the stone cover free to examine the recess behind it, letting the knife clatter to the floor beside him.

The shimmering light of the lamps showed him that the hollow was a foot deep. He reached into it and drew out a dozen small leather pouches. These proved to contain various components for the casting of spells, all illegal in the city of Tyr. Under the pouches, he found a bone tube and a soft canvas bag that held something heavy, rounded, and roughly six inches long.

The bone tube was common enough. Such things were often used to store maps or important documents. Pallinius twisted the cap free of the tube and looked inside. Sure enough, there was a scroll of parchment inside. He pulled it out and unrolled it.

There was some manner of list written upon it, although he could not read it. Pallinius smiled as he recognized the magical script that Amundius had taught them so long ago. A simple incantation, one of the few that he had ever learned, would cause the indecipherable letters to glow and take on meaning.

As he wove his spell, the plants in the room withered and crumbled into ash, the life within them drained away to fuel his crude magical skills. Kaliana had always tried to convince him to study the nondestructive magic of the Preservers as Amundius taught it, but he lacked the mental stamina for that. His life-draining spells marked him as a Defiler, an outcast even among wizards.

He looked at the writing on the scroll again, and this time it made sense. It was a list of names. Kaliana's was there, as were a dozen others. Three of the names, hers included, were marked with some sort of special rune. It was an oval with a star in the middle and meant nothing to Pallinius. He rolled up the scroll again, dropped it back in the tube, and deposited the item in his satchel.

Lastly, he turned his attention to the canvas sack. It

was tied with a thick cord, but the knot was not complex. He quickly opened it and looked inside. A gasp escaped his lips as he saw the wonder within. Carefully, with the tenderness a mother might show her newborn child, he reached into the sack and brought forth a large egg cut from blue crystal. A tiny spark, like some glowing insect, was captured at the heart of the stone. The yellow light of the lamps flashed from the many facets of the gem's surface, throwing a wild pattern of reflections to every corner of the room. That this object was magical, Pallinius had no doubt. Certainly, this was what the thieves had been looking for. He sat back on the floor and marvelled at its beauty.

"By the dragon, he has the egg!"

Pallinius whirled about at the exclamation behind him, coming into a fighting crouch. The door, which he remembered bolting hours ago, hung open. Two men stood inside the adobe arch. They were tall and wore billowing robes. Each of them flashed a slender bone knife to view. The manner of their entrance, such an easy passage through a locked door, marked them as either thieves or wizards. Instantly, the thought that these might be the men who had killed Kaliana flashed into Pallinius' mind.

One of the men stepped forward and slid the hood back from his head. The light of the lamps fell upon the face of an older man, bald and with a cruel look to his stern features. He looked Pallinius up and down carefully. His hands were wrinkled and his eyes deep with intelligence. This was not a thief. Wizards they were, then. Possibly they were members of the local Veiled Alliance. For a long moment, nothing was said. No one moved, and the whispering of a soft breeze outside was the only sound to be heard. Then, the older man spoke. "Tethyn, do what you will with this thief, then bring the crystal to my home. I will make speed to Dellek's house and warn him that Kaliana has been killed. Once you have finished with the thief, fly and carry the same message to Johr. The crystals must not be lost!"

Pallinius' ears perked up at the mention of the two names, Dellek and Johr. They were both on Kaliana's





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list and each marked with that unfamiliar sigil. Clearly, that glyph had been indicative of the crystal with its glowing point of light.

The older man turned and left. Tethyn slipped his hood off and pointed a delicate pink finger at Pallinius. "You have made a mistake in challenging our order, a mistake that you will not live to regret."

At that, Pallinius pulled his sword free of its scabbard. The gleaming blade swung smoothly to stand ready before the warrior. Amber light from the lamps glinted from its polished surface.

Tethyn laughed. "A sword, the weapon of a barbarian. I have killed more of your pathetic kind than I can count."

"And I yours!" shouted Pallinius as he sprang forward. The magician was ready for this attack, however. As Pallinius bounded toward him, Tethyn waved his hand in a delicate motion and spoke an ancient word of power. The sorcerer snapped his other hand forward; holding a fine piece of crystal in it. It might have been a piece of quartz or mica, Pallinius could not tell and did not care.

The obsidian blade swept forward with great speed, the air hissing as it moved. The crystal in the wizard's hand flashed briefly and a deafening burst of sound erupted, so shrill and high pitched that it hurt Pallinius' ears. With a loud crack, the obsidian blade shattered into a cloud of fragments. Unable to check his swing or compensate for the sudden change in weight and momentum, Pallinius spun and fell. Tethyn laughed gleefully at the shocked Pallinius.

Pallinius rolled over to face Tethyn. His other weapon, a bone axe, was strapped to the outside of his satchel and would not be easy to free.

"Well, thief," Tethyn gloated, "if you tell me all that you know of your leader and his interest in the crystals, I shall let you go free. You're just a quisling; it's your master that I am interested in."

Pallinius shook his head. Meanwhile, his right arm reached slowly for the strap of his satchel. "I work alone."

Tethyn laughed again. He swept one arm up over his

head and began to speak again in an ancient tongue. Pallinius moved quickly. He grabbed at the strap of his satchel and swung it around. As Tethyn brought his arm down and began to pronounce the last word of his incantation, the leather pouch struck his outstretched hand and wrapped a thick, supple strap around his wrist. Pallinius gave a hard tug on the bag, pulling the wizard off balance and breaking the magic that he had been weaving.

As Tethyn stumbled toward him, the warrior rolled sideways and kicked the magician's legs out from under him. With a cry of pain, the robed figure fell.

Pallinius leapt sideways. Even before Tethyn hit the ground, Pallinius grabbed the steel dagger that had been his sister's and swung it around so that the blade rested against wizard's throat. "Make no move," he said, "or I will kill you."

Tethyn's hands opened wide in a gesture of submission. His lilting voice, choked with terror and wracked with pain, pleaded for mercy. Pallinius scowled at his weakness. "Tell me of the crystals," he demanded, allowing the blade to taste a thin trickle of blood.

"I don't know very much about them," Tethyn began, speaking in a whisper. "There are three of them. Dellek had one and Kaliana another. Johr, our leader, holds the third."

"Where can I find Johr?" Pallinius demanded. "Tell me now," he hissed, "and you will go free."

Reluctantly, Tethyn supplied Pallinius with directions to the wizard's house. It was not far and sounded as if it would be easy to find, even in the dead of night.

"You have been helpful," said Pallinius. He tightened his grip on the steel dagger and pulled Tethyn's head back by the hair. "For that, you shall die quickly."

"But...you said I would live!"

"No. I said I would set you free," Pallinius said as he drew the knife across Tethyn's throat with a powerful stroke. *Free from your miserable existence*, the warrior said to himself.

Pallinius returned the egg to its hiding place and locked the panel in place over it. He scattered some of the debris in the room over the floor to make the cache less



visible, snuffed out the lamps, and headed out into the night.

It took the warrior less than half an hour to find the home of Johr. Like Kaliana's, it was built of adobe, with a flat roof, circular holes for windows, and a single wooden door set in one wall. Although it was larger, for this was certainly a more affluent part of the city, the house was still fairly bland and featureless. A small yard, an expensive luxury in the city, surrounded the house on the sides not bordering the street. A sparse crop of yellow-green scrub grew there, giving off a pleasant, somewhat bitter odor.

Only one of the two moons was in the sky, and its pale orange light washed over the city like the glow of a failing torch. Still, even that dim illumination was more than Pallinius cared for. He looked to the sky, hoping that a rare cloud might promise to block the moon's face, but only shimmering stars looked back at him. With a mental sigh, Pallinius vaulted the wall and landed, almost silently, in a fighting crouch.

As he reached the window, Pallinius eased himself closer. The shutters, made of bone like the ones at his sister's home, were open slightly, and he could hear bits and pieces of conversation coming from within. Someone was making threats against the life of an "uncooperative wizard." He stood and risked a peek inside.

The inside of the room was much as he had expected. There were many simple furnishings, a few pathetic attempts at decoration, and a number of oil lamps scattered around for light. Three men, each in the uniform of the city watch, stood over the battered body of a young man. His arms and legs had been tied to a wicker chair with slender leather thongs. His fingers were broken and bent, a brutal brutal effective way of keeping him from casting spells. Cuts and bruises on his face showed the quality of treatment that he was being given under the watchful eyes of Tyr's least important templars.

Suddenly, the light from the lamps flashed off something he had not noticed, and Pallinius almost gasped. One of the templars held a bright crystal egg in his hands. His uniform clearly marked him as the leader of this band. The only difference between this crystal and

the one that Pallinius had found in Kaliana's home, so far as he could see, was that this one was red; hers had been blue.

Pallinius had seen enough. He drew the slender steel dagger. In his other hand, he weighed the bone axe. Slowly and quietly, he moved around to the front of the yard. He worked his way over the low wall and stood before the door. From inside, he heard the sound of laughter and the slap of leather on flesh. When the tortured Johr let out a sharp cry of pain, Pallinius cocked back his leg and kicked the door open.

All three of the templars looked up in alarm, too caught up in their sadistic games to respond quickly. Pallinius, however, did not hesitate. He hurled the axe, which tumbled perfectly through the air, and dashed forward. The bone blade of the axe buried itself in the head of the nearest templar, who died without fully knowing what had happened to him.

The second guardsman, however, was more alert. He spun to the side, avoiding Pallinius' lunge, and drew his own sword. It was an uncommon weapon, for its blade was wooden. A row of slender, sharp teeth, pulled from the jaw of some savage predator, were lashed to the sword, giving it a keen, serrated edge.

The templar started to make a lunge but then bent sideways. Pallinius, expecting an outright attack, turned away from the direction in which he assumed the blade would fall. As he started to respond, the templar brought his free arm around in a sweeping gesture and caught Pallinius across the face with his forearm. The impact sent him sprawling backward. His head was spinning from the unexpected blow, and he only dimly felt his fingers lose their grip on the knife. When he fell, his head struck the slate floor with what seemed to Pallinius to be a deafening crack. Everything in the room was out of focus, and he could only roughly discern the shape of the templar moving in for the kill.

The templar brought up his sword and held it aloft for a second. Pallinius fought to clear his head and focus his vision, but it seemed to do little good. The jagged blade fell.

Reflexively, Pallinius snapped up a hand to ward off



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the attack. The ripping edge of the templar's blade tore into his hand, sending a torrent of pain down his arm. He cried out, forcing his hand to close around the sword. His grip was tight, though the teeth tore into his flesh and blood flowed liberally from his wounds. The templar, unprepared for such an event, was stunned for a moment. Pallinius yanked the weapon from his grip and hurled it across the room.

Pallinius scooped up his dagger. His senses were beginning to clear, but not quickly. The templar sprang at Pallinius, who held the steel knife before him in rigid arms. The templar, already in mid-leap, saw his peril and could do nothing to escape it. He landed on the outstretched knife with the full force of his mighty jump. He shivered for a second, and his eyes opened wide in pain. The warrior rolled his attacker's corpse off to one side and let out a deep sigh of relief.

Suddenly, he remembered the third templar. Horrified that he had left himself open to a deadly attack, he struggled free of the body that lay upon him. He got to his feet, still dizzy, and looked around. The third man was gone. And with him, Pallinius cursed, he had taken the red egg.

Pallinius knelt beside the bound mage. His skin was crisscrossed with lacerations, burns, and other marks of torture. Even before he had completed an examination with the little medical expertise that a soldier cannot help but learn, Pallinius knew that it was hopeless. Several of the wounds bore yellow smudges around them. Pallinius knew from past encounters with the templars of Tyr that this was balicten, a deadly poison. The wizard would die in a few hours. There was nothing to save him from the lingering, painful death of that accursed drug.

Pallinius cut the wizard's straps and helped him down to the floor. He hoped that this would be more comfortable for the wounded man than the chair. The first twinges of balicten pain hit, and Johr's body tightened. When the agony had passed, he looked up and met Pallinius' gaze. He whispered the word "Who?" but then fell silent.

"Do not try to move, wizard. I will do what I can to make you comfortable. My name is Pallinius, and I am a

friend of Kaliana. The templars that tortured you have given you balicten. Do you know what that means?"

No emotion showed in the wizard's face. He managed to nod, and Pallinius saw a strength of character in the clear eyes of the dying man that moved him. It was refreshing to discover that not all of Kaliana's associates in Tyr had been as offensive as Tethyn.

"Listen to me, Johr." said Pallinius, leaning low over the body. "I can stop the pain. I can kill you quickly. You refused to answer the templars, I know, and this is the only reward that I can grant you. I shall do it, but first tell me what you can of the men who did this."

"They serve Daricles. I heard them mention his name when they found the egg." Another seizure of pain burned through Johr's body, cutting his words off and replacing them with a scream of agony. This one was longer and more intense than the last one. Pallinius knew that others would follow, each more intense than the last. In the end, just before he died, Johr would be driven mad by the pain.

"What of the crystals?" Pallinius asked.

Johr's eyes narrowed. For a second, he seemed to have thrown off the pain of the balicten. Pallinius met his gaze, seeing in the man's eyes a strength that he might never have guessed a wizard could have. For a moment, the warrior felt a sense of kinship with this man similar to that he had known for dying comrades on the battlefield.

"The crystals are ancient." he said. "They date back to a time before recorded history, perhaps to a time before the sorcerer-kings. I cannot tell. There is great power within them—some consciousness. It may be that these crystals house beings from our ancient past. If that is so, perhaps they will know secrets and powers that will enable us to restore Athas to the rich land that I believe it once was."

Johr seemed to have said all that he was going to on the subject. Another tremor began in his hands and then swept through his body. All traces of color had drained away from his face and the edges of the wounds on his body glowed like crimson welts.

"Close your eyes, wizard. I shall be as quick as I can." The trembling man obeyed, and Pallinius recovered his





bone axe. He stepped quietly back to Johr, who closed his eyes and waited.

After the deed was done, Pallinius sat for a moment in silent contemplation. The templars and their leader would pay for this. He had heard of Daricles, the head of the watch in this part of town. It was not possible, he had discovered, to linger long in the streets near Kaliana's house without hearing someone curse his name.

Pallinius moved quietly into a position beneath one of the darkened windows that was set into the adobe wall of Daricles' home. While he went to work with Kaliana's steel dagger on the bone bars that blocked the window, his eyes took in the unusual sight beyond.

He had found some sort of large throne room. Presumably, this was the chamber from which Daricles handed down his decrees and heard the appeals of those beneath him in the templar order. The place was richly decorated and, based on the information Pallinius had been able to gather about Daricles, entirely too grand for a man of his position. Opposite the entrance to the room stood a large, ornate throne carved from a single block of solid granite. The craftsmanship was exquisite, and Pallinius could not begin to estimate its value.

Still, for all the ornate statuary and various pieces of art, Pallinius' attention was drawn to only one element of the decor: an arcane apparatus that stood in the center of the room. It was bulky, assembled within a sprawling frame of bone and wood. Mounted at various points in the device were clusters of glowing gems, blown glass orbs of translucent liquids, and metal icons of a style and purpose unknown to Pallinius. All told, the thing looked quite complex and dangerous. In any other situation, Pallinius would have left it alone and gone about his business. However, a fixture at its center was set with three copper brackets, one of which held a yellow, glowing crystal egg. Two brackets were empty but clearly waiting.

After several minutes of work, Pallinius had removed three of the bars from the window and created a space large enough to squeeze through. He did so and then replaced the missing bones in the window so that they

looked more or less like they had before his attempt at house breaking.

Pallinius moved quickly toward the center of the room and stood before the apparatus. He was about to claim the yellow crystal for himself when he heard a bolt being pulled back on the room's only door. He looked about, saw that he had no chance to reach a secluded hiding place, and whirled to face the door. The light from the glowing crystal behind him glinted on his knife as it flashed from its leather sheath.

The door swung open and two men entered. One of them he recognized as the templar who had escaped from him at Johr's home. The other, a hulking figure with powerful muscles, richly tanned skin, and sharply defined features, he took to be Daricles himself. The fact that the man carried a second gleaming crystal, the red one that Pallinius had seen earlier in the evening, only confirmed his suspicions.

A smile crept across Daricles' face as his gaze fell upon Pallinius. "Let me guess," he chuckled. "This is the man who attacked you at the wizard's home earlier." The other templar showed a moment of shock at the sight of Pallinius but quickly confirmed his master's suspicions. "You are a very busy thief," laughed Daricles as he took a long stride forward. He made no motion toward his sword, but the threat in his every step warned Pallinius of the great danger that he was in.

Daricles called for his guards, and a pair of less imposing but still muscular warriors dashed into the room. Pallinius, recognizing that the odds against his escape grew greater with each passing second, decided to strike quickly. Even if he was unable to avoid capture, he would see to it that Daricles paid for his sister's death. His arm snapped up; the flash of metal bit into the dry air as he sent the dagger tumbling at the templar. With hardly a sign of effort, Daricles stepped aside and the blade buried itself in the smaller templar's throat. With a stunned gasp, he staggered back two steps and fell to the floor. Blood trickled out from beneath the fallen body.

Daricles shook his head and motioned for his men to take Pallinius. After a brief struggle, they bound Pallinius' wrists with leather thongs and threw him to the



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hard, stone floor before their master, who had taken his seat upon the granite throne. "Go and fetch Kachitka," Daricles ordered, and one of the guards moved swiftly out of the room.

The templar turned his attention back to Pallinius. "You seem to have caused me a great deal of difficulty, thief, but I don't believe I know you. Is this a professional matter, then? May I assume that you are merely interested in the crystals for their obvious beauty and value?" Pallinius said nothing, and Daricles smiled. "Very well, no need to answer. I'll know everything about you soon."

As Pallinius considered the menacing implications of these words, a clattering sound came from the doorway behind him. He twisted his body around so that he could see its source. Pallinius felt a twinge of horror within him, as he supposed all men did, at the sight of the chitinous shell of the insectoid thri-kreen entering the room. The handful of guards that followed it into the room meant nothing in contrast with the creature that led them.

"Thief," said Daricles, "this is Kachitka. He is a master at curing poor unfortunate people like yourself who seem to have lost the ability to communicate. He will tell us who you are and why you have interfered with my plans."

As the creature moved toward him, a knot formed in Pallinius' gut. He had heard stories about the savage and brutal methods of torture that the thri-kreen employed. He had seen what they had done to his village and knew that they were not a threat to be lightly dismissed.

To Pallinius' surprise, the creature did not strike at him. Rather, it moved to within a few feet of his prone form and stopped. The gleaming, multi-faceted eyes looked him up and down with a slow, assessing gaze. He was unable to tell anything of the alien mind that lurked behind those hard orbs, but he sensed a coldness and a cruelty that was unlike any he had known before.

Suddenly, the nature of Kachitka's tactics became clear. A wave of mental force crashed against Pallinius' mind, causing him to cry out in pain. The insect quickly destroyed the subconscious attempts at resistance offered by Pallinius and began to sift through his thoughts. Random images of things long past began to flash

through his mind as the insect sought the information that its master desired.

*He was a boy, watching as his father was pulled into the maw of a howling desert beast. He was a man, listening to Amundius tell him of the village's destruction. He was a mercenary, cutting down a gith raider that was about to impale the stunned elf Kendium on its spear. He was a youth, watching the warriors of his tribe practice their arts and dreaming of the day when he might join them in battle. He was a warrior, outside Johr's home, watching the templars laugh as they tortured the wizard. He was a frustrated student, trying hopelessly to learn the subtle magics that his sister seemed to master without effort. He was a wanderer, moving from city to city looking for a woman that he knew he would never find. He was a failure, thrown to the ground before the cruel, mocking company of a brutal templar of Tyr.*

Suddenly, the horrid intimacy was over. Pallinius went limp, drained of the energy to even hold his head up against the pull of gravity. A brittle, staccato laugh grated out of the thri-kreen's mouth as it turned away from him and looked up at Daricles. In a rasping, dry voice it told the story of Pallinius' time in Tyr, taking sadistic glee in the man's struggle to find his sister, only to delay contact with her for the last few days of her life. When all was said, Daricles burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

By the time his captor was quiet again, Pallinius had recovered enough strength to lift his head and open his eyes. Daricles stood over him, looking down with false pity. "It seems," he said scornfully, "that I have done this poor fellow a great wrong." The company assembled in the room laughed openly as their master stepped down to stand before Pallinius. "This is nothing so minor as theft, is it? I have caused the death of your beloved sister in my rash hunger for power and the crystals." Another round of laughter echoed about the room as Daricles reached down and pulled the limp Pallinius to his feet. "You must be given a chance to avenge yourself, mustn't you?" He released Pallinius, who fell like a child's toy at his feet, and ordered the guards to remove his bonds.



Pallinius twisted his wrists, making it more difficult for the man trying to untie the thongs. His strength was beginning to return, but not quickly. Every second of extra time that he could buy would mean more energy for whatever was to come next. When the straps were finally pulled free, Pallinius had recovered enough to get to his feet, though he feigned greater weakness and allowed the guards to lift him up.

Daricles had removed his braided leather belt, and with it the bone sword that hung at his side. He stood before Pallinius with no weapon in his hands and motioned for his captive to come at him. "You wanted to kill me, Pallinius. This is your chance. Show your sister the strength of your love and avenge her now."

By this time, a dozen guards had entered the room. They formed a circle around the two combatants and smiled with anticipation at the coming duel. At the center of the ring, the slender Pallinius looked like no match for the wedge-shaped templar.

Pallinius hung back, still pretending to be weaker than he was in hopes of buying himself a few extra seconds of recovery time. After a couple of sparing labs, Daricles seemed to grow weary of waiting and moved in on the smaller man. He cocked back his right arm to throw a punch, and Pallinius kicked his legs out from under him. Even before his massive frame struck the stone floor, Pallinius was on him. He locked his hands on the templar's throat and squeezed with every bit of his strength. He hoped to crush his opponent's windpipe but lacked the strength. Daricles rolled to one side and kicked, breaking Pallinius' grip and sending him sliding across the floor. A round of appreciative laughter went up from the spectators, who seemed to take this unexpected move by Pallinius as a promise that the fight might be better than they had expected.

Pallinius got to one knee as Daricles sprang back to his feet. "You're a sly little fellow," laughed the templar, "Perhaps you are not as fatigued as you would have me believe, eh?"

With that, Daricles sprang forward. Pallinius put up his arms to ward off the attack, but the sheer mass of the templar was enough to knock him down. Pallinius man-

aged to work himself free of his opponent's mighty grip, but not before he had been hit with a series of violent blows that split his lip, knocked out two teeth, and left his mouth awash with blood.

Pallinius managed to focus his eyes just in time to receive a tremendous kick to his right side. A burning pain filled his chest, and a cracking sensation that accompanied every move told Pallinius that at least two of his ribs were broken.

Pallinius cursed himself for failing. His sister's death would go unavenged. He couldn't allow that to happen, but what chance did he have? Suddenly, the thought of his sister brought a spark of inspiration to his darkened spirit. Daricles made some taunting threat as he stood over him, but Pallinius' mind was racing too quickly to hear it. His mind was dashing back across the ages, struggling to recall the gestures and words that Amundius had shown him so long ago. The effects of the thri-kreen mind probe made every fragment of memory a fleet moment of reality. He tried to focus, to ride the shifting sands of confusion that echoed in his head. Then, he found it.

He was young man, learning a new spell from Amundius. It was the last spell that the wizard would teach him before Pallinius left the tribe. He saw mystic symbols in his mind. Responding to the long forgotten memories, he moved his hands sharply. Words not spoken in nearly a decade came to his mouth. He felt the tingle of arcane power race through his body. As he made the last gesture of the incantation, the memory broke up and fell away. He was back in the templar's house.

Suddenly, his spell took effect and the room was plunged into darkness. A cry of alarm sprang up from the spectators. Daricles, caught off guard but still a man of lightning reflexes, kicked outward at the spot where Pallinius had been kneeling before him only a second ago—but his prisoner was gone.

Pallinius, as blind as the others, moved by memory. He had known what was coming and, if he was lucky, that would give him the edge he needed.

Daricles heard the crash of a falling body behind and a string of short, sharp curses. Shouts of confusion and





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alarm were spreading among the guards, making it difficult for him to sort out what he was hearing. The templar spun about reflexively, although the darkness was absolute and he had no hope of seeing the source of the disturbance. Another sound, the scraping of leather on stone and the clattering of something hard hitting the floor, came from his left. He swung about again, still impotent in the black chaos.

Pallinius scampered over the outer wall of Daricles' compound, trying his best to ignore the fire in his rib cage. He smiled, an act which brought satisfaction as well as pain, when he heard the cry of rage from behind him. His spell had just ended—he could feel it—and he was certain that Daricles was looking at the copper fixture that now stood empty at the heart of his apparatus. Pallinius held the two crystals—red and yellow—carefully wrapped and concealed in his bloodstained tunic.

As the sun climbed above the horizon, spreading a wash of pink fire across the sky, Pallinius stepped up to a simple wooden door. He placed a small package on the door step and knocked sharply, using the same code that he had heard first outside his sister's home.

A few seconds later, when the door was pulled open, Pallinius was gone. From the shadows across the street, Pallinius watched as the old wizard who had accompanied Tethyn to Kaliana's house leaned out of his home. He spotted the parcel, studied it cautiously for a moment, then pulled it inside and closed the door.

"But why did Daricles want these crystals so badly?" asked the aging templar as he looked down at Pallinius from his high obsidian seat. His stern face was lined with wrinkles that twisted when he spoke and his eyes, which had at first regarded Pallinius dully, now shone with curiosity and interest.

"I believe that the crystals contain powerful spirits, Magistrate, that were locked in them through sorcery centuries ago. When Daricles learned that the Veiled Alliance was trying to recover them and release these trapped spirits, he formed a plan. At his command, a strange magical device was built. When it was done,

agents were dispatched to locate and recover the crystals. He planned to replace the captured spirits with those of his most loyal men. Once that was done, the Alliance would have found the crystals again. Under their hand, the newly trapped spirits would be released. Passing themselves off as ancient sorcerers, Daricles' men would infiltrate the Alliance. With the information that they provided, Daricles could control the order, using it to bring you down and advance himself and his minions."

"And where are these crystals now?"

"The blue one, which Daricles' men were unable to recover, has been found by the Veiled Alliance. The yellow one I have brought to you." Pallinius said, opening his satchel and drawing out the radiant amber egg. The solemn templar showed an unaccustomed awe at the beauty of the thing as he reached his hands out to take it.

"And the third?" he asked.

"The red one? It is gone. I do not know where it is now."

"Very well." said the old man. He called in a servant and spoke sharply to him. "Escort this man out of the building. See to it that his price is met. He has done Tyr a great service. When that is done, send for Daricles. I have something to discuss with him."

Kendium called for his company of racing elves to halt. Something had been bothering him throughout the morning's run and he wanted to investigate it. He slid his backpack loose and dropped it to the sand beside him. Kneeling before it, he unlaced the top and reached inside. Something had thrown it out of balance, and he was determined to see what.

He pulled out a canvas-wrapped bundle. Cocking his head to one side, his slender brown fingers worked loose the cord that bound it and pulled the fabric aside. Beneath it, he saw a gleaming red crystal of unimaginable perfection. *I don't know what you are, he thought, or where you came from. But I'll bet you fetch a nice price from the jewelers in Urik.*

# Arcane Shadows

## Non-player Characters

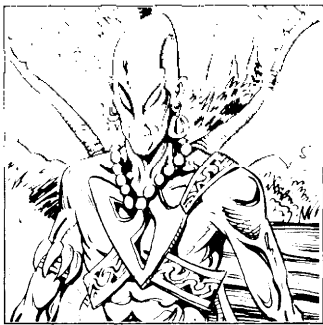
The following NPCs from *Arcane Shadows* include both friends and enemies of the PCs. With care and consideration, the PCs can acquire long-term allies from among such folk as Korgunard, Jaggo, Elentha, and the Pyreen. On the other hand, there are also those who can serve as long-term enemies of the vilest sort. Your PCs would do well to be cautious in their dealings with Malesitic, Hespulto, and Lokee.

### Korgunard

Male Avangion

22nd Level (23rd Level after the transformation)

Neutral Good



hp: 57 (58)

AC: 8 (7)

#AT: 1

THAC0: 10 (9)

Dmg: 1d4+1/1d3+1  
(steel dagger +1)

(Note: information in parentheses refers to Korgunard's level, 23rd, upon completion

of the ceremony at the end of the adventure.)

At the beginning of the adventure, Korgunard appears as a tall, imposing figure. His bald head and golden eyes seem majestic, and his skin has a golden, metallic glow. Korgunard is a legendary preserver/psionist and famed member of the Veiled Alliance. As he will have little chance to use either his spells or his psionics, these statistics have not been included. Because of the transformation process he has been going through, Korgunard has a magic resistance of 15% (which rises to 100% once he falls into his coma, and drops to 20% after the transformation) and is immune to weapons that aren't at least +1 or better.

Despite the unfamiliarity of the magical ceremony he has brought to Urik, Korgunard is a good character who really has discovered a way to help Athas. He is deeply saddened by the division hindering Urik's

Alliance, but he must look to the big picture, namely, completing his transformation. Before he falls into his coma, Korgunard inspires faith and trust. He directs much of his presence at the PCs, hoping to win them over so that they will aid him. He has a nagging premonition that he will need the help of more than just the Veiled Alliance before the ceremony is completed.

Once he falls into a coma, Korgunard can only interact with the PCs through the use of *arcane shadows*—magical dream images that may or may not be understood by those who receive them. His only chance is to get to the hidden valley of Desverendi the earth spirit, who Korgunard visited during his search for the spells of transformation.

### Jaggo

Human Male Preserver

13th Level

Chaotic Good



Str 9

Int 17

Dex 9

Wis 15

Con 9

Cha 12

hp: 28

AC: 10

#AT: 1

THAC0: 16

Dmg: 1d6/1d6 (bone quarterstaff +1)

Jaggo is an ancient preserver and long-time member of the Veiled Alliance of Urik. Some thought that when Morlak disappeared, Jaggo would assume leadership of Urik's Alliance. Instead, he stood aside while others took control. He had hoped that the coming of the legendary Korgunard would have been the key to a reconciliation, but alas, Thania, the leader of the opposing faction, has ordered her members to stay away from the meeting.

Jaggo is a friendly old man. He is a respected and



## Arcane Shadows Non-player Characters

trusted member of the Alliance, and he is looked to as a leader because of his age and wisdom. He is intrigued by Korgunard's sudden reappearance after all these years, and he is even more intrigued by the magical ceremony he witnessed.

Once Jagger decides to give his friendship to someone, he gives it for life. He finds humor in all things, often making jokes at the most serious occasions. He has even tried to inject this outlook into his very serious former student, Elentha, but she has so far failed to so much as crack a smile.

Jagger's spellbook has been carved into his bone staff, disguised within the swirls of intricate designs, though he does have scrolls hidden in various locations throughout Urik. (Jagger knows whatever spells you deem necessary and can be useful to PC spellcasters in replacing missing spellbooks or teaching new spells, if time permits.)

### Elentha

Human Female Preserver  
11th Level  
Chaotic Good



Str 13            Int 17  
Dex 16           Wis 12  
Con 15           Cha 16  
  
hp: 36  
AC: 8  
#AT: 1  
THAC0: 17  
Dmg: 1d6/1d6 (staff)

Elentha learned the preservers' craft from old Jagger while she was a slave in Urik. When the slave tribe called the Free released her from bondage, Elentha accepted their invitation to join the tribe. She soon became good friends with the tribe's leader, Bartras, and gained a measure of respect and authority among the tribe members. She remains a member of Urik's Veiled Alliance and often travels to the city to check

on her former mentor. While she will not betray or otherwise compromise the Alliance, her true allegiance is to Bartras and the Free.

Elentha is a serious young woman who finds little humor in life on Athas. Because of this, she is often considered moody and an outsider, for she stays away from the celebrations and parties that occur frequently in the slave tribes. Her skills as a preserver and her devotion to the belief of the Free more than make up for her anti-social tendencies, nevertheless.

The preserver is constantly on guard, ever watchful of deceit or betrayal. She never wants to be a slave again. She knows of Korgunard through the stories told to her by Jagger, and by a visit the famous preserver made to her old mentor many years ago. She will do whatever she can to assure the legendary mage's safety. Elentha carries her spellbook scrolls with her, though she knows this practice will probably get her in trouble one day. (Elentha knows whatever spells you deem necessary and can be useful to PC spellcasters in replacing missing spellbooks or teaching new spells.)

### Pyreen

Neutral Good  
16 HD, 75 hp  
AC: 0  
THAC0: 5  
#AT: 1  
Dmg:            1d8 +6/  
1d12 +6 (enchanted  
steel long sword plus  
Strength bonus)



#### Psionics Summary:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense | Score | PSPs      |
|-------|-------------|----------------|-------|-----------|
| 13    | 4/7/19      | EW, PC/All     | 16    | 1d100+225 |

Pyreens, or Peace-Bringers, are mysterious beings who roam Athas. They are powerful druids and psionics. They are sworn enemies of defilers and





seek to revive the dying world. This pyreen decides to forego her travels to watch over Korgunard. She will only show herself if Korgunard or his protectors are in dire need (as described in the adventure), though she might aid them from afar. She can appear as a beautiful woman with characteristics of all races, or as any animal.

Like all pyreens, this unnamed female does not like to fight, but she can be a devastating opponent if driven to combat. She can use whatever psionic powers you deem appropriate at a given moment, and she has the powers of a 16th-level druid. Instead of showing herself, she might send an elemental to fight at the PCs' side or call up a sudden wind to spoil a defiler's spell. She will not engage the PCs in conversation (besides those scenes included in the adventure), nor will she aid them in every battle. Her help, if it comes at all, will be directed at those times when the PCs or Korgunard are in dire need. Still, if dire need occurs too often, she will decide that neither these protectors nor Korgunard are as important as she thought and will leave them to their own devices.

## Malestic

Human Male Templar

11th Level

Lawful Evil



|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| Str 17 | Int 15 |
| Dex 17 | Wis 18 |
| Con 15 | Cha 14 |

hp: 53  
 AC: 3 (mekillot hide plus Dexterity bonus)  
 #AT: 1  
 THAC0: 14 (+1 Str)  
 Dmg: 1d8 + 1/

1d12+1 (steel long sword plus Strength bonus)

Spells: Six 1st-level spells, five 2nd-level spells, four 3rd-level spells, three 4th-level spells, and one 5th-level spell

Malestic is an ambitious, cruel, and very calculating templar in service to King Hamanu of Urik. He enjoys setting up visitors and other citizens, tempting them to break one of Hamanu's many laws so that he can fill Urik's slave pens. As an opponent, he makes a terrible enemy. He uses his own skills to their best ability, and he often commands the best guards he can gather. These guards know that Malestic can be very generous if they perform well . . . and very deadly if they fail.

The templar believes (correctly) that he has stumbled upon something of extreme importance in the hidden room beneath the pottery shop on Urik's Street of Exotic Goods. He knows that he must catch those who fled the city, for Hamanu will reward him greatly for a prize such as the legendary Korgunard and some new sort of magic. Though he doesn't understand what he is chasing, he has no fear of the PCs—in fact, he is rather overconfident concerning their abilities. All he has to do is catch up to them, and then it will all be over.

Malestic has hired Werrik's Stalkers to hunt down the PCs, and he has offered a generous bounty to any informer who can point out the direction they may have taken. In addition, he has a small force of human and half-giant guards and some low-level templars at his side as he follows the PCs' trail. He has access to all cleric spells. Malestic is an intelligent, dangerous foe who will long remember the PCs, should they escape him.



## Arcane Shadows Non-player Characters

### Hespulto

Half-Elf Male Defiler  
6th Level  
Chaotic Evil



Str 11            Int 16  
Dex 16           Wis 11  
Con 10           Cha 9

hp: 16  
AC: 8 (Dexterity bonus)  
#AT: 1  
THAC0: 17  
Dmg: 1d6/1d6

(quarterstaff)

Spells: Four 1st-level spells, two 2nd-level spells, two 3rd-level spells

Hespulto is fanatically loyal to his master, Fevil, the defiler of the Black Sand Raiders slave tribe. His master has felt the magic of Korgunard and wants it for his own. He has sent Hespulto out to find the source of the magic and bring it back to him. Hespulto is more than happy to comply. He is an evil, twisted man who enjoys cruel experiments and causing pain and suffering. He hates the halfling Lokee, but also admires the small warrior's abilities.

Hespulto is excited by his current mission, for it is unlike the usual tasks assigned to him as a member of the Black Sand Raiders. He laughs madly at the most inopportune times, and his wild eyes show that he is slowly going insane. If there are any preservers in the PC party, they will become the object of Hespulto's anger, hatred, and insane glee. He will mock them, humiliate them, and eventually try to kill them while laughing until his sides split.

The defiler has access to any spells you deem appropriate to the course of the adventure, particularly those of an offensive nature. He carries a traveling spellbook in three scroll tubes which he protects jealously.

### Lokee

Halfling Male Fighter  
6th Level  
Chaotic Evil



Str 15            Int 16  
Dex 19           Wis 14  
Con 15           Cha 13

hp: 39  
AC: 4 (carru leather plus Dexterity bonus)  
#AT: 1  
THAC0: 15

Dmg: 1d6 (iron short sword)

Psionic Summary: PSP 44; Wild Talent—Adrenalin Control (PS Con -3, Cost 8 + 4/rd)

The halfling Lokee was recruited into the Black Sand Raiders by the tribe's defiler, Fevil. He was rescued from a slave train on its way to Nibenay. Beyond this, the halfling's past is unknown. He has claimed that he is no longer welcome in the Forest Ridge, but refuses to say more. Some believe he did the unforgivable—that he ate halfling flesh.

Lokee's cruelty, fighting skills, and evil personality have made him one of the tribe's top officers. He loves to hunt, and the current hunt has proven both challenging and enjoyable, though he wishes he could lose Hespulto. Someday he may just eat the defiler's heart, for no other reason than he would enjoy it. His lessons in true evil at the feet of Fevil have been postponed numerous times so that Hespulto could learn from his mentor. Perhaps this mission will end Hespulto's life and give Lokee more time with Fevil.

Lokee cares little for the powerful magic they are after, but he does obey Fevil without question. As long as Fevil wants the magic, then Lokee wants to get it for him. If he gets to practice his cruelty along the way, so much the better. If he gets to feast, then the hunt will be particularly satisfying.

## NPC Master Table

| NAME                                    | CL  | AC   | MV | HD/hp          | #AT    | Damage (penalties and bonuses included)             | AL  | THAC0 <sup>1</sup> |
|---|-----|------|----|----------------|--------|---|-----|--------------------|
| Antloid Soldier                         | —   | 3    | 18 | 6d8+1          | 1      | 3d6 (mandibles)                                     | N   | 15                 |
| Black Sand Raider/<br>Werrick's Stalker | F4  | 6    | 12 | 4d10           | 1      | 1d8+1 (obsidian sword)                              | CE  | 17*                |
| Caravan Guard                           | F3  | 7    | 12 | 3d10           | 1      | 1d6+1 (bone spear)                                  | N   | 18*                |
| Cha'thrang                              | —   | -2/8 | 3  | 8d8+3          | 3      | 1d4/1d4/1d12  | N   | 11                 |
| Citizen, typical                        | —   | 10   | 12 | 1d6            | 1      | 1d4-1 (bone dagger)                                 | Var | 20                 |
| Elf Chief                               | F7  | 2    | 12 | 7d10           | 3/2    | 1d8 (steel long sword)                              | NE  | 14                 |
| Elf Informer                            | T3  | 9    | 12 | 3d6            | 1      | 1d6 (bone wrist razor)                              | N   | 19                 |
| Elf Warriors                            | F3  | 7    | 12 | 3d10           | 1      | 1d6+1 (bone spear)                                  | N   | 18*                |
| Free, typical member                    | F3  | 6    | 12 | 3d10           | 1      | 1d8-1 (bone sword)                                  | NG  | 18                 |
| Guard, half-giant                       | F2  | 6    | 15 | 2 d 10 (x 2)** | 1      | 1d8+7 (obsidian sword)                              | N?  | 19**               |
| Guard, human                            | F4  | 7    | 12 | 4d10           | 1      | 1d6+1 (bone spear)                                  | NE  | 17*                |
| Guard, officer                          | F7  | 4    | 12 | 7d10           | 3/2    | 1d8+2 (enchanted metal sword)                       | NE  | 14                 |
| Merchant, typical                       | —   | 10   | 12 | 1d6            | 1      | 1d4-1 (bone dagger)                                 | Var | 20                 |
| Mul, wild <sup>2</sup>                  | —   | 8    | 9  | 5d8+5          | 1      | 1d8 (bone sword)                                    | NE  | 15                 |
| Overseer                                | F4  | 8    | 12 | 4d10           | 1      | 1d4 (scourge)                                       | LE  | 17                 |
| Preserver, typical <sup>3</sup>         | P5  | 10   | 12 | 5d4            | 1      | 1d4-1 (bone dagger)                                 | NG  | 19                 |
| Slave, typical                          | F2  | 10   | 12 | 2d10           | 1      | Punch/wrestle                                       | Var | 19                 |
| Slaver, typical                         | F5  | 4    | 12 | 5d10           | 1      | 1d6 (stone club)                                    | LE  | 16                 |
| Slaver, leader                          | F7  | 2    | 12 | 7d10           | 3/2    | 1d8+1 (obsidian sword)                              | LE  | 14*                |
| Templar, low-level <sup>3</sup>         | Tp3 | 8    | 12 | 3d8            | 1      | 1d6 (stone club)                                    | LE  | 20                 |
| Templar, mid-level <sup>3</sup>         | Tp6 | 5    | 12 | 6d8            | 1      | 1d4 (metal dagger)                                  | LE  | 18                 |
| Thief, typical                          | T3  | 9    | 12 | 3d6            | 1      | 1d6 (bone wrist razor)                              | N   | 19                 |
| Thri-kreen                              | —   | 5    | 18 | 5d8+3          | 5      | 1d4 x 4 (claws)/ 1d4+1 (bite)                       | N   | 15                 |
| Thri-kreen,<br>leader                   | —   | 5    | 18 | 6d8+3          | 5 or 1 | 1d4 x 4 (claws)/1d4+1 (bite)<br>or 2d4/1d2 (gythka) | N   | 13                 |

<sup>1</sup>Does not include penalties or bonuses due to Str or Weapon materials

<sup>2</sup>Possesses wild talents

<sup>3</sup>Possesses spells

\*+1 to hit due to Str

\*\*+2 hit points/Hit Die due to Con; +4 to hit due to Str



## How to Use Arcane Shadows



The two spiral-bound books here contain the role-playing adventure *Arcane Shadows*. The *DUNGEON MASTER™ Book* contains each encounter the DM needs. Other parts of the *DUNGEON MASTER Book* contain background material the DM needs to run a series of encounters. The *Player's Book* contains maps, illustrations, and text the players need for reference. Players should not casually look through the *Player's Book*— the *DUNGEON MASTER Book* indicates when they should turn to a specific page. The *Story Book* contains a short story that broadens understanding of the world of Athas. At the back of this booklet are detailed descriptions of various NPCs.

Each encounter in the *DUNGEON MASTER Book* contains information arranged under the following headings:

**Setup.** This section tells the DM how to prepare for the upcoming encounter, including what page or pages of the *Player's Book* will be used.

**Start.** This section tells how to begin the encounter and sometimes includes a section to be read to the players.

**Encounter.** The main action of the encounter is detailed in this section.

**Role-Playing.** Descriptions of the personalities and tips on role-playing, including sample lines of dialogue, are given here.

**Statistics.** Vital game statistics are given here the DM is referenced to the NPC Master Table on the inside cover of the module.

**Reactions.** This section occasionally appears, when the anticipated reactions of PCs and NPCs are important to the encounter.

**Outcome.** This section indicates what should result from the encounter.

**Next.** This section tells the DM what encounter to run next.



# Arcane Shadows

by Bill Slavicsek



*Tyr has been freed, and the mighty army of Urik has been turned back. These are new and strange times, indeed. Now Urik has become home—at least for a while—and there are new markets to shop, new streets to explore, and, oh yes, preservers to meet.*



*Preservers, the keepers of good magic, have sent a mysterious summons. They are ready to embark on a new and dangerous plot to thwart sorcerer-kings and*

*bring new life to Athas. To associate with preservers is dangerous to say the least, but when the king's templars uncover the schemes, a death mark falls upon all involved.*

*Will a desperate journey across the wastelands, with the templars in hot pursuit, end in victory or chaos? The answers lie in the hearts of mighty heroes and the recesses of Arcane Shadows.*

*Designed for four to six characters of 5th to 8th level, Arcane Shadows is set in Urik. A stand-alone adventure, Arcane Shadows can also be played as the sequel to Freedom and Road to Urik.*

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