

Robert E. Howard's

# CONAN



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ENTERTAINMENT

SHINING KINGDOMS:  
SPOILS OF WAR

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# Robert E. Howard's



## SHINING KINGDOMS: SPOILS OF WAR

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### With Thanks To

The Robert E. Howard Foundation,  
Professor John Kirowan, H.P.  
Lovecraft, Fred & Jay at Cabinet  
Entertainment

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### Legal

Modiphius Entertainment  
Product Number: MUHO52399

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## ADVENTURE

# SPOILS OF WAR

*“The frosty sky was over them, the white illimitable plain around them, the dead men at their feet. Slowly through the corpses they came, as ghosts might come to a tryst through the shambles of a dead world. In the brooding silence they stood face to face.”*

— “*Gods of the North*”

This adventure is designed for a group of beginning level player characters. It involves a lot of combat, so good weapon skills will be a great advantage. However, there is a certain amount of social interaction that will not always suit negotiation at the point of a sword, so any player characters who are not especially combat-oriented will still find their skills useful. The player characters can have originated from any country, although those from Aquilonia will be especially well suited.

## SYNOPSIS

The player characters begin the adventure participating in a battle between Aquilonia and Zingara. After the fighting they come across a dying Zingaran soldier who asks them for a favor. He knows of a hidden cache of treasure that he divulges the location of, as long as they promise to bring a share to his wife and child.

The instructions lead the player characters to a town in Zingaran territory. Unfortunately, the town is the same one the defeated Zingaran army has retreated to. If they manage to get through the town, they make their way to the ruined temple where the treasure is supposed to be buried. A group of Zingaran soldiers are also looking for the treasure. However, they may turn out to be of assistance when the Great Wurm of the temple awakens...

If the player characters escape the temple alive, they are not out of the woods. The treasure was stolen and the gang's leader has been waiting for someone to retrieve it, most particularly a gem that can power his dark sorcery. He is waiting outside to relieve the player characters of their valuable burden.

## SCENE 1: TO WAR!

The adventure begins in the midst of a battle. A border dispute between Aquilonia and Zingara has once more blown up into armed conflict. The player characters find themselves in the thick of the fighting as mercenaries for Aquilonia. Aquilonia have the larger army as they have offered mercenary fees far above the usual standard. While many might feel Zingara's cause is just, it is certainly not enough to make any hired sword turn down such a large sum, and even those loyal to Zingara recognize that another conflict is likely to flare up soon where they might fight for the other side. Such has been the way of these two lands for longer than most can remember.

## JOINING THE FIGHT

The adventure begins with the player characters in the middle of a massive battle. The Aquilonian side is clearly winning, but the Zingarans are making them pay for every inch. The clash of steel rings in the character's ears as they push through the screams and blood to crush their enemies. The gamemaster should run three to five rounds of heavy combat in which the player characters show off their skills and risk initial Wounds. From the start it is the Aquilonians who hold the advantage in this battle. The Zingarans, as valiantly as they might try, are outnumbered and outmatched.

After a few moments of action, the Zingarans sound the retreat. Aquilonia wins the day! Cavalry pursues the defeated forces, leaving the player characters temporarily alone in a field of the dead and dying.





## THE SILENT BATTLEFIELD

After their triumph on the battlefield, the player characters deserve a well-earned rest. However, there is another, more somber, job that needs doing. Among the bodies lying across the battlefield, some may still be alive. The mercenaries and soldiers of the Aquilonian forces are ordered to wander among the carnage to check for the wounded among the dead.

This gruesome operation yields few survivors, but some lives are saved. Any Zingaran wounded can be dealt with as the player characters feel is appropriate. They come across several wounded or dying Zingaran soldiers and they might decide to offer medical aid or finish them off. Officially, any Zingaran wounded should be returned to their side as long as they remain non-hostile. In practice, the Aquilonian generals don't want to bother sending them home. They prefer the problem be 'dealt with' on the battlefield, although they do take proper care of those brought to them as prisoners of war. The gamemaster should face the player characters with a few moral quandaries (such as those exist in the brutal world of Hyperborea) as they take their turn walking the field.

There is also a certain amount of plunder to be found here. Some of the bodies have coins, good boots, or well-crafted weapons their previous owners won't be needing any more. The player characters can find loot worth 2 gold each, along with a suitable spare weapon should one be required. The Aquilonians officially look dimly on this practice, but in reality, don't care in the slightest.

## Endrigo

Whatever the player characters' attitude to the Zingarans, they find one who catches their attention. His name is Endrigo, and he is a simple soldier of the defeated army. Although it is clear to any healer that there is no saving him from several terrible sword wounds, he begs for the player characters to help him. He knows he is dying, but he badly needs their help. In return he offers a vast reward.

A year ago, Endrigo was part of a gang of robbers. They made several scores, one especially lucrative one against the house of an Argosian merchant, and another when they uncovered a Pictish tribe's lair. The leader of the gang declared they should bury the combined treasure in secret and wait until the heat died down before dividing it up. The Argosian merchant was far too well-connected and spending too many of his coins would lead the authorities to the gang easily.

Endrigo has no love for mercenaries of Aquilonia, but they are the only option he has given the circumstances. He wants to see his share of the treasure go to his wife and child. He tells the player characters where the treasure can be found if they promise to deliver a portion to his family (who live in a large town in Zingara). He insists on a promise from the player characters before he tells them any more details. While Endrigo is dying and desperate, he is not a fool. There are a few wrinkles to the idea of just picking up the treasure, and the more he believes the sincerity of the player characters, the more details he tells them. He



figures that those who are more likely to keep the treasure for themselves should have to work harder for it!

The player characters should all make Persuade tests, taking the best result among them into account, but subtracting 1 Success for every two player characters who fail the test.

ENDRIGO'S REVELATIONS	
Successes	Result
0	Endrigo tells player characters the treasure can be found in the mountains above a small town called Marillio, just across the border in Zingara. The town is built almost on top of some old ruins, and in a well in an old temple in these ruins can be found the buried treasure.
1	Endrigo is not the only one to know where the treasure is. The gang consisted of six men, and some of them may have had the same idea of going back early to pick up more than their share.
2	The temple has traps, although they are old and broken. This might mean they don't work, or that there is no way to shut them down.
3	They disturbed some sort of monster when they were there, and lost at least one man burying the treasure. The monster was a huge and ancient serpent.
4	Endrigo made the mistake of trusting some of his Zingaran compatriots. Some of the men in his unit know about the hoard and roughly where it is. If they survived the battle they may make a play for it. But he didn't tell them there are two wells in the area, and they buried the treasure in the one inside the temple.
5+	The old gang's leader, Vandrath, is very dangerous. He scared Endrigo and is most of the reason the others have stuck to the plan to wait before dividing the treasure. No one wanted to cross him. He was the one who insisted they bury the treasure, and no one wanted to disagree. If the player characters are lucky, they won't meet him, but if they do, they had better be ready for a fight.

## BUT I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT!

It is quite possible that some player characters won't feel they would join a battle against Zingara, or indeed any battle. While such an attitude is unlikely to win them glory and renown in the Hyborian Age, we should still address the possibility. There might be several reasons for such reluctance: the character might be Zingaran themselves, refuse to fight for money, or lack the right skills.

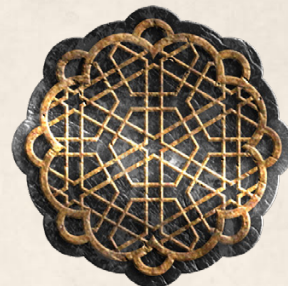
The main reason many mercenaries are joining the fight is that Aquilonia is offering a lot of money. Essentially, everyone is on double time for this job, making it worthwhile.

They may wish to avoid fighting Zingara, but even for a Zingaran character this should not create a problem. The border disputes between the two countries have gone on for years and will surely continue. It has become tiresome to many Zingarans and Aquilonians. There is no reason not to fight on this side and take Aquilonia's money and wait until the next battle to fight for Zingara.

If the characters have few combat skills, they can still be useful in other ways. There is a great need for those skilled in the craft of healing, or to carry supplies. While there may be little glory in lugging boxes, and it doesn't pay as well as fighting, it is something anyone can do.

Unless most of the player characters refuse to take part, the remaining characters can watch the battle from the sidelines. If they all refuse to take part, they at least have to wait for the battle to end, or cross its aftermath while en route to an unrelated destination and thus encounter the wounded Endrigo.

Once he has said his piece, destiny catches up with Endrigo and he dies from his wounds. They are too deep for any hope of recovery unless the player characters use some form of magic. While trying to save his life is laudable, the player characters might like to remember this was an enemy soldier, and if he lives, they must split the treasure with him...







## SCENE 2 : ACROSS THE SAND

The player characters now know the location of a great hoard of treasure, but the problem now is getting to it. The borderlands between Zingara and Aquilonia have been made into a wasteland by ceaseless war. Marillio is not a difficult town to find on a map, but the route there is taxing and treacherous.

### STEALING SUPPLIES

If they don't owe any particular allegiance to Aquilonia, the player characters might steal both supplies and horses from their previous employer. The Aquilonian army soon begins striking their camp for a return to their capital, but a large border guard force remains. This force has plenty of supplies, and in the chaos of the withdrawal there may be a few easy pickings. A Challenging (D3) Thievery or Survival test should allow player characters to secure the food and supplies they need for the trek through enemy-occupied land.

Any Consequences rolled on this test should each spawn a small challenge requiring no more than one new test or a brief combat against one or two foes, as appropriate for how the player characters are harvesting their travelling supplies.

### ACROSS THE WASTELAND

While the border wastelands are open and barren, they are also full of bandits. Many criminals from both Zingara and Aquilonia have used this area as a hiding place. With the area so contested, it is always unclear whose laws apply here. However, while the area is mostly safe from the authorities, there is little here to live on. The few criminals who make a home here prey on travelers, mostly so they can eat. Such bandits attack the player characters at least once. It is up to the gamemaster as to how dangerous the journey should become. While the Zingaran army has retreated past here recently, every bandit they removed was replaced by two deserters.

The bandits attack in groups equal to two or three times the number of player characters — use the corresponding Bandit statistics from page 312 of the *Conan* corebook. The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom points to upgrade one of the Bandits to a Berserker (see page 312 of the *Conan* corebook).

As there might be several attacks, there are several different ways the player characters might be drawn into an ambush. The following offers some potential encounters the gamemaster might use.







### **Frontal Assault**

The bandits charge at the player characters from a nearby hiding place, hoping weight of numbers will do the work for them.

### **Share a Meal**

As night falls another group of travelers approaches the player characters. They ask to share a campfire for mutual protection. The group doesn't look too dangerous so the offer may appear genuine. Sadly, it is not, the travelers are all bandits. If the player characters go to sleep without guards, they wake up with their possessions gone. If they stay up the bandits try to take them out at an advantageous moment.

### **Trap!**

The bandits have built a trap and lie in wait for someone to come along and spring it. The trap consists of a deep covered trench. The trench is not deep or wide enough to drop the entire group in a pit, but it is deep enough that a horse walking across it loses its footing and falls, throwing its rider. The bandits lie in wait nearby in covered holes, and leap out when a group falls foul of the trap. This all adds up to the bandits getting a round of surprise when they attack the player characters.

If the approaching player characters succeed at a Challenging (D2) Observation test, they see the ground

looks off ahead of them (with 4 or more successes they see it is a covered trench). If they approach, the bandits wait until they are closer and possibly distracted looking at the trench before they attack. If the player characters see their hiding places, the tables turn and the bandits are surprised and disorganized if the player characters attack.

## **SCENE 3 : MARILLIO**

After crossing the wasteland, the player characters see Marillio ahead of them. The town is small, but has done well serving the Zingaran army during the ceaseless border disputes. It was built some time ago, at the foot of the mountains near the river. The area was once home to an ancient settlement that now lies in ruins, and the old stone buildings of the place lie scattered around the area. Some even form the basis of a few of the larger of Marillio's buildings.

The player characters must pass through the town to reach the ruins of the temple that sits higher up the mountain slope. However, they might take their time exploring the town instead of just passing through, in need of medical assistance or just a stiff drink after the wasteland. This border town is home to many opportunities for trouble and adventure, should the player characters look for either.



### The Zingaran Army

While Marillio isn't the safest or most orderly of towns, there is an additional problem for the player characters when they arrive. The Zingaran army, in the process of retreat from the battle, is camped here while it consolidates its forces and takes stock. A large campsite lies next to the town, and the soldiers and officers are spending their time taking advantage of the supplies of food, liquor, and consorts both male and female. While the player characters may not be considered enemies of Zingara, they might be recognized. It could lead to some tense situations, if they aren't good liars or know to keep their heads down.

### Law and Order

Being a frontier town, there isn't much law and order in Marillio. A town watch answers to the town council, but it is small and not well armed — essentially a brute squad for the council. The council itself is worse, as most of the members are retired or semi-retired career criminals who run the town like mob bosses. The deal they offer is a simple one: the army is welcome to avail itself of the town's entertainments as long as they behave, and so long as the council receives its remuneration. Having said that, they can fight and kill each other as much as they like, as long as the town and its inhabitants aren't hurt. If they are, then the council steps in. In such a case the occupying officers might find some of the food poisoned or any troublemakers turn up dead. The watch might only be good for keeping the locals in line, but the council members are all dangerous and have a lot of contacts with some highly skilled people. With the army in residence, they have brought a few professional killers to town, so they have a few on hand if need be. The player characters had best be careful of any other mysterious guests they run into.

### Officer Barren

Officer Barren, a veteran of the Marillioan watch, is an opportunist. He is always looking to make a little extra money on the side and has even sold secrets to the Aquilonians. He is in a position to give the player characters a signed pass to get them through the patrols, a letter stating they are employed as scouts to investigate the area further ahead, seeking out Argosian threats and deserters who have slipped past the patrols.

Player characters might be led to Officer Barren in a variety of ways, by interacting with the folk of Marillio. This depends on who these townfolk think the player characters are. This is something for the gamemaster to decide on depending on how the player characters approach, but here are a few suggestions:

- Baston, the innkeeper of the Swordsman's Rest points out Barren if he thinks the player characters serve

Aquilonia. Barren has often sold Baston secrets, which has been mutually profitable for both of them.

- Ariel in the general store has fenced several goods for Barren. If the player characters look shady and seem interested in work, she might point them at Barren as a potential employer.
- Martooth's wife Elena has often known Barren to ask her to sell him some of her husband's weapons and armor. She always refuses as she knows he is usually up to no good. She may complain of this to the player characters.
- Elidor and his wife Chalaine both know Barren is a dodgy customer. He has bought several suspicious brews from them in the past. However, they rarely share details of their customers.

Any public house or brothel may know Barren as a regular customer. He has 'procured' girls for some of the less reputable establishments and helped smuggle ale and spirits through Zingaran customs for a cut of the tax saving.

If the player characters meet up with Officer Barren, he is already willing to sell them a pass under the assumption they are deserters. He has already sold passes to quite a few deserters! They might tell him they are deserters themselves, or spies looking to get further into Zingara or Argos. The player characters should make a Persuade test to convince Barren to help. Any excuse works, as Barren doesn't care so long as he gets paid. However, this means that they mustn't tell him the real reason or he insists on a cut, and a large cut at that. As long as he doesn't suspect a bigger score could come his way, he charges a 1 Gold per player character for this service up front, or 3 Gold each taken out of the treasure hoard if the adventurers are so unwise as to let him know their plans. A single Persuade test can reduce this fee by 1 Gold total (not per player character) per success.

If the player characters do let slip about the treasure, they may not be concerned about having to give Barren a cut. After all, if they never come back here how is he going to make them hand it over? While Barren doesn't have unlimited reach, he does have contacts, and friends,

*"In a wild confusion the battle swept through the wide mouth of the valley and into the plain beyond. All over the plain swarmed the warriors, fleeing and pursuing, broken into single combat and clumps of smiting, hacking knights on rearing, wheeling horses."*

— *The Hour of The Dragon*





and doesn't like to be double crossed. Somehow, sometime, Barren eventually catches up to the player characters and expect his cut.

## THE PEOPLE AND PLACES IN MARILLIO

Marillio is not a large town, but it makes up for that by being overcrowded, especially with the army nearby. About 80% of the buildings are homes, with most of the rest consisting of inns, taverns, and brothels. Marillio often finds itself catering to the military and it knows its market well. The majority of 'entertainment houses' are crowded into the center of town, which becomes busy, crowded, and rowdy as it gets darker.

The following are a few of the buildings and inhabitants of the town. Most avoid physical confrontations as much as possible. Town Council members prefer to have a minion take on that sort of risk, while doing business in a town as dangerous as Marillio has weeded out any shop owner who can't talk their way out of a fight. Should combat arise, the

gamemaster should choose an appropriate Toughened or Nemesis character from the *Conan* corebook.

### The Town Hall

The largest building in the town, and also its most well-appointed and easily the tallest. It is somewhat dilapidated, like most of the buildings here, though it retains more of the grandeur of the ancient, pillared stone building that it has been built on top of than any other in the frontier town. It serves as a base for the town council, as well as a watch house, jail, and garrison. Armed men can be found everywhere here as there is little more important to the town council than their own safety.

The town council meets here to discuss business matters, and hear any problems that need adjudication. Bribery is commonplace in this system, but the council does understand that if the system gets too corrupt the town will fail to work. While most of the council are criminals, they understand profits are highest when the town at least appears to function.

There are five members of the town council, each of whom is dangerous enough to run their own criminal organizations and possess extensive criminal contacts. Each has their own specialty and uses the council to extend and trade their spheres of influence.

**Timeron Corbin** was once a soldier until he turned to mercenary work. He runs several gangs of armed men, including the town watch.

**Francoise Marchand** was forced to leave Aquilonia after several acts of high-level fraud. He now runs the town accounts and has dealings across several national borders.

**Maricia Del Vores** began as a prostitute but quickly learned how to use the secrets whispered in the dark. She blackmailed her way into political office several times before using the same technique to amass a substantial fortune. She often functions as an ambassador for the town.

**Alicia Tenaral** started her career as a burglar and pick-pocket until a job went bad and she discovered she had a knack for killing. She then trained as an assassin and rose to form her own assassin order "The Silencers". Any town problems requiring violence beyond the watch's capacity often get solved by her.

**Sorsha Nevera** has traded arms and weapons to pretty much every nation under the Hyborian-age sun. She usually makes trade deals on behalf of the town and is owed a lot of favors by some very unpleasant people.





### Ariel's General Store

Ariel Del Vores runs this small shop, packed to the gills with a seemingly random collection of merchandise, piled high in every corner. She sells everything from pots and pans to knives and cuttlefish shells. Any kind of mundane equipment or supplies are available here at normal prices. If the player characters are after something particularly rare, they might find it if they are willing to pay the gamemaster a Doom point.

Ariel is a little past her youth, but certainly no crone, and she has always had a sharp eye for a deal. She is perfectly willing to fence goods for anyone who looks like they can be discrete. If the player characters have bounty they wish to sell, she'll give them a decent price as long as it isn't stolen from the Zingaran army, as such merchandise would be too hot for her to handle right now. She keeps stolen items out of general display until the heat has died down.

### Elidor's Emporium

One of the town's better provision shops belongs to Elidor and his wife Chalaine. They package all manner of food-stuffs, such as trail rations, preserves, and pickles. They are always looking to buy any forms of seasoning, spices, or herbs, and are skilled in several herbal remedies as well as being excellent cooks. They are also both familiar with several poisons and can sell all manner of draughts without asking what a customer intends to do with them. With so many assassins in the city they do a brisk trade, and have become a little too willing to offer this service to strangers.

### Temple of the Divine Ecstasy


This brothel has a novel theme that allows it to stand out from the usual establishment. It purports to be a temple to the entirely fictional Goddess Alumat, the goddess of healing, freedom, and sensuality. All the men and women working there are not prostitutes, but priests and priestesses of the "cult of Alumat". The tenets of this cult are that sexual enjoyment is the best way to become close to the goddess and so they need the help of public-spirited patrons to help them attain this divine state. The charges are high, but also count as a donation to church funds, so clients often don't mind the additional cost, believing that it buys them some measure of forgiveness for whichever crime they committed most recently.

### Esmine's

Of the several gambling houses in the town, Esmine's remains the most popular. It is run as if there is a constant party going on. Drink is poured in large measures and willing consorts can be found there in abundance. Almost every game of chance is on offer and there is rarely a house limit. Esmine Durand, a savvy businesswoman who has learnt that one must spend money to make money, runs

the establishment. She is deliberately hospitable, as those distracted by drink and a pretty face often make foolish bets or mistakes in their cardplay. The house usually wins, but Esmine ensures her customers still have a good time, which is why they keep coming back.

### Martooth's Forge

Callan Martooth is the only genuine weaponsmith and armorer in the town, and anyone who knows how to judge quality points to Martooth. Martooth is quite expensive, as he finds it hard to part with anything he has made. A little of his soul goes into every weapon and piece of armor, or so he believes. He is engaged in a quest to make the perfect sword and is always eager to hear of new methods or crafting or advanced techniques he might try. All Martooth's weapons deal an additional 1  of damage, over and above their standard allotment, but he needs to be talked into even putting a price to them. Someone who wishes to buy any of his goods must make a Persuade test. With two successes, Martooth is willing to sell a single item at twice the normal cost. A third success brings that price down to one-and-a-half times. At four successes or more, he parts with it at the normal price.

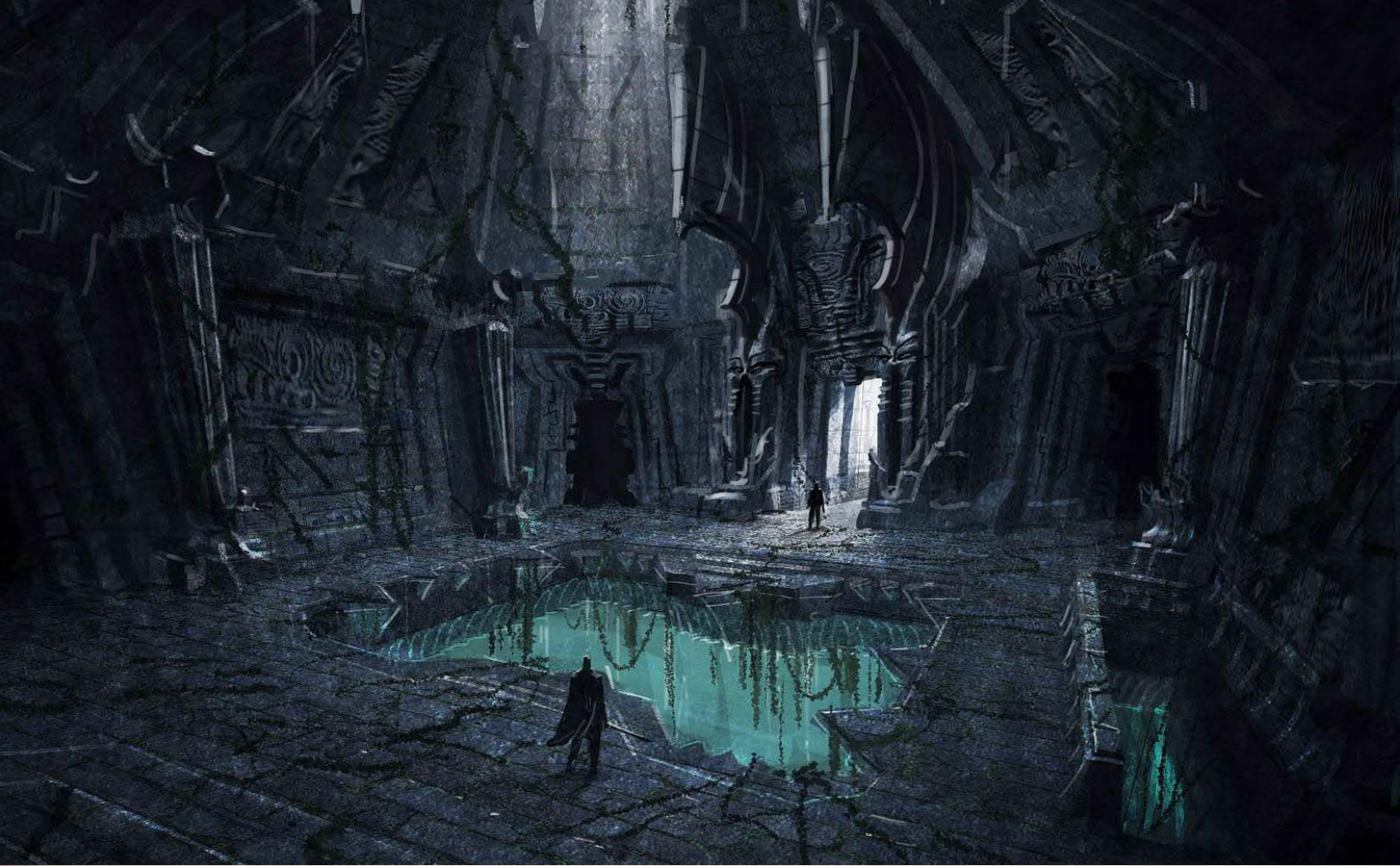
### The Sellsword's Rest

This pub is one of the better ones in town, and caters particularly to the military. Weapons hang on the walls and anyone with a good war story is assured of a few free drinks. Baston always takes a keen interest in tales of fortune on the battlefield. He used to serve until he was hit in the leg with an arrow, which badly damaged his knee. Denied the soldier's life he did the next best thing and used his savings to build a tavern. Despite his genial demeanor and generous pouring hand, people should be careful what they say around Baston. He is actually a spy for Aquilonia, who gave him stake money so he could pass on details of troop movements in Zingara. Many of the locals suspect this and chatting with them can elicit this detail with an Average (D1) Persuade test.

### Doctor Vivar Giralda

Several purported healers ply their trade in Marillio, but most are charlatans and fakers. If the player characters require healing, locals direct them to Doctor Giralda's house. The doctor is advanced in years but is no less of a sharp practitioner for it. He is assisted by his daughter Sansha and his apprentice Cabra. Both of them are experienced healers now in their own right. They are also very much in love but keep their distance as Doctor Giralda has forbidden the match. As the doctor is one of the wealthier townfolk, he thinks Cabra is too low class for his daughter. If he realizes they are seeing each other in secret, Cabra will lose his apprenticeship. The two lovers may ask the player characters for





help in making a new life together somewhere, possibly offering the player characters a secret means of leaving the town or specialized knowledge of the nearby environs.

For purposes of healing the player characters, Giralda's skill in Healing is 13 with a Focus of 3. Sansha and Cabra each have Healing 11 with Focus 1.

## GETTING TO THE TEMPLE

The player characters may want to avoid staying in Marillio at all and insist on making their way to the ruins as quickly as possible. But, as they should expect by now, things are not that simple. The town lies close to the Alimane River, which is often used by Argosian pirates to make raids into Zingara and Aquilonia. Guard patrols watch the riverbank constantly, always alert for the possibility of an Argosian raid.

The player characters might deal with this in several ways. They might opt for the ever-popular frontal assault and march up the mountainside and take down any guards they find. They might choose stealth and cunning, but they may bank on surprise and skill to ensure no alarm is raised. It is not impossible for this plan to succeed, but also not very likely. The guards are positioned in such a way that the player characters must find a route that takes them between patrols. To do this, the player characters have to realize it is a potential problem, which they can only really discover by talking to any of the Zingaran soldiers

or Marillio inhabitants. Then they have to make Insight or Observation tests to determine the guard's patrol pattern. Each success on the best result between them reduces the number of patrols they encounter by one. The base number of patrols they encounter is 5, but they encounter a minimum of one. Until they start making their way up, there is no way to know how many patrols they run into, or which will be their last...

The guard patrols are typically found in groups of 2 soldiers per player character. The gamemaster should use the Guard (Minion) statistics (page 317 on the *Conan corebook*). At the cost of 1 Doom, one of the guards can be made a Sergeant (see page 317 of the *Conan corebook*).

Any Zingaran patrol realizes something is wrong when at least one of their number is attacked (they neither split up nor sleep while on duty). On the second round after any confrontation, one survivor sounds the alarm, a hunting horn, if any are alive. They also sound the alarm if they see anything suspicious, such as player characters trying to sneak past them. Bear in mind they are on the lookout for people doing exactly what the player characters are trying to do. When the alarm is sounded, it brings another patrol every other round for the six rounds. Even if the fight is over by the time the patrols arrive, the newcomers begin tracking the player characters under the assumption they are pirates, conducting reconnaissance for a future raid. The gamemaster may decide they call on extra help as well. If



## THE ZINGARANS

The gamemaster should not forget about the Zingaran soldiers who are also looking for the treasure. It is possible they give up and go home, but also possible they may join the player characters as temporary allies to find the treasure or face the Great Wyrms. If they follow the player characters into the trapped corridors, or go first, the gamemaster might kill them off as an object lesson to the player characters. They initially want to go first to get to anything interesting before the player characters, but on the other hand they may quickly discover discretion is the better part of valor. Either way, they are not really willing to share and do their best to betray the player characters and take everything for themselves as soon as they can.

The gamemaster should use the Guard (Minion) statistics (page 317 on the *Conan corebook*). At the cost of 1 Doom, one of the guards can be made a Sergeant (see page 317 of the *Conan corebook*).

the characters are discovered and yield to the patrols, they are arrested and brought back to the town to face trial. If they killed a few Zingarans, the patrols may decide to deal with them themselves instead of making an arrest...If the player characters are brought back for trial, it quickly becomes clear they are not part of the Zingaran army. At this point they are held captive until they reveal what they are up to. Failure to tell a convincing story leads to them being executed as Argosian or Aquilonian spies. But before this happens, they meet Officer Barren, who is looking to make money from releasing them. He can get them a pardon for cash, the expense depending on the extent of damage they did prior to their capture. If he discovers they are looking for treasure he expects a cut, in exchange for which he offers a pass through the patrols, once the heat has died down a little.

## SCENE 4 : THE TEMPLE

No matter how much time the player characters spend in the town, their true destination lies in the ruins nearby. If they have raised suspicions, they may be followed by either a few greedy chancers or the town watch. Conversely if the player characters have made friends in the town, they may have been given guidance on how to avoid such avaricious attentions. People generally avoid the temple, as there have been several strange deaths near it. Unpleasant creatures

dwell there, and a Great Wyrms has fitfully slumbered there for centuries.

## THE DARK ROAD

To reach the ruins the player characters must pass through the town and make their way up the hillside. Several small ruins litter the way, the remnants of an ancient civilization long forgotten. There is a clear path up the hill, through the grey and rock-strewn hillside, but it is quite steep — another reason it is rarely traveled. If any of the player characters can make an Average (D1) Observation or Survival test, they see there are a few tracks in the path. Closer examination reveals two sets of tracks. While both are scuffed and indistinct, one set appears to belong to a small band of men going in the same direction as the player characters. The other appears to be something between animal and human, crisscrossing the area.

The first set of tracks belongs to a group of Zingaran soldiers who used to serve with Endrigo. He told them a little about the treasure and they have decided to collect it. They are only a little way ahead of the player characters as they had to get away from their commander. However, they have already made it to one of the wells and begun to dig.

The second set of tracks belongs to the degenerates who live in the area. These mysterious ape-like creatures are usually hostile, but generally keep away from humans. They eagerly pick off anyone who strays alone up the mountain. Ordinarily the player characters would appear too dangerous to attack, however the Zingaran soldiers have already encountered a few degenerates and killed enough to put the rest of the tribe on a path of vengeance, enraged and desperate to drive off the invaders.

The degenerates first track and observe the player characters and form a strategy. The player characters should make Observation tests to notice they are being hunted. Have each make a test and average the number of successes.

### OBSERVATION TEST RESULTS

Successes	Result
1	They notice something is following them, just out of sight.
2	Movement, bird-like calls, and a sense of tension warn that their hunters are preparing for an attack
3	The player characters get an accurate count of the number of enemies about to ambush them.
4+	A clear glimpse of one degenerate reveals the attackers are not human.



When the degenerates attack, they come charging in three waves. They rely on raw aggression to confuse their quarry and prefer to gang up on a single target until it is incapacitated, even while receiving attacks from others. Each wave consists of three degenerates for every two player characters. The second wave comes three rounds after the first, and the third arrives four rounds after the second.

If a preceding wave is entirely killed before the next arrives, any player character may make a threat display. Degenerates equal to the success rolled for that display flee as the others engage, hungry for vengeance.

The gamemaster should use the Degenerate statistics provided on page 315 of the **Conan** corebook. At the cost of 1 Doom point, the gamemaster can promote one of these Degenerates to a Degenerate Chief (see page 316 of **Conan** corebook).

*“As the ape came rolling in on him, swinging wide its terrible arms, he plunged in between them and struck with all his desperate power. He felt the blade sink to the hilt in the hairy breast, and*

*instantly, releasing it, he ducked his head and bunched his whole body into one compact mass of knotted muscles, and as he did so he grasped the closing arms and drove his knee fiercely into the monster’s belly, bracing himself against that crushing grapple.”*

— *The Hour of The Dragon*

## THE TEMPLE ITSELF

The temple area itself is one of the less dilapidated places, although it is still ruined and overgrown. A courtyard full of fallen pillars stretches out in front of the player characters, choked with the tendrils and fronds of huge, looming trees. Across this courtyard, a set of wide stone steps leads up to the remains of the main temple building, which burrows deep into the mountainside. Everything here is still and ominously quiet. However, if the player characters take some time to listen, an Average (D1) Observation test detects sounds of activity coming from far the side of the courtyard.

The group of Zingaran soldiers is digging around an old well on the edge of the courtyard. They used to serve with Endrigo, and he told them of the treasure “hidden in the well.” Having made their way up here they came across the old well and assumed they had the right place. They do

not. There are two wells in the area. One used to provide water for the temple, and another with a darker purpose

If the player characters know there are two wells, they may choose to seek out the other one rather than challenge the Zingarans. Otherwise, they may choose to wait and see what they find or attack them. If they successfully hide and observe the Zingarans (there are plenty of fallen pillars for cover) they see them investigate the well and the area for a while before becoming despondent — there is nothing there to find. If they do not encounter anyone, the Zingarans eventually leave, believing that Endrigo lied to them or that the treasure is long gone. If they think someone else is after the treasure, they decide to investigate the temple and have a further look around.

## INSIDE THE TEMPLE

The temple is a grand building, with huge, vaulted ceilings and massive pillars. Various carvings and mosaics surround this grand area, and many are still in quite decent condition. They depict a huge serpent-like god ruling a primitive people. In tribute to this god, sacrifices were cast into a huge well to be devoured. If the player characters do not already know there are two wells, these mosaics should be a clue. This detail can be easily understood with a Challenging (D2) successful Lore roll, and it is clear this area was a main worship space. The remains of what was once an altar stand on a small dais and there is enough space for worshipers to gather before it.

Behind the altar are three corridors leading deeper into the mountain. All three are dark and choked vines. If the player characters managed three or more successes on their Lore tests, they realize these corridors all seem to lead to the sacrificial well. It appears the priests would choose a path and take the sacrifices down one of these paths. What is confusing is that there seems to be no correct path. Each of the mosaics shows different corridors being used. They also show people getting crushed or peppered with darts and arrows.



As the mosaics indicate, each of the corridors is trapped. This was for two reasons, firstly to make the priests look powerful for not setting off the traps, and to stop any sacrifices trying to run back out of the corridor. The priest would use a system of levers to make one of the paths safe and then “miraculously” lead the sacrifices down the appropriate corridor. Anyone trying to run out and escape would set off the traps and die horribly for defying the Serpent God. The problem is that the mechanism to shut down the traps is long gone, but the traps themselves remain. If the player characters are going to make their way to the sacrificial well, they must choose one of these three paths: left, center, or right. Each path appears to be the same, and they are so dark nothing can be seen at the entrance to offer any clue.



## THE LEFT HAND PATH

This is the path Endrigo's gang originally chose and is a little safer as some of the traps have already been set off. Along the walls are several carved faces of serpent heads. Each is subtly different, but all have a baleful glare directed at those who pass by. A little way down the corridor are two bodies, both visibly several years dead. They have been hit with several darts and appear to have been left where they fell.

The darts fire from the snake carvings and are triggered by certain stones in the floor. There are three main ways to avoid the darts, as they are designed to fire at people running through the corridor. The first is to crawl along the corridor like a snake. This fires several darts, but none hit anyone flat on the floor. If only one person tries this approach, they set it off for those walking beside them! The second way to avoid the darts is to avoid stepping on certain marked stones that make up the floor. Many of the markings are worn, meaning that those trying to avoid the marked stones must succeed a Daunting (D3) Observation test to avoid setting off the trap. The final way to avoid the darts is to walk very slowly. The base bodyweight of a person is not enough to trigger the trap if they walk slowly and carefully. This is how Endrigo and the others, unknowingly, got through. Anyone who states they are walking slowly and carefully avoids the trap altogether.

If the trap is set off, everyone past the bodies in the corridor takes 4  of damage immediately, as they are pinioned by the first set of darts. The darts fire again each round. The player characters can make a Dire (D4) Athletics or Acrobatics test to try and avoid the next onslaught or, again, take 4  damage. There are four loads of darts within the mechanisms, ready to fire, before the mechanism runs out of ammunition and continues to uselessly rotate. Once all of the dart loads have been fired, there is a futile clacking noise as the mechanism repeats its purpose until finally breaking down.

## THE CENTER PATH

This corridor appears to be much the same as the others, except for a different design in the carvings on the walls. These show people running as the sky appears to be falling. The trap here is simple but deadly. It is triggered in much the same way as the dart traps, by standing heavily on one of the marked flagstones. These marks are as worn and hard to see as those in the left-hand corridor.

If the trap is triggered, the ceiling of the corridor, which is one huge block of stone, comes sliding down. It first drops at the entrance of the corridor, blocking the way completely. Then it begins to slide down, towards those ahead of it, filling the corridor. The original idea was to block the exit of those trying to escape, possibly trapping them as they try to stop running towards the ever-closing angle. Running the other way, towards the well, the victims have a better chance of survival.

There is only one way to escape this trap, and that is to outrun it. Anyone who stays in the corridor is utterly crushed. The gamemaster should make the player characters all make Average (D1) Athletics tests, with one success ensuring that they make it out in time. If any player character fails this test, others may "lend" them an extra success to haul them to their feet as the block descends, saving them in the nick of time.

The gamemaster should play this scene for tension rather than attempt to kill the player characters. Use their rolls to detail how close they come to death and how attempts to help each other only allow them to escape by the skin of their teeth. At the end of the corridor, the player characters emerge into the chamber where the Well of Sacrifice awaits.

## THE RIGHT HAND PATH



The right-hand corridor is the same as the others, except that its carvings detail many snakes wrapped around each other in disturbingly familiar knot patterns. The trap here separates the player characters and puts them at the mercy of several venomous snakes. While the original snakes kept in the walls are long gone, their descendants found this to be a good breeding ground and have continued to nest there. The trap is set off in the same way as the other corridors, through stepping on the marked flagstones. As before, they are just as worn here as they are in the other corridors.

When the trap is set off, portcullises drop from the ceiling, dividing the corridor into five sections. Careful player characters might be forewarned to this by noticing the gaps between the ceiling stones where the portcullises slide through with a Daunting (D3) Observation test. The player characters should provide the gamemaster with a marching order, and a little detail about how spaced out they are. There is enough room to walk two abreast. No matter who sets off the trap, the result is the same, but it may be that the group is trapped towards one end of the





corridor. Some player characters may have got out before the trap is sprung.

The six portcullises separate the whole corridor into five sections and also close off the entrance and exit. It is up to the gamemaster to decide who might be below any particular portcullis depending on how the player characters are moving down the corridor. If one of them is likely to be hit they must make a Dire (D4) Athletics test, or take 4  of damage with the Grappling quality as the portcullis crashes down and pins them in place. If Grappled, the unfortunate victim takes an additional 3  damage per round with the Vicious quality until they escape with a Dire (D4) Brawn test.

After settling any damage, the player characters find themselves split up between the five sections and trapped. Lifting a portcullis while not pinned requires a Challenging (D2) Brawn test, but the gate mechanism allows no more than one portcullis to be open at any given time. Attempts to escape are further hindered by the arrival of many venomous snakes slithering through holes in the ceiling. Use the statistics for the Venomous Snake (Minion) found on page 330 of the *Conan corebook*, with two snakes arriving in each section of corridor each round. Wherever they land, the snakes slither toward the nearest player character, at a rate of one section per round until they are close enough to strike.

## THE WELL OF SACRIFICE

All three trapped corridors lead to the same place, a vast cave dominated by the great well. The well is a circular hole 20 feet in diameter. Sacrifices were brought here and thrown in, so the sides of the well have been made smooth to prevent anyone climbing out. The player characters should have thought to bring rope, but if not, they can make something out of the vines that grow in the corridors.

There is a dark aura to this place, one noticeable with a successful Challenging (D2) Insight, Sorcery, or Awareness test. All the sacrifices in ages past seem to linger here and taint the place with blood and death and the atmosphere is decidedly unnerving to anyone staying here for long.

The well drops 30 feet into a floor filled with old bones. Caves extend in several directions, some of which lead to the surface further down the mountain. However, the player characters are not likely to make it that far without attracting the attention of the Great Wyrms.

Among the bones is indeed the treasure Endrigo spoke of. There is a large amount of gold and several valuable artifacts. This is worth approximately 20 gold for each player character, along with artefacts which can be sold for roughly the same again.

There is also a mysterious green gem that is noticeable for its large size, unnatural color, and nauseating aura. An Average (D1) Awareness and Sorcery test reveals there is

something both magical and dark about this object. It is called "The Tarvath Gemstone" also known as the Gem of Hate, and it is the most important artifact to the evil sorcerer Vandrath who led Endrigo's group here originally. Vandrath not only wanted the stone but wanted to charge up its power in the well. Now that it is fully charged, he waits outside for the player characters to unwittingly bring it to him.

Once the treasure has been found, if the Zingarans are with the player characters, this may be where the trouble really starts. Dividing it up quickly becomes a button issue for all involved. The Zingarans likely want to sort it out in swordplay before anyone goes further, especially if they outnumber the player characters either down the well or on top of it.

## The Great Wyrms

There is only one inhabitant in this place, because no one dares challenge its domain. The Great Wyrms is an ancient serpent-like creature, much like a dragon with no arms, legs, or wings. It was once considered a god and welcomed daily sacrifices to feed its hunger. In return it slaughtered anyone who tried to hurt the ancient inhabitants. After many years it decided to sleep and the people here were wiped out by invaders, their culture passing into history.

When Endrigo and his companions arrived, they inadvertently woke it from its slumber. It ate a couple members of the gang, but was still confused and not quite awake. Over the last few years, it has properly woken, driven by a gnawing hunger. Angry there are no sacrifices, it fully intends to consume anything that enters its domain.

The Great Wyrms dwells in the caves under the well. If the player characters, or the Zingarans, make a lot of noise they might draw the Great Wyrms towards them. Otherwise, it detects them when they enter the well and decide to slake its hunger on them at that, though it is still slow to engage and the player characters have time to get most of the treasure out if they do not take too long about it.

When they engage the Great Wyrms there are only two options, fight or flee! It is extremely cunning, but still an animal intelligence, and is currently driven by an ages old hunger. It cannot be negotiated with. If they run it gives chase to this possible meal, crashing out of the temple in a shower of flying rocks and debris. It pursues its prey as far as the border of the ruins before returning to its home. Though hungry, it retreats if it receives 3 Wounds total, or 2 Wounds in a single round of combat.





## GREAT WYRM OF THE WELL (NEMESIS)

An ancient, ever hungry being from times nearly forgotten, this colossal serpent was once worshipped as a god. Having awoken after millennia of dreamless sleep, its power and ferocity is such that it might well be treated as such again.

### ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	4	5	12
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
8	16(3)	3	




### FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	Movement	Fortitude	Senses	Knowledge	Social
2	1	5	1	—	—

### STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 24, Resolve 12
- **Soak:** Armor 8 (Scales), Courage 3



### ATTACKS

- **Fanged Bite (M):** Reach 2, 11 , Fearsome, Vicious 2
- **Coils (M):** Range C, 11 , Knockdown, Grappling
- **Wrath of a God (T):** Range C, 4 , mental, Area, Vicious 1

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Bestial:** The Wyrms of the Well's ferocious aura allows it to use a Fortitude test rather than a Social test when attempting its Wrath of a God or any other Threaten attack.
- **Dread Creature 3**
- **Fear 2**
- **Flesh Like Iron:** The Wyrms of the Well's ancient scales deflect all but the keenest of weapons. Any effects which would reduce its Armor soak are only half as effective as normal.
- **Inhuman Brawn 3**
- **Monstrous Creature**

### DOOM SPENDS

- **Death Throes:** Upon the Wyrms of the Well's death, the gamemaster must spend all remaining Doom up to a maximum of 5. All creatures within Close range at this moment must attempt an Acrobatics test at a difficulty equal to the Doom spent. Those who fail are struck by the thrashing coils of the Wyrms' dying body, which inflict 5  damage with the Fearsome, Knockdown, and Vicious 1 Qualities. Any creature still Grappled by its Coils attacks takes twice that damage if they fail the test, and the normal damage if they succeed.
- **Leap of Death:** For 2 Doom, the Wyrms of the Well may leap up to 2 Zones away and make an immediate Fanged Bite attack against one opponent.
- **Roar of the Ages:** At the cost of 2 Doom while attempting a Threaten attack, the Wyrms of the Well inflicts 6  mental damage with the Area, Piercing 2, and Vicious 1 Qualities.





## SCENE 5: THE FINAL ENEMY

Having fought or run from the Great Wyrn, avoided several traps and found a great store of treasure, the player characters may think it is all over, but there remains one further obstacle. His name is Vandrath, the leader of Endrigo's gang, and he is waiting for the player characters. He has been tracking them since the beginning of the adventure, starting as he hunted the battle ground at the onset of the expedition, when the player characters stumbled across Endrigo. Vandrath was there searching for his erstwhile companion, seeking to tie up loose ends.

Vandrath is a very dangerous man. He trained as a warrior and was marked by his bloodlust and ferocity. But skill at arms was not enough for him and once he learned of the dark arts, he became enamored of their power. He is not only a skilled swordsman, but an experienced sorcerer. He assembled the gang together with promises of riches, but his target was not as random as Endrigo and the others believed it to be. Vandrath sought the Gem of Hate — a powerful object of dark sorcery. Having acquired the gem, he learned it needed to be charged to be effective. The Well of Sacrifice, even after many eons, is still a place of fell shadow, and lying amidst that place has made the gem fat with power. The time has come to collect it.

Vandrath has spent the last few years hunting down and killing the rest of the gang to ensure they told no one of the gem. Vandrath eschews risk wherever possible and has developed a taste for murder over the years. The gem itself reached full potency some months ago, but Vandrath is no fool and has no desire to face the Great Wyrn again if someone else could fetch his property for him.

When the player characters leave the temple, Vandrath is waiting for them just outside Marillio. They might need the services of a doctor or a barman before leaving and could set off in any direction. But Vandrath was able to attune himself to the gem and knows where it is at all times. He waits for the player characters to be alone and lays his trap. When Vandrath attacks is up to the gamemaster. Should the player characters be badly affected by their battle with the Great Wyrn, Vandrath attacks them as they leave Marillio. If they are still relatively intact, he springs his trap immediately after they leave the Temple.

### The Gem of Hate

The gem itself is a fist-sized stone that now pulses with a dark green energy deep in its core. A Lore roll reveals one of the following pieces of information for each success:

- This appears to be a renowned gemstone known as the Gem of Tarvath or the Gem of Hate
- Legends say it was made by the ancient sorcerer Tarvath, whose heart was so cruel it eventually turned to rock.
- It is said that Tarvath's apprentice carved it from his master and used it for dark magic. Since then it has passed through many hands.
- The stone is capable of storing dark energies a sorcerer might draw on to power their magic. It is an object of deep corruption.
- No one quite knows how to destroy the stone. Legends say only love can destroy such an object of hate.

## SUDDEN STORM

Whichever direction the player characters leave the temple or Marillio, Vandrath awaits them. He summons a windstorm using *Venom on the Wind* to drive the player characters to a small valley where he can surround them. Out of a clear sky the wind becomes powerful and aggressive. The player characters notice the small valley ahead that may offer shelter until it passes. If they want to avoid the valley, the storm increases in power. Eventually, so much dust and earth is stirred up that visibility drops to zero except for the barely glimpsed valley entrance.

Vandrath then comes forward on horseback and asks to talk to the player characters. He is an intimidating figure, large and strong with several occult trinkets about his armor. He also has a clear intelligence that makes him truly frightening. He wants to know how dangerous the player characters are, so his first question is how they escaped the Great Wyrn. If they killed it, he is less interested in getting into a fight. He asks for the gem and promises to be on his way if they hand it over. If he thinks the player characters are weak, he tells them he will let them leave with their lives if they dump all the treasure here and walk away. If he thinks them easy prey Vandrath kills them all for the fun of it.

Vandrath is true to his word, letting the player characters live if they hand over the gem and/or the treasure. However, he may decide later on to kill them one by one to tie up loose ends and for his own enjoyment. If the player characters defeat Vandrath and do well against him, he retreats. He is not a coward but sees no point in dying for honor. However, if he is forced to retreat, he will not forget it. He makes it his next mission to take the gem from the player characters, and kill them for the sake of it. If the player characters get rid of the gem, he soon finds it and kills anyone they give it to. Whatever happens, the player characters will likely run into Vandrath again.





## VANDRATH THE DECEIVER (NEMESIS)

Once a simple warrior, Vandrath carried on an affair with a witch of dark Stygia, who gave him his first taste of magic, and the power it can gift those brave and skillful enough to wield it. Since that time, he has become a master manipulator and powerful sorcerer, willing to use guile, magic, or brute force in his quest for greater magical power.

Having studied the lives of sorcerers like Thoth-Amon of the Ring and Thulsa Doom, he has recently become obsessed with possessing a powerful magical object to amplify his growing magical powers. At present, he is fixated on the Gem of Hate, though he has not yet begun to fully understand what it is, what it can do, and how he might use it.

### ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
13	11	11	12
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
10	10	11	

### FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	3	Social	3

### STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 12, Resolve 15
- **Soak:** Armor 4 (Chain), Courage 4

### ATTACKS

- **Black Blade (M):** Range C, 4 ⚔, 1H
- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 5 ⚔, Parrying
- **Longbow (M):** Range M, 5 ⚔, Piercing 1, Volley
- **Wrathful Gaze (T):** Range C, 7 ⚔ mental, Stun

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Master Sorcerer:** Vandrath knows many spells, and knows Commune with the Wild, Dismember, Enslave, Fury of the Elements, Raise up the Dead, and Venom on the Wind. His Resolve cost for each of these spells is 1 lower than normal.
- **The Precious Gem:** Vandrath's obsession with and connection to the Gem of Hate is such that he always knows its location so long as it remains on this planet. On his first test in any attempt to wrest the Gem from another's possession, he rolls 2 bonus d20s.

### DOOM SPENDS

- **Master of Magic:** At any time, Vandrath may spend Doom instead of Momentum to empower his spells. He may use this in conjunction with his Spellsword ability.
- **Prestidigitation:** For 1 Doom, Vandrath uses a combination of trickery, sleight of hand, and minor magics to distract anybody nearby. He gains 2 bonus d20s on his next test made to oppose those opponents.
- **Spellsword:** At the cost of 2 Doom, Vandrath may infuse any of his weapon attacks with the Dismember spell. If doing so, he may spend additional Doom, with each point of Doom acting as though he had paid an equal cost in Resolve.



## EPILOGUE: RETURNING A SHARE

If the player characters survive their encounter with Vandrath, they are free to divide the spoils between them and possibly decide the safest course of action with the Gem of Hate. They must also decide whether to honor the promise they made Endrigo and give a share to his wife and child.

If they do, they find them living in a nearby town in Zingara. Maria and her eight-year-old daughter Fallia live in a cheap but decent neighborhood among the weavers of the city. Maria scrapes by washing linen and repairing clothes and fabrics. While the news of the Zingaran defeat has reached the city, the army is still in the process of returning. The gates are choked each day by townspeople watching for the return of wives, husbands, and children. Some remain at home, fearful of the news they will never see them again.

If the player characters do return a share for Maria, she is grateful and welcoming. She insists they stay for a meal, the only thanks she is in a position to offer. How she takes the news of her beloved's death depends on how gently the player characters can share the news.

She comments on the player character's honor, as they could have left her with nothing. A decent share sees her and Fallia through the next few years, more if the player characters decide to be generous. If Maria learns they were part of the Aquilonian army she is more impressed with their honor in coming to see her.

From here the player characters are free to rest unless another adventure finds them. Will they face Vandrath again in his search for the Gem? Will Zingara attempt to retake what was lost to Aquilonia? Perhaps Maria has a friend who is looking for men and women of honor to help them in a dangerous task? Adventure and mystery are no doubt around the corner for the player characters once more...

