

#13

1E & 5E
COMPATIBLE

FOR THE FOLIO

Part 3 of the
Adventures from the
Emerald Serpent
Campaign

AT3 Playing Down the
Dawn

New Monster:
Dire Lowl

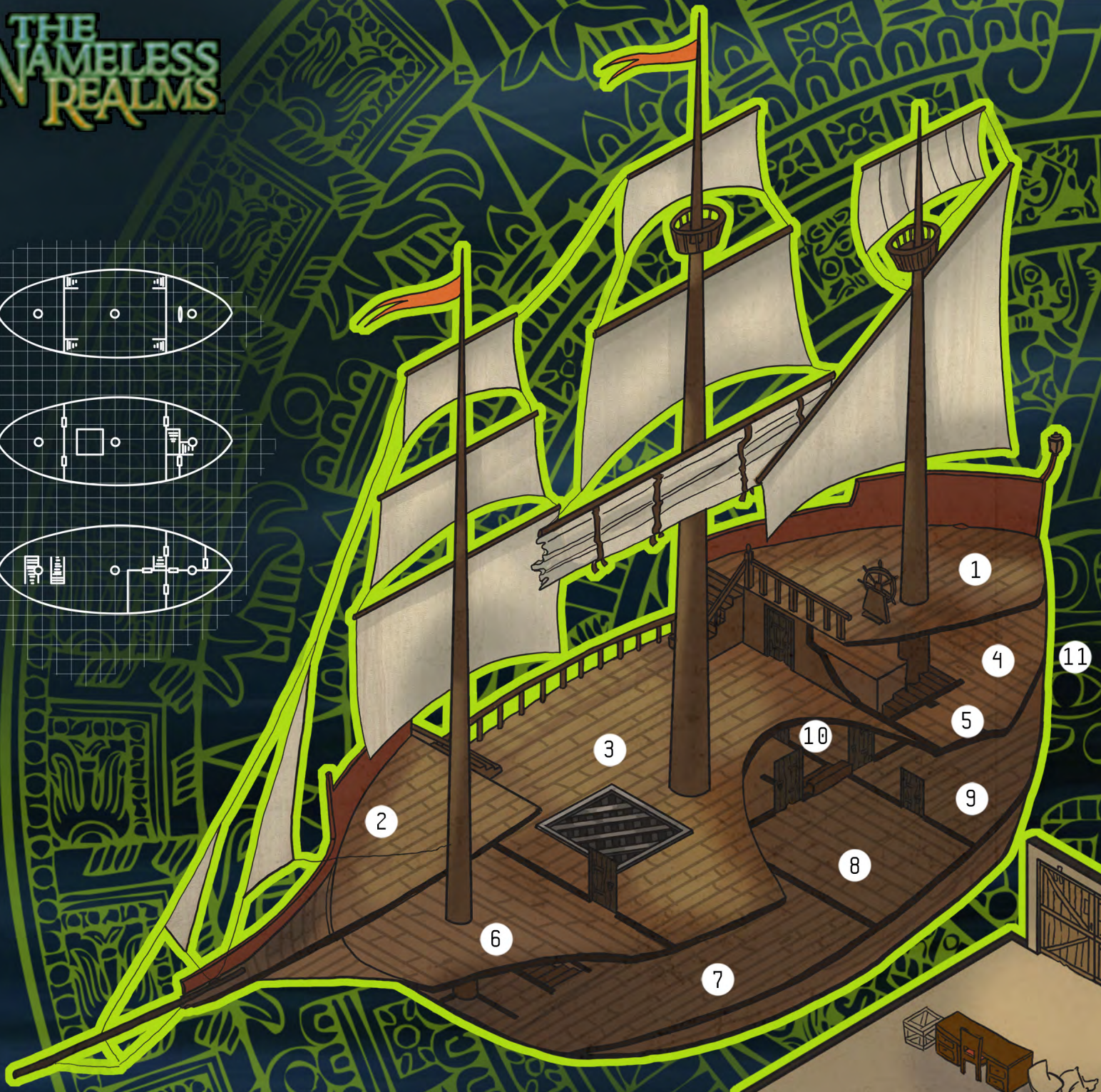
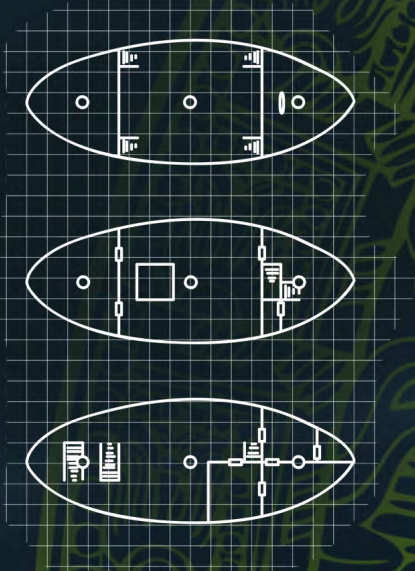
Gazetteer NR9
The Duelists of the
Three Great Schools

An Adventure for Levels
6-8 in both
1E & 5E Format

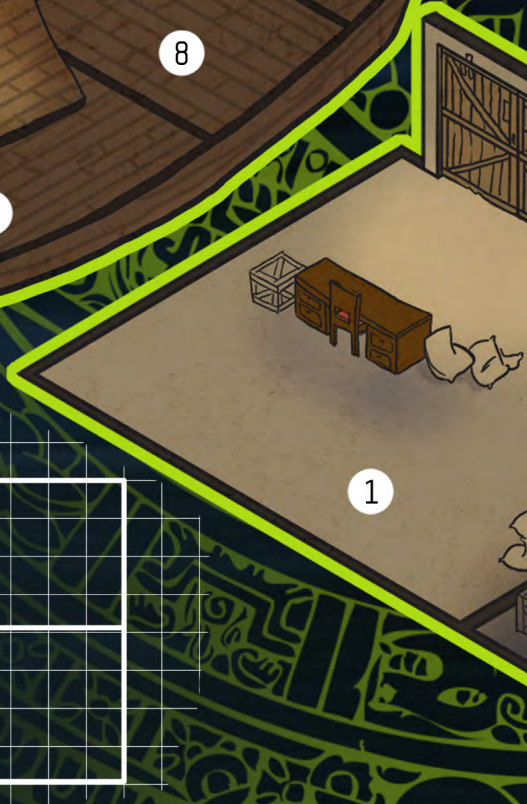
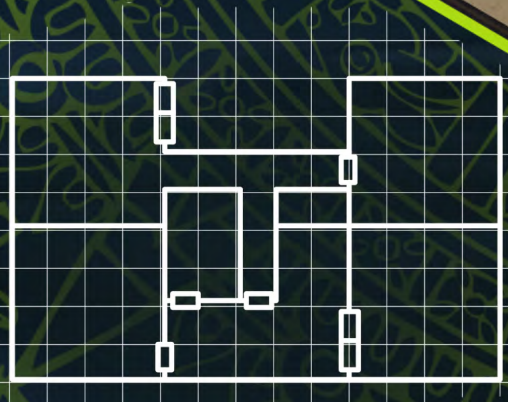
THE
NAMELESS
REALMS

G
ART
of the
genre

THE NAMELESS REALMS



- S** SECRET DOOR
- C** HIDDEN DOOR
- T** TRAP





Introduction

Well, thus far you've had a couple of interesting 'tastes' of Taux, and I hope you've enjoyed the storytelling involved. Whenever I go about working within Taux, I find that my primary purpose is always to spin stories and arcs together. That is the true purpose of a shared world mosaic anthology after all.

As I've worked within the city painting a role-playing story, I've utilized the different settings for the anthologies, *Tales of the Emerald Serpent* and *A Knight in the Silk Purse*, as backdrops. There was no such anthology to lean on with this adventure. Instead, I used the authors' notes, rough drafts, and concept art for what would have been the third installment in the *Taux Anthology Trilogy*.

So, if you are running this adventure, know that you are getting a great deal of insider information concerning the city that has never before been put in print. I truly hope you enjoy this final chapter, and that your players manage to survive their final encounter in Taux (at least from me to this point).

Scott Taylor

STYLE OF PLAY

For this adventure, we are going to combine some of the techniques featured in the previous two modules. The adventure will revolve around helping to wreak a bit of revenge on House Vash in the form of participation in the city's secret dueling festival known as the Chikin K'ïik Tun.

Your players will be running again, but this time from event to event, trying to solve another mystery concerning various transformations that threaten the civility of the population. By this point the players should be well-versed in the city's culture, so continue to foster the whispers, the hauntings, and the people to keep up the rich flavor.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

As noted in the first two adventures, experience points are kept to a minimum as I've expressly written these adventures for the 'sweet spot' levels of 5–7. That said, the culmination of this adventure should be awarded a large pot of bonus experience for the completion of the trilogy. I always want players to feel they have received strong awards for their hours invested in my adventures, so be sure to be kind. (But remember, there may be further Taux adventures, so you might not want the players gaining too much experience!)

DUELS

I'm going to reinvest a moment to once again talk about duels in Taux. This topic was first breached in Folio #11, but it should be noted that at this point the players are seeking out specific duels for the purpose of bloodshed, and rules of no

quarter are in play. You can imagine the impact this should have on your players, especially your resident duelist (assuming you have one). Having spent a great deal of time playing Legend of the Five Rings and Deadlands, I've come to appreciate the harrowing effect duels have on players. Be sure you press the envelope here, but also keep in mind that player death isn't your endgame, so when in doubt, favor the players accordingly.

RELIC

Assuming the relic, The Fists of the Onyx God, that has been both a boon and a curse for the players is still in their possession, it might be prudent to utilize some of its yet unknown powers during a duel (this is again if your duelist happens to wear the item). Its powers might also be used on behalf of a duelist, if needed, gaining the character some advantage.

Still, the curse of the item is now in full effect, and blood sacrifice is something sought after (and could be a great motivator for the duelist to wear the item while fighting in these matches). At the end of the day, the relic wishes to be used in the name of its dark god, and cleave a bloody path through the city with sacrifice and death. Each time the player utilizing the relic kills an enemy, they must make a saving throw versus magic [**DC 18 Wisdom save**] or fall to the power of the item. If this saving throw is failed, consider the character an NPC for the purpose of DM control AS HE/SHE WISHES, i.e., you may take control of the character at will, and may deliver control back to the player as you

like, but the character is technically your pawn until the curse can be broken.

Mithelvarn's Shard

At the culmination of the adventure the characters will come in contact with a magical being known as Mithelvarn's Shard. During the events that unfolded in Folios 1-6, a piece of the Infernal Machine in the labyrinth below Roslof Keep 'escaped'. Its purpose is to establish chaos and adventure wherever it manifests. Although it can't be killed, it can take mortal form and use its extensive magical abilities to create scenarios in which it seeks out 'players' for its game of 'monster versus hero'. Although Mithelvarn's Shard can be disrupted, its essence will slip away and reform elsewhere in a matter of days or months. If the players have played the complete Roslof Keep

campaign, or the accompanying mini-adventure NR1.5 The Giant Has Only One Mission, then they should get a bit of a thrill at meeting the shard. If they have not, she can be seen as an enigma that will perhaps rise up again at some point.

Adventure Synopsis

This adventure revolves around the Chikin K'ïik Tun and the heroes' interactions in it. After the affair at the Grand Playhouse, the characters have managed to thwart yet another Vash plot, but that house is still lethal, even if licking its wounds. Although now somewhat shielded by two Red Pillars (Mama Serene & Count Rummel), the heroes know that it is only a matter of time before the Vash try again for them and their relic.

Meeting with Balthazar, local mercenary duelist and friend of Mama Serene, the heroes are provided with perhaps a final chance to put an end to their feud with House Vash. To accomplish this, one hero will have to assume the identity of an Ebontra Cross (a practitioner of the Ebontra twin blade school which utilizes both blades for offense), then deal a blow to two other duelists in the city. Balthazar has it on good authority that the character possessing the relic is to be murdered by Esmerelda Serata, an infamous noble of fallen station who is now a Razor in the city. By defeating her, you will have defeated the Vash's most talented assassin and taken a major player off their board of retribution before they can strike against you. To do this you must fight her on your terms (or at least those of the Chikin K'ïik Tun).



However, Serata is only a decoy of the Vash, and the heroes and Serata will be betrayed and ambushed by dire lowl corrupted by dark magic. Realizing Serata was just bait, Balthazar will run off to find Cold Shay, leaving the heroes without further guidance. The heroes will be left with a choice: slip back into the woodwork and await the next Vash plot, or find the true reason for the corruption of the lowl, provide it to the Sturgeon Tohil, and then leverage it to gain respite.

Campaign Background

The Chikin K'i'ik Tun:

The Circle of Bloody Stones

Each year, a secret dueling tournament takes place inside one of the three great trade cities of the Halo Ocean: Taux, Ebontra, and Findalynn. The dates of these tournaments are set around various astronomical calculations, and therefore happen on a random day that can't be tracked by law enforcement. This year, this particular day takes place only a week after the Festival of a Thousand Blossoms in the city of Taux.

What this means to citizens of Taux is that the ranks of duelists inside its walls will swell; lesser duels, blood feuds, and theatrical swashbuckling are commonplace during the event. Some people hide secrets and pay debts both old and new, some settle scores, and for the greatest of the duelists, those of the three great guilds, the hierarchy of membership is established. It is typically the latter duels that are most enjoyed by people willing to risk punishment by the city's Sturgeons, as fans of

all three guilds will rabble-rouse and cheer on the bloody sport wherever it takes place.

Still, even these combats typically don't end in death unless those participating take part in a secondary ritual, that of laying out stones in a circle with the final laid by both combatants being decorated in blood (not necessarily their own). For these death duels, only one fighter will exit the circle alive, and for the Sturgeons of Taux, these are the contests they most ruthlessly pursue in a kind of 'not under my watch' mentality.

Typically, only one such contest per district is put into play by the guilds in the city, otherwise the death toll would be too great on those participating. It wouldn't be overly prudent to lose all your best fighters each year, but for those that win such contests, glory, rank, and privilege are certainly theirs to be had. Winning a Bloody Stone Circle duel is considered 'gallant' among the guilds, and only someone who has won such a contest is ever considered for upper leadership of the guild orders (roughly a high ranking lieutenant with privilege). As this event is highly illegal, only a single day is dedicated to it, and then it and the duelists involved will turn to smoke and scatter to the winds.

The Three Dueling 'Kits'

For game purposes, I've broken down the subclass dueling powers of each type of guild duelist you will face in Taux. To acquire these 'kits', a character must invest three proficiency slots that

will grant the special powers each school employs. Each is based around the NPC class duelist found in Dragon Magazine #73, but a standard fighter class (as well as others below) can be utilized to make a Guild Duelist of one of the three great schools. And remember, if you are using the duelist NPC class, they get that pesky save vs. killing blow ability which makes them problematic. If such an ability is put into play, you might use it to save NPCs and have them 'tap out' so to speak, knowing they are beaten.

Taux Razor Duelist

Required Class: Duelist, Fighter

Proficiency Slots: 3

Special Ability: Wounding (Each time a Razor scores a hit, the victim must make a saving throw versus petrification [**DC 14 Constitution**] or begin bleeding at 1 HP per round. These hits are cumulative.)

Secondary Special Ability: At 5th level a Razor can modify a critical hit roll to a specific location, thus tripling the damage instead of doubling it.

Ebontra Cross Duelist

Required Class: Duelist, Fighter, Ranger

Proficiency Slots: 3

Special Ability: The Cross suffers no negative penalties for fighting with an off-hand weapon.

Secondary Special Ability: At 5th level a Cross may make an extra attack with an off-hand weapon.

Findalynn Bravo Duelist

Required Class: Duelist, Fighter,

Thief [**Rogue**]

Proficiency Slots: 3

Special Ability: The Bravo is adept at using his off-hand weapon in defense, doubling the Dexterity modifier for AC.

Secondary Special Ability: At 5th level, a Bravo may make a saving throw versus petrification [**DC 14 Constitution**] to half the damage inflicted from a blow once per combat round.

Dungeon Master Notes & Suggestions

1. The Primary NPC in this adventure will be Balthazar, an outcast Taux Razor with training in both the Razor and Ebontra styles. He is a good-looking young man in his early twenties with a well-trimmed goatee and wavy dark hair. His purpose is to see to the fall of Esmerelda Serata, who he believes has become an agent of the Vash and is preparing to ambush and kill his friend Cold Shay the Beautiful Death.

2. The Dire Lowl:

One thing that will continue to be gossiped about throughout the adventure will be that some lowl in the city are turning savage. This is true, and has been accomplished by a new female tome-mage recently signed on as a retainer to House Vash. Receipts for payment are within the tome-mage's lair and bear the Vash seal. Unbeknownst to either the Vash or the heroes, this tome-mage is actually a shard of the Infernal Machine from Roslof Keep, and has saved the payment receipts from House Vash, as well as detailed information concerning the transformative corruption (harkening back to the Violet Corruption) she undertook for them, to ensure chaos if she is ever threatened.

3. Running the Endgame with House Vash:

As stated many times, House Vash can't ever truly be defeated, there are too many of them in different cells throughout Taux with enough clout

to insist one cell was working independently and therefore not all the Vash were involved. However, in the case of the players, they can use information gained from both Folio 12 and Folio 13 to destroy a single cell, led by Timmer Vash, the 1st cousin of Tlacotl Vash and someone Tlacotl was already thinking of getting rid of. If they manage this, then all past debts or plots with the Vash family are at an end, at least until some other event comes to rest on the heroes' doorsteps.

4. Esmerelda Serata is an interesting NPC that can become a great ally of the characters if they play their cards right. Although obsessed



with killing her half-brother, Cold Shay, she is a strong duelist with a keen mind and has many connections in Taux as her family was once a great power in the city before Shay brought about the downfall of their father.

Overall Story Arcs and Threads

1. The Running of the Clock

It is very important to note that the actions of this adventure all take place in a single day (just as those of Folio #11 took place in a single night). Therefore, the players must be made to understand the import of speed, moving from one encounter point to the next as quickly as possible. Only in this way do they have a chance of fulfilling plans laid out by Balthazar to free them of another threat.

2. As this is the culmination of the trilogy, it should be no secret just how sick of House Vash the players should be. Keep the carrot of sticking it to the Vash and getting them off their backs right in front of them to help propel them along.

3. Remember, this isn't a dungeon crawl, so keep the city involved: get something to eat, talk things over if time allows, and move through the streets, over mighty canals, through markets teeming with activity, etc.

4. The Sturgeons will be on full alert during this day, so keep the players watchful for those blue and silver tabards. Also remember that Tohil



owes them a favor after the events at the Grand Playhouse, so be sure to keep that in mind and remind the players as needed. Perhaps it can get them out of trouble in a pinch.

New Monster

Dire Lowl

Chaotic Evil

Frequency: Uncommon

No. Appearing: 1 – 4

Armor Class: 5

HD: 2

Move: 12”

No. of Attacks: 3

**Damage/Attack: 2–8+4/1–4+2
(2 Claws/1 Bite)**

Special Attacks: Flamefist

Special Defense: -

Magic Resistance: Standard

Intelligence: Standard

Size: M (6’ – 7’)

Psionic Ability: NIL

% in lair: 20%

Dire Lowl: AC 15, Speed 30 ft., HD 5, Attack: 3, Init: +3, Hit +8, Claw 8 (2D4+4), Bite 4 (1D4+2), Multiattack, Flamefist (additional 5 (1d6+2) flame damage on claw attacks)]

Like the standard lowl’s Flametongue ability, the dire lowl can place the flames directly on its clawed hands, causing an additional 1–6 points of damage.

These corrupted souls are mad with a battle-rage that makes them almost unrecognizable as lowl, with facial distortion and shoulder expansion that give them a truly dire appearance. They have been changed by horrific magic born from their demon goddess and brought forth by the power of corruptive magic. Only the power of the magic that corrupted them has any control over their actions, and if left unattended, they go into a bloody rage, seeking to rend the living limb from limb.

Credits:

Author: Scott Taylor

Editing: G. Scott Swift

Cartography: Scott Taylor,

G. Scott Swift, & Andrew Rodgers

Design/Layout: Andrew Rodgers

Cover Art: ‘Breaking Through’ by Jim Holloway

Color Module Back Cover Art: Michael Wilson

Color Interior Cover Art: [Gazetteer] Jeff Laubenstein and Andrew Rodgers

Color Interior Cover Art: [Dungeon] Todd Lockwood

B/W Interior Illustrations: [Gazetteer] Jeff Laubenstein, Matthey Ray

B/W Interior Illustrations: [Dungeon] Jeff Laubenstein,

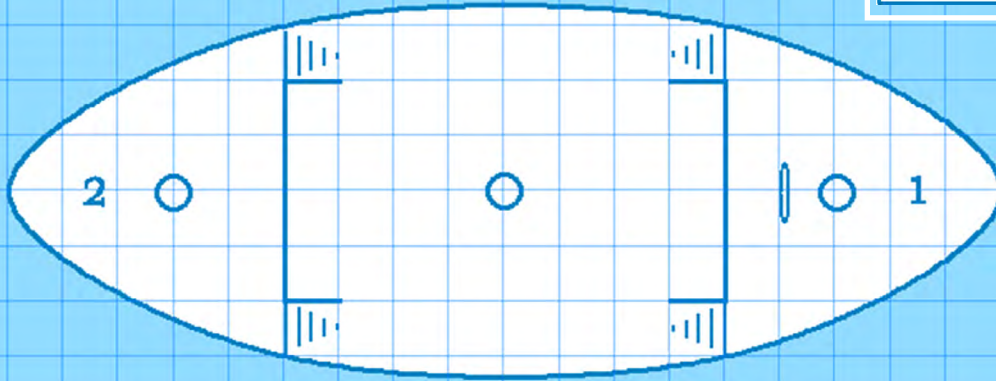
Playtesters: Sean Murphy, Mark Timm, Lil’Joe Livesay, Brent Blackwell, Shayne Hintz

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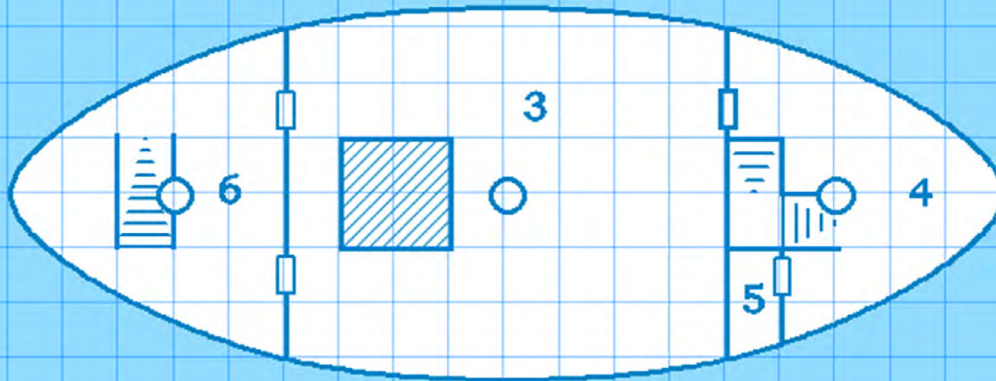
THE FOLIO

	Stairs
	Mast
	Door
	Secret Door

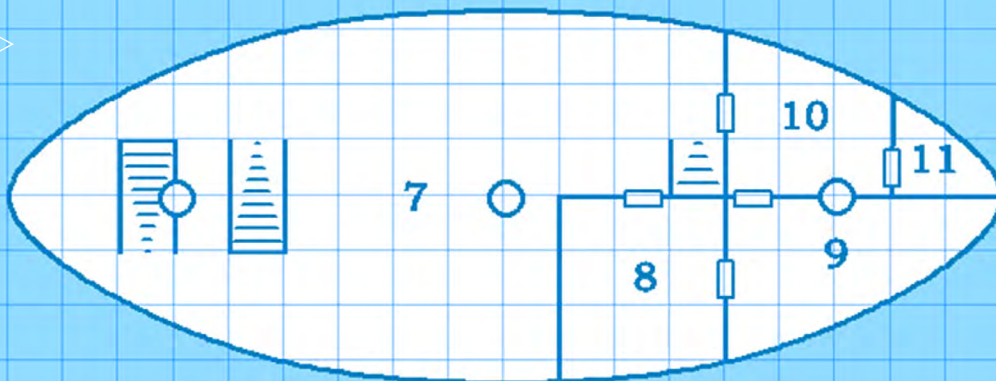
Upper Deck



Main Deck



Middle Deck



THE FOLIO



Playing Down the Down

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Role Module A73

A Four Part Scenario for Characters Levels 5-7
by Scott Taylor



Playing Down the Dawn

A Three Part Scenario for
Characters Levels 5–7

All 'grey blocks' are for 5E conversions
in this section.

Part One

The Coral Stranger

As you walk the dark pavers of the Black Gate, a stray petal, crushed and muddied, still provides a last memory of color from the quickly fading delights of the Festival of a Thousand Blossoms. Beyond the Ullamalitzli courts, the Emerald Serpent towers like a bastion in the pre-dawn mists as you make your way to a meeting that sly-tongued Savino promised would be worth your while. If he can be trusted, perhaps the Vash might be checked off your list of problems, but in this cursed place, where the stones mock you as you pass, such hopeful thoughts have as much life in them as the petal at your feet.

Setting the Stage

Within the Emerald Serpent, an hour before the sun rises and the heat of the late-spring day backs the mist from the streets, a rogue duelist named Balthazar awaits the heroes. He is friends of Shay Gatewell, or Cold Shay, one of the most notorious killers in all of Taux. This friendship has its benefits and its burdens, with today being heavily weighted to the latter.

Balthazar, his human elemental spark alight with agitation, quickly greets the players before flowing into a story concerning the Vash plot to murder them in a series of surgical strikes by the duelist/assassin Esmerelda Serata. Serata is a veritable ghost in the city most days, but word on the street is that the Vash have won her to their cause with ample gold, and she's now destined to do the heroes in. However, she has one weakness, that being that she's a Razor in the Dueling Guild of Taux. Balthazar has it on good authority that Serata will be dueling this very day, and if the players can find her, they can eliminate her before she has a chance to fulfill her contract.

To accomplish this, the heroes will have to obtain the dueling badge of another city duelist, and Balthazar already has a mark in mind. The man's name is Dane Rallis, and he's a known pirate who operates out of Ebontra on a Letter of Marque that protects him in the port of Taux. His ship, the Coral Stranger, was seen entering the harbor on the late tide this very night, and if the heroes can make it aboard, they have a chance to do what the Sturgeons and the Taux Navy cannot, kill Rallis the Black Heart and put an end to his reign of murder on the seas between here and the Kraken's Maw.

However, it will not be easy as the Coral Stranger has a strong and seasoned crew of cutthroats, even if most may have already come ashore to partake of the delights of Taux's brothels and taverns. If the heroes can find and kill Rallis, they can take his Ebontra Cross badge and the scroll containing

whatever duelist he is to face this afternoon, thus taking a step closer to Serata in the process.

Balthazar will await the heroes at the Saltwater Swine, a local dive tavern close to the docks, hoping they have done the deed and have more information on the Vash at the time.

The Ship

The Coral Stranger is currently moored on the low docks amid a gaggle of unseaworthy coastal sloops and Tung trade ships. Nefarious characters are found aplenty here, and if the DM wants to press the heroes with a random encounter, certainly a heavy muscled press gang is prepared to lock blades. However, the path to the Coral Stranger isn't a difficult one. Security is lax around the ship; the dockmaster loathes the crew and hasn't taken precautions to keep it safe, hoping that perhaps someone with a score to settle might do him a favor. A single gangplank leads to the main deck, and a guttering lantern lights the course.

1.

The Poop Deck

Situated high on the back of the ship, this raised deck houses the ship's wheel and the aft sail. Two men share a drink as a single lantern burns between them. Blades lay loose against their hips.

The two men are the ship's sentries, and they have a 2 in 6 chance [**passive Perception 14**] of spotting anyone approaching the gangplank. If they

spot anyone approaching, they will alert the sailors who are currently playing a game of dice on the main deck below.

2 Pirates [AC 7, HD 5, HP 30, #AT 3/2, D 1-6 (Short Sword)]

TREASURE

2 DOZEN COPPER COINS AND 5 SILVER COATLS

2 Pirates [AC 12, HD 5d8+5, HP 25, Initiative +3, #AT 2, Hit +4, Dam Short Sword (1d6+2), Pack Tactics (Pirates are at advantage if attacking with allies within 5 feet.)]

2.

The Foredeck

Currently empty, the foredeck rises above the main deck and can be accessed by two sets of stairs (like the poop deck).

3.

Main Deck

The large main deck, split with the massive main mast at the center, provides access to both the forecastle and the aftcastle of the ship as well as the hold through a heavy wooden grate. Five men are currently engaged in a highly contested game of dice farther toward the aftcastle.

5 Pirates [AC 7, HD 5, HP 30, #AT 3/2, D 1-6 (Short Sword)]

TREASURE

2 DOZEN COPPER COINS, 5 SILVER COATLS, AND 12 SILVER COATLS CURRENTLY IN THE GAMBLING POT

5 Pirates [AC 12, HD 5d8+5, HP 25, Initiative +3, #AT 2, Hit +4, Dam Short Sword (1d6+2), Pack Tactics (Pirates are at advantage if attacking with allies within 5 feet.)]

4.

Captain's Cabin

A heavy, locked wooden door [DC 15] bars the way into the aftcastle.

Inside, Captain Rallis is taking pleasure with his newest Zimbolay slave. However, he is always on heavy alert and will notice a picking attempt without a successful Move Silently check [passive Perception 16 vs. Stealth]. He will quickly rise and arm himself if he hears anyone working the lock on his door.

He also has a stair into the hold and will send his slave girl to fetch help from the quartermaster below (and anyone else the quartermaster has at his disposal). Help will arrive in round 3 if he detects anything. Also, if there is any heavy combat on the main deck, he will certainly be warned and fully prepared for combat before the door is opened (and will likely have his quartermaster with him if 3 rounds have passed).

1 Cross Duelist (Dane Rallis) [AC 5, HD 8+8, HP 75, #AT 4/1 (+4 to hit), D 1-6+5 (x2) / 1-4+6 (x2), Multiattack, Extra Off-Hand Attack]

TREASURE

RAPIER +2, DAGGER +3, LETTER OF MARQUE FROM THE CITY OF EBONTRA, AN EBONTRA CROSS BADGE FOR A CLOAK, A SCROLL CONTAINING A MAP TO A BUILDING CALLED THE HOLLAND GRANARY, AND A BROKEN SEALED SCROLL WITH THE NAME MARQUIS O'LINDON HATHOWAY



1 Cross Duelist (Dane Rallis) [AC 15, HD 11d8+22, HP 72, Initiative +5, #AT 4, Hit +7, Dam Rapier 7 (1d6+4) and Dagger 7 (1d4+5), Multiattack, Parry (+2 AC against one attack), Extra Off-Hand Attack]

5.

Captain's Slave Quarters

This small room contains a tiny bed, chamber pot, water basin, and several silken strips of cloth, presumably to be used as clothing.

6.

Officers' Quarters

(Includes the Armory)

Three beds, a table, three chests, and a dartboard decorate this large room. At the center, a single stair leads down.

This is the officers' quarters for the ship, but at this point all officers are in Taux drinking away the night with the bulk of the crew.

7.

Middle Hold

Three straggler sailors wile away the night by sharing a bottle of wine atop a large stack of rugs within this large space.

These sailors are currently being disciplined and were not allowed to go ashore. If they hear fighting

above, 2 in 6 chance **[DC 13 Perception]**, they will grab their weapons and head to investigate through the officers' quarters. If the captain is alerted and sends for help, the quartermaster will collect these sailors before rushing up the stairs to the captain's cabin.

3 Pirates [AC 7, HD 5, HP 30, #AT 3/2, D 1-6 (Short Sword)]

TREASURE

NONE

3 Pirates [AC 12, HD 5d8+5, HP 25, Initiative +3, #AT 2, Hit +4, Dam Short Sword (1d6+2), Pack Tactics (Pirates are at advantage if attacking with allies within 5 feet.)]

8.

Quartermaster and Cook's Cabin

This room houses two beds and various treasures collected from years of sea travel. Two chests are here as well as some bottles of rum and other spirits. An orange and white cat sleeps on one of the beds, and a large man with facial tattoos and brands sleeps on the other.

The quartermaster is catching some sleep, but over the years tends to sleep with one eye open. He will detect any commotion on the ship on a 3 in 6 chance **[passive Perception 15]**.

1 Quartermaster [AC 5, HD 10+10, HP 70, #AT 3 (+4 to hit), D 1-6+5/1-4+2 (2 scimitar/1 dagger)]

TREASURE

SCIMITAR +2, DAGGER +2, 14 SILVER COATLS. CHEST ONE, LOCKED [DC 15]: A SILK ROBE (20 SILVER), A BAG WITH 76 SILVER COATLS, AND 10 GOLD COINS MINTED IN ZIMBOLAY. CHEST TWO, LOCKED [DC 13]: A FINE KNIFE (10 SILVER), A RUBY THE SIZE OF A THUMBNAIL (100 SILVER), 2 BOTTLES OF ARCANIAN WINE (10 SILVER EACH).

1 Quartermaster [AC 15, HD 10d8+20, HP 65, Initiative +5, #AT 3, Hit +7, Dam Scimitar 8 (1d6+4), Dagger 7 (1d4+5), Multiattack (2 scimitars/1 dagger), Parry (+2 AC against one attack)]

9:

Galley

Two stout long-tables, benches, and an iron oven area set with slate stones around it mark the chamber as the ship's galley.

10:

Storage

A small storage closet holds the bulk of the ship's food stores.

Closing the Stage

Once the characters have successfully cleared the ship and discovered both the Cross Badge and the parchment containing the Bravo that Rallis was to duel (one Marquis O'Lindon Hathoway of Findalynn), they can move back into the city toward their new target.

Balthazar awaits them at a predesignated tavern close to the docks. Once they show him what they have discovered, he will lead them to the Holland Granary before giving them another place to meet in two hours when the sun is at its zenith, the Tallow Wastrel Tavern near the mouth of the Black Gate. A friend of his (Shay) is currently in the wind and he's working to find him before the meeting; he has a bad feeling about today.



The Holland Granary

Balthazar leads a weaving path through the markets of the Turquoise Turtle, his brown cloak mingling easily with those of a hundred other citizens shopping for the early wares of the day. Whatever relief night provided has burned off to allow an oppressive heat to blanket the city. Sweat trickles down your brow and the cries of a water seller make your tongue strike against dry lips.

Setting the Stage

Balthazar finally pulls up outside the Holland Granary, an old merchant building with deep ties to the Findalynn grain markets. It is here that he will provide you with a blood-covered stone, something you will need to complete the circle and begin the deadly combat of the tournament. Without such a duel and victory, you will not get the next set of papers that will bring you to the Taux champion of the Turtle District, Esmerelda Serata.

Within, two guards in girded chain coats and metal studded helms ask for your papers. When provided, one will escort the heroes to the rear of the building, room 5, where nearly thirty people are standing at the ready and whispering amongst themselves. Bets (if you like that sort of thing) can be placed with several odds makers in the crowd.

Coming forward into the circle is a lean man with a white mustache and an inkvine scar along the right side of his head. He wears no armor, only a deep umber shirt, brown gloves, breeches, and low soft boots.

He provides a greeting, offering his name as Marquis O'Lindon Hathoway, and then waits for the Cross to enter before pulling forth a bloody stone from a pouch at his waist and placing it on his side of the circle.

From this point, the dueling hero should replicate the action, and then the combat will begin.

The Granary

1.

The Merchant Entry

This large room has walls covered with tapestries and a desk at its center. Two men, both girded with mail and steel helmed, stand at the door.

These two mercenaries will check your papers. If all is in order, one will escort you back to room 5.

2 Mercenaries [AC 4, HD 6, HP 36, #AT 2/1, D 1-8+2 (Longswords)]

TREASURE

52 COPPER COINS, 17 SILVER COATLS



2 Mercenaries [AC 16, HD 6d8+6, HP 30, Initiative +3, #AT 2, Hit +4, Dam Longsword (1d8+2), Pack Tactics (Mercenaries are at advantage if attacking with allies within 5 feet.)]

2.

Storage Room One

A large storeroom is filled around the walls with heavy sacks and boxes. There are three men here playing a game of dice, and will invite anyone entering to join.

3.

Overflow Room

This large room is currently empty, but debris on the floor indicates that it has housed grain and other goods in the past.

4.

Sorting and Packing Room

Several long tables and a set of scales are in this room. Otherwise it is currently empty.

Two secret doors are in this room, one to a contraband storage room located on the north wall [DC 15 Perception], and the other to a concealed exit route on the south wall [DC 15 Perception].

5.

Lead Merchant Chamber

This large room houses some dozen men and women in cloaks and a long lean man with white hair who stretches in the center of a circle of blood-red stones.

This is the main gallery for the tournament, and the man, O'Lindon Hathoway, is preparing for a duel that is sure to help him secure a fine position within the guild of Findalynn.

Around him, a collection of patrons looking to see the match (and likely bet on it) have gathered. They will remain quiet, their access to the match dependent on their ability to stay out of the way.

1 Bravo Duelist (O'Lindon Hathoway) [AC -1, HD 9+18, HP 90, #AT 2/1 (+4 to hit), D 1-6+3,

Special Ability: The Bravo is adept at using his off-hand weapon in defense and may add double his Dexterity modifier to his AC. Secondary Special Ability: At 5th level, a Bravo may make a saving throw versus petrification [DC 14 Constitution] to half the damage inflicted from a blow once per combat round.]

TREASURE

RAPIER +3, RING OF PROTECTION +2 (WITH BRAVO GUILD SYMBOL SET IN THE STONE), BROKEN SEALED SCROLL WITH THE NAME ESMERALDA SERATA ON IT, AND A MAP WITH THE LOCATION OF THE JADE TOWER, AS WELL AS A TIME DURING THE AFTERNOON

1 Bravo Duelist (O'Lindon Hathoway) [AC 21, HD 9d10+18, HP 80, Initiative +5, #AT 2, Hit +8, Dam Rapier 7 (1d6+5), Multiattack, Parry (+2 AC against one attack), Special Ability: The Bravo is adept at using his off-hand weapon in defense and may add double his Dexterity modifier to his AC. Secondary Special Ability: At 5th level, a Bravo may make a saving throw [DC 14 Constitution] to half the damage inflicted from a blow once per combat round.]

6.

Storage Room Two

This room is filled with crates, a snaking path between them leading into shadows away from the door.

Closing the Stage

Once the duel is complete, an alarm will be raised from the front of the structure. The Sturgeons have come and will be arresting those involved in the illegal fight. Chaos should reign as people bolt in every direction.

The players will have to decide how they deal with the situation. Certainly killing a Sturgeon would be a bad idea, and they might be able to use their clout with Tohil to get off with a lesser charge if they decide to let themselves be captured, but more likely, a quick run to one of the various secret doors will likely be the way to go. Still, I'd try to block any exit

with at least a small fight, prompting the players to use their skills to subdue any Sturgeons in their way.

Sturgeon [AC 4, HD 6, HP 36, #AT 2/1, D 1-8+2 (Longswords)]

TREASURE

NONE

Sturgeon [AC 16, HD 6d8+6, HP 30, Initiative +3, #AT 2, Hit +4, Dam Longsword (1d8+2), Pack Tactics (Mercenaries are at advantage if attacking with allies within 5 feet.)]

When the raid has ended, the players will need to get the information they secured from winning the duel (another writ and a map) and proceed to the next location, either meeting Balthazar or going directly to the Jade Tower.

If they meet Balthazar, he is greatly agitated, and looks to have been in a fight himself, with blood about his cloak and his gloved hands. He will relay, 'Things aren't what they seem, but Serata is still the only lead we have, and she must be put down.' After taking a look at the documents and the location, he will say he will meet you at the Jade Tower (although he will be late and show up right after the battle, unless of course you need him to help the players survive! For stats on Balthazar, use those of Dane Rallis, as Balthazar has been trained in the Ebontra Cross style).



The Jade Tower

Rain pounds the pavers in blowing sheets as city stragglers dash from building to building in search of dry environs. Your boots splash in puddles as the octagonal stone walls and dour green roof of the Jade Tower rise above the buildings around it. A single lantern decorates its heavy double door entry, the light golden amid the gloom of the flash storm that now blankets Taux.

Setting the Stage

Between the time that the players defeat the Marquis and their next meeting at 3 o'clock with the Razor, a storm blows into Taux from the east, bringing with it a fetid heat and palpable stink from the Black Swamp.

They may seek healing as needed in the city's temples before going to the Jade Tower, as they have several hours, but keep in mind they might also be wanted by the Sturgeons at this point, depending on how the last encounter during the raid played out.

Once they make it to the tower, they will have a similar experience to the one before, with two mercenary guards allowing them entry, checking their papers, and then finally leading them to the third floor of the tower where the duel is to take place.

The only difference here is that House Vash has become aware of the circumstances of the mission during the intervening hours and will unleash a group of dire lowl on the heroes even before the duel has properly come to an end in an attempt to kill two birds with one stone.

It will be up to the players to counter the attempted assassination, and it would be highly recommended they recruit Serata to their cause. She will certainly help them, knowing full well she has been betrayed.

The Tower

1.

Main Entry

Twin double doors give way to a long fifty-by-twenty-foot room decorated with several tapestries and a small sitting area directly to your left. Two doors, one each on the left and right walls, and a lone set of stairs provide exits to the chamber. There are two men in mail with stout short blades near the stairs.

The men are mercenaries hired by the tournament to make sure all is in order between combatants. They will look over your records obtained from the previous duel, and then one will escort only the duelist upstairs, the others required to stay in the lower level and wait.

There is also a secret door in the room

[DC 16 Perception].

2 Mercenaries [AC 4, HD 6, HP 36, #AT 2/1, D 1-6+2 (Short Swords)]

TREASURE

12 COPPER COINS, 3 SILVER COATLS

2 Mercenaries [AC 16, HD 6d8+6, HP 30, Initiative +3, #AT 2, Hit +4, Dam Short Sword 5 (1d6+2), Pack Tactics (Mercenaries are at advantage if attacking with allies within 5 feet.)]

2.

Study

A large desk and padded velvet chair rest against the western wall of this spacious room. A series of bookshelves line the walls, and a chandelier hangs from the ceiling.

The books tend to be on subjects pertaining to trade law, the southern nation of the Tung, and the bulk being actual ledgers of years of trade cargos coming into the city.

3.

Lower Salon

Five large velvet chairs and a long bench decorate this room. A single slender table rests against the eastern wall and holds a bowl of fruit and several glasses as well as a pitcher of water.

It is here the players can wait, if they choose, while the duel takes place above.

4.

Guard Room

A sliding panel door opens into a guard post with several spears and a single long sword and shield as well as a set of chairs and a table.

5.

Grand Salon

This large chamber is nearly sixty feet by sixty feet with stairs on the north and south wall. Around the room a four post bed with luxuriant curtains, several stuffed chairs, a drinking station with all manner of bottled liquors, and a copper tub decorate the area.

6.

Master's Chamber

Furniture has been slid back against the walls of this large room, and a single chandelier is lit in the vaulted ceiling above. Around the inner perimeter of the room a circle of stones has been placed, and a lone figure, lean and beautiful, stands with a blood red stone in her hand.



This is Esmeralda Serata, the deadly assassin and outcast noble. She will take no quarter, and has little to say, as she is ready to get this contest over with as quickly as possible. However, after three rounds of combat, the lower level of the tower will be besieged by a gang of dire lowl, and she will withdraw from the circle of stones, first asking what kind of trickery or betrayal is this, and then asking to call a halt to the duel until the source of the noise below can be discerned.

1 Razor Duelist (Esmeralda Serata) [AC 5, HD 10+10, HP 90, #AT 2/1 (+4 to hit), D 1-6+2, Wounding (Each time a Razor scores a hit, the victim must make a saving throw versus petrification or begin bleeding at 1 HP per round. These hits are cumulative.) Secondary Special Ability: At 5th level a Razor can modify a critical hit roll to a specific location, thus tripling the damage instead of doubling it.]

TREASURE

RAPIER OF SHARPNESS +2

1 Razor Duelist (Esmeralda Serata) [AC 15, HD 10d8+20, HP 65, Initiative +5, #AT 2, Hit +7, Dam Sabre 7 (1d6+4), Multiattack, Parry (+2 AC against one attack), Wounding (Each time a Razor scores a hit, the victim must make a saving throw (DC 14 Constitution) or begin bleeding at 1 HP per round. These hits are cumulative.) Secondary Special Ability: At 5th level a Razor can modify a critical hit roll to a specific location, thus tripling the damage instead of doubling it.]

Round Three Dire Lowl Attack

The front door of the tower will burst open as a gang of recently corrupted lowl rush in looking for

blood. The two mercenaries will first attempt to attack the lowl, but once their strength is shown to be so great, they will try to get through the secret door and lock themselves in room 4.

The bulk of the lowl will attack anyone on the ground floor, but if they break through any line of defense, at least two will make for the stairs and try to get to the top floor, searching for other victims.

12 Dire Lowl [AC 5, HD 5, HP 30, #AT 3/1, Damage/Attack: 2-8+4/1-4+2 (2 Claws/1 Bite), Special Attacks: Flamefist (already calculated into the damage)]

12 Dire Lowl: AC 15, Speed 30 ft, HD 5, Attack: 3, Init: +3, Hit +8, Claw 8 (2D4+4), Bite 4 (1D4+2), Multiattack, Flamefist (additional 5 (1d6+2) flame damage on claw attacks)]

Closing the Stage

Once the dire lowl have been defeated, Esmeralda will have a very dark contenance. She'll share if the party is looking for a reason to attack the Vash, they should investigate the former residence of Emil Locasta in the Black Gate as it is rumored a foreign Vash tome-mage now resides there who has something to do with the madness of the lowl in the city. They might find what they are looking for there. After this, she will slip away, looking toward the duelist she fought and saying, 'Another time, another place.'

Balthazar can show up at any time the DM desires, and if Esmeralda is still around, the two will glare daggers at one another, but have nothing to say directly to the other. He will see the carnage, and that Esmeralda lives, and go ashen, hissing, 'This was just a ploy!' only to run off into the driving rain. From this point forward, the characters will not see Balthazar, so they are on their own to the conclusion with Mithelvarn's shard.



The Lovely Shard

The residence of the famed 'Love Maker', Emil Locasta, is more a walled compound, with heavy ivy growing up its iron gate and signs of disuse evident in the crumbling bricks and rusted hinges. Inside, a single tree grows in an inner garden, the small estate house backing up against the old bleacher rise and marking this structure as one of the first built inside the stadium during the reclamation.

Setting the Stage

Rain still falls as dusk descends on the Black Gate when the players make their way to the former home of Emil Locasta. Rumors indicate that the man returned to Zimbolay, although that is unconfirmed, and some insist the apothecary will return, thus his house remains empty for fear of his ire upon such a day.

Whatever the case, anyone going to the home will discover the gate is unlocked, and the building beyond warmed by a single lamp within the main entry.

The Apothacary of Emil Locasta

1.

The Garden Entry

A heavily neglected garden overgrows its bounds within the gate as a single tree dominates the area with wide boughs that shadow the snaking path to the main house.

Two dire lowl stalk the garden, and will attack the party from concealment once they have made half the distance to the house.

2 Dire Lowl [AC 5, HD 5, HP 30, #AT 3/1, Damage/Attack: 2-8+4/1-4+2 (2 Claws/1 Bite), Special Attacks: Flamefist (already calculated into the damage)]

2 Dire Lowl: AC 15, Speed 30 ft., HD 5, Attack: 3, Init: +3, Hit +8, Claw 8 (2D4+4), Bite 4 (1D4+2), Multiattack, Flamefist (additional 5 (1d6+2) flame damage on claw attacks)]

2.

The Solicitation Salon

The grand entry into the square stone home holds a massive wooden table and four oak chairs. A single lantern lies atop the table, casting shadows in the well-worn wood. Beyond the table is a lovely woman, her skin a creamy chocolate, with high cheekbones and upturned ears. A strange shimmering aura dances around her in the gloom.

Smiling, she offers a bow before her crisp voice states the following: “It is my life to find foes such as these, to call them, to nurture them, and to see the will of the master done in each place I choose to manifest. So let us dance once more, heroes, and if you are worthy, then the Machine is sated until the next time I find form to do its bidding...”

At this she will attack, hurling spells at distance and trying to keep the party from her as long as possible, while utilizing Greater Invisibility. The ‘shimmering aura’ is a Cold Shield (reverse of Fire Shield) as well as the Shield spell [Mage Armor in 5E]. She is likely to drop Fireballs directly on her position, or Ice Storms, since she has protections up against such elements.

Once she is defeated, her form will dissipate and the items she carried will clatter to the floor along with all the communications she’s had with the Vash family since she entered the city a month ago.

Credits:**Author:** Scott Taylor**Editing:** G. Scott Swift**Cartography:** Scott Taylor,
G. Scott Swift, & Andrew Rodgers**Design/Layout:** Andrew Rodgers**Cover Art:** 'Breaking Through'
by Jim Holloway**Color Module Back Cover Art:**

Michael Wilson

Color Interior Cover Art:[Gazetteer] Jeff Laubenstein
and Andrew Rodgers**Color Interior Cover Art:**

[Dungeon] Todd Lockwood

B/W Interior Illustrations:

[Gazetteer] Jeff Laubenstein, Matthey Ray

B/W Interior Illustrations:

[Dungeon] Jeff Laubenstein,

Playtesters: Sean Murphy, Mark Timm,

Lil'Joe Livesay, Brent Blackwell,

Shayne Hintz

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Mithelvarn's Shard [AC 7, HD 9+18, HP 72, #AT 1, D 1-4+3, Spells: 1st (4) Shield, Shocking Grasp, Magic Missile, Charm Person; 2nd (3) Strength, Web, Detect Invisibility; 3rd (3) Fireball, Hold Person, Suggestion; 4th (2) Fire Shield, Ice Storm; 5th (1) Cone of Cold]

TREASURE

+3 DAGGER, SPELL SCROLLS (INCLUDES ALL KNOWN SPELLS), RING OF PROTECTION +1, RING OF FIRE RESISTANCE, 200 COPPER COINS, 540 SILVER COATLS, 80 GOLD JAGUARS

Mithelvarn's Shard [AC 13, HD 9d12+18, HP 72, Initiative +3, #AT 1, Hit +8, Dam Dagger 7 (1d4+5), Spellcasting (DC 14 saves and +6 to hit), Spells: Cantrips (at will) Fire Bolt, Mage Hand; 1st (4 Slots) Mage Armor, Magic Missile, Shield; 2nd (3

Slots) Misty Step, Suggestion; 3rd (3 Slots) Counterspell, Fireball, Fly; 4th (3 Slots) Greater Invisibility, Ice Storm; 5th (1 Slot) Cone of Cold]

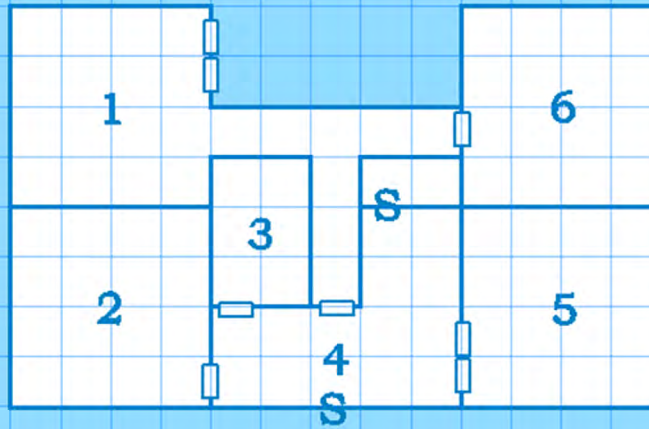
Closing the Stage

Once Mithelvarn's Shard has been defeated, the players will have all the evidence they need to take down the arm of House Vash that has been after them. They need only to turn the documents over to Tohil, and the Sturgeons will take care of the rest. This means they are now free to stay in Taux, or leave it, without a lingering feud hanging over their heads and certainly with some experience as to the culture and politics of the city.

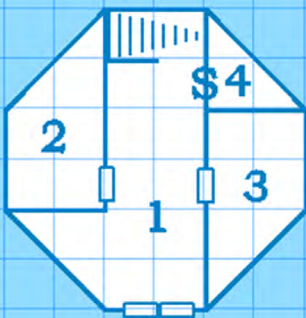
THE FOLIO

	Stairs
	Mast
	Door
	Secret Door

Warehouse

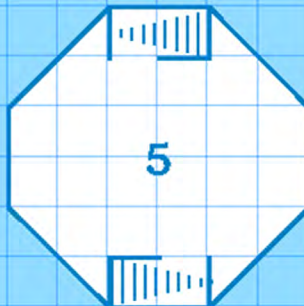


Level 1

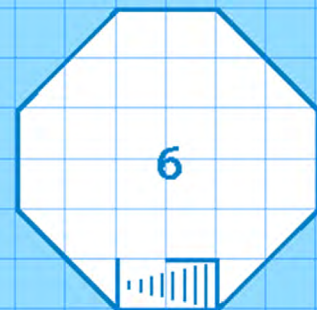


Tower

Level 2



Level 3

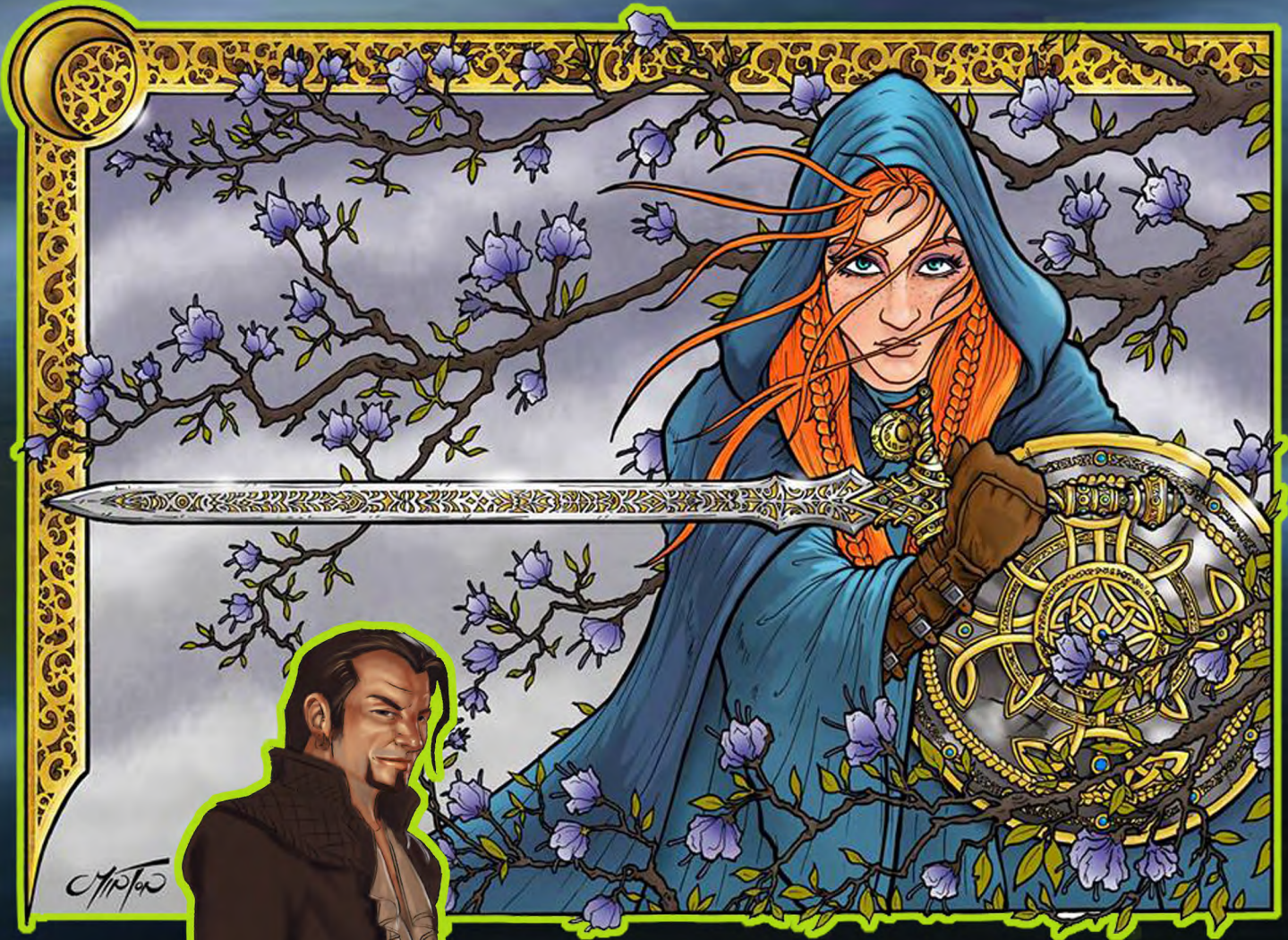


Playing Down the Down



**Part 3 of the
Adventures from
the Emerald
Serpent Campaign**

**An Adventure for
Levels 5-7 in both
1E & 5E Format**



The tournament of bloody stones has come to Taux, and the streets are said to run red with the blood of the combatants. Now, amid the crackdowns of the Sturgeons and the secret duels of the three great fencing schools, the heroes must once and for all solve the mystery of the House Vash blood feud. Taking on the guise of foreign swashbucklers, all must brave bloody single combat, pirates, ravenous cursed lowl, and even magical reverberations from distant Roslof Keep! Complete the Adventures from the Emerald Serpent trilogy with this module for characters levels 6-8.