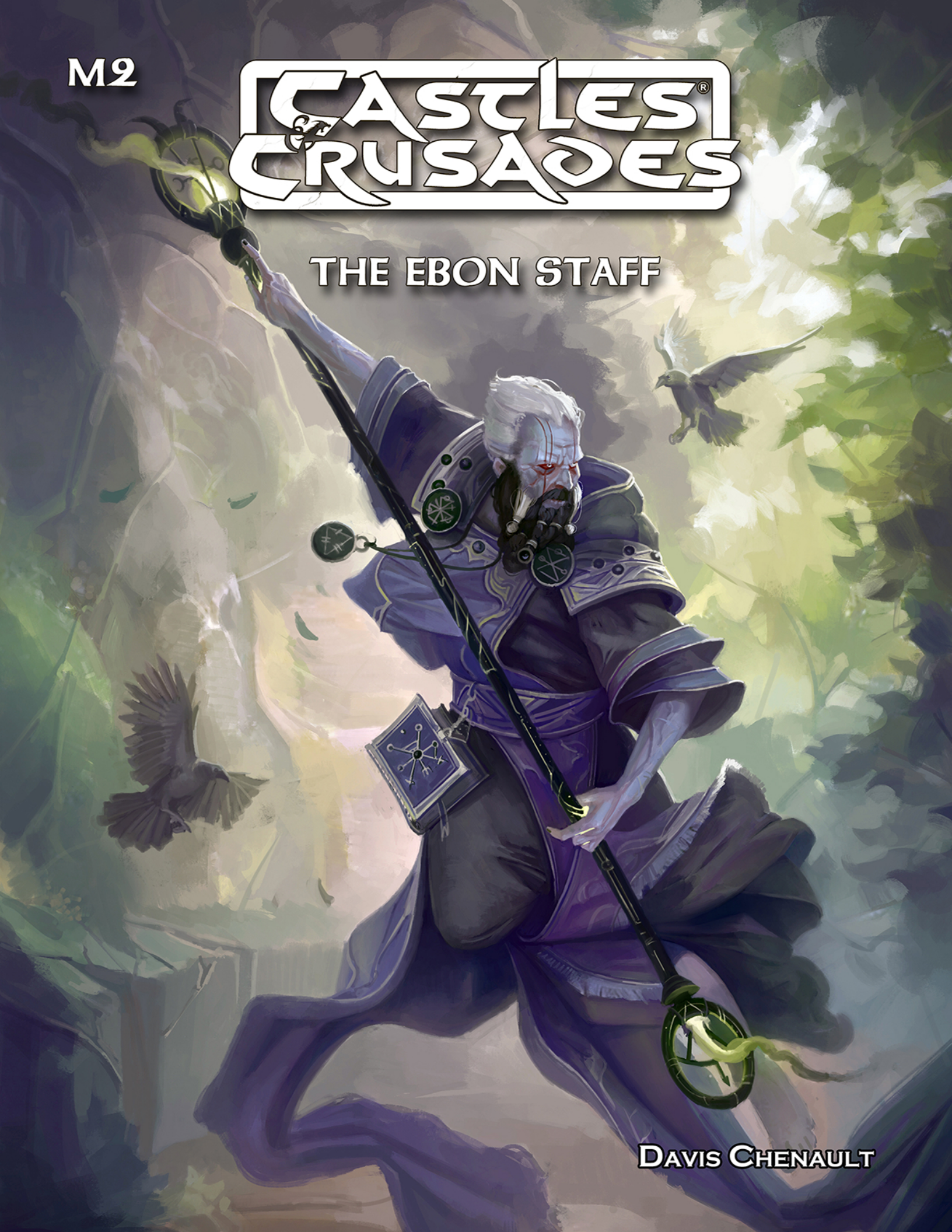


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CASTLES CRUSADES®

THE EBON STAFF



DAVIS CHENAULT

CASTLES & CRUSADES

THE EBON STAFF

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This adventure takes place east of the Blacktooth Ridge in Aihrde and continues the adventure begun in *A Stranger Among Us*. It is designed for at least 4 characters of 7th-8th level and a cleric, druid, or similar character would be useful in completing the adventure. The party would also benefit from the presence of a ranger or a similar class who is capable of tracking and can gather food from the wild.

The adventure begins either with the characters escorting the Fa' Aeadyn survivors from the previous adventure to their main encampment, or the characters might be curious about the city noted on the map found in a building during the previous adventure. They could also attempt to backtrack the goblin marauders named the Red Cap, to see where they went. Whichever is the case, the characters are heading farther east of the Blacktooth Ridge and into those little-known nor explored vast steppes, the Plains of Achrothos, where they come across the ruins of an abandoned city, an ancient tower, and a deadly priest.

BACKGROUND

Ages ago, Unklar sent forces to the east to beat those who lived there into submission and force them to give tribute. Unklar gave this task to his lieutenant Mammon the Sunderer. As Mammon advanced deep into the plains, the cities were easily conquered, but the nomadic tribes resisted his efforts and remained free, aided as they were by the goddess Amphoe Wan. Mammon went to Amphoe Wan's most sacred temple and fought her. Though he did not defeat Amphoe Wan, he did take the Ebon Staff, an artifact in which much of her power rested. Without this, her power waned, and Amphoe Wan had to leave Aihrde or face death. She chose to leave, entreating her people to find the Ebon Staff and return it to her so that she might bless them again.

The Ebon Staff burned Mammon's hand and heart, so he left it in the recently conquered city of Patholear and instructed his priests to guard it until the day came when it could be destroyed. That day never arrived. The priests who remained with the Ebon Staff placed the item in a vault under the earth and built a tower above that spot. The city remained under their control for ages and generation after generation of priests guarded the tower and staff. Alas, the city eventually fell into ruin and the people left. The priesthood all but died after this.

The last priests of the order closed the doors to the tower and locked it to the outside world. Some went back west to help in the wars while others remained inside the tower. After a time, the priests who remained in the tower performed rituals and put themselves into deep periods of sleep akin to death. Wards and warnings were set to awaken them should the tower doors ever be opened. There they slept for many years. With the banishment of Unklar, the magic keeping the priests alive faded and all but one died.

Much later, the army under Urghi of the Sampi began their conquests of the steppes to the east and north of the Blacktooth Ridge. This pushed the nomadic tribes who lived in that region, the Fa' Aeadyn, to the south and west. This movement turned into a mass migration in the last few decades. Several scouting parties of the Fa' Aeadyn arrived near the Blacktooth Ridge only

in the previous year, some of whom the characters encountered in the previous adventure.

That group belonged to a much larger group that had set up camp in the ruins of Patholear. Several thousand Fa' Aeadyn camped there. Their leader sent out small parties to scout the region to ensure suitable grasses for the horses and game for his people. While in the city, the Fa' Aeadyn explored the ruins. Especially interesting to them was the tower located in the center of the city. It took some time, but a priest eventually managed to open the doors to the tower.

Opening the doors awakened the only priest to survive the long sleep, Narammidin. A fight ensued. The Fa' Aeadyn outnumbered Narammidin and forced him to retreat from combat and flee the tower. Narammidin managed to set ablaze a signal fire on the tower's roof before leaving. This green fire was intended to be lit in a dire situation. In time's past, it would have summoned the forces of Mammon to come to the aid of the priests. That help did not arrive, nor can Mammon see it anymore.

It did, however, attract the attention of the Red Caps. That army of goblins traveled to the ruins and slew everyone they could find, and most of the Fa' Aeadyn were killed. Only a few escaped and now wander the plains around Patholear. One survivor, the priest Gaeta still moves around the ruins hiding from Narammidin and the few remaining Red Caps Marauders. There are a few stragglers from the Red Caps still dwelling in the ruins. Notably, a goblin assassin named Filth is slinking around, specifically looking for Fa' Aeadyn survivors. Meanwhile, Narammidin has returned to the tower to attempt the resurrection of the other priests and discover the fate of Unklar. Just as dangerous are the many predators and scavengers come to feast on the bodies of the dead throughout the ruins.

LOCATIONS: 1) The village from *A Stranger Among Us* 2) The ruined city of Patholear 3) Tower

PROTAGONISTS: 1) Gaeta, a Fa' Aeadyn priest

ANTAGONISTS: 1) Narammidin, a priest 2) Filth, a goblin

IMPORTANT ITEMS: 1) The Ebon Staff

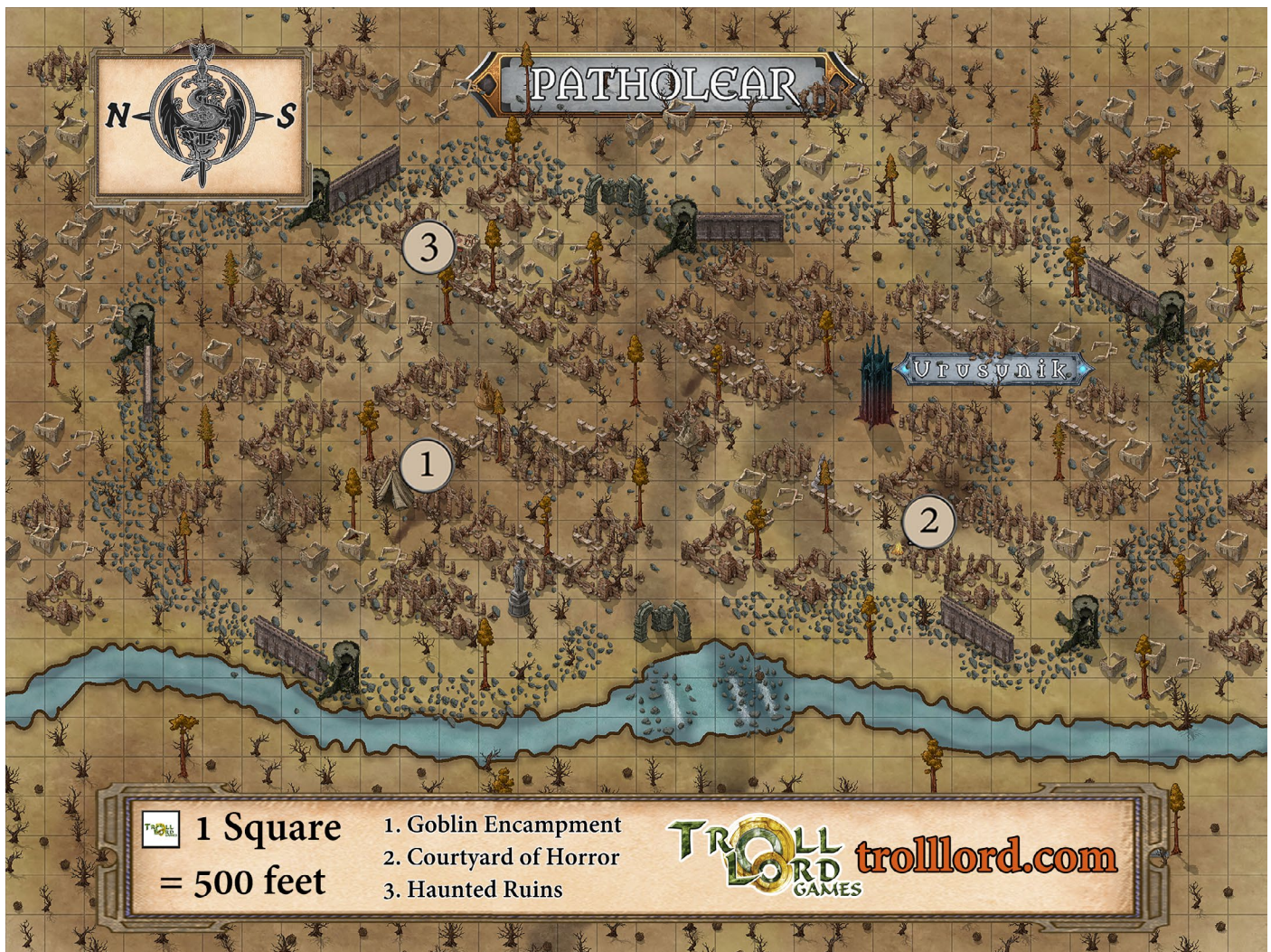
NOTABLE GROUPS: 1) Fa' Aeadyn, nomadic people 2) The Red Caps 3) Iraha 'Adyn and a troop of scouts

GOALS: The goal of the adventure is to locate Gaeta, learn about the nature of the Staff, defeat Narammidin, and retrieve the Ebon Staff. After this, the characters must decide what to do with the Ebon Staff. That is discussed at the end of the module.

THE BLEAK ESCARPMENT

The plains north and east of the Blacktooth Ridge are named the Plains of Achrothos. This is a vast steppe region that stretches for a thousand miles or more to the east and north. For much of the year the whole region receives little rain and is an arid, dusty, brown landscape. During the early spring, rains pour in from the north. These rains come in torrents and fill rivers to bursting. Dry riverbeds become raging floods, and the plains turn a vibrant green for two or three months. During the high summer,

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the temperatures can soar and become scorching, blistering skin, and taking one's breath away. The winters are cool but not uncomfortable, while the spring is surprisingly pleasant.

The steppes are dotted with springs and a few great waterways. The resulting oasis and river valleys are usually crowded with wildlife and vegetation. Between these are swathes of land with tall grasses, bramble, brush, and rare trees. These trees dot the landscape as if scattered by some giant. The trees are dozens of feet across and several hundred feet tall. They do not grow close to one another and are usually several hundred yards or more apart.

Huge herds of herbivorous animals roam the steppes. These herds of long horned bovines, antelopes, horses, and others can number in the tens of thousands. They are generally harmless unless stampeding. Predators such as lions, hyenas, and leopards roam the steppes as well. These can be dangerous as they see everything as a potential food source, and few know to be afraid of man, elf, or dwarf.

GETTING TO PATHOLEAR

It is a little over 100 miles from the village in *A Stranger Among Us* to the ruins of Patholear. The road that led from Blacktoot Ridge to near the village is visible in a few places but not enough to follow with any reliability. Finding the ruins is easily

accomplished either by following the trail left by the Red Caps or having one of the Fa' Aeadyn show the characters the way. Once the trail left by the Red Caps is located, it is easy to follow back to the ruins, and no tracking is necessary. If using the Fa' Aeadyn to locate the ruins, a tracking check must be made for every day of travel. A failure indicates that one or two days are needed to locate the city. This can be managed by saying the characters have strayed off course for the average number of miles traveled in a day. The trip should not take over 14 days. Adjust any rolls necessary to accomplish this.

WANDERING MONSTERS

The characters may encounter several types of creatures while traveling through the escarpment. Roll 1d10 for encounters three times a day; before dawn or morning, afternoon, and dusk or early evening. A 1-2 indicates herbivorous animals, and a 3 indicates a predator or others. Anything higher than a 3 indicates no encounter has occurred.

The plains are populated by huge herds of herbivorous animals. These herds number in the thousands and some in the tens of thousands. Bovines, gazelle, deer, and similar are typical of the herbivorous animals. They leave behind them large swathes of land completely denuded of vegetation. There are also other animals traveling in smaller herds and groups.

There are a few predators that live here as well. For the most part, they do not consider humans prey but, under the right conditions, do attack humans and similar bipeds. There are a few stragglers from the Red Caps' army wandering around, as well as several Fa' Aeadyn who survived the attack on Patholear. For predators or others, consult the following chart and roll 1d10.

1:	Lioness	2d6
2:	Lion	1d2
3:	Hyena	1d20+10
4:	Griffon	(See below)
5:	Panther	1d2
6:	Red Caps Stragglers	1d6+6 (see below)
7:	Hippogriff	1d6+1
8:	Baboons	1d12+6
9:	Bonesnapper	1
10:	Fa' Aeadyn survivors	2d4 (see below)

GRIFFONS ON HIGH

The plains are home to many beasts. In addition to the large and voracious predators who roam the lands, some predators fly high in the sky looking for food. Of these, some of the most successful are griffons. The griffons that inhabit these plains nest in the canopy of the trees scattered across the landscape. They range for hundreds of miles from their nest for their food. Though they eat much of the game found on the plains, they prefer horse flesh to all other meats, but that has been a rare commodity on the plains until recently. With the arrival of the Fa' Aeadyn and their herds of horses, the griffons are growing large and fat with horseflesh. The griffons may have avoided humans and their ilk a few years ago, but that is no longer the case, as they have grown venturesome and less fearful of humans.

Two or three griffons are soaring high in the sky at dusk or dawn (they rarely hunt during the heat of the day) when they spot the characters. If the characters have horses with them, the griffons attack. They dive down on those who are riding horses, attempt to grab the rider and lift them into the sky several hundred feet, and drop them. The griffons try to kill as many riders and those on foot as possible in this manner. They do not drop to the ground to fight unless so wounded they are rendered incapable of flight. Usually, the griffons ignore the horses until after the fighting has stopped. Occasionally several griffons may chase loose horses while others attack riders. The griffons try to kill horses on the ground, preferring not to carry them into the air unless in a hurry. Usually one horse is claimed and eaten by one griffon at a time. On rare occasions, more will share the horsemeat, but this tends to cause fighting amongst griffons. The head male is first in its right to eat. Each griffon, descending in hierarchical order, eats thereafter. While any one griffon is busy eating, the whole flock guards and protects that member.

GRIFFONS 1d2+1 (These neutral magical beasts' vital statistics are HD 7d10, HP 45, AC 17, BtH +7, and Move 30/80 feet walk/fly. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d4 damage and a bite for



2d8 damage each round. If both claw attacks succeed, they can lift any creature under three hundred pounds into the air. If carrying prey, their claws automatically inflict 1d2 point of damage per round. They are not allowed to attack with their beak while carrying prey. Their special abilities are darkvision to 60 feet and twilight vision.)

RED CAPS STRAGGLERS

This small group of goblins belongs to the Red Caps. They either linger back after the raid on Patholear or are just moving more slowly than the larger group of goblins. They are all mounted.

GOBLINS 1d6+6 (These are lawful evil humanoids whose vital statistics are HD 2d6, HP 9, AC 16, BtH +2, and their Move is 20 feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear chain shirts. They wield spears and scimitars in combat. They carry 1d10gp in coin and valuables on their person.)

WOLVES (These are neutral animals whose vital statistics are HD 2d8, HP 12, AC 13, BtH +2, and Move 50 feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d8 damage.)

FA' AEAEDYN SURVIVORS

These Fa' Aeadyn survived the attack on Patholear and are searching for a kind hand to relieve them of their hunger and take them back to Patholear to see who is left after the goblin attack. Unless surprised or unable to leave, they do not try to interact with the characters, rather they attempt to escape. The presence of any Fa' Aeadyn with the party will smooth any encounter.

FA' AEAEDYN 1d6+1 (These are chaotic neutral human adherents whose vital statistics are HD 1d6, HP 7, AC 12, BtH -2, and Move 30 feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear leather armor. They wield short swords and short bows in combat. They carry basic overland backpacks.)

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PATHOLEAR

Spread out on the east bank of a wide river are the remains of what was once a great city. The remnants of tall stone walls, towers, and keeps stretch for several miles along the river's banks and onto the terraces above the river. Massive trees dot the landscape and seem to consume what remains of the buildings. Much of what was the city is covered in vines and vast swathes of grasses and low brush. The smoke from several dozen fires wafts up from the ruins. Only one building seems intact, somehow having withstood the test of time and the ruination of the elements. A tower so tall that it stretches far above any of the other buildings and the tops of the highest trees. It is made of blackened stone and made in the shape of a tree with many small branches extending from its sides. Atop the tower, a bright green fire pulsates and throbs even in the light of day.

It does not take long to locate a place on the river where a bridge once stood. It has collapsed, but the river is shallower and broader than either upstream or downstream and is easily crossed. This is also the place where the Red Caps crossed to and from the ruins. The ground is churned up, and there are dozens of makeshift rafts lying on the bank as well as old firepits and the detritus of their encampment, including several dozen or more corpses of goblins, Fa'Aeadyn, and even a few wolves.

Hyenas scour the field and guard some of the bodies they are eating. It is easy to avoid the ire of the hyenas and other scavengers by staying away from them and not making aggressive movements in their direction. However, if approached, the hyenas will defend their prey and fight the characters. There is nothing of real value in this area.

Hyenas 16 (These neutral animals' vital statistics are HD 3d6, HP variable, AC 13, BtH +3, and Move 50 feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d8+1 damage. Their special abilities are trip, scent, twilight vision, and tracking 10.)

A CITY IN RUINS

The ruins stretch roughly 5 miles up and down the river and half a mile to the east of the river. There was a large inner keep inside the city. The wall enclosing the inner keep covers approximately a mile of the riverbank and stretches nearly 500 yards to the east of the river. Only small sections of that wall remain. The surviving portions of the inner keep's walls are 100 feet in tall. Almost everything in the city has fallen into ruin, with only the superstructure of the stone buildings remaining. Many of the buildings have either been destroyed or collapsed. The only structure that appears undisturbed by time is the huge black tower near the city center.

OVERALL DESIGN

The city was built on a grid pattern. Every few blocks the streets open on to a large square, in the center of which once stood a statue. Most of the statues have fallen, eroded, or been torn down. There are a few that are, miraculously, still intact and these depict warriors astride chariots, large birds, or riding griffons. Others depict deities in various acts of combat or aiding

people in farming. The larger buildings are located toward the city center, and some of these were truly immense, being five or six stories high, if not higher. One block is given over to an old amphitheater that could seat 10,000 people. Animal trails and those made by the Fa' Aeadyn and Red Caps are easy to find and easy to follow.

WALLS

The city's walls are large though mostly collapsed. Most are easily scaled using abutting piles of rubble, vines creeping up the stonework, or nearby trees now grown tall and close enough to cross over the top. The tallest walls are 100 feet high and 40 feet wide. Pairs of tunnels built one atop the other, pass through some sections of the wall that remain intact. The tunnel in the walls were used to move people and equipment safely from one point on the wall to another. A few of the tunnels have steps that access the few remaining guard towers. A few could have access to tunnels and chambers beneath the city if the CK cares to add more areas for adventure.

BUILDINGS

Most of the buildings have collapsed or are so overgrown with vines, brush, or trees that finding an intact building is difficult. Should the characters go to those places with smoke from still smoldering fires, they find some intact (relatively speaking) houses or buildings. Many of these were used by the Fa' Aeadyn for temporary habitation. Piles of bodies and debris are always found near those areas used by the Fa' Aeadyn. The surviving buildings or superstructures range in size from a single floor and chamber to several floors and a dozen or more chambers. If the CK chooses, access to areas beneath the city can be added to allow more adventuring. However, easily 90% of the ruins are just that, piles of rubble covered in sand, dirt, and vegetation.

PYLONS OF HEADS

The Red Caps decapitated all the Fa' Aeadyn they could find. The heads were stuck on poles erected for horrifying display throughout the city. The gruesome poles wind around the city, and include the occasional goblin or humanoid head, their trail of death starting from the bridge (mentioned above) through all the Fa' Aeadyn encampments, and thence to the tower. Carrion birds gather in hordes throughout the city, haunting the poles as well as the corpses piled throughout the ruins. Buzzards, crows, and other creatures have gnawed on many of the heads.

WANDERING MONSTERS

The city is normally inhabited by many animals. Especially prevalent are tribes of small monkeys that wander the ruins in search of smaller prey. Though not normally aggressive, when the tribe decides to rest for the night, they aggressively clear that area of potential threats. This is done with sharp whistling noises and by violently beating the brush for snakes and larger lizards. The tribes also fight one another regularly. Snakes, several types of which are poisonous, are not uncommon. A few larger predators and scavengers stay here on occasion. Currently, there are more than usual because of the corpses. Bats are common.

Additionally, there is a goblin assassin, Filth, slinking through the ruins looking for any Fa' Aeadyn survivors. Iraha 'Adyn and a troop of scouts from Agrit Kha's army arrive shortly after the characters, cautiously move into the ruins, making their way to the tower. A group of Red Caps is encamped near the tower. They break up into contingents during the night to search for survivors.

A Fa' Aeadyn priest, Gaeta, is hiding in the ruins, but he relocates his hiding spot regularly. Another Fa' Aeadyn survivor, Es 'Haradyn, is sneaking around the ruins searching for goblin survivors to kill. Finally, Narammidin, the priest from the tower, roves the ruins throughout the day, returning to the tower at night.

Encounter checks occur once during the day and once during the evening. Roll a d6 for each. On a 1 an encounter occurs.

If an encounter occurs, roll a d12 and consult the chart below.

DAY

1-6	Herbivore*
7	Griffon 1d4+1
8	Monkey 4d10+20
9	Snake 1
10	Lion 1
11	Hyena 3d6
12	Special (see Unique Encounters below)

Evening

1-7	Herbivore*
8	Monkey 1d10+10
9	Panther 1
10	Giant Snake 1
11	Giant Bat 1d2+2
12	Special (see Unique Encounters below)

*Herbivores are the more common encounter and include deer, antelope, bovine, and the like. They usually travel in smaller numbers through the ruins, typically 10 to 100.

UNIQUE ENCOUNTERS

Roll a d8 to determine which encounter occurs. Adjust these as desired. Some can repeat if possible.

Each of these encounters is described in further detail below.

1	Red Caps Patrol
2	Gaeta
3	Agrit Kha's Scouts
4	Filth
5	Narammidin
6	Es 'Haradyn
7	Aurumvorax
8	Huge Snake

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1 RED CAPS PATROL

A group of 40 Red Caps Marauders remained in the city. They remained to loot what they could find, intending to catch up with the main troop later. The main body is encamped at Encounter Area 1. The patrol consists of 1d6+6 goblins plus a leader. They are always riding their wolves while moving through the ruins and dismount only to inspect something (or if their wolf dies). See Area 1 for details.

2 GAETA

Gaeta is a Fa' Aeadyn priest who survived the attack by the Red Caps. He is aware that some goblins remain in the ruins and of the priest from the tower who is skulking about. He also roves around the ruins, avoiding the goblins, the priest from the tower, and other creatures, while at the same time looking for survivors.

Gaeta will travel north looking for other tribes of Fa' Aeadyn if he finds no survivors. He is neither aware that Filth is in the city nor that a group of Agrit 'Kha's scouts are arriving shortly. If Gaeta sees the characters traveling with a Fa' Aeadyn, he will watch them for a short while before trying to contact the characters, just to ensure they are not there to kill the Fa' Aeadyn. Any of the Fa' Aeadyn that may be traveling with the characters would recognize Gaeta and vouch for him. Otherwise, he shadows them to see what they are doing in the city. If the characters fight either Narammidin, the goblins, or Agrit 'Kha's scouts, he may join them in the effort. If captured or cornered, Gaeta does not immediately offer resistance, but rather tries to communicate. He fights if he feels his life is in danger.

If befriended in some manner, Gaeta can be a great source of information to the characters and potentially an aid in combat. He could relate what occurred in the city, where the Fa' Aeadyn are from, who Agrit 'kha is and what is going on, in a general way, with the entire steppe region to the north and east. More importantly, Gaeta can impart information about the mythology of the Fa' Aeadyn if it becomes necessary. If asked about the tower, Gaeta claims to know little about it. He does explain that he entered with some others and somehow awoke a once seemingly dead priest, whom they fought and managed to drive out of the tower but failed to kill. Also, he will relate that a temple dedicated to Amphoe Wan (called Aphyan by most), a goddess the Fa' Aeadyn worship, is located beneath the tower.

What he does not convey, until he comes to trust the characters, is that he believes Amphoe Wan's Ebon Staff is in the bottom of the tower. If he comes to trust the characters, he relates the significance of the staff. Importantly, if the staff is retrieved, Gaeta explains to the characters that if the Ebon Staff is returned to a temple of Amphoe Wan located far to the east, it will allow the goddess to return to Aihrde and save the Fa' Aeadyn.

GAETA (He is a chaotic good human 5th level cleric whose vital statistics are HD 5d8, HP 25, AC 13, BtH +2, and Move 30 feet. His primary attributes are constitution, wisdom, and charisma. His significant attributes are constitution 15 and wisdom 16. He wears studded leather armor and a brooch with two pearls of power on it, allowing the recall of 4 spells

of up to 6th level. He wields a +1 heavy mace in combat. He carries a potion of walk without trace, a potion of sanctuary, a holy symbol that is also a periapt of wound closure, and an expert overland backpack. He has the following number of spells available; 0-5; 1st-5; 2nd-3; 3rd-1)

3 AGRIT 'KHA'S SCOUTS

These scouts are the lead element of a larger army numbering in the tens of thousands. That army has been spread out recently due to infighting in the kingdom but is still expanding its territories. There are 30 people in the group. They are all mounted on light war horses and led by Mugul Yan. Their intent is not to engage in combat unless necessary. They are just gathering information to be passed on to their superiors. They move around the city, gather what information they can, and then continue to scout to the west, stopping at the Blacktooth Ridge. Generally, the Fa' Aeadyn will fight them, as they are enemies.

Should they encounter the characters, they do not attack, rather they try to engage the characters in conversation, trade, or other friendly activities. This applies even if the party includes Fa' Aeadyn. They will defend themselves if cornered, pressed, or threatened, but will retreat at the first opportunity. If attacked, they will want to return with a larger group of soldiers, but as that could take up to a year to manage (if ever), their intent becomes rather moot.

MUGUL YAN (He is a lawful neutral human 6th level ranger whose vital statistics are HD 5d10, HP 36, AC 16, BtH +4, and Move 30 feet. His primary attributes are strength, constitution, and wisdom. His significant attributes are strength 15 and wisdom 16. He wears a +2 cuir bouille and belt of elemental resistance +2. He wields a +2 scimitar, +1 spear, and short bow in combat. He carries ten bird feather tokens, an expert overland backpack, ranger pack, and 500gp in coin and jewelry.)

LEAD SCOUT (He is a lawful neutral human 3rd level ranger whose vital statistics are HD 3d10, HP 21, AC 13, BtH +2, and Move 30 feet. His primary attributes are dexterity, constitution, and wisdom. His significant attributes are dexterity 15, wisdom 15, and constitution 16. He wears leather armor, shield, and a ring of the ram. He wields a +1 scimitar, spear, and short bow in combat. He carries an expert overland backpack, ranger pack, and 200gp in coin and jewelry.)

SCOUTS 28 (These are lawful neutral 1st level rangers whose vital statistics are HD 1d10, HP 7, AC 12, BtH +0, and Move 30 feet. Their primary attributes are strength, constitution, and wisdom. Their significant attribute is constitution 14. They wear leather armor. They wield scimitars and spears in combat. They carry expert overland packs and 20gp worth of valuables.)

LIGHT WARHORSE (These neutral animals' vital statistics are HD 3d10, HP 20, AC 13, BtH +3, and Move 60 feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 hooves for 1d4+2 damage or a bite for 1d4 damage.)

4 FILTH

Filth is a member of Red Caps. He is highly valued by the Red Caps because Filth is so good at killing. The Red Caps told Filth

to remain in the ruins to search for any surviving Fa' Aeadyn and kill them, which Filth has done. The Red Caps were so thorough that Filth found few survivors, but he still has valuable information. For instance, he knows Gaeta and Narammidin are hiding in the vicinity and has made it a priority to kill both. On the other hand, he is not aware of Es 'Haradyn. Unfortunately for the goblin, Es 'Haradyn is aware of Filth, and intends to kill him first.

Filth does not have a mount. He hides during the day, only coming out at dusk and dawn to track and search, then goes back into hiding during the night (unless he plans to attack someone in the dark). Once Filth becomes aware of the characters, the dynamic changes, and Filth begins to target them. However, he only attacks individuals, never groups that might overwhelm him. He will try to call the remaining goblins to his aid should he get into an untenable situation, assuming there are any alive at that point. If the remaining goblins are not able to help, Filth attempts to escape via a magic portal.

Filth prefers to use poisons, backstabbing, sneak attacks, traps, and other stealthy methods of attack rather than fighting face to face. He abhors getting hurt. If captured, he snivels and begs for mercy, revealing all the information he can to stave off punishment or execution. If released, he immediately goes back to killing and is especially eager to kill those who captured and freed him.

FILTH (He is a lawful evil humanoid 4th/4th level assassin/ranger multi-class whose vital statistics are HD 4d6, HP 15, AC 16, BtH +3, and Move 20 feet. His primary attributes are dexterity, constitution, and intelligence. His significant attributes are constitution 13 and dexterity 16. He wears +1 leather armor, +1 bracer of defense, and cloak of the chameleon. He wields a +1 scimitar and +2 dagger of venom in combat. He carries a potion of sleeping, basic overland backpack, assassins' pack, and 200gp worth of jewelry.)

5 NARAMMIDIN

Narammidin is the one priest who survived the long sleep and was accidentally revived by the Fa' Aeadyn. Once awakened, he realized the danger he was in and sought first to light the warning fire on top of the tower before confronting his enemies. He managed to fight off the Fa' Aeadyn, got to the top of the tower, and lit the fire. He then escaped, vanishing into the surrounding ruins, and hid until the Red Caps arrived. He mistakenly believed the Red Caps to be the help he had signaled for with the fire. But it quickly became obvious they were not his allies, and he once again went into hiding.

Since then, Narammidin has figured out almost everything that has happened, especially regarding Unklar, The Horned God. He knows help is not coming and that the banishment of his god has cost him greatly, though he intuits Mammon is still in Aufstrag. He intends to find the Ebon Staff, taking it with him to Aufstrag, where he will reunite with his master, bearing the artifact as an offering. To that end, he will try to kill anyone who gets in his way.

He has recently entered the tower again and is preparing the spell needed to open the door to the vault containing the staff. But his preparations are slow-paced given his awareness of Filth's presence, along with the remaining goblins. Those factors, as well as the insurgence of predators, sparked fears of getting caught inside, unable to defend himself. Narammidin has decided to wait for everyone to leave, while watching over the tower and attacking anyone who wanders too far inside, especially near the vault. He has summoned a bat familiar who stays inside the tower and contacts him when anyone enters, while he hides in the ruins. Narammidin moves about constantly, believing if he stays in one place too long, someone will figure out where he is and attempt to kill him.

NARAMMIDIN (He is a lawful evil human 8th level cleric whose vital statistics are HD 8d8, HP 31, AC 17, BtH +4, and Move 30 feet. His primary attributes are intelligence, wisdom, and charisma. His significant attributes are constitution 16, intelligence 16, wisdom 16, and charisma 15. He wears a +2 cloak of displacement and protection, +2 bracers of defense, +2 ring of protection, and a necklace of spell resistance +3. He wields a +3 feather-edged dagger and six throwing darts in combat. He carries a +2 staff of frost and fire, a clear ioun stone, an orange ioun stone, a whip feather token, two dragon's teeth, a basic overland pack and 100gp in jewelry. He has the following number of spells available; 0-5; 1st-5; 2nd-4; 3rd-3; 4th-3; 5th-2)

6 ES 'HARADYN

Es 'Haradyn was out hunting when the Red Caps arrived. He returned a couple of days prior to the characters' arrival to witness the aftermath of the attack. Since that time, he has been hunting for goblins to kill. Es 'Haradyn is aware of the group of goblins located in the goblin encampment and suspects another goblin is slinking around. That would be Filth. He stays hidden from everyone as best he can, waiting for a chance to strike. Should he witness the character's attacking the goblins, he may join in, especially if there is another Fa' Aeadyn fighting with the characters. Once Agrit 'Kha 's scouts arrive, Es 'Haradyn makes plans to leave. He heads back east in search of other Fa' Aeadyn unless he and the characters start working together.

ES 'HARADYN (He is a neutral good human 5th level ranger whose vital statistics are HD 5d10, HP 32, AC 13, BtH +4, and Move 30 feet. His primary attributes are strength, constitution, and dexterity. His significant attributes are strength 13, constitution 16, and dexterity 15. He wears leather armor and boots of elvenkind. He wields a +2 wolf spear, shortsword, and +1 short bow in combat. He carries an expert overland pack.)

7 AURUMVORAX

This creature is the size of badger but looks more like a crouching coyote with eight legs and a snub snout bristling with gleaming white canines. Despite its size, the aurumvorax weighs up to 500 pounds and can crush someone should they land on top of them. It lives in the ruins and comes out to eat on the corpses now scattered around the city. It aggressively defends any prey it

is eating but otherwise ignores everything else unless attacked. The aurumvorax currently goes to Area 2 to eat. Until the food runs out, it wanders between its lair and whichever pile of bodies it happens to be eating from (see map and Area 2 for more details).

AURUMVORAX (This neutral magical beast's vital statistics are HD 12d8, HP 52, AC 20, BtH +12, and Move 30 feet. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite for 2d4 damage. Special: Locking Jaw and Resistant to Weapons.)



8 HUGE SNAKE

There is a single huge snake that lives in the ruins. The snake is roughly 200 years old and has lived here since it arrived in the world. It is quite aggressive when out looking for food, which it does about once a week. Otherwise, the snake just slithers around without bothering anything and defends itself if attacked. There have been no predatory species in these ruins in over a hundred years, thus the snake has become quite placid. If the characters leave food, the snake eats it, and will not view them as a threat (more likely, the snake will sense the characters are a source of nutrition). It will still attack if molested while eating. It may mistake a halfling or gnome for easy prey.

Huge Snake (This neutral animals' vital statistics are HD 6d8, HP 41, AC 15, BtH +6, and Move 30/30/30 feet ground/climb/swim. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite for 1d4 damage and a coil for 2d6 damage. Special: Constrict.)

8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

ENCOUNTER AREAS

AREA 1 GOBLIN ENCAMPMENT

There are 40 goblins camped in an old building on this square. They remained to loot what they could but have found little of any value (or what they consider valuable). They do not keep guards; however, their wolf mounts, equal to the number of goblins, always linger outside nearby. Between 1d20+10 goblins are in the camp at any given time, while the others are on patrol or looting in other parts of the ruins. There is a pile of corpses in the square nobody has bothered to burn or bury. Several fires burn throughout the day and night while the goblins eat, drink, and sing songs. Groups of between 1d6+6 of them are often patrolling or searching through the ruins looking for treasure left by the Fa' Aeadyn. There is a 50% chance that 1-2 parties are out searching at any given time.

They have not accumulated much treasure, with most taken by the larger group of Red Caps shortly before. In and around the encampment are found the following items and materials which may be of value: over 500 feet of rope, dozens of harnesses, one harness set worth 100gp, a dozen small 1 gallon barrels of oil, dozens of bags of dried rice, peas, fruits and jerky, silver jewelry worth 500gp, gold jewelry worth 300gp, two dozen long composite bows, roughly 1000 arrows, a hundred daggers, 50 short swords, axes, saws, and some woodworking tools.

Adjust the number at the encounter based on previous encounters or patrol sizes.

GOBLIN LEADER (*He is a lawful evil humanoid whose vital statistics are HD 4d8, HP 25, AC 17, BtH +4, and Move 20 feet. His primary attributes are physical. His significant attribute is dexterity 16. He wears a chain shirt and shield. He wields a +1 scimitar and short bow in combat. He carries 100gp in valuables on his person.*)

GOBLINS 40 (*These are lawful evil humanoids whose vital statistics are HD 2d6, HP 9, AC 16, BtH +2, and Move 20 feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear chain shirts. They wield spears and scimitars in combat. They carry 10d10gp in coin and valuables on their person.*)

WOLVES (*These are neutral animals whose vital statistics are HD 2d8, HP 12, AC 13, BtH +2, and Move 50 feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d8 damage.*)

AREA 2

This is a large courtyard that not more than a year ago was cleared of all debris, and any trees or brush that grew here. Portions of the plaza were exposed as the buildings around the square were being cleared. The square is surrounded by smoldering debris such as wagons, chariots, trees, tree limbs, and other detritus, and several hundred hastily constructed pikes line the courtyard. Upon each is thrust the head of some hapless person. Worse, a large, grizzly pile of 200-300 bodies rot in the middle of the square. All are headless, their flesh picked apart by carrion birds and other vermin.

The Red Caps used this area to execute a Fa' Aeadyn threat whenever any were captured. If the characters care to search through the grizzly wreckage, they can find about 1000gp worth of jewelry. A ranger, barbarian, druid, or other familiar or skill in hunting and trapping quickly notes that something quite large has been gnawing on the bodies. Some of the bodies were dragged from the pile and scavenged, many with thigh bones snapped, and rib cages crushed by a rare and valuable *aurumvorax* that lives about a ¼ mile from this location. It comes out every few days to grab a corpse and munch on it. Tracking it is a normal track check. Its lair is in a tunnel in a portion of the wall. *ee* Wandering Monsters for statistics.

AREA 3

Not much is left of this building except its superstructure. It was large at one time, at least three stories high, covering nearly a whole city block. It is mostly overgrown now, although less so than many similar buildings. Small wooden objects arranged and carved to look like humans or esoteric symbols dangle from many bushes and saplings around the premises, most made of woven twigs, although a few clay symbols are located on necklaces.

The objects are wards and warnings placed there by the Fa' Aeadyn. They inform everyone that the place is haunted. Once inside the building, it becomes obvious the bushes and trees have been highly manicured and are wonderful works of art to behold. A ghost lives in this building. He was killed when the city was sacked by the forces of Mammon. The ghost is harmless and has resided here since that time. Often it stays in the realm between here and there, where ghosts are stuck, but it comes out usually once a week for a few days. It can pick up a small set of shears with which it begins to manicure the plants.

The ghost's name is Repsac. It will sit and talk with whoever bothers to speak with it. Repsac is quite friendly and caring. If attacked, the ghost ignores the threat until it takes 20 points of damage. It then gets a little miffed and attacks back. Much information about the city's past can be gleaned from the ghost.

GHOST (*This neutral undead's vital statistics are HD 10d8, HP 60, AC 20, BtH +10, and Move 30 feet. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with a slam. Special: Touch of Death, Frightful Moan, Telekinesis, and Moan.*)

THE TOWER

The great tower in the center of the city is constructed to resemble a tree. The tower is called Urusunik, or the Tower of Chains. It was built some ages ago above a vault used to hold the Ebon Staff. It is roughly 800 feet tall and 200 feet across on the outside at its base.

The walls of the lower portion of the tower are several dozen feet thick. The upper portion of the tower narrows to 30 feet across, with the walls being only a few feet thick. It is made of black basalt, its stone cut, carved, and intricately stacked to give the tower's outer surface a near bark-like appearance.

Near the top of the tower a dozen slender balconies extend out from the interior to stretch outward into the open air, some like branches of stonework wide enough to provide walkways, others narrower, like vines precariously clinging to the trunk of the tower. Three of the balconies have collapsed, their debris scattered around the base of the tower.

The tower is entered through two large iron doors, standing at the height of six men. One of the doors is slightly ajar, leaving enough space for two people to enter side by side, while the other door remains shut. Each door displays an identical image of a massive horned beast with the cloven hooves of a goat, the torso of a man, and the head of a bull. Shattered blocks of basalt from the collapsed balcony protrusions lay in large piles near the base of the tower. The interior of the tower is mostly hollow. There is a stone staircase leading to the roof, long which are several landings that give access to the balconies extending from the tower.

There are several rooms beneath the tower, one of which contains the Ebon Staff. This is also where the priests laid in repose for such a long time.

If the characters decide not to walk through the open front door, they will find the tower is exceedingly easy to climb; all such attempts are made at +5 to a skill roll. Giant bats occasionally hang on the underside of the balconies while resting and digesting food. As such, there are large pyramidal piles of dung on the ground beneath several of the walkways. If observing the tower at night, shortly after the sun sets, one can see the outline of the giant bats leaving through the balcony entrances. They return before sunrise.

Atop the tower, a green flame burns bright, licking the clouds and bathing the city in an indistinct green light. The top of the tower is flat where the green flame is located. The flame is a signal asking for help and will continue to burn until the characters or somebody else puts it out. Narammidin has ignored it since igniting the signal, as he recently surmised that the Horned God was banished, and that help is never likely to arrive.

Once the characters enter the temple, the priest Narammidin is alerted by his familiar, one of the thousands of smaller bats in the tower. The priest uses the bat to spy on the characters. Should the characters come near the vault that contains the staff, Narammidin comes to the tower to fight the characters. Otherwise, the priest tries to remain hidden.

The tower is built over an old temple that Narammidin and the other priests could not enter. Opening the door to the temple requires a Fa 'Aeadyn who worships Amphoe Wan. The door to the temple was concealed, and a vault built in front of it. The vault contains the Ebon Staff, which was placed inside for safekeeping, to keep it out of reach of Amphoe Wan and her worshippers. The vault is a diversion from the concealed door to the temple, and its conspicuous existence taunts the devotees of Amphoe Wan. Several rooms and chambers were built around this, and then the tower atop all of it.

INTERIOR LOWER TOWER

The interior of the tower is a magnificent work of architecture. The walls on the lower portion of the tower are 24 feet thick. The tower narrows to 30 feet across the top, with the walls being only several feet thick at that point. There are no rooms in the interior of the tower. A single statue stretches up to the ceiling of the tower some 800 feet above the floor. The statue is of a single creature with cloven hooves, goat-like legs, and a human torso with a bull head. The horns of the head tangle into the structure of the ceiling. All over the statue are intricate carvings of many tens of thousands of different types of beasts, humanoids, and people in armor. The interior walls of the tower are likewise carved with depictions of soldiers, armies, beasts, dragons, and thousands of different types of creatures.

A broad stone staircase, about 8 feet wide, spirals up the walls to the ceiling. There is no handrail on the steps. The floor is piled high in some places with up to ten feet of bat guano. The floor is impossible to see except where a trail has been dug through the guano. Several spades, pitchforks, and picks lay scattered about.

If the characters enter the tower during the day, it is deathly quiet, very humid, and there is an overwhelming smell of urine and feces. The clicking of bats begins as soon as the characters start moving around inside, escalating quickly, until ten thousand bats are making noise. This sound echoes and reverberates inside the tower so much that it can begin to affect concentration, and even cause headaches which interferes with spell casting (a constitution check is required, a failure indicating the character casting a spell must make a wisdom check to successfully cast the spell).

The bats quiet down somewhat after about ten minutes if the characters do not further disturb them, remaining quiet unless stirred again by more commotion. The characters are more likely to disturb the bats if they go up to the top of the tower, especially the larger specimens (see Upper Tower for more details). The bats begin erratically flying around if disturbed using magic or they are attacked. They do not want to leave during the day, so keep swirling lower. The large bats in the upper portion of the tower will come down to attack the source of the problem (the characters). If the characters enter during the evening, only a few hundred bats remain, and the others do not return until just before sunrise.

The Fa 'Aeadyn were mining the guano for fuel, hence the trail. They excavated a door located in the back of one of the hooves of the statue found in the center of the tower. This door is closed now but is easily opened. Steps leading down are inside the heel of the statue. These lead to the chamber below the tower (see Lower Chambers below).

The steps which circle the inside of the tower, leading to the roof, are covered in bat guano and are quite slick. Fighting on the steps is difficult. Every round of melee requires the combatants to make a dexterity check to remain standing. Failure indicates they have slipped over. A second check is then required with failure indicating they have fallen off the steps. Unless the bats are disturbed on the way up, nothing out of the ordinary occurs.

INTERIOR UPPER TOWER

The upper portion of the tower gradually narrows until it reaches the ceiling. At that point, the tower is 30 feet across with 2-3 foot thick walls. The steps continue to spiral upwards to the ceiling but become narrower and narrower until, just before reaching the entrance to the roof, they are only about 2 feet wide. There are 15 small landings in the upper quarter of the tower. These are located by each of the fifteen balconies. The statue reaches to just below the ceiling. The horns extending from the head of the statue and twist up into the ceiling. The staircase ends at the ceiling, where one enters a small dark tunnel.

Fighting at the top of the tower is even more difficult than below because the steps are narrow. Every 200 feet up the steps, it becomes increasingly difficult to remain standing during combat without falling off the steps. At 100-200 feet the dexterity check is CL1, at 200-300 feet it is CL2, at 300-400 feet it is CL3, 400-500 feet is CL4, 500-600 feet is CL5, 600-700 feet is CL6, and 700-800 feet is CL7.

As the characters move up the steps, they pass the head of the statue at roughly the 650-foot point. The eyes are massive and are painted red with blue slits where the iris' would be. The eyes appear to be watching those moving up or down the steps, seemingly moving with a character. This can be disconcerting and disorienting to those who look at the statue. If any of the characters stop to look at the eyes, they must make a charisma check at CL 2. Failure indicates they fall under a disorienting curse. Once each round for the following d6 rounds, the character must make a wisdom check at CL 0. If they fail, they roll a d6. This is the number of rounds they stand transfixed by the eyes. At the end of this time, they walk off the steps, falling to the floor below.

The upper section of the tower is crowded with bats. There are thousands of them hanging from the statue and on any irregular surfaces under the steps. There are large bats up here as well as smaller ones; large carnivorous bats that may attack the characters. If the characters disturb the bats here, they proceed to vacate the tower entirely, by the hundreds or thousands, until the place is empty of all but a few bats. Just the sheer numbers will cause them to swarm the characters. This is unusual behavior, as they prefer avoiding other animals.

If a swarm happens in the upper 300 feet of the tower, the characters are subject to being affected. Roll a d20 for each character. A 10 or better means the character is swarmed and must make a dexterity check CL 2 or fall prone. If a character drops to their knees for stability, there is a +5 bonus to the check. If they lie down on the steps, the check is made at a +10. If a character falls prone, they must make another check. Failure indicates they have slipped off the edge of the stairs. Twelve large bats attack the characters in a randomly determined order, and when they attack, the smaller bats continue to swarm. The CK will note that all dexterity or footing checks stack up! In all cases, the swarming of the smaller bats ends after 5 minutes, as it takes them this long to leave the tower.

BATS (These neutral animals' vital statistics are HD 1d2, HP 1, AC 17, BtH +0, and Move 60 feet flying. Their primary attributes are physical. They have no attack. Special: Swarm.)

BATS GIANT (These neutral animals' vital statistics are HD 3d4, HP 7, AC 15, BtH +3, and Move 80 feet flying. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d2 damage. Special: They first attack is a latching attack that causes no damage. Once successfully latched on to an opponent they proceed with a bite attack.)

BALCONIES

There were originally fifteen balconies, but three collapsed, leaving twelve intact balconies. These are arranged in the top 250 feet of the tower. Each has roughly 20 feet of elevation, starting at the height of 550 feet. There is a landing in front of each balcony with a narrow portal leading to each. The branch-like balconies are quite narrow, only being about 4 feet wide, and some are even narrower in places, more like flat vines with half a foothold. They extend outward 50 feet and have no railings. The surface of the balcony is smooth and reflective, like a black mirror and were created to be slightly off-angle, with tiny reflective irregularities which often causes vertigo.

Fighting on the balconies is ridiculously dangerous. Even maintaining balance at this height without suffering dizziness from vertigo is taxing. If a character spends more than their wisdom score in rounds on a balcony, they may suffer vertigo. They should make a wisdom check at CL0, with failure meaning they start feeling the effects of vertigo and must make a dexterity check at CL+2 to remain standing. Repeat this wisdom check, halving the number of rounds before the next check each time. For every failure, the vertigo worsens, increasing the dexterity check CL by +1. For every success, the vertigo subsides one step. If a character is engaged in combat the CL should be increased by a further 1d3. Should a character fail the dexterity check they slip and are hanging from the balcony. Another dexterity check, with the same CL as the previous roll, will determine if they fall the 800ft or not.

On the uppermost balcony, at the limb's end, is a large nest. It is made of branches, vines, twigs, and other debris. The nest covers half the length of the balcony, with the edge being five feet high. Several giant ravens, about three feet tall, sit on the edge of the nest.

This is a griffon nest and contains three oval multicolored eggs, each about one foot long and eight inches wide. Griffons and ravens have a symbiotic relationship. The ravens live near griffon nests and generally eat their scraps. The ravens also act as accidental guards because when anything gets near their 'source of food' they begin screeching loudly. A griffon can hear this up to a mile away. Luckily for the characters, the griffons who nest here are gone, but they are not gone for long. The griffons come back within 48 hours. If the eggs are gone, the griffons go hunting for those who took them. They will be able to pick up the scent of the eggs and track them when outside. They also call the entire brood when tracking those who took the eggs.



The eggs hatch in 3 months. The griffons can be trained, but this takes quite some time and effort. The eggs can sell for up to 10,000gp each. Although the shells are hard, they can be broken, and even a hairline fracture can kill the baby inside.

GRIFFONS 6 (These neutral magical beasts' vital statistics are HD 7d10, HP 45 each, AC 17, BtH +7, and Move 30/80 feet walk/fly. Their size is large, and their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d4 damage each and a bite for 2d8 damage. Special Abilities: Darkvision to 60 feet, Twilight Vision.)

ROOFTOP

The steps meet the ceiling, leading into a three feet wide tunnel that travels around the full circumference of the rooftop. As with other areas of the upper tower, bats live in here and will fly out as soon as anyone enters the tower.

12 CASTLES & CRUSADES

The tunnel opens onto the roof of the tower. The roof is bathed in a green glow. There is a large stone vase, about ten feet in diameter and 20 feet high, in the center of the roof. A blue-green flame erupts from the top of the vase. Narrow, nearly vertical steps are carved into the vase. Two large pipes of a horn extend up from the floor and wrap around the vase ending in two large bells, some ten feet above the vase. Piles of grass, twigs, and branches are scattered around the rooftop. Amongst these are the remnants of large eggshells.

The eggshells belonged to those of a hippogriff. These shells hatched a season ago and have not decayed (they can last several years unless something eats them). A hippogriff nested here until it was chased away by griffons.

The horn extends through to the statue in the tower, leading to Area 16 underneath the tower, where the mouthpieces are located. Should anyone blow into these horns correctly, a sound is emitted from on top of the tower, and its deep baritone blast can be heard for miles around. Blowing the horns will clear the tower of the bats. Everything scatters, including griffons, hippogriffs, or other creatures. Please see Area 16 for more details.

The fire is a blue-green heat flame, designed to be both a warning and a request for aid from the priests in the tower and their allies. Igniting it was a simple process requiring just the casting of a spell with a drop of blood. The flame remains until someone of good alignment is thrown in it – or walks in it. The flame scorches the soul of any good-aligned person who steps inside, resulting in 1d6 wisdom damage per round. When the flame has absorbed 18 points of wisdom it gutters and goes out. As the flame is absorbing wisdom points, it becomes dimmer and dimmer and smaller in size. If a character is brought to 0 wisdom, they die, and their soul is sucked away forever. The wisdom damage from this flame is healed at a rate of 1 point per day if they survive.

LOWER CHAMBERS: LEVEL ONE

AREA 1 STAIRS

The stairs to the lower chambers are located under the foot of the statue in the center of the tower. It is a spiral staircase with irregularly sized steps which descends 15 feet. The steps are moist and slick and cold air wafts up from below. A musty odor pervades the tight chute leading down. The steps are only wide enough for one person to move down them and the ceiling is only six feet above the steps. Despite their age, the steps do not show much erosion.

Because the steps are irregularly sized and slick, walking down them takes some minimal concentration. Fighting on the steps is difficult as they are only three feet wide and coil tightly. Fighting with anything more than 36" long is done so at a -2 per additional six inches of length. It is nearly impossible

to effectively fight with anything more than 6 feet in length. Fighting on the steps requires combatants to make a dexterity check every round. Failure indicates a slip. This results in a -2 to their AC, and they cannot attack that round. As well, they must make a second dexterity check. Failure indicates they have fallen and are considered prone until they can stand back up.

AREA 2 LARGE CHAMBER

The steps end in a large room, though it feels very cramped. The room is only 7 feet tall, and there are 2-foot-thick columns spaced every 5 feet of the room. The columns are in a staggered grid and not rows, making the area feel even more confined. The room is damp, and chilly. The smell of rotting flesh permeates the room.

The columns are all intricately carved with many thousands of representations of various beasts, gods, demons, devils, and unholy inscriptions of the long banished Unklar. The floor is a complex mosaic of intersecting lines that are just slightly off parallel. These combine to create an uncomfortable feeling in the room. A feeling of oppression, of being squeezed, and controlled, is viscerally felt by most entering here, almost as if the doors to a cell have just slammed shut. Anyone in this room of good or chaotic alignment makes all mental saving throws at -1.

There is a pile of half a dozen headless Fa' Aeadyn in the corner of the room. Six dead goblins lie on the floor as well.

AREA 3 SHRINE TO UNKLAR

This small room contains a shrine to Unklar. A stone shelf stretches across the south end of the room. There are six 4-foot-tall statues on the shelf, each is of a horned beast in various poses of relaxation. In front of each is a copper bowl set into the shelf. The floor is a simple mosaic depicting snakes.

The shrine room was not entered by any of the Fa' Aeadyn. Their priest thought the room to be cursed and refused to enter. They were correct to think that. Anyone who enters the room without offering a drop of blood in each of the six copper bowls becomes a target for a curse.

The snake-mosaics on the floor come to life, attacking the person refusing to sacrifice some of their own blood to Unklar. It takes 1d4+2 minutes before the snakes from the mosaic come to life.

The small snakes behave and attack like any other venomous snakes, although the stones used in making the mosaic serve as armor-like skin, conferring a higher armor class. They are semi-intelligent and receive a higher BtH than normal snakes as they attempt to chase the offender out of the room and kill them. When killed, a snake's body dissolves and reappears as part of the mosaic.

SNAKES 6 (These are neutral magical beasts whose vital statistics are HD 1d4, HP 4, AC 16, BtH +4, and Move 20/20/20 feet normal/climb/swim. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite with no damage. Special: Poison.)

AREA 4 SLEEPING CHAMBER

This chamber was once a sleeping chamber for the priests who lived here. The remains of ten rotting wooden beds are lined up against the walls, each falling apart. Broken trunks are scattered around the room, and a dilapidated wooden door hangs open, partly off its hinges on the east wall. The threadbare and rotting remains of clothing, footwear, and vestments are also scattered around the room.

This room was looted by the Fa' Aeadyn and then by the Red Caps. Other than the decayed and rotting remains of personal gear, nothing of any value remains.

AREA 5 STORAGE CHAMBER

This small chamber was used for the storage of personal goods and foodstuffs. The boxes, trunks, containers, and baskets have been thoroughly looted by the Fa' Aeadyn and the Red Caps. Amongst the debris are many ceramic containers. All of these are broken. There are smaller containers, about 4 inches tall and 3 inches wide, made of marble. Each has an inscription on the bottom conferring a magical quality to that which is drunk out of the container (be it water, milk, or wine). The liquid can cure 1d8 HP of damage or 1 constitution point lost for whatever reason. It can only be used once a week. There are 4 of these containers left in the room. They need stoppers of some type.

AREA 6 BATHROOM

This was a bathroom. It still smells fetid. There are several large ceramic jars in the room and yellowish mold and purple mushrooms growing on the floor and walls.

YELLOW MOLD (This is a neutral plant whose vital statistics are HD 1d1, HP 1, AC 10, BtH n/a, and Move n/a. It has no primary attributes. It attacks with a spore release. Special: Poison Spores, Psionic Blast.)

AREA 7 SMALL KITCHEN

This area was used for cooking when necessary. There is no venting from the room, so it was never used much. Two small cast iron stoves are against the west wall. Each weigh about 1000lbs, so are quite difficult to move. Some old rusted out skillets and pots lay around the room. There are broken jars, rotten wooden bowls, and similar kitchenware in here as well. Shelves that once lined the wall are broken and scattered on the floor. Hooks used for hanging vegetables line the ceiling.

In both stoves is one small piece of ever burning coal. These are buried in the sodden ash and the few chunks of normal coal which are left. They appear just as normal pieces of coal but, when lit, always catch fire, thus obviating the need for kindling. They are pieces of rock from the abyss, immediately notable by any dwarf or stonemason as something unworldly, though nothing more specific than that.

AREA 8 COMMON ROOM

This room was used for meetings and eating. Several headless corpses of Fa' Aeadyn are rotting in the center of the room.

A scatter of debris, clothing, and personal items surround them. Four goblin corpses are in the room as well. Rotten wood, parts of chairs and a table are pushed up against the west wall. Mats and blankets are strewn around the perimeter of the room.

Several Fa' Aeadyn priests were staying here before the attack. When the Red Caps attacked a few Fa' Aeadyn escaped as far as this room, where they were killed. One of the priests was near the woodpile when she was shot with an arrow and died. She was holding a gem capable of summoning an earth elemental (it acts exactly as a ring of elemental command) at the time and dropped it in the pile of wood. If the pile of wood is searched, the gem is easily found.

AREA 9 SCROLL ROOM

This room was used to store scrolls. Several old scribe's desks are located on either side of the door along the southern wall. In the center of the areas in the east and west of the room are reading desks. All the nooks have racks of shelves filled with scrolls. Most of the scrolls are scattered on the ground. These are remarkably well-preserved scrolls.

The language written on the scrolls is old and only known by scholars, researchers, and the like. The scrolls mostly contain histories, genealogies, and clerical material such as lists of materials ordered and transactions with merchants. There are some scrolls recording conversations with officials from Aufstrag and others containing troop dispositions, edicts, etc. Most are of little interest or utility to the characters. Each is worth 50gp as an antiquity. There are approximately 1000 scrolls here.

There is one set of scrolls that explains the history of the tower, who built it and how. These scrolls also contain the reason for the tower being built, and the spell one could cast to open the door to the Shrine of Amphoe Wan. The chances of the characters finding this spell through anything other than magical means is roughly 0%. If they do use magical means, it can be located. Casting a spell in which a character communes with their deity should be enough to point the characters in the right direction. A Fa' Aeadyn priest could read the spell's meaning, but casting it requires an 8th level druid, cleric, or similar class.

AREA 10 STAIRS TO LEVEL TWO

A set of long and broad steps lead down into darkness. The steps are easily 10-feet wide, quite regular in shape and do not show any wear from use or age. They are slick but rough enough that walking on them is not an issue.

LOWER CHAMBERS: LEVEL TWO

AREA 11 ENTRY HALL

The steps exit into a large hall. There is one column in the center of this hall. It is shaped like a tree with thick branches extending out all over the ceiling of the chamber. The trunk and branches are covered in intricate designs and motifs depicting various gods in acts of war.

14 CASTLES & CRUSADES

The floor is a complex and colorful mosaic depicting wildlife on the Plains of Achrothos. The walls glitter in the torchlight with many hundreds of thousands of gems and jewels arranged in mosaics depicting farming, feeding people, and acts of worship to a tree. There are two iron doors on each of the east and west walls. All four are open. To the north is a large opening.

The north side of the column is open where a corridor slants down into the earth. This corridor dives down under Area 11 and then rises to enter Area 17.

AREA 12 HIGH PRIEST'S CHAMBER

The door to this room is open. It can be barred with an iron crossbar from the inside. Within are an upturned bed, a bureau which has been knocked down and shattered, a scattering of old and threadbare clothing, some personal odds and ends, a broken table, and a chamber pot.

This was the high priest's room. It has been thoroughly ransacked. However, in all the ransacking, no one bothered checking the bedposts. Two of the posts have a fake knob on top, which unscrew easily. There is a slot containing a wand of frost with 20 charges left on it. The other bedpost has been hollowed out and contains 100 platinum coins, each worth 50 gold pieces. The coins have the stamp of Unklar on them and might bring the ire of locals if used in the wrong place.

AREA 13 STUDY

This was a study for the priests. There are half a dozen wooden floor desks in the room and tattered rugs. A carving of Unklar is on the northern wall.

This is not a carving. This is a mimic. It was once a pet of the high priest who lived here. It's waiting to attack a single person, not a group. It moves around the lower areas of the complex, changing shape as necessary. It is quite hungry at this point but tries to remain 'out of sight' to avoid getting killed until it might catch someone unguarded.

MIMIC (This neutral aberration's vital statistics are HD 7d8, HP 36, AC 15, BtH +7, and Move 10 feet. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a slam for 3d4 damage. Special: Adhesive, Crush, Darkvision 60 feet, Immunity to Acid (full), and Mimic Shape.)

AREA 14 STORAGE

This room was used to store vestments and other ritual accouterments. Almost all have been looted and scattered around the room. There are broken racks and trunks in here as well.

Although almost everything in here is rotted and threadbare, close examination reveals that all the vestments are sewn with a small amount of silver and gold thread. The silver and gold from the cloth is worth almost 2000gp if it is all collected. Carrying all of the vestments is difficult as all the cloth weighs 200lbs.

Urusunik Tower



AREA 16 SUMMONING ROOM

The floor in front of the room (before one enters) has unusual scrawls made with ash. The north end of the room has a large statue of a man sitting cross legged. The feet are cloven. The statue's head looks up to an imagined sky. Horns protruding from the statue's head wrap and tangle around one another before ending about 5 feet off the ground in front of the statue. A second set of horns rises into the ceiling. The arms of the statue are stretched out, palms facing up. The statue is 20 feet tall, and the ceiling is 30 feet above the floor.

The floor in front of the statue is blue as ice and etched with a triangle filled with a golden material. Arcane figures are carved into the floor along the perimeter of the triangle.

This room served three purposes. There is a shrine to Unklar here. This room is also where the horns running through the statue of the tower originate. Summoning rituals were performed here as well. The statue is that of Unklar. The triangle on the floor is a place where summoning occurred. The magic that once powered that summoning is now gone from the world.

The horns descending from the statue to in front of it are the mouthpieces of a working horn. This horn is built into the statue in the tower and end on the rooftop. Should anyone blow into these horns correctly, the sound is emitted on top of the tower, and its deep baritone blast can be heard for miles around. Blowing the horns will clear the tower of bats and any other creatures that are inside. Everything scatters, including griffons, hippogriffs, or other creatures.

The horns were designed to contact Ethorix, a servant of Mammon. Ethorix is a Blue Dragon who has slept for ages in a quiet slumber. He will hear the call and slowly wake up, then make his way to Patholear. Ethorix should not show up in this adventure unless the CK prefers that

he do so. Ethorix should arrive long after the characters have left the ruin. He comes to occupy the tower with the intent of protecting other servants of Mammon. When he finds none, Ethorix decides to take up residence in the tower. He is hungry, very hungry.

There is a section of the statue removed and placed on the floor from the posterior of the statue, revealing a space about 4 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 3 feet deep. This space held the scroll case found in Area 19.

AREA 15 STORAGE

This room was used to store dried foods, weapons, tools, and items of similar nature used for maintenance and upkeep of the lower portion of the tower. The room has a scatter of broken boxes, crates, and rotted baskets strewn around. This room never had much value in it and still does not.

...except for a single gold coin lying in the middle of the room. There is no debris around the coin. It lies, shining and alone, in the middle of the room. That is it; a goblin put it there as a joke should anyone come here.

AREA 17 CRYPT

This hall is also a crypt. On either side of the corridor are 5 x 5 foot alcoves. Each of the alcoves contains a desiccated body, standing upright. These are elaborately dressed corpses, each wearing robes and hats of blue and white, threaded with gold and silver threads. Tiny gems of all types are embroidered into the material. Stone shelves wrap around the upper portion of the alcoves. The shelves have ceramic jars on them.

The first two alcoves to the east and west have a scattering of broken boxes, tools, and clothing. There are dozens of broken vessels on the floor near a box. These alcoves were used as storage. The other alcoves were used for the storage of the dead's remains, and the last priests used them as a place of repose. The ceramic jars in the alcoves all contain the ashen remains of long dead priests. There are some 200 of these spread out among the shelves. Each of the jars has a name on it. All the alcoves have a corpse in it except the one. The corpses in the alcoves are of those of the last priests who resided here.

The Fa' Aeadyn entered this area but dared not disturb the corpses. The empty alcove is where Narammidin was 'sleeping' before being revived. Narammidin left before the Fa' Aeadyn came down this far. He went through Area 18 and down to Area 19. After a time, he came out, got in a scuffle with the Fa' Aeadyn, and then escaped. But he has come back down since the Fa' Aeadyn were killed, having decided to take the Ebon Staff somewhere safer. Above the

The secret door at the end of the hall is open.

AREA 18 TREASURY

This room is completely empty except for one large iron pylon near the southeast corner. Everything else in it was taken by either the Fa' Aeadyn or the Red Caps. It was once a treasury. The secret door in the southwest corner of the room is closed.

The secret door is very well hidden, and neither the Fa' Aeadyn nor the Red Caps found it. The door is so well woven into the frame that locating it is a CL5 wisdom check. To open it first requires that the door to Area 17 be closed. If that door is not closed, the lock-bar holding this secret door in place will not budge. Once that door is closed, a mechanism releases the lock-bar. There is a pressure plate in the southeast end of the room that must have at least 400 pounds of pressure placed on it. The pressure plate is only 1 x 1 foot square. The iron pylon is in here for that exact purpose. Placing that weight on the pressure plate releases a second bar in the door so that it can then be pushed inward, revealing a set of steps leading down into the darkness. The iron pylon is only a foot away from the pressure plate. There are scratch marks on the floor between it and the pressure plate.

The steps are trapped with three large iron blades recessed in the ceiling above. The mechanism was reset by Narammidin but is easily seen. The steps are all pressure sensitive, and stepping on them can activate the trap, causing the blades to come slicing down. Each step can only take 200 pounds of weight,

any more than that and the step drops a bit, activating the trap. The blades drop down and arc over the steps, each blade doing damage equivalent to a 10HD creature. If they strike, they cause 2d8 damage. Also, the blades cause damage again on the backswing, before moving fully back up to rest into their slots. If a blade strikes someone, it will not have enough force to swing back up into its slot, and instead remains hanging limply.

LEVEL 3

AREA 19 VAULT OF THE EBON STAFF, FAKE

This room is constructed of pure white marble. A low black pedestal in the center of the room has an ebony staff lying on top of it. It is a simple staff except for the 3-inch-wide ruby attached to the top. Otherwise, it is constructed of dark wood and is carved to appear as an antelope horn. The staff is roughly six feet tall. The floor around the pedestal is etched with protective symbols that begin to glow slightly orange as the pedestal is approached. The ceiling above the pedestal has some etched into it as well. A large scroll case leans against the wall near the southeast corner of the room. Two clay jars about 2 feet tall are located near the northeast corner of the room. Between the two is a small metal cup.

There are ten protective glyphs above and below the staff. One glyph arcs out a bolt of electricity to the hand of the person touching the staff when it is touched. If the staff is moved with another object (say a 10-foot pole with a hook), a bolt of lightning strikes the person holding the pole or object moving the staff. This causes 1d12 damage per strike with a constitution save for half. If magic is used to move the staff, the person casting the spell is struck. Each round the staff is manipulated, a glyph explodes, striking someone. The strikes can reach up to 30 feet away. The strike causes 1d10 damage and requires the person struck to make a constitution check at CL8 or drop whatever it is they are holding.

The ruby on the staff is worth 10,000gp. The glyphs recharge 6 hours after they have exploded. They can be neutralized if a *dispel magic* is cast on them CL 12.

The clay jars contain water. The scroll case contains a huge scroll with a spell on it.

The concealed door on the east wall is more akin to a magic door. The door does not exist until the correct spell is cast to create it. The spell is on the scroll in the scroll case. To cast the spell requires at least an 8th level cleric or druid who can read the script (this is left up to the discretion of the CK). The casting time is 12 hours. During that time, the caster must read the spell on the scroll continuously for the twelve hours. Though this might sound like an easy task for an aesthetic or similar class who spends much of their time concentrating, the spell has a fail-safe switch in it. The spell attacks the caster as it is being cast. Casting must be completely uninterrupted. Every hour the caster must make a constitution check. Failure causes the caster to take 1d10 damage and a temporary loss of 1 constitution point. It also requires a second check with that failure indicating the caster

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Level Three

cannot continue casting and must wait at least 24 hours to begin again. This process is difficult. Narammidin has failed several times but keeps coming back to try.

Once the spell is successfully cast 5 x 10 foot oval forms in the wall. It is as if that portion of the wall simply disappears. Beyond the portal is inky blackness. It is impossible to tell, but there is another doorway at some distant location on the other side of the darkness.

The inky blackness is a void. If anyone steps through the portal, they fall into the void and are lost forever! A way to get to the other door must be created. It is easier than it seems. Although the door appears far away, it is only ten feet distant. A 12-foot plank of wood could stretch through the void to the other side, and one could simply walk across the space to the other door. That door is, however, quite small, being only 3 feet tall and 3 feet wide. The characters should be able to devise many ways of crossing, however doing so will awaken the guardian in Area 20.

AREA 20 VAULT

This room contains the real Ebon Staff. It is resting in a wooden stand and appears exactly as the staff in Area 19. It radiates a Spell Resistance 10 against all evil-aligned magical beasts in a 10-foot radius. Guarding the staff is a dark naga.

Someone with a highly attuned sense of smell (a half-orc, for example) is allowed a scent check at CL5. If successful, they note an unusual and musty scent in the room. The dark naga senses the arrival of the characters because of the change in

odor and the sudden rush of wind from opening the doorway in Area 19. It tries to prevent them from entering further and rushes to attack the characters at the door. It does not wait until the characters are inside before fighting.

CK Note: The dark naga's best strategy is to push incoming characters off whatever they use to cross the void and enter the room, whether it is a flying carpet, plank of wood, or bridge of fog. Its goal is to knock the characters into the void. One disadvantage for the naga is that it cannot get within 10 feet of the staff without taking damage. Each round the naga is closer than 10 feet to the staff, it takes 1d10 damage.

Beneath this room in an old sepulcher and shrine to Amphoe Wan. The floor of this room covers the structure. There is no secret or concealed door. The floor of this room was built over the structure and must be partially destroyed for anyone to gain access to that area. There are two manners in which the characters may discover the nature of the floor. The first is if a dwarf, or character with similar stonemasonry or underground experience notices a few incongruities. A wisdom check at CL3 reveals that the floor has a hollow ring to it. This is because the sepulcher below is hollow,

and there is an 'echo' while walking over this space. Another possible method is the discovery of a hole in the floor beneath the pedestal upon which the staff rests. If the pedestal is moved, a small hole, no more than 1/8 of an inch wide, is revealed.

Breaking the floor can be done in many ways. It is 4 feet thick and primarily made of stone with wooden crossbeams. Removing one of the three central support beams could cause a portion of the whole floor to collapse. The collapsing debris and fall causes 1d20 damage, unless they pass a dexterity save, when they take half damage.

NAGA, DARK (This lawful evil aberration's vital statistics are HD 9d8, HP 60, AC 14, BtH +9, and Move 40 feet, its primary attributes are mental and physical. It attacks with a bite for 1d4 damage and a sting for 2d4 damage. Special: Poison, Spells, Guard Thoughts, Darkvision to 60 feet, Constriction, Detect Thoughts, Immunity to Poison, and Resistance to Charm.)

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The Ebon Staff casts a protection from evil spell around itself in a 10 foot diameter. This only affects those of good alignment within that radius. The staff can be used as a +3 staff and is indestructible. The staff also increases the bearer's charisma by 2 points. There is more on the Ebon Staff in the following adventure module.

To wield the staff safely a character must be of good alignment. Should a neutrally aligned character hold it for more than ten minutes in a day they will take 1 point of damage. An evil

aligned character takes 2 points of damage. This damage cannot be healed except at a rate of one point a week.

The staff wants to be returned to the shrine from which it was taken many ages ago. If held lightly and without purpose, the staff begins to move in that direction. The movement is a barely perceptible pull rather than a tug. It only does this when in the possession of a human or elf.

AREA 21 AMPHOE WAN'S TEMPLE

Underneath Area 20 is a sepulcher and shrine to Amphoe Wan. This consists of a 25 x 25 foot wide square hole in the ground with steps leading down. The steps run around the edge of the hole and turn at every corner. The steps are only two feet wide and shallow. The hole goes down around 20 feet before stopping on a 5x5 foot landing. A small symbol of Amphoe Wan is engraved on the central stone of the landing. The symbol is a simple rendition of a horse and shield. This is the shrine portion of the structure. The central stone on this landing can be pried open. Beneath the stone is a small chamber containing ashes. These are the ashes of long dead kings.

WRAPPING UP

After the Ebon Staff is retrieved, it tries to direct the character holding it to its shrine from which it was taken. This is done by subtly pulling in that direction while being held. This is a straight-line direction and does not consider natural or unnatural obstacles. If allowed, it will lead the characters to the shrine some 400 miles away.

Gaeta knows of the Ebon Staff's mystical past and recognizes it immediately. He relates that it is the Staff of Amphoe Wan, the goddess who watched over the people of the steppes. The tales tell that the staff was taken from a shrine built where Amphoe

Wan first stepped into the world and needs to be returned to that shrine for her to come back into the world. He cannot say what good this will do but believes that the Ebon Staff should be returned. He agrees to carry the Staff and search for the shrine if the characters do not.

Should there be no other manner of discovering the nature of the staff, the goddess Amphoe Wan eventually starts to contact the holder through dreams and begins sending images to them. These images would be vague, consisting of moments from the past, the shrine, battles etc. Eventually, a recurring dream will be of a hand placing the staff on a pedestal in front of a statue of Amphoe Wan.

The Red Caps do not return, and Red Cap himself could not care less about the characters or what they have done. Red Cap continues traveling to meet his brother Blue Cap and thence south and west to raid along the Blacktooth Ridge.

If Narammidin somehow survives, he leaves and heads west to Aufstrag in the hopes of gaining entry and thence receiving the succor of his master, Mammon.

If Agrit Kha's scouts survive any encounters, they head back to the east to report what they have discovered. Eventually, a troop of several thousand will make their way here, but that could take anywhere from six months to a year.

If the horn in the tower is blown, it wakes the dragon Ethorix, who comes here within a few months to take up residence in the tower.

Where the characters go from here is entirely up to the players. However, if the players and/or the CK wish to continue the adventure they can do so in "A Gathering Storm", which is to be released soon.

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CASTLES[®] CRUSADES

THE EBON STAFF

On the banks of a rushing river, in a vast and desolate steppe, lie the remains of an ancient city. It stands there, a testament to misplaced glory, like the bones of a long-forgotten civilization. Dusty winds and silence have been its only company for centuries, an echo to the legends of cults and ancient gods. Despite this, the city serves as a refuge of sorts, where water and shelter provide comfort to the weary traveler.

Now, however, something is different. A glow emanates from a tower's ruins; a beacon or warning, who can say. Gray smoke trails up from the aged ruins, vultures circle above, and the fluttering whisper of an ancient evil and death are on the wind.

Enter the ruins of Poatholear and unearth the mysteries that surround the Ebon Staff. Whether for good or ill, the old gods stir.

The Ebon Staff is an overland adventure that began in *A Stranger Among Us*. It finds the characters escorting survivors into the wild plains toward an abandoned city. It is designed for use with a mid-level party of 4-6 characters.



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