

A FACELESS ENEMY



Tales From the
Fallen empire

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Presents

A FACELESS ENEMY

A Level 5 Adventure
By Oscar Rios

For use with

Tales From the Fallen Empire

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A Faceless Enemy

Introduction

This adventure is suited for 4–8 characters of 5th level. The characters are hired to escort a caravan across the Dol Minor Wastelands to the fortress of Harkanis Bek. The road is perilous and the supplies desperately needed by those awaiting delivery, the Knights of Tal Abastion. However, this seemingly simple task embroils the adventurers in an epic struggle as war rages across the wastelands. The adventurers may learn of a vile deception and uncover a sinister plot to rewrite the history of the Third Age and undo the defeat of the Abyssal Lord Ereshal.

A Faceless Enemy is divided into five parts:

- **Tasagaroth:** The adventurers obtain a magical artifact and are tasked with transporting it across the Dol Minor Wastes to the fortress of Harkanis Bek.
- **The Dol Minor Wastes:** The adventurers attempt to cross a vast wasteland filled with dangerous creatures and an army of cunning raiders.
- **The Red Tower:** The adventurers become guests, or prisoners, of the Army of the Red Scarf. They are told a fantastic story and their allegiance is questioned.
- **Harkanis Bek:** The adventurers reach the fortress of the Knights of Tal Abastion. They may complete their original mission, begin another on behalf of their new allies, or both.
- **The Ruins of Uruk:** The adventurers discover a newly constructed temple within the ruins of Uruk. They must fight their way into it and confront an Abyssal Prince attempting to change history.

History of the Knights of Tal Abastion

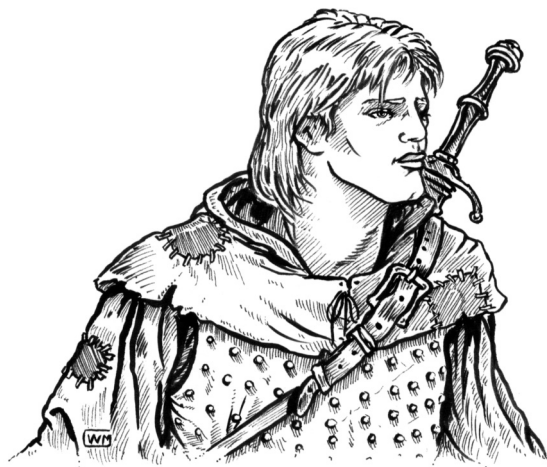
Most nations fear the threat lurking within the ruins of the City-State of Uruk. Demonic creatures and the daughters of Kishari, also known as the Kyss, openly control the ruins. Treasure hunters and wizards, seeking to loot the ruins for items of power and blasphemous knowledge, also threaten the stability of all peace-loving people across Urd.

The threat was too great to ignore.

So a common treaty was reached. The ruins of Uruk would be watched over by a guardian army, garrisoned with a mighty stronghold and commanded by a noble general. The Fortress of Harkanis Bek was built at the edge of the ruins, a citadel able to withstand powerful sieges and house a thousand defenders. Its commander became known as The Tal, a hereditary position passed down from one generation to the next. This tradition began with a might warrior named Tal Abastion, a cunning general of Empress Nythura who fought alongside the warrior-monk Valerak.

After the victory over the abyssal horde that heralded the fall of city-state, Tal Abastion alerted nations across Urd to the threat which still remained. The respect he commanded and his diplomatic skills helped Tal Abastion forge this multi-national alliance. The current Tal is a man named Jannik Bel'Tarul, great-great grandson of Tal Abastion and a noble warrior in his own right.

The forces Tal Abastion originally led were the remnants of his army after the battle of Uruk. This included a core group of loyal Ooruk who remained at his side when the majority of their race deserted the battlefield. The army became known as the Knights of Tal Abastion and over the last century their fame has spread far and wide. They are considered the bravest and best-trained army on the face of Urd, and are universally respected. Their ranks are filled with volunteers from many nations, but perhaps as few as 1 in 50 applicants are accepted into the order.



A hereditary tradition is strong within the order and the children of the Knights often strive to earn a place within the ranks. Because of this, Ooruk still make up about 25% of the guardian army, these being a more civilized and cultured breed than others of their race. The threat of the daughters of Kishari, who steal men for breeding purposes, also shaped the composition of the Knights of Tal Abastion — women are welcome to apply and make up 30% of the human Knights of Tal Abastion.

The perils these knights face during their five-year tours are quite deadly, as they battle demons, monsters, and looters on an almost daily basis. While many recruits die during their first tour, those who survive often re-enlist into the order's ranks. Knights who retire from the order are given special badges, one for each tour. These are marks of high honor and can help elevate a recipient to a higher station. Many of low birth have risen to become generals, royal councilors, or even kings and chieftains, after serving with the Knights of Tal Abastion.

The order is supported by tributes from many nations and city-states across Urd. Many in positions of power also served in the Knights during their youth, so the organization has a great deal of political backing. Most nations consider the semiannual donations of a few wagons of supplies or chests of coins to assist in the upkeep of the Knights of Tal Abastion to be a small price to pay for the security and stability the order provides.

For nearly a century the Knights of Tal Abastion have safeguarded the world from the dark threats lurking in the ruins of Uruk. Some of the greatest heroes of the last 100 years have served within its ranks. Stories of their heroics are told in common taverns and kingly courts, becoming some of the first legends of the Third Age.

Current Crisis

Known only to a select few rulers, the Knights of Tal Abastion are dealing with a crisis unlike any they've ever faced before. In recent months, the order has been so weakened that their mission of protecting the ruins of Uruk may soon fail. The enemy they face isn't coming from within the dread ruins, but from the wastelands without.

An army of cunning and elusive raiders known as the Red Scarves has systematically cut off the supply routes leading into Harkanis Bek. Somehow these deadly warriors are able to not only survive, but thrive in the brutal wastelands. Using ambushes and guerilla tactics, the Red Scarves have isolated Harkanis Bek from the outside world. Little grows within the Dol Minor Wastes around the ruins of Uruk, and fresh water is impossible to find. Supplies must be transported to the fortress regularly or the garrison cannot be maintained. What the bandits don't seize they destroy, denying the knights food and fresh water. Their objective seems to be starving the Knights of Tal Abastion into submission.

Unless the supply routes can be secured, Harkanis Bek could fall in a matter of months, leaving the evil creatures of the ruins accessible to the rest of the world. Therefore shipments of food and water must be escorted safely to Harkanis Bek at all costs. The Knights of Tal Abastion have pledged to never abandon their citadel and intend to remain at their posts until they die from thirst and hunger. The caravans MUST get through.



The Actual Crisis

Twelve years ago, Jannik Bel'Tarul, Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion, was captured while leading a patrol inside the ruins of Uruk. His men slaughtered, Jannik became the prisoner of a shape-changing Abyssal Prince called Morazak. The demon flayed the skin from Jannik's head and devoured his face and scalp. As the Tal lay dying from shock, the Abyssal Prince fell into a deep torpor. For a day and night Morazak slept, while his body changed to perfectly mimic Jannik Bel'Tarul and his mind filled with the man's memories. When Morazak awoke he was a perfect copy of the current Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion.

However, when the Abyssal Prince discovered his minions were dead and his captive missing, he wasted no time. He rushed to Harkanis Bek and began commanding the order, dispatching a patrol to search for survivors from among the very knights he'd earlier ambushed. He hoped to locate the true Jannik Bel'Tarul, but the man had vanished, as well as his fourteen-year-old twin children, daughter Bellana and son Tarran.

But Morazak had greater concerns than the missing Bel'Tarul family. Replacing Jannik was only the first step in a far greater plan, one aimed at undoing the defeat of the Abyssal Lord Ereshal at the hands of Valerak. Morazak's plot, if successful, would re-write the last century of history. The Third Age would become an era in which the Urd was ruled by the Abyssal Lord Ereshal. The Knights of Tal Abastion were now Morazak's unwitting pawns.

The Demon's Plot

Morazak was not at Uruk when his master and father, Lord Ereshal, fell to the warrior-monk Valerak. The Abyssal Prince, known as The Face Stealer, swore to do more than avenge Ereshal. Morazak would dedicate his existence to undoing that moment, re-writing the last century of Urd's history. For several decades, the Abyssal Prince researched dark sorceries and forbidden arts until he discovered a way to accomplish his goal.



Part One: Tasagaroth

Introduction

It is an exciting and profitable time for adventurers. The call has gone out far and wide for soldiers of fortune willing to undertake a dangerous mission promising generous pay. Escorting caravans is hardly glamorous work, but it is how many adventurers and mercenaries get their start. Few veteran campaigners would ever return to such work, but these are special circumstances.

In the south lands a crisis has arisen. The fortress of Harkanis Bek requires re-supply after its caravan routes have been blocked by a force of bandits. The raiders, known as the Red Scarves, have been choking off supplies going into the fortress and, unless stopped, the garrison faces starvation. This puts many nations at risk, as the Knights of Tal Abastion based in Harkanis Bek have watched over the ruins of Uruk for almost a century. By their bravery and heroic service, intruders are kept out of the ruins and Abyssal creatures, for the most part, kept within.

The lands around Uruk, called the Dol Minor Wastes, are a scorched and blasted wilderness, devoid of game, forage, or drinkable water. Without constant re-supply, those defending the fortress of Harkanis Bek will soon succumb to hunger and thirst. Jannik Bel'Tarul, the current leader of the Knights of Tal Abastion, has declared that the fortress will never be abandoned. The order is offering 1000 silver coins for each wagonload of essential supplies reaching Harkanis Bek.

Because of this, scores of merchants, teamsters, guards, and mercenaries have flocked to Tasagaroth. This walled town in the lands of Vuul is a place of commerce, a launching point for caravans crossing the Dol Minor Wastes. For many it is the last civilized place they see before meeting their end. The routes linking Tasagaroth and the fortress of Harkanis Bek are quite dangerous, even before the arrival of the Red Scarves. The current crisis has benefited Tasagaroth's economy, as traders and mercenaries from across Urd now crowd its narrow streets.

Your company has come to Tasagaroth for a slightly different reason. You've received a request to journey here and meet with Shou Shen, a noble lord of Zhou. The reason for this

meeting was not stated in his message, but he stressed the need for utter secrecy and promised considerable rewards. The message did not state where within Tasagaroth the meeting would take place, so you can only assume the Zhou lord will find you once you arrive.

You now stand at the gates of Tasagaroth, waiting for entry along with several mercenary companies and trade caravans. The air is filled with the smells of pack beasts, cooking food, stale beer, cheaply perfumed ladies, and garbage. The features, complexions, and clothing styles of a dozen different nations can be seen among those awaiting entry. Tasagaroth seems less like a caravan stop and more like a mustering camp for a major military campaign.

About Tasagaroth

This large town is surrounded by a twenty-foot stone wall with two gates on opposite sides of the settlement. Tasagaroth is choked with people, most of whom spend only a few days here. Much coin changes hand as goods bound for Harkanis Bek are stockpiled, warehoused, and traded. Many businesses cater to the needs of guards, mercenaries, and adventurers, giving the town an abundance of smithies (for arms and armor), taverns, and brothels.

Tasagaroth is a noisy, raucous place that can sometimes be dangerous. Violence between groups of travelers is common, as well-armed citizens of rival nations often cross paths on the streets of Tasagaroth. Add to this the abundance of taverns and it becomes clear to see why brawls and riots are a constant threat. Also, Tasagaroth is plagued by The Spiders, a thieves' guild specializing in mugging and pick-pocketing.

Warlord

The current ruler of Tasagaroth is Varuvis, a merchant prince of Kesh. He is a shrewd businessman and powerful sorcerer. Without his genius, many know that the town would fall into anarchy. Varuvis makes a fortune from the taxes and fees gathered here, some of which he uses to maintain a large garrison of fighting men to maintain order. Most people never encounter Varuvis unless they are being sentenced for a crime. Most of his orders are issued through Saysani, a beautiful woman rumored to be his slave, apprentice, or both.



Mahira Ryos

This robed Kesh woman is a competent survivor who only works for small groups of traders and travelers. She speaks in a low, lisping voice and is never seen without her veil. Her fees are a bit lower than other guides (2d8*50sp) due to her questionable reputation. If hired, Mahira attempts to abandon the party 1d4 days into the trip across the Dol Minor Wastes. She may vanish while scouting ahead or slip away in the night while on watch. She may, depending on her mood, rob the adventurers of supplies, coin, jewelry, or an obvious magical item when making her departure.



- **Mahira Ryos, Treacherous Guide:** Init +4; Atk scimitar +4 melee (1d8+2); AC 15; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; AL C

Prannar Wastewalker

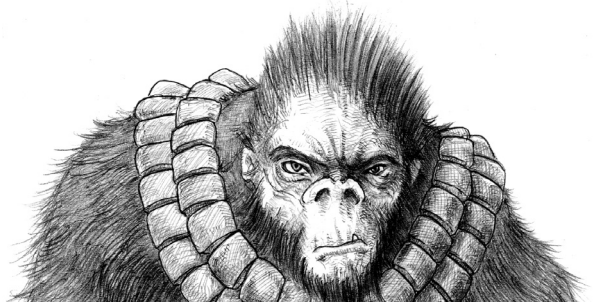
This former Kesh slave toiled for many years as a teamster owned by the Melesandra Trading Company. Three years ago he escaped into the Dol Minor Wastes, slipping away during the confusion after a giant scorpion attack threw the caravan into disarray. Since then he's built a life as a guide while hiding from his former owners. Prannar is an honest man but a marked one; the Red Scarves are set to either capture or eliminate him. His skills are hampering their efforts to prevent supplies reaching to Harkanis Bek.



- **Prannar Wastewalker, Escaped Slave and Honest Guide:** Init +2; Atk long sword +1 melee (1d8+1); AC 16; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N

Harowl

This powerful, older Ooruk male once served with the Knights of Tal Abastion, and proudly displays his badge of service. He is the most successful guide to date, and well respected among the traders and merchants in Tasagaroth. His fees are steep (2d10*50sp) but most consider his services worth every coin. The reason for his success is that Harowl is not only a spy for the Army of the Red Scarves, but one of its commanders.



- **Harowl, Successful Guide and Red Scarf Spy:** Init +3; Atk Spear +5 Melee d8+5; AC 16; HD 4d12; MV 40'; Act 1D20; SP Animal Prowess, Infravision 60'; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; AL N



The Red Scarf Scout

Sometime after the party discovers the ruined caravan they notice a large animal flying high overhead. Their eyes can just make out a long, slender body with transparent wings, like a wasp or hornet of some sort but bigger than the largest of vultures. The animal follows the party for a time, circling the area but never coming close enough to enter arrow range. Eventually, it departs upward and away, flying toward the sun to blind observers.

The party has been spotted by an elite scout of the Army of the Red Scarf, a Wasp Rider. This is the greatest secret of the Red Scarves, and so far no one outside of the Wastelands realizes their forces employ such exotic creatures as mounts. Just how these creatures are captured, tamed, and trained remains a mystery, even to most within the ranks of the Red Scarves. Shortly after this scout sights the party, it reports their location to its commander and a hunting party is sent to intercept them.

Wasp, Giant

Of the many overly large insects inhabiting the Dol Minor Wastes, Giant Wasps are at the top of the food chain. In the wild, they hunt for living prey both as food and to complete their life cycle. Giant Wasps can deliver bites with their powerful mandibles, but their primary weapon is a highly venomous sting. This injects a poison that causes total paralysis for 1d6 hours, during which the victim is either eaten or used as a host for the wasp's young. Female wasps lay a single egg under the skin of a paralyzed victim. The larvae hatch quickly and secrete the same paralytic poison through their skin, ensuring that their host remains helpless while being devoured alive.

- **Wasp, Giant:** Init +1; Atk sting +6 melee (1d3+6 plus poison); AC 14; HD 5d8 +10; MV20' or fly 60'; Act 1d20; SP poison, darkvision; Fort +6, Ref+2, Will +2; AL C

The Red Scarves Attack

The Red Scarves launch an attack on the party about midway between Tasagaroth and Harkanis Bek. The attack comes in one of two different forms, depending on whether the adventurers are with a larger caravan or a smaller group (i.e. alone or with a guide). The attack happens about an hour after the party begins that day's journey, as a carefully prepared ambush is set up a few miles from their camp on their likeliest route of travel.



The Red Scarf Bandits

While mistakenly considered to be thieves and raiders, the men and women comprising the ranks of the Army of the Red Scarf make up a well-trained and highly disciplined guerilla army. They employ brilliant tactics, not surprising considering they are led by the Bel'Tarul family, who have commanded the Knights of Tal Abastion since the order's founding.

Their weapons of choice are the recurved bow, scimitar, light lance, and hunga-munga (an exotic throwing axe). They field light infantry troops wearing studded leather armor, and medium cavalry troops wearing armor made from the shells of giant armored beetles (roughly equivalent to chain-mail). To protect themselves from the harsh conditions of the Dol Minor Wastes, each wears long, flowing brown robes, leather hoods, and brightly dyed red face scarves that conceal all facial features other than their eyes.

- **Red Scarf, Light Infantry:** Init +1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d6) hunga-munga +1 ranged(1d6+2); AC 14; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L
- **Red Scarf, Medium Cavalry:** Init +3; Atk light lance +3 melee (1d10) recurved bow +3 ranged (1d6); AC 18; HD 4d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L
- **Giant Armored Beetles:** Init -2; Atk mandibles +3 melee (1d4+2); AC 20; HD 2d8+2; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will -3; AL N

Attacked, With a Caravan

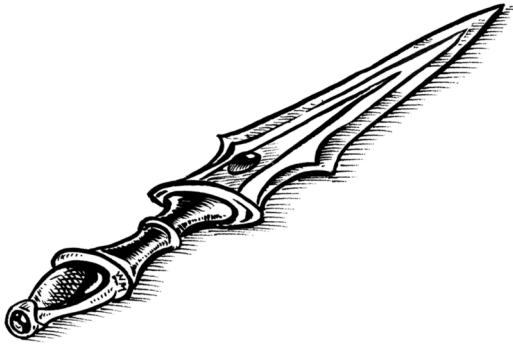
If the adventurers are with a caravan when attacked, the Red Scarves hide in a series of covered pits just below the surface of the sands, lining both sides of the trail or road. When the caravan moves between these lines, the Red Scarves spring up from their concealment and attack. These troops are all light infantry and shower the caravan with arrows.

Before the caravan can properly react, a third group launches a direct attack on the caravan's lead elements. This third force is medium cavalry, armed with lances and scimitars and mounted upon Giant Armored Beetles. These troops blow war horns as they attack the front of the caravan, trying to divert attention from the lighter troops and keep the caravan's warriors from organizing a proper defense.

As the battle rages all around them, the adventurers notice that the Red Scarf troops avoid attacking anyone who is not defending themselves. Those who are unarmed are ignored, helpless wounded are spared further attacks, and anyone surrendering is spared. The archers even attempt to cripple their targets, with most arrows striking outer extremities rather than vital areas. The adventurers are engaged by either light or medium Red Scarf soldiers, depending on where they were within the caravan when the ambush occurred.

Red Scarf Ambush Party

- **Flanks:** 10 Red Scarf, Light Infantry (see above).
- **Front:** 6 Red Scarf, Light Infantry (see above), 4 Red Scarf, Medium Cavalry (see above).



The Battle Ends, With a Caravan

Whether or not the party defeats their personal adversaries, the battle is over. If the party falls to the Red Scarves, they are taken prisoner, even if unconscious at the time. None are intentionally killed. If the party is victorious, they soon discover they are the only members of the caravan who remain armed and able to defend themselves. The rest are either dead, helpless, or have surrendered and the party now stands against the full war party (Judges should have the party outnumbered at least three to one at this point).

One of the medium cavalry troops among the Red Scarves steps forward to address the adventurers. "Well fought," a feminine voice calls from beyond her Red Scarf. "But your position is indefensible. I offer you peaceable and honorable surrender. I pledge on my life the fair and humane treatment of yourselves and all others I take into custody this day."

If the party refuses the woman whistles loudly and the remaining troops draw forth their hunga-munga. In seconds each prisoner, now screaming and begging for mercy, has an axe blade held to their throat. The woman then says, "It is up to you if I take many prisoners today, or none. Their blood will be on your hands and my conscience will be clear. I salute your skills at arms and admire your courage, but the battle is lost. Don't make things worse for these people."

Defeat

If the party still refuses to lay down their arms, the prisoners are executed and battle resumes. If the Red Scarves defeat the adventurers, they quickly bind their wounds to prevent their death and take them prisoner (see Red Tower).

Surrender

If the players surrender, no one is harmed. The party is disarmed, bound, and blindfolded. Their wounds are bandaged, they are given water and marched blindly across the Wastes with the captured contents of the caravan. Several hours later they arrive at Red Scarf Central Command (see Red Tower).

Victory

If the party fights their way through the ambush, whether with a caravan, alone, or with a guide (see below) they may continue on their way to Harkanis Bek. However, the following day they are approached by an emissary of the Red Scarf Raiders seeking a ceasefire (see Deadly Ultimatum).

Attacked, Alone, or With a Guide

In this case, the party stumbles into a carefully prepared ambush just outside of their camp as they begin that day's journey. A large group of Red Scarf Raiders, all light infantry, bursts out of covered pits and attacks. If the party defeats the ambushers, they are visited the following day by an emissary (see Deadly Ultimatum).

If the Red Scarves gain a clear advantage, they call on the party to surrender. If the adventurers yield, they're disarmed, blindfolded, bound, and taken into custody (see Red Tower above). If the party falls to the Raiders, their attackers bandage their wounds before any of them die. The helpless adventurers are then taken prisoner (see Red Tower).

Red Scarf Ambush Party

- 6 Red Scarf, Light Infantry (see above), 4 Red Scarf, Medium Cavalry (see above).

Battle, With a Guide

If the party has hired an NPC guide, the ambush unfolds a slightly differently way, depends on which of the three guides the party hired.

Battle with Mahira Kyos

If party hired Mahira, she'll have already abandoned or attempted to abandon the adventurers before this point. The only way she'd still be with the party would be against her will, and she'd attempt escape at every opportunity to do so. If the party has imprisoned Mahira and is forcing her to guide them to Harkanis Bek, she won't likely assist them against the Red Scarf Raiders.

Battle with Prannar Wastewalker

If the party hired Prannar, things go tragically for the escaped slave. He fights alongside the party against the raiders but is clearly outmatched. However, even when wounded he refuses all calls to yield. The Red Scarves don't want to kill the guide, but Prannar gives them no choice, fighting like a cornered rat. The man made an oath after escaping slavery to never again have his freedom taken from him. Despite their pleas for his surrender and promises of humane treatment, the former slave fights on until dying from his wounds.

After this happens a Red Scarf tries to bandage Prannar, but is stopped by his commander. A feminine voice calls out from behind a red scarf, "Leave him be. This brave soul made his choice. It was an honorable one and we won't take that from him. Die well, Prannar Wastewalker, may your next life be kinder one."

Battle with Harowl

As the ambush begins, the powerful Ooruk stays close to the party but does not assist them in battle. The Red Scarves also avoid attacking him. After a few rounds of combat, Harowl roars loudly, then says, "Enough blood. We yield, don't we, friends? Lay down your arms, and I give you my word you'll all be well treated." He then steps over to the Red Scarf Raiders, revealing his true allegiances. The Ooruk says with a sigh, "There is more to all this than you realize. Don't throw away your lives before you know the truth. By the blood of Tal Abastion, I beg you, yield."

At this point the party must either yield or resume fighting. However, they must also battle Harowl, as the Red Scarves continue their attempt at capturing the party.

Deadly Ultimatum

This happens if, and only if, the party fought their way through the initial Red Scarf ambush. The following day the adventurers spot another giant wasp circling overhead, only this time it descends much lower. Now its rider can clearly be seen by the party. The rider, obviously a Red Scarf soldier, holds a white cloth in one hand as he flies overhead. Just before entering arrow range the rider drops an object, and departs. The item, a rock with a long flowing ribbon tied to it, lands fifty yards from the party.

Players retrieving this rock find a note affixed to it, which reads, "I, Commander of Army Group Crimson, humbly request a formal ceasefire for a meeting. We pledge peaceable conduct during this meeting and expect you to honor the same accord. Rider shall return in 30 minutes. If interested, signal with flash from mirror or polished steel to receive further instructions. If not interested, hostilities shall resume and your company won't be underestimated again."

Thirty minutes later the rider returns, overflying the area to search for the party. If the adventurers don't signal, or take efforts to avoid detection, the Red Scarves take that as a sign that the peaceful meeting has been refused. If this happens, the Red Scarves begin aggressively hunting the party (see Hunting Party). If the party signals the rider, another rock with a note and signal ribbon is dropped near their location. The note this time is a map of the immediate area, with a spot several miles from the party's current location clearly marked upon it.

Diplomatic Encampment

If the party travels to the marked location, they discover a large pavilion tent has been erected. Its entrance is flanked by a pair of Red Scarf honor guards. The guards say nothing, but hold the flaps open for the party to enter. Inside the players find a folding camp table, a set of folding chairs, and three armed Red Scarf soldiers. The party is greeted formally by a man introducing himself as Commander Tarul, Commander of Army Group Crimson. He takes off his helmet and scarf,

revealing himself to be a handsome, darkly tanned man in his late twenties. Tarul seems much older than his years.

He thanks the characters for agreeing to meet with him and invites them to sit. He offers them water and a strange purple flatbread as a courtesy before beginning a formal discussion. If the players attack the commander or any of his men the ceasefire ends and battle ensues.

Violating Protocol

Commander Tarul is here with four honor guards, some of his finest men. Hidden nearby are an entire strike force of honor guards, light infantry, and mounted cavalry. Commander Tarul has no intention of ordering them to attack unless the party violates the peace first. The man, raised in a proud military tradition, considers a parley sacred. Should the adventurers violate it he orders his men to attack without mercy.

- **Red Scarf, Light Infantry (*6):** Init +1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d6) hunga-munga +1 ranged (1d6+2); AC 14; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L
- **Red Scarf, Medium Cavalry (*2):** Init +3; Atk light lance +3 melee (1d10) recurved bow +3 ranged (1d6); AC 18; HD 4d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L
- **Red Scarf, Honor Guards (6):** Init +3; Atk scimitar +3 melee (1d6) hunga-munga +3 ranged (1d6+2); AC 15; HD 3d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L
- **Commander Tarul, Tal of Army Group Crimson (aka Tarran Bel'Tarul):** Init +4; Atk Scimitar +4 melee (1d8+3) or recurved bow +4 missile fire (1d8); AC 18; HD 5d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4; AL L

The Meeting

Commander Tarul answers a few questions and asks a few of his own, trading information back and forth with the adventurers. His goal is to convince the party to accompany him back to Red Tower to meet with his father, The Flayed Man. In conversation, Tarul offers the following information:

- He is aware they're transporting an arcane artifact on behalf of the Zhou emperor that will somehow ease the supply crisis within Harkanis Bek caused by the Red Scarf blockade.
- The party is unaware of the true nature of this conflict between the Knights of Tal Abastion and the Army of the Red Scarf.
- The Army of the Red Scarves aren't bandits, they're an honorable army waging an unconventional war against a superior force.
- The true enemy of all people upon Urd resides within Harkanis Bek.

- He can offer the party and his hostages safe passage across the Dol Minor Wastes if they agree to meet with his superior, the Grand Commander of the Army of the Red Scarves.

Hostages

Should the players refuse, hesitate, or question him about the word “hostages”, he asks them to walk with him. If the party follows him, Tarul leads them up a sand dune overlooking a barren plain. He points at some figures about a mile away, and passes the party a field glass. Through its magnifying lenses, the party clearly sees a dozen people, captured caravan guards, merchants, and teamsters, securely tied to posts driven into the sands. A few feet away are a pair of Red Scarf Wasp Riders, their mounts, and a giant scorpion. The scorpion is trapped under a huge net that has been spiked into the ground.

Commander Tarul explains, “If you don’t come with me peaceably and converse with my superior, my men are ordered to cut the beast loose. Those prisoners have all proven troublesome to hold and I’d be pleased to be rid of them. Now, I can have them released within sighting of a Tasagaroth patrol or... well, I am sure the scorpion is hungry — damned things always are. Understand, I am not proud of such methods and I am sure to receive a strong reprimand from my superiors, but I will follow through on my threat. I fear our adversary is moving into his endgame, so the time for civilized behavior has run out.”

Yield

If the party agrees to meet with his commander, they are disarmed, blindfolded, and loaded onto giant beetles. The party is transported to the central command center for the Army of the Red Scarves (see Red Tower).

Refuse

If the party refuses to meet with Commander Tarul’s superior, the man sighs and orders his men to break camp. He explains, “This ceasefire is over. We shall resume hostilities in three hours’ time. Their blood is on your hands.” His men on the plain below cut the net and release the giant scorpion, escaping into the air before it can harm them. The ravenous monster makes short work of the prisoners, killing them all before the party can intervene.

Hunting Party

If the party reject the ceasefire or refuse Commander Tarul’s invitation to meet with his superior, the Red Scarves stop attempting to recruit them. After three hours pass, the Red Scarves do everything possible to prevent the party from reaching Harkanis Bek. They send out numerous wasp-mounted scouts to scour the Dol Minor Wastes looking for them. Once their position is found, a hunting party is sent after them. Just when or even if the Red Scarf hunters intercept the party is left up to the Judge.

By now the adventurers should have nearly completed their journey. Once they reach the safe-zone, a day’s travel out from Harkanis Bek, all Red Scarf pursuit ends. Judges should keep the pressure on the party, dogging their steps and chasing them across the final few days of their trip across the Dol Minor Wastes. If they are caught, Judges should present the party with a very difficult battle.

Red Scarf Hunting Party

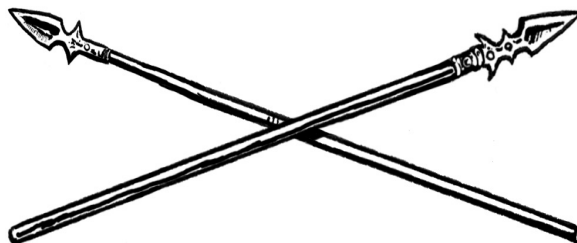
- **Red Scarf, Light Infantry (*6):** Init +1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d6) hunga-munga +1 ranged (1d6+2); AC 14; HD 2d8; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L
- **Red Scarf, Medium Cavalry (*4):** Init +3; Atk light lance +3 melee (1d10) recurved bow +3 ranged (1d6); AC 18; HD 4d8; MV 25’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L
- **Red Scarf, Honor Guards (2):** Init +3; Atk scimitar +3 melee (1d6) hunga-munga +3 ranged (1d6+2); AC 15; HD 3d8; MV 25’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L

A Forked Path

If the party surrenders to, are captured by, or accept the invitation of the Army of the Red Scarf, Judge should proceed to the section entitled “Red Tower”. Here they meet with The Flayed Man, Jannik Bel’Tarul; deposed Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion. The adventurers then have the option of joining the Red Scarves in their fight against the Demon Prince Morazak.

However, adventurers can manage to elude capture and refuse dealing with the Red Scarf Raiders. If so, they safely reach the Knight’s fortress directly from Tasagaroth, and Judges should proceed to the section entitled “Harkanis Bek”. Here they can see the famed fortress, deliver the Heart of Yan Shia, and receive their reward.

Such adventurers remain unaware that a Demon Prince has replaced the true leader of the Knights of Tal Abastion, and are blind to the threat building within the ruins of Uruk. Judges may choose to end the adventure here as the party has, to their knowledge, completed their real mission. However, an option remains for Judges to allow adventurers to hear rumors of mysterious slavers transporting their human cargo directly into the ruins. This option allows Judges to give their players another route to discovering the hidden temple within the Ruins of Uruk without guidance from the Army of the Red Scarf.



Part Three: The Red Tower

Introduction

You awaken in darkness. As your eyes slowly adjust to the chamber's scant illumination, you become aware of your surroundings. You and your companions are lying on a row of beds in a small room lit by a lamp. Your wounds have been dressed and healed. A bucket of water, a ladle for drinking, and a basket of bluish flatbread all rest atop a side table. After a few moments you hear a knock upon the chamber's door and a feminine voice asking, "Do I have your pledge of truce? May I enter?"

For the Judge

The adventurers are now in the central command center of the Army of the Red Scarf. They've been brought here to meet with the bandit's mysterious leader known as The Flayed Man, who is actually Jannik Bel'Tarul. The Red Scarves have tried to discover what Morazak is doing in the ruins of Uruk, but they've learned little. They know he's had hundreds of slaves smuggled into the ruins over the last few years, but have no clue why. Jannik has a feeling in his gut that time is running out. He is desperate to bring the campaign against Morazak to a successful conclusion.



High Priestess Bellana

If the party pledges good conduct, a lovely woman in her late twenties enters. She wears an open robe over a set of traveler's leathers. She possesses striking noble features, darkly tanned skin, and a ready smile filled with kindness. Her sharp eyes display an almost unnatural clarity of purpose. If the characters have already met Commander Tarran, her resemblance to him is uncanny.

The woman introduces herself as Bellana Bel'Tarul, High Priestess of Istasha. She adds, "You may call me Blessed Mother or Mother Bellana." Bellana then conveys the following information as she speaks with the adventurers, answering their questions and asking a few of her own:

- She explains that they are not prisoners; they are guests who will be well treated.
- They are in Red Tower, central command for the Army of the Red Scarves.
- She is a High Priestess of Istasha, spiritual leader of the Army.
- She invites the party to accompany her on her rounds, so she can give them a tour of Red Tower.
- If they swear to take no violent actions, she'll have their arms returned as a sign of good faith.
- At nightfall, the adventurers will meet with the Grand Commander of the Army of the Red Scarves, who has urgent matters to discuss with them.
- If the players ask, she proudly confirms that she is the same Bellana Bel'Tarul who vanished from Harkanis Bek twelve years ago, and a direct descendant of Tal Abastion.

A Tour of Red Tower

As the adventurers leave their cell, they find themselves in a series of oval tunnels. The walls seem to be made of strange, grainy cement. The entire complex contains many miles of tunnels and hundreds of chambers of various sizes. Bellana explains that Red Tower was once the home of a colony of giant termites. "It's our home now, one of several such mounds our forces have liberated from the creatures," she explains proudly, "The nasty things are masters of engineering; their hives have perfect ventilation and maintain a constant comfortable temperature."

As the cleric makes her rounds, the adventurers see hundreds of people living here, making Red Tower more like a town than a bandit camp. Everyone Bellana meets greets her warmly and treats her with deep respect and affection. Occasionally, she delivers a blessing or heals a minor injury with her divine abilities as she tours Red Tower.

Bellana explains that most of the people living here were once slaves, which the Red Scarves liberated from Kesh caravans crossing the Dol Minor Wastes. The rest were prisoners, various merchants, caravan guards, or teamsters who joined the movement after learning about their cause during their captivity. Just what their cause is she won't say yet, replying, "The Grand Commander will answer all those questions tonight, I promise."

The adventurers are shown the following locations within the complex:

- **A School:** Where thirty children are learning to read.
- **A Training Area:** Where new recruits are learning archery.
- **An Armory:** Where weapons and armor are made.
- **Stables:** Where giant beetles and wasps are raised, kept, and cared for.
- **Dormitories:** Where families live and sleep, as well as one for young single women and another for young single men.
- **The Well:** Access to fresh water, dug out by the termites.
- **The Farm:** See below.

The Farm

At the lowest level of the tour, the party notices the scent of ammonia. Mother Bellana distributes thick red scarves, instructing everyone to tie them over their mouths and noses. "It will keep you safe from the fumes," the high priestess explains.

She then guides the characters to a series of strongly sealed doors, closing one before opening the next. As they move forward, the temperature becomes punishingly hot. The party arrives in an enormous chamber filled with misty vapors of deadly ammonia.

The chamber is crammed with mushrooms and growing fungus, some of which tower above their heads like trees. While some of what's growing here appears wild, most is organized into neat cultivated rows. Through her scarf Mother Bellana explains, "This is how we feed everyone. Most of what grows here is edible. Our waste feeds the mushrooms and the mushrooms feed us, thanks to our allies."



She then calls out in a strange language and four figures approach, slowly shuffling out of the mist. They appear to be short, pale mushrooms with arms, legs, and dark eyes; these are Shroomen. The priestess speaks with the Shroomen for a few moments in a slowly spoken language before the fungal people depart.

- **Shroomen (4):** See page 426, DCC Core Rule book for stats.

Mother Bellana then leads the party back to the upper levels. She continues, "The Grand Commander learned that the giant termites who built this complex had enslaved those poor, intelligent creatures. They forced the shroomen to tend the forest to supply their colony with food, but also treated them like cattle. Once too weak or old to work, the termites ate them. When we conquered the termites, the Grand Commander learned their language and forged an alliance between us. Our movement opposes slavery in any form."

End of the Tour

At day's end, Mother Bellana finishes the tour at her chapel. She sits with the adventurers and attempts to answer any remaining questions. She asks if she has changed their opinion of just who the Red Scarves are. "We are not savages", she insists. "We're civilized people fighting a noble cause for the good of this world. Hopefully, after you meet with the Grand Commander, you'll understand that. I've given you this tour to begin building a foundation of trust between us. Our enemies are desperate to learn how we survive in the Dol Minor Wastes. I pray you won't betray the trust I have shown you."

With that, a guard enters and nods to Mother Bellana. She turns to the party and says, "My father is ready to meet with you. Please be kind to him and don't stare — he's suffered a great deal." Players who've confirmed Mother Bellana's true identity may realize they're about to meet Jannik Bel'Tarul, Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion, but to their knowledge, the man is supposed to be at Harkanis Bek, actively leading the order in its fight against the Army of the Red Scarves.

A Stern Warning

The guards lead the party to a secure door deep in the complex, watched over by a pair of honor guards. A third man, in full armor, is waiting for them. If they haven't already met him, he introduces himself as Commander Tarul, second in command of the Army of the Red Scarf. He's very protective of Jannik Bel'Tarul, his commander and father. Commander Tarul disarms the party and promises the return their weapons after the meeting. He explains a few things before allowing them in to meet with his superior:

- Should they harm the Grand Commander, they'll never leave this compound alive.
- The Grand Commander has suffered injuries that left him disfigured and makes talking difficult.

- They shouldn't tire him out, as the demands on him are great.
- They should treat him with respect, or they'll pay dearly for their actions.

The Flayed Man

After this briefing, the party enter a dimly lit room whose walls are covered with various maps. The center of the room is dominated with a huge table, atop which is a detailed map of the Dol Minor Wastes, including Tasagaroth, Harkanis Bek, and the ruins of Uruk. Dozens of colored markers stand on the map, indicating various units, supply depots, and enemy positions. This is clearly a command center.

An older man enters from a side chamber, dressed in a vintage-style military uniform. He wears a helmet with the bottom half of his face covered by a thick red scarf, and a visor of smoked glass blocking the view of his eyes. He nods greetings to the party and motions them towards a circle of chairs. The man slowly lowers himself into a chair and sighs before speaking.

His voice is laden with rasps, gurgles, and lisps, making his words difficult to discern at first. He says, "Talking is difficult with all this on. I shall remove it. You have been warned of my disfigurements, yes?" The man removes his helmet and face coverings, revealing a horrific sight. His head and face are a twisted mass of scars, devoid of lips, ears, nose or eyelids. The man's eyes bulge and drip; his teeth hang bare, with drool flowing freely onto his chin. He periodically wipes his face and dampens his unblinking eyes with a wet red cloth.

He relates his story, saying, "I am Jannik Bel'Tarul, direct descendant of Tal Abastion, founder of the order which shares his name. I was the commander of that order, but was deposed twelve years ago. Today I lead the Army of the Red Scarves against the greatest enemy the world has known since the end of the Second Age. You have been brought here to learn the truth and, gods willing, assist us in bringing this conflict to a conclusion." What follows is a full conversation where Jannik relates the tale of how all this came to be, answers the party's questions, and possibly persuades them to assist him in his war against the Abyssal Prince Morazak. A list of fact points covered in this discussion are included below as a guideline for Judges:

A Discussion with the Flayed Man

- Twelve years ago I was captured by a powerful demon, commanding a war party of infernals and daughters of Kishari while patrolling the Ruins of Uruk.
- The demon is called Prince Morazak, son of the Abyssal Lord Ereshal.
- While a prisoner, Morazak flayed the skin from my head and devoured it.
- I blacked out from the pain, and when I regained consciousness, I was with my children, Tarran and Bellana.
- They'd rescued me from Morazak, but dared not return to Harkanis Bek.
- We realized that, somehow, the Abyssal Prince had copied my form, even my memories, probably from eating my skinned face.
- The fiend was now in full control of the order, so my family went into hiding.
- It took me a year to recover, which was only possible because of my daughter's powers as a true servant of the goddess Istasha.
- Morazak, using my identity as Tal, reorganized patrols, retired key commanders, promoted less competent men, and subtly weakened the order.
- We learned Morazak was secretly bringing slave caravans from Kesh across the Dol Minor Wastes. We estimate nearly a thousand slaves have been smuggled into the ruins of Uruk over the last decade, and we have no idea why.
- Once I recovered and further trained my children, we started attacking the slavers and freeing their human cargo. Over time, those people formed the backbone of the fighting force that became known as the Army of the Red Scarves.
- Our plan was to starve the Knights out of Harkanis Bek, and force Morazak into the open. We'd hoped to then strike directly at the fiend, but I fear this tactic isn't working. Morazak seems content to let the garrison starve and the knights are too loyal to abandon him.
- I never went public with the truth to preserve the reputation of the order. The Knights of Tal Abastion are universally respected, and materially supported by various nations. If it became known an infernal had usurped control over the Knights of Tal Abastion, it would destroy everything. Trust in the order would vanish, soon followed by the support network it relies upon.
- Also, who would believe me? Look at what Morazak has made me, I appear more infernal than he does. Many would take his word over mine, as he wears my form and possesses my memories.
- I don't know if you believe me or not, but I hope that you do because I need your help. I'll share a final confidence with you, one that even my children are unaware of. I am dying. I have had more winters than a fighting man has a right to. Now, each time I close my eyes to sleep, I fear I will never open them again. I must see this through before my time ends. I cannot allow this conflict to be the only inheritance I leave my children.
- Once the Abyssal Prince Morazak is destroyed, I can depart this life with a clear conscience.
- My son or daughter would then become the rightful Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion. Each has become a great leader, although I suspect Bellana would choose service to Istasha over commanding the order. Tarran would make an excellent Tal.
- Will you help me?

The Party Refuses

If the party refuses to help Jannik and the Army of the Red Scarves in their battle against Prince Morazak, they are detained at Red Tower. Jannik Bel'Tarul explains, "You've seen and heard too much to be allowed to leave. You must remain at Red Tower until the campaign is decided. You'll be well treated, I promise. I am sorry you won't aid us in our mission." Judges then have three options:

- Three months later, the party is released after the Red Scarves are victorious over Prince Morazak and Tarran becomes the new Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion.
- Four months later, the timeline shifts and Leviathan is now ruled by the Abyssal Lord Ereshal. It is likely the characters have never even been born.
- Judges can allow the party to attempt to escape. If this option is used, Judges should create a set of challenges for the party that allows them to escape Red Tower and travel across the Dol Minor Wastes to either Tasagaroth or Harkanis Bek.

The Party Accepts

If the adventurers agree to help Jannik, he is thrilled. He says, "For the first time in weeks I have hope of seeing this conflict end in my lifetime. Now go get some rest." He claps and Commander Tarran enters. Jannik addresses his son, saying, "They will help us. Gather the counsel for an urgent briefing. We are moving into the final stages of the war, my son."

Commander Tarran replies with a smile, "It's about bloody time." He salutes and rushes off. The party is then escorted back to their quarters, given a meal, and allowed to sleep. Several hours later, just before dawn, they are awoken and brought back to the command center. Here they take part in a meeting of the Red Scarves War Council.



The War Council

The party enters the command center, which is under heavy guard. Gathered here are three men, two women, and a male Ooruk. They are:

- **Jannik Bel'Tarul:** The Flayed Man; Grand Commander, Army of the Red Scarves
- **Tarran Bel'Tarul:** Commander of Army Group Crimson
- **Bellana Bel'Tarul:** Spiritual Advisor to the Army of the Red Scarves
- **Wermel Scall:** A freed Kesh slave, Commander of Army Group Scarlet
- **Saysani:** A beautiful wizardess, apprentice to Varuvis, warlord of Tasagaroth
- **Harowl:** An aged Ooruk posing as a caravan guide, Spymaster (if he still lives)

Mother Bellana makes introductions between the party and war council members. The meeting begins with Jannik welcoming everyone and Bellana offering a prayer to bless this meeting. Jannik states, "The final stage of this war is about to begin. These adventurers have agreed to help us. They're supposed to make an important delivery to Harkanis Bek, meaning they'll have the order's trust, and likely won't be carefully watched. This provides an unparalleled opportunity to strike a decisive blow against our enemy."

Several plans are considered, and the party is encouraged to contribute to the discussion. Saysani proposes the party attempt an assassination of Morazak inside the Fortress, even offering them a supply of potent poison. However, this plan is quickly refused. Wermel suggests the party ambush Morazak while he's out on patrol in the ruins.

Mother Bellana explains that Morazak rerouted the patrols away from the center of the Uruk, near where Lord Ereshal was slain. "For years, no one's seen that area of the ruins," she explains, "He's also smuggled hundreds of slaves into the ruins — there's no telling what Morazak has them doing."

Harowl adds, "My contacts within the order say that the demon posing as Jannik often ventures away from patrols with his honor guard. The thing claims to be searching for signs of his missing children. I believe that during these times, Morazak visits that restricted area. This could be an ideal location for an ambush. However, the team must stealthily position themselves deep within the ruins."

Tarran continues, "Even if the ambush fails, some the team might survive and escape. Then we'd learn what was going on inside the restricted zone and maybe locate the slaves."

Jannik decides that the best course is for the party to go to Harkanis Bek posing as supporters, then enter the ruins, journey to the restricted zone, and ambush Morazak there. If their attack fails, at least one of them must escape and report to Harowl what they've discovered inside the ruins. Rough maps of the ruins, including a secret tunnel leading into them from Harkanis Bek, are then given to the party. Bellana points to the tunnel on the map and explains, "This is the route Tarran and I used to sneak out of Harkanis Bek to find our father. With luck it hasn't been discovered."

The Heart of Yan Shia

The issue of artifact the group was sent to deliver is then discussed. Tarran states the Red Scarves should take the item and use it to supply Army Group Scarlet, which has had difficulties with water shortages. Harowl agrees, saying that without a solution to the water crisis the knights will be forced to abandon Harkanis Bek in about six weeks.

Mother Bellana and Sayani disagree. Sayani explains that should the party arrive in Harkanis Bek empty-handed, Morazak may distrust them. If they aren't trusted, they could

be closely watched, which could jeopardize the entire mission. Bellana feels the knights themselves are suffering greatly, when Prince Morazak is their true enemy. Her concern is a humanitarian one.

Commander Scroll sees both sides of the issue, and cannot decide which course of action is best.

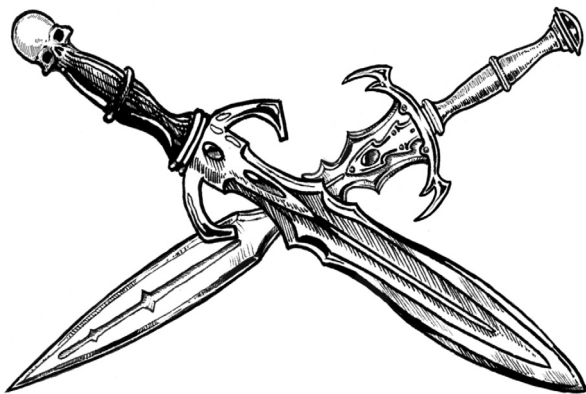
Jannik looks to the party. "As the council cannot reach a consensus the final choice is yours. Do what you will with this wondrous item."

Bitter Responsibility

Tarran asks to join the adventurers on their mission, but his father refuses. Tarran insists saying, "I have earned this right, father. I have fought this war for nearly half my lifetime. I must see it through to the end. Would you rob me of that?"

His father threatens to strip him of command and place him under arrest if he says another word on the matter. He explains, "You are next in line for Tal. When Morazak falls I cannot, I will not, resume command of the order. My time is past. You and your sister are next in line to carry on the traditions of Tal Abastion. One of you must outlive the war and take command."

Bellana quickly adds, "Tarran, it cannot be me. I serve the goddess first, as I must. I could never command the order with my full heart, as one should. It is you, my brother; you must make ready to take command at war's end." Tarran hangs his head in defeat, and nods in acquiescence.



Leaving The Red Tower

As the meeting ends, Jannik orders the mission to begin immediately and bids everyone goodbye. He orders Commander Tarran to lead a flight of wasp riders to drop the party a day's walk from Harkanis Bek. "A patrol of knights should quickly locate you and escort you safely to the fortress," Jannik explains. "After that, it's up to you." He offers his hand in friendship, holding it a moment longer than expected. He whispers to each, "I am pleased to have met you; farewell." It is obvious that this is a final goodbye from a man knowing his final days are upon him.

Mother Bellana embraces each party member before blessing them all, bidding them the Istasha's mercy and protection. To each adventurer she hands a bag containing three mushrooms, explaining that eating each grants a special power:

- **Blue Mushroom:** This mushroom reinvigorates you as if you've slept for a full night.
- **Green Mushroom:** This mushroom restores 2d6 HP of damage.
- **Red Mushroom:** This mushroom purges the effects of all toxins (injected, ingested, and inhaled).

Final Farewell

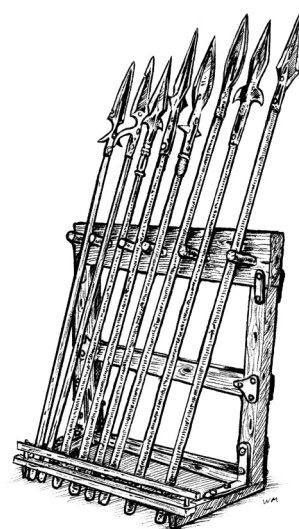
Commander Tarran flies the party away from Red Tower and across the Dol Minor Wastes. Each party member rides on a separate Giant Wasp, piloted by a Red Scarf soldier. Commander Tarran leads the flight, which eventually touches down behind a set of tall rock formations. He explains, "Circle around these rocks to the south, and you'll find a road. Follow it north and you should reach Harkanis Bek in two days. You likely won't get all the way there without meeting a patrol of knights. Here is where we part ways."

Tarran then expresses envy and regret that he's unable to accompany them, but he cannot disobey his father's direct orders. He says, "I was saving these for when I finally came up against Morazak, so you'd better take them." Commander Tarran then gives the party the following items:

- Six potions: Restore Vitality (2), Invisibility (2), Haste (1), Strength (1)
- A quiver of eighteen +2 Arrows.
- Dagger +2/+4 vs. Abyssal Creatures

Reaching Harkanis Bek

The road south of the rock formation leads to Harkanis Bek, and is heavily patrolled by the Knights. After following the road for a day, the party encounters a patrol, and is escorted to the fortress of Harkanis Bek on the outskirts of the ruins of Uruk.

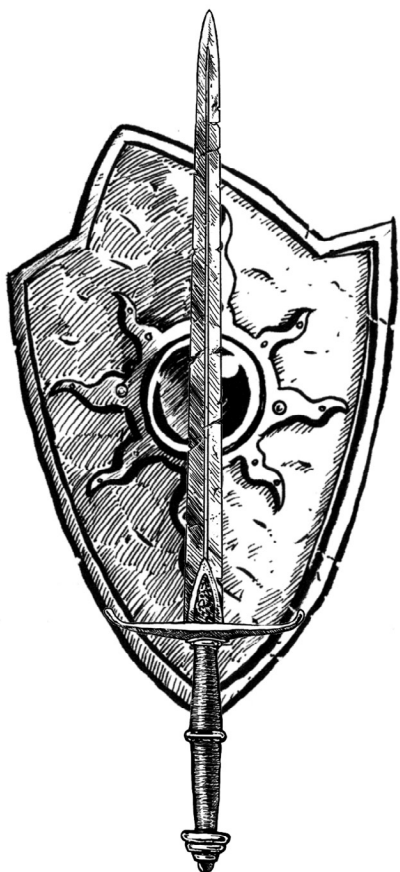


Part Four: Harkanis Bek

Introduction

The road leading to Harkanis Bek becomes better maintained the longer you follow it. After walking it for most of a day you catch sight of them, six figures on horseback riding out to meet you. As they approach you see one of them carries a pennant, blue and white emblazoned with an upraised blade against a shield, the emblem of the Knights of Tal Abastion.

They stop twenty yards ahead of you and their apparent leader calls out, "We are outriders of the Knights of Tal Abastion. I am First Spear Lurian, second cohort, and I offer my greetings. May we approach your company to determine your purpose? Otherwise this road is denied to all travel." This is common practice, as one of the duties of the order is to prevent treasure hunters from reaching the ruins of Uruk.



The Patrol

This standard patrol of Knights means the party no harm. After briefly questioning them, the patrol escorts the party through the final day of their journey. The men are well armed and armored, and, although they appear thin and tired, they conduct themselves with honor and professionalism. Should the party refuse to speak with First Spear Lurian, they are turned back toward the Dol Minor Wastes. If the party tries to force their way past the patrol or attacks the Knights, combat ensues.

- **Knights of Tal Abastion, Standard Patrol (6):** Init +3; Atk spear +3 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 3d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L

This close to the fortress the roads are relatively safe, but if any monsters appear, four of the Knights dispatch them quickly. The other two remain with the party to defend them if required to do so. They do not ask for, or accept, any assistance. They respectfully explain that it is their sworn duty to keep the road safe and protect those upon it. The knights are friendly and even offer to share what little food and water they carry.

The Fortress of Harkanis Bek

When the adventurers first see the famed fortress, they are unimpressed. While hardly a small keep, it is not as large as they expected and seems unremarkable. It appears to be a blocky, unattractive military redoubt. As they get closer, the party starts to notice the great thickness of the wall and how expertly its defenses are arranged. It becomes obvious how difficult it would be to besiege this ugly little fortification. Harkanis Bek is not a grand castle or a governor's residence. It is a soldier's stronghold, designed not to impress anyone except the men defending it or those unfortunate enough to attempt an attack against it.

Once past the fortress's gate, the party enters its narrow streets. While inconvenient to foot travel and commerce this too was intentionally done for defensibility. Most buildings are made of stone, with stout doors and arrow slits. Even if the great gate fell or the walls were breached, the Knights would be able to fight on, defending each interior structure to the last man.

The Knights within Harkanis Bek

The characters see many Knights roaming about, tending to duties and standing guard. While their weapons and armor are in good repair, bits of rust and tarnish can be spotted here and there. Their hair is closely cropped, even among the female Knights. Oorok Knights have trimmed their hair so shortly they appear nearly bald. If asked about it, the Knights explain that lice have become serious health issue within Harkanis Bek. Everyone appears tired, with a gaunt, sallow look, clear signs of the strict rationing placed upon them. While these men and women won't leave their posts, they no longer have the strength to properly defend the fortress. Any other army would have abandoned this position long ago due to the conditions, but not the Knights of Tal Abastion. They are starving and on the brink of collapse; the situation is worse than anyone in the outside world realizes.

The Travelers within Harkanis Bek

While the adventurers saw many hundreds of people setting out from Tasagaroth they only see a few scattered dozen non-knights within the fortress. These merchants, teamsters, caravan guards, and mercenaries wander about with a haunted, far-off gaze. Many suffered wounds or lost companions crossing the Dol Minor Wastes. They appear sullen and exhausted.

While their purses are filled with coin, few take comfort in it. Most want nothing more than to rest for a few days and rush back to Tasagaroth. They hope that without a cargo to haul the road back will be safer and the journey shorter. No one seems willing to ever attempt this dangerous trip again.

The Heart of Yan Shia, Delivered

If the party decided to deliver the Heart of Yan Shia to the Knights of Tal Abastion, they are escorted to one of many stone buildings within the fortress. There they meet with Second Helm Kentral, First Cohort, a female knight of middle years. Like every other knight, the older woman appears thin and her head is nearly shaved bald. When given the Heart, Second Helm Kentral heralds the party as heroes and quickly pays them 10,000 pieces of silver.

The Knights immediately put the artifact to use, delivering water rations to everyone on duty. Those knights who are off-duty line up to fill their canteen for the first time in months. As cold water passes their parched lips some knights — though hardened warriors — openly weep. The party becomes instant celebrities within Harkanis Bek, openly called saviors by everyone they encounter. The adventurers are allowed to remain in Harkanis Bek unescorted.

Second Helm Kentral, the highest-ranking knight currently in the fortress, asks the party how long they plan to remain at Harkanis Bek. She says the Tal will want to thank them personally once he returns. If they ask where he is, Kentral explains he is leading an extended patrol in the ruins with his personal guard, and should return tomorrow or the day after.

The Heart of Yan Shia, Lost

If the party doesn't deliver the artifact, they have nothing to offer the Knights of Tal Abastion. Without bringing in goods of some kind, they are viewed as a burden at best, with suspicion at worst. They meet with Second Helm Kentral, who takes their report with a look of exasperation. She tells the party that they may remain within Harkanis Bek for three days to rest, but must depart after that. Also, she can offer them no provisions of any kind during their stay here. Finally, she assigns two Knights to "assist" them during their stay.

Assigned Guards

Two Knights of Tal Abastion are assigned to watch over the party if they fail to deliver the Heart of Yan Shia. They are Sevash, a young man serving his first tour, and Talgru, a powerful Oorok veteran of the order. Sevash is weak and has dizzy spells due to malnutrition.

Talgru suspects the party of being Red Scarf spies after crossing the Dol Minor Wastes only to arrive at Harkanis Bek empty-handed. Both are honorable Knights with knowledge of the Abyssal Prince Morazak.

Adventurers attempting to sneak into the ruins must find a way to deal with these guards. The party may attempt to evade them, subdue them, or eliminate them. Should combat erupt between the party and their guards, an alarm is likely to be raised. This summons 1d6+4 Knights of Tal Abastion, who join Sevash and Talgru against the party. If full-blown battle erupts between the party and the Knights inside Harkanis Bek, the scenario likely ends in failure and possibly the adventurers' death.

- **Sevash, Knights of Tal Abastion, Guard:** Init +2; Atk spear +2 melee (1d10); AC 16; HD 3d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL L
- **Talgru, Knights of Tal Abastion, Guard:** Init +4; Atk spear +4 melee (1d8+3); AC 18; HD 4d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4; AL L
- **Knights of Tal Abastion, Reinforcements (1d6+4):** Init +1; Atk spear +1 melee (1d8); AC 14; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L

Back on Track: Brace Anderhall

Judges can introduce this character if the party never journeyed to Red Tower. This allows Judges an alternate way to lead the adventurers into the Ruins of Uruk and the Abyssal Prince Morazak's secret temple. While wandering the fortress, the adventurers are approached by a lone traveler recovering from his crossing of the Dol Minor Wastes.

Brace Anderhall, also known as Brace Grindstone, is a wiry, middle-aged man from Kesh. He is closely watched by the Knights of Tal Abastion, as they mistrust his intentions. Rightly so, as Brace has come to Harkanis Bek with every

4. **The Third Trap:** While marked on the map (if possessed) as a trapdoor in the ceiling, this is now a locked metal grate. The lock must either be picked or the metal grate forced upward, which requires DC 15 to pick or Strength check DC 18. This doorway is trapped by the Abyssal Prince Morazak, and if triggered, an alarm rings out across the area. Should that occur, it has dangerous consequences (see The Ruins of Uruk).

Other Methods of Entering the Ruins

While there are other ways for the adventurers to sneak into the ruins from inside Harkanis Bek, this is the only one provided to Judges. Should parties attempt to penetrate the ruins in another way, it is left for their individual Judges to create a series of difficult challenges. Judges should remember, the Knights of Tal Abastion have been working hard to keep people out of the Ruins of Uruk for nearly a century.



Shuhadaku Sea

The Region of
VUUL

Bahal

Tasagarothi

Kem

Khremata
Forest

The Red
Tower

Dol Minor
Wastes

Harkanis
Bek

Seget River

Azag
Isles

The Ruins
of Uruk

**A FACELESS
ENEMY**



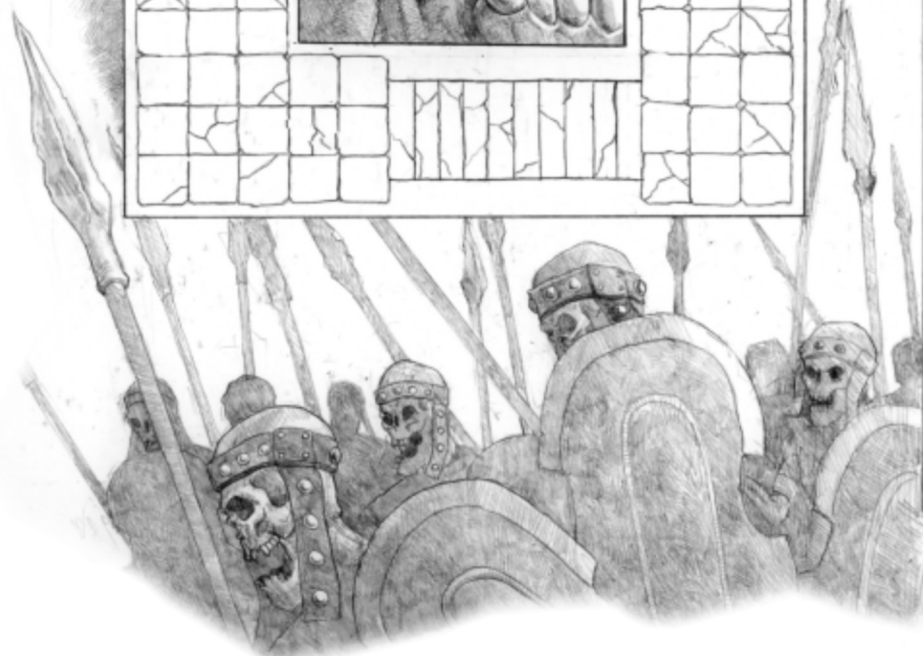
A FACELESS ENEMY



Trap Door
in Ceiling



Rock
Pile

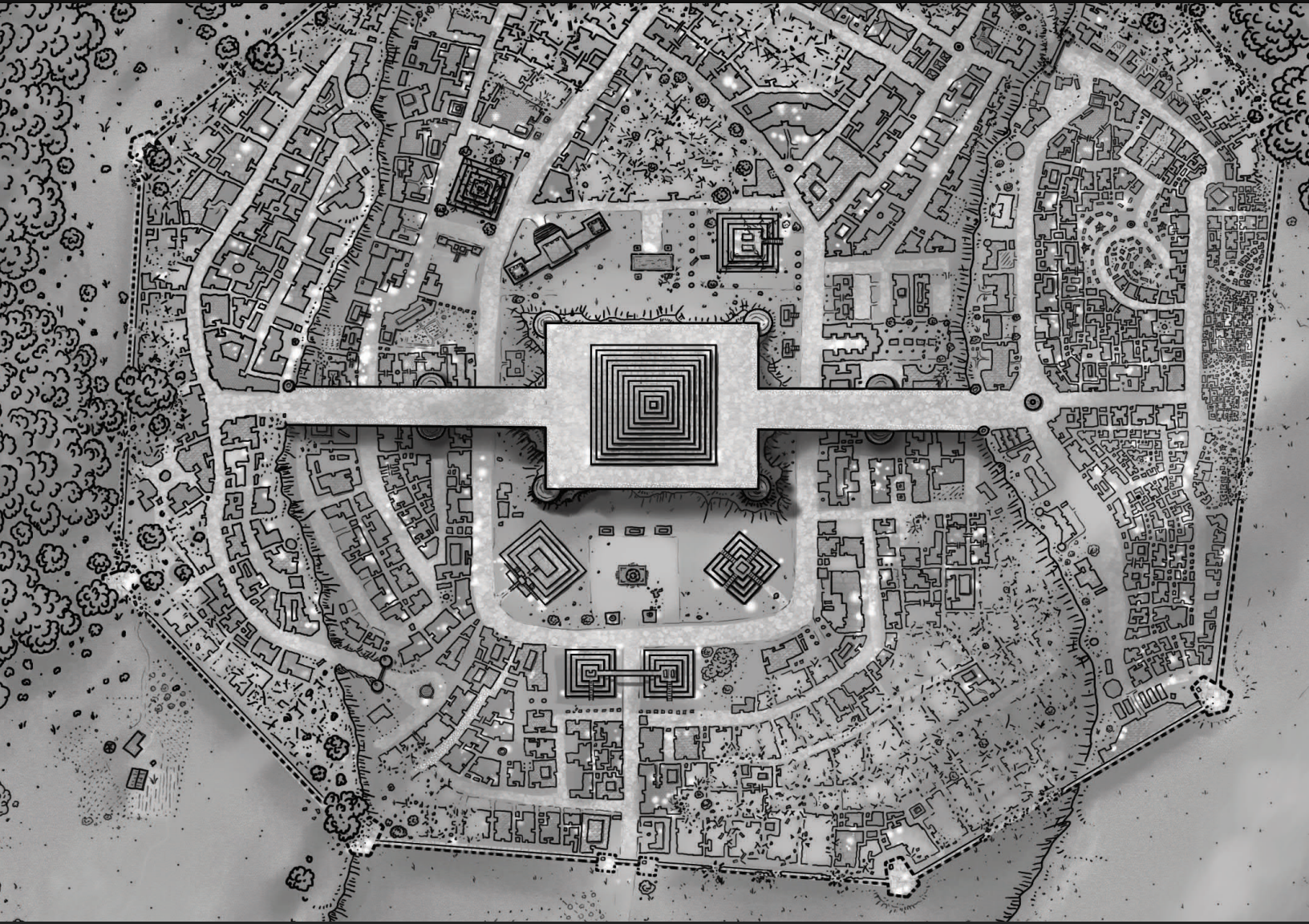


Entrance

A FACELESS ENEMY



For 100 years, the ruins of the City-State of Uruk have stood as a memorial to the power of the Sorcerer Kings.



The adventurers are tasked with bringing a powerful magical artifact to the fortress of Harkanis Bek, built on the edge of the ruins of Uruk. The Knights of the Order of Tal Abastion have watched over the ruins for nearly a century, keeping treasure hunters and graverobbers out... and unspeakable horrors in.

CHAPTER 13 PRESS

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