

RUINS OF MADNESS

– *Eberron* –

The secret of nature is patience

Shadows of the fiend – chapter 2 of 4

A D&D adventure for tier 1 characters



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Abstract

Welcome to **Ruins of Madness**, a D&D Eberron adventure, part 2 of 4 of the “Shadows of the fiend” story.

The adventure takes place in the island of Durast, a mysterious place where a strange population lives in secret and adventurers have landed after the crash of the airship Oceanus.

Will the adventurers be able to save the people that was on the airship with them?

Adjusting the adventure

This adventure is designed for **5 1st-level characters**. The story arc should lead the group from 1st level to 5th within 8 chapters.

If you play it as a one-shot adventure, anyway, you can find suggestions about how to increase the difficulty of the encounters for different groups.

Shadows of the fiend

The “Shadows of the fiend” set of stories is designed to offer a good way to shift from a set of new characters to a group of new characters. Each chapter explores tips and situations to develop bonds between the characters, both PCs and NPCs.

“Shadows of the fiend” uses rules of [13th moon – Eberron Shared Campaign](#), which you can download for free. Characters will need 2 chapters to obtain a level up. If you don’t use these rules, you can adjust XP rewards accordingly.



Introduction

This adventure takes place in a mysterious island, **Durast**, which was chosen by a mighty Rakshasa, Durastoran the Wyrmbreaker, to save a sparkle of Bel Shalor (someone could say that it's because of this loss that Bel Shalor's imprisonment was possible at all).

The island was later used by Cyre's army as an outpost during the Last War. The sparkle of Bel Shalor, called Nal Shalor, managed to twist and corrupt cyren soldiers, forcing them to worship him and offering acts of evil and betrayal.

The adventurers, after the crash of the Oceanus, will assess damage and try to explore the area to find resources and getting an understanding of possible threats. They will find cyren soldiers fighting terrible monsters from a temple recently risen in the middle of the island – actually, they are tricked by Nal Shalor who is feeding upon their despair and corrupting their soul.

Development

The adventure takes place in three acts.

After a quick **setup**, to introduce new characters, in **Act I – Damage assessment** the adventurers should try to understand their situation, checking NPCs they have related with and the other survivors.

In **Act II – Exploring the wilderness**, the adventurers will find a group of cyren soldiers, isolated since the Last War. They are unaware of the rest of the world, do not know that the Last War has ended, and that their country is a pile of wasted dweomers. Their mind is warped by a malign entity, Nal Shalor, which corrupted their Sivilis communication officer, isolating and tricking them.

In **Act III – Gaining freedom**, the soldiers will be assaulted by a group of dangerous monsters from the other side of the island. In the aftermath of the fight, PCs will understand that some kind of madness is keeping the soldiers in a delusional state and they will need to find out the source before falling mad themselves.

What happens next?

"Lost and found" is designed in 2 storylines of 4 chapters. The first storyline, "Shadows of the fiend" is

- **Flying fear** (level 1) – hijack of the Oceanus and crash on the mysterious island of Shont
- **Ruins of madness** (level 1) – exploration of the island of Durast and discovery of lost cyren soldiers
- **The Shadowflame altar** (level 2) – finding the lost temple of Nal Shalor, the group will find something unsettling – and the elemental of the ship!
- **Tides of danger** (level 2) – after repairing the ship, will the characters be able to find a way back home?

NPCs presented in these adventures should help introduce special themes of the setting: widespread magic, savage frontiers, faiths and religions, clear and obscure conflicts. This should help with an introduction and a chance for the PCs to build their relations with NPCs and other PCs.

Act I – Damage assessment

Duration: 30/45 min

After the crash, the ruins of the airship Oceanus lie on the shore of a mysterious island. The passengers, 25 ordinary people, don't know what to do and the only adventurer among crewmembers, captain Shorel d'Lyrandar, is badly wounded.

Setup

If you didn't play the previous module, *Flying fear*, or there are new players, you can play a short intro scene with your characters to introduce them to all other players. You can ask each player to introduce the character, adding some relevant information on where or what the character is doing.

You can also set up an "opening credits" scene, describing the last instants of the previous module and asking them to decide what were they doing during the crash, choosing something that outlines the character, so that, for example, they can *show* bravery instead of *telling* that the character is brave.

The crash ends with the fire elemental powering the ship roaring and escaping into the forest.

Dead, alive, and all in between

After the crash, the PCs should be hurt, badly wounded and surrounded by chaos: passengers in bad conditions, captain Shorel out of action due to a bad wound inflicted by the bandits (consider him having 5 levels of exhaustion) and survivor bandits escaped. It's raining and the smoke coming from the ship makes it difficult to have a complete view of the situation, which is grievous.

Show lots of emergency situations to players and let them be creative about resolution: it's a good time to reward inspiration. Offer situations like:

- A woman with her legs locked under a huge chunk of debris
- A man with a big splint piercing his arm
- Some people in shock screaming still in front of something dangerous which is gonna fall upon them
- Someone wandering in shock unaware of surroundings and putting himself in danger

Use a **CD15** ability check, relevant to the possible solution attempted by the PCs, giving advantage on the roll if the solution seems ok, to outline the outcome. If the attempt fails, the passenger will die – mark down the number of dead passengers and subtract them to the total.

After 2 failed attempts or 3 successful attempts, the fire elemental bound to the airship gets loose: the ring around the ship breaks, explodes, and the elemental starts running free to the center of the island. On its path there are 3 passengers which will be roasted if PCs do not intervene. Enjoy the solutions your players will try to implement (or the lack of them). If the passengers die, panic will fill the air and it will take a lot to settle down and understand how to survive.

The hull of the airship is in almost good conditions, despite some missing piece, and it can be used as shelter to rest. This is the chance for the PCs to enjoy a long rest (required after the crash). Nothing dangerous will happen during the rest, but add some scene involving wounded or panicked NPCs.

Notable characters

Same as the previous adventure, there are various NPCs for the PCs to interact with. You can of course change what happened to them to your own accord.

- **Captain Shorel d'Lyrandar** is a daring adventurer and ex-captain of the ship. His leg is wounded, and he is unable to act due to exhaustion. He'll need some days to recover. He can give good advice to the PCs
- **Countess Louette Lorianne** is the vain and frivolous daughter of a rich merchant of Sharn. She was almost unscathed at the crash, but she keeps annoying everyone around her, trying to draw anybody's attention.
- **Count George Blacktail** is Leouette's betrothed. He often brags a lot about his combat skills, but he's more an animal handler. He'll develop a Mark of Handling in the future – if he survives. He's unhappy of Louette, who is too vain and careless.
- **Roman Dylar [Moshar d'Phiarlan]** is a member of House Phiarlan in disguise. He'll try to kill and get the message from Bringer without being discovered. Can be a minor antagonist for PCs.
- **Sam Guilleran** was the bartender on the Oceanus. The captain will ask him to be his eyes and keep an eye out on the passengers. He can be trusted by the characters for surveillance of the passengers.
- **Jerome Luliac** is a cold-blooded killer. After the crash he died and got raised as a wight by Nal Shalor. Now he is trying to get the revenge he wants from the people who denied him his higher destiny. His aberrant dragonmark is still visible but not working.
- **Kurgaath**, the brutal and disciplined hobgoblin was a former ally of Jerome but after his "return" as a wight he is changing his mind and looking for a chance to dump his undead partner. His hatred towards Lyrandars will create trouble with the captain.
- **Bringer** can be an ally of the PCs: he's looking for a reason to live, since he was built to deliver a message and the recipient is no more, lost forever after the Mourning.
- **Kevin, the ship boy** will be a problem for the PCs, since he'll try in any way to get involved in adventures, putting himself at risk.

You don't have to use them all: try to choose NPCs that will be more interesting for your players.

Act II – Exploring the wilderness

Duration: 1 hour

After a night of rest, the PCs will be refreshed and ready to explore the island. The captain will push them to do so to find resources to fix the ship and come back home.

Exploration time

The island hides many threats, mostly related to Nal Shalor's spreading corruption. Let the players decide their role during the exploration, assign ability and skill relevant to that action and let each player make a single **CD14** ability check. Grant advantage on the roll for well-constructed ideas. If at least half of the group succeeds, consider the **ghoul** surprised at the beginning of the next encounter.

Light and darkness

While traveling, the group will find an unexpected scene: two armored soldiers, unconscious on the ground, are being attacked by another mad gnome soldier with darkened gloomy eyes, almost unable to speak (statistics of a **cultist**) and a huge corrupted undead soldier (statistics of a **ghoul**). Add 1 mad soldier for every PC beyond the 5th. Behind them there is a creature made of black flame, **Nal Shalor**, trying to get a new host – he will stay behind and not fight at this time. As soon as they see the group they will attack them. The flame, if attacked, interacted with, or if the monsters are defeated, vanishes and reappears in the temple. If someone is at 0 hit points while the flame disappears, the flame can inhabit the unconscious body and heal it to 1 hp, to spy on the enemy (a passive perception of 19 or more reveals that the flame turned back while fleeing and it is probably still around, lurking).

Nal Shalor

A very long time ago, Durastoran the Wyrmbreaker, a powerful Rakshasa from the Lords of the Dust, managed to find some remnant sparkles of Bel Shalor and hid them all around Eberon, hoping to make them grow and obtain new powerful demon at his disposal to free his master. One of the sparkles, Nal Shalor, was hidden in this little island.

Forgotten soldiers

Ten years ago, during the Last War, a cyren force secured the island as an outpost for surveillance. Nal Shalor took advantage of the situation, corrupting the mind of the soldiers, possessing their Sivis



communication officer, lying them and feeding himself of their hope and despair. The Last War has ended two years ago, but they are unaware of that, praying every day to be the day they finally get home.

If the PC manage to save the soldiers, they will be scared: they were unconscious in the hands of an enemy and their last orders, twisted by Nal Shalor, were to execute every enemy invading the outpost. All cyren soldiers have statistics of a **guard**, except where noted. They can manage to find their camp talking, intimidating, or following them or any other plan.

Captain Angela Thennos

The captain was a kind and honorable half-elf woman, always polite and respectful. After all these years, she is willing to execute every single non cyren invader, man, woman, or child. Nal Shalor, possessing the communication officer, told her about unspeakable horrors the enemy has inflicted on her people and filled her mind with cruelty and her heart with rage. Statistics of a **Knight**.

First lieutenant Gregory Woyit

Second-in-command for the group, he was an apprentice magewright turned as a wandslinger for the war. He was a good confident for each of his comrades, but his mind got twisted by Nal Shalor and he has become a pathological liar, trying to seed hate and discord. He is equipped with two *wands of magic missiles*.

Chaplain Kareema Kunderak

Faithful servant of Dol Arrah, Kareema is a dwarf combatant raised and born in Metrol. Without a dragonmark to secure her future, she decided to join the army and travel the world. She was a spirit of hope, a light in the darkness, but after the touch of Nal Shalor she became obsessed with looming threats from the forest.

Sparkles of life

Add any other soldier that could be a bond with one of the PCs. Maybe an old comrade, an old friend, enemy, partner-in-crime or what is more appropriate to the group you have at your table. Create drama, tension, and interest in your players using their character's background. It's a good spot to involve more a shy player: pick a line from his background (personality, ideal, bond, flaw) and ask the player to use that line to tell the story of how the two met.

Meeting the soldiers

As the group manages to meet the soldiers, it should be evident that their condition is terrible. They are ready to fight, raging against their enemy. The PCs can try to persuade them and tell them that the war is over and that the five nations are at peace but it will require a good amount of roleplaying or a CD18 Charisma[Persuasion] check, made with disadvantage in presence Karrnathi (due to some lies of Nal Shalor).

It's a powerful scene to play – reward good roleplaying and/or well-played lies with *inspiration*.

Act III – Gaining freedom

After a time for shock about the news, the group should understand the big issue: monsters from a temple inside the island keep attacking them and they are being killed, one by one. The monsters are hiding some elemental entity, which the PCs can try to use to fix the problems of their ship and go back home. After some time (which can be used for a *short rest*), the PCs can go explore the place. They can ask for reinforcement to the soldier and the captain is ready to assign one of them, at their choice (even herself).

If the PCs manage not to kill any of the soldier and are able to ally with them, the captain will reward them with a *wand of magic missiles* from their supply. The wand has the silver bell of Cyre on its handle which can be rung as an action to make it shed bright light in a 10ft radius and dim light for an additional 10ft. Ringing the bell again, as an action, turns the light off.

Roleplay the hard trip through the forest asking each player how he is helping and assigning an ability[skill/tool] check to each one. If at least half of the group succeeds on a CD15 check the group can reach the temple safely, else they all will gain one level of exhaustion.

Once at the temple, they find some people in savage clothing, their eyes empty and their teeth long and sharp, with a strange black flame, Nal Shalor, between them. They are 1 **will-o'-wisp** and 2 **zombies** (add 2 **zombies** for each PC beyond the 5th). They are soldiers from the cyren outpost, ultimately corrupted being too near to the temple, receiving orders from the undead fiend.

Every time a PC damages in melee one of the undead, tell that the character notices something strange on his target: a military badge, a cyren weapon or remnant of armour, brightly coloured cloth – everything that can hint their origin. After that, show that the soldier that went with them is slowly turning into an undead. If they manage to move far from the temple before the second turn of fight, the soldier will be saved – else, he'll turn into a **zombie** and he'll start attacking the PCs.

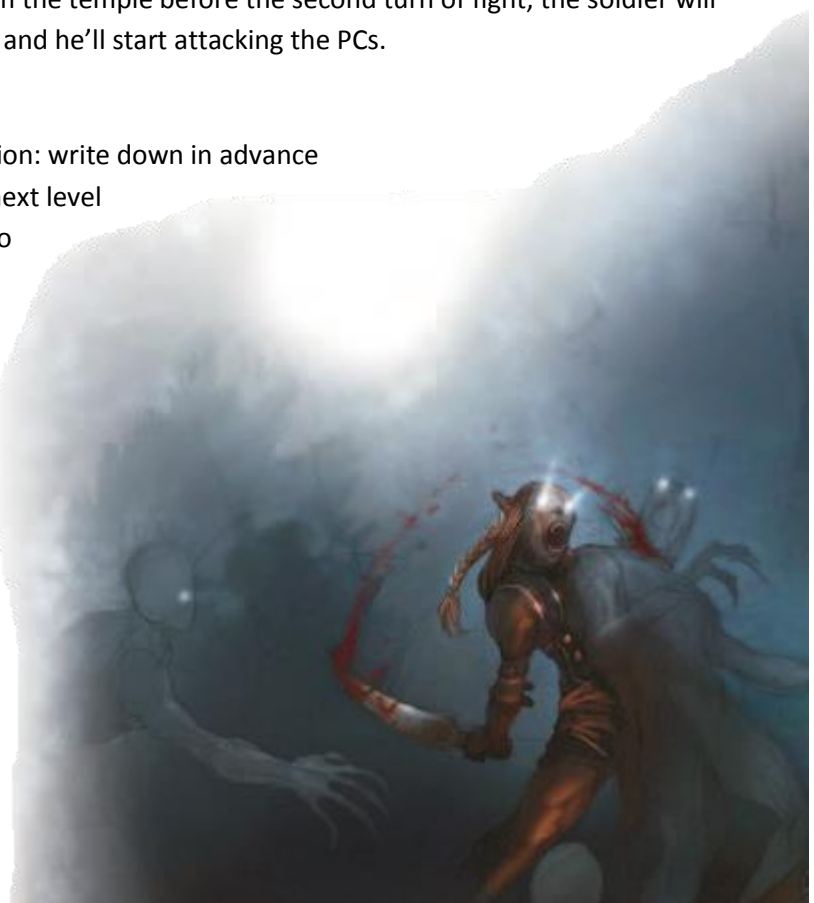
A colourful note

Some PCs should level up after this session: write down in advance which abilities they should gain on the next level and tell them to use them in this fight, to show their growth.

The doors open

After the fight, the doors of the temple open and everyone can hear a voice taunting them: *“Come! Come and feed me with your souls! You will never leave this island, you are mine and mine only!”*

Give the PCs time to shout a cool reply and freeze the scene: the temple comes for the next episode and a good cliffhanger works like a charm!



Rewards

Each player (and DM as well) gains **1 XPC** and **1 TP**.

If the players got the *wand of magic missiles* from cyren soldiers, they can add it to their list.

Mark down how many passengers survive the adventure.

A special thank you...

...to my UESM fellows who helped me playtesting the adventure.

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