

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons  
2nd Edition



# DARK • SUN

W O R L D

Official Game Adventure

## Marauders of Nibenay



by William W. Connors



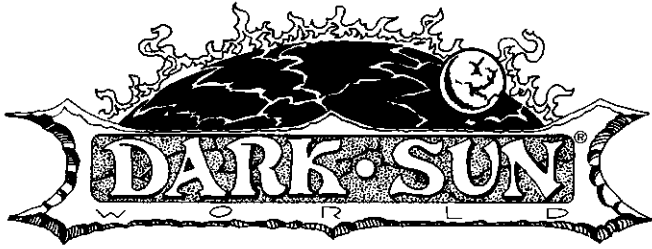


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Player's Book



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A DARK SUN® Campaign Adventure

## Player's Book

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This adventure is dedicated to the men and women of the American Red Cross disaster services, whose tireless efforts go unnoticed far too often.

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# One: Using This Book

## **Before the Game**

The information presented in this book is intended to be used by both the players and the DUNGEON MASTER™ (DM™). The first several pages are provided as background material and are available to the players at the start of the game. For the most part, these pages give the players the information that their characters would normally know about the city of Nibenay, its environs, and its people. The players should have free access to most or all of this information both before and during the game. However, the DM may opt to give the players more or less information, depending upon the history of the characters in the adventure.

## **During the Game**

The majority of the illustrations in this book are intended to be shown to the players at specific points during the game. From time to time, the *DM; Book* will instruct the person refereeing the adventure to have the players flip to a specific page in this book. On that page, they'll be shown something important to help them better understand the situation in which they now find themselves.

## **Regenerated Characters**

The party of six adventurers provided in this book can be used as either player characters (PCs) or nonplayer characters (NPCs). If the players are going to use these characters in the game, some time should be spent making certain that both the players and the DM are familiar with all of the characters, their backgrounds, and any spells or special abilities that they might have. These pages may be cut and removed from the flipbook without affecting its use in play.

## Two: General Information

### **Geography**

The city of Nibenay is located at the eastern end of the Crescent Forest just north of the Great Ivory Plain. A long road runs out of the city to the north, connecting it with the Ivory Palace of Raam and the rest of the Tyr region. Just south of Nibenay is a region of hot springs called the Plain of Burning Water, which supplies the city's water and irrigates the rice fields that ring the City.

### **Government**

Nibenay is ruled by and named for the sorcerer-king who founded it centuries ago. He is seldom seen by his subjects, and rumors that he has died are frequently rife within the city. On occasion, these rumors have swelled to the point where civil disturbances and revolution seem imminent. At such times, the so-called Shadow King appears just long enough to crush the insurgents and prove to all that he still lives.

The power of the noble class in Nibenay lies in the springs of the Plain of Burning Water. Each noble family owns one of these springs and has absolute say over the use to which its waters are put. The nobles are entrusted with the appeasement of the various spirits associated with these springs. If a spring runs dry, the family that owns it is disgraced and loses all status in the city.

All of Nibenay's templars are women. It is said that they are all the wives of the sorcerer-king. Regardless of the truth of the rumor, it is important to keep in mind that these women have absolute power in the city. Making an enemy of one of Nibenay's templar-wives can be a fatal mistake.

### **Economy**

The artisans of Nibenay are noted for their fine skill at stonework and sculpture. Indeed, every surface of the city is decorated with carvings, etchings, and reliefs. The work of artists and stonemasons from Nibenay command a high price in any market.

Another important commodity in this magnificent city is the fine agafari wood of the Crescent Forest. This incredibly hard timber can be used to craft weapons and items that are nearly as durable as those made of bronze. While this industry is vital to the wealth of the city, it has also drawn it into a bitter resource war with Gulg, which is located at the far end of the Crescent Forest.

### **Culture**

Visitors to Nibenay cannot help but be awestruck by the city. The architecture makes the entire place a veritable work of art. Strange tastes and unusual building techniques can be seen everywhere. Some structures are decorated with the images of their owners, while others are marked with caricatures of some of Athas's most terrible monsters.

An important aspect of life in Nibenay is ritual dance. Because only nobles and templars are permitted to be literate, stories are often handed down through dances that are passed from generation to generation. Anyone with musical or similar talents will find an eager, demanding audience in the streets of Nibenay.

## Three: Fighter's Introduction

Because of Nibenay's ongoing war with Gulg, there is almost always work for mercenaries in the city. In some cases, they are hired as guards for the seemingly endless caravans that carry the city's works to markets in other lands. Others who are willing to sell their services will find a place in the ranks of a private army in the service of one of the city's noble families. The city-state itself maintains a standing army, but foreigners are not permitted to enlist.

The army of Nibenay is noted for its core unit, a devastating company of 1,000 half-giants. Furthermore, the Shadow King delights in the use of terrible war machines and has been known to employ large numbers of undead units. The templar-wives who command Nibenay's army prefer to fight in open ground, where their larger units and war machines can crush all but the mightiest of enemies. In recent years, however, they have been forced to deal with skirmishers hampering the logging industry in the Crescent Forest, something that has caused them to rethink their overall military strategy.

### **Rangers**

The great importance of the Crescent Forest to the economy of Nibenay makes rangers a valuable commodity in the lands controlled by the Shadow King. In particular, the families who control the logging trade will often employ rangers to protect their laborers from the head-hunters of Gulg, who constantly patrol the Crescent Forest in hopes of striking a blow against their ancient rivals.

The templars of Nibenay also employ rangers to act as scouts for their armies. While the laws prohibit them from hiring foreigners, the importance of the task is such that exceptions are occasionally made.

### **Gladiators**

Nibenay is one of the few places in the Tyr region that employs free gladiators. Indeed, there is quite a following for the most popular of the gladiatorial warriors. A free gladiator can earn fame and wealth in the games, so long as his skills do not fail him at a crucial moment.

In order to enter the arena as a free gladiator, one must be sponsored by a merchant house, noble family, or similar group. Because of the public admiration that comes with sponsorship of a successful team of gladiators, and the high turnover rate associated with the job, it is generally not too difficult to find a backer.

## Four: Wizard's Introduction

In general, the public takes a dim view of mages in Nibenay. They are typically perceived as twisted, power-hungry people who have abilities they cannot control. Because of this, any use of spells is likely to get one stoned or lynched by an angry mob. To the general populace of Nibenay, there is no difference between a defiler and preserver.

For their part, the templar-wives of Nibenay generally kill any magic-users they come across—instantly. However, in rare cases they have been known to work out deals in which a wizard is spared in exchange for some service. As often as not, though, these agreements end with the magician being killed.

### **Defilers**

The sorcerer-king himself keeps a cadre of defilers who have sworn fealty to him. In return for their service, the wizards are treated as if they were nobles and are even assigned one or more templar bodyguards. Entering the service of the Shadow King not easy, however, since many of those who present themselves to Nibenay are found wanting for some reason and are usually executed in a public ceremony.

Once in the service of the sorcerer-king, the duties of defilers are many and varied. They must serve as entertainers during the various festivals held in the city, a task they generally find demeaning. They also act as the secret weapons of the army, creating undead troops and providing support on the battlefield.

### **Preservers**

Unlike defilers, there is no place at all for preservers in the city of Nibenay. They are neither liked by the people nor tolerated by the sorcerer-king. The only friends that a preserver is likely to find in Nibenay are among the ranks of the Veiled Alliance. However, the environment of hatred and distrust that surrounds it makes this secret society a reclusive and suspicious lot. Because of this, attempting to contact the Alliance can be as dangerous for preservers as seeking an audience with the sorcerer-king for a defiler.

### **The Zwuun**

There is a mysterious force living in the Plane of Burning Waters south of the city. It is believed to be a compilation of the life forces of many ancient preservers. From time to time, preservers are able to contact the Zwuun. Whatever its nature and other powers, the Zwuun is an almost unlimited source of information. On most occasions, the Zwuun will be cooperative. When it is not feeling helpful, however, the Zwuun provides false, deceptive, and even dangerous information.



## Five: Cleric's Introduction

The people of Nibenay generally respect clerics as much as they despise wizards. While they are neither revered nor placed on pedestals, as they are in many other parts of the world, they are almost always treated with courtesy and deference.

The use of magical abilities must be handled carefully. On more than one occasion, a cleric has been mistaken for a magic-user, often with regrettable, and permanent, results.

### **Elemental Clerics**

Each of the elemental devotions is well represented in Nibenay. Within the city, clerics of earth and fire are the most respected-though the dangerous fire clerics are feared and watched by the templar-wives. In the fields that surround Nibenay, those who serve air and water are considered somewhat more important than their peers. Visiting clerics can generally find comfortable lodgings within the city by seeking out their local counterparts

### **Druids**

The importance of the Crescent Forest to the city of Nibenay makes for interesting relationships with the druids of Athas. On the one hand, druids oppose the unrestricted logging of agafari trees in the forest, a fact that has caused great friction with the merchants of the city. In contrast, those who must work and travel in the forests recognize the druids as an important source of information and aid.

Within the city, druids are popularly respected like other clerics. Indeed, those who protect the springs on the Plain of Burning Water are treated as well as anyone in Nibenay. Nobles and templars, of course, have quite a different view, but as long as the druids maintain a low profile, the authorities of Nibenay will tolerate them for brief periods of time. Athasian cities are always dangerous for druids, and Nibenay is no exception.

### **Templars**

Templars from other cities are generally welcome in Nibenay as long as they identify themselves to the gate guards upon entering the city. If they execute this required courtesy they are treated with all the respect and privilege due to visiting foreign statesmen. Templars who slip into the city unannounced are considered to be spies. If discovered, they are generally killed outright or tortured for whatever information they might have about their home city. Such treatment is automatic (and particularly vicious) if the templar is from Gulg.



## Six: Rogue's Introduction

Nibenay has often been called a thief's paradise. After all, the city's stone-carving and wood-working industries have made a large percentage of the populace wealthy. Further, due to the city's unusual architecture and its myriad hiding places, a thief can move about safely even on the brightest of days.

The city's Hill District, home to the Bard's Quarter and Elven Market, hides a band of talented and resourceful thieves. Outsiders will not be bothered if they keep their malfeasance modest. Those who get carried away will be stopped (often violently) before they can call for help from Nibenay's templar-wives or the powerful merchant houses.

For their part, the templars are unusually tolerant of illegal activities directed at foreigners. There are exceptions, of course, and crimes that might upset trade or involve important persons will be quickly investigated and punished. It is said that many of the most powerful templar-wives maintain a small cadre of thieves who serve them in exchange for protection from arrest.

Rogues who direct their attention to the city's nobles or powerful merchant houses will find themselves in even more serious trouble. In addition to drawing the wrath of the templars, many of Nibenay's most important citizens have small private armies that are free to act in the defense of their masters. It is hard to say whether a captured thief would suffer more at the hands of the templars or these mercenaries.

In cases where a thief is brought to trial, the usual result is a conviction, often without regard to evidence. The most common punishments for thieves are the loss of a hand (for the first offense) and death in the arena (for a subsequent conviction).

### **Bards**

Bards are the vice merchants of Nibenay. They deal in all manner of illicit goods and activities. For the most part, they do business in and around the Elven Market and Hill District in the city's eastern section.

Because the people of Nibenay are so fond of dance, ritual, and stories of the past, bards play an important part in the seasonal celebrations that are so popular in Nibenay. Bards from other areas are often asked to perform songs and stories that tell the tales of their homelands, for new tales are always welcome in Nibenay. As often as not, a bard can secure room and board with nothing more than a promise of entertainment.

In addition to their role as black-market dealers and entertainers, the bards of Nibenay sometimes sell their services as spies and assassins. This practice is far less common here than it is in many other parts of the Tyr region, however. The variety of poisons manufactured, distributed, and employed by these shadowy characters is more diverse than in any other city state.

## Seven: Psionicist's Introduction

The powers of the mind are not only recognized but also highly valued in Nibenay. Over the years, both the merchant houses and nobles of the city have taken care to build their psychic power. People who have studied the arts of the mind as a lifelong occupation can generally command a high price for their services from the masters of Nibenay.

The Nibenese School of Augurs, an association of psionicists, uses the mental abilities of its members to generate revenue and to hold a place among the most powerful merchant houses of the city. They are always open to suggestions of new ways in which their powers can be used to create income. Outsiders who come to them with clever plans are paid handsomely for their efforts.

### **The Order**

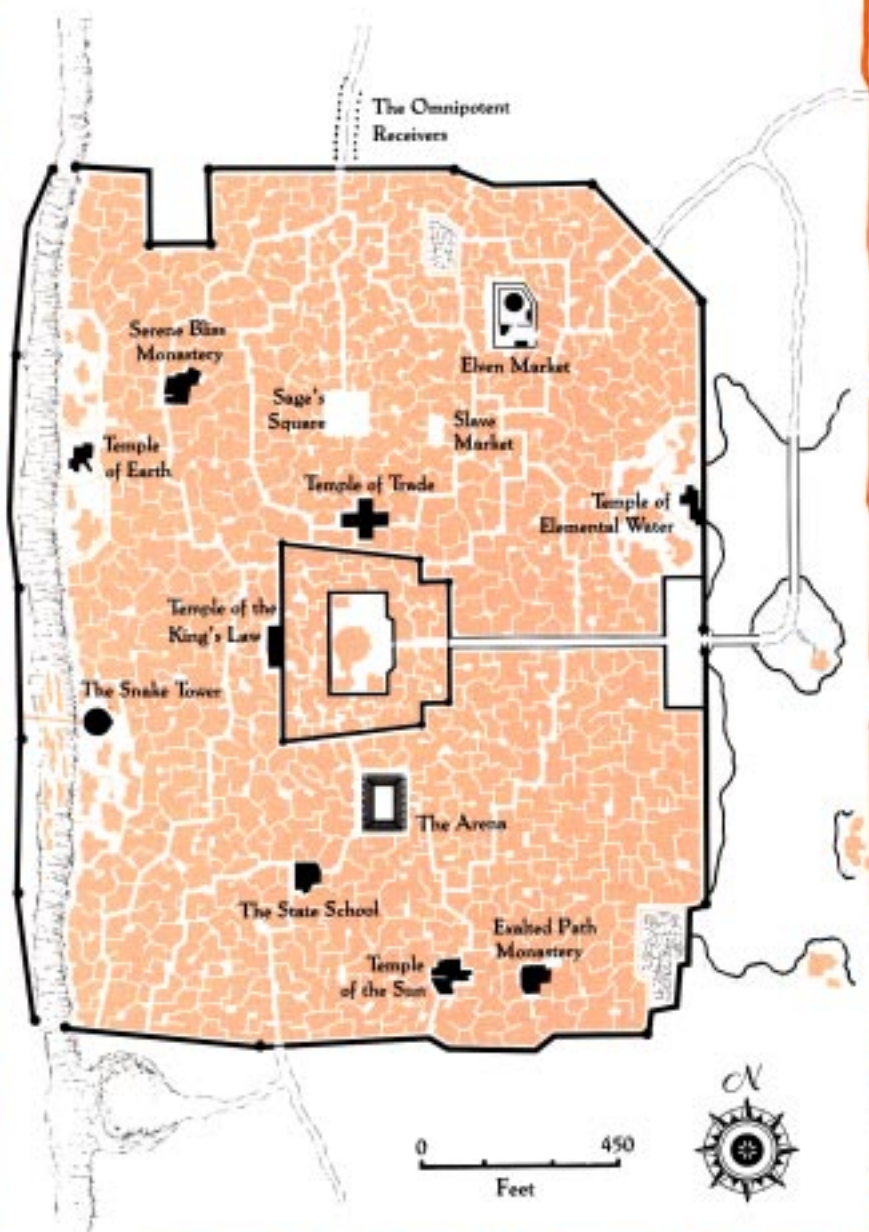
This band of psychics maintains a presence in Nibenay. For the most part, their actions are subdued and secret. Their exact goals and aspirations within the city are impossible for outsiders to discern. It is that they have some influence over the actions of the monastic movement (see below) in the city, but there is no solid proof of that at this time.

### **The Monastic Movement**

Two groups in Nibenay are attempting to revive the city's ancient traditions of monasticism. While the monks of Nibenay are not truly psionicists, their study of meditation and the mastery of self make them comparable to the old psychic fraternities.

These monastic assemblies are divided along gender lines. The Exalted Path is composed entirely of males, and Serene Bliss admits only women. The followers of the Exalted Path are led by their abbot, Thong Nal, while a woman named Au Treng is the abbot of the Serene Bliss movement.

## Eight: City Map



Nine:  
The Festival





Ten:  
Leaza

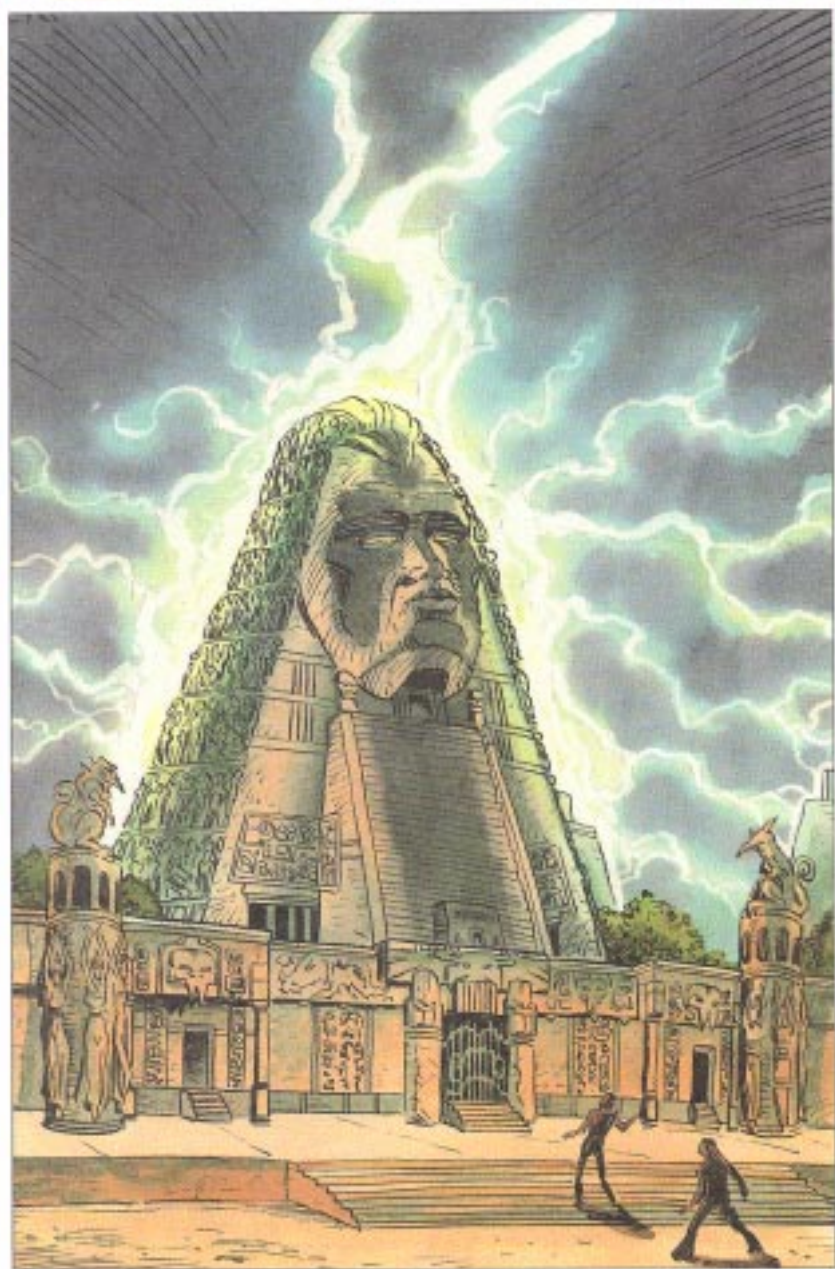


Eleven:  
Johrd





Twelve:  
The Lightning Bolt



Thirteen:  
The Shattered City





Fourteen:  
The Burning Rain



Fifteen:  
The Council

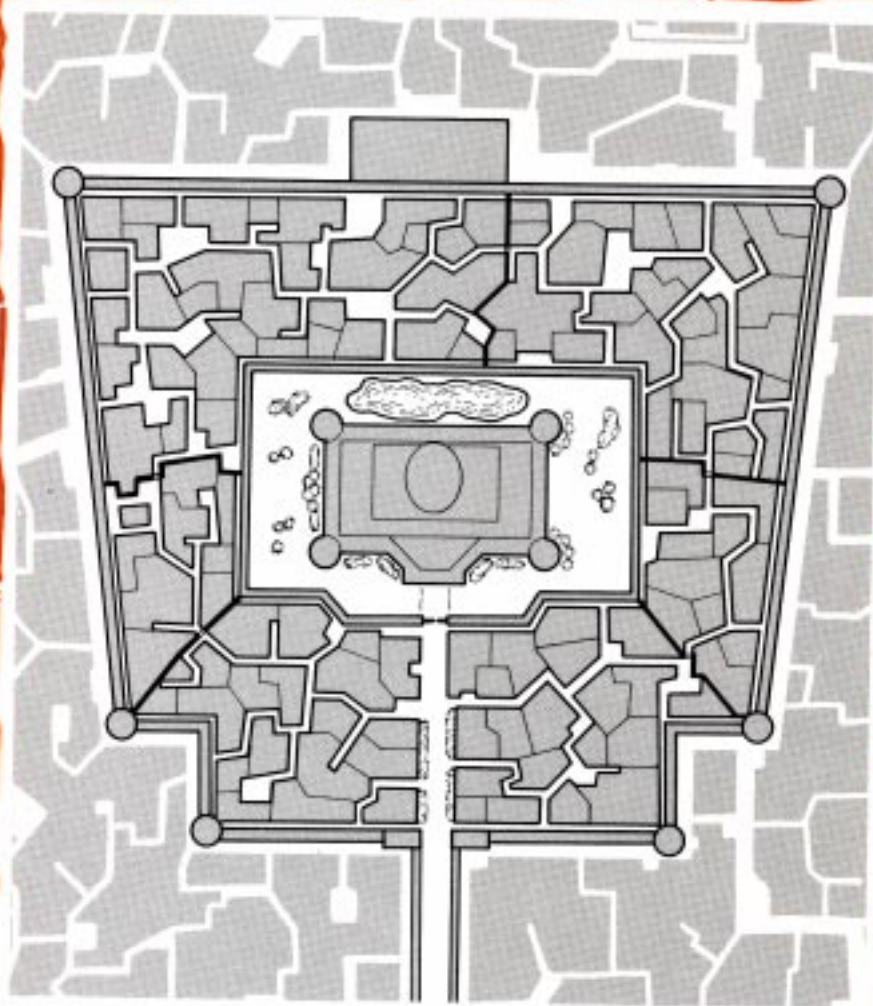




Sixteen:  
The Dead Rise!



Seventeen:  
The Naggaramakam



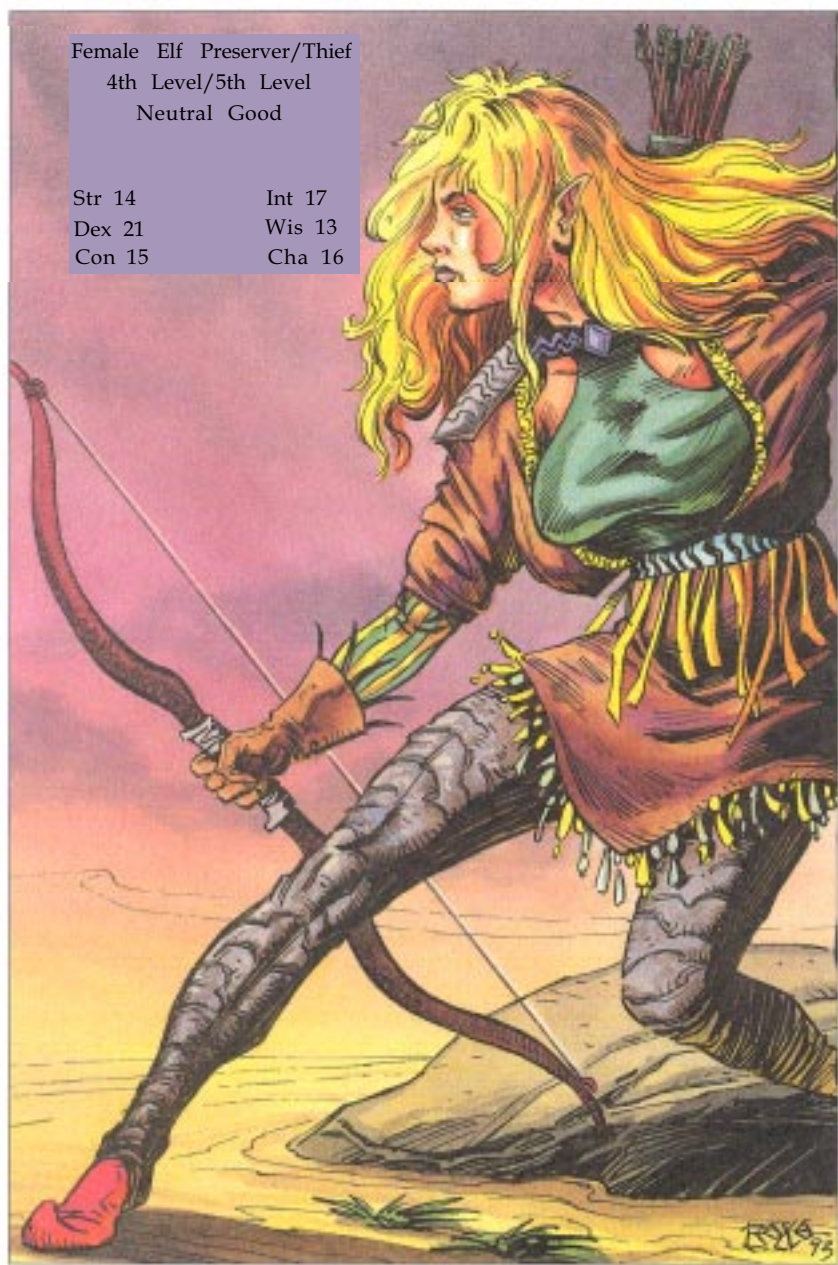


## Eighteen: Rowan

Female Elf Preserver/Thief  
4th Level/5th Level  
Neutral Good

Str 14  
Dex 21  
Con 15

Int 17  
Wis 13  
Cha 16



## Nineteen: Shaayira the Earth-Singer

Female Human Earth Cleric  
6th Level  
Chaotic Good

Str 17	Int 12
Dex 13	Wis 19
Con 16	Cha 14





## Twenty: Ashathra the Swift

Female Human Bard  
7th Level  
Chaotic Neutral

Str 12	Int 15
Dex 19	Wis 10
Con 15	Cha 18





## Twenty-One: Stug Two-Blades

Male Half-Giant Gladiator  
5th Level  
Neutral (?)

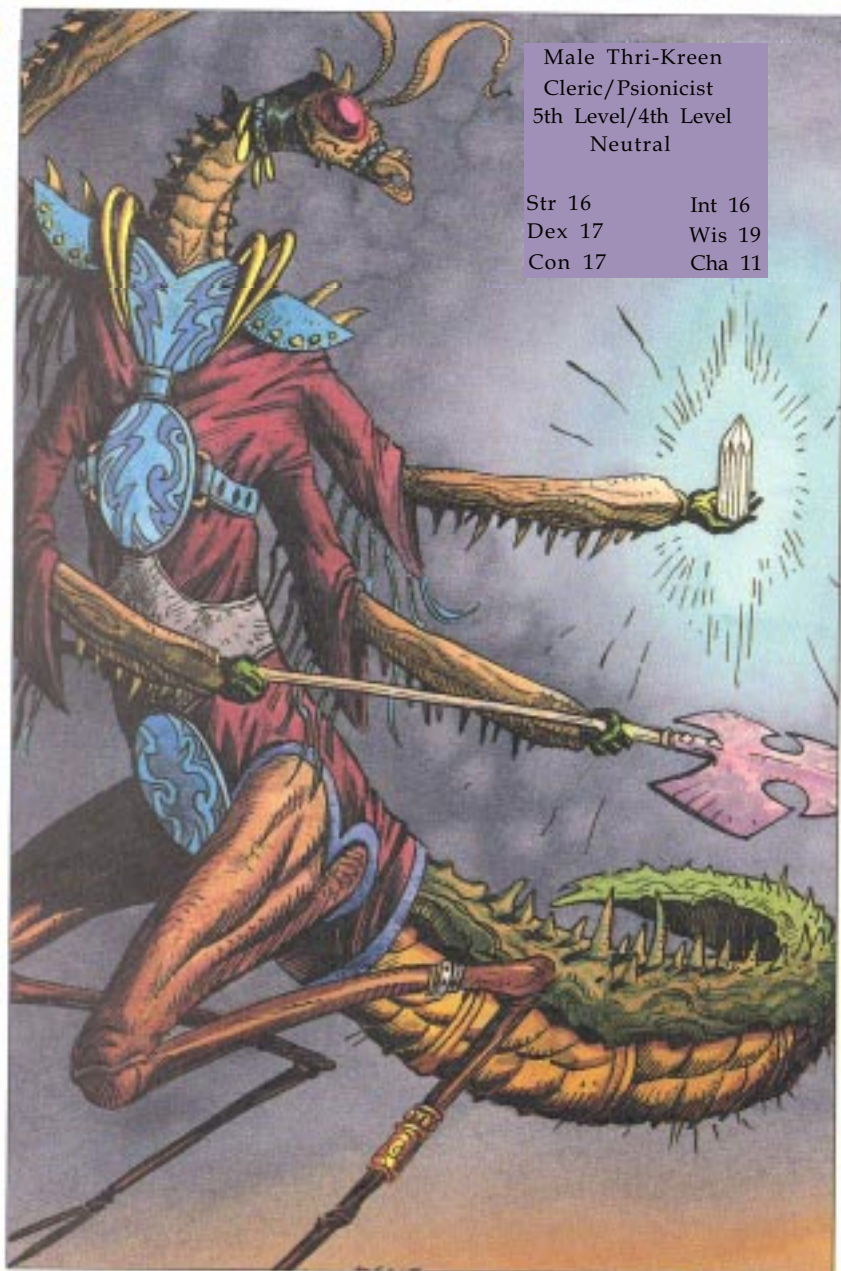
Str 22	Int 13
Dex 15	Wis 11
Con 19	Cha 7



Twenty-Two:  
Ka'Cha

Male Thri-Kreen  
Cleric/Psionist  
5th Level/4th Level  
Neutral

Str 16	Int 16
Dex 17	Wis 19
Con 17	Cha 11





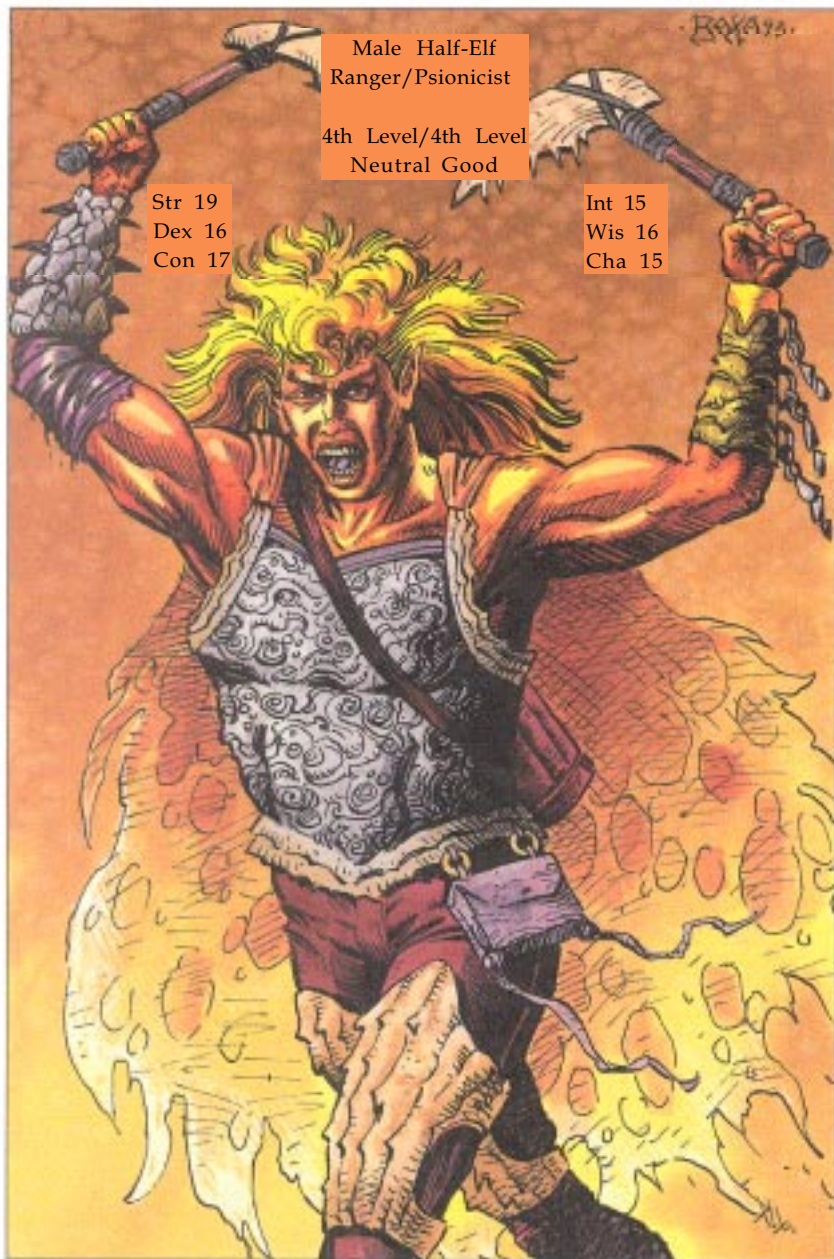
## Twenty-Three: Galek Sandstrider

Male Half-Elf  
Ranger/Psionicist

4th Level/4th Level  
Neutral Good

Str 19  
Dex 16  
Con 17

Int 15  
Wis 16  
Cha 15





## Twenty-Four: Galek Sandstrider

**Reaction Adjustments:** Surprise +1  
NPCs +3

**AT:** 2 with longbow

1 or 2 with daggers

2 with impalers

**THAC0:** 17

Bone impalers 15

Custom longbow 16

Obsidian *dagger* +1 15 (14 thrown)

Bone dagger 15

**Damage:** Bone impalers 1d8+6/1d8+6

Obsidian flight arrow 1d6+6/1d6+6

Steel flight arrow 1d6+7/1d6+7

Obsidian *dagger* +1 1d4+7/1d3+7

Bone dagger 1d4+6/1d3+6

**Armor Class:** 4 in hide armor (modified for Dexterity)

**HP:** 38

**Species Enemy:** Dune Freak (Anakore) +4 to attack rolls, -4 to reaction checks

### Saving Throws:

DM	RSW	PP	BW	SP
13	15	10	16	15

+4 on all saves vs. enchantment/charm spells and similar effects (psionicist bonus, high Wisdom score)

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Composite longbow, impaler, spear, 1 slot unused

### Background

A half-elf leads a lonely existence. You are the child of an elf mother and a human father and were raised in an elven clan, the Shal-armani, a merchant tribe that wanders from city to city through the vast deserts. As you grew, you learned how to survive and how to fight, because the Shal-armam never accepted you fully. You spent much of your time off alone, hunting and wandering in the wastelands.

Eventually you decided that you would be better off without the elven prejudices and suspicions, and you struck out on your own. As a skilled fighter, you learned that there was always someone ready to pay you for your abilities, and you found work as a caravan guard. This led to your first adventure with your companions, for an evil defiler separated you from the caravan and coerced you into accompanying him to the ruins of Yaramuke.

You tend to conceal your mental talents, preferring to reserve them for an unexpected advantage in a tight situation. Your experiences with the tribe of your birth have made you a loner, too cautious to trust anyone. It is your belief that sooner or later the prejudices of all companions surface, forcing you once again to depart for new territory. You are especially careful around Rowan, since she is the only full-blooded elf group, but so far she has not shown any arrogance toward you. All the others are your friends, although you can see that some of them do not get along with each other.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Heat Protection, Rejuvenation, Running, Survival-Sandy Wastes Survival—Stony Barrens, Tracking, Water Find

**Languages:** Common, Giant

**Psionics:** PSP: 57

**Disciplines:** Psychokinesis, Clairsentience

**Sciences:** Project Force (Con -2, 10, na), Telekinesis Wis -3, 3+, 1+/rd)

**Devotions:** Animate Object (Int -3, 8, 3/rd), Combat Mind (Int -4, 5, Urd), Control Light (Int, 12, 4/rd), Control Sound (Int -5, 5, 2/rd), Know Direction (Int, 1, na), Know Location (Int, 10, na), Levitate (Wis -3, 12, 2/rd), Molecular Manipulation (Int -3, 6, 5/rd), Soften (Int, 4, 3/rd)

**Defense Modes:** Mental Barrier (Wis -2, 3, na), Mind Blank (Wis -70, 0)

**Equipment:** Mekillot hide armor, 2 bone impalers, obsidian *dagger* +1, bone dagger, composite longbow (custom-built for Strength damage bonus), quiver with 20 obsidian-head arrows and 9 steel-head arrows, backpack (50' rope, clothing, blanket, 2 weeks of food), 4 one-gallon waterskins, 2 large belt pouches, small tent

**Magical Item:** *Fruit of extra-healing*

## Twenty-Five: Ka'Cha

### Reaction Adjustments: Surprise +2

NPCs 0

#AT 4 clews and 1 bite

2 with chatkcha

1 and 1 with gythka and bite

1 and 1 with quabone and bite

THACO: 18

Chetkcha (thrown only) 16

Gythka 18

Quabone 18

Damage: Claws 1d4/1d4

Bite 1d4+1/1d4+1

Chatkcha 1d6+2/1d4+1

Gythka 2d4/1d10

Quabone 1d4/1d3

AC: 2 (natural AC 5 plus Dexterity)

HP: 30

### Cleric of Earth Spells:

- Six 1st-level spells
- Five 2nd-level spells
- Two 3rd-level spells (with Wis adjustment)
- *Spheres of Access*: Major to Earth, minor to Cosmos

Turn Undead

Ignore earth 5 rounds/day

### Saving Throws:

DM	RSW	PP	BW	SD
9	13	10	15	14

+6 to saves vs. mind-affecting spells

Immune to *cause fear*, *charm person*, *command*, *friends*, *hypnotism*, *hold person* (high Wisdom score and thri-kreen resistances)

Thri-kreen Abilities: Leap 20 feet up or 50

feet forward; poison saliva—victim must save vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed (size S creatures immobilized 2-20 rounds, size M 2-16 rounds, size L 1-8 rounds, and size H and larger only 1 round).

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Chatkcha, gythka, quabone (claw and bite)

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Artistic Ability (Paint), Direction Sense, Endurance, Psionic Detection, Read/Write Common, Rejuvenation, Somatic Concealment

**Languages:** Thri-kreen, common, gith, tohr-kreen

**Psionics:** PSPs 73

**Disciplines:** Psychokinetic, Psychometabolic

**Sciences:** Detonate (Con -3, 18, na), Telekinesis (Wis -3, 3+, 1+/round)

**Devotions:** Adrenaline Control (Con -3, 8, 4/rd), Ballistic Attack (Con -2, 5, na), Control Body (Con -2, 8, 8/rd), Control Light (Int, 12, 4/rd), Heightened Senses (Con, 5, 1 /rd), Inertial Barrier (Con -3, 7, 5/rd), Levitation (Wis -3, 12, 2/rd), Molecular Agitation (Wis, 7 6/rd), Reduction (Con -2, vanes, 1/rd)

**Defense Modes:** Thought Shield (Wis -3, 1, na), Tower of Iron Will (Wis -2, 6, na)

**Equipment:** Gythka, quabone, 4 chatkcha, leather harness, leather backpack (metal bell, chalk, 50' rope, ceramic whistle), cloak, holy symbol (hunk of obsidian), 1 week's rations, 1 one-gallon waterskin

Money: 3 silver pieces and 22 ceramic pieces

### Background

You are of the Chtik-kek pack from the Yellow Hills. You are a kilkektet, a seeker. It has fallen to you to go into the world of humans and learn what you can of their strange ways. An itinerant tohr-kreen named Khk-chaka'da taught you intellectual pursuits and skills and helped you develop the powers of your mind. Because of Klik's tutoring, you are more worldly than your old clutch-mates, but there are still many things about humans and other intelligent creatures that you do not understand.

Your clutch of companions earned your trust during an adventure in the ruined city of Yaramuke. They seem to be more civilized than many of the human barbarians you have dealt with in the past, and at times you believe they might begin to appreciate thri-kreen ways and lore. You do not trust them insincere Ashathra, who acknowledges your role in the dominance order but does not listen to you. Shayira is a fellow priest of earth and your most trusted friend and ally. Stug and Galek respect you, and you in turn respect them, but you find the elf Rowan to be weak, a liability to the clutch.

## Twenty-Six: Stug Two-Blades

**Reaction Adjustment:** Surprise 0

NPCs -1

#AT 3/2 with one gythka

3/2 and 1 with gythka in each hand

1 with obsidian harpoon

1 with bone club

1 unarmed

**THAC0:** 16

Gythka 11 (11 thrown)

Obsidian harpoon 14 (14 thrown)

Bone club 13

**Damage:** Gythka 2d4+12/1d10+12

Harpoon 2d4+3/2d6+9

Bone club 1d6+9/1d3+9

Unarmed 1d3+10

**AC:** 6 in hide armor

5 with gladiator ability

4 with successful Armor Optimization

**HP:** 79

**Gladiator Abilities:**

+/-4 Chart Modifier with unarmed combat attacks

Optimize Armor, -1 AC bonus

**Psionics:** PSPs 72

**Wild Talent:** Complete Healing

**Power Score:** Con

**Cost:** 30

**Wild Talent:** Energy Containment

**Power Score:** Con -2

**Cost:** 10, 1/round to maintain

**Wild Talent:** Dimensional Door

**Power Score:** Con -1

**Cost:** 4, 2/round per 50 yards to maintain

**Saving Throws:**

DM	RSW	PP	BW	SP
11	13	12	13	14

**Weapon Proficiencies:** All, 1 slot unused

**Weapon Specializations:** Ambidexterity, gythka specialization, two-weapon style

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Armor Optimization, Blind-fighting, Endurance, Heat Protection, Rope Use

**Languages:** Common

**Equipment:** Inix hide armor, 2 gythka, 6 obsidian harpoons, harpoon quiver, bone club, 3 50-foot coils of giant-hair rope, 6 two-gallon waterskins, 2 weeks' rations, whetstone, blanket, backpack, flint and steel, lamp, 1 flask oil

**Magical Items:** *Oil fruit of feather fall, fruit of healing*

**Money:** 6 silver pieces and 38 ceramic pieces

### Background

You are a native of Balic, your father served as guard to an important templar of that city. When you were still a youth, your father's patron was accused of treason and executed. His guards were executed as well, and you were thrown into the gladiatorial arena. Angry and resentful, unjustly enslaved, you became known as a vicious killer with powerful psionic talents. The sight of your paired gythkas flashing in the sun was a favorite with arena crowds. After a time, you earned enough to buy your own freedom and wisely left the city before your masters could change their minds.

Once out of Balic you worked odd jobs and kept moving, not really sure what to do with your life. You found employment as a caravan guard, then served as the lieutenant of a defiler, defending his stronghold. You tired of the wizard's harsh and arrogant manner and moved on. You even turned to raiding for a time, leading a fierce band of unruly gith.

You met your friends when you were serving as a mercenary for a dune trader in Raam. An evil defiler manipulated you and your companions into entering the haunted ruins of Yaramuke, but you managed to escape with your lives and destroy the creature when he came after you. Galek is a true fighting companion, a warrior after your own heart, while the thri-kreen Ka'Cha commands your respect for his natural fighting abilities. Shayira seems cold and distant to you, and Ashathra is a lying schemer who seems to care nothing for any of the rest of you. Rowan's magic fascinates you, and you enjoy being her friend.



## Twenty-Seven: Ashathra the Swift

**Reaction Adjustments:** Surprise +3

NPCs +7

**#AT:** 1 and 1 (with daggers)

2 with blowgun

1 with light crossbow

**THAC0:** 17

Pterrax-tooth *dagger* +2 16 (13 thrown)

Iron dagger 17 (14 thrown) (18 in off hand)

Blowgun 14

Light crossbow 14

**Damage:** Pterrax-tooth *dagger* +2 1d4+1/  
1d3+1

Iron dagger 1d4/1d3

Blowgun needle 1/1

Blowgun barbed dart 1d3-1/1d2-1

Obsidian-headed quarrel 1d4-1/1d4-1

Steel-headed quarrel 1d4/1d4

**Armor Class:** 4 in leather armor (modified for  
Dexterity)

**HP:** 35

**Psionics:** PSP: 67

**Wild Talent:** Ectoplasmic Form

**Power Score:** Con -4

**Cost:** 9, 9/round to maintain

**Thieving Percentages:**

PP	OL	F/RT	MS	HS	DN	CW	RL
30	30	30	55	50	25	85	10

**Influence Reactions:** -2 die modifier

**Inspire:** +1 THAC0, +1 to saving throws, or  
+2 morale

### Background

Your father, a poor potter from the city of Tyr, was enslaved for indebtedness when you were quite young. He was worked to death in the iron mines. Your mother disappeared soon after his death, abandoning you to your fate in the streets of the city.

Quick and agile, you discovered that you could take what you needed as a thief. Your daily meal was stolen from a fruit vendor. Your clothes were taken from laundry lines. You found that a steady hand and a bit of nerve more than made up for a lack of a home or parents.

When you were 12 years old, you met a bard who called herself Sandwhisper. She recognized your potential, took you under her wing, and taught you the skills of a bard: how to sing and dance, how to fight and kill. But eventually she grew restless and moved on, leaving you to find your own way in the world. You learned that everyone leaves sooner or later, and that the only person you can count on is yourself.

Now you are finding that your cynicism may not be all that you need. Hired on by a caravan as an entertainer, you found yourself involved in a perilous adventure. You and your current companions had to work together in order to survive an expedition into the ruins of Yaramuke, where you found the wrath of an evil defiler-dragon. You keep telling yourself that Ashathra comes first, but in your heart you are not sure whether you still believe it.

**Identify Magical Item:** 35%

**Saving Throws:**

DM	RSW	PP	BW	SP
12	12	11	15	13

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Dagger, light crossbow,  
blowgun

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Dancing, Disguise,  
Etiquette, Jumping, Land-based Riding,  
Local History, Read/Write Common, Tight-  
rope Walking, Tumbling

**Languages:** Common, Dwarven

**Poisons Known:**

- A (Injected, onset 10-30 min., strength 15/0)
- B (Injected, onset 2-12 min., strength 20/1-3)
- D (Injected, onset 1-2 min., strength 30/2-12)
- E (Injected, onset immediate, strength death/20)
- H (Ingested, onset 1-4 hrs., strength 20/10)
- I (Ingested, onset 2-12 min., strength 30/15)

**Equipment:** Leather armor, pterrax-tooth *dagger* +2, second iron dagger in hidden boot sheath, light crossbow, case with 12 obsidian-headed quarrels and 9 steel-headed quarrels, blowgun, pouch with 6 bone needles and 6 bone barbed darts, backpack, 1 one-gallon water-skin, 1 week's rations, tinder kit oil lamp, 1 flask oil, 50-foot silk rope, blanket

**Magical Items:** *Fruit of invisibility, fruit of gaseous form*

**Money:** 31 silver pieces and 17 ceramic pieces

## Twenty-Eight: Shayira the Earth-Singer

**Reaction Adjustments:** Surprise 0

NPCs +2

#AT: 1

**THAC0:** 18

Bronze-headed mace 17

Steel dagger 17

Sling 18

**Damage:** Bronze-headed mace 1d6+2/1d6+1

Steel dagger 1d4+1/1d3+1

Sling stone 1d4/1d4

Lead sling bullet 1d4+1/1d6+1

**AC:** 4 in rasclinn hide armor

**HP:** 42

**Cleric of Earth spells:**

- Six 1st-level spells
- Five 2nd-level spells
- Three 3rd-level spells (includes Wisdom adjustment)
- *Spheres of Access:* Major to Earth, minor to Cosmos

Turn Undead

Ignore earth 6 rounds per day

**Psionics:** PSPs 63

**Wild Talent:** Domination

**Power Score:** Wis -4

**Cost:** Contact, 2× contact cost to maintain

**Wild Talent:** Mindlink

### Background

You were born and raised as a nomadic herder in the foothills of the Ringing Mountains. From birth you were marked as an Earth-Singer, or priestess of earth, by your tribe. The marks of the Earth-Singer, tattooed circles on the backs of your hands, were given to you when you reached maturity. The rock, the stone, and the mountains are all sacred to you. As Earth-Singer, you healed the sick while keeping the old ways and observing the honored rites of your ancestors.

During your 20th year, you were betrothed to a young warrior named Therek the Lion, the Earth-Singer of another clan. Therek was cruel and vain, and you could not bring yourself to marry him. The elders were shocked by your refusal, and you had to flee. Now you roam the Tablelands, torn between your duty to your tribe and your duty to yourself. Wherever you go, you try to fight for good and help the weak, as you would be expected to do as an Earth-singer.

You met your current companions when your wanderings led you to sign on with a caravan near Raam. You shared an adventure into the ruins of Yaramuke at the side of a powerful defiler seeking dragonhood, and you witnessed his destruction at the hands of Abalach-Re, sorcerer-queen of Raam. Your companions strike you as devious and manipulative at times, Ashathra especially so. Rowan and Galek are good friends, but you find the thri-kreen Ka'Cha to be a true ally. As a fellow priest of earth, he shares a common cause and calling with you. On the other hand, Stug's capacity for violence frightens you, and the half-giant's mercurial shifts in attitude make him extremely untrustworthy. You'll have to keep an eye on him.

**Power Score:** Wis -5

**Cost:** contact, 8/round to maintain

**Wild Talent:** Contact

**Power Score:** Wis

**Cost:** Varies, 1/round to maintain

**Saving Throws:**

DM	RSW	PP	BW	SP
9	13	12	15	14

+4 to saves vs. mind-affecting spells

Immune to *cause fear*, *charm person*, *command*, *friends*, *hypnotism* (high Wisdom)

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Mace, dagger, sling

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Ancient History, Direction Sense, Fire-building, Healing, Singing, Stonemasonry, Water Find

**Languages:** Common, gith

**Equipment:** Rasclinn hide armor, bronze-headed mace, steel dagger, sling, pouch with 20 sling stones, pouch with 12 lead sling bullets, backpack with flint and steel, 6 torches, 1 flask of oil, 1 week's rations, 1 one-gallon waterskin, small glass mirror, quartz crystal, bedroll

**Money:** 6 silver pieces, 24 ceramic pieces, and a ruby worth 30 sp

## Twenty-Nine: Rowan

**Reaction Adjustment:** Surprise +4

NPCs +5

**#AT:** 1 and 1 (sword and dagger)

2 with bow

**THAC0:** 18

Steel long sword 18

Bone *dagger* +217 (13 thrown)

Bone dagger 19 (15 thrown)

Short bow 14

**Damage:** Bone long sword 1d8/1d12

Bone *dagger* +2 1d4+1/1d3+1

Bone dagger 1d4-1/1d3-1

Obsidian-headed arrows 1dG1/1d6-1

Steel-headed arrows 1dG/1d6

**AC:** 3 in leather armor (modified for Dexterity)

**HP:** 22

### Preserver Spells:

- Three 1st-level spells
- Two 2nd-level spells

**Psionics:** PSPs 38

**Wild Talent:** Empathy

**Power Score:** Wis

**Cost:** Contact/1, 1 per round to maintain

**Wild Talent:** Contact

**Power Score:** Wis

**Cost:** Varies, 1 per round to maintain

### Thieving Percentages:

PP O L F / RT M S H S D N C W R L

60 40 50 70 70 35 30 17

**Backstab:** +4 to hit, 3 × damage

### Background

Born a free elf of the Taga-Elanni tribe, you were captured at an early age by evil raiders and sold into slavery in Dral. Your life was horrid, but you learned many skills. You learned stealth, stealing away to avoid your master's lash; you filched extra food and trinkets; and most importantly, you learned magic from an old slave, a scribe named Arshon. He passed to you those few spells he had.

Eventually, your day came. You killed the vain noble who had tormented you for years. With your spells and thief abilities, you eluded pursuit and set off in search of a new life. You have been on the run ever since. In Draj you are a criminal marked for death, but the rest of Athas is your home now. Someday you hope to find the Taga-Elanni again, but you have never discovered what became of the tribe.

In your first adventure with your current companions, you journeyed to the ruined city of Yaramuke as the pawn of an evil dragon. You are not sure how much you trust them, but Stug and Shayira seem to be a loyal friends and Galek is courageous and honorable. You enjoy Ashathra's company, but find the thri-kreen Ka'Cha to be unpredictable and somewhat threatening.

### Saving Throws:

DM	RSW	PP	BW	SP
12	11	11	15	12

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Long sword, dagger, short bow

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Appraising, Dancing, Direction Sense, Disguise, Heat Protection, Herbalism, Read/Write Common, Somatic Concealment, Tumbling

**Languages:** Common, elven

### Spell Book (parchment scrolls in bone case):

- 1st level: *Change self: charm person, color spray, detect magic, identify, magic missile, phantasmal force, reed magic, sleep, wall of fog*
- 2nd level: *Blur, invisibility, knock, levitate, mirror image, web*

**Magic:** *Fruit of fire resistance, scroll of protection from poison*

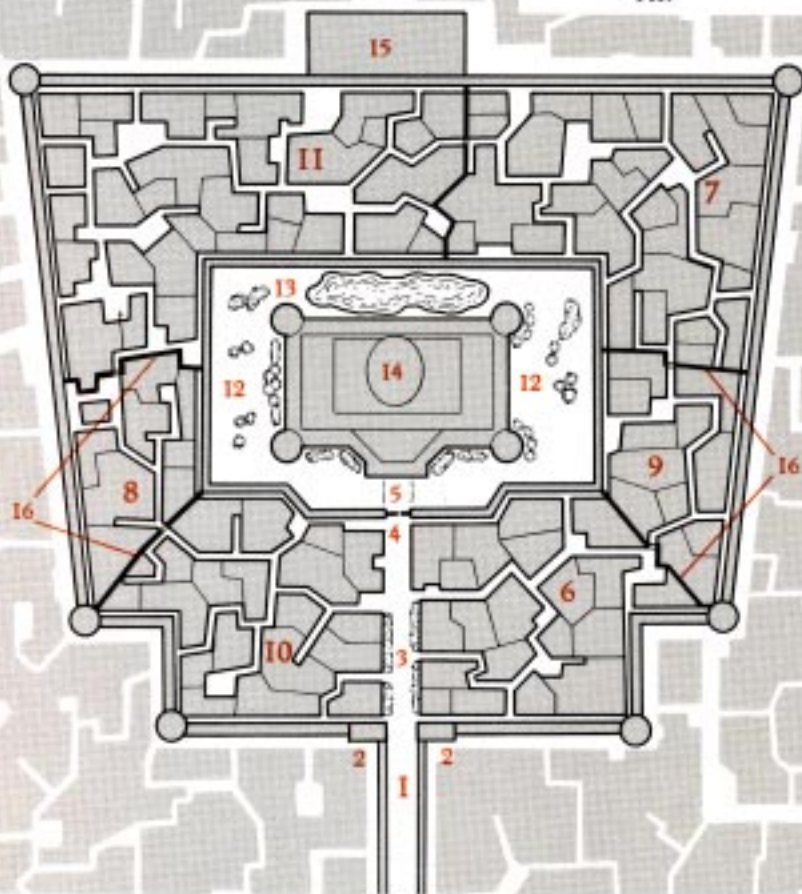
**Equipment:** Leather armor, steel long sword (not of tribal design, +1 to hit bonus does not apply), bone *dagger* +2, bone dagger, short bow, quiver with 12 obsidian-headed arrows and 5 steel-headed arrows, belt pouch with thieves' tools, 50 feet silk rope, bone grapple, 2 one-gallon waterskins, 1 week's rations, sandals, cloak.

**Money:** 11 silver pieces, 37 ceramic pieces



# Thirty: The Citadel

0 150  
Feet



- |                           |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. The High Road          | 9. The Houses of Education    |
| 2. The Bone Gate          | 10. The Houses of Agriculture |
| 3. The Hanging Gardens    | 11. The Houses of Law         |
| 4. The Iron Door          | 12. The Green Sanctum         |
| 5. The Obsidian Path      | 13. The Crystal Pond          |
| 6. The Houses of Commerce | 14. The Fortress of Nibenay   |
| 7. The Houses of War      | 15. The Temple of Law         |
| 8. The Houses of Magic    | 16. Partition Walls           |

Thirty-One:  
Blossoms of Death



Thirty-Two:  
The Iron Door





Thirty-Three:  
Surprise Attack!



Thirty-Four:  
The Green Sanctum





Thirty-Five:  
The Crystal Pond





Thirty-Six:  
The Vortex



Thirty-Seven:  
The Jade Hall





Thirty-Eight:  
The Southwest Tower

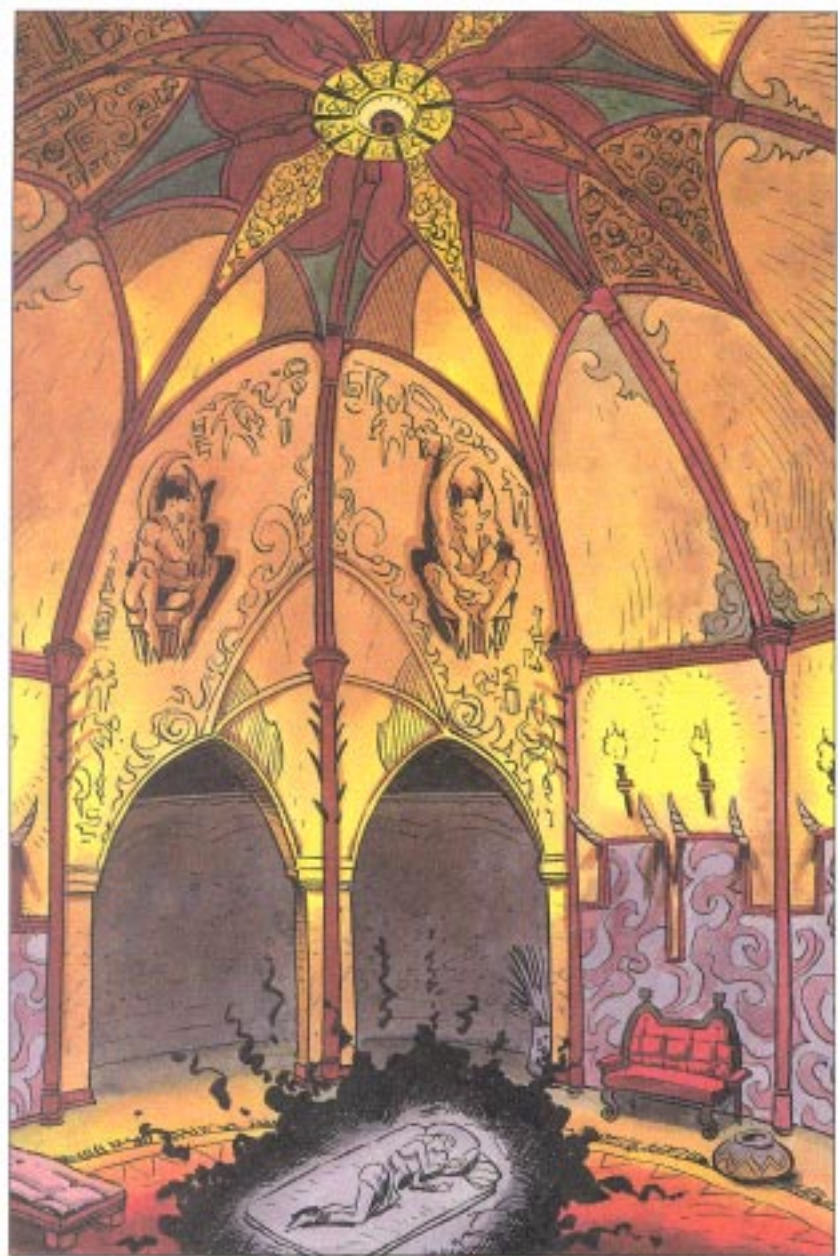




Thirty-Nine:  
The Southeast Tower



Forty:  
The Northwest Tower





Forty-One:  
The Northeast Tower

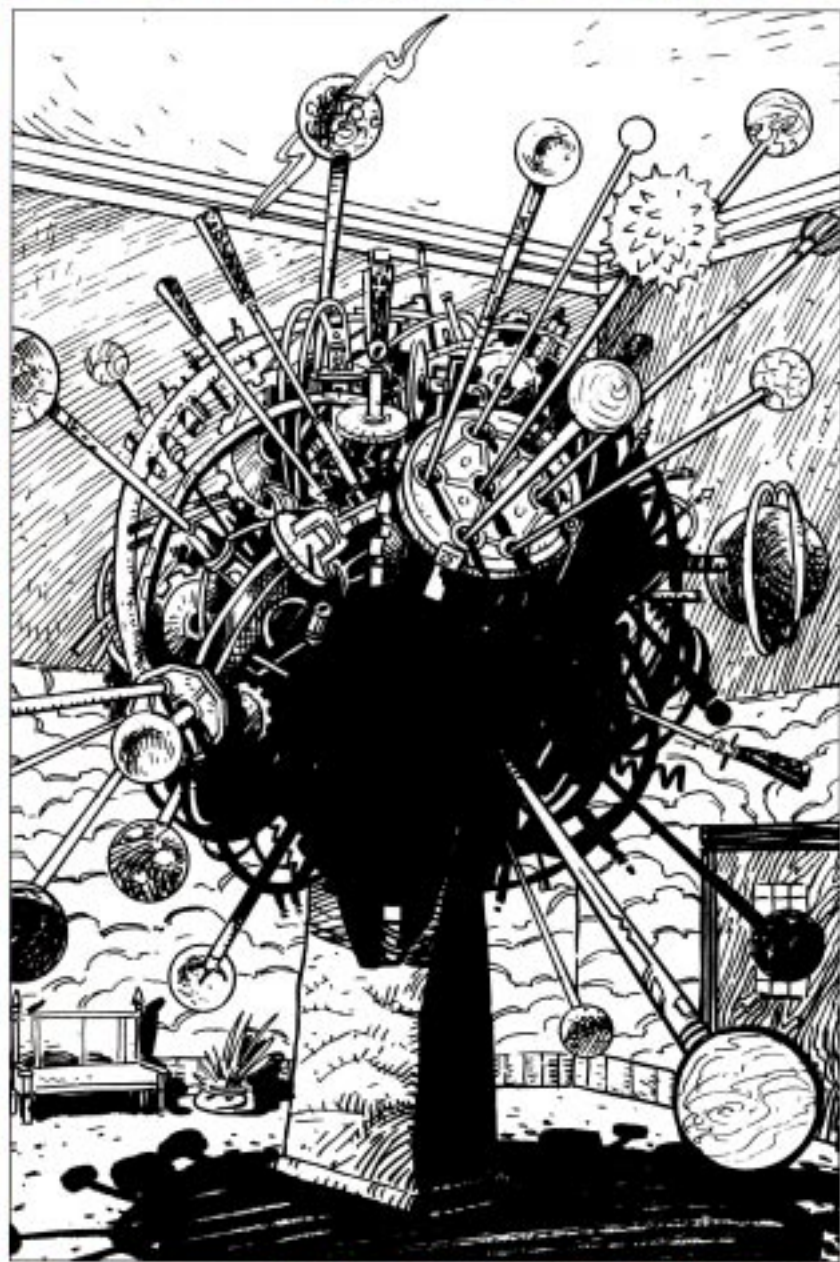




Forty-Two:  
The Crimson Gallery



Forty-Three:  
The Orrery





Forty-Four:  
The Library of Darkness





Forty-Five:  
The Bone Hall



Forty-Six:  
The Throne Room





Forty-Seven:  
Epilogue









**DARK • SUN**<sup>®</sup>

W O R L D



**DUNGEON MASTER™** Book



## Marauders of Nibenay

A DARK SUN® Campaign Adventure

## DUNGEON MASTER™ Book

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# Running This Adventure

## Flipbook Adventures

This module has been designed in the flipbook format, a style of adventure construction unique to the DARK SUN® campaign world. A DUNGEON MASTER™ (DM™) who has never referred a flipbook adventure should read this section before attempting to play *Marauders of Nibenay*.

## Components

A flipbook adventure is composed of three parts: two 48-page spiral bound books and a 16-page booklet that contains a short story set in the DARK SUN universe as well as information about the important nonplayer characters (NPCs).

One of the spiral bound books (this one, in fact) contains the adventure itself and is used by the Dungeon Master during play. The other is given to the players, to be used as a visual reference during play. The short story booklet is intended for reference and may or may not be used during actual play.

## Using the Dungeon Master's Book

The adventure begins on the page titled **Part One: The Festival**. The festival encounter is the first of many scenes that will finally come together to complete *Marauders of Nibenay*. Each encounter provides the DM with the information he needs to run it successfully.

Setup tells the DM what sort of things need to happen at the beginning of the adventure. Once all those requirements are met, the DM can move on to the next part of the encounter.

*Start* is usually a narrative that should be read (or paraphrased) to the players as a starting point for the encounter. It tells the players what is happening around them and gives them all the information they need at the beginning of the scene.

Encounter allows the DM to know what is really going on in the plot. It often provides material that is not revealed to the players, but information that the DM needs to direct and develop the action.

*Reactions* provides information about actions that are going to occur during the course of the encounter. In some cases, these are based upon the actions of the characters. In others it merely indicates how things will change with the passage of time. In any event, *Reactions* provides all of the action for the encounter.

*Statistics*: When monsters or NPCs are to appear in a scene, the DM will find the necessary information about them in *Statistics*. In some cases, this section will reference the NPC descriptions in the 16-page short story book.

*Next* tells the DM where to find the outcome, or the next encounter, after the current situation has been resolved. Generally, there will be more than one possible place for the story to go, depending on the PCs' actions. Their actions determine what happens next in the plot.

## Using the Player's Book

Frequently, the DM's book indicates that an Illustration, map, or other graphic element can be found in the *Player's Book*. When that happens, the DM should tell the players to flip to that page. The graphic elements in the *Player's Book* will help players visualize an encounter more vividly, and using these elements is a good method to make the action feel more exciting.

It is important that the DM does not allow the players to flip through the *Player's Book* because me of the illustrations may give away future events.

## Getting Started

*Marauders of Nibenay* is an adventure for 4 to 6 characters of 6th to 8th level. A variety of character classes and races is recommended. A collection of sample player characters (PCs) is presented at the back of the *Player's Book*. These can also be used as NPCs in order to fill out the ranks of a smaller party.

### Required Materials

As with any ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure, the referee running this adventure needs a copy of both the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* and the *Player's Handbook*. Because this module is set in the DARK SUN® campaign setting, the DARK SUN boxed set, the *Terrors of the Desert*, MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix, and the *Complete Psionics Handbook* are also required for play. Some of the monsters in this adventure are drawn from the *Monstrous Manual* – that book may be helpful, but it is not necessary to play this adventure.


Much of the information on which this adventure is based comes from various accessories. In particular, copies of *Veiled Alliance* and *The Ivory Triangle* will provide useful background knowledge. Because this adventure gives the DM all the necessary information presented in those works, their use is optional.

### Preparing for Play

It is recommended that the DM read this book thoroughly before running the adventure. While it is quite possible to run *Marauders of Nibenay* without doing so, familiarity with the storyline is what makes for exciting campaigns, and the DM will find it well worth the time spent. In addition, a DM who has read the adventure beforehand will better be able to tailor it to meet the demands of his own campaign and to respond to unexpected actions on the part of the players.

### Pregenerated Characters

The last few pages of the *Player's Book* have been used to detail a party of adventurers who may be used as either PCs or NPCs. If the players are going to use these characters in the game, some time should be spent making certain that both the players and the DM are familiar with all of the characters, their backgrounds, and any spells or special abilities that they might have.



## Adventure Overview

*Marauders of Nibenay* details an attempt by the Shadow King Nibenay to destroy the Zwuun, a magical entity vital to the city's Veiled Alliance. If the Shadow King is successful, the annihilation of this unique being will crush the morale of the Alliance and leave them vulnerable to destruction at the hands of his templar-wives.

Unknown to the Shadow King, the Veiled Alliance has learned of his plan and intends to protect the Zwuun from harm. When the mighty force of the sorcerer-king and the powerful magic of the Veiled Alliance clash, both attempts fail. Rather than being destroyed or protected, the Zwuun is transformed into a vengeful magical entity, obsessed by a deep hatred for all living things.

The tremendous magical energies unleashed during this clash of wills cause the very ground to buckle and heave. As mighty as the city of Nibenay is, it cannot stand against the powerful earthquake that collapses buildings and shatters walls. Great clouds of sulfurous gas boil out of the fractured soil, mixing with the steam that rises eternally from hot springs on the Plain of Burning Water. Even as the people of Nibenay begin to recover from the earthquake, a deluge of caustic rain falls on the city. Throughout Nibenay, this shower of acid spreads death and poisons the water supply.

As if that were not enough, the Zwuun moves against the Shadow King in an effort to destroy him. The two meet in a titanic clash of magical and psionic powers that penetrates deep into the shattered ground beneath the city. Horrified, the people of Nibenay watch as the conflicting energies raise centuries-old dead from their graves to walk the streets. As unstoppable as a sandstorm, as relentless as the searing sun, the zombie army begins to destroy the great city, murdering thousands of citizens in the wake of its passing.

As the carnage and chaos grow, a small band of heroes must enter the heart of Naggaaramakam, Nibenay's forbidden palace. If the Zwuun is to be calmed and peace restored to the dead, they must find Siemhouk, the mysterious Priest Child of Nibenay. Only her unique psionic powers have a chance of reversing the terrible havoc wrought by the Shadow King.

### **Designer's Note**

Because character motivations and actions can vary so greatly, this adventure has been designed so that the PCs can be working with either the templars of Nibenay or the city's Veiled Alliance. In the former case they will begin the adventure seeking to aid the sorcerer-king in his attempt to destroy the Zwuun. If they work with the Veiled Alliance, they will be opposing the mysterious tyrant.

In the end, it matters little which side they initially supported, for the solution to this adventure calls for the restoration of normal life in Nibenay. If all goes well, the heroes will have restored the Zwuun to its original state, and Nibenay will begin to return to normal. It should not be possible to destroy the Zwuun within the context of this adventure.



## Part One: The Festival

**Setup.** This is the starting point of the adventure. It begins with the Starlight Pageant at the end of the Festival Week of Dessilia. Players should flip to page 9, **The Festival** in the *Player's Book* for an illustration of this scene.

**Start.** The purpose of this scene is to set the stage for what is to come and to establish the atmosphere of the city at the start of the game. Read the following to the players:

*The Starlight Pageant is a wonderful event in the city of Nibenay. As the crimson sun falls beneath the horizon, the gates of the sorcerer-king's sanctuary open and dozens of female dancers, called aspara, pour into the streets. As they move down the High Road toward the Reservoir Gardens, crowds of people join the celebration. At last, amid the pounding of drums and the blowing of great horns, they enter the gardens and begin a series of performances that promises to last until dawn. The presentations of the aspara recount the history of Nibenay and the mysterious ruler who bestowed his own name on the city.*

**Encounter.** There is no combat in this scene. Rather, the PCs are regularly buffeted by the crowds around them and confronted with the endless events of the pageant. Street vendors, selling every conceivable variety of food and drink, constantly move about them. Passers-by attempt to lure them into games of chance, and some of them are even honest. Pickpockets drift through the sea of celebrants, targeting outsiders, striking quickly, and vanishing into the masses before they can be noticed. This is a grand festival; its magnitude cannot be overstated. One might describe the Starlight Pageant as Nibenay's equivalent of Mardi gras.

The DM should use this encounter to establish a mood of celebration and confusion. The PCs should feel exposed by the press of people around them and uncertain, confused by their inability to keep a careful watch on everything going on around them. This scene may be enhanced by the shouts of carnival barkers and assorted street vendors. The DM can enliven the experience by delivering the following, or similar lines:

"Sugar weed! Get your dried sugar weed!"

"Pick a card, any card!"

"Fortunes! Portents! Learn what the stars say about your future!"

"Place your bets! Starlight gladiators! Win! Place! Death!"

**Reactions.** For the most part, the people of Nibenay are quite tolerant of each other during the Starlight Pageant. After all, no one can expect to move through the crowds in the streets without bumping into people every 10 feet. If the player characters are any less cheerful or high-spirited, they will become objects of good-natured ridicule and be taunted by those around them. For characters who may well be used to the rough and rugged ways of adventurers, the atmosphere of the festival can be quite alien and unsettling.

**Next.** If the DM feels that the players are more likely to support the templars of Nibenay, then the adventure continues with **The Templar Offer**. If they are more likely to work with the city's Veiled Alliance, then the DM should flip to **The Alliance Offer**.

## Part One: The Templar Offer

**Setup.** This scene follows the introduction of the festival and really gets the story rolling for the characters. It assumes that they are likely to side with the forces that are protecting the city from harm. During this encounter, the PCs encounter the templar Leaza, who is illustrated on page 10 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** This encounter begins when the characters notice that someone is keeping an eye on them during the Starlight Pageant. Read the following text to the players after they have wandered around the festival for a few minutes:

*As the festival continues, the twin moons of Athas rise and the familiar constellations spread across the black night sky. Gradually, you become aware that one face remains constant among the ever shifting crowds of people. Despite the randomness of the revelers faces, always changing, always different, one face quickly replacing another, one dark-haired woman never lets you out of her sight. Muscular and athletic, she is attractive in a rugged sort of way, and quick to turn away when you look in her direction.*

**Encounter.** The woman is Leaza, one of the Shadow King's army of templar-wives. She has been looking for a group of adventurers to hire and the PCs are the most likely looking bunch she has seen. After the PCs notice that she is paying attention to them, she will make contact and identify herself. If the characters set up some sort of a trap and try to force an encounter, she will fall into it.

Leaza's offer is simple enough. She has learned that the local Veiled Alliance chapter is smuggling a dangerous, magical object into the city to use against the power of the Shadow King. Because many of her people are known to the Alliance, she does not feel that she can set up an attack herself without tipping her hand. Of course, the PCs will be paid for their efforts. The exact amount of this compensation should be determined by the DM based upon the wealth and greed of the PCs.

**Reactions.** If the characters attack Leaza, a number of templar-wives slip from the crowds to defend her. There will be one additional templar for every player character. The templar women are assumed to have the same statistics as Leaza herself. They will not attempt to kill the PCs, they only subdue them so that Leaza can present her proposal.

Leaza is all business. She takes her job very seriously and has no sense of humor. All things considered, Leaza is not a fun person.

**Statistics.** Complete information on Leaza is presented at the end of the 16-page story booklet. The following is a summary only:

**Leaza (5th-level Templar):** AL LE; #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 2d4 (bone khopesh, -1 attack & damage); AC 10 (7); HD 5; hp 30; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 14; Str 12; Dex 17; Con 16; Int 14; Ws 17; Cha 16. Spells: (1st) *endure heat, command, light* (2nd) *flame blade, hold person*.

**Next.** If the PCs accept Leaza's offer, the adventure continues with **Part One: Smugglers**. If they refuse, Leaza will leave and the PCs will then be contacted by the Veiled Alliance; see **Part One: The Alliance Offer**.

## Part One: The Alliance Offer

**Setup.** This scene begins with the characters enjoying the events of the Starlight Pageant. It assumes that they are likely to be well-disposed toward the Veiled Alliance. During this scene, the PCs are contacted by Johrd, a representative of the Alliance, the secret society of preservers, in search of help. A portrait of Johrd can be found on page 11 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** This scene begins when the characters notice that they are being followed. Read the following text to the players:

*As night passes, the twin moons of Athas leisurely trace twin arcs across the dark sky. Gradually, you begin to suspect that you are being watched. With a little effort, you notice that a slender man seems to be shadowing your movements. His thin features give him a look of keen intelligence, but his frail physique makes it difficult to think of him as a threat.*

**Encounter.** The frail man is Johrd, a member of the Veiled Alliance. A band of 11 elves are bringing a rare, magical object into the city—an object that the Alliance must have. Johrd knows that the templar-wives of Nibenay would notice any gathering of Alliance members and wants a third party to contact the elves. The PCs look trustworthy and rugged to him. As soon as the PCs notice him, he will take steps to make contact. If they decide to set up some sort of trap and force a confrontation with Johrd, he will fall into it.

Johrd offers the characters money in exchange for their services. All they have to do is meet a group of elves in the market and trade them a pouch of magical herbs for a satchel containing an amber crystal. Once they deliver the crystal to Johrd, he will pay them whatever amount has been agreed upon. The DM should make Johrd's offer of payment large enough to interest the PCs, but not so great that it makes them suspicious. Johrd's offer is on the level. He has no intention of betraying the characters and expects them to deal just as honestly with him.

**Reactions.** If the PCs attack Johrd, he will use his magical abilities to escape from them. If he is unable to escape, he will fight to the death. Johrd is fiercely loyal to the Alliance and will say or do nothing that might cause trouble for the Alliance or its members. If possible, he will try to stop any fight long enough to make his offer to the party.

**Statistics.** Complete information on Johrd is presented at the end of the 16-page story booklet. The following is a summary:

**Johrd (8th-level preserver):** AL LG; #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1d4 (bone dagger, -1 attack & damage); AC 10; HD 8; hp 20; MV 9; SZ M (5'6" tall); ML 12; Str 9; Dex 10; Con 12; Int 17; Wis 15; Cha 12. Spells: (1st) *burning hands, hold portal, sleep, spider climb*; (2nd) *alter self; invisibility, web*; (3rd) *fireball, hold person, wraithform*; (4th) *fear, improved invisibility*.

**Next.** If the PCs agree to help Johrd, the adventure continues with **Part One: Ambushed**. If they refuse, Johrd leaves them and Leaza, one of Nibenay's templar-wives makes contact. See **The Templar Offer**.



## Part One: Smugglers

**Setup.** In this scene, the PCs follow Leaza's instructions and ambush the Veiled Alliance as they make contact with a band of elven rogues. The scene is set in a deserted corner of the city's infamous Hill District. If the DM wishes to make a quick map of the area for his players he may, but it really isn't necessary.

**Start.** This scene begins with the reading of the following text:

*As the sun begins to lighten the eastern sky, the time has come to carry out your mission for Leaza. Moving quickly through the crowd of celebrants, you come at last to the alley where the smugglers are supposed to appear. If your patron; information is correct, the meeting will take place in roughly an hour.*

**Encounter.** This encounter assumes that the PCs are setting up some sort of ambush for the elves and their Veiled Alliance contacts. If they don't do this, their presence in the alley will be noticed and the rendezvous must then take place somewhere else, leaving the PCs to explain their failure to Leaza.

If the PCs do set up an ambush that isn't obviously flawed, the elves will show up an hour or so later. Shortly after the elves arrive, Johrd of the Veiled Alliance appears. If undisturbed, he comes forward and exchanges a small package of herbs for a canvas sack carried by the elves. As soon as their business is done, Johrd uses an *invisibility* spell to vanish and the elves make their way back to the elven market.

The canvas sack given to Johrd contains a magical crystal that, although it is vital to the Alliance, has no intrinsic powers of its own. Only when it is used in concert with certain other items and specific spells does it manifest its mystical power. The package given to the elves contains magical leaves. The leaves, when eaten, will satisfy an individual's need for water for 24 hours.

**Reactions.** When the PCs attack, the elves attempt to scatter and escape. They will try to recover the package of leaves if possible, but they will not risk injury. Johrd will try to use spells to retrieve the canvas sack (even if this requires great risk on his part) and then he flees. The wizard is very loyal to the Veiled Alliance and will die before allowing himself to be captured and questioned.

**Statistics.** Johrd's complete statistics are presented at the end of the 16-page booklet. A summary of his statistics is below. Each PC also faces one elf.

**Johrd (8th-level preserver):** AL LG; #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1d4 (bone dagger -1 attack & damage); AC 10; HD 8; hp 20; MV 9; SZ M (5'6" tall); ML 12; Str 3; Dex 10; Cdn 12; Int 17; Wis 15; Cha 12. Spells: (1st) *burning hands, hold portal, sleep, spider climb*; (2nd) *alter self; invisibility, web*; (3rd) *fireball, hold person, wraithform*; (4th) *fear, improved invisibility*.

**Elves (3rd-level Rogues):** AL NE; #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg 1d6 (bone short sword -1 attack & damage); AC 8; HD 3; hp 12; MV 15; SZ M (7' tall); ML 10; Str 12; Dex 16; Con 12; Int 10; Wis 12; Cha 13.

**Next.** If the battle ends with the PCs in possession of the crystal, they need only deliver it to Leaza and claim their reward (**The Templar Payment**). If they fail to get the crystal, Leaza refuses to pay them and the adventure moves on to **Prelude to Disaster**.

## Part One: Ambushed!

**Setup.** This scene details the PCs encounter with the elves in service to the Veiled Alliance. It takes place in a deserted corner of the city's infamous Hill District. The DM may want to sketch out a quick map for use with this encounter, but it isn't really needed.

**Start.** Begin this encounter with the following narrative:

*As the sun begins to lighten the eastern sky, the time has come to carry out your mission for Johrd. Moving quickly through the crowds of celebrants, you come at last to the alley where the elves are supposed to appear. If your information is correct, they should arrive shortly.*

**Encounter.** Johrd has given the characters a bundle of leaves that they are to exchange for the package that the elves are carrying. The leaves are magical—they can satisfy an individual's need for water for 24 hours. The item that the elves are trading is a crystal in a canvas sack which, although it has no great power, is a vital ingredient in the plans of the Alliance.

A trio of elves arrive within an hour, as expected. They gladly hand over the crystal in exchange for the package of leaves. As soon as the transaction is complete, a team of templars drops from the surrounding rooftops and attacks. They have been hiding on the roofs under a spell of *invisibility*, waiting for the smugglers and the PCs to show up.

It is possible that the PCs will discover the ambush before it is sprung. If that happens, they'll have to battle the templars before the elves show up. If they defeat the templars, the elves will arrive and turn over the crystal.

**Reactions.** As soon as the templars attack, the elves try to escape. They will try to get their hands on the bundle of leaves, but they won't risk their lives to get it.

For their part, the templars are not really interested in killing or capturing the elves. They want crystal and the agents of the Veiled Alliance. The templars will not take any prisoners, so surrender is not an option.

**Statistics.** There is one templar for each PC, and they are led by Leaza. Her full statistics are at the end of the 16-page stay booklet. Here is a summary:

Leaza (5th-level Templar): AL LE; #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 2d4 (bone khopesh, -1 attack & damage); AC 10 (7); HD 5; hp 30; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 14; Str 12; Dex 17; Con 16; Int 14; Wis 17; Cha 16. Spells: (1st) *endure heat, command, fight*; (2nd) *flame blade, hold person*.

**Templar-Wives of Nibenay (3rd-level Templars):** AL LE; #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 2d4 (bone khopesh, -1 attack & damage); AC 10 (9); HD 7; hp 20; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 14; Str 12; Dex 15; Con 16; Int 14; Wis 14; Cha 15. Spells: (1st) *command*; (2nd) *flame blade*.

**Elves (3rd-level Rogues):** AL NE; #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg 1d6 (bone short sword, -1 attack & damage); AC 8; HD 3; hp 12; MV 15; SZ M (7' tall); ML 10; Str 12; Dex 16; Con 12; Int 10; Wis 12; Cha 13.

**Next.** If the PCs escape the ambush without the crystal, they will have no further contact with the Veiled Alliance. The adventure continues with *Prelude to Disaster*. If the PCs do escape with the crystal, go to **The Alliance Payment**.

## Part One: The Templar Payment

**Setup.** This encounter completes the first part of the adventure. In it, the characters are rewarded for their efforts on behalf of the Shadow King of Nibenay. These events may take place anywhere, but they are most likely to occur in Leaza's office or in some prearranged meeting place, selected by the DM. An illustration of Leaza can be found on page 10 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** When the characters give the crystal to Leaza, read them the following text:

*As you produce the crystal, a satisfied smile settles upon the templar's face. She takes the crystal from you and hands over a leather pouch. Inside are the coins that she promised you. "Your efforts are appreciated," she says, "for without this crystal to protect them, the Veiled Alliance is doomed!"*

**Encounter.** If the PCs don't pursue the matter further, Leaza will dismiss them and they will have no further contact with her.

If the PCs ask about the crystal, she tells them that Nibenay is planning to launch a major attack against the Veiled Alliance, destroying the criminals once and for all. Somehow, the Alliance learned of the upcoming offensive and began to gather the components for an arcane device to protect them from the enormous magical powers of the Shadow King. Without this crystal, they are helpless.

Because the characters have shown an interest in the matter, Leaza will offer them the opportunity to become part of her attack force. She assures them that all who fight on the side of Nibenay against the criminal Alliance will be remembered with fondness after the battle. While she makes no definite offer of a reward, she does imply that wealth and power might be had by the PCs in exchange for their efforts.

**Reactions.** If the PCs agree, Leaza will tell them to return to her office at sunset. Nibenay has decreed that the attack will begin just as the last rays of the sun vanish from the sky. If they refuse to join her, Leaza thanks them again for their efforts and sends them on their way.

If the characters attempt to dissuade her, she assumes that they are a security risk and orders their destruction. If this is the case, Leaza will lead a team of templars (one for each character) against them.

**Statistics.** Leaza's full statistics are at the end of the 16-page story booklet. The following is a summary:

**Leaza (5th-level Templar):** AL LE; #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 2d4 (bone khopesh, -1 attack & damage); AC 10 (7); HD 5; hp 30; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 14; Str 12; Dex 17; Con 16; Int 14; Wis 17; Cha 16. Spells: (1st) *endure heat, command, light*; (2nd) *flame blade, hold person*.

**Templar-Wives of Nibenay (3rd-level Templars):** AL LE; #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 2d4 (bone khopesh, -1 attack & damage); AC 10 (9); HD 7; hp 20; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 14; Str 12; Dex 15; Con 16; Int 14; Wis 14; Cha 15. Spells: (1st) *command*; (2nd) *flame blade*.

**Next.** If the PCs are a part of the templar attack group, the adventure continues with **Strike Force**. If they opt to avoid this duty, the adventure continues with **Prelude to Disaster**.



## Part One: The Alliance Payment

**Setup.** In this scene, the characters are rewarded for their efforts on behalf of the Veiled Alliance. This encounter can take place anywhere, but it is most likely to occur in some prearranged, secluded location, selected by the DM. An illustration of Johrd can be found on page 11 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** When the characters give the crystal to Johrd, read them the following text:

*As you produce the crystal, a sparkle comes into the wizard's eyes. With a smile he takes it from you and drops a leather pouch into your hands. Inside is the promised payment, in coin.*

*"Your efforts are greedy appreciated," he says. "Without this crystal, the Veiled Alliance would be doomed! Now, it is the Shadow King who shall perish!"*

**Encounter.** If the PCs don't pursue the matter any further, Johrd will dismiss them and they will have no further contact with him. He is honestly grateful to them for the work they have done. If the PCs ask about the crystal, Johrd will tell them that the sorcerer-king is planning to launch a major attack against the Veiled Alliance. The Alliance learned of the coming attack and began to gather the components of an arcane device that would protect them from the power of the Shadow King. When the forces of Nibenay attack, the device will turn Nibenay's own power against him. When that happens, the Alliance can strike. With luck, quick action will enable them to destroy Nibenay and end his reign of terror.

Because the PCs have shown an interest in these events, Johrd will offer them an opportunity to join his team. Once the Shadow King is defeated, his templar-wives will have to be destroyed. Only when their ranks are shattered can the Alliance seize control of the city. Johrd makes no definite offer of a reward, but he does imply that wealth and power might be had by the PCs in exchange for their efforts.

**Reactions.** If the PCs agree, Johrd will tell them to get ready and to return at sunset. He believes Nibenay's attack will begin just as the last rays of the sun vanish from the sky. If they refuse, thanks them again for their efforts.

If the characters attempt to dissuade him, he assumes that they are a security risk and he will order their deaths. If this is the case, Johrd will lead a team of hugs (one for each character) against them.

**Statistics.** Johrd's full statistics are at the end of the 16-page story booklet. The following is a summary:

**Johrd (8th-level preserver):** AL LG; #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1d4 (bone dagger, -1 attack & damage); AC 10; HD 8; hp 20; MV 9; SZ M (5'6" tall); ML 12; Str 9; Dex 10; Con 12; Int 17; Wis 15; Cha 12. Spells: (1st) *burning hands, hold portal, sleep, spider climb*; (2nd) *alter self invisibility, web*; (3rd) *fireball, hold person, wraithform*; (4th) *fear, improved invisibility*.

**Thugs (3rd-level Rogues):** AL NE; #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg 1d6 (bone short sword, -1 attack & damage); AC 8; HD 3; hp 12; MV 15; SZ M (7" tall); ML 10; Str 12; Dex 16; Con 12; Int 10; Ws 12; Cha 13.

**Next.** If the PCs decide to join Johrd and his earn, the adventure continues with **Counterstrike**. Otherwise, continue with **Prelude to Disaster**.

## Part One: Strike Force

**Setup.** At this point, the characters join with Leaza and her templar team for the attack on the Veiled Alliance. A picture of Leaza can be found on page 10 of the *Player's Book*. No map of the building in which the battle takes place is provided, because the building is just a large empty cube. The DM may want to construct a map and flesh out some details for the players, but it isn't really necessary.

**Start.** Begin the action with the following text:

*As the sun falls toward the horizon, you make your way through the streets of the city to the meeting with Leaza and her squad of six templars. She greets you without emotion, her mind apparently fixed on her work. With her at the head of your group, you take up positions outside a large stone warehouse in the city's Freeman District.*

*"According to our information," Leaza says quietly, "this is an important magical research facility. Now we wait for sign to attack."*

**Encounter.** Leaza does not know exactly what sign she is waiting for. All she has been told is that the time to launch her attack will be unmistakable.

As soon as the sun sets, a great arc of lightning flashes from the center of the Shadow King's palace, the Naggaramakam. With a tremendous roar of thunder, the fork of energy bursts across the sky and slams into the Plain of Burning Water. Additional information about this event can be found in **Prelude to Disaster**, but that encounter is not a part of the adventure at this point. Leaza believes, correctly, that this is the sign for the attack. She springs forward, shouting for the others to follow her. In a matter of seconds, the PCs and Leaza's templars burst into the building and attack the Alliance.

**Reactions.** The Alliance wizards are not taken by surprise as Leaza expected. Rather, they seem to have expected this attack. Whatever magical research they may have conducted here in the past is long gone, leaving only an empty building.

There is one wizard for each PC and templar. They have been expecting the attack and are all *invisible*. Each of the wizards will unleash a pair of *magic missiles* (for a total of 2d4+2 points of damage) at one of the attackers.

### Statistics.

**Leaza (5th-level Templar):** AL LE; #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 2d4 (bone khopesh -1 attack & damage); AC 10 (7); HD 5; hp 30; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 14; Str 12; Dex 17 Con 16. Int 14; Wis 17; Cha 16. Spells: (1st) *endure heat, command, light*, (2nd) *flame blade, hold person*

**Templar-Wives of Nibenay (3rd-level Templars):** AL LE; #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 2d4 (bone khopesh, -1 attack & damage); AC 10 (9); HD 3; hp 20; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 14; Str 12; Dex 15; Con 16; Int 14; Wis 14; Cha 15. Spells: (1st) *command*; (2nd) *flame blade*.

**Alliance Wizards (3rd-level Wizards):** AL NG; #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 1d4 (bone dagger -1 attack & damage); AC 10; HD 3; hp 10; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 10; Str 12; Dex 10; Con 12; Int 16; Wis 12; Cha 12. Spells (1st) *magic missile* (×2); (2nd) *invisibility*.

**Next.** After the battle has gone on for a few rounds, a great catastrophe abruptly ends the confrontation. These events are detailed in **Part Two: Holocaust**.

## Part One: Counterstrike

**Setup.** In this part of the adventure, the characters join Johrd and the Veiled Alliance to battle the templars. A picture of Johrd can be found on page 11 of the *Player's Book*. The building in which the fight takes place is just a large empty cube, 50 no map is provided. DMs who wish to add more details to this encounter are free to create a detailed map, but it isn't really necessary.

**Start.** Begin this scene with the following text:

*As the sun drops toward the horizon, you make your way through the streets of the city to the meeting with Johrd and his Veiled Alliance companions. He greets you with obvious delight, clearly excited that his people will soon be free. With Johrd at the head of your group, you slip quietly into a stone warehouse in the city's Freeman District.*

*"Some time ago the Alliance conducted magical research here. When we learned that the templars were planning to attack us, we cleaned it out. Now, when they attack us, they'll find us waiting for them."*

**Encounter.** The PCs are free to make whatever preparations they wish for the coming attack. For their part, the preservers all become *invisible* and wait to hammer the attackers with *magic missiles*. Each of the wizards can fire two missiles per round, doing 2d4+2 points of damage.

As soon as the sun sets, a great arc of lightning flashes from the center of the Shadow King's Ice, the Naggaramakam. With a tremendous roar of thunder, the fork of energy flashes across the sky and slams into the Plain of Burning Water. Additional information about this event can be found in **Prelude to Disaster**, but that scene is not a part of the adventure at this time.

The preservers gasp in awe at this display of raw power, but their wonder is suddenly cut short by attack of the templars.

**Reactions.** While the templar-wives do not anticipate an ambush, they are skilled combatants and adjust to the unexpected, putting up a stiff fight. The preservers, on the other hand, are just as determined to destroy their enemies.

**Statistics.** Complete data on Johrd can be found in the 16-page booklet.

**Johrd (8th-level preserver):** AL LG; #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1d4 (bone dagger, -1 attack & damage); AC 10; HD 8; hp 20; MV 9; SZ M (5'6" tall); ML 12; Str 9; Dex 10; Con 12; Int 17; Wis 15; Cha 12. Spells: (1st) *burning hands, hold portal, sleep, spider climb*; (2nd) *alter self invisibility, web*, (3rd) *fireball, hold person, wraithform*; (4th) *fear, improved invisibility*.

**Alliance Wizards (3rd-level Wizards):** AL NG; #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 1d4 (bone dagger, -1 attack & damage); AC 10; HD 3; hp 10; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 10; Str 12; Dex 10; Con 12; Int 16; Wis 12; Cha 12. Spells (1st) *magic missile* (x2); (2nd) *invisibility*.

**Templar-Wives of Nibenay (3rd-level Templars):** AL LE; #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg 2d4 (bone khopesh, -1 attack & damage); AC 10 (9); HD 3; hp 20; MV 12; SZ M (6' tall); ML 14; Str 12; Dex 15; Con 16; Int 14; Wis 14; Cha 15. Spells: (1st) *command*; (2nd) *flame blade*.

**Next.** After the battle has gone on for a few rounds, a sudden disaster strikes and the melee grinds to a halt. These events are detailed in **Part Two: Holocaust**.





## Part One: Prelude to Disaster

**Setup.** This scene assumes that the characters have terminated their involvement with either the templars or Veiled Alliance. It takes place at sunset, on the second day of the five-day Starlight Pageant celebration. It does not matter where the heroes are or what they are doing when the DM springs this encounter on them. An illustration depicting the events in this scene can be found on page 12 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** Wherever the PCs are and whatever they are doing, interrupt it with the following narrative text:

*Suddenly, the evening sky is shattered by a brilliant blue flash. Without warning, a tremendous fork of lightning springs from the Naggaramakam, Nibenay's mysterious citadel at the center of the city. It races across the sky, unleashing a deafening roar of thunder in its wake. With a great explosion, the lightning slams into the Plain of Burning Water south of the city, sending a great shudder through the earth at your feet and causing a great cloud of sparkling steam to rise up into the twilight sky.*

**Encounter.** This is the beginning of the great attack by the sorcerer-king Nibenay on the city's Veiled Alliance. It is his plan to destroy the Zwuun, a magical entity that lives in the Plain of Burning Water and occasionally assists the Veiled Alliance. What the mysterious Nibenay does not suspect is that the Alliance has been anticipating his attack. They have taken steps to protect both the Zwuun and the Alliance from his wrath.

**Reactions.** Immediately following the lightning bolt, a great hush falls over the city. After the shock has worn off, the average citizen of Nibenay believes that this display is simply part of the Starlight Pageant. In the streets, a cheer gradually builds to a great crescendo of appreciation.

**Next.** If the characters are not convinced that this is the case, they will have only a few seconds to take action before the true nature of this spell is revealed to all. The DM should allow each player to declare one action for his character before going on to the next scene: **Part Two: Holocaust.**

## Part Two: Holocaust

**Setup.** This scene describes the terrible result of Nibenay's attempt to destroy the Zwuun. It doesn't matter where the characters are or what they are doing when it happens. As a rule, this scene will immediately follow either Prelude to Disaster, Counterstrike, or Strike Force, in the first part of the adventure. If the players have gotten off the track of the adventure, this encounter can serve as a fine tool to get them back on course. An illustration of this scene can be found on page 13 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** Begin the encounter with the following text:

*Suddenly, the ground beneath your feet heaves and buckles. Cracks rip across the land, forming a great lattice work of fissures, and through these burst clouds of scalding, white steam. Buildings sway and rock, wells crackle and shatter, towers collapse in great explosions of stone. The cheerful sounds of the Starlight Pageant fade away, the din replaced by screams of agony, torment, and fear. If this is not the end of the world, it is an excellent simulation.*

**Encounter.** The purpose of this encounter is to drive home the devastation that has swept over the city of Nibenay. Thus, it can take many forms.

The events in this encounter are very fluid, and the form they take is entirely up to the DM. The important thing is that the characters are placed in a position where they must save some innocent bystanders from the extensive damage of the disaster. Two possible encounters follow:

*Beware of Falling Rock:* The characters spot a large stone structure (a building, statue, or part of the city wall) that is about to collapse. A number of helpless, shocked people are about to be crushed to death and only quick work by the characters can save them.

*Cracks of Doom:* A huge fissure splits the surface of the earth near the party. Several innocent people topple into the chasm, dying horribly in the steaming depths. Others, however, are more fortunate and manage to grab exposed roots or anchored rocks on the sides of the fracture. Only fast action by the PCs can save them from certain doom.

**Reactions.** The people saved by the characters will probably be too shocked to express their gratitude. After all, the city that they now and love is being destroyed around them. The more events the DM introduces to show the players the extreme level of the destruction of Nibenay, the better. This is a disaster of such magnitude that it is not possible to overstate it.

If the PCs were engaged in combat with either the templars or the Alliance, their enemies will attempt to help save innocents from harm. After all, the templars have a duty to protect the interests of the sorcerer-king and his subjects. The Veiled Alliance holds a natural respect for life and it will also seek to aid those in need. All in all, this disaster is so overwhelming that everything else has to wait.

**Next.** After the player characters have dealt with one (or more) of these events, the adventure continues with **The Burning Rain**.

## Part Two: The Burning Rain

**Setup.** the first stages of the disaster, the PCs will a few minutes of hectic activity trying to save themselves and others from the cataclysm around them. An illustration of the ruined city can be found on page 14 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** When the DM is ready to continue with the adventure, the following text should be read to players:

*At long last, the earth stills end the trembling after shocks fade. Still, all is far from quiet in the city. Cries of pain and fear can be heard everywhere, fires burn throughout the city, and geysers of scalding steam roar out of the ground. The sky above Nibenay darkens as the black smoke mingles with white steam to form a sticky gray cloud. Slender traces of blue-white lightning flash back and forth in the tumbling vapor, producing not thunder, but an eerie crackling sound.*

**Encounter.** The DM should allow the characters a few minutes to recover their wits following the earthquake. During this time, casual mention of the growing cloud and the mysterious catastrophe that has befallen Nibenay will help to build tension for the adventuring team.

After a few minutes, a spitting rain begins to fall from the sky, It will quickly increase in intensity It becomes a pounding downpour. This is not life-giving water, however, but a caustic chemical that burns flesh like acid. The DM should be aware that this scene is not meant to be deadly; +rpose is to reinforce the scope of the disaster that has struck Nibenay.

**Reactions.** It should soon become obvious to the PCs that this is no normal rain. As long as they get under shelter quickly, they'll be unharmed. If they linger, however, they will take 1d4 points of damage from the strange, chemical rain. If this still doesn't convince them to seek safety, the DM should keep increasing the damage level of the rain until the PCs hide or melt away into nothing. Magic designed to protect against injury will not stop the painful, burning rain, but anything that provides resistance to acid will.

The torrent of acidic rain falls from the sky for only a few minutes. During this time, however, it kills many of the wounded who were unable to escape. It also leaves the city dotted with puddles of highly corrosive liquid that can be used by the DM as an ongoing hazard throughout the rest of the adventure.

In addition, much of the city's water supply has been made toxic by the caustic, polluting rain. Any open source of water is now tainted, and causes 1d6 points of damage to anyone who drinks it. Fortunately, poisonings are rare, because the corrupted water has a distinctly foul odor and a greenish haze lies like scum upon the surface.

**Next.** After the rain passes, the adventure continues with **Unanswered Questions**.



## Part Two: Unanswered Questions

**Setup.** This encounter takes place after the fall of the burning rain. It allows the DM to resolve any attempts the characters have made to investigate the causes of the disaster.

**Start.** There is no narrative to begin this encounter; rather, background data (below) is to be used resolving any number of possible actions by the PCs.

**Encounter.** Various degrees of knowledge may be acquired by different magical and psionic means. The following are some of the most common methods of investigation:

*Psionics:* Depending upon the avenues of research pursued, psionic characters can learn many things. For one thing, it should be possible to deduce that the Zwuun has moved from the Plain of Burning Water to the Naggaramakam itself. It may also become clear that the nature of this mysterious creature has changed. Its formerly peaceful and curious personality has been transformed, and it is now burning with blind rage. No details of the events within the Naggaramakam can be discovered, however, for the hatred of the Zwuun has rendered the mysterious fortress impenetrable to psychic exploration.

*Wizardly Magic:* Clever use of a variety of spells, especially those from the schools of Divination and Necromancy, will reveal that an incredible surge of magical energy is building up in the Although it is obvious that that the magic is necromantic in origin, its exact nature is unclear. The source of the power is the Zwuun, which is now centered on the Naggaramakam. Attempts to scry into the Naggaramakam itself or to learn what is happening within its walls will fail.

*Priestly Magic:* Spells that fall into the schools of Divination and Necromancy in the *Player's Handbook* (all of which are subsumed into the Sphere of the Cosmos on Athas) can reveal some of the information presented above. However, use of spells such as *augury* or *commune* only indicate that the spirits of the ancient dead have grown restless and angry. Again, specific details about events within Nibenay's fortress are beyond detection.

*General Research:* No matter what sources of information the PCs seek out, the DM should make certain that they learn the following bit of prophesy:

*When the brides of death become the marauders of Nibenay, the dead must die, the unsleeping must wake, and the Dragon must stand triumphant.*

This can be discovered using an augury spell, by using the astrology proficiency, visiting a soothsayer, or any number of other methods. It simply means that the countless dead templar-brides of Nibenay, carefully preserved and buried beneath the Naggaramakam, have started to rise as zombies under the magical influence of the Zwuun. In order to heal the madness of the Zwuun the PCs must penetrate the fortress of Naggaramakam and awaken Siemhouk, who has been driven into a coma by the shock of the Zwuun's presence.

Next. The adventure continues with **Peace Offering**.

## Part Two: Peace Offering

**Setup.** In the hours following the earthquake and the fall of the burning rain, the people of Nibenay discovered that they would have to work together in order to survive. Individual differences must be set aside if the community as a whole is to endure. This scene demonstrates that fact by giving the characters a chance to ally with forces and individuals they may have considered to be enemies in the past.

**Start.** When the DM is ready to continue with the adventure, the following text should be read to the players:

*As the sun begins to rise in the east, you see more clearly than ever that the tip of Nibenay is in ruins. Shattered buildings have strewn debris across the streets, pools of acidic rain are spread everywhere, and the bodies of the dead and wounded litter the city. If the entire city is as badly damaged as that which you see around you, this is a disaster as great as any in the history of Athas.*

**Encounter.** After the fall of the burning rain, a shocked calm settles over the city. During this time, the characters will have a chance to explore the city a bit and see just how badly the devastation ted Nibenay. In short, it's terrible. Wherever they go, they'll find teams of people clearing away rubble to rescue those trapped beneath, templars and clerics using magical powers to heal the injured, and members of the city watch policing the streets, controlling lawlessness and preventing ng. The DM is free to introduce encounters that call on the characters to use their powers and abilities to help with these efforts.

Eventually, the PCs will be contacted either by Johrd or Leaza, whichever side they had worked with at the start of the adventure. If they didn't ally with either the Alliance or the templars previously, the DM may have either side contact them.

Whoever their contact is, the tale they are told is the same. It is now obvious that the catastrophe was the result of a simultaneous attack by the sorcerer-king and the Veiled Alliance upon each other. Both sides have agreed to cease hostilities and are planning a meeting to discuss what can be done to save the city from total destruction. Because of their past efforts, both sides want the PCs at the meeting as advisors and neutral observers.

**Reactions.** It is assumed that the PCs have impressed both the faction that employed them and the side they opposed. If they botched their previous assignment for the templars or Alliance (or simply refused to get involved), the DM will need to justify the invitation in some other way. This can be easily done simply by having one side or the other note that signs in the heavens hint at an important role for a group of outlanders. The latter justification is easy enough to pass off, for the people of Nibenay are adamant star gazers and believe that the past and the future can be explored with astrology.

**Next.** If the characters agree to attend the council, the adventure continues with **Council of Peace**. If they refuse, move on to **The Dead Rise**.

## Part Two: Council of Peace

**Setup.** The meeting takes place soon after the PCs are contacted and invited to attend. All sides recognize the need for expediency in order to prevent further loss of life and to minimize the spread of chaos. An illustration of the council meeting can be found on page 15 of the *Player's Book*, and it will help set the mood of this encounter. Pictures of Leaza and Johrd are on pages 10 and 11 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** The meeting begins with Johrd and Leaza setting an example of cooperation previously undreamed of in Nibenay. The following text describes it:

*The meeting is held in the Temple of Elemental Water in the city's Noble District. Like the rest of Nibenay, this region has been shattered by the events of the previous day. The people gathered in this room represent nearly all of the city's diverse factions. At first, it seems that no one is in charge, but then an athletic looking templar woman and a lean, wise-looking man call for order.*

*The woman speaks first "I am Leaza, templar-wife of Nibenay. To the best of my knowledge, I am the highest ranking templar to have survived the holocaust. I charge you to heed my words and obey them as you would Nibenay's own." With that, she yields to the slender man.*

*"I am Johrd of the Veiled Alliance," he says. "Leaza and I have agreed to set aside our differences and join forces to salvage what we can from this terrible calamity."*

**Encounter.** This encounter takes the form of a conference. Each person attending the meeting has some important information that can be revealed to the players.

**Leaza:** The gates of Naggaramakam are sealed. No one has entered or left the sorcerer-king's citadel since the disaster struck. The fate of the Shadow King is unknown, but Leaza and the other templars (including those among the PCs, if any) are no longer able to cast spells. Leaza hopes that she can maintain the people's loyalty to the sorcerer-king by showing them that it was her leadership that brought the city through this great disaster.

**Johrd:** The Veiled Alliance has tried to contact the Zwuun for assistance. Those who communed with the mysterious entity were suddenly filled with an insane rage, and tried to kill everyone in sight. Among those lost to the madness were Thagya, the leader of the Veiled Alliance, and Horga-at-Horg, his faithful bodyguard. It is Johrd's hope that the people of Nibenay will recognize the efforts of the Veiled Alliance in this time of tragedy and look upon them as a force for good in the future.

**Temmya Shom:** Temmya is the daughter of Giovvo, the master of the ancient merchant house of Shom. She reports that there is little food or water in the city left untainted by the caustic, burning rain. Even as the meeting is being held, runners have been sent out to divert House Shom's caravans to bring emergency food and supplies to Nibenay. House Shom plans to cash in on their so-called humanitarian efforts by charging the government of Nibenay an exorbitant rate for goods brought to the city after the crisis has passed.

**Pahleek:** Pahleek is a member of the School of Augers. He is one of the most valued assistants of Djef, the dwarf who heads that particular collection of psionics. The Augers have discovered that all attempts to psionically explore the sorcerer-king's citadel have resulted in failure. Some terrible force seems to have infused the Naggaramakam, creating an aura of hatred and anger so great that nothing can pierce it. The effect that this might have on those within the citadel is unknown.



## Part Two: Council of Peace (Continued)

*Kayardi Drasad:* Kayardi is the assistant of Thong Nal, Master of the Monks of the Exalted Path. He claims to have made a careful study of the stars and recent omens. Taken individually, these portents show nothing unusual. When examined together, however, they are more foreboding. Kayardi insists that all the might of the templars, the magic of the Veiled Alliance, and the wisdom of his people will not save Nibenay. That, he claims, must be done by a child. He knows nothing more.

Kayardi is secretly a member of The Order. He uses his great mental power to become Thong Nal's master and is the de facto chief of the Exalted Path. He is making a careful study of the other leaders at this meeting, attempting to learn all he can about them so that he will be better able to deal with them in the future.

*Ahli Kiaka:* Ahli is one of the city's most influential nobles. She is said to be one of the few who can actually call the sorcerer-king a friend. She says that the vast majority of Nibenay's most important nobles were called to meet with the king just before the disaster struck. Since no word has come from Nibenay's citadel, she assumes that she may be the highest ranking noble left alive in city. She is very loyal to the Shadow King, however, and refuses to claim the throne until her liege lord's death can be proved beyond doubt.

Ahli believes (correctly) that Nibenay planned to destroy the Veiled Alliance by unleashing a tremendous magical assault on the mysterious Zwuun. He had long believed that the information this creature supplied to the Alliance was a great threat to him. With the Zwuun gone, he had always said, the Alliance would crumble.

**Reactions.** This encounter requires the DM to present various pieces of information held by those attending the meeting so that the players can piece them together and proceed with the adventure. If they have not managed to assemble all of the information presented earlier in **Unanswered Questions**, then it should all come out at this forum.

The conclusion that the players should come to is that Nibenay's attack on the Zwuun has caused the entity to become a hate-filled force, now centered on Naggaramakam. They should also deduce that the only one who can restore the Zwuun to its normal state is the priest child Siemhouk. Since the priest child lives within the Shadow King's citadel, it is necessary for a team of heroes to enter that mysterious fortress, find young Siemhouk, and convince her to use her unique psionic power on the Zwuun.

For a variety of reasons, the players might come to slightly different conclusions about what has happened and what needs to be done. In order to prompt them to the correct answers, the DM should allow the diverse people at the council meeting to contribute additional information as needed. There are enough different viewpoints represented that almost anything can be added by someone in attendance, without the clue appearing as an outright gift from the DM.

**Statistics.** Basic statistics for the various important people at this meeting can be found at the end of the 16-page booklet.

**Next.** When the characters decide to explore the Naggaramakam, the adventure continues with **Outside the Palace**. If they refuse to take this step, the next encounter is detailed in **The Dead Rise**.

## Part Two: The Dead Rise

**Setup.** This encounter takes place only if the PC have failed to move toward an expedition into the confines of Naggaramakam. It serves as a prod to convince them that the worst is yet to come in Nibenay and to get them moving in the right direction. It is assumed that the PCs are not alone when this happens. An illustration on page 16 of the *Player's Book* depicts this encounter.

**Start.** The following narrative establishes the scene:

*Without warning the ground seems to shift beneath your feet, and the stone crack and splinters, revealing the dark yellow earth below. One by one, several withered corpses begin to claw their way free of the soil. As onlookers scream in terror, you look around and see that this is not an isolated incident—dozens of cadavers have somehow been freed from their graves.*

**Encounter.** These are ordinary zombies, exactly as described in the *Monstrous Manual*, except they are tougher to turn (see below). The residual energy of the Zwuun's attack on Nibenay has seeped into the earth and reanimated them. They will simply wander the city, attacking everyone they encounter. At this point, there will be only one zombie for each PC and NPC in the area. PCs of good alignment should be rewarded if they take any actions meant to protect the bystanders.

**Reactions.** Because of the burial traditions of Nibenay the entire city is essentially built on a mass grave that has been growing for centuries—there are more than enough zombies to keep the PCs occupied for the rest of their lives. The DM should keep dropping zombie encounters into the game, making each one tougher than the one before, until the PCs finally decide to explore the Naggaramakam or flee the city and end the adventure.

**Statistics.** These are typical zombies as described in the *Monstrous Manual*. As such, they suffer 2d4 points of damage per vial of holy water splashed upon them, and always strike last in any melee round. They can be turned by a cleric, but the animating magic of the Zwuun is so powerful that these creatures are turned as if they were 4 Hit Dice creatures.

**Zombies (variable):** AL N; #AT 1; THAC0 13; Dmg 1d8; SA Nil; SD Immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells, death magic, poisons, and cold-based spells; AC 8; HD 2; hp 10 ea; MV 6; MR Nil; SZ M (6' tall); ML 20; XP 65 each; Treasure Nil.

**Next.** The DM should continue to use zombie encounters on the party, making them tougher and tougher, until the players decide that they must send their characters into the Naggaramakam. If the characters are slow to come to this conclusion, other complications (an encounter with a mystic, a mage who has had an unusual dream, or a cleric or psionicist character with some knowledge) can be added to prompt their decision.

When they do decide to explore the Naggaramakam, the adventure will continue with **Outside the Palace**.

## Part Two: Outside the Palace

**Setup.** This scenario concludes the second part of the adventure. It can be used whenever the characters are going to enter the Naggaramakam. A map of the citadel appears on page 17 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *You stand before the Naggaramakam, Nibenay's mighty fortress of shadows. The outer walls, carved in magnificent reliefs of the Shadow King and his templar-wives, rise to a height of 15 feet and are set with bone spikes near the top. Seven stone towers anchor the walls, rising to a height of some 30 feet. A great gate, fashioned from the bones of some huge desert terror and flanked by two square stone towers, offers the only obvious entrance to the citadel. There is no sign of the women who normally guard the gates and walls.*

**Encounter.** The primary focus of this encounter is the entry of the Naggaramakam by the PCs. The following paragraphs describe the most common means by which this may be attempted and the results of each.

*The Bone Gate:* This is, essentially, walking in through the front door. Anyone who selects this method will meet no resistance and will enter area 3 of the Naggaramakam.

*Climbing the Walls:* The outer walls of the fortress are some 15 feet tall and topped with bone spikes that inflict 1d4 points of damage to anyone clumsy enough to be impaled by one. As long as the players can come up with a method of getting past these hazards, this method works fine. Depending upon the location at which they enter the fortress, they will find themselves in a different area of the Naggaramakam map.

*Tunneling:* This is a possibility, although a very unlikely one. It will quickly become obvious to any would-be tunnelers that they have essentially created a "zombie mine" from which scores of undead will pour into the city. It is almost impossible to enter the fortress this way, but it might be done by clever and resourceful players. The location of the tunnel will determine where in the Naggaramakam the PCs begin the next part of the adventure.

*Magic:* The disruptions caused by the Zwuun's mystical energy make it impossible to pass the walls of the fortress using any magical spell. Thus, wizards cannot use a *teleport* or *passwall* spell to enter, and earth clerics cannot ignore earth and walk through the fortress's outer stone wall.

*Psionics:* Attempting to enter Naggaramakam by means of Dimension Walking, Dream Travel, or similar abilities presents a terrible danger for psionics. Any attempt to enter the fortress psionically will automatically fail, and the character will be forced to make a saving throw vs. spells or be filled with the rage of the Zwuun and driven into a berserk killing frenzy for 1d6 minutes. During this time, the PC may not use magic or psionic powers but will attack the nearest person.

*The Temple of Law:* In the Temple of Law, there is indeed a secret tunnel through the walls; however, the building is in ruins following the disasters that have hammered the city and the hidden door is all but useless. A determined effort by the characters might (DM's option) permit its use and allow access to area 15 of the Naggeramakam map.

**Next.** The adventure continues in **Part Three** of this book. The exact method used by the PCs to gain entry, the location point of their arrival inside the fortress, determine the page that the DM should flip to next.



## Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam

**Setup.** The interior of Nibenay's great fortress has been divided into 20 areas. This page offers only the briefest of descriptions of these areas, representing information that the PCs might get by questioning Leaza prior to entering the fortress. Players will find a map of the citadel on page 17 of the *Player's Book*.

A more complete description of these areas is to be found on the next few pages of this book. As the PCs explore the Naggaramakam, the DM should read the text describing each area to the players.

1. *The High Road.* The main road through the city and to the Naggaramakam.
2. *The Bone Gate.* The only known entrance into the citadel. It is heavily guarded at all times by Nibenay's templarwives. The towers that flank the gate are 30 feet high and roughly 60 feet square.
3. *The Hanging Gardens.* This location is filled with some of the most beautiful and delicate flowers to be found anywhere on Athas.
4. *The Iron Door.* An impressive sight and a mark of Nibenay's great wealth, this pair of 2-inch-thick iron doors forms a portal 20 feet high by 20 feet wide. It predates Athasian recorded history and is ornamented with arcane glyphs, sigils, and runes.
5. *The Obsidian Path.* This is a section of road built from slabs of gleaming black obsidian. It leads from the Iron Door to the gates of Nibenay's fortress.
6. *The Houses of Commerce.* This area of the Naggaramakam contains the homes and offices of the templars who oversee all trade and commerce in the city.
7. *The Houses of War.* The buildings in this section of the Naggaramakam serve as homes and offices for the templars assigned to the defense of the city.
8. *The Houses of Magic.* This section is reserved for the defilers who serve Nibenay and the templars assigned to rooting out and destroying all other wizards in the city. All actions against the Veiled Alliance begin here.
9. *The Houses of Education.* These buildings hold the offices and homes of those templars who oversee education in the city's schools.
10. *The Houses of Agriculture.* These structures provide homes and administrative offices for the templars who manage the city's food production.
11. *The Houses of Law.* This place contains homes and offices for those templars assigned to establish and enforce the laws of Nibenay.
12. *The Green Sanctum.* This is a magnificent park where Nibenay often spends time meditating upon his governance of the city.
13. *The Crystal Pond.* A large and ornate pond, fed by a natural spring and filled with several varieties of rare, colorful fish.
14. *The Citadel of Nibenay.* This is Nibenay's private sanctuary. It is mysterious and unknown even to the sorcerer-king's templarwives.
15. *The Temple of Law.* This building is not actually a part of the Naggaramakam, for it is outside the citadel's walls. This is the great courthouse in which all legal matters are resolved by the templars who live in the Houses of Law.
16. *Outer Towers (7).* These are 30 feet tall and roughly 60 feet in diameter.
17. *Inner Towers (4).* These are 30 feet tall and roughly 45 feet in diameter.
18. *Outer Walls.* These are roughly 15 feet tall and 10 feet thick and set with spikes.
19. *Inner Walls.* Similar to the outer walls, the inner walls are not spiked.
20. *Partition Walls.* These are 15 feet tall and 5 feet thick with no spikes.

## Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam (Cont'd)

**Setup.** As the PCs explore the Naggaramakam, they will encounter many deadly and terrifying perils. These are the result of the corrupted Zwuun's influence on the place as well as the natural safeguards erected by Nibenay.

When the PCs enter an area of the great citadel, the DM should read the narrative text that describes the area. In some cases, a page reference has been added to the end of the narrative. This indicates that the PCs have happened upon a special encounter, described on the indicated page. When this happens, the DM should flip to that page, play out the scene, and then return to this section.

### 1. The High Road

*This is the main road through the city and to the Naggaramakam. It is a wide avenue, grandly decorated for the aborted Twilight Festival. The many colorful banners and ornate decorations that hang here contrast sharply with the shattered buildings and scattered corpses, giving this place a terrible, macabre appearance.*

There are no additional encounters here.

### 2. The Bone Gate

*This mighty portal now stands twisted and broken in the wake of the great disaster. The proud stone towers flanking the gate are cracked, splintered, and half-collapsed. The bodies of several templar-wives can be seen partially buried under fallen debris of the gatehouse, but no living guards stand to block your entrance into the mysterious Naggaramakam.*

There are no additional encounters here.

### 3. The Hanging Gardens

*The High Road passes through a terraced garden that was once quite splendid. The grounds on both sides of the road have been tilled and planted with colorful, decorative grasses. There are flower boxes lining the walls, and ornate urns, filled with the most delicate of flowers, hang from crossbars overhead. Sadly, the violent tremors that so recently swept the city have left the place in ruin, and the fall of the burning rain has poisoned even the plants that survived the first calamity.*

This area is the site of **Encounter One: Blossoms of Death.**

### 4. The Iron Door

*Here, the High Road ends abruptly at a mighty stone gatehouse with a pair of great, ornate doors that appear to be fashioned of solid iron. A faint glow vibrates the air around the doors, marking them as magical. The arcane glyphs, sigils, and runes that cover the doors seem to burn like brilliant sapphires. Despite being cracked and damaged, this structure seems to be largely intact. Like the outer bone gates, however, there are no signs of guards to keep intruders out of Nibenay's sanctum.*

This area is the site of **Encounter Two: Fire of the Ancients.**

### 5. The Obsidian Path

*This is a section of road built from slabs of gleaming black obsidian. It leads from the Iron Door to gates of Nibenay; fortress, passing through what was once a magnificent garden. Convolutions in earth, no doubt caused by the earthquakes, have left the path twisted and difficult to walk upon.*

There are no additional encounters here.

## Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam (Cont'd)

### 6. The Houses of Commerce

*This area of the Naggaramakam is filled with a claustrophobic array of low stone structures. Many of the buildings have collapsed, no doubt killing those inside. The bodies of dozens of Nibenay's templar-wives litter the streets. While many were obviously killed by falling debris, others appear to have been torn apart by savage creatures.*

This area is the site of **Encounter Three: Lightning Zombies.**

### 7. The Houses of War

*There can be little doubt that this was the military district of the Naggaramakam. The squat stone buildings that stand here are all marked with the emblems and devices of war. Some great firestorm, one that must have spared the rest of the city, appears to have swept through this place, for the walls are scorched and nothing flammable appears to remain. Blackened skeletons, clearly those of countless templar-wives, are strewn about.*

This area is the site of **Encounter Three: Lightning Zombies.**

### 8. The Houses of Magic

*This region of the Naggaramakam is twisted and confusing. Like the other districts that lie between the inner and outer walls, it is a maze of narrow, claustrophobic passages, but here the turns and angles are difficult to focus on or to follow with the eye. This was clearly the home of Nibenay's defilers, for only the effects of magical spells could have created the wild and impossible paths that snake through this place.*

This area is the site of **Encounter Six: The Vortex.**

### 9. The Houses of Education

*This district is filled with neat and orderly rows of low buildings fashioned from smooth slabs of stone. Although the earthquake and the burning rain have destroyed many of them and littered the streets with scores of bodies, it still retains a look of calm symmetry.*

This area is the site of **Encounter Three: Lightning Zombies.**

### 10. The Houses of Agriculture

*This quarter is a tightly packed maze of narrow streets running between countless low stone buildings. Most of the structures are still standing, although heavily damaged from the earthquake. Many bodies, all of them Nibenay's templar-wives, lie scattered here. A few seem to have been killed by falling debris or the burning rain, but most show signs of having died very violently at the hands of some terrible beast.*

This area is the site of **Encounter Three: Lightning Zombies.**

### 11. The Houses of Law

*Most of the buildings in this area are shattered and collapsed. Most of the streets, narrow to begin with, are now choked with fallen stone and the bodies of the templar-wives. Scattered fires burn around the area, marking the last remains of temporary wooden structures or stores of combustible materials.*

This area is the site of **Encounter Three: Lightning Zombies.**



## Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam (Cont'd)

### 12. The Green Sanctum

*This district was once a great park decorated with tall trees, delicate green grasses, and flowering shrubs. The fall of the burning rain left it a mottled and scorched expanse of tortured plants that are either dead or dying. Here and there, you catch glimpses of movement in the withering foliage, but it is impossible to say exactly what kinds of animals might still be alive in this fortress of death.*

This is the site of **Encounter Four: The Killing Field.**

### 13. The Crystal Pond

*This is a large pond fed by a natural spring that keeps the water near its center bubbling and churning. The bodies of dozens of colorful fish float on the surface, a clear indication that the burning rain has left this oasis tainted and deadly. A film of thick slime, possibly a result of the toxic storm, makes it impossible to see into the depths of the reservoir.*

This is the site of **Encounter Five: Lurker in the Deep.**

### 14. The Citadel of Nibenay

*Before you stands the heart of the Naggaramakam, an incredible fortress of epic power. High atop this immense bastion is a huge effigy that you can only assume to be the gaunt, skeletal face of the Shadow King himself. The citadel beneath this great bust is built from colossal blocks of stones, etched from top to bottom with twisted carvings of the Shadow King's countless templar-wives, depicted as if they were lock of their master's hair. What lies within this ominous structure, not even the templar-wives can say.*

When the characters enter this building, flip to **Part Four: Into the Darkness.**

### 15. The Temple of Law

*This building is not actually a part of the Naggaramakam, since it is outside the citadel's walls. Once it served as a great courthouse, a palace of justice where all of the city's legal matters were resolved by the sorcerer-king's templar wives—now it lies in ruins. Despite its seemingly solid construction, the Temple of Law buckled in the first seconds of the earthquake, killing dozens of citizens and templar-wives. Teams of slaves, overseen by surviving templars, work to clear the debris and rescue those still trapped within, but the process is slow and difficult.*

There are no additional encounters here.

### 16. Outer Towers (7)

*These great, circular structures stand some 30 feet tall and roughly 60 feet in diameter. They are fashioned from massive stone blocks that are now laced with jagged splits and rough cracks. While it is clear from their twisted, buckled appearance that the interior chambers have collapsed, they still serve as solid anchors for the outer walls of Nibenay's fortress.*

There are no additional encounters here.

### 17. Inner Towers (4)

*These round towers were once some 30 feet tall and roughly 45 feet in diameter. Unlike their counterparts in the outer wall, these have been utterly destroyed by the earthquake. Now they lie in great piles of stone, leaving vast gaps in the walls they were meant to anchor.*

There are no additional encounters here.

## Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam (Cont'd)

### 18. Outer Walls

*These mighty stone wall.. are roughly 15 feet tall and set with wickedly curved bone spikes near the top. Although cracked and crumbling, these walls remain remarkably intact, of offering a mute tribute to the architect who designed and built them.*

There are no additional encounters here.

### 19. Inner Walls

*Like the outer walls of the Naggaramakam, these mighty barriers stand fully 15 feet in height and are fixed with cruel bone spikes. Where the outer walls proved able to withstand the shocks and tremors that challenged them, these were less durable. Along the length of the great walls, partial collapses and minor breaches can be found, offering entry to the inner portions of Nibenay's citadel.*

There we no additional encounters here.

### 20. Partition Walls

*Unlike the outer and inner walls of the Naggaramakam, these partitions were not really intended as defensive fortifications. Rather, they were primarily meant to divide the sprawling temple quarters into separate districts. For the most part, they have all collapsed into piles of debris that present only minor obstacles for travelers within the Naggaramakam.*

There are no additional encounters here.

## Encounter One: Blossoms of Death

**Setup.** This scene takes place as the characters are exploring **Area 3: The Hanging Gardens**. It is triggered as soon as one of the PCs stops to examine the flowers. If none of the players does this, then the DM can either ignore the encounter or spring it on them just before they reach **Area 4: The Iron Door**. An illustration of this encounter is presented on page 31 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** Begin the encounter by reading the following narrative. It is important to note that only one of the characters notices the events described. Because of the speed with which these events will be revealed to the others, however, it is not necessary to isolate the player while reading him the description.

*As you look around this area, a single shrub decorated with brilliant blossoms catches your eye. Unlike the other plants in this place that are withered, faded, and dying, this single flower is as dazzling as it ever was. In the split second that it takes you to realize how out of place this plant is, a burst of prismatic light explodes from the bloom, showering you with all the colors of the rainbow.*

**Encounter.** Prior to the coming of the Zwuun, this was a simple flower known as a prismatic rose. The rose absorbed sunlight and directly converted it to energy without any form of photosynthesis. It was altered by the magical aura of the mysterious Zwuun, however, and is now a dangerous plant able to employ a magical ability similar to *color spray*.

The plant has no hidden agenda, nor any importance to the resolution of the adventure. It simply serves as a combat encounter and introduces the PCs to the kinds of unusual hazards that lie before them.

### Statistics.

**Prismatic Rose (1):** AL N; #AT 3; THAC0 11; AC 6; HD 10; hp 50 (tendrils: 10 hp, bush: 20 hp); Dmg 1d8 (×3); SA *color spray*, SD nil; MV 0; MR Nil; SZ L (30' long); ML 20; XP 2,000; Treasure Nil.

The blossom's *colors spray* can be used three times per day and acts much like the spell of the same name. Up to 10 creatures can be affected by the spray, provided that all are within 20 feet of the blossom and looking in its general direction. All creatures of up to 5 Hit Dice are instantly blinded by the attack for 2d4 rounds. Creatures with between 6 and 10 Hit Dice are entitled to a saving throw vs. spells, with failure indicating that they are blinded for 1d4 rounds. Creatures with more than 10 Hit Dice are unaffected by the *color spray*. After unleashing its *color spray*, the plant attacks with its thorny, whiplike tendrils, and attempts to flay its victims alive.

**Next.** After the PCs have dealt with this hazard, they can return to their investigation of the fortress in **Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam**.



## Encounter Two: Fire of the Ancients

**Setup.** This encounter takes place at **Area 4: The Iron Door**. It assumes that the characters are attempting to open the door in order to move deeper into the Naggaramakam. It is quite possible for a party to avoid this encounter by seeking out one of the many breaches in the inner wall or by scaling it. An illustration of this door can be found on page 32 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** Here, the High Road ends abruptly at a mighty stone gatehouse with a pair of great, ornate doors that appear to be fashioned of solid iron. A faint glow vibrates the air around the doors, marking them as magical. Despite being cracked and damaged, this structure seems to be mostly intact. There are no signs of guards to keep intruders out of Nibenay's sanctum.

**Encounter.** The trick for the PCs at this point is to determine what type of magic infuses the iron door, then to somehow defeat that magic, and, finally, to open the portal. The events of this encounter are largely driven by the actions the PCs take to investigate the door.

**Attacking the door** unarmed, or with melee or missile weapons, or with spells, will result in the release of lightning bolts that inflict 3d6 points of damage on every attacker who fails a saving throw vs. spells. The door is immune to physical and magical harm.

**Attempting to decipher the runes** on the door, whether by magic, psionics, or a proficiency will accomplish nothing. This door originated in the outer planes and the language on it is unlike anything that the PCs have ever seen before.

**Casting a knock spell** will not open the door. It will, however, trigger a lightning bolt that does 3d6 points of damage to the caster unless a save vs. spells is made.

**Casting a dispel magic spell** may open the door, although it will resist this enchantment as if it were a spell test by a 20th-level wizard.

**Casting detect magic, detect evil, or using object reading or sensitivity to psionic impressions** on the door will reveal that it is strongly enchanted with magic from the Summoning school or that it is quite evil (depending upon the spell cast). This is actually a reflection of the door's origins, not its magical powers.

**Casting a dismissal or banishment spell or ability** will cause the door to implode, vanishing into a pinpoint of blackness and leaving the way ahead clear.

**Casting a find traps spell or searching for traps** will reveal that the door is utterly safe. This is not true, but a manifestation of the door's powerful magical aura.

**Casting a crystalbrittle spell or employing a molecular rearrangement, molecular agitation, molecular manipulation, or soften power** will fail to affect the door, but will instead affect all of the metal carried by the caster.

**Casting a passwall or phase door spell** will allow the character to step through the iron door. Once inside the portal, however, it is very difficult to avoid being magically *gated* to the place where the door was forged (namely, the Abyss). Any character who attempts to pass through the door by this or any other method must make a saving throw vs. death or be lost to the nameless horrors of the Abyss.

**Casting a disintegrate spell or using a cause decay, detonate, or disintegrates ability** on the door will force the wizard to make a saving throw vs. death or be *disintegrated* or *detonated*, the spells have no effect upon the door.

**Next.** After the PCs have dealt with the door or given up on it, the adventure returns to **Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam**.

## Encounter Three: Lightning Zombies

**Setup.** Many places within the Naggaramakam are infested with a unique type of undead known as *lightning zombies*. Whenever the PCs move through such an area, they will be attacked by these vile creatures. The attack of the lightning zombies is depicted on page 33 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** Because there are several possible ways for these encounters to be resolved, there is no narrative to begin the scene.

**Encounter.** The region between the outer end inner wells of the Naggaramakam is filled with a claustrophobic army of stone buildings that are collectively known as the Houses of Government. There are six of these districts, and they served as home and work place for hundreds of Nibenay's templar-wives. When disaster swept the city, countless templars died in these places.

When the Zwuun descended upon the Naggaramakam, things became even worse. For centuries, the bodies of Nibenay's wives were interred beneath the citadel. The magical energy and concentrated hatred of the Zwuun has begun to reanimate them as zombies who move with incredible speed and agility. As the PCs explore the Naggaramakam, the first of these creatures are beginning to dig themselves free of the earth. Indeed, if the quest to calm the Zwuun fails, all of Nibenay will be overrun by lightning zombies within a fortnight.

As with the traditional zombie encounters in the city, the DM is free to use lightning zombies to prod the PCs into taking courses of action that they might have overlooked. Every lightning zombie attack should have a unique flavor, for these creatures are more cunning than their lesser kin.

**Reactions.** The first attack by the lightning zombies should maximize the surprise of their speed and ferocity. The PCs should have plenty of warnings that something is moving around them, but never directly see what might be stalking them. After a few minutes of this has created some paranoia, a peck of zombies (1 or 2 per character is a good number) flashes in from the ruins around the party and attacks. (DMs familiar with movie *Aliens* would do well to model these attacks after the chaotic battles in that film, with the zombies swarming over their enemies and striking from the shadows.)

Subsequent attacks by the zombies should again catch the PCs off guard. For example, the zombies might weaken the roof of an underground passage so that one or more of the characters fall into it from the surface, like a tiger trap. As soon as victims are in sight, the zombies swarm in and attack. These kinds of tactics will make the lightning zombies a horrific menace the players will long remember.

### Statistics.

**Lightning Zombies (variable):** AL N; #AT 3; THAC0 13; Dmg 1d8 (×3); AC 8; HD 2; hp 10 ea; SA -4 initiative bonus; SD Immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells, death magic, poisons, and cold-based spells; MV 18; MR Nil; SZ M (6' tall); ML 20; XP 120 ea; Treasure Nil. Lightning zombies are semi-intelligent and can be turned as ghouls.

**Next.** After the PCs have dealt with this hazard, they can return to their investigation of the fortress in **Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam**.

## Encounter Four: The Killing Field

**Setup.** This encounter takes place as the PCs explore **Area 12: The Green Sanctum**. An illustration of the Sanctum can be found on page 34 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *Once a great park decorated with tall trees, delicate grasses, and flowering shrubs, the burning rain has left it a mottled and scorched expanse of tortured plants that are either dead or dying. Here and there, you catch glimpses of movement in the withering foliage, but it is impossible to say exactly what sort of animals might still be alive in this fortress of death.*

**Encounter.** The creatures darting about in the shadows are actually zhackals. While they are themselves invisible, their movement through the grass and shrubbery may be observed. They will attack any single character moving away from the party, but they will not molest a band.

There are several more passive hazards in the Green Sanctum that can be tossed in to spice up the fight against the zhackals.

*Acid Grass:* The burning rain has changed the chemical composition of the grass that covers the dying garden. Anyone who allows his bare skin to come in contact with it will be burned. Casual contact (touching a blade of grass) does 1d4 points of damage. Moderate contact (stepping onto the grass barefooted) does 2d4 points of damage and requires a saving throw vs. poison to avoid a loss of 1 Charisma point. Extensive contact (lying down on the grass) does 3d4 points of damage and causes an automatic loss of 1 Charisma point.

*Slash Weed:* The shrubbery in the sanctum has mutated and grown razor-sharp thorns. Anyone who falls or is pushed into a shrub will suffer damage equal to their base Armor Class. Thus, someone in leather armor is slashed for 8 points.

*Carrion Bees:* These vile insects buzz around their hives in the tops of the trees in the Sanctum. Anyone climbing one of the trees or disturbing a nest will be attacked by carrion bees. The bees will attack for 1d4 rounds, and the victims of the attack will suffer 1d4 points of damage each round unless a saving throw vs. breath weapons is made. Anyone who is stung for 4 points of damage must save vs. poison or begin to decay as if dead. Each hour after the decay begins, the victim loses 1 level (and all the benefits associated with it, such as Hit Dice and spell use) and 1 point of Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma. The rate of decay can be slowed to 2 hours with a slow poison spell, and the entire process can be halted by a *remove poison* spell. Once the poison is expunged, the lost levels and ability score points return at a rate of 1 per hour. A *heal* spell will destroy the toxin and restore all lost points.

### Statistics.

**Zhackals (10):** AL NE; #AT 1; THAC0 13; Dmg 1d3 AC 7; HD 1; hp 6 each; MV 18; SA psionics; SD psionics; MR Nil; SZ S (1' tall); ML 12; XP 120 ea; Treasure Nil; Psionic Devotions: Contact, Mind Link, Mind Bar, Ego Whip, Invisibility; Att/Def Modes: EW/-; Score 12; PSPs 15.

The zhackals' Contact, Mind Link, and Ego Whip powers are not functioning due to the effects of the Zwuun on psionics. Like the plants in the area, they have been changed by the Zwuun so that the acid grass does not affect them.

**Next.** After the PCs have dealt with this hazard, they can return to their investigation of the fortress in **Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam**.



## Encounter Five: Lurker in the Deep

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs investigate **Area 13: The Crystal Pond**. An illustration of this place can be found on page 35 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *You see a large pond fed by a natural spring that keeps the water near its center bubbling and churning. The bodies of dozens of colorful fish float on the surface, a clear indication that the burning rain has left this oasis tainted and deadly. A film of thick slime, possibly a result of the toxic storm, makes it impossible to see into the depths of the reservoir.*

**Encounter.** Anyone moving near the edge of the Crystal Pond will be attacked by the trio of creatures living there. While these were once docile amphibians, they have been transformed into nightmarish predators. When they attack, the pond fiends leap out of the water and attempt to drag their victims into the water.

Anyone who is pulled in, falls in, or jumps into the pond will discover that it is now highly acidic. Would-be swimmers will suffer 4d6 points of damage (save vs. breath weapon for half-damage). This damage is sustained each round the victim remains in the water.

Drowning is, of course, a major hazard. For their part, the pond fiends will attempt to pull their victims beneath the surface of the water. The complete rules for resolving such situations are presented in the *Player's Handbook* section entitled **Time and Movement**. To summarize, a character can hold his breath for a maximum number of rounds equal to one-third of his Constitution with a good breath of air or half that with a poor one. During this time, the character must make an ability check on Constitution each round (with a cumulative -2 penalty on each check after the first) or be forced to breathe. Failure to breathe, either because a check has been missed or at the end of the maximum period, indicates that the character has drowned.

**Reactions.** The pond fiends are both evil and hungry. They have already devoured all of the other fish in the pond and are now famished. The PCs represent a good supply of food and the pond fiends will do everything in their power to claim them as dinner. They are cunning, but are not actually intelligent.

### Statistics.

**Pond Fiends (3):** AL CE; SW 15; #AT 5; THAC0 15; Dmg 1d4 (×2) and 1d6; AC 4; HD 4+3; hp 25 ea; SA Spit acid (30', save vs. breath weapon or take 3d4); SD Immune to acid or poison; MV 9; MR Nil; SZ M (6'tall); ML 11; XP 420 ea; Treasure Nil.

**Next.** After the PCs have dealt with this hazard, they can return to their investigation of the fortress in **Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam**.

## Encounter Six: The Vortex

**Setup.** This scene takes place when the PCs explore area 8 on the map of the City of Nibenay. An accompanying illio can be found on page 36 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** While a basic description of this place was provided in **Exploring the Naggaramakam**, the following description should be read to the PCs if they come near the center of this location.

*Suddenly, a flicker of light catches your eye. Inside the shell of a half-collapsed building is a whirling pinwheel of light some 3 feet across, hanging quietly in the air. While the object is magnificent, beautiful, there is something darkly disturbing about it.*

**Encounter.** The pinwheel is a magical vortex created by the High Wizard of Nibenay, a defiler who loyally served the Shadow King until he was torn apart by a rampaging pack of lightning zombies. When he saw that he was doomed, the wizard took the Iron Key to Nibenay's fortress and encased it in this protective barrier so that it would not fall into the hands of the sorcerer-king's enemies.

**Reactions.** The events of this encounter depend upon the actions of the PCs.

**Examining the vortex** will reveal that there is an object at its center. Apart from the fact that it is more or less cube-shaped, about 6 inches on a side, no details can be seen. All attempts at divination, scrying or similar magic will fail to provide any additional information.

**Touching the vortex** will trigger the explosive release of a deadly electrical charge. The offender instantly suffers 6d6 points of damage (save vs. spells for half damage) and anyone touching him suffers 3d6 points of damage (save vs. spells allowed for no damage).

**Casting *dispel magic* on the vortex** will cause it to burst, inflicting 6d6 points of damage to everyone within 50 feet (save vs. breath weapons for half damage). As soon as the vortex is gone, a crystalline box falls to the ground and shatters. Anyone examining the shards will find a heavy iron key about 6 inches long.

**Attacking the vortex** with spells or ranged weapons will cause it to unleash a pulse of electrical energy that inflicts 3d6 points of damage to all persons within 50 feet (save vs. breath weapons for half damage). Other than that, it will have no effect upon either the vortex or the object within.

**Next.** After the PCs have dealt with this hazard (or decided to ignore it), they can return to their investigation of the fortress in **Part Three: Exploring the Naggaramakam**.

## Part Four: Into the Darkness

**Setup.** This encounter resolves attempts to enter the Fortress of Nibenay at the heart of the Nag-garamakam. A map of the interior of this grand structure appears on the next page of this book. When all is said and done, about the only way that the PCs should be able to enter the fortress is through the front door.

**Start.** *Before you stands the heart of the Naggaramakam, an incredible fortress of epic power. Atop this immense bastion is a huge statue of the gaunt, skeletal face of the Shadow King himself. The citadel beneath this great bust is built of colossal blocks of stone, worked from top to bottom with twisted carvings of the countless templar-wives, each carved in the image of a lock of their master's hair. What lies within this structure, not even the templar-wives can say.*

**Encounter.** Entering the fortress is a difficult task at best. The place is protected not only by the psionic defenses of the sorcerer-king, but also by the mystical energies of the Zwuun. There are no openings in the thick stone walls of the building, save for the main entrance on the south side, at the end of the Obsidian Path. The results of various attempts to enter the fortress are detailed below.

**Walking through the front door** might seem like suicide, but it turns out to be about the only way of entering the place. If the PCs have recovered the Iron Key (see Encounter Six: The Vortex), they can use it to open the main door. If they do not have the key, they must use a *dispel magic* or *knock* spell on the front door in order to break the magical bonds that bind it shut. Ordinarily, such spells would not be enough to force the portal, but the presence of the Zwuun has disrupted a few of the normal enchantments that hold it secure. Characters with exceptional strength might be able to break down the door, although it is treated as being *wizard locked*.

**Using magical spells or psionic powers to pass through the walls** of the fortress will not work. The structure of the place is so heavily laced with magical and psionic energies that it is invulnerable to such things. Anyone attempting to *teleport* inside, use *passwall*, or even the clerical ability to *ignore earth*, will trigger a discharge of magical energy that does 3d6 points of damage and stuns the character for an equal number of minutes. A saving throw vs. spells is allowed for half damage.

**Searching for secret doors** won't help; there aren't any.

**Physically breaching the walls** is a really bad idea. Any attempt to make even the slightest stretch in the fortress has the same result as using magical spells to pass through it.

**Tunneling in** might seem like a good idea. However, digging into the earth around the fortress is generally a very bad thing to do, for all of the lightning zombies who have not yet escaped the confines of their coffins are buried here. Any hole dug deeper than a few feet into the earth will turn into a portal through which lightning zombies can attack.

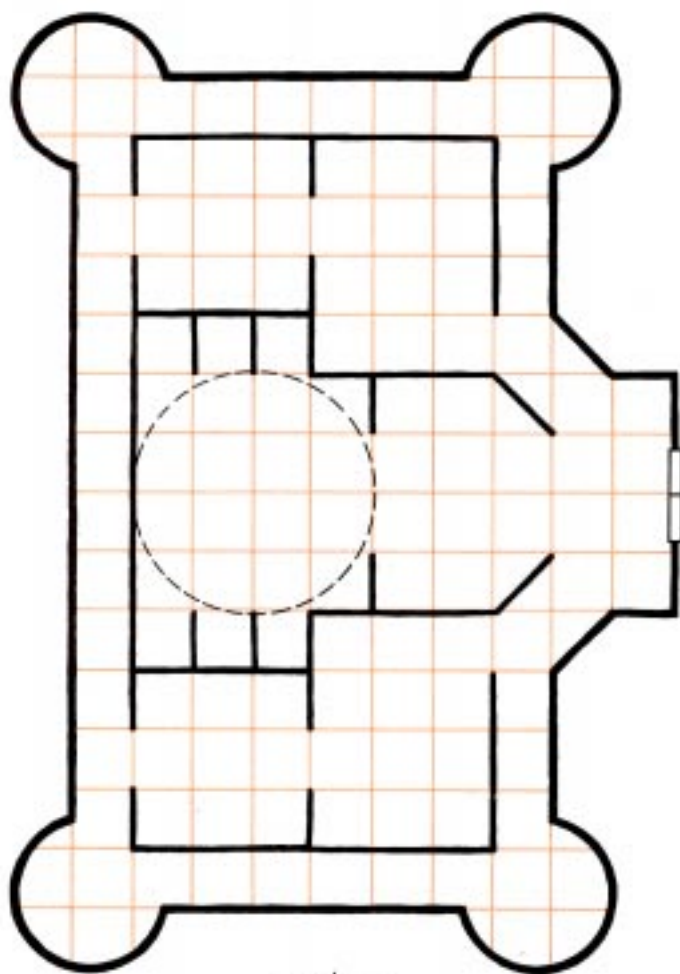
**Next.** Once the PCs get past the front door, they will enter **Area One: The Jade Hall**. If the PCs have come up with some really clever way of entering the fortress at another point, they may be in a different location, as dictated by the map presented on the next page.

As the PCs move around the map, just flip to the page that describes the events that occur in each room.



Part Four:  
Fortress of Nibenay Map

One square = 10 feet



## Area One: The Jade Hall

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs enter area 1 on the map of the Fortress of Nibenay. This scene appears on page 37 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *Your party has come to a great hallway that is fully 100 feet wide and 150 feet long with a floor of hexagonal jade tiles. On the walls are carved countless twisted, jade-accented figures of death, suffering, and torment that could hardly have been created by anyone but a madman. There are great doors on the southern and northern ends of the room and a pair of lesser apertures in the east and west walls. The entire length of this gigantic room is illuminated by some three dozen dimly glowing jade spheres, hanging from bone chains set in the ceiling, 50 feet above your heads. An inescapable feeling of hatred hangs in the air.*

**Encounter.** As the PCs move through the room, they will trigger an unusual chain of events. It begins with a web of green lightning flashing to and fro among the dozens of glowing jade orbs. As long as the party remains in this room, the magical storm will rage above their heads. Nothing they do will effect it in any way, for the Fortress of Nibenay is cloaked with mighty protective spells.

**Reactions.** As soon as the PCs move toward one of the doors leading out of this place, a great stroke of lightning bursts from above and strikes the jade tiled floor between them and the exit. As a deafening clap of thunder accompanying the discharge echoes endlessly about the room, a great jade figure shapes itself out of the floor tiles and attack. This terrible creature is a jade golem.

Once the PCs have defeated the creature, they are free to leave by the door they were going to leave through when the golem attacked. The only exception is the door on the northern wall that leads into area 10. This barrier is impassable without the help of Siemhouk (who can be found in area 4).

If they opt to try a different door, another golem will be produced to battle them. Whenever the PCs return to this room, they will be forced to repeat this encounter for each door they attempt to use, even if it is one they previously passed through.

### Statistics.

**Jade Golem:** AL N; #AT 1; THAC0 9; Dmg 4-40 (4d10); AC 4; HD 12; hp 55; SA petrification; SD see below; MV 6; MR Nil; SZ M (6' tall); ML 11; XP 420 ea; Treasure Nil.

The jade golem can be hit only by +1 or better magical weapons. It is also immune to all mind-end life-affecting spells, defiler spells of less than the 7th level, all spells cast by preservers, and all psionic powers from the Telepathy, Psychometabolism, Clairsentience, and Metapsionic disciplines. A *dispel magic* cast at the golem forces it to save vs. spells or be stunned for number of turns equal to the level of the caster. If the jade golem meets the gaze of another individual, it unleashes a bolt of green light that link the two beings for a split second. The target of such an attack must make a save vs. petrification or be transformed into solid jade. A *stone to flesh* spell can be used to reverse the effects of this terrible metamorphosis.

**Next.** If the PCs do have Siemhouk with them and they wish to move into area 10, flip to that page and continue the adventure from there. Otherwise, the next encounter depends on the area of the fortress map that the PCs enter.

## Area Two: The Southwest Tower

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs enter area 2 on the Fortress of Nibenay map. It is illustrated on page 38 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *You have entered a wide dome some 100 feet in diameter and 75 feet in height. The floor is tiled in 6-inch hexagonal slabs of turquoise, while the walls have been polished smooth and painted a pleasant aquamarine. In the center of the room is a grand fountain seemingly fashioned from a single piece of blue-white marble. Clear, sparkling water jets high in to the air from the center, then splashes into a broad basin some 30 feet in diameter. The echoes of the cascading water are relaxing and comfortable, but they make quiet conversation impossible.*

*Something about this place seems to lessen the feeling of hatred and anger that has been gnawing at your psyche ever since you entered the fortress.*

**Encounter.** In actuality, this is a very safe place. There are no magical defenses, the fountain flows with untainted water, and the Zwuun's rage has not been manifested here. If the PCs are in need of a place to rest, heal, or study spells, this is it.

As it happens, this may well be the only remaining renews of fresh water in the city. If the Zwuun can be defeated and the sorcerer-king reasoned with, it could prove invaluable to the survival and rebuilding of Nibenay.

**Reaction.** About the only thing the PCs can do to get themselves in trouble in here is to attempt to summon a water elemental from the fountain. If they do this, the creature will appear as usual, but it will be corrupted by the rage and hatred of the Zwuun. Thus, as soon as it is formed, the water elemental will go berserk and attack the character that summoned it. It is utterly impossible for the PCs to regain control of the creature, no matter what they do.

**Next.** The next encounter of the adventure depends on the area of the fortress that the PCs enter.



## Area Three: The Southeast Tower

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs enter area 3 on the Fortress of Nibenay map. An illustration of this room can be found on page 39 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *Your party has entered a large domed chamber some 100 feet in diameter and 75 feet high. The floor and walls are tiled with hexagonal slabs of obsidian, making the entire chamber seem dark and foreboding, like an open grave. Dozens of cages, each fashioned from polished obsidian cylinders and large enough to hold a thri-kreen, hang from the ceiling on long bone chains. The lowest of these are some 30 feet over your heads, and the majority of them hang some 10 to 20 feet higher. It is difficult to see what the cages contain, but moans of suffering and agony drift out of them, giving the entire area a heavy, macabre atmosphere.*

**Encounter.** Over the centuries since he founded Nibenay, the Shadow King has crushed several attempted coups. The leaders of these failed revolutions hang above the party in obsidian cages. For years, Nibenay kept them alive and imprisoned through the use of necromantic magic that enabled him to torture and abuse them from time to time. There are currently 38 cages, each holding one prisoner.

Having tired of his pets, Nibenay used their life essences to power the incredible lightning strike that was intended to destroy the Zwuun. They were all instantly killed when the spell was cast, but the coming of the Zwuun revived them. Sadly, they are now lightning zombies with an eternal hunger for human flesh.

**Reactions.** Any creature released from its cage will attack at once, attempting to kill and devour the nearest person.

Anyone familiar with the history of Nibenay might be able to identify some of the prisoners.

### Statistics.

**Lightning Zombies (38):** AL N; #AT 3; THAC0 19; Dmg 1d8 (×3); AC 8; HD 2; hp 10 ea; SA -4 initiative bonus; SD Immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells, death magic, poisons and cold-based spells; MV 18; MR Nil; SZ M (6' tall); ML 20; XP 120 ea; Treasure Nil. Lightning zombies are semi-intelligent and can be turned as ghouls.

**Next.** The next encounter of the adventure depends on the area of the fortress that the PCs enter.



## Area Four: The Northwest Tower

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs enter area 4 on the Fortress of Nibenay map. An illustration of this scene can be found on page 40 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *You have entered a sprawling dome some 100 feet in diameter and 75 feet in height. Comfortable furnishings and pleasant adornments give the place a look of intimacy that belies the vast openness of the chamber. From the nature of the items in this room, it is clearly a private living area. Near the center of the room is the body of a young girl. She lies crumpled on a sleeping cushion, her unmoving, willowy form draped in a shimmering black aura.*

**Encounter.** The child is Siemhouk, ward of the Shadow King and the key to defeating the Zwuun. When he saw that his fortress was about to fall under attack by a great entity with tremendous magical and psionic powers, the Shadow King threw a *temporal stasis* spell on his heir, hoping that this would hide her from the scrying of the Zwuun. He was right, the mysterious creature has not noticed the child and she has been left undisturbed by the disasters that have all but razed the city.

**Reactions.** Reviving the child can be done in one of two ways. The most direct method is to cast a *dispel magic* spell, but the fact that Nibenay is a 23rd-level defiler can make this a difficult proposition. An easier way to revive the young girl is simply to touch her unmoving body and say her name, "Siemhouk." As soon as this is done, the spell will collapse and the priest child will awaken.

Siemhouk is a very troubling person. She never seems fully aware of what is going on around her, and she seems to have been stripped of all emotions and imagination. She almost never speaks, only answering direct questions and then seldom giving more than a one-word answer. For all intents and purposes, Siemhouk can be thought of as an "item" the party brings along with them. She will take no initiative and does only what the apparent leader of the party tells her to do. Years of living under the rule of the Shadow King have left her spirit broken and taught her the value of prompt obedience.

**Statistics.** A complete description of Siemhouk can be found in the NPCs section of the 16-page short story booklet included with this adventure.

**Next.** The next encounter of the adventure depends on the area of the fortress that the PCs enter.



## Area Five: The Northeast Tower

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs enter area 5 on the Fortress of Nibenay map. An illustration of this scene can be found on page 41 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** A wall of sparkling energy hangs across the entrance to this chamber. Through the translucent barrier, your party sees a magnificent dome some 100 feet in diameter and 75 feet in height. The floor and walls appear to have been cut from a single sheet of charcoal gray granite. At the center of the room, a bone tube juts some 20 feet into the air, where it unleashes a cloud of blue-white fire that provides an unnatural illumination. The place is adorned with harsh, utilitarian furnishings fashioned mainly from bone and hardwoods. An uncomfortable bed and several other items give the impression that that this place may be the living quarters of Nibenay himself. A great maze of shelves and cabinets fills the far half of the room, providing storage space for countless scrolls, trinkets, and macabre-looking devices.

**Encounter.** These are indeed the private quarters of Nibenay and, as one might expect, they are protected by some very potent magical spells. The most obvious of these is the shimmering barrier across the entrance.

**Reactions.** Anything that contacts this obstruction will suffer the effects of a *disintegration* spell. Objects that make their saving throws to avoid the effects of that spell are thrown backward, crashing to the floor some 25 feet away from the portal end suffering 2d6 points of impact damage.

Other attempts to enter the room should be similarly turned aside by the DM. Nothing the characters do will enable them to enter this room. The treasures within it are protected by the full might of Nibenay, one of the most powerful creatures on Athas. This place is simply meant to tease the players, for they can only imagine the wealth that lies beyond the barrier.

Even Siemhouk has no idea how to bypass the defenses in this room. If she is with the party and they ask her about the place, she will simply shrug her shoulders. She has never been in this room and has no curiosity at all about what goes on inside its walls.

**Next.** The next encounter of the adventure depends on the area of the fortress that the PCs enter.



## Area Six: The Crimson Gallery

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs enter area 6 on the Fortress of Nibenay map. An illustration of this scene can be found on page 42 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *The party has come into a vast chamber some 100 feet across and 150 feet long. The walls are enameled with a glistening shell the color of blood, while the floor is fashioned of triangular panels of some bright red rock that has been polished to a mirror-like finish. A hot breeze blows through the room, although no sign of its origin can be found. Large doors offer exits to the east and north.*

*Countless statues depicting the various intelligent races of Athas fill the chamber, all ornate and superbly detailed. A dozen mobiles hang from the ceiling, which is at least 50 feet above you, depicting all manner of aerial phenomena and creatures. Paintings, etchings, and carvings line the wall, depicting various elements of city life in Nibenay in a twisted, eclectic way. A pair of crystal chimes flank the two exits of the room, filling the air with a high-pitched, random melody that is somewhat unsettling.*

**Encounter.** This place is exactly what it appears to be: an art gallery. Nibenay is a great lover of the work of master craftsmen and artisans, especially those who seem to be on the verge of madness or obsession. Over the centuries, he has collected hundreds of pieces of art, and nearly all of them have found their way into this room.

If the player characters make no attempt to loot or vandalize the objects in this room, they may pass through it unmolested. Should they attempt actions that might be detrimental (in the DM's judgment) to the masterpieces stored here, they will trigger a defensive system established by Nibenay himself.

**Reaction.** If the defenses in this room are triggered, a psionic *ultrablast* rips into the minds of everyone in the gallery. Each round, another such attack will be made until everyone in the room is incapacitated or has fled. As soon as there are no conscious beings left in the room, the attacks will stop and the bodies of the fallen will magically *teleport* to area 3, the Southeast Tower.

When the *teleported* characters awake, they will find themselves in cages suspended from the ceiling. If and how they escape is up to the DM, but it should be noted that any characters placed in these cages will be stripped of all their equipment and that spells and psionics will not function in the obsidian confines of those hanging cells.

**Next.** The next encounter of the adventure depends on the area of the fortress map that the PCs enter.

## Area Seven: The Orrery

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs enter area 7 on the Fortress of Nibenay map. An illustration of this scene can be found on page 43 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *This room, fully 100 feet wide and 150 feet long, is completely given over to one of the most amazing machines you have ever seen. The heart of the device is a large, spherical clockwork mechanism that contains thousands of delicate looking gears, wheels, and spings, all moving with what appears to be absolute precision. A dozen slender rods jut out from the massive central sphere, each ending in an assembly of globes that appear to move in circles, about each other and then (as a group) about the mechanism itself. Exits can be found on the north and west walls, but the convolutions of the machine make moving from one door to the other a very difficult task.*

**Encounter.** This device is an orrery, a mechanical representation of the Athasian solar system. Nibenay, like many of his subjects, has a keen interest in astrology and has built this machine to help him his studies of the stars and the portents they bring. Any character who makes an Astrology check should be able to deduce the function of the machine and understand its value as an aid to astrological studies. Any character who has identified the machine and wants to make use of the orrery with the Astrology proficiency will gain a +2 bonus to the use of that skill and may see as far as one year into the future.

**Reaction.** The orrery is very delicate and can easily be damaged or destroyed. If any attempt is made to harm the machine, no attack roll is needed. Players should roll for damage normally, and DM should consider the orrery to be a large opponent. Every point of damage done to the machine has a 2% chance of causing it to explode. This total is cumulative, so that it will automatically detonate after a total of 50 damage points have been inflicted. When it explodes, all characters in the room suffer 4d10 points of damage. A successful saving throw vs. breath weapons will reduce this damage by half.

**Next.** The next encounter of the adventure depends on the area of the fortress map that the PCs enter.

## Area Eight: The Library of Darkness

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs on the Fortress of Nibenay map. An illustration of this scene can be found on page 44 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *You have entered a poorly lit room some 50 feet wide and three times that long. The walls and floor are polished to a rough, dull finish the color of slate and they seem to absorb any light that falls on them. The entire place is filled with a maze of ornate wooden shelves holding an incalculable number of clay tablets.*

**Encounter.** This is Nibenay's personal library. Upon these tablets, in great detail, is recorded the entire history of Nibenay. However, they are written in an unusual magical language created by the Shadow King himself. This being the case, it is very difficult for anyone else to determine what information might be recorded on them. The only way that the PCs will be able to translate them is with a *read magic* spell or a rogue's *know languages* ability. In the former case, the spell must be cast once on each tablet that is to be read because of enchantments inherent in the writing. In the latter case, a roll must be made for each tablet.

**Reaction.** If the characters wish to read any of these records, they will find themselves learning a great deal about things that happened a long time ago and are of no importance to them. Attempts to search for records of specific events (like the attack on the Zwuun) will be prone to failure, for Nibenay uses a categorizing system that makes sense only to himself. Still, if the effort is made, there is a cumulative 1% chance per hour that the desired topic can be located, assuming that *read magic* spells or the *know languages* ability are freely available to help in the search.

If the players spend too much time searching through this room, the DM should remind them that their mission is one that demands the utmost speed. After all, the zombies and lightning zombies will be spreading throughout the city while the characters are browsing through the library. If the party still lingers, the DM can prompt them to continue by having a section of the floor collapse due to undermining, and by allowing a pack of lightning zombies to come screaming into the library.

If Siemhouk is with the party, they may ask her to help them use this library. She does not know how to read the tablets, but will increase the chances of finding specific information to 2% per hour.

### Statistics.

**Lightning Zombies (Variable):** AL N; #AT 3; THAC0 19; Dmg 1d8 (x3); AC 8; HD 2; hp 10 ea; SA -4 initiative bonus; SD Immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells, death magic, poisons, and cold-based spells; MV 18; MR Nil; SZ M (6' tall); ML 20; XP 120 ea; Treasure Nil. Lightning zombies are semi-intelligent and can be turned as ghouls.

**Next.** The next encounter of the adventure depends on the area of the fortress that the PCs enter.



## Area Nine: The Bone Hall

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs enter area 9 on the Fortress of Nibenay map. An illustration of this area can be found on page 45 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *You have entered a long, narrow chamber. From north to south, the room stretches nearly 150 feet and is roughly 50 feet wide. Three pairs of very slender, hourglass-shaped pillars rise from the floor of the room and stretch all the way to the ceiling some 50 feet above. These columns are built from some sort of unusual crystal and glow so brightly that they are difficult to look at directly. The walls and floor are tiled in an elegant white marble that gleams brightly in the radiance of the six pillars.*

*As if all this were not wondrous enough, this piece is filled with the skeletons of great animals. The largest of these is roughly five times the height of a man and looks something like a giant silt runner. The smallest is twice the height of a man and resembles a so-ut with an extra pair of arms. All told, there are some three dozen skeletons standing here.*

**Encounter.** In this great museum, Nibenay has assembled the skeletons of many long-forgotten creatures. Being something of a scholar and a sage at heart, the Shadow King has a keen interest in the ancient history of his world, as indicated by the Iron Gate outside his fortress. Indeed, Nibenay probably knows more about the true history of Athas than any other sorcerer-king, but he will not share the secrets he has learned with anyone.

If the PCs examine the skeletons carefully, they will find that none of them exactly matches any of the species that they have encountered in their travels. There are similarities, certainly, but none of the characters can exactly identify what they are seeing. A successful ancient history proficiency check will reveal that these animals are all extinct and no longer roam the wilds of Athas.

**Reactions.** If the PCs attempt to animate any of the skeletons, they will find that they have no control over them. Instead, the skeletons fall under the power of the Zwuun and attempt to destroy everyone in sight. The DM will need to determine the creature's statistics based upon the size and type of skeleton that the players wish to animate.

**Next.** The next encounter of the adventure depends on the area of the fortress that the PCs enter.

## Area Ten: The Throne Room

**Setup.** This encounter takes place when the PCs enter area 10 on the Fortress of Nibenay map. It sets the stage for the next encounter, in which the PCs must confront the Zwuun itself in combat. The narrative text that begins this encounter assumes that the PCs are actually in Area One: The Jade Hall, that they have defeated the jade golem that attempted to bar the north door of that chamber, and that they have Siemhouk with them. The *Elemental, Greater Air* entry in the DARK SUN® appendix to the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® will be helpful in resolving this encounter. An illustration can be found on page 46 of the *Player' Book*.

**Start.** *As you draw near the north door of the Jade Hall, the hanging orbs grow dark. The only light in the room now comes from the door itself; which radiates a pulsating emerald aura. Siemhouk steps forward, her frail body trembling. As she reaches the door, the priest child stretches out a slender arm and touches the surface of the portal. Suddenly, all lights are extinguished and the area fills into absolute darkness. For a second, all is still. Then a minute trace of blue light appears before you as the mighty doors begin to open. Blinking, you look into the strange room beyond, gasping at the sight before you.*

*The room itself is an immense rectangle, easily 200 feet wide and 150 feet deep. A great domed ceiling rises up nearly 100 feet above you, supported by a pair of massive arches. The inside of the dome is painted to resemble the night sky with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and other jewels marking the positions of various stars. A step pyramid some 40 feet high rises up beneath the center of the dome, and a great obsidian throne stands at its peak.*

*Seated in the throne is a mighty figure. If it were to stand, the creature would easily be 12 feet tall and might weigh 700 pounds. Although more or less humanoid in shape, its body is a mess of tightly pecked muscles covered with the scaled skin of a black reptile. A whiplike tail curls around the base of the throne, gripping it tightly, and a slender neck lifts an almost serpentine head some 2 feet above the shoulders.*

*The beast does not seem to notice your presence. Its reptilian features are set in a grimace of pain and its mouth is open as if to scream. A great sphere of energy hangs about the creature, pulsing and throbbing with electrical discharges that fill the room with an unending cacophony of hissing static and booming thunder. A veritable storm of hatred hammers into your minds with such force that you almost believe you are under psionic attack.*

*In a barely audible voice Siemhouk says: "Behold the sorcerer-king, Nibenay."*

**Encounter.** Whether the players are seeing is one of the most powerful creatures on Athas. Nibenay is a 23rd-level defiler/psionicist well on his way to becoming a full-fledged dragon. The glowing sphere of energy around him is the mysterious Zwuun. The two creatures are locked together in an awesome psychic battle, each so intent upon destroying the other that neither takes any notice of the PCs. Unfortunately for the characters, there are other defenses—defenses that act automatically when intruders enter the throne room.

Long ago the sorcerer-king spared the life of an air cleric who had taken action against the throne. In exchange, the cleric acted as an envoy for Nibenay, helping him to procure the service of a deadly creature of the elemental planes. This greater air elemental is now the guardian of Nibenay's throne room, and it suddenly springs to life and attacks. It is important to note that the air elemental knows nothing of Siemhouk's importance to the sorcerer-king. Thus, it will not hesitate to attack the priest child, and it will take no action to protect her from damage.

## Area Ten: The Throne Room (Cont'd)

**Reactions.** Of course, the PCs are free to do just about anything at this point. The actions of the others in the room are as follows:

*Siemhouk* knows what she must do. With or without the PCs to guide her actions, she enters into a psychic trance and begins to ease the hatred and rage felt by the Zwuun. With all of her attention focused on that task, she can do nothing to protect herself from the air elemental. It will take her three combat rounds to establish contact with the Zwuun and then one more for the creature to be stripped of its rage. Thus, the PC must protect her from harm for four full rounds. If she is injured in any way, her concentration is broken and she must begin the process anew.

If *Siemhouk* dies, the PCs' cause is obviously lost. Thus, the DM cannot allow that to happen. Of course, the players won't know that. A good DM will make certain that the trance comes close to being broken on at least one occasion, forcing one or more of the PCs to undertake some brave, heroic action to save the day.

*The air elemental* knows its job too. Its agreement with *Nibenay* was pretty simple: when you are summoned, kill everyone in the room except *Nibenay*. Normally, it would not have been summoned by *Siemhouk's* entrance. However, the fact that the PCs were with her triggered the spell and brought the creature to Athas from the elemental planes.

If the PCs are able to keep the elemental's attention focused on them, *Siemhouk* will not be attacked. Of course, this doesn't mean that its actions won't threaten the girl indirectly. The DM has to make sure that the creature almost destroys the girl's concentration at least once during the battle.

*Nibenay* will spend the entire time locked in mental combat with the Zwuun. The two are at a stalemate and nothing short of *Siemhouk's* powers will break it. As soon as the girl calms the aged Zwuun, however, *Nibenay* will spring to his feet and scream in pain, venting the agony he has felt for the last few days. If the PCs have not defeated the elemental, he will *banishi* it at once.

Despite their presence in his inner sanctum, *Nibenay* recognizes that the PCs have done him a great service. He will take no action against them, unless they foolishly try to attack him. If that happens, he'll unleash his full power at them and almost certainly kill them all.

*The Zwuun* is too busy battling *Nibenay* to notice the PCs or *Siemhouk*. As soon as the girl has completed her task (at the end of the fourth combat round), the Zwuun will sense the damage that it has done and instantly flees the *Naggaramakam*. Throughout the city, the zombies and the lightning zombies collapse and crumble into dust.

### Statistics.

**Elemental, Greater Air:** AL N; #AT 1; THAC0 3; Dmg 5-50 (5d10); AC 1; HD 18; hp 100; SA whirlwind & sandstorm; SD +3 or better weapon to hit; MV 36 (A); MR 50% (sphere of air) or 25% (other spheres) or nil (all other spells); SZ H (16' tall); ML 17; XP 15,000; Treasure Nil.

**Next.** With the Zwuun pacified, the PCs have accomplished their goal. The city has been saved and can now begin the lengthy task of rebuilding itself. The adventure concludes on the next page with **Epilogue: The Dragon Triumphant.**



## Epilogue: The Dragon Triumphant

**Setup.** This scene concludes the adventure, and it should take place shortly after the battle in the throne room. In the time that has passed, Siemhouk has moved to stand beside Nibenay and told him of the bravery shown by the PCs in their efforts to save the city from absolute destruction. An illustration of this scene can be found on page 47 of the *Player's Book*.

**Start.** *Nibenay sits motionless on his throne and listens carefully as Siemhouk tells him of your actions on behalf of his subjects. When she finishes, the towering dragon tilts his head down to look at your party.*

*"I foresaw that a time of great change was coming," he begins. "I was shown a time in which the internal struggles of the city were diminished. I assumed that this meant the destruction of my enemies and the cleansing of the rebels from my city. I see now that I was wrong. Throughout the city, I sense great suffering and torment. Truly, this is the darkest day of my long reign."*

*For a time, the dragon king is silent. Then he speaks again. "I sense, however, that it is also one of the brightest. Throughout Nibenay, people who should be battling each other work together to heal the wounded and rebuild that which has been destroyed. Perhaps this is the way of the future."*

**Encounter.** With that optimistic thought, the dragon falls silent. Siemhouk steps forward and announces softly that Nibenay wishes to be left alone so that he may consider his next actions. She escorts the PCs out of the throne room, through the Jade Hall, and onto the obsidian path in the garden beyond. At the Iron Door, she pauses and tilts her head, as if listening to something no one else can hear.

After a moment, she tells the PCs that Nibenay wishes them to seek out the leaders of the city's various factions and arrange for a conference to be held. He wishes to discuss with them the terrible tragedy that has rocked the city, how Nibenay can best recover from the disasters, and what can be done to prevent such a thing from happening again.

**Reactions.** Unless the PCs do something really stupid, they will now be on the good side of just about everyone in the city of Nibenay. The only exceptions might be a few of the more power hungry nobles who saw the disaster as their chance to seize power. They are in a perfect position to act as liaisons between Nibenay himself and the leaders of the city's many factions.

If they demand a reward for their services, Nibenay will give them what they want, within reason, but will then think of them as nothing more than mercenaries. They will lose their bored place in his eyes and be politely dismissed from service and the rebuilding of the city.

As far as setting up the conference goes, they will find most parties reluctant to attend and hesitant to trust the others. If they take the initiative to promote goodwill and the benefits of peaceful cooperation, however, they should be able to pull it off. This conference will certainly be stormy and the resulting alliances fragile at best, but it's a good first step.

**Next.** This concludes the adventure. A few ideas on subsequent events can be found on the next page, **Final Notes: Life Returns to Normal**.

## Final Notes: Life Returns to Normal

### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

What happens next in any given DARK SUN® campaign is, of course, up to the individual DM. There are a number of perfectly acceptable paths that the rebuilding of Nibenay might follow.

### **Everyone Lives Happily Ever After . . .**

If the DM wishes, the attempts at coexistence in Nibenay can prove to be more successful than anyone could have hoped. After all, the city has always been known as a center of humanitarian thought, ideals, and liberal thinking. If the DM opts to follow this path, Nibenay can become a shining example of all that is good on Athas. Of course, the other city-states are likely to look upon such a culture as weak and ripe for the picking, so Nibenay will be frequently called upon to defend itself from outside aggressors.

This ending is a pretty good curve-ball to throw to the players. They won't know what's up and may spend months looking for a hidden conspiracy that isn't there. It's also especially good if the player characters have devoted themselves to making Athas a better place to live.

### **Everyone Lives Happily Ever After... But Then!**

This is probably the ending most of the players will expect. The conference goes over pretty well. In the days and weeks that follow, Nibenay begins the painfully slow process of reconstruction. It looks as if everyone is going to get along and forge a new era of peace and happiness in Nibenay, just as in the previous finale. And then, when it seems like the golden age of Nibenay is a sure thing, someone reveals his or her master plan and attempts to seize control of the city. After that, life returns to normal and everyone is out to kill/betray/undermine everyone else.

If the players are conspiracy buffs, this is a good ending. It's especially useful if the players stumble upon the truth and have a chance to thwart the coup before it is pulled off.

### **Business as Usual**

This is the most probable ending. The meeting is called and quickly breaks down into an endless chain of threats, accusations, and lies. Each faction accuses the others of causing the disaster, and the attendants of the conference almost come to blows. Everyone goes his own way, and the factionalism in the city is as bad (or worse) as it ever was. In short, nobody learns anything from the terrible lesson they received. This leaves the door open for lots of carnage in the shattered city.



# Equinox

by William W. Connors

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The pounding of the drum hammered Djan's ears. In the thick gloom of the hold, wrapped in the oppressive desert heat, the sound seemed like the heartbeat of some distant creature. If he closed his eyes, Djan could imagine that this spectral menace loomed above him ready to strike. Indeed, when the taskmaster's lash periodically fell across his back to demand greater effort, the sensation from the strap of leather could have come from the talons of an unseen horror biting into his skin. Either way, the pain forced his attention back to his endless labors.

Keeping time with the drum's demanding pulse, Djan bent his will and body to the task of turning the great shaft before him. He pushed forward, knowing without having to look that the man on the bench beside him was drawing his section of the axle back at the same time. Their combined efforts were mirrored by another pair of men on a bench adjacent to the one Djan and his partner occupied. On the starboard side of the hold, four others mimicked their obedience to the pounding drum and commanding lash.

Each beat of the leather drum drove sixty men through this painful ritual an uncountable number of times each hour. Individually, none of the men in the hold had even a fraction of the strength needed to move the great battle wagon *Equinox*. Together, though, their combined effort drove the terrible craft across the wastes of Athas at considerable speed.





## Equinox

Djan had long ago given up trying to count the number of days, weeks, or months that had passed since his capture. Time had no meaning to a galley slave in the service of the Warlord of Raam. Each hour was like the next, and day and night nothing more than a slight change in the terrible heat that filled the air around him.

Djan had almost forgotten that there was life before his imprisonment. The days when he commanded *Dune Thunder*, a craft not unlike *Equinox*, seemed no more than a dream that offered dim reflections from some previous incarnation. If it were not for the fact that Djan did not believe in past lives, he might easily be persuaded that his memories were only dreams. Djan knew better, however. He knew he had been the master of a magnificent war wagon. He knew he had rolled across the deserts of Athas crushing the enemies of Nibenay as a man might swat away the gnats that circle him at an oasis. And by the Shadow King, he vowed he would do so again.

But there was a difference between his wagon and the one his back and arms now drove. *Dune Thunder* was powered not by a galley of slaves but by great sails that captured the wind and bent it to Djan's will. None of the battle wagons that served the Shadow King of Nibenay were driven by slaves. Among the ranks of the military there were many like Djan who believed the Shadow King had struck a bargain with the wind, for it never failed Nibenay's battle wagons when they were in peril.

Still, the reason for this lack of slaves was perhaps less noble than one might first assume. The soldiers of Nibenay had learned a long time ago that slaves were not loyal. The same strong arms that might propel the craft with great speed across the open desert would suddenly turn weary and frail when the craft entered battle. Certainly, the whip might restore some degree of motivation, but the loss could never be wholly overcome.

In addition, slaves often tried to escape, which was exactly what Djan and the deformed man beside him were planning to do. As the darkness in the galley grew, the drummer signaled for the wheels to stop, and the

taskmaster sent for food and drink to be brought for the slaves. Almost as one, the sixty men slumped forward across their portions of the great driving shafts. Careful not to attract the attention of the drummer, Djan whispered in the ear of the man chained at his side. "Did you get it?"

"Of course," came the hissed response.

Djan resisted the urge to slap the rogue for his disrespectful attitude. In addition to being hideously ugly, Kaarg was quite possibly the most unlikable person Djan had ever met. It seemed that he was incapable of holding even the briefest conversation without being offensive and vulgar. There was nothing to be done about it. A man had no say in who he must share a bench with in the galleys of Raam.

Moving slowly, the rogue drew something from the rags he wore, then slipped it carefully into Djan's hand. So confident and subtle were his actions that the drummer, staring just beyond them, didn't notice the exchange. As repulsive as he was, Kaarg was certainly skilled at his chosen profession of pickpocket and thief.

For the next few minutes, Djan and his companion said nothing. A young man brought a bucket of water and some dried rations around. Although the drink was bitter and the food almost inedible, it was no worse than the food Djan and the other slaves had survived on for well over a month.

After he ate, Djan turned his attention to the object in his hand. It was a metal disc, not large, he noted, and could be easily concealed. A slight bit of pressure and the circle parted, revealing a keen cutting edge. As a weapon, it would be almost useless, but as a utility knife, it would prove most helpful. Indeed, it was from one of *Equinox's* carpenters that Kaarg had obtained it. Certainly not with his knowledge or permission, of course; the rogue had palmed the small knife while the young soldier repaired a break in the bench ahead of Djan and Kaarg.

The drum sounded a return to work and Djan again began his labors. With each beat, he drove the axle forward and then drew it back. For several hours, he had no



thoughts but for his work and the whip that threatened to fall across his back at any moment.



Over the next few days, time regained its meaning. Where it had been nothing for so many weeks before, every second now seemed precious to Djan. During any unobserved second, Djan gradually chipped away the wood beside him. With each passing minute of his labor, the metal pin that anchored his bone manacles to the wall was slowly worked free.

At last, sometime during the third night, Djan gave a great pull on his chain. When the pin shifted, he tapped Kaarg on the shoulder and nodded. Silently, the rogue added his strength to Djan's and the pin popped out. Moving with great speed, Kaarg's arm shot forward and caught the tumbling clamp before it could clang on the deck and give away their plan. Djan sighed quietly in relief, thankful for the dexterity of the nimble rogue. In response, Kaarg sneered at him and shook his head in disgust.

Ignoring the thief, Djan pointed first at Kaarg and then at the taskmaster. Like the drummer at the front of the galley, he was sound asleep. The rogue nodded in acknowledgment of the silent orders, slipped quietly away from the bench, and set out for the back of the galley.

For his part, Djan moved forward and carefully sized up the drummer. Of their two keepers, he was by far the more dangerous—nothing less than a hulking mass of muscle. Even so, Djan doubted the man had the intelligence to do much more than pound out the beats commanded by the taskmaster.

Hearing the thief strike, Djan glanced back to watch Kaarg loop a length of bone chain around his victim's neck. With obvious delight, he twisted the shackles tight about the taskmaster's throat.

Sickened, Djan turned away from the rogue and saw that the mul drummer had awakened and was lumber-

ing toward him. Djan brought up the utility knife, painfully aware that the blade was all but worthless against the bestial mul.

With unexpected speed, the drummer swept a mighty arm out to slap the knife from Djan's hand. Stepping nimbly back, he let the mul's follow-through spin the beast around. Then Djan sprang upon his back. In one fluid motion, he swept the utility knife across the mul's throat, releasing a torrent of dark blood onto the wooden deck of the galley. For a second, it seemed that not even that deadly wound would bring the drummer down. At last his mighty knees buckled, and he fell.

Djan knelt beside the slain behemoth, gasping lungs full of the galley's choking air, then coughing it back out. He looked to the back of the hold and saw the rogue fishing quickly through the taskmaster's pockets. With a spartan motion, Kaarg yanked a wide bone ring into the air, and a number of iron keys danced upon the ivory loop. A smile found its way to Djan's face.

Working quickly, Kaarg began to move down the lines of benches. As he reached each one, he knelt wordlessly and unlocked the shackles of the men and women bound there. In short order, all of the galley slaves were standing and working their legs to restore long lost circulation.

"Did the taskmaster have a weapon?" Djan asked after Kaarg had finished his work.

For a moment, the thief seemed to consider the question carefully, as if afraid that his answer might betray too much information to a potential enemy. At last, he nodded and showed Djan a short punch dagger with a triangular blade of gleaming black obsidian. "That gives us just three weapons, the taskmaster's dagger and whip as well as my knife." Kaarg grunted in derision at their minute arsenal.

"If I might," came a hoarse but obviously female voice from behind them, "you have greatly underestimated our inventory."

Both Djan and Kaarg turned to face a dark, athletic woman who stood easily four inches taller than Djan's



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own six feet. Her eyes glinted like the blade of the taskmaster's obsidian dagger. The right half of her face was branded with the crimson triangle and crescent dagger known and feared as the sign of the templars of Raam.

At the sight of the templar, Kaarg cursed sharply and sprang to the attack. His slender arm drew back and then flashed forward, driving the punch dagger at her throat. With lightning reflexes, the woman dropped to one knee and thrust her shoulder below Kaarg's weapon and into his abdomen. Turning with the momentum of the rogue's charge, she sprang back up and sent him crashing against the galley wall.

Djan leapt forward to break up the fight, but by the time he reached the woman, it was over. Kaarg lay unconscious and showed no signs of waking up in the near future.

"As I was saying," she continued as if nothing had happened, "we also have the batons that the mul used to beat the drum and the shackles we all so recently wore. The former should prove serviceable cudgels and the latter excellent flails, wouldn't you agree Captain Djan?"

"You know me?" asked Djan suspiciously. In the sweltering confines of the galley, prisoners were seldom allowed to speak. Because of this, the only man in the galley that Djan knew was Kaarg. That another prisoner should know his name and former rank was more than a little shocking.

"My name is Belin," she said, "and I do indeed know you, Captain. It was my unit that assembled the information leading to the ambush of *Dune Thunder* . . . and to your own capture. Because we were unable to locate the other two members of your triad, though, I was accused of being lax in my duties. When an underling suggested that I had accepted a bribe in order to allow the other two craft to escape, I was stripped of my powers, rank, and social position. I understand if you do not trust me, but I can assure you of my loyalty."

Djan considered the issue and decided that this was no time to be overly selective in his allies. He held out

his hand to Belin and they clasped forearms in agreement.

"Someone wake up the rogue," Djan said in the almost-forgotten voice of command he had used when aboard *Thunder*. "We're sure to be discovered soon if we don't get to work."



A stiff wind swept across the desert, catching the smoke from the great funeral pyre and carrying it back across the newly taken *Equinox*. From his position at the helm, Djan looked out over the great battle wagon. With the help of Kaarg's skills and the information supplied by Belin, the coup had gone very well. Moving out in darkness, the slaves had completely surprised the crew. By the time the bloated sun breached the eastern horizon, *Equinox* was taken. Now, hours later, Djan stood alone atop the great forecastle of the mighty war wagon.

A slender silhouette moved gracefully up the ladder from the main deck, then approached Djan. As it reached him, the shadow's features became visible, and Djan recognized it as Kendium, one of a dozen elves who had shared his torment in the service of the Warlord of Raam.

"My kin and I owe you a great debt," said the desert runner, "In the months since we were taken by the army of Raam, I had all but forgotten the bracing smell of the desert air and the beauty of the endless sands."

"I'm glad I could help you, Kendium, but I have to admit that I didn't have anyone else's interest in mind when I started the escape. Besides, Kaarg was the one who got hold of the knife. Without him, we'd all be turning wheels this morning."

Kendium nodded somberly. "I suppose that we all owe Kaarg a debt as well, but I find it difficult to show gratitude to someone like him. You, on the other hand, are a man of honor."

"Thank you, Kendium, I've always strived to be so. Mine is a noble family with a long and great history."



"Indeed, yours is a name known even among the desert runners."

For a moment the two men stood side by side watching the repair crews work on the areas of the wagon damaged during the slave revolt, but neither spoke. At last, Kendium broke the silence. "It will be at least two days before *Equinox* will be repaired. What are your plans when that is done?"

"I've given that a lot of thought," Djan answered. "As soon as the repairs are done, we'll set our course for Nibenay. Most of the men and women in the hold had once belonged to my crew or to the Army of Nibenay. All of us want to return to the city and our duties as soon as possible. Of the others, such as Kaarg, most were criminals tried and convicted in the courts of Raam. I've offered them places in my crew or, at the least, their freedom when we reach Nibenay. Belin is a special case, as are you and your kin. Any suggestions?"

"My kin and I long to be reunited with our tribe. As soon as we see you and the others safely to Nibenay, we will return to the desert."

"You're free to go now, Kendium, with whatever supplies or spoils you want to take," said Djan.

"I know that," nodded the elf. "As I have said, though, we owe you a debt. I will see you to Nibenay or our bones will lie together in the sands."

"I won't argue, Kendium. Your people are a welcome addition to our forces. I can't imagine better scouts than elves."



The sun had fallen below the horizon hours before a wash of brilliant stars spread feeble light across the deserts of Athas. It would be another two hours before the first of the twin moons rose. Cloaked by this almost total darkness, a shadow darted across the deck of the battle wagon. Moving from one patch of ebony darkness to another, it passed unseen and unheard between the bodies of sleeping men and women.

With only a hint of delay, the dark form opened a narrow door and slipped through to the chart room beyond. Closing the door, the shadow ran slender fingers along the side of a broad table until a smoothly disguised panel was found and removed. A small crystal disc was pulled from the small recess behind the panel, and a wan blue light spilled into the windowless room. Gradually, a misty face formed on the surface of the crystal, and the silhouette spoke in a hushed, guarded voice.

"Listen carefully, I am aboard the battle wagon *Equinox*, and I have something very important to tell you."



"That's it, Captain," said Belin in a satisfied tone. "The last of the repairs are completed, and *Equinox* is ready to travel."

Djan breathed a sigh of relief. Over the last few days he had spent every waking hour worried that the wagon would be discovered and attacked. The sooner he could start the mighty machine on its way to Nibenay the better.

With a nod, he acknowledged the templar's report and offered her a smile, which seemed lost on her stern features. "As soon as Kendium and his patrol return, we'll get underway," he said.

"You might as well give the orders now," she answered with a motion toward the badlands beyond *Equinox's* bow.

Djan turned and raised a hand to shield his eyes from the blistering sun. Although it took him a few minutes to spot them, he soon saw a cluster of elves trotting toward the wagon. They were moving slower and raising more dust than was usual for the desert runners, he thought, and then noticed that they were not alone.

Squinting, he saw that they were followed by a trio of riders perched atop crodlu. Each of them wore leather hauberks and dun cloaks with hoods raised to protect them from the sun. The two trailing riders had their





## Equinox

lances out, but raised into the air and capped with scarlet banners—an indication that they were neither prisoners nor enemies. All of this Djan noticed later, however. The first thing that he saw was the pennant streaming from the leader's lance. No other sight could have been more welcome to his eyes, for the riders traveled under the resplendent sign of the Shadow King Nibenay himself.

Calling to Belin to follow him, he dashed away from the helm and down to the deck. As the templar hurried after him, Djan shouted an order for the colors to be raised. Men moved quickly to obey, and while the riders and their elven escorts drew near *Equinox*, a triangular flag was run up a slender pole that jutted out of the great wagon. The wind caught it quickly, and it snapped out to full length. Though crudely manufactured from materials found aboard the wagon, there could be no doubt that it too was the sign of the great Army of Nibenay.

No sooner had the first flag been unfurled than two more ran up on lesser shafts to its left and right. One was the azure and silver of Djan's noble family; the other was the distinctive black and red mark of Kendium's tribe. The former was traditionally raised to honor the master of any craft in the Army of Nibenay; the other paid respect to the elves who had sworn to see *Equinox* safely to Nibenay.

With the raising of the second set of standards, the riders and elves reached the wagon. A rope ladder was dropped over the side and the traveler's scampered up to the deck.

"This is a welcome sight indeed, Kendium!" cried Djan as he clasped forearms with the riders from Nibenay. "Have you told them our story?"

The elf nodded. "Djan, this woman is Lieutenant Arna. She has news of your city that will distress you."

Arna stepped forward and bowed her head in respect of Djan's higher rank. She offered her congratulations on his capture of *Equinox* as the company made its to Djan's cabin. Once inside, she looked around the room as if trying to think of something to say. Three times she

started to speak, then stopped. At last she sighed and plunged into her story.

"Nibenay has been destroyed," she said. "A great earthquake and a rain of fire has left the city ruined. Food stores are all but depleted, and the reservoirs have been poisoned. We are one of many triads sent out to seek aid from the merchants and traders of the region."

Djan sat stunned for a moment, unable to accept Arna's words as true.

Belin placed a comforting hand on his shoulder.

Kendium offered him a nod of compassion and said "My people will do whatever we can."

Years of training and experience took hold. Djan snapped quickly to his feet and turned to Belin. "Tell Kaarg to have the prisoners in the galley make ready, we're getting underway at once."

"We are making for Nibenay?" she asked.

"No. Kendium will set our course." Djan smiled.

"I will?" asked the startled elf.

Djan nodded and placed a conspiratorial hand on Kendium's shoulder. "You told me that you were captured when your people raided a grain caravan bound for Raam from one of her outposts, isn't that right?"

"It is," said the elf, smiling as he began to see what Djan had in mind.

"Then lead us there, my friend, you're going to get a second chance at those caravans."



*Equinox* rolled through the half darkness of an Athasian night. Propelled now by those who had once been her masters, the wagon rumbled along lighted by the twin moons of Athas. One a pale pink and the other a wispy violet, the moons drifted above the rumbling wagon like great eyes watching its travels.

Beneath the moonlit deck, a dark figure closed the wooden door to a cabin that was hardly large enough to lie down in. A velvet bag was slipped from a concealed pocket and once again the shimmering light of a magical



crystal shone. For a moment, the crystal remained dark-some, but then a murky, distorted face became visible.

"We are moving," said the shadowed figure, "toward the caravan route near Burning Spear."



"How are the prisoners holding out?" Djan asked.

"Does it matter?" spat Kaarg. "We'll get to Nibenay on their backs, which isn't a tenth the distance they traveled on ours."

"Good enough. Keep driving them."

"I will, Captain. Don't you worry about that," the rogue said with a grin.

Djan was impressed at how well Kaarg had taken to his assignment as Master of the Galley. He wasn't certain he would want to see the ugly little man working, however, for Kaarg seemed to be every bit as sadistic as the man he had replaced.

Djan was spared the need to continue conversation with the thief; a crew member announced an elf scout's return to the wagon. By the time he scampered up to the deck, Kendium and Djan were waiting to hear his report. Both smiled and clasped hands in anticipation as the scout reported that the caravan had been sighted. Each wagon of the three wagons was full of grain and drawn by a brace of lumbering, beetlelike mekillots. They would be easy targets. None of their weapons would be able to harm a war craft like *Equinox*, and it was doubtful that they would even put up a fight when they saw the nature of their enemy.

"Once we take the caravan, we're only a few days' travel from Nibenay," Djan said to the elf leader. "With luck, you'll be back with your tribe in very short order."

"I can think of nothing I would like better, Captain Djan," allowed Kendium.

Djan issued the call to battle stations, and his crew-veterans and newcomers alike—sprang to action. Belin joined him as Kendium vanished over the side of the wagon to gather the remaining scouts. If the merchants

resisted and battle followed, every hand would be needed aboard *Equinox*.

"You look troubled," said Belin.

"Well, I'm sure it's nothing, but the scouts reported that there were three wagons."

"So?" asked Belin, tilting her head slightly and shrugging one shoulder. "Were you hoping for more?"

"No, less. Kendium told me that there would only be two wagons."

"I wouldn't worry about that, my Captain," said Belin. "Harvests have been good recently. It seems not unusual that additional wagons should be needed to transport the plentiful crop."

"I suppose not," said Djan, "and there's nothing to do about it at this point. We'll catch them as they clear that massive outcropping of rock."

"I believe it's called the Burning Spear," said Belin.

Djan said nothing, but nodded in agreement. The name suited the great vertical shaft of stone.

Minutes later, the first of the wagons came into view. Djan gave the order to attack, and the haunting notes of the charge were sounded. Although he couldn't hear it from his place near the helm, Djan knew that the drummer would have begun to pound out a rapid beat in the galley. He could almost see a cruel smile on the twisted face of Kaarg as he lit into the prisoners with his whip.

Much to Djan's surprise, the master of the first wagon did not strike his colors when he saw the hulking shape of *Equinox* bearing down on him. Instead, he ordered his craft to swing left and stop. As he did this, the second wagon rolled past him and fanned off to the right. As the second wagon also rolled to a halt, the third craft came up between them and cut free the team of mekillots that drew it. With greater speed than its momentum could have provided, it pulled ahead of the other two craft and made its way across *Equinox's* path. As it passed before him, Djan saw that he faced a disguised war wagon, now clearly identified as *Eclipse*.

Djan cursed, suddenly aware that he had made a terrible mistake. As he ordered the helmsman to turn parallel



## Equinox

to the wagon, wooden panels fell open along *Eclipse's* length. As one, a dozen ballistae fired, and a volley of flaming spears crashed into the side of his wagon.

Djan gave the order to return fire, but the shock of the sudden attack showed clearly in the scattered salvo they produced. Most of the spears either passed above the target or fell to the ground short. Only two of the ten spears struck home, and those merely embedded themselves in the hull.

Djan called for fire control parties to extinguish the blazes that had sprung up around *Equinox*. As the crew dashed to carry out his orders, he cursed the luck that had seen him escape from the hold only to run into an ambush. He could imagine the cries of delight springing up in the galley as the prisoners saw their countrymen turn the tables on the men who had taken their ship.

The wagons exchanged another round of flaming spears, this time at closer range and accompanied with a shower of fire from archers on the deck. When Djan looked down and saw the dead and wounded among his crew, he bowed his head in defeat. Try as they might, his crew was far too small and inexperienced to compete with these attackers.

Belin seemed to know what he was thinking. She also lowered her head in respect for the dead. "Shall I strike the colors?" she asked in a hushed voice.

"No," said Djan, "we'll try to get away. *Eclipse* is carrying a lot more weight than we are, especially with all those false panels and structures on her deck. Order the drummer to step up the beat and let's make for open desert."

As the crew hurried to obey, Belin stepped closer to her captain. "I hope you know what you're doing," she whispered.

"Me too," Djan smiled. "Why don't you go below and let the rear gunners know that I want some harassing fire laid down to cover our retreat."

"Of course," said Belin.



The drummer sounded his fastest pace, and the encouragement of Kaarg and his assistants saw to it that the former crew of *Equinox* obeyed. Somehow the hold didn't seem as terrible a place when the rogue was giving the orders instead of taking them. He smiled as he swept his lash across the back of a slacking prisoner, then howled out a frightful promise to all similar workers.

As he drew back his arm to strike again, Kaarg realized that something was wrong. He cocked his head to the side and tried to figure out what it was.

Certainly, everything looked all right. He even took a second to examine the pins that held the nearest prisoners to their benches. After all, that was how Djan had engineered their escape, so why shouldn't the same idea occur to others? Still, try as he might, he saw nothing out of the ordinary.

Kaarg's concentration was broken by the sharp crack of a whip on the shoulders of the prisoner nearest him. Lost as he was in concentration, he involuntarily flinched at the memory of the many times he had felt the sting of the lash himself. For a brief second, he felt as if he were back on the bench beside that man. The welts on his back throbbed, and the memory of the wagon's endless rumbling filled his senses.

That was it: the cacophony of *Equinox's* wheels thundering across the ground.

In the months he had spent turning the axles of this mighty wagon, he had come to know that sound well. But now, it was different. There was a new element to the clamor around him, something that had been missing before. A mechanical clattering that he couldn't place.

With a sudden realization, Kaarg turned and darted through the door out of the galley. Beyond, he found the access way to the upper decks and a panel set into the wall. On the other side of the small wooden hatch, he knew, was passage to the steering mechanism. Looking carefully, he saw that the hatch was not secured. Someone had recently opened it, increasing the noise of the great wheels ever so slightly. Kaarg yanked the panel back and ducked inside.



Moving silently, he drew out his dagger and started down the crawlway. At its end, the narrow passage opened into a larger chamber with a wide hole in its floor. Here, a pair of wooden shafts ran up through the ceiling to the wheel on the deck of the wagon. At the base of these shafts was a complex pivot mechanism that translated turns of the wheel on deck into a shift of the front wheels left or right. Below the almost arcane mechanism, four jointed rods ran down to the guide wheels through an opening some three feet wide and six feet long. Outside, the ground flashed by rapidly, and the rumbling of the wagon's wheels was like thunder.

Standing next to the pivot mechanism, Kaarg saw a tall, athletic figure pouring some green liquid onto the intricate device. At the first touch of the fluid, white vapor began to boil into the air. Reacting quickly, he cocked back an arm and threw his dagger.

The blade completed exactly one and a half revolutions in the air before sinking itself into Belin's back. Gasping in pain, she whirled about and saw her attacker.

"I should have killed you in the hold," she spat, a trickle of blood running out the side of her parted lips. Her own knife seemed to appear in her hand from nowhere and she lunged at the rogue.

Startled that the dagger wound had not proven fatal, Kaarg was slow to defend himself, and Belin cut him badly along his ribs. The wound burned like fire, and blood soaked into his coarse tunic. As he tried to shake the fog of pain from his head, Kaarg found himself caught up in Belin's muscular arms. Even badly wounded, her strength was incredible. As she began to squeeze, he found it impossible to breathe and felt his ribs crushed to the verge of breaking. The pain from his wound and the pressure she applied to it were incredible. Kaarg doubted that he could remain conscious for long.

Suddenly, a loud crack cut through the air, a sound as sharp as the snap of Kaarg's own whip in the galley. The pivot mechanism had failed, no doubt a result of Belin's sabotage. Almost as if it had exploded, the

thing flew apart, showing the chamber with splinters and fragments.

Belin gasped in surprise at the sudden noise and momentarily slackened her grip on Kaarg. At that, the rogue kicked out with one foot, pushed off the wall, and forced Belin off balance. She took a staggering step, found no floor beneath her, and the two fell through the opening below to be crushed beneath *Equinox's* great wheels.



"I don't like running into this canyon," complained Djan. "It's the perfect place for an ambush."

"Another ambush, you mean?" said Kendium with what passed for a grin. Djan saw the irony of his complaint and nodded. "This area has long been hunted by my tribe," the elf continued. "I know it as well as any living creature. Once we clear this length of canyon, we'll find ourselves in flat, open terrain. I don't see any way that *Eclipse* can overtake us once we reach there."

Djan nodded. After the failed attack on the grain wagons, it was nice to think that something would go right today. If they escaped, at least they would be able to return to Nibenay and make some lesser contribution to the reconstruction of the city.

Without warning, the steering mechanism of the mighty *Equinox* shuddered, shrieked, and failed. The helmsman's wheel assembly fairly exploded in his hands, causing him to cry out in agony as the bones in his left arm shattered.

Far below, the leading axle buckled back on itself and the nose of the battle wagon crashed into the rocky terrain. Almost at once, the craft slipped sideways, scraped along the wall of the canyon, and came to a stop. It teetered to one side before crashing back down on its wheel carriage and crushing it. Timbers groaned and buckled throughout the wagon's frame.

Djan found himself lying on his back and looking up along the great stone walls that stretched high above his





## Equinox

shattered war wagon. He tried to get quickly back to his feet but found that his right arm was broken and numb. Pulling himself up with his left he discovered that a long splinter of wood had been driven into his right thigh. It was all he could do to hobble over to the aft railing and look out across the deck of the wagon.

All of his crew were shocked, and most were injured. Some, like himself, showed signs of getting back to their feet despite severe injuries. Others lay still, either unconscious or dead. The fires that had been almost under control were now spreading again. It seemed unlikely that the dazed and demoralized members of his command would be able to extinguish them now.

Some distance behind the crippled *Equinox*, the massive shape of *Eclipse* was bearing down on him.

It was obvious to Djan that he had no choice. The battle was lost; escape was impossible. They would soon fall victim to the mercies of the warlord's justice, a fate he had experienced once and had no wish to repeat. Fortunately, he thought, he wouldn't have to return to the hold of a slave ship. A prisoner with a broken arm and badly injured leg would simply be killed. At least the uninjured crew members would survive, Djan thought, but he couldn't say who would be luckier.

Djan looked around for Belin, but she was not to be found. Remembering that he had sent her below, he hoped she hadn't been killed or injured in the crash. There was something about her that he liked, although that didn't matter very much at this moment. He leaned over the railing and looked across the wounded and stunned men scattered about the deck. There was no chance now.

In a loud voice, he called for the colors to be struck. Several of the novice crewman looked about in confusion, not fully understanding the order. One of the older men on the deck, a member of Djan's former crew aboard *Dune Thunder*, acknowledged the command stiffly, however, and pulled down the three standards that hung limp behind the unmoving craft.

With that done, Djan's energies fled from him. He made his way across to the other side of the deck and looked out over the broken terrain at *Eclipse*. Curiously, she showed no sign of slowing her charge. Certainly the captain could see that Djan had lowered his flags and was admitting defeat. Why didn't he assume a less aggressive posture? This full-speed approach made no sense . . . unless their surrender wasn't going to be accepted.

Even as that thought entered Djan's head, the forward ballistae on *Eclipse* fired. This time, however, they were not loaded with the flaming spears used earlier in the battle. Instead, a salvo of arrows raced through the air and showered down upon the wounded and shaken crew on the deck. Ten men fell beneath the barrage, half of them obviously dead.

Djan called for the attack to be sounded, saw that the young man who had been charged with the signals was lying dead with an arrow in his throat, and scooped up the ivory horn himself. Djan sounded the attack, an ominous call that might well have been the enraged cry of a desert beast.

In response, a staggered volley of spears sprang away from *Equinox*. With the great wagon resting crookedly upon a shattered wheel carriage, it was impossible for the few surviving gunners to make precise shots. The attack was all but useless.

Djan looked around for anything that he might turn to his advantage, but saw nothing. The flight of *Equinox* had taken them down a narrow canyon that Kendium assured him would lead to safety. He was almost certainly right—the elf never seemed to be wrong about anything—but they would never live to find that out now.

As he looked up at the sliver of blue sky overhead, a dozen great silhouettes sprang from the edges of the canyon. Huge birds, their great batlike wings spread wide, suddenly filled the air. Djan was so puzzled by the strange sight that he almost forgot the battle around him. If these were scavengers who had designs on the bodies of



the dead, there would certainly be more than enough food for them here.

Djan watched, almost hypnotized, as the leading bird swooped into a graceful spiral, then slipped into a gradual dive that would take it right above *Equinox* and on toward *Eclipse*. Others in his crew had begun to notice the strange flock that filled the air, and a macabre silence spread across the deck. Even the wounded seemed to forget their pain as these silent things drifted through the air above.

The first of the creatures swept above *Equinox*, and Djan saw that it was not what he had thought. These were not birds, but elves who hung beneath great frameworks of leather and bone. Indeed, they were not only elves, but members of Kendium's tribe, as shown by the black and silver mark on their framework wings.

As the first elf neared *Eclipse* he pulled up, losing some speed but gaining altitude, and released a sphere. It looked to Djan as if this great bird had suddenly laid an egg. With delicate precision, the object tumbled to the deck of the charging wagon and shattered. Flames exploded from the point of impact, quickly spreading across the wagon. Within a minute, three other eggs struck the craft and the entire thing was engulfed in dancing flames.

A cheer sprang up among the crew. Djan realized with some surprise that Kendium was standing beside him laughing. "Your tribe, I assume?"

"Indeed," Kendium replied with a grin. "They must have seen that we flew my standard as well as yours and that of your king. When it became clear that we needed help, they responded." Placing an arm around the wounded Djan, Kendium motioned to the dead and dying on the twisted deck of the wrecked *Equinox*. "I'm only sorry that they did not arrive sooner, Captain Djan."

"I'm just grateful that they didn't arrive later."

For once in their lives, Kendium and his followers did not run as they moved across the deserts south of Nibenay. Instead, they held themselves back and walked at Djan's pace. Even if he had been healthy, his pace would have been agonizingly slow for the elves. The fact that his leg was stiff and bandaged, however, made the elves feel that they were crawling. At last, Kendium stepped over to the noble and the two clasped forearms.

"My kin long to be away, Djan," the elf said politely.

"And I have a great deal of work to do back in the city, Kendium. Still, I wanted to see you safely out of the city and have a chance to say good-bye in a place that didn't smell of the dead."

"I understand, my friend," said the elf. He too had hoped to part company with Djan outside of the ruined city and its shattered walls.

"Thanks again for your help," Djan said. "We'd never have taken those two grain freighters without you. A lot of lives were saved by the food we brought in."

"Think nothing of it, Djan," said Kendium. "My brothers and I would still be driving that foul wagon if it weren't for you. Return now to your people as I return to mine. Rebuild their homes and help them to begin their lives again. And don't fear the Warlord of Raam. If he attempts to strike at Nibenay while it heals its wounds, we will see him."

Djan nodded silently. Kendium stepped away and bowed his head slightly. Without another word, the elf and his folk sprinted away, moving into the desert with a speed that Djan could not have matched even in his prime. He watched until even the faint dust cloud that they kicked up was gone.

Once again, he felt the call of the desert and wished he could follow the wild elves. But that could not be; the city needed him. Djan, who had arrived with food when the city was about to starve, was being called hero by nobles and slaves alike. Now it was time for the hero, who had lived as both noble and slave, to see to it that some things changed in Nibenay.





## Nonplayer Characters

**Leaza**

**Human Female**

**Templar**

**5th level**

**Neutral evil**

Str 12      Int 14  
Dex 17      Wis 17  
Con 16      Cha 16

hp: 22

AC: 10 (7)

#AT: 1

THAC0: 18

Dmg: 2d4 (Bone khopesh)



**Spells:** (1st) *endure heat, command, light*; (2nd) *flame blade, hold person*

Leaza was born just shy of 30 years ago. Her father was an artist known throughout the city for his masterful sculpting technique. Her mother was a half-elf trader who dealt in the rarest of gemstones and often found specific stones to complement her husband's work.

As Leaza grew, she learned the importance of hard work from her mother and acquired an understanding of fine art from her father. While both of these factors have helped her to become the successful woman that she is, the dominant factor in her life was the example of public service set by her aunt, a templar-wife name Mahlika.

When Leaza reached adulthood, she left home and entered the service of Nibenay. Under the careful guidance of her aunt, the young girl learned her duties quickly. It was no surprise to anyone that she soon mastered the required skills and was assigned a place in the service of the city and its mysterious Shadow King.

For the last few years, Leaza has worked with her aunt to uncover the city's Veiled Alliance. The task has been difficult, and she has had both success and failure.

Just over two years ago, Mahlika and Leaza stumbled upon a band of terrorists from Gulg working with the Veiled Alliance. They destroyed the outsiders and dealt a serious blow to the Alliance as well. In the process, however, Leaza's aunt was killed.

In the time since then, Leaza has become one of Nibenay's best operatives. She has been unstoppable in her pursuit of the Alliance and her dedication to its destruction has been almost fanatical. She believes that the key to her success as a templar lies in the absolute destruction of the Alliance.

**Johrd**

**Human Male**

**Preserver**

**8th level**

**Lawful good**

Str 9      Int 17  
Dex 10      Wis 15  
Con 12      Cha 12

hp: 20

AC: 10

#AT: 1

THAC0: 18

Dmg: 1d4 (Bone dagger)



**Spells:** (1st) *burning hands, hold portal, sleep, spider climb*; (2nd) *alter self, invisibility, web*; (3rd) *fireball, hold person, wraithform*; (4th) *fear, improved invisibility*

Few men are as devoted to the cause of the Veiled Alliance as Johrd. When his parents were killed, members of the Alliance took him in and raised him as their own child. His entire upbringing has been one of encouragement and learning. Magic came easily to him, and he was one of the youngest Preservers ever to take

## Nonplayer Characters



the oaths that bound him forever to the service of the mystical order.

Having both a keen intelligence and a natural cunning that few can match, Johrd has spent many years protecting the Veiled Alliance from the sorcerer-king's attempts to destroy it. He has recently been warning the other members of the Alliance that the Shadow King was planning something big, but they didn't take him seriously. As such, he has been forced to take a number of actions without the approval of the Alliance's leaders.

Johrd is not a violent man. Indeed, he takes every step to prevent violence whenever he can. He does recognize that force must sometimes be used to accomplish an important goal, but he will always attempt to find another path when he can.

When disaster sweeps the city in this adventure, Johrd's first thought is for his order. He sees this as a chance for people to see the Alliance as a group of people who want to use their powers for good and the betterment of everyone's life. He is far too smart to think that he can bring the Alliance out into the open, but he does think that things can change for the better in the wake of the catastrophe.

### Temmnya Shom

#### Human Female Defiler

15th level

Neutral Evil

Str 10	Int 20
Dex 11	Wis 13
Con 16	Cha 19

hp: 38

AC: 10

#AT: 1

THAC0: 16

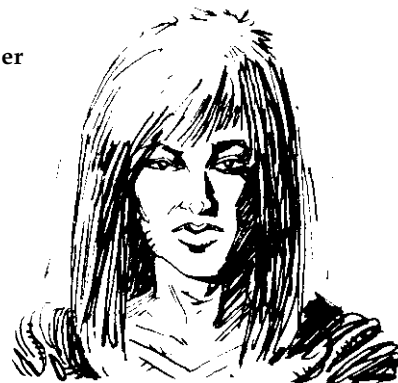
Dmg: 1d4 (Bronze dirk)

**Psionics:** PSPs 101, Aura Sight (PS Wis -5; Cost 9+9/round)

**Spells:** (1st) *audible glamer*, *magic missile* (x3), *phantasmal force*; (2nd) *darkness* -15' radius, *flaming sphere*, *invisibility*, *knock*, *spectral hand*; (3rd) *dispel magic*, *fireball* (x2), *hold person*, *vampiric touch*; (4th) *confusion*, *extension I*, *magic mirror*, *phantasmal killer*, *transmute stone to sand*; (5th) *cloudkill*, *dismissal*, *dream*, *feblemind*, *passwall*; (6th) *invisible stalker*, *shades*; (7th) *spell turning*.

Temmnya is the eldest daughter of the great merchant Giovvo Shom. She is a beautiful, charismatic, and highly intelligent woman. Unfortunately, she is also greedy, manipulative, and hedonistic. In any situation, she thinks first of her own physical pleasure and personal satisfaction. She has a reputation throughout the Tyr region for throwing some of the most expensive, decadent parties ever seen.

In addition to her reputation as a hedonist, Temmnya is also something of a temptress. She is fond of dressing in a sultry, revealing clothes and then humiliating suitors she considers to be below her stature. Those she does accept as lovers will generally find themselves used







## Nonplayer Characters

and forgotten within a matter of days, for her attentions are flighty at best.

While Temmnya can certainly project a front of concern and compassion, she is thoroughly evil. She generally keeps her magical powers secret and uses them to humiliate or injure enemies. In the course of this adventure, it is quite possible that she will either take an interest in or be offended by one of the player characters. If this happens, the PCs can certainly expect to have dealings with her in the future.

### Pahleek

**Human Male Psionicist**

**7th level**

**Lawful Good**

Str 14            Int 17

Dex 13           Wis 17

Con 16           Cha 12

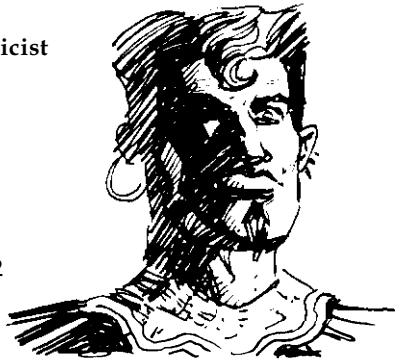
hp: 30

AC: 10

#AT: 1

THAC0: 17

Dmg: 1d4 (Bone dagger)



Pahleek is member of Nibenay's School of Augers. He is one of the most valued assistants of Djef, the dwarf who heads that collection of psionics. In this and other adventures, he can serve as a go-between for those wishing to do business with the Augers.

Pahleek was born to a Jeana, a powerful psionicist from another world, while she was traveling through the planes. Shortly after he was born, his mother was attacked by a terrible host of fiends. Only Jeana's great mental powers saved their lives. While the creatures massed for a second assault, she opened a portal to the Prime Material Plane so that she and her son could escape.

That portal brought her to Athas, where she met and fell in love with a freelance gladiator named Bohrik. Together, Jeana and Bohrik were quite happy and lived together for many years before the harsh Athasian climate claimed the outlander. Bohrik adopted Pahleek and retired from the arena.

Years later, Bohrik died and Pahleek moved to Nibenay. There, he met Djef and the two became close friends. Now, he is one of the most important men in the School of Augers and, thus, in the city of Nibenay itself.

**Psionics Summary:** PSPs 99

**Dis/Sci/Dev**

3/4/12

**Attack/Defense**

Nil/M-, TS, MB, IF

**Clairsentience—Sciences:** Object Reading; Devotions: Danger Sense, Know Direction, Poison Sense, Spirit Sense

**Psychokinesis—Sciences:** Detonate; Devotions: Animate Shadow, Inertial Barrier, Levitation, Soften

**Psychoportation—Sciences:** Banishment; Devotions: Dream Travel

## Nonplayer Characters



**Kayardi Drasad**

**Human Male**

**Psionicist**

**5th level**

**Neutral evil**

Str 12      Int 15  
Dex 13      Wis 17  
Con 18      Cha 10



hp: 28

AC: 10 (8)

#AT: 1

THAC0: 17

Dmg: 1d4 (Bone dagger)

**Psionics Summary:** PSPs 75

**Dis/Sci/Dev**

2/3/10

**Attack/Defense**

EW/MB, IF TS

**Telepathy—Sciences:** Domination, Ejection; **Devotions:** Awe, Contact, Ego Whip, Daydream, ESP Life Detection, Invisibility, Repugnance, Intellect Fortress, Mind Blank, Thought Shield

**Metapsionics—Sciences:** Ultrablast; **Devotions:** Psionic Sense, Psychic Drain

Kayardi is the assistant of Thong Nal, master of the monks of the Exalted Path. He is secretly a member of The Order. He has used his great mental powers to become Thong Nal's master and is the de facto head of the Exalted Path.

While Kayardi's parents were slaves in the service of a noble family in Nibenay, he vowed to be something more. At an early age, he discovered that he had an unnaturally talented mind and quickly developed his gifts until he could actually control the actions of others.

As the years flowed by, Kayardi continued to train his mind until the noble family that had been his masters were really nothing more than his puppets. When his parents died, he took out his grief on the nobles and left their household shattered. He claimed their wealth for his own and attributed their deaths to assassins from the city of Gulg.

Confused and alone for the first time in his life, Kayardi found his way to the Exalted Path and joined their ranks. While he had hoped to find friendship and acceptance, he soon became convinced that he was meant to rule them. As he gradually gained power and authority within the Exalted Path, he came into contact with members of The Order and joined that covert organization.

In recent years, Kayardi's peers in The Order have begun to look upon his desire for power as dangerous. They fear that he may even turn against them. To date, no action has been taken against the ambitious ex-slave, but that may not be the case for much longer.



## Nonplayer Characters

**Ahli Kiaka**  
**Human Female Warrior**  
**7th level**  
**Lawful Good**

Str 10      Int 14  
Dex 13      Wis 15  
Con 11      Cha 16

hp: 30  
AC: 10  
#AT: 1  
THAC0: 14  
Dmg: 1d6 (Bone short sword)



Ahli is one of the city's most influential nobles. She is said to be one of the few who can actually call the sorcerer-king a friend. How this relationship came about, none can say. For her part, Ahli is reluctant to discuss the matter, dismissing it as "just one of those things."

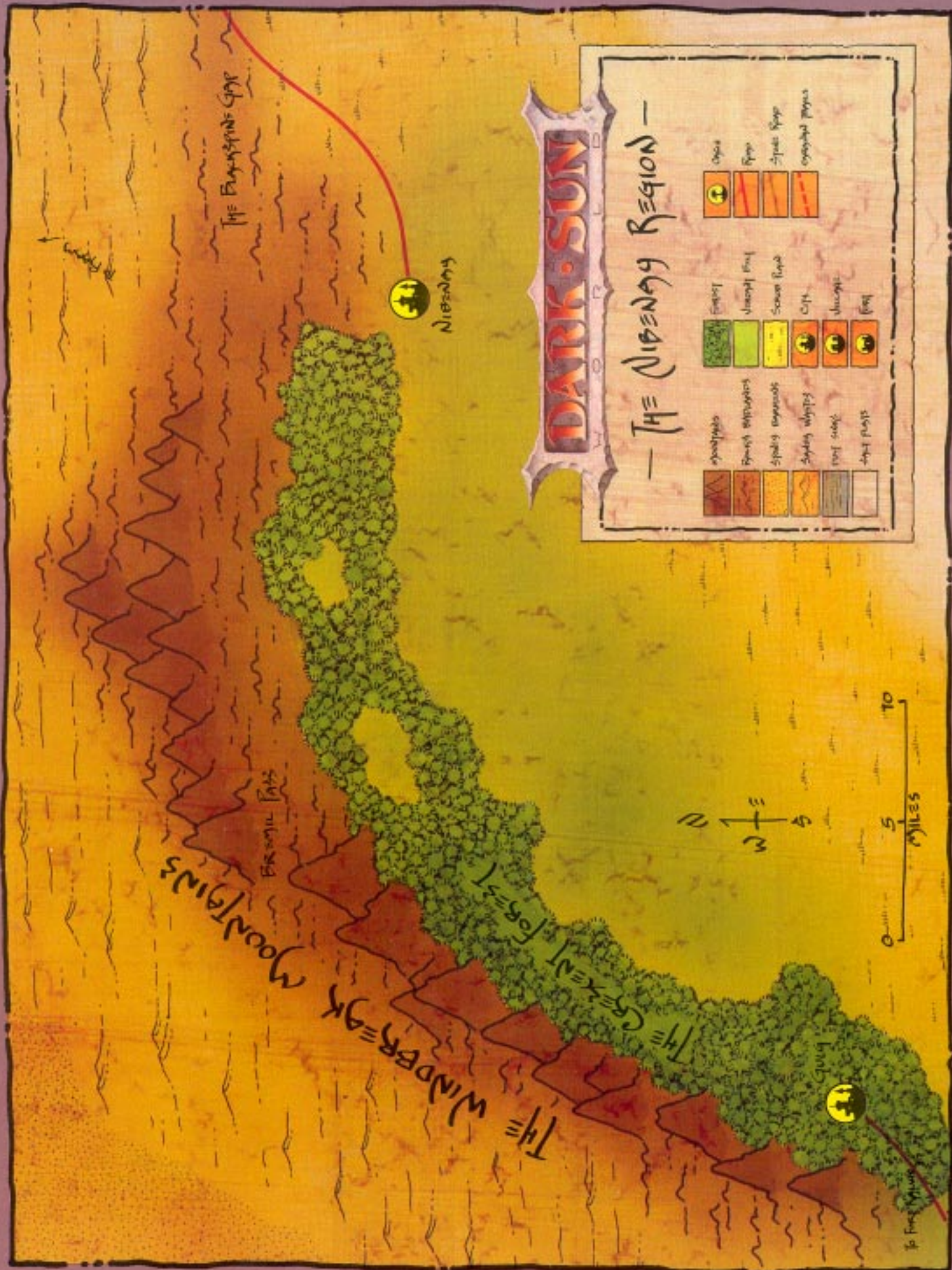
The Kiaka family has lived in Nibenay since the founding of the city. While not the wealthiest of clans,

they are certainly comfortable and want for nothing. They keep a large stock of slaves who are primarily used to maintain their estate and to tend their hot spring in the Plain of Burning Waters. It is well known that slaves bearing the Kiaka brand are generally happy and content, for their masters are a fair and just lot.

It has been almost 20 years since Ahli's parents died, leaving the estate in the care of their eldest daughter. Ahli has worked hard to maintain the family's place in Nibenay, obviously with great success.

Ahli regularly meets with Nibenay himself within the confines of the Green Sanctum near the heart of the Naggaramakam. When these meetings take place, generally once or twice a year, he asks her impressions of recent events and generally tries to understand the point of view of one of his subjects. She knows Nibenay's true form and is both repulsed and fascinated by the transformation that he appears to be undergoing. She has also met the Priest Child, whose unnaturally silent nature scares her. She has sworn an oath of secrecy about these meetings and will reveal nothing of them to the player characters.

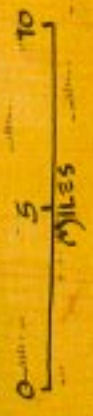
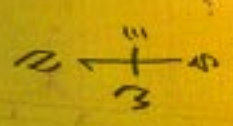




# DARK SUN

## — THE NIBENAY REGION —

	mountains		forests		cities
	hills		marshes		temples
	plains		deserts		ruins
	lowlands		swamps		shrines
	lowlands		lowlands		shrines
	lowlands		lowlands		shrines
	lowlands		lowlands		shrines
	lowlands		lowlands		shrines
	lowlands		lowlands		shrines
	lowlands		lowlands		shrines



The Windbreak Mountains

Bramble Pass

The Greenest Forest

The Flaming Spine Spire

Nibenay

To Frenz Village



## How to Use Marauders of Nibenay

This module has been designed in the flipbook format, a style of adventure construction unique to the DARK SUN® game line. A flipbook adventure is composed of three parts: two 48-page spiral-bound books and a 16-page booklet that contains a short story set in the DARK SUN universe.

One of the spiral-bound books contains the adventure itself and is used by the DUNGEON MASTER™ during play. The *Player's Book* is used as a visual reference by the players during the game. The story book is intended as a reference work and may or may not come into use during actual play.

### Using the DUNGEON MASTER™ Book

The adventure begins on the fifth page of the DM's book. This is the first of many scenes that will all run together to complete the Marauders of Nibenay storyline.

The setup information provided on that page tells the DM™ what sort of things need to be happening at the start of the adventure.

The text that follows the start heading is usually a narrative that can be read to the players (or paraphrased) as a starting point for the encounter. It tells the players what is happening around them and gives them all the information they need to begin the scene.

The encounter section tells the DM what is really going on at this point. It often provides information that is not apparent to the player characters.

The reactions section provides information on what will happen throughout the course of the scene. In some cases, it will be based upon the actions of the characters while in others it will merely indicate how things will change with the passage of time. It provides all of the action for the encounter.

If any monsters or NPCs appear in the scene, the DM will find important information about them in the statistics entry. In some cases, this section will reference the NPC descriptions in the 16-page book.

The next section tells the DM where to go in the book after this scene is resolved. Generally, there will be more than one possible place for the story to go at that point and the actions of the PCs will determine what happens next.







# Marauders of Nibenay

by William W. Connors



*When the brides of death  
become the marauders of Nibenay,  
When the dead must die  
and the unsleeping must wake,  
Then the Dragon shall be born anew.*



For centuries the Veiled Alliance has been a thorn in the side of the mighty sorcerer-king Nibenay. Now the stars are right and the mysterious Shadow King has decided to rid himself of his unremitting rivals. But the Veiled Alliance is not easily defeated. They too have been watching the stars, and they know that the history of the great city has reached a crucial juncture. Both sides stand ready for a great battle, but neither is prepared for the disaster that looms over them. By the time the sun rises again, the city will be in ruins and the task of rebuilding it will fall squarely on the shoulders of a small band of adventurers. The future is theirs to decide, for good or evil.

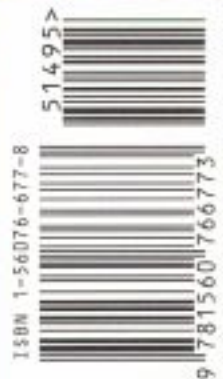
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