



RED DAWN

An Adventure for Characters Level 9 to 12



THIS TIME, THE DAWN WILL BRING NOTHING BUT BLOOD...

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RED DAWN

INTRODUCTION

A hunger proves to burn hotter and brighter than the sun itself.

Red Dawn is an adventure module for the Pathfinder Role-playing Game designed for four characters of 9th level to 12th and requires the use of the Pathfinder Core Rules and the first three Bestiaries. If they are not prepared for exploration of the arctic, then they will start out with the following kit for free.

Arctic Exploration Gear

Each character has a Cold weather outfit, furs, and a pair of snowshoes. In addition, the party has a *wand of endure elements* with 25 charges left on it.

Adventure Background

Centuries ago, there was a battle between a great wizard and a very powerful vampire that was only referred to as the Vampire King. Unable to truly kill or even banish the Vampire King, the wizard imprisoned the vampire within the Sun, where he had no power to commit any harm upon the world. The Azer, the people of the sun, recognized the power beneath the surface and later constructed a temple around the Vampire King's prison.

During the years he was a threat, the Vampire King had three favored minions. These were the Blood Jarl, a frost giant vampire; the Shadow Herald, the Blood Jarl's own shadow given life and independence; and Redback, a fire giant werewolf. The Blood Jarl and Shadow Herald both abandoned the Vampire King soon after his defeat, and went their separate ways to rule elsewhere, though occasionally keeping in touch. Redback and his clan remained loyal to the Vampire King, but were too weak and disorganized to find a way to free their master, and slowly died out over the centuries. Now, there is but one member left of the clan, Duncan Redback. Duncan Redback, eager to restore his clan's honor, has seized upon the opportunity to claim a powerful magic artifact that can finally free the Vampire King: the Chime of Release.

Adventure Outline

The party having followed the trail of adventure in the quest for treasure, the first scene is on a battlefield partway

through a thus-far typical journey that leads them to the doors of the Tomb of the Blood Jarl. Upon breaking the seal to the tomb, they see a mysterious something steal a magic item from within, which swiftly leads to signs of a god-like vampire being released from its own prison if the stolen item isn't retrieved soon.

Whether the party seeks a dominated moorland village ruled by the Shadow Herald or delves through an ancient library, they make their way to the Temple of the Sun (see the beginning of Act Three), on the Sun. This can be reached by either *Teleporting* to the Earth-side Temple of the Sun and its gate or generous use of *Plane Shift*.

From there, they run into the disciples of the Vampire King warring with the Azer keepers of the sun-side Temple of the Sun, built upon the prison itself.

ACT I: DAWNING OF ADVENTURE

You'd have noticed it faster if you hadn't still been picking tiny little ice slivers out of your cheeks where the ricochets hit. It was after you'd sat and put ourselves together for a while, you saw it, and then you'd wondered how you missed it. It was enormous, that door, obviously built for something far larger than a man.

Beautiful carvings that must have taken a master craftsman or three years to detail and gild. They showed an army of warriors with huge axes and hammers towering over tiny little figures running away at their feet. Giants, maybe. Some of them were coloured with unsettling blood-shot eyes, and some of them looked bestial, wolflike. The part that couldn't be ignored, that dominated that door no matter where you were looking, was the thing in the center. Some kind of man-shaped thing, but outlined in the deepest crimson you'd ever seen, and blacker than even those nights you'd spent in the Darklands caverns.

Visions of gold and jewels danced in your head as you stood outside the door. If only you'd known then what you know now...

For the players, the adventure begins after a battle. The party begins *In Media Res*, nearing completion of a hunt for the treasures of the Blood Jarl. It is a far northern landscape in its first week of summer, the temperature at -15°F/5°C. The howling wind is blocked by a ravine, and

the snow is 3 feet deep, which costs 4 squares of movement to enter, and 2 squares of movement if the character is wearing snowshoes. Behind them is the path that had led them to where they are now, a cavernous tunnel littered with destroyed ghouls and skeletons. They are standing in the front courtyard to the tomb of the Blood Jarl, depicted with classical rune-carved pillars lining the sheer cliffs around them. They have already overcome the guardians here, and so yeti and Ice Mephit corpses are scattered around them. All that remains is the front entrance at the opposite end of the courtyard, an imposing rime-frosted iron door that leads into the Tomb proper.

In Media Res

Spellcasters start having already expended a spell of their highest spell level, as well as two additional spells of a spell level determined randomly (roll 1d4). At the spellcaster player's choice, any additional spells with a duration of 1 hour per level or longer can already be in effect, and are deducted from the spellcaster's list for the day.

Non-spellcasters with limited-use abilities, not counting mundane and magical items with charges or limited number of uses, must select two abilities acquired within the past 1d4 levels. These abilities have a 25% chance of already having been used. The same ability can be selected again, provided it wasn't expended on the first check.

Each character begins play having taken an amount of damage equal to 1d4 per Hit dice they possess.

Given the battlefield's starting conditions, each player is permitted to describe the past events of the day and its encounters that led them to their current state and position. Encourage a bit of role-playing between players to establish specifics before beginning the adventure proper.

The iron door to the foyer, frosted with rime and set into the cliff face, is sealed with a good lock and the *arcane lock* spell (DC 40 Disable Device check to unlock) that will open to any who use a specific key (currently carried by the frost giant guardian within the foyer). The door is also vulnerable to both positive and negative energy effects. If the door suffers 20 points of positive energy damage within 10 minutes, it shatters immediately. If it suffers 20 points of negative energy instead, it simply opens and remains so for 1d6+1 minutes.

Past the door is the foyer to the tomb itself, guarded by a frost giant and two Ice Golems carved in the likeness of the Blood Jarl. The frost giant is one of the chosen of his clan to guard the tomb in honor of the Blood Jarl, a great honor passed down from one generation to the next as a right of passage, guarding the tomb to prevent a prophecy that states that The Eternal Winter will come to pass if the tomb's sanctity is breached. The prophecy, vague so it is, is carved as such in the rime covered walls of the foyer by the frost giant architects.

Mindful of his sacred duty, the Frost Giant in this room has no interest in speaking with the party (ignoring any attempts they make at diplomacy), and willingly fights to the death. The Frost Giant will investigate commotion outside the locked door, so this provides the DM a backup way to get the players inside if they cannot find another solution.

FROST GIANT

CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 133 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, page 149)

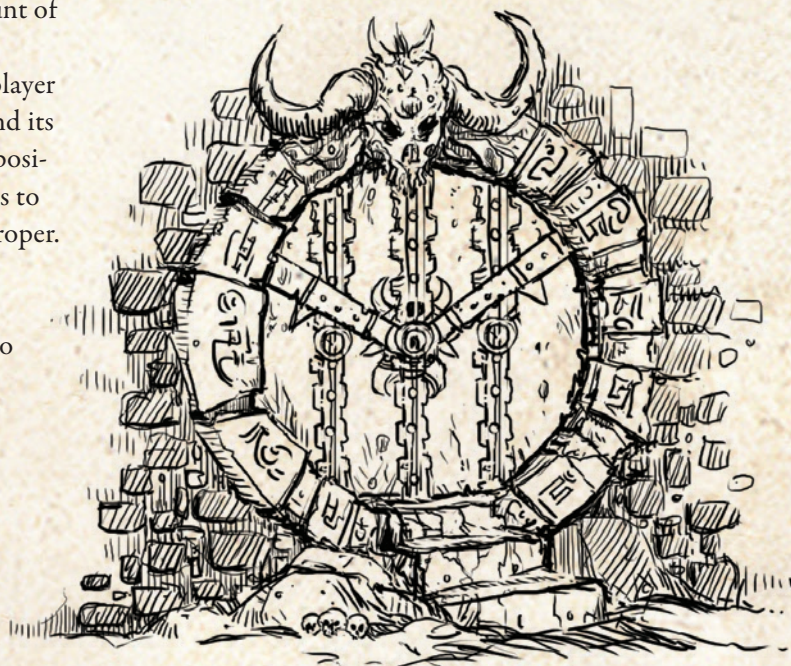
JARL STATUES (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Giant ice golem

hp 63 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, page 161)



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Inside the foyer is a similarly elaborately decorated door to the tomb itself. It has the same statistics as the front entrance, but there is no key that gets past the *Arcane Lock*. The tomb interior is covered with a permanent *Unhallow* (CL 15th) with a *Dimensional Anchor* fixed to it. If the door is destroyed, opened, or unlocked, the *Unhallow* effect lapses permanently. Within the tomb is a trap within line-of-sight to the door, set into a statue of a Balor kneeling in supplication.

SCORCHING RAY TRAP

CR 5

XP 1,600

Type magic; Perception 27; Disable Device 27

EFFECTS

Trigger visual (*arcane eye*); Reset automatic

Effect spell effect (*scorching ray*, +2 ranged touch, 4d6 fire damage)

When the party unlocks the entrance to the tomb, a small clan of Ogres and a Mercane will be alerted and will ambush the party. The Mercane is invisible and will be careful to avoid detection as it teleports inside using *Dimension Door*, attempts to retrieve a metal chime from the coffin, and then escapes using *Plane Shift*. The ogres will remain blissfully ignorant of the deception, but observant players can make a DC 15 Perception check to notice the black chime twinkle aloft in the air before being whisked away. If questioned, the ogres may confess to being bribed by a robed figure, who spoke of helping to release the Vampire King. The Ogres know very little of the Vampire King except legends describing him as very frightening and very powerful, as well as very rich; the Ogres are simple and do not require more than this.

MERCANE

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 51 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*, page 188)

OGRE (6)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 30 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, page 220)

OGRE CLERIC

CR 5

XP 1,600

Female ogre Cleric 4

CE Large humanoid (augmented, giant)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 23 (+6 armor, +5 natural, +3 shield, -1 size); +2 deflection against good-aligned creatures

hp 68 (8d8+32)

Fort +12, **Ref** +2, **Will** +9; +2 against spells from good-aligned creatures

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. base)

Melee +1 battleaxe +14 (2d6+7/x3)

Ranged javelin +5 (1d8+6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Spells Prepared (CL 4th)

2nd — *hold person* (DC 14), *bull's strength*, *augury*

1st — *bless*, *divine favor*, *magic weapon*, *protection from good*

0 (at will) — *purify food and drink*, *bleed*, *stabilize*, *detect magic*

Special channel negative energy 2/day (DC 11, 2d6)

BASE STATISTICS

When not benefiting from *bull's strength* & *magic weapon*, the ogre cleric has the following statistics:

Melee battleaxe +11 (2d6+4/x3),

Ranged javelin +5 (1d8+4); Str 19

Str 23, **Dex** 10, **Con** 19, **Int** 6, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 21

Feats Iron Will, Toughness, Shield Focus, Weapon Focus (battleaxe)

Skills Climb +5, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +11

Languages Giant

Equipment *chainmail*, *battleaxe*, *javelin*, *heavy wood shield*

The Vampire King will rise from his prison in the Temple of the Sun. These words are inscribed throughout the tomb in dozens of languages, with occasional scratching in the walls denying and refusing such a statement. A massive lens on the ceiling that focuses the sun in an intense beam upon an open stone sarcophagus, large enough for a frost giant, with but a pile of ash within.

Correspondence in the form of ancient, leathery letters preserved by the bitter cold are present here in an icy crevice. They are missives between the Blood Jarl and the Shadow Herald, telling of her guilt at abandoning her sire as well as regret for her involvement, as even other vampires shun her for her association with the Vampire King. The letters are informal and both sides tease each other with their mundane and petty concerns regarding the people they command. It also documents her eventual decision to commit suicide in the warded tomb, so that none may find the Chime of Release, which would allow the release of the Vampire King, even though she could not bring herself to destroy it outright.

ACT 2: SHADOWLESS SEARCH

In your line of work, good deeds are fine, but it's usually about the payday – thank yous, after all, don't always equal food and a place to sleep. Even the most mercenary of you, however, can begin to see how dangerous leaving the Vampire King's minions alone is, after the first news hits you. Towns torched to the ground, people fleeing in the cold, and worse gossip from fellow travelers on the road about a twelve-foot-tall wolf made of fire, leading packs of vicious hounds.

Since emerging from the largely fruitless encounter at the Blood Jarl's tomb, you have been feeling a sense of unease. No doubt it is related to the strange sight in the winter sky: dark shadows slowly moving about the sun, shadows cast by no cloud. Occasionally they begin to resemble a shape you can almost make out, perhaps a toothy smile?

The ancient letters found in the tomb suggest a cause, and a course of action. Perhaps it's time to look further into this nameless Vampire King of long ago.

There are two primary ways to investigate the location of the Vampire King or the Temple of the Sun, which are listed below. The most direct is by asking the Shadow Herald. This will be a roleplaying-heavy encounter that will make some groups at least question their morals in letting an evil creature continue to live, after getting necessary information to prevent the return of a far greater evil. The second option is to hit the books and rely upon records in a nearby historical library, which will take longer and

therefore allow the party to directly see how the stirring of the Vampire King is affecting the world for the worse.

No matter what method the party chooses, whether one of these two or some other option, the party should begin to hear rumors about Duncan Redback's activity in the world. Redback is not friendly to the continued existence of sentient life, and he will burn any village he encounters to the ground as he journeys to the Sun with the Chime of Release in hand. This has been his objective for some time, and if the party seems unwilling to pursue the Vampire King, perhaps a town they had previously visited is no longer there next time they come around?

In addition, the Sun will begin to exhibit unusual activity as the Vampire King senses his approaching release. Describe to the players the appearance of 'black spots' moving about the sun, and occasional very obvious solar flares.

Sooten: Trail of the Shadow Herald

Diplomacy, Knowledge (history), or Knowledge (local) checks can reveal the following information concerning the Shadow Herald from the correspondence found in the Blood Jarl's tomb.

DC 15: The village of Sooten, where the Shadow Herald currently resides. It is in a moorland to the south, past the tundra. An isolated village, far from rivers and coasts, at the base of a mountain range. The villagers are poor, outside the claim of any kingdom, and the only trade they engage in is laborious coal mining.

DC 20: The Shadow Herald is a shadow fiend rumored to have been created from the actual shadow of the Vampire King to serve as his herald. After the fall of its master, it moved on and eventually laid claim to the people of Sooten and gave itself the moniker of 'The Dark One'. The villagers live in terror of the Dark One, who enforces three laws:

- None shall converse with known servants of Good
- None shall harm the Cursed
- None shall invite the Undead into the village or their home

The dead are to be cremated according to the Dark One's rites to prevent any potential undead, their ashes scattered to the wind into the moor. Breaking these laws

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THE SHADOW HERALD

So as to keep itself entertained, the Shadow Herald will choose one villager each generation to favor with attention. This chosen one, always a level 1 human commoner, becomes known as the Cursed. Through magic jar, the Shadow Herald indulges in all manner of hedonistic activities. It will also indulge in the Cursed's own desires and perform frequent favors, but always in a manner to serve the Shadow Herald's own self-interest. In addition, the Cursed will be protected as a favored pet, ensuring that they are free from virtually any repercussion at the hands of the villagers. As the Cursed is chosen at a young age, their own morality does not adjust well and they frequently become nearly as dark and evil as the Shadow Herald itself.

will result in either the offender or a close friend or relative suffering a grisly fate.

The Shadow Herald itself doesn't use any other name, and is content with its life in Sooten. It encourages the villagers to remain isolated and distrustful of outsiders. As it holds no loyalty to its former master, and a healthy respect for self-preservation, it will divulge the location of the Temple of the Sun with a DC 29 Diplomacy check (DC 24 after a DC 19 Intimidate check). If the Shadow Herald is reduced to 20 hit points or less through combat, it will beg to give the information in exchange for mercy. The Shadow Herald will also confirm that the black spots on the sun are signs that someone has the Chime of Release and is on their way to release the Vampire King. The portal to the Temple of the Sun is two weeks' travel by foot from Sooten, in the Scorched Valley, a rocky desert area described later in this adventure.

The village of Sooten is a collection of single-story huts made of sod with an internal stone frame, its people notable for coal stains about their persons. Bell pits are scattered about in the outer border of the town, ropes and pulleys constructed over them to hoist the coal miners in and out. Dominating the community is a run-down stone church with its religious iconography destroyed or defaced, where the Shadow Herald resides.

The statistics of the Shadow Herald are listed below, as well as the Cursed.

SHADOW HERALD

CR 8

XP 4,800

Giant Shadow Demon

hp 73 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, page 67)

TACTICS

The Shadow Herald will try to *greater teleport* out of sight, where it will attempt to summon another shadow demon, then use *shadow conjuration* to summon creatures to interrupt movement. From this point, it will try to stay distant to use *telekinesis* offensively.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES

While the Shadow Herald is both vicious and a coward, it will refrain from using the villagers of Sooten as soldiers, fodder, or even meat shields. The Shadow Herald cares for its 'subjects', in a twisted way, and has sworn to only interfere with the villagers to enforce its laws and to enable the Cursed's urges.

CURSED

CR 5

XP 1,600

Ruffian (human commoner 7)

hp 45 (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*, page 257)

Hartwood: Research in Dusty Tomes

The largest town in the area of the Blood Jarl's Tomb, and the nearest town large enough to support a historical library, is named Hartwood. Hartwood is a quiet woody town in the middle of a snowy plain, useful primarily as a source of fresh liquid water (due to nearby volcanic springs) on a crossroads to more exciting places. Fortunately for the party, the town's foot traffic occasionally hosts traveling scholars, making Hartwood's library the party's best choice in the area for finding local history.

Hartwood is a sleepy a week's journey by foot from the tomb of the Blood Jarl. One day prior to the adventurer's arrival in the town, the sun will emit a large and clearly visible solar flare.

A full day's use of the Library grants a +10 Research bonus to Knowledge (History) or Knowledge (Local) checks regarding the Vampire King. If these skills are not available, players may alternatively use the Gather Information skill; this represents the sages of the library help-

ing the party search and collate information. The difficulty for either the Knowledge or Gather Information tasks is DC 30. If either or both checks are made successfully, the following information is revealed:

- The Vampire King was immensely powerful, able to defeat numerous high level adventuring parties in quick succession.
- The Vampire King has committed multiple acts of genocide in this region in the past.
- A wizard had arranged to fight the Vampire King on the Sun, where he was subsequently defeated and imprisoned
- The Vampire King anticipated being imprisoned, and had a minion carry away and hide the Chime of Release, a powerful magic item that could free it from the prison
- The Blood Jarl betrayed its sire, and never used the Chime to release the Vampire King.
- The town was founded on the battleground of the last place the Vampire King had fought on the planet, and a monument was constructed upon the site where five drops of his blood had spilled. The monument is heavily weathered and almost completely forgotten by the townsfolk.

Information gathered in Hartwood should point the party towards the Shadow Herald as the most likely current owner of the Chime of Release, if they have not yet encountered it. If the party is attempting research as a result of a fruitless encounter with the Shadow Herald, they should also be able to discover here the location of the portal to the Temple of the Sun, two weeks travel from Hartwood in the Scorched Valley.

ACT 3: TWILIGHT OF DISCONTENT

As your boots hit sand rather than sod, crossing from the frosted plains to the edge of this wintry desert, you feel a warmth that manages to chill rather than comfort. The strange behavior of the Sun has gotten ever worse, and now it seems to breathe and pulse. What kind of terrible creature could it be, that in pounding its fists against that prison could shake and bend it so?

DUNCAN REDBACK

The Vampire King's most loyal followers came from the Redback Clan, a family of dire werewolf fire giants. After the King's defeat, the clan lost their greatest support and slowly died out over the generations. In the end, only one living member of the Redback Clan remains. Duncan Redback is fiercely arrogant, wields his legacy as a cudgel, and even treats his loyal hell-hounds as tools. His search for the Chime of Release only recently yielded fruit, where he subsequently hired a mercane to ensure its retrieval and then begin his trek by foot across the Sun to the Vampire King's burial site.

There is only one way to make sure your group never has to find out. The Scorched Valley shouldn't be far now, and you can see the foothills in the distance where the portal is said to lie. Could it be true? Could your way to the Sun in the sky be such a mundane few miles away?

Your party spots great glassy footprints in the sand, as if someone huge and hot left melted pools of sand even as a few lost and stray snowflakes drift to the ground around you.

Multiple methods are available for the party to attempt to reach the Temple of the Sun before Duncan Redback reaches it and successfully uses the Chime of Release. Duncan himself intends to use the gateway at the Temple of the Sun, and the party will encounter him there if they attempt that route.

Plane Shift

Without *Interplanetary Teleport*, a very likely attempt by players would be to use *Plane Shift* to reach the Sun. One casting to another plane, and a second use to bring the party back to the Prime Material and within 5 to 500 miles (5d%) of the Temple of the Sun. This method is not without its flaws, however. There exists no known useful map to direct them from their point of arrival to the Temple of the Sun. In addition, unless they have prolonged methods of survival, they will require expedited travel options. If they are without such options upon reaching the Sun, they can attempt to beseech a passing native for aid. The DM is free to select any of the encounters below as options for the party to utilize for means of travel to the Temple of the Sun.

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Thundholm Horse

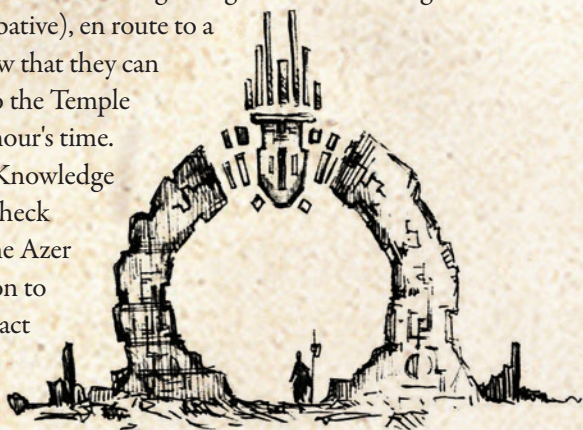
A DC 20 Knowledge (Nature) or Knowledge (Local) check suggests this option. Thundholm Horses live in warm, rocky foothills near to the Scorched Valley. They can be convinced to transport a party to the Temple of the Sun through diplomacy, deceit, or intimidation. Thundholm Horses are statistically the same as a Champion Pegasus with the Fire subtype, immunity to effects that blind or dazzle, and a constant effect *Wind Walk* upon both themselves and whomever they bear upon their back. These are a particularly proud breed of metallic bronze equine, who are incredibly vain about their speed.

Efreet

A more immediate danger than the sun itself, the first civilized native encountered will be leading a procession of four Salamanders carrying the obsidian coffin of its father to a sacred dumping ground. The Efreeti has immense respect for his dead parent, and will break into a loquacious lecture if disrespected that will lead toward violence unless he is appeased in some manner. Sufficient displays of honor (a DC 20 Knowledge (Planes) check will suggest correct protocol) will convince him to allow a single *Limited Wish* to be granted in order to transport the party. Alternatively, the Efreet will surrender once reaching 50% of max HP or lower and offer this *Limited Wish* in exchange for its life. Acquiring a boon from the Efreet through violence will not endear the party to these creatures, and they may seek revenge in a later adventure!

Azer Pilgrimage

An entire squad is escorting an honored Azer sage to the Temple of the Sun, carting a longboat with burning oxen (non-combative), en route to a plasma flow that they can navigate to the Temple in but an hour's time. A DC 20 Knowledge (Arcana) check suggests the Azer as an option to make contact with for



local aid. These Azer are aware of the presence of the Aghash Alaird on the Earth-side gate to the Temple of the Sun (see 'Sun Gate' section), and may request the party's help in dealing with the fiend in exchange for their guidance.

Elemental Flare Surfers

A few spots will show signs of eruption for a solar flare, with at least five minutes of warning that can be seen a mile away. Dealing 20d6 points of electricity damage to any within 20 feet of the center of the flare, and 20d6 points of fire damage to any within 80 feet of the center, the flare itself arcing out of sight. Fire Elementals can ride the shockwave of such a conflagration of power, staying just ahead of the electrical core that would obliterate even them. If the players can become immune to fire, they too can ride a solar flare if they have a fire elemental guide to both help them go where they need and not harm themselves in any number of ways.

Sun Gate

With information regarding the Temple of the Sun, whether it be from research at the library or the Shadow Herald itself, the following will be provided:

Built upon solar flame is the jewel of the Azer race, a reverent masterpiece of architecture, the Temple of the Sun. Crafted in memorial to their lost Princess eons ago, it has since become a monument to the defeat of great foes throughout the system. A Janni Prince had loved the Princess, and wished to be near his beloved. Unwilling to disrespect her beauty by warding himself against the heat of the Sun, he built a replica of it upon the earth, one sixth the size of the original and linked it with a portal to the Temple of the Sun. This earthly temple is known as the Sun Gate.

The Sun Gate is a cube 108 metres to a side and covered with precise, round, and circular inscriptions. In front of the building is an even more immense rectangular stepped pit. There are 108 steps major steps toward the bottom of the pit, each nine metres tall and deep, lined with 52 carved pillars. Carved into each step is at least one shrine or temple of its own. Every individual brick of obsidian has a supplication to one spirit or another, each having pledged their respect for all who reside here.

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The directions provided to the Sun Gate indicate a week's journey south to the Scorched Valley, a rocky desert plain leading into dark foothills of the mountains far in the distance. The Valley in the summer months is easily the hottest area for a large distance around, though at the moment it is quite chilly, and the party will see the occasional snowflake fall and instantly evaporate in the dry sand.

The area appears very empty, with little plant life and few animals to be seen, but if the party bothers to search for unusual features they will discover a set of wolf-like prints 'burned' into the sand, appearing black and glassy. Encounters while navigating the Scorched Valley should be minimal, though the intelligent race of Thundholm Horses (see previous section) may be found here, providing an alternative path if the party is, for some reason, having difficulty.

The gate to the Temple of the Sun is located across the desert plain in the rocky foothills, hidden in an oddly-shaped crevasse; a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals that this crevasse is not a natural formation, but likely the result of the blast of some powerful magic attack. It is a stone monument, made of the same material as the surrounding rocky landscape, carved with exquisite skill, shaped like a column with a multifaceted jewel atop it, and a wide half-circle arch at the base, within which glows with fiery orange and red light in slow swirls.

Normally there will be a handful of Azer disciples in this area. However, when the players arrive, they will find that all of the Azer disciples at the Sun Gate are heavily cursed with crippling disfigurements and violent paranoia by a particularly potent Aghash named Alaird, a local miscreant. Depending on DM fiat, Duncan Redback may be here as well, or perhaps some of his Half-Fiend Hell Hound minions – adjust as necessary to make the battle here fit the party's current condition and ability to do violence.

ALAIRD

CR 5

XP 1,600

Advanced Aghash

AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (+4 Dex, +8 natural, +2 armor)

hp 52 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3*, page 88)

Equipment haramaki, silken ceremonial armor

WHY THE SUN?

In D&D, adventurers can explore any number of worlds, planes of existence, and even the void of space in some settings. There is a willing suspension of disbelief required for a fantasy setting, and positing an adventure on the surface of the Sun requires a certain mythical element to the setting. In order for such an adventure to take place, the laws of physics are put on hold the moment you presuppose a ground to stand upon, air to breathe, and simply not instantly burnt to ash when even vaguely near this great orb.

Aside from the associated luminosity, there is little to separate the Sun from the Plane of Fire on narrative level. The Elemental Plane of Fire is formed of the raw building blocks of heat and flame, yet can be traversed by humans with descriptively simple abjurations. Certainly, magma flows are the like do more damage and are less hospitable, but they are universally treated as terrain features rather than independent realms.

CURSED AZER PRIEST (48)

CR 1/3

XP 33 each

LN Medium Outsider (extraplanar, fire)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; Perception -4

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12 (+2 natural)

hp 15 (2d10+4), has 7 nonlethal damage (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*, page 39)

Fort +1, **Ref** -4, **Will** -10

Immune fire; **SR** 13

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold, cursed (insanity of psychosis, paranoia, multiple personality disorder, -4 all saves, attacks, ability checks, and skill checks), starving (7 nonlethal damage, fatigued)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft

Melee mwk warhammer -1 (1d8/x3 plus 1d6 fire)

Special Attacks heat (1d6 fire)

Str 11, **Dex** 10, **Con** 15, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 12

Feats Power Attack

Skills Acrobatics -1, Appraise +2, Craft (any two) +2, Knowledge (nobility, religion) +2, Perception -4

Languages Common, Ignan

TEMPLE OF THE SUN

In tattered robes, layers of curses have stricken the azer with broken wings, muttering insanity, open sores, and painfully calloused talons growing from fingers not meant for such. It has been four days since the priest has been able to eat any food, retching at the taste of anything but sand, which gives no nourishment. This man, like the rest of his congregation, is not long for this world if the curses continue unchallenged.

Alaird is an Aghash, a Material-bound fiend that exists to despise all that is beautiful. It has no preexisting relationship to Duncan Redback, and will neither hinder nor aid him if he and his minions are present here.

The Surface of the Sun

Regardless of how they get there, the party must prepare for perils of such an environment.

Like the Plane of Fire, the oppressive heat deals 3d10 points of fire damage per round. The brilliance of the sun forces a Fortitude save (DC 15) each round or be blinded for a minute, darkness effects treating the natural illumination as one step above bright. In addition, the light burns undead horrifically, dealing 1d10 points of positive energy damage to all undead, and 3d10 to undead vulnerable to sunlight.

Sunblock

Potions or scrolls of *resist energy* at a caster level of 11 are the most cost-effective, and should be readily available through any city or personal contact that sells such items. In addition, smoked goggles will reduce the blinding effect of the sun to only leaving them *dazzled*.

If the party is currently without the equipment necessary to survive a trip to the surface of the Sun, then there will be a mercane merchant conveniently passing by, with such goods available for sale at a 20% mark-up. They will also have a supply of silversheen available. This mercane is either the very one that absconded with the Chime of Release, or a close associate, and is using this insider knowledge to capitalize on the business opportunity.

"You amuse me, little wretch!" The grand tower of fur, fangs, fire and rage roared out, but in laughter, not the bloodcurdling shriek that had heralded the village's demise. Seventeen feet of molten muscle and mocking hate bent lower to get a better look at this one, this bold curiosity.

"Always they scream, they beg for their lives, they offer gold and jewels and treasures of their realm, or they curse the dire fate that led them to cross my path. But never have they stood before their death and simply asked me 'Why?'. Very well. In honor of your bravery, I will tell you.

Do you know why you fear the dark? Do you know why the accursed star of day gives you comfort? Your ancestors knew why. The night once ruled the day, yes! What splendid nights those were! My master was Lord of the Night, who ruled over you mortal fools like your farmers rule over your cattle! The world was right, then, everything in its proper place. We hunted, and we fed, and we killed, and



RED DAWN

we paid tribute to our master, whose darkness outshone the sun! Most importantly, we kept you in line, my sheep.

Hah! The look on your face! Is that wonderment, I see? Back, my pets!" A great flaming arm held at bay the great, snapping, hellish pack around him. "The story is not done. Yes, I am your shepherd, though your kind have forgotten it. Were we not good shepherds? Did we not keep you fed, and cull you so that you did not overrun yourselves? Your kind once dared to bite the hand that feeds you, long ago. The fool wizard's name is forgotten now, crumbled into dust just like his bones. But he dared strike at his Lord! Though of course he could not win against his natural betters, he deprived your kind of the just hand of the Night. Such insults, to seal the Night within the Day! Yes, the sun! Look at the skies above you. My master has waited patiently these many centuries, watching and waiting. His gentle patience will be rewarded.

I am Duncan Redback. I, who remained loyal even as you ungrateful slime forgot him, am the one who will free the Vampire King and set right what went wrong.

As for this..." He swept about at the burning butts that once thrived against the cold snow, "this... is simply a return to our duties. There are so many of you now, and so much work now to do."

The Sun-side Temple of the Sun is under assault by the great grandson of one of the Vampire King's generals, Duncan Redback. He has brought a pack of a dozen hell hounds, who are keeping the sun-side Azer guardians occupied while Duncan searches for the site where the Vampire King was imprisoned so that he can use the Chime of Release.

Duncan will be present at the Temple of the Sun when the party arrives in all cases. If the party arrived here via the portal in the Scorched Valley, they may have been pursuing Duncan as he flees. Treat his presence on the Sun as a separate encounter, though Duncan will be in the same condition as he was at the end of the previous one.

DUNCAN REDBACK

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

LE Large humanoid (fire, giant, shapechanger)

Init -1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (+8 armor, -1 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

hp 157 (15d8+90)

Fort +15, **Ref** +4, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities rock catching; Immune fire; DR 10/silver

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. without armor)

Melee greatsword +22/+17/+12 (3d6+17), bite +16 (1d8+5 plus curse of lycanthropy) or 2 slams +21 (1d8+11), bite +21 (1d8+11 plus curse of lycanthropy)

Ranged rock +9 (1d8+16 plus 1d6 fire)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks heated rock, rock throwing (120 ft.)

STATISTICS

Str 33, **Dex** 9, **Con** 23, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 32

Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (greatsword), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Climb +15, Craft (any one) +8, Intimidate +10, Perception +15

Languages Common, Giant

Equipment Chime of Release, +1 greatsword, half-plate

SQ change shape (fire giant, hybrid, and dire wolf; polymorph), lycanthropic empathy (wolves and dire wolves)

Heated Rock (Su) Fire giants transfer the heat of their bodies to rocks as part of an attack action when they throw rocks. A heated rock deals 1d6 points of additional fire damage on a hit.

HALF-FIEND HELL HOUNDS (12)

CR 4

XP 1,400 each

LE Medium Outsider (evil, native, fire, lawful)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft, scent; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+2 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 46 (4d10+24)

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Resist acid, cold, electricity 10; Immune fire, poison; **DR** 5/magic; **SR** 15

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)

Melee bite +7 (1d8+3 plus 1d6 fire), 2 claws +7 (1d4+3 plus 1d6 fire)

RED DAWN

Special Attack breath weapon (10-ft. cone, 2d6 fire, Reflex DC 16 for half, usable every 1d4 rounds), smite good (1/day, swift action, as a level 4 paladin)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)

3/day— *darkness*

1/day— *desecrate*

STATISTICS

Str 17, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 8

Base Atk +4; CMB +7; CMD 19 (23 vs trip)

Feats Improved Initiative, Run

Skills Acrobatics +9, Fly +13, Perception +9, Stealth +14, Survival +9; Racial Modifiers +5 Stealth

Languages Infernal (cannot speak)

The forebears of this pack of Hell-Hounds were fed the blood of the Vampire King, and that power continues to flow after the passage of generations.

What If The Vampire King Is Released?

No plan survives contact with the enemy. Should the party not stop Duncan from releasing his master, their failure will result in cataclysm. This 50 foot tall sovereign of blood stands with alabaster skin, crimson hair so dark it nearly eats the sunlight touching it, and displays a level of hunger and power the realms had hoped forgotten. It is highly advised to impart upon the players the danger in engaging with an entity that has thus far only known defeat in containment. Brimming with victory, the Vampire King will laugh at his freedom and briefly consider what horrors will visit upon the living, ignoring the party and even Duncan himself, before using *greater teleport* to return to the world below.

Should they attempt to quixotically engage with the Vampire King in combat, use the following statistics as a rough approximation.

VAMPIRE KING

CR 20

Advanced Tzitzimitl

hp 363 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3*, page 276)

Special Notes Add the following additional abilities.

Change Shape (Su): Can assume any animal or humanoid form at will as if using *polymorph*.

Dominate (Su): As a standard action, the target must make a Will save (DC 31) or fall instantly under the Vampire King's control, as though by a *dominate monster* (caster level 22nd). The ability has a range of 30 feet.

NEW FEAT: AZERS' SOLAR BLESSING

Having saved the Temple of the Sun from the rise of the Vampire King, you have earned the eternal gratitude of the residing monks.

Prerequisite: Prevented the return of the Vampire King; Visited the Temple of the Sun within the last year

Benefit: You are immune to blinding or dazzling effects due to bright light.

You gain a gaze attack that can temporarily blind foes with light. The gaze effect is limited, and so only works when actively gazing at an opponent within range as an attack action. This effect has a range of 30 feet, and the target must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + ½ Hit dice + CHA modifier) or be blinded for 1 round. You can make a targeted gaze attack in this manner up to three times per day.

Create Spawn (Su): The Vampire King can create spawn out of those it slays with energy drain, provided that the slain creature is a humanoid. The victim rises from death as a vampire in 1d4 hours. This vampire is under the command of the Vampire King, and remains enslaved until its master's destruction. The Vampire King may have enslaved spawn totaling no more than 44HD; any spawn it creates that would exceed this limit become free-willed Undead.

Rejuvenation (Su): There is currently no known permanent way to destroy the Vampire King: it will simply restore itself in 2d4 days.

EPILOGUE

As the party strikes the killing blow against Duncan, his natural defenses against the searing heat of the Sun fail. Shifting wildly between his Giant and Dire Werewolf forms as he loses control of himself, Duncan is consumed in a great burning flare of smoke and heat as the Sun claims him. Seeing his ultimate failure, he chokes out a crazed plea to his master to save him, but thanks to the party's efforts, the Vampire King remains safely trapped where it can do nothing to aid the marauding Giant.

Once the last scion of the Redback Clan is defeated, any remaining Hell Hounds will be demoralized and attempt to flee, their willingness to free the Vampire King having relied on promises they trusted only Duncan to fulfill. The Chime of Release clatters to the Temple floor,

NEW MAGIC ITEM

and the party hears a low moan of rage that reverberates among the columns before gradually subsiding, along with the dissolution of the menacing black spots moving about the plasma surface of the Sun – surely the Vampire King senses his minion’s failure and despairs at his imprisonment all the more, now that hope of release is gone.

The Azer priests are grateful for the heroics shown, extending their full hospitality and sanctuary to the adventurers. They are lacking in material wealth, but lead the party to the shining jewel at the core of their temple, and beg the group to place their hands upon it and repeat a solemn mantra. As the party does so, they are filled with a swelling power from the fiery star around them. See above for the effect of the Azer’s Solar Blessing feat.

In addition, the Azer priests hold a fair bit of social clout among communities on the Sun, which should be reflected appropriately in your campaign. After successful completion of this adventure, at minimum, the PCs should receive a +2 circumstance bonus to all Diplomacy checks with creatures on the Sun friendly to the Azer. At most, any creature who resides on the Sun and is not allied with Efreet (who tend towards using the Azer as slaves) will start out one category friendlier with the PCs.

If the Efreet were crossed at some point during the adventure (such as by fighting or insulting them), word of the party’s uncouth behavior will spread, and the Efreet may come for revenge in the future!

Their ability to trek the length of the Sun also opens a new realm of adventure possibilities for your party. The surface of the Sun is surprisingly populous, with the Azers, Efreet and Fire Mephits the main civilizations, though a host of other creatures with the Fire subtype such as Fire Giants, Elementals, Salamanders, and even Brass and Red Dragons also call the star home. Powerful Fire Elemental Princes war with Efreeti royalty and decadent Mephit empires, with the Azer frequently caught in the middle and used as servants and slaves by the others. In addition, here portals to the Elemental Plane of Fire occur frequently, including one nearby the Temple of the Sun which ends not far from the Efreeti capital of the City of Brass.

This new item is found in this adventure

CHIME OF RELEASE

Aura strong transmutation; **CL** 20th

Slot none; **Weight** 1lb.

DESCRIPTION

This hand-chime is a one foot long Adamantine tube, framed in Mithral and etched with colorful, stylized imagery of Azata celestials. These etchings change daily whenever they are not directly observed by a creature.

The *Chime of Release* is a hollow Adamantine tube about 1 foot long. It functions as a *Chime of Opening* with unlimited charges. It holds an additional function when pointed at a creature and rapidly struck twice in succession, which will grant the subject *freedom of movement* for one round.

With ten consecutive full-round actions (one full minute), the *Chime of Release* will cast *freedom* at the subject it is aimed at. This function can only be used once per week.

DESTRUCTION

The *Chime of Release* shatters if it’s carried by an Azata that willingly and knowingly forgoes its saving throw against a *dominate monster* spell cast by an evil creature.

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From frozen dungeons, to the surface of the Sun! *Red Dawn* is an adventure for 9th to 12th level characters, written for the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*. The adventure starts in an ancient, frozen tomb and begins a race against time to stop the release of an ancient evil sealed away on the surface of the sun itself.

DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU FEAR THE DARK? DO YOU KNOW WHY THE ACCURSED STAR OF DAY GIVES YOU COMFORT? YOUR ANCESTORS KNEW WHY. THE NIGHT ONCE RULED THE DAY, YES! WHAT SPLENDID NIGHTS THOSE WERE! MY MASTER WAS LORD OF THE NIGHT, WHO RULED OVER YOU MORTAL FOOLS LIKE YOUR FARMERS RULE OVER YOUR CATTLE! THE WORLD WAS RIGHT, THEN, EVERYTHING IN ITS PROPER PLACE. WE HUNTED, AND WE FED, AND WE KILLED, AND WE PAID TRIBUTE TO OUR MASTER, WHOSE DARKNESS OUTSHONE THE SUN! MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE KEPT YOU IN LINE, MY SHEEP."

- DUNCAN REDBACK, SERVANT OF THE VAMPIRE KING.



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