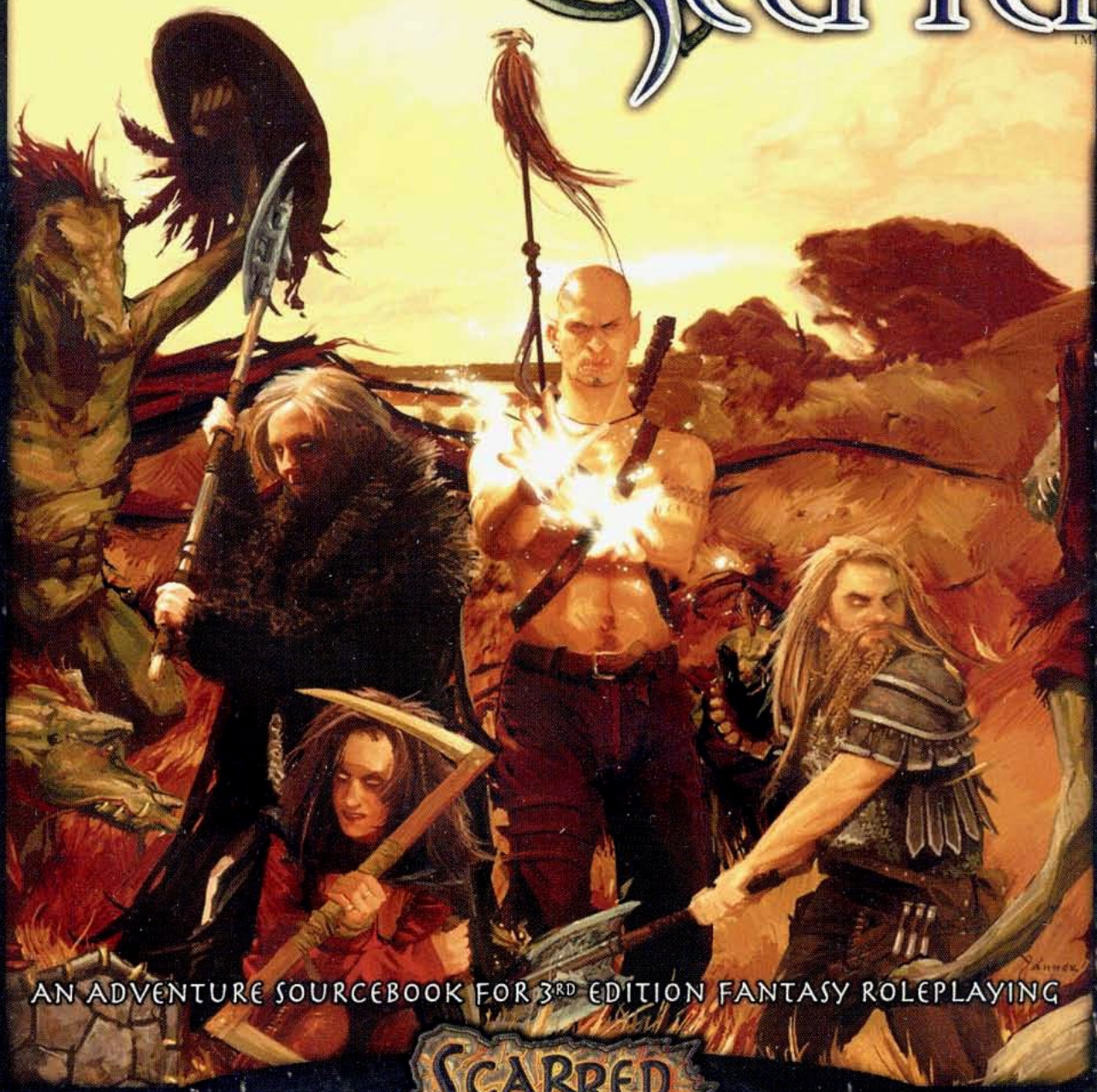


SWORD & SORCERY

THE SERPENT

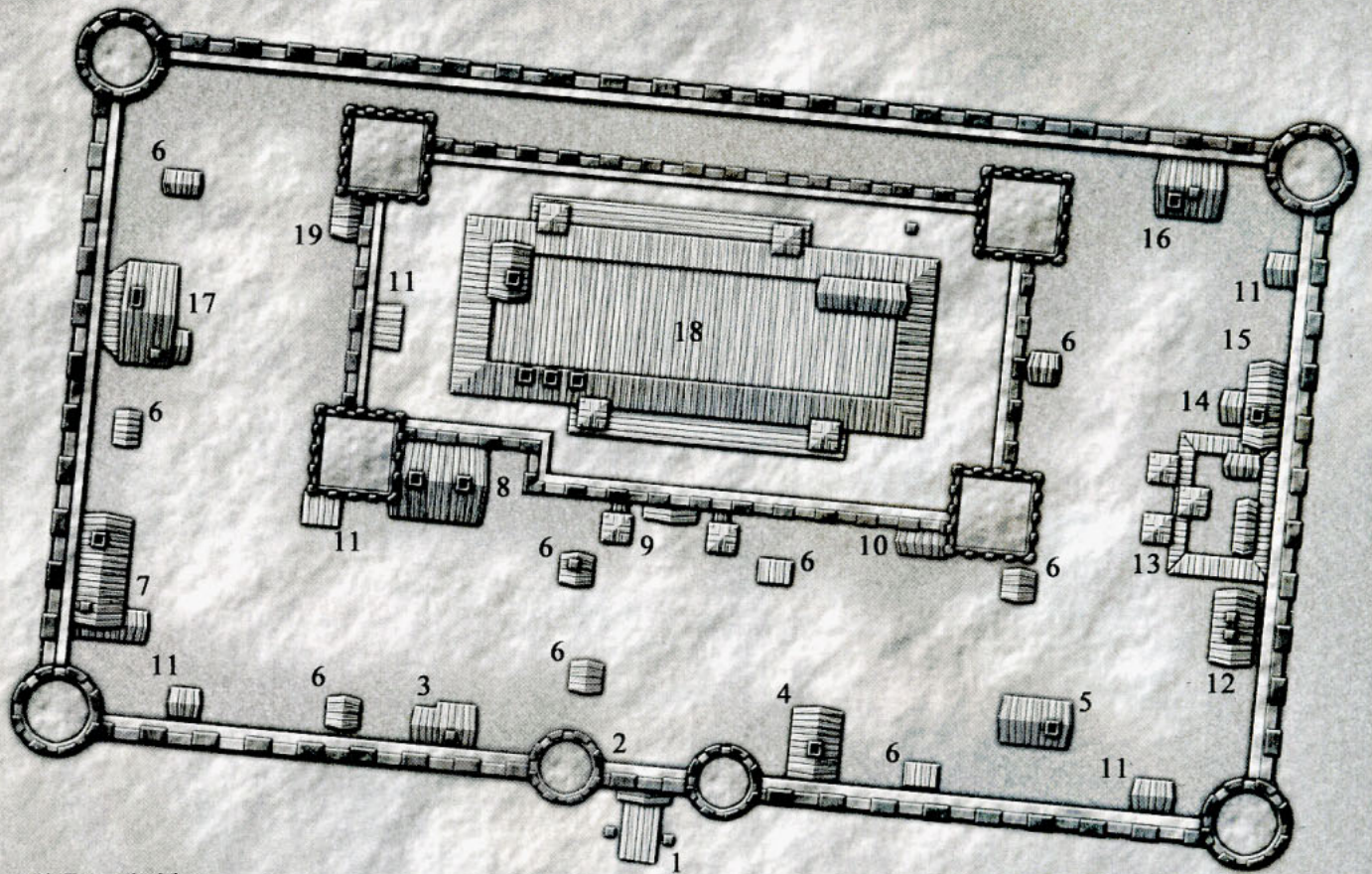
SERPENT AMPHORA CYCLE
BOOK TWO

THE SCEPTER



AN ADVENTURE SOURCEBOOK FOR 3RD EDITION FANTASY ROLEPLAYING

SCARRED LANDS



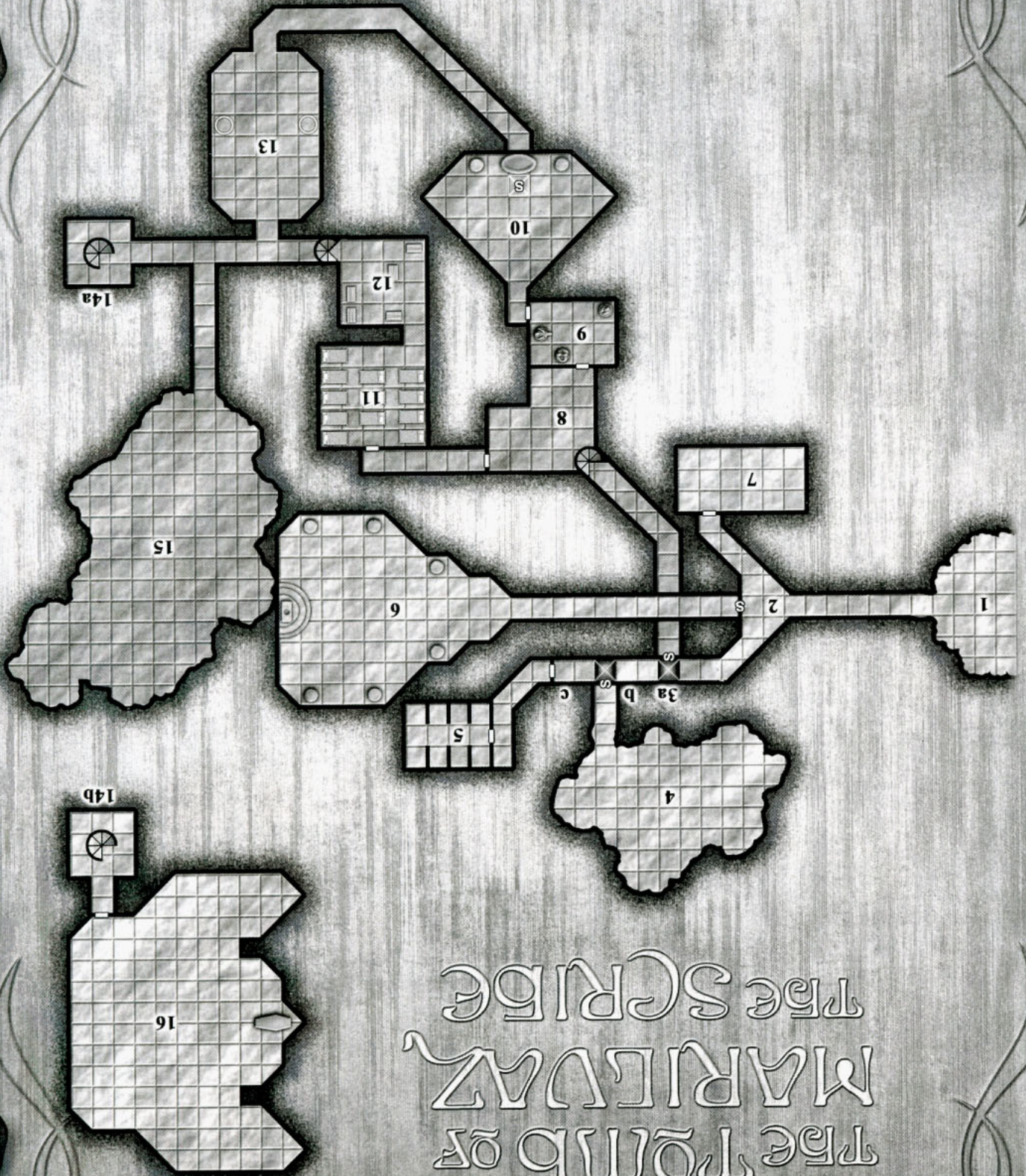
- 1) Drawbridge
- 2) Portcullis and barbican
- 3) The Burning Bolt tavern, servicing both soldiers and the numerous petitioners and merchants who frequent the outer bailey on a daily basis
- 4) Stables
- 5) Kitchens (away from other buildings in case of fire)
- 6) Stalls and temporary buildings set up by those vendors approved to serve the needs of the soldiers and the daily petitioners and merchants
- 7) Blacksmith and foundry
- 8) Stone stables, home of Traviak's demonic steeds
- 9) Inner bailey watchtowers, portcullis and barbican
- 10) Office of the watch commander on duty
- 11) Equipment and weapon storage sheds
- 12) Temple to Chardun
- 13) Soldiers' barracks
- 14) Soldiers' mess
- 15) Midden pit
- 16) Priests' and war wizards' quarters
- 17) Amphitheater for addressing the troops and large religious services
- 18) Inner keep
- 19) Training grounds, office and surrounding field

CASTLE DURM



scale in feet
0 20 40 60

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



THE TOMB OF MARIQVAZ THE SERPENT

THE SWORD & SORCERY

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Dedication

To everyone who visited the Sword & Sorcery Studio booth during GenCon 2002. Thanks for making it a great con, folks, and we'll see you next year!

Anthony "Forsook" Pryor and Rhiannon "Gilly" Louve, for putting up with the insane sonic assault that comes from sharing a hotel room with me. You guys have the patience of saints.

Ari, George, C.A. and Joanna, for the Mummy game, and for general hang-out time. I thoroughly enjoyed myself that weekend, and a good portion of the reason why lies with you guys. Thanks.

Charles "Keeper of the Elder God" Bailey, for the pics of Carl all throughout GenCon. You never know where the Squamous One will show up.

Lucien Soulban, for keeping me company at lunch on the last day of GenCon. We are going to have to do that earlier in the con next time, man.

Clark, Bill, Kasey, Casey, Rich, Steve, Stewart, and Monte, for the game. Thanks, guys.



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Introduction

The Serpent Stirs...

The Serpent Amphora, a hideous artifact impervious to mortal magics and containing the very essence of the titaness Mormo, travels the Scarred Lands once more. Torn from its place of rest and passed through numerous hands, it patiently anticipates the day when it will be opened to pour forth its contents in the foulest parody of birth. A day that draws ever nearer...

The Serpent & the Scepter takes a party of 4th- to 5th-level characters on the middle leg of a quest to destroy this foul artifact of the Witch-Queen. The story begins in **The Serpent Amphora** (a short adventure available for free download at www.swordsofceremony.com), grows ever more dangerous in **Serpent in the Fold**, continues in this adventure sourcebook, and reaches its conclusion in the upcoming **The Serpent Citadel**.

What Has Gone Before

The soft earthen floor of the passageway squelched beneath her feet as Tirran Orroko passed under an arch formed of packed loam and the deepest roots of ancient trees. There, below the fouled and corrupted wood men call the Stricken Forest, in the center of a chamber walled by dirt and things long dead, the sorceress approached the throne of her master.

The air, as usual, smelled faintly of roses.

From a raised throne of brambles and thorns, its branches and vines intertwining with the ivy that ran through his skeletal, fleshless form, Ilkuthsra the Autumn King gazed down from empty sockets. "Good evening, Tirran." His voice was the sound of wood cracking and splintering.

"And to you, my lord."

"Entertain me, Tirran. Tell me of the Vigils' puppets."

Tirran nodded once, brushing the dark hair from her face with an unconscious gesture, and tried—as she always did—not to stare at the intricate knot-work carvings that adorned the bare skull of her master.

"Those we watch first left Vesh on behalf of the Vigils to seek the library of Hedrad. They wished to research the Amphora, hoping to learn its true nature."

A dry wheeze like the rush of wind, not quite a chuckle, sounded from the thing on the throne. "They might simply have asked," he complained sarcastically.

"Umm... Indeed." The sorceress blinked once, and continued. "On the road, we succeeded in planting on them the scrying focus that I have used to watch them since."

"And you are certain you remain undetected when you do so?"

"Yes, Master. The *Lidded Eye* prevents even the most adept of them from sensing my presence."

Satisfied, the Autumn King waved a bony hand, inviting further information.

"They were intercepted en route, my lord, by Hedrada's Taurosphinx. The Law-god's irritating beast sent them back the other way, toward the ruins of Sky Keep in the Kelder Mountains. There they sought the Vault of Chardun, which held a tome to provide the information they required."

No chuckle this time, but a full throated laugh, though it was no laugh like any human being could produce. "Irritating beast, is it? You've been with me too long, Tirran. Your contempt for the gods is growing thick." He paused. "Nonetheless, irritating or no, he did set their feet on the path we wanted..."

With a crack like the snapping of dry twigs, Ilkuthsra cocked his fleshless head to one side. "There was a storm," he rasped thoughtfully, "that reversed the Hornswythe's flow. That, too, must have been the gods, Enkili or some other, speeding their lackeys' progress. Fascinating that they would involve themselves so soon and so directly." Bare teeth clicked together rapidly as the ancient druid performed what in him passed for a grin. "But do continue, O Master Storyteller."

"It is a simple enough tale, really. Although some witch-children of the Mother made to stop them, even going so far as to sink their ship in the Blood Basin, they made their way to the peak of Mount Croiganne and the ruins of Sky Keep. There they defeated both the Red Witch called Tears Of Her Enemies and the guardian of the Vault. Furthermore, due to the rat-kins' carelessness, they learned the name of the Mother's agent among the Vigils. Not only did they return to Vesh with the tome, they exposed the Lady of Serpents as well."

"So..." the Autumn King rumbled. "They now know precisely what the Serpent Amphora is. I presume they now seek a means of destroying it?"

"Just so."

The sockets of the Autumn King's eyes were no longer empty, but now glowed a phosphorescent yellow, a color reminiscent of sickness and slow decay. With the sharp retort of a breaking bone, a single word echoed through the musty chamber...

"Perfect."

Using the information found in the Vault of Chardun in the ruins of Sky Keep, the PCs are sent to Lageni to discover the true ritual mentioned in the text, which will allow them to destroy the Amphora



Serpent in the Fold

The above encounter between the Autumn King and his sorcerous lieutenant serves as an introduction for GMs new to the Serpent Amphora Cycle, but it contains only the most basic overview of past events. The events described above occur in **Serpent in the Fold**, the first full-scale adventure in the Serpent Amphora Cycle, which introduces the characters to the Serpent Amphora and the machinations of the servitors of Mormo. (The prelude to the Cycle, **The Serpent Amphora**, can be downloaded for free from www.swordsofceremony.com.)

and its contents. On the way, they learn they are being spied upon, and may even identify the culprits as the Dar al Annot.

At the temple of a High Priest of Chardun, the PCs discover that the ritual is known to have been recorded only among in the works of Marilvaz, an ancient sage, wizard, and priest of Chardun. Marilvaz died shortly after the Divine War, but mere death could not stop him — he simply pursued his life's goals in undeath, demanding of his slave-apprentices that the entirety of his works be inscribed into the walls of his tomb. Only once this task was complete did he allow himself his eternal rest.

The Serpent Amphora

Very little is capable of harming the Serpent Amphora. There is little need of game statistics for this vessel — its hardness is beyond quantification in mortal terms and it resists all damaging magic used on it. It does not radiate magic, although to spells that detect the presence of evil, it certainly does detect as such; however, it also detects as an item of law, leading sages who have studied it to conclude that they are in fact detecting the power of Chardun that seals the Amphora, rather than any malign influence or power the vessel itself may have.

By the same token, the Amphora does not negate non-damaging magic used on it or against those carrying it. Such spells can be used on it freely; indeed, the asaathi have in the past used tactics including *grease cantrips* to extract it from their foes' clutches and *mage hand* to bring it into their own hands. It is simply unaffected by any powers that would alter its form, whether by transmutation or damage. Sages have theorized that this is because Chardun imbued great powers of stasis into it — it is forever unchanging, at least by the powers mortals can bring to bear.

An Unseen Hand

For those who do not have **Serpent in the Fold**, a brief introduction to one of the players behind the scenes is in order.

In the darkest reaches of Khet, deep in the thickest part of the forest, dwells the creature named Illkuthsra, called by some the Autumn King. Those who have seen Illkuthsra say that his visage is that of a fleshless, dried skull inscribed with serpentine, twisted knotwork.

That Illkuthsra is a druid of immense power, none can deny. He is too old to be mortal, although even the druids of Khet cannot say with certainty precisely what he is. "Lich," say some, "Undead." Others believe him to be a dark creature of the fey, the likes of which has not been seen since well before the Titanswar. The Autumn King is an enigma even to his fellow druids in both deed and form; he seems to share their goals, yet he spends as much time working toward his own as he does cooperating with them. He commands his own faction of the cannibal druids of Khet called the Bringers of Autumn, yet even they are ignorant of his true ambitions.

Illkuthsra has been observing the party for some time. (If the PCs did not go through **Serpent in the Fold**, his agents instead picked them up when they departed Vesh and entered Calastia.) For reasons of

his own, he is intrigued by their activities. More strange still, despite the fact that the party must oppose the goals of the Cannibals of Khet, is the fact that Illkuthsra seems to want them to succeed!

Tirran, the sorceress who points out the Dar al Annot's crows to the party in Chapter One of this adventure, is Illkuthsra's right-hand woman. The ivy-laden corpses on the ledge outside Marilvaz's Tomb were some of his "vinedead," constructs created from skeletons using vines and other plants of the forest. (If your group played **Serpent in the Fold**, their characters may recognize the vinedead from a past encounter.) It is the vinedead, directed by Illkuthsra's servants, that destroyed Marilvaz's undead guardians at the entrance to his Tomb (as well as intercepting other attacks the Dar al Annot launched at the party throughout the journey to Castle Dum). Some are destroyed by the undead there; the rest depart before the PCs arrive, returning to their master. They could not proceed further, for they lack the intelligence to circumvent any of the ancient sage's tricks and traps. Still, Illkuthsra did what he could to at least open the door for the party, as it were.

Why would Illkuthsra seek to aid these interlopers? None but he can say. At least for the moment, the inscrutable Autumn King will keep his secrets...

The heroes enter the Tomb of Marilvaz and are beset by undead guardians and various traps, left by Marilvaz to weed out all but the most worthy. They discover that the tomb contains many spells in addition to the ritual they seek — and that the ritual itself is written in the Infernal tongue. Whether or not they can read it, their only viable option is to take the many hours necessary to copy it all down in a more portable fashion. While they do so, the tomb is invaded by a band of Dar al Annot, a group too powerful for the heroes to challenge directly. However, the heroes might be able to use the tomb itself against their enemies...

If they survive, the party finally returns to Vesh with the true ritual.

Although intended for parties who have already completed the **Serpent in the Fold** adventure, **The Serpent & the Scepter** can stand alone or even serve as the beginning of a longer campaign. If the PCs have no previous experience with the Amphora, they may still be approached by the Vigils, who require assistance in seeking a means to destroy this artifact of evil. (The DM may decide how the Vigils obtained the Amphora in this instance.) Alternatively, the party might stumble onto a group of Vigils already

pursuing the quest, and agree to take up the burden when the Vigils are slain by servants of Mormo (as heroic NPCs so often are in these stories).

Getting Started

At the opening of **The Serpent & the Scepter**, it is assumed that the party is in Vesh. If they've just completed **Serpent in the Fold**, this makes sense, as they have just recently helped prevent (or at least hinder) the theft of the Serpent Amphora by a traitor amongst the Vigils. This situation also provides a strong link with the Vigils, and a good reason why they might approach the party for help yet again.

If your group has not played **Serpent in the Fold**, they might be in Vesh for any number of reasons. It's vital, though, that they have some strong connection with the Vigils, or at least with a prominent member of that organization.

In either case, the party will be approached by a messenger who bears a token marked with a stylized sun, one sword above and another below it. A successful Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Knowledge (local: Vesh), or Intelligence check (DC 10) will allow a character to recognize the symbol as incorporating the Vigilant Sun heraldry of Vesh. Those who

make a Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or Knowledge (local: Vesh) check (DC 12) will recognize the seal as being that of the Home Commander, the leader of Vesh. Of course, if the characters have just completed **Serpent in the Fold**, they most likely know this symbol already.

If the heroes have been through the events of the previous module, the messenger says, "I'm sorry to disturb you, my friends, but Commander Durn requests an audience immediately. There's a problem regarding the— ahem... the, uh, item you've been investigating for him."

If, on the other hand, the party has not been involved with the Amphora to date, the messenger begins by asking for a specific member of the group (i.e., whoever has the closest relationship with the Vigils). Once he has identified the right character, he says, "I'm sorry to disturb you, but Lord Kelemis Durn, Home Commander of the Vigils, requests an audience with you immediately. He's learned that you are in town, and he needs your help. Would you grant us a bit of your time?"

The remainder of this sequence — and indeed, the remainder of the module — assumes that the party agrees to speak with Durn.

Nearly anyone in town can point the PCs to the Hall of Command, the palatial villa that overlooks the Grand Square. Once used as the Emperor of

Lede's palace when he vacationed in the Vascan province of Old Lede, designed exclusively for comfort and beauty, the Hall of Command now houses a number of offices used by various officials in the government of Vesh.

The PCs again meet the Majordomo, Trophion (*male human, Rgr4/Rog4/Vig1, NG*), who guides them into the Sun Room, a large and beautiful chamber with huge picture windows that contain flecks of mica, so that when the sun shines into the room its rays are split into glittering golden spangles. (For more information on Trophion and the Hall of Command, see **Serpent in the Fold**.)

Meeting Kelemis Durn

Waiting in the Sun Room is Kelemis Durn (*male human, Rgr6/Ftr6/Vig5, NG*), who is still recovering from his death at the hands of his traitorous lieutenant Amra Varith, who attempted to steal the Amphora. If the players are new to the Serpent Amphora Cycle, the first thing he does is give a very brief summary of the events of **The Serpent Amphora** and **Serpent in the Fold** (as described above). He then explains that the adventurers who retrieved the tome from the Vault of Chardun are unavailable to assist him right now. If the party has been involved to this point, he of course refrains from summarizing what they already know.

In either case, he continues as follows.



Chapter One:

Audience With the Archfiend

Assuming the party accepts the Home Commander's quest, little remains for them to do but get to it — and Kelemis Durn is quick to remind them that time is of the essence.

If they've any need to restock supplies or replace equipment before departing, they have one day to do so. They are to set out the next day on a brief overland trek toward Denev's Aquifer (the lake at Vesh's southwest border, just west of the Mourning Marshes). Durn will arrange to have a river-worthy boat awaiting them.

A Pleasant Stroll in the Country

The journey to Denev's Aquifer is quite relaxing and peaceful. The plains of southern Vesh aren't the most scenic, but the weather is mild, the breeze refreshing, the sky blue, and the hike itself an easy one, with the occasional bird or small animal to be seen. (The DM should be sure to include such subtle references to animals when describing the scene, although without emphasizing or drawing attention to them. They're important later.)

If the DM wishes to throw a brief side adventure at the party, this is a good time to do so. There are plenty of people in this region with whom to interact, as messengers and merchants often travel this route to reach Burok Torn and Durrover. In fact, the heroes might even make some extra coin by hiring on as guards with one of the merchant caravans for at least part of the trip.

Perhaps the only downside to this trek is that it's a long one: over two weeks by standard means of travel.

Game is scarce on the Blood Steppes due to the plethora of predators throughout most of the region and the number of travelers on the few regular routes. Edible plant life, such as wild red cabbage, tubers, and bitter grasses, exist despite the harsh terrain.

The terrain through which the PCs must pass is sharp and rocky, boasting myriad outcroppings, hills, and crevices. It looks nasty, but a traveler would have to be particularly careless — at least in this part of the Steppes — to fall or otherwise injure herself.

Other than any side adventures, however, or the occasional wandering monster, the journey to Denev's Aquifer is largely untroubled.

Any PC who actually makes a point of watching for them sees crows in the sky on a regular basis throughout the journey. Of course, crows are quite common, and the flock they see around the lake is certainly not the same one they saw leaving Vesh. After all, there's no reason for crows to follow them... right?

The Lake, the River, and the Steppes

As promised, a small troupe of Vigils stands watch over a boat moored at the northeast shore of Denev's Aquifer. The Vigilants do not know what mission the party is on: they were simply told to wait here for a party fitting the characters' description. They will insist on seeing the sigil of the Home Commander, but once the party has produced it, they happily turn over the boat and begin the march home.

Denev's Aquifer

The boat itself is just barely large enough for the entire party and their equipment. (If the party was riding horses to this point, the Vigilants will offer to take the animals back to Lave and hold them until the heroes' return.) Even were there room for a mast and sail — which there is not — the breeze isn't strong enough to provide propulsion. The party is going to have to row, although they at least have the benefit of moving with the current once they reach the Eni.

Depending upon the number of party members strong enough to row, it takes a few days to cross the lake, and just about a week to reach the point on the river just east of Castle Durn. (A small fishing village is located there.)

As they cross the lake, the breeze picks up a bit (though still not enough to make a sail worthwhile). It's colder than it was, and carries with it the faint tang of the lake itself. Days aren't bad, but the nights grow uncomfortably (but not dangerously) chilly due to the wet wind. Ripples in the lake suggest fish or other larger creatures, but nothing rises from the depths to disturb the party's passage.

Beyond that, the days are still fairly pretty. Although it has grown cloudier than during the journey from Lave, a Wilderness Lore check (DC 12) indicates that no inclement weather is brewing, at least not yet.

Wandering Monsters of the Blood Steppes

D%Day	D%Night	Encounter (# Appearing)	CR	EL*	Source
01–05	01–05	Acid shamblers (2d4)	2	4	CC2
06–07	06–13	Bat devils (4)	1/2	3	CC
–	14–18	Bat devils (3d4)	1/2	5	CC
08–17	19–33	Cathedral beetles (2)	1	6	CC
18–22	34–38	Celestians (2)	1	6	CC
23–27	39–43	Coal goblins (5)	1/2	3	CC
28–32	–	Crescent elk herd (5d6)	1	8	CC
33–37	44–46	Dread ravens (3)	3	6	CC
38–42	47–51	Flesh strippers (10d4)	1/4	5	CC2
43–52	52–56	Hill howler [8 HD] (1)	4	4	CC
53–57	57–59	Gray render (1)	8	8	MM
58–62	62–66	Manticora pride (1d4+4)	1	5	CC
63–67	67–71	Mock dragon (1)	4	4	CC
68–77	–	Scythe falcons (5)	1	5	CC
78–80	72–78	Spider-eye goblins (13)**	1	6	CC
81–90	79–83S	pire wyvern (1)	4	4	CC
91–95	84–86	Giant wolf-spider [7 HD] (1)	4	4	CC
96–00	87–00	Worgs (2)	2	4	MM

CC — Creature Collection.

CC2 — Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie.

MM — Core Rulebook III.

*Where a dice roll is listed under “# Appearing” (as opposed to a single number), the EL has been determined using the average result of the applicable roll.

**This spider-eye goblin raiding band is led by a 3rd-level warrior. There are no spider mounts with the group.

Note: Where monsters' CR stats on this table differ from those in the source referenced, this table takes precedence.

Birds wheel about beneath the clouds, riding the currents of the wind as it is channeled between the eastern and western peaks of the Kelder Mountains.

A Spot check (DC 18) is required to recognize the birds as crows against the backdrop of the clouds at this distance; any character with at least 5 ranks in Knowledge (nature) gains a +2 synergy bonus for the purpose of this particular check. If the crows are noted, a Knowledge (nature) check (DC 10) or a Wilderness Lore check (DC 14) is required to realize that this is an unusual place for crows to fly: scavengers and carrion eaters of their sort rarely

travel over large bodies of water if they can help it, as there is little for them to eat. Still, winter isn't too far off, and the drafts between the mountains make flying south an easy proposition. Perhaps they're simply off to an early start on the winter migration?

Should the party attempt to attack the crows, the flock scatters, squawking madly.

The Eni River

The pace of the journey picks up drastically here, as the party suddenly has the currents of the Eni —

All Right, What's Going On?

Except for a few random encounters, the party hasn't encountered anything nasty on this trip. Why is that?

Well, it's partly because of their method of travel. Not many dangerous creatures frequent the waters of Denev's Aquifer or the Eni River, since traffic is relatively frequent and — being composed largely of merchants — usually well armed and protected. Of course, there's more to it than just that.

In terms of plot and story, the Dar al Annot have been spying on the characters since they left Lave. (The crows are their eyes and ears.)

The druids have launched several ambushes aimed at the heroes, but none of them have reached the party. The Bringers of Autumn, a splinter faction of the Cannibals of Khet who serve the undead druid Ilkuthsra, have so far prevented the agents of the Dar al Annot from attacking the party. Ilkuthsra, for his own reasons, *wants* the heroes to find the ritual they seek. The Autumn King's motives in all this remain inscrutable, and the PCs will probably never even know he is involved.

The other reason for making the journey so (relatively) peaceful, of course, is to provide sharp contrast to the horrors the heroes will be forced to witness when they have to travel overland through the lands of Lageni.

strong if not particularly swift — to speed them on their way. Despite the increase in speed, however, a Spot check (DC 15 if the character is actively watching the sky to the rear, 25 otherwise) detects distant crows in the light of day. (They are hanging well back, and are invisible at night.)

The terrain alongside the river grows bleak and rocky as the Eni cuts its way through the Blood Steppes. The heroes have a right to be nervous here. The inhabitants of the Steppes are nasty, dangerous creatures, and while some are unwilling or unable to assault invaders on the river, others will not be stopped by so minor a barrier as some running water.

Save for the occasional random encounter, however, the week (give or take) spent on the Eni is as uneventful as the rest of the journey has been to date.

Kulomi

A village so small it fails to appear on most maps, Kulomi survives by fishing the Eni and by serving those merchants and soldiers who pass through on their way to or from Castle Durm. The only buildings of any note are the inn — a ramshackle, rundown sort of place that doesn't even have a name — and the blacksmith who repairs weapons and armor for passing soldiers. Characters may hire him for any such repair work at standard rates.

The citizens of Kulomi are accustomed to boats stopping at their tiny piers to unload messengers, prisoners, and military supplies for the castle. The party, unless they openly proclaim their connections with the Vigils, will go largely unmolested. (The soldiers under Major Mavoth might eye them warily, and might even halt them for brief questioning, but will let them pass with any halfway reasonable answers and explanations.)

Old Worrow, as she's called, is the woman in charge of Kulomi's tiny docks. The old crone demands a fee to store the party's boat when they arrive, or else, she cackles, "I cannot guarantee its safety from thieves and vandals." If the party refuses to pay, Worrow will

Kulomi (hamlet)

Power Center: Nonstandard

Alignment: LE

Wealth: 100 gp limit; 1,750 gp assets.

Population: 347 (362 counting the garrison); human.

Authority Figures: Major Mavoth (*male human, Ftr6, LE*) of Duke Traviak's military.

Notable Characters: Shurras (*female human, Com3, N; barkeep*), Gurt Smith (*male human, Exp7, NE; blacksmith*), Old Worrow (*female human, Com4, NE; dock-keeper*).

Notable Locations: The inn, the blacksmith's shop.

sell the boat, and then insist, should the PCs return later on, that it was stolen. (She has friends in town who will corroborate her story, even though it's a lie.) If they pay her less than 5 gold, she won't sell the boat, but she won't bother watching it; the DM can decide what the odds are that the boat (or its contents) will be stolen. For more than 5 gp, she declares it off limits, and it'll actually be there, untouched, should the party return.

The March to Castle Durm

No wandering monsters are encountered here. The route between Kilomi and Durm is too heavily patrolled.

The weather has turned cloudier still, but a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 11) suggests that no storm is actually brewing. The weather is blustery and threatening, but ultimately without teeth.

As the party moves further east, the condition of the path improves until it quickly becomes an actual road. Various small towns and farmsteads occupy the plains through which the heroes pass, and the party must share the road with occasional groups of travelers, generally merchants and soldiers. Assuming a standard rate of overland travel, the PCs will take about five days to reach the castle. (The travel time is shortened slightly by the well-maintained and smooth condition of the road.)

The Shadow of Duke Traviak

Around mid-afternoon on their second day of travel, the heroes spot a single figure atop a small rise in the road ahead of them. Staggering in their direction from the east, he keeps to the side of the road, and glances constantly over his shoulder. He's clearly running from something. His name, although the party cannot know this yet, is Zedris (*male human, War4, LN*).

As he draws near, the PCs observe that he's been badly treated. His clothes are in bloody tatters, his face is battered and bruised, and his body is covered in minor wounds. Any character who succeeds in a Spot check (DC 10) realizes that the tatters of his outer tunic, now almost unrecognizable, seems to have been the uniform of a Lageni soldier!

Whether or not the party moves to help him, Zedris spots them and begins limping toward them, arms outstretched as though begging for aid. Unfortunately, in his sudden excitement, he collapses before he reaches them (or just as they reach him), exhaustion and his wounds overcoming him.

Zedris is in no immediate danger of dying, but he's definitely in a bad state. PCs may choose to aid him either with spells or more mundane healing. If they do so, he'll start awake, his eyes darting back and forth.

"Quickly!" he rasps, his voice hoarse. "You've got to get off the road! If they see you with me—"

It is, of course, too late. Whether or not he's awakened, a patrol of soldiers crests the same rise over which Zedris himself just came. Numbering 20 and mounted on war horses, they clearly outmatch the party.

As they near, the soldiers rein their horses to a slow walk. Their leader is a broad-shouldered man with a shaven head, clad in the black plate armor of the Black Dragoons, Traviak's elite soldiers.

Stopping his horse some 10 feet from the heroes, he gives them a haughty, dismissive look. "My name," he announces in a voice like fingernails on slate, "is Colonel Gihjan. The man you stand over is a wanted fugitive from Duke Traviak's justice. May I assume that you have stopped him here with intent of turning him over?"

This is a sticky situation. Simply turning the man over to the Black Dragoons — notorious for their immense cruelty — may well go against everything good characters believe in. It's vital that the DM make it very clear that the party is *vastly* overpowered here; they have almost no chance if they attempt to battle the patrol. (If they try, Gihjan's stats, as well as those of his highly trained troops, can be found below. They number 20 in total.) The best they could hope for would be a quick death; the worst, capture and torture in Traviak's dungeons. In either case, the quest would be finished before it truly began.

Gihjan doesn't take being questioned well. If the party asks what Zedris did, he snaps, "Disobeyed the lawful orders of an officer of Lageni — as you are dangerously close to doing now." The set of his jaw makes it very clear that he's not going to say anything else, except possibly to order an attack.

If the party turns Zedris over, Gihjan smiles at them. "Wise choice. I'll have to ask you to accompany us briefly. We need merely take him back to the site of his crimes so he may be judged. It's not far, and you appear to be headed that way anyway. If you're actually his accomplices, we'll find out, and you'll be dealt with. If, however, you really are travelers who happened to come across him, you'll be free to go, with the thanks of the Black Dragoons for your aid."

Again, the party doesn't really have many options. Fortunately, the site of Zedris' "crime" is less than two miles away, and it does indeed lie along the road toward the east. As long as the characters are wise enough not to speak of anything suspicious on the way, the soldiers are cordial to them, if not friendly.

The Farmstead

After an awkward and uncomfortable hike, the soldiers lead the PCs off the road into a field of wheat, and eventually, after a few moments of pushing through the high stalks, into a large open pasture. Gathered within are yet more soldiers — perhaps 10 more, at a quick count — and over a dozen men, women, and children in the rustic garb of farmers. Two soldiers watch over one of the families in particular, all of

whom are shackled together at the ankles. The other soldiers have apparently just completed construction of a wooden framework of some sort. The manacles hanging from the crossbar at the top make it clear that the structure has no farming application.

"Wait here," Colonel Gihjan orders the PCs, and he waves several of the guards over to make sure the strangers comply. One of the soldiers who approaches is not one of those who accompanied the colonel to find Zedris, but rather one of those who were already here when the PCs arrived.

As Gihjan begins chaining Zedris to the frame, the soldier sidles up beside one or two of the heroes. "How did you poor devils get caught up in this?" he whispers from the corner of his mouth.

The soldier's name is Amiric (*male human, War4, LN*), and he's not happy about what's happening here. The party has time to ask him a handful of questions, discreetly, before Gihjan has completed his preparations. The GM will, of course, have to improvise based on the specific questions, but Amiric can provide the following information in response to the proper questions.

- **Who are these people? Why are they here?**

"These poor people don't deserve what's happening. They've been gathered up from all the neighboring farmsteads for one of the Colonel's..." His jaw works as though he's fighting back the urge to spit. "... 'lessons in obedience'."

- **What crime did Zedris commit? Why is that family in chains?**

"Well, that chained family over there? The old man said something to the Colonel he didn't like. I'm not sure what it was — wasn't close enough to hear it. Anyway, he started whipping him, bad. After a few minutes, the man's daughter — that girl there — screamed at him, called him something you don't *ever* want to call one of the Dragoons.

"The Colonel was furious! He ordered the nearest soldier to..."

Amiric needs prompting to continue.

"He ordered the nearest soldier to ravish the girl, in front of her father, and then slit her throat. That was poor Zedris, and he just couldn't do it. Wouldn't want to meet the man who could. I mean, I've seen battlefield rapes before, and I'm not real fond of that, but on *orders*? As *punishment*?! That's not the kind of war Chardun espouses, and not why I signed up, you know?"

"Well, Zedris tried to run. Some of the guys tried to grab him and beat at him, but he made it through. That's when the Colonel ordered some of us to build that frame while he took the others and chased him down."

- **If Gihjan is so vile, why don't you all do something about him?**

"Not going to happen, friends. See, only some of us hate him enough to even consider a mutiny — and I'm not even saying I'm one of them, if anybody asks — so there

wouldn't be enough of us. Besides, the penalties for attacking a superior officer, let alone one of the Dragoons, make what almost happened to that girl look pleasant. Wouldn't suggest you folks try anything either. Most of the soldiers, whether or not they like the Colonel, would fight to protect him. Duty and all, or self-preservation. I'd have to, too, even though Zedris was a friend of mine, and I really don't want to do that."

Crime and Punishment

At this point — whenever the DM decides it's dramatically appropriate and the PCs have received enough information — Gihjan steps back from the frame. Zedris hangs spread-eagled, suspended by his wrists, his legs lashed to the sides. It looks horribly uncomfortable, and blood has already begun to well out from beneath the manacles.

"This," Gihjan announces, turning to address everyone present, "is the fate of all traitors to Duke Traviak and the chain of command!"

He then turns, his eyes gleaming coldly, toward the shackled family. "You people," he rasps, "drew the rightful wrath of a Black Dragoon. I'm within my rights to execute you along with the traitor."

He pauses a moment, to let that sink in. "However," he continues, "I am prepared to be merciful. After all, you exposed a much more dangerous criminal in my own ranks by your actions."

He gestures with a black-gauntleted hand, and the nearby soldiers unlock the family's manacles. A second gesture, and the soldiers step back — having somehow produced a small pile of stones and heavy branches where the PCs couldn't see it.

Amiric swallows. "You folks may want to turn away," he says to the PCs.

"The sentence for treason is death," Gihjan announces, his voice ringing. "Prove your loyalty to Duke Traviak," he tells the newly freed family, "and your own sentence is deferred."

And as the heroes watch, the man Gihjan whipped, his daughter who was nearly raped and brutally murdered, and all the others in their family slowly, with dead and empty eyes, pick up the rocks and sticks. Over the next few minutes, to a ghastly chorus of crunches and screams, Zedris is beaten to death by the very people he couldn't bring himself to harm. By the time they're through, the pulped mass on the frame hardly resembles a man.

The heroes may want to interfere — they *should* want to — but they should also remember the consequences. (If they begin to move forward or reach for weapons, Amiric hisses at them, "Stop, gods damn it! You can't help him! You can't!" Remind the PCs that Gihjan has 29 soldiers with him. If the heroes insist on fighting, stats for the colonel and his soldiers can be found below, and all 29 will fight, even Amiric. In fact, the more decent soldiers will be among the first to attack and the most deadly, as they will want to see the PCs killed rather than captured and tortured.)



When it's over, Gihjan mounts his horse and reins the beast about to stare at the PCs. "Zedris confirmed on the way back," he tells them, "that you were a chance encounter, not collaborators. The fact that you made no attempt to save him proves it. You're free to go." He then summons his soldiers around him and begins issuing orders. So far as he's concerned, the PCs are already gone.

However, Amiric makes a point of catching up with them as they're leaving. He looks around nervously, but his jaw is set. He's come to a decision.

"It turns out," he informs the heroes in a hoarse whisper, "that the Colonel is splitting us up, with orders to look for any further dissenters in the nearby farmsteads. He himself is heading back to Castle Durm to make a report — and he's only taking two men with him." He pauses. "I just thought you'd want to know."

With that, Amiric returns to his unit without a backwards glance. Sharper players will realize immediately what he's suggesting, and will no doubt be happy to comply.

Other Encounters

The following events occur in the remaining three days of travel to Castle Durm. They can occur in any order, and at any time the DM wishes within those three days.

So, We Meet Again

Encounter Level: 7 (or 8)

Gihjan and his escorts are ahead of the party, and they're on horseback. It doesn't seem likely that the heroes could catch up with him to inflict some much-needed retribution, but they do. The Colonel has been stopping at the occasional farmhouse and homestead to "question" the citizens. (He's convinced himself that some sort of underground rebel movement exists in this area.) The PCs may encounter him on a straight stretch of roadway, a hillier patch of terrain, near a copse of trees — whatever the GM thinks will make for the best and most memorable encounter; she may even wish to let the heroes set up an ambush, if they think to do so.

If they're wise, the heroes know that they can't afford to be seen, or to let even one of the trio escape and report back. If Gihjan or any of his escort does escape, the PCs can expect to be arrested, detained, tortured, and executed when they arrive at Castle Durm. (This can, of course, make for a great beginning to a prison-break story, but that lies outside the scope of this adventure.)

Of course, nothing is *forcing* the heroes to attack Gihjan. They may feel it vital to continue in their mission without such risk-taking, or they may be of a more mercenary bent and simply see no profit in doing so. In this case, they simply pass the trio of soldiers on the road, drawing some unusual looks but nothing more.

A Well-Informed Traveler

As the heroes make their way down the road, they are met by another traveler coming the other way. This is nothing unusual — the road, while not precisely busy, is far

from empty — but the woman herself is quite unusual. (Unusual even beyond the fact that she appears to be a remarkably attractive young woman traveling alone.) Her dark hair is tied back in a long braid, and she wears obviously old but well-maintained traveling leathers. She wears a light mace at her side, but is otherwise unarmed.

As she passes the party, she nods a polite greeting — and then stops, staring above and behind them.

"Odd," she says. "Those are northern crows. The crows that live around here are larger, with more of a curve to the beak. I wonder what they're doing this far south?"

Even at their most obvious, the crows were never near enough for the party to make out that sort of detail, so they

Colonel Gihjan and Soldiers

Colonel Gihjan, Black Dragoon Colonel, male human Ftr6: CR 6; SZ Medium-size humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 6d10+18; hp 56; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (full plate); AC 20 (+8 full plate, +2 large steel shield); Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+5, 19–20/x2 crit, masterwork longsword); AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 11, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Handle Animal +3, Hide +0*, Jump +3*, Knowledge (military tactics) +3, Knowledge (religion) +3, Ride +7, Spot +3. *These skills have been modified for the skill check penalty of Gihjan's masterwork full plate.

Feats: Cleave, Endurance, Great Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Languages: Calastian, Ledean.

Possessions: Masterwork black full plate, masterwork large steel shield, masterwork longsword. (Gihjan's *dragoon crossbow* was recently damaged in combat, and he's not yet had it replaced.)

Soldiers, Black Dragoon Recruits, male human War4 (2): CR 3 (each); SZ Medium-size humanoid; HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (breastplate); AC 18 (+1 Dex, +5 breastplate, +2 large steel shield); Atk +8 melee (1d8+3, 19–20/x2 crit, longsword), +5 ranged (1d10, 19–20/x2 crit, 120 ft., heavy crossbow); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills: Handle Animal +0, Intimidate +6, Ride +8, Spot +3. **Feats:** Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Masterwork black breastplate, large steel shield, longsword, heavy crossbow, 20 bolts.

Horse, Heavy War (3): CR 2; SZ Large animal; HD 4d8+12; hp 34, 31, 28; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk 2 hooves +6 melee (1d6+4), bite +1 melee (1d4+2); Face 5 ft. by 10 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7.

Note: If the PCs manage to catch the soldiers without their warhorses, the EL of the encounter is 7; if the soldiers are mounted or can make use of their horses, it's 8.

Crows? What Crows?

It's possible the party became suspicious of the crows earlier and has already scattered them via some form of magic or ranged attack. If so, the GM may decide whether the flock reformed and follows the party again — in which case Tirran points them out as above — or whether the Dar al Annot now makes use of a different sort of animal. In the latter case, replace her comment about the crows with a similar comment about whatever animal you've chosen.

may turn and look, expecting them to be much closer. They're not; in fact, they're barely visible as a cloud-like mass on the horizon. If the characters do turn away to look at the crows, the woman is gone when they turn back around. Otherwise, she simply continues on her way, ignoring any questions, and disappears as soon as she's out of the party's line of sight. (If they try to detain her, she vanishes before their eyes on her first action, with nary a gesture.)

The woman is Tirran Orroko, one of the Autumn King's most capable servants, although the party has now way of knowing this. (No stats are given for Tirran, as there is very little PCs of this level might do to keep her from vanishing, using a *teleport* spell contained within her *ring of spell storing*.) At her master's command, Tirran is subtly trying to warn the party that they're being spied upon. The crows are, in fact, spies for the Dar al Annot. The party may not be able to do anything about it, but at least they now know to keep their eyes open.

Castle Durm

Finally, after too many days in this depressing and oppressive land, the characters draw near their destination. After one look at Castle Durm, though, they might well be tempted to turn back.

The castle, constructed of heavy gray stone, sits atop a lonely hill in the midst of an otherwise flat plain; the capital city of Durm is visible some thousand yards further east. Rather than the tall, craggy fortress one might expect from a man of the Archduke's reputation, the castle is low, almost stubby. Its watchtowers are high enough, however, to spot any incoming enemy — and even if they are not, half a dozen independent guard towers, built hundreds of yards away from the main structure, overlook all possible avenues of approach. The castle's outer walls are themselves almost 30 feet high, be-decked with guard turrets and nasty barbs and spikes, and they are constantly patrolled.

A well-maintained path diverges from the main road and runs to the main gates of the castle, meandering between several ridges and heaps of stone that were clearly placed as impediments to attackers. After several unneces-

sary zigs and zags through the rocks — no doubt intended both to break any incoming cavalry charges and to keep anyone coming up the path in the sights of the archers on the castle turrets — the roadway finally reaches the main gate.

Surprisingly enough, the heavy oaken doors stand wide open at the moment and the bronze portcullis is raised. However, a huge number of guards mill about the entrance, watched over by a similar number of archers on the walls. Additional soldiers, literally scores of them, occasionally show themselves through the gate or atop the walls. A line of people, some dressed as peasants but most clad in armor or fighting garb of some sort, winds back from the gate and down the path, almost to the main roadway. The heroes are going to have a long wait before they can even try to enter.

The Outer Gate

It takes the PCs 1d4+4 hours to reach the front of the line. The DM should keep track of when they arrived; if night falls before they reach the gates, one of the guards shouts, "That's all for today! Everybody else can come back tomorrow morning!" The gates are then slammed and barred, and the portcullis dropped. Unless the heroes want to try something foolish, they can simply find somewhere to camp for the night and try again in the morning.

Regardless of which day they finally reach the gate, one of the guards greets them with a brusque "State your business at Castle Durm!"

As long as they have a reasonable purpose, the guards admit them without any argument. The priesthood encourages the worship of Chardun, so if they say they're here to see the Archfiend, the guard directs them to the temple on the eastern side of the outer bailey. If they express an interest in joining up, he directs them to the nearest officer, and so forth.

On the other hand, if they claim they're here to see Duke Traviak, the guard scoffs. "The Duke's out on the front lines at the moment. And even if he weren't, he doesn't waste his time with the likes of you! If there's nothing one of the officers can do for you, be gone!"

The DM will have to decide if any other excuse or story is sufficient, but anything not blatantly false or ridiculous should do. The guards aren't too worried about admitting people into the fortress, since they've enough soldiers there to deal with anything smaller than a full-scale invasion.

The Bailey

The courtyard behind the outer wall is a chaotic mass of bustling activity and deafening noise. Soldiers and craftsmen run this way and that on errands that no doubt are absolutely urgent in their own minds.

If they're willing to do a little judicious shoving, the heroes can force their way to any one of the various secondary buildings that occupy the bailey. On their left is an enormous stone structure with multiple smoking chimneys, clearly a foundry and forge. Indeed, the blacksmiths

Don't Start Anything...

It's remotely possible that the players may try — for unfathomable reasons known only to them — either to fight their way into the castle, or to threaten or attack someone while inside. This qualifies as the worst sort of Very Bad Idea.

Any time they're at or near the gate, the heroes are watched by a foot patrol on the ground and a sniper patrol on the wall, as well as two officers, one with each group. (A single patrol consists of 6 soldiers and an officer.) Every 4 rounds, if the battle is outside the walls, or every 2 rounds if it's inside, an additional 2d4 soldiers, 1d3-1 officers and 1d3-1 clerics of Chardun arrive until the heroes are overwhelmed or somehow manage to escape. (See below for notes on the stats of typical soldiers, officers, and clerics of Chardun.) Literally hundreds of troops are inside Durm's outer walls, so there is little chance of the PCs actually winning this sort of engagement.

By the same token, sneaking into the castle rather than entering through the main gate is also a risky proposition. The walls are a difficult obstacle (Climb DC 25), and patrols are actually increased during the night. The tops of the wall are well lit by lanterns and torches. Furthermore, nobody except soldiers is moving about the place, instantly marking the characters as invaders. If they are caught, they are

therein constantly churn out weapons and armor for the duke's warriors. They've no time to accept any outside commissions, and rudely dismiss the PCs if asked.

Across the courtyard, the heroes will also see what appears to be an enormous stable, constructed — rather oddly — out of iron and stone, rather than the normal heavy wood. No animals can be seen going in or out, but the PCs might be vaguely troubled to note that the stables, like the forge, have multiple smoking chimneys. A successful Intelligence or Knowledge (local: Lageni) check (DC 10) means the character has heard of Traviak's fiendish and half-fiend steeds, and that this building must be where those creatures are kept.

The inner keep itself takes up the greater part of the bailey. Squat, ugly stone walls and round towers jut forth from the hilltop like cancerous growths. Unlike the secondary buildings, the PCs will not be allowed into the inner keep under any circumstances. The guards at the (closed) iron doors demand that they leave immediately no matter what story they tell, directing them to nearest officer if they have any complaints, and attacking them if they refuse to depart.

Any other reasonable structures — soldiers' barracks, smaller forges cranking out tools and horseshoes, leatherworkers, training fields and so forth — can also be found throughout the bailey if the heroes wish to wander about.

attacked until slain or subdued, with soldiers arriving each round as described above. Even if the PCs avoid detection, they'll have to find the Archfiend by trial and error, and he may not be all that happy to see them unannounced.

Typical warriors on guard duty in Castle Durm are male or female humans, all warriors of 2nd to 4th level, wearing breastplates and armed with longswords and large shields, as well as heavy crossbows; for ease of play, the GM may use the stats for the soldiers encountered with Colonel Gihjan, above.

Typical officers are male or female human fighters of 4th to 6th level. Again for simplicity's sake, use Colonel Gihjan's stats for a typical officer, but do add a heavy crossbow to his or her possessions. Alternately, many officers have *Dragoon crossbows*: each is a +1 *flaming light crossbow* that inflicts a *scare* effect in a 15-foot radius around the point of impact (Will DC 12).

Typical clerics of Chardun encountered here are male or female human clerics of 3rd to 5th level (use the NPC cleric stats found on Table 2-35 in the DMG; most have the Law and War domains), armed with warscepters (1d10, x3 crit; 15 lb). These Large, exotic bludgeoning weapons are etched with a thorny wreath encircling the weapon's head. The warscepter serves as the cleric's holy symbol.

The Temple of Chardun

After tiring themselves pushing through the crowd, the heroes finally reach the eastern side of the courtyard and the temple. From a distance, nothing differentiates it from any of the other structures; it's made largely of stone, has but a single storey, and resembles nothing so much as a large brick with a doorway, some windows and a chimney.

From nearby, however, one cannot doubt whose house this is. The double doors are banded in iron like the doors of the fortress itself. In the center of the doors — half on each one — is a bronze plaque which bears the bloody, thorn-wreathed scepter that is the Slaver's sigil.

At the moment, the doors are slightly ajar, and the sound of chanting comes from within. As the party approaches, several young men wearing white robes over breastplates come running and grab the nearest hero by the arm.

"You're just in time," the first one hisses. "The ceremony is about to start. Hurry, or they'll not admit you!"

Refusing will only draw attention and postpone their meeting with Fiarun the Archfiend. Although this decision has no major repercussions beyond inconvenience, they're better served by allowing themselves to be ushered into the temple, where they can take an uncomfortable seat in the last row of hard, stone benches. Other than the pews, the massive chamber is largely empty save for a raised altar at the front of



the room, and a huge fireplace in the wall behind it. Weapons of all sorts and tapestries depicting Chardun in combat against all manner of foes hang from the walls. Not counting the main entrance, two doors provide egress from the room, one on either side of the fireplace against the back wall. The temple is filled to perhaps two-thirds of its capacity, which means approximately 150 people are present.

Just as the heroes are seated, a tall, broad-shouldered man steps up before the altar. This, of course, is Archfiend Fiarun (*male human, Clr11, LE; Domination and War domains* — the Domination domain appears in *The Divine and the Defeated*, page 147). His beard is thick, red, and wild, but his hair is tied back in a warrior's queue. He wears black full plate — not entirely unlike that worn by the Black Dragons — with a white vestment, stained blood red at the bottom. His enormous, wickedly-flanged warscepter hangs at his waist.

“Greetings, O Faithful of Chardun!” he begins in his booming voice. What follows is two hours of vicious, bloody rhetoric (unless the listener is a follower of the Overlord, of course, in which case it’s a stirring, blood-boiling sermon). It addresses the need to grow strong by almost any means, the better to ward off the dangers of the world, and the rights — nay, duty — of the strong to dominate the weak are the topics of today’s service, as they are most every other day.

Excerpts are read from Chardun’s holy books and scriptures, telling of those who have waged war in his name. By the time it’s all over, most characters may be wondering how an entire sect can delude itself so, for the teachings of the Overlord clearly teach the creed of embracing evil and violence for the sake of defeating evil and violence! Fortunately, the other worshippers are too caught up in the service to notice the heroes’ lack of enthusiasm.

When it’s done, the Archfiend turns, bows to the altar, and then exits through the door to his left. The crowd slowly disperses, talking excitedly about the riveting sermon. If the PCs make their way toward the door through which the Archfiend disappeared, they receive a few wary glances from some in the crowd, but they aren’t disturbed.

The Audience

No guard stands outside the door. Unlike many officers in a military bureaucracy, Fiarun prefers to decide for himself who is and isn’t worth his time, rather than leaving the job to some underling. If the PCs knock, he calls out “Enter!” If they simply barge in, he scowls darkly at them and snaps, “As you’ve clearly forgotten your manners and I don’t know you, I can only assume

that either this is an emergency, or that you've developed a death wish. Which is it?"

The office itself is absolutely pristine. It contains nothing but a desk, several chairs, multiple maces and axes hanging from the walls, and the symbol of Chardun, the great warscepter painted over in dried blood, on the back wall.

Nothing can be gained by lying to the Archfiend. The heroes need information from him, which means they'll have to come out and ask. Assuming the PCs do indeed explain that they're seeking knowledge of a ritual for destroying powerful artifacts, he leans back in his chair and stares thoughtfully into space.

"And why," he asks, "would you seek such a thing?"

If given an answer of which he approves — for instance, the truth, that the heroes wish to destroy an artifact of Mormo — he nods. "Such a ritual does exist. The 'Song of Unmaking,' it was called. It was the work of Marilvaz, a sage, wizard, and priest of the Great General who died decades ago. A wise and powerful man, that one. After he died, he rose from the grave through sheer force of will, and demanded the workmen constructing his tomb expand the complex! He wished to have his greatest works inscribed on the very walls as a testament to his glory."

As he speaks, Fiarun develops a dangerous gleam in his eyes and speaks with greater fervor. Obviously, he approves of Marilvaz's actions from beyond the grave.

"It must have been glorious!" he continues with a grin. "The workmen weren't working fast enough for his tastes. He rounded up citizens from all the nearby towns and forced them to work as well, enslaving them to his will. It's said that the entire town of Vauldell was depopulated for an entire month, its whole population put to work for the glory of Marilvaz. In his tomb, and only there, could you find the ritual you seek."

Ashesays that last, the Archfiend's expression changes. Suddenly, he looks troubled. Presumably, the heroes will press him for more information — particularly the tomb's location. They may be shocked by his response.

"No," he mutters quietly, and then more loudly, "No! No, I'll not have the tomb of one of our greatest and most learned saints defiled by a band of nonbelievers! Not even to destroy one of the Bitch-Queen's relics! You'll have to find some other way."

No argument the PCs offer, however reasonable, will change Fiarun's mind. "If you're willing to swear fealty to the Great General," he offers, "and spend several years learning his ways and warring in his name, perhaps then I'll be inclined to tell you. If not, get out!"

There's little the heroes can do. Attacking the Archfiend is clearly not an option. He could probably destroy the party himself, in any case, to say nothing of the guards who will arrive in increments (see above) every other round as soon as Fiarun shouts for them — which he'll do as soon as battle begins.

Fortunately for the heroes, however, the Archfiend slipped up. Alert players will have caught his mention of the town called Vauldell. (If none of the players catch this, the GM may allow their characters Intelligence checks [DC 13] to see if they realize his error.) The tomb may not be located there, but it's clearly close by. Perhaps the town itself might offer more information?

After a bit of reflection, days later, Fiarun also realizes his mistake. He won't act on it immediately, but casts various divinations to determine if the party picked up on his slip. By the time he decides to act and is able to get away from his duties at Castle Durm, the events described in this adventure will have concluded. The Archfiend has a long memory, however, and will very likely move against the heroes at a later date if the opportunity arises — particularly if they remain in or near Marilvaz's tomb for too long. (See the Appendix.)

Vauldell

Asking for this town among the various people in or near Castle Durm yields a number of blank stares and rude dismissals, but eventually someone will be able to tell the PCs that Vauldell is a tiny town in the foothills of the Kelder Mountains, not quite 40 miles north of Durm itself. Even given the rocky terrain, that's only about three days' travel for a determined group.

The GM may, of course, choose to include random encounters during the party's hike north, but nothing of any real import happens during those three days, save that the sky — threatening bad weather for some time now — finally erupts in a slow but steady downpour, drenching the PCs from head to toe. If they're lucky (or perhaps make good Wilderness Lore checks), they'll find caves or overhangs in the foothills where they can make a semi-dry camp every night.

Late on the third day, the party crests a rise and catches their first glimpse of Vauldell. The term "town" is clearly an overstatement. Vauldell might once have been a thriving community. Now it's little more than a handful of independent homes and farmsteads that happen to share a central marketplace where the farmers trade and talk with one another.

They also share a single plot of land for use as a cemetery. As the heroes approach, they see a lone man dressed in wet, mud-stained clothes standing beside a wooden grave marker and a fresh pile of earth. This is Elam (*male human, Chr3, NG; Law and Protection domains*). A spade lies by his feet. He's an older man, gray haired and clean-shaven. Due to the rain and the fact that he appears to be occupied with praying, he doesn't hear the party approach unless they stop directly beside him or deliberately make their presence known. If the party does draw near, they overhear enough of his prayer to learn that this is no priest of Chardun, but rather of Hedrada!

He jumps a bit upon first becoming aware of the party, but quickly recovers himself. "My apologies for not noticing you sooner, good travelers," he offers. "I was praying for this

poor woman, died recently in childbirth. Sad, isn't it? My name is Elam. Is there something I can do for you? I fear Vauldell offers no inn, but perhaps one of the farmers might put you up for a few coins."

Again, the heroes really have little choice but to explain honestly what they seek, and Elam will certainly ask them why. If they give an answer of which he approves — such as destroying an artifact of *Mormo* — he'll be only too happy to help.

"Yes, I know the tomb of that cursed sage. That slave-driver! Vauldell never fully recovered from his oppression, even though it lasted only a few weeks. Most of the people moved away, not desiring to be so near his resting place — if he truly does rest.

"Good fellows, you need merely travel another ten miles north, or so, and perhaps a mile deeper into the foothills to the east. At that point, you will find a circular area free of hills, save for a single hill in the center, topped by a natural crown of rock. Search the western side of the slope: this is where Fiend Marilvaz made his final home. I wish you all the luck of the gods in wringing some good out of that wretched place."

Elam has little else of use he can tell the heroes, but his directions should be sufficient. It's quite late in the day, now. The priest recommends that the party hole up for the night and that they start fresh in the morning — he gives them the names of several of the farmers who may have extra rooms, and even offers to go with them and extend his recommendation.

The Hill

The rain, fortunately, has ceased by morning, although the sky remains overcast and the wind still blows. After yet another brief and uneventful trek, the heroes now stand at the base of an unassuming, rocky hill. The wind blows cold, stinging eyes and throats. A promontory of rock tops the rise, appearing not entirely unlike a crown atop a wizened, balding head. Still, if one didn't already know this was a special place, one would almost certainly pass it by, dismissing it along with all the other knolls and rises that make up the Kelder foothills.

But of course, it is special. For this hill contains the hidden Tomb of Marilvaz the scribe, wisest of the wise — a man with an ego so tremendously inflated that even death couldn't get the last word.

The GM should *not* roll any random encounter checks in this area.

Approaching the Tomb

The slope of the hill is relatively shallow. No Climb checks are required, and hikers shouldn't even have to use their hands unless they want to scramble over the rocks at the peak. The hillside is spotted with patches of scrub and coarse grasses, but consists largely of dirt and rocks. The stone at the top forms a flat surface, almost like a table, that juts some 5 feet above the slope of the hill. Sporadic holes and burrows house nothing more dangerous than an irate

fox, nervous lizard or, if the character is truly unlucky, a tiny venomous snake.

Once the heroes have climbed at least halfway (about 300 feet) up the hill on the western side, each character may attempt a Spot check (DC 20). Those who succeed notice a small ledge or shelf above them, near the top of the hill; they cannot see what might be on the ledge. Because of the surrounding rock, and the expert way the ledge was carved to blend in with its surroundings when viewed from below, it is virtually undetectable from the ground. If none of the characters notices the ledge at the halfway point of their climb, they may make repeated attempts every 50 feet farther, with a cumulative -1 to the DC of each subsequent check, until someone finally sees it.

It isn't difficult to climb up onto the ledge, although cautious players may assume that an ambush awaits them and thus take precautions. In fact, an ambush *did* await the unwary here, but other forces have conspired to make the party's task at least a little bit easier.

The Ledge

The wind is louder up here, although the bulk of the hill prevents anyone on the ledge from feeling anything but the faintest traces of breeze. The ledge itself is covered in the same pebbles and mud as the hillside, but with a surprising abundance of plant life.

A large cave, a nearly perfect semicircle, gapes open in the side of the hill, invisible from the ground because the ledge and surrounding rocks masked its presence. A strange hollow sound emanates from within; it's *probably* just the aforementioned breeze, whispering through the yawning maw.

Before entering, however, the characters will probably want to take a moment to examine the bones that lay scattered about the ledge by the cave entrance.

Over a dozen skeletons, some intact and some torn limb from limb, lay strewn about. Many have smashed skulls and cracked bones. Close examination reveals that these were almost certainly undead: all the signs indicate that the battle occurred mere days, perhaps even hours ago, far too short a time for the corpses to have been reduced to such dried bones. Many of the corpses clutch weapons in their stiffened, claw-like hands; none are of high enough quality to be worth taking unless the party is, for some reason, truly in desperate need of arms. A very few of the skeletal corpses seem to have lengths of ivy and other vines entwined around their bones, despite the fact that they cannot have lain here long enough for such growth to occur. (To say nothing of the fact that no ivy is growing anywhere else in the area, and shouldn't thrive in these conditions.)

A Wilderness Lore check (DC 13) by someone with the Track feat, or a Search check (DC 15) by someone with substantial combat experience (i.e., with a BAB of +4 or higher) suggests that several of the skeletons were battling each other, and not some absent third party. If any player asks, or if any character either succeeds at a Wisdom check (DC 12) or has the scent



What? No Monsters?

The players may be wondering why they haven't been running into anything with big teeth and a nasty attitude. Given the fact that this place holds such valuable magics, paranoid players may be expecting an ambush around every rock. They might even start smacking those aforementioned animals around, on the off chance that they represent a greater threat than they appear.

Let the party grow paranoid. It just heightens the tension. In truth, no guardians lurk outside the tomb. No wandering monsters or random encounters appear to menace the wary heroes. The reasons for this unusual peace will become apparent all too soon, although it's entirely possible that the players, for all their paranoia, won't recognize the significance of what they're about to see...

ability, they notice that the air smells vaguely of sandalwood, but is otherwise unremarkable.

The characters (and indeed the players) have no way of knowing it, of course, but most of the skeletons here were the first line of defense for Marilvaz's tomb. Some were stationed at the ledge, while others wandered the grounds around and upon the slope of the hill. Were they still functioning, the party would have had a difficult fight on their hands.

Obviously, they aren't functioning. Someone has cleared the way for the party to proceed into the tomb. (This is, of course, the work of Illkuthsra's vinedead; see "An Unseen Hand" in the Introduction. If the heroes have encountered vinedead before, they recognize these creatures.)

Once the party has learned all they can from the ledge, they've really no other option but to proceed into Marilvaz's Tomb. The entry cave beyond the ledge corresponds with area 1 on the map of the Tomb.

Chapter Two: The Tomb of Marilvaz the Scribe

Although most of the Tomb is very obviously and very skillfully carved from the rock, some portions of it are still in a rougher, more natural state. Even these show signs of being worked, however, and were apparently left in their roughened condition deliberately. Unless otherwise noted, ceilings range from 8 to 10 feet high in the fully worked areas, and from 6 to 12 feet in those chambers that appear nearer their natural state. No natural or magical light exists within the Tomb save what explorers bring with them. Darkvision, of course, functions normally save where noted otherwise.

One square on the map equals 5 feet.

Marilvaz was, in his day, a prolific writer and researcher. Master of all manner of magical and mundane lore, he penned many a lengthy tome on a variety of subjects, to say nothing of the various spells he created. When Marilvaz rose briefly from the dead and demanded that his tomb be expanded to allow his works to be inscribed on the walls, he had a specific plan in mind. Each of the chambers of the sage's

Tomb contains one of his tomes. (He wrote well over 14, of course, but these were the ones he considered most important.) Furthermore, each room follows the theme of the book it contains, both in terms of décor and the defenses Marilvaz arranged to thwart, harass, and destroy unworthy guests.

Most of the rooms also contain one of the sage's spells inscribed on the walls. Identifying, comprehending, and scribing these spells requires all the standard checks, and takes the requisite one day plus one day per spell level, as defined in the "Arcane Magical Writings" section in Chapter 10 of the PHB. Any new spells are defined, in their entirety, in the Appendix: Feats, Spells and Rituals.

All Right, Wait a Minute...

We've got undead guardians, nasty critters, and traps galore designed to harm the unwary. Okay, that's standard fare for a mad wizard's tomb, right? But if Marilvaz was so eager to have his works survive that he had his books entombed with him and many of his

Marilvaz's Tomes

Marilvaz's tomes are truly massive samples of the writer's art. Hundreds upon hundreds of pages long, bound in thick leather and weighing upwards of 10 pounds each, they are remarkably complete treatises on their chosen subjects. They are most certainly not, however, designed with ease of reading in mind. Anyone who wishes to read one of Marilvaz's works in its entirety must really work at it. Multiply the reader's Intelligence modifier by 2, then subtract the modifier from 40. This is the number of days it requires to read the tome through, assuming the character is reading about 4 hours a day. If the reader devotes more time to reading, reduce that time as appropriate.

Once a character has thoroughly read through a given book once, he may thereafter use it as a reference source. Each tome grants a circumstance bonus to specific skill checks, but this bonus only applies to characters who have

read the entire book at least once, and who still have the book with them to use as reference; thus, gaining the circumstance bonus requires sufficient time (1d4 minutes) to flip through the book and find the relevant section.

Some of the books bestow negative effects on their readers; these are adjudicated on a case by case basis, and are described in the individual entries below. Similarly, any magical properties of a tome (most are nonmagical) are described below.

Should the party wishes to sell the books, they will have to find a sage or a collector of ancient works. If they can do so, they can sell the books for 200 to 1,200 gold pieces (2d6 x 100 gp) each. Of course, finding sages and collectors with both money and an interest in these particular topics might be a quest unto itself, and shouldn't be remotely easy.

spells carved into the rock around him, why make it so difficult for others to reach them? Doesn't he *want* people to read his works?

Yes and no. Marilvaz was exceedingly strong-willed; one has to be to come back from the dead and start giving orders to the poor workmen constructing one's tomb. The notion of his works being lost was unacceptable. Their survival was paramount — whether anyone else ever saw them was entirely secondary.

More to the point, though, Marilvaz doesn't want just anyone gaining access to his secrets. Only those worthy of him can be allowed to make use of his writings. If intruders cannot best his guardians, well, they obviously weren't worthy of witnessing his greatness.

The Cave of Entry (1)

The 20-foot-deep and almost 35-foot-wide cave that provides access to the innards of the hill appears natural only from the outside. As soon as the party steps inside, they'll be able to make out all sorts of carvings along the walls, the ceiling, and even the floor. Rather than smooth out the surfaces, the workers sculpted the images so that they would blend with, and make use of, the natural crevices and contours of the rock.

The images are relatively abstract — shapes and figures more than recognizable portraits — but they are carved with such skill that their intended mean-

ing is still quite clear. Across the ceiling, muscular figures stare from on high, standing on rounded, uneven shapes resembling clouds. Across the left-hand wall, slighter, weaker figures with stooped knees and long beards watch over smaller icons that can only symbolize frolicking children. On the right, figures sit at desks, scribing furiously in massive tomes; stand before easels with brush in hand; or kneel before half-formed sculptures. Finally, across from the entryway on both sides of the corridor that leads deeper into the hill is a series of images that are far less mundane and far more chilling. Skeletal and partially skeletal men and women gesture towards the open hallway from both sides, as though ushering visitors into some hideous parlor.

On a successful Search check (DC 16), the PCs might notice something interesting here. Scattered throughout the other carvings, running from the far left side all the way round the walls to the far right, is a series of runes that together form one of Marilvaz's unique spells, called *sense years* (see the Appendix).

On a shelf about 7 feet above the entryway leading to area 2 sits an iron-bound wooden box, carefully preserved against the ravages of time. Particularly tall characters can reach it, but otherwise one of the party will have to stand on something to open it. The chest is bolted into place, but is unlocked and untrapped. Within the box is the first of Marilvaz's tomes. Entitled *Remnants of Eternity*, the book is an in-depth study of immortality in all its forms, literal and symbolic. This includes a discussion of living through one's children, passing one's works on to future generations (Marilvaz's personal favorite, obviously), an analysis of undeath and the undead, and even theoretical and theological examinations of the concept of immortality as a gift of the gods. (All of these are, of course, symbolized in the carvings on the walls.) Anyone who reads it and then uses it as a reference work (see the "Marilvaz's Tomes" sidebar, above) gains a +2 circumstance bonus on any Knowledge checks — be they arcana, religion, or any other — that specifically involve undead, death magic, artworks involving death, myths of immortality or the afterlife, etc.

The passage progresses only 5 feet or so into the hillside before the rough walls give way to smooth, carved stone. The entryway may or may not have occurred naturally, but this passage is clearly artificial.

Magics of the Tomb

Marilvaz had access to potent spells and rituals long lost to modern sorcery, and he wasn't shy about using them. Time and neglect may erase the memories and monuments of even the greatest of men, but, by the gods and the titans both, the world wouldn't soon forget Marilvaz! Even if he couldn't live forever, his work — and thus his Tomb, that monument to his brilliance — certainly would.

As a result of the forgotten ritual magics imbued into the very rock, Marilvaz's Tomb is nigh indestructible. Any damage to the walls, doors, or other parts of the tomb repairs itself at the rate of 1 hit point every two days; slow, yes, but substantially faster than the healing rate of your average wood or stone!

Further, as described at the end of this chapter, the guardian creatures and traps in the Tomb are capable of "resetting" once per month.

Only magic powerful enough to destroy the entire complex and all its contents — magics far beyond the capabilities of the heroes at this stage of their careers — will cause permanent damage.

A Fork in the Tunnel (2)

Encounter Level: 1

The corridor widens slightly here and angles to both the right and the left. Nothing in particular exists to recommend one path over the other.

The secret door here that allows passage straight forward requires a Search check (DC 15) to locate. Opening the door is tricky, though; finding the mecha-

Spike Trap

CR 1; +8 melee (1d8+1, x3 crit); Search (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 12).

nism to do so requires a second Search check (DC 12 if the door has already been found, DC 15 otherwise). One must press on the center of the door, triggering one pressure plate, while at the same time stepping on a second plate on the floor at the door's right corner.

Unfortunately, the floor plate is also trapped. The individual stepping on the plate must also twist his foot to the right; failure to do so activates the spike trap.

The Pits (3)

As the party moves down this hallway, assuming they have a light source that extends at least 5 feet, they notice gaping pits that bar their progress down the passage. Each is about 7 feet across and 20 feet deep, with scant inches of clearance between the edge of each pit and the stone walls around it.

The tiny slivers of stone to either side (they're not really big enough to be called ledges) can be crossed only with a Balance check (30), due to the fact that the closeness of the walls prevents one from balancing properly. A Balance check failed by 10 or more results in the character falling, although the character may fall to safety on the far side of the pit with a Reflex save (DC 13); if the save fails, the character falls into the pit for 2d6 points of damage. The pits may also be circumvented with rope, by climbing along the walls (Climb check DC 20; chance of falling as for Balance checks, above), by jumping (but beware smacking into the 8-foot ceiling), or by magic.

Marilvaz was a tricky one, though. Characters who simply bypass the pits and move on won't be able to progress much farther into the Tomb.

In the first pit, marked A on the map, a secret door is built into the south wall at the *bottom* of the pit. This door requires a Search check (DC 13) to find, but can only be located if one searches at the bottom of the pit. This door leads into a tunnel that runs below the corridor leading from area 2 to area 6, eventually ending in a spiral staircase that leads up into area 8.

The door at pit B is even trickier. It's not down in the pit; rather, it's in the wall *just below the edge* of the pit, on the north wall. Thus, a searcher would have to be levitating, hanging by a rope, clinging to the wall or standing on something tall inside the pit in order to look for it. It too requires a Search check (DC 13) to find, but anyone attempting to search while also climbing or clinging to the wall without magic suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to the Search check. Fortunately, since the top of this door is roughly at floor level, an elf or half-elf crossing or leaping the pit *does* have her chance for automatic detection.

Because the pits are obvious, easily noticed and avoided, they are considered no real danger, and therefore have no assigned Challenge Rating. The trick here is to find the secret doors, not to "overcome" the pits. If some unlucky character does fall, however, the damage is 2d6 as the pits are each 20 feet deep.

The corridor ends in a thick, locked wooden door, marked C on the map.

Strong Wooden Door: Hardness 5; 3 inches thick; hp 20; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 15.

The Elemental Cavern (4)

Encounter Level: 6

As with the entranceway, this massive cavern is largely unworked. Stalactites and stalagmites jut into the chamber at various points, several of them merging into thin floor-to-ceiling columns. Any sound the heroes make echoes dully through the recesses of the cave, sounding somehow muted by the oppressive weight of stone over their heads. Despite the great width of the cavern, the ceiling ranges only from 8 to 10 feet in height.

Also like the entrance, numerous images have been carved into the stone walls, although the floors and ceilings are bare of such decoration. The south wall is carved with random, jagged shapes. The east wall is covered in carved spirals and swirls, and the west wall boasts a sequence of peaks with curves at the top. If the GM is feeling generous, he might allow Intelligence checks (DC 12) to determine that these relatively abstract shapes vaguely resemble the traditional representations of fire, wind and water. The north wall remains undecorated, but once the characters recognize the other three symbols, they'll probably have little difficulty surmising that the stone has been left bare to symbolize earth. Of course, all of this assumes that the characters take the time to examine the cavern — time they do not have until they've dealt with the room's guardians.

The party is attacked by several miniature elementals shortly after they enter the room, the natures of which are determined at least partially by the characters' possessions. Roll 1d4: The result is the number of rounds that passes after the party enters before the first wave of elementals attack (this number is noted as "X" in the four entries below).

Round X: In this round, any torches, lanterns, or other flames the party carries will animate as Small fire elementals (to a maximum of 4 fire elementals, even if the party carries more than four sources of flame).

Round X+1: In the next round, the water carried by the party in any waterskins or other containers will animate as Small water elementals and attack (again, to a maximum of 4). The room will not produce more than 8 elementals in total, so if the party has four lit torches and four full waterskins, nothing further



Small Elementals (8)

Air elemental: CR 1; SZ Small elemental (air); HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd fly 100 ft. (perfect); AC 17 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural); Atk slam +5 melee (1d4); SA air mastery; SQ elemental; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5. *Feats:* Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (slam).

Special Attacks: *Air mastery (Ex):* Airborne opponents suffer a -1 penalty to attack and damage rolls.

Earth elemental: CR 1; SZ Small elemental (earth); HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (+1 size, -1 Dex, +7 natural); Atk slam +5 melee (1d6+4); SA earth mastery, push; SQ elemental; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5. *Feats:* Power Attack.

Special Attacks: *Earth mastery (Ex):* Elemental gains +1 bonus to attack and damage if both it and its opponent touch the ground, but -4 penalty if opponent is airborne or waterborne; *Push (Ex):* May start a bull rush without provoking attack of opportunity.

Fire elemental: CR 1; SZ Small elemental (fire); HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atk slam +3 melee (1d4 and 1d4 fire); SA burn; SQ elemental, fire subtype; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5; *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (slam).

Special Attacks: *Burn (Ex):* Those hit by slam must make Reflex save (DC 11) or catch fire (see DMG, Chapter 3, "Catching on Fire" sidebar).

Water elemental: CR 1; SZ Small elemental (water); HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 20 ft., swim 90 ft.; AC 17 (+1 size, +6 natural); Atk slam +4 melee (1d6+3); SA water mastery, drench; SQ elemental; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5. *Feats:* Power Attack.

Special Attacks: *Water mastery (Ex):* Elemental gains +1 bonus to attack and damage if both it and its opponent touch water, but -4 penalty if opponent is land bound; *Drench (Ex):* Touch puts out nonmagical open flames of Large size or smaller; dispels magical fire with touch as caster level equal to its HD.

Source: MM, "Elemental."

appears and the combat is resolved normally with the creatures already present. If fewer than 8 elementals have appeared so far, go on to the next entry.

Round X+2: In the 3rd round of the attacks, any character who speaks — including anyone casting spells with verbal components — generates a Small air elemental, again to a maximum of 4, and only up to a maximum of 8 elementals of all types, total.

Round X+3: Finally, if by the 4th round the room still has not created a total of 8 elementals, then Small earth elementals — as many as is necessary to

bring the total number of elementals created up to 8 — will rise from the floor.

Note that the fire and water elementals consume their sources in the act of forming; thus, as soon as the party slays the fire elementals, they may find themselves in pitch blackness if they do not produce (or already have) another light source. (It's perfectly safe to relight their torches and lamps, although the players may not realize this.)

The room does not replace any elementals that are destroyed. All of these elementals are hostile and attack ceaselessly until destroyed. Note that the water and air elementals cannot make full use of their special abilities. The air elementals have insufficient headroom throughout most of the chamber to assume their whirlwind form, and the water elementals would accomplish little by turning into a vortex in a character's wineskin. Still, this is not an easy battle for a party of this level.

Again, Marilvaz has the words to one of his spells carved and hidden throughout the drawings on the walls. The spell found in this chamber is called *protection from elementals* (see the Appendix), but noticing it requires a successful Search check (DC 16).

In a small niche along the south wall, a stalagmite has been chopped off at the tip, forming a small pedestal. On it rests a tome entitled *Pillars of the World*. It is a theoretical and philosophical discussion of the four elements and the Elemental Planes, and how those elements were used in the creation of Scarn and all of reality. When used as a reference, this book grants a +2 circumstance bonus to any Knowledge (planes) or Knowledge (arcana) checks that directly involve the four basic elements or the Elemental Planes.

Cell Block (5)

Encounter Level: 8

The outer door to this room, although made of wood, is very strong and bound in iron. There's no lock, but it is barred from this side. The 4-in. by 4-in. wooden bar is quite heavy — upwards of 50 pounds — and has swollen slightly due to moisture so that it is wedged in place, but it shouldn't prove too difficult for the heroes to remove it and enter into the area beyond.

Iron-bound door: Hardness 5; 3 inches thick; hp 40; Lift Bar DC 13.

Once through the door, the party finds itself in a passageway running between two rows of four tiny prison cells each. The floors of the cells are covered in old, dry straw, and rusted manacles dangle from the walls. The doors to the cells have long since been torn off, although twisted metal hinges and broken locks mark where they once stood. Each cell also contains an old wooden cot, covered in splinters. Another spell is scrawled across the walls of the various cells and can be

Shackledeath

CR 8; SZ Large outsider (lawful, evil); HD 6d8+12; hp 39; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +5 natural); Atk 2 claws +10/+5 melee (1d6+5), 4 touches +5 melee (shackle); Face 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SA shackle, punishment; SQ immunities, damage reduction 10/+1, resistances, SR 15, see in darkness, telepathy; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +10; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills: Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (law) +12, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Search +11, Sense Motive +12, Spot +11, Wilderness Lore +11. **Feats:** Iron Will, Track.

Shackle (Ex): A target hit by a shackledeath's shackle attack is clasped around an arm or leg by a single shackle; she suffers a -1 penalty to all attacks and skill checks and a -2 penalty to Dexterity for each shackle upon her, and her base speed is also reduced by one-quarter per shackle. Shackled victims can only move within the 10-foot reach of the shackledeath's chains, of course. A shackled victim who tries to cast a spell must first make a Concentration check (DC 15, +1 per additional shackle) or be unable to cast the spell. Shackled creatures may free themselves as a full-round action with a successful Strength check (DC 18, +2 per additional shackle).

Punishment (Sp): The shackledeath may use *chill touch*, *ghoul touch*, or *blindness/deafness* on any victim held by one shackle; *vampiric touch* or *contagion* on a victim held by two shackles; *bestow curse* or *hold monster* on any victim in three shackles; and *finger of death* on any victim in four shackles. All are as the spells cast by an 8th-level sorcerer (save DC 13 + spell level). Using any of these abilities is a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Immunities (Ex): Immune to cold and poison. Half damage from piercing or slashing weapons.

Resistances (Ex): Acid and fire resistance 20.

See in Darkness (Su): Can see perfectly in even magical darkness.

Telepathy (Su): Can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

Source: *Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie*, page 143. Where statistics differ between the two listings, this sidebar's information takes precedence.

found with a Search check (DC 16), although it's not written in order and thus also requires a Spellcraft check (DC 15) to put together properly. The spell revealed is *phantom cell* (see the Appendix).



Lurking in the northeast cell is a shackled death, imprisoned here by Marilvaz. This diabolic creature attacks as soon as the first character is 15 feet into the chamber. It will not pursue beyond the cell block itself. Furthermore, if the entire party becomes trapped in its shackles, it will be content with “punishing” them all and then releasing them, and does not insist on slaying them unless they resume their attacks afterwards. Wise players will make use of the various open cells and cell walls for cover to prevent the shackled death from using its 10-foot reach.

In the cell immediately across from the shackled death, another of the sage’s tomes sits upon the cot. This one is entitled *Shackled Blessings*, and contains philosophical, religious, and arcane lore about various forms of imprisonment (both mundane and magical), and imprisoned entities. Using this book as a reference provides a +2 circumstance bonus to any Knowledge checks involving spells or rituals of imprisoning, or involving any legends or myths of imprisonment (including myths of several of the titans).

The Hidden Temple (6)

Encounter Level: 5

Unlike most of the Tomb, this area provides its own illumination. The PCs stand within a massive temple devoted not merely to Chardun, as might have been expected in Marilvaz’s Tomb, but apparently to all the gods as a whole. The light comes from the six massive pillars around the room, each glowing a different hue.

The ceiling here is quite high, rising almost 20 feet above the floor. Each of the six pillars is carved of pure marble, and bears the likeness of one of the gods. (In fact, the columns are magical; in addition to glowing, they display whichever six gods each character most reveres.) At the far end of the room, on a dais raised some 2 feet above the surrounding floor, stands a massive marble altar. A bowl-shaped depression, lined with silver, sits in the center of the marble. In the stone around it is carved, in common, the statement: “Whosoever would seek the favor of the gods on high must prove his devotion.”

Any sacrifice (of coins, gems, goods, or other valuables) a character places in the bowl will vanish immediately. The allips (see below) will ignore anyone who has sacrificed at least 10 gp worth of goods at the altar (although they will cease ignoring them and attack if they are attacked first). Anyone who sacrifices 100 gp worth is not only safe from the allips, but receives the benefit of a *cure serious wounds* spell.

Once the party has spent 5 minutes in the temple, 2 allips emerge from the pillars nearest the altar and move to attack. As stated above, they will ignore anyone who has sacrificed well, but everyone else is open to attack. (Once the allips appear, sacrificing at the altar will not appease them.) If someone they were

Allips (2)

CR 3; SZ Medium-size undead (incorporeal); HD 4d12; hp 30, 25; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 deflection); Atk incorporeal touch +3 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain); SA babble, madness; SQ undead, incorporeal; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4; Str —, Dex 12, Con —, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills: Hide +8, Intimidate +11, Intuit Direction +4, Listen +7, Search +7, Spot +7. **Feats:** Improved Initiative.

Special Attacks: *Babble (Su):* All sane creatures within 60 feet must make Will save (DC 16) or come under the effect of a *hypnotism* spell for 2d4 rounds [sonic, mind-affecting compulsion]; *Madness (Su):* Anyone targeting the allip with mind-control or telepathy takes 1d4 temporary Wisdom damage.

Source: MM, "Allip."

previously ignoring attacks them, perhaps to aid a friend, that person is no longer safe. The allips attack until destroyed, or until the party leaves the temple.

Clearly inscribed on the walls between the pillars is Marilvaz's spell *bolster undead* (see the Appendix).

The tome for this chamber, which sits on the altar behind the sacrificial bowl, is called *Divine Wrongs*. Marilvaz felt that most of the gods, although far less wicked and vicious than the titans, have still been

responsible for a great many injustices against the divine races. (He excludes his own deity from among this number, of course.) Use of this book as a reference provides a +2 circumstance bonus to any Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (religion) checks involving the gods (but not the titans). Reading this book, however, may also shake the faith of the reader. Any paladin or any cleric of a god other than Chardun who reads this tome must make a Will save (DC 16) or temporarily have her faith shaken. Take the amount by which the character's saving throw failed and multiply this number by 5. This result is the percentage chance that the character's divine special abilities or spells (such as turning undead or *laying on hands*) will fail. If the next divine ability that the character uses succeeds, then the chance of failure for the next one drops by 5%, until it reaches 0 and she has overcome her crisis of faith. If a divine ability fails, the chance of failure for the next attempt remains the same.

The Conservatory (7)

Unlike most of the other doors the party has come across within the Tomb, this one is old and rickety, obviously quite weak. It's jagged, and has been broken off at the corners — it looks almost as though someone just stuck a slab of wood on the hinges as though jury-rigging a replacement door. It's not locked, and swings open at the slightest touch.

Rickety Wooden Door: Hardness 2; 1 inch thick; hp 8; Break DC 8.



The rectangular room beyond is filled to bursting with plant life. Ivy covers the walls; thick hedges, delicate flowers, and small rows of edible vegetables thrive in the soil that is the room's only floor. A window at the junction of wall and ceiling in the middle of the west wall allows sunlight into the chamber, yet the heroes saw no such opening on the hill outside. (In truth, the opening is a small crevice just above the main entrance at area 1; the sunlight is directed to this chamber by a series of mirrors.)

In the center of the room sits a wooden worktable, not unlike one you might expect to find near a well-tended garden. On the table lie spades, clippers and other gardening implements, as well as a sealed wooden box just about the right size to hold another of Marilvaz's books, and a single ceramic vial filled with a viscous green liquid. A note on the table beside the vial reads, "This is the only antidote, and there's only enough for one. I would advise you to hurry before one of your companions gets it first."

As soon as any character approaches to within 5 feet of the table, a *wall of force* seals the entrance and a heavy green gas begins to leak swiftly into the chamber. Characters have only 5 rounds to react before the entire room is filled with the foul-smelling substance.

In truth, this is another example of Marilvaz's rather twisted sense of humor. The gas is quite harmless, save for smelling bad, and disappears within a few minutes. The vial, however, contains actual poison (Fortitude save DC 15; primary and secondary damage 1d6 Con).

If the party pushes aside the ivy clinging to the walls, they'll find the spell *extract poison* (see the Appendix) inscribed upon the wall.

The tome in the box (which is unlocked) is entitled *Roots of Evil*. It's a catalog of naturally occurring poisons and toxins, both animal and plant, and their antidotes. Use of this book as a reference adds a +2 circumstance bonus to any Profession (herbalist) or Heal check that involves natural poisons and their antidotes; due to the highly detailed index in the back of this book, it can be used as a reference in only 1d10 rounds, rather than the usual 1d4 minutes (see the "Marilvaz's Tomes" sidebar at the beginning of this chapter).

The Mirrored Room (8)

Encounter Level: 4

Barring truly unusual circumstances, the only way for the heroes to reach this room is through the tunnel that leads from the pit at 3A, runs under the passage leading to the temple, and ends at a tight spiral staircase. The stairs open up into this oddly shaped room. Each half of the room, bisected across from the stairwell to the protruding corner opposite

the stairs, is a perfect mirror image of the other. Furthermore, the walls are covered in all manner, variety, size, and shape of mirrors. Large ones, small ones, round, oval, square, rectangular, fancy, simple, framed, freestanding — they're all here, all reflecting the images of a confused party back from their depths.

One of the mirrors on the eastern wall of the southernmost portion of the room is actually a *mirror of life trapping*. Any character looking at this portion of the room must make a Will save (DC 19) or be sucked into the mirror, leaving his or her equipment behind. Nowhere is there any sign of the mirror's command words, so the only way to free trapped companions is to shatter the mirror (without getting caught oneself, of course). Of course, shattering the mirror frees not only the heroes, but the other trapped occupant as well...

She claims her name is Mia Coroon, and that she was an adventurer and "acquirer of missing objects" who was exploring the Tomb, until she was trapped within the mirror. Careful questioning reveals that she believes it is still 10 years ago; she's been here a *long* time.

The heroes may or may not be inclined to believe her (assuming they can concentrate on her story; Mia is blonde, very attractive, and — because the mirror steals only bodies, not equipment — very naked). She's telling the truth as to how long she's been trapped, but her very appearance is a lie. Mia is actually a face stealer called who, in the guise of Mia the rogue, accompanied another group of adventurers into the Tomb 10 years ago. She had hoped to steal anything they found (and possibly their faces as well, although she wasn't about to challenge an entire adventuring party), but was trapped by the mirror. The rest of the party now makes up some of Marilvaz's undead force. If allowed to accompany the party, "Mia" will try to escape at the first opportunity — taking whatever valuables with her that she can manage. She knows she cannot challenge the party in outright combat, and fights only if attacked.

If the party examines all the framed mirrors, they'll find the words to the spell *reflective strike* (see the Appendix) inscribed in the decoration on the frames.

Shattering the *mirror of life trapping* also reveals a hidden niche in the wall which contains the tome *Echoes and Dreams*. This is one of Marilvaz's most thoughtful books, and contains interesting treatises in existential and ontological philosophy. Reading the book provides no benefit, but the reader must make a Will save (DC 16) or have his very faith in reality itself shaken. Anyone who fails the save is no longer convinced that what he sees is real; this doubt imposes a -1 morale penalty to all checks and combat rolls for 2d10 days after he's completed the book.

The doors leading to areas 9 and 11 are neither locked nor trapped.

The Face Stealer [Advanced HD]

Buranka, female face stealer Rog: CR 3; SZ Medium-size monstrous humanoid; HD 4d8 (base) + 1d6 (Rog); hp 21; Init +6 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural); Atk 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+1); SA steal visage, sneak attack +1d6; SQ traps; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +12, Disguise +5 (+20 if using someone's face), Listen +7, Pick Pocket +7, Search +5, Spot +7.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative.

Steal visage (Su): Any opponent of size Large or smaller who is grappled by the face stealer must make Fortitude save (DC 14) or have its face stolen. A victim whose face is stolen is effectively *blinded*, *deafened*, and *mute*, and may well suffocate, since it has no mouth or nose through which to breathe. The face stealer may wear the victim's face (thus taking on the entire likeness of the individual), or else restore it or another face to the victim; otherwise, restoration requires *regeneration*-type magic.

Source: *Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie*, page 170. This face stealer is an exceptional specimen: it has higher-than-average ability scores, 4 (base) HD, and has advanced a level in the rogue class.

The Honeymoon Suite (9)

Characters entering this room may find themselves either blushing furiously, or else — depending on their proclivities — unable to wipe a smirk from their face. The walls are covered in erotic murals; where the images in some of the other chambers might have been relatively abstract, these are absolutely realistic. Men and women of all the divine races are shown here in every manner of intimacy. The paintings are further enhanced by the presence of several life-sized sculptures, also realistically carved and also in the throes of eternal passion.

Only one of the statues is not represented as being occupied in carnal pursuits. The sculpture of a young woman sits in the southwest corner holding a book in her lap. The book, of course, is not part of the statue, but is in fact Marilvaz's treatise *The Greatest Gift*, an exhaustive discussion of the human capacity for love. Unlike most of the other books in Marilvaz's Tomb, this one is actually enchanted. After reading it, the reader must make a Will save (DC 17), or be *charmed* (as the spell) by the first member of the opposite gender and roughly the same racial type he or she sees. Unlike the *charm person* spell, this effect is permanent until dispelled, although the victim does receive an additional saving throw anytime he is asked to perform an action that violates his alignment. Any attempt to dispel the enchantment must succeed against caster level 17.

Painted into the background around the frolicking figures on the walls is the spell *proxy charm* (see the Appendix). The door leading to area 10 is unlocked.

The Fountain of Wealth (10)

Encounter Level: 5

This vaguely diamond-shaped room is filled with riches. Expensive tapestries line the walls; exotic carpets lie in rows upon the floor; the two pillars standing along the south wall are bedecked with jewels; and coins of all denominations lie in messy heaps in the corners. A large marble fountain stands in the center of the south wall, its water flowing up through a spout in the center and splashing back down into a shallow basin. The water contains many tiny sparkling jewels, some sitting still on the bottom, others skittering along in the constant current. No exit is apparent save for the way in which the party entered.

Flitting throughout the room is a ghostly figure, featureless save for vaguely blurred spots where eyes and mouth might once have been, whose humanoid torso trails away into misty vapors. It floats from coins to gems and back again, constantly running intangible fingers through the riches it can never touch, and moaning softly.

If the heroes attack the spirit, disturb the wealth of the room in any way, or try to force the secret trapdoor open (see below), the wraith — for that indeed is what the spirit is — attacks instantly and fights until destroyed or turned. Otherwise, it ignores the party.

Written around the lip of the basin on the fountain is the spell *dreams of avarice* (see the Appendix). No tome is immediately obvious.

If any character throws at least 5 gold (of his own wealth, not from the room) into the fountain, a secret trapdoor opens, revealing a ladder that leads down into another passage. The trapdoor can also be found with a Search check (DC 20), but it cannot be opened in any way other than by throwing at least 5 gp in the fountain. If the characters wish to open it without losing any money, they must break it or force it open. Any attempt to do so also draws the wraith's ire, and it will attack.

Stone Trapdoor: Hardness 8; 3 inches thick; hp 45; Break DC 25.

The actual amount of wealth in this room is quite deceptive. Most of the coins are copper — albeit hidden beneath a thin layer of silver and gold coins — and most of the gems are only semi-precious at best. If the entire room were emptied of all treasure, it would yield less than 400 gp worth of riches. (Should this happen, the room replaces the stolen wealth with illusions of coins and gems when it “resets.” See area 16.)

In the hallway below, just before it turns to the east, a niche in the wall contains the tome *The Ravages of Wealth*. Written when Marilvaz was young and bitter (he had not yet reached his heights of success), the book is a discussion of the various evils of wealth and the upper classes. No benefit comes from reading it, but neither does it cause any harm.

Wraith

CR 5; SZ Medium-size undead (incorporeal); HD 5d12; hp 32; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection); Atk incorporeal touch +5 melee (1d4 and 1d6 permanent constitution drain); SA Constitution drain, create spawn; SQ undead, incorporeal, +2 turn resistance, unnatural aura, daylight powerlessness; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +6; Str —, Dex 16, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills: Hide +11, Intimidate +10, Intuit Direction +6, Listen +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +12.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative.

Special Attacks: *Constitution drain (Su):* Living creatures hit by a wraith's incorporeal touch attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 14) or suffer 1d6 points of permanent Constitution drain; *Create spawn (Su):* Any humanoid slain by a wraith becomes a wight in 1d4 rounds. Spawn are under the command of the wraith that created them and remain enslaved until its death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Special Qualities: *Unnatural aura (Su):* Animals can sense a wraith at 30 feet. They will not willingly approach nearer than that and panic if forced to do so; they remain panicked as long as they are within that range. *Daylight powerlessness (Ex):* Wraiths are utterly powerless in natural sunlight (not merely a *daylight* spell) and flee from it.

Source: MM, "Wraith."

The Barracks (11)

Encounter Level: 5

The northern door to this chamber is locked, but not trapped.

Strong Wooden Door: Hardness 5; 3 inches thick; hp 20; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 15.

This room appears exactly like a barracks in any normal fortress or military stronghold. The walls are made up of large stone bricks, a dozen beds rest in three neat rows, and a painted window on the east wall is of such magnificent craftsmanship that it really looks as though it is an open portal overlooking a training field surrounded by wooden walls.

Only three of the beds, one in each row, are occupied. As soon as the party enters this room, the 3 Chardun-slain resting there rise and attack. They will pursue a fleeing party into area 12, but not into any other parts of the Tomb.

If a character studies the "window" carefully, he will see that the painting has words hidden within the scene (on banners, in windows of distant towers, etc.). With a successful Search check (DC 14), and the usual Spellcraft checks, of course, these can be identified as the spell *salt the earth* (see the Appendix).

Chardun-Slain (3)

CR 2; SZ Medium-size undead; HD 5d12; hp 32; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (+5 natural, +4 scale mail); Atk warhammer +6 melee (1d8+3, x3 crit); or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+3, 30 ft.); SA finishing blow; SQ undead; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 10, Con —, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +5, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +8, Listen +5, Ride +5, Search +5, Spot +5.

Feats: Ability Focus (finishing blow), Weapon Focus (warhammer).

Finishing blow (Su): Any victim struck in combat who has 10 or fewer hit points must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or suffer double damage. This ability does not function against any creatures protected by any spell with the good or holy descriptor.

Source: *Creature Collection*, page 41. Where statistics differ between the two listings, this sidebar's information takes precedence.

In the middle bed of the middle row, a tome entitled *Wars of Attrition* can be found. This is Marilvaz's treatise on war, particularly on the benefits of psychological terror tactics. If used as a reference work, it grants the user a +2 circumstance bonus to any Craft, Knowledge, or Profession skill checks involving military tactics.

The Game Room (12)

Perfectly square, save for the alcove in the southeast corner, the floor of this room is tiled like a chessboard. Several tables scattered about the room display various kinds of games, all of which seem to have been left in the midst of play. On one table, several hands of cards lie face down across from one another. Another boasts an unfinished chess game. A third shows a partially completed game of *brunholk*, a dwarven pastime involving both dice and chits, not unlike dominos. The walls, however, are completely plain, unadorned by any painting or murals.

One table contains not a game, but one of Marilvaz's omnipresent tomes. Called *To Win*, it is an analysis of the sorts of games people play — including theoretical commonalities between games that are, on the surface, completely dissimilar — as well as a discussion of ways to "beat the system" (read: cheat). Use of this book as a reference grants a +2 circumstance bonus to any skill checks involving games or similar contests (but *not* in any sort of sporting event or test of physical prowess). Of course, if one starts flipping through a hefty tome in the middle of a hand of cards, her opponents may start asking questions...

Scrawled across the tabletop of the same table is the cantrip *quicker than the eye* (see the Appendix).

Winning Isn't Everything

d10 Result	Bonus	Penalty
1–2	+2 on next saving throw	–2 on next saving throw
3–4	+2 on next attack roll	–2 on next attack roll
5	Base speed increased by +5 for 24 hours	Base speed decreased by –5 for 24 hours
6–8	+2 to AC against next attack	–2 to AC against next attack
9	+10 hit points, lasting until used or for 24 hours	Character suffers 10 points of subdual damage
10	Roll twice	Roll twice

No combat awaits the heroes in this room, but that doesn't mean Marilvaz hasn't challenged them. The entire room is heavily enchanted, in fact; if any character disturbs a game in any way, she must make a Will save (DC 19) or else sit down and play the game to completion, competing against the room itself — opposing pieces move on their own, cards deal themselves, etc. The GM may resolve the games through skill checks, or, if he prefers, through actual games of cards, chess, etc., against the player(s) involved. If the character wins the game, she receives one random benefit from the chart below (roll 1d10). If she loses, or refuses to play after disturbing a game, she receives one penalty from the chart (again, roll randomly). Note that these modifiers are all luck bonuses or penalties, where applicable. Modifiers last until used, or for 24 hours, whichever comes first.

The spiral staircase in the southeast leads down to another passage that runs below the main level of the Tomb.

A Little Piece of Death (13)

This vaguely oval chamber is completely shrouded in numerous permanent *deeper darkness* and *silence* spells. It would require a dozen *daylight* spells or targeted *dispel magic* spells (against caster level 17) to overcome the darkness, and an equal number to overcome the silence.

Midway along both side walls, set to catch those who are feeling their way blindly across the room, is a permanent *teleportation circle*. A character moving north along one wall will be teleported across the room and turned around, so that he is moving south along the other wall (or vice-versa). A Wisdom or Intuit Direction check (DC 20) is required to notice that he is no longer heading in the same direction he was. A subsequent Spellcraft check (DC 33) is required to identify exactly what has just happened. Characters who wish to travel blindly through the center of the room must make a Wisdom or Intuit Direction check (DC 14) to keep a straight line, but if they succeed they are safe from the teleporters.

To add to the confusion, each character in the chamber is targeted by a *seeming* spell unless they succeed

at a Will save (DC 20). Those who fail are cloaked in the illusion of a hideous, shambling corpse, not unlike a zombie or a ghoul. This can cause substantial problems as party members will be likely to attack one another as they emerge from the darkness. Individuals do not simply look like undead versions of themselves, but they still sound like themselves, so fast talking may mitigate the problem. Characters may attempt to disbelieve the illusion (DC 20) once they have reason to suspect it is false, but the *seeming* lasts for only 5 minutes after they leave the darkness in any event.

Characters who travel along the center of the room will find a very thin raised platform in their path. They can easily move around it, but even a cursory search by touch reveals another of Marilvaz's tomes. Called *Hidden Deceptions*, it is a collection of short "morality tales." They aren't particularly moral by most standards, however. In each of them, a liar or cheater reaps great rewards, while those who try to expose them or set them straight are punished. If a character takes the tome, he suddenly becomes able to read the spell scrawled on the chamber walls, despite the darkness. (He still can see nothing else, however.) The spell is *sphere of deception* (see the Appendix).

The Final Climb (14)

This square chamber (14A) contains a simple spiral staircase leading upwards. Halfway up the stairs, a display case sits attached to the handrail. Within it is the tome *Ascension*, Marilvaz's examination of the theological and mythical connotations of divine ascension, and his hypotheses as to whether it's even possible for a mortal to actually become divine. While interesting, the text is of no practical use as a reference document. A partial spell is carved on the wall following the curve of the stairs, but it's incomplete. (Marilvaz decided at the last moment that, his ego aside, he didn't want anyone to have this spell. It was designed to actually draw the attentions of the gods themselves so the caster might speak with them in person! The sage never developed the courage to test it.)

The chamber marked 14B, at the top of the stairs (a 30-foot climb, which places the chamber 20 feet above the level of the majority of the Tomb) is identical to 14A, save that the passage leading out runs to the north.

The Graveyard (15)

Encounter Level: 6

At least a portion of this massive cavern is obviously illusionary. Several scraggly trees claw at the ceiling, owls call out from among the branches, wolves howl mournfully in the distance, insects buzz audibly around the heroes, and a dim moonlight filters down from the cavern's ceiling. All of this is clearly an illusion, and it can, in fact, be disbelieved with a Will save (DC 20).

What is undeniably real, however, is the earthen floor of the cavern and the rows and rows of headstones that jut from it. Between reality and illusion, this place appears to be the stereotypical gothic graveyard.

Close examination of the headstones reveals the names of friends and family of the characters. This may throw the party briefly, but it, too, is illusion. Once disbelieved (DC 20), the tombstones instead bear various fragments in the language of magic that, when put together like a puzzle (requiring a Spellcraft check against DC 15), produce the spell *prime corpse* (see the Appendix).

The heroes, of course, expect something awful to rise from the graves to menace them, and they'll not be disappointed. After they have spent 3 minutes in the

room, all of the graves but one disgorge a collection of bones which, over the course of 1 full round, come together to form a single creature identical to a bone lord. The bone lord will not pursue beyond area 15.

Anyone investigating the single grave that did not disgorge part of the bone lord discovers a small box sitting beside the headstone. Within the box is the tome *Funerary Practices of Scarn*. It is, quite simply, a catalog and discussion of the burial and funerary rites of all the common nations and cultures of Scarn. If used as a reference it grants a +2 circumstance bonus to any Knowledge skill checks directly pertaining to such practices.

Marilvaz's Final Resting Place (16)

The door leading into area 16 is locked, but not trapped.

Strong Wooden Door: Hardness 5; 3 inches thick; hp 20; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 17.

The chamber beyond is absolutely massive and rather oddly shaped. Within the angled niche in the middle of the west wall lies a stone sarcophagus. Within the larger alcoves in the northwest and southwest are 14 small mirrors, seven in each alcove. The walls are absolutely covered, all the way around, in alien writings.

This is, indeed, Marilvaz's final resting place, and it is guarded by... nothing. The sage wanted no guardian creatures or traps to risk damaging his greatest work or his own earthly remains. Besides, he figured that anyone who could win through this far was worthy of his secrets.

The true ritual that covers the walls is indeed the heroes' goal: the *Song of Unmaking*. Unfortunately for the party, it is written not in Common, nor even entirely in the language of magic, but largely in the Infernal tongue of Chardun's servitors!

If the party has a member who understands Infernal, or who possesses some magical means of translation, they can copy down the entire ritual over the span of 4 or 5 hours. If they do not, they can still copy it down in hopes of finding a translator, but this requires at least 20 hours of careful, painstaking copying.

Close examination of the mirrors reveals that each is actually a mystical scrying device trained on one of the other rooms of the Tomb. The mirrors in the southwest alcove show areas 1 through 7; those in the northeast show 8 through 13 and 15. They show the rooms in perfect clarity, despite any natural or magical darkness that might be present in those areas. Furthermore, the sound of the fountain can be heard in the mirror showing area 10; the mirrors appear to transmit sound as well as sight. (They do not transmit smell, nor can spells be cast through them.)

Each mirror also has a pair of command words inscribed in the frame. Speaking the first word *resets*

Bone Lord

Bone Lord: CR 6; SZ Large aberration; HD 12d8+36; hp 90; Init +0; Spd 60 ft.; AC 18 (-1 size, +9 natural); Atk bites/claws +12 melee (1d8+6); Face 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SA multiple natural weapons; SQ alter shape, stable form, cold tolerance, fire vulnerability; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +13; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 20, Cha 5.

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +10, Escape Artist +20, Listen +14, Spot +14.

Feats: Blind-Fight.

Multiple natural weapons (Ex): In the first round of combat, a bone lord attacks with 1d4 jaws and/or claws; in every subsequent round, it produces one more such weapon, up to a number equal to its HD.

Alter shape (Ex): As a free action, the bone lord may alter its shape with a successful Dexterity check (DC 18) to best take advantage of the terrain.

Stable form (Ex): Immune to polymorphing effects.

Cold tolerance (Ex): Half damage from cold-based attacks.

Fire vulnerability (Ex): Double damage from fire-based attacks.

Skills: Bone lords gain a +4 racial bonus to Balance and Climb checks, and a +8 racial bonus to Escape Artist checks.

Source: *Creature Collection*, page 21. Where statistics differ between the two listings, this sidebar's information takes precedence.



the room shown in the mirror — that is, it recreates any guardians whom the party has destroyed, resets any of the traps, rebuilds any objects the party wrecked, and so forth. This can occur only once per month, however. Speaking the second word *deactivates* the traps, forcing the guardians to go dormant and rendering the room essentially harmless.

(Without someone to speak the command words, the natural magics of the Tomb would still reset all the rooms, but only after a week had passed. If the creatures are slain again, however, they will not reset

automatically for one full month, as noted above. *Note:* This is *not* an experience point factory; characters receive no experience for any creatures they reactivate just to fight them a second time.)

These mirrors may seem nothing but a nifty curiosity at first, but they may soon save the party's lives. A mere 2 hours after they reach this final chamber, the mirror to area 1 suddenly starts speaking, it seems, and the heroes then also make out the sounds of footsteps. Someone else is approaching the Tomb!

Chapter Three:

Something Wicked

The footsteps the party hears through the mirror in the Mad Scribe's Tomb belong to the cultists of the Dar al Annot — the fanatical servants of Mormo who have been tailing the PCs ever since they leave Vesh. Just two hours after the characters first enter Marilvaz's final resting place, the cultists enter the Tomb themselves. The Dar al Annot believe that the PCs have done all the work for them by this point, and they arrive intent on destroying their would-be stooges (who are no longer useful to them) and taking the true ritual for themselves. They, too, have plans for the *Song of Unmaking*...

The Dar al Annot

In the Dark Tongue of Mormo, Dar al Annot means "Those Who Will Find," and the moniker is most fitting for a group whose sole purpose is the locating and reassembling of Mormo's scattered viscera. The cult wants every piece of its fallen matron, the Hag Queen, in order to restore her from the exenteration she suffered at the hands of the gods during the Titanswar. This particular clutch of cultists, a band of corrupted rangers led by a human priest of Mormo, has been charged with the recovery of the true ritual in Marilvaz's Tomb, and has been tracking the PCs since Vesh.

The composition of this particular Dar al Annot clutch is as follows: A High Priest of Mormo named Sadayyat (*male human, Drd6, NE*), chosen to lead a band of 8 of the clutch's best trackers (*male humans, Rgr2 or Rgr3, NE*) across Ghelspad to recover the *Song of Unmaking*. Sadayyat is a fire-eyed zealot, and looks the part. He cuts a most unsettling figure, standing well over 6 feet in height and dressed in an eerily tight-fitting suit of what appears to be charred flesh. He is completely bald, with a charcoal-colored tattoo of what looks like a black teardrop on his forehead (just above and between the eyes), and he carries a wicked scimitar forged of a strange green alloy. The rangers are similarly grim, clothed in spiked leather and carrying short, nasty-looking blades; their skin is a latticework of competition between scars and ink. Like their leader, most are bald and clean-shaven.

Accompanying Sadayyat and his band of tainted rangers, the PCs should also be able to make out a roughly man-sized blob of roiling blackness. Any PC who makes a Spot check (DC 12) will notice intermittent flashes of gold as

well. This dark mass is actually a serpent golem (see sidebar below), its body the result of a terrible union of the remains of a former priestess of Denev and dozens of black vipers birthed from the darkest grottos of the Ophidian Vale. The golem is accompanying the Dar al Annot into the tomb specifically to locate the *Song of Unmaking*, and it follows Sadayyat's orders to the letter — more or less.

Fluttering around and above Sadayyat, in particular, is a small murder of crows — of precisely the type that an attentive PC might have noticed was following the party on the road to Denev's Aquifer. These are the personal scouts (animal companions) of the High Priest; immediately upon entering Area 1, he will send them on into the Tomb with orders to seek out the PCs and return with information as to their whereabouts and current status. Although he maintains no mental or spiritual contact with these animals, Sadayyat can and does communicate with them when they are in his presence. The GM is encouraged to make the presence of these fluttering sentinels somewhat ubiquitous throughout this ending scenario, as the crows may play a more pivotal role later on (see "Warlock's Flight" below).

Any PC that chooses to focus his or her attentions on the cultists themselves is allowed a Spot check (DC 10). If this check is successful, the character notes that all the members of the group (save the priest) seem to be edgy, actually twitching and periodically looking about in swift, jerking motions. Most are sweating quite profusely, as well, clutching the hafts of their weapons so tightly that the whites of their knuckles are visible to observant PCs — even through so small and distant a medium as a scrying mirror. To complete the overall effect, though, the faces of these individuals are eerily serene, belying the nervous agitation displayed in their body movements.

The reason for this behavior is due to the fact that every cult member present is strongly addicted to a special drugged liquor brewed by the high priests of the Dar al Annot. The root of this dark tonic, which is known as "bitter brew," is made from the fruit of the bitter tree (see sidebar). When found in the wild, the bitter

Mormo's Bitter Brew

The Dar al Annot who pursue the PCs into Marilvaz' tomb are under the influence of a special liquor known as bitter brew. This oblation is made from the potent fruit of the bitter tree (see *Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie*, page 15), and is ritually imbibed by devoted Dar al Annot in order to bring their spirits closer to the essence of their vile matron, the Hag Queen. Those who regularly partake of this sweet-tasting liquor become utterly addicted both to it and to Mormo, given time. Such individuals (including the cult members in this adventure, whose adjusted traits due to the brew are noted in parentheses) are affected as follows:

Anyone addicted to the bitter brew (see below) grows both edgy and violent, as though constantly on the verge of eruption. This brew grants a +2 alchemical bonus to both Strength and Constitution, as well as a +1 alchemical bonus to all Will saves. However, this edginess causes carelessness, and the subject's Armor Class is reduced by 1 for as long as he remains addicted to the brew. Those addicted will also find their alignment slipping rather hastily towards evil as the brew takes hold. Over time, the character's will is slowly usurped by the all-consuming drive to further Mormo's cause, fed in turn by his steady diet of brew. After a

number of weeks "on the brew" equal to the imbiber's Wisdom score, he will have fallen entirely to maniacal and sociopathic reverence of the serpents and their Mother, who now fill his troubled dreams.

The moment the liquid touches any character's lips, he must make a Will save (DC 10). Each separate quaff thereafter forces him to make yet another Will save, with a cumulative DC increase of +1 for each drink after the first. Once the character fails a save, he becomes addicted. From that point onward, he is affected as above, with all the attendant benefits and disadvantages. If an addicted character manages to go a full day without partaking of the brew, he is allowed another Will save (DC 20); the DC for such "withdrawal" checks decreases by -1 for each successive day the character goes without the brew. In the meantime, however, he will be ravenous for the liquid and will try to harm all those who would keep him from it. In addition, he will suffer from shakes and chills, losing 1 point from both Strength and Dexterity per day until he either gets his "fix" or makes a save. Once a save is finally made, the character is considered "cured," and all bonuses and penalties disappear.

tree's fruit causes imbibers to degenerate into psychotic, evil minions, bent on protecting the tree that gives them their "fix." The Dar al Annot liquor, a special formula brewed in conjunction with druidic rites and herbs, leads to similarly psychotic behavior, but the focus of attention is shifted away from the source of the fruit and towards the unflinching service of Mormo's cult. Cultists "on the brew" (as the state of addiction is often called) are some of the most fearless and fanatical servants in the Witch Queen's employ.

Chances are high the PCs will not know what the brew is when they first encounter it, and will likely confuse it for a mundane if somewhat high-quality wine. This is made doubly likely by the fact that the Dar al Annot typically carry their bitter brew in ordinary wineskins; each cultist carries no fewer than three such wineskins. If a PC drinks the brew, he will find it sweet and succulent — and will instantly crave more. Luckily for him there will be plenty of the stuff available....

A Grim Prospect

Upon seeing the Dar al Annot enter the Tomb, the party should begin to feel the pressure of being boxed in. After all, they find themselves "cornered" in the deepest room of a tomb that they cannot yet afford to leave — not if they wish to complete their task, at any rate — and the might of the assembled force before them should be apparent... dauntingly so, in fact. Players should quickly get the impression that a stand-up fight would result in either utter failure or in *significant* casualties for the party, and the GM should encourage the players (via his descriptions) to explore other options besides boldly charging out to face certain death. Although the Encounter Level of the Dar al Annot task force is 10, this fact soon becomes irrelevant....

Divide and Conquer

The first alternative to such PC suicide graciously presents itself 3 rounds after the newcomers turn up in the scrying mirrors, when they arrive at

area 2. Through the mirrors in area 16, the PCs watch the leader hold up his hand, at which point the remainder of the group stops as if awaiting instruction. The priest splits up 6 of his warriors into two groups of 3 each (one 3rd-level and two 2nd-level rangers in each group), and directs them to fan out into the Tomb, with each trio responsible for a different direction. The other 2 rangers (Sadayyat's best men) remain with the priest, to accompany him down the straightest path into the Tomb.

At this point, the PCs witness something truly bizarre. The writhing mass of darkness begins to

Serpent Golem (Whole): CR 6; SZ Medium-size construct; HD 10d10; hp 60; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (can't run); AC 19 (-1 Dex, +10 natural); Atk 2 slams +13 melee (2d8+6); Face 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SA poison, entrapment; SQ construct, magic immunity, damage reduction 15/+1; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 23, Dex 9, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Poison (Ex): Slam, Fortitude save (DC 15); initial and secondary damage 1d6 temporary Constitution.

Entrapment (Su): Upon seeing the golem (in person), creatures must make a Will save (DC 15) or be *dazed* for 1d3 rounds; vigorous shaking by an ally frees the creature from its daze. Those who save are not affected by that golem's entrapment for one day.

Magic Immunity (Ex): Immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects except the following: *calm animal* slows the golem for 2d4 rounds; *charm person or animal* deals 1d6 points of damage; *dominate animal* deals 2d6 points of damage and 2 points of temp Str damage; *summon nature's ally* heals the golem of 4 hit points per HD of vipers summoned and commanded to join the golem.

Serpent Golem (Quarter): CR 2; SZ Small construct; HD 10d10; hp 15; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (can't run); AC 21 (+1 size, +10 natural); Atk slam +12 melee (1d8+6); Face 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA poison, entrapment; SQ construct, magic immunity, damage reduction 15/+1, discrete entity; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 19, Dex 11, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Discrete entity (Ex): Any golem quarter that is slain diminishes the whole golem by one quarter of its hit points (i.e., the 15 that the destroyed quarter once had), but doesn't otherwise affect the whole being. A whole serpent golem damaged in this way may still regrow lost serpents through *summon nature's ally* spells, as described above.

Source: *Creature Collection 2*, page 83. Where *Creature Collection 2* and the stats for the whole golem in this sidebar differ, this sidebar takes precedence.

uncoil at the priest's command, separating into a handful of smaller collections of squirming black and gold. In all, four separate "piles" emerge. Three of these are directed to accompany the search parties (one pile to each), while the last is left to guard the exit. The PCs will hear the priest whisper something to the (dis)assembled piles, but they can neither hear nor understand the words themselves.

The Serpent Golem

As a sort of "insurance" against the failure of Sadayyat and his men, the leaders of the Dar al Annot have sent a serpent golem to accompany the group into the Tomb. Although Sadayyat believes the golem to be under his complete control, this is (terrifyingly) not the case. The golem is under orders from a "higher authority," and is interested exclusively in the true ritual it was sent to recover. Sadayyat, though a competent and devoted servant of Mormo, is not truly the creature's master — he merely holds the leash of the beast, as it were. As such, the golem owes Sadayyat no special consideration and, in point of fact, will forsake the druid at a moment's notice if that should become necessary over the course of its mission. Indeed, none of the cultists' lives are particularly important to the golem. All that matters is the *Song of Unmaking*.

Although the golem enters the Tomb in its usual form, the first thing Sadayyat does when he splits up the clutch into three different groups is to ask that the golem likewise split itself apart, so that a "section" may accompany each group (with one left over to guard the entrance). The statistics given below are those of the golem in both forms.

(GM's Note: The golem is still one entity, so any component "pieces" can see what the others can see and the four sub-sections may reunite at no cost over the course of 1 full round.)

If the other three sections of the golem are destroyed by the PCs, the fourth quarter will return to the Dar al Annot leaders, where it will be "rebuilt" and eventually reassigned.

At this time, with the responsibilities thus divided and assigned, the cultists move in (with the challenge the cultists represent as a unit now *significantly* reduced). The final make-up of the three sub-groups is as follows:

Group One (EL 8): Saddayyat, Kheldaris, and Urzhon (see below), and a serpent golem quarter.

Group Two (EL 6): Hollicarthax, Pradhana, and Skree (see below), and a serpent golem quarter.

Group Three (EL 6): Jhevarra, Lhiavar, and Vardas (see below), and a serpent golem quarter.

High Priest Sadayyat

A man driven to prove his worth to the Dar al Annot (notorious for its unwillingness to show any favor to its male members), Sadayyat intends to return triumphant to the witches of the Hornsaw, *Song of Unmaking* in hand, regardless of what ends he has to use to do so.

Sadayyat, male human, Drd6: CR 6; SZ Medium-size humanoid (6 ft., 1 in.); HD 6d8+18; HP 50; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +4 magic leather armor, -1 addiction); Atk +8 melee (1d6+3 and poison, 18-20/x2 crit, +1 serpentsteel scimitar); SA spells; SQ addiction, animal companions, nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, *wild shape* 2/day, woodland stride, speak with birds; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +8 [addiction]; Str 14 (12), Dex 16, Con 17 (15), Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Skills: Concentration +11, Craft (poison making) +6, Diplomacy +5, Heal +6, Handle Animal +7, Listen +6, Spot +6, Profession (herbalist) +7, Spellcraft +5, Wilderness Lore +8.

Feats: Dodge, Scribe Scroll, Improved Initiative.

Druid spells prepared (5/4/4/2): 0 - *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *flare*, *know direction*, *light*; 1st - *detect snares and pits*, *faerie fire*, *obscuring mist*, *cure light wounds*; 2nd - *barkskin* (AC rises to 20), *charm person or animal*, *heat metal*, *produce flame*; 3rd - *meld into stone*, *poison*.

Special Qualities: Addiction (bitter brew), animal companions (48 crows with 1/4 HD each; use raven stats), nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, *wild shape* 2/day, woodland stride, speak with birds (due to a ritual he underwent some time ago, Sadayyat may always speak with birds as if through the *speak with animals* spell).

Possessions: Charred man-flesh +2 *leather armor*, +1 *serpentsteel scimitar* (Fort save [DC 12] or take 1 point of temp Con damage for 1d4 hours), 3 wineskins of bitter brew, 2 weeks' dry rations, reed-lantern with *continual flame* cast upon it, bag full of various herbs and fortune-telling bones, coin purse (10 gp).

Sadayyat in great crow form: CR 6; SZ Small humanoid [animal form]; HD 6d8+6; hp 38; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 11 (+1 size, +1 Dex, -1 addiction); Atk claws +6 melee (1d3-2); SA spells; SQ addiction, animal companions, nature sense, resist nature's lure, *wild shape* 2/day, speak with birds; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +8 [addiction]; Str 7 (5), Dex 13, Con 12 (10), Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Skills: Concentration +9, Diplomacy +5, Handle Animal +7, Listen +6, Spot +6, Profession (herbalist) +7, Spellcraft +5, Wilderness Lore +8.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (claws).

Prepared druid spells available: 0 - *flare*; 1st - none; 2nd - none; 3rd - none.

The Trackers of the Dar al Annot

Kheldaris, Urzhon, Hollicarthax, and Jhevarra, male humans, Rgr3: CR 3; SZ Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d10+7; hp 31, 25, 23, 22; Init +5 (+1

Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, -1 addiction); Atk +5 melee (1d6+3, 19-20/x2 crit, short sword) and +5 melee (1d6+1, 19-20/x2 crit, short sword); or +7 melee (1d8+3, 19-20/x2 crit, short sword); or +4 ranged (1d6, x3 crit, 60 ft., shortbow); SA favored enemy (humans), ranger fighting; SQ addiction; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 16 (14), Dex 13, Con 16 (14), Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Craft (poison making) +3, Listen +5, Heal +3, Hide +5, Move Silently +5, Search +3, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +7.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Special Attacks: Favored enemy (+1 to damage rolls and to Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks against or involving humans); ranger fighting (as the Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting feats in light or no armor). **Special Qualities:** Addiction (bitter brew).

Possessions (Kheldaris & Urzhon): Spiked studded leather, 2 short swords, shortbow, quiver and 10 arrows, 3 wineskins of bitter brew; 50-ft. rope (w/ grappling hooks), 2 weeks' dry rations, 6 torches, bag of herbs and coins (8 gp).

Possessions (Hollicarthax & Jhevarra): As Kheldaris & Urzhon, plus these two rangers have 3 doses each of a special extract of black adder venom (injury, Fort DC 12; initial damage none, secondary damage 1d6 Str) that reacts violently with the presence of bitter brew in the bloodstream. Anyone "on the brew" struck by a weapon with this venom on it must make a Fortitude save (DC 20): initial and secondary damage is death. The two will stab their confederates and then themselves with this poison if they believe themselves faced with capture.

Lhiavar, Skree, Vardas, and Pradhana, male human, Rgr2: CR 2; SZ Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d10+6; hp 24, 19, 16, 14; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, -1 addiction); Atk +4 melee (1d6+3, 19-20/x2 crit, short sword) and +4 melee (1d6+1, 19-20/x2 crit, short sword); or +6 melee (1d8+3, 19-20/x2 crit, short sword); SA favored enemy (humans), ranger fighting; SQ addiction; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 16 (14), Dex 13, Con 16 (14), Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Craft (poison making) +2, Listen +4, Heal +3, Hide +5, Move Silently +5, Search +2, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +6.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Special Attacks: Favored enemy (+1 to damage rolls and to Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks against or involving humans); ranger fighting (as the Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting feats in light or no armor). **Special Qualities:** Addiction (bitter brew).

Possessions: Spiked studded leather, 2 short swords, 3 wineskins of bitter brew; 50-ft. rope (w/ grappling hooks), 2 weeks' dry rations, 6 torches, bag of herbs and coins (8 gp).



While it is likely that the PCs will attempt to “dig in” at area 16, fortifying their position while the remainder of the *Song of Unmaking* is transcribed, this is not the only strategy available to them. The players may be inclined to believe, quite rightly, that they have something of an upper hand in this situation: The characters know of the Dar al Annot and its members’ locations within the Tomb, while the same cannot be said of the cultists regarding the PCs. In addition, the heroes have at their disposal a means by which they may make the complex a challenge to the Dar al Annot — and to rid them of the belief that the PCs had already “done all the work,” after a fashion.

Located on the northwest and southwest walls in area 16, etched into the mirrors that reveal each room’s current activity, is a series of 28 command words — 2 words per mirror/room. As noted at the end of the previous chapter, each mirror has a command word that will deactivate any and all traps and wards (even the creatures) in the room to which it is attached. What is important here, however, is that each room also has a command word that will “reset” all the room’s creatures and traps. If any PC figures this mechanism out, the Dar al Annot may well be in for a tough time as they make their way through the Tomb. The GM must keep in mind, however, that the PCs can only reset each room *once*. If the cultists overcome any fresh traps or creatures in a given room, those traps cannot and will not be reset again until a month has passed.

Players Running the Tomb Guardians

Although it is quite possible that the players will enjoy watching the Dar al Annot bumble their way through rooms already bested by the PCs, it is just as likely that they will *not* enjoy sitting through four or five combats wherein the GM is both aggressor and defender. Most any player will agree: Watching the GM roll dice is rarely a fun thing (especially for nervous players), and becomes far less so when the GM is rolling dice both for and against his own NPCs. Thus, we’ve included this little “roll reversal” for those groups who like to take their gaming for a walk on the wild side once in a while.

Here’s how it works: As the Dar al Annot cultists begin to make their way into the Tomb, the GM should ask the players what it is their characters wish to do. If they do as is expected and remain in area 16 after reactivating all the traps and guardians, the GM should announce the following:

“In order to make the game more enjoyable — and, let’s face it, less boring — for you players, I will hand out the statistics of the *monsters* guarding each room of the Tomb. When the bad guys arrive in any given room and are forced to contend with whatever guardians await them there, *you* will play those guardians.”

How it actually breaks down is, of course, up to each individual group. The suggested method is to have the GM simply narrate the progress of the Dar al Annot (which the PCs should be able to monitor

from area 16), and whenever the cultists engage one or more of the Tomb's guardians in combat, the GM should simply hand out the relevant stats of those monsters to one or more of the players. The players can take turns running the monsters if there are not enough guardians in any given encounter to have each player control one, or else play one creature as a communal effort. In this case, a designated party leader should likely roll the dice and make the decisions, although any sort of player consensus will do when it comes down to it. In the event of a room with multiple guardians, the monsters should simply be divvied up among the players, so that each player effectively has a "character" to play. Naturally, the GM will be "playing" the Dar al Annot. Initiative is then rolled, and combat proceeds as per normal rules.

As the cultists have split up into three subgroups in order to more quickly search the Tomb, it might be best to switch the "camera" from one group to the next after such a battle, in order for the players to have something to do at all times. Handled this way, the scenario should play out quite smoothly and shouldn't drag on too long.

Guerilla Warfare

Sitting by and watching the cultists stumble through room after room in search of the *Song of Unmaking* isn't the only option available to the party. It is conceivable that the PCs might not have figured out the purposes of the command words in area 16. In this event, the party will not have reset the room guardians throughout the Tomb when the cultists arrive, essentially leaving the doors open for the villains to come find (and kill) the heroes. In all likelihood, this eventuality will be intolerable to the PCs, the smartest of whom will seek to use their position and knowledge to best advantage against the quickly advancing and technically superior force.

Since they still have the upper hand in the reconnaissance department, the PCs might well start making sorties out of area 16 once they realize that the cultists will be splitting up into three smaller — and far more manageable — groups. By carefully monitoring the whereabouts of each group at any given time, the PCs can plan surgical strikes against the Dar al Annot, timing their forays to match the movements of the other two groups at any given time. Wise PCs will also use their hard-earned knowledge of the Tomb itself to their advantage when timing these strikes, as they have already been through the area themselves and can plan surprises for the cultists based on the layout and known inhabitants of the Mad Scribe's Tomb.

Note that the PCs may well decide to attempt such blitzkrieg attacks even if they *have* also discovered the command words in area 16, as a means of complementing the efforts of the Tomb's re-propa-

gated guardians — their unwitting allies against the Dar al Annot. It would simply be a matter of the players factoring in the movements of the Tomb's creatures when planning their assaults on the cultists. Such two-pronged warfare will likely result in some sterling successes for the PCs, and the GM is strongly encouraged to reward the tenacity, ingenuity, and bravery of any troupe that wisely blends all available strategies into a cohesive battle plan with an additional XP award at the conclusion of the adventure.

Warlock's Flight

The Dar al Annot cultists are willing to fight to the death, gleefully ending their lives in this dank, forgotten tomb if it might ultimately further the cause of the Witch Queen. If there are *any* survivors, there will be only one — Sadayyat.

In the unlikely event that both his cultists and "his" golem should fail him, Sadayyat will seek to escape. As a druid traveling alone, the odds are stacked in his favor once he reaches the Tomb's exit. Although there are a number of options at his disposal, the Mormovian druid prefers to effect escape by using his *wild shape* ability to assume the shape of a great black crow. He picks this form because he can still speak as a crow — and even use a few spells that require only verbal components. (If sorely pressed, Sadayyat may also use *wild shape* simply to regain lost hit points; since he must shift back to human form to gain the benefit, however, he probably won't resort to this tactic unless he hasn't used the ability yet that day.)

If the GM chooses this option, there are a couple important things to remember. First, the Mad Scribe's Tomb will be positively aflutter with crows by this time (Sadayyat has 48 of the creatures as his animal companions). Second, even if the PCs are all gathered in area 16 with all eyes on the scrying mirrors, they will most likely have a hard time telling one crow from another, despite the relatively large size of Saddayat's own crow form. Without some very quick thinking on the part of the PCs, it is very likely that Sadayyat will indeed escape.

If the Dar al Annot priest does indeed get away, the PCs have made themselves a bitter enemy. Sadayyat cannot return to his leaders in the cult having failed in this important mission nor, worse yet, having been bested by the PCs. Even if his superiors were inclined to be merciful, Sadayyat would never extend himself such consideration. After making his escape, the psychotic druid vows to exact vengeance upon the PCs. If he was too late to claim the true ritual for himself and his mistress, he might at least return home with head held high, having slain those who robbed him of his (and Mormo's) rightful due.

It is up to the GM how any further interaction with Sadayyat plays out: Perhaps he ambushes the

PCs on their trip back from the Tomb, or maybe he is more cunning, lying in wait and watching from afar as the events surrounding the PCs unfold. Either way, the party hasn't seen the last of *this* fanatic....

Into the Tomb

What follows is a general guideline regarding the Dar al Annot as they make their way through the various rooms of Marilvaz's Tomb. Needless to say, if circumstances warrant (or require) that the cultists deviate from these strategies, then they certainly may. They will do whatever seems reasonable, given their personalities and skills.

The Cave of Entry (1)

At this stage, the Dar al Annot are still a united front. If for some reason the PCs decide to confront them here, they will have a tough fight on their hands (EL 10). Such is not likely, however, as the cultists will move through this area quickly once they realize that neither the PCs nor the true ritual awaits them here.

As to the room itself, the cultists don't seem particularly phased by any of the disturbing carvings on the wall, but then... these cultists don't seem particularly phased by much of anything (except, of course, the prospect of recovering the *Song of Unmaking*). As soon as Sadayyat has entered this room, he sends his murder of crows into the Tomb complex to seek out the PCs. The GM will have to "keep track" of these crows throughout the remainder of the scenario, but they should likely only provide something of a backdrop to other goings-on, as they don't present enough of a threat for most of the Tomb's guardians to bother with them.

A Fork in the Tunnel (2)

When the cultists arrive at this juncture, Sadayyat makes his decision to split up the clutch. He'll probably cast *detect snares and pits* at this time, and will suspect that the Tomb progresses beyond the east wall. He'll probably occupy himself and his two companions with discovering the method to get through, while sending Groups One and Two to areas 3 and 7 of the Tomb, respectively. In the course of this search, he might get paranoid and cast *detect poison* as well.

Once he's found the mechanism that opens the door in the east wall, Sadayyat will push through with his men, regardless of what may befall the other two groups. It is important for the GM to remember that Groups Two and Three are searching primarily for the PCs and not for the *Song of Unmaking*, for the rangers likely wouldn't know the ritual even if it fell on them. To this end, neither Group Two nor Three is particularly enticed by the appearance of books on

pedestals and the like. They're merely searching for those who already have such items.

The Pits (3)

It will most likely be Group Two that finds this room first. Sadayyat will probably want his men to investigate what's on the other side of the two pits in the hallway, even if they've already located either or both of the secret doors. After all, there's nothing saying that the true ritual isn't hidden in whatever may lie beyond the door at the end of the hall. Nonetheless, Sadayyat is both cautious and meticulous and will certainly come back to these rooms later on. If the GM wants to get really creative, he can have one of the men (or the serpent golem quarter) investigate one or both of the secret doors while the other two rangers move down the hall into Area 5. All in all, it would be safer (and easier on the GM) if the three just stuck together, so they probably should do so.

Sadayyat is not stupid. If by some chance, none of the Dar al Annot have discovered the secret doors in this room by the time all the other rooms have been searched, he will reconvene them all in this hallway, prepared to search the pits as a group. At this point, the PCs may be in trouble again, as the cultists are now a unit once more. Still, there is nothing to say that all the cultists are present after having searched through all the rest of the rooms on this level of the Tomb....

The Elemental Cavern (4)

Chances are, if either Group Two or Group Three has found this cavern first, they will simply scan the room from the door, searching for either signs of the PCs or the true ritual (assuming they'd know it when they see it). They aren't terribly interested in prolonged spelunking adventures if there's nothing to be immediately gained. All the same, if all the other rooms on this floor have been searched with still no sign of the PCs, Sadayyat will insist on a return to this room for further scrutiny.

Given the fact that the cultists don't plan to stay very long, they may not have to endure the elemental onslaught. However, it is pretty much guaranteed that at least some are carrying torches, so they may have to contend with the small fire elementals jumping forth from their light sources. In this event, the cultists withdraw rather than pressing into the room.

Cell Block (5)

If the PCs have already braved this room, then the iron-bound door likely doesn't pose much of an obstacle to the cultists. (Although the proper command word from area 16 would restore a defeated shackled death, it wouldn't fix the broken door.) If the PCs never made it this far for whatever reason, then the door would obviously still be intact when the Dar al Annot arrive.

The cultists have no interest in taking on the shackled death, but that shouldn't stop the diabolic menace from exacting its particular brand of "justice" upon any that intrude (particularly since the cult is so heavily attuned to Mormo, Chardun's bitter enemy). The GM should note that the same rules apply to any and all intruders, regardless of affiliation. The shackled death will likely not destroy the cultists after having meted out its "justice" upon them (unless they insist on attacking it further, which they may), leaving them free to return to their systematic search of the Tomb, though most likely greatly weakened.

The Hidden Temple (6)

The Dar al Annot are in serious trouble here. The only way to avoid conflict with this room's guardians is to place a valuable sacrifice on the altar. However, the cultists certainly have no desire to obtain the favor of the gods in this way, and thus will have a nasty fight on their hands. This, however, assumes that the PCs have rejuvenated any allips that they themselves might have defeated on the first pass through. If they haven't spoken the right command word for this room, then there are no allips around to harass the cultists for their lack of penitence.

In this event, the cultists proceed to defame the walls of this temple, scratching out the likenesses of the gods with their swords and spitting upon the various words of prayer inscribed around the columns. (The irony behind this behavior, of course, is that it only confirms Marilvaz's beliefs that the gods — though petty and cruel — are infinitely preferable to the titans from which they were spawned... titans that included the cultists' own precious queen, Mormo.)

As the PCs watch, however, they witness a curious event: The command word etched around the rim of the mirror associated with this room glows a faint purple for a moment, and then the party sees two new allips emerge from the columns, ready to punish the transgressors. In addition to providing a bit of eerie *deus ex machine* into the scenario, this divine intervention (which is actually just an autonomic response from the Tomb itself, courtesy of Marilvaz' designs) may also serve to clue in players that they hadn't yet figured out the connection between the command words and the rooms, or were afraid to speak the words themselves and put their theories to the test.

Luckily for the PCs, the group of cultists most likely to face this room is Group One. If either of the other two groups happens upon this room for any reason, they will likely flee the temple once the allips emerge.

The Conservatory (7)

The cultists most likely to encounter this room first are Group Three, sent in this direction when the



cultists were first divided. How the scene plays out is ultimately up to the GM. The simplest and most likely option is that once the cultists see that nobody is in the room, so they will withdraw and head back to area 2. If, however, the GM wishes to make the scene more interesting (particularly in the event that the PCs never made it to this room in the first place), he could have one or more of the rangers step towards the worktable in the center of the room, thereby activating the *wall of force* and the gas trap. However, the GM should allow them a Craft (poison making) check (DC 15) to notice that the gas itself is mostly harmless. A similar roll should be granted for any cultist who attempts to examine the vial of green liquid.

This room, if nothing else, might provide a moment of early revelation for the PCs. Watching the cultists identify and subsequently circumvent Marilvaz's cunning trap should provoke a nice realization in the PCs that they're not up against amateurs here. Regardless of what happens with the gas, any one of the leaders of any of the three groups will take the tome *IRoots of Evil*) from the box on the table with him before leaving the room, assuming the PCs have not already done so.

The Mirrored Room (8)

Chances are high that three sub-groups of cultists will have reunited by the time they reach this room (if Group Two discovers the entrance at Area 3A, they likely return to their leader to await further instructions, although the GM is certainly free to have them press on ahead, if so desired). Even so, the room has two exits leading out from it (one to the hallway leading to area 11 and the other leading to area 9) and Sadayyat would likely split up his forces yet again at this juncture. The mostly likely split at this point would be to have Groups Two and Three head off in one direction together and for Sadayyat and his two guards to investigate the other. The GM can then handle any further encounters using the combined traits listed earlier.

Barring some unusual turns of events, the PCs will have already shattered the *mirror of life trapping* by the time the cultists arrive. As such, the face stealer will also be gone (probably in the company of the party) and the niche in wall revealed. If the PCs have not already taken the book resting there (Marilvaz's treatise on the potentially illusory nature of reality), Sadayyat will be most interested in it and will snatch it for his personal collection.

The Honeymoon Suite (9)

Any Dar al Annot ranger entering this room will grow violently disgusted by the paintings and statues found within. All the rangers in this particular clutch

absolutely detest the divine races, humanity in particular. They will immediately, brutally, and thoroughly mar the faces of the "works of art" found in this room, making their blasphemy of the temple at area 6 look like art appreciation. If Sadayyat is not with the rangers who first discover this room (a likely occurrence), the cultists will make sure that they level at least some destruction upon *every* painting and statue in the room, even at the risk of neglecting their other duties. Only when they are satisfied that no piece of art remains unblemished will they return to their mission. If the book resting in the statue's lap has not already been taken by this point, the rangers will demand that it, too, be destroyed, although they do wait to obtain Sadayyat's permission first.

If Sadayyat is present when this room is discovered, he will permit this vandalism up to a point, allowing the brew-addled warriors to satiate their appetite for destruction, so long as it does not take too long. When he feels that enough damage has been done, Sadayyat will raise his blade to the sky, and all the rampaging rangers — regardless of what vandalism currently occupies their attentions — will immediately fall into line.

The Fountain of Wealth (10)

If the PCs have taken all the actual riches from this room, then all the wealth in the room is illusory by this point (the illusions having been put in place when the room was "reset"). Strangely, the cultists do not race to fill their purses with the riches, however, despite what the PCs might expect. Rather, they simply look to their leader for guidance upon entering this room. If Sadayyat is not with them, they merely search the perimeter of the room, looking for hidden passages or individuals, taking special care to avoid the spectral figure flitting about the room. If they do not find the passageway leading to area 13, they will quietly withdraw from the room and head back to area 8 to rejoin the others. At no point will they attempt to steal from the fountain, nor will they offer any of their own paltry earnings.

Alternately, the GM might have one of the weaker-willed cultists make a grab for one of the more valuable (-looking) gems while the others aren't looking. (Even in this event, the cultist should probably get a Will save (DC 12) to resist the temptation, as he has been *thoroughly* trained by the cult's leadership to do just the opposite.) If one of the rangers does attempt to grab some treasure, the GM should take special care to describe how completely and eerily the other cultists ignore him afterward, leaving him to face his fate at the wraith's ghostly hands. At no point do the thief's compatriots come to their fallen comrade's aid. They simply look on, straight-faced, as he faces his doom.

The Barracks (11)

When the cultists enter this room, they will have no option but to fight the guardians within (as written in the room's description), if they are present. The Dar al Annot have no wish to do battle here, but the undead soldiers won't give them any options. The Chardun-slain are a match for the rangers of Groups Two and Three, and indeed, this room is the one where some or all of the cultists might meet their ends. The cultists' best immediate hope lies in the serpent golem quarter, with whose help they may stand a decent chance. Their other hope rests in their leader: If Sadayyat and his best men (Group One) arrive here first (or alongside them), or if he and his group hear their cries for help and rush to their assistance, they might handle the undead capably.

The Game Room (12)

This room will likely pose little or no threat to the cultists, as they've all been trained not to disturb their surroundings any more than they absolutely have to. They will not disturb any of the game pieces, and thus shouldn't have to play any of the games to completion. Nonetheless, for the sake of drama, the GM may choose to have one weak-willed (or stupid) cultist take his brew-borne jitters out on one or more of the game pieces in this room — with possibly entertaining results.

A Little Piece of Death (13)

As has been previously stated, the cultists aren't really stupid. If the GM decides that it's worth it for them to try maneuvering their way through this room, the first thing they will do is send the serpent golem quarter on ahead. The golem is immune to the room's mind-affecting magics (but not the teleports, though it will head into the center of the room in any case), and it certainly isn't afraid of anything that might be found within. If the golem returns unharmed, the GM may then have the cultists tie a rope between themselves before proceeding. Cultists who find their way to the center of the room will take the book they find there (it may contain the true ritual and they can't see to make sure) and leave with it immediately, thenceforth returning to rejoin the others once again. Remember, though, that each cultist who emerges from the room is cloaked in an illusion of a rotting, shambling corpse; the results of their appearance to their fellows could be entertaining to the PCs...

It may be pointed out here that this is a great place to stage an ambush, since the PCs can see all that transpires in this room (using the mirrors) and the cultists cannot. Some players might see this an opportunity too good to pass up.

The Final Climb (14)

This room is of no real import to the cultists. They simply move through to area 16, although Sadayyat will stop to take the tome found on the stairwell for his collection. If, however, the PCs holed up in area 16 have attempted to fortify their position at all, this would be the perfect place to set snares or to rain down death from above onto the cultists. Indeed, the party's "last stand" may well take place long before any cultist ever sets foot in area 16.

The Graveyard (15)

All the cultists in this clutch have had their wills mystically and herbally enhanced by the bitter brew coursing through their systems. Even without Sadayyat's presence to give them a clue, the rangers will attempt to disbelieve the illusion aspect of this room almost immediately upon entering. And even if one or more doesn't make the roll, the one(s) that do will explain the reality of the room to their confederates.

The biggest problem facing the Dar al Annot, of course, is the bone lord. If the PCs have "reset" this room, then the bone lord might rise once again to take on the new intruders. As with the Chardun-slain, the cultists will have a difficult time defeating this guardian. Their preferred strategy is to withdraw (seeing no reason to remain in this place), with a back-up plan of sending the whole serpent golem in later and then flanking the bone lord as a complete unit.

It should be noted as well that the illusion of the names of family members on the tombstones will not phase these cultists in the slightest. Indeed, closely observant PCs will see an amused little smile cross the lips of one or two of the rangers.

Marilvaz's Final Resting Place (16)

Needless to say, if the Dar al Annot have arrived here without suffering any significant casualties, then the PCs might be in trouble. At the very least, they are in for a very tough fight.

The first thing that will happen will be the serpent golem's attack. Even if Sadayyat has not expressly ordered it, any and all serpent golem quarters present when the PCs are discovered will surprise everyone involved by rushing forth in a murderous frenzy, attempting to daze, poison, and crush the life out of anyone it believes may be in possession of the *Song of Unmaking*. Although this unsettles Sadayyat greatly, he will follow suit, ordering any remaining men to back up the golem's assault, while standing at the rear and assisting their efforts with spellcasting. If he knows from his previous spying that any particular PC(s) tend to use invisibility or similar effects in combat, he will target them with his *faerie fire* spell;

he learned long ago the danger of invisible opponents. He reserves his *heat metal* spell for a heavily armored fighter-type. Otherwise, he uses his spells as any situation demands or allows. In any event, it should be clear to the PCs that the cultists are fanatics who want nothing less than the PCs' total destruction — especially those characters of their own race. Reasoning with Sadayyat is impossible.

If at any time it looks like the PCs are in control of the battle, Sadayyat will attempt to make his escape (see Warlock's Flight, above). If the PCs have managed to transcribe the true ritual by this point, he will attempt to steal it on his way out of the Tomb, if he has any knowledge of this and it is at all possible. Ultimately, however, his own survival is paramount, and he would sooner leave Marilvaz's Tomb empty-handed than dead. Nevertheless, this will not be his last appearance, and his rage at having come so close, only to be denied, will be visited upon those who bested him — sooner rather than later, if High Priest Sadayyat has anything to say about it...

Ending the Adventure

All that remains, at this point, is for the heroes to return the Song of Unmaking to Home Commander Kelemis Durn. Of course, while the journey home may be a simple prospect, it does not have to be an easy one. Anything from random monsters to entire side adventures may await the PCs on their return journey. Archfiend Fiarun or others may learn, either through divinations or more mundane sources, of the desecration of Marilvaz's Tomb. If this occurs, the party has made a new and dangerous enemy. They may expect assassination attempts, or perhaps even interference by soldiers of Lageni working under the Archfiend's command.

Marilvaz's Tomb itself also offers future story options. The party knows it pretty much inside and out, and knows how to control — or at least avoid — its traps, inhabitants, and pitfalls. They might even choose to adopt it as a headquarters, particularly if they intend to spend any of their time in the future fighting the despotic regime of Traviak the Steel Fisted, either on their own or on behalf of the Vigils. Of course, they can expect Chardun's faithful to make numerous attempts to take it back from them if they decide to keep it.

Enterprising DMs might even choose to add secret passage(s) somewhere in one of the Tomb's 16 chambers, leading to unexplored (and unmapped) portions of the complex. Marilvaz penned far more than a mere 14 tomes, and created far more than 14 spells. Who knows what secrets and what magics might still be lying untouched?

And if the heroes seek to take a greater hand in the affairs of Lageni — or even Calastia — do they have any allies? Will Amiric and other soldiers like him, disgusted by the actions of the Black Dragoons and their ilk, prove willing to help fight from within to make their country a better place? Or will their loyalty to (or fear of) Duke Traviak inspire them to turn the characters over to their superiors at the first opportunity?

Kelemis Durn will, of course, immediately take possession of the true ritual, so that he and the Vigils may decide how best to use it to destroy the Amphora. For the time being, the party's involvement is concluded (although if they have any suggestions or arcane knowledge to add, their input is certainly welcome). Durn will ask that they make themselves available in the near future, however. Once they've determined the ritual's best use, the Vigils will want the Amphora destroyed as soon as possible, and they just may require the help of agents they can trust for that most vital of tasks...

Rewards

Durn will, of course, provide any reward he worked out with the party ahead of time. In fact, if he's promised them training or nearby lands or titles, those can function as perfect reasons to keep the party around Vesh long enough to drag them into the next and final installment of the *Serpent Amphora Cycle*, the forthcoming *Serpent Citadel*.

In terms of experience, GMs should grant the players a story award for successfully delivering the *Song of Unmaking* true ritual to the Vigils. This award should range from 500 to 750 xp per player, based both on the GM's assessment of their overall performance, and on whether or not they picked up the clues (such as Fiarun's mention of Vauldell) on their own (as opposed to depending upon Intelligence checks and the like).

Appendix

New Feat

The Lidded Eye is a magical technique that any spellcaster, arcane or divine, may learn. It requires several weeks of study if taught by one who already knows it, several months if learned from written sources. Mastery of the technique is represented in game mechanics by a metamagic feat. Wizards may choose the Lidded Eye as one of their class bonus feats.

The Lidded Eye (Metamagic)

With this ability, you may cloak your attempts at spying on others, obfuscating the magical sensor that is normally created through scrying.

Benefit: You may prepare any scrying spell as a higher-level spell than normal; for every level by which this slot is higher than the usual slot required,

the DC of any Scry check to detect your magical scrying sensor is increased by 5. For example, scrying is normally a 3rd-level spell for a bard, and can normally be detected by a character with Intelligence 12 or higher who makes a Scry check (DC 20). If a bard with this feat cast the spell using a 5th-level spell slot, the Scry check DC to detect the scry attempt would be raised to 30.

This feat cloaks the scrying spell only from mundane detection by a successful Scry (or Intelligence) check, not from magical detection such as that granted by the *detect scrying* spell. However, this feat does help you avoid having your location discovered by means of the *detect scrying* spell or similar spells or effects: you gain a +5 bonus to any opposed Scry checks in such circumstances for every additional spell level you used in your scrying attempt.

New Spells

These are the new spells the PCs may have found and recorded from the walls in Marilvaz's Tomb.

* This domain appears in *Relics & Rituals* (pages 31–36).

** This domain appears in *The Divine and the Defeated* (pages 147–149).

Bolster Undead

Necromancy

Level: Clr 4, Death 4, Sor/Wiz 5

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 1 full round

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One undead creature/3 levels, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: Harmless (Will negates)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Description

Perturbed by the vulnerabilities of the standard “servitor” types of undead, Marilvaz developed this spell to bolster his undead minions.

Spell Effect

You strengthen the ties between a number of undead creatures and the Negative Plane, thereby granting them heightened resistance to clerical turning or rebuking. The spell raises the subjects' turn resistance by +1, plus an additional +1 for every four caster levels (thus, +3 at 8th level, +4 at 12th, and so on). This spell stacks with an undead target's innate turn resistance, but not with an evil cleric's ability to bolster undead. Note that this spell grants no control over the affected creatures.

Material Component: A pinch of ash from the cremated corpse of a cleric or paladin (Sor/Wiz version only).

Dreams of Avarice

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Brd 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Description

Marilvaz developed this spell as a means of persuading skilled individuals to work for him, but he used it most frequently as a means of turning his enemies against one another.

Spell Effect

Dreams of avarice accentuates the target's natural greed (affecting even those who would not normally succumb to greedy impulses). The subject becomes obsessed with the notion of making money for the duration of the spell. He will attempt to claim any wealth of which he is aware (whether lying around or in the possession of others), becoming violent if denied his “right.” He will also accept almost any offered job or commission if it pays well. He is entitled to a second saving throw if the task grossly violates his alignment, or if his compulsion forces him to attack friends or loved ones. Only a single extra save is allowed.



Extract Poison

Conjuration (Summoning)

Level: Drd 2, Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, F/DF

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One plant or animal

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: See below

Spell Resistance: Yes

Description

Marilvaz felt that poisons were extremely useful, both in his studies and for dealing with his enemies, but he wasn't fond of the danger inherent in acquiring them. This spell was his solution.

Spell Effect

You immediately extract a single dose of natural poison from any normal plant or animal, which you may then use as you see fit. The subject is not harmed by the extraction of the poison. If the animal is one that produces only a small quantity of poison per day (i.e. can only use its poison ability a limited number of times), it is entitled to a Fortitude save. Success indicates that no poison is extracted; failure means that the spell functions, and the animal loses one of its daily uses of poison. Animals and plants with no functional limit to their use of poison receive no save.

If this spell is cast upon someone who has been poisoned within the onset time of that poison, it can prevent the poison's secondary damage from taking effect by drawing the poison out of the wound, their skin, or their stomach. Unlike poison extracted from a poisonous plant or animal, poison extracted in this manner is not usable. After the secondary has occurred, the spell cannot help the victim.

Arcane Focus: A small ivory vessel of no less than 5-gp value that is capable of storing the extracted poison.

Phantom Cell

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Brd 3, Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, F/DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One humanoid of Medium-size or smaller

Duration: 1 hour/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes (see text)

Description

Marilvaz created this spell so that he could force prisoners to perform tasks or answer questions — actions that are impossible with traditional holding or paralysis spells — without the risk of them escaping.

Spell Effect

You prevent the target from leaving an area designated by you. This can be an actual, physical area ("You may not leave this suite of rooms!") or a simple spatial measurement ("You may not move more than 10 paces from your current location.") The designated space may be no larger than 1,000 square feet (just over 30 ft. by 30 ft.) per caster level, and no smaller than 10 square feet. The subject is free to move about, engage in combat, and otherwise take any action she chooses within the designated space. She may even cast spells, except for those that might (even inadvertently) transport her outside of the space. If the subject is physically removed from the space by someone else, she immediately suffers the effects of a *hold person* spell for the remaining duration of the *phantom cell* (no save, although spell resistance applies to this effect).

Arcane Focus: A tiny length of fine steel chain ending in a miniature lock or manacle.

Prime Corpse

Necromancy

Level: Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Target: Corpses touched (see below)

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Description

Marilvaz developed this spell for an ally who desired to have an undead brigade somewhat larger than that normally allowed by standard necromantic spells.

Spell Effect

Prime corpse allows you to prepare a number of corpses or skeletons for animation using the *animate dead* spell, making them easier for their animator to control. The corpses must all be touched during the casting of the spell, up to a maximum number of HD in skeletons or zombies equal

to your caster level. Every one of those corpses thereafter counts as only half its actual undead HD for determining the maximum number of undead that the caster can control through *animate dead*. Thus, a 7th-level cleric could, by means of this spell, animate and control 28 HD of undead using the *animate dead* spell, rather than his usual maximum of 14 HD. The caster of *prime corpse* need not be the same caster as the one who animates the undead. Undead who are already animate are not affected by this spell; it must be cast on corpses prior to animation.

Material Component: Various scented oils mixed with human blood and the powder of any kind of crushed gem worth at least 50 gp.

Protection from Elementals

Abjuration

Level: Brd 1, Clr 1, Rgr 1, Sor/Wiz 1

Description

Marilvaz always respected the threats posed by elemental creatures far more than he did those of creatures from the outer planes, and he developed this defensive measure accordingly.

Spell Effect

As *protection from evil*, except that the deflection and resistance bonuses apply to one type of elemental creature, determined during the casting of this spell; also, this spell does not offer protection against mental control, although it offers the subject immunity to any extraordinary or supernatural special attacks from elementals of the chosen type.

Proxy Charm

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Brd 2, Missionary 3*, Entrancement 2**, Sor/Wiz 2

Description

During his service to the priesthood of Chardun, Marilvaz more than once felt the need to ensure an agent's or prisoner's cooperation with a local garrison commander or other officer, thus freeing himself for other duties. *Proxy charm* enabled him to ensorcel the subject and then depart, confident in the subject's continual cooperation.

Spell Effect

This spell functions exactly as *charm person*, save that you may designate somebody else as the recipient of the subject's friendship and loyalty. For instance, not only will the spell charm a goblin, you could then assign the goblin's loyalty to one of your traveling companions, rather than (but not in addition to) yourself.

Quicker Than the Eye

Divination

Level: Brd 0, Luck 1, Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Area: Quarter circle emanating from you to the extreme of the range

Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Description

Perhaps the most frivolous of Marilvaz's spells (often called by his apprentice "detect cheating"), this was also one of the first. The sage often traveled with soldiers while serving Chardun, and was simply sick of being cheated at cards.

Spell Effect

As *detect scrying*, except that this spell allows you to become aware of any attempt to cheat at any sort of game of chance or skill. This must be an actual game, such as cards or a board game; physical contests and sports do not qualify. You get a vague sense of how the person is cheating, but not specific details. (For instance, you might know that he's got an extra card hidden on him, but not know where or which one.) Any spell

designed to hide the subject from divinations, such as *nondetection*, thwarts this spell.

Reflective Strike

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action (but see text)

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One humanoid of Medium-size or smaller

Duration: 1 round

Saving Throw: Harmless (Will negates)

Spell Resistance: Yes (Harmless)

Description

One of the few times in his life that Marilvaz faced near defeat was at the hands of a paladin of Corean. The paladin wore a suit a mightily enchanted plate, so powerful that Marilvaz was practically unable to touch him either physically or with magic. This spell was his attempt to ensure that he would always have an alternate means of striking his foes.

Spell Effect

The subject gains the ability to injure a foe by making melee attacks at his shadow or reflection. The subject must make an attack roll against the target's natural shadow or naturally reflected image; this bypasses all magical protections; any armor, shields, and natural armor; and any enhancement bonuses of these items as if it were an incorporeal attack. Deflection bonuses to AC are still effective. Furthermore, the creature being attacked does not receive his Dexterity bonus unless he is fully aware of what is occurring. If the attack is successful, the subject deals full damage to her target as though she'd struck him directly. Any additional damaging effects of the weapon, such as flaming damage or the keen or vorpal abilities,

for instance, do not apply; the weapon does gain any enhancement bonuses to attack and damage, however. The attack also deals full damage — including any special effects or damage — to the surface struck (the one on which the target's shadow or image was cast), however, possibly destroying it in the process.

If the caster casts this spell upon himself, he may then opt to make a single reflective strike in the same round, both casting this spell and attacking his target's reflection as a special full attack action.

Material Component: A small mirror backed with precious metals, worth at least 50 gp.

Salt the Earth

Transmutation

Level: Clr 3, Earth 2, Drd 2, Rgr 3, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Area: Up to 1,000 square feet/caster level

Duration: See text

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Description

Marilvaz developed this spell as a means of ensuring that lands "pacified" by the soldiers with whom he worked would never again be of any practical value to the enemy, even if they were to be reclaimed.

Spell Effect

This spell allows you to render an area — usually farmlands, but any natural setting will work—unable to support plant life. This spell kills any nonmagical plants in the area, and prevents new plants from growing for a number of years equal the caster's level.

Material Component: One tablespoon of pure salt.

Sense Years

Divination

Level: Clr 2, Secrets 2**, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Description

Knowing one's foe is always the most vital step to defeating him. Marilvaz knew of many entities — dragons, demons, certain sorts of titanspawn — whose age might accurately give him some gauge of their powers.

Spell Effect

You discern instantly the true age of any living creature, regardless of appearances, magical disguises, or magical means of longevity. This spell does not function on undead, constructs, or anything not truly alive.

Sphere of Deception

Enchantment (Compulsion)
[Mind-Affecting]

Level: Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, F/DF

Description

Although Marilvaz was never one to lie just for fun, he knew the value of deception and misinformation as a military tactic. This spell was designed to mislead even those agents of other gods who weren't shy about using truth spells on him.

Spell Description

As *zone of truth*, save that those within are prevented from telling the truth. Everything they say must be false to some extent. *Sphere of deception* negates *zone of truth*, and vice-versa.

Arcane Focus: The preserved tongue of a man convicted of perjury, fraud or some other act of dishonesty.

New True Rituals

The Song of Unmaking

Level: True Ritual — Drd 6, Wiz 7
(see below)

Components: V, S, M, XP

Casters Required: 11

Proxy: None

Casting Time: 5 hours

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: One artifact

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Description

Unlike the other spells in his Tomb, Marilvaz did not create this ritual. Rather, he found it and copied it from an older work owned by a druid/sorceress named Zithinru. The ritual is supposedly the creation of the followers of the titan Mesos for use against the creations of the gods during the Divine War. The ritual was first penned at the end of the war, and has never, to anyone's knowledge, been used.

Spell Effect

This true ritual destroys any magic item it is cast upon, even those powerful artifacts normally immune to effects such as *dispelling* or *disjunction*. The relic simply

cracks and shatters from within, often breaking down into its component parts or substances. Under most conditions, the magic of the item simply disperses back into the world, although the ritual's creators theorize that, if conditions are right, the power might have unforeseen and potentially adverse effects on the area.

The ritual takes the form of a complex song, which must be sung in harmony by all eleven casters, each voicing his or her own passage. The casters must be standing on the six points and five of the six intersections of a six-pointed star, with the artifact resting at the sixth point of intersection. The ritual must be performed in some place of power, such as a region greatly infused or associated with the essence a titan or a god.

During the course of the song, one of the singers must spill the blood of a creature closely associated with the god or titan whose worshippers created the relic. The relic must be bathed in this creature's blood before the body of the sacrifice has cooled. The relic must also be bathed in the nothing less than the blood of a god or a titan during the ritual. (In this case, any god or titan will do; it need

not be one specifically associated with the artifact.)

All the above must be accomplished within the first 3 hours of the ritual. For the remaining 2 hours, the casters need merely continue their song. Because some passages and verses are longer than others, not all casters need be present for the entire ritual. They must all start together, but two of the eleven will be finished (and can thus leave without adversely affecting the ritual) after 3 hours have passed, and two more may leave after the 4th hour. The remaining seven must remain for the duration. If any of the necessary casters cease their singing or are interrupted for longer than a single round, the entire ritual fails.

Material Components: The blood of a sacrificial creature, as mentioned above, plus any number of herbs, substances, or objects holy to or revered by the entity whose worshippers created the artifact. (For instance, if destroying an artifact of Denev, the casters would have to possess large quantities of holly, stones, fertile soil, rare woods, and so forth.)

XP Cost: 2,000 from each caster.

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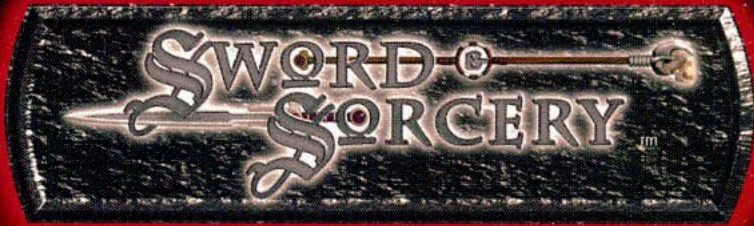
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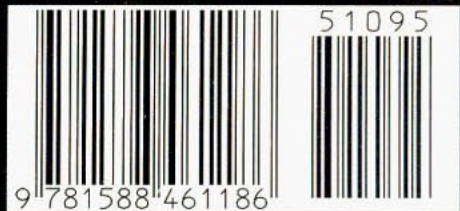
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