

TYRANNY'S PERILOUS BASTION

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] *LIVING
FORGOTTEN REALMS* ADVENTURE

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SPECIAL THANKS TO THE DMs, MARSHALS, AND HQ STAFF AT GEN CON INDY 2010

Rumors of an alliance between the Council of Blades in Mulmaster and a group of Banite Warlock Knights of Vaasa portend evil for the entire Moonsea region. Two years ago, a great earthquake rattled northern Vaasa and Damara. The ruined Castle Perilous sloughed off crumbling stone and the marks of age, revealing a sleek and dark edifice beneath, covered with shimmering black runes of unknown purpose. A powerful Warlock Knight now attempts to breach the castle's defenses, and your patron fears that his efforts will succeed. You must unlock the castle's secrets before the merciless lords of tyranny gain access to the ancient and terrible powers of the Witch-King Zhengyi. A *Living Forgotten Realms* Special adventure set in Vaasa for characters levels 17-20.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Andy Collins, Rob Heinsoo, and James Wyatt.

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OFFICIAL D&D PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an event, or you received it from your organizer. To play this adventure and receive rewards for it, you must schedule it as an event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To schedule a game for public play, you must be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. Information on enrolling in the program can be found at www.wizards.com/wpn. If you are scheduling the game for private play, you do not need to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. The person who schedules the event, called the organizer, is in charge of making sure the event is scheduled before play, runs smoothly on the date scheduled, and gets reported back to Wizards in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table Dungeon Master (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the organizer is also the table DM. You don't have to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network to DM this adventure if you are not the organizer.

By scheduling and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First, it is an official game, tracked under your play history. Second, DMs gain rewards for scheduled play if they are members of the DM REWARDS program. DMing this adventure is worth one (1) point.

To learn more about event scheduling and DM REWARDS, visit the D&D Events website at www.wizards.com/dnd and click on "Events."

PREPARING FOR PLAY

In order to play this adventure, you'll need copies of the following D&D 4th Edition rulebooks: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. Any other rules referenced in this adventure will be noted in the **New Rules Items** section at the end of the adventure.

Throughout this adventure, text in bold italics provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text.

Along with this adventure, you'll find a session tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an officially scheduled event, complete and turn in this sheet to your organizer directly after play.

READING MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

Most of the information should be easy to understand, as it mirrors the information presented in the *Monster Manual*. Attacks may have a letter next to them designating the type: M for melee, R for ranged, C for close, and A for area. A lower-case letter (used only in some melee and ranged attacks) denotes that the attack can be used as a basic attack.

IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

As the DM of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You take the words on these pages and make them come alive. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you DM for a group:

Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- **You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure.** This is especially important and applicable outside of combat encounters, but feel free to use the "scaling the encounter" advice (usually for adjusting to different-sized groups) to adjust combat encounters for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time in an adventure.
- **Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group.** Never being challenged makes for a boring game, and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating game. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a "chance to shine."
- **Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately.** Watch for stalling, as play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish the adventure too early; provide them with a full play experience. *Living Forgotten Realms* adventures are designed to be played within 3.5 - 4 hours; try to be very aware

of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.

- **Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to interact with their environment.** Players should always know when enemies are affected by conditions and are bloodied. They should be given clues about how to interact with their surroundings so they can tackle skill challenges, combats, and puzzles without getting too frustrated over lack of information. This helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players “little victories” for figuring out a good choice from a clue.

In short, being the DM for a *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure isn't about following the adventure's text word-for-word; it's about creating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. Chapters 1 and 2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are filled with good information about being a DM for a D&D game.

APPROPRIATE CHARACTER LEVELS

This adventure is designed for player characters (PCs) levels 17-20. Characters that fall outside of the level range may not participate in the adventure. Make certain to check the levels of the PCs before beginning play to ensure that they are the proper level.

Each adventure has a low-level version and a high-level version. The low level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the lower levels of the adventure's level spread. The high level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the higher levels of the adventure's level spread.

A group may decide to play the high level when their levels are more suited to the low level if everyone in the group agrees to do so; however, some of the rewards may not be available to them. Conversely, a group may decide to play the low level when their levels are more suited to the high level if everyone in the group agrees; however, some of the rewards may be less than what they'd ideally want from the adventure.

Reading the Numbers: Each encounter has a level and sometimes other values (such as XP or skill check DCs) listed with two numbers divided by a slash. The number before the slash is always the value for the low-level version of the adventure; the number after the slash is the value for the high-level version of the adventure.

FAILING TO DEFEAT AN ENCOUNTER

If a group fails to defeat an encounter - that is, if they have to flee from a combat because it's too tough or they reach the predetermined number of failures in a skill challenge before reaching success - they are only awarded half experience points (round down) for the encounter. If they manage to tackle the encounter later and defeat it, award them the other half of the experience points for the encounter.

CHARACTER DEATH

If a PC dies during the course of the adventure, the player of that character and the rest of the group have two options, provided that they have access to the Raise Dead ritual (either a PC has it and can use it or the characters return to civilization), they have access to the body, and it is possible to return the dead PC to life.

- **Pay the component cost for the ritual.** If the group chooses this option, the cost should be divided evenly among the group (500 gp for heroic tier, 5,000 gp for paragon tier, and 50,000 gp for epic tier). Using a source outside the group to cast the ritual costs 20% more than the component cost. Total cost when using an outside source is 600 gp for heroic tier, 6,000 gp for paragon tier, and 60,000 gp for epic tier. A PC that dies and chooses this method of return gains full (or half, if the party was defeated) experience points from the encounter in which the character died, but no experience points for any encounters that were missed while the character was dead. If there are encounters remaining, the PC continues to earn experience as normal, and receives a normal cut of the rewards at the end of the adventure.
- **Invoke the Death Charity clause.** If the group cannot afford to pay for the ritual (or doesn't desire to do so), the PC can choose to return to life at the end of the adventure. Doing so forfeits all rewards (including treasure and story rewards) earned for the adventure except experience points gained prior to the character's death (the character receives the experience point award for the encounter in which they died). The PC cannot participate in the same adventure a second time.

MILESTONES

No matter if the characters succeed or fail in an encounter, they reach a milestone if it is the second encounter they've had since the start of the adventure or their last extended rest. **Encounters that do not give out experience points do not count for purposes of reaching a milestone.** Make certain to mention this information to the players when applicable, as it gives each PC another action point and affects how some magic item powers are used.

LASTING EFFECTS

Sometimes a PC suffers a lasting effect that isn't easily resolved before the end of the adventure. The two most common lasting effects are the death penalty and diseases.

Death Penalty: When a character dies and is brought back to life by the Raise Dead ritual, that character suffers a -1 penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and ability checks until they have reached three milestones. The player should simply record the adventure where the character died on their adventure log, and then keep a running tally of milestones reached. Once the PC has reached the third milestone since coming back to life, they no longer suffer the penalty.

Diseases: Diseases take hold of a character and last until they are cured or they reach their final state. Normally, a PC makes an Endurance check after each extended rest to see if the disease improves, worsens, or maintains its current condition. At the end of the adventure, any character suffering from a disease must resolve the disease to either its cure or final state, using the necessary number of extended rests to do so. Other characters adventuring with the PC may decide to aid the afflicted character during this time. If a disease reaches its final state and the PC can get a Cure Disease ritual cast (and pay the appropriate costs), they may do so.

Other Lasting Effects: Other effects that last beyond the scope of the adventure should be resolved at the DM's discretion. Any effects that last for a specific period of time (that end after a certain number of days or a certain number of extended rests) should be resolved at the end of the adventure in which the effect was obtained (unless otherwise specified). Effects that use some sort of adventuring benchmark of unknown duration (such as milestones) should be recorded on the character's logsheet and tracked across adventures.

WHAT'S A CORE SPECIAL ADVENTURE?

Core Special adventures are designed to provide a challenging and epic (but fair and fun) experience where the players must work together in order to successfully complete the entire adventure within the time limit. The adventure as a whole is intended to be only slightly more difficult than other adventures, and not impossible to complete in a standard four-to-five hour convention slot.

The combat encounters in this adventure are designed to pose a tough challenge for the typical party of the expected levels (17-18 for low tier, 19-20 for high tier). The design intentionally features two combats instead of the usual three or four. This is to make the fights more challenging (by spending a higher percentage of the adventure's XP budget on each combat) and also to help ensure that the adventure can still be completed in a single convention slot, since Paragon tier combat encounters often run longer than their Heroic tier counterparts.

GLORY TIER

When player characters reach Paragon tier, the difference between "typical" parties and "heavily optimized" parties can become rather wide. There is no way to predict in advance whether your table will be one of those super-groups that cuts through normal encounters like a hot knife through warm butter. To help you challenge these parties, this adventure includes an optional "Glory Tier."

The Glory Tier offers suggestions and monster upgrades you can use to make the combat encounters more difficult. You can use none, some, or all of them, as you see fit. The PCs earn no additional XP for facing these options, and you may only use the Glory Tier with the players' consent. If the PCs have the power to win every fight in two or three combat rounds and that's the kind of game the players enjoy, then please, let them enjoy it. But if they specifically tell you that they are looking for a tough challenge, the Glory Tier might help you give them the beat-down they crave.

Again, to be very clear: The baseline encounters in this adventure are already more difficult than those in a standard LFR adventure. The Glory Tier will make things even harder. Do not use these options to TPK a party of less-experienced players or less-optimized characters. That is no fun for anyone.

The best way to find out what level of challenge to use is to ask the players. Have they played together many times before, or did they just meet for the first

time five minutes ago during mustering? Do they have a good mix of class roles in the party, or are they unbalanced in some fashion (lacking a leader, have three leaders, mostly defenders with low damage output, mostly strikers with high damage output)? Do they generally find LFR adventures, particularly the other Paragon tier adventures they've played, to be too easy, too hard, or about right? What level of difficulty do they want in the combat encounters ("take it easy on us," "bring it on," or somewhere in between)?

As always, we trust you to use good judgment and give the players a fun, but fair, level of challenge.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In SPEC2-2 P2, a group of adventurers (which might have included some of the PCs) recovered an artifact that once belonged to the Witch-King Zhengyi. The PCs' patron, Yazeth Cobb, has determined that this item is a shard from a much older artifact, given to the Witch-King by Orcus himself. The artifact must be destroyed. Yazeth's research and casting of ritual divinations has led him to believe that the means of destroying the artifact must involve a planar rift, and such a rift will most likely be found somewhere within Castle Perilous, since the Witch-King was quite adept at creating gates to the Lower Planes. Castle Perilous is also a logical destination because of the artifact's history. It doesn't hurt that the castle was recently rebuilt by unknown forces, and the artifact's rediscovery happened too soon thereafter to be mere coincidence.

The Council of Blades in Mulmaster and the Banite faction of Warlock Knights have been trying to form an alliance, but so far, all their efforts to work together have been thwarted by adventurers (see SPEC2-2 P1 and SPEC2-2 P2). Yazeth's sources tell him that these failures have caused the two organizations to bicker and argue with one another. The only goal that the two organizations are still willing to work together on is trying to recover the artifact, so if the PCs manage to destroy it, that should put an end to any further talks of an alliance. If, on the other hand, the Banites or Warlock Knights get their hands on the item, they will surely be able to use it for great evil. Yazeth knows that he is taking a risk by sending the artifact back into Vaasa, but he believes that the risk is worth taking if it results in the artifact's destruction. He trusts the PCs to make sure that the item does not fall into enemy hands.

Note: This adventure does not draw on any material from the novel *Promise of the Witch-King* by R.A. Salvatore. The novel is set in the pre-Spellplague era, and trying to reference its events in these adventures would only complicate the background without really

changing the details of the adventures. This adventure requires no background information other than what is found in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* (see the Appendix: Legends & Lore). However, the book is a good read!

DM'S INTRODUCTION

Before beginning play, check to see which of the PCs have worked with Yazeth Cobb in the past. (Potential adventures where the PCs might have met Yazeth include SPEC1-1, SPEC1-2, QUES1-1, CORE2-1, and the two previous SPEC2-2 adventures at the P1 and P2 level bands.)

Introduction: Yazeth Cobb asks the PCs to meet him in Damara. He explains the situation, gives them the artifact, and asks them to journey into Vaasa, find a way into Castle Perilous, and figure out how to destroy the artifact.

Encounter 1 (Exploration / Roleplaying): The PCs reach the site of the current Castle Perilous, which was magically rebuilt from its previous ruined state in a single night by forces unknown. The PCs quickly discover that a frontal assault is out of the question. However, if they are able to convince some local Vaasans to talk to them, the PCs can learn that a group of high-ranking Warlock Knights recently learned that there might be a portal leading into the castle, and have gone to investigate.

Encounter 2 (Combat): The PCs catch up with the Warlock Knights in a ruined gatehouse that was once part of the original Castle Perilous but did not get rebuilt when the rest of the castle did. The Warlock Knights are formidable adversaries and do not appreciate the PCs' interference.

Encounter 3 (Exploration): The PCs must figure out exactly where the portal is located and how to activate it. When they do, they are able to enter Castle Perilous. They find that the halls are deserted, but a strong magical aura leads them in a specific direction. The artifact wakes up from its torpor at this point and attempts to dominate/subvert the PCs, turning them against one another, until they manage to reassert their willpower and suppress its effects once more.

Encounter 4 (Combat / Skill Challenge): The PCs reach the source of the arcane energy and discover a huge summoning chamber beneath Castle Perilous. This was the site of the Witch-King's last stand against the forces of Gareth Dragonsbane. Zhengyi lost that battle and the lich's unholy existence came to an end.

Apparently, whatever force rebuilt the castle, it did so specifically to reopen this portal. Demonic orcs

(tanarukks) and a huge abyssal drake try to stop the PCs from closing the portal.

This is an elaborate encounter, involving several waves of enemies, a constantly-escalating threat, a puzzle that the players need to figure out during combat, and a skill challenge. Once the PCs have defeated the monsters and sealed the portal, they can throw the artifact into the collapsing portal, destroying it.

Encounter 5 (Roleplaying): The PCs return to Damara and make their report to Yazeth. He is delighted if they were able to destroy the artifact. If they closed the portal but didn't destroy the artifact, he's somewhat disappointed, but understanding. If they failed to close the portal then he is very disappointed.

Conclusion: Assuming the PCs did manage to close the portal and destroy the artifact, they have dealt a fatal blow to the notion of an alliance between Mulmaster and the Banite Warlock Knights. Too many opportunities have slipped away, and the two evil factions quickly devolve into finger-pointing and blaming each other for their individual losses (most of which were actually caused by PCs, of course). This concludes the Major Quest which began in SPEC2-2 P1 and continued in SPEC2-2 P2.

PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

You have journeyed to the harsh frontier nation of Damara at the request of Yazeth Cobb, a powerful cleric of Amaunator and frequent patron of adventuring companies.

Yazeth is a middle-aged male human cleric of Amaunator from Elturgard. He warmly greets those PCs who have worked with him before. For those he has not met previously, he is polite but respectful. Yazeth learned about them because of their reputation as powerful and experienced heroes. At this point, the PCs' experience and power has exceeded Yazeth's own, and he has a mission that is so important that he dare not entrust it to anyone but the mightiest paragons. This is your opportunity to have everyone perform character introductions.

Yazeth explains the mission (see the Adventure Background and DM's Introduction for details). In a nutshell, he wants the PCs to take a certain evil artifact that was recently recovered from the Great Glacier and find a way to destroy it. The artifact is quite evil and seems to be associated with Orcus in some fashion. Yazeth's research indicates that the artifact once belonged to the Witch-King Zhengyi, a lich who was

quite prominent among Orcus's agents before his existence was ended by Gareth Dragonsbane (whose dynasty ruled Damara until about 20 years ago). Zhengyi's stronghold was Castle Perilous, and the Castle has recently been rebuilt from its former rubble by powerful magic. The connection between the artifact, the Witch-King, and the castle is too strong to be a coincidence; Yazeth is convinced that the PCs will find a way to destroy the artifact within the castle.

The artifact is currently in a quiescent state, but Yazeth warns the PCs that it will likely try to subvert their will at some point, so they need to remain vigilant. The PCs are given a small *ironfell* coffer (see FRCG 276) containing the artifact. The artifact itself looks like nothing more sinister than a slender shard of obsidian, but it has already demonstrated the ability to dominate the minds of those in its presence (some PCs might have a story award to this effect from SPEC2-2 P2).

Yazeth provides the PCs with two scrolls of Linked Portal if they do not have the desire or ability to transport themselves to Vaasa. There are a few teleportation circles scattered in various ruins throughout Vaasa, so the PCs are able to get close enough to Castle Perilous to make the journey short. The mission is easier said than done: Find a way into Castle Perilous, and once inside, find a way to destroy the artifact, ideally by sending it through a planar rift.

Proceed to Encounter 1.

My Realms Opportunity: If you are running this adventure for a home play group, and there is interest in expanding the length of this adventure, you could combine a My Realms P3 with this adventure. You could intersperse encounters of your own devising (using the My Realms XP budget) with the encounters detailed in this adventure. Here are some suggestions for areas where this adventure could be expanded:

- As presented herein, Encounter 1 is a short information-gathering encounter (this is because of time constraints). You could expand this encounter in various ways - the PCs could have to chase down various leads to learn where the Warlock Knights went, or they could have a combat encounter with Banite forces and/or the chromatic dragons outside Castle Perilous, then interrogate the survivors to learn where the Warlock Knights went. Perhaps the "back door" portal (Encounter 3) cannot be activated until at least some of the exterior wards of Castle Perilous have been disabled, which would allow you to include an elaborate trap/skill challenge encounter as well.

- Dealing with the artifact could easily be an entire quest in itself. As presented here, the PCs simply need to throw the artifact into the demongate before they close it (Encounter 4). But destroying the artifact could be made into a far more elaborate process, perhaps requiring the PCs to gather certain information, magical components, or rituals from elsewhere in Vaasa or even other locations or individuals throughout the Realms. If you have advance knowledge of the characters you'll be running, you could tailor this to their personal interests and histories, using the contacts they have made in past adventures (story awards). The PCs might even have to take the artifact into the Abyss (going through the demongate) and destroy it there, which would let you add at least one more combat encounter inside the Abyss, using creatures from *Demonomicon* and other appropriate sources.
- Perhaps the best opportunity to extend this adventure with a My Realms package would be by adding encounters inside Castle Perilous. As presented, the PCs move very quickly through the interior of the Castle, simply because of time constraints to finish the adventure in a single convention slot. You could easily expand Castle Perilous into an adventure site of its own - the bastion is large enough to contain many encounters' worth of adventure material. The PCs could fight both the new demonic residents (such as the tanarukks and other creatures that might have come through the portal) as well as some of Zhengyi's own guardians and servants that have been dormant since before the Spellplague. There are any number of golems, constructs, undead, summoned creatures, etc. that you could use in this fashion. The castle itself might be an elaborate maze of rooms and hallways, requiring the PCs to collect certain pieces of information or key items before they can unlock the wards and gain entry to the portal room itself. Just remember that however you set things up, the battle in the summoning chamber (Encounter 4) is designed to be quite taxing of the PCs' resources, so if you throw an entire My Realms' worth of encounters at them between Encounter 3 and Encounter 4, you might need to contrive a way for them to get an extended rest along the way.

ENCOUNTER 1: THE FRONT DOOR

SETUP

The PCs use the Linked Portal ritual to enter Vaasa and make their way to the location of Castle Perilous. They discover that the castle has seemingly been rebuilt from its own ruins, and now features sleek black obsidian walls covered with glowing red runes. Chromatic dragons of all sorts cavort and dive in the air over the castle, as if they too are trying to find a way to get inside.

As the PCs watch, one of the dragons gets too close to the walls, and is blasted with powerful energy by a rune. Its scales smoking, the dragon quickly withdraws to a safe distance. Around the base of the castle walls, the PCs see a number of charred corpses, attesting to the fact that the Warlock Knights have been trying to figure out how to get in for some time now, but without success.

A few hundred yards away from Castle Perilous, outside the evident range of the runes, the PCs see an elaborate tent pavilion. Investigating this, they learn that it is the temporary headquarters for a trio of Warlock Knights who have decided that they need to find out what is inside Castle Perilous. The PCs can interrogate the Knights' retainers, but only if they come up with a good disguise or cover story. They could try to pass themselves off as Warlock Knights, or they could pose as mercenaries hired by the Knights to help them breach the castle, or any other story that you think plausible. Call for appropriate skill checks as needed, but this is not a skill challenge, so you don't need to run it that way.

Assuming they are successful at befriending the squires and servants at the pavilion, the PCs can learn the following information:

- The party of Warlock Knights consists of three members: an Executor, a Vindicator, and a Luminary. (See the Appendix for more information about the Warlock Knights as an organization.) The Vindicator and the Luminary in particular are very high-ranking Warlock Knights, although they are not quite powerful enough to be invited to sit on the ruling Ironfell Council.
- The Knights have been camped here for several weeks, studying Castle Perilous and trying to find a way to bypass the guardian runes. So far, all efforts to enter the castle have failed. Quite a few "test subjects" have lost their lives to the castle's defenses. (Feel free to allow the players to make appropriate skill checks to study the runes and come to the same conclusion on their own.)

- Nobody knows who or what rebuilt the castle. It had lain in ruins for over a hundred years after Gareth Dragonsbane killed the Witch-King Zhengyi. When the castle reappeared, it happened in a single night. Many believe that an army of demons was responsible for the construction, and that there is a demonic army of some sort building up inside the castle, biding their time before launching a massive attack.
- In addition to trying to bypass the castle's magical defenses, the Warlock Knights have a contingent of sages poring over every tale and tome they can find that might mention the Witch-King, Castle Perilous, Gareth Dragonsbane, or any other historical details that might be helpful.
- Just a few hours ago, a courier arrived with what seemed just like another ordinary book, but this one had exactly what the Knights needed - it mentions a secret portal that Gareth Dragonsbane and his Order of the Golden Cup might have used to get into Castle Perilous. The location of the portal is not within the section of the ruins that were magically rebuilt, so it's very possible that the portal might still function, and allow the Warlock Knights to enter the castle.
- A hard DC skill check, meaningful bribe, or other suitable inducement is required to convince the Vassans that it's OK for them to tell the PCs which direction the Warlock Knights went. After all, if the PCs cause any trouble, it's the commonfolk who will bear the brunt of the Warlock Knights' wrath.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs have gotten the information they need, there's no reason to stick around outside Castle Perilous. If the PCs decide to approach the castle on their own, they quickly learn that no ritual or power they have can get them past the rune-scribed walls of the rebuilt castle. Their only real option is to follow the Warlock Knights' trail and hope that they have indeed discovered a long-lost portal linking part of the ruins to the castle's interior. Proceed to Encounter 2.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, and it does not count towards a milestone.

TREASURE

There is no treasure in this encounter.

ENCOUNTER 2: WARLOCK KNIGHTS

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 21/22 (16000/22400 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

- 1 Warlock Knight executor (level 18) (E)
- 1 Warlock Knight vindicator (level 18) (V)
- 1 Warlock Knight luminary (level 18) (L)
- 2 shardsoul avatars (level 18) (S)

This encounter includes the following creatures the high tier:

- 1 Warlock Knight executor (level 20) (E)
- 1 Warlock Knight vindicator (level 20) (V)
- 1 Warlock Knight luminary (level 20) (L)
- 2 shardsoul avatars (level 20) (S)

The PCs learned about this location after exploring the main site of Castle Perilous, discovering that the rune-covered walls are both deadly and impassable, and interrogating some local Vaasans to learn about a group of Warlock Knights in the area.

When the PCs arrive the Warlock Knights have already begun exploring the ruined gatehouse. A portal within leads to the castle proper, providing a way to bypass the deadly wards that now cover the castle walls. Before the PCs can take advantage of this "back door," however, they will need to deal with the Warlock Knights and their shardsoul servants.

This ruined gatehouse is not part of the "rejuvenated" Castle Perilous; it is a remnant of the Witch-King's original castle that was destroyed before the Spellplague. The building is in terrible shape, with crumbling walls and no intact fortifications, but it seems stable enough. The question is, what could possibly be located here that a group of high-ranking Warlock Knights would find so interesting?

The Warlock Knights got here via a high-level casting of the Phantom Steed ritual, so they came in on flying, insubstantial mounts which left no tracks and then disappeared. Thus, the PCs likely cannot discover the Knights' location until they approach the building.

Allow the PCs to determine how they want to approach the gatehouse (this determines which PCs and

which monsters see each other, and when). The battle map shows the immediate area, but the terrain stretches as many squares as needed in all directions. The nearest cover or concealment is 20 squares away, so the PCs must approach over open ground. The building's roof remains intact, so aerial reconnaissance yields no useful information.

Adjudicate the PCs' approach as you see fit, using Stealth vs. Perception, line of sight, and any other effects (such as invisibility or teleportation) that the PCs can bring to bear. When the PCs can see into the gatehouse, read the following:

Three Warlock Knights explore different sections of the gatehouse. One is clad in full plate and carries a glaive. A second wears leather armor and has a brace of daggers sheathed across his chest. The third is obviously a Luminary, based on his gray robes and veil. The Luminary seems to be in charge. She is currently examining a crumbling dais atop which six crumbling statues stand.

Patrolling the area are several metallic humanoids. Their movements are slightly jerky, like automatons, and they have a single, unblinking violet eye in the center of their faces. These must be the legendary shardsoul avatars, carved by the Warlock Knights directly from the ironfell body of the primordial Telos.

As soon as the PCs have been spotted or reveal themselves, the Warlock Knight Vindicator calls out a challenge, and combat begins. Note that the Warlock Knights cannot be surprised, thanks to the effect of their *ironfell rings* (each currently carrying the power of a *premonition ring*; see the statistics page for details).

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The area is brightly lit by the sun.

Rubble: These squares are difficult terrain. Note that the shardsoul avatars have "jump" as a movement mode which allows them to jump as part of their movement, up to the listed distance, without needing to roll an Athletics check.

Walls: The solid black walls are intact. The former gates of the building are long gone, leaving the front entrance wide open. There are arrow slits and other places where the walls have collapsed, as shown on the map. These openings provide line of sight / line of effect and offer numerous potential ways to get past the walls or make ranged/area attacks through the walls.

Ceiling: Inside the building, the ceiling is 10 feet high. Outside, the sky's the limit, but the Warlock Knights cannot fly and so refuse to engage the PCs

outside the building. If necessary, they can activate the portal and head into Castle Perilous, forcing the PCs to pursue them, but only do this as a last resort if the PCs insist on trying to fight the battle in the air outside the gatehouse.

Statues: The statues are blocking terrain and provide cover to Medium creatures. They are also the keys to activating the portal into Castle Perilous (see the next encounter for details).

TACTICS

The shardsoul avatars use *skyfall charge* (they can combine this with their jump movement mode to make a leaping charge, if necessary to bypass difficult terrain) on their first turn. They position themselves near as many PCs as possible, to maximize the effects of their *deranging aura* and *starshriek aura*. They make a *claw* attack to mark someone, then activate *slaying frenzy*. They always stay within 10 squares of each other so they can benefit from *shardsoul release* when one of them dies.

The vindicator challenges the most knightly-looking PC (likely a fighter or paladin in full plate armor). From across the battlefield, he points at this character and invokes *iron sky starfall*, hoping to daze his chosen foe, then closes to melee for repeated *glaive arcs*.

The executor circles the battlefield seeking combat advantage. He can wreak havoc on a single target in one glorious round by leading with *iron sky starfall*. If that hits and dazes the target, he spends an action point for *shardstar warrior* to make two *ironfell dagger* attacks, and if one of them scores a critical hit (which happens on a roll of 18-20) then he follows it up with *critical opportunity*. If the initial attempt to daze fails, consider using *dark one's own luck* to reroll, as this is a potent combination if everything comes together.

The luminary is in charge of this expedition, but she prefers to lead from the rear. She places her *ironfell curse* on the nearest PC; if possible, move her around the battlefield so that she can curse different PCs on subsequent turns (each curse lasts for the entire encounter and there is no limit to the total number of curses she can place, other than the number of enemies she faces). *Double eldritch blast* is even more fun when both targets are taking extra damage from *ironfell curse*. She uses *bands of Telos* to immobilize ranged attackers, or *iron sky meteors* to daze them, so that her allies can close in and engage them in melee. Conversely, if someone closes to melee range with her, the luminary activates *star trail* to extricate herself. She still provokes opportunity attacks as she flies away, but takes half damage for being insubstantial and the attacker takes

radiant damage for swinging at her (regardless of whether the attack hits or misses).

Note that each of the Warlock Knights has the *shielding shades* daily power, which allows them to individually negate all damage from a single attack. This is helpful in avoiding an early death due to PC “alpha strike” tactics.

IMPORTANT NOTE

This is designed to be a very challenging battle. Although this company of Warlock Knights is not the most powerful group in Vaasa, they are but one step below the thirteen members of the Ironfell Council. The PCs are getting close to the Epic tier and this battle is designed to make them feel like the foes they are facing are a worthy match for their own great power.

During playtesting and at the premiere of this adventure, this particular encounter proved to be quite deadly. There is still a lot of adventure left after this encounter, and it would not be fun for the players to miss out. You must use all your skill and experience as a DM to make sure you are challenging the PCs without overwhelming them (especially at a 4-player table).

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the PCs are forced to retreat, use your best judgment and restructure the remaining encounters to account for this. The surviving Warlock Knights figure out how the portal works and enter Castle Perilous, but it takes them a long time to explore the castle - enabling the PCs to overtake them during Encounter 3 and finish the job.

The most likely scenario is for the PCs to encounter the Warlock Knights in a battle against some of the denizens of Castle Perilous. Pull the stat blocks from Encounter 4 for the tanarukks and throw them together with the surviving Warlock Knights and any shardsouls, and let the PCs come into the middle of this fight. Of course, both sides turn on the new arrivals, but the two evil forces definitely do not work together.

Once the PCs defeat the Warlock Knights, they aren't necessarily up against any particular time limit, though of course the goal is for the party not to take an extended rest unless absolutely necessary.

If any of the PCs are killed during the battle, the Warlock Knights perform a cursory search for interesting magic items, but leave the bodies behind, planning to deal with them after they explore the castle. Characters at this level should easily be able to bring dead party members back via the appropriate rituals, allowing them to continue with the rest of the adventure.

GLORY TIER

If the players have asked for an additional challenge, you can consider using some or all of the following adjustments:

- Change the executor's *critical opportunity* power from "Encounter" to "Recharge 4 5 6".
- If the vindicator hits the same target twice with *glaive arcs*, he knocks the target prone and deals an additional 10 radiant damage.
- Change the vindicator's *beacon of Telos* aura so that it grants any three energy resistances of the vindicator's choosing (changing the resistances is a minor action for each damage type changed).
- When the luminary attacks a target on which she has placed her *ironfell curse*, she deals the extra curse damage even if the attack misses.
- The luminary's curse damage is always maximized (12 damage instead of 2d6).
- Change the trigger for *shardsoul release* from "reduced to 0 hit points" to "when first bloodied." This will allow the shardsouls to benefit from each other's release, instead of only the second one benefiting after the first one dies.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present. To be clear, these adjustments are not cumulative.

Four PCs (normal): Remove one of the shardsoul avatars.

Four PCs (strong table) or Five PCs (normal): Run as written; no changes.

Five PCs (strong table) or Six PCs (normal): Add a third shardsoul avatar.

Six PCs (strong table): Each Warlock Knight begins the encounter with temporary hit points equal to his or her bloodied value. Alternatively, add a third shardsoul avatar. (Base this decision on the PCs' damage output and ability to neutralize individual targets. You don't necessarily need to decide until a round or two into the combat; if the PCs are rapidly burning down the Warlock Knights' hit points, go with the temporary hit point option. If the PCs demonstrate a lot of control and "lock down" abilities, have the third shardsoul avatar join the battle, entering through one of the ruined walls.)

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

The Witch-King had many secret escape routes from his castle, as insurance against things going badly. Of course, this insurance didn't pay off, as Zhengyi was eventually cornered and destroyed in his inner sanctum.

Most of the knowledge of the castle's secret passages and magic portals died with Zhengyi. Although they were in the right place, the Warlock Knights had not yet figured out how to open the portal when the PCs attacked. Thus, even if the PCs take a Warlock Knight alive, they cannot gain any useful information by interrogation. (The Ironfell Pact also prevents the Warlock Knights from betraying any of the secrets of Telos or the Ironfell Council.)

However, the PCs do know from their earlier investigation that the Warlock Knights believed there was a "back door" into Castle Perilous at this location, so all they need to do is discover exactly how to operate the portal. Proceed to Encounter 3.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 3200 / 4480 XP each for defeating the Warlock Knights and their retinue.

TREASURE

Between the three Warlock Knights, they carry a total amount of gems and jewelry worth 4750/7500 gold pieces per PC. The executor wears *gambit armor +4*. The vindicator wears *death's brink armor +4*. The luminary wears a *robe of defying flames +4* and carries an ancient journal, kept by one of the knights who accompanied Gareth Dragonsbane into Castle Perilous during the battle against the Witch-King in 1348 DR.

Among these notes are the clues the PCs need to close the abyssal gate within Castle Perilous. Distribute **Handout 1**.

ENCOUNTER 2: "WARLOCK KNIGHTS" (LOW LEVEL)

Warlock Knight Executor (Level 18)	Level 18 Elite Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (human)	XP 4,000
HP 338; Bloodied 169	Initiative +17
AC 32, Fortitude 30, Reflex 33, Will 30	Perception +14
Speed 7	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
TRAITS	
Combat Advantage	
The executor deals an extra 3d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target he has combat advantage against.	
Dagger Advantage	
When the executor scores a critical hit with <i>ironfell dagger</i> , the target grants combat advantage to the executor until the end of the executor's next turn.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
m Ironfell Dagger (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +24 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d4 + 15 damage plus 10 radiant damage.	
Special: This power can score a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.	
R Ironfell Shuriken (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +23 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d6 + 15 damage plus 10 radiant damage.	
Shard Star Warrior (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Effect: The executor makes two basic attacks (melee or ranged).	
R Iron Sky Starfall (radiant) • Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +21 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d6 + 9 radiant damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the executor's next turn.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
M Critical Opportunity (weapon) • Encounter	
Requirement: The executor must have scored a critical hit with <i>ironfell dagger</i> against an enemy during this turn.	
Attack: Melee 1 (the same creature that the executor critically hit); +24 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d4 + 15 damage plus 10 radiant damage.	
Special: This power can score a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Dark One's Own Luck • Daily	
Trigger: The executor makes an attack roll, saving throw, ability check, or skill check and dislikes the result.	
Effect (No Action): The executor rerolls the triggering roll and uses the better of the two results.	
Shielding Shades • Daily	
Trigger: The executor is hit by an attack.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Reduce the attack's damage to 0. If the attack targets other creatures, they take damage as normal.	
Skills Arcana +15, Bluff +18, Diplomacy +18, Insight +14	
Str 15 (+11)	Dex 22 (+15) Wis 10 (+9)
Con 17 (+12)	Int 12 (+10) Cha 18 (+13)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Damaran	
Equipment 2 ironfell daggers, 15 ironfell shuriken, <i>iron ring</i> , leather armor	

Notes: All three of the Warlock Knights come from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*, updated to Paragon tier and to reflect MM3 design and damage guidelines

Warlock Knight Vindicator (Level 18)	Level 18 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (human)	XP 4,000
HP 334; Bloodied 167	Initiative +11
AC 35, Fortitude 33, Reflex 30, Will 31	Perception +9
Speed 5	
Resist 10 radiant	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
TRAITS	
O Beacon of Telos • Aura 5	
Allies within the aura gain resist 10 fire, psychic, and radiant.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
m Ironfell Glaive (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +23 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d4 + 16 damage plus 1d10 radiant damage, and the target is marked until the end of the vindicator's next turn.	
Glaive Arcs (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Effect: The vindicator makes two <i>ironfell glaive</i> attacks.	
R Iron Sky Starfall (radiant) • Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +21 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d6 + 9 radiant damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the vindicator's next turn.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Iron Sky Pursuit • At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy marked by the vindicator within 5 squares of the vindicator moves away.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The vindicator shifts up to 4 squares toward the marked enemy.	
Dark One's Own Luck • Daily	
Trigger: The vindicator makes an attack roll, saving throw, ability check, or skill check and dislikes the result.	
Effect (No Action): The vindicator rerolls the triggering roll and uses the better of the two results.	
Shielding Shades • Daily	
Trigger: The vindicator is hit by an attack.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Reduce the attack's damage to 0. If the attack targets other creatures, they take damage as normal.	
Skills Arcana +18, Athletics +21, Diplomacy +19, Intimidate +19	
Str 24 (+16)	Dex 10 (+9) Wis 11 (+9)
Con 15 (+11)	Int 18 (+13) Cha 20 (+14)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Damaran	
Equipment ironfell plate armor, ironfell glaive, <i>iron ring</i>	

Each of the Warlock Knights wears an *iron ring*, which is the focus for a ritual known as the Pact of the Iron Ring (FRCG 59). As a side effect, the Knights gain the benefit of a *premonition ring* (*Adventurer's Vault* 157) while wearing these items. This grants them the following benefit and daily magic item power, which are not included in their stat blocks:

Premonition Ring	Level 15
With this dark obsidian ring on your finger, you act quickly when faced with danger.	
Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to initiative and passive Perception checks.	
Power (Daily): No Action. Use this power when you are surprised. You are not surprised.	

Warlock Knight Luminary (Level 18)	Level 18 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human)	XP 4,000
HP 268; Bloodied 134	Initiative +9
AC 30, Fortitude 32, Reflex 31, Will 34	Perception +11
Speed 6	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
TRAITS	
Fate of Ironfell	
When an enemy under the effect of <i>ironfell curse</i> is reduced to 0 hit points, the luminary gains a +5 power bonus to a single d20 roll before the end of her next turn.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
m Ironfell Morningstar (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage plus 1d10 radiant damage.	
r Eldritch Blast • At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d10 + 10 damage.	
Double Eldritch Blast • At-Will	
Effect: The luminary makes two <i>eldritch blast</i> attacks against two different targets.	
C Iron Sky Meteors (radiant) • Recharge 5 6	
Attack: Close burst 10 (two creatures in burst); +21 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d10 + 10 radiant damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the luminary's next turn.	
A Bands of Telos (radiant, zone) • Daily	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +22 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 4d10 + 10 radiant damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Effect: The burst creates a zone of difficult terrain that lasts until the end of the luminary's next turn. Whenever a creature enters the zone, the luminary can use an opportunity action to make the above attack against that creature.	
Sustain Minor: The zone persists, and each creature within the zone takes 10 radiant damage.	
MOVE ACTIONS	
Star Trail • Encounter	
Effect: The luminary flies up to 7 squares, landing in an unoccupied space; she becomes insubstantial during this movement. Any enemy that makes an opportunity attack against the luminary during this movement takes 10 radiant damage.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
Ironfell Curse • At-Will (1/round)	
Effect: The luminary chooses the closest enemy within line of sight. That enemy takes 2d6 extra damage from the luminary's attacks. A luminary can't curse an enemy already under the effect of <i>ironfell curse</i> or another creature's curse.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Dark One's Own Luck • Daily	
Trigger: The luminary makes an attack roll, saving throw, ability check, or skill check and dislikes the result.	
Effect (No Action): The luminary rerolls the triggering roll and uses the better of the two results.	
Shielding Shades • Daily	
Trigger: The luminary is hit by an attack.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Reduce the attack's damage to 0. If the attack targets other creatures, they take damage as normal.	
Skills Arcana +18, Bluff +21, Intimidate +21, Streetwise +21	
Str 12 (+10)	Dex 10 (+9) Wis 14 (+11)
Con 20 (+14)	Int 18 (+13) Cha 24 (+16)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Damaran, Primordial	
Equipment robes, ironfell morningstar, iron ring	

Shardsoul Avatar (Level 18)	Level 18 Soldier
Large elemental animate (construct)	XP 2,000
HP 172; Bloodied 86	Initiative +21
AC 33, Fortitude 33, Reflex 29, Will 29	Perception +10
Speed 8, jump 6	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 radiant	
TRAITS	
O Deranging Aura (charm) • Aura 5	
Enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls. Any enemy within the aura whose attack misses the shardsoul avatar must make a melee basic attack against the nearest ally within reach as a free action.	
O Starshriek Aura (psychic) • Aura 1	
An enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 5 psychic damage.	
Skyfall Charge	
When a shardsoul avatar charges, it deals 2d6 extra damage.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
m Claw • At-Will	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +23 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 13 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the shardsoul's next turn.	
r Ironfell Beam (radiant) • At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d6 + 9 radiant damage, and the shardsoul slides the target 1 square.	
M Slaying Frenzy • Recharge 4 5 6	
Effect: The shardsoul makes two claw attacks. If either attack hits a target marked by the shardsoul, or if both attacks hit the same target, that target is also dazed until the end of the shardsoul's next turn.	
C Meteor Stomp (radiant) • Encounter	
Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +21 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 3d6 + 9 damage plus 2d6 radiant damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.	
Miss: Half damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Focused Killer • At-Will (1/round)	
Trigger: An adjacent enemy marked by the shardsoul shifts.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The shardsoul makes a <i>claw</i> attack against the triggering enemy.	
Shardsoul Release • Encounter	
Trigger: The shardsoul avatar is reduced to 0 hit points.	
Target: One other shardsoul of the avatar's level or lower within 10 squares.	
Effect: The target shardsoul can take one extra standard action on each of its next two turns.	
Str 26 (+17)	Dex 23 (+15) Wis 3 (+5)
Con 20 (+14)	Int 6 (+7) Cha 20 (+14)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages understands Common, Primordial	
Equipment greatsword	

Notes: *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*, updated to reflect MM3 design and damage guidelines.

ENCOUNTER 2: "WARLOCK KNIGHTS" (HIGH LEVEL)

Warlock Knight Executor (Level 20) Level 20 Elite Skirmisher	
Medium natural humanoid (human)	XP 5,600
HP 370; Bloodied 185	Initiative +18
AC 34, Fortitude 32, Reflex 35, Will 32	Perception +15
Speed 7	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
TRAITS	
Combat Advantage	
The executor deals an extra 3d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target he has combat advantage against.	
Dagger Advantage	
When the executor scores a critical hit with <i>ironfell dagger</i> , the target grants combat advantage to the executor until the end of the executor's next turn.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
m Ironfell Dagger (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d4 + 17 damage plus 10 radiant damage.	
Special: This power can score a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.	
R Ironfell Shuriken (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +25 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d6 + 17 damage plus 10 radiant damage.	
Shard Star Warrior (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Effect: The executor makes two basic attacks (melee or ranged).	
R Iron Sky Starfall (radiant) • Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +23 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d6 + 11 radiant damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the executor's next turn.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
M Critical Opportunity (weapon) • Encounter	
Requirement: The executor must have scored a critical hit with <i>ironfell dagger</i> against an enemy during this turn.	
Attack: Melee 1 (the same creature that the executor critically hit); +26 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d4 + 17 damage plus 10 radiant damage.	
Special: This power can score a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Dark One's Own Luck • Daily	
Trigger: The executor makes an attack roll, saving throw, ability check, or skill check and dislikes the result.	
Effect (No Action): The executor rerolls the triggering roll and uses the better of the two results.	
Shielding Shades • Daily	
Trigger: The executor is hit by an attack.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Reduce the attack's damage to 0. If the attack targets other creatures, they take damage as normal.	
Skills Arcana +16, Bluff +19, Diplomacy +19, Insight +15	
Str 15 (+12)	Dex 22 (+16) Wis 10 (+10)
Con 17 (+13)	Int 12 (+11) Cha 18 (+14)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Damaran	
Equipment 2 ironfell daggers, 15 ironfell shuriken, <i>iron ring</i> , leather armor	

Notes: All three of the Warlock Knights come from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*, updated to Paragon tier and to reflect MM3 design and damage guidelines

Warlock Knight Vindicator (Level 20) Level 20 Elite Soldier (Leader)	
Medium natural humanoid (human)	XP 5,600
HP 366; Bloodied 183	Initiative +12
AC 37, Fortitude 35, Reflex 32, Will 33	Perception +10
Speed 5	
Resist 10 radiant	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
TRAITS	
O Beacon of Telos • Aura 5	
Allies within the aura gain resist 10 fire, psychic, and radiant.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
m Ironfell Glaive (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +25 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d4 + 18 damage plus 1d10 radiant damage, and the target is marked until the end of the vindicator's next turn.	
Glaive Arcs (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Effect: The vindicator makes two <i>ironfell glaive</i> attacks.	
R Iron Sky Starfall (radiant) • Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +23 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d6 + 11 radiant damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the vindicator's next turn.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Iron Sky Pursuit • At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy marked by the vindicator within 5 squares of the vindicator moves away.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The vindicator shifts up to 4 squares toward the marked enemy.	
Dark One's Own Luck • Daily	
Trigger: The vindicator makes an attack roll, saving throw, ability check, or skill check and dislikes the result.	
Effect (No Action): The vindicator rerolls the triggering roll and uses the better of the two results.	
Shielding Shades • Daily	
Trigger: The vindicator is hit by an attack.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Reduce the attack's damage to 0. If the attack targets other creatures, they take damage as normal.	
Skills Arcana +19, Athletics +22, Diplomacy +20 Intimidate +20	
Str 24 (+17)	Dex 10 (+10) Wis 11 (+10)
Con 15 (+12)	Int 18 (+14) Cha 20 (+15)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Damaran	
Equipment ironfell plate armor, ironfell glaive, <i>iron ring</i>	

Each of the Warlock Knights wears an *iron ring*, which is the focus for a ritual known as the Pact of the Iron Ring (FRCG 59). As a side effect, the Knights gain the benefit of a *premonition ring* (*Adventurer's Vault* 157) while wearing these items. This grants them the following benefit and daily magic item power, which are not included in their stat blocks:

Premonition Ring	Level 15
With this dark obsidian ring on your finger, you act quickly when faced with danger.	
Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to initiative and passive Perception checks.	
Power (Daily): No Action. Use this power when you are surprised. You are not surprised.	

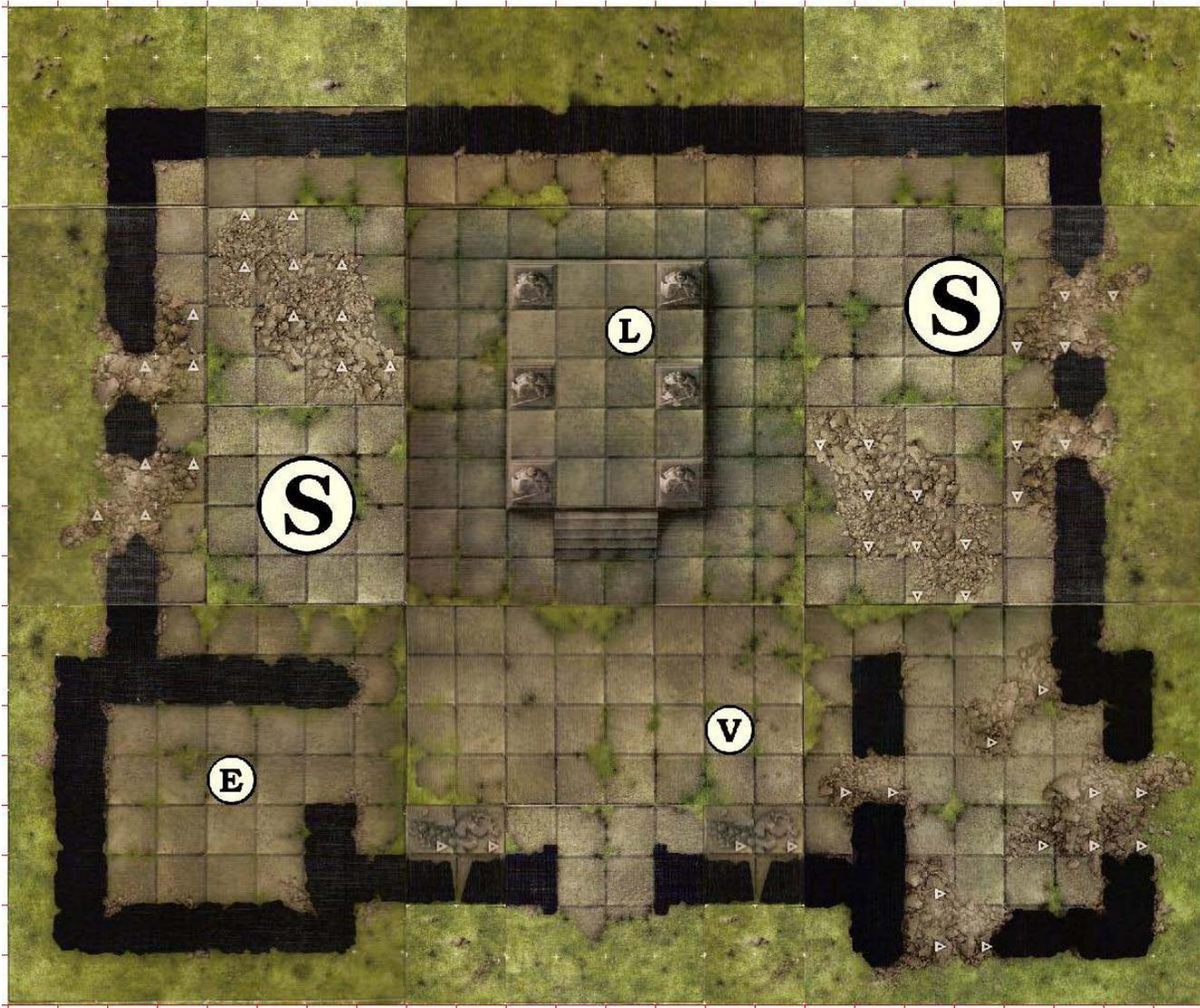
Warlock Knight Luminary (Level 20)	Level 20 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (human)	XP 5,600
HP 292; Bloodied 146	Initiative +10
AC 32, Fortitude 34, Reflex 33, Will 36	Perception +12
Speed 6	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
TRAITS	
Fate of Ironfell	
When an enemy under the effect of <i>ironfell curse</i> is reduced to 0 hit points, the luminary gains a +5 power bonus to a single d20 roll before the end of her next turn.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
m Ironfell Morningstar (radiant, weapon) • At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 7 damage plus 1d10 radiant damage.	
r Eldritch Blast • At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +25 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d10 + 12 damage.	
Double Eldritch Blast • At-Will	
Effect: The luminary makes two <i>eldritch blast</i> attacks against two different targets.	
C Iron Sky Meteors (radiant) • Recharge 5 6	
Attack: Close burst 10 (two creatures in burst); +23 vs. Will	
Hit: 3d10 + 12 radiant damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the luminary's next turn.	
A Bands of Telos (radiant, zone) • Daily	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +24 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 4d10 + 12 radiant damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Effect: The burst creates a zone of difficult terrain that lasts until the end of the luminary's next turn. Whenever a creature enters the zone, the luminary can use an opportunity action to make the above attack against that creature.	
Sustain Minor: The zone persists, and each creature within the zone takes 10 radiant damage.	
MOVE ACTIONS	
Star Trail • Encounter	
Effect: The luminary flies up to 7 squares, landing in an unoccupied space; she becomes insubstantial during this movement. Any enemy that makes an opportunity attack against the luminary during this movement takes 10 radiant damage.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
Ironfell Curse • At-Will (1/round)	
Effect: The luminary chooses the closest enemy within line of sight. That enemy takes 2d6 extra damage from the luminary's attacks. A luminary can't curse an enemy already under the effect of <i>ironfell curse</i> or another creature's curse.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Dark One's Own Luck • Daily	
Trigger: The luminary makes an attack roll, saving throw, ability check, or skill check and dislikes the result.	
Effect (No Action): The luminary rerolls the triggering roll and uses the better of the two results.	
Shielding Shades • Daily	
Trigger: The luminary is hit by an attack.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Reduce the attack's damage to 0. If the attack targets other creatures, they take damage as normal.	
Skills Arcana +19, Bluff +22, Intimidate +22, Streetwise +22	
Str 12 (+11)	Dex 10 (+10) Wis 14 (+12)
Con 20 (+15)	Int 18 (+14) Cha 24 (+17)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Damaran, Primordial	
Equipment robes, ironfell morningstar, iron ring	

Shardsoul Avatar (Level 20)	Level 20 Soldier
Large elemental animate (construct)	XP 2,800
HP 188; Bloodied 94	Initiative +22
AC 35, Fortitude 35, Reflex 31, Will 31	Perception +11
Speed 8, jump 6	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 radiant	
TRAITS	
O Deranging Aura (charm) • Aura 5	
Enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls. Any enemy within the aura whose attack misses the shardsoul avatar must make a melee basic attack against the nearest ally within reach as a free action.	
O Starshriek Aura (psychic) • Aura 1	
An enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 5 psychic damage.	
Skyfall Charge	
When a shardsoul avatar charges, it deals 2d6 extra damage.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
m Claw • At-Will	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +25 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 15 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the shardsoul's next turn.	
r Ironfell Beam (radiant) • At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d6 + 11 radiant damage, and the shardsoul slides the target 1 square.	
M Slaying Frenzy • Recharge 4 5 6	
Effect: The shardsoul makes two claw attacks. If either attack hits a target marked by the shardsoul, or if both attacks hit the same target, that target is also dazed until the end of the shardsoul's next turn.	
C Meteor Stomp (radiant) • Encounter	
Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +23 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 3d6 + 11 damage plus 2d6 radiant damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.	
Miss: Half damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Focused Killer • At-Will (1/round)	
Trigger: An adjacent enemy marked by the shardsoul shifts.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The shardsoul makes a <i>claw</i> attack against the triggering enemy.	
Shardsoul Release • Encounter	
Trigger: The shardsoul avatar is reduced to 0 hit points.	
Target: One other shardsoul of the avatar's level or lower within 10 squares.	
Effect: The target shardsoul can take one extra standard action on each of its next two turns.	
Str 26 (+18)	Dex 23 (+16) Wis 3 (+6)
Con 20 (+15)	Int 6 (+8) Cha 20 (+15)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages understands Common, Primordial	
Equipment greatsword	

Notes: *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*, updated to reflect MM3 design and damage guidelines.

ENCOUNTER 2: "WARLOCK KNIGHTS" (MAP)

TILE SETS NEEDED
DU5 Sinister Woods x2



ENCOUNTER 3: THE BACK DOOR

Once the PCs have defeated the Warlock Knights, they can investigate the gatehouse. There is nothing of interest save the six statues.

ACTIVATING THE PORTAL

On the dais stand six statues of knights in full plate and heavy shields. Each statue has a single outstretched arm, holding a longsword.

Closer examination and a History check reveals that these statues are actually likenesses of some of the more prominent members of the Order of the Golden Cup. However, they have all been disfigured, and this was apparently done deliberately by the sculptor. It seems that Zhengyi commissioned some statues of his arch-enemy, but had them made deliberately misshapen, for his own amusement. (The PCs can surmise this with an Insight check.)

Examination of the statues and appropriate skill checks reveals that the sword arms pivot at the shoulder, while each statue can also be rotated on its base (Thievery) and that each of the statues radiates a faint aura of teleportation magic (Arcana).

The PCs can confirm that there is a portal in this location, that it does go into Castle Perilous, and that the last creature to use it was Zhengyi himself, by using the Analyze Portal ritual (*Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*). However, the ritual does not reveal the portal's key or means of activation. Other divination rituals can offer clues, but will not spell out the entire solution.

The obvious thing to try is to turn the statues so that they face each other, and then move each statue's arm so that the swords form some kind of pattern (pairs of statues pointing at each other, swords crossed in the air in a salute, swords all pointing together in a star or circle, and so forth). None of these configurations is correct.

There is one very important fact that the PCs might overlook: Zhengyi built this portal and he absolutely hated the Order of the Golden Cup and its leader, Gareth Dragonsbane. The lich and the knights had fought everything from small skirmishes to full-scale wars before the final siege of Castle Perilous (History). Thus, it stands to reason that if Zhengyi actually commissioned statues of his hated enemies, he did so for his own amusement (Insight). This explains why the statues are defaced. Perhaps the portal configuration requires the knights to be humiliated or dishonored in some fashion (Insight, Intelligence).

The correct solution is to turn the knights so that they form a circle, but instead of the blades pointing

inward, the knights must be arranged so that each one of them is stabbing one of his fellow knights in the back. When this arrangement is completed, the center of the dais flares with light, and a glowing oval of energy appears.

Peering through the portal the PCs can see a stark black hallway of pure obsidian, which matches the outside of Castle Perilous, but thankfully without the glowing red runes that are inscribed on the outer walls.

INSIDE THE CASTLE

The interior of Castle Perilous is a series of long, black corridors, made of featureless obsidian. The walls, floor, and ceiling all seem to absorb light. The place is eerily silent.

This is a freeform encounter that you can make as simple or as complicated as desired. Be cognizant of your time constraints and make sure you leave enough time for the final battle. The goal is to make the players feel like they are exploring an ancient place of power, with all its attendant wonders and dangers.

The PCs can either take a stealthy approach or march down the halls in plain sight. After a few minutes, the PCs spot a group of tanarukks (orc-like demons) moving down a different hallway, and if they are careful they can observe these creatures for a moment (see the stat blocks in the next encounter, although the tanarukks encountered in the hallway are not the same group that is already in the summoning chamber).

The tanarukks are the current inhabitants of Castle Perilous, having come here through a gate to the Abyss beneath the castle. This gate was believed to have been closed in the time of Gareth Dragonsbane, as explained in Handout 1, but what Gareth did not know was that he was lacking one important material component to permanently close the portal - the artifact the PCs now carry, which is what was used to create the portal in the first place.

The PCs need to be cautious in their exploration of the castle. There aren't many good disguise options unless the PCs can make themselves appear to be demons with illusion magic or some other ruse. The tanarukks would be just as hostile to Warlock Knights as they are to the adventurers. They are not here to make allies with Vaasa or anyone else; they are here to prepare Castle Perilous to play a part in an upcoming invasion of the world by an army of demons.

It does not serve the PCs' interests to fight their way through the entire castle. They need to find what they're looking for and make their getaway. If time permits, you could stage a scene where the PCs need to eliminate a

single tanarukk guard to get through a particular tunnel. Rather than running this as a full combat encounter, just use a stat block from the next encounter, give the PCs a surprise round, and see if they can kill the creature before it gets a turn and raises the alarm. If it escapes, it runs down the tunnels, leading the PCs into the summoning chamber and triggering the next encounter.

THE ARTIFACT AWAKENS

DM Note: The artifact is supposed to be fun for you to roleplay, but it's not intended as comic relief unless that is the type of game the players enjoy. The artifact is arrogant, haughty, overconfident, and irrevocably evil. It's quite simple-minded in its goal, which is to be reunited with Orcus.

After the PCs have been exploring the castle for a few minutes, the artifact (which actually "woke up" the instant they entered the castle) subtly begins trying to take control of the PC it has identified as the weakest-willed. It can dominate one character at a time or alternate between different targets (+21 / +23 vs. Will, on a hit the target is dominated for 1 minute with no save to end the effect early; on a miss the target knows that someone or something just tried to assert its will over the character's own free will.) Any character who has the **Zhengyian Domination** story award from SPEC22 P2 suffers a -5 penalty to Will against the artifact's attacks.

The artifact wants the PCs to take it to the very bottom of Castle Perilous, to the location where Zhengyi's gate to the Abyss was located. The artifact's goal is to compel the PCs to go through the gate, into the Abyss, and hand it over to a servant of Orcus. However, it has to be subtle. It might make a dominated character do anything from trying to persuade the other PCs that they should leave ("Hey guys, I think I can handle it by myself from here"), to grabbing the box containing the artifact and making a break for it.

Once the PCs realize what's going on, the artifact communicates with them telepathically, demanding that they take it to the bottom of the castle so that it can be reunited with its master (Orcus). The PCs can impose their will on the artifact with a few suitable skill checks such as Intimidate or Charisma checks. You don't really need to make this into a full-blown skill challenge, although you can if you wish. Have fun roleplaying the artifact; try to make it menacing and evil.

After a few successes by the PCs at intimidating it or using Charisma checks to block its influence, using their powers or rituals to dispel or neutralize its magic, or simply resisting its attacks repeatedly, the artifact realizes that it isn't going to get anywhere by trying to

control the party and decides to draw attention to itself in other ways. It can communicate telepathically with other creatures in the castle (such as the tanarukks). The PCs are unlikely to be able to block its telepathic orders, so it repeats its demands, over and over, screaming into their minds until they head in the direction it wants to go. Although this might be a bit uncomfortable, because the artifact is evil and clearly does not want what is best for the PCs, the truth is that the PCs want to go where the artifact is leading, so that they can put a stop to whatever it's planning.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

The PCs don't have time to wander the halls of Castle Perilous fighting endless hordes of demonic orcs (as entertaining as that might be). As such, their best option is to let the artifact guide them to where it wants to go. This can happen either by means of a dominated PC, or because the PCs deliberately decide to play along and then give the artifact an unpleasant surprise at the end when they destroy it.

Regardless, when they finally agree to let the artifact guide them, it directs them down various tunnels and passageways, always moving deeper beneath the surface. Castle Perilous extends quite a long way underground, so it is much larger than it appears from the surface. Finally the PCs come into a long hallway with spiral staircases at either end. The artifact triumphantly announces that this is the Witch-King's summoning chamber and that it looks forward to the PCs carrying it into the Abyss and reuniting it with Orcus. The PCs will no doubt have other ideas. Proceed to Encounter 4.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Although the PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, they will be at a significant disadvantage in Encounter 4 if they don't have any action points or if they have used all their daily magic item powers.

Therefore, this encounter does count toward a milestone, which combined with Encounter 3 means the PCs should all have an action point and another daily magic item use going into Encounter 4.

TREASURE

There is no treasure in this encounter.

ENCOUNTER 4: PRISON BREAK

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 21/23 (18000/25200 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures and hazards at the low tier:

- 2 tanarukk marauders (level 18) (M)
- 2 tanarukk steel warriors (W)
- 1 tanarukk flame speaker (level 18) (F)
- 1 abyssal fire drake (level 18) (D)
- 5 abyssal sparks (level 18) (S)
- 1 abyssal portal (level 18)

This encounter includes the following creatures and hazards at the high tier:

- 2 tanarukk marauders (level 20) (M)
- 2 tanarukk steel warriors (level 20) (W)
- 1 tanarukk flame speaker (level 20) (F)
- 1 abyssal drake (D)
- 5 abyssal sparks (level 20) (S)
- 1 abyssal portal (level 20)

When the PCs enter the area, read the following:

You have reached the bottom of your seemingly endless descent into the depths of Castle Perilous. This might be the very room where the Witch-King Zhengyi and Gareth Dragonsbane fought their final, fateful battle. History says that the portal to the Abyss over which they fought was destroyed. It would seem that history is condemned to repeat itself.

It is crucially important for you to set the scene clearly here; the players need to understand what they have to do. When the PCs enter, the abyssal portal is inactive. But before the PCs can do anything, they see the flamespeaker pull the lever he's next to, while two of the other tanarukks are standing on blue runes; this causes the right-hand gate to open. The left-hand gate is already open, and as the second gate opens, a massive burst of energy erupts from each gate, colliding in the center of the room and tearing a hole in the world.

The carving fills with hellfire, and an abyssal portal entrance yawns open, belching forth the flames of the Abyss. There is a terrifying roar, as the massive abyssal drake begins clawing and dragging its way through the portal, while bright sparks of animated flame emerge from the two smaller gates.

When combat begins, the tanarukk flamespeaker has just thrown the right-hand lever (the one he is standing next to). Two of the other tanarukks are standing on the corresponding runes (shown by their starting positions). The left-hand gate was already open, so this action opened the right-hand gate and activated the abyssal portal. The PCs must now reverse the procedure in order to deactivate and ultimately destroy the portal.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The area is brightly lit by the roaring fires of the Abyss, visible through the portal at the center of the room and the two gates on either side.

Dexter and Sinister Gates: These two gates are shown on the battle map on the far right and far left sides of the room. (They are labeled "red" and "blue" to match the runes and levers needed to close them; see "Closing the Portal" for details.) PCs cannot enter the gates, but a creature forced into an open gate takes 3d10 fire damage plus ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

At the end of each combat round, for each of the two gates that is still open, roll 1d6. On a roll of 5 or 6, an abyssal spark emerges from the gate and joins the battle. (You can roll initiative separately for each spark, or simply keep them all on the same initiative count, whichever you prefer.) If there are already five abyssal sparks on the battlefield, do not roll for the gates.

Runes: The 2x2 blue and red runes have no obvious effect when stepped on, but they are involved in closing the Dexter and Sinister gates. See the "Closing the Portal" section for details.

Blinkenlights: The 4x4 section of small glowing dots shown in the bottom center of the map have no game effect. They change color to match when creatures step on the red or blue 2x2 runes. Half the lights are associated with the two runes at the top of the room, and the other half of the lights are associated with the two runes at the bottom of the room. This can be another clue the PCs need to step on the runes of the same color. (Both sets of lights are blue when the encounter starts, because two of the tanarukks are standing on blue runes.)

Levers: The levers are used to close the Dexter and Sinister gates, in conjunction with the runes. If a lever is thrown but the right color runes are not active, there is no effect.

Abyssal Portal: The PCs must close this portal for good to end the threat posted by Castle Perilous. Until they do, it represents a dangerous hazard.

TACTICS

The tanarukks fight to keep the PCs from closing the gates and/or the portal. They are eager to serve the drake when it is freed from its prison.

The steel warriors use *burning cage* as their first attack, preferably against lightly-armored PCs (who are more likely to move around a lot). They then mark a threatening-looking character, or any character that goes after the flame speaker, with *broadsword* attacks, relying on *combat awareness* to keep their chosen foe from disengaging.

The marauders use *flame harrower* against a likely target (preferably not a tiefling or fire genasi) and then gleefully provoke opportunity attacks via *brutal rampage* to deal even more damage with their *greataxe* attacks.

The flame speaker stays out of melee, preferring to rely on *fire barrage* to blast multiple PCs but switching to *fire bolt* if he needs to focus on a single PC. He casts *winds of fire* in an origin square where it can pull PCs toward the abyssal portal.

The abyssal sparks flit around the battlefield with *fire pulse*, trying to stay within one square of at least one other demon so that they can benefit from the defense bonus granted by *fire burst* when the spark dies.

The fire drake has just been summoned when the PCs arrive. It spends the first 3 rounds of combat clawing its way out of the abyssal portal. While it is still inside the portal, the drake is immune to all damage, conditions, and other effects. The drake cannot take actions (other than to make an opportunity attack against any PCs drawn adjacent to it by the portal; see the portal's stat block for details.)

Put the drake in the initiative order, and each round when its turn comes up, describe how it is getting closer and closer to ripping its way through the portal and into the room. Until the three rounds pass and the drake enters combat, the drake is squeezed to Large size, as shown on the battle map by the "D" token. This is so that it exactly fills the 2x2 opening of the portal. Once the drake fully exits the portal, it assumes its normal Huge size. The PCs cannot delay the drake's arrival by using forced movement against it while it is still in the portal.

On its initiative count on the fourth round of combat, the drake pulls itself completely through the portal, roars a challenge, and attacks (it gets a full round of actions on this turn). The drake opens with *orb of elemental fire* to scorch as many enemies as possible, moving the fiery zone about the battlefield to herd them. It grabs an enemy and uses it to deflect blows, for fun as well as defense. Fire drakes thrive on tormenting their victims, using *blazing pain* to amplify everyone's suffering.

Once it joins the battle, the drake is too big for the PCs to push it back through the portal. They must destroy it or close the portal to banish it. Note that until the PCs have closed both the Dexter and Sinister gates, the drake gains a large amount of regeneration and cannot be killed (see its statistics block for details). Also, the PCs cannot begin the skill challenge to close the portal until both gates have been closed. The PCs can see that planar energy flowing from the gates is sustaining both the portal and the drake.

CLOSING THE PORTAL

There are three steps that the characters must take before the abyssal portal can be closed. They may attempt to close the portal while fighting the tanarukks and the fire drake, or they may prefer to wait until they have defeated all the monsters.

The first two steps involve closing the gates on either side of the room. It does not matter in which order the PCs close the gates. Once both of the gates have been closed, the PCs may attempt to seal the abyssal portal.

STEP 1: CLOSING THE DEXTER GATE

In order to close the right-hand (dexter) gate, the following conditions must be met:

- At least one creature must be standing on each of the two blue runes shown on the map.
- Someone must throw the right-side lever (marked "blue" on the tactical map).

STEP 2: CLOSING THE SINISTER GATE

In order to close the left-hand (sinister) gate, the following conditions must be met:

- At least one creature must be standing on each of the two red runes shown on the map.
- Someone must throw the left-side lever (marked "red" on the tactical map).

The levers are very light. PCs can flip them using powers such as *mage hand*, or an adjacent character can flip a lever as a minor action. A character could even flip a lever with a thrown weapon or other ranged attack, at your discretion (assume all defenses 29/30 for determining if such an attack hits the lever).

To be clear, at least one *creature* must be standing on the correct runes when the appropriate lever is thrown. That creature does not necessarily have to be a player character. If the PCs are able to use forced movement, stunning effects, immobilization, etc. to cause the monsters to trigger the runes, more power to them. Note that the abyssal sparks fly, so they do not count as

"standing" on a rune even if they are in one of the squares containing a rune.

SPECIAL NOTE: FOUR~PLAYER TABLES

Experience has shown that four-player tables are at a significant disadvantage in this encounter relative to their five- and six-player counterparts. It takes three PCs to activate the dexter and sinister gates (two to stand on the runes and one to throw the lever). In some sense, that leaves only one character to deal with the monsters, and if any of the PCs are stunned or dominated (which is rather likely) then it becomes even harder. To combat this, there are a few things you can do.

One option is to only require that the PCs touch a rune, not that they remain standing on it. This would allow a character to cross over a rune and keep going, while still having that rune count for activation of the gate. (Obviously if the tanarukks cross over the other runes it would throw off the PCs' handiwork, so don't have them do that.)

Another option is to allow the PCs to trigger or control the runes with skill checks, such as Arcana (against the moderate DC). This can be done as a minor action, and a successful check "activates" one rune. Don't forget that the PCs can also use ranged attacks or other powers to strike the levers. Again, allow this as a minor action if necessary.

Finally, the tanarukks themselves can be used to activate runes. If the PCs have powers that force movement, an Insight check might suggest that they can push the tanarukks around into the appropriate positions. Again, just getting a creature onto the rune is sufficient, rather than requiring the creature to remain there.

Use the colors of the runes and the colored lights to help guide the players through the step-by-step process of closing the two side gates. Make sure it is unambiguous what they need to do and how they can accomplish the task.

STEP 3: GET THEE BEHIND ME

Once both gates have been closed, the PCs may attempt the following skill challenge to close the portal. Again, they can undertake the skill challenge while fighting the remaining monsters, or they can wait until all monsters have been defeated to try and close the portal. The purpose of Handout 1 is to clue the players in to what needs to be done in order to complete this skill challenge.

Level: 18/20

Complexity: Special (requires 7 total successes).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Heal, Intimidate, Religion.

Arcana (DC 21/22, standard action): The character executes the rite of closing. The character must be within 3 squares of the portal to make this check. This skill must be used to gain 2 successes in this challenge.

Heal (DC 16/17, standard action): The character distracts the portal by the gift of his or her life force. Whether this check is a success or failure, the character loses two healing surges. The character must be adjacent to the portal to make this check. This skill must be used to gain 2 successes in this challenge.

Intimidate (DC 26/27, standard action): Using the strength of his or her personality, the character commands the portal to close. The party must gain their 7th and final success with this check, but may do so only after 6 total successes have been accrued.

Religion (DC 26/27, standard action): The character calls for divine aid to speed the rite. If the character fails, the portal flares and deals 20 damage to each nondemon within 5 squares of it. The character must be within 3 squares of the portal to make this check. This skill must be used to 2 successes in this challenge.

Secondary Skills: Endurance, History, Insight.

Endurance (DC 21/22, standard action): The character shields an adjacent ally from the chaos beyond the portal. If that ally fails his or her next Arcana or Heal check in the challenge, the ally can reroll the check. If the ally fails his or her next Religion check in the challenge, the portal does not flare and deals no damage.

History (DC 21/22, standard action): The character recalls ancient lore describing the closure of a similar portal. The next three Arcana, Heal, or Religion checks made in this challenge gain a +2 bonus. A failure on this History check instead causes the next three Arcana, Heal, or Religion checks to suffer a -2 penalty as the character shares incorrect information.

Insight (DC 21/22, free action): If the players are having trouble figuring out the skill challenge, allow them to make Insight checks to connect the various parts of the story (Handout 1) to the situation before them. Each successful check reveals information: which primary skills are used, how many times each skill must be used, that Intimidate must be the final skill, etc.

Success: When the characters achieve 7 total successes - which requires 2 Arcana successes, 2 Heal successes, and 2 Religion successes (in any order) and then finally 1 Intimidate success - the portal closes.

If the abyssal drake and/or any abyssal sparks are still on the battle map, these creatures are dragged screaming into the portal by invisible chains and banished back to the Abyss. Any surviving tanarukks are not pulled into the Abyss; they fight to the death.

Failure: The PCs cannot fail the skill challenge by accruing failed skill checks. However, every time they accrue a total of 3 failures, the portal flares with malign energy, dealing 20 damage to all non-demons (this affects every PC on the map regardless of range).

GLORY TIER

If the players have asked for an additional challenge, you can consider using some or all of the following adjustments:

- The drake exits the portal in 2 rounds instead of 3 rounds.
- If the PCs have a lot of fire resistance or the party wizard uses *mass resistance*, consider changing some of the fire damage dealt by all the monsters to fire and necrotic damage. (When an attack deals multiple types of energy damage, only the target's lowest resistance applies.) Don't change it all; the players deserve to get a benefit for having the right tools for the job. But, don't let it trivialize the encounter, either.
- When a tanarukk uses *indomitable fury*, instead of regaining 1 hit point, the tanarukk instead has 25% of its maximum hit points (one-half its bloodied value). This makes the creatures more likely get at least one more turn.
- Give the high crit property to the tanarukk marauders' greataxes. This means that on a critical hit, they deal an additional 2d12 damage.
- Don't bother rolling to see if more abyssal sparks come out of the gates. Add another spark to each open gate each round, even if there are already 5 or more sparks on the board.
- Instead of making *blazing pain* a recharge power, make it at-will, and use it every round. This will cause the drake to die faster, but it will deal a lot more damage.
- Allow the drake to start making attacks through the portal even before it fully enters the room. This should be limited to *bite* and *claw* attacks, and the drake can only reach creatures within 3 squares of the 2x2 portal entrance. The PCs still cannot damage the drake during this time, as the portal absorbs all their attacks.
- Increase the fire drake's hit points by 50%.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present. To be clear, these adjustments are not cumulative.

Four PCs (normal): Remove one of the tanarukk steel warriors. Abyssal sparks only emerge from the

gates on a roll of 6 instead of a roll of 5-6. (Do not remove the two sparks already shown on the map.)

Four PCs (strong table) or Five PCs (normal): No changes, run as written.

Five PCs (strong table) or Six PCs (normal): Add another tanarukk flame speaker. Abyssal sparks emerge from the gates on a roll of 4-6 instead of a roll of 5-6. Add another three sparks to the map at the beginning of the encounter, for a total of 5 (place the new sparks within 3 squares of either gate).

Six PCs (strong table): Add another tanarukk flame speaker and another tanarukk steel warrior. Abyssal sparks emerge from the gates every round (no roll necessary) regardless of how many sparks are already on the map. Add another three sparks to the map at the beginning of the encounter, for a total of 5 (place the new sparks within 3 squares of either gate).

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

As the portal is closing, the PCs sense an overwhelming fear from the artifact. Right up until the last moment, the artifact believed that it would be able to compel the PCs to do its bidding, and now that they have destroyed the portal, the artifact realizes what a terrible mistake it has made. When the portal implodes, it utterly destroys everything inside, including the artifact (if the PCs throw the artifact in). The PCs can figure this out with Arcana, Religion, History, or Insight checks. They have only a few rounds to act.

If the PCs do not destroy the artifact, then they will have to take it back to Yazeth Cobb. Leaving it here would be foolish as the tanarukks would certainly be able to put it to good (evil) use.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 3200 / 4480 XP each for defeating the demonic invaders. They get full XP for monsters that they don't have to kill because they closed the portal, such as the drake. However, they receive no additional XP if they are forced to kill more than 5 abyssal sparks.

The characters receive an additional 400 / 560 XP each for closing the abyssal portal.

TREASURE

One of the tanarukk steel warriors bears a *storm shield*. The tanarukk flame speaker wears *diamond bracers* (high tier only). In a secret compartment at the back of the Witch-King's throne, the PCs discover a *belt of the witch king* and a *deadblast bone* (high tier only) along with astral diamonds worth 5000 / 8000 gold pieces per PC.

Abyssal Portal	Level 18/20 Obstacle
Hazard	XP 2,000 / 2,800
A portal to the Abyss whispers in your mind, drawing your forward as it compels you to revel in chaos and murder.	
<p>Hazard: The abyssal portal is a 2x2 square dimensional passageway (the center 2x2 square of the yellow sigil in the middle of the battle map, where the abyssal drake's token is initially placed). The portal does not provide cover or block movement.</p>	
Perception	
No Perception check is needed to notice the abyssal portal (and the abyssal fire drake trying to claw its way through the portal).	
Additional Skill: Insight	
DC 24 / 25: An unknown evil taints this area, whispering of murder as it calls for you to approach. (This check can be used to warn the players that anyone getting too close to the portal risks being forced to turn against his or her allies.)	
Trigger	
When any non-demon creature (i.e. a PC) moves within 5 squares of the abyssal portal, the hazard attacks. (To be clear, this means that the range of the portal includes one corner of each of the four smaller 2x2 runes.)	
Attack	
Opportunity Action	
Attack: Ranged 5 (the triggering creature); +22 / +24 vs. Will	
Hit: The target makes a melee or ranged basic attack as a free action, targeting a random ally. (Determine the ally first, as this will decide whether the target uses a melee or ranged basic attack.) If the target is unable to make the attack, it instead takes 15 psychic damage.	
Aftereffect: The abyssal portal pulls the target 2 squares.	
Special: If the target is pulled into the abyssal portal (the center 2x2 square area), what happens depends on whether the abyssal drake has been freed.	
<p>If the drake is still in the portal, the character stops moving adjacent to the drake, and the drake makes a <i>bite</i> attack against that character.</p>	
<p>If the drake is no longer in the portal, the character is pulled partway into the abyss and must fight his or her way back through the portal to escape. The character is removed from the battlefield, is immobilized, cannot use attack powers, cannot be targeted by attacks, and does not have line of sight or line of effect to any square other than his or her own (save ends all).</p>	
When the character saves against this effect, he or she reappears in a square adjacent to the portal. The portal ignores that character for the remainder of the encounter, as it believes the character to be a demon (the PC is tainted with the residual energy of the Abyss until he or she takes an extended rest).	
Countermeasures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a minor action, a creature can make a Charisma check (DC 24 / 25) to ignore the hazard's effect until the start of the creature's next turn. • Once the abyssal portal has been closed, the portal can no longer attack. The process of closing the abyssal portal involves a specific set of actions and a skill challenge (see "Closing the Portal"). 	

Source: Adapted from *Demonomicon*, page 83.

ENCOUNTER 4: "PRISON BREAK" (LOW LEVEL)

Abysal Spark		Level 18 Minion
Medium elemental magical beast (fire)		XP 500
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +14
AC 32, Fortitude 30, Reflex 32, Will 28		Perception +10
Speed fly 7 (hover)		
Resist 30 fire		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Fire Pulse (fire) • At-Will		
Effect: The abysal spark shifts 1 square either before or after the attack.		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC		
Hit: 10 fire damage (crit 15 fire damage).		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
C Fire Burst (fire)		
Trigger: The abysal spark is reduced to 0 hit points.		
Attack (Immediate Reaction): The abysal spark shifts 1 square and explodes. Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +21 vs. Reflex.		
Hit: 10 fire damage. Demons in the burst gain a +2 bonus to defenses until the end of their next turn.		
Str 15 (+11)	Dex 21 (+14)	Wis 12 (+10)
Con 16 (+12)	Int 3 (+5)	Cha 8 (+8)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Abysal

Tanarukk Steel Warrior		Level 18 Soldier
Medium elemental humanoid (demon, orc)		XP 2,000
HP 177; Bloodied 88		Initiative +13
AC 33, Fortitude 30, Reflex 28, Will 29		Perception +12
Speed 5		Darkvision
Resist 5 fire		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Broadsword (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d10 + 10 damage.		
Effect: The target is marked until the end of the steel warrior's next turn.		
r Crossbow (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +23 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d8 + 6 damage.		
M Burning Cage (fire, weapon) • Recharge 5 6		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 3d10 + 20 fire damage, and the target takes 5 fire damage whenever it enters a square during its turn (save ends).		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
M Combat Awareness • At-Will		
Trigger: An enemy marked by the steel warrior shifts or makes an attack that does not include the steel warrior as a target.		
Effect (Opportunity Action): The steel warrior can use <i>broadsword</i> against the triggering enemy.		
Indomitable Fury		
Trigger: The steel warrior drops to 0 hit points for the first time.		
Effect (No Action): The steel warrior instead has 1 hit point, and it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the encounter.		
Skills Athletics +20		
Str 22 (+15)	Dex 15 (+11)	Wis 17 (+12)
Con 25 (+16)	Int 8 (+8)	Cha 10 (+9)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Abysal, Common
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, broadsword, crossbow, 10 bolts		

Abysal Fire Drake (Level 18)		Level 18 Elite Lurker
Huge elemental beast (demon, fire, reptile)		XP 4,000
HP 274; Bloodied 137		Initiative +21
AC 30, Fortitude 28, Reflex 31, Will 26		Perception +18
Speed 9		
Resist 15 fire		
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Bite • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +23 vs. AC		
Hit: 6d6 + 5 damage.		
m Claw • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +23 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d8 + 8 damage, and the drake grabs the target.		
M Drake's Fury • At-Will		
Effect: The drake uses <i>claw</i> twice against one target and <i>bite</i> once against a different target.		
A Orb of Elemental Fire (fire, zone) • Recharge 5 6		
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +21 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d10 + 5 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).		
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter or until the drake uses <i>orb of elemental fire</i> again. Any creature that enters the zone or starts its turn there takes 10 fire damage. Once per round as a minor action, the drake can move the zone up to 4 squares.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Blazing Pain (fire, psychic) • Recharge when first bloodied		
Effect: Until the end of the drake's next turn, its melee attacks deal 10 extra fire and psychic damage and the drake gains vulnerable 5 to all damage.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
M Living Shield • At-Will		
Requirement: The drake must have a creature grabbed.		
Trigger: The drake is damaged by an attack from a creature other than the grabbed creature.		
Effect (Opportunity Action): The triggering attack deals half damage to the drake and half damage to the grabbed creature.		
Str 22 (+15)	Dex 26 (+17)	Wis 19 (+13)
Con 23 (+15)	Int 3 (+5)	Cha 14 (+11)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Abysal

SPECIAL NOTES
While both the Dexter and Sinister gates are open
Effect: The drake gains regeneration 80 and cannot die (it continues to take actions even when at or below 0 hit points).
While either, but not both, of the Dexter and Sinister gates are open
Effect: The drake gains regeneration 40 and cannot die.

Abysal Spark: Re-flavored fire elemental spark from *Revenge of the Giants*.

Tanarukk Steel Warrior: *Monster Manual 3*

Abysal Fire Drake: Re-flavored fire drake from *Dark Sun Creature Catalog*.

Tanarukk Marauder (Level 18)		Level 18 Skirmisher
Medium elemental humanoid (demon, orc)		XP 2,000
HP 173; Bloodied 86		Initiative +13
AC 32, Fortitude 30, Reflex 29, Will 29		Perception +12
Speed 5		Darkvision
Resist 5 fire		
TRAITS		
Nimble Reaction		
The marauder gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Greataxe (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d12 + 13 damage.		
M Brutal Rampage • At-Will		
Effect: The marauder moves its speed and can move through enemies' spaces during the move. At any point during the move, the marauder can use <i>greataxe</i> . The marauder gains a +5 bonus to the damage roll for each opportunity attack made against it during the move before the attack.		
r Hand Axe (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +23 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 13 damage.		
M Flame Harrower (fire, weapon) • Encounter		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d12 + 11 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 fire damage and grants combat advantage (save ends both).		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Indomitable Fury		
Trigger: The marauder drops to 0 hit points for the first time.		
Effect (No Action): The marauder instead has 1 hit point, and it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the encounter.		
Skills Athletics +20		
Str 22 (+15)	Dex 15 (+11)	Wis 17 (+12)
Con 21 (+14)	Int 8 (+8)	Cha 10 (+9)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common		
Equipment hide armor, greataxe, 3 handaxes		

Notes: *Monster Manual 3*

Tanarukk Flame Speaker (Level 18)		Level 18 Artillery
Medium elemental humanoid (demon, orc)		XP 2,000
HP 135; Bloodied 67		Initiative +12
AC 30, Fortitude 30, Reflex 30, Will 30		Perception +12
Speed 6		Darkvision
Resist 10 fire		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Staff (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d6 + 11 damage.		
r Fire Bolt (fire, implement) • At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 3d8 + 13 fire damage.		
R Fire Barrage (fire, implement) • Recharge 5 6		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one, two, or three creatures); +23 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d10 + 8 fire damage.		
A Winds of Fire (fire, implement, zone) • Encounter		
Attack: Area 2 within 20 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 3d6 + 7 fire damage.		
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. Any creature that enters the zone or ends its turn there takes 10 fire damage and is pulled 1 square toward the burst's origin square.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Indomitable Fury		
Trigger: The flame speaker drops to 0 hit points for the first time.		
Effect (No Action): The flame speaker instead has 1 hit point, and it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the encounter.		
Avenging Fire (fire)		
Trigger: An enemy reduces the flame speaker to 0 hit points for the second time.		
Effect (No Action): The triggering enemy takes 2d10 + 6 fire damage.		
Skills Arcana +16		
Str 20 (+14)	Dex 17 (+12)	Wis 17 (+12)
Con 21 (+14)	Int 14 (+11)	Cha 12 (+10)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common		
Equipment staff		

Notes: *Monster Manual 3*

ENCOUNTER 4: "PRISON BREAK" (HIGH LEVEL)

Abyssal Spark (Level 20)		Level 20 Minion
Medium elemental magical beast (fire)		XP 700
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +15
AC 34, Fortitude 32, Reflex 34, Will 30		Perception +11
Speed fly 7 (hover)		
Resist 30 fire		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Fire Pulse (fire) • At-Will		
Effect: The abyssal spark shifts 1 square either before or after the attack.		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC		
Hit: 11 fire damage (crit 16 fire damage).		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
C Fire Burst (fire)		
Trigger: The abyssal spark is reduced to 0 hit points.		
Attack (Immediate Reaction): The abyssal spark shifts 1 square and explodes. Close burst 1 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex.		
Hit: 11 fire damage. Demons in the burst gain a +2 bonus to defenses until the end of their next turn.		
Str 15 (+12)	Dex 21 (+15)	Wis 12 (+11)
Con 16 (+13)	Int 3 (+6)	Cha 8 (+9)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal

Tanarukk Steel Warrior (Level 20)		Level 20 Soldier
Medium elemental humanoid (demon, orc)		XP 2,800
HP 193; Bloodied 96		Initiative +14
AC 35, Fortitude 32, Reflex 30, Will 31		Perception +13
Speed 5		Darkvision
Resist 5 fire		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Broadsword (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d10 + 12 damage.		
Effect: The target is marked until the end of the steel warrior's next turn.		
r Crossbow (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +25 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d8 + 8 damage.		
M Burning Cage (fire, weapon) • Recharge 5 6		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 3d10 + 22 fire damage, and the target takes 5 fire damage whenever it enters a square during its turn (save ends).		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
M Combat Awareness • At-Will		
Trigger: An enemy marked by the steel warrior shifts or makes an attack that does not include the steel warrior as a target.		
Effect (Opportunity Action): The steel warrior can use <i>broadsword</i> against the triggering enemy.		
Indomitable Fury		
Trigger: The steel warrior drops to 0 hit points for the first time.		
Effect (No Action): The steel warrior instead has 1 hit point, and it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the encounter.		
Skills Athletics +21		
Str 22 (+16)	Dex 15 (+12)	Wis 17 (+13)
Con 25 (+17)	Int 8 (+9)	Cha 10 (+10)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal, Common
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, broadsword, crossbow, 10 bolts		

Abyssal Fire Drake		Level 20 Elite Lurker
Huge elemental beast (demon, fire, reptile)		XP 5,600
HP 298; Bloodied 149		Initiative +22
AC 32, Fortitude 30, Reflex 33, Will 28		Perception +19
Speed 9		
Resist 15 fire		
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Bite • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +25 vs. AC		
Hit: 6d6 + 7 damage.		
m Claw • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +25 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d8 + 10 damage, and the drake grabs the target.		
M Drake's Fury • At-Will		
Effect: The drake uses <i>claw</i> twice against one target and <i>bite</i> once against a different target.		
A Orb of Elemental Fire (fire, zone) • Recharge 5 6		
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +23 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d10 + 7 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).		
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter or until the drake uses <i>orb of elemental fire</i> again. Any creature that enters the zone or starts its turn there takes 10 fire damage. Once per round as a minor action, the drake can move the zone up to 4 squares.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Blazing Pain (fire, psychic) • Recharge when first bloodied		
Effect: Until the end of the drake's next turn, its melee attacks deal 10 extra fire and psychic damage and the drake gains vulnerable 5 to all damage.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
M Living Shield • At-Will		
Requirement: The drake must have a creature grabbed.		
Trigger: The drake is damaged by an attack from a creature other than the grabbed creature.		
Effect (Opportunity Action): The triggering attack deals half damage to the drake and half damage to the grabbed creature.		
Str 22 (+16)	Dex 26 (+18)	Wis 19 (+14)
Con 23 (+16)	Int 3 (+6)	Cha 14 (+12)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal

SPECIAL NOTES
While both the Dexter and Sinister gates are open
Effect: The drake gains regeneration 100 and cannot die (it continues to take actions even when at or below 0 hit points).
While either, but not both, of the Dexter and Sinister gates are open
Effect: The drake gains regeneration 50 and cannot die.

Abyssal Spark: Reflavored fire elemental spark from *Revenge of the Giants*.

Tanarukk Steel Warrior: *Monster Manual 3*

Abyssal Fire Drake: Reflavored fire drake from *Dark Sun Creature Catalog*.

Tanarukk Marauder (Level 20)		Level 20 Skirmisher
Medium elemental humanoid (demon, orc)		XP 2,800
HP 189; Bloodied 94		Initiative +14
AC 34, Fortitude 32, Reflex 31, Will 31		Perception +13
Speed 5		Darkvision
Resist 5 fire		
TRAITS		
Nimble Reaction		
The marauder gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Greataxe (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d12 + 15 damage.		
M Brutal Rampage • At-Will		
Effect: The marauder moves its speed and can move through enemies' spaces during the move. At any point during the move, the marauder can use <i>greataxe</i> . The marauder gains a +5 bonus to the damage roll for each opportunity attack made against it during the move before the attack.		
r Hand Axe (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +25 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 15 damage.		
M Flame Harrower (fire, weapon) • Encounter		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d12 + 13 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 fire damage and grants combat advantage (save ends both).		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Indomitable Fury		
Trigger: The marauder drops to 0 hit points for the first time.		
Effect (No Action): The marauder instead has 1 hit point, and it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the encounter.		
Skills Athletics +21		
Str 22 (+16)	Dex 15 (+12)	Wis 17 (+13)
Con 21 (+15)	Int 8 (+9)	Cha 10 (+10)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal, Common
Equipment hide armor, greataxe, 3 handaxes		

Notes: Monster Manual 3

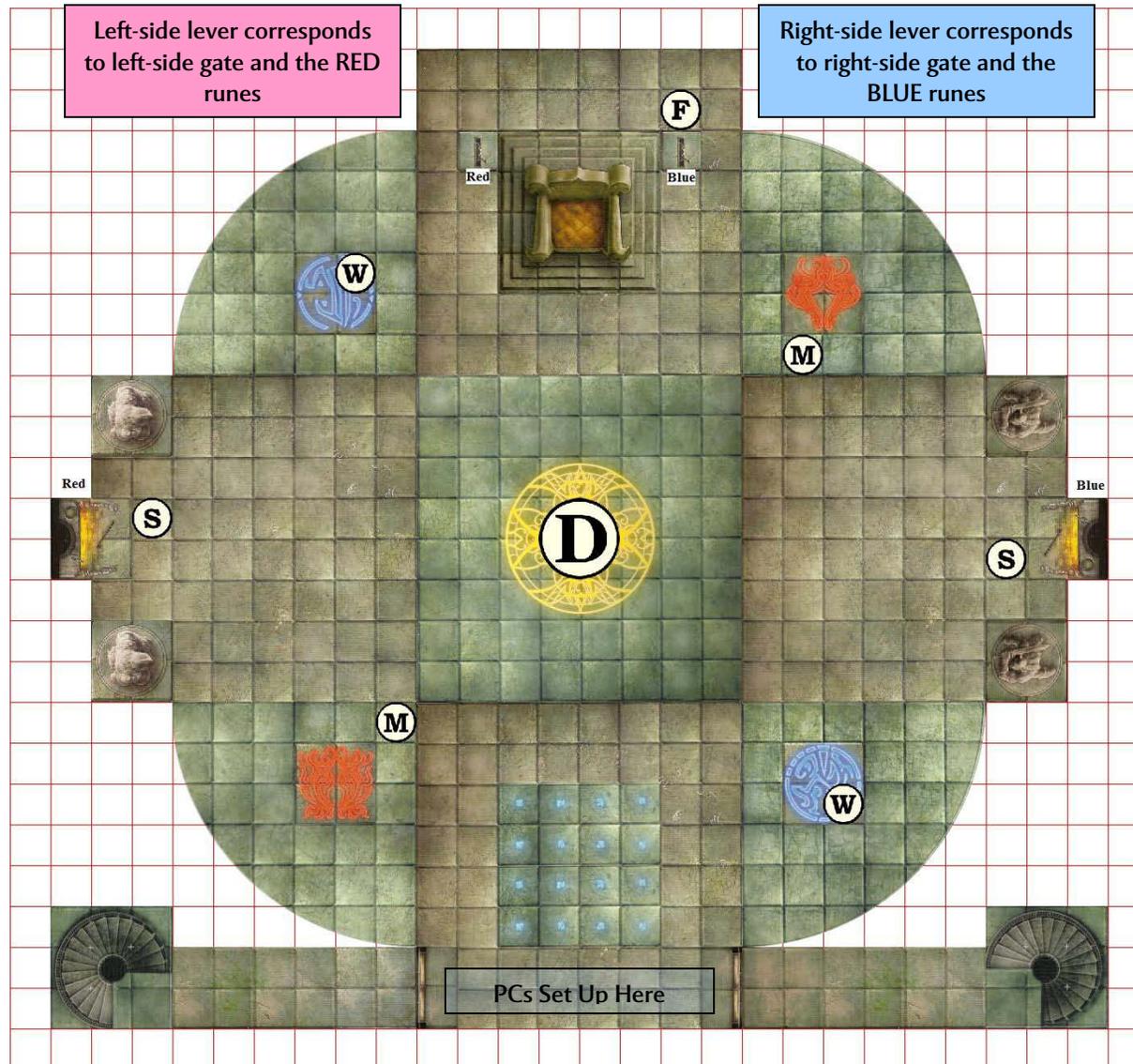
Tanarukk Flame Speaker (Level 20)		Level 20 Artillery
Medium elemental humanoid (demon, orc)		XP 2,800
HP 147; Bloodied 73		Initiative +13
AC 32, Fortitude 32, Reflex 32, Will 32		Perception +13
Speed 6		Darkvision
Resist 10 fire		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
m Staff (weapon) • At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +25 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d6 + 13 damage.		
r Fire Bolt (fire, implement) • At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +25 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 3d8 + 15 fire damage.		
R Fire Barrage (fire, implement) • Recharge 5 6		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one, two, or three creatures); +25 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d10 + 10 fire damage.		
A Winds of Fire (fire, implement, zone) • Encounter		
Attack: Area 2 within 20 (creatures in burst); +25 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 3d6 + 9 fire damage.		
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. Any creature that enters the zone or ends its turn there takes 10 fire damage and is pulled 1 square toward the burst's origin square.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Indomitable Fury		
Trigger: The flame speaker drops to 0 hit points for the first time.		
Effect (No Action): The flame speaker instead has 1 hit point, and it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the encounter.		
Avenging Fire (fire)		
Trigger: An enemy reduces the flame speaker to 0 hit points for the second time.		
Effect (No Action): The triggering enemy takes 2d10 + 8 fire damage.		
Skills Arcana +17		
Str 20 (+15)	Dex 17 (+13)	Wis 17 (+13)
Con 21 (+15)	Int 14 (+12)	Cha 12 (+11)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal, Common
Equipment staff		

Notes: Monster Manual 3

ENCOUNTER 4: "PRISON BREAK" (MAP)

TILE SETS NEEDED

DU1 Halls of the Giant King x2, DU4 Arcane Towers x2



ENCOUNTER 5: THE AFTERMATH

SETUP

Upon their return to Damara, Yazeth anxiously asks the PCs whether they were successful in destroying the artifact.

Complete Success: The PCs defeated the Warlock Knights, defeated the tanarukks and abyssal drake, closed the abyssal portal, and threw the artifact in just as the portal was collapsing, destroying it. If the PCs accomplished all these things, Yazeth is overjoyed, praising them as true heroes of the light.

Yazeth congratulates the PCs on disrupting the last hope for an alliance between the Council of Blades and the Banite Warlock Knights. If these evildoers had gotten their hands on the artifact, it would have been a much different story.

Partial Success: The PCs defeated the Warlock Knights and closed the abyssal portal, but they didn't destroy the artifact. Yazeth is disappointed, but understands - it wasn't clear what needed to be done. Yazeth suspects that this incursion was just a prelude to a much larger event, so it's possible that he will have another chance to destroy the artifact someday, and at least they closed the portal, preventing any more immediate demonic forces from entering the world through Castle Perilous. Not to mention, they killed a group of powerful Warlock Knights.

Failure: The PCs fail if they either did not close the abyssal portal or did not defeat the Warlock Knights. Yazeth is horrified and warns the PCs that the alliance between these two evil forces will almost surely be cemented by this outcome. The future safety of Damara and the entire Moonsea region is now in grave doubt.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Yazeth thanks the PCs for their efforts (tailor his level of enthusiasm based on their degree of success). For those PCs who have worked with him many times over the years, he is quite sentimental. He realizes that these characters are on the cusp of a transformation that will take them beyond the day-to-day struggles of good and evil, instead dealing with epic threats on a world-spanning scale. Perhaps they might even someday become Chosen themselves and join the gods in their greatest works.

TREASURE

If the PCs closed the abyssal portal (regardless of whether they destroyed the artifact), Yazeth presents them each with a magic weapon of their choosing, of an item level less than or equal to the PC's character level plus 1. (Treasure Bundle H.)

STORY AWARDS

If the PCs killed the Warlock Knights, they earn **SPEC38 Death Warrant in Vaasa**.

If the PCs closed the abyssal portal (regardless of whether they destroyed the artifact) then they earn **SPEC39 Prelude to the Abyssal Plague**.

Finally, if they destroyed the artifact, they are eligible for a Major Quest award depending on whether they have played the previous two adventures in the SPEC2-2 series (SPEC2-2 P1 *Tyranny's Bleak Depths* and SPEC2-2 P2 *Tyranny's Bitter Frost*). Each of these two adventures has a story award continuing the Major Quest for the PCs to disrupt the alliance between Mulmaster and the Banite Warlock Knights (which they have done by destroying the artifact). The PCs earn **SPEC40 Tyranny Undone** and are eligible for extra rewards, including a divine boon and bonus XP, if they have at least one of the previous two story awards.

Note: Yes, the structure of the story awards for the quest means that characters who were already 18th level when they played SPEC2-2 P3 are ineligible to complete the quest because they can never go back and play the P1 or P2 adventures. (17th-level characters can still pick up the P2, if they haven't played it already, and would be eligible for the divine boon if they do earn the corresponding story award from that adventure.)

The players of 18th-level and higher PCs might be a little bit irritated by this, but major quest lines are supposed to span multiple adventures, and these high-level PCs are on the verge of transitioning to the Epic tier where they will be able to take on a whole new level of "major" quests. The additional reward for playing at least two of the SPEC2-2 adventures is really designed for players with lower-level characters who might have the opportunity to play through two or even all three of the adventures when their PC is of the appropriate levels, and thereby get to see how the entire story unfolds. That's really what a major quest reward is supposed to commemorate.

REWARDS SUMMARY

At the conclusion of the adventure, the PCs earn experience points, treasure, and possibly story awards. All totals listed here are per PC. A number before the slash is the low-level value; after the slash is the high-level value.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Give PCs a full award for each encounter they successfully completed, and a half award if they were unsuccessful. Give no award if the characters did not play the encounter at all.

Encounter 2: Warlock Knights

3200 / 4480 XP

Encounter 4: Prison Break (Combat)

3200 / 4480 XP

Encounter 4: Get Thee Behind Me (Skill Challenge)

400 / 560 XP

Total Possible Experience (no quest award)

6800 / 9520 XP

Partial Major Quest Award: Tyranny Undone, PC has either SPEC34 or SPEC37 but not both

600 / 840 XP

Total Possible Experience (partial quest award)

7400 / 10360 XP

Full Major Quest Award: Tyranny Undone, PC has both SPEC34 and SPEC37

1200 / 1680 XP

Total Possible Experience (full quest award)

8000 / 11200 XP

Gold per PC

9750 / 15500 gp

(Encounter 2: 4750/7500 gp, Encounter 4: 5000/8000 gp)

TREASURE

Each PC receives treasure in the form of gold pieces as well as one share from a treasure bundle. The treasure bundle may give the PC more gold, a magic item, or something else of value. Each player makes one and only one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Note that it is possible (and likely) that some characters will not select a bundle for each session of play.

If characters buy or sell magic items or other gear during the adventure (or pay for services) add or subtract that amount from the total gold the PC receives at the end of the adventure. If a player selects an option that gives their character more gold, add that amount to that character's base gold award. It is possible and permissible for a character who spends more gold than he or she earns to have a negative total for the adventure. PCs receive 20% of the item's market price when they sell any magic item or consumable. They receive 50% of the market price for ritual books and alchemical formulas.

If a player selects a magic weapon or suit of armor for their PC that is not specific on the type of item listed, they must select the exact item at the time they choose that bundle. For example, if a *duelist's weapon +1* is listed as a choice in a bundle, a player selects the form of the weapon amongst the choices possible for that magic item (light blades). If the player selects the item as a *+1 duelist's dagger*, the player writes that information down on the PC's adventure log and the item is forever after that specific weapon.

An asterisk next to a magic item means that it is an item that appears in the **New Rules** section.

EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BUNDLES:

Bundle A: *death's brink armor +4** (17th level; AV2)

Found in Encounter 2

Bundle B: *gambit armor +4* (18th level; AV2)

Found in Encounter 2

Bundle C: *robe of defying flames +4** (18th level; AV)

Found in Encounter 2

Bundle D: *storm shield** (18th level; AV)

Found in Encounter 2

Bundle F: *belt of the witch king** (18th level; AV2)

Found in Encounter 4

Bundle F: *diamond bracers** (19th level; AV2) (high-level version only)

Found in Encounter 4

Bundle G: *deadblast bone** (19th level; AV) (high-level version only)

Found in Encounter 4

Bundle H: Any magic weapon, implement, or ki focus from any player-legal source of an item level less than or equal to your character level plus 1

Found in the Conclusion

Consumable plus Gold: If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add a *potion of regeneration* (19th level; AV) plus 4300 / 8300 gp to their rewards from this adventure. The player should write the consumable gained on their adventure log. That character (and only that character) then receives the consumable plus the listed amount of gold (if any) instead of any other treasure bundle. Consumable items obtained in this fashion do not take up found magic item slots.

More Gold: If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add 8500 / 12500 gp to their rewards from this adventure. That character (and only that character) receives more gold instead of any other treasure bundle.

STORY AWARDS

Award these if the PC completes the condition for the award in the adventure. Pass out certificates to the players for their story awards. The PCs may earn all three story awards in this adventure, if they meet the listed criteria.

SPEC38 Death Warrant in Vaasa

The Ironfell Council has declared you an enemy of the state in the nation of Vaasa. The Voice of Telos has ordered that you be slain on sight and your body brought to him so that he can personally encase you in an ironfell coffin for all eternity.

Any Warlock Knight or shardsoul that you encounter will immediately recognize you unless you are sufficiently disguised (DM's discretion). These creatures won't just make you their preferred target; they'll practically trip over each other in their eagerness to get at you.

During any future adventures you play set in Vaasa, you must inform the DM of this story award so that the appropriate measures can be taken.

SPEC39 Prelude to the Abyssal Plague

You helped destroy an abyssal portal beneath Castle Perilous in the nation of Vaasa. The timing of the castle's magical renewal and the opening of the portal beneath its dungeons are not coincidental. The forces of the Abyss are stirring. This story award marks the beginning of a Major Quest that may change the world forever.

SPEC40 Tyranny Undone

Thanks to your efforts, the Council of Blades in Mulmaster and the Banite faction of Warlock Knights have failed to form an alliance. They have fallen into

squabbling over which of them bears a greater responsibility for allowing you to disrupt their plans.

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If you have both story awards, then the boon does not count as one of your found magic items.

Amaunator's Beacon

Level 18 Divine Boon

Property: When you use the aid another action, you grant your ally a +4 bonus rather than +2.

Power (Daily, Healing): Minor Action. An ally within 5 squares of you can spend a healing surge and regain 2d6 additional hit points. That ally also gains a +2 bonus to his or her next attack roll.

NEW RULES

Belt of the Witch King

Level 18

The links of this silver chain are separated by small spheres of arcane-enhanced obsidian.

Lvl 18 (85,000 gp)

Item Slot: Waist

Property: You gain a +2 item bonus to Fortitude.

Power (Daily, Healing): Free Action. *Trigger:* You become bloodied. *Effect:* You regain hit points equal to twice the level of the highest-level arcane power you have not expended.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*, page 75.

Deadblast Bone

Level 19

This rune-scarred bone has the power to temporarily stun undead.

Lvl 19 (105,000 gp)

Wondrous Item

Power (Daily): Standard Action. Make an attack: Close burst 5; targets undead creatures in burst; +22 vs. Will; on a hit, the target is stunned until the end of your next turn or until it is attacked, whichever comes first.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault*, page 169.

Death's Brink Armor +4

Level 17

This black metal armor has the image of an outthrust hand emblazoned on its breast.

Lvl 17 (65,000 gp)

Armor: Scale, Plate

Enhancement: AC

Property: While you're dying, you don't die until you fail four death saving throws.

Power (Daily): No Action. *Trigger:* You roll a death saving throw and dislike the result. *Effect:* You gain a +3 bonus to the saving throw.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*, page 7.

Diamond Bracers

Level 19

These clear crystal vambraces of interlocking plates can protect you from virtually anything, for a time.

Lvl 19 (105,000 gp)

Item Slot: Arms

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Until the end of the encounter, gain resist 15 against a damage type from which you were dealt damage since the end of your last turn.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault*, page 116.

Gambit Armor +4

Level 18

Made for those who like to take chances in battle, this armor lets you risk your own safety for a better chance to harm your foes.

Lvl 18 (85,000 gp)

Armor: Cloth, Leather

Enhancement: AC

Property: When an enemy scores a critical hit against you, you can score a critical hit on a roll of 17-20 on your next attack against that enemy before the end of your next turn.

Power (Daily, Stance): Minor Action. Until the stance ends, you grant combat advantage and any creature you attack grants combat advantage to you.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*, page 8.

Potion of Regeneration

Level 19

If you are sufficiently wounded after having quaffed this russet, copper-scented potion, you heal quickly.

Lvl 19 (4,200 gp)

Potion

Power (Consumable, Healing): Minor Action. Drink this potion and spend a healing surge. You do not gain hit points as normal. Instead, gain regeneration 10 until the end of the encounter. If you aren't bloodied at the start of your turn while this power is in effect, you don't regain any hit points and the regeneration is suppressed until the start of your next turn.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault*, page 188.

Robe of Defying Flames +4

Level 18

Emblazoned with fiery imagery, this robe can both repel and summon flames.

Lvl 18 (85,000 gp)

Armor: Cloth

Enhancement: AC

Property: Resist 10 fire.

Power (Daily Healing): Immediate Interrupt. *Trigger:* You would take fire damage. *Effect:* You take no fire damage, you gain a +2 power bonus to speed until the end of your next turn, and you can spend a healing surge.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault*, page 49.

Storm Shield

Level 18

Shifting clouds play across the surface of this shield as it protects you from storm-like effects and then unleashes them on your foes.

Lvl 18 (85,000 gp)

Item Slot: Arms

Property: Resist 10 lightning and resist 10 thunder.

Power (Daily, Lightning, Thunder): Immediate Reaction. *Trigger:* You are hit by a melee attack. *Effect:* Deal 4d6 lightning and thunder damage to the attacker. (The attacker must have resistance or immunity to both damage types to reduce or ignore this damage.)

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault*, page 121.

APPENDIX: LEGENDS AND LORE

Sources for the following information include the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*, “Realmslore: Hall of the Frostmaiden” by Brian R. James (*Dragon* 367) and “Realmslore: Vaasa” by Brian R. James (*Dungeon* 177).

DAMARA

Damara is wild, rugged, and rustic—a frontier as unrefined as it is remote. This is a northerly land of windswept plains, ice-crowned mountains, dark pine forests, and long, fearsome winters. Any who stray too far from the walled towns end up fighting for their lives against horrible monsters.

About twenty years ago, the last heir to the old Dragonsbane dynasty was assassinated and the ambitious Lord Yarin Frostmantle took the throne. King Yarin’s hand in the death of his predecessor is an open secret in Damara. Stronger and wealthier than anyone else, Yarin is absolutely ruthless in crushing those who dare question his legitimacy.

Helgabal: This once-prosperous trading city is the former seat of Damara’s throne. While Damara’s people groan under tyrannical rule, deadly perils loom on all fronts. To the west, the Warlock Knights of Vaasa grow stronger and threaten war. To the north, the receding Great Glacier has uncovered passages to the monster-infested Frostfell at the top of the world. To the east, the demon-haunted Dunwood grows darker and more deadly every day. All the while, feral tribesfolk from Narfell engage in ever bolder raids.

Damaran Gate: This fortress wall guards the end of Bloodstone Pass between Damara and the Warlock Knights of Vaasa. The Damaran Gate is 3 miles long and 30 feet high, studded with ballista-defended towers, and flanked by castles at either end. The castles and gate are regularly patrolled and filled with stockpiles of food and armaments in case of an invasion. A similar gate is situated on the Vaasan end of the Pass.

VAASA

Vaasa is a desolate realm of bogs, tundra, and windswept mountains in the northwest corner of the Bloodstone Lands. The dreaded Warlock Knights of Vaasa gather an army of monsters of all descriptions, preparing for the day when their terrible hordes will sweep away neighboring kingdoms, spreading their alien evil.

Commoners: Vaasan society is built upon the backbreaking labor of the peasant working class, known locally as serfs. Serfs are a hardy folk, eking out a modest living under harsh conditions and with limited

resources. As a feudal society, population centers in Vaasa are divided into fiefdoms presided over by Fellthanes. These landed lords in turn acquiesce to the authority of Vindicators and the Ironfell Council in Telos. Though the aristocracy is predominantly human, the majority of Vaasan citizens are shield dwarves and mountain orcs, toiling tirelessly in countless mines lining the slopes of the Galena Mountains.

Warlock Knights: Vaasan lords are, without exception, all members of the Warlock Knights. While some titles are hereditary, most earn their rank through hard work and exploiting the weaknesses of their rivals. As the nobility of Vaasa’s brutal feudal system, Warlock Knights have life-and-death authority over the common folk of the realm. As their name implies, all Warlock Knights dabble in the arcane arts, through their mastery of martial exploits remains their primary competency.

Bound Ones: In Vaasa, practitioners of arcane magic are permitted their studies only by swearing lifelong fealty to the Warlock Knights. Known as *Nishaadhri*, or Bound Ones, this order of warlocks is commonly garbed in gray robes, each wearing a dark veil over their eyes. *Nishaadhri* gain their formidable abilities through a special star pact with the primordial Telos. Luminaries function almost as priests do in other kingdoms, presiding over shrines and temples consecrated to Telos. Luminaries are also responsible for the crafting of shardsouls, monstrous automatons formed from Telos’s body and set to serve in Vaasa’s armies.

Telos: An entity called Telos, Master of the Iron Sky, is the focus of the Warlock Knights’ power. The most powerful members of the Warlock Knights advise this mighty ruler of Vaasa as a group called the Ironfell Council. Members of the council, as well as their servants, also compete with each other for status and power.

Some of the priests who call themselves Warlock Knights are Banites. They keep alive their connection with Bane’s center of worship in Mulmaster. Certainly, all Warlock Knights view the rest of the Moonsea region with greedy eyes. Damara, Impiltur, and the stronger Moonsea cities keep a worried eye on Vaasa, recognizing the Warlock Knights and their potent master as a threat potentially as significant as Thay, Netheril, or the Abolethic Sovereignty.

SITES OF INTEREST

Delhalls: This mine is rich in gems and copper. A recent quake collapsed several main shafts into the Delhalls and sealed the entrance. The local lord quickly dispatched dwarf slaves to reopen the mine, but the new shafts revealed spaces not previously known to exist. Exotic crystal rock formations and strange, haunting melodies resound in the depths, luring miners ever deeper.

The Great Glacier: Though considerably diminished in size from the time when cartographers dubbed it the Great Glacier, the enormous ice flow remains impressive. Slowly, the glacier gives up its secrets as the Novularond Mountains surface from their icy prison. Ruins from some lost civilization stand on those peaks. White dragons and other creatures of cold roam the glacial waste.

Castle Perilous: Long ago, the famed Castle Perilous was a seat of power. The self-styled Witch-King Zhengyi housed a huge army in and around the castle, repeatedly using it to attack the kingdom of Damara. The lich was finally destroyed and his army defeated, and his castle fell into ruin. Two years ago, a great earthquake rattled northern Vaasa and Damara. The ruined castle sloughed off crumbling stone and the marks of age, revealing a sleek and dark edifice beneath. Black runes shimmer with darkness on this castle's walls, absorbing the wan northern light but providing no clues to the castle's sudden rejuvenation.

AURIL

Chaotic Evil Goddess (Frostmaiden, Storm-bringer, Icedawn, Lady Frostkiss)

Religion DC 15: Auril (awe-ril) is a vain and fickle creature whose cold heart remains untouched by any hint of true love, noble feeling, or honor. She is a somewhat aloof deity, and she embodies freedom and impulse. She toys with those who offend her by trapping them in snow storms and then driving them insane by tantalizing them with visions of warmth and the comforts of home before she freezes them to death. Her eternal beauty is cold and deadly—the flower of womanhood preserved forever in a slab of arctic ice, but with sensibilities to match the ice.

Auril is one of the so-called Three Furies, along with Malar and Umberlee. She owes allegiance to Silvanus. Her portfolio includes cold, winter, wind, and storms. She appears as a haughty winged faerie of terrible, cold beauty, with bone-white skin and angular features. Her mane of flowing black hair is adorned with an ornate crown of platinum and diamonds.



IYRACLEA, THE ICE QUEEN

History or Religion DC 25: The human cleric Iyraclea was one of Auril's Chosen, invested with a portion of the Frostmaiden's divinity. At the height of her power, Iyraclea lived in a castle of sculpted ice somewhere in the northern reaches of the Great Glacier. She was killed during the Year of Rogue Dragons (1373 DR). Without Iyraclea's attention and ministrations, the Great Glacier has been slowly melting for over a century. Upon her death, Iyraclea was elevated to the status of exarch, and now serves the Frostmaiden in her Astral dominion.

ZHENGYI, THE WITCH KING

History DC 25: Despite the passage of more than a century since his demise, the name Zhengyi still invokes fear in the hearts of men. In the Year of the Bright Blade (1347 DR), the Witch-King gathered to Castle Perilous a mighty army, the ferocity of which has never been matched. With this monstrous host, the powerful lich quickly tamed the Vaasan tundra and moved to capture Damara as well. Only through the valiant efforts of Gareth Dragonsbane and his stalwart companions was Zhengyi ultimately defeated and his horde scattered.

HANDOUT 1: A KNIGHT'S JOURNAL

You have discovered a yellowed journal, written in a formal hand, such as one might expect of a court-bred knight. References in the text indicate that this journal was likely kept by a member of the Order of the Golden Cup, Gareth Dragonsbane's company of knights. It was Gareth who led the force that killed the Witch-King Zhengyi in the year 1348 DR, razing the original Castle Perilous. Several of the passages seem like they might be particularly relevant.

As we entered the summoning chamber, I beheld a truly terrifying sight. Though my paladin training and my faith in The One Who Endures have often sustained me from the cold chill of terror, I freely confess that I trembled in the depths of my soul as I stared into that swirling pit of hellfire. The center of the room was carved into a gigantic face, made to resemble the gaping maw of a demon, and the very fires of the Abyss shot forth into the air. There were smaller gates along the sides of the room, covering everything with thick orange smoke and the scent of brimstone.

A huge beast, half demon and half dragon, came forth, roaring a challenge, while the lesser denizens of the Pit swarmed all around us. Surely we would need every last scrap of Saint Sollars' protection to survive this day. Though the fight was difficult, we did prevail, laying the beast low. And yet, there was still the matter of the portal itself. I must confess that I was sore afraid, for the mighty demon had killed two of our finest Knights while I myself barely survived being crushed in its claws.

When I expressed my fear to Gareth that the portal would soon spew forth another monstrosity like the first, he just smiled. "Take heart," he said, "for those who are pure of thought and deed can properly deal with such matters. We have among our company everything we need to close this evil gate and seal it forevermore."

Gareth called out to the clerics, telling them to focus divine energy upon the foundation. "They channel the energy of the gods' Astral dominions," he explained, "and it is anathema to the energy of the Lower Planes." Twice did the clerics hold forth their holy symbols and chant prayers to Ilmater, and indeed, it seemed to me that the portal did weaken.

"Now," said Dragonsbane, "there is the matter of the arcane weavings of this portal. Emelyn the Gray has told me how magic can be used to bind the planes together in specific locations, and so we must unmake this evil wizardry with magic of our own." At Gareth's command, the mages came forth; twice did they focus their sorcerous might upon the portal. As I watched, it weakened yet again; now I could almost see through it to the stone floor on the other side.

"Although these rifts are held together by magic, they are anchored in flesh. It pains me even to know this, but the only way such a gate can be created is through the sacrifice of innocent blood. And so we must offer our own sacrifice to release the souls of those innocents and allow them to find their way to their afterlife. Come with me, draw your blade."

Gareth and I stood before the portal together, we two. With our holy swords we drew our own blood, and flung it into the air. The blood was captured by some invisible force, flying directly into the center of the gate, which now began to shudder and shake like a living thing.

"See how it resists us," said Gareth. "It has sense; it knows what we are about. But we are nearly finished. There is but one thing left to do, and that is both the easiest and most difficult of all. You must be strong in your convictions and forceful in your tone if you are to complete the rite successfully. Only when the powers of divinity, the arcane, and life have been aligned will the Gods be willing to grant this final request. I believe that we are ready now."

I nearly jumped out of my boots when Gareth suddenly whirled to face the gate. In his sternest voice, he pointed at the portal and shouted: "FROM ALL EVIL DELIVER US!"

With a noise like the sound of a thousand bones snapping, the gateway collapsed. I did not realize I was holding my breath until I let it all out in a great shudder. Gareth chuckled. "You see, that wasn't so bad, was it? Of course, that was just a little one. We have many more such chambers to fight through before we reach the Witch-King!"

I tell you truly, Gareth was in no way exaggerating. I lost count of the battles we fought as we made our way through the deepest recesses of Castle Perilous. Though we lost many brave men and women, in the end, we were victorious. The Witch-King defended his most powerful portal to the very last of his unlife, calling upon all the wickedness of Orcus, but Gareth finally laid the lich low with a mighty swing of Crusader, the Holy Avenger.

With Ilmater's blessing the blow struck true and at long last, Zhengyi was no more.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]

LIVING FORGOTTEN REALMS

(character name)

HAS RECEIVED STORY AWARDS FROM:
(cross out those not received)

SPEC2-2 P3 TYRANNY'S PERILOUS BASTION

SPEC38 Death Warrant in Vaasa

The Ironfell Council has declared you an enemy of the state in the nation of Vaasa. The Voice of Telos has ordered that you be slain on sight and your body brought to him so that he can personally encase you in an ironfell coffin for all eternity.

Any Warlock Knight or shardsoul that you encounter will immediately recognize you unless you are sufficiently disguised (DM's discretion). These creatures won't just make you their preferred target; they'll practically trip over each other in their eagerness to get at you.

During any future adventures you play set in Vaasa, you must inform the DM of this story award so that the appropriate measures can be taken.

SPEC39 Prelude to the Abyssal Plague

You helped destroy an abyssal portal beneath Castle Perilous in the nation of Vaasa. The timing of the castle's magical renewal and the opening of the portal beneath its dungeons are not coincidental. The forces of the Abyss are stirring. This story award marks the beginning of a Major Quest that may change the world forever.

SPEC40 Tyranny Undone

Thanks to your efforts, the Council of Blades in Mulmaster and the Banite faction of Warlock Knights have failed to form an alliance. They have fallen into squabbling over which of them bears a greater responsibility for allowing you to disrupt their plans.

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]

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Event Name: _____ Event Code: _____
(This number was given to the organizer when the event was scheduled)

Adventure Title: _____ Session Number: _____
(For administrative use only)

Date of Play: / /
Month Day Year

Start Time: :
Hour Minute

Give hour in military time standard (p.m. hours = hour +12). Don't record the exact minute the adventure played. Instead list the closest 30-minute interval the game was scheduled to start at (30 or 00).

A legal table has no less than four players, and no more than six players.

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DUNGEON MASTER

DM Name: _____

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