

CORM1-4

# ALL THE KING'S MEN

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

BY ANDREW SCHNEIDER

REVIEWED BY SHAWN MERWIN

PLAYTESTED BY SIMONA ASSENOVA, JOHN BAFFORD, MONICA FULVIO, GREG SANDERS, STEPHANIE ROSE WILLIAMS, JACOB PEREZ, JASON PEREZ, FRANK MCGINLEY, MARYALYCE RENZA, ALEXANDER NUDD, FRED HALLMAN

A mysterious coffin washes ashore near Marsember, and everyone wants it! Can the PCs navigate this web of politics, greed, and desire to do what's right? A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Cormyr for characters levels 7-10.

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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## 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 RPGA Session Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned 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 7-10. 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.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Over a hundred years ago, many users of magic not fortunate enough to be consumed by the Spellplague were driven to madness by its transformative fire. A lucky few had time to recognize their affliction and take

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steps. Infected by the plague, the wizard Taliss built a sarcophagus that would preserve him until his apprentices and their descendants could find a cure. Unfortunately, Taliss' apprentices were wiped out by an attack of plaguechanged monsters shortly thereafter.

Adventurers later cleared and looted Taliss' mansion. While no one could figure out how to open the chipped and battered coffin, its value was undeniable: An intricately carved ebon marble veneer, framed with electrum accents and set with sapphires, only began to speak of its unequalled craftsmanship. The sarcophagus changed hands many times over the years until it went to the bottom of the Sea of Stars with the Cormyrian warship, the *Halshan Myrai*.

The sarcophagus was recently pulled from the wreck by a merchant-salvage company out of Marsember. Ambushed en route by a force of Netherese, the sarcophagus is on its way to Netheril, its powers to be dissected by the Princes of Shade.

## PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

*The one-eyed man throws back his hood and runs his hand through silver-streaked hair. "Time is of the essence, but when is it not? Point being, we have information that a salvage company out of Marsember recently recovered some cargo out of the Sea of Fallen Stars that should've never come out in the first place. To make matters worse, the cargo's been hijacked by mercenaries working for the Shadovar.*

*"Lord Prio, Regent of Special Affairs, wants you to intercept the cargo and bring it to a safehouse outside of Marsember. Questions?"*

## DM'S INTRODUCTION

The PCs have access to the following information at the start of the adventure:

- The cargo is an ebony sarcophagus branded with the symbol of a blue flame.
- The sarcophagus was recovered from a Cormyrian warship, the *Halshan Myrai*, which sank off the coast of High Imaskar about ten years ago.
- According to journals recovered from the wreckage, there was an ongoing investigation into a series of mysterious drownings at the time the *Halshan Myrai* sank. The victims were found

in their bunks, water filling their lungs and their entire cabin crusted with salt.

- History DC 25: The *Halshan Myrai's* cargo was said to have held 5 of the ebony sarcophagi.
- The one-eyed man has no further information on the sarcophagi or the *Halshan Myrai*.
- The mercenaries are making all speed to a shadow crossing, a gateway to the Shadowfell where they may rendezvous with a Shadovar strike team. They must be stopped prior to the rendezvous.
- The Shadovar are led by one Havastav, a knight of Shade. Use caution if he is encountered, as he is extremely dangerous.
- The safehouse is approximately three hours from the shadow crossing.
- The safehouse is being prepared for the PCs arrival by another member of Cormyr's intelligence service, Navish Brightfoot.
- The PCs are supplied with a single-use magical stone they can use to summon Navish if there are any unforeseen developments (See Encounter 2c).

## ENCOUNTER 1: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

### ENCOUNTER LEVEL 5/7 (900/1,300 XP)

#### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures.

2 dragonborn soldiers (D)

2 halfling prowlers (H)

It's been slow going for the mercenaries, and they are currently trying to push their heavily laden wagon out of the mud.

As the adventurers enter the area, read:

*The mercenaries swear loudly by the light of the moon, cursing the luck that's gotten their wagon stuck in the mud by an old canal on the outskirts of Marsember. Horses toss their heads nervously in the darkness.*

The mercenaries are expecting pursuit from guards contracted to the salvage company, not a band of adventurers. The PCs gain a surprise round if they attack immediately.

If not attacked immediately, the mercenaries initiate a dialogue in hopes of getting the PCs to help them move the wagon out of the mud.

This band of mercenaries is not without a certain amount of honor. If the PCs aid them in any way, they do not attack without first stating their intent, and offering regret that things have come to this.

At the end of the first round of combat, read:

*The horses spook. They lurch forward, and the sarcophagus slides out of the wagon, breaking open on the ground. A well-dressed man spills out into the mud screaming, "Help me, I'm drowning!" The man's veins blaze with blue fire. Immediately the surrounding air shimmers and warps. Then there is no more air, only water.*

The man is Taliss (see Appendix 1). Taliss' suspended animation was broken when the sarcophagus opened, and his subconscious is flooding his mind with latent memories, the strongest of which is him being underwater for many years. The power of the Spellplague is manifesting those memories as reality.

The combat area is now essentially underwater, with all combatants considered standing on the ground

in very deep water. There is no end to the watery terrain in sight (see Aquatic Combat, DMG 45):

- Creatures using powers that have the fire keyword take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
- Characters using weapons from the spear and crossbow weapon groups take no penalties to attack rolls. Any other weapon takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
- Creatures move using their swim speed. A creature without a swim speed must make a DC 10 Athletics check to swim at half speed (PHB 182).
- Creatures who take damage while holding their breath must make a DC 20 Endurance check at the end of their turn in the round they take damage.
  - Failure means the creature loses 1 healing surge: A creature without healing surges takes damage equal to their level, and must make another check at the end of the next round regardless of whether or not he takes damage.

Taliss' struggles cause him to fall unconscious in 4 rounds, at which point the water vanishes and all creatures fall to the earth if they swam up (taking falling damage as normal).

#### MANIPULATING TALISS

Taliss has awoken confused and consumed by the nightmares of his past. A PC adjacent to Taliss can manipulate him with a minor action (once per turn) to change how he affects his environment:

- **Insight DC 19:** The PC understands Taliss is causing the situation and knows which skills might successfully influence Taliss.
- **Heal DC 17:** Taliss stops struggling and takes a deep breath. All creatures can breathe and speak normally until the start of the PC's next turn.
- **Intimidate (any attempt):** Water suddenly threatens to fill the PC's lungs. Unless the PC can breathe water, he must make an immediate DC 20 Endurance check or lose 1 healing surge.
- **Diplomacy DC 15:** Requires the ability to speak underwater. Taliss is made to understand his situation. Reduce the amount of time the situation remains underwater by 1 round.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The moon provides dim light. Remember that light sources might be extinguished.

**Islands and Bridges:** The islands and bridges are normal terrain.

**Canals:** The areas off the map are dried canals. They are 20 feet deep and are normal terrain at the bottom.

**Current:** When the battlefield becomes submerged, several currents appear.

- At the level and above the bridges, a gentle current flows east to west. With the exception of Taliss, creatures who enter or start their turns in that area are pushed 1 square.
- Beneath the bridges flow several fast, narrow currents both north to south and west to east respectively. Creatures who enter or start their turns in the area are pushed 3 squares. These currents travel the length of the map.
- If a creature enters a new current as a result of an old one, he is swept up by the new current.

## TACTICS

The mercenaries presume the underwater effect to be some magic perpetrated by the PCs. Accordingly, they target any obvious ritual casters (cleric, druid, invoker, wizard) first before turning their attentions to the rest of the party.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove one dragonborn soldier.

**Six PCs:** Add two dragonborn soldiers.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Captured mercenaries attempt to bargain for their freedom. They share the following if defeated and spared:

- They are members of the Black Wing company out of Sembia. They were hired to waylay the salvage operation caravan and steal the sealed sarcophagus.
- They were to meet with someone named Havastav to arrange for the sarcophagus' transfer.
- Havastav is described as a gaunt, drawn human with ashen skin and glowing blue eyes. He is accompanied by rust-colored dragon which trails

dust in its wake and wilts the grass and trees in its passing.

The PCs may also determine the following information:

- **History (DC 20):** Havastav is a knight of Shade. He commands squads of shadar-kai, coordinating and sometimes directly overseeing missions. His primary duty is the defense of the city of Shade, although he occasionally provides support for important shadow caravans.
- **Arcana (DC 20):** From the description, the dragon sounds like a blight dragon. A blight dragon transforms the land around its lair, wiping out any indigenous life. They are native to the Shadowfell.
- **Arcana (DC 25):** The description of Havastav corresponds to a Shade. Shades are the elite of Netheril, blessed by Shar. They can regenerate, teleport, and become invisible in the shadows.
- **Arcana (DC 25):** Blight dragons share a dragon's frightful presence. They can conjure dust storms, breathe rot-laced fire, and drain the life from their enemies.
- **Arcana (DC 30):** Both shades and blight dragons are vulnerable to radiant damage.

Taliss recovers his senses following the combat and is willing to talk with the PCs. Once the PCs have interrogated prisoners (if any) and began talking with Taliss, **proceed to Encounter 2a.**

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 180/260 experience points each for defeating the monsters.

## TREASURE

The PCs find 150/200 gold per PC in the wagon.

## ENCOUNTER 2: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

<b>Dragonborn Soldier</b>	<b>Level 5 Soldier</b>
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200
<b>Initiative</b> +6 <b>Senses Perception</b> +3	
<b>HP</b> 63; <b>Bloodied</b> 31; see also <i>dragonborn fury</i>	
<b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 18, <b>Reflex</b> 16, <b>Will</b> 15	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
m <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+10 vs. AC (+11 while bloodied); 1d8 + 3 damage	
C <b>Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold</b>	
Close blast 3; +6 vs. Reflex (+7 while bloodied); 1d6 + 2 cold damage.	
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>Impetuous Spirit</b> (immediate reaction, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn soldier makes a melee basic attack against the enemy, even if the enemy is shifting.	
<b>Martial Recovery</b> (free, when the dragonborn soldier misses with a melee attack; recharges when the soldier uses <i>impetuous spirit</i> ) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn soldier makes another melee attack against the same target.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +9, History +4, Intimidate +8	
<b>Str</b> 16 (+5)	<b>Dex</b> 15 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 15 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 11 (+2) <b>Cha</b> 9 (+1)
<b>Equipment</b> scale armor, light shield, longsword	

<b>Halfling Prowler</b>	<b>Level 6 Lurker</b>
Small natural humanoid	XP 250
<b>Initiative</b> +11 <b>Senses Perception</b> +8	
<b>HP</b> 52; <b>Bloodied</b> 26	
<b>AC</b> 18; <b>Fortitude</b> 14, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 15; see also <i>crowd shield</i> and <i>nimble reaction</i>	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +5 against fear effects	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
m <b>Short Sword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Poison, Weapon</b>	
+10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the halfling prowler makes a secondary attack. <i>Secondary attack</i> : +8 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 3 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).	
R <b>Hand Crossbow</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Poison, Weapon</b>	
Ranged 10/20; +10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the halfling prowler makes a secondary attack. <i>Secondary attack</i> : +8 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 3 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).	
<b>Catfall</b>	
If the halfling prowler falls, reduce the distance it falls by 20 feet when determining how much damage it takes.	
<b>Crowd Shield</b>	
The halfling prowler gains a +2 bonus to its AC and Reflex defense if it has one creature adjacent to it, or a +4 bonus if two or more creatures are adjacent to it.	
<b>Nimble Reaction</b>	
Halflings gain a +2 racial bonus to AC against opportunity attacks.	
<b>Second Chance</b> (immediate interrupt, when the halfling would be hit by an attack; encounter)	
The halfling prowler forces the attacker to reroll the attack and take the new result.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Common, Chondathan
<b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +14, Athletics +9, Stealth +12, Streetwise +10, Thievery +13	
<b>Str</b> 12 (+4)	<b>Dex</b> 18 (+7) <b>Wis</b> 10 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 10 (+3)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+3) <b>Cha</b> 15 (+5)
<b>Equipment</b> leather armor, poisoned short sword, hand crossbow with 10 poisoned bolts, thieves' tools	

## ENCOUNTER 2: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

<b>Dragonborn Soldier (level 7)</b>	<b>Level 7 Soldier</b>
Medium natural humanoid	XP 300
<b>Initiative</b> +7 <b>Senses Perception</b> +4	
<b>HP</b> 79; <b>Bloodied</b> 39; see also <i>dragonborn fury</i>	
<b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 20, <b>Reflex</b> 18, <b>Will</b> 17	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
m <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+12 vs. AC (+13 while bloodied); 1d8 + 4 damage	
C <b>Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold</b>	
Close blast 3; +8 vs. Reflex (+9 while bloodied); 1d6 + 3 cold damage.	
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>Impetuous Spirit</b> (immediate reaction, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn soldier makes a melee basic attack against the enemy, even if the enemy is shifting.	
<b>Martial Recovery</b> (free, when the dragonborn soldier misses with a melee attack; recharges when the soldier uses <i>impetuous spirit</i> ) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn soldier makes another melee attack against the same target.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +10, History +5, Intimidate +9	
<b>Str</b> 16 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 15 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 15 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 11 (+3) <b>Cha</b> 9 (+2)
<b>Equipment</b> scale armor, light shield, longsword	

<b>Halfling Prowler (level 8)</b>	<b>Level 8 Lurker</b>
Small natural humanoid	XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +12 <b>Senses Perception</b> +9	
<b>HP</b> 64; <b>Bloodied</b> 32	
<b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 16, <b>Reflex</b> 19, <b>Will</b> 17; see also <i>crowd shield</i> and <i>nimble reaction</i>	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +5 against fear effects	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
m <b>Short Sword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Poison, Weapon</b>	
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage, and the halfling prowler makes a secondary attack. <i>Secondary attack</i> : +10 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).	
R <b>Hand Crossbow</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Poison, Weapon</b>	
Ranged 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage, and the halfling prowler makes a secondary attack. <i>Secondary attack</i> : +10 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).	
<b>Catfall</b>	
If the halfling prowler falls, reduce the distance it falls by 20 feet when determining how much damage it takes.	
<b>Crowd Shield</b>	
The halfling prowler gains a +2 bonus to its AC and Reflex defense if it has one creature adjacent to it, or a +4 bonus if two or more creatures are adjacent to it.	
<b>Nimble Reaction</b>	
Halflings gain a +2 racial bonus to AC against opportunity attacks.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Common, Chondathan
<b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +15, Athletics +10, Stealth +13, Streetwise +11, Thievery +14	
<b>Str</b> 12 (+5)	<b>Dex</b> 18 (+8) <b>Wis</b> 10 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 10 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+4) <b>Cha</b> 15 (+6)
<b>Equipment</b> leather armor, poisoned short sword, hand crossbow with 10 poisoned bolts, thieves' tools	

# ENCOUNTER 2: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED MAP

## Ruins of the Wild

Field / Skeleton 4x8 x1

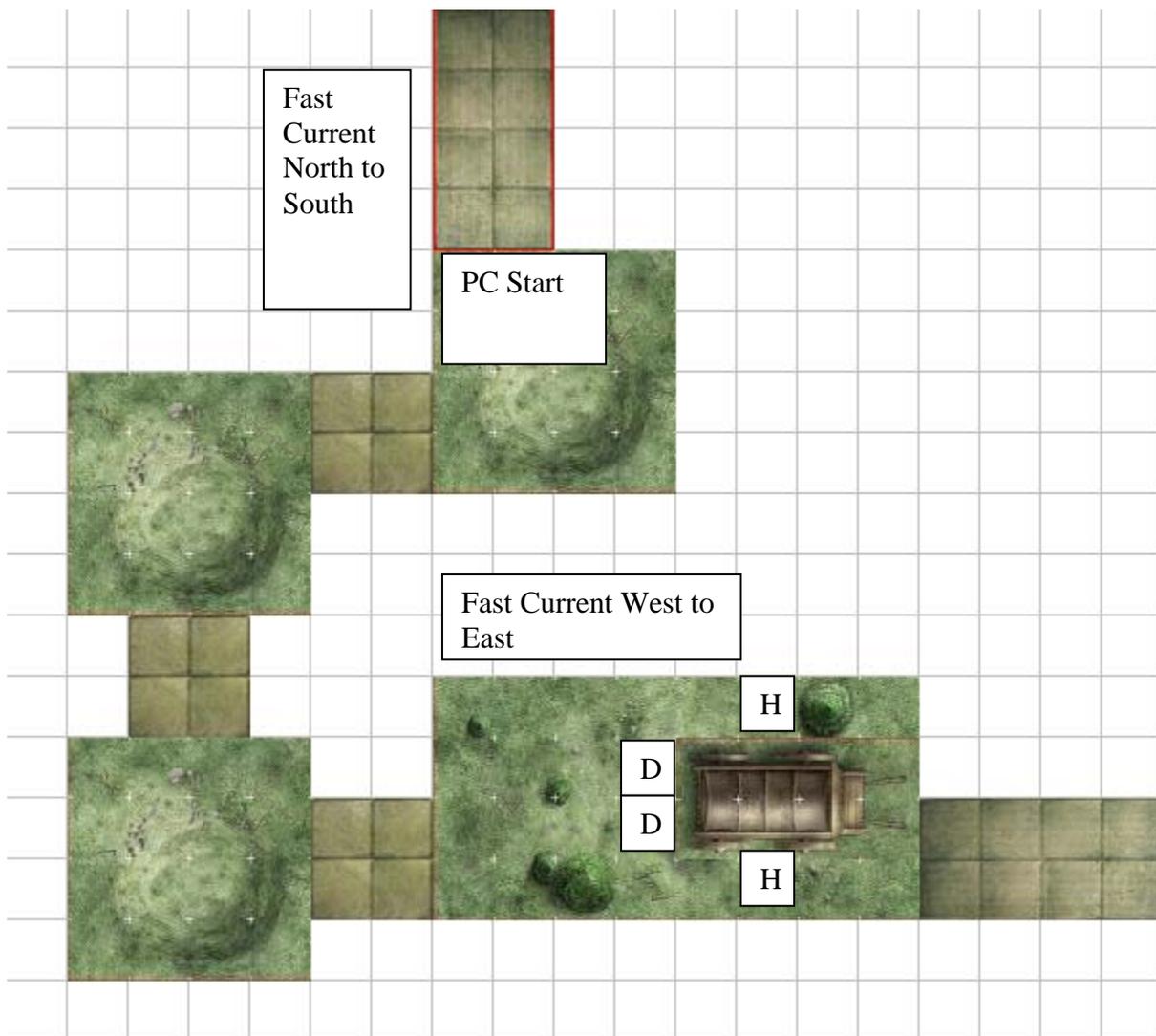
Mound / Hobbit Hole 4x4 x3

Covered Wagon / Field w/Log 4x2 x1

## Fane of the Forgotten Gods

Dragon Fountain / Floor 2x2 x3

Plank Floor / Floor 4x2 x1



## ENCOUNTER 2A: TALISS

### SETUP

Taliss engages the PCs in conversation once the battle with the mercenaries has ended and he has regained his senses.

*The man from the sarcophagus stands unsteadily in the mud. "Well, that was quite a trip," he says. "So good of you to come to my aid, gentle folk. Now where, and more importantly, when am I?"*

### Taliss Muirwood

**Goals:** Taliss has a burning need to know whether or not he's been cured of the Spellplague.

Because of the ravages of the Spellplague, Taliss exhibits three separate personalities. Taliss the Archmage is dominant as the conversation begins. Having seen the fate of his fellow mages at the hands of fearful peasants immediately following the onset of the plague, he is careful not to immediately let on that he is also infected. Taliss the Dandy is far more trusting, whereas Taliss the War Wizard figures the secret is bound to get out eventually.

- With a History DC 25 check, a PC recognizes Taliss Muirwood as a well-respected wizard and noted researcher prior to the Spellplague.
- Taliss recognizes the PCs with the story award **CORM01 Badge of Temperance** as trusted agents of the Crown.

### The Sarcophagus

The sarcophagus is inert, its power broken when Taliss emerged. Its construction is exactly as the one-eyed man described, made of ebony and branded with a blue flame.

- Casual inspection reveals the interior of the sarcophagus is filled with tiny steel spikes, like an iron maiden.
- Taliss' body is unmarked.

### Personality Problems

Taliss is being torn apart and remade from within by the Spellplague. While this process has yet to show physically, it has already splintered Taliss' mind into three parts.

- **Archmage:** Towards the end of his life, Taliss built a tower and took on several apprentices, isolating himself from the bustle of the world to better concentrate on his study of magic. Taliss the Archmage thinks of himself as friendly and

courteous, but the mysteries of the arcane leave little time for social graces, and he can come across as aloof and vaguely insulting. He quickly loses patience with anyone he considers inferior, which is just about everyone.

- **Dandy:** In his youth, before taking on the rigorous studies of becoming a wizard, Taliss bounced from court to court and tavern to tavern, a consummate social butterfly. Taliss the Dandy is friendly and ingratiating to the point of obsequiousness.
- **War Wizard:** Taliss served for many years with Cormyr's war wizards, a calling to which he was ill-suited. Taliss the War Wizard is deeply depressed and fatalistic.

Taliss' different personalities share fragmented memories of his past and a complete recollection of his experiences since emerging from the sarcophagus.

When confronted with stress, or even if moderately vexed by an unforeseen turn of events, the dominant Taliss personality has a chance of losing control to one of his other aspects. When Taliss loses control of himself, roll a d6 and compare the result to the table below or simply pick an appropriate personality.

- 1-2: Archmage
- 3-4: Dandy
- 5-6: War Wizard

When Taliss' personality shifts, the veins in his arms and neck glow blue briefly.

### Taliss' Memories

Due to the Spellplague and the magic of the sarcophagus, Taliss' specific memories of the past are largely incomplete. A few details, however, have remained in his mind:

- Taliss was attending a small conclave of wizards when the Spellplague hit. He remembers his colleagues changed or consumed by blue fire. The few survivors, robbed of their magic, were torn apart by an angry mob who blamed the wizards for the catastrophe. Taliss destroyed the mob, causing toothy mouths to sprout from the peasants' bodies and laughing as they devoured each other.
- Prior to entering the sarcophagus, Taliss identified a promising set of standing stones near Marsember. Properly attuned, the stones might leech or at least stabilize the plague coursing through his veins. With little time before his estimated transformation, he left the information with his apprentices.

- Taliss briefly courted Alysia Redfern, a lady in the court of king Azoun IV. She was his first and only kiss.

### **If Taliss Dies**

Taliss has 200 hit points, two healing surges, and is automatically hit when attacked. If Taliss is killed, his dead body erupts into a (fully healed) sharn. Run Encounter 5 immediately in conjunction with the encounter where Taliss dies.

### **Regarding Lucius**

Taliss, in his multiple personalities, is interested in Lucius and the work of the Order. (See Encounter 2b for more information on Lucius.) He has faith in his research, however, and if given the choice would prefer to travel to the standing stones.

### **Regarding Navish**

Taliss dislikes Navish intensely, though not for any reason he is capable of articulating. He remembers only that the crest of the purple dragon is associated with intense pain.

## **ENDING THE ENCOUNTER**

After a few minutes of conversation (and whether or not the PCs summon Navish), **proceed to Encounter 2b: Lucius Corgan Adaster**. The notes from Encounter 2a are useful throughout the rest of the adventure.

## ENCOUNTER 2B: LUCIUS CORGAN ADASTER

### SETUP

Lucius Corgan Adaster, commander of the Marsember chapter of the Order of Blue Fire (FRCG 264), has been directed to Taliss' location by a mysterious message (actually from the Masters of Absolute Accord) telling him of a plaguechanged creature in need of assistance.

*The nearby darkness is suddenly lit with blue fire, and Taliss' veins pulse in response. A voice cries out, "Well met, friends. May I approach?" An old eladrin, wisps of blue fire trailing from his eyes, stands at the crest of a nearby hill—a location that was empty moments ago.*

Lucius' part in the Order of Blue Fire has nothing to do with its sinister aspects. He works tirelessly to help the spellscarred understand and control their affliction, as well fighting any manifestations of the Spellplague within the area. Lucius has nothing to hide of his purpose, and he questions the party closely about manifestations of the Spellplague in the area.

If Lucius is told of Taliss' affliction (or if he observes Taliss' personality shift and its accompanying pulse of blue fire), he surmises that Taliss is the "plaguechanged creature" he was meant to find. He immediately wants to take Taliss back to the Order's chapter house so that Taliss can be taught to understand and accept his powers.

Lucius is very proud of his decades-long work helping victims of the Spellplague. Though he has never yet had the opportunity to work with a potential plaguechanged prior to their transformation, he is sure he can succeed in helping Taliss.

The PCs can learn the following about the Order of Blue Fire with the appropriate check:

- **History DC 40:** The Masters of Absolute Accord formed in or near Deep Imaskar during the Spellplague. They are still imprisoned near that Underdark city, and they can manipulate plaguelands and send visions to the spellscarred. Their guidance is more coherent than that of sharns but still strengthens and spreads the Spellplague.
- **Religion DC 35:** The order's public face is a front for a more sinister organization. It was originally a cult dedicated to the idea that the Spellplague was a holy cosmic event whose work should be

continued. Sharns are held to be expressions of a Spellplague godhead by those who follow the deepest precepts of the order. At times they issue erratic, contradictory, and even illogical dictates to the cult, leading to miraculous and terrible events that spread and nurture existing active pockets of the Spellplague.

- **Streetwise DC 35:** The Order of Blue Fire is actually the origin of many problems it is supposedly trying to solve. Trying to convince anyone of this fact is nearly impossible, though, given the order's good reputation. Its officials disavow knowledge of the activities of members who seem to be working to foster the Spellplague and its changes.

The PCs can learn the following from speaking with Lucius:

- The Order of Blue Fire has been active in Marsember for over thirty years. They have aided several thousand spellscarred and dealt with dozens isolated outbreaks of the Spellplague in that time.
- Lucius is leader of the Marsember chapter of the Order, as well as its founder.
- If Lucius is confronted with the fact that the Order is not as benign as it seems, he is honestly offended. While there are zealots in all organizations, their isolated activities should not sully the Order's good name.
- Though Lucius has never before worked with a plaguechanged prior to its transformation, the facilities at the Order's chapter house should be more than sufficient to mitigate the negative aspects of Taliss' affliction.
- Lucius sees the Spellplague as a part of the natural world, and believes it can be as much of a gift as the ability to swing a sword or throw a fireball. He teaches acceptance, control, and understanding. Any mention of "curing" the Spellplague is met with skepticism. Does a sailboat cure the wind?

### Regarding Navish

Lucius respects Navish as a representative of the government of Corymr. He quietly refutes, however, any claims that the Order is evil.

### Regarding Taliss

Lucius is thrilled to meet Taliss. To have the chance to help and study one of the plaguechanged could be a turning point in his career with the Order.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

If the PCs decide to take Taliss to the Cormyrian safehouse, proceed to encounter 3a: The Safehouse.

If the PCs decide to follow Lucius to the Order of Blue Fire, proceed to encounter 3b: The Order of Blue Fire.

If the PCs decide to trust Taliss' memories and head to the standing stones, proceed to encounter 3c: The Standing Stones.

If the PCs attempt to take Taliss elsewhere, proceed to encounter 4d: Indecision.

## ENCOUNTER 2c (OPTIONAL): NAVISH BRIGHTFOOT

### SETUP

This encounter only occurs if the PCs use the stone given to them by the one-eyed man in the Introduction to summon Navish Brightfoot.

*The stone opens like a flower, releasing a series of glowing runes into the air. The runes settle into a circle on the ground. In a flash of light, the runes are gone, and a red-haired halfling with a purple dragon stitched onto his eye-patch stands before you. “That was unpleasant.” The halfling raises the eye-patch and takes in the situation. Both good eyes settle on Taliss. “I’m guessing there’s a problem?”*

Navish is a spy for Cormyr, one of the Crown’s top agents. He responds favorably if he’s met any of the PCs in previous adventures, but it won’t influence his actions in the current situation. In his line of work, friends one day can easily be enemies the next.

Navish’s priority is to find out what happened to the sarcophagus. He guesses, if no one tells him, that Taliss emerged from the sarcophagus.

What little Navish knows of the *Halshan Myrai* and its mission is summarized below:

- Ten years ago, the *Halshan Myrai* set sail with five sarcophagi branded with a blue flame.
- The sarcophagi were not identical. All, however, were believed to date from the onset of the Spellplague.
- Prior to leaving port, the sarcophagi were subjected to intense study by a special team of War Wizards. The findings of that team were not made available outside the highest levels of government, not even to Navish himself.
- The King himself sent the *Halshan Myrai* and its cargo all the way to the Great Sea.
- Navish assumes the sarcophagi were to be dumped into that vast, fathomless deep, never to be found again.

Navish’s orders were to secure the sarcophagus for transport back to Suzail. There is a cadre of War Wizards and Purple Dragon knights waiting at the safehouse, ready to leave the moment the sarcophagus arrives. Navish was provided with a special ritual of containment in case the sarcophagus should open. The ritual and its components are back at the safehouse.

From the information available, Navish assumes that whatever was in those sarcophagi was deemed a danger to the kingdom. He works to convince the PCs that they need to get Taliss to the safehouse and under the effects of the containment ritual before whatever powers he contains spirals out of control.

### Regarding Lucius

Navish takes an immediate dislike to Lucius. Navish has uncovered information pointing towards the sinister side of the Order, and he believes that wittingly or not, Lucius’ custody of Taliss would only further the Order’s secret agenda.

### Towards Taliss

Navish neither likes nor dislikes Taliss at first. Taliss is a mission objective more than a person. After a few minutes of conversation however, Navish revises his opinion. He decides that Taliss is not only extremely dangerous, but also insane.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

If the PCs decide to take Taliss to the Cormyrian safehouse, proceed to encounter 3a: The Safehouse.

If the PCs decide to follow Lucius to the Order of Blue Fire, proceed to encounter 3b: The Order of Blue Fire.

If the PCs decide to trust Taliss’ memories and head to the standing stones, proceed to encounter 3c: The Standing Stones.

If the PCs attempt to take Taliss elsewhere, proceed to encounter 4d; Indecision.

## ENCOUNTER 3A: THE SAFEHOUSE

### SETUP

If the PCs decide to take Taliss to the Cormyrian safehouse, Lucius respectfully accepts their decision and returns to Marsember.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*Taliss is largely silent as he is led to the nearby safehouse, an abandoned-looking barn, made from fieldstones, in the middle of a clearing. War Wizards and Purple Dragon knights stand guard around a large ritual circle. "It pays to be prepared," says Navish as he summons a pair of knights to Taliss' side. In the center of the circle are a stake and a pair of shackles.*

If the PCs ask or express reservations, Navish explains that he can't risk Taliss leaving the circle before the ritual is complete.

The ritual a modified version of what was used in Akanûl on a plaguechanged creature known as the Virushead. If all goes according to plan, it should place Taliss, and his affliction, into a short-term stasis: long enough to reach the facilities at Suzail safely.

**Insight DC 15:** If the PCs know about Taliss' personality shifts, they note that the shifts have been coming with increasing frequency as the night progresses.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

If the PCs continue with the ritual, Taliss begins muttering, begging, and then screaming in all of his personalities as the shackles close over his wrists.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*As Taliss' screams echo through the night, an alarm sounds from within the safehouse. A War Wizard bursts outside shouting "Shades, shadar-kai, and a damn dragon, incoming!"*

Go to **Encounter 4a: For Cormyr.**

If the PCs have second thoughts about their course of action prior to Taliss' entering the ritual circle, Navish reluctantly agrees to escort them to the destination of their choice if they can convince him (DC 15 Diplomacy).

Go to **Encounter 4d: Indecision.**

## ENCOUNTER 3B: THE ORDER OF BLUE FIRE

### SETUP

If Navish is present when the PCs decide to take Taliss to the Order of Blue Fire, Navish informs the PCs that he thinks they are acting foolishly, and he is heading back to the Cormyrian safehouse. Navish intends to gather his troops and monitor the situation until he can get further orders.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*Taliss and Lucius talk animatedly during the journey to the Order's chapterhouse. Lucius seems nonplussed by Taliss increasing frequent personality shifts as he explains elaborate theories on how to control and harness the power of the Spellplague.*

*The Order's chapter house finally comes into view. On a hill outside of Marsember, the Order of Blue Fire has taken over an ancient fortress and made it their own.*

Arriving at the chapterhouse, Lucius is greeted warmly by the guards on duty. All of them are spellscarred or marked by the Spellplague to one extent or another. Some of the plaguewrought deformities are obvious, such as an extra arm or a third eye, while others are more subtle - a blue tint to the skin or a forked tongue.

Lucius greets the guards warmly and invites the PCs inside.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

As the PCs are about to enter the chapterhouse, read or paraphrase the following:

*A knight of the Order teleports into the center of the courtyard as an alarm bell sounds. "We're under attack!" Pale-skinned humanoids appear out of the darkness as a dragon swoops overhead and a gaunt, gray-skinned man appears in the doorway.*

Go to **Encounter 4b: Acceptance.**

If the PCs have second thoughts about their course of action prior to Taliss' entering the Order's chapter house, Lucius, with great sadness, agrees to escort them to the destination of their choice.

Go to **Encounter 4d: Indecision.**

## ENCOUNTER 3c: THE STANDING STONES

### SETUP

If the PCs decide to trust Taliss' research and head to the standing stones, Lucius accepts their decision and returns to Marsember.

If Navish is present, he returns to the safehouse to gather his troops and request further orders.

*Taliss seems to speak with himself, his personality shifts coming faster and faster as you approach the standing stones. Finally the monoliths appear, looming out of the darkness.*

The standing stones are covered in moss and lichen. The weathered tracery of ancient runes can be seen here and there.

- **Arcana DC 35:** There is a faint magic about the standing stones, but it is buried deep and dormant.
- **History DC 30:** These stones were once part of a small mythal that warded this area from plague and disease.

Taliss immediately approaches the standing stones and begins caressing them, murmuring in the liquid language of the elves.

- PCs who speak Elven recognize the structure of the language, but not the words themselves. It could be a forgotten dialect, or it could be nonsense.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

If the PCs allow Taliss to continue working with the stones, read or paraphrase the following:

*The stones suddenly flare with light, arcane runes blazing with life. "Quickly," Taliss cries, "get inside the circle!" Pale-skinned humanoids charge out of the darkness, led by gaunt, grey man on the back of a dragon.*

Go to **Encounter 4c: The Cure.**

If the PCs have second thoughts about attempting to work with the standing stones, Taliss reluctantly agrees to follow them to the destination of their choice.

Go to **Encounter 4d: Indecision.**

## ENCOUNTER 4A: FOR CORMYR

### ENCOUNTER LEVEL 9/11 (2150/3100 XP)

#### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures.

**Havastav** (H)

**1 adult blight dragon** (D)

**Taliss** (T)

The War Wizards and Purple Dragon knights quickly move to engage the force of shadar-kai, leaving the PCs to deal with another threat.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*“Protect Taliss while I complete the ritual!” Navish cries. A gaunt gray man riding an ash-colored dragon swoops low over the battlefield, heading toward the ritual circle.*

When the PCs engage Havastav in combat, read or paraphrase the following:

*An imposing figure arrayed in dark cloak that billows in a slow unseen breeze faces you. He wields an ancient bastard sword and exudes contempt.*

When Havastav has a chance to speak, read or paraphrase the following:

*“I am Havastav, Knight of Shade. I will take your lives for vengeance, and I will take your souls for spite.”*

If Taliss takes damage:

*Taliss convulses and drops to the ground as thousands of needle-size wounds of blue fire open all over his body.*

Taliss is losing his battle with the Spellplague. Being wounded pushes his mind over the edge, and he is reliving the moment he activated the sarcophagus. The power of the Spellplague translates Taliss’ pain into the world. Immediately read or paraphrase the following:

*Long spikes of black steel shoot up through the ground.*

Three steel spikes about 3-feet wide and 15-feet tall shoot-up through the ground and stay there on the first

round, but do not target creatures. One spike appears every round thereafter, and those might target creatures.

- The spikes appear beneath a creature if you roll a 1 on a d4. Roll randomly to determine their target, including the PCs, Havastav, and his allies—but not Taliss.
- At low tier the spikes attack at +13 vs. AC for 2d6+5 damage.
- At high tier the spikes attack at +15 vs. AC for 2d6+6 damage.

#### MANIPULATING TALISS

Taliss is in great pain and consumed with fear at the advancing ritual. With difficulty, a PC adjacent to Taliss can manipulate him with a minor action (once per round) to change how he affects the environment around him:

- **Insight DC 20:** The PC understands which skills might successfully influence Taliss.
- **Heal DC 20:** A PC can calm Taliss’ seizure until the end of that PC’s next turn.
- **Bluff DC 20:** A PC can direct Taliss’ pain, causing a spike to come up under a target of his choice. This check can only be made while Taliss is calm.
- **Intimidate DC 20:** A PC can shock Taliss into indecision. No spikes appear on Taliss’ turn. This check can only be made while Taliss is calm.

#### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The runes give off dim light in a 4 square radius.

**Spikes:** The spikes are thin, providing cover against ranged attacks only. Creatures can move through spike squares as difficult terrain.

**Battlefield:** The edges of the map are filled with shadar-kai and Cormyrian troops. Both sides are giving the ritual circle and the battle raging within a wide berth. Friend and foe alike are liable to be hit with a stray sword or spell as the press of combat forces them back towards the center.

- A creature that enters or starts in a square beyond the edge of the map is attacked. +16 vs. AC, 1d8+5 damage and the creature is pushed one square toward the ritual circle.

**Boulders:** These small rock outcroppings count as blocking terrain. They can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

**Navish:** Navish continually moves around the runes. He has to concentrate on the ritual and cannot

take part in the fight. The casting of this particular ritual protects him from any damage.

**Ritual Runes:** Creatures crossing the ritual runes on foot earn a glare from Navish and a small blast of energy for their troubles; +11 vs. Reflex, 1d6 radiant damage.

**Large Trees:** Large trees count as cover for ranged attacks. Their trunks count as blocking terrain.

**Small Trees:** Small trees count as difficult terrain and cover.

## TACTICS

The Princes of Shade know full well the untapped power Taliss represents. Havastav's instructions were to secure the sarcophagus and its contents or ensure Taliss cannot be used by anyone else.

Havastav or the blight dragon target Taliss initially, setting off Taliss' seizure and the chain reaction that leads to Taliss' transformation.

Havastav teleports from the dragon's back at the first opportunity and works the opposite side of the battlefield from the dragon, staying out of its aura. They concentrate their efforts on PCs who deal radiant damage. Havastav attempts to keep moving on his turn, hiding within his *coalescing darkness* after an attack.

The blight dragon happily hovers above the battlefield, only coming within range of the spikes when a *bite* is his only option.

Havastav and the blight dragon are supremely confident in their abilities and fight to the death. They ignore Navish, knowing that the battle will be over, one way or another, well before the ritual can be completed.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove 16 hit points from both Havastav and the adult blight dragon, and reduce their attacks and defenses by 1.

**Six PCs:** Add 16 hit points to both Havastav and the adult blight dragon, and increase their attacks and defenses by 1.

If Havastav and the blight dragon are defeated, read or paraphrase the following:

***With the dragon and his rider dead, Taliss' back arches, and blue fire shoots from his eyes and mouth. Navish swears loudly "Too soon! Keep him down. I'm going to try again!"***

## SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 8/10, COMPLEXITY 1 (XP INCLUDED IN THE ENCOUNTER)

### SETUP

**Number of Successes:** 4

**Number of Failures:** 3

**Primary Skills:** Bluff, Endurance, Heal, Intimidate, Thievery

The PCs have to get Taliss under control so Navish can complete the ritual.

If a PC wants to use a skill that is not listed here but seems applicable, they need to make a DC 19/21 check with that skill to garner a success. Checks that do not seem particularly applicable but might be used to aid their party must pass a DC 19/21 check and grant a +2 bonus.

### SKILL CHALLENGE

**Bluff (DC 19/21):** You convince Taliss that everything is okay, and despite his pain he calms for a moment.

**Endurance (DC 14/16):** Taliss' body is bucking and kicking, but you manage to hold him down.

**Heal (DC 14/16):** You are able to calm Taliss using your knowledge of the body.

**Intimidate (DC 14/16):** You shock Taliss into submission, buying yourself a moment of respite.

**Thievery (DC 14/16):** With your knowledge of ropes and locks, you're able to temporarily immobilize Taliss and keep him from hurting himself.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** The PCs manage to calm or restrain Taliss as Navish continues with the ritual. The PCs gain the benefit of a short rest before proceeding to **Encounter 5: Blue Fire**.

**Failure:** The PCs fail to restrain Taliss and his transformation takes place immediately. Proceed to **Encounter 5: Blue Fire**.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 430/620 experience points each for defeating the monsters and succeeding at the skill challenge.

# ENCOUNTER 4A: FOR CORMYR MAP

## Select Map ...

### Ruins of the Wild

Camp / Field 8x8 x3

Ruined Tower / Field w/Trees 8x8 x3

Field / Skeleton 4x8 x1

### Fane of the Forgotten Gods

Arrow Rune / Round Fountain 2x2 x6

Checkerboard floor / Outdoor Shrine 8x8 x1



## ENCOUNTER 4B: ACCEPTANCE

### ENCOUNTER LEVEL 9/11 (2150/3100 XP)

#### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures.

**Havastav (H)**

**1 adult blight dragon (D)**

The knights find themselves in a fight for their lives holding the line against attacking shadar-kai. They have to trust the PCs and Lucius to handle the dragon.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*Lucius gurgles and coughs as he looks down at the sword transfixing his chest. "I am Havastav, knight of Shade." The gaunt man pushes Lucius' body from his sword. "Your deaths will soon be on my hands."*

If Taliss takes damage:

*Taliss convulses and drops to the ground as thousands of needle-size wounds of blue fire open all over his body. He screams with a three anguished.*

Taliss is losing his battle with the Spellplague. Being wounded pushes his mind over the edge, and he is reliving the moment he activated the sarcophagus. The power of the Spellplague translates Taliss' pain into the world. Immediately read or paraphrase the following:

*Long spikes of black steel shoot up through the ground.*

Three steel spikes about 3-feet wide and 15-feet tall shoot-up through the ground and stay there on the first round, but do not target creatures. One spike appears every round thereafter, and those might target creatures.

- The spikes appear beneath a creature if you roll a 1 or 2 on a d4. Roll randomly to determine their target, including the PCs, Havastav, and his allies—but not Taliss.
- At low tier the spikes attack at +13 vs. AC for 2d6+5 damage.
- At high tier the spikes attack at +15 vs. AC for 2d6+6 damage.

#### MANIPULATING TALISS

Taliss is in great pain, but Lucius' teachings give him a chance to control his powers. A PC adjacent to Taliss can manipulate him with a minor action to change how he affects the environment around him:

- **Insight DC 15:** The PC understands which skills might successfully influence Taliss.
- **Heal DC 15:** A PC can calm Taliss' seizure until the end of that PC's next turn.
- **Bluff DC 15:** A PC can direct Taliss' pain, causing a spike to come up under a target of his choice. This check can only be made while Taliss is calm.
- **Intimidate DC 15:** A PC can shock Taliss into indecision. No spikes appear on Taliss' turn. This check can only be made while Taliss is calm.

#### FEATURES OF THE AREA

These features refer to an encounter on land.

**Illumination:** Torches and lanterns set around the courtyard give off a bright light throughout the area.

**Spikes:** The spikes are thin, and provide cover against ranged attacks only. Creatures can move through spike squares as difficult terrain.

**Ballistae:** The order maintains a few small siege weapons in case a fearful populace decides they are no longer welcome.

- The ballistae require a move action to aim and a standard action to fire.
- A ballista uses the firing PC's basic ranged attack bonus and deals 4d10+5 damage.
- Each Ballista can be aimed and fired once only.

**Doors:** The doors to the interior of the fortress were locked when the alarm sounded to protect the noncombatants. They require a DC 30 Strength check to open.

**Ladders:** The ladders lead up to the walls and from the walls to the towers. They are 10 feet high.

**Ground:** The area inside the walls is the courtyard, and is normal terrain.

**Towers:** The towers are 20 feet high. The interior of the towers were condemned by the order and their entrances were sealed. The tower stairs are broken and inaccessible, but provide cover.

**Portcullis:** The portcullis is closed, keeping the shadar-kai beyond the walls out. It can be opened with a DC 30 Strength check.

**Walls:** The walls of the courtyard and beyond are filled with with shadar-kai and knights of the order.

Friend and foe alike are liable to be hit with a stray sword or spell as the press of combat forces them back towards the center.

- The walls are considered difficult terrain due to the press of combatants.
- A creature that enters or starts in a square beyond the walls of the courtyard is attacked. +16 vs. AC, 1d8+5 damage and the creature is pushed one square toward the courtyard.
- The walls are 10 feet high.

## TACTICS

The Princes of Shade know full well the untapped power Taliss represents. Havastav's instructions were to secure the sarcophagus and its contents or ensure Taliss cannot be used by anyone else.

Havastav or the blight dragon target Taliss initially, setting off Taliss' seizure and the chain reaction that leads to Taliss' transformation.

Havastav teleports from the dragon's back at the first opportunity and works the opposite side of the battlefield from the dragon, staying out of its aura. They concentrate their efforts on PCs who deal radiant damage. Havastav attempts to keep moving on his turn, hiding within his *coalescing darkness* after an attack.

The blight dragon happily hovers above the battlefield, only coming within range of the spikes when a *bite* is his only option.

Havastav and the blight dragon are supremely confident in their abilities and fight to the death.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

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If Havastav and the blight dragon are defeated, read or paraphrase the following:

*As the dragon and his rider fall dead, Taliss' back arches, and blue fire shoots from his eyes and mouth.*

*Lucius rises to his hands and knees, lines of blue fire running down his arms as his wounds close. "Bad. This is very, very bad!" Lucius cries. "Try to calm him down, distract him, focus his mind. He has to stop fighting the plague and accept himself as he is!"*

## SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 8/10, COMPLEXITY 1 (XP INCLUDED IN THE ENCOUNTER)

### SETUP

**Number of Successes:** 4

**Number of Failures:** 3

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Diplomacy, History, Insight

The PCs have to calm Taliss down so he can fight the transformation that threatens to consume him.

If a PC wants to use a skill that is not listed here but seems applicable, they need to make a DC 19/21 check with that skill to garner a success. Checks that do not seem particularly applicable but might be used to aid their party must pass a DC 19/21 check and grant a +2 bonus.

### SKILL CHALLENGE

**Arcana (DC 17/19):** You engage Taliss with a peculiar problem of magical theory. His archmage personality comes to the fore for a moment and listens carefully.

**Diplomacy (DC 14/16):** You impress upon Taliss his need to master himself before he destroys everything around him. His war wizard personality is inspired to take control, if only for a moment.

**History (DC 16/18):** You tell Taliss tales of the past, the sad and happy endings of people he once knew. His dandy personality listens rapt, keeping the other voices out for a moment.

**Insight (DC 9/11):** You realize that Taliss' personalities might be able to control his transformation, if only you could get their attention. Gain a +2 to all future rolls towards that end in this skill challenge.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** The PCs manage to strengthen Taliss' hold on himself for a few minutes. The PCs gain the benefit of a short rest before proceeding to **Encounter 5: Blue Fire**.

**Failure:** The PCs fail to help Taliss master himself, and his transformation takes place immediately. Proceed to **Encounter 5: Blue Fire**.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 430/620 experience points each for defeating the monsters and succeeding at the skill challenge.

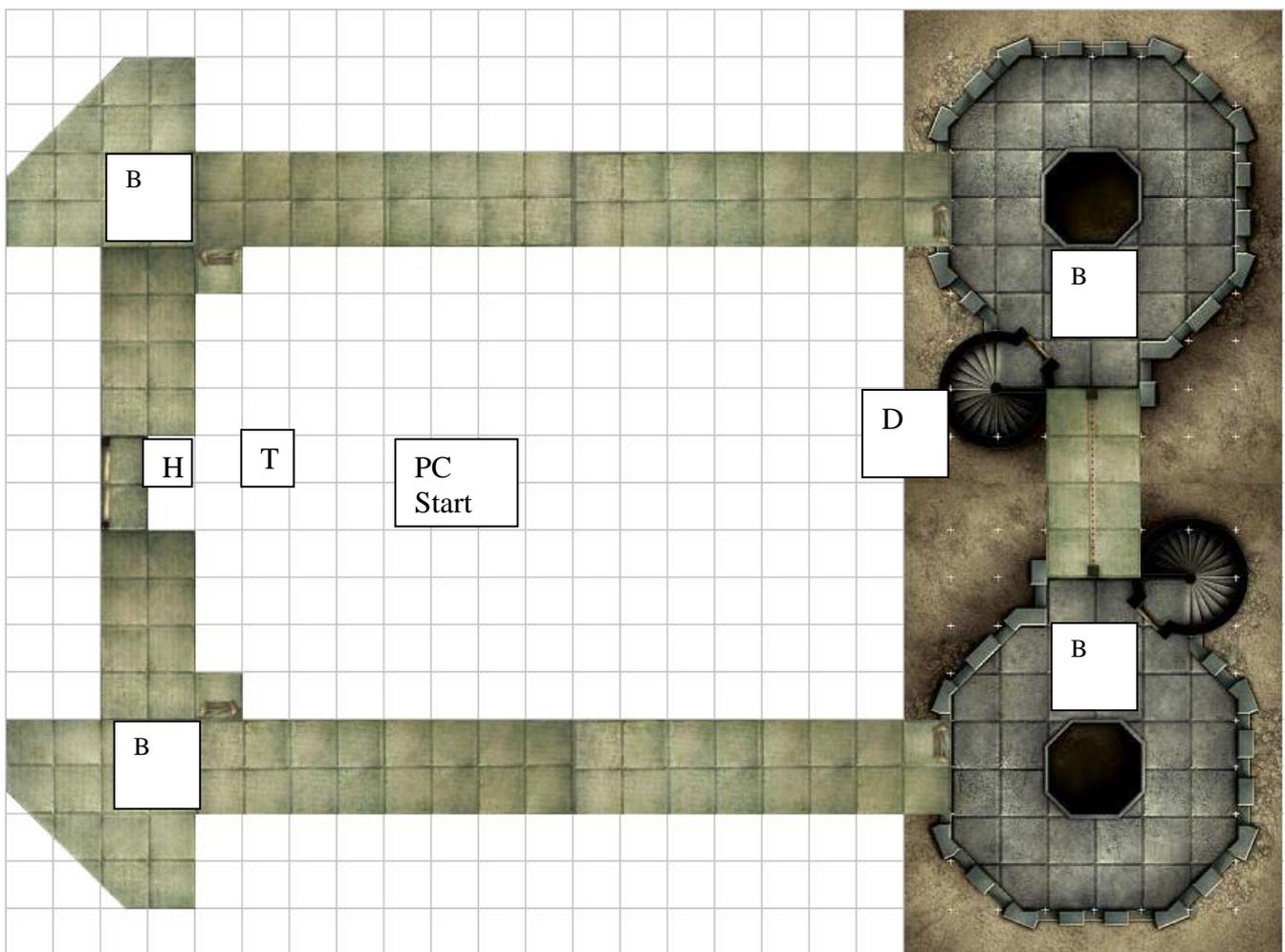
# ENCOUNTER 4B: ACCEPTANCE MAP

## Arcane Corridors

Tower Top / Magic Lab 8x10 x2

## Fane of the Forgotten Gods

Floor / Hidden Shrine	4x4d	x2
Portcullis / Floor	4x2	x1
Broken Staircase / Floor	4x2	x2
Stairs w/Landing / Floor	8x2	x2
Closed Wood Doors / Open Wood Doors	1x2	x1
Ladder / Flaming Cauldron	1x1	x2



## ENCOUNTER 4C: THE CURE

### ENCOUNTER LEVEL 9/11 (2150/3100 XP)

#### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures.

1 Havastav (H)

1 adult blight dragon (D)

Allow the PCs to place themselves as they will on the map, then read or paraphrase the following:

*Taliss sings to the standing stones, and they answer his call. A field of energy rises into existence around the perimeter of the standing stones, forming a protective dome. The rider and his mount swoop inside just before the dome seals over.*

If Taliss takes damage:

*Taliss convulses and drops to the ground as thousands of needle-size wounds of blue fire open all over his body.*

Taliss is losing his battle with the Spellplague. Being wounded pushes his mind over the edge, and he is reliving the moment he activated the sarcophagus. The power of the Spellplague translates Taliss' pain into the world. Immediately read or paraphrase the following:

*Long spikes of black steel shoot up through the ground.*

Three steel spikes about 3-feet wide and 15-feet tall shoot-up through the ground and stay there on the first round, but do not target creatures. One spike appears every round thereafter, and those might target creatures.

- The spikes appear beneath a creature if you roll a 1 or 2 on a d4. Roll randomly to determine their target, including the PCs, Havastav, and his allies—but not Taliss.
- At low tier the spikes attack at +13 vs. AC for 2d6+5 damage.
- At high tier the spikes attack at +15 vs. AC for 2d6+6 damage.

#### MANIPULATING TALISS

Taliss is in great pain, the power of the stones supports him. A PC adjacent to Taliss can manipulate him with a minor action to change how he affects the environment around him:

- **Insight DC 15:** The PC understands which skills might successfully influence Taliss.
- **Heal DC 15:** A PC can calm Taliss' seizure for 1 round with a successful Heal check.
- **Bluff DC 15:** A PC can direct Taliss' pain, causing a spike to come-up under a target of his choice. This check can only be made while Taliss is calm.
- **Intimidate DC 15:** A PC can shock Taliss into indecision. No spikes appear for 1 round. This check can only be made while Taliss is calm.

#### FEATURES OF THE AREA

These features refer to an encounter on land.

**Illumination:** The standing stones and the energy field give off dim light in a 1 square radius. The moon has set, and there is no other light other than what the PCs have with them.

**Spikes:** The spikes are thin, and provide cover against ranged attacks only. Creatures can move through spike squares as difficult terrain.

**Boulders:** The large boulders are five feet high and are considered blocking terrain. They can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check. A creature on top of a boulder has cover in relation to creatures on the ground.

**Energy Field:** The edge of the map represents the energy field surrounding the standing stones. The energy field has several effects:

- The energy field is impassible.
- No creature can fly higher than fifty feet without coming in contact with the energy field.
- Evil and Chaotic Evil creatures can't use powers with the teleportation keyword.
- A creature who comes in contact with the energy field takes 2d6+5 force damage, and the creature is pushed one square toward the center of the standing stones.

**Pool:** The pool is 5 feet deep. It is difficult terrain and provides cover.

**Standing Stones (outer ring):** The outer ring of standing stones is considered blocking terrain.

**Standing Stones (inner ring):** The inner ring of standing stones is considered blocking terrain where the stones intersect the ground (the dark squares). In

addition, all Good and Lawful Good creatures within the inner ring gain a +2 bonus to their saving throws.

**Large Trees:** The trees provide cover to ranged attacks. The center of the tree is blocking terrain.

**Small Trees:** The small trees provide cover against ranged attacks and are difficult terrain.

## TACTICS

The Princes of Shade know full well the untapped power Taliss represents. Havastav's instructions were to secure the sarcophagus and its contents or ensure Taliss cannot be used by anyone else.

Havastav or the blight dragon target Taliss initially, setting off Taliss' seizure and the chain reaction that leads to Taliss' transformation.

Havastav teleports from the dragon's back at the first opportunity and works the opposite side of the battlefield from the dragon, staying out of its aura. They concentrate their efforts on PCs who deal radiant damage. Havastav attempts to keep moving on his turn, hiding within his *coalescing darkness* after an attack.

The blight dragon happily hovers above the battlefield, only coming within range of the spikes when a *bite* is his only option.

Havastav and the blight dragon are supremely confident in their abilities and fight to the death.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove 16 hit points from both Havastav and the adult blight dragon, and reduce their attacks and defenses by 1.

**Six PCs:** Add 16 hit points to both Havastav and the adult blight dragon, and increase their attacks and defenses by 1.

If Havastav and the blight dragon are defeated, read or paraphrase the following:

*As Havastav and his dragon fall dead, Taliss' back arches, and blue fire shoots from his eyes and mouth.*

*The standing stones sing, absorbing the fire pouring from Taliss' body, though they rock dangerously, and bright cracks run up and down their surface.*

## SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 8/10, COMPLEXITY 1 (XP INCLUDED IN THE ENCOUNTER)

### SETUP

**Number of Successes:** 4

**Number of Failures:** 3

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Athletics, Heal, Perception,

The PCs need to keep the standing stones from overloading as they attempt to cure Taliss.

If a PC wants to use a skill that is not listed here but seems applicable, they need to make a DC 19/21 check with that skill to garner a success. Checks that do not seem particularly applicable but might be used to aid their party must pass a DC 19/21 check and grant a +2 bonus.

### SKILL CHALLENGE

**Arcana (DC 17/19):** You lend your power to that of the standing stones, lightening their burden for just a moment.

**Athletics (DC 14/16):** You steady one of the standing stones as it about to fall. This check can only be attempted once per character.

**Heal (DC 15/17):** Only available after a successful Perception check. You do your best to staunch the stones' blazing wounds. It's not perfect, but it's something.

**Perception (DC 9/11):** You notice that the cracks in the stones resemble pulsing veins, and those veins are bleeding. Opens up the use of the Heal skill.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** The PCs manage to fortify the standing stones for a few minutes. The PCs gain the benefit of a short rest before proceeding to **Encounter 5: Blue Fire**.

**Failure:** The PCs fail to keep the standing stones from overloading, and Taliss' transformation takes place immediately. Proceed to **Encounter 5: Blue Fire**.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 430/620 experience points each for defeating the monsters and succeeding at the skill challenge.

# ENCOUNTER 4C: THE CURE MAP

## Dungeon Tiles

Obelisk / Floor 2x2 x13

## Ruins of the Wild

Camp / Field 8x8 x1

Cabin / Field w/Trees 8x8 x1

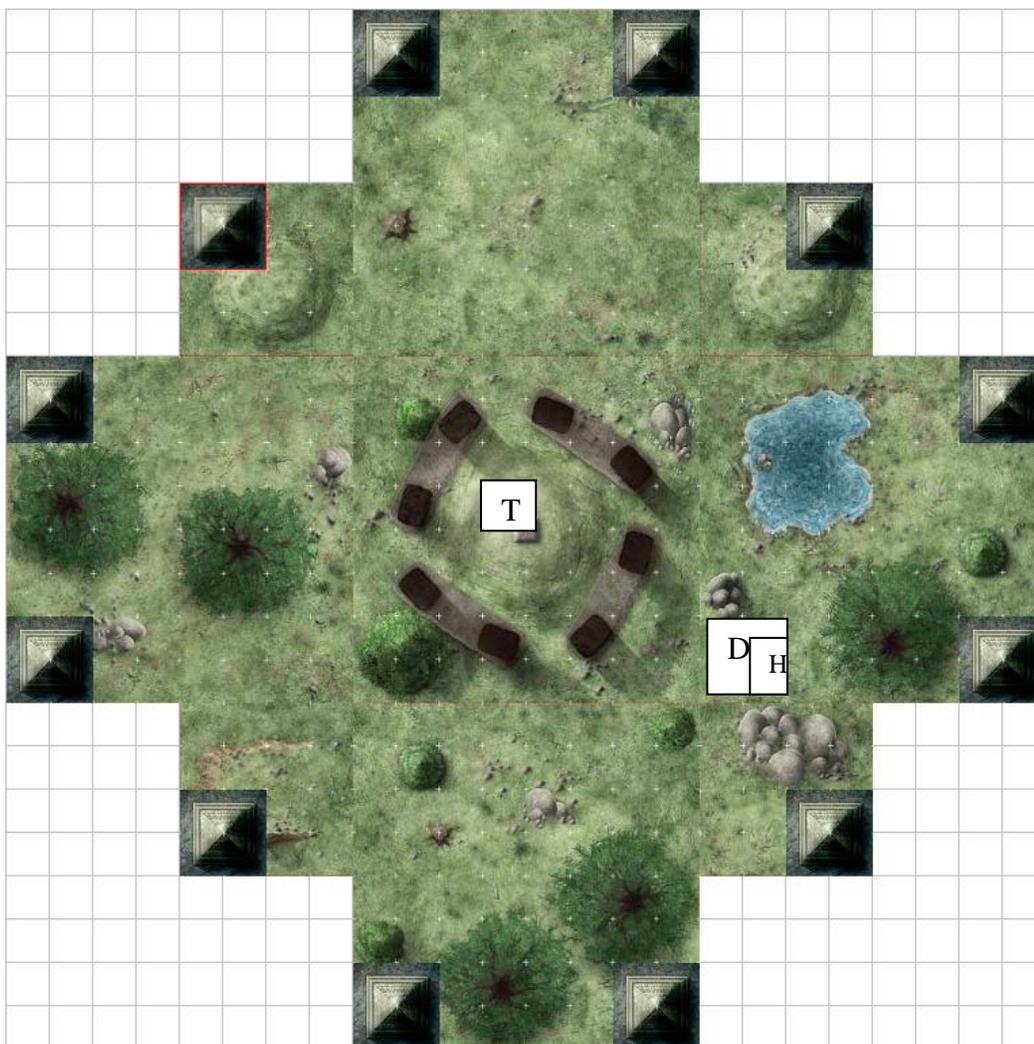
Stonehenge / Field w/Pond 8x8 x2

Ruined Tower / Field w/Trees 8x8 x1

Mound / Hobbit Hole 4x4 x2

Hill / Stairs Down 4x4 x1

Field / Rock Outcropping 4x2 x2



## ENCOUNTER 4D: INDECISION

### SETUP

This encounter takes place if the PCs change their mind about Taliss' destination, or if they choose to take Taliss somewhere other than Cormyr's safehouse, the order fortress, or the standing stones.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*In the middle of your journey, Taliss drops to the ground, screaming in three voices as once. At the same time, a band of pale humanoids rush from the darkness, led by gaunt gray man on the back of a dragon.*

The Spellplague overwhelms Taliss as Havastav and his strike force track him down. Havastav and his troops were prepared to abduct a man, not face a monster.

Faced with a threat that could challenge Shade itself and the punishment of those responsible, Havastav and the blight dragon divide their attention between the Taliss the sharn and the PCs. Havastav concentrates on the PCs while the blight dragon engages the sharn, though it happily hits the PCs with its area attacks whenever possible.

The sharn uses its *double action* to attack both the Netherese and the PCs each round.

Havastav' troops flee if Havastav falls in battle.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Proceed to **Encounter 5**. Use the statistics for Havastav and the blight dragon from **Encounter 4** to run this three-way, free-for-all battle.

Please remember that a battle such as this can be overwhelming if all of the creatures attack only the PCs.

**Do not do this!**

However, this battle can be used to subtly challenge the PCs by adjusting the number of attacks the PCs take. If they are finding the challenge to easy, raise the number of attacks against the PCs for that round. If the challenge is too much, lower the number of attacks to give the PCs the chance to recover.

## ENCOUNTER 4: ALL STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

<b>Havastav (level 9) Level 9 Elite Skirmisher (Leader)</b>	
Medium shadow humanoid	XP 800
<b>Initiative</b> +10	<b>Senses</b> Perception +11; darkvision
<b>Benighted Presence</b> aura 10; light-producing effects within the aura whose level is lower than Havastav's can create only dim light.	
<b>HP</b> 184; <b>Bloodied</b> 92	
<b>Regeneration</b> 10 (If Havastav takes radiant damage, his regeneration doesn't function on his next turn.)	
<b>AC</b> 25; <b>Fortitude</b> 23, <b>Reflex</b> 21, <b>Will</b> 22	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2	
<b>Speed</b> 5; see also <i>shadow stride</i>	
<b>Action Point</b> 1	
<b>m Bastard Sword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+15 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage (crit 1d6+16).	
<b>r Gloom Chakram</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Force</b>	
Ranged 5; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 force damage	
<b>M Arcing Swings</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Havastav makes two basic melee attacks and shifts 1 square after the first attack.	
<b>M Disrupting Strike</b> (standard; recharge 6) ♦ <b>Force, Weapon</b>	
+15 vs. AC; 3d10 + 6 damage plus ongoing 5 force damage (save ends)	
<b>Triumphant Cry</b> (free, when Havastav scores a critical hit or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points; at-will)	
Havastav or an ally within 20 squares can make a melee or ranged attack.	
<b>Shadow Stride</b> (move; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Teleportation</b>	
Havastav can teleport 20 squares but must end his move in dim light or darkness.	
<b>Coalescing Darkness</b>	
If Havastav moves 3 or more squares by any means, he is cloaked with supernatural darkness, gaining total concealment.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Netherese
<b>Skills</b> Diplomacy +14, Intimidate +14, Insight +11, Stealth +11	
<b>Str</b> 23 (+10)	<b>Dex</b> 18 (+8) <b>Wis</b> 14 (+6)
<b>Con</b> 18 (+8)	<b>Int</b> 12 (+5) <b>Cha</b> 21 (+9)
<b>Equipment</b> plate armor, heavy shield, bastard sword	

<b>Adult Blight Dragon (level 10) Level 10 Elite Controller</b>		
Large shadow magical beast (dragon)		XP 1,000
<b>Initiative</b> +9	<b>Senses</b> Perception +11; darkvision	
<b>Ruin (Necrotic)</b> aura 5; any creature that enters the aura or starts its turn within the aura takes 10 necrotic damage.		
<b>HP</b> 222; <b>Bloodied</b> 111		
<b>AC</b> 26; <b>Fortitude</b> 26, <b>Reflex</b> 22, <b>Will</b> 25		
<b>Resist</b> 10 fire, 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 10 radiant		
<b>Speed</b> 8, fly 5 (hover)		
<b>Action Points</b> 1		
<b>m Bite</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b>		
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage.		
<b>R Life Leech</b> (standard; recharge 4 5 6) ♦ <b>Healing, Necrotic</b>		
Ranged 10; +14 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 4 necrotic damage and the blight dragon regains a number of hit points equal to the amount of damage dealt.		
<b>C Breath Weapon</b> (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Fire, Necrotic</b>		
Close blast 8; +14 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 6 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends). Aftereffect: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the dragon's next turn.		
<b>C Dust Storm</b> (minor; recharge when first bloodied)		
Close burst 3; +12 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). The blight dragon has concealment against any creature that is dazed by this effect.		
<b>C Frightful Presence</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Fear</b>		
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +12 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of the dragon's next turn. Aftereffect: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).		
<b>Alignment</b> Evil		<b>Languages</b> Draconic
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +16, Stealth +14		
<b>Str</b> 19 (+9)	<b>Dex</b> 19 (+9)	<b>Wis</b> 21 (+10)
<b>Con</b> 23 (+11)	<b>Int</b> 17 (+8)	<b>Cha</b> 14 (+7)

## ENCOUNTER 4: ALL STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

<b>Havastav</b>		<b>Level 11 Elite Skirmisher (Leader)</b>	
Medium shadow humanoid		XP 1,200	
<b>Initiative</b> +11	<b>Senses</b> Perception +12; darkvision		
<b>Benighted Presence</b> aura 10; light-producing effects within the aura whose level is lower than Havastav's can create only dim light.			
<b>HP</b> 208; <b>Bloodied</b> 104			
<b>Regeneration</b> 10 (If Havastav takes radiant damage, his regeneration doesn't function on his next turn.)			
<b>AC</b> 27; <b>Fortitude</b> 25, <b>Reflex</b> 23, <b>Will</b> 24			
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2			
<b>Speed</b> 5; see also <i>shadow stride</i>			
<b>Action Point</b> 1			
<b>m Bastard Sword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>			
+17 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage (crit 1d6+17).			
<b>r Gloom Chakram</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Force</b>			
Ranged 5; +15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 force damage			
<b>M Arcing Swings</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>			
Havastav makes two basic melee attacks and shifts 1 square after the first attack.			
<b>M Disrupting Strike</b> (standard; recharge 6) ♦ <b>Force, Weapon</b>			
+17 vs. AC; 3d10 + 7 damage plus ongoing 5 force damage (save ends)			
<b>Triumphant Cry</b> (free, when Havastav scores a critical hit or reduces an enemy to 0 hit points; at-will)			
Havastav or an ally within 20 squares can make a melee or ranged attack.			
<b>Shadow Stride</b> (move; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Teleportation</b>			
Havastav can teleport 20 squares but must end his move in dim light or darkness.			
<b>Coalescing Darkness</b>			
If Havastav moves 3 or more squares by any means, he is cloaked with supernatural darkness, gaining total concealment.			
<b>Alignment</b> Evil		<b>Languages</b> Common, Netherese	
<b>Skills</b> Diplomacy +15, Intimidate +15, Insight +12, Stealth +12			
<b>Str</b> 23 (+11)	<b>Dex</b> 18 (+9)	<b>Wis</b> 14 (+7)	
<b>Con</b> 18 (+9)	<b>Int</b> 12 (+6)	<b>Cha</b> 21 (+10)	
<b>Equipment</b> plate armor, heavy shield, bastard sword			

<b>Adult Blight Dragon</b>		<b>Level 12 Elite Controller</b>	
Large shadow magical beast (dragon)		XP 1,400	
<b>Initiative</b> +10	<b>Senses</b> Perception +11; darkvision		
<b>Ruin (Necrotic)</b> aura 5; any creature that enters the aura or starts its turn within the aura takes 10 necrotic damage.			
<b>HP</b> 254; <b>Bloodied</b> 127			
<b>AC</b> 28; <b>Fortitude</b> 28, <b>Reflex</b> 24, <b>Will</b> 27			
<b>Resist</b> 10 fire, 10 necrotic; <b>Vulnerable</b> 10 radiant			
<b>Speed</b> 8, fly 5 (hover)			
<b>Action Points</b> 1			
<b>m Bite</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b>			
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage.			
<b>R Life Leech</b> (standard; recharge 4 5 6) ♦ <b>Healing, Necrotic</b>			
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 necrotic damage and the blight dragon regains a number of hit points equal to the amount of damage dealt.			
<b>C Breath Weapon</b> (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Fire, Necrotic</b>			
Close blast 8; +16 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 7 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends). Aftereffect: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the dragon's next turn.			
<b>C Dust Storm</b> (minor; recharge when first bloodied)			
Close burst 3; +14 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). The blight dragon has concealment against any creature that is dazed by this effect.			
<b>C Frightful Presence</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Fear</b>			
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +14 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of the dragon's next turn. Aftereffect: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).			
<b>Alignment</b> Evil		<b>Languages</b> Draconic	
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +17, Stealth +15			
<b>Str</b> 19 (+10)	<b>Dex</b> 19 (+10)	<b>Wis</b> 21 (+11)	
<b>Con</b> 23 (+12)	<b>Int</b> 17 (+9)	<b>Cha</b> 14 (+8)	

## ENCOUNTER 5: BLUE FIRE

### ENCOUNTER LEVEL 10/12 (2500/3500 XP)

#### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures.

#### 1 sharn (S)

Taliss' form destabilizes as the blue fire inside him devours his soul, transforming him into a sharn, an embodiment of the Spellplague.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*Taliss' body is consumed by blue fire as the very ground beneath your feet shoots into the air. You are confronted with a nightmare creature. Taliss has become a bloated, hovering thing with three clawed arms and three heads resembling the man he once was - young, middle-aged, and old. Each head screams with Taliss' voice.*

#### MANIPULATING TALISS

Taliss is now a sharn, but vestiges of him fight the transformation. The PC must have line of sight to the sharn to use a minor action to change how Taliss affects the environment. Each skill (outside of Insight) corresponds to a single facet of Taliss' fragmented personality. Each personality can aid once a round:

- **Insight DC 20:** The PC understands which skills might successfully influence Taliss.
- **Diplomacy DC 20:** Taliss the Dandy is still eager to please. A PC can cause Taliss to move a floating piece of land 50 feet in one direction. This can be used to bring a fallen PC back to the fight, or some other creative use. The land is not moving fast enough to do any damage, and it can't move through occupied squares.
- **Intimidate DC 20:** Taliss the War Wizard is used to taking orders. The sharn's next attack takes a -2 penalty.
- **Arcana DC 20:** Taliss the Archmage is intimately familiar with the workings of magic. A PC can cause Taliss to immediately close a single *hex portal*.

#### FEATURES OF THE AREA

Fragments of ground hang in the air, a hundred feet above the earth. All of the PCs start on the same level of fragmented ground, but innumerable other fragments are churning in the air below.

**Ground:** The ground is normal terrain.

- Jumping from one piece of ground to another requires an Athletics check (DC 20, or DC 10 with a running start) if the pieces are 2 squares away from each other.
- If a PC fails the check by less than five, he can catch the edge of the ground with a DC 15 Athletics/Acrobatics check as a free action. The PC is considered prone. He can stand, shifting onto a ground square with a move action.
- If a PC falls, he falls 1d6 x 10 feet (1d10 damage for every 10 feet of falling) to a piece of churning earth below. The earth stops moving once a PC lands on it.

#### TACTICS

The sharn starts combat ten feet above the PCs. It opens combat with *leaping plaguefire*, causing blue fire to burst from one foe and leap to others. It then sets up a network of *hex portals* to strike its enemies from unexpected directions, especially with opportunity attacks.

#### SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove 89/123 hit points from the sharn.

**Six PCs:** Add 89/123 hit points to the sharn.

#### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

When the sharn is defeated, read:

*The sharn dissipates in a blast of blue light, and the motes of earth float slowly to the ground.*

#### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 500/700 experience points each for defeating the monster.

## CONCLUSION

If Taliss transformed at the Cormyrian safehouse, read or paraphrase the following:

*The bodies of dark ones and shadar-kai litter the field around the safehouse as the Cormyrian troops tend to their wounded.*

*Taliss catches his breath as magical chains wind their way around his body. Then his body stills, his eyes staring into space.*

*Navish nods, his ritual finished. "Thanks for the help. This'll hold until we're back in Suzail. Then, who knows? He'll be studied, most likely, now that he's out of his box. Maybe the wise ones can figure out a way to deal with the plaguechanged and take back Tilverton. In any case, it's out of my hands." He disappears into the safehouse, returning a moment later. "I've a few things for you, washed ashore with the Halshan Myrai. Right payment for a job well done."*

If Taliss transformed at the Order of Blue Fire chapterhouse, read or paraphrase the following:

*The battle is over, the Order's knights harrying the few remaining shadar-kai.*

*Lucius reaches Taliss as the old wizard sits up, rubbing his head. "What am I?" Taliss says in three voices at once. "What is become of me?" His pupils flicker with blue fire.*

*"You are more, far more than you once were. But your journey is only beginning." Lucius turns to you. "Thank you. This man may someday be the key to halting the ravages of the Spellplague. We found a stash of old Cormyrian equipment when we cleared out this fort. Allow me to reward you for your help."*

If Taliss transformed at the standing stones, read or paraphrase the following:

*The shadar-kai are nowhere in evidence as Taliss sits up, staring at you with wondering eyes. "You may wonder if I am cured? No, I am not. But the virulence is lessened. I can think with one thought. Speak with one voice. Remember..." Taliss' voice trails off as he brushes at the dirt near one of the standing stones, revealing a trap door. "Time, anyway. You've bought me time to research a true cure. Anyway, down here is one of the War Wizards' emergency equipment stashes. Or it was, before the Spellplague. Take what's inside. You've earned it."*

If the PCs attempted to aid Taliss without help, or changed their mind about his ultimate destination, read or paraphrase the following:

*Taliss is dead. As you watch, his body is slowly eaten from the inside by blue fire until there's nothing left but empty robes and a few possessions.*

## TREASURE

The PCs find or are offered the following: *staff of the war mage +2, orb of inescapable consequences +2, wand of shield +2, staff of unparalleled vision +2, warsheath armor +2, purple dragon commander's ring (high-level only), ritual scroll of Raise Dead, and ritual book of Speak with Dead and Phantom Steed.*

If the PCs arrested or killed the shade knight Havastav, they may take the honorific "Shadeslayer". The PCs are now famous as "The Shadeslayers" in towns along Cormyr's Southern coast.

## ENCOUNTER 5: BLUE FIRE STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

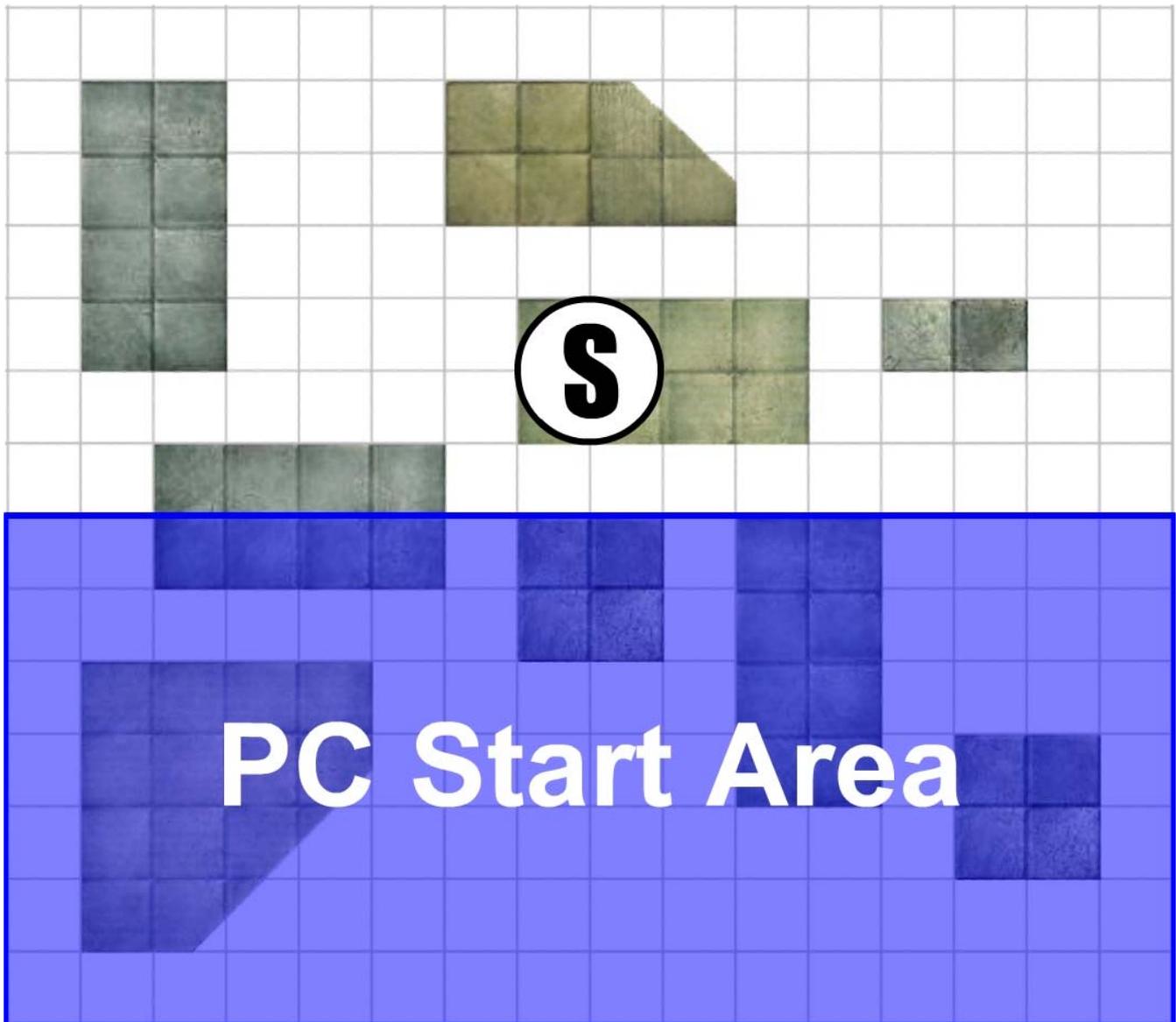
Sharn (Level 10)		Level 10 Solo Artillery
Large aberrant magical beast		XP 2,500
<b>Initiative</b> +11	<b>Senses</b> Perception +15; darkvision	
<b>HP</b> 444; <b>Bloodied</b> 222; see also <i>second wind</i>		
<b>Regeneration</b> 10		
<b>AC</b> 26; <b>Fortitude</b> 26, <b>Reflex</b> 26, <b>Will</b> 27		
<b>Immune</b> petrification, polymorph		
<b>Saving Throws</b> +5 (+8 against feat effects, and against conditions that hinder movement); see also <i>independent consciousness</i> .		
<b>Speed</b> 4; fly 8 (hover)		
<b>Action Points</b> 2		
m <b>Claw</b> (standard; at-will)		
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.		
r <b>Adaptive Blue Bolt</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Force</b> (see text)		
Ranged 20; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 6 force damage, and ongoing 5 variable damage. The ongoing damage is a type to which the target is most vulnerable (sharn's choice; the damage type doesn't change once chosen). If the target has not vulnerability, the ongoing damage is force.		
R <b>Hex Portal</b> (minor; sustain minor [see text]; at-will) ♦ <b>Conjuration</b>		
Ranged 5; the sharn creates a hexagonal window of blue light that it can attack through as if it were in that portal's space. As a minor action, it can move one portal up to 4 squares. Portals don't block line of sight, line of effect, or enemy movement. A sharn can maintain up to three such portals at a time with a single minor action; it can close as many as it wishes with a free action.		
R <b>Leaping Plaguefire</b> (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Fire, Force</b>		
The sharn sends a blast of blue fire against three targets; the first target must be within 10 squares of the sharn, and the other two targets must be within 5 squares of the first target. <i>Primary Target</i> : +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 fire and force damage. <i>Secondary Targets</i> : +15 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 6 fire and force damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).		
<b>Independent Action</b> (standard; at-will)		
The sharn makes two basic attacks (melee or ranged). If two different kinds of basic attacks hit the same target (such as a claw and a bite), that target is also dazed (save ends).		
<b>Second Wind</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Healing</b>		
The sharn spends a healing surge and heals 111 hit points. The sharn gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.		
<b>Double Actions</b>		
A sharn rolls initiative twice, gets two turns during a round, and has a full set of actions (standard, move, minor) on each turn. Each set of actions corresponds to a different consciousness. The sharn's ability to take immediate actions refreshes on each of its turns.		
<b>Threatening Reach</b>		
A sharn can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares), including through hex portals.		
<b>Alignment</b> Chaotic Evil		<b>Languages</b> Common, Deep Speech
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +16, Insight +10, Religion +16		
<b>Str</b> 21 (+10)	<b>Dex</b> 23 (+11)	<b>Wis</b> 8 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 23 (+11)	<b>Int</b> 21(+10)	<b>Cha</b> 24 (+12)

## ENCOUNTER 5: BLUE FIRE STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Sharn		Level 12 Solo Artillery	
Large aberrant magical beast		XP 3,500	
Initiative +12 Senses Perception +16; darkvision			
HP 615; Bloodied 307; see also <i>second wind</i>			
Regeneration 10			
AC 28; Fortitude 28, Reflex 28, Will 29			
Immune petrification, polymorph			
Saving Throws +5 (+8 against feat effects, and against conditions that hinder movement); see also <i>independent consciousness</i> .			
Speed 4; fly 8 (hover)			
Action Points 2			
m <b>Claw</b> (standard; at-will)			
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage.			
r <b>Adaptive Blue Bolt</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Force</b> (see text)			
Ranged 20; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 7 force damage, and ongoing 5 variable damage. The ongoing damage is a type to which the target is most vulnerable (sharn's choice; the damage type doesn't change once chosen). If the target has not vulnerability, the ongoing damage is force.			
R <b>Hex Portal</b> (minor; sustain minor [see text]; at-will) ♦ <b>Conjuration</b>			
Ranged 5; the sharn creates a hexagonal window of blue light that it can attack through as if it were in that portal's space. As a minor action, it can move one portal up to 4 squares. Portals don't block line of sight, line of effect, or enemy movement. A sharn can maintain up to three such portals at a time with a single minor action; it can close as many as it wishes with a free action.			
R <b>Leaping Plaguefire</b> (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Fire, Force</b>			
The sharn sends a blast of blue fire against three targets; the first target must be within 10 squares of the sharn, and the other two targets must be within 5 squares of the first target. <i>Primary Target:</i> +17 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 fire and force damage. <i>Secondary Targets:</i> +17 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 7 fire and force damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).			
<b>Independent Action</b> (standard; at-will)			
The sharn makes two basic attacks (melee or ranged). If two different kinds of basic attacks hit the same target (such as a claw and a bite), that target is also dazed (save ends).			
<b>Second Wind</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Healing</b>			
The sharn spends a healing surge and heals 153 hit points. The sharn gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.			
<b>Double Actions</b>			
A sharn rolls initiative twice, gets two turns during a round, and has a full set of actions (standard, move, minor) on each turn. Each set of actions corresponds to a different consciousness. The sharn's ability to take immediate actions refreshes on each of its turns.			
<b>Threatening Reach</b>			
A sharn can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares), including through hex portals.			
<b>Alignment</b> Chaotic Evil		<b>Languages</b> Common, Deep Speech	
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +16, Insight +10, Religion +16			
<b>Str</b> 21 (+10)	<b>Dex</b> 23 (+11)	<b>Wis</b> 8 (+4)	
<b>Con</b> 23 (+11)	<b>Int</b> 21(+10)	<b>Cha</b> 24 (+12)	

## ENCOUNTER 5: BLUE FIRE MAP

The specific tiles used are not important as long as the tiles are about the same size as the ones represented here. More tiles can be added as necessary. Don't place any tile more than one square away from another tile.



## 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.

## IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

It is critical that you enter the PC rewards accurately on the tracking form, and ensure that the information is reported and entered online in a timely manner. While players will be able to track their character's information on paper, the online information serves as an important backup and verification of play. Ask the players for their RPGA numbers and character numbers (usually a single digit) when you begin to fill out the tracking form.

## 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 1: Mission Accomplished

180/260 XP

### Encounter 4

430/620 XP

### Encounter 5: Blue Fire

500/700 XP

### Total Possible Experience

1110/1580 XP

## 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 some other item of value. Each player makes one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Mark the one-letter bundle ID on the tracking form next to any character that selects a 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, and ensure you enter

the total amount of gold gained (minus any expenditures) online. 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.

### Gold Per PC

150/200 gp

(Encounter 2: 150/200 gp)

### EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

**Bundle A:** *staff of the war mage +2* (level 8, PH 242)  
Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle B:** *orb of inescapable consequences +2* (level 8, AV 94)  
Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle C:** *wand of shield +2* (level 8, PH 244)  
Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle D:** *staff of unparalleled vision +2* (level 9, AV 107)  
Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle E:** *warshearth armor +2* (level 10, AV 55)  
Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle F:** *purple dragon commander's ring\** (level 13, *Dragon Magazine* 365) (high-level version only)  
Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle G:** *ritual scroll of Raise Dead*  
Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle H:** *ritual book of Speak with Dead and Phantom Steed*  
Found in Encounter 5

**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* (level 9, AV 188) plus 190/340 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 350/500 gp to their rewards from this adventure. That character (and only that character) receives more gold instead of any other treasure bundle.

## ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

Mark the answers to the following adventure questions on the tracking form.

### 1. How did the PCs deal with Havastav?

- a. They killed him.
- b. They arrested him.
- c. Havastav escaped.
- d. Havastav killed the PCs.
- e. They never faced Havastav.

### 2. How did the PCs deal with Taliss?

- a. Taliss was given to the Cormyrian authorities.
- b. Taliss joined the Order of Blue Fire.
- c. Taliss used the standing stones and gained time to research a cure.
- d. Taliss died.
- e. Taliss killed the PCs.

### 3. At what tier did the PCs play this adventure?

- a. High tier.
- b. Low tier.
- c. I mixed the tiers during play.

## NEW RULES

### Purple Dragon Commander's Ring

*This silver ring is engraved with the Purple Dragon signet of the Obarskyr royal family.*

**Level:** 13

**Price:** 17000 gp

**Item Slot:** Ring

**Power (Daily • Arcane):** Standard Action. Detect Magic and Poison: Activated by command word (usually inscribed on the inside of the ring, and typically “Bonthar”. When the power is activated and the ring touched to food or drink, it glows with an eerie gold-green if the substance is poisonous and bright blue if it is enchanted (including potions), although the ring cannot identify what sort of poison or magic is present.

**Power (Daily • Arcane):** Immediate Interrupt. You can use this power when you fall. You take no damage from the fall, regardless of its distance, and you do not fall prone at the end of the fall.

First published in *Dragon Magazine* 365.

### Potion of Regeneration

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

**Level:** 9

**Price:** 160 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 5 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.

First published in *Adventurer's Vault*.

### Staff of Unparalleled Vision

*Wizards who keep to the outskirts of a battlefield favor this glass-topped staff.*

**Level:** 9

**Price:** 4200 gp

**Implement (Staff)**

**Enhancement:** +2 attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +2d6 damage

**Property:** When you use a ranged or area arcane power, add the enhancement bonus of this staff to the power's range. For example, a +2 *staff of unparalleled vision* would increase “area burst 5 with 10 squares” to “area burst 5 within 12 squares.”

First published in *Adventurer's Vault*.

### Warsheath Armor

*This armor ensures that its wearer is surrounded not just by protective layers, but also by eager foes*

**Level:** 10

**Price:** 5000 gp

**Armor:** Plate

**Enhancement:** +2 AC

**Power (Daily):** Minor Action. Enemies within a number of squares equal to this armor's enhancement bonus of you are pulled adjacent to you.

First published in *Adventurer's Vault*.