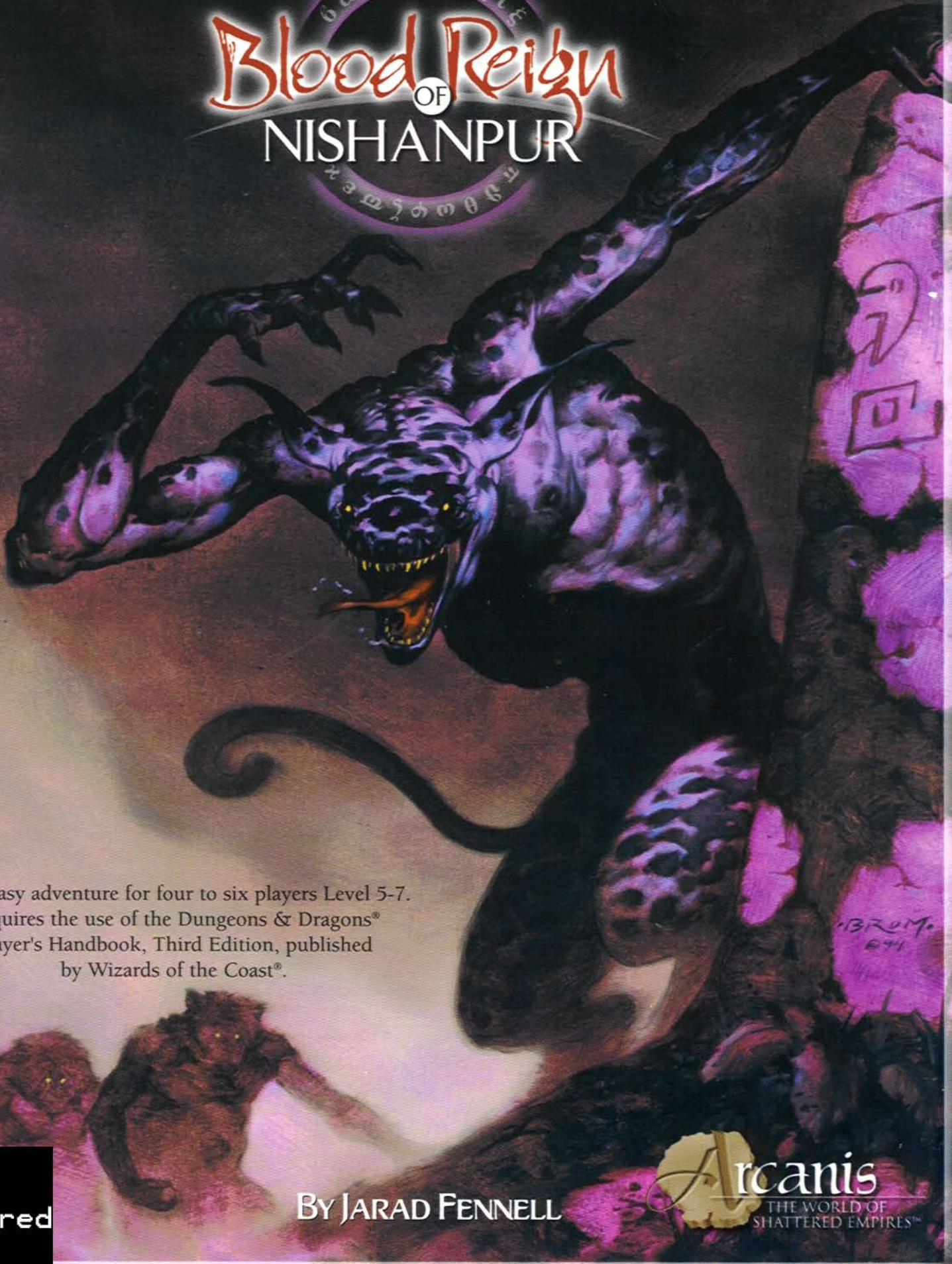
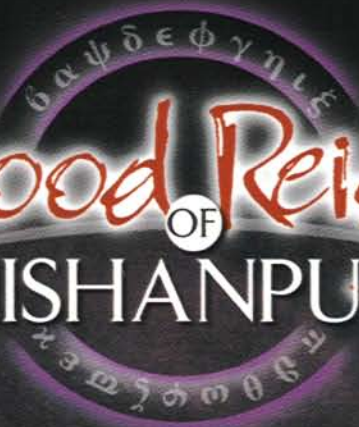


Blood Reign OF NISHANPUR



A Fantasy adventure for four to six players Level 5-7.
Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons®
Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published
by Wizards of the Coast®.

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Censored

BY JARAD FENNELL

Arcanis
THE WORLD OF
SHATTERED EMPIRES™

Blood Reign OF NISHANPUR

By Jarad Fennell

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Second in the Canceri Chronicles Set in Arcanis, the world of Shattered Empires™

INTRODUCTION

Neroth has reclaimed his own. After a century of rule, the Dark Apostate of Canceri has relinquished his claim upon this mortal coil and passed into oblivion. Shadows cluster among the vaults of the capital city of Nishanpur as the Nihang of the Church of the Dark Triumvirate gather to intrigue for dominance over the unquiet soul of the land. Into this passion play of fiends and vipers enter the players, in their quest to uncover lore not meant for the eyes of mortal men, to make a choice...between unspeakable evils.

USING THIS SCENARIO WITH OTHER GAME SYSTEMS

This adventure makes use of the D20 system and is fully compatible with all games that use the D20 rules. The adventure is made possible by the Open Gaming License and requires the use of the 3rd Edition Players Handbook published by Wizards of the Coast. With a minimum of work, the scenario can be adapted to any world setting that the Game Master chooses.

The scenario is intended for four to six characters of experience levels 5-7.

THE FORMAT

Blood Reign of Nishanpur is written with a rich background setting in mind, but is also structured so that individual Game Masters may customize it to their own world if they wish. To this end, the scenario is organized as a series of encounters and each of these encounters is listed as either a **Hard Point** or a **Soft Point**. The Hard Points are essential to the plot. Each Hard Point introduces, furthers or resolves a subplot involving a major character or conflict. For the scenario to make sense, it is suggested that the Game Master include every Hard Point, though certain specific details may be altered for the scenario to fit into a larger campaign.

The Soft Points, on the other hand, are meant to give the players background information or to add tension to the drama as it unfolds. They may be more easily altered than the Hard Points to fit the Game Master's whim, expanded on to extend the adventure to several nights or excluded altogether.

GAME MASTER'S BACKGROUND

Blood Reign of Nishanpur assumes that the Gamemaster has already run the first module in the Canceri Chronicles, *The Spear of the Lohgin*. If this is not the case however, *Blood Reign* can still be run by itself, but the Gamemaster should read the following to become acquainted with what has occurred prior to this scenario.

The Spear of the Lohgin dealt with an ancient pact between Jude Lohgin and a Demon Prince called Losknek. In exchange for his promise to deliver the Black Book of Ymandragore, the Prince assisted Jude in opening a Gate to the lands of Sarish and sent a powerful demon called a Quara'te as well as a number of lesser minions to serve Jude. Jude soon usurped his brother's lands and murdered his family. His brother returned, killed Jude, and pinned the Quara'te with a holy spear as it emerged from the Gate.

Centuries passed and eventually a band of heroes dared to enter the ruins of Lohgin Castle to retrieve fragments of the holy spear and destroy the Quara'te. Once this was accomplished, the Gate remained open as a conduit from Onara to the realm of Sarish. Jude Lohgin had never fulfilled his part of the bargain to turn over the Black Book to the Losknek, so Losknek soon sent his agents out in search of the Book.

Losknek was never able to find the Black Book because a sorceress named Sulemei val'Mehan stole it shortly before the Quara'te was killed. Sulemei is a Nihang, a high priest of Canceri, who was part of a conspiracy against the Dark Apostate at the time, a lich in the service of Neroth. Sulemei used the spells from the Book to strike a deal with the Sorcerer-King of Ymandragore, who in turn sent one of his Ordainers, a wizard able to "eat" magic and channel it into his own spells. The Ordainer devoured the energies keeping the Dark Apostate animate, and Sulemei and her allies moved to have a new Dark Apostate elected.

As the balance of power shifts in Canceri, Prince Losknek becomes frustrated by his servants failure to locate the Book and goes seeking the imp who brokered the deal between Jude and himself, Jude's familiar Pyidma. He appears at a feast held by Duke Victor val'Holryn of Milandir, discovers Pyidma hiding among the guests, and learns from the imp that a wizard from Canceri stole the Book. He offers to seal the Gate at Lohgin Castle if the heroes can retrieve the Book for him.



SCENARIO OUTLINE (HARD POINTS)

- A. The Order of the Spear.** The players attend a celebration held by Duke Victor val'Holryn to celebrate the first anniversary of the founding of the Order of the Spear. All of Ashvan is celebrating the arrival of the Duke and anticipating another war with Canceri.
- B. An Unwelcome Visitor.** At a feast, the Duke confides in the players and his closest vassals that he is troubled by reports of demonic creatures roaming the mires about Lohgin Castle. At the stroke of midnight, a stranger appears and asks for hospitality, explaining that he is a prince from a far away land seeking an errant vassal. After being invited in, the stranger hunts down and seizes an invisible imp (Pyidma) in the Order of the Spear's midst, demanding to know why his bargain with Jude Lohgin hasn't been kept. Pyidma explains that the Black Book of Ymandragore, the magical book Jude promised him, was stolen by a wizard and taken to Canceri. The stranger reveals to Duke val'Holryn that he is Prince Losknek, an infernal vassal in service to the demon god Sarish, and pledges that he will seal the Gate within Lohgin Castle if the Book of Ymandragore is brought to him. The players are asked to retrieve the Book.
- C. The Warmaster's Strategy.** Duke Victor's Master of War outlines a plan to retrieve the Black Book and avert a bloody conflict with the armies of Hell. He gives them a name of a spy within Canceri who will help them find the Book and instructs them to disguise themselves as merchants conveying a shipment of raw iron ore into Canceri. They are supplied with horses, a wagon, and the ore.
- D. The Land of Eternal Night.** The players' characters travel into Canceri and stop in the city of Kielmun to contact a spy in the employ of Milandir named Bhij Lissim. Lissim informs them that the leader of Canceri's priesthood, the Dark Apostate, recently perished by magical means. The Apostate, Hegrish, was a lich worshipper of Neroth, and the spy believes that spells from the Book might have been used to destroy the Apostate. The high priests of the Church of the Dark Triumvirate are gathering even now to choose a new Dark Apostate.
- E. There Is No Turning Back.** A contingent of troops led by the worshippers of Nier arrives in Kielmun from Nishanpur, takes control of the city and seals off the border with Milandir for 'security reasons'. The players are forced to flee deeper into the nation of Canceri.
- F. The Mark Of Sarish.** The players arrive in Nishanpur and witness the complex web of blood rituals and demonic pacts that keep the city together. Following the destruction of Apostate Hegrish, the nation of Canceri is on the eve of a revolution. Bhij Lissim leaves the players, directing them to contact a Canceri librarian named Kelimrhe for information on the Book.
- G. Wheels Within Wheels.** The players meet with the sorcerer Kelimrhe, who claims to be an expert on the magic of Ymandragore. He reveals that the worshippers of Sarish have the Book of Ymandragore and used it to destroy Apostate Hegrish by leeching away his magical essence, so they could replace him with one of their own. Kelimrhe argues that he is a Canceri patriot that wants the Sarishans brought to justice. In reality, he is a devoted follower of Nier. The Nierites are maneuvering the players to sow discord between the Sarishans and Nerothians so they can stage a coup and take control of Canceri themselves.
- H. The Hall of Contracts.** The players raid the Temple of Sarish in Nishanpur and find evidence of the Sarishans' numerous plots, including written evidence that they destroyed Hegrish.

- I. The Council of the Nihang.** The players produce the evidence against the Sarishans at the Nihang Council as they debate the election of the Dark Apostate. Chaos ensues, and Sulemei, a witch-priest of Sarish, escapes through a magic mirror to enact a ritual that will summon a powerful Blood Elemental to help her seize power in Canceri. To power the ritual however, Sulemei plans to draw energy from a source of magic deep beneath Nishanpur that imprisons an evil much older than Canceri itself. The players are obliged to pursue and stop her.
- J. Of Burning Blood and Cold Steel.** Plunging through the magic mirror, the players must stop the Blood Elemental ritual before Sulemei completes it. Just as they defeat Sulemei and her Ymandragore magician ally however, the Blood Elemental rises, albeit weaker due to their interference. They must put it down as well. If the players are victorious, they realize that the prison that Sulemei was drawing power from, a huge mass of red crystal, has melted and whatever was within has already escaped.
- K. The Fall of Nishanpur.** A huge civil war breaks out in Nishanpur and the player characters escape to Milandir while Canceri burns... They witness the evil that Sulemei unleashed, the Nierite "Sword of the Heavens", as it falls upon the Council of the Nihang. Prince Losknek fulfills his part of the bargain however, and the Gate is closed.
- L. A Moment's Respite.** Presumably, the players return to Duke Victor and receive his rewards for their efforts.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Akali: An Akali is the chief priest of a given region in Canceri, who rules from a *gurdwara*. Akali wield nearly absolute authority over their followers.

Ashvan: A growing city that guards the Cold Road from Canceri into Milandir. Recently the Order of the Spear was founded in Ashvan to protect it from the demonic creatures that lurk about the ruins of Castle Lohgin, a few days travel from the town.

Becherek: A radical Coryani priest who sought to revive the worship of the outlawed cults of Neroth, Sarish and Nier. Becherek won many converts among the nobility of the lands that now make up Canceri, and when he was executed for treason, these nobles revolted against the Coryani Empire. The Canceri nobles become the core of the priesthood of the new Church of the Dark Triumvirate that rules the nation today.

Canceri: A nation that is the sworn enemy of Milandir. Canceri broke from the Coryani Empire two hundred years ago due to a religious schism. It is ruled by a theocracy that venerates the "Dark Triumvirate" that is made up of the gods Neroth, Sarish, and Nier.

Coryani Empire: An empire with a history that stretches back over eight hundred years. Both Milandir and Canceri split from the Coryani Empire during two successive civil wars.

Dark Apostate: The Dark Apostates claim to be the successors of Becherek, the priest who revived the worship of the Dark Triumvirate in defiance of the Patriarch of the Coryani and who was consequently martyred just outside of Nishanpur. The death of Becherek marked a schism within the Coryani Church and the founding of the Church of the Dark Triumvirate. Today the office is highly coveted by all within the Canceri priesthood.

Demons: The people of Canceri tend to use the word demon freely to describe many of the malefic beings they consort with on a regular basis. Here, it typically refers to a creature that is beholden to Sarish in some way, either a hostile extraplanar intelligence or a corrupted Valinor.

Gurdwara: Communities in Canceri are typically very small and centered around a combination church and town hall, called a *gurdwara*. The character of a particular community generally reflects which God of the Dark Triumvirate its *gurdwara* is devoted to.

Illir: The God of Light and Perfection. In Canceri, the few worshippers of Illir are part of the Confraternity of the Just Death. This group visits prisoners to offer them comfort and walks beside those about to be executed, whispering in the condemned's ear their mantra, "Though you go now to die, your deeds will live on." The *Akali* barely tolerate the existence of the Confraternity and as a result, priests of Illir always travel in groups.

Khitani: A vast nation to the west of Coryani, and its historic enemy. Little is known about this land in the West, save that the Khitani are ruled by a being they call the Sleeping Emperor.

Milandir: A province that split from the Coryani when the Emperor failed to protect it from the aggression of neighboring Canceri. The Milandir revere knightly ideals.

Neroth: The Canceri God of Diseases, the Dead, and the Maimed. Many of his *Akali* are brilliant stonemasons, raising huge necropolises both beautiful and disturbing in their God's honor. Their practices were condemned by the Patriarch centuries before the Schism and the worship of Neroth had all but died out until Becherek revived it.

Nier: The Scourge of Heaven. Nier is the god of flames, destruction and orthodoxy. Once Nier's warriors formed the elite guard of the Patriarch of Coryani, but their zeal in enforcing submission to the will of the gods brought them into conflict with the Emperor. They were officially disbanded and went underground, until Canceri revolted against the Empire. Some believe that the warrior-priests of Nier planned the revolt for decades, choosing the execution of Becherek to make their move. They have always remained aloof from the politics of the Church for the most part, but the rare Dark Apostate who is raised from among the priests of Nier burns out fast, either by causing a civil war or by engaging in a campaign of military expansion.

Nihang: Nihang are the priests who make up the Council of the Dark Triumvirate in Nishanpur. There are thirteen of them for each deity, each elected by the *Akali* to serve a life term. They, in turn, elect the Dark Apostate from among their number.

Onara: The continent upon which Milandir, Canceri and the Coryani Empire are located.

Sarish: The Demon God. Sarish is represented by a sigil drawn in blood that marks his contracts and is placed upon those whom he bestows his favor upon. Followers of Sarish often come off as impartial, polite, even ingratiating, unless someone breaks an agreement with them, in which case there is literally Hell to pay. Legend has it that the priesthood of Sarish betrayed the Coryani Emperor in some way, prompting him to outlaw the sect. The group quietly disbanded, without bloodshed. Some historians mark this seemingly inconspicuous event as the beginning of the Empire's decline and fragmentation.

The Schism: This commonly refers to the religious and political split occasioned by the execution of Becherek that created the nation of Canceri.

Valinor: The chief servants of the gods. Long ago, each god was served by an equal number of Valinor. Legends say that Sarish tempted the Valinor with the promise of gifts and many of them fell, becoming demons.

Ymandragore: A mysterious island realm ruled by the Sorcerer-King. The Sorcerer-King uses spells unknown to the rest of Onara. One order of mage in his service is known as the Ordainers, wizards capable of "eating" magic and who employ strange magical artifacts.

THE ADVENTURE

A. THE ORDER OF THE SPEAR (Hard)

Set-up: The players are invited to attend a feast held by Duke Victor val'Holryn of Milandir to celebrate the first anniversary of the founding of the knightly Order of the Spear. If the heroes are the same who retrieved the relic in *The Spear of Lohgin*, the reasons for the invitation are obvious. If not, Duke Victor has heard of the character's deeds and is considering offering them membership in the Order. All members of the Order serve Duke Victor directly, and the title holds a great weight in Milandir. It is an honor to be inducted.

Scene: As the players enter the town of Ashvan, they witness people preparing for the celebration, and also notice signs of recent growth. With the establishment of the Order of the Spear and the building of a new castle to house the Order, Ashvan has become an important bulwark against possible aggression from Canceri, Milandir's ancient enemy.

You have been traveling for over a week to attend a celebration in honor of the first anniversary of the Order of the Spear in Ashvan. You received an invitation from Duke Victor val'Holryn himself that promised some manner of heroic endeavor for which you were required. The only unpleasantness you've encountered on the way has been tales of horrific creatures that are appearing in greater and greater numbers in the hills around Ashvan.

But as you walk into the town, you pass townspeople carrying streamers, banners and baskets full of food. There are signs of recent construction here and there. Workers are putting up a wall around the perimeter of the town, and a sizable keep is half-erected toward the center. As you pass, a man stops and places a clenched fist over his chest, a simple salute in recognition of your courage. Many others repeat the gesture as you pass, and someone suddenly shouts, "Walk in the light, champions of Illir!" Soon, you are surrounded by a procession, all of them applauding your deeds both factual and reputed, and you walk the final stretch of road to the town's central keep, basking in the people's adulation.

A smiling, portly man in the livery of House val'Holryn meets you at the gate.

If the players have not met Willem Brecht before, he introduces himself. Brecht is master of the guilds in Ashvan, and if one of the players did not claim the title in *Spear of the Lohgin*, he is Knight-Protector as well. Otherwise, he serves as Chamberlain of the Order of the Spear, attending to an array of administrative duties.

"Welcome, friends. I will see to it that your belongings are attended to and that you are shown to your rooms. The Duke is indisposed at present, but is eager to meet with you tonight during the feast. Please, enjoy the hospitality of the people of Ashvan in the meanwhile."

Rules: If the Gamemaster wishes, he may give the players some time to roam Ashvan before the night's festivities. Most of the townsfolk know of the heroes' reputations (The people of Milandir are fond of tales of bravery), and will sell their goods well below their usual price, as low as 50% less than normal.

A1. THE RIVAL SWORDSMAN (Soft)

Set-up: This encounter can be set any time the characters are walking down a major street in Ashvan.

Scene:

As you walk the streets of Ashvan, townspeople smile and nod at you as they pass. Their eyes are upon you all and you feel sure you are the topic of many animated discussions. A few call out friendly greetings. All of a sudden, a hush falls over the crowd, and the people slowly part in front of you, leaving a clear avenue between your group and a lone figure. It's a man with a long blade belted to his waist.

The swordsman will nod to the highest-level fighter in the party. He says,

"My name is Rel Krogen. I've heard about you. Heard you're good with that weapon of yours. Care to see how good? Just you and me."

Rel draws his blade and falls into a ready fencing stance, his center of gravity low to the ground, knees slightly bent. You can tell he's a skilled warrior. The people of Ashvan look back at you expectantly.

Rules: Rel isn't evil, but he won't hesitate to kill if he thinks his opponent intends to kill him. If Rel doesn't get a good hit (4 or more damage) within five rounds, he'll concede and go on his way (The character dueling him gains half experience for defeating Rel). Otherwise, he'll fight until his opponent acknowledges that Rel is the better swordsman. Rel is eager to give quarter to an honorable opponent and will force a humiliating surrender from those who earn his scorn through dirty tactics or outside help.

Rel Krogen

(4th level LN Fighter)

HD: 4D10+12 (44hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 20 feet

AC: 18 (Breastplate +5, Dex +3)

Attacks: Longsword +9

Damage: 1d8+6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +0

Abilities: Str: 16(+3), Dex: 16(+3), Con: 17(+3),
Int: 10(+0), Wiz 9(-1), Cha 12(+1)

Skills: Climb 3, Gather Information 2,
Intimidation 2, Search 2, Ride 3, and
Swim 3

Feats: Weapon Focus (Longsword), Weapon
Specialization (Longsword), Expertise,
Dodge, Combat Reflexes, and
Improved Initiative.

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: The Sword of Elabac (Longsword +1)

A2. A HIDDEN VIPER (Soft)

Set-up: Prior to this encounter, the Gamemaster should play up that townsfolk during the celebration are wont to give the characters gifts. Women shower kisses on male party members while female characters receive roses from male admirers. Merchants thrust food and trinkets on the characters free of charge. In the midst of these jovial goings-on, a pale young serving wench approaches one of the characters, preferably a male and/or a wizard.

Scene:

As townspeople throng about the party, paying their respects or simply trying to listen in on your conversations, a young woman with skin like milk and tresses of pale yellow approaches you and lightly touches your arm.

She leans over and whispers sweetly in your ear; "Allow me to show you some of Ashvan's famed hospitality, hero. My name is Mina. Let me offer you a drink, and some pleasant conversation. At the very least." Her smile is inviting, hinting at more satisfying comforts.

If the player accepts her offer, read the following.

She leads you over to a table, sits you down, and pours two goblets of wine. As she passes one to you, she plays with a little silver locket in the shape of a swan that dangles into her bodice. Noticing your look, she smiles, "You like it? A gift from my late mother."

She just poisoned the goblet, using the locket as a distraction.

Rules: A wily character will notice the sleight of hand with a Spot check at DC 12 and avoid the trap altogether. Anyone who drinks the poisoned wine must make a Fortitude Saving Throw at DC 14, or take 4d6 damage. Those succeeding at the Save will notice the strange taste immediately and spit most of it out, taking only 1d3 points. The poison is fast acting, so regardless of whether the player falls to the ground in convulsions or reacts violently, continue with the scene below.

Scene:

Seeing that she has been discovered, Mina attempts to flee but is caught easily by two burly townsfolk. She spits and screams, trying to fight her way free, "Die! Die, all of you! I'm not afraid of death! Neroth will consume you, but I will be rewarded for my earthly suffering!" Her eyes lock on one man in particular, "Why that look, Kurtis? You didn't look at me so when you were in my bed just last week, you filthy hypocrite. I'm sure your wife would like to hear about that." The man blanches and moves away quickly.

A captain of the guard in the service of the Knight-Protector pushes his way through the crowd and takes her by the arm. "Enough out of you. You'll come with us and await the Duke's justice." He nods toward your group curtly.

As he drags her away, Mina's eyes roll wildly, bloody drool from a bitten lip running down her chin, "Vanity, all you are is vanity. Your deeds are meaningless. Your pride hinders our salvation."

Once she's gone, the crowd begins an ugly murmur that doesn't abate for some time.

"Filthy Nerothians."

"Stinking Canceri."

"Can't wait till the Duke raises an army and marches on Nishanpur."

"Where can my son and I sign up?"

"Burn their Church to the ground..."

B. AN UNWELCOME VISITOR (Hard)

Set-up: The night after their arrival in Ashvan, the players are invited to feast with Duke Victor and the officers of the Order of the Spear.



Scene:

That night you are invited to feast with the Duke himself. Around his table are heroes from throughout Milandir who have come to Ashvan to join the Order of the Spear, knights sworn to protect the nation from the dangers out of the Blighted Mires and Canceri. You share stories of glorious deeds, both of heroes long passed into history and of those who still walk among you, long into the night. The wine flows freely and after the revelry is over, the mood in the room turns more gravid. At that point, Duke Victor rises from his place at the head of the table and motions for silence. He addresses the assembly.

"Honored friends. One year ago today, the holy Spear of the Valinor was returned to us, and a new brotherhood was born. It was a brotherhood of men sworn to defend the innocent, a brotherhood sworn to upholding justice, a brotherhood of righteous men who drew courage from their convictions and who were not afraid to fight for those convictions. It was the Order of the Spear." Spontaneous cheers break out and the Duke is forced to pause and wait for quiet. Outside, you can hear the sounds of a terrible storm. It must be close to midnight.

If the imp familiar Pyidma from *The Spear of the Lohgin* is with the characters, he disappears unobtrusively at this point. If Pyidma was killed previous to this scenario, the Gamemaster can either replace him with another imp or just say he faked his death. Imps are tricky like that.

If the Gamemaster hasn't run *The Spear of the Lohgin*, just continue as normal.

The Duke continues. "For a whole turn of the seasons, we have gathered our strength. We have rebuilt Ashvan. We have cleared the Cold Road and nearby forests of brigands. But we have not yet confronted our true enemy." A strong gust of wind blows through the hall, making the torches flicker, and many of them go out. "A

year ago a company of noble heroes destroyed a great evil deep within the Blighted Mires. But even now, the offspring of that foul thing still roam the hills of Milandir. They seem to be massing for an attack on the heart of Milandir itself. Our purpose here, my friends, is to march on Lohgin Castle and put an end to this evil forever."

In the depths of the keep, you can hear a clock begin to strike the twelfth hour. Duke Victor indicates your group. "Most of you know these heroes by their deeds. You know and respect them for their courage and virtue. I asked them here this evening because I could think of no better men to lead us to the mouth of hell itself, to purge our fair nation of this taint with fire and sword."

Before you have a chance to respond to the Duke, the great brass bound doors of the hall are flung wide and a flash of lightning silhouettes a single figure. Duke Victor blinks, momentarily stunned, and then stammers, "Who is there? How did you get in?"

The figure steps into the torchlight and doffs his broad-rimmed hat, shaking rainwater from his long, chestnut brown hair. The man is dressed like a rich dandy, with elegant lace at his neck and wrists and a crimson velvet doublet. He sweeps his hat before him, bowing low. "I sincerely apologize for this interruption, Duke Victor. I was in need of a warm fire and good company, and your men were good enough to look the other way as I slipped in."

Having regained his composure, Victor watches the man warily. "You've come unannounced? You seem a foreigner. What do you seek in Milandir?"

The dandy holds up a protesting hand. "I mean harm to none, so long as none intend harm toward me. I am a prince in my own land, and I come seeking an errant vassal."

Duke Victor nods. "Very well. As long as you do no harm, no harm will be done to you. You are welcome."

The dandy smiles and dips his head again. "You are too kind. Now to business- ah." The man's eyes dart to an empty corner and he begins moving catlike toward it, as if stalking something unseen. Suddenly, his hand shoots out and grabs something invisible that struggles feebly in his grip. The dandy squeezes, and slowly a devilish imp [Pyidma] materializes in his hands. "There you are, you scamp. Now then, where is the Book I was promised?" Knights around the room leap to their feet, but the dandy continues to ignore them, his attention focused on the imp.

The dandy is Losknek, a Prince of Hell. He's really only interested in recovering his property, but if the players insist on fighting him before he's done with Pyidma, he'll rain destruction on their heads, destroying the keep around them and most of the Order of the Spear in the process. Merciful Gamemasters might want to have Duke Victor remind the players just before they attack that he gave his word that no harm would come to the stranger. If they ignore the Duke's warning, a good group of players is a terrible thing to waste, but oh well... Enjoy. Refer to Losknek's stats from Soft Point B2- "The Devil Collects His Due".

If the players restrain themselves, continue.

The little creature emits a shriek and begins blubbing. "Master, I so sorry. Jude man make bargain, then die with nasty stick in his heart. Gate was sealed for so long, I no know what to do. Then, person come drifting like ghost into room, take Book. I try to stop, but they magic too strong. But, I see they have black manacle of Sarish on arm. They one of ours, I think maybe you send them?"

"No, Pyidma. Not one of mine. Could they serve one of my rivals, perhaps? They've taken it back to their little stronghold in Canceri, no doubt." The dandy looks

thoughtful. "No matter. It appears that this matter requires more- delicacy- than I thought." The man lets the imp drop and turns to Duke Victor. "I am sorry, Duke. I neglected to fully introduce myself. I am Prince Losknek, a servant of Sarish, and I detect a historic opportunity in our meeting like this. A chance for a bloodless resolution of our current difficulty, in which each party gets what they want with a minimum of bother."

Duke Victor's face drains of color, but his voice does not quiver. "What do you mean?"

Losknek smiles. "You want the troubles around Lohgin Castle to cease. You want the Gate closed. Am I correct? I can do this. Easily." The Duke hesitates, and then nods. "In exchange, I want what was promised to me by Jude Lohgin so long ago. I want the price I set for murdering his family and granting him his infernal powers. I want the Black Book of Ymandragore."

Silence blankets the assembly for over a minute, and then Duke Victor clears his throat. Before he can speak, however, Willem Brecht rises and grabs his arm. "No, my lord! Please, you can't do it! You can't make a deal with this thing." He turns toward the knights of the Order. "Someone must swear this thing in the Duke's stead. The honor of a lord of Milandir cannot be tarnished." Brecht looks over the host, and the men's eyes avoid his imploring gaze. Finally, his gaze settles upon your group.

The players are being prompted here to volunteer. The Gamemaster should give them a chance to think it over. If they refuse to do so, Brecht himself volunteers with a heavy sigh, takes the oath, and goes to Nishanpur to die horribly-end of story. If the Gamemaster wishes, he may continue with Soft Point B1- "Storming the Gates of Hell". Otherwise, continue with the scene.

One by one, you step forward and volunteer to retrieve the Book in order to seal the Gate. Once you have all come forward, Losknek snaps his fingers at you. "Swear to it. Swear to our bargain."

Unless the players get it in one and swear to Sarish right away, Losknek interrupts them, shaking his head, then says the following in the boxed text below. If the players swear to Sarish right away without being asked to, Illiir help them, all Losknek does is smile and leave without saying a word (What kind of heroes are you running through this module?).

"No. No, those oaths are for pretty speeches and poetry. Take an oath that really matters. Swear your oath by Sarish. You might hope to be released from honoring your vows to other gods through death, but Sarish will collect his due from you, even beyond the grave."

Losknek insists on this point. Once the players have sworn to uphold their part of the bargain and find the Black Book for him, he swears to withdraw his minions from Milandir and seal the Gate upon delivery. He then leaves without further incident. If the players decide, at any time, that they are not going to fulfill their part of the bargain, run Soft Point B2- "The Devil Collects His Due."

Once Losknek departs, Duke Victor addresses the hall. "We must all honor the sacrifices of these brave heroes. Let none here speak of what they witnessed this night." He motions to Willem Brecht and a quiet, battle-scared old veteran with slanted eyes to follow him and then turns toward all of you. "Come. We must consult with my Warmaster."

They leave the hall and reconvene in the Duke's library. Continue with Hard Point C.

B1. STORMING THE GATES OF HELL (Soft)

Set-up: Run this encounter if the players refuse the mission into Canceri to get the Black Book of Ymandragore and opt instead to join Duke Victor's assault on Castle Lohgin.

Scene:

The next morning, Duke Victor calls together the Order of the Spear and announces that he will march on Lohgin Castle to destroy the demons within and somehow seal the Gate to Hell. Your party takes their place in the vanguard of the army, with the Order's bravest knights. The army rolls out of Ashvan five hundred strong, many of their number pike men enlisted from the local peasantry, while the people of the town cheer.

Two days later, spirits are still high as Duke Victor's army enters the Blighted Mires. That's when the first signs of plague appear. During the weeklong march through the Mires, more than a tenth of the army becomes too sick to continue. Another fifty die from eating poisonous plants or animals. A fifth either desert or are taken in the night by things that haunt the periphery of your campfires. Despite heavy losses and spiraling morale, Duke Victor is encouraged by his scouts' reports of no sign of resistance around the castle itself. He suspects that Sarish may have recalled his minions back beyond the Gate.

A little over a week out of Ashvan, Duke Victor's army, reduced to less than three hundred men now, reaches the outskirts of the ruined town about Castle Lohgin. As Duke Victor prepares to advance, you suddenly hear a deep reverberation in the earth, as if the land itself is groaning in pain. The sun begins to dim as something large moves to obstruct its rays. As day turns rapidly to night, winged shapes flood out of the parapets of the castle, spreading out and over the army. Men and horses scream, drowning out the shouted commands of the knights and a moment later all is thrown into confusion as the demons descend like a hailstorm upon your ill-fated company.

You are separated from the other knights and fight back-to-back, clinging to each other in a sea of barbed tails and gnawing teeth.

Rules: The players must fight alone.

30 Winged Demons Talenorith (Demon)

(NE Medium Outsider)

HD: 4d8+4 (26hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 feet/60 flying (Average)

AC: 19 (Natural +5, +4 Dex)

Attacks: 2 claws & bite: +4/+4/+4

Damage: d6+3/d6+3/d6+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +4

Abilities: Str: 17(+3), Dex: 19(+4), Con: 12(+1), Int: 12(+1), Wiz 12(+1), Cha 6(-2)

Skills: Spot +8, Listen +8, and Search +3

Feats: Multi-attack, Flyby Attack

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 5/+1, SR: 5, Tanar'ri Qualities

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

If they manage to survive, the players are left alone as the rest of the army is routed. The sun emerges once again, and the players see the bodies of hundreds of men and demons littering the ground around them. They can still hear the frantic shouts of feeling men and the hungry screech of the many creatures that pursue them. The players have two choices. They can admit defeat and flee the field, or they can enter the castle and try their hand at sealing the Gate (Which will prove fruitless. The magic involved is far beyond them). If they choose to attempt the later, they encounter no resistance until they reach the throne room of the castle, where the Gate stands. Losknek is lounging on the throne, but rises as the players enter.

Losknek smirks. "Here to make another bargain? You should have made good on the last. Only I can seal the Gate. But I suppose you want to throw yourselves at me in some final, meaningless gesture. Very well then, let's get on with it. I haven't had lunch yet."

Refer to the rules in Soft Point B2- "The Devil Collects His Due". Even if the players manage to defeat him, read the following.

As you strike Losknek a mortal blow, his body crumples as if its strings were cut. Every hair on your bodies stands on end as you feel a peculiar tingle in the air than moves back toward the Gate. Suddenly, there is a roar of flame and a naked man, his skin, eyes and hair all a rich crimson color, emerges from the Gate. Shaking his head, Losknek remarks, "It is a simple thing to extinguish the life of a mortal body, but forming a new one from dust is a bit more tricky. I do NOT appreciate the headache it has caused me. Shall we try that again?"

B2. THE DEVIL COLLECTS HIS DUE (Soft)

Set-up: This scene takes place only in the worst case scenario; the players attack Losknek, manage to provoke him into attacking him (Which requires an exceptionally good Charisma Check- Losknek is been around a bit), or they decide to break their bargain with him and give up looking for the Book. If they break their bargain with him, he shows up wherever they are the following night. The Gamemaster should read the scene below to the players. If the players sleep separately, he visits them each in turn. Otherwise, Gamemasters may elect to use some variation on the scene below and then have Losknek beat the tar out of them anyway.

Scene:

As you sleep that night, a tremendous heat awakens you. You start in alarm, thinking that your fire has burned out of control. Then you realize that it has actually gone out. The illumination in the room comes from a figure kneeling beside you, rubbing his fingers together. A small but intense flame snakes between his fingers and is reflected in his eyes. It is Prince Losknek. As he speaks, the heat of his breath actually burns your face and you're forced to close your eyes as they tear up fiercely.

"I am insulted. You have defaulted on our arrangement, and I have come to take what is now mine."

Losknek kills them. He kills them and then gently removes their soul from their bodies, trapping it in a ring on his finger. The player or players may not be brought back from this sort of death by any kind of magic short of a *Wish* spell. Eventually Losknek will pervert their essence and create something nasty with it. Alternately, if the player especially annoyed him in some way, he may elect to eat their soul on the spot, in which case not even a *Wish* will bring them back; they're out of the karmic cycle, beyond salvation, or to put it in lay terms, they're just *gone*.

Rules:

Prince Losknek, Lord of Hell (Devil)

(LE Medium Outsider 8th Fighter, 10th Rogue, 10th Sorcerer)

HD: 10d8+30, 8d10+24, 10d6+30, 10d4+30 (268hp)

Initiative: +11

Speed: 30 feet

AC: 32 (Natural +15, +7 Dex)

Attacks: Any weapon: +30/+25/+20/+15/+10/+5

Demonblade: +35/+30/+25/+20/+15/+10

Damage: Demonblade d8+12 17-20x3

(Longsword +5, Keen, Improved Crit Multiplier, Other abilities unknown)

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +24, Ref +26, Will +23

Abilities: Str: 20(+5), Dex: 24(+7), Con: 19(+3),

Int: 24(+5), Wiz 20(+4), Cha 28(+8)

Skills: Hide +30, Listen +22, Move Silently +30, Search +25, Spot +36, Bluff +29, Diplomacy +29, Disguise +30, Gather Information +30, Intnuendo +25, Intimidate +35, Sense Motive +34, Tumble +20, Spellcraft +30, Concentration +30, Knowledge (All) +17, Knowledge (Law) +27, Alchemy +10, Use Magic Device +19,

Feats: Improved Initiative, Dodge, Mobility, Blind-Fight, Weapon Focus (All Weapons), Alertness, Power Attack, Expertise, Cleave, Great Cleave, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack, Improved Critical (all) Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Two Weapon Fighting.

Sorcerer: *Spell Per day:* 14/14/14/13/11

Spells Known: All 1st to 5th level spells

Special Qualities: *Damage Reduction* 15/+3, *SR:* 25, *Baatezu Qualities, Spell like Powers (Su):* At Will: *Polymorph Self, Undetectable Alignment, Charm Monster, Darkness, Detect Good, Detect Thoughts, Doom, Suggestion, Teleport w/o error:* 3/day: *Unholy Blight, Gate, Dismissal* 1/day: *Slay Living, Harm, Soul-Bind.* These Abilities are as if cast by a 20th level Sorcerer (Save DC 18 + spell level) spell *Undying (Su):* if destroyed, Prince Losknek can return to Onara via gate spell after 1 day or immediately if near an open gate like the one in Lohgin castle.

Challenge Rating: 40

Treasure: Demonblade

C. THE WARMASTER'S STRATEGY (Hard)

Set-up: After the bargain with Losknek, Duke Victor dismisses all his men except Warmaster ul-Zheng Yi, Willem Brecht, and the players. He then leads them up a flight of stairs and down a hallway to a small library.

Scene:

"I do not wish us to be disturbed." Duke Victor closes the door behind all of you and throws the bolt. He fetches a decanter of wine from a table, motioning to the seats about a round table, and begins pouring a glass for each of you. "You

have taken a terrible burden upon yourselves for the good of the nation. First, I want all of you to know that I am not unappreciative of your efforts on our behalf. Whatever you need for this undertaking that is within my power, you will have it. If you are successful, the bonds of affection between my house and yours will be so great that I will consider each of you as close as my own kin. You, or those you leave behind if it comes to that, shall want for nothing in the years ahead.

But it appears that this quest will force you to enter Canceri itself, and that darkened realm remains largely unknown to me, though I have lead several campaigns against it in the past. There is no man who knows its dangers better than my Master of War, ul-Zheng Yi."

Duke Victor nods to the veteran, who rises and looks your company over impassively. His voice is like sandpaper. "I am Warmaster ul-Zheng Yi. It is my duty to keep the Duke apprised of the strength of Canceri's armies and its ability to wage war. To this end, I have established an extensive spy network within Canceri." He reaches behind his decorative lacquered wood breastplate and withdraws a sheaf of yellowed papers. "I have worked with my agents and come up with a briefing for just such an occasion as this."

ul-Zheng Yi sorts through the papers. "If a witch of Sarish stole the Black Book of Ymandragore, she most likely took it to the great library in the capitol city of Nishanpur to unlock its secrets. In order to fulfill your mission in Canceri, you should know something of the nation's history and politics in general, and have some background on Nishanpur in specific.

Over three hundred years ago, in the midst of a war between the great empires of the Coryani and my own native Khitani in the west, a priest by the name of Becherek attempted to revive the worship of three gods outlawed long before by the Emperors of Coryani. He grew in popularity in the province of Canceri, and when he was executed for sedition, a general uprising occurred. The province revolted and the nobility of Canceri began to openly worship Becherek's dark gods. These noble houses formed the core of the theocracy that rules Canceri to this day, the Church of the Dark Triumvirate.

Each of the three gods holds sway in a different region of Canceri, but a priest who they call the Dark Apostate rules the nation as a whole. This Dark Apostate is chosen by an advisory body made up of thirteen priests of each of the three gods called the Nihang Council. The seat of this ruling body is in the city of Nishanpur.

The current Dark Apostate is an undead creature by the name of Hegrish. Despite their disgusting practices, the Nerothians are isolationists. Canceri has not mounted an offensive against another nation as long as Hegrish has been in power, which has been at least two generations." ul-Zheng Yi looks at Duke Victor, who nods in confirmation, and then continues.

"The Nerothians are not very circumspect about guarding their borders, so you should have no problem getting into Canceri posing as traveling merchants, perhaps with Master Brecht's help." ul-Zheng Yi motions toward Brecht. "But Nishanpur is a different matter. Even though the Dark Apostate rules from there, the city is in the middle of Sarishan lands. The witches of the Demon God built the city, and their demons prowl the streets, doing their bidding." He scratches his chin. "Demons like that thing that visited us tonight. In fact, I would say there is a pretty good chance this is all an elaborate trap of some sort. I've had some dealings with Sarishans, since they run the few mercantile and diplomatic concerns that operate out of Canceri, and they are quite devious. They have always got a smile to your face and a knife ready for your back.

Warmaster ul-Zheng Yi allows the players to air their concerns and ask questions. If they decide to back out, ul-Zheng Yi and Duke Victor are grim, but understand. They prepare to lead an assault on Lohgin Castle with the Order of the Spear. If the players accompany them, see Soft Point B1- "Storming the Gates of Hell."

If the players prefer to use another cover story of their own devising, the Gamemaster should adjust the encounters to fit their gambit.

If the players decide they've had enough and leave for friendlier climes, run Soft Point B2- "The Devil Collects His Due."

Otherwise, continue with the scene below.

ul-Zheng Yi begins collecting his papers, as he finishes speaking. "Very well then. Master Brecht and I will see to gathering some horses and a wagon loaded with trade goods to provide your cover for the mission. Tomorrow, you will leave for the city of Kielmun, within Canceri's borders. There, I would like you to meet with an agent of mine, a Khitani stonemason by the name of Bhij Lissim. Tell him that I sent you. He will be your contact and guide within Canceri. May your Goddess of Fortune smile upon you.

The players are shown to their rooms for the night. In the morning, they are given the blousy robes worn by Coryani merchants that can be put on over their armor and equipped with a wagon, a dozen crates of raw Milandir iron, a full team of horses and whatever other reasonable items they might require on the trip. They set out on the Cold Road that morning, before the sun and townfolk of Ashvan are up, on their way to Kielmun.

C1 BLOODSTAINS IN THE WOODS (Soft)

Set-up: Run this scene at any point along the Cold Road, before the characters enter the Blighted Mires.

Scene:

You're traveling on the Cold Road when you hear a muffled wailing noise off to the side in a stand of trees. Listening for a moment, you recognize it as the sound of a baby crying.

If the players investigate the sound, read the following.

As you pick your way into the cluster of trees, the sound becomes louder until you reach a clearing. In the middle of the clearing is a carpet of sticks and branches. You can see blood among the greenery, and the baby's cries seem to come from a pit beneath the blood stained branches.

If the players move the branches, they find the shrubs do indeed conceal a pit.

The pit is shallow, roughly the height of a man, and at the bottom you can see an infant in swaddling clothes. The baby's cries are hoarse. It must have been outside for hours.

As you consider what to do about the abandoned child, you hear a twig snap behind you and when you look, you see two bat-eared creatures emerge from the forest. Both stand about five feet tall and have bony arms easily as long as they are tall that bend double in front of them and end in four long, saw-toothed fingers.

"See, Ozkra?" One remarks to the other as they approach, "I told you, you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. It was a sweet thing, but no more than a mouthful. You would have wasted it. You are too impatient."

"I was hungry, Whiele. Oh, no." The other looks closely at your group and whines. "These are claimed by Losknek. I fear we will starve out here while he feasts."

The first sighs mournfully and waves you on your way. "Very well. Be gone, little fishes. But leave the bait."

The demons are willing to let the players go, as long as they leave the baby behind. If the players insist on taking the child with them, the demons decide to risk their master's displeasure and eat them after all.

Rules: If the players manage to save the baby, they come upon a village later in the day. An old woman claims the child as her granddaughter and gives the players her prize possession, a silver ring given to her by a bard when she was younger and prettier (Actually, it is a **Ring of Sustenance**).

Ozkara and Whiele Kornathin (Devil)

(NE Medium Outsider)

HD: 5d8+2 (32hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 feet/60 flying (Average)

AC: 19 (Natural +5, Dex +4)

Attacks: 2 claws +9/+9

Damage: Claws d6+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3

Abilities: Str: 16(+3), Dex: 18(+4), Con: 14(+2), Int: 14(+2), Wiz 8 (-1), Cha 13(+1)

Skills: Spot +9, Listen +9, Search +9, Hide +11, Move Silently +11, Knowledge (Planner) +9, and Spellcraft +9

Feats: Multi-attack, Weapon Focus (Claws)

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 5/+1, SR: 5, Baatezu Qualities, Spell like Powers (Su): At will: Detect Good, Detect Magic, 1/day Teleport w/o error

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None



C2. THE WORMS THAT EAT THE WORLD (Soft)

Set-up: This encounter can take place any time the characters camp out in the open. The Gamemaster should pick a player at random and then pull them aside for this encounter. The character in question is gently awakened by a sinking sensation, but is unable to sound an alarm before the ground closes over him.

Scene:

You dream you are floating on the ocean, but the water is perfectly still about you. Then, you slowly begin to sink beneath the surface. You wake up and realize that the ground under your sleeping body has actually given way, and you are sinking into the dirt. Just before you open your mouth to scream, the ground closes over you.

Unable to struggle free due to the weight of the earth around you, you are sucked deeper and deeper underground until you fall a short distance onto a stony cavern floor. Before you're able to gather your wits, you hear someone say, "Glow."

Overhead, hundreds of tiny pinpricks of light begin to shed an unsteady illumination on your surroundings. You are in a small cave, the roof not high enough for you to stand upright, and the light comes from a mass of tiny, glowing worms that sway to and fro in time with the sound of a distant drip-drip of water. Not fifteen paces from where you lay is the corpse of a man. It wears pieces of ruined, twisted metal and a deteriorated fur cloak. Half its face has been eaten away by worms. His other eye is good, and stares at you. The corpse opens its mouth, and you realize it is what spoke earlier.

"Good. It is good. No matter how big you are, there is always something out to eat you. You have come here to eat what is eating me." The corpse chuckles, and then begins to cough. It raises a fist to staunch a stream of mucus and thick, black blood and you notice that the fingers of its right hand were all broken when it lived and healed back misshapen. "Being born. What a joke. It all leads back here, to the womb, to the gullet of the worm. Go on your way, but take this. Use it when you find your true prey. Tell them Porphal had a hand in their destruction. Use it to kill what's eating us."

Porphal holds out an arrow with a tattered purple feather. The head is marked with letters that burn red and squirm over the metal like tiny, glowing maggots.

If the player refuses the arrow, Porphal shrugs. Whether or not the character accepts the gift, he points out a passage that leads back to the surface, tells them to "Go. Now", and refuses to say anything more. As the player heads back to the surface, the passage closes behind them.

Rules: The arrow is an **Arrow of Wizard Slaying** (Works like a normal Arrow of Slaying, from p. 189 of the DM's Guide, but keyed to Wizards and Sorcerers).

If at any point the player decides to attack the corpse or threaten it, the light goes out in the tunnel and the character hears something shuffling about, some muffled laughter, and then passes out. When he wakes up, he's back among the rest of the party. But his left hand is dead. The flesh is cold and limp, and will begin to rot in a few days. Unless it's severed, the limb eventually becomes gangrenous. For game purposes, any action that requires two hands automatically fails. Gangrene occurs within 1d4+2 weeks, at which point the character loses 1 point of Constitution per day until he or she reaches 0 Constitution and then they die.

D. THE LAND OF ETERNAL NIGHT (Hard)

Set-up: The characters pass the border into Canceri and follow the Cold Road to the domed city of Kielmun. Gamemasters are encouraged to add whatever encounters they wish in the city of Kielmun and prolong the characters' stay here for as long as seems entertaining. The city is a massive network of old crypts, many of these built for entire families. The family crypts are full of worldly goods, many undead guardians, and vicious traps galore.

While raiding a few tombs may go unnoticed, challenging the local government directly is probably a bad idea. As hated and feared as the priests of Neroth are, they are the only thing keeping the huge undead population in Kielmun from devouring the living of the city completely. Supplanting the Nerothians would require garrisoning the city with a huge number of troops.

Scene:

After two weeks' travel you pass out of the Blighted Mires and into the wetlands of southern Canceri. The land you travel through is full of contradictions, being made up of low bogs for long stretches and then rising to form jagged, short mesas of a gray porous rock at others. The weather has grown colder and the humidity has increased, but somehow it refuses to snow. Soon, you and all your belongings are covered with clammy droplets. The sky is always overcast, and a freezing wind cuts across the road.

You come upon a field where shivering peasants are knee-deep in freezing water, harvesting a starchy crop of strange, white tubers. They look up as you go by, but avoid meeting your gaze and return quickly to work. When you ask how far it is to Kielmun, one of the women gestures vaguely to the northeast, toward what you took to be a mountain in the distance at first glance. You realize it's actually a huge dome.

The peasants are unresponsive, unless threatened with physical violence. Even then, they say very little, answering as simply as possible to the most direct of questions. Clearly, they fear the players, but they fear their overlords even more. If the players persist in trying to get information from them, one of the peasants comes forward, claiming to be one of the Akali's (Chief priest's) Rats (No, really. That's actually what they're called), and demands they tell him why they're asking so many questions, or he'll report them. If the players let him live, he'll report their suspicious behavior later to his superiors anyway, in which case it is suggested the Gamemaster run Soft Point D4- "We Have Ways of Making You Talk" some time after the players enter Kielmun. In any case, continue below.

As your group approaches Kielmun, you realize that a true dome doesn't cover the city. Rather, the settlement was built around the base of an especially large mesa that was hollowed out to serve as some sort of central meeting structure. The rest of Kielmun radiates out from this central point, and all of its streets are covered by stonework. Literally hundreds of structures are linked together by a network of stone both bewildering and beautiful, far surpassing anything built in Milandir in the elegance of its design. You would be awed by the city's magnificence, if it weren't for the faint but persistent smell of decay that wafts from the place. As you pass beneath the grand arch of the necropolis' southern entrance, you slowly gather from the near-deserted streets that the size of the city dwarfs its actual living population. Many of the buildings are tombs. The only sources of illumination are torches arranged at random intervals, and the occasional stray beam of sunlight that falls from a crack in the dome above.

If the characters ask after the Khitani stonemason Bhij Lissim, they are quickly directed to his shop. Continue below. If they choose to roam about Kielmun first, feel free to run a few of the Soft Points in this section before coming back to the players' meeting with Bhij Lissim.

Many of the buildings in Kielmun stand silent and sealed, but here and there are construction crews adding on to or maintaining a structure. By speaking with some of the workers, you are soon on your way to Bhij Lissim's workshop.

The shop is situated on top of an older building that looks like a monument to some forgotten Coryani military leader, and you are forced to climb two flights of stairs to reach the Lissim's door. Within, you can smell the heavy reek of burning incense. You knock, and soon a scowling young man answers the door. Seeing you, he looks quietly perturbed, "One moment. I'll get the master."

"Move over, Poktrin. I will attend to it." A short Khitani man, balding and bent over, pushes the Canceri boy aside and regards you through dusty spectacles. "Strangers? Here? My, my, it's been too long."

If the players mention ul-Zheng Yi (Hopefully they won't say Warmaster ul-Zheng Yi), Lissim's eyes light up.

"Ah, news from my UNCLE ul-Zheng Yi, very good. Please, come in, come in. Poktrin-," Lissim opens his purse and counts out some gold coins, "Go to the market and fetch me some red glaze and a new chisel. And spend the rest on some clothes; your old ones are filthy. Take your time."

Once the boy leaves, Lissim motions your group to follow him into his workshop. You pass benches where a number of unfinished works lie, as well as a huge marble pillar that has been halfway worked into the shape of a man, to enter the stonemason's private room. He closes the door behind you, and his demeanor immediately changes. He stands up straight and snaps, "Quickly. You aren't the regular couriers. What are you doing here?"

Once the players explain their business, Lissim relaxes visibly.

"I see. Another piece in the puzzle," Lissim holds up his hand for silence, listens carefully, then shakes his head and continues. "Canceri has been in turmoil for the past month. The Dark Apostate has died. I was unable to get a message to Warmaster ul-Zheng Yi because our regular courier has disappeared. I think he was arrested."

My sources indicate that the Dark Apostate Hegrish, a lich of Neroth, was destroyed by strange magic. The spells that animated his body began to inexplicably unravel and finally failed, leaving a desiccated corpse. All the high priests of the Church of the Dark Triumvirate, the Council of the Nihang, are gathering now in Nishanpur to select a new Dark Apostate. If what you say is true, that a follower of Sarish has found the Black Book of Ymandragore, he might have used spells from the Book to remove Hegrish."

Lissim looks at all of you with a wild intensity, "If we could prove that the Sarishans were behind the destruction of Hegrish, it would throw the Council of the Nihang into chaos and strike a great blow against the stability of all of Canceri. I will go with you and help you find this Book. Perhaps we will find evidence of a Sarishan conspiracy also. There is a man in Nishanpur, a sorcerer named Kelimrhe, who knows a great deal of the magic of Ymandragore. We can speak to him. He may help us. Give me a day to put my affairs in order here, and then I'll guide you to Nishanpur. You should leave now before my assistant returns. Meet me tomorrow in the city's atrium, in the square of the Gurdwara. I recommend staying at the Confraternity of the Just Death. They are followers of Illiir. It is the safest place for outsiders like you to stay, and you can leave your horses there. Be careful, trust no one."

Bhij Lissim will hurriedly answer any final questions the players might have and then gives them directions to find the Confraternity of the Just Death (See Soft Point D3). A minute later, they find themselves on the lightless streets of Kielmun once again.

If the players come back to Lissim's workshop before they're supposed to meet with him again, they'll find the door locked and no one will answer their knocks.

D1. BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU PRAY FOR (Soft)

Set-up: This encounter takes place as the players are walking the streets of Kielmun. Workers and a few soldiers pass them by, but no one speaks unless spoken to.

Scene:

As you carefully pick your way down a darkened avenue in Kielmun, you come upon a man kneeling in the road in a shaft of sunlight. He appears to be praying.

"Lord, lord, I am so sorry. Please take back your gift. I am so sorry."

Once he notices you, he stands suddenly and tries to wipe away tears of anguish. "Greetings, strangers. Neroth's blessing upon you."

If the players ask him what's wrong, the man looks frightened.

"Nothing! Nothing at all is wrong. I just..."

Just then, you hear a hiss from the shadows. "Nevin. Come home, Nevin. The children and I miss you."

Nevin shoots you a crazed look, "My wife. Don't worry; it's just my wife. I thought she was gone, but I prayed to Neroth, and..." A tattered figure partially emerges from the shadows and you can see the woman's body looks crushed, perhaps from fallen mortar. Nevin screams at her, "What did you do with the children?"

"They're here, Nevin. Here with me."

Nevin looks at you helplessly, "Please, help me..."



The creature surges forward and attempts to drag the man into the shadows.

Rules:

Undead Wife

(CE medium undead)

Hit Dice: 4d12 (26 hp)

Initiative: +2, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 16 (+2 dex, +4 natural),

Attacks: Bite: +4, 2 claws +1,

Damage: 1d8+1 bite, 1d4+1 claw,

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Ref +3, Fort +1, Will +6

Abilities: Str 13(+1), Dex 15(+2), Con -,

Int 13(+1), Wis 14(+2), Cha 16(+3)

Skills: Climb +7

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite), Multi-attack

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: none

Special: Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, stunning, criticals, disease

Infected Bite (Ex): Any living creature bitten must make a Fortitude Save at 12 to avoid a horrible festering wound. These wounds cannot be healed until a Cure Disease is cast upon them.

D2. A FUNERAL PROCESSION (Soft)

Set-up: This is another encounter that can be run anywhere on the streets of Kielmun.

Scene:

You hear the sound of bells and low chanting. The noise gradually gets nearer and a funeral procession turns the corner ahead of you, heading in your direction. About a dozen pallbearers support a huge glass casket and are led by two priests carrying smoking censers. A train of relatives follows in the casket's wake. Apparently, the deceased was someone of importance.

As you step aside to let the procession pass, you see that the casket contains more than one body. Through the glass you see what appears to be a married couple, dressed in their wedding clothes, locked in a final embrace. Then, to your horror the bride, a young woman in her early twenties, looks up and meets your gaze, her eyes red from weeping. She touches the glass of the coffin, her fingers leaving a bloody smudge.

The procession winds its way toward a newly built crypt. Obviously, they intend to bury the woman alive with her husband.

If the players stand by and do nothing, this is exactly what happens. Read the following.

As the coffin is interred, an old man attempts to brush past the priests. You hear a muffled cry from within the coffin, and the old man is seized and brought to his knees. A black-cowled crow of a priest looms over him. "Do you defy the traditions?"

The old man's voice trembles, "I did not consent to this. This marriage was not our choice. Please, spare her."

"Silence," the priest scowls, "The union brought your house honor. But now Neroth has called the master of this house to him and the dutiful wife must follow."

The crypt is sealed and the old man is left discarded on the steps, like a puppet whose strings have been cut.

After the woman and the corpse of her husband are sealed up in the crypt, the people disperse. Two guards and a priest remain behind to perform last rites, and then stand on vigil to make sure the bride's relatives do not try to rescue the girl.

If the sentries are attacked, the Priest summons forth Crypt Lurkers to aid them.

If the players manage to free the girl, the old man kisses the players' hands and vows to do anything in his power to help them in the future. His name is Hamen and he is a city architect. He knows the streets well and can teach them how to avoid Nerothian patrols by taking the back alleys.

Rules:

Nerothian Guardsmen

(3rd level warriors) (2)

Hit Dice: 3d8 + 6 (20hps)

Initiative: +1, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 18 (+1 dex, +5 Breastplate, +2 shield),

Attacks: Shortsword +5 melee,

Damage: 1d6+1,

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Ref +2, Fort +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 13(+1), Dex 12(+1), Con 14(+2),

Int 11(+0), Wis 11(+0), Cha 11(+0)

Skills: Spot: +4, Listen +4

Feats: Weapon Focus (swordsword),
Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: none

Nerothian Warden of the Dead

(7th level NE cleric)

Hit Dice: 7d8+7 (38 hps)

Initiative: +2, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 19 (+2 dex, +5 breastplate, +2 shield),

Attacks: Morningstar +7,

Damage: 1d8+1,

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Ref +2, Fort +5, Will +8

Abilities: Str 12(+1), Dex 14(+2), Con

12(+1), Int 12(+1), Wis 18(+4), Cha 13(+1)

Skills: Knowledge (Arcana): +8, Spellcraft +7,
Concentration +11

Feats: Combat Casting, Skill Focus:
Concentration, Silent Spell

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: Mastercraft Morningstar

Special- Spells: Guidance x3, Resistance x3, Cause Fear x3, Bane, Sanctuary x2, Death Knell, Desecrate, Hold Person, Silence x2, Hold Person (Prepared Silent), Animate Dead x4 (Always 3 Lurkers), Animate Dead (prepared Silent, also 3 lurkers) Neroth's Embrace x2 (See Appendix II), Unholy Blight
Death Touch (Sp): Once per day the Warden of the Dead may make a death touch as a death effect. This spell like ability requires a melee touch attack. If this attack hits, roll 7d6, if the total equals or exceeds the targets current hit points, the target dies.

Crypt Lurkers

(medium NE undead) (1per PC)

Hit Dice: 2d12 (14 hp)

Initiative: +2, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 16 (+2 dex, +4 natural),

Attacks: Bite: +4, 2 claws +1,

Damage: 1d8+1 bite, 1d4+1 claw,

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +3, Fort +1, Will +6

Abilities: Str 13(+1), Dex 15(+2), Con -,

Int 13(+1), Wis 14(+2), Cha 16(+3)

Skills: Climb +7

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite),

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: none

Special: Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, stunning, criticals, disease

Constitution Damage (Su): The claws of a

crypt lurker deal 1d6 points of temporary

Constitution damage. A creature reduced

to 0 Constitution by a Crypt Lurker dies.

Fortitude Save to negate, DC: 15.

D3. THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE JUST DEATH (Soft)

Set-up: Bhij Lissim will give directions to the temple of the Confraternity. If the players ask about or mention them to anyone else in Kielmun, they'll only draw suspicious looks and may end up getting reported (Gamemaster's call. See Soft Point D4- "We Have Ways of Making You Talk").

Scene:

You find the temple of the Confraternity of the Just Death outside the walls of Kielmun, near the eastern gate of the city. It is a short, squat building made of wood, with the golden orb of the god Illiir displayed prominently over the temple's entrance. When you arrive and request a place to stay for the night, a monk of the Confraternity ushers you into a bare cell beneath the foundation of the temple. "Dinner is served at dusk, in the refectory. If there is anything you need, let me know. My name is Brother Herman."

Bhij Lissim is correct in thinking that the players will be safe from physical harm while staying at the Confraternity. What he isn't aware of though is that the Akali, the high priest of Kielmun, has spies within the temple. Part of the reason the authorities tolerate the existence of the Confraternity is because it acts as a magnet for dissidents, who are then picked up once they leave the temple. If the characters discuss their mission while within the walls of the temple, one of the Akali's Rats, his informers, hears them and reports it. Next time they enter Kielmun, a group will try to pick them up for questioning; see Soft Point D4- "We Have Ways of Making You Talk".

D4. WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU TALK (Soft)

Set-up: If the character are reported to the authorities by one of the Akali's Rats, a group of guardsmen led by a priest of Neroth tracks them down to arrest them.

Scene:

On the streets of Kielmun, you are passing a construction crew who is busy hoisting aloft a statue of a malefic being with huge bat wings in order to affix it to the

roof of a crypt, when a group of a dozen guards rounds a corner and begin quick marching in your direction. The priest leading them calls a halt twenty feet distant and motions you to stop with an upraised hand. "You there. You will come with us for questioning."

If the players seem prepared to go with the guards, read the following to one of the players.

As you get ready to follow the guards, one of the workmen grabs your arm from behind and whispers tersely, "Do not go, stranger. None ever return." He looks up at the statue that the workmen are holding winched in place and then nods at you. "Flee through the crypt we are working on. There is an exit in the back."

If the players refuse to go along with the guards, continue.

The priest shrugs. "Very well. I can draw a confession of your sins just as easily from your corpse. Kill them, but leave their heads intact for questioning."

The players can fight the guards, or they can flee into the crypt. If the players appear to be having trouble, the Gamemaster may inform them that they see a light within the nearby crypt that indicates an escape. The workmen will "accidentally" let the statue drop behind them to discourage their pursuers. The players can then flee through a hole in the rear of the crypt.

Rules:

Nerothian Secret Police Leader

(5th level LE Cleric)

Hit Dice: 5d8+5 (30 hps)

Initiative: +2, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 18 (+2 dex, +4 Scalemail, +2 shield),

Attacks: Morningstar +4

Damage: 1d8+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +2, Fort +5, Will +8

Abilities: Str 12(+1), Dex 14(+2), Con 12(+1),
Int 12(+1), Wis 18(+4), Cha 13(+1)

Skills: Knowledge (Arcana): +8, Spellcraft +7,
Concentration +9

Feats: Combat Casting, Skill Focus:
Concentration, Extend Spell

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: none

Special: Spells: Guidance x3, Resistance x3,
Cause Fear, Bane x2, Sanctuary x2,
Death Knell, Desecrate, Hold Person
x3, Animate Dead, Prayer, Wind Wall

Nerothian Guardsmen (1 per PC)

Hit Dice: 3d8 + 6 (20hps)

Initiative: +1, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 17 (+1 dex, +4 Scalemail, +2 shield),

Attacks: Shortsword +5 melee,

Damage: 1d6+1,

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +2, Fort +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 13(+1), Dex 12(+1), Con 14(+2),
Int 11(+0), Wis 11(+0), Cha 11(+0)

Skills: Spot: +4, Listen +4

Feats: Weapon Focus (shortsword),
Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: none

E. THERE IS NO TURNING BACK (Hard)

Set-up: The Gamemaster should run this scene after the players spend a night in Kielmun and go to meet with Bhij Lissim in the morning.

Scene:

The morning of your second day in Kielmun, you find yourself standing in the square of the gurdwara, or central temple, of the city. The square contains dozens of merchant's stall where all manner of goods, from incense to meat pies, are sold. The meat pies smell foul. Arranged about the square are niches that contain shrines dedicated to the ancestors of the priesthood of Kielmun. As they pass, some people pause to press their thumb to the base and then brush their forehead reverently.

The gates of the gurdwara are currently closed and two bored guards stand watch. The people in the square go about their business quietly, trying to avoid being noticed while in the shadow of the temple. Suddenly, bells in the spires of the temple far above begin to ring and the guards become suddenly alert. Merchants begin packing up their goods and going home.

Bhij Lissim appears at your side. "A contingent of troops has arrived from Nishanpur to seal the city. We need to leave. Now."

He motions for you to follow him down a deserted street. In the distance, you can here the tread of many heavy boots.

Several units of Canceri troops have arrived with orders to seal off Kielmun and protect the border during the election of the Dark Apostate. It shouldn't be a problem for the players to avoid patrols while in the city, but once they reach the gate heading out of Kielmun, read the following.

You come within sight of the gate leading out of Kielmun and find that a large battalion of soldiers, about twenty men strong, is guarding it. These soldiers are different from those you have seen in the past. They carry Greatswords and wear an armband emblazoned with a flame device.

As you watch, a group of Nerothian troops wearing the skull device on their breastplates marches up to the first group of soldiers. Their tall, cadaverous commander sneers at the newcomers, "You've overstepped the bounds of your authority, Nierite. Kielmun does not fall under your jurisdiction."

A clear-eyed Nierite warrior with red hair stares back at the man solemnly. "The order was handed down by the secretary of the Council of the Nihang himself. I've been given emergency powers to direct the defense of this region. I'm in charge here."

The Nerothian throws back his head and laughs. "Ridiculous."

The Nierite contemplates him impassively and then remarks casually, "Execute him."

A crossbow bolt strikes the Nerothian in the throat, killing him instantly. A free-for-all breaks out between the two groups. Bhij Lissim turns to you, "Quickly. We can fight our way through and escape in the confusion."

The players must break through a small group of Nierites that attempt to stop them. If they manage to win free, there are no immediate signs of pursuit.

As you rush along at breakneck pace from the domed city of Kielmun, Bhij Lissim shouts over the whistling of the wind, "We are in luck, it seems we are not being followed. We are on the Red March, which leads straight to Nishanpur. But there is no turning back now, my friends. They will be watching the roads for us. We must push on in earnest."

Rules:

Nierite Soldiers

(3rd level Fighters) (1 per PC)

Hit Dice: 3d10+6 (29 hps)

Initiative: +3, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 17 (+2 dex, +5 chainmail),

Attacks: Greatsword + 7 melee, Light Crossbow: +6

Damage: 2d6+2 Greatsword, 1d8 crossbow

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +4, Fort +6, Will +2

Abilities: Str 15(+2), Dex 15(+2), Con 15(+2),
Int 10(+0), Wis 12(+1), Cha 10(+0)

Skills: Ride +6

Feats: Weapon Focus (Greatsword), Power
Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, Combat
Reflexes

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: none

Nierite Captain

(6th level LE Fighter)

Hit Dice: 6d10+12 (45 hp)

Initiative: +7, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 20 (+2 dex, +8 full plate),

Attacks: Greatsword + 10

Damage: 2d6+5

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +5, Fort +7, Will +3

Abilities: Str 15(+2), Dex 15(+2), Con 15(+2),
Int 10(+0), Wis 12(+1), Cha 10(+0)

Skills: Ride +10

Feats: Weapon Focus (Greatsword), Power
Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, Mounted
Combat, Weapon Specialization
(Greatsword), Expertise, Improved
Initiative

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: Mastercraft Greatsword

E1. A MAN OF WEALTH AND TASTE (Soft)

Set-up: This encounter takes place while the players are on the Red March, the road that leads from Kielmun to Nishanpur. The party comes upon a Canceri merchant who has pitched camp by the side of the road.

Scene:

Night is falling on the Red March when you spot the welcome sign of a campfire surrounded by brightly striped tents. It looks as if some noble has chosen to hold court out in the open. The gathering is replete with a handsome feast and a huge entourage of servants, musicians, jugglers and flame-eaters. You notice some nearby wagons piled high with goods, but to your surprise, you see no sign of armed guards.

If the players investigate the wagons, there may be nasty repercussions. See below and improvise as necessary. If the party decides instead to see who is throwing this party in the middle of nowhere, continue with the boxed text below.

As you approach, you hear loud, guttural laughter, and a voice stammers with suppressed hilarity, "Again. Do it again." You enter the cheery radius of the campfire and see a raised platform that is acting as a stage. Two little men,

one dressed up as a clown and the other as a woman are lampooning about on the stage. The clown is striking the woman with a blunt object while the woman runs about howling in mock pain. Their primary audience is a huge man, half again as tall as a normal human being and five times as wide, who titters in appreciation and shouts encouragement. Flanking him are half a dozen other merchants. When the large man notices you standing there, he motions you over, "Ah, my friends! Do not be shy! Please, enjoy my hospitality!"

If the players refuse and leave, the man is annoyed but quickly returns to his amusements. If they accept his offer, continue.

"Good, good. Some real men. Not jaded boors." The corpulent merchant throws a turkey leg at a bald man next to him, who grits his teeth but says nothing. "What? Something you wish to say, Merka? I didn't think so." He turns back to you, "I apologize for my companions rudeness. I am Guildman Qruto. Please, sit down."

Food is brought to you and the entertainment continues. Despite Qruto's continue abuse of his guests and their silent resentment, you enjoy yourself until the little clown on the stage slaps the other a little too hard. The mock woman turns and punches the clown in the face, then begins to apologize, before Qruto interrupts, "No. No. That's not right. Do it again. Harder." The little man does it again, harder. "Now, do it again. Kick him. Hard."

The clown clenches his eyes shut as he is pummeled again and again. Finally he falls, one eye swollen shut and nose bleeding. The other jester has tears running down his face. Qruto turns to you, excited, "Quick- loan him your dagger."

If the characters go along with it, Qruto has the jester kill the other in cold blood. The rest of the night, the players will be treated to Qruto's brutal sense of humor and his constant abuse. If they defy him, they quickly find out why he feels he can act with impunity (See the **Rules** below).

Rules: Qruto owns a ring that contains a powerful guardian demon. This demon manifests at any threat to Qruto's person or property. If someone who intends to steal his property touches the goods on his wagon, or if someone draws a weapon around Qruto with the intent of attacking him, the demon springs forth from the ring and tries to kill them. Qruto uses the threat of the ring to heap scorn and abuse on his servants and associates.

Bodyguard Demon (Xavinot)

(Large LE Outsider)

Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (24 hp)

Initiative: +3 (dex), Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 11 (-1 size, +1 dex, +1 natural),

Attacks 2 claws at +8, bite at +8, tail
+8 (d6+3),

Damage: Claws 1d4+5, Bite 1d6+5, Tail 1d6+5,

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft

Saves: Ref +6, Fort +6, Will +6

Abilities: Str 20(+5), Dex 13(+1), Con 16(+3),
Int 10(+0), Wis 12(+1), Cha 10(+0)

Skills: Spot: +6, Listen +6, Intimidate +10

Feats: Power Attack, Multi-attack

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Special: Damage Reduction 5/+1, SR: 5,
Tanar'ri Qualities.

Language (Su): Can speak to any creature in that creature's language
Aura of Fear (Su): All creatures viewing the Demon must make a Will Save at 15 or flee in terror. The Demon can turn this ability on and off at will.



E2. KNIGHT OF THE RED FIST (Soft)

Set-up: This encounter takes place on the Red March between Kielmun and Nishanpur. For several hours the players notice what looks like a bird far above and to the west, following them. Finally, the shape begins to descend, and is much, much larger than the first thought.

Scene:

For the last few hours what looks like a bird has been following your course. It has always stayed high above and roughly parallel and to the west. But after observing you for some time, it begins to circle and descend, and you all realize it is much larger than you first thought, about the size of a horse.

It's a huge creature with bat wings, red fur, a stunted head and a four-foot long tongue that snakes out in front of it. On its back is a man dressed in high collared, leather uniform and a long red cloak. He wears the black armband of a follower of Sarish, but upon his breast is a symbol in the shape of a clenched, red fist.

The man lands the creature in your path about ten yards ahead and calls out, "Ho there. Stop." The beast seems to become excited, its tongue gyrating wildly in your direction and before the rider can pull back on the reins the creature advances a few steps in your direction. "Whoah, boy. You there, are you carrying any weapons?"

If the characters lie, the man becomes annoyed and tells them to hand the weapons over. He won't tell them that the beast he rides can smell the metal. If the players manage to figure it out (By succeeding at a Knowledge (Outsider) roll at DC 15), they can always claim that the raw iron ore they're shipping is what the creature smells, an explanation that the rider accepts and allows them to go on their way. If the characters question him, the rider explains.

"You're heading into Nishanpur. No weapons allowed there except those of Sarishan manufacture. You'll have to turn them over at the gate if you want to be marked. It's the law."

If the players are cooperative, the man introduces himself as Yemlid, a member of the Guard of the Red Fist. The purpose of his group is to guard foreign caravans heading toward Nishanpur from bandits. If they don't mind, he offers to accompany them to the gates of Nishanpur and recommends that they pay for the Mark of Sarish (See Hard Point F).

Rules:

Yemlid, Guard of the Red Fist

(6th Level LN Ranger)

Hit Dice: 6d10+12 (48 hp)

Initiative: +9, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 17 (Std Leather +3, +4 Dex), Attack: +9/+4 Longsword or +10/+5 Longbow

Damage: Longsword 1d8+3, Longbow 1d8

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +9, Fort +4, Will +4

Abilities: Str 16(+3), Dex 18(+4), Con 15(+2), Int 10(+0), Wis 15(+2), Cha 11(+0)

Skills: Animal Empathy 6, Climb 2, Handle Animal 6, Heal 3, Hide 3, Intuit Direction 3, Knowledge (Nature) 3, Ride 5, Spot 6

Feats: Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Trample, Improved Initiative

Specials: Favored Enemy (Dwarves, Elves)

Spells: Entangle, Speak with Animals

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: 120 gold pieces

Melatorn (Devil)

(Large LE outsider)

Hit Dice: 5d10+9 (34hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 30 feet/60 flying (Good)

AC: 21 (+10 Natural Armor, +2 Dex, -1 Size)

Attacks: Claws (2) +9, Bite +4

Damage: Claw d6+4/d8+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +6

Abilities: Str 18(+4), Dex 15(+2), Con 16(+3), Int 4(-3), Wis 13(+1), Cha 8 (-1)

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6

Feats: Improved Initiative, Fly back attack

Special Attacks: Corrosive Bite (Ex) Any Successful bite will cause any mental contacted to Liquefy, becoming useless immediately. Reflex save of DC 20 negates.

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 10/+1, SR: 15, Baatezu Qualities,

Challenge Rating: 5

F THE MARK OF SARISH (Hard)

Set-up: The characters reach the gates of the city of Nishanpur.

Nishanpur is the capital city of the nation of Canceri, but it has only grown to its present size and wealth due to the work of the priests of Sarish. There is no local militia or standing army besides the Order of the Red Fist, and that group is made up of only a few dozen members. The city is kept from descending into complete chaos by means of a special ritual that offers demonic protection to the wealthy. As a result the poor, besides having to struggle for the basic necessities, live every day with the threat of violence as they squabble over the crumbs that fall from the tables of the priests.

There are many, many injustices in Nishanpur that a group of heroes could spend years fighting against, and almost as many opportunities for an unscrupulous band of cutthroats. The greatest danger the players will encounter here is not the pervasive demonic influence, but rather the complex and treacherous web of deals, feuds and plots that have made the city a powder keg that only requires a spark to explode. Even the common people seem conscious of this and do their utmost to avoid causing friction, to the point of looking the other way as people they know are torn apart due to some casual misstep.

Gamemasters should keep this in mind when running encounters on the streets of Nishanpur.

Scene:

Before you, you see the center of the web of lies and treachery that is the nation of Canceri. At last, you have come to the city of Nishanpur.

The town lies near the geographical center of the nation, at the beginning of the mountain range called Nier's Spine, within sight of the swamp that is claimed by Neroth, and looming over the plains that stretch westward toward the coastal towns populated by Sarish's adherents. The grand Cathedral of the Dark Apostate clings to the mountainside and below it is the forum of the Nihang Council, once a Coryani arena where those ancient people held their blood sports. Radiating out from these two central structures are the trading houses of the capitol city.

A tall wall smooth as glass surrounds the city on all sides, and you are forced to approach Nishanpur by one of its many gates. There is quite a line of travelers, merchants and peasants before you, and you notice they pay some money and offer a bit of their blood for a priest of Sarish to bless them and make a mark on their forehead.

Bhij Lissim leans toward you and whispers, "The Mark of Sarish. It is not necessary for you to enter, but it is said not many survive long in the city without it. You see, the wizards of Sarish do not employ guards to enforce their laws. Those with the Mark are protected by their demons, as long as they respect the city's traditions. Those without the Mark invite the attention of rapists, thieves and murderers."

Over the din of the crowd waiting, you hear a horrified scream from within the gate that is quickly cut short. The priest at the gate and his two assistants pause in their labors to watch and a hush descends. Then, they resume to their duties and business returns to normal in Nishanpur.

"Ah, I forgot. If you intend to get receive the Mark, you will want to leave your weapons at the gate. Only Sarishan steel is legal within the city walls. There are other laws you should know about- do not strike a priest, do not enter a church without the consent of a priest of that church, do not steal from a priest, and do not strike another unless it is in self-defense. Break any law, and the Mark vanishes."

You are near the front of the line, and you overhear a conversation between the priest performing the ritual of the Mark and a peasant.

"Thirty pieces of silver."

"I don't have enough. But once I sell some of my crop, I will be able to pay you."

"Then return and receive the blessing of Sarish later. Next."

The peasant almost grabs the priest's arm but is stopped by a raised eyebrow. "Sorry, Father. But please- I will not survive alone in the city without the Mark. I swear by Sarish I will return and pay what I owe."

The priest smiles pleasantly. "Sarish does not extend his followers credit, my son." Then, in a lower voice, he confides. "But my cousin Rhomas does. He lives on Flood

Street and his rates are reasonable."

"But- but, that is in the worst part of town."

The priest winks at him. "Then I suggest you move quickly and be careful. Godspeed. Next." You are motioned forward. Nearby, the can see the corpse of a man lying in the street. Something with huge claws has disemboweled him. A few beggars are dividing his belongings.

Once the players who pay for the Mark of Sarish have given a few drops of their blood and had the ritual performed, Bhij Lissim does the same, then motions for all of you to follow him out of earshot. He tells the players the following.

"I will leave you now. I need to check on a few things. Go to the central library at dusk and ask after Kelimrhe, Archivist of the Histories. I will meet you there, if I am able. Good luck, my friends."

Rules:

The Mark of Sarish

Conjuration (Summoning)

Level: Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 3 rounds

Range: Touch

Effect: One creature

Duration: One month

The caster must take a bit of the subject's blood, which anointed on their forehead. Once the spell is cast, the blood takes the shape of the Mark of Sarish, resembling an inverted triangle between two parentheses. It pulses with a deep red glow.

If a non-Infernal creature attacks a creature wearing the Mark, the Mark activates and summons 1d4 Demons of the Mark to defend him (See below). The power of the Mark will remain in effect for the full duration of the spell, but will not activate for the remainder of a combat unless all the bearer's demonic guardians are dispatched.

If, at any time, a person wearing the Mark breaks a law of Nishanpur, commits a crime against the priesthood of Sarish, or if a Cleric of Sarish simply wills it, the Mark disappears.

The specifics of casting this spell are a closely guarded secret of the priesthood of Sarish in Nishanpur. They will not teach it to anyone who is not a lieutenant in Sarish's Church in Nishanpur.

Demons of the Mark - The Vorlerath (Demon)

(CE medium outsiders)

Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (12 hp)

Initiative: +4 (dex), Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 17 (4 dex, 2 natural, 1 dodge),

Attacks: 2 claws at +4

Damage: Claws d6+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +6, Fort +3, Will +1

Abilities: Str 17(+3), Dex 19(+4), Con 12(+1),
Int 12(+1), Wis 10(+0), Cha 10(+0)

Skills: Spot: +4, Listen +4

Feats: Dodge, Multi-attack

Challenge Rating: 2 + Random Qualities

Treasure: None

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 5/+1, SR: 5,

Tanar'i Qualities

Language (Su): Can speak to any

creature in that creature's language

Random Qualities (Pick or roll one

from each A and B)

A- Physical Features

- 1) Tail (additional attack at d4 damage)
- 2) Wings (Fly at base rate, good)
- 3) Large (+1hd, -2 AC, +4 Str, 10ft reach) +1CR
- 4) Small (-1hd, +2 AC, -2 Strength) -1 CR
- 5) Horns (d6 gore, double charge)
- 6) Tentacles (Grab attack, 10ft reach) +1CR

B- Special Features

- 1) Poison (save at 15 or take 1d6 more) +1 CR
- 2) Sorcerer (2nd level Sorcerer abilities) +2 CR
- 3) Fast (40 move rate)
- 4) Strong (+4 Str) +1CR
- 5) Damage Resistance (10/+1) +1 CR
- 6) Spell Resistance: 10 +1 CR

The Gamemaster is encouraged to improvise encounters in Nishanpur as he likes, but below are a few sample encounters.

F1. LIFE IS CHEAP (Soft)

Set-up: This encounter occurs in a major market place in Nishanpur, or any other heavily trafficked part of the city.

Scene:

Pushing through the crowds, you spot a dangerous-looking group of thugs hanging about on the periphery. Their leader looks over your group, taking your measure, and then dismisses you as too much trouble. Next, you notice him eyeing a merchant with a fat purse, but he shakes his head when he sees the red Mark of Sarish on the merchant's forehead. His eyes finally settle on a peasant and his wife leading a cart, and he steps into their path.

"W-what do you want?" The peasant stammers. "Please, don't take my crops. They're all I have."

"What would I do with crops?" The thief spits. "No. I want your woman. After she entertains my men, I know a few places where she'll catch a fair price."

You notice a group of six soldiers of Nishanpur's Order of the Red Fist heading in their direction.

The players may intercede and stop the bandits. If they do, the Knights of the Red Fist and the rest of the crowd simply walk around the fighting, trying not to get involved. Gamemasters should note that attacking the thieves causes the Mark of Sarish to vanish.

If the players do not save the peasant, perhaps believing the Knights of the Red Fist will handle it, read the following.

As you watch, the peasant steps in front of his wife protectively and the leader of the thieves runs him through with his sword, lips twisted into a sneer. The peasant falls at the feet of a Knight of the Red Fist, the blood forming a wide, sticky pool on the cobblestones. The Knight glances at the thief with the bloody blade in irritation.

The thief dips his head, "Excuse me, sir."

The Knight steps over the dying peasant and continues on his way.

The thief turns to the peasant's widow with a wicked leer. "Come this way, lady. You needn't grieve for long- not with the 'consoling' we will give you."

If the players fail to interfere, the thief seizes the woman by her hair and he and his men carry her off, while she screams for help. A few people look on, their faces contorted with regret and disgust, but the vast majority pretends not to hear her cries.

If at any point the players drive off or kill the bandits, read the following to one of the players.



The peasant woman clings to you, takes your hand and kisses it, then presses something into your fist. Her eyes are crazed with excitement and fear, and she whispers to you, "For the faithful of Nier, come the Day of Burning, may it be soon."

She then forces you roughly away from her and disappears into the crowd.

It's a silver medallion, only worth about five silver pieces, but it is stamped with the flame of the god Nier.

Rules:

Street Scum (3rd level NE Rogues)

Hit Dice: 3d6 + 3 (15hps)

Initiative: +8, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 16 (+4dex, +2 Leather Armor, +1 Dodge)

Attacks: Club +3 melee,

Damage: 1d6+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +7, Fort +2, Will +1

Abilities: Str 13(+1), Dex 18(+4), Con 13(+1), Int 11(+0), Wis 11(+0), Cha 11(+0)

Skills: Spot: +4, Listen +4, Hide +10, Move Silently +10, Intimidation: +8

Feats: Skill Focus: Intimidation, Improved Initiative, Dodge, Sneak Attack 2d6, uncanny dodge, evasion.

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: none

F2. EVEN IN THE DESERT, THERE IS WATER (Soft)

Set-up: As the players walk the streets of Nishanpur, they witness the horrible inequality among the social classes and encounter a strange prophecy.

Scene:

Touring Nishanpur, you are shocked to see extravagant displays of wealth that coexist alongside examples of grinding poverty.

Behind one of Nishanpur's many dry wells, between a huge bathhouse that wafts perfumed steam into the city streets and a merchant selling Nishanpur steel weapons from a cart, sits an old man with a bowl. He holds it feebly in his left hand and extends it to each passerby, all of whom studiously ignore him. The merchant selling the weapons finally turns toward the old man and remarks with irritation, "Why don't you move? You're driving away business with your stink. At least move downwind of me."

The old man looks up at the merchant with rheum-stained eyes and then shifts his rags to display two stumps where his legs once were. "I lost my legs in the wars, fighting for Canceri. Give some coins to a poor veteran. Please."

The merchant sneers at him. "If you were smart enough, you wouldn't have had to fight. People like you should have the decency to die when it's their time."

The old man notices you looking on and extends his bowl slowly.

If the players elect not to help the veteran, the scene ends.

If a player or players drop a few coins in his bowl, read the following to the character that donates the coins first.

You drop some coins in the old man's bowl and notice a young boy about nine years old has appeared at your elbow. His hair is a dusty, ashen blond and his eyes are gray. He offers you an orchid with a smile that displays a confidence unusual for his youth, and says, "It cannot last. Their chains will be broken and the world remade, for even in the desert, there is water."

The merchant distracts you as he steps forward and scoops some coins out of the old man's bowl. Seeing your look, he smirks, "I deserve something for my troubles. He's driven away a great deal of business."

When you look back, the boy has gone.

If the player didn't accept the orchid, the boy leaves it behind. The players may have some difficulty getting the merchant to return the money to the beggar, since the merchant has the Mark of Sarish (See above, Encounter F). He is arrogant in the face of physical threats and may require mystical compulsion.

Rules:

Orchid of the Soulfast River

The Orchid provides the possessor an MR of 15 against detrimental but non damage-causing spells, such as charms or polymorphs (i.e. If the caster's intent is harmful but the spell does not actually cause damage, the Orchid provides protection).

F3. WHERE IS OUR JUSTICE? (Soft)

Set-up: This scene takes place in Nishanpur, in one of the poorer, less populated neighborhoods. The players overhear someone shouting and voices replying in unison from a stairwell leading down into a nearby basement, and may stop to listen.

Scene:

You are walking past a stairwell in the rear of a large building that leads down into a root cellar when you hear the sounds of someone shouting. Upon closer inspection, you notice that the door to the root cellar is open and flanked by two men in identical red and very neat jerkins. Though they carry no obvious weapons, you can tell they've had some sort of military experience. Torchlight flickers beyond the doorway and it sounds as if someone is giving some sort of speech. Sometimes, a crowd answers back in unison.

If the players decide to enter or talk to the guards, read the following. They will NOT admit anyone with the Mark of Sarish.

As you approach the men before the doorway, one of them just nods and tells you, "Go ahead. Hamet said to expect you." When you hesitate for a moment, he grinds his teeth, "Inside, fool, before someone sees you."

You enter the cellar and see around you a couple dozen people, mostly from the lower classes of Nishanpur. They are listening to a man who stands behind a small bonfire on the far end of the room. About the room are scattered many boxes and crates.

The man behind the bonfire wears a black uniform and a crimson breastplate. He spreads out his arms before him and the livid flames light his face. "The Day of Burning is coming, my brothers and sisters, at last. Can't you feel it?"

The crowd replies, "The forge is ready."

"You have all waited so long. You have all gone hungry, starved of godly things in this wicked land. You have cried out for justice, said, 'where is our justice?' The gods have not forgotten you, O my brothers."

"The hammer falls."

"Their work has gone to waste, brothers. The design has gone awry. Humanity has squandered the gods' gifts and wandered far from what the heavenly powers intended. But there will come a day when He will come and set things right. Can't you feel it?"

"He will forge the world anew."

"Good, brothers and sisters, very good. Come. We will begin here, tonight. We will begin by forging you anew. Put your life in the fire and come out reborn."

The man steps back and the people begin lining up to pass before the fire, one by one. As each person steps before the fire, they strip bare and throw their clothes and belongings into the flames. After the first person finishes, another man in a red uniform steps from the shadows holding a razor, which he uses to scrape the hair from the initiate's body. Once he finishes, a third red-uniformed man reaches into one of the crates and pulls out a red leather jerkin, a sword, and some boots. Finally, the initiate is presented with an armband with the flame of Nier imprinted on it. The process is repeated for each person.

Slowly but surely, the line is getting shorter, and the speaker's eyes are upon your group, waiting for you to take your turns at the fire.

The players are expected to participate. If the players refuse to go along, one of the soldiers will scream, "Spies! INFIDELS!" and the whole horde will attack, beating them into the ground with steel-toed boots.

Rules:

Nierite Soldiers

(3rd level Fighters- 5)

Hit Dice: 3d10+6 (29 hps)

Initiative: +3, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 17 (+3 dex, +4 chain shirt),

Attacks: Greatsword + 7 melee, Light Crossbow: +6

Damage: 2d6+2 Greatsword, 1d8 crossbow

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +4, Fort +6, Will +2

Abilities: Str 15(+2), Dex 16(+3), Con 15(+2),
Int 10(+0), Wis 12(+1), Cha 10(+0)

Skills: Ride +6

Feats: Weapon Focus (Greatsword), Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, Combat Reflexes

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: none

Recruits of Nier

(1st Level Commoners- 5 per PC)

Hit Dice: 1d4+1 (3hps)

Initiative: +0, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 12 (+2 armor),

Attacks: Short Sword: +0 melee, Damage: 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +0, Fort: +1, Will +1

Abilities: Str: 11(+0), Dex: 11(+0), Con: 12(+1),
Int:11(+0), Wis:11(+0), Cha: 10(+0)

Skills: Spot +1, Listen +1

Feats: none

Challenge Rating: 1/4

Treasure: none

Special Abilities: Fanatical (Ex): Never rout when led by Nierite Cleric

G. WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

Set-up: This scene occurs when the players arrive at the library and inquire after the sorcerer Kelimrhe.

Scene:

You arrive at the Grand Library of Nishanpur at dusk. The library is a simple structure, square at the base but very tall, rising over twelve stories high. In the stone of its walls are carved the figures of gods, Valinor and demons, all entwined in the act of love, or in combat, or simply reclining among the eaves and parapets. At your approach, you feel their eyes are upon you, but you shake off the sensation. Then you notice one statue slither across the surface languidly and realize it's not part of the relief.

A young, tonsured monk meets you just inside the door. Once you give him the name of Kelimrhe, he nods. "Yes, the Archivist of Histories is expecting you. He's on the sixth floor, the Ymandragore collection. I will take you to him."

The monk leads you past a reception area and up a flight of stairs. A cold wind moves through the library's halls, stirring the flame of the monk's candle and carrying the low murmuring of many voices, so many and so varied that you cannot distinguish what any one is saying. You arrive on the sixth floor and the monk leads you down a dusty hallway and throws open a gold leafed door depicting a scene of a man carving a staff in the foreground. Behind the man stands a creature with horns and a serpent for a tongue, looking on enviously. The artist seems oblivious to the thing's attentions.

Within the room beyond is a man dressed in simple red robes with a curly black beard. "Please, come in. Kadyre, thank you. That will be all."

The monk bows and closes the door after you. Before you have a chance to speak, the bearded man holds up a finger to his lips, then raises his arms and speaks three guttural words in the language of magic. There is a suctioning noise and the faint sound of whispers ceases. Kelimrhe dry washes his hands in satisfaction. "Good. Now we may speak."

The players may make introductions if they wish, or ask after Bhij Lissim, or tell Kelimrhe why they're there. He doesn't seem especially interested in what the players have to say, he just waits until they're done so he can tell them what he needs to. Then, he relates the following.

"Yes, I know why you are here and what you are looking for. Bhij has told me everything. Unfortunately, there were pressing matters he had to attend to, so he could not be here tonight.

But my counsel should suffice, yes? I am the foremost mortal authority on the Black Book of Ymandragore, despite never having actually seen the text. But there are references elsewhere of what the Sorcerer-King of Ymandragore did with the power of magic he stole from the gods. How he twisted it to his own ends, perverted it, allowed it to fall into the hands of mere children." Kelimrhe looks disgusted, but slowly his features begin to smooth in contemplation. "But there are also so many wonderful things in the Book. Tales of things not seen in centuries, descriptions of the world when it was young and perfect, a time when humanity and the gods were much closer. I would dearly like to study it."

He looks at you hopefully. "Perhaps you could give it to me? I could find some other way to seal the Gate, banish this demon of yours. No? Well, consider it. Perhaps you will change your mind later."

To return to the matter at hand, yes, the Book contains magic that was capable of destroying Apostate Hegrish. Among the magic the Sorcerer-King discovered is that practiced by an order of his servants called the Ordainers. It involves the consumption and reconstitution of magical forces. You see, Hegrish was a lich, kept animate by magic alone. His murderers simply leeches away at the enchantments holding him together until he collapsed.

As for Hegrish's murderers, you need look no further than the House of Contracts, beneath the Temple of Sarish. One of the Council of the Nihang, a witch by the name of Sulemei, brought the Black Book to Nishanpur, but was forced to consult some of the tomes in this library to uncover its secrets. I track those particular books quite carefully. The House of Contracts is difficult to infiltrate, but I happen to know a way in through a series of magical portals known as the Mirrors of Rystas. I can cast an enchantment that will mask your entry. The Council of the Nihang is meeting tonight. Once you have the Black Book and proof of the Sarishan's conspiracy against Hegrish, you can use the Mirrors to travel to the Council amphitheater and reveal their treachery. I will teach you the enchantment to activate the Mirrors. It is best that I stay and monitor the situation from here."

Abruptly, Kelimrhe remarks, "You don't entirely trust me, do you? After all, I am Cancerian. I must seem a traitor to my own people. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. I am a patriot, and faithful to the Church of the Dark Triumvirate, even though I don't agree with every doctrine it prescribes. Things were not like this when Becherek first inspired the founding of the Church. Regardless of all that, these followers of Sarish have murdered the Dark Apostate and are attempting to seize control of the nation. They must be stopped. Are you the ones to do it?"

The players may choose to bow out at this point, and try to find another way to enter the Hall of Contracts. One possibility are the wells that lead down to the lake that is called Nishanpur's Heart (See Point H6). If they simply give up, Losknek finds them in breach of contract and pays them a visit (See Point B2).

If they continue to work with Kelimrhe, read the following.

Kelimrhe leads you up three flights of stairs and into a wide hall. At the far end is a huge mirror framed by twisted bronze serpents. Kelimrhe gestures to it, "This is a Mirror of Rystas. The glass of each is ground from the sand around the Walls of Autumn. They are all interconnected. Activate them like so." He runs his fingertips along the surface of the mirror and recites a string of syllables, then says, "Nihang Council." The glass turns milky and then resolves into a window looking out on a huge coliseum. Acolytes move about the rows of benches, while an altar and other ceremonial trappings have been arranged on the sandy floor in the center. He frowns, "They have already begun to gather. Damn. You must move quickly." He caresses the frame of the mirror and the glass turns reflective again. "Now, recite the words..."

Kelimrhe teaches the players how to activate the mirror to transport them to the Nihang Council.

Once Kelimrhe is confident you have learned the incantation for the Mirror of Rystas, he runs his fingertips along the surface and pronounces another string of syllables, followed by the command, "Hall of Contracts." The mirror's surface clouds then clears to reveal a torch-lit

chamber. Within it, a number of people are suspended by chains that hang from a single steel ring in the center of the ceiling. Some of the chains reflect and magnify the torchlight in the room, while others are extremely fine and make a musical sound as the individuals that dangle from them shift their weight. For victims of torture, the hanging people are eerily quiet.

Kelimrhe snaps his fingers and whispers. "There you have it, the Pain Garden of the Hall of Contracts. Step through the skin of the glass and you will be there. My best wishes. Return to that chamber when you have found what you seek and invoke the mirror again. It will take you to the Nihang Council."

If the players enter the mirror, continue with Hard Point H.
Rules:

Kelimrhe Sorcerer of Nier

(LN 2nd level Fighter, 8th level Sorcerer)

HD: 2D10 8D4 + 30 (70hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 feet

AC: 16 (Amulet +2, Bracers +2, Dex +2)

Attacks: Great Ax +9

Damage: 1d8+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +8

Abilities: Str: 12(+1), Dex: 15(+2), Con: 16(+3),

Int: 17(+3), Wiz 15(+2), Cha 18(+4)

Skills: Search 4, Concentration 6, Diplomacy 2, Gather Information 4, Scrye 6, Knowledge (Arcana) 10, Knowledge (Religion) 6, Knowledge (History) 6, Spellcraft 6, Profession (Scribe) 6

Feats: Weapon Focus (GreatAxe), Mobility, Dodge, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (Evocation).

Challenge Rating: 10

Sorcerer Spell Per day: 6/7/7/6/4

Spells Known: 8/5/3/2/1

Arcane Mark, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Disrupt Undead, Flare, Light, Mage Hand, Open/Close, 1st : Burning Hands, Detect Undead, Identify, Magic Missile, Shocking Grasp 2nd : Flaming Sphere, Invisibility, Pyrotechnics 3rd : Fireball, Greater Magic Weapon, 4th : Ice Storm.

Treasure: Great Axe +2, Amulet of Natural Armor +2, Bracers of Armor +2, Ring of Force Shield, Iron Bands of Billaro

H. HALL OF CONTRACTS

Set-up: Once the players have performed the incantation and stepped through the Mirror of Rystas, they end up in Room 1 of the Hall of Contracts, the Pain Garden. Behind them, the Mirror becomes reflective again. The Hall of Contracts is actually only a small part of the Temple of Sarish, but is sealed off from the other parts of the Temple due to the number of dangerous magical experiments (especially summonings) that take place here.

Once the players enter the Hall of Contracts, those who have the Mark of Sarish will lose it. Unless otherwise noted, all characters encountered in the Hall of Contracts wear the Mark of Sarish, and in this place twice as many demons will respond when the power of the Mark is invoked.



H1. THE PAIN GARDEN (HARD)

Scene:

You emerge from the Mirror of Rystas and find yourselves in a wide chamber filled with hanging chains. Depending from many of the chains, some of them manacled, others held by rings actually embedded into their flesh, are a dozen human beings. Each one has a different expression. Some weep from the pain, others grit their teeth and bear it, others moan. The smell of sweat and blood assails you.

The woman nearest to you twists to get a better look at you, grunting with the exertion. She's hanging upside down by chains manacled about her neck, ankles, and right arm. She drags herself partway horizontal and blinks rapidly as blood rushes to starved parts of her anatomy, then grins. "Welcome. You're part of the entourage? Good, right on time. They're about to leave. Please tell Master va'Mehen something for me when you see him. Tell him- 'I can feel it now. Thank you.' He'll understand." The woman's hand slips and she passes out.

Some of the hanging people will talk to the characters, others won't. If the characters attempt to free any of them, the others will begin intoning in unison, summoning a Kyton Devil who will attack, eager to add more subjects to his precious collection. If asked why they're being tortured, the hanging people will seem surprised by the question and explain that they are acolytes of Sarish and are here as part of their training.

Kyton Devil

(LE medium outsider)

Hit Dice: 8d8+8 (44 hp)

Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 feet

AC: 18 (+8 natural)

Attacks: 2 chain rakes +9 melee

Damage: 1d8+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Special Attacks: Dancing Chains, Unnerving Gaze

Saves: Ref +6, Fort +7, Will +6

Abilities: Str 13(+1), Dex 11, Con 13(+1), Int 6(-2), Wis 10(+0), Cha 12(+1)

Skills: Spot: +13, Listen +13, Climb +12, Craft (Blacksmithing) +10, Escape Artist +11

Feats: Alertness, Improved Critical (chain), Improved Initiative

Challenge Rating: 6

Special: Immunities (Ex): Immune to Cold, regeneration 2, Damage Reduction (Ex): 20/+2, SR 17

H2. THE REFRACTORY OF THE SENSES (Soft)

Scene:

This looks like a storeroom of some sort or perhaps a winery. There are two large vats full of a thick, syrupy purple liquid and dozens upon dozens of casks stacked one upon the other.

One of the many commodities that the priesthood of Sarish produces is magical wine cut with a potent hallucinogenic. Imbibing even a small quantity of the wine creates immediate euphoria, quickly followed by manic visions and acute schizophrenia. Below are a few examples of what a character drinking the wine might experience. The Gamemaster should expect affected players to role-play out their delusions for as long as they're under the wine's spell.

You feel a tingle running up and down your spine, the telltale sign of some sort of evil magic being used against you. You feel a deep throbbing heat in your belly and see your skin begin to bubble. Your vision blurs as your eyelids melt and run down your face. Your skin is so boiling hot, whatever you touch will be scalded. But you're not dying. Why aren't you dead yet? You could die at any time; do whatever you need to before the end comes.

Here's another:

Someone's stolen your tongue and buried it somewhere. You can't talk. You need to find it. You need to dig in the ground for it. You need to make them tell you where they put your tongue, but you can't speak!

One more.

A tiny magical frog has invaded your head and taken up residence in your skull. He's taken control of your body; he's pretending to be you and making you say things, crazy things that don't make any sense. But he's talking way too loud. Maybe someone will notice. Maybe a sharp blow to the head will kill the frog, if you can just regain control for a moment...

You get the idea. Have fun with it.

Rules: There is no Saving Throw if the character drinks the wine; it automatically starts working its mojo. It lasts for 1d4 hours and the player must make a Willpower Saving Throw at DC 16 every time they want to resist the effects of the wine for a round.

H3. THE WORKSHOPS OF SARISH (Soft)

Scene:

You hear the constant clink of metal on metal coming from this room from down the hall. As you look into the room, you see three long tables littered with all manner of tools and crafted items, from a stiletto shaped like the

beak of a crane to breastplate that displays the inner workings of a not-so human anatomy. A score of demonic craftsmen bend over their work or tend to a smithy. Many of them wear spectacles and dirty coveralls that look somewhat ridiculous when paired with their heavy jaws and the thorny, matted manes that hang down their backs.

Many of the objects on the table radiate magic, but attacking the demons for them is sheer suicide. In addition to being quite powerful themselves, the Craft Demons will summon other Demons to their aid, which will in turn alert the entire priesthood of Sarish. A thief might be able to steal one or two, but at great personal risk. Gamemaster's choice of the power level of the item stolen.

Rules:

Othanti (Devils)

(Small LE outsiders)

Hit Dice: 2d8 (9 hp)

Initiative: +5 (Dex),

Speed: 30 feet/60 Fly (good)

AC: 17 (+5 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size),

Attacks: Claw +2

Damage: 1d4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Summon Demonic Assistance (Sp): These demons can summon guards to their assistance. 40% chance that 1d6 Xavinots appear when called. The demons are loath to do so as it makes them beholden to the summoned. Therefore they will only do so when their life is in clear danger.

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 10/+1, SR: 15, Baatezu Qualities, Artisan (Ex): Able to create items of astounding quality +15 to craft skill

Saves: Ref +8, Fort +3, Will +5

Abilities: Str 10 (+0), Dex 20 (+5), Con 11 (+0), Int 20 (+5), Wis 15 (+2), and Cha 10 (+0)

Skills: Craft: +25, Use Magical Device +6, Spot +10, Listen +10

Feats: Craft Wondrous Item (Through unknown means Othanti can create Magical Items despite their lack of spell casting abilities)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: A minor wondrous item, GM's choice.

H4. THE ARCHIVE OF BINDINGS (Soft)

Scene:

This room holds a vast number of scrolls. Nooks along the walls stretch up to the ceiling and racks arranged throughout the room hold even more documents. Six acolytes are bustling about, filing documents and recording data in a huge tome lying on a lectern by the east wall.

The scrolls are contracts between various demons and human agencies that were presided over by a priest of Sarish. Each is sealed with the Mark of Sarish, with all that that implies (Someone trying to destroy one will invoke the Mark).

Rules:

Acolytes of Sarish

(3rd Level LE, NE or LN Clerics)

Hit Dice: 3d8 (14 hp)

Initiative: +1, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 12 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge),

Attacks: Sarishan Dagger +4

Damage: 1d4+1,

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Saves: Ref +2, Fort +3, Will +7

Abilities: Str 12 (+1), Dex 13 (+1), Con 11 (+0), Int 12 (+1), Wis 16 (+3), Cha 12 (+1)

Skills: Knowledge (Religion) +6, Knowledge (Arcana): +6, Spellcraft (+6)

Feats: Dodge, Scribe Scroll, Iron Will

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Special: Spells: Light, Resistance, Detect Magic, Read Magic, Summon Monster I x4, Summon Monster II x3 (Summons only fiendish creatures and demons)

Demonic Command (Ex): A cleric of Sarish can rebuke or command Demons as an evil cleric rebukes or commands undead

H5. THE MENAGERIE OF THE FORSWORN (Soft)

Scene:

A huge reinforced door, bolted from the outside, leads into the room. The walls within are marked with mystical symbols and concentric rings of summoning. There is a heavy smell of ozone in the air.

Upon a low dais are arranged tiny bone-carved figurines, many of which wear long, pale robes and look like figures from ancient history. In the center of the smaller figures, against the far wall, is a statue of a majestic being hewn entirely from the bones of some great beast. The magnificent being's face is fixed in a rictus of frustrated rage, huge, six-fingered hands spread wide in appeal. As you approach it, the statue quivers and utters a single word in a gravelly basso, "Blood."

The statue is a fallen Valinor of Illiir known as Manetas. Sarish tempted him away from Illiir's service by appealing to his pride and encouraged Manetas to build his own cult of followers during the First Imperium. But when Manetas became a threat to the Demon God himself, Sarish quickly made arrangements to have the Valinor imprisoned.

All that Manetas requires to be free is for his lips to taste human blood once again. If the players are foolish enough to free him, read the following.

As your blood touches his lips, the surface of the statue shivers and takes on a more fleshy consistency. The Valinor radiates with an inner light and looks down on you all, booming, "Your lord Manetas thanks you. You have done well my followers, and will be rewarded. I go now to prepare our return." There is a crackling sound and it vanishes in a blinding flash of light. .

Manetas now considers the players to be the core of his new cult of worshippers. The Gamemaster may have him appear at a later date to give the players further instructions or to otherwise meddle in their lives.

Rules:

Manetas the Fallen Valinor

(Large, LN Outsider)

Hit Dice: 6d12 + 30 (90 hp)

Initiative: +4, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 22 (+5dex, -1 size, +8natural),

Attacks: Longsword +14/+9

Damage: 1d8+8

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft

Saves: Ref +12, Fort +9, Will +2

Abilities: Str 20 (+5), Dex 20 (+5), Con 20 (+5),
Int 15 (+2), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 30 (+10)

Skills: Listen +10, Spot +10, Intimidate +15

Feats: Alertness, Great Fortitude, Lightning
Reflexes, Leadership

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: none

Special: Immunities (Ex): Immune to poison
and electricity
Resistances (Ex): Cold, Fire and Acid
resistance of 20
Spell Resistance (Ex): 25
Damage Reduction (Ex): 5/+1
Spells (Sp): Daze x5, Charm Person x3,
Mage Armor, Alter Self x2, Suggestion
x2, Dimension Door, Polymorph Self

H6. THE RESERVOIR OF NISHANPUR'S HEART (Soft)

Scene:

You pass through an arch and find yourself on a balcony looking out over a huge cavern. Below you, you see what looks like a huge underground lake, its waters thick and sluggish, almost black in color. By some unknown means, most likely magical, the waters are kept constantly churning and frothing. A cloying, sickly smell rises from the surface. Far above you, you can see tiny openings that let in the feeble rays of the moon, and you realize that these openings are the many wells you spotted throughout the city of Nishanpur earlier.

This is one end of the vast lake of blood that lies beneath the city of Nishanpur. The priests of Sarish collect it here as part of a centuries-old ritual (See Hard Point J).

H7. THE TEMPLE OF THE SABBAT (Soft)

Scene:

A central chamber forms the center of a wheel with passages leading off like spokes in every direction. A huge circle is inscribed in the floor and far above the ceiling opens up on the vault of the night sky. The strange whispering of many different voices can be heard on the wind.

This is the place where the priesthood of Sarish enacts all of its major rituals. All the passages leading off except the three described below lead to common sleeping quarters for the acolytes of Sarish.

Rules: 3d6 of these acolytes can be found in the whole of the dormitory area at any given time. If threatened, they will flee to this central area beneath the open sky and begin summoning as many infernal creatures as they're capable of—this place boosts such magic, doubling the number of creatures summoned for each spell.

Acolytes of Sarish

(3rd Level LE, NE or LN Clerics)

Hit Dice: 3d8 (14 hp)

Initiative: +1, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 12 (+1 dex, +1 dodge),

Attacks: Sarishan Dagger +4

Damage: 1d4+1,

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft

Saves: Ref +2, Fort +3, Will +7

Abilities: Str 12 (+1), Dex 13 (+1), Con 11 (+0),
Int 12 (+1), Wis 16(+3), Cha 12 (+1)

Skills: Knowledge (Religion) +6, Knowledge
(Arcana): +6, Spellcraft (+6)

Feats: Dodge, Scribe Scroll, Iron Will

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Special: Spells: Light, Resistance, Detect Magic,
Read Magic, Summon Monster I x4,
Summon Monster II x3 (Summons
only fiendish creatures and demons)
Demonic Command (Ex): A cleric of
Sarish can rebuke or command
Demons as an evil cleric rebukes or
commands

H8. BETHALIC'S CHAMBERS (Hard)

Scene:

The door to this room is decorated with the black band design of Sarish and appears to be the private residence of one of the high priests of Sarish, most likely a member of the Nihang Council. The door is locked.

The door requires an Open Locks Skill Roll at DC 18 to be opened. Forcing the door by means of brute strength requires a Strength Roll at DC 25.

The room within is opulent. Rather than a bed, a sumptuous divan rests against one wall. A huge fur rug is spread out on the floor, and a number of mirrors reflect the divan at odd angles. A thick chain is bolted to one wall, and beside it is a dish. Upon closer inspection, it looks like someone was scratching at the wall where the chain is affixed, trying to escape. There is also a desk; upon it is a dirk with a cat's head pommel weighing down a sheaf of papers.

The dagger is animate and is enchanted with the power of flight. It will wait until one of the players gets close enough and then attack them. If the players manage to neutralize it and inspect the papers it was guarding, read the following.

The papers are the collected correspondence of a priest named Bethalic. One set of papers deals with a new design for the popular Sarishan daggers sold on the streets of Nishanpur. Bethalic records that he has taught a necromantic ritual to his underlings that is to be cast when the daggers are first made. 'Thus, each death,' Bethalic writes in a margin, 'will hasten the genesis of the life growing beneath the city streets, as Master val'Mehen has instructed'. Another is an unsigned message in an unfamiliar hand that says simply, 'we are not opposed to your plans. Rest assured that there will be no outside interference. We will see to it.' There is another series of messages from someone named Kurmoc that seem to deal primarily with magic theory. Bethalic has made an irritated scrawl on one that reads, 'Yes, but how does he do it? I sent a Needle Demon to observe him and he ate its essence. How is that possible? Perhaps if he can be separated from the bitch, a deal can be struck.'

Rules:

Demon Dirk

(Tiny, NE Outsider/Construct)

Hit Dice: 1d12 + 5 (17hps)

Initiative: +10, Speed: flight 60 feet (perfect),

AC: 30 (+6 dex, +2 size +12 natural),

Attacks: 2 Stabs +6/+1

Damage: stab:1d4+5 (17-20/x2),

Face/Reach: 1 ft. by 1 ft./1ft

Saves: Ref +10, Fort +9, Will +1

Abilities: Str 10 (+1), Dex 22 (+6), Con 20 (+5),

Int 4 (-3), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 10 (+0)

Skills: Listen +15, Spot +15

Feats: Improved Initiative, Improved Critical

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: none

Special: Immunities (Ex): Immune to cold, fire, criticals, disease poison and electricity
Spell Resistance (Ex): 20
Damage Reduction (Ex): 5/+1

H9. SULEMEI VAL'MEHAN'S QUARTERS (Hard)

Scene:

The door to this room is ajar, and its markings indicate that these are the quarters of one of Sarish's Nihang priests.

Once the players enter, describe the interior.

The Nihang residence is separated into two rooms, a bedroom and an adjoining study.

The bedroom is spacious, accommodating a large bed with an overhanging canopy, as well as a vanity equipped with an extensive supply of perfumes, glosses and powders. A large hand-drawn map with varied notations covers the wall opposite the bed. There is also a portrait of a young woman in black holding an ermine. Her cruel lips are slightly upturned in an enigmatic smile. Her cold blue eyes stand out, at odds with the beady red pupils of the ermine and ruddiness of her skin.

Compared to the bedroom, the study is tiny, but there are easily over two hundred volumes packed closely together in three cases. A reading lectern stands in one corner, in the middle of a summoning circle, an unlit, partially melted candle and a book with a worn, blackened leather cover on it. It looks like one of the bookcases was moved to allow room for a sleeping cot that lies unfolded against one wall.

Players exploring this area may find the following.

First, the vanity isn't just a vanity; it also doubles as Sulemei's laboratory. She keeps her poisons and alchemical potions with her beauty aides, many of which are magical as well, so there is a 1 in 3 chance that a player experimenting with them will pick up something dangerous that will cause 2d6 damage, 1d4 on a successful DC 14 Constitution Save, if swallowed or applied to the skin.

Beneath the bed is a locked strongbox that holds Sulemei's journals and personal papers. It takes an Open Locks roll at DC 16 to pick it, or a Strength check at DC 12 to force it open. Within is a horde of sixty Needle Demons, almost invisible to the eye individually. When the box is opened, they seem like a burst of red powder that quickly disperses. In reality, they will divide themselves equally between the players, secreting themselves close to the skin. Players must make an Spot check at DC 12 to track down each group of 4 hiding on his or her body, while they are

attacking with their paralytic poison (See the Needle Demon description below for their special abilities and tactics). Read the following to a player examining Sulemei's papers.

The vast majority of the documents in the strongbox are letters of credit and traveling papers from Coryani, Khitani, and even Ymandragore, many of them under false names. One however, a deed to some property in eastern Canceri, reveals the true identity of the occupant of these rooms: Sulemei val'Mehan, priestess of Sarish. There is also a journal, but you realize it uses a complex cipher.

Figuring out the cipher requires a Decipher Script check at DC15. Continue below if one of the players succeeds.

The journal relates Sulemei's travels in foreign lands, naming contacts in both Coryani and Milandir. It describes a number of covert operations, one of them the assassination of major lord in Coryani that was opposed to the current Patriarch's plans to reunite the Church of the Dark Triumvirate with the Blessed Church of the Coryani Empire. It further records two different diplomatic missions, one to Coryani to discuss reunification, the other to Ymandragore. The latter has this direct quote:

"I was unable to attain an audience with the Sorcerer-King himself, but armed with the information from the Book, I sought out and met with the head of the Order of Ordainers, one Masvel Romkar. We spoke at length regarding the current political situation in Onara and agreed it was unfortunate that Apostate Hegrish was opposed to Canceri reunification with the Coryani Empire. Considering the longevity of Hegrish and the unpopularity of the policies of the Emperor, I stressed to Master Romkar that such an opportunity might not present itself again in our lifetime. Romkar acknowledged that the Coryani Emperor had welcomed the Ordainer's actives in his domain in the past and that Canceri support for his troubled reign would be in Ymandragore's best interest. To this end, he has sent the Ordainer Jrunka back with me to resolve the matter of Apostate Hegrish."

Another short passage reads, "Have found source of energy referenced in library that will fuel Ritual of Genesis, must consult with Master val'Mehen."

A third passage reads, "Bethalic covets the Book. I must keep it on my person at all times. I believe I have secured Jrunka's loyalty, however. He seems quite content to remain in my company."

The books in the study are mostly historical treatises, travel journals, and tomes on magical theory.

The book on the lectern fits any descriptions of the Black Book of Ymandragore that the players have heard. In reality, it is a Cuperis Demon, an infernal agent of desire. It has plucked the image from the player characters' minds and taken on the appearance of the Black Book to lure them into the circle. Once one of the players enters the circle, the demon will fulfill its own desire- to tear a human limb from limb.

Rules:

Needle Demons

Individually, these Tiny creatures are almost invisible to the naked eye. Collectively, they attack as a Swarm with the following rules:

Each group of 4 may make a sting attack, which causes no damage, but releases a paralytic poison into the victim's system (Fort save DC 12). Each round the victim may make a Spot check (DC12) to spot a group of 4 and terminate them.

If the Needle Demons come into contact with fresh water, they are immediately killed.

Cuperis Demon

(CE Large Outsider)

HD: 5d8+2 (32hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 feet

AC: 19 (Natural +5, Dex +4)

Attacks: 4x Grappling Attack (See Below) +9, Crushing Attack

Damage: Barbed Tentacle Grappling Attack 1d4/tentacle, Constrict (1d6+3 x4)

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3

Abilities: Str: 16(+3), Dex: 18(+4), Con: 14(+2), Int: 14(+2), Wis: 12 (+1), Cha 13(+1)

Skills: Spot +9, Listen +9, Search +9, Hide +11, Move Silently +11, Knowledge (Planer) +9, and Spellcraft +9

Feats: Improved Grab(Ex), Weapon Focus (Tentacles), MultiAttack

Special Qualities: *Tanar'ri Qualities, Spell like Powers (Su):*

At will: *Detect Thoughts, Silent Image*

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the Cuperis Demon must hit a medium size or smaller opponent with one of its tentacle attacks. If it succeeds, it may constrict.

Constrict (Ex): A Cuperis Demon does 1d6+3 for each tentacle that successfully grapples against a Medium or smaller size opponent. The constricted opponent must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 19) or lose consciousness for as long as it remains grappled and for 2d4 rounds thereafter.

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: None

H10. THE SANCTUM OF MASTER PALIC VAL'MEHEN (Hard)

Scene:

This door is marked as the residence of a Nihang of Sarish. The doorknob is shaped like the head of a lion. It is locked.

It requires an Open Locks check at DC 18 to unlock. If it's opened, continue.

The door opens with a suctioning noise and the temperature in the area suddenly drops. As you enter the room, a globe on a nearby desk suddenly flares up to illuminate the room. The inhabitant has a hard wooden bench against one wall that apparently doubles as a bed, since there is a folded blanket and a pillow on it set off to the side. The room is largely bare, except for one very striking thing. Opposite the door there is a huge glass tank, about four foot tall and rectangular. Within the tank is a miniature castle.

Players investigating the desk will be in for a surprise. Upon the desk is coiled an exotic creature brought back from Ymandragore, an invisible serpent called a Sacmesh, a gift from Jrunka to Palic val'Mehen. If a wizard or sorcerer opens the desk, the Sacmesh will respond to their presence by coiling about the character's wrist, ready to perform the functions detailed in its description. If any other character tampers with the desk, the Sacmesh has been trained to crawl up their arm and attempt to strangle them.

Once the Sacmesh is dealt with, the characters will find the following letter in the drawer.

"Master Mehen,

With the aid of Jrunka and the Library's Archivist of History, I have discovered a powerful source of arcane energy that may serve our needs, a pillar of frozen fire. As luck would have it, it is adjoining the Lake of the Lifeblood and I have established a Mirror of Rystas leading to it. Jrunka feels confident that by tapping into the source, he could complete our Ritual of Genesis within a very short time. While I hesitate to permit him the use of such a potent and unknown quantity as this pillar, if our current plans go awry it might serve as an alternative in an emergency. I think we both realize that Bethalic's scheme with the knives is a pipe dream that will require an eternity to realize.

Adept Sulemei val'Mehan"

Read the following if the players examine the miniature castle in the glass tank.

The castle is a model done in the style of Milandir with exacting detail, complete with a surrounding landscape of hills and foliage. Tiny fires burn in the windows, and tiny humanoid figures stand vigilant upon the battlements. Coiled about the base of the castle's walls, or under the rocks, are a number of asps. One snake lies dead within the courtyard of the castle, and its carcass is pitted and rotten, as if whatever fed upon it could not finish the meal but had no means to dispose of it. To your surprise, one of the tiny humanoid figures points in your direction and you hear a tiny bell from within the castle begin to ring. The figures scramble about when the alarm sounds, as if preparing for an imminent attack.

The menagerie is Palic's hobby. He built the model by hand and took his victims, either political enemies or simply people who crossed his path at the wrong time, reduced them in size and place them in the tank. At times he provides for his tiny colony of pets, but more often he rains misfortune on their heads, placing small predators in the tank to terrify them or starting a low fire underneath the tank that he gradually stokes.

Lately, the shrunken city has begun to bore him and Palic is considering wiping it out in a grand apocalypse and starting again fresh.

Rules:

Sacmesh

Magical Serpent of Ymandragore (Tiny, N, Construct)

HD: 4d10 (32 hp)

Initiative: +3 Dex

Speed: 4 ft., climb 4ft., swim 4 ft.

AC: 15 (Natural +2, Dex +3)

Attacks: Bite +5 melee

Damage: Bite 1d3+4

Face/Reach: 1 ft. by 1 ft. (coiled)/1 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, constrict 1d3+4

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2

Abilities: Str: 17(+), Dex: 17(+), Con: 13(+), Int: 10 (+0), Wis: 12 (+1), Cha 6(-2)

Skills: Spot +9, Listen +9, Hide +11, Move Silently +11, Balance +11, Climb +14 and Spellcraft +9

Feats: Evasion

Special Qualities: Invisibility, absorb 1 level of spells/Hit die. The Sacmesh is an invisible serpent-like parasite that feeds off magic. If a wizard or sorcerer touches it, it will slither up his arm and wrap around his wrist. The Sacmesh is trained to release

its host when a special command word is given. It has also been trained to strangle people upon hearing another command word.

The creature is able to store four levels of spells. As a full round action the host may pull upon stored spell levels to power any metamagic feat or in the case of sorcerers to cast a known spell. As the host taps into this stored energy the Sacmesh "feeds" off the magical byproduct of the casting. Once the Sacmesh is "empty", it automatically drains its caster of at least one spell level. If the Sacmesh is ever injured, it may expend one level's worth of stored spells to regenerate 1d6 hit points. After 1d4 weeks the snake will develop a telepathic bond with her host, language is not a barrier as the snake learns them from her host.

H11. COUNCIL OF THE NIHANG (Hard)

Set-up: The characters use the Mirror of Rystas to escape the Hall of Contracts and enter the coliseum where the Council of the Nihang is meeting.

Scene:

Your party emerges from the glass of the mirror and travels down a short passageway that opens up upon a huge auditorium. The basin of the auditorium is a sandy pit stained red from the numerous rituals enacted over it. An altar has been set up in the center, and upon it sits a black steel circlet and a jeweled scepter, the holy regalia of the Dark Apostate of Canceri. The most powerful and influential priests of Canceri, as well as their entourage ring the stone seats of the coliseum around it. As you enter, there is an ugly grumbling coming from the assembly.

Suddenly, a booming voice magnified by a spell of some sort cuts through the noise, "Enough!" A wax-faced man with elongated jaws and livid facial scars points an accusing finger across the pit. "We all know what you represent, Master val'Mehen! The Nerothians will not support your ascension!"

You follow the Nerothian's finger to a stately old man with fleshy lips who is dressed in indigo robes. Behind him you recognize Sulemei, a leather satchel clutched to her chest protectively. An attractive youth next to Master Palic val'Mehen snaps back at the Nerothian priest, "Some of us tire of dwelling in darkness, Master Shamesh. We were not exiled all that long ago. Many still think of themselves as Coryani."

Shamesh sneers, "I think it is ridiculous to talk of reunification when someone has defiled the holy seat of the Apostate himself! Hegrish was murdered, and his assassins must pay!"

Master val'Mehen waves a hand in dismissal. "Nonsense. Hegrish's magic grew weak. He was too feeble to govern Canceri. I am surprised anyone even noted the hour when his will let his body come undone. The Nerothians ruled by not ruling. It is time for new ideas and new leadership in the Nihang Council."

The Council begins arguing again, and something catches your attention. Kelimrhe is in the stands opposite you. As you make eye contact, Kelimrhe puts a hand on the shoulder of the man next to him, a man that wears the red armor of a warrior of Nier and looks as if he was chiseled from a single block of marble, and points your group out. The Nierite warrior looks at you once, his normally impassive mouth bending to a slight smile, and then nods.



Master val'Mehen waves his hands in the air, motioning for silence, and a quiet falls over the Council again. He turns toward the warrior of Nier. "We know where the Nerothians stand and who they will support. But what do the Nierites say, Master Eremis val'Virdan?" You notice that as Master val'Mehen speaks, Kelimrhe walks over to the Nerothians and passes a note to one of their priests.

The Nierite clears his throat and stares straight at your group. "I would like to hear what our visitors have to say."

The whole of the Nihang Council turns toward you.

This is an extremely delicate moment for the players. If they denounce the Sarishans and explain they have evidence of Hegrish's assassination, anarchy reigns. Read the following to the players.

A riot breaks out among the Nerothians. Some scream at you to give them the evidence, while others hurl accusations at the Sarishans. Master val'Mehen turns pale and immediately begins casting a spell of protection. One of his acolytes leaps at you, his blade drawn, but is abruptly cut down by a black bolt of lightning.

A man with half a face, the priest Porphal, steps in front of your group protectively, his hands smoking with necromantic energies. "Go now. The witch is fleeing. You must stop her." You follow Porphal's pointing finger and see Sulemei and a small group of men enter another Mirror of Rystas. The Mirror opens up on a stone cavern on the shores of a lake of blood.

If the players dissemble or try to stall for time when Master val'Virdan gives them their cue, the Nierite leader looks disappointed and growls, "Kill the intruders," to his men. Unless the players get to the point quick, they are

attacked by thirty 3rd level soldiers backed up by thirteen priests of Nier, all of them of levels 9 to 15. Eremis val'Viridan would have preferred that an outsider denounce the Sarishans before the Council, but he decides he can always "discover" the evidence on their corpses afterwards.

If the players decide to pursue Sulemei, read the following.

The Nihang and their followers seem more intent on slaughtering each other than your group, and pay you no heed as you push through the throng and head for the Mirror that Sulemei stepped through. You reach the Mirror and hear someone scream, "Stop them! Stop the intruders!" You have no choice now; you must enter the Mirror or be captured.

As the last of you passes through the Mirror of Rystas, you see Eremis val'Viridan, from out of the corner of your eye, heft a war hammer and take aim. Behind you there is a rush of wind and the Mirror shatters behind you and goes dark.

Rules:

Nierite Honor Guard

(LE or LN 6th level fighters)

Hit Dice: 6d10+12 (45, 42, 44, 50, 39, 41 hp)

Initiative: +7,

Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 19 (+1 Dex, +8 full plate),

Attacks: Greatsword or Greataxe+ 13

Damage: Greatsword: 2d6+7, Greataxe 1d12+7

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Ref +5, Fort +7, Will +3

Abilities: Str 19(+4), Dex 16(+3), Con 15(+2),
Int 10(+0), Wis 12(+1), Cha 10(+0)

Skills: Knowledge (Religion): +10

Feats: Weapon Focus (Greatsword or Greataxe),
Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave,
Weapon Specialization (Greatsword or
Greataxe), Improved Initiative

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: Mastercraft Greatsword or Greataxe

I. OF BURNING BLOOD AND COLD STEEL (Hard)

Set-up: This encounter takes place immediately following the last, right after the players step through the Mirror of Rystas and onto the shore beside the lake of blood.

Scene:

Sulemei and her group of a half dozen have gathered around a pillar of red crystal. They are passing around a ritual dagger, cutting their palms and smearing their blood on the surface of the crystal. Sulemei is kneeling, reading from a worn old tome that sits beside her on the ground. A short distance away, a man in ocher robes holding a glass and steel staff is surveying the scene with a critical eye. As you watch, he holds out a hand and the crystal pillar begins to pulse. Gradually, a scarlet luminescence moves from the pillar, to the man in the ocher robes, and from his other hand to the lake of blood.

Sulemei spies your group and rises, producing a many-knobbed sandstone rod from beneath her robes. "Continue to feed the ritual, Jrunka, my sweet. I will add the blood of these fools to the Ritual of Genesis."

The very air around you screams as Sulemei rips it apart, allowing things from the depths of Hell to pour forth.

It will take some time (3 rounds) for the party to reach Sulemei and her fellow summoners. In the interval, they will attempt to bring forth as many demons as possible to delay them. If the players manage to slaughter Sulemei and her followers, they realize that Jrunka is still feeding magic into the lake of blood. The only way to stop him is to kill him. *If the Gamemaster doesn't want to complicate things by using the optional rules for Ordainers, allow the players to slay him automatically, then read the following.* Otherwise, the Gamemaster may choose to have Jrunka put up a fight before going down. Then continue as normal.



You strike Jrunka a mortal blow that staggers him, driving him to one knee. The Ordainer grins at you, blood running down his masked face, "Ironic, children, isn't it? It seems my own life's blood will suffice to complete the Ritual."

His lifeless body falls to the ground and the lake suddenly overcomes its banks, swelling up to suck Jrunka into its depths. As you watch, a gore-covered hand emerges from the lake, followed by another. Within a few seconds, a wall of questing hands begins to search the shore, and where they find the body of a slain creature, they pass over it and drink it dry. The lake is rising and advancing upon you, and as it does, it screams with the anguish of a millions of souls.

This is the Blood Elemental. It is a new form of life entirely, born from the Canceri's worship and the spells of the Sarishans. Without the guidance of the Sarishans, its only thought is to eat until it has grown large enough to reproduce. Then it and its offspring will start eating all over again. If the players manage to stop it, read the following.

Your interruption of the Ritual must have accomplished something after all, for as you fight it, the creature begins to visibly weaken. Its many limbs begin to lose cohesion, and the blood from your wounds no longer rises up to attack you. The thing finally collapses and the blood of the lake flows back into itself, its surface is once more placid and the screaming stops.

Behind you, you hear a sizzling sound. The crystal that Jrunka was drawing his power from seems to have partially melted from an intense heat, leaving a roughly humanoid depression within the pillar. Whomever or whatever was trapped within the pillar appears to have burned its way up through solid rock to exit on the surface. Once the rock has cooled, you can escape the cavern by following whatever Jrunka freed.

The characters may collect the Black Book of Ymandragore from beside Sulemei's body and leave when they wish.

Rules:

Sulemei val'Mehan

(NE 9th Level Cleric of Sarish)

HD: 57hp

Initiative: +8 (+4 Dex, +4Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 feet

AC: 19/21 (+3 Studded Leather, +4 Dex, +2/+4 Circlet of Shielding)

Attacks: Sarishan Dagger +4

Damage: 1d4+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +12

Abilities: Str: 13(+1), Dex: 18(+4), Con: 12(+1), Int: 11(+0), Wis 18(+4), Cha 15(+2)

Skills: Concentration +6, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +3, Heal +7, Intimidate +4, Knowledge, Arcane +4, Knowledge, Religion (Sarish) +9, Search +2.

Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Extra Turning, Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

Challenge Rating: 6

Clerical Spells

Spell Per day: 7/6/6/5/4/2

Spells: Light, Resistance, Detect Magic, Read Magic, Guidance, Inflict Minor Wounds, Cure Minor Wounds, Summon Monster I x4, Doom, Cause

Fear, Darkness, Hold Person x2, Summon Monster II x3, Summon Monster IIIx3, Meld into Stone, Dispel Magic, Summon Monster Ix2, Spell Immunity, Greater Magic Weapon, Summon Monster V (Summons only fiendish creatures and demons) Insect Plague.

Demonic Command (Ex): A cleric of Sarish can rebuke or command Demons as an evil cleric rebukes or commands undead.

Magical Items: Rod of Flaming Contemption (Rod of Flame Extinguishing), Circlet of Shielding (+2 refection bonus, +2 additional insight bonus vs. Missile Attacks.)

Acolytes of Sarish (x6)

(3rd Level LE, NE or LN Clerics)

Hit Dice: 3d8 (14 hp)

Initiative: +1, Speed: 30 feet,

AC: 12 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge),

Attacks: Sarishan Dagger +4

Damage: 1d4+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Ref +2, Fort +3, Will +7

Abilities: Str 12(+1), Dex 13(+1), Con 11(+0),

Int 12(+1), Wis 16(+3), Cha 12(+1)

Skills: Knowledge (Religion) +6, Knowledge (Arcana): +6, Spellcraft (+6)

Feats: Dodge, Scribe Scroll, Iron Will

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Special: Spells: Cure Light Wounds, Light, Resistance, Detect Magic, Read Magic, Resistance, Summon Monster I x2, Hold Person x2, Summon Monster II (Summons only fiendish creatures and demons)

Demonic Command (Ex): A cleric of Sarish can rebuke or command Demons as an evil cleric rebukes or commands undead.

Jhrunka the Ordainer

(NE 7th Level Wizard/4th Level Ordainer)

HD: 11d4+33 (66hp)

Initiative: +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 feet

AC: 18 (+4 Bracers, +4 dex)

Attacks: Sarishan Dagger +6

Damage: 1d4+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +13

Abilities: Str: 12(+1), Dex: 16(+3), Con: 16(+3), Int: 18(+4), Wis 15(+2), Cha 10(+0)

Skills: Concentration +10, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +5, Knowledge, Arcana +9, Knowledge, Religion (The Pantheon) +8, Move Silent +7, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +10.

Feats: Empower Spell, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Penetration.

Challenge Rating: 11

Arcane Spells

Spell Per day: 4/5/4/3/2

Spells: Magic Missile, Ray of Enfeeblement, Shocking Grasp, Silent Image, True Strike, Alter Self, Darkness, Detect Thoughts, Invisibility, Haste, Hold Person, Lightning Bolt, Minor Globe of Invulnerability, Scrying.

Magical Items: Bracers of Armor +4

Ordainer Abilities (See Appendix III)

Blood Elemental

(Large Elemental)

Hit Dice: 8d8+32 (71hp)

Initiative: +2, Speed: 20 feet/swim 90ft,

AC: 20 (-1size, +2 dex, +9natural),

Attacks: Slam +10/+ 5,

Damage: 2d8+7

Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.

Saves: Ref +4, Fort +10, Will +2

Abilities: Str 20(+5), Dex 15(+2), Con 18(+4),
Int 6(-2), Wis 11(+0), Cha 10(+0)

Skills: Listen +10, Spot +10

Feats: Cleave, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: none

Special Abilities: Blood Mastery (Ex): A Blood Elemental gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls if both it and its opponent are touching a large body of blood (These modifiers are not included in the statistics block)

Elemental Type: Immune to poison, paralysis and stunning. Not subject to critical hits

Engulf (Su): A blood elemental that hits with both slams against 1 target in a round may attempt to engulf that target. The blood elemental must succeed with a touch attack to engulf a target. An engulfed target may take no action other than attempting to escape. Any living target engulfed by the blood elemental suffers 1d8 points of damage per round. Escaping is a full round action that requires a successful reflex save at DC 15.

Damage Resistance (Ex): 10/+1

Elemental Vulnerability (Ex): Suffers double damage from cold attacks.

J. THE FALL OF NISHANPUR (Hard)

Set-up: This encounter takes place once the characters have followed the passage up through the stone. At a certain point, they enter a network of caverns and only with great difficulty exit from a cave on a hill far above Nishanpur.

Scene:

After wandering for what must have been hours, your group emerges from a cleft in a rock on a hill that looks down upon the city of Nishanpur.

It looks as if the fighting between the Canceri priests has spread to the streets. Buildings lay wasted and fires rage out of control. Here and there you spot a horned demon causing havoc, or a pack of ghouls falling upon the helpless. There are also many large squads of men and women in red leather armor, rushing from place to place. These groups seem to be working in concert, and even from this distance, you can hear

priests of Nier shouting commands at them. You watch as one of the Nierite patrols comes upon a huge, goat-headed demon slaughtering people in the town square. The Nierites fan out, surround the beast, and attack it like a wolf pack. You hear the thing laughing contemptuously as it crushes a dozen of them beneath its flailing hooves, until one warrior's sword finds its throat. Then the demon falls, and the Nierites move on.

From the edge of the city, you suddenly realize that one of the many bonfires in Nishanpur is moving purposefully. A massive pillar of flame is heading up one of the main streets, toward the Council of the Nihang. Within the flames, you see the blackened figure of a man. Anything that crosses his path is consumed.

"The Sword of the Heavens," from behind you, Losknek chuckles. "You've done very well. The Sword of the Heavens has cut deep into Canceri, and soon it will fall upon all the nations of man. Let's see how they deal with that.

But we had a bargain, did we not? I've come to collect."

If the players refuse to give him the Book, Losknek is upset, but has no problem taking it from their corpses. Otherwise, read the following.

Losknek takes the Book from you and smiling broadly, turns to a particular page. "Ah, Amath, it is just as I always thought. You, always the sly one, you were. Both the Master and I miss you dearly." With that, he rips a page out of the Book and puts it in his doublet. Then he remarks to you casually, "Have you noticed that wherever this Book goes, empires crumble, cities fall, and thousands die in agony?" He drops the Book at your feet and walks away.

The players are free to pick up the Book, or not. In any case, it is not easy to decipher its secrets. It requires years of dedicated study. If they decide to leave the Book behind however, the Gamemaster may want to read a parting comment from Losknek.

From the shadows, you hear Losknek's voice, "I am impressed. Could it be that you mortals have learned wisdom? There is no gift without a price, and the ones that come easiest are sometimes the hardest to pay. I will be watching you. All of you." With that, he vanishes.

Rules:

K. A MOMENT'S RESPITE (Hard)

Set-up: On their return journey the players are largely unmolested, as all of Canceri has been turned upside down by civil war.

Scene:

You return to Ashvan and find the mood among its people oddly somber. News of the revolution in Canceri has preceded you and the populace of Milandir seems pleased, as if their years of despising the nation have been justified by the collapse of its government and the deaths of its people. You have no problem getting an audience with Duke Victor.

He meets you in the now finished hall of the Order of the Spear and clasps hands with each of you in turn. "You have done very well, and I extend my warmest regards to you and yours. I would be honored if you would count me among your friends. The Gate at Lohgin Castle has been sealed as per your- arrangement- and our enemies are at each other's throats. I have heard that the priests of Nier have seized power in Nishanpur and done away with their Council. Is that true?"

The players may explain what they wish of what they witnessed in Canceri and Duke Victor listens. Once they finish, he shrugs.

"Well, be all that as it may, I believe we may find some common ground with the priests of Nier. They are the only Canceri who have any grasp of manly honor." He sighs. "Time will tell, I suppose. Ah, but I forget... Please reside here as long as you like. Accept my hospitality- it would be a great honor to have you as my guests."

Duke Victor raises them to the status of peers of the realm of Milandir (Making them landless nobility within Milandir) and provides them with a monthly stipend (Probably in the neighborhood of 100 gold or so), as well as whatever other reasonable aid he can offer. In return he will expect them to act as his vassals, responding to his wishes when he has need of them. At the very least he will provide for them to reside in state any time they visit his demesne.

APPENDIX I – NPC MOTIVES

Bethalic val'Mehan

Motives: Bethalic is obsessed with his own potency, whether it's physical or political. He is the most overtly aggressive of the Nihangs of Sarish, and is the best-known Sarishan priest after Palic val'Mehen. Palic values Bethalic for his ability to distract the priests of the other Dark Gods from his more subtle agents.

Eremis val'Virdan

Motives: Eremis val'Virdan is as brilliant a tactician as he is emotionless a killer. But he believes in Nier completely. He knows that humanity has wandered far from what the gods intended for them, and even the Church of the Dark Triumvirate, which the Nierites sought to use to restore the old ways, has become corrupted and complacent.

Eremis is going to change all that He's going to expose the murderous Sarishans and play upon the Nerothians indignation and anger over the assassination of Apostate Hegrish. All that he requires to put his King into play are a few unwitting pawns...

Kelimirhe

Motives: A faithful Nierite, Kelimirhe works in the library of Nishanpur cataloguing artifacts and historical documents in order to find clues to the gods' original intent in creating the world. In the past he has openly criticized the direction of the Church of the Dark Triumvirate, which prompted Bhijj Lissam to approach him and solicit the librarian to act as an informer for Warmaster ul-Zheng Yi's spy ring. Seeing an opportunity, Kelimirhe reported the matter to Eremis, who devised a plan to use Milandir's agents to fulfill their own dark designs.

Losknek, Prince of Hell

Motives: Losknek is Sarish's closest advisor and the only one of the Demon God's lieutenants competent enough to carry out the god's private agenda. One of the greatest strengths and at the same time a major failing of Sarish's infernal hierarchy is that it functions largely without the god's involvement. Sarish remains neutral in all disputes between the gods and his minions are free to bargain with whichever faction they choose to. Sarish simply ensures that they keep to the letter of the deals they make, if not the spirit.

Losknek, being privy to the Demon God's private counsels however, knows that Sarish is not as aloof as many believe. He constantly has to contend with factions among his demon

followers that conspire to overthrow him. One of Losknek's interests is in breaking up these factions for his master. Of even higher priority however, Sarish wants to avoid losing a valuable servant again as he did with the Sorcerer-King. Unbeknownst to the other gods, the secrets the Sorcerer-King stole from Sarish were more sensitive than anyone realized. Losknek wants the Black Book in order to help determine how the Sorcerer-King is going to utilize the lore he pilfered.

Manetas, Fallen Valinor

Motives: Manetas was once the Pride of Illiir. He stood on the front lines in the god's battles and rallied the troops when they faltered, covering himself in military glory and winning the respect of the other Valinor.

Manetas came to the attention of Sarish during a war between Illiir and Neroth. Illiir's forces came dangerously close to wiping out the Valinor of Neroth Sarish feared that once Illiir vanquished his chief rival among the gods, that his attention would turn to other matters- such as Sarish's affairs.

So Sarish sent a honey-tongued servant to whisper in Manetas' ear. The servant appealed to Manetas' pride, arguing that while he might be Illiir's greatest Valinor, no glory would ever be enough to make him anything more than first among the god's slaves. Manetas began to chafe at Illiir's commands and eventually inspired a revolt among the god's Valinor, taking a full third of Illiir's army from him.

In the following century, Manetas subverted the First Imperium's worship of Illiir and, in secret; he managed to become the personal patron of the Emperor himself. Fearing he had traded one monster for another, Sarish moved quickly to neutralize Manetas and his closest disciples.

Only the blood of one of Manetas' human descendant's can free him from his prison (Guess one of the players has the blood of a fallen Valinor running in his veins).

Palic val'Mehen

Motives: Simple. Palic val'Mehen wants to become the Dark Apostate. He wants to reunite Canceri with the Coryani Empire, and sink his barbs into the Emperor and Patriarch. Then he wants to use the unlimited resources of the Empire to strangle the rest of Onara into submission.

The only problem is that Palic lacks the ability to accomplish this on his own. He relies far too heavily on his underlings, and they have their own agendas.

Rel Krogan

Motives: Rel is like many of the people of Milandir. He is obsessed with the idea of nobility, and puts a great deal of value on his reputation. He wants to be known far and wide as Milandir's greatest warrior. He travels from place to place, testing his mettle against other fighters to prove his worth.

Sulemei val'Mehan

Motives: Sulemei is Palic val'Mehen's right hand. She travels abroad extensively on a variety of missions, everything from persuading the Emperor of Coryani to consider reunification with Canceri to hunting down powerful artifacts like the Black Book of Ymandragore.

Privately, Sulemei knows that Palic is ultimately only a medium-sized fish in a small pond. She's far more intelligent than he is, and far more ambitious. Why? Because she's read the Black Book of Ymandragore and she knows what the Sorcerer-King is after. Everything she's doing now is a stepping-stone to getting there before he does.

Sulemei wants to become a god. The Ritual of Genesis that creates the Sarishan's Blood Elemental is a test. With a little work, she believes the same ritual will lead to her divine ascendance.

Porphal val'Mordane

Motives: A year ago, Porphal was a bitter, arrogant and ambitious priest who sought power and wanted only to become one of the Nihang.

Then he died.

He saw something on the other side that changed him, that ripped away his sense of self and made him a pure vehicle of Neroth's will. After he returned as a lich to Canceri it was obvious to all that Porphal had been touched by the God of the Dead himself, and he was offered a position on the Nihang Council.

Since then, many of his actions have been a mystery, even to other priests of Neroth. Porphal wanders from place to place, rarely taking note of the world around him. Sometimes he makes morbid, enigmatic predictions and laughs hollowly when they inevitably come true.

Whatever Porphal has become, it's a far cry from human.

Yemlid, Knight of the Red Fist

Motives: Yemlid is motivated by duty. His job is to protect Nishanpur's trade. He despises bandits and non-humans, especially elves and dwarves, races whose cultures seem to put more value on trees and rocks than they do on community. Such creatures typically aren't motivated by duty or by money, and as such they have no place in Nishanpur. Other than his racial prejudices, Yemlid can be a fair and honorable man- as long as you're human.

APPENDIX II – NEW SPELL

Neroth's Embrace

Necromancy (Evil/Death)

Level: Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 5

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Touch

Targets: One Living creature

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Fortitude partial

Spell Resistance: Half

When laying your hand upon a living creature, you drain some of the vitality from the target, causing 1d4 points of temporary strength damage and the target must make a fortitude save or an appendage (randomly determined) shrivels into a desiccated version of its former self. All actions requiring the use of this appendage are at minus 6, if a leg is shriveled, the target can no longer stand up. A creature reduced to 0 strength dies and must make a will save or return as a crypt lurker in d3 days.

APPENDIX III – NISHANPUR THE CITY OF SECRETS

When running a campaign that spans vast regions, nations and Empires, the cities visited by the players tend to blur and become indistinct. Although not meant for every small town or village visited, a city should be thought of as another important NPC.

To make an NPC stand out in the memory of players, try and give the NPC a memorable trait, such as a distinctive speech pattern or a unique style of dress. This same technique should be used when introducing a new environment to the players, such as a City.

As detailed in the manuscript, Nishanpur has quite a few interesting customs to make it distinct. Below are a few more.

The reason Nishanpur is called the City of Secrets is not because of the many deals and intrigue, which abound within its high, sun-baked walls, but rather for the unusual habit of its inhabitants speaking in a soft voice. Just above a whisper, the cities inhabitants speak as if carrying on an intimate conversation, whether asking for directions or planning an assassination of a major official. This soft-spoken manner of communication has an unsettling effect on those who have never visited Nishanpur. Rather than the loud cacophony of Coryan, the endless raucous celebrations of Sweet Savona or the eerily silent streets of Ventaka, a never-ending low murmur resonates throughout the streets of Nishanpur, the City of Secrets.

APPENDIX IV - THE ORDAINER PRESTIGE CLASS

Prerequisites:

Must be able to cast 4th level Arcane spells

Alignment: Any Evil

Concentration: 6

Spellcraft: 6

Knowledge (Arcane): 5

Feats: Any two meta-magic Feats

Level	Attack	Saves (F/R/W)	Spell Levels	Abilities
1	+0	+1/+1/+1	3	Absorb Spells, Power Meta-magic
2	+1	+2/+2/+2	6	Absorb Charges, Redirect Spell
3	+1	+3/+3/+3	9	Heal self
4	+2	+4/+4/+4	10	Reform Magic
5	+2	+5/+5/+5	12	Spell Thief, Eldritch Storm

Skills: 4 + Int per level

Class Skills: Same as Wizard

Weapons/Armor Proficiency: None

Power Mechanics

Absorb Spells: Concentration check DR: 15+Spell level or take full affect of spell (Partial Action)

Power Meta-Magic: can use stored spell levels to power a meta-magic feat (Full round action)

Absorb Charges: Can take charges out of an item 1 charge = 1 spell level (full round action)

Heal: the Ordainer can heal himself 1d8 per spell level (Full round action)

Reform Magic: Can use stored spell levels to cast spells known by the sorcerer (a wizard may cast spells known through the feat *Spell Mastery*)

Spell Theft: Touch attack. Concentration check. Steal a spell from mind of target

Eldritch Storm: 20' rad. d6 per spell level used

Taken at the first signs of The Gift (Arcane abilities), young would-be Wizards and Sorcerers are trained on the dread isle of Ymandragore, the demesne of the Sorcerer-King.

Here, they are instructed in various schools of magic. One of these schools, that of the Ordainers, trains those who go out into the world and hunt down wayward Wizards and Sorcerers. When one of these errant Mages are found, they are either taken back to Ymandragore for training if young enough or slain if too old to indoctrinate. Their ability to redirect, leech and reflect magical energy, whether Arcane or Divine, makes them uniquely suited to the task.

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Blood Reign OF NISHANPUR

"There is no gift without a price, and the ones that come easiest are sometimes the hardest to pay"

- Losknek, Prince of Hell

Neroth has reclaimed his own. After a century of rule, the Dark Apostate of Canceri has relinquished his claim upon this mortal coil and passed into oblivion. Shadows cluster among the vaults of the capital city of Nishanpur as the Nihang of the Church of the Dark Triumvirate gather to intrigue for dominance over the unquiet soul of the land. Into this passion play of fiends and vipers enter the players, in their quest to uncover lore not meant for the eyes of mortal men, to make a choice...between unspeakable evils.

Blood Reign of Nishanpur is the second part in the Canceri Chronicles, a series of adventures that focus on the malevolent nation of Canceri. This second installment in the trilogy plunges the players into the heart of this wicked nation as they desperately search for the Black Book of Ymandragore, a Tome of Unspeakable Horror and are drawn into an intricate web of deadly intrigue.

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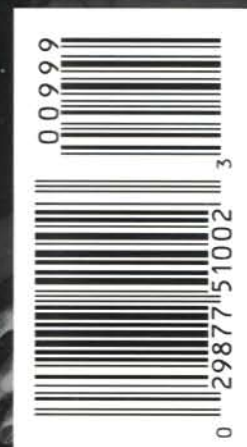
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