

Dispatch 1: Mournland Silvercloud 1

Zol, 4 Sypheros, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



Expeditionary dispatch 1: Zol, 4 Sypheros, 998 YK

From: Carnaby Goebb, Expedition Leader, Mournland Silvercloud Team

To: Professor Ingrim Jarell, Library of Korranberg

*archival reference code 4923-A: delivered ink-on-vellum,
encoded, scroll case seal intact, clockwork courier*

Dear Professor Jarell:

I am pleased to report that we have assembled our party and penetrated the perimeter fog of the Mournland with minimal casualties. We rendezvoused in Vathiron with the House Orien river guide and House Deneith sellswords your institution graciously provided (please express my thanks again to Lady ir'Korran). Upon departure from Vathiron, we numbered ten in total -- the three principles of the Silvercloud Team, two Denieth guards, our guide Keleena, and four porters.



You spoke true regarding the elemental river skiff -- it is indeed a marvel! We were able to travel upriver at an astonishing rate of speed. Fascinating!

Unfortunately, we lost one of our porters the first hour in the fog. Terrible thing, really. Strapping lad, but he fell into an increasing panic as we progressed, and suddenly dived into the brackish water. Keleena restrained me from retrieving the boy initially, and just as well -- several hours later, we found his charred remains floating downriver. He must have gone ashore and somehow circled back across our path in his wild flight. My guess is that he was felled by a *spellstorm**. Gantry thinks differently and believes the boy was deliberately placed for us to find. But then, Gantry is predisposed to dark paranoia. I should know, as I've been putting up with his wizardly conjectures for years.

By my reckoning, we've traveled approximately 10 miles into the interior from the last wisps of the fog shroud. Keleena moored the skiff and concealed it with additional protective wards from Gantry. So have we embarked on the overland portion of our journey.

The scope of the devastation is simply humbling. The land is blasted, the ground cracked and, in many places, fused into a hard, glasslike substance. What plant life we've observed is clearly mutated and apparently feeding off the twisted, arcane energies that remain. I've collected many soil and flora samples, per your request. No direct sighting of spellstorms yet, and no other living creatures whatsoever.

We have encountered several corpses along the road, however, and true to the tales, the dead do not rest in Old Cyre. Our roguish companion, Ashford, insisted on scavenging a bit. He returned with some Brelish epaulets and a very bad case of the nerves. He's a right devil with mechanical locks and traps but has no stomach for "the deadsies," as he calls them. The cadavers have not decomposed and are, in fact, still warm two years after they fell. A haunted place, this.

As we agreed, I shall try to relay this missive via clockwork courier. I can only hope your wards allow the poor beastie to navigate back through the fog shroud. Keleena has estimated four more days of travel before we reach the Cannith compound indicated on the map. I am confident we shall recover the item you require.

Yours Very Truly,

Carnaby Goebb, Expedition Leader, Mournland Silvercloud Team

* aka Living Spell, *Eberron Campaign Setting*, p. 293

NPC

Professor Ingrim Jarell, Library of Korranberg

Female gnome expert 6; CR 5; Small humanoid; HD 6d6; hp 21; Init +1; Speed 20 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +4; Grp -2; Atk +3 melee (1d3-2/19-20, dagger) or +6 ranged (1d3-2/19-20, dagger); SQ gnome traits, low-light vision; AL LN; SV Fort +2*, Ref +3*, Will +5*; Str 7, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Craft (alchemy) +8, Decipher Script +11, Diplomacy +2, Gather Information +2, Hide +5, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +8, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Listen +2, Search +4 (involving secret

doors and compartments), Spellcraft +15, Use Magical Device +8 (+12 to decipher spells on scrolls); Magical Aptitude, Skill Focus (Decipher Script), Skill Focus (Knowledge [history]).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Gnome, Riedran

Possessions: Dagger, scholar's outfit, keys to Library locked rooms, identification papers.

*Gnomes have a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against illusions.

Professor Jarell is a thin, bespectacled woman with severe facial features and a temperament to match. A brilliant scholar, she oversees most expeditionary projects sponsored by the Library of Karranberg's main campus. Her particular field of study is the history of magic in Khorvaire and Sarlona, and her knowledge in this area is matched only by her passion for acquiring historical artifacts for the library's private collection. Professor Jarell is very well-connected within Zilargo and is a great resource for information of all sorts. Anything she doesn't know offhand, she can find quickly in the Library's vast, extradimensional bookshelves.

Equipment

Elemental river skiff: Only a handful of prototypes of this experimental watercraft exist in Khorvaire. A joint venture between House Cannith and artificers from Zilargo's Library of Karranberg, the elemental river skiff was designed to quickly and quietly transport small military strike teams in the Last War. The skiff is made from soarwood and powered by a Small water elemental bound into minute carvings along both sides of the craft. Elemental river skiffs were designed to be inconspicuous. They look to be nothing more than poorly-improvised river rafts of bound tree trunks. But they are actually quite sturdy -- the skiff can carry up to 10 Medium-size humanoids -- and very swift. A skiff can move 15 mph upriver against a moderate river current or 20 mph across a lake or other relatively still water. If moving with a river current, they travel 20 mph plus the speed of the current. In an attempt to make the craft stealthier, the Cannith artificers built some additional magic into the raft but were unable to perfect the process. As a result, there is a 10 percent cumulative chance per hour in use that the skiff itself will spontaneously cast *obscuring mist* or *silence* (caster level 10; each spell can only manifest once per day). It's possible that these defects could be magically repaired and controlled, at the discretion of the DM.

Clockwork courier: Another prototype from artificers at the Library of Karranberg, a clockwork courier operates in most respects as the warforged component Final Messenger (*Eberron Campaign Setting*, p. 269) with the following differences. A clockwork courier is larger and heavier, with a built in scroll case that can hold up to 10 sheets of paper or vellum. A courier also has an internal energy generator that gives it a practically unlimited charge and range. The courier retains the Final Messenger ability to relay spoken messages and images. It can store up to 50 words in a message and three images. In the current prototype, clockwork couriers cannot be implanted into warforged.

The courier's destination is hardwired into the construct and cannot be changed once established.

Clockwork courier: Fine construct; AC 26 (touch 26, flat-footed 26); 6 hp; Speed 60 feet (flying; perfect).

Moderate transmutation, CL 11th; Craft Construct, animate objects, sending; price 8,000 gp.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

Dispatch 2: Mournland Silvercloud 2

Sul, 9 Sypheros, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



Expeditionary dispatch 2: Sul, 9 Sypheros, 998 YK

From: Carnaby Goebb, Expedition Leader, Mournland Silvercloud Team

To: Professor Ingrim Jarell, Library of Korranberg

archival reference code 4923-B: delivered ink-on-vellum, encoded, scroll case seal intact, clockwork courier

Dear Professor Jarell;

I regret to inform you that after five days of hard travel inland, we appear to be no closer to our destination of Ulieth's Valley, or the purported House Cannith compound therein, or the precious eldritch schematic your venerable institution so desires. As a point of fact, if we ever find the accursed valley, I expect peace in Droamm and snowballs in Fernia soon thereafter.

I'd heard the tales of the Mournland's chaos and insanity, but nothing prepared me for what we've encountered thus far. The pre-war maps provided by House Orien, as well as those issued by your institution, have proven utterly useless. Are you aware, good madam, that entire roads, cities, and bodies of water have been completely displaced within Old Cyre? For instance, just this morning we came across the ruined village of Autumnstead on the shore of Falls Lake. You can imagine our surprise -- by the reckoning of our guide Keleena, Autumnstead lies 200 miles to the north of our position and Falls Lake 300 miles to the east.

Nevertheless, we opted to explore what we could of the village in the hope of obtaining potable water and food. We still number nine, miraculously -- Gantry, Ashford, myself, Keleena, Keleena's three porters, and our two Denieth guards. Our supplies are running low, however, and we can scavenge nothing from the land. Vegetation is gnarled and inedible, and what small game animals we've spied are more likely to eat us, than us them. One curious phenomenon -- within Autumnstead (and elsewhere, previously) we encountered magical springs of water that manifest and disappear at random. Our miserable spelltossing Gantry, amidst his busy schedule of gloomy monologues, has managed to bottle and test several specimens. He reports that the water does indeed have healing properties -- except when it doesn't, in which case it's a deadly poison, and there's no way to discern between the two. Delightful!

By the Host, Ingrim, were it not for our mutual respect as businesspersons and my profound regard for the fury of your displeasure, I would have abandoned this expedition days ago. We are too few, too slow, and too conspicuous to be traveling openly in this blasted land. We camp here at Autumnstead tonight and proceed north tomorrow. Keleena believes she can plot a course by star reckoning and her elemental communes. Whatever strange magicks have rent this place, I fear we have only begun to experience its horrors.

Addendum: Expeditionary dispatch 2: Mol, 10 Sypheros, 998 YK

Ingrim;

As I feared, last night we were accosted by the terrible spirits of this place. These wretched haunts, terrible and fierce in their violent grief, took the life of young Hollis, one of the Denieth guards. The spirits appeared in the gloom of twilight, five in total -- misty wraiths howling in anguish. They swarmed Hollis as he stood watch and brought him low before we had a chance to react. Their wails of sorrow seemed to take from Hollis any will to resist. He simply fell to the ground, only barely wounded, as they stole from him his very essence. I beheld the shades only as they flew away in retreat -- mere wisps of fog, nothing more than hellish visages and outstretched claws. Ashford and I loosed a volley of arrows to no avail.

Keleena tells us that these ghosts are known as Mourners, bitter wraiths of soldiers betrayed in the last days of the war. Tales suggest they wander the cracked lands of Old Cyre, taking their revenge on the quick and the innocent. We've assembled a cairn, but must leave the body of master Hollis behind. I fear for his soul. We journey north now, and I am dispatching this, our second clockwork courier. I trust we shall recover this schematic you seek, good professor, and can only hope it will be worth the price already paid and those costs yet to come.

Yours Very Truly,

Carnaby Goebb, Expedition Leader, Mournland Silvercloud Team

Wandering Fonts

Similar to living spells, wandering fonts are pools of water that manifest randomly within the borders of the Mournland. There is a 10 percent chance of encountering a wandering font in any 10-mile-radius area. An encountered font has a 50% chance of possessing either healing or harming properties. Characters drinking from

or immersing themselves in a healing font benefit as per the *cure serious wounds* spell, once per hour. Conversely, a harmful font deals damage as per the *inflict serious wounds* spell. Wandering fonts manifest for 1d4+1 hours before disappearing, and there is no known method for discerning between the two types. For more details, see *Five Nations*, p. 82.

Mourner

Medium Undead

Hit Dice: 4d12 (26 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: Fly 50 ft. (good) (10 squares)

Armor Class: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+4

Attack: Claw +4 melee (1d6+2 plus 1d6 Wis)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Wail of anguish

Special Qualities: Aura of doom, damage reduction 5/magic

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

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 15, Con -, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15

Skills: Hide +9, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Spot +9

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will

Environment: The Mournland

Organization: Solitary or haunt (2-5)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 5-10 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: --



Mourners are the ghosts of Thrane soldiers betrayed in the Last War and evidently created in the cataclysm that formed the Mournland. For more details, see *Five Nations*, p. 90.

Clockwork Courier

Another prototype from artificers at the Library of Korranberg, a clockwork courier operates in most respects as the warforged component Final Messenger (*Eberron Campaign Setting*, p. 269) with the following differences. A clockwork courier is larger and heavier, with a built in scroll case that can hold up to 10 sheets of paper or vellum. A courier also has an internal energy generator that gives it a practically unlimited charge and range. The courier retains the Final Messenger ability to relay spoken messages and images. It can store up to 50 words in a message and three images. In the current prototype, clockwork couriers cannot be implanted into warforged. The courier's destination is hardwired into the construct and cannot be changed once established.

Clockwork courier: Fine construct; AC 26 (touch 26, flat-footed 26); 6 hp; Speed 60 feet (flying; perfect).

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Dispatch 3: Mournland Silvercloud 3

Sul, 16 Sypheros, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



Expeditionary dispatch 3: Sul, 16 Sypheros, 998 YK

From: Carnaby Tok, Expedition Leader, Mournland Silvercloud Team

To: Professor Ingrim Jarell, Library of Korranberg

archival reference code 4923-C: delivered ink-on-vellum, encoded, scroll case seal intact, clockwork courier

Dear Professor Jarell --

You will be pleased to hear that we have finally located Ulieth's Valley within the Mournland and ascertained the location of the hidden House Cannith compound. It is a small miracle -- all pre-War maps proved utterly useless, as did all traditional orientation processes such as star reckoning. However, thanks to Gantry's arcane resourcefulness and the abilities of our dragonmarked Orien guide Keleena, we managed to find a reliable technique of navigation in this impossible land. I'll be happy to share this valuable method(1) with you and the Library upon our return and the subsequent renegotiation of our contract.

You'll note that it has been a full week since the dispatch of our latest update via clockwork courier.(2) The intervening days have been spent in a most jolly and invigorating manner -- incessant flight from sentient spellstorms, regular encounters with the mutated dead, and a general ambiance of desperate, howling paranoia. Also, one of our porters turned into a giant cockroach.

As you will recall, we recruited four porters in Vathiron prior to our departure on the expedition proper. The porters were native Sharns, bound on a return caravan trip to that city, but we secured their services by doubling their usual fee. We lost one porter on our voyage upriver via elemental river skiff(2), but the remaining three proved stalwart and durable. Until three nights ago. 'Tis a tale for the books --

Ashford and I were awoken by the sounds of a struggle. We found our female porter, Yenna, defending herself against the sullen and generally mute porter who called himself Blatt. We were attempting to sort out the situation when Blatt, to our consternation and alarm, commenced to shed his very flesh. Within moments, a hybrid roach horror stood before us, standing upon two legs but with the torso and six claws of a grotesquely enlarged Sharn trash roach.

Ashford and myself made short work of the aberrant beast, but poor Yenna is thoroughly traumatized by her encounter with the monstrosity. I'd heard tales of these creatures in Sharn -- roach thralls(3) they are called, insects masquerading as men. Apparently, this specimen had traveled from the city in guise of a porter and was attempting to reproduce abroad. Gantry performed a perfunctory autopsy and pickled a few choice organs for later study.

So our luck continues to be grim, albeit in a most fascinating manner. Ingrid, my dear, I was a holy fool to ever undertake this expedition in the first place. But I swear on my grandmother's beard that we shall see it to completion.

As of this dispatch, we are encamped among a small boulder mound just northeast of the valley and near to the Cannith compound. The entrance itself is a small hatch in the ground, previously covered over with camouflage both actual and illusory. The mark imprinted upon the hatch seal matches the design you provided. Ashford has assessed the mechanical aspects, and Gantry assures me he can overcome the magical wards. Our supply of goodberry wine is all but depleted, so tonight we rest and attempt infiltration of the compound before dawn. Our intent is to retrieve the schema(4) as quickly as possible, then travel east across the Cyre River and into the Talenta Plains. I have contacts in Gatherhold that will shelter us there.

Yours Very Truly,

Carnaby Goebbe, Expedition Leader, Mournland Silvercloud Team

Footnotes

(1) New Spell: *Mournland Reckoning*

Mournland Reckoning

Divination

Level: Bard 2, Cleric 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 2, Travel 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: see text

Duration: 1 day/level
Saving Throw: none
Spell Resistance: no

Through the dark gloom of the Mournland twilight, a bright, beckoning star glimmers in your mind's eye, showing you the way ...

The magical energies released on the Day of Mourning rendered navigation in the Mournland next to impossible. Pre-war maps are useless, as the landscape is radically altered by magical forces. All techniques for wilderness orientation, even the stars, can be unreliable here. *Mournland reckoning* is a spell that can be used both to discern true north and/or find a single location, landmark, or item within the Mournland. Once cast, *Mournland reckoning* lets the caster automatically discern true north (as per *know direction*) for the duration of the spell. In addition, the caster can select a single location or item within the Mournland with which she is already familiar from past experience. By concentrating on this item or location, the caster can 'see' a glowing star on the horizon indicating the proper direction of travel. This illusory star glows a ghostly green and can be seen only by the caster. The caster must be able to 'see' the horizon directly (without using magical aids to penetrate walls or earth, for example), but the 'star' shines through any non-magical obscuration such as fog or cloud cover.

The spell has a chance of failure in proportion to the caster's familiarity with the location or item in question. If the spell fails, there is no effect, and the location of that particular item or location cannot be retried -- its location is obscured by the arcane eddies of the land. This spell functions only within the Mournland proper.

Familiarity	Chance of Success
Very familiar	90%
Studied carefully	70%
Seen casually	50%
Viewed once	30%

Special: A caster with any Mark of Finding or Mark of Travel adds a bonus of 20% to the usual chance of success. An ally with either Mark who helps prepare the casting of the spell adds a bonus of 10%.

Material Component: A pinch of Mournland soil.

(2) See [Expeditionary Dispatch 1](#).

(3) Roach Thrall: See *Sharn: City of Towers*, page 183.

(4) For more on House Cannith schemas, see Chapter 12 of *Eberron Campaign Setting* or the adventure *Shadows of the Last War*.

About the Author

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Dispatch 4: Mournland Silvercloud 4

Sul, 23 Sypheros, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



Expeditionary dispatch 4: Sul, 23 Sypheros, 998 YK

From: Carnaby Goebb, Expedition Leader, Mournland Silvercloud Team

To: Professor Ingram Jarell, Library of Korranberg

archival reference code 4923-D: delivered ink-on-vellum, scroll case seal intact, item teleported directly to the office of Prof. Ingram Jarell, courier unknown

Dearest Ingram --

Greetings from lovely Gatherhold! I trust you will forgive my familiarity in addressing you by first name, but since your betrayal has come fully to light, I feel we can dispense with the formalities. You're very clever, Ingram, but -- as you can plainly see -- so am I. We are in possession of the Ulieth Valley schema and currently are enjoying the hospitality of House Ghallanda here in the heart of the Talenta Plains. The House chefs do the most remarkable things with dinosaur eggs, wouldn't you agree? Ah, but I imagine you've little time for such frippery at present. I've heard sobering things regarding the displeasure of your Korranberg superiors. As for your other, more unforgiving superiors, I can only imagine ...

In any case, I suppose you want to know the final details of the Mournland Silvercloud expedition. Had you dealt squarely with myself and my team, I believe we could have both profited from the venture. As it stands, we will surely profit, and you'll need luck to simply survive.

In our last correspondence, the team was preparing to descend into the Cannith compound within Ulieth's Valley. Breaching the Cannith defenses was no easy task, you may be assured. But, of course, you knew that would be the case when you assembled our team. Ashford is one of the few rogues in all of Khorvaire with knowledge of vintage Cyran mechanical locks. Gantry's proficiency with arcane perimeter wards is unrivaled, and Keleena's Mark of Passage was required to pass the final portal.

After dealing with several still-sentient Cannith guard constructs, we penetrated the final sanctum and retrieved the schema. This is when the full genius of your plan became apparent. Throughout the exploration, I had been puzzled -- why choose me to lead the team? You, apparently, know more of my ancestry than I do, for I recognized in that final sanctum chamber some very distinctive stonework. My forefathers dug these tunnels for Cannith hundreds of years ago, and none but a true Goebb clan member could have located the secret egress behind the fourth column. As I often tell Ashford, Goebb blood comes in handy all the time.

Upon resurfacing in the Mournland, we were surrounded by a band of vicious-looking warforged -- a former Cyran reconnaissance unit, by the cast of their plating -- the very same band of warforged you paid off outside Varithon to ambush us and steal the schema.

Unfortunately for you, I had also made previous arrangements. You remember my business partner, a fellow by the name of Tok? Tallish lad, metal skin? After initially agreeing to our bargain in Sharn, I dispatched him to reconnoiter our proposed route from Vathiron into the Mournland. Tok served a solo scout in the War and operates most efficiently in this capacity. It is fortunate indeed that I did so. I hope you will forgive me for this departure from our agreed-upon protocol, but one can never be too careful in these hard days.

You see, dear Ingram, both Tok and I fought with Cyre in the final days of the Last War, alongside these very warforged soldiers you hired. The 'forged of the Mournland are not all vicious savages to be tricked, cajoled, and bought off. Some are simply war veterans, like Tok and myself. And old war companions tend to stick together.

So with Tok and our new escort leading the way, we traveled east out of the Mournland and into the wild but welcoming lands of the Talenta. We have friends here, too.

You were clever but ultimately unwise to have crossed me in this matter. When you first assembled our team to recover the Cannith artifact, I thought it odd that the assignment was not coming through the usual, proper channels. The Library of Korranberg is notoriously bureaucratic, and your negotiations had an unusual air of secrecy about them. Upon our arrival here in Gatherkeep, I sent word to an associate of mine in Zilargo, a changeling by the name of -- well, she goes by many names, doesn't she? She has since reported back to me a most interesting detail -- that funding for the Mournland Silvercloud expedition did not come from the Library at all.

Oh, Ingram. You always were ambitious. Surely even you must know that it is unhealthy to traffic with the Lords of Dust.

The schema is safe now, well-hidden and secured. I can't imagine, however, that you'll ever lay eyes upon it. Surely you're aware that other interested parties are in play.

We still may have business to conduct, however. For now, your dealings with the Lords of Dust remain our secret. If you'd care to keep it that way, send word to my associates in Sharn, via the usual channels.

Always a pleasure, madam.

Your friend,

Carnaby

Locales

Carnaby and Tok's Wondrous Emporium

In the heart of the Cyran refugee community of Sharn's Lower Tavick's Landing sits a sprawling, ramshackle tavern and used goods store with a rather incongruous name -- Carnaby and Tok's Wondrous Emporium. Proprietors Carnaby Goebbe (NG male dwarf fighter 5) and Tok (NG male warforged ranger 4) operate a legitimate business here, an informal 'town hall' and flea market for downtrodden Cyrans in Sharn.

Unbeknownst to most, however, Carnaby and Tok are experienced adventurers who use the storefront as a base of operations for gray-market expeditions and espionage. Still fiercely loyal to the people of the lost nation of Cyre, Carnaby Goebbe is well-connected within Sharn and has many allies and contacts across the Five Nations and beyond. Tok, in turn, is extremely loyal to Carnaby, his closest friend and former superior officer in the Last War. The duo specialize in assembling teams of adventurers to undertake covert missions for various, sometimes competing, interests, and they often invest the profits from these ventures back into the Cyran community of Sharn. Their activities are unofficially sanctioned by the Cyran ambassador, Lord Jairan ir'Dain, and his spymaster Tyrala. (See p. 117 of *Sharn: City of Towers*).

Player characters in Sharn may run across these two, particularly when dealing with the Cyran refugee community. Carnaby often recruits outside adventurers for special missions and is known to deal squarely with those he hires. Or, adventurers may appeal to Carnaby for help when dealing with the legitimate and/or criminal authorities of the City of Towers. If nothing else, characters in Tavick's Landing looking for a cheap place to drink or a bargain on used equipment will always find the lights on at Carnaby and Tok's Wondrous Emporium.

NPCs

Carnaby Goebbe

Male dwarf fighter 5; CR 5; Small humanoid; HD 5d10; hp 37; Init +5; Speed 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 11; flat-footed 16; Base Atk +5; Grp +3; Atk +8 (1d10+2/19-20; dwarven waraxe +1); SQ dwarf traits; AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +4, Str 13, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Craft (armorsmithing) +6, Craft (weaponsmithing) +9, Forgery +2; Gather Information +4; Heal +3, Intimidate +6, Search +4; Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Toughness, Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Investigator

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Goblin

Possessions: +1 breastplate, +1 dwarven waraxe, identification papers, various letters of introduction and passage in Sharn

Still to some degree a reluctant warrior, Carnaby was conscripted to fight for Cyre just as he was about to enter monastery to become a scholar and cleric. Carnaby's exceptional wisdom and intelligence quickly earned him a leadership position, and he spent most of the war organizing reconnaissance missions. He is a superior strategist who prefers careful, behind-the-scenes maneuvering to direct confrontation. His hair and beard are black streaked with grey, and he tends to wear rough, military-style field clothing.

Tok

Male warforged ranger 4; CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 4d8+12; hp 38; Init +0; Speed 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk +8 (1d8+6/x3; +2 composite longbow) or +7 (1d10+3/19-20; masterwork bastard sword); SQ warforged traits; AL NG; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3, Str 16, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Hide +7, Knowledge (geography) +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Search +7, Survival +9; Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Languages: Common

Possessions: combat gear plus +2 composite longbow, +2 composite plating, masterwork bastard sword, *Minor Circlet of Blasting* quiver with 40 arrows, potion of bull's strength, identification papers

The warforged construct known as Tok takes his name from the metallic thudding sound he makes when speaking. (The sound is involuntary, the result of a manufacturing error.) Forged to fight for Cyre in the Last War, Tok served as a solo reconnaissance unit. He still relies on stealth and positioning tactics in combat. When overt hostilities ended, Tok decided that his mission is still to serve the people of Cyre in any way he can. Tok's composite plating is covered with a brown-and-green enamel coating for wilderness camouflage.

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Dispatch 5: Draqam Redstone

Sul, 23 Sypheros, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



Sul, 23 Sypheros, 998 YK

From: "Iokaste," Draqam Redstone Envoy

To: "Kalostos," Draqam Redstone Principle

archival reference code 5308-A: delivered ink-on-vellum, encoded, scroll case seal intact; courier unknown; principal and envoy pseudonyms preserved

Kalostos --

It is done.

I trust you have arranged for my payment. Our mutual friend in Sharn will be attending to the transaction with House Kundarak. You requested a detailed account of the proceedings, and so I shall set to paper here my account of the relevant events.

After commissioning a coastal skiff from a village south of Breland's Shadowlock Keep, I made landfall on Draqam's rocky, southern shores three nights ago. Traveling in Orcish guise, I moved by night into the lands of the Daughters of Sora Kell. By dawn I had arrived at the gates of Vralkek.

This is indeed the Land of Monsters, and I have never seen the like. Filthy shanties ringed the perimeter of the town proper with thousands of goblins and orcs squatting amongst rock mounds and tents. Bands of gnolls appeared to be patrolling these warrens, harnessing vicious worgs and other dire beasts. Outside the gates, a crew of several hundred ogres labored among newly constructed fortifications, employing monstrous draft horses and laying a stone road headed north along the Scar River.

Within the gates, a vision I shall not soon forget. A bustling coastal town, spilling over with commerce and industry -- and not a single representative of the common races in sight. Ogre smiths bartering with bugbear soldiers, uniformed minotaurs drinking with brightly-dressed harpies and medusae. And worse -- shambling, squamous things moving about the shadows, fiendish shapes circling overhead.

I also observed several detachments of troll infantry moving purposefully through the city. To my eyes, Vralkek serves as evidence enough that the Daughters are succeeding in their efforts to unite the monstrous denizens of all the Barrens. If their reach has encompassed this southernmost port, I tremble at the thought of what is being wrought in the strongholds of Graywall and the Great Crag. The sister hags command a great power indeed if truly they rule this nation of monsters. Perhaps they should have been invited to parley at the Thronehold Accords after all.

In any event, you may inform your superiors in Flamekeep that their suspicions are confirmed -- Vralkek appears firmly in the control of the Daughters of Sora Kell. As to our other bit of business ...

I rendezvoused with the fire giant warlord Gorodan(1) at the meeting place you specified. He arrived with a retinue of three rather clannish-looking ogres, who promptly (and predictably) attempted to extort by force and intimidation the materials with which I came to barter. I restrained myself, and it's likely all three will recover enough to walk again at some point. Gorodan was reasonable after that little dance, and we made the exchange with no further unpleasantness.

Indeed, he seemed very pleased at the trophies you had secreted in the haversack. He's really rather bitter about his banishment from Xen'drik, you know. I assume the severed heads he pulled forth once belonged to those who had wronged him. That gift was an inspired touch, Kalostos -- Gorodan became quite friendly after that. We bartered in peace, he and I, and even shared a mulchmead sinister(2) before we parted.

Included here are the maps Gorodan provided. The first details a concealed route into the territories of the Battalion of the Basalt Towers(3) in Xen'drik. I'm told Gorodan enjoyed an intimate affiliation with these fiend-worshippers before his exile to Draqam. I suspect this map will fetch a premium in Stormreach.

The second is a map to the seasonal gathering point, in southern Draqam, of the Dark Pack lycanthropes your Thrane patrons wish to hunt. As you are aware, I disagree with passing this information to the Thranes. If the Silver Flame wants to continue its war against the shapeshifters, let them do so openly. I am uncomfortable with abetting clandestine race murder. Nevertheless, I pass this information to you as per our agreement. I can only hope you have another purpose in mind. Otherwise, the burden is upon you.

Most truly,

Iokaste

Footnotes:

(1) For more on the exiled Xen'drik fire giant Gorodan, see the Drow entry in the *Eberron Campaign Sourcebook*.

(2) The potent brew called *mulchmead sinister* can be found primarily in the monstrous cities of Drow, where it earned a reputation as one of Khorvaire's most unique and potent spirits. Fermented from a blotchy, purplish fungus native to Drow soil, mulchmead sinister is a syrupy, brown liquid with black swirls and a strong, smoky flavor. Consumed in excess, mulchmead sinister induces mild visual and aural hallucinations in which fiendish images and sounds seem to encroach upon reality. Many of Drow's monstrous citizens find the effect to be pleasant.

(3) Giant Factions of Xen'drik (from *Secrets of Xen'drik*, page 60) --

The giants of Xen'drik form factions based not only on racial lines but also on ideologies. Sometimes these distinctions match up, but groups of giants from disparate tribes occasionally band together for specific purposes. Three of the largest factions are described below.

Battalion of the Basalt Towers: This organization of fire giants seeks to dominate Xen'drik by forging alliances with fiends. The fire giants revere an ancient hero named Adaxus who supposedly used a demonic alliance to crown himself the so-called Fire Prince. Members of the Battalion of the Basalt Towers consider it a great honor to be possessed by a fiend.

Dominion of Purity: Giants of all races support the Dominion of Purity, an organization bent on regaining the former glory of the giant race. The Dominion of Purity aggressively recruits new members. The group has many goals, the most pressing being to reacquire the giants' escaped drow slaves.

Scriveners of the Sky: This alliance of cloud giants and storm giants seeks the lost lore of the giant empire. Unlike the Dominion of Purity, these giants do not wish to reclaim their history but only to preserve it. Scriveners of the Sky explore ancient ruins in search of old documents and relics to add to their archives.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

Dispatch 6: Xen'drik Blackwind 1

Wir, 4 Sypheros, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



In this latest dispatch, the anonymous benefactor called Kalistos -- sponsor of the previous Droamm Redstone undertaking -- once again recruits the mysterious envoy known as lokaste to initiate a new expedition. The Xen'drik Blackwind series begins with a communiqué from Kalistos, requesting a rendezvous of adventurers in Stormreach.

Wir, 4 Sypheros, 998 YK

From: Kalistos, Xen'drik Blackwind Principle

To: lokaste, Xen'drik Blackwind Envoy

archival reference code 5598-A: delivered ink-on-vellum, encoded; initial courier and method of transferal unknown

lokaste --

I thank you for your services in the Droamm affair(1) and am surpassingly pleased with the results. Your detailed reconnaissance of Droamm's southern city of Vralkek proved of great value to my clients in Flamekeep. As we agreed, I have collected my fee from the Thranes and in turn delivered your entitlement to our mutual friend in House Kundarak.

As to your concerns about the Dark Pack lycanthropes -- I caution you in this regard, lokaste. Your commission was to secure this information and deliver it to me. You need not, and ought not, concern yourself with the ultimate destination and purpose of the map. A courier is unwise to be overly inquisitive about the parcel.

With that stated, I concede that you are, of course, much more than a courier, and that our relationship runs deeper. I can assure you that your fears are unfounded. The clients who purchased the Droamm lycanthrope map hail not from Thrane. In fact, these particular worthies hail not from Khorvaire at all. But that is a story for another time, my friend.

As for your third commission -- The Xen'drik map you acquired from the fire giant Gorodan did not pass from me to any outside interest at all. This item I desired for my own purposes. I did not inform you of this at the time, for your protection. Now that I have possession of the map, I find that circumstances have changed. Time is of the essence. Might I tempt you with another proposition?

I have verified this map's authenticity as a route into the territories of the Battalion of the Basalt Towers in Xen'drik. As you know, Gorodan was a former leader in the Battalion, since exiled to the barrens of Droamm. The current leaders of the Battalion, however, are in possession of an artifact from the Age of Giants -- one of great import and value. It is this item that I principally desire.

To that end, I have assembled a small team of representatives to journey to the territories of the Battalion in Xen'drik. These individuals -- trusted and puissant, each -- will rendezvous in a fortnight at The Chapterhouse(2) in Stormreach. This venue may seem obvious, but it is deliberate. In this matter, I believe it is best to hide in plain sight.

If you choose to attend the rendezvous, make yourself present in the Chapterhouse common room at dusk on Wir, 18 Sypheros. Your contact will be an elder human scholar -- Mentarion Palinostrum from Morggrave University. I believe you know him by reputation, if nothing else. He may be traveling under another name or in another guise. Regardless, he will be wearing conspicuously a silver brooch with my personal seal upon it. I have included here a similar brooch, which I request you also display at the rendezvous. He will know you, as per your standing request, only as lokaste. Professor Palinostrum will introduce you to the others and provide further instructions



Also included here is a haversack with all the materials you will need for travel to Stormreach. I urge you to consider this proposition. The item I wish to acquire from the Xen'drik fire giants boasts a remarkable pedigree. It may prove to be of great import in regard to our mutual concern. I know that you share my suspicions about the Riedrans. It is my considered opinion that this item will shed a terrible and piercing light upon their shadowy agenda.

If I cannot appeal to your conscience, perhaps I can appeal to your good sense as a woman of fine aesthetic discrimination. In the haversack you'll find a small relic(3) from one of my previous Xen'drik expeditions. It seems of a fashion you would appreciate. I hope this will serve as your initial retainer.

Please advise quickly, by the usual channels.

Kalistos

(1) Please see [Expeditionary Dispatch, Droamm Redstone Series 1](#)

(2) **The Chapterhouse** (from *Secrets of Xen'drik*, p. 15)

The Chapterhouse (Area 10): A joint venture of House Phiarlan and House Ghallanda, this squat structure serves as tavern, hostel, and performance space. It provides inexpensive accommodations and some of the best entertainment the city has to offer. Of course, information can also be bought and sold at the Chapterhouse. With a successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) check, a character can find someone willing to talk about the latest expeditions into the interior, which ships are carrying the most mysterious cargo, or who among the locals has suddenly struck it rich (and how). The hostel almost always has rooms available at a decent price, the only drawback being that if you're staying at the Chapterhouse, you can be certain someone knows exactly what you're up to.

(3) Equipment

Bracers of the Hunter (from *Secrets of Xen'drik*, p. 145)

Powerful shamans and clerics of Vulkoor work together to create these scorpion-shell bracers to honor a clan's favored hunters. Although rare even among the drow tribes, a few pairs of these bracers have made their way into the hands of explorers, often through deadly combat with the chosen of Vulkoor.

These black bracers are made from the shell of a monstrous scorpion ritually sacrificed in honor of the drow deity Vulkoor. One side of the bracers is etched with prayers to Vulkoor. The other bears the image of a scorpion poised to strike.

The bracers

- function automatically while worn;
 - cause the wearer's skin and garb to take on the hues of the background environment, granting a +5 competence bonus on Hide checks;
 - increase the wearer's reflexes, granting a +2 competence bonus on initiative checks;
 - enhance the wearer's precision when making a sneak attack or sudden strike, and such attacks deal an additional 1d6 points of damage. This extra damage is granted only once, even if the wearer is making both a sneak attack and a sudden strike. If the wearer does not have the sudden strike or sneak attack ability, the bracers grant no additional benefit in combat;
 - project an aura of moderate divination and transmutation and have a caster level of 7th;
 - require in their construction Craft Wondrous Item, *cat's grace, disguise self, inflict moderate wounds*, 4,250 gp, 340 XP, 9 days;
 - weigh 2 lbs;
 - have a value of 8,500 gp.
-

About the Author

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Dispatch 7: Xen'drik Blackwind 2

Zor, 19 Sypheros, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



In our latest dispatch, the envoy known as lokaste reports back to her sponsor, Kalistos, after arriving in the ramshackle port town of Stormreach. Kalistos has assembled an expedition team to recover an artifact of the Age of Giants from deep within the jungles of Xen'drik. None of the members of the Xen'drik Blackwind expedition have previously met. Here, lokaste details an interesting encounter with a most unusual scholar...

Zor, 19 Sypheros, 998 YK

From: lokaste, Xen'drik Blackwind Envoy

To: Kalistos, Xen'drik Blackwind Principle

archival reference code 5598-B: delivered ink-on-vellum, magically sealed and encoded; courier and method of transferal unknown

Kalistos:

I write to you from central Stormreach, in the vicinity of The Chapterhouse. An ill wind blows this night, bringing both rain and embers, coating the streets in an ashen paste. The air brings water and fire to the earth. What manner of omen is this?

The journey from Sharn was typically arduous. After securing passage aboard a Lyrander ship, I called upon our old friend Carnaby Goebb(1) in Tavick's Landing. Resourceful as always, he provided me with a signal anchor stone for later use bargaining with the sahuagin(2).

Fortunate indeed that I took this precaution. For all their airs, the Lyrander captains can be unholy fools when navigating Shargon's Teeth. Our esteemed commander assumed the bargain he struck with his sahuagin guide in Sharn guaranteed safe passage regardless of the route. Alas, the sea devils are as territorial as the Talentans, and we were promptly boarded by two dozen angry sentinels of a rival clan. Negotiations were proceeding poorly -- weapons were drawn, as I recall -- until I dropped Carnaby's signal stone off the starboard bow. We were soon joined by a rather glorious sahuagin priestess, resplendent upon her terrifying dragon eel.

Our Lyrander captain suffered an unfortunate bout of seasickness at that sight and turned nearly as green as the sentinels. I was able to secure passage through the remaining waters by bartering directly with the priestess's representative, according to Carnaby's instructions. I never cease to marvel at the reach of that old dwarf's influence! The remainder of the journey was relatively uneventful, and I stepped onto Stormreach's battered wharves yesterday morn.

I made myself present in The Chapterhouse common room at the appointed hour and was greeted by Professor Palinostrum of Morggrave University. He appeared just as I expected, I must say -- tall and thin, elderly, scholarly. Then he dismissed his glamour, and I was confronted with the good Professor's true form -- a powerfully-built, war-scarred menace with a giant pair of ram's horns sprouting upward and back from his forehead. Interesting. This being Stormreach, of course, few even looked up from their ales.

The others in the party having been delayed, the Professor and I spoke at length. Palinostrum is quite learned and genteel, of course. Observing the protocol in matters such as these, we spoke only very generally at first. As it happens, however, we have mutual acquaintances and interests, and soon our discourse became more intimate. Are you aware of his particular eldritch appetites?

Palinostrum is a binder -- a practitioner of pact magic(3). I had heard rumors and suggestions of such disciplines but never expected to actually encounter an openly practicing binder. Within Morggrave, no less! The Professor explained to me that his horns are a manifestation of his pact magic, specific to the spirit, or vestige, to whom he is bound. My knowledge in this area is limited, but it is my understanding that these vestiges are beings beyond gods and mortals, beyond death or any of the planes.

Most fascinating! I am encouraged that Palinostrum shall be orchestrating and guiding this expedition. I should likely have pledged my assistance previous to our acquaintance, due solely to the Professor's reputation and credentials. Now that I have an appreciation for the true power that he wields, I'm glad indeed of the opportunity to quest alongside him.

We are to meet on the morrow with the remainder of our company. I shall remain in communication as best I can as we proceed with the expedition upriver and into the wilds. As per your instructions, I am keeping this correspondence, and the manner of its conveyance, undisclosed to the others. Until we speak again, Kalistos.

lokaste



Footnotes

(1) For more on the redoubtable Carnaby Goebb, see the Expeditionary Dispatch: Mournland Silvercloud series - - installments [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), and [4](#) in the archives.

(2) The Sahuagin of the Thunder Sea (from page 12 of *Secrets of Xen'drik*)

Look beneath the waves, and you'll find a vast and ancient world filled with secrets unknown to those who can breathe only air. Thousands of years of history are buried beneath the Thunder Sea. Kingdoms have risen and fallen there. Great wars have been fought between the sahuagin and aboleth slavers, between merfolk nomads and the Lords of Dust. Pirates and merchants battle sahuagin at the frontier between air and water, never dreaming of the mysteries that lie below.

The sahuagin are a powerful and sophisticated race. They are stronger, faster, and smarter than humans, with armored skin and a deadly bite. The sahuagin have a clan-based society, and they fight one another with the same zeal they devote to raiding surface vessels and fishing villages. So far, these internal struggles have kept the sahuagin from mounting a unified assault on the surface world.

Sahuagin can be found in all ten seas of Eberron, but they are most common in the Thunder Sea and the Barren Sea. For centuries, they were implacably hostile, but over time, the scholars and sages of Galifar and Zilargo were able to establish diplomatic contact with a number of sahuagin nobles. For the last two centuries, captains planning to travel across the Thunder Sea have made arrangements with the sahuagin, paying for peaceful passage and for aquatic guides to help ships navigate the dangers of Shargon's Teeth. Today, sahuagin guides can be found in all the great port cities of southern Khorvaire. In the Cliffside district of Sharn, sahuagin curses have even found their way into everyday speech.

Because of the conflicts between clans, having a sahuagin guide is not a foolproof shield against attack. A vessel must adhere to the territory of its guide's clan, and even then it might run afoul of a raiding party from a neighboring clan. Defeating such raiders won't invite retaliation, but fighting a clan in its own waters usually results in redoubled attacks as the sea devils seek to bring down their prey. Old sailors tell tales of legions of sharks led by sahuagin priestesses riding dragon eels. If caught up in such action, a ship's only hope is to cross into the territory of an opposing clan.

Adventurers in an appropriate port city can locate a sahuagin guide with a successful DC 15 Profession (sailor) check, DC 20 Knowledge (local) check, or DC 20 Gather Information check. It is also possible to negotiate with the sea devils on the open water. The Windwrights Guild has a few established points where a captain can drop anchor and drop a carved signal stone overboard to call a guide from the depths. In either case, the standard price for hiring a guide is 1% of the value of the ship itself (100 gp for a standard sailing ship). Many captains offer greater rewards in the hope of buying greater loyalty. On occasion, sahuagin have helped sailors battle threats from the deep.

(3) The Binder (from page 9 of *Tome of Magic*)

Between mortality and godhood, beyond life and undeath, souls exist in a place both forgotten and inaccessible. Mortals too strong-willed to pass into the afterlife, dead outsiders too powerful to be absorbed into their planes, the dreams of slain deities put to rest eons before the current age -- these are the beings called vestiges. A seal forms the door between these beings and reality, and knowledge is the key to opening it.

Only the binder possesses that key, because only he knows the vestiges' special seals and the rituals by which they can be called from the void beyond reality. By drawing their seals and speaking the words of power, he summons these strange entities, bargains with them, and binds them to his service.

About the Author

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Dispatch 8: Xen'drik Blackwind 3

Date Unknown
By Glenn McDonald



Our latest dispatch is a collection of hurriedly scrawled notes sent by the desperate Xen'drik Blackwind expedition to their benefactor, the mysterious patron known only as Kalistos. Previous correspondence indicates that the team was preparing to depart Stormreach to barter for an item in the possession of a fire giant faction deep within the wilds of Xen'drik. Events, as usual, do not go according to plan.

Date Unknown

From: lokaste, Xen'drik Blackwind Envoy
To: Kalistos, Xen'drik Blackwind Principle
archival reference code 5598-C: delivered ink-on-vellum, magically sealed and encoded, by animal courier

Kalistos --

Disaster has already befallen our expedition. I have little time for details, as we find ourselves deep within the wilds of Xen'drik, harried and pursued. In short -- After assembling the Blackwind team in Stormreach, we set out toward the territories of the Battalion of the Basalt Towers. According to the map Gorodon provided, the journey required overland travel through Riedran lands outside the forbidden city of Dar Qat(1). Professor Palinostrum made arrangements with Dar Qat officials before our departure to ensure safe passage, but in vain. We have been betrayed by the treacherous Riedrans!

In a narrow ravine just outside the city's main trade route, we were to meet with our guide, the expatriate Khorvarian druid known as Cairn. Instead, we were ambushed by a squad of Riedran assassins. Their attacks were, at once, physical, magical, and psionic. The assault was tactically sophisticated. Tybor was killed by a monastic warrior wielding a blade of pure psychic energy, and Jast fell to the concentrated mental attacks of two Riedran mindmages. Ashford, after engaging a trio of half-drow/half-scorpion monstrosities(2) apparently under the thrall of the Riedrans, disappeared in the melee. We would all have perished if not for the intervention of our druid guide, who arrived just as the battle was joined. Cairn brought the might of Xen'drik jungle itself to bear, and we managed a narrow escape.

We are three now -- myself, the Professor, and Cairn. I have of necessity taken the druid into our confidence, and he has agreed to send this message by way of animal courier. I can only hope it finds you in Stormreach. Alas, we must ourselves take flight, as our pursuers are closing. If it is within your power to scry or otherwise ascertain our position, please send help.

lokaste

Kalistos --

It is approximately 12 hours since we dispatched our last message. The Riedrans continue their pursuit, despite our best efforts to move quickly and lightly toward the Battalion territories. They are relentless. Cairn contends we are passing utterly without trace, thanks to his earth magic, so the Sarlonans must be tracking us by other means. The druid has summoned aid from the native creatures to delay our pursuers, but all other attempts at arcane communication and teleportation have been thwarted. Against my judgment, the professor believes we should send the attached documents to you in case we are defeated and all is lost. The included papers, magicked and encoded, indicate our current position and landmarks leading to the Battalion rendezvous. We are fatigued and far from battle ready and can only hope to keep running. Cairn reckons we are half a day from the fire giants' territories, and the Professor is confident we shall receive succor from allies there.

In sincere hope that this is not our last communication, I remain your friend ...

lokaste

Kalistos --

Our luck improves. We have seemingly eluded our Riedran pursuers and are now camped near a bluff overlooking the Basalt Tower edifice indicated on the map. However, the area is abandoned, and there is evidence of a recent siege and much bloodshed. According to the documents provided by Gorodon, the artifact we seek is secreted within the vast, cyclopean vault below, belonging to giants of a past age.

Professor Palinostrum intended to barter with the Battalion for access to the artifact, but it appears that path is closed to us now. After communing with his bound vestige(3), the professor believes the artifact is still secreted within the ancient vault. It is his assessment that we can likely overcome the wards and attempt exploration of the ancient ruins. I concur. We shall commence at dawn. I trust our next communication will bring happier news.

lokaste

Footnotes

(1) Dar Qat

Small City, Population 6,430

The city is beautiful -- more a work of art than a place of habitation. The wall surrounding the city is four times the height of a human, formed of blue crysteel that glitters in the light of the sun. It seems to have been carved from a single slab of crystal, though surely that can't be possible. Safely behind the wall rise a dozen towers of glass and stone studded with crystal spheres that pulse with all the colors of the rainbow. The buildings are smooth and rounded, with curved walls that create an aesthetic quite unlike the towers of Sharn or the ruins of Stormreach. As impressive as the city is, it is dwarfed by the massive monolith standing to the south. The ovoid monument is at least 800 feet tall and covered with a tracery of glowing lines.

Stormreach might be the largest human city in Xen'drik, but few people know that it was not the first settlement. That honor goes to Dar Qat, the outpost of the distant empire of Riedra. The Inspired lords who dominate Riedra have long been interested in the resources and secrets hidden in Xen'drik, and they established their city a full century before the pirates of Khorvaire set the first stones of Stormreach. In fact, Riedran merchant vessels have long been the favored prey of the northern pirates. Were it not for the steady stream of Riedran shipping, Stormreach might never have been established to begin with. Though many Sarlona expeditions set out from Stormreach, Dar Qat is where all Xen'drik trade goods bound for Sarlona are refined and processed.

For more on the city of Dar Qat, see page 20 of Secrets of Xen'drik.

(2) Scorrow

Eight segmented legs support the long body of a black scorpion. Where its head should be, the smooth torso of a dark-skinned elf rises up, its arms wielding silvered blades. The eyes of a hunter scan the area, while a long tail ending in a deadly stinger dances overhead.

Ecology

The scorrow's physical kinship to drow is obvious, but they are not simply transformed drow. Rather, they are a race that breeds true. Scorrow live long lives and reproduce infrequently. Their young hatch fully formed and are expected to travel with the colony from birth. Those who are unable to keep up with their elders are left to fend for themselves, for the scorrow abhor weakness in any form.

Society

Although their true origins are lost to time and the depths of the jungle, the scorrow claim that they were once the most skilled tribe of drow hunters in all Xen'drik. Their god Vulkoor admired their skill and sent to them a great gift. A colossal scorpion came to the village and stung every member of the tribe. Although the poison brought great pain, it also brought about a transformation, changing these drow into the first scorrow. The scorrow speak of the great scorpion with reverence and say that it lurks in the jungle still, appearing only to those worthy of its gifts.



The scorrow's predatory and migratory nature means that they have no central leadership or culture. Each individual or small clan lives according to its own whims. Scorrow's mutual disdain for other races mean that they rarely come into conflict with each other. The drow of Xen'drik respect the scorrow and treat them as divinely favored, but no great alliance exists between the two races. They sometimes work together -- if the scorrow view the drow as deserving their company.

For more on the scorrow, see page 81 of Secrets of Xen'drik.

Scorrow

CR 7

Usually CE Large aberration

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Common, Drow, Giant

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +9 natural)

hp 75 (10 HD) SR 21

Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +8

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee drow long knife +12/+7 (1d8+5/19-20) or

Melee sting +12 (1d6+2 plus poison) or

Melee drow long knife +10/+5 (1d8+5/19-20) and drow long knife +10 (1d8+5/19-20) and sting +7 (1d6+2 plus poison)
Ranged Xen'drik boomerang +9 (1d8+5)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +16

Atk Options poison (DC 18, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con), favored enemy animals +2, favored enemy giants +2, favored

enemy magical beasts +2

Abilities Str 21, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ scorpion empathy +11

Feats Improved Initiative, Track B, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (drow long knife), Weapon Focus (sting)

Skills Hide +11, Jump +13, Listen +9, Move Silently +15, Spot +9, Survival +12

Advancement by character class; Favored Class ranger

Possessions 2 drow long knives*, 6 Xen'drik boomerangs

* New weapon described in Chapter 5

Favored Enemies (Ex) A scorrows has animals, giants, and magical beasts as favored enemies, each at a +2 bonus. See the ranger class feature (PH 47).

Scorpion Empathy (Ex) A scorrows can improve the attitude of scorpions. This ability functions just like the druid's wild empathy class feature (PH 37), using the scorrows's Hit Dice in place of druid levels.

Skills A scorrows has a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Move Silently, and Survival checks.

(3)For more on binders and vestiges, see Expeditionary Dispatch: [Xen'drik Blackwind Series \(2\)](#).

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

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Dispatch 9: Xen'drik Blackwind 4

Date Unknown
By Glenn McDonald



Our latest dispatch concludes the Xen'drik Blackwind expedition, in which our hastily assembled mercenary team attempts to outrace the Riedrans of Sarlona to secure an artifact of unknowable power. In the previous dispatch, the Blackwind team managed to elude death squads from the Riedran outpost of Dar Qat and prepared to breach an ancient fire giant vault deep in the jungles of Xen'drik.

Date Unknown

From: Iokaste, Xen'drik Blackwind Envoy
To: Kalistos, Xen'drik Blackwind Principle
archival reference code 5598-D: delivered ink-on-vellum, magically sealed and encoded; secured and delivered by representatives of House Kundarak

Kalistos --

I am pleased, and not a little relieved, to report the successful conclusion of the Blackwind expedition. Pleased with the success. Relieved with the conclusion.

Recovery of the item has come at a steep price. Of the original Blackwind team, only myself and Ashford remain. To our number we add the druid Cairn, our Xen'drik guide, who joined us after the massacre outside Dar Qat. Indeed, without Cairn's assistance, we should never have recovered the item. Nor would we two have survived. Cairn is a singular ally, and I urge you compensate him as a full member of the expedition.

It was Cairn who finally located an entrance to the Battalion vault after our initial scouting of the fire giants' abandoned base camp. By communing directly with the nature spirits of the primeval forest, he was able to ascertain a secret entrance toward the rear of the cyclopean edifice. Evidently, this entrance was once used by the elf-slaves of Xen'drik in the age when the giants subjugated these natives.

Assuming the area to be still under the eye of the Dar Qat Riedrans, Professor Palinostrum and I employed the dust you provided to approach the entrance with stealth. Cairn, shifting to the form of a giant jungle bat, scouted above. To our surprise, we found our roguish companion Ashford, missing since the Dar Qat battle, standing guard over the entrance -- and three dead Riedran scouts. "The Sarlonans discovered the entrance," he quipped. "I discovered them."

Ashford was able to determine the nature of the locked portal after squeezing through an impossibly narrow series of burrow tunnels. A massive stone slid inward, grinding on ancient bearings, but finally permitting entrance. A spiraling corridor screwed itself down into the darkness.

I have included separately several documents that describe in detail all that we discovered within the ancient giant vault, as well as some mundane artifacts of likely interest to scholars. I am no historian but suspect this ruin to be among the most ancient in all of Xen'drik. I have seen nothing that compares. The vast halls impressed themselves upon me as wholly alien and infused with a pervasive sense of dread.

Immediately evident was the titanic scale of the interior features. Ceilings rose 30 feet in height at a minimum. Hinged doors, even when unlocked and unstuck, proved difficult to move simply because of their tremendous weight. More often than not, we could not even reach the door handles and were forced to employ ropes and hooks to pull inward-opening portals. The scale suggested inhabitants larger than any giant I have encountered.

More disturbing were the odd geometries of the vault. Angles and surfaces seemed somehow wrong -- unnerving beyond simple description. The stone walls bore a translucent tackiness to them, and when regarded for more than a moment, seemed to swim with motion.

During several hours of exploration and cataloguing, we encountered nary a living creature. The vault was apparently devoid of life, even of insects or vermin. Following Professor Palinostrum's lead, we came at last to the central chamber of the vault. Before us stood a massive archway of violet crystal perhaps 50 feet tall and half that in width. The plane of the arch acted as a mirror so that we beheld nothing beyond it but a darkened reflection of ourselves.

Here the perceptual effects were profound. A fluidity of reality pervaded all -- there were new colors here and new kinds of light. Sounds, even speech, rendered oddly -- often backward. A tactile sense of being underwater and, at the same time, falling, or flying. It pulled at our very sanity. Directly before the archway, perhaps 20 feet from the plane of the portal and some 30 feet in the air, hung suspended an iridescent dragonshard of a variety I have not previously beheld.

At this point the Professor and Cairn consulted for a moment, then Palinostrum turned to Ashford and I. "Here ends our quest," he said. "It is a dreamwar gate, a relic from the age when passage was still possible between Eberron and Dal Quor, the plane of dreams. The shard above us," he gestured, "is the item we seek. We must recover both halves of this crystal -- the one above us and the one in the dream reflection."

At this point, Palinostrum did a most unexpected thing. Incanting, he rose up in levitation and entered through the plane of the dreamwar gate. Upon passage to the other side, the Professor transformed into a kind of mirror self -- a visage at once familiar and utterly strange. Grasping the reflected dragonshard, he lowered himself to the ground, still on the other side of the mirror arch. As he descended with the mirror shard, so did the shard above us slowly drift downward. The dream image of Palinostrum then strode forward to the gate, the shard on our side eerily mirroring his motion. As the two shards touched at the plane of the gate, they locked together into a single, larger crystal which fell inert to the stone floor. The Professor, however, remained on the other side, gazing out at us with sadness.

All about us, a terrible trembling commenced as stones shook loose from the massive, vaulted ceiling and fell to the floor. Cairn urged retreat -- "The professor cannot return, he has crossed over to the place between places. This was his choice, his intent. We must flee! The shard is what the Riedrans seek, and we must see it safely away!" My last memory is of the professor's weird mirror self, his hand raised solemnly in farewell ...

We three -- Cairn, Ashford, and myself -- are assembled here at the Stormreach drop-off location you requested. In the intervening days, we have eluded the Riedrans narrowly on three separate occasions and have rendezvoused with the House Kundarak representatives as per instructions. Their retinue is impressive -- 'twas a pretty coin indeed you must have paid for this manner of safekeeping. I leave the shard in their hands now, Kalistos, and finally, in yours.

I am convinced, of course, that your suspicions are accurate -- the Riedrans are in league with the devils of Dal Quor. I wish you luck -- it is my intention to vanish, best I can, for the next few moons. Please effect final transactions through the usual channels in Sharn. Gods' luck and farewell, Kalistos. I remain, your friend.

-- lokaste

Location: Giant Ruins

(from *Secrets of Xen'drik*, page 121)

Exploring giant ruins is not nearly as simple as exploring ruins built for smaller creatures. When running an adventure that deals with such titanic buildings and dungeons, keep the following points in mind.

Doors Are Heavy: The DC to break down a giant door is increased by 2, but at the DM's option, giant doors might require a DC 10 Strength check merely to open. In the case of doors built for Huge creatures, the handle (if present) might be too high for Medium creatures to reach (just as Small creatures would have trouble reaching the handles on doors built for Large creatures).

Stairs Are Tall: Treat Large and Huge stairs as steep stairs (DMG 63). Stairs built for even larger creatures are effectively a series of short walls that must be scaled (Climb DC 10).

Walls Are Thick: Structures built for giants are taller and sturdier than normal buildings need to be. Double the thickness and hit points of walls to approximate this, and increase the DC for any such wall by 2 per added inch of thickness. Walls around giant compounds were often up to 40 feet tall to protect against other giants and large predators. *Stronghold Builder's Guidebook* has a more thorough treatment of varying wall sizes.

Locks Are Big: While locks built for Large and larger creatures are just as complex as smaller locks, their components are larger. Those attempting to open such locks take a -2 penalty on the check because of inappropriately sized tools. Shops in Stormreach sell thieves' tools made to work in giant locks but at three times the cost of normal tools.

Remember the Elves: Many giant compounds contained quarters for their smaller slaves. Some might have entire wings of rooms, corridors, and doors sized for Medium creatures. These smaller passages connect discretely to many of the important rooms in a building to allow the elves to serve their masters without being seen. In some cases, larger doors might have smaller doors set into them to allow the elves ease of access, and normal staircases might run alongside giant-sized steps.

Everything Is Bigger: Even simple things such as plates and serving knives are larger than most characters are accustomed to. As a general rule, Large items weigh eight times as much as identical items sized for Medium characters. Ceilings in a giant structure must be taller, typically 20 feet at a minimum. Traps such as pits and falling blocks are bigger (at least 10 feet by 10 feet in area), as are open structures such as windows and moats.

Magical Location: Dreamwar Gate

(from *Secrets of Xen'drik*, page 142)

The war between the giants and the quori occurred at a time when Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams, was coterminous to Xen'drik. Now Dal Quor is always remote, but shattered gates still exist where mortals could once enter the plane of dreams.

Creatures approaching a shattered dreamwar gate become aware of a twist in reality. Colors seem unnaturally bright or juxtaposed next to areas of black and white. Trees seem bent and warped as if reflected in rippled water. Bird calls sound out backward, and the sun appears to move in the wrong direction.

Lore

Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a shattered dreamwar gate by making successful Knowledge (the planes) or bardic knowledge checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 10: The giants fought a great war with the quori thousands of years ago, resulting in cataclysmic destruction.

DC 15: During the quori war, Dal Quor was coterminous to Eberron. Now the two planes are forever remote.

DC 25: Gates that once connected Dal Quor and Eberron still remain, but their links are severed. Those who enter a shattered dreamwar gate take damage but often manifest strange powers afterward.

Description: A shattered dreamwar gate appears as a massive archway of violet crystal. Green mold grows in its many pits and cracks. The area for 300 feet around a shattered dreamwar gate carries a feeling of altered reality. The landscape appears dreamlike from its long association with the Region of Dreams (though the area undergoes no physical change).

Creatures that do not dream (such as elves, kalashtar, and warforged) and creatures immune to mind-affecting spells and abilities see nothing unusual.

Prerequisite: Only a creature with a Wisdom score of 8 or higher can activate a shattered dreamwar gate. Creatures that do not dream and creatures immune to mind-affecting spells and abilities cannot activate a shattered dreamwar gate, but they take no damage from it, either.

Location Activation: To access the power of a shattered dreamwar gate, a character must move through the arch. A character doing so takes 1d6 points of Wisdom damage and disappears for three rounds, during which time he appears to those on the outside as a ghostly image that has been plunged into a terrifying nightmare.

Recharge: Once a shattered dreamwar gate has conferred a bonus to a character, it cannot affect another creature for one year.

Special Ability (Ps): A character who passes through a shattered dreamwar gate can thereafter blur the line between dreams and reality. Once per day, he can manifest false sensory input (EPH 106) as a psi-like ability with a manifester level equal to his character level. A creature that does not dream cannot be targeted with this power.

Duration: The conferred ability lasts for one year.

Aura: Moderate telepathy.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

Dispatch 10: Sharn Citydark 1

Wir, 11 Aryth, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



The Sharn Citydark series begins with a flurry of correspondence tumbling down the societal classes of the City as a cloistered scholar seeks aid from a familiar "specialty merchant." Our merchant in turn employs native delvers familiar with the City's deeper alleyways to inspect a potentially lucrative archeological find. But what they find instead begins a sinister mystery...

Wir, 11 Aryth, 998 YK

From: Provost Tal d'Archer, Morgrave University

To: Ashford Terra

archival reference code 1026-A: delivered ink-on-vellum, magically sealed and encoded; Morgrave courier service

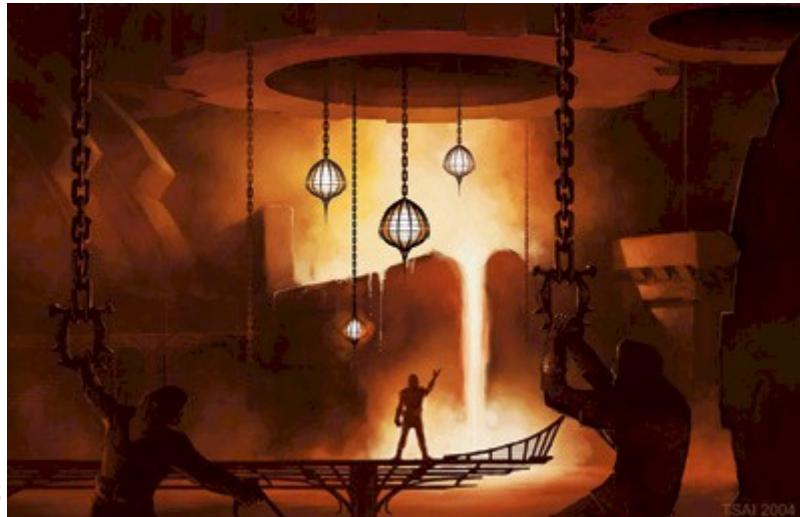
Greetings Friend Ashford!

I trust your concerns in Xen'drik(1) were successfully resolved; it's good to have you back in Sharn. Have you heard about Professor Jarell's scandalous departure from the Library of Korranberg?(2) Quite a shock to us all!

In any event, I write to request your assistance. A colleague has brought to my attention a certain matter. It seems she has come across a reference in our special collections library, heretofore unearched by our researchers. It concerns the goblinoid foundations beneath our fair city. The manuscript suggests that sometime toward the late Y'llothian period, a municipal digging team happened upon peculiar masonry while excavating a new water well. The goblins subsequently unearthed a chamber, with no visible egress, filled with strange sculptures and alien sigils. After the digging team sent word to the surface, they disappeared. Two investigative parties sent thereafter also never returned. The goblins covered the upper mouth of the water well leading to the chamber, taking great pains to seal tight the passage with both physical impediments and magical wards.

Last week, the University arranged employment of an Inquisitive familiar with the area where we believe the sealed well mouth to be located. (Dura Quarter Depths; see included map). He reports that the well mouth is indeed still extant, accessible beneath a furnace duct originating deeper into the Cogs(3). The physical seals have decayed to the point of crumbling, and he reports no aura of magical warding still present.

If indeed this well leads to ruins predating the goblinoid period, we should like to confirm with all expediency. This matter is too delicate to entrust to our effective but notoriously mercenary Inquisitive.(4) (He knows none of the details set forth here).



My request to you, then -- access the well, descend to the chamber, and return with masonry samples or any portable artifacts therein. I foresee no particular hazards here. The reports of disappearing goblin diggers are certain to owe more to goblinoid mining habits than any outside threat.

Please reply with haste.

-- Tal

Zor, 12 Aryth, 998 YK

From: Ashford Terra

To: O'bo dob'Dura

archival reference code 1026-B: delivered ink-on-vellum, sealed and encoded; courier unknown

Hello, O'bo;

See the attached message and map from our friend d'Archer at Morgrave -- you remember him, tall fellow, big tattoo on his face? I believe this area is under the hobgoblins' jurisdiction -- it's adjacent to your warren in the Depths. The map is a bit dodgy, but the well mouth appears to be near an outlying furnace duct network, possibly belonging to the local Cogmasters. You know the area better than I do.

Please go down and fetch the samples requested by d'Archer. My personal feeling? It's another sewer ghost hunt. But Morgrave pays well regardless of the samples returned, and I'm willing to double your usual commission. It should be an easy tunnel-and-grab, quick coin for us both. Still, take someone with you, to be safe. Jabber, perhaps? And keep this to yourselves. These types of scholarly secrets -- should they prove true -- are of great value in certain circles. Return the samples to me at the usual place. I know that I can trust you with this, O'bo. I need not mention our exchange with your former Darguun friends and the boon I have yet to collect.

Just leave me a note when you drop off the samples. And watch your back down there!

-- Ashford

Far, 13 Aryth, 998 YK

From: O'bo dob'Dura

To: Ashford Terra

archival reference code 1026-C: delivered ink-on-vellum, barely legible; courier unknown

Ash;

Must say to you -- play nice with O'bo! O'bo remember favor! O'bo play nice!

O'bo and Jabber sneak into Cogs last night. Jabber, him biggie magicker now, you know. But still little kobold friend to me. This place we go, it Dogface turf, you know. So Dogface come to take our coin. But Jabber no want give coin. When Dogface swing dagger, Jabber mumble him famous biggie curse, and Dogface cut him own throat! How Jabber do that?(5) Jabber make good magic now.

Jabber find old well. O'bo break top. We look down -- biggie deep well! Jabber say O'bo eat spider, for magic. So O'bo eat spider. Jabber, too. Then O'bo and Jabber walk down side of well, no problem!

Must say to you, we not find chamber. We find other thing, must say to you. Sideways tunnel into well, many feet down, blocked, heavy bars. But this tunnel, dusty and stones, maybe five suns old. O'bo not talk pretty, but you know O'bo smart. You know, friend Ash. This tunnel new, not belong this place.

As we look -- human-man, very thin, starving man, slam into bars on other side! Must say to you, scare *khtoch* out of Jabber! Him human-man say, please help. Him say they hunt him here. Him say they hunt Cyre folk here! Him say many Cyre folk here, taken and hunted and killed! Then him gasp and crossbow bolt come out him stomach! Jabber and O'bo, we climb fast, up and out.

We not go back, thank you, must say to you. O'bo worried for human-man, worried for Cyre folk.

Also, O'bo still get coin?

(1) See [Expeditionary Dispatch, Xen'drik Blackwind 4](#)

(2) See [Expeditionary Dispatch, Mournland Silvercloud 4](#)

(3) **Sharn Districts (from Chapter One of Sharn: City of Towers)**

Dura, the largest quarter in Sharn, covers the great expanse of the western plateau from the cliffs overlooking the Dagger River to the crevasse of the Western Cog. It is also the poorest, excepting the Cogs, with even its topmost levels solidly middle class. Dura mixes various businesses and housing, never approaching a true residential district but holding a number of apartments, tenements, and (near the bottom) slums. The lower levels of Dura include a large population of immigrants from Darguun and Droaam, forming a neighborhood of goblinoids and other monstrous residents.

The Depths is the generic name for everything that lies beneath the city's main plateau, excepting Cliffside and the Cogs far below. The upper levels give way to active and inactive sewers, some of which have their own inhabitants, as well as the mostly forgotten ruins of earlier settlements built long before the towers started to rise. Far below and accessed by well-maintained tunnels and shafts, the Cogs sit at the very base of Sharn and serve as an actively populated center of industry. In fact, the roots of modern Sharn's towers lie underground in some places, buried by the passing of centuries.

The Cogs are the churning heart of the city, full of forges and foundries powered by steaming geysers, molten lava, and bound fire elementals. The Cogs incorporate elements of ancient ruins and natural caverns that extend far below the foundations of Sharn's towers, built along the banks of the great chasms that divide the city.

(4) Hiring an Inquisitive (from Chapter One of Sharn: City of Towers)

An inquisitive's rates vary from customer to customer. In general, they range from 10 sp to 20 sp per day, plus expenses. (This is comparable to the results of a Profession check.) For exceptionally difficult or dangerous cases, inquisitives usually increase their rates by as much as 100% and insist on receiving an advance for several days' work. An inquisitive who brings magical resources to bear in the course of a case charges typical rates for spellcasting:

Spell	Minimum Cost*
Heal	10 sp
Light	1 sp
Protection from Evil	10 sp
Protection from Good	10 sp
Sanctuary	10 sp
True Seeing	10 sp
Wall of Fire	10 sp
Wall of Thorns	10 sp
Wall of Water	10 sp
Wall of Wind	10 sp
Wind Wall	10 sp

<i>Clairaudience/clairvoyance</i>	60 gp
<i>Discern location</i>	1,200 gp
<i>Locate creature</i>	280 gp
<i>Locate object</i>	60 gp
<i>Scrying</i>	280 gp

* The minimum cost assumes the lowest caster level that allows casting the spell. Higher-level casters produce better results and charge correspondingly more.

(5) Spell: Black Karma Curse (from page 103 of Player's Handbook II)

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Cleric 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

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

Target: One creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

With a word and a gesture, you compel the bewildered creature to attack itself.

If the target creature's saving throw fails, it immediately takes damage as if it had hit itself with its currently wielded weapon (or natural weapon). If the creature has more than one eligible attack form, it uses the one that deals the most damage.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

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Dispatch 11: Sharn Citydark 2

Sul, 15 Aryth, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



In our last dispatch, Provost Tal d'Archer of Morgrave University employed the rogue Ashford Terra to investigate an ancient goblinoid well mouth discovered in the Depths of Sharn's Dura Quarter. Ashford, in turn, sent two local associates to scout the area -- the hobgoblin warren leader O'bo dob'Dura and his kobold comrade Jabber. Their discoveries prompt Ash to make a more careful inspection...

Sul, 15 Aryth, 998 YK

From: Ashford Terra

To: Provost Tal d'Archer, Morgrave University

archival reference code 1026-D: delivered ink-on-vellum, magically sealed and encoded; Morgrave courier service

Greeting Provost d'Archer;

After receiving your note, I dispatched associates to uncover the well mouth. They were interrupted in their delve, however, when they found a new passage carved into the side of the well. There they encountered a starving human who claimed that Cyrans -- or rather, Sharn immigrants from the ruined nation of Old Cyre -- were being held captive in an underground network.

I recalled my associates and paid for their silence. I reckoned that, for reasons that will become clear in a moment, there may be political aspects to consider here. After a brief preparation, I undertook to explore the well mouth myself, along with the druid Cairn(1), with whom I believe you are familiar. What we found was disturbing indeed.

It seems the initial well is truly ancient, of goblinoid design, sealed and untouched until only very recently. A new tunnel has been joined to the original, laterally, about 30 feet below the mouth. This is of much newer construction -- within the last few months, I would reckon. It appears to have been magically excavated and sealed off with an iron portcullis.

By use of Cairn's nature magic, we descended upon the air down to the level of the lateral tunnel. The druid grasped the metal and rusted it through in an instant, allowing us entry. Cairn, as you know, is quite versatile for a druid, as home in the Depths of Sharn as he is in the deep shadows of the Eldeen. He has concerns in the Citydark, principally with planar breaches, and is well-traveled indeed -- are you aware of his pedigree within druidic circles?(2)

The tunnel led directly to a section of the old, municipal sewer system. Many tracks here, all humanoid, both boot-shod and barefoot. Cairn says many of the tracks are recognizable to him -- a boot design specific to the Brelish army. We found a holding cell scooped from the sewer wall, abandoned. The sewer section itself was choked off at both ends by collapsed rubble. These collapses were very recent, almost certainly deliberate, and completely impassable.

Within the holding cell were fresh blood and scrapings on the walls -- evidently captives trying to dig their way out. Also this -- wedged into a crack in the cell, we pried loose an epaulet of the old Cyran army, from a rather vintage period it would seem.

Finally, we found the item I am including with this package. I'm hoping Morgrave scholars can make some sense of it. I haven't seen the like(3). Whatever it is, I find to my surprise that it physically sickens me to behold it -- and I am not easily sickened.

While there exists a standing Brelish army, there is, of course, no Cyran army anymore. When my initial retainers encountered the prisoner, he claimed that Cyrans were being kept and killed or hunted. It's obvious that we have accidentally uncovered a portion of a larger network of tunnels, and that the collapses are deliberate attempts to evade immediate pursuit. What grim mystery unfolds here?

Cairn and I returned to the surface to examine the Cyran epaulet more thoroughly and to consult with our mutual friends at the Emporium(4). I have my suspicions regarding these events and think it best to avoid official channels for the present. If you choose to become involved further, meet us at dusk this night at the Emporium.

(1) NPC: Cairn, Gatekeeper and Warden of the Wood

Cairn, Gatekeeper and Warden of the Wood

Male human druid 10

NG Medium humanoid

Init +0; Senses Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Common, Aquan, Auran, Draconic, Druidic, Ignan, Riedran, Terran

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor)

hp 73 (10 HD)

Immune poison

Resist +4 against spell-like abilities of fey

Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +11

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); woodland stride

Melee +1 flaming sickle +8/+3 (1d6+1 plus 1d6 fire)

Ranged +2 shortbow +9/+4 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Point Blank Shot

Special Actions wild shape 4/day (10 hours)

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (34 charges); potions of *cure serious wounds* (x2), *gaseous form* (x2), *invisibility*

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 10th)

5th -- stoneskin, tree stride

4th -- dispel magic, nature's wrath (DC 18), rust metal, scrying (DC 18)

3rd -- cure moderate wounds (x2), speak with plants, stone shape

2nd -- animal messenger, barkskin, bear's endurance, detect aberration, fog cloud

1st -- cure light wounds (x2), entangle (DC 15), faerie fire, speak with animals

0 -- create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, light, mending, read magic

Abilities Str 10, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 19, Cha 14

SQ wild empathy +14 (+10 magical beasts), trackless step

Feats Martial Weapon Proficiency (shortbow), Natural Spell, Point Blank Shot, Track, Brew Potion

Skills Concentration +15, Handle Animal +15, Knowledge (nature) +17, Survival +19

Possessions combat gear plus +2 *wild dragonhide breastplate*, +1 flaming sickle, +2 shortbow, 50 arrows

Cairn, Dire Bat Wildshape Form

Male human druid 10

NG large animal

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +8; *blindsight*

AC 27, touch 15, flat-footed 21 (-1 size, +6 Dex, +7 *wild* armor, +5 natural)

hp 73 (10 HD)

Immune poison

Resist +4 against spell-like abilities of fey

Fort +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee bite +7 (1d8+4)

Ranged +2 shortbow +9/+4 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +7

Atk Options

Special Actions wild shape 4/day (10 hours)

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 10th) via *Natural Spell*

5th -- stoneskin, tree stride

4th -- dispel magic, nature's wrath (DC 18), rust metal, scrying (DC 18)

3rd -- cure moderate wounds (x2), speak with plants, stone shape

2nd -- animal messenger, barkskin, bear's endurance, detect aberration, fog cloud

1st -- cure light wounds (x2), entangle (DC 15), faerie fire, speak with animals

0 -- create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, light, mending, read magic

Abilities Str 17, Dex 22, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 19, Cha 14

SQ wild empathy +14 (+10 magical beasts), trackless step

Feats Natural Spell, Track

Skills Concentration +15, Handle Animal +15, Knowledge (nature) +17, Survival +19

The druid known as Cairn received his initial training as a Warden of the Wood under the tutelage of the awakened greatpine Oalian deep within the Eldeen Reaches. As he rose through the ranks, Cairn worked closely with the orcish Gatekeeper sects of the western Reaches. He is, in fact, one of the very few druidic initiates to hold official title as both a Warden and a Gatekeeper, and serves as the primary liaison between the two groups. He is also a rather advanced linguist, fluent in eight languages and familiar with a dozen more.

In recent years, Cairn has dedicated himself to determining the nature of the great catastrophe that ended the Last War and created the Mournland. His pursuit of this goal has led him to travel the breadth of Khorvaire, as well as portions of Xen'drik, Sarlona and Argoness. He is equally at home in urban and wild environments, viewing technology and civilization as merely manifestations of a deeper natural order. He reserves his wrath instead for those who would breach the planar barriers that protect Eberron from the horrors of the outer planes.

Physically, Cairn in his natural form appears as a tall, rake-thin human of advancing years, with dreadlocked blond-grey hair and windburned, weathered skin. However, when traveling or otherwise living outside the city, he tends to remain in wildshape form of a great brown bear or dire bat. His travels currently prevent him from keeping a permanent animal companion.

In battle, Cairn prefers to remain in wildshape, often hovering as a dire bat, while casting via Natural Spell. When electing to stay in human form, he will often concentrate on summoning elementals via Summon Nature's Ally, commanding them directly with his elemental language skills.

(2) Gatekeeper Hierarchy (from p. 100 of *Faiths of Eberron*)

Being few in number and widely scattered, the Gatekeepers have little formal organization. The most senior druids are usually occupied with studying the heavens, but when a threat arises, they quickly call the others. Individual bands of hunters are widely scattered in the world, many in far-flung reaches such as the Mournland and even across the seas, which makes contact difficult. Still, their Siberys observatories enhance scrying spells, greatly aiding communication.

The elder Gatekeeper of the Shadow Marches, Saala Torrn (NG female half-orc druid 14) is as close to a leader as the sect has. She does not command others or set policy, but those in search of wisdom seek her out. It is said she carries the last words of Vvaraak to his pupils, recorded in a mystic crystal passed down through generations of Gatekeepers in her clan.

Other gatekeepers and initiates serve their regions as authorities on the sect's history, preside over initiation ceremonies and major rituals, and help to pool aid against common dangers. Only a handful of gatekeepers proper exist and perhaps three dozen initiates. No more than two hundred members of the sect are aspirants, generally not exceeding 3rd level. Most aspirants are druids, but some are adepts, and the orc culture contributes quite a few spirit shamans (*Complete Divine* 14).

A typical hunting group comprises three or four combatants led by an aspirant. It's unusual for a member to exceed 5th level. In more dangerous areas or where the hunters are called together against a specific threat, a group might number up to a dozen, with two aspirants and an initiate or even a gatekeeper in command. Such groups might contain moderately high-level rangers or barbarians. A hunting group operating out of the Green Spire (a Gatekeeper bastion located in the Shadow Marches) might even include a symbiont-wearing impure prince (*Magic of Eberron* 73).

(3) Religious Equipment: Flayskin (*Faiths of Eberron* 153)

Flayskin is created by tanning leather through a lengthy alchemical process. (The leather is sometimes human skin, though this is not required.) When this special leather is worn against the skin, the substances within it slowly numb the wearer's flesh. The wearer still feels pain but can withstand more than normal. Followers of the Mockery sometimes use flayskin during rituals involving self-mutilation, allowing them to extend those rituals much longer than normal.

Any living creature wearing flayskin gains DR 2/lethal (that is, they gain damage reduction 2 against nonlethal damage only). A given application of flayskin functions for only 24 hours. After that time, the alchemical substances leave it brittle and useless. A suit of flayskin fits any character of its size category (Medium flayskin fits any Medium character, for example, but won't fit a Small or Large character). Adjust the price for smaller or larger creatures as if flayskin were armor.

Price 100 gp.

(4) a.k.a. Carnaby and Tok's Wondrous Emporium; see [Expeditionary Dispatch: Mournland Silvercloud Series 4](#)

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

Dispatch 12: Sharn Citydark 3

Wir, 18 Aryth, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



In our last dispatch, gentleman rogue Ashford Terra uncovered a grim mystery in the Depths below Sharn's Dura Quarter. Evidence suggested that Cyran refugees were being imprisoned in a secret network of tunnels beneath the City of Towers. Ashford reported back to his sponsor, the politically connected Provost Tal d'Archer of Morgrave University, and stated his intention to investigate further -- political considerations be damned.

Wir, 18 Aryth, 998 YK

From: Ashford Terra

To: Provost Tal d'Archer, Morgrave University

archival reference code 1026-E: delivered ink-on-vellum, magically sealed and encoded

Greetings Provost d'Archer;

You requested a detailed report of our investigations into the Dura Quarter situation, and that you shall have -- in the trust that some sort of justice shall be served in this foul matter. If you are reading this, then my worthy companions O'bo and Jabber have successfully located you. Along with this report, then, I deliver O'bo and Jabber to your service and their three prisoners into your custody. You crave elucidation, I suspect. Details follow.



Three days ago, after our [initial foray into the well mouth chambers](#), Cairn and I returned to the Dura Quarter surface. Having consulted with Carnaby and Tok at [the Emporium](#), I made a few immediate

discoveries that connected the events we have so far uncovered. We know that captives are being detained in the depths beneath Sharn's Dura Quarter, and evidence indicates the prisoners are Cyran refugees. Carnaby informed me that there has been a rash of disappearances from the Cyran community in Sharn -- and not just in the Dura Quarter. More than three dozen Cyrans, mostly workers employed in the Cogs, have been abducted in recent weeks. Carnaby had rallied a local militia to investigate but to no avail.

After some canvassing, we were lucky to find a witness to the latest abduction -- a young elfin street urchin known as Lilypad. She'd watched from the shadows as a group of black-clad warforged led by two humans ambushed a trio of laborers returning to the local Cyran shantytown. The attackers bound their victims and disappeared back into the tunnels.

My first thought was that perhaps my old associates in the [Boromar Clan](#) were involved. The Boromars are known to occasionally branch into kidnappings for hire or for ransom, but they are not known to employ warforged. In any case, the Cyran community has little to offer by way of ransom.

It was then that we made another interesting discovery. Carnaby, well-loved within and knowledgeable of the refugee community, ascertained a common thread among the abductees -- all were former member of the Cyran military during the Last War.

We decided to return immediately to the tunnel section and investigate further. As I reported earlier, the tunnels had been deliberately collapsed to discourage pursuit. Our druid friend Cairn offered an inventive, if somewhat terrifying, solution. Carnaby, Tok and I, along with O'bo and Jabber, waited by the collapsed tunnel until Cairn arrived. You can imagine our surprise when we spied the enormous ankheg at his heels. The fearsome beast proceeded to burrow through the debris as Cairn commanded. Quite remarkable. Cairn dismissed the beast, and we crawled through the newly excavated passage.

As we suspected, the tunnels are part of a larger network. We stood in a dank, partially flooded drainage chamber, likely a long-abandoned section of the municipal sewer system. We'd barely managed to clear the tunnel when four figures dressed in Brelish military uniforms appeared to investigate the disturbance. They were evidently as surprised to see us, as we they. Appraising the situation, I decided it best to subdue and detain these worthies before they could retreat. You know the premium I put on discretion in these matters.

Three of the four were easily overcome. In fact, they surrendered within a few heartbeats. The fourth, however, was a puissant foe. He fought hard, smart, and silently. This tall and muscular human was well trained in martial tactics and nearly felled Carnaby with a blow from his [magicked heavy pick](#). It was O'bo, startlingly, who landed the decisive stroke, having managed to flank our adversary to deliver his dagger blade between the shoulders. In retreat, the wounded fighter swallowed a potion and escaped in gaseous form through a small grate in the ceiling of the chamber.

To make a long tale brief (too late, I know), we interrogated our remaining prisoners. They told us, rather frankly, that they are paying members of an organization called the Citydark Hunting Guild. Simply put, wealthy Sharn dilettantes pay for the privilege of reliving the Last War by dressing in vintage Brelish outfits, hunting, and killing former Cyran soldiers in a quarantined system of tunnels beneath the City. The Cyrans are kidnapped, held captive, then released into the hunting grounds to be stalked and killed. Furthermore, the Cyans are also dressed in period military garb, though equipped with no weapons, and they are given no quarter. Dozens have been slaughtered already in this fashion, with dozens more still imprisoned.

Barbaric. Ghastly. Sickening. I've come to believe, friend Tal, that the greatest evils under Siberys reside not in the wastes of Kyber or the wilds of Xen'drik, but in the dark corners of men's souls.

Our captives confessed their identities and those of other hunting guild members. I regret to inform you that many are administrators within city offices, some affiliated with [elite branches of the](#)



[Sharn Watch](#): the Redcloaks, Goldwings, Blackened Book, even the King's Citadel. Our cowardly prisoners also readily named their leader, the one who escaped us. He is a fallen paladin of the Sovereign Host, a blackguard by the name of Lantana Jorgens. I believe I recall the name. Was Jorgens not a former Brelish commander? Did he not lead that lost regiment against the Cyans at the Battle of Gehan's Valley?

We are making a temporary camp here in the depths as I scribble this report. I am sending O'bo and Jabber back to the surface to deliver this and the prisoners to you. We intend to uncover and confront the leadership of this vile consortium and to liberate any remaining Cyran captives. Should we fail in our endeavor, I trust you will ... well, no more need be written here.

In the bright assumption that we meet again, I remain, your friend.

-- Ash



The Boromar Clan (from Chapter 5 of *Sharn: City of Towers*)

The Boromar Clan is the most powerful criminal organization in Sharn. From a humble start as a gang of smugglers and thieves, the Boromars have risen to become one of the most influential forces in the city. They have a stranglehold on the smuggling trade and own the majority of gambling halls in the city. Most of the fences and thieves in Sharn either work directly for the Boromars or pay tribute in exchange for independence. This clan controls a vast network of extortion, blackmail, and graft that extends from the slums of Lower Dura to the heights of Skyway, with its headquarters in the halfling district of Little Plains (in Middle Menthis).

Their influence reaches far beyond the criminal underworld. The early Boromar patriarchs invested wisely over the centuries, so that today the Boromars are one of the Sixty families of Sharn. The Boromar Clan owns many of the warehouses in Precarious and Cogsedge. It owns taverns and inns throughout the city and has a considerable interest in the shipping trade. A Boromar heir sits on the city council of Sharn, and the current patriarch is a member of the Gold Concord of the Aurum.

Spell: Weapon of the Deity (from Chapter 6 of *Faiths of Eberron*)

Weapon of the Deity

Transmutation

Level: Blackguard 3, cleric 3, paladin 3

Components: V, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Weapon touched

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

You utter a brief prayer, and your weapon transforms into an awesome expression of your god's power.

You must be holding your deity's favored weapon to cast this spell. You can use the weapon as if you had proficiency with it even if you normally do not. The weapon gains a +1 enhancement bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls and an additional special ability (see the list below). A double weapon gains this enhancement bonus and special ability for only one of its two ends, as chosen by you.

When you reach caster level 9, the enhancement bonus of the weapon increases to +2. At 12th level, the bonus rises to +3, at 15th level it is +4, and at 18th level it becomes +5.

The list below includes deities described in *Faiths of Eberron* along with the five alignment components. If a cleric worshiping a different deity casts this spell, the DM should assign an appropriate weapon special ability of the same power level as those given here.

Arawai: +1 thundering Morningstar
Aureon: +1 spell-storing quarterstaff
Balinor: +1 earthbound battleaxe
The Becoming God: +1 defending spiked gauntlet or battlefist
The Blood of Vol: +1 keen dagger
Cults of the Dragon Below: +1 vicious heavy pick
Boldrei: +1 defending spear
The Dark Six: +1 keen kama
The Devourer: +1 waterborn trident
Dol Arrah: +1 merciful halberd
Dol Dorn: +1 mighty cleaving longsword
The Fury: +1 vicious rapier
The Keeper: +1 frost scythe
Kol Korran: +1 defending heavy mace
The Lord of Blades: +1 shock greatsword
The Mockery: +1 keen kama
Olladra: +1 lucky sickle
Onatar: +1 flaming warhammer
The Path of Light: +1 flaming gauntlet (unarmed strike)
The Shadow: +1 spell storing quarterstaff
The Sovereign Host: +1 defending longsword
The Silver Flame: +1 seeking longbow
The Spirits of the Past: +1 keen double scimitar
The Traveler: +1 lucky scimitar
The Undying Court: +1 undead bane scimitar

Chaos: +1 shock battleaxe
Evil: +1 mighty cleaving light flail
Good: +1 frost warhammer
Law: +1 flaming longsword
Neutral: +1 defending heavy mace

The Sharn Watch (from Chapter 4 of *Sharn: City of Towers*)

The Sharn Watch is the overarching organization that enforces the laws of the city. The sentinels of the Watch patrol the streets of Sharn, ever vigilant for signs of unrest. Unfortunately, the Sharn Watch is riddled with corruption, from the commanding officers down to the patrols. A few dedicated guards truly want to protect the innocent, but bribery runs rampant, and the watch has a way of never showing up at the same time as Daask or the Boromar clan.

While the majority of the members of the Watch are simple street pounders, it includes a few elite divisions that have special duties. A few of these groups -- such as the Blackened Book and the Guardians of the Gate -- are described in *Sharn: City of Towers*. Other branches include the Wharf Watch, who oversee trade and taxation (despite the name, they operate throughout the city); the Cog Guards (who patrol the reservoirs and most critical areas of the sewer systems); and the Goldwings, an air cavalry unit that uses Vadalis-trained hippogriffs to scout for trouble and respond to mid-air crimes.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

Dispatch 13: Sharn Citydark 4

Far, 20 Aryth, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



In the conclusion to our Sharn Citydark series -- or is it a conclusion? -- gentleman rogue Ashford Terra leads his team to confront the leadership of the Citydark Hunting Guild. This vile consortium, led by the fallen paladin Lantana Jorgens, arranges for dilettante Brelish "soldiers" -- powerful politicians and administrators within Sharn -- to relieve the Last War by hunting Cyran refugees in killing grounds below the City of Towers. But as Ashford soon discovers, still more shades of darkness wait to be dispelled.

Far, 20 Aryth, 998 YK

From: Ashford Terra

To: Provost Tal d'Archer, Morgrave University

archival reference code 1026-F: delivered ink-on-vellum, magically sealed and encoded

Hallo Tal,

I write you from the grim wards of a House Jorasco infirmary, the exact location of which I prefer to keep undeclared in this missive. Please make contact via our usual channels. I am unsure of the extent of this conspiracy, and matters have become considerably more complex, as you shall see.

Our mission to uncover the true leadership of the foul Hunting Guild has failed. [When last we corresponded](#), our small party prepared to delve deeper into the hermetic tunnels beneath the Dura Quarter Depths. The rescue party consisted of myself, the druid Cairn, and our stalwart allies -- the dwarf Carnaby Goebb and his warforged companion Tok. Our objective -- to liberate the remaining Cyran prisoners and bring their captors to justice or to the sword.

We explored the tunnel network slowly and carefully, for much of the night and into the morning. Cairn readily detected many tracks despite conspicuous attempts to obscure and remove evidence. As we suspected, the killing ground labyrinth had been sealed off from the surrounding warrens and Cogs facilities. Many of the passageways and holding cells were renovated from old municipal sewers, some predating modern Sharn. In one apparently overlooked alcove, we found several papers which may identify Hunting Guild members. They are included here, along with a rough map of the tunnels. If your Morgrave scholars can break the wards and codes, we may be able to ascertain the true dimensions of the conspiracy.

We also discovered, after some backtracking, an illusory wall in the northernmost chamber concealing a sloping, rough-hewn passage leading into darkness. We followed this for perhaps an hour when the tunnel opened, revealing a massive underground lake. There we beheld a horror -- the remaining Cyran captives, dead and piled grotesquely at the edge of the fetid waters.

Events transpired very quickly after that. The water of the underground lake began to bubble and boil, and Carnaby went suddenly rigid. He turned to me and spoke with a voice that was not his own: "You cannot defeat me. I am old beyond your reckoning, powerful beyond your ken."

In a flash, two massive tentacles burst forth from the water, seizing our warforged companion Tok and dragging him into the lake. In the same instant, I was assailed by a powerful, malign presence in my own mind. I fell prone as the alien entity assaulted my thoughts and senses. Carnaby raised his axe, confusion and pain in his eyes.

Beside me, Cairn hissed, "Aboleth!" He pulled me to my feet and pushed me toward the tunnel. "Flee, Ashford! I alone must confront this one!" A third tentacle thrust forth from the water then, sending me sprawling down the tunnel and covering me in a viscous, acidic slime. Overcome with an alien fear, I fled, chancing one last glimpse toward the water's edge. A most remarkable sight, as Cairn morphed into a giant octopus and slid into the lake to battle the aberration.



To my shame, this is all I am able to report. I know not the fate of my three companions left below. The aboleth's attack has left me afflicted with a most debilitating malady -- my flesh has decayed into a thin, translucent membrane. The Jorasco physicians are keeping me submerged in a healing solution, but until they can overcome the disease, I am helpless.

Please advise at once. Whether Jorgens and the Hunting Guild are in league with the aberration, or perhaps in thrall to it, I cannot say. But I intend to rejoin my companions. Or failing that, to avenge them -- and the fallen Cyrans.

Ash

Organization: The Citydark Hunting Guild

In the final years of the Last War, Cyre and Breland squared off in a brutal war of attrition, with each side taking devastating losses. One particularly bloody engagement was the Battle of Gehan's Valley, in which an entire regiment of Brelish soldiers was lost. The military leader of that lost regiment, the human paladin Lantana Jorgens, escaped death but went mad with grief and rage, falling from grace and becoming a feared blackguard.

Jorgens eventually returned to Sharn, his physical appearance radically altered by unknown means, and assumed a new identity as a wealthy art dealer from Zilargo. While maintaining this guise, Jorgens founded the organization that has come to be known as the Citydark Hunting Guild. Recruiting like-minded individuals -- former Brelish military officers unwilling to embrace peace -- he initiated his own mad continuation of the war. Jorgens excavated a "hunting ground" beneath the Dura Quarter in Sharn, adapting unused tunnel networks and sealing off the labyrinth from other passages in the Depths and the Cogs. His rage curdled into an unholy obsession, Jorgens kidnapped dozens of Cyran refugees, setting them loose in the tunnels to be hunted down and executed in a twisted perversion of battle.

Jorgens has since found a growing clientele willing to pay for the privilege of hunting unarmed Cyrans for sport. In fact, the Citydark Hunting Guild has become the ultimate thrill for certain decadent and cruel aristocrats in Sharn. As his operation has grown, so has Jorgens' madness. He now barteres with the Cults of the Dragon Below to expand his underground territory and has recently begun trafficking with powerful aberrations deep below the city. His lieutenants, seeking new prey for the clientele, have expanded their efforts, abducting not just Cyrans but many other innocents from Sharn's desperate lower classes.

About the Author

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Dispatch 14: Q'Barra Blidenstone 1

Far, 20 Aryth, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



Our Q'Barra Blidenstone Series begins with a communiqué from the dragonmarked gnomish bard Fell Severins to his House Sivis superiors. Fell has been dispatched to the wilds of Q'Barra to make contact with a reclusive utopian cult known as the Anand. The cult is said to be in possession of a legendary relic known as the Blidenstone, an ancient tablet that may unlock linguistic secrets of great value to House Sivis. In particular, legends say the Blidenstone provides the key link between the modern Common tongue and the Old Common of Khorvaire's first Sarlonan settlers, and may reveal a portion of the Draconic Prophecy.

Far, 20 Aryth, 998 YK

From: Fell Severins

To: Viceroy Camilla Severins, Overseer, Korranberg Sivis Enclave

archival reference code 1026-F: transcribed from message via augmented speaking stone, magically sealed and encoded

Greetings, sister mine;

I must, of necessity, be brief. Uncharacteristic, I know -- I can feel your gratitude e'en o'er this distance. Our team assembled yesterday morn at the rendezvous point near the mouth of the Crimson River. The Lhazaar sea rogues proved as good as their word, for once, and the journey from Regalport was unremarkable. I'll assume you have your reasons for this roundabout approach. We disembarked and quickly set up a small, concealed base camp.

Our Q'Barran river guides, a pair of loquacious lizardfolk, arrived at the appointed hour, and we broke bread to seal the bargain. "Bread" being loosely applied here -- I suspect lizardfolk are the race for which the term omnivore was invented. You would find them interesting from a linguistic standpoint as well. They speak a jumbled mix of Common and Draconic -- incessantly. We now number seven -- myself, the Jorasco healer Jin-Mae, our guides, and the three Deneith sellswords we took on in Regalport.

We moved upriver via river skiff for half a day, then moored and began the overland journey into the Basura Swamp. Well-named, this place -- what a mess. I may be your ne'er-do-well sibling, Cami, and desperately in need of gainful employ, but knee-deep in these fetid waters, I can only assume you have assigned me this mission out of spite. I'll have my revenge.

There was a diverting interlude yesterday at dusk. I clambered atop a mound of relatively dry land, thinking to air out a bit and count my leeches, when to my dismay the earth mound rose up on two legs and flung me back into the swamp. Before us loomed a monstrosity, seemingly half-plant and half-giant, with roots and vines hanging from its massive limbs.

The Q'Barrans reacted swiftly, peppering the beast with javelins. The Deneith soldiers waded in with swords but were rudely and painfully swatted away. At the urging of the native guides, they soon switched to ranged weapons, and the Jorasco halfling ultimately felled the giant with a pillar of divine flame. Me? I took notes.

Afterward, the Q'Barrans explained that our foe was what they call a hullock, or swamp giant. These sleeping goliaths litter the Basura swamp, evidently. They are barely sentient swamp beasts, more vegetable than animal. Charming.

We resume our trek at dawn. Our guides estimate another full day before we enter the territories of the Anand. I will send updates as events warrant. Enjoy your comfortable bed.

Your brother,

Fell

Addendum: Reply from Viceroy Severins, via augmented speaking stone: You call this brief? Keep your dispatches concise, brother, and dispense please with the familiar tone. Need I remind you that this is official House business? By the Word, Fell, you are impossible! The Q'Barran's language is intriguing, though. Make some transcriptions, will you?

Hullock (Swamp Giant)

The fetid swamp waters ripple outward as the massive mound of vegetation slowly uncurls itself to stand on two legs. Steam rises from its lichen- and algae-covered limbs, trailing roots and vines that dangle back down into the water. It gazes upon you evenly, eyes calm with the wisdom of the ancient fen.

Hullock, CR 7

Always Neutral Large Giant

Init -1; Senses low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Giant

AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20

(-1 size -1 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 119 (14 HD)

Immune poison, paralysis, stunning, critical hits

Fort +15, Ref +3, Will +4

Weakness: vulnerability to fire

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); Wetland Stride

Melee slam +16 (1d8+7) with Mighty Swat or

Melee full attack; 2 slams +16 (1d8+7) with Mighty Swat

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

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +20

Atk Options Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Abilities Str 25, Dex 8, Con 19, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 7

SQ plant traits (partial)

Feats Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Attack, Power Attack

Skills Hide +16*

Advancement 15-18 HD (Large); 19-24 HD (Huge)

Plant Traits (partial): Immune to poison, paralysis, stunning, and critical hits

Wetland Stride (Ex): A hullock may move through any sort of marsh or swamp terrain at normal speed and without suffering any other impairment.

Mighty Swat (Ex): As a standard action, a hullock may deliver a mighty swat. If the hullock hits a corporeal opponent smaller than itself with a mighty swat, its opponent must succeed on a Reflex save (DC = 24) or be knocked flying 20 feet in a direction of the attacking creature's choice, where the swatted creature falls prone. The attacking creature can swat the opponent only in a straight line, and the opponent can't move closer to the attacking creature than the square it started in. If an obstacle prevents the completion of the opponent's move, the opponent and the obstacle each take 2d6 points of damage, and the opponent stops in the space adjacent to the obstacle.

* +8 racial bonus on Hide checks in marsh or forest

Hullocks, or swamp giants, are a surpassingly rare and primitive race that withdrew from the civilized world eons ago, seeking a physical and spiritual union with the swamplands they inhabit. Hullocks spend most of the year in a kind of dormant stasis, curled under the waters of the swamp, drawing sustenance from the biosystem itself. Hullocks have, over the course of hundreds of generations, developed a hybrid vegetable/animal physiology that is still evolving.

Strategies and Tactics

When dormant, hullocks remain almost entirely still on the floor of the swamp, their curled, vegetation-covered backs protruding from the water. A DC 34 Spot check is needed to differentiate a dormant hullock from a typical swamp mound. Anyone with ranks in Survival or Knowledge (nature) can use one of those skills instead of Spot to notice the hullock. A hullock usually is indifferent to passing creatures unless the hullock's habitat is disturbed or threatened.

If a dormant hullock feels threatened, it becomes active as a standard action, rising from the waters and attacking with its slam and mighty swat attacks. The hullock's in-process evolutionary transformation into vegetable life has blunted much of its sentient thought. It acts on primitive instinct, attacking nearby creatures first, and often employing its power attack feat along with its mighty swat. Hullocks usually enjoy a mobility advantage because of their wetland stride ability; they can swat an opponent and pursue quickly for another attack. Once engaged in combat, hullocks fight to the death.

Ecology

Dormant and submerged most of the year, hullocks extend shallow roots from the vegetable elements in their bodies, drawing much of their nourishment from the soil and waters of the swampland. (These roots are snapped or pulled out when the Hullock becomes active.) When dormant, a hullock must keep some portion of its body above the water to breathe via its hybrid respiration system. Hullocks regularly become active to forage, using their animal digestive tract to consume nearby plants, fish, and small animals. Newborns are birthed underwater and remain with their group (or "stand") until maturity as non-combatants. Because of their unique physiology -- essentially an early stage of transition from animal to vegetable form -- hullocks retain the Giant type but have assumed some immunities of the Plant type. It's likely that as the evolutionary process continues, hullocks will be properly classified as Plant (augmented Giant).

Environment: Hullocks are found only in warm or temperate forests or marshes -- specifically, the most remote and fertile of swamplands. The giants seek out secluded areas where they can practice their natural commune with minimum interruption. If civilization does encroach, hullocks usually move en masse deeper into the swamplands.

Typical Physical Characteristics: When active, hullocks appear as massive humanoids with decidedly vegetable characteristics. Their skin is a mossy green, usually completely covered with algae, vines, grass, and sometimes even flowers. Larger roots hang from their arms and chest. Hullocks never use armor, equipment, or weapons.

Society

For a period of several weeks in the early spring, all hullocks in a particular ecosystem become active to gather, mate, and participate in ritual eating. Otherwise, hullocks have no society to speak of. They retain the ability to speak Giant and a primitive dialect of Common.

Alignment: Hullocks are always true neutral. Long ago, they shed most higher thought processes and now exist simply to procreate and continue their communion with the swamp environment. They are not hostile except when they or their habitat is threatened.

Typical Treasure: Hullocks possess no sense of acquisition or ownership, so any treasure is likely found among the remains of former victims, submerged beneath the water and muck of the swamp (DC 25 Search). Occasionally, valuables might be found embedded in the hybrid plant/animal flesh of the hullock itself.

Lore

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (nature) can learn more about this creature. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (nature)

DC Result

- 15 Hullocks are giant creatures that rest under the water of swamps, where their protruding backs are often mistaken for patches of dry land.
- 20 Hullocks have a hybrid animal/vegetable physiology.
- 25 Hullocks' plantlike traits grant them certain immunities, but they are vulnerable to fire.

About the Author

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Dispatch 15: Q'Barra Blindenstone 2

Sul, 22 Aryth, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



As our Q'Barra Blindenstone Series continues, House Sivis bard Fell Severins leads his expedition into the wilds of Q'Barra, intending to make contact with a reclusive utopian cult known as the Anand. The Anand are said possess the Blindenstone, an ancient tablet able to unlock certain linguistic secrets of the Draconic Prophecy.

Sul, 22 Aryth, 998 YK

From: Fell Severins

To: Viceroy Camilla Severins, Overseer, Korranberg Sivis Enclave

archival reference code 1043-B: transcribed from message via augmented speaking stone, magically sealed and encoded

Greetings again, sister mine;

We are two days travel north of the Crimson River now, deep in the heart of Q'Barra's Basura Swamp. Q'Barra's rotting, stinking, snake-infested Basura Swamp. I am attempting to compose a song about our travels here but can't think of anything that rhymes with "loathsome." Any ideas, sister? At least we have left the fetid plains of standing water behind us and are moving slowly into higher elevations of relatively dry land. That the Anand would choose to pioneer their utopian society here is final evidence that these good gentlefolk are, indeed, insane.

In fact, just earlier today, I made the acquaintance of another native beastie. A "croc-o-dile," I believe it is called. Huge. Ill-tempered. Like a snake with legs. Horrid. You know my feelings about snakes of any sort, so I immediately panicked and set upon the brute my dragonmark projection. [Interesting spell](#), that -- picked it up from Wordsmith Santor at the Guildhouse last spring. 'Twas rather a mismatch, but the Denieth sellswords we hired on in Regalport found my display quite impressive. They are noticeably more polite now.

At any rate, I bring tidings grimmer still. Our guides assure us that we are well within the territories of the Anand now. Still we have seen no trace of their settlements. The Anand are known to be semi-nomadic, however, so we press forward in the hope that we've arrived in the midst of some seasonal migration.

This is not to say we have seen no signs of passage. Toward dusk yesterday, our Jorasco healer Jin-Mae literally stumbled across the corpse of a [hillock](#), one of the native swamp giant hybrids that haunt this forsaken marsh. The brute was riddled with arrows and evidently was felled mere hours before our arrival. On examining the projectiles, I noted the arrows were of two distinct varieties. The fletching on the first was unique and specific to the elite spirit runners of House Phiarlan.



The second variety was surpassing strange. I am comfortably convinced that the arrows are of Riedran origin. As you know, I've made quite the study of our reclusive Sarlonan friends, gathering information and artifacts for several years now. The Riedran's standing military, the Harmonious Shield, uses native Sarlonan materials in their weaponry. Easy enough to spot, if you know what you're looking for.

Our Oversight agents* warned before launching this expedition that other Houses would likely be interested in acquiring the Blindenstone. It does not surprise me that House Phiarlan would be involved, whether of its own accord or, more likely, on retainer to others. But what are the Riedrans doing here?

We press on. Perhaps you can consult with others regarding Sivis policy and protocol? I would better know our standing here before we encounter the Phiarlan representatives, and I do not relish the thought of negotiating with the Riedrans.

Your brother,

Fell

* Organization: Oversight, House Sivis

(from p. 71 of *Dragonmarked*)

Oversight is the security arm of House Sivis. It defends the house's reputation for absolute confidentiality and impartiality. Oversight protects Sivis from spies and scrying eyes but also polices the house membership, swiftly

punishing those who threaten the stability of the organization. In addition to its own highly skilled agents, Oversight often works with operatives of Phiarlan and Thuranni, House Kundarak, and the Trust, creating the tightest web of secrecy that gold can buy. As with Zilargo and the Trust, Oversight is allowed a great deal of latitude in its methods. Gnomes who leak house secrets have a tendency to simply disappear.

Spell: Summon Living Dragonmark

(from p. 153 of *Dragonmarked*)

Summon Living Dragonmark

Conjuration (Summoning) [Force]

Level: Bard 3, cleric 3, sorcerer/wizard 3

Components: V, S, Dr

Casting Time: 1 round

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

Effect: One summoned living dragonmark

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You summon a writhing mass of energy with a vaguely dragonlike form, not unlike a three-dimensional version of your dragonmark.

A living dragonmark appears where you designate within the spell's range and acts immediately, on your turn. It attacks your opponents to the best of its ability, and you can direct it to attack particular enemies. It cannot perform any other actions. You can summon only one living dragonmark at a time.

Dragonmark: Any lesser, greater, or Siberys true dragonmark.

Living Dragonmark CR --

N Medium ooze

Init +4; Senses blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC see below

hp see below (6 HD); DR 10/magic

Immune acid, cold, electricity, fire, sonic, positive and negative energy, ooze immunities

Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +2

Speed fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee force slam +8 (see below)

Base Atk +4; Grp +8

Atk Options constrict, improved grab

Abilities Str 18, Dex 18, Con --, Int --, Wis 11, Cha 10

SQ ooze traits

AC In addition to its +4 Dexterity bonus to AC, a living dragonmark gains a deflection bonus to AC equal to its summoner's Charisma modifier.

Hit Points A living dragonmark summoned by a caster with a lesser dragonmark has 33 hit points. If its summoner bears a greater dragonmark or Siberys dragonmark, it has 48 hit points.

Force Slam (Ex) A living dragonmark's slam attack deals an amount of force damage based on the strength of the summoner's dragonmark.

Dragonmark Damage

Lesser 1d6+6

Greater 1d8+6

Siberys 2d6+6

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a living dragonmark must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Constrict (Ex) On a successful grapple check, a living dragonmark deals normal force slam damage (see above). It cannot constrict creatures larger than itself.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

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Dispatch 16: Q'Barra Blindenstone 3

Mol, 23 Aryth, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



House Sivis' Q'Barra expedition resumes as operative Fell Severins continues in his tireless pursuit of the Blindenstone. In [our last installment](#), Fell and his companion, the House Jorasco healer Jin-Mae, discovered that Riedran agents from the mysterious continent of Sarlona somehow beat them to their prize deep in the Q'Barran jungle. Neither were quite prepared for the expedition's next development -- an abrupt change of venue ...

Mol, 23 Aryth, 998 YK

From: Fell Severins

To: Viceroy Camilla Severins, Overseer, Korranberg Sivis Enclave

archival reference code 1043-B: transcribed from message via augmented speaking stone, magically sealed and encoded

Dearest sister mine,

Hard to know where to begin. The short version is: We've lost our Q'Barran jungle guides and the Deneith sell-swords; we're no longer chasing the Anand (nor the Riedrans); and we still don't have possession of the Blindenstone. Oh, and we're trudging through snow in northern Sarlona now, surrounded by arctic shifters.

Funny old world, isn't it? It happened like this -

After discovering evidence of the Riedrans' presence in Q'Barra, we continued tracking them through the Basura Swamp. My instinct was that the Riedrans had also come for the Blindenstone, and that perhaps we could strike a bargain. The puzzling element was that we still had seen no sign of the Anand, the reclusive cult said to be in possession of the 'stone in the first place.



That mystery was solved yesterday when we came upon the scorched remains of the Anand settlement upon a plateau within the swamp. Evidently, the Riedrans had taken the Blindenstone by force. Though we found no corpses among the still-smoldering embers, our Q'Barran lizardfolk guides did manage to pick up the Riedrans' trail once again. Near dusk, the trail abruptly ended. Jin-Mae and I separated from the group to consult about our situation. As we picked through the vines, there was a bright flash and I had a sickening feeling of vertigo.

Teleportation circle, I suspect, for we are now in the port city of Whitetooth, far north in Sarlona's Tashana Tundra region. More than that, I cannot say, for I do not know. Events have transpired rapidly within the last hour. More details will follow as they come to light. I do know this: The Riedrans are dead, the Blindenstone is missing, and this city is nothing but snow and tribal Sarlonan shifters! I am not, as you can imagine, dressed for the occasion. A most interesting errand this has turned out to be, sister.

Foul-tempered yet somehow bemused, I remain --

-- your brother Fell

NPC: Fell Severins, House of Sivis

Fell Severins CR 7

Male gnome bard 7
CN small humanoid

Init +2; Senses low light vision; Listen +2, Spot +0

Languages Common, Gnome, Elven, Dwarven

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 16

(+2 Dex, +5 armor, +1 size)

hp 37 (7 HD)

Resist +2 on saves against illusions

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +1 rapier sword cane +3 (1d4+1/18-20) or

Ranged +1 shortbow +9 (1d4+1/x3)

Base Atk +5; Grp +1

Atk Options Point Blank Shot

Special Actions bardic music 7/day (suggestion [DC 16], inspire competence, inspire courage +1, fascinate 3 creatures, countersong)

Combat Gear potions of *invisibility*, *gaseous form*, *flying*, *cure serious wounds*

Bard Spells Prepared (CL 7th)

3rd -- *summon living dragonmark*

2nd -- *cure moderate wounds*, *suggestion* (DC 15), *invisibility*

1st -- *cure light wounds*, *charm person* (DC 14), *identify*, *disguise self*

0 -- *detect magic*, *prestidigitation*, *mage hand*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)

2/day -- *comprehend languages*; 1/day -- *tongues*, *speak with animals* (burrowing mammal only, duration 1 minute), *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*.

Abilities Str 10 Dex 14 Con 13 Int 14 Wis 11 Cha 17

SQ bardic knowledge +9

Feats Least Mark of Scribing, Lesser Mark of Scribing, Point Blank Shot

Skills Concentration +11, Diplomacy +15, Disguise +13, Gather Information +13, Hide +16, Jump -6, Knowledge (geography) +12, Knowledge (nobility) +12

Possessions combat gear plus +1 mithril shirt, +1 shortbow with 20 arrows, +1 rapier sword cane, Heward's handy haversack

Fell Severins is something of an embarrassment to his family and those in the know within House Sivis. He left home at an early age to quench his insatiable wanderlust and has traveled far and wide across both Khorvaire and Xen'drik. Only his close relationship with his sister, Viceroy Camilla Severins, Overseer with the Korranberg Sivis Enclave, keeps his House Sivis status intact.

Fell remains a bit of a scoundrel. Although his heart is essentially good, he is prone to using his superior gifts for language, magic, and deception to manipulate people and events around him. He often supplements his income as an adventurer by brokering information and fencing stolen goods.

His upbringing in House Sivis, along with his still-developing dragonmark abilities, travels, and personal predilections, have gifted Fell with a great proficiency for lost languages and obscure forms of communication. His bardic music abilities are drawn from a unique style of chanting, invented by Fell and his sister in childhood. These chants tend to draw upon long-forgotten words and phrases combining several languages both living and dead.

Melee-averse to an extreme, Fell relies on his bardic chant, spells, and shortbow to stay well away from the action while still supporting his companions. He always keeps potions of *invisibility*, *flying*, and *gaseous form* on hand to escape unfavorable situations. Currently impoverished and on the run from several former business partners, Fell is desperately trying to win back favor with House Sivis to gain privileges and protection.

PCs might make acquaintance with Fell Severins in any situation where contraband or valuable information is brokered.

About the Author

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Dispatch 17: Q'Barra Blindenstone 4

Wir, 25 Aryth, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



House Sivis' Q'Barra expedition began as a seemingly routine mission to retrieve the Blindenstone, a stone tablet said to unlock certain linguistic secrets of the Draconic Prophecy. House bard [Fell Severins](#) tracked the relic to Q'Barra's dank Basura Swamp only to find the 'Stone had been spirited away by agents of House Thuranni and the inscrutable Riedrans of Sarlona. Unwittingly teleported to the coastal shantytown of Whitetooth in Sarlona's remote Tashana Tundra region, Fell nevertheless managed to pick up the trail again. As he finally lays eyes upon the Blindenstone, the Sivis bard is reminded yet again that, in Eberron, nothing is ever as it seems.

Wir, 25 Aryth, 998 YK

From: Fell Severins

To: Viceroy Camilla Severins, Overseer, Korranberg Sivis Enclave

archival reference code 1043-B: transcribed from message via augmented speaking stone, magically sealed and encoded

Dearest sister Camilla,

Success! I have gained possession of the Blindenstone! Furthermore, I have managed this remarkable feat spilling neither blood nor an excess of House Sivis coin. How, you ask? Thereby hangs a tale ...

Stitching it all together, it is indeed a yarn for the Library. As you know, the existence of the Blindenstone was confirmed shortly after the Treaty of Thronehold, when various documents inevitably changed hands. Venerated by the utopian cult known as the Anand, the 'Stone was secreted in the bowels of Q'Barra's bleak Basura swamp.

It seems that House Thuranni, that painted harlot of secrets, ascertained the location of the relic and sold this information to both House Sivis and the Riedrans. While the Riedran expedition won the race to the 'Stone, they were in turn infiltrated by yet another player -- a dreadfully slippery rogue known as [Clovis Forlaine](#).

Forlaine is a rascal -- you'd like him. Pirate and fence, he is the unofficial mayor of the free city of Whitetooth here in Sarlona's forbidding Tashana Tundra. Forlaine has no love for the Riedrans, and he managed to dupe them entirely by posing as their House Thuranni guide to the fecund marshes of Q'Barra. Once in possession of the Blindenstone, Forlaine 'ported the entire Riedran party back to the Tundra using a forgotten smuggler's network of permanent teleportation circles linking Q'Barra to Whitetooth. There the Riedrans were summarily dispatched by Forlaine's waiting allies, the arctic shifters of Tashana's Saartuk tribe. Admirable, isn't it? I am rather fond of the human.



Jin-Mae and I arrived here in Whitetooth mere hours after the Riedrans met their fate. That was three sunsets ago, and in the meanwhile, we have made the friendly acquaintance of the estimable 'mayor'. He arranged a meeting offshore upon one of several seafaring vessels he keeps moored in the harbor.

Negotiating on your behalf, I have agreed to a contract by which the Blindenstone will be returned to House Sivis -- along with some very interesting [native lichen samples](#). I shall send the details in a separate dispatch. Meanwhile, I've finally had a chance to inspect the Blindenstone thoroughly, and I suspect both the Hidden Word and Tasker's Dream will want to take immediate possession. It is a marvel -- Five columns of corresponding text in Common, Old Common, Riedran, Draconian, and a fifth language I do not recognize. Could this represent the "missing link" of humankind's origin? Most fascinating.

Jin-Mae and I are set to depart on the morrow. Master Forlaine assures us that the Riedrans are unaware of the betrayal, but I fear the far-reaching mind powers of these Sarlonans. We will make contact again when we are far from this land and safe.

I trust you will petition the Oversight committees to award me full reinstatement. I'll keep the 'Stone secured until then. Many thanks, sister. It has been a most excellent venture!

Your loving brother,

Fell

NPC: Clovis Forlaine

Clovis Forlaine CR 7

Male changeling rogue 7

CN medium humanoid (shapechanger)

Init +3; Senses Listen +0; Spot +0

Languages: Common, Aquan, Dwarven, Sarlonan

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 18; uncanny dodge

(+3 Dex, +5 armor)

hp 23 (7 HD)

Resist evasion; +2 on saves against sleep and charm effects

Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +2

Speed 30 ft (4 squares)

Melee+1 *frost rapier* +9 (1d6+1 plus 1d6 cold/18-20) or

Ranged throwing daggers +8 (1d4/19-20)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5

Atk Options sneak attack +4d6

Special Actions minor change shape

Combat Gear: *Amulet of proof against detection and location*; lichen pastes of water breathing, neutralize poison, invisibility, gaseous form, fly

Abilities Str 10 Dex 17 Con 8 Int 16 Wis 10 Cha 14

SQ trap sense +2, trapfinding

Feats Persona Immersion (*Races of Eberron*), Urban Tracking (*Cityscape*), Weapon Finesse

Skills Appraise +13, Bluff +14, Disable Device +13, Disguise +12, Forgery +13, Gather Information +14, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (local) +13, Open Lock +13, Profession (Mariner) +10, Sense Motive +12, Use Magic Device +12

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *mithril shirt*, throwing daggers (4)

Minor Change Shape (Su) As disguise self at will, but does not affect possessions.

Clovis Forlaine -- merchant, pirate, and fence -- runs various gray-market operations in Whitetooth, acquiring Tashanan lichens, art, and other valuable resources of the Tundra. Originally a privateer from the Lhazaar Principalities, Clovis has operated out of Whitetooth for more than a decade. He has a hand in or an eye on every significant transaction that takes place in Whitetooth. Clovis keeps several different safe houses in town and often conducts business on vessels anchored in the waters west of Whitetooth. Clovis's true identity (as a changeling) is a carefully guarded secret, and he 'officially' presents himself as a slickly dressed male human of conspicuously Lhazaar origin.

Clovis is a master of disguise and deception. He relies on his shapeshifting abilities, Persona Immersion feat, and *amulet of proof against detection and location* to assume various identities at will or to disappear altogether. Clovis keeps multiple changes of clothing, equipment, and forged identification papers in and around Whitetooth. He also regularly travels to the cities of Riedra to "conduct business" and maintains still more identities in that dangerous land. He is known to have contacts among the Riedran smuggling cabal known as the Dream Merchants.

Clovis is a skilled sailor and swordsman, and his prized possession is his +1 *frost rapier* -- a gift from the maenads of the Tashyvar Islands. Unfortunately, Clovis also has a weakness for certain narcotic substances of Sarlona, particularly dreamlily and icewild, which accounts for his poor Constitution and general state of enervation. Clovis's best fighting days are behind him, and he keeps special Tashana lichen pastes on his person at all times to escape unfavorable combat situations.

PCs might encounter Clovis Forlaine, or one of his assumed identities, anytime they travel in Whitetooth, or traverse the criminal underground of major Riedran cities.

Magic Item: Tashana Lichen Pastes

(from p. 138 of *Secrets of Sarlona*)

Tashanan shamans can create from the native rock lichens a wide variety of magic substances that approximate the effects of standard potions and oils. The lichen pastes use natural materials and processes such as sun-drying but otherwise have the same creation costs and requirements of a potion or oil, including spellcasting ability, the Brew Potion feat, and the XP and gp costs (*DMG* 286).

In the coastal ports of Whitetooth and Winterstead, lichen pastes can be purchased at normal cost (*DMG* 230). In addition, individual tribes encountered in the inland of Tashana might be willing to sell or barter lichen pastes. The DM should set price and availability, considering the size and disposition of the tribe.

Physical Description: Tashanan lichen pastes differ in consistency and appearance depending on whether they're intended to be applied (as an oil) or consumed (as a potion). Consumable pastes appear as very small, thin wafers of shredded leaves. Oil-type pastes have a greasy or buttery consistency. Taste and smell vary among types. Experienced characters can learn to identify a lichen paste by remembering particular attributes.

For example, a minty taste might indicate curative properties, while a particularly pungent odor specifies *barkskin*. Lichen pastes are typically stored in small hide pouches. Pouches have AC 13, 2 hit points, and hardness 2. The relative portability and durability of lichen pouches give them an advantage over ceramic or glass potion vials.

Activation: Consumable pastes are heavily concentrated, relative to potions, and dissolve almost instantly when placed under the tongue. Applicable pastes can be smeared just as traditional oils. Activating a paste is a standard action that provokes attacks of opportunity. The effect takes place immediately. Incorporeal characters cannot use lichen pastes of either variety. Curative lichen pastes can be administered to unconscious creatures as a standard action (a potion requires a full-round action).

The Tashana region also produces some lichens which contain natural magical/psychoactive properties. These lichens do not require any preparation and can be harvested and ingested raw. The most notorious of these is the blood-red rock lichen known as icewild.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

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Dispatch 18: Sarlona Emissaries 1

Mol, 2 Vult, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



The Expeditionary Dispatches series journeys to the distant continent of Sarlona, where the changeling rogue [Clovis Forlaine](#) undertakes a mission on behalf of the mysterious Khorvarian power broker known only as Kalistos. As the mission commences, Clovis leads his team from the coastal shantytown of Whitetooth in the Tashana Tundra to the borders of Riedra, land of the Inspired.

Mol, 2 Vult, 998 YK
From: Clovis Forlaine

To: Kalistos

archival reference code 1653-A: transcribed from message via [augmented speaking stone](#), magically sealed and encoded

Kalistos:

We have arrived at the northern border of Riedra and are moored within a small archipelago just off the western coast of the Tashana Tundra. I assembled the team in Whitetooth, as per your instructions. We number three now -- myself, the Saartuk shifter ranger Tel-Mark, and a representative from the Akiak duergar clans, Dens Joerlan.

I have made Tel-Marq's acquaintance many times before. His tribe, the Telaani, have become the de facto shifter authority in Whitetooth. He is a stalwart soul, a great warrior among his people, and rather a noble sort. Nobler than I, no doubt. Joerlan I know only by reputation. He is said to be among the leaders of the Akiak resistance forces in the Paqaa mountains. Neither have any love for the Riedrans, however, and in this we are all brothers.

The journey was typically arduous. The Tundra, as you know, is an unforgiving land at the best of times. In the dead of winter, it is a special kind of anguish. Tel-Marq knows the coastline well, however. The Saartuk people have been plying these shores from time immemorial. From Whitetooth, we skirted the coast for much of the voyage, and also took advantage of some shallow, inland waterways.

Yesterday at dawn we encountered one of the Tashana's infamous [aukaraks](#) or reality storms. In my time here on Sarlonan soil, I have endured more than a few of these, but this gale was particularly vicious. As you may know, the aukaraks are suspected to be rogue planar breaches, free-floating manifest zones that drift across the Tundra like weather fronts. This particular storm blew in from the east, bringing wind and snow, but also -- in sequence -- lightning, superheated rain, a hail of obsidian glass, a slightly acidic fog, a sustained drizzle of blood, a kind of sonic maelstrom, and finally an extended shower of fish. Yes, fish. Joerlan, who has made a study of the aukaraks over his many years, identified the storm as a breach to Kythri, the plane of chaos.

At any rate, we are now assembled at the border and I await further instructions. I trust the augmented speaking stone I am using, provided by our mutual friend in House Sivis, will bear this message to you securely, wherever you may be.

In alliance and companionship,

Clovis

Magical Location -- Aukaraks (Reality Storms)

(from p. 144, *Secrets of Sarlona*)

Ask anyone on Sarlona about the vast, open spaces of the Tundra, and you're likely to hear the same refrain -- it is a land of strange weathers. The native shifter tribes can tell you more specifically -- The Tundra is home to [aukaraks](#) or reality storms.

Aukaraks are free-floating planar breaches, remnants of a long-ago era in which terrible magics rent the very fabric of the planes. They move about the Tundra, blowing in just as a rainstorm might and blowing over again just as quickly. In terms of game effects, aukaraks usually function as small, temporary manifest zones to one of the twelve planes that have coterminous phases with Eberron (see ECS 94). Aukaraks tend to be more intense and powerful than typical manifest zones, but they are unpredictable and impermanent. Reality storms also have a chance of "porting in" natives of a particular plane as if summoned -- these creatures are effectively unsummoned at the end of the storm's duration and return to their native plane.

When traveling in the Tundra, PCs have a 5% chance, cumulative per day, of encountering an aukarak (on the second day of travel, the chance is 10%, on the third day 15%, and so forth). An aukarak takes 1d10 minutes to fully manifest, sometimes simply materializing overhead, sometimes rolling over the horizon and toward the characters at the appropriate speed. The duration of an aukarak is 2d4–1 hours, with exceptions for burst storms.

Magic Item -- House Sivis Augmented Speaking Stone

This prototype from House Sivis is an augmented version of the ubiquitous *speaking stones* (ECS p. 263) that facilitate long-distance communication across Khorvaire. Only a handful have been manufactured, and their existence is a closely guarded secret within the House. An augmented *speaking stone* works like a typical *speaking stone* with the following changes.

- These prototype stones are smaller, more powerful, and designed to be portable -- weight is five pounds. Messages travel at a rate of 10 miles per minute; maximum message length is approximately 1,000 words.
- Augmented stones work in exclusive pairs, passing messages only between one another. They cannot (normally) send to or receive from standard speaking stones.
- Augmented speaking stones, in this prototype phase, do not require a Mark of Scribing to operate (although the Mark is still required to create them). As an interim security device, each set of two stones is magically connected to a corresponding set of two signet rings. A particular set of stones can only be operated by characters bearing the matching signet rings.

As prototypes, any given set of augmented *speaking stones* has a chance to malfunction. There is a 20% chance per use that a stone will malfunction, as randomly rolled from the following table:

d10 Malfunction

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1-4 | transmission fails; message is lost |
| 5-6 | partial transmission; portions of message garbled |
| 7-8 | transmission fails; message bounces back to original sending stone (with appropriate "travel time" elapsed) |
| 9 | message transmitted to random standard speaking stone in 1,000-mile radius |
| 10 | message broadcast to all standard speaking stones in 1,000-mile radius |

Augmented speaking stones cannot currently be obtained on any open market. House Sivis, however, is currently 'field testing' several sets in various locales throughout Eberron.

About the Author

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Dispatch 19: Sarlona Emissaries 2

Zol, 2 Vult, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



In our latest series of Dispatches, the anonymous expedition sponsor known as Kalistos has hired the changeling rogue Clovis Forlaine to infiltrate the borders of Riedra. Traveling surreptitiously in the repressive land of the Inspired, Clovis and his team attempt to make a very dangerous rendezvous -- and learn the true nature of this most unusual of expeditions.

Zol, 2 Vult, 998 YK

From: Kalistos

To: Clovis Forlaine

archival reference code 1653-B: transcribed from message via augmented speaking stone, magically sealed and encoded

Greetings, Clovis;

I have received your report and hasten to reply.

Now that you have assembled the team at the border, you are to progress inland into the Riedran province of Dor Maleer, staying north of the Frostwall Mountains. The Akiak representative, Dens Joerlan, has been provided a map that details the area. Bear in mind that you are now in Riedra. The very sight of your duergar and shifter companions will cause panic among any human commoners you encounter. Remember that the humans of this land have been indoctrinated to believe all outlanders are, quite literally, demons. You must use the utmost precaution on this first leg of the journey and remain entirely unseen.

Your ultimate destination is the Riedran town of Dar Paneth. Following the trade route, you will come to a covered bridge approximately a half-day's travel from the coast. If all goes according to plan, you will be greeted at this bridge by two more travelers. The newest members of your entourage will be:

The first is Shiaali, a human dissident from the Corvagura province. She is associated with the underground group known as the [Dream Merchants](#) and is a skilled illusionist. Shiaali is among the most wanted 'criminals' in all of Riedra, and the [Thousand Eyes](#) have several death squads specifically tasked to hunt her down. The second is Pak'toki, an emissary from the underground [dromite](#) communities. The dromites have been exploited as a slave race by the Inspired for many generations, and Pak'toki is one of the very few city-hive leaders willing to associate with "surfacers" at all.



It is here that you must adopt your full disguise and make use of the identification papers we have prepared. It is absolutely critical that the ruse be prepared and executed as carefully as possible. You are to present yourself as the bounty hunter and gaoler known as Jharee of Pyrine. Shiaali will pose as your lieutenant, Dujiira of Rhiavaar.

To maintain the deception, Pak'toki, Tel-Marq, and Joerlan must of necessity pose as your prisoners. Shiaali will provide the slave cart and draft animals. The cart is barred and covered and designed to pass the most thorough of inspections. There is a secret trap-door escape toward the rear of the containment area -- Shiaali will be able to demonstrate this when you rendezvous. You will likely pass through many checkpoints before you arrive at Dar Paneth. You must work closely with Shiaali. Her magical skills are very nearly a match for your own powers of deception. Together, you should be able to bluff the Riedrans long enough to make the journey.

As you may already have guessed, this expedition is far from typical. We do not seek gold or valuables, neither do we pursue artifacts or historical treasure. Instead, we endeavor with this quest to smuggle these important dissidents out from under the watchful eye of the Inspired and the Thousand Eyes.

I know you share my deep concern about the true nature and intentions of the Riedran leaders. It is our intention -- those of us bound together in this conspiracy of honor -- to bring to Khorvaire a collection of emissaries. These emissaries represent those people of Sarlona fighting back against the infernal machinations of the Inspired -- duergar and shifter, changeling and dromite, Tashanan and Akiak, Syrk and Adaran. Fate willing, your party will grow even further before we set sail. It is our hope that this delegation of worthies will convince the powers of Khorvaire of the grave threat that is Riedra.

Further instructions await when you reach Dar Paneth. Godspeed, my friend.

-- Kalistos

Organization: The Dream Merchants

(from p. 61 of *Secrets of Sarlona*)

People always want what they cannot have, and every new law creates a source of profit for those who challenge it. The major challenger in Riedra is a cabal known as the Dream Merchants. The Merchants are smugglers first and foremost -- they run dreamily and other Sarlonan goods to Khorvaire, and they provide a black market for Riedrans who want goods beyond the basic tools of survival provided by the Inspired.

The Dream Merchants, while established in bastion cities, are rarely seen in the villages. Individual merchants sometimes travel between villages, posing as couriers. They carry *bags of holding* containing a wide range of contraband goods they can exchange with villagers.

Wandering merchants are generally masters of Sense Motive. They are very careful about whom they reveal their true nature to, since one misstep could bring death. Although most Riedrans have heard of the Dream Merchants, common wisdom is that these people are the direct servants of the altavars, sent to tempt and test the devotion of the innocent. Loyal Riedrans report such criminals immediately.

Dream Merchants can be found in most bastion cities with a successful DC 25 Gather Information check. Failure by 5 or more results in the authorities learning of the character's interest.

Organization: The Thousand Eyes

(from p. 56 of *Secrets of Sarlona*)

To a Riedran, no one in his right mind turns against the Inspired. Those who do are clearly victims of altavar influence. Someone must help these victims if possible, or do whatever is necessary to ensure that they do not threaten innocent souls. Those tasks fall to the Thousand Eyes.

The Thousand Eyes administer justice across Riedra and maintain the reclamation centers. Public agents of the Thousand Eyes -- easily identified by their green uniforms and golden badges of office -- can be found throughout any bastion, and people take comfort in knowing that these guardians are watching. Far more dangerous, however, are the secret members of the Eyes. Nearly anyone in Riedra could be an agent.

Agents of the Thousand Eyes are typically human, Chosen, or changeling. The bulk are simply observers, 1st- or 2nd-level experts who have maximum ranks in Disguise, Hide, Listen, Gather Information, Knowledge (local), Move Silently, Sense Motive, or Spot, along with a Craft or Profession skill used as a cover. More capable agents tend to be rogues or monks specializing in observation and stealth.

Sarlona Characters: Dromites

(from p. 108 of *Secrets of Sarlona*)

Sarlona has a secret civilization deep beneath its surface -- that of the dromites and their city-hives (*Expanded Psionics Handbook*). The dromites of Sarlona are not a unified nation. They are insular at best and xenophobic at worst. Their interactions with surface-dwellers have rarely been good. The Inspired have dealt with dromites using only murder and enslavement as "diplomatic" tools. Most dromites are content to live and trade among their kind.

In some areas, however, dromite reclusiveness is not the norm. The kalashtar made diplomatic inroads with them more than a millennium ago. Zi'til'natek, a city-hive under Adar, is loosely allied with the defenders of that land. Under the tundra, the few dromite hives have had decent relations with some dwarf clans.

Some dromite hives have taken a militant stance against all "surfers." These extremist city-hives are uncommon and their citizens too few to engage in outright warfare. Instead, dromites from these hives employ sabotage and guerrilla strikes against threats they can manage, from unlucky ogre nomads to Riedran Edge-walkers. Dromites of the city-hive of Nar'zix in Syrkarn are more insidious -- they have begun trading tainted Khyber shards through merchants in Ardhmen and other settlements.

Dromite settlements, large and small, exist all across Sarlona, hidden from surfacers and often removed from one another.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

Dispatch 20: Sarlona Emissaries 3

Zol, 2 Vult, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



Zol, 2 Vult, 998 YK
From: Clovis Forlaine
To: Kalistos
archival reference code 1653-C: transcribed from message via [augmented speaking stone](#), magically sealed and encoded

Kalistos:

Mere hours ago, under cover of a driving rain, we made our rendezvous with [Shiaali](#) of the [Dream Merchants](#) and her companion, the [dromite](#) emissary Pak'tokl. Beneath a covered bridge, we assembled our disguise. Shiaali and I are now presenting ourselves as Riedran gaolers, using the full powers of our illusion magic along with the uniforms and forged identification papers we prepared in advance. Our nonhuman companions -- Pak'tokl, the shifter warrior Tel-Marq, and the Akiak duergar Dens Joerlan -- are posing as our prisoners in the 'slave cart'.

This is a most dangerous game we are playing. Riedra is, without doubt, the most difficult land in all of Eberron in which to practice such bold deception. I worry particularly about the mind powers of the Riedrans and their Inspired leaders. I have no training whatsoever in the psionic arts and am trusting to the dromite and the duergar to maintain our concealment on this front. I am assured that they are equal to the task. Shiaali and I, meanwhile, are combining our arcane resources -- spells and items -- to avoid magical detection.

Wir, 3 Vult, 998 YK

We have settled tonight in a small roadhouse. The Riedran peasants maintaining this crossroad inn have proven warm, genuine, incessantly friendly, and completely unnerving. With our orange-and-yellow uniforms, Shiaali and I were immediately welcomed as noble soldiers of the Harmonious Shield, Riedra's standing army. These same innkeepers, however, so gentle otherwise, regarded our 'prisoners' with utter fear and hatred. More than ever am I convinced that the soul of the Riedran people has been blinded and poisoned by the infernal propaganda of the Inspired.



Zor, 4 Vult, 998 YK

Two days' travel toward Dar Paneth, and we have successfully passed through three impromptu inspections along the trade route and one official checkpoint.

It appears our deception is holding well enough for now. The Riedran countryside is remarkably bucolic and beautiful; such a counterpoint to the corruption that festers beneath. The inspections appear to be mandatory on this trade route. The military squads have simply checked our papers and stared with open hostility at our slave cart and its occupants. Near dusk yesterday, we spotted a massive [hanbalani](#) construction on the horizon. Scrying the site in more detail, Shiaali described hundreds of identically-dressed laborers clambering over the massive scaffolding like busy worker ants. It was at this point on the road that we endured a most rigorous checkpoint inspection -- by an official, I suspect, of the [Thousand Eyes](#). We were very nearly discovered, but Shiaali was able to persuade the official -- via arcane suggestion -- that his efforts were better spent interrogating the farm convoy behind us in line. A very near thing, that.

As you can imagine, the journey is particularly uncomfortable for the others. Dens is complaining constantly now. Tel-Marq and Pak'tokl have managed to forge an unlikely shifter-dromite friendship by way of an impressively complex dice game they apparently invented to pass the time. We anticipate arrival at the rendezvous point in Dar Paneth on the morrow. Once we have picked up the last of the emissaries, I hope to report again immediately upon our departure for the coast. Most sincerely, I remain --

Clovis

Magical Location: The Hanbalani Altas

(*Secrets of Sarlona*, page 62)

The massive monoliths of Riedra serve many purposes. They draw on the emotions of the nearby populace and transform these thoughts into psychic energy, which is used to power many systems in nearby communities. More importantly, they allow the quori to shape the dreams of masses of humans and in so doing, to prevent

change in Dal Quor. Most important, the hanbalani are slowly bringing Dal Quor into alignment with Eberron, repairing the damage inflicted by the giants ages ago. Already, the quori are able to possess willing humans. As more monoliths are built, quori might be able to possess other willing creatures, and manifest zones tied to Dal Quor could appear across the world. Eventually, the quori should be able to physically manifest on Eberron.

NPC: Shiaali, Riedran Dissident

Shiaali, CR 6

Female human beguiler 6

CN medium humanoid

Init +3; Senses Listen -1, Spot -1

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15
(+3 Dex, +4 armor, +1 natural armor)

hp 25 (6 HD)

Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +4

Speed 30 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +1 rapier +7 (1d6+1/18-20) or

Ranged +1 shortbow +7 (1d6+1/x3)

Base Atk +3; Grp +3

Atk Options Point Blank Shot; Precise Shot; Cloaked Casting; Surprise Casting

Combat Gear wand of *charm person* (12 charges), potion of *cure light wounds* (x3)

Beguiler Spells Known (CL 6th)

3rd -- *arcane sight, clairaudience/clairvoyance, crown of veils*, deep slumber, dispel magic, displacement, glibness, halt*, haste, hesitate*, hold person, inevitable defeat*, invisibility sphere, legion of sentinels*, major image, nondetection, slow, suggestion, vertigo field*, zone of silence.*

2nd -- *blinding color surge*, blur, daze monster, detect thoughts, fog cloud, glitterdust, hypnotic pattern, invisibility, knock, minor image, mirror image, misdirection, see invisibility, silence, spider climb, stay the hand*, touch of idiocy, vertigo*, whelming burst*.*

1st -- *charm person, color spray, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, disguise self, expeditious retreat, hypnotism, mage armor, obscuring mist, rouse*, silent image, sleep, undetectable alignment, helm*.*

0 -- *dancing lights, daze, detect magic, ghost sound, message, open/close, read magic.*

* from *Player's Handbook II*

Abilities Str 10 Dex 16 Con 8 Int 17 Wis 8 Cha 14

SQ trapfinding, armored mage

Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse, Silent Spell

Skills Appraise +12, Balance +5, Bluff, +11, Concentration +8, Disable Device +12, Gather Information +11, Knowledge (local) +12, Open Lock +12, Search +12, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +11

Possessions combat gear plus *mithral shirt, +1 shortbow with 20 arrows, +1 rapier, amulet of natural armor +1, ring of mind shielding*

Armored Mage (Ex): Normally, armor of any type interferes with an arcane spellcaster's gestures, which can cause your spells to fail if those spells have a somatic component. A beguiler's limited focus and specialized training, however, allow you to avoid any chance of arcane spell failure as long as you restrict yourself to light armor. This training neither extends to any other form of armor, nor does this ability apply to spells gained from other spellcasting classes.

Cloaked Casting (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, a beguiler's spells become more effective when cast against an unwary foe. You gain a +1 bonus to the spell's save DC when you cast a spell that targets any foe who would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether or not the target actually has a Dexterity bonus). At 8th level, you gain a +2 bonus on rolls made to overcome the spell resistance of any affected target. At 14th level, the bonus to your spell's save DC increases to +2. At 20th level, you become able to automatically overcome the spell resistance of any affected target.

Surprise Casting (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, when you successfully use the Bluff skill to feint in combat, your target is denied its Dexterity bonus (if it has one) to AC for the next melee attack you make against it or the next spell you cast. You must remain in melee with the target, and the attack must be made or the spell cast on or before your next turn. The target is not considered flat-footed and therefore can make attacks of opportunity against you if you do not cast defensively. At 6th level, you gain the ability to feint in combat as a move action instead of a standard action. If you have the Improved Feint feat, you can feint in combat as a swift action.

The human beguiler known as Shiaali goes by many aliases and pseudonyms within Riedra. She is an adjunct member of the Riedran smuggling syndicate known as the Dream Merchants and a former operative within the Thousand Eyes, Riedra's 'secret police'.

Dispatch 21: Sarlona Emissaries 4

Wir, 3 Vult, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



In Eberron, information can be a more valuable commodity than gold. Disaster befalls this most unusual of expeditions as our delegation of Sarlonan emissaries attempts to escape the clutches of Riedra and deliver their message to the nations of Khorvaire.

Wir, 3 Vult, 998 YK

From: Clovis Forlaine

To: Kalistos

archival reference code 1656-A: transcribed from message via [augmented speaking stone](#), magically sealed and encoded

Kalistos:

We arrived late this morning at the Riedran crossroads town of Dar Paneth and were quickly escorted to safety by Shiaali's associates among the [Dream Merchants](#). The smugglers passed into our custody the final two members of our emissary party -- the [Adaran](#) kalashtar monk Jharee and her companion, the [Syrk](#) druid Kaxen. Our 'delegation' complete, we shall rest here tonight, and then attempt to make haste in our departure back to the coast.

There is much excitement and optimism now. If all goes well, this delegation of true Sarlonans will bring their stories and evidence to the people of Khorvaire. Fate willing, their testimony will persuade others of the grave threat that is Riedra. We need only escape detection to the borders of the Tashana and pray for good fortune on our subsequent journey across the Sea of Rage.

Zor, 5 Vult, 998 YK

Disaster has befallen our expedition! At dawn, Shiaali and myself, posing as Riedran gaolers, presented our forged papers to the local authorities at the checkpoint leading out of Dar Paneth. The other emissaries, posing as our prisoners, feigned sleep in the filth and rags of the slave cart. This time, however, our ruse did not hold. Perhaps it was some simple detail we overlooked or a mind trick of these powerful psions. Perhaps it was simple bad luck. In any case, an alarm was raised and a pitched battle ensued. The [dromite](#) Pak'tokl was lost in the chaos; we do not know his fate. Our shifter companion Tel-Marq was felled by some psionic attack and has not yet awoken.



Full details will have to wait; suffice to say we left a dozen dead in our wake and are now fleeing afoot to the Tashana border, pursued by a relentless band of Riedran hunters. The Syrk druid has so far managed to conceal our passage through these foothills, and we are aided by a steady, cold rain blowing from the north. The Akiak fighter Dens, familiar with the northern border forces, advises that we are likely set against both the standard military of the Harmonious Shield and the stealthy death squads of the Thousand Eyes. Shiaali speaks darkly of even deadlier foes on our trail -- [Quorbound](#) creatures, minions of the Inspired, powered by the energies of the Region of Dreams.

We must now resume our desperate flight. I can only hope this missive finds you in a position to send aid.

-- Clovis

Sarlona Nation: Adar

(*Secrets of Sarlona*, page 19)

Adar is as a land plucked from some other realm. Among the mountains that spring from southern Sarlona, manifestations of other worlds and the natural results of such interference conspire to produce a forbidding environment. Yet, amid unforgiving peaks and between terrible storms, life thrives and evolves. The word Adar means "refuge" in an ancient Riedran dialect. This etymology shows that Adar was named from without. Its people have never been unified -- clashes among its mountainfolk continue intermittently, and rancorous debates arise among its mystics. Still, Adar has long been a place of peace and introspection on a continent known for its terrible wars. Only when Adar accepted the strangest refugees of all -- renegade quori -- did it become a realm beset on all sides by immortal enemies. Adarans must now work together or become an instrument of the Inspired.

Sarlonan Nation: Syrkarn

(Secrets of Sarlona, page 83)

Five thousand years before the arrival of the Inspired and the present age, the nations now known collectively as Syrkarn were the jewels in the imperial crown of old Sarlona. Today, only ancient stonework and half-forgotten legends mark the fall, passing, and rebirth of this land. To those who inherited this seemingly inhospitable kingdom, Syrkarn offers a gift denied to both the warring nations of the past and the Inspired-dominated lands of the present. To its people, Syrkarn is the promise of freedom.

Sarlonan Monster: Quorbound Creature

(Secrets of Sarlona, page 150)

The wolf is barely visible as it follows you -- its coat blends with the dark of the forest. But as a gleam of gold light flashes in its dark eyes, a telltale shiver informs you that the creature is inside your mind, already transmitting your location and thoughts to its unseen masters.

Though the energy of the Region of Dreams pervades Sarlona, the creatures of Dal Quor cannot cross over to the material realm. Their plane is forever remote. Even so, the Inspired have devised methods to augment animals and magical beasts with a hint of Dal Quor's power. These quorbound creatures serve as guard animals, mounts, and spies. Quorbound creatures breed true, and any that escape captivity and mate with mundane members of their species sometimes pass their otherworldly abilities onto their offspring.

Those who fear the Inspired are quick to see the taint of evil in the quorbound. Those aware of the legend of the Quor Tarai, however, know that the potential for good still lingers in the dark heart of Dal Quor. Quorbound creatures can be any lawful alignment but are most often lawful good (touched by the Path of Light) or lawful evil (born of the Dreaming Dark).

This sample quorbound creature uses a wolf as the base creature.

Quorbound Wolf Spy, CR 3

LE Medium magical beast (augmented animal, psionic)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +3, **Spot** +3

Languages Quori, Riedran (can't speak)

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12

(+3 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 32 (5 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee bite +6 (1d6+2) and

2 claws +0 (1d4+1)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Special Atk Trip

Psi-Like Abilities (ML 5th):

3/day -- chameleon, mindlink

2/day -- read thoughts (DC 12)

Abilities Str 15, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ tricks

Feats Mind Mask*, Track, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Autohypnosis +4, Concentration +5, Hide +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Psicraft +1, Spot +3, Survival +1 (+5 tracking by scent)

Trip (Ex) A wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+1 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking attacks of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the wolf.

Tricks This quorbound wolf knows all twelve tricks described under the Handle Animal skill (PH 74).

Skills Wolves have a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent. A quorbound creature receives a +2 racial bonus on Autohypnosis, Concentration, and Psicraft checks.

* feat described in *Secrets of Sarlona*

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

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Dispatch 22: Cairn's Gatekeepers 1

Wir, 3 Vult, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



The Eldeen druid Cairn, last seen slipping into the brackish waters beneath Sharn at the conclusion of the [Citydark Series](#), surfaces back in the Reaches. In a communiqué to his friend Ashford Terra, Cairn speculates darkly on the link between the Day of Mourning and Xoriat, the Realm of Madness.

Wir, 3 Vult, 998 YK

From: Cairn

To: Ashford Terra

archival reference code 1886-A: delivered via unknown courier, magically sealed and encoded

Friend Ash,

I trust this missive finds you well and fully recovered from the affliction conferred by the terrible foe of [our last encounter](#). The beast was indeed an aboleth, creature of Xoriat, and likely the original architect of the madness we faced in the tunnels beneath Sharn.



After our brief battle in the citydark cavern, I assumed the form of a giant cephalopod and pursued the foul aberration through a labyrinth of underwater passages beneath the city. Summoning to my aid whales, tojanida, and a friendly elasmosaurus, I finally bested the fiend beneath the swirling currents of the Dagger River. Crushing the weakened aboleth in my tentacles, I channeled [pure elemental power](#) into its alien mind, burning its consciousness forever from our plane. Better, I think, that you did not join me in this battle -- although I concede you are a fine swimmer.

You should know, old friend, that I have been closely following your recovery, after a fashion. The healers of House Jorasco tend to keep various medicinal plants growing within their facilities, and by use of a [particular druidic scrying technique](#), I have kept a keen eye on you these past several weeks. Your complexion is improving! The lash of the aboleth is no mere wound, and you would do well to let the Jorasco healers work their craft to completion.

Meanwhile, I have returned to my home in the Eldeen Reaches to confer with the Gatekeepers about our discoveries in Sharn. More than ever, I am convinced that the Day of Mourning is tied to the madness of Xoriat. In cooperation with my Gatekeeper brothers and sisters, [I have assembled a working group](#) here to combat the menace of aberrations within the Reaches and abroad in Eberron. I would be pleased if you would consider joining us. We have a great need for one with your particular skills, and I know you share my unease about the true origins of the Mournland catastrophe.

Until we meet again, I remain your friend and compatriot,

Cairn

Feat: Elemental Essence [Wild]

(*Complete Champion*, page 58)

You can channel the power of the four elements from the natural world around you.

Prerequisites: Any other wild feat (which require the wild shape class feature).

Benefit: When you first select this feat, choose one type of energy -- acid, cold, electricity, or fire. This choice cannot thereafter be changed. You can spend one daily use of your wild shape ability to surround your limbs and weapons with an aura of the chosen energy. While this effect is active, each melee attack you make deals an extra 1d6 points of the appropriate type of energy damage. Additionally, you gain resistance 5 against that type of energy. These effects last for 1 minute.

Special: You can select this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take it, you must select a different type of energy to which the feat applies. You cannot use this feat to activate multiple energy types at the same time.

Spell: Forest Eyes

(Complete Champion, page 121)

Divination (Scrying)

Level: Druid 3

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Unlimited

Target: Two plants of the same type, one of which must be in physical contact with you

Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

The moment your hand contacts the rough wood, your vision swims, blurs, and resolves into a different image.

Upon casting this spell, you can touch a normal, Medium or larger plant or tree and designate another of the same kind. You immediately see the surroundings of the destination plant, regardless of the distance separating the two. You see the area as though you were standing in the exact spot where the destination plant stands. You cannot move your field of vision from that spot, but you can rotate it in all directions to observe the area around the destination plant. Unlike other scrying spells, *forest eyes* does not allow magically or supernaturally enhanced senses to work through it. If the chosen locale is magically dark, you see nothing. If it is naturally dark, you can see in a 10-foot radius around the plant at the center of the spell's effect.

Both plants must be alive to allow use of this spell. You can either select a particular destination plant that is already familiar to you or designate a direction and distance and let *forest eyes* find the appropriate type of plant nearest to the desired location.

New Organization: Cairn's Keepers

Founded by the druid Cairn of the Eldeen Reaches, Cairn's Keepers is a small and exclusive group dedicated to hunting down and destroying aberrations anywhere in Eberron. Supported by both the Gatekeepers (ECS 241) and the Wardens of the Wood (ECS 246), Cairn's Keepers go abroad more often than their Eldeen brethren and are specifically tasked with maintaining the planar seals between Eberron and Xoriat, the Realm of Madness.

The group also gathers information on the Day of Mourning, as their leader Cairn suspects a planar breach is the ultimate cause of the Cyran catastrophe.

Membership in Cairn's Keepers is by invitation only. The group favors stealth and mobility, forming small, elite strike forces that can move quickly throughout Eberron.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's levels
Base attack bonus +5 or higher	+1
Druid, ranger, or barbarian	+1
Place of origin: Eldeen Reaches	+1
Favored enemy: aberrations	+2
Successful mission on behalf of Cairn's Keepers	+2
Uncover information related to Day of Mourning	+2
Uncover information related to Xoriat planar invasion	+2
Defeat aberration	+1/4 aberration CR
Refuse mission from higher-ranking keeper	-4
Retreat from or surrender to aberration	-2
Oppose or offend Gatekeeper or Warden of the Wood	-2
Needlessly kill living creature	-1

Affiliation

Score

Title: Benefits and Duties

3 or lower

Aspirant: Cairn's Keepers recognize you, and you are granted a 50gp/character level equipment disbursement.

4-10

Initiate: +2 circumstance bonus on Survival checks in Eldeen Reaches and Shadow Marches; +2 to Will saves when fighting aberrations. You are assigned to at least one mission or expedition per month.

11-15

Hunter: You may select one anti-aberration magic weapon up to 10,000 gp value from the

keepers' cache (subject to DM's discretion); +2 to AC, attacks, and damage rolls when fighting aberrations. You are assigned to at least one mission or expedition per month.

16-22 Bane: You may select one anti-aberration magic item up to 30,000 gp value from armory (subject to DM's discretion); *Protection from Evil* 1/day as spell-like ability (caster level = character level). You are assigned leadership of a small squad (2d4 1st-level NPCs) on at least one mission or expedition per month.

30 or higher Keeper: *Dispel magic* 1/day as spell-like ability (caster level = character level); Spell resistance 20 vs. aberrations as extraordinary ability. You earn the Leadership feat with a base score of 15.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

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Dispatch 23: Quinlan's Wanderings 1

Wir, 3 Vult, 998 YK
By Glenn McDonald



Carnaby Goebb, principal of the [very first Expeditionary Dispatch](#), receives an unexpected missive from a friend thought long gone. Here he learns of strange connections between the wild Talenta Plains and the sanctified theocracy of Thrane and is reminded once again that all who wander are not lost.

Wir, 3 Vult, 998 YK

From: Quinlan Sol

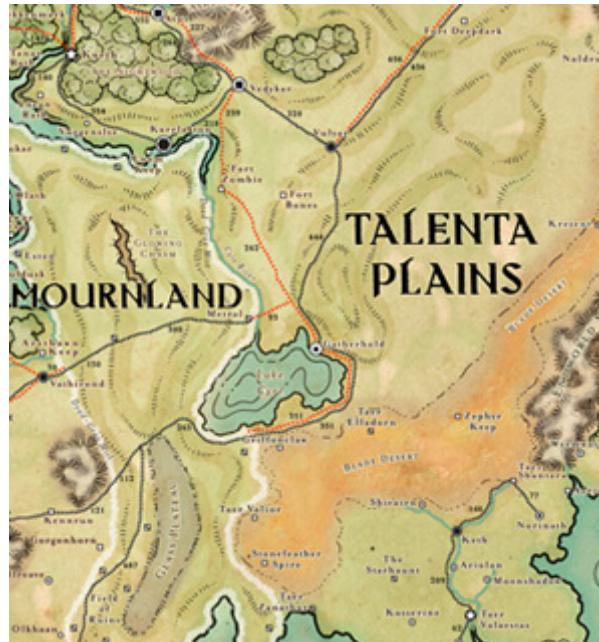
To: Carnaby Goebb

archival reference code 7017-A: delivered via unknown courier, magically sealed and encoded

Friend Carnaby,

For ten long years now have I wandered these strange and lonely lands. Ten years among the fierce warriors of the Talenta and their primitive beasts. Our initial encounters were bloody, to be sure, but as the seasons have turned, the natives here have come to accept my presence, my fitful wanderings. Many are the times, in recent years, that I have come to their aid, to offer healing or a stout sword against the darkness. Many times, too, have the tribes sheltered me when my strength has ebbed, my spirit faltered. They call me "The Pale One," "The Lost Man," or sometimes "The Tall Wanderer."

For a full decade now, in these rags and this filthy cloak, I have walked the grasslands, facing the Adversary in the wild places of the world -- my quest, my struggle, forever a carefully guarded secret. And so to all others I appear a madman. I don't imagine any of the Talentans suspect that I was once a paragon of "civilized" warfare, a resplendent Knight of Thrane, any more than they suspect the true nature of the hideous shadow beneath their feet.



I write to you today, old friend, because it seems my wanderings may at last be coming to an end. I have disclosed to no living soul, these many years, the true reason for my departure from the Order. But I must tell you now, and in short order at that. Ten years ago, I received a powerful vision from the Voice of the Silver Flame herself -- the founder of our order, the great paladin Tira Miron. She warned me that a dire corruption festered beneath these lands and that I alone must face down the powers of darkness threatening to rise from Khyber.

I have discovered in my experience since that a great rajah is bound beneath these plains, a mad architect of the Age of Demons. My task has been to maintain the bindings that hold the fiend and to drive off the fell worshippers that would seek him out. For reasons not mine to know, I was instructed to carry the fight alone, to keep secret my task from all who might give aid -- old friends, my new Talentan hosts, even from the Church herself.

Now I have received another vision and am instructed to return to Flamekeep at last. I have been informed that there is a cancer within the Council of Cardinals, a traitor who betrays the Flame and himself conspires with agents of Khyber below. You will remember this one, for we had dealings together in the throes of the Last War. It is High Cardinal Krozen, whom you suspected all those years ago.

I hope that you will agree to join me in my return to Flamekeep. My lonely quest is ended, and its ultimate resolution is nigh. I would have you by my side again, old friend. Perhaps we shall yet see restoration of Galifar.

Quinlan Sol

NPC: Quinlan Sol, Paladin of Thrane

Quinlan Sol, CR 15

Male human paladin

LG medium humanoid

Init +1, Senses Listen +4, Spot +4

Aura courage

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common

AC 26, touch 15, flat-footed 25

(+1 Dex, +11 armor, +4 deflection)

hp 164 (15 HD)

Immune fear, disease

Fort +21, **Ref** +13, **Will** +16

Speed 20 ft in medium armor (4 squares)

Melee +2 blessed greatsword +22/+17/+12/+7 (2d6+8/17-20) or

Ranged +1 composite longbow (+4 Str bonus) +18/+13/+8/+3 (1d8+5)

Base Atk +16/+11/+6/+1; **Grp** +20

Atk Options: Power Attack, Smite Evil 6/Day (+3 attack, +15 damage), Turn Undead 10/day (+5, 2d6+13, 7th)

Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 7th)

4th -- *holy sword, neutralize poison*

3rd -- *dispel magic, magic circle against evil*

2nd -- *resist energy, shield other*

1st -- *bless, cure light wounds, endure elements*

Abilities Str 18 Dex 12 Con 18 Int 10 Wis 18 Cha 17

SQ aura of good, detect evil, divine grace, lay on hands, divine health

Feats Extra Turning, Improved Critical (Greatsword), Power Attack, Divine Fortune (*Player's Handbook* 2 pg. 88), Extra Smiting (*Complete Warrior* pg. 98), Sacred Boost (*Complete Divine* pg. 84), Battle Blessing (*Complete Champion* pg. 55)

Skills Concentration +23, Heal +19, Knowledge (religion) +19

Possessions +2 blessed greatsword (autoconfirms critical hits 3/day), +3 mithral full plate of speed, +1 composite longbow (+4 Str bonus) w/24 cold iron arrows, periapt of wisdom +6, ring of protection +4, cloak of resistance +4, amulet of health +4, bag of holding (type II), bottle of air, candle of invocation, potions of cure serious wounds (x4), fly, gaseous form, neutralize poison

Quinlan Sol, Paladin of the Knights of Thrane, is a legendary templar of the Church of the Silver Flame. Or, at least, he was once -- many years ago. After a glorious and storied career fighting supernatural evil across Eberron at the direction of his Church superiors, Quinlan disappeared in the area of the Talenta Plains nearly 10 years ago.

As a matter of record, Thrane and the Church maintain that the holy templar known as Quinlan Sol was lost in battle during the Last War. In reality, however, Quinlan retired himself from active duty within the military branches of the Church, and disavowed his allegiance to the nation of Thrane. For reasons known only to himself, the paladin turned away from church and state to undertake a lone quest, cutting off all communication with his former compatriots and superiors.

The Council of Cardinals attempted to excommunicate Quinlan, but found to their great consternation that Quinlan not only maintained his status as a paladin, but had apparently forged a direct connection with the mystical force of the Silver Flame. Despite their best efforts to track down and interrogate Quinlan, the Thrane priesthood is left only with questions. The paladin himself has seemingly vanished from the face of Eberron, and their auguries and prayers can reveal nothing about Quinlan's apparently unique and powerful connection with the Silver Flame.

Combat and Tactics

Quinlan relies heavily on his innate skill and years of experience with *Lightbringer*, his +2 blessed greatsword. When confronted with a truly powerful evil foe, Quinlan can combine the Power Attack feat with his Smite Evil ability, a quickened *holy sword* spell (via the Battle Blessing feat), and the Charging Smite alternate class feature to make devastating attacks.

Self-reliant to an extreme, Quinlan keeps a large collection of one-use contingency items in his *bag of holding* for special situations. He also owns a special *candle of invocation* which allows him to *gate* in powerful allies from the plane of Irian, The Eternal Day.

Alternate Class Feature: Charging Smite

(*Player's Handbook II*, pg. 53)

Despite the glorious vision of a shining knight atop a warhorse charging into combat, the reality in the *D&D* game is that it's far from easy (and sometimes impossible) to bring a big animal along on your dungeon crawl. To avoid the drain on time and resources created by a special mount you might not even be able to use, you can select the charging smite alternative class feature instead. You still leap into the fray, taking the fight to the enemy, but you do so in a manner that better matches the typical combat found in a *D&D* game.

Level: 5th.

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain a special mount.

Benefit: Beginning at 5th level, if you smite evil on a charge attack, you deal an extra 2 points of damage per paladin level to any evil creature you hit (in addition to the normal bonus damage dealt by a smite). If the charge attack misses, the smite ability is not considered used. This is a supernatural ability.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer in lovely Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He writes about games, film, technology, pop culture, shady characters, conflicted heroes, strange and terrible magic, and shadowy fantasy noir intrigue. Not all at the same time.

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