

AETHERLIGHT FESTIVAL: SHADOWS OF THE PAST

GELOME TO DODECATEL, A CITY ALIVE WITH THE vibrant energy of the Aetherlight Festival, where townsfolk celebrate the legendary defeat of the Ancient Time Dragon, Volrath, 600 years ago. Nestled at the foot of the foreboding Storm Horn Mountains, Dodecatel boasts a rich history and a protective magical barrier powered by the fabled Aethercore, housed within the Museum of Magical Items. As students from the esteemed Tolarian Magic Academy, you are here to immerse yourselves in the festivities and explore the wonders of the Aethercore. But as the joyful laughter of the festival mingles with unsettling whispers of a faltering magic barrier, dark shadows loom, hinting that the past may not be as buried as you think. Prepare for a day of celebration, intrigue, and unexpected challenges that will test your courage and convictions in ways you never imagined!

- Recommended for 3-4 players at Level 3

SYNOPSIS

- **Setting the Stage** The Aetherlight Festival is an annual celebration in the city of Dodecatel, nestled at the foot of the dangerous Storm Horn Mountains. The festival marks the defeat of the Ancient Time Dragon, Volrath, by the legendary hero party Aetherlight 600 years ago. Dodecatel is protected from the region's dangerous monsters by a powerful magical barrier generated by the Aethercore, a mythical artifact housed in the Museum of Magical Items (MoMI). Statues of the Aetherlight heroes stand at the city square, where the festival is held. Most of their names have been lost to history, save for the legendary leader Ragnar Steelheart.
- **Player Involvement** The players are a party of students from the Tolarian Magic Academy, visiting the Aetherlight Festival as part of a field trip to write a report on the Aethercore. They begin by exploring the festival, enjoying its vibrant stalls, games, and food, but a feeling of unease is in the air as strange rumors of malfunctioning magic barrier and return of Volrath circulate.
- **Introduction to Warissa** The party meets Warissa, an excitable red-panda Tabaxi volunteer guide and avid fan of the Aetherlight legends, who offers to show them around. As they walk from the city square towards MoMI, a group of thugs harasses Warissa for being a Tabaxi and for her admiration of the red-panda Tabaxi hero of Aetherlight. The party can either intervene or let the conflict unfold, giving them an early taste of action and their first moral choice.

- **A Shocking Theft** After the encounter, the party arrives at the museum just in time to witness a shocking event—a Time Dragon Wyrmeling crashes through the ceiling, snatching the Aethercore, the heart of the city's defenses. The dragon escapes into a hidden labyrinth beneath the museum. Warissa, stunned, theorizes that this may be a reincarnation of Volrath; Time Dragons always respawn at a random point in space-time.
- **The Labyrinth** The party pursues the Wyrmeling into the labyrinth, encountering traps and ancient mechanical guardians left to protect it. Warissa helps guide them, but as they progress, they begin noticing odd behaviors in her—she seems to know more than she is letting on, and her magic seems unusually powerful for a simple guide.
- **Betrayal** At a critical moment, Warissa betrays the party, using Illusion Magic to incapacitate them. She reveals her true form—an Elven mage identical to the one immortalized in the Aetherlight statues. The Wyrmeling was an illusion created by Warissa, and she used the party to bypass the labyrinth's defenses. She escapes deeper into the labyrinth with the Aethercore, leaving the party to deal with the aftermath.
- **Aetherlight Puzzle** The party regroups and follows Warissa to a sealed door adorned with intricate runes and arcane symbols. The only way forward is to unlock it by solving a puzzle tied to the ancient Aetherlight heroes.
- **The Final Confrontation** In the final room, they find Warissa attempting to reawaken Ragnar Steelheart, revealed to be a Warforged. Warissa was actually one of the original Aetherlight members, sent 600 years into the future by Volrath's magic during their fateful battle. She now seeks to reunite with Ragnar, whose heart, the Aethercore, has powered the city's defenses for centuries. After defeating her, the party must make a difficult choice: let Warissa and Ragnar reunite, removing the Aethercore and dooming the city to monster attacks, or stop Warissa and save the city at the cost of her and Ragnar's reunion.

THE AETHERLIGHT FESTIVAL

DODECATEL CITY SQUARE

- **Dodecatel** is a rare bustling city at the foot of the dangerous Storm Horn Mountains. Its massive magical barrier, powered by the **Aethercore**, is what prevents monsters from ravaging the city.



- The **Aetherlight Festival** is an annual celebration that marks the defeat of the Ancient Time Dragon, **Volrath**, by the legendary hero party **Aetherlight** 600 years ago.
- The festival takes place at the city square and along the main street leading to **Museum of Magical Items (MoMI)**, where the Aethercore is kept.
- Colorful banners, magical lights, and festive decorations adorn the area. Stalls selling food, trinkets, and magical items line the streets. A large stage is set up for performances and speeches.
- At the center of the square stand marble statues to commemorate Aetherlight heroes stand in the middle of the square. There six figures: 1) **Ragnar Steelheart**, the leader in full armor and helmet 2) a red-panda Tabaxi Monk 3) an Elven Wizard 4) a Human Sorcerer 5) a Halfling Rogue and 6) a Dwarven Cleric.

OBJECTIVES

- For the school report, the party must learn about the Aethercore, its significance to Dodecatel, what the legendary Aetherlight has to do with it, and why they have a festival to celebrate their deeds.
- They may as well enjoy the festival while at it. You start with 100 gp each.

DEVELOPMENT

The party may choose to enjoy themselves at various stalls and attractions at the festival. The townsfolk will

drop ominous hints about the malfunctioning barrier.

1. **Stage play** about how Aetherlight defeated Volrath, embellished by Illusion Magic, hinting at possible use of Illusion Magic later.
2. **Divination Tent** Gives vague prophecies about the return of a powerful figure, a betrayal out of love, a difficult choice to make, and doom to the city.
3. **Supply Merchant** Sells potions and basic equipment. Complains about delayed shipment of explosives; thinks it is because of the barrier malfunction.
4. **Magical Food Challenges** A jovial gnome stall owner welcomes your challenges
 - *Spicy Mastery Challenge* (CON 12) - disadvantage in speech / Ring of Fire Resistance
 - *Blind Taste Challenge* (WIS 14) - disadvantage in perception / Goggles of Night
 - *Slippery Noodles Challenge* (DEX 13) - disadvantage in charisma / Scroll of Misty Steps
5. **Aetherlight Plush Catchers** Arcana (INT 14) and Sleight of Hand (DEX 12) to get an Aetherlight plushie. The operator shares conspiracy theories about the barrier “flickering” and possibly falling soon.
6. **Crazy Vagrant** Keeps shouting “The Great Barrier will fall” and “The Ghost of The Past is here”.
7. **Aetherlight Statues** Old inscriptions at the base have already faded. A sign explains we now only know Ragnar Steelheart is the leader of the party and that they defeated Volrath.

TRANSITION

After exploring the festival, the party encounters **Warissa**, an excitable red-panda Tabaxi volunteer who offers to guide them to MoMI where the Aethercore is kept. This leads into the next scene, **Trouble with The Specist Thugs**.



TROUBLE WITH THE SPECIST THUGS

DODECATEL MAIN STREET

- The Main Street is a long strip paved by cobblestone leading to MoMI. It is filled with festival-goers and colorful stalls on both sides.



OBJECTIVES

- Deal with the Specist Thugs picking a fight with Warissa.

DEVELOPMENT

- The party and Warissa walks down the cobblestone street towards the MoMI. The conversation is lively as Warissa enthusiastically recounts stories of the Aetherlight heroes, particularly the Tabaxi hero who fought alongside Ragnar Steelheart.



- A group of thugs approaches. These locals harbor prejudice against Tabaxi and mock Warissa for her enthusiasm about the Aetherlight heroes, making derogatory remarks about her Tabaxi heritage and the red-panda Tabaxi hero from the past.
- The party decides to negotiate or enter combat. Conflict score starts at 2. Encounter ends when conflict score reaches 0, or becomes combat when it reaches 3. Add/subtract by Intimidation (STR 15), Persuasion (CHA 12), and Deception (CHA 10).

COMBAT

There are [# of players * 2] Specist Thugs. They use [Bandit](#) stat block (25 XP) equipped with Scimitar, Light Crossbow, and Leather Armor (AC 12). They will simply attack the closest enemies.

TRANSITION

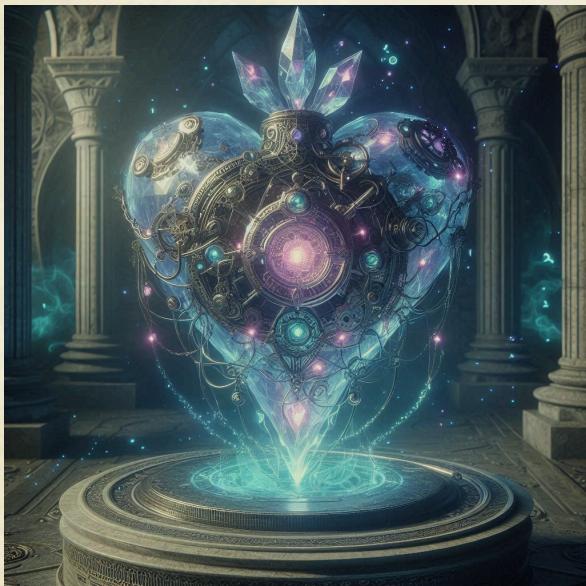
After the encounter, Warissa thanks the players for standing up for her. Allows [Short Rest](#). She leads them to the entrance of MoMI, where the next scene **Theft of the Aethercore** unfolds.



THEFT OF THE AETHERCORE

MUSEUM OF MAGICAL ITEMS (MoMI)

- MoMI is an imposing structure at the end of the main street, with intricate arcane symbols and glowing runes etched across its surface. It is home to Dodecatel's most important magical relics.
- The most important item is the Aethercore, the mythical artifact that powers the Great Magical Barrier that protects the city.



OBJECTIVES

- Learns about the Aethercore for school report.
- Follow the Wyrmling into the Hidden Labyrinth beneath MoMI to retrieve the Aethercore before monster rampage arrives.

DEVELOPMENT

- Warissa introduces the party to **Curator Thistlethorn**, an elderly Gnome who oversees the museum, welcoming the students and explaining the Aethercore's significance as power generator for the barrier.
1. *History (INT); 12 - Created by Aetherlight 600 years ago / 15 - Records of Ragnar's disappearance and no record of his face / 18 - Records of one or more Aetherlights being sent forward in time*
 2. *Arcana (INT); 12 - Not just power source but not sure what / 15 - Sense link to life force / 18 - Learns it is part of a sentient construct*
 3. *Investigation (INT) or Perception (WIS); 12 - Finds cracks indicating waning power / 15 - Notices it has been moved recently / 18 - Finds traces of severed connections; it was connected to something before*

- In the middle of the party's visit, a sudden BOOM is heard from above and a Time Dragon Wyrmling, glowing with temporal energy, bursts through, scattering debris and sending the visitors into a panic. Acrobatics (DEX 13) or Athletics (STR 15) to avoid debris (2d6 Bludgeoning damage).
- The Wyrmling appears to flicker in and out of time as it dives toward the Aethercore. Its presence causes minor temporal anomalies—visitors see flashes of past and future events momentarily.
- It seizes the Aethercore with its claws and tears open a passage in the museum floor, revealing an ancient, forgotten labyrinth beneath MoMI. It disappears into the Hidden Labyrinth.
- Alarms blare throughout the museum, and magic wards across the city start to flicker, indicating the city's defenses are failing.
- Warissa, shocked, cries out that this must be the reincarnation of Volrath, as legends say Time Dragons will always respawn at a random point in space-time. She insists that the party follow the Wyrmling before it escapes with the Aethercore.
- If players ask Thistlethorn, he will say he does not know of such legends, hinting Warissa might know more than she lets on.

TRANSITION

The party decides which course of action to take. They either follow the Wyrmling immediately as Warissa urges or takes more time to investigate and prepare for the dungeon crawl. Insight (WIS 12) reveals Warissa is not telling the whole truth, but she will insist the pursuit is of the highest priority. Arcana (INT 20) will reveal the Wyrmling was an illusion.

INTO THE LABYRINTH

THE HIDDEN MoMI LABYRINTH

- Beneath the Museum of Magical Items (MoMI), the Hidden Labyrinth is an ancient, forgotten structure. It seems to guard a deep, dark secret.
- The entrance is a crumbling stone passageway that the Time Dragon Wyrmling broke through during its theft of the Aethercore. The walls are lined with glowing, ancient runes and intricate carvings depicting legendary battles and magical rituals.



OBJECTIVES

- Finds the stolen Aethercore.

DEVELOPMENT

- The party arrives at a crossroad with multiple corridors, each lined with faintly glowing runes that pulse with arcane energy. *Arcana or Investigation* (INT 15) to sense a faint trace of magic from one of the corridor. *Perception* (DEX 15) to spot something passed through one of the corridor; if DEX 18, realizes it is a humanoid.
- The wrong corridors lead to rooms with Cloud of Daggers (WIS 10), Spike Growth (WIS 12), and Explosive Runes (DEX 12).
- When the party is about to enter the wrong room, Warissa will warn them about the trigger tile. An information she should not have if this is her first time into the labyrinth.
- If the players confront her about it, Warissa dismisses their suspicions, saying she has studied these ruins in preparation for becoming a guide. However, an *Insight* (WIS 15) check reveals she is hiding something.
- History (INT 14) or Perception (WIS 14) check reveals that the mural shows Ragnar using the power of the Aethercore to erect the barrier. INT 20 reveals it is Ragnar's heart.

- The party enters a dark room with six red dots glowing on the other end. Perception (WIS 18) or Darkvision will reveal they are dormant Ancient constructs. Warissa will know what they are, another piece of information she should not know.

COMBAT

- When any player steps on the trigger tile or attacks them, the Mechanical Guardian and two Mechanical Gnomes with Longswords engage the party. After two rounds, if the enemies are not defeated, two more Mechanical Gnomes join the fight with Light Crossbow. They get disadvantage on all rolls in the turn after they got hit with Lightning attacks.
- Ancient Mechanical Guardian** uses Animated Armor stat block (200 XP). **Ancient Mechanical Gnomes** use Animated Sword stat block (50 XP).
- At the start of combat, Warissa shouts that their weakness is Lightning. An information she should not have about these ancient constructs.
- Warissa casts basic support magic; complains that her School of Magic does not affect the constructs.

TRANSITION

- When all enemies are defeated, Warissa casts an unsavable Hypnotic Pattern on the party. Her form slowly morphs into the Elven mage of the hero party Aetherlight.



- She thanks the party and explains that the Wyrmling was an illusion all along, used to deceive the party into the labyrinth. She could not win against the Ancient Mechanical Guardian and Gnomes on her own with Illusion Magic since they have no mind.
- Persuasion (CHA 15) convinces her to reveal that the Aethercore is Ragnar Steelheart's heart. Her goal is to return it and finally reunite with him, at the expense of Dodecatel falling. Allows Short Rest.
- Warissa leaves the party, taking the Aethercore deeper into the depths of the labyrinth. The party follows her leading to the **Aetherlight Puzzle**.

THE AETHERLIGHT PUZZLE

PUZZLE ROOM

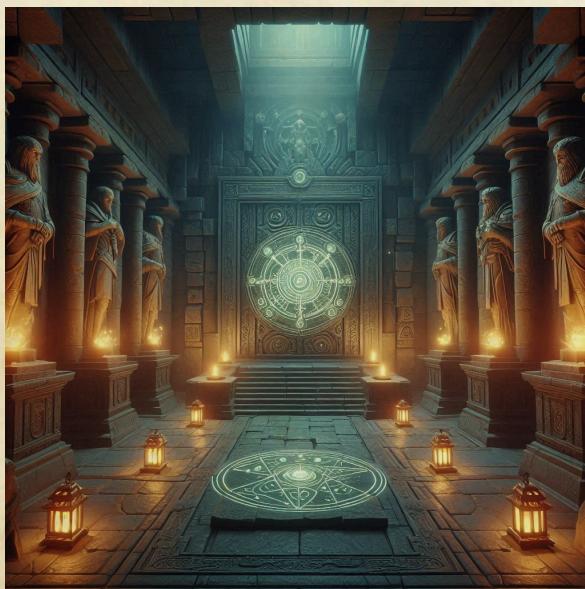
- The room is a grand chamber deep within the labyrinth, dimly lit by glowing arcane symbols. In the center of the room stands a sealed door, adorned with powerful runes and intricate carvings, leading to the final confrontation with Warissa.
- On both sides stand the statues of Aetherlight heroes. In front of each statue is an unlit lantern and a sign in six different languages. Only two signs are written in Common, the ones in front of Ragnar and the Human Sorcerer. The one in front of Ragnar says 'Light' and the one in front of the Sorcerer says 'Dark'.

OBJECTIVES

- Solve the puzzle to open the door to Warissa and get the Aethercore back from her.

DEVELOPMENT

- The magical door will unlock if the lanterns are lit or unlit according to the what the signs say in their respective languages that are native to the heroes.
1. Ragnar Steelheart, Common, Light
 2. Red-panda Tabaxi Monk, Payit, Dark
 3. Dark Elf Wizard, Elvish, Dark
 4. Human Sorcerer, Common, Dark
 5. Halfling Rogue, Luiric, Light
 6. Dwarven Cleric, Dwarven, Light



TRANSITION

- Once the puzzle is solved, the door opens, revealing a final passage that leads to the heart of the labyrinth. This sets up the climactic **Warissa's Last Stand**.
- Allows [Short Rest](#).

- If anyone lights the lanterns that say 'Dark' or distinguishes the lanterns that say 'Light', it will trigger 1d6 Force damage.
- Once per player, History or Investigate (INT 18) can read one language they are not fluent in.

WARISSA'S LAST STAND

TOMB OF RAGNAR STEELHEART

- The party enters a grand, ancient chamber where Warissa stands before the dormant form of Ragnar Steelheart, who is now revealed to be a Warforged, his body encased in magical stasis. The Aethercore, still pulsing with energy, hovers above him, radiating power.
- Warissa, now in her full Dark Elven form, turns to face the party, her eyes filled with desperation and determination. She is preparing the final ritual to reawaken Ragnar.



OBJECTIVES

- Defeat Warissa and discover the truth about the Aethercore.

COMBAT

- Before entering combat, Warissa summons the Illusory Time Dragon Wyrm. It has [Time Dragon Wyrm](#) stat block (600 XP) but has 1/3 hit points, +4 hit bite, DEX 11 save for breath attack and 1/3 damage on all attacks.
- The Wyrm starts by using Lightning Breath and reuse it again after 3 turns. Otherwise, it flies around and bites.
- Warissa is a Level 5 Wizard (Illusionist). She starts the fight by 1) casting [Mirror Image](#) and [Hypnotic Pattern](#) for crowd control or 2) [Invisibility](#) to find an opportunity to land a critical [Fireball](#).
- The room is laden with [Glyph of Warding](#) traps that deals 1d10 Force damage and pushes back 30 feet.

TRANSITION

As Warissa nears defeat, she speaks with fervor about her motivations, revealing her poignant past. She explains that she was thrust 600 years into the future by Volrath's devastating attack, leaving her separated from her beloved Ragnar—a Warforged who sacrificed his heart to forge the Aethercore. With desperation in her voice, she implores the party to understand that no one should be sacrificed for the so-called greater good. The party now faces a heart-wrenching decision:

- Allow Warissa to return the Aethercore to Ragnar, reuniting the two lovers but potentially condemning the city to impending monster attacks.
- Eliminate Warissa and reclaim the Aethercore, thus saving the city, but at the grave cost of two ancient heroes' lives.

REWARDS

- If the party chooses to side with Warissa, the party witnesses a heartfelt reunion between Warissa and Ragnar. Their bond, forged through centuries, serves as a powerful reminder of love and sacrifice. The ancient heroes will award them with **Blessing of the Ancient Heroes** (a boon that grants them advantage on one saving throw of choice for the next three sessions). As they return to the surface, they see the barrier continues to fade. It will not be long before monsters from the Stormhorn Mountains will flood the city. The party must now defend Dodecatel or seek a new source of protection.
- If the party chooses to side against her, they will retrieve the Aethercore and maintain the status quo. The party is celebrated as heroes of Dodecatel (500 gp each; advantage on all CHA checks at Dodecatel). However, upon careful examination, Curator Thistlenthorn found that the Aethercore's power is starting to wane due to passage of time. Sooner or later, it will lose its power and Dodecatel will be the prime target for monster invasion.

APPENDIX

GENERAL STORE AT THE FESTIVAL

- [Potion of Healing](#) - 50 gp - Recover 2d4+2 hit points
- [Elixir of Arcane Sensing](#) - 75 gp - Reveal traces of magic as faint blue lines
- [Torch](#) - 1 cp - 20-foot bright light + 20-foot dim light
- [Encyclopedia of Exotic Languages](#) - 100 gp - Translate among Common, Payit, and Luiric
- [Ring of Protection](#) - 200 gp - AC + 1, Saving + 1
- [Lesser Wand of Lightning Bolts](#) - 200 gp - Cast Lightning Bolt for 3 charges

FESTIVAL COMBAT MAP



Aetherlight Festival: Shadows of the Past

LABYRINTH COMBAT MAP



TOMB OF RAGNAR COMBAT MAP



