

FIRES OF FORT FLAME

A Side Trek in Anchôromé and Avernus



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FIRES OF FORT FLAME

Fires of Fort Flame is meant to accompany **Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus**. It details an extra "flowchart" like the ones that appear in the adventure, but this one gives the players the extra task of protecting Fort Flame from a fate not unlike the one suffered by Elturel.

Most encounters are balanced for four characters of levels 8-10, but they can be easily adjusted to accommodate lower or higher level characters.

This book also features a write up of the frontier town and fledgling city known as Fort Flame which lies on the east coast of the great continent of Anchôromé.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The following background details how **Fires of Fort Flame** is connected to the storyline found in **Descent into Avernus** and gives a detailed history which a DM might give to his players in bits and pieces throughout the adventure.

THE FLAMING FIST

Fort Flame was founded centuries ago by the Flaming Fist mercenary company and had close ties to the organization up until Anchôromé disappeared during the Spellplague, taking Fort Flame with it.

Since the Sundering, Fort Flame is back on Toril. It's dual populations of humans and dragonborn knows only what the history books tell them about their former ties to Baldur's Gate and it's resident mercenaries-turned-standing-army.

Outposts like Fort Belaruan in Chult have been lucrative for the Flaming Fist, though they have been spread quite thin as of late.

Because of this, Grand Duke Ulder Ravengard has sent his nephew, the honorable Gideon Ravengard, to try and reestablish long gone ties. It is not a task which he wants to take much time dealing with personally, so he has allowed Gideon to act as a proxy, fully trusting his wise but inexperienced relative.

Only days ago, Gideon's galleon *Moonrock Plunder* entered Fort Flame's newly established docks.

THE FAE DRAGON

After a full century on the alternate world of Abeir, Fort Flame not only survived, but thrived and this was mostly due to the assistance of the tanarvaki dragonborn. Aggressive dragons of Abeir fell to human and dragonborn heroes each time they thought to make Fort Flame part of their territory and plunder.

The dragonborn however, had a hidden benefactor who lent his assistance, but kept himself hidden, lest the humans think the dragonborn were playing both sides.

A mirage dragon named Xerfelox was this silent patron. The brightly feathered dragon detected incoming assaults and warned the tanarvaki, who in turn warned their human allies.

With adequate time to prepare, the Flamians were victorious in their battles against even such a powerful foe. When the dragons were defeated, the dragonborns' standing in the eyes of the humans grew into the strong friendship it is today.

ON AVERNUS

While most see the fallen angel ruler of Avernus for the hellish whirlwind of destruction she is known to be, few realize that raw power alone is not sufficient to maintain a hold on an entire layer of Hell. Zariel is a brilliant tactician and like all devils she is more than adept at scheming whenever she finds it necessary. For one, the former lord of Avernus Bel himself is kept in line by giving him the mindless task of creating infernal war machines. Bel's continued impotence is not her only power play.

Zariel sometimes has contingencies within contingencies and her plans for Baldur's Gate does not end with the city proper. Baldur's Gate has ties to a number of outposts such as Fort Belaruan whose inhabitants she would love to steal away to fuel her armies in the endless Blood War.

But while Fort Belaruan is currently a distant goal, Fort Flame offers a more immediate and tantalizing prize. As part of an entirely different continent and immersed in a wholly separate culture, Anchôromé itself could one day provide millions of corrupted souls for her infernal armies.

THE SPIRIT REALM

While she remains immersed in the corruption of Elturel and Baldur's Gate, Zariel needed an agent that she could "trust" (as much as a devilish Lord of the Nine is capable of trust) to handle her plans for Fort Flame.

As it's lord, Zariel has an inherent awareness of all beings of Avernus. There is a region of the layer that is (metaphysically speaking) far off the beaten path. This region, part of a conglomeration of planes known as the "Spirit Realm," consists of the infernal, celestial and everything in between. It is the final resting place (or place of torment) for the souls of beings who die knowing only the faiths of the distant land of Anchôromé.

This part of the Spirit Realm is still Avernus, and still Hell, but it has its own rules, power players and even devils. From this corner of Avernus, Zariel reaches into Anchôromé.

XERFLOX THE BLACKFEATHER

Like many regions do, Anchôromé has its own version of hag and this foul creature is known as a hisshishtawia. As stubborn as they might be, hisshishtawia hags will defer to a Lord of the Nine when called upon, particularly considering they gain much of their power from the infernal Spirit Realm.

Zariel approached two twin sister hags known as the Twisted Ones with a proposition. She would let them rule the Spirit Realm in Avernus as duchesses if they would only assist her in a simple task.

Zariel gave the Twisted Ones a fist sized stone shaped like a blackened heart which they could use to corrupt the mirage dragon Xerfelox. The hags could then open a permanent gate to the Spirit Realm and Xerfelox would use his corrupted breath weapon to steer the river Styx directly into the water supply of Fort Flame.

So where Zariel sought to bring Elturel to Avernus, she thought it clever and ironic to bring Avernus to Fort Flame instead. Without time to spare, her plan had been set into motion and unlike in Elturel, she no longer needs to maintain focus on the task. Events had been set into motion and her hags and dragon should serve her well.

CORRUPTION IN THE WATERS

Zariel's plan has been working perfectly but it needs time to complete. The *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* has thoroughly corrupted the mirage dragon who has become a version of dracolich, the hags have opened and maintained the portal, and the Styx is slowly leaking into the river which supplies most of Fort Flame with its water. Fort Flame already has had its share of bizarre encounters with sea creatures, but now it seems almost daily that an attack occurs. What is worse is that some of the cities residents have been changing into terrible monstrosities and no one knows why.

Add to this chaos the arrival of Gideon Ravengard, and we have the situation PCs are thrust into.

INVOLVING THE ADVENTURERS

As the flowchart shows, the PCs start this adventure in Avernus and travel to the Spirit Realm in order to seal a portal that leads directly to Fort Flame.

The adventure should occur at some point between chapters 3 and 4 of **Descent into Avernus** as the players are exploring the plane. On page 80, the book explains (under *Charting a Course*) that the characters might end up at a location they did not intend. This mishap could lead the adventurers to the *Pillar of Skulls* where this side trek begins.

FLOWCHART FOR AVERNUS

PILLAR OF SKULLS

For characters of level 8

The adventurers happen upon the fabled Pillar of Skulls when one of its demonic skulls warns them of the threat to Fort Flame and a means to locate the Spirit Realm.

THE BLOOD SANDS

For characters of level 8

The players pass desert and badlands at the entrance to the Spirit Realm region of Avernus. Here they encounter infernal landsharks that seek to devour them as they continue in their quest to save Fort Flame.

HAND OF THE TWISTED ONE

For characters of level 8

The players encounter a hag in her demesne which is the petrified hand of a giant or titan. The players either bargain with or kill the hag, who promises she can assist the PCs in defeating the mirage dracolich if they only kill her sister first.

SKULL OF THE TWISTED ONE

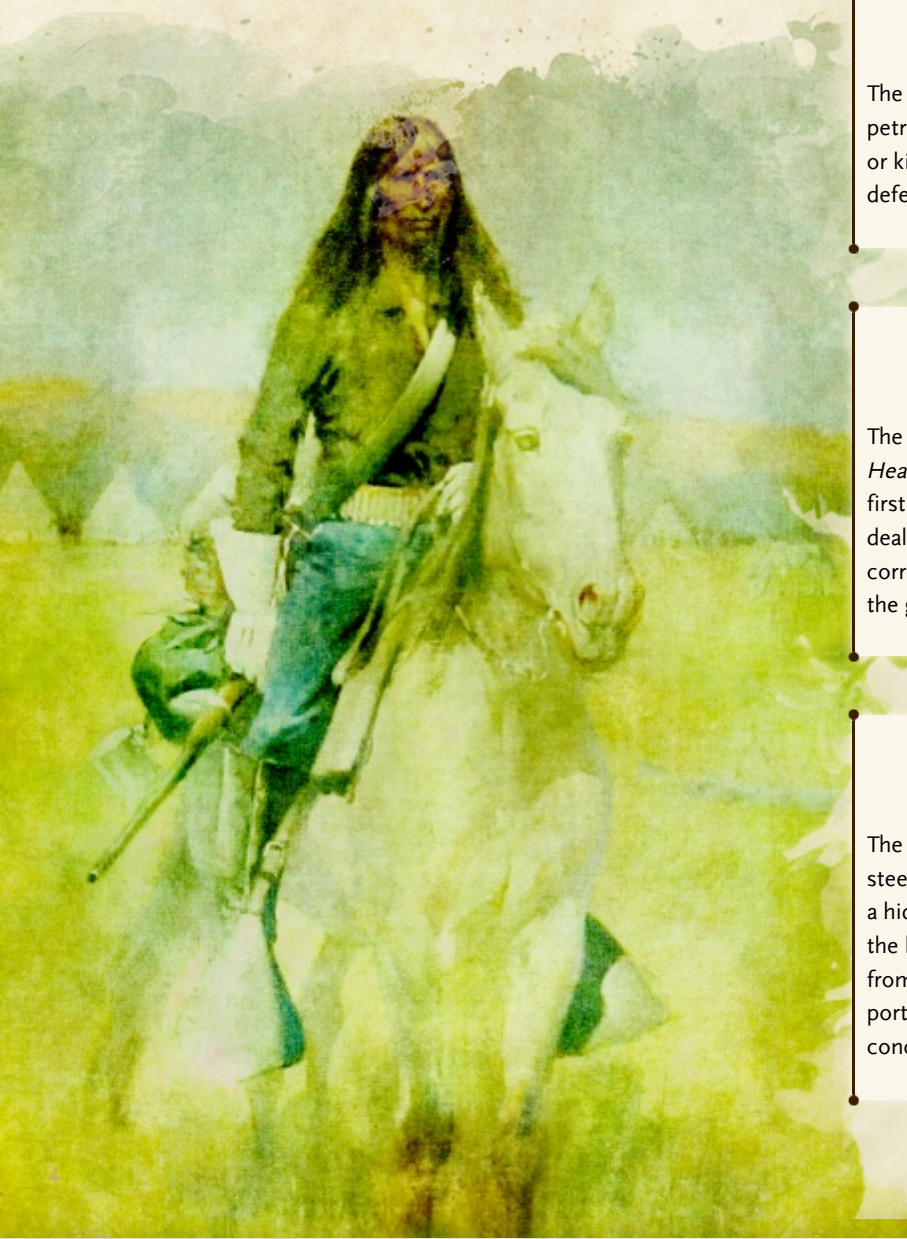
For characters of levels 8-9

The players encounter the second hag who holds the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* which was used to corrupt Xerfelox. The first sister makes good on her promises and the Heart helps deal with the dragon, but the hag doesn't mention the Heart's corrupting influence. This hag's fortress is the petrified skull of the giant.

XERFELOX THE BLACKFEATHER

For characters of levels 9-10

The players observe how Xerfelox uses his breath weapon to steer a tributary of the River Styx towards a portal that leads to a hidden cave near Fort Flame. Xerfelox must be stopped with the heart and possibly redeemed. Devilish deep scions emerge from the river and threaten an emissary from Baldur's Gate. The portal to Avernus must be closed by the adventure's conclusion.



THE PILLAR OF SKULLS

The Pillar of Skulls is a well known site and landmark on Avernus. As its name suggests, it is an impossibly tall (over 1 mile) pile of skulls that by all laws of physics should easily topple over. Each skull it contains is a victim of the Blood War, and they are gathered by devils as trophies and added to the pillar one by one.

As a side effect of the ambient evil magic of Avernus, many of the skulls are capable of speech and have much the same personality they had in life but tainted even further. Every skull that can speak, whether it be the massive and toothed skull of a balor or the fist sized cranium of a quasit, is a consummate liar.

If the skulls *only* lied, the Pillar would serve no purpose. The very best liars always know to hide a kernel of truth within their fabrications. Every half-truth told is designed to cause anguish or as much suffering as possible.

Devils often bring some of their deepest secrets to the Pillar of Skulls, knowing that they will be put to good use. They whisper these secrets to the skulls, allowing them to be altered or manipulated as the skulls see fit.

This gives the Pillar of Skulls vast amounts of secret knowledge and when the entire pillar is taken into consideration, it knows more than even the wisest of sages.

The Pillar should be plainly visible for miles around, but it is often obscured in the red haze and sulfurous clouds that seem to gather eagerly in its vicinity.

LIES AND HALF TRUTHS

Talking skulls represent only a very small percentage of the Pillar's collection, meaning that a character will generally only be spoken to by a few skulls at a time at worst, and sometimes only a singular talking skull is within range. There is also some motion of the skulls within the Pillar itself and they will be subsumed over time, while others are brought to the forefront.

A player who flies up the side of a pillar will of course encounter dozens or even hundreds who each desire to spread their falsehoods to the flying character.

The table below gives a random collection of lies and half truths that the PCs might be told by a skull if they go beyond the encounter and seek to speak to additional skulls. You may roll 1d8 to randomly select from the table or choose one or more of the lies spoken. The tongue the skulls speak in can be understood by anyone in range, even if all listeners speak a different language. This is as if the speech has a telepathic component to it beyond the actual words. If players speak Infernal, the lies and half truths will always be spoken in that particular language.

PILLAR OF SKULLS LIES AND HALF-TRUTHS

Note that the information given by the skulls in the following table does not impact either this side trek or **Descent into Avernus**. Rather, they are designed to encourage further adventures on the plane and the DM can determine the degree of truth found within each bit of information.

Roll

1d8 Information

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Asmodeus himself keeps a small, nondescript domicile somewhere on the blasted plains of Avernus in order to keep a closer eye on Zariel, Bel, Tiamat and other power players of the region. While it appears to be a humble abode, it is in fact encrusted with rubies that are hidden with illusion, and each ruby can blast bouts of hellfire at intruders. |
| 2 | A clan of azers has been captured by Bel who uses them to forge weapons for the Blood War. The hellfire they work with is seeping into their souls and soon the elemental dwarves will become creatures of Avernus. |
| 3 | A strange humanoid dwells in a parlor where he produces magical tattoos that offer protection against both normal fire and the hellfire of Avernus. The cost is said to be steep and he often requires bizarre services. |
| 4 | The Dark Eight have grown impatient with Bel as of late. Even should he return to prominence the Dark Eight will likely ensure Bel's eventual destruction and replacement. |
| 5 | Zariel is hardly the first fallen angel to inhabit Avernus. A planetar lies beneath the Maggot Pit whose foul inhabitants keep her trapped with only their colossal bulk. The planetar suffers eternally and wishes only to be released. |
| 6 | A volcano hides a direct link and portal to the slopes of Gehenna. In order to use the portal, a traveler must sacrifice one whom they truly love. Since devils love none but themselves, the portal has only been used by mortals in the past. It is guarded by a devil that is also somehow undead. |
| 7 | The ruined city of Darkspine has been organized by the lich Nhaimdailux. Nhaimdailux brings all of the lost and desperate to Darkspine and it wants to draw Darkspine into his own world where it can be used to jumpstart a new kingdom. |
| 8 | An entire contingent of modrons was separated from the last Modron March and they were abandoned on Avernus. These creatures have found a way to grow coppery metallic "trees" in a hidden "woodlands" on Avernus. The modrons are all rogue and tend to leave trespassers in their forest skinned alive. |

THE MAGGOT PIT

Not far from the Pillar of Skulls there is a 1,000 foot wide pit of writhing maggots from where newly formed lemures arise. Though the PCs can easily find the location if they have reached the Pillar of Skulls, it is best they avoid the Maggot Pit at their current levels.

A **red abishai** named Arraka herds the newly arrived lemures from the pit and he is often accompanied by or visited by other agents of Tiamat.

The Maggot Pit is in close proximity to Tiamat's primary lair which also houses her dragon consorts, a pathway to the second layer Dis, and a hoard of treasure whose immensity is seen almost nowhere else in the multiverse. Tiamat will not abide trespassers.

Arraka on the other hand is oddly patient for a devil and will not attack on sight. He will however, give warning that his mistress will not tolerate their presence.

If the PCs insist, he will offer to fly all of the characters over the Maggot Pit for the small sum of 300 gold pieces total. The first character who accepts this ride will be taken over the pit as promised and unceremoniously dumped right into the wriggling mass.

Players who are immersed in the Maggot Pit suffer 22 (4d10) acid damage each round and are poisoned if they fail a DC 19 Constitution saving throw for the entire time they are in the pit and a full minute after they leave it.

Roll 1d6 x 10 to determine how far from shore the PC must go to reach shore and the PC can only move at half their normal swim speed.

Arraka will not attack even after the character has emerged, but rather laugh and ask, "Who want's to go next?" with a smirk.

Arraka will fight back if attacked and wont stop until all of the PCs are killed.



THE DOG WALKER

Karpazio the Sable, a **black abishai**, is currently at the Pillar of Skulls adding the skulls of three vrock he and his pack of ambush drakes took down on the fields of the Blood War.

The vrock killed most of the pack, but four **ambush drakes** still remain. The abishai shows no battle fatigue and seeing the characters makes him smile with glee as he sicks his "puppies" on them and attacks from the sky with his +1 longbow (no change to his CR).

When destroyed, the PCs may search the remains. The abishai was carrying two *soul coins* in a small pouch made from supple leather which is actually elven hide. There is also a tiny emerald worth 50 gp - "change" he received when purchasing the soul coins from a hag.

THE BRUTAL TRUTH

If the PCs dispatch Karpazio, a skull will yell to them from Pillar congratulating them for a job well done. He snickers and tantalizes them by saying the following.

So you think what the angel has done to your precious Elturel is bad, you can't imagine what she has planned for the People! Well, Bertram knows, Bertram knows all!

Bertram is hard to see at first, but that is because he is just the tiny skull of a quasit crushed between the skull of a minotaur and a flind. Neither has consciousness, but the quasit skull is nevertheless aggravated at its predicament.

You mortals can see the threat in front of your face, but can't ever hope to outmaneuver the angel. Not without Bertram's help! No, you wont see it coming and by the time you do, you will have already forgotten yourselves. Let Bertram help. If you help me I will help you as well! I speak only the truth.

Bertram knows most of the history found in the background. Abishai who investigated the coming of the mirage dracolich learned of the Twisted Ones and Zariel's auxiliary plans for Fort Flame and greater Anchôrômé. This information was given to Bertram who just couldn't wait to pass on a tainted version of this knowledge.

What does Bertram want in return? A very simple thing, he just wants to be shifted from his current uncomfortable position among the skulls. A simple DC 11 Strength check should be enough to remove and replace the quasit's skull. Once the PCs do so, he continues.

So polite you mortals are, and so kind. It's no wonder most of you can't last more than a single day on these blasted plains!

Well, be that as it may, Bertram will assist you now. I will give you secret knowledge known by very few others.

Here, Bertram gives the PCs some of the background information and answers questions as they are asked to the best of his knowledge.

He explains that the portal to Anchôromé exists in the part of Avernus known as the Spirit Realm.

Bertram does not know much of the Spirit Realm other than the portal, the existence of the hags, and possibility that a powerful dead dragon is at the center of Zariel's plan.

The skull of course cannot and will not tell the full truth. He describes the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* physically but gives the PCs the wrong information as to which hag currently holds it. He also doesn't explain its corrupting and weakening effect on mortals.

Unfortunately, the magic of the Pillar is such that it lies cannot be detected with magic.

Bertram will refuse to go with the PCs and will scream and wail constantly if they take him anyway. The only use taking Bertram will have is to increase random encounters wherever they go.

Of course, if the PCs simply ignore the quasit skull, this portion of the side trek is over and the PCs may simply continue with **Descent into Avernus** as written.

THE BLOOD SANDS

Bertram gives detailed directions to the Blood Sands, explaining that it is where the Spirit Realm of the people of Anchôromé overlaps with Avernus. This is where the PCs will need to go in order to save Fort Flame from a fate much like Elturel's.

The Blood Sands might at first seem like a normal desert and badlands but the sand is peppered with bloodstains that never disperse into the sands which gives the region its name. Otherwise it shares all the same traits as the rest of Avernus.

THE SPIRIT REALM AND AVERNUS

The Spirit Realm is the collective name of the afterlife for the people of Anchôromé and those who honor the spirits of the continent. It includes a portion of each major outer plane and can often be attached to multiple levels of an individual plane.

The Spirit Realm also includes a few demiplanes (one is known as Wenimats) and it is even rumored to have some sort of rainbow based transitive plane of its own. The most commonly known portion of the Spirit Realm is the one that overlaps the material plane and some mystics are capable of seeing into.

On Avernus' corner of the Spirit Realm, lawful evil spirits remain in perpetual motion because any cessation of movement tends to attract infernal bulettes. These bulettes are particularly keen on devouring souls who are eventually reborn elsewhere in the Blood Sands. These tormented spirits feel the sensation of being eaten and digested every time they are caught.

Most souls here end up as lemures, but they begin their afterlife as ghostly and only partially substantial versions of their living selves (see illustration on page 4).

The only "hope" the souls still have is that an occasional hag will visit the Blood Sands and capture them to be sold off to some devil elsewhere on Avernus. In extreme circumstances they can advance up the devilish chain and there is rumored to be at least one prominent devil who began his existence here among the red stained badlands.

The **infernal bulettes** do not limit their meals to spirits however, and any time the PCs take a short or long rest outside of a structure in the Blood Sands, they are attacked by 1d4 of the terrible landsharks.

THE STONE TITAN

In ancient times a giant of truly titanic proportions found its way from Anchôromé to Avernus and the Spirit Realm. This creature was no friend to the devils and it crushed hundred of them under its titanic foot.

The devils rallied to destroy the trespasser and eventually slew it by petrifying it. The enormous stone statue stood for thousands of years in the Blood Sands and canny souls would often flee to it in order to avoid the landsharks.

It was eventually hit by a massive fireball of Avernus and it shattered into at least a dozen pieces. The largest of these were hauled off elsewhere on the plains and some were eventually hallowed out in order to serve as lairs for a variety of inhabitants of the plane. A hand of this giant petrified giant serves as the younger hag sister Chimalli's abode, and the older Chilam resides in the skull.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Each time the players travel from site to site in the Blood Sands, they will need to roll for a random encounter. Remember that they must also contend with the infernal bulettes if they choose to rest.

Roll 1d6	Information
1-2	No encounter
3	Ghoul Pack
4	Culloo Flock
5	Vrock
6	Osyluth Soul Collector

Ghoul Pack. The PCs are surrounded by a pack of 10 **ghouls** who attempt to paralyze and consume whatever they come across in the Spirit Realm. If a character is paralyzed, their lack of motion could be enough to trigger the arrival of the infernal bulettes as if they took a rest. This only occurs on a roll of 6 on a 1d6 which is taken at the end of the minute in which the character was paralyzed. The bulettes attack both the PCs and the remaining ghouls.

Culloo Flock. A flock of 12 culloo attempt to grab characters and drop them among a pile of boulders in the badlands. Before they drop the character, the PC is able to see the titanic hand-fortress of Chimali off in the distance.

Vrock. A vrock that escaped a recent battle in the Blood War is hiding out in the relative desolation of the Blood Sands. It is searching for a way back to the Abyss and promises "great favors from Lord Pazuzu" if only the characters help him escape.

If the PCs seem particularly gullible, the vrock asks the players to say the demon lord's name three times in succession. Whether or not Pazuzu (who can now converse telepathically with the character who said his name) responds is up to the DM. The vrock will betray characters otherwise at its first opportunity.

Osyluth Soul Collector. A **bone devil** scours the badlands for souls to collect and has currently found two **lemures** whom it is leading out of the Blood Sands.

This osyluth has been tasked with bringing 101 such creatures to its pit fiend lord, and it has not been even remotely successful. Now, it hunts the Spirit Realm because it believes it will find easy pickings.

The lemures constitute its first two prizes after weeks of searching and it will fight to the death in order to not lose them. Better to find oblivion than suffer the fate in store if it fails its master.

The osyluth wears a *nosering of levitation* which has exactly the same powers as *boots of levitation*, but must be pierced through the nose during the attunement process (causing 1 hp piercing damage). The bone devil activates its magic to avoid the infernal bulettes when it wishes to rest.

HAND OF THE TWISTED ONE

Bertram claims that one of the hag sisters, known as Chimalli (Bluebird), is in possession of the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus*. He gives accurate directions to her "hand" so that they might be driven to destroy her. Unfortunately, she is the only one who knows how to locate her sister who is actually the one in possession of the artifact.

Chimalli is annoyingly flirtatious and remarks often about her natural beauty and her youth. She is a minute younger than her sister Chilam (Snowbird) and believes this helps with her obviously "superior beauty." A few well placed compliments can go a long way with the vain hag, even if the PCs have smashed their way through her lair.

The lair itself is the shape of a titanic hand that thrusts outward from the bloody sand that permeates the area. The pinky finger was destroyed long ago by the Avernian fireball and there is significant damage to the index finger as well.

The thumb is hollow and Chimalli keeps her nightmare steed in it, and the middle finger has a hidden ladder going upwards to an observation turret. The murder holes here are no longer manned, but Chimalli often goes there to survey the surroundings. She will see the PCs approach unless they are invisible or attempt to sneak up on the hand.

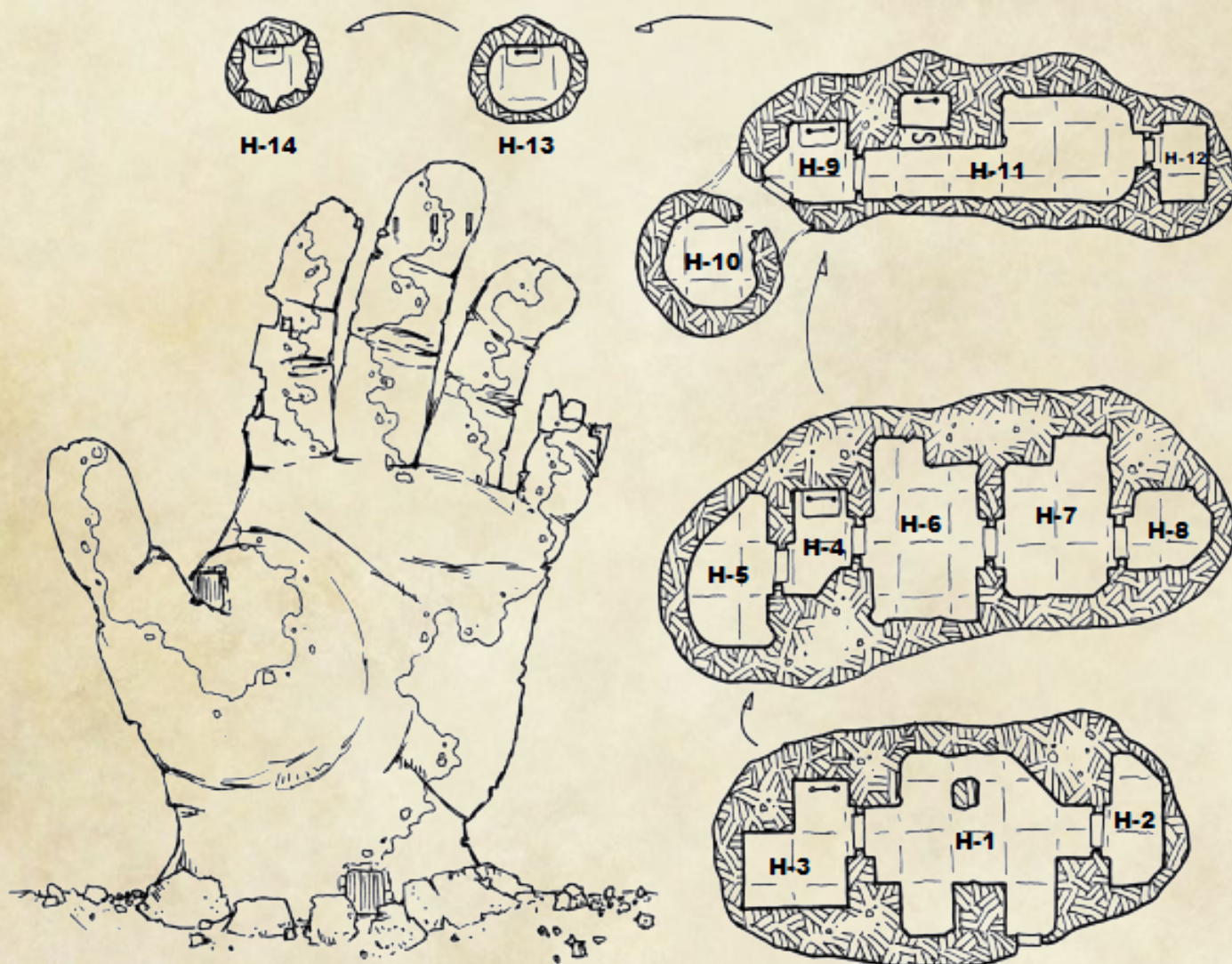
H-1 ENTRANCE

Chimalli's vanity leads to overconfidence in herself and her guards. She keeps the door to her fortress unlocked and it isn't trapped. It actually makes her quite happy when she has visitors. Occasionally a stray lemure or nupperibo will wander into her fortress which she gladly captures and sells to the highest bidder.

This is exactly what has occurred just before the PCs arrived as a pack of 6 **nupperibo** have wandered in. Chimalli's majordomo, a fawning **wereboar** named Ahanu, is trying to herd them into the pen (room H-2), but they don't seem to fit with their combined bulk.

Ahanu attacks visitors that come unannounced, and he will redirect the nupperibo to do the same.

Ahanu was once an inhabitant of the forest near Fort Flame, and if captured, he can be forced to give the information found in **ANC! The Anchorome Campaign Guide** concerning the town and surrounding forest.



H-2 HOLDING PEN

This is where Ahanu leads captured lemures and nupperibo to await the arrival of his mistress. It is also used as a waiting room for invited guests, and sometimes they are forced to wait alongside the foul creatures.

At the moment, only Ahanu's belongings are in here which includes a few copper pieces (Chimalli is stingy in her salary, there are 30 of them), and magical fan that Ahanu uses to clear the stench in the room when nupperibo are removed. This fan is a *fan of the North Wind*.

FAN OF THE NORTH WIND

Wondrous item, uncommon

This hand held fan is made from a wooden base and a collection of tightly packed feathers of an unknown species of avian. Nonmagical versions of such items are used to manipulate the scents of burning incense and less so in order to keep cool. While its powers are similar to a *wind fan*, there are subtle differences.

The holder of a *fan of the North Wind* can cast *gust of wind* using a charge, and the fan hold up to three charges. Every morning the fan regains 1d4-1 charges up to a maximum of 3.

H-3 TORTURE ROOM

Chimalli loves to intimidate her guests so she keeps one of the most vile chambers in her entire fortress here on the first floor where all can see.

There is a vertical wooden rack, dozens of hanging knives, scalpels and spiked chains, an iron maiden and blood splattered literally everywhere. The room smells almost as foul as the nupperibo, but unless the PCs have been captured, there is no actual physical danger to be found here.

A ladder in the northern corner of the room leads upwards through the hand to H-4 and further upwards through the index finger.

H-4 MURAL

The landing above H-3 is empty with the exception of a horrible fully nude image of Chimalli the hag laying on a plush, heart shaped bed in a compromising position. PCs who specifically state that they look intently at the mural must make a DC 14 Constitution save or be poisoned for 1 minute due to intense nausea.

The mural and its effect are magical, but that will be tough to determine considering the subject matter.

H-5 CHAMBER OF FAT

Read the description for the players when the characters enter this room.

When you enter this room the first thing you notice is the vileness that surrounds you. As if it were melting wax, the walls around drip a milky white viscous liquid that is streaked with blood at different points. Two pots of the liquid are boiling in the southern corner and fiery little devils flit from wall to pot with tiny scalpels.

Chimalla has been experimenting a bit with the nature of her fortress and has been transmuting parts of the stone hand back into the giant's flesh. This part of the giant's hand was particularly fatty and she has started her own "beauty" product line by turning the fat into soap.

She has a half dozen **imps** creating the soap bars, of which 40 bars can be found neatly stacked in a wooden box. There is also a small pouch of 20 tiny emeralds worth 25 gp each by the soap. This was Chimalli's payment for her last batch of soap which an unsuspecting dandy from Fort Flame is now the proud owner.

If the PCs attack the imps, the first thing they do is knock over the two vats of boiling fat (costs two of the imps their first action). This fills the room causing 17 (5d6) fire damage to all who stand inside and the floor becomes incredibly slippery. This means the room is affected as if someone had cast *grease* upon it and it will take an hour before the effect fades. The imps are unaffected by the melted fat because of their ability to fly.

H-6 A FORMER PLAYTHING

When the PCs enter H-6 from the landing, read the following.

In front of you stands the two most diametrically opposite creatures you have ever seen as far as pure visual beauty is concerned. A bloated troll drips vile ichor and stands before an incredibly handsome male human. They both stare intently in your direction until the handsome one speaks.

Bow before the great Zubaljin, favored consort of the great Chimalli! Never before in your life have you witnessed such beauty, such magnificence!

The troll just growls and gnashes its teeth at you and when the human finishes its proclamation it suddenly begins to change as majestic bat wings sprout from his back. To your great surprise, the devilish humanoid drops to its own knees before the troll and exclaims once again,

I said BOW!

The "human" is actually a shapechanging fiend known as an **incubus** and the troll drips ichor because it is in fact a **venom troll**. This odd couple is Chimalli's former consort and his page. Despite initial reactions to whom might be the consort, the venom troll Zubaljin is actually the one who once held Chimalli's heart.

Chimalli has recently rejected Zubaljin as her lover and he is extremely agitated. With or without bowing, it will take a DC 18 Charisma (Intimidation) check for the pair to allow the PCs to pass. A Charisma (Persuasion) check has the same DC, but is made at disadvantage if there are any males in the party. The PCs of course, are potential rivals for Chimalli's affections.

The incubus carries a copper ring with a rather large onyx stone surrounded by garnets. The copper has an engraving in infernal in which Zubaljin professes his eternal love to the hag. The garnets and copper together are only worth 5 gp, but the onyx is quite valuable and if removed from its setting could sell for 1,500 gp on its own.

H-7 KITCHEN

Chimalli's kitchen is more horrifying than her torture chamber. It is apparent that she will eat virtually anything, including demon ichor soup which she has boiling in a pot for the evening's dinner. The cook was a male half-elf (pagunki half-elven race, see **ANC1 The Anchôromé Campaign Guide** for details) that Chimalli had kidnapped as a child, but the jealous Zubaljin just killed him in a fit of rage.

Now the pot of soup is boiling over and the half-elf's body lies on the floor. If the PCs should be foolish enough to try the soup, they suffer 7 (2d6) poison damage and are poisoned for an hour. In addition, they must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffer the effects of *flesh warping* as found on page 78 of **Descent into Avernus**.

H-8 LARDER

Numerous iron hooks hang from the ceiling and four of them have hanging humanoids, including a tanarvaki dragonborn. The bodies are naked and mostly bled out, and all are missing their heads.

Bags of spices and salt line the edges of the room and one of these bags is filled with a very exotic spice. It is a full pound of *shiftspice* which is grown or created on Limbo and has a different taste every time it is consumed. If one concentrates on the spice, it can be controlled to taste like any other nonmagical spice. The full pound of shiftspice is worth 200 gp.

H-9 TOP LANDING

The landing on the third level is nondescript except for a thin chain which hangs from the ceiling. The chain is attached to loosened blocks which a PC can determine with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

If the chain is pulled, the blocks will fall, causing 36 (8d8) bludgeoning damage to any creature in the room.

Chimalli uses this as a fail safe if she needs to escape the tower from an internal attack and she might use it if the PCs choose violence without conversing. Typically, she will flee down the ladder while one of her imp servitors remains to pull the chain. It will take 30 minutes to clear the debris to go down the ladder or exit to H-10 after the chain has been pulled as well, giving Chimalli more than enough time to escape astride her nightmare.

H-10 GROGOCH'S NEST

Chimalli's steed and ally is a **nightmare** named Grogoch whom she lets come and go as he pleases to his nest inside the stone giant's thumb.

Generally nightmares are created by dark magic after the removal of the wings of a pegasus. Grogoch is different, he was born through the ritualistic union of an actual pegasus and nightmare.

As a child of such a strange union, Grogoch has features of both creatures such as the jet black fur of the nightmare and lightly feathered mane. Its most striking feature however, is its blazing fiery wings.

When Grogoch strikes with its hooves, the target is also burned by the intense heat from Grogoch's wings. This means he uses the stats of a typical nightmare with the following changes.

- Replace the additional fire damage from the nightmare's hooves with 17 (5d6) fire damage.
- Grogoch is CR 4.

H-11 PERFUMARIA AND GUARD ROOM

This is the chamber which leads to Chimalli's actual living quarters. She worries (particularly with the clientele that she often deals with) that those who enter her chambers will not be as pleasant on the olfactory organs as she would hope.

Chimalli makes sure that this isn't something she needs to worry about and has instructed her **horned devil** bodyguard to dump a bucket of "perfume" on any who enter from the landing in H-9.

Unfortunately, Chimalli's senses do not acknowledge pleasant smells in a way most would. In fact, the concoction she brews for this purpose is particularly vile. The malebranche, whose name is Ujarak, takes an action to throw a bucket of the vile substance on the PCs who must each make a DC 17 Dexterity check to avoid being hit. Those who are hit also make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw in order to avoid being poisoned until such time as they can wash the substance off with alcohol or after 6 hours have passed and the smell wears off.

After throwing the bucket, Ujarak will temporarily stand down and even allow the PCs to pass to Chimalli's Den of Love, but he does not speak to them under any circumstances. If the PCs attack, he returns the violence with reckless abandon, despite usually being a bit of a coward.



This should be a tough battle for the players but if they are in too much danger, Chimalli will call from the other room. In this case, the PCs hear a sweet, almost childish voice call out.

Yohoo! You out there! Is Ujarak bothering you, my sweet guests? Let me see you, all of you sound so beautiful. Ujarak! Stand down you fool and let my guests enter.

H-12 CHIMALLI'S DEN OF LOVE

Chimalli's bedroom is the essence of every seedy inn room found in the most depraved corners of Torillian cities. Every cliché for such places can be found in here and a similar scene to the mural in H-4 can be found here in the flesh.

Chimalli puts on her most sultry smile as she addresses the PCs, taking particular note of males in the party.

My, my, my, what lovelies do we have here? Mmmm if I knew this is what the Prime had to offer, I probably would never have left! Now that I see you have killed all my other lovelies, perhaps you have come here to take their place?

Despite her evil nature, the **hisshishtawia** hag will remain friendly if the PCs do not initiate violence immediately. If they do, she gives one warning, telling them what they seek is not here, and that she is the only one who can help them find the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* and she would be willing to do so if only they would kill her "ugly sister" as a favor.

Chimalli agrees to whatever sort of lie detecting magic they might wish to put her too, and unlike Bertram the quasit skull, her words do ring completely true.

If the PCs insist on a fight, Chimalli calls on her 11 **imp** attendants (who are all hiding under the bed) to distract the PCs as she makes for Grogoch's nest.

One imp follows her and if Ujarak still lives, he joins the melee as well, arriving immediately at the sound of battle. Lastly, Chimalli screams the whole way through her halls while she flees which draws the attention of the two merregon in the barracks.

AGREEING TO CHIMALLI'S TERMS

If the players accept Chimalli's deal, she will ask them to seal the deal with a kiss from each of the male characters. The characters may accept or deny this request and she is simply trying to take advantage of the deal making process. Chimalli will complain if they refuse, but it won't break the deal.

If the male PC with the *lowest* Charisma actually returns her affections, the kiss bestows on him the *charm of agelessness* found on page 215 in **Descent into Avernus**.

From that day forward, the PC will have a rather obnoxious paramour that pursues him endlessly until the PC relents or rejects the hag, at which point the charm disappears.

When all is said and done, Chimalli produces a small iron whistle and hands it to the PCs wishing them well. She instructs them to blow it once they set foot outside at which point a guide will arrive for them.

ANY QUESTIONS?

She can tell the PCs very little of her sister, only that she is a twin and the "ugly one." She also knows most of what Bertram has already told them, but clarifies that Chilam owns the *Black Heart*.

If they ask about their guide, she will simply say, "You'll see! Or perhaps you won't." She will not clarify and has little else to offer.

H-13 BARRACKS

The barracks hold two **merregon** devils, who are Chimalli's actual guards and she treats them far better than a devilish master would. They are loyal to their hag mistress and come down the ladder at her call only. If the PCs climb upwards before meeting Chimalli, the guards attack while the PCs are still single file on the ladder.

H-14 TURRET

The turret has murder holes where merregon fire crossbows should the fortress ever be attacked. It has not been since Chimalli has resided here and the turret has fallen into disrepair. A *soul coin* that was lost long ago can be found among the cobwebs and rust after a quick search using an Intelligence (Investigation) check with a DC of 14.

THE GUIDE

Blowing the whistle outside the tower as Chimalli recommended seemingly does nothing and it makes no sound perceptible to mortal ears. The brief moment necessary to blow the whistle also attracts an infernal bulette whom the PCs see approaching from the distance.

Before the PCs can prepare an attack, the bulette is hit by a massive electric shock at which point it ceases movement. A two-tusked stocky devil appears, crossbow and dagger in hand, materializing from invisibility.

This is Daaledze, an **orthon** devil, and the PCs guide to Chilam's fortress. Daaledze will not speak as he finishes off the paralyzed bulette, and covered in the creature's ichor it motions for the PCs to follow.

SKULL OF THE TWISTED ONE

Daaledze leads the PCs faithfully through the Blood Desert and the PCs will start to realize why they never would have found the skull fortress on their own.

The ways the orthon leads them are so counterintuitive and twisting that only one who knows the way could actually get there. The badlands almost seem to work against finding the hag's den, but the orthon does not fail in his mission.

At the end of their journey the stone giant's skull appears in the distance at which point Daaledze holds out his hand. The devil was conscripted to perform this task by Chimalli long ago, but he is not above demanding a tip for his service.

If the PCs question what the orthon desires, it will point to where the PCs hold any *soul coins* they might have acquired. A small magical item like a potion will serve as well.

The PCs can refuse to tip the orthon, but then he will lead a pack of three **infernal bulettes** to intercept the PCs before they reach the skull. As it is right now, if the PCs ponder for too long, they risk attracting the bulettes anyway and this time Daaledze will not intervene.

APPEARANCE

The skull of the petrified giant once appeared as a head, but this part of the Avernian Blood Sands has frequent sandstorms that have eroded away at the stoney "flesh," leaving only stone bone exposed.

Like her sister Chimalli, Chilam has hallowed out what remained to make herself a home and fortress. Chilam is very unlike her sister and though it is hard to determine who is truly "uglier," the PCs will certainly note the huge difference in personalities.

Chilam is sadistic to the core and enjoys inflicting suffering on mortals in particular. This one will not flirt with the PCs who under the best circumstances will only be considered meat for her stew pot. Chilam owns a *carpet of flying* which she uses to enter her fortress at S-6.

S-1 MISSING TOOTH

In lieu of what she considers "conniving devils," Chilam is more apt to employ guards which she has transported from the Prime. Her favorite type of minion is the foul smelling shampe, a hairless and corrupted offshoot of the alaghi forest folk who have a taste for human flesh.

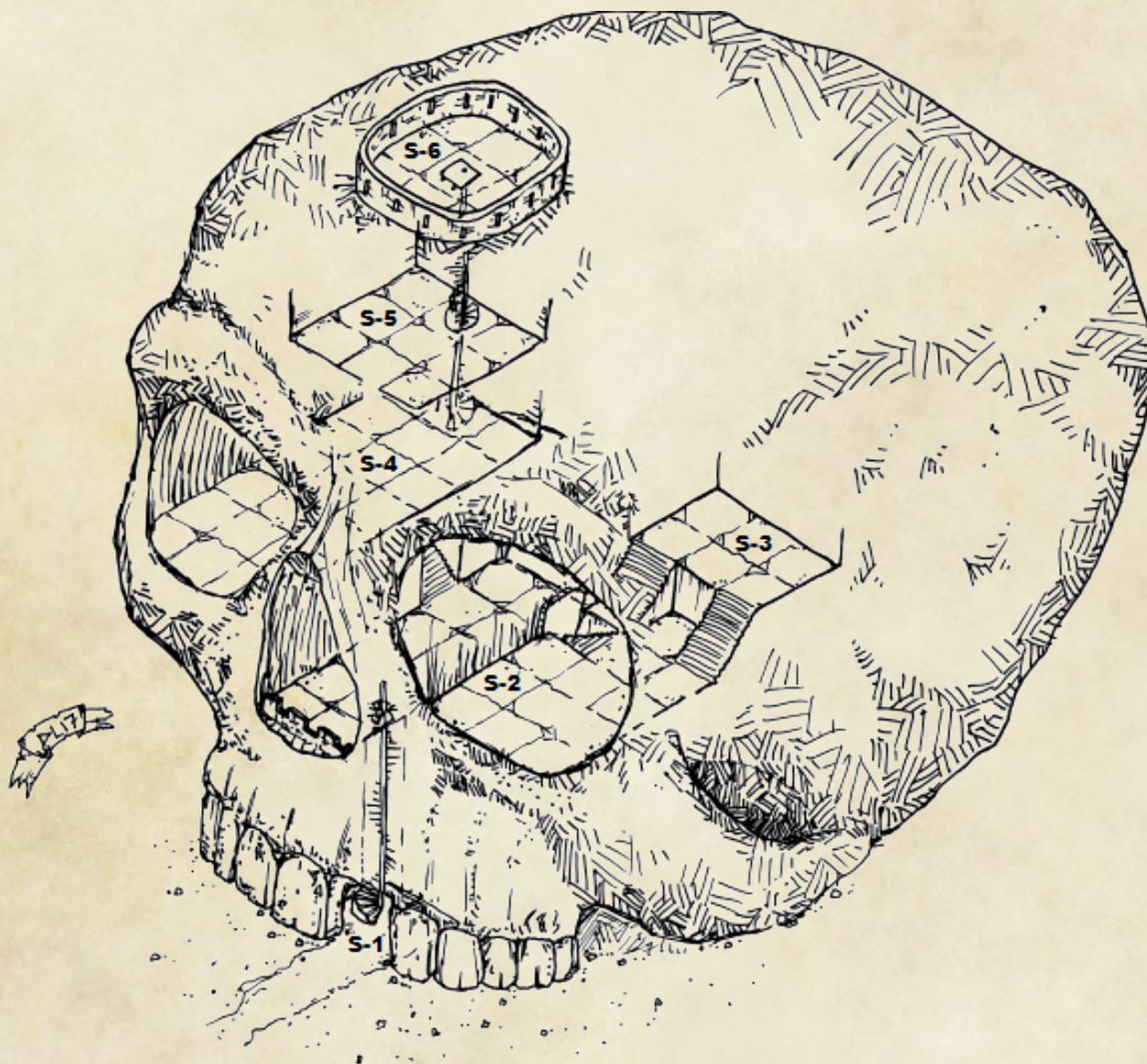
The skull fortress' entance is a missing tooth removed by Chilam and there are two **shampe** guards stationed here. Unless the PCs somehow silence them, these guards raise the alarm and five additional shampe arrive from S-2 to defend the fortress.

S-2 BEHIND THE LEFT EYE

Each "eye" of the skull is a large open space that would leave the fortress vulnerable to the unpredictable weather conditions that can appear in this region of the Blood Sands. However, Chilam has created a permanent and invisible *wall of force* in the socket of each eye. She can lower or raise these walls with an action if she so desires.

Normally five **shampe** lair here, leaving it a foul smelling mess. The creature's stench lingers here and the shampe have been allowed to decorate with the flayed bodies of humans kidnapped from Fort Flame.

If the bodies are searched, one of them still has a small pouch attached to its belt. In it the PCs can find a *lesser talisman* which contains the metamagic ability *substitute energy*. See page 74 of **ANC1 The Anchôromé Campaign Guide** for details on talismanic magic or simply replace this item *ring of water walking* if that book is not available.



S-3 BRAIN MATTER

Chilam has captured and bound an **ulitharid** named Vemaemon who remains shackled on this platform using *dimensional shackles*. In addition, Chilam has inscribed runes near the staircases into what would be the stone giant's brain matter were it still made of flesh. It is currently the subject of a permanent illusion to appear as a naked tanarvaki dragonborn.

The runes prevent the ulitharid from using its psionic powers beyond the platform and the shampe know better than to walk up the staircase. If a PC approaches the ulitharid he first tries to deceive the PCs into believing he is a kidnap victim of the hag and her shampe. The PCs may choose to believe him or not, but if they don't and they remain on the platform, the ulitharid immediately blasts them with his mind blast, followed by a *mass suggestion* for the PCs to fight each other. In his current condition, the ulitharid is still a threat, but since he is restrained, he is far less so. Count Vemeamom's CR as 7 for experience rewards.

S-4 BEHIND THE RIGHT EYE

Chilam is a devotee of the slain hag countess Malagard, and believes she is capable of resurrecting the former Lord of the Nine who will of course reward her for her dutiful behavior. Of course, even holding these thoughts is a danger considering Malagard's death was a direct result of the actions of Asmodeus himself.

While Chilam keeps her ultimate intentions secret, her love for the countess is plainly apparent in this shrine. The walls are covered with depictions of Malagard's accomplishments (in addition to some of Chilam's own) and blood red candles illuminate the drawings. The room radiates a pervasive evil even beyond that of the rest of Avernus. If you are using the *Pervasive Evil* optional rule from the **Dungeon Master's Guide** on page 64, the check to avoid an alignment shift is made with disadvantage if the PCs rest within this room. A character who becomes lawful evil also becomes obsessed with resurrecting the hag countess and would likely join Chilam in her quest, rather than attempting to slay her.

A reliquary to the right of the spiral staircase holds a book entitled *A Devil's Demise: The Story of the Deposition of Moloch* which is bound in human flesh and has pages that turn of their own accord during the reading process. This book is worth 500 gp and details how Malagard once counseled Moloch and then manipulated events so that she became the only non-devil Lord of the Nine in the sixth layer of Malbolge. The book ends rather abruptly and does not delve into the conclusion of how Malagard was deposed herself. There is also a scribbled map detailing directions to the portal to Fort Flame and the lair of Xerfelox the Blackfeather.

The book could easily be used to allow admittance into Candlekeep, should the PCs wish to do so.

S-5 THE HAG DUCHESS

This is the lair of the hag duchess who is certainly aware of the assault on her fortress if the PCs have been blasting their way through it. She has four **shampe** guards with her and she will stand back and cast spells while they engage in battle. If a PC falls, she will attempt to use her ghoulish consumption ability.

Should three of the shampe fall, the **hisshishtawia** will attempt to flee through the hatch above, taking the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* with her. When it gets to this point, read the following to the PCs.

The vile hag attempts to make a move for an escape hatch in the roof. As the last foul smelling ogrish creature stands in your way she moves faster than her bulbous body would leave you to believe possible.

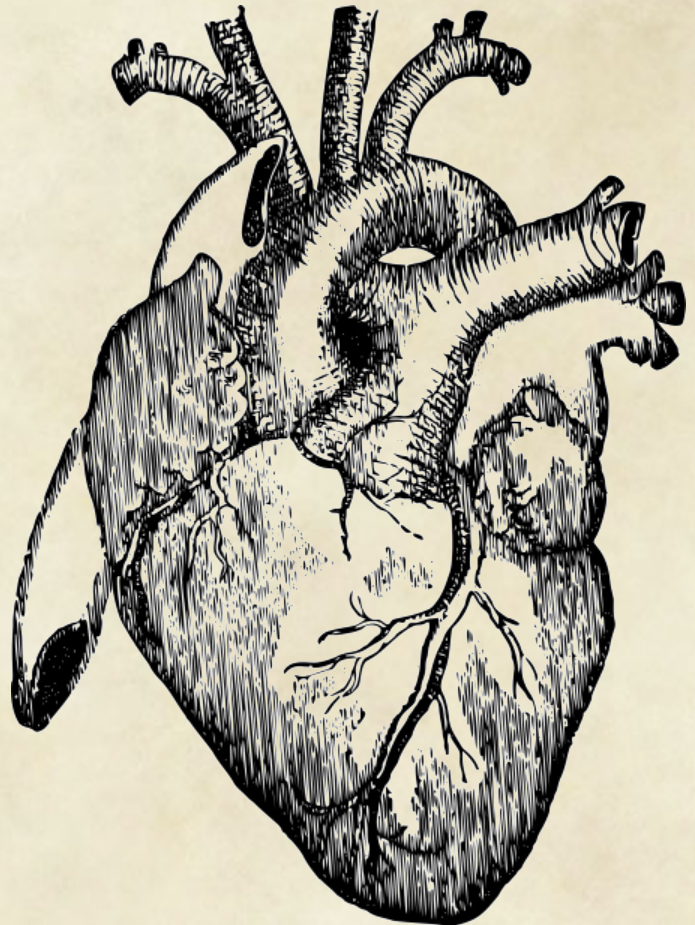
As she lifts the hatch and smirks down at you, you hear a sudden familiar voice.

Hello again lovies! I knew you'd need my help again, my sister might be ugly, but she is certainly a wily one!

With that statement, you simultaneously hear the whinny of what could only be her nightmare Grogoch, the sound of blasts of fire, and a hatch slamming shut which knocks Chilam off the ladder and onto the floor below. With the hatch sealed above you, the hag yells out as she turns to face you.

Malagard my queen, come to defend your most devoted servant!

The fall causes Chilam 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage but she manages to get herself together and continue the attack alongside her remaining shampe. If the PCs slay the hag, they may take her only possession, the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus*.



BLACK HEART OF TYRANTHRAXUS

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement by a creature of evil alignment)

This dessicated, blackened heart is the size of a fist and has the hardness of stone. It is pitch black, to the point where it absorbs some of the light which surrounds it, making it appear hazy in bright light.

Tyranthraxus is known as the Possessing Spirit and the Flamed One. He has taken many forms over the centuries and is a being of great power and unknown origin. His body has been destroyed numerous times and on one occasion his heart was cut out by the *blade of Lathander* and left to rot. Instead of decomposing the heart shriveled to its current state and it was found by a night hag who then brought it to Avernus where it remained for many centuries.

The heart has gathered ambient evil magic energy from around itself and it has become increasingly powerful. It now contains a number of powers and possibly some that remain unknown. While a decidedly evil artifact, its ability to absorb various energies can be used to remove corruption if properly utilized.

Adjusted Ability Scores. Attuning to the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* increased a character's Strength and Charisma by 2, to a maximum of 24.

Alignment Shift. Any character who is not evil may not attune to the *Black Heart*, however, they may still use its energy absorption ability. If a good or neutral character attempts to use it this way, they must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or have their alignment changed to lawful evil. This curse can be lifted only after the *Black Heart* is no longer in their possession and a carefully worded *wish* or stronger magic is made. The character will resist relinquishing the *Black Heart* with violence.

Energy Absorption. Once per day, the power of the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* can be called upon to absorb a particular type of energy within a 100 foot radius. This can be used to absorb any walls or fields permanently (though artifact level powers like a *mythal* are unaffected). Energy includes magical fires, cold, lightning, force, radiant, necrotic, psychic or thunder and also more obscure energies like prismatic, darkness or even good and evil.

If its user proclaims it is attempting to absorb an effect whose status as an "energy" is debatable, the DM makes the final decision.

Azure Bond. Any creature who attunes to or uses the *Black Heart* for energy absorption is permanently branded by a glowing blue symbol on their forearm. The symbol is of Tyranthraxus himself, and glows faintly (dim light to 5 feet unless covered) but has no discernible benefit or disadvantage that is apparent. In reality, the Flamed One is now aware of the creature's existence and such a branded being can touch a *Pool of Radiance* without harm, but there won't be any way to know either of these.

The bond can be removed with a *wish* spell and if carefully worded, one wish can cover both the bond and alignment change simultaneously.

Random Properties. The *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* has the following random properties that can only be used by an attuned user.

- 2 minor beneficial properties
- 1 major beneficial property

S-6 WIDOW'S WALK

Chilam's fortress has a Widow's Walk that serves as a landing pad for her when she travels via her *carpet of flying* (5 ft. by 7 ft.). A hatch leads to the hag's chambers but is bolted from the inside and would need to be destroyed in order to open from the outside. When Chilam returns a shampe guard typically opens it for her. Otherwise the stone hatch is AC 17 and has 20 hit points. Breaking it down alerts the entire complex who come to investigate.

In addition, the widow's walk is surrounded by an iron railing that has infernal runes carved into its surface. These runes set the entire widow's walk alight in flame causing 36 (8d8) damage to any who do not use a password that only Chilam knows. It recharges in an hour.

If the PCs have just destroyed Chilam as detailed in S-5, Chimalli has already triggered the trap while astride her nightmare. Riding the infernal equine has protected her from the flames but when they see her riding off and waving goodbye, smoke noticeably rises from her hair.

The *carpet of flying* lies flat on the skulltop just far enough from the walk to be unaffected by the flames.

XERFELOX THE BLACKFEATHER

Xerfelox was once known as Xerfelox of the Many Feathers for his bright and multicolored plumage. He was a secret benefactor of Fort Flame and beloved by the town's dragonborn. While his existence was kept secret, it was not a heavily guarded one and the dragonborn intended to "introduce" the dragon to their human allies in a short time.

Unfortunately, the hags managed to corrupt the dragon by allowing the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* to fall into its possession. Unknowingly, the dragon attempted to attune to the artifact which changed his alignment to lawful evil. Reveling in its own evil, the dragon allowed the hags to further assist in his transformation into even further depravity. By choice, Xerfelox performed the rituals necessary to become a dracolich - perhaps the first mirage dragon ever to do so.

THE PORTAL

The map found in S-4 of the skull fortress easily leads the PCs to the location of the portal in a hidden canyon in the Blood Sands. The portal stands between two stone pillars near a small tributary of the river Styx which now flows directly into the gossamer portal. A DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check allows the PCs to realize that the original course of the river has been altered and it no longer travels along its original path. When it reaches the pillars, it simply disappears, presumably to the Prime outside of Fort Flame.

From this side, the portal is unguarded, but a pack of 4 **infernal bulettes** have just passed through the portal and will confront the PCs on the other side.

FORT FLAME

Fort Flame is described in detail its own portion of this book and the DM can reference it if the players decide to explore the town before continuing with the adventure. However, the longer they wait, the more corruption will seep into the waters used by its citizens.

In any case, the PCs should encounter the besieged Gideon Ravengard in his ship before anything else occurs.

THE GRAND DUKE'S NEPHEW

Gideon Ravengard was sent to Fort Flame to once again restore ties between the former outpost and the Flaming Fists of Baldur's Gate.

Unfortunately, he has been under siege since he first arrived and is now holed up in his ship. Ten **deep scions** walk the deck of his ship known as the *Moonrock Plunder*. It is currently moored just off the shores of Fort Flame itself and the scions have recently set the sails aflame. When the PCs exit the portal, the smoke from this fire should be one of the first things they notice.

On the map of the *Moonrock Plunder*, "DS" represents current locations of each deep scion, while Gideon (a **swashbuckler**) and his two remaining **guards** are ready to make their last stand in the rear cabin of the boat.

If the PCs are being overwhelmed by the deep scions, have the swashbuckler and his guards emerge to take on at least the three sea monstrosities that linger near the cabin. In this case, the two guards will be killed but Gideon will survive.

When the battle is over Gideon will address the heroes.

Though you all stink of the foulest swamp, I owe you my life. I do not know the names of my saviors, I am Gideon Ravengard, nephew of the Grand Duke Ulder Ravengard. Who is it that I am to thank?

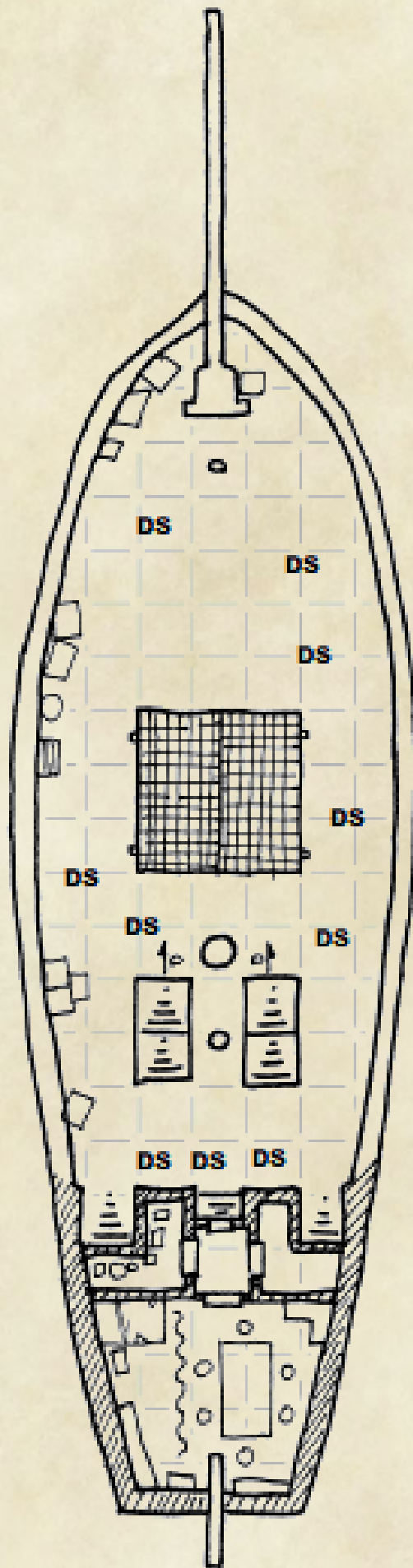
Allow the players to make introductions and help Gideon clean up the ship and put out fires. The bad news is that the sails have been burnt, but to Gideon's pleasant surprise most of his crew have managed to barricade themselves in the cargo hold. The dead were all loyal crew members, but Gideon thought the whole ship had been lost.

When all has calmed down, Gideon will explain his mission and tell them all they need to know of Baldur's Gate. His voyage began before Elturel was dragged off to Avernus and he does not know of its disappearance. If the PCs give him this information he becomes visibly distraught and informs them that his uncle Ulder had been planning a diplomatic trip to Elturel only days before he left aboard the *Moonrock Plunder*. Gideon begs the PCs to save his uncle and asks the PCs to accompany him back to the captain's cabin for a moment.

When they reach the cabin, he opens a secret panel and produces a golden bound book inset with small gemstones. This is a *tome of leadership and influence* that has been in his family for many generations. He claims that the book was used 99 years and 11 months ago by one of his ancestors, and many times great grandfather of Ulder Ravengard. He planned on using it once it regained its magic, but if the PCs are willing to try and save Elturel, Baldur's Gate and now Fort Flame, it is theirs to keep.

Gideon's most important information comes in his sighting of the "black feathered dragon." It flew over the *Moonrock Plunder* and he saw it land just off to the north near the forest known as Adusgi.

He can draw a small map or even point out where he thinks the creature landed.



BLACKFEATHER

The encounter with **Xerfelox** is perhaps the most deadly of the PCs career so far as they will have to face off against a mirage dragon dracolich. Luckily the battle is a straight up melee and the dragon will not be expecting an attack. In addition, the goal will not be to actually slay the dracolich since it can actually be redeemed through a roundabout method. The *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* can absorb its own evil magic, taking in all that it has wrought and miraculously returning the mirage dragon to his former, benevolent state.

If the PCs do not realize this is possible, perhaps their old friend Chimalli who has legitimately taken a liking to them sends them a *message* from beyond the Prime.

The message is only a faint whisper, but it is clear, and clearly Chimalli's voice.

Remember the Blackfeather was once the Many Plumed and the evil you hold can return what it owns into itself. Use the Black Heart and perhaps then you can return it to the pretty sister with love!

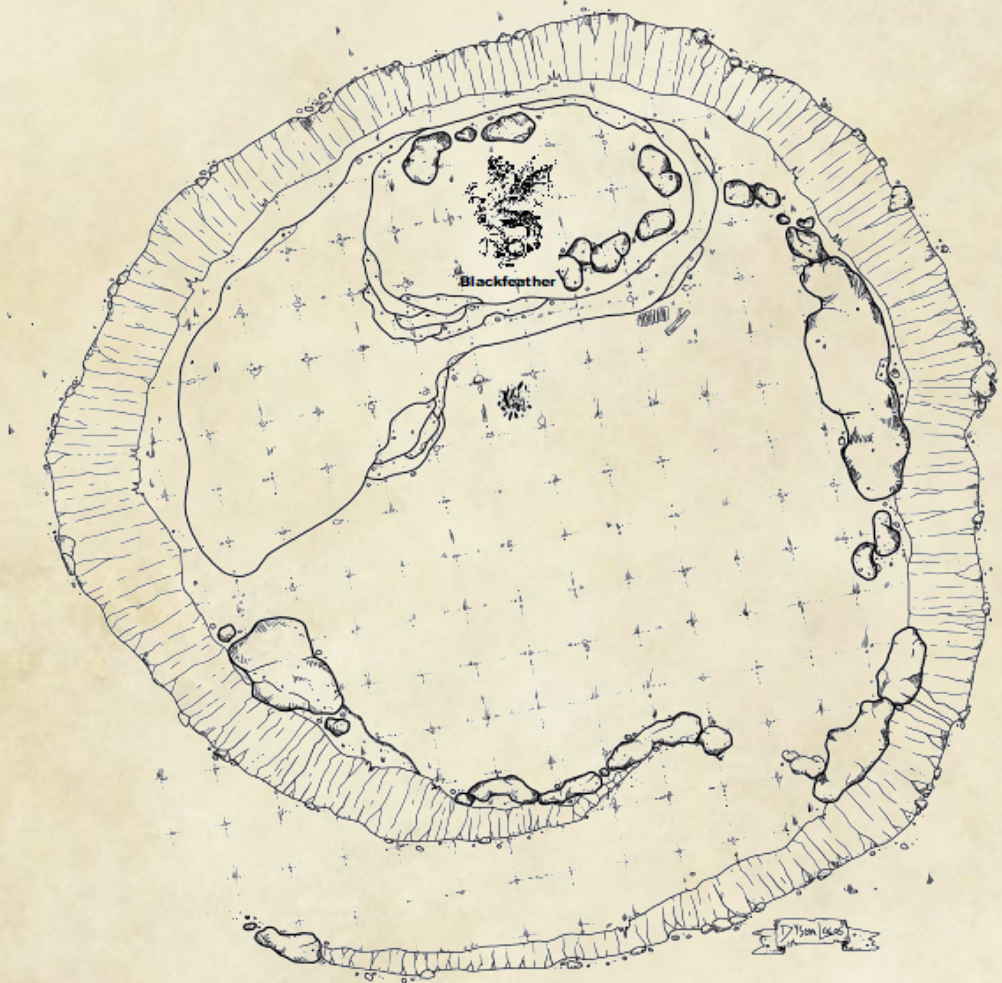
The PCs may use the Black Heart's ability to absorb energy successfully only if the dracolich is down to less than half of its hit points. A character who successfully makes a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check will realize this. The fight should be easier than expected, but still deadly.

LAIR

Xerfelox's lair is a temporary one while he repeatedly returns to Avernus in order to direct more of the River Styx's waters into the Prime. Currently he is awaiting orders from the hags or Zariel herself, though the dracolich does not realize that Chimalli has turned against him. The lair is simply a large mound with steep cliffs and a circular path, though it is hidden far from civilized eyes.

The dracolich is not expecting resistance, but rather spends his days watching the chaos that is unfolding in Fort Flame as more of its populace are turned into vile creatures of the sea through his actions. He shares Zariel's desires to see the entire populace condemned to the battlefields of Avernus rather than their simple annihilation. Fort Flame's inhabitants are entirely unaware of his presence and Gideon and his crew are been the only living beings to have seen the dracolich and still live.

If the PCs manage to destroy Xerfelox, he has a fist sized onyx phylactery hidden deep underneath the mound to which his soul will return. While this will effectively end the dracolich's menace, this is not the ideal conclusion to the adventure. Xerfelox can be redeemed and it would be a shame to allow such a powerful ally to the humans and dragonborn of the region to die. In addition, while the River Styx will eventually return to its proper course, the waters will remain as they are for at least another tenday, leading to much additional suffering.



The portal to Avernus remains open and eventually more infernal bulettes will come through, causing additional havoc to an already beleaguered people, and worst of all, Xerfelox might return in the body of another dragon at some future date to continue his work.

If the PCs use the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* properly, however, read the following.

The *Black Heart* swells and beats as if alive. Like a hole in reality the warping sensation the artifact gives off intensifies, reaching out to all energy within at least a hundred feet. Light dims, sounds become whispers and the dracolich known as Blackfeather screams. The hushed tones the world has adopted cause his roar to stand out in its intensity.

In moments, you see a trail of darkness being pulled from the dracolich into the black void you hold in your hand. The speed increases until the entire effect begins to draw itself in.

With an immediate hush, it is all over. The *Black Heart* rests in your hand, sounds and lights return, and before you stands a living, breathing dragon with a multicolored crest of bright plumage. Somehow, the magic of the vile artifact has returned the mirage dragon from both death and corruption.

Xerfelox knows and understands everything that has happened to him. His behavior has left him speechless and as his first action, he will bow his head low to the characters that saved him. He will feel particular sadness for the PC who used the **Black Heart** to save him if that PC has succumbed to the heart's alignment change curse.

Read the following to the PCs.

Xerfelox rears back as if to breathe and turns towards the mound behind him. His breath manifests as a shimmering and warping of light that penetrates deep into his mound. A moment later a fist sized black jewel and a small sword with a golden jeweled hilt fly from the mound and towards you.

Xerfelox says, Truly you are heroes to sacrifice so much for those you do not even know. I pledge my service for as long as I remain to the people of Fort Flame, and they shall know it is in your honor that I will do this. The items before you are only but a token gift which I can offer you. The gem, an onyx which once served as my phylactery - do with it as you wish, I no longer wish to even see it. And the sword? You may know of it as a luck blade, though it only holds one fulfillment of your desires remaining. Use it well.

With that the dragon motions for you all to climb onto his back, the dragon tells you that there is a portal which needs closing.

The ride on the dragon's back is gentle and easy as Xerfelox takes special precautions to fly carefully. His multicolored plumage serves as great hand holds as well making chances of falling minimal.

After a short flight, the PCs will spot the point of their arrival and they can see the foul Styx pouring through the portal and flowing into Anchôromé's own waterway. The PCs may travel through the portal to continue their adventures on Avernus in the remainder of **Descent into Avernus** or they can choose to remain at Fort Flame for a time. Elturel is still in danger, but perhaps the PCs deserve a temporary rest. If a PC has changed alignment, they need to think of how to carefully word their *wish* to return him to normal first.

If the PCs remain on Toril, read the following.

With a powerful breath Xerfelox tears at the portal's shimmering veil until it fades away into nothingness. The Styx quickly dries up and evaporates under the afternoon sun, leaving nothing but a blackened stain on the soil.

AFTERMATH

With the successful closing of the portal this portion of the adventure at least, is effectively over. No matter where the PCs remain the following changes will occur with time.

- Fort Flame's water supply will return to normal and the transformation of its inhabitants into deep scions and other foul sea creatures will halt almost immediately. Some will linger however, and evil sea creatures will remain a problem for years to come.
- Xerfelox will contact his dragonborn allies and arrange a meeting with Fort Flame's human leadership. His alignment shifts from neutral to neutral good and he remains a protector for the town for centuries to come. Xerfelox has developed some unusual abilities due to his recent interactions with the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus*, and he is advancing to an adult dragon naturally as well.
- Chimalli will miss her favorite PC, and will send an imp to collect the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus* as promised. If the PCs do not hand over the heart, her jovial manner quickly changes and she becomes a dedicated threat to the PCs at every turn. Perhaps she will help them in some other manner in the future if they maintained good relations. The heart, however, might change her demeanor over time, particularly now that it has absorbed such powerful and evil energy.
- Gideon will reestablish ties between Baldur's Gate and Fort Flame, but only in trade relations. Fort Flame is an independent town which will quickly grow into a city given its dragonborn population and new protector. It has no desire to become a simple outpost once again.
- Between the words of Gideon and Xerfelox, the PCs will be hailed as heroes in Fort Flame despite having never met its citizens. Their legend will grow quickly and they are welcome anywhere in town, particularly among the dragonborn. If they return or remain in Anchôromé, they will be contacted often to stop this or that menace. Cleaning up the remainder of the deep scions is always an opportunity for further adventure, as are the kuo-toa of the Bay of Balduran and the sahuagin of the nearby kingdom of Itzcali who were oddly silent during this whole ordeal.

FORT FLAME

If there was a time in Fort Flame's history where it wasn't besieged, there is no elf or dragon who's memory would recall such a time. From the first days of its founding, it has been at war. This war is not of conquest or contesting resources with other nations, but rather one of survival.

HISTORY OF FORT FLAME

Fort Flame's history is rife with conflict. The enemies have changed over the centuries, though none every truly disappear for good. The difference in the modern day is that the town also has some allies and its growth is bound to accelerate in coming years.

DUKE ELTAN AND THE FLAMING FIST

A Duke of Baldur's Gate named Eltan founded the highly successful Flaming Fist mercenary company in the earlier part of the 14th century DR. After 30 years at its head, he grew interested in the exploration and possible exploitation of foreign lands well beyond those that were generally known.

As such, he funded expeditions to both Chult and Anchôromé. While the Chult expedition saw some success, Anchôromé was a disaster from the start.

Four of his dedicated captains; Scar, Bellan, Desedrak and Yulimtul were sent to the New World with over 500 mercenaries of the Flaming fist. With over 200 horses and laden with equipment, Eltan had hoped his forces would find success similar to that of Cordell in Maztica whom he had fought beside against the pirate lord Akbet-Khrul of the Sword Coast.

Right to begin with, the crew was set upon with terrible disease that some blamed on the goddess Talona herself. However, if there was the involvement of any goddess at all, it would more likely be Beshaba, because their bad luck only began at the crews health.

Of the twenty ships that set forth, three were lost entirely to storms and no survivors were found. Worse yet, one of these ships carried a contingent of clerics that had been keeping the worst effects of disease at bay.

Limping and weakened, the remainder of the fleet reached the Maztican port of Helmsport/Ulatos where they recruited local warriors to replace many of their losses, including sixty noble Eagle Knights who learned much of exploration and greed from their time spent with Cordell and his Golden Legion.

FORT FLAME FOUNDING

Disagreements arose because of Eltan's rather unclear directives. The commanders were given too much choice and the four eventually split the forces on two separate expeditions. The first, led by Desedrak and Yulimtul headed northwest through great deserts in order to find the fabled City of Gold. This entire expedition simply disappeared without a trace and still remain one of the greatest unsolved mysteries in the annals of Baldur's Gate.

The story of Fort Flame truly begins with the 340 mercenaries, 150 horses and 15 ships that set course due north along the coast of Maztica and into Anchôromé.

These mercenaries unfortunately passed right over the kingdom of shark-folk known as Itzcali. The sahuagin did not take such intrusion lightly and from the Realm of the Sea People, they came in waves that eventually wrecked a third of the ships.



Scar, arguably the greatest mind and general among the Flaming Fist, led a brilliant counterattack, utilizing magical and mundane fire to turn the hordes back to the sea while as many horses and humans as possible got to shore.

Now on foot or horseback, the expedition continued inland through a region devoid of visible civilization until they eventually came upon the remains of a wooden fort. Scar believed that they had found the long lost resting spot of Balduran, whose expedition centuries earlier had inspired Eltan to fund this one to begin with.

The eastern branches of Poscadari elven tribes are far more savage in nature than their western kin, and the long memories of elves recalled their treatment at the hands of Balduran and his crew and attacked the weary expedition.

The elves had also called upon their darfellan allies in the seas to sink what remained of the ships. The orca folk's druids summoned great whales to smash the ships into splinters. Unfortunately for them, this brought the darfellan to the attention of the sahuagin who watched from a distance intently.

Bruised and battered once again, the remaining 100 or so mercenaries continued northward on foot until they came upon what they named the Bay of Balduran and settled for the first time in what would come to be known as Fort Flame.

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Scar left the encampment with a small group and miraculously returned first to Helmsport and then eventually to Baldur's Gate. He left the newly established Fort Flame under the command of the brave Bellan. All this had occurred in the Year of the Wave (1364 DR) but two years later in the Year of the Staff, Bellan finally received reinforcements from Baldur's Gate. This increased his population of 60 souls to just over 300. Elves were part of this reinforcement in hopes that their inclusion would slow the savage elf attacks.

Bellan took the title "First Flame" and spent the remainder of his life fighting off hostile elf raids, reinforcing the outer walls of the fort itself, and trying to eke out a modicum of trade with distant Baldur's Gate. Upon his deathbed, Bellan selected a young commander named Tyrian to be his successor. No one disputed Bellan's decision because of the respect that was held for elder commander and because of Tyrian's proven bravery and wisdom on the battlefield. The Council of Four in distant Baldur's Gate approved of the succession as well, despite the fact that the young warrior (a paladin of Tyr) was only 20 at the time.

Tyrian would be the last First Flame that would need to be approved by the Council of Four because only two years into his stewardship, magic across the breadth of Toril went haywire. Blue fire ripped across the world and tore chunks of land from the twin world of Abeir and dumped it on Toril. Conversely, entire continents of Toril were brought to the primal world of Abeir and Anchôromé was one of these displaced landmasses.

At first, earthquakes tore at the very foundations of Fort Flame's buildings and walls, but Bellan had them built strong so the damage was minimized. The sky changed to a steely gray and panic set in among the populace. While the disciplined soldiers were generally prepared for anything, this was an unexpected turn of events to say the least.

Clerics muttered prayers to their gods, but even the most loving and loyal of gods, even Torm the True and Helm the Watcher who never ignored their flock, fell silent.

Shock set in on the new world, finally identified years later as the twin planet Abeir. Fort Flame somehow persevered, but then the dragons started to appear.

The first was a brass scaled dragon that at first seemed a welcome sight in an unfamiliar realm. Without warning, it landed upon the wall built by Bellan and unleashed its fire. Shocked and dismayed, the mercenaries (and now, many of their families) scrambled. The elves readied their longbows and unleashed volley after volley. The dragon turned its attention to the elves and wiped out dozens with a single blast.

Next came the brave Eagle Knights who swooped at the dragon in their beast forms. The damage they caused was mostly ineffective against the fierce wyrm, but it distracted him long enough for a dozen mercenaries to turn their halberds on the fell beast. The first dragon had been destroyed.

COMING OF THE DRAGONBORN

Just as Fort Flame seemed to be recovering and rebuilding from the dragon's fires, lightning rained down from the sky in the glare of an otherwise sunny day. A blue dragon of massive proportions had come to eradicate the human infestation just as the brass had done so before him.

This time, almost simultaneously, strangely plumed lizard men emerged from the northern wood and charged at Fort Flame's gates. Tyrian thought the brief and embattled history of the onetime outpost was at an end, but he mustered up all the strength he could and hurled a great spear at the dragon as it swooped by. The spear struck, but it had done little to hinder the dragon as it turned to engulf him in a great bolt of lightning.

At the moment he thought himself doomed, the dragon suddenly stopped in its tracks. The lizard people had all turned their own breath weapons on the dragon. It was now plain to see they were in fact no swamp bound lizardfolk, but rather noble creatures who had far more in common with dragonkind. Furthermore, these "dragonborn" were not here to destroy Fort Flame, but rather to save it.

Blast after blast drove the dragon to its belly whereupon human warriors fell upon it, hacking and sawing. Fort Flame had survived its second dragon attack.

The dragonborn's leader was a noble creature named Greyax who explained to Tyrian and his council that his own people had recently been enslaved by the great dragons and had only earned their freedom in the days of confusion that followed the *Blue Breath of Change*. They were without a home, but were aware of the impending attack on Fort Flame. Their intentions were only to assist and find allies in a world dominated by the terrible lizards.

The dragonborn were allowed to remain, and most folk appreciated the assistance of such powerful allies. For nearly fifty years, the fort grew and the dragonborn settled among the humans and few remaining elves. They taught their allies of the blue sun and *aramber* sky. They spoke of the primordials and the great dragons who ruled this world. They even spoke of the influence of the Far Realm and the corruption it could bring to the weak mind.

They never spoke of their hidden ally however, a young dragon of many colored plumes known as Xerfelox. This mirage dragon, a breed virtually unknown outside of Abeir or the Realm of the Feywild, would remain a secret known only to the dragonborn, and even among them only those who needed to know.

DURBARUM'GARASH THE RED FLAME

In a battle that would unite the inhabitants of Fort Flame for all time, the most terrible dragon attack came soon after the outer wall had been upgraded to stone and Tyrian had reached the end of a half century of rule. Thanks to their hidden ally in the nearby Adusgi Forest, the dragonborn were aware of an incoming attack, but were terrified by the news.

The dragon that sped towards the town was none other than Durbarum'garash the Red Flame, the dragon who had once enslaved all of their kind. Tyrian's dragonborn commander Belziros readied the catapults, ballistae and all the manpower they could muster, but still the dragon caused vast swaths of destruction. The walls northeastern extent was torn to the ground and at least a dozen homes were incinerated on the dragon's first pass.

Taking to the air astride giant cardinals and blue jays, dragonborn and human air defense bravely pursued the beast before it could turn for a second pass. While their arrows and the bolts from the mages upon their backs caused the wyrm some discomfort, the dragon turned directly towards Bellan Manor, home of the aging First Flame.

Standing atop the manor, Tyrian once again hurled a mighty spear. This one however, was charged with the primal power of lightning and struck the great dragon in its left wing, forcing the beast to crash outside the manor. For a brief moment the dragon floundered until it reared up and bit the First Flame in two.

Tyrian's Last Stand as it came to be known, bought time for the rest of the warriors to gather and descend upon the dragon. Though it was blasted with the powerful psychic energy of dragonborn breath repeatedly and stung by both magic and sword from human defenders, the dragon managed to kill close to a hundred heroes that day. The dragon's eventual demise at the end of Belziros' sword was a pyrrhic victory at best.

BELZIROS THE FIRST FLAME

In less than a century of existence and only a half century after their arrival, the first dragonborn First Flame was elected unanimously by the populace. Long before his demise, Tyrian had devised and spearheaded the formation of a fair and democratic system for the election of his successor where both dragonborn and human had equal say.

Belziros set to the task of rebuilding immediately and recompensing the families of those who had lost a loved one. Though it stretched the town's coffers to its limits, this act of kindness ensured that the military remained loyal and dedicated to the town's defense. Fort Flame was growing, and with it the threats would increase. Belziros wanted it to be ready.

Early in his rule, Belziros commissioned the development of a crest for Fort Flame that would represent the fighting spirit of its people. To this day it still stands as testament to the will of folks that have always lived on the edge of a deadly frontier.

A RETURN TO A RED SUN

As another half century passed, the people of Fort Flame maintained their heroic histories and honored their forefathers.

Skirmishes with the wild Poscadari elves continued, but the elves likely had great challenges of their own while finding their way in the new world. Attacks grew less and less frequent and Fort Flame grew grander and stronger. Three First Flames were elected and served by advisors known as the Brass, the Azure and the Crimson Dukes, but none as noteworthy as those who came before.

When all seemed settled, the dragon attacks ceased and the fledgling city seemed stronger than ever, calamity struck one final time as the earthquakes of old appeared once again. The sky changed to blue and just like that Anchôromé returned to Toril.

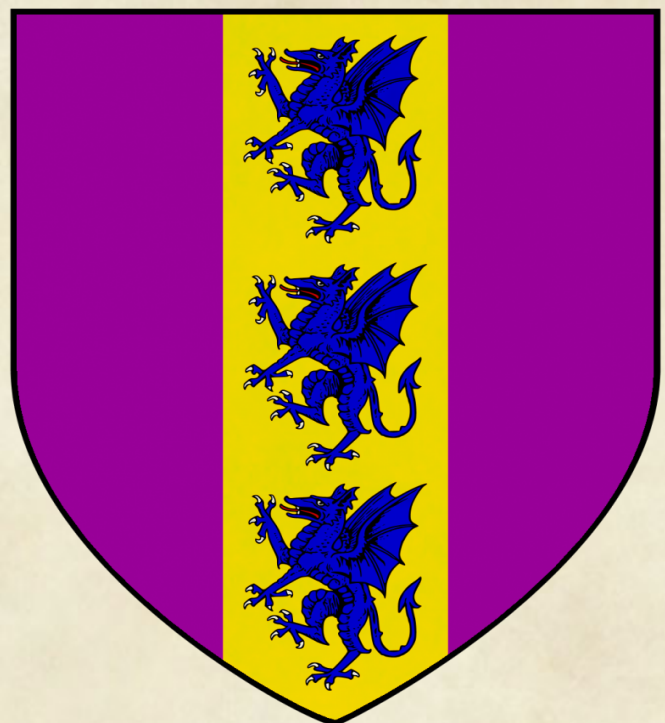
FORT FLAME TODAY

Similar to how **Descent into Avernus** gives an accurate depiction of how Baldur's Gate stands today, this chapter details how the far smaller, but no less intriguing Fort Flame can be found in the year 1492 DR.

Fort Flame has needed to fight for its very survival so often that it has become one of the most unified, intrigue free towns of its size located anywhere on Toril. Nearly every adult is capable of fighting, and many are quite accomplished frontiersmen capable of taking care of themselves both in the wild and within the town proper. Dandies exist within its walls, but they are uncommon and generally bullied by a populace that values survival skills.

Visitors are unfortunately held to this same standard and Fort Flame's human population gives very little in the way of charity to less fortunate folk. Most Flamians consider it an insult to be offered monetary charity and they would never offer such an insult in return.

Flamian tanarvraiki dragonborn are more willing to aid the needy, but they too have an independent streak. The dragonborn were accepted into the populace very quickly because of their heroic actions but there are a few notable exceptions of bigoted humans. It would be considered odd to think that there is any animosity between the races as a whole however, even though geographically the dragonborn cluster within certain parts of the town.



FORT FLAME

Population: 1,000 humans, 450 tanarvaki dragonborn, 40 elves (mixed subraces)

Government: Democracy (one person, one vote) to elect a "First Flame" with three chosen advisors (the Brass, Azure and Crimson Dukes).

Defense: Standing army, led by a commander and first officer and consisting of infantry and air cavalry.

Organizations: The Watch, trade guilds, a small, practically non-existent thieves guild (unnamed). **Religions:** A wide variety including gods such as Tyr, Torm and Helm. Great Spirits such as Tabladak and the Thunderbird. A smattering of dying worship of primordial beings and a secret cult of Dagon.

Identification: Given its growing population, Fort Flame is a large town that is quickly growing into a city. Fort Flame residents of all races refer to themselves as "Flamians" (pronounced like *flam* instead of flame).

The Fort Flame crest was developed by the dragonborn First Flame Belziros and his advisors. The purple and yellow background is meant to represent the unity of the dragonborn (whose scales are sometimes thought to have a slightly purplish hue) and human inhabitants.

The three dragons represent the dragons that were slain during the town's stint on Abeir, though their color is always blue to represent victory over each terrible beast.



NEIGHBORING REGIONS AND PEOPLES

Fort Flame does not have much in the way of allies, but they are no longer at war with foreign folk, at least that live above the waters. Even attacks by the Poscadari elves have abated since the Spellplague and subsequent Sundering.

ITZCALI AND THE SEA

Attacks from the sea are currently the greatest threat to the survival of Fort Flame. It is impossible to predict when the sahuagin city of Itzcali will stage a raid and ships have been lost to attacks by titanic and mean spirited megalodons all too often. This has effectively slowed trade with other regions of Toril to a near standstill. Baldur's Gate would love to reinstate trade talks, but only recently have any ships been able to make port.

In the Bay of Balduran an outpost of kou-toans might be even more of a worry than the sahuagin themselves. The kou-toa are believed to worship a foul being from deep in the Abyss known as Dagon. They have dominated entire tribes of sahuagin and have even begun to capture and torture Flamians that they can get their webbed hands on. Such poor souls invariably return changed. Sleeper cells of these "sea children," whether they be skum, deep scions or even less known beings hide within the populace. Recent events have sped up this process exponentially.

THE ADUSGI FOREST

To the north of Fort Flame lies a massive forest that by itself takes up nearly a fifth of the Anchôromé continent. Once inhabited by scores of lycanthropes, it is now primarily the home of the Hairy Forest Folk and a tribe of indifferent half-elves. The Hairy Forest Folk mostly consist of Anchôromé alaghi and their umpleby allies who mostly leave the Flamians alone. There is a distinct subset of the alaghi known as "runts" for their smaller size who appear in Fort Flame on occasion. The sight of these beings is no longer shocking to the inhabitants and the existence of their kin in the northern wood is well known information.

The half-elves, known as Pagunki, are slightly more xenophobic and unfortunately closer in proximity to the actual town. Because of these half-elves, logging is kept to the barest minimum, but in the southern reaches of the forest they generally leave hunters alone.

Before the Spellplague (or the Blue Breath of change as it is known here), a splinter group of Flamians forged forward into the Adusgi hoping to establish a new settlement. These brave folk negotiated peace with both the Pagunki and alaghi for their tiny village. Something happened during the Spellplague however, and every villager disappeared with only strange runes remaining to mark their disappearance.

POSCADARI ELVES

The savage elves of the southern coast have been a thorn in the side of Fort Flame since prior to its founding. The elves have long memories and the "pale skinned folk" were first represented by Balduran centuries ago. Balduran did not treat the elves, their burial grounds, or their monuments with any semblance of respect. Much of Baldur's Gate actually exists because of his wanton plunder of elven monuments.

Hundreds of skirmishes have occurred throughout the years, but Fort Flame is no longer openly at war with the elves. Flamians simply do not travel into the southern wilds and the elves give Fort Flame a wide berth. It would take a significant event to forge a true lasting peace between the two peoples, however.

MINNENEWAH

Further to the west and outside of the Adusgi, there are a number of scattered tribes of a people known as the Minnnewah. Each tribe seems to have its own distinct culture and social norms and at the moment they do not seem to treat Flamians any differently than they would another tribe. Some are hostile, but most are peaceable and Minnnewah are welcome between the town walls.

GOVERNMENT

The First Flame has all but supreme power in Fort Flame, yet tradition states that he rule with a light hand. Advisors known as Dukes wield some power, and they are given the First Flame's ear whenever required. They tend to the day to day needs of the town, though the First Flame can outrank any and all of the Dukes in any one issue.

The Dukes consist of a Brass Duke, who manages both public construction and matters of judgment, the Azure Duke who deals with all matters of the sea including defense and the limited shipping that exists, and finally the Crimson Duke, who is responsible for a small police force and military matters.

A First Flame is elected for life and elections are purely democratic, with every citizen receiving exactly one vote. In order to curb irrelevant alternatives, voters submit a preference ballot and a plurality runoff is made between the two top contenders.

FIRST FLAME STREOLDRUS GRAYHORN

Orphaned at a young age, the human warrior Streoldrus was living on the streets of Fort Flame for nearly three years of his life as a child. He wandered into the Borough of the Tanarvraki looking for food where he was taken in by the dragonborn family Grayhorn.

Streoldrus grew to embody everything that Fort Flame represents - survival, independence and rugged individualism. He is a fierce warrior who made a name for himself in the last major skirmish with the Poscadari elves. His adoptive father Drucshukiond was killed in that battle and he has hidden desires to enact revenge on the elves. At the moment, hostilities have abated, but Streoldrus has not forgotten.

Of the Dukes, Streoldrus respects Acshe and Teorgia, but he considers Kridarzros a mentor of sorts, and sometimes the dragonborn Crimson Duke is afforded powers that were not intended for a Duke. Kridarzros reminds Streoldrus of his father, which has created a blind spot in the First Flame's judgment. As it stands, the First Flame is lucky that Kridarzros has not taken advantage.

CRIMSON DUKE KRIDARZROS

The Crimson Duke is a statuesque tanarvraki dragonborn who tops out close to 7 feet tall. His powerfully muscled frame is often draped with his signature crimson cowl and few ever see him without his magical chain *armor of fire resistance*.

The Crimson Duke is loyal, but ambitious, and the First Flame gives him a lot of leeway in how he runs the military and police force of Fort Flame. His interests definitely lie more in the military, and the police (known only as the Watch) have fallen somewhat by the wayside. Luckily, crime is not rampant in town, but the police could not handle any major incidents.

AZURE DUKE TEORGIA

Teorgia is one of the few remaining folk in Fort Flame that still has elven blood running through her veins. She is human, but there are hints of tips at her edges of her ears and her hair has a golden tinge that is unusual for Flamians.

Teorgia does not quite have the passion for the sea that her position entails, but has become much more serious since she began to suspect the incursion from the depths. Streoldrus has given her permission to form a commission to root out the evil and she is currently looking to hire powerful individuals that are willing to head into the depths of the Bay of Balduran.

BRASS DUKE ACHSE

Achse is a loner, which is an odd personality trait for one responsible for so much of public life. She has a home outside the walls and refuses to move inside despite the recommendations of the other Dukes and Streoldrus himself. Achse enters through the south gate every morning at sunrise, however, and treats her position as the job it is. She is in many ways a counter to Kridarzros whom she sees as overzealous.

Achse has a small secret in that she has adopted an umpleby that wandered from the Adusgi Forest a number of years ago. She keeps the gentle creature whom she has all but raised as a child hidden in her home. She wears a *ring of lightning resistance* which helps her avoid mishaps with her electrically charged child.

MILITARY

As it should be for a fort at the edge of a frontier, Fort Flame's military is substantial and almost every family has at least one member who serves. The military has had to contend with savage elves, sea creature incursions, and of course the three dragons depicted in the town's crest.

There has been little to fight in the way of actual war in the last few years, but the military has been used increasingly to clear nearby monsters from their dens. Perhaps Kridarzros and Streoldrus intend to expand into neighboring lands in the near future.

The threat from the sea has been relegated to the Azure Duke's commission and the military flexes its might under her command when sahuagin warbands rise from the sea. Since the threat has been more insidious of late, she has begun to employ more indirect tactics than pure use of military might.

THE WATCH

Fort Flame's police force is small and generally hands off. There is only the smallest of thieves guilds as of yet (less than ten members) despite the size of the settlement, so they don't typically need to be in everyone's business.

The Watch typically deals with disputes that become violent, reports of missing children or pets, and illegal public activities such as building without permission between the town walls. Recently an infestation of exceptionally large rats were found on the southeast side of town, and the Watch did an admirable job at removing them.

LIGHT INFANTRY

Though there are individuals with heavier armor, the standing infantry of Fort Flame generally wears armor no heavier than chain. Many battles have been fought deep in wooded areas and the flexibility of leather has suited Fort Flame's infantry well. This is the largest part of the military with a mix of 200 humans and dragonborn.

AIR CALVARY

Fifty warriors and mages ride upon giant bluejays and cardinals that have been raised and domesticated. The mobility of this cavalry has been the deciding factor in a number of battles, and it is believed that they effectively keep the elves at bay.

DEFUNCT FORCES

Over time two units have fallen into disuse and have all but disappeared from Fort Flame's military. At one time at least sixty elves fought alongside mankind and there were dozens of expert archers among them. Elven blood has run thin, however and only occasionally shows in the lithe body or slightly pointed ears of a human warrior. The infantry is trained well with both the use of a crossbow and longbow, but their abilities can not match those of the elves of the past.

Maztica has been unreachable by all but the most intrepid explorers and at one time there was a contingent of Eagle Knights from that far away land. Attrition and a lack of interest wore at these fabled warriors and today, the Eagle Lodge is used only for storage. This disappearance is also due in no small part to the silence of Qotal after the Spellplague.

GIANT BLUEJAY

Large beast, lawful neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Flyby. The giant bluejay doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of enemy reach.

Keen Sight. The giant bluejay has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The giant bluejay makes 2 attacks, one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10+3) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

GIANT CARDINAL

Large beast, lawful neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 30 (4d10 + 8)

Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Hearing And Sight . The giant cardinal has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The giant cardinal makes 2 attacks, one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10+3) slashing damage.

MISCELLANEOUS

Fort Flame has a number of other features that might be of interest to both players and DMs. This section briefly describes the prominent religious beliefs held by Flamians and a current issue that is dividing the populace in opinion, mostly along the lines of the old and the young.

RELIGION

Faith was once strong in Helm, Torm, Tyr and Gond mostly due to the mercenaries responsible for the founding. Despite a hundred year silence, belief in these gods has remained, but there was a sense of abandonment even when the knowledge of the Abeir/Toril divide was made common knowledge.

Faith has made a bit of a comeback since the Sundering, but many Flamians have turned to the Great or Mighty Spirits of Anchōromé, particularly for Flamians who have made contact with the Minnenewah tribes of the west.

Of the spirits, Tabladak and the Thunderbird are particularly popular. The air calvary pay the Thunderbird particular respect as a general rule.

RETURNING TO THE FLAMING FIST

The vast majority of Flamians would utterly refuse to become vassals once again to the city of Baldur's Gate. However, stories told of the great heroes of the past like Scar and Bellan appeal to young Flamians.

Recently, a representative of Baldur's Gate, nephew to the Grand Duke Ulder Ravengard, has arrived in Fort Flame. This young nobleman, Gideon Ravengard by name, has piqued the interest of the more impressionable. Arguments are already forming at inns and alehouses about exactly how the First Flame should proceed and what the future of Fort Flame might look like.

For now, it is most likely that Streoldrus will just reopen the trade routes and commission the building of ships to trade with the overseas city. Where this heads to in the future is anyone's guess.

FORT FLAME AT A GLANCE

The following page contains a map of Fort Flame as it appears in the Year 1492 DR, just after the events of this adventure book. The following descriptions give a very brief overview of the towns major landmarks.

1 - FRONT GATES

The front gate is the most heavily defended part of Fort Flame and nearby barracks hold at least half the standing army at any given time. The rest can be mustered within a short time. Kridarzros makes sure they are well drilled and "response" time is one of their strengths.

2 - ROOKERY

The giant bluejays and cardinals are generally kept in this rookery and are well cared for by trainers. They are taken out often and the sight of blue and red streaks are seen over the skies of Fort Flame on any day that weather permits.

3 - OLD EAGLE LODGE

At one time the fiercest warriors used this as a living space. The Eagle Knights are now defunct, but their lodge still stands. The inside is a mess now and it is occasionally occupied by vagrants despite the piles of documents and old furniture.

4 - BELLAN MANOR

Named after the premiere First Flame, Bellan Manor is traditionally the home of whomever holds the title of First Flame along with their family and (usually quite large) retinue of guards. Streoldrus Grayhorn lives here now with his dragonborn adoptive mother, his three stepsisters, and Gideon Ravengard who is currently his guest.

5 - COURT BUILDING

This building handles most criminal and civil complaints within the city. Fort Flame is known for its harsh, but fair justice.

6 - NORTHERN BOROUGH

There is little in the way of income disparity in the town, but there are a few individuals that could be considered "rich" relatively speaking, and this is where the majority of them live. There are a number of large manors and huge open spaces which one would be hard pressed to find elsewhere in the town.

7 - TANARVRAKI BOROUGH

The majority of dragonborn cluster together in this slightly crowded portion of the city. The industrious and content tanarvaki do not mind living so close to the opulence of the Northern Borough overmuch.

8 - OUTER SETTLEMENTS

Population has expanded recently and a number of settlements have sprung up outside the safety of the walls. Air Cavalry often visits these areas to check up on the safety of its citizens because the farmers and hunters that generally choose to live here are crucial to the town's survival.

9 - SOUTHERN BOROUGH

This area is the prominent living space for the human inhabitants of Fort Flame. There is a massive open field and park at the center of the borough where children play and warriors keep their bodies toned during off hours. Achse is largely responsible for its renovation in recent years and Flamians take particular pride in its beauty.

10 - ACHSE'S MANOR

Achse has insisted on building a manor of her own just outside a small but well defended southern gate. She keeps her umpleby "child" hidden within her manor during daylight hours, and reports of "flashing lights" at nighttime have other local farmers spooked. These flashes are of course the umpleby's static discharging which the farmers can see when it leaves the manor.

11 - DOCKS

The docks of Fort Flame have been destroyed and rebuilt all too often, and shipping has not been of use as a source of trade since before the Blue Breath of Change. The Azure Duke intends to make important changes so that this is no longer the case.

She has actually expanded the docks beyond the safety of the town's thick walls to the north, and so far there have not been any overt sahuagin or kuo-toan attacks.

12 - TEMPLE BOROUGH

The temples of Fort Flame's deities and shrines to their Spirits lie within the Temple Borough. They are surrounded by the thickest walls in the entire town because this was once the location of the original fort. The worst of the elf attacks once crashed against these walls as the few human survivors huddled inside. In the earliest days, the walls were nothing more than hastily constructed wooden blockades, but soon after the first of the dragon attacks, the walls were rebuilt and reinforced.



MONSTERS

Strange and powerful creatures can be found throughout **Fires of Fort Flame**. This portion of the book is designed to introduce a few new ones in addition to creatures that have appeared in **ANS2 Monsters of Anchorome**. Their statistics are reprinted here for your convenience.

NEW MONSTERS

The infernal bulette, mirage dragon and Xerfelox are new creatures found in this adventure, though the mirage dragon is an update from the fourth edition.

INFERNAL BULETTE

The bulette of the Material Plane is a rampaging beast and bringer of destruction, but its motivations are not demonstrably cruel nor particularly evil. The hammerheaded infernal bulette however, has the latter trait in abundance.

A Devilish Evolution. Long ago when a group of devils first found their way to the Material Plane, the beings of pure evil were not overly impressed with the mortal creatures they encountered. They encountered beast after beast which they knew wouldn't last an hour on one of the infernal planes.

Then without warning, the ground exploded underfoot and from it burst a creature like no other and before the devils could defend themselves, a lesser devil was swallowed whole. The remaining devils used their innate powers to bring down the beast but for the first time they realized they had found a creature whose innate savagery they could take advantage of.

Thus the devils spent many months finding and collecting all of the living landsharks that they could and transporting them to Avernus in a mostly desert region of insubstantial souls known as the Blood Sands. Over time the bulettes evolved with no small encouragement from the devils who transported them there. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of years later, the infernal bulette came to resemble the terrible creature it is today.

Ecology of the Spirit Realm. The Spirit Realm touches upon all planes, and before the arrival of the infernal bulettes, it was a mostly empty and desolate region of Avernus. There are rumors of titanic giants that once roamed here, but they are long gone and now the only creature that could be truly considered a part of the Avernian "ecology" is the infernal bulette.

Insubstantial souls have just as much to fear from the landsharks as the living, as they are capable of consuming spirit matter as if it were flesh. Perhaps this was part of the creature's evolution, ensuring it enough "food" so that they could continue to live and expand throughout the Blood Sands.

Supernatural Detection. The hammerheaded form of the infernal bulette serves as an electrical detection system that is foiled by motion. Infernal bulettes have a unique form of tremorsense that has a range in the miles, but cannot detect moving creatures. This forces all beings in the Blood Sands to remain on the move at all times or be subject to endless attacks from these awful creatures.

INFERNAL BULETTE

Large monstrosity (bulette), lawful evil

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 94 (9d10 + 45)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	21 (+5)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire, poison

Senses passive Perception 16, tremorsense 60 ft. (special, see description)

Languages understands Infernal but cannot speak

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Consume The Insubstantial. The infernal bulette's attacks reach into the ethereal plane and can affect insubstantial creatures as if it was a magical weapon.

Standing Leap. The infernal bulette's long jump is up to 30 feet and its high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a running start.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (4d12+4) piercing damage.

Deadly Leap. If the infernal bulette jumps at least 15 feet as part of its movement, it can then use this action to land on its feet in a space that contains one or more other creatures. Each of those creatures must succeed on a DC 16 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (target's choice) or be knocked prone and take 14 (3d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage. On a successful save, the creature takes only half the damage, isn't knocked prone, and is pushed 5 feet out of the infernal bulette's space into an unoccupied space of the creature's choice. If no unoccupied space is within range, the creature instead falls prone in the infernal bulette's space.



MIRAGE DRAGON

Mirage dragons are the brightly plumed, reclusive dragons of the Feywild. Occasionally one will find its way to the Material Plane where they hide out in regions most like their home. Typically, this means idyllic and secluded forests where most mortal beings would not know to find them.

Green Dragon Descendants. Though once simply a rumor, even the mirage dragons now confirm that in a distant age, a flight of green dragons were trapped in the Feywild, perhaps by fey allies of the aearee who are themselves the progenitors of the aarakocra. Over eons of time, the green dragons began to take on aspects more like their surroundings and their new home. At some point in their history, the rapacious green dragon disappeared and the independent and reclusive mirage dragon was born.

Allies to Eladrin. On the feywild, mirage dragons often feel overprotective of eladrin and their natural shyness falls away momentarily. They are particularly close to eladrin when they are in their autumn or spring mood.

Patron to Tanarvraki. Through some trick of planar mechanics, a number of mirage dragons had found their way to the twin world of Abeir and there they had a hand in the creation of the tanarvraki - honorable but wild dragonborn with slightly purple hued scales. The tanarvraki were dedicated to their patrons and in turn were treated well by mirage dragons.

MIRAGE DRAGON WYRMLING

Medium dragon, neutral

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Con +3, Wis +2, Cha +3

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 14, darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Draconic

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10+2) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) psychic damage.

Psychic Energy Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales a mental energy blast in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 11 Intelligence saving throw, taking 21 (6d10) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

YOUNG MIRAGE DRAGON

Large dragon, neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +6, Wis +4, Cha +5

Skills Stealth +4, Perception +7

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Draconic, Common

Challenge 8 (3900 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage.

Psychic Energy Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales a mental energy blast in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Intelligence saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

XERFELOX

Xerfelox is a young mirage dragon who befriended an entire tribe of tanarvraki on Abeir after they had escaped the clutches of a powerful red dragon and he has remained a benefactor for many years. With his clan he settled parts of the Adusgi forest after making concessions with the local alaghi.

Eventually, other dragons came for land and plunder in the vicinity of the forest with the humans of Fort Flame becoming their primary targets. The tanarvraki were not content to live in the forest as their dragon ally was, so they sought out the humans and eventually formed a fast friendship.

Xerfelox himself was left alone in the Adusgi and was approached by a duo of hags who tricked him into using an artifact known as the *Black Heart of Tyranthraxus*. The artifact corrupted him and he became a dracolich. Because of the *Heart* the newly formed dracolich developed some unusual powers which were part of the hags' plans all along.

Undead Traits. As an undead creature, Xerfelox no longer needs to sleep, eat or drink, nor does he require air.

ADULT MIRAGE DRAGON

Huge dragon, neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 207 (18d12 + 90)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	12 (+1)	21 (+5)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +10, Wis +7, Cha +8

Skills Stealth +6, Deception +8, Insight +7, Perception +12, Persuasion +8

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 22

Languages Draconic, Common

Challenge 15 (13000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10+6) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6+6) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8+6) bludgeoning damage.

Psychic Energy Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales a mental energy blast in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Intelligence saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The adult mirage dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The adult mirage dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or take 13 (2d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

XERFELOX

Large undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +6, Wis +4, Cha +5

Skills Stealth +4, Perception +7

Damage Immunities psychic, poison

Damage Resistances necrotic

Condition Immunities frightened, poisoned, charmed, paralyzed, exhaustion

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Draconic, Common

Challenge 8 (3900 XP)

Magic Resistance. Xerfelox has advantage on saving

throws against spells and other magical effects.

Control The Styx. Xerfelox can control the flow of the River Styx using his Psychic Energy Breath.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage.

Psychic Energy Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales a mental energy blast in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Intelligence saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

ANCIENT MIRAGE DRAGON

Gargantuan dragon, neutral

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)

Hit Points 385 (22d20 + 154)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	12 (+1)	25 (+7)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +14, Wis +10, Cha +11

Skills Persuasion +11, Deception +11, Insight +10, Perception +17, Stealth +8

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 27

Languages Draconic, Common

Challenge 22 (41000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10+8) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) psychic damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d6+8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8+8) bludgeoning damage.

Psychic Energy Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales a mental energy blast in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 22 Intelligence saving throw, taking 77 (22d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

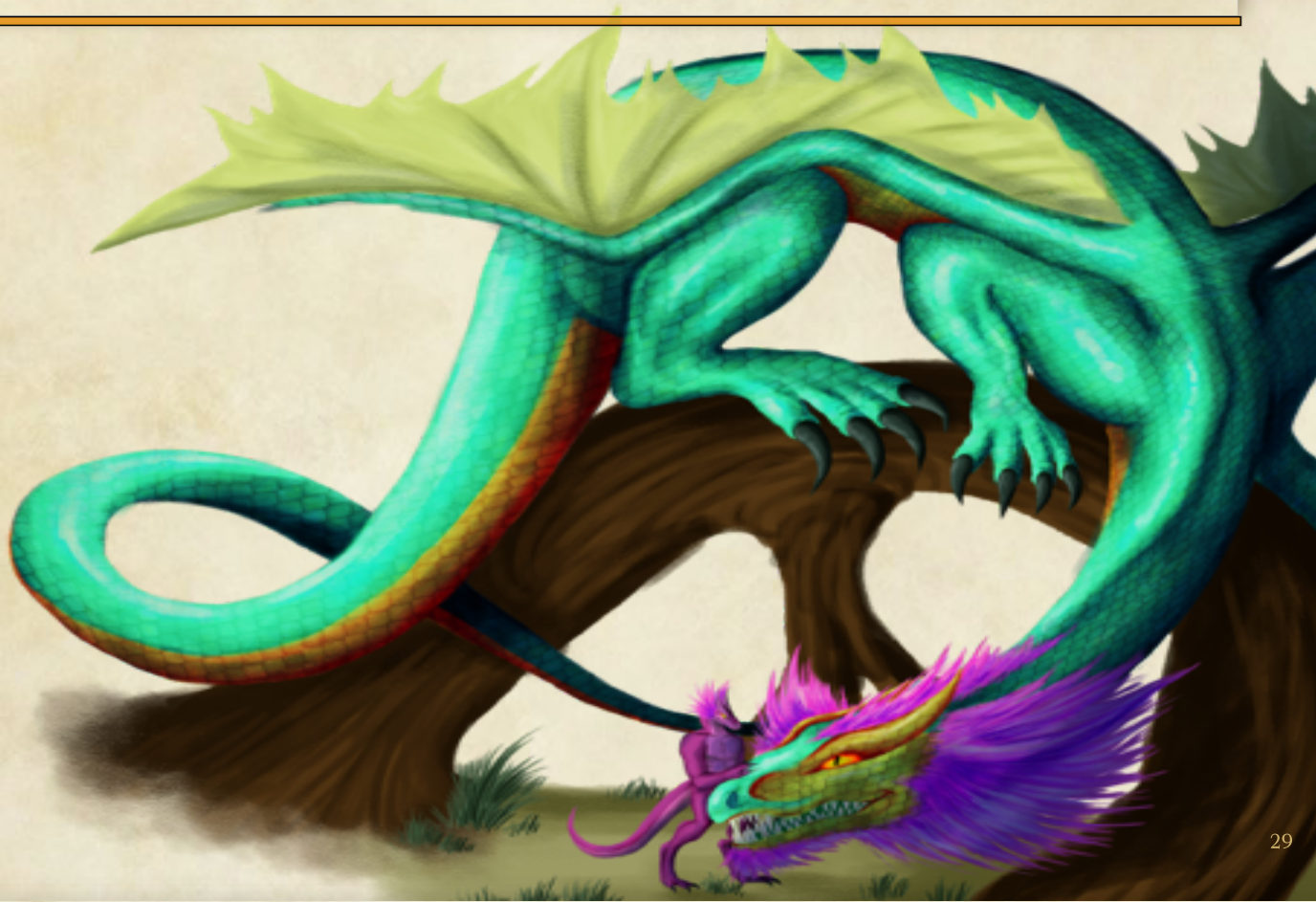
LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The ancient mirage dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The ancient mirage dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.





OTHER MONSTERS

The monsters found in this section can also be found in **ANS2 Monsters of Anchôromé**.

CULLOO

The culloo is a large predatory bird which will snatch its victims and drop them from high in the sky. They are aggressive predators that are frightened of very little, but are cunning enough to target the vulnerable.

A Warning for Children. Due to their small size, children are the unfortunate recipients of the majority of culloo attacks. Parents often use the threat of culloo to warn their children from straying too far. When they gather in larger numbers, however, culloo will not hesitate to attack full grown adults.

Death from Above. Culloo do not have particularly damaging bites or claws, but their grip is remarkably strong and they are powerful fliers. Because of this, their primary tactic for killing prey is to grab the creature and drop it from great heights.

Flocks of Terror. Culloo are a social species that occasionally gather in large flocks. They will find a nesting area that is usually inaccessible and well hidden (typically in high hills or coastal cliffs), and hunt together in what can only be described as a swarm.

Under such circumstances, the best means of defense is to simply hide. Thirty screeching terror birds could easily depopulate an entire small settlement in moments, leaving nothing but fleshless broken bones in their wake.

CULLOO

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Acrobatics +5, Perception +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages -

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Dodge Missiles. Culloos are nimble and have almost a sixth sense when it comes to dodging arrows. Attackers have disadvantage attacking a culloo if they are using ammunition and a ranged weapon, the culloo is flying

and not carrying a Medium creature.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (2d4+3) piercing damage and if the creature is Medium or smaller, it must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or become grappled.

Drop. If a culloo has a creature grappled, it will fly to 60 feet and drop its victim causing 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage when the creature hits the ground. Culloo are cunning enough to drop creatures over cliffs and into pits causing 1d6 bludgeoning damage per 10 feet dropped. Unless two culloo are grappling the same creature, a Medium target can be brought to 40 feet only, in which case the damage is 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage.

HISSHISHTAWIA

Hisshishtawia are horrible hags known for their propensity for eating sentient mortal flesh. Due to their grim meals and legendary lack of hygiene, bloodstains often mar their naked mouth and body giving them the common nickname "red woman."

Accomplished Spellcrafter. Red women are peculiarly strong, but their main forms of attack are undoubtedly their spellcraft. A hisshishtawia is talented in charms and enchantments but is also more than capable of offensive spells which she uses a twisted wand or branch as a focus. Should this wand be lost, a red woman can only rely on her claws and bite which are in themselves, quite deadly.

Hag Curse. Occasionally a hisshishtawia will kidnap small female children and raise them as their own. Though they can fool others into believing there is some measure of love in this child rearing, such an upbringing curses the child to become a red woman herself once fully mature.

It is not difficult to remove such a curse before the child matures, and if the child is rescued before maturity the only lasting effects are frequent nightmares that lessen in time. However, once the girl has become red woman, only magic such as a *wish* could reverse the changes.



HISSHISHTAWIA

Medium fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +4, Wis +4, Cha +4

Skills Medicine +4, Nature +4, Perception +4, Survival +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic, Sylvan

Challenge 6 (2300 XP)

Detect Children. The hisshishtawia can smell humanoid children within 1 mile and pinpoint their direction perfectly. They are also able to distinguish genders using this sense.

Spider Climb. The hisshishtawia can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Twisted Wand Magic. The hisshishtawia carries a twisted wand which is a length of gnarled wood that the hag uses as a focus for her spellcasting. While holding the wand, she can cast additional spells with her Innate Spellcasting Trait (these spells are marked with an asterisk). If the wand is lost or destroyed the hisshishtawia must craft another, which takes her 66 days. The wand is useless to creatures other than the hisshishtawia it was made by.

Innate Spellcasting. The hisshishtawia's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). The hisshishtawia can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *acid splash*, *charm person**, *hold person*

3/day each: *cloudkill**, *cone of cold**

1/day each: *eyebite*, *geas**

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 26 (5d8+4) slashing damage.

Ghoulish Consumption. A hisshishtawia can consume a corpse of medium size or smaller using an action. Those who witness this consumption must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute.

SHAMPE

The shampe is a cruel and malevolent ogre with a distinct taste for humanoid flesh. It is legendary for its awful smell which makes it nearly impossible for the creature to sneak up on its victims, but the shampe was never very keen on subtlety anyway.

Obnoxious Stink. The smell of a shampe is almost supernatural in nature and causes most creatures within its vicinity to retch, making the creature difficult to fight. The fate of humanoids who are captured by the brute for later consumption are far worse. The scent is so powerful that creatures can not even be blessed with the mercy of unconsciousness in its vicinity, making the horror of their fate all the worse.

Notorious Flayer. Unfortunately for its victims, shampe like to take live captives when they cannot consume a creature on the spot. Typically, beings are disarmed and put in huge burlap sacks to be brought back into the swamps and dark woods where shampe often lair in crudely wrought huts. Such victims are skinned alive and left hanging just outside the shampe's abode, leaving a horrifying scene that has earned shampe the nickname, "skin-flayer."



SHAMPE

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (hide armor)

Hit Points 59 (7d10 + 21)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)	5 (-3)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages Common, Giant

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Stench. Any creature other than a shampe who starts its turn within 10 feet of the shampe must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the stench of the shampe for 1 hour.

ACTIONS

Greatclub. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) bludgeoning damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage.

To HELL AND Back Again...

While none would argue that she is certainly a whirlwind of destruction, it must also be understood that Zariel can be just as cunning and deceitful as any other devil. One cannot maintain control of an entire lair of the Nine Hells without formulating plans within plans.

Thus, while Zariel herself concentrates on the corruption and assumption of Elturel into Avernus, she sets two hags, sisters known as the Twisted Ones and their pet dracolich to enact similar plans elsewhere. This time, she does not wish to drag the entire city kicking and screaming into hell, but rather to bring hell to the Material Plane.

Can this secondary plan be thwarted by the intrepid PCs?

Cover Art: "Pillar of Skulls"

Thamara Gomez

A DESCENT INTO AVERNUS SIDE TREK

This book is designed to be used during the actual adventure of **Descent into Avernus** or it can be used completely independently while allowing other heroes to see to the salvation of Elturel.

The adventure begins in hell, near the infamous Pillar of Skulls where the PCs learn of Zariel's secondary plot through the lying voice of a tiny quasit demon's skull.

The adventure pits the PCs up against some interesting new creatures and other foes, though one might take a little more of an interest in the PCs than they might be comfortable with. The PCs will be introduced to the Spirit Realm, infernal landsharks, a petrified titan and the fortresses that have been made out of his corpse, two awful hags and a dragon unlike they have ever seen before.

Finally the adventure concludes in the former outpost of Baldur's Gate known as Fort Flame, which disappeared during the Spellplague and has since returned with the Sundering. Once the incursion has been thwarted, do the PCs remain in Fort Flame on the fabled continent of Anchôromé or do they return to Avernus to continue the struggle against a Lord of the Nine?

FORT FLAME

As a bonus to this adventure, a write up for the fledgling city of Fort Flame is included. Its government, military, history and major personalities are all given life in a format similar to the one found in **Descent** for Baldur's Gate. Even the three dragon crest of the city is revealed!

THE ANCHÔROMÉ CAMPAIGN

Anchôromé is a continent found in the northwestern reaches of the planet Toril which was first described in any detail in the Maztican supplement **FMQ1 City of Gold**. It is found to the north of the fabled lands of Maztica and is mostly unknown to the inhabitants of both Faerûn and Maztica.

Future products, including small articles (ANM Series), entirely new supplements (ANS series) and even adventures (ANA series) are planned for the near future. Keep an eye out for these products!

In addition, the *Anchôromé Campaign* is always looking for new ideas, artists, and authors. Please feel free to contact the author's gmail account at seethe75. Anchôromé is a canonical region of the realms that has been left mostly untouched - let's make it our playground!