

PARADIGM CONCEPTS

PRESENTS A



ADVENTURE

A THOUSAND WORDS

4-hour Introductory Adventure

Intro #2

The fool desires to live forever. The average man desires to be remembered forever. The wise man desires that his actions be remembered but cares not whether his name is forgotten. All men crave immortality in their own way, and this desire makes all men craven when they should be bold; foolish when they should be wise.

– Elandre val'Assante

When a painting is worth a thousand words, what image might those words paint? Not everything is black and white in Faerdlau as the Heroes are invited to speak with Ryter Ealdmar val'Holryn.

An **Introductory** adventure for Tier 1 characters (levels 1 through 3) optimized for **2nd level** characters.

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RUNNING AN ARCANIS ADVENTURE

When you run an Arcanis adventure you are charged with bringing the world to life. We pride ourselves on delivering a deep world where a player's actions are just as, if not more, important than their die rolls.

We ask our GMs to be familiar with the location the adventure is set in and the cultures the players may encounter. But we also understand that during convention play some GMs may be forced to run an Arcanis adventure on short notice, as such when cultural details come into play we will do our best to call them out in "Arcanis Cliff Notes" sidebars.

Beyond that, the important job you have as a GM is to make the table as fun as possible by engaging players and drawing them into the story.

Pay close attention to the player's actions (not character's, players), are they on their cell phone or tablet? Do they seem disengaged? Distracted? Don't be afraid to engage them or shift the spotlight to their character a little.

To facilitate this, you are empowered to adjust and modify the adventure in a number of ways:

- You may make on the fly adjustments to the adventure if the players find a clever way to tackle a problem, especially when out of combat. As long as the idea is reasonable, run with it! When you must say "no" always try and say "no, but..." This keeps the game moving and makes it fun for everyone,
- Don't be an adversarial GM. Some tables like to be challenged, but there is a difference between being adversarial and offering a challenge. At the same time, don't make an adventure so easy that the players become bored.
- Keep the pace going to keep players engaged Switch the spotlight, have them make some skill rolls, asking them what their character is doing. If the party is stuck nudge them though some skill rolls or improvised details, just keep the game going.
- During conventions and game days be aware if you are running short or long on time while running an adventure. If necessary, skip some encounters but try and tell the entire story. Give the players closure, even if you need to fudge the numbers.
- Read-aloud text may be adjusted as you see fit, but make sure you give the players the appropriate hints and clues needed to keep the story going.

ADJUSTING ENCOUNTERS

Before you begin play you should determine the average strength of the party and compare that to the base level of the adventure. Each combat encounter has a box titled “scaling the encounter” guiding you on how to adjust the encounter to the party’s power level.

These adjustments are suggestions; if a party is having an easy or hard time don’t be afraid to adjust the difficulty.

To set the adventure difficulty you must first determine the party’s Average Party Level.

Add up all the levels of all the characters, then divide by the number of players. Round up fractions to the nearest whole This number is the Average Party Level, or APL.

Consult the table below to set the adventure difficulty based on the APL

ADVENTURE DIFFICULTY

This adventure has a base level of 2; it has been optimized for a table of 5 players playing **2nd** level characters.

#of Players	APL to BL	Difficulty
3-4	Equal to BL	Easy
3-4	Greater to BL	Normal
5	Less/Equal	Normal
5	Greater than	Difficult
6-7	Less/Equal	Difficult
6-7	Greater	Perilous

SPELLCASTING SERVICES

While in a settlement, town, or city, characters may visit a temple or shrine to request spell casting at the cost of a substantial donation. You may only utilize these spell casting services three times per adventure. Any spell casting provided through the story of the adventure, such as an NPC casting a spell for the party, does not count against this limit.

Shrines do not house a clergy with which to attend to the needs of the faithful. Instead, one or two itinerant priests tend to the shrine and the needs of the people.

Temples and churches are larger structures attended by full staffs of the faithful including Templars.

The following spell services are common to all temples, with additional options becoming available within specific temples. Shrines, regardless of their deity, may only provide players with *cure wounds* and *lesser restoration*.

General Spell Casting Services

Spell	Cost
<i>Cure wounds (1st level)</i>	10 gp
<i>Lesser restoration</i>	40 gp
<i>Prayer of healing (2nd level)</i>	40 gp
<i>Greater restoration</i>	450 gp

Initiate of the Gods background/ Acolyte background/divine spell casters may receive **one free spell casting** as long as it is from temple or shrine of the same religious faction as the character (Mother Church for example).

If the character in questions worships the same god as a particular temple but are part of another church, they can get a onetime 50% discount instead.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

What price, immortality? Consider Gareth Hirsch, a painter well known for his strange, experimental styles. He has stumbled across something extraordinary: the ability to make his paintings absorb the years from anyone he portrays, using special paints made of infernal blood and binding the portrait to the person with a dark spell he developed. When he begins offering this to the nobles in the area of the Faerdwalden, a number of them jump at the chance; after all, the forest can be a dangerous place, and they had the misfortune to gain estates in the area. Some fear death, some want to live forever, some just want to live long enough to sire new heirs to their name, lost in the last Crusade.

Of course, Gareth neglects to tell them everything until after the portrait is finished and bound. The paintings require regular applications of blood with the infernal taint to maintain the link, and failing to do so is fatal for the subject. Gareth has been using this to blackmail his patrons, providing infernal blood so that they don't have to get their hands dirty.

However, a couple of the nobles have taken matters into their own hands, not trusting their lives to Gareth. Two have decided to kidnap dark-kin and keep them hostage for their blood, though one noble is unsure of the morality of this action and has begun seeking alternative methods of acquiring infernal blood. The other three are worried, but are thus far going along with Gareth's blackmail, considering it a fair price to pay for longer, healthier lives.

Though Sarishans are no longer quite the pariahs they were in the Milandric Church, neither are they welcomed easily into the fold. Gareth's actions will not make this an easier transition.

Enter the Heroes. They have received a letter from Rytir (Knight) Ealdmar Theoderic val'Holryn, either as veterans of the Crusade, or freelance mercenaries, inviting them to attend a meeting that could be very profitable for the Crusade and the individuals involved.

ADVENTURE RELATED INFORMATION

This adventure begins and probably ends in the settlement of Mil Takara, located in the Hinterlands. Few permanent structures exist here as the majority of the inhabitants live in elaborate tents, befitting a nomadic people. This is just an illusion for many, as the Khur Gi tribesman who live here have given up their transient nature to live a more sedentary life.

SECRET MISSIONS

There are passive secret missions in this module for members of the **Sanctorum of the Arcane** and members of the **Orthodoxy** as well as members of the **Champions of the Silver Chalice**.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

- Saint Henryk's Cathedral, an odd temple that is dedicated to the entire Pantheon of Man rather than one specific deity. It is headed by Deacon Kazimierz val'Holryn, a priest of Althares.
- Hospice of the Sisters of the Lady's Mercy (temple) an abbey dedicated to Beltine, led by Abbess Danuta val'Ishi.

ORGANIZATIONS

The Knights of St. Lambertus, who act as the local city guard, maintain extensive holdings just outside the city of Faerdlau.

The Sanctorum of the Arcane maintains a safe house in the Noble Quarter, maintained by Tadeusz Krol, a small and excitable middle-aged sorcerer with a slight gift for illusions.

PORTALS OF ANSHAR

The nearest known portal of Anshar is in Tralia itself and is not accessible during this adventure.

INTRODUCTION

Key Concepts: The Heroes have received an invitation to a meeting with a noble of Milandir, concerning a business venture.

Read the following:

Whether business or pleasure brings you to Mil Takara, at least the encampment no longer has the pall of the Crusade hanging over it. Now that the Devil-King Uhxbracit has been slain, many Crusaders have already packed up and left, leaving many free beds in the barracks for you to use on your journey.

It is on one such bed that a message awaits you.

If any Hero is a dark-kin, hand them Player **Handout 2**. The message is from the Brothers of Light-in-Darkness.

For all the other Heroes have a Crusader hand them the letter (**Handout 1**), already opened, telling them that he isn't interested in any more adventuring and just wants to settle down after being mustered out. If none of the Heroes are literate, have the Crusader read them the letter.

Only allow the following options if the players think to ask.

- *Detect magic* will determine that none of the letters are magical. A successful **Intelligence (Investigation) DC 10** check

can be used to ascertain that the letters have not been tampered with.

- An **Intelligence (History) check (DC 11** for Heroes from Tralia specifically, **DC 13** for other Milandisian Heroes, and **DC 20** for all others) will identify Ryter Ealdmar val'Holryn as a minor noble of Milandir, possessed of a decent amount of land and money but relatively few retainers. He is well into his 70s, and was given his land for his services to the Crown that included deeds of great valor in the 5th Crusade of Light.
- A successful **Intelligence (History) DC 11** check will be able to identify the Brothers of Light-in-Darkness if any Hero asks. Any Coryani, Almeran, Hinterlander, or dark-kin Hero may succeed on a passive check. The organization is based out of Naeraanth, dedicated to supporting the notion that not all dark-kin are bad, and providing protection and aid for any dark-kin oppressed anywhere (though most of what little power it has is in Naeraanth. It is not a secret society as such, but its ranks are only open to dark-kin, and any member who displays regular violent tendencies is rejected from the group.
- A successful **Intelligence (History) DC 15** check will reveal that Brother Hektor, an elderly and very kind dark-kin who treats everyone very well, regardless of their race, leads the Brothers. Hektor is a veteran of the 5th Crusade of Light, where he sought to find and slay his Infernal ancestor.

From here, allow the Heroes to discuss the various messages they have received and hopefully decide to travel to Faerdlau, whether

to meet with Ealdmar val'Holryn or to investigate the missing dark-kin.

Development: At this point, the Heroes have the letters and not much else. Hopefully their curiosity is sufficiently piqued to draw them south. Continue to **Scene 1**. If they're not interested in going, allow them to play a character that would go, or thank them for their time.

SCENE 1

Key Concepts: The Heroes run into a dark-kin by the side of the road on their way to Faerdlau, beaten and dying.

Read the following

Your journey through Milandir has been an enjoyable one. The sun has shone brightly throughout your trip, and not a single thing of note has occurred to mar the peaceful days.

As you near the Faerdwalden forest, Cadic's cloak has begun to envelop Illiir's brilliance. The sun sets and the moon Aperio can be seen on the far horizon over the trees.

Have the Heroes make a **Wisdom (Perception)** check, with advantage if they can see in the darkness. Read the following to the Hero with the highest result:

The darkness that enshrouds the forest after nightfall is not enough to hide the body from your sight. Behind a large oak tree just off the path, you can see an arm and head of a sprawled, limp form.

Let the Heroes decide whether they want to approach or not. If not, they can continue on their way. Of course, many will investigate.

Approaching, you find a terrible sight. It is a

dark-kin, unconscious. Terrible wounds can be seen all over his body; most are recent, some still bleeding slowly. He is wearing rags, fouled from weeks of wear and his Tainted blood seeping into the cloth. His skin is a blue so dark it's almost black, and cold to the touch.

A **Wisdom (Medicine)** skill check will reveal the following at the corresponding DC:

- **DC 10:** He's alive, but unconscious. He probably won't be alive for much longer.
- **DC 13:** The wounds are mortal. Quite simply, he has bled out too much and nothing short of a miracle can heal him. Beyond the cuts, there are also manacle marks around his ankles and wrists.
- **DC 16:** The wounds cover his body, but are predominantly located at major arteries. The wounds appear to have been inflicted by a short, very sharp blade, and are exceedingly precise.

A separate **Wisdom (Medicine)** DC 13 check can be made to bring the dark-kin back to consciousness for a short time.

If the Heroes manage to bring the dark-kin to consciousness:

The dark-kin stirs under you ministrations, and shudders, drawing away from your touch as he opens his eyes. An initial look of resignation is replaced by muted hope as he gazes up at you, speaking Milandisian in a very weak voice: "Unless Sigurd has hired new men to escort me to my death, you're a welcome sight. Forgive me for not getting up."

- Who are you?

My name is Isebrand, a lowly serf of Tralia, and damned by birth to suffer.

- Who did this to you? Who is Sigurd?

Graf Sigurd Wulfheim val'Holryn. My lord to whom I was in service and who has, as you can see, used me poorly.

- Why did Sigurd do this? What happened to you?

It would seem my lord developed a taste for tainted blood. There were three of us kept in his basement, bound in chains. We came willingly when we were invited, to help our lord, but we were not told why we were needed, and we were not allowed to leave. We were drained of our blood, once a week, maybe twice, for over three months. I never found out why he wanted our tainted blood. Last time I was bled, I simply didn't awaken... and now here I am, out in the forest, dying by inches.

- Do you know anything of a dark-kin named Erik? Who is the 'we' you mentioned?

(The name is unfamiliar to me.) The other unfortunates with me were Claudia and Saxdan, tainted like me.

- What happened to Claudia and Saxdan?

They were with me in the castle. I have a very vague recollection of Claudia being bled at the same time I was. She was probably in as bad a shape as I, or worse.

- Where is Sigurd's estate?

Three hours walk due west of Faerdlau. He does much business with the other lords in the area.

SAVING ISEBRAND

If none of the Heroes attempt to save Isebrand, he will fall unconscious and stop breathing

shortly after speaking to the Heroes. If he dies, note what they do with the body and the body of Claudia if they found it.

Saving his life will take a bit more than just a healing spell. Isebrand has lost a LOT of blood and is clinging to life. To save him the Heroes need to make an **Intelligence (Healing Kit) or Wisdom (Medicine) DC 15** during a long rest. Heroes with proficiency in both Healing Kit and Medicine gain advantage on this skill check.

If the Heroes save Isebrand, they can leave him in the Bear's Den Inn as they pass through Faerdlau on their way to the various estates.

TRACKING CLAUDIA

Have the heroes roll a **Wisdom (Survival)** skill check **DC 15**. If successful, the Heroes find tracks leading deeper into the forest and back onto the road the Heroes were on.

GM Note

If the Heroes do follow the tracks, trigger **Scene 2** immediately. They will find the ratmen preparing to cook Claudia's body. Then return to this point. If the Heroes wait until morning, Claudia's body will be gone.

Ask the Heroes whether they wish to continue traveling, make camp for the night, or follow the tracks.

Development: If the Heroes decide to continue on the road, they will be ambushed by Ratmen as they travel, proceed to Scene 2A. If the PCs decide to camp for the night, they will be ambushed at their camp by Ratmen, proceed to Scene 2B. If the Heroes follow the tracks, they will find the Ratmen, proceed to Scene 2C.

Continue immediately to **Scene 2**. If the Heroes set up camp for the night, the ratmen ambush them during a random watch. If the Heroes instead follow the tracks, they come across the ratmen about to feast on Claudia. Regardless,

they will not be able to find Saxdan; he's already been eaten by the ratmen.

If it is still night and the Heroes continue on after finding Isebrand they will soon learn not to travel near the Faerdwalden forest at night.

Development: Continue immediately to **Scene 2**. If the Heroes set up camp for the night, the ratmen ambush them during a random watch. If the Heroes instead follow the tracks, they come across the ratmen about to feast on Claudia. Regardless, they will not be able to find Saxdan; he's already been eaten by the ratmen.

SCENE 2A – AMBUSH ON THE ROAD

Key Concepts: Traveling near the Faerdwalden at night is never a safe idea. Things stir within the forest. The Heroes are beset by a group of ratmen.

GM Note

This scene triggers when the Heroes continued on into the forest at night.

Make sure to determine what light sources the Heroes have with them, reminding them that it is night and dark in the forest.

Read the following:

At the darkest hour of the night, the path wends its way slightly into the Faerdwalden itself, rather than skirting the edge. The trees are thick on either side, and the twin lights of Aperio and Viridis can be seen far above you, though the shadows that surround you feel impenetrable. Perhaps continuing through the night was not the best idea...

Allow the Heroes a **Wisdom (Perception) DC 14** check (active or passive) to detect the upcoming

ambush. Any Hero who succeeds is not surprised when the ratmen come boiling out of the forest.

COMBAT

This combat consists of

- **Four (4) ratmen**
- **One (1) ratman shaman**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Remove 1 ratmen
- **Difficult:** Add 2 ratmen
- **Perilous:** Add 3 ratmen; one is a scout hidden in a tree with a crude short bow (d6 damage). **Wisdom (Perception) DC: 15** to spot before combat.

Tactics: The ratmen will target anyone with a light, doing their absolute best to fight in darkness. This includes any casters who have magical sources of light or anyone who is carrying a torch.

Notes: Heroes without a light source or darkvision, or who are within magical *darkness* are fighting blind (disadvantage to all attack rolls). Any Hero that has a light or creates a light by some means will immediately be targeted by the ratmen in an effort to make it dark again.

The savage ratmen are carrying nothing but their crude weapons and makeshift armor. Their equipment isn't even worth salvaging for scrap metal.

However, the shaman is wearing a pair of talismans about his neck. They appear to be simple stones wrapped in leather, but they feel somewhat off. Any non-psionic Hero will feel uncomfortable having one in their possession. Any psionic Hero carrying one (even in their backpack) will hear very faint whispers at the back of their minds, but nothing they can discern.

After the battle, read the following:

Your foes defeated, you take a few moments to assess your wounds. Perhaps traveling through the Faerdwalden at night wasn't the best idea but stopping now would obviously be even worse. As you look around, you notice one extra body lying on the ground. It appears to be a female dark-kin, crimson skinned, and very, very dead. The tracks you were following veer back onto the road you were on before.

If the Heroes wish they may follow the tracks of the Ratmen. It is a **Wisdom (Survival)** skill check **DC 14 to track the Ratmen**.

If the Heroes follow them deeper into the forest, within a half a mile they will find one more dark-kin body. The corpse is a female, crimson skinned, and very, very dead from similar wounds as Isebrand. The tracks then turn to return to the road. If the Heroes bring the body back to Isebrand, he will be able to identify her as Claudia.

A **Wisdom (Medicine) DC 10** check (automatically succeeds if one was already done on Isebrand) will reveal that the injuries that killed her are pretty much identical to those on Isebrand; the ratmen hadn't had a chance to start eating her yet.

Development: The Heroes can continue on to where they were headed before this scene; either to meet with Ryter Ealdmar (**Scene 3**) or Graf Sigurd's estate (**Scene 4**). If the Heroes are defeated, they are killed, cooked, and eaten (**Conclusion X**).

SCENE 2B – AMBUSH AT CAMP

Key Concepts: The Faerdwalden at night is never a safe idea. Things stir within the forest. The Heroes are beset by a group of ratmen.

GM Note

This scene triggers when the Heroes camped at night.

Make sure to determine what light sources the Heroes have with them and what watches they set, reminding them that it is night and dark in the forest.

Allow the Heroes a **Wisdom (Perception) DC 14** check (active or passive) (or any defenses against surprise such as the *alarm* spell) to detect the upcoming ambush. Heroes who are asleep make the check with disadvantage (-5 to passive). Any Hero who succeeds is not surprised when the ratmen come boiling out of the forest. Any Hero who fails is awoken by the sounds of combat and may act after the surprise round.

COMBAT

This combat consists of

- **Three (3) ratmen**
- **One (1) ratman shaman**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Remove 1 ratmen
- **Difficult:** Add 2 ratmen
- **Perilous:** Add 3 ratmen; one is a scout hidden in a tree with a crude short bow (d6 damage). **Wisdom (Perception) DC: 15** to spot before combat.

Tactics: The ratmen will target anyone with a light, doing their absolute best to fight in darkness. This includes any casters who have magical sources of light or anyone who is carrying a torch.

Notes: Heroes without a light source or darkvision, or who are within magical *darkness* are fighting blind (disadvantage to all attack rolls). Any Hero that has a light or creates a light by some means will immediately be targeted by the ratmen in an effort to make it dark again.

The savage ratmen are carrying nothing but their crude weapons and makeshift armor. Their equipment isn't even worth salvaging for scrap metal.

However, the shaman is wearing a pair of talismans about his neck. They appear to be simple stones wrapped in leather, but they feel somewhat off. Any non-psionic Hero will feel uncomfortable having one in their possession. Any psionic Hero carrying one (even in their backpack) will hear very faint whispers at the back of their minds, but nothing they can discern.

If the Heroes wish they may follow the tracks of the Ratmen. It is a **Wisdom (Survival)** skill check **DC 14 to track the Ratmen**.

If the Heroes follow them deeper into the forest, within a half a mile they will find one more dark-kin body. The corpse is a female, crimson skinned, and very, very dead from similar wounds as Isebrand. The tracks then turn to return to the road. If the Heroes bring the body back to Isebrand, he will be able to identify her as Claudia.

A **Wisdom (Medicine) DC 10** check (automatically succeeds if one was already done on Isebrand) will reveal that the injuries that killed her are pretty much identical to those on Isebrand; the ratmen hadn't had a chance to start eating her yet.

Development: The Heroes can continue on to where they were headed before this scene; either to meet with Ryter Ealdmar (**Scene 3**) or Graf Sigurd's estate (**Scene 4**). If the Heroes are defeated, they are killed, cooked, and eaten (**Conclusion X**).

SCENE 2C – AMBUSHING THE RATMEN

Key Concepts: The Heroes have foolishly decided to follow the tracks into the forest at night. The Heroes have a chance to ambush a group of ratmen that are preparing to cook and eat Claudia's corpse.

GM Note

This scene triggers when the Heroes follow the tracks they find at night.

Make sure to determine what light sources the Heroes have with them, reminding them that it is night and dark in the forest.

Read the following:

At the darkest hour of the night, the tracks continue further into the forest. The trees are thick on either side, and the twin lights of Aperio and Viridis can be seen far above you, though the shadows that surround you feel impenetrable. Perhaps continuing through the night was not the best idea...

Allow the Heroes a **Wisdom (Perception) DC 15** check. If they succeed, tell them that they hear voices up ahead and see a fire through the trees.

If the Heroes succeed, then they may sneak up on the Ratmen's camp and ambush them. The Ratmen's passive perception is 11.

If no Hero succeeds, then the Heroes blunder into the Ratmen's camp and neither side is surprised.

Read the following:

You see a group of Ratmen arguing around a small fire. It seems that they are preparing to cook something.

COMBAT

This combat consists of

- **Four (4) ratmen**
- **One (1) ratman shaman**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Remove 1 ratmen
- **Difficult:** Add 2 ratmen
- **Perilous:** Add 3 ratmen; one is a scout hidden in a tree with a crude short bow (d6 damage). **Wisdom (Perception) DC: 15** to spot before combat.

Tactics: The ratmen will target anyone with a light, doing their absolute best to fight in darkness. This includes any casters who have magical sources of light or anyone who is carrying a torch. One of them will take an action to douse the fire that they have started.

Notes: Heroes without a light source or darkvision, or who are within magical *darkness* are fighting blind (disadvantage to all attack rolls). Any Hero that has a light or creates a light by some means will immediately be targeted by the ratmen in an effort to make it dark again.

The savage ratmen are carrying nothing but their crude weapons and makeshift armor. Their equipment isn't even worth salvaging for scrap metal.

However, the shaman is wearing a pair of talismans about his neck. They appear to be simple stones wrapped in leather, but they feel somewhat off. Any non-psionic Hero will feel uncomfortable having one in their possession. Any psionic Hero carrying one (even in their backpack) will hear very faint whispers at the back of their minds, but nothing they can discern.

After the battle, read the following:

Your foes defeated, you take a few moments to assess your wounds. As you look around,

you notice one extra body lying on the ground. It appears to be a female dark-kin, crimson skinned, and very, very dead.

A **Wisdom (Medicine) DC 10** check (automatically succeeds if one was already done on Isebrand) will reveal that the injuries that killed her are pretty much identical to those on Isebrand; the ratmen hadn't had a chance to start eating her yet.

The Heroes may camp for the night without any further excitement.

Development: The Heroes can continue on to where they were headed before this scene; either to meet with Ryter Ealdmar (**Scene 3**) or Graf Sigurd's estate (**Scene 4**). If the Heroes are defeated, they are killed, cooked, and eaten (**Conclusion X**).

SCENE 3

Key Concepts: The Heroes meet with Ryter Ealdmar Theoderic val'Holryn... or would, if he weren't dead.

Read the following:

Approaching Ealdmar's estate, you are struck by how deserted the place feels. Though not a large structure by any means, the manor before you should have at least a couple guards, or a stable boy to take horses of guests... You feel a chill slowly creep along your spine as you approach.

GM Note

There is actually nothing horrifying here. Something is out of sorts, but it's definitely not aimed at the Heroes, and it's a great opportunity to play with players' expectations

A passive **Wisdom (Perception) DC 11** check will reveal that there are no horses in the open-air stables. A passive **DC 13** will reveal that there is smoke coming from the chimney.

Options: The Heroes can break in using thieves' tools, try to look through windows, or just knock on the front door. If they come up with other ideas, ad lib as best you can.

Looking through windows:

Have the Heroes make a **Wisdom (Perception)** check and consult below:

- **DC 10:** Inside the manor, at least as far as you can see from outside, there appears to be only one elderly man, alone by a fireplace in the kitchen on the north side of the building. He appears to be throwing papers and books into the fire.
- **DC 14:** Looking closer, it appears as though the man is crying, tears running down the creases in his worn and haggard face.
- **DC 18:** One window on the upper floor is covered over with curtains.

Breaking in:

Winimund's passive **Wisdom (Perception)** is **14** against all Stealth checks. If he hears the Heroes, he will immediately find them. If he doesn't, allow them to explore, having them make periodic Stealth checks as they move about the house.

If he hears them, he will call out:

"Who's there? Thieves! Miscreants! My master hasn't even been dead three days and you've already come to scavenge his bones and take his house! Hurrian damn you all to Nier's Judgment!"

Knocking on the door:

You hear footsteps, then the door opens to reveal an old man, his eyes bright with tears. "Please leave; this is a house of death and sorrow."

If the Heroes try to talk to Winimund a successful **Charisma (Persuasion) DC 15** check will allow them to calm him down long enough to convince him they were invited. Any Heroes who show him the letter and seal gain advantage on this roll. Award Heroes Inspiration for good roleplaying.

Heroes that make a **Wisdom (Insight) check DC: 14** will see how honestly distraught Winimund is and gain advantage on their **Persuasion** checks to calm him down

If the Heroes can calm Winimund down, he will talk to them.

If the Heroes cannot calm him down, he will simply forbid them from entering and close the door in their faces.

If the Heroes broke in and can't calm him down, Winimund will immediately rage and claw at them. He is old, frail, and can easily be knocked out (treat as a Commoner – MM pg. 345). Adjust the scene accordingly if they kill him.

GM Note

Roleplaying Winimund: Ever the faithful confidant, Winimund truly loved Ealdmar, and they were as close as brothers in their youth. Winimund was never one for combat though, so when Ealdmar was knighted in the 5th Crusade, Winimund sought to enter Ealdmar's service.

Winimund is distraught over his old friend's passing, especially since he has no idea what occasioned it. He suspects there is something supernatural going on, but doesn't have the abilities to prove it, nor the finances to hire someone to do so.

- Who are you?

I am Winimund, steward of the late Ryter Ealdmar val'Holryn.

- We came to speak with him/he sent us this letter.

Would that you had arrived sooner, my master might still be alive. He died three days ago.

- What happened? How did he die?

Come see for yourselves. I have not yet wanted to dig his grave and admit he is gone, and I haven't been able to bring myself to go back into the room where he died.

- What were you burning?

Personal effects of my master that he would not have wanted others to read. Letters from past lovers, that sort of thing. (Winimund honestly believes this. He just knows that Ealdmar wanted these documents burned after his death but hasn't looked at them. In truth, they are records of payment to Gareth).

- Why did Ealdmar want us?

I was unaware that he had sent out any message of that nature. I couldn't tell you why he wanted to speak with you.

When the Heroes are done with any initial questions, or ask how Ealdmar died, continue with the following:

Winimund escorts you to the top of the stairs, and takes out a large set of keys. Fumbling around, he finds the right one, and unlocks the door. A putrid stench rolls out of the room, the smell of rot and decay.

As you enter what must have been Ealdmar's study, it is very dark. The heavy curtain on the

windows block out Illir's light.

Whether the Heroes create a light or open the window (or can all see in the dark), continue:

As your eyes adjust, a number of things draw your attention. The corpse, of course, slumped over the desk in the middle of the room. The entire body is gaunt, mostly rotted away, though a bony grip still holds a quill. Beneath the quill, a journal lies open to what must be Ealdmar's last entry.

On the wall, you see a life size portrait of Ealdmar as a corpse. The detail is remarkable, every wrinkle and hair seemingly accounted for.

"Ealdmar commissioned that last year," Winimund says from behind you, standing at the doorway. "A number of other nobles had theirs done, and he wanted one of his own. He was gone for a week posing for it. It didn't look like that, though. It was a perfect depiction of him whole and healthy, and despite his age, this last year he has been healthier than the entire decade before that."

If the Heroes want to examine the journal, give them Player Handout 3.

A Wisdom (Medicine) or Wisdom (Perception) check DC 14 will reveal that the body is significantly more rotten than just being dead three days. The body also doesn't stink and appears to have mummified.

Have each Hero make an **Intelligence (Investigation) check**, giving advantage to any Hero who has proficiency with painter's supplies.

- **DC 11:** The canvas of the painting is dried and cracked, appearing decades old rather than months.
- **DC 13:** The frame of the painting appears to be hollow, some parts made of clear glass. A closer examination

reveals a hole in the top of the frame, stained red.

- **DC 15:** The entire portrait is shaded ever so slightly red, almost as though the canvas had been saturated in red paint, then painted over in brighter colors.
- **DC 15:** Inside one of the drawers of the desk, beneath a pile of papers, lies a chalice, stained red.
- **DC 18:** One of the papers is a letter in Milandisian, reading only "You know what you did wrong. You know my price. If you're unwilling to pay, suffer the consequences of your own decisions. -G"
- **DC 20:** A painter's mark can be found cleverly inscribed and almost hidden inside the portrait in the bottom left hand corner; a stylized set of initials "GH".

The *detect magic* spell or a successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana)** check will identify the painting as magical. The chalice is non-magical.

- How old was Ealdmar?
He was going to be 78 this year.
- Who was the painter?
I don't know. Ealdmar never told me, and I never thought to ask. It wasn't as though I could ever afford to have one done.
- When/how did it become like this?
In the last week, my master had suddenly become very ill. He was spending more and more time up here, locked away. I was concerned, but he bade me tend to the household and ensure that things kept running smoothly. I did so, and every time I

brought him his meals he looked older, sicker. The painting seemed to change to match, though he was already so old when it was painted. When I found him dead three days ago the painting was as you see it now. I have thought of throwing it in the fire, but I can't bring myself to touch the cursed thing.

- Who is Gareth/"GH"?
I've never heard the name before in my life.
- Who are Brandon/Wilhelm/Ingrid?

I can only presume my master was speaking of Ryters Brandon and Wilhelm, and Vikontesa Ingrid. They were nobles of his acquaintance, along with Graf Sigurd. They all live within a half day's walk from here, in various directions.

- Who is Sigurd?

Graf Sigurd val'Holryn is a brute of a man who lives a short way south of here. I know Ealdmar would rather not have had to deal with him, but they were involved in some business over the last year or so that meant he couldn't be avoided.

- What business?

I confess, I do not know. Though Ealdmar confided much in me, I was never made aware of the nature of his business with Graf Sigurd.

- What will you do now?

After I have buried the body, I will continue living here by myself. I have no family, no loved ones to care for anymore, and I have no desire to leave. I will live out my days here.

The Cellar: Should the Heroes think to head to the cellar mentioned in the journal, the door is locked. A **DC 13 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check** will open it, as will simply taking time to break down the door.

As your eyes adjust to the gloom, you see numerous wine racks, emptied of their bottles. In their place, a set of sturdy iron manacles are attached to the racks bolted into the ground.

A Passive **Wisdom (Perception)** of **13** or a successful **Wisdom (Perception)** **DC 15** skill check will notice bloodstains on the stone floor and the manacles themselves. Anyone examining the manacles specifically gets this automatically.

Development: The Heroes should at this point need a little more information. The biggest clue they have is Sigurd val'Holryn. If they didn't talk to Isebrand in **Scene 1**, Winimund can give them direction to Sigurd's castle (**Scene 4**). If they decide to visit any of the other patrons instead, go to **Scene 5**. Asking around Faerdlau about "a Gareth who paints" will get them pointed to the painter's house (**Scene 6**), as will having the information from **Scene 4** before coming here.

SCENE 4

Key Concepts: The Heroes visit the estate of Graf Sigurd Wulfheim val'Holryn, where the dark-kin claimed to have been held.

Read the following:

The castle of Graf Sigurd val'Holryn is an impressive affair. At least a dozen guards patrol the battlements of the keep, and a small moat is filled with brackish water. As you cross the drawbridge, a guard with a long pike confronts you: "Identify yourselves. What business do you have with Graf

Sigurd?"

Allow the Heroes to answer whatever they like. So long as it's reasonable, the guard will let them in and provide an escort to the castle's small audience hall.

Chronicler's Note: If the entire party is made up of elorii/dark-kin/ss'ressen/gnomes, Sigurd will refuse to even see them and just have his guards arrest them. The guards know this, so a group of Heroes of this composition will be escorted immediately to the dungeons where they will undoubtedly get into a fight to escape. Use the same stats below, and bring Count Sigurd in after 4 turns with one of the groups of guards as he is informed of the commotion.

Read the following:

Ushered into an audience hall, the first thing that catches your eye is a large painting hanging above a wooden throne. The painting is of a tall, strong man with flowing silver-grey hair that curls its way down his back. Matte-grey eyes gaze intelligently out from the picture at you, and the smile is like that a hawk might have before it strikes at its prey, if hawks could smile.

The man who sits in the throne is unmistakably the subject of the painting, down to the very same smile as he watches you approach.

"You're a long way from home, (ladies and) gentlemen. What business could you possibly have with me?"

Have each Hero make an **Intelligence (Investigation)** check, giving advantage to any Hero who also has proficiency in painter's supplies.

- **DC 11:** The canvas of the painting is dried and cracked, appearing decades old rather than months.

The information at **DC 15** and **DC 20** can only be gained if the Heroes convince Sigurd to let them examine the painting up close (requiring a really good argument and a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion)** or **Charisma (Deception)** check), or after Sigurd has been defeated in combat.

- **DC 13:** The frame of the painting appears to be hollow, with parts inside revealed to be clear glass as you inspect it. A closer examination reveals a hole in the top of the frame, stained red.
- **DC 15:** The entire portrait is shaded ever so slightly red, almost as though the canvas had been saturated in red paint, then painted over in brighter colors.
- **DC 20:** A painter's mark can be found cleverly inscribed and almost hidden inside the portrait in the bottom left hand corner; a stylized set of initials "GH".

GM's Note:

Roleplaying Sigurd: Graf Sigurd is fairly quick to anger and insult. If the Heroes are less than diplomatic, he will be uncooperative, and the most they'll be able to get out of him is the name of the painter and that he lives in Faerdlau. If they're willing to talk and not insult him, he'll be much more gregarious. He is exceedingly prejudiced against dark-kin, seeing them as nothing more than beasts, and he doesn't much care for elorii or gnomes either, though he will at least converse with them.

If there are dark-kin in the party, Sigurd will want to add them to his collection, since three of his previous victims have died when

he abused them too hard. Any party with a dark-kin in it isn't going to be leaving without a fight.

- I like your portrait/Where'd you get your painting?

That is probably one of my most valuable pieces. I paid a whole army's monthly salary for it, and I haven't regretted it in the slightest.

- What makes it so valuable?

Aside from it costing me a fortune? Sigurd shrugs. Well, I believe that having your likeness captured in art is as close to immortality as any of us are likely to get.

- Who is the painter? Where can we find the painter?

You'd like one for yourself, eh? Be wary; Gareth Hirsch drives a very hard bargain if you're not prepared for the costs. He lives in Faerdlau, in a green house by the north gate. You'll know it when you find it.

- What do you know of Ealdmar val'Holryn?

Ealdmar is a stubborn idiot whose notions of honor would be quaint if they weren't so antiquated. There are many times I wish Gareth had approached me first instead of him.

- We ran into Isebrand/Why are you kidnapping and torturing dark-kin?

Why not? It's not like they're really people, after all. It is fascinating to see all the imperfections and corruptions that compose each individual one.

- Release any dark-kin you have prisoner! (Or any insults/demands for

justice/"dark-kin aren't so bad" arguments)

I think not. Guards!

Initiate Combat.

- If there are dark-kin in the party, at the end of the conversation:

The rest of you may go, but you, Sigurd says, pointing at <any dark-kin in the party>, you will be staying here as my... guests. Guards!

Initiate Combat.

COMBAT

This combat consists of

- **Two (2) guards**
- **One (1) Captain of the Guards**
- **Graf Sigurd**
- These are followed by another group of **(2) guards** every other round for the next 8 rounds (for a grand total of 10 guards), and See Appendix 2 for stats.

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Only one guard will arrive every other round after the first.
- **Difficult:** Guards arrive every round after the first, so that all 10 have arrived by round 5.
- **Perilous:** Add 2 guards to the initial group and to the waves of guards that arrive every round after the first, for a total of 20 guards that have all arrived by round 5.

Tactics: The guardsmen will attempt to divide Heroes and drive them into submission. They will not kill Heroes, just incapacitate them to be dealt with later. The Captain of the Guards will direct his troops and focus on taking down any obvious casters. Graf Sigurd will try to beat any dark-kin, elorii, gnomes, or ss'ressen into submission first because of his xenophobia,

before turning to help defeat the rest of the party.

Attacking the painting: The Graf's painting of himself is a Large object with an AC of 11 and 40 hit points. The painting is vulnerable to slashing damage. Due to the magic of its construction, the painting has a damage threshold of 5.

If the Heroes damage the painting, Graf Sigurd gains 1 level of exhaustion. For every 10 hit points the painting loses, Graf Sigurd gains an additional level of exhaustion.

He cannot remove these levels of exhaustion until the painting is repaired.

If the painting is completely destroyed, the Graf's link to it ends and he dies.

Notes: If the Heroes are defeated, they will be locked up in the dungeons and have to be rescued. Continue immediately to **Conclusion Y**.

If the Heroes are victorious, they have defeated all the guards in the castle proper and have a little time to explore before the defeated guards start waking up.

If Graf Sigurd is killed (not just knocked out), the painting on the wall will immediately shift to include a likeness of the wound that killed him.

Exploring the Castle:

There's not much of interest to the Heroes in the rest of the castle except for the dungeons. Everything else is pretty much just standard fare; kitchen area, fairly sparse bedrooms, servant's rooms, etc.

The Dungeons

Read the following:

At the bottom of the castle, tucked far in the back, are the dungeons. A long hallway down from the stairs leads to a wide-open room, off of which are a half-dozen cells. The main

room looks like a torturers dream; an iron maiden, a rack, and an entire wall of cruel implements designed to part people from their blood, skin, and bones. Four of the cells are empty; the other two have dark-kin inside them.

The two dark-kin are Erik and Sylvia. They have both been bled, but not too much yet, so their wounds are few and small.

Erik is the Brothers of Light-in-Darkness agent who was captured, though he will only speak of this to another dark-kin. If there is one, he will thank them for helping secure his freedom, and strongly recommend the Hero come to Naeraanth when their business is done to talk to the guild. If there are no dark-kin in the group, Erik will talk about his life as a baker in Faerdlau (which he is), and how Sigurd captured him by hiring Erik to deliver fresh bread to the castle and just not letting him leave.

Sylvia is just a peasant girl from Faerdlau with the misfortune of having been born with slightly demonic features. Though very pretty, her Infernal heritage is obvious. She was lured by one of the guards whom she had a crush on, who brought her to the castle then turned her over to his lord for a bonus.

Development: If the Heroes haven't been to see Duke Ealdmar yet, they are welcome to do so (**Scene 3**).

If they have, they should definitely get the sense that the next place to visit is the Gareth's studio (**Scene 6**).

If the Heroes want to visit any of the other aforementioned patrons, they may do so (**Scene 5**).

SCENE 5

Key Concepts: The Heroes visit any of the other three patrons.

Read the following:

The keep of <Ryter Brandon/Ryter Wilhelm/Vikontesa Ingrid> is a busy place, and the guards at the gate stop you as you approach. "I'm sorry," one says, "but our Master/Mistress is not entertaining guests; he/she is actually away on business."

If the Heroes try to ask questions or need more information:

If you're just looking for information... Wulf and I see and hear a fair bit, manning these gates." The guard coughs surreptitiously and extends a hand.

The Heroes cannot talk, bribe, or fight their way into any of the three keeps. However, the guards at the gate are willing to exchange information for a little bit of cash. They will answer one question for every 2 sp the Heroes offer. If the Heroes offer 10 sp, the guards will just tell them about the odd things involving the painting, the visitors, and all the rumors without having to be prompted.

Paintings

Why yes, our Master/Mistress did commission a large painting of themselves months ago. The thing gives me the creeps to tell the truth. Feels like its eyes watch you when you're in the same room.

I had to help escort the painting for delivery. For some reason, our Master/Mistress had five of us guards escort the painting from the painter's house to here. (They can give the Heroes directions to Gareth's house.)

Visitors

There's the usual stream of visitors to the keep, mercenaries, servants, and the like, but only a couple notable recently. Both Graf Sigurd and Ryter Ealdmar have visited in the past month; and then there was that delivery boy. He's got a note with our Master's/Mistress' seal that allows him entry, but all he ever brings with him is some sealed jars.

Rumors

- There's some that say dark-kin are disappearing throughout the region. Not just the bad ones either, but honest folk with a bit of bad blood in their background. Erik the baker, for instance; a good man.
- The Inn of the Golden Horseshoe in Treslau is becoming hugely prosperous. Since Treslau is considered one of few sanctuaries of neutral ground in Almeric, due to Margraf Roderik's stance of not desiring the crown, many factions use it as a staging ground for their efforts in Almeric. The Golden Horseshoe just happens to be one of the largest and centrally located inns in the city, and its owner, Grimur val'Assante, has profited greatly. Some say Grimur is using the information he overhears in his inn to make a profit on the side, but it's mostly other innkeepers talking behind his back saying such things.
- Marcus Arminius val'Assante, heir to the Coryani throne, and a Centurion in the Legion of Triumphant Rays of the Invincible Sun, has received orders to travel to Plexus in Annonica with his unit to help quell an uprising of the Undir.

Development: If the Heroes head from here to Ealdmar's or Sigurd's estate, continue to **Scene 3** or **Scene 4** as appropriate.

If they feel it's time to find Gareth, continue to **Scene 6**.

SCENE 6

Key Concepts: The Heroes visit the painter's house and discover a chained succubus, her blood used as paint.

Gareth's home is not what you'd expect from a painter with powerful patrons. The directions you have been given lead you down a maze of back alleys, settled in the shadow of the northern gate, but inaccessible from direct paths. The building is in fact green, but the ugliest dull green you have ever laid eyes on, the walls and structure warped and degraded as though the house has been abandoned for over a decade.

If the Heroes knock on the door, there is no answer. Gareth isn't home at the moment. He will not return home until the Heroes decide to enter the house, even if that takes a day or two. If the Heroes absolutely insist on waiting, continue to **Scene 7** and adapt as necessary.

The door is locked and trapped.

The lock can be picked with a successful **Dexterity (Thieves' tools) DC 13** roll using a successful while a **Wisdom (Perception) DC 15** check is required to detect the trap on the door, and a **Dexterity (Thieves' tools) DC 13** check to disable it. Any attempt to open the door without disarming the trap will set it off.

GM's Note:

The Trap: If the trap is set off, a single puff of poison gas will emanate from it. Anyone standing within 5' radius will have to make a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw**.

Effect: Any Hero who fails their saving throw will be under the effects of the poisoned condition for the next 2 hours.

There are no windows on the main floor. Breaking in a window would require some serious acrobatics up to the 2nd floor, but if the Heroes want to give it a shot, go ahead.

Entering the house, it appears just as abandoned on the inside as it does outside. There's a hole in the ceiling just inside the door, dusty worn furniture scattered throughout the house, and a couple rats the size of small dogs glare at you as you enter, clearly debating whether it's worth the effort to go after you as a meal. Clearly deciding it's not, they disappear into a large crack in the floorboards.

Looking around, the majority of the house seems to be untouched by human contact. A **Wisdom (Perception) DC 12** skill check will reveal a path through the dust leading to a closed door. This door leads to the basement.

The rest of the house: There is really nothing of value throughout the entire house except in the basement. Gareth lives in another place, under another name, but uses this ramshackle building as his 'home' to keep his bound Infernals and to conduct business so people will underestimate him.

The basement is a marked difference from the squalor upstairs. Not a trace of dust can be seen, and the walls are covered in unfinished paintings, depicting a wide variety of Milandir's nobles, particularly those known to have substantial amounts of money or power. A table covered in bowls of paint and paintbrushes is along one wall, beside a small bookcase.

In the center of the room is a large pentacle, containing a still figure. Large wings are folded about a clearly feminine body, and the knowledge that she is infernal does nothing to detract from her obvious beauty. As you approach, she stirs. "Please! No more. It hurts so much, no more, please Gareth..." Without

looking up, the demon begins to sob.

A successful **Wisdom (Insight) DC 13** skill check reveals that the Succubus' tears appear to be genuine. Feel free to roll a fake **Deception** check if you want the Heroes to be suspicious, but ultimately, she simply is exactly what she appears to be.

A **Wisdom (Perception)** check on her will reveal:

- **DC 10:** She appears to be badly wounded.
- **DC 13:** There are deep gouges in her forearms, and a fair bit of scarring. An **Intelligence (Investigation) DC 14** check will reveal these to be reflective of a small blade repeatedly cutting across the same scars, reopening them again and again.
- **DC 16:** Her wings, feathered and dark as Cadic's shroud, are clipped. The binding circle appears to have been constructed properly, so why the wings were maimed is a mystery.

Wisdom (Perception) checks on the room:

- **DC 10:** There are half a dozen paintings in this room near completion, and dozens of bowls of paint of all different shades.
- **DC 13:** There are three different pentacles carved into the floor of the basement. Only the one containing the succubus seems to be active.
- **DC 15:** The books on the bookcase are all green bound leather books with nothing written on the covers.

The paintings are very pretty works of art. An **Intelligence (Investigation)** check on the paintings (with advantage if proficient in painter's supplies) will reveal the following:

- **DC 10:** Nice use of colors and shading. The likenesses are very lifelike. Clearly a fair bit of talent is behind this artwork.
- **DC 13:** Every painting has a red tinge in the background, as though the plain white canvas had been dipped in blood red paint before the artist painted over it.
- **DC 16:** The paint is oil based, mixed with a small amount of blood, and all boiled with a pine resin to create a fine gloss when the paints dry. The technique is clearly a layered effect, with each successive coat of paint being allowed to dry before the next one is added.

A *detect magic* spell or a successful **Intelligence (Arcana) DC 16** skill check will reveal that are two magical effects in the room. The pentacle is magical, (a *glyph of warding* versus infernal creatures is cast upon it), and there appears to be an enchantment on the succubus as well.

Looking at the Books

These books are all written in Cancerese. If any Hero can read them, they are mostly Sarishan treatise involving the binding of demons and various uses of their blood. Nothing that isn't known to various sects of Sarishans already, but in the margins are Gareth's personal notations, in awkward Cancerese.

The marginalia tend to ramble, but Gareth seems to have stumbled on to a way to bind Infernal blood to individuals through the medium of his painting.

These books are heretical to the Milandric Church, despite its recent re-inclusion of Sarishan Priests, and to the Mother Church of Coryan because of its Cancerese provenance. A Sarishan possessing them though will not be questioned.

Carrying at least one of these books with you as a reference grants advantage on any Wisdom (Religion) skill checks involving Sarish, and Intelligence (Arcana) checks for identifying infernals, providing you can read Cancerese.

As soon as any Hero approaches or speaks to the succubus:

Her wings unfurl and in a moment, the succubus is on her feet, staring at you in shock. "You're not Gareth! Who are you? It doesn't matter! Save me, please. Set me free and I will reward you greatly. Nights of pleasure, gold, a life granted, a death claimed, anything you desire, just release me from my agony!"

GM's Note:

Roleplaying Auroria, the succubus: Auroria has been imprisoned and bound for four months, being bled once every three days. Her blood is either added to paints or sold to Ryter Brandon, Ryter Wilhelm, or Vikontesa Ingrid, all of whom are still paying for the privilege of keeping their hands clean.

She is absolutely miserable, and doesn't even attempt to hide how she feels. She knows exactly what she is and is comfortable with it, but considers this torture cruel and unusual even by her standards. At least the men she torments get pleasure before suffering.

Allow the Heroes to negotiate with her as they wish. She will not be bound in service again, but she will promise anything at all to be free. Some promises she might even keep (though the opportunity to seal the deal will never actually

occur. If the Heroes are on the edge of making a deal, have Gareth show up).

If the Heroes begin attempting to break the circle by magic at any point, immediately trigger **Scene 7**. If the Heroes attempt to break the circle by physical means, they will be unable to do so. The ritual magic of the pentacle will lash out at them, throwing any offending Hero or item back forcibly, causing 2d6 force damage.

- Who are you?

I am Auroria, morning glory, quickener of hearts. At least, I was before I was trapped here. Now I am a shadow.

- How long have you been here?

Weeks? Months? I've lost track. I have bled more than two dozen times for him, and I am not the first. I don't have much more life in me, and if I die here, Gareth will simply summon another to replace me.

- Why are you here?

Gareth summoned me down into this place and bound me with his magic. When he comes to paint, he compels me to cut myself and bleed for him until I am unconscious. He collects the blood, and mixes it with his paints and his magic to imbue them. I don't know what effect it has.

- Why should we free you? You're an Infernal.

We are not all incompetently evil. I corrupt men for my pleasure and their own. I don't kill them; it's far crueler to tempt married men away from their wives, religious men away from their vows, and sweet women away from men entirely, then let them search their souls and live with what they have done; alive, but tainted with the

knowledge that they have transgressed their own beliefs, their own code. Yes, I am evil and infernal, but compared to the evil that men do to one another I can hardly compare. Prove yourself better than me. Free me, then, for no other reason than that it is the right thing to do.

- Where is Gareth?

I don't know. He frequently goes out to meet with various highborn patrons. Sometimes I go days without seeing him, starving but for the little bread and water he leaves me. She gestures to a small, empty bowl in the circle with her.

Development: The Heroes have found the succubus, Auroria. Let them debate as long as they like as to whether they are going to free her or kill her. Once they have made a decision, continue to **Scene 7**.

SCENE 7

Key Concepts: Gareth arrives home, and challenges the Heroes. He explains everything he's doing, and requests that they keep quiet. If the Heroes refuse, Gareth will attack them.

Whenever the Heroes are about to try and release Auroria, or have run out of questions, or the Chronicler feels it necessary, continue with the following:

A loud shout comes from above you in Milandisian. "Whatever you do, don't listen to that creature in there!" Careening down the stairs comes an older man, looking distinctly unassuming.

Coming to a halt at the bottom of the stairs, he wheezes and coughs. "I am Gareth Hirsch, Sarishan and painter, and you are trespassing in my house. Explain to me very quickly why I shouldn't call the authorities."

GM's Note:

Roleplaying Gareth: Gareth Hirsch is a Sarishan Binder and a consummate artist. He values his art above all else, and is willing to make almost any sacrifice for it.

He doesn't see a problem using infernals for their blood, as he sees them as demonic creatures without souls. He draws the line at dark-kin though, since he still sees them as human, and since he has enough skill as a binder to go directly to the source. Gareth honestly does not believe he is doing anything illegal or immoral.

- You have a succubus in your house.

Many Sarishans make deals with such creatures. I suspect many would support the uses I have found for them.

- What uses have you found for them?

The blood of infernals can be used to power great magic; better spells to bind the creatures. Spells to keep others alive and healthy. Magic to maybe even one day overcome death itself!

- What do your paintings actually do?

My art... my precious art. I have discovered a spell to bind paintings to their subjects, with infernal blood as the medium. So long as the painting is regularly supplied with tainted blood, the subject need never be concerned with normal poisons, disease, aging... the painting is a link to the life force of the subject. Barring brute trauma or lack of infernal blood, the subject will remain in exactly the same condition as when they were painted, potentially forever.

- What will happen when others find out about this? What if someone notices they're not aging?

Ideally, I'll have more commissions. Being able to bring something good out of something evil should be lauded, not condemned.

- Why is she being treated so cruelly?

Do not make the mistake of thinking her even remotely human, my friend. Her every thought and gesture is bent towards corruption, deceit, and spreading evil. She deserves no better than she would give.

Besides, it is no different than how Sarishan Steel is made, where the forge hot blade is pierced through a living demon.

- Ealdamar val'Holryn is dead.

The more fool he. I knew what Sigurd and Ealdmar were trying to do. I'm even impressed that it worked. But there's a reason I don't use dark-kin. At the end of the day, they're still mostly human, and not irredeemable. That's why I raised my price when he contacted me again. His actions were reprehensible, but at least he was only using criminals. I will never deal with Graf Sigurd again; you can rest assured of that.

- But he aged to death!

An unfortunate side effect; I'm working on correcting it as I go along. I have no desire to kill my patrons.

A successful **Wisdom (Insight) DC 15** check will reveal that he's not nearly as passionate about this as he is about the art itself.

- Why are you selling blood to your patrons?

Some of my patrons have no desire to sully their hands with the mundane matters of acquiring infernal blood to keep the link between themselves and their paintings active. Since I need the blood for my art anyway, it is a small matter to collect a little extra and have it delivered to them. The money I get from it allows me more time to spend with my art, and to purchase better supplies.

- Free the succubus!

I'm afraid I can't do that, and clearly she has seduced you, you poor damned fools.

When the Heroes have run out of questions:

Gareth taps his foot impatiently on the ground. "Well, we seem to be at an impasse. I won't release the infernal, and I can't let you leave and reveal to anyone what you have seen here. Let me make you a deal. I will provide you each with two healing potions that I have enhanced with Infernal blood. In exchange, you will take the following Sarishan Oath, "I solemnly swear not to inform anyone of what I have discovered of Gareth Hirsch and his artwork."

If the Heroes agree, they may quibble about the wording of the Oath, but Gareth is a smart enough Sarishan to ensure that they don't tell anyone through word or deed. (No writing it down on a letter, etc.) Gareth will have the potions of healing delivered to the Heroes at the Bear's Inn. Each of the Heroes receives a pair of improved potions of healing that each heal 10 hit points (maximized potion of healing). All of the Heroes have to take the Sarishan Oath, if just one Hero refuses...

If the Heroes refuse, read the following:

Blind law disapproves, and there are enough people who would disrupt my art simply out of fear. The things I must do for my art..."

Initiate Combat.

COMBAT

This combat consists of

- Gareth Hirsch
- Auroria the succubus

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy:** Auroria hesitates for one round forcing Gareth Hirsch to scream at her, reinforcing his binding.
- **Difficult:** Gareth waves his hand and summons a lemure.
- **Perilous:** Gareth waves his hand and summons 2 lemures.

Tactics: Gareth will immediately begin by dismissing the ward around Auroria. He will command Auroria to attack the Heroes, and target any injured Heroes with spells, generally staying out of the way as much as possible. Auroria is under a *planar binding* spell that lasts for 24 hours, forcing her to obey Gareth's will so long as he is conscious. The spell Bindings of Sarish will not be able to override the *planar binding* spell.

Auroria, controlled by Gareth's will, will make regular use of her Charm ability, resorting to her claws should her other skills fail.

Notes: If Gareth is defeated before Auroria, the succubus will immediately stop attacking the Heroes.

If Auroria is still standing when Gareth is defeated, OR if the Heroes dispel magic on the planar binding (vs a DC of 16), she will immediately call out **"Hold! I am free! Free to**

return to my home. Let me go, brave heroes. Let me take my tormentor. I will treat him far better than he treated me, I assure you, but he will face justice.”

If the Heroes let her go and take Gareth, she will place a hand on his unconscious body, gesture, and the pair will disappear.

If the Heroes continue attacking her, she will simply vanish on her next action, returning to the Infernal planes.

After the Combat: The Heroes need to decide what they’re doing with Gareth in the short term (if Auroria didn’t take him), as well as what they’re going to do with all the blood, paintings, and books.

Development: Whether the Heroes swore a Sarishan Oath or fought Gareth, continue to **Scene 8**.

SCENE 8

Key Concepts: The heroes arrive at the Bear’s Inn and determine what they’re going to tell to whom, and what they’re going to do about whom.

- Decision about Sigurd val’Holryn: If his crimes don’t come to light, he will just keep doing them.
- Decision about Gareth Hirsch: Regardless of whether he’s dead or not, were the representatives warned that there would be no more blood?
- If they didn’t fight Gareth, whom can they tell what?
- Decision about the heretical books

GM’s Note:

If the Heroes captured Gareth, ask them immediately what they did with him, and

what they wanted done with him.

The obvious option is to turn him over to the city guards (who are Knights of St. Lambertus) for having a hand in the death of Ryter Ealdmar. This will get him executed by the knights after they investigate and find evidence of the Cancerese connections.

They can turn him over to the Champions of the Silver Chalice, who will convene a secret trial for consorting with demons (with execution as the inevitable result). All the players have to do is mention that they want to do this while in the inn and a representative will find them.

They can turn him over to the Brothers of Light-in-Darkness, who will ultimately release Gareth. He honestly has no desire to harm dark-kin whatsoever, and in fact made his displeasure at their use known.

They can trump up other charges against him, but anything that doesn’t end with his death will eventually see Gareth released.

Read this to the heroes:

The Bear’s Den is filled to the brim with travelers and locals, making it very easy to arrange quiet conversations. You may not notice if someone is listening in, but they’ll have a hell of a time hearing you over the ruckus.

One of the half-dozen buxom barmaids saunters over to your table to take your order for drinks, and she winks salaciously at <the Hero with the highest Charisma, male or female>.

Though you’d love to just relax and enjoy the evening, you know there are still decisions that need to be made, and consequences that must be borne out. Ealdmar, Sigurd, Gareth, Isebrand, and others besides... So many lives

ruined in the pursuit of art and immortality.

At this point, the Heroes need to decide the following things:

- What they are going to do about Graf Sigurd, if he isn't dead. The city guards, Knights of Saint Lambertus would probably be very interested in finding out where their favorite baker went. The Champions of the Silver Chalice would also be interested in bringing him to justice.
- Whether they will inform Brandon, Wilhelm, and Ingrid about Gareth.
- What they are going to do with the heretical Cancere books in Gareth's basement. Both the Sanctorum of the Arcane and The Orthodoxy would be interested in these volumes of lore.

Development: Continue to **Conclusions**.

CONCLUSIONS & ENDINGS

If Gareth Hirsch is killed, imprisoned, or taken by the succubus Auroria, read **Conclusion A**.

If the Heroes swore a Sarishan Oath to keep silent about Gareth's work, read **Conclusion B**.

If Graf Sigurd's crimes against dark-kin come to light, read **Conclusion C** in addition to **Conclusions A or B**.

If any/all of the representatives were not warned that there would be no more blood coming from Gareth, read **Conclusion D** in addition to **Conclusion A**.

For any new Champions of the Silver Chalice, give them **Player Handout 4**.

CONCLUSION A

It wasn't an easy decision, but justice is done. There will be no more tainted paintings to offer the temptation of health and immortality, and hopefully no more deaths because of them. You have made the world a slightly better place, and that is worth exactly as much as you value it.

CONCLUSION B

Your lips are sealed and you have been rewarded for your silence; Gareth's work continues, and infernal after infernal will die in agony to prolong the lives of many rich and powerful nobles. Perhaps one day you, too, will be able to afford one of the paintings, and buy yourself a chance at immortality.

CONCLUSION C

Graf Sigurd's cruelty and bigotry have caught up with him. Duke Konrad's response to the kidnapping and murder of dark-kin citizens of Tralia in the city is swift and decisive. By morning, the Graf is dangling from a rope, suffering from a broken neck. Interestingly, one of his staff mentioned in passing that the beautiful portrait Sigurd had commissioned of himself had changed; no longer tall and proud, the painting has the Graf's neck at an awkward angle, the face pale, and the body limp like that of a corpse.

CONCLUSION D

Shortly after Gareth has been dealt with, you hear tell of a few other unfortunate notable deaths in the region. It seems <Ryter Brandon/Ryter Wilhelm/Vikontesa Ingrid> (Any who were not warned in time to make other arrangements) passed away under

mysterious circumstances. There aren't many details, but rumor claims they appeared to age to death overnight and simply never woke up the next morning.

CONCLUSION X

The ratmen strip you of your weapons and armor before roasting you on spits, deep in the forest. Apparently you're delicious.

The Heroes are now DEAD and removed from play.

CONCLUSION Y

Beaten, bruised, and chained up in Sigurd's dungeon, your freedom comes when the guardsmen of Faerdlau, following up a rumor that Erik the baker had last been seen there, search his castle. Sigurd himself is taken in for questioning.

Also read **Conclusion C**.

THE END

ADVENTURE REWARDS

After an adventure make sure players record what experience and treasure they acquire on their Adventure Chronicle, after which check their numbers, mark off any favors, boons, or curses and add any particular game notes before signing the Adventure Chronicle and handing it back to the player.

EXPERIENCE REWARDS

Arcanis adventures do not necessarily reward experience points for winning combats. Instead Arcanis adventures reward experience for achieving particular tasks or reaching important story points.

Task, Achievement	
Total Experience	300 Exp

FOUND ITEMS

Players may keep any item without an Item Certificate that they find during the adventure. Remember that carrying a flintlock without the right to do so is a crime.

When a player keeps an item, the item's sale value is removed from the shared treasure reward the party splits at the end of the adventure. If the amount removed is greater than a player's share of the coin, the player in question must make up the difference or the other players can chip in from their shares.

The number and distribution of items found in a Living Arcanis adventure is always calculated using the base level of the adventure and a table of 5 players. Even if the party goes through the adventure at a higher difficulty and fights more enemies, any items beyond what is listed here are unsalvageable. This helps the Campaign Staff have a better grasp on campaign economy.

SCENE 2

- 2 *strange stones* (see below)

SCENE 4

- Chain shirt (10) – 250 gp
- Shield (10) – 50 gp
- Spear (10) – 5 gp
- Scale Mail – 25 gp
- Halberd – 10 gp
- Longsword – 7 gp

Total for Scene 4 – 347 gp

SCENE 6

- 10 gp in leather pouch on one of the tables
- 20 gp worth of fresh paintings materials that are as of yet unmixed with infernal blood.
- Gareth's notebooks (see below)

OR

- 2 maximized potions of healing for each Hero (Conclusion B only)

TOTAL TREASURE REWARD

The party can split a maximum of 377 gp. At a table of 5 that would be 75 gp.

STRANGE STONES

Wondrous item (psionic), uncommon

Although this stone appears to be just a simple stone, wrapped in leather, it always feels somewhat off.

Any non-psionic Hero feels uncomfortable having one of these stones in their possession. Any psionic Hero carrying one, even in a pack or pouch, will hear faint yet indiscernible whispers at the back of their minds.

GARETH'S NOTEBOOKS

Book, uncommon

Description: These notebooks are heretical texts written in Cancereze regarding the various uses of infernal blood for magical purposes. Though they may be of significant value to certain groups, no merchant will buy them off you.

Effect: Using these books as a reference, grants advantage to any **Intelligence (Religion)** checks involving Sarish or **Intelligence (Arcana)** checks for identifying infernals, so long as you have time to refer to the books and can read Cancerese.

FAME REWARDS

In this adventure, the Heroes can gain fame with the following organizations if they complete the listed actions. It is possible for *Gareth's notebooks* to be split up and be delivered to both the Sanctorum of the Arcane and the Orthodoxy. However, doing so requires a **DC 18 Charisma (Deception) check**. Failure results in infamy with both organizations instead of fame.

Task, Achievement	
Bringing either or both Gareth or Graf Sigurd to lawful justice	Champions of the Silver Chalice 1 Fame
Turning Gareth's notebooks over	Sanctorum of the Arcane 1 Fame
Turning over Gareth's notebooks	The Orthodoxy 1 Fame
Reporting the events of the adventure to the Brothers of Light-in-Darkness	Brothers of Light-in-Darkness 1 Fame

NOTICE OF THE HARVESTERS

This only pertains to characters who cast Arcane magic. Every time during the adventure an arcane caster casts spells in a public place or within sight of common people there is a chance that they had been spotted by a harvester or a harvester informant.

Unless the caster goes out of their way to hide such spell casting, news of their abilities will, eventually, reach the ears of the "wrong" people.

If the hero was open about their spell casting in public or failed two consecutive attempts to disguise it they get 1 point of harvester notice.

COMBAT APPENDIX 1

SCENE 2A

This combat consists of

- **Four (4) ratmen**
- **One (1) ratman shaman**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Remove 1 ratmen
- **Difficult:** Add 2 ratmen
- **Perilous:** Add 3 ratmen; one is a scout hidden in a tree with a crude short bow (d6 damage). **Wisdom (Perception) DC: 14 (active or passive)** to spot before combat.

- **Perilous:** Add 3 ratmen; one is a scout hidden in a tree with a crude short bow (d6 damage). **Wisdom (Perception) DC: 14 (active or passive)** to spot before combat.

Tactics: The ratmen will target anyone with a light, doing their absolute best to fight in darkness. This includes any casters who have magical sources of light or anyone who is carrying a torch.

Notes: Heroes without a light source or darkvision, or who are within magical *darkness* are fighting blind (disadvantage to all attack rolls). Any Hero that has a light or creates a light by some means will immediately be targeted by the ratmen in an effort to make it dark again.

COMBAT APPENDIX 1

SCENE 2B

This combat consists of

- **Three (3) ratmen**
- **One (1) ratman shaman**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Remove 1 ratmen
- **Difficult:** Add 2 ratmen
- **Perilous:** Add 3 ratmen; one is a scout hidden in a tree with a crude short bow (d6 damage). **Wisdom (Perception) DC: 14 (active or passive)** to spot before combat.

COMBAT APPENDIX 1

SCENE 2C

This combat consists of

- **Four (4) ratmen**
- **One (1) ratman shaman**

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Remove 1 ratmen
- **Difficult:** Add 2 ratmen

RATMEN

Medium Humanoid, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d6+2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	9 (-1)

Skills: Perception +1, Stealth +4

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 11

Languages Low Coryani (Common)

Challenge: 1/4 (50 XP)

Keen Smell. Ratmen have advantage on Perception (Wisdom) checks that rely on smell.

Pack Tactics. Ratmen have advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the ratman's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Claw – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6-1) piercing damage.

Bite – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4-1) piercing damage.

RATMEN SHAMAN

Medium Humanoid, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 11 (13 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Skills: Perception +2, Arcana +4

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 12

Languages Low Coryani (Common)

Challenge: 1 (200 XP)

Spellcasting. The rat shaman's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 11; +3 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward*, *ray of frost*, *true strike*

1st level (3 slots): *charm person*, *mage armor*

2nd level (2 slots): *crown of madness*, *darkness*

Keen Smell. The ratman shaman has advantage on Perception (Wisdom) checks that rely on smell.

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage or 4 (1d8) damage if used two handed.

Bite – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

COMBAT APPENDIX 2

SCENE 4

COMBAT

This combat consists of

- **Two (2) guards**
- **One (1) Captain of the Guards**
- **Graf Sigurd**
- These are followed by another group of **(2) guards** every other round for the next 8 rounds (for a grand total of 10 guards), and See Appendix 2 for stats.

Adventure Difficulty

- **Easy Mode:** Only one guard will arrive every round after the first.
- **Difficult:** Guards arrive every round after the first, so that all 10 have arrived by round 5.
- **Perilous:** Add 2 guards to the initial group and to the waves of guards that arrive every round after the first, for a total of 20 guards that have all arrived by round 5.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 16 (Scale mail)

Hit Points 19 (3d8+6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills: Intimidation +3, Perception +2

Senses: Passive Perception 12

Languages: Low Coryani (Common), Milandisian

Challenge: 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Halberd – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10+1) slashing damage.

GUARDS

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 16 (Chain Shirt, Shield)

Hit Points 11 (2d8+2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills: Perception +2

Senses: Passive Perception 12

Languages: Low Coryani (Common), Milandisian

Challenge: 1/8 (25 XP)

ACTIONS

Spear – *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage.

SIGURD VAL'HOLRYN

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 12 (none)

Hit Points 12 (4d8+8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills: Intimidation, +4, Perception +3

Senses: Passive Perception 13

Damage Resistances: Lighting

Languages: Low Coryani (Common), Milandisian

Challenge: 1/2 (100 XP)

Bloodline Power (*Val'Tensen*)

Sigurd may cast *shocking grasp* (+4 to hit melee touch, 4 (1d8) lightning damage) at will and *thunderwave* (15 foot cube – 8 (2d8) thunder damage and 10' push - Con Save DC 12 for half damage and no push).

ACTIONS

Multiattack – Sigurd makes two melee weapon attacks.

Longsword – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8+2) slashing damage.

COMBAT APPENDIX 3

SCENE 7

GARETH HIRSCH

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 12 (none)

Hit Points 28 (5d8+5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9	15	12	12	13	17
(-1)	(+2)	(+1)	(+1)	(+1)	(+3)

Saving Throws: Cha +5, Wis +3

Skills: Arcana +4, Deception +5, Perception +3

Senses: Passive Perception 13, telepathy 60 ft.

Languages Low Coryani, High Coryani, Infernal

Challenge: 1 (100 XP)

Spellcasting. Gareth's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13; +5 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward*, *chill touch*, *fire bolt*

1st level (4 slots): *Burning Hands**, *hellish rebuke*

2nd level (2 slots): *hold person*, *ray of enfeeblement*

**he will only cast Burning Hands as a last ditch effort as it will burn many of the paintings he has been working on.*

ACTIONS

Dagger – *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

Notes: If Gareth is defeated before Auroria, the succubus will immediately stop attacking the Heroes.

If Auroria is still standing when Gareth is defeated, OR if the Heroes *dispel magic* on the *planar binding* (DC 16), she will immediately call out “**Hold! I am free! Free to return to my home. Let me go, brave heroes. Let me take my tormentor. I will treat him far better than he treated me, I assure you, but he will face justice.**”

If the Heroes let her go and take Gareth, she will place a hand on his unconscious body, gesture, and the pair will disappear.

AURORIA (WEAKENED)

Medium fiend / shape changer

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points ~~66~~ Currently at 33 (12d8+12)

Speed ~~30 ft., fly 60 ft.~~ Speed 15 ft, cannot fly.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8	15	13	15	12	17
(-1)	(+2)	(+1)	(+2)	(+1)	(+3)

Skills: Deception +9, Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +9, Stealth +7

Senses: Passive Perception 13

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Languages Low Coryani, High Coryani, Infernal

Challenge: 4 (1,100 XP)

Telepathic Bond. Auroria ignores the range restriction on her telepathy when communicating with a creature it has charmed.

Shapechanger. Auroria can use her action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid, or back into her true form. Without wings, she loses her flying speed. Other than her size and speed, her statistics are the same in each form.

ACTIONS

Claw (Fiend Form Only) – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

Charm – One humanoid the fiend can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys the fiend's verbal or telepathic commands. If the target suffers any harm or receives a suicidal command, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the target successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the target is immune to this fiend's Charm for the next 24 hours.

The fiend can have only one target charmed at a time. If it charms another, the effect on the previous target ends.

Draining Kiss – Due to the particulars of the binding spell placed upon her she cannot use her Draining Kiss ability until she is released of the spell, and if she is, she will only use it on Gareth, not the heroes.

Aurora Currently suffers from 4 ranks of Exhaustion. Suffering disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saves. Speed and HP are halved (adjusted above)

HANDOUT 1

The message was sealed in black wax, although the seal was broken the insignia that of a big black bear is still visible. The message is written in expansively flowing script.

Greetings and Salutations,

I write to all former Irregulars of the Crusade. Now that the war is over, I've no doubt many of you will be seeking your fortunes. While I'm sure your pay will tide you over in the short term, I should like to offer a business venture that may be of interest to individuals of your unique capabilities, appealing to your particular talents. After all, having faced down the infernal armies, surely you deserve more compensation than you got.

Please come visit me at my estate in Tralia, a half-day's walk northwest of Faerdlau on the edge of the Faerdwalden; we will discuss the nature of what I am interested in procuring, and negotiate a lucrative agreement for us both. I will, of course, provide compensation for your traveling expenses.

Sincerely,

Ryter Ealdmar Theoderic val Holryn

HANDOUT 2

The message is written in a tight, precise hand, sealed in yellow and black wax; the insignia of Illiir's glory on a solid black Cadican symbol

Brother/Sister,

Your name has come to us by two of our own that believe you to be of a similar mind to us. Milo and Ilyia, twins who fought in the Crusade as Irregulars, have long been members of our ranks. We are the Brothers of Light-in-Darkness, a group devoted to the protection of all dark-kin across Onara. We seek to prove to the world that we are better than our ancestors; that we are not intrinsically bad any more than all val are intrinsically good.

We would love to talk more with you, but I fear we must begin by being in your debt. One of our agents has gone missing in Tralia, near Faerdlau. His name is Erik. He was seeking information on disappearances; dark-kin simply vanishing into the night, good, hard-working people. We are not a militant order. We have no troops to send, no army to call upon to stop these injustices.

You are one of those we reach out to in our time of need; we humbly request that you help us right whatever wrongs are being committed, find our argent, and use your abilities to overcome the darkness without, that we may continue to focus on restraining the darkness within ourselves. Whatever you discover, please find us in Naeraanth. Speak to almost any dark-kin in the city; any local knows where to find us.

Brother Hektor

HANDOUT 3

I can't continue like this any longer. Gareth's extortion has driven me to the brink of poverty. There must be another way...

28th of Vires, 1071 IC

Sigurd's suggestion is a good one, and seems to be working just fine for him. Pity Brandon, Wilhelm, and Ingrid didn't agree to it. Ah well. Their loss is our gain; more for Sigurd and I.

13th of Caligo, 1071 IC

I don't feel right about this. I know he's a criminal, but even criminals deserve better than this... And how Sigurd treats his... I can't even begin to accept that. I need another option! And by the gods, I hate having to lie to Winimund. He asked me the other day why I'd locked up the wine cellar in the basement, and I couldn't provide a good reason for him.

22nd of Caligo, 1071 IC

That's it! I cannot do this anymore. I only pray the missives I sent to the Crusaders last week arrive in time. In the meantime, I will pay Gareth whatever he asks.

24th of Caligo, 1071 IC

Gareth will not accept my payment anymore! Oh, if the gods are kind, a solution will arrive soon.

2nd of Pallidus, 1071 IC

I wish I'd never commissioned this thrice cursed painting. Now my soul is thrice damned because of it. Beltine have mer...

A big spot of ink has blotted out anything else Ealdmar may have written

HANDOUT 4

Brother/Sister,

You have proven your willingness to assist us; allow us to assist you. If ever you have need of our services, call upon us and we will aid you as best we can. From time to time we may call upon you again, to help forward our mutual cause of overcoming our heritage and integrating more fully into society without evoking the fear and hatred that so often accompanies our passing.

You have our thanks, and our friendship.

Brother Hektor

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