

# DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® *LIVING  
FORGOTTEN REALMS* ADVENTURE

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A secret cabal seeks an artifact of unknown power in the ruins of ancient Unthalass. Unfortunately, the only dragonborn in all of Djerad Thymar with the knowledge to stop them has been declared outcast by his own House. Can you trust one who has already proven himself untrustworthy long enough to keep the relic out of the grasping hands of the cabal? A *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure set in Tymander for characters levels 4 - 7.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Andy Collins, Rob Heinsoo, and James Wyatt.

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This adventure retires from RPGA-sanctioned play on December 31, 2011.

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## PREPARING FOR PLAY

In order to play this adventure, you'll need copies of the following D&D 4th Edition rulebooks: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. Any other rules referenced in this adventure will be noted in the **New Rules Items** section at the end of the adventure.

Throughout this adventure, text in bold italics provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text.

Along with this adventure, you'll find a RPGA Session Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your organizer directly after play.

## READING MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

Most of the information should be easy to understand, as it mirrors the information presented in the *Monster Manual*. Attacks may have a letter next to them designating the type: M for melee, R for ranged, C for close, and A for area. A lower-case letter (used only in some melee and ranged attacks) denotes that the attack can be used as a basic attack.

## IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

As the DM of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You take the words on these pages and make them come alive. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you DM for a group:

**Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.**

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- **You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure.** This is especially important and applicable outside of combat encounters, but feel free to use the "scaling the encounter" advice (usually for adjusting to different-sized groups) to adjust combat encounters for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time in an adventure.
- **Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group.** Never being challenged makes for a boring game, and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating game. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a "chance to shine."
- **Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately.** Watch for stalling, as play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish the adventure too early; provide them with a full play experience. *Living Forgotten Realms* adventures are designed to be played within 3.5 - 4 hours; try to be very aware

of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.

- **Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to interact with their environment.** Players should always know when enemies are affected by conditions and are bloodied. They should be given clues about how to interact with their surroundings so they can tackle skill challenges, combats, and puzzles without getting too frustrated over lack of information. This helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players “little victories” for figuring out a good choice from a clue.

In short, being the DM for a *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure isn't about following the adventure's text word-for-word; it's about creating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. Chapters 1 and 2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are filled with good information about being a DM for a D&D game.

## APPROPRIATE CHARACTER LEVELS

This adventure is designed for player characters (PCs) levels 4-7. Characters that fall outside of the level range may not participate in the adventure. Make certain to check the levels of the PCs before beginning play to ensure that they are the proper level.

Each adventure has a low-level version and a high-level version. The low level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the lower levels of the adventure's level spread. The high level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the higher levels of the adventure's level spread.

A group may decide to play the high level when their levels are more suited to the low level if everyone in the group agrees to do so; however, some of the rewards may not be available to them. Conversely, a group may decide to play the low level when their levels are more suited to the high level if everyone in the group agrees; however, some of the rewards may be less than what they'd ideally want from the adventure.

**Reading the Numbers:** Each encounter has a level and sometimes other values (such as XP or skill check DCs) listed with two numbers divided by a slash. The number before the slash is always the value for the low-level version of the adventure; the number after the slash is the value for the high-level version of the adventure.

## FAILING TO DEFEAT AN ENCOUNTER

If a group fails to defeat an encounter – that is, if they have to flee from a combat because it's too tough or they reach the predetermined number of failures in a skill challenge before reaching success – they are only awarded half experience points (round down) for the encounter. If they manage to tackle the encounter later and defeat it, award them the other half of the experience points for the encounter.

## CHARACTER DEATH

If a PC dies during the course of the adventure, the player of that character and the rest of the group have two options, provided that they have access to the Raise Dead ritual (either a PC has it and can use it or the characters return to civilization), they have access to the body, and it is possible to return the dead PC to life.

- **Pay the component cost for the ritual.** If the group chooses this option, the cost should be divided evenly among the group (500 gp for heroic tier, 5,000 gp for paragon tier, and 50,000 gp for epic tier). Using a source outside the group to cast the ritual costs 20% more than the component cost. Total cost when using an outside source is 600 gp for heroic tier, 6,000 gp for paragon tier, and 60,000 gp for epic tier. A PC that dies and chooses this method of return gains full (or half, if the party was defeated) experience points from the encounter in which the character died, but no experience points for any encounters that were missed while the character was dead. If there are encounters remaining, the PC continues to earn experience as normal, and receives a normal cut of the rewards at the end of the adventure.
- **Invoke the Death Charity clause.** If the group cannot afford to pay for the ritual (or doesn't desire to do so), the PC can choose to return to life at the end of the adventure. Doing so forfeits all rewards (including treasure and story rewards) earned for the adventure except experience points gained prior to the character's death (the character receives the experience point award for the encounter in which they died). The PC cannot participate in the same adventure a second time.

## MILESTONES

No matter if the characters succeed or fail in an encounter, they reach a milestone if it is the second encounter they've had since the start of the adventure or their last extended rest. **Encounters that do not give**

**out experience points do not count for purposes of reaching a milestone.** Make certain to mention this information to the players when applicable, as it gives each PC another action point and affects how some magic item powers are used.

## LASTING EFFECTS

Sometimes a PC suffers a lasting effect that isn't easily resolved before the end of the adventure. The two most common lasting effects are the death penalty and diseases.

**Death Penalty:** When a character dies and is brought back to life by the Raise Dead ritual, that character suffers a -1 penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and ability checks until they have reached three milestones. The player should simply record the adventure where the character died on their adventure log, and then keep a running tally of milestones reached. Once the PC has reached the third milestone since coming back to life, they no longer suffer the penalty.

**Diseases:** Diseases take hold of a character and last until they are cured or they reach their final state. Normally, a PC makes an Endurance check after each extended rest to see if the disease improves, worsens, or maintains its current condition. At the end of the adventure, any character suffering from a disease must resolve the disease to either its cure or final state, using the necessary number of extended rests to do so. Other characters adventuring with the PC may decide to aid the afflicted character during this time. If a disease reaches its final state and the PC can get a Cure Disease ritual cast (and pay the appropriate costs), they may do so.

**Other Lasting Effects:** Other effects that last beyond the scope of the adventure should be resolved at the DM's discretion. Any effects that last for a specific period of time (that end after a certain number of days or a certain number of extended rests) should be resolved at the end of the adventure in which the effect was obtained (unless otherwise specified). Effects that use some sort of adventuring benchmark of unknown duration (such as milestones) should be recorded on the character's logsheet and tracked across adventures.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In the last few months, the Vkriss, a dragonborn house who have fallen into evil ways, have been searching for something. Their pattern of activity has altered to focus upon sages and historians who might have the information they seek. They are looking for a powerful ritual item, the Sphere of Laskanova, which was last

owned by Ur-Hammabi, a powerful priest of Tiamat in the lost civilization of Unther.

A faction within House Vkriss, the Knights of the Five-Thorned Rose, believes that the Sphere will improve their House's fortunes and gain power for Tiamat. Given their determined ruthlessness, it is not surprising that they will use any means to obtain the artifact.

A few days ago, a dragonborn warlock named Tearn overheard several Vkriss assassins inquiring about the specialties of various sages. Based on what he heard, as well as his own investigations into the matter, Tearn believes he knows what they are looking for, because he is obsessed with the very same object. Unfortunately, the item is located near the House Tlassian compound. Tearn's problem is that he was recently banished from his House (because of some things he did during his own research into the whereabouts of the Sphere of Laskanova) and is currently an outcast. Tearn cannot act directly, as he would suffer severe repercussions. However should he be able to retrieve the item, or should a group of adventurers retrieve the item and allow Tearn to take the credit, it might go a long way towards redeeming him in the eyes of his former family.

## DM'S INTRODUCTION

**Encounter 1:** The characters have an opportunity to hear Tearn's story. He is an outcast dragonborn from House Tlassian. He will tell the PCs of an overheard conversation between two Vkriss assassins. Between what he overheard and what he has learned through his own investigations, Tearn believes the Vkriss have discovered the Sphere of Laskanova, a powerful artifact. The Sphere has been lost for over a century. What little is known about the artifact suggests that it should lie in the tomb of Ur-Hammabi, a priest of Tiamat who died before the Spellplague.

**Encounter 2:** Skill Challenge. The characters must find the way into the tomb of Ur-Hammabi either through the sewers of the capital or through the strange black obelisk in the center of House Tlassian's fortress.

**Encounter 3:** Combat Encounter. The characters encounter some of the remaining tomb guardians (if they succeeded in the skill challenge) or a contingent of Vkriss minions who are guarding the entrance (if they failed the skill challenge).

**Encounter 4:** Combat Encounter. The characters have an opportunity to stop the Vkriss from gaining the Sphere of Laskanova. Their battle against the Vkriss

expedition occurs in the temple's central chamber. If the PCs won the skill challenge, they gain the element of surprise here.

**Encounter 5:** Hazard/Skill Challenge. Ur-Hammabi's crypt holds one final secret - when the Sphere is removed from its resting place, ancient mechanisms activate to collapse the tomb, killing anyone left in the room. The PCs must use different skills to be able to collect treasure, gather information, and escape before they are buried alive.

**Conclusion:** Assuming they recovered it, the PCs must decide what to do with the Sphere. The PCs might choose to give the item to Tearn, return it directly to House Tlassian, sell it to House Vkriss, give it to the Platinum Cadre (or the Temple of Bahamut), or give it to the authorities of Djerad Thymar. They cannot keep the artifact; should they try, the Sphere has other ideas and quickly disappears from their possession.

## PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

The PCs find themselves in Djerad Thymar, the capital city of Tymanther. For more information about Djerad Thymar, see the Tymanther regional entries in either the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* or the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*. A few possible reasons for the PCs to come here might include:

- A dragonborn PC has slain a dragon (there are several adventures that offer this opportunity) and he or she is going to bring a trophy to the Hall of Trophies. The ceremony at the Hall of Trophies will be in a few days.
- A PC will be attending one of the monthly Grand Balls that take place on the Market Floor.
- If the PCs are from a region other than Tymanther, the city has invited the PCs as members of a cultural exchange to help the dragonborn learn more about the culture, history, magic, or fighting styles of their neighbors in this new world.

See page 187 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* for more information about the city of Djerad Thymar. The PCs are in the Market Floor when the adventure begins. Allow the PCs to role-play with the various vendors. The merchants here include:

**Jelbar the Red** is a merchant dealing in rustic clothing in the style of Aglarond. A human male of about 40 years, he has a wide selection of both human and elven

styles of hunting clothing and accessories. He sells cloth armor, both magical and mundane. A discerning individual might notice that while Jelbar claims to be from Aglarond, his accent is that of Cormyr.

**Quivara's Potions and Elixirs** is a stall that is run by an elderly Halfling woman named Quivara Nimbletoe. She sells herbal remedies and is quite knowledgeable about the local varieties of herbs and plants. She also carries a selection of "special" potions and other consumables that she will gladly show to those who can prove that they have the funds (so as to assure her that they are not wasting her time).

**Muvat Rockbiter** is an earth genasi who specializes in earthenware and clay products. He makes some of the best pottery in this area and is quite reasonable in his pricing. As a person who keeps his "ear to the ground" he is quite knowledgeable about what is going on in the area. He can be persuaded to part with information if the questioner is willing to purchase something.

**Trank Eldwing** specializes in selling armor. A rather young and impulsive dragonborn, he has a jagged scar across the top of his head from a wound that he took in the service of his lord. His reward was to be given this shop and access to the creations coming out of the foundries of House Tlassian. A quick glance at Trank's wares shows that these armors are of superior make. Trank sells both mundane and magical versions of any chain or scale armor. He can also arrange for the delivery of plate armor, but because of the fitting involved, it takes several days to complete such orders.

**Jormak the Provisioner** is a tiefling male with two very impressive horns coming out of his forehead. Despite his formidable appearance, Jormak is actually a pacifist and one of the kindest, most charitable individuals in the market. Universally loved, he is protected by the other merchants against his tendency to cheat himself to help others. Provisions of all types are available from Jormak, including supplies such as sunrods, torches, and other adventuring gear. No haggling allowed!

If the PCs already know one another, then perhaps they have come to the Market Floor together on some errand. If they are not already acquainted, then you can engineer a roleplaying introduction as the various members of the party encounter each other by chance at the various merchants' stalls. One possible method of introduction is that any character with any sort of *Favor of House Jalt* story award (available in a variety of

Tymanther regional adventures) should be able to spot any other character with a similar favor.

When everyone is ready, read the following.

*While examining the wares available in one of the many stalls on the Market Floor in the vast fortress of Djerad Thymar, you sense that you are being watched. Scanning the area, you see a cloaked and hooded male dragonborn watching you. He is trying not to be noticed in return, but he isn't doing a very good job of concealing his interest in you.*

*Noticing you noticing him, he approaches and stammers a greeting. "Excuse me... my name is Tearn and I was wondering if you would give me a few minutes of your time. I am in need of assistance."*

*As the dragonborn speaks, you cannot help but notice that his face is marked with an unusual scar.*

Tearn is trying to find a group of individuals who he believes are capable of helping him. However, he is acutely self-conscious because of his status as a House outcast. Dragonborn, particularly those who are natives of Tymanther, are likely to scorn him, so he avoids approaching such PCs unless he has no other choice. Tearn feels that foreigners or at least non-dragonborn would be more likely to help than individuals from Tymanther. He appears to be nervous about something and keeps glancing about. He says that the streets are not safe and asks if the PCs would accompany him to somewhere more private for a discussion. If pressed, he reluctantly imparts some of his information to the PCs (see Encounter 1) but just enough to get them to accompany him.

If PCs inquire about the scar, Tearn tries to avoid the question. He agrees to explain the scar if the PCs come with him and hear what he has to say. The scar is on Tearn's left cheek. It is not a typical battle scar: the actual skin and scales have been removed and the area is bare flesh. There is a strange symbol branded upon his cheek. PCs can make History or Streetwise checks to recall some information concerning the scar. Natives of Tymanther gain a +5 bonus on these checks.

**DC 15:** The scar on his face indicates that at one time he belonged to House Tlassian.

**DC 20:** Outcasts have their House identifiers, such as emblems, signets, and house names, stripped from them. So before being named outcast, he would have been "Tearn of House Tlassian" and now he is just Tearn. This is a symbol of his shame – cast out from his House, he belongs to nothing.

If and when the PCs decide to speak with Tearn, go to Encounter 1.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

Note that dragonborn PCs who express reservations about talking to an outcast can either choose to skip Encounter 1 (letting the other PCs fill them in later) or they can participate and just listen quietly. Make it clear to the players that even though he has been cast out of his House, it is not illegal for Tearn to be within the city of Djerad Thymar, nor would the PCs break any laws by speaking to him. Turning him over to the authorities does not accomplish anything because he is not currently wanted for any crime. Clan and family are extremely important to the proud dragonborn, and being cast out of a House is certainly a sign of terrible shame, but it is not unheard-of. Tearn has difficulty in his day-to-day life, but he can find food, shelter, and so forth among the many back alleys and bazaars of Djerad Thymar without undue difficulty. Like any city, the dragonborn capital has more than its share of black markets and unsavory elements.

# ENCOUNTER 1: THE DISHONORED

## SETUP

**Important NPC:** Tearn (Diplomacy +15, Insight +15, Bluff +10)

*As Tearn leads you through the crowded market, you notice that he avoids eye contact and constantly tries to keep his scar covered with the hood of his cloak. Those dragonborn who do catch sight of his face seem to regard him with a mixture of pity and hostility. Finally, Tearn leads you to a seedy-looking tavern whose sign proclaims it to be the Hooked Claw.*

*As he holds the door open, Tearn says “We should be safe to speak in here. I have a room.”*

Tearn will impart the following information. He does not lie to the PCs (as Insight checks may confirm) although some of the more personal details require thorough questioning before he will admit them.

- The Sphere of Laskanova is a powerful artifact that once belonged to a priest of Tiamat named Ur-Hammabi. The legends say that the Sphere was buried with Ur-Hammabi in his tomb, but the exact location of that tomb is unknown. Most scholars agree that it is somewhere in the Untheric ruins, probably not far from Djerad Thymar itself.
- A few days ago, Tearn overheard several members of House Vkriss asking rather esoteric questions concerning certain sages and their specialties. Based on what he overheard and his own investigations, he thinks they are seeking an item called the Sphere of Laskanova.
- House Vkriss members tend to be shady sorts, and the House itself is often accused of supporting organized criminal activities. Of course, these charges are rarely able to be substantiated; evidence and witnesses tend to disappear under mysterious circumstances.
- Whenever the Vkriss want something, it is almost certain that the rest of dragonborn society doesn't want them to get it. If the Vkriss get their hands on the Sphere, they will certainly attempt to use it for evil purposes.
- Tearn admits that he is hardly unbiased in this matter. He used to be a member of House Tlassian. He became obsessed with the Sphere of Laskanova and in the course of his research, came to believe that the tomb of Ur-Hammabi is likely located on one of the many estates to the

east of Djerad Thymar that have been granted to the House by Vanquisher Tarhun.

- Unfortunately, Tearn was a bit too enthusiastic in his research, even after being warned to stop by his mentor Talmar Eldwing. Tearn took maps and blueprints of the various estates out of the House library and showed them to some outside scholars in hopes that they would be able to help him pinpoint the location of the tomb. When the House leaders learned of this, they believed that Tearn was conspiring with the House's enemies and providing them with details of the estates' defenses. For this, he was made outcast.
- Tearn still believes that the Sphere is located on one of House Tlassian's estates, but he doesn't know which one. He suspects that the Vkriss might have figured it out, though. Tearn can't try to get the sphere himself because he is a scholar and does not possess the “necessary skills to handle such a dangerous outing.” (And, of course, because he would get in even more trouble if House Tlassian caught him snooping around one of its estates.)
- Tearn is worried that the Vkriss will find their way to his friend, the eladrin sage Eliko - if they haven't already. Tearn hasn't gone to see Eliko himself for fear of leading the Vkriss to his old friend. Tearn can provide the PCs with directions to Eliko's shop.
- Tearn has some gold that he saved up during his days as a member of House Tlassian. He offers the PCs 50 gold pieces each if they will undertake the investigation.

It is obvious that Tearn has an ulterior motive for getting the Sphere, but that he is sincere in his belief that in any case the Vkriss need to be prevented from getting it. If at any time the PCs question his motivations, he insists that he never betrayed his House and if he does get the Sphere, he would immediately turn it over to Lady Telina Silberhaar. He admits that he hopes that by bringing the sphere to his former House, it will allow him to start the process of earning his way back into the clan. There is precedent for such things, although the ranks of those who have been made outcast and then accepted back into the same or a different House are few.

The PCs might want to ask around about some of the various people and things that Tearn mentioned. They can learn the following information. Natives of Tymander gain a +5 bonus on all checks relating to House Tlassian and House Vkriss.

## HOUSE TLASSIAN

The PCs can gather this information with History or Streetwise checks.

**DC 15:** A relatively small clan, they specialize in metalcrafting, especially in armorcraft, and are renowned for the quality of their work. Their houses/fortresses are mostly on the outskirts of Djermar Thymad, where they are the primary defenders of the eastern approaches to the city.

**DC 20:** House Tlassian has made a name for itself as a stalwart military supporter of the current ruler of Tymanther, Vanquisher Tarhun. Over the years, they have been rewarded with many estates and lands in the region east of the city, and so now have a significant agricultural base to support their military activities. Loyal in the extreme, the Tlassians are sometimes mocked as rigid and narrow in their outlook on life. House members pride themselves on their stubbornness and their loyalty.

**DC 25:** Influential members of House Tlassian include:

- **Telina Silberhaar** is commander of the House. An accomplished tactician and dragon-slayer, she was considered a strong candidate for the post of Vanquisher, but threw her support to Tarhun, helping to ensure his election. Under her leadership, clan Tlassian has cemented its ties with the military structure of Tymanther.
- **Talmar Eldwing** is subcommander of the house and captain of the Tlassian House Hall, Twarmek Thymad. A bookish, middle aged dragonborn, he is widely respected for his intelligence and his encyclopedic knowledge of military history.
- **Antar Ludovic** is chief smith of the clan. Trained under the dwarven mastersmith, Kvelic Forkbeard, he is said to be the only non-dwarf that Kvelic passed to master status. A bear of a dragonborn, many of his opponents have underestimated his intelligence. It is said that even some of Master Kvelic's own dwarvish apprentices have been seen wearing Ludovican armor.

## HOUSE VKRISS

The PCs can make History or Streetwise checks to learn the following. House Vkriss is quite secretive, so some of this information carries a very high DC to learn.

**DC 15:** House Vkriss was once a prominent noble house of Tymanther. Even in those days, the reputation of House Vkriss was suspect, as they were known to deal with unsavory types and use questionable methods to achieve their political objectives. When they finally fell from grace in a far-reaching scandal, the remaining Vkriss reorganized into something little better than a criminal syndicate. They have members in many of the prominent guilds and businesses of Djerad Thymar.

**DC 20:** To most of Tymantheran society, the Vkriss are a failed clan that has fallen on hard times and has become small time merchants and shopkeepers. To those who know better, they are regarded as one of the most dangerous clans. They maintain their own cadre of assassins and are quite skilled at training drakes to serve alongside their troops.

**DC 25:** Influential figures of House Vkriss include the following:

- **V'kandress.** This shadowy figure is thought to lead the organization known as the Knights of the Five-Thorned Rose. Rumors fly that he is a priest of Tiamat, an infernal pact warlock, an assassin, and a beggar. Perhaps he is all of these things.
- **Valtan Leatherwings** is Guildmaster of the Weaver's Guild of Djerad Thymar. Though he looks unassuming, he is nonetheless a cunning and cutthroat businessman. A widower, his wife died in a tragic boating accident two days before the infamous Gethmara Massacre, where most of the leaders of House Gethmara were found strangled in their beds.
- **Vona the Black** is head of the Vkriss assassins. Some say that that "Vona the Black" is a pseudonym given to the head of the assassin's guild rather than a specific person. Whether the current Vona is the same woman as the original Vona is not known by anyone who has survived to record their impressions.

**DC 30:** There is a secret society dedicated to the worship of Tiamat within the House, called the Knights of the Five-Thorned Rose. The Knights are completely dedicated to the Dragon Queen in this life and beyond. They have no fear of death and many look forward to their demise, for they believe that they will continue to serve Tiamat in the afterlife.



## THE SPHERE OF LASKANOVA

The PCs might want to do some research or wonder what they already know about the Sphere of Laskanova. Arcana, History, or Religion checks can reveal the following information.

**DC 15:** The Sphere is named for Laskanova, a worshipper of Selune who was the first person to find the artifact. Laskanova claimed that the relic fell from the sky, and believed it to be one of the Tears of Selune, but nobody knows for certain what the artifact's true origin might be. It is said that only the most powerful of divine wielders can fully control the power of the Sphere.

**DC 20:** A priest of Tiamat named Ur-Hammabi was the last known wielder of the Sphere. He was attempting to use the artifact in a powerful ritual on Tiamat's behalf when he met his well-deserved fate at the hands of his bodyguards and one of his wives. It was rumored that his followers managed to enter the Sphere with Ur-Hammabi despite the efforts of the followers of Bahamut to locate and recover it.

**DC 25:** Although Ur-Hammabi was a worshipper of Tiamat, there is no evidence to indicate that the Sphere itself favors any particular deity or ethos; it has been used for both good and evil purposes over the centuries. Owners of the Sphere never seem to find a peaceful death and most of them died by extraordinarily violent means.

**DC 30:** The Sphere is roughly a foot in diameter and is made out of solid onyx. The sphere is much lighter than it appears to be. If held aloft, it can even float in midair under its own power. Its precise powers are presently unknown, as are the rituals that would be needed to access those powers.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Assuming the PCs decide to help Tearn, proceed to the next encounter. If the PCs refuse to help Tearn, then you can have them approached by an agent of House Tlassian who asks them to go along with Tearn's request because the House suspects that he is still plotting against them and they want to know his plans. The agent offers the PCs the same 50 gp reward that Tearn would have paid them.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs gain no experience from this encounter, and it does not count toward a milestone.

### TREASURE

Tearn agrees to pay the PCs 50 gold pieces each if they are willing to help him. He knows that he has a very limited bargaining position, so he can be convinced to pay some or all of the money up front.

## ENCOUNTER 2: THE TOMB

### SKILL CHALLENGE AND TRAP, LEVEL 5 / 7 (TOTAL VALUE 750 / 1,000 XP)

#### SETUP

**Important NPCs:** Eliko (dead eladrin scholar), Nika (the scholar's daughter), Talmar Eldwing (dragonborn subcommander of House Tlassian)

#### SCENE 1: ELIKO'S SHOP

**Goal:** The eladrin sage Eliko discovered the location of the Tomb of Ur-Hammabi before his death at the hands of Vkriss assassins. The PCs must persuade his daughter to recreate the sage's maps and notes for them so that they can pursue the Vkriss.

**Complexity:** 1 (4 successes before 3 failures)

The eladrin sage Eliko was a specialist in Untheric history and was one of the people to whom Tearn showed the plans of the various House Tlassian estates. Since Tearn was kicked out of his House, Eliko had been independently continuing to research the location of the Tomb of Ur-Hammabi. Unfortunately, House Vkriss recently heard about Eliko's inquiries and found their way to him. Earlier this morning, several Vkriss thugs tortured the eladrin to learn where he believed the Tomb was located, then killed him, stole his notes, and tore up his shop to make it appear as though it was a robbery. What the thugs did not know is that Eliko often used his daughter as a scribe. Thus, the girl knows nearly everything that her father did, and she can help the PCs follow the trail.

*It is obvious as you approach the shop that something is wrong. Several shutters are broken in the windows, and a group of eladrin men are bustling about, carrying broken items out of the shop and doing small repairs.*

*The inside of the shop looks as though someone engaged in random destruction. Books and papers lie scattered on the floor, yet a valuable looking astrolabe is sitting on the counter untouched. A group of women are surrounding a young eladrin woman who is weeping inconsolably.*

The weeping woman is Eliko's daughter, Nika. She is nearly hysterical with grief over the death of her father. The city watch has already come and gone and proclaimed that this was a simple robbery. Her father lies on a table in the back room, surrounded by other

mourners. Nika cannot bring herself to go in there yet, and others from the area are taking over the job of cleaning the body and laying it out.

**Talking to Nika:** Nika is understandably quite distraught, so the first thing the PCs need to do is calm her down enough to speak to them. They can take a variety of approaches, culminating in a skill check.

**Diplomacy, Heal, Insight, or Religion (DC 17/19, 1 required):** *You manage to calm Nika down. She thanks you and asks through a film of unshed tears what she might do for you.*

Failure results in her remaining hysterical, but the PCs can try again. After three failures, the other relatives ask the PCs to please leave since they are obviously upsetting the girl. Their failure here will force them to find a different source of information (see "Optional Scene: House Tlassian" for more details).

The PCs must earn at least one success before they can begin to ask Nika any substantive questions. Nika knows Tearn and is aware of his story. She believes that he was unfairly cast out of his House. If the PCs seem sympathetic to Tearn's cause, they gain a +2 bonus on their social skill checks when dealing with Nika. If the PCs seem hostile or scornful towards Tearn, then they suffer a -2 penalty instead.

**Bluff or Diplomacy (DC 12/14, 3 maximum):** Nika knows the following information. For each successful Diplomacy or Bluff check the PCs make in this scene, or for each bit of good roleplaying that you deem sufficient for an automatic success, reveal another piece of information. Intimidate will not work because the girl is already distraught (and her hovering relatives quickly come to her rescue).

Once the PCs have earned a total of four successes (including the initial success to get Nika to talk to them) they have completed this scene and may move on.

- Nika's father, the sage Eliko, was a specialist in Untheric history, as well as a highly skilled cartographer. The shop sells maps, astrological charts, and sea charts for locations all over Faerun, including some from the ancient Abeiran land of Tymanchebar (precursor to Tymander). Eliko knew as much as anybody in Djerad Thymar about the various ruins in the region. He and Tearn were working together to study some old maps, trying to locate a tomb. After Tearn was cast out of his house, Eliko continued the research, but Tearn had to stop for fear of getting

in even more trouble with his former House. Nika has not seen Tearn in at least a week.

- Eliko often used his daughter as a scribe, because his eyesight was not as good as it used to be and deciphering some of the older texts was becoming difficult for him. Just last night, her father asked her to copy out some specific maps and notes. He seemed very excited, as if he had made a breakthrough in his research, but he also seemed somewhat worried, as if he thought the information might be dangerous. Nika does not know specifically what her father and Tearn were looking for, but it must be quite significant to get her father so excited.
- When Nika arrived at the shop this morning, she found her father brutally murdered and the place had been ransacked. But after searching through the wreckage, she believes that the only things that are missing are her father's notes and maps pertaining to the Untheric ruins on the Tlassian estates. She is convinced that whoever killed her father must be planning to ransack the tomb that he discovered. If the PCs promise to track down her father's killers and bring them to justice, she will agree to redraw the map for them. Fortunately, she has an excellent memory.

If the PCs ask to see Eliko's body, the eladrin are very reluctant to allow this. This is not part of the main skill challenge, so successes or failures here do not count towards the overall challenge. However, this information might help cement the PCs' resolve to deal harshly with the members of House Vkriss.

The PCs need to make a successful **DC 22/24 Bluff or Diplomacy check** to get permission to view the body. Read or paraphrase the following:

***The body of a middle-aged eladrin is laid out on a back table. Several of his family members have stripped the body and are cleaning it, while others are gently dressing the dead man with his best clothing. A wound in his back was obviously the cause of death.***

**Heal (DC 15):** *The wound that killed Eliko was made by a long knife. Tissue discoloration indicates that the knife was poisoned. You would guess that the wound was fatal even without the poison.*

**Heal (DC 20):** *Other marks and gouges, including some under his fingernails, indicate that the sage was tortured before he was killed. Whoever did this knew their trade; the marks are subtle, but it probably didn't take a whole lot of pain before the*

*elderly eladrin would have told his questioners anything they wanted to know.*

## OPTIONAL SCENE: HOUSE TLASSIAN

The PCs might wish to obtain the permission of House Tlassian before they enter its estates and begin poking around. This scene does not count towards the skill challenge, because the members of House Tlassian do not know the location of Ur-Hammabi's tomb (if they did, they would have secured the place long ago).

***The main fortress of House Tlassian sits at the very edge of the city. It is built up from the massive block of granite that serves as the city's very foundation. House Tlassian and Djerad Thymar are truly one. The gates are open, and a stream of soldiers and citizens pass before the watchful eyes of the gate guards.***

It is easy for the PCs to talk to the gate guards, who are friendly if watchful. Gaining an audience with one of the House's leaders is a more difficult task, as the nobles are obviously quite busy and do not have time to chit-chat with every random sellsword who happens to present himself at the gates. However, there are a few things that can tip the balance in the PCs' favor.

- The dragonborn of Tymanther place a very high value on loyalty and honor. If the PCs have played other Tymanther regional adventures, they might have earned the favor of House Jalt. Even though House Jalt is not part of House Tlassian, the two clans are allies. If the PCs (collectively) have at least three story objects that represent various favors of House Jalt, they are granted an audience as friends and heroes.
- If the PCs do not have enough influence with House Jalt, they may instead substitute suitable favors and honors from outside of Tymanther (at your discretion - but be generous in reviewing the players' story objects). The dragonborn of Djerad Thymar are always seeking to foster peaceful relationships with the other nations of their new homeland. A total of six favors or noteworthy deeds are needed in this case, but any favor that specifically mentions Tymanther, dragonborn, or Bahamut counts as two for this purpose.
- If neither of the above options will do, the PCs can gain an audience simply by mentioning that they want to report a threat to House Tlassian's safety. The name of Tearn will draw attention and get the PCs an audience, but Talmar Eldwing will be unfavorably disposed toward the PCs in

this case, because Tearn's situation remains very controversial even within the House itself (many people liked him and did not believe the accusations against him).

Assuming the PCs are granted an audience, they are directed to the office of Talmar Eldwing, subcommander and historian of the House (History +14, Insight +12, Perception +12).

*After a short wait, you are ushered into a sparsely furnished room. A middle-aged male dragonborn wearing spectacles sits behind a desk covered with papers. Although he is robed as a scholar, the dragonborn has the physique of a lifelong soldier. Looking up at your entrance, he removes his spectacles, rubs his nose, and asks "What can I do for you?"*

Any mention of Tearn draws an immediate, negative reaction. Talmar considered Tearn to be one of the most promising young scholars of the House, and his "betrayal" of the clan wounded the older dragonborn deeply. There is no chance for the PCs to persuade Talmar to give Tearn another chance in this scene, and the subcommander does not wish to speak of the matter to outsiders.

Allow the PCs to present their case as they see fit. If the PCs already have the map and notes from Eliko's daughter, then Talmar reviews these materials thoughtfully. Without the map, Talmar is unconvinced and suggests that the PCs return when they have some actual evidence. Run the previous scene and then return here. If the PCs try to lie to Talmar or present him with fake evidence, use his Insight and Perception scores listed above. Any deception that he discovers causes him to throw the PCs out of the fortress immediately and unceremoniously.

If the PCs failed the previous scene so badly that they have no hope of getting the map at all, then you can adjust this scene as needed; following Tearn's exile from the House, Talmar ordered several of his own personal research assistants to pursue the matter, and they have recently concluded that the Tomb is probably indeed located on Tlassian lands. Of course, the PCs need to convince Talmar that they are the right adventurers for the job. This provides an alternative way for you to get the PCs to the right location.

Talmar is aware of the legend of the Sphere of Laskanova and the rumors that it is buried within the Tomb of Ur-Hammabi, but has never seen any evidence to convince him that the artifact might actually be located on his House's own lands. However, Eliko's map is specific in its plotting of the Tomb's location, and the

eladrin scholar's notes match up with a number of items that Talmar knows to be true from his own study of the region's history. If the PCs also report on the activities of House Vkriss in searching for the Sphere, and mention that the Vkriss already have their own copy of this same map, Talmar becomes very concerned and agrees to grant the PCs permission to search the location described by the map. He writes out a writ of passage and seals it with his own signet ring. This writ grants the PCs an automatic success in the next scene.

Talmar also instructs the PCs that if they do discover the Sphere, they should bring it to him immediately. Any Vkriss agents encountered on Tlassian lands should, of course, be dealt with appropriately. The dragonborn smiles toothily as he says this, leaving no doubt as to what means he considers "appropriate."

## SCENE 2: ENTERING THE ESTATE

One way or another, the PCs should find their way to the Tlassian estate where the Tomb of Ur-Hammabi is located. This estate is about a half-day's ride from Djerad Thymar. The journey passes without incident. If the PCs have obtained a writ of passage from Talmar Eldwing, then they can simply show that writ to the estate's guards and proceed to the next scene. If the PCs do not have permission to be here, then they need to evade or otherwise deal with the guards.

The Tlassian estate is patrolled. The PCs may choose a stealthy approach, they may attempt to persuade the guards into letting them pass, or they may incapacitate the guards. For the sake of time, each of these options is abstracted to a single check. The PCs only need to succeed on one of the following checks to end this scene. Add any failures here to the failures the PCs earned in Scene 1 (if any) when considering the overall success or failure of this skill challenge.

**Bluff (DC 17/19):** The PCs attempt to persuade the guard patrol that they have a legitimate reason to be here (inspecting the estates on behalf of House Tlassian, chasing after a lost farm animal, or whatever other crazy story they want to concoct). On a failed check, the PCs are ordered to leave the estate and must attempt one of the other options.

**Diplomacy (DC 17/19):** The PCs attempt to convince the guards that they are here on behalf of House Tlassian. The most likely way to be successful here is by convincing the guards that they are being infiltrated by agents of House Vkriss and the PCs are here chasing after those agents. On a failed check, the PCs are ordered to leave the estate and must attempt one of the other options.

**Intimidate:** The PCs cannot intimidate the guards directly; this approach represents ambushing a patrol and knocking the guards unconscious long enough for the PCs to explore the area and get out. The PCs might also end up here if they fail at every other approach. No skill check is required, but each PC loses one healing surge to represent the struggle with the guards.

**Stealth (DC 12/14):** This is a group check. Each PC must attempt the check and at least half of the PCs must succeed. If the group check succeeds, then the party is able to evade the guard patrols while they search for the location specified on the map. If the group check fails, then the PCs are discovered by a patrol during their search and must attempt one of the other options. However, they suffer a -2 penalty on either the Bluff or Diplomacy options since the guards are naturally quite suspicious, having just caught the PCs skulking around.

### SCENE 3: REACHING THE TOMB

Once the PCs have gotten past the estate's guards, they can proceed to the location marked on their map. The entrance to the Tomb of Ur-Hammabi is on an isolated part of the estate, in a deep ravine. The PCs must climb down into the ravine, where they discover an ancient basalt obelisk. This obelisk is actually the entrance to the tomb.

**Navigating:** Although the PCs have a map, it is obviously not an exact representation of every detail of the landscape. The exact location of the tomb can only be determined in the wild.

**Nature (DC 17/19, 1 required):** The PCs must puzzle out landmarks and other key details, comparing their map and the sage's notes to the terrain around them in order to reach the tomb's location as quickly as possible. On a failure, the PCs wander around the estate for an hour without locating the ravine, but may retry the check. If the PCs reach a total of three failures, they eventually discover the ravine, but the Vkriss agents are already far ahead (see "Ending the Encounter" for details).

**Climbing Down:** The PCs need to make their way down a steep, rocky ravine. One PC can go down first and lay a rope, or all the PCs can attempt the climb, or they can use powers, rituals, or magic items to descend, as you see fit.

**Athletics (DC 20, not a success or failure):** The character attempts to climb through the razor-sharp rocks that line the sides of the ravine. On a failure, the character slips and falls 30/40 feet to the bottom of the

ravine, suffering 3d10/4d10 points of falling damage (this damage can be reduced by a character trained in Acrobatics, as detailed in the PH). Failures on Athletics checks do not count as failures toward the overall skill challenge.

If one character climbs down first and sets a rope, the DC for everyone else is reduced from 20 to 10.

### SCENE 4: OPENING THE OBELISK

**Goal:** The entrance to the Tomb of Ur-Hammabi is a black basalt obelisk covered in Untheric runes. The PCs must figure out how to open the obelisk, preferably without triggering its traps.

**Complexity:** 1 (4 successes before 3 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, History, Perception, Religion, Thievery

*At the bottom of the ravine stands a black obelisk, 15 feet high and 5 feet wide across the base. Its basalt surface is carved with hieroglyphs and other runes. A thin seam runs down the center, but there is no obvious mechanism for opening the slab. It no doubt bristles with concealed traps, as well.*

Failures in this scene no longer matter; the PCs can take as many tries as they need in order to open the obelisk. Their total accumulated failures up to this point are important, however. If the PCs have already achieved a total of three or more failures in the skill challenge to this point, then it is obvious that someone else got here first. Scuff marks in the dirt at the bottom of the ravine indicate a number of booted humanoids, and there are various scratches and other signs of thievery on the obelisk's surface. The agents of House Vkriss already opened the entrance and went inside, but they were thoughtful enough to close the door behind them, resetting the wards and forcing the PCs to deal with the same obstacle.

**History or Religion (DC 15, not a success or failure):** The hieroglyphs are both Untheric and religious in nature. They repeatedly mention the name Ur-Hammabi and are clearly dedicated to Tiamat. There is no mention of the Sphere of Laskanova, however. Perhaps Ur-Hammabi's followers wanted to keep the artifact's presence here a secret.

**Arcana (DC 15/17, 0 required, 1 maximum):** The PC studies the obelisk for auras and other magical indicators that help determine how to open the slab and avoid the various trapped glyphs.

**History (DC 15/17, 0 required, 1 maximum):** The character is aware of other Untheric tombs and recalls some detail about how they were constructed that helps the party determine the opening mechanism or avoid a mechanical trap.

**Perception (DC 15/17, 0 required, 1 maximum):** The character notices a particularly ominous glyph or dangerous-looking protrusion, or spots a portion of the obelisk that can be moved slightly, helping to activate the opening mechanism.

**Religion (DC 15/17, 0 required, 1 maximum):** The PC recalls some detail of the lore of Tiamat regarding the preservation of tombs and other sacred sites. This helps the party figure out how to open the obelisk or avoid a trapped glyph.

**Athletics or Thievery (DC 15/17, minimum of 1 success required, 4 maximum):** The character disables a trap or activates one part of the opening sequence for the obelisk.

On each failure, the character triggers a trap. The obelisk erupts with energy (+8 / +10 vs. Reflex; targets all creatures within a close burst 3; damage 4d6 + 3 / 4d6 + 4 plus ongoing 5, save ends). Roll 1d6 each time the trap goes off to see which type of energy the trap generates: fire, cold, thunder, lightning, acid, or necrotic.

If the characters do not have anyone who wants to attempt the Thievery checks, they can force the obelisk open using Athletics checks against the same DC. This automatically triggers the trap each time, regardless of success or failure.

On the fourth total success, regardless of which combination of skills was used (as long as the fourth and final success was made with either an Athletics or Thievery check), the obelisk opens.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

The encounter ends when the PCs open the obelisk. What they find on the other side depends on how quickly they got here.

**Victory:** If the PCs earned less than three failures total during the key scenes of the skill challenge (as described above), then they have an easier fight with tomb guardians before encountering the Vriss agents at the center of the tomb. Proceed to Encounter 3A.

**Defeat:** If the PCs earned three or more failures total during the key scenes of the skill challenge, then the Vriss have been here long enough to eliminate most of the guardians and set up their own defenses. Proceed to Encounter 3B. The PCs will be able to earn

back the XP they lost by failing the skill challenge, because Encounter 3B is harder than Encounter 3A.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs gain 150 / 200 XP each for succeeding at this skill challenge, and proceed to Encounter 3A, which is an easier combat.

If they fail, they instead earn 80 / 100 XP and will have the chance to make up the lost XP in Encounter 3B. This is a more difficult combat, however.

## TREASURE

There is no treasure in this encounter.

## ENCOUNTER 3A: GUARDIANS

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 5 / 7 (1,025 / 1,450 XP)

### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

- 3 Tomb Guardians (Warforged Soldiers) (G)
- 1 Guardian Commander (Warforged Captain) (C)
- 1 Mad Wraith (W)

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

- 3 Tomb Guardians (Warforged Soldiers Level 6) (G)
- 1 Guardian Commander (Warforged Captain Level 8) (C)
- 1 Mad Wraith (Level 8) (W)

As the adventurers pass into the obelisk, read:

*You travel down a tight spiral staircase that obviously hasn't been used in centuries. At the bottom of the staircase is a corroded bronze door covered with more of the strange hieroglyphs. A lead seal with a prominent sigil that glows faintly blue covers the gap between the doors.*

**Religion (DC 15):** The hieroglyphs are meant to invoke the power of Tiamat, and also include the name Ur-Hammabi.

**Arcana (DC 20):** The lead seal creates a magical barrier. On a result of DC 25 or higher, the character also recognizes that undead may not pass the seal.

This room is where Ur-Hammabi's wives were interred when he died. One of the wives did not settle into death and became a wraith. The seal keeps her from traveling up the staircase. There is a similar seal on the door on the opposite side of the room.

Once the PCs break the seal and enter the area, read the following:

*This appears to be a crypt, as it contains a number of sarcophagi. The sarcophagi are carved and painted with images of beautiful women wearing elaborate jewelry. Statues of armored warriors wielding swords and polearms stand at attention around the room.*

Once the PCs move halfway into the room, continue with the following:

*A ghostly form suddenly rises from one of the sarcophagi and moves towards you, wailing madly. At the same time, the doors behind you slam shut and the statues lurch unsteadily to life.*

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** None.

**Cracked Floor:** The area of cracked floor is treated as difficult terrain, costing 2 squares of movement.

**Runes:** The squares containing runes are normal terrain, but the PCs might suspect a trap. A DC 20 Arcana check is sufficient to determine that the runes are non-magical.

**Sarcophagi:** These are treated as blocking terrain. A character can climb or jump on top of a sarcophagus with a DC 15 Athletics check.

### TACTICS

The wraith moves within 3 squares of the characters to utilize its *mad whispers*. When possible, it will use the Tomb Guardians as blockers to avoid physical contact as long as possible.

The various guardians attempt to gang up on a single PC so that they can take advantage of their *battlefield tactics*.

### SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove one of the Tomb Guardians.

**Six PCs:** Add another Tomb Guardian.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

The characters see another sealed set of double doors on the other side of the chamber. Breaking the seal and entering the next chamber leads to Encounter 4.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs gain 205 / 290 XP for defeating the Tomb Guardians and Mad Wraith.

### TREASURE

The sarcophagus from which the wraith emerged contains a skeleton wearing a *companion's defender*. The skeleton also wears 50 / 75 gp per PC in ornate, ancient jewelry.

## ENCOUNTER 3A: “GUARDIANS” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Warforged Soldier	Level 4 Soldier
Medium natural animate (construct)	XP 175
<b>Initiative</b> +6 <b>Senses</b> Perception +3	
<b>HP</b> 56; <b>Bloodied</b> 28; see also <i>warforged resolve</i>	
<b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 15, <b>Will</b> 14	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2 against ongoing damage	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
m <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the warforged soldier's next turn; see also <i>battlefield tactics</i> .	
<b>Battlefield Tactics</b>	
The warforged soldier gains a +1 bonus to melee attacks if it has an ally adjacent to the target.	
<b>Warforged Resolve</b> (minor, only usable while bloodied; encounter)	
The warforged soldier gains 14 temporary hit points.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +8, Intimidate +7	
<b>Str</b> 18 (+6) <b>Dex</b> 14 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+3)	
<b>Con</b> 16 (+5) <b>Int</b> 10 (+2) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+2)	
<b>Equipment</b> plate armor, heavy shield, longsword	

Warforged Captain	Level 6 Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (construct)	XP 250
<b>Initiative</b> +7 <b>Senses</b> Perception +4	
<b>Aura of Command</b> aura 10; allies in the aura gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>HP</b> 72; <b>Bloodied</b> 36; see also <i>warforged resolve</i>	
<b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 20, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 18	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2 against ongoing damage	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
m <b>Glaive</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the warforged captain's next turn; see also <i>battlefield tactics</i> .	
M <b>Tactical Switch</b> (standard; recharge 4 5 6) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The warforged captain makes a melee basic attack. On a hit, the target slides 1 square, and the warforged captain or an ally within 10 squares of the warforged captain shifts 1 square.	
<b>Battlefield Tactics</b>	
The warforged captain gains a +1 bonus to melee attacks if it has an ally adjacent to the target.	
<b>Warforged Resolve</b> (minor, only usable while bloodied; encounter)	
The warforged captain gains 18 temporary hit points.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +11, Intimidate +11	
<b>Str</b> 20 (+8) <b>Dex</b> 14 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+4)	
<b>Con</b> 16 (+6) <b>Int</b> 10 (+3) <b>Cha</b> 16 (+6)	
<b>Equipment</b> plate armor, glaive	

Mad Wraith	Level 6 Controller
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 250
<b>Initiative</b> +8 <b>Senses</b> Perception +6; darkvision	
<b>Mad Whispers (Psychic)</b> aura 3; deafened creatures are immune; any enemy in the aura at the start of its turn takes 5 psychic damage and is dazed until the start of its next turn. (If the mad wraith takes radiant damage, the aura is negated until the end of the mad wraith's next turn.)	
<b>HP</b> 54; <b>Bloodied</b> 27	
<b>AC</b> 18; <b>Fortitude</b> 15, <b>Reflex</b> 18, <b>Will</b> 17	
<b>Immune</b> disease, poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic, insubstantial;	
<b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant (see also <i>mad whispers</i> above)	
<b>Speed</b> fly 6 (hover); phasing	
m <b>Touch of Madness</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Psychic</b>	
+8 vs. Will; 1d6 + 5 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Will defense (save ends).	
M <b>Touch of Chaos</b> (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Psychic</b>	
+9 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target moves up to its speed and makes a basic attack against its nearest ally as a free action.	
<b>Spawn Wraith</b>	
Any humanoid killed by a mad wraith rises as a free-willed mad wraith at the start of its creator's next turn, appearing in the space where it died (or in the nearest unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature (using the Raise Dead ritual) does not destroy the spawned wraith.	
<b>Alignment</b> Chaotic evil <b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Skills</b> Stealth +13	
<b>Str</b> 6 (+1) <b>Dex</b> 20 (+8) <b>Wis</b> 6 (+1)	
<b>Con</b> 12 (+4) <b>Int</b> 11 (+3) <b>Cha</b> 19 (+7)	



## ENCOUNTER 3A: “GUARDIANS” STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Warforged Soldier (Level 6)	Level 6 Soldier
Medium natural animate (construct)	XP 250
<b>Initiative</b> +7 <b>Senses</b> Perception +4	
<b>HP</b> 72; <b>Bloodied</b> 36; see also <i>warforged resolve</i>	
<b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 16	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2 against ongoing damage	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
m <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the warforged soldier's next turn; see also <i>battlefield tactics</i> .	
<b>Battlefield Tactics</b>	
The warforged soldier gains a +1 bonus to melee attacks if it has an ally adjacent to the target.	
<b>Warforged Resolve</b> (minor, only usable while bloodied; encounter)	
The warforged soldier gains 18 temporary hit points.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +9, Intimidate +8	
<b>Str</b> 18 (+7) <b>Dex</b> 14 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+4)	
<b>Con</b> 16 (+6) <b>Int</b> 10 (+3) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+3)	
<b>Equipment</b> plate armor, heavy shield, longsword	

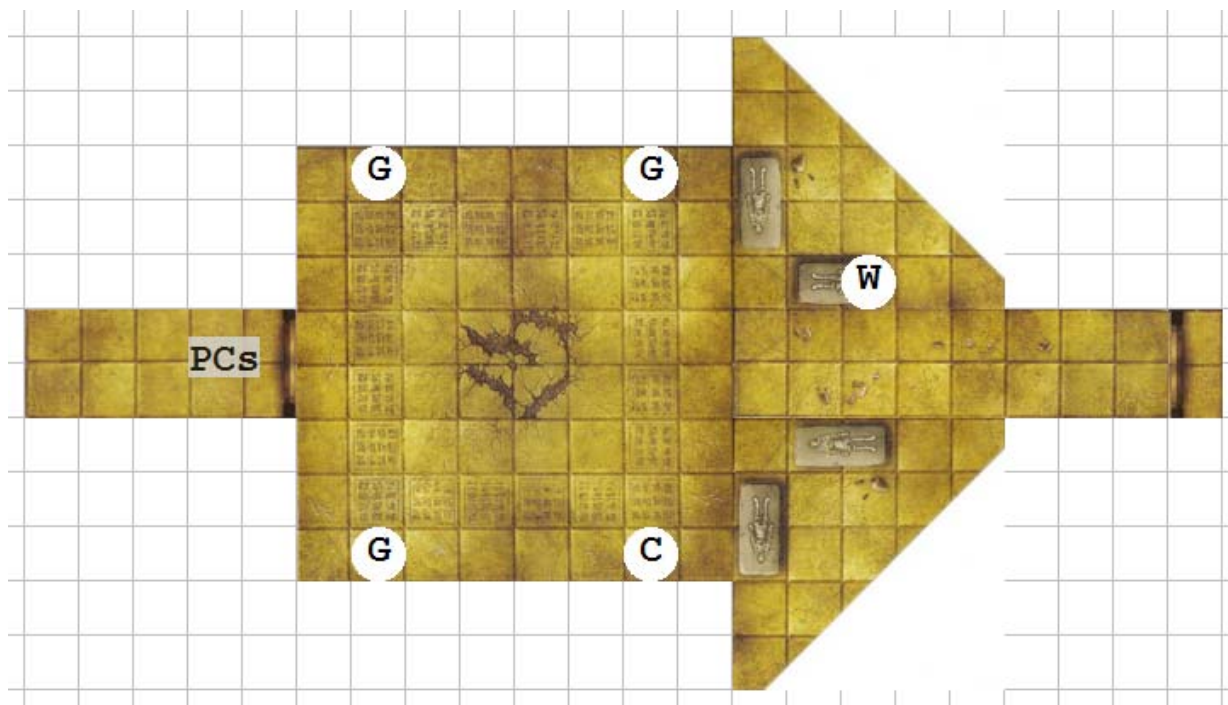
Warforged Captain (Level 8)	Level 8 Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid (construct)	XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +8 <b>Senses</b> Perception +5	
<b>Aura of Command</b> aura 10; allies in the aura gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>HP</b> 88; <b>Bloodied</b> 44; see also <i>warforged resolve</i>	
<b>AC</b> 24; <b>Fortitude</b> 22, <b>Reflex</b> 19, <b>Will</b> 20	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2 against ongoing damage	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
m <b>Glaive</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Reach 2; +13 vs. AC; 2d4 + 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the warforged captain's next turn; see also <i>battlefield tactics</i> .	
M <b>Tactical Switch</b> (standard; recharge 4 5 6) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The warforged captain makes a melee basic attack. On a hit, the target slides 1 square, and the warforged captain or an ally within 10 squares of the warforged captain shifts 1 square.	
<b>Battlefield Tactics</b>	
The warforged captain gains a +1 bonus to melee attacks if it has an ally adjacent to the target.	
<b>Warforged Resolve</b> (minor, only usable while bloodied; encounter)	
The warforged captain gains 22 temporary hit points.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +12, Intimidate +12	
<b>Str</b> 20 (+9) <b>Dex</b> 14 (+6) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+5)	
<b>Con</b> 16 (+7) <b>Int</b> 10 (+4) <b>Cha</b> 16 (+7)	
<b>Equipment</b> plate armor, glaive	

Mad Wraith (Level 8)	Level 8 Controller
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +9 <b>Senses</b> Perception +7; darkvision	
<b>Mad Whispers (Psychic)</b> aura 3; deafened creatures are immune; any enemy in the aura at the start of its turn takes 5 psychic damage and is dazed until the start of its next turn. (If the mad wraith takes radiant damage, the aura is negated until the end of the mad wraith's next turn.)	
<b>HP</b> 70; <b>Bloodied</b> 35	
<b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 20, <b>Will</b> 19	
<b>Immune</b> disease, poison; <b>Resist</b> 10 necrotic, insubstantial;	
<b>Vulnerable</b> 5 radiant (see also <i>mad whispers</i> above)	
<b>Speed</b> fly 6 (hover); phasing	
m <b>Touch of Madness</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Psychic</b>	
+10 vs. Will; 1d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Will defense (save ends).	
M <b>Touch of Chaos</b> (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Psychic</b>	
+11 vs. Will; 2d6 + 5 psychic damage, and the target moves up to its speed and makes a basic attack against its nearest ally as a free action.	
<b>Spawn Wraith</b>	
Any humanoid killed by a mad wraith rises as a free-willed mad wraith at the start of its creator's next turn, appearing in the space where it died (or in the nearest unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature (using the Raise Dead ritual) does not destroy the spawned wraith.	
<b>Alignment</b> Chaotic evil <b>Languages</b> Common	
<b>Skills</b> Stealth +14	
<b>Str</b> 6 (+2) <b>Dex</b> 20 (+9) <b>Wis</b> 6 (+2)	
<b>Con</b> 12 (+5) <b>Int</b> 11 (+4) <b>Cha</b> 19 (+8)	

## ENCOUNTER 3A: “GUARDIANS” MAP

### TILE SETS NEEDED

*Dire Tombs x2*



## ENCOUNTER 3B: SECOND PLACE

### ENCOUNTER LEVEL 6 / 8 (1,375 / 1,950 XP)

#### SETUP

This encounter is more difficult because the PCs must have failed the skill challenge to be going this direction, so they need to make up some XP. The agents of House Vkriss have already eliminated the outer tomb guardians and set up their own defensive position.

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

- 1 Deathpriest of Tiamat (D)
- 3 Dragonborn Soldiers (Level 4) (S)
- 2 Ambush Drakes (A)

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

- 1 Deathpriest of Tiamat (Level 10) (D)
- 3 Dragonborn Soldiers (Level 6) (S)
- 2 Ambush Drakes (Level 8) (A)

As the adventurers pass into the sewers, read:

*The Vkriss agents have obviously beaten you to the tomb. As you pass through various chambers, you see destroyed guardians and triggered traps, along with a few dead dragonborn bodies that have already been stripped of their equipment and valuables. The Vkriss seem to place a high premium on efficiency.*

*Deep within the tomb, you encounter an ornate hieroglyph-covered door. From the fresh tool marks on the door it seems that the door has been recently opened.*

**Perception (DC 18, on the ground):** Tracks indicate that a number of humanoids, as well as some clawed quadrupeds, recently passed this way.

**Perception (DC 20, on the door):** The door had a lead seal of some sort, which has been broken open. A subsequent **Arcana check (DC 20)** on the seal indicates that it once had a magical aura, but whatever power the seal had is now broken.

Once the PCs enter the area, read the following:

*This appears to be an ancient temple to Tiamat. A large dragon statue rests on a dais in the back of the room.*

*The altar has seen many sacrifices, based on the dried bloodstains surrounding its pedestal.*

*A series of black pillars lead to the statue, inscribed with horrific scenes depicting monstrous reptilian creatures devouring humans. You have little opportunity to study the artwork in detail, however, as a group of dragonborn step out from behind the pillars. They are accompanied by a pair of purplish-red drakes that seem barely controlled, hissing and spitting ferociously.*

Vendar, a Deathpriest of Tiamat, has orders to kill anyone that attempts to get to the sphere before House Vkriss can. He relishes the thought of becoming a martyr in Tiamat's name while helping to retrieve an item of such importance. He is not the highest ranking member of the Knights of the Five-Thorned Rose in House Vkriss, but he is the most mentally unstable.

#### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The room is brightly illuminated by sunrods that the dragonborn previously scattered around the area.

**Statue:** The statue near the back of the room is blocking terrain.

**Bloodstains:** The squares with visible bloodstains have the same properties as blood rock. Attacks made by characters standing in these squares can score a critical hit on an attack roll of 19 or 20.

#### TACTICS

The Deathpriest tries to stay out of melee combat. He times his *dark blessing* to benefit as many of his allies as possible. He will not surrender and would much rather die than be taken captive.

The dragonborn are Knights of the Five-Thorned Rose (a cult of Tiamat that has a devoted following inside House Vkriss). They will not flee or surrender as long as the Deathpriest is still alive, but they are not as fanatical as he is. Once the Deathpriest is dispatched, they will attempt a fighting withdrawal into the next room (Encounter 4) which could trigger the next encounter unless the PCs are able to block their escape.

The ambush drakes are incredibly bloodthirsty and are barely restrained. These creatures are difficult to handle under the best circumstances and it is only the Knights' access to the lore of Tiamat that makes it possible for these creatures to be trained at all. The drakes always attack bloodied characters in preference to non-bloodied characters, even if they have to disengage from a current target to do so. The drakes fight to the death.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove one dragonborn soldier.

**Six PCs:** Add another dragonborn soldier.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Assuming that the dragonborn were not able to trigger the next encounter, the PCs have time for a short rest.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs earn 275 / 390 XP each for defeating the agents of House Vkriss. Note that this XP award offsets the XP that the party lost for failing the skill challenge in the previous encounter.

## TREASURE

One of the dragonborn soldiers wears a *companion's defender*. The other dragonborn carry a total of 50 / 75 gp per PC in cash.

## ENCOUNTER 3B: “SECOND PLACE” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Deathpriest of Tiamat	Level 8 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn	XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +4 <b>Senses</b> Perception +12	
<b>Death's Embrace (Necrotic)</b> aura 10; enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to death saves.	
<b>HP</b> 88; <b>Bloodied</b> 44	
<b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 20, <b>Reflex</b> 18, <b>Will</b> 20; see also <i>dark blessing</i>	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
<b>m Mace</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+11 vs. AC (+12 while bloodied); 1d8 + 1 damage plus 1d8 necrotic damage.	
<b>R Ray of Black Ice</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Cold, Necrotic</b>	
Ranged 10; +9 vs. Reflex (+10 while bloodied); 1d8 + 3 cold and necrotic damage, and one ally in the deathpriest's line of sight gains a +2 power bonus to its next attack roll against the target.	
<b>C Dark Blessing</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b>	
Close burst 2; +9 vs. Fortitude (+10 while bloodied); 2d8 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. <i>Effect:</i> The deathpriest and all allies in the burst gain a +2 power bonus to AC until the end of the encounter.	
<b>C Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold</b>	
Close blast 3; +9 vs. Reflex (+10 while bloodied); 1d6 + 3 cold damage.	
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil <b>Languages</b> Abyssal, Common, Draconic	
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +10, Religion +10	
<b>Str</b> 13 (+5) <b>Dex</b> 10 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 16 (+7)	
<b>Con</b> 16 (+7) <b>Int</b> 12 (+5) <b>Cha</b> 15 (+6)	
<b>Equipment</b> chainmail, mace	

Dragonborn Soldier (Level 4)	Level 4 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn	XP 175
<b>Initiative</b> +6 <b>Senses</b> Perception +3	
<b>HP</b> 55; <b>Bloodied</b> 27	
<b>AC</b> 19; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 15, <b>Will</b> 14	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
<b>m Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+9 vs. AC (+10 while bloodied); 1d8 + 3 damage.	
<b>C Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold</b>	
Close blast 3; +5 vs. Reflex (+6 while bloodied); 1d6 + 2 cold damage.	
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>Impetuous Spirit</b> (immediate reaction, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn soldier makes a melee basic attack against the enemy, even if the enemy is shifting.	
<b>Martial Recovery</b> (free, when the dragonborn soldier misses with a melee attack, recharges when the soldier uses <i>impetuous spirit</i> )	
♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn soldier makes another melee attack against the same target.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil <b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic	
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +9, History +4, Intimidate +8	
<b>Str</b> 16 (+5) <b>Dex</b> 15 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+3)	
<b>Con</b> 15 (+4) <b>Int</b> 11 (+2) <b>Cha</b> 9 (+1)	
<b>Equipment</b> light shield, longsword, scale armor	

Ambush Drake	Level 6 Skirmisher
Medium natural beast (reptile)	XP 250
<b>Initiative</b> +7 <b>Senses</b> Perception +3	
<b>HP</b> 71; <b>Bloodied</b> 35	
<b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 18, <b>Will</b> 16	
<b>Speed</b> 6, fly 4 (clumsy)	
<b>m Claws</b> (standard; at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.	
<b>M Shifting Strike</b> (standard; at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage. The ambush drake can shift 1 square before or after the attack.	
<b>Ravenous</b> (minor; at-will)	
The ambush drake shifts 2 squares toward a bloodied enemy.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> –	
<b>Skills</b> Stealth +10	
<b>Str</b> 16 (+6) <b>Dex</b> 14 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 11 (+3)	
<b>Con</b> 15 (+5) <b>Int</b> 3 (–1) <b>Cha</b> 6 (+1)	

## ENCOUNTER 3B: “SECOND PLACE” STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Deathpriest of Tiamat (Level 10) Level 10 Controller (Leader)	
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn	XP 500
<b>Initiative</b> +5	<b>Senses Perception</b> +13
<b>Death's Embrace (Necrotic)</b> aura 10; enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to death saves.	
<b>HP</b> 104; <b>Bloodied</b> 52	
<b>AC</b> 24; <b>Fortitude</b> 22, <b>Reflex</b> 20, <b>Will</b> 22; see also <i>dark blessing</i>	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
<b>m Mace</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+13 vs. AC (+14 while bloodied); 1d8 + 2 damage plus 1d8 necrotic damage.	
<b>R Ray of Black Ice</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Cold, Necrotic</b>	
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Reflex (+12 while bloodied); 1d8 + 4 cold and necrotic damage, and one ally in the deathpriest's line of sight gains a +2 power bonus to its next attack roll against the target.	
<b>C Dark Blessing</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Necrotic</b>	
Close burst 2; +11 vs. Fortitude (+12 while bloodied); 2d8 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target is pushed 1 square. <i>Effect:</i> The deathpriest and all allies in the burst gain a +2 power bonus to AC until the end of the encounter.	
<b>C Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold</b>	
Close blast 3; +11 vs. Reflex (+12 while bloodied); 1d6 + 4 cold damage.	
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Abyssal, Common, Draconic
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +11, Religion +11	
<b>Str</b> 13 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 10 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 16 (+8)
<b>Con</b> 16 (+8)	<b>Int</b> 12 (+6) <b>Cha</b> 15 (+7)
<b>Equipment</b> chainmail, mace	

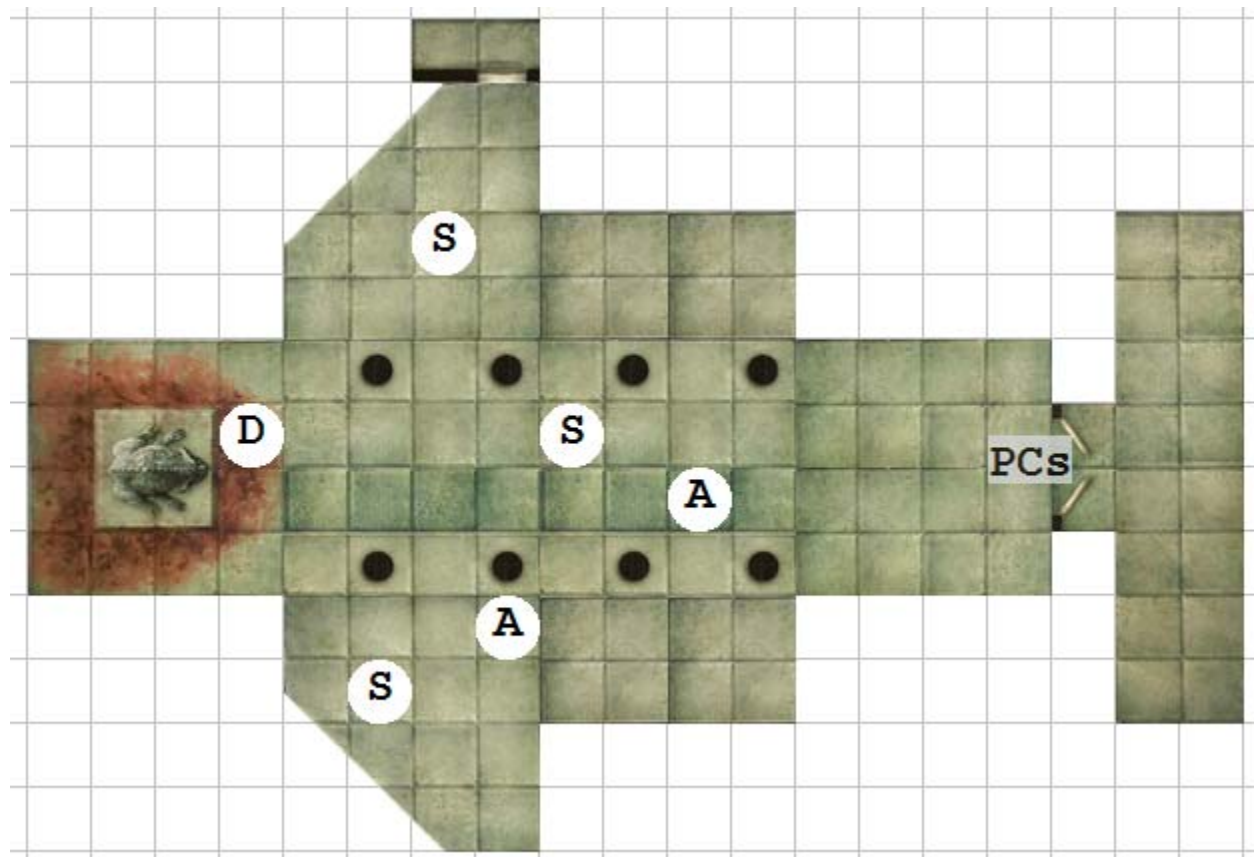
Dragonborn Soldier (Level 6) Level 6 Soldier	
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn	XP 250
<b>Initiative</b> +7	<b>Senses Perception</b> +4
<b>HP</b> 71; <b>Bloodied</b> 35	
<b>AC</b> 21; <b>Fortitude</b> 18, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 16	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
<b>m Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+11 vs. AC (+12 while bloodied); 1d8 + 4 damage.	
<b>C Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold</b>	
Close blast 3; +7 vs. Reflex (+8 while bloodied); 1d6 + 3 cold damage.	
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>Impetuous Spirit</b> (immediate reaction, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn soldier makes a melee basic attack against the enemy, even if the enemy is shifting.	
<b>Martial Recovery</b> (free, when the dragonborn soldier misses with a melee attack, recharges when the soldier uses <i>impetuous spirit</i> )	
♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn soldier makes another melee attack against the same target.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic
<b>Skills</b> Endurance +10, History +5, Intimidate +9	
<b>Str</b> 16 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 15 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 15 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 11 (+3) <b>Cha</b> 9 (+2)
<b>Equipment</b> light shield, longsword, scale armor	

Ambush Drake (Level 8) Level 8 Skirmisher	
Medium natural beast (reptile)	XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +8	<b>Senses Perception</b> +4
<b>HP</b> 87; <b>Bloodied</b> 43	
<b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 21, <b>Reflex</b> 20, <b>Will</b> 18	
<b>Speed</b> 6, fly 4 (clumsy)	
<b>m Claws</b> (standard; at-will)	
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage.	
<b>M Shifting Strike</b> (standard; at-will)	
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage. The ambush drake can shift 1 square before or after the attack.	
<b>Ravenous</b> (minor; at-will)	
The ambush drake shifts 2 squares toward a bloodied enemy.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> –
<b>Skills</b> Stealth +11	
<b>Str</b> 16 (+7)	<b>Dex</b> 14 (+6) <b>Wis</b> 11 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 15 (+6)	<b>Int</b> 3 (+0) <b>Cha</b> 6 (+2)

## ENCOUNTER 3B: “SECOND PLACE” MAP

### TILE SETS NEEDED

*Fane of the Forgotten Gods x2*



## ENCOUNTER 4: STOPPING THE VKRISS

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 6 / 8 (1,350 / 2,200 XP)

### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

**Bimaran, Dragonborn Commandant (Level 6) (C)**  
**Sithandrel, Dragonborn Elementalist (Level 6) (E)**  
**2 Dragonborn Sellswords (Level 5) (S)**  
**1 Rage Drake (D)**

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

**Bimaran, Dragonborn Commandant (Level 9) (C)**  
**Sithandrel, Dragonborn Elementalist (E)**  
**2 Dragonborn Sellswords (Level 8) (S)**  
**1 Rage Drake (Level 8) (D)**

The setup for this encounter depends on whether the PCs or the Vkriss got here first.

### IF THE PCs ARRIVE FIRST

If the PCs came here via Encounter 3A, then the Vkriss are not on the map when the encounter begins. Read or paraphrase the following:

*You have reached the burial chamber of Ur-Hammabi. Two large sarcophagi fill the front part of the room. A sand-covered staircase ascends to a second area where a glowing circle of runes surrounds a jet-black sphere which floats in midair.*

The PCs can approach the artifact or explore the other parts of the room as they see fit. Draw the map and ask each player to place his or her miniature in the location where that PC is going to search. The Vkriss charge in through the doors, with the rage drake leading the way. To avoid having the entire combat bottleneck at the entrance, consider adding some additional doors along the sides of the map (parallel to the sarcophagi - not on the second tier), allowing all the Vkriss to get onto the battlefield in a single round. These could be secret doors that the PCs simply failed to spot, or you can draw them in as part of the battle map and let the PCs take them into account when setting up their positions. Regardless, because the PCs got here first and the Vkriss must fight

their way up the stairs, the PCs should begin this battle with a tactical advantage.

### IF THE VKRISS ARRIVE FIRST

If the PCs came here via Encounter 3B, then the Vkriss are already set up in this chamber as shown on the map. As the PCs arrive in this room, Sithandrel is just finishing a dispelling ritual to break the circle of protection surrounding the Sphere of Laskanova. Read:

*You have reached the burial chamber of Ur-Hammabi. Two large sarcophagi fill the front part of the room. Their lids have been smashed open, revealing bones and funeral wrappings. Two dragonborn with battleaxes are pawing eagerly through the remains, looking for treasure.*

*A sand-covered staircase ascends to a second area where a glowing circle of runes surrounds a jet-black sphere which floats in midair. A burly dragonborn carrying a massive fullblade sees you and gives a shout of warning. He releases the collar of a massive, red-scaled drake, which lets out a bellow of rage and bounds down the stairs towards you.*

*At the edge of the circle, a thin dragonborn with a staff appears to be performing some sort of ritual.*

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The two firepots give the room bright illumination.

**Firepots:** A character entering one of these squares takes 2d6 + 3 points of fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

**Runic Circle:** The 2x2 area containing the Sphere of Laskanova is completely impassable as long as the artifact is still imprisoned (blocking line of effect and teleportation). The 4x4 area in the center of the upper portion of the map (all the squares containing the circular portion of the large sigil, but not the sigil's "arms") is treated as difficult terrain even after the circle has been destroyed; characters moving through these squares are impeded by invisible tendrils of force.

**Sarcophagi:** The sarcophagi are considered blocking terrain. A character can jump or climb onto a sarcophagus with a DC 15 Athletics check.

**Staircase:** The stairs are steep and covered with fine sand. They are treated as difficult terrain.

### COMPLETING THE RITUAL

The Vkriss elemental's job is to perform a ritual to release the Sphere of Laskanova from its resting place.



The length of time it takes him to complete this ritual depends on whether the PCs or the Vkriss arrived first.

If the PCs arrived first, then Sithandrel begins the ritual on his first turn, but must spend a total of six minor actions to complete it.

If the Vkriss arrived first, then Sithandrel is nearly finished (as described in the read-aloud text), needing to spend only two more minor actions.

Unless he needs all of his actions for the purpose of survival, Sithandrel always spends at least one minor action on each of his turns to work on the ritual. If he is not seriously threatened on his turn then he also trades his move action for another minor action and uses that to complete the ritual more quickly. If Sithandrel is interrupted or does not spend a minor action on his turn, the count remains the same; he does not lose the progress he had previously made.

If Sithandrel completes the ritual, read:

***The wall of energy surrounding the sphere dissipates, and the dragonborn elementalists shouts in triumph. He reaches forward and plucks the artifact out of the air. "At last! The Sphere of Laskanova's power shall serve House Vkriss and the Knights of the Five-Thorned Rose! Now let us kill these fools quickly so that mighty Tiamat may feast upon their souls!"***

If Sithandrel is somehow unable to complete the ritual (say, because the PCs kill or incapacitate him) then the artifact remains floating in midair and the 2x2 square area of the Runic Circle (see below) is surrounded by an impassable wall of force. Any character trained in Arcana may work to complete the ritual by standing in any square adjacent to the circle and succeeding on a DC 17/19 Arcana check (as a minor action). During combat, each person counts his or her own successes separately, and five successes are required for any individual caster to bring down the ritual circle. A PC who makes a successful check may choose to remove one of Sithandrel's successes instead of adding to his or her own count.

## TACTICS

The primary objective of the Vkriss agents is for one of them to escape with the sphere. However, the PCs will most likely block the exit, making that difficult. Sithandrel attempts to catch as many PCs as possible at the entrance in the area of his *acid rain* (hoping they will then move away from the door to avoid the extra acid damage) and then continually uses *lightning blast* on anybody blocking his escape route.

Bimaran orders the dragonborn sellswords to maneuver around the PCs and provide him with flanking opportunities. He uses *designating smite* to mark a specific PC and then all the dragonborn focus their melee attacks on that character to take advantage of the attack and damage bonuses. The commandant tries to fight his way to the door so that he can make an opening for Sithandrel to escape with the sphere. If Sithandrel is killed, Bimaran orders one of the sellswords to pick up the sphere and run with it (he knows that he is the strongest fighter and therefore has the best chance to delay the PCs while someone else gets away).

The rage drake is not a subtle combatant. It charges the nearest PC (taking advantage of its *raking charge* ability) and then fights to the death.

All of the dragonborn are members of the Knights of the Five-Thorned Rose. They neither give nor expect quarter.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

**Four PCs:** Remove one of the dragonborn sellswords.

**Six PCs:** Add another dragonborn sellsword.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

After the PCs have defeated the agents of House Vkriss, they can claim the Sphere of Laskanova (either taking it off the dead dragonborn or by completing the ritual as detailed above if Sithandrel was killed before he could do the job). The Sphere is currently dormant, and the rituals to activate its full power are unknown to the PCs.

The PCs can loot the Vkriss, examine the sarcophagi, and even take a short rest in this room if they wish, but as soon as the Sphere crosses over the lintel of the doorway, whether it is carried by a PC or one of the Vkriss, the temple's last line of defense activates. Proceed to Encounter 5.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs gain 270 / 440 XP each for defeating the dragonborn and claiming the Sphere of Laskanova.

## TREASURE

Bimaran and his allies carry a ritual book of Traveler's Feast, as well as *tactician's armor* +1, a *watchful ruby eye*, and a +2 *staff of missile mastery*. The PCs also find jewelry worth 50 / 75 gp each in the tomb, either in the sarcophagi or carried by the dragonborn sellswords.

## ENCOUNTER 4: “STOPPING THE VKRISS” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Dragonborn Commandant (Level 6) Level 6 Elite Soldier (Leader)	
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn	XP 500
<b>Initiative</b> +5	<b>Senses</b> Perception +4
<b>HP</b> 142; <b>Bloodied</b> 71; see also <i>dragonborn frenzy</i>	
<b>AC</b> 23; <b>Fortitude</b> 21, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 20	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
<b>Action Points</b> 1	
m <b>Fullblade</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+12 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage and the target is marked until the end of the dragonborn commandant's next turn.	
M <b>Arching Slice</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn commandant makes two fullblade attacks, each against a different target within reach.	
M <b>Designating Smite</b> (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 9 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the dragonborn commandant's next turn and slowed (save ends). In addition, while the creature is slowed due to this attack, the dragonborn commandant and all his allies gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls and a +4 power bonus to damage rolls against that target.	
M <b>Termination Order</b> (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy becomes bloodied; encounter) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn commandant immediately recharges <i>designating smite</i> (if necessary), and uses that power against the triggering enemy.	
C <b>Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Acid</b>	
Close blast 3; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 5 acid damage.	
<b>Dragonborn Frenzy</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn commandant gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic
<b>Skills</b> History +13, Intimidate +14	
<b>Str</b> 20 (+8)	<b>Dex</b> 11 (+3) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 15 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 16 (+6) <b>Cha</b> 18 (+7)
<b>Equipment</b> fullblade, plate armor	

Dragonborn Elementalist (Level 6) Level 6 Artillery	
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn	XP 250
<b>Initiative</b> +3	<b>Senses</b> Perception +3
<b>HP</b> 55; <b>Bloodied</b> 27; see also <i>dragonborn fury</i>	
<b>AC</b> 19; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 19, <b>Will</b> 18	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
m <b>Quarterstaff</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+10 vs. AC (+11 while bloodied); 1d8 + 1 damage.	
r <b>Lightning Blast</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Lightning</b>	
Area burst 1 within 10; +11 vs. Reflex (+12 while bloodied); 2d6 + 3 lightning damage.	
C <b>Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold or Fire</b>	
Close blast 5; +9 vs. Reflex (+10 while bloodied); 1d6 + 3 cold or fire damage (choose when using the power).	
C <b>Icicle Spray</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold</b>	
Close blast 5; +11 vs. Reflex (+12 while bloodied); 2d6 + 5 cold damage. The blast area becomes difficult terrain until the end of the elementalists's next turn.	
A <b>Acid Rain</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Acid</b>	
Area burst 2 within 10; +11 vs. Fortitude (+12 while bloodied); 1d8 + 3 acid damage. The acid rain persists until the end of the elementalists's next turn, dealing 10 acid damage to any creature that starts or ends its turn in the area, though a creature can take this damage only once on a given turn.	
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>Winging Wind</b> (immediate interrupt, when the elementalists would be hit by a melee or ranged attack; encounter)	
Winds whip up, granting the elementalists a +2 bonus to the defense targeted by the attack. The elementalists can shift 2 squares, ignoring difficult terrain, and the attacker is pushed 2 squares.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +12, History +14	
<b>Str</b> 15 (+5)	<b>Dex</b> 11 (+3) <b>Wis</b> 10 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 13 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 19 (+7) <b>Cha</b> 17 (+6)
<b>Equipment</b> robes, quarterstaff	

Dragonborn Sellsword (Level 5)		Level 5 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn		XP 200
<b>Initiative</b> +7 <b>Senses</b> Perception +3		
<b>HP</b> 62; <b>Bloodied</b> 31; see also <i>dragonborn fury</i>		
<b>AC</b> 19; <b>Fortitude</b> 16, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 17		
<b>Resist</b> 5 lightning		
<b>Speed</b> 6		
m <b>Battleaxe</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>		
+10 vs. AC (+11 while bloodied); 1d10 + 5 damage.		
M <b>Overwhelming Strike</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>		
Requires battleaxe; +10 vs. AC (+11 while bloodied); 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target grants combat advantage to the dragonborn sellsword until the end of the sellsword's next turn.		
C <b>Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Lightning</b>		
Close blast 3; +8 vs. Reflex (+9 while bloodied); 1d6 + 3 lightning damage.		
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)		
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.		
<b>Skirmish</b> +1d6		
If, on its turn, the dragonborn sellsword ends its move at least 4 squares away from its starting point, it deals 1d6 extra damage with its melee attacks until the start of its next turn.		
<b>Tactical Withdrawal</b> (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter)		
The dragonborn sellsword shifts 3 squares.		
<b>Alignment</b> Evil <b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic		
<b>Skills</b> History +2, Intimidate +3		
<b>Str</b> 18 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+5)	<b>Wis</b> 13 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 14 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 8 (+1)	<b>Cha</b> 10 (+2)
<b>Equipment</b> battleaxe, leather armor		

Rage Drake		Level 5 Brute
Large natural beast (mount, reptile)		XP 200
<b>Initiative</b> +3 <b>Senses</b> Perception +3		
<b>HP</b> 77; <b>Bloodied</b> 38; see also <i>bloodied rage</i>		
<b>AC</b> 17; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 15, <b>Will</b> 15		
<b>Immune</b> fear (while bloodied only)		
<b>Speed</b> 8		
m <b>Bite</b> (standard; at-will)		
+9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.		
M <b>Claw</b> (standard; at-will)		
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.		
M <b>Raking Charge</b> (standard; at-will)		
When the rage drake charges, it makes two claw attacks against a single target.		
<b>Bloodied Rage</b> (while bloodied)		
While bloodied, a rage drake gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and deals an extra 5 damage per attack.		
<b>Raging Mount</b> (while bloodied and mounted by a friendly rider of 5 <sup>th</sup> level or higher; at-will) ♦ <b>Mount</b>		
The rage drake grants its rider a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls with melee attacks.		
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> –		
<b>Skills</b> Stealth +10		
<b>Str</b> 19 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 13 (+3)	<b>Wis</b> 13 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 17 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 3 (–2)	<b>Cha</b> 12 (+3)

## ENCOUNTER 4: “STOPPING THE VKRISS” STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Dragonborn Commandant (Level 9)    Level 9 Elite Soldier (Leader)	
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn	XP 800
<b>Initiative</b> +6 <b>Senses</b> Perception +5	
<b>HP</b> 190; <b>Bloodied</b> 95; see also <i>dragonborn frenzy</i>	
<b>AC</b> 26; <b>Fortitude</b> 24, <b>Reflex</b> 20, <b>Will</b> 23	
<b>Speed</b> 5	
<b>Action Points</b> 1	
m <b>Fullblade</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+15 vs. AC; 1d12 + 6 damage and the target is marked until the end of the dragonborn commandant's next turn.	
M <b>Arching Slice</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn commandant makes two fullblade attacks, each against a different target within reach.	
M <b>Designating Smite</b> (standard; recharge 5 6) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+16 vs. AC; 1d12 + 10 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the dragonborn commandant's next turn and slowed (save ends). In addition, while the creature is slowed due to this attack, the dragonborn commandant and all his allies gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls and a +4 power bonus to damage rolls against that target.	
M <b>Termination Order</b> (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy becomes bloodied; encounter) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The dragonborn commandant immediately recharges <i>designating smite</i> (if necessary), and uses that power against the triggering enemy.	
C <b>Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Acid</b>	
Close blast 3; +14 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 6 acid damage.	
<b>Dragonborn Frenzy</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn commandant gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic
<b>Skills</b> History +14, Intimidate +15	
<b>Str</b> 20 (+9)	<b>Dex</b> 11 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+5)
<b>Con</b> 15 (+6)	<b>Int</b> 16 (+7) <b>Cha</b> 18 (+8)
<b>Equipment</b> fullblade, plate armor	

Dragonborn Elementalist    Level 8 Artillery	
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn	XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +4 <b>Senses</b> Perception +4	
<b>HP</b> 67; <b>Bloodied</b> 33; see also <i>dragonborn fury</i>	
<b>AC</b> 21; <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 21, <b>Will</b> 20	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
m <b>Quarterstaff</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+12 vs. AC (+13 while bloodied); 1d8 + 2 damage.	
r <b>Lightning Blast</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Lightning</b>	
Area burst 1 within 10; +13 vs. Reflex (+14 while bloodied); 2d6 + 4 lightning damage.	
C <b>Dragon Breath</b> (minor; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold or Fire</b>	
Close blast 5; +11 vs. Reflex (+12 while bloodied); 1d6 + 4 cold or fire damage (choose when using the power).	
C <b>Icicle Spray</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Cold</b>	
Close blast 5; +13 vs. Reflex (+14 while bloodied); 2d6 + 6 cold damage. The blast area becomes difficult terrain until the end of the elementalists' next turn.	
A <b>Acid Rain</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Acid</b>	
Area burst 2 within 10; +13 vs. Fortitude (+14 while bloodied); 1d8 + 4 acid damage. The acid rain persists until the end of the elementalists' next turn, dealing 10 acid damage to any creature that starts or ends its turn in the area, though a creature can take this damage only once on a given turn.	
<b>Dragonborn Fury</b> (only while bloodied)	
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.	
<b>Winging Wind</b> (immediate interrupt, when the elementalists would be hit by a melee or ranged attack; encounter)	
Winds whip up, granting the elementalists a +2 bonus to the defense targeted by the attack. The elementalists can shift 2 squares, ignoring difficult terrain, and the attacker is pushed 2 squares.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Common, Draconic
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +13, History +15	
<b>Str</b> 15 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 11 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 10 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 13 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 19 (+8) <b>Cha</b> 17 (+7)
<b>Equipment</b> robes, quarterstaff	

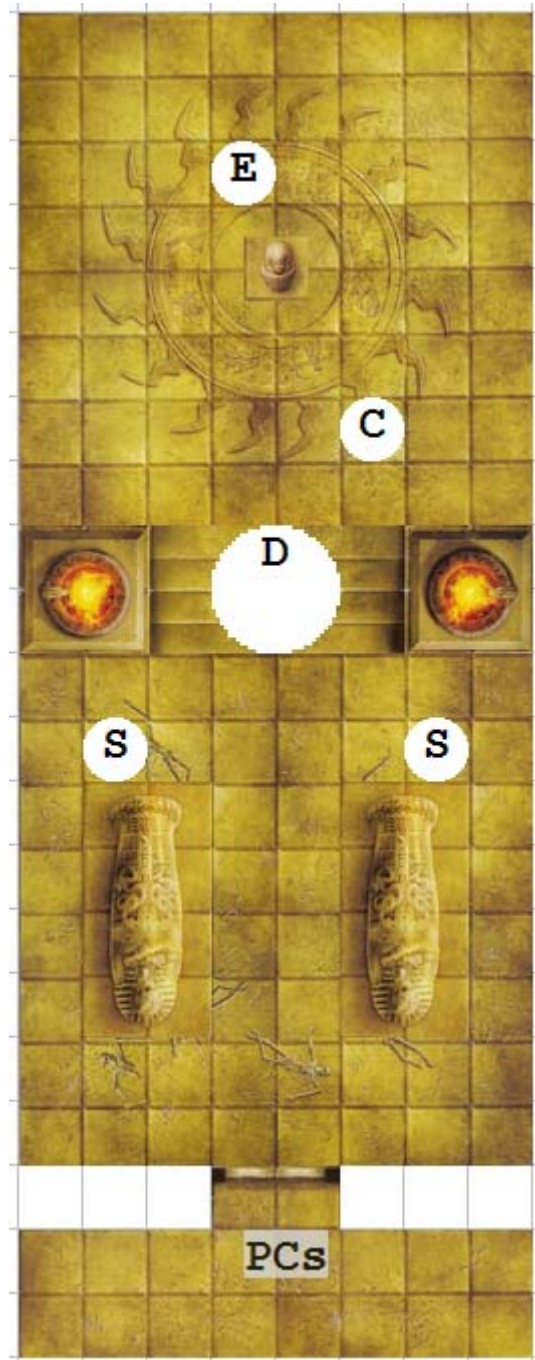
Dragonborn Sellsword (Level 8)		Level 8 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn		XP 350
Initiative +9	Senses Perception +5	
HP 86; Bloodied 43; see also <i>dragonborn fury</i>		
AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 20, Will 20		
Resist 5 lightning		
Speed 6		
m Battleaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+13 vs. AC (+14 while bloodied); 1d10 + 7 damage.		
M Overwhelming Strike (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon		
Requires battleaxe; +13 vs. AC (+14 while bloodied); 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target grants combat advantage to the dragonborn sellsword until the end of the sellsword's next turn.		
C Dragon Breath (minor; encounter) ♦ Lightning		
Close blast 3; +11 vs. Reflex (+12 while bloodied); 1d6 + 5 lightning damage.		
Dragonborn Fury (only while bloodied)		
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.		
Skirmish +1d6		
If, on its turn, the dragonborn sellsword ends its move at least 4 squares away from its starting point, it deals 1d6 extra damage with its melee attacks until the start of its next turn.		
Tactical Withdrawal (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter)		
The dragonborn sellsword shifts 3 squares.		
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, Draconic
Skills History +4, Intimidate +5		
Str 18 (+8)	Dex 16 (+7)	Wis 13 (+5)
Con 14 (+6)	Int 8 (+3)	Cha 10 (+4)
Equipment battleaxe, leather armor		

Rage Drake (Level 8)		Level 8 Brute
Large natural beast (mount, reptile)		XP 350
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +5	
HP 107; Bloodied 53; see also <i>bloodied rage</i>		
AC 20; Fortitude 20, Reflex 18, Will 18		
Immune fear (while bloodied only)		
Speed 8		
m <b>Bite</b> (standard; at-will)		
+12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.		
M <b>Claw</b> (standard; at-will)		
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage.		
M <b>Raking Charge</b> (standard; at-will)		
When the rage drake charges, it makes two claw attacks against a single target.		
<b>Bloodied Rage</b> (while bloodied)		
While bloodied, a rage drake gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and deals an extra 5 damage per attack.		
<b>Raging Mount</b> (while bloodied and mounted by a friendly rider of 5 <sup>th</sup> level or higher; at-will) ♦ <b>Mount</b>		
The rage drake grants its rider a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls with melee attacks.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Stealth +12		
Str 19 (+8)	Dex 13 (+5)	Wis 13 (+5)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 3 (+0)	Cha 12 (+5)

## ENCOUNTER 4: “STOPPING THE VKRISS” MAP

TILE SETS NEEDED

*Dire Tombs x2*



## ENCOUNTER 5: RUN FOR IT!

### SPECIAL SKILL CHALLENGE (100 / 150 XP)

#### SETUP

When someone carries the Sphere of Laskanova out of the burial chamber, the tomb's final secret is revealed. The entire structure is a death trap for those who would seek to steal the most prized possession of Ur-Hammabi. Read or paraphrase the following:

*As the Sphere of Laskanova crosses beyond the threshold of the burial chamber, there is a terrible screeching noise and the earth begins to shake. Sand falls from the ceiling and cracks begin appearing in the walls and floor. The entire tomb seems to be collapsing!*

This scene is intended to be cinematic and abstract. Think about a certain famous movie archaeologist sprinting to escape an ancient temple while poisoned darts fly through the air, floors collapse under his feet, and a gigantic stone sphere rolls towards him, threatening to crush him and his stolen treasure. For this reason, no map is provided of the tomb, but if you think your players would rather maneuver their figures and track each round of movement, you can certainly improvise something.

The basic idea is that a character with a speed of 5 who is taking a double move each round, running, and who does not get caught by any obstacles should be able to escape the tomb with a bit of room to spare after six rounds (the total distance to be covered is 80 squares or 400 feet, but this is not all in a straight line, as the tomb consists of various tunnels and chambers). **Once the Sphere has been removed from the burial chamber, the tomb will collapse at the end of one minute (10 rounds) no matter what else happens.**

#### ESCAPE FROM THE TOMB

This tomb escape is presented as a special variant of a skill challenge. It does not matter how many successes or failures each PC accumulates; it simply matters whether or not that PC is able to escape the tomb within the 10-round time limit. To keep things interesting, don't reveal the time limit to the players; that allows you to ratchet up the suspense even if you can tell that they are easily going to escape before time runs out. Make your descriptions of the collapsing tomb

as vivid as possible - and if you can engineer things so that the last PC escapes at the last possible moment, perhaps with one or two of his friends pulling him to safety, so much the better!

Each character needs to cover a total distance of 80 squares to escape the tomb. Roll initiative, or simply go around the table. Each character gets the standard allotment of actions on each turn (standard, move, and minor) and may double move by trading the standard action for another move action. Running allows the character to move faster (+2 speed) but imposes a -5 penalty on all the character's obstacle checks (essentially increasing the DCs from moderate to hard). Magic items and powers that affect movement, terrain, or skill checks may be used as you see fit.

On every other round, beginning with the second round, each PC must pass an **obstacle check**. An obstacle check is a skill check made to avoid part of the collapsing tomb or dodge the effects of one of its traps. An obstacle check does not require the character to spend one of his or her actions. A failed obstacle check means that the character loses one healing surge and is pushed back 5 squares away from the exit (canceling out some or all of a move).

The type of obstacle encountered by each character for each check can be chosen by the player if you want to make things easier, or you can require each PC to attempt each of the four different types of obstacle check, if you want to make things more difficult (most characters will not be good at all these skills).

If you have enough time to prepare in advance, you can even set up a little "obstacle course" with specific descriptions of each hazard that the PCs encounter as they race through the tomb.

**Obstacle Check 1 - Acrobatics (DC 12 / 14):** The PC must balance across a narrow ledge, scamper over a collapsing floor, dodge between two crushing walls, evade a jet of flame or cloud of poisoned darts, or duck out of the way of a falling chunk of the ceiling.

**Obstacle Check 2 - Athletics (DC 12 / 14):** The PC must climb over a collapsed pillar, push through a pile of rubble, hold back a section of wall that is about to collapse, or leap a chasm that has opened up in the floor.

**Obstacle Check 3 - Endurance (DC 12 / 14):** The PC must shake off the effects of a blow to the head, push through the fatigue and exhaustion of sprinting through a deadly gauntlet of traps, or ignore the pain of getting blasted by traps and hazards.



**Obstacle Check 4 - Perception (DC 12 / 14):** The PC must squint through the dust and haze thrown up by the collapsing stonework of the tomb, spot a narrow opening between two closing walls, see the last bit of daylight as a door slides inexorably closed, choose from among a series of mazelike tunnels, or pick out the fastest path across a shaking room while sarcophagi and pieces of the floor fly in all directions.

**Special Check - Dungeoneering or Perception (DC 17 / 19, trained only):** This is not an obstacle check. A character who is willing to trade one turn of his or her own movement can attempt a Dungeoneering or Perception check to survey the hazards ahead, shouting out a warning to the other PCs, giving them all a +2 bonus on their next skill checks.

**Obstacle Check or Special Check - Thievery (DC 17 / 19, trained only):** Do not use Thievery as an obstacle check unless the character is trained in Thievery. The PC must work quickly to defeat a trap before it can collapse the next section of the hallway, trigger a mechanism to cause a closed door to slide open, or otherwise work to delay or defeat the tomb's mechanisms so that everyone can escape.

This can count as a successful obstacle check, or if the character is willing to give up a round of his or her own movement, can replace a failed obstacle check for one other PC (this character prevents a trap from going off, so the other character doesn't have to face it).

## OPTIONAL: A RUNNING BATTLE

If someone carried the Sphere out of the burial chamber while the fight was still in progress, then this encounter could take the form of a running battle as the PCs and Vkriss sprint back through the tunnels and chambers of the tomb, exchanging attacks while dodging traps and falling stone. In this case, an improvised battle map could be useful, with various hazards corresponding to the different possible skill checks arranged along the escape route, allowing each PC and NPC to choose his or her own preferred path while still continuing to fight. If you choose this option, you might want to extend the length of time before the tomb collapses from 10 rounds to 15 or even 20 rounds in order to avoid having everyone on both sides killed when the entire thing collapses on them in mid-battle.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

The success or failure of this encounter is determined simply by how many of the PCs make it out alive.

Anybody who is still trapped in the tomb at the end of the tenth round is killed. Those characters earn no XP for this encounter, but they still earn all the rest of the XP from the adventure, and House Tlassian pays for them to be brought back from the dead (to avoid the embarrassment of having everyone in Djerad Thymar hear the story about how a group of notable adventurers were killed while exploring a dangerous and previously uncharted ruin on the House's property). If none of the PCs make it out of the tomb alive, then the noise and dust of the collapsing tomb still draws the attention of a patrol from the estate, who dig through the rubble and discover the PCs' bodies.

If the agents of House Vkriss are still carrying the Sphere of Laskanova, any PCs who made it out of the tomb within the 10-round limit can continue the fight against the surviving Vkriss outside the temple. Give the PCs every opportunity to recover the Sphere of Laskanova as long as there is breath remaining in their bodies. However, if the Vkriss agents get out of the tomb and the PCs do not, then the Sphere disappears into the vaults of House Vkriss, to be used for whatever fell purposes the worshippers of Tiamat can devise.

## STUDYING THE SPHERE

If the PCs ended up with the Sphere of Laskanova, they have at least a half-day's ride back to Djerad Thymar (and might choose to take an extended rest, giving them even more time to study the object). Alas, despite whatever Arcana, History, Religion, or other skill checks they make, rituals they use, or sources of information they tap, the PCs are unable to discern anything about the Sphere's powers or how to active the artifact. It does not communicate with them, other than to give a faint sense of determination and purpose. This sense grows stronger if the PCs head towards Djerad Thymar. The PCs can feel the Sphere's faint disapproval if they head in any other direction. If they do not return to the city, the Sphere disappears from their possession on the second night. The PCs have been marked in some fashion simply by being in the presence of the relic, but what those effects might be, no one can tell them.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs gain 20 / 30 XP each for escaping the tomb before it collapses.

## TREASURE

There is no treasure in this encounter, but the PCs might still earn the Encounter 4 treasure if they end up fighting some or all of the House Vkriss agents outside the tomb (or while running through the tomb).



## ENCOUNTER 6: DECISION TIME

If the PCs ended up with the Sphere of Laskanova, then they must decide what to do with it. (If House Vkriss agents escaped with the Sphere, then you can skip this encounter and just conclude the adventure.)

The PCs may choose to give the item to Tearn, to hand it over directly to House Tlassian, to sell it to House Vkriss, to ask the Platinum Cadre (Bahamut worshippers) to guard it, or any other option that the players might decide. If the players cannot come to a unanimous agreement on what to do with the artifact, then take a vote and the majority rules.

Following is a short synopsis of how each group will approach the PCs. The PCs might want to sample their options, so to speak, approaching various groups and hearing their recommendations and requests before deciding the final disposition of the Sphere.

**House Vkriss:** If the PCs decide to approach House Vkriss (probably in hopes of getting a large payoff), they are introduced to a smiling, smirking dragonborn named Rodberg. He is a slimy individual (Streetwise +15, Bluff +15, Diplomacy +15) who will attempt to bribe the PCs or lie to them. He will not try to intimidate or threaten the PCs. He believes it is much better to have the PCs leave and give the item to someone else than to argue with them, because he is confident that he can track it down no matter where it ends up. The PCs giving it directly to House Vkriss will simply save everyone some time, that's all.

Rodberg will thank the PCs for outing the evil Knights of the Five-Thorned Rose members that had infiltrated his House. He will gladly give the PCs gold and magic items (basically making sure they have access to all treasure bundles and maximum gold from the adventure no matter what else happened).

If the PCs try to physically assault Rodberg, they are thrashed by the House guards and wake up naked in a gutter in Djerad Thymar. Attacking a noble of a powerful House, especially one that operates on the wrong side of the law, is a spectacularly bad idea.

**Tearn:** If the PCs return to Tearn's room at the Hooked Claw and show him the Sphere, he is overjoyed. Anyone who has a passive Insight score of 15 or higher will realize that something is very strange about the way Tearn looks at the Sphere - his adoring gaze is unnatural. The truth of the matter is that the Sphere wanted to be found, and it has been sending dreams and other subtle suggestions to Tearn this entire time. The Sphere itself is the source of the young

dragonborn's single-minded obsession and thus is also indirectly responsible for his fall from grace within House Tlassian. Of course, Tearn is not aware of any of this and will deny it if the PCs suggest that the Sphere has been influencing him. Regardless, Tearn insists that the Sphere must be handed over to the leaders of House Tlassian. If the PCs offer to let him deliver the Sphere himself, then Tearn is overjoyed and thanks them tearfully. He asks PCs to escort him to House Tlassian just in case House Vkriss attacks him on the way.

**House Tlassian:** The PCs might decide to give the item directly to House Tlassian. If they do, Talmar Eldwing greets them personally and asks them for a full report. He thanks the PCs on behalf of House Tlassian and assures them that the Sphere will be placed in a safe location, warded by priests of Bahamut, and if its powers are ever determined, it will only be used for good ends and for the protection of Tymanthor.

**Platinum Cadre:** If the PCs want to take the artifact to the followers of Bahamut, they are directed to Hiernek (a Platinum Cadre member of House Jalt) who is currently in Djerad Thymar. Hiernek will appeal to the PCs' good and heroic nature, saying that the artifact spent a long time under the control of worshippers of Tiamat, so it is only right that the worshippers of Bahamut should be responsible for ensuring that the Sphere can never again be used for evil.

Hiernek will understand if PCs want to turn the Sphere over to the city or House Tlassian. He will try to convince the PCs not to turn it over to House Vkriss. If the PCs want to give the sphere to Tearn, Hiernek will offer to accompany them to meet with Tearn to see what he will do with it. He is not entirely trusting of Tearn and would like to know what will happen with the sphere.

**City Authorities:** The PCs might want to curry favor with the leadership of Djerad Thymar and Tymanthor as a whole, rather than restricting their ambitions to just House Tlassian. The arrival of the Sphere of Laskanova has not gone unnoticed by the Lance Defenders. The PCs cannot get an audience with Vanquisher Tarhun himself, as that worthy figure is not currently within the city, but they do get to meet a seneschal named Llydock. Llydock is amazingly diplomatic. He is happy to accept the item on behalf of Vanquisher Tarhun, but he also does not object if the PCs ask about turning the item over to House Tlassian (whose loyalty to the Vanquisher is unquestionable). He is skeptical if the PCs suggest giving the item to the Platinum Cadre, as the followers of the Platinum Dragon are not entirely trusted by the

dragon-hating leadership of Tymanther, but will not object considering the artifact's most recent connection to Tiamat. If the PCs suggest that they are considering handing the artifact over to House Vkriss then Llydock will order them not to do so, and if necessary, will have the Lance Defenders take the item from the PCs by force.

**Someone Else:** The PCs might have their own agenda and decide to give the Sphere to one of the groups not listed (such as a church, adventuring company, or other organization with which they are affiliated). This is fine. Depending on which group the PCs choose, you can decide what happens to the artifact. Many non-Tymantheran groups will offer it to either the Platinum Cadre / temple of Bahamut or to Vanquisher Tarhun as a gesture of good faith; others will seal it away in their own vaults for future study. Of course, the artifact will decide how much it likes its new home, and act accordingly...

**Keeping the Sphere:** The only option that is really not on the table is for the PCs to keep the artifact. They should realize that such a powerful object will draw the attention of many groups (both good and evil) and they are not yet experienced or important enough to be able to withstand that kind of attention. The artifact also has a mind of its own, and none of the PCs can achieve a concordance with it, so the Sphere vanishes within a day or two even if the PCs hide it or try to run away with it.

#### TREASURE

No matter which group the PCs decide to give the sphere to they get the same treasure. Present this as a reward that is only offered by the specific group to which they give the item, of course. The treasure is a *stag helm*, a pair of *gloves of eldritch admixture* (high-level only) and a pair of *boots of quickness* (high-level only)

The group to whom the PCs give the artifact also makes up any difference between the gold the PCs recovered and the maximum gold per PC. That way the PCs are not punished if they refused to accept a payment from Tearn or if they did not wish to defile the sarcophagi in the Tomb of Ur-Hammabi.

#### CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs allowed Tearn to be the one to return the Sphere of Laskanova to House Tlassian, the group is given an audience with Talmar Eldwing (see Encounter 2 for details if the PCs did not meet Talmar earlier). It is obvious that Talmar was once very fond of Tearn, but

feels as though his young protégé betrayed him by showing the maps and plans of House Tlassian's estates to people outside the clan. Talmar accepts the Sphere and thanks the PCs. Tearn maintains his composure the entire time, even though it is clear that he wants to throw himself at the elder dragonborn's feet and beg forgiveness. House Tlassian will not allow its wayward son to return home at this time, but perhaps, just perhaps, there is hope for Tearn to be reunited with his family in the future.

If the PCs returned the Sphere of Laskanova to any group in Djerad Thymar other than House Vkriss, they receive the *Reputation in Djerad Thymar* story object. Circle the ONE organization or individual with whom the PCs gained the most favor. (They might have been friendly and respectful to everyone, but in the end, they can only give the Sphere to one person.) The PCs get the favor of the Lance Defenders if they returned the Sphere to Vanquisher Tarhun's seneschal, and the favor of the Platinum Cadre if they went directly to the Cadre or to the Temple of Bahamut. If the PCs returned the Sphere directly to House Tlassian without involving Tearn (even if they put in a good word for him), then mark Talmar Eldwing on the certificate. Only if the PCs permitted Tearn to return the Sphere to House Tlassian himself should you mark Tearn on the favor. If the PCs returned the Sphere to a group outside of Djerad Thymar or tried to keep it for themselves, then they do not receive this story object.

Alternatively, if the PCs failed to retrieve the Sphere or deliberately returned it to House Vkriss, they each receive the *Gratitude of House Vkriss* story object. (They get this favor for failing because House Vkriss still ended up with what it wanted.) A PC cannot receive both the *Gratitude of House Vkriss* and the *Reputation in Djerad Thymar* story objects in this adventure.

Finally, regardless of where the Sphere ended up, each PC who touched, studied, helped participate in the ritual to release, or made contact with the Sphere of Laskanova in any way receives the *Contact with the Sphere* story object. You don't need to get into the minute details of who carried the relic while the PCs were traveling back to Djerad Thymar. The intent is not to make it difficult for PCs to receive this story object; really, the only way a PC should not receive it is if the player doesn't want it. For example, a particular PC might have gone out of his or her way to avoid being contaminated by the touch of the relic, fearing the touch of Tiamat. The relic does not make contact with anyone who it can sense does not wish to make contact with it.

## REWARDS SUMMARY

At the conclusion of the adventure, the PCs earn experience points, treasure, and possibly story awards. All totals listed here are per PC. A number before the slash is the low-level value; after the slash is the high-level value.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

Give PCs a full award for each encounter they successfully completed, and a half award if they were unsuccessful. Give no award if the characters did not play the encounter at all.

#### Encounter 2: The Tomb (Successful)

150 / 200 XP

#### Encounter 3A: Guardians

205 / 290 XP

-OR-

#### Encounter 2: The Tomb (Failed)

80 / 100 XP

#### Encounter 3B: Second Place

275 / 390 XP

#### Encounter 4: Stopping the Vkriss

270 / 440 XP

#### Encounter 5: Run for It!

20 / 30 XP

#### Total Possible Experience

645 / 960 XP

#### Gold per PC

100 / 150 gp

(Encounter 3A or 3B: 50/75 gp; Encounter 4: 50/75 gp; Encounter 6: make up any difference between the total so far and the maximum gold per PC)

### TREASURE

Each PC receives treasure in the form of gold pieces as well as one share from a treasure bundle. The treasure bundle may give the PC more gold, a magic item, or something else of value. Each player makes one and only one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Note that it is possible (and likely) that some characters will not select a bundle for each session of play.

If characters buy or sell magic items or other gear during the adventure (or pay for services) add or subtract that amount from the total gold the PC receives at the end of the adventure. If a player selects

an option that gives their character more gold, add that amount to that character's base gold award. It is possible and permissible for a character who spends more gold than he or she earns to have a negative total for the adventure. PCs receive 20% of the item's market price when they sell any magic item or consumable. They receive 50% of the market price for ritual books and alchemical formulas.

If a player selects a magic weapon or suit of armor for their PC that is not specific on the type of item listed, they must select the exact item at the time they choose that bundle. For example, if a *duelist's weapon +1* is listed as a choice in a bundle, a player selects the form of the weapon amongst the choices possible for that magic item (light blades). If the player selects the item as a +1 *duelist's dagger*, the player writes that information down on the PC's adventure log and the item is forever after that specific weapon.

An asterisk next to a magic item means that it is an item that appears in the **New Rules** section.

#### EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BUNDLES:

##### Bundle A: *stag helm* (level 5; AV)

Found in Encounter 6 / Conclusion

##### Bundle B: *companion's defender* (level 5; AV)

Found in Encounter 3A or 3B

##### Bundle C: *tactician's armor +1* (level 5; AV)

Found in Encounter 4

##### Bundle D: *staff of missile mastery +2* (level 7; AV)

Found in Encounter 4

##### Bundle E: *watchful ruby eye* (level 6; AV)

Found in Encounter 4

##### Bundle F: *gloves of eldritch admixture* (high-level version only) (level 8; AV)

Found in Encounter 6 (Conclusion)

##### Bundle G: *boots of quickness* (high-level version only) (level 8; AV)

Found in Encounter 6 / Conclusion

##### Bundle H: *ritual book of Traveler's Feast* (level 4, PH)

Found in Encounter 4

**Consumable plus Gold:** If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add a *glassteel shard\** (a level 7 consumable from *Adventurer's Vault*) plus 25 / 150 gp to their rewards from this adventure. The player should

write the consumable gained on their adventure log. That character (and only that character) then receives the consumable plus the listed amount of gold (if any) instead of any other treasure bundle. Consumable items obtained in this fashion do not take up found magic item slots.

**More Gold:** If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add 125 / 250 gp to their rewards from this adventure. That character (and only that character) receives more gold instead of any other treasure bundle.

## STORY AWARDS

Award these if the PC completes the condition for the award in the adventure. Pass out certificates to the players for their story awards. The PCs cannot earn both TYMA07 and TYMA08 in this adventure.

### TYMA07 Reputation in Djerad Thymar

You have recovered a valuable artifact and returned it to one of the power groups in the city of Djerad Thymar. Although it takes many great deeds to build up a reputation, your actions have shown that you are on the path to greatness. Circle the ONE entity in the city with whom you gained the most favor in this adventure. (Tearn, Talmar Eldwing of House Tlassian, the Platinum Cadre, the Lance Defenders)

### TYMA08 Gratitude of House Vkriss

Your unexpected assistance to the Vkriss (whether intentional or not) has caused them to look upon you with favor. If ever you should need a leg up among the criminal underworld of Djerad Thymar, you now have someone you can talk to. Of course, the city's legitimate authorities and the Church of Bahamut might not look quite so favorably on your new "friends."

### TYMA09 Contact with the Sphere

You have somehow been touched by the Sphere of Laskanova, a powerful artifact of unknown provenance from the region of Tymanther. As far as anyone knows or can tell, the Sphere's powers are currently dormant. Nevertheless, you cannot help but feel as though you have established some kind of mystic connection to the artifact, a faint sense that it is somehow... watching you. What effects this may have, for good or ill, only time will tell.

## ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

Mark the answer to the following adventure question on the tracking form.

### 1. What was the fate of the Sphere of Laskanova?

- a. The Vkriss have it (either because the PCs were defeated or one of the Vkriss escaped with it)
- b. House Tlassian has it, but they got it directly from the PCs instead of from Tearn.
- c. House Tlassian has it, and the PCs allowed Tearn to be the one to give it to them.
- d. The Djerad Thymar authorities or the followers of Bahamut have it.
- e. The PCs gave it to someone other than those mentioned above.

### 2. Did the PCs help Tearn regain some favor with his former House?

- a. No, the PCs did not interact with House Tlassian much during the adventure.
- b. No, the PCs went out of their way to make sure that Tearn did not receive any credit with his House.
- c. The PCs put in a good word for Tearn with members of his House, but did not allow Tearn to be the one to turn in the Sphere.
- d. The PCs allowed Tearn to present the Sphere to his House.

### 3. How do your players rate this adventure?

- a. One star (worst possible rating)
- b. Two stars (below average)
- c. Three stars (average)
- d. Four stars (above average)
- e. Five stars (best possible rating)

### 4. How do you, the DM, rate this adventure?

- a. One star (worst possible rating)
- b. Two stars (below average)
- c. Three stars (average)
- d. Four stars (above average)
- e. Five stars (best possible rating)

## NEW RULES

### Boots of Quickness

Level 8

*This supple leather footwear keeps you out of harm's way.*

Lvl 8 3,400 gp

**Item Slot:** Feet

**Property:** Gain a +1 bonus to Reflex defense.

### Companion's Defender

Level 5

*This belt is constructed from woven bones and enhances a companion's defensive ability while adjacent to you.*

Lvl 5 1,000 gp

**Item Slot:** Companion

**Property:** While adjacent to you, your companion gains a +1 item bonus to all defenses.

### Gloves of Eldritch Admixture

Level 8

*You funnel the energy granted by your pact through these gloves, amplifying your power.*

Lvl 8 3,400 gp

**Item Slot:** Hands

**Prerequisite:** Warlock

**Property:** When you deal extra damage as a result of your Warlock's Curse, you can choose that damage to be acid, cold, or fire (or leave it untyped).

**Power (At-Will, 5 Charges/Day ♦ Acid, Cold, or Fire):** Free Action. The next attack you make this turn deals extra damage depending on how many charges you spend: 1 charge, 1d6 damage; 2 charges, 2d6 damage; 5 charges, 3d6 damage. This extra damage can be acid, cold, or fire damage.

### Staff of Missile Mastery +2

Level 7

*This dark wooden staff empowers a wizard's most basic attack.*

Lvl 7 +2 2,600 gp

**Implement (Staff)**

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d6 damage per plus, or +1d8 damage per plus when using *magic missile*.

**Property:** When you cast *magic missile* with this implement, you gain a +1 item bonus to attack rolls and an item bonus to damage rolls equal to the staff's enhancement bonus.

**Power (Daily):** Free Action. Use this power when you cast *magic missile*. Target one or two creatures with the attack. No target can be more than 5 squares from any other target.

### Stag Helm

Level 5

*This helm sports a set of antlers and makes you as alert as a stag.*

Lvl 5 1,000 gp

**Item Slot:** Head

**Property:** Gain a +2 item bonus to passive Perception checks. Also, you can take a minor action during a round when you are surprised.

### Tactician's Armor +1

Level 5

*In battle, strength of mind is as important as strength of the body, and this armor ensures that you have both.*

Lvl 5 +1 1,000 gp

**Armor:** Chain, Scale, Plate

**Enhancement:** AC

**Property:** When a power or class feature calls on your Intelligence modifier to determine a value other than your attack bonus, add 1 to that value. This does not change your Intelligence modifier for any other purpose.

### Watchful Ruby Eye

Level 6

*This crimson gem set in gold and silver enhances your warding rituals.*

**Wondrous Item** 1,800 gp

**Property:** While grasping this gem, any skill check you make as part of a warding ritual gains a +2 power bonus.

**Special:** The *watchful ruby eye* can be used as a focus in warding rituals that allow a focus (such as *eye of alarm*). The value of a *watchful ruby eye* must meet the focus cost requirement for the ritual, as normal.

### Glassteel Shard

Level 7

*Strong as steel, this tempered glass shard enhances the force with which a power strikes.*

Lvl 7 100 gp

**Reagent**

**Power (Consumable):** Free Action. Expend this reagent when you use a power with the force keyword of up to 7th level. Slide each target 1 square.