

The Best Laid Plans



A Scenario by
Dave Morris

Converted to Dragon Warriors by Lee Barklam

Setting Up

This adventure is really intended to give players a crash course in how to deal with Dragon Warriors demons. It should be light-hearted, but that doesn't mean that survival chances are high – players are recommended to create special characters for this adventure only, unless they particularly want to use suitable regular characters.

Characters generated for this adventure will need to be heavily armed and likely at least 8th rank to survive the arena. The GM should have a copy of the rules for demonologists (either from *In From The Cold* or the *Dragon Warriors Players' Guide*).

The scenario involves *X* characters (maximum eight) in a fight with *X*+2 demons. If there are fewer than four players in the group, each should take two characters. If there is a surplus of players, get some of them to help run the demons.

Players' Introduction

This whole section may be read to the players verbatim, as an introduction to this short scenario.

You are seasoned adventurers who have come from all over the known world (i.e., the mapped territories of Krarth) to the Tower Built of Night, having heard that the great demonologist Master Hajpool the Supreme is hiring men at very good rates of pay. You stand in one of the chambers of the Tower and listen to Master Hajpool explain the deal:

"Attend, and I will simplify matters for your meagre intellects to comprehend! Tonight, I summon the Lord Kastyron, overseer of Gambits, Demon of Risk. Not in five centuries has terrible Kastyron been evoked, for he is mightily feared, having extra-ordinary power and a predisposition to summarily slay any summoner who does not please him greatly. But I have determined that since Kastyron above all things values a gamble, by the very act of summoning him I take considerable risk and thus ensure his goodwill towards me. So the 'gamble' is really a dead certainty."

Hajpool titters slightly – a curious sound from one so powerful. He continues, *"When he appears, he will doubtless expect some sort of competition with me. I intend to suggest pitting you against some enchanted beasts of Kastyron's and then the demon-lord and I can bet on the outcome. You needn't worry too much*

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about the danger though, because the battle will have to be evenly matched or even slightly in your favour to gratify Kastyrian's desire to gamble. Payment will be 100 crowns each, plus a potion of healing for any... I mean everyone who survives. All of you who are interested, come to the topmost chamber before midnight tonight."

So it is that you find yourself standing armed and armoured in a chamber at the top of the Tower Built of Night, shivering against the wind howling through the open windows and watching Master Hajpool as he waits for the light of the full moon to throw the proper patterns on the stone floor. Alarming that you should be outside the pentacle he's drawn for himself, but perhaps that's the proper summoning etiquette...

Hajpool begins his gestures and intonations as the moment arrives. Much of the ritual seems dubious or even totally comical, and as the minutes drag on you find it more and more difficult to accept that anything is going to happen. Then, quite suddenly, Hajpool claps his hands together and stands perfectly still. The lines of the pentacle brighten with a reddish glow. The wind drops momentarily and then starts to build up, rapidly becoming an icy gale that screeches through the chamber like a thing alive. Hajpool starts to smile, then throws open two chests beside him. One full of blood and the other full of gold dust! The contents of each chest seem to stir and then rise up, mingling to form a single scarlet-and-gold stream, a flux that passes out through the window and up towards the stars.

Hajpool watches the offerings from the chests flow to the demon-lord's realms for a few moments. Something seems to distract him, because he swallows hard a couple of times, then cranes his back and gingerly fingers his throat. A moment later, his head explodes, scattering unmentionable gore over the ceiling of the chamber.

There follows a moment of preternatural calm – hands seem to reach almost lazily for sword hilts as each of you watches the demonologist's headless form crumple within the pentacle. Then, with a noise like a dozen thunderclaps, the topmost chamber of the impregnable Tower Built of Night bursts apart.

A moment of complete disorientation – you feel the rushing wind and realise you are falling. Not far off, the thread of blood and gold flows into the crystal night. Then you see the lights of Deliverance far below and the moonlight shimmering on the Issaries river, and with sudden panic you realise that you are now thousands of feet above the ground, plummeting to your doom.

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Each of you hears a voice in his mind – a voice like the rustling of leaves in the breeze: *“Unlucky Hajpool. I despise someone who tries to fix the odds. Now, through your greed, you miserable creatures have come into my clutches and it seems I must get my entertainment from you.”*

You fall, it seems, into a light cloud, and for a moment the ground rushing up to meet you is obscured. As the veil of cloud parts, you are aware that you are falling much slower now – and you land with a jarring thud on a floor of polished black marble. You are in a large, vaulted chamber. It seems to be about 30m across, and each of you is lying in one of the alcoves around the wall.

Kastyrion's challenge echoes around the room: *“Welcome to my combat arena. Thirty of your seconds from now I shall introduce you to my gladiators, who will seek to slay you. If any of you are still alive after one hour, I will return you to your own plane. Remuneration is also offered, for the survivors to divide amongst themselves: a magical crystal for each of my gladiators slain.”*

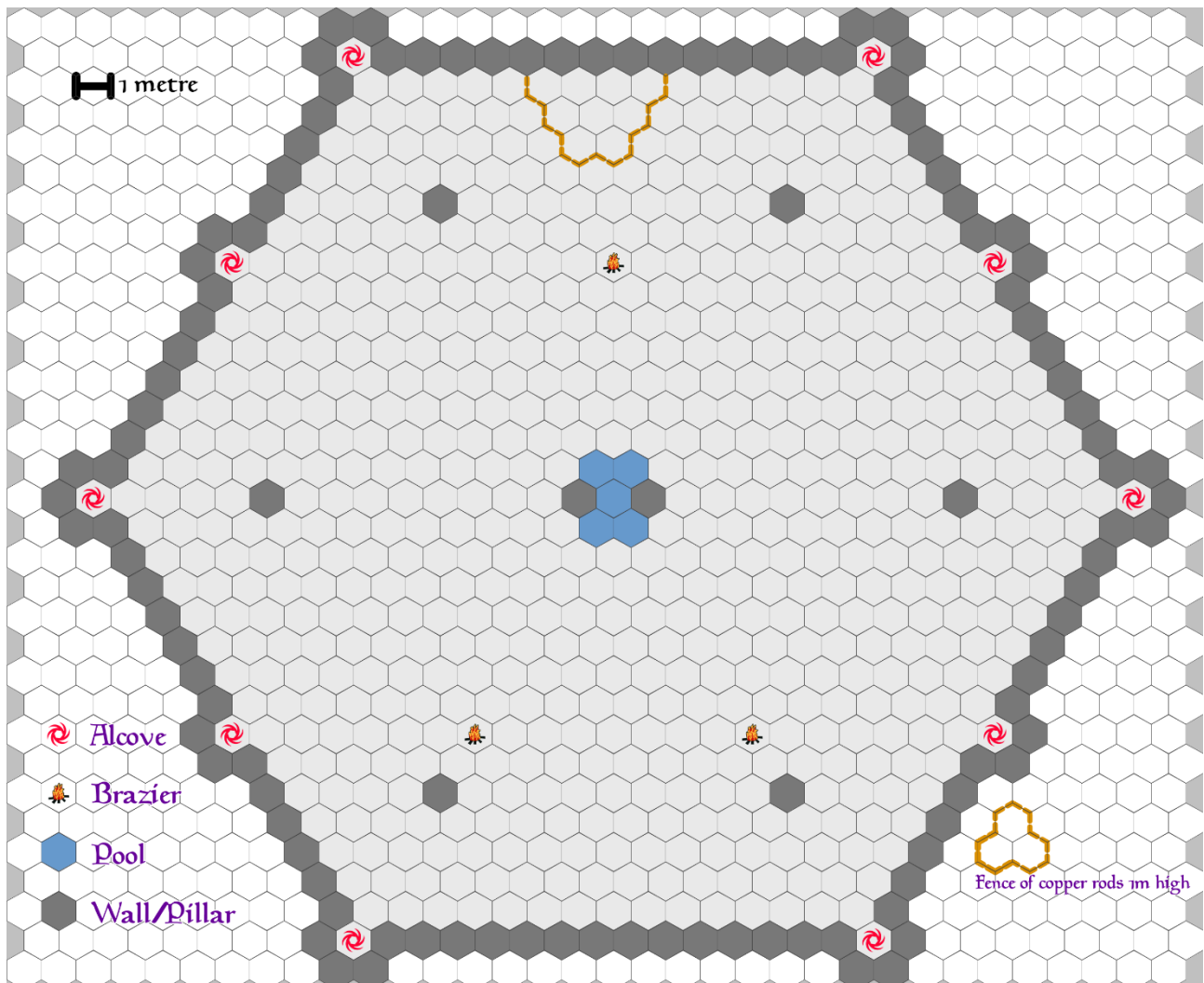
As you step from your alcoves, a reddish glow appears within each. *“These alcoves are havens from the battle come. You will find that they protect you from my gladiators if you need to retire for healing purposes. Be warned that the protective energies are of strictly limited duration.”*



Referee's Notes

1. Each hex equals 1m. Ordinarily, a human character would move 2.5m before acting in a combat round. However, for the purposes of this battle, a human character may move up to 3 hexes in a straight line or only 2 hexes if turning or changing facing as part of their move.
2. In a tactical battle like this, it is important that the referee strictly adheres to the appropriate order for the declaration of actions and the execution of actions. Actions should be declared at the beginning of the round in reverse order of Reflexes and then executed in order of Reflexes. A list of all participants' relative Reflexes scores will therefore be a useful reference.
3. Each alcove contains a red glow – a forcefield that activates when a character enters it. The forcefield is subject to a Spell Expiry Roll. If the character leaves the alcove before the SER indicates it would fail, the forcefield will reactivate the next time any character enters the alcove. However, if the SER indicates the forcefield fails whilst a character is within it, it will not reactivate again. Demons cannot enter alcoves, nor may missiles or indirect attack spells be fired through it. Direct attack spell, though, can pass through the forcefield unimpeded.
4. The lighting in the room is equivalent to half-light. There are three large iron braziers in the room. Once ignited (they are unlit at the start) these will burn for the duration of the scenario. To the left of each alcove, there is a lit torch in a bracket. The braziers are immovable but the torches can be taken down and carried.
5. The pool in the centre of the room is one metre deep. The water detects as strongly magical. A character standing in the pool will be at a height disadvantage if meleed by someone standing at the pool's edge, so his attacks will be at -2 and attacks made on him will be at +2. However, the pool's magic protects him for as long as he stands in it – he gets +1 Armour Factor, +1 Magical Defence, and is not subject to critical hits. Demons can enter the pool if they wish and they are aware of its properties.
6. A group of X characters will be pitted against X demons, plus the two gremlins. The demons involved are chosen by the Referee. Lord Kastyrion stops the combat after 60 minutes (300 combat rounds). Any character alive at that time will be returned to Krarth, materialising on the lawn beside Hajpool's tower, just as the sun rises. The promised crystals lie on an ebony table beside them.

The Arena



The Demons

The demons will co-operate with one another as much as possible, but since they do not speak each other's languages, there will not be much in the way of a coherent battle plan.

The other point to remember is that the demons are unlikely to settle for a convenient one-on-one melee. A character fighting the strain could find in the next instant that he's been hit by a lightning bolt from the storm demon meleeing someone else and that the rult is teleporting beside him to deliver a claw attack. Except for the gremlins, there will only be at least one of each other type of demon, although the exact mix is left for the Referee to decide.

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Amorph Rank Equivalence: 8th		
Attack	19	An Amorph is an oozing blob of grey-mauve protoplasm, full of eyes and chattering mouths. It will occasionally extrude temporary appendages. Amorphs take an additional 50% damage from fire and 2d6 HP damage if they cross a line of eucalyptus oil. The Amorph will stay towards the middle of the room, if possible, to take on anyone who tries to make use of the pool.
Defence	13	
Magical Defence	12	
Evasion	2	
Stealth	17	
Perception	16 (panoptical)	
Movement	5m	
Reflexes	11	
Weapon	Appendage (2d6, 8)	
Armour	Hide, AF 3	
Health Points	2d6+30	

B'krath Rank Equivalence: 8th		
Attack	23	B'krath are slender, prowling killers—roughly humanoid in appearance but with musculature and stance reminiscent of a jaguar. The jet-black fur of a B'krath makes it particularly adept at stalking in shadows (its defence and stealth abilities are halved in bright light, such as within 2 hexes of a lit brazier). B'krath fight with their long powerful talons and needle-sharp teeth.
Defence	12	
Magical Defence	11	
Evasion	9	
Stealth	23	
Perception	14 (darksight)	
Movement	15m (30m)	
Reflexes	16	
Weapon	Claws (d10, 6)	
Armour	Hide, AF 4	
Health Points	2d6+20	

Gremlins (2) Rank Equivalence: 2nd		
Attack	14	Gremlins are small (2'6"), thin humanoids with elongated toes and fingers like a lizard's, and a globular head perched on a narrow neck. They have pale green skin and their large, saucer-shaped eyes give them a rather comical look. Any rolls made by a character or demon within 8m of a gremlin are adjusted by 2 to be less favourable to him. This adjustment also applies to rolls made to target an affected character. As this applies to the demons as well, the gremlins will attempt to manoeuvre to bring bad luck only the player characters and will target non-engaged spellcasters or missile-users first. Gremlins will initially be deployed to the arena by the Referee out of sight of the players and only need to check their Stealth if the gremlins move. The gremlins' bad-luck powers are not cumulative, and gremlins are immune to other gremlins' bad luck.
Defence	9	
Magical Defence	6	
Evasion	7	
Stealth	25	
Perception	14 (darksight)	
Movement	12m (25m)	
Reflexes	11	
Weapon	Claw (d6, 4)	
Armour	Hide, AF 2	
Health Points	1d6+6	

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Melech Rank Equivalence: 6th		
Attack	19	Melechs are tall, muscular, bronze-skinned humanoids, with malevolent but not unhandsome features and dancing flames for hair. If the melech is not engaged in melee, he will breathe fire at a target up to 10m away at speed 13, causing 2d8 damage on a successful hit, reduced by 2 if the target is wearing armour. The melech is also able to cast <i>illusion</i> and <i>phantasm</i> spells at will with no MP cost. Their magical nature also makes them immune to any spell cast with 2 or fewer MP.
Defence	10	
Magical Attack	18	
Magical Defence	11	
Evasion	5	
Stealth	18	
Perception	9 (darksight)	
Movement	10m (20m)	
Reflexes	15	
Weapon	Flaming 2H sword (d10+1, 6)	
Armour	Hide, AF 3	
Health Points	2d6+12	

Porphyry Rank Equivalence: 5th		
Attack	22	Vampiric blue-skinned demons, porphyrs are very tall and gaunt and have all the normal powers of a Dragon Warriors vampire. They have bald, veined heads, eyes of limpid yellow, and long seemingly delicate nails. Over its robes, a Porphyry will wear a silver cuirass with intricate designs worked upon it. Porphyrs have all the vulnerabilities of a vampire but are particularly vulnerable to fresh garlic flowers, causing a -2 penalty to its attack for 2d6 rounds against any character so protected. Additionally, if a burning torch is used as a club against the porphyry, its robes might ignite (test Reflexes to avoid this). If the porphyry's robes ignite, the porphyry takes 2 HP damage per round until the fire is out. To extinguish the fire, the porphyry must disengage from combat and successfully test Reflexes as a full round action.
Defence	14	
Magical Defence	9	
Evasion	8	
Stealth	18	
Perception	9 (darksight)	
Movement	10m (20m)	
Reflexes	18	
Weapon	Claws, (d4+2, 5)	
Armour	Robes, AF 1	
Health Points	4d4+18	

Rult Rank Equivalence: 5th*		
Attack	18	Rult have large, hunched bodies with dry, shredding flesh, a large head like that of a fly, and skeletal wings draped with a torn web of skin. The rult has two special abilities – the first is that the rult may teleport next to any character they have previously engaged in combat as part of their movement each round (and do not need to disengage from their current opponent to do this) and, secondly, the rult exudes a poisonous vapour affecting everyone within 2m as a weak poison. Damage from this poison may not be healed with magic.
Defence	12	
Magical Defence	9	
Evasion	6	
Stealth	12	
Perception	8 (darksight)	
Movement	15m (30m)	
Reflexes	11	
Weapon	Claws (1d6, 5)	
Armour	Hide, AF 4	
Health Points	2d4+13	

* If poisons are deadly, as per canon Dragon Warriors rules, rank equivalence is still only 5th.

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Sraim Rank Equivalence: 7th*		
Attack	20	Sraim have a giant maggot's body on four long spidery legs, with a face which is lumpish and misshapen as though made of putty. In addition to biting in combat, the sraim can also spit acidic venom (equivalent to a normal strength poison) up to 10m at speed 14. Note that a successful bite attack automatically subjects the character to the poison effect, no Evasion check may be made against this.
Defence	14	
Magical Defence	11	
Evasion	6	
Stealth	18	
Perception	9 (darksight)	
Movement	12m (25m)	
Reflexes	15	
Weapon	Bite (2d4+1, 7), plus poison	
Armour	Hide, AF 4	
Health Points	2d6+12	

* If poisons are deadly, as per canon Dragon Warriors rules, rank equivalence increases to 8th.

Stalker Rank Equivalence: 9th		
Attack	22	Stalkers appear to be vaguely humanoid, hunched inside their dusty robes, but have withered brown skin like tree bark and a cowed vulture's head. The Stalker can make itself intangible to anything except metals and magical materials, but it is unlikely to find this power very useful during this combat because the arena walls and floor are definitely magical. If the stalker wounds a character and makes a successful Magical Attack against him, the character loses 2 points of Strength, which recover at 1 point per hour. Every fifth round, the stalker can cast bolts of white light up to 10m with a speed of 18, dealing 1d20 points of damage, against which armour offers no protection.
Defence	13	
Magical Attack	20	
Magical Defence	12	
Evasion	10	
Stealth	23	
Perception	14 (panoptical)	
Movement	12m (25m)	
Reflexes	17	
Weapon	Claws (2d6, 6)	
Armour	Robes, AF 5	
Health Points	2d6+22	

Storm Demon Rank Equivalence: 7th		
Attack	18	Storm demons are creatures of living lightning that appear as flickering, electrical humanoid figures up to twice the size of a man. Storm demons are immune to non-magical weapons and may hurl bolts of energy up to 20m away at speed 16. On impact, these bolts cause four 1d8 wounds, each of which may be reduced by 1 if the target is wearing non-metal armour, but metal armour provides no protection. Alternatively, in melee, the storm demon's touch causes 7 HP damage (again, reduced by 1 by non-metal armour only) and having a 20% chance to set the victim's hair and clothing alight, causing a further 1d6 HP damage per round until the character spends a full round putting out the flames. Crossing the fence of copper rods will cause 3d6 HP damage to the storm demon and any lightning bolts crossing it reduce their speed by 4.
Defence	10	
Magical Defence	10	
Evasion	5	
Stealth	5	
Perception	10 (panoptical)	
Movement	10m (20m)	
Reflexes	11	
Weapon	Touch (N/A, 7)	
Armour	Body, AF 6	
Health Points	1d6+10	

The Crystals

Each of the crystals stores a single sorcery spell that may be cast by anyone holding it in their unadorned left hand. To determine which spell each crystal holds, roll 3d4-2 for the spell's level and 1d6 for the specific spell. If relevant to the spell, the crystal has a Magical Attack score of 28, although a sorcerer may choose to substitute their own Magical Attack score, if higher. The crystal may be used up to three times each day and replenishes its daily charges at midnight.

However, when picking up the crystal, the character will realise that the crystal stores a human soul, which communicates its impotent pleas for freedom telepathically with the possessor whenever it is in contact with their skin. Each activation of the crystal wracks the soul within with unimaginable torments, flooding the mind of the caster with the anguished screams of the tortured soul.

It could be an adventure in itself to figure out how to release the soul, assuming the character wants to, of course...

