

A FACELESS ENEMY



Tales From the
Fallen empire

CHAPTER **13** PRESS

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Presents

A FACELESS ENEMY

A Level 5 Adventure

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For use with

Tales From the
Fallen Empire

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v1.0 (05/12/2016)

A hereditary tradition is strong within the order and the children of the Knights often strive to earn a place within the ranks. Because of this, Ooruk still make up about 25% of the guardian army, these being a more civilized and cultured breed than others of their race. The threat of the daughters of Kishari, who steal men for breeding purposes, also shaped the composition of the Knights of Tal Abastion — women are welcome to apply and make up 30% of the human Knights of Tal Abastion.

The perils these knights face during their five-year tours are quite deadly, as they battle demons, monsters, and looters on an almost daily basis. While many recruits die during their first tour, those who survive often re-enlist into the order's ranks. Knights who retire from the order are given special badges, one for each tour. These are marks of high honor and can help elevate a recipient to a higher station. Many of low birth have risen to become generals, royal councilors, or even kings and chieftains, after serving with the Knights of Tal Abastion.

The order is supported by tributes from many nations and city-states across Urd. Many in positions of power also served in the Knights during their youth, so the organization has a great deal of political backing. Most nations consider the semiannual donations of a few wagons of supplies or chests of coins to assist in the upkeep of the Knights of Tal Abastion to be a small price to pay for the security and stability the order provides.

For nearly a century the Knights of Tal Abastion have safeguarded the world from the dark threats lurking in the ruins of Uruk. Some of the greatest heroes of the last 100 years have served within its ranks. Stories of their heroics are told in common taverns and kingly courts, becoming some of the first legends of the Third Age.

Current Crisis

Known only to a select few rulers, the Knights of Tal Abastion are dealing with a crisis unlike any they've ever faced before. In recent months, the order has been so weakened that their mission of protecting the ruins of Uruk may soon fail. The enemy they face isn't coming from within the dread ruins, but from the wastelands without.

An army of cunning and elusive raiders known as the Red Scarves has systematically cut off the supply routes leading into Harkanis Bek. Somehow these deadly warriors are able to not only survive, but thrive in the brutal wastelands. Using ambushes and guerilla tactics, the Red Scarves have isolated Harkanis Bek from the outside world. Little grows within the Dol Minor Wastes around the ruins of Uruk, and fresh water is impossible to find. Supplies must be transported to the fortress regularly or the garrison cannot be maintained. What the bandits don't seize they destroy, denying the knights food and fresh water. Their objective seems to be starving the Knights of Tal Abastion into submission.

Unless the supply routes can be secured, Harkanis Bek could fall in a matter of months, leaving the evil creatures of the ruins accessible to the rest of the world. Therefore shipments of food and water must be escorted safely to Harkanis Bek at all costs. The Knights of Tal Abastion have pledged to never abandon their citadel and intend to remain at their posts until they die from thirst and hunger. The caravans **MUST** get through.



The Actual Crisis

Twelve years ago, Jannik Bel'Tarul, Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion, was captured while leading a patrol inside the ruins of Uruk. His men slaughtered, Jannik became the prisoner of a shape-changing Abyssal Prince called Morazak. The demon flayed the skin from Jannik's head and devoured his face and scalp. As the Tal lay dying from shock, the Abyssal Prince fell into a deep torpor. For a day and night Morazak slept, while his body changed to perfectly mimic Jannik Bel'Tarul and his mind filled with the man's memories. When Morazak awoke he was a perfect copy of the current Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion.

However, when the Abyssal Prince discovered his minions were dead and his captive missing, he wasted no time. He rushed to Harkanis Bek and began commanding the order, dispatching a patrol to search for survivors from among the very knights he'd earlier ambushed. He hoped to locate the true Jannik Bel'Tarul, but the man had vanished, as well as his fourteen-year-old twin children, daughter Bellana and son Tarran.

But Morazak had greater concerns than the missing Bel'Tarul family. Replacing Jannik was only the first step in a far greater plan, one aimed at undoing the defeat of the Abyssal Lord Ereshal at the hands of Valerak. Morazak's plot, if successful, would re-write the last century of history. The Third Age would become an era in which the Urd was ruled by the Abyssal Lord Ereshal. The Knights of Tal Abastion were now Morazak's unwitting pawns.

The Demon's Plot

Morazak was not at Uruk when his master and father, Lord Ereshal, fell to the warrior-monk Valerak. The Abyssal Prince, known as The Face Stealer, swore to do more than avenge Ereshal. Morazak would dedicate his existence to undoing that moment, re-writing the last century of Urd's history. For several decades, the Abyssal Prince researched dark sorceries and forbidden arts until he discovered a way to accomplish his goal.

However, creating this gate would not be easy. It needed to be contained within a specially consecrated temple built near the physical location one wished to travel back to. The doorway itself had to be carefully constructed of the bones of more than a thousand humans, each of whom had to be ritually sacrificed during a full moon. Accomplishing all this would take years, but Morazak was immortal (if not invulnerable), so time was of little concern.

Next, Morazak started work on the temple and time portal, which he called the Arch of Bone. He made contacts with Kesh slavers and started smuggling human slaves into the ruins of Uruk. Soon a huge labor camp was formed, overseen by Morazak's Abyssal minions and his allies among the Daughters of Kishari. The slaves were put to work constructing a temple from materials salvaged from the ruins.

This cycle continued for years. Finally, just two short years ago, the temple was completed. Currently, Morazak has nearly enough enchanted human bones harvested to finish the Arch of Bone. The construction of this magical doorway has been difficult, with each bone carefully placed while certain stars were in proper alignment. Soon the Abyssal Prince will complete his long mission and change the history of The Third Age.

Jannik Bel'Tarul did not die. When his patrol failed to return to Harkanis Bek, his rash children, the twins Bellana and Tarran, took action. They disobeyed orders and entered the ruins to search for him. They'd been well trained by their father and tracked the demons to their lair where their father was being held. Bellana and Tarran killed the minions left to guard Jannik and liberated him from captivity. They knew him only by his clothing and armor, as all skin had been flayed from his head.

It was months before Jannik healed enough from his horrific wounds to function. Even this was only possible by the gifts of his daughter, who discovered she was favored by the Goddess Istasha — Bellana Bel'Tarul was a true cleric. The family hid in the wilderness, avoiding Abyssal hunters, the order's patrols, and the fearsome beasts of the Dol Minor wastes. Jannik knew few would believe their story that an Abyssal Fiend wearing his form was now in control of the Knights of Tal Abastion. His face, a nightmarish mask of scars, would be enough for many to disbelieve any claim he made. Worse, if they believed his tale, then faith in the knights would be shattered. No one would trust them any longer, and support of the order would soon evaporate. Jannik needed to save the Knights of Tal Abastion, not destroy them.

As the former leader of the Knights of Tal Abastion, Jannik knew that the order had a great weakness. The fortress of Harkanis Bek was never constructed to be self-sufficient. It required a constant resupply of food and fresh water; this was the gap in the order's armor. Jannik's plan was to have the Army of the Red Scarves sever all supply routes into Harkanis Bek and starve the fortress into submission. This would force Morazak to abandon the fortification, and leave him vulnerable to direct attack. Jannik wishes to limit the loss of life among both his army and the Knights of Tal Abastion. If they can kill the Abyssal Prince wearing his form, then they won't need to take on the order in open battle.



Part One: Tasagaroth

Introduction

It is an exciting and profitable time for adventurers. The call has gone out far and wide for soldiers of fortune willing to undertake a dangerous mission promising generous pay. Escorting caravans is hardly glamorous work, but it is how many adventurers and mercenaries get their start. Few veteran campaigners would ever return to such work, but these are special circumstances.

In the south lands a crisis has arisen. The fortress of Harkanis Bek requires re-supply after its caravan routes have been blocked by a force of bandits. The raiders, known as the Red Scarves, have been choking off supplies going into the fortress and, unless stopped, the garrison faces starvation. This puts many nations at risk, as the Knights of Tal Abastion based in Harkanis Bek have watched over the ruins of Uruk for almost a century. By their bravery and heroic service, intruders are kept out of the ruins and Abyssal creatures, for the most part, kept within.

The lands around Uruk, called the Dol Minor Wastes, are a scorched and blasted wilderness, devoid of game, forage, or drinkable water. Without constant re-supply, those defending the fortress of Harkanis Bek will soon succumb to hunger and thirst. Jannik Bel'Tarul, the current leader of the Knights of Tal Abastion, has declared that the fortress will never be abandoned. The order is offering 1000 silver coins for each wagonload of essential supplies reaching Harkanis Bek.

Because of this, scores of merchants, teamsters, guards, and mercenaries have flocked to Tasagaroth. This walled town in the lands of Vuul is a place of commerce, a launching point for caravans crossing the Dol Minor Wastes. For many it is the last civilized place they see before meeting their end. The routes linking Tasagaroth and the fortress of Harkanis Bek are quite dangerous, even before the arrival of the Red Scarves. The current crisis has benefited Tasagaroth's economy, as traders and mercenaries from across Urd now crowd its narrow streets.

Your company has come to Tasagaroth for a slightly different reason. You've received a request to journey here and meet with Shou Shen, a noble lord of Zhou. The reason for this

meeting was not stated in his message, but he stressed the need for utter secrecy and promised considerable rewards. The message did not state where within Tasagaroth the meeting would take place, so you can only assume the Zhou lord will find you once you arrive.

You now stand at the gates of Tasagaroth, waiting for entry along with several mercenary companies and trade caravans. The air is filled with the smells of pack beasts, cooking food, stale beer, cheaply perfumed ladies, and garbage. The features, complexions, and clothing styles of a dozen different nations can be seen among those awaiting entry. Tasagaroth seems less like a caravan stop and more like a mustering camp for a major military campaign.

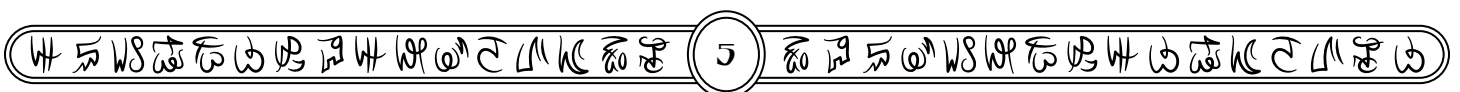
About Tasagaroth

This large town is surrounded by a twenty-foot stone wall with two gates on opposite sides of the settlement. Tasagaroth is choked with people, most of whom spend only a few days here. Much coin changes hand as goods bound for Harkanis Bek are stockpiled, warehoused, and traded. Many businesses cater to the needs of guards, mercenaries, and adventurers, giving the town an abundance of smithies (for arms and armor), taverns, and brothels.

Tasagaroth is a noisy, raucous place that can sometimes be dangerous. Violence between groups of travelers is common, as well-armed citizens of rival nations often cross paths on the streets of Tasagaroth. Add to this the abundance of taverns and it becomes clear to see why brawls and riots are a constant threat. Also, Tasagaroth is plagued by The Spiders, a thieves' guild specializing in mugging and pick-pocketing.

Warlord

The current ruler of Tasagaroth is Varuvis, a merchant prince of Kesh. He is a shrewd businessman and powerful sorcerer. Without his genius, many know that the town would fall into anarchy. Varuvis makes a fortune from the taxes and fees gathered here, some of which he uses to maintain a large garrison of fighting men to maintain order. Most people never encounter Varuvis unless they are being sentenced for a crime. Most of his orders are issued through Saysani, a beautiful woman rumored to be his slave, apprentice, or both.



Guards

The guardsmen of Tasagaroth wear tabards emblazoned with a Red "V" wreathed in green flame, the sigil of Varuvis. They are well paid and loyal, often patrolling in groups of six. When a problem arises they typically detain and disarm everyone involved until the issues can be resolved. If a patrol finds itself overmatched they blow a horn which quickly summons reinforcements.

- **Tasagaroth Guardsmen (4):** Init +0; Atk spear +1 melee (1d8); AC 14; HD 1d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L

Establishments

While not a large town, Tasagaroth is home to a variety of business establishments. There are general stores offering most common items, and armories that repair and supply both weapons and armor. Much of the town caters to the caravan trade, with warehouses for goods and stables for pack animals and mounts. Tasagaroth's east side is where all of its brothels, gaming dens, and taverns are located. Below are a few sample establishments found here.

- **Bloodwine:** Low-class tavern known for dice games
- **Morgan's:** High-class tavern known for good food and tough bouncers
- **The Dented Mug:** Middle-class tavern with music and dancers
- **The Falcon's Roost:** High-class brothel
- **Talbot's:** Low-class, Kesh-style brothel staffed by slaves
- **The Gilded Glaive:** High-class rooming house with baths
- **The Games:** Huge gaming house with dice, darts, cards and bare knuckle matches
- **Wendell's Emporium:** General store whose items are substandard 30% of the time
- **Carthax's Forge:** Expensive general store (+30% cost) known for quality items
- **Amstel's Armory:** Smithy that specializes in armor (+30% cost)
- **Boranell's Blades:** Smithy that specializes in weapons (+40% cost)
- **Arms & Armor:** Affordable smithy making arms and armor, substandard 30% of the time



About Shou Shen

This mysterious Zhou is a diplomat for his people and often meets with other races across Urd. He is well traveled, and versed in the tongues and customs of many nations. Shou Shen has summoned the party in to Tasagaroth in order to hire them for a secret mission. He watches the gates for the characters to arrive then observes them about for a day to make certain they aren't being followed before making his presence known.

Shou Shen is atypical of most Zhou. His clothing is a mixture of Vuul nomad with his long flowing robe, and Karthis mountain barbarian with sturdy boots and thick leather belts. He thanks the party for making the long journey to Tasagaroth. He immediately hands each a silver ring with a jade stone worth 500 silver coins, saying it is compensation for their time so far.

The Mission

Shou Shen wishes to hire the adventurers to transport an item to the fortress of Harkanis Bek. He says he cannot do this personally because of the current political situation. If asked to explain, Shou Shen says that the Red Scarves are more than bandits; they are too well organized to be anything but an army. Moving such a valuable item across the Dol Minor Wastes must be done in secret by a small party of competent adventurers.

Shou Shen explains that the item is bulky, three feet tall, and weighing about fifty pounds. He stresses that the item **MUST** be kept secret and be safely delivered to Harkanis Bek. He offers the party 10,000 pieces of silver, payable upon reaching their destination. Unless the party accepts the mission, he gives them no more details. Upon taking the mission, Shou Shen gives them the item (see below), explaining its powers and importance.

The Heart of Yan Shia

This large, heavy stone jug was created by a cabal of Zhou mystics especially for the Knights of Tal Abastion. The magical vessel is filled with cold, refreshing water and can supply 1000 gallons per day. The water remains cold and fresh for up to a month even when placed in other containers. Lastly, if someone ill or wounded is bathed in 50 gallons of water from the Heart they are fully healed of injuries and cured of all diseases. This restorative bath only works once during a person's lifetime.

Lord Shou explains that this item is a gift from Zheng Wei, the son of heaven, to the Knights of Tal Abastion. The Knights are constructing a reservoir system for the vessel and are desperately awaiting its delivery. The magical item can support much of the garrison's need for fresh water. Shou Shen states, "It won't be enough for them to be comfortable, but they'll be able to hold on. People can last weeks with little to no food, but water is an entirely different matter. The

Knights' valor may hold demons at bay, but it won't help them against thirst."

The Spiders of Tasagaroth

If the adventurers are careless, the Spiders may discover the rare and valuable artifact in their possession. If the Heart of Yan Shia isn't constantly concealed, or party members speak of it openly, Tasagaroth's thieves guild may learn of its existence and whereabouts. The Red Scarves, the Knights of Tal Abastion, and Varuvis would pay a fortune for such a powerful magical item. In the Dol Minor Wastes, water is life and the control of drinkable water is power.

The Spiders may try to acquire the item by stealth, trickery, or outright force, whichever option seems to present the best chance of success. No matter what the odds, once they learn of the Heart, the Spiders' guild-masters decide an attempt to obtain it must be made. If the party kills more than three guild members, the Spiders will abandon their mission to steal it.

- **Spider, Mugger/Thug (1):** Init +1; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6+1) or short bow +2 missile fire (1d6); AC 15; HD 1d8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C
- **Spider, Pick-pocket (1):** Init +2; Atk club +2 melee (1d6+1) or sling +2 missile fire (1d4); AC 13; HD 1d8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C

Planning the Journey

Currently 1d3 caravans leave Tasagaroth each day. Caravan masters try to avoid other groups and take different routes while crossing the Dol Minor Wastes. They fear multiple caravans traveling together would be easily discovered and too tempting a target for either Red Scarf raiders or predatory monsters (or both). Add to this the lack of drinkable water, game, and grazing between Tasagaroth and Harkanis Bek, and the trip becomes a deadly challenge.

The party can join a caravan on its way to Harkanis Bek, hire a guide, or attempt the journey out on their own. No matter which they choose, the adventurers must supply their own food and water for the trip. Water may not be a problem, if the party uses the Heart during the crossing. However, setting out without enough water will arouse a great deal of suspicion.

The adventurers can purchase a map showing five different routes between Tasagaroth and Harkanis Bek, costing 1d6*20sp. There are also a few guides to be found, willing to lead people across the Dol Minor Wastes.

Trips from Tasagaroth to Harkanis Bek

- If traveling with a caravan: 1d4+8 days
- If traveling with a guide: 1d8+8 days
- If traveling with just a map: 1d10+8 days

Joining a Caravan

Parties joining a caravan become much bigger targets to the Red Scarf bandits. Additional guards are usually welcome and hired on, although they are not as well paid as regular guards (1d4*20 sp). Below are three different caravans preparing to leave Tasagaroth.

The Melesandra Trading Company

Run by the Melesandra family, one of the six houses of Kesh, this caravan of thirty frons, large bison-like animals, is guarded by fifty warriors. It's the largest caravan ever to set across the Dol Minor Wastes. The caravan master is Jalal Melesandra, the eighth son of the house. He is an experienced merchant and caravan master, but this is his first trip to Harkanis Bek. His brother, Jabener, usually works this route for their household but vanished, along with his entire caravan, three months ago while attempting to deliver grain to the fortress. The family is sure it was the work of the Red Scarf Bandits. The heavily laden caravan carries supplies of salted meats, hard tack bread, grain, dried fruit, and nuts.

Douh Kalis Mercantile

This family-owned caravan hails from Vuul and is led by Douh Kalis, an independent merchant. He's a road-hardened trader running a dozen pack camels. He is accompanied by his younger brother and three adult sons, all of whom ride moa, large ostrich-like birds. Douh hired ten men as guards and gladly hires more, if possible. He's made this trip many times, sticking to a secret route he feels is safer than the common ones. So far he's avoided the Red Scarf raiders but feels his luck is running out. He says that this will be his last trip until the bandits are dealt with. This caravan carries nothing but casks of water.

Golden Hammer Caravan

This caravan hails from a small village called Kendle, on the edge of the jungles of Kesh. It is run jointly by two friends, a human trader named Johanis Yander and a young Ooruk warrior named Ruf. Ruf is the son of a Knight of Tal Abastion, and his father is currently serving his sixth tour in the order. The pair hopes to hire a few guards to help protect their caravan. They are transporting six wagons filled with coconuts, palm dates, salted fish, and wax-covered boiled moa eggs. The wagons are pulled by giant lizards, which will be slaughtered for meat upon arriving in Harkanis Bek.

Caravan Guides

Knowledgeable guides working the Dol Minor Wastes are few, and the demand for their services is high. Many have vanished over the past few years since the arrival of the Red Scarves. This has left only a handful available for hire. Currently, there are three available guides in Tasagaroth, which can be hired for 2d12*50 sp.

Mahira Ryos

This robed Kesh woman is a competent survivor who only works for small groups of traders and travelers. She speaks in a low, lisping voice and is never seen without her veil. Her fees are a bit lower than other guides (2d8*50sp) due to her questionable reputation. If hired, Mahira attempts to abandon the party 1d4 days into the trip across the Dol Minor Wastes. She may vanish while scouting ahead or slip away in the night while on watch. She may, depending on her mood, rob the adventurers of supplies, coin, jewelry, or an obvious magical item when making her departure.



- **Mahira Ryos, Treacherous Guide:** Init +4; Atk scimitar +4 melee (1d8+2); AC 15; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; AL C

Prannar Wastewalker

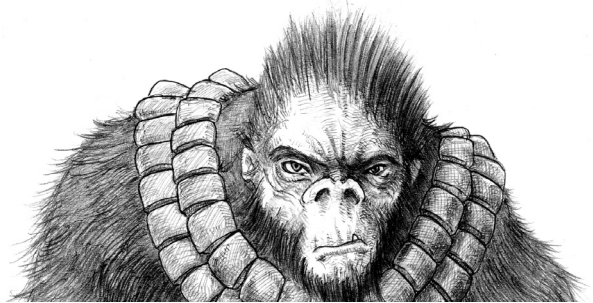
This former Kesh slave toiled for many years as a teamster owned by the Melesandra Trading Company. Three years ago he escaped into the Dol Minor Wastes, slipping away during the confusion after a giant scorpion attack threw the caravan into disarray. Since then he's built a life as a guide while hiding from his former owners. Prannar is an honest man but a marked one; the Red Scarves are set to either capture or eliminate him. His skills are hampering their efforts to prevent supplies reaching to Harkanis Bek.



- **Prannar Wastewalker, Escaped Slave and Honest Guide:** Init +2; Atk long sword +1 melee (1d8+1); AC 16; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N

Harowl

This powerful, older Ooruk male once served with the Knights of Tal Abastion, and proudly displays his badge of service. He is the most successful guide to date, and well respected among the traders and merchants in Tasagaroth. His fees are steep (2d10*50sp) but most consider his services worth every coin. The reason for his success is that Harowl is not only a spy for the Army of the Red Scarves, but one of its commanders.



- **Harowl, Successful Guide and Red Scarf Spy:** Init +3; Atk Spear +5 Melee d8+5; AC 16; HD 4d12; MV 40'; Act 1D20; SP Animal Prowess, Infravision 60'; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; AL N



Dol Minor Reaper Tentacle

Poison	Delivery	Fort Save	Damage on Successful Save	Damage on Failed Save
Dol Minor Reaper	Wound	DC 20	1d6 Agility	Paralysis (1d4 days)

Recovery

Can only be healed magically

Ghost, Damned of Uruk

Countless thousands of men, women, and children died during the fall of Uruk. Many were driven mad witnessing the horror of those days, and ended their own lives to escape the nightmare. However, many awoke on the other side of mortality as the restless, tortured dead. These are the Damned of Uruk, ghosts consumed with madness seeking the escape of oblivion. They cannot find rest unless destroyed and jealously hate all those who can still find peace in death. The Damned of Uruk all hope for their own destruction as they attack the living, although few are mighty enough to defeat one. All living creatures within a 30-foot spread must succeed on a Will save or run in a random direction for 2d4 rounds. A creature that successfully saves against the moan cannot be affected by the same ghost's moan for 24 hours. A ghost that hits a living target drains 1d4 points from Stamina. On each such successful attack, the ghost heals 5 points of damage to itself.

- **Ghost, Damned of Uruk:** Init +0; Atk weapon +1 melee (1d6); AC 15; HD 1d12; MV 25' Fly 30'; Act 1d20; SP undead, horrid moan, stamina drain; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL C

Hydra, Dol Minor

This terrible creature is found nowhere else on Urd. Somewhere in the Dol Minor Wastes, a hydra's brood was tainted with Abyssal influence, creating a new variant of the species. These creatures always begin with four heads, with each neck able to divide only once, giving a Dol Minor Hyda a maximum of eight heads. These creatures are longer than others of their species and snake-like, with small flippers instead of limbs. Dol Minor Hydras move by tunneling through the earth, although they can move clumsily while on the surface.



The heads of these creatures has a single eye and a mane of writhing tendrils instead of horns. Each head can release a jet of rancid vomit every 1d6 rounds. The highly acidic vomit burns those coming in contact with it for 3d4 damage on the first round, 2d4 on the second, and 1d4 on the third before becoming inert.

- **Hydra, Dol Minor:** Init +4; Atk bite +6 melee (1d10+4); AC 16; HD 1d10 (7 hp) per head; MV 20', burrow 40'; Act 1d20 per head; SP 4-8 heads, crit on 19-20, regeneration of heads at 2x rate, heal 1 hp/round per remaining head, acid; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +5; AL C

A Caravan Lost

Sometime during the journey the party discovers the remains of a recently attacked caravan. At first they spot a large gathering of carrion birds circling high overhead, which makes the location of the caravan easy to find. Once there the party discovers many corpses and slain pack animals. Judges can have this be the remains of any of the caravans provided earlier (The Melesandra Trading Company, Dough Kalis Mercantile, or a Golden Hammer Caravan), or one they've never seen before. Judges should also decide if this caravan was attacked by monsters or ambushed by the Army of the Red Scarves.

Monster Attack

If the caravan was attacked by monsters, everyone in the caravan is dead, as are the pack animals. The bodies have been devoured and dismembered, or drained into withered husks if attacked by the Damned of Uruk. The cargo lays ruined and scattered about, although lucky adventurers may be able to scavenge the odd item or two. Very little of value can be found here.

Red Scarf Attack

If the caravan was attacked by the Red Scarf Raiders all corpses found are stripped of arms, armor, and valuables. The bodies are respectfully laid out in a row with their faces covered and arms crossed; however, scavengers may have disturbed them before the party's arrival. Most of the bodies appear to have been slain by arrows, but no useable arrows remain anywhere to be found. Otherwise, those slain were cut down by wide blade strokes, likely scimitars or short axes.

If this is a caravan the party has earlier encountered they realize that about half its members and pack animals are unaccounted for. All cargo is gone, aside from a few odds and ends damaged during the fighting. Tracks, of both men, beasts, and possibly wagons, can be found leading away from the site of the battle. There are some strange tracks as well which are not easily identified (i.e. giant beetles). After a mile or two the trail vanishes, erased by either the wind or the careful efforts of the Red Scarf rearguard.

The Red Scarf Scout

Sometime after the party discovers the ruined caravan they notice a large animal flying high overhead. Their eyes can just make out a long, slender body with transparent wings, like a wasp or hornet of some sort but bigger than the largest of vultures. The animal follows the party for a time, circling the area but never coming close enough to enter arrow range. Eventually, it departs upward and away, flying toward the sun to blind observers.

The party has been spotted by an elite scout of the Army of the Red Scarf, a Wasp Rider. This is the greatest secret of the Red Scarves, and so far no one outside of the Wastelands realizes their forces employ such exotic creatures as mounts. Just how these creatures are captured, tamed, and trained remains a mystery, even to most within the ranks of the Red Scarves. Shortly after this scout sights the party, it reports their location to its commander and a hunting party is sent to intercept them.

Wasp, Giant

Of the many overly large insects inhabiting the Dol Minor Wastes, Giant Wasps are at the top of the food chain. In the wild, they hunt for living prey both as food and to complete their life cycle. Giant Wasps can deliver bites with their powerful mandibles, but their primary weapon is a highly venomous sting. This injects a poison that causes total paralysis for 1d6 hours, during which the victim is either eaten or used as a host for the wasp's young. Female wasps lay a single egg under the skin of a paralyzed victim. The larvae hatch quickly and secrete the same paralytic poison through their skin, ensuring that their host remains helpless while being devoured alive.

- **Wasp, Giant:** Init +1; Atk sting +6 melee (1d3+6 plus poison); AC 14; HD 5d8+10; MV20' or fly 60'; Act 1d20; SP poison, darkvision; Fort +6, Ref+2, Will +2; AL C

The Red Scarves Attack

The Red Scarves launch an attack on the party about midway between Tasagaroth and Harkanis Bek. The attack comes in one of two different forms, depending on whether the adventurers are with a larger caravan or a smaller group (i.e. alone or with a guide). The attack happens about an hour after the party begins that day's journey, as a carefully prepared ambush is set up a few miles from their camp on their likeliest route of travel.



The Red Scarf Bandits

While mistakenly considered to be thieves and raiders, the men and women comprising the ranks of the Army of the Red Scarf make up a well-trained and highly disciplined guerilla army. They employ brilliant tactics, not surprising considering they are led by the Bel'Tarul family, who have commanded the Knights of Tal Abastion since the order's founding.

Their weapons of choice are the recurved bow, scimitar, light lance, and hunga-munga (an exotic throwing axe). They field light infantry troops wearing studded leather armor, and medium cavalry troops wearing armor made from the shells of giant armored beetles (roughly equivalent to chain-mail). To protect themselves from the harsh conditions of the Dol Minor Wastes, each wears long, flowing brown robes, leather hoods, and brightly dyed red face scarves that conceal all facial features other than their eyes.

- **Red Scarf, Light Infantry:** Init +1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d6) hunga-munga +1 ranged(1d6+2); AC 14; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L
- **Red Scarf, Medium Cavalry:** Init +3; Atk light lance +3 melee (1d10) recurved bow +3 ranged (1d6); AC 18; HD 4d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L
- **Giant Armored Beetles:** Init -2; Atk mandibles +3 melee (1d4+2); AC 20; HD 2d8+2; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will -3; AL N

Attacked, With a Caravan

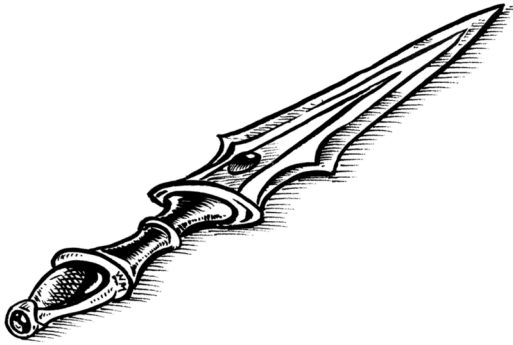
If the adventurers are with a caravan when attacked, the Red Scarves hide in a series of covered pits just below the surface of the sands, lining both sides of the trail or road. When the caravan moves between these lines, the Red Scarves spring up from their concealment and attack. These troops are all light infantry and shower the caravan with arrows.

Before the caravan can properly react, a third group launches a direct attack on the caravan's lead elements. This third force is medium cavalry, armed with lances and scimitars and mounted upon Giant Armored Beetles. These troops blow war horns as they attack the front of the caravan, trying to divert attention from the lighter troops and keep the caravan's warriors from organizing a proper defense.

As the battle rages all around them, the adventurers notice that the Red Scarf troops avoid attacking anyone who is not defending themselves. Those who are unarmed are ignored, helpless wounded are spared further attacks, and anyone surrendering is spared. The archers even attempt to cripple their targets, with most arrows striking outer extremities rather than vital areas. The adventurers are engaged by either light or medium Red Scarf soldiers, depending on where they were within the caravan when the ambush occurred.

Red Scarf Ambush Party

- **Flanks:** 10 Red Scarf, Light Infantry (see above).
- **Front:** 6 Red Scarf, Light Infantry (see above), 4 Red Scarf, Medium Cavalry (see above).



The Battle Ends, With a Caravan

Whether or not the party defeats their personal adversaries, the battle is over. If the party falls to the Red Scarves, they are taken prisoner, even if unconscious at the time. None are intentionally killed. If the party is victorious, they soon discover they are the only members of the caravan who remain armed and able to defend themselves. The rest are either dead, helpless, or have surrendered and the party now stands against the full war party (Judges should have the party outnumbered at least three to one at this point).

One of the medium cavalry troops among the Red Scarves steps forward to address the adventurers. "Well fought," a feminine voice calls from beyond her Red Scarf. "But your position is indefensible. I offer you peaceable and honorable surrender. I pledge on my life the fair and humane treatment of yourselves and all others I take into custody this day."

If the party refuses the woman whistles loudly and the remaining troops draw forth their hunga-munga. In seconds each prisoner, now screaming and begging for mercy, has an axe blade held to their throat. The woman then says, "It is up to you if I take many prisoners today, or none. Their blood will be on your hands and my conscience will be clear. I salute your skills at arms and admire your courage, but the battle is lost. Don't make things worse for these people."

Defeat

If the party still refuses to lay down their arms, the prisoners are executed and battle resumes. If the Red Scarves defeat the adventurers, they quickly bind their wounds to prevent their death and take them prisoner (see Red Tower).

Surrender

If the players surrender, no one is harmed. The party is disarmed, bound, and blindfolded. Their wounds are bandaged, they are given water and marched blindly across the Wastes with the captured contents of the caravan. Several hours later they arrive at Red Scarf Central Command (see Red Tower).

Victory

If the party fights their way through the ambush, whether with a caravan, alone, or with a guide (see below) they may continue on their way to Harkanis Bek. However, the following day they are approached by an emissary of the Red Scarf Raiders seeking a ceasefire (see Deadly Ultimatum).

Attacked, Alone, or With a Guide

In this case, the party stumbles into a carefully prepared ambush just outside of their camp as they begin that day's journey. A large group of Red Scarf Raiders, all light infantry, bursts out of covered pits and attacks. If the party defeats the ambushers, they are visited the following day by an emissary (see Deadly Ultimatum).

If the Red Scarves gain a clear advantage, they call on the party to surrender. If the adventurers yield, they're disarmed, blindfolded, bound, and taken into custody (see Red Tower above). If the party falls to the Raiders, their attackers bandage their wounds before any of them die. The helpless adventurers are then taken prisoner (see Red Tower).

Red Scarf Ambush Party

- 6 Red Scarf, Light Infantry (see above), 4 Red Scarf, Medium Cavalry (see above).

Battle, With a Guide

If the party has hired an NPC guide, the ambush unfolds a slightly differently way, depends on which of the three guides the party hired.

Battle with Mahira Kyos

If party hired Mahira, she'll have already abandoned or attempted to abandon the adventurers before this point. The only way she'd still be with the party would be against her will, and she'd attempt escape at every opportunity to do so. If the party has imprisoned Mahira and is forcing her to guide them to Harkanis Bek, she won't likely assist them against the Red Scarf Raiders.

Battle with Prannar Wastewalker

If the party hired Prannar, things go tragically for the escaped slave. He fights alongside the party against the raiders but is clearly outmatched. However, even when wounded he refuses all calls to yield. The Red Scarves don't want to kill the guide, but Prannar gives them no choice, fighting like a cornered rat. The man made an oath after escaping slavery to never again have his freedom taken from him. Despite their pleas for his surrender and promises of humane treatment, the former slave fights on until dying from his wounds.

After this happens a Red Scarf tries to bandage Prannar, but is stopped by his commander. A feminine voice calls out from behind a red scarf, "Leave him be. This brave soul made his choice. It was an honorable one and we won't take that from him. Die well, Prannar Wastewalker, may your next life be kinder one."

Battle with Harowl

As the ambush begins, the powerful Ooruk stays close to the party but does not assist them in battle. The Red Scarves also avoid attacking him. After a few rounds of combat, Harowl roars loudly, then says, "Enough blood. We yield, don't we, friends? Lay down your arms, and I give you my word you'll all be well treated." He then steps over to the Red Scarf Raiders, revealing his true allegiances. The Ooruk says with a sigh, "There is more to all this than you realize. Don't throw away your lives before you know the truth. By the blood of Tal Abastion, I beg you, yield."

At this point the party must either yield or resume fighting. However, they must also battle Harowl, as the Red Scarves continue their attempt at capturing the party.

Deadly Ultimatum

This happens if, and only if, the party fought their way through the initial Red Scarf ambush. The following day the adventurers spot another giant wasp circling overhead, only this time it descends much lower. Now its rider can clearly be seen by the party. The rider, obviously a Red Scarf soldier, holds a white cloth in one hand as he flies overhead. Just before entering arrow range the rider drops an object, and departs. The item, a rock with a long flowing ribbon tied to it, lands fifty yards from the party.

Players retrieving this rock find a note affixed to it, which reads, "I, Commander of Army Group Crimson, humbly request a formal ceasefire for a meeting. We pledge peaceable conduct during this meeting and expect you to honor the same accord. Rider shall return in 30 minutes. If interested, signal with flash from mirror or polished steel to receive further instructions. If not interested, hostilities shall resume and your company won't be underestimated again."

Thirty minutes later the rider returns, overflying the area to search for the party. If the adventurers don't signal, or take efforts to avoid detection, the Red Scarves take that as a sign that the peaceful meeting has been refused. If this happens, the Red Scarves begin aggressively hunting the party (see Hunting Party). If the party signals the rider, another rock with a note and signal ribbon is dropped near their location. The note this time is a map of the immediate area, with a spot several miles from the party's current location clearly marked upon it.

Diplomatic Encampment

If the party travels to the marked location, they discover a large pavilion tent has been erected. Its entrance is flanked by a pair of Red Scarf honor guards. The guards say nothing, but hold the flaps open for the party to enter. Inside the players find a folding camp table, a set of folding chairs, and three armed Red Scarf soldiers. The party is greeted formally by a man introducing himself as Commander Tarul, Commander of Army Group Crimson. He takes off his helmet and scarf,

revealing himself to be a handsome, darkly tanned man in his late twenties. Tarul seems much older than his years.

He thanks the characters for agreeing to meet with him and invites them to sit. He offers them water and a strange purple flatbread as a courtesy before beginning a formal discussion. If the players attack the commander or any of his men the ceasefire ends and battle ensues.

Violating Protocol

Commander Tarul is here with four honor guards, some of his finest men. Hidden nearby are an entire strike force of honor guards, light infantry, and mounted cavalry. Commander Tarul has no intention of ordering them to attack unless the party violates the peace first. The man, raised in a proud military tradition, considers a parley sacred. Should the adventurers violate it he orders his men to attack without mercy.

- **Red Scarf, Light Infantry (*6):** Init +1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d6) hunga-munga +1 ranged (1d6+2); AC 14; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L
- **Red Scarf, Medium Cavalry (*2):** Init +3; Atk light lance +3 melee (1d10) recurved bow +3 ranged (1d6); AC 18; HD 4d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L
- **Red Scarf, Honor Guards (6):** Init +3; Atk scimitar +3 melee (1d6) hunga-munga +3 ranged (1d6+2); AC 15; HD 3d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L
- **Commander Tarul, Tal of Army Group Crimson (aka Tarran Bel'Tarul):** Init +4; Atk Scimitar +4 melee (1d8+3) or recurved bow +4 missile fire (1d8); AC 18; HD 5d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4; AL L

The Meeting

Commander Tarul answers a few questions and asks a few of his own, trading information back and forth with the adventurers. His goal is to convince the party to accompany him back to Red Tower to meet with his father, The Flayed Man. In conversation, Tarul offers the following information:

- He is aware they're transporting an arcane artifact on behalf of the Zhou emperor that will somehow ease the supply crisis within Harkanis Bek caused by the Red Scarf blockade.
- The party is unaware of the true nature of this conflict between the Knights of Tal Abastion and the Army of the Red Scarf.
- The Army of the Red Scarves aren't bandits, they're an honorable army waging an unconventional war against a superior force.
- The true enemy of all people upon Urd resides within Harkanis Bek.

- He can offer the party and his hostages safe passage across the Dol Minor Wastes if they agree to meet with his superior, the Grand Commander of the Army of the Red Scarves.

Hostages

Should the players refuse, hesitate, or question him about the word “hostages”, he asks them to walk with him. If the party follows him, Tarul leads them up a sand dune overlooking a barren plain. He points at some figures about a mile away, and passes the party a field glass. Through its magnifying lenses, the party clearly sees a dozen people, captured caravan guards, merchants, and teamsters, securely tied to posts driven into the sands. A few feet away are a pair of Red Scarf Wasp Riders, their mounts, and a giant scorpion. The scorpion is trapped under a huge net that has been spiked into the ground.

Commander Tarul explains, “If you don’t come with me peaceably and converse with my superior, my men are ordered to cut the beast loose. Those prisoners have all proven troublesome to hold and I’d be pleased to be rid of them. Now, I can have them released within sighting of a Tasagaroth patrol or... well, I am sure the scorpion is hungry — damned things always are. Understand, I am not proud of such methods and I am sure to receive a strong reprimand from my superiors, but I will follow through on my threat. I fear our adversary is moving into his endgame, so the time for civilized behavior has run out.”

Yield

If the party agrees to meet with his commander, they are disarmed, blindfolded, and loaded onto giant beetles. The party is transported to the central command center for the Army of the Red Scarves (see Red Tower).

Refuse

If the party refuses to meet with Commander Tarul’s superior, the man sighs and orders his men to break camp. He explains, “This ceasefire is over. We shall resume hostilities in three hours’ time. Their blood is on your hands.” His men on the plain below cut the net and release the giant scorpion, escaping into the air before it can harm them. The ravenous monster makes short work of the prisoners, killing them all before the party can intervene.

Hunting Party

If the party reject the ceasefire or refuse Commander Tarul’s invitation to meet with his superior, the Red Scarves stop attempting to recruit them. After three hours pass, the Red Scarves do everything possible to prevent the party from reaching Harkanis Bek. They send out numerous wasp-mounted scouts to scour the Dol Minor Wastes looking for them. Once their position is found, a hunting party is sent after them. Just when or even if the Red Scarf hunters intercept the party is left up to the Judge.

By now the adventurers should have nearly completed their journey. Once they reach the safe-zone, a day’s travel out from Harkanis Bek, all Red Scarf pursuit ends. Judges should keep the pressure on the party, dogging their steps and chasing them across the final few days of their trip across the Dol Minor Wastes. If they are caught, Judges should present the party with a very difficult battle.

Red Scarf Hunting Party

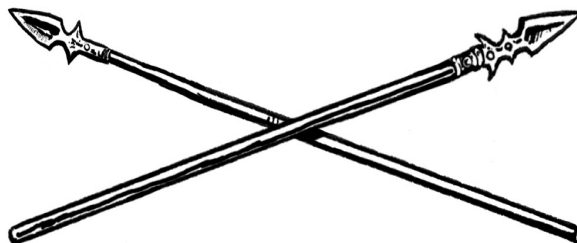
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A Forked Path

If the party surrenders to, are captured by, or accept the invitation of the Army of the Red Scarf, Judge should proceed to the section entitled “Red Tower”. Here they meet with The Flayed Man, Jannik Bel’Tarul; deposed Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion. The adventurers then have the option of joining the Red Scarves in their fight against the Demon Prince Morazak.

However, adventurers can manage to elude capture and refuse dealing with the Red Scarf Raiders. If so, they safely reach the Knight’s fortress directly from Tasagaroth, and Judges should proceed to the section entitled “Harkanis Bek”. Here they can see the famed fortress, deliver the Heart of Yan Shia, and receive their reward.

Such adventurers remain unaware that a Demon Prince has replaced the true leader of the Knights of Tal Abastion, and are blind to the threat building within the ruins of Uruk. Judges may choose to end the adventure here as the party has, to their knowledge, completed their real mission. However, an option remains for Judges to allow adventurers to hear rumors of mysterious slavers transporting their human cargo directly into the ruins. This option allows Judges to give their players another route to discovering the hidden temple within the Ruins of Uruk without guidance from the Army of the Red Scarf.



The adventurers are now in the central command center of the Army of the Red Scarf. They've been brought here to meet with the bandit's mysterious leader known as The Flayed Man, who is actually Jannik Bel'Tarul. The Red Scarves have tried to discover what Morazak is doing in the ruins of Uruk, but they've learned little. They know he's had hundreds of slaves smuggled into the ruins over the last few years, but have no clue why. Jannik has a feeling in his gut that time is running out. He is desperate to bring the campaign against Morazak to a successful conclusion.



If the party pledges good conduct, a lovely woman in her late twenties enters. She wears an open robe over a set of traveler's leathers. She possesses striking noble features, darkly tanned skin, and a ready smile filled with kindness. Her sharp eyes display an almost unnatural clarity of purpose. If the characters have already met Commander Tarran, her resemblance to him is uncanny.

The woman introduces herself as Bellana Bel'Tarul, High Priestess of Istasha. She adds, "You may call me Blessed Mother or Mother Bellana." Bellana then conveys the following information as she speaks with the adventurers, answering their questions and asking a few of her own:

- She explains that they are not prisoners; they are guests who will be well treated.
- They are in Red Tower, central command for the Army of the Red Scarves.
- She is a High Priestess of Istasha, spiritual leader of the Army.
- She invites the party to accompany her on her rounds, so she can give them a tour of Red Tower.
- If they swear to take no violent actions, she'll have their arms returned as a sign of good faith.
- At nightfall, the adventurers will meet with the Grand Commander of the Army of the Red Scarves, who has urgent matters to discuss with them.
- If the players ask, she proudly confirms that she is the same Bellana Bel'Tarul who vanished from Harkanis Bek twelve years ago, and a direct descendant of Tal Abastion.

As the adventurers leave their cell, they find themselves in a series of oval tunnels. The walls seem to be made of strange, grainy cement. The entire complex contains many miles of tunnels and hundreds of chambers of various sizes. Bellana explains that Red Tower was once the home of a colony of giant termites. "It's our home now, one of several such mounds our forces have liberated from the creatures," she explains proudly, "The nasty things are masters of engineering; their hives have perfect ventilation and maintain a constant comfortable temperature."

As the cleric makes her rounds, the adventurers see hundreds of people living here, making Red Tower more like a town than a bandit camp. Everyone Bellana meets greets her warmly and treats her with deep respect and affection. Occasionally, she delivers a blessing or heals a minor injury with her divine abilities as she tours Red Tower.

Bellana explains that most of the people living here were once slaves, which the Red Scarves liberated from Kesh caravans crossing the Dol Minor Wastes. The rest were prisoners, various merchants, caravan guards, or teamsters who joined the movement after learning about their cause during their captivity. Just what their cause is she won't say yet, replying, "The Grand Commander will answer all those questions tonight, I promise."

They adventurers are shown the following locations within the complex:

- **A School:** Where thirty children are learning to read.
- **A Training Area:** Where new recruits are learning archery.
- **An Armory:** Where weapons and armor are made.
- **Stables:** Where giant beetles and wasps are raised, kept, and cared for.
- **Dormitories:** Where families live and sleep, as well as one for young single women and another for young single men.
- **The Well:** Access to fresh water, dug out by the termites.
- **The Farm:** See below.

The Farm

At the lowest level of the tour, the party notices the scent of ammonia. Mother Bellana distributes thick red scarves, instructing everyone to tie them over their mouths and noses. "It will keep you safe from the fumes," the high priestess explains.

She then guides the characters to a series of strongly sealed doors, closing one before opening the next. As they move forward, the temperature becomes punishingly hot. The party arrives in an enormous chamber filled with misty vapors of deadly ammonia.

The chamber is crammed with mushrooms and growing fungus, some of which tower above their heads like trees. While some of what's growing here appears wild, most is organized into neat cultivated rows. Through her scarf Mother Bellana explains, "This is how we feed everyone. Most of what grows here is edible. Our waste feeds the mushrooms and the mushrooms feed us, thanks to our allies."



She then calls out in a strange language and four figures approach, slowly shuffling out of the mist. They appear to be short, pale mushrooms with arms, legs, and dark eyes; these are Shroomen. The priestess speaks with the Shroomen for a few moments in a slowly spoken language before the fungal people depart.

- **Shroomen (4):** See page 426, DCC Core Rule book for stats.

Mother Bellana then leads the party back to the upper levels. She continues, "The Grand Commander learned that the giant termites who built this complex had enslaved those poor, intelligent creatures. They forced the shroomen to tend the forest to supply their colony with food, but also treated them like cattle. Once too weak or old to work, the termites ate them. When we conquered the termites, the Grand Commander learned their language and forged an alliance between us. Our movement opposes slavery in any form."

End of the Tour

At day's end, Mother Bellana finishes the tour at her chapel. She sits with the adventurers and attempts to answer any remaining questions. She asks if she has changed their opinion of just who the Red Scarves are. "We are not savages", she insists. "We're civilized people fighting a noble cause for the good of this world. Hopefully, after you meet with the Grand Commander, you'll understand that. I've given you this tour to begin building a foundation of trust between us. Our enemies are desperate to learn how we survive in the Dol Minor Wastes. I pray you won't betray the trust I have shown you."

With that, a guard enters and nods to Mother Bellana. She turns to the party and says, "My father is ready to meet with you. Please be kind to him and don't stare — he's suffered a great deal." Players who've confirmed Mother Bellana's true identity may realize they're about to meet Jannik Bel'Tarul, Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion, but to their knowledge, the man is supposed to be at Harkanis Bek, actively leading the order in its fight against the Army of the Red Scarves.

A Stern Warning

The guards lead the party to a secure door deep in the complex, watched over by a pair of honor guards. A third man, in full armor, is waiting for them. If they haven't already met him, he introduces himself as Commander Tarul, second in command of the Army of the Red Scarf. He's very protective of Jannik Bel'Tarul, his commander and father. Commander Tarul disarms the party and promises the return their weapons after the meeting. He explains a few things before allowing them in to meet with his superior:

- Should they harm the Grand Commander, they'll never leave this compound alive.
- The Grand Commander has suffered injuries that left him disfigured and makes talking difficult.

- They shouldn't tire him out, as the demands on him are great.
- They should treat him with respect, or they'll pay dearly for their actions.

The Flayed Man

After this briefing, the party enter a dimly lit room whose walls are covered with various maps. The center of the room is dominated with a huge table, atop which is a detailed map of the Dol Minor Wastes, including Tasagaroth, Harkanis Bek, and the ruins of Uruk. Dozens of colored markers stand on the map, indicating various units, supply depots, and enemy positions. This is clearly a command center.

An older man enters from a side chamber, dressed in a vintage-style military uniform. He wears a helmet with the bottom half of his face covered by a thick red scarf, and a visor of smoked glass blocking the view of his eyes. He nods greetings to the party and motions them towards a circle of chairs. The man slowly lowers himself into a chair and sighs before speaking.

His voice is laden with rasps, gurgles, and lisps, making his words difficult to discern at first. He says, "Talking is difficult with all this on. I shall remove it. You have been warned of my disfigurements, yes?" The man removes his helmet and face coverings, revealing a horrific sight. His head and face are a twisted mass of scars, devoid of lips, ears, nose or eyelids. The man's eyes bulge and drip; his teeth hang bare, with drool flowing freely onto his chin. He periodically wipes his face and dampens his unblinking eyes with a wet red cloth.

He relates his story, saying, "I am Jannik Bel'Tarul, direct descendant of Tal Abastion, founder of the order which shares his name. I was the commander of that order, but was deposed twelve years ago. Today I lead the Army of the Red Scarves against the greatest enemy the world has known since the end of the Second Age. You have been brought here to learn the truth and, gods willing, assist us in bringing this conflict to a conclusion." What follows is a full conversation where Jannik relates the tale of how all this came to be, answers the party's questions, and possibly persuades them to assist him in his war against the Abyssal Prince Morazak. A list of fact points covered in this discussion are included below as a guideline for Judges:

A Discussion with the Flayed Man

- Twelve years ago I was captured by a powerful demon, commanding a war party of infernals and daughters of Kishari while patrolling the Ruins of Uruk.
- The demon is called Prince Morazak, son of the Abyssal Lord Ereshal.
- While a prisoner, Morazak flayed the skin from my head and devoured it.
- I blacked out from the pain, and when I regained consciousness, I was with my children, Tarran and Bellana.
- They'd rescued me from Morazak, but dared not return to Harkanis Bek.
- We realized that, somehow, the Abyssal Prince had copied my form, even my memories, probably from eating my skinned face.
- The fiend was now in full control of the order, so my family went into hiding.
- It took me a year to recover, which was only possible because of my daughter's powers as a true servant of the goddess Istasha.
- Morazak, using my identity as Tal, reorganized patrols, retired key commanders, promoted less competent men, and subtly weakened the order.
- We learned Morazak was secretly bringing slave caravans from Kesh across the Dol Minor Wastes. We estimate nearly a thousand slaves have been smuggled into the ruins of Uruk over the last decade, and we have no idea why.
- Once I recovered and further trained my children, we started attacking the slavers and freeing their human cargo. Over time, those people formed the backbone of the fighting force that became known as the Army of the Red Scarves.
- Our plan was to starve the Knights out of Harkanis Bek, and force Morazak into the open. We'd hoped to then strike directly at the fiend, but I fear this tactic isn't working. Morazak seems content to let the garrison starve and the knights are too loyal to abandon him.
- I never went public with the truth to preserve the reputation of the order. The Knights of Tal Abastion are universally respected, and materially supported by various nations. If it became known an infernal had usurped control over the Knights of Tal Abastion, it would destroy everything. Trust in the order would vanish, soon followed by the support network it relies upon.
- Also, who would believe me? Look at what Morazak has made me, I appear more infernal than he does. Many would take his word over mine, as he wears my form and possesses my memories.
- I don't know if you believe me or not, but I hope that you do because I need your help. I'll share a final confidence with you, one that even my children are unaware of. I am dying. I have had more winters than a fighting man has a right to. Now, each time I close my eyes to sleep, I fear I will never open them again. I must see this through before my time ends. I cannot allow this conflict to be the only inheritance I leave my children.
- Once the Abyssal Prince Morazak is destroyed, I can depart this life with a clear conscience.
- My son or daughter would then become the rightful Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion. Each has become a great leader, although I suspect Bellana would choose service to Istasha over commanding the order. Tarran would make an excellent Tal.
- Will you help me?

The Party Refuses

If the party refuses to help Jannik and the Army of the Red Scarves in their battle against Prince Morazak, they are detained at Red Tower. Jannik Bel'Tarul explains, "You've seen and heard too much to be allowed to leave. You must remain at Red Tower until the campaign is decided. You'll be well treated, I promise. I am sorry you won't aid us in our mission." Judges then have three options:

- Three months later, the party is released after the Red Scarves are victorious over Prince Morazak and Tarran becomes the new Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion.
- Four months later, the timeline shifts and Leviathan is now ruled by the Abyssal Lord Ereshal. It is likely the characters have never even been born.
- Judges can allow the party to attempt to escape. If this option is used, Judges should create a set of challenges for the party that allows them to escape Red Tower and travel across the Dol Minor Wastes to either Tasagaroth or Harkanis Bek.

The Party Accepts

If the adventurers agree to help Jannik, he is thrilled. He says, "For the first time in weeks I have hope of seeing this conflict end in my lifetime. Now go get some rest." He claps and Commander Tarran enters. Jannik addresses his son, saying, "They will help us. Gather the counsel for an urgent briefing. We are moving into the final stages of the war, my son."

Commander Tarran replies with a smile, "It's about bloody time." He salutes and rushes off. The party is then escorted back to their quarters, given a meal, and allowed to sleep. Several hours later, just before dawn, they are awoken and brought back to the command center. Here they take part in a meeting of the Red Scarves War Council.



The War Council

The party enters the command center, which is under heavy guard. Gathered here are three men, two women, and a male Ooruk. They are:

- **Jannik Bel'Tarul:** The Flayed Man; Grand Commander, Army of the Red Scarves
- **Tarran Bel'Tarul:** Commander of Army Group Crimson
- **Bellana Bel'Tarul:** Spiritual Advisor to the Army of the Red Scarves
- **Wermel Scroll:** A freed Kesh slave, Commander of Army Group Scarlet
- **Saysani:** A beautiful wizardess, apprentice to Varuvis, warlord of Tasagaroth
- **Harowl:** An aged Ooruk posing as a caravan guide, Spymaster (if he still lives)

Mother Bellana makes introductions between the party and war council members. The meeting begins with Jannik welcoming everyone and Bellana offering a prayer to bless this meeting. Jannik states, "The final stage of this war is about to begin. These adventurers have agreed to help us. They're supposed to make an important delivery to Harkanis Bek, meaning they'll have the order's trust, and likely won't be carefully watched. This provides an unparalleled opportunity to strike a decisive blow against our enemy."

Several plans are considered, and the party is encouraged to contribute to the discussion. Saysani proposes the party attempt an assassination of Morazak inside the Fortress, even offering them a supply of potent poison. However, this plan is quickly refused. Wermel suggests the party ambush Morazak while he's out on patrol in the ruins.

Mother Bellana explains that Morazak rerouted the patrols away from the center of the Uruk, near where Lord Ereshal was slain. "For years, no one's seen that area of the ruins," she explains, "He's also smuggled hundreds of slaves into the ruins — there's no telling what Morazak has them doing."

Harowl adds, "My contacts within the order say that the demon posing as Jannik often ventures away from patrols with his honor guard. The thing claims to be searching for signs of his missing children. I believe that during these times, Morazak visits that restricted area. This could be an ideal location for an ambush. However, the team must stealthily position themselves deep within the ruins."

Tarran continues, "Even if the ambush fails, some the team might survive and escape. Then we'd learn what was going on inside the restricted zone and maybe locate the slaves."

Jannik decides that the best course is for the party to go to Harkanis Bek posing as supporters, then enter the ruins, journey to the restricted zone, and ambush Morazak there. If their attack fails, at least one of them must escape and report to Harowl what they've discovered inside the ruins. Rough maps of the ruins, including a secret tunnel leading into them from Harkanis Bek, are then given to the party. Bellana points to the tunnel on the map and explains, "This is the route Tarran and I used to sneak out of Harkanis Bek to find our father. With luck it hasn't been discovered."

The Heart of Yan Shia

The issue of artifact the group was sent to deliver is then discussed. Tarran states the Red Scarves should take the item and use it to supply Army Group Scarlet, which has had difficulties with water shortages. Harowl agrees, saying that without a solution to the water crisis the knights will be forced to abandon Harkanis Bek in about six weeks.

Mother Bellana and Sayani disagree. Sayani explains that should the party arrive in Harkanis Bek empty-handed, Morazak may distrust them. If they aren't trusted, they could

be closely watched, which could jeopardize the entire mission. Bellana feels the knights themselves are suffering greatly, when Prince Morazak is their true enemy. Her concern is a humanitarian one.

Commander Scroll sees both sides of the issue, and cannot decide which course of action is best.

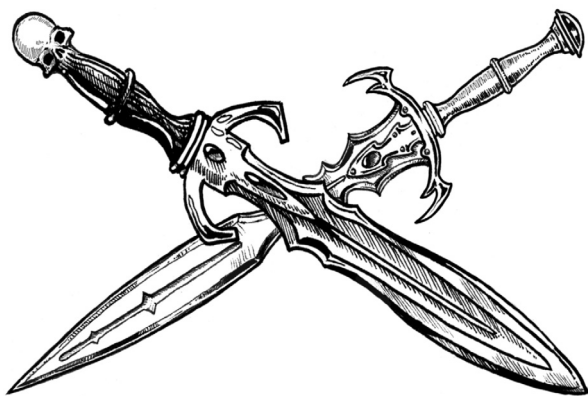
Jannik looks to the party. "As the council cannot reach a consensus the final choice is yours. Do what you will with this wondrous item."

Bitter Responsibility

Tarran asks to join the adventurers on their mission, but his father refuses. Tarran insists saying, "I have earned this right, father. I have fought this war for nearly half my lifetime. I must see it through to the end. Would you rob me of that?"

His father threatens to strip him of command and place him under arrest if he says another word on the matter. He explains, "You are next in line for Tal. When Morazak falls I cannot, I will not, resume command of the order. My time is past. You and your sister are next in line to carry on the traditions of Tal Abastion. One of you must outlive the war and take command."

Bellana quickly adds, "Tarran, it cannot be me. I serve the goddess first, as I must. I could never command the order with my full heart, as one should. It is you, my brother; you must make ready to take command at war's end." Tarran hangs his head in defeat, and nods in acquiescence.



Leaving The Red Tower

As the meeting ends, Jannik orders the mission to begin immediately and bids everyone goodbye. He orders Commander Tarran to lead a flight of wasp riders to drop the party a day's walk from Harkanis Bek. "A patrol of knights should quickly locate you and escort you safely to the fortress," Jannik explains. "After that, it's up to you." He offers his hand in friendship, holding it a moment longer than expected. He whispers to each, "I am pleased to have met you; farewell." It is obvious that this is a final goodbye from a man knowing his final days are upon him.

Mother Bellana embraces each party member before blessing them all, bidding them the Istasha's mercy and protection. To each adventurer she hands a bag containing three mushrooms, explaining that eating each grants a special power:

- **Blue Mushroom:** This mushroom reinvigorates you as if you've slept for a full night.
- **Green Mushroom:** This mushroom restores 2d6 HP of damage.
- **Red Mushroom:** This mushroom purges the effects of all toxins (injected, ingested, and inhaled).

Final Farewell

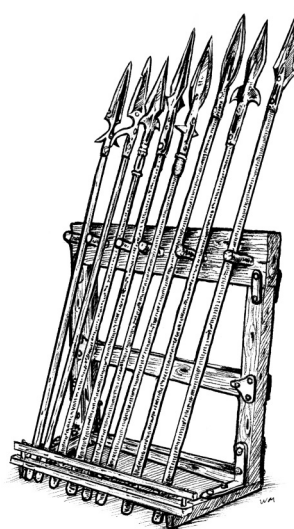
Commander Tarran flies the party away from Red Tower and across the Dol Minor Wastes. Each party member rides on a separate Giant Wasp, piloted by a Red Scarf soldier. Commander Tarran leads the flight, which eventually touches down behind a set of tall rock formations. He explains, "Circle around these rocks to the south, and you'll find a road. Follow it north and you should reach Harkanis Bek in two days. You likely won't get all the way there without meeting a patrol of knights. Here is where we part ways."

Tarran then expresses envy and regret that he's unable to accompany them, but he cannot disobey his father's direct orders. He says, "I was saving these for when I finally came up against Morazak, so you'd better take them." Commander Tarran then gives the party the following items:

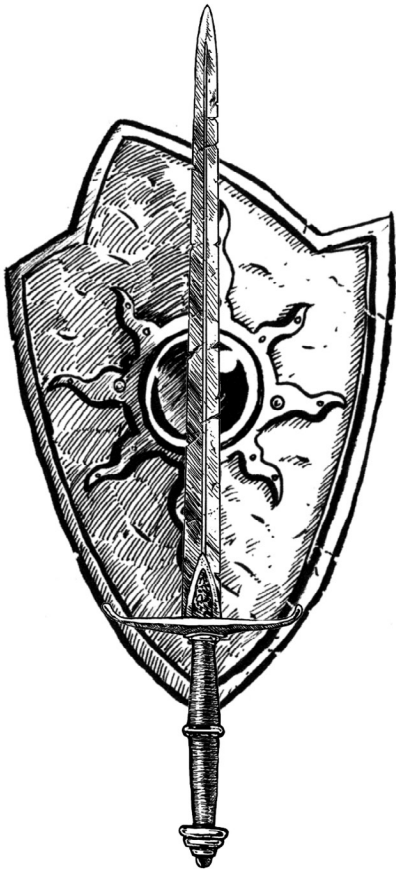
- Six potions: Restore Vitality (2), Invisibility (2), Haste (1), Strength (1)
- A quiver of eighteen +2 Arrows.
- Dagger +2/+4 vs. Abyssal Creatures

Reaching Harkanis Bek

The road south of the rock formation leads to Harkanis Bek, and is heavily patrolled by the Knights. After following the road for a day, the party encounters a patrol, and is escorted to the fortress of Harkanis Bek on the outskirts of the ruins of Uruk.



They stop twenty yards ahead of you and their apparent leader calls out, "We are outriders of the Knights of Tal Abastion. I am First Spear Lurian, second cohort, and I offer my greetings. May we approach your company to determine your purpose? Otherwise this road is denied to all travel." This is common practice, as one of the duties of the order is to prevent treasure hunters from reaching the ruins of Uruk.



This standard patrol of Knights means the party no harm. After briefly questioning them, the patrol escorts the party through the final day of their journey. The men are well armed and armored, and, although they appear thin and tired, they conduct themselves with honor and professionalism. Should the party refuse to speak with First Spear Lurian, they are turned back toward the Dol Minor Wastes. If the party tries to force their way past the patrol or attacks the Knights, combat ensues.

- **Knights of Tal Abastion, Standard Patrol (6):** Init +3; Atk spear +3 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 3d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L

This close to the fortress the roads are relatively safe, but if any monsters appear, four of the Knights dispatch them quickly. The other two remain with the party to defend them if required to do so. They do not ask for, or accept, any assistance. They respectfully explain that it is their sworn duty to keep the road safe and protect those upon it. The knights are friendly and even offer to share what little food and water they carry.

When the adventurers first see the famed fortress, they are unimpressed. While hardly a small keep, it is not as large as they expected and seems unremarkable. It appears to be a blocky, unattractive military redoubt. As they get closer, the party starts to notice the great thickness of the wall and how expertly its defenses are arranged. It becomes obvious how difficult it would be to besiege this ugly little fortification. Harkanis Bek is not a grand castle or a governor's residence. It is a soldier's stronghold, designed not to impress anyone except the men defending it or those unfortunate enough to attempt an attack against it.

Once past the fortress's gate, the party enters its narrow streets. While inconvenient to foot travel and commerce this too was intentionally done for defensibility. Most buildings are made of stone, with stout doors and arrow slits. Even if the great gate fell or the walls were breached, the Knights would be able to fight on, defending each interior structure to the last man.

The Knights within Harkanis Bek

The characters see many Knights roaming about, tending to duties and standing guard. While their weapons and armor are in good repair, bits of rust and tarnish can be spotted here and there. Their hair is closely cropped, even among the female Knights. Ooruk Knights have trimmed their hair so shortly they appear nearly bald. If asked about it, the Knights explain that lice have become serious health issue within Harkanis Bek. Everyone appears tired, with a gaunt, sallow look, clear signs of the strict rationing placed upon them. While these men and women won't leave their posts, they no longer have the strength to properly defend the fortress. Any other army would have abandoned this position long ago due to the conditions, but not the Knights of Tal Abastion. They are starving and on the brink of collapse; the situation is worse than anyone in the outside world realizes.

The Travelers within Harkanis Bek

While the adventurers saw many hundreds of people setting out from Tasagaroth they only see a few scattered dozen non-knights within the fortress. These merchants, teamsters, caravan guards, and mercenaries wander about with a haunted, far-off gaze. Many suffered wounds or lost companions crossing the Dol Minor Wastes. They appear sullen and exhausted.

While their purses are filled with coin, few take comfort in it. Most want nothing more than to rest for a few days and rush back to Tasagaroth. They hope that without a cargo to haul the road back will be safer and the journey shorter. No one seems willing to ever attempt this dangerous trip again.

The Heart of Yan Shia, Delivered

If the party decided to deliver the Heart of Yan Shia to the Knights of Tal Abastion, they are escorted to one of many stone buildings within the fortress. There they meet with Second Helm Kentral, First Cohort, a female knight of middle years. Like every other knight, the older woman appears thin and her head is nearly shaved bald. When given the Heart, Second Helm Kentral heralds the party as heroes and quickly pays them 10,000 pieces of silver.

The Knights immediately put the artifact to use, delivering water rations to everyone on duty. Those knights who are off-duty line up to fill their canteen for the first time in months. As cold water passes their parched lips some knights — though hardened warriors — openly weep. The party becomes instant celebrities within Harkanis Bek, openly called saviors by everyone they encounter. The adventurers are allowed to remain in Harkanis Bek unescorted.

Second Helm Kentral, the highest-ranking knight currently in the fortress, asks the party how long they plan to remain at Harkanis Bek. She says the Tal will want to thank them personally once he returns. If they ask where he is, Kentral explains he is leading an extended patrol in the ruins with his personal guard, and should return tomorrow or the day after.

The Heart of Yan Shia, Lost

If the party doesn't deliver the artifact, they have nothing to offer the Knights of Tal Abastion. Without bringing in goods of some kind, they are viewed as a burden at best, with suspicion at worst. They meet with Second Helm Kentral, who takes their report with a look of exasperation. She tells the party that they may remain within Harkanis Bek for three days to rest, but must depart after that. Also, she can offer them no provisions of any kind during their stay here. Finally, she assigns two Knights to "assist" them during their stay.

Assigned Guards

Two Knights of Tal Abastion are assigned to watch over the party if they fail to deliver the Heart of Yan Shia. They are Sevash, a young man serving his first tour, and Talgru, a powerful Oorok veteran of the order. Sevash is weak and has dizzy spells due to malnutrition.

Talgru suspects the party of being Red Scarf spies after crossing the Dol Minor Wastes only to arrive at Harkanis Bek empty-handed. Both are honorable Knights with knowledge of the Abyssal Prince Morazak.

Adventurers attempting to sneak into the ruins must find a way to deal with these guards. The party may attempt to evade them, subdue them, or eliminate them. Should combat erupt between the party and their guards, an alarm is likely to be raised. This summons 1d6+4 Knights of Tal Abastion, who join Sevash and Talgru against the party. If full-blown battle erupts between the party and the Knights inside Harkanis Bek, the scenario likely ends in failure and possibly the adventurers' death.

- **Sevash, Knights of Tal Abastion, Guard:** Init +2; Atk spear +2 melee (1d10); AC 16; HD 3d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL L
- **Talgru, Knights of Tal Abastion, Guard:** Init +4; Atk spear +4 melee (1d8+3); AC 18; HD 4d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4; AL L
- **Knights of Tal Abastion, Reinforcements (1d6+4):** Init +1; Atk spear +1 melee (1d8); AC 14; HD 2d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L

Back on Track: Brace Anderhall

Judges can introduce this character if the party never journeyed to Red Tower. This allows Judges an alternate way to lead the adventurers into the Ruins of Uruk and the Abyssal Prince Morazak's secret temple. While wandering the fortress, the adventurers are approached by a lone traveler recovering from his crossing of the Dol Minor Wastes.

Brace Anderhall, also known as Brace Grindstone, is a wiry, middle-aged man from Kesh. He is closely watched by the Knights of Tal Abastion, as they mistrust his intentions. Rightly so, as Brace has come to Harkanis Bek with every

intention of sneaking into the Ruins of Uruk. He is desperate for assistance, so he attempts to befriend the adventurers and somehow enlist their aid.

The Sad Tale of Brace Grindstone

Brace is a thief who had been arrested and condemned to a year of slavery, along with his wife and children. The family was broken up and a year later Brace was freed. He tracked his missing family down, learning they'd illegally been re-sold to another slaver and not freed at the completion of the sentence as dictated by law. He questioned their former owner at knife point and learned his family's fate. They'd been sold into a huge work detail and marched into the Dol Minor Wastes. Enraged, Brace murdered the man and set out to somehow find his family.

So began his perilous journey, which has nearly claimed his life a dozen times over the past six months. He's learned that Kesh slavers have been delivering large groups of slaves to a buyer inside the Ruins of Uruk. Brace suspects that some of the Knights are involved because how else could this happen right under their noses. He has, therefore, not shared this information with the order. Brace hopes to find a way out of the fortress and into the ruins to search for his family, and asks the adventurers to accompany him. He offers to give them his share of any treasure they find so long as they help in finding his lost family.

If the adventurers agree, they must help Brace evade the Knight who's keeping tabs on him. After that, Brace and the party can enter the secret tunnel below the fortress, which leads into the ruins. This is the same route used by Bellana and Tarran twelve years ago.



- **Brace Grindstone, Kesh Thief:** Init +2; Atk scimitar +2 melee (1d8+1); AC 15; HD 1d8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort+2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C
- **Knight of Tal Abastion, Brace's Shadow:** Init +2; Atk spear +2 melee (1d10); AC 16; HD 3d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL L

Secret Tunnel

Bellana and Tarran discovered this tunnel as children, stumbling across it while playing hide-and-seek inside Harkanis Bek. It leads north under the fortress and links up with some half-collapsed sewers under the streets of Uruk. They used it to sneak out of the fortress and rescue their father twelve years ago. Now the adventurers, and possibly Brace, must use it to enter the ruins. The tunnels are pitch-black, narrow, and foul-smelling. Unfortunately they are also trap-laden, as the Abyssal Prince Morazak also learned of their existence.



1. **Entrance:** A bit of discolored floor stone in a fortress hallway lifts up to reveal a shaft dropping twenty feet down into a tunnel. The stone hangs on a hinge, allowing it to be closed after descending. A ladder of recessed brickwork has been built into the wall.
 2. **The First Trap:** A set of trip wires releases several large spike-covered stone slabs from the ceiling. These come crashing down upon everyone within a twenty-foot stretch of passage, starting at the trap and moving backward. Anyone hit by the heavy, spiked slabs takes 2d10 points of damage. Adventurers can avoid this trap should a thief, either a PC or accompanying NPC, make a successful Find and Disable Traps roll.
 3. **The Second Trap:** This door is listed on the map (if possessed) as a rock pile. Morazak installed a sturdy door, which is both locked and trapped. The lock must be picked or the door battered down, which requires inflicting 50 HP worth of damage to it. If the door is opened without the trap being detected and disarmed, a pottery jug comes crashing to the ground, easily shattering on the slightest impact.
 - A. Those disarming the trap can remove the pottery jug before it falls, finding it to be cheaply made and sealed with wax. Should the jug be broken or the wax seal removed, a Yellow Primeval Slime is released. The creature quickly expands to its full size of two inches thick, covering a 25' X 25' area, and immediately attacks every living thing in the area.
- **Yellow Primeval Slime:** Init (always last); Atk Five Pseudopod +4 melee (1d4+1d6); AC 10; HD 5d8; hp 35; MV 5', climb 5'; Act 1d20 per 5' square; Sp half damage from slicing and piercing weapons; SV Fort +6, Ref -8, Will -6; AL N. This slime has an Acidic Touch (+1d6 to attacks) and is immune to fire.

4. **The Third Trap:** While marked on the map (if possessed) as a trapdoor in the ceiling, this is now a locked metal grate. The lock must either be picked or the metal grate forced upward, which requires DC 15 to pick or Strength check DC 18. This doorway is trapped by the Abyssal Prince Morazak, and if triggered, an alarm rings out across the area. Should that occur, it has dangerous consequences (see The Ruins of Uruk).

Other Methods of Entering the Ruins

While there are other ways for the adventurers to sneak into the ruins from inside Harkanis Bek, this is the only one provided to Judges. Should parties attempt to penetrate the ruins in another way, it is left for their individual Judges to create a series of difficult challenges. Judges should remember, the Knights of Tal Abastion have been working hard to keep people out of the Ruins of Uruk for nearly a century.

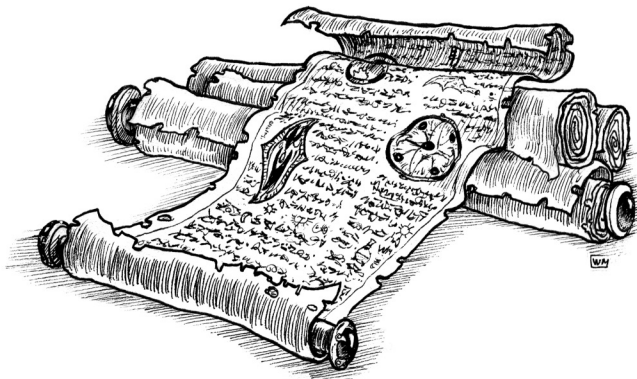


Part Five: The Ruins of Uruk

Introduction

All around you is rubble and destruction, stretching as far as you can see in every direction under a slate-grey sky. A few buildings still stand, burned and battered, a grim testament to the glories of the past. History was made here, the Second Age died and the Third Age was born on these very streets. These ruins were once a grand city filled with magic and intrigue, the capital of an empire, but all that was long ago.

In the century since the city's destruction, one would expect nature to have reclaimed this land. But nothing grows upon the rubble, not even a blade of grass pushing up between ancient flagstones. Others might have imagined that the Dol Minor Wastes would have spread here, covering the ruins in blowing sand and scouring Uruk from the surface of Urd, but the dead city stands just as it did the day Lord Ereshal was slain here by the hero-monk, Valerak. How nature and the elements are held at bay, whether from the ancient magicks of Uruk or the spilled blood of countless infernals, none can say.



The Alarm

If the alarm on the trap door was set off, the party first views the Ruins of Uruk as accompanied by the sound of a ringing bell. As the sound echoes and fades, baying infernal howls replace it. The bestial sounds grow louder, combining with that of rapid footfalls racing across loose rubble. Suddenly, four terrifying demons, six-legged hyena-like fiends viciously attack the party. The creatures, called Abyssal Howlers, fight until they are destroyed or no living being stands before them.

Demon, Abyssal Howler

These demons are Prince Morazak's primary minions and can be found guarding the area around the Temple of Ereshal. These fiends are the size of ponies and resemble six-legged hyenas with long spiked-covered tails. Howlers have long, flexible necks, ending in a head that possesses a single red eye and a set of massive jaws. The howl of these demons can chill the heart of even the most valorous, and any who fail a Fort DC 15 check suffers a -3 attack penalty due to unnatural fear.

- Demon, Abyssal Howler (type II demon):** Init +4; Atk bite +8 melee (1d10+2) or tail +6 (1d6+2); AC 18; HD 5d12; MV30'; Act 2d20; SP Howl, Demon traits; Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +6; AL C

Crossing the Ruins

The party can easily locate the center of the ruins, either using the map provided by Red Scarves, the directions of Brace, or by dead reckoning. Judges can have the party stumble into any the following encounters (Judges roll 1d4) before reaching the Temple of Ereshal:

- Demon, Dol Minor Reaper (1d3):** Init +1; Atk spiked tentacle +6 melee (1d16+2); AC 14; HD 4d12; MV20' or burrow 15'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits; Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C
- Mummy (1d4):** See page 422 of the DCC Core Rule Book for Stats
- Kyss (1d3):** Init +2; Atk claws +6 melee (1d6+6 or weapon damage as per weapon +6); AC 20; HD 6d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP charm, demonic traits, darkvision 60'; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +3; AL C
- Knights of Tal Abastion, Patrol (1d4+1):** Init +3; Atk spear +3 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 3d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L

The Temple of Ereshal

Near the center of the ruins, on the exact spot where Lord Ereshal fell to Valerak, there stands a temple. The construction is new, built from salvaged materials from the ruins and the labor of countless slaves. It is a huge dome-shaped building

illuminated by several bonfires of burning corpses. The walls are covered with pitch and tar, giving the structure a dark, unholy texture, almost as if it were a living thing. Two huge, bronze doors stand at the top of a set of wide stairs. Each door is cast with the shape of half a monstrous face, forming a whole image when closed, as they are now. Even from a distance the details of long curved horns, sharpened teeth, a snake's forked tongue, and a hooked nose can be made out. It is a familiar image from historical texts and the tales of old — a classic representation of the Abyssal Lord Ereshal himself.

The Courtyard

As the players approach the temple, they must cross a wide open area. As they do so, they walk past the remains of tents, tattered clothing, old cooking fires, building tools, and rusted manacles. This area was once a vast labor camp, home to countless slaves who constructed the temple.

Halfway across the abandoned camp, the party starts hearing the sounds of movement and low, sorrowful moans. Soon a dark figure appears, shambling toward them, then another and another. Rising up from debris are scores of strange creatures, moving towards the party with jerky steps and wobbling, outstretched arms. The creatures, once human, are now a horde of living dead. They are flopping, leathery marionettes, living sacks of desiccated human skin animated by black magic and malice. Their strange appearance is caused by the fact that all of their bones have been removed.



- **Boneless Zombie (5d4):** Init -4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 11; HD 2d6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP Undead; SV Fort +3, Ref -4, Will +1; AL C

The party must defeat the above number of zombies to reach the temple, but this is hardly the end of their numbers. The creatures keep rising from the ruined camp, eventually forming a vast horde of nearly a thousand zombies. To avoid being swarmed by the sheer volume of the horde, the adventurers must enter the temple and secure the door behind them. Judges should keep the pressure on until the party realizes that there is no way to defeat the horde. Judges should have the party surrounded and state that the horde seems thinnest between themselves and the temple's doors. This should keep the party moving forward.

The Interior Chamber

As the party enters the temple, they must quickly close the door behind them to keep the zombie horde out. There is a huge bar that can be slammed down to prevent the doors from being opened from the outside. Once the doors are secured, the party is safe from the zombies. However, they are now inside the Temple of Ereshal, and they are not alone.

This room is well lit by braziers, illuminating the nightmarish décor. The interior walls are accented with decorative arrangements of human bone. In the center of the room is an orgiastic mass of intertwined bodies. The nude, human men and red-skinned women rise from their padded fur rugs, snatch up their weapons and turn to face the infidels.

The human men are Knights of Tal Abastion, Morazak's honor guard. Each has been corrupted by the Abyssal Prince and now willingly serves his dark cause. Unlike the others Knights, these men are all well fed and healthy. Their partners are the daughter of Kishari (the Kyss), demonic abominations and allies of Prince Morazak.

- **Corrupted Knights of Tal Abastion, Morazak's Personal Guard (1d4+1):** Init +1; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 3d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C
- **Kyss (1d3):** Init +2; Atk claws +6 melee (1d6+6 or weapon damage as per weapon +6); AC 20; HD 6d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP charm, demonic traits, darkvision 60'; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +3; AL C



The Altar

Beyond the temple's interior chamber is an arched doorway leading to the temple's altar. This room's walls are covered in marble slabs, artfully carved into bas reliefs depicting various Abyssal creatures torturing human beings. At the far end of the chamber are fifty infernal creatures, a mix of Dol Minor Reapers, Abyssal Howlers, and heavily armed Kyss. They stand with their backs to the party, facing a black wall decorated with a huge half-circle of human bones. The bones form a morbid mosaic arch of skulls, curved ribs, long limb bones, and smaller knucklebones. Standing beside the arch, addressing these gathered horrors, is a lone Knight of Tal Abastion in glittering armor. He wears a plumed helmet and holds a polearm. If the party has met either Tarran or Bellana Bel'Tarul they clearly see a family resemblance.

The Ritual is Complete

The man's body crackles with dark energy as the infernal power fills the room. Suddenly he screams, and a burst of light flashes from the dark wall, the air tingles and crackles with released energy. When your eyes adjust you see that dark wall within the Arch of Bone is gone. What was solid rock is now open air.

Through the semi-circle of bone one can see a mighty battle raging between the men of Old Uruk and various abominations from the Abyss. Powerful spells light up the night; screams of pain, death, and heroic battle cries can be heard coming from beyond the bone archway. The conflict rages in the street of a great city and you know this can only be one place. You look upon Uruk itself just before its fall.

The Knight laughs as his minions chant in ecstasy.

"GO NOW!" screams the knight, "Kill Valerak! Save my father! Tonight we change history!"

The Reapers, Howlers, and Kyss rush through the arch of bone. The party sees them enter the battlefield beyond the arch, reinforcing the abyssal forces. The Knight looks to the adventurers and laughs. "Too late! You are too late. What we do here will change everything! FATHER! I am coming!"

The Knight reaches up, tears off his helmet, and hurls it to the ground. As he does so a blood-covered leather mass, topped with thick hair flops across the floor. It is the face of Jannik Bel'Tarul! As the Knight leaps through the arch, you can already see his body growing and changing into something monstrous.

Traveling through the Gate

As Morazak steps through the arch, the ground rocks, the wind howls, and the temple begins to collapse. The archway shimmers and crackles, its power fading as the temple is destroyed. The party has but moments to act before their history is unmade. The party must immediately follow

Morazak and his minions through the arch of bone to ensure he is unable to alter the established timeline.

As the adventurers rush through the bone arch they feel a flash of incredible pain and a wave of nausea, but in a moment it passes. They find themselves fully healed of all wounds and any cast spells restored to their memory. The styles of their clothing, weapons, and armor also change, fitting in perfectly with those of Old Uruk.

The Battle of Uruk

The city is aflame. People are running and screaming in panic. Battle rages everywhere. Suddenly, there is a crash and an explosion. A nearby building collapses. All seems hopeless, and for a moment, the party stands confused and afraid, as do many of the defenders on the street with them.

Then a voice calls out, clear as a silver bell above the chaos, as hopeful as a sunrise, as steady as the moon. "Right here! Rally to me! To me!" screams a man. "This far and no further — we hold here! Ready yourselves, men of Uruk, my brave brothers, protect the man beside you. Have no fear, for Istasha is with us. Cry out with me so our troops can join us! Rally up! Form lines!" Your heart feels light hearing the words and seeing the bravery of this man, who appears to be a monk.



A Separate Battle of Uruk

- **Kyss (1d3):** Init +2; Atk claws +6 melee 1d6+6 or Weapon (damage as per weapon +6); AC 20; HD 6d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP charm, demonic traits, darkvision 60'; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +3; AL C
- **Demon, Dol Minor Reaper (type II demon) (1d3):** Init +1; Atk spiked tentacle +6 melee (1d16+2); AC 14; HD 4d12; MV20' or burrow 15'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits; Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C
- **Demon, Abyssal Howler (type II demon):** Init +4; Atk bite +8 melee (1d10+2) or tail +6 (1d6+2); AC 18; HD 5d12; MV30'; Act 2d20; SP howl, demon traits; Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +6; AL C

- **Prince Morazak (type IV demon):** Init +6; Atk bite +15 melee (1d12+4) or tail +12 (3d8+6); AC 22; HD 10d12; MV60'; Act 2d20; SP breath weapon, mimic form (see below) demon traits; Fort +12, Ref +10, Will +12; AL C

There is a very tense moment as the two groups draw weapons and square off. No one makes a move or a sound until Commander Tarran steps forward. He removes his scarf and helmet.

The knights gasp, as the resemblance between this man and their own commander is unmistakable. Tarran looks much like his father. He says, "My name is Tarran Bel'Tarul, son of Jannik Bel'Tarul, and descendant of Tal Abastion. I humbly ask to be taken to Second Helm Kentral for formal negotiations."

The leader of the patrol asks, "To what end?"

Tarran smiles, "I wish to discuss terms for the immediate cessation of hostilities. I also hope to arrange the delivery of relief supplies into Harkanis Bek. Beyond that, I will only speak with your commander."

Tarran is taken into the fortress for a high-level meeting with Second Helm Kentral. By morning the fighting has stopped, and supplies begin arriving at Harknonis Bek the following day. The war is over.

Aftermath

Many things happen over the next few weeks, much of which never becomes common knowledge. A story is told how the children of Jannik Bel'Tarul returned to Harkanis Bek after the death of their father in a massive explosion.

The Army of the Red Scarf disbands. Many of their brave soldiers return to the lives they led before the conflict began.

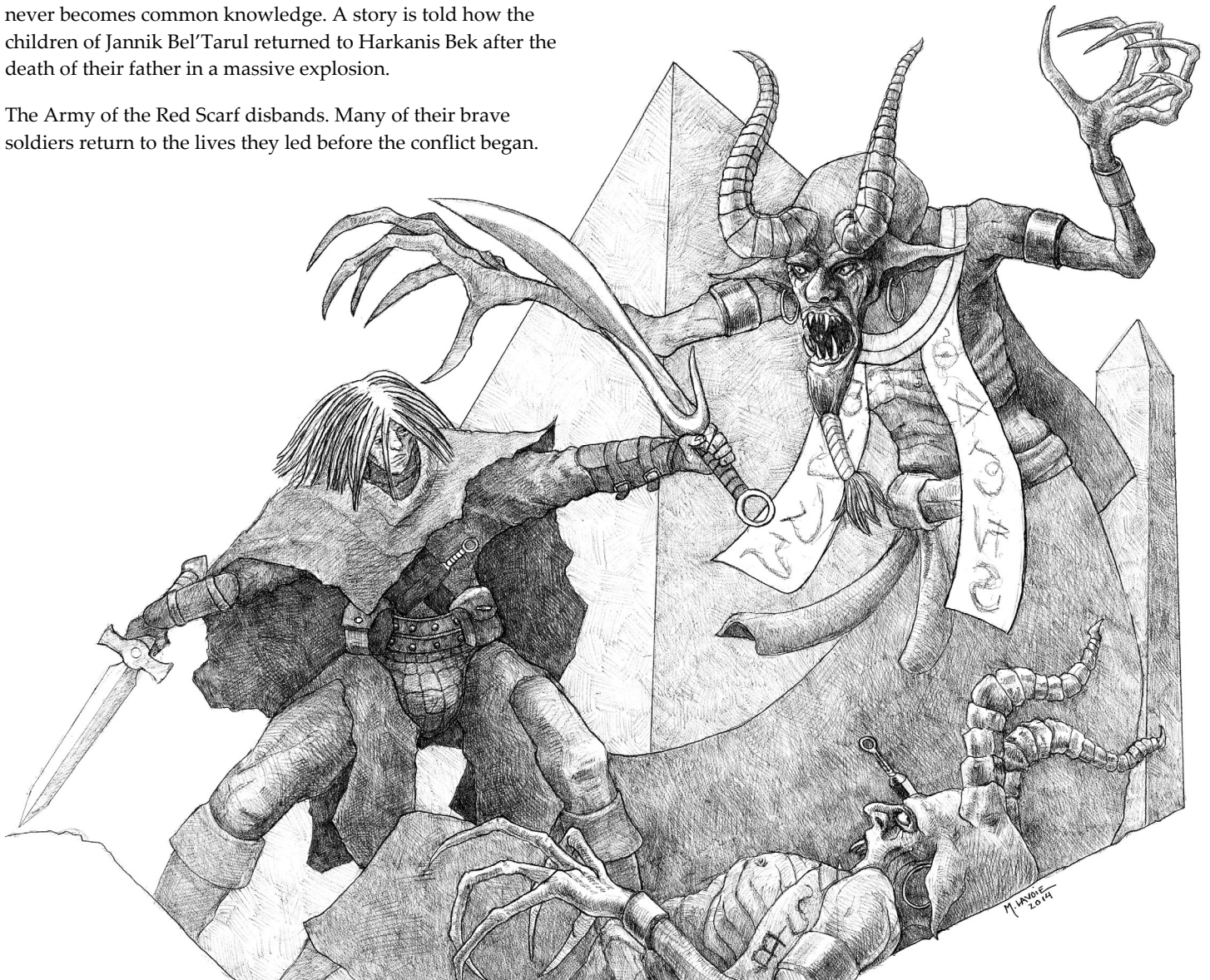
Tarran is granted the title of Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion, pledging his life to defending the ruins from without and within.

Bellana Bel'Tarul begins traveling far and wide, spreading her faith across Leviathan. Some who hear her words are deeply touched, feeling the power of the goddess for themselves and become true clerics as well.

The Played Man, the true Jannik Bel'Tarul, lives just long enough to see the end of the war and his son elevated to Tal of the Knights of Tal Abastion. He dies the following evening, peacefully, in his sleep.

And what becomes of the adventurers? Having no further concern, they leave the region to seek their fortunes elsewhere. This is far from the end of their adventures, but that is another story....

~The End~



Shuhadaku Sea

The Region of
VUUL



**A FACELESS
ENEMY**

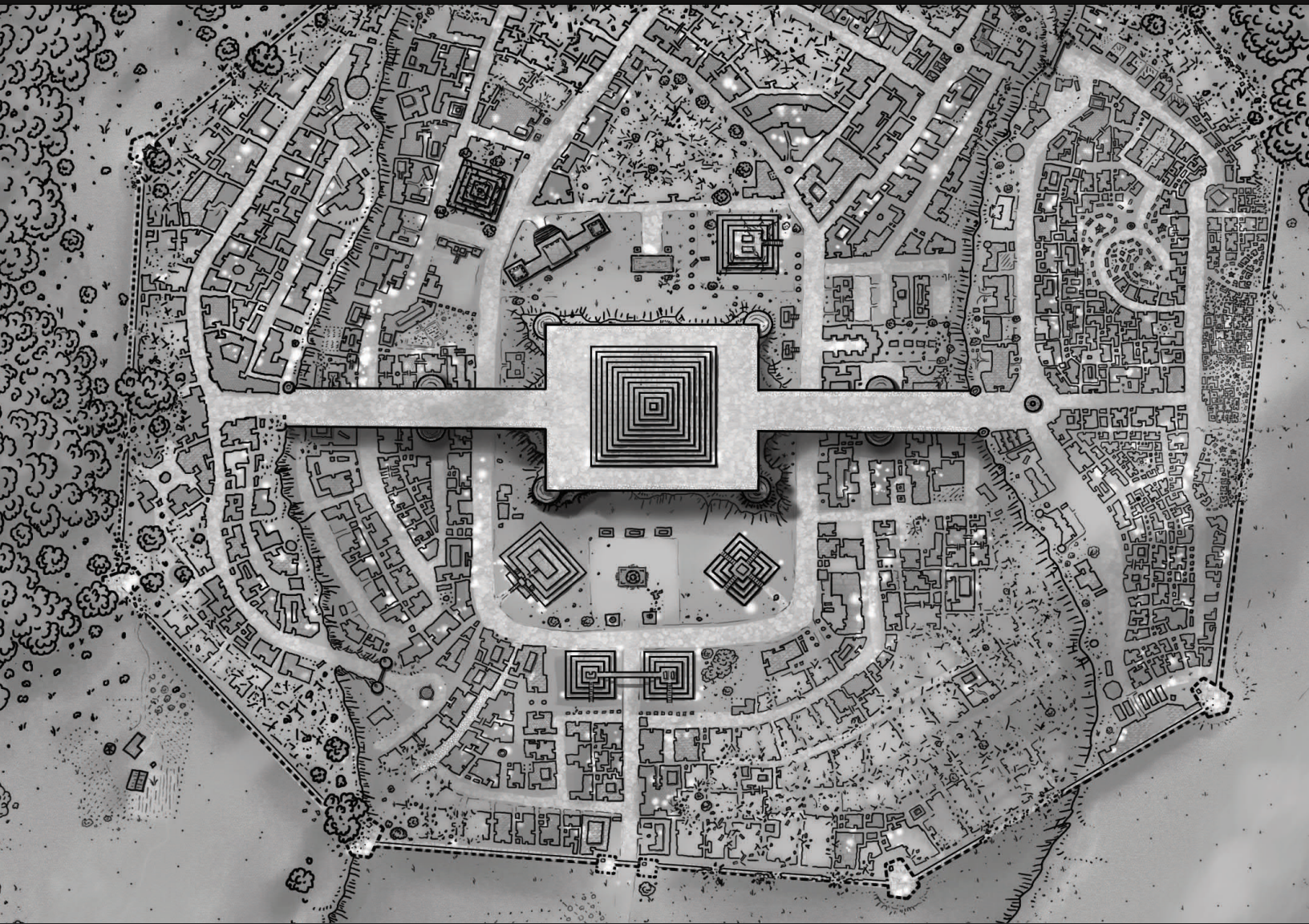
A FACELESS ENEMY



A FACELESS ENEMY



For 100 years, the ruins of the City-State of Uruk have stood as a memorial to the power of the Sorcerer Kings.



The adventurers are tasked with bringing a powerful magical artifact to the fortress of Harkanis Bek, built on the edge of the ruins of Uruk. The Knights of the Order of Tal Abastion have watched over the ruins for nearly a century, keeping treasure hunters and graverobbers out... and unspeakable horrors in.

CHAPTER 13 PRESS

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ISBN 978-0-9850221-4-3



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